

Changing Patterns of Behaviour among Adolescents: An Analysis

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Abstract

The present paper has been conceived and formulated on a very wide canvas of adolescents in India in relation to their socio-economic status and analysis its impact on their differing behaviours in present context. In this perspective paper makes a diffident attempt to highlight and explore changing patterns of behaviour among adolescents. Since socio-economic status impinges directly and indirectly, covertly and overtly upon behaviour therefore the paper revolves round the theoretical conception of socio economic condition and its impact on adolescents' behaviour. The result shows that the changing socio economic status has marked a deep impact upon the changing behaviours among adolescents in several ways.

KEYWORDS: Adolescents, Behaviour, socio-economic status

Before going to discuss issues pertaining to socio economic status and how it shapes the behaviour among adolescents, it is imperative to narrate some of the cases in brief that was observed during teaching in the school. The incidents took place in the reputed school at Delhi. The first case is of a student of 12th standard of high profile school in Delhi who was asked to stop copying in pre board examination by a teacher. Later immediately after commencement of the exam, the boy called his friends from 'Gurmandi and hit the teacher on head with an iron rod. The teacher bleeding profusely oozing out from head fell down and became unconscious and now is brain dead that we popularly known as 'in coma'. The 'mistake' or the 'crime' of the teacher was that he prevented the boy from cheating in the examination. The boy later was arrested but got free as there was no evidence against him. The witness got hostile and the investigating police officer was bribed to weaken the case. The boy and their family come from high socio-economic status and are influential.

The second case is of three friends from one school in Rohini, Delhi. All the three friends went to the fourth friend house, asked him to accompany them for party, went to Sonapat and murdered the last companion. In this case too, the murdered was from low socio-economic status where as the others were from high socio-status family background. There are several incidents around us. The question is why such frustrated, differing behaviour is reflected among adolescents more often now a days? Is that changing behaviour pattern among students reflective of changing socio-economic status? How can we understand socio-economic status? These are some of the issues that the paper delves into details.

Life is a challenge from dawn to dusk and birth to death. In addition to happy things, problems, stress, difficulties, dishonor comes in the way of our life. Adolescence, the period of transition from childhood to adulthood, is a critical time for the development of lifelong perceptions, beliefs, values and practices. It is a stage where teenagers go through emotional, physical or hormonal, changes and as Erickson in his "Identity vs Identity crisis" explains the adolescents state of mind says that they want to prove themselves socially and academically and hence they have to follow and maintain a fine line of balance between childhood and adulthood and emotions play a great role in it. Goleman (1995) explained that strong emotions are the basis for the impulse to action. Thus, an emotionally intelligent student would tend to seek mature and rational solution to problems whereas lack of it would tend to lead to anger and defiance, loneliness and depression, impulsive aggression and a worried and nervous look. Such behaviour of adolescents depends on identity of self which plays a significant role in an adolescent life. During the process of growth and development, every individual acquires the awareness of 'self' experiencing 'ones identity' which includes impressions one has about one's physical appearance and other tangible properties. It further includes the conception of oneself about one's traits, abilities, roles, attitudes, beliefs, values and the possibilities of future. It is believed that 'self' is a principal controlling agent, which shapes human destiny. In reality, 'self' is viewed by the majority of psychologists as the nucleus of human being. An adolescent struggle with the developmental tasks of establishing an identity, accepting changes in physical characteristics, learning skills for a healthy lifestyle and separating from family. Among socio-economic factors, family income seems to be most related to self-esteem among adolescents. Researches also show how socio-economic status is significantly related to self-esteem. In general, those with higher socio-economic status report higher self-esteem than those with lower socio-economic status (Francis and Jones, 1996).

Conceptualizing socio-economic status and its impact:

The concept of social status is used as a correlate of social role. Social status is the honor or prestige attached to one's social position in society. It may also refer to a rank or position that one holds in a group, for example son or daughter, playmate, pupil, etc. The position or rank of a person or group within the society can be determined in two ways. One can earn their social status by their own achievements, which is known as achieved status. Alternatively, one can be placed in the stratification system by their inherited position, which is called status. Status also means the individual acquirement during his or her lifetime as a result of the exercise of knowledge, ability, skill and perseverance. Chapin (1928) and Linton (1936) defined 'Status' simply as "*a position in a social system, such as child or parent.*" Status is also indicative of the monetary value of an individual in a particular group (Kulshreshta 1975; Kalia and Sahu, 2012).

