



TO STUDY THE WELL-BEING OF SCHEDULED CASTE STUDENTS IN RELATION TO THE SELF-ESTEEM

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Abstract

Each individual is inherently unique. Self-esteem, also known as self-respect, refers to the confidence in one's worth, abilities, or aptitudes. Conversely, low self-esteem is characterized by a lack of confidence in one's own worth. Self-esteem is shaped throughout an individual's life and can have both positive and negative effects, depending on whether an individual has high or low self-esteem. There is considerable research on the effects of low self-esteem, as it often has the most detrimental impact on a person's well-being. In this context, the investigator aimed to study the well-being of Scheduled Caste students in relation to their self-esteem. For the present study, a survey method was employed, and a sample of 1,632 undergraduate Scheduled Caste students was selected. The data was analysed using Mean, Standard Deviation, and t-tests as statistical techniques. The findings revealed a significant difference in the well-being of students with high and low self-esteem."

Keywords: *Well-being, Self-esteem, Scheduled caste students.*

Introduction

Student well-being is a term that encompasses the overall development and quality of life of students. It includes aspects such as physical and mental health, happiness and satisfaction, social connectedness, and future aspirations. Student well-being is important for many reasons, such as improving the academic performance, motivation, and resilience of students, as well as enhancing their personal growth, creativity, and citizenship. The study of the wellbeing of Scheduled Caste (SC) in relation to self-esteem is a critical area of inquiry within the broader field of social psychology and educational research. Scheduled Castes, historically marginalized and oppressed groups in India, face systemic social, economic, and educational challenges. This marginalization often manifests in the form of discrimination,

limited access to quality education, and socio-economic hardships, which can profoundly impact the self-esteem and overall wellbeing of Scheduled Caste people. Self-esteem, defined as an individual's overall subjective emotional evaluation of their own worth, is a fundamental aspect of psychological health. It influences a person's behavior, academic performance, and interpersonal relationships. For Scheduled Caste individual, self-esteem can be particularly fragile due to the pervasive societal prejudices and institutional barriers they encounter. Understanding the interplay between self-esteem and wellbeing in this demographic is essential for developing effective interventions and policies aimed at promoting equality and social justice. The educational experiences of Scheduled Caste students are often marked by stigmatization and lower expectations from educators and peers. These negative experiences can lead to a diminished sense of self-worth and belonging, adversely affecting their academic achievements and mental health. Studies have shown that students with higher self-esteem are more likely to perform better academically, exhibit greater resilience, and engage more positively in their educational environment. Conversely, those with low self-esteem are at a higher risk of academic failure, dropout, and mental health issues such as depression and anxiety. In India, affirmative action policies such as reservations in educational institutions aim to level the playing field for Scheduled Caste students. However, these measures, while beneficial in providing access, often do not address the deeper issues of social ostracism and internalized inferiority that many Scheduled Caste students face. As such, there is a critical need to explore how self-esteem impacts the wellbeing of Scheduled Caste students and to identify the factors that can enhance their self-esteem. A multidimensional approach is necessary to understand and improve the wellbeing of Scheduled Caste students. This includes examining family background, economic status, social support systems, and the role of educational institutions. Family support and positive reinforcement play a crucial role in building self-esteem. Economic stability can alleviate some of the pressures that contribute to stress and low self-worth. Social support from peers and teachers can foster a more inclusive and encouraging environment. Educational institutions must also play a proactive role in nurturing the self-esteem of Scheduled Caste students. This can be achieved through inclusive curricula that reflect the diverse histories and contributions of marginalized communities, anti-discrimination policies, mentorship programs, and psychological counseling services. Teachers and administrators need to be trained to recognize and address their own biases and to create a supportive and equitable learning environment. Moreover, peer interactions are pivotal in shaping a student's self-

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perception. Encouraging peer mentorship programs and inclusive student activities can help bridge social divides and promote a sense of community. Creating spaces where Scheduled Caste students feel valued and heard can significantly enhance their self-esteem and, consequently, their overall wellbeing. In conclusion, the wellbeing of Scheduled Caste students is intricately linked to their self-esteem. Addressing this relationship requires a comprehensive and empathetic approach that involves families, educational institutions, and policymakers. By fostering an environment of inclusion, respect, and support, we can help Scheduled Caste students achieve their full potential and contribute meaningfully to society. This study aims to explore these dynamics in detail, providing insights that can inform future educational strategies and social policies.

