

Self-esteem and Peer Support of Academic Leadership

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The correlation of self-esteem and peer support for teachers and students has been reported by many researches. 'Academic leader' is a term used for teachers which depicts their role at different academic levels like; primary and secondary schools, colleges, and universities. Given the constraint of time and resources, the scope of this study was limited to academic leaders at higher education level. Lahore was purposively selected, being a hub of educational activities in the province. For data collection, 5 universities from Lahore were randomly selected while 300 academic teachers employed in these universities were purposively accessed. Two separate questionnaires for measuring self-esteem and the extent of peer support were adopted. Out of three hundred, two hundred and twenty five questionnaires were received back. t- Test and Pearson correlations were applied to analyze the data. Study indicated that male and senior leaders had higher self-esteem level than their female counterpart and juniors, but they reported receiving less peer support. Although no significant correlation was reported but gender differences exist in correlation of self-esteem of academic leadership. The correlation was higher for male academic leaders than the female. The study concludes that academic leaders in universities have significant level of self-esteem, and peer support significantly matters for boosting their self-esteem.

Key Words: academic leadership, self-esteem, peer support, survey research, correlation gender

In the current academic world, expectations from academic institutions especially universities has significantly increased. The expectations from scholars and academic leaders are multifaceted. The governments want to get high quality research outputs; the industry requires a competent work force; parents suppose outstanding growth; society supposes persistence of social causes and justice; the academic leaders dream an accomplishing career that is at par with the industry and the management thinks progress, effective processes and brand building. In this scenario, teachers' role has been emerging as academic leaders. To satisfy all of them; academic leaders are required to think about, eloquent, organize and practice strategies to achieve goals.

It was observed more than a century ago by James (1890) that academics compare their own self-worth with others whose skills and abilities they consider similar to themselves. He further noted that self-esteem increased with success and decreased with failure. It relates to what we can do and what we aspire to be able to achieve. Studies conducted by Chen and Klimosi in 2003 and later in 2004 by McNatt and Judge reveal that academics can fall prey to their own self inhibiting beliefs, where if they think of themselves as valuable employees, they tend to be high achievers in their career, and conversely, when they have low self-worth, they may land themselves in poor, unsuitable jobs, as they believe themselves to be worthy of it. In their longitudinal study, Kammeyer, Judge, and Piccolo (2008) assert self-esteem to be associated with increased occupational prestige and income, although it does not change by career consequences.

To deliver a quality performance, a teacher as an academic leader has to be a visionary, to be articulate, to be an academician, to be a team player, has to lead by example, have the courage of conviction, to be industrious and to be accessible all the time etc. All these characteristics are indicators of their self-esteem. High self-esteem of academicians lead them to play their role as leader in an organization.

Positive or negative attitude of people toward themselves is their self-esteem (Rosenberg 1965), which is deeply linked with their personality functioning. It can be defined as self-imagination of an individual developed by his/ her beliefs about all traits, facets and characteristics within him/her. Individual's attitude towards himself is a reflection of his personal judgment of worthiness. (Sanaktekin & Sunar, 2008). Carr (2004) opined that self-esteem is frequently developed by how people judge themselves in different settings, at home, at job place, on holidays and with friends.

Aðalsteinsson, Frímannsdóttir, and Konráðsson (2014) elaborate that a beginning teacher experiences greater insecurity at work. This feeling of insecurity is alleviated with time, experience and also an understanding of one's position and worth in the work place. They opine that continued work insecurity may lead to work discontentment, self-doubt and low self-worth. For uprising their self-esteem in such cases, Westbrook et al. (2009) and later Tessier, Sarrazin and Ntoumains (2010) suggested Professional training as the best mean.

Westbrook et al. (2009) report experiences of newly qualified teachers, who often encounter contradictory guidance from their heads and senior teachers. The experienced teachers tend to praise their own teaching methods and training, but discourage the new teachers with same qualifications from practicing varied teaching methodologies in class. The study also reports that the newly inducted teachers experience hostility, and even jealousy from their seniors, who on one hand discouraged progressive ways of teaching, but on the other, copied it themselves. They asserted that it is important to know the way how newly qualified teachers negotiate their early professional years for improvement of the efficiency of teachers' professional development and institutional quality.

