EFFECT OF TRIGUNA ON THE SELF-ESTEEM OF YOUNG ADULTS

Bonshe

Dept. of Psychology

Lucknow University

Email: bonshe009@gmail.com

Dr. Manini Srivastava

Assistant Professor

Dept. of Psychology

Lucknow University

Abstract

The study was aimed to explore if there is a relationship between the Trigunas i.e., Sattva, Rajas and Tamas with the self-esteem of young adults. Data collection was completed over the course of two weeks through Google Forms (online mode) wherein the Vedic Personality Inventory developed by David Wolff was used to measure the Trigunain the respondents and to calculate the self-esteem of the participants the Rosenberg Self-esteem scale developed by M. Rosenberg was used. The study consisted of responses from 217 consenting young adults within the age bracket of 19 to 25.

To explore the relation between the Trigunas and self-esteem, the Correlational Coefficient was calculated. It was found that Sattva has a positive correlation with the self-esteem of an individual whereas a negative correlation was found between self-esteem and Rajas dominant individuals as well as Tamas dominant individuals. Thereafter, t-testing was done to find if significant differences existed between the scores obtained by the groups of each of the dominant groups. The results obtained confirmed a significant difference between the scores of Sattva dominant individuals and Rajas dominant individuals as well as between the scores of Sattva dominant and Tamas dominant individuals. However no significant difference was found between the scores of Rajas and Tamas.

Keywords

Triguna, Sattva, Rajas, Tamas, Samkhya, Shrimad Bhagwat Gita, Self-concept, Personality, Self-esteem, Atharvaveda, Sattvic, Rajasic, Tamasic etc.

Bonshe, Dr. Manini Srivastava

Introduction

A number of studies and research have been conducted in terms of personality traits and self-esteem and how or if the interplay between them affects various aspects and domains of an individual's life. But mainly these have been conducted in relation to the Big Five personality traits classification done by contemporary psychologists such as McCrae & Costa (1987), Norman (1967) and Goldberg (1981). According to this model of classification, all individuals can be classified based on five dimensions. These are abbreviated as the OCEAN and include the following traits- Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism.

When talking about self-esteem numerous studies have been conducted to understand the ill-effects of negative self-esteem. The personality of an individual is influenced by various other factors which are both implicit as well as explicit. These factors result in a number of common traits and behavioral patterns within the individual. These personality traits also influence and make up an individual's self-concept consisting of self-esteem, self-perception and self-image. There are a number of models of personality that categorize individuals under different criteria most commonly Big Five personality dimensions. Due to this reason a number of studies have been done to examine the relationship between these five dimensions and self-esteem. However not a lot of research has attempted to determine the influence of the Trigunas on the self-esteem of individuals. Keeping in view this fact, the present study aims to explore the influence of the Trigunas i.e., Sattva, Rajas and Tamas on the self-esteem of young adults.

The widespread study of personality has resulted in various approaches to modern psychological studies but in my study, I have focussed on the Eastern perspective of personality study which consists of the Tri-guna classification mentioned in the Samkhya philosophy discussed in the Atharvaveda.

Chapter 7 of the Shrimad BhagwatGita talks about the Samkhya system or philosophy. It is also mentioned in the Atharvaveda. This is a dualistic philosophy that talks about the existence of two interdependent realities – Purush (consciousness) and Prakriti (illusionary world). This illusionary world is made up of three Gunas: Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas. The dominance of one of these determines an individual's personality type.

- Sattva can be considered to be related to the nature of pleasure in its various forms such as happiness, satisfaction, joy or bliss.Sattva can be considered to be related to the nature of pleasure in its various forms such as happiness, satisfaction, joy or bliss. It can be called a "spiritual quality" as its dominance in an individual results in a constancy of the mind and the senses.

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- Rajasguna is associated with activity. If it is dominant in an individual, it gives rise to passion, greed, desire, restlessness, activity etc.Rajas is characterized by stimulation and motion. Rajasik's tendency increases the passion and a desire to satisfy the wants and needs.

- TamasGuna stimulates negative thoughts in the mind and is regarded as the material quality. It arises from hope and illusionary thinking and tends to produce ambiguity, idleness, fantasy and persistence.Tamas is related to passivity and negativity and it is in contrast to the principle of activity i.e., rajas by inducing sleep, drowsiness and laziness in an individual.

According to Carl Rogers, Self-concept is an overarching construct that self-esteem is one of the components of. (McLeod, 2008). According to Rosenberg (1965), self-esteem refers to an individual's overall positive evaluation of the self. Similarly, Sedikides and Gress (2003) define self-esteem as an individual's perception or subjective appraisal of one's own self-worth, one's feelings of self-respect and self-confidence and the extent to which the individual holds positive or negative views about self. The beliefs and evaluations people hold about themselves determine who they are, what they can do and what they can become (Burns, 1982). These powerful, inner influences provide an internal guiding mechanism, steering and nurturing individuals through life, and governing their behavior. The concepts that people form and the feelings that they have about themselves are generally what we refer to as their self-concept and self-esteem. These terminologies as well as an individual's ability to deal with life's challenges and to control how it affects them have been widely documented in literature. (Seligman, 1975; Bandura, 1977; Bowlby, 1980; Rutter, 1992; Harter, 1999).

