

Self-Esteem among Youth in the Fishermen Community Residing With and Without Elderly: A Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT

Self-esteem refers to the individual's overall positive or negative evaluation of the self, (Rosenberg-1965). It reflects how individuals perceive themselves in relation to their abilities, social roles, and life situations. High self-esteem is linked with confidence, positive relationships, and resilience in facing challenges, whereas low self-esteem is associated with feelings of inadequacy, anxiety, and vulnerability to stress. Youth are the future of every community, and their psychological well-being plays a key role in social and economic development. In the fishermen community, youth face multiple psycho-social challenges such as uncertain livelihoods, family pressures, marital conflicts, social marginalization, and financial crisis. These factors can negatively impact their self-esteem, affecting confidence, decision-making, resilience, and social interactions. Fostering self-esteem in this context is therefore crucial, not only for individual mental health but also for empowering youth to navigate psycho-social challenges and contribute meaningfully to the growth and resilience of their community. Within this dynamic, the presence of elderly family members can play a pivotal role, as their guidance, advice, and emotional support provide protective factors that strengthen youth resilience and enhance self-esteem. The present study adopts a comparative design, focusing on 54 youth from the fishermen community of Arthunkal village Alappuzha, Kerala. The sample consists of two groups: 28 youth residing with elderly family members and 26 youth not residing with elderly in their households. Simple random sampling method was employed. This study underscores the influence of elderly family members on the psychosocial well-being of youth. The guidance, advice, and supportive presence of elders function as protective factors, enabling young people to manage psychosocial challenges more effectively. Youth residing with elderly members are expected to demonstrate stronger intergenerational support, which contributes to minimizing psychosocial problems and enhancing self-esteem. The present comparative study aims to examine the significant role of elderly family members in influencing the self-esteem of youth, by comparing those residing with elderly members in their households and those not residing with elderly. The findings and based on these insights, targeted social work interventions and recommendations have been proposed in the full paper to foster and enhance their self-esteem among youth in fishermen community.

Keywords: Youth, Fishermen Community, Self-esteem, Elder people

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INTRODUCTION

India is experiencing a significant demographic transition, with an increasing proportion of older persons who can contribute not only as caregivers but also as active agents in social and community development. The National Conference, "Navigating India's Ageing Population: A Roadmap for Viksit Bharat 2047", emphasizes the potential of older persons to drive local and global action, moving beyond the perception of ageing as a burden to viewing it as a demographic dividend.

In modern times, **intergenerational bonds between youth and older family members are weakening**, leading to a rise in psychosocial problems among young people. In Kerala, compared to previous generations, there is an increase in family-related issues such as **divorce, marital conflicts, domestic tensions, and even suicide**

among youth, reflecting the pressures and vulnerabilities of contemporary life. A key factor underlying these challenges is the **low level of self-esteem**, which diminishes the ability of young individuals to cope with stress, make decisions, and maintain healthy relationships. Strong family bonds, particularly the presence and support of elderly family members, play a critical role in fostering self-esteem and resilience. Youth who maintain close intergenerational relationships are better equipped to navigate life challenges, develop emotional stability, and engage positively with their communities. Understanding the influence of these family dynamics is therefore crucial for designing interventions that promote the psychosocial well-being of youth in Kerala.

Intergenerational dynamics is crucially essential, as the relationship between youth and elderly family members

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can significantly shape psychosocial outcomes. Youth rely on elders not only for emotional support but also for guidance, mentorship, and the transmission of cultural and social values. High-quality intergenerational interactions have been shown to enhance confidence, decision-making abilities, resilience, and overall self-esteem. In the fishermen community of Arthunkal village, Alappuzha district, youth are particularly vulnerable to multiple stressors, including economic uncertainty due to fluctuating fishing yields, social marginalization, family pressures, and early marital responsibilities. The presence of elderly family members provides protective support, helps manage psychosocial stressors, and fosters a sense of belonging and security. By offering wisdom, advice, and emotional care, elders contribute to the development of adaptive coping strategies, which strengthens youth resilience and prepares them to engage more effectively in social and community life.

