

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN SELF-ESTEEM AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AMONG PUBLIC GENERAL UNIVERSITIES IN KARACHI

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Abstract

This research explores the way academic performance and self-esteem are related in university students. The results show that there is a strong and significant positive relationship between how well students do in universities and how much they value themselves. The researchers also looked at how gender affected academic performance and self-esteem. The study found that boys scored better in universities, but girls reported feeling better about themselves than the boys. It looks into the relationship between young people's self-esteem and how they perform in universities. The findings reveal that students who perform better at university tend to believe in themselves more, and the same holds true the other way around. The results also looked at gender differences in self-esteem and academic achievement. Based on the results, boys got better marks than girls, yet girls had stronger self-esteem than boys did. The evidence shows that self-acceptance and academic success are related and gender has an effect on both psychology and academics. It is highlighted in the study that we need to design environments that help every student improve academically and feel valued.

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1

Overview of the Chapter

The introduction chapter provides a foundational exploration of the conceptual and empirical background for the study of self-esteem and its relationship with academic performance, particularly within the context of university students. The chapter begins by establishing the theoretical underpinnings of self-esteem, drawing primarily from Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which emphasizes the dual nature of self-esteem, internal self-worth, and external validation and its role in achieving self-actualization. The psychological literature is reviewed to demonstrate how self-

esteem influences emotional well-being, motivation, resilience, and interpersonal relationships.

Background of the study

In Maslow's model, Self-Esteem is divided into two categories: Self-Esteem (internal feelings of self-worth) and esteem from others (external validation and respect). Maslow posited that individuals must satisfy their esteem needs to reach a higher level of self-actualization, which is the realization of one's full potential.

Self-esteem, according to researchers, is beneficial for mental health. Individuals with high self-

esteem typically have positive emotional states, are able to manage stress, and employ more effective coping mechanisms (Orth & Robins, 2014). High self-esteem is associated with mild anxiety and depression, improved relationships, and greater optimism (Baumeister et al., 2013). On the other hand, issues like loneliness and a sense of worthlessness are typically linked to poor self-esteem.

Maslow notes that a person's self-esteem fluctuates and continues to impact their drive. People are more driven and successful when they have a better sense of self-worth (Ryan & Deci, 2020). People frequently do better at work and in school as a result of this incentive.

In schools, Self-Esteem greatly influences both student engagement and their achievement. Data reveals that pupils who feel good about themselves engage more in class discussions and are more persistent during difficult school tasks (Schunk, 2019). Programs meant to improve Self-Esteem in adolescents have resulted in better social, emotional, and academic outcomes (Harter, 2019).

People's opinions of themselves play a role in their relationships with others. People with a strong sense of Self-Esteem generally enjoy better relationships, because they are better at communicating and less likely to get into arguments (Murray et al., 2023). Alternatively, people with below Self-Esteem might have difficulty trusting others and may fear being rejected, which influences their relationships and the people they rely on.

Pakistani educational institutions face significant challenges related to student behavior and health, which negatively impact academic success. In 2012, the illiteracy rates for young adults were notably high, exceeding those of Afghanistan and Bangladesh, but lower than those in China and several other countries. At that time, approximately 3.75 million students were enrolled in schools, with 2.6 million in primary education, 2.9 million in intermediate college, and 1.5 million in colleges and universities (UNESCO, 2012). One noticeable exception is that girls with an upper level of self-esteem are less likely to develop bulimia. Strong self-esteem generally offers

benefits in two key areas: increased initiative and more positive emotions. However, no evidence suggests that boosting self-esteem through therapeutic interventions or educational programs leads to significant positive outcomes.

According to Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, and Vohs's (2003) research, the word "self-esteem" has gained widespread usage. Teachers, parents, therapists, and others have focused their efforts on enhancing self-esteem because they believe that having a strong sense of self will result in a number of positive outcomes and benefits. This idea is examined severely in this article. Assessing the influence of self-esteem is fraught with difficulties. Because people with high self-esteem tend to exaggerate their accomplishments and personal attributes, objective outcome metrics are prioritized. Furthermore, people with high self-esteem are a diverse group that includes people who appropriately perceive their strengths as well as egocentric, defensive, and arrogant people. High self-esteem is not a requirement for academic achievement, as seen by the modest link found between self-esteem and academic performance. Stronger self-esteem is more likely to result from academic achievement than the other way around. Attempts to boost pupils' self-esteem have not been demonstrated to enhance academic achievement and may even have the opposite effect in certain situations. In a similar vein, there is conflicting evidence about the causal relationship between adult self-esteem and job performance. Self-esteem may only be beneficial in particular vocational circumstances, or it may even be lowered by workplace success. Children with high self-esteem nevertheless smoke, drink, use drugs, have early sex, and consume alcohol. Although its overall effects are small, high self-esteem promotes experimentation, which may result in greater early drinking or sexual engagement (Baumeister et al., 2023). The broad promotion of self-esteem with the hope that it will inevitably result in better outcomes is not supported by our findings. Excessive or unconditional praise can encourage narcissism, which is linked to less desirable results, because high self-esteem can take many different forms. Rather, in order to promote healthy self-esteem, we advise that praise be applied carefully,

in response to socially acceptable behavior and sincere self-improvement. (Krauger, Vohs, Campbell, and Baumeister, 2003).

Problem Statement

At present, how Self-Esteem influences academic performance among students is a major point of interest in universities. The current body of research recognizes the independent importance of Self-Esteem and academic achievement. Even so, there isn't an in-depth picture of how these factors are linked in the university environment. We will investigate this connection to find out how Self-Esteem affects the academic results of university students.

The concern is to find out how Self-Esteem levels are associated with results and achievements in higher education. While some single studies have looked at this link, we still need a detailed and complete understanding of how Self-Esteem affects university students' academics, learning and happiness. This issue is important mainly to help students develop in all areas. While doing well in school matters, feeling good about oneself is just as important for students at university. Achieving academically depends on both a person's mental abilities and their emotions, beliefs and motivation. The authors note that there is little science linking Self-Esteem and academic achievement in students which this study intends to clarify. The findings should help guide teachers, counselors and those setting policies on the link between Self-Esteem and school performance. This study aims to offer knowledge used to support intervention development and the creation of a welcoming atmosphere for students that helps them grow in confidence and improve their school records.

