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UNDERSTANDING TEEN EMOTIONS: HOW SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS INFLUENCE EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN ADOLESCENTS – A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY

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Abstract
Adolescence is a developmental stage that is of critical nature with a fast emotional, cognitive and social development. The capacity to perceive, understand, control, and utilize emotions efficiently is referred to as Emotional Intelligence (EI), which is crucial in psychological wellness and social adaptation of adolescents. The current cross-sectional research is based on the investigation of the current condition of EI and its correlation with the chosen socio-demographic variables among adolescent learners. A purposive sample was used to recruit 268 adolescents, age 10-18 years of ages (Mean=13.23, S.D=1.72) in Bangalore, Karnataka. The questionnaire used to gather data was a socio-demographic questionnaire and an emotional intelligence test. Findings showed that moderate EI was demonstrated by 57.5% of adolescents and high EI was demonstrated by 42.5% of adolescents. The chi-square tests showed that there are no significantly connected to gender, age, family type, and parental education level. Nevertheless, board of study and EI were noted to be statistically significantly correlated with each other. The results of the multiple regression analysis also indicated that the board of study was the most significant predictor of the total EI scores, with a high boundary of 13.1% (R^2 =.131, $F(7, 260) = 5.588$, $p < .001$).All in all, the results indicated that the influential power of the school environment and curriculum context on the emotional intelligence may be higher compared to the role of the factors related to families. The research adds to the deficient empirical data on emotional intelligence in Indian adolescents and presents the necessity of interventions based on emotional development and social-emotional learning in school-specific settings.

Keywords: *emotional intelligence, adolescence, socio-demographic factors, educational board, school environment*

Introduction

The ability to acknowledge, comprehend, manage, and proficiently apply emotions in others and oneself is what defines Emotional Intelligence (EI). It is essential in directing the way the thinkers behave, and interact. Modern theories learn to understand EI as a complex multi-dimensional construct of emotional awareness, emotional management, empathy, and social competence (Mayer et al., 2016). Over the past years, EI has become a growing topic in both educational and psychological studies because it is significantly linked to academic achievement, mental health, and adaptive functioning, specifically in the adolescent stage (MacCann et al., 2020).

Adolescence is a critical developmental stage, which is associated with fast biological, cognitive, and socio-emotional transformations. It is at this stage that people become more emotionally aware, form identity and have self-regulatory skills,

which are core constituents of emotional intelligence (Steinberg, 2017). Adolescent development of emotion and cognition systems has a strong impact on long-term psychosocial readjustment and mental health (Blakemore and Mills, 2014). Therefore, emotional intelligence in adolescence is important to understand in order to enhance emotional well-being and resilience.

Salovey and Mayer (1990) initially defined Emotional Intelligence as a kind of social intelligence, which entails the capability to track personal and other people's feeling, differentiate among them, and utilize the information about emotions to inform thought and behavior. The latter was extended into an ability-based model, which captures an emotional perception, facilitation, understanding, and regulation (Mayer et al., 2016). Goleman (1995) also popularized EI by noting that it is practical and suggesting that the fundamental elements of EI included self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. These models are different in their focus but they all support the significance of emotional competencies to achieve effective functioning.

An increasing amount of empirical evidence indicates that adolescent emotional intelligence correlates with better academic outcomes, strong relations with peers, reduced anxiety and depression, and more adaptive coping styles (Resurrection et al., 2014; Sánchez-Alvarez et al., 2016). According to the recent meta-analytic research, it can be argued that EI is a vital predictor of academic success and psychological health, even when cognitive intelligence and personality factors have been considered (MacCann et al., 2020). These results point to EI as an important non-cognitive asset in the developmental adolescent years.

Socio-demographic factors have been extensively studied as the possible factors that impact the development of emotional intelligence. Gender differences in EI have been widely documented with a number of studies showing that girls are more inclined to score higher on emotional awareness, empathy, and interpersonal sensitivity which may be attributed to sex-specific socialization patterns (Petrides et al., 2018). But new studies also indicate that total gender differences in EI might be small in consideration with the contextual and educational aspects (Joseph and Newman, 2010).

