

Relationship between Self-esteem and Borderline Personality Disorder

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Abstract

Borderline personality disorder (BPD) is characterized by instability in feeling and behaviour. Several factors were associated with BPD. However, its relationship with self-esteem is still under researched. The purpose of this study is to review the literature and examine the relationship between self-esteem and BPD. Reliable databases were used to search for articles pertain to the topic using specific keywords. The search resulted in 27 articles that met the inclusion criteria. The findings confirmed that the number of articles pertaining to the relationship between self-esteem and BPD is still limited. Most of the reviewed studies were conducted in western context and deployed a quantitative approach. Survey design and randomized control trial (RCT) were used in the reviewed studies and the sample size is limited. The first generation of data analysis was widely used. The finding showed that self-esteem has a mixed relationship with BPD with tendency to be negative relationship. There is a need for more studies to explain the BPD using intervention method such as religiosity and deploying qualitative approach.

Keywords: *Borderline Personality Disorder, Self-Esteem, Randomized Control Trail, Systematic Literature Review*

1. Introduction

Borderline personality disorder (BPD) is widely known as an illness that is characterized by mood variation, self-image and behaviour. These symptoms cause impulsive action and problem in the relationship with others (Euler et al., 2021; Grilo & Udo, 2021). People who have BPD usually will have intensive anger, anxiety and depression that may last for several hours a day. Researchers also found that people with BPD will experience a mood swings and most likely to have an uncertainty about themselves (Beeney et al., 2016). Therefore, their values as well as their interest may change more frequently and quickly (Ditrich et al., 2021; Matson et al., 2021). People with such symptoms will develop extreme view whether good or bad. For example, their view of people around them might change quickly. An enemy or undesirable person might change to a friend and desirable one. Therefore, they are unstable in their relationships and view of themselves and others (Jørgensen et al., 2021; Santangelo, Kockler, et al., 2020).

Several factors contributed to the BPD. For instance, researchers related the BPD to undesirable social feedback (Korn et al., 2016), personal and environmental factors (Dahl et al., 2017), motive oriented

relationship (Kramer et al., 2017), culture (Choudhary & Gupta, 2020), Internalized stigma of Mental Illness (Quenneville et al., 2020), and pathology (Kaufman & Meddaoui, 2021). However, in term of the relationship between self-esteem and BPD, there is mixed findings. Bungert et al. (2015) found that lower self-esteem is positively correlated with increased in BPD. Similarly, the study of Winter et al. (2017) found that there is a negative link between self-esteem and BPD. In a gender based study, Winter et al. (2018) found that implicit and explicit self-esteem lower in women with BPD. On the other hand, Marissen et al. (2016) found that there is no evidence on the relationship between self-esteem and the level of BPD.

Researchers indicated that there is a strong lack of studies that take the complexity of the construct self-esteem into account (Winter et al., 2017). However, there is a growing evidence of the importance of self-esteem in the context of BPD (Santangelo, Kockler, et al., 2020). Self-esteem can be divided into implicit and explicit self-esteem (Boucher et al., 2015; Marissen et al., 2016). This study aims to review the literature systematically. The study has two aims. The first aim is to understand the status of the research into the relationship of self-esteem and BPD. The second aim is to identify the gaps and provides the direction for future work. Due to the nature of this study, the next section discusses the methodology followed by a summary of the reviewed studies. The findings is presented as well as the discussion, limitation, and direction of future work. Last section provides the concluding remarks of this study.

2. Research Methodology

This study is reviewing the literature to understand the relationship between self-esteem and BPD. The study developed keywords to search the related databases for articles that have examined the issues of this study. PubMed, Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar were searched for articles using keywords such as borderline personality disorder, BPD, self-esteem, borderline personality and self-esteem and a combination of these words were used to find the suitable articles. The inclusion criteria were set to be articles written in English between 2015 to 2021. The exclusion criteria include articles in non-English before 2015. This has resulted in 214 articles. The articles were screened to select the most related one. Articles in none English language were removed as well as the articles before 2015. This has resulted in removing 137 articles.

