

## Influence of Grandparents on the Emotional Intelligence of Early Adolescents in Kerala

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Children find unique acceptance in their relationships with grandparents, which benefits them emotionally and mentally. The presence of grandparents in the family can be a source of great support for other family members, especially children and adolescents. They are often role models, playmates and mentors for younger generations. The aim of the study is to compare emotional intelligence of adolescents with regard to the influence of grandparents through a quantitative research design. The sample taken for this research comprised of 427 adolescents of VIII to XII standards, among which 278 were from nuclear families and 149 from three generation families. They belonged to ten different government aided urban state syllabus English medium schools in Kerala. Mangal Emotional Intelligence Inventory was used to yield the total score and four dimensional scores in areas of Intrapersonal awareness, Interpersonal awareness, Intrapersonal management and Interpersonal management in adolescents. An independent sample t-test between two types of families indicated that grandparents have an influence on the emotional intelligence of adolescents.

**Keywords:** Emotional intelligence, Adolescents, Nuclear family, Three generation family.

Emotional intelligence influences one's success in life and the day-to-day social interactions. Thus, any factor or variable having its effect on the emotional formation of an individual is important and needs to be taken into consideration for personality and individual development. The influences of parents, siblings and peers on emotional intelligence have been studied. However, the influence of grandparents as socialising agents or support to the family has not been studied adequately, while they too have a vital role in the process of their holistic growth. Their role in nurturing the emotional development of the child is often neglected. Ruiz and Silverstein (2007) indicated that close supportive relationship between grandparents and grandchildren is an important factor influencing children's emotional well-being. In extended families, grandparents may also act as buffers to any negative impact of parenting. In this study, we try to analyse and see how the presence of grandparents in the families and their relation with the grandchildren can help to develop higher levels of emotional intelligence. Olsen and Taylor (2000) suggest that children

find unique acceptance in their relationships with grandparents, which benefits them emotionally and mentally.

### **Indian socio-cultural context**

Chadda and Deb (2013) suggest that Indian society is collectivistic and promotes social cohesion and interdependence. The traditional, Indian joint family, which follows the same principles of collectivism, has proved itself to be an excellent resource for the care of its members. However, the society is changing with one of the most significant alterations being the disintegration of the joint family and the rise of nuclear and extended family system. However, in today's changing scenario, the family forms a resource for better mental health, yet utilization of family in management of emotional wellbeing is minimal. The present study is guided by the social ecological theory of Bronfenbrenner (2006), which suggests that to understand the changes in adolescents, they are to be taken into consideration with respect to their immediate circles, and their experiences with their family members

including grandparents. The ecological systems theory of Bronfenbrenner (2006) allows one to categorize various familial, environmental, and personal attributes into groups and subgroups of risk and protective factors of development. The environmental context is significant for emotional development of adolescents even more than the hormonal change (Santrock, 2006). In the micro-system, the child interacts with parents and other family members. Children who have grandparents at home speak to them and interact with them, which can offer continued emotional and practical support. On the whole, findings suggest that there are more advantages than disadvantages of having grandparents at home for developing and nurturing emotional intelligence of adolescents. When both parents work outside, children usually spend time with grandparents, who in turn, also influence the emotional development of the child. In this context, the present study intended to understand the importance of the role of grandparents in shaping the four components of emotional intelligence such as Intrapersonal awareness, Interpersonal awareness, Intrapersonal management and Interpersonal management in adolescents.

**Hypothesis:**

Grandparents have no influence on the emotional intelligence in early adolescence.

**Method**

**Participants:**

The sample consisted of 427 middle class adolescents (173 male and 254 female) living in Kerala, of which 278 adolescents belonged to nuclear families and 149 adolescents to three-generation families. The adolescents were studying in VIII to XII standards, belonging to ten different government aided state syllabus urban English medium schools (3 co-education, 3 boys' and 4 girls' schools). The mean age of the participants was 14 years.

**Inclusion Criteria:**

The student's age ranged between 13 and 18 years. They had working-parents from middle class families. Their parents were at least S.S.L.C qualified, and each had more

than one sibling. In the nuclear families, the students resided with both the parents. In three generational families, the students resided with both the parents and grandparents for more than 10 years. Researchers also ensured if the grandparents were actively participated in the care of and interaction with the adolescents.

**Exclusion Criteria:** The sample of both types' of families excluded adolescents who had single or divorced parent or lived with any other family member. The sample of the three generational families further excluded adolescents whose grandparents had severe physical or mental ailments and those living with other extended family members (uncles, aunts, or cousins). Students who didn't have siblings (and were the only child) were also excluded.

