

## **A Study of Self-Esteem among Cambodian Students and its Association with Aspirations**

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### **1. Introduction**

Self-esteem as an overall self evaluation of an individual's image, his worth, and bodily functions, could provide a strong foundation for building up self identity. It is the way one feels about one's self. According to Rogers, a positive self-concept is a major determinant of psychological adjustment. Self-esteem is one's perception about one's characteristics, attributes, and abilities which includes comparisons with others as well. Self-esteem could also be described as people's evaluations of their own self-worth to the extent to which they value themselves as being nice, and competent. Most of young people begin to make self evaluations about their body, social skills, talents, accomplishments, and other personality aspects in the beginning of early adolescence. (Aronson et al, 1997; Amato & Booth, 1997; Michelle and Craig, 1982). Self-acceptance in various domains always helps in the development of self-esteem (Wiener Valerie, 1999). As Anthony Walsh noted: "The information we pay attention to, however, and how it is processed and responded to is rooted in preverbal experiences etched in our brains in response to genetic and environmental influences. To ignore these rooted predispositions and how they got there is to misunderstand the nature and origin of self-esteem" (Anthony Walsh, 1995). In this process self strategically manages three operational functions: the discrepancy between what we want others to think we are, who we think we are, and what we really are. Earlier theorists considered it as unidimensional (Rosenberg, 1979, Coopersmith, 1967) and later studies mostly revealed existence of more than two factors of self-esteem (Shavelson, Hubner & Stanton 1976; Brooks & Jane, 1991).

We value ourselves highly or poorly and develop varying degrees of self acceptance that leads us toward low, high or moderate self-esteem. Values of good or bad also contribute to the knowledge of self one holds. One by nature always tries to be good not to be bad and socialization develops through the standards one maintains and internalizes. In short, "we have self-esteem to the degree to which we have self confidence or satisfaction with our behavior " (Watson R I, 1959).

There is a great deal of ideas in history about self-esteem and self-concept. The two terms have been evaluated in studies randomly without any clear definition and distinction made by researchers. Theorists have noted that the evaluation of self-esteem may affect the structure of self-concept (Rogers, 1951). Thus self-concept is the total picture that children have of themselves based on their own perceptions and on what others reflect to them about who and what they are ( Stephanie, Dons, Eva., 1983); when children evaluate these perceptions it will be considered as self-esteem. Agreeing with the views of Demoulin(1999) we can describe self-concept as a sum or total of all experiences we are exposed to and when we assign negative or positive weights to those experiences self-esteem develops. In simple words we can say that self-esteem is an affective component of self-concept.

Self-concept is formed from ages 2 to 6 by significant others, either in positive or negative direction, depending upon types of events we experience. It tends to stabilize as we grow older but if we don't mediate, it can be severely low and as a result depression, suicide, anti-social behavior, rebellious attitude, drug usage, rejection, confusion, apathy, self-indulgence, hostility, rebellion, low satisfaction with self or life and symptoms of emotional ill health like nervousness, pressures in the head, fingernail biting, nightmares etc could be expected. It would be wise to take some precautions as early as possible in shaping self-concepts of our youth as to alter self-concept in later stages is almost impossible (Krippner, 1999). Studies also reveal that self-concept has a profound impact on achievement that is more powerful than IQ or any other ability required to succeed. Thus, on the whole, self-esteem has been regarded as the most important psychological need (see e.g. Branden, 1971, Rosenberg, 1979).

Early adolescence is very critical age for the development of self-esteem as needs for esteem are highest in adolescence compared to younger and adults of several ages (Jacob Cohen, & Patricia Cohen, 1996). It is a time of great change for both boys and girls in terms of pubertal development, academic and social challenges associated with middle school, important for its developmental tasks and because it provides base line for future, more critical when it comes to evaluate gender differences between boys and girls which increase during adolescence (Lerner, 1997), a time to gain maintenance and strengthen of self-esteem, self regulation, attainment of educational objectives, characteristics of autonomy and self direction and is related to peer orientation, identity issues, and capacity for abstract cognitive activity (Brooks et al, 1996; Chubb et al, 1997). Self-esteem is one of the attributes of adulthood that begin to develop in adolescence (Holmes, 1995) and is deeply connected with the successful completion of age specific tasks (Schwartzberg, 1998). Piaget's (1954) observations conclude that individuals can deal with values and attitudes in adolescence.