Cox and Pyszczynski (2004) narrated that basic human drive is to maintain a positive self-concept, or self-view. Leadership roles are better performed by those who hold a firm believe in their abilities to do their tasks successfully than those people who lack such believes (Mayseless & Scharf, 2009). High self-esteem of individuals has both positive and negative aspects. On one hand, one gets great self-importance in accomplishments, on the other it may lead to stubbornly negation of someone from taking any responsibility of failures, and criticizing out other team members. Kernis (2005)

considered this practice a threat for one's own -importance of some body.

High self-esteem of a person is allied with his abilities of successful adjustments to life events, positive feelings, self-control, and to bear criticism. Low self-esteem, on the other hand, causes poor adjustment and numerous psychological problems, such as despair, nervousness, dependence, challenging relationships and weak stress coping strategies etc. Car (2004) wrote that individuals having high self-esteem concentrate on their abilities and skills and strive to use them to best, while those having low self-esteem concentrate on their flaws and try to correct them for avoiding mistakes in future. Individuals with high self-esteem hold positive self-perceptions. They are more proficient and feel psychologically better than those who have poor and low self-esteem. Furthermore, they perceive things more positively and rationalized them. (Ditto & Griffin 1993). In teaching, it is the ability to regulate students' performance and achievements (Shahzada & Naureen, 2017). Shahzad et al. (2017) correlated teachers' high level of self-efficacy with students positive behavior, attitude and with their high academic achievement. Fakhra, Akhtar and Rauf (2012) cited Bailey who reported no difference in self-efficacy beliefs of male and female teachers while Hassan and Awan (2018) found female staff more self-efficacious than male staff.

Many factors contribute to the development of self-esteem, of which the initial and crucial ones are family and friends (Mruk, 1999, p. 65). A positive correlation between self-esteem and other psychological variables like; motivation, job satisfaction, competencies, attitude, behavior, job performance etc. have been supported by several researches. Peer support is one of the many factors that may sway one's self-esteem level.

Gaylord, Ragsdale, Mandara, Richards and Petersen (2007) opined that family and peer support would increase self-esteem of individuals being a protective factor for their depression and anxiety. Birndorf, Ryan, Auinger and Aten (2005) reported that girls had low self-esteem level than boys. They concluded that constructive communication through supportive and gentle relationships can enhance self-esteem of adults.

The correlation between self-esteem, parents and peer support and problem behavior was investigated by Siyez (2008). He aimed to study factors which effects family conflict and investigate which type of observed parental and peer support influences teenager's self-esteem, despair and problematic behavior. They also examined gender differences. They reported higher self-esteem and minor depression in those who received parental and peer support. Further data analysis showed significant gender difference as boys were found to be less supported by their peers than girls. The results did not report gender difference in other research variables. They suggested that individuals should support those bonds with friends that they already have.

Gunnarsdóttir (2015) also reported that in adolescence, self-esteem was significantly influenced by parental and peer support. High parental and peers support led to high self-esteem. Further girls had low self-esteem as compare to boys. In this sequence, the current research examined the relationship between self-esteem and peer support of academic leadership. Gender and designation differences and correlation between both variables were also examined.

Significance of the study

The study was expected to add a significant and valuable contribution to the emerging body of exiting literature on self-esteem

and peer support of academic leaders. It explains newly established relationship between peer support and self-esteem and reveals that academic leaders who receive peer support have high self-esteem than those who do not have peer support. By providing peer support, low self-esteem of academic leaders which cause many psychological problems can be enhanced.

Objectives

- To identify the nature of relationship between peer support and self-esteem of academic leadership.
- To explore self-esteem of academic leadership.
- To examine peer support of academic leadership.
- To find out gender difference in relationship between self-esteem and peer support of academic leadership.

Research Questions

- Is there any relationship between peer support and self-esteem of academic leadership?
- Do men have higher level of self-esteem than women?
- Do men receive more peer support than women?
- Does any gender difference exist in relationship between peer support and self-esteem of academic leadership?

