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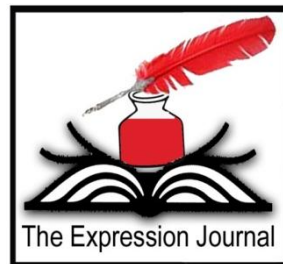The Expression Journal

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ACADEMIC SELF-COMPETENCE OF URBAN AND RURAL ADOLESENTS IN DIFFERENT TYPES OF SCHOOL

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Abstract

In social Psychology, Academic self-concepts are important correlates and predictors of successful scholastic learning. Self-competence, which involves the interrelationship between self-perception of personal worth and efficacy, is an important component of healthy development during adolescence. The aim of the present investigation was to study the sex differences in academic self-competence of rural and urban adolescents and sex differences in academic self- competence in different types of school. Schools which contained good building, had proper space and physical amenities, provided adequate visual aids, facilities for the games, sports, recreational activities, extracurricular activities, conveyance facilities and trained personnel, etc. were put in the category of high facility schools. On the other hand, the schools which were lacking in or were not equipped with the above facilities were regarded as low facility schools. Area was categorized as rural and urban. The area which comes under municipal's undertaking known as urban area. Rural area is defined as the area which is situated 15 km. away from the centre of the city and included under Gram Panchayat. The occupation of the people in rural area is mainly agriculture based. In this area conveyance facility is not easily available and the people usually follow traditional way of life. Two hundred students (100 males and 100 females) with the ages between 12 to 14 years were selected as the participants. All of them were students who were studying in std. six to eight in a school. For the assessment of academic self-competence scale developed by Rai and Arora (2002) was used. Data of male and female students was compared by t-test. Results reveal that there is significant difference between boys and girls. Boys (m=10.51) scored significantly higher in competence as compared to girls (m=9.66) counterparts.

Keywords

Self-competence, Urban and Rural Area, High and Low Facility School, Age-Group, Children, Gender Differences.
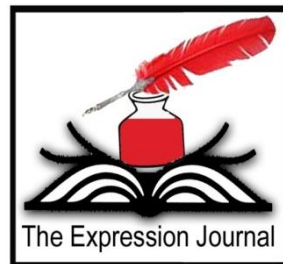
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Introduction

Competence is a broad term that refers to a person's capacity to interact effectively with the environment (White, 1963). It involves the acquisition of knowledge and skills relevant to adaptation within the school domain; within that domain, competence is strongly linked with academic achievement or outcomes that are assessed through both grades standardized tests and classroom grades. Grades and standardized achievement test scores are one type of competence assessment, and ratings of classroom teachers provide another index of children's school related competence. Competence refers to the perception that one has necessary and sufficient skills in various life domains, (academic, athletic, social, appearance and behavior) to respond adaptively to demands within these environments. The key components of this self-competence are self-esteem, self-determination, and successful coping.

As such, academic competence includes many of the critical skills viz., reading, writing, calculating, solving problems, attending, questioning, and studying needed for academic success (DiPerna, 1997; DiPerna & Elliott, 1999). An examination of the empirical literature indicates that researchers have defined this construct somewhat inconsistently. Several researchers have not explicitly defined the construct or have used "academic competence" interchangeably with terms such as "academic performance" and "academic ability" (e.g., Henggeler, Cohen, Edwards, Summerville, & Ray, 1991).

The results of our research have indicated that the skills, attitudes, and behaviors contributing to academic competence fall into one of two domains: academic skills or academic enablers (DiPerna & Elliott, 2000). Academic skills are the basic and complex skills that are a central part of academic curricula at the elementary and secondary levels of education, and they play a critical role in allowing students to learn content specific knowledge at the post-secondary level. Academic enablers are attitudes and behaviors that allow a student to benefit from instruction. In general Academic self- competence is a multidimensional construct composed of the skills, attitudes, and behaviors of a learner that contribute to academic success in the classroom.