Knowing the links between Self-Esteem and university students' academic performance helps educators design strategies that will help students perform better in their studies and protect their sense of self-worth.

Objectives

To examine the relationship between Self-Esteem and academic performance among university students.

To explore the differences in Self-Esteem scores between male and female university students.

To investigate the differences in academic performance scores between male and female university students.

Research Questions

What is the relationship between Self-Esteem and academic performance among university students?

What is the difference in self-esteem scores between male and female university students?

What are the differences in academic performance scores between male and female university students?

Significance of the Study

The study on the correlation between Self-Esteem and academic performance among university students holds immense significance in several aspects. Firstly, understanding the relationship between these variables can aid educational institutions in developing targeted interventions to enhance students' academic success.

This study's findings provided insights into how fostering positive Self-Esteem positively impacts academic outcomes. This knowledge is crucial for educators, counselors, and policymakers to implement strategies aimed at bolstering students' Self-Esteem, thereby potentially improving their performance in academic settings.

Moreover, the significance extends to the mental health and well-being of students. Establishing a link between Self-Esteem and academic achievement sheds light on the holistic development of individuals. It emphasizes the need for educational environments that not only focus on academic rigor but also foster a supportive atmosphere that nurtures students' self-worth and confidence.

Definition of Key Terms

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem represents an individual's overall subjective emotional assessment of their worth. It encompasses a personal sense of value and self-worth, reflecting both how one judges oneself and the attitude one holds toward the self. (Hewitt, 2009). In 1965, Rosenberg described Self-Esteem

as a person's attitude toward themselves, and a global feeling of worth, dignity, and importance.

Academic Performance

Measured by students' Grade Point Average (GPA) or examination results. Academic performance refers to the results or achievements in an educational setting, indicating the extent to which a student, teacher, or institution has met their academic objectives. (Annie, Howard & Mildred, 2016). Academic achievement is the ability to reach a set goal through skill, effort, or courage within the institute context. (Hornby, 2006)

Academic excellence refers to an individual's proven ability to perform, succeed, and excel in academic pursuits. It goes beyond merely earning high grades; it also involves demonstrating exceptional performance and standing out among peers (Albatool Alrbia Alzakirah 2022).

Interplay between Variables

The mutual influence or interaction between two variables—in this case, self-esteem and academic performance. The term "interplay" refers to the dynamic, reciprocal influence or interaction between two or more factors or variables, where changes in one can affect the other and vice versa. It emphasizes the mutual relationship and co-dependence within a system or process (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023).

In academic and psychological research, interplay often signifies the complex, bidirectional relationships among psychological constructs, such as self-esteem and academic performance, where each may simultaneously influence and be influenced by the other (Lerner, 2016).

Government-funded institutions offering a wide range of academic disciplines in Karachi. Public general universities are government-funded institutions of higher education that provide a broad spectrum of academic programs across multiple disciplines, including the arts, humanities, sciences, and social sciences. These institutions are established to serve the general public by offering accessible and affordable education without specializing exclusively in professional or technical fields (Altbach et al., 2009).

In the context of Pakistan, public general universities operate under the regulation of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and aim to promote inclusive education, national development, and academic excellence across diverse academic fields (HEC, 2023).

Karachi, the largest metropolis of Pakistan, is a highly urbanized, multicultural, and economically significant city, often described as the country's financial, industrial, and educational nucleus. As the capital of Sindh province and the former capital of Pakistan, Karachi holds the status of a megacity with an estimated population exceeding 20 million, making it one of the most populous cities in the world (Hasan, 2015).

Functioning as a metropolitan city, Karachi exhibits key characteristics such as a dense population, diverse ethnic composition, complex infrastructure, and dynamic socio-economic activities. It houses the country's busiest seaport and airport, facilitating both national and international trade. (Gazdar, 2007; HEC, 2023). Karachi's metropolitan nature is also reflected in its cultural plurality and socio-economic stratification, where various ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups coexist. This diversity not only defines the city's social fabric but also contributes to its challenges, including urban planning, security, and access to quality education and public services (Hasan, 2015).

Summary

The chapter then delves into empirical findings that explore both the positive and negative implications of self-esteem. While high self-esteem is generally associated with academic success, positive emotions, and better coping mechanisms, it may also lead to overconfidence and risky behavior if not grounded in actual competence. Conversely, low self-esteem is linked to psychological distress and academic underperformance. Scholars such as Baumeister and colleagues have questioned the direct benefits of self-esteem interventions, emphasizing the importance of accurate self-assessment and intrinsic motivation over superficial praise.

Particular attention is given to the educational context, where self-esteem is seen as both a

predictor and outcome of academic performance. The review highlights studies showing how self-efficacy, motivation, and social support intersect with self-esteem to shape students' academic trajectories. The chapter also explores cultural and socio-economic factors that influence this relationship, especially within collectivist societies like Pakistan, where educational challenges are compounded by systemic issues such as gender inequality and resource limitations.

The discussion transitions to the specific context of Pakistani universities, noting the country's literacy statistics and educational challenges, and framing the study within this environment. Gender-based differences in both self-esteem and academic achievement are discussed, informed by previous research indicating that while males often report higher self-esteem, females frequently outperform academically. This background information emphasizes how important it is to look more closely at how these variables interact.

The chapter concludes by outlining the goals, significance, and purpose of the research, which leads to the development of hypotheses to investigate (1) the connection between academic performance and self-esteem, (2) gender disparities in self-esteem, and (3) gender differences in academic achievement among college students. By tackling these goals, the study hopes to add to the body of knowledge in educational psychology and guide strategies that support students' academic performance and mental health in higher education environments.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of the Chapter

Overview of the chapter literature review critically explores the complex interplay between self-esteem and academic performance among university students, drawing from a range of cross-cultural, gender-based, and psychological research studies. The literature reveals that self-esteem, while not a singular predictor, plays a significant mediating role in shaping academic outcomes through motivational and cognitive pathways.