The second screening include reading the title and abstract. This screening has reduced the articles by 43 out of scope articles. The third screening include full reading of the articles. This has resulted in 27 related articles pertaining to the topic and examined the BPD and self-esteem. Figure 1 shows a summary of selecting and refining the articles of this study.

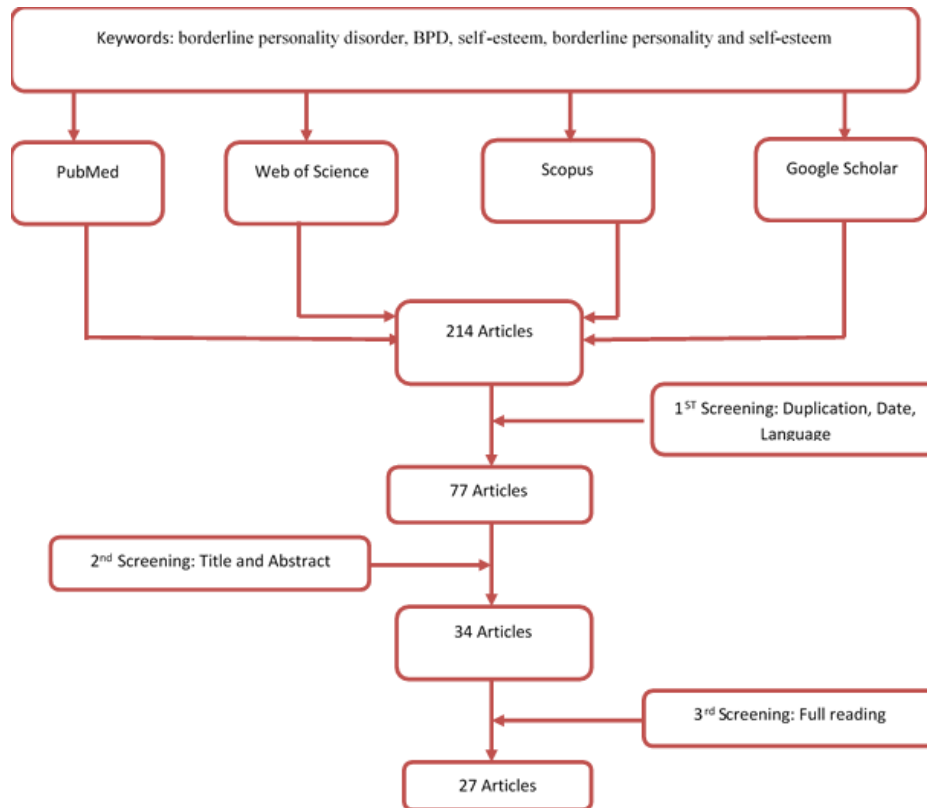


Figure 1: Process of Refining and Selecting Articles

3. Summary of Reviewed Articles

Self-esteem and its relationship with the BPD was examined in several studies. In this section, a brief summary of the reviewed articles is given. The reviewed articles can be divided into two main streams. The first streams investigated self-esteem as the outcome of a behaviour. The second stream looked at the self-esteem and other variables as the causers of the BPD. The first link the self-esteem among university students to the internet addiction. In other words, self-esteem happens when student addict the use of internet (Budak et al., 2015).

A review study by Randal et al., (2015) examined the effectiveness of an intervention based on mindfulness on self-esteem and found that the intervention based on mindfulness has resulted in an increase in self-esteem. In these above studies, the self-esteem was examined as a dependent variable. On the other hand, researchers also linked the BPD to self-esteem and depression. For instance, the study of DeShong et al. (2015) examined the validity of five factor borderline in measuring depression and self-esteem and found that the instrument is valid for the purpose of the study.

Studies that deal with self-esteem as a predictor of BPD and other illness outperform those that have used the variable as a predictor. For instance, self-esteem has been used as a predictor of eating disorder (Boucher et al., 2015), psychological distress (Feng et al., 2019), body dysmorphic symptoms (Allen et al., 2020), Internalized stigma of Mental Illness (ISMI) (Quenneville et al., 2020).