Emotional development in the adolescents has also been associated with family-related issues such as family type and education level of parents. Positive family experiences where there is frequent communication and emotional sensitivity ensures greater emotional regulation and social competence among adolescents (Branje, 2018). Although parental education has been presupposed to improve emotional and cognitive stimulation, recent facts show that its impact on EI could be indirect and conditioned by parenting behaviors instead of educational attainment only (Castillo et al., 2021).

The school climate has a significantly important effect on the development of emotional intelligence in adolescents. It has been observed that educational environments where social-emotional learning (SEL) practices are implemented can enhance the emotional control of students, their empathy, and academic interest (Durlak et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2017). Variations in the structure of the curriculum and assessment practices and co-curricular focus in various educational boards can thus lead to the differences in emotional intelligence. The recent research stresses that the school climate and instructional activities tend to have a more potent effect on the development of EI than the family demographics do exclusively (OECD, 2021).

In spite of the wide scope of international research, there is still significant research gap especially in the Indian context. Several of the available studies consider the individual socio-demographic factors as opposed to evaluating them in combination to determine their overall effects on emotional intelligence. Besides, see research has not paid much attention to Indian adolescents with various educational board, grades, and family backgrounds through the comprehensive analytical framework. Considering the variety of the education system and the social-cultural background of India, there is an urgent necessity to find the integrated studies focusing on the simultaneous investigation of multiple socio-demographic factors.

Thus, the current research is expected to evaluate the level of emotional intelligence among teenage students aged between 10 and 18 years of age and to determine its correlation with the chosen socio-demographic factors such as gender, age, grade, educational board, family type, and parental education. A combination of descriptive and inferential statistical methods that are proposed by the study is believed to allow obtaining a more comprehensive picture regarding the significance of emotional intelligence during adolescence and to guide the creation of specific educational and psychosocial programs.

Rationale for the Study:

The rationale used to conduct this study is the need to develop an evidence-based insight into the concerted effect of different educational and familial factors on the emotional intelligence of adolescents in the Indiana population experiencing a rapid social and educational

change. The results can be used to design emotional development interventions in educational institutions and build more comprehensive policies on education that can foster mental health and emotional well-being by determining which socio-demographic factors have the greatest influence on EI.

Method

Objective

The current research was conducted to be able to grasp the level of emotional intelligence and the related socio-demographic factors in the group of adolescent students.

Study design and Study population

The current research design of the study should be considered a cross-section research design with the use of a survey method to obtain the data among adolescent students between the ages of 10 to 18 years, through the purposive sampling technique. This research was conducted in the months of February 2024 to November 2025 and the sample size of the study was 268 adolescents that were studying in various schools and colleges in a Metropolitan city, Bangalore, Karnataka State, South India. Table 1 contains the mean age of the study participants and other socio demographic information.

Measures and Procedure

Before collecting the information, the head of the institution was contacted and informed properly about the goals of the research, the purpose of the students, and concerning the confidentiality of the personal information. The permission was given to the students only after they got an invitation to take part in the study. In order to have a rapport, one-on-one interactions were carried out with the subjects in their respective schools to collect the data.

The questionnaire booklet that included a Socio-demographic Information Sheet and Emotional Intelligence Test was given to all the adolescent students who were willing to participate in the study and presented with the signed assent form (Sharma, 2011).

The information about the age, gender, level of education, board of study and family type of the participant was elicited using sociodemographic sheet. Emotional Intelligence Test (EIT) is an indigenous scale to measure emotional intelligence that was created by Dr. Ekta Sharma in 2011. The scale has 60 questions divided into five areas of emotional intelligence, which are: Self-knowledge, Emotions management, Self-motivation, Empathy, and Relationship management. Each item is scored on a descending/ascending order that has a range of scores between 5 and 1. In particular, an score of 5 is given to always, 4 to often, 3 to occasionally, 2 to rarely, and 1 to never. In the case of negative items, scoring is reversed, the higher the negative item, the higher the score is, whereas 1 means the always and 5 the never. Within the context of this paper, we have considered total scale score in order to depict the status of EI and its relation with socio-demographic factors of the participants.

