



PARENTAL INFLUENCE ON SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE AMONG HIGHER SECONDARY STUDENTS: IMPLICATIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION READINESS

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Abstract

The adolescents' ability to navigate higher education successfully depends not only on academic knowledge but also on social intelligence, which enables them to manage relationships, adapt to new environments, and cope with academic pressures. Parents are the primary influence in shaping these social and emotional skills during adolescence. This study examines how parental influence affects social intelligence among higher secondary students and its implications for readiness for higher education. The study was conducted with 50 student-parent pairs (total N = 100) from Marthoma Higher Secondary School, Valakom, using structured questionnaires to assess parental influence and students' social intelligence. Data were analyzed using percentage analysis to determine levels of parental influence and Pearson's correlation coefficient to explore the relationship between parenting and social intelligence. The results indicate that 52% of students and 58% of parents reported a high level of parental influence. The correlation between parental influence and social intelligence was positive and statistically significant ($r = 0.29$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that supportive parenting contributes meaningfully to the development of social competence. While the correlation is moderate, the findings underscore the importance of parental guidance, emotional support, and collaboration between home and school in preparing students for higher education challenges. Based on these results, the study recommends structured parental engagement, social intelligence training, and life-skill programmes within schools to enhance empathy, communication, and interpersonal skills. These initiatives can strengthen students' social competence and better equip them for academic and social demands in higher education. The study also highlights areas for further research, including examining the impact of parenting in different cultural and educational contexts.

Keywords: Parental Influence, Social Intelligence, Higher Secondary Students, Adolescent Development, Higher Education Readiness.

INTRODUCTION

Education in the present century is not limited to academic achievement alone. Students entering higher education are expected to possess social and emotional skills that help them adjust to new environments, manage relationships, and handle academic pressure effectively. The transition from school to higher education is a crucial stage in a student's life, as it involves greater independence, responsibility, and interaction with diverse groups of people. In this context, social intelligence plays an important role in helping students succeed both academically and socially. Social intelligence refers to the ability of an individual to understand others, maintain healthy relationships, and respond effectively in social situations. It includes qualities such as empathy, cooperation, communication skills, and emotional understanding. Students with higher levels of social intelligence are generally better at teamwork, conflict

resolution, and adapting to new academic settings (Thorndike, 1920; Goleman, 2020). These abilities are especially important in higher education institutions where collaborative learning, presentations, group discussions, and peer interaction are common. One of the most influential factors in the development of social intelligence is parenting. Parents are the first and most significant social environment for children. The way parents communicate, guide, support, and discipline their children has a lasting impact on their personality and social behaviour. Supportive parenting, emotional warmth, encouragement, and open communication can help adolescents develop confidence, empathy, and strong interpersonal skills. On the other hand, lack of parental involvement or excessive control may negatively affect social development (Baumrind, 2013). Higher secondary school is a significant period in adolescence, during which students prepare themselves for future academic and career paths. At this stage, parental influence continues to play a vital role in shaping students' attitudes, behaviours, and coping strategies. Understanding how parenting influences social intelligence during this stage can provide valuable insights into how students can be better prepared to face the emerging challenges of higher education. Although several studies have examined parenting styles and adolescent development, fewer studies have specifically focused on the relationship between parental influence and social intelligence among higher secondary students in the context of higher education readiness. Therefore, the present study aims to identify the level of parental influence on social intelligence and examine the relationship between these two variables. The findings of this study may help educators and parents understand the importance of collaborative efforts in preparing students for the academic and social demands of higher education.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION OF THE STUDY

The present study is grounded in established psychological and educational theories that explain the development of social intelligence and the role of parenting in shaping adolescent behaviour. The concept of social intelligence was first introduced by Edward Thorndike (1920), who defined it as the ability to understand and manage people effectively in human relations. According to Thorndike, social intelligence enables individuals to respond effectively in social situations and maintain healthy interpersonal relationships. This concept forms the foundation for understanding how students adapt to higher education environments that require cooperation, communication, and teamwork. The study is also supported by the Parenting Styles Theory developed by Diana Baumrind. Baumrind identified three major parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. Among these, authoritative parenting—characterized by warmth, responsiveness, and reasonable control—is often associated with positive social and emotional outcomes in children. Supportive parenting practices are believed to enhance adolescents' confidence, empathy, and interpersonal skills, which are essential components of social intelligence.

