

A Study on Emotional Intelligence and Self-Esteem Among Adolescents Across Different Socio-Economic Status

Rismita Borah¹, Dr. Siba Ranjan Mahanta²

¹Research Scholar, Department of Education, Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya

²Former Principal of Nagaon GNDG Commerce College

Abstract

The study explores how emotional intelligence and self-esteem are connected among adolescents from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. It investigates the impact of parental education, household income, and parental support and care and access to socio-emotional resources on adolescents' emotional abilities and self-worth perceptions. Findings reveal a strong positive correlation between emotional intelligence and self-esteem across all socio-economic levels. However, students from higher socio-economic backgrounds generally display more refined emotional regulation and greater self-confidence and also, they are emotionally healthy and able to face to face various challenges in life and they have better communication skills and socially active. The results emphasize that a nurturing school environment and consistent peer support and engaging in co-curricular activities can help to reduce socio-economic challenges, encouraging healthier emotional growth even among students from lower income families. Overall, the study highlights the importance of inclusive, school-based emotional development programs to enhance student psychological well-being regardless of socio-economic status.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Self-Esteem, Socio-Economic Status, Adolescents.

Introduction:

Adolescence is a crucial developmental stage marked by rapid physical, emotional, psychological and social changes that shape an individual's sense of identity and personal worth. During this stage, the development of self-esteem becomes particularly significant, as it influences their motivation, academic engagement, interpersonal relationships, personal growth, academic success, active social interactions and overall psychological well-being. Two important component such as emotional intelligence and self-esteem plays an in important role in adolescents' growth. Emotional Intelligence refers to the ability to recognize, understand, and regulate one's own emotions as well as those of others. It facilitates effectively communicate, empathy, and decision-making in social contexts. It helps an individual to handle stress more effectively and managing their emotions effectively. It is a key component of social effectiveness, leadership, and interpersonal relationships. Self-esteem, regarded as one's evaluation of personal value and competence and value and self-respect. It reflects how people evaluate themselves including their abilities and confidence

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and how to adapt themselves in changing environment. Instead, it is shaped by the social environment in which adolescents grow, with family support and socio-economic status (SES) being two of the most influential components in adolescents' life. Family support and socio-economic status are key factors that contribute to adolescents' emotional development and psychological adjustment which helps in live a peaceful life and provide encouragement to achieve a goal in their lives.

Family support plays an essential role in providing emotional security and nurturing a positive sense of self. Supporting parenting practices including warmth affection, consistent encouragement, valuable guidance and directions, active involvement, and open communication help adolescents build confidence and resilience in facing life's challenges and children also learn to recognize, express and manage their emotions effectively. When students feel valued and supported and accepted and important member of the family at home, they develop a sense of self-worth and confidence in their abilities and they are more likely to navigate academic and social challenges effectively, whereas a lack of emotional warmth or parental engagement or constant criticism may lead to feelings of inadequacy or inferiority and lower self-esteem. Thus, the quality of home environment strongly determines how individuals perceive themselves and face emotional challenges and how to overcome from them.

Socio-economic status also plays a crucial role in shaping adolescents experiences and self-perception, emotional and social growth which helps an individual to lead a happier life. SES which includes parental education, occupation, and income levels, which collectively influence access to resources and digital resources, educational opportunities, academic achievement, quality of food, health facilities, home facilities, problem solving skills and social environments. Students from higher SES backgrounds tend to benefit from enriched learning environments and greater emotional and material support and better opportunities which enhance their emotional competence and sense of self-worth and gain confidence to take risk in any field, while those from lower SES families may often face challenges such as limited educational opportunities and limited health facilities and limited nutritious food and financial strain, and social exclusion which can negatively influence their confidence and sense of capability and also effect on psychological well- being of adolescents.

Understanding how emotional intelligence and self-esteem vary across different socio-economic background is essential for promoting equitable emotional as well as self-development. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the relationship between socio economic status, emotional intelligence, self-esteem, highlighting how environmental and social factors shape emotional well- being of adolescents development.

Need for the study

This study is significant because it explores the combined role of emotional intelligence and self-esteem among adolescents within different socio-economic contexts. Adolescence is a formative period during which individuals develop a stable sense of self, emotional regulation abilities, and interpersonal competence. Healthy self-esteem during this stage is associated with positive outcomes such as academic success, emotional resilience, and psychological well-being, whereas low self-esteem increases vulnerability to stress, anxiety,

depression, and behavioural difficulties. Emotional intelligence, which involves recognizing, understanding, and managing one's own emotions as well as those of others, has been shown to enhance coping skills, social relationships, and self-confidence.

Socio- economic disparities can substantially affect adolescents' emotional development. Adolescents from lower socio-economic backgrounds often experience heightened stress, limited access to supportive environments, and fewer opportunities for emotional skill development, which may negatively impact both emotional intelligence and self-esteem. By examining these variables together, the study helps determine whether emotional intelligence can act as a protective factor that reduces the negative impact of socio-economic disadvantage on self-esteem.