Theoretical Background

Numerous psycho-sociological research have shown that students' lack of excitement for seeking academic brilliance and their restricted willingness to positively and successfully contribute to national development are caused in part by low self-esteem and a lack of accomplishment motivation. In a study published in 2020, Abdullah investigated the connection between university students' academic performance and factors including locus of control, self-esteem, and achievement motivation in a Nigerian institution. The purpose of the study was to ascertain how much academic achievement was impacted by these psychological elements. The poll was completed by male and female students from seven different faculties. These subjective factors, however, were unable to accurately predict students' actual academic achievement, according to the multiple regression analysis's findings.

The present study used a mixed-methods approach to examine the relationship between early adolescent academic achievement and self-esteem in two Western cultural contexts: the United States and England. Self-esteem and academic achievement throughout the course of a school year were examined in this study, which concentrated on kids aged 11 to 12. Data from 86 teenagers in North America and 86 in Britain were collected using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. A number of measures of academic achievement the following year were shown to be correlated with self-esteem as measured in the fall for both groups. Cross-country disparities started to surface toward the end of the year, although in both cases, mathematics consistently shown a substantial link with self-esteem. According to qualitative research, British students' perceptions of themselves and their academic experiences were more similar than those of their American counterparts. Gerard and Booth, 2021).

This interaction has been further nuanced by recent studies. Raghuvanshi and Pandey (2025) investigated the effects of digital behaviors, namely social media use, on university students' academic achievement and, consequently, their sense of self. Excessive social media use was found to be strongly

associated with low self-esteem, which in turn had a negative impact on academic motivation and focus. However, it was discovered that moderate and thoughtful use of digital platforms had neutral or even positive impacts, indicating that the digital environment is progressively influencing the psychosocial context of self-esteem (Raghuvanshi & Pandey, 2025).

Giannetti, et al., compared the relationship between students' academic performance, lifestyle, and subjective well-being in five different countries in 2025. It has been demonstrated that children who perform well academically are not always happier or more self-assured. In actuality, despite having a significant impact on the environment and conflicting emotions of enjoyment, both Brazilian and American pupils managed to retain strong academic records.

Additionally, they discovered that students' performance is protected during periods of high academic stress by self-efficacy, a mental attribute associated with self-esteem. When under a lot of stress, those who had greater social support and self-confidence were still able to perform well in school. According to these findings, kids' resilience and academic performance may both be enhanced by supporting them and helping them feel good about themselves (Peduraru et al., 2025).

Self-esteem influences the way students do in their academic work. A number of researchers have looked at how a person's self-worth affects their academic results. A person's self-esteem is their view of their worth and can shape both their drive and mental state (Rosenberg, 1965). It has been found by some that students who believe in themselves are more successful in school because they are eager to study (Baumeister et al., 2013).

High achievement in school and a good opinion of oneself are related, according to Hansford and Hattie (2022). Some say that self-esteem supports a student's motivation and effort which can account for their achievement (Marsh, 2020).

Culture appears to play a role in how strongly family influences educational outcomes. According to researchers, the bond between the two is weaker in Pakistan because people place more importance on group achievement (Heine et al., 2019). More details regarding the function of

self-esteem in psychological and motivational contexts have been added by recent studies. The causes of academic procrastination, which can coexist with low self-esteem and subpar grades, were investigated by Koçer and Şeker (2025). They came to the conclusion that procrastination is closely linked to low motivation and personality qualities like low conscientiousness, suggesting that motivation may be the link between performance and self-esteem. According to earlier theories, self-esteem exerts its effects through motivation and self-control (Koçer & Şeker, 2025).

Furthermore, Raghuvanshi and Pandey (2025) noted that university students' self-esteem is significantly impacted by digital social settings. According to the study, excessive social media use resulted in low self-esteem and, subsequently, scholastic difficulties because it caused anxiety and a lack of focus. The findings indicate that academic support services, particularly in urban campuses like Karachi, should include digital skills and mental health services (Raghuvanshi & Pandey, 2025).

We should still try to understand how different cultures work. Students in schools with a mix of ethnicities may experience problems that can make their low self-esteem better or worse, says Hashmi and Jan (2025). A variety of studies have shown that students who are supported culturally and personally often feel more confident and happier in learning. Hence, schools and therapies should include cultural diversity, so kids can appreciate themselves and keep participating in their education.

Men and Women Feel Differently about Themselves

How much we value ourselves often depends on our gender. A meta-analysis done by Kling et al. (2019) suggests that men tend to have a little higher self-esteem than women. The difference can be explained by the fact that social pressure expects women to be perfect and reward men for being brave and daring (Gentile & et al., 2019).

Because there are both cultural and academic expectations at university, gender differences in how students feel about themselves can become

very clear. Studies have found that male students with more self-esteem do better in academic situations (Niederle & Vesterlund, 2021).

Role of Social Comparison: Research by Singh, Kumar, and Singh (2025) in Punjab, India, examined academic buoyancy—which is the capacity of students to manage regular academic difficulties—in connection to gender and discovered that girls outperformed boys in both academic buoyancy and emotional intelligence. This implies that female students may perform better than male students in emotionally adaptable attributes that mitigate academic pressures, even while male students may have higher global self-esteem (Singh et al., 2025). According to Moksnes and Espnes (2023), female students are frequently more likely to engage in social comparison, which can negatively affect their self-esteem and, consequently, their academic performance.

Alnaimi (2025), on the other hand, emphasized gender-based differences in academic confidence in mathematics, a prevalent source of stress in college life. His research revealed that among Arab university students, men demonstrated greater mathematical confidence than women. This is partly due to underlying disparities in academic self-concept, a subdimension of self-esteem associated with certain domains (Alnaimi, 2025). There were no significant differences in students' math self-concepts based on gender in the post-pandemic education environment, according to Hasnorhisham and Samat (2025). Hasnorhisham and Samat (2025) point out that although many harbor prejudices, both male and female students have a moderate level of confidence in their studies. It means that things such as a student's change in school and the support they get play a part in reducing gender differences in self-esteem. People often use standardized tests or GPA to assess achievement in school, yet gender differences may still show up in many different academic fields. Researchers found that women usually do better in language and the humanities than men do, who tend to perform better in math and science (Duckworth & Seligman, 2016). Despite any lack of confidence, women generally do better in school on average because they work harder and manage their time and tasks better

(Richardson et al., 2012). Because of these characteristics, many are less confident in subjects such as science and math.

