

Social Competence of Adolescents in Relation to Their Emotional Maturity

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Abstract. Adolescence is a stage marked by rapid emotional and social change, and the manner in which a young person regulates emotion is closely bound up with the manner in which the same young person relates to others. The present paper reports the findings of a study undertaken to examine the relationship between social competence and emotional maturity among adolescents studying in secondary and senior secondary schools of Yamuna Nagar district, Haryana, and to determine whether male and female adolescents differ significantly on either variable. A sample of one hundred adolescents, aged thirteen to eighteen years, was drawn through stratified random sampling, balanced across gender, school management, and locale. Data were gathered using two standardised tools — the Social Competence Scale (Mathur & Bhatnagar) and the Emotional Maturity Scale (Singh & Bhargava) — and analysed using Pearson's correlation and the independent samples t-test at the 0.05 level of significance. Results showed a significant relationship between the two variables, a significant gender difference favouring females on emotional maturity, and no significant gender difference on social competence. The paper discusses these findings in light of existing research and offers implications for schools and counsellors.

keywords: Social Competence, Emotional Maturity, Adolescents, Gender Difference, Descriptive Survey.

I. Introduction

Adolescence occupies a pivotal position in human development, bridging the dependency of childhood and the autonomy of adulthood. Within this period of transition, two capacities stand out for the role they play in shaping how a young person eventually settles into adult life: the ability to relate to others in a skilled, cooperative manner, and the ability to understand and regulate one's own emotional life. The first of these capacities is generally termed social competence; the second, emotional maturity.

Social competence refers to the practical skill of building and sustaining relationships — communicating clearly, cooperating within a group, resolving disagreements, and adapting one's conduct to different social settings. Emotional maturity, by contrast, refers to an inner capacity for composure — the ability to experience strong feeling without being overwhelmed by it, and to respond to life's demands in a measured, considerate way. Although conceptually distinct, the two are widely believed to be interwoven: an adolescent who cannot tolerate frustration is unlikely to negotiate a disagreement gracefully, while an adolescent who reads a friend's distress accurately is better placed to respond with comfort rather than indifference.

The pace of change facing today's adolescents adds urgency to this enquiry. Continuous exposure to digital media, heightened academic competitiveness, and smaller, more nuclear family structures place unprecedented demands on a young person's emotional and social resources at precisely the age when both are still under construction. Schools, in turn, are increasingly expected to nurture not merely academic achievement but the wider socio-emotional competencies that determine how well a student ultimately copes with the demands of adult life.

Indian research on these two constructs has grown steadily over the past two decades, yet comparatively little of it has focused on the semi-urban school context of Haryana. The present study was undertaken to address this gap by examining the relationship between social competence and emotional maturity among adolescents of Yamuna Nagar district, and by testing whether the two sexes differ on either variable.

II. Review of Related Literature

A body of research spanning nearly two decades has examined social competence and emotional maturity, both independently and jointly, among Indian adolescents. Kumari and Jain (2013) found a significant positive correlation between the two constructs among senior secondary students in Delhi, a finding echoed more recently by Kaur and Singh (2025) among northern Indian adolescents. Choudhary (2011) linked authoritative parenting to stronger social competence, while Desai and Jadhav (2014) found that school climate and co-curricular participation similarly strengthened social skill.

On emotional maturity specifically, Rani (2012) reported significantly higher scores among urban female adolescents compared with males, a pattern replicated by Pillai and Menon (2024) across a three-state comparative sample. Wentzel (2010) and Rose-Krasnor (2006) contributed influential theoretical models treating social competence as a multidimensional, learned skill set rather than a fixed trait, a view that underpins the treatment of both variables in the present study.

International contributions have similarly shaped this field. Smith and Taylor (2016) conducted a longitudinal study demonstrating that early emotional self-control predicted later social adaptability, offering some of the clearest developmental evidence that emotional regulation precedes and supports social skill acquisition. Rathore (2018)

compared emotionally mature and less mature Indian adolescents and found the former group experienced markedly greater peer acceptance and fewer behavioural difficulties, a finding directly relevant to the present study's central hypothesis.

