

## SELF-ESTEEM AND SELF-EFFICACY AMONG CHILDREN OF DEVADASIS.

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**Abstract:** Devadasi System has existed since time immemorial across countries and in various religions. This involves offering virgin girl to the god, which restricts her to have a normal marital life. This tradition is prevalent in quite a few parts of South India and these girls end up as prostitutes and their children carry the stigma of being son/daughter of Devadasi. Since they are neglected by their primary care giver there is a need to understand their self-esteem and self-efficacy. Self-esteem is a subjective appraisal of the self as intrinsically positive or negative and can have significant implications on psychological functioning; self-efficacy is the belief about one's ability to achieve goals and to overcome obstacles in daily living. The aim of the present study was to examine the relationship between self-esteem and self-efficacy among children of devadasis. A purposive sample of 152 participants was selected from six districts of Karnataka State. The age range of the sample was from 18 to 30 years. Data was collected using Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) and Self-efficacy Scale (Sherer et al., 1982). On self-esteem 17% participants scored low and 17% of them scored high where as on self-efficacy, 17% scored low and 15% scored high. Findings show that Self-esteem and Self-efficacy are significantly positively correlated indicating that as feeling of self-worth increases, self-efficacy also increases and vice-versa.

**Keywords:** Devadasi, Self-efficacy, Self-esteem.

**Introduction:** Devadasi System and other similar practices are prevalent across the globe. Varied practices similar to Devadasi System have existed since time immemorial across countries and in various religions. This involves offering virgin girl to the god, which restricts her to have a normal marital life. This tradition is prevalent in quite a few parts of South India and these girls end up as prostitutes and their children carry the stigma of being son/daughter of Devadasi. It is essential to understand in depth the system and its impact on these individuals. The word Devadasi in Sanskrit means servant of god. Her name immediately suggests the two worlds that she inhabits – those of gods and slaves. She serves god (deva), and men who assume godly status, as a slave (dasi), and considers it an honor to do so. Girls dedicated to the temple deity are expected to carry out this traditional practice. (Harshananda, 1998) [1].

**Prevalence:** According to the survey which was carried out with 375 Devadasis by the Joint Women's Programme, Bangalore for the National Commission for Women (NCW), 61.6 percent of adolescent girls were forced into the Devadasi system due to custom, while 38.4 percent reported that their families had a history of Devadasis. According to Desai (2012), at least one thousand girls belonging to backward communities are initiated into Devadasi system and in due time they are pushed into commercial sex work [2].

**Children of Devadasis and their contemporary status:** Nikolova's (2009) research on young girls and women forced into ritual prostitution, recognizes that blind belief in the tradition increases ritual prostitution and majority of girls and women desire to leave prostitution. Poverty, lack of alternative

income-generating options, family demands to provide, tradition and prejudice and societal inclination to maintain status and insufficient or lack of government support and interplay between these factors become mutually reinforcing vulnerabilities magnifying their trapping force [3].

**Lack of father presence in upbringing and degraded status:** Children born to the Devadasi mothers carry the stigma of being her child and followed by that they do not have a father figure. Most of the time these children are taken care of by their grandparents or by the caretakers. Since most of these children can't stay with their mother. These children miss out on parental care and guidance during crucial periods of development. Traditionally, a stigma is attached to devadasi children who are not perceived equal by the other members of their caste. The children of a devadasi cannot enjoy legitimacy and they do not have a rightful father they can claim (Fuller & Marcus, 1900) [4].

**Self esteem:** Self-esteem is the global evaluative dimension of the self. Self-esteem is also reflected as self-worth or self-image (Santrock, 2001). [5] According to Branden (1992) self-esteem is "the disposition to experience oneself as competent to cope with the basic challenges of life and as worthy of happiness. It is believed widely that raising an individual's self-esteem especially that of a child or adolescent would be beneficial for the individual and society as a whole. Children who exhibit low self-esteem have several consequences (Baumeister et al., 2003; Emler, 2001). They might acquire greater difficulties in dealing with problems, can become extremely self-critical, passive, withdrawn and depressed. They are also more likely to be easily

frustrated, may hesitate to try new things, may speak negatively about themselves, and often view their transient problems as permanent conditions. In essence, they tend to be pessimistic about themselves and their life. On the other hand, children who exhibit high self-esteem may laugh and smile more, likely to have a generally optimistic view of the world and their lives, and tend to find it easier to handle conflicts, resist negative pressures, and openly make friends.

**Self-efficacy:** Self-efficacy is grounded in the larger theoretical framework of social cognitive theory. This theory postulates that human functioning results from interactions among personal factors e.g., cognitions, emotions, behaviours, and environmental conditions (Bandura, 1986). Perceived self-efficacy is defined as people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives (Bandura, 1994). General Self-Efficacy: The belief about one's ability to achieve goals and to overcome obstacles in daily living. It is viewed as a global construct and is drawn from the internal averaging of all successes and failures that are attributed to the self (Shelton, 1990). Self-efficacy theory would expect there to be some co-variation across distinct domains of functioning when activities in different domains are governed by similar sub-skills. Domain-or subject/area specific self-efficacy is conceptualized such that an individual's expectancies in new situations are based on experiences in the most similar past situation (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997). The earliest study (Achchi, 1984) showed how the self-concept of the children of devadasis is molded by their life circumstance. The Children of Devadasis seem to have an approach-avoidance conflict that is they want to come out of this blind system but they have a fear of future and are also anxious about how the society will perceive them. They undergo approach-avoidance conflict which is most difficult to overcome. The great majority of the children of Devadasis continue to remain in distress and turmoil. In a maximum number of families, parents neglect them, caretakers batter them and the society sexually abuses them. Hence children of Devadasis develop more of a negative self-concept. They are uncertain about the future and also have poor self-confidence. This further contributes to poor personal as well as social adjustment. Menon (1997) elucidated the different forms and supply areas of women to commercial sexual exploitation. According to the author Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu are considered to be the high supply areas. Karnataka and Maharashtra borders known as the 'Devadasi belt' have trafficking structures working at various levels. These women are into prostitution either because their spouses have deserted them, or

