

UNDERSTANDING ADOLESCENTS' EMOTIONALITY: AN ANALYSIS OF FACTORS AFFECTING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

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ABSTRACT

The study is an attempt to explore the factors analyzing adolescents' emotional development. At first some of the views of psychologists and researchers on the stage of adolescence was examined. The researcher goes by the definition, 'adolescence is a socially defined group' given by Ritzer, Kammeyer and Yetman (1979) (6). The sample comprised of 400 adolescents in the age group of 13-18 years in Kamrup Metropolitan District of Assam. At first an Emotional Intelligence test developed by Dr Ekta Sharma was administered to the adolescents. The influence of demographic factors such as locality, parents' education and occupation were analysed. The data was statistically treated and the scores of the adolescents were also examined. Though a vast expanse of literature tries to dwell on the relationship of the demographic variables with Emotional Intelligence, the researcher would like to gravitate attention to the fact that at the stage of adolescence, an individual develops a sense of emotional autonomy; there exists a myriad of factors that interplay to shape the emotionality of adolescents. The world today needs more attention to be directed towards nurturing adolescents emotionality through comprehensive, well designed Emotional Intelligence Education curriculum, suited to the individual needs of the adolescents in particular and the society in general.

KEYWORDS: Adolescence, Emotional Education, Emotional Intelligence

INTRODUCTION

'Adolescence is a socially created group' as stated by Ritzer, Kammeyer and Yetman (1979)(6). While considering this definition, on examining the adolescents in this study, the age period which is supposed to mark the stage of adolescence which extends to 20-22 years has been cut short. This can be inferred on the basis of girls marrying at an early age and boys taking up the family occupation. For adolescents coming from poor families it is a jump from childhood to adulthood. Social role expectations shape their behavior and as soon as they reach puberty, they are expected to behave like adults in many ways.

With this definition in mind the present study would focus on the understanding that it is a stage that starts at puberty and ends before adulthood. Technological advancements has let to precocious puberty which begins as early as 7-8 years nowadays especially in India. It is obvious that a jump into this stage from childhood to adolescence makes the transition very stressful which gets manifested in myriad forms such as conflicts with caregivers, aggression, substance abuse, sexual promiscuity, lack of focus and a goal direction.

Adolescence

Adolescence is a stage of transformation from childhood to adulthood. They are expected to behave like grownups and to develop a sense of self responsibility and at the same time they are also labelled as too immature to take certain decisions, for example, to go out alone particularly in case of girls, to watch certain programmes or to dress up like adults. The growth occurring during this period is marked by rapid physical changes in the body. This causes a lot of emotional turmoil in the adolescent. This situation is particularly more aggravated in the Indian context due to the fact that sex education in the households is a taboo. Girls attend puberty without knowing what is a menstrual cycle and boys tend to alienate from their fathers on reaching puberty. Growth during this period is markedly influenced by parenting techniques, social institutions, geographical conditions, locality, neighbourhood, tradition and culture apart from hereditary influences. Most of the characteristics during this stage is universal. Heightened emotionality triggered by hormonal changes during this period; pressure of conforming to peer group expectations, rebelliousness and conflict with family.

The Indian tradition particularly followed in the rural areas and those among low socio-economic background makes the adolescent a miniature adult. Girls are often married off at this stage or they elope. Society expects them to dress and act like adults. Expressing emotions freely is not accepted by the society. This holds true for the urban adolescents in Assam. Shaffer (2009)(11) had revealed that the adolescents want to achieve 'emotional autonomy', that is they want to depend on their own emotional strength rather than being dependent on their parents. Negativity in disciplining aggravates the situation. Boys and girls at this stage are reminded of their mistakes and instructions are not given as to what is right and how things should be done. This confuses the young minds. Some households also lack a proper role model. Parents who are illiterate lack a proper hold on their children. Illiterate parents lack confidence in rearing children, particularly when it comes to education. Adolescents, when they discover that their parents are illiterate or less educated, their confidence on their parents diminishes.

Aristotle's definition of adolescence as 'a period of storm and stress' has been a subject of discussion by recent psychologists. Oswalt (2010)(9) had mentioned about Larson and Hans (1993) that 'what appears to be storm and stress is actually the natural outcome of youth learning to cope with a much larger array of new and unfamiliar situations'.

