

Unleashing the Power of Ideal Self: Exploring its Impact on Collective Self-Esteem among University Students

Sidra-Tul-Muntaha^a

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of Ideal Self (IS) on collective self-esteem (CSE) among university students at University of Swabi. The study also explores gender-based distinctions, family systems as well as socio-economic status among study variables. The main hypotheses of the research suggest that Ideal Self positively affects collective self-esteem among students, male students at University of Swabi will have higher CSE compared to female students, and lower-class students will have higher collective self-esteem than middle and upper-class students. Data was gathered from a random sample of 200 students in the University of Swabi's faculty of social sciences using a survey study design including an equal number of men and women participants. Data were collected using established scales, including the Ideal Self Scale (IS) questionnaire and the Collective Self Esteem (CSE) questionnaire. Data were analyzed using statistical tools in SPSS, including normality checks, Pearson correlation analysis, descriptive statistics, Independent Sample t tests for gender differences, and an ANOVA for socioeconomic status differences. The results may have implications for educational institutions in supporting students' Ideal Self and fostering a positive collective self-esteem environment.

Keywords: power of ideal self, collective self-esteem, university students

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^a University of Swabi, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa – Pakistan email: doctors962@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

The term "ideal self" in psychology describes a person's perception of their best self, including their personal qualities, values, goals, and aspirations (Higgins, 1987; Rogers, 1959). It is formed through internalization of cultural and social norms, as well as personal experiences, and acts as a benchmark for assessing oneself and one's behavior (Higgins, 1987). Striving towards one's ideal self can provide motivation, direction, and a sense of purpose, but discrepancies between Ideal Self and actual self can lead to negative feelings and low self-esteem (Sheldon & Elliot, 1998; Higgins, 1987). Research has shown that the degree to which an individual's ideal self is congruent with their actual self is related to their psychological adjustment and well-being, with higher congruence leading to greater life satisfaction and positive affect (Higgins, 1987).

The Michelangelo model suggests that affirmation of ideal self-behavior and being treated according to one's ideal self can help individuals move towards their ideal self and experience personal and relationship growth (Rusbult et al., 2005). To prevent negative psychological consequences, it is crucial to recognize and resolve variances between the ideal and real self (Higgins, 1987). Future research in this area may explore the formation of the ideal self-concept and its promotion of positive outcomes (Higgins, 1987). To conclude that, The Michelangelo model has a profound connection to the ideal self, describing how we help loved ones become their best selves, reducing the gap between their actual and ideal selves. This process guides our behavior in relationships and reinforces our shared identity and group membership, ultimately enhancing collective self-esteem. By supporting others in their pursuit of self-actualization, we create an intricate web of interdependence, shaping our sense of self and informing our actions.

Collective self-esteem is an idea that stems from a branch of psychology that focuses on how a person's interactions with others and the social groupings they belong to affect how they perceive themselves (Rogers, 1959). According to Crocker's theory, people who have high levels of CSE have more prone to respond to dangers by demeaning the outsiders, promoting insiders. The subjective evaluation of an individual's self-concept that is predicated on labels that hold psychological importance for them, such as race, ethnicity, or nationality, as well as their affiliation with social groups like families, teams, or schools. In CSE evaluations, more active individuals of a social group typically perform better than less engaged ones. This construct, as considered through Crocker and her associates (e.g., Crocker & Luhtanen, 1990; Crocker, Luhtanen, Blaine, & Broadnax, 1994; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1991, 1992).

