

## **AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON SHYNESS AND SELF-ESTEEM IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

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### **Introduction**

Today's is a world of completion; this is especially so in the field of academics. To succeed, one has to put into action all his potentials; achieve to the best of one's abilities. Quality of performance has become the key factor for personal progress. Parents desire that their children perform as high as possible. This desire for a high level of achievement puts a lot of pressure on students, teachers, schools and the educational system in general. In fact it appears the whole system of education revolves round the academic achievement of the students, though various other outcomes are also expected from it. A lot of time and effort of the school are spent on helping students to achieve better in their academics. There are factors, which promote achievement in students; there are also certain factors, which come in between a student and his achievement.

Shyness and self-esteem are two important personality traits. These two are well integrated and determine the individual's disposition to take decisions to overcome conflicts, to adjust to his environment in a positive way and to have a better creative thought. If an individual is less shy and has a greater self-esteem, he will have better interaction with the society, peer group, teachers and parents. This leads to better learning situation and better thinking capacity, which in turn enhance achievement. It is a general feeling that greater shyness indicates low self-esteem and low academic achievement. In other words, shyness and self-esteem are negatively correlated.

Students, who are commonly described as shy, are inhibited, lacking in confidence and socially anxious. Inhibited behavior may reflect introversion rather than shyness. Being unresponsive, uncommunicative and daydreaming are symptoms of withdrawal. Children may be withdrawn due to shyness. Some students, who are rather inactive compared to their peers, may in fact be well adjusted academically and socially, but relatively quiet and content to work independently. A few are problematically shy or withdrawn in varying degrees.

Also symptoms of shyness or withdrawal may appear as part of students overall personally or as a situation specific response to a particular stress factor.

Self-esteem has been found to be significantly associated with a number of important aspects of human behavior like general adjustment, anxiety, acceptance of other people and child rearing practices. This has implications for both parents and teachers. There is substantial evidence to show that school achievement is positively associated with the level of self-esteem, Self-esteem is the evaluation we make of ourselves; it is the sense of worthiness or otherwise of self. This makes us behave as we do. Thus self-esteem has important behavioral consequences.

### **Statement of the Problem:**

The present study is titled “Correlation of Shyness and Self-esteem with Academic Achievement of Elementary School Children”.

### **Rationale of the Study:**

A number of investigators have reported a significant negative correlation between shyness and self-esteem (Check & Buss, 1979). Shy people are lower in self-esteem than less shy people. The importance of high self-esteem for academic achievement is well attested (Coopersmith, 1967). Therefore, a study of the relationship of shyness and self-esteem with academic achievement in elementary school children is pertinent. So far such studies have been carried out mostly in foreign countries. The investigators intend to verify this relationship among Indian children.

Most of the empirical research correlating shyness and self-esteem has been carried out with adolescent college students and adults. The Investigator, therefore, wants to study the trend in the elementary school stage (4<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> standards). The intention is to look more closely at the period commencing from the last year of lower primary education and extending throughout upper primary education, as this period of transition has been shown to be associated with changes in self-consciousness.

Rozenberg (1967) states that there are distinct age trends for shyness. The age range of 9 to 12 years is a crucial period from the point of both academic achievement and shyness and self-esteem. The main aim of this study is to investigate the relationship of academic achievement with shyness and self-esteem among children of this age group.

Further, most of the previous studies have been on independent global self-esteem of children. In contrast to this, the present Investigators wish to examine the impact of self-esteem on the domain of academic achievement. Gender is another variable included in this study.

This study may be of considerable value and help to both teachers and parents - the two groups, who are anxious about the academic achievement of the children.

### **Explanation of the terms:**

**Academic Achievement:** Academic achievement is the level of proficiency attained in academics or scholastic work. In the present study, the marks scored by the students in various school subjects are taken as indicators of their academic achievement.

**Shyness:** - Shyness is defined as self-consciousness or uneasiness in company. In the present study, shyness is assessed based on the individual's responses to the Children Shyness Questionnaire (Crozier, 1995).