Evaluation about one's physical self image is also a big factor in the major studies of self-esteem. It has been observed that "the development of body image and the successful assimilation of that body image into the psyche is an essential element of adolescent's identity formation" (Kristi, Betsy, Schooler, & Jack, 2000). Here it is to be noted that in eastern cultures, although girls develop physically in the same biological time frame like western girls but mentally they are immature as compared to western ones due to certain restrictions imposed on them from family and society as well. As studies of American women indicate that girls self-esteem and self worth are feelings related to their body satisfaction (Eisler R.M. & Michel Hersen, 2000).

Variation in intensity in the assessment of any affective characteristic such as self-esteem should also be considered. Anxiety, values and interests are taken as high-intensity, academic self-esteem, self-efficacy and aspirations tend to be moderately high-intensity and locus of control, attitudes are considered as moderate-intensity affective characteristics. Thus self-esteem influenced by many other factors like a series of successes or failures, values and attitudes, could be taken as 'moderately high intensity' trait and like attitudes could also be learnt (Anderson, & Bourke, 2000) and can also range from low to high depending on one's beliefs and perceptions.

Earliest theorists like James (1890), Cooley (1902) and Mead (1834) have emphasized the role of culture in the development of self. They argued that people from different cultures vary not only from behavioral aspects rather they differ in descriptions and evaluations regarding their particular experiences. In addition self-esteem has always been associated with psychological, physical and health factors (Brennan & O' Loidean, 1980; Rosenberg, 1965) and delinquent behaviors as well (Rosenberg, 1978; Kaplan, 1975). Thus to build self-esteem should be one of the biggest consideration in our at-risk youth (Frank, 1996). Therefore the present research considers cultural aspects, gender differences, as well as demographic details with psychological factor - aspirations in the assessment of self-esteem.

Self-esteem is how we think of ourselves, to appraise, to deem, to value, and to esteem generally. Self-esteem is dynamic and based upon our past accomplishments, evaluation of our present actions, perception of our ability to attain goals, and perception of our own esteem. It is not time-bound. Self-esteem theory contends as: "self-esteem is the totality of the individual's perceptions of self, his self-concept: mental, his self-image: physical, and social-concept: cultural" (Steffenhagen, 1987,69).

## **2. Literature Review**

According to James (1982) self-esteem is basically a persons position in the world that depends on his/her successes or failures and such feelings are the result of what one wishes to achieve or aspires (in James terminology) for one's self. James formula was: successes divided by aspirations or pretensions equals to self-esteem (in James time the term "pretension" was related to aim, purpose or intention). Thus in the perception of self-esteem actual attainment of goal is not important as William James has described self-esteem as the ratio between successes over aspirations, rather individuals internal evaluation of the importance of that goal. He further argues that if we give up our pretensions we will

be more comfortable with ourselves. To him, self-concept relates to identity whereas self-esteem relates more to the wish that identity should be.

James viewpoint is that people may differ in assigning importance to any component of self, they could choose between their several goals related to self components and they can well evaluate their success or failure as well. As an individual's self-esteem is determined by his or her success or failure in the specific task, which is significant and important to him, the expectations, and aspirations would determine the value of the task and evaluations of success or failure in that specific field will have a great impact on his or her self-esteem. In other words for one individual being a social worker could be a big source of self-esteem while for another person being an engineer could be a big honor and a source of great esteem. Thus, success or failure could have different meanings for different individuals. He explored further that our sense of self is beyond our physical beings. Although our friends, family, and possessions are also components of self but LSE people mostly rely on these extended selves rather than improving their own qualities.

Cooley(1902) was oriented towards sociological aspects of self more than James. Cooley's theory of "looking glass self" i.e. one's self-concept is what others think about him or her, reflects the self that is the result of symbolic interaction between individuals and others and this can happen during face-to-face conversation. For him self-feelings are social in nature. These are the self-conceptions developed by the persons subjective opinion, idea, belief, or evaluation about others opinions for that individual. Thus self and society mutually set defining references for each other.

Mead (1934) discussed James's social self and advanced the Cooley's theory. According to him, individual's relations as processes of social activity and experience with others develop 'self'. Society controls the behavior of each individual and persons act as others react as a whole in the form of 'generalized' other. To Mead, the development of self is dependent on the language as a mean to interact with others. Thus 'self' is the result of 'social experience' in which language is used as a media between self and society. He stresses on the use of language for social interaction more than Cooley.