The current study aims to explore the relationship between IS and CSE among university students. Specifically, we investigate the impact of IS on CSE, as well as the effects of gender, family system, area of residence, and socio-economic status on CSE and IS. Our hypotheses are as follows:

- Ideal Self positively affects collective self esteem among students.
- Male students at University of Swabi will have higher CSE compared to female students.
- lower-class students will have higher collective self-esteem than middle and upper-class students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of the ideal self holds significant importance in psychology, as it represents an individual's vision of their desired or optimal self (Carver & Scheier, 2016; Higgins, 1987). Latin psychoanalyst Benvenuto (2022) explains that the self is intrinsically linked to the idea of ideal, where one's own Self is considered ideal. This notion extends to the idealization of others, creating a difference between the "Ideal Self" and the "Other self." Psychologist Carl Rogers introduced this concept in the 1950s, emphasizing its role as a motivational force for personal growth and self-actualization (Rogers, 1959). People are more inclined to act in ways that are consistent with their self-concept when they have a clear and positive ideal self, which improves psychological well-being (Rogers, 1959). However, the ideal self is not only a conscious construct; it also exists partially at an unconscious level that varies among individuals, influenced by personal and social factors (Baumeister, 1998; Higgins, 1989; Nasby, 1997; Schechter, 1974).

Extensive research has highlighted the significant role of Ideal Self in psychological functioning and wellbeing (Carver & Scheier, 1990; Higgins, 1987). A clear and positive ideal self can serve as a powerful motivator for individuals to strive for self-improvement and the achievement of personal goals (Carver & Scheier, 1990). Conversely, a discrepancy between actual self and ideal self can lead to feelings of dissatisfaction and distress (Higgins, 1987). Higgins (1987) introduced self discrepancy theory, which declares that the Ideal Self acts as an internal standard against which individuals evaluate their behavior and experiences. When there is a misalignment between actual, ideal self and negative emotions such as anxiety, guilt, shame may arise. Conversely, progress towards the ideal self can evoke positive emotions such as pride and fulfillment (Higgins, 1987).

Various factors contribute to the formation of the ideal self. Cultural values and norms play a significant role, with individuals in collectivistic cultures prioritizing group-oriented traits and behaviors in their ideal selves, while those in individualistic cultures emphasize personal achievement and autonomy (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Additionally, social comparison processes and feedback from others can shape an individual's ideal self (Swann et al., 2003). It is crucial to note that the pursuit of Ideal Self can have drawbacks, such as fostering perfectionism and self-criticism (Egan & Hirt, 2002). Despite these limitations, understanding the ideal self remains crucial for comprehending motivation and self-evaluation (Carver & Scheier, 1990; Higgins, 1987).

Measuring the ideal self can be challenging due to its subjective nature and individual variability. However, researchers have developed several scales to assess ideal self, including the Ideal Self questionnaire by Sedikides, Gaertner, and Vevea (2005) and the Higgins' Self Discrepancy Scale (Higgins, 1987). In summary, concept of the Ideal Self encompasses an The vision of an individual of their ideal self and acts as a powerful motivational force for personal growth and well-being. This construct is influenced by personal and social factors and can impact psychological functioning. While subjective and varying across individuals and contexts, the ideal self remains an essential element in understanding motivation and self-evaluation.

Collective Self Esteem

The idea of collective self esteem (CSE) has drawn a lot of attention in the study of social psychology. It proposes that how an individual feels about their social group(s) and their affiliation with them (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). (Crocker & Luhtanen, 1990; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) CSE has been connected linked to a variety of psychological outcomes, including Mental Health, resilience, and social support. In 1990, Jennifer Crocker and Riia Luhtanen became the first researchers to examine group self-esteem. They held the opinion that people's feelings about the groups they belonged to and their sense of self-worth were related. The subjective evaluation of an individual's self-concept as it relates to social groups they belong to, like their teams, families, or schools, as well as to Categories with psychological significance, like their ethnicity, race, or nationality. In CSE evaluations, more active members of a social group typically perform better than less active ones. According to Crocker and her coworkers' conceptualization. The degree to which people appreciate the social groupings or categories to which they belong, such as their cultural, racial, or national group, is referred to as collective self-esteem.

