

Emotional competence of Children in Child Care Institutes: A Cross-Sectional Study

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Abstract

Emotional competence (EC) involves the ability to recognize and regulate one's own emotions, as well as the emotions of others, for self-motivation and effective management of emotions in social relationships. A child's family is the primary source of socialization, hence its role is significant in the development of EC. In the present cross sectional study was designed to compare the emotional competence of Students residing in Child Care Institute (CCI) and in Family. The sample of students (N=300) was constituted with two sub-groups namely family deprived (Students from CCI), and Family Privileged (Students living with Family). Emotional Competence Scale (ECS-DSGS) developed by Sharma and Bharadwaj (2016) was used to assess emotional competence of children. Obtained data was analyzed by employing t (Independent) analysis. Result revealed that family privileged students were significantly higher in their emotional competence ($t = 2.90, p < .01$), and its specific components namely Adequate Depth of Feeling ($t = 5.05, p < .01$), Adequate Expression and Control of Emotions/Emotional Expressiveness ($t = 2.74, p < .01$), and, Ability to Enhance Positive Emotions ($t = .675, P > .01$). Whereas, no such difference was observed for components such as the Ability to function with Emotions denoted as C ($t = .675, P > .01$), and Ability to Cope with Problem Emotions denoted by D ($t = 1.74, p > .01$).

Keywords - Emotional competence, Child Care Institute, family deprived, and Family Privileged.

Introduction

Development is not a linear process, and individuals may experience different stages of development at different rates. There are critical periods during development where certain skills or abilities must be acquired for optimal development to occur. For instance, language development is critical during early childhood, and if a child does not acquire linguistic skills during this period, it may affect their ability to communicate effectively later in life. Environmental factors such as cultural, social, and economic contexts play a significant role in an individual's development. Cultural influences shape the beliefs, values, and behaviours of an individual, whereas social interactions with family, peers, and community members can have a significant impact on the development of social skills and relationships. Economic factors such as income, education, and access to resources can also influence an individual's development.

Overall, development is a complex and ongoing process that is influenced by a range of factors, including biological, cognitive, socio-emotional, cultural, social, and economic factors. Understanding these factors and their interactions is essential to promoting optimal development and well-being throughout an individual's life.

The Role of the Family and Psychosocial Development

A child's family provides a base for its physical, psychological, social, and overall development. The family is a group of individuals united by the ties of blood, marriage, or adoption, and they share biological, social, and psychological relationships with each other. The role of family is central to a child's life, it serves as the primary agent of a child's

socialization. It is within the family that a child's all-round development takes place, including physical, social, and psychological domains.

The different domains of a child's development, including physical, social, and psychological, are equally important. However, psychosocial development is a major cornerstone of an individual's well-being. Psychosocial development is the combination of psychological and social development, and it involves the development of a person's personality, self-esteem, identity, social skills, and relationships with others.

Therefore, the family's role in a child's psychosocial development is crucial, as the family is the primary source of socialization and emotional support for the child. The family provides a nurturing environment that helps the child develop a positive self-concept, healthy social relationships, and emotional stability.

One's psychosocial development is influenced by both physical and environmental conditions, as well as demographic characteristics. The context of the family, including the family's demographic characteristics, can play an important role in a child's psychosocial development.

Researchers have used a tripartite model of familial influence to describe the associations between the components of the family context and children and adolescents' emotional regulation. This model includes three components:

- i. Family structure: This refers to the composition of the family, including the number and relationships of family members. For example, a child growing up in a two-parent household may have different psychosocial development experiences than a child growing up in a single-parent household.
- ii. Family processes: This refers to the interactions and communication patterns within the family, such as the level of warmth and support, discipline strategies, and conflict resolution methods. Positive family processes can promote healthy psychosocial development, while negative family processes can hinder it.
- iii. Family culture: This refers to the beliefs, values, and norms within the family that influence a child's development. For example, a family's cultural background and traditions can shape a child's identity and worldview.

These components of the family context can interact with each other to influence a child's psychosocial development. For example, a single-parent household may have different family processes and cultural beliefs than a two-parent household, which could impact the child's emotional regulation and overall psychosocial development.

