

CHILD FACTORS: PREDICTORS OF SOCIAL MATURITY

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ABSTRACT

The present investigation was carried out to assess degree of association between social maturity and child factors explicitly age, gender, ordinal position, sibling status, perceived health status, school change and the perceived friendship ties on primary school children with age range of 10-12 years (N=300) of urban (50%) and rural (50%) localities of Dharwad Taluk, Karnataka. General information schedule was used to collect mentioned child factors. A differential research design was employed to compare variation between the independent variables and social maturity. Social Maturity Scale (Rao, 1971) was used to assess the level of social maturity. Results revealed that majority of children from urban and rural locality were found to be slightly socially competent. None of the children were found to be totally mature or immature in social context. Child factors such as child's age, gender, ordinal positions, sibling status and perceived health were found to be significant predictors of social maturity among study samples.

KEYWORDS: Ordinal Position, Sibling Status, Perceived Health, Perceived Friendship Ties

INTRODUCTION

Man is a social animal and his existence without social set up can hardly be imagined. Parents, family members, neighbors, peer groups, society and human himself/herself has influence on social competence of each human beings. Every individual expect behave in a socially acceptable manner and to learn the ways to interact with them. This ability to function in an appropriately responsible manner while understanding the social rules and norms in place in a given culture and the ability to use that knowledge effectively is known as 'social maturity'.

Raj (2000) defines social maturity as a level of social skills and awareness that an individual has achieved relative to particular norms related to an age group. It is a measure of the development competence of an individual with regard to interpersonal relations, behavior appropriateness, social problem solving and judgment. Social maturity encompasses attainments in several domains including independent functioning, effective interpersonal communication, interaction and responsibility. The maturity develops not only in the physical, mental and emotional behavior but also in social behavior. Individual range of social activities is interwoven with other features of his growth. Moreover, if student is quite efficient, intelligent and successful at his work, participate in co-curricular activities may give his true contribution in the welfare of the society and in his way become more socially mature. Self concept is critical in social and emotional development of children. Self concept is, in turn, influencing socialization, even as socialization processes are helping to form the individual's self concept.

The foundations of socialization are laid during the child hood years. These foundations will help to establish new, more mature intimate relationships with age mates of both sexes. The child characteristics such as age, gender, ordinal position, sibling status, health status, transition to new school as well as friendship ties or peers plays a substantial

role in a every child life. The years between 10 and 12 middle childhood or early adolescence—are a time of important developmental advances that establish children’s sense of identity. During these years, children make strides toward adulthood by becoming competent, independent self-aware, and involved in the world beyond their families. Gender is also significant factors in determining the maturity in social context of humans. Due to the social norms, rules, roles given by the society where we are living matters a lot. The order in which a person is born into their family plays a substantial role in the individual’s development of personality, character, intelligence, and career choices. The familial atmosphere is the first group experience a child has and the child’s role in their family influences the development of the child’s individual maturity in social context. In families, children learn what is valuable and meaningful to their parents and siblings and they compete with their siblings for various roles before they find their personal niche in the family (Stewart et al., 2001).

As children are socialized into their families, the children make a place for themselves and no two children make a place for themselves exactly alike, even in the event that they are identical twins. Biological and cognitive changes transform children’s bodies and minds. Social relationships and roles change dramatically as children enter school/ college, join programs, and become involved with peers and adults outside their families. During this age, children develop a sense of self-esteem and individuality, comparing themselves with their peers. Along with family and school, another important source of support during this period is ‘peer group’. Peers are important during childhood, because they provide a means of social comparison, offer reference group, provide wide range of learning and development opportunities for children. These includes companionship, recreation, building social skills, participating in group problem solving and managing competition and conflict. The peer group is the childhood real world providing him a stage to develop social acceptance. During this age, children develop a sense of self-esteem and individuality, comparing themselves with their peers. They come to expect they will succeed or fail at different tasks. They may develop an orientation toward achievement that will color their response to school and other challenges for many years.

The present was undertaken with aim ‘to have better understanding of how the related factors that influence social maturity of urban and rural primary school children’.

Hypothesis

- There is no difference among the primary school children’s of rural and urban on social maturity.
- The children’s characteristics such as age, gender, Ordinal Positions, Sibling Constellation, health, change in school and relationship with friendship do not influence social maturity of primary school children.

