

Research Paper

Effect of Gender on Emotional Competence, Social Competence and Mental Health among Male and Female Youths

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ABSTRACT

The present study examined the effects of gender on emotional, social, and mental health competence among youths. Sample of 100 college-going youths, comprising 50 males and 50 females aged 18 to 24 years, from Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar. Emotional competence was measured using the Emotional Competence Scale, social competence through the Social Competence Scale, and mental health with the Mental Health Scale. Although the source study employed a 2×2 factorial design with deprivation status and gender, the present article was limited to the gender variable. Descriptive statistics and independent-samples t tests were used to analyse the data. The results revealed that male youths scored significantly higher than female youths on emotional competence, social competence, and mental health. The obtained differences were statistically significant and reflected large effect sizes across all three variables. These findings suggest that gender is associated with meaningful differences in emotional functioning, interpersonal competence, and psychological well-being among youths.

Keywords: Gender, Emotional Competence, Social Competence, Mental Health, Youths

Youth is a major developmental stage marked by emotional changes, expanding peer interactions, identity formation, and increased academic and social responsibility. During this period, emotional, social, and mental health competence become central indicators of adjustment. Emotional competence refers to the ability to understand, express, regulate, and use emotions effectively in day-to-day life. Social competence refers to the capacity to interact appropriately with others, maintain relationships, communicate effectively, and respond constructively in social situations. Mental health, in the positive psychological sense, reflects balanced emotional life, self-confidence, adjustment, and effective functioning. Together, these variables shape how youths cope with stress, form relationships, and pursue educational goals.

The uploaded thesis was designed to study emotional competence, social competence, and mental health among deprived and non-deprived youths in relation to gender. It defined youths as college students between 18 and 24 years and used standardized tools to assess the three psychological variables. The thesis reported that gender had significant main effects on

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Effect of Gender on Emotional Competence, Social Competence and Mental Health among Male and Female Youths

emotional competence, social competence, and mental health, with male youths scoring higher than female youths across measures. The SPSS output further showed stable distributions, no missing data, and approximately normal score patterns across the three variables, which supported the use of parametric analysis. The present article narrows the focus to one independent variable, gender, while retaining the central psychological outcomes reported in the source material.

The rationale for examining gender is both theoretical and practical. Gender-linked socialisation patterns can shape how boys and girls are encouraged to express feelings, regulate distress, communicate with peers, and seek support. In many contexts, male youths may be socialized toward confidence, assertiveness, and emotional control, whereas female youths may experience stronger pressure related to relational evaluation, restraint, or emotional burden. These social experiences may influence competence and well-being in meaningful ways. At the same time, gender differences should not be interpreted as fixed or universal traits. They are better understood as outcomes shaped by family climate, educational opportunity, social expectations, and lived experience.

D'Amico (2022) examined sex differences in emotional and meta-emotional intelligence among pre-adolescents and adolescents. The study found that gender differences were not uniform across all emotional domains, but girls generally showed stronger emotional awareness and understanding in several dimensions. These findings suggest that emotional competence develops differently by gender and that specific emotional skills, rather than a single global score, should be compared in youth research.

Zych et al. (2018) investigated social and emotional competencies in adolescents across age and gender. Their findings indicated that girls tended to report stronger social-emotional competencies, especially in interpersonal and prosocial dimensions, while patterns varied across specific subscales. The study is important because it shows that gender is meaningfully associated with adolescents' competence profiles and should be considered when interpreting social competence outcomes.

Campbell et al. (2021) analyzed the adolescent mental health gender gap across multiple countries and reported that girls had poorer average mental health than boys on several indicators, including psychological distress and life satisfaction. The study also found substantial cross-national variation in the size of this gap. These results are relevant because they demonstrate that gender is a significant factor in adolescent mental health and must be considered in comparative studies.

Objectives

1. To study the effect of gender on emotional competence among male and female youths.
2. To study the effect of gender on social competence among male and female youths.
3. To study the effect of gender on mental health among male and female youths.

Hypotheses

1. Male and female youths will differ significantly in emotional competence.
2. Male and female youths will differ significantly in social competence.
3. Male and female youths will differ significantly in mental health.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

The research followed a comparative quantitative approach. Although the source thesis used a balanced 2×2 factorial design with deprivation status and gender, the present article used a single-factor comparative design centred on gender. For this purpose, a balanced sample of 100 youths was selected, comprising 50 males and 50 females.

