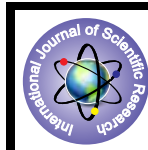


Demographic Factors Contributing to the Psychosocial Competence of Adolescents



Psychology

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ABSTRACT

No matter where one lives in the world, his surroundings, people and events do have some impact on human being. This holds well on adolescents also, who are influenced by their age, sex, order of birth and SES etc. This paper attempts to look into the demographic factors contributing to the psychosocial competence of adolescents. A sample of 220 adolescents studying in IX and X standards was drawn from the high schools of Dharwad city. Along with the demographic sheet, psychosocial competence scale constructed by Dindigal and Aminabhavi was used in the study. The results revealed that out of many demographic factors, number of siblings and SES have emerged as contributing factors to overall psychosocial competence of adolescents. Adolescents having two siblings have lower psychosocial competence and children from upper class have better psychosocial competence.

Demographic Factors Contributing to the Psychosocial Competence of Adolescents

Psychosocial Competence has been defined by WHO (1997) as "person's ability to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life". "It is a person's ability to maintain state of mental well-being and to demonstrate this in adaptive and positive behaviour while interacting with others, in his/her culture and environment." 'Adaptive' means that a person is flexible in approach and is able to adjust in different circumstances. 'Positive behaviour' implies that a person is forward looking and even in difficult situations, can find a ray of hope and opportunities to find solutions. A competency is more than just knowledge and skills. It involves the ability to meet complex demands, by drawing on and mobilising psychosocial resources (including skills and attitudes) in a particular context.

Adolescence is like springtime in one's life. Just as the nature transforms into new by shedding old leaves and blossoming with all fresh leaves and flowers, adolescents too are in the process of transformation wherein they abandon their childish form of behavior, thoughts and emotions in place of more mature forms of behavior and thoughts. Adolescence is a period of transition of becoming brand new individuals. Physically, cognitively, emotionally and psychologically changes take place resulting in a totally different individuals. Adolescents attain physical maturity, establish their own identity and tend to become independent and responsible for their own betterment. However, this transformation is not so easy. Not all adolescents pass through this transitional period without difficulties. This process of transformation doesn't take place all at once. It is a gradual shift involving many important contributions from the significant persons, places, events and institutions. Collectively, these factors are known as socio-demographic factors. Studies have shown empirically that psychosocial competence can be enhanced through life skills training. Dindigal and Aminabhavi(2007) found that joint family has inverse relationship with psychosocial competence of adolescents. However, relatively few studies have attempted to find out the significant contribution of demographic factors like age, gender, SES, number of siblings, birth order, religion and caste on psychosocial competence. Therefore an attempt was made here to find out the significant contribution of demographic factors to the psychosocial competence of adolescents.

Method

Procedure and Participants

Participants for the present study were 220 adolescents (of which 110 were boys and 110 were girls) studying in IX and X standards. The data were collected from Pavan English medium and Saint Joseph Convent schools of Dharwad district, Karnataka, India.

Measures

Psychosocial Competence Scale (2007)

The psychosocial competence scale constructed by Ajitha Dindigal and Dr. Vijayalaxmi Aminabhavi(2007) was used in this study. This scale consists of 100 items, focusing on 10 different life skills, such as, 1) problem solving, 2) decision making, 3) critical thinking, 4) empathy, 5) self-awareness, 6) coping with emotions, 7) coping with stress, 8) interpersonal relations and 10) effective communication. This is a Likert type scale having 5 response categories. There are 75 positively keyed items and 25 negatively keyed items. The positively keyed items are assigned scores from 1 to 5 whereas the negative items are scored in reverse order that is, 5 to 1. Therefore the lower score indicates higher competence and vice versa. The authors have reported that the scale as a whole has split-half reliability coefficient by Cronbach alpha = 0.88, Spearman-Brown coefficient = 0.71 and Guttman's split-half coefficient = 0.71 ($p < 0.001$). Similarly the concurrent validity of all subscales ranges from 0.38-0.76 ($p < 0.001$).

