

Role of siblings in social and emotional maturity of adolescents

KUSHAPANT and RITU SINGH

Department of Human Development and Family Studies, College of Home Science, G. B. Pant University of Agriculture and Technology, Pantnagar-263145 (U. S. Nagar, Uttarakhand)

ABSTRACT: The present study has been carried out to study the influence of presence of siblings on the social and emotional maturity of senior school adolescents. The sample of the study comprised of 277 adolescents studying in class XI selected randomly from the schools located at Pantnagar, Uttarakhand. Social Maturity Scale by Rao, Emotional Maturity Scale by Singh & Bhargava and a self-designed questionnaire were employed to collect the requisite data. The study revealed that adolescents who had three or more siblings were significantly more personally adequate than those who had one or no sibling. Conversely, emotional progressiveness and personality integration of adolescents having one or no sibling were perceived to be significantly more than ones having two siblings. Non-significant differences were observed across composite social and emotional maturity of adolescents. Further, all the components of social and emotional maturity were found to be significantly and positively correlated with each other across number of siblings.

Key words: Emotional Progression, familial relations, personal adequacy, personality integration, sibling relationships, social adequacy

Relationship with siblings provides a context for life experiences. The sibling relationship has been described as the most enduring of all familial relations, and, despite its secondary significance, it remains unique and influential. It includes warmth and siblings' involvement in each other's lives, as well as conflict and rivalry, and is best described as emotionally ambivalent (Deater-Deckard, Dunn and Lussier, 2002). Siblings play a major role during the transition to adulthood, in social relationships of children and in the overall development across the life course (Conger and Kramer, 2010). Siblings influence all sorts of competencies (Sailor, 2014). From the time they are born, our brothers and sisters are our collaborators and co-conspirators, our role models and cautionary tales. They are our scolds, protectors, goads, tormentors, playmates, counsellors, sources of envy, objects of pride. They teach us how to resolve conflicts and how not to, how to conduct friendships and when to walk away from them (Kluger, 2006). Siblings can be important role models and agents of socialization in the family and might also be peers. First-born siblings engage in leadership, teaching, care giving, and helping roles, whereas second-born siblings are more likely to imitate, follow, be a learner, and elicit care and help (Howe and Recchia, 2014). According to Kluger (2006), within the scientific community, older siblings were said to be strivers, younger ones rebels and middle kids the lost souls.

With age, sibling relationships undergo developmental transformations and become more egalitarian and more symmetrical. Adolescents start to develop their own identity, separate emotionally from parents and show growing interest in the wider world, friends and romantic partners. This development may lead to decreased interest in their siblings and joint activities. Despite the growing distance and decrease in joint activities, the emotional attachment between siblings remains moderately strong throughout adolescence (Cole and Kerns, 2001). In a longitudinal study, Updegraff, McHale and Crouter (2002) showed that approaching late adolescence, participants reported an increase in intimacy with their siblings. Moreover, findings by Tucker, McHale and Crouter (2001) suggested that 13 and 16 year olds described their older siblings as sources of support in social and emotional issues, as well as in familial issues. The above reviewed literature indicates that during adolescence, relationship with sibling keeps on changing due to one or other transition occurring in number of domains which directly influences their social and emotional development.

Emotional maturity and social maturity, both are vital for attaining success and happiness in one's life. Emotional maturity enables adolescents make better decisions, better choices and have more fun and less stress, which enables them to have better balance in life. Similarly, good social adjustment is also important, not

only because the adolescent craves social success, but also because his social adjustments in adolescence will determine to a large extent what he will be socially throughout the adult years. What children learn from their siblings when they are growing up has a considerable influence on their social and emotional development as adults.

According to Kramer (2010), while a parent's influence on a child's development is obviously important, the influence of a sibling should not be underestimated. Siblings are closer to the social environments that children find themselves in during the majority of their day, which is why it's important not to overlook the contributions that they make on who we end up being. Social and emotional maturity is an important aspect of adolescent's life because he is to develop in an adult and society cannot tolerate socially and emotionally immature individuals. A lot of current research looks at how children learn undesirable behaviours like smoking, drinking and other delinquent acts, from exposure to an older sibling's antisocial behaviours as well as that of their sibling's friends. For example, a female teen is at higher risk for getting pregnant if her older sister was a teenage mother. It is a common belief that siblings provide a necessary social and emotional environment for a child's normal development. Thus, developing a better understanding of sibling influences can help us design effective strategies for protecting younger children in families. Our study is thus an attempt to assess the influence of presence of siblings on the social and emotional maturity levels of adolescents with the objectives to examine the level of social and emotional maturity of adolescents across number of siblings, to explore if the number of siblings statistically influences the social and emotional maturity of adolescents and to investigate the relationship between social and emotional maturity of adolescents across number of siblings.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sample