It is important to note that while the family context can play an important role in a child's psychosocial development, individual differences and experiences outside of the family context (such as school and peer relationships) also contribute to psychosocial development.

Emotional Competence

Competence in the emotional domain is important for an individual's well-being. Competence refers to a person's mastery of skills, and emotional competence specifically refers to the ability to effectively regulate one's emotions to achieve goals and interact with others in a healthy way.

According to Goleman (1995), emotional competence involves the ability to recognize and regulate one's own emotions, as well as the emotions of others, for self-motivation and effective management of emotions in social relationships. This skill is essential for healthy social and emotional development, as it allows individuals to form positive relationships, manage stress, and achieve personal goals.

Theoretical Orientation of Emotional competence

Emotional competence has been gaining more attention as a strong predictor of life success. Emotional competence refers to a set of generic emotion-related skills which allow individuals to effectively recognize, interpret, and respond to their own emotions as well as those of others.

According to Boyatzis et al. (2000), emotional competence can be defined as the ability to demonstrate self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social skills at appropriate times and in sufficient frequency to be effective in a given situation. Self-awareness involves understanding one's own emotions and how they impact behavior, while self-management involves the ability to regulate one's emotions and behaviors in a constructive way. Social awareness involves recognizing and understanding the emotions of others, while social skills refer to the ability to use emotional information effectively in social interactions.

Emotional competence is an important skill for success in life, as it allows individuals to navigate complex social interactions and relationships, manage stress, and achieve personal goals. It also plays a crucial role in mental health and well-being, as individuals with higher levels of emotional competence are better able to cope with stress and maintain positive relationships.

Therefore, promoting emotional competence in individuals, especially in children and adolescents, is essential for their overall success and well-being. By developing skills in self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social skills, individuals can become more effective and successful in a wide range of personal and professional settings.

The concept of emotional competence has been studied from different theoretical perspectives, including functionalist and developmental perspectives. Lazarus and Campos were among the first researchers to study emotional competence from a functionalist perspective. They focused on how emotions function to help individuals adapt to their environment and respond to significant events or situations. They argued that emotional competence involves the ability to appraise and cope with environmental demands in a way that promotes adaptive functioning. Saarni expanded on the functionalist perspective by exploring the role of social and cultural factors in emotional development.

The debate surrounding Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Emotional Competence (EC) is ongoing in the academic community, and there is still no clear distinction between the two concepts. Some researchers argue that the terms are interchangeable, while others see them as distinct constructs.

According to Lau's review, EI is primarily concerned with an individual's innate ability to recognize, understand and regulate their own emotions, as well as the emotions of others. In contrast, EC emphasizes the skills acquired through cultural and contextual experiences. This means that emotional competence is gained through social interactions with others, and it can be nurtured and developed over time.

While EI focuses on an individual's inherent emotional traits and personality, EC is more transactional, occurring both within the self and between the self and others. EC involves the ability to communicate effectively, empathize with others, and manage emotions in social situations. These skills are essential for building strong relationships and navigating complex social dynamics.

Some researchers argue that the term "emotional intelligence" places too much emphasis on individual traits and abilities, while neglecting the importance of social and cultural factors in emotional development. As a result, they prefer to use the term "emotional competence" to better reflect the role of context and culture in emotional learning and development.

Ultimately, whether one uses the term EI or EC, the key takeaway is that emotional skills are essential for success in both personal and professional relationships. These skills can be learned and developed through practice and experience, making emotional competence a valuable asset in all aspects of life.

The study by Ciarrochi and Scott (2006) found that emotional competence, or the ability to understand and manage one's emotions, is an important factor in adolescent well-being. The study also found that difficulties in emotional regulation can lead to destructive behaviors such as alcohol abuse.

Research has shown that enhancing emotional competence can have a positive impact on youth development and can help prevent negative outcomes such as substance abuse, depression, and anxiety. By learning to identify and manage their emotions effectively, adolescents can develop better coping mechanisms and improve their overall well-being.

