

Role of Economic Class in Ascertaining Social and Emotional Maturity of Adolescents

Ritu Singh¹, Kusha Pant* and Asmita Dhyani

*Department of Human Development and Family Studies, College of Home Science,
G.B.P.U. A. and T, Pantnagar 263 145, Distt. U.S. Nagar, Uttarakhand, India*
¹Mobile: 09412120734, ¹E-mail: ritu.singh07@gmail.com

KEYWORDS Social Adequacy. Emotional Stability. Personality Integration. Independence. Economic Class. Adolescents

ABSTRACT The present study was undertaken to assess and compare the social and emotional maturity of 277 randomly drawn class XI students of Pantnagar, Uttarakhand across family economic class. A self-designed questionnaire was used to study the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents of the present study. Social and Emotional maturity of the respondents were assessed employing Rao's Social Maturity Scale and Emotional Maturity Scale, respectively. The study revealed that adolescents from higher and upper middle class family were significantly more personally adequate than those from rest of the classes whereas, on social adequacy component, adolescents from higher class were observed to be significantly lower than those from rest of the family classes. Adolescents from higher income family were seen to be significantly more socially adjusting and independent than those specifically from lower income family. On the whole adolescents from higher income family were seen to be significantly more emotionally mature in comparison to the ones from other classes. Social maturity and emotional maturity were found to be significantly and positively correlated with each other across family economic class.

INTRODUCTION

Children are like precious gems. They are like divine gifts that parents get from the almighty. Every child is unique in itself and has its own pace of growth and development. This process of growth and development initiates right from the birth of a child and continues throughout the lifespan of an individual. When a child is born, he receives blessings from everyone around him and starts growing and developing physically, cognitively and most importantly socially and emotionally. As a child grows up and develops, new social and emotional capacities emerge and eventually these emotions and social functioning changes and continues till adolescence. Santrock (1993) stated that adolescence is a period of transition between childhood and adulthood that involves biological, cognitive and social development. Development is an essential aspect for the individual as well as the process of socialization that depends on maturation. Apparently maturity marks the end of growth and development (Khadi et al. 2009).

Maturity as defined by Finley (1996) is "the capacity of mind to endure an ability of an individual to respond to uncertainty, circumstances or environment in an appropriate manner". It is the deliberateness of action, mature consideration, due promptness, the state of being com-

plete or ready. The importance of attainment of social and emotional maturity by adolescence becomes very crucial as adolescence is the only period which relates to mental, physical and specifically emotional and social maturity. Emotional maturity implies controlling your emotions more willingly than letting your emotions to give you the orders. It is the ability to see life clearly. According to Menninger (1999), emotional maturity includes the ability to deal constructively with reality. As emotional maturity is a measure of one's capacity to create a positive mental attitude, social maturity has to do with how well people understand the nature of the social world they live within. Lawrence and Jesudoss (2011) define social maturity as the process of appropriate attitudes for personal, interpersonal and social adequacies of an individual which are essential for functioning effectively in the society.

Emotional maturity and social maturity, both are vital for attaining success and happiness in one's life. Emotional maturity enables adolescents make better decisions; better choices; have more fun and less stress which enables them to have better balance in life. Similarly, good social adjustment is also important as adolescents often experiment with alternative identities, roles, and behaviors as they probe the limits of acceptable behaviour (Marder et al. 2003). Thus, it can be said that at the end of the adolescent

period, the adolescent is expected to be socially and emotionally mature.

An adolescent is at a crossroads of changes where emotions, hormones, judgment, identity and the physical body are so in flux that parents and even experts struggle to fully understand. Media portrayals of adolescents often seem to emphasize the problems that can be a part of adolescence. Gang violence, school shootings, alcohol-related accidents, drug abuse, and suicides involving teens are all too frequently reflected in newspaper headlines and movie plots. In the professional literature, too, adolescence is frequently portrayed as a negative stage of life—a period of storm and stress to be survived or endured (Arnett 1999). All of it can be attributed to their low social and emotional maturity.