Socio-economic status plays an important role in determining the level of self-concept in an individual. It is the first important thing in determining what a student is and what he is going to be in future and what he feels about himself and others. In some homes, those parents who are well educated and possess good social background and wholesome personality, they nurture their children according to the changing lifestyle, fashion and psychological principles. So, as a result of this changing pattern of behavior among

adults, their children (adolescents) also develop positive thinking about others and themselves. The socio-economic status of parents influences study habits of the child (Dahiya, 2013). The social economic and educational statuses of his family, his neighborhood, moral qualities of his associates etc are the major determinants of quality of academic achievement of a student (Demarest et.al 1993; Panda, 1998). Not surprisingly, low-income adolescents have less achievement motivation and much higher risk of educational failure than the students belongs to high income family Schultz, (1993). In particular, compared with their more affluent counterparts, low-income adolescents receive lower grades, earn lower scores in class tests, and are much more likely to drop out of the school (Tenda, Schneidr & Kao, 1996) ; Hauser, Simmons & Pager 2000).

Low-income students usually attend schools with lower funding levels, which result in reduced availability of textbooks and other instructional materials, laboratory equipment, library books, and other educational resources; low-level curricula; and less-qualified teachers and administrators (Kozol, 1991; Oakes, 1990).

Families with high socio-economic status often have more success in preparing their young children for school because they typically have access to a wide range of resources to promote and support young children's development. They are able to provide their young children with high-quality child care facilities, books, and toys to encourage children in various learning activities at home. Also, they have easy access to information regarding their children's health, as well as social, emotional, and cognitive development. In addition, families with high socioeconomic status often seek out information to help them better to prepare their young children for school.

How socio-economic status impact adolescents?

Many research studies have been conducted in social sciences to find out influences of socio-economic status on adolescent behaviour Valenzuela, 1971; Ronald, 1972; Thomas, 1974; Heyneman, 1975; Chauhan, 1982; White, 1982; Singh, 1986; Yadav, 1989; Harikrishan, 1992; Crnic and Lamberty, 1994). Kormos et al. (2013) suggests that social class has an overall medium-size effect on motivational factors with self-efficacy beliefs being the most strongly related to socio-economic status.

Determinants of social positions are a matter of social change. It varies with time, region, culture and paying capacity of people. Growing economy of India, implementation of new pay scales as recommended by the sixth pay commission (2008), technological explosion, impact of electronic media, print media and education has changed many parameters of social position in last few years. In these days, number of followers of a person in a social network like Facebook or Twitter counts the ability of that person to influence mass and so as his level of social status. Today modernity is regarded as more important than money hence, social status of a person cannot be measured only with financial and occupational status. The level of education, modern life styles, health status and kind of gadgets, facilities and services that a person is enjoying must be taken into consideration while determining his/her status and social position.

The literatures available on socio-economic status indicate change in the concept of social position from time to time. Power, (1981) focused only on occupation while measuring socio economic position where as U.S. Department of Defense, (1986) identified some traditional components of socio-economic status viz. education,

occupation, income, employment status, possession of materials and presence of reading materials. Similarly, Australian Bureau of Statistics, (1994) identified education, health, contact with criminal justice system, employment, housing, access to services, water, sewerage, etc. as social position and income, ownership, assets level, holdings etc. as economic position of a person. Thus, the determinant for measuring socio-economic status has remained dynamic.

Socio-economic status also plays a significant role in parent child relationship. Unemployed or low income parents tend to see themselves as incapable because they cannot meet the needs of their children and family. Inadequate resources create conflict in the family. Such a state of affairs may influence the parent child relationship and subsequently the holistic development of child. Family income also has a profound influence on the educational opportunities available to adolescents and on their chances of educational success. These days, pocket money is also been taken as a symbol of prestige by our new generation. Pocket money is a small amount of money given to children on daily, weekly or monthly bases from their parents or guardians. Children are supposed to consume this amount according to their own free will. Although it has also been revealed by Cheng and Westwood (2007) while investigating the achievement of primary school students, that majority of children are least worried about their pocket money situation; nevertheless, pocket money can teach children the money management skills and help them to understand how the economic system works. It is probable that there could be some negative impacts of pocket money upon children. Students from high class take it as a status symbol and they spend it on soft drinks, tea, milk, juice, coffee, movie tickets etc. They spend money for such stuffs which can spoil them. Reasons for rising liquor consumption among school students include easy money. About 70 per cent of the teens consume alcohol on occasions like farewell party, New Year, Christmas, birthdays and valentine day. Students who get more pocket money from their parents, gets more preference from other students as compared to the students who do not get pocket money from their parents which results in depression, guilt, disappointment, apathy, anxiety and other such emotions and ultimately affects the mental state of the individual. A frustrated state of mind exhibits tension, lack of peace, sense of inferiority etc. and in it; many kinds of mental mechanisms are involved. This emotionally distressing state of mind, popularly known as the inferiority complex, is especially prevalent among individuals who attribute their failure to attain life objectives to personal inadequacies or defects. Inadequate income is known to induce stress, anger, frustration and sense of helplessness which in turn may promote hostile family relationship and it may have a negative impact on self-concept of adolescents. Coleman (1966) studied the effect of school resources and the socioeconomic factors on student achievement. They found that student background and socioeconomic status are much more important in determining educational outcomes than are measured differences in school resources whereas Agnihotri (1990) reported that adults belonging to low socio-economic status had better self-concept than adults belonging to high socio-economic status. No significant difference was observed between high and low socio-economic groups with respect to self-concept (Gupta & Wogu, 1989; Uma Devi *et al.* 1998).