Eric Ericson's definition of the stage of adolescence as characterized by identity vs confusion was pronounced in the revelations made by the adolescent learners in this study. Another characteristic found among the adolescents were that a very large majority (96%) belonged to low income households (monthly income below Rs 9000).

What is Emotional Intelligence?

"Emotional Intelligence" refers to the capacity for recognising our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships.

Emotional Intelligence has been categorised into five domains as has been explained by Daniel Goleman.(3)

Self -awareness: Knowing what we are feeling in the moment, and using those preferences to guide our decision making; having a realistic, of our own abilities and a well grounded self-confidence.

Managing Emotions: Handling our emotions show that they facilitate rather than interfere with the task at hand; being conscientious and delaying gratification to pursue goals; recovering well from emotional distress.

Self Motivation: Using our deepest preferences to move and guide us toward our goals, to help us take initiatives

and strive to improve, and to persevere in the face of setbacks and frustrations.

Empathy: Sensing what people are feeling, being able to take their perspective, and cultivating rapport and attunement with a broad diversity of people.

Handling relationships: Handling Emotions in relationships well and accurately reading social situations and networks; interacting smoothly; using these skills to persuade and lead, negotiate and settle disputes, for co-operation and teamwork.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To examine the Emotional Intelligence scores of adolescents.
- To find the relation of certain demographic factors such as income of parents, type of family and locality on emotional intelligence of adolescents.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample comprised of 400 adolescents, male and female, in the age group of 13-18 years, from Kamrup Metropolitan District of Assam.

Instruments Used

- Emotional Intelligence test developed by Dr Ekta Sharma was used to find the Emotional Intelligence of adolescent boys and girls.
- Interview schedule for parents to illicit information on adolescents emotionality.
- Interview schedule for teachers to illicit information on adolescents emotionality.
- Focus group discussions with the students.

FINDINGS

Emotional Intelligence scores of adolescence

Table 1: Percentage of Adolescents' in the Different Categories of Scores of Emotional Intelligence(EI) Test (n=400)

Domains of EI	Below Average	Average	High
Self Awareness	4.0	87.8	8.3
Managing Emotions	-	46.0	54.0
Empathy	2.3	86.0	11.8
Motivating Oneself	-	39.5	60.5
Handling Relationships	1.5	83.8	14.8

It is heartening to note that more than half of the adolescents (60%) showed high scores in Motivating Oneself. A large majority of the adolescents belonged to families with low income level. Interaction with adolescents revealed that intrinsic motivation was high though constraints were there due to the pressures put by family stress. The next highest score was observed in the domain of managing emotions(54.0%). Highest average score was found in the domain of self awareness(87.8%) followed by Empathy (86.0%). 54.0 % scoring high in Managing Emotions can be explained by the fact

that though lack of Self Awareness was observed Managing Emotions was present which is due to the learned helplessness present among the poor sections of the society.

Emotional Intelligence in Relation to and Occupation of Parents

Table 2: Pearson Correlations of Emotional intelligence with Parents occupation

	Father Occupation in Sores	Mother Occupation in Scores
Self Awareness	-.052	.008
Managing Emotions	.004	-.026
Motivating Oneself	-.031	.074
Empathy	-.038	.074
Handling Relations	-.078	.042
Total Emotional Intelligence	-.074	.066

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

No significant co-rrrelation was seen between fathers' occupation and the five domains of EI, except for Managing Emotions. Mothers' co-rrrelation was more positive except for managing emotions.

Statistical findings did not throw any light on the positive influence of parents' occupation on Emotional Intelligence. That Children's Emotional Intelligence develops with the level of occupation of the parents has been proved wrong and is consistent with the findings of Gowdhaman and Murugan (2009)(4), and Jaques (2009)(5); and contradicts the findings of Mohanty and Devi(2010)(7) who stated that good education and occupation of the parents significantly affect the Emotional Intelligence of adolescents.

