Effects of Adolescents' Socioeconomic Status on Their Self-esteem: A Case of School going Adolescents in Central Bhutan

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Abstract
Many factors have been suggested, debated and instituted across the schools toward enhancing the quality of learning. However, the psychological aspect of learners rarely come up as an issue of discussion though various researches has pointed that improving the psychological aspect of learners can have a profound effect on the overall success and well-being of learners. One prominent psychological aspect of learners is self esteem that can have a significant effect on the way learner engages in activities, deals with challenges and connects with others. It also has an influence on learner's motivation to learn competently and willing to face challenges. Therefore, this study examines the effects of adolescents' socioeconomic status on their self-esteem at school. The study was conducted on the 61 adolescents from grade six to eight studying in three different schools in central Bhutan. A sequential mixed method based on survey, students' reflections and interview were used to collect the data. Descriptive statistical techniques and Pearson correlation were used analyzed the quantitative data. The qualitative data was inductively analyzed through qualitative thematic analysis. The findings showed the significant positive correlation between the self-esteem and socioeconomic status indicators such as father's education level, family monthly income and modes of travel to reach. Findings also indicated that adolescents' school context experiences such as low academic achievement, interpersonal relationship with their teachers and peers, participation in co-curricular activities, friends undermining their intelligence was reported to be affecting their self-esteem at school. Further, finding suggest that adolescents' school experience was influenced by their SES that ultimately affecting their self-esteem at school. The findings from this study suggest that education stakeholders in Bhutan need to understand how the adolescents' school context experiences and socio-cultural aspects could impact the students' self-esteem and emotion at school. While there has been some indication in this study that school context experiences and socio-cultural aspects impacting the students' self-esteem and emotions, further research needs to carried out to explored this issue and accordingly addressed. Otherwise, the poor self-esteem and negative emotions at adolescence age period is link to later mental health and its related behaviour, poor educational attainment and economic participation, and well-being.
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1. Introduction
Bhutan is a developing country and has a rich and unique culture with its long history. Modern education system in the country is neither too old nor too young – only more than half a century old. It was introduced in the country largely during the reign of Third King of Bhutan in early 1960s. Prior to this, the monastic education was the only form of education in the country. However, with the introduction of modern education system in the country, it has witnessed rapid development in both cultural-specific activity and socio-economic development of the country guided by the principle of Gross National Happiness (GNH).

With the progress in socio-economic development and education in the country, the number of children enrollment in the school has increased. According to the Annual Education Statistics of Bhutan of 2021 (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2021) the number of children enrollment as of 2021 was 168,324 students with maximum in adolescence age group. Today, the general literacy rate in the country is 71.4% with the GDP per capita of US$ 3129.86 (NSB, 2021).

Referring to the figures in the Bhutan Living Standards Report (2017), the monthly per capita household's expenditure in the urban areas was Nu.11,452 which was by 85% higher than in the rural areas with Nu.6,174. Moreover, the mean per capita annual household income reported in the earlier Bhutan Living Standards Report

(2012) has almost by three times higher in the urban with Nu.79,905 than that of rural with Nu.27,824. This inequalities on the per capita household expenditure and the per capita annual household income have the predictable disparities in the socioeconomic status (SES) of the urban and the rural people and among the people living in the same area.

The disparities in the SES among people in the country has the foreseeable impact on the development of self-esteem and later the academic achievement among adolescents (Twenge & Campbell, 2002). As SES has been identified as one of the most used contextual variables within research on development of self-esteem and later academic achievement (Veselska et al., 2010; Sirin, 2005). Moreover, the numerous studies literatures have provided enough evidences that SES is one of the strongest predictors of self-esteem and academic achievement among adolescents (Ratshivhanda & Guvuriro, 2018; Akhtar, 2012; Reardon, 2011). Furthermore, research on SES and self-esteem has shown a consistent relationship (Milne & Plourde, 2006; Rhodes et al., 2004). However, the gap still persists on self-esteem among adolescents due to differences in their SES globally (Pamar, 2014; Erol & Orth, 2011).

