

Full Length Article

A Study on Self-reported Shyness and Self-esteem in bilingual and Monolingual students in Gorgan, Iran

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed at comparing self-reported shyness and self-esteem between monolingual and bilingual students as well as boys and girls in each group. Also, the present study determined the correlation between these variables in both monolingual and bilingual students. For this aim, 300 Kazakh (150 girls and 150 boys) and 300 Persian (150 girls and 150 boys) students were randomly selected from fifth-grade elementary school students of Gorgan, Iran. All the Kazakh students could speak Persian language without any problem. Self-reported shyness and self-esteem of the participants were determined via the Persian-version of the Children's Shyness Questionnaire (CSQ) and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), respectively. The results of independent samples t-tests showed that there were no significant differences in self-reported shyness and self-esteem between boys and girls in both monolingual and bilingual groups ($p > 0.05$), whereas there were significant differences in self-reported shyness and self-esteem between Kazakh and Persian students ($p < 0.05$). Furthermore, the results of Pearson's correlation coefficient analysis revealed that self-reported shyness was significantly and negatively correlated with self-esteem in both groups ($p < 0.05$). It is concluded that social and/or lexical issues could explain higher level of shyness and lower self-esteem in bilingual minority students.

Keywords: self-reported shyness, self-esteem, Kazakh, Persian.

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INTRODUCTION

Studies have shown that shyness in children can cause several problems such as loneliness, social dissatisfaction, negative self-perceptions, anxiety, and depression [1-7]. In addition, shyness in children was found to be in close relationship with school performance [8].

Ding *et al.* [1] stated that self-reports can be regarded as the most convenient tools to determine shyness in children since it provides motivation and sense of participation among this group of subjects. Consequently, this type of tool was adopted in the present study.

Rosenberg [9] stated that self-esteem can be considered one's assessment and appraisal of themselves. This could be very important, especially at lower ages, since the people with problems in their self-esteem are repeatedly blaming themselves when they encounter challenges; this blaming happens because they doubt about their own capabilities unconsciously [10].

Bilingualism is generally regarded as a helpful attribute for development of cognitive capabilities in children [11]. Frequent use of both languages in bilingual children can facilitate production and comprehension [12, 13, 14], which can be effective on many psychological features of bilingual students [15, 16, 17]. However, there is still doubt and confusion in considering bilingualism a pure advantage; that is, in addition to its all positive effects, bilingualism might cause some problems for children at school [18]. One of these problems can be cultural issues. Culture was found to be an important factor to predict

social functioning, especially at younger ages [1, 20], leading to such problems as high level of shyness and low level of self-esteem.

This study is the first investigation to compare measures of self-reported shyness and self-esteem in monolingual and bilingual students as well as between boys and girls. There are three hypotheses in the present study: (a) self-reported shyness is not significantly different between boys and girls in monolingual and bilingual students; (b) self-esteem is not significantly different between boys and girls in monolingual and bilingual students; (c) there are negative and significant correlations between self-reported shyness and self-esteem in monolingual and bilingual students.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Participants in this study were 300 Kazakh (150 girls and 150 boys) and 300 Persian (150 girls and 150 boys) from fifth-grade elementary school students. In order to eliminate the possible influence of age and/or socioeconomic condition on the results, the students were chosen from the same age and socioeconomic groups from fifth-grade classes in 8 elementary schools in Gorgan City, Iran. All the Kazakh students could speak Persian language without any problem. Furthermore, the following standards were taken into account for inclusion of the participants: (a) no physical and/or mental disorders; (b) not suffering from any external complications such as family problems, depression, etc.; (c) understanding the purpose of the study and a written parents' permission to participate in this study. In addition, the participants were selected from rather similar socio-economic backgrounds to minimize the influence of external factors on the study results.

Self-reported shyness

Shyness of the subjects was determined by using the Persian-version of the Children's Shyness Questionnaire (CSQ) [20], which is a self-reported evaluation of shyness in elementary school children. In order to prepare a valid Persian version of this questionnaire, it was first translated into Persian by a professor of psychology and then it was retranslated into English in order to find possible discrepancies between two samples. After correcting the translated version, the final questionnaire in Persian was made with 26 items. The scores range from 0 to 52 and higher scores indicate higher level of shyness. After validation of the tool, reliability of the tool was also confirmed because the Cronbach's α was found to be .84.

Self-esteem

Assessment of self-esteem was performed via the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) [9]. The questionnaire was revalidated to prevent from the effect of the sample on final results and ensure its suitability for the subjects of the present study. The questionnaire included 10 items rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale with responses ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree). The scores range from 0 to 30 and higher scores indicate higher self-esteem. The Cronbach's alpha for the current study was found to be .86.

Data analyses

Data analyses were performed by using SPSS version 21 (IBM SPSS Statistics, Chicago, IL, USA). The statistical analyses were performed via independent samples t-test and Pearson's correlation coefficient.

RESULTS

Table 1 represents descriptive information on self-reported shyness and self-esteem among Kazakh and Persian students. As it can be seen, Kazakh students had higher scores of shyness than Persian students and therefore, they can be shyer than Persian participants. Furthermore, Persian students achieved higher score of self-esteem than Kazakh students.

In order to find out whether there significant differences between boys and girls as well as between Persian and Kazakh participants in terms of self-reported shyness and self-esteem, independent samples t-tests were run (Table 2). As it can be seen from Table 2, there were not any significant differences in self-reported shyness and self-esteem between Kazakh boys and girls as well as between Persian boys and girls ($p > 0.05$). Moreover, there were significant differences in self-reported shyness and self-esteem between Kazakh and Persian participants ($p < 0.05$).

