

Influence of Family's Psychological Atmosphere on Social Intelligence Among Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

Adolescence is a developmental stage unique to human beings. During this phase of life, individual focuses on building and enhancing interpersonal relationships with members in the family and the outside world. The aim of the study was to determine whether family's psychological atmosphere influences social intelligence among adolescents. The study was conducted among 346 adolescents (13-19 years) residing in Kerala. The instruments used were Family Psychological Atmosphere Scale and Social Intelligence Scale. The results revealed that the family's psychological atmosphere significantly influences social intelligence among adolescents. Post hoc test revealed that the high scoring group in family's psychological atmosphere were significantly different from the low and average scoring groups indicating that higher the family's psychological atmosphere's quality higher the social intelligence among adolescents.

Keywords: *Adolescents, Family's psychological atmosphere, Social intelligence*

Adolescence, a unique stage of development, is a phase of transition from childhood to adulthood which lays the foundation of good health. Adolescence is a crucial stage because the individual goes through rapid physical, cognitive, and psychosocial growth which affects how they react, make decisions and how they interact with others. The trials and tribulations of adolescence is not unfamiliar to us as we have read and studied and most importantly gone through the stage ourselves.

During adolescence, a person learns to think beyond the here and now, imagine its implications and the future, and begin to appreciate the intricacies of interpersonal relationships. Family and its members are role models in effective communication, relationship skills, and socially acceptable behaviours. The way conflicts are handled and negotiated within the family is a guiding map for them to deal with issues in other areas. Setting appropriate and well-defined boundaries enable adolescents to know what is acceptable and what is not. The skills acquired in the house (directly and indirectly) can

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therefore be useful to manoeuvre their social life and develop a stable sense of themselves. Therefore, family's psychological atmosphere, that is, functioning of the family, cohesiveness between the family members, how well the family adapts to change, and the style of parenting determines the adolescent's social development.

Throughout adolescence, individuals are seriously involved with various social contexts and institutions that directly and indirectly influence their development. The social contexts are proximal (friends, romantic partners, and family) in which they are directly involved and distal (communities, societies, and cultural norms), both contributes to the development of adolescents. It is imperative for them to feel connected to others, ask for and provide support, be empathetic, communicate care, cooperate with others, accept and understand that others have different beliefs from their own, and be receptive to others' needs (Cacioppo et al., 2011; Feeney & Collins, 2015). Therefore, it can be safely assumed that social intelligence is essential to maintain healthy relationships. Social intelligence is defined as the ability to manage people and act wisely in human relations (Thorndike, 1920). Affectionate constraint parenting style is found to be a strong predictor of high social intelligence as compared to neglectful parenting style among adolescents (Abdollahi et al., 2013).

It is therefore poignant to study how the psychological atmosphere of the family influences the social intelligence of adolescents.

Objective

- To study the influence of family's psychological atmosphere on overall social intelligence and its sub-dimensions among adolescents.

Hypothesis

- Family's psychological atmosphere will significantly influence overall social intelligence and its sub-dimensions among adolescents.

METHODOLOGY

Participants:

The participants of the study consisted of 346 adolescents belonging to the age group of 13-19 years. The participants were randomly selected from different districts of Kerala.

Instruments:

The following instruments were employed for testing the hypothesis. The details of the instruments are as follows;

- **Family Psychological Atmosphere Scale (Ritu Priya R., Dr. Jasseer J., & Dr. C. Jayan., 2024).** The test measures the family's psychological atmosphere among adolescents. The scale has 46 items measuring 4 dimensions, such as, family functioning, family cohesion, family adaptability, and parenting style. The Cronbach Alpha of the scale was found out to be 0.91. The scale has face and content validity.
- **Social Intelligence Scale (Bhavna Bajaj, 2020).** Standardised scale was employed for the study. The scale measures social intelligence of adolescents. The scale has 10 items measuring 3 dimensions, such as, social information processing, social awareness, and social skills. The Cronbach Alpha was found to be 0.71. The scale has face and content validity.

Administration:

The permission was sought from the concerned authorities of the institutions. After the permission was granted, the aim of the study was explained to participants. Each participant was met individually and the questionnaires were given to them. Their doubts were cleared as and when required. The ethic of confidentiality was kept intact. The scoring of the questionnaires was done as per the manual.

Statistics Used:

Descriptive statistics, One way ANOVA and Duncan were used to analyse the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The hypothesis was statistically tested. Firstly, the aim was to find out whether there was a difference between low, average and high scoring groups in FPAS on overall social intelligence and its dimensions. In order to test the hypothesis, the mean differences between the groups were found, which shows difference between the three groups (Table 1). Furthermore, One way Analysis of Variance was used in order to ascertain whether there is a significant statistical difference between group means. The F value obtained is 11.72 (Table 2) significant at 0.01 level. Post hoc tests were done (Table 3). The values showed that Group 1 (low scoring) differs from Group 2 (average scoring) and Group 2 differs from Group 3 (high scoring). Moreover, Group 3 significantly differs from Group 1 and 2 on overall social intelligence.

With the aim of understanding the influence of family's psychological atmosphere on social intelligence better, the three (social information processing, social awareness, and social skills) sub-dimensions that encompass social intelligence were also put to test. Analogous to the overall social intelligence mean and standard deviation, each sub-dimension's mean and standard deviation was found. Subsequently, One way Analysis of Variance was carried out to identify the significant difference between means. Post hoc tests were also carried out for better understanding.