Studies were also examined the BPD as a outcome of several social and behavioural action. Self-referential and its link with BPD was examined among three groups in China. The findings showed that those with BPD judged positive and neutral word as negative when the word has self-reference.

Social feedback processing and its link with BPD was examined among 22 BPD and 81 health control (HC). The findings showed that undesirable social feedback were highly associated with BPD (Korn et al., 2016). In workplace environment, the study of Dahl et al. (2017) deployed a case study approach using 18 respondents to examine the link between work participation and BPD. The findings showed that personal and environmental factors at works influence work participation of individual with BPD.

Link between motive-oriented relationship and BPD was examined in the study of Kramer et al. (2017) using 40 respondents. the findings showed that motive-oriented relationship can reduce the BPD. Psychological illness such as sexual masochism in women and its link with BPD was examined in 60 female respondents. The findings showed that sexual masochism in women was 10 times higher in women with BPD (Frías et al., 2017). Beeney et al. (2016) examined the link between complexity, integration, valence of self-representation, and self-representation with BPD. The authors deployed 17 BPD and 21 HC. The findings showed that BPD group showed main effects, insensitive to condition of hyperactivation.

Observer-based global assessment and self-rated satisfaction with life were used as indicators to assess the BPD among 58 respondents in Canada. The findings showed that there is insufficient indicators for receiver from BPD. On the other hand, the self-generated treatment and recovery goals were assessed using content analysis of 102 individual in Australia (Ng et al., 2019). The findings showed that the self-generated treatment and recovery goals has resulted in improvement in BPD. They have improved well-being, better interpersonal relationship, and having greater sense of self. In a review studies, the studies examined the role of pathology in BPD (Kaufman & Meddaoui, 2021) and found that there is a shortage of knowledge regarding the effect of pathology on BPD. Choudhary and Gupta (2020) indicated that the culture has a critical role in the BPD.

Link between self-esteem and BPD was examined in several previous studies. In a male oriented study conducted by Marissen et al. (2016), the study divided the respondents into 20 Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD), 20 Cluster C personality disorder (PD) and 20 HC. The findings indicted that there is no evidence on the relationship between self-esteem and level of BPD. On the other hand, studies examined the self-esteem of female and divided the respondents into 77 having severe BPD, 15 have acute BPD, and 75 HC were used as a control group. The findings showed that lower self-esteem is positively correlated with increased in BPD. The impact of self-esteem and self-positivity was examined among women in Germany by Winter et al. (2018). The study deployed 38 BPD and 31 HC. The findings showed that implicit and explicit self-esteem lower in women with BPD. In a women based study, Pohl et al. (2021) found that patient with BPD reported significantly lower self-compassion and self-esteem.

A negative link between self-esteem and BPD was found in the study of Winter et al. (2017). Santangelo, Holtmann et al. (2020) found that low trait of self-esteem predicted the dysfunctional behaviour of respondents in US. Van Schie et al. (2020) examined the link between self-review and low self-esteem with social feedback processing in BPD. The study deployed 26 BPD and 32 HC. The findings showed BPD had negative self-review than HC and felt worse after negative feedback.

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The literature also showed that some studies have used an intervention. For instance, the link between self-esteem with BPD was examined under the intervention of good psychiatric management (GPM). The findings showed that GPM is effective intervention training to enhance the relationship between BPD and self-esteem. metacognitive training as an intervention method was used in the study of Schilling et al. (2018). The findings showed that Intervention based on metacognitive training has improved the BPD. Lastly, the study of Euler et al. (2018) reported that mentalization based group theory resulted in more negative relationship among the alliance group. For a summary of the reviewed articles, Table 1 shows the most critical elements of the reviewed studies.

