

Emotional Maturity and Behavioral Problems among School Students: A Correlational Study

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between Emotional Maturity and Behavioral Problems of school students. The Emotional Maturity Scale (EMS) and the Child Behavior Checklist (YSR) were used on a sample of 800 school students selected from different public and private schools of Lahore, Pakistan. The results of the study indicate that there is a significant positive relationship between emotional maturity and the internalizing and externalizing behavioral problems of the school students. Moreover, there were gender differences between emotional maturity and externalizing problems of the school children. Girls ($M=146.23$) were found to be more emotionally insecure than boys ($M=143.3$) whereas boys ($M=18.42$) had more externalizing problems than girls ($M=16.60$). The study can guide the counselors about the relationship of emotional maturity and behavioral problems and how these affect the school children in different ways.

Keywords: Emotional Maturity, Behavior Problems, Internalizing Problems, externalizing problems.

Introduction

Emotional maturity is essential determinant of personality pattern. It assists to manage the growth of adolescent's development. According to the scientific perspective, personality is the organization of various characteristics and "emotional maturity" is one of them. Emotional maturity is the tendency to comprehend and deal with a person's

sentiments. The level of emotional maturity determines our ability to manage complex situations (Jobson, 2020). It is a state, in which a person acquires emotional growth, becomes emotionally stable and manages their emotions according to the circumstances, and also critically examines a situation before responding to it. They have steady emotions and do not exhibit constant swings (joy, 2018). The ability to withstand tension is the most notable sign of emotional maturity, as it allows a person to bear the frustration they go through (Kumar & Smriti, 2014).

Emotional maturity according to Jersild (1963), is the degree to which people can recognize their potential for life prosperity and develop aptitude to enjoy things, to love and laugh and able to relate themselves to others; and express their emotions according to the occasion as a real self without any faking of personality'. Emotional mood swings are regularly noticed at an adolescent's stage. Adolescence is a intermediate period from childhood to being an independent adult; typified by social and emotional, physical and psychological changes (Gulati et al., 2018). According to Smiston (1974), emotional maturity is a procedure through which personality constantly strives for better emotional well-being, both physically & psychologically.

Tayebi et al, (2020) stated that emotional problems are one of the most prominent leading causes of behavioral problems. There is a strong correlation between the adolescence age and behavioral and emotional issues. It is vital to get awareness regarding these problems and find the coping solutions. The most common psychological disorders during childhood and adolescence are anxiety disorder (31%), emotional problems (14.3 %), and behavior disorders (19.1%) Fuchs et al., (2013).

Problem behavior is the disrupted behavior, which a child shows frequently that can be harmful for the child, their families and other persons around them. The adolescents could exhibit internal and external both type of behavioral problems (Devlin, 1998).

The behaviors which are termed as externalizing behavior involves disinherit behavior and other ways of socialization (Kovacs & Devlin, 1998). They are the clusters of behaviors which are directed outward, such as hyperactive and destructive behavior (Shan & Winslow, 1997). Internalizing behavior consists of withdrawal, apprehension, self-consciousness and anxiety (Eisenberg et al., 2001).

Rational of Study

Children experience behavioral problems due to many reasons, among those emotional immaturity is a significant factor which exacerbates the emotional insecurity and ultimately pushes the children to behavioral problems. The main purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between emotional maturity and behavioral problems among school children. As there is dearth of studies of this topic, therefore there is a dire need to dwell deeply into different aspects regarding emotional maturity and its effects on child's psychological and behavioral well-being so that awareness can be spread in Pakistani society about it.

Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Explore the relationship between emotional maturity and behavioral problems among school students.
2. Evaluate the gender differences regarding emotional maturity and behavioral problems of adolescents.
3. Investigate the difference in family systems in terms of behavioral problems among school students.
4. Examine the difference between the numbers of siblings and behavioral problems of school students.
5. Explore how birth order impacts the relationship between emotional maturity and behavioral problems of school children.

Literature Review

In reviewing previous literature, many studies have revealed that emotional maturity and behavioral problems are interlinked. Emotional maturity has a crucial role on the growth of individuals. Lack of emotional maturity could cause severe hurdles in social and personal life. It helps the individual to lead a healthy life and act appropriately according to the situation (Jobson, 2020).

Hollingworth (1928) explained that a person who is emotionally mature can react with a degree of emotional responses and keep within bounds, he does not respond in none or all fashion. He will be able to control his responses according to the situations and are capable of tackling self-pity (Singh & Bhargava, 1990).

