

Self Concept of Physically Challenged Adolescents

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In order to ascertain the impact of disability on the development of self concept the study was designed to compare the level of self concept among the physically challenged adolescents with the normally developed peers. Altogether 90 school going adolescents of grade IX and X aged 11-16 (30 in each category namely, normal, blind and orthopaedically handicapped) were purposively selected from three different schools of Delhi. Out of which 15 were males and 15 females in each category. Mohsin's self concept Inventory was administered on each subject. On the whole the level of self concept among the physically challenged adolescents was found significantly lower than their normal counterparts. Similarly the level of self concept among the girls was also found significantly lower than the boys in general, whereas category wise significant difference was found only in case of blind subjects.

The desire for positive evaluation of self affects a person's feelings, actions and aspirations throughout life. In the course of childhood and adolescence, school experience play an important role in the development of self perceptions and can have powerful and long effects on child self esteem. Because the study of self concept is, in essence the study of individual differences it follows that it can be undertaken mostly readily in situations where such differences are maximized. One way of doing this is by considering the impact of disability upon the person's concept of self. By studying children who have different kinds and levels of disability and by comparing their concepts of self with those who do not have such an impairment, the impact of individual differences upon such notions of self can be more effectively analysed. The role of an ideal in determining our image of self is one which Harter (1985) has explored extensively, particularly with respect to the young child and which be further elucidated in the way.

If a developmental perspective is taken additional insights can be derived from studying the self

concept of children with disabilities. Thus it is probable as Silon and Harter (1985) suggest, that children with intellectual disabilities have less clearly defined notions of self and than either typically developing children or children with physical, learning or sensory disabilities but no intellectual deficit of the same chronological age. Through this approach the process innovated in determining levels of self image, self esteem and feelings of self worth can also be further explored.

In our society physical appearance on motor functioning are highly valued and are important factors in determining the popularity of children. Children with physical disabilities, if they accept these values, may be condemning themselves to low self esteem. The same would also be true for children whose disability has typical and distinctive characteristics as for example in the case of down syndrome. Researcher has not, however, consistently found that individuals with disabilities have lower levels of self esteem and self worth than their typically developing peers (King et al. 1993; Chaipman, 1988; Silverman & Zigman, 1983). King et al (1993)

in their study of adolescence with physical disabilities found that females were lower in perceived social acceptance, athletic competence and romantic appeal than the normal sample while males were lower in perceived scholastic competence, athletic competence and romantic appeal but they did not differ from the normative sample with respect to global self worth.

Thus physical disability in itself may not be as bad physical experience as the social one, especially in those cases where the handicap is visible. It is only recently that the disability has been termed as a challenge impediment for an individual. The bias against disability is revealed in the terminologies locally used for referring to these individual, which are often derogatory and limiting. Such individuals grow up with a very negative self image resulting in low motivation and aspiration. They grow up they 'cannot do' where as when the disability is offered as a challenge their outlook towards life changes. In other words successes and other pleasurable events in life lead to the enhancement of self concept while failure, frustration and other denigrating experiences tend to lower the concept of one self.

The study of impact of disability upon the child's perceptions allows a clearer understanding of the factors influencing the development of self concept. It is therefore, argued that comparing self concept development in those who have a disability with those who do not provides a powerful way of clarifying the underlying constructs. It is consequently, of some surprise that such an approach has not been more widely used. On the basis of review of literature two hypotheses with formulated:

1. Self concept of physically challenged adolescence will be lower than the normal.
2. Boys and girls will differ significantly with regard to their level of self concept.

Method

Sample

30 normal and 60 physically challenged (n=90) were drawn from three different schools of metropolitan city of Delhi. The age group of sample was 11-16 years and was purposively selected from Grade IX and X. The normal students were taken from Government senior secondary school and physically challenged consisted of blind and orthopaedically handicapped were drawn from Jouta Adarsh Andh Vidyalaya and Amar Jyoti school

respectively. Out of the 30 normal students 15 were boys and 15 girls. Similarly out of 60 physically challenged adolescence 30 were orthopaedically impaired consisted of 15 boys and 15 girls and rest 30 were blind with 15 males and 15 females.

