



A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF EMOTIONAL MATURITY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN NUCLEAR AND JOINT FAMILIES

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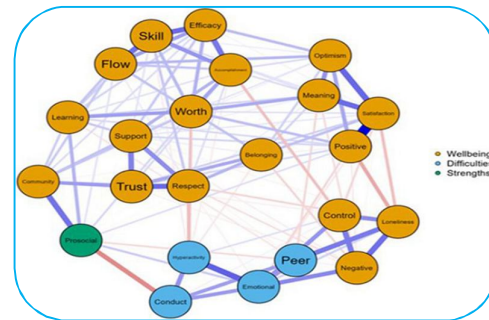
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ABSTRACT

The present study examined emotional maturity and psychological well-being among adolescents belonging to nuclear and joint families. The study adopted a comparative, cross-sectional quantitative design. A total of 150 adolescents aged 14 to 21 years were selected through stratified random sampling, with 75 participants from nuclear families and 75 participants from joint families. Emotional maturity was measured with the Emotional Maturity Scale by Singh and Bhargava, and psychological well-being was assessed with Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale. Descriptive statistics, independent-samples *t* tests, effect sizes, and Pearson's product-moment correlation were used for data analysis. The results indicated that adolescents from joint families obtained significantly higher emotional maturity scores than adolescents from nuclear families, $t(147.77) = 4.08, p < .001, d = 0.67$. Adolescents from joint families also reported significantly higher psychological well-being than those from nuclear families, $t(147.81) = 4.09, p < .001, d = 0.67$. Emotional maturity was positively and significantly related to psychological well-being, $r(148) = .46, p < .001$. The findings suggest that family structure may play a meaningful role in adolescent emotional development and positive psychological functioning. The study has implications for parents, teachers, counselors, and school mental health professionals.



KEYWORDS: adolescents, emotional maturity, psychological well-being, nuclear family, joint family, APA style.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a crucial developmental period characterised by rapid physical, cognitive, emotional, and social changes. During this stage, individuals gradually move from dependency toward greater autonomy and identity formation. The ability to regulate emotions, tolerate frustration, maintain stable relationships, and respond adaptively to stress becomes especially important. Emotional maturity, therefore, becomes a central developmental quality during adolescence because it reflects the adolescent's capacity to understand, control, and express emotions in socially appropriate ways.

Emotional maturity is not merely the absence of emotional disturbance. It includes emotional stability, social adjustment, independence, self-control, and the ability to handle interpersonal challenges without excessive impulsiveness. Adolescents with better emotional maturity are generally expected to show healthier adjustment in school, family, and peer contexts. They are more likely to use constructive coping strategies, accept responsibility for their behaviour, and maintain balanced emotional reactions in difficult situations.

Psychological well-being represents the positive dimension of mental health. Ryff conceptualised psychological well-being through six major dimensions: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. This model emphasises optimal functioning rather than only happiness or the absence of illness. For adolescents, psychological well-being is reflected in meaningful goals, self-confidence, supportive relationships, adaptive decision-making, and a sense of competence in daily life.

Family is one of the most important socialising institutions in adolescent development. In the Indian social context, nuclear and joint families are two common family structures. A nuclear family generally consists of parents and children, while a joint family includes extended relatives such as grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins who live together or maintain close interdependence. These two family systems may provide different emotional, social, and supervisory environments for adolescents. Joint families may offer wider emotional support, shared responsibilities, and intergenerational guidance. Nuclear families may provide greater privacy and independence but may also place more emotional responsibility on parents and children.

The present study is important because adolescence is a sensitive period for emotional and psychological development. Understanding whether family type is associated with emotional maturity and well-being may help parents, teachers, counselors, and policy makers design suitable support systems. The study also examines the relationship between emotional maturity and psychological well-being, because adolescents who regulate emotions effectively may experience better self-acceptance, stronger relationships, and greater life satisfaction. Thus, the study aims to compare adolescents from nuclear and joint families and to identify whether emotional maturity is significantly associated with psychological well-being.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ryff (1989) argued that psychological well-being should be understood as positive psychological functioning rather than simple happiness. Her model includes autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. This framework is useful for adolescent research because it allows researchers to study well-being as a multidimensional construct. In the present study, Ryff's perspective supports selecting psychological well-being as a major outcome variable.

Ryff and Keyes (1995) further examined the structure of psychological well-being and reported support for a multidimensional model. Their work indicated that positive functioning includes both personal and interpersonal dimensions. This is relevant for adolescents because family relationships, peer interactions, school adjustment, and self-development are closely connected with well-being. The present study uses this theoretical base to examine how family context may be associated with adolescents' well-being.

Research on family structure suggests that the family's emotional climate can influence adolescent adjustment. The family is considered a primary social environment that affects adolescents' emotional, social, and behavioural development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Joint families may provide broader interpersonal resources, guidance from elders, emotional support, and frequent social interaction. In the Indian context, Mathur (2017) found that adolescents from joint families showed better social adjustment than adolescents from nuclear families. Nuclear families may encourage self-reliance and independent decision-making, but adolescents may have fewer immediate family members for emotional support. However, Rani (2017) reported that adjustment may not always differ significantly between adolescents from nuclear and joint families. Therefore, a comparison between nuclear and joint family adolescents is meaningful in the Indian cultural context.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Statement of the Research Problem

The research problem of the present study is: A comparative study of emotional maturity and psychological well-being among adolescents in nuclear and joint families.

