

## **A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON EMOTIONAL MATURITY BETWEEN ADOLESCENT BOYS AND GIRLS**

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### **Abstract**

Adolescence, the teenage years, marks the transitional period between childhood and maturity, occurring roughly between the ages of 13 and 19. It is the passage from childhood to adolescence, composed of a set of transitions that unfold gradually and touch upon many aspects of the individual's behaviour - biological, cognitive, social and emotional. Emotional maturity is a significant predictor that may be equated with wealth, a general level of happiness, self-confidence, success in relationships, and an enhanced level of well being. An emotionally disturbed individual displays behaviour that is typical of a child: looking for sympathy, conceited, quarrelsome, infantile, self-centered and demanding, self-seeking and emotionally excitable. The problem the present investigation concerns itself with is to find out if there does exist a significant difference between adolescent boys and girls with regard to emotional maturity. The sample consists of 130 members - of which 65 are adolescent boys and 65 adolescent girls - from regular college in the age group 17-19 years. The critical ratio (C R) was found and findings indicate that there is a significant difference in contributory factors - such as emotional instability, social maladjustment, personality disintegration and a lack of independence - between adolescent boys and girls in the area of emotional maturity. While there is no significant difference in emotional regression between adolescent boys and girls, there is a significant difference between adolescent boys and girls in the domain of overall emotional maturity.

**Key words :** Emotional maturity, Adolescent boys and girls

## **Introducton**

Adolescence, the teenage years marks the transitional period between childhood and maturity, occurring roughly between the ages of 13 and 19. The word “adolescence” is derived from the Latin “adolescere,” which means “to mature/to grow up/to grow into adulthood (Compact Oxford Dictionary, Thesaurus & Wordpower Guide, 2001) Adolescence is a time that marks the moving away from the immaturity of childhood into the maturity of adulthood. There is no single event or boundary line that divides the end of childhood or the beginning of adolescence. Rather, experts think of the passage from childhood to adolescence as composed of a set of transitions that unfold gradually and that touch upon many aspects of the individual's behaviour including the biological, cognitive, social and emotional.

The biological transition entailed in adolescence or puberty is perhaps the most observable sign of adolescence. Technically, puberty refers to the period during which an individual becomes capable of sexual reproduction. It is used as a collective term that refers to all the physical changes that occurs in a growing girl or boy as the individual passes from childhood into adulthood. The timing of physical maturation varies widely. The physical changes of puberty are all triggered by hormones, chemical substances in the body that act on specific organs and tissues. In boys, a major change that happens during puberty is the increased production of testosterone, a male sex hormone, while girls experience increased production of the female hormone, estrogen.

There is a perceptible change in cognition in adolescence, in that thinking tends to become multidimensional rather than being limited to a single issue. Adolescents describe themselves and others in more differentiated and complicated aspects and find it easier to look at problems from multiple perspectives. They are more likely than children to see things as relative rather than absolute. They think about abstract ideas as seen in interpersonal relationships, politics, philosophy, religion and mortality. Adolescence is also a period of emotional transition marked by changes in the way individuals view

themselves and their capacity to function independently. As adolescents mature intellectually and undergo cognitive changes, they come to perceive themselves in more sophisticated and distinctive ways.

Accompanying the biological, cognitive and emotional transitions during adolescence are important changes affecting the adolescent's social relationships. One of the noteworthy aspects of the social transition from childhood into adolescence is the increased time that individuals spend with their peers. The importance of peers during early adolescence coincides with changes in the individual's need for intimacy. Teenagers, especially girls, spend a good deal of time discussing their innermost thoughts and feelings, and so try to understand one another. One of the most important social transitions that takes place in adolescence concerns the emergence of sexual and romantic relationships.

## **EMOTION**

The word 'emotion' is derived from the Latin word 'emovere' which means to stir up, agitate or excite (Compact Oxford Dictionary, Thesaurus & Word power guide, 2001). It is a stirred-up state of feeling. Emotional states are communicated through a wide range of nonverbal signals including facial expressions, eye contact, body language and touch. Emotions can activate and direct behaviour in the same way as biological or psychological motives. These emotions are found in children from birth upwards. Emotions may be overt behaviour patterns, involving facial and vocal expressions.