The research study was carried out exclusively in the schools of G. B. Pant University of Agriculture & Technology, Pantnagar, in 2009. The respondents for the study were the adolescents studying in class XI of the various schools situated in Pantnagar. Out of the total eight schools situated in Pantnagar, only three schools could be purposively included in the study since only these schools provided education up to intermediate

level. All the adolescents studying in class XI of the selected three schools were taken up as respondents for the present study i.e. 87 senior school adolescents (42 boys and 45 girls) from Campus School, 116 senior school adolescents from GGIC and 74 senior school adolescents from PIC, making a total of two hundred & seventy seven (277) respondents for the present study.

Tools

Self-designed socio-demographic questionnaire was used to study the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents. Social maturity of the respondents was assessed using Rao's Social Maturity Scale developed by Nalini Rao. This 90 items scale measures social maturity under 3 dimensions viz. Personal Adequacy, Interpersonal Adequacy and Social Adequacy. The response options available for the items are: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree & Strongly Disagree with scores of 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 for positive items and 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 for negative items respectively. The scores of a respondent on 3 sub-scales of the social maturity scale collectively give his / her Composite Social Maturity Score. Emotional maturity of the respondents was assessed through Emotional Maturity Scale by Y. Singh and M. Bhargava. It is a standardized scale. This scale consists of in total 48 questions scattered under five categories i.e. Emotional Stability, Emotional Progression, Social Adjustment, Personality Integration and Independence. Emotional Maturity Scale is a self-reporting Five Point Scale. The response options are Very Much, Much, Undecided, Probably and Never and scores assigned are 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The scores of a respondent on 5 sub-scales of the emotional maturity scale collectively give his / her Composite Emotional Maturity Score.

Procedure and Data Analysis

The respondents were approached in a group of 4 to 5 in the school itself during their free period. Firstly, the purpose of the study was made clear to them. Then, they were requested to give honest responses and were assured that their identity would be kept confidential and information provided by them would be used exclusively for the purpose of research work. English version of both the scales was used with Campus School students as this school is an English medium school where as Hindi version of the scales was provided to students from PIC and GGIC because both these schools are Hindi medium schools. Each sampled student was given questionnaires individually and was asked to fill the questionnaires there

and then only under strict supervision of the investigator. The respondents were asked to fill the questionnaires within the given time and then the investigator collected the questionnaires from the students immediately. Statistical analysis was done by using Arithmetic mean, Standard deviation, Analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Correlation coefficient.