Table 1: Summary of the Review Articles

Author/ year	Country	Research design	Sample	Data Analysis
(Budak et al., 2015)	Turkey	Quantitative	University students	SPSS
(Randal et al., 2015)	US	Review of 32 papers	32 articles	SPSS
(DeShong et al., 2015)	US	Quantitative	N=87 NPD N= 85 HC	SPSS
(Boucher et al., 2015)	Canada	Quantitative	Three group of respondents include 69, 51, and 95	SPSS
(Winter et al., 2015)	China	Quantitative	Three groups	SPSS
(Bungert et al., 2015)	Germany	Quantitative - female	N=77 Severe BPD N=15 Acute BPD N=75 healthy	SPSS
(Beeney et al., 2016)	US	Quantitative	N=17 BPD N=21 Control	SPSS
(Marissen et al., 2016)	Netherland	Quantitative - male	N=60 (20 NPD, 20 PD, 20 HC)	SPSS
(Keuroghlian et al., 2016)	US	Quantitative	N=297 respondents	SPSS
(Korn et al., 2016)	Germany	Quantitative	N=22 BPD N=81 control	SPSS
(Dahl et al., 2017)	Canada	Case study	N=18	SPSS
(Kramer et al., 2017)	Switzerland,	Quantitative	N=40	SPSS
(Frías et al., 2017)	Spain	Quantitative	N=60	SPSS
(Winter et al., 2017)	Nil	Review	Review	Review
(Schilling et al., 2018)	Germany	Quantitative	N=74	SPSS
(Euler et al., 2018)	Switzerland	Quantitative	N=23 BPD N=28 healthy	SPSS
(Zeitler et al., 2018)	Canada	Quantitative	N=58	SPSS

(Winter et al., 2018)	Germany	Quantitative	N= 38 BPD N=31 HC	SPSS
(Ng et al., 2019)	Australia	Qualitative	N=102	Content analysis
(Feng et al., 2019)	China	Quantitative	N= 460	AMOS
(Choudhary & Gupta, 2020)	India	Review	Nil	Review
(Allen et al., 2020)	Australia	Quantitative	449	SPSS
(Santangelo, Holtmann, et al., 2020)	US	Quantitative	N=119	SEM
(Quenneville et al., 2020)	Switzerland	Quantitative	N=244	SPSS
(Van Schie et al., 2020)	The Netherland	Quantitative	N=26 BPD N=32 HC N=22	SPSS
(Kaufman & Meddaoui, 2021)	Canada	Review	Review	Review
(Pohl et al., 2021)	Germany	Quantitative	35 female	SPSS

4. Findings

The findings of this study are based on frequency analysis of the information in the reviewed articles. The study deployed an excel sheet to draw the diagrams that presents the findings in counts and percentage. The year of publication, country, approach, research design, and sample, design and data analysis tools.

4.1 Year of Publication

Number of articles published on yearly basis is shown in Figure 2. It shows that the number of article was steady between 2016-2018 with variation in the aftermath period. The number of articles in 2021 is only 2 and this could be due to the fact that the reviewed period lasted only until May 2021.

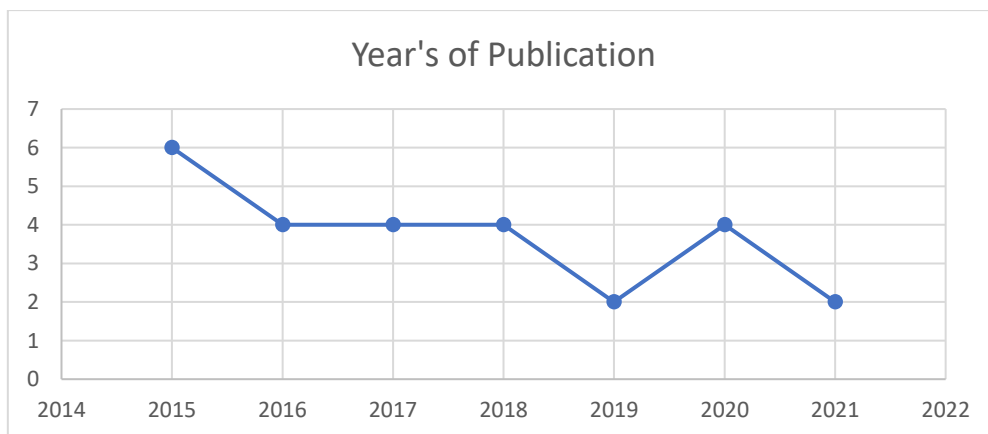


Figure 2: Year of Publication

4.2 Country of Origin

Figure 3 shows the place where the reviewed articles were conducted. Highest percentage of 22% were conducted in US followed by 19% in Germany, 15% in Canada, and 11% in Switzerland. Other countries received minimal number of studies.

