

## FAMILY STRUCTURE AS DETERMINANT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE OF ADOLESCENTS

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### ABSTRACT

*The present study analyzed the predictive association of family structure and emotional intelligence, family structure wise difference and gender difference in emotional intelligence of adolescents. After literature review following hypotheses were formulated: (1) Family structure will predict the emotional intelligence of the participants; (2) There will be a significant difference in the emotional intelligence of the participants from joint and nuclear families; (3) There would be gender difference in emotional intelligence. A sample comprising 400 adolescents, (200 belonging to joint and 200 to nuclear families) with mean age 14.49 (SD=±1.29) was drawn from various schools of Karachi, Pakistan. Consent form, demographic form, and Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire for Adolescents (TEIQue-ASF) (Petrides et al, 2006) were administered. Descriptive statistics, regression analysis, and t-test were calculated. Results indicate that family structure does not predict emotional intelligence while the mean scores difference of emotional intelligence of participants belonging to nuclear or joint families was insignificant. However, the research found gender differences in emotional intelligence.*

**Keywords:** family structure, joint family, nuclear family, emotional intelligence, gender

### INTRODUCTION

A family is composed of individuals that are blood relations or a sub section of a family unit by any other sort of relationship (like adoption). It achieves diverse functions including the aspects of development and socialization of the physical, moral and emotional self of the child (Kirby, 2000). Providing food and security and the above mentioned functions have remained the key functions of a family despite the modifications that have happened in humanity and family structure in the past.

In terms of being a family-oriented country, Pakistan is significantly high ranked (Mohiuddin, 2007). Joint family system dominates Pakistani society. Parents live with their married sons in the same house, with few opting to form nuclear families after marriage. Family-oriented culture in Pakistan promotes a joint family system. It is considered the responsibility of a son/sons to live with parents while the daughters live with their husbands after marriage. However, few opt to move into a separate house, initiating a nuclear family (Salahuddin & Jalbani, 2006).

Different factors have been viewed as influential factors for family dynamics and household environments, which seem to develop a specific environment in a family. These variables comprise the processes such as open communication, level of understanding displayed by family members towards the children, and the emotional and psychological well-being of the adults in the family who shape the communication pattern in the household (Barber, 1992). Along with these variables, another one of the basic constructs which effects the family environment is the concept of family structure, which formulates a part of this study, which as discussed earlier is divided into nuclear and joint family systems. The family structure is seen to effect the interaction dynamics between the members

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of a household, which is seen as a notable force in effecting the overall environment in the family (Stover et al., 2016).

It has been asserted that a family is critical for survival and healthy development. However, just being a part of the family doesn't guarantee healthy social and emotional development as not all families have a stable and functional outlook. There are families that are overrun by conflicts and frequent issues among the family members, which have a negative effect on the emotional and psychological development of the children (Stover et al., 2016).

Various scholars suggest that family has profound effects on the child. It remains for the lifetime on the behavioral, psychological and emotional aspects of a person (Manzeske & Stright, 2009; Galindo et al, 2012; Cox, 2010). Family is a basic social unit. Family structure has many effects on its members of all ages (Suleman et al., 2012; Nagaraja et al, 2012).

The structure of family is a very important aspect that indicates composition of family life. It is usually seen as either joint or nuclear. Joint family is a composition where grandparents are the head of the family while their children and grandchildren live with them. After the death of the grandparents the families of brothers may still live together. This family system prevails more in Asia (Ruggles, 2010). On the other hand, nuclear family system is formed by parents and their children only. Gradually the joint families have disintegrated and are replaced with nuclear families in many developed countries. Both family structures are prevalent in Pakistan. The nuclear family system gives more autonomy to its members but it has caused distance among the members of extended families as the separation of houses has created fewer interactions (Bahadur et al, 2008). Nuclear families are on a rise in the urban centers of Pakistan.

Different sets of dynamics are involved in both structures that create different experiences for the individuals that are part of these family structures. According to some researchers family structure is not much related to how an individual develops the understanding of socially acceptable behavior. For example, according to Bahadur and Dhawan (2008) family structure's influence on values is insignificant. Whereas others see a role of family structure in the way a child develops as reflected by performance in academics (Bilal et al, 2013) and engagement in positive behaviors (like helping others) (Sanadhya et al, 2010). According to Fortune, Cottrell et al (2016) when emotionally a family is unsupportive or emotionally abusive, different emotional and psychological issues are observed in the adolescents.