According to Erikson (1968), the occupation with the thoughts about self-esteem and self-concept continues till the time the solidification of personal identity happens and if for any reason this process is not completed healthily, the individuals remain confused. This might lead to problems such as unclear or maybe diffused identity

A study was published in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology in 2002 which talked about the global self-esteem in relation to structural models of personality and affectivity. Under this research, three studies were conducted and, in each study, it was found that a strong negative correlation exists between self-esteem and Neuroticism or negative affectivity and that self-esteem is moderately to strongly related to Extraversion or positive affectivity (Watson, D., Suls, J., & Haig, J.).

Another study that can be quoted here is the one done by Robins, Tracy and Trzesniewski in 2001. According to the results of this study the strongest predictor of self-esteem is neuroticism vs. emotional stability. Self-esteem is located at the high end of neuroticism. The second predictor is extraversion vs. introversion. Self-esteem is located at the higher end of extraversion. The third predictor is conscientiousness which shows a slight positive location on the conscientious vs. careless dimension. Openness vs. closeness also shows a slight tendency towards openness. Lastly, large variability was observed in the results for agreeableness and at least one negative correlation was shown but most correlations tend to be positive(Robins, R. W., &Trzesniewski, K. H. (2005)).

Garber and Flynn conducted a study which was focused on young adolescents. It was concluded from the results obtained that that negative self-worth is a plausible outcome of low maternal acceptance, a maternal history of depression and exposure to negative interpersonal contexts, such as negative parenting practices, early history of child maltreatment, negative feedback from significant others on one's competence, and family discord and disruption (Garber & Flynn, 2001).

A cross-sectional study done by Nguyen et al. (2019), to examine low self-esteem and its association with Anxiety, Depression, and Suicidal Ideation in Vietnamese Secondary School students showed that the students who had low self-esteem were detected at a prevalence of 19.4%. Some of the major risk factors that correlated highly to low self-esteem included factors such as physical and emotional abuse by parents or other adults in the household and high educational stress. Meanwhile, attending supplementary classes proved to be a protective factor for low self-esteem. There was also an association between lower self-esteem and increased anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation that was detected. Another quantitative study that was conducted in Malaysia studied the relationship between parenting styles and adolescent's self-esteem. This study showed that there exists a correlation between parenting style and self-esteem of students though the degree of correlation is rather strong but still significant. It was also noted that adolescents' level of self-esteem is negatively influenced by their parent's perceived Authoritative or Permissive parenting styles.

Method

The present study was undertaken to contribute to the Eastern understanding of personality types and how they relate to other concepts of the self particularly Self-esteem. A correlational research design was used to determine the relationship between Triguna and Self-esteem. Students from the age range of 19-25 from the University of Lucknow and affiliated colleges who gave consent were chosen for the study. The sample of the study includes 219 young adults from the University of

Lucknow and affiliated colleges in Lucknow, India. The data was collected for the purpose of analysis. Simplerandomsamplingtechniquewas usedtocollectthedata. People below the age of 19 or above the age of 25 or those who were not studying or were studying in colleges outside of Lucknow or did not give consent were excluded.Thetwotoolsusedinthisstudywere:

- VedicPersonalityInventory Standardized by David Wolf (1998) to determine the dominant guna in an individual.
- RosenbergSelf-EsteemScale by Morris Rosenberg (1965) to measure the self-esteem of young adults.

Results

After the data collection, the calculations were done carefully and the result was tabulated and interpreted accordingly. The statistics applied include computation of the correlational coefficient and the t-testing done between the scores of self-esteems obtained by the Trigunas respectively. The data were analyzed in terms of the significant difference between scores to find out the effect of Trigunas on the self-esteem of young adults.

The Pearson's correlation coefficient was calculated between the scores of Sattva dominant scores and their respective self-esteem scores and the correlation coefficient "r" came out to be 0.40 which signifies a positive correlation i.e., when one variable increases then the other variable also increases. Thereafter, Pearson's correlation coefficient was calculated between the scores of Raja dominant individual's scores and their respective self-esteem scores and the correlation coefficient "r" came out to be -0.09 which signifies a negative correlation i.e., when one variable increases then the other variable decreases. Finally, Pearson's correlation coefficient was calculated between the scores of Tamasicindividual's scores and their respective self-esteem scores and the correlation coefficient "r" came out to be 0.25 which signifies a negative correlation i.e., when one variable increases then the other variable decreases.

