



A qualitative study using focus group discussions on exploring adolescent social behaviour

Dr. Shweta Jaiswal¹, Manushi Srivastava²

¹ Department of Community Medicine, Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India

² Professor, Department of Community Medicine, Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.66856/ijhssr.2026.12.4.12296>

Abstract

During the adolescence period, adolescents face overwhelming external and internal struggles, for instance; hormonal changes, puberty, social and parental forces, school and teachers' pressure and so on. Hence, it's important to understand the perceptions, thoughts and their behaviour pattern to facilitate them for their future prospects, therefore this is the qualitative study held on adolescents of residential and non-residential schools. We have chosen FGD, and tried to find out pattern of social interaction of the adolescents, like; tendency of talking to other, tendency of helping others, relationships with their parents and friends and so on. Also, they discussed about some problems like- double standard of Indian elders because one hand the elders said you can't do this "you are child" and other hand they said, now you have to grow up "you are not a child". Therefore, we will have to bear a special responsibility in the adolescent context.

Keywords: Adolescents, social interaction, social behaviour, focus group discussion, schools

Introduction

If anybody think that age is just a number than we have to explain that it is 'NOT'. Because during adolescence, an adolescent faces many difficulties in her/his life. Adolescence is a vital phase of life. It is the period from puberty (In human life when the body and genital organs start developing very fast and in that process an adolescent reach their full development) to legal adulthood. In this period a human is not a child nor an adult. It is mostly close with the TEENAGE years. Adolescence is that period of life in which many such changes take place which revolutionise one's physical, mental and social settings (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018) [11]. Maximum parents fail to assess these types of changes and generally, show indifference because they do not like to slacken their control over their children. This attitude creates too much difficulties for them.

World Health Organization (WHO) has defined that 'Adolescents' as individuals in the age group of 10-19 years. According to Hall (1916) (using the scientific methods to study adolescents), adolescents' period begins at puberty at about 12 or 13 years, and end late, between 22 years to 25 years of age. Hall described adolescence as a period of 'storm and

strife' - storm and stress. This is the stage of hero worshipping. The adolescents are crazy after their idols. They try to adopt mannerism in speech and dress of matinee-idols to enhance their social image (Waterman, 1982) [12].

Sigmund Freud believed that individual's personality develops through a series of stages based on their ability to control their internal needs (İsaoglu, 2015) and it depends on changes in the distribution of sexual energy. In the Genital phase, an adolescent faces intimate relationships & sexual attraction. Erickson has described that Adolescence is a period of Role confusion. The adolescent experiences a unified sense of self, based on a combination of previous learning (Côté, 2009). Therefore, Adolescence is a journey, which is full of hardship and adventures.

An unpredictable phase that eventually rubs off on our life. Also, a path with most of the obstacles but that only makes us stronger. In this period, we can make mistakes, obviously, but these mistakes leave a permanent scar, some of which never go with time. They want to give up many old habits and things of childhood and wants to acquire new ideas and habits in their place. As many people would agree that adolescence could be the most influential or sometimes most destructive part of our life. Depending on the situation we choose to be in. For example- the weak child becomes stronger, the selfish one becomes more liberal, the short tempered develops some tolerance, the dirty boy starts observing cleanliness and dull-head becomes more intelligent and so on. An adolescent could be surrounded by people, people you know for a long, but still, they feel lonely and there is a chance for distraction (S.P. Chaube, 2002) [3].

An Adolescent sometimes feels irritated due to adjustment problems. Either he or she will appear to be an extremely selfish person or extremely liberal. The adolescent that has passed their childhood in bad psychological or social atmosphere and or grown up in very protective & pampered by their parents face many difficulties during this period. We have seen many times that from the adolescent boys, parents expect that he should stand up on his own in many matters and should take responsibilities independently. How's it possible suddenly? This sometimes puts an adverse effect on the adolescent's personality and if an adolescent becomes immoral, corrupt, he poses a danger for a society (Bhalerao, P., 2021) [1]. Therefore, Socialization (it is the process through which an individual learns and adapts the ways, ideas, beliefs, values, and norms of his culture) plays a vital role.

