



# EFFECT OF SOCIETAL STIGMA ON SELF ESTEEM AMONG CANCER PATIENTS

**Author Ms. Farheen Bathool**

Guest Lecturer

Department of P.G. Studies and Research in Home Science  
Justice Basheer Ahmed Sayeed College for Women (Autonomous)  
Teynmpet, Chennai – 600018, Tamil Nadu, India

**Abstract:** The relationship between societal stigma, self esteem and cancer is complex. Societal stigma surrounding cancer can lead to negative perceptions, discrimination, feeling of shame and decrease in self esteem. The aim of the present investigation was to study the effect of societal stigma on self esteem among cancer patients. A random sample of 60 cancer patients were selected for the present investigation. Out of the total sample of 60 cancer patients, 30 were men and 30 were women. The 30 men were divided into 15 men from middle adulthood and 15 men from late adulthood and the same was done for women. The tools used for the investigation were Cancer Stigma Scale (CAAS) devised by Marlow & Wardle (2014) and Rosenberg's Self Esteem Scale (RSES) developed by Morris Rosenberg (1995). The questionnaires were administered and the data was collected, tabulated and subjected to statistical analysis using the statistical tests for mean, standard deviation, 't' test and Karl Pearson's Coefficient of Correlation. The results showed no significant difference in the effect of societal stigma on self esteem between adults belonging to middle and late adulthood. A slight difference was found in the effect of societal stigma on self esteem between men and women suffering from cancer, women showed a higher self esteem than men. A significant relationship was noted between societal stigma and self esteem among cancer patients.

**Key words - Societal stigma, self esteem, cancer, gender, age**

## INTRODUCTION

Cancer is a group of diseases characterized by uncontrolled growth of the cells in the human body and the ability of these cells to migrate from the original site and spread to distant sites. If the spread is not controlled, cancer can result in death. Sajib Chakraborty (2012) in his article says that apart from the various chemical and physical (ionizing radiation, UV light) carcinogens several biological agents can also contribute to the development of cancer; for example viruses, bacteria and parasites can potentiate a carcinogenic process in humans.

According to the World Health Organization (2002) social stigma in the context of health is the negative association between a person or group of people who share certain characteristics and a specific disease. In an outbreak, this may mean people are labeled, stereotyped, discriminated against, treated separately, and/or experience loss of status because of a perceived link with a disease. Such treatment can negatively affect those with the disease, as well as their caregivers, family, friends and communities. People who don't have the disease but share other characteristics with this group may also suffer from stigma.

Self-esteem is a positive or negative orientation toward oneself; an overall evaluation of one's worth or value. People are motivated to have high self-esteem, and having it indicates positive self-regard, not egotism. Self-esteem is only one component of the self-concept, which Rosenberg (1965) defines as "totality of the individual's thoughts and feelings with reference to himself as an object." Besides self-esteem, self-efficacy or mastery, and self-identities are important parts of the self-concept. Self-esteem as a whole is an unchanging feature of adults and it is difficult to be influenced by the experimental design of a study. Self-esteem levels tend to decrease when people are stigmatized especially while facing something which is not under their control.

Hence, the present study was undertaken to find out the effect of societal stigma on self-esteem among cancer patients with reference to age and gender.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To compare the effect of societal stigma on self-esteem among cancer patients belonging to middle and late adulthood.
2. To examine the effect of societal stigma on self-esteem among men and women suffering from cancer.
3. To study the relationship between societal stigma and self-esteem among cancer patients.

## **HYPOTHESIS**

**H1.** There will be a significant difference in the effect of societal stigma on self-esteem between adults belonging to middle and late adulthood.

**H2.** There will be a significant difference in the effect of societal stigma on self-esteem between men and women suffering from cancer.

**H3.** There will be a significant relationship between societal stigma and self-esteem among cancer patients.

## **METHOD OF THE STUDY**

In order to conduct the research survey method was used.

## **POPULATION OF THE STUDY**

The population for the study were cancer patients both men and women belonging to middle and late adulthood from Chennai city.

## **SAMPLE AND SAMPLING OF THE STUDY**

The sample for the present study was selected by stratified random sampling method. The sample consists of 60 cancer patients which was further divided according to gender and age.

## **TOOLS OF THE STUDY**

1. Cancer Stigma Scale (CAAS) developed by Marlow & Wardle (2014)
2. Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) developed by Morris Rosenberg (1995)

**ANAYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA**

In order to justify the objectives and hypothesis, investigator used mean, standard deviation, 't' -test and Karl Pearson's coefficient of correlation.