Taken together, this literature establishes a reasonably consistent expectation of a positive relationship between the two constructs, alongside a recurring, though not universal, gender advantage in emotional maturity favouring female adolescents — both propositions tested directly in the present study.

A close reading of this literature also reveals a persistent gap: the great majority of studies examining these two constructs jointly have drawn on metropolitan Indian samples, with comparatively little research addressing the semi-urban districts of Haryana. The present study responds directly to this gap.

III. Social Competence and Emotional Maturity: A Conceptual Link

Contemporary developmental psychology treats social competence as a learned, multidimensional skill set rather than a fixed trait, shaped substantially by parenting style, school climate, and peer exposure. Emotional maturity, similarly, is understood to develop gradually through interaction with family, school, and the wider social environment rather than emerging automatically with age. A meaningful body of research — spanning both Indian and international samples — has proposed that these two constructs draw on a shared underlying capacity for self-regulation: effective social interaction requires the same composure under pressure that defines emotional maturity, while social experience itself offers adolescents repeated opportunities to practise and refine that composure.

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory offers one influential account of how such composure translates into skilled social behaviour, proposing that adolescents acquire cooperative, empathic conduct largely through observing how significant adults and peers handle similar situations, and through the consequences that follow. Erikson's psychosocial framework, meanwhile, situates adolescence as the stage in which identity formation is the central developmental task, a task that depends on both the interpersonal skill to explore social roles and the emotional stability to withstand the setbacks that such exploration inevitably brings.

It is this reciprocal relationship — conceptually distinct constructs bound together by a shared regulatory foundation — that anchors the present study, and the empirical testing of which forms its central task.

Objectives of the Study

- To assess the level of social competence among adolescents.
- To assess the level of emotional maturity among adolescents.
- To study the relationship between social competence and emotional maturity among adolescents.

- To compare emotional maturity of male and female adolescents.
- To compare social competence of male and female adolescents.

IV. Hypotheses of the Study

- H01: There exists no significant relationship between social competence and emotional maturity among adolescents.
- H02: There exists no significant difference between male and female adolescents with respect to emotional maturity.
- H03: There exists no significant difference between male and female adolescents with respect to social competence.

Delimitations

The study is delimited to adolescents aged thirteen to eighteen years, studying in secondary and senior secondary schools of Yamuna Nagar district, Haryana, during the academic session 2025–26. The sample is restricted to one hundred respondents, selected from schools affiliated to recognised state or central boards. The study is confined to the two variables of social competence and emotional maturity, measured through standardised tools only; other related variables such as self-esteem, academic achievement, or family environment fall outside its scope.

V. Method

The Descriptive Survey Method was employed, since the study is concerned with describing the naturally occurring levels of, and relationship between, social competence and emotional maturity, rather than manipulating either variable experimentally. This method is well suited to psychological constructs of this kind, which develop gradually over years of lived experience and cannot ethically or practically be induced or withheld for an experimental design.

Sample

The stratified random sampling technique was used to draw a sample of one hundred adolescents from secondary and senior secondary schools of Yamuna Nagar district, proportionately balanced across gender (50 male, 50 female), school management (55 government, 45 private), and locale (48 urban, 52 rural). Schools were first selected to represent both management types and locales, following which individual respondents were drawn at random from class lists in numbers proportionate to the intended strata, in order to guard against a sample skewed disproportionately toward any single subgroup.

Tools Used and Collection of Data

Two standardised tools were used for data collection. The Social Competence Scale (Mathur & Bhatnagar) consists of twenty-five items across five dimensions — communication, cooperation, empathy, conflict resolution, and adaptability — rated on a five-

point continuum, with a higher score indicating greater social competence. The Emotional Maturity Scale (Singh & Bhargava) consists of thirty items across five dimensions — emotional stability, self-control, adaptability, stress tolerance, and emotional awareness — on which a lower score indicates greater maturity.