At the period of adolescence age, the self-esteem of adolescent undergoes changes influenced by SES indicators. Moreover, the adolescent undergoes important changes and development of lifelong behaviour and perceptions, beliefs, values, and practices (Veselska et al., 2010). They also encounter struggles with the developmental tasks of establishing an individual identity, accepting development and changes in physical characteristics, learning skills for a healthy behaviour (Susman et al., 2003).

While, the presence and importance of values and value education in Bhutan was prevalent long before the formalization of education as a social institution. It does not appear to have much room in the political environment and current Bhutanese curriculum (Schuelka et al., 2018), that is heavily outweigh with vast syllabus, academic focused and examination oriented (Maxwell et al., 2010). The observers have indicated that Bhutan has been witnessing a decline in moral values, which is claimed to have a relationship to poor values education in the school (Thinley, 2010, as cited in Sherab et al., 2016). Discussing the importance of teaching values to children at school, hence the Bhutan's ministry of education introduced the Educating for Gross National Hppiness (EGNH) to provide emphasis on values education in schools and with the ultimate goal, then, is to produce graduates fully acquired with morale and social values - frequently becoming termed as non-cognitive skills in the west (Sherab, 2013; Phuntsho & Dhendup, 2020). However, with this initiative, it was found that Bhutanese teachers, many were not efficacious about implementing EGNH in their formal lessons and as a result not much has happened in terms of actually infusing GNH values and principles into the lessons (Sherab et al., 2016). This finding indicates that students learning values and values education across the school are declining.

This in effect has caused the worrying situation for school going adolescent's psycho-social wellbeing, as the changing in values predicts and has the proportional affects on the development of self-esteem (Lönnqvist et al., 2009; Fetvadjiev & He, 2019). Further, the disparaties in socioeconmic status effects on the development of self-esteem in adolescence (Ratshivhanda & Guvuriro, 2018). Therefore, before entering adulthood, it is important for the adolescent to develop high self-esteem and the ability to care for the self (Anderson & Olnhausen, 1999). The self-esteem at adolescence age period link later mental health and health related behaviour (Mann et al., 2004), education attainment and economic participation (Ratshivhanda & Guvuriro, 2018) and well-being (Duru & Balkis, 2017).

SES and self-esteem are two of the most important and frequently examined psychological relationship and it has received considerable attention around the globe from educators, researchers and policymakers. Numerous studies were conducted over the past decades across the globe on this relationship including empirical and longitudinal studies. However, the evidences from the past research on this relationship between these two variables across the context is still inconsistent (e.g., Outbir, 2019; Sang, 2015; Erol & Orth, 2011) and moreover, the meta-analytic review has also evidence on the variation of self-esteem across the developmental ages (Twenge & Campbell, 2002). Similarly, recognizing the need to the psychological aspect of a child, (Lhamo, 2008) conducted a preliminary study on self-esteem of 158 Bhutanese students of seventh and eighth grade. The study revealed a significant number of students to be suffering from low self-esteem. The study identified the cause to be the weakness in social skills, feeling of inadequacy, physical appearance, teacher-student relationship, and parents-student relationship. However, her study did not examine the relationship between school going adolescents' SES and self-esteem. Moreover, in the context of Bhutan, no concrete study attention has been given on the development of adolescents' self-esteem as a result of the disparities in their SES. This study, therefore, seeks to examine the relationship between school going adolescents' SES and self-esteem. Furthermore, the numbers of school going children at adolescence age group is more in our country, thus, the evidence from this study has direct implications on preparing appropriate school-based intervention towards developing positive self-esteem.

2.   Literature review

2.1. Self-esteem

The term self-esteem and its concept were introduced to the field of psychology by the first American psychologist William James in 1890. The interest of his work was in the development of the self and he saw the self-esteem as an important part of this process, especially in regard to establishing and maintaining one's sense of identity as a person over time. Since then, numerous psychologists and researchers have studied on this subject, as a result the numerous existing literatures show a variety of definitions of self-esteem. However, the definition is found to be fundamentally similar with the psychological aspects in it.

