



Psychosocial Problems of Female Students in Private Higher Institutions

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Abstract

The study attempted to see the psychosocial problems of female students at private higher institutions. More specifically, it was designed to explore the level of their general self-esteem and problems they faced in the formation of intimate friends. The study also examined the association between psychosocial problems and academic performance. Sample female students from Saint Mary's and Royal Colleges were the subjects of the study. The paper was grounded in qualitative analysis.

The results of the study indicated that female students seemed to have favourable self-esteem. However, they appeared to rank themselves below average in social skills. Lack of professional supports, inconsistent treatments, perceived assumptions and reflected appraisals were some of the major factors that might affect the psychosocial states of female students in private institutions. Furthermore, the study suggested that there might be certain association between psychosocial problems and academic performance.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

It is a well recognized fact that Education plays a significant role in the development process. However, in Ethiopia, education is not accessible to all people. The overall level of education is very low (Trufat 1999). The literacy rate is 41 and 21 percent for male and female respectively (Befekadu 1998). Asmaru (1998 cited in Guday 2003) further stated that in grades (1-6) boys are 50.3% whereas girls are 29.3%, in grade (1-8) boys are 43% and girls are 26%, and in senior secondary schools girls are 14% and boys are 17.9%.

One can observe from the above review the numerical value that the participation of girls in the Ethiopian education system is limited. The participation rate, performance and gender stereotype is even worse at tertiary level education, and gender inequality in education widens as one goes up higher on the educational ladder (Seyoum 1991; Trufat 1999; Befekadu 1998 and Haregewoin and Emebet 2002). Further Atsede (1991 as cited in Guday 2003) reported that girls' enrolment and performance, their participation as researchers, teachers, lecturers and engineers is in most instances less than one-tenth of that of men.

Gender disparities are prevalent in Ethiopia. The existing gender imbalance dates back to ancient Ethiopia. In Ethiopia women had been excluded from getting church and koranic education (Seyoum 1986) which has not changed much even today.

As commented above, the number of female students admitted to higher institutions is negligible compared with the number of male students. According to Genet (1991), it was only 5% of female

as compared to 14% male students who were reported to have scored a GPA that could qualify them for higher education. Having understood the reality, the government of Ethiopia has tried to take some affirmative actions such as admitting them to join higher institution with a GPA of 2 which is less than that of male students. Despite this attempt of gender responsive policies, the participation and enrolment rate of female students in higher institutions has been minimal (Fentaw 2001; Anteneh 2000 and Seyoum 1986).

The problems of female students are quite different from that of male. They are overburdened with household chores; they are exposed to the deep rooted inequality with men and they have social, cultural and economic discrimination and stigma. These impede their limited educational opportunities and those who got the access cease their studies due to academic and non-academic reasons (Fentaw 2001). These problems create special difficulties in terms of self concept and interpersonal relations and this study attempts to find out the psychological and social problems of female students in selected higher institutions of Ethiopia.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In Ethiopia a growing body of studies and statistical reports have revealed the low participation rate of female students in Education (Genet 1991; Almaz 1991 and Atsede 1991 as cited in Gudaye 2003; Adugnaw 1995; Negat 1995 and Asmaru 1998). This shows that half segment of the population contributes little for the development of the country for gender discrimination affects not only women but also the overall growth of the economy.

It is argued that the limited participation of female students in education is mainly due to economic, cultural and societal factors (Guday 2000). Over the years, the low participation of females in education is highlighted, documented and recorded but their psychosocial problems as per the knowledge of the researcher, is not thoroughly considered.

Some local researchers (Efrem 1999; Solomon 1999; Bahiru 1999 and Demewoz 1997) conducted research in connection with self concept and the formation of peers. However, none of the previous studies was addressing the specific psychosocial problems of female students in private higher institutions. Thus, this study aims at filling this research gap.