Both tools were piloted on thirty adolescents prior to main administration; Cronbach's Alpha was 0.81 for the Social Competence Scale and 0.84 for the Emotional Maturity Scale, both exceeding the conventionally accepted minimum of 0.70 for research purposes. Formal permission was obtained from school principals, and informed consent was secured through the schools on behalf of student participants. Both scales were administered together in a single classroom sitting under the researcher's direct supervision, with confidentiality and anonymity assured to all respondents, and completed response sheets were collected and scored on the same day.

Statistics Used

Descriptive statistics (Mean, Standard Deviation) were used to address the first two objectives. Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was used to test the relationship between social competence and emotional maturity, calculated as $r = \frac{\sum(X-\bar{X})(Y-\bar{Y})}{\sqrt{[\sum(X-\bar{X})^2 \times \sum(Y-\bar{Y})^2]}}$. The independent samples t-test was used to compare male and female adolescents on each variable, calculated as $t = \frac{(\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2)}{\sqrt{[(SD_1^2/n_1) + (SD_2^2/n_2)]}}$. All tests were conducted at the 0.05 level of significance, with the corresponding null hypothesis rejected wherever the calculated value equalled or exceeded the relevant critical value.

VI. Analysis of Data

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics obtained on both variables for the sample as a whole.

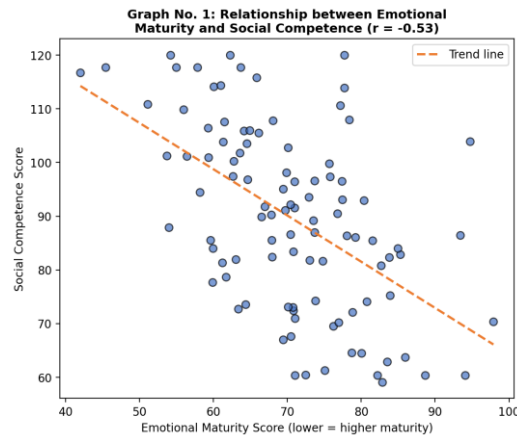
Table No. 1: Descriptive Statistics of Social Competence and Emotional Maturity Scores

Variable	Mean	SD	N
Social Competence	89.73	17.13	100
Emotional Maturity	70.47	10.56	100

Table 2 presents the correlation obtained between the two variables, testing Hypothesis H01.

Table No. 2: Correlation between Social Competence and Emotional Maturity (*p<0.05, df=98)

Variables	N	r	Result
SC & EM	100	-0.531*	Sig.

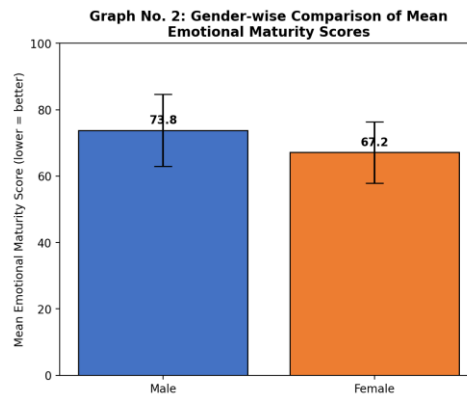


Graph No. 1: Scatter Plot showing Relationship between Emotional Maturity and Social Competence

Table 3 presents the comparison of male and female adolescents on emotional maturity, testing Hypothesis H02.

Table No. 3: Gender-wise Comparison of Emotional Maturity Scores (*Sig. at 0.05, $df=98$)

Group	N	Mean	SD	t
Male	50	73.78	10.83	3.29*
Female	50	67.16	9.24	

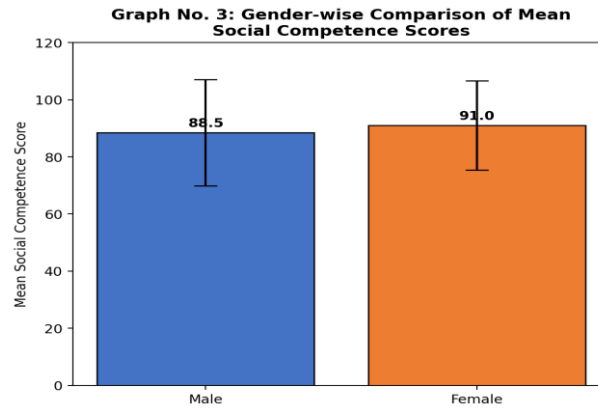


Graph No. 2: Gender-wise Comparison of Mean Emotional Maturity Scores

Table 4 presents the comparison of male and female adolescents on social competence, testing Hypothesis H03.