In addition, the Emotional Intelligence framework proposed by Daniel Goleman highlights the importance of self-awareness, empathy, and social skills in personal and academic success. Although emotional intelligence and social intelligence are distinct constructs, they are closely related in promoting effective social functioning and adaptation to new academic environments. Thus, the present study is theoretically grounded in Thorndike's concept of social intelligence and Baumrind's parenting styles theory, providing a conceptual basis for examining the relationship between parental influence and social intelligence among higher secondary students.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The present study assumes that parental influence plays a significant role in shaping the social intelligence of higher secondary students. Social intelligence, in turn, contributes to students' readiness to face the academic and social challenges of higher education. Based on the theoretical foundation and review of literature, the conceptual framework of the study proposes that parental influence directly affects social intelligence, which further supports higher education readiness.



Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Today, success in higher education depends not only on academic knowledge but also on social and emotional skills. Students entering colleges and universities must adjust to new environments, interact with different people, work in groups, and handle academic pressure. For this reason, social intelligence has become very important during the higher secondary stage. The Parents play a major role in shaping the behaviour, confidence, and social skills of their children. The way parents' guide, support, and communicate with their children can influence how well students understand others and manage relationships. During adolescence, parental support continues to be an important factor in personality development.

There are many studies on parenting and academic achievement, but fewer studies focus on how parenting influences social intelligence, especially in preparing students for higher education challenges. Therefore, this study is needed to understand the connection between parental influence and social intelligence among higher secondary students. The findings of this study may help parents and teachers work together to support students in developing the social skills necessary for success in higher education and future life.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the present educational context, students entering higher education are expected to possess not only academic knowledge but also strong social and emotional skills. Many students face difficulties in adjusting to new academic environments due to a lack of social competence, confidence, and interpersonal skills. Social intelligence plays an important role in helping students manage relationships, adapt to new situations, and succeed in higher education. Parents are the primary influence in a child's life and play a significant role in shaping behaviour, attitudes, and social skills.

However, the extent to which parental influence contributes to the development of social intelligence among higher secondary students is not clearly understood. There is a need to examine whether parenting has a meaningful impact on students' social intelligence and how this may support their readiness for higher education. Therefore, the problem selected for the present study is stated as: "Parental Influence on Social Intelligence among Higher Secondary Students: Implications for Higher Education Readiness."

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To identify the level of parental influence among higher secondary school students.
- To determine the level of social intelligence among higher secondary school students.
- To examine the relationship between parental influence and social intelligence among higher secondary school students.
- To understand the implications of social intelligence for students' readiness to face higher education challenges.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

- H₁: Parental influence significantly affects social intelligence among higher secondary students.
- H₂: Parental influence is positively and significantly associated with social intelligence.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study adopted the survey method to examine the influence of parenting on social intelligence among higher secondary school students and its implications for higher education readiness. The survey method was considered appropriate as it allows direct collection of information from respondents regarding their experiences, opinions, and perceptions. The population of the study included higher secondary school students and their parents, and the sample consisted of 50 student-parent pairs (total N = 100) from Marthoma Higher Secondary School, Valakom, selected using a purposive sampling method. Data were collected using two separate structured questionnaires, one for students and one for parents, each comprising 30 items related to parental influence and social intelligence. The investigator personally visited the school, distributed the questionnaires, and provided instructions to ensure accurate responses. Ethical considerations were observed by obtaining informed consent from all participants and maintaining the confidentiality of their responses. For data analysis, percentage analysis was employed to determine the levels of parental influence, and Karl Pearson's coefficient of correlation was used to examine the relationship between parental influence and social intelligence.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Many studies have shown that parenting strongly influences adolescents' social and emotional development. Children raised in supportive and caring family environments tend to develop better social skills, empathy, confidence, and emotional understanding. Parenting styles that encourage open communication, guidance, and warmth are often linked with higher levels of social competence, while harsh or neglectful parenting may negatively affect a child's ability to adjust socially. Some studies suggest that emotional intelligence mediates the relationship between parenting and social behaviour. In recent years, social and emotional skills have become essential for students transitioning to higher education, where independence, academic pressure, and peer interactions are prevalent. However, limited studies have directly examined how parental influence affects social intelligence among higher secondary students, particularly regarding higher education readiness. This gap underscores the need for the present study.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1
Table showing students' Perceived Level of Parental Influence on Social Intelligence

LEVELS	HIGH	MODERATE	LOW
NORMS	Above Mean +SD	In Between Mean +SD and Mean -SD	Below Mean -SD
NUMBER	26	15	9
PERCENTAGE	52%	30%	18%

Interpretation

In the above table 1, 52% of students reported that parental influence on their social intelligence was high, 30% reported moderate influence, and 18% reported low influence. This supports the hypothesis that parental influence affects social intelligence.