The goals of socialization differ from one culture to the other and within the culture from one class to the other (Sharma, 2003) [9]. Therefore, "Social relationships are particularly playing vital role during adolescence (Choudhury et al., 2006) [4]." However, during this period,

they develop social anxiety which is attached to various forms of expectations and values. They became more sensitive to social cues and pressure. Adolescents with growing age become more aware of their prestige, social image, friends etc. This produces an increased striving for socially desirable goals. Lev Vygotsky believes that nurture influence development more than nature. According to him, Social Interaction plays an essential role in learning and skill development to a higher level with social interactions of adult guidance or peer collaboration. An individual has to develop social interaction, which is defined as a situation where the behavior of one actor is consciously reorganized by, and influence the behaviors of, another actor, and vice versa (Turner, 1989)^[10].

In this modern era, where literature supports that an adolescent lean toward friends for advice and are less caring for others, and so on, is it really happening? Therefore, in this Study, we tried to analyse the behavioural perspectives of the adolescent. Here, I am using “behaviour” because through the specific behaviour. We can analyse the pattern of social interaction.

Methodology

This is a Qualitative study on the residential and non-residential schools' adolescents (9th to 12th standard students). Education is an integral part of human life especially for Adolescents because they spent their most important period of life in gaining Education, that's why we have taken school set up for our study. We also wanted to see that what's the nature or behaviour of those adolescents who live under the family's surveillances (in Non-Residential school) or who live with peers and under the teacher's supervision (in Residential schools).

In qualitative data collection the reliability of data is not linked with the numbers of people who participate. Instead, it is linked to the concept of 'saturation', which means that the point when no new ideas are emerging from the participants. To gather qualitative data, we conducted a total of four Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), 2 FGDs in Kendriya Vidyalaya (represent non-residential schools) and another FGDs has been conducted on Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya (a residential school) of the Varanasi District. Each consisting of eight participants which represent the ideal size of a focus group. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Our selection of respondents was based on several factors, including the occupation of their mother (working or non-working), their academic achievement (low or high), and the type of family they belonged to (joint or nuclear). Both male and female participants were included in each FGD group.

Results & Discussion

The study of social interaction of adolescents is important to understand their behaviour and deal with them in a right & timely manner. This proper understanding may help in removing the causes of frictions in the family and it will also reduce the tension level among adolescents. Through this qualitative study, we analysed some basic social interaction of the adolescent students.

Relationship with Parents and Friends

Adolescents' relationships with their parents and best friends are important in the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Generally, there is a perception that if the child is

staying away from the family, then he/she gets detached from the family members and becomes closer to the friends and this process is natural. Indeed, when we look at our data, we find that this is true. An adolescent from residential said that, “Jab hum ghar jate hain toh teen din bad hi yahi sochne lagte hain, jaldi se wapas ab JNV (Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya- a residential school) main chale (“When we go home, just after three days we start thinking, 'let's quickly go back to JNV (Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya - a residential school).” This finding is very similar to the study of Brett Laursen (1995)^[2] and he stated that “more social interaction was reported with peers than family members”.

But we cannot say that a child who lives with their parents or family are very close to them. As our study showed that most of the adolescent who were studying in non-residential schools said that they hardly get time to talk to our family members and share their secrets yet most of them also agreed that however they did not have enough time but we have good bonding with their parents.

A student of non-residential school said that “mera to bahut matlab bhut jyada baat hota rehta hai mummy papa se, aur hum log mein jaise matlab papa se, class 9-10 me aaye jabse hai tabse, bilkul dost ke jaise baat hota hai (I keep having a lot of conversations with my mom and dad, and it's like, since we came to class 9-10, it's been like talking to a friend, especially with dad).” There were some girls of non-residential schools who shared that their bonding with their parents is very good, even she shares all the events of the day with them.

