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An Exploratory Study on Relationship of Social-Emotional Learning with Aggression among Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

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Adolescence is a phase of transitions in all the domains of development namely, cognitive, physical, social and emotional. Due to all these changes, adolescents may face many difficulties which create discrepancies in their lives. All these discrepancies have an effect on their learning and well-being but with the amalgamation of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies, negative behaviours like aggression may be prevented or reduced. Therefore, the present study was designed to study the relationship of social-emotional learning with aggression among adolescents. A sample of 500 school going adolescents in the age range of 13-14 years from various government schools of Ludhiana city of Punjab participated in the study. Social Emotional Competence Questionnaire (SECQ) developed by Zhou and Ee (2012) and Aggression Inventory adapted by Sultania (2006) were used to assess social-emotional learning and aggression among adolescents in the present study. The results of the study illustrated that adolescents living in joint families significantly possessed more social-emotional learning competencies while adolescents from nuclear families were significantly more aggressive. Furthermore, correlation analysis emphasized that overall social-emotional learning had significant negative relationship with overall aggression in joint families whereas in nuclear families, overall social-emotional learning was found to have non-significant negative relationship with overall aggression.

Introduction

Adolescents have immense vigor in them, which they sometimes articulate in the form of aggression (Kumar *et al.*, 2016). Aggression is an external behaviour that involves at least two people with intends to harm another person (Bushman & Huesmann 2010). Several longitudinal researches that were carried out unveiled and proved that social-emotional

competencies were associated with lessening of numerous problem behaviours including aggression (CASEL 2015; Farrell *et al.*, 2001). SEL programs when well implemented linked to reduce the level of aggression (Osher *et al.*, 2016).

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) includes the competencies necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and attain positive

goals, develop care and concern for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, handle challenging situations capably and make responsible decisions (CASEL 2012).

These competencies are incredibly essential for adolescents to incorporate in their day-to-day activities.

Amadi *et al.*, (2015) conducted a study to investigate influence of demographic factors on aggressive behavior among secondary school adolescents. Findings of the study revealed that there was a difference between nuclear and joint family on aggressive behaviour among secondary school adolescents. Adolescents in joint families were less aggressive than adolescents in nuclear families as in nuclear family; there was absence of parental warmth and frequent parental attempts at rigidly controlling the child's behavior. On the contrary, a research conducted by Chaudhary and Shabbir (2018) found that adolescents living in joint family system had slightly high rates of displaying aggressive behaviour as compared to adolescents living in nuclear family system.

The outcomes of three large-scale reviews of research on the impact of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) programmes on middle-school student were summarized by Payton *et al.*, (2008). The review studies incorporated 317 studies and engaged 324,303 students. The finding of the study indicated that SEL programs implemented by school staff members improved student's behaviour.

The results from the review also demonstrated that students who participated in SEL programs had fewer conduct problems and developed pro-social attitudes toward aggression. Therefore, the present study aims to study the relationship of social-emotional learning with aggression among adolescents belonging to joint and nuclear families.

Materials and Methods

The sample for this study consisted of 500 adolescents in the age range of 13-14 years. An attempt was made to distribute the sample evenly as per their family structure (i.e. 250 nuclear families and 250 joint families). The sample for the present study was drawn from eight government schools of Ludhiana city of Punjab. As per the outlook of research design, a list of all the government schools of Ludhiana city was obtained from the official website of the District Education Office. From that list, schools were randomly selected in order to fulfill the criteria of 500 respondents.

To facilitate data collection, the researcher personally visited the schools and contacted the Principals of the selected schools for their permission to gather information from the respondents. The adolescents from 7th and 8th grades were approached by contacting the class teachers of the respective classes.

Before administrating different scales, the respondents were informed about the importance of the present study. The respondents were well-versed that they could withdraw at any phase of the research process and the information given by them would only be used for research work. After acquiring their expression of interest and willingness to take part in the study, the questionnaires were provided to respondents. The respondents were provided with essential instructions before filling responses and instructions were repeated for each and every scale. They were asked to respond to the statements of the questionnaires honestly and generously.

Social Emotional Competence Questionnaire (SECQ) developed by Zhou and Ee (2012) was used to assess social-emotional learning among adolescents and Aggression Inventory adapted by Sultania (2006), originally constructed by Buss and Durkee (1957) was

administered to assess aggression among adolescents. The data was analyzed using appropriate statistical methods.