Recently, Pokharel et al. examined the relationship between gender and mobile learning's effects on academic results. Results indicated that although resources for mobile learning improved learning outcomes for both sexes, there was a small and significant gender impact on performance. Still, the results suggested that mobile learning worked well for both genders and technology could help students achieve the same educational outcomes (Pokharel et al., 2025).

Zayas et al. discovered in their study of first-year medical students that academic success was predicted differently by pre-university academic ranking for males and females. In comparison to effort, motivation and IQ, how many weekly study hours and prior academic performance predicted success and this effect was stronger for girls. It means that how men and women perform can be affected differently by the standards and criteria of organizations (Zayas et al., 2025).

Al Abdullah and his team (2025) observed that gender had no effect on academic resilience or optimistic thinking among Syrian university students, even in tough circumstances. According to the researchers, important psychological qualities for achieving well in school such as optimism and self-efficacy, may be found in similar levels among both genders, despite differences in school performance, especially in areas affected by conflict or great stress (Al Abdullah et al., 2025).

Research by Huang (2011) reveals that female students often outperform male students in school, but are less sure of themselves than males. Because of this difference, many women's achievements might be dismissed, particularly in engineering and mathematics.

Having mentoring and counseling programs is very important for adolescents. Zins et al. (2024) state that programs that develop self-belief and goal planning can make female students feel better about themselves and control their emotions which helps them deal with stereotypes within themselves. They lead to much better academic results.

Recent work by Peduraru et al. (2025) makes this point clearer by demonstrating that both social support and self-efficacy help reduce the impact of academic stress on how well students perform. The cross-sectional study also supported the idea that gender-sensitive academic counseling is needed, since it found that female students react better to supportive measures than male students (Peduraru et al., 2025).

Likewise, researchers Raghuvanshi and Pandey (2025) discovered that girls are more affected by the self-esteem changes that come from using social media a lot. According to their research, digital comparison today results in increased differences between girls and boys when it comes to motivation and self-esteem at school (Raghuvanshi & Pandey, 2025). This demonstrates why it's important to set up learning settings that encourage mental toughness, equal self-worth and learning for all genders.

Lane, Lane and Kyprianou (2024) looked at how academic achievement, self-efficacy and self-esteem were connected in a group of 205 postgraduate students. To start the course, each person completed forms to rate their confidence, self-esteem and past performance. We assessed academic performance by looking at the average score of the modules every student had studied. Self-efficacy and self-esteem were highly correlated, as found by correlational analysis. Besides, results from the multiple regression analysis suggested that self-efficacy influenced the way past performance success was linked to academic achievement. The results confirm that self-efficacy helps predict academic outcomes.

Performance in school work is an important sign of someone's education and is generally considered important for future achievements. It shapes work possibilities, personal improvement and mental health overall. Because it plays a big role, researchers have explored different factors that help with academic achievement. Particularly, self-esteem has become a focus because it may impact how motivated students are, how they behave during learning and their achievements in school (Marsh & Craven, 2016). Self-esteem is important in personality and strongly affects how we respond with our thoughts, feelings and actions

to academic challenges (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003).

It describes a person's personal opinion of their importance and abilities. It is very important for mental health and helps determine one's attitude toward studying. In early childhood, self-esteem starts to develop and continues to grow throughout life, affected by parental help, friendships and things accomplished (Harter, 2019). Many studies have shown that strong self-esteem is related to better academic results since it helps people feel confident, tough and open to learning (Dweck, 2016). Individuals who feel good about themselves are more likely to face challenges in school with a strong will and make better grades (Zuffianò et al., 2012). Besides, people with high self-esteem seem to be more motivated from within which helps students enjoy and commit to their learning tasks (Deci & Ryan, 2020). In contrast, lacking self-esteem can result in problems at school, higher anxiety and less motivation which may reduce someone's performance (Orth, Robins, & Widaman, 2012).

Still, there are many factors that make the link between self-esteem and school performance difficult to understand. Although high self-esteem helps build motivation and confidence, some experts believe that too much of it can discourage people from trying hard, overrate their skills and so hold back their education (Baumeister et al., 2013). It has also been reported that people who overestimate their abilities, without having the skills to match, may be discouraged from trying to improve themselves academically (Forsyth, Lawrence, Burnette, & Baumeister, 2017). Likewise, people with low self-esteem might use strategies like defensive pessimism which, on occasion, boosts student academic performance by making them study more carefully for assignments (Pullmann & Allik, 2018). They point out that a better understanding is needed of how self-esteem influences students' success in school, considering its connections with other factors.

Many things affect the way self-esteem and academic performance interact. Believing in their ability to do well in school is called self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Researchers indicate that self-efficacy lies between self-esteem and academic

performance, because students with higher self-esteem often have greater self-efficacy and, as a result, perform better academically (Pajares, 2016). Additionally, students' self-esteem and academic motivation are built up by positive support from teachers, classmates and family members (Wentzel, 2018). The environment in which a student learns such as the teacher's encouragement and the culture of the classroom, greatly shapes their self-esteem and how they do at school (Harter, 2019). People's cultural background is another thing to consider. Interplay means that self-esteem and academic performance influence one another in collectivist societies (Lerner, 2016). However, in individualistic cultures, people value personal achievements and self-confidence more which may make self-esteem and academic achievements more closely connected. It has also been shown that SES is a factor because high SES students have more educational advantages and usually perform better in school and feel better about themselves (Sirin, 2025). The aim of this study is to explore how self-esteem influences academic performance, considering possible intermediary and moderating roles. This research examines the psychological reasons behind academic success to discover how self-esteem affects students' learning, their motivation and their overall results. Moreover, this study wants to provide information that guides educational interventions and policies to help students feel valued which should increase their learning and mental health. Knowing about these factors will help teachers and psychologists create strategies that encourage students, improve their self-esteem and develop their ability to keep going in their studies (Eccles & Wigfield, 2022). Additional studies ought to study ways to improve students' self-esteem without encouraging them to be overconfident or believe they are entitled. Schools should use programs that help students improve their skills, receive useful advice and learn about growth mindset, to boost their confidence from what they can do (Yeager & Dweck, 2012). Teachers and parents should use positive ways of communicating to help students believe in themselves and keep trying with their schoolwork (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

