

An Analytical Study of Social Competence of ‘Children with Sibling’ and ‘Children without Sibling

¹Dr. Minakshi Mishra, ²Ruchika Aggarwal

¹Principal, Bharti Shikshak Prashikshan Sansthan, Bikaner.

²Research Scholar, Maharaja Ganga Singh University, Sri Ganganagar
Email - santsarwa45@gmail.com

Abstract: *On the background of the population explosion in India, changes have occurred in the society where especially educated people are swiftly moving towards only child families. The current study aims to explore the effect of being single or having sibling on the social competence of children. Adolescents Social Competence Scale by Viju P. Devassy and John Michael Raj was administered on 600 adolescents. 150 girls and 150 boys without a sibling, 150 girls and 150 boys with sibling were selected from schools in Sri Ganganagar district. The difference in social competence between various groups was studied by computing Critical Ratio and ANOVA was employed to study the interaction effect of sibling status (with or without sibling) and gender on social competence. Results showed that there are significant differences between children without sibling and children with sibling on social competence. There is significant gender difference in the social competence of adolescents. But sibling status and gender do not interact to produce any effect on social competence.*

Key Words: *children without sibling, children with sibling, social competence, adolescents.*

1. INTRODUCTION :

In the 21st century, globalization has brought the world together and closer, but the individuals are drifting apart. People prefer to live in nuclear families and those nuclear families are in itself becoming single child families as people now prefer to have one child. There can be many reasons for this like both working parents, financial resources of parents, stress, preoccupation with professional growth, late age marriages, secondary infertility, population explosion and family planning programmes and desire to give best to their children etc. All these changes affect the members of a family but the individual who is being affected most in the scenario is an adolescent, a teenager who is standing on threshold of childhood and adulthood and is unable to comprehend the changes taking place around him. This distinctive family structure can have both positive and negative impacts on various aspects of their development. The effects of having siblings or being an only child on adolescents' development are complex and multifaceted. While siblings can provide social support, companionship, and opportunities for social learning, they can also contribute to conflicts and rivalries. The experiences of only children, particularly those who are adolescents, can be shaped significantly by the unique dynamics of being the sole recipient of their parents' attention and resources. Only children often develop strong relationships with adults, including their parents, which can enhance their communication skills and maturity. Only children tend to form close, meaningful friendships outside the family, often seeking deep connections to compensate for the lack of sibling relationships.

Social competence is a multidimensional construct with emotional, behavioural and cognitive components with an overlapping of these components in social interactions to produce positive adaptive outcome. The Cognitive component involves recognition and acceptance of social situations or contexts which means being aware of and sensible of social contexts, planning and selecting the strategies, having forethought and social cognition. The Behavioural component consists of dealing effectively with the social context using the environmental and personal resources. Environmental resources refer to the peer support, family support and other social supports systems. Personal resources include one's abilities, skills, temperamental factors and personality variables. The outcome component denotes adaptive interaction in social contexts such as family, school, team and peers with social emotion, social compassion and social flexibility.

The various dimensions of social competence are school competence, team organizing competence, peer competence, social cognition, home related social competence, socio emotional competence, social forethought and compassion, social flexibility. School competence refers to an adolescent's ability to deal with the academic, social and interpersonal contexts of the school. It involves enjoying the course of study, school ambiance, relating to the teachers effectively, assimilating their instruction, being disciplined, using the school time and free time effectively to prepare oneself to meet the challenges of future. Team organizing competence involves confidence to organize team for common good, acceptance in the team, emerging as leader in the team, success in giving identity for a team and willingness to take up leadership roles in school or college, and elsewhere for social causes. Peer competence refers to the ability to easily make friends among peers, making new friends, mingle with peers, get along with peers, involve in social gathering with peers and being accepted by the peers. Social cognition is the ability of an adolescent to respect and promote the rights of others including the elders and even those against them. It is a resolve to promote social equality and social growth and the noble traditions of the society. Home-related social competence refers to the ability of an individual to develop and engage in positive interaction with their parents and siblings and express themselves adequately. Socio-emotional competence is the ability to regulate, manage and express one's emotions adequately and effectively in social situations and social interactions. Social forethought and compassion refer to an individual's ability to understand and sense the need of others and care for others and their needs. Social flexibility refers to the adolescent's ability to adapt flexibly to the diverse social contexts and demands.

2. Rationale of the Study :

Findings from past research on children, adolescents, and adults are surprisingly mixed. Studies on adolescents also report inconclusive findings regarding sociability between those with and without siblings. There are three views in existing literature regarding the competencies of only children as compared to those who have siblings.

One view, originally proposed by early psychiatrists and psychologists and consistent with the popular thinking, sees only children as relatively problematic and disadvantaged. The absence of a sibling relationship or 'sibling deprivation' is also postulated to affect personality; the idea is that only children miss socialisation experiences important to personality development (Mancillas, 2006, Polit & Falbo, 1987, Roberts & Blanton, 2001). Children with siblings have an outlet for interaction and are more responsible socially to other children of their own age. They view siblings as social capital and suggests that those without siblings are deprived of important social learning background experiences that are gained through sibling interaction (Downey & Condron, 2004; Falbo & Polit, 1986). Siblings are "thought to affect social development and, consequently, sociability," defined "as the need for affiliation" (Blake, 1991). Interaction between siblings facilitates the learning of emotion regulation and promotes social skills and sociability. Because siblings tend to be more available than other kin and also tend to outlive parents, siblings account for a large proportion of adults' social networks at any one time and throughout life.