STUDENTS PERCEIVED LEVEL OF PARENTAL INFLUENCE

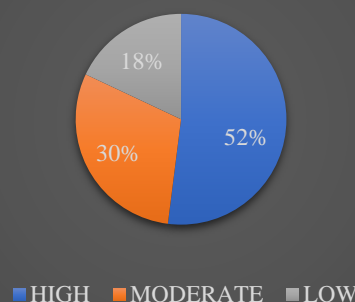


Figure 2

Figure showing Students' Perceived Level of Parental Influence

Table 2
Table showing Parents' Perceived Level of Influence on Students' Social Intelligence

LEVELS	HIGH	MODERATE	LOW
NORMS	Above Mean +SD	In between Mean +SD and Mean -SD	Below Mean -SD
NUMBER	29	14	7
PERCENTAGE	58%	28%	14%

Interpretation

In the above table 58% of parents reported a high level of influence on students' social intelligence, 28% reported moderate influence, and 14% reported low influence.

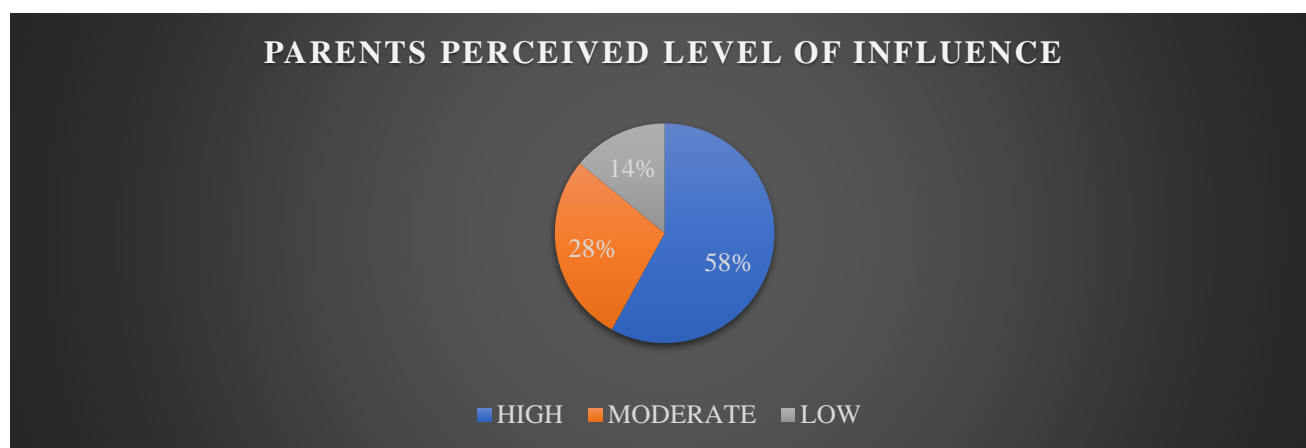


Figure 3
Figure showing Parents' Perceived Level of Influence

Relationship between parenting and social intelligence among higher secondary school students

The relationship between parenting and social intelligence among higher secondary school students has been found out through this part of analysis. The data collected were subjected to the Karl Pearson's coefficient correlation was found out for the total sample.

Table 3
Table showing the Pearson's Correlation

VARIABLES	SAMPLE CATEGORY	SAMPLE SIZE	COEFFICIENT	P VALUE
Parenting	Social Intelligence	Total sample	0.29	<0.05

Interpretation

The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.29$, $p < 0.05$) indicates a low to moderate, yet statistically significant, positive relationship between parental influence and social intelligence. This suggests that parental guidance contributes meaningfully to students' social competence, though other factors may also play a role.

Tenability Of Hypothesis

Based on the analysis of student responses, 52% of students reported a high level of parental influence on their social intelligence, 30% reported a moderate level, and 18% reported a low level. Similarly, from the parents' perspective, 58% indicated a high level of influence on their children's social intelligence, 28% reported a moderate level, and 14% reported a low level. The Pearson's correlation coefficient between parental influence and social intelligence was found to be 0.29, which was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), indicating a positive relationship between the two variables. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that parental influence does not significantly affect social intelligence is rejected, and the research hypothesis is accepted. This suggests that parental influence plays a meaningful role in the development of social intelligence among higher secondary students.