Components of Emotional Competence

1. **Adequate Depth of Feeling** refers to the process of mental contentment and is an evaluating component of one's adaptation to the environment in which he/she lives.
2. **Adequate Expression and Control of Emotions (Emotional Expressiveness)** implies a natural and dynamic stability of a person to express and control his/her emotions simultaneously.
3. **Ability to Function with Emotions** is an ability to carry out even routine work in spite of a highly emotional situation.
4. **Ability to Cope with Problem Emotions** implies to efficiency to understand the role of sensitivity and the negative effects of problem emotions in the start and along with it, and also develops the ability to resist the detrimental effects of them thereafter.
5. **Ability to Enhance Positive Emotions** refers to the person's competence to establish a predominance of positive emotions in his personality in order to lead a fairly integrated and meaningful life.

Although there are plenty of studies conducted on the significance of family in development of emotional competence, in the current study the attempt was made to verify aforesaid by comparing family privileged and non-privileged children on their measure of emotional competence on a sample of Rajasthan state.

Objective

To study and compare the family deprived and family privileged adolescents in their emotional competence

Hypothesis

Family deprived and family privileged adolescents will be significantly different in their Emotional competence.

Method

Sample

The population for this study was Sr. Sec. Students, from Government schools, situated in Udaipur and Jaipur district of Rajasthan. The sample was constituted of 300 adolescents selected through purposive sampling technique. The sample was equally comprised of two groups namely family deprived (n=150) and family privileged (n=150) adolescents' group. Adolescents living in Child Care Institute (CCI) were selected into Family deprived Group, whereas adolescents living with their family were selected for family privileged group.

Sample Selection Criteria

Sample was selected on the basis of inclusion and exclusion criteria, described as follows-

● Inclusion Criteria—

- Adolescents studying in class 11 and 12 with age range in between 15-18 years from government schools were included in the sample.
- Both male and female were included in the sample.
- Adolescents' consent to take participants was taken into consideration.

● Exclusion Criteria—

- Adolescents from Private schools were excluded.
- Students whose age was found below 15 years or above 18 years were excluded from the sample.
- Refused to be involved in the study.

Operational Definition of the Variables Under Study

The operational definition of all the studied independent and dependent variables are as follows—

- **Family Deprived:** Children whose upbringing takes place in the absence of family environment.
- **Family Privileged:** Children whose upbringing takes place within the family environment.
- **Emotional Competence:** Emotional competence as an efficacy to deal effectively with several dissociable but related processes is a blending of five competencies, which are adequate depth of feeling (ADF), Adequate expression and control of emotions (AECE), Ability to function with emotions (AFE), Ability to cope with problem emotions (ACPE), and Ability to enhance positive emotions (AEPE).

Research Design

Between group design (Two Independent group design) was used.

Figure

Two Independent Group Design

Family Status A		Total
Family Deprived A1	Family Privileged A2	N=300
EXP. gr. 1 n = 150	EXP. gr. 2 n = 150	

Scale & Test

- Emotional Competence Scale (ECS-DSGS) developed by Sharma and Bharadwaj (2016) was used to assess emotional competence of children. This tool contains 30 items related to various competencies namely Adequate depth of feeling (ADF), Adequate expression and control of emotions (AECE), Ability to function with emotions (AFE), Ability to cope with problem emotions (ACPE), and Ability to enhance positive emotions (AEPE). Reliability of the scale was found through test-retest, and split Half reliability coefficient which are found to be .74, & .76 respectively. Using these two methods the reliability coefficient for all comprised competencies were found in range of .71 to .90. The validity of this scale has been determined with factor A and C personality factors questionnaire and found to be .64 and .69 respectively.

Procedure

The sample consisted of two groups, family deprived and family privileged, from Udaipur city of Rajasthan. The sample was selected from various government senior secondary schools for the availability of family deprived adolescents who reside in child care institutes (CCI). The study included a sample of 300 adolescents, with 150 in each group, and administered the Emotional Competence Scale (ECS-DSGS) after obtaining their consent and ensuring confidentiality. The data obtained from the test was analyzed using t-(Independent) test analysis with the help of SPSS software.