Emotions involve three major components:

- Physiological changes in the body - shifts in heart rate, blood pressure, etc.
- Subjective cognitive states - the realm of personal experiences
- Expressive behaviour - outward signs of these internal reactions

Jersild (1943) defined emotion as a state of being moved, stirred up, or aroused in some way. It involves feelings, impulses and physical and physiological reactions. These feelings, impulses, physiological

reactions etc., occur in an almost unlimited variety of mixtures and gradations.

Munn (1951) defined emotions as acute disturbances of the individual as a whole, being psychological in origin, and involving behaviour, conscious experiences and verbal functioning.

## **EMOTIONAL CONTROL**

The efficiency of an individual in dealing with daily happenings depends on his ability to control and manage his emotions. The feelings and emotions he experiences can make his life miserable or happy, depending on the control he has over them. Worry can make a person not just miserable, but inefficient as well. Emotional states also affect physical health. When a person has unhealthy fears, he cannot expect to enjoy good his health. Worry, vague fears and frequent emotional upsets bring illness, therefore emotional control is especially necessary. The best time for emotional control is during early development, but even in adulthood it is not too late. Emotional control is necessary for health, happiness and efficiency. The emphasis, in recent times, on the conflict between the regressive (and dependent) versus the progressive (and productive) forces in the human personality has been successful in directing interest towards more detailed studies on the very nature of maturity.

## **NATURE OF MATURITY**

1. One of the most obvious pathways of development, long emphasized by Freud, S. & Alexander, F. (1990), is from the parasitic dependence characteristic of a foetus to the relative independence enjoyed by a parent, coupled with the parental capacity for responsibility for both spouse and child.
2. Intimately bound up with the organism's development - from parasitism on the mother to relative independence from the parents - is its increased capacity for responsibility and productivity, as well as its decreased receptive needs.
3. The third characteristic of maturity is relative freedom from the well-known constellation of inferiority, egotism and competitiveness.

4. Maturity consists in acquiring the conditioning and training necessary for socialization and domestication.
5. Hostile aggressiveness - the term being used here to include all sorts of anger, hate, and cruelty - is always a sign of emotional irritation or crabbiness thread.
6. An important attribute of maturity is a firm sense of reality.
7. A characteristic of maturity is flexibility and adaptability.

### **EMOTIONAL MATURITY**

The concept of “mature” behaviour, at any level, is that which reflects the fruits of normal emotional development. Kaplan and Baron (1986) elaborate upon the characteristics of an emotionally mature person; they say that he has the capacity to withstand delays in the satisfaction of his needs. He has the ability to tolerate a reasonable amount of frustration.

According to Murray (2003), there is no correlation between chronological age, intellectual age, social age or emotional age. Just because someone is 'grown-up' in terms of chronological age does not mean they are 'grown-up' emotionally. Chronological maturity and intellectual maturity, when unequally combined with emotional immaturity, is not common and is potentially dangerous. A person whose body and mind are adult, but whose emotional development is like that of a child, can wreck havoc in his own life and that of others.

It is the opinion of Murray (2003) that an emotionally mature person displays the following characteristics:

1. The capability to face reality and deal with it.
2. The aptitude for being just as interested in giving as in receiving.
3. The capacity to relate positively to life experiences.
4. The ability to assimilate more experiences.
5. The prowess to accept frustration.
6. The proficiency to handle hostility constructively.
7. The gift of experiencing relative freedom from the symptoms of tension.

Mostly, 'emotional balance' and 'emotional maturity' are thought of as synonymous terms - but they are not, actually. Emotional balance emphasizes the value of learning to cope with both pleasant and unpleasant emotions. One can attain emotional maturity without having attained emotional balance, although the vice versa is not true. An emotionally balanced person will necessarily be an emotionally mature person. Emotional balance is the quality of an adult and not that of a child. Thus, emotional maturity is a relative term directly related to age and the particular stage of development at which the individual concerned finds himself. Therefore, the emotionally mature individual is not one who has necessarily resolved every condition that arouses anxiety and hostility, but is one who is continuously engaged in the process of seeing himself clearly from an unequivocal perspective and is, in addition, constantly involved in the struggle to achieve a healthy integration of feeling, thinking and action. Aleem and Sheema (2005) have found that there is a significant difference between the mean scores of male and female students in terms of emotional stability. Female students are less emotionally stable when compared to their male counterparts.