**Self-esteem :** The term self-esteem refers to the evaluation a person makes and customarily maintains with regard to him or herself. It is a subjective experience conveyed to others by verbal reports and other overt expressive behavior in the present study, the degree of self-esteem has been determined by the students responses to the Coopersmith self-esteem inventory (1967).

### **Objectives of the Study:**

The Objectives of Study are as follows:

1. To study the influence of shyness on academic achievement of elementary school children.
2. To find out how self-esteem influences academic achievement.
3. To study the relation between shyness and self-esteem.
4. To study how age and sex influence shyness.
5. To study how age and sex influence self-esteem.

### **Research Questions:**

1. Does shyness have any correlation with the academic achievement of elementary school children?

2. What is the influence of self-esteem on academic achievement?
3. Are shyness and self-esteem related in any way?
4. Do sex and age have any impact on shyness?
5. Does self-esteem depend on sex and age?

### **Hypotheses of the Study:**

The hypotheses formulated for the study are as follows:

1. There is no significant relationship between shyness and academic achievement.
2. There is no significant relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement.
3. There is no significant relationship between self-esteem and shyness.
4. There is no significant relationship between sex and shyness.
5. There is no significant relationship between age and shyness.
6. There is no significant relationship between sex and self-esteem.
7. There is no significant relationship between age and self-esteem.

### **Tools:**

The main objective of the study is to find out the correlation of shyness and self-esteem with academic achievement. One could get an idea about the academic achievement of the students from the school records. But shyness and self-esteem of the students has to be assessed. For this purpose, a questionnaire was prepared specifically for the current project. It contains three parts. Part A is for collecting general information like the student's name, age, sex and class. Part B is a Self-esteem inventory, contains 25 items. Children's Shyness Questionnaire, containing 26 items, forms part C of the questionnaire.

### **Self-Esteem Inventory (SEI):**

The School Short Form (Form-B) is used with students and eight to fifteen years and consists of the first 25 items. The investigator observed that many preferred this inventory for the purpose of assessing the self-esteem of children in their studies.

### **Children's Shyness Questionnaire:**

The second instrument selected for the study was the "Children's Shyness Questionnaire (CSQ)", recently developed by Crozier, W.R.(1995) specifically for the age group of 9 to 12 years.

The investigators thought that this questionnaire is best suited as the study is related to the children of IV to VII grades, majority of whom in our country are in the age group of 9 to 12 years.

**Sample:**

Totally 120 students belonging to IV to VII standards drawn from 8 co-educational schools formed the sample of this study. Equal number of boys and girls were involved in the present study.

**Data Collection:**

The investigators visited each of the selected schools, met the Heads of the institutions and obtained their permission for administering the tool. Bases on the time schedule drawn, the questionnaire was administered on one day and the school records were scrutinized on another day to gather information on academic achievement. As the response sheets of two girls and one boy were incomplete only 117 were retained for final analysis.

**Analysis and Interpretation:**

**Characteristics of the Sample:**

To begin with there were 120 students in the sample. As the response sheets of these were incomplete, only 117 have been considered for the final analysis. The sample contained almost equal proportion of boys (50.4%) and girls (49.6%). Class-wise distribution (Table.1) indicated that 25.6%, 23.9%, 25.6% and 24.8% belong to standards IV, V VI and Vii respectively. These four groups were 9, 10, 11 and 12 years old respectively. The proportion of boys and girls of different age groups were almost equal.

**Table. 1.** Composition of the Sample

Standard	Age (Years)	Boys	Girls	Total	percentage
IV	9	15	15	30	25.6
V	10	14	14	28	23.9
VI	11	15	15	30	25.6
VII	12	15	14	29	24.8
TOTAL		59	58	117	100

**Analysis :**

Keeping in view the objectives and the hypotheses, the data are being analyzed here.

**Shyness and Academic Achievement:**

One of the main objectives of the study was to study the influence of shyness on academic achievement of elementary school children. From Table- 2, it is seen that there is a negative correlation ( $r = - 0.16$ ) between shyness and academic achievement; but it is low and not significant. Hence **hypothesis 1**, “There is no significant relationship between shyness and academic achievement”, may be accepted.

