

Research Paper

Emotional Competence and Social Adjustment: A Study on the Secondary and Higher Secondary Students of Kolkata

Urmi Saha^{1*}, Dr. Dipty Subba²

ABSTRACT

To live in the modern world peacefully, comfortably, and in an organized manner either solo or with others, an individual requires emotional competence together with social adjustment. Focusing on this critical developmental age, the present study provides insight into the intricate interface between emotional competence and the social adjustments of adolescents through the context of West Bengal. With the use of quantitative survey and cross-sectional methodology, information was gathered from a wide range of adolescents in the different places of Kolkata district. There have been findings that males tend to have a higher emotional competence and social adjustment compared to females. Besides, class XIIth students are supposed to be better in terms of Emotional Competence and Total or Positive Social Adjustment compared to class Xth students; however, except for Negative Social Adjustment. Researcher found that there is a positive correlation between Total Social Adjustment and Total Emotional Competence.

Keywords: *Emotional Competence, Social Adjustment, Students, School Education Level*

Emotional Competence and Social Adjustment thus become very important developmental tasks of adolescence in general and more so within the urban setup of Kolkata. Emotional competence refers to a person's understanding, expression, and management of emotional abilities very essential for adolescents who negotiate day-to-day with complex social environments (Denham, 2007; Saarni, 1999), facilitating effective interpersonal relationships, enhancing resilience, and promoting overall well-being (Gross & John, 2003; Lopes et al., 2004). On the other hand, social adjustment similarly important and it's the ability to fit in with social norms and to develop proper relationships with other people (Rubin et al., 2009). In most cases, adolescents characterized by high levels of emotional competence usually do better during social problems and are better at social adjustment (Eisenberg et al., 1997; Mayer & Salovey, 1997). It is the urban landscape of Kolkata that gives certain challenges and opportunities to adolescents. Cultural diversity, socio-economic disparities, and pressure for education, emotional and social development are some of the features that go on to characterize the urban landscape of Kolkata (Nair et al., 2017; Banerjee & Chaudhuri, 2019). The way an adolescent develops emotional competence and achieves social adjustment is very important in understanding interventions

¹Research Scholar, Department of Education, Jadavpur University, West Bengal, India

²Associate Professor, Department of Education, Jadavpur University, West Bengal, India

*Corresponding Author

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designed to support mental health and social well-being among adolescents of Kolkata (Sharma et al., 2016). Previous research suggests that agreeable family circumstances, good peer relationships, and school-based programs effectively promote emotional and social competencies among adolescents (Fischer & Corcoran, 2007; O'Brien & DeLongis, 1996). The present research seeks to understand this interplay of social adjustment and emotional competence among adolescents in Kolkata, with a view to garnering practical means for improving adolescent wellbeing within metropolitan settings.

REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES

Collective attention of reviewed studies points towards the important role of emotional competence and social adjustment to developmental and academic outcomes. Socio-emotional competence, in particular, has executive function, is said to predict school adjustment and peer relationships (Nakamichi et al., 2021), while Shields et al. (2010) reported that improved emotion regulation of preschoolers correlates with better adaptation in the classroom. Engelberg and Sjoberg (2003) focused on the accuracy of emotion perception to have an enhancing effect on both emotional intelligence and social adjustment, thus supporting the proposed relationship between emotional awareness and adaptability. Domitrovich et al. (2017) have underlined the necessity of increasing the need for school-based programs in developing the social-emotional skills to provide resilience and adjustment towards school, while Miller et al. (2007) linked regulation and emotion knowledge to social skills and reduced aggression in low-income preschoolers. Sette (2012) has therefore underscored that positive relations between the teachers and their students together with social skills are paramount elements in a child's development. Combining the insights of the studies calls for early interventions to establish emotional intelligence and social abilities. It goes a long way to bring about good interpersonal skills and excellent performances in learning. According to findings of Denham et al. (2014) preschoolers who are high in emotional competence also exhibit better social behaviours and readiness for school. These findings correspond with Bierman et al. (2016) who found that children who had superior skills in emotional regulation had better peer relationships and school outcomes. Both reveal the importance of early incorporation of emotional competence development in education to holistically develop the child.

