

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-ESTEEM AND
COPING RESPONSES OF ADULTS

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ABSTRACT

In the present research the Relationship between Self-Esteem and Coping Responses of Adults was studied. It was hypothesized that individuals with high self esteem will obtain high scores on Logical Analysis and on Problem Solving. In order to find out the level of Self-Esteem among adults Culture Free Self-Esteem Inventory – Adult (CFSEI-2) was administered .In order to find out the Coping Responses in adults the Coping Response Inventory (CRI-A) was administered. The inventories were administered to two hundred participants out of which 100 were males and 100 were females. There were 50 males and 50 females who had high Self-Esteem and 50 females and 50 males who had low Self-Esteem. Chi-Square was computed for the statistical analysis of the data. Both the hypotheses were highly significant at $P < .001$ level. The results of the present study show that individuals with high Self-Esteem have a feeling of worthiness. They are confident and competent about their abilities. Their feelings of worthiness help them in the process of coping. In response to stress they try to think more logically, rationally and they attempt to solve the problems.

INTRODUCTION

In daily encounters people are likely to experience multiple conflicting emotional situations. This leads to stress, which also affects their sense of self. Self-esteem is an important component of self. Self is composite of an individual's thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about themselves.

The present research is being conducted in Pakistan to find out the relationship between self-esteem and coping responses of adults. Pakistan is an under developed country. Thus generally in Pakistan, due to low literacy rate, people are not aware about the importance of mental health and significance of self-esteem. The research findings of this thesis will be helpful in educating the society, parents and teachers about the importance of self-esteem.

From the Pakistani psycho-social perspective this research can provide valuable data on this phenomenon. The research finding of this thesis will be helpful in the field of Clinical Psychology. In this context no research has been conducted in Pakistan.

Therefore it is imperative for qualified clinical psychologists to investigate and highlight the relationship between self-esteem and coping responses of adults, so that the mental health of Pakistani nation can be enhanced and improved.

Self:

According to Battle, (1992) the concept of self, develops and takes shape as the child grows. In the early stages of development, the self is vague and some what poorly integrated phenomenon but becomes increasingly more differentiated as the youngster matures and interacts with significant individuals in his life.

Self-concept And Self-esteem

Self-concept and self esteem are related to each other and generally they are often used interchangeably.

Markus, (1977) suggested that Self-concept is a cognitive structure and self-esteem is an affective reaction, the self-concept refers to what we believe about ourselves and self-esteem is related to how we feel about or evaluate ourselves.

Battle, (1992) defined self-esteem as a fundamental human need at all stages of development, that affects one's level of achievement, ability to adjust to the environmental demands and general state of well being.

Kazdin,(2000) defined Self esteem as a global evaluation reflecting our view, our accomplishment, and capabilities, our values, our bodies, other's responses to us, and even on occasion our possessions.

According to Branden, (2001) self-esteem is the disposition to experience oneself as being competent to cope with the basic challenges of life and being worthy of happiness.

Nature of Self-esteem

The term self-esteem has been approached from several different perspectives.

According to Reasoner, (1992) the term self-esteem includes cognitive, affective and behavioral elements. It is cognitive as one consciously thinks about oneself, as one considers the discrepancy between ones ideal self, the person one wishes to be, and the perceived self or the realistic appraisal of how one sees oneself. The affective element refers to the feelings or emotions that one has when considering that discrepancy. The behavioral aspects of self-esteem are manifested in such behaviors as assertiveness, resilience, being decisive and respectful of others.

Impact of Culture on Self-esteem

According to Markus & Kitayaman, (1991) Culture plays a powerful role in the formation of the Self-Concept, the perception one forms of the others, and the extent to which others may influence the development of one's Self-Concept.

They emphasized that American & other western cultures often emphasize the uniqueness of the individual and appreciation of being different from others. In contrast Eastern cultures often emphasize paying attention to others and the relationship with individual and others.

Markus & Kitayaman, (1991) also conceptualized two construal of the self that reflect such cultural differences. The independent construal emphasizes the uniqueness of the self, its autonomy from others and self-reliance.

Although other people have an influence on a person's behavior, a person's self-concept is largely defined independently of others.

The Interdependent Construal emphasizes the interconnectedness of people and the role that others play in developing an individual's self concept. In the interdependent construal, what others think of the individual or do to the individual matter. The person is extremely sensitive to others and strives to form strong social bonds with them.