Due to this maturational strain this period calls for great support and assistance on an individual's part. The families in general and parents in particular, have often been deemed to be the most important support system available to an adolescent. According to Harkness and Super (1992), the Development Niche of the adolescent is shaped by 1) the psychology of the care takers, 2) the physical and social settings of the child, and 3) the child rearing practices. Now, it is quite obvious that the psychology of the care takers, and the physical and social settings of the child and the child rearing practices depends a great deal on family's economic class. Therefore, the present study has been taken up with the following objectives:

1. To investigate if the social maturity of adolescents is influenced by the economic strata of the family.
2. To investigate if the emotional maturity of adolescents is influenced by the economic strata of the family.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The research study was carried out exclusively in the schools of G. B. Pant University of Agriculture and Technology, Pantnagar, in 2009. The respondents for the study were the adolescents studying in class XI of the various schools situated in Pantnagar. Out of the total eight schools situated in Pantnagar, only three schools could be purposively included in the study since only these schools provided education up to in-

termediate level. All the adolescents studying in class XI of the selected three schools were taken up as respondents for the present study i.e. 87 senior school adolescents (42 boys and 45 girls) from Campus School, 116 senior school adolescents from GGIC and 74 senior school adolescents from PIC, making a total of two hundred and seventy seven (277) respondents for the present study.

Tools

Self-designed socio-demographic questionnaire was used to study the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents. Social maturity of the respondents was assessed using Rao's Social Maturity Scale developed by Nalini Rao. This 90 items scale measures social maturity under 3 dimensions viz. Personal Adequacy, Interpersonal Adequacy and Social Adequacy. The response options available for the items are: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree and Strongly Disagree with scores of 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 for positive items and 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 for negative items respectively. The scores of a respondent on 3 sub-scales of the social maturity scale collectively give his / her Composite Social Maturity Score. Emotional maturity of the respondents was assessed through Emotional Maturity Scale by Y. Singh and M. Bhargava. It is a standardized scale. This scale consists of in total 48 questions scattered under five categories, that is, Emotional Stability, Emotional Progression, Social Adjustment, Personality Integration and Independence. Emotional Maturity Scale is a self-reporting Five Point Scale. The response options are Very Much, Much, Undecided, Probably and Never and scores assigned are 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The scores of a respondent on 5 sub-scales of the emotional maturity scale collectively give his / her Composite Emotional Maturity Score.

Procedure and Data Analysis

The respondents were approached in a group of 4 to 5 in the school itself during their free period. Firstly, the purpose of the study was made clear to them. Then, they were requested to give honest responses and were assured that their identity would be kept confidential and information provided by them would be used exclusively for the purpose of research work. English ver-

sion of both the scales was used with Campus School students as this school is an English medium school where as Hindi version of the scales was provided to students from PIC and GGIC because both these schools are Hindi medium schools. Each sampled student was given questionnaires individually and was asked to fill the questionnaires there and then only under strict supervision of the investigator. The respondents were asked to fill the questionnaires within the given time and then the investigator collected the questionnaires from the students immediately. Statistical analysis was done by using Arithmetic mean, Standard deviation, Z-test and Correlation coefficient.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The frequency and percentage distribution of adolescents on social maturity across family economic class is presented in Figure 1. It is quite clear from the figure that on personal adequacy more than half of adolescents from high class families (61.90%) and upper middle class families

(53.19%) were found moderately stable. Whereas for adolescents of middle class, upper lower class and lower class families (52.63%, 50.00% and 53.95% respectively) majority was observed for unstable category of personal adequacy. However, only 38.10% and 42.55% adolescents from higher class and upper middle class respectively were found unstable. To our excitement none of the adolescent from higher and upper middle class families was found extremely unstable but unfortunately for adolescents of middle class, upper lower class and low class families, this percentage was found to be quite noticeable (0.75%, 12.50% and 2.63% respectively).