Rationale of the Study

Understanding the interplay between emotional competence and social adjustment is vital for fostering healthy development in adolescents, particularly in culturally and socio-economically diverse urban environments like Kolkata. Emotional competence, which encompasses the ability to perceive, understand, and manage emotions, significantly influences adolescents' social interactions and overall well-being (Saarni, 1999; Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Social adjustment, defined as the ability to adapt to social norms and form positive relationships, is crucial for academic success and mental health (Rubin et al., 2009). In the context of Kolkata, the unique challenges posed by socio-economic disparities, educational pressures, and cultural dynamics necessitate a thorough examination of these constructs (Nair et al., 2017; Banerjee & Chaudhuri, 2019). Prior research highlights the importance of emotional competence in mitigating the negative effects of stress and promoting resilience (Gross & John, 2003; Lopes et al., 2004). Additionally, supportive family environments, peer relationships, and school-based programs have been shown to enhance emotional and social competencies (Fischer & Corcoran, 2007; O'Brien & DeLongis, 1996). However, there is a gap in literature specifically addressing these factors among adolescents in Kolkata. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the relationship

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between emotional competence and social adjustment, providing insights that could inform interventions and policies aimed at promoting adolescent well-being in urban settings (Sharma et al., 2016). Kolkata's secondary and higher secondary students require emotional competence and social adjustment to deal with stressors, loneliness, and academic pressures. They would lend themselves to fortifying resilience, mental well-being, and social adjustment and can use these skills to ensure complete and wholesome development through that vital life phase for success in later years. Detailed emotional competence along with adjustment to society must go hand in hand with the way a particular school handles it so that the secondary and higher secondary students at Kolkata learn to manage the stressors, build relationships, and adjust to the pressing academic pressures. Lasting mental health coupled with harmonious relations can form a strong foundation for life, allowing a blend of mental well-being and social adjustment to ensure holistic development and thus pave the way for success.

Significance of the Study

Emotional Competence is of great importance for students to learn stress management skills, skilful handling of relationships, and how to perform in school (Brackett, Rivers, & Salovey, 2011; Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade, 2008). Emotional competence is capability through which, as undoubtably a student is able to work independently, to face academic and social pressures and develop resilience to withstand life challenges (Zeidner, Matthews, & Roberts, 2004). It would plug the gap that exists for students from West Bengal regarding boosting the well-being and success for such a group. Social adjustment is key to mental health, interpersonal relationships, and quality of life and it works to cut down maladaptive behavior and improves psychological resiliency (Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 2006; Zinbarg et al., 2016). How emotional competence is related to social adjustment informs interventions that reduce risks to social maladjustment and foster inclusive communities by promoting adaptive coping (Gini & Pozzoli, 2013). The importance of this study lies in tapping how emotional competences and social adjustment affect academic performance, mental well-being, and peer relationships among secondary school students and higher secondary students in Kolkata. It further requires specific interventions to make students cope with socio-cultural and educational problems. For the schools, this will be significant in that it will point to the need for emotional competence and social adjustment training in the curriculum for a supportive learning environment. It means better emotional regulation, peer relationships in students, and academic success. Therefore, this research is of immense value to the educators, policy framers, and health professionals to draw upon while designing effective programs that would enhance emotional competence and social adjustment for better mental health, social networks, and cohesive society.

Objective of the study

The researcher strives to achieve the following objectives to assess the level of Emotional Competence and Social Adjustment among the students of Secondary and Higher Secondary levels in the district of Kolkata:

- 1) To study the level of Emotional Competence among male and female students in Kolkata.
- 2) To compare the levels of social adjustment among male and female students in Kolkata.
- 3) To study the dissimilarities in Emotional Competence among Class X & Class XII students in Kolkata.

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- 4) To investigate the difference in Social Adjustment among Class X & Class XII students in Kolkata.
- 5) To examine the relationship between Emotional Competence and Social Adjustment among the Class X & Class XII students in Kolkata.

Hypothesis of the study

The researcher approached the investigation of the research problem with the help of a null hypothesis. The null hypothesis by the researcher is in line with the objectives of the study. These hypotheses are as follows:

- **H01:** There is no significant difference on the level of Emotional Competence among male and female students in Kolkata.
- **H02:** There is no significant difference on the level of Social Adjustment among male and female students in Kolkata.
- **H03:** There is no noticeable difference in Emotional Competence between Class X and Class XII students of Kolkata.
- **H04:** There is no significant difference in Social Adjustment among Class X & Class XII students in Kolkata.
- **H05:** There is no significant relationship between Emotional Competence and Social Adjustment among the Class X & Class XII students in Kolkata.

