



An analytical study on the development of social skills

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to know the social skills of high school children. The random sample consisted of 240 high school children (120 boys and 120 girls) studying in class 8, 9 and 10, age ranging from 13 to 15 years drawn from four English medium schools of urban areas in Dharwad city during 2013-2014. Social skills were measured using Social Skills Questionnaire by Spence (1995) and socio-economic status was measured by using socio-economic scale by Aggarwal *et al.* (2005). Results revealed significant association between age and social skills of high school children, where 14 years children had better social skills compared to 13 years and 15 years children. There was no significant association observed between gender and social skills. However, girls scored more compared to boys. A positive relation was found between socio-economic status and social skills.

INTRODUCTION

Skills can be defined as an ability and capacity acquired through deliberate, systematic, and sustained effort to smoothly and adaptively carryout complex activities or job functions involving ideas (cognitive skills), things (technical skills) and/or people (interpersonal skills).

Some children seem to be socially adept from birth, while others struggle with various challenges of social acceptance. Some children make friends easily; others are loners. Some children have self-control, and others have quick tempers. Some are natural leaders, while others are withdrawn. Many aspects of social development seem to be an innate part of a child's temperament, but we also know that the environment

can play an important part in shaping a child's social development. In the last ten years, psychologists have become increasingly aware that social skills can, and should, be taught. Many studies have shown that shy children can become more outgoing, aggressive children can learn self-control, and children who tend to be social isolates can be taught how to make friends. There is no question that children with better social skills have a significant advantage in life. They not only experience the rewards of positive relationships, but they do better in school, have a better self-image, and in general, are much more resilient as they face life's inevitable challenges. Interpersonal skills are important for peer acceptance and social adjustment throughout childhood and adolescence (Masten *et al.*, 2005).

Socialization is a continuous process which makes a beginning through infant attachment, the bonding between infant and primary care giver and which strengthens thereafter. As an adolescent's relationship will multiply and become more intense as new demands and social expectations are made apparent to the adolescent by the peer group. Social skills are not the same thing as behaviour. Rather, they are components of behaviour that help an individual understand and adapt across a variety of social settings. Walker (1983) defines social skills as "a set of competencies that- a) allow an individual to initiate and maintain positive social relationships, b) contribute to peer acceptance and to a satisfactory school adjustment, and c) allow an individual to cope effectively with the larger social environment." Social skill is any skill facilitating interaction and communication with others. Social roles and relations are created, communicated and changed in verbal and non-verbal ways.

Since, social and unsocial patterns of behaviour are mainly established during the formative childhood years, early social experiences largely determine what sort of adults, children will become. The early social experiences are mainly with family members. Thus, home is the seat for learning social skills, only when children have satisfactory social relations with members of the family, they can fully enjoy social relationships with people outside the home develop healthy attitudes towards people and learn to function successfully in their peer group and in society to a large extent. The children living in poor environment cannot develop their potentials and skills to the optimum extent, which have a negative effect on their performance in school and achievements in social life, while children from well to do families show superior cognitive abilities and academic competence. It is, therefore, necessary to study the social behaviour of children in these two different contexts and trace the casual factor into the family with special reference to parenting styles. Social learning theorists have also been concerned with peer relations, arguing that children learn about their social world and how to behave within it through their interactions with peers (Bandura and Walter, 1963). This learning can take place either directly, through children teaching one another concepts and behaviours, or it can take place indirectly, through the child's observation of their peer's behaviours. Research suggests that children will first develop their social

skills with parents, such as when parents provide playmates for children, monitor the child's interactions and use parenting strategies and even play with the child (Ladd and Pettit, 2002). The level of maladjustment and social skills predicts sociometric popularity, which is a significant predictor of bullying involvement (Postigo *et al.*, 2012). According to, Geijsel *et al.* (2012), adolescents in secondary education were found to score higher than the adolescents in primary education on citizenship knowledge. Brendgen *et al.* (2005), found that boys were more physically aggressive and more socially aggressive than girls. Students whose parents vary in their socio-economic status significantly differ in their level of Social Intelligence (Gnanadevan, 2007). To have a better overview on how high school children develop their social skills, the following objectives were undertaken for the study :

- To know the influence of age on social skills of high school children.
- To know the influence of gender on social skills of high school children.
- To know the influence of socio-economic status on social skills of high school children.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Sample :

The sample of the study constituted 240 children from four high schools residing in urban areas and from each school a minimum of 60 students *i.e.*, 20 (10 boys and 10 girls) of age 13 to 15 years studying in class 8, 9 and 10 were selected for the study. The samples were randomly drawn from each class.

Tools :

Self-structured questionnaire :

The self-structured questionnaire was used to elicit general information of the samples. The questionnaire consisted of 23 items to collect information about the subject and family.

Social skills questionnaire :

Social skill questionnaire developed by Spence (1995) is a type of questionnaire used to check the specific behavioural responses during interaction with another person. The tool comprises of 30 questions and has to be answered with sub scores- 1 (not true), 2 (sometimes true) and 3 (mostly true).

Socio-economic scale :

The Socio-economic status was ascertained by using socio-economic status scale by Aggarwal *et al.* (2005). The scale consists of 22 statements which assess education, occupation, monthly per capita income from all sources, family possessions, number of children, number of earning members in family, education of children, domestic servants in home, possession of agricultural land and non-agricultural land along with animals and social status of the family.

OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

Table 1 shows the association between social skills and age. From the table it can be seen that 77.4 per cent of children from 14 years age group had high social skills, followed by 67.5 per cent of 13 years children and then, 60.5 per cent of 15 years children. About 40 per cent of children from 15 years age group had average social skills, followed by 32.4 per cent of 13 years children and 20.2 per cent children from 14 years had average social skills. Only 2.38 per cent of 14 years children had poor social skills and no poor social skills was found in 13 years and

14 years children. There was a significant association found between age and social skills of high school children ($\chi^2=11.56$). The comparison of mean scores showed that children of 14 years (73.21) had better social skills followed by 13 years children (73.16) and 15 years children (71.47). The F-value of 1.47 was not significant. No significant relation was observed ($r=-0.09$). Jacobs *et al.* (2004) who found out that younger adolescent would be more concerned about peers and social standing than older adolescents. However, this result is in contrast with the peer-conformity literature (Leventhal, 1994), who predicted that social self-perceptions would have the greatest impact during early and middle adolescence and slightly less impact during later adolescence

A close view on the Table 2 shows that, 63.3 per cent of boys and 71.7 per cent of girls had high social skills; while 35 per cent of boys and 28.3 per cent of girls had average social skills and 1.7 per cent of boys had poor social skills. No girls had poor social skills. However, Chi-square analysis shows no significant association between boys and girls in social skills ($\chi^2=3.46$). Comparison of 't' score 2.46 revealed no significant

Table 1: Association between age and social skills of high school children

Age	Social skills			Total	Modified χ^2	Mean (SD)	F-value	r
	High	Average	Poor					
13 years	25 (67.6)	12 (32.4)	0 (0.0)	37 (100)	11.56*	73.16 (7.91)	1.47 NS	-0.09
14 years	65 (77.4)	17 (20.2)	2 (2.38)	84 (100)		73.21 (8.73)		
15 years	72 (60.5)	47 (39.5)	0 (0.0)	119 (100)		71.47 (7.01)		
Total	162 (67.5)	76 (31.6)	2 (0.8)	240 (100)		72.34 (7.80)		

* indicate significance of value at $P \leq 0.05$

NS=Non-significant

Table 2 : Association between social skills and gender of high school children

Gender	Social skills			Total	Modified χ^2	Mean (SD)	t value
	High	Average	Poor				
Male	76 (63.3)	42 (35.0)	2 (1.7)	120 (100.0)	3.46	71.12 (8.94)	2.46
Female	86 (71.7)	34 (28.3)	0 (0.0)	120 (100.0)		73.57 (6.27)	
Total	162 (67.5)	76 (31.7)	2 (0.8)	240 (100.0)			

Note: Figure in the parentheses indicates percentage

Table 3: Association between socio-economic status and social skills of high school children (n=240)

SES	Social Skills			Total	Modified χ^2	Mean (SD)	F	r
	High	Average	Poor					
High	76 (78.3)	21 (21.6)	0 (0)	97 (100.0)	10.82*	74.42 (6.74)	7.82***	0.14*
Medium	79 (58.9)	53 (39.5)	2 (1.49)	134 (100.0)		70.63 (8.15)		
Low	7 (77.7)	2 (22.2)	0 (0)	9 (100)		75.44 (7.40)		
Total	162 (67.5)	76 (31.6)	2 (0.8)	240 (100)				

* and *** indicate significance of values at $P \leq 0.05$ and 0.001, respectively

difference between boys and girls on social skills (71.12 and 73.57, respectively). Gender roles are shared expectations of men's and women's attributes and social behaviour, and are internalized early in development. Gnanadevan (2007) in his study found out that boys and girls do not differ significantly in their social intelligence.

An appraisal of Table 3 shows that there was significant association between socio-economic status and social skills of high school children. A glance at the table showed that among the children from high socio-economic status 78.3 per cent had high social skills, 21.6 per cent children with average and no children had poor social skills. Among children from middle socio-economic status, 58.9 per cent had high social skills followed by 39.5 per cent with average social skills and 1.49 per cent children had poor social skills. Among children from low socio-economic status 78 per cent had high social skills followed by 22.2 per cent of children with average social skills and no children had poor social skills. The Chi-square analysis revealed that there was a significant association between socio-economic status and social skills of high school children ($\chi^2=10.82$). Comparison of mean scores reveals that children from low socio-economic status had better social skills compared to the other group (74.42, 70.63 and 75.44, respectively). The F-value of 7.82 was significant. A significant positive relation was observed between socio-economic status and social skills ($r=0.14$). The probable reason may be because children from high socio-economic status get better facilities and more opportunity to enhance their social skills and parents from high socio-economic status are aware of the importance of stimulating environment which has bearing on children's social skills and they can afford it. They have a means to meet the needs of their children, whereas, parents from low socio-economic status may not be able to provide stimulating environment to their children. Similar work related to the present topic was also done by Becker and Tomes (1979); Bourdieu (1972, 1983 and 1986); Coleman (1987;1988 and 1990); Gracia *et al.* (2000); Lochman and Dodge (1998); McFall (1982) and Sinha (1982).

Conclusion :

The result in the study revealed a significant association between age and social skills of high school children, where children of 14 years had better social skills compared to children of 13 years and 15 years.

This may be due to maturity and development. The junior and senior children may experience more tension about their academic work load for which they may not get time for social interactions with their peers. There was no significant association observed between gender and social skills. However, girls scored more compared to boys. The reason may be due to parent cultural and familial expectations from boys and girls exert influencing in moulding the personality of adolescents. A positive relation was found between socio-economic status and social skills. It is generally believed that children from high and middle socio-economic status parents are better exposed to a learning environment at home because of provision and availability of extra learning facilities. It has become well recognized that wealthy and well-educated parents ensure their children's future earning by providing them a favorable learning environment, better education, and good jobs. In contrast to this belief, children from low socio-economic status parents do not have access to extra learning facilities; hence, the opportunity to get to the top of their educational ladder may not be very easy.

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