This study specifically investigates the **impact of elderly family members on youth self-esteem** by comparing two groups: those residing with elderly family members and those not residing with them. Through this comparative approach, the study seeks to identify the differences in self-esteem levels, the role of intergenerational support, and how such familial interactions can mitigate psychosocial challenges. By highlighting these dynamics, the research contributes to the broader agenda of recognizing older persons as active agents in community development. It underscores the importance of integrating the wisdom, experience, and mentorship of elders into youth development strategies, aligning with the conference theme of promoting the **well-being, dignity, and active participation of older persons** while leveraging their potential to contribute to a *Viksit Bharat 2047*.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Erikson (1968) emphasizes that adolescence and young adulthood represent critical phases for identity formation, where role models and supportive figures significantly shape self-concept. Elders in the family often function as stabilizing influences, providing guidance, reassurance, and a sense of continuity with tradition. Erikson argues that when youth receive such support, they are more likely to experience identity cohesion and higher self-esteem, whereas the absence of these intergenerational supports can lead to confusion and role conflict.

Rastogi and Thergaonkar (2017) examined the psychological well-being of adolescents in joint versus nuclear family structures. Their findings indicate that adolescents in joint families, where elders are present, showed higher levels of perceived emotional support and resilience. The authors suggest that the intergenerational presence of grandparents or older relatives contributes positively to adolescents' coping strategies and overall life satisfaction.

Merz, Schuengel, and Schulze (2019) investigate the ambivalence in intergenerational ties, finding that while elders often serve as sources of support, they may also

create tension through conflicting values or expectations. Their research demonstrates that the quality of elder–youth relationships, rather than mere co-residence, is the strongest predictor of positive self-concept in young people. Ambivalence in these relationships requires youth to negotiate autonomy and dependence, influencing self-esteem in nuanced ways.

Chaudhary and Sharma (2019) focused on the role of grandparents in shaping the self-esteem of Indian youth. Their study revealed that grandparents, especially grandmothers, provide a sense of unconditional acceptance and guidance, which strengthens the confidence of adolescents. The research underscores the unique Indian cultural context where grandparents' involvement is not peripheral but central to youth development.

Kumar and Thomas (2021) investigated intergenerational relationships in Kerala's coastal communities, showing that elders play a crucial role in mentoring youth and maintaining community solidarity. They found that youth residing with elderly family members displayed stronger respect for traditions, higher self-esteem, and lower anxiety levels compared to those living without elders. The study emphasizes the significance of intergenerational bonds in preserving both psychological well-being and cultural continuity in Kerala.

Jose, Walusimbi, Vanithaa et al. (2025) examined self-concept among adolescents in small-scale fishing communities in Kerala. The study found that co-residence and interactions with family elders significantly influenced adolescents' self-perception, confidence, and emotional regulation. Males showed higher physical and intellectual self-concept, whereas females reported stronger educational and moral self-concept, indicating nuanced gender-based effects of intergenerational influence.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Objectives

1. To study the socio-demographic profile of the youth who is residing and not residing with elderly in fishermen community
2. To assess the level of self-esteem among youth residing with elderly family members in the fishermen community.
3. To assess the level of self-esteem among youth not residing with elderly family members in the fishermen community.
4. To compare the self-esteem levels between youth residing with elderly family members and those not residing with elderly.

Hypothesis

1. **H₁:** Youth residing with elderly family members have **significantly higher self-esteem** than youth not residing with elderly family members in the fishermen community.

H₀: There is **no significant difference** in the self-esteem levels between youth residing with elderly family members and youth not residing with elderly family members in the fishermen community.

The study adopts a **descriptive research design** to examine the influence of elderly family members on the self-esteem of youth in the fishermen community of Arthunkal village, Alappuzha district, Kerala. According to the *Survey of Aged in Kerala (2012–13)*, Alappuzha district has 245,698 persons aged 60 and above, and about 70.07% of its households include at least one elderly person. Hence, Arthunkal was purposively selected due to its high elderly population and strong intergenerational ties, providing an ideal context to explore how living arrangements with or without elderly family members affect youth self-esteem. The study covered **54 youth** selected through simple random sampling, comprising **28**

residing with elderly family members and 26 without. Respondents aged 18–29 years, belonging to the fishermen community, and willing to participate voluntarily were included. Data were collected using a **structured interview schedule** with two parts: socio-demographic details and the **Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965)**. The researcher personally administered the interviews after obtaining informed consent and ensuring confidentiality. Data were analyzed using **SPSS**, applying descriptive statistics and inferential tests (*t*-test and chi-square) to identify differences between groups. Ethical standards of voluntary participation, privacy, and confidentiality were maintained.