Table 1: Descriptive information on the scores of participants in self-reported shyness and self-esteem

		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean ± SD
Self-reported Shyness	Kazakh boys	150	11	39	25.52 ± 6.20
	Kazakh girls	150	8	39	25.72 ± 6.94
	Kazakh total	300	10	40	26.59 ± 6.37
	Persian boys	150	7	31	16.82 ± 5.73
	Persian girls	150	7	31	16.43 ± 5.30
	Persian total	300	7	31	16.63 ± 5.51
Self-esteem	Kazakh boys	150	8	25	14.60 ± 3.53
	Kazakh girls	150	6	24	14.32 ± 3.72
	Kazakh total	300	6	25	14.46 ± 3.63
	Persian boys	150	10	29	20.52 ± 3.94
	Persian girls	150	10	26	19.86 ± 3.09
	Persian total	300	10	29	20.19 ± 3.55

Table 2: Independent samples t-test results for self-reported shyness and self-esteem

		N	Mean ± SD	t	Sig
Self-reported shyness	Kazakh boys	150	25.52 ± 6.20	-0.263	0.793
	Kazakh girls	150	26.11 ± 7.25		
	Persian boys	150	16.82 ± 5.73	0.617	0.538
	Persian girls	150	16.43 ± 5.30		
	Kazakh	300	26.59 ± 6.37	20.481	0.000
	Persian	300	16.63 ± 5.51		
Self-esteem	Kazakh boys	150	14.60 ± 3.53	0.651	0.515
	Kazakh girls	150	14.32 ± 3.72		
	Persian boys	150	20.52 ± 3.94	1.612	0.108
	Persian girls	150	19.86 ± 3.09		
	Kazakh	300	14.46 ± 3.63	-19.519	0.000
	Persian	300	20.19 ± 3.55		

The present study hypothesized that self-esteem of students significantly decrease with higher level of shyness. In order to test this hypothesis, Pearson’s correlation coefficient was measured between Kazakh and Persian students’ self-reported shyness and self-esteem, as Table 3 shows, there are negative and significant correlations between shyness and self-esteem (p<0.05).

Table 3: Pearson’s correlations between self-reported shyness and self-esteem in Kazakh and Persian participants

		Self-esteem	
		Pearson Correlation	Sig
Self-reported shyness	Kazakh students	Pearson Correlation	-0.583
		Sig	0.000
		N	300
	Persian students	Pearson Correlation	-0.318
		Sig	0.043
		N	300

DISCUSSION

The present study was an effort to determine self-reported shyness and self-esteem in bilingual and monolingual students in Gorgan, Iran. The results of statistical analyses revealed that self-reported shyness in bilingual students is significantly higher than that in monolinguals. This could have been caused by the cultural issues. Since bilinguals in the study group of the present investigation are considered a minority group, they might feel ashamed of expressing their own cultural representations. On the other hand, higher shyness in bilinguals could be caused by their lexical inefficiency in their second language. Bialystok [11] stated that bilinguals experience deficits and shortages in lexical access; however, its reasons have not been found yet. Additionally, Michael and Gollan [22] mentioned that bilinguals use either of two languages less frequently than monolinguals, which leads to lower capability of rapid and fluent speech production. These cultural and lingual issues could cause shyness in bilingual students, especially when they are considered members of a minority group among dominant monolinguals.

This can explain another result of the present study that showed self-esteem of monolingual students is significantly higher than that of bilinguals. Crozier [20] stated that shyness induces negative affect,

sorrow, grief and worriedness as well as the propensity to pronounce oneself as a shy person; all of these might lead to lower levels of self-esteem and lack of self-respect.

The results of the present study are in disagreement with the idea of Ding *et al.*, 2014 who stated shy, sensitive, and wary children might obtain approval and support from important others (parents, peers, teachers), which would help them to succeed socially and academically. Furthermore, Chen *et al.* [23] mentioned that shyness is positively associated with indices of social, emotional, and school adjustment. However, unlike the above-mentioned, shyness in the subjects of the present study has led to lower level of self-esteem. Of course, this could have had something to do with bilingualism of the subjects.

In addition, there were no significant differences in self-reported shyness and self-esteem between boys and girls in both monolingual and bilingual students. This is surprising because the gender-related expectations and corresponding socialization practices may affect the exhibition of shyness and unsociability [24]. Boys are invigorated to be more self-sufficient and self-assured compared to girls in social interactions owing to gender-stereotypical ideologies, while girls are often supposed to be more involved in social relationships [21, 25].

The results of the present study have valuable implications regarding self-reported shyness and self-esteem in monolingual and bilingual students. However, there were a couple of limitations. Although the present study yielded valuable information on self-reported shyness and self-esteem among monolingual and bilingual children in both genders, the results are limited since they cannot be generalized to other age groups, ethnic groups, and social conditions. Another limitation of the present study is that the results are only for the children at school and adolescents were not taken into account. Another limitation of the present study was that it was conducted at a single point of place in a northern city in Iran and therefore, the results might be different in other places regarding different religion, ethnic, and culture groups. Future studies can thus consider the variables studied here in a broader spectrum in terms of place with more variable ethnic groups.

In spite of the above-mentioned limitations, the present study provided important implications regarding the gender differences in shyness and self-esteem among monolingual and bilinguals students as well as correlations between these two attributes. Considering that there were significant and negative correlations between the variables in both groups, a special attention should be devoted in order to avoid shyness in students, especially at lower ages. These measures should be more pronounced in the case of bilingual students who are considered minority in their schools.

COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS:

Authors declare that the present study is in a perfect compliance with ethical standards. All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

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