Thus, the focus of this study will be on the psychological and social problems of female students. More specifically, the study will attempt to answer the following basic questions.

1. What are the psychosocial problems of female students?
2. Is there any association between psychosocial problems and academic performance of students?

1.3 Objectives of the study

In trying to answer the above research questions, the study attempts to achieve the following specific objectives to:

1. explore the level of their general self-esteem;
2. identify their specific social challenges for the formation of intimate friends; and
3. see the association between psychosocial problems and academic performance.

1.4 Operational Definitions of Key Terms

Psychosocial: represents intrapersonal and interpersonal characteristics of a person.

Psychological problems: are emotions related to general self esteem

Social problems: are interpersonal barriers for social relations particularly in the formation of intimate friends.

Friendships: are social agents who share one's feelings and avoid loneliness in a particular social milieu.

Self esteem: is the judgments we make about the worth of ourselves.

Peers: are students of the same maturity level and consist of a few friends of the same sex or a large group of both sexes.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Psychological Development

2.1.1 The Nature of Self

Berk (1991) pointed out that social cognition has a multifaceted nature and it comprises the behaviour and inner characteristics of the self and other people. Berk (1991) further explained that the concept of self, of other people and of relationships between people is the three facets of social cognition development.

Under social cognition, we find the notion of self concept. Self concept is a general term covering self esteem. In relation to this, Derlega and Janda (1986) indicated that the feeling, attitudes and values people have in regard to their behaviour, abilities and worth are defined as self concept.

According to Rogers(1959) self concept refers to the organized, consistent, and whole perceptions that each of us has about ourselves through reflected appraisals of others whereas self esteem is more specific than self concept, and it is the way we think about ourselves whether in a generally negative or positive fashion (Derlega,1986). According to Owens (1993), self esteem is what you feel about yourself and it is the extent to which you admire and value the self. In other words, it is the evaluative side of self concept or it is the judgment we make about the worth of ourselves (Berk 1991). For some researchers self-concept and self esteem have similar meaning (Green *et al*

1975 and Derlega and Janda 1986) but, others treat them separately (Coopersmith 1967 and Messey *et al* 1984).The researcher of this study perceives them differently.

2.1.1.1. Formation of Self Esteem

Researchers like Owens (1993), Pervin (1984) and Fox (1993) indicated that the origin of self esteem is in social interaction. However, the formation of self esteem is not purely a social product. It can be seen from two dimensions - outer source of self esteem and inner source of self-esteem. In connection to this, Rosenberg (1981) explained that the outer source of self is derived from reflected appraisals of others. Further, Rosenberg (1981) showed that the impact of others depends on the degree of crystallization of the self-esteem component under consideration. If the component is firmly fixed and the person has preformulated view of himself or herself regarding that specific component, other's view may have little impact.

Rosenberg (1981) further indicated that the inner source of self esteem is the result of individuals' beliefs about their ability to succeed in a particular task. Although the individual's view of himself is internal, what he sees and feels when he thinks of himself is largely the product of social life (Coopersmith 1967 and Efrem 1999).

2.1.1.2. Components of Self Esteem

The concept of self esteem has multidimensional nature. That is the components of self esteem are different since people have different perception and judgment about themselves in different interaction and situation. Rosenberg (1981) revealed that an individual's self esteem varies from situation to situation; as a result, the person has many different social selves.

Under the general self esteem, Berk (1991) explained some of the components of self-esteem. These are: social self-esteem, academic self esteem, physical self esteem, etc. Battle (1981) indicated that social self esteem is related to social value and it is the individual's perceptions of the quality of their relationship with the society whereas academic self esteem is the individual's perceptions, capability and evaluation to succeed academically. Further, Berk (1991) indicated that each classification may have other components. For example, academic self could be arithmetic, language, science, art, etc. Physical self esteem includes - physical ability and physical attractiveness.

