

A Study of Relationship between Cinderella Complex and Self Esteem among Young Females

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Abstract: Cinderella Complex is woman's dependence on men that implies financially, emotionally, physically, psychologically and so on. In Indian society as well, it has been mentioned that a woman is always a responsibility of a male member of the family. Most of the psychologists believe that women having this complex usually have other deep-rooted emotional issues such as low self-esteem and dependency issues. The study was based on understanding the relationship between the Cinderella Complex and Self-Esteem among the young females. From the results, it can be inferred that both the variables are negatively co-related to each other. Gender stereotypes are deeply internalized in these females with the Cinderella complex, which affects their self-esteem as well. These gender images have been consciously or unconsciously incorporated into these females' gender perception that govern their behaviors.

Key Words: *Cinderella Complex, Self Esteem, psychological dependency, gender stereotypes.*

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I. Introduction

Cinderella Complex (also known as the *Cinderella syndrome*), was first coined by New York psychotherapist Colette Dowling in 1981. The Cinderella Complex comprises of repressed fears and outlooks which hinders women's creativity and prohibits them to use their full potential. They wait for some external force or validation to transform their lives. The complex makes women believe that they are in need to be rescued and they wait for their "prince charming" to take charge of their lives.

The name of the complex finds its origin from the fairy tale of Cinderella, who waited for her prince charming to save her from her evil step mother and sisters. More similar stories can be seen working on similar lines of men saving the women, which place stereotypical gender expectations. Another, engendered part of the Cinderella story was her kind hearted nature towards her family, which rewards her in becoming a princess and rescuing by a prince. The story reinforces the women and men positions in daily life of being a reliant and provider.

The Cinderella Complex functions as an instrumental factor in patriarchy. A psychological dependence is nurtured in women in relation to her femininity. Women start looking for freedom and independence in this dependency and rely on their partners for their source of identity, love and protection.

All women portray the tendencies of Cinderella Complex within them, what is alarming is the women who show high scores of Cinderella Complex. Society

propagates woman to imagine that they have to rely upon men. Young girls are taught that men are their defenders and protectors and will spare them from the frightening things that reality holds in store. The idea of women's financial, emotional and other reliance on men is generic and quite common across cultures. Women with Cinderella Complex trust upon an ideal man to come into her life and make her blissful.

In psychology, the term Self Esteem is used to describe a person's overall sense of 'Self-worth' or 'Personal Value'. In other words how much one appreciates and likes oneself. Self-esteem involves a variety of belief about oneself, such as appearance, belief, emotions and behaviors. Self-esteem is an essential contribution to the life process and is indispensable to normal and healthy self-development, and has a value for survival. Self-esteem promotion can benefit from lifestyle-oriented activities. Its growth takes place in the larger context of relationship, environment related experience, attitude toward self and achievements. People with poor self-esteem often rely on how they are doing in the present to determine how they feel about themselves. They need positive external experiences to counteract the negative feelings and thoughts that constantly plague them. Even then, the good feeling can be temporary.

II. Rationale of the Study

In 21st century, India has seen many changes driven by women empowerment. As they flourished, women became economically independent. Even after the gained independence, the Cinderella complex still remains a dominant part of the lives of women. In our

country, most of the girls do get a proper education and holds the right to vote. But when it comes to getting higher education abroad, they get taunted as 'too ambitious'. It is also very common that women's ambitions are undermined by fear. Primary issues when it comes to dealing with achievement are confidence and low self-esteem. Women are more cautious of their actions rather than confident in their decisions. Lack of self-confidence affects women's self-image and consequently their ability to function effectively. This leads women to constantly underestimate and not feel confident in their own abilities.