All in all, self-esteem is important for students' academic achievements, but its effects can be different and are affected by several other factors. Having strong self-esteem usually helps, but if it's too much or unjustified, it can bring harm. When educators learn how self-esteem, self-efficacy, culture, social support and SES interact, they can choose better ways to assist students' achievement. The purpose of this study is to add a new perspective on how self-esteem affects learning and suggest methods backed by research that could improve students' learning. Educational and psychological researchers have focused a lot on academic performance and self-esteem. How students perform academically indicates their potential and, often, their future professional and personal opportunities (Sirin, 2025). On the second side, self-esteem which is a person's overall sense of their importance, influences their emotional well-being, social connections and accomplishments. Scientists have been trying to discover how academic achievements are affected by self-esteem and the other way around.

Research suggests a challenging and at times two-way link between self-esteem and how well a person does in school. According to Baumeister et al. (2003), greater self-esteem encourages students to work harder, keep going and feel more confident in their schoolwork. As a result of this relationship, students with strong self-esteem generally take part in their schoolwork, seek advice and deal with obstacles with determination. Still, they pointed out that sometimes self-esteem is the result of doing well in school, because academic achievements can increase self-confidence. This means that success makes a person feel better about themselves which allows them to do even better. Also, Harter (2019) pointed out that academic achievements or outcomes have a major impact on self-esteem in important developmental years, further demonstrating the connection between the two.

Studying this relationship becomes especially important when it comes to university students. Going to college or university can bring major challenges to students, affect their studies and lower their self-confidence. According to Wigfield and Eccles, researchers in 2020, self-belief plays an

essential role in gaining motivation for academic success in college. In addition, some studies suggest that stress and failure in school can lower a person's self-esteem (Conley et al., 2024). Because university life has many shifts and challenges, it is worth studying how these variables relate and differ between males and females.

There is a lot of information about how gender relates to self-esteem and academic outcomes, but the issue is still widely discussed in the field. Kling and colleagues (2019) found in their analysis that self-esteem is often reported to be higher among males, mainly during adolescence and early adulthood, than among females. Differences may be caused by the ways society and culture influence people's notions about themselves and their ambitions. Still, academic achievement has varied and girls sometimes get better grades but find it more difficult to excel in subjects that are mainly for men such as STEM fields (Steele, 1997; Hyde & Linn, 2016). Gaining knowledge about gender-specific trends helps create interventions that work well for all students. Understanding that self-esteem and academic performance are linked helps educators and policymakers find better ways to help people of all genders improve in both areas.

This study aims to add to what we know about self-esteem and academic performance by studying their relationship in university students. To explore these constructs in detail, the study is using the following hypotheses:

To study the link between self-esteem and how university students do academically. Research done before this has discovered both strong positive ties (Marsh & Craven, 2006) and weaker or context-dependent ones (Baumeister et al., 2013) in this area. The goal of this hypothesis is to explain the relationships between these constructs at universities, with attention to course load, student involvement in activities outside class and the presence of social support systems.

To examine how self-esteem scores vary between men and women among university students. According to Kling et al. (2019), this hypothesis seeks to study if the differences in self-esteem noticed earlier continue in university and consider variations in subjects, cultural backgrounds and peer effects on self-perception during this change.

To analyze how gender affects academic performance scores in university students. Although gender differences are found in school, this study tries to determine if these are present in university, as well as investigate what role classroom environment, mentorship and social pressures have on students' achievement levels (Hyde et al., 2018).

The study seeks to elucidate the correlation between self-esteem and academic achievement, particularly within higher education, and to propose strategies that may assist all students, irrespective of gender, in enhancing both variables. There is a lot of interest in how educational and psychological researchers study academic performance and self-esteem. Academic performance helps show a student's potential and usually leads to better employment and personal development (Sirin, 2025). On the contrary, self-esteem which means a person's total belief in their personal importance (Rosenberg, 1965), greatly contributes to emotional well-being, friendships and successes in life. Many studies have focused on figuring out how self-esteem impacts learning and how much learning impacts self-esteem.

The existing studies show that there is a challenging and two-way link between self-esteem and academic performance. Baumeister and his colleagues (2023) believe that self-esteem at a higher level encourages better schoolwork by increasing a person's motivation, willingness to persist and self-assurance. But they pointed out that self-esteem could be a result rather than a reason for doing well at school, as achieving academic results can improve a person's belief in themselves. Harter (2019) also pointed out that how well or poorly children do in school can affect their self-esteem in their first years.

College students are especially important to focus on when studying this relationship. When students start college or university, they often face major academic, social and emotional problems that impact both their grades and how they view themselves. According to Wigfield and Eccles (2020), how students see themselves plays a big role in their desire to achieve at this age and Conley et al. (2014) have suggested that failures and stress can make students feel less confident.

Because university life is always changing, it gives students an excellent platform to see how these variables affect people and how they can be different for each gender.

A lot of research has reported gender differences in both self-esteem and academic achievement, but the issues are still hotly debated. Studies by Kling et al. (2019) found that self-esteem is generally higher in adolescent and early adult males than in females. One reason for these differences is society's and culture's views about gender norms. While the grades of students have gone up and down, females generally outperform males in school, yet they have difficulties in subjects like STEM that men typically excel in (Steele, 2017; Hyde & Linn, 2016). Identifying gender-related differences helps educators create interventions that suit all students in the classroom.

The research looks to add to our understanding of how self-esteem and academic performance are connected in university students. The study is built around the following hypotheses:

To see how university students' self-esteem influences their academic results. Some previous studies find that self-esteem and happiness tend to go together, while others see only weak or varying relationships (Marsh & Craven, 2016; Baumeister et al., 2023).

To investigate how self-esteem varies between male and female university students. The hypothesis examines whether the self-esteem differences seen in Kling et al. (2019) continue to occur in the university setting.