Sivakumar, R. (2010) found that sex, community and the kind of family they belonged to did not play any role (there was no significant difference) in the emotional maturity levels of the college students studied. But it is inferred from the college students studied that there were indeed significant differences in emotional maturity, depending upon the religion professed/practiced. Stephen, S. (2002) conducted a study related to neuroticism and emotional maturity among female college students and found that those individuals who scored higher on neuroticism displayed lower levels of emotional maturity as well.

### **EMOTIONAL IMMATURITY**

Individuals who are emotionally immature find it difficult to deal with their own feelings. Singh & Bhargava (1989) have prepared a list of five factors that are broadly indicative of emotional immaturity

- Emotional instability
- Emotional regression

- Social maladjustment
- Personality disintegration
- Lack of independence

- **EMOTIONAL INSTABILITY**

It is represented by a syndrome that includes a lack of capacity to dispose of problems, irritability and the need for it to be allayed, constant help with one's day-to-day work, vulnerability, stubbornness, and temper tantrums.

- **EMOTIONAL REGRESSION**

It is represented by a syndrome inclusive of feelings of inferiority, restlessness, inhospitality, aggressiveness and self-centeredness.

- **SOCIAL MALADJUSTMENT**

The person shows a lack of social adaptability and hatred, and is inclined to be secretive, withdrawn and taciturn yet boastful and is, in addition, predisposed to be a liar and shirker.

- **PERSONALITY DISINTEGRATION**

It includes all of those symptoms that represent the disintegration of the personality, such as traumatic reactions, daunting phobias, an unmitigated lack of rationalization, dire pessimism, and alarming delusions of immortality. Such a person suffers from a massive inferiority complex and hence reacts to the environment through aggressiveness and destruction, and has a distorted sense of reality with varied degrees of neuroticism.

- **LACK OF INDEPENDENCE**

The individual shows a parasitic dependence on others, is egocentric and lacks objective interests. People think of him as inclined to be unreliable.

- **NEED FOR THE STUDY**

All human beings are essentially highly emotional, regardless of whether they live in this millennium or any other. They need to be emotionally mature so as to be able to handle any kind of situation

plausibly. In the present scenario, youth as well as children face difficulties in life - reasons for which may vary vastly - but these difficulties, in fact, give rise to certain psychosomatic problems such as anxiety, tension, frustration, and emotional upsets in day-to-day life. The study of one's emotional life is now emerging as a science, comparable to anatomy. The present study, therefore, was done to assess the emotional maturity of the individuals concerned and enable them to discern their level of emotional maturity in general - and then, in particular, identify the dimension in which he/she lacks the maturity required - so that they can be equipped to cope with difficult and stressful situations and, in this way, intelligently manage their emotions and act in a mature way.

## **PROBLEM**

The problem of the present investigation is to find out if there exists a significant difference between adolescent boys and girls with regard to emotional maturity.

## **HYPOTHESES**

- 1 There is no significant difference in the factor of emotional instability between adolescent boys and girls.
- 2 There is no significant difference in the factor of emotional regression between adolescent boys and girls.
- 3 There is no significant difference in the factor of social maladjustment between adolescent boys and girls.
- 4 There is no significant difference in the factor of personality disintegration between adolescent boys and girls.
- 5 There is no significant difference in the factor of the lack of independence between adolescent boys and girls.
- 6 There is no significant difference in emotional maturity between adolescent boys and girls.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

Ex post facto research is used, as there is no control over independent variables.



## **SAMPLE**

The study was carried out on 130 subjects, randomly selected from various colleges in Chennai. The sample consists of 65 adolescent boys and 65 adolescent girls, ranging from 17 to 19 years of age.

## **TOOLS**

The “Emotional Maturity” questionnaire, developed by Dr. Yashvir Singh and Dr. Mahesh Bhargava, is a scale that comprises 48 statements listed under five broad factors such as emotional instability, emotional regression, social maladjustment, personality disintegration and lack of independence; with a self-reporting five-point scale featuring options such as “very much, much, undecided, probably, and never,” depending upon how often the individual experiences affirmative emotions that irrefutably reflect signs of emotional maturity. The age group to which the questionnaire can be administered ranges from 14-23 years. The reliability of the scale, determined by test-retest reliability, was 0.75. The scale was validated against external criteria and its value was found to be 0.64. The lower the scores on the test items, the higher the emotional maturity of the individual.