Anand et al., (2014) examined those adolescent years are the most critical time for emotional maturity. Adolescents learn to love, hate, feel anger and fear. It is vital that adults empower their thinking and channelize their anger positively. Various decisions of life occur in this little period of adolescence. Those who are emotionally mature grow from childhood, where one effectively deals with disappointment and failures. High intelligence quotient does not essentially take one to the development of emotional maturity.

Johns et al., (2016) conducted research regarding all such emotions which are known to be the basic factor of all relationships. Emotions have influence as they are powerful and they have great control on our thoughts, behavior and other aspects of life. Our past experiences directly influenced the behavior and thought processes and early developmental stages of consciousness characterized by physical aspects like physical arousal, awareness of implicit and explicit behavior. We are energized and motivated by healthy emotions for appropriate action. Unhealthy emotions are either overly intense or suppressed. Mowafy et al, (2015) conducted cross-sectional research on 476 students to assess the occurrence, impact and predictors of behavioral and emotional issues of 13 to 17 years of age students from rural areas. Our findings indicated that students with higher level of emotional problems have greater behavior problems. Kumar (2014) stated that boys and girls significantly differ in terms of emotional maturity and it's also influenced by their family relations.

Significance of the Study

This study will be helpful for counselors to get some insight about the psychological well-being of the school children as young as 14 years because in describing stress and other mental issues, the mainstream school children are believed to be out of this domain. Most of the literature has focused on clinical population whenever they set out for exploring behavior problems, but recent researches and statistics are indicating a large population of mainstream school and high-school students experiencing a lack of emotional maturity, which causes different types of behavioral problems in them. This study will bring forth the awareness of behavior problems in mainstream school population.

Methodology

Participants

The sample consisted of 800 participants from various schools of the Lahore city and around Lahore, including boys and girls of 7th to 10th grades, with the age range of 13–18 years were included in the sample (N=800). Convenient sampling technique had been used. The students over 18 and below age 13 and the students with any physical and mental health issues are not included.

Research Instruments

Demographic Questionnaire

A demographic questionnaire was designed keeping in account the demographic variables as obtained from the literature review. The demographic variables included age, gender, class, school system, family system and number of siblings.

Emotional Maturity Scale (EMS)

This scale is developed by Waheed, Rasheed and Kausar (2015). The scale comprises of 46 items and it is a self-reporting five-point Likert scale. The higher score on the scale shows a greater degree of emotional insecurity and the other way around.

Child Behavior Checklist (YSR)

Child Behavior Checklist was developed by Achenbach and Rescorla in 2001. It was used to measure a broad variety of behavioral and emotional problems among children. The scale comprises 112 items with 3 rating scales. It measures the 8 various behavioral domains.

Procedure

Formal permission was sought to use the measuring tools from the authors of the scales and Urdu translated versions were used. Informed consent was initially taken before the data collection. The participants were briefed about the aim and purpose of the study. They were also instructed about how to fill the scales. The anonymity and confidentiality of the information was ensured. Participants were instructed to be honest, while responding to the questions. Once the data were collected, it was recorded on SPSS for analysis.

Results

Table 1

Mean and SD of Age, Frequencies and Percentage of Gender, School System, Class, Number of Siblings Family System of the School Children (N=800).

Demographic Variables	<i>F</i>	%
Age		
M=14.17, SD=1.242		
Gender		
Boys	411	51
Girls	389	48
School System		
Government	400	50
Private	400	50
Grade		
7 th	200	25
8 th	200	25
9 th	200	25
10 th	200	25
Number of Siblings		
Only Child	22	2.8
1-3	451	56.4
4-6	303	37.9
7-9	21	2.6
10-12	3	.4
Family System		
Joint	385	48
Nuclear	412	51

Note. f = Frequency; M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation

Above table 1 shows the demographic profile of the participants. Most of the sample lies between the age ranges of 14 to 17 years. There were 400 boys and 389 girls. There were two categories of school system 400 students were from government schools while 400 were from public schools. The sample was collected from the students of the 7th to 10th class,

200 students per class. There were 5 categories of Siblings among which the maximum number of siblings was 12. 3% of children have 10–12 siblings, while 2% was the one-Child. Furthermore, the table also depicted that 48% of students belong to joint family system, whereas 51% of students were those who belongs to nuclear family system.

