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Peer Ratings and Social Problem-solving Skills of 6-8 Years Old Children

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ABSTRACT For the study Faizabad regions of state Uttar Pradesh were selected as locales. Faizabad region included districts namely-Faizabad, Barabanki, Sultanpur, Ambedkar Nagar and Gonda. Four Schools and hundred children from each district were selected. Hence a total of 500 primary school children were assessed for peer acceptance and rejection and interpersonal social problem-solving skills. Result of this study showed the relationship between peer acceptance and rejection and interpersonal social problem-solving skills. Positively rated children suggested more number of relevant strategies and flexibility than their less accepted counter parts. Also positively rated children were more likely to suggest prosocial strategies for obtaining access to an object in another child's possession, while reverse was seen among negatively rated children.

INTRODUCTION

In modern society, children are experiencing social interaction with peers at an early age and for longer time periods. Peer relationships play a significant role in the social development of children. Peer relationships have qualities that do not exist in adult-child relationships (Hartup 1983). Children need to value each other's opinion for peer acceptance. They negotiate and compromise for conflicts resolution and learn give and take to have successful peer interactions. The development of these skills promotes social competence. Peers have significant pressure on children's behavior because they can modify behavior by acceptance or rejection.

Rubin and Daniels-Beirness (1983) found positive association between children's cognitive abilities to produce a large number of relevant, flexible and prosocial strategies and their peer acceptance. Peer acceptance was also negatively associated with the use of agonistic strategies. In contrast peer rejected children suggested less prosocial and more agonistic strategies. Parker and Asher (1987) reported that children who have poor peer relations are "at risk" for later developmental problems. Research has shown that peer rejected children are aggressive and disruptive, more likely to initiate fights and are less cooperative (Coie et al. 1982). With regards to interpersonal problem solving, Chen and Rubin (1992) found that rejected children are poor social problem solvers.

In India, more recently in a study with rural 5-6 years old children, Balda and her associates (Balda 2001; Balda et al. 2003) have found that prosocial strategies of social interaction predicted peer acceptance, whereas agonistic strategies predicted peer rejection, Also social problem-solving scores were correlated with social acceptance and rejection.

Gokiert et al. (2014) have reported that technical adequacy and usability are important considerations in selecting early childhood social-emotional screening and assessment measures. Williams et al. (2014) have found that cognitive assessment of young children contributes to high-stakes decisions because results are often used to determine eligibility for early intervention and special education.

Therefore, the present study was conducted in Faizabad region with 6 to 8 years old children. It was hypothesized that greater number of relevant, flexible and prosocial strategies would be positively correlated/associated with peer acceptance, whereas, use of agonistic strategies would be negatively correlated/ associated with peer acceptance of primary school going children.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

Five hundred 6 to 8 years old primary school children from Faizabad Region of State Uttar Pradesh participated in the study.

Measures

The children were administered two measures.

1. Sociometric peer rating scale. 2. Social problem-solving test.

1. Sociometric Peer Rating Scale Measure

The rating scale measure of Asher et al. (1979) require each child to rate each peer on a likert type scale, according to the specified interpersonal, criteria (for example, "how much do you like this child"). In an adaptation of this procedure for 6-8 years old children, photographs of peers were used. Photograph were displayed on a table top and they were asked to rate peers by assigning the photographs of classmates to one of the three boxes, according to how much they liked each peer. The three boxes were identified with a happy, neutral, or sad face, respectively, which were intended to help the children remember the meaning of each of the three point of the scale which showed in Figure 1.

Regardless of the interpersonal criteria used, the child's score on this measure was computed as the average rating received from peers. The positive ratings, received by the child were multiplied by 3, the neutral ones by 2, and the negative rating by 1. Each child received an average sociometric rating score by dividing the sum of rating received from his/ her classmates by the number of children in the class minus one (because a child cannot rate himself/ herself).

2. Social Problem Solving Skills

The social problem solving Test – Revised, developed by Rubin (1988) was used to assess children's social problem- solving skills in hypothetical situations with their peers. Each child was presented individually with five problem situations in which a story character either wished to gain access to an object in another child's possession (five stories) or to become friendly with an unfamiliar child (five stories). The child being tested was then asked what the story character could do or say in each situation to achieve the desired goal. Two such responses were requested for each situation. Picture cards were used to depict the stories.

The children's responses were scored in terms of their quantitative and qualitative features. The total numbers of different strategies in stories of object acquisition were computed. The children's responses were also scored for the number of relevant categories produced per story and were computed to get object acquisition were also computed. Flexibility for object acquisition relevancy score. Scores of response flexibility involved a comparison of the categories found in response 2 with those found in response 1 for any given story.