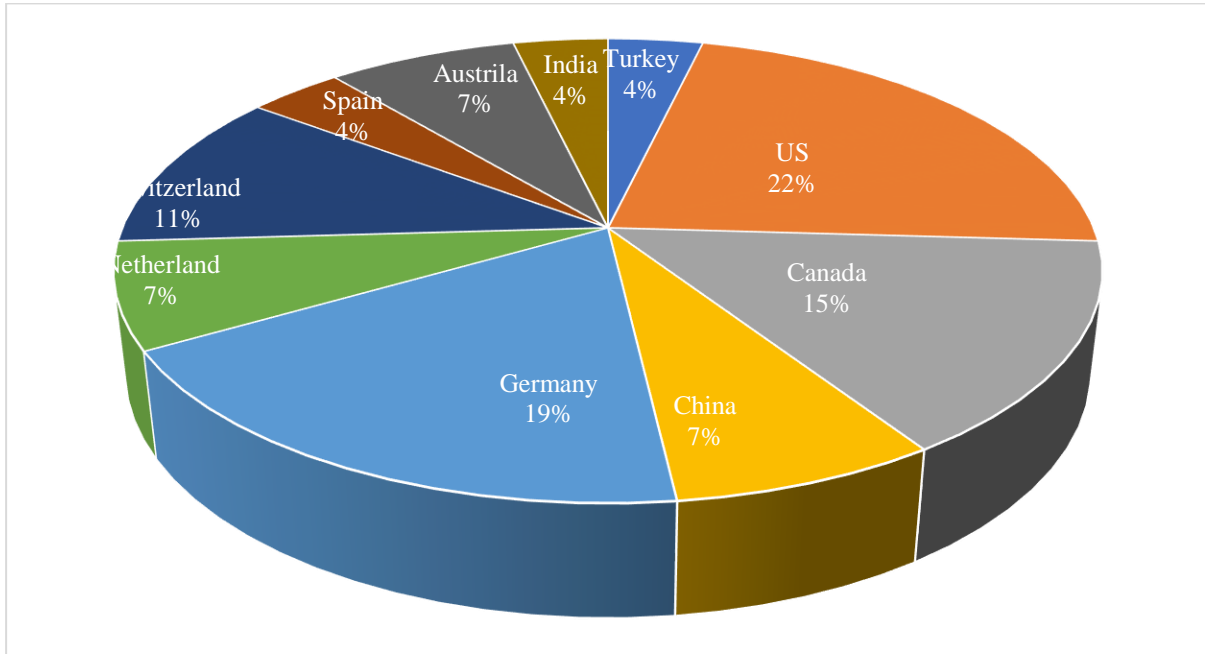


Figure 3: Country of the Reviewed Studies

4.3 Approach of the Studies

The reviewed articles can be divided into four categories as shown in Figure 4. The majority were quantitative with percentage of 78%. This is followed by 15% of the reviewed studies have reviewed the literature, 4% have used a qualitative approach while 3% have used case study.

