

## **Adolescent Students' Perceptions of Their Teachers' Feelings Toward Them, Self-Perception and Academic Achievement: An Exploratory Study**

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An exploratory study was designed to ascertain the differences and relationship between students' perception of their teachers' feelings towards them and the variables: self-perception, academic achievement, gender, socio-economic status, the stream of study and type of school. Altogether 450 school going adolescents of grade XI aged 16-17 years were randomly selected resulting in 230 female 220 male students from nine different schools of Chennai. Bilingual (English and Tamil) research instruments namely, "I think I am" and, "My teacher thinks I am", were used to collect the data. The study shows that there was a significant difference in the students' perception of their teachers' feelings towards them among male and female students. There was also a difference in self-perception of students based on the types of educational board. However, the students' perception of their teachers' feelings toward them and self-perception are independent of socio-economic status. Further, there was a statistically significant effect on the stream of study and type of school on students' academic achievement. However, we found no significant effect of gender and socio economic status on academic achievement.

**Keywords:** Students' perception of their teachers, Self-perception, Gender, Type of school, Stream of study.

School experiences are known to contribute to the mental health and development of the students (Bond et al., 2007; Shochet, Dadds, Ham, & Montague, 2006). The aspiration for positive self-evaluation affects one's feelings, actions and, desires (Hussain, 2006). The development of self-perception can have an enduring effect on a child's self-esteem. It also has a role in directing the students' academic effort. One of the basic concerns of educators, policy makers and teachers is to enhance the teaching-learning processes, which will lead towards significant academic gains for the students.

Teachers have great influence on students' perceived feelings. As described by Goleman (1995, 1998), the five basic emotional competences for being a highly effective teacher are knowing how to express one's feelings, manage one's moods, empathize with the emotional states of others, motivate oneself and others, and exercise a wide range of social

skills. The perceived feelings of the students can also make an influence on one's future academic effort. Learning goals are construed, and the anticipations are conveyed to the students by the teachers. These goals are to make the classroom environment valuable for the students. Students internalise these expectations and modify them based on their personal perception. If the teachers fail to communicate these goals effectively, it will demotivate the students and in turn, will make them discontented. Only the teachers and the students know what happens in the classrooms as they are the ones who inhabit it. According to Geoff (2004), the perception that a student has about them could influence their self-concept over a period of time. This also affects the students' performance in academics at large. In short, owing to their perceptions of teachers, students may develop positive or negative self-perception. As a result, some students may withdraw within themselves most of the times, and subsequently, transfer this withdrawal attitude to the teachers' subjects by

avoiding their classes (Wattenberg & Clifford, 1964).

According to Barnett, Vondra, & Shonk (1996), "Notably, school performance, self-perceptions of competence, and motivation all tend to be inter-correlated among school-aged children. Although, the direction of effects is debatable, children who feel good about themselves tend to be intrinsically motivated and tend to be academically competent. This dynamic network of self-related cognitions, motivation, and academic performance is referred to as the self-system" (p. 398). The self is essentially a social product arising out of the experience with people. While some of the individual's experience of self may be achieved in isolation from other people, by far the greater portion of one's self arises out of one's relationships with others (Delaney, 2005). Human personality is primarily a product of social interaction. We learn the most significant and fundamental facts about ourselves from what Sullivan (1947) called "reflected appraisals," inferences about ourselves from the way we are treated by those who surround us; in our earlier years by our families and in later years by all those people with whom we come in contact with.

Frenkel-Brunswik (1949) made a distinction in perceptual responses with social relevance; he called it an intolerance of ambiguity. It is a tendency to see events in one way or another definitely i.e. things are either 'good' or 'bad' or things are either 'white' or 'black' and so on. In the classroom, this tendency may be found when a pupil wants to decide immediately whether the teacher is in favour or against him/her. Kelly (1955) found that all pupils differ only in how good or bad they are. For example, if they like a person, they see as intelligent, attractive, competent and pleasant or else they are seen as stupid and unattractive. Applying this approach to teachers and asking them to compare their students with one another and with themselves it was found that some teachers tended to see all the good students as similar to one another having all the good traits, and all the bad students were seen to be very similar to one another having all the bad traits (Rao, 1990).