METHODOLOGY

A random sample of 300 primary school children were selected from urban (N=150) and rural (N=150) localities of Dharwad Taluk, Karnataka. Information schedule was prepared by the researcher to examine the child factors namely age, gender, ordinal position, sibling status, school transition as well as perceived health and friendship ties. A differential research design was used to compare the social maturity of 10-12 years studying in 5th, 6th and 7th grades of both Kannada and English medium were selected. The Heads of the primary schools of selected 10 schools were contacted and taken permission for conducting the study. Socio metry technique was employed to select the five acceptee and five rejectee children including both boys and girls from selected school of urban as well as rural. They were placed in one hall and the questionnaire of social maturity and general information schedule was given for the selected students with the gap of three to four days with time of 30 minutes between each questionnaire.

Tools Used for the Study

Social Maturity Scale

(Rao, 1971) was used to assess the level of social maturity of the child. This has 90 items with three main subscales with 9 components namely personal adequacy, interpersonal adequacy and social adequacy. It is a 4 point rating scale having options of 'Strongly Agree', 'Agree', 'Disagree', 'Strongly Disagree' with a score of 4, 3, 2, 1 respectively for positive items and reverse scoring for negative items. The total score ranges from 90 to 360. Based on the total score, the respondents are classified into 4 categories such as mature, slightly mature, slightly immature and immature.

Child Factors

The chronological age of the child in completed years at the time of investigation was considered. The age of the children selected for the study ranged between 10 to 12 years and were grouped as 10, 11 and 12 year olds. Gender was classified as boys and girls. Ordinal position of the child was considered on the basis of the birth order of the children and they were grouped as below: First born and Later born. Number of siblings was taken as an indicator of sibling status. Perception was taken with respect to the health condition and categorized as good and poor. The change in school due to transfer/ school in neighboring villages was considered and grouped as "new comer" to the school. Friendship Ties was calculated based on the relation with friends as perceived by the child was considered. The number of friends and quality was categorized as Quality (liked/disliked) and quantity (number of friends).

RESULTS

Table 1 represents the comparison and association between urban and rural locality on social maturity. The result accepted the first hypothesis that there was no difference between urban and rural children on social maturity and Student t-test also revealed non significant differences between both the groups. From the table it was apparent that children from both locality were matured enough in the social context.

From the table 2 it was clear that the second hypothesis was accepted except in school transition and perceived friendship ties variables. There was significant association between age, gender, ordinal position, sibling status and perceived health with respect to the social maturity. Social maturity was not associated with school transition and perceived friendship ties.

From the table it was depicted that majority of the primary school children belongs to the category slightly mature (68%) followed by slightly immature (32%). Among the group older age children were socially matured than younger age group. Chi-square test revealed significant association of age with social maturity. Indicating that 12 year old children (81%) had better social maturity than 10 (60%) and 11(63%) year old children.

There was significant difference between boys and girls on social maturity. Boys had higher (72%) social maturity scores than girls (64%). More number of both boys and girls (68%) were slightly matured in social competency. Lower number were found in the slightly immature category (32%). None of the children were found the under the category of mature and immature social maturity levels.

The chi square test revealed significant association between ordinal position, sibling status and social maturity at 5 percent level of significance. With respect to the ordinal position, later born had better social maturity (69.2%) than first born (67.5%). Sixty eight percent of the children were having high social competence followed by 32% of slightly

immature group and none of the children were totally mature and totally immature socially.

More number (68%) of the children were slightly matured, but no children were extremely mature and immature. Children with siblings (69.6%) had better social maturity than children with only child (51.9%). So may develop more mature behavior in comparison with younger ones.

It is evident from the table that there was association between social maturity and perceived health. Results reported that children have a sense of mastery, self worth and positive self esteem, self confidence, a sense of self efficacy, autonomy and self reliance and perceived themselves as physically good, emotionally fit, capable. Forty six percent of children were perceived them as poor health condition, so may be they are socially immature.

Majority of the children in urban (77.3%) and in rural (78.7%) locality changed the schools. Children may seek out friendship easily during this age. Majority of children who changed the school were under the category of slightly immature in social context. Locality of school doesn't have any role in developing the social maturity among the primary school children. So change in school might not have disfavored their status in new setting. Hence non significant association was found between school transition and social maturity.

