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RESEARCH ARTICLE

A STUDY OF SOCIAL SKILLS AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN RELATION TO CERTAIN DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

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ABSTRACT

Adolescents' social skills are highly influenced by family, environment and cultural background. Appropriate social skills are needed for the successful completion of social roles and responsibilities. The present study aims to investigate the social skills of adolescents in relation to gender, place of living, type of school, category of school and students active on social sites. The study has been carried out on 815 secondary and senior secondary school students from Uttar Pradesh, India. The results revealed that girls have high social skills than boys. The findings also showed that students who are active on social sites have higher social skills than those who are not active on social sites. Similar findings have been found in favour of co-educational institutions and private school students.

INTRODUCTION

Children and adolescents are the predictors of future success. They start to expand their social environment and shift from adult caretaker to peer relations. As children grow older, they have less interaction with adults and more interaction with peers (Johnson, Johnson and Holubec, 1991). Children learn by observing, modelling, and imitating the behaviours and attitudes of others (McLeod, S., 2011). Children observe the behaviours around them and develop similar behaviour. Generally, children imitate those people who are similar to them. During adolescence, children tried to imitate the behaviour of their peers. Peer relationship is one of the main socializing settings for children and school play very important role to develop required social skills among adolescents. As social skills are life skills (UNICEF, 2012) so it is very important to develop good social skills among adolescents. Students have the chance to study and enhance their social skills while in school, which serves as a stage before entering the workforce. It helps student become sincere, truthful, tolerant, disciplined, obedient, and appreciative of others. The secondary level of education is crucial since it is here that students begin the most significant and serious phase of their lives, which is their careers. This phase acts as a transitional period between elementary and higher education. Young people begin to consider their possibilities. This level offers a greater range of educational and job options. Teenagers experience rapid growth at this time, and identity, belonging, and socialization, all play major roles in shaping how they view justice, democracy, and human rights.

Social Skills: Social skills are learnt, acceptable behaviours that enable one to interact with others in a social setting (Gresham and Elliott, 1984). Socially acceptable behaviours include asking for help, sharing, building excellent relationships, and saying "please" and "thank you" (Elliott and Busse, 1991). A person's ability to engage and communicate with others—both verbally and nonverbally—depends on their social skills. Gresham and Elliott have proposed five main social skill clusters (1990). These are cooperation, assertiveness, responsibility, empathy, and self-control. Essential character traits like respect, responsibility, leadership, and good manners are developed through social skills, which enable a person to make socially competent decisions regarding their actions and way of thinking.

Review or Related Literature: Goel (2015) examined the social skills of senior secondary school students in relation to gender, locale and type of family. The data was collected from 100 senior secondary school students of Sonipat district. A self-made questionnaire of social skills was used for this purpose. The results of the study revealed that there is no significant difference in the social skills of senior secondary school students in relation to gender and locale. But the social skills of students significantly affected by the type of family. Students of joint family have better social skills than students belong to nuclear family. Chukwuere (2021) studied the impact of social media on students' social skills and the findings of the study revealed that social media promote social interaction among students, but at the same time it encourages physical distance among peer.

Jamil *et al.* (2021) conducted a study about the effect of social media on social interactions among students. A sample of 380 students (aged 14-21 years) was selected for this purpose. The findings of the study showed that social sites have strong impact on the social interaction of both the genders. They spend more than four hours in a day on using different sites and feel that their lives are incomplete without it.

Objectives of the study

- To study the significant difference in the social skills of adolescents in relation to gender.
- To study the significant difference in the social skills of adolescents in relation to place of living.
- To study the significant difference in the social skills of adolescents in relation to type of school.
- To study the significant difference in the social skills of adolescents in relation to active on social sites.
- To study the significant difference in the social skills of adolescents in relation to category of school.

Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the social skills of adolescents in relation to gender.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the social skills of adolescents in relation place of living.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in the social skills of adolescents in relation to type of school.

H₀₄: There is no significant difference in the social skills of adolescents in relation to active on social sites.