Competence also has an internalized aspect that White (1963) referred to as sense of competence. Through effective and independent action there is growth of understanding about who or what controls and confidence in one self to produce success. Harter's (1982) domain-specific theory identifies academic perceived competence as a major input to successful outcomes to school, whereas Connell (1985) has focused on the importance of children's knowledge of how successful school related outcomes are attained (i.e., control understanding).

Academic self-competence

Academic self-competence has been operationally defied as the scores obtained by the adolescents on the Academic self-competence (Hindi version) developed by Rai and Arora (2002).

High and Low facility schools

Schools which contained good building, had proper space and physical amenities, provided adequate visual aids, facilities for the games, sports, recreational activities, extracurricular activities, conveyance facilities and trained personnel, etc. were put in the category of high facility schools. On the other hand, the schools which were lacking in or were not equipped with the above facilities were regarded as low facility schools.

Urban and Rural area

Area was categorized as rural and urban. The area which comes under municipal's undertaking known as urban area. Rural area is defined as the area which is situated 15 km. away from the centre of the city and included under Gram Panchayat. The occupation of the people in rural area is mainly agriculture based. In this area conveyance facility is not easily available and the people usually follow traditional way of life. Another feature of rural area is the absence of civic amenities such as absence of clear water supply, transportation facility, and sanitation etc.

Objectives of the Study

(i)   To study the sex differences in academic self-competence of rural and urban adolescents.

(ii)   To study the sex differences in academic self- competence in different types of school.

Hypotheses

Academic self- competence would be higher in boys as compared to girls in urban and rural area as well as in high and low facility of schools.

Sample

The sample of present study consists of four hundred urban and rural adolescents studying in different types of schools, employing 2 (area) x 2 (area) x 2 (sex) factorial design. For each area (rural and urban), an equal number of adolescents from high and low facility of schools were drawn. There were one hundred subjects in each area equally divided into fifty subjects in each category of schools. To ensure the representiveness of schools equal number of boys and girls in each group were sampled from high and low facility schools. This resulted in a 2 (area) x 2 (school) x 2 (sex) distribution of the sample in a factorial design. Schools were categorized as high facility and low facility on the basis of sixteen indices of physical and educational opportunities available in them (Shukla & Mishra, 1993). The categories were given 'two' or 'one' points on each index and a median split on the index (i, e., 24) was used as criterion for distinguishing between high and low facility schools. These indices were- location of school (open area-congested area), building (good-poor), space (sufficient-insufficient), furniture (good-ordinary), physical amenities such as electricity and running water (adequate-

inadequate), teaching aids (sufficient-insufficient), facility for games and sports (adequate-inadequate), staff (permanent-temporary), teachers training (mostly trained-untrained), method of instructions (active-passive), teacher-student interaction (good-poor), discipline (good-poor), extracurricular activities (sufficient-insufficient), school uniform (proper-improper), health facility (sufficient-insufficient), and conveyance facility (sufficient-insufficient). Thus schools which contained good building, had a proper space and physical amnesties, provided adequate visual aids, facilities for games and sports, recreational and extracurricular activities, conveyance and health facilities and trained personnel etc.were put in the category of high facility schools. On the other hand, the schools which were lacking in or were not equipped with the above facilities were regarded as low facility schools.

Area was categorized as urban and rural. The area which comes under municipal's undertaking is known as urban area. Rural area has been defined as the area which is situated 15 km. away from the centre of the city and included under Gram Panchayat. The occupation of the people in rural area is mainly agriculture based. In this area conveyance facility is not easily available and the people usually follow traditional way of life. Another feature of rural area is the absence of civic amenities such as absence of clear water supply, transportation facility, and sanitation etc.

Sample Distribution (N=400)

Area	High Facility school		Low facility school	
	Boys	**Girls**	**Boys**	**Girls**
Urban	50	50	50	50
Rural	50	50	50	50

Measures Used
Academic self-competence scale

To assess academic self-competence of students' academic self-competence scale developed by Rai and Arora (2002) was used. This scale was used to assess how student perceives himself/ herself as compared to his/ her classmates. The academic self-competence scale consists of four items which are to be rated on three point scale. All items are positively worded and rated on three point scale i.e., never, sometimes, and mostly. Scoring of each item ranged from one to three. Scoring was done in such of way that low scores indicated low competence and high score indicated high competence.