The results indicated a significant positive relationship between emotional maturity and behavioral problems' subscales except somatic complaints ($r=.055$, $p>.05$) and rule breaking behavior ($r=.026$, $p>.05$). The highest correlation score of emotional maturity was with attention problems ($r=.216^{**}$, $p<.001$) and rule breaking behavior ($r=.211^{**}$, $p<.001$). In emotional maturity scale, higher scores indicated a greater degree of the emotional insecurity and vice versa. So the findings revealed that the children who receive higher scores in emotional insecurity have a greater degree of behavioral problems.

Table 2

Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient between Emotional Maturity, Behavioral Problems and its subscales (N=800).

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	M	SD
1. EM	1	.211**	.144**	.055	.026	.170**	.108**	.137**	.216**	144.	18.6
2.ANX		1	.616**	.518**	.592**	.639**	.671**	.653**	.614**	8.82	4.41
3.W/D			1	.419**	.437**	.532**	.515**	.504**	.510**	6.03	2.85
4. SC				1	.417**	.445**	.446**	.460**	.397**	6.65	3.80
5.RBB					1	.682**	.662**	.661**	.537**	6.95	5.48
6. AB						1	.639**	.651**	.645**	10.2	6.18
7.SP							1	.606**	.572**	7.27	3.85
8. TP								1	.579**	8.93	4.93
9.AP									1	6.81	3.49

Note: CP= Critical Parenting, PS=Parental Support, EM= Emotional Maturity, ANX/D= Anxious/Depression, WD/D= EM= Emotional Maturity, ANX/D= Anxious/Depression, WD/D= Withdrawn/Depression, SC= Somatic Complaints, RBB= Rule Breaking Behavior, AB= Aggressive Behavior, SP= Social Problems, TP= Thought Problems, AP= Attention Problems, M=Mean, SD=Standard Deviation

Table 3

Independent sample T-test between boys and girls for Emotional Maturity and Behavioral problems (N=800).

Note: M=Mean, SD=Standard Deviation, CL= Confidence Interval, LL=Lower Limit, UL=Upper Limit

Variables	Boys(N=434)		Girls(N=366)		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95%CL		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
Emotional Maturity	143.30	18.40	146.23	18.85	-2.214	.027	-5.521	.332	0.157
Internalizing Problems	22.07	9.485	21.87	9.332	.304	.761	-1.109	1.515	0.021
Externalizing Problems	18.42	11.208	16.60	10.692	2.344	.019	.297	3.355	0.166
Other Problems	5.58	3.216	5.79	3.193	-.919	.359	-.655	.238	-0.065

Independent sample t-test was performed comparing the emotional maturity, internalizing, externalizing and other problems of boys and girls. The result indicated a significant difference ($p < .05$) between emotional maturity in boys ($M=143.3$, $SD=18.40$) and girls ($M=146.23$, $SD=18.85$). Girls scored higher in emotional maturity than boys, In Emotional maturity scale higher scores indicated greater degree of the emotional immature and vice versa. So the findings revealed that girls are more emotionally immature than boys. In internalizing problems, there is no significant difference ($p > .05$) between boys and girls. The mean scores of boys are higher ($M=22.07$, $SD=9.485$) than girls ($M=21.87$, $SD=9.332$). In externalizing problems there is a significant difference ($p < .05$) between boys and girls. Table shows that boys ($M=18.42$, $SD=11.208$) scored higher than girls ($M=16.60$, $SD=10.692$) in externalizing problems.

Table 4

Independent sample T-test between Joint and Nuclear Family for Emotional Maturity and Behavioral Problems (N=800).

Variables	Joint	Nuclear	<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>	95%CL	Cohen's d
	(N=384)	(N=412)			LL	
	M	M			UL	
	SD	SD				
Emotional	144.19	145.06	-	.513	-3.469	-0.046
Maturity	19.45	17.92	.655		1.733	
Behavioral	84.0	85.61	-	.447	-5.768	-0.053
Problems	30.607	29.1	.761		.2545	

Note: *M*=Mean, *SD*=Standard Deviation, *CL*= Confidence Interval, *LL*=Lower Limit *UL*= Upper Limit, $p > 0.05$.

The above tables indicated that there is no significant difference among joint and nuclear family system in terms of emotional maturity ($M=144.19$, $SD=19.45$) and behavioral problems ($M=84.0$, $SD= 30.607$).

Table 5

Descriptive of One-Way Analysis of Variance for Number of Siblings on Behavior Problems among School Children (N=800).