A **second** set of findings views the single-child status in more positive terms. They are of the view that only children may do better in life because of the love of parents, their undivided attention and resources available to them. Only children are presumed to receive more focused attention and expectations from parents and family members, as well as have a greater number of financial and social resources allocated to them in the absence of siblings (Polit & Falbo, 1987; Roberts & Blanton, 2001), which might help with developing self-esteem, self-reliability and resilience. Yet, they may also be more mature, due to socialising with adults rather than other children, and engage in more imaginative play due to their lack of siblings (Polit & Falbo, 1987 ; Roberts & Blanton, 2001). Due to lack of sibling rivalry, only children are likely to be more cooperative due to a more trusting style of interaction as they frequently obtain help and nurturance from their parents

The **third** set of findings opines that there are no differences between only children and children with siblings. Studies have not found significant differences between only children and those who have siblings in the domains of adjustment and sociability.

All these different perspectives create controversies on single children versus children with siblings. Various studies show inconsistency in the results. They don't clearly indicate the effect of having a sibling or being an only child on the social competence of the individual. Social competence is very important for the development of children and adolescents. Social competence is negatively related to depression, low self-esteem, adjustment problems and loneliness among individuals. Social competence has significance during adolescence as the development of social competence

during adolescent has impact on their integration into adult society later. So, the present study “An Analytical Study of Social Competence of ‘Children with Sibling’ and ‘Children without Sibling’” has been conceived.

3. Objectives :

- To find the difference between groups of adolescents with sibling and without sibling on the variable of social competence.
- To find out gender difference in social competence among adolescents.
- To study the interaction effect of gender and sibling status (with and without sibling) on social competence of adolescents.

Hypotheses

H.1 There is no significant difference between groups of adolescents with sibling and without siblings on the variable of social competence.

H.2 There is no significant gender difference in social competence among adolescents.

H.3 There is no significant interaction between gender and sibling status (with and without sibling) on the variable of social competence.

4. Methodology : The nature of the research is descriptive survey.

Sample : The sample of the present study consisted of 600 adolescents. Out of the 600 adolescents, 300 cases were selected who had sibling and the rest of the 300 cases were selected who were only children. The same number of male and female adolescents were selected in both groups. The data was collected from adolescents studying at senior secondary level of English medium schools in Sri Ganganagar district. The sample was selected randomly.

Tool: Adolescents Social Competence Scale by Viju P. Devassy and John Michael Raj

Procedure : Prior to data collection, the investigator personally visited the schools to request principals to allow her to collect the data for the research. All respondents were provided with detailed information and important guidelines, and the aim of the survey was also explained in detail to all respondents. The data was collected using a scale that was completed in the classroom settings. Students were asked to mark and write the most appropriate answer in their opinion. The investigator assured the respondents that the information collected would only be used for research purposes. On completion, the researcher collected the scale from the respondents.

Statistical Analysis and Interpretation

Collected data was analyzed using SPSS. Mean, standard deviation, Critical Ratio and ANOVA (2*2) were computed.

H.1 There is no significant difference between groups of adolescents with sibling and without sibling on the variable of Social Competence.

In order to verify hypotheses H.1, CR was computed to compare the scores of Social Competence of different groups to identify any significant differences.

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations of the Social Competence of Adolescents Based on Their Sibling Status and Corresponding Critical Ratio

Variable	Sibling Status	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>CR</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Social Competence	Without Sibling	300	140.09	21.18	2.359	598	.019
	With Sibling	300	136.18	19.35			

According to Table 1, the computed $CR (598) = 2.359$, $p = .019$ and since $p < 0.05$, CR was found to be statistically significant. So there is significant difference in the scores of score of without sibling group of adolescents ($M = 140.09$, $SD = 21.18$) and with sibling group of adolescents is ($M = 136.18$, $SD = 19.35$) on the variable of Social Competence. This indicates that the two groups of adolescents, namely, with sibling and without sibling differ significantly on the variable of Social Competence. Hence the hypothesis 5.0 stating that there is no significant difference between groups of adolescents with sibling and without sibling on the variable of Social Competence is refuted.

To investigate further, whether adolescents with sibling or adolescents without sibling have better Social Competence, means of the two groups were compared. Adolescents without sibling have significantly better Social Competence than adolescents with sibling.

H.2 There is no significant gender difference in Social Competence among adolescents.

In order to verify hypotheses H.2, CR was computed to compare the scores of Social Competence of different groups to identify any significant differences.