## **STATISTICS**

An uncorelated critical ratio (t-test) was used to ascertain whether adolescent boys differed from adolescent girls in terms of emotional maturity, taking into consideration the five factors determining emotional maturity.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Table 1**

**Mean value, standard deviation, standard error of the difference, critical ratio and level of significance of the factor of emotional instability between adolescent boys and girls.**

<b>GROUP</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>MEAN</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>SED</b>	<b>C R</b>	<b>Level of Significance</b>
<b>Boys</b>	65	28.1	5.3	1.01	9.1	0.01
<b>Girls</b>	65	37.3	6.2			

Table I shows the number of respondents, their mean value, SD value, SE<sub>d</sub> value, C R value and the level of significance between adolescent boys and girls in terms of emotional instability.

The mean of 65 adolescent boys is 28.1, the mean of 65 adolescent girls is 37.3, and their standard deviation values are 5.3 and 6.2 respectively. The standard error of difference is 1.01. The critical ratio, with 128 degrees of freedom, was found to be 1.98 at 0.05 level and 2.61 at 0.01 level. The computed C R value is 9.1. This value of 9.1 is more than the table value and hence is significant. It shows that emotional instability is a significant factor affecting the well-being of both adolescent boys and girls. It is represented by a syndrome that includes a lack of capacity to dispose of problems, irritability and the need for it to be allayed, constant help with one's day-to-day work, vulnerability, stubbornness, and temper tantrums - and all of these are more marked in girls than in boys. Girls are more likely than boys to be highly strung during stressful times, and consequently tend to make hasty decisions, followed by lingering doubts about the wisdom of the said decisions. They have become accustomed to a great degree of dependency, constantly being supported by parents, husbands, and sons during the course of an entire lifetime. Therefore, hypothesis 1 which states that there is no significant difference in terms of (the factor of) emotional instability between adolescent boys and girls is not accepted.

**Table 2**

**Mean value, standard deviation, standard error of the difference, critical ratio and level of significance of the factor of emotional regression between adolescent boys and girls.**

GROUP	N	MEAN	SD	SED	C R	Level of Significance
Boys	65	22.9	4.8	0.86	1.51	NS
Girls	65	24.2	5.0			

NS – Not Significant

Table II shows the number of respondents, their mean value, SD value, SE<sub>d</sub> value, C.R value, and the level of significance between adolescent boys and girls in terms of emotional regression.

The mean of 65 adolescent boys is 22.9, the mean of 65 adolescent girls is 24.2, and their standard deviation values are 4.8 and 5.0 respectively. The standard error of difference is 0.86. The C R value is 1.51, which is lesser than the table value, and hence insignificant. It shows that emotional regression is not a significant factor affecting adolescent boys and girls. Both experience feelings of inferiority, restlessness, inhospitality, aggressiveness and self-centeredness. Therefore, hypothesis 2 which states that there is no significant difference in terms of (the factor of) emotional regression between adolescent boys and girls is accepted.

**Table 3**  
**Mean value, standard deviation, standard error of the difference, critical ratio and level of significance of the factor of social maladjustment between adolescent boys and girls.**

GROUP	N	MEAN	SD	SED	C R	Level of Significance
Boys	65	27.1	5.9	0.9	2.7	0.01
Girls	65	24.6	5.3			

Table III shows the number of respondents, their mean value, SD value, SE<sub>d</sub> value, C R value, and the level of significance between adolescent boys and girls in terms of social maladjustment.

The mean of 65 adolescent boys is 27.1, the mean of 65 adolescent girls is 24.6, and their standard deviation values are 5.9 and 5.3 respectively. The standard error of difference is 0.9 and the computed C R value is 2.7, which is higher than the table value and hence significant, showing that social maladjustment is a key factor affecting both adolescent boys and girls. When compared to girls, boys show a lack of social adaptability and hatred, and are inclined to be secretive, yet boastful -

and are, in addition, likely to be liars and shirkers. Girls, on the other hand, excel at adapting to change, making the adjustments necessary to blend seamlessly into society, all the while essaying to lead a healthy and peaceful life. Therefore, hypothesis 3 which states that there is no significant difference in terms of (the factor of) social maladjustment between adolescent boys and girls is not accepted.