To compare how male and female university students perform in their scores. Hyde et al. (2018) developed this hypothesis to determine if the different educational abilities found between genders in other settings also appear in universities.

Theoretical framework.

Self-Esteem and Academic Performance

Rosenberg's (1965) Self-Esteem Theory remains a foundational lens through which scholars analyze personal valuation and its behavioral implications. According to Rosenberg, self-esteem reflects a global sense of self-worth, where individuals with high self-esteem perceive themselves as competent

and worthy. This internal valuation fosters proactive attitudes, resilience, and a stronger ability to face academic challenges with confidence.

Bandura's (1997) Self-Efficacy Theory closely complements Rosenberg's framework. While self-esteem concerns overall self-worth, self-efficacy refers specifically to one's belief in their ability to perform tasks and achieve specific goals. Bandura argued that higher self-efficacy promotes persistence, goal-setting, and adaptive learning strategies—key drivers of academic achievement. Notably, self-efficacy is often considered a domain-specific expression of self-esteem, particularly within academic settings.

Empirical studies have consistently shown that students with higher self-esteem are more likely to set ambitious academic goals, engage deeply in learning tasks, and cope better with academic pressures (Marsh & Craven, 2016). These students exhibit adaptive motivational patterns and are less likely to experience academic burnout or anxiety. Conversely, low self-esteem correlates with self-doubt, learned helplessness, and academic disengagement (Harter, 2022).

In support of these theories, Diseth et al. (2014) found that university students with high academic self-esteem demonstrated superior learning strategies and academic performance. Their intrinsic motivation was strongly influenced by their self-perception of competence. Similarly, recent findings by Peduraru et al. (2025) emphasized the mediating role of self-efficacy and social support in translating self-esteem into tangible academic outcomes, particularly under stress. These frameworks underscore the importance of psychological constructs not merely as emotional traits but as active components of academic behavior and success.

Integrating these perspectives offers a holistic understanding: while self-esteem sets the emotional foundation, self-efficacy activates behavioral engagement in learning. Thus, interventions aimed at enhancing academic outcomes should address both global self-worth and domain-specific confidence to foster sustainable student development.

Gender differences in self-esteem and academic performance

Why there are gender differences in self-esteem and school performance is widely discussed in theories about culture, thinking and motivation. Eagly and Wood (2012) argue in Social Role Theory that traditional gender roles influence what people do, what they hope for and how they see themselves. In schools such roles impact how both male and female students view their strengths and handle suggestions from teachers. Because they are usually told to act independently, male students gain more confidence in what they achieve. Unlike males, female students may believe that their abilities are below average, even though they do just as well or even outperform others.

To explain why academic achievement and self-esteem differ by gender, sociocultural, cognitive and motivational theories have been introduced. Eagly and Wood (2012) show in the Social Role Theory that what people do, aim for and think about themselves is guided by the roles and standards in society. Through these roles, students can learn to react differently to criticism and see themselves differently in school. Many boys are motivated to have good self-esteem since they are often urged to act confidently and on their own. However, some female students may take in social comparisons and visible community traits which can lead to low self-esteem even when they perform as well as or better than other students.

The results are backed up by real-life data. In general, males tend to report higher self-esteem than females, mainly when it comes to physical appearance and school achievement, says a meta-analysis by Kling et al. (2019). The causes of these gaps are different experiences and exposure to stereotypes, rather than real abilities. Many forms of education see differences in academic results based on gender. Most women excel in courses that involve language and words, but it is men who generally do better in math and physics. Studies done recently indicate that females tend to achieve better grades and are more engaged in school which can be explained by their strong organization, greater conscientiousness and dedication (Richardson et al., 2012). They do not come from a person's natural talents.

Understanding these differences can be explained by using the Expectancy-Value Theory put forward by Eccles in 1983. Performance can be affected because a person's view of success and their importance of the task are molded by their gendered upbringing and initial academic days. So, girls praised for their communication skills might choose language subjects, while boys encouraged in logic may do better in science, technology, engineering and math. Over time, these expectations end up supporting and repeating the usual academic performance results.

Current research notes that cognitive abilities are not much different between genders, but stereotypes, the attitudes of teachers and family expectations greatly affect academic and self-confidence differences among students. Gender has a significant effect on how a person's psychological features show up in their academic life. Although several things affect academic performance and self-esteem, the way people are socialized based on their gender frequently prevents these things from interacting.

The Social Role Theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012) gives a main perspective on understanding these differences. It explains how, because of traditional work and social norms, gender roles lead men and women to have and display different ways of acting and seeing themselves. Many times, male students are told to depend on themselves, stand up for what they want and aim high. However, girls are commonly taught to pay more attention to how they relate to others, to feel empathy and to conform. Social norms guide the way students' self-esteem develops and is seen in their academic world.

Confidence and an enthusiasm for risk help in school, so male students may show a bigger link between feeling good about themselves and how they perform in the classroom. At the same time, even though they achieve the same or better results in school, many females may feel a lack of self-worth or have additional anxiety about their studies. Because they compare themselves to others and insist on perfection, some students become timid in their studies and this is partially why they underachieve.

A recent analysis using empirical data backs this conclusion. According to Huang (2013), women were strong in verbal subjects, but their confidence was low, while men typically had more confidence in STEM areas. It was also found by Raghuvanshi and Pandey (2025) that how we deal with digital pressures is greatly influenced by our gender. As a result, gender not only affects performance and self-esteem levels separately, but it also alters the relationship between academic conduct and self-esteem. This moderating role implies that gender-sensitive therapies that address both systemic biases and personal cognitive-emotional tendencies are necessary for success. Programs that foster inclusive classroom environments, promote

