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## Self-Esteem and its Relationship to some Demographic Variables among Students with Learning Disabilities

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# Self-Esteem and its Relationship to some Demographic Variables among Students with Learning Disabilities

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**Abstract:** This study aimed at identifying self-esteem and its relationship to some demographic variables among students with learning disabilities in Irbid, Jordan. The study used the descriptive methodology and used a scale to measure the levels of self-esteem among 2000 male and female students from the third and fourth grades in primary schools in Irbid city. The results revealed that the level of self-esteem was average. There were apparent significant differences in the levels of self-esteem due to the effect of gender, and the differences came in favor of males. The results also showed no statistically significant differences due to the effect of the school grade. In light of the results of the study, the researcher recommends raising the level of the students' self-esteem through cooperation between school administrations, teachers, and students' parents, and researchers conducting developmental studies, comparing levels of shyness and self-esteem among students at different ages and environments.

**Keywords:** Demographic variables, Learning disabilities, School administration, Self-esteem.

## 1 Introduction

Learning disabilities vary from one individual to another. The term does not imply a disorder, but rather a problem in some major skills, such as reading, listening, reasoning, or speaking. Students with such problems can succeed in school and their lives if they are treated early and dealt with in a way that is different from regular students. On the personal and the psychological level, these students should be encouraged and inspired to achieve better in their academic lives. Hence, the concept of self-esteem becomes an important factor in boosting the morale of these students to achieve better. The concept of self-esteem appeared five decades ago and was studied thoroughly by a group of researchers in psychology such as Rosenberg, Cooper Smith, Zeller, and Willis, who identified its definition and its relationship to psychological variables, as well as its impact on the personality of the individual [1]. Self-esteem refers to an individual's positive or negative view of himself/herself, and the awareness of a person's skills and abilities, which affect his/her view of himself/herself [2].

Kavas [3] explained that self-esteem is concerned with evaluating the individual and his/her self-attitudes, which take their place in judging the self-concept with acceptance and high appreciation.

Self-esteem affects the individual's self and social behaviors. Individuals with high self-esteem are self-confident and take social responsibility, in addition to their social effectiveness and their easy integration with peer groups and colleagues. The results of studies in this field [2] indicated that individuals with high self-esteem are more able to control their lives and manage their emotions and behaviors, and they are more productive, happy, and satisfied with their lives.

### Problem Statement

Self-esteem is a major variable in the development of a person's life. It impacts the educational level as well. It is highly effective and influential for students with learning disabilities also. Therefore, the purpose of the current study is to reveal the level of self-esteem of students with learning disabilities in Irbid Governorate.

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## Research Questions

- 1- What is the level of self-esteem among primary school students with learning disabilities in Irbid Governorate?
2. Do the levels of self-esteem of primary school students with LDs differ according to gender and school grade?

## Significance of the Study

The current study is important because it covers a crucial topic, which is investigating the impact of self-esteem on the formation of the personality of the individual in the most important stages of his life, which is the primary stage, specifically the third and fourth grades. The practical significance of the study stems from informing the concerned authorities of the educational process, which may contribute to drawing the attention of educational counselors and teachers working in primary schools in Irbid governorate to the impact on the self-esteem of students with learning disabilities, to take the necessary measures regarding this issue.

## Delimitations of the Study

The results of this study are limited to the sample of primary school students with learning disabilities, who study in the two grades (third and fourth) in primary schools in Irbid Governorate in the first semester of the 2021-2022 academic year. The results of this study can be generalized to the extent of verification of the psychometric properties of the measurement tools, objectivity, impartiality in the application, and the validity of the study sample's response to the study instrument.

## 2 Literature Review

The concept of the human self and related concepts such as the Self, self-realization, self-esteem, and self-efficacy are among the basic concepts of personality. They all seek to achieve integration and personality consistency, so the individual can adapt to the environment in which he lives, and distinguish themselves from other people. Scientists started studying the concept of self-esteem in the sixties of the twentieth century, and among the most prominent scholars who dealt with this subject in research and practice were Rosenberg, Cooper Smith, Jung, and Zeller [1].

Al-Baqour [4] defined self-esteem as "the judgments that an individual makes about himself compared to others, and they represent his abilities and skills that he possesses to perform a certain skill or perform an achievement." Coopersmith (2005: 2) defined it as "the individual's beliefs about himself, his capabilities and his abilities to succeed and fail while facing different life challenges and the world around him."