Statistics

Data that were collected were analysed using the IBM Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 21. The descriptive analysis (frequency and proportions) was done first to present the status of emotional intelligence. The relationship and the commonality between demographic factors and EI were analyzed through Chi-square and multiple regression analysis among adolescent students.

Results

The principal aim of the research was to examine the status of the EI and its correlation with socio-demographic factors among adolescent students. One hundred and sixty-eight adolescent students had complete data.

Table 1:Socio-demographic characteristics of the study participants (N=268)

Category	Subgroups	N (%)
Gender	Female	136 (50.7)
	Male	132 (49.3)
Stage of Adolescence	Early (10–13)	155 (57.8)
	Late (14–18)	113 (42.2)
Education Level	Primary	130 (51.5)
	High School and PUC	138 (48.5)
Board of Study	CBSE Board	96 (35.8)
	ICSE Board	114 (42.5)
	State Board	58 (21.6)
Family Type	Joint Family	71 (26.5)
	Nuclear Family	197 (73.5)

	Graduation or below	216 (80.6)
Father's qualification	Post-Graduation or above	52 (19.4)
Mother's qualification	Graduation or below	236 (88.1)
	Post-graduation or above	32 (11.9)

The sample consisted of 136 females (50.7%) and 132 males (49.3%). In terms of the stage of adolescence, a majority of the participants were in the early stage (10–13 years) with 155 individuals (57.8%), while 113 participants (42.2%) were in the late stage (14–18 years). The mean age of the participants is 13.23 and the Standard Deviation is 1.72. Regarding education level, participants were nearly evenly split between primary education (130, 51.5%) and high school education (138, 48.5%). The distribution across different boards of study revealed that 96 participants (35.8%) followed the CBSE board, 114 participants (42.5%) followed the ICSE board, and 58 participants (21.6%) followed the state board. Lastly, most participants came from nuclear families (197, 73.5%), with 71 participants (26.5%) from joint families. In terms of parental education, 80.6% of fathers and 88.1% of mothers held qualifications of graduation or below, while 19.4% of fathers and 11.9% of mothers had completed post-graduation or above.

Table 2: Status of EI among adolescent students (N=268)

Emotional Intelligence Category	N	%
Low Emotional Intelligence	-	-
Average Emotional Intelligence	154	57.5%
High Emotional Intelligence	114	42.5%

The distribution of emotional intelligence levels among adolescent students is presented in Table 3. Descriptive analysis indicates that a majority of the participants (57.5%, $n = 154$) demonstrated average levels of emotional intelligence, while 42.5% ($n = 114$) were classified as having high emotional intelligence. Notably, none of the participants fell into the low emotional intelligence category based on the classification criteria employed in the present study.

These findings suggest that emotional intelligence among adolescents in the sample is predominantly at an average level, with a substantial proportion exhibiting high emotional competence. The predominance of average emotional intelligence may reflect the ongoing developmental nature of emotional awareness and regulation during adolescence. Simultaneously, the proportion of students having high emotional intelligence is rather high, which demonstrates that there is the presence of adaptive emotional and social skills in a significant sample.

In general, the findings shed light on adolescence as a developmental phase, which is marked by the development of emotional competencies, and the significance of educational and psychosocial interventions that could reinforce emotional intelligence in this development stage.

Table 3 Association between Demographic Variables and Emotional Intelligence

Variable	Categories	Average EI (N)	High EI(N)	χ^2	df	p
Gender	Female	77	59	0.08	1	.776
	Male	77	55			
Age	Early Adolescence	87	68	0.27	1	.605
	Late Adolescence	67	46			
Grade	High School	87	51	3.63	1	.057
	Primary School	67	63			
Board of Study	CBSE Syllabus	59	37	21.94	2	.01***
	ICSE Syllabus	77	37			
	State Syllabus	18	40			
Type of Family	Joint	45	26	1.38	1	.239
	Nuclear	109	88			
Father's Qualification	Graduation or Below	125	91	0.08	1	.783
	Post-graduation or Above	29	23			
Mother's Qualification	Graduation or below	138	98	0.83	1	.363

Variable	Categories	Average EI (N)	High EI(N)	χ^2	df	p
	Post-graduation or above	16	16			

The chi-square tests were done in order to determine the relationship between chosen demographic factors and the degree of emotional intelligence in students. The findings revealed that emotional intelligence was not significantly related to gender, $\chi^2(1, N = 268) = 0.08$, $p = .776$. There was similar distributions of average and high levels of emotional intelligence between both male and female students.