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations of Social Competence of Adolescents Based on Their Gender and Corresponding Critical Ratio

Variable	Gender	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>CR</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Social Competence	Male	300	135.79	20.38	-2.831	598	.005
	Female	300	140.47	20.11			

According to Table 2, the computed, $CR (598) = -2.831$, $p = .005$ and since $p < 0.05$, CR was found to be statistically significant. So there is significant difference in the scores of male group of adolescents ($M = 135.79$, $SD = 20.38$) and female group of adolescents ($M = 140.47$, $SD = 20.11$) on the variable of Social Competence. This indicates that score indicate that the male and female adolescents differ significantly on the variable of Social Competence. Hence the hypothesis 4.0 stating that there is no significant gender difference in Social Competence among adolescents is rejected.

To investigate further, whether males or females have better Social Competence, means of the two groups were compared. Females have significantly better Social Competence than males.

H.3 There is no significant interaction between gender and sibling status (with and without sibling) on the variable of Social Competence.

In order to verify hypotheses H.3, the scores of Social Competence of different groups were analyzed using two-way ANOVA to identify any significant interaction.

The results of two-way ANOVA on the variable School Well-being are presented in Table 3

Table 3

Summary of 2x2 Analysis of Variance for Variables of Gender and Sibling Status on the Dependent Variable of Social Competence

Sources	Sum Of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Gender	3285.36	1	3285.36	8.088	.005
Sibling Status	2289.31	1	2289.31	5.636	.018

Gender Sibling Status	726.00	1	726.00	1.787	.182
Error	242088.67	596	406.19		

Interpretation of results on the basis of Table 3

Interaction effect of gender and sibling status on Social Competence ($F(1, 596) = 1.787, p = .182$) was found to be statistically insignificant as $p > .05$. Thus the two variables of gender and sibling status do not interact to produce any significant effect on Social Competence. Hence the hypothesis 6.0 stating that there is no significant interaction between gender and sibling status (with and without sibling) on the variable of Social Competence stands accepted.

5. Results and Discussion :

The results of the study lead to the conclusion that adolescents without sibling differ in their social competence from adolescents with sibling. The results of the current study are incongruence with earlier results obtained by Blake (1981), Falbo & Polit (1986), Riggio (1999), Trent and Spitze (2011), Singh (2013) who found that only children are not different and are not at any disadvantage compared to their peers who have siblings. They are not politically and socially alienated, do not have disruptive family lives. They expose higher social skills and social competence than their intact family counterparts. In terms of social competence, the results indicate that growing up without siblings is an advantage. The results of the comparison of only children and children with siblings in terms of social competence are consistent with the confluence model, resource dilution model and attachment theory. Focused family resources, undivided attention, and increased parental responsiveness and care all contributed to the social competence of only children and helped them to develop strong social skills. It can be assumed that greater parental attention to only children promotes their development of intellectual competence, psychological confidence and mature social behavior. Female adolescents show higher levels of social competence than male adolescence. This may be due to combined efforts to enhance the social development of females in the present educational context.

6. Conclusion :

The results of the present study thus contribute to existing research by debunking the myth of unfavorable opinions about only children. Only children likely enjoy some measurable advantages over peers with siblings in terms of social competence. Only children cope just as well as other adolescents in this capricious phase of development. It is reassuring that only children are likely to grow up to be healthy and responsible citizens, just like those who have siblings. Results also show that there is significant gender difference in social competence among adolescents. Moreover, gender and sibling status do not interact to produce any effect general well-being.

Educational Implications

Understanding the impact of sibling relationships on adolescents' development can provide valuable insights for parents, educators, and mental health professionals. All parents should consider that it can't just be assumed that, if children have siblings, they are going to be in an environment where they learn sharing, getting on with others, interacting and all the things we assume siblings provide. It's not about choosing or providing opportunities to have companionship and interaction but to have those opportunities in ways that are positive. Parents should become their child's best friend-someone he can always approach for help, advice or play. Parents should spend more time together with their children. Close bond with parents, siblings and peers may be the pathways that may promote the well-being and mitigate the loneliness of a sibling child. It is the positive qualitative life experiences that contribute to healthy development in children and not just the status of having sibling. The result of poor parenting, making comparison in children, favouring one over other has been reported to be closely associated with sibling rivalry and conflict. The parental expectations too affect the well-being of child. This research will be immensely useful for the parents of sibling adolescents as it makes their parents aware of the problems of adolescents. The findings may highlight the significance of fostering healthy connections between siblings and handling disagreements in a constructive manner for parents who have more than one kid from a single marriage. Parents should encourage a positive sibling relationship and try to minimize sibling rivalry among their children. The present study suggested that engaging siblings together in some mental exercises, creativity,

sports, art and craft activity and indoor games can help them develop positive relationship and will enhance their social skills and alleviate loneliness and promote their well-being, sense of security and healthy lifestyle. Parents should encourage their child to share things with sibling and show their appreciation by rewarding him with words of encouragement. So, avoiding these common mistakes, parents can make a positive contribution to their child's development. Personalized social skills training, peer mentorship programs, and group activities may be designed in schools to meet the specific requirements of these adolescents, so contributing to the development of a school atmosphere that is more welcoming and encouraging of all students. Social workers, counselors and psychologists should plan working strategies for them, so that this target group can be developed at its optimal level.

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