Rogers (1951) introduced the theory of psychopathology. His self theory and ideas about self synthesized the views of Comb A., Snygg (1976), Mead (1934), Cooley (1902) and Sullivan (1953). Rogers, while defining self-concept as it is how a person perceives or feels his/her self, incorporated the concepts of self, ideal self and self-regard in his theory. According to him self strives for consistency (i.e. behavior of a person is consistent with the self). Secondly self is capable of growth (i.e. self may change with the passage of time and knowledge ). Rogers argued that personality inconsistencies are due to unrealistic ideal self or because of incongruence between self-concept and ideal self. This results in conflict or anxiety and thus leads to psychopathology. The extent to which the individual's perceptions of self are incongruent with 'reality', he or she will tend to adopt a defensive behavior and would be more vulnerable to tension. And the distinction between the true and false self emerges in early adolescence. Rogers (1951) contended that people who like themselves, have high regard for others and who have negative feelings for themselves, derogate others too.

Maslow (1954) in his theory of motivation, assigns great importance to self-esteem. Although he did not give any definition of self-esteem yet he considered the need for positive self-esteem as an essential part of mental health. He noted that all people have a need or desire for a stable, firm, sense of self regard or self respect and they need esteem for themselves and for others.

Maslow's theory of motivation and conceptualizations were based on a hierarchical structure of biological drives and psychological needs. In *Motivation and Personality* (1954), Maslow described basic motivating forces such as the physiological needs for food, sleep, and sex; relational needs for love and acceptance; the need for self-esteem; a need for knowledge; and the higher level need for aesthetic satisfaction. According to him, the individual whose basic physiological needs for food, drink, and shelter are not fulfilled, would be less likely to put his efforts towards self-esteem or self actualization.

He argues that self-esteem is regarded as a source of adjustment in a way that having a low opinion for one's self is an indicator of unfulfilled person and to view favorably one's self is a positive indication of self fulfillment. He suggests we must discover our inner, accept and grow ( establish high self-esteem) to get self fulfillment otherwise we will put ourselves in risks like illness, frustration, neurosis, and other kinds of pathologies.

In Adlerian psychology self-esteem is the very core of personality and basis of all behavior whether normal or pathological. Our all life is a function of building and maintaining self-esteem. Human behavior can only be understood in terms of self-esteem which could be achieved through social action and through a movement from inferior to superior. These two sentiments, superiority and inferiority are complementary. He argues that we are born inferior and we strive to reduce this inferiority, as we attain this goal, we begin to feel good about ourselves and we develop good self-esteem. So the basic motive, the basic goal of the individual, behind one's efforts is to build and protect self-esteem. He has also studied the effect of inferior feelings on self-esteem. He further elaborates about the goals which are culturally rooted

through socialization: if the goals are realistic, individual will develop a normal healthy personality otherwise individual will develop low self-esteem. In Adlerian model, focus is always on the future goals and present situation but not on the past.

Coopersmith (1959) defined self-esteem as the evaluation a person makes of himself/herself. . He suggested four factors valuable in the development of self-esteem. These are: (a) how significant others treat or accept in life; (b) a person's past successes; (c) the values and aspirations belonging to a person's experiences, and (d) how a person reacts/responds to devaluation. He defines self-esteem as: "an overall expression of approval or disapproval indicating the extent to which a person believes him or her self competent, successful, significant, and worthy" (pp. 1-2). He proposed that self-esteem is based on " a judgmental process in which the individual examines his performance, capacities and attributes according to his personal standards and values and arrives at a decision of his own worthiness" (p.7). He considers self-esteem as a prerequisite for self protection from any kind of psychological or social distress.

Burns (1979) has also provided a theoretical structure of the self. According to him self-esteem is the product/outcome of conscious judgments of one's abilities, values, and attitudes. Burns (1979) has noted three reference points about self-evaluation. First point is the comparison of self-image with the ideal self-image. Second reference point involves the internalization of society's evaluation. Third reference point refers the person's evaluation of his/her success or failure in doing a specific task one aspires to achieve. So an individuals success is judged and deemed significant for his or her esteem level rather than success it self in some task is measured or valued. Burns suggested that desires, goals, pretensions/aspirations and attitudes along with their social appreciations and relative comparisons with others build self-esteem.

Rosenberg(1981) defines self-concept as: "the totality of the individuals thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as an object "(p.7). According to Morris Rosenberg (1979), self-esteem is one component of self-concept in that self-concept relates to sum of thoughts and feelings, a "complex, intricate and multifaceted structure" and self-esteem as "self-acceptance, self-respect or feelings of self-worth" is related to positive or negative evaluation of our identity and an attitude of approval or disapproval. In this regard individual with high self-esteem will consider himself a person of worth, not necessarily superior to others and low self-esteem individual experiences self rejection, self dissatisfaction or self contempt ( Rosenberg, 1979).