The extensive literature search on the self-esteem has come over with the operationalized definition for this study which was put up by sociologist Morris Rosenberg in the latter part of the 20th century. He defined self-esteem as an attitude or feeling toward oneself concerning his or her worth as a person, which was then called as *worthiness* by Mruk (2019). In the case of high self- esteem, for instance, he said an individual feels that he or she is "a person of worth" (Rosenberg, 1965, p. 31).

A substantial body of research has shown that low self-esteem and depressive symptoms often has relative effects among adolescents (Masselink et al., 2018; Lee & Hankin, 2009; Sowislo et al., 2014; Mann et al., 2004).

2.2. Socioeconomic status

While we acknowledge the broader range of the definitions and perspectives of SES used across the sociological researches. The use of SES definition and concept across the studies vary and depend on the research questions, the populations examined, and the measures available (Herd et al., 2007). In specificity to our research questions, we have employed definition collectively from the sociological point as viewed by Gaur (2013), House (2002), and Galobardes (2006). It is defined as a measure of family's combined economic and social status in relation to others, based on various variables responsible for social and economic development. The contextual and potentially explanatory variables available for measures at adolescence in this study context were family (parents) income, father's education attainment, father's occupational status, type of resident (Galobardes, 2006), and modes of travel to reach school.

For over the past decades, research around the globe has frequently used SES as the sociological variables to investigate the numerous psychological and physiological research outcomes. For example, SES on children's physical activity, fitness, and fundamental movement skill levels (Peralta et al., 2019; Schmalz et al., 2007); relationship between SES and personal values (Magrea, 2011); SES and thinking styles beside self-esteem (Zhang & Postiglione, 2003); SES and mental health (Reiss, et al., 2019; Hailemichael, et al., 2019); SES on self-esteem and life satisfaction (Farwa et al., 2019). This research has clear evidences of SES impacting on the investigated physiological and psychological variables.

2.3. SES and self-esteem

Over the past decades, the researches on the relationship between SES and self-esteem have received considerable attention across the different contexts. For example, study by Rosenberg and Pearlin (1978) and Veselska et al. (2010) examined the relationship between SES and self-esteem among children and adult. It showed the significant correlation between socio-economic status and the self-esteem among adolescents. The studies in different contexts over the time have also reported the variation in the level of self-esteem with reference to SES varies across the age groups. For example, a study by Demo and Williams (1983) found the relationship between SES and self-esteem to be higher in adults as compared to adolescent, and among students, it was higher in older students as compared to younger ones. The similar finding was also emerged from the meta-analytic review by Twenge and Campbell (2002), it has reported that the level of self-esteem due to SES is very low in young children and for adults over the age of 60, increases substantially during young adulthood and continues higher until middle age, it also revealed that the higher SES individuals report higher self-esteem. Likewise, a longitudinal study by Erol and Orth (2011) on self-esteem development ranging from 14-30 years of age revealed that the self-esteem increases rapidly during adolescence and increases slowly with the growing age. Moreover, a study by Chinawa et al. (2015) on the level of self-esteem of adolescents age group ranging from 10 to 19 years established that self-esteem was higher in the age group of 10-17 years but lower in older adolescents (aged 18-19).

The level of self-esteem influenced by SES were also found to be varies between genders. For example, studies by Sang (2005), Farwa et al. (2019), and Birndorf et al. (2005) reported generally, boys have higher level of self-esteem than that of girls and students with higher socio-economic status tend to have more self-esteem than those with lower socio-economic status.

Numerous studies in the pasts on self-esteem with reference to SES reported findings in favor of people with high SES. It is generally, revealed that higher SES individuals have higher level of self-esteem as compared to individuals with low SES. (Debrah, 2018; Pamar, 2014; Twenge & Campbell, 2002; Ross & Broh, 2000), specifically Twenge & Campbell (2002) demonstrated for all age groups. A deatiled study by (Veselska, et al., 2010) on socioeconomic differences in self-esteem of adolescents influenced by personality, mental health and

social support have shown lower level of that self-esteem among adolescents from low socioeconomic status. The study also discussed the factors responsible for exhibiting the level of lower self-esteem including interpersonal and socio-cultural aspects.