Results and Discussion

Comparison of social-emotional learning of adolescents as per their family structure

Data presented in table 1 predicts mean difference across different dimensions of social-emotional learning of adolescents in relation to family structure. It was evident from the data that significant differences were observed with regards to family structure of adolescents in the mean scores for all the dimensions of social-emotional learning viz. self-awareness (2.30; $p < 0.05$), social awareness (3.41; $p < 0.01$), self-management (2.00; $p < 0.05$), relationship management (2.55; $p < 0.05$) and responsible decision making (2.60; $p < 0.01$).

Further, the results indicated that in all the five mentioned dimensions of social-emotional learning, adolescents from joint families had better mean scores than adolescents from nuclear families.

Accordingly, the findings of the research indicates that adolescents living in joint families were more capable in identifying and managing their emotions, thoughts, different perspectives of people, healthy relationships and making constructive decisions when compared with adolescents living in nuclear families. These finding of self-awareness and relationship management are consistent with the study of Ahangar and Khan (2017) who suggested that adolescents living in joint families had significantly better ability to manage, identify and label emotions and also, adolescents living in joint families were better in analyzing and understanding relationships as compared to adolescents living in nuclear families.

Moreover, overall analysis of social-emotional learning revealed that adolescents from joint families significantly possessed more social-emotional learning competencies (2.69; $p < 0.01$) as compared to their counterparts. The findings of the study go along with that of Buchanan and Flouri (2008) who claimed that adolescents, who spend time with their grandparents, are in general socially and emotionally better than those who do not spend time with their grandparents.

Assessment of aggression among adolescents as per their family structure

The depiction of data in the table 2 highlights frequency distribution of adolescents across various dimensions of aggression with respect to family type. It was illustrated that assault dimension and irritability dimension of aggression with regards to family structure differ significantly at low level wherein significantly more number of adolescents from joint families in both assault dimension (2.37; $p < 0.05$) and irritability dimension (2.02; $p < 0.05$) signified this level as compared to their counterparts. Further, non-significant difference was observed at medium level of both assault (43.60%) and irritability (60.80%) dimensions of aggression wherein adolescents from nuclear families outweighed adolescent living in joint families. Furthermore, at high level, non-significant difference was noted wherein in assault dimension, more number of adolescents from nuclear families (43.20%) and in irritability dimension, an equal proportion of adolescents (23.20%) with respect to family structure were observed.

The dimension of indirect aggression with reference to family structure reflected significant differences at medium and high level wherein significantly majority of the adolescents from joint families (3.40; $p < 0.01$) were at medium level, whereas significantly more number of adolescents from nuclear

families (4.00; $p<0.01$) were at high level when compared with their counterparts. A slightly more number of adolescents from joint families (12.00%) were found at low level as compared to adolescents from nuclear families but the difference was observed to be non-significant.

A surprising analysis of negativism dimension of aggression with respect to family structure highlighted non-significant differences at all the levels wherein at medium level (56.00%) and at low level (17.60%) adolescents from joint families and at high level, adolescents from nuclear families (32.00%) outnumbered when compared with their counterparts.

In the verbal aggression and resentment dimensions of aggression, significant differences were observed at all the levels with reference to family structure. It was reflected that significantly higher percentage of adolescents from joint families were found to be at low level of verbal aggression (2.72; $p<0.01$) and resentment (3.90; $p<0.01$) when compared with their counterparts. Further, at medium level, higher proportion of adolescents from joint families (3.13; $p<0.01$) signified this level of verbal aggression, whereas for resentment dimension, more number of adolescents from nuclear families (4.94; $p<0.01$) represented this level. The data on verbal aggression indicated that significantly more percentage of adolescents from nuclear families (5.81; $p<0.01$) were at high level whereas in resentment dimension, higher proportion of adolescents from joint families (2.49; $p<0.05$) signified this level.

The pattern of data presented for guilt dimension of aggression noticed significant differences with respect to family structure at low and medium level wherein at low level, more proportion of adolescents from joint families (3.18; $p<0.01$) and at medium level, higher percentage of adolescents from nuclear

families (2.96; $p<0.01$) represented these levels as compared to their counterparts. Further, it was seen that more number of adolescents from joint families (36.00%) were at high level but the difference was found to be non-significant.

On the suspicion dimension of aggression and overall aggression, significant differences with regards to family structure were noted at low and high level wherein at low level, higher proportion of adolescents from joint families in both suspicion dimension (4.96; $p<0.01$) and overall aggression (3.05; $p<0.01$) whereas at high level, more percentage of adolescents from nuclear families in both suspicion dimension (2.62; $p<0.01$) and overall aggression (2.70; $p<0.01$) were observed as compared to their counterparts. However, non-significant difference was observed at medium level of both suspicion dimension and overall aggression but the findings indicated that adolescents from nuclear families (26.00%) in suspicion dimension whereas adolescents from joint families (47.60%) in overall aggression outnumbered when compared with their counterparts.