Self-esteem is important for students because it constitutes a strong motive for achievement and excellence, as it is the internal force that drives human behavior, and maintains the internal consistency of human behavior. The individual who has self-esteem uses abilities and skills to achieve higher and lives a richer life than others. A self-esteemed person thus

achieves psychological compatibility free of emotional conflicts and discouraging factors that other students may experience [5]. Self-esteem is essential to human well-being from a psychological point of view, in addition to being an emotional necessity. Without a certain amount of self-esteem, life can be very difficult and painful, with many basic needs not being satisfied [6].

Arslan [7] points out that self-esteem is one of the essential concepts during adolescence, which is greatly affected by parental family education and the group of companions and leads the individual to play a vital role in social interactions, and eventually leads to success, happiness, and high self-confidence. Those who feel high self-esteem feel happy and have personal effectiveness. They can create intimate relationships, and they are more resistant to psychosomatic disorders. However, those who have a problem with their self-esteem, are vulnerable to shock from events, and others. Self-esteem gives the individual a feeling of love, acceptance, trust, and acceptance of new attempts [8].

## Previous Studies

Agbaria et al [9] investigated the impact of using a training program based on psychodrama in improving the levels of self-esteem among students with LDs. The study experimented on 30 male and female students in Palestine using the self-esteem scale. The findings showed that the students who received the training have improved their levels of self-esteem. The gender variable has less impact on the differences in the levels of self-esteem among students.

Bayazid [10] explored the relationship between parental treatment methods and self-esteem among students with learning disabilities in the primary grades in schools in Jeddah. The study sample consisted of (150) students with learning difficulties in the third grade of primary school. The researcher used the descriptive correlative approach, using the Hawarna Family Upbringing Attitudes Scale (2005), and the Hare Self-Esteem Scale (1975). The results showed that the parental treatment method (authoritarianism - neglect) was the most common, while the least common method was (democratic - overprotective). The highest degree of self-esteem is (family self-esteem), while the lowest degree is (school self-esteem), in addition to the absence of a correlation between the total score of the parenting styles of the father and the mother and all dimensions of self-esteem, except for the dimension (family self-esteem).

Al-Rumaidi [11] investigated the impact of learning disabilities on self-esteem among students with LDs who are not included in regular classes. The study used the descriptive approach and was applied to 100 students from fourth and fifth grades, who have LDs. The study found significant differences in the level of self-esteem among the sample, as the levels were low compared to regular students. Musetti et al [12] explored how psychological interventions with parental support help in raising the self-esteem of students with LDs. The study was applied to 93 students after completing a scale to measure their levels of self-esteem.

The study revealed that students who receive these interventions with parental support increase their levels of self-esteem dramatically.

Mohammad and Al-Muqbil [13] identified the level of self-esteem and its relationship to aggressive behavior among a sample of female students with learning disabilities and compared them with normal female students. The sample included (116) female students: (56) female students with learning difficulties and (60) normal female students. The study used the self-esteem scale, prepared by Bruce R. Hare (1985), and the aggressive behavior scale prepared by the researchers. The results of the study concluded that there is an inverse relationship with statistical significance between self-esteem and its various dimension: (family, school, peers) and aggressive behavior among students with learning difficulties.

Saday Duman and Aysev [14] explored the effectiveness of educational therapy on the level of self-esteem and problem behaviors in children diagnosed with a specific learning disability. The study included 150 students, who participated in answering scales to measure their levels of self-esteem. The investigation revealed that self-esteem among students with SLD was lower than their regular peers. After performing a treatment program, the students have their levels of self-esteem increased and their problem behavior decreased.

### 3 Research Methodology

The current study is based on describing the levels of self-esteem among primary school students with learning disabilities. This goal needs a descriptive research approach to analyze and present the data. The study was based on examining the correlation between self-esteem and a group of other variables. Therefore, the research method used was the descriptive method.

#### Population and Sample

The population of the study included primary school students with learning disabilities from the third and fourth grades in Irbid governorate, and their number was (2000) male and female students. The final number of participants was (200) male and female students from the third and fourth grades in primary schools in Irbid Governorate.