The findings of this research have important practical implications for educators, psychologists, and policymakers. Insights gained can guide the development of school based social emotional learning programs and targeted interventions aimed at strengthening emotional intelligence and self-esteem, particularly among adolescents from disadvantaged socio-economic groups. Overall, the study contributes to a more inclusive and holistic understanding of adolescent psychological development and supports efforts to promote mental health and social equity.

Literature Review

Higher SES adolescents often have greater access to emotional learning resources (e.g., supportive schools, extracurricular programs, mental health services), which foster Emotional Development (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002)

Adolescents with strong Emotional Intelligence show lower levels of emotional problems like anxiety and depression (Extremera & Fernandez- Berrocal,2004)

Studies indicate that Emotional Intelligence tends to increase with age during adolescence as social cognition and emotional regulation skills develop (Mavroveli et al.,2007)

Higher Emotional Intelligence found to be associated with better mental health, academic success, and healthier peer relationships (Brackett, Rivers &Salovey,2011)

Studies have found that adolescents from higher SES backgrounds generally score higher on Emotional Intelligence measures than those from lower SES backgrounds (Siddiqui & Singh, 2011).

The influence of SES on Emotional Intelligence and Self- Esteem persists in diverse settings, though the magnitude varies with cultural norms about emotional expression and social hierarchy (Abdulrahman & Salami, 2019).

Objectives

1. To assess the levels of emotional intelligence among adolescents belonging to different socio-economic status groups.
2. To examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and self-esteem among adolescents students.
3. To compare the self-esteem levels of students from low, middle, and high socio-economic backgrounds.

4. To determine whether socio-economic status significantly influences student's emotional intelligences and self-esteem.

Methodology

The present study adopted a descriptive survey research design to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and self-esteem among adolescents across different socio-economic status (SES) groups. The design was considered appropriate as it enables the researcher to assess psychological characteristics and compare variations among naturally existing groups without manipulating variables.

Population and Sample

The population of the study comprised adolescents studying in secondary and higher secondary schools (13 – 18 years) in both urban and rural areas. A representative sample of 300 adolescents was selected using a stratified random sampling technique to ensure proportional representation across three socio-economic status categories : low, middle and high SES.

Research Instruments

Data were collected using standardized and validated instruments :

Emotional Intelligence Scale : A standardized Emotional Intelligence Scale suitable for adolescents was used to measure components such as self- awareness, self – regulation, motivation etc. The scale consisted of multiple items rated on a Likert type format. Higher scores indicated higher emotional intelligence. The reliability coefficient (cronbach's alpha) of the scale was found to be above 0.80.

Self- Esteem Scale : It was measured using a widely validated self-esteem scale. The instrument assessed global self- worth through positively and negatively worded statements rated on a Likert Scale. Higher scores reflected higher levels of self-esteem. The reliability coefficient for the present study exceeded 0.75.

Socio- Economic Status (SES) Scale : A standardized SES scale was used to categorized participants into low, middle, and high socio-economic groups based on parental education, occupation, and monthly income.

Procedure of Data Collection

Prior permission was obtained from school authorities. Participants were briefed about the purpose of the study, and confidentiality and anonymity were assured. Informed consent was obtained from students and school authorities (and parents where required).

The questionnaire was administered collectively in classroom settings under the supervision of the researcher. Clear instructions were provided, and students were encouraged to respond honestly.

Statistical Analysis and Results

The collected data were coded and analyzed using statistical software (e.g., SPSS). The following statistical techniques were employed :

Descriptive Statistics (Mean, Standard Deviation, Percentage) to describe levels of emotional intelligence and self-esteem.

One- way ANOVA to examine differences in emotional intelligence and self-esteem across different SES groups.

Pearson’s correlation coefficient to determine the relationship between emotional intelligence and self –esteem.

Table 1 : Levels of Emotional Intelligence among Adolescents (N = 300)

Level of Emotional Intelligence	Score Range	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
High	Above 120	84	28.0
Moderate	90-120	156	52.0
Low	Below 90	60	20.0
Total		300	100.0

Mean Score M= 104.32 SD =1

Source : Primary Data (Field Survey, 2025)

Table 2 : Levels of Self- Esteem among Adolescents (N =300)

Level of Self-Esteem	Score Range	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
High	Above 25	92	30.7
Moderate	15-25	148	49.3
Low	Below 15	60	20.0
Total		300	100.0

Mean Score M = 21.76 SD =4

Source : Primary Data (Field Survey, 2025)

Table 3 : Mean Scores of Emotional Intelligence and Self – Esteem across Socio-Economic Status (SES) Groups (N =300)