Table No. 4: Gender-wise Comparison of Social Competence Scores (NS = Not Significant at 0.05, df=98)

Group	N	Mean	SD	t
Male	50	88.46	18.57	0.74
Female	50	91.00	15.64	(NS)



Graph No. 3: Gender-wise Comparison of Mean Social Competence Scores

Tables 5 and 6 present the dimension-wise mean scores obtained on the two scales, offering a more detailed picture of the sample's relative strengths.

Table No. 5: Dimension-wise Mean Scores on Social Competence

SC Dimension	Mean	Max
Communication	18.5	25
Cooperation	18.0	25
Empathy	18.8	25
Conflict Resolution	16.9	25
Adaptability	17.6	25

Table No. 6: Dimension-wise Mean Scores on Emotional Maturity (lower = better)

EM Dimension	Mean	Max
Emotional Stability	14.6	30
Self-Control	14.2	30
Adaptability	13.5	30
Stress Tolerance	15.0	30
Emotional Awareness	13.2	30

Conflict resolution emerged as the comparatively weaker dimension of social competence, while stress tolerance emerged as the comparatively weaker dimension of emotional maturity — a convergence that points toward a shared underlying difficulty

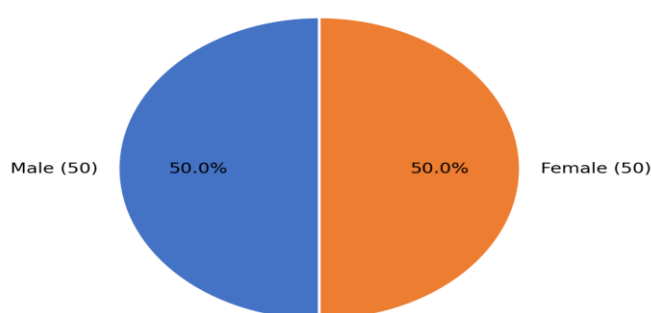
in managing emotionally charged, unplanned situations, and one that carries direct implications for the design of school-based intervention discussed later in this paper.

Table 7 and Graph No. 4 summarise the demographic composition of the sample described in Section VIII.

Table No. 7: Demographic Profile of the Sample (N = 100)

Category	Sub-Group	N
Gender	Male / Female	50/50
School Mgmt.	Govt. / Private	55/45
Locale	Urban / Rural	48/52

Graph No. 4: Gender-wise Distribution of the Sample



Graph No. 4: Gender-wise Distribution of the Sample

Findings Based on Hypotheses

- There is a significant negative correlation between Emotional Maturity Scale scores and Social Competence Scale scores ($r = -0.531$, $N = 100$, significant at 0.05 level, $df = 98$). Since a lower EMS score reflects greater maturity, this indicates that greater emotional maturity is associated with greater social competence, and that emotional maturity accounts for approximately twenty-eight percent of the variance in social competence scores ($r^2 = 0.28$). H01 is rejected.
- There is a significant difference between male and female adolescents on emotional maturity ($t = 3.29$, $df = 98$, significant at 0.05 level), with female adolescents ($M = 67.16$) showing significantly greater maturity than male adolescents ($M = 73.78$), a difference corresponding to roughly six-tenths of a standard deviation. H02 is rejected.
- There is no significant difference between male and female adolescents on social competence ($t = 0.74$, $df = 98$, not significant at 0.05 level), although female adolescents ($M = 91.00$) obtained a marginally higher mean than male adolescents ($M = 88.46$). H03 is accepted.