2.1.1.3. Gender and Self-Esteem

Regarding sex, females show lower self-esteem than males do (Lips 1997). Their low self-esteem may result from the influences of others in the immediate environment. In connection to this, Gearheart *et.al* (1988 Page No.) address the following adage which indicates by contrast the need for an objective and sensitive attitude.

- What you think of me
- I will think of me
- What I think of me
- Will be me

The perception and attitude of others in the immediate environment have profound effect on the psychological make up of students with orthopaedic impairments. Psychological support service and supportive environment at home and in school can help relieve this feeling.

Freiber (1991 cited in Lips 1997) suggested that the gender-gap in self-esteem widens during adolescence and the subsequent stages of development. When females move from childhood to adolescence and to adulthood, they become aware that there is a conflict between the way they see themselves and the others (teachers, authorities) view them. They confront a message of female inferiority, exclusion and subordinate (Galligan 1990 as cited by Lips 1997). Significant others such as peers should see female students positively and make them see as worth while individuals with many valued abilities.

There are different variables that influence women's self esteem; the following are some.

2.1.1.4. Factors Affecting Self Esteem

Body image, others and social standard are some of the factors that can play a role in affecting self-esteem.

2.1.1.4.1. Body Image

The way physical attractiveness is viewed has profound effects on personal adjustment. Derlega and Janda (1986) stated that people who are satisfied with their appearances are well adjusted and are comfortable in social situations while those who feel they are unattractive are likely to experience anxiety in social situation; they tend to be less effective in interpersonal relationships and they have fear of being criticized and rejected so they have poor self esteem.

Feeling of dissatisfaction with one's body is more common among women than men. Lips (1997) noted that physical attractiveness is more central part of the self concept for femininity than to masculinity.

2.1.1.4.2. Significant others

Derlega and Janda (1986) indicated that people are bound to develop feelings of worthless, worthwhile, lovable and unloved according to the degree of acceptance accorded to them; i.e., they learn to define themselves on the basis of others treatment. In other words, one's self-esteem is developed through interaction with other people.

Although there are many people with whom we interact, we don't accept all their views of us since they may not be significant to us. Derlega and Janda (1986) noted that significant others such as peers, parents, siblings and teachers play a part in how we think of ourselves. Concerning this, Rosenberg (1981) proposed two foundations of interpersonal significance-valuation and credibility. Valuation refers to giving credit to the opinion of those people who matter most to us - whose opinion we care for greatly should have strong effect on our self esteem than the views of those to whom we are indifferent. Credibility - the impact of other's opinion of us depends on the degree of faith, trust or confidence that we repose in that person's judgments.

Thus, if one is accepted by important others, the relationship is likely to have a positive effect on the individuals; self-esteem; on the other hand, if peers or teachers show lack of acceptance, the relationship may have unfavourable effect on the individual's self esteem.

2.1.1.4.3. Social Standard

It is the universal desire of mankind to be recognized as a worthwhile individual since society has placed standards on academic performance, strength, ability, wealth and physical beauty. Social standard which regulates public image limits self esteem and adjustment (Derlega and Janda 1986). And it is easy for female students to devalue themselves because they do not have the qualities. In other words, not having the qualities expected by the society, the discrepancy between the expectations and standards set by the society and the inability of the person to meet these expectations create poor self esteem. By internalizing the attitudes of the community as a whole, female students view themselves from the perspectives of the broader society that is negatively and stereotypically (Rosenberg 1981).

2.2. Social Development

Socialization is a very intricate process. Everyone is not born with sufficient survival skills but he/she acquires them through socialization. This implies that our lives are interwoven with the lives of others (Garwood 1983).

A variety of social agents participate in the socialization process. The process is controlled by significant agents such as friends, teachers and parents. Garwood (1983) further noted that prolonged acquaintance with peers and peer contacts are the primary vehicle for shaping and developing more complex adaptive social interchanges. This shows that the quality of interpersonal skills among friends tend to interfere with spontaneous social activity and interactions.