The results of the present study revealed non significant association between perceived friendship ties and social maturity. It was observed that majority (68%) of the children were liked by many and having many friends. Those children had many friends but not liked by them were slightly mature in socially and due to the disproportionate sampling the association may not have reached the level of significance.

DISCUSSIONS

The results of the study entitled “**Child Factors: A Predictors of Social Maturity**” are discussed. The discussion that follows will attempt to integrate the aspect of social maturity as they relate to primary school children under the following headings.

Social Maturity of Urban and Rural Children

There was no difference between urban and rural children on social maturity and Student t-test also revealed non significant differences between both the groups (Table 1). It is disheartening to note that only 66 percent of the urban children and 70 percent of rural children had **slightly mature level** of social maturity. Singh and Thukral (2010) also noted non- significant differences between urban and rural high school students on social maturity.

Influence of Child factors on Social Maturity among Primary School Children

Child's Age

From the table 2 it was clear that child's age, gender, ordinal position, sibling status and perceived health factors are having role in widening the social maturity among primary school children. Social maturity was not associated with school transition and perceived friendship ties. The study found that 12 year old children had better social maturity than younger age group (10 and 11 year old children). The fund of knowledge regarding self and empathy increases with age and their mental and social maturity enables them to understand the ability and self worth. Pershey and Monica (2001) also reported that sixth grade students perceived themselves as confident. They had greater perceptions of themselves as able and competitive than fourth graders.

Child's Gender

Gender was significantly associated with child's with social maturity. There was significant difference between boys and girls on social maturity. Boys had higher (72%) social maturity scores than girls (64%). This may be due to the fact that boys are more self confident, self directional, have more exposure, are expected to have more ability to work, problem solving skills, which may have contributed to be more socially matured than girls. In a patriarchal society, the gender role socialization practices differ for boys and girls. Girls are supposed to be submissive, nurturing, sensitive, expressive but boys are expected to be strong both emotionally and physically, active, aggressive, dominant and to behave maturely. Bennett and Cohen (1959) states that each sex possesses a relatively greater proportion of traits appropriate to its own role. Similarly Jain and Audichya (2007) revealed significant difference between the boys and girls in the social maturity where in Boys scored higher compared to girls in social maturity.

Child's Ordinal Position and Sibling Status

The results revealed significant association between ordinal position, sibling status and social maturity. With respect to the ordinal position, later born had better social maturity (69.2%) than first born. This may be because of the fact that last-borns were most sociable perhaps because they were not likely to win at competitions (due to their younger age and lower competency) and thus developed a more adaptive affiliative orientation. Singh and Dhanda (2009) reported that last-born were more extroverted; a overt behavior of social behavior.

Children with siblings (69.6%) had better social maturity than children with only child (51.9%). This may be due to the reason that children with siblings get social comparison between themselves. siblings spend more time together than with parents, suggesting the growing influence of siblings (Landry, 1998). They imitate each other. They provide each other opportunities for understanding each other's. Older sibling tend to take the adult role of caring and discipline their younger siblings. So may develop more mature behavior in comparison with younger ones.

Perceived Health

It is evident from the table (No.2) that there was association between social maturity and perceived health. This may due to the fact that physical factors such as a good health history in children was reported to have a sense of mastery, self worth and positive self esteem, self confidence, a sense of self efficacy, autonomy and self reliance (Polk 1997). Children's attitudes affect their own self image with regards to being healthy and running a productive and fruitful life.

School Transition

Majority of the children in urban (77.3%) and in rural (78.7%) locality changed the schools. Children may seek out friendship easily during this age. So change in school might not have disfavored their status in new setting. Hence non significant association was found between school transition and social maturity.

Perceived Friendship Ties

The results of the present study revealed non significant association between perceived friendship ties and social maturity. It was observed that majority (68%) of the children were liked by many and having many friends. Due to this disproportionate sampling this association may not have reached the level of significance.

It has been found that high social maturity development takes place in an atmosphere of acceptance that allows the children autonomy and the opportunity to learn competencies. So every child become matured enough to have better

relationship with members of the society and have the ability to deal constructively with reality.