A study conducted by McKenna et al. (2022) supports this, stating that adolescents' value positive relationships with parents involving emotional support and companionship. Non-residential students largely agreed that their bonding is better with parents and they trust them more than friends. In contrast, residential students trust their friends completely because they spend the majority of their time with them.

Concern for other's Emotions & Feelings

Now a days, we always keep listening from the parents that 'today's children, they do not care about anyone's happiness and sorrow'. Is it really like that? When we wanted to know this, it came forth that the adolescent of both the schools care was well concerned about others' emotions & feelings. They use to feel the happiness & pains of others. An adolescent of non-residential students said that “dusro ki khushi mein to apni khushi hai unko dard hota hai unse jyada takaleff hume hota hai (In the happiness of others, there is our own happiness, but more than their pain, we feel more distress).” They also mention that they care more about the happiness of their parents and less about his friend's happiness. They also admit that their family comes first for them in their priorities.

Interacting with others

We cannot say that today's adolescent admires to be alone, and don't like interacting with others. Because when we try analyse in our study whether today's adolescent really does not like to talk to anyone, then it comes that whether it is a non-residential school student or a residential school student, everyone likes to talk. A student of non-residential school said that “logo se baat krenge tbhi to hum unko janenge (We will get to know them only when we talk to people)”. Other students said that “jisse baat krne se hmara

mood achcha ho jata hai use to baat krenge, jisko hum psnd nahi krtein use hum baat bhi nhi krte (We will talk to those who uplift our mood when we converse with them, and we won't engage in conversation with those whom we don't like)".

Their Emotions when someone Criticise them

It is Human tendency that if someone criticise us, we feel bad & gets angry. Even most of the adolescents agreed that they get anger when anyone criticises them. A social interactionist George Herbert Mead gave the 'theory of self-mirror' and in it he/she has told that the way a child is seen by society or other people, he/she also sees himself in the same way. When we saw this, we found that most of the adolescents do this too. A student of non-residential school said that "bura lgta hai bahot, aur fir yhi smjh ata hai ki ho skta hmare ander hi koi kmi hogi tbhi vo ese bole (It feels very bad and then the thought comes that perhaps there must be something lacking within us, that's why they said this)." When their family member or close one criticizes them, they start to feel that they really deserve this criticism. As noted by Gibson (2015) ^[6], parental neglect and rejection in childhood can adversely affect self-confidence.

As an adolescent of residential school or non-residential school all agreed that we don't feel bad if friend or unknown person criticizes but when family members do it, they really feel very bad. A residential school girl said that "hum ghar walo se jyada close rehte hain, vo jaise kuch bol dete hain to ekdm hurt sa feel hota hai (We are closer to our family members than anyone else. If they say something, it hurts us deeply)." This statement is very close to the research of the Symonds. In his book 'A Study of Parental Acceptance and Rejection', he concludes that parental affection has an effect on the adolescent.

When we see how they react after hearing criticism, most of the teenagers said that the reaction depends on the situation. When we see that there is no harm for us, we show anger there, but when there is a loss, we remain calm.

There were also few adolescents from both the schools who showed their disagreement on above thoughts, they said that whenever someone criticizes them, whether it is right or wrong, they express their anger without giving second thought.

Tendency to Help others

Man is a social animal and through the process of socialization an attempt is made to socialize a biological child, and with the help of socialization process society learns the qualities of socialization in them like how to behave with others, help others. to become a social being etc. The primary element of role, according to Parsons is role-expectation. It implies reciprocity between the actor and his/her alter (the other persons), and is governed by a range of motivational and value orientations. As mentioned earlier, the Motivational orientation refers to a situation in which action takes place considering needs or motives, external appearances and plans of the individual actors. Value orientation refers to the values, aesthetics, morality, etc. aspects of action.

