
Self-Concept in Young Mexicans, a Comparison by Gender

Jose R. Blanco, Judith M. Rodriguez-Villalobos, Juan C. Barron*, Hector L. Medina

Faculty of Physical Culture Sciences, Autonomous University of Chihuahua, Chihuahua, México

Email address:

jcbarron@uach.mx (J. C. Barron)

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Abstract: The purpose of the present study was to compare the profiles of self-concept between men and women Mexican university students. A total sample of 1518 participants, 815 women and 703 men, aged 18-26 years participated in this study. A quantitative approach with a descriptive and transversal survey design was used. All the participants completed the Self-concept Questionnaire AUDIM de Rodríguez and Fernández (2011). The results of the one-way multivariate analysis of variance, followed by the one-way univariate analyses of variance, showed that compared with the women, the men obtained higher scores on the subscales Academic Self-concept, Social Self-concept, Physical Self-concept, and Personal Self-concept. However, in the General Self-concept subscale statistically significant differences were not found. Because of the differences between men and women in their perception of self-concept found, these findings suggest that in order to design any intervention for improving the perceived physical self-concept of the students, the variable gender should be taken into account.

Keywords: Self-Concept, Student's Beliefs, Gender Differences, Self-Perception

1. Introduction

Self-concept is one of the most important findings in the field of motivational research, that's why psychology has always given preference attention to self-concept; considering it as an important predictor of behavior and emotional and cognitive outcomes of people [1].

Self-concept may be defined as the person's own self-perceptions that are formed through experience and interpretations of the own environment [2]. Likewise, the relationship between self-concept and academic performance is one of the most intriguing questions in the research of self-concept. This relationship has been studied extensively in the past decades [1, 3, 4] considering the self-concept as a relevant motivation source for behavior in general and learning behaviors in particular.

One of the most widespread and accepted multidimensional models among the proposed is Shavelson et al.[2] according to which the overall self-concept is at the top of the hierarchy being divided into academic self-concept and non-academic self-concept. The non-academic also includes the domains of social, emotional and physical self-concept [4, 5].

Self-concept plays a crucial and central role in the development of personality, as noted in the main psychological theories; a positive self-concept is the basis of good personal,

social and professional functioning depending on it, largely, personal satisfaction, and feeling good about yourself. Therefore achieving a positive self-concept is one of the objectives pursued in numerous psychological intervention programs (educational, clinical, community, civic. ...) for which are demanded strategies and resources for their improvement [3].

This research is primarily a descriptive study that aims to compare self-concept profiles of men and women Mexican university students. Consequently, this research aims, as an applied research, provide information that translates into a higher educational practice quality in the context of attention to diversity; contributing to pedagogic knowledge to clarify the factors that make a model of the integral human development; under the premise that the educational efforts must focus on the increasing feelings of self-worth and capability of students, strengthening self-esteem and self-concept, which in turn will encourage the motivation for achievement, interpersonal relationships and overall the particularly way to cope with various tasks and challenges they encounter.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The sample of 1518 participants, 815 (53.7%) woman and 703 (46.3%) men, was obtained by a convenience sample.

Women ages was ranging between 18 and 26 years, with a mean of 20.38 and a standard deviation of 1.81 years; and men ages was ranging between 18 and 26 years, with a mean of 20.78 and a standard deviation of 1.94 years.

2.2. Instrument

Self-Efficacy in Academic behaviors Scale (EACA) designed by [6] is a Likert questionnaire, assisted by computer of 13 items related to academic behavior; where the respondent answers on a scale of 0-10, how often currently, ideally if he strives to change, would make or manifest an action (Figure 1).

Self-concept questionnaire AUDIM of Rodriguez and Fernandez [7], is a Likert questionnaire computer-assisted, of 31 items related to the own person; where the respondent answers on a scale of 1-5 (1 = false, 2 = rather false 3 = neither true nor false to 5 = True) their level of agreement with each of the aspects proposed (choosing the answer that best fits their person). The questionnaire items are grouped into four specific factors: Academic Self-concept (6 items), Social Self-concept (4 items), Physical Self-concept (8 items) and Personal Self-concept (8 items) and one Overall General Self-concept (5 items).