Objectives

- 1) To compare the emotional maturity of adolescents from nuclear families with that of adolescents from joint families.
- 2) To compare the psychological well-being of adolescents from nuclear families with that of adolescents from joint families.
- 3) To examine the relationship between emotional maturity and psychological well-being among adolescents in both family types.

Hypotheses

- 1) H1: Adolescents from joint families will have higher emotional maturity than adolescents from nuclear families.
- 2) H2: Adolescents from joint families will have better psychological well-being than adolescents from nuclear families.
- 3) H3: There will be a positive relationship between emotional maturity and psychological well-being among adolescents.

Variables

The independent variable was family type, with two categories: nuclear family and joint family. The dependent variables were emotional maturity and psychological well-being.

Research Design

The study followed a comparative, cross-sectional, quantitative survey design. Family type was treated as the grouping variable, and emotional maturity and psychological well-being were treated as outcome variables. The relationship between emotional maturity and psychological well-being was examined through correlational analysis.

Population and Sample

The population consisted of adolescent students aged 14 to 21 years, from nuclear and joint families. A total sample of 150 adolescents was selected. The sample included 75 adolescents from nuclear families and 75 adolescents from joint families.

Table 1
Sample Distribution by Family Type

Sr. No.	Family type	Sample size	Age range
1	Nuclear family	75	14 to 21 years
2	Joint family	75	14 to 21 years
Total		150	

Sampling Technique

Stratified random sampling was used. First, participants were classified into two strata based on family type. Then, adolescents were randomly selected from each stratum to ensure representation from both nuclear and joint families.

Tools

Standardized paper-pencil psychological tests were used for data collection. The tests were administered individually or in groups, with clear instructions given to the participants.

Table 2
Psychological Tests Used in the Study

Sr. No.	Psychological test	Prepared by	Items	Reliability/Validity
1	Emotional Maturity Scale	Y. Singh & M. Bhargava	48	Reliability = .75; Validity = .64
2	Psychological Well-Being Scale	Carol D. Ryff	42	Reliability = .96; Validity = .67

Statistical Analysis and Results

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, independent-samples t tests, Cohen's d, and Pearson's product-moment correlation.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics for Emotional Maturity and Psychological Well-Being by Family Type

Variable	Family type	n	M	SD
Emotional maturity	Nuclear family	75	149.28	18.64
Emotional maturity	Joint family	75	161.45	17.92
Psychological well-being	Nuclear family	75	168.73	20.15
Psychological well-being	Joint family	75	181.96	19.44

Comparison of Emotional Maturity

An independent-samples t test was conducted to compare emotional maturity scores of adolescents from nuclear and joint families. Adolescents from joint families ($M = 161.45$, $SD = 17.92$) obtained higher emotional maturity scores than adolescents from nuclear families ($M = 149.28$, $SD = 18.64$). The difference was statistically significant, $t(147.77) = 4.08$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [6.27, 18.07]. The effect size was medium to large, Cohen's $d = 0.67$. Therefore, H1 was supported.

Comparison of Psychological Well-Being

An independent-samples t test was conducted to compare psychological well-being scores of adolescents from nuclear and joint families. Adolescents from joint families ($M = 181.96$, $SD = 19.44$) reported higher psychological well-being than adolescents from nuclear families ($M = 168.73$, $SD = 20.15$). The difference was statistically significant, $t(147.81) = 4.09$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [6.84, 19.62]. The effect size was medium to large, Cohen's $d = 0.67$. Therefore, H2 was supported.

Table 4
Independent-Samples t Test Comparing Nuclear and Joint Family Adolescents

Variable	Mean difference	SE	t	df	p	Cohen's d
Emotional maturity	12.17	2.99	4.08	147.77	< .001	0.67
Psychological well-being	13.23	3.23	4.09	147.81	< .001	0.67

Relationship Between Emotional Maturity and Psychological Well-Being

Pearson's product-moment correlation was computed to examine the relationship between emotional maturity and psychological well-being among all adolescents. The analysis showed a positive and statistically significant relationship between emotional maturity and psychological well-being,

$r(148) = .46, p < .001$. This indicates that adolescents with higher emotional maturity tended to report higher psychological well-being. Therefore, H3 was supported.

Table 5
Pearson Correlation Between Emotional Maturity and Psychological Well-Being

Variables	N	r	p
Emotional maturity and psychological well-being	150	.46	< .001

The study found that adolescents from joint families scored significantly higher on emotional maturity than those from nuclear families. This result suggests that joint-family environments may offer adolescents more opportunities for emotional learning, social interaction, and guidance from elders. The presence of grandparents and other relatives may help adolescents observe different coping styles, receive support during stress, and develop patience and responsibility within family relationships.

The results also showed that adolescents from joint families reported significantly higher psychological well-being. This finding may be explained by the availability of multiple sources of support in joint families. Adolescents who feel supported by family members may experience greater security, a sense of belonging, and positive relationships with others. These factors are closely related to the dimensions of psychological well-being proposed by Ryff, especially positive relations, environmental mastery, and self-acceptance.

The correlation analysis indicated a significant positive relationship between emotional maturity and psychological well-being. This means that adolescents who are better able to regulate emotions also tend to experience better psychological functioning. Emotional maturity may help adolescents manage conflict, tolerate frustration, maintain interpersonal relationships, and make balanced decisions. These abilities can strengthen self-confidence and promote well-being.

CONCLUSION

The present study concluded that adolescents from joint families showed significantly higher emotional maturity and psychological well-being than adolescents from nuclear families. The study also found a significant positive relationship between emotional maturity and psychological well-being. The findings indicate that emotionally mature adolescents are more likely to experience positive psychological functioning.

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