**Table 4**

**Mean value, standard deviation, standard error of the difference, critical ratio and level of significance of the factor of personality disintegration between adolescent boys and girls.**

GROUP	N	MEAN	SD	SED	C R	Level of Significance
Boys	65	24.9	6.6	1.114	3.15	0.01
Girls	65	21.3	6.1			

Table IV shows the number of respondents, their mean value, SD value, SE<sub>d</sub> value, C R value, and the level of significance between adolescent boys and girls in terms of personality disintegration.

The mean of 65 adolescent boys is 24.9, the mean of 65 adolescent girls is 21.3, and their standard deviation values are 6.6 and 6.1 respectively. The standard error of difference is 1.114 and the computed C R value is 3.15, which is higher than the table value and hence significant. It shows that personality disintegration is a significant factor affecting adolescent boys and girls. Boys display certain symptoms that represent the disintegration of the personality, such as traumatic reactions, daunting phobias, an unmitigated lack of rationalization, dire pessimism, and alarming delusions of immortality. Therefore, hypothesis 4 which states that there is no significant difference in terms of (the factor of) personality disintegration between adolescent boys and girls is not accepted.

**Table 5**

**Mean value, standard deviation, standard error of the difference, critical ratio and level of significance of the factor of a lack of independence between adolescent boys and girls.**

GROUP	N	MEAN	SD	SED	C R	Level of Significance
Boys	65	26.9	5.2	0.99	6.5	0.01
Girls	65	33.4	6.1			

Table V shows the number of respondents, their mean value, SD value, SE<sub>d</sub> value, C R value, and the level of significance between adolescent boys and girls in terms of a lack of independence.

The mean of 65 adolescent boys is 26.9, the mean of 65 adolescent girls is 33.4, and their standard deviation values are 5.2 and 6.1 respectively. The standard error of difference is 0.99. The computed C R value is 6.5, which is higher than the table value and hence significant. This shows that a lack of independence factor is a significant factor affecting adolescent boys and girls. Girls show a great degree of dependence on others. Therefore, hypothesis 5 which states that there is no significant difference in terms of (the factor of) a lack of independence between adolescent boys and girls is not accepted.

**Table 6**

**Mean value, standard deviation, standard error of the difference, critical ratio and level of significance in emotional maturity between adolescent boys and girls.**

GROUP	N	MEAN	SD	SED	C R	Level of Significance
Boys	65	112.1	20.3	3.9	2.89	0.01
Girls	65	123.4	26.6			

Table VI shows the number of respondents, their mean value, SD value, SE<sub>d</sub> value, C R value, and the level of significance between adolescent boys and girls in terms of emotional maturity.

The mean of 65 adolescent boys is 112.1, the mean of 65 adolescent girls is 123.4, and their standard deviation values are 20.3 and 26.6 respectively. The standard error of difference is 2.89. The computed C R value is 2.89, higher than the table value and hence significant, showing that emotional maturity is a significant factor affecting adolescent boys and girls. It indicates that boys display a greater degree of independence and emotional control and handle circumstances and situations commendably, when compared to girls. Therefore, hypothesis 6 which states that there is no significant difference between adolescent boys and girls in terms of emotional maturity is not accepted.

### **SUGGESTIONS**

- The study can be done on large samples.
- Variables such as intrinsic values and patterns of/attitudes to adjustment prevailing among adolescent boys and girls can also be studied.
- The study can be done between adults and children.
- The study can be done with people from the poorer sections of society.
- The study can be done on professionals.

### **CONCLUSION**

- There is a significant difference in terms of such particular factors as emotional instability, social maladjustment, personality disintegration and a lack of independence between adolescent boys and girls when it comes to the question of emotional maturity.
- There is no significant difference in terms of emotional regression between adolescent boys and girls.
- The degree of emotional maturity differs significantly between adolescent boys and girls.

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