

Research Paper :

Influence of gender, age and birth order on adjustment during adolescence

GUNJAN RAGHAV AND UMA JOSHI

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See end of the article for authors' affiliations

Correspondence to:

GUNJAN RAGHAV
Department of Home
Science, V.M.L.G. (PG.)
College, GHAZIABAD
(U.P.)INDIA
gunjan_raghav8259
@rediffmail.com

ABSTRACT

The aim of the present study was to investigate the influence of gender, age and birth order on adjustment during adolescence. The study was conducted in urban area of Aligarh, district of Uttar Pradesh. A sample of 400 adolescents (200 girls and 200 boys), aged 14-17 years were selected randomly for the study. The Multistage Stratified Random sampling technique was used for the selection of the sample. The Adjustment inventory was used to collect the data. The data were analysed by using mean, SD, correlation and t-test. The result of the study showed that age and birth order had affected the adjustment of adolescent boys and girls significantly and also indicated that adjustment of girls was higher among the girls as compared to boys.

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The word adolescence comes from a Greek word "adolescence" which means "to grow to maturity". This means accomplishing a number of developmental tasks. It is characterized by rapid physical, social and psychological changes, increasing personal autonomy, social experimentation, idealism, conflict, and personal uncertainty, and identity formation via involvements. According to Cole (1950), a long period of adolescence has gradually replaced the short period of puberty that was recognized as important from early times.

Adolescence starts from about twelve years of age and continues through eighteen years. It extends from sexual maturity until the age when independence from adult authority is legally assured. Because there are such marked individual difference in the ages at which sexual maturity occurs, it is difficult to do more than mark off the end of childhood and the beginning of adolescence by using average ages. Society recognizes the individual as mature at the age of 21 years as the legal age of maturity and gives him at this age the right to vote and to be responsible for his own behaviour. Pujar and Gaonkar (2000) revealed that as the adolescents advanced in age, their self- concept also increased among both high and low achievers.

Adjustment at the adolescent stage has an importance of vast magnitude. Adolescence is a period which goes a long way in the formation of personality apparent and

real. Good adjustment is helpful for a healthy mental life with a balanced personality. It is in this stage that any abnormality or even morbidity persistent, residual or latent in the adolescents gets the opportunity to grow, persist, subside or disappear depending upon the nature of mental adjustment with the environment. Adjustment is considered as the modifications of weighting of a series of results to compensate for or meet special conditions.

The problem of adjustment has become so vital in our complex and civilized society that psychologists have turned their deep interest in understanding it. The problem of adjustment, being faced by our adolescents, needs serious consideration. The prevention is essential not only for the individual, but for the society at large. Agarwal (2003) found that the successful adolescents were significantly superior in their social, emotional and educational adjustment in comparison to unsuccessful adolescents. The present generation, particularly the students, are passing through a critical stage characterized by confusion, transition, indiscipline and tension. This has posed a serious problem before the behavioural scientists in general and psychologists in particular. India being a country of traditional families, the ordinal position of child catalyses the adjustment of the adolescents. Sailaja and Punia (2005) found that children from single families and first order children would stand their counterparts. Kalyani Devi (2001) stated that self -concept of first born

was higher than that of third born.

Each stage has its own characteristic pattern of growth, behaviour and problems too. Near the beginning of adolescence boys and girls enter the phase of sexual maturity and attain intellectual growth nearly so, and attain intellectual growth nearly so. These developmental changes, along with other factors as such age and birth order, may cause emotional, social, moral and economic difficulties. The objectives are as follows: to study the profile of the selected adolescents, to study the influence of gender on adjustment during adolescence, to study the influence of age on adjustment during adolescence and to study the influence of birth order on adjustment during adolescence.

Hypotheses:

- There would be significant difference in adjustment of adolescent in relation to gender.
- There would be significant difference in adjustment of adolescent in relation to age.
- There would be significant difference in adjustment of adolescent in relation to birth order.

