SUMMARY.—This study had three objectives: (a) to compare undergraduates from four Arab countries on self-esteem, (b) to explore the sex-related differences in self-esteem in these four Arab countries, and (c) to examine the association of self-esteem with both per-capita income and unemployment rate. Four samples of 2,643 students were recruited from Egypt (n = 576), Kuwait (n = 674), Lebanon (n = 826), and Oman (n = 567). They responded to the Arabic version of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. Kuwaiti and Omani men had a significantly higher mean score on self-esteem than did Egyptian and Lebanese men. Egyptian women scored significantly lower than the Omani women, but the effect size was small. Regarding the sex-related differences in self-esteem, Kuwaiti men had a significantly higher mean score than did their female peers, but the effect size was small, whereas there were no significant sex differences in the other samples. The sex-related difference in self-esteem is a controversial result and it may not be replicable in different countries. It was suggested that self-esteem is associated with high per-capita income and low unemployment rate.

Self-esteem is a construct that underlies and often helps to explain human thoughts, feelings, and behavior. There is a general consensus that high self-esteem is associated with better psychological health, well-being, and functioning, and that low self-esteem is undesirable, because it is associated with lower psychological health and functioning (Glaus, 1999). Self-esteem is the evaluative dimension of self-knowledge, referring to how a person positively or negatively appraises himself (Baumeister, 1994). Researchers have affirmed the importance of self-esteem as indicating a person’s subjective quality of life, because self-esteem is related to behavioral competence, positive self-experience, and self-actualization (Ng, Tam, Man, Cheng, & Chiu, 2003). Additionally, researchers have considered it an important aspect of self-development, because it reflects the evaluation of one’s competence and affects emotional experiences, future behavior, and long-term psychological adjustment (Nagar, Sharma, & Chopra, 2008).

Although self-esteem is generally stable, it can fluctuate from time to

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