The research on person perception is directed to determine how pupils come to

understand from impressions of one another and to determine how this understanding is related to other interpersonal skills and investigate the widely held proposition that the teacher should understand the pupils. The experimenters asked whether the accuracy with which a teacher perceived cognitive, social and emotional characteristics of their pupils held any relationship to the effectiveness of the teachers' behaviour as judged by their pupils. In the cognitive areas they assumed that a teacher would teach better if one could accurately evaluate the competence of the pupils. To determine the teacher's accuracy in this area (cognitive area) the experimenters gave 103 teachers pairs of items from a standardised achievement test. They asked them to identify which of the pair of items would be harder for pupils. Teacher accuracy did not bear any relation to pupils' evaluation of how well their teacher explained things to them (Gage, Leavitt, & Stone, 1955). A good teacher understands their pupils' problems reasonably well. According to Berliner (2004), feedback to teachers about how the students think about them influences the teachers' consequent behaviour.

Teachers' perceptions are usually communicated to students indirectly through teachers' reaction, emotional responses, and classroom practices. These subtle cues are transferred to the students unknowingly by the teachers. For instance, when teachers have high expectations for a student, the teacher typically often commends the student and provides stimulating material to the student, which in turn, increases the student's expectations of their future competence (Upadyaya & Eccles, 2014). Teacher and pupil perceptions of one another may have a considerable impact on school learning. There are a number of ways a teacher can manage the classroom to provide an effective learning environment; one such way is to develop students' self-concept i.e. to encourage the discouraged students and to build their self-esteem (Ramalingam, 2013).

Academic performance plays a vital role in the determination of future success of a student and consequently failure to achieve certain standards in performance is sure to influence the future. During the formative period of life,

a favourable social, economic and cultural environment generates a congenial atmosphere for students to achieve the academic goal. A repulsive feeling is generated in the minds of students towards scholastic activities under a reverse condition, which may adversely affect the academic results (Gupta, Mukherjee, & Chatterjee, 1993). It is widely recognised that the perception of others and an individual's perception of self have important consequences. Individuals who perceive themselves as highly competent are likely to try new approaches to tasks and perhaps be more productive than their peers (Hitt, Miller, & Collela, 2006). Remarkably, school performance, self-perceptions of competence, and motivation all tend to be inter-correlated among school children (Barnett, Vondra, & Shonk, 1996).

There are a number of valuable international studies on students' perception of their teachers and self-perception in relation to academic achievement (Stringer & Heath, 2008; Mucherah, Dixon, Hartley, & Hardin, 2010; Van Velsor, Taylor, & Leslie, 1993). However, to the best of authors' knowledge very little research work has been done on the topic in the Indian context, especially among adolescence. In particular, our study seeks to understand how contextual variables such as gender, socio-economic status (SES), stream of study and type of school affect students' perception of their teacher's feelings toward them (STPT), self-perception (SEPE) and academic achievement (AACH). This exploratory, quantitative study would contribute to the body of knowledge in the specific context of the location of study as recent research on this topic is scanty.

### **Hypotheses**

- H1: There is a significant effect of (a) gender, (b) type of school, (c) stream of study and (d) socio-economic status (SES) on students' perception of their teachers' feelings towards them (STPT)
- H2: There is a significant effect of (a) gender, (b) type of school, (c) stream of study and (d) socio-economic status (SES) on students' self-perception (SEPE)
- H3: There is a significant effect of (a) gender, (b) type of school, (c) stream of study

and (d) socio-economic status (SES) on students' academic achievement (AACH)

### **Method**

#### **Measure**

To test the hypotheses proposed, we used an instrument developed by Helen H. Davidson and Gerhard Lang (1960). The checklist was administered twice with an interval of four to six weeks on 105 junior high school students. A correlation of .85 was obtained. Empirical and concurrent validity was completed by correlating the child's perception of their teacher's appraisal of them with their classmates' perceptions of the teachers' feelings toward him. The scale included positive words like "here is someone whom the teachers praise for trying hard" and negative statements like "here is someone whom the teacher points out at who wastes their time." A modified version of de Groat and Thompson Teacher Approval and Disapproval scale along with Checklist was administered on 93 children. A correlation of .51 was obtained between Index of Favourability and the teacher approval score.

