SELF-ESTEEM AND SELF-COMPETENCE

Self-esteem and self-competence have been evaluated in this chapter by comparing the subjects in both the sample groups on these variables. The experience of self-esteem in relation to the four types of social support has also been computed.

To evaluate the differences in the self-esteem experiences in both the sample groups means, standard deviations and ‘t’ value have been computed. The results and findings are presented in Table-36.

**TABLE - 36**

Means, standard deviations and ‘t’ value of the self-esteem scores in both the sample groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visually handicapped sample</th>
<th>Normal sighted sample</th>
<th>‘t’ value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.45</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>54.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Significant at 0.01% level
GRAPH: 4 COMPARISON OF THE MEAN SCORES OF SELF-ESTEEM IN THE VISUALLY HANDICAPPED INDIVIDUALS AND THE NORMAL SIGHTED INDIVIDUALS
The visually handicapped sample has a mean score of 33.45 with a standard deviation of 2.85. The normal sighted sample has a mean score of 54.31 with a standard deviation of 5.66. There is significant difference in the self-esteem scores in both the sample groups which is evident by the ‘t’ value 34.51 which is highly significant at 0.01 level of significance.

The visually handicapped individuals are not satisfied with themselves, as they do not have a favourable self-concept and judgment about themselves. They fail to have a firm and stable belief in themselves, their ideas and values. They are highly sensitive to criticism and feel vulnerable and helpless to express their feelings. They are doubtful about achieving success as they have a negative image of themselves. All these negative ideas and feelings of themselves contribute to their perception of low self-esteem.

The normal sighted individuals, by contrast, have a very favourable self-image about themselves. They have firm views and perceptions of themselves. They feel good about their self-image as they have a firm belief in their ideas and thoughts. The normal sighted individuals are able to face criticism boldly and not disturbed by negative remarks. They are confident about expressing their ideas and feelings to others. They consider themselves as capable of achieving success. On the whole, the normal sighted individuals have a more
positive and optimistic image of themselves which contributes to their high self-esteem.

Self-esteem captures the essence of how people think and feel about themselves as totalities; it is, therefore, "global" rather than "specific", or limited to a single dimension of the self (Rosenberg, 1965; Sekaran, 1989; Rosenberg et al., 1995; and Diener and Diener, 1995). Viewed as a global concept, self-esteem comprises self-evaluation of such items as adequacy, worth, goodness, health, appearance, skills, sexuality, and social competence. Self-esteem is generated by how one thinks he or she is being perceived by others.

Research confirms that people with a strong sense of self-efficacy do indeed manage their lives more successfully. In general these people tend to be less depressed and anxious (Maddux and Stanley, 1986). People who are confident in their abilities typically approach new challenges with optimism and they set high goals for themselves (Bandura and Jourden, 1991). High self-esteem, as stated by Rosenberg (1965), Elliott (1986), and Robson (1988), simply means that the individual respects himself, considers himself worthy. He recognizes his limitations and expects to grow and improve his deficiencies. High self-esteem is associated with adaptive functioning and greater personal contentment. Since high self-esteem leads to rewarding experiences in life, it comes to be valued for itself.
Campbell et al., (1991) projected the portrait of a prototypical person with low self-esteem as someone who lacks a clear sense of self-definition and having no firm internal reference, is plagued by self-doubt and responds in a reactive fashion to daily events. Individuals with low self-esteem function in a cautious, conservative and self-protecting style. Such individuals avoid making exaggerated or strong positive claim for themselves. They desire good traits and wish to be admired and respected, but they are reluctant to make bold claims about deserving such approval. They emphasize the avoidance of self-presentational risks in order to minimize their chances of embarrassment or humiliation. They may be inclined to avoid drawing attention to themselves and to avoid responsibility that entails vulnerability to blame. They prefer to be inconspicuous especially in uncertain and risky situations. They tend to avoid the use of self-presentational ploys, possibly except for ploys that would be explicitly and exclusively self-protective (Hunter et al., 1981; Brown et al., 1988; Robson, 1988; Baumeister et al., 1989; and Wood et al., 1994). People with low self-esteem are unhappy about themselves as they consider themselves to be deficient, unworthy and inadequate. They tend to be low in self-acceptance, self-liking and self-respect (Elliott, 1986; and Baumeister et al., 1995).

The findings of the present study lend support to the hypothesis that there are significant differences in the self-esteem scores in both
the sample groups – the self-esteem scores of the visually handicapped individuals are lower than the self-esteem scores of the normal sighted individuals. Thus, the hypothesis is proved.

Self-esteem and Social Support

The correlations between self-esteem and the four types of social support are computed for both the sample groups to check the correlation between them. The results and findings are presented in Table-37.

**TABLE - 37**
Correlations between self-esteem and the four types of social support in both the sample groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Visually handicapped sample</th>
<th>Normal sighted sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family support</td>
<td>0.2108*</td>
<td>0.6351**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend support</td>
<td>0.1649</td>
<td>0.1034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others support</td>
<td>0.1523</td>
<td>0.1146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total social support</td>
<td>0.1643</td>
<td>0.7013**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* significant at 0.05% level
** significant at 0.01% level
In the visually handicapped individuals self-esteem correlates significantly with family support at 0.05 level of significance. In the normal sighted individuals self-esteem correlates significantly with family support and total social support at 0.01 level of significance.

Muhlenkamp and Sayles (1986) observe that self-esteem and social support are positive indication of life style. Respondents with high self-esteem perceive their social support to be very adequate. Those with high self-esteem are capable of attracting others into their social network. Hirsch (1980) reports that high self-esteem is most strongly associated with greater satisfaction with socializing experiences. Friendship is positively related to self-esteem (Maton, 1988). The visually handicapped individuals have precariously scored low on social support appraisals and it is evident that the low scores have led to insignificant correlation between self-esteem and social support appraisals.

Self-competence

To evaluate the differences in the self-competence scores in both the sample groups’ means, standard deviations and ‘t’ value are computed. The results and findings are presented in Table-38.
TABLE - 38
Means, standard deviations and ‘t’ value of the self-competence scores in both the sample groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visually handicapped sample</th>
<th>Normal sighted sample</th>
<th>‘t’ value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.68</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>14.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** significant at 0.01% level

There is a statistically significant difference in the self-competence scores in both the sample groups. The visually handicapped sample has a mean score of 8.68 with a standard deviation 1.47 and the normal sighted individuals have a mean score of 14.80 with a standard deviation of 5.70. The significant difference is evident by the ‘t’ value 10.90 which is highly significant at 0.01 level of significance.

The visually handicapped individuals in comparison with the normal sighted individuals are less competent as they lack the confidence to undertake tasks and complete them to perfection. They underutilized their potential, as they are doubtful of overcoming obstacles. The normal sighted individuals are highly competent as they have the ability to meticulously accomplish tasks. They are able to take charge and have command over obstacles. Competence is regarded as a capacity to develop and maintain harmonious relationship with the environment which is vital to an individual’s well-being (Sinha, 1990).
Cauce (1986) states that the ability to actively shape one's social environment in a way that is conducive to the development and maintenance of supportive positive relationship is an aspect of self-competence.
GRAPH:5 COMPARISON OF THE MEAN SCORES OF SELF-COMPETANCE SCORES IN VISUALLY HANDICAPPED INDIVIDUALS AND NORMAL SIGHTED INDIVIDUALS