H₀₅: There is no significant difference in the social skills of adolescents in relation to category of school.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants: The participants of this study were 815 secondary and senior secondary school students aged 13–17 years. The data was collected from nine schools (5 Private and 4 Government) of Uttar Pradesh, India, selected by cluster sampling. Initially, the scale was administered on 850 students, but 35 students were excluded due to missing values on more than five items.

Measures

Social Skills Scale – Adolescent (SSS-A): In order to know the level of social skills among adolescents, a self-report instrument “Social skills Scale – Adolescents” was developed and validated by the researcher. The scale includes 7 dimensions i.e. cooperation, per- relations, leadership, respect for rules at school, basic manners, communication and self-management.

The dimensionality of the items was examined by exploratory factor analysis (EFA), which identified 31 items within 7 dimensions. The validity of the scale was calculated by confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and item-to-total correlation. Confirmatory factor analysis showed good model fit indices (CFI = 0.93, TLI = 0.92 and RMSEA = 0.05). The reliability of the scale was calculated by Alpha Cronbach Coefficient and the seven dimensions showed good internal consistency. The Alpha Cronbach Coefficient of the whole scale is .95 which is very good (Cortina, 1993). For U.P. Board school students the items of the scale were given in both Hindi and English language.

Procedure: For the collection of the data, the researchers contacted administrators of various schools and requested for permission to collect the data. The students' participation was voluntary, and they were given the assurance that the responses they provided would be kept private. Data was gathered during the school hours. Each item was rated by the students on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree).

RESULTS

Analysis of the study revealed following results based on the objectives stated above:

H₀₁: *There is no significant difference in the social skills of adolescents in relation to gender.*

Table 1. Independent t-test comparing means of social skills of adolescents in relation to gender

Gender	N	Mean	s.d.	df	't' value	Sig.
Male	428	115.82	13.58	813	3.62	.00
Female	387	119.21	13.06			

There is a significant difference ('t' value = 3.62) in the mean scores of Social Skills of male (115.82) and female (119.21) students. In this way, the null hypothesis H₀₁, which states that “There is no significant difference in the mean scores of social skills of adolescents in relation to gender” is rejected. The result shows that female students have high social skills than male students.

H₀₂: *There is no significant difference in the social skills of adolescents in relation to place of living.*

Table 2. Independent t-test comparing means of social skills of adolescents in relation to place of living

Place of Living	N	Mean	s.d.	df	't' value	Sig.
Urban	503	117.71	13.62	813	.80	.41
Rural	312	116.92	13.13			

There is no significant difference ('t' value = .80) in the mean scores of Social Skills of urban (117.71) and rural (116.92) students. In this way, the null hypothesis H₀₂, which states that “There is no significant difference in the mean scores of social skills of adolescents in relation to place of living” is not rejected. The result shows that students living in urban and rural area have same level of social skills.

H₀₃: *There is no significant difference in the social skills of adolescents in relation to type of school.*

Table 3. Independent t-test comparing means of social skills of adolescents in relation to Type of school

Type of School	N	Mean	s.d.	df	't' value	Sig.
Government	397	114.48	14.28	813	6.19	.00
Private	418	120.20	11.92			

There is a significant difference ('t' value = 6.19) in the mean scores of Social Skills of government (114.48) and private (120.20) school students. In this way, the null hypothesis H₀₃, which states that “There is no significant difference in the mean scores of social skills of adolescents in relation to place of living” is rejected. The result shows that students studied in private schools have high social skills than government school students.

H₀₄: *There is no significant difference in the social skills of adolescents in relation to active on social sites.*

Table 4. Independent t-test comparing means of social skills of adolescents in relation to active on social sites

Active on Social Sites	N	Mean	s.d.	df	't' value	Sig.
Yes	563	118.14	13.58	813	2.26	.02
No	252	115.83	13.01			

There is a significant difference ('t' value = 2.26) in the mean scores of Social Skills of adolescents in relation to active on social sites. In this way, the null hypothesis H₀₄, which states that “There is no significant difference in the mean scores of social skills of adolescents in relation to active on social sites” is rejected.