The first checklist was to measure the students' perception of their teachers' feelings towards them (My teacher thinks I am) and the second to measure self-perception (I think I am). Both the checklists had similar 35 words with favourable words like Fair, Cheerful, Neat, Loving and unfavourable words such as a Nuisance, A time waster, Forgetful, Unhappy etc., on a three-point rating scale: most of the time, half of the time, seldom or almost never. The words used in the scale connoted both positive and negative feelings. The scale measures feelings such as adjustment, self-acceptance, empathy, and character traits. In order to measure the self-perception of students the scale was classified based on social and psychological variables. The reliability test of the Checklists was conducted through test-retest method and a correlation of .85 was reported (Davidson & Lang, 1960).

The adjectives used were easy in terms of reading and comprehending for students whose age ranged from 10-17 years. A separate personal data sheet was affixed to collect personal information about the pupil such as

name, sex, age, type of educational board, parent educational qualification, occupation and annual income. The marks obtained by the students in their school examination were taken as the index of academic achievement. The investigator took help from the English-Tamil translators to translate the Checklist of trait names in Tamil. Two subject experts in Tamil language tested the content validity of the translated Checklist. Changes suggested by them were incorporated into the final instrument.

### **Sample**

The list of CBSE schools and Tamil Nadu board schools of Chennai and Suburban areas were obtained from the National Informatics Centre website (<http://www.chennai.tn.nic.in/schools.htm>). From this list, we selected some schools for survey following a judgemental approach for balanced representation with respect to gender, stream of study and type of school. The checklists with trait names were distributed to 450 students of XI standard in and around the Chennai city. Sections/Divisions of XI standard students from each school was randomly selected from science and commerce streams. The questionnaire was administered in the selected divisions/sections ensuring approximately equal distribution of male and female students, which finally resulted in 230 female and 220 male students' responses.

### **Collection of Data**

The data for the study was collected by the investigators from various schools affiliated to Central Board of Secondary Education and State Board of Tamil Nadu from Chennai city. Prior permission was obtained from Heads of the various government and private institutions and schools before administering the test. One of the investigators personally visited the institutions and administered the tool to each subject carefully to get the correct information. Before the test, the respondents were briefed about the questionnaire and instructions were given on how to fill the instruments. Later, the questionnaire was administered in the presence of the school teacher assigned to that classroom. No time limit was specified.

### **Scoring Procedure**

The Checklist of Trait Names was administered twice on the students. During the first administration, the students were instructed to respond to the 35 adjectives comprising of "I think I am" and during the second administration, "My teachers thinks I am." The "My teacher thinks I am" scale yields a measure of perceived teacher feeling referred to henceforth as the Index of Favourability; "I think I am" scale yields a measure of self-perception. The students were instructed to decide how the teachers feel towards them with respect to each trait name and to rate it on a three-point rating scale: most of the time, half of the time, seldom or almost never. A favourable word is assigned a score of 3 when it is checked in the most of the time column; a score of 2 for half of the time, and 1 for seldom or almost never. For an unfavourable word the scoring was reversed. The total score, the Index of Favourability is obtained by adding the scores of all the words. The Scores were then divided into three different levels i.e. the index can range from 1.00 to 3.00.

### **Results**

The analysis of category wise mean shows that the mean of Self-perception, and Index of Favourability vary for students belonging to the different gender, type of school, stream of study and SES.