**Table 2.** Correlation of Shyness and self-esteem with Academic Achievement

VARIABLES	Self-esteem	Acad. Ach.
Shyness	- 0.40*	- 0.16
Self-esteem	- --	- 0.15

**Self-esteem and Academic Achievement :**

The co-efficient or correlation between self-esteem and academic achievement is 0.15 (vide Table.2). This is again low and not significant; but this is positive. As the correlation is not significant, **hypothesis 2**, “There is no significant relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement”, may be **accepted**.

**Shyness and Self-esteem:**

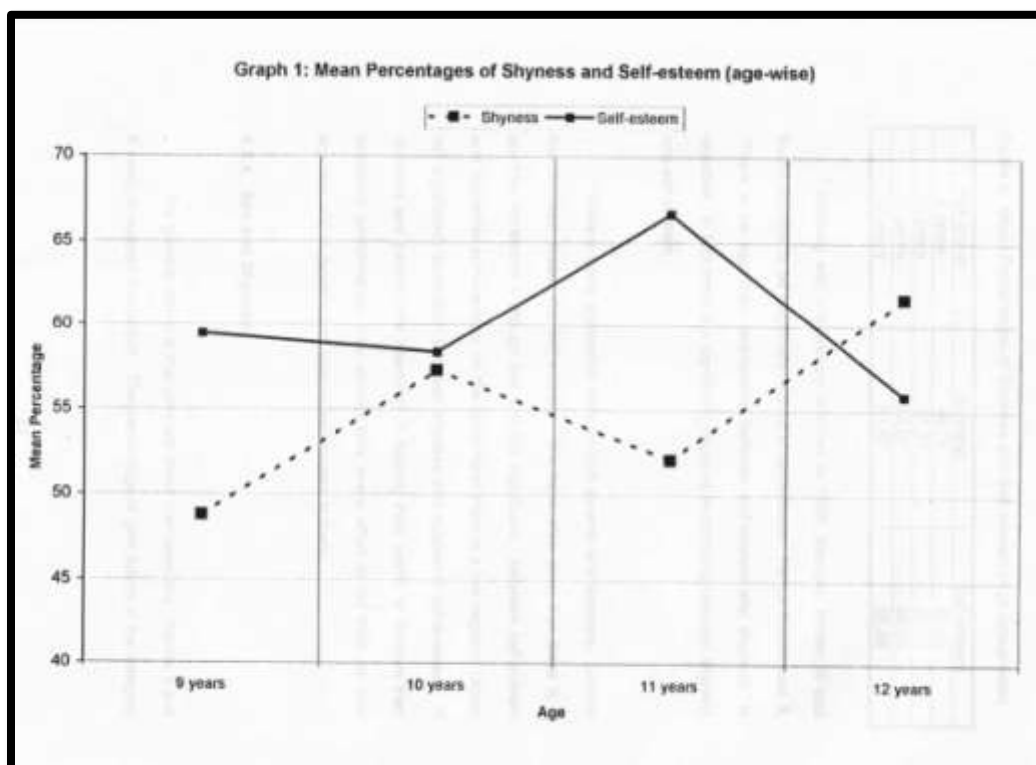
It was noticed that shyness has a negative correlation with academic achievement, whereas self-esteem has a positive correlation. Then, what is the relation between shyness and self-esteem? This is one of the research questions. The correlation co-efficient of the two is - 0.40 (See Table.2). Unlike in the previous cases, here the correlation is moderate and significant. The negative correlation implies that as shyness increases, self-esteem will decrease and vice versa. This relation is beautifully brought out in Table.3. It was observed that, the mean various of shyness go on increasing and those of self-esteem go on decreasing, except in the case of 11-year group. Here is a reversal. It is noteworthy that in this group, there is a drop in the mean value of shyness and a simultaneous rise in the mean value of self-esteem.