The result shows that students who are active on social sites have high social skills than those who are not using social sites.

H_{05} : There is no significant difference in the social skills of adolescents in relation to category of school.

Table 5. Independent t-test comparing means of social skills of adolescents in relation to category of school

Category of School	N	Mean	s.d.	F value	Sig.
Girls	154	115.91	14.79	7.89	.00
Boys	100	113.31	12.43		
Co-ed	561	118.59	13.05		

There is a significant difference (F value = 7.89) in the mean scores of Social Skills of adolescents in relation to category of school. In this way, the null hypothesis H_{05} , which states that "There is no significant difference in the mean scores of social skills of adolescents in relation to category of school" is rejected. The result shows that students who studied in co-education institutions have high social skills.

DISCUSSION

During adolescence, the increased influence of peer groups is a major determinant of social skills. Apart from family and peer group, various demographic variables such as gender, place of living, type of school and category of school etc. also influence the social skills of adolescents. The result of the present study revealed that there is a significant difference in the social skills of adolescents in relation to gender. Girls have higher social skills than boys. Due to peer pressure, boys struggle socially more than girls. During adolescence, boys perceive social skills as less important and engage in many anti-social activities. On the other hand, girls engage in household activities, where they observe the behaviours of adults and learn good social and moral character from them. The result of the study also revealed that there is a significant difference in the social skills of adolescents in relation to type of school. Students in private schools have better social skills than students in public schools. The reason for this may be that, private schools focus on extracurricular and social activities to engage students in a social environment that improves their peer relationships and communication skills. Apart from this, teachers in government schools focus on traditional method of teaching which is teacher-centered and create a competitive environment in school. Students perceive that they can achieve a higher position in the class if the other students fail to achieve it. On the other hand, in private schools, teachers use innovative methods of teaching. They assign group projects to students so that they can work together and develop positive interdependence. In private schools, adequate attention is given to every student and teachers teach them basic manners, cooperation, respect for rules at school and self-management.

Over the past decades, social media has had a large influence on the social skills of adolescents. It changed the way of communication. Now, people are more busy to communicate through social networking sites than face to face communication. Spending too much time on social networking sites stops the interaction with peers, but sometimes social sites give us an opportunity to practice various social skills. The users of social media always have to communicate and it gives them an opportunity to convey their ideas and thoughts. Social media also provides an opportunity to regularly practice basic manners such as "please," "thank you," and so on. There is a significant difference in the social skills of adolescents in relation to category of school (Girls, Boys, Co-ed). As the school is the miniature of society, it prepares the students for later life. The girls and boys have to live together in a society, therefore, schools prepare them in advance for cooperation, good peer-relations, leadership qualities and self-management. Students who learn in co-educational institutions are more socially intelligent.

They easily understand the complicated relationship with the opposite gender and better adjusted with them. Apart from these, co-education also helps to eliminate gender discrimination, because in the classroom both the genders are treated equally. It also develops respect for opposite gender and better understands to them.

CONCLUSION

The social development of a child begins at home. Parents should provide right guidance and training to their children, so that they become good social being. At this stage, peer group is one of the major determinate of social skills. The interaction of peer groups affects their social lives. Therefore, the necessity of careful planning and continuous efforts to train adolescent's social skills is very essential. School environment is one of the most important factors that affect social development of adolescents. Teacher should provide opportunities to the students to participate in group work. So, the students can know how to cooperate with each other and develop good working relationships. An appropriate environment should be provided in the classroom, so that students can feel free to express their ideas and thoughts. Social sites are good medium for connecting the people while they are apart, but continuous use of it affect basic social skills of adolescents. Face-to-face communication, to maintain eye contact while talking and the use of appropriate posture, all are neglected while using the social media too much. Therefore, parents and teachers should encourage face-to-face interaction among adolescents, so that they can understand the intentions and emotions of the person with whom they are talking.

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