There were some theoretical and empirical controversial around the link between SES and student's self-esteem (Mahadevan et al., 2021), and to help clarify it, they proposed an integrated account of two types of status: socioeconomic status (SES; education, income, occupation) and sociometric status (SMS; respect, admiration, importance). They examined the correlation between SES and SMS, and how they influence self-esteem across five studies ($N = 2,018$). Their study findings pointed that the link between SES and student's self-esteem was found weak as compared to SMS, however, when SMS mediated the link between SES and self-esteem, and found it to be likely influence the self-esteem.

Whereas, among socioeconomic factors, family income seems to be most related to self-esteem among adolescents (Birndorf et al., 2005) and adolescents who perceived their family as poorer than their friends were less likely to have *greater* self-esteem (Bannink et al., 2016). Parents that have low or high status of occupation cannot affect the self-esteem of the students. Student's self-esteem is not depending to the work of their parents (Moneva et al., 2019; Khan, 2020). Similarly, the study by ŞahiN et al. (2013) investigating parental education level positively affects self-esteem of Turkish adolescents also found that parental education level positively influences self-esteem of adolescents at school.

On the contrary, the ex post facto research that employed a correlation research design, by Sang (2015) investigated the relationship between the students' socio economic status and their self esteem and academic achievement. It has shown that there was no statistically significant relationship between students' family SES and their self- esteem.

While SES has been identified as one of the most commonly used independent variable within research on different dependent variables. However, many researchers defined SES using three main indicators: parents' education, parents' occupation, and parents' income (Li et al., 2011). These variables were so important that they also attracted attention from the international community (Valero et al., 2015), indicating that these researchers tend to use internationally universal indicators of SES to analyze its outcomes, the current study also used these indicators besides contextual indicators such as types of resident the adolescent live, modes of the transportation travelled to reach the school.

Research questions
1. How is SES affecting the self-esteem of school going adolescents?
2. What is the difference in the level of self-esteem between genders influenced by SES?
3. What are the adolescents' school experiences that determine their self-esteem at school?
4. How is adolescents' SES influenced their school experiences at school?

3. Methodology
Research Design
This study employed a sequential mixed method. The correlation was established between SES indicators and self-esteem to see whether there was a relationship between the SES and self-esteem of school going adolescent. A correlation research design answer questions about the existence of the relationship between two or more variables and allows a researcher to make predictions from one variable to another with a certain degree of accuracy (Sang, 2015). Moreover, it is suitable where manipulation of variables is not possible (Gravetter & Forzano, 2006). In this study the SES was treated as independent variables while self-esteem of the adolescent were the dependent variables.

Participants
Sixty-one (33 male and 28 female) adolescents studying from grade six to eight in two schools in central Bhutan took part in this study. To ensure actual diverse selection of the sample, purposive sampling was done among three grade levels by applying the class teacher's knowledge on student's socioeconomic background. Thus, it produce a sample that can be logically assumed to be representative of the population (Lavrakas, 2008).

Instruments
The two sets of questionnaires were used in this study to gather the data on adolescents SES and their self-esteem. The questionnaire on SES items include: father's education level, family monthly income, types of parents' residence, and modes of travel to school. The 10 items Rosenberg self-esteem scale with four response options (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Agree, and (4) Strongly Agree was adapted for gathering the data on the self-esteem of the participant adolescents. However, based on the suggestions from the three experts on the content validation of the scales, some of the scales in both the sets were simplified to the level of respondent comprehension without losing the intended meaning of the scale. The reliability of the scales from both the sets

were established through pilot test involving 30 participants from the same grade. The internal consistency 0.83 was obtained indicating the items were valid for implementation. A reflection writing on self-esteem was administered to purposive sample of 15 adolescent participants in order to delved deeper into their school experiences influenced by their SES in affecting their self-esteem at the school. The contents of these reflection papers included the study participants' self-esteem level at school, what are school experiences they perceived to affects their self-esteem, how their school experience is influence by their SES. Through such reflection papers, more contextual factors in relation to adolescents' school experience influenced by their SES predicting their level of self-esteem could be explored. After collecting and analyzing the 15 reflection papers, one-on-one semi-structured interviews with the 10 participant adolescents was conducted in native language (Dzongkha) to clarify what they had written in their reflection papers particularly about their self-esteem that they felt while at school and what they perceived to be causes of it. The questions were designed in a semi- structured way and included "How is your experience at school influence by your SES? "How did your school experiences affect your self-esteem? The interviews were conducted through Telegram via smartphone, and each of them lasted 5– 10 minutes. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for further analysis of the data obtained from them.