For our study the following adaptation was made: while in the original scale is scored with five answer choices, in the version used in this investigation, the subject selected from eleven possible options on a scale of 0-10, this adaptation is justified in relation to the participants, they are used to the scale of 0-10 (0 = FALSE, 1-3 = almost always false, 4-6 = Sometimes false sometimes true, 7-9 = almost always false and 10 = true) (Figure 1) since they have been evaluated this way by the education system in our country (Mexico). Reference [8] reports a similar change in the validation of a scale with Spanish population.

Figure 1. Example response for the items of the questionnaire.

Although each individual responded to the 6 items of the instrument in three different scenarios: scenario perceived ability, scenario of interest in being capable and scenario of being able to change ad; in the psychometric analysis only the answers to the first stage were used.

2.3. Desing

Regarding the design of the study, a quantitative approach with a descriptive and transversal survey design was used [9]. The independent variable was gender (women and men) and the dependent variables were the scores on self-concept.

2.4. Procedure

Once obtained the permission from the corresponding

educational authorities, the students of the Degrees of Human Motricity and Physical Education of the Autonomous University of Chihuahua (UACH) were invited to participate in the study.

Those who agreed to participate signed the document for acceptance. Then the instrument was applied using a personal computer, in a session of about 30 minutes; in the computer labs of the Faculty of Sciences of Physical Culture UACH. At the end of the session students were thanked for their participation.

Once applied the instrument the results were gather through the generator module results Scale Editor Version 2.0 [10].

2.5. Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were calculated (means and standard deviations) for all variables. Subsequently after verifying that the data meets the assumptions of parametric statistical analysis, was used a multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) followed by variance analysis of a single factor (ANOVA) to examine the differences between women and men in their self-concept perception in each of the subscales of the AUDIM. The effect size was estimated by eta-squared (η^2). All statistical analyzes were made using SPSS version 20.0 for Windows (IBM SPSS Statistics 20). The level of statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

3. Results

Table 1 shows the mean values and standard deviations of self-efficacy in the five factors of the AUDIM, also the MANOVA results and the subsequent ANOVAs.

MANOVA results showed general differences statistically significant according to the gender variable in self-concept scores (Wilks $\lambda = .814$, $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = .186$).

Subsequently, ANOVAs indicated that, compared to the women students, men students show higher scores in academic self-concept ($F = 18.695$, $p < .001$), social self-concept ($F = 20786$, $p < .001$), physical self-concept ($F = 290.118$, $p < .001$) and personal self-concept ($F = 13.279$, $p < .001$). While in the subscale of general self-concept no significant differences were found ($p > .05$).

Table 1. Results of MANOVA and ANOVA for the gender differences on the five subscales of self-concept.

	Women (n = 815)	Men (n = 703)	F	p	η^2
			69.061	<.001	.186
Academic Self-concept	5.97 (2.04)	6.42 (2.01)	18.695	<.001	.012
Social Self-concept	6.93 (1.52)	7.30 (1.59)	20.786	<.001	.014
Physical Self-concept	6.06 (1.67)	7.44 (1.42)	290.118	<.001	.161
Personal Self-concept	7.25 (1.52)	7.53 (1.43)	13.279	<.001	.009
General Self-concept	7.93 (1.88)	8.07 (1.71)	2.197	.139	.001

Note. Descriptive values are reported as mean (standard deviation).

4. Discussion and Conclusions

The results show that, even though no significant differences between women and men were found, regarding General self-concept, women show a poorer self-concept in the other dimensions including the physical self-concept where the effect size is the most important, so women that manifest lower levels of physical self-concept are at greater risk of suffering from eating disorders, since it has been proven that people with poor physical self-concept are more vulnerable to cultural pressure to seek a slimmer body [11-13]. However, is important to develop more research on this topic, because this subject goes beyond the scope of this research.

The differences found between men and women regarding their self-concept, also suggest, that when designing any kind of intervention that aims to improve the self-concept, the gender variable should be taken into account.

At least two limitations are present in this work. The first is that participants are only Mexican university students, which threatens the possibility of generalizing these results. Expand the sample (for example adding young adults who are not students) is a work area for the future. The second limitation comes from the measuring instrument itself, which is based on self-inform and therefore may contain biases that result from social desirability.

Is also emphasized, the importance of more research on the subject in our country.

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