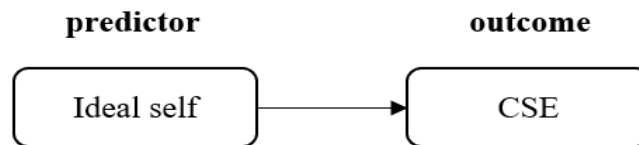
It is associated with the social identity hypothesis, which contends that a person's membership in different social groups contributes in some way to the definition of who they are as a person. Intergroup attitudes, behaviours, and well-being have all been found to be strongly predicted by collective self esteem (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). Other research has focused on the causes of CSE. According to research, social comparison can have an impact on CSE, for example, increasing the likelihood of high CSE among people who think their group has a high status (Crocker & Luhtanen, 1990; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). Group identity and the impression of social support from one's group are two further factors related to CSE (Jetten et al., 2002; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). Only a few of the factors that could affect CSE include group identity, social comparison, and the perceived status of social groups (Crocker & Luhtanen, 1990; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). It is challenging to measure CSE because it is a subjective construct that fluctuates depending on the person and their experiences. The CSES has the drawback of not taking into account individual differences in experiences and views, which are examples of diversity within social groupings (Major et al., 2003).

Alternative CSE measures, such as the Multidimensional Collective Self Esteem Scale (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) and the Diversity-Adjusted collective SelfEsteem questionnaire (Major et al., 2003), have been developed by researchers to solve this problem. large CSE. According to research, people with high collective self-esteem tend to be more supportive of their social networks, exhibit more pro-social behaviors, and have higher psychological well-being. Additionally, they show more tenacity in the face of prejudice and threats to their social identities. Conflicts and tensions between groups may thus worsen (Branscombe, Schmitt, and Harvey, 1999). On the other side, individuals with low group self esteem may be more inclined to behave in a manner that harms members of other groups. Recent research has also explored the role of collective self-esteem in shaping intergroup attitudes and behaviors, including prejudice and discrimination. CSE can play an crucial role in psychological functioning and well being (Crocker & Luhtanen, 1990; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). Individuals with high CSE tend to have better mental health and are more resilient to stress than those with low CSE. Research has shown that CSE can play an important role in psychological functioning and well being (Crocker & Luhtanen, 1990; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992).

Unleashing the Power of Ideal Self

The ideal self and CSE are interconnected concepts. A positive ideal self can enhance CSE, as individuals are more likely to evaluate their group membership positively when they have a clear and positive ideal self. Conversely, a mismatch between the actual and ideal self can lead to negative emotions, which can, in turn, affect CSE. In conclusion, the ideal self and CSE are essential concepts in understanding motivation, self-evaluation, and psychological well-being. Further research is needed to explore the relationship between these constructs and their implications for individual and group outcomes.

Conceptual Framework



Objectives

Main objectives of the research are as to:

- Investigate impact of IS on collective self esteem among the students of University of Swabi.
- Survey the gender based distinctions, family system and area of residence among study variables.
- Explore the socio economic status among study variables.

Hypotheses

Main hypothesis of this study are as follows:

- IS will have advantageous effect on collective self-esteem among the students.
- Female students of University of Swabi have higher IS as compared to male students.
- Upper class have higher IS than middle and lower class among university of Swabi students.
- Male students of University of Swabi have surplus CSE as compared to female students.
- Lower class have high Collective Self-esteem than middle and upper class among university of Swabi students.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A survey research design was used for current research. Data from the University of Swabi were collected using a random sampling technique. The samples were obtained from Swabi University

utilizing a Random sampling technique. In this survey, 200 students from the faculty of social sciences (100 men and 100 women) took part. Equal numbers of men and women participated.

Inclusion criteria

Participants having age range 18 to 30 was included. The participants must be in 2nd to final semester of their undergraduate study program. Participants having age less than 18 and greater than 30 were excluded. Students enrolled in 1st semester of any undergraduate program and all students of any graduate program were excluded

Instruments

Data was collected using the following tools:

Ideal Self scale was developed from theory (Boyatzis & Akrivou, 2006). The response option from 20 items survey are based on a 7-points Likert scale 1 (Strongly disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (Somewhat disagree), 4 (Neither agree nor disagree), 5 (Somewhat agree), 6 (Agree), 7 (Strongly agree). The measure has 4 factors that include hostile, sense of purpose, and deeper meaning, fun.

