



## Self-Esteem and Locus of Control in Married and Unmarried Women College Students

### KEYWORDS

self-esteem, locus of control, married women, unmarried women, college students

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**ABSTRACT** A study was conducted to understand the dynamics of self-esteem and locus of control in married and unmarried women college students. The study involved 80 women college students (34 married and 46 unmarried) who were assessed for self-esteem and locus of control using Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and Levenson Scale for Locus of Control respectively. Results indicated that there were no significant differences in self-esteem and in locus of control between married and unmarried college students. There are suggestions regarding research involving variables of social nature to understand the social dynamics of our culture.

### Introduction

Morris Rosenberg and social-learning theorists defined self-esteem in terms of a stable sense of personal worth or worthiness. Personality traits which one inherits from one's parents or grandparents for example will play a part in the manner in which events or circumstances are interpreted thus impacting upon self-esteem. One of the greatest factors affecting self-esteem is one's experiences encountered in childhood. From an early age children are strongly influenced by those caring for them and if those people were overly critical and judgmental it is easy to see how this would cause one to feel inferior, rejected or worthless as a result. Other factors impacting upon self-esteem include painful events/experiences such as bereavement, divorce, serious illness or bullying (Edelman, 2007).

For young women, low self-esteem leads to poor choices that can sabotage success and interfere with healthy maturity. Healthy self-esteem ensures success in endeavours and helps them build and maintain relationships. Research indicates that there is no significant difference in the self-esteem of married and unmarried women (Hasnain, Ansari and Sethi, 2011).

Poor choices can alter the lives of young women forever. According to the National Association for Self-Esteem, there is a close relationship between low self-esteem and drug use among girls. Using drugs to ease feelings of inferiority can lead to addiction. Eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia often are associated with low self-esteem and can lead to serious medical complications. Poor choices resulting from low self-esteem can lead to serious problems such as pregnancy, dropping out of school and suicide. A healthy dose of self-esteem helps young women to maintain a positive attitude, which aids in a number of life skills. Positive people are happier, optimistic and able to see the bright side in any situation. They persevere because they are hopeful that their efforts will result in success. According to the Center for Young Women's Health, those with high self-esteem generally find life more enjoyable.

Locus of control refers to a person's perception of control or responsibility for his own life and actions. People who

view the world as the primary contributor to their life situations and believe forces outside of themselves are responsible for their misfortunes or success subscribe to an exterior locus of control. Those who view their life and destiny as a result of their own doing subscribe to an interior locus of control (Richford, 2012). Research has found the following trends:

- Males tend to be more internal than females
- As people get older they tend to become more internal
- People higher up in organizational structures tend to be more internal

Our attribution style determines which forces we hold responsible for our successes and failures. Both loci of control and attribution styles have a significant impact on our motivation, expectations, self-esteem, risk-taking behavior, and even on the actual outcome of our actions (Psychology Today, 2011).

Developing an internal Locus of Control means to (a) Learn the real cause of our feelings (b) Learn and remember what our cognitive choices are (c) Learn to use this new knowledge to our advantage to feel better regardless of what happens. (The Chamm'd Foundation.org, 2012)

Developing an internal Locus of Control means: (a) Learning and remembering what we can and cannot control (b) Focusing on and working with what we can control instead of what we cannot

Gender socialization creates expectations for the way men and women behave, think and feel about themselves. And while women draw much of their identity from their family and personal relationships, men tend to think of themselves as free-agents, independent of those ties that bind. Therefore, a man's self-esteem develops quite differently than a woman's because he does not put too much stock in what those around him think. He relies mostly on the discourse itself. As for a woman, she will go out of her way to please others, and she will still struggle to count herself worthy. In India, especially in South India, married status is considered as providing a strong sense of social and personal security. For the same reason, we find more

and more families marrying off their college going daughters. The families probably feel that marriage can make young women more responsible, strong and develop good self control to avoid the effects of temptations and distractions. In the idea of understanding the interesting dynamics of our changing culture, an attempt was made to study the level of self esteem and locus of control in a selected group of married and unmarried women in a college.

**Method**  
**Participants**

From Vellalar Arts and Science College for Women, Nanjanapuram, Erode, Tamil Nadu, 80 women students, 46 unmarried and 34 married were selected by the Purposive sampling method. The participants were in the age range of 18-20 years.

**Tools**

- Case Study Schedule (2012)
- Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Florence Rosenberg, 1965)
- Levenson Scale for Locus of Control (Levenson, 1975)

The Case Study Schedule contains the personal details of the respondent like name, age, education, and the demographic details like socio economic status, family type, marital status and locality.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale consists of 10 items. There are 4 possible responses to each item namely, 'Strongly Agree'- 'Agree'- 'Disagree'- 'Strongly Disagree'. The subject had to tick ( ) any one of the alternative, which applied to him/her.