Tools

A 48 items self concept inventory by S.M. Mohsin (1979) was used for the assessment of level of self concept of adolescents. The reliability for half of the inventory was .57 and for the full inventory .73 was found by Spearman Brown formula. The high scores was indicating high level of self concept and low score indicating low level of self concept.

Procedure

For the purpose of collection of data from different institutions prior permissions were taken from head of the institution for visiting the schools and contacting students there of. The investigator visited the institutions many times and administered the tool on the each subject carefully in order to get correct information.

Results and Discussion

The obtained data were analysed in terms of mean, SD and 't' and were presented in the tables as follows

Table 1: Mean and SD of self concept scores of three groups of subjects irrespective of the gender (n=30)

	Normal	Blind	Ortho
Mean	34.5	29.5	28.1
SD	8.02	9.37	7.2

Table 2 showing mean and SD of self concept scores of normal (n=30) and physically challenged subjects (n=60) in general and 't' between the two groups

	Normal	Physically Challenged
Mean	34.5	30.81
SD	6.58	7.58
t'		2.39**

** p<0.01

Table 3 showing mean and SD of self concept scores gender wise for each of the three group and 't' between boys and girls for each group of subjects. (n=15)

	Normal		Blind		Orthohandicapped	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Mean	34.4	34.6	34.8	24.4	29.2	26.9
SD	5.31	7.84	7.55	5.52	4.16	6.80
t	.081		2.165*		1.121	

* p<0.05

Table 4 showing mean and SD of self concept scores gender-wise for the total sample and 't' between the boys and girls of total sample. (n=45)

	Boys	Girls
Mean	32.82	28.64
SD	6.25	7.95
't'	2.786**	

** p<0.01

The results indicated that the average score of self-concept for the normal adolescence was higher than the physically challenged subjects. The mean score of self concept of normal adolescence was found to be 34.5 whereas for the blind and orthopaedically disabled the scores were 29.5 and 28.1 respectively. The mean scores of self concept of physically challenged in total was found 30.81. To test the reliability of the difference between the normal and physically challenged adolescence taken as a whole with regard to their self concept 't' critical ratio was computed between the two handicapped groups which was found 2.39 and statistically significant. Thus on the basis of results it can be said that there was significant difference in the level of self concept of normal and physically challenged adolescence which confirm the hypothesis of significant difference between the two groups.

The results were very much similar to the findings of Chapman, 1988; Cooley & Ayres, 1988; Grolnick & Ryan, 1990, King et al., 1993. They found in a number of studies that individual with disabilities have lower levels of self-esteem and self-worth. However, the difference between the two groups of physically challenged namely blind and orthopaedically handicapped was found very little

as mean for the said two groups were found 29.5 and 28.1 respectively and the difference between the two means was too small to be significant. Hence it can be concluded that there were adverse impact of disabilities on the development of concept of self among the adolescent and physically challenged adolescents were found to be inferior to their normal peers irrespective of the types of disability they were having. In other words the onset of disabilities tends to lower down the self image, self esteem, sense of self worth etc.

The study further revealed that self concept of girls in general was lower than the boys. On average the mean score of self concept for boys was 32.82 whereas for the girls the mean score was found to be 28.64 the difference between the means was also found statistically significant as the 't' value was 2.786. Thus the hypothesis of significant difference between the boys and girls with regard to their level of self concept had been confirmed. Similar results were obtained by King et al. (1993) in his study he found that females were lower in perceived social acceptance, etc. However, the same results could not be found for each group of subjects separately. For normal adolescence the difference between boys and girls regarding their self concept was found to be marginal (m=34.4 and 34.6 respectively) and the 't' value was .081 which was insignificant at all levels. On the other hand, for the blind subjects group mean scores were quite large (m=34.8 and 24.4 respectively for boys and girls) here the gender wise difference was found statistically significant (t=2.165). But for the group of orthopaedically handicapped difference between the means (m=29.2 and 26.9 respectively for the boys and girls) was not found to large to be statistically significant (t=1.121). Hence it can be said on the basis of above results that in general girls had lower level of self-concept than the boys.

On the whole it can be inferred that disabilities not only restrict functioning of the individual but also prove to be hurdle in the development of self image which may pave the way for the development of sense of inferiority and maladjustment. Interestingly the girls were found to be lagging behind the boys in general with regard to the levels of self concept were but not very much inferior to boys so far as the orthopaedically challenged and the normal people.

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