Reviews of the Related Literature

Patel, Kumar, Tiwari, and Singh (2018) found that self-esteem and satisfaction with life are significantly correlated among male, female, urban, and general category participants. Arshad, Zaidi, and Mahmood (2015) reported a significant difference between male and female students in self-esteem and academic performance scores. Their findings indicated that female students scored higher in academic performance, while male students had higher self-esteem compared to female students. Parmar (2014) conducted a study to examine the impact of gender differences on self-esteem among college students and to explore the effect of economic status on self-esteem. The results of a t-test revealed a significant difference in self-esteem between male and female college students. Bhattacharjee (2011) aimed to assess the locus of control and self-esteem of male and female undergraduate students. The findings showed a significant impact of gender and community on locus of control and self-esteem. Male students were found to be more internally oriented and possessed higher self-esteem compared to female students. Singha and Prakash (2021) conducted a study to determine the level of self-esteem and psychological well-being among Indian college students and to examine gender differences associated with these variables. The study also explored the relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being and whether self-esteem is a significant predictor of psychological well-being. The findings revealed that college students reported a moderate level of self-esteem and psychological distress. A significant positive relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being was identified. However, no significant gender differences in self-esteem and psychological well-being levels were observed, suggesting a notable shift in urban India toward providing equal opportunities and resources for male and female college students. Regression analysis further indicated that

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self-esteem significantly predicted psychological well-being. The study recommended providing counselling services on college campuses to address mental health issues and daily challenges faced by students. Since self-esteem is a significant determinant of psychological well-being, fostering healthy self-esteem development is essential for promoting positive mental health outcomes among college students. Nagar and Saxena (2024) explored the relationship between self-esteem, mental well-being, and life satisfaction among young adults. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between self-esteem, mental well-being, and life satisfaction.

Objective

- To study the well-being of scheduled caste students in higher education.
- To study the self-esteem of scheduled caste students in higher education.
- To study the effect of self-esteem on well-being of scheduled caste students in higher education.

Methodology

Survey Method was employed.

Tool used

1. Well-Being Index

Well-Being Index developed by Dr. Vijayalaxmi Chouhan & Dr. Varsha Sharma was used to measure an individual's mental status regarding overall feeling about life. The inventory measures six dimensions namely;

1. Emotional Well-being
2. Psychological Well-being
3. Social Well-being
4. Spiritual Well-being
5. Self-Awareness
6. Physical Well-being

2. Self-Esteem Scale

Self-Esteem Scale was developed by Santosh Dhar and Upinder Dhar was used. This scale consists 23 items divided into six areas namely;

1. Positivity
2. Openness
3. Competence
4. Humility

5. Self-worth
6. Learning orientation

Sample

Sample for the study consisted of 1632 undergraduate scheduled caste students from four districts of Himachal Pradesh.

Statistical technique used

To study the self-esteem and effect of self-esteem on well-being among Scheduled Caste students, mean and SDs along with t-value will be calculated

Limitation of the study

The present study was delimited to undergraduate scheduled caste students of Himachal Pradesh. Further, this study was delimited to one independent variable (self-esteem) and one dependent variable (well-being).