EXPERIMENTAL PROCEDURE

Sample:

The study was conducted on urban area of Aligarh, district of Uttar Pradesh. A sample of 400 adolescents (200 girls and 200 boys), aged 14-17 years studying in XI class, were selected randomly for the study. The multistage stratified random sampling technique was used for the selection of the unit of information. The adolescent were selected from eight schools of Aligarh district.

Tools:

The adjustment inventory was used to assess the adjustment of adolescents.

OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

Data were tabulated, analysed and the results

obtained are presented under the following Tables 1-4.

Results of Table 1 reveal the distribution of adolescent boys and girls according to age and birth order. Out of 400 adolescents according to their age, majority of them (39.00 %) were of 15 years old, followed by 38.50 % of 16 years old and minimum 8.75 % were of 14 years old. Among the respondents girls, majority of them (39.5 %) were of 16 years old, followed by 35.50 % were of 15 years old and minimum (16.5 %) were of 17 years old. Among the boys respondents, majority of them (42.5 %) were of 15 years old, followed by 37.50 % of 16 years old and minimum (11.00 %) were of 17 years old. Out of 400 adolescents according to their birth order, majority of them (35.75%) were second born, followed by 30.00 % were first born and minimum (20.50 %) were third born. Among the girls respondents, majority of them (34.00%) were second born, followed by 29.50 % were first born and minimum (20.50%) were third born. Among the boys respondents, majority of them (37.50 %) were second born, followed by 30.50 were first born and minimum 20.50 % were third born.

Table 2 reveals the mean scores of adjustment among adolescent boys and girls according to sex. Mean scores were as home adjustment (33.81), social adjustment (44.69), health/emotional adjustment (38.30) and school adjustment (36.70). Overall adjustment (151.24) was found to be more among the girl adolescents as compared to boy adolescents (149.22). Statistically significant difference was regarding mean scores of health/emotional adjustment, school adjustment at ($p < 0.01$) and home adjustment at ($p < 0.05$) were observed between boy and girl adolescents. However, insignificant difference regarding mean score of social adjustment and overall adjustments were observed between boy and girl adolescents even at 5 % level of significance.

Table 3 reveals the mean scores of adjustment among adolescent boys and girls according to age. Mean scores were as home adjustment (34.00), social

Table 1: Profile of adolescents according to their gender, age and birth order

Sr. No.	Variables	Adolscents						
		Girls (n = 200)		Boys (n = 200)		Total (n = 400)		
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
1.	Age of adolescents	14 yrs.	17	8.50	18	9.00	35	8.75
		15 yrs.	71	35.50	85	42.50	156	39.00
		16 yrs.	79	39.50	75	37.50	154	38.50
		17 yrs.	33	16.50	22	11.00	55	13.75
2.	Birth order	1 st born	59	29.50	61	30.50	120	30.00
		2 nd born	68	34.00	75	37.50	143	35.75
		3 rd born	41	20.50	41	20.50	82	20.50
		4 th -above	32	16.00	23	11.50	55	13.75

Table 2: Mean scores of adjustment among adolescents according to gender

Adjustment	Sex of adolescents							
	Boys (n = 200)		Girls (n = 200)		Statistical value		Total (n = 400)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	p	Mean	SD
Home adjustment	32.63	5.41	33.81	6.23	2.022	<0.05	33.22	5.86
Social adjustment	43.28	5.23	44.69	5.33	0.776	>0.05	44.49	5.28
Health/emotional adjustment	35.65	7.28	38.30	7.00	3.711	<0.01	36.98	7.27
School adjustment	35.66	5.73	36.70	6.39	3.230	<0.01	34.68	6.15
Total adjustment	149.22	18.11	151.24	22.13	0.999	>0.05	150.23	20.24