The participant adolescents were recruited with prior approval and consent from the head of the school and from participant themselves. Participating adolescents completed the two set of self-report survey questionnaires. Questionnaire items were also explained in native language (*Dzongkha)* during the survey time to avoid discrepancy between intended measure of the items and participants understanding of it.

Data analysis
Descriptive statistical techniques were used to analyze the overall adolescents' self-esteem level. Pearson correlation was used to check the common and relative relationship of SES indicators on the self-esteem level of the participant adolescents. The 15 reflection papers written by the study participants and the interview transcripts were inductively analysed through qualitative thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012)

4.   Results
Level of adolescents' self-esteem
The 10 items Rosenberg self-esteem scale with four response options (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Agree, and (4) Strongly Agree. The lowest possible score was 10 and the highest score was 40. The score range was divided into three categories of self-esteem level: low, medium, and high as shown in in Table 1.

Table 1. Criteria for level of adolescents' self-esteem

Mean Score	Level of self-esteem
00 - 1.3	Low
1.4 – 2.6	Medium
2.7 – 4.0	High

Table 2. shows the overall level of adolescents' self-esteem of both male (M = 2.03, SD = .58) and female (M = 1.82, SD = .54) influenced by SES indicators, and it was found to be at medium level.

Table 2. Overall level of adolescents' self-esteem

	Gender	N	Mean	Sta. Deviation	Level of self-esteem
Self-esteem	Male	33	2.03	.58	*Medium*
	Female	28	1.82	.54	*Medium*

Correlation between level of adolescents' self-esteem and their socioeconomic indicators
The correlation analysis regarding the relationship between socioeconomic indicators and level of self-esteem are presented in Table 3. It shows that there is a significant positive relationship between the high level of self-esteem and father's education level ($r(6)$ = .710, p = .038), family monthly income ($r(6)$ = .610, p = .001), and mode of travel to reach school ($r(6)$ = .365, p = .004). There is also a moderate relationship observed between adolescents' medium level of self-esteem and modes of travel to reach school ($r(39)$ = .303, p = .017). However, there is negative correlation observed between adolescents with medium level of self-esteem and father's education level ($r(39)$ = -.035, p = .787) and father's occupation ($r(39)$ = -.235, p = .068). Adolescents' low self-esteem has no significant relationship with any of the SES indicators.

Table 3. Correlation analysis showing the correlation coefficient between SES variables and level of self-esteem

	Level of self-esteem	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tail)	N
Father's education level	Low	.145	.266	12
	Medium	-.035	.787	41
	H	.710 *	.038	8
Father's occupation	Low	.111	.143	12
	Medium	-.235	.068	41
	H	.510	.054	8
Family monthly income	Low	.022	.867	12
	Medium	.645	.044	41
	H	.610**	.001	8
Types of residents live	Low	-.033	.789	12
	Medium	.041	.754	41
	H	.039	.770	8
Modes of travel to reach school	Low	-.075	.566	12
	Medium	.303*	.017	41
	H	.365**	.004	8

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Adolescents' school experience and their self-esteem

The inductive thematic analysis of reflection papers written by the participant adolescents and the interview transcripts reveal their school experience such as low academic achievement, celebration of birthday in the school, interpersonal relationship with their teachers and peers, physical appearance, other friends undermining their intelligence, participation in co-curricular activities, fancy clothing, concert dress and costume during school concert performance were reported to be school context factors that determine adolescents' self-esteem at school.