Rosenberg (1979) further concluded that self-esteem is the product of evaluations of self in specific domains as he describes: " a persons global self-esteem is based on an assessment of his constituent qualities, particularly on an assessment of the qualities that count "(p.18). To him self-esteem is the combination of different interrelated and hierarchically organized components and can be measured directly. He further argues that each person evaluates specific aspects of the self in his or her own way to construct overall self-esteem. Rosenberg, while using a sample of 1917, found that association between perceived self and self-esteem is stronger among those who care others thinking towards them than those who don't think so. Moreover, he found that self-esteem dropped during early adolescence especially at age 12 and it tended to increase till age 16. According to him once self-esteem is established, it is hard to change and it remains stable throughout life. He also noted that self-schemes of young children are global and undifferentiated but become increasingly more complex, differentiated, and integrated with age (Rosenberg, 1986). He did not put emphasis on goals or aims in his scale.

According to Rosenberg we are not born with self-esteem, so without contacting others we could not develop it. There are four factors that are simultaneously involved with the development of self-esteem:(1) Reflected appraisals, (2) Social comparisons, (3) Self-attribution, and (4) Psychological centrality. Additionally there are two important components of reflected appraisals: "direct reflections" and "perceived selves. "Direct reflections" means that our self-esteem is based on the feed back how others directly respond to us. If people tell us we're very worthy and esteemed we tend to feel so or if they tell us we're worthless, we tend to feel that way. "Perceived selves" refers to how each of us thinks others perceive us. Obviously there is some relation between how others really perceive and how we believe them to feel about us but these two are not the same. In general, the way a person ranks herself in ability, intelligence, physical attractiveness, is closely related to the way others rank him or her directly. Importantly, the way a person ranks himself or herself is even more closely related to the way one believes other people rank him or her.

Rosenberg (1979) further explicated that all significant others have different influences on self-esteem of children and those who are more significant will have more great influence on their self-esteem. Moreover, individuals are likely to attribute significance to others as to maximize their self-esteem. Thus individuals not only accept reflected appraisals of others rather play an active role in the selection of others and in evaluating their appraisals to protect their self-esteem. He noted that appraisals from significant others specially parents and more usually mother followed by the father, siblings, friends and classmates have strong influence on individuals self-esteem (Rosenberg,1979).

Harter (1988) pointed out that different self attributes combine to form an integrated identity during adolescence. She noted few conflicts during early adolescence because of few cognitive abilities and argued that all conflicts must be finished/resolved later as individuals learn to integrate all conflicts in late adolescence. To her, self-esteem could play an important role in mediating emotional problems in certain domains. Harter supported Rosenberg's notion of global self-esteem but she postulated an inter-actional model with specific domains such as competence, control, self worth, and acceptance. She recommended that one can possess a global self-concept/self-esteem and could simultaneously evaluate one's self in specific domains of self-esteem.

Markus and Kitayama (1991) investigated influences of culture on cognition, emotion and motivation and found self-concept of Americans as 'independent self' and that of Japanese as 'interdependent self'. They concluded that the difference between these two cultures was the functional role of other individuals in defining self. They mentioned, "Others and surroundings are important in both construal, but for the interdependent self, others are directly involved in the self-definition" (p.40). They further elaborated that in the construal of self gender, religion, region of country and historical generational cohort played an important role and different bases of self-esteem would vary cross culturally. Studies by Markus and Kitayama about self referent variables become important for the understanding of self-esteem because self-esteem is basically derived from culturally valued aspects of the self.

In Cambodia so far no work has been carried out towards construct validation of self-esteem scale for adolescents and adults. Thus only a valid and reliable measure of self-esteem based on solid theory and improved methodology could change the present status of research in Cambodia. Therefore, the present study is designed to develop and validate an indigenous measure of self-esteem and to achieve a reliable and legitimate understanding of the construct in the light of aspirations. Moreover, it seems in this new era, Cambodian people (new generation) like other Asian developing nations are facing a complex process of regeneration of values from new technological societies while being aware of cultural traditions of their ancestors (Greg Sheridan, 1999). So to keep balance between both cultures and to protect personal, social, and national identity, self-esteem that is considered as a crux of all psychological shifts, could play an important mediating role and could be effective in making productive and creative evaluations according to new standards and values.