- The majority of respondents fell into the moderate category on both social competence (63%) and emotional maturity (70%), with roughly symmetrical, smaller proportions at the low and high ends of each distribution, indicating that extreme difficulty or extreme strength on either variable is relatively uncommon within this sample.
- Empathy and communication emerged as the strongest dimensions of social competence, while emotional awareness and adaptability emerged as the strongest dimensions of emotional maturity, suggesting that the sampled adolescents are, on the whole, more comfortable with the reflective and interpersonal aspects of these constructs than with their more demanding, pressure-tested aspects.

VII. Discussion

The significant relationship obtained between social competence and emotional maturity is consistent with the view that effective interpersonal functioning depends on an adolescent's capacity for emotional self-regulation. It also aligns closely with earlier Indian findings, including Kumari and Jain (2013) and Kaur and Singh (2025), both of whom reported a comparable positive association among adolescent samples drawn from different regions, lending the present finding a degree of external consistency.

The finding of significantly higher emotional maturity among female adolescents echoes a recurring pattern in Indian research, generally attributed to differences in emotional socialisation between boys and girls, wherein girls are typically encouraged earlier and more consistently toward empathic responsiveness and self-restraint. At the same time, the moderate rather than large size of this difference cautions against overstating its practical significance for any individual adolescent, since the two distributions overlap considerably.

The absence of a significant gender difference on social competence, however, suggests that this particular skill set may depend more on situational opportunity for social practice — group activities, peer exposure — than on the emotional advantage documented for one sex over the other, indicating that both boys and girls in the present sample had broadly comparable opportunity to develop socially. Read together, these two results suggest that gender exerts a more reliable influence on the emotional dimension of adolescent development than on its social dimension within the present sample.

The dimension-level convergence noted in Section XI — weak conflict resolution alongside weak stress tolerance — lends further weight to this interpretation, since both dimensions draw on the same capacity to remain composed under pressure. This convergence suggests that interventions targeting this shared regulatory capacity, rather than treating the two constructs as entirely separate targets, may offer the most efficient route to strengthening adolescent functioning on both fronts simultaneously.

Educational Implications

The findings carry several practical implications. Since emotional maturity and social competence are significantly related, classroom activities that strengthen emotional self-regulation — guided reflection after conflict, structured turn-taking exercises — may be expected to carry benefits for peer relationships as well. Because conflict resolution and stress tolerance emerged as the weakest dimensions of the two constructs respectively, schools may wish to prioritise structured practice in these specific areas. Counsellors may usefully direct particular attention toward male adolescents' emotional expression, given the significant gender gap observed, while social-skills programming can reasonably be delivered to boys and girls together, given the absence of a comparable gap in social competence.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

The present study is subject to certain limitations. The sample, though adequate for the statistical techniques employed, was restricted to one hundred adolescents from a single district, limiting the generalisability of the findings beyond Yamuna Nagar. Reliance on self-report scales leaves open the possibility that some responses were shaped by social desirability. The cross-sectional design permits conclusions about association but not about the causal direction between emotional maturity and social competence, and the study did not control for other plausible influences such as family structure or academic performance.

Future research could usefully replicate the present design across multiple districts of Haryana to test the consistency of the gender pattern reported here, or adopt a longitudinal design to clarify whether the observed gender difference in emotional maturity narrows or persists as adolescents move into early adulthood. An intervention study evaluating a structured socio-emotional learning programme against a control group would also help establish whether the relationship documented here is causal rather than merely associative.

VIII. Conclusion

The present study concludes that social competence and emotional maturity are significantly related among adolescents of Yamuna Nagar district, that gender exerts a more consistent influence on emotional maturity than on social competence, and that school-based programmes strengthening emotional regulation are likely to carry benefits for adolescents' social functioning as well. These findings hold relevance for teachers, counsellors, and curriculum planners seeking to strengthen the socio-emotional development of adolescents within this region and comparable settings. Future research, employing longitudinal or intervention-based designs, could usefully test whether the relationship documented here holds over time and whether structured programming can strengthen both constructs jointly.

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