Reasoning frustrating behaviour among adolescents:

Human behavior is goal-oriented and is directed by various environmental forces and internal qualities of the individuals such as their attitudes, aptitudes, interests, likings and various other personality traits. Every individual has unlimited wants, desire, goals, ambitions and needs. However, in present times, the entire system is too complex to fulfill all of them. Lack of feelings of love and belongingness within the individual as well as feeling of decline in the individual's drive to adjust to the existing environment has lead to develop negative behavior among individual resulting in frustration within the individual and change of behavior patterns. Frustration involves the thwarting or blocking of a person's dominant motives, needs, desires, drives and purposes. Modern world is full of complex, confusion and competitiveness where frustration among adolescent in India is increasing day by day. Frustration is one of the most dominating factors influencing the individual behavior. The specific situations that bring about frustration are endless but they can generally be put into three main categories- Physical environment, Man's biological limitations and psychological make-up. Besides its inevitability, frustration is a phenomenon of a great consequence to human happiness. Many psychologists have pointed out the importance of frustration towards constructive side. The frustration may spur individual to greater and better organized efforts, determined to achieve ultimate success and satisfaction. It may increase the strength of the motive and to redouble the efforts to go ahead with the blocked line of activity. Many of the outstanding achievements in human, social and individual history have sprung out of deeply frustrating situations or backgrounds. Under frustrated conditions a state of hopeless emotive behaviour and disgust are reflected and hence it impact the mental conditions due to failure to satisfy some motives and desires or due to delayed desired outcome. Though, it is a normal reaction to stress and to hassles of everyday life however, psychologists believed that frustration increases the probability of aggressive behaviour. There are evidences where researches have shown that frustration cause depression, guilt, disappointment, apathy, anxiety and other emotive behaviours resulting in increased aggression (Sargent, 1948) as well as resignation, fixation and regression resulting in injury to organism (Dollard, et al., 1939).

There may be several factors (Allport, 1961) viz. a viz. external or environmental factors, internal or personal factors, physical, social, economic, abnormality, mental deficiency, conflicting desires, moral values or high level of aspiration which may be causing frustration among adolescents. Family and peers play a major role in the development of an adolescent's self-esteem. The family in particular, as the primary environment at this period of life, provides an important background for developing and creating the initial sense of oneself. Lack of support or a dysfunctional family environment is a great contributor to maladjustment and other behavioural problems. Support from peer groups and teachers, can positively or negatively influence the development of one's self-esteem.

Realizing Self:

Realizing self or self-concept is an important attribute of understanding, predicting and organizing behavior. It may be thought of as an organized configuration of perception of the self, which are admissible to awareness. Jerschild (1960) says,

“It is a composite of a person’s thoughts and feelings, striving and hopes, fears and fantasies, his views of what he is what he has been, what he might become, and his attitude pertaining to his worth.”

Maximum behavior viz. a viz. intellectual and school status, physical appearance and attributes, anxiety, popularity and happiness, satisfaction, etc. of an adolescent student depend on his self-concept. Self is the more or less organized perceptual object resulting from present and past self-observation. It is the core and the substance of his experience as human being and how person ideals about himself are reflections of how others see him (Cooley, 1964), One’s attitudes and beliefs about himself, the convictions one has and the values one holds also a form of self-concept. For example, an individual growing up in a perfectionist family may view himself as always falling short of the anticipations of the family. As a consequence, no matter how successful he might be, he thinks of himself as a failure.

Marsh and Young (1997) found that self-concept in specific school subject are significantly related to subsequent coursework selection to choice of what subject students want to study and the choice of what they actually pursue. Jain (1990) found that the girls having high self-concept tended to select high academic goals which were positively associated with each other, suggesting that they reinforce each other where academic achievement was depended on the concept of self that adolescence girls possessed.