They also suggested that in the western cultures, others are important as source of comparison. In Eastern cultures one's relationships with others helps to define the self. In Western cultures self esteem is associated with being able to express one's internal convictions being a "winner" and validating internal attributes. In Eastern cultures, one is self "satisfied" to the extent that one can fit in and harmonize with the social context.

Wylie (1974) suggested that presence of high self-esteem is associated with desire for control, hope, achievement, motivation and self determination. On the other hand low self-esteem is associated with depression, aggression and anxiety.

Self-esteem also regulates the individuals coping responses in stressful circumstances. The various definitions of coping have been given by different scholars of Psychology.

Definitions of Coping

Lazarus and Folkman, (1984) defined coping as "constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and / or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resource of the person".

Baron and Byrne, (1997) described coping as “responding to stress in a way that reduces the threat and its effects, includes what a person does, feels or thinks in order to master, tolerate or decrease the negative effects of the stressful situation”.

In the light of above definitions it could be concluded that coping is an attempt to manage stress in some effective way. It consists not of one single act but is a process that allows the individuals to deal effectively with various stressors.

Zeidner and Endler, (1995) suggested that the concept of coping refers to the various ways in which people try either to meet these demands or deal with the emotions that are created by the pressure of these demands.

Therefore it includes those actions and thoughts that enable individuals to handle difficult situations.

Problem Focused Coping

Lazarus defined, (1966) that Problem Focused coping means the cognitive style used in stress by individuals who face their trouble and try to solve them.

Problem focused coping is direct; it consists of reducing, modifying, or eliminating the source of stress itself. According to Billings & Moos, (1984) problem focused coping include strategies that deal directly with the situation or the stressors in ways that will eventually decrease or eliminate it. These strategies consist of identifying stressful problems, generating possible solutions, selecting appropriate solutions and applying the solution to the problems, thereby eliminating the stress.

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In problem focused strategies person can change something about himself. Changing levels of aspirations, finding alternative sources of gratification and learning new skills are examples. People who use problem focused coping in stressful situations show lower levels of depression both during and after the stressful situation.

In problem focused coping or task oriented approach the adult makes direct effort to alleviate the source of stress e.g. couples who have marital problems approach for marriage counseling, instead of blaming each other. A person having financial problem gets at additional part time job to earn extra money. In this way stress can provide an opportunity for growth.

Coping with a stressful event is a dynamic process which requires identifying and eliminating the source of stress. To cope with stress, the person's appraisal of the situation plays an important role. In the process of coping, the person first defines stress, evaluates its severity and then determines the best ways to respond. So in the process of coping, cognition plays an important role.

Cognitive Appraisal

Although several theories of coping have been proposed, the one that is employed most widely is that proposed by Lazarus, (1966) and elaborated upon by Lazarus & Folkman, (1984). The theory is sometimes termed as Cognitive Appraisal Model and sometime termed as Transactional Model.

Lazarus, (1976) defined the cognitive appraisal as "the process of recognizing a stressor, assessing the demands it makes, and identifying resources available to deal with it."

Lazarus distinguished two stages in cognitive appraisal. He uses the term Primary Appraisal and Secondary Appraisal.

Primary Appraisal:

Primary appraisal is an evaluation of the meaning and significance of a situation; whether its effect on one's well being is positive or negative.

According to Folkman & Lazarus, (1988) the relationship between emotions and coping in stressful encounters is bi-directional, with each affecting the other. The behavioral flow begins with a transaction that is appraised as harmful, beneficial, threatening or challenging.

The appraisal process generates emotion. The appraisal and its attended emotions influence the coping process, which in turn change the person environment relationship. The altered person environment is reappraised, and the reappraisal leads to a change in emotion quality and intensity.

According to Folkman, (1984) when people appraise a situation as involving harm, loss or threat, they experience negative emotions such as anxiety, fear, anger or resentment. On the other hand a challenge appraisal, is usually accompanied by positive emotions such as excitement, hopefulness, and eagerness.

Secondary Appraisal

According to Lazarus, (1976) the individual evaluates the available personal & social resources for dealing with the stressful circumstance and considers what action to take.

According to Folkman, (1984) during secondary appraisal, if people

judge the situation to be within their control, they make an evaluation of available coping resources – physical (health, energy, stamina), social (support network), psychological (skills, morale, self-esteem), material (money, tools, equipment) and time.