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

1.1 Level Of 'Well-Being' Of Scheduled Caste Students in Higher Education Of Himachal Pradesh

Data obtained from the scheduled caste students on well-being scale is considered for computing different statistics and the values are presented in Table 1

Table 1
Frequency Distribution and Descriptive Statistics related to 'Well-Being Scores' of Scheduled Caste Students

Class interval	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Frequency Percentage
241-250	3	0.18	3	0.18
231-240	14	0.86	17	1.04
221-230	35	2.14	52	3.19
211-220	109	6.68	161	9.87
201-210	201	12.3	362	22.18
191-200	221	13.5	583	35.72
181-190	374	22.9	957	58.64
171-180	330	20.2	1287	78.86
161-170	200	12.3	1487	91.12
151-160	107	6.56	1594	97.67
141-150	30	1.84	1624	99.51
131-140	7	0.43	1631	99.94
121-130	1	0.06	1632	100.00
Total	1632	100		
Descriptive Statistics	Values		Descriptive Statistics	Values
Mean	185.48		Median	184

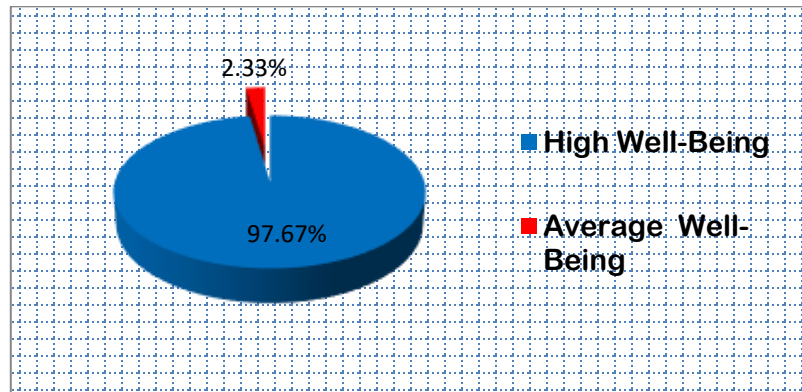
Mode	178	SD	18.57
Skewness	0.185	Kurtosis	-0.094
Range	117	Q1 = 174	Q3 = 199

The analysis of well-being scores for Scheduled Caste students in higher education in Himachal Pradesh reveals significant findings. The well-being scores ranged from 126 to 243, with a range of 117. The mean score of 185.48 lies between the first quartile (Q1 = 174) and the third quartile (Q3 = 199), indicating that the data is approximately normally distributed. This is further supported by the skewness value of 0.185, which is close to zero, and the kurtosis value of -0.094, which aligns with the characteristics of a normal distribution. According to the norms provided in the Well-Being Index, z-scores of +0.51 and above indicate a high level of well-being, z-scores between -0.50 and +0.50 indicate an average level, and z-scores below -0.51 represent a low level of well-being. The data shows that 97.67% of Scheduled Caste students possess a high level of well-being, while only 2.33% fall into the average category, and none were found to have low levels of well-being. These findings suggest that the majority of Scheduled Caste students in higher education enjoy high levels of well-being.

To test the hypothesis (H01: There exists no significant difference in the well-being of Scheduled Caste students in higher education), statistical analysis was conducted. The null hypothesis was rejected, indicating that the well-being of Scheduled Caste students differs significantly. This suggests that the levels of well-being are not uniformly distributed but vary significantly, with most students exhibiting high levels of well-being. These results highlight the robust well-being of Scheduled Caste students in higher education, which may be influenced by factors such as supportive academic environments, socio-cultural contexts, or individual traits. The distribution of scheduled caste students according to their level of well-being is pictorially shown in figure 1

Figure 1

Pie-Chart Showing Percentage Distribution of Scheduled Caste Students according to their level of 'Well-Being'