For social information processing, the mean for Group 1, 2, and 3 were 10.64, 12.27, and 12.44 respectively (Table 1). Furthermore, F value for the sub-variable was found out to be 6.59 ($p < 0.01$) (Table 2). Post hoc test helped identify that Group 1 differs from Group 2 and 3 on social information processing (Table 4). For social awareness, the mean for Group 1, 2, and 3 were 9.70, 9.15, and 10.43 respectively (Table 1). Additionally, F value for self-regulation was found out to be 6.22 ($p < 0.01$) (Table 2). Post hoc test helped identify that Group 1 differs significantly from Group 2 and 3 in social awareness (Table 5). For social skills, the mean for Group 1, 2, and 3 were 7.84, 8.88, and 9.69 respectively (Table 1). Additionally, F value for the sub-variable was found out to be 6.59 ($p < 0.01$) (Table 2). Post hoc test helped identify that Group 1 differs significantly from Group 2 and 3 in social skills (Table 6).

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Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of three groups formed on the basis of scores (FPA) on overall and sub-dimensions of Social Intelligence.

Variables	Group 1 (N=56)		Group 2 (N=215)		Group 3 (N=75)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Social Information Processing (SIP)	10.64	2.83	12.27	3.19	12.44	3.34
Social Awareness (SAW)	9.70	2.47	9.15	2.74	10.43	2.86
Social Skills (SK)	7.84	2.61	8.88	2.94	9.69	2.92
Overall SI	28.18	4.88	30.30	5.31	32.56	4.94

Table 2: F values of three groups formed on the basis of scores (FPA) on overall and sub-dimensions of Social Intelligence.

Variables	Between Groups		Within Groups		F
	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	
Social Information Processing (SIP)	132.65	66.33	3451.69	10.06	6.591**
Social Awareness (SAW)	93.01	46.50	2561.42	7.46	6.22**
Social Skills (SK)	110.23	55.11	2867.59	8.36	6.59**
Overall SI	627.52	313.76	9182.04	26.77	11.72**

**significant at 0.01 level

Table 3: Duncan table for overall social intelligence

FPA	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05		
		1	2	3
1	56	28.18		
2	215		30.30	
3	75			32.56
Sig.		1.000	1.000	1.000

Table 4: Duncan table for sub-dimension, social information processing.

FPA	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05	
		1	2
1	56	10.64	
2	215		12.27
3	75		12.44
Sig.		1.000	0.729

Table 5: Duncan table for sub-dimension, social awareness.

FPA	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05	
		1	2
2	215	9.15	
1	56	9.70	9.70
3	75		10.43
Sig.		0.196	0.085

Table 6: Duncan table for sub-dimension, social skills.

FPA	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05	
		1	2
1	56	7.84	
2	215		8.88
3	75		9.69
Sig.		1.000	0.071

The results evidently shows that the family's psychological atmosphere significantly influences social intelligence of adolescents. The results are in tandem with the available literature. Ainsworth et al. (1978) noted that children who were strongly connected with their mothers as babies have stronger tendency to develop stronger sense of self-respect and self-confidence, they do better in school, have successful social relationships and experience less anxiety and depression. Children of authoritative parents are reported to easily be able to make friendships. Also, they are well accepted in the groups they belong to. On the contrary, children raised by authoritarian parents have difficulties in peer relations (Davidson et al., 2006).

Children from the families with open communication have better capability to develop desirable social skills and problem solving skills (Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Quality of family communication is a marker of children's emotional and social progress (Martinez-Pons, 1998). Adolescents' positive social adaptation is strongly predicted by growing up in a comfortable home environment with secure emotional bonding with family members (Vandeleur et al., 2007).

Social stimulation provided by parents corresponds directly with the children's level of social functioning (Echeburúa, 1993). Additionally, mode and quality of communication including how parents interact verbally even about their daily lives to their children and open ended questioning helps children practice their communication which helps promoting their social development (Vygotsky, 1978; Gallagher, 1993; Lee et al., 2012). Parents that spend more time with their children involving in shared activities like play or going out, talking about their school, are assumed to have higher social competence. Families that spend more time in leisure and other activities with their children show higher social competence (Sánchez-Morales & Romero-López, 2021).

Considering the social intelligence variable holistically, the focus was also laid on the sub-dimensions of the variable. Firstly, social information processing is the manner in which the individual understands the world around him and his ability to predict others behaviour. A family serves as the basis for every understanding that a child has of the outside world. When grown into an adolescent, the individual starts looking at the world through a broader spectacle. Therefore, if the adolescent cohabits a space of positive psychological atmosphere then the spectacle will be brighter and broader. Secondly, social awareness is the ability to recognise and understand the mental states of others and also to understand the demands of intricate social situations. Children of the family observes their family members closely that they imitate what they see. Parental involvement can foster social awareness among children by setting an example through positive behaviour. Kim et al. (2021), suggests that parents who empathise and show respect for others will instil these qualities in their children. Moreover, a positive reinforcement in the form of praise and recognition can help in the

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development of social awareness. Additionally, social skills is the ability to maintain interpersonal relationships and have effective communication with others. Social skills of children predict important outcomes such as peer acceptance, friendships, and positive opinions by significant others (Nassau & Drotar, 1995). Open communication in the family enables children to develop capacity to identify constructive solutions to interpersonal and social problems.

Adolescence is a psychologically fascinating phase because everything learnt (primarily from family) until then is organically put to test. Coming out of the phase healthily is an achievement. Living beings do not function in isolation. They need a social life, a group of people, and a space to belong to. How adolescents interact with others is immensely dependent on what they see in the family. How parents and family members deal with their interpersonal relationships, how they respond to others, how they manage conflicts are constantly and implicitly observed by children. The test of such implicit and explicit teachings from home is put to test in adolescence which could either break or make their mental and physical well-being. To conclude, the better the quality of family's psychological atmosphere, the better the adolescents social understanding and their interpersonal relationships.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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