they are trafficked through oppression and deception. Many of these women and children are Devadasis who are into prostitution in the name of goddess Yellamma. These Children are forced to perform dances and songs for male clients who are buyers, and some are compelled to provide sexual service to these males. They further reported in their research that there are at least four hundred children found to be involved in prostitution in Goa[6].

**Method -Research question:** What is the level of self efficacy and self-esteem among children of Devadasis?

**Aim:** To understand the self efficacy and self esteem among children of Devadasis.

**Objectives:** To understand the self-efficacy and self-esteem among children of Devadasis.

- To understand the relationship between self-esteem and self efficacy among children of devadasis.

**Design:** Sample survey design was adopted for the current research.

**Sample:** The sample for the present study was selected by adopting the purposive sampling technique. 100 male and 52 female was selected. Age range of the participants was 18-30 years. All the participants were from North Karnataka District.

**Data collection procedure:** Data was collected in a single session. The responses were collected using the scales. After identifying the organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) working for Devadasis and their children the researcher contacted them and explained to them about the research. They were assured of confidentiality of the information divulged by the participants. Later children of Devadasis who were living in the community were contacted. Data was collected over five to six months duration based on the availability of the participants. After ascertaining the willingness of the Participants to be a part of the study written consent was taken from them.

**Inclusion criteria:** Male and female children of Devadasis between the age of 18 to 30 years.

- Participants who can consent and communicate in Kannada and English.
- Residing in North Karnataka districts of Bellary, Belgavi, Davanagere, Koppala, Raichur and Bagalkote.

**Exclusion criteria**

- Participants with any diagnosed physical or mental ailment.

**Tools: Rosenberg's Self Esteem Scale:** Participants completed the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965), a well-validated measure of global self-regard (Blaskovich&Tomaka, 1991; Demo, 1985). The RSES consists of 10 items to which participants provide ratings of agreement on scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Participants were instructed to complete the scale according to

how they typically or generally feel about themselves. Test-retest correlations greater than .80 have previously been reported (Rosenberg, 1965; Silber & Tippett, 1965).

**Self-efficacy Scale (Sherer et al., 1982):** This questionnaire is a Likert format 30 items scale which consists of series of statements about an individual's personal attitudes and traits. The response format is a 5- point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Sum of item score reflects general self-efficacy and social self-efficacy separately. The higher the total score the more self-efficacious is the respondent. It has accepted levels of internal consistency, temporal stability and construct validity[7].

**Data analysis:** The data was analysed using suitable techniques. The quantitative data obtained from the

rating scales was processed and analysed using suitable descriptive and inferential statistics.

**Results and discussion:** Self-esteem and Self efficacy among Children of Devadasis

Table 1 Self-esteem and Self-efficacy of children of Devadasis.

Variables	Low	Moderate	High
Self-esteem	17	66	17
Self-efficacy	17	68	15

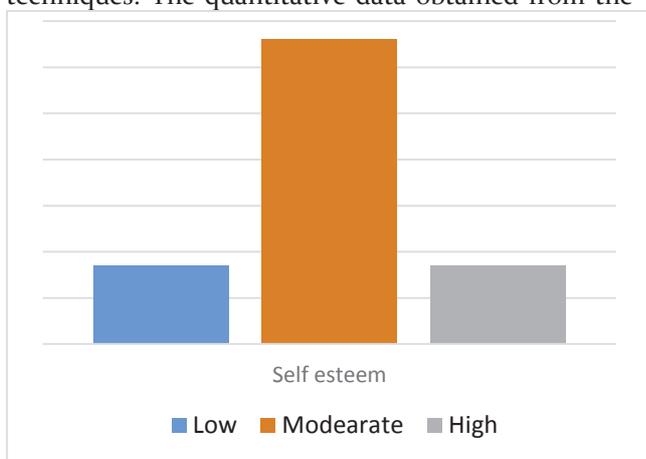


Figure 1.1 & 1.2 Self-esteem and Self-efficacy of the children of Devadasis represented in percentage

On self-esteem 17% scored low which indicates that these individuals have poor self-worth, feel incompetent, unworthy and incapable and 17% of the participants scored high revealing that these individuals feel good about their ability to participate, they also show confidence in social situations and are happy with the way they are. On self-efficacy, 17% scored low indicating that they are using less or limited effort and 15% of the participants scored high indicating that they put intensive effort when they want to accomplish the difficult tasks in life.

**Findings:** Self-esteem and Self-efficacy are significantly positively correlated indicating that as

feeling of self-worth increases, self-efficacy also increases and vice-versa.

**Assumptions and Limitations of the study:** The researcher assumes that the tools (questionnaires/rating scales/ inventories) are honestly and truthfully answered by the participants of the study. Some of the limitations of the study are: Not including all the stakeholders in the study, which would have helped to get a global understanding of the system.

**Scope for further research :** The dynamics of psychosocial concerns of children of Devadasis across different age group can be explored.

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