In contrast to this, under interpersonal adequacy component of social adequacy, majority of adolescents from all the family class were found moderately stable except adolescents from upper lower class (12.50%). Surprisingly adolescents who belong to high class income families (4.76%) were found less extremely stable than those who were from upper middle class families (10.64%). However, none of the adolescent from high class, upper middle class, middle class and

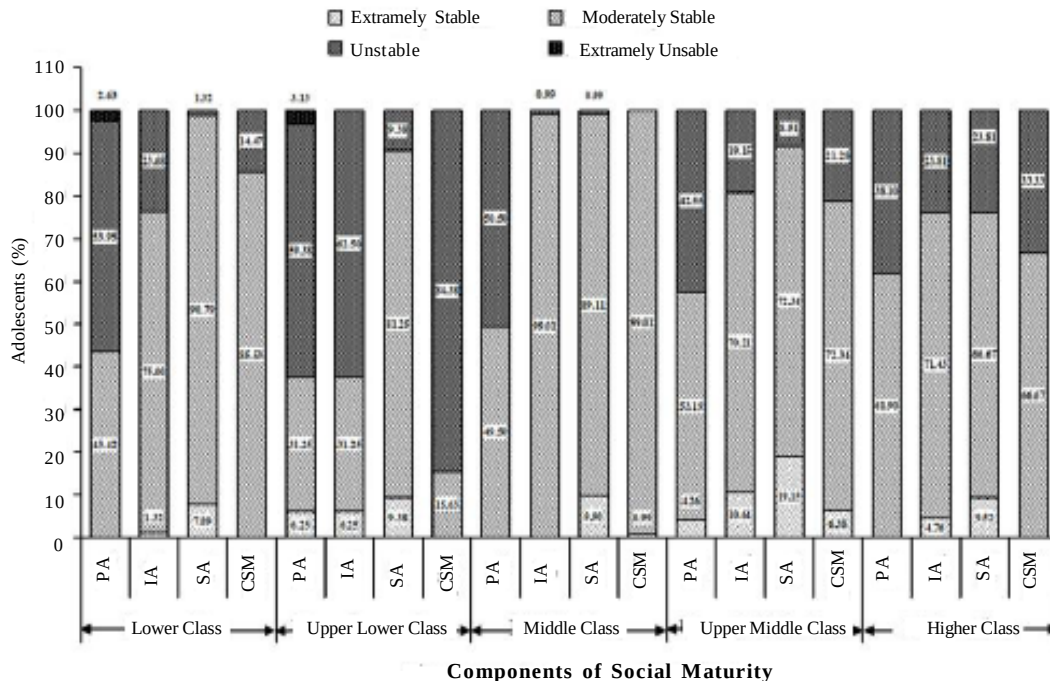


Fig. 1. Percentage distributed of adolescents of Pantnagar on social maturity across family economic class
Note: PA indicates Adequacy, IA indicate Inter-personal Adequacy, SA indicate Social Adequacy and CSM indicates Composite Social Maturity.

lower class families were found to be extremely unstable.

Exactly same picture was revealed under the social adequacy component as, majority of adolescents (90.79% adolescents from lower class, 87.22 % adolescents from middle class, 72.34% adolescents from upper middle class and 66.67% adolescents from high class) were found to be moderately stable except those for upper lower class (12.50%). Adolescents from upper lower class were found unstable in majority when compared with the rest (43.75% adolescents were found unstable and 34.38% adolescents were found extremely unstable).

As far as composite social maturity of adolescents is considered, only adolescents from upper middle class (6.38%) and middle class (0.75%) were found extremely stable. Majority of adolescents were found moderately stable (85.33% lower class, 78.95% middle class, 72.34% upper middle class and 66.67% higher class) except those from upper lower class, who were unstable (78.13%) and extremely unstable (21.88%). None of the adolescent from higher class, upper middle class, middle class and lower class was found extremely unstable.

Figure 2 represents percentage distribution of senior school adolescents of Pantnagar on emotional maturity across family economic class. It is quite evident from the figure that under emotional stability, majority of adolescents were found to belong to extremely stable level except those from lower class (27.63%). 53.47% adolescents from middle class, 51.06% adolescents from upper middle class and 47.62% from higher class were found extremely stable. Whereas adolescents from lower class were found moderately stable in majority (61.84%). 31.25% adolescents from upper lower class were observed unstable followed by those from higher class (19.05%) middle class (13.86%) lower class (10.53%) and upper middle class (8.51%). However adolescents from upper middle class (2.13%) and upper lower class (3.13%) were found extremely unstable. Surprisingly, none of the adolescent who belonged to higher class, middle class and lower class was found extremely unstable.