#### Research Instrument

The self-esteem scale was developed based on theoretical literature, educational literature, and psychological measures available in previous studies [3], [15], [16], [17], [18]. In light of these studies, the self-esteem scale was developed to suit the current study environment, and it included (40) items, divided into four dimensions, which were as follows. The first is the personal dimension. which is the positive evaluation of the individual of his abilities, and his potential for success in life (items 1-10). The second is the psychological dimension, which is the positive psychological feelings of the individual's attitudes and positive feelings towards his abilities (items 11-20). The third is the social dimension, which is the individual's positive evaluation of his social and communicative abilities

with others, and his sense of his social importance in the family, school, and social environment (items 21-30). Fourth, is the academic dimension, which is the positive evaluation of the individual about his achievement and cognitive abilities, his ability to achieve, and academic success (items 31-40).

#### Validity and reliability of the instrument

To achieve the content validity (apparent validity) of the self-esteem scale, it was presented to (10) arbitrators from specialized faculty members. After considering their comments, the scale became 40 items in its final form.

To check the reliability of the instrument, the scale was applied to an exploratory sample outside the study sample that consisted of (50) primary school students with learning disabilities in Irbid Governorate. The application was performed twice with an interval of two weeks. The consistency was measured through the test-retest method, by calculating the Pearson correlation coefficient between the scores of the first application and the second application. The Pearson correlation coefficient was used to calculate the response stability coefficient between the two applications, and the total reliability coefficient in this way was (0.89), which is a high coefficient.

### 4 Findings

#### Results of the first question:

To answer the first question of the study, the mean scores and standard deviations of the level of self-esteem of primary school students with LDs were extracted, and Table (1) illustrates the results.

**Table 1:** The mean scores and standard deviations of the level of self-esteem among primary school students according to gender and school grade.

Sequence	NO.	Dimensions	Mean score	St.dev	Level
1	1	Personal	3.71	0.62	High
2	2	Psychological	3.62	0.54	Medium
3	4	Academic	3.60	0.53	Medium
4	3	Social	3.44	0.56	Medium
Total			3.60	0.50	Medium

Table (1) shows that the level of self-esteem of primary school students with learning disabilities in Irbid had a medium degree. The total mean score was (3.60), as the personal dimension ranked first with the highest mean score (3.71), while the social dimension came in the last rank, with a mean score of (3.44) .

The mean scores and standard deviations of the responses of the study sample were calculated on the items of each dimension separately as follows:

#### 1. The personal dimension

The mean scores and standard deviations of the personal dimension of the level of self-esteem of primary school students with LDs were extracted, as shown in Table 2.

Table (2) shows that the mean scores ranged between (3.60-4.35), where item No. (4) which states “I have the courage to admit my mistakes” came in the first place with

**Table 2:** The mean scores and standard deviations of the personal dimension items as arranged according to the mean scores.

sequence	NO.	Item	Mean score	Standard deviation	Level
1	4	I have the courage to admit my mistakes.	4.35	0.83	High
2	2	I express my thoughts in front of others.	3.98	0.82	High
3	1	I set goals compatible with my abilities.	3.93	0.95	High
4	9	I bear the responsibility entrusted to me.	3.89	1.00	High
5	6	I see that my ideas lead me to success.	3.84	1.06	High
6	8	I defend my rights vigorously.	3.86	1.10	High
7	10	I feel that I have many good character traits.	3.81	0.88	High
8	3	I strive to achieve success.	3.80	1.14	High
9	5	I can perform many of the things others do.	3.72	0.93	High
10	7	I face problems with courage	3.60	1.08	Medium
		Total	3.71	0.61	High

**Table 3:** The mean scores and standard deviations of the psychological dimension items as arranged according to the mean scores.

sequence	NO.	Item	Mean score	Standard deviation	Level
1	12	I feel that my presence in life is valuable.	4.22	0.83	High
2	20	Others respect me.	4.03	1.13	High
3	11	I feel satisfied with my life.	3.98	1.03	High
4	19	I love himself.	3.93	.083	High
5	13	I feel that my ambitions will be fulfilled.	3.86	0.96	High
6	16	I feel satisfied with my decisions.	3.84	1.12	High
7	14	I tend to give up quickly when things get tough.	3.75	0.90	High
8	18	I aspire to be better.	3.73	1.09	High
9	15	I feel frustrated when I fail.	3.45	1.27	Medium
10	17	I feel the power to overcome the difficulties.	3.21	1.31	Medium
		Total	3.62	0.54	Medium

an average of (4.35), while item No. (7), “I face problems with courage” ranked last, with a mean of (3.60). The total mean score of the personal dimension as a whole was (3.71).