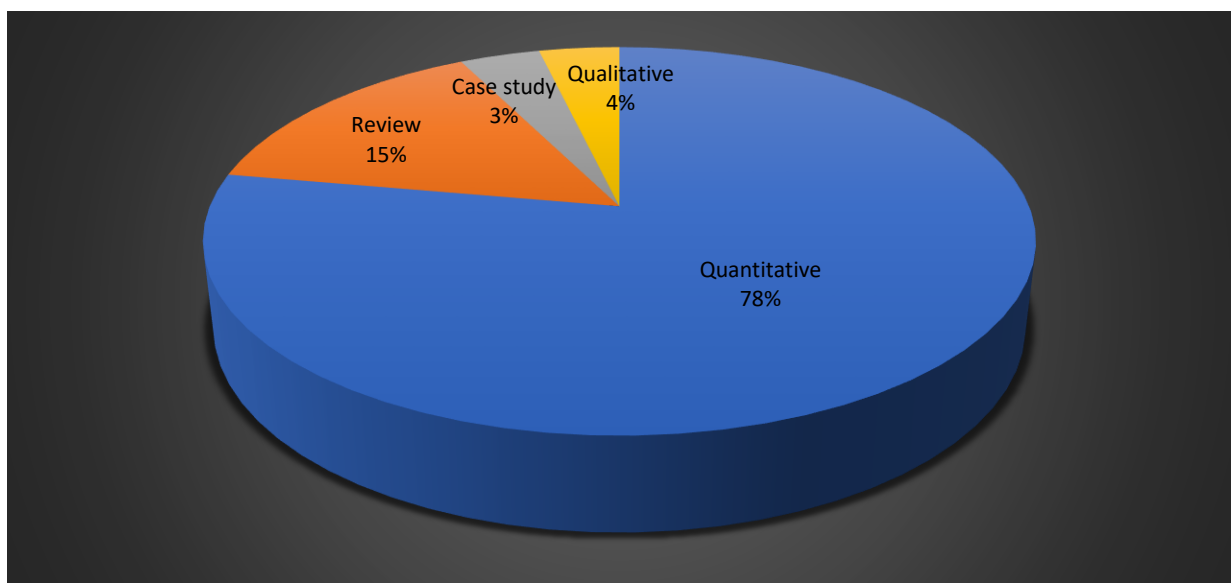


Figure 4: Approach of the Reviewed Studies

4.4 Study Design

The study design of the quantitative reviewed studies is shown in Figure 5. 59% of the quantitative study followed a survey design while 41% have deployed a randomized control trail (RCT).

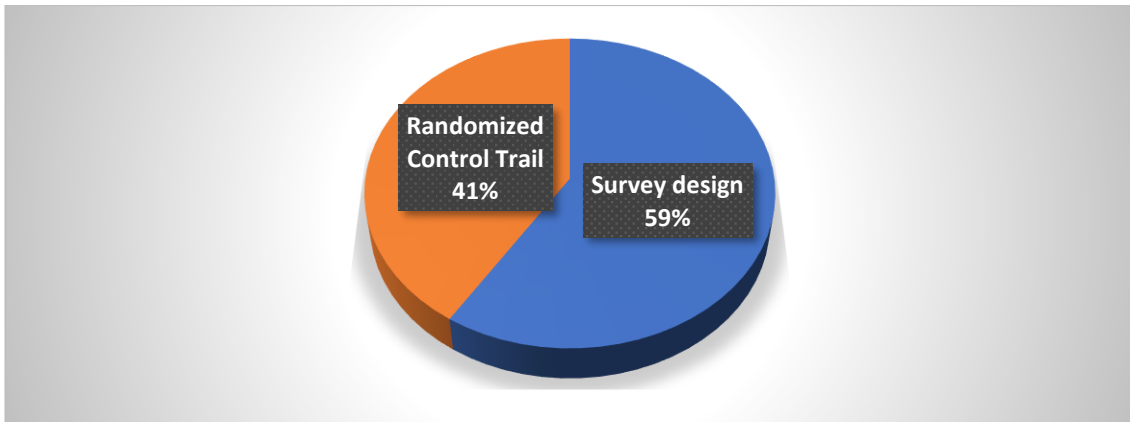


Figure 5: Study Design

4.5 Sample Size

In the survey design studies, the sample size ranged between 18 and 460 respondents with mean of 159 respondents. On the other hand, the RCT studies have used mainly two groups, the BPD group and the HC group. Number of respondents for BPD ranged between 17 and 87 with mean of 42 while number of respondents for HC ranged between 20 and 85 with mean of 53 respondents. Sample size of the quantitative studies is shown in Figure 6.