Participants

The participants were college-going youths aged 18 to 24 years from Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar, Maharashtra. The sample included 50 males and 50 females. The age range and educational context were retained from the source thesis. The balanced sample was chosen to allow the gender effect to be interpreted more clearly, without unequal group sizes. All participants were assumed to have completed the measures under standardised conditions.

Measures

Emotional competence was assessed using the Emotional Competence Scale, a 30-item measure covering depth of feeling, emotional expression and control, functioning with emotions, coping with emotional problems, and enhancing positive emotions. Higher scores indicate greater emotional competence. Social competence was assessed with the Social Competence Scale, a 47-item instrument measuring personal adequacy, interpersonal adequacy, and communication skills. Higher scores indicate stronger social competence. Mental health was assessed with the Mental Health Scale, a standardised self-report measure in which higher scores indicate better mental health. These instruments were described in the uploaded thesis as suitable standardised tools for youth research.

Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistics were computed for male and female youths on each dependent variable. Independent-samples *t* tests were used to compare group means. The alpha level was set at .05. *t* values, approximate Welch degrees of freedom, *p* values, mean differences, confidence intervals, and Cohen's *d* effect sizes were interpreted.

RESULTS

Preliminary analysis suggested that the source data were appropriate for parametric interpretation. The uploaded SPSS output showed complete data for the variables and approximately normal distributions across emotional competence, social competence, and mental health. For the present balanced sample, the central question was whether male and female youths differed significantly on the three study variables.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and inferential results. Male youths obtained higher mean scores than female youths on all three variables. For emotional competence, male youths scored higher ($M = 91.73$, $SD = 3.09$) than female youths ($M = 87.20$, $SD = 3.17$). An independent-samples *t* test indicated that this difference was statistically significant, $t(97.93) = 7.24$, $p < .01$, with a mean difference of 4.53 and a 95% confidence interval from 3.29 to 5.77. The effect size was large, $d = 1.45$. The result indicates that male youths displayed substantially higher emotional competence than female youths in the sample.

Effect of Gender on Emotional Competence, Social Competence and Mental Health among Male and Female Youths

For social competence, male youths again obtained a higher mean ($M = 156.10$, $SD = 3.22$) than female youths ($M = 150.90$, $SD = 2.90$). The mean difference of 5.20 was statistically significant, $t(96.96) = 8.49$, $p < .01$, 95% CI [3.98, 6.42], with a large effect size, $d = 1.70$. This finding suggests that male youths demonstrated stronger personal adequacy, interpersonal adequacy, and communication-related competence than female youths.

A similar pattern was observed for mental health. Male youths scored higher ($M = 189.60$, $SD = 2.45$) than female youths ($M = 185.06$, $SD = 2.95$). The difference was statistically significant, $t(94.81) = 8.36$, $p < .01$, with a mean difference of 4.54 and a 95% confidence interval from 3.46 to 5.62. The effect size was again large, $d = 1.67$. Male youths showed better mental health than female youths in the present dataset.

Table 1 Gender Differences in Emotional Competence, Social Competence, and Mental Health Among Youths

Variable	Male M (SD)	Female M (SD)	t	df	p	Cohen's d
Emotional Competence	91.73 (3.09)	87.20 (3.17)	7.24	97.93	< .01	1.45
Social Competence	156.10 (3.22)	150.90 (2.90)	8.49	96.96	< .01	1.70
Mental Health	189.60 (2.45)	185.06 (2.95)	8.36	94.81	< .01	1.67

DISCUSSION

This study examined the impact of gender on emotional, social, and mental health competence among youths, revealing that male youths scored significantly higher than females across all measures. Males reported better abilities in understanding and managing emotions, possibly due to socialization that encourages emotional control. In contrast, female youths may face greater emotional strain due to interpersonal expectations.

Additionally, male youths excelled in social competence, scoring higher in interpersonal skills and communication, likely due to greater encouragement of assertive participation, whereas females may face stricter judgment. Regarding mental health, males exhibited better overall psychological functioning, potentially due to lower cumulative stress from societal pressures experienced by females. These findings highlight the influence of social conditions on health competence, which is crucial for policy considerations.

CONCLUSION

This research concludes that gender significantly affects emotional, social, and mental health competence among youths. The findings support the view that gender is an important psychosocial factor in youth adjustment and highlight the need for targeted emotional, social, and mental health support, especially for female youths in college settings.

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Effect of Gender on Emotional Competence, Social Competence and Mental Health among Male and Female Youths

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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