Variables	N	M	SD
Parental Criticism			
Behavior Problems			
Only Child	22	105.14	30.53
1-3	451	83.37	30.06
4-6	303	85.12	29.25
7-9	21	87.19	23.77
10-12	3	106.00	27.71
Total	800	84.81	29.79

Note: N= No of Sample, M=Mean, SD= Standard Deviation

This table shows the mean difference between levels of number of siblings on behavior problems in school children. As reported above, the children whose number of siblings are 10-12 tend to have the maximum mean for behavior problems (M=106.00, SD=27.71). While children whose number of siblings is 1-3 have lowest behavior problems.

Discussion

The current study is conducted to assess the relationship of emotional maturity with the behavior problems of school children. This study also attempted to identify the role of various demographic variables along with main variable of emotional maturity and behavior problems. The descriptive analysis showed that the sample was from the age range of 14 - 17 years. There were 400 boys and 400 girls, most of them belonged to Nuclearfamily system.

Higher critical parenting enhances behavior problems, which comprised internalizing, externalizing and other problems. Internalizing behavior is focused inwards and it affects the internal psychological settings rather than the outside world. Whereas, those behaviors which are referred as externalizing behaviors are clusters of behavior, which is directed outward for example, disruptive, hyperactive and destructive behavior (Devlin,

1998). This study showed that emotional maturity had a significant positive relationship with internalizing, externalizing and other problems of school students.

The results also indicated a positive relationship between emotional maturity and behavioral problems. A higher level of emotional immaturity elevated behavior problems. According to Mathai et al., (2016) emotional maturity and behavioral problems are interlinked with each other; they assessed emotions, which are considered a basic factor of all relationships. They suggested that emotions are strong and they have great control on our behavior, thoughts and other aspects of life. Healthy emotions motivate and give us energy for appropriate actions. Unhealthy emotions are either overly intense or suppressed. Mowafy et al. conducted cross-sectional research on 476 students to assess the occurrence, impact and predictors of emotional and behavioral problems of rural adolescents' school students of 13 to 17 years of age. The findings indicated that students with higher level of emotional problems have greater behavior problems. Emotions predict behavioral tendencies more strongly than stereotypes do and usually mediate stereotype-to-behavioral-tendency links (Cuddy et al, 2007).

There was a significant difference in emotional maturity between boys and girls. Girls are more emotionally insecure than boys. There were no significant differences in internalizing problems and other behavior problems, but there was a significant difference in externalizing problems. These results were supported by previous studies according to Moona (2012) girls are more prone to emotional insecurity than boys. There is another research conducted by Wan & Masih (2015) across gender on emotional maturity and level of education done on university students found that emotional maturity varies with the level of education, and women are found to be significantly more emotionally immature than men. The perusal of tables further revealed that boys are higher in behavioral problems than girls. As Peterson, (1999) stated that behavioral problems are more common in boys than girls. According to Terry, (2002) boys are at high risk of behavioral problems. According to Ermisch (2008) and Bertrand and Pan (2013), at school age, girls tend to have lower externalizing behavioral problems than boys.

Analysis of variance was conducted to check whether there comes any difference in the number of siblings for behavior problems the results

supported the hypothesis. Students who are the only child in family differ significantly in behavior problems than those who have up to six siblings. Results revealed that only children are higher in behavior problems than those who have up to 6 siblings. Chen (2013) stated that only child is more prone to problematic behavior than two or more children. According to a kindergarten research children with siblings have better social and behavioral skills (Downey & Condron). Children without siblings may have poor social and behavioral skills; maybe it could be the result of over admiration of parents (Cameron et al., 2013). It was hypothesized that children of neutral and joint family systems will differ in terms of behavioral problems. The results did not support the hypothesis that which was that there is no significant difference determine between the nuclear and joint and family system. Although, previous studies have indicated that the family system has a high impact on the emotional and behavioral problems of children. Along with the passage of time, differences between the nuclear and extended family systems seems to have diminished. There can be multiple reasons for this to occur for example, awareness among the families.

Conclusion

The current study demonstrated that emotional maturity plays a vital role in adolescents' behavioral outcomes. It highlighted the significance of emotional maturity on the behavior outcomes of school students. The findings of significant gender differences depicted that boys are higher in externalizing behavioral problems than girls and girls have higher emotional insecurity than boys. The results further found that there were significant differences among the number of siblings over behavior problems. Students who are the only child in the family differ significantly in behavior problems than those who have up to six siblings.

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