Comparison of aggression among adolescents as per their family structure

Data furnished in table 3 represents the mean difference across different dimensions of aggression among adolescents with reference to family structure. The data as per family structure revealed significant differences in the mean scores of assault (4.92; $p<0.01$), indirect aggression (2.23; $p<0.05$), irritability (2.37; $p<0.05$), suspicion (4.30; $p<0.01$), verbal aggression (3.82; $p<0.01$) and resentment (2.30; $p<0.05$) wherein mean scores predicted that adolescents from nuclear families were more inclined to the above mentioned dimensions of aggression when compared with their counterparts. Thus, it could be deduced from the findings that

adolescents from nuclear families were more physically, indirectly and verbally aggressive, irritable, suspicious and resentful.

Although, non-significant differences were found under negativism and guilt dimensions of aggression, but the mean score pattern indicated that adolescents from nuclear families in both negativism dimension (mean=2.92) and guilt dimension (mean=5.71) had more mean scores than those from joint families. Thus, these findings suggest that adolescents from nuclear families were more likely to refuse to act in accordance with authority and had feeling of guilt following aggressive act.

Moreover, significant difference in the mean score was observed in case of overall aggression (3.62; $p < 0.01$) wherein adolescents from nuclear families had more mean score (mean= 40.11) as compared to adolescents residing in joint families which pointed out that adolescents residing in nuclear families were more aggressive than adolescents living in joint families. This is because in nuclear families, arguments and differing opinions of parents leads to disputes which effects the psychological well-being of adolescents which

results in adolescents exhibiting aggressive behaviour. While in joint families, adolescents learn social virtues like affection, friendliness, sacrifice, selflessness, cooperation and teamwork and learn fundamentals of communication necessary for joyfully living in a society. The result of the study coincides with those reported by Garg *et al.*, (2018), who claimed that adolescents living in nuclear families had a higher score for aggression than adolescents residing in joint families.

Correlation between different dimensions of social-emotional learning and aggression among adolescents as per their family structure

The illustration of data in the table 4 represents the correlation analysis between different dimensions of social-emotional learning and various dimensions of aggression among adolescents with regards to family structure. The analysis of data depicted that adolescents from joint families had significant negative correlation of self-awareness dimension with five dimensions of aggression namely, assault ($r = -0.21$; $p < 0.01$), indirect aggression ($r = -0.14$; $p < 0.05$), irritability ($r = -0.21$; $p < 0.01$), verbal aggression ($r = -0.24$; $p < 0.01$) and resentment ($r = -0.17$; $p < 0.01$).

Table.1 Comparative mean scores (\pm SD) of the adolescents as per their family structure across different dimensions of social-emotional learning

Dimensions of Social-Emotional Learning	Joint Families ($n_1 = 250$)		Nuclear Families ($n_2 = 250$)		t-value
	Mean	\pm SD	Mean	\pm SD	
Self-Awareness	16.83	7.66	15.29	7.29	2.30*
Social Awareness	15.84	4.38	14.33	5.45	3.41**
Self-Management	14.30	6.89	13.07	6.86	2.00*
Relationship Management	15.24	7.50	13.53	7.45	2.55*
Responsible Decision Making	14.33	7.50	12.55	7.78	2.60**
Overall Social-Emotional Learning	76.74	29.34	69.44	31.21	2.69**

Note: *Significant at 5% level, **Significant at 1% level

Table.2 Per cent distribution of the adolescents as per their family structure across different dimensions of aggression

Dimensions of Aggression	Levels	Joint Families (n ₁ = 250)		Nuclear Families (n ₂ = 250)		Z-value
		<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	
Assault	Low	53	21.20	33	13.20	2.37*
	Medium	107	42.80	109	43.60	0.18
	High	90	36.00	108	43.20	1.64
Indirect Aggression	Low	30	12.00	29	11.60	0.13
	Medium	184	73.60	148	59.20	3.40**
	High	36	14.40	73	29.20	4.00**
Irritability	Low	58	23.20	40	16.00	2.02*
	Medium	134	53.60	152	60.80	1.62
	High	58	23.20	58	23.20	0.00
Negativism	Low	44	17.60	34	13.60	1.23
	Medium	140	56.00	136	54.40	0.36
	High	66	26.40	80	32.00	1.37
Suspicion	Low	41	16.40	8	3.20	4.96**
	Medium	60	24.00	65	26.00	0.51
	High	149	59.60	177	70.80	2.62**
Verbal Aggression	Low	66	26.40	41	16.40	2.72**
	Medium	137	54.80	102	40.80	3.13**
	High	47	18.80	107	42.80	5.81**
Guilt	Low	41	16.40	18	7.20	3.18**
	Medium	119	47.60	152	60.80	2.96**
	High	90	36.00	80	32.00	0.94
Resentment	Low	46	18.40	17	6.80	3.90**
	Medium	111	44.40	166	66.40	4.94**
	High	93	37.20	67	26.80	2.49*
Overall Aggression	Low	37	14.80	16	6.40	3.05**
	Medium	119	47.60	110	44.00	0.80
	High	94	37.60	124	49.60	2.70**