Personality Characteristics and Style of Coping

Most of us cope with stress in a characteristic manner, employing a specific “coping style”. This represents our general tendency to deal with stress in a specific way. Some people have a stronger tendency towards using certain coping responses as compared to other people. Some people find it easy to cope with major life stresses, while others find it hard to deal with even minor problems. Several factors determine whether they find a particular situation stressful. A person who is self confident, feels capable of coping with life events, is less likely to find a given situation stressful than someone who lacks self-assurance. For example people who have handled job changes well in the past are likely to find a new change less stressful than those who have had great difficulty adjusting to previous job changes.

Preston and Mansfield, (1984) suggested that the stressed person believes that his or her own behavior makes a difference in the outcome of a stressful situation and then takes charge is pursuing an effective way of coping with stress.

Researchers also identified that some individuals approach stress in an optimistic manner and take direct actions. Thus their positive expectations make them more stress resistant than pessimists. In a study of college students, Scheier & Carver, (1985) found that at the end of the semester, optimistic students reported fewer physical symptoms than those who were pessimistic.

Another study Scheier et al, (1989) of patients who had undergone coronary bypass surgery revealed that optimists recovered faster during hospitalization and were able to resume their normal activities sooner after discharge than pessimists.

According to Scheier & Carver, (1992) optimists and pessimists seem to adopt different tactics for coping. Optimists concentrate on problem focused coping, making and enacting specific plans for dealing with sources of stress. They also seek and obtain social support. In contrast, pessimists tend to adopt different strategies, such as giving up the goal with which stress is interfering or denying that the stress exists.

On the basis of above theoretical explanation and researches, it could be inferred that several factors such as sense of control, positive thinking and problem focused coping can help individual to cope with stress. Along with these factors researchers also suggested a close relation between level of self-esteem and styles of coping. Several theorists suggested that self-esteem is often increased when individuals face a problem and try to cope with it rather than avoid it.

In the light of these researches the following hypotheses were formulated:

Hypotheses

1. Individuals obtaining high scores on Self-Esteem will obtain high scores on Logical Analysis.
2. Individuals obtaining high scores on Self-Esteem will obtain high scores on Problem Solving.

METHOD

This study was conducted to assess the relationship between Self-Esteem and Coping Responses of Adults. In order to analyze it scientifically, individuals with high self-esteem were compared with individuals with low self-esteem.

Participants

A total of two hundred participants were selected for the study; hundred males and hundred females, out of which fifty males and fifty females with high self-esteem, fifty males and fifty females with low self-esteem. The individuals were selected from the different institutions and colleges of Karachi. The ages of these individuals ranged from 18 to 30 years.

Measures

Culture Free Self-Esteem Inventory Adult (CFSEI-2 ADULT) by Battle, (1992) was administered in order to assess the different level of self-esteem. Coping Response Inventory Adult (CRI-ADULT) by Moos, (1988) was administered in order to assess the different forms of coping responses.

Culture Free Self-Esteem Inventory (CFSEI-2)

The Culture Free Self Esteem Inventory is a self report inventory developed by James Battle, in 1992 in the course of several years of work with students and clients. The inventory which is intended to measure an individual's perception of self, have been proven to be of value in offering greater insight into client's subjective feelings.

Battle, (1992) defined self-esteem as the perception the individual possesses of his or her own worth. An individual's perception develops

gradually and becomes more differentiated as he or she matures and interacts with significant others. Perception of self worth, once established, tends to be fairly stable and is resistant to change.

The inventory can be administered to individuals or groups, and actually requires only 15 to 20 minutes for administration. Responses are of the forced choice variety. The individual checks each item as either YES or NO.

The items in the instrument are divided into two groups: those that indicate High self-esteem and those that indicate Low self-esteem.

DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

High Self-Esteem

Individuals who obtain a score of 27 or more on Culture Free Self-Esteem Inventory were marked as High self esteem individuals.

Low Self-Esteem

Individuals who obtain a score of 14 or less on Culture Free Self-Esteem Inventory were marked as Low self-esteem individuals.

Coping Responses Inventory –Adult (CRI-A)

The Coping Response Inventory-Adult (CRI-A) is suitable for assessing the coping responses of adults. The inventory considers the orientation or focus of coping and divides coping responses into Approach and Avoidance. The CRI-A can be used to assess an individual's relative reliance on Approach compared to Avoidance coping. These responses are Logical Analysis (LA) and Problem Solving (PS),

DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

Logical Analysis

Cognitive attempts to understand and prepare mentally for a stressor and its consequences.