In addition, each response was coded as to its quality. The proportions of responses falling into each of the categories were computed as described by Rubin (1988). For object acquisition children's responses could be categorized as "Prosocial" (for example, "Please can I have it?"), "Agonistic" (for example, "Give it to me."), "Adult Intervention" (for example, "I'll tell teacher to make him share."), "Trade-bride" (for example, "I'll let you read my book if you give me yours.'), and "Affect-manipulation" (for example, "I'll be happy if you give it to me). Mean scores were calculated for each strategies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sociometric peer rating classification on the basis of district is depicted in Table 1. The data reveals comparison of the respondents belonging to different districts of Faizabad region. Data regarding the level of peer rating against different districts of Faizabad region indicates that, the highest percentage of respondents (55.00%)

Positive rating **Neutral rating** **Negative rating**

Fig. 1. Rating scale measure

Table 1: Frequency distribution of sociometric peer rating classification (District wise)

Socio-metric status	*Districts*					*Total (n=500)*
	Faizabad (n=100)	*Barabanki (n=100)*	*Sultanpur (n=100)*	*Ambedkar Nagar (n=100)*	*Gonda (n=100*	
Peer Rating						
Positive rating	30	45	34	26	40	175 (35.0)
Neutral rating	58	47	52	61	57	275 (55.0)
Negative rating	12	15	14	13	03	50 (10.0)

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate percentage.

out of the total sample was belonging to the category of neutral rating followed by positive rating (35.00%) and negative rating (10.00%).

On the basis of district the table further reveals that, in Faizabad maximum percentage (58.00%) of respondents were having neutral rating followed by positive (30.00%) and negative rating (12.00%). Again in Barabanki same trend was seen that, 47.00 percent respondents were having neutral rating followed by positive rating (45.00%) and negative rating (15.00%). In Sultanpur maximum percentage (52.00%) of respondents were having neutral rating followed by positive (34.00%) and negative rating (14.00%). In Ambedkar Nagar 61.00 percent respondents were having neutral rating from their peers followed by positive rating (26.00%) and negative rating (13.00%). In Gonda maximum percentage (57.00%) of respondents were having neutral rating followed by positive (40.00%) and negative rating (3.00%).

Correlation between peer rating scores and scores of problem solving task, as presented in Table 2 shows that, the number of positive rating received were significantly positively correlated with number of strategies suggested, relevancy and flexibility scores of object acquisition tasks. Negative correlations were obtained between negative ratings received and the number of strategies received as well as neutral ratings and flexibility scores received.

Further same table presented correlation between sociometric scores and social problem – solving strategies. As depicted in table 1, the positive ratings received were significantly positively correlated with the prosocial and authoritative strategies. The negative correlations were evidenced between positive rating received and the agonistic strategies. Neutral ratings were negatively correlated with flexibility score and agonistic strategies of object acquisition.

The results of the present study truly predict relationships between sociometric status and social problem-solving skills. Positively rated primary school children were more likely to suggest prosocial and authoritative strategies as well as less likely to suggest agonistic strategies while reverse was seen among negative rated children. The result of the present study clearly predicts relationship between peer acceptance or rejection and quantitative features of social-cognition and problem solving. Positively rated children were more flexible than those who received neutral ratings. In the present study, support was found for previous research in which association has been found between sociometric status and social-problem solving Chen and Rubin (1992). Balda (2001) also reported that the

Table 2: Correlations between peer rating scores and social problem-solving scores and strategies

Peer rating *Social problem*	*Positive ratings*	*Neutral ratings*	*Negative ratings*
Social Problem-Solving Scores			
Object acquisition scores			
Number of strategies	.39*	ns	-.22*
Relevancy score	.18*	ns	ns
Flexibility score	.29*	.01*	ns
Social Problem-Solving Strategies			
Object acquisition strategies	.33*	ns	-10*
Prosocial Agonistic	.29*	.24*	ns
Authoritative	.29*	ns	ns

Note: Significant at *p<0.05 and **p<0.01

positive rating child had more flexibility rather than neutral or negative rating. Children's social behavior and social cognition interpersonal problem solving are the predictors of peer acceptance and rejection.

Chiu S and Alexander PA (2014) were reported that a computerized measure, interactive analogical measure, was developed and used to assess young children's ability to reason analogically. It seems that an interactive measure provides meaningful problem-solving experience for young children.

Conclusively this research shows children's prosocial strategies of social interaction predict peer acceptance, whereas agonistic strategies predict peer rejection.

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