2.2.1. Friendship

Friendships are interpersonal social relationships which serve many human needs and help us grow and develop as individuals (Derlega and Janda 1986). Derlega and Janda (1986) further explained that friendships provide mutual protection, avoid loneliness, gain approval for ourselves and increase our certainty about our own behaviours.

According to Garwood (1983), friendships have developmental trends - situational, contractual and empathic. Situational friendships are based on shared activities whereas contractual are based on adherence to socially sanctioned rules; on the other hand, empathic friendships rely on mutual understanding.

Derlega and Janda (1986) and Garwood (1983) pinpointed five major elements that enhance healthy relationship among friends - genuineness, warmth, empathy, self-disclosure and altruism.

Genuineness: - a relationship between friends deepens only if both persons, without hiding and denying, are honest in what they say and feel toward one another.

Warmth: - refers to seeing the other peer as a unique person with his/ her own thought, feeling, experience; accepting both goods and bad qualities and offering unconditioned positive regard.

Empathy:- denotes recognizing the nature of their friend's private worlds and understanding both cognitive components (knowledge of what another is feeling) and affective components (sharing in another's emotionality).

Self Disclosure: - is an index that shows the growth of a relationship is a building block of friendship. Persons who are able to reveal their thoughts are more likely to have intimate friends whereas persons who are unable to disclose their innermost thought are isolated and they couldn't learn about themselves. Although the depth of disclosure depends on the intimacy and the quality of the friendship, self disclosure may be inappropriate and self defeating if it is not done at the correct time, in the correct context and to the correct person (Derlega and Janda 1986).

Altruism: - is offering aid or giving comfort to others in time of distress or it is a behaviour that is intended to help others without anticipation of personal gain as result (Garwood 1983).

The formation of friendship is as varied as its intensity; however, Berk (1991) and Derlega and Janda (1986) proposed four major cases in which friendship is founded.

2.2.1.1. Origins of Friendship

Friendships seem to be based on attractiveness, proximity, similarity and reciprocity (Berk 1991 and Derlega and Janda 1986). Physical attractiveness is one of the most powerful reasons why people like each other. Berk (1991) asserted that according to the matching principle, people tend to be attracted to others with similar physical characteristics such as attractiveness, height and weight. Regarding the reason for doing so, Derlega and Janda (1986) stated that the strong driving motive for selecting attractive individuals as friend is to increase status; being seen with a physically attractive persons seem to enhance our own social appeal and our own image. In relation to this, Sigall and Londy (1973 cited in Berk 1991) reported that man seated with an attractive woman was viewed positively by others but if he was with unattractive woman, he was viewed negatively. Moreover, attractiveness has a strong impact on our evaluation and makes us sympathetic. For instance, Derlega and Janda (1986) explained that adults make excuses for an attractive child who has misbehaved.

Along with this, beauty drives women crazy when they reach early adulthood. For example, one female student addresses the following "I thought of myself that if I were an ugly girl, I would consider killing myself" Derlega and Janda (1986). This tyranny of beauty informs that women give much credit for physical attractiveness.

Proximity: - physical proximity or closeness is the most important factor in forming a friend or getting to know someone. Derlega and Janda (1986) indicated that repeated contact tends to increase social attraction and the more we meet someone, the more likely we are to like that person. But proximity is limited by a number of social influences. Berk (1991) forwarded that social filter established by parents, peers, cultural groups lead people to have a strong tendency to make friends (marry) with members of the same race religion, social class and education. In connection to this, Behru (1999) concluded that college students seem ethnically biased in peer relation.

Similarity: - refers to having the same interest, physical characteristics, attitudes and other personality characteristics. Researchers (Berk 1991 and Derlega and Janda 1986) showed that people who are more similar to each other are more likely to get together particularly at the early stage of their relationship but when the relationship such as close friends advances need complimentary may be important.