Problem Solving

Behavioral attempts to take action to deal directly with the problem.

Procedure

The Culture Free Self-Esteem Inventory-Adult (CFSEI-A) and the Coping Response Inventory-Adult (CRI-A) inventories were administered separately to the participants. Inventories were administered in group settings. Participants were appreciated for their cooperation and contribution in research. They were assured of confidentiality of their results. After that the following demographic information was collected from each participant.

1. Age
2. Sex
3. Marital Status
4. Education
5. Residence Area

TABLE NO 1
LEVEL OF LOGICAL ANALYSIS AS COMPARED WITH LEVEL OF SELF-ESTEEM

LEVEL OF LOGICAL ANALYSIS

LEVEL OF SELF-ESTEEM

	High	Low	Total
High	59	45	104
Low	41	55	96
Total	100	100	200

$$\chi^2 = \frac{\sum(F_o - F_e)^2}{F_e}$$

$$\chi^2 = 3.92$$

$$df = 1$$

Significant at P < 0.001

Level of Logical Analysis As Compared with Level of Self-Esteem

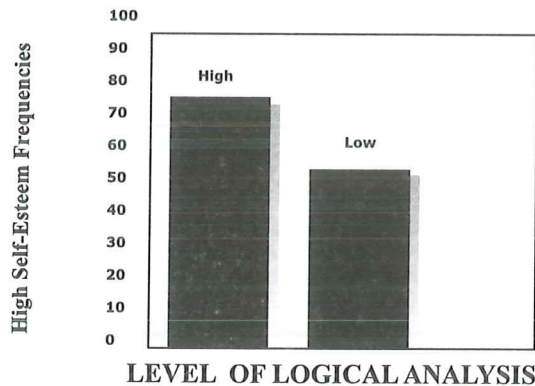


TABLE NO 2
LEVEL OF PROBLEM SOLVING COMPARED WITH LEVEL OF SELF-ESTEEM

LEVEL OF PROBLEM SOLVING

LEVEL OF SELF-ESTEEM

	High	Low	Total
High	65	40	105
Low	35	60	95
Total	100	100	200

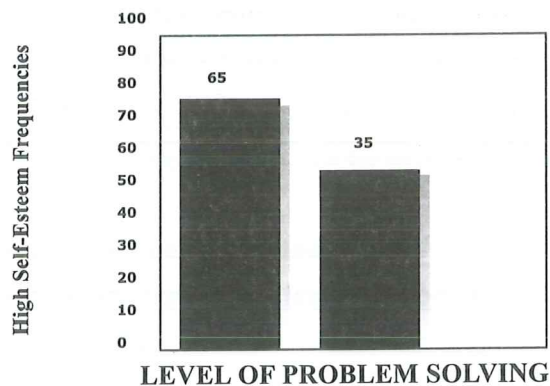
$$\chi^2 = \frac{\sum(F_o - F_e)^2}{F_e}$$

$$\chi^2 = 12.5$$

$$df = 1$$

Significant at $p < 0.001$

Level of Problem Solving As Compared with Level of Self-Esteem



DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study is to assess the relationship between Self-Esteem and Coping Responses of Adults.

Self-esteem includes the feelings and beliefs that individuals have about their abilities to make a positive difference, to confront rather than retreat from challenges, to learn from both success and failure. It influences individuals' thoughts, ideas and decisions. Having self-esteem would help with many social problems. A person with high self-esteem is confident, has the ability to think, learn, choose and make appropriate decisions.

Another important aspect of high self esteem is being competent to cope with basic challenges of life. Self esteem provides a resistance and strength to handle the stresses. On the other hand low self esteem is associated with varieties of abnormalities, e.g. shyness, depression, anxiety, lack of participation in life , not able to face the challenges of life and trying to avoid them.

Hypothesis No. 1

The hypothesis is supported by the results and is highly significant at $p < 0.001$. The results are shown in Table No. 1 and Graph -1. It is obvious that there is a significant difference in the two groups. The individuals with high self esteem have high scores on Logical Analysis.

Self-esteem is defined as having confidence and satisfaction in oneself. Self-esteem is considered to be the overall value that one places on oneself as a person.