METHODOLOGY

- **Research Design:** The descriptive survey research design administered the study of a quantitative nature to get Emotional Competence and Social Adjustment data from respondents selected from various backgrounds.
- **Population:** The students studying in Secondary and Higher Secondary level in West Bengal were targeted for the study population.
- **Sample:** The study constitutes a random selection of a sample of 190 students from both Secondary and Higher Secondary levels from different schools in Kolkata.
- **Sampling Technique:** The present study utilized the Convenient Sampling Method from different schools in Kolkata.
- **Variables:** For the present research investigation, the following variables are specified and used.
 - Independent variables: Gender and Level of Education.
 - Dependent variables: Emotional Competence and Social Adjustment.
- **Measuring Tools Used in the Study:** For the purpose of data collection, the following measuring tools were used soft demographic measures prepared for the study by the investigator include some, like Gender, Social Status, and Level of Education, which were studied.

Among other instruments, the present study incorporates a Scale of Emotional Competencies, developed and revised by Dr. Harish Sharma and Dr. Rajeev Lochan Bhardwaj (2016). Also used was Dr. Ashutosh Kumar's Scale of Social Adjustment (Patna).

Statistical Techniques used: Data were analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS package), version 21.0 as it can take care of a wide number of variables at a point in time and minimize calculation man-hours and while doing so reduce the chance of error.

ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

Table No: 1 Showing the Gender wise Comparison in the Levels of Emotional Competence

Level of Emotional Competence	N	Male	Female	Total
Average	190	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Competent	190	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
Highly Competent	190	57.5%	42.5%	100.0%
Overall Emotional Competence	190	57.4%	42.6%	100.0%

For Emotional Competence, it can be stated as follows: 100% of males are average in the level of emotional competence than female; male and female are equal at the competent level at 50.0% each; in the competent upper level, 57.5% of males have identified more than female (42.5%); males show a slightly higher level of total emotional competence (57.4%) over females (42.6%).

Generally, it is found that men are emotionally well competent because the society prescribes them never to show their emotions and thus should approach an issue with utmost confidence. Thus, they learn to cope and decide (Brody, 2000; Chaplin, 2015).

Thus, the null-Hypothesis, 'There is no significant difference on the level of Emotional Competence among male and female students in Kolkata' stands rejected.

Table No: 2 showing the Gender wise Comparison in the Levels of Social Adjustment

Level of Social Adjustment	N	Male	Female	Total
Low SA	190	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Average SA	190	56.2%	43.8%	100.0%
Above Average SA	190	56.9%	43.1%	100.0%
High SA	190	58.3%	41.7%	100.0%
Overall Social Adjustment	190	57.4%	42.6%	100.0%

Evidence regarding Low level of Social Adjustment shows that 100% males show more Social Adjustment than females; males (56.2%) show better Average Social Adjustment than females (43.8%); males (56.9%) are better than females (43.1%) in Above Average Social Adjustment, while, in terms of High Social Adjustment, males (58.3%) surpass females (41.7%); still the researcher found that in terms of Overall Social Adjustment males (57.4%) do surpass females (42.6%).

Therefore, the null hypothesis 'Null Hypothesis There is no significant difference on the level of social adjustment between male and female students in Kolkata' is rejected on the basis of the sample values.

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Table No: 3 T-test showing the Level of Education wise Comparison in Emotional Competence

Group Statistics						
Dimensions of Emotional Competence	Level of Education	N	Mean	SD	t-score	p-value
Adequate Depth of Feeling	X	69	15.06	3.769	-1.300	0.204
	XII	121	15.82	4.060		
Adequate Expression and Control of Emotions	X	69	17.80	4.071	-0.245	0.801
	XII	121	17.94	3.659		
Ability to Function with Emotions	X	69	17.90	3.456	0.224	0.828
	XII	121	17.78	3.829		
Ability to Cope with Problem Emotions	X	69	18.84	3.479	-0.020	0.985
	XII	121	18.85	3.805		
Ability to Enhance Positive Emotions	X	69	21.23	4.170	0.156	0.878
	XII	121	21.13	4.380		
Total Emotional Competence	X	69	90.83	12.867	-0.348	0.733
	XII	121	91.52	13.831		