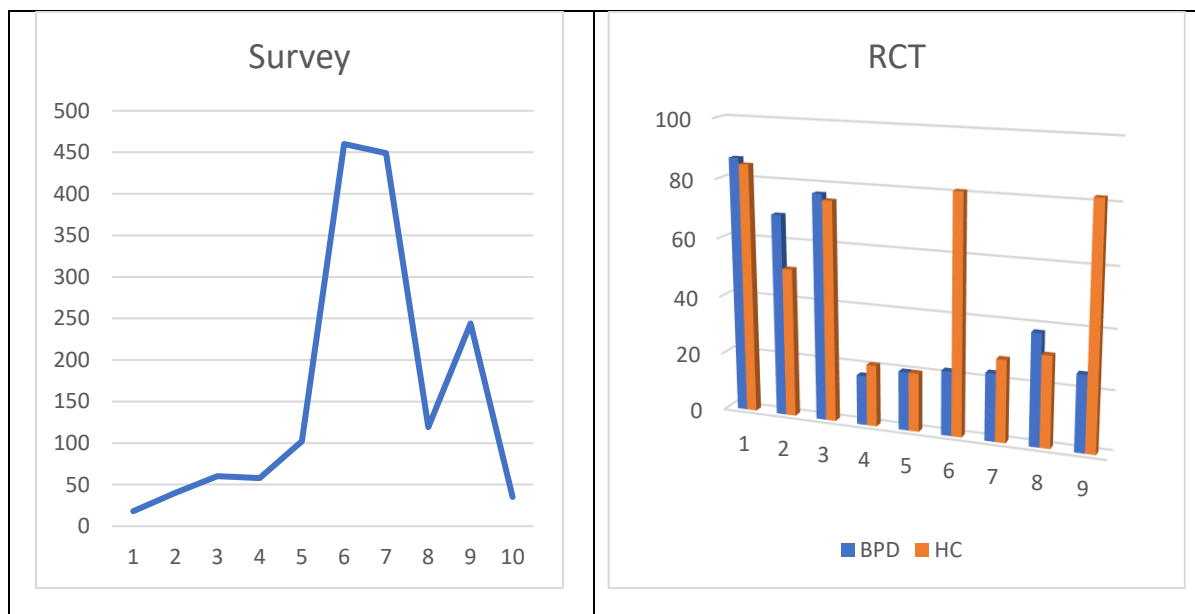


Figure 6: Sample Size

4.6 Data Analysis Tool

The data analysis techniques that have been used in previous studies is shown in Figure 7. It shows that 87% has used the first generation of data analysis; statistical package for social science (SPSS)

and 9% has used the second generation of data analysis i.e., structural equation modelling (SEM). Content analysis was used in 4% of the reviewed studies.