Similarly, age did not show a significant association with emotional intelligence, $\chi^2(1, N = 268) = 0.27$, $p = .605$, suggesting that emotional intelligence levels were relatively stable across early and late adolescence.

The association between grade and emotional intelligence approached significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 268) = 3.63$, $p = .057$, indicating a possible trend wherein primary-grade students demonstrated relatively higher emotional intelligence compared to high school students; however, this association did not reach conventional levels of statistical significance. A statistically significant association was observed between educational board and emotional intelligence, $\chi^2(2, N = 268) = 21.94$, $p < .001$. Students studying under the State Board showed a higher proportion of high emotional intelligence compared to those from CBSE and ICSE boards, indicating that the type of educational board may play a meaningful role in emotional development. No significant association was found between type of family and emotional intelligence, $\chi^2(1, N = 268) = 1.38$, $p = .239$, suggesting that students from joint and nuclear families did not differ significantly in emotional intelligence levels.

Further, father's educational qualification was not significantly related to emotional intelligence, $\chi^2(1, N = 268) = 0.08$, $p = .783$. Likewise, mother's educational qualification also showed no significant association with emotional intelligence, $\chi^2(1, N = 268) = 0.83$, $p = .363$.Over all it can be understood that the Emotional intelligence did not vary significantly by gender, age, family type, or parental education whereas, Educational board emerged as a significant factor influencing emotional intelligence. Grade showed a near-significant trend, warranting further investigation. Findings indicate that the school environment and curriculum background might prove to be a more dominant factor on emotional intelligence than family backgrounds.

Table 4 Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Total Emotional Intelligence Score

Predictor	B	SE B	B	t	P	95% CI for B
Constant	227.982	6.751	—	33.768	< .001	[214.687, 241.276]
Gender	-1.407	1.914	-0.04	-0.735	.463	[-5.176, 2.362]
Age	0.886	3.301	0.02	0.269	.789	[-5.615, 7.388]
Grade	4.113	3.166	0.08	1.299	.195	[-2.122, 10.348]
Board	-7.536	1.294	-0.36	-5.825	< .001***	[-10.084, -4.989]
Type of Family	-3.169	2.148	-0.09	-1.475	.141	[-7.399, 1.062]
Father's Qualification	-1.127	2.636	-0.03	-0.427	.669	[-6.318, 4.064]
Mother's Qualification	3.549	3.132	0.07	1.133	.258	[-2.618, 9.717]

Model Summary: R = .362, R^2 = .131, Adjusted R^2 = .107, SEest = 15.381
ANOVA:$F(7, 260) = 5.588$, $p < .001$. ***$p < .001$.
Note. Dependent variable = Total Emotional Intelligence Score.

A multiple regression analysis was used to test how much the gender, age, grade, board, type of family, father qualification and mother qualification predict the total emotional intelligence scores. The regression model as a whole was statistically significant, $F(7, 260) = 5.588$, $p<.001$, which means that the model of predictors was a reliable explanation of the variability in emotional intelligence.

The model explained 13.1% of the total emotional intelligence scores ($R^2 = .131$), and the adjusted R^2 of .107, indicating a small amount of explainability after adjusting the number of predictors.

Educational board was only the predictor that proved to be statistically significant in predicting emotional intelligence (B = -7.536, $p<.001$). The negative coefficient shows that the dissimilarity in type of board is connected with the smaller emotional intelligence score, contingent on the

coding scheme applied. The 95% confidence interval of board was not zero but it was less than one which proves this effect is strong.

Other predictors; gender, age, grade, kind of family, father qualification and mother qualification were not statistically significant since their confidence intervals fell within the range of zero meaning that they have no reliable impact on the total scores of emotional intelligence.