Khurshid, Parveen and Yousuf, (2014) suggest that the family environment that an adolescent has is related to his personality development, the increase in negative habits and behaviors that are socially destructive among adolescents. Hill et al. (2017) suggest that experiences during adolescence have lasting impact on personality, emotional and psychological functioning. Deković et al. (2003) studied the different variables of adolescent's family in the development of negative behavioral traits. Patterns of communication and interactional dynamics among parents and adolescents are directly related to adolescent's attitude towards society and pro-social or anti-social leanings.

According to an investigation (Li et al, 2019) the adolescents, who are part of families where hostility dominates the communications, have more chances of adopting hostile tendencies. Modecki et al. (2017) suggest that family has influence on emotional well-being and emotional resilience. It suggests the possible linkages between competence at the emotional regulation and emotional development of an adolescent in the family.

Singh et al. (2014) suggest a connection between an adolescent's emotional intelligence (EI) of and their family dynamics (that include family structure), providing the foundation for the present study.

Some researchers (Salovey et al. 1990) formulate the EI as a regulation process of emotions in a better way, with the capability of intelligently handling the emotions. In simple words the EI is the capacity to control the emotions as per situation, maintaining equilibrium between the different emotions. This means that individuals may have different degrees of intelligence in handling their own emotions and understanding others emotions (Coon et al., 2012). Honmore et al. (2017) suggest that the structure of the family may have a strong role in determining the EI level shown by an adolescent. Current study is an attempt to further explore the family structure of an adolescent as a determining factor in her level of the EI.

The focus of this research is to examine the influence of family structure on the level of the EI of adolescents. Following hypotheses are formulated:

(1) Family structure will predict the emotional intelligence of the participants.

(2) There will be a significant difference in the emotional intelligence of the participants from joint and nuclear families

(3) There will be gender differences in emotional intelligence.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Sample**

A sample comprising 400 adolescents, (200 belonging to joint and 200 to nuclear families) with mean age 14.49 (SD= $\pm$ 1.29) was drawn from various schools of Karachi, Pakistan were recruited for the research from different privately run schools in Karachi. The sample belonged to the middle socioeconomic class.

### **Measures**

#### ***Demographic form***

A structured demographic form that recorded personal information i.e. gender, age, grade, family structure and socio-economic status.

#### ***Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire for Adolescents (TEIQue-ASF)***

Thirty items TEIQue-ASF (Petrides, 2009) were used. The current version of scale measures the level of emotional intelligence keeping the fifteen traits into four factors (Well-being, self-control, emotionality, and sociability) and global trait EI. The TEIQue-ASF has a significant level of internal consistency and reliability as observed through the Cronbach alpha value of 0.83. In the case of the other four factors, the alpha coefficients were also significantly high; Emotionality (0.74), Self-control (0.76), Sociability (0.85), and Well-being (0.89) (Boyle et al, 2014).

### **Procedure**

The topic of this research was approved by the ethical research committee and Advanced Board of Studies and Research (ABSR) for approval. Permission from the scale's author to ethically use the measure was also taken. Schools were briefed about the objectives of the study so they may understand the research. After permissions for collection of data, the participants filled an informed assent form. After this the participants filled demographic forms. In the last step the participants filled TEIQue-ASF.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical measures that pertain to participant's anonymity and confidentiality of the information provided by the participants were followed in the study. Anonymity was followed by not asking the names of the participants during data collection. The researcher made sure that participant's information was stored in a protected database and used for research purposes only.

Informed assent form that asked permission for voluntary participation. Informed assent described basic facts and the rationale for the research to answer the participant's queries. Monetary gains for the study were none and similarly there was no harm related to participation. The participants were told that they can withdraw from the study if they wish.

### **Statistics Analysis**

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (24.0) was utilized for the analysis of the data. Analysis of regression (linear) and t test were conducted to the test the hypothesis.