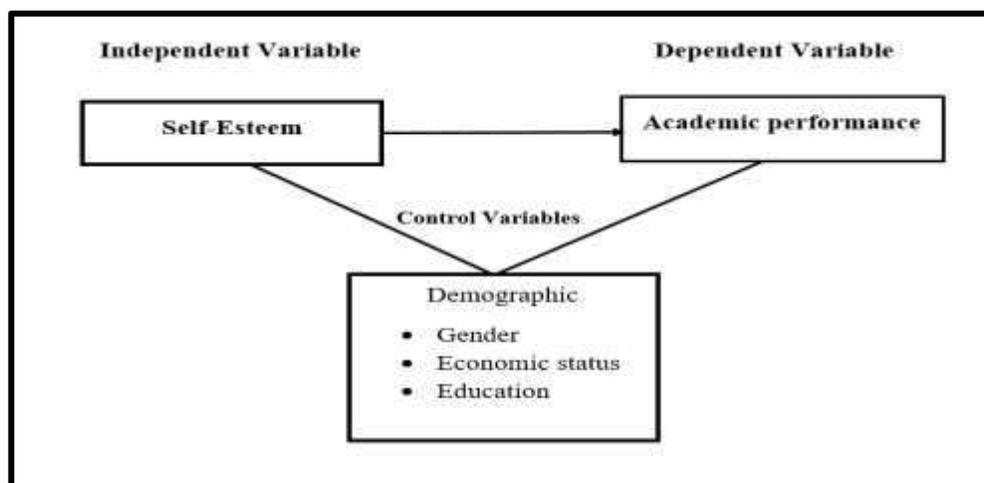
balanced self-evaluation, and counteract stereotype threat are critical to harmonizing self-perceptions and academic success across genders.

Null Hypothesis

H0.1: There was no significant relationship between Self-Esteem and academic performance among university students.

H0.2: There was no significant differences in scores on the Self-Esteem scale among male and female university students.

H0.3: There was no significant differences in scores on the academic performance scores among male and female university students.



Conceptual Framework

Summary of the chapter

Early foundational studies, such as Abdullah (2020), questioned the predictive reliability of self-esteem and related psychosocial variables, while more recent work by Booth & Gerard (2021) emphasized cultural and subject-specific patterns—particularly the strong association between self-esteem and performance in mathematics across British and American adolescents. Other contemporary studies (e.g., Raghuvanshi & Pandey, 2025; Giannetti et al., 2025) extend the discussion to include the influence of digital behavior and ecological lifestyle, highlighting how modern factors interact with students' psychological well-being.

The section on Self-Esteem and Academic Performance establishes a generally positive but context-dependent correlation. Motivation, digital habits, cultural values, and social support emerge as critical mediators. Findings from Koçer & Şeker (2025) and Hashmi & Jan (2025) reinforce the need for culturally responsive and psychologically informed academic environments, particularly in diverse settings like Karachi.

The section Gender Differences in Self-Esteem examines differences in self-esteem between male and female students. Though males usually have higher global self-esteem, females usually perform better in emotional intelligence and show better adaptive skills in school. Singh et al. (2025), Alnaimi (2025) and Hasnorhisham & Samat

(2025) agree that these differences are not always the same and are influenced by what students do and the culture around them.

Current studies have focused on how digital use, academic pressure and requirements from the institution affect the results students get in their studies. According to Peduraru et al. (2025) and Raghuvanshi & Pandey (2025), female students are more influenced by how they compare themselves to others and their interactions online, so it's important to provide them with gender-sensitive counseling and education in digital awareness. All in all, this chapter demonstrates that self-esteem affects academic performance through a variety of factors, including people's traits, their culture, their use of technology and their gender. The chapter finishes by pointing out that more research is needed in Pakistani public universities, as well as in other underrepresented contexts, to direct better educational and psychological policies.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research approach. Therefore, the descriptive and correlational research design was used in this study. There was an examination of the relationship between self-esteem and academic performance among students in public general universities in Karachi. Quantitative research allows for the objective measurement of variables, and a correlational research design helps understand the strength and direction of relationships between two measurable constructs: self-esteem and academic performance, as well as differences in Self-esteem and academic performance between male and female students. However, the objective was not to modify any factors; rather, it was to investigate whether or not there is a statistically significant connection between the levels of self-esteem that students feel they have and the academic accomplishments that they achieve. The study used a correlational design to investigate the relationship between self-esteem and academic performance. Additionally, comparative design was used to explore differences

in self-esteem and academic performance between male and female students.

Population and Sampling

Population

The population of the study consisted of students enrolled in various public general universities located in Karachi. These institutions offer undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate programs across different disciplines, making them ideal for a study that seeks to understand patterns of self-esteem and academic performance in a diverse academic environment.

Sampling Technique

The study utilized convenience sampling, a non-probability sampling method. This approach was selected due to time and resource limitations and the need for easy access to participants. Convenience sampling involves collecting data from participants who are readily available and willing to participate.

Sample Size

A total of 1000 participants were selected from different public general universities in Karachi. The sample aimed to include diversity in terms of gender, age, socioeconomic status, and education level. The inclusion criteria required that participants be currently enrolled students and willing to provide information on their academic performance and personal background.

Research Instruments

The study employed two primary data collection instruments: (1) the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) and (2) a Demographic Information Questionnaire, including current Academic status and academic result of last semester achievement which achieved in the exam like CGPA or percentage or marks.

(RSES) Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale: Morris Rosenberg created the internationally renowned Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale in 1965 as a tool for assessing self-esteem in social science research. It is intended to evaluate a person's general sense of acceptance and self-worth. Self-esteem was measured using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

(RSES). Responses on this 10-item Likert-type scale range from 0 (strongly disagree) to 3 (strongly agree).

There are both positively and negatively worded items in the RSES. Items 3, 5, 8, 9, and 10 have negative wording, whereas items 1, 2, 4, 6, and 7 have positive wording. Item scoring that is positive. The following was the scoring for items with favorable wording: Agree (A): 2 points, Strongly Agree (SA): 3 points Strongly Disagree (SD): 0 points, Disagree (D): 1. But the Negative Item

Demographic information: In addition to self-esteem, demographic and academic data were collected through a structured questionnaire. The following variables were included: Gender (Male / Female), Age (Recorded in years) . Moreover, Level of Education (Undergraduate/ graduate/ Postgraduate), Socioeconomic Status (Low / Middle / High - self-reported based on family income and lifestyle),

Academic Performance (Academic performance): Researcher used the participant result of last achievement scores in the university. Furthermore, some of the university used to show CGPA or some universities result announce in percentages and some of used to for scores but all are analyzable so researcher used percentages of the university students.