Gilligan (1982) focused on the differences between men and women. Gilligan postulated that problems which may be seen in female development are problems that emerge from relational issues. Theories of personality and development, such as Erickson or Freud, do not necessarily account for all of the gender differences that can occur within personality and development for females and males (Gilligan, 1982). Thus, it is important to go beyond the current prevailing theories and emphasize certain aspects of female development of the self that may differ from male development. Miller (as cited in Katz et al., 1993) postulated that although both sexes are in relationship with others throughout the developmental process it is the female that is more motivated to stay in relation and connected with others. This relationship and connection with others becomes part of a woman's idea of self-esteem. Thus, her capacity for connectedness and nurturing are important for her to be in relationship with others. Miller (as cited in Katz et al., 1993) proposed that females from a very young age are encouraged into relationship and connectedness while males are discouraged from feeling what another may feel or becoming too connected with that individual. Negative perceptions as well as the devaluation of a central aspect of the female self-place the female at risk for many mental illnesses, low self-esteem, and relationship conflict.

The present study was an effort to understand the relationship between the Cinderella Complex and Self Esteem.

III. Objectives

1. To study the level of Cinderella Complex among young females.
2. To study the level of Self Esteem among young females.
3. To measure the co-relation between Cinderella Complex and Self Esteem among young females.

IV. Methodology

Population and Sample: The population of the study comprised of the young females of Delhi- NCR India of the age group 18 to 25. The sample comprised of 60 female participants age ranged between 18 to 25 years

of age. The study is delimited to unmarried females only.

Tests/Tools for data collection: Two scales were used for data collection, namely, The Cinderella Complex Scale (Saha and Safri), and Self Esteem Scale (SES) (Dhar and Dhar). The independent variable in the study was Cinderella Complex, and dependent Variable was Self Esteem.

V. Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The data was analyzed quantitatively by using mean, SD and co-relation. Maximum number of the participants have medium level (38%) of Cinderella Complex. Whereas, 32% and 30% of participants have high and low level of Cinderella Complex. Higher level of Cinderella Complex signifies the dependency of women on men in their lives. It can be inferred from the data that the desire for dependency among women is imbibed in the women since the childhood. This dependency is so deep rooted in women that it becomes their second nature to conform their existence from men in their lives. The scores ranging from 26-40, depicts high level of dependency (32%) among women. Such women are highly dependent, conform to traditional roles and have unrealistic expectations from their relationships. They are more prone to abuse in their relationships. Scores ranging from 14-25 depicts moderate level (38%) of dependency among women. These women are ambitious, yet prefer traditional roles of womanhood. They find conflict in maintaining balance between their personal and professional life. Scores ranging from 00-13 depicts low level of dependency (30%) among women. Such women are highly independent, ambitious and strong. They are distant from social norms and have high self- esteem as compared to others.