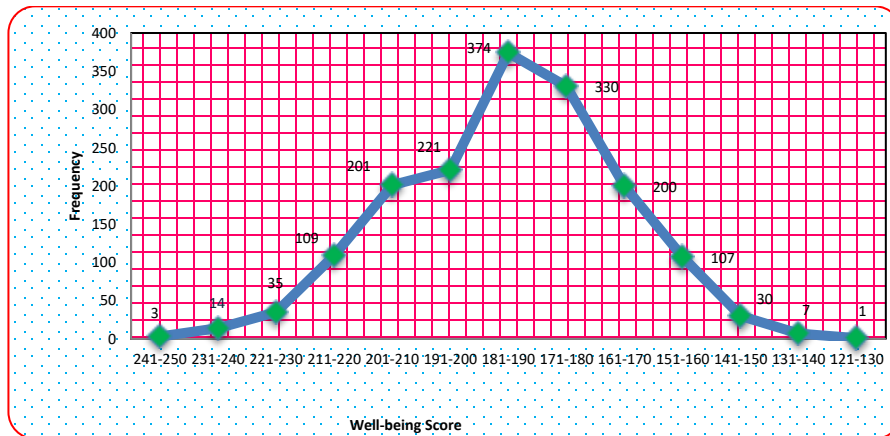
The analysis of well-being scores for the total sample shows that the mean and median scores are 185.48 and 184, respectively. The close proximity of these values indicates a symmetrical distribution of data. To further confirm the symmetry, the coefficient of skewness was calculated. In a normal distribution, the mean equals the median, resulting in a skewness value of zero. In this study, the coefficient of skewness was found to be 0.185, which is close to zero, indicating that the distribution of well-being scores is approximately normal.

To gain deeper insight into the shape and peakness of the distribution, the kurtosis value was analysed. A normal distribution has a kurtosis value of zero (when measured as excess kurtosis). A distribution with a kurtosis value less than zero is considered platykurtic, suggesting a slightly flatter curve, while a kurtosis value greater than zero represents a leptokurtic distribution, which is more peaked. In the present data, the kurtosis value was -0.094, which is slightly below zero, indicating a slight platykurtic characteristic. This means that the distribution of well-being scores is marginally flatter than a standard normal curve but still falls within the range of approximate normality.

These results collectively suggest that the distribution of well-being scores in the total sample is approximately normal, with slight deviations in symmetry and peakness. This normality of distribution is critical for further statistical analyses and validates the reliability of the findings.

The distribution of well-being scores of scheduled caste students is shown in figure 2 which appears nearly normal in shape.

Figure 2
Frequency Polygon Showing Distribution of 'Well-Being Scores' of Scheduled Caste Students



1.2 Self-esteem among Scheduled Caste Students

The frequency distribution pattern of self-esteem scores of scheduled caste students is given in table 2

Table 2
Frequency Distribution and Descriptive Statistics related to ‘Self-esteem’ of Scheduled Caste Students

Class interval	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Frequency Percentage
101-110	26	1.59	26	1.59
91-100	268	16.42	294	18.01
81-90	650	39.83	944	57.84
71-80	419	25.67	1363	83.52
61-70	188	11.52	1551	95.04
51-60	42	2.57	1593	97.61
41-50	27	1.65	1620	99.26
31-40	9	0.55	1629	99.82
21-30	3	0.18	1632	100.00
Total	1632	100		
Descriptive Statistics	Values	Descriptive Statistics	Values	
Mean	80.95	Median	83	
Mode	88	SD	11.60	
Skewness	-1.054	Kurtosis	2.140	
Range	88	Q1 = 75	Q3 = 88	

The analysis of Table 2 indicates that the mean self-esteem score among Scheduled Caste students is 80.95, with a standard deviation of 11.60. The median and mode values are 83 and 88, respectively, suggesting slight skewness in the data. According to the self-esteem scale, scores of 80 and below represents a low level of self-esteem, scores between 81 and 97 indicate a moderate level, and scores of 98 and above signify a high level of self-esteem. The data reveals that 42.14% of Scheduled Caste students fall into the low self-esteem category,

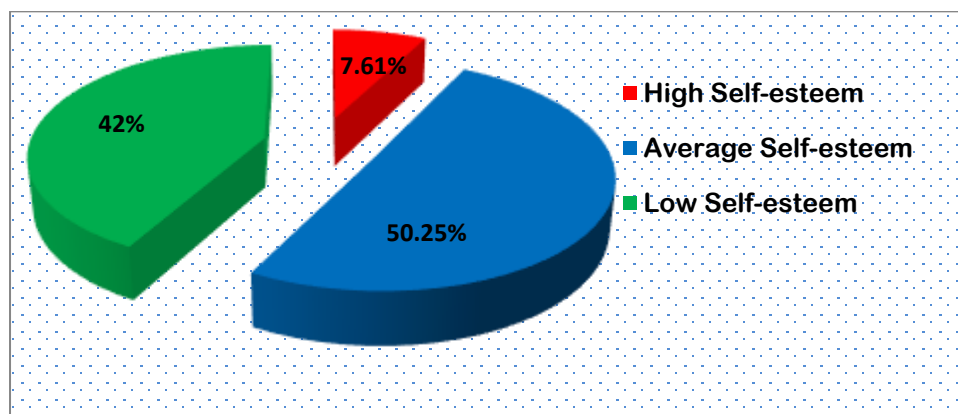
while only 7.61% possess a high level of self-esteem. The majority, 50.25%, exhibit a moderate level of self-esteem.