**Objective no - 1:** Compare the effect of societal stigma on self esteem among cancer patients belonging to middle and late adulthood.

**Table No. 1 : Comparison of the effect of societal stigma on self esteem among cancer patients belonging to middle and late adulthood**

Variable	Age	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	't' Value	Level of Significance
Societal Stigma	Middle adulthood	30	84.07	18.747	1.66	NS
	Late adulthood	30	87.17	17.347		
Self Esteem	Middle adulthood	30	16.33	2.783	1.55	NS
	Late adulthood	30	15.13	3.192		

**Note - NS :** Not Significant

**INTERPRETATION**

From above table 1 it is observed that the mean value of societal stigma between middle and late adults were found to be 84.07 and 87.17 respectively. As the calculated 't' value ( $t=1.66$ ) is found to be lesser than the table value 1.96 at 5% level of significance, hence it is not significant. It is also found that cancer patients belonging to late adulthood were found to be more affected by societal stigma than those belonging to middle adulthood.

The table also reveals that the mean value of self esteem between middle and late adults were found to be 16.33 and 15.13 respectively. As the calculated 't' value ( $t=1.55$ ) is found to be lesser than the table value 1.96 at 5% level of significance, hence it is not significant. Mean scores also revealed that cancer patients belonging to middle adulthood had a low self esteem than those belonging to late adulthood.

Thus the set hypothesis H1 which states that there will be a significant difference in the effect of societal stigma on self esteem between adults belonging to middle and late adulthood is hereby not accepted.

**Objective no - 2:** To examine the effect of societal stigma on self esteem among men and women suffering from cancer.

**Table No. 2 : Comparison of the effect of societal stigma on self esteem between men and women suffering from cancer**

Variables	Age	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	't' Value	Level of Significance
Societal Stigma	Men	30	86.90	16.020	2.55	0.05
	Women	30	84.33	19.931		
Self Esteem	Men	30	15.70	3.131	0.08	NS
	Women	30	15.77	3.131		

**Note - NS :** Not Significant

### INTERPRETATION

From above table 2 it is observed that the mean value of societal stigma between men and women were found to be 86.90 and 84.33 respectively. As the calculated 't' value ( $t=2.55$ ) is found to be greater than the table value 1.96 at 5% level of significance, hence it is significant. It was also revealed men were found to be more affected by societal stigma than women.

The table also reveals that the mean value of self esteem between men and women were found to be 15.70 and 15.77 respectively. As the calculated 't' value ( $t=0.08$ ) is found to be lesser than the table value 1.96 at 5% level of significance, hence it is not significant. A further perusal of the table reveals that women suffering from cancer have a better self esteem than men.

Thus the set hypothesis H2 which states that there will be a significant difference in the effect of societal stigma on self esteem between men and women suffering from cancer is partially accepted.

**Objective no - 3:** To study the relationship between societal stigma and self esteem among cancer patients.

**Table No. 3 : Relationship between societal stigma and self esteem among cancer patients**

Variable	Self Esteem	Level of Significance
Societal stigma	0.432	0.01

## INTERPRETATION

Table 3 revealed that significant relationship exists between societal stigma and self esteem among cancer patients. As the calculated r value was found to be 0.432 so it is taken as significant at the level of 0.01.

Thus the set hypothesis H3 which states that there will be a significant relationship between societal stigma and self esteem among cancer patients is hereby accepted.

## DISCUSSION

In this study the investigator has discussed the Effect of Societal Stigma and Self Esteem among cancer patients from Chennai city. In this research data collection was conducted using questionnaire and the interpretation of data was analysed using some inferential statistical methods.

The findings of the study are as follows:

1. There is no significant difference in the effect of societal stigma on self esteem between cancer patients belonging to middle and late adulthood.
2. There is a significant difference in the effect of societal stigma on self esteem among men and women suffering from cancer
3. There is a significant relationship between societal stigma and self esteem among cancer patients.

## CONCLUSION

Self-esteem is a part of one's personality and encompasses belief about oneself. Cancer can significantly impact self esteem due to various factors such as physical changes, emotional distress and societal stigma. Societal stigma can lead to discrimination, shame and embarrassment for those with the disease, which ultimately affects their self esteem causing them feel devalued. On the contrary, individuals with higher self esteem can easily cope with societal stigma and the challenges of cancer treatment. Additionally, support system and awareness about the disease can help combat societal stigma and promote positive self esteem among cancer patients.

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