Result and Discussion

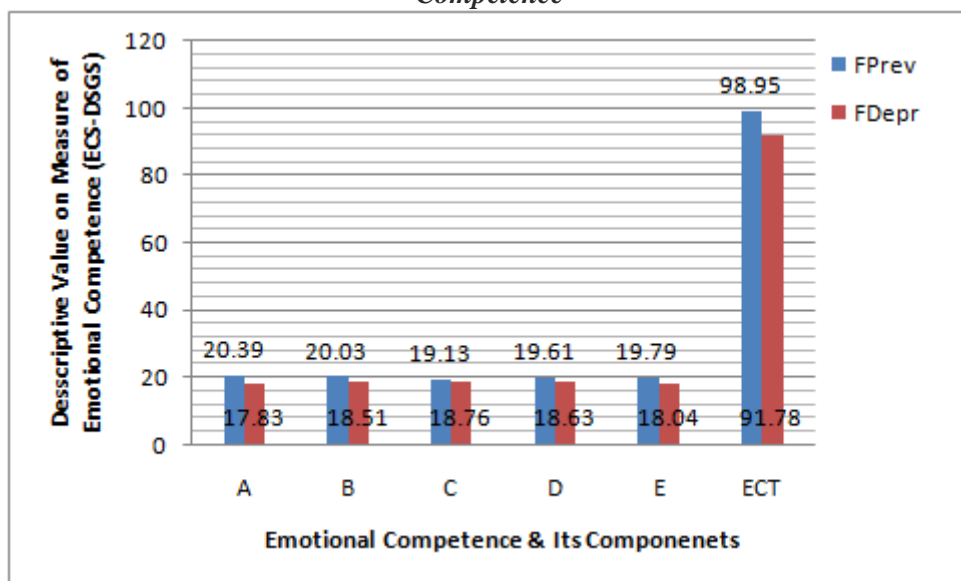
The aim of the present research was to compare the Family deprived and family Privileged children on their measure of emotional competence. The result under Descriptive and t-test (Independent) analysis presented in Table 1.

Result Table-1 ; Summary of t (Independent)-test Analysis for Family status of Children on measure of Emotional Competence

Measures	FPrev		FDepr		t	df	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
A	20.387	4.508	17.833	4.254	5.045	298.000	0.001*
B	20.033	5.132	18.513	4.452	2.740	298.000	0.007*
C	19.133	5.191	18.760	4.351	0.675	298.000	0.500
D	19.613	5.118	18.633	4.577	1.748	298.000	0.081
E	19.787	4.900	18.040	4.713	3.147	298.000	0.002*
ECT	98.953	11.876	91.780	9.997	5.659	298.000	0.001*

* Significant at .01 level, **Significant at .05 level.

Figure- 1: Graphical Representation for Family Status on measure of Emotional Competence



Result Table 5.5 and respective figure (Figure 5.5) interprets the t-test (Independent) analysis for Family Status (Family Privilege & Family Deprived) on the measure of emotional

competence and its components, namely, Adequate Depth of Feeling (A), Adequate Expression and Control of Emotions/Emotional Expressiveness (B), Ability to function with Emotions (C), Ability to Cope with Problem Emotions (D), and, Ability to Enhance Positive Emotions (E) for adolescents.

For EC ($t= 2.90, p< .01$), as the t value was found to be significant, it revealed that children with family privilege ($M= 98.95, SD= 11.87$) are significantly higher in their ability to express or release one's inner feelings (emotions), as compared to adolescents who are Family Deprived ($M= 91.78, SD= 9.99$).

While scrutinizing variance in components of Emotional competence, t - value are further examined to be significant For Adequate Depth of Feeling denoted as A ($t= 5.05, p< .01$) for Family Privileged ($M= 20.38, SD= 4.5$) the mean value was found to be higher than Family Deprived adolescents ($M= 17.83, SD= 4.25$). The finding indicates that children who are developed in family surroundings are highly appropriate in their process of mental contentment of adaptation to the environment, they are also higher in their personality integration, and the feeling of being confident as compared to those who are not rearing in a family environment.

Additionally, for Adequate Expression and Control of Emotions or Emotional Expressiveness denoted as B ($t = 2.74, p< .01$), the t value is further examined to be significant for Family Privileged ($M= 20.03, SD= 5.13$) as the mean value was found to be higher than Family Deprived adolescents ($M= 18.51, SD= 4.51$). The result highlights that adolescents whose development is taking place in a family environment have comparatively natural and dynamic stability of expression and control of their emotions well as compared to those who are away from their family.