For some participant adolescents', their school experience such as academic achievement, interpersonal relationship with their teachers and peers, friends undermining their intelligence, participation in co-curricular activities were among many others reported to be school context variables that seemingly determined their self-esteem. As some of the selected excerpts from interviews read:

"I feel proud of myself as I am able to achieve the academic excellence from the all the sections." (Dorji, P#3)

"I feel good at school as I have good relationship with my teachers and classmates." (Sangay, P#8)

The evidence of school experience is also reported in the reflection:

"I feel proud of myself because I am good in dance and games and sports." (Yangden, comment# 12)

"I feel good at school because I have many friends who trust me." (Bhadur, comment# 9)

In contrast, some of the adolescent participants felt totally negative self-esteem from these school context factors. Their descriptions of their negative self-esteem generally pointed as a result of their low academic achievement, undermining their intelligence by others, unable to participate in co-curricular activities, lack of interpersonal relationship with teachers and peers.

"I feel like I have low self-esteem when I get low mark in my exams" (Choden, comment# 7)

"I feel low when some of my friends try to be jealous to my achievement." (Zam, P# 2)

"I feel useless as I have no talent to participate in extra-curricular activities like others friends do." (Namgay, comment # 4)

"I feel low self-esteem when my teacher make fun of me in front others in the classroom when I am not able to tell the answer correctly to her question." (Wangzom, comment #16)

"I feel low looking to myself as I don't have many good friends." (Tashi, comment #32)

For some female adolescent participants, their physical appearance attributed to their level of self-esteem. Those who think their physical appearance to be not fair as compared to others felt low self-esteem. As mentioned in their reflection, she wrote,

"I am fat and short; this makes me sad and feel worthless." (Dem, comment # 23)

Another male adolescent wrote,

"I feel low when my friends call me by nickname referring to my physical looks." (Pemba, comment # 41)

On being asked, what are their school experiences that is being influenced by their SES and how these school experience determine their level of self-esteem? Notably many of the study participant clearly mentioned in reflections and their interviews, as some selected excerpts reads:

"I feel low and shy especially during school variety show as I have to borrow dresses from my friends as I don't have money to buy all those dresses asked to wear during dance performance." (Sonam, comment # 11)

"My parents are not rich; therefore, I can't dress up with good cloth like my friends, I feel it is ok at home but when I am at school, I feel low self-esteem." (Rinzin, comment # 19)

"…for some celebration of birthday is pride for them, but when I am unable to celebrate my birthday with friends, I feel bad about myself." (Subba, comment # 30)

"I don't support school allowing celebration of student's birthday in school as it creates bad feeling to other you can't afford to celebrate their birthday like others." (Interview, male)

clearly, many participant adolescents felt low self-esteem when they are not able to afford birthday celebration with their friends at school, unable to afford good clothing, concert dress and costume during their performance at school concert. These factors mentioned in their reflection and interview are directly linked to their low SES.

5. Discussion and implications

The purpose of this study was to examine how the school going adolescents' self-esteem is influenced by their SES. It also examined how the adolescents' school experiences are influenced by their SES that ultimately affecting their self-esteem at school. Findings show the significant positive correlation between the self-esteem and socioeconomic status indicators such as father's education level, family monthly income and modes of travel to reach. It is surprising to note that adolescents school context experiences such as low academic achievement, interpersonal relationship with their teachers and peers, participation in co-curricular activities, friends undermining their intelligence was reported that seemingly determined their self-esteem at school. Findings also suggest that adolescents' school experience are influenced by their SES that ultimately affecting their self-esteem at school.

The review of literatures on SES and self-esteem from various contexts, for example, the studies by Twenge and Campbell (2002), Debrah (2018), Pamar, (2014), and Ross and Broh (2000) has generally revealed that the higher SES adolescents report higher self-esteem. Whereas, among SES factors, family income to be most related to self-esteem among adolescents (Birndorf et al., 2005), similarly, the parental education level positively influences the adolescents' self-esteem (ŞahiN et al., 2013). The finding from the current study confirms the findings from earlier studies that participant adolescents reported significant positive correlation between their father's educational level and their family monthly income, and adolescents who perceived their family as poorer than their friends were more likely to have low self-esteem at school. Adolescents' SES indicator modes of travel to reach school were also found to be strongly correlated with their self-esteem in this study. This finding indicates the contextual SES indicator beside international universal indicators of SES in examining its effect on adolescents' self-esteem.