Based on the observed distribution of self-esteem levels, the null hypothesis (H02: There exists no significant difference in self-esteem of Scheduled Caste students in higher education) is rejected. This indicates that there are significant differences in the self-esteem levels of Scheduled Caste students, with a substantial portion of the sample demonstrating low and moderate levels of self-esteem. These findings highlight the need for targeted interventions to address the lower self-esteem levels among Scheduled Caste students in higher education.

The distribution of scheduled caste students according to their level of self-esteem is shown with the help of pie chart in figure 3 as follows:

Figure 3

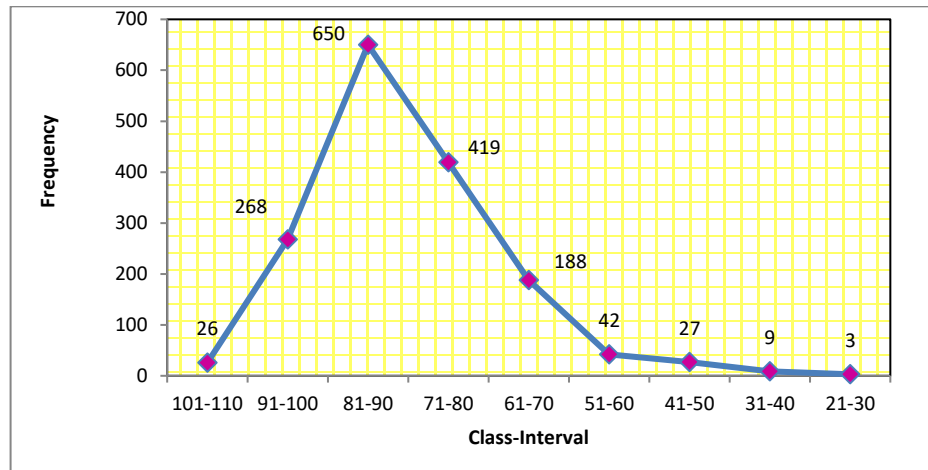
Pie-Chart Showing Percentage Distribution of Scheduled Caste Students according to their level of 'Self-esteem'



From the table 2 shows that the mean, median and mode lies within the range of Q1 and Q3 indicating the normality in data. Computed value for skewness is -1.054 showing negative skewness in data. Negative skew refers to a longer or fatter tail on the left side of the distribution. Also, the mean of negatively skewed data is less than the median as observed in the table 2 The value for kurtosis (2.140), it is higher than the table value 0.263 and indicates that the data is platykurtic. A frequency polygon shows the distribution of 'self-esteem' scores of scheduled caste students is given in figure 4.17

Figure 4

Frequency Polygon Showing Distribution of 'Self-esteem' scores of Scheduled Caste Students



1.3 Effect of Self-Esteem on Well-Being of Scheduled Caste Students

The data related to mean and standard deviation along with the t-value on well-being of scheduled caste students belonging to high and low level of self-esteem is presented in table 3 as follows:

Table 3

Effect of self-esteem on well-being of undergraduate scheduled caste students

Level of Self-Esteem	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Significance
High	816	192.65	18.68	16.89**	Significant at 0.01 Level
Low	816	178.31	15.45		