## 2. The psychological dimension

The mean scores and standard deviations of the psychological dimension of the level of self-esteem of primary school students with LDs were extracted, as shown in Table 3.

Table (3) shows that the mean scores ranged from 3.21 to 4.22. Item No. (12) which states “I feel that my presence in life is valuable,” came in the first place with a mean score of (4.22), while item No. (17), "I feel the power to overcome the difficulties," came in the last rank, with a mean score of (3.21). The total mean score of the psychological dimension as a whole was (3.62).

## 3. The social dimension

The mean scores and standard deviations of the social dimension of the level of self-esteem of primary school students with LDs were extracted, as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4:** The mean scores and standard deviations of the social dimension items as arranged according to the mean scores.

sequence	NO.	Item	Mean score	Standard deviation	Level
1	22	I am annoyed by the criticism directed at me.	3.80	0.98	High
2	25	I speak fluently in front of others.	3.77	1.09	High
3	23	I participate with my friends in their events.	3.65	1.07	Medium
4	30	I care about the opinion of others in my work.	3.64	1.06	Medium
5	24	My friends turn to me to solve their problems.	3.58	1.20	Medium
6	27	I can take the initiative in social situations.	3.55	1.03	Medium
7	29	I always know what to say to people.	3.52	0.98	Medium
8	21	I can speak in front of a group of people without confusion.	3.59	1.70	Medium
9	26	I cannot achieve the success others have achieved.	3.48	1.10	Medium
10	28	I am weak in situations that require debate and dialogue.	3.49	1.10	Medium
		Total	3.57	0.55	Medium

**Table 5:** The mean scores and standard deviations of the academic dimension items as arranged according to the mean scores.

sequence	NO.	Item	Mean score	Standard deviation	Level
1	38	I think I have a high level of intelligence	3.63	0.97	Medium
2	31	I prefer my way of thinking when doing homework.	3.62	1.01	Medium
3	36	I feel that I can reach a high level of success.	3.61	0.84	Medium
4	40	I am satisfied with my achievement results.	3.60	0.92	Medium
5	32	I can give a valid opinion when asked.	3.59	0.12	Medium
6	37	I find myself competent to do homework.	3.58	1.02	Medium
7	35	I feel my scientific importance among my colleagues.	3.57	0.98	Medium
8	34	I do my homework regularly.	3.56	0.94	Medium
9	39	The teachers' behavior makes me feel low about my school achievement.	3.55	1.11	Medium
10	33	I feel I excel in studying.	3.54	1.10	Medium
		Total	3.61	0.54	Medium

Table (4) shows that the mean scores ranged from 3.48 to 3.80. Item No. (22) which states, "I am annoyed by criticism directed at me" came in the first place with an average of (3.80), while item No. (28), "I am weak in situations that require debate and dialogue," came in the last rank, with a mean score of 3.48. The total mean score of the social dimension as a whole was 3.57.

4. The academic dimension

The mean scores and standard deviations of the academic dimension of the level of self-esteem of primary school students with LDs were extracted, as shown in Table 5.

Table (5) shows that the mean scores ranged from 3.54 to 3.63. Item No. (38) which states "I think I have a high level of intelligence" came in the first place with a mean score of (4.00), while the item No. 33, which reads, "I feel I excel in studying," came in the last rank, with a mean score of 3.54. The total mean score for the academic dimension as a whole was (3.61)

Results of the second question:

To answer the second question of the study, the mean scores and standard deviations of the levels of self-esteem

**Table 6:** The mean scores and standard deviations of levels of self-esteem among primary school students according to gender and grade variables.

Variable	Category		Personal	Psychological	Social	Academic	Self-esteem
Gender	Male	Mean score	3.77	3.75	3.51	3.55	3.60
		St. dev	0.61	.378	0.50	0.40	0.49
	Female	Mean score	3.63	3.51	3.36	3.61	3.50
		St. dev	0.58	0.59	0.53	0.59	0.56
Grade	Third	Mean score	3.68	3.68	3.45	3.60	3.60
		St. dev	0.63	.570	0.53	0.45	0.52
	Fourth	Mean score	3.71	3.54	3.42	3.53	3.54
		St. dev	0.56	.473	0.50	0.56	0.50

**Table 7:** The MANCOVA analysis of the impact of gender and grade on the dimensions of self-esteem among primary school students with LDs.