Levenson Scale for Locus of Control consisted of 24 items. Each item has to be responded on a 5 point scale namely 'Strongly Agree'- 'Agree'- 'Undecided'- 'Disagree'- 'Strongly Disagree'

**Procedure**

To begin with, rapport was established with the entire sample, after which the Case Study Schedule, the Levenson Scale for Locus of Control and Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale were administered on the entire sample. The subjects in the two groups namely, married and unmarried were matched in age and education. The Case Study Schedule, Levenson Scale for Locus of Control and Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale were administered separately for the unmarried women and married women on consecutive days. As the study involved only the administration of Self-esteem Scale and Locus of Control Scale without any intervention, the method used is known as a Survey Method.

**Results and Discussion**

**Table 1: ANOVA Showing the Significance in Difference in Self-esteem between Married and Unmarried Participants**

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
self esteem	Between Groups	1.396	1	1.396	.189	.665
	Within Groups	576.991	78	7.397		
	Total	578.388	79			

Table 1 shows that the mean self-esteem of the married and unmarried groups is almost the same. This could mean that the self-esteem of the selected married and unmarried women students do not differ. Probably for this selected group, married or unmarried status may not mean

much. It could be due to the upbringing and the socialization patterns of the students. In a review done by Meisenhelder (2007) on 'Self-Esteem in Women: The Influence of Employment and Perception of Husband's Appraisals', it has been found that the perceived reflected appraisals of the husband was a remarkably strong predictor of self-esteem for all women but was three times more influential for homemakers than for employed women. Although homemakers and employed women were alike in their self-esteem, full-time employed women had significantly higher self-esteem than did part-time employed women. Strength of religious beliefs was a positive contributor to the self-esteem of employed women. The work environment appeared to influence self-esteem.

**Table 2: ANOVA Showing the Significance in Difference in Locus of Control between Married and Unmarried Participants**

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
individual control	Between Groups	13.884	1	13.884	3.016	.086
	Within Groups	359.004	78	4.603		
	Total	372.888	79			
chance control	Between Groups	37.013	1	37.013	9.160	.003
	Within Groups	315.187	78	4.041		
	Total	352.200	79			
powerful others	Between Groups	6.189	1	6.189	2.346	.130
	Within Groups	205.811	78	2.639		
	Total	212.000	79			

Table 2 indicates that, when compared to the unmarried group, chance control and powerful others have more influence on married group. After marriage, women tend to attribute happenings more to destiny and also they value the words of the elders and powerful others at home. Even among unmarried group, chance control and powerful other have more influence on them when compared to individual control. Individual control seems to be slightly more for the married group than the unmarried group. Marriage can also bring about more individual control. Married women might feel that they have more control over the environment.

**Table 3: Showing Correlations between Self-esteem and Locus of Control**

		individual control	chance control	powerful others	self esteem
individual control	Pearson Correlation	1	.215*	.057	.006
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.055	.616	.959
	N	80	80	80	80
chance control	Pearson Correlation	.215*	1	.403**	.008
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.055		.000	.946
	N	80	80	80	80
powerful others	Pearson Correlation	.057	.403**	1	-.037
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.616	.000		.744
	N	80	80	80	80
self esteem	Pearson Correlation	.006	.008	-.037	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.959	.946	.744	
	N	80	80	80	80

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).  
\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 3 indicates that there is a positive correlation between individual control and chance control in the sample. The correlation value of .215 is significant at 0.05 level. It could also be noted that there is a positive correlation between powerful others and chance control in the sample. The correlation value of .403 is significant at 0.01 level.

#### Empirical Findings

- The mean self-esteem of married and unmarried groups did not have much difference.
- When compared to the unmarried group, chance control and powerful others have more influence on married group. Individual control is slightly more for the married group than the unmarried group.
- The correlation between self-esteem and locus of control in the selected married group is not statistically significant.
- The correlation between self-esteem and locus of control in the selected unmarried group is not statistically significant.
- There is a positive correlation (.215) between individual control and chance control in the sample. The correlation value is significant at 0.05 level. There is a positive correlation (.403) between powerful others and chance control in the sample. The correlation value at 0.01 level.

#### Recommendations for Further Research

- Studies involving variables of social nature could be done to understand the social dynamics of our culture.
- Longitudinal studies on issues and variables related to anthropological nature could be done to draw meaningful and useful results for the society.

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