

The Impact of Socio-Economic Status on Emotional Maturity Among Children: A Gender Perspective

Khushboo Kumari^{1*}, Dr. Gauri Shanker Ram²

ABSTRACT

Emotional maturity refers to the capacity to express one's emotions in a manner that is neither excessive nor disproportionate to the circumstances. It involves maintaining balance and control over emotional responses, ensuring they are appropriate to the context. The current study aims to explore how gender and socio-economic status influence emotional maturity in children. To achieve this, researchers utilized standardized assessment tools to measure emotional maturity effectively. The study's sample consisted of 100 children from diverse backgrounds, providing a representative dataset for analysis. Through rigorous data collection and analysis, the research sought to identify patterns and correlations between emotional maturity, gender, and socio-economic status. The findings revealed a significant relationship between emotional maturity and socio-economic status. Specifically, correlational analysis demonstrated that children from lower socio-economic backgrounds exhibited lower levels of emotional maturity compared to their peers from moderately stable socio-economic conditions. This disparity highlights the impact of financial and social stability on a child's ability to manage and express emotions appropriately. Socio-economic challenges may limit access to resources and opportunities for emotional development, contributing to the observed differences. Moreover, the study uncovered gender-based differences in emotional maturity levels. Girls were found to exhibit higher emotional maturity than boys. This gender disparity may stem from various cultural, social, or developmental factors. For instance, societal norms and expectations often encourage girls to develop emotional awareness and regulate their emotions more than boys. Additionally, developmental differences in emotional processing between genders might also play a role in these findings. In conclusion, the study provides valuable insights into the interplay between emotional maturity, socio-economic status, and gender among children. It emphasizes the importance of addressing socio-economic disparities to foster emotional development and maturity in children from all backgrounds. Similarly, the observed gender differences highlight the need for tailored interventions to support boys in enhancing their emotional maturity. By addressing these factors, educators, parents, and policymakers can create more equitable environments that support emotional growth and resilience in children.

Keywords: *Emotional maturity, gender, socio-economic status, Children*

¹Ph.D. Research Scholar, Veer Kuwar Singh University, Ara, Bihar, India

²Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Shayamal Devkhaira collage, Rohtas, Sasaram. Veer Kuwar Singh university, Ara, Bihar, India

*Corresponding Author

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Childhood is a critical period of growth and development. In today's world, marked by intense competition, high expectations, and rapid technological advancements, children often face emotional challenges such as stress, anxiety, frustration, and emotional distress. These challenges can sometimes escalate into severe issues like depression or suicidal tendencies. However, developing emotional maturity can help address these vulnerabilities effectively.

Emotional maturity refers to an individual's ability to appropriately manage, control, and direct emotions in response to varying circumstances and uncertainties. It is essential for healthy development and plays a crucial role in shaping a well-adjusted adult. Moreover, emotional maturity significantly influences personality, guiding individuals on how to regulate and manage their emotions. Since childhood serves as the foundation for future adulthood, nurturing emotional maturity during this stage is vital.

Emotional maturity results from the interplay of various factors, including the type of discipline in a household, socio-economic status (SES), peer groups, and school environments. The family, as the primary social unit, plays a central role in this process. Families instill norms and values, serving as key agents of socialization and development. Socio-economic status, encompassing education, income, and occupation, greatly impacts a family's living standards and the overall development of an individual. Its influence begins even before birth and continues into adulthood, shaping children's emotional and psychological development, as well as their relationships with parents.

SES, as defined by Stawarski and Boesel (1998), serves as an indicator of an individual's economic and social standing. Piko and Fitzpatrick (2001) examined SES and psychological health in Hungarian adolescents, using parents' occupational status as an objective measure and self-assessed SES as a subjective indicator. Other factors, such as race, social class, and caste, are also considered indicators of SES.

Although "emotional balance" and "emotional maturity" are often used interchangeably, they are distinct concepts. Emotional balance pertains to managing pleasant and unpleasant emotions, while emotional maturity involves broader emotional health and development. It is possible to achieve emotional maturity without attaining emotional balance, but the reverse is not true. Emotional balance is typically an attribute of adults rather than children, making emotional maturity a relative concept linked to age and developmental stage. According to Smitson (1974), emotional maturity is a continuous process wherein individuals strive for improved emotional health both internally and in interpersonal relationships.

In many African and Western countries, SES is commonly linked to factors such as family income, parental education, occupation, and social status. For example, data on family possessions, like computer access, has been linked to educational achievement; students with access to computers at home and school performed better in science compared to those with access only at school (Thompson and Fleming, 2003).

Studies have explored the relationships between SES, emotional maturity, and mental health. Sharma (2006) found differences in mental health dimensions between male and female adolescents. Aggarwal (2007) discovered significant correlations between emotional stability, academic performance, intelligence, social maturity, and overall adjustment in adolescents but found no significant links with autonomy, security, or self-concept. Kaur (2004) observed no significant correlation between emotional maturity and self-confidence in adolescents, nor

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differences between boys and girls. However, her study highlighted significant differences in emotional maturity between adolescents from rural and urban areas.