**Table.3.** Mean percentages of Shyness and Self-esteem (Age Group-wise)

Age group	Shyness	Self- esteem
9 years	48.79	59.48
10 years	57.31	58.40
11 years	52.07	66.68
12 years	61.67	55.88

Working with pre-primary children in 1995, Kemple, Kristen. M also found shyness to be negatively related to self-esteem. Hence **hypothesis 3**, “There is no significant relationship between self-esteem and shyness.” is **rejected**. In fact there is a significant negative relationship between shyness and self-esteem.

There is some implication here for both parents and teachers. Greater the shyness, lesser the self-esteem. It is also seen that there is a positive correlation – though low and no significant – between self-esteem and academic achievement; on the other hand there is a low negative (again not significant) correlation between shyness and academic achievement. If teachers and parents are interested in helping their wards to improve their academic performance, they should take every effort to rid them of their shyness and to develop and nurture self-esteem in them.



**Sex and Shyness :**

The general notion is that girls are shyer than boys are. Table 4 and 7 seem to support this notion. The percentage of girls falling in the category of high shyness is considerably more than that of the boys. Also the mean shyness score of girls is higher than that of the boys.

**Table.4.** Sex-wise Categories of Shyness

Variable	LOW	AVERAGE	HIGH	TOTAL
Shyness	16 and below	17-28	29 and above	
Girls	9 (15.52%)	33(56.89%)	16(27.59%)	58(49.6%)
Boys	11(18.64%)	39(66.11%)	9(15.25%)	59(50.4%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>20(17.09%)</b>	<b>72(61.54%)</b>	<b>25(21.37%)</b>	<b>117</b>

Variable : **Table. 5 :** Mean values of Shyness Scores (Sex-wise)

Shyness	N	Mean	SD
Girls	58	23.45	6.85
Boys	59	21.80	6.95
<b>Total</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>22.61</b>	<b>6.52</b>

The Pearson’s correlation co-efficient for sex and shyness is 0.12 (vide Table.6). It is rather low and not significant. This leads us to accept hypothesis 4, “There is no significant relationship between sex and shyness”.

**Table. 6.** Correlation of Sex and Age with Shyness.

VALUABLE	Shyness	Self-esteem
Sex	0.12	0.02
Age	0.28*	-0.22*

**Age and Shyness :**

Is there any correlation between age and shyness? The percentage of children with high shyness tends to increase with advancing age (See Table.7). But one group alone (of 11 years) has deviated from this tendency in this study. This deviation is reflected in the mean scores of shyness also, as is seen from Table.8.



**Table.7. Age-wise Categories of Shyness**

Variable	LOW	AVERAGE	HIGH	TOTAL
Shyness	16 and below	17-28	29 and above	
9 years	7(23-33%)	22(73.34%)	1(3.33%)	30(25.6%)
10 years	4(14.28%)	16(57.16%)	8(28.56%)	28(23.9%)
11 years	7(23.33%)	18(60.00%)	5(16.67%)	30(25.6%)
12 years	2(6.90%)	16(55.17%)	11(37.93%)	29(24.8%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>20(17.09%)</b>	<b>72(61.54%)</b>	<b>25(21.37%)</b>	<b>117</b>

Variable :

**Table.8. Mean values of Shyness Scores (Age-wise)**

Shyness	N	Mean	SD
9 years	30	19.23	4.88
10 years	28	24.07	6.83
11 years	30	21.87	7.18
12 years	29	25.90	6.97
<b>Total</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>22.61</b>	<b>6.52</b>

To get conclusive evidence regarding the relation between age and shyness. Pearson's Correlation co-efficient was computed. The correlation is low but significant with a value of 0.28 (vide Table.7). So, **hypothesis. 5**, "There is no significant relationship between age and shyness." Is **rejected**. There is a significant correlation between age and shyness.

#### **Sex and Self-esteem :**

Having analysed the relation of sex and age with shyness, the next step was to assess the relation of these two factors with self-esteem. Just as in the case of shyness, here again girls have a higher percentage in the high self-esteem category (vide Table.9) and also a higher mean (vide Table.10.) This is unexpected, when we remember that shyness and self-esteem are negatively correlated. There might be other factors interacting here. This needs further probing, which is beyond the scope of this study.