Additionally it seems as children are facing many behavioral and psychological problems and teachers are not aware of the reasons behind lazy, careless, or mischievous children. Mostly studies to deal with such issues are representative of western cultures, so it would not be fair to imply their findings to Cambodian youth social and psychological problems.

### 3. Method

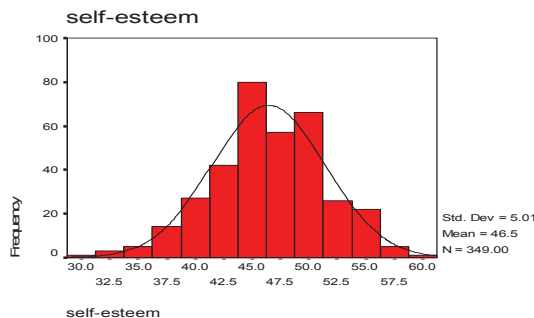
The purpose of this study was to determine the validity, reliability, and factor structure of the self-esteem scale developed for Cambodian Students aged 11 to 30 and to carry out a detailed analysis of relationship of self-esteem along with aspirations and its associated demographic factors (age and class level). The scale was based on the same definition of the construct used by Rosenberg and Coopersmith.

Firstly, a list of items was developed from qualitative data and study of self-esteem scales while considering Cambodian adolescents age needs and societal variables effect on them. After considering about 50 items from the self esteem scale, 14 items were carefully selected which were more relevant, expressive and associated with the nature of self-esteem and its dimension in Cambodian culture. They were also checked for their appropriate wording, meaning, and simplicity. And the level of reading skill and cognitive ability in students was also considered prior to final selection of items. Then a scale, 5 point Likert type, consisting of these self report statements was developed. There are 7 negative and 7 positive statements in the scale to get unbiased response from children with five response categories like: never, rarely, sometimes, often, and always. There are two parts in the questionnaire given to students. On the first part, they were required to give some demographic information about their age, class level, religion and successes and then they were asked to rank for their aspirations from 1 the most important, to 5 the least important from a list of 10 items for each general psychological aspiration category. In the second part, they were asked to fill the self esteem questionnaire according to their choices (both questionnaires are given in the Appendix a and b).

In this study, 350 students (with 181 boys and 169 girls) of PUC (Pannasastra university of Cambodia) aged between 12 to 39 ( mean age= 19, SD= 3.5 ), from three distinct class levels ( GESL (187), IEAP (123), FOUNDATION YEAR (40), were selected to evaluate self-esteem. Over all data represents homogeneous characteristics that to from happy, healthy and well off families as a whole.

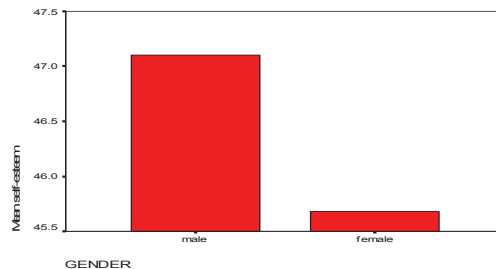
Self-esteem scale was given to selected sample in English and SPSS was used to analyze. The self esteem scale 14 items were positively and significantly correlated with the total score of self-esteem: correlation coefficient for F1 (.298\*\*\*\*), F2(.314\*\*\*\*), F3(.472\*\*\*\*), F4(.402\*\*\*\*), F5(.315\*\*\*\*), F6(.378\*\*\*\*), F7(.376\*\*\*\*), F8(.382\*\*\*\*), F9(.410\*\*\*\*), F10(.461\*\*\*\*), F11(.384\*\*\*\*), F12(.507\*\*\*\*), F13(.336\*\*\*\*), and F14(.496\*\*\*\*) and all correlations are significant at .0001 level ( $p < .0001$ , two-tailed). Thus the scale was proved internally highly consistent and reliable as Chronbach's alpha value was. 60 . The split half reliability coefficients were . 3 and . 5 for each seven items.