Table 1: Showing the t-test between the self-esteem scores of Sattva and Rajas dominant Subjects

	Sattva Dominant	Rajas Dominant
Mean	30.1737	24.2414
Variance	16.4335	20.9754
Observations	167	29
dF (degree of freedom)	36	
t Stat	6.54435*	

*Significant at 0.5 level

The t-test score between the scores of self-esteem obtained by Sattva dominant and Rajas dominant individuals respectively came out to be 6.54 which was highly significant at both 0.5 as well as 0.1 levels. This implies that there is a significant difference in the scores obtained by Sattva's dominant individuals compared to Raja's dominant individuals. This was also evident from the raw scores obtained wherein 45.83% of individuals out of the total 167 Sattva dominant individuals had scores that implied high self-esteem whereas the scores obtained by Rajas dominant individuals did not have any scores that resulted in high self-esteem.

If we try to look at these findings in terms of empirical support, we can compare the qualities of a Sattvic personality with the characteristics of someone who possesses high self-esteem. Webster's dictionary defines self-esteem as "satisfaction with oneself" and Sattvic's personality is characterized by being content and confident in one's own self. As a sattvic person is aware of his strengths and weaknesses they are satisfied in themselves and therefore, possesses a high sense of self-worth.

Table 2: Table showing t-test between the self-esteem scores of Rajas and Tamas dominant Subjects

	Rajas Dominant	**Tamas Dominant**
Mean	24.2414	25
Variance	20.9754	4.94737
Observations	29	20
dF (degree of freedom)	43	
t Stat	0.77*	

*Not Significant at 0.5 level

The t-test score between the self-esteem scores of Rajas dominant and Tamas dominant individuals respectively came out to be 0.77 which was not significant at both 0.5 as well as 0.1 levels. This implies that there is a no significant difference in the scores obtained by Rajas dominant individuals compared to Tamas dominant individuals. This was also evident from the raw scores obtained wherein the self-esteem scores for all individuals for both the Rajas dominant as well as the Tamas dominant fell into the category of having average self-esteem.

A study published by the researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi in 2015 (Khanna P, Singh K, Singla S, Verma V. 2013) found that Rajas were negatively correlated with well-being in an individual. Similarly, a number of studies have shown that self-esteem is an important predictor of subjective well-being and high self-esteem corresponds to higher levels of positive affect and life satisfaction. Also, if we look at some of the rajasic traits, we can see that it is marked by feelings

of anxiety and restlessness therefore a sense of lacking and inadequacy and the constant need to achieve more can be attributed to not having a higher self-esteem ratio in rajasic individuals.

Table 3: Table showing t-test between the self-esteem scores of Sattva and Tamas dominant Subjects

	Sattva Dominant	Tamas Dominant
Mean	30.1737	25
Variance	16.4335	4.94737
Observations	167	20
dF (degree of freedom)	36	
t Stat	8.798*	

*Significant at 0.5 level

The t-test score between the self-esteem scores of Sattva dominant and Tamas dominant individuals respectively came out to be 8.798 which was significant at both 0.5 as well as 0.1 levels. This implies that there is a significant difference in the scores obtained by Sattva dominant individuals compared to Tamas dominant individuals. This was also evident from the raw scores obtained wherein 45.83% individuals out of the total 167 Sattva dominant individuals had scores that implied high self-esteem whereas the scores obtained by Tamas dominant individuals did not have any scores that resulted in high self-esteem i.e., all of them had average self-esteem.

These findings can again be supported by the previously quoted study done at the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi wherein Tamas was also found to be negatively correlated to well-being (Khanna P, Singh K, Singla S, Verma V. 2013). This is understandable when we look at the traits of tamasic people like self-doubt, confusion and ignorance. These individuals are characterised by a lack of awareness and willingness to make changes and work on themselves therefore causing confusion irritation and self-doubt which leads to lower levels of self-esteem.

Therefore, it can be concluded that-

✓ There is a significant difference between the self-esteem scores of Sattva dominant individuals and Rajas dominant individuals as well as between the self-esteem scores of Sattva dominant individuals as well as Tamasic individuals.

✓ There is no significant difference between the self-esteem scores of Tamasic and Rajasic individuals.

✓ There is a positive correlation between Sattvic personality type and high level of self-esteem.

✓ There is a negative correlation between Rajasic and Tamasic individuals and their self-esteem levels respectively.

Conclusion

It was an interesting experience studying about the Eastern classification system and understanding the Eastern perspective on personality and how it affects the self-esteem of individuals. More studies must be conducted exploring the Eastern concepts relating to psychology so that we develop a deeper understanding of the Indian population and its problems and solutions. This study concludes the importance of having a sattvic lifestyle to develop healthy self-concepts and increased well-being in the context of the Indian population.

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