Not Significant

According to the level of education regarding Emotional Competence, the mean score for Class X students in Adequate Depth of Feelings is lower (Mean=15.06, S.D.=3.769) than that of class XII students (Mean=15.82, S.D.=4.060), and the t score is -1.300 with a p value of 0.204; in Adequate Expression and Control of Emotions, class XII students (Mean=17.80, S.D.=4.071) performed better than class X (Mean=17.94, S.D.=3.659) students, and the t score is -0.245 with a p value of 0.801; in the Ability to Cope with Problem Emotions, class X (Mean=18.84, S.D.=3.479) performed slightly lower than class XII (Mean=18.85, S.D.=3.805) students, and the t score is -0.020 with a p value of 0.985; abilities of class X (Mean=17.90, S.D.=3.456) students in Functioning with Emotions Regarding were scored better than class XII (Mean=17.78, S.D.=3.829) students, and the t score is 0.224 with the p value of 0.828; in the Ability to Enhance Positive Emotions, class X (Mean=21.23, S.D.=4.170) students scored better than class XII students (Mean=21.13, S.D.=4.380), and the t score is 0.156 with the p value of 0.878; in the Total Emotional Competence score, class XII students (Mean=91.52, S.D.=13.831) are relatively better than class X students (Mean=90.83, S.D.=12.867), and the t score is -0.348 with the p value of 0.733.

Since all p values for the dimensions of Emotional Competence (adequate depth of feeling, adequate expression and control of emotions, ability to function with emotions, ability to cope with problem emotions, ability to enhance positive emotions) and the total Emotional Competence are above 0.05, that is why for this case we do not reject the null hypothesis. Thus, there are no significant differences between groups for these variables.

Therefore, the null hypothesis ‘There is no noticeable difference in Emotional Competence between Class X and Class XII students of Kolkata’ is accepted. In this case, the educational qualification does not seem to have any considerable effect on emotional competence.

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Table No: 4 T-test showing the Level of Education wise Comparison in Social Adjustment

Types of SA	Level of Education	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-score	p-value
Positive SA	X	69	46.14	5.652	-2.088	*0.038
	XII	121	48.23	7.117		
Negative SA	X	69	6.86	1.751	0.365	0.716
	XII	121	6.75	1.938		
Total SA	X	69	53.00	5.618	-1.924	0.056
	XII	121	54.98	7.433		

Significant *0.05 level

On the basis of level of education, according to Positive Social Adjustment class XII (mean=48.23, S.D.=7.117) students, they are better than the class X (mean=46.14, S.D.=5.652) students, and the t-score is -2.088 or p-value is 0.038; as p-value is less than 0.05. Thus, we reject the null hypothesis. So, the result is significant at the level of 0.05. So, there is a significant difference between these two educational levels, Xth and XIIth regarding Positive Social Adjustment. For Negative Social Adjustment class XII students (mean=6.75, S.D.=1.938) show a lower score than class X students (mean=6.86, S.D.=1.751), the t-score being 0.365 and p-value 0.716. In total Social Adjustment standard students XII (mean=54.98, S.D.=7.433) scored on average higher than on class X (mean=53, S.D.=5.618) and their t-score is -1.924 and their p-value is 0.056. As p is more than 0.05, we accept the null hypothesis: the result is not significant. The case holds that with respect to Negative and Total Social Adjustment levels, there is no significant difference between educational levels, X and XII except for Positive Social Adjustment.

Thus, the null hypothesis 'There is no significant difference in Social Adjustment among Class X & Class XII students in Kolkata' is rejected.

Table No: 5 Correlation table showing the Relationship between Emotional Competence & Social Adjustment

Variables	Mean	SD.	N	r	P
Social Adjustment	54.26	6.881	190	.183*	0.012*
Emotional Competence	4.95	0.246	190		

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

Correlation suggested a significant, though weak, relationship of social adjustment with emotional competence ($r = .183$, $p = .012$), which can be postulated to be a reasonably positive relationship between emotional competence and social adjustment levels among respondents. Although the correlation is weak, it is still significantly significant; that is, it offers an avenue for further exploration. This suggests that emotional regulation and social skills assist in social adjustments.

The null-hypothesis, 'There is no significant relationship between Emotional Competence and Social Adjustment among the Class X & Class XII students in Kolkata' is hence rejected.

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Major Findings

- The null hypothesis, 'There is no significant difference on the level of Emotional Competence among male and female students in Kolkata' is rejected. Males showed a greater level of emotional competence than females among students of Kolkata.
- The null hypothesis 'There is no significant difference on level of Social Adjustment among male and female students in Kolkata' got rejected. The findings, however, have shown that there exist significant gender differences in social adjustment, with males possessing better social adjustment skills compared with their female counterparts among students of Kolkata.
- The null hypothesis 'There is no noticeable difference in Emotional Competence between Class X and Class XII students of Kolkata' is accepted. The findings found few significant differences in emotional competence and concluded that educational level does not hold significant interrelationship with emotional competence.
- The null hypothesis 'There is no significant relationship between Emotional Competence and Social Adjustment among class X & class XII students in Kolkata' is rejected. There was found a small yet significant positive correlation between emotional competence and social adjustment scores for students of class X and class XII in Kolkata.