Reciprocity: - is the tendency to like others if we think they like us. However, Berk (1991) indicated that insincere and ingratiating demonstration may produce disliking if it is perceived as a phoney attempt to gain some advantage.

Research Instruments

The study was basically qualitative and it attempted to present the psychosocial problems of female students in PHEIs. It was also the purpose of this study to see the impacts of psychosocial problems on the academic performance of female students.

Three methods of data collection techniques were used; these were questionnaire, interview and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The questionnaire was developed in a form of scale. The adapted general self-esteem scale GSES (Rosenberg 1981) is a 17 item questionnaire. The response scale was a five point Likert format ranging from always to never in which higher scores reflecting positive self esteem and lower scores denoting negative self esteem.

Open-ended interview guide was also employed in order to assess the attitude and personal experience of female students. Further, focus group discussions were made with small representative groups. The FGD was designed to collect information in connection to the general experience they have had.

Ninety five sophomore students from St. Mary's and Royal Colleges took part in filling the self-esteem scale. Eighteen out of the ninety-five female students were selected randomly and participated in the focus group discussion. In addition, ten of them were interviewed.

3. Results and discussions

3.1 Psychological Development of Female Student

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Positive Self Concept Items

<i>Item</i>	<i>Positive Self Concept Items</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
1	I am happy most of the time	95	1	5	2.21	1.01
2	I usually can take care of myself	94	1	5	1.76	1.17
3	I am as happy as most girls	92	1	5	2.60	1.34
4	I am as nice looking as most girls	92	1	5	2.08	1.29
5	I know myself very well	93	1	5	1.61	1.01
6	When I have something to say, I usually say it	94	1	4	2.12	1.07
7	People can depend on me to keep my promises	92	1	5	2.10	1.25
	overall mean	95	1.00	3.50	2.063	0.5856
	Valid cases	87				

As might be noted in the above table, the mean of the self esteem item was 2.0629 which shows that the sample female students had favourable self concept about themselves. The means of the second and the fifth items were 1.76 and 1.61 respectively; this in turn depicts that the subjects could probably take care of themselves and they seem to know themselves very well. This was compatible with the theoretical concept which stated that taking care of oneself for the sake of physical attractiveness is more central part of the self concept for femininity than to masculinity (Lips 1997).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Negative Self Concept items

<i>Item</i>	<i>Negative Self Concept Factors</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
1	I spend a lot of time daydreaming	95	1	5	2.66	1.23
2	I like to spend most of my time alone	95	1	5	3.02	1.08
3	I have very little trust in myself	95	1	5	3.15	1.55
4	I like being a boy	95	1	5	3.58	1.61
5	I usually fail when I try to do important things	93	1	5	3.09	1.28
6	I often feel ashamed of myself	91	1	5	3.97	1.35
7	I often feel that I am no good at all	91	1	5	3.60	1.20
8	Most girls are better than me	93	1	5	3.94	1.28
9	I would change many things about myself if I could	90	1	5	2.33	1.31
10	I worry a lot	92	1	5	2.60	1.29
	Overall mean	95	2.00	4.90	3.1938	.7007
	Valid cases	82				

The table above revealed that the negative self-esteem items had a total mean of 3.1938, which exceeds the average value. This shows that female students had probably better self-esteem about themselves.

Furthermore, the observed mean values for the first and the tenth items were almost on the average line. According to this, it was reasonable to expect that the sample students possibly spent some of their time daydreaming and they sometimes tended to worry. On the other hand, the ninth item had a value of 2.33, which is below the average line. This revealed that some subjects would probably change many things about themselves if they could. In a nutshell, female students had favourable self esteem.

This is contrary to the theoretical concepts stated under the literature, which stated that female had low self esteem (Lips 1997). The likely explanation is that education, the environment in which the subjects were found and the gender advocacy might be some of the factors that account for the favourable self-esteem that the subjects had. Or, the degree of crystallization of the inner self might be so concrete that the subjects had such favourable self esteem score.