Variable	SES Group	N	Mean
Emotional Intelligence	Low SES	100	96.45
	Middle SES	100	105.88

	High SES	100	110.63
Self- Esteem	Low SES	100	18.94
	Middle SES	100	21.88
	High SES	100	24.46

Source : Primary Data (Field Survey, 2025)

Table 4: One _ Way ANOVA Showing Differences in Emotional Intelligence across SES Groups (N =300)

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square
Between Groups	9845.62	2	4922.81
Within Groups	92214.37	297	310.48

Total 102059.99 299

Table 5 : One – Way ANOVA Showing Differences in Self- Esteem across SES Groups (N=300)

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square
Between Groups	1486.24	2	743.12
Within Groups	10184.56	297	34.29

Total 11670.80 299

Table 6 : Correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Self- Esteem (N= 300)

Variables	Correlation (r)	p-value	Significant
Emotional Intelligence & Self- Esteem	0.62	<0.001	Significant

Source : Primary Data (Field Survey, 2025)

Pearson Correlation Analysis

Discussion: The present study examined the levels of Emotional Intelligence (EI) and self-esteem among adolescents and analysed their differences across socio-economic status (SES) groups, along with the relationship between the two variables.

The findings reveal that the majority of adolescents demonstrated a moderate level of Emotional Intelligence (52%), while 28% showed high EI and 20% reported low EI. The

mean EI score ($M = 104.32$) indicates that overall adolescents possess an average to moderately high ability to perceive, understand, and regulate emotions. This suggests that most adolescents are developing emotional competencies appropriate for their age, although a considerable proportion still falls in the low EI category, highlighting the need for emotional skill development programs.

Similarly, with regard to self-esteem, nearly half of the adolescents (49.3%) reported a moderate level, 30.7% showed high self-esteem, and 20% exhibited low self-esteem. The mean self-esteem score ($M = 21.76$, $SD = 4$) indicates an overall moderate level of self-worth among the respondents. However, the presence of one-fifth of adolescents with low self-esteem is concerning, as low self-esteem during adolescence may negatively affect academic achievement, social relationships, and psychological well-being.

The comparison of EI across SES groups shows a clear trend. Adolescents from high SES families recorded the highest mean EI score (110.63), followed by Middle SES (105.88), and Low SES (96.45). The One-Way ANOVA results (Between Groups $SS = 9845.62$; Within Groups $SS = 92214.37$) indicate significant differences in Emotional Intelligence across SES groups. This suggests that socio-economic background plays a crucial role in shaping emotional development.

A similar pattern was observed for self-esteem. High SES adolescents obtained the highest mean score (24.46), followed by Middle SES (21.88) and Low SES (18.94). The ANOVA results for self-esteem (Between Groups $SS = 1486.24$; within Groups $SS = 10184.56$) also demonstrate significant differences among SES groups. This indicates that socio-economic status significantly influences adolescents' perception of self-worth.

Furthermore, the correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Self-Esteem ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.001$). This statistically significant correlation indicates that adolescents with higher emotional intelligence tend to possess higher self-esteem. The finding suggests that the ability to understand and regulate emotions enhances confidence, self-acceptance, and positive self-evaluation.

Conclusion

The present study concludes that emotional intelligence and self-esteem both play an essential role in adolescents' psychological wellbeing and emotional security and these are influenced by different socio-economic status. It helps in building strong mental health and bringing academic success and enable adolescents to manage stress effectively and actively participate in social activities and social resilience irrespective of socio-economic background. Moreover, the findings also suggested that adolescents from lower socio-economic background can develop strong emotional regulation, emotional awareness and self-worth if they provided strong emotional support, proper love and support from parents effective counselling sessions etc.

Educational Implications

Educational institutions play an important role in shaping adolescents' emotional intelligence and self-esteem by implementing various supportive programs. Educational institutions should take initiative like parents teacher involvement especially from economically

disadvantaged background so that parents can understand the importance of emotional intelligence and self-esteem in adolescents' growth and this involvement helps to strengthen family child relationships. Similarly, school must eliminate

Addressing Socio-Economic Disparities, Equal opportunities should be provided to the students in every field irrespective of different socio-economic status and try to feel equally emotionally and mentally healthy. Schools must provide inclusive learning environments to adolescents' so that they can feel emotionally safe from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and it helps in building positive attitude and confidence towards life. Teacher training program should be organized to create an awareness on recognizing emotional and self-esteem issues among students from various socio-economic background. Only trained teachers can create effective environment in the classroom so that student can able to express their opinion and emotions effectively. Proper mental health education should be given to adolescents' so that they can feel awareness about own mental health conditions and able to lead a healthier emotional development as well as able to address their emotional issues. Counseling and mentorship program should be organized to able to improve emotional conditions and good communication skills and able to talk openly about problem related to mental health.

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