When we tried to assess whether adolescents have value orientation or not? we found that whether they are adolescents of residential school or non-residential school, everyone loves to help others. Except one of the students agreed that if someone asks us for help, then first of all we

see that we are not going to face any problem then we agree to help the needy. Apart from this, a student who was from the residential school said that "He does not think at all, if someone asks me for help, I am always ready to help".

Quarrelling with younger siblings

Adolescents are the future of any country, especially for India because the largest part of India's population is the population of adolescents. In India, where everyone gives example of Ram and Bharat for brotherhood. On the other hand, they believe that there is no one like them in Kaliyuga. We tried to see whether adolescents really do not have good relations with their siblings. So, we found that all the students agreed that they have a lot of fights with their siblings but all of them also agreed that as much we fight, as much there is a sense of belongingness and love between us.

Conclusion and Future Work

The social interaction of the adolescent goes on getting complicated with his/her development. No one noticed their social interaction during early years but the parents become cautious about their social interaction when they attain the age of ten or twelve years. When the child enters in the phase of adolescence, their parents become more cautious, because during adolescence period the individual moves rapidly towards maturity and everyone watches their actions keenly. Parents will start desiring from their adolescent to get respect in society and responsible behaviours will be expected of an Adolescent by the near and dear person.

As per our study analysis, we can conclude that an adolescent has misrepresented by the society. They want to interact with their lovable persons. They have helping nature. They are well concerned about others' emotions & feelings. Generally, there is a thought that an adolescent has short tempered personality. But as per our data, it is showing that they show their temper after the analysis of profit or loss. An Adolescent's feeling towards his/her companions, teachers and specially with their parents or near and dear ones become deeper.

There are some problems in the social life of adolescents which was disclosed by students during discussion: "(1) rashness of behaviour and unmindfulness of consequences, (2) desire to reform the society and (3) double standards of elders. Therefore, we face problems and we feel bad that no one understand us."

Ultimately, the study suggests that teenagers feel a deep sense of being misunderstood by those around them. It is the duty of parents or teachers to give adolescents ample opportunity of correcting and learning social behaviour. They should guide them by taking interest himself.

Funding Declaration: This research received no external funding.

Conflict of interest: None declared.

Ethical approval: The study was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee. Availability of Data and

Materials: The datasets generated and/or analysed during the current study are not publicly available due to privacy and ethical considerations but are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Reference

1. Bhalerao P. Reengineering Indian Adolescence: The Complete Blueprint. 1st edition. Notion Press, 2021.

2. Laursen B. Conflict and Social Interaction in Adolescent Relationships. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*,1995;5(1):55–70. DOI: 10.1207/s15327795jra0501_3.
3. Chaube SP. *Psychology of Adolescents in India*. Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2002.
4. Choudhury S, Blakemore SJ, Charman T. Social cognitive development during adolescence. *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience*,2006;1(3):165–174. DOI: 10.1093/scan/nsi024.
5. Côté JE. Identity formation and self-development in adolescence. In Lerner RM, Steinberg L, editors. *Handbook of Adolescent Psychology: Individual Bases of Adolescent Development*. 3rd ed. John Wiley & Sons, 2009:266–304.
6. Gibson CL. *Adult Children of Emotionally Immature Parents*, 2015.
7. İsaoglu H. A Freudian Psychoanalytic Analysis of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. *International Journal of Social Sciences*,2015;32(3):499–511. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.9761/JASSS2713>.
8. McKenna S, Olsen A, Pasalich D. Understanding Strengths in Adolescent-Parent Relationships: A Qualitative Analysis of Adolescent Speech Samples. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*,2022;32(3):1228–1245. DOI: 10.1111/jora.12684.
9. Sharma D. *Childhood, Family and Sociocultural Change in India*. Oxford University Press, 2003.
10. Turner J. *A Theory of Social Interaction*. 1989. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2579266>.
11. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Adolescent Development Explained*. Office of Population Affairs. Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 2018.
12. Waterman AS. Identity development from adolescence to adulthood: An extension of theory and a review of research. *Developmental Psychology*,1982;18(3):341–358. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.18.3.34>.