Collective Self-Esteem (CSE) is developed by Luhtanen and Crocker (1992). It has 16 statements and a 7-point Likert scale with following options: 1, 2 ,3, 4 ,5 ,6 and 7. It comprises four subscales.

Demographic Information

It was the first section of questionnaires. The demographic form was taken into consideration in order to gather data on gender, age (minimum 18 years), education, department, family system, socioeconomic position, and region of residence. The participants' informed consent was obtained prior to data collection.

Procedure

Informed consent was obtained after each student received a briefing on the study's goals prior to the data collection. To collect replies from the students using hard copies, the scales were distributed. After completing the scales, students received appreciation for taking part in the study. After the data was collected, they were given the assurance that their privacy and confidentiality would be preserved.

Proposed Analysis

On the data collection, statistical analysis was done using SPSS. The data's normality was verified using the scales' Alpha reliabilities and descriptive statistics analysis, and the link between the study variables was examined using Pearson Correlation analysis. Gender differences were examined using an independent sample t-test, while socioeconomic status differences were examined using an ANOVA.

RESULTS & FINDINGS**Table 1**

Frequency, and %age of student's N (200).

Demographic variables	F	%
Gender		
Male	100	50.0
Female	100	50.0
Family system		
Nuclear	135	67.5
Joint	65	32.5
Age		
18-22	164	67.0
23-26	61	30.5
27-30	4	2.0
Economic status		
Upper	74	37.0
Middle	109	54.5
Lower	17	8.5

Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage of students in terms of age, gender, family system, and economic status. Male students (f = 100, 50.0%) were equal to the number of female students. (f = 100, 50.0%). Students being a member of a nuclear family (f = 135, 67.5%) are more in number as compared to joint family system (f = 65, 32.5%). Students having age group 18-22 (f = 164, 67.0) are greater in number as compared to age group 23-26 (f = 61, 30.5) and 27-30 (f=4, 2.0). Students of middle class (108, 54.5) are greater in number as compared to upper (74, 37.0) and lower (17, 8.5).

Table 2

Psychometric properties of study variables (N =200)

Variables	N	M	SD	A	Potential	Actual	Skewness	Kurtosis
CSE	200	69.69	10.80	.77	16-112	34-104	.02	.62
IS	200	110.9	19.6	.72	20-140	54-140	-.91	.34

Note. CSE = Collective Self esteem, IS= Ideal Self

Table 2 shows that the psychometric properties of study variables. Reliability analysis indicates that reliability co-efficient of collective-self and Ideal Self scale is .72, and .93 respectively which indicates satisfactory internal consistency. Values of kurtosis and skewness for collective self and ideal self scale are less than 1 which shows that univariate normality not problematic.

Table 3

Pearson correlation among study variables (N=200)

Variables	1	2	3
CSE	-	.35*	.45*
IS			-

Note. *p < .01, GPA = Grade Point Average, CSE=Collective self-esteem; IS= Ideal self.

Table 3 indicates Pearson correlation among study variables. Findings shows that has Collective self-esteem significant positive C]orrelation with Ideal self ($r = .45, p < .001$).

Table 4

Mean, standard deviation and t-values for male and female university students on collective self-esteem and ideal self (N = 200)

Variables	Female(n=100)		Male(n=100)		t(198)	P	95% CI		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
CSE	69.7	10.4	69.6	11.	-.111	.91	3.19	2.85	0.01
IS	111.9	18.5	109.9	20.	-.704	.48	7.45	3.53	0.10

Note. CSE=Collective self-esteem; IS= Ideal self.