All these were taken care of with the help of questions included in the socio demographic sheet, which helped to identify the mentally and physically fit or unfit grandparents, broken families and the other criteria used for the sample.

**Research Design**

The research design in the present study is quantitative in nature. The present study investigated whether the grandparents made any significant difference in the four components of the emotional intelligence such as Intrapersonal awareness, Interpersonal awareness, Intrapersonal management and Interpersonal management in adolescents.

**Measures**

Socio-demographic Proforma. This data sheet contained personal details like type of family, socio economic status, parents' age, education, occupation, number of siblings, grandparent's age, illness and other details (How many years are you living with both grandparents? Did you get to spend quality time with your grandparents?), that were related to the variables under the study, which helped to identify the mentally and physically fit grandparents and broken families and the criteria used for the sample.

Mangal Emotional Intelligence Inventory by S. K. Mangal (2001). This is a 100-item inventory

adapted in English and measures emotional intelligence in four areas. They are intrapersonal awareness, interpersonal awareness (on emotions), intrapersonal management (own emotions) and interpersonal management. The test has been standardized on 2200 children from India. Reliability coefficient of the inventory was examined using three different methods. The reliability coefficients using split-half method, K-R formula and test-retest are 0.86, .90 and .92, respectively. The validity of the inventory has been established by adopting factorial and criterion approaches. The validity coefficients obtained using the product moment correlation coefficients are -0.662 and -0.613. The mode of response to each of the item of the inventory is 'yes' or 'no'. The scoring of the test was done with the help of a stencil.

#### **Procedure**

Data for the present study were collected in groups and in only one session. Independent sample t-test was used to analyze the significance of differences between groups.

#### **Results and Discussion**

The means and standard deviations of nuclear families ( $M = 55.48$ ,  $SD = 7.677$ ) and three generation families ( $M = 77.88$ ,  $SD = 8.402$ ) and the subsequent t test [ $t(425) = -31.095$ ,  $p \leq .05$ ] suggested that there was a significant difference between the total scores on emotional intelligence of the two groups. Hence, the hypothesis 'Grandparents have no influence on the emotional intelligence of early adolescents' was rejected. The study indicates that the grandparents have an influence on the emotional intelligence of adolescents by inculcating an ability to understand the emotions of one-self and others. This is in line with earlier research that in three generation families, the grandparents contribute to the well-being and development of the adolescents, in addition to the influence of parents and siblings (Ruiz & Silverstein, 2007). The results of the present study are supported by the study conducted by Singh and Udainiya (2009). They too, proposed that grandparents are a boon for the development of grandchildren, especially in their emotional well-being. In an in-depth study, emotional attachment was

found to be the fundamental component for grandchildren (Kornhaber & Woodward, 1981). Ruiz and Silverstein (2007) indicated that close supportive relationship between grandparents and grandchildren are an important factor of children's emotional well-being. They also found that grandchildren who have affective relationship with grandparents actually have higher self-esteem levels than that of their counterparts. Grandparents influence grandchildren both directly and indirectly. They provide guidance, support and act as role models, (Larson, Wilson, Brown, Furstenberg, & Suman, 2002) and also help in development of self-regulation (Pittman, 2007). Grandparents tend to contribute to the good quality in the parental relationships and jointly reduce depression in grandchildren (Ruiz & Silverstein, 2007).

#### **Implications and Limitations of the Study**

The results could help to develop an understanding about family processes among adolescents and may help counsellors to work with adolescents in school and with their families by conducting psycho-educational programmes. The significance of the role of grandparents in the family has been addressed in family life education courses and has encouraged their stay with the family. It supports the multigenerational practice approach by providing a framework that urges practitioners to work across generations and strengthen the entire family.

One limitation of the study resided in not trying to understand the underlying reasons. It also lacked a multi-cultural context. The use of a mixed method or a qualitative method in future may provide more insight in this area.

As a result of this research and from what we have observed through several generations in our society, we may say that the presence of grandparent in the family could help to balance the emotional intelligence and mental wellbeing of its members. The day to-day necessities that may be compromised in a nuclear family because of today's demanding technological life can be compensated by involving grandparents. This may create a well-balanced support system to one another and children find unique acceptance in their relationships with grandparents.

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Manuscript submitted on November 15, 2015

Final revision received on March 29, 2016

Accepted on April 6, 2016.

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