Method

Sample

For data collection, 5 universities were randomly selected while 300 academic teachers were purposively accessed. Two hundred and twenty five questionnaires were received back. Among them, 113 were male and 112 were female respondents. Twenty four were professor, Fifty one were associate professor, and Sixty seven were assistant professor while eighty three were lecturers. Professors and associate professors were taken as senior

Instruments and Procedure

The study was quantitative in nature. Survey technique was used to collect data. Two separate questionnaires were used to measure prevailing self-esteem and peer support of academic leadership. Both scales were adopted. Self-esteem of academic leaders was evaluated by using the Rosenberg Self Esteem scale (RSE) which was consisted of 10 statements. Respondents were asked to rate self-esteem on a four point Likert scale. For measuring peer support, there were 5 statements related to 5 dimensions of peer support. Academic leaders were asked about their difficulty level in receiving support on a 4-point Likert scale. It was adopted from Helga Hafðís Gunnarsdóttir who used it in 2014. Scale ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Population of the study consisted of all the academic leaders in universities located in Lahore. Lahore is purposively selected being a hub of educational activities in the province

Data Analysis

Simple descriptive statistics and correlations were applied to analyze the data. First t test was used to test statistical significance of difference between gender and titles. Then, Pearson r was applied to measure the relationship between both variables.

Results

Table 1

Gender Differences in Self-esteem Score of Academic Leadership (N= 225)

Cohorts	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	p	d
Men	113	63.9	4.1	225	32.5	.000*	.489 *
Women	112	46.9	2.6				

* $p < .05$

* Cohen's d was calculated by using means & standard deviations of two groups

Table 1 reports statistically significant gender difference on self-esteem scale as men score ($M=63.9$, $S.D.=4.1$) higher than women ($M=46.9$, $S.D.=2.6$). In this specific study, men shows higher self-esteem measures than women.

Table 2

Gender Differences in Peer Support of Academic Leadership (N= 225)

Cohorts	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	p
Men	113	84.1	8.4	225	0.45	.64
Women	112	83.9	12.9			

Table 2 shows that on peer support scale, no statistically significant gender difference exists as the p value based on their mean score, SD and t value is greater than 0.05. It can be concluded that both genders receive similar level of peer support.

Table 3

Overall Relationship between Self-esteem and Peer Support of Academic Leaders (N= 225)

	Variables	Min	Max	n	r
All academic leaders	Self esteem	41	108	225	.557**
	Peer support	32	127		

** $p < .01$

Table 3 shows that there is a significant positive correlation between self-esteem and peer support, $r = .557$, $p < .01$. This correlation indicates that over-all relationship of both variables is significant. This positive correlation indicates that the more support participants got from their peers, the higher self-esteem they had.

Table 3a

Relationship between Self-esteem and Peer Support of Male Academic Leaders (n= 113)

	Variables	Min	Max	r
Men	Self esteem	82	143	.551**
	Peer support	59	134	

** $p < .01$

Table 3a shows that there is a significant positive correlation between self-esteem and peer support, $r = .551$, $p < .01$.

Table 3b

Relationship between Self-esteem and Peer Support of Female Academic Leaders (n= 112)

	Variables	Min	Max	r
Women	Self- esteem	53	120	.512**
	Peer support	55	114	

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

Table 3b shows that there is a significant positive correlation between self-esteem and peer support of women, $r = .512$, $p < .01$.

Table 3c

Relationship between Self-esteem and Peer support of Professors (n=24)

	Variables	Min	Max	r
Professors	Self esteem	41	108	.551**
	Peer support	32	127	

* $p < .01$. (2-tailed).

Table 3c shows that there is a significant positive correlation between self-esteem and peer support, $r = .551$, $p < .01$. This correlation indicates that academic leaders of professor designation also exhibit more self-esteem with higher level of peer support.

Table 3d

Relationship between Self-esteem and Peer Support of Associate Professors (n=51)

	Variables	Min	Max	r
Associate Professors	Self esteem	73	127	.451**
	Peer support	49	135	

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

Table 3d shows that there is a significant positive correlation between peer support and self-esteem, $r (51) = .451$, $p < .01$. This correlation indicates that associate professors have significant level of peer support which contributes in enhancing their self-esteem.