Similarly, under emotional progression, adolescents from higher class (42.86%), upper middle class (46.81%), and middle class (51.49%) were found extremely stable in majority. Whereas, for those who belonged to upper lower class

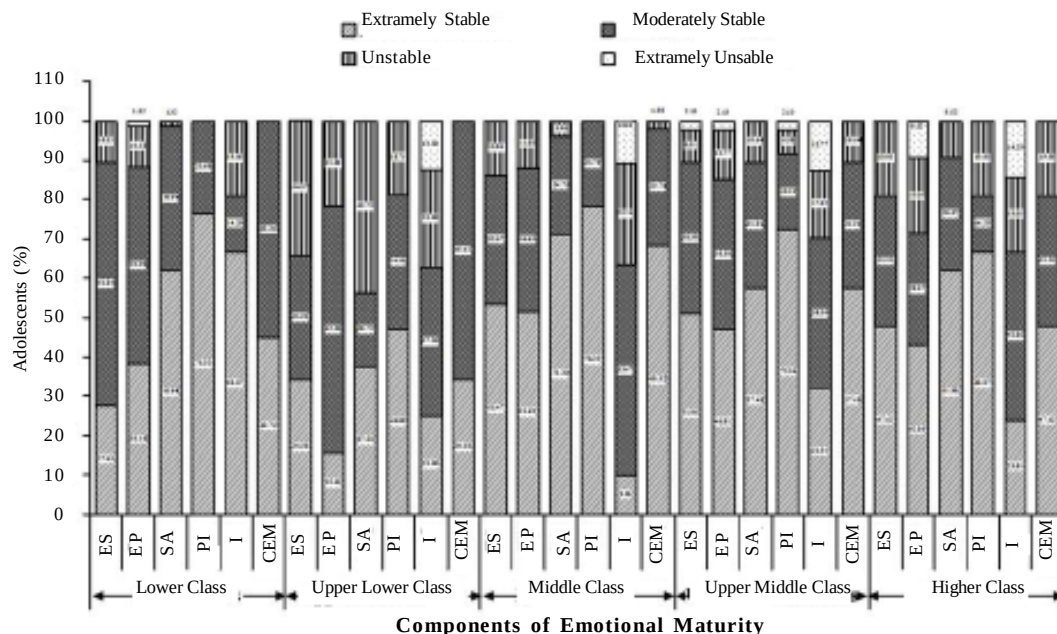


Fig. 2. Percentage distribution of adolescents of Pantnagar on emotional maturity across family economic data

Note: ES indicate Emotional Stability, EP indicate Emotional Progression, SA indicates Social Adjustments, PI indicates Personality Integration, I indicates Independence and CEM indicate Composite Emotional Maturity

(43.75%) and lower class (50.00%) majority found to fall under moderately stable level of maturity. 21.88% adolescents from upper lower class were observed unstable followed by those from higher class (19.05%), upper middle class (12.77%), middle class (11.88%) and lower class (10.53%). Surprisingly, from middle class, none of the adolescent was found extremely unstable whereas from upper lower class, higher class, lower middle class and lower class this percentage was found 9.52%, 2.13% and 1.32%, respectively.

For social adjustment, majority of adolescents were found extremely stable under all the categories of family economic class. 71.29% adolescents who belonged to middle class, 61.84% those who were from lower class, 61.9% who belonged to higher class, 57.45% who belonged to upper middle class and 37.50% who were from upper lower class were found extremely stable. However, none of the adolescent was found extremely unstable where as adolescents from upper lower class (43.75%), from upper middle class (10.64%), higher class (9.52%), middle class (3.96%) and lower class (1.32%) were found unstable.

