

Exploring Gender Differences in Socio-Emotional Learning among Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the gender differences in socio-emotional learning among adolescents. Socio-emotional learning (SEL) encompasses the development of skills such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. These competencies are vital for academic success and overall well-being, especially during adolescence. The sample comprised 100 students (50 boys and 50 girls) aged 14-15 years from Nellore District, selected through stratified random sampling. The findings suggest that girls have stronger SEL competencies, positively influencing personal, academic and social development than boys of the same age group.

Keywords: Gender differences, Adolescents, Self-awareness, Self-management

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a critical developmental stage marked by significant physical, emotional, and cognitive changes. During this period, social and emotional learning (SEL) plays a pivotal role in shaping an individual's ability to understand and manage emotions, establish positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. SEL is essential for fostering self-awareness, empathy, and interpersonal skills, which are vital for personal growth and societal contribution.

However, the differences in socio-emotional development among adolescents is influenced by biological, psychological, and socio-cultural factors. Boys and girls often experience and express emotions differently, with societal norms and expectations further shaping these patterns. For instance, traditional stereotypes might encourage emotional expressiveness in girls while discouraging it in boys, potentially creating disparities in their SEL experiences and outcomes.

Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) has become a pivotal element in contemporary educational frameworks, recognized for its profound influence on students' overall

development. SEL focuses on equipping students with essential skills to manage their emotions, build healthy relationships, and make responsible decisions. By fostering these competencies, SEL aims to enhance students' emotional well-being and academic outcomes.

Recent studies underscore the importance of SEL in shaping students' academic trajectories. Students who are proficient in SEL skills tend to exhibit improved classroom behavior, better stress management, and higher levels of academic achievement (Cherewick *et al.*, 2021; Simion, 2023; Weems, 2024). SEL helps adolescents to manage their emotions effectively, reduce stress, anxiety, and mood swings and cope up with challenges. It strengthens communication skills and empathy, enabling healthier relationships with peers, family, and teachers. It also promotes focus, self-discipline, and motivation, leading to improved academic outcomes. It encourages goal-setting and perseverance. Enables Increased Self-Esteem and Confidence. By integrating SEL into their education and upbringing, adolescents can develop into well-rounded individuals capable of thriving in all aspects of life.

Understanding these gendered dimensions of SEL

is crucial for several reasons. It allows educators, policymakers, and caregivers to design tailored interventions that address the unique needs of boys and girls, ensuring equitable development opportunities. Moreover, such exploration helps to dismantle harmful stereotypes, promoting a balanced and inclusive approach to emotional and social education. Understanding these gender differences is crucial for developing effective SEL programs. Tailoring SEL interventions to address the specific needs of different genders can optimize their impact and ensure that all students benefit equally from these programs. SEL interventions are particularly effective in improving academic outcomes for boys, who generally have lower socio-emotional skills compared to girls (Durlak *et al.*, 2011).

This study delves into the gender differences in socio-emotional learning among adolescents, aiming to uncover how factors such as emotional intelligence, empathy, self-regulation, and social skills vary between boys and girls. By highlighting these distinctions, the research seeks to provide actionable insights for fostering comprehensive SEL programs that bridge gaps and empower all adolescents to thrive.

Objective :

To study the Gender differences in Socio-Emotional Learning among Adolescents

METHODOLOGY

The sample of the study consisted of 50 Boys and 50 Girls in the age group of 14-15 years studying in IX and X class in Nellore District. The sample were selected by using stratified random sampling technique with respect to the geographical back ground. The dimensions of SEL consisted of self awareness, self management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision

making. The respondents were informed to tick mark against the statement under Always or Often option. The response was calculated and percentages were found.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents data regarding the distribution of sample according to Gender, Class and Age. A sample of 50 Boys and 50 Girls were selected in the age group of 14 to 15 years.

The Table 2 provides a distribution of gender-based awareness among adolescents on Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) across five dimensions. The responses are categorized into “Always” and “Often,” with percentages calculated for both boys and girls. Among boys, 44 per cent reported “Always” being self-aware, while 56 per cent reported “Often.” In contrast, 70 per cent of girls reported “Always” being self-aware, significantly higher than boys, with only 30 per cent reporting “Often.” This indicates a stronger inclination towards consistent self-awareness among girls compared to boys. Self-Management dimension among Boys showed a higher percentage 64 for “Always” managing themselves compared to girls 76 per cent. Girls showed a higher proportion of consistency in this domain, with only 24 per cent reporting “Often” managing themselves versus 36 per cent for boys. This suggests that while both genders show strong awareness, girls display slightly better self-management overall.

Social awareness is relatively balanced between boys with 52 per cent Always and girls 58 per cent Always. Both genders have a comparable proportion reporting “Often,” with boys 48 percentage and girls at 42 per cent. These figures indicate that social awareness is reasonably well-developed in both genders, with a slight edge for girls. Relationship skills showed a strong response from both genders, with 60 per cent of boys and 72 per

Table 1 : Distribution of sample according to Gender, class and Age

Sr. No.	Variable		Number	Per cent
1.	Gender	Boys	50	50
		Girls	50	50
		Total	100	100
2.	Class	IX Class	50	50
		X class	50	50
		Total	100	100
3.	Age	14 years	50	50
		15 years	50	50
		Total	100	100

Table 2 : Distribution of Gender and Awareness among adolescents on Socio Emotional Learning

Sr. No.	Dimensions of SEL	Response	Gender			
			Boys	Per cent	Girls	Per cent
1.	Self Awareness	Always	22	44	35	70
		Often	28	56	15	30
		Total	50	100	50	100
2.	Self Management	Always	32	64	38	76
		Often	18	36	12	24
		Total	50	100	50	100
3.	Social Awareness	Always	26	52	29	58
		Often	24	48	21	42
		Total	50	100	50	100
4.	Relationship skills	Always	30	60	36	72
		Often	20	40	14	28
		Total	50	100	50	100
5.	Responsible Decision Making	Always	22	44	34	68
		Often	28	56	16	32
		Total	50	100	50	100

cent of girls responding “Always.” However, 40 per cent of boys and 28 per cent of girls reported “Often,” highlighting that girls exhibit better consistency in relationship skills. Responsible Decision-Making among Boys and girls showed a marked difference, with only 44 per cent of boys reporting “Always” making responsible decisions, compared to 68 per cent of girls. A significant 56 per cent of boys reported “Often,” compared to 32 per cent of girls, reflecting a clear gender disparity in this dimension of SEL.

Conclusion:

The results highlight that girls generally show stronger and more consistent socio-emotional skills than boys across all five dimensions. Girls outperform boys significantly in Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Relationship Skills, and Responsible Decision-Making, showing greater consistency in these areas. In Social Awareness, both genders perform well, but girls have a slight edge. Overall, the findings suggest that girls tend to have better-developed and more reliable socio-emotional learning abilities compared to boys. This findings

highlights the importance of gender-sensitive approaches in fostering socio-emotional learning to bridge gaps and enhance holistic development.

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