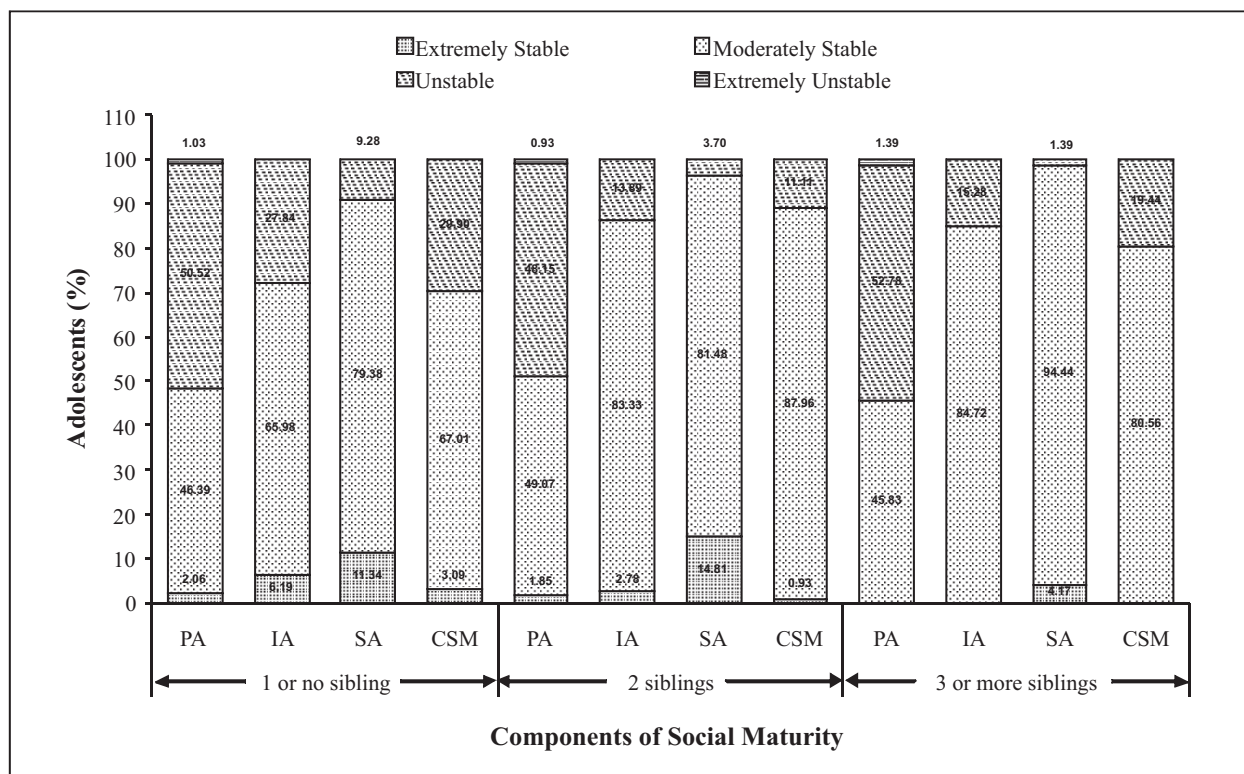
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The frequency and percentage distribution of adolescents on social maturity across number of siblings is presented in Figure 1. A cursory look at the figure reveals that none of the adolescents who had three or more siblings were extremely stable whereas, 2.06% of adolescents having one or no sibling and 1.85% having two siblings were extremely stable on personal adequacy component of social maturity. Among adolescents having one or no sibling, two siblings and three or more siblings 1.03%, 0.93% and 1.39% adolescents, respectively were found to be extremely unstable. On this component, 50.52% of the adolescents having one or no

sibling and 52.78% of those with three or more siblings were unstable whereas, 49.07% of those having two siblings were moderately stable.

On interpersonal adequacy component, 65.98% of the adolescents having one or no sibling, 83.33% of those having two siblings and 84.72% of those having three or more siblings were found to be moderately stable whereas, 27.84%, 13.89% and 15.28%, respectively were unstable. None of the adolescents who had three or more siblings were found extremely stable whereas, 6.19% and 2.78% of the adolescents having one or no sibling and two siblings, respectively, were found extremely stable. There was no adolescent who fall on extremely unstable level of social maturity.

Social adequacy component also revealed somewhat similar trend. Majority of the adolescents having one or no sibling (79.38%), two siblings (81.48%) and three or more siblings (94.44%) were found to be moderately stable and no one was extremely unstable.



Note: PA indicates Personal Adequacy; IA indicates Inter-personal Adequacy; SA indicates Social Adequacy; CSM indicates Composite Social Maturity; ES indicates Emotional Stability; EP indicates Emotional Progression; SA indicates Social Adjustment; PI indicates Personality Integration; I indicates Independence and CEM indicates Composite Emotional Maturity

Fig. 1: Percentage distribution of senior school adolescents of Pantnagar on social maturity across number of siblings