Under personality integration, majority of adolescents from all the family economic class groups were found extremely stable, which is quite noticeable. 94.06% adolescents from middle class, 76.32% from lower class, 72.34% from upper middle class, 66.67% from higher class and 46.88% from upper lower class were found extremely stable. Surprisingly, none of the adolescent from lower class was found to fall under unstable and extremely unstable level of maturity: Adolescents from higher class or middle class

were also not found extremely unstable. Although, those who belonged to upper lower class (6.25%) and upper middle class (2.13%) were found extremely unstable.

In contrast to this, in case of independence component, majority of adolescents were found moderately stable except those who belonged to middle class and lower class. Adolescents from higher class (42.86%), upper middle class (38.30%) and upper lower class (37.50%) were found moderately stable in majority. Whereas, those who belonged to middle class (37.62%) and lower class (66.67%) were found extremely stable in majority. Surprisingly, 14.29% adolescents from higher class, 12.77% from upper middle class, 6.25% from upper lower class and 1.98% from middle class were found extremely unstable. Whereas, none of the adolescent from lower class was observed extremely unstable.

The composite emotional maturity score reveals that majority of adolescents were found extremely stable except those who were from lower class, which is quite acceptable. 47.62% adolescents from higher class, 57.45% from upper middle class, 68.32% from middle class and 34.38% from upper lower class were found extremely stable where as 55.26% adolescents from lower class were found moderately stable in majority. None of the adolescent was found extremely unstable except those were from upper lower class families.

A close perusal of Table 1 clearly shows that adolescents from upper middle and higher income family were significantly more personally, and interpersonally adequate but not socially adequate than those from other family economic class classes viz lower, upper lower and middle

Table 1: Mean differences in social and emotional maturity of adolescents of Pantnagar across family economic class

Components of maturity	Lower class ($n_1=76$)	Upperlower class($n_2=32$)	Higher class ($n_3=21$)	Middleclass ($n_4=101$)	Uppermiddle class($n_5=47$)
<i>Components of Social Maturity</i>	71.46 ^a	72.34 ^a	73.42 ^a	75.23 ^b	74.47 ^b
Personal adequacy					
Inter-personal adequacy	80.22	79.57	79.88	81.00	80.47
Social adequacy	86.53 ^a	85.64 ^a	86.25 ^a	86.89 ^a	83.33 ^b
Composite social maturity	238.22	238.78	239.57	243.12	238.28
<i>Components of Emotional Maturity</i>					
Emotional stability	19.36	19.67	19.95	20.74	20.85
Emotional progression	19.87	19.89	19.00	20.66	19.54
Social adjustment	17.55 ^a	18.98 ^a	18.22 ^a	18.66 ^a	19.38 ^b
Personality integration	17.36	16.77	17.41	16.4	17.28
Independence	22.52 ^a	22.67 ^a	22.35 ^a	22.61 ^a	24.09 ^b
Composite emotional maturity	100.07 ^a	101.46 ^a	100.52 ^a	100.12 ^a	104.47 ^b

Note: ^a Significant at 0.05 level, ^b Significant at 0.01 level.

Table 2: Relationship between social and emotional maturity of adolescents of Pantnagar across family economic class

Components of emotional/ social maturity	Lower class				Upper lower class			
	Perso- nal ade- quacy	Inter- personal ade- quacy	Social ade- quacy	Compo- site matu- rity	Perso- nal ade- quacy	Inter- personal ade- quacy	Social ade- quacy	Composite social maturity
Emotional stability	.069	.243*	.111*	.156*	.236**	.270*	.208*	.135*
Emotional progression	.149*	.181*	.113*	.141*	.356**	.330**	.216*	.371**
Social adjustment	.105*	.188*	.170*	.148*	.137*	.129*	.229**	.185*
Personality integration	.248*	.344**	.124*	.123*	.280**	.260**	.155*	.200*
Independence	.159*	.066	.218**	.178*	.274*	.236**	.305**	.192*
Composite emotional maturity	.153*	.273*	.168*	.106*	.331**	.315**	.267**	.298**