## **RESULTS**

**Table No. 1 Analysis of regression (linear): family structure (FS) and emotional intelligence (EI)**

<b>Predictors</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Family structure	.055	.003	398	1.218	.27

a. Predictors: (Constant), family structure  $p < .05$ ,  $df = 1,398$

Table 1 indicates weak linear relationship between study variables ( $R^2 = 0.003$ ). ( $p < .27$ ).

**Table No. 2** Linear regression coefficient: FS as a predictor of EI

Model	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>T</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Constant	146.48	3.159		46.49	.00
FS	2.20	1.998	0.55	1.104	.27

a. Dependent Variable: Sum of trait emotional intelligence

Table 2 indicates weak linear relationship between family structure and emotional intelligence ( $R^2 = 0.003$ ) ( $p < .27$ ).

**Table No. 3** Differences in Emotional Intelligence between participants belonging to joint and nuclear Family System

	Nuclear family system		Joint family system		<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Emotional intelligence	144.680	20.69	142.475	19.23	1.104	.270	0.110

$p < .270$ ,  $df = 398$

Table 3 indicates no significant difference in the mean scores of participants belonging to nuclear family system as compared to the scores of participants from joint family system in terms of emotional intelligence.

**Table No. 4** Gender differences in Emotional Intelligence

	Male		Female		<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Emotional intelligence	145.755	21.160	141.400	18.531	2.190	.029	0.218

$P < .05^*$

Table 4 indicates significant difference found in the mean scores of males and females in emotional intelligence.

## DISCUSSION

Current study was based on the notion that dynamics of the family as defined by the structures of family shape an individual's level of emotional intelligence (EI), in a sample of adolescents. The results of the investigation are as follows

A predictive relationship between family structure and the EI were assumed in the first hypothesis of this study. The hypothesis is not supported by the results. During adolescence an individual undergoes the course of formation of personal identity and a sense of self. It is relevant to note here that Bahadur and Dhawan's (2008) study, reveals that family structure doesn't influence a person's values significantly. Values are also an important aspect of personal identity and social self.

The second assumption was that there would be a difference in the EI in participants from nuclear and joint families. No significant mean difference is indicated in the results. This finding also implies that the participants from joint and nuclear families did not show any notable differences. In contradiction with the findings of current study, It is suggested by some researchers that the structure of family may have a strong effect on an adolescent's way of learning and response to stimuli related to emotions and handling of emotions, empathy for others and gaining control on self (Ozbaci, 2006). According to Naghavi et al (2012) the EI levels are greater if the family size is small. Contrary to this, Keaten et al (2008) suggest that family structure does not influence in the determination of the EI of an adolescent. It suggests that factors like communication between parent and child and family relationships are more significant.

Third assumption was there will be gender difference in the EI. Results are supportive of this assumption, the mean scores difference of both genders on the variable of the EI is at a p value of .029. An earlier study carried out by Chaudhry et al. (2013) is relevant as it analyzed the EI in Pakistan. Females obtained higher scores on the EI as compared to males. A contrary finding has (Petrides et al, 2000) suggested that males have higher EI as compared to females. In another research (Salavera et al, 2017) it is suggested that the EI and gender are not correlated and variations in their levels need to be seen from different variables rather than gender alone.

Some studies offer comparable results to the variations of the EI due to an individual's gender. A research (Naghavi et al, 2011) explains them by connecting them with the different expectations of the families from the boys and the girls. In terms of expression of emotions females get more autonomy as compared to males. Even where gender is not connected with the EI scores differences, there was a difference in some aspects of the EI like high optimism and levels of dependability among girls (Langhorn, 2004). It is evident that the studies give a mixed picture about which gender has greater EI. There are studies that have reported females to have greater degree of the EI, while there are researches that suggest that males have higher degree of the EI. What can be concluded from these contradictory findings is that gender plays a crucial role when it comes to the development of the EI and emotionality of an adolescent (Ahmad et al, 2009).

It is concluded that the structure of family (either joint or nuclear) has no significant effect on the level of the EI. It is relevant to note here that both the family structures have their own characteristics but both can be functional or dysfunctional so despite the pros and cons of both it is better not to overstate their role. Gender, however, has a role in the EI, females having superiority over males that may be due to the societal acceptance of their expression of emotions and their portrayal as empathetic and gentle.

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