Marsh and Young (1997) found that self-concept in specific school subject are significantly related to subsequent coursework selection to choice of what subject students want to study and the choices of what they actually pursue. Similarly, Jain (1990) found that the girls having high self-concept tend to select high academic goals, which were positively associated with each other, suggesting that they reinforce each other where academic achievement was dependent on the self-concept that adolescent girls possessed. Individual’s self-concept is also influenced by the subjects that he/she studies and how he/she feels about it. Manocha (1993) revealed that self concept of students of different groups differed significantly Science group students formed significantly separate group considering themselves to be much superior to both commerce and humanity groups. The humanity group seemed to suffer from inferiority feelings considering themselves as lower than both science and commerce groups whereas Sood (2006) found no variation in the academic self-concept of students from different the educational streams.

Bester (2007) found no gender difference in boys’ and girls’ self-concept. Chung (2003) revealed that boys has higher level of self-concept than girls on the contrarily Tyagi and Kaur (2001) found that girls had higher level of self concept than boys, especially in the subscales of behaviour, intellectual school status and popularity.

It has been noticed that the overall performance of a student in the class-room is largely dependent on his self-concept. Mehta (1968) reported that negative aspects of the self-concept characterize under-achievers whereas positive aspects characterize over achievers. Sharma (1979) revealed that the level of self-concept affects academic achievement positively and significantly. Rani (1980) revealed that the scheduled caste student’s academic achievement was significantly lower than that of the non-scheduled caste students and differed significantly with regard to physical self-concept, self-esteem

and self-concept. (Homachandhuri, 1980; Shanmugasundaram & Singh, 1983; Krishnan, 1993) explored self-concept as the most significant correlate of academic performance. (Pathani, 1985; Dutta, 1988) found that self-concept was a significant predictor of academic achievement (actual) and academic achievement (perceived). Saxena & Vandana (1988) studied the impact of family relationship on the self-concept and academic achievement of high school students. No significant difference was observed between dimensions of self-concept and family. Ramasamy (1988) explored that academic achievement was positively related to self-concept and socio-economic status among high and low achieving boys and girls reported a significant relationship between self-concept and academic achievement. Mahashevta (2007) revealed significant difference in academic achievement of scheduled caste students belonging to high and low groups of self-concept. (Sundaram, 1989; Nuthana, 2007) explored a significant difference between urban and rural students in their self concept and revealed that the rural students had higher self-concept than urban students whereas Kalyani Devi (2004) explored that self-concept of urban students was greater than the rural adolescents.

Alexander (1997) showed a high degree of positive, significant association between academic performance and academic self-concept. Self-concept was also found positive, high and significantly correlated with scholastic achievement of students (Chakravarti, 1999). Boulter (2002) used self-concept as a predictor of academic performance. Sharma (2003) revealed that low achieving students generally show low self-concept than the high achieving students. Carlos (2009) revealed that students' academic self-concepts and unambiguous outcome expectations encourage critical thinking and reflective approaches to learning. McInerney et.al (2012) found that academic self-concept, learning strategies, and academic achievement have reciprocal relationships with each other. Thus it is clearly established by contemporary researches that the way an individual perceives himself goes to shape his behavior patterns and an important mental apparatus of a student may be considered to be his 'self-concept' which influences every function of his life.

Conclusion:

Main intention of research exertion was to estimate the impact of socio economic status on behavior of the individual. The adolescent undergoes a continuous process of adjustment. His personal and social behavior does not develop in a vacuum. These interests and modes of behavior are particularly the result from the relationship that exists between his personal desires, needs or inherit potentialities and existing environmental conditions by which he is stimulated. He may fail completely to adjust with the emotional or mental breakdown. Most adolescents manage change and development without making those appear like problems still there are various environmental forces and internal qualities which affect human behaviour, such as their attitudes, aptitudes, interests, likings and various other personality traits. If they are given authentic and practical knowledge about these changes and development, if parents, teachers and other adults share the concerns of adolescents and extend their support to them, it will be easier for adolescents to cope with these ongoing changes.

There is an urgent need to give proper attention to the adolescents as they account for one fifth of the world's total population. Stress and strain for a child starts as soon as he is sent to school. A child is put under constant stress because of many differences prevailing

in the society. Unless a child is properly adjusted he cannot live in the society peacefully. Teacher's role is very important as students spend their maximum time in the classroom with the teacher. So, there is enough scope for the teachers to mould the personality and behavior patterns of students and to enable them to have good adjustment capacities by finding out the levels of frustration among the students. The perception and confidence that even bad social deeds can be covered up with high socio-economic status is on rise. We need to rethink which types of society we want to make. It will be imperative if we find the solution as early as possible.

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