Components of emotional/ social maturity	Lower class				Upper lower class				Higher class			
	Perso- nal ade- quacy	Inter- personal ade- quacy	Social ade- quacy	Compo- site matu- rity	Perso- nal ade- quacy	Inter- personal ade- quacy	Social ade- quacy	Compo- site matu- rity	Perso- nal ade- quacy	Inter- personal ade- quacy	Social adequ- acy	Compo- social matu- rity
Emotional stability	.119*	.232*	.183*	.122*	.354*	.137*	.344*	.270**	.165*	.107*	.318**	.264**
Emotional progression	.252**	.111*	.220*	.117*	.457**	.318*	.403*	.388**	.136*	.173*	.268**	.236**
Social adjustment	.120*	.143*	.163*	.172*	.300*	.109*	.405**	.265**	.028	.157*	.202**	.254**
Personality integration	.197*	.138*	.218*	.177*	.380**	.195*	.407**	.320*	.223**	.229**	.368**	.424**
Independence	.232*	.119	.252**	.219*	.230*	.102*	.188*	.265**	.212**	.105*	.288**	.139*
Composite emotional maturity	.221*	.244*	.239*	.216*	.355*	.225*	.405**	.328*	.165*	.107*	.318**	.264*

Note: * Significant at 0.05 level

** Significant at 0.01 level

income family. However, no significant difference was observed on overall social maturity across family economic class of adolescents.

One reason behind adolescents from upper middle and higher income family being more personally and interpersonally adequate but lesser socially adequate than lower income families can be that most of time these high SES families, remains highly concerned, involved and sometimes even obsessed with having material gains and striving towards opulence in life in order to maintain that high status. Due to this reason their social circle starts getting restricted and ultimately the social adequacy of such families suffers to great extent although their personal and interpersonal adequacy remains efficient as compared to the lower socio-economic strata families.

In 1995, Kalaramma conducted a study on social maturity of children of Haryana State and found that the association between social maturity and social-personal, socio-economic factors was non-significant, which is opposite to the above findings. In contrast to this, Anand and Bhanot (2007) examined the social maturity of rural and urban adolescent girls and found that socio-personal and socio-economic factors are directly related to social maturity of adolescent girls of both urban and rural areas and the socio-economic status of the family will help in developing the social maturity.

On emotional maturity, it was noticed that adolescents from higher income family were significantly better on social adjustment and independence component of emotional maturity than those from lower income family. They were also observed to be significantly more emotionally mature than those from rest of the adolescents. It is pretty obvious that an adolescent belonging to upper socio-economic status besides getting least worried about meeting the demands of basic necessities, also gets a better opportunity or privilege to enjoy a luxurious and lavish lifestyle that contributes greatly towards his/her contentment and satisfaction level in life which ultimately results in his/her enhanced socio-emotional adjustment as compared to the adolescent belonging to lower income groups. Dodge et al. (1994) also reported that *children from low-income families are also more likely than those from more affluent families to suffer from such socio-emotional problems as anxiety and depression, and such behavioral problems as peer conflict and conduct disorders*. Similarly, Leh-

man and Koerner (2002) conducted a study on the association of family financial hardship with adolescent girls' adjustment and found a positive direct relationship between family financial hardship and girls' psychological distress.

Table 2 highlights the relationship between social and emotional maturity of senior school adolescents of Pantnagar across family economic class. All the components of emotional and social maturity were found significantly and positively correlated for those adolescents who belonged to upper lower class income group. Correlation between social and emotional maturity of senior school adolescents of Pantnagar on the basis of lower class income group was significant in most the variables. Personal adequacy and inter-personal adequacy were found non-significantly correlated with emotional stability (.069) and independence (.066), respectively.

CONCLUSION

It is evident from the study that for sure family economic class has great impact over the social and emotional maturity of adolescents, that is, difference in family economic class contributes to difference in social and emotional maturity of adolescents. Some of the components of social maturity such as personal and interpersonal adequacy are positively dominated by higher income classes but the reverse is true for the social adequacy component of social maturity where middle and lower income family adolescents are seen to be better than the high income family adolescents. However, adolescents from higher income families are better than rest of the income groups in almost all the components of emotional maturity. Moreover, social and emotional maturity of adolescents is significantly and positively correlated with each other across family economic class.

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