RESULTS

Findings related to the socio-demographic variables

The following findings present the data related to the demographic variables of the respondents

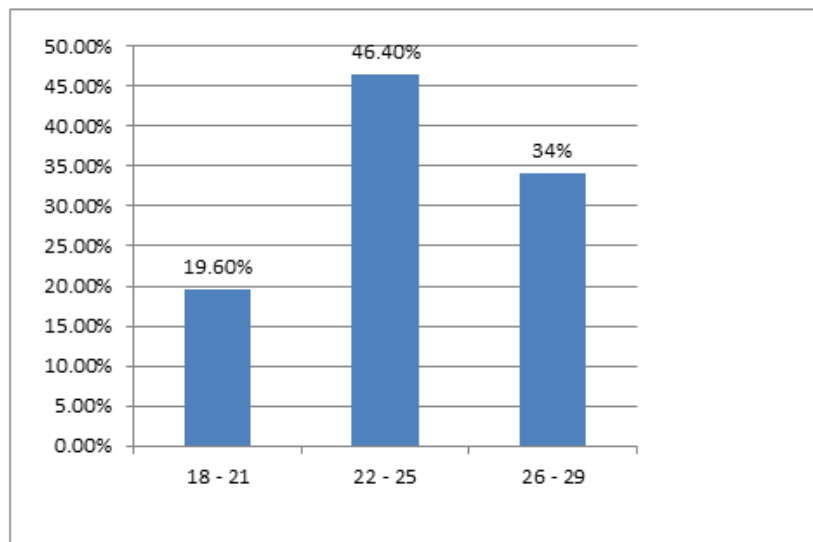


Figure – 1

Age of the Respondents

The figure 1 depicts the age distribution of the respondents, showing that 46.4% belong to the 22–25 years category, 34% fall within the 26–29 years group, and

19.6% are in the 18–21 years group. This indicates that the majority of the respondents are young adults in their early to mid-twenties.

Distribution of the respondents on the basis of Gender, Educational Qualification, Family Type, Monthly Income, Marital Status

Table – 1

Sl.No	Variable	Percentage (100)
1.	Gender	
	Male	55.3%
	Female	44.7%
2.	Educational Qualification	
	High School	1.78%
	Higher Secondary	46.4%
	Under Graduation	46.4%
	Post Graduation and Higher	5.5%
3.	Family Type	
	Joint Family	23.2%
	Nuclear Family	76.78

4.	Monthly Income	
	< 15000	50.0%
	15001 – 20000	46.4%
	Above 20000	3.6%
5.	Marital Status	
	Married	23.2%
	Unmarried	76.7%

Table 1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents based on gender, educational qualification, family type, monthly income, and marital status. The data show that a higher proportion of respondents are **male (55.3%)**, while **female respondents constitute 44.7%** of the sample. Regarding educational qualification, **46.4%** each have completed **higher secondary** and **undergraduate** education, followed by **5.5%** with **postgraduate or higher qualifications**, and only **1.78%** with **high school education**, indicating that most respondents possess a relatively good educational background. In terms of family type, a majority (**76.78%**)

belong to **nuclear families**, whereas **23.2%** come from **joint families**, reflecting the growing prevalence of nuclear family systems. With respect to monthly income, **half of the respondents (50%)** earn **below ₹15,000**, **46.4%** fall in the **₹15,001–₹20,000** range, and **3.6%** earn **above ₹20,000**, showing that most respondents belong to lower and middle-income groups. Concerning marital status, **76.7%** of the respondents are **unmarried**, and **23.2%** are **married**, suggesting that the majority of participants are young adults who are yet to enter marital life.

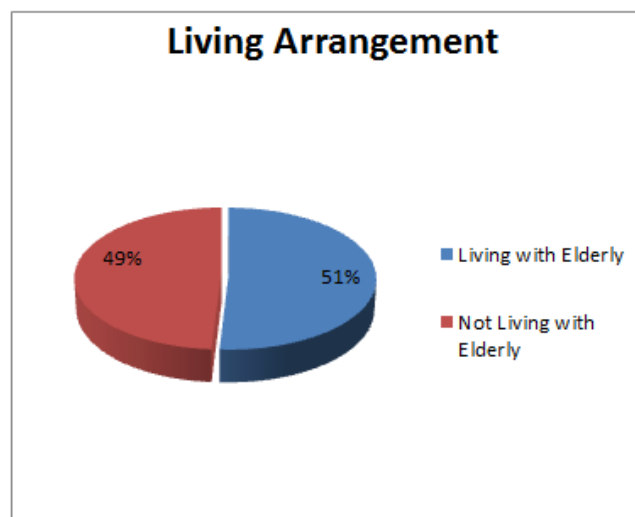


Figure 2

The figure 2 depicts the living arrangement of the respondents, showing that **51% are living with elderly members**, while **49% are not living with elderly members**. This indicates that a **slightly higher proportion of respondents reside with elderly family**

members, suggesting a balance between **joint and nuclear family systems** among the participants.