It may be mentioned that children of low income families are deprived of the quality time devoted by parents to their children. Homemaker mothers spent most of the time on attending to domestic chores. In the urban areas mothers are also engaged as domestic workers. Interestingly the study does not provide any data regarding the engagement of mothers as domestic helpers. This is due to the fact that the adolescents felt shy to disclose that their mothers were working as domestic helpers.

Another important aspect that needs to be mentioned was that low income families generally adopt the authoritarian style of parenting. Children do not participate in the decision making process and discipline is imposed on them. The presence of hierarchy in all matters of the family- disciplining, decision making, problem solving, setting family goals, dealing with any crisis ; and majority of the mothers being homemakers also indicates that they are dependent on the family head for all matters. This works against the possibility of developing a sense of cohesiveness in the family.

Stress is present in all families, but the stressors or the causes are different depending on the culture, tradition, locality and family goals. Stress affects our emotionality. Therefore, it can be inferred that the stress factors actually shape the emotionality of adolescents and is independent of the influence of parents' education or occupation.

Emotional Intelligence as Regards Locality

Table 3: Comparison of EI Scores of Rural and Urban Adolescents

	Domicile	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Self Awareness	Rural	200	37.99	5.353	2.342	398	.020
	Urban	200	36.80	4.840			
Managing Emotions	Rural	200	26.04	3.297	1.301	398	.194
	Urban	200	25.60	3.467			
Motivating Oneself	Rural	200	53.60	6.796	-1.381	398	.168
	Urban	200	54.49	6.000			
Empathy	Rural	200	30.49	4.439	-1.083	398	.280
	Urban	200	30.96	4.334			
Handling Relations	Rural	200	62.25	7.550	-1.446	398	.149
	Urban	200	63.34	7.598			
Total Emotional Intelligence	Rural	200	210.36	16.319	-.503	398	.615
	Urban	200	211.18	16.263			

No differences were observed between rural and urban adolescents in Emotional Intelligence scores. Differences were observed only in the ways of expression depending on the tradition and culture and parenting styles. No significant differences were found among the research samples belonging to these two groups as regards emotional intelligence.

Characteristics of adolescents are universal. This implies to the adolescents in the present study. However there are subtle differences observed as regarding the situations in which the emotions are expressed, for example in the urban areas the adolescents are more pressurized to compete with other adolescents in the society, on the other hand in the rural areas more homogeneity is seen as regards their problems and stressors of life. Therefore the differences has been observed only in terms of the causative factors of stress in both the areas- rural and urban.

Emotional Intelligence and Type of Family

Table 4: Total Emotional Intelligence in Relation to Nuclear, Joint and Extended Family

		Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Total Emotional Intelligence	Between groups	104.627	52.314	.197	.822
	Within groups	105594.213	265.980		
	Total	105698.84			

Present research evidence does not prove that larger families are more conducive for adolescents' emotional development. A recent study by Afzal and Afzal (2016)(1) revealed that family size and number of siblings have no relationship with Emotional Intelligence. Afzal and Afzal had reported of Ozabaci (2006)(10) who had revealed the decrease of emotional intelligence with the increase of family size. The reason mentioned was that as family size increases with more number of siblings, the interaction with parents and their supervisors decreases. Afzal and Afzal further reported of Barber, Christensen and Barchard (2004) who had revealed that no relationship exists between family size and emotional Intelligence. Regarding this the researcher would like to bring into consideration the influence of myriad factors that go to make a family life, such as the type of parenting, the cohesiveness, the communication, the crisis and the like. Findings suggest that, to make conclusive statements was not possible as many other factors needed to be considered. Therefore structure of the family provides little evidence, compared to the many influential factors that had been

overlooked in all research findings.

SUMMARY

It can be summarized from the above findings that emotionality of adolescents is an independent factor. Schaffer was right in saying that adolescents develops a sense of emotional autonomy. Research findings do not yield any consistent results to conclude that occupation of parents, type of family and locality influences adolescents' Emotionality. There are many factors that influences adolescents' emotional development. These includes home climate, peer group influence and school environment. Research needs to focus more on these areas. Cefai and Cooper (2009)(2) rightfully says that parents, communities and schools need to pay more attention to the promotion of emotional and social wellbeing than to the control of childrens' behavior.

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