Table 4 indicates mean, standard deviation and t-values for male and female students on Collective self-esteem and Ideal self. Results shows significant mean differences on depression $t(198) = 3.19, p < .001$. The findings shows that female victims significantly have score higher on Collective self-esteem ($M = 69.7, p < .001$) with respect male students ($M = 69.6, p < .001$). Results indicate significant mean differences on Ideal self with $t(198) = 7.45, p < .001$. The findings indicates that female students ($M = 111.9, p < .001$) significantly scored higher on stress with respect to male students ($M = 15.95, p < .001$).

Table 5

Effects of gender and family system on Collective self-esteem (N = 200)

Source	SS	Df	MS	F	P
Corrected Model	87.399	3	29.133	.247	.864
Intercept	733302.199	1	733302.199	6209.325	.000
Gender	26.453	1	26.453	.224	.637
Family system	2.474	1	2.474	.021	.885
Gender x family system	83.579	1	83.579	.708	.401
Error	23146.996	196	118.097		
Total	994713.000	200			
Corrected Total	23234.395	199			

Table 5 shows the effect of gender and family systems on Collective self-esteem. The results indicate that gender having $F(1, 733) = .224, p < .05$ and family system having $F(1, 733) = .021, p < .05$ have significant effect on Collective self-esteem. The results are non-significant on gender x family system $F(1, 733) = 0.05, p > .05$.

Table 6

Mean standard deviation and one way analysis of variance in ideal self and collective self-esteem across Economic status

variables	Upper Class		Middle Class		lower Class		F(2,197)	η^2
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
CSE	69.82	8.38	69.47	10.99	70.52	17.70	0.077***	0.0007
IS	119.50	16.57	106.79	18.58	100.23	25.51	13.43***	0.119

Note. GPA = Grade Point Average, CSE= collective self esteem, IS= Ideal self

Table indicates mean, standard deviation, and F value for Collective self esteem and Collective self esteem. Results indicated significant differences across economic status on Collective self-esteem $F(2, 197) = 0.077, p < 0.001$. Findings revealed that lower class have higher level of

collective self-esteem with respect to lower and upper class. The value of η^2 was 0.0007 ($<.50$) which indicate small effect size. Result indicated significant mean differences across economic status on ideal self with $F(2,197) = 13.43, p < 0.001$. Findings revealed that upper class have higher Ideal self than middle and lower class. The value of η^2 was 0.11 (>0.05) which indicate large effect size.

Table 7

Multiple Regression Analysis showing the impact of ideal self on collective self-esteem among students (N = 200)

Variables	B	B	SE
Constant	3.78		4.44
IS	.206	.375	.041
R2		.214	

Note. * $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$ IS= Ideal self.

Multiple Regression Analysis is computed with Ideal Self as Predictor variables and Collective self-esteem as Outcome variable. The ΔR^2 value of .214 shows that .214% variance in Dependent Variable could be accounted for, by the Predictors with $F(2, 197) = 28.01, p < .001$. Findings shows that ideal self have significant positive effect on collective self-esteem among students ($\beta = .375, p < .01$).

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

Findings of the present highlight the significant impact of ideal self (IS) on collective self-esteem (CSE) among university students. The study reveals that individuals with higher self-efficacy and a clearer ideal-self (IS) tend to exhibit higher level of collective self esteem. This suggest that fostering self-efficacy and assisting individuals in defining their ideal selves can be effective interventions to enhance collective self esteem. The implications of findings are important for both individuals and researchers alike. Understanding the link between Self efficacy and collective self esteem can help in devising targeted interventions aimed at improving individual and group wellbeing. Educational institutions and support programs can use this knowledge to develop strategies that boost students' self-confidence and encourage them to embrace their aspirations, thereby nurturing a more positive collective self-esteem environment. The study also recommended that Researchers should explore different collectives such as race, ethnicity, gender, religion or cultural background since the perceptions of the IS, SE, and CSE may differ between different groups based on their shared experiences or cultural values. In addition, Include psychosocial interventions as mental health counselling, group therapy or collective empowerment programs may provide insights into improving collective self-esteem while addressing individuals' self-perception patterns and SE levels.

Competing Interests

The authors did not declare any known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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