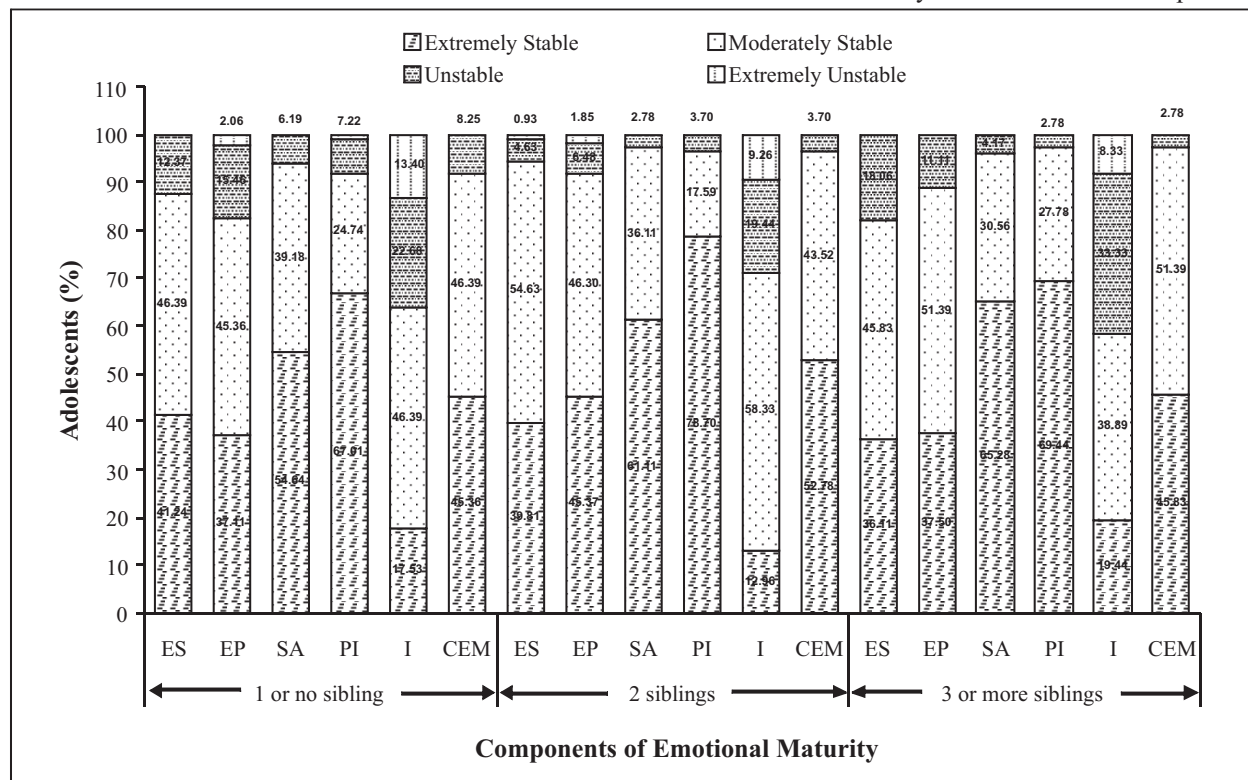
However, 9.28%, 3.70% and 1.39% of the adolescents among those having one or no sibling, two siblings and three or more siblings, respectively, were found to be unstable on this component. Reportedly, 11.34%, 14.81% and 4.17% of the adolescents having one or no sibling, two siblings and three or more siblings were observed to be extremely stable also.

A glance at composite social maturity shows that adolescents having one or no (67.01%), two (87.96%) and three or more (80.56%) siblings, were predominantly moderately stable followed by being unstable (1 or no sibling-29.90%, 2 sibling-11.11% and 3 or more sibling-19.44%). None of the adolescent was found to be extremely unstable on this component. It was disappointing to find that only 3.09% and 0.93% of the adolescents having one or no and two siblings, respectively, were identified as extremely socially mature.

Further, Figure 2 represents percentage distribution of senior school adolescents of Pantnagar on emotional maturity across number of siblings. It can be clearly seen

from figure that good proportions of adolescents were moderately and extremely stable on emotional stability component of emotional maturity. 46.39%, 54.63% and 45.83% of the adolescents having one or no sibling, two siblings and three or more siblings, respectively, were identified as moderately stable and 41.24%, 39.81% and 36.11%, respectively, as extremely stable. Although, none belonged to extremely unstable category but still 12.37%, 4.63% and 18.06% of the adolescents having one or no sibling, two siblings and three or more siblings were found unstable.

Emotional progression component also revealed somewhat similar trend. Majority of the adolescents having one or no sibling (45.36%), two siblings (46.30%) and three or more siblings (51.39%) were found to be moderately stable. Next majority under all the three categories was found to fall on extremely stable level of emotional maturity. 37.11%, 45.37% and 37.50% of the adolescents among those having one or no sibling, two siblings and three or more siblings, respectively were found to be extremely stable on this component.



Note: PA indicates Personal Adequacy; IA indicates Inter-personal Adequacy; SA indicates Social Adequacy; CSM indicates Composite Social Maturity; ES indicates Emotional Stability; EP indicates Emotional Progression; SA indicates Social Adjustment; PI indicates Personality Integration; I indicates Independence and CEM indicates Composite Emotional Maturity

Fig. 2: Percentage distribution of adolescents of Pantnagar on emotional maturity across number of siblings

However, certain percent of adolescents were observed to be unstable also. Reportedly, 15.46%, 6.48% and 11.11%, of the adolescents having one or no sibling, two siblings and three or more siblings, respectively, were identified as unstable and 2.06% and 1.85% among adolescents having one or no and two siblings, respectively, as extremely unstable on this component.