In addition to this scale, demographic information is sought through a separate sheet containing information regarding age, gender, order of birth, number of siblings, parents' education, occupation and income, religion, caste etc.

Data Collection

The investigators collected the data by taking the consent from the concerned school authorities and administered the psychosocial competence scale and responses were obtained. Demographic information was collected at the same time.

Data Analysis

SPSS version 17 was used to analyze the collected data. Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis was applied to know the significance of the contribution of the demographic factors to the psychosocial competence of adolescents.

Results and Discussion

It may be observed from Table 1 that out of many demographic factors some factors such as number of siblings, SES, order of birth, age, gender, religion and caste have found to be significantly contributing to various dimensions of psychosocial competence and also overall psychosocial competence. Having two and one siblings have collectively contributed to 5.4% of the variance for problem solving dimension of psychosocial competence which is highly significant ($F = 5.33$; $p < 0.01$). Further, individually 1.9% and 1.9% of variance on problem

Table No. 1: Results of Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis of the factors contributing to the psychosocial competence of adolescents (N=220, 110girls and 110 boys)

Sl.No.	Dimensions of Psychosocial Competence	Contributing Variables	Beta Coefficients	Standard Error	Contributed R ²	F-value	t- value
1	Problem Solving	Sibling 2	5.96	1.83	.02	5.33**	3.25**
		Sibling 1	3.98	1.72	.02		2.31*
2	Decision Making	Siblings_2	4.51	1.41	.04	10.21**	3.20**
3	Critical Thinking	Age-16	-6.25	2.23	0.19	5.20**	-2.80**
		Middle Born	3.91	1.74	0.17		2.25*
4	Creative Thinking	First Born	-4.15	1.31	.04	6.10**	-3.17**
		Upper Class	-6.21	2.16	.02		-2.87**
		Upper- Middle class	-2.89	1.45	.01		-1.98*
5	Self-Awareness	Lower upper class	14.05	5.72	.02	4.94**	2.46*
		Lingayat	2.75	1.33	.02		2.07*
6	Coping with Emotions	Age-16	4.54	2.19	.02	4.30*	2.07*
7	Coping with Stress	Christian	10.95	3.58	.03	6.75**	3.06**
		Male	3.47	1.34	.03		2.59*
8	Effective Communication	Siblings-2	3.17	1.43	.02	4.91*	2.22*
9	Overall Psychosocial Competence	Siblings-2	4.03	1.42	.02	5.69**	2.83**
		Upper Class	-4.40	2.00	.02		-2.20*

Note: As lower score indicates higher competence, negative sign indicates better competence and vice versa

solving can be predicted on the basis of having two and one siblings respectively. More specifically, adolescents having two siblings and one sibling have significantly lower problem solving compared to adolescents having no siblings and more than two siblings. Thus it can be inferred from the above facts that the contribution of having two and one siblings is highly significant and just significant but negative (t=3.25; p<0.01, and t=2.31; p<0.05 respectively) showing that adolescents having one and two siblings have significantly lower problem solving compared to adolescents having no siblings and more than two siblings.

Number of siblings has contributed 4.0% of the variance for decision making component of psychosocial competence which is highly significant (F=10.21; p<0.01). 4% of the variance on decision making can be predicted on the basis of number of siblings. Adolescents having two siblings are having low decision making compared to their counterparts. The contribution of having two siblings is highly significant (t=3.20; p<0.01) but negative. This may be due to the fact that compared to having no siblings and one sibling, these adolescents with two siblings may develop dependency and make them less responsible leading to lower decision making.

Further, age and order of birth have emerged as significantly contributing factors to critical thinking dimension of psychosocial competence. These variables have collectively contributed to 5.6% of the total variance on critical thinking which is highly significant (F=5.20; p<0.01). Individually 1.9% and 1.8% of the variance on critical thinking can be predicted on the basis of age and birth order respectively. More precisely, the contribution of age-16 is significantly high (t=-2.80; p<0.01) and the contribution of middle born is just significant (t=2.25; p<0.05). Thus, adolescents belonging to age 16 have better critical thinking to their counterparts (who are 14 and 15 years old) whereas middle born adolescents have low critical thinking compared to first and last born children.