Note: *Significant at 5% level, **Significant at 1% level

Table.3 Comparative mean scores (\pm SD) of the adolescents as per their family structure across different dimensions of aggression

Dimensions of Aggression	Joint Families (n ₁ = 250)		Nuclear Families (n ₂ = 250)		t-value
	Mean	\pm SD	Mean	\pm SD	
Assault	5.47	2.25	6.52	2.51	4.92**
Indirect Aggression	4.29	1.44	4.62	1.84	2.23*
Irritability	4.10	1.89	4.50	1.88	2.37*
Negativism	2.85	1.22	2.92	1.26	0.63
Suspicion	5.20	1.94	5.90	1.69	4.30**
Verbal Aggression	4.76	2.02	5.47	2.13	3.82**
Guilt	5.50	1.99	5.71	1.53	1.32
Resentment	4.18	2.06	4.58	1.81	2.30*
Overall Aggression	36.36	11.92	40.11	11.21	3.62**

Note: *Significant at 5% level, **Significant at 1% level

Table.4 Correlation between different dimensions of social-emotional learning and aggression among adolescents as per their family structure

Dimensions of Aggression	Joint Families (n ₁ = 250)						Nuclear Families (n ₂ = 250)					
	SA (r)	SoA (r)	SM (r)	RM (r)	RDM (r)	Overall SEL (r)	SA (r)	SoA (r)	SM (r)	RM (r)	RDM (r)	Overall SEL (r)
Assault	-0.21**	-0.06	-0.22**	-0.15*	-0.14*	-0.20**	-0.09	0.01	0.006	0.00	0.05	-0.01
Indirect Aggression	-0.14*	-0.05	-0.11	-0.10	-0.08	-0.12	-0.12	-0.10	-0.10	-0.10	-0.12	-0.12*
Irritability	-0.21**	-0.05	-0.26**	-0.18**	-0.18**	-0.22**	-0.19**	-	-	-	-0.11	-0.18**
Negativism	-0.11	-0.00	-0.01	0.01	0.01	-0.03	-0.07	-0.05	-0.05	-0.07	-0.09	-0.08
Suspicion	-0.12	-0.05	-0.16*	-0.14*	-0.17**	-0.16*	-0.06	-0.05	-0.03	-0.05	-0.06	-0.06
Verbal Aggression	-0.24**	-0.09	-0.22**	-0.17**	-0.16**	-0.22**	-0.18**	-0.12	-0.10	-0.08	-0.07	-0.13*
Guilt	-0.05	-0.007	-0.09	-0.05	-0.09	-0.08	-0.01	0.01	0.03	0.03	0.00	0.01
Resentment	-0.17**	-0.02	-0.13*	-0.09	-0.09	-0.13*	-0.17**	-0.13*	-0.11	-0.11	-0.09	-0.14*
Overall Aggression	-0.20**	-0.06	-0.21**	-0.15*	-0.16**	-0.20**	-0.15*	-0.09	-0.08	-0.08	-0.07	-0.12

Note: *Significant at 5% level, **Significant at 1% level; r= correlation coefficient; SA= Self-Awareness; SoA= Social Awareness; SM= Self-Management; RM= Relationship Management; RDM= Responsible Decision Making; SEL= Social-Emotional Learning

Thus, it could be inferred that when adolescents from joint families were self-aware then, they were less likely to display physical, indirect and verbal aggression, irritability, and resentment. However, social awareness dimension was identified as having no relationship with any of the dimension of aggression.

Further examination of data pointed out that self-management dimension had significant negative association with assault ($r = -0.22$; $p < 0.01$), irritability ($r = -0.26$; $p < 0.01$), suspicion ($r = -0.16$; $p < 0.05$), verbal aggression ($r = -0.22$; $p < 0.01$) and resentment ($r = -0.13$; $p < 0.05$). Similarly, overall social-emotional learning was significantly negatively associated with assault ($r = -0.20$; $p < 0.01$), irritability ($r = -0.22$; $p < 0.01$), suspicion ($r = -0.16$; $p < 0.05$), verbal aggression ($r = -0.22$; $p < 0.01$) and resentment ($r = -0.13$; $p < 0.05$).