Table.9. Sex-wise Categories of Self-esteem

Variable	LOW	AVERAGE	HIGH	TOTAL
Self-esteem	11 and below	12-17	18 and above	
Girls	5(8.62%)	42(72.41%)	11(18.97%)	58 (49.6%)
Boys	7(11.86%)	42(71.19%)	10(16.95%)	59(50.4%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>12(10.26%)</b>	<b>84(71.79%)</b>	<b>21(17.95%)</b>	<b>117</b>

Variable :-

Table.10. Mean values of self-esteem scores (sex-wise)

Self-esteem	N	Mean	SD
Girls	58	15.19	3.17
Boys	59	14.98	2.80
<b>Total</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>15.02</b>	<b>2.98</b>

Any how, there is no significant correlation between sex and self-esteem, as is indicated by the correlation co-efficient. It is a negligible 0.02 (vide Table.6) and is not significant. The **hypothesis 6** is also accepted, i.e. there is no significant relationship between sex and self-esteem.

### Age and Self-esteem :

No definite pattern of increase or decrease in the percentage of students with high self-esteem is observed as age advances in this study. This is evident from Table.11. Any way, the mean value of self-esteem decreased as age increases (vide Table.12), with the exception of 11 year group. It may be recalled here that such a deviation from the general trend was observed in case of shyness also. Once again referring to Table.6, we find a low correlation (0.22) between age and self-esteem. But this is negative and significant. Negative correlation implies that self-esteem decreases as age increases. The significance of the correlation leads us to **reject hypothesis 7**. There is a significant correlation between age and self-esteem.

Table.11. Age-wise Categories of Self-esteem

Variable	LOW	AVERAGE	HIGH	TOTAL
Self-esteem	11 and below	12-17	18 and above	
9 years	1(3.33%)	25(83.34%)	4(13.33%)	30(25.6%)
10 years	27(7.14%)	21(75.00%)	5(17.86%)	28(23.9%)
11 years	3(10.00%)	18^60.00%)	9(30.00%)	30(25.6%)
12 years	6(20.69%)	20(68.97%)	3(10.34%)	29(24.8%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>12(10.26%)</b>	<b>84(71.79%)</b>	<b>21(17.95%)</b>	<b>117</b>

Table 12. Mean values of self-esteem scores (Age-wise)

Variable:

Shyness	N	Mean	SD
9 years	30	14.87	2.33
10 years	28	14.60	2.59
11 years	30	16.67	3.57
12 years	29	13.97	2.68
<b>Total</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>15.02</b>	<b>2.98</b>

How is it that the 11 year group (of class VI) alone deviated from the general trend regarding both shyness and self-esteem? What could be reason? Perhaps there was room here for further investigation. The entire sample of this analysis was 117 and that of the 11 – year group, a mere 30 with a larger sample, a definite pattern might have evolved.

The picture given by the present analysis should create grave concern in the minds of parents, educators and psychologists. It is disquieting that as age advances (or as the children go up the ladder of schooling) shyness increases and self-esteem decreases. Does it reflect on the child rearing practices of the parents? Or does it reflect on the treatment meted out to the students by the teachers in schools? Or on both? Or are there some other potent factors responsible for this? This is a very fertile ground for further research.

**ANOVA:**

The analysis has revealed the significant relationship between age and shyness and also age and self-esteem. It has also helped us to conclude that there is no such significant

correlation between sex and either shyness or self-esteem. All this juncture it was desired to analyse if any differences exist in shyness or self-esteem among the different age groups and between the two sexes. For this purpose ANOVA was resorted to. One way ANOVA revealed that there is no significant sex difference in self-esteem ( $F_{1-10} = 1.6756$ ), whereas there is a significant sex difference in shyness ( $F_{1-115} = 4.0669^{**}$ ). But the latter is significant only at 0.05 level and not 0.01 level Phillips. J.Lazarus had reported no sex difference in shyness among the elementary school age children in 1982. Among the different age groups, the differences both in self-esteem ( $F_{3,113} = 4.9381^*$ ) and shyness ( $F_{3,113} = 5.9176^*$ ) are found to be significant.