Table 3: Mean scores of adjustment among adolescents according to age

Adjustment	Age of adolescents (in years)					
	14 to 15		16 to 17		Statistical value	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	p
Home adjustment	32.36	5.96	34.00	5.66	2.822	<0.01
Social adjustment	44.30	5.68	44.66	4.89	0.681	>0.05
Health/ Emotional adjustment	36.82	7.13	37.12	7.39	0.412	>0.05
School adjustment	34.26	6.19	35.06	6.08	1.303	>0.05
Total adjustment	148.93	21.09	151.42	19.36	1.231	>0.05

adjustment (44.66), health/emotional adjustment (37.12), school adjustment (35.06) and overall adjustment (151.52) were found to be more among 16-17 years adolescents as compared to 15-16 years adolescents. Statistically significant difference regarding mean scores of home adjustment ($p < 0.01$) was observed between 15-16 and 16-17 years adolescents. However insignificant difference regarding mean scores of social, health/emotional, school and overall adjustment were observed between 15-16 and 16-17 years adolescents ($p > 0.05$).

Table 4 reveals the mean scores of adjustment among adolescent boys and girls according to order of birth. Mean scores of regarding home adjustment (33.86), social adjustment (45.18), health/emotional adjustment (37.74) and school adjustment (35.34), overall adjustments (154.24) were found to be more among 3rd and above born adolescents as compared to 1st and 2nd born. Statistically significant difference regarding mean scores of overall adjustment was observed between 1 - 2nd born and 3rd and above adolescents. However, insignificant difference regarding mean scores of home, social, health/emotional and school adjustment were observed between boy and girl adolescents even at 5 % level of significance. Mehta *et al.* (2005) stated that boys first in birth order had more repressive tendency than boys of second birth order. On the contrary, girls second in birth order had more repressive tendency than girls first in birth order.

The results obtained in Table 2 showed that the mean scores of home, social, health/emotional, school and overall adjustment were found to be more among the girl

adolescents as compared to boy adolescents. The adolescents 'girls by nature were homely and less demanding by nature. They felt satisfied in whatever social likes they can manage and being less conscious of their emotional needs, are more tolerant, so they were more adjusted in all areas. On the other hand, boys were likely to find more avenues of satisfaction outside the home. They were more restless, rebellious and have more emotional conflicts and less avenues of emotional satisfaction. Godiyal and Padiyar (2008) found that that the boys and girls differed significantly in their adjustment. Singh (2006) also supported the present study that girls had better home and school adjustment than boys.

The results obtained in Table 3 showed that the mean scores regarding home, social, health/emotional, school and overall adjustment were found to be more among 16-17 years adolescents as compared to 15-16 years adolescents. 16 – 17 years adolescents were more mature physically and socially. They had friendly, positive attitude towards life and cooperative attitudes with other. It was found that they were outgoing, self- dependent, active and adjustable. They were influenced by the media and society. Now, they were aware for their career and had more experience about life. Due to this conception, the difference between 14- 15 years and 16- 17 years' adolescents might have occurred.

The results obtained in Table 4 showed that the mean scores regarding home, social, health/emotional, school and overall adjustments were found to be more among 3rd and above born adolescents as compared to

Table 4: Mean scores of adjustment among adolescents according to order of birth

Adjustment	Order of birth of adolescents				Statistical value	
	1 & 2		3 & above			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	p
Home adjustment	32.89	5.75	33.86	6.02	1.575	>0.05
Social adjustment	44.13	5.29	45.18	5.20	1.895	>0.05
Health/ Emotional adjustment	36.57	7.41	37.74	6.93	1.532	>0.05
School adjustment	34.33	5.87	35.34	6.59	1.565	>0.05
Total adjustment	148.14	17.58	154.24	24.06	2.889	>0.01

1st and 2nd born. The 3rd and above born adolescents were more attached with their parents. Parents gave affection to the youngest one. They had a feeling of sharing their things, cooperation and emotional bond with elders. On the other hand 1st and 2nd born adolescents had a feeling of single child and jealousy with their siblings. They want to fulfill all the desires on their demands. Due to this conception, the difference between adjustment of 1st and 2nd born and 3rd and above born adolescents might have occurred. So, the gender, age and birth order had affected the adjustment of adolescents.

Authors' affiliations:

UMA JOSHI, Department of Home Science, V.M.L.G. PG. College, GHAZIABAD (U.P.) INDIA

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