The information was used not only to describe the sample but also to explore potential differences in self-esteem, academic performance across gender and to examine correlations between self-esteem and academic outcomes.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection was conducted throughout 9 months using both physical distribution and online platforms such as Google Forms. The researcher approached students in libraries, cafeterias, university corridors, and student lounges, inviting them to participate voluntarily. Participants were given a brief introduction to the study, including its purpose and their rights. After obtaining informed consent, they were asked to complete the questionnaire, which took

approximately 10–15 minutes. For the online version, a consent form was attached at the beginning of the survey, and only students who agreed could proceed to the questionnaire.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data were entered and analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency, percentage) Pearson's correlation coefficient was applied to determine the relationship between self-esteem and academic performance. Additionally, independent sample t-tests were conducted to examine differences in self-esteem across demographic groups (e.g., gender or socioeconomic status).

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted in adherence to ethical standards in educational and psychological research. All participants provided informed consent before participating. Data were anonymized; no identifying information was collected. Students were informed that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without penalty.

CHAPTER 4 DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Overview of the Chapter

The study sample consisted of 100 university students, with an equal distribution of gender, 50 males and 50 females. Participants were drawn from various public general universities in Karachi. The demographic variables collected included gender, academic level, socio-economic background, and GPA from the last semester.

Demographic Information

Demographic information showed that there has three type of demographic information for example: gender economic status and academic qualification. Gender showed up male and female male 50 and female also 50 economic status have 3 type low, middle, and upper class. Furthermore, qualification have three types like post graduate, graduate and under-graduate level.

RESULTS

Table 1. Correlation between Academic Performance and Self-Esteem

	Academic Performance	Self-Esteem
Academic Performance	1	.261**
Self-Esteem	.261**	1
Mean	18.63	73.32
Std. Deviation	3.155	5.784
N	1000	1000

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

The above mentioned table show the correlation between Academic Performance and Self-Esteem among University students. Results indicate positive, moderate and statistically significant correlation between academic performance and self-esteem $r(998) = .261, p < .01$. This suggest that as academic performance increases, self-esteem also increases and vice versa.

Table 2. Difference between male and female students on the scale of Self-Esteem

Group Statistics					
	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Self-Esteem	Male	500	72.22	4.177	.187
	Female	500	74.42	6.863	.307

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Independent Samples Test

t-test for Equality of Means							
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	(2- Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Self-Esteem	-6.129	998	.000	-2.202	.359	-2.907	-1.497

An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine gender differences in self-esteem scores among 1,000 participants. The results showed that female students (M = 74.42, SD = 6.863) reported significantly higher self-esteem than male students (M = 72.22, SD = 4.177), $t(998) = -6.129, p < .001$. The mean difference was -2.202 (95% CI [-2.907, -1.497]), indicating that gender has a significant impact on self-esteem in this sample.

Table 3. Difference between male and female students on the scale of Academic Performance

Group Statistics					
	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Academic Performance	Male	500	19.36	3.251	.145

Female 500 17.89 2.878 .129

Independent Samples Test

	t-test for Equality of Means						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	(2- Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Academic Performance	7.560	998	.000	1.468	.194	1.087	1.849

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare academic performance scores between male and female students among 1,000 participants. The results revealed that male students (M = 19.36, SD = 3.251) scored significantly higher in academic performance than female students (M = 17.89, SD = 2.878), $t(998) = 7.560, p < .001$. The mean difference was 1.468 (95% CI [1.087, 1.849]), indicating a statistically significant difference in academic performance based on gender in this sample.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

The objective of this study was to investigate academic performance and self-esteem relationships, as well as differences between male and female university students. The analysis of the research gave many important new insights that added to what was already known in the academic literature and helped people understand these ideas in new ways.

The results demonstrated that self-esteem and academic performance show a moderate significant relationship ($r = .261, p < .01$). The results of the current study demonstrate that academic achievement creates higher self-esteem levels among students. Research by Rosenberg (1979) and following investigations confirmed the long-established link between self-concept and academic success, which produced similar findings. Marsh and Craven's (2006) study stated the "reciprocal effects model," which shows how self-esteem affects both academic performance and academic performance's effect on self-esteem.

Research shows that cultural elements and environmental circumstances could possibly affect this relationship. Academic success in collectivist

cultures creates enhanced self-esteem because it brings pride to families and enhances societal standing (Cheng & Furnham, 2003). Further studies should investigate cultural variations, particularly in Pakistani settings, because academic success receives substantial societal pressure.

The results of the study showed female students possessed greater self-esteem than male students with M = 74.42 (SD = 6.863) versus M = 72.22 (SD = 4.177) with $t(998) = -6.129, p < .001$. Previous study results show higher self-esteem in males, yet the current study produced different findings. Research by Kling et al. (1999) through meta-analysis showed men tend to express higher self-esteem levels than women, specifically during their teenage years. The present research findings demonstrate that self-esteem differences between genders may be diminishing in particular demographic groups.

The unexpected outcome might stem from changing social standards that enable female students to demonstrate increased confidence in their capabilities. The cultural environment of the research sample appears to influence results since Pakistani women obtain self-esteem from academic success to fight against established gender norms. Additional research needs to check if the identified patterns emerge in different geographic areas and cultural contexts for better statistical generalization.

In contrast, male students were found to perform significantly better academically (M = 19.36, SD = 3.251) compared to female students (M = 17.89, SD = 2.878), $t(998) = 7.560, p < .001$. This finding is consistent with prior research indicating that males often outperform females in quantitative and analytical tasks, which may contribute to

higher academic scores in some contexts (Stoet & Geary, 2013). However, it is essential to consider the nature of the assessment used in this study, as differences in academic performance might vary across disciplines.

The observed gender disparity in academic performance could also reflect broader systemic and cultural factors. For example, traditional expectations might pressure male students to excel academically to fulfill provider roles, while female students face challenges such as limited access to educational resources or societal constraints that impact their performance. However, recent efforts to promote gender equality in education, particularly in South Asia, may contribute to a gradual reduction in this gap over time (UNESCO, 2020).

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