Findings related to the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale

Findings related to the descriptive and statistical analysis

Table 2: 't' test between the youth residing and not residing with elderly regards to self-esteem

S. No	Self-esteem	- X	S.D	Statistical Inference
1.	Youth Residing with Elderly (N.28) Youth Not Residing with Elderly (N.26)	22.46 16.96	1.15 1.26	t = 16.73 p<0.01 Significant

The table 2 above shows the statistical results about comparing the self esteem level of two groups such as the respondents who are living with elderly and not living with elderly and the descriptive statistics for the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) showed youth residing with elderly family members (n=28) reported a higher mean self-esteem score (X =22.46, SD=1.15) compared to youth not residing with elderly family

members (n=26); (X =16.96, SD=1.26). An Independent Samples t-test was conducted confirmed homogeneity of variances. The analysis revealed a statistically significant difference (Mean Difference = 5.50) between the groups, as summarized in Table 2. The significant t-value, t(52)=16.73, p<0.001, leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

The data provide strong evidence supporting the research alternative hypothesis that youth residing with elderly family members have significantly higher self-esteem than the non-residing group.

MAJOR FINDINGS

1. The distribution of respondents based on age revealed that the less than half of the respondents (**46.4%**) were in the 22–25 years age group.
2. The distribution of respondents based on gender revealed that more than half of the respondents were male (**55.3%**).
3. Analysis of educational qualifications showed that the less than half of the respondents had completed **Higher Secondary (46.4%)** and another less than half of the respondents were pursuing **Undergraduate studies (46.4%)**.
4. The findings indicated that a more than majority of respondents belonged to **nuclear families (76.78%)**
5. Family income levels revealed that half of the respondents, **50%** of them came from families earning **less than ₹15,000**. This highlights that most respondents were from **low to middle-income households**.
6. Regarding marital status, more than majority of respondents were **unmarried (76.7%)**.
7. More than half of respondents (54.6%) who are not living with elderly exhibit a low level of self-esteem, while only 14% display a high level, indicating that most youth without elderly family members tend to have diminished self-worth and confidence.
8. A less than half of the respondents (42.4%) who are living with elderly exhibit a **high level of self-esteem**, while only 16.6% show a **low level**, indicating that residing with elderly family members positively influences the youth's self-worth and confidence.
9. Descriptive statistics for the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) showed youth residing with elderly family members reported a higher mean self-esteem score compared to youth not residing with elderly family members.
10. An independent *t*-test revealed a significant difference in self-esteem between the two groups, $t(52)=16.73$, $p<0.001$, indicating that youth living with elderly family members have significantly higher self-esteem than those not living with them.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Social workers should develop programs that encourage regular interactions between youth and elderly family members to foster guidance, emotional support, and positive role modeling.

2. Establish community groups or youth clubs where young people can express themselves, gain recognition, and receive peer and adult support.
3. Use social media and local platforms to spread awareness about the importance of self-esteem and healthy family connections.
4. Social workers can facilitate intergenerational bonding initiatives, conduct self-esteem enhancement programs, and provide continuous psychosocial support to vulnerable youth.
5. Use casework method to help youth not residing with elderly cope with emotional deprivation and loneliness.
6. Conduct structured group sessions where youth can engage in activities that build self-confidence, communication, and social skills.
7. Conduct community awareness drives highlighting the importance of family support and elderly influence on youth development.
8. Conduct continuous research on the effectiveness of intergenerational programs in improving youth self-esteem.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the presence of elderly family members has a significant positive influence on the self-esteem of youth in the fishermen community. Youth residing with elderly members exhibited higher levels of confidence, self-worth, and resilience, suggesting that intergenerational support provides guidance, emotional stability, and coping resources that help them navigate the psychosocial challenges inherent in their community, such as uncertain livelihoods, financial pressures, and social marginalization. In contrast, youth not residing with elderly family members were more likely to experience lower self-esteem, indicating greater vulnerability to stress and diminished psychosocial functioning. These results emphasize the critical role of family structure and social support in fostering psychological well-being, highlighting that the presence of elders acts as a protective factor that strengthens youth resilience. The study underscores the need for targeted social work interventions, community programs, and mentorship initiatives that enhance intergenerational connections and provide guidance and support to youth lacking elderly presence. By fostering such protective factors, it becomes possible to empower youth, improve their self-esteem, and promote their overall psychosocial development, thereby contributing to the resilience and growth of marginalized populations like the fishermen community.

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