Therefore, these findings suggest that adolescents from joint families, who were competent in managing their emotions and thoughts as well as possessed good social-emotional learning competencies, were less apt to be physically and verbally aggressive, irritable, suspicious and resentful.

Further, the data illustrated that relationship management had a significant negative correlation with assault ($r = -0.15$; $p < 0.05$), irritability ($r = -0.18$; $p < 0.01$), suspicion ($r = -0.14$; $p < 0.05$) and verbal aggression ($r = -0.17$; $p < 0.01$) dimensions of aggression. A parallel trend was noticed wherein responsible decision making was found to be significantly negatively associated with assault ($r = -0.14$; $p < 0.05$), irritability ($r = -0.18$; $p < 0.01$), suspicion ($r = -0.17$; $p < 0.01$) and verbal aggression ($r = -0.16$; $p < 0.01$). So, it could be deduced that when adolescents living in joint families become competent in handling relationships with people and become responsible in making constructive decisions

then, they were perceived to be less physically and verbally aggressive, irritable and suspicious.

Also, overall social-emotional learning ($r = -0.16$; $p < 0.01$) as well as its four dimensions viz. self-awareness ($r = -0.20$; $p < 0.01$), self-management ($r = -0.21$; $p < 0.01$), relationship management ($r = -0.15$; $p < 0.05$) and responsible decision making ($r = -0.16$; $p < 0.01$) were significantly negatively correlated with overall aggression.

Hence, these findings in broad-spectrum suggest that adolescents residing in joint families, who had a fine awareness and management of themselves, relationship with people, responsible decisions and had good social-emotional learning competencies, were less likely to exhibit behaviours that are intended to harm another person in a direct or indirect manner.

The interpretation of data among adolescents from nuclear families revealed that self-awareness was significantly negatively correlated with irritability ($r = -0.19$; $p < 0.01$), verbal aggression ($r = -0.18$; $p < 0.01$) and resentment ($r = -0.17$; $p < 0.01$). So, it could be inferred that adolescents living in nuclear families, who were self-aware, were apt to be less irritable, verbally aggressive and resentful. Social awareness dimension of social-emotional learning had significant negative relationship with irritability ($r = -0.16$; $p < 0.01$) and resentment ($r = -0.13$; $p < 0.05$) dimensions of aggression. Thus, this implies that when adolescents residing in nuclear families were socially aware then, they were likely to be less irritable and resentful.

The further analysis of data reflected that self-management ($r = -0.15$; $p < 0.05$) and relationship management ($r = -0.15$; $p < 0.05$) were significantly negatively related with irritability dimension of aggression. Therefore, these findings indicate that adolescents living

in nuclear families, who were able to manage their thoughts, emotions and relations with people, had a tendency to be less irritable. However, the data revealed non-significant association of responsible decision making with all the dimensions of aggression.

A significant negative correlation was found between overall social-emotional learning and four dimensions of aggression viz. indirect aggression ($r = -0.12$; $p < 0.05$), irritability ($r = -0.18$; $p < 0.01$), verbal aggression ($r = -0.13$; $p < 0.05$) and resentment ($r = -0.14$; $p < 0.05$). Thus, this suggests that adolescents from nuclear families, who possessed good social-emotional learning competencies, were less indirectly and verbally aggressive, irritable and resentful.

Further, the data indicated that self-awareness dimension had significant negative correlation with overall aggression ($r = -0.15$; $p < 0.05$). Hence, it could be deduced that adolescents belonging to nuclear families, who were self-aware, were likely to be less aggressive.

It is apparent from the findings of the present study that adolescents living in joint families significantly possessed more social-emotional learning competencies as compared to adolescents from nuclear families. Further, significantly more number of adolescents from nuclear families were noted to be at high level of aggression stating that adolescents from nuclear families were significantly more aggressive. Moreover, correlation analysis illustrated that overall social-emotional learning had significant negative relationship with overall aggression in joint families whereas in nuclear families, overall social-emotional learning was found to have non-significant negative relationship with overall aggression. Thus, this suggests that when adolescents possessed good social-emotional learning competencies then, they were likely to be less aggressive which is significantly

observed in adolescents living in joint families. Thus, these findings highlights that in joint families, more people are present whom adolescents observe, learn and imitate resulting in developing intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, and decision making skills that are practical with support of family members. Also, joint families have concept of 'we' instead of 'me' thus, there are less disputes at home among family members. Moreover, elders in the family observe the undesirable and antisocial tendencies of adolescents resulting in adolescents displaying less aggressive behaviour.

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