

Peer relations in primary class children : A comparison of peer nomination and peer ratings

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ABSTRACT

One hundred children from Hisar city were assessed for sociometric status. The results revealed that the popular children scored significantly higher positive nominations and positive ratings than the rejected children. In contrast, the rejected children scored significantly higher negative nominations and negative ratings than the popular children. Test-retest reliability of rating scale measure was found to be very high than for nomination measure

Key words : Peer relation, Peer rating, Sociometric status

Sociometric techniques are the measures of interpersonal attraction among the members of a specified group. When applied to children, it provides an evaluation of a child's peer relations from the perspective of peers themselves. Sociometric assessments also show relatively good temporal stability (Coie and Dodge, 1983). A further advantage of the sociometric approach is that status is correlated with other indices of adjustment, both concurrently and predictive (Parker and Asher, 1987; Parker *et al.*, 1995). There is considerable evidence that peer rejection is associated with later difficulties such as delinquency and school drop out; however, there is less evidence that childhood popularity predicts later success.

Three major types of sociometric measures are nomination, paired comparison, and peer rating scale. The nomination method is the traditional and most commonly used method. In this method, children are asked to identify a number of peers (usually three) according to some specified interpersonal criteria. Both positive and negative criteria have been used. For example, "Name three classmates you like very much" versus "Name three classmates you don't like at all". In the paired-comparison technique, a child is presented, in turn, with all possible pairs of peers within the group under consideration. For each pair, the child is asked to state a preference for one or the other peer according to some interpersonal criteria, for example, "Which one would you most like to play with?" Positive or negative interpersonal criteria can be used. The third sociometric procedure, the rating scale measure, requires each child to rate each peer on a Likert-type scale according to some interpersonal criteria, for

example, "How much do you like to play with this child at school"

The main objectives of this study are to identify popular and rejected children in a classroom and to compare the positive nomination and negative nomination scores, positive rating and negative rating scores of popular and rejected children.

METHODOLOGY

Sample:

One hundred 8-9 year old children enrolled from Hisar city were assessed for sociometric status. Later, 16 boys and 16 girls, each 8 popular and 8 rejected, were selected, on the basis of the nomination results, matched on age, sex and grade.

Procedure:

The sociometric status of children was assessed with the help of rating scale and nomination method. At the beginning of the study, photograph of each child was taken individually against a standard background. Photograph of each child in a particular class was presented individually to each class member by the researcher, and he/she was asked to name each child. Photographs were used to overcome any potential memory problems that might occur by relying on names only (Asher *et al.*, 1979; Cassidy and Asher, 1992; Negi and Balda, 2002). The same-sex sociometric scores were computed for each child.

Peer ratings:

All children in the classroom were shown the

photographs, one by one, of each classmate and were asked to consider each photograph and put it in to one of the three boxes on which were drawn either a happy face (“children I like a lot”), a neutral face (“children I like a little”), or a sad face (“children I don’t like at all”). Children thus received a number of positive, neutral and negative ratings. The positive rating received by the child was given a score of 3, neutral a score of 2, and negative rating a score of 1.

In the present research, sociometric peer rating scale was re-administered to forty children after a gap of one month to test the reliability of this measure. Test-retest reliability of this technique was proved to be very high for boys (0.76) and girls (0.78).

The nomination measure:

Children were individually and separately asked to identify three peers according to the specified interpersonal criteria from the displayed photographs. Both positive and negative sociometric criteria were used (For example, “Name three same-sex classmates you like very much”, versus, “Name three same-sex classmates you do not like at all”). Two different scores were obtained, positive nomination and negative nomination scores.

Positive nomination and negative nomination scores were considered to be separate indices of social status and were calculated and examined independently. On the basis of this method, the nominations received were further classified into five categories- popular, average, rejected, isolated and controversial. Popular children received large number of positive choices (high liking and low disliking scores). Rejected children received large number of negative choices (high disliking and low liking scores). Average children received relatively few positive and negative choices. Isolated children failed to receive even a single choice. Controversial children received high liking and disliking scores.

In the present research sociometric nomination measure was re-administered to forty children after a gap of one month to test the reliability of this measure. For boys, test-retest reliability of this technique was 0.56

for positive nomination scores and 0.58 for negative nomination scores. For girls, test-retest reliability of this measure was 0.59 for positive nomination scores and 0.54 for negative nomination scores. Finally, 16 popular (8 boys and 8 girls) and 16 rejected (8 boys and 8 girls) constituted the sample.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Mean positive and negative sociometric choices were computed for popular and rejected children. Table 1 depicts mean positive nomination and negative nomination scores, positive rating and negative rating scores of popular and rejected children. One-way ANOVA was computed to examine differences in mean scores of popular and rejected children. Effect of popularity was found to be significant for all the scores. The popular children scored significantly higher positive nomination and positive rating scores than the rejected children. Whereas, the rejected children scored significantly higher negative nomination and negative rating scores than the popular children.

One-way ANOVAs were also computed using sex of child and grade as independent variables mean positive nomination and negative nomination scores, positive rating and negative rating scores as dependent variables. No significant sex and grade differences were obtained.

These results indicated that in every classroom there existed a group of popular children and a group of rejected children. Also that, positive peer rating scores were very high for popular children and very low for rejected children; whereas, negative peer rating scores were very high for rejected children and very low for popular children.

The number of nominations a child receives reflects the number of friends that child has. The nomination scores, positive and negative, are based only on a few responses by each child. The rating scores provide an overall index of the child’s acceptability and likeability by the peers with regard to various behavioural dimensions, as each child in the class rates all members of the peer group under consideration. Thus, provides an indication of the child’s attitude toward each of the group members.

Table 1: Mean nomination and peer rating scores of popular and rejected children

Sr. No.	Variables	Boys (n = 16)		Girls (n = 16)		Total (n = 32)	
		Popular (n = 8)	Rejected (n = 8)	Popular (n = 8)	Rejected (n = 8)	Popular (n = 16)	Rejected (n = 16)
1.	Positive nomination scores*	8.0 ^b	1.25 ^a	7.60 ^b	1.23 ^a	7.80 ^b	1.24 ^a
2.	Negative nomination scores *	1.0 ^a	8.12 ^b	1.26 ^a	8.26 ^b	1.13 ^a	8.19 ^b
3.	Positive rating scores *	15.0 ^b	2.21 ^a	14.2 ^b	2.13 ^a	14.6 ^b	2.17 ^a
4.	Negative rating scores *	1.9 ^a	14.60 ^b	2.0 ^a	14.50 ^b	1.95 ^a	14.55 ^b

Note : ^a differs significantly from ^b for boys, girls and total sample at *p < .001.

The rating scores are more stable over time since the gain or loss of a single friend has relatively little effect on a child's total score. In the present study, test-retest reliability of rating scale measure was proved to be very high than for nomination measure.

Thus, it can be concluded that peer rating scale can either be used independently or in combination with other techniques to examine behavioural and social competencies of children. Hymel (1983) reviewed the literature on "Pre-school children's peer relations: Issues in sociometric assessment" and noted that the peer rating scale has advantages over other sociometric measures and is a reliable measure to assess sociometric status of children. Balda *et al.* (2002) too reported that peer rating scale is a reliable and valid measure to assess sociometric status of pre-school children. Although the information obtained from peer ratings do not provide the cause of these judgments, however, this information is valuable to identify children "at risk" from the perspective of child's peers if supplemented with other measures, such as interpersonal social problem-solving measure, in identifying the underlying causes.

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