The scale considered the competence construct of academic area. The scale is brief and through in measuring the academic competence of the students. It has been high reliability for such a short scale. The reliability of the test was found to be 0.94.

Result and Discussion
Analysis of academic self-competence scores
Analysis of gender differences on academic self-competence scores

The obtained data were analyzed in terms of mean, standard deviation and t ratios. Following hypothesis was prepared for this regard.

Hypothesis : Academic self- competence would higher in boys as compared to girls.

Table 1
Mean, S.D., and t value of academic self-competence of boys and girls

Variable	Boys (N=200)		Girls (N=200)		t
	Mean	**S.D.**	**Mean**	**S.D.**	5.82**
Academic self-competence	10.51	1.55	9.66	1.37	

**p<.01

An inspection of Table 1, t value (5.82) reveals that there is significant difference between boys and girls. Boys (m=10.51) scored significantly higher in competence as compared to girls (m=9.66) counterparts.

Table 2
Mean, S.D., and t value of academic self-competence of boys and girls in high and low facility schools

Variable Academic self-competence	High Facility (N=200)			Low Facility (N=200)		
	Mean	**S.D.**	**t (df=198)**	**Mean**	**S.D.**	**t (df=198)**
Boys	10.86	1.51	5.384	10.17	1.51	2.98
Girls	9.77	1.33		9.55	1.41	

Results show that in both high and low facility schools, there are no significant differences (t= 5.38 and 2.98 respectively) were found as far as the academic self-competence is concerned. However the mean scores of male are higher (in both high and low facility schools) than female (Table15).

Table 3
Mean, S.D., and t value of academic self-competence of boys and girls   in urban and rural area

Variable Academic self-competence	Urban (N=200)			Rural (N=200)		
	Mean	**S.D.**	**t (df=198)**	**Mean**	**S.D.**	**t (df=198)**
Boys	11.14	1.05	7.808**	9.89	1.71	1.24
Girls	9.69	1.52		9.63	1.21	

**p<0.01

Table 3 pursuits that there is significant difference between male and female (t=7.80 df 198) on competence in urban area. Male students have scored significantly higher on competence than female students.

In rural area, the results shows that there is no significant difference between male and female students on self- esteem (t=1.24, df =198). However as far as the mean scores are concerned, male students is higher than female students.

The hypothesis that academic competence would higher in boys as compared to girls has been partially supported by the results. Boy students scored significantly higher in academic competence as compared to girl students. It means that boys have perceived themselves more competent than their counterparts.

This striking compatibility between the obtained result and the hypothesis invites a minute psychological analysis. The few facts appear responsible for higher competence in boys. Our Indian society, being patriarchal has granted a special status to boys which have a feeling of inherent sense of superiority. As a consequence of that they continuously strive to retain this superiority either overtly or covertly. This creates sense of responsibilities in them. This helps a great deal to develop his intrinsic ability and competence. It may be stated that boy students are highly privileged to interact with outer world heterogeneously. In both the situations he is usually encouraged to add positively to their competence and performance.

On contrary, in case of girl students, by their very birth, suffer a sense of reluctance in the family they are brought up. This trend in modern time is being discouraged. However, in majority of the family this feeling still finds expression in the form of preferential treatment. This dampens her zeal and enthusiasm which ultimately results in dwindling of her feeling of competence. It becomes part and parcel of her life and she prefers to withdraw. This sad and silent escape makes her feel less competent as compared to her boy counterpart. The other glaring factor which has a large share is that girls are mostly given the notion that their life is limited to four wall of the home. They have to justify their life inside their homes. No important responsibility is imposed on them. Therefore from the very beginning they are constrained to accept their marginalized status. They become low spirited and their interest is reduced. Girls are unusually not allowed to expose and interact with the world outside whereby they do not get the opportunity to assess themselves. They become self-competent and the impulse of bringing a change in their present level of competence become dormant. This eventually results in lowering their perceived self-academic competence.

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