Despite the fact that female students showed positive general self-esteem in Rosenberg's scale, the subjects' endorsement of social stereotypes had strong effect on their social identity. This might be the reason for the subjects' need to change many things about themselves if they could.

It was outlined that self-esteem was twofold - inner and outer sources of self esteem (Rosenberg 1981). The study shows that the subjects' belief about their ability, worth, feeling and values seems to be positive. However, the culture, people's treatment and attitude towards female tend to lower their self-concept. Results of the interview about the factors that affect the psychological conditions of female students revealed that the following are the predictors that affect their identity.

Societal attitude towards female, myths about women, fear of success and risk taking and sex role orientation are some of the factors that affect our psychological states.

The way feminine is viewed by the society has profound effects on the subjects' personal adjustment since the outer source of self is derived from reflected appraisals of others (Rosenberg 1981). The society's view towards females had impacts on their identity because the subjects are bound to develop their self-image according to the degree of treatment and acceptance accorded to them. From the interview results, it was found out that those parents of few subjects uttered before their daughters about their male sex preferences. This type of utterances might unknowingly hurt the subjects' psychological feelings. Below are the responses of some female that could show the point clearly.

In different occasions my father said "Had you been a son, I would have felt an everlasting happiness. This has a telling effect on my identity. Furthermore, when I made an error, my mother often said, "I was cursed while I gave birth to a baby girl."

In view of the above points, parental attitude appears to be important. This is because personality structure and the nature of social relations are formed as reflected in the attitude of the parents towards their daughters. The statements of the parents and the treatments they received from the society seem to complicate the matter. This could lead the subjects to have a poor psychological states. Had culture, people's attitude and situations been conducive to female students, they would have even shown high self esteem score than what is found in the study.

3.2 Social Development of Female Students

Friendships are one of the building blocks of interpersonal ties. Friends share important information and feelings that become a source of love. The development of friendship depends on the participation in positive interactions. The subjects' participation in healthy social interaction seems to be positive. The following responses of the subjects consolidated the point above.

I have many friends but not intimate; I have a lot of friends but few close peers.

According to Garwood (1983), friends are important milestone in the development of personality. Despite the fact that sharing information is generally seen as a hallmark of common friendships, sharing of intimate feelings, discussing a wealth of information, defusing everyday frustration and understanding the desires of partners are only qualities of close friendships. However, female students did not have many close friends to whom they counted on to be themselves. The following description has brought this point out.

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I could not trust people and I would not be completely myself with them since it is hard to find people who disclose personal secret and understand your thought. I behave in a more neutral way instead of expressing the real excitement, sorrow and happiness with friends. On the other hand, few of them explained as follows: I could completely be myself when I have been with my mother, sisters or brother.

In view of the above facts, majority (77%) of female students did not have many intimate friends to whom they share warm, affectionate and happy excitements.

The culture, female socialization and personal style might be some of the factors that impede the existence of warm interpersonal relations and real social bonds.

Although items referring to the culture of the sample students were not taken into account, socio-metric peer nominations were a product of culture. All the subjects taking part in the focus groups discussion stated as follows.

The way we are reared restricts the area of social interactions. This undoubtedly limits the number of friends formed as it narrows the opportunities of forming friends in different social gathering.

It is quite conceivable that being uninvolved actively in social interactions emerged as a significant factor that could reduce the opportunity of making friends. In connection to the impacts of feminine in the realm of social relation, the subjects participated in the focus groups discussion stated their common experiences below.

Female socialization process forces female to think about ourselves as less competent. The role standards of female lead us to internalize this cultural though. Thus, feminity increases the vulnerability of female to interpersonal and interpersonal relations.

This finding was also compatible with the theoretical concepts and empirical reports discussed under the literature (Guday 2000 and Almaz 1991). According to the respondents, female socialization process has followed strict system of upbringing. The role standards of female guided the way they are supposed to behave in a particular society.