In contrast to emotional progression component, majority of the adolescents on social adjustment component were found to be extremely stable followed by moderately stable. Under this component, 54.64%, 61.11% and 65.28% of the adolescents having one or no sibling, two siblings and three or more siblings, respectively, were found to be extremely stable and 39.18%, 36.11% and 30.56%, respectively, as moderately stable. 6.19%, 2.78% and 4.17%, of the adolescents having one or no sibling, two siblings and three or more sibling, respectively, were found to be unstable also but no one was identified as extremely unstable on it.

Most of the adolescents under all the three categories, viz. adolescents with one or no sibling (67.01%), two siblings (78.70%) and three or more siblings (69.44%) were extremely stable on personality integration component. It was also observed that next good proportion of adolescents under these categories fall on moderately stable level of maturity like 24.74% among adolescents with one or no sibling, 17.59% among adolescents with two siblings and 27.78% among those having three or more siblings. But still, small percent of

adolescents under these categories were also identified as unstable (7.22%- adolescents with one or no sibling, 3.70%- adolescents with two siblings and 2.78% adolescents with one or no sibling) and extremely unstable (1.03%- adolescents with one or no sibling) as well.

Respondents of the study were predominantly found to fall within stable level of maturity on independence component of emotional maturity. 46.39%, 58.33% and 38.89% of adolescents with one or no sibling, 2 siblings and 3 or more siblings, respectively, were identified as moderately stable and 17.53%, 12.96% and 19.44%, respectively, as extremely stable. It was also noticed that the percent adolescents falling within unstable level was more than that falling under extremely stable level.

Among adolescents having one or no sibling, 2 siblings and 3 or more siblings 22.68%, 19.44% and 33.33%, respectively, were observed to be unstable. 13.40%, 9.26% and 8.33% of adolescents were also observed to be extremely unstable.

A cursory look at respondents' emotional maturity in total depicts that adolescents with 3 or more siblings (51.39%) were more moderately stable whereas, those who had 2 siblings were more extremely stable (52.78%). Among adolescents with one or no sibling, almost equal percent of adolescents were found to be extremely stable (45.36%) and moderately stable (46.39%). 8.25%, 3.70% and 2.78% of adolescents having one or no sibling, 2 siblings and 3 or more siblings, respectively, were found

Table 1: Mean differences in social and emotional maturity of adolescents of Pantnagar across number of siblings

SOCIAL MATURITY			
Components of Social Maturity	1 or no sibling (n₁=97)	2 siblings (n₂=108)	3 or more siblings (n₃=88)
Personal Adequacy	73.21 ^a	74.02 ^{ab}	79.22 ^b
Inter-personal Adequacy	79.14	81.45	79.79
Social Adequacy	85.24	87.23	86.01
Composite Social Maturity	237.60	242.71	238.02
EMOTIONAL MATURITY			
Components of Emotional Maturity	1 or no sibling (n₁=97)	2 siblings (n₂=108)	3 or more siblings (n₃=88)
Emotional Stability	22.69	21.98	23.55
Emotional Progression	23.71 ^a	21.68 ^b	22.38 ^{ab}
Social Adjustment	20.94	19.37	19.65
Personality Integration	19.24 ^a	17.36 ^b	18.05 ^{ab}
Independence	17.47	16.96	17.26
Composite Emotional Maturity	104.07	97.36	100.91

Means with different superscripts differ significantly at $p < 0.05$

to be unstable as well. However, none of the adolescent was found to be extremely emotionally immature.

Mean differences in social and emotional maturity of senior school adolescents of Pantnagar across number of siblings is presented in Table 1. Differences in the mean scores on social maturity across number of siblings was analysed using one way ANOVA. Significant difference was found to exist on personal adequacy component of social maturity among adolescents having three and more siblings (\bar{x} =79.22) and adolescents having one or no sibling (\bar{x} =73.21). In contrast, Hasnain and Adlakha (2012) revealed that adolescents without siblings had better social maturity than adolescents with siblings. The probable reason behind the adolescents having more number of siblings to be more personally adequate than those having one or no sibling may be because in our society bonding between siblings is considered to be very strong during adolescence which provides individuals confidence to behave adequately. Findings by Tucker, McHale and Crouter (2001) also suggest that 13 and 16 year olds described their older siblings as sources of support in social and emotional issues, as well as in familial issues.