In the study, the t value is also examined to be significant in the case of the Ability to Enhance Positive Emotions (E) too, ($t= 3.14, p< .01$), as for Family Privileged ($M= 19.78, SD= 4.9$) the mean value was found to be higher than Family Deprived adolescents ($M= 18.04, SD= 4.7$). The finding divulged that rearing in the family also facilitates the growth of positive emotions which constructively influence the dynamics of human behaviour such as joy, love, affections, etc. to take place smoothly. Growing vibrancy and a feeling of wholeness along with a continuous capacity for spiritual and intellectual growth are the base ingredients. These positive emotions are the basis of the healthy growth of an individual's personality and his/her adaptation to the environment's needs.

However, apart from these components of emotional components described above, t - values for components such as the Ability to function with Emotions denoted as C ($t=.675, P>.01$), and Ability to Cope with Problem Emotions denoted by D ($t= 1.74, p>.01$), are examined to be non-significant which divulges that the family environment has non-significant effect on two specific dimensions of emotional competence, namely 1) Ability to Function with Emotions which reflects one's ability to face a highly emotional situation, carrying out even routine work may be difficult; and 2) Ability to Cope with Problem Emotions which reflects when many problem emotions play a destructive role in the manifestation of one's behaviour.

The present study highlights the impact of family deprivation on the psycho-social development of adolescents, including their emotional competence (Lo Cricchio, et al., 2021). According to (Halberstadt, 1991) a child's emotional competence is shaped by their environment While family is a crucial foundation for a child's overall development, those who are deprived of this environment may experience unique challenges that can impact their emotional development.

It is worth noting that emotional competence is influenced not only by family but also by other factors such as school, peers, genetics, and life experiences. Therefore, it is important to consider these factors when studying emotional development and its relationship to family deprivation.

The role of the family in developing emotional competence is well-established, with parents being one of the most influential sources for children and adolescents. Emotional competence, which includes the ability to label, identify, and regulate emotions, is crucial for healthy development and well-being. The family plays a critical role in creating a positive environment that enhances children's and adolescents' emotional learning.

The study by Khairi et al. (2022) highlights the importance of family education and modeling in developing emotional competence. Positive family functioning has been found to be positively correlated with emotional intelligence in previous studies by Ghanawat et al. (2016). However, the recent study by Mumtaz et al. (2023) found that family structure was a poor predictor of emotional competence in Pakistani school-going adolescents, suggesting that the role of the family may differ depending on cultural and contextual factors.

It is important to consider these mixed findings and continue studying the complex relationship between family and emotional competence. Future research should investigate the specific aspects of family functioning that contribute to emotional competence and how they interact with other factors such as culture, school, and peers. This understanding could help inform interventions and support for families and adolescents in developing emotional competence.

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that children raised in family environments are likely to have higher emotional competence compared to those living in childcare institutes. Therefore, the hypothesis has been accepted. The study validates the crucial and significant role of the family in the development of emotional competence, emphasizing the importance of family support and involvement in promoting emotional development in children and adolescents. It is important to note that the findings of this study may not be generalizable to all cultural and contextual settings and that further research is needed to fully understand the complex relationship between family and emotional competence.

The current study has several strengths, including highlighting the prominent role of the family in psycho-social development in children in childcare institutes. The study's results were obtained from a naturalistic setting, which adds to its ecological validity. However, there are few limitations to the study. One of the limitations is that the participants were given questionnaires, which could have been manipulated, leading to inaccurate descriptions of the data. Additionally, there may have been other factors, such as the quality of care in childcare institutes, that were not accounted for in the study and may have influenced emotional competence development.

Future studies could consider using multiple methods to gather data, such as observational measures, in addition to self-report questionnaires, to increase the study's validity. Additionally, researchers could consider measuring other factors that may influence emotional competence development in children in childcare institutes, such as the quality of care provided.

Conflict of interest: The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Author contributions: Has full access to all of the data used in this study and takes responsibility for the integrity and the accuracy of the data; Meena. Study concept and design: Meena & Jain. Analysis and interpretation of data: Manglani. Drafting the manuscript: Meena & Manglani. Critical revision of the manuscript for important intellectual content: all authors. Study supervision: Jain.

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