**Graph 1.**



On the basis of findings it came out that overall Cambodian boys global self-esteem was higher ( mean= 47) than Cambodian girls self-esteem (with mean= 45) and that different is significant too (  $t = 344$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

**Graph 2.**



It is also evident that the difference of self esteem is not significant between male and female among GESL and foundation year students where as in IEAP males self esteem is significantly higher than females self esteem (  $t = 2.2$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

CLASS	GENDER	N	Mean
leap	male	103	47.3883
	female	83	45.7590
gesl	male	62	46.5968
	female	61	45.9344
foundation year	male	16	47.1875
	female	24	45.2917

Similarly the difference of self esteem between males and females is calculated among two age levels : adolescence ( from 11 to 19 ) and adults (from 20 to 39). The difference between male adults and female adults self esteem is significant with males self esteem is higher than females self esteem (  $t = 217$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

AGEC	GENDER	N	Mean
adolescents	male	58	47.0690
	female	63	45.9048
adult	male	121	47.1240
	female	103	45.5437

For the dimensionality of the items, principal component factor analyses through varimax rotation was applied which gives us more meaningful and distinguishable results about the construction of the construct 'self-esteem' and its relevant constituents.

Through principal component analysis, varimax rotation method and after careful and detailed analysis of items based on a methodical systematic comparison, only 4 factors were finally extracted including items with highest factor loadings. There are 5 items in first factor, and 3 in second, third, and fourth factor. This result is quite descriptive and interpretable as required according to the demands of construct validation and true in itself.

The following table shows four factor solution in which it is revealed that first factor is consisted of items which are related to one's general competency and ability in educational, social, and home environment. It will be labeled as " self competence " factor of self-esteem. Second factor loading has appeared with a set of items related to one's socially accepted or non-accepted attitudes. It will be named as "social self acceptance". In third factor loading domain, we can see one's evaluating terms having reference to one's general satisfaction with life. It is justified with the heading of " self satisfaction". And the last set loaded by only 3 items, oriented towards failures and hopelessness in life , could be better explicated as " self confidence".

Conclusively the resultant factors of self-esteem are as follows:

1. Self Competence.
2. Social Self Acceptance.
3. self satisfaction
4. self confidence

	Mean	Std. Deviation
social self acceptance	10.0774	1.90350
self satisfaction	10.2894	1.80180
self confidence	12.4384	1.87691
self competence	13.6476	2.36452

Table shows that for Cambodian students self esteem first factor explains 13.6%, second factor explains 11.1%, third factor explains 11.1 %, and fourth factor explains 9.8 % of total variance. The eigenvalues of these factors ranged from 7.8. 0 to 16. 3.

#### 4. Correlations:

Correlation coefficient has been computed among four subscales of self-esteem in Cambodian sample. Using Bonferroni approach across the 10 correlations, a p value of less than .001 (. 01/10) was required for significance.

From the table below, it is evident that self-esteem scale has significant correlations between its subscales which also provides the evidence of sufficient content and construct validity.

**Table :** Correlations between four subscales and total scores of self-esteem scale in Cambodian sample:

Correlations					
	self-esteem	social self acceptance	self satisfaction	self confidence	self competence
self-esteem	1	.546**	.629**	.676**	.662**
	.	.000	.000	.000	.000
social self acceptance	.546**	1	.138**	.259**	.041
	.000	.	.010	.000	.450
self satisfaction	.629**	.138**	1	.265**	.247**
	.000	.010	.	.000	.000
self confidence	.676**	.259**	.265**	1	.227**
	.000	.000	.000	.	.000
self competence	.662**	.041	.247**	.227**	1
	.000	.450	.000	.000	.

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Now we can see the difference of self esteem between males and females in these factors of self esteem. From the table below, we can see the means and SD for all four factors of self esteem.

	GENDER	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
social self acceptance	male	181	10.1547	1.77587
	female	168	9.9940	2.03413
self satisfaction	male	181	10.4033	1.70873
	female	168	10.1667	1.89442
self confidence	male	181	12.6685	1.92081
	female	168	12.1905	1.80137
self competence	male	181	13.8729	2.38756
	female	168	13.4048	2.32208

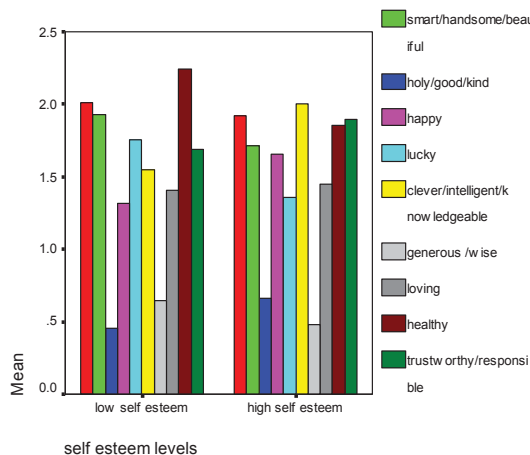
After conducting independent sample t-test, it is concluded that the difference of self esteem between males and females is significant only for the factor named as "self confidence". Thus boys self confidence is significantly higher than girls self confidence among Cambodian students ( $t= 2.4$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

### 5. Self esteem with respect to Aspirations:

Then aspirations variables have been studied with respect to self esteem in detail. These variables can also be studied in the context of gender which is not included in the present paper. Cambodian students aspirations percentage wise can also be seen in Appendix A.