Factorial ANOVA was used to test the hypotheses and check the interaction effects. A 2X2X2X3 design was used (gender [male, female] x stream of study [science, commerce] x type of school [CBSE, State Board] x socio-economic status [low, average, high]). The following are the results:

We conducted ANOVA tests to test our hypotheses. Results are presented in Table 2. The ANOVA test was done to examine the effect of students' perception of their teachers' based on gender, type of school, stream of steady and socio-economic status. Table 1 shows female students' perception of their teachers'

Table 1. Descriptive Analysis (Means and SDs) of the Dependent Variables in Terms of Gender, Type of School, Stream of Study and SES

Variables	SEPE		STPT		AACH	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Gender						
Male	80.56	7.57	79.53	11.38	74.15	11.95
Female	81.79	6.84	83.94	8.47	75.14	12.77
Type of school						
State Board	80.56	6.81	82.54	9.85	75.55	12.74
CBSE	82.02	7.55	81.03	10.55	73.75	11.95
Stream of Study						
Science	81.67	7.59	81.97	10.63	82.54	8.77
Commerce	80.90	6.79	81.59	9.80	66.41	10.00
SES						
Low	80.55	5.87	82.01	9.70	72.88	12.00
Average	81.49	7.58	81.69	9.70	75.21	12.43
High	82.50	0.707	86.50	0.707	65.56	17.59

Note: M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation

Table 2. Factorial ANOVA with Gender, Stream of Study, Type of School and SES as Independent Variables

Variables	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	$\eta_p^2$	<i>p</i>
Students' perception of their teachers' feelings towards them				
Gender	1	9.231*	.021	.003
Type of school	1	.211	.000	.647
Stream of study	1	.099	.000	.753
SES	2	.173	.001	.841
Self-Perception				
Gender	1	.493	.001	.483
Type of school	1	1.748	.004	.187
Stream of study	1	.987	.002	.321
SES	2	.062	.000	.940
Academic Achievement				
Gender	1	.131	.000	.718
Type of school	1	4.760*	.011	.030
Stream of study	1	140.598*	.246	.000
SES	2	1.129	.005	.324

Note: *df* = degrees of freedom, *F* = F-test,  $\eta_p^2$  = partial eta squared, *p* = probability, \**p* < .05

feelings toward them (Mean = 83.54) was more favourable than their male counterparts (Mean = 79.53). There is a statistically significant effect of gender on students' perception of their teachers' feelings toward them  $F(1,432) = 9.231$ ,  $p = .003$ ,  $\eta^2 = .021$ . Hence, our hypothesis H1 was supported for gender. However, stream of study  $F(1,432) = .099$ ,  $p = .753$ ,  $\eta^2 = .000$ , type of school  $F(1,432) = .211$ ,  $p = .647$ ,  $\eta^2 = .000$  and socio-economic status  $F(2,432) = .173$ ,  $p = .841$ ,  $\eta^2 = .001$  have no significant effect on STPE. Therefore, H1 was rejected for these factors.

Table 2 also shows the effect of gender, type of school, stream of study and socio-economic status on self-perception. There is no significant effect of gender  $F(1,432) = .493$ ,  $p = .483$ ,  $\eta^2 = .001$ , stream of study  $F(1,432) = .987$ ,  $p = .321$ ,  $\eta^2 = .002$ , type of school  $F(1,432) = 1.748$ ,  $p = .187$ ,  $\eta^2 = .004$  and socio-economic status  $F(2,432) = .062$ ,  $p = .940$ ,  $\eta^2 = .000$ . Thus, H2 was rejected for all these factors as well.