Objectives:

- To examine the impact of socio-economic status (SES) on the emotional maturity of children.
- To investigate gender differences in the emotional maturity of children.

Hypotheses:

- Socio-economic status has a significant influence on the emotional maturity of boys and girls.
- There is a significant difference in emotional maturity between boys and girls.

METHODOLOGY

The sample consisted of 100 children, evenly distributed between genders, with 50% being male and 50% female. The participants were aged between 8 and 16 years and were selected from various schools in Patna. Respondents were chosen using purposive sampling methods.

Tools used

- **Emotional Maturity Scale (EMS):** The Emotional Maturity Scale (EMS), developed by Singh and Bhargava in 1990, was utilized to assess emotional maturity. This scale comprises 48 items categorized into five dimensions: Emotional Instability, Emotional Regression, Social Maladjustment, Personality Disintegration, and Lack of Independence. Each item is rated on a five-point scale, ranging from 1 (emotionally mature) to 5 (extremely emotionally immature). The EMS demonstrates strong psychometric properties, with a test-retest reliability of 0.75 and a concurrent validity of 0.64.
- **Self-designed socio-demographic questionnaire** was used to study the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents.

Procedure

To collect the data, testing was conducted. Verbal consent was obtained from the participants after explaining the purpose of the study. They were assured that the information they provided would remain confidential and be used solely for research purposes. The sample consisted of boys and girls aged 8 to 16. Each participant was given a copy of the questionnaire to complete. Assistance was provided if they faced any difficulties in understanding or responding to the questionnaire items. Participants were encouraged to respond honestly and complete all items. Once they finished, they were thanked, and the completed questionnaires were collected.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and a t-test to assess the significance of the mean difference. The results are presented in Table 1 below.

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Table 1

Socio-economic status (SES) groups	Boys		Girls		t-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Upper SES	168.98	15.94	166.48	18.87	1.32
Lower SES	153.44	13.98	152.14	17.97	

The data indicate the mean scores for boys and girls across different socio-economic status (SES) groups. In the upper SES group, boys had a mean score of 168.98 (SD = 15.94), while girls had a mean score of 166.48 (SD = 18.87). For the lower SES group, boys had a mean score of 153.44 (SD = 13.98), and girls had a mean score of 152.14 (SD = 17.97). The t-value for the comparison between boys and girls in the upper SES group is 1.32, which suggests that the difference in mean scores is not statistically significant. Hence, no significant differences were found in the emotional maturity of boys and girls. Therefore, it is clear that both genders are more or less same in their emotional maturity in all socio-economic status groups. These findings suggest that while boys and girls in both SES groups show some variation in their mean scores, the observed differences between genders are minimal in both groups, and the statistical analysis does not provide strong evidence of a significant gender-based discrepancy in scores. This indicates that socio-economic status might play a more significant role than gender in affecting the outcomes measured. Findings reveals that boys and girls both have almost similar level of emotional maturity. It may be because of similar exposure and opportunities provided to both the genders in today's socio culture milieu, which gives equal autonomy of emotional expression and management opportunities to both genders.

These results are in conformity with the findings of Devi and Vincent (2016) who studied influencing factors of emotional maturity among adolescents in Coimbatore and revealed that gender had no significant effect on emotional maturity of adolescents. Dutt (2015) also conducted comparative study on emotional maturity on school going students and reported that no significant difference in emotional maturity level of adolescent boys and girls was found.

Table 2

Dimensions	Male		Female		t-value	Sig.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Emotional Instability	25.72	6.56	20.63	5.71	3.68	P<0.01
Emotional regression	23.98	5.46	19.99	5.15	3.19	P<0.01
Social maladjustment	23.28	5.75	19.33	5.52	3.56	P<0.01
Personality disintegration	20.71	6.12	17.86	4.19	3.15	P<0.01
Lack of Independence	17.86	4.11	17.88	4.17	0.23	P>0.05
Total	110.69	20.61	95.08	16.96	4.81	P<0.01

The results indicate significant gender differences across various dimensions. Males show higher levels of emotional instability, emotional regression, social maladjustment, and personality disintegration compared to females, with t-values ranging from 3.15 to 3.68 and p-values less than 0.01, suggesting statistical significance. In contrast, no significant gender difference was found for the lack of independence, with a t-value of 0.23 and a p-value greater than 0.05. Overall, the total score for males (110.69) is significantly higher than that for females (95.08), with a t-value of 4.81 and a p-value less than 0.01. These results imply that

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males, on average, tend to score higher on emotional and personality disturbances than females, except for independence, where there is no significant difference.

CONCLUSION

It is inferred from the findings that gender has no significant effect on emotional maturity of children across all socio-economic status groups. Findings also reveals that higher emotional maturity was found in children of lower socio-economic status group followed by middle socio-economic status group and least in upper socio-economic status groups. Hence socio-economic groups is found as one of the important determents that affect emotional maturity of boys and girls. Girls are more emotionally mature than boys.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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