Female were socialized to think about themselves a bit lower than male. This assumptions might provide them the under grid on which they erected their personal identity i.e. there seemed to be a kind of general consensus about the way female behave. In other words, there was a positive correlation between the normative beliefs and the subjects' endorsement of social stereotype. The subjects' personal experiences revealed that gender role was culturally rooted in the general belief of the society.

Both the family and the public at large did never consider female as equal as male. The views of interviewees given below could provide a vivid picture of the point under discussion.

Some people treat female as equal as males but the majority of the people look down upon us. People in general do not have consistent judgments for women. Even my parents never allowed me to do something alone because they thought that I always need safeguard. Moreover, they are not pleased to spend my time with friends.

As per the responses of the subjects, they received inconsistent treatment from the community. This implies that the treatments they get do not remain fixed on account of which their conception of their identity might also be changed along with the kind of treatment they experienced.

For self-conception is to be responsive to environmental fluctuation (Rosenberg 1981), female students are likely to show momentary fluctuation in their self identity. The public image about feminine was unfavourable and it was found out that most people undermine their ability and potential to perform tasks similar to their male counterparts.

Due to the assumptions sustained by the society and the undesired treatment imposed on them the subjects might not be in a position to initiate friendship and they would make attribution from the stand point of others. The response below is compatible with the point under discussion.

We rank ourselves in the same way with respect to the conventional standards of the society and we act according to the norms of the society. It is the society's attitude that affects our social relations.

The responses of the subjects correspond with the theory of reflected appraisals which state people come to see themselves in terms of appraisals other made about them (Rosenberg 1981). Reflected appraisals seem to show their structural location in the society. According to the respondents, they were socially viewed as less competent and this would lead them to view themselves in terms of the views of others.

In addition to the point discussed above, the absence of genuineness, empathy, altruism and self-disclosure might be some of the factors that could hamper the formation of close friends. Although self-disclosure might be self-defeating if it is not done in the correct time, context and person, individuals who do not disclose their innermost though have fewer opportunities for making deep friendship (Derlega and Janda 1986). The culture in which the subjects are socialized does not help them to disclose themselves. Females do not have guts to violate the cultural moral code, which restricts them to be secretive.

From the psychological point of view, it is understandable that females' earliest experiences, the emotional responsiveness of caregivers to a developing baby's wish have profound influences on the quality and nature of interpersonal interactions because all these might be relatively fixed early in childhood (Freud 1917 cited in Berk 1991). This is further accentuated by the culture in which females are immersed.

3.3 Psychological Problems and Their Impacts on Females Academic Performance

The psychological conditions of the subjects are determinants of their academic performance. For example, level of self-concept could have some effect on their achievements. In line with this, Rosenberg (1981) explained that self-esteem could be both a consequence of academic performance or a cause for it.

The subject also explained that psychological conditions would have impacts on their academic performance. The summary given below illustrated this point.

To begin with, lack of courage to raise questions in the classroom for instance has influenced our understanding. Further, poor psychological state such as being shy, dependent, lack of achievement motivation, becoming over sensitive not to make errors have marked effects on our school achievements.

The psychological conditions of females have a prominent influence on their academic achievement. Learning needs active interactions between teachers and students and among students too. However, females' active participation is constrained because of their poor psychological states of being shy and lack of courage, which might be the product of sheltered upbringing.

In relation to this, Rosenberg (1981) explained that the confidence with which one approaches a task and the freedom from anxiety might also influence academic achievement. In the classroom situation, it was a common experience to see that the majority of female students did not have the courage to talk and participate actively in the classroom interactions; if they talked at all, they might talk only in whisper. This happened because they are fearful of getting disapproval and they are more vulnerable to criticism. Thus, it was reasonable to conclude that shyness and lack of encouragement and courage might be some of the factors that could hinder the academic performance of female students.