Table 3e

Relationship between Self-esteem and Peer support of Assistant Professors (n=67)

	Variables	Min	Mix	n	r
Assistant Professors	Self esteem	71	124	67	.593**
	Peer support	63	141		

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

Table 3e shows that there is a significant positive correlation between peer support and self-esteem, $r = .593$, $p < .01$. This correlation indicates that assistant professors receive peer support and have high self-esteem.

Table 3f

Relationship between Self-esteem and Peer Support of Lecturers (n=83)

	Variables	Min	Max	r
Lecturers	Self esteem	39	117	.407**
	Peer support	37	129	

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

Table 3f shows that there is a significant positive correlation between peer support and self-esteem, $r = .407$, $p < .01$. This correlation indicates that Lecturers who receive more peer support and have more self-esteem and vice versa.

According to gender, male exhibit more positive correlation between self-esteem and peer support $r (113) = .551$, $p < .01$ as compared to female academicians $r (112) = .512$, $p < .01$.

With respect to designation, Assistant Professors exhibit the strongest positive correlation between self-esteem and peer support $r (67) = .593$, $p < .01$ as compared to others (professors, associate professors and lecturers).

Table 4
Summary of Relationship between Self-esteem and Peer support of Teachers

Variables		n	r
Self-esteem of all academic leaders	Peer support of all academic leaders	225	.557**
Self-esteem of male academic leaders	Peer support of male academic leaders	113	.551**
Self-esteem of female academic leaders	Peer support of female academic leaders	112	.512**
Self-esteem of Professors	Peer support of Professors	24	.551**
Self-esteem of Associate professors	Peer support of Associate professors	51	.451**
Self-esteem of Assistant Professors	Peer support of Assistant Professors	67	.593**
Self-esteem of Lecturers	Peer support of Lecturers	83	.407**

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

Discussion

This study indicated that male and assistant professors as leaders had higher self-esteem level than their female counterparts and other colleagues at different designation level. The correlation of both variables was higher for male academic leaders than the female. The study concludes that academic leaders in universities have significant level of self-esteem and peer support which significantly matters for boosting their self-esteem. These results are in line with the results of Siyez (2008) who conducted a research on examining the significant effect of various factors in parental support and peer support on self-esteem, And concluded that higher parental and peer support leads to higher self-esteem. Further, they reported a strong positive correlation between self-esteem, peer support of and boys and girls on various factors. They reported gender differences too. A higher correlation of personal issue discussion and self-esteem was found for girls than boys while for correlation of self-esteem and care, case was opposite as boys' self-esteem was more correlated with care and warmth than girls.

Birndorf et al., (2005) also reported similar results that narrated the same results as positive communication resulted from supportive rapport could enhance youth's self-esteem. The present study reported significant gender differences on self-esteem scale. Men have higher self-esteem overall than women, which is consistent with the Birndorf's study (2005) who found lower self-esteem of girls as compared to boys. The collaborating effect of parental and peer support was significant for boys and girls although girls were more influenced by peer support than boys. Reason reported was that boys who had high peer support and those who had low peer support had the same self-esteem level. The present study reports significant gender differences in peer support as men perceived more peer support than women which is not according with the results of Siyez (2008), who reported that girls perceived more peer support than boys did. The reason might be context specific. Generally, Pakistani society has been considered as a gender biased society where men are believed to be superior in every field. This superiority enhances their self-esteem. On the other hand, they tend to rely more on friends and share more personal issues and difficulties with their peers.

The present study provides practical implication of this correlation as self-esteem and peer support should be considered

complementary to one another. It would be a realistic approach to consider perceived peer support of academic leaders when people are trying to address the problems of their self-esteem.

Conclusion

The present research is limited to higher education level, at secondary and elementary level a correlation of study variables including self-esteem and peer support is recommended for future researchers to investigate.

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Received: 27th May, 2018

Revisions Received: 24th January, 2019