While across the composite social maturity, no significant difference was observed between the two groups. Riggio (1999) found differences in personality and social skills of 146 adults with one or more siblings and 51 adults without siblings and found only a marginal difference between individuals with and without siblings in neuroticism, and no differences in various social skills or overall social competence. Thus the findings of the present study is in consonance with result of this study.

The number of siblings an adolescent had was seen

to influence not exactly their overall emotional maturity but some components of it viz. emotional progression and personality integration. Adolescents having one or no sibling (\bar{x} =23.7) were significantly better on emotional progression component of emotional maturity than those who had two siblings (\bar{x} =21.68). Similarly, on personality integration component, adolescents having one or no sibling were found to be significantly better than those having two siblings (\bar{x} =19.24 and 17.36, respectively). In contrary, Rashmi and Gopalakrishna (2012) in their work discovered that children with siblings had good level of emotional adjustment compared with only child. The plausible reason for adolescents having one or no sibling being more emotionally progressive and integrated than others may be the presence of less sibling rivalry. It is obvious to understand that when rivalry exists among siblings, their emotional bond weakens which automatically affects the emotional support they render to each other.

Looking at the result of overall social and emotional maturity of adolescents, it is clear that number of siblings does not make any significant difference in the maturity level of individual. In parallel to this result Rashmi and Gopalakrishna (2012) also found no significant differences between only children and children with siblings in their level of social and emotional adjustment. Further Table 2 elucidates that all the components of emotional maturity were significantly and positively correlated with all the components of social maturity across each category of number of siblings. Emotional stability and independence of adolescents, who had three or more number of siblings, were observed significantly correlated with composite social maturity at 0.01 level of significance. Same level of significance was found between social adjustment and inter-personal adequacy.

Table 2: Relationship between social and emotional maturity of adolescents of Pantnagar across number of siblings

Components of Emotional/ Social Maturity	1 or no sibling				2 siblings				3 or more siblings			
	Personal Adequacy	Inter-personal Adequacy	Social Adequacy	Composite Social Maturity	Personal Adequacy	Inter-personal Adequacy	Social Adequacy	Composite Social Maturity	Personal Adequacy	Inter-personal Adequacy	Social Adequacy	Composite Social Maturity
<i>Emotional Stability</i>	.306**	.171*	.318**	.257*	.119*	.232*	.183*	.122*	.231*	.153*	.153*	.226**
<i>Emotional Progression</i>	.403**	.343**	.318**	.442**	.252**	.111*	.220*	.117*	.146*	.114*	.135*	.147*
<i>Social Adjustment</i>	.183*	.199*	.410**	.186*	.120*	.143*	.163*	.172*	.301*	.322**	.181*	.282 *
<i>Personality Integration</i>	.283**	.344**	.333**	.363**	.197*	.138*	.218*	.177*	.335**	.198*	.175*	.122*
<i>Independence</i>	.310**	.235*	.339**	.259*	.232*	.119*	.252**	.219 *	.144*	.116*	.141*	.211**
Composite Emotional Maturity	.298**	.235 *	.369**	.310**	.221 *	.244 *	.239 *	.216 *	.301 *	.193*	.123*	.130*

Note: 1. * Significant at 0.05 level
 2. ** Significant at 0.01 level

Majority of components of social and emotional maturity were found significantly correlated at 0.05 level of significance for those adolescents who had two siblings, whereas for those who had one or no sibling, minority of components of both social and emotional maturity were observed correlated at 0.05 level of significance.

CONCLUSION

It is apparent from the study that number of siblings present in the family does influence the social and emotional maturity of adolescents to some extent i.e. presence of siblings in ones' life make some changes in the level of his personal adequacy, emotional progression and personality integration. When a person knows that he has their own siblings whenever he requires them for social as well as emotional support, his social and emotional maturity gets affected. Seeking social support makes the individual feel more secure and directed however emotional dependence hinders the path of emotional development. Hence, it is required to look for right help in a right proportion. There exists a mutual relationship between social and emotional maturity which indicates that development in any would lead to the development of another.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Parents should ensure that sibling rivalry does not occur among children at any point of time.
2. Parents are required to treat every child equally irrespective of their gender and birth order.
3. Parents, teachers and other elder members of the family should practically teach children about their role and responsibility towards their siblings.

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