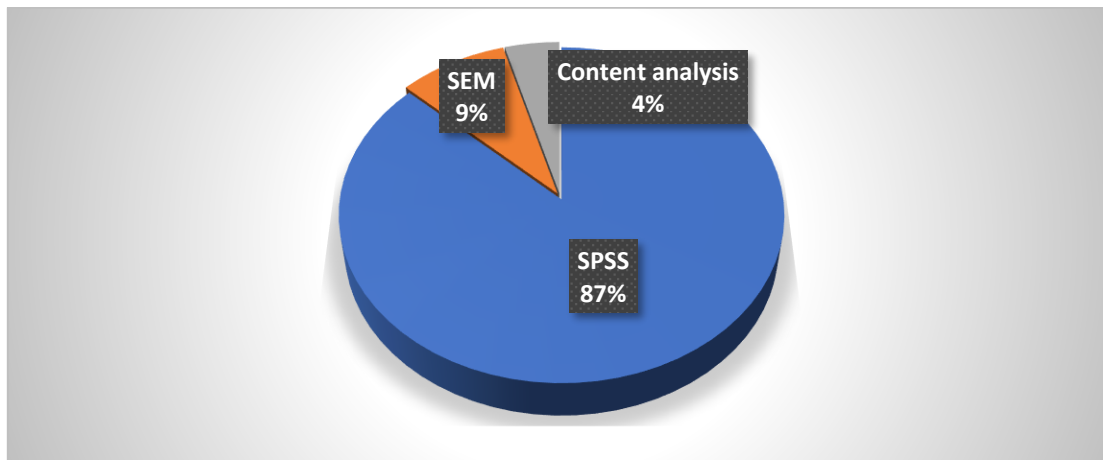


Figure 7: Data Analysis Technique

4.7 Effect of Self-Esteem on BPD

Relationship between self-esteem with BPD has been examined in limited number of studies. In addition, the gender based study were more frequent which might limit the generalization of the findings of previous studies. Researchers are with the opinion that self-esteem has a negative correlation with the BPD. The increase in self-esteem reduce the BPD (Pohl et al., 2021; Van Schie et al., 2020; Winter et al., 2017, 2018). However, only the study of Marissen et al. (2016) reported no significant relationship between self-esteem and BPD. It seems also that the relationship between self-esteem and BPD is a bidirectional (DeShong et al., 2015).

5. Discussion

This study is a review studies that have attempted to understand the status quo of the relationship between self-esteem and BPD. The study did a systematic literature review by searching for related articles in four databases. The findings showed that the number of articles is still limited. This finding is in line with the findings of previous studies that indicated the lack of studies on self-esteem and BPD (Winter et al., 2018). The findings also showed that most of the studies conducted in US, Germany, Canada, and Switzerland.

Few of the reviewed studies were conducted in developing or emerging economies. This finding is in line with the findings of previous studies that indicated the scarcity of studies in non-western context (Budak et al., 2015; Choudhary & Gupta, 2020). Moreover, the findings showed that most of the reviewed studies are quantitative. Previous reviewed study share the same opinion regarding the approach of the study of self-esteem and BPD. In a review study conducted by (Randal et al., 2015), the author indicated that most of the reviewed studies are quantitative. Survey design study outperform the RCT studies and sample size is minimal which can explain the overwhelming use of the first generation of data analysis which require a minimum sample size of 30 respondents (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

Regarding the effect of self-esteem on BPD, the findings showed that this effect tend to be mixed with more likely negative effect. Low self-esteem result in more BPD. The use of intervention is limited and the differentiation between type of self-esteem is also limited in the reviewed studies.

6. Limitation and Future Work

There are some limitations of this study which can be deployed as a direction for future work. The study reviewed articles from four databases. The findings are subject to the reviewed articles. The study also used keywords specific to the topic. The increase in the keywords might increase the number of articles. Therefore, the study is limited to the used keyword. The timeframe of this study was between 2015-2021. As a direction for future work, there is room for more studies in the relationship between self-esteem and BPD and especially in the context of developing countries and emerging economies as most of the studies were conducted in western context.

Future studies are recommended to differentiate between type of self-esteem and examine their effect on BPD and other psychological illness. Intervention studies are limited and there is a need for more intervention such as those based on cognitive behavioural therapy. More importantly, the religiosity as an intervention method has not been used in the context of self-esteem and BPD. Future studies can design an intervention based on religiosity to enhance the self-esteem and reduce the BPD. The future studies are also recommended to use intervening variables such as mediator or conditional variable such as moderator. A potential mediator to be used in this context is the socialization and respect while a moderator can be the income and education or the time of using the Internet and social media.

Previous studies were quantitative in nature and more qualitative or case study approach can help in understanding the effect of self-esteem on BPD. Since the result of previous studies showed mixed findings, the future researchers are recommended to look into more variables along with self-esteem such as self-respect and self-perception. Lastly, future studies are recommended to study the cause and effect between self-esteem and BPD. In other words, the bidirectional relationship between the two variables can be an avenue for future work.

7. Conclusion

This study was conducted to examine the literature systematically and identify the relationship between self-esteem and BPD. The study reviewed 27 related articles and found that the number of article into the topic is still limited with the majority of the reviewed articles conducted in western context and were quantitative in nature. The sample size is generally small and the SPSS has been used widely in the reviewed studies. The effect of self-esteem on BPD is mixed with tendency to be negative more than being positive. The findings were discussed and limitations as well as direction for future work were given.

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