Furthermore, Table 2 also shows the effect of gender, type of school, stream of study and socio-economic status on Academic Achievement. Table 1 depicts that Science students' Academic Achievement (Mean = 82.54) was higher than commerce students' (Mean = 66.41). There is a statistically significant effect of stream of study on students' academic achievement  $F(1,432) = 140.598$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $\eta^2 = .246$ . Further, the academic achievement of State Board schools (Mean = 75.55) were higher than the CBSE schools (Mean = 73.75). There is a statistically significant effect of type of school on academic achievement  $F(1,432) = 4.760$ ,  $p = .030$ ,  $\eta^2 = .011$ . Hence, our hypothesis H3 was supported for stream of study and type of school. However, there is no significant effect of gender  $F(1,432) = .131$ ,  $p = .718$ ,  $\eta^2 = .000$  and socio-economic status  $F(2,432) = 1.129$ ,  $p = .324$ ,  $\eta^2 = .005$  on Academic Achievement. Thus, H3 was rejected for gender and socio-economic status.

### Discussion

The findings related to student's perception of their teachers' feelings towards them, self-perception and academic achievement with reference to demographic variables are discussed below.

Gender differences were observed concerning the index of favourability. Girls perceived their teachers' feelings towards them more favourably than did the boys. Our findings on gender differences in students' perception of their teachers are consistent with the result reported from the studies conducted among Singaporean and Bruneian students (Keeves, & Watanabe, 2013, p. 468). In this study, the girls perceived that their teachers exhibited significantly more positive, interactional qualities in terms of being helpful and friendly, and understanding and displaying significantly less negative, interactional qualities in terms of being uncertain, dissatisfied and admonishing, as compared to boys.

Although, it was hypothesised that there would be a potential impact of gender, type of school, stream of study and SES on self-perception, the analysis did not support any of these hypotheses.

A significant difference in academic achievement of students of State Board schools and CBSE schools was also found. A possible explanation can be that of the difference in the examination pattern. A further study to understand the causality can be undertaken. A significant difference has been observed in the academic achievement of the students of Science and Commerce streams. It requires further investigation why students' with low academic achievement opt for commerce stream of study. Probably, it is due to lack of availability of opportunities and less awareness of the commerce stream. However, there is no significant difference in the self-perception and student's perception of their teachers towards them with regards to the stream of study.

SES emphasises social stratification as an organising force in an individual life. Most of the educational experts argue that the low socio-economic status has a negative effect on the academic performance of students because the basic needs of students remain unfulfilled, and hence they do not perform better academically. The low socio-economic status causes environmental deficiencies, which result in low self-esteem of students. Teachers play a unique role relative to the students and the

kind of experiences that teachers create for the students exert a powerful influence on them. Research also shows how pairings by race and ethnicity influence teachers' perceptions and expectations of the student. It also presumes that one's social understanding is a more important determinant than any of the economic and social resources (Dee, 2005). After the computation of Factorial ANOVA, it was found that the socio-economic status (SES) had no effect on students' perception of their teachers' feelings towards them, self-perception and academic achievement. This finding is in disagreement with Reddy's findings (1987) with regards to academic achievement, who found that the score of the socially advantaged students were better than the socially disadvantaged children.

### Conclusion

The purpose of this exploratory study was to find the effect of (a) gender, (b) type of school, (c) stream of study and, (d) socio-economic status (SES) on students' perception of their teachers' feelings towards them, self-perception and academic achievement. Girls perceived their teachers' feelings more favourably than the boys did. However, the study did not yield any statistically significant effect on the self-perception of male and female students and socially advantaged and disadvantaged students. This finding provides evidence to suggest that when equal opportunities and support is given, students will see themselves as academically capable and competent and will thus, strive to work hard to achieve their educational goals.

A limitation of this study is that it covers only a few male and female students of CBSE Schools and Tamil Nadu State Board Schools. Further, the study was restricted to XI standard students. Additionally, differences in educational practices, curricula, examination pattern and teaching techniques for different boards were not considered. The sample was selected only from Chennai city. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to assume that subjects are representative of the adolescent student population of the region of study.

As an extension of this study, a similar kind of questionnaire can be administered during

teacher recruitment and training programmes to measure the self-perception of teachers. This may be helpful to provide assistance to the teachers, and also it will help the administration to decide whether the teacher can handle classes where the majority of students consist of those, who are in need of recognition and support.

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