CONCLUSIONS

It is evident from the study that child factors such as age, gender, ordinal position, sibling status and perceived health differences do exist in social maturity of urban and rural primary school going children. However, these differences can be attributed to the variations in socialization process of study participants. More number of urban (66%) children and rural (70%) were of 'slightly mature' level of social maturity. None of them belonged to mature and immature level of social maturity.

RECOMMENDATION

In a rapidly changing world, the cultivation of a sound personality, sensitive and open to problems in his/her environment is vital but also urgent. A special care and personalized support system is therefore, imperative to nourish the potentialities of primary school children. So, for positive self concept development among children, it is suggested to nurture during primary school age, as self is being crystallized. It is also necessary for children going through this period, teachers and other professionals, who care enough to make a difference, Significant and meaningful relationship, positive forces help young children grow in healthy and self actualizing ways. Parents should respect the child's efforts and acknowledge the confidence they have in their children ability to do well as well as provide organized, orderly and supportive environment. In nutshell, it may be said that to nurture children's potential, intervention efforts need to be made not only in enhancing social maturity, but also in promoting the parent-child, peer relationship.

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Table 1: Social Maturity of Urban and Rural Primary School Children

Characteristics	Social maturity				Total (%)	Mean ± SD	χ ²	't' value
	Immature	Slightly immature	Slightly mature	Mature				
Urban	-	51 (34.0)	99 (66.0)	-	150 (100)	230.39 ±19.93	0.551 ^{NS}	1.253 ^{NS}
Rural	-	45 (30.0)	105 (70.0)	-	150 (100)	233.18 ±18.55		
Total	-	96 (32.0)	204 (68.0)	-	300 (100)			

Figures in parenthesis indicates percentage
NS – Non-significant

χ² Chi Square symbol

Table 2: Association of Child Factors with Social Maturity

Child characteristics		Levels of Social Maturity				Modified (χ ²)
		<i>Immature</i>	<i>Slightly Immature</i>	<i>Slightly Mature</i>	<i>Mature</i>	
Age	<i>10 years</i>	-	40 (40)	60 (60)	-	11.857**
	<i>11 years</i>	-	37 (37)	63 (63)	-	
	<i>12 years</i>	-	19 (19)	81 (81)	-	
	<i>Total</i>	-	96 (32)	204 (68)	-	
Gender	<i>Boys</i>	-	42 (28)	108 (72)	-	2.206*
	<i>Girls</i>	-	54 (36)	96 (64)	-	
	<i>Total</i>	-	96 (32)	204 (68)	-	
Ordinal Position	<i>First born</i>	-	68 (32.5)	141 (67.5)	-	2.206*
	<i>Later born</i>	-	28 (30.8)	63 (69.2)	-	
	<i>Total</i>	-	96 (32)	204 (68)	-	
Sibling Status	<i>Only child</i>	-	13 (48.1)	14 (51.9)	-	3.556*
	<i>With sibling</i>	-	83 (30.4)	190 (69.6)	-	
	<i>Total</i>	-	96 (32)	204 (68)	-	
Perceived Health	<i>Good</i>	-	83 (30.5)	189 (69.5)	-	2.95*
	<i>Poor</i>	-	13 (46.4)	15 (53.6)	-	
	<i>Total</i>	-	96 (32)	204 (68)	-	
School Transition	<i>Same school</i>	-	25 (37.9)	41 (62.1)	-	1.344NS
	<i>Change in school</i>	-	71 (30.3)	163 (69.7)	-	
	<i>Total</i>	-	96 (32)	204 (68)	-	
Perceived Friendship Ties	<i>Having many friends</i>	-	88 (31.7)	190 (68.3)	-	0.208NS
	<i>Having less friends</i>	-	8 (36.4)	14 (63.6)	-	
	<i>Total</i>	-	96 (32)	204 (68)	-	
	<i>Liked by many</i>	-	89 (33.1)	180 (66.9)	-	1.410NS
	<i>Not liked by many</i>	-	7 (22.6)	24 (77.4)	-	
<i>Total</i>	-	96 (32)	204 (68)	-		

* Significant at 0.05 percent level of probability

**Significant at 0.01 per cent level of probability

χ² Chi Square symbol

NS=Non-significant, Figures in parenthesis indicates percentage