Self-esteem is an important force against distress, dependency and irrational thinking. It is an important variable that significantly influences the process of coping in managing stress. It is noted that individuals who are self confident, have belief about their abilities, and have a feeling of worthiness, and try to think logically about the situation in the process of coping. Moos, (1988) defined Logical Analysis as “cognitive attempts to understand and prepare mentally for a stressor and its consequences”.

In order to think logically, individuals see beyond what is directly observable and reason in terms of what might be possible. With this ability the individuals are able to plan ahead, are able to see the future consequences of an action, and are able to provide alternative explanations of events.

It is noted that perception of self-esteem effects thoughts ideas and reasoning abilities. Those who form a positive view are more confident, independent and optimistic. Their feelings of worthiness help them in the process of thinking that involves analyzing, evaluating and interpreting the consequences of the situation. Their belief about their abilities helps them to deal directly with the situations or stressors in a way that will eventually decrease the stressors.

It has been seen from the results that individuals who have positive perceptions of themselves are capable to deal with the problems directly, try to think logically and rationally.

Hypothesis No. 2

The Hypothesis states that: Individuals obtaining high scores on Self –Esteem well obtain high scores on Problem Solving.

This hypothesis is supported by the data and is significant at $p < 0.001$. The results are shown in Table No 2 and Graph -2. It is obvious that there is a significant difference in the two groups. The individuals with high Self-Esteem have high scores on Problem Solving.

Moos, (1988) defined the problem solving as “behavioral attempts to take action, to deal directly with the problem”.

Problems are inevitable in all realms of life. Hence all human beings face problems which require immediate solution.

These problems can be solved effectively with some effort. Problem solving is a basic part of our every day existence. Individuals constantly encounter problems that require solutions. This understanding allows the individuals to get on with the problem solving process. It has been seen that feeling good about one self is important in the process of problem solving. Feeling that one has a good ability to solve problems gives a sense of control and enables one to pursue goals.

It has been noted that those who have fair degree of confidence and commitment and have no doubts in their abilities address problems effectively by accepting them. Individuals with this ability examine the problem carefully, devise a strategy, and try various solutions for that particular problem.

High Self-Esteem has been associated with the ability to perform competently and successfully in whatever they attempt. It is noted that people with this perception approach situations or problems confidently, set high goals and persist in their efforts. It is noted that individuals who have confidence in their abilities and have a sense of worth are better able to cope

effectively with the given situation by using a problem solving approach.

Individuals with positive perception try to identify or discover the opportunities that decreases stress and enhance their problem solving abilities.

It has been seen from the results that individuals who have feelings of worthiness and confidence are able to deal directly with the stressors. Hence it is important for the clinical psychologist to help the individuals enhance their self esteem. Therefore people with high self-esteem see problems as challenges and even as opportunities for positive change. So in response to stress they are able to regulate their actions and deal effectively.

APPENDIX - B

CRI-ADULT ANSWER SHEET

Name _____
Date _____
Gender Age _____
Marital Status _____
Residential _____ Area Education _____
College _____

Instructions for Part 1

This booklet contains questions about how you manage important problems that come up in your life. Please think about the most important problem or stressful event you have experienced in the last 12 months (e.g. troubles with a relative or friend, the illness or death of a relative or friend, an accident or illness, financial or work problem). Briefly describe the problem in the space provided in Part 1 of the answer sheet. If you have not experienced a major problem, list a minor problem that you have had to deal with.

Part 1

Describe the problem or solution

Part 2

Read each item carefully and indicate how often you engaged in that behavior in connection with the problem you described in Part 1. Circle the appropriate response on the answer sheet:

- Circle "N" if your response is NO, Not at all.

N	O	S	F
---	---	---	---
- Circle "O" if your response is YES, Once or Twice.

N	O	S	F
---	---	---	---
- Circle "S" if your response is YES, Sometimes.

N	O	S	F
---	---	---	---
- Circle "F" if your response is YES, Fairly often.

N	O	S	F
---	---	---	---

There are 48 items in Part 2. Remember to mark all your answers on the answer sheet. Please answer each item as accurately as you can. (All your answers are strictly confidential). If you do not wish to answer an item, please circle the number of that item on the answer sheet to indicate that you have decided to skip it. If an item does not apply to you, please write NA (Not Applicable) in the box to the right of the number for that item. (If you wish to change an answer, make an X through your original answer and circle the new answer). Note that answers are numbered across in rows on part 2 of the answer sheet.