It is surprising to note that adolescents school context experiences such as low academic achievement, interpersonal relationship with their teachers and peers, participation in co-curricular activities, friends undermining their intelligence was reported that seemingly determined their self-esteem at school. Some of the school context factors like interpersonal relationship with peers and teachers reported in the current study coincides with the earlier studies, for example, Veselska et al. (2010), Sadovnikova (2016), and Lhamo, (2008), they found the lack of interpersonal relationship aspect were found to be responsible for exhibiting the low level of self-esteem. The finding from this study suggests that, it is important to address these factors in the school policy that should not only focus on the improvement of students' psycho-social wellbeing, but also in adding the creation, implementation and evaluation of value-based programs that focus on the development and improvement of students' emotional skills. As suggested by (Ruvalcaba-Romero et al., 2017) addressing these emotional skills in the school policy have shown to increase the experience of positive emotions, self-esteem, the quality of interpersonal skills, conflict resolution, and proactive attitudes and coping skills, and could help by diminishing problems such as violence. Hence, as suggested, schools need to understand these school context and socio-cultural factors that determine the students' self-esteem and to address them in school policy to improve the students' positive emotions and their wellbeing at school.

It has been concerning to note that majority of adolescents participant were in view and mentioned in their reflections that school activities and its experiences such as school concert, birthday celebration in the assembly and classroom, and body shaming based on their physical appearance for both genders negatively affect their self-esteem. Similarly, the earlier study by Lhamo (2008) also reveals that a significant number of female students were not happy with the way they look and found it to be negatively impact on their self-esteem in learning at school. The low level of self-esteem and positive emotions is likely to negatively impact the learning process (Kärchner et al., 2021). This is a worrying trend that needs prompt attention and intervention. Therefore, participant adolescents' schools and across need to address this issue as quickly as possible. Otherwise, this has the potential to further deteriorate the students' self-esteem and emotions that would negatively impact their learning at school.

Unlike in the previous studies, it is encouraging to learn that adolescents' self-esteem for both male and

female adolescents of same SES level was found to be at medium level in the current study. This finding is inconsistent to early finding from the studies by Sang (2005), Farwa et al. (2019), and Birndorf et al. (2005) reported generally, boys have higher level of self-esteem than that of girls and students with higher socio-economic status tend to have more self-esteem than those with lower socio-economic status. Moreover, a study by Lhamo (2008) from the same socio-cultural context of the current study also found that more female students suffer from low self-esteem compared to male students. The improvement in female students' self-esteem as revealed in this study is noteworthy that acknowledges the progress of some national school education policy like Bhutan Education Blueprint 2014-2024 (MoE, 2014), that has given priority to girls' education and participation which is likely to have positive effects not only on girls' educational outcomes but also on positive emotional development.

6. Conclusion

The current study provided the findings from the investigation on how the school going adolescents' self-esteem is influenced by their SES, and how is their school experiences influenced by their SES affect their self-esteem at school. The study established the significant positive correlation between the self-esteem and SES indicators such as father's education level, family monthly income and modes of travel to reach school. The adolescents school experiences and socio-cultural aspects are reported that seemingly affecting their self-esteem at school. It is concluded that adolescents' school experiences are influenced by their SES and ultimately affecting their self-esteem at school.

While there is not enough data and research, the findings from this study also suggest that education stakeholders like teacher, principal, parents, official at both district and ministry level need to understand how the adolescents' school context experiences and socio-cultural aspects could impact the students' self-esteem and emotion at school. There has been some indication in this study that school context experiences and socio-cultural aspects impacting the students' self-esteem and emotions. However, this issue needs to be further explored and accordingly addressed. Otherwise, the poor self-esteem and negative emotions at adolescence age period is link to later mental health and its related behaviour, poor educational attainment and economic participation, and well-being.

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