DISCUSSION

The study mentions significant gender differences and differences based on educational level in emotional competence and social adjustment amongst students in Kolkata. Males were found to be more emotionally competent than females; this may be ascribed to societal norms regarding emotional performance and interpersonal exposure. Among the various factors contributing to the higher level of social adjustment among males, unlike their female counterparts, are: differences in process of socialization and emotional regulation that seem to stimulate better interpersonal skills among males (Gross & John, 2003). Besides, A research has shown that males display more socially positive behaviors and adopt better coping strategies in social conditions, thought to be why they display higher social adjustment scores (Meyer & Marks, 2007).

No significant variation is found between the categories of educational level on all dimensions of Emotional Competence, namely: Adequate Depth of Feeling, Adequate Expression and Control of Emotions, Ability to Function with Emotions, Ability to Cope with Problem Emotions, and Ability to Enhance Positive Emotions, according to Cohen 2013 & Field 2013. In their study, they mentioned that there lies no considerable distinction in Emotional Competence between the Class X and Class XII students.

There are differences in social adjustment between Class XII students and Class X students, with: Class XII students being more socially adjusted on the average, quite possibly a result of accumulated maturity and experiences concerning social adjustment. The Class XII group is performing well in Positive Social Adjustment, possessing maturity and wider social experiences, yet no differences whatsoever were found in both Negative and Total Social Adjustment scores; in other words, both groups face similar adjustment challenges (Choudhury & Sinha, 2020; Ghosh, 2023).

However, while overall emotional competence and negative social adjustment did not significantly differ between the two such groups, there was a small but significant positive correlation between emotional competence and social tuning. Such a link illustrates the

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significant role emotional regulation is likely to play in interpersonal skills as far as students are concerned. All these correlated with previous studies, thus implying a need for intervention to improve emotional and social skills to facilitate the holistic development of students.

Educational Implication

Understanding the implications of emotional competence and social adjustment is important in enhancing all aspects of adolescent growth and development, especially towards the older stages of the cycle of adolescence. Teachers train emotional competency programs to the adolescence in school settings, which empower them to control their emotions, solve problems, and develop lasting relationships. This creates a hospitable atmosphere conducive to learning by encouraging an atmosphere within school characterized by empathy, respect, and understanding. Teachers will also offer constructive and caring support to help adolescents localize barriers to socialization and learn how to cope with these problems. Academic achievement and lifelong learning are sustained as social-emotional learning programs further enhance students' emotional regulation, social interaction skills, and responsible decision-making. Educationists can very well enable their teens in achieving all-rounded growth and academic performance by addressing the domains of emotional competence and social adaptability.

Recommendation

Further research on emotional competence and social adjustment of West Bengal adolescents may start with the effect of certain cultural practices and traditions on emotional growth and social integration or how peer dynamics influence social networks for emotional health and interpersonal interactions (Chakraborty, 2019; Das & Banerjee, 2021). In addition, effectiveness of school-based interventions and programs designed to help the development of emotional competence and support positive social adaptation among adolescents in West Bengal (Sen & Roy, 2022). Research in the future should basically longitudinally follow adolescents and collect their experiences and opinions; it would be important in understanding how their emotional and social skills develop and function in their lives (Ghosh, 2020; Saha & Mitra, 2023).

CONCLUSION

It throws light on the intricate interaction between emotional competence and social adjustment in Kolkata adolescents. Males in the study showed a higher level of emotional competence and social adjustment in comparison to females. XII-grade students are generally more emotionally competent and socially well-adjusted than students in X-grade; however, these differences are not statistically significant except for Positive Social Adjustment ($p = .038$). There was a weak but statistically significant positive relationship between emotional competence and social adjustment, indicating a possible contribution of emotion regulation to better adjustment to the social environment (Garner & Hinton, 2010; Roeser & Eccles, 2014). The need for educational interventions aimed at developing emotional and social skills to foster general well-being and flexibility within adolescents is stressed through these results. Further studies should be conducted to examine these associations in larger, more heterogeneous samples or use longitudinal designs to develop a more in-depth understanding of their associations (APA, 2020).

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Conflict of Interest

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