Discussion

The main aim of the current research was to investigate the state of emotional intelligence (EI) and its association with some socio-demographic characteristics in adolescent students. The descriptive analysis showed that most of the participants showed average EI score with 57.5%% of the participants having an average score and 42.5% having a low EI score. The above observation is consistent with past studies indicating that adolescence is a developmental stage characterized by inconsistencies in emotional skills (Mavroveli et al, 2007). The moderate levels of EI in teens can be an indication of the continuing development of emotional regulation and interpersonal ability in the teens of this age group (Cole, Martin, and Dennis, 2004).

Through the chi-square test, it was found that gender did not have a significant relationship with EI, implying that there is no significant difference in emotional intelligence between the male and female adolescents. This result corresponds to a few previous researches that have found few gender distinctions in general EI when measured by ability or trait instruments (Andrei et al., 2016; Schutte et al., 2001). Other researchers have however, in some cases recorded gender effects in particular EI aspects (e.g., empathy or social awareness) (Martins et al., 2010), something not necessarily recorded when EI is treated as a global factor.

Equally, age/stage of adolescence failed to reveal any significant correlation with EI and therefore the early and late adolescents in this sample had similar levels of emotional intelligence. Although other studies have found that emotional regulation is increasing at a slow pace across the adolescent years (Zimmermann and Iwanski, 2014), the age-association value is not significant in this study, which could be due to the relatively small period of age or the stabilizing influences of schooling and peer socialization during the early to mid-adolescence years of life.

The trend analysis revealed a slightly significant result of the education level (grade) with primary students exhibiting a slightly large percentage of high EI than the high school students. This trend is not statistically significant, but should be mentioned, as there is some literature regarding the possibility of worsening perceived emotional wellbeing in mid-adolescence, which could be as a result of increased academic and social pressure (Steinberg and Morris, 2001). This is worth more research in longitudinal designs to explain developmental patterns of EI in the levels of schooling.

The type of educational board (CBSE, ICSE and State board) was found to be the most important socio-demographic predictor of EI. The State board students had higher percentage of high EI than the CBSE and ICSE board students. This observation can be a result of varying emphasis in curriculum, pedagogy, or co-curricular activities that facilitate emotional and social learning. The importance of school context and culture in the development of emotional competencies has been emphasized in the studies (CASEL, 2020), and educational settings with a focus on socio-emotional learning may support the development of EI.

There were no significant relations or connections between EI and family type (joint vs. nuclear) or parental educational qualifications. This implies that in this sample, a wider family formation and the level of parental education did not have a quantifiable effect on the emotional intelligence of adolescents. These findings can be understood in the context of studies that indicate that though family emotional climate and parenting styles have a connection with the outcomes of EI (Rahim and Coskun, 2017), that the simplistic classifications of family type or parental qualification might not fully embrace the dynamics involved in the emotional growth of adolescents.

These results were also confirmed by the multiple regression analysis where the total EI scores variance that the overall model worked out was only as high as 13.1 percent and the board of study was the only statistically significant predictor. This aligns with the previous literature which suggests that personality traits, emotional socialization encounters and cognitive abilities are important determinants of EI over and above demographic factors (Mayer et al., 2008; Nelis et al., 2009).

Taken together, the results in this study indicate that emotional intelligence in adolescents can be said to be fairly consistent regardless of some simple demographic factors like gender and age, family type and parental education. Rather, school background, as represented by the board of education, can have a more stringent effect, perhaps by variations in curricular and co-curricular methods of social-emotional learning. The proposed further study should take into account a multi-methodology including the qualitative evaluation of the school climate and the emotional learning processes, which can help to comprehend the role of certain environmental

determinants in the formation of emotional intelligence.

Conclusion and Implications of the findings

The current results have research and practical implications. The rather limited predictive value of socio-demographic factors with respect to research indicates the necessity to examine psychological, interpersonal, and contextual factors of EI during adolescence (e.g., emotional socialization, peer relationships). Educationally, the aspect of school board implies that the design of curriculum and the co-curricular focus on emotional skills might be a good area through which EI can be promoted in students. The schools and policymakers could think of how to incorporate the socio-emotional learning (SEL) programs as part of the systematic settings at the board levels in order to develop holistic students (Durlak et al., 2011).

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