1. Did you think of different ways to deal with the problem?
2. Did you tell yourself things to make yourself feel better?
3. Did you talk with your spouse or other relative about the problem?
4. Did you make a plan of action and follow it?
5. Did you try to forget the whole thing?
6. Did you feel that time would make a difference-that the only thing to do was wait?

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7. Did you try to help others deal with a similar problem?
8. Did you take it out on other people when you felt angry or depressed?
9. Did you try to step back from the solution and be more objective?
10. Did you remind yourself how much worse things could be?
11. Did you talk with a friend about the problem?
12. Did you know what had to be done and try hard to make things work?
13. Did you try not to think about the problem?
14. Did you realize that you had no control over the problem?
15. Did you get involved in new activities?
16. Did you take a chance and do something risky?
17. Did you go over in your mind what you would say or do?
18. Did you try to see the good side of the situation?
19. Did you talk with a professional person (e.g., Doctor, Lawyer, Clergy)?
20. Did you decide what you wanted and try hard to get it?
21. Did you daydream or imagine a better time or place than the one you were in?
22. Did you think that the outcome would be decided by fate?
23. Did you try to make new friends?
24. Did you keep away from people in general?
25. Did you try to anticipate how things would turn out?
26. Did you think about how you were much better off than other people with similar problems?
27. Did you seek help from persons or groups with the same type of problem?
28. Did you try at least two different ways to solve the problem?
29. Did you try to put off thinking about the situation, even though you knew you would have to at some point?
30. Did you accept it; nothing could be done?
31. Did you read more often as a source of enjoyment?
32. Did you yell or shout to let off steam?
33. Did you try to find some personal meaning from the situation?
34. Did you try to tell yourself that things would get better?
35. Did you try to find out more about the situation?
36. Did you try learn to do more things on your own?
37. Did you wish the problem would go away or somehow be over with?
38. Did you expect the worst possible outcome?
39. Did you spend more time in recreational activities?
40. Did you cry to let your feelings out?
41. Did you try to anticipate the new demands that would be placed on you?
42. Did you think about how this event could change your life in a positive way?
43. Did you pay for guidance and/or strength?
44. Did you take things a day at a time, one step at a time?
45. Did you try to deny how serious the problem was?
46. Did you lose hope that things would ever be the same?
47. Did you turn to work or do other activities to help you manage things?
48. Did you do something that you didn't think would work, but at least you were doing something?

APPENDIX - B

CFSEI-2

Name _____

Date _____

Gender _____ Age _____

Marital Status _____

Residential Area _____ Education _____

College _____

Instruction:

There are 30 items. These items indicate what you generally do and feel about your self. There is no right or wrong answer. Mark your answer by a 'tick' in Column of 'Yes' or 'No'.

Sr. # Question

(Yes or No)

1. Do you have only a few friends?
2. Are you happy most of the time?
3. Can you do most things as well as others?
4. Do you like everyone you know?
5. Do you spend most of your free time alone?
6. Do you like being a male / Do you like being a female?
7. Do most people you know like you?
8. Are you usually successful when you attempt important tasks or assignments?
9. Have you ever taken anything that did not belong to you?
10. Are you as intelligent as most people?
11. Do you feel you are as important as most people?
12. Are you easily depressed?
13. Would you change many things about yourself if you could?
14. Do you always tell the truth?
15. Are you as nice looking as most people?
16. Do many people dislike you?
17. Are you usually tense or anxious?
18. Are you lacking in self-confidence?
19. Do you gossip at times?
20. Do you often feel that you are no good at all?
21. Are you as strong and healthy as most people?
22. Are your feelings easily hurt?
23. Is it difficult for you to express your views or feelings?
24. Do you ever get angry?
25. Do you often feel ashamed of yourself?

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26. Are other people generally more successful than you are?
27. Do you feel uneasy much of the time without knowing why?
28. Would you like to be as happy as others appear to be?
29. Are you ever shy?
30. Are you a failure?
31. Do people like your ideas?
32. Is it hard for you to meet new people?
33. Do you ever lie?
34. Are you often upset about something?
35. Do most people respect your views?
36. Are you more sensitive than most people?
37. Are you as happy as most people?
38. Are you ever sad?
39. Are you definitely lacking in initiative?
40. Do you worry a lot?

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