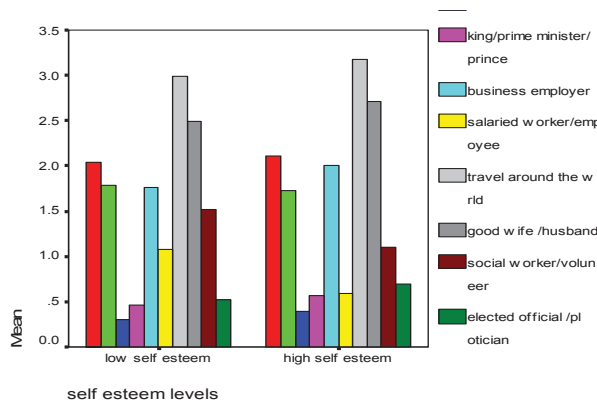
Now we will divide self esteem in to two categories: high self esteem and low self esteem. Students with high self esteem would provide a different set of aspirations prioritized and students with low self esteem would prefer different set of aspirations. The difference could not be statistically significant but this information might be of great importance for further studies.

Graph 3.



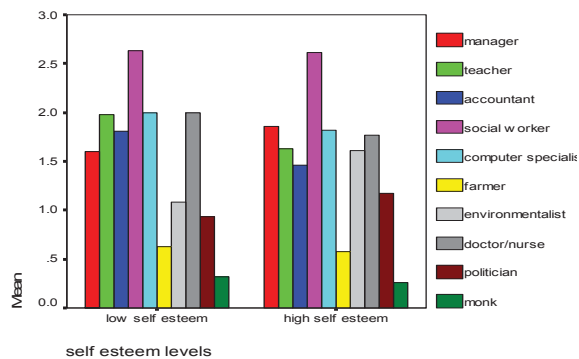
High self-esteem scores were positively and significantly related with traits more admirable in Cambodian culture like one's great aspiration towards being knowledgeable and intelligent person, attaining language skills to improve social life, and at the same time being trustworthy and responsible. Here it is notable that students with low self esteem are intended to value their health, physical attributes and language skills more than their counterparts.

**Graph 4.**



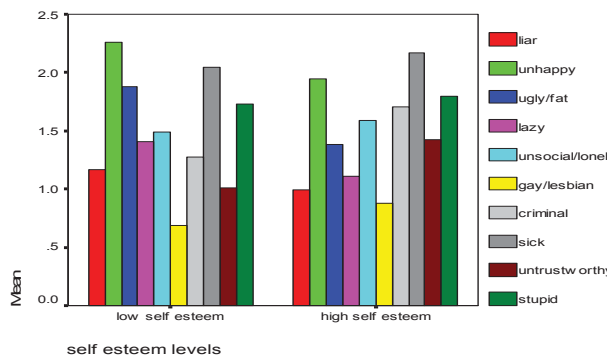
It is also clear from the above table that students with high and low self esteem both would like to travel around the world. At second preference level, they would like to have a good husband or wife. At third level, they would like to become a wealthy person. In both groups, no one would like to become monk.

**Graph 5.**



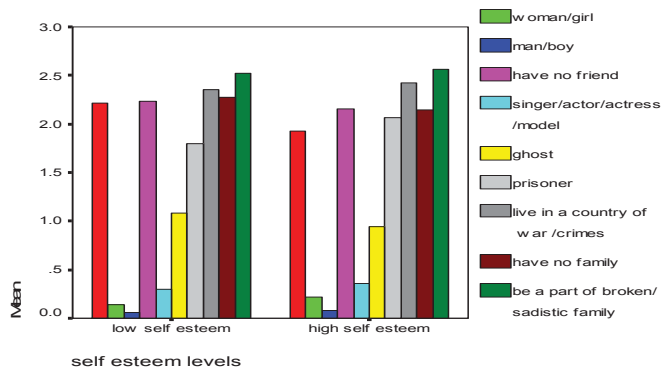
From the above table it is evident that the students with high and low self esteem consider being a social worker as the most important profession in their future. And both don't prefer to become monk in their future life. This result is alarming as Cambodia is a country where Buddhism is very popular religion among people and all students call themselves as Buddhist.