Source of variance	Dimensions	Sum of squares	Freedom value	Mean square	F value	Sig.
Gender	Personal	2.25	1	2.270	6.747	.011
	psychological	3.94	1	3.950	17.310	.001
	Social	1.95	1	1.967	7.680	.008
	Academic	0.08	1	0.08	0.40	0.57
Grade	Personal	0.15	1	0.19	0.50	0.45
	psychological	0.46	1	0.49	2.06	0.13
	Social	0.02	1	0.02	0.08	0.80
	Academic	0.38	1	0.37	1.50	0.25
Error	Personal	81.67	197	0.32		
	psychological	55.49	197	0.20		
	Social	62.08	197	0.23		
	Academic	61.90	197	0.23		
Total	Personal	88.60	199			
	psychological	69.47	199			
	Social	69.95	199			
	Academic	66.07	199			

of primary school students with LDs in Irbid governorate were extracted according to the variables of gender and school grade, and table (6) illustrates the results.

Table 6 shows an apparent discrepancy in the mean scores and standard deviations of the levels of self-esteem among primary school students with learning disabilities in Irbid Governorate due to the different categories of gender and grade variables. To show the significance of the statistical differences between the mean scores, the MANCOVA analysis of variance was used, as shown in Table (7).

It is evident from Table (7) that there are statistically significant differences due to the effect of gender, and the differences are in favor of males. There are no statistically significant differences due to the effect of the school grade in all dimensions.

## 5 Discussions

The results of the first question revealed that the level of self-esteem of primary school students with LDs in Irbid governorate came with a medium degree. The personal dimension came in the first place with the highest mean score while the social dimension came in the last place.

The result of the average degree of self-esteem obtained by primary school students with LDs was due to the nature of the age stage of the study sample. Students in the primary stage begin to form a positive or negative view of themselves, through their awareness of their skills and abilities. Santrock [19] argued that self-esteem is concerned with evaluating the individual and his self-attitudes, which occurs by judging the self-concept of acceptance and high appreciation. Since this age is the beginning of the formation of self-esteem in the individual, it is logical for the sample members to have a medium level of self-esteem.

The reason for this result may be due to the nature of school upbringing and the traditional teaching practices that students are exposed to by teachers and school administrations. Students evaluate themselves, their abilities, and potentials, and limit the evaluation to the cognitive and achievement side only, which leads to their obtaining an average degree of self-esteem. Weitend & Lioyed [20] indicated in this field that self-esteem depends on the school and social factors, as it is a concept that exists in varying degrees, and reflects the individual's appreciation of his abilities, skills, and positive sense of himself and his potential.

This result may be attributed to some of the family practices that parents perform on their children, by comparing the behavior of the son with others and repeatedly blaming him for not reaching the parents' ambitions, which affects the students' self-esteem. When the student desires to reach a high-level conflict with expectations, self-esteem becomes associated with negative parental practices, and it will become at a medium level as a result of conflicting attitudes and practices.

The results of the second question of this study revealed that there were statistically significant differences in the levels of self-esteem among primary school students with LDs in Irbid governorate due to the effect of gender, and the differences came in favor of males. The results also showed there were no statistically significant differences due to the effect of the school grade.

The first result of this question indicates the superiority of male students in the level of self-esteem more than females. The reason for this may be due to the most important factors in raising self-esteem, which are the social factors and social experiences that students go through in their community, allowing them to practice various experiences and practice multiple skills, getting to know many personalities, dealing with adults and others. These factors are not available to female students, which leads to raising the self-esteem of male students because of the social experiences they go through compared to female students.

The second result of this question indicates that there are no statistically significant differences due to the effect of the school grade. The reason for this result may be due to the similarities between the classes included in this study. The researcher applied the study to the third and fourth classes, and the students of these two classes are of one age and live similar social and academic experiences. These factors may

have led to the absence of statistical differences in self-esteem attributable to the academic grade.

### Recommendation

Based on the previous results, the study recommends directing the attention of parents, teachers, and counselors to some of the disorders that may occur to students as a result of many personal and social factors, the most important of which is the problem of shyness among students. The study also recommends directing the attention of school principals, teachers, and counselors to the work of educational and social programs and activities that integrate students with cooperative and social work to address the problems of shyness that may affect some students, in addition to raising individuals' self-esteem.

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### Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict regarding the publication of this paper.

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