In the same vein, the subjects' perception of their capability might also be influenced by the reflection of dependency. Misconception awareness of their ability might be the major factor that determines effective outcomes. In relation to this, Bandura (1982) stated that self efficacy is a strong predictor of subject specific academic performance and goals.

From the explanation they made, female students appeared to be more concerned with others' reactions to them. Being over sensitive towards the opinion of others and a fear of failure might retard the course of their active interactions in the classroom. And insufficient involvement or classroom interactions undoubtedly limit the students' achievements.

This finding reconciled with the theoretical issue which stated that both social and cultural factors are the major causes that lead to differences in academic performance (Tony 2003). The study subjects noted that social problems would also have impacts on their academic performance. To mention but few, the following sample presentation clearly showed the case under discussion.

Household chores restrict our studying time. In addition, we are not allowed to spend the whole day in the library since we are over safeguarded. Further, sexual harassments from male classmates and teachers, low estimation of females' performance are some of the factors that affect our academic achievement.

Social factors may account for their academic performance. As it was mentioned above, female students were requested to spend their time at home – doing household tasks. Underling this was little attention might be paid to their studying time. Restricting them at home limits the opportunity to acquire the skills and experiences with their classmates through interactions. In such a way, they could not cover lessons given in the classroom let alone exploring unknown course related issues with enthusiasm and curiosity that are the major accountabilities of students in PHEIs.

As per the responses of subjects, the people's orientation of females' made the subjects be over safeguarded. This tended to show the social structure of females. The extremes over protection, over appreciation and underestimation have their own impacts on their identity development and poor identity development might also give rise to affecting academic achievement.

According to the data, the sample female students were exposed to sexual harassment from teachers and classmates. Such harassments were likely to generate tension, feelings of fear, insecurity and problems of interpersonal relations. To avoid the subtly hidden desire of such male, the interpersonal interaction and discussion to which the respondents are subjected would be restricted. In other words, the subjects would facilitate the avoidance of situations and persons in which they were likely to face treating incidents because there is a tendency of people to avoid potentially self-devolving situation (Rosenberg, 1981). Due to all these, it is not difficult to envisage the young female students' feelings that undergo in such situations. And attending lessons with such kind of psychological conditions might inhibit the academic performance of female students in PHEIs.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Since a fuller understanding of problems that female students experience is a fertile step in finding solutions, the overall aim of the study was to explore the psychosocial problems of female students and see the effects of the problems on their academic performance.

The data mirror that the society tends to underestimate feminine and they experience inconsistent treatments. As a result, the subjects of the study view themselves according to the views of others and they internalize this cultural assumption. Due to this, they are poor in social skills. The study also indicates that female socialization process is likely to be a major factor for the absence of forming intimate friends. Further, they lack confidence, courage and they develop a feeling of shyness. In spite of all these, as the study shows, female students have favourable self-esteem.

The study also reveals that there is an association between psychosocial problems and academic performance. Poor psychological conditions such as shyness, lack of encouragement and courage, restricting female at home, low esteem for female students' achievement, unwanted sexual attention and harassment are some of the barriers to their academic learning.

The recommendations rendered have been twofold one is to change society's attitude towards female; in doing so, consciousness-raising and gender advocacy tasks have prominent roles. Both the family and the society should be enlightened about gender equality. As a result, positive sustainable and desirable attitude could develop. Furthermore, female students should not be restricted at home because restricting females at home is potentially hazardous for their academic performance. For females tend to be more concerned with people's reactions to their classroom activities, they appear to have low academic self-confidence. To overcome such embarrassment, instructors have to play a key role in enhancing their participation in the classroom activities. Moreover, professional supports such as counselling service could foster their psychological wellbeing. Academic staff in particular and the society in general have to treat female students equally as their male counterparts. In addition, unwanted sexual attention and harassment must be curbed.

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