Results also reveal that factors like order of birth, and SES have emerged as contributing factors to creative thinking component of psychosocial competence. These variables have collectively contributed to 15.4% of the total variance on creative thinking which is highly significant (F=6.10; p<0.01). Individually 3.6%, 1.7% and 1.2% of the variance on creative thinking can be pre-

dicted on the basis of first born, upper class and upper-middle class respectively. The contribution of first born and upper class are highly significant (t=-3.17 and -2.87; p<0.01 respectively), and the contribution of upper-middle class is just significant (t=-1.98; p<0.05).

Thus it can be inferred from the above facts that first born children have better creative thinking compared to their counterparts. Findings from the study by Eisenman (1992) partially support the present finding that first-borns are more fearful, and that some first-borns show more anxiety and creativity. Similarly adolescents from upper and upper-middle class also have shown better creative thinking compared to the children coming from middle and lower middle class.

Further, SES and caste have emerged as contributing factors to self-awareness dimension of psychosocial competence. These variables have collectively contributed to 3.5% variance on self-awareness component of psychosocial competence which is highly significant (F=4.94; p<0.01). Individually 2.0% and 1.5% of variance can be attributed to SES and caste respectively. The contribution of lower upper class and Lingayat caste are just significant and negative (t=2.46& 2.07; p<0.05 respectively). Thus it is evident that adolescents belonging to lower-upper class and Lingayat caste have significantly low self-awareness compared to children from other classes and other castes.

Age has come out as contributing factor to coping with emotions. 1.5% of the variance can be predicted on the basis of age which is just significant (F=4.30; p<0.05). Further the contribution of age is just significant and negative (t=2.07; p<0.05). Thus it is revealed that children belonging to age 16 group are low in coping with emotions compared to 14 and 15 years old children. Since they are about to finish their high school the expectations and pressures on them are considerably more compared to their counterparts.

Religion and gender have emerged as contributing factors to coping with stress component of psychosocial competence. These two variables collectively contribute to 5.0% of the total variance on coping with stress which is significantly high (F=6.75; p<0.01). Individually, 2.5% and 2.5% of the variance can be attributed to religion and gender respectively. More precisely,

adolescents who are Christians have significantly lower coping with stress ($t=3.06$; $p<0.01$) and boys too have significantly low coping with stress ($F=2.59$; $p<0.05$).

Number of siblings has come out to be the contributing factor for effective communication. 1.8% of the variance on effective communication can be predicted on the basis of number of siblings, which is just significant ($F=4.91$; $p<0.05$). Adolescents having two siblings have significantly low effective communication ($t=2.22$; $p<0.05$) compared to children having no siblings and more than two siblings.

Finally, number of siblings and SES have emerged as contributing factors to overall psychosocial competence of adolescents. These variables collectively contribute to 4.1% of the variance which is highly significant ($F=5.69$; $p<0.01$). Individually, 2.4% and 1.7% of variance can be attributed to number of siblings and SES respectively. Thus it is clear from the results that adolescents having two siblings have significantly low overall psychosocial competence ($t=2.83$; $p<0.01$) and children belonging to upper class ($t=2.20$; $p<0.05$) have significantly better overall psychosocial competence.

CONCLUSION

Social context plays a very important role in overall development of individuals. The findings of the study show empirically that demographic factors have significantly contributed to the psychosocial competence of adolescents. Particularly, variables such as number of siblings and SES have emerged as significant contributing factors to many dimensions as well as overall psychosocial competence. Apart from these two, age, order of birth, gender, caste and religion are the other factors contributing to various life skills individually.

Main limitations of the study are use of exclusively urban sample who are in the age group of 14-16, and lack of representation of the children from lower socioeconomic status group, which can be taken care of in future research. The study has important implications for educators, policy makers, parents etc.

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