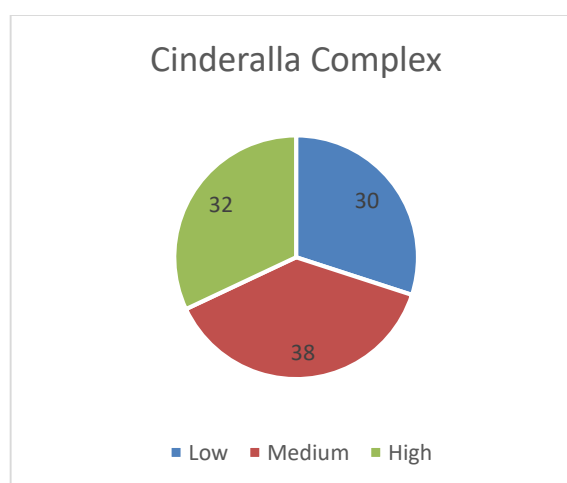


Figure 1 Analysis of Cinderella Complex

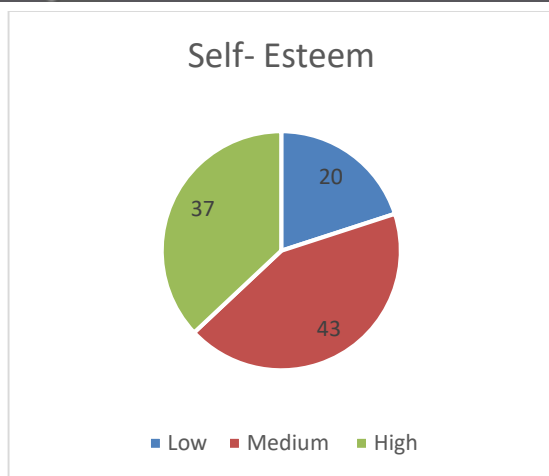


Figure 2 Analysis of Self Esteem Scale

Further, from the analysis of Self Esteem, it was inferred that maximum 43% of respondents have moderate level of self-esteem. Whereas, 37% of respondents have high level of self-esteem and 20% of respondents have low level of self-esteem. The data depicts that maximum number of respondents have moderate level of self-esteem.

Table 1: Co-relation between level of Cinderella Complex and Self-Esteem

Variables	N	Mean	Correlation (By Pearson)
Cinderella Complex	60	20.23	r = - 0.8033
Self Esteem	60	90.31	

The hypothesis of the study was tested and it resulted that there is a negative correlation between Cinderella Complex and Self-Esteem, Pearson's r correlation coefficient was used to measure the relationship between Cinderella Complex and Self-Esteem. In accordance with the study's hypothesis, results indicate negative relationship between Cinderella Complex and Self-Esteem as the value of 'r' in the Pearson's correlation coefficient is - 0.8033. This shows a negative correlation, therefore the relationship between the variables is significant as mentioned in the hypothesis. Hence the hypothesis of the study was accepted.

From the above-mentioned results, it was interpreted that the women with high Cinderella Complex will show disinclination to work towards creating a positive self-esteem. Women scoring high on Cinderella complex were found scoring low on self-esteem and vice versa. The results and statistical analysis clearly show the negative co-relation between the two variables; Cinderella Complex and Self-Esteem. The women with high dependency factor scored low on self-esteem which shows that their dependency on men can be one

of the reasons of their lack of confidence and low self-worth. They do not feel competent enough to survive in the world on their own and do not trust their own capabilities. This leads to intense self-doubt in areas such as handling finances, making choices or facing life challenges, and low self-worth leading to acceptance of poor treatment in unhealthy relationships. This stops women from using their full skills which further weakens their self-confidence.

Therefore, it can be said that the concept of Cinderella Complex is still relevant in the contemporary context. It is important to encourage studies related to Cinderella Complex, since dependency on men is a general consensus, most of the cases and its implications go unnoticed. Women suffering with the symptoms of Cinderella Complex get into unrealistic relationships and engage in unhealthy relationship.

VI. Implications

- The study can also be helpful in organizing the Therapy sessions following the five-step procedure for the women having the Cinderella Complex. It will also help in boosting their self-esteem as well.
- In the field of Sociology, the study can help in understanding the concept of gender socialization in a better way, as it is origin of Cinderella Complex. Awareness programmes can also be organized related to societal issues. Gender dynamics in the society can be comprehended with the help of the research.
- In the field of Gender and Women Studies, sensitization programmes can be organized for both male and females. It is important to empower the women about their rights but also necessary to educate men as well to understand the women rights in a better way.
- The study can also be useful in the other allied disciplines like Education, Social Psychology, Social Work etc.
- Apart from Cinderella Complex in women, some concepts in men can also be identified. As they are also victim of gender biased behaviours in their lives. Their fear of showing emotional vulnerability, expressing themselves openly etc can also be explored.

VII. Conclusion

In Indian society, women's independence and assertiveness are not encouraged, which subsequently, lose their skills in dealing with their environment and their problems. In turn, they seek for their men to solve their problems and their lives. As a result, they cannot build their own identity but instead build up their identity in terms of their men's identity. These women are willing to subordinate themselves to win a man to rely on. Conferring to Dowling, the reason behind the willingness of subordination of these women is that they are never trained to think about themselves or to speak

about themselves. As an alternative, they are trained to avoid independence; that is, they have “the wish to be saved.” It is nice to have their career, but if there is a chance to meet their Prince Charming, they would rather to marry up and to be protected by their “prince.”

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