Two way ANOVA shows that sex and age taken together have no significant interaction on self-esteem ( $F_{3,114} = 1.523$ ); sex alone also has no significant interaction on self-esteem ( $F_{1,116} = 0.035$ ); but age by itself has a significant interaction ( $F_{3,114} = 4.779$ ). Similar results were obtained in the case of shyness. Age alone exercises a significant interaction ( $F_{3,114} = 5.872$ ); neither sex alone ( $F_{1,116} = 1.951$ ) nor sex and age taken together ( $F_{3,114} = 0.191$ ) has any significant interaction with shyness.

The analysis has led us to accept four of the hypotheses formulated and reject the other three. There is a significant negative correlation between shyness and self-esteem. While sex does not have any significant correlation with shyness or self-esteem, age does have with both. Again there is no significant difference in self-esteem between the two sexes; but in shyness there are significant sex differences. Among the different age groups, differences are significant both in shyness and self-esteem.

### **Major Findings of the Study:**

**Shyness and Academic Achievement:** One of the main objectives of the study was to study the influence of shyness on academic achievement of elementary school children. It is observed that there is a negative correlation ( $r = -0.16$ ) between shyness and academic achievement; but it is low and not significant. Hence **hypothesis 1**, "There is no significant relationship between shyness and academic achievement." may be accepted.

**Shyness and Self-Esteem :** The correlation co-efficient of shyness and self-esteem is - 0.40. Unlike in the previous cases, here the correlation is moderate and significant. The negative correlation implies that as shyness increases, self-esteem will decrease and vice versa. Hence **hypothesis 3**, "There is no significant relationship between self-esteem and shyness."

Is **rejected**. In fact there is a significant negative relationship between shyness and self-esteem.

**Sex and Shyness** : The general notion is that girls are shyer than boys are. The Pearson's correlation co-efficient for sex and shyness is 0.12. It is rather low and not significant. This leads us to **accept hypothesis 4**, "There is no significant relationship between sex and shyness".

**Age and Shyness** : It was found in this study that in general shyness increases as age increases. The correlation between shyness and age is low, but significant with a Pearson's Correlation co-efficient of 0.28. So, **hypothesis 5**, "There is no significant relationship between age and shyness" is **rejected**. There is a significant correlation between age and shyness.

**Sex and Self-esteem**: There is no significant correlation between sex and self-esteem, as is indicated by the correlation co-efficient. It is a negligible 0.02 and is not significant. Thus **hypothesis 6** is also **accepted**, i.e. there is no significant relationship between sex and self-esteem.

**Age and self-esteem**: In this study no definite pattern of increase or decrease in self-esteem is observed as age advances. A low correlation ( -0.22) between age and self-esteem was observed. But this is negative and significant. Negative correlation implies that self-esteem decreases as age increases. The significance on the correlation leads us to reject hypothesis 7, "There is a significant correlation between age and self-esteem".

**Sex Differences**: There is no significant sex difference in self-esteem, whereas there is a significant sex difference in shyness.

**Age Group Differences**: Among the different age groups, the differences both in self-esteem and shyness are found to be significant.

#### **Limitations of the Study:**

- The study is confined to Cuddapah city only in view of the time and resources available to the investigator.
- The study has been limited to a sample of eight schools and 120 students only.
- The study is limited to the urban schools.
- It is confined to private schools only.

## **Conclusion :**

The present study has revealed the significant negative correlation between shyness and self-esteem. It has also shown that age, and not sex, has significant correlation with both shyness and self-esteem. The study has also opened our eyes to a matter of great concern that as age advances shyness increases and self-esteem decreases. This calls for an urgent and in-depth investigation by educators and educationalists all over the country. The findings of such investigations might really prove worthy in improving the personality along with the academic achievement of our children – the greatest wealth of our nation.

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