**** Significant at 0.05 level**

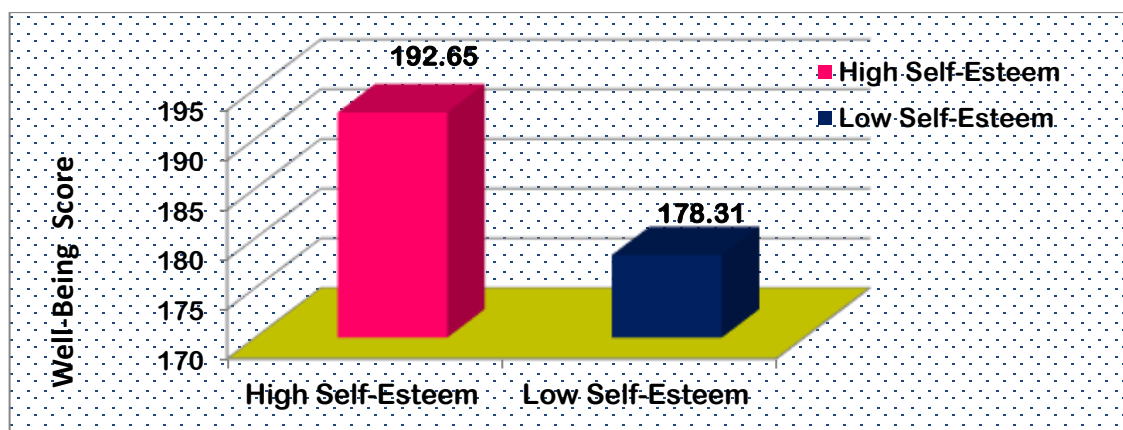
The analysis of Table 3 reveals a highly significant t -value (16.89) at the 0.01 level for the well-being of Scheduled Caste students with high and low levels of self-esteem. This indicates that Scheduled Caste students with high and low levels of self-esteem differ significantly in terms of well-being. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0 : "There exists no significant difference in the well-being of Scheduled Caste students in higher education with respect to self-esteem") is rejected.

Further examination of the mean scores shows that Scheduled Caste students with a high level of self-esteem have a greater mean well-being score (192.65) compared to those with a low level of self-esteem, whose mean score is 178.31. This suggests that Scheduled Caste students with a high level of self-esteem possess significantly better well-being

compared to their counterparts with low levels of self-esteem. These findings emphasize the strong association between self-esteem and well-being among Scheduled Caste students in higher education, highlighting the importance of fostering self-esteem to enhance their overall well-being.

Figure 5 displays the significant difference in ‘well-being’ of scheduled caste students having high and low level of self-esteem.

Figure 5
Difference in Well-Being of Undergraduate Scheduled Caste Students Having High and Low Self-Esteem



Findings of the study

1. The well-being scores of Scheduled Caste students follows a normal distribution.
2. A large proportion of students exhibit a high level of well-being, with a smaller percentage showing average well-being.
3. Most students demonstrate moderate self-esteem, with a significant number showing low self-esteem and a smaller group possessing high self-esteem.
4. A significant difference exists between the well-being of students with high and low self-esteem.
5. Students with higher self-esteem report better well-being compared to those with lower self-esteem.

Suggestions

Self-esteem is a significant segment of life. Improving self-esteem is a multifaceted process that involves cultivating positive thought patterns, developing supportive habits, and engaging in self-care. As parents and as teachers, it is our soul duty to boost up the child's self-esteem. In order to develop good self-esteem, here are some suggestions:

1. Teach children to recognize negative thoughts and replace them with positive affirmations about their strengths and achievements.
2. Help children set achievable goals and break them down into smaller steps. Celebrate their progress to build a sense of accomplishment.
3. Surround children with supportive family members and positive influences. Avoid overly critical or negative remarks.
4. Show self-kindness in the classroom, especially when discussing mistakes or setbacks.
5. If a student shows signs of deep-seated self-esteem issues, suggest seeking support from school counselors or mental health professionals.

In order to have good self-esteem, we need others to be encouraging and communicate in a positive way. We also need to build our own self-esteem by realizing we need to be our self; not what others necessarily think we should be. Negativity from others only lowers our self-esteem and makes us less confident. We need confidence in order to communicate well with others.

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