**Graph 6.**



From the above table, we can see that for high self esteem students, being sick is worst than all where as for low self esteem students being unhappy is the worst than all calamities of life. This result is vice versa at second level of preference. In third level of preference, high self esteem students consider being stupid is the third most unlikely trait where as for low self esteem students dislike being fat and ugly.

**Graph 7.**



Here we can see both high and low self esteem students don't like to be a part of broken or sadistic family. On second level, they don't want to live in a country of war or crimes. At third level, high self esteem students would prefer 'having no friend' as the worst thing to happen on them whereas low self esteem students would consider 'have no family' as the worst thing happened to them.

## 6. Discussion

High self esteem people in Cambodia prefer to express their aspirations in terms such as intelligence, language skills, and being responsible then they would love to travel around the world, having a good partner and become a rich person in future. Cambodian students with low self esteem would express themselves in terms like being healthy, with great language skills and becoming beautiful and smart. Then they would also like to travel around the world, having a good partner and becoming rich person. Although the two groups have many similarity in their choices for their future but they differ too. High self esteem ones prefer being knowledgeable and being responsible to being healthy and beautiful/smart. It is quite obvious that low self esteem students health and physical attributes may be a cause of their low self esteem. In this regard we need to further evaluate their health status and their perception of attractiveness or beauty to boost their self esteem.

As 'Battambang self-esteem scale' has been developed to fulfill the needs of Cambodian culture, it represents findings relevant to cultural backgrounds. In Cambodia now a days people are quite motivated to work in some organizations to develop their country. So both high and low self esteem ones prefer to do social work in future that would strengthen their country in future. As both groups strongly admit that they don't want to become monk in future life, it is a surprising outcome especially in Cambodia where majority religion is Buddhism. It is one of the reasons that they want to become a rich person as well as keep families and travel around the world so they could not fulfill their dreams being a monk in their future life.

On the other side high self esteem students don't want to become sick, unhappy and stupid. Their counterparts don't want to become unhappy, sick and ugly. Here it is notable that low self esteem students only differ at one point-they don't want to become ugly/fat where as high self esteem students don't want to be stupid. Again high self esteem students prefer cognitive domain to physical domain. This result provides future researcher an understanding that Cambodian low self esteem students feel themselves ugly or conscious of their physical self too much. Further analysis of their personalities would determine whether their perception of physical self is a contributing factor towards their low self esteem or not.

From further negative aspirations, both groups agree that they would not like to become a member of broken family, and live in a country of war. High self esteem students prefer friends to family. This shows that high self esteem people are more social in nature and their basic needs are already being fulfilled.

Over all Cambodian females, adult, studying in IEAP various levels present low level of self esteem than their counterparts and the difference is significant ( $t = 2.2, p < .05$ ). It verifies the fact that females are more conscious about their health, physical attributes, smartness, family status, and emotional needs like happiness and males usually express themselves as being intelligent, knowledgeable, wise/not stupid and social being. In studies related to gender differences in self esteem, mostly girls low self esteem is caused by their low perception of their beauty and attractiveness. So this result is consistent with other similar studies of this nature (Eisler R.M. & Michel Hersen, 2000; Kristi, Betsy, Schooler, & Jack, 2000).

Surprisingly, the girls whose self esteem is lower than their counterparts are adults rather than adolescents. This result would need some further researches on the subject from different perspectives as this study was not designed to investigate the reasons for low level self esteem among girls/women.

When we divided self esteem into four factors named Self Competence, Social Self Acceptance, self satisfaction, and self confidence, it came out that girls self esteem is significantly lower than boys self esteem in the factor called 'self confidence'. This factor is consisted on items relevant to ones failures, problems and hopelessness as well as ones dissatisfaction towards ones physical attributes. Here it can be suggested that Cambodian girls over all low self esteem can be raised up through therapies/counseling to uplift their general self confidence in social settings and academic fields as well. This result also supports the evidence of girls low perception of themselves in the related fields of aspirations. Therefore it is strongly recommended to continue further researches on how we can raise Cambodian girls self esteem to make them as competent as boys and to utilize their potentials for the betterment of Cambodia and humanity in the long run.

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