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- A majority of students (52%) reported that parental influence on their social intelligence was high, while 30% reported moderate influence, and 18% reported low influence.
- From the parents' perspective, 58% believed they had a high level of influence on their children's social intelligence, 28% reported moderate influence, and 14% reported low influence.
- The correlation between parental influence and social intelligence was found to be $r = 0.29$, $p < 0.05$, indicating a statistically significant positive relationship.
- Although the correlation is low to moderate, it demonstrates that supportive and positive parenting contributes meaningfully to the development of social intelligence among higher secondary students.
- Both students and parents acknowledge the important role of parenting in shaping social skills, interpersonal behavior, and emotional understanding during adolescence.
- The findings highlight that parental involvement, combined with school support, is essential for preparing students to face the academic and social challenges of higher education.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The study was conducted in only one school (Marthoma Higher Secondary School, Valakom), limiting the generalizability of the findings.
- The sample size was small, consisting of 50 student-parent pairs, which may affect the representativeness of the results.
- Convenience sampling was used, which could introduce selection bias.
- Data were collected using self-reported questionnaires, making the responses susceptible to social desirability or response bias.
- The study adopted a cross-sectional design, so causal relationships between parental influence and social intelligence cannot be established.

SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- Conduct comparative studies between urban and rural schools to examine contextual differences in parental influence and social intelligence.
- Explore gender-based differences in social intelligence and the impact of parenting styles.
- Apply advanced statistical techniques such as Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to better understand the relationships between variables.
- Undertake longitudinal studies to track changes in social intelligence and parental influence over time.
- Expand the study to multiple schools and larger samples to enhance generalizability.
- Investigate additional factors (peer influence, school environment, socio-economic status) that may interact with parental influence in shaping social intelligence.

SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions are proposed:

- Parents should maintain open and healthy communication with their children to promote confidence and emotional understanding.
- Parents should provide emotional support, encouragement, and guidance during adolescence to strengthen social skills.
- Schools should organize parent awareness programmes to educate parents about the importance of social intelligence in higher education readiness.
- Teachers should encourage group activities, discussions, and collaborative learning to enhance students' social competence.
- Counselling and mentoring programmes may be introduced in higher secondary schools to support students in developing interpersonal and coping skills.
- Parents and teachers should work together to create a supportive environment that fosters empathy, cooperation, and responsible behaviour.
- Educational institutions may include life skill training and social skill development programmes as part of the curriculum.
- Further research may be conducted with a larger sample and in different settings to strengthen the understanding of the relationship between parenting and social intelligence.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The following are the major educational implications of the present study:

- Schools should integrate social intelligence training into the curriculum, emphasizing the development of empathy, communication skills, emotional regulation, and interpersonal understanding.
- Educational institutions should create structured programmes to actively involve parents in their children's academic and social development, strengthening home-school collaboration.
- Teachers should receive professional development and training on the importance of social intelligence and practical strategies to nurture it in the classroom. This includes identifying diverse social and emotional needs and working collaboratively with parents to support students' overall growth.
- Schools should foster a positive and inclusive environment that values cooperation, respect, teamwork, and healthy peer interaction.
- Institutions should strengthen counselling and guidance services to address students' social and emotional challenges and prepare them for higher education demands.
- Students should be encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities such as clubs, sports, cultural programmes, and community service, as these provide real-life opportunities to develop and practice social intelligence.
- Leadership development programmes should be introduced to enhance students' confidence, decision-making ability, teamwork, and social responsibility.
- Schools may establish parent support groups or networks where parents can share experiences, challenges, and effective strategies for fostering social intelligence in their children.

Overall, the study implies that preparing students for higher education requires a holistic educational approach that combines academic excellence with strong social and emotional development, supported jointly by schools and families.

PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTION

The findings of the present study provide practical insights for parents, educators, and policymakers. The study highlights the importance of parental involvement in developing students' social intelligence, which is essential for higher education readiness. The results may help policymakers integrate structured social intelligence and life-skill training programmes within the school curriculum. The study also provides guidance for designing effective parent engagement programmes to strengthen home-school collaboration. Furthermore, the findings support the holistic education approach emphasized in the Ministry of Education's National Education Policy (NEP 2020), which stresses the development of social, emotional, and life skills along with academic learning. The study contributes to planning strategies that prepare students for smooth transition into higher education.

CONCLUSION

The present study focused on understanding the influence of parenting on social intelligence among higher secondary school students and its importance in preparing them for higher education. The results of the study show that most students experience a high level of parental influence, and parents also believe that they play an important role in shaping their children's social behaviour. The positive correlation found between parenting and social intelligence indicates that students who receive proper guidance, emotional support, and encouragement from their parents tend to develop better social skills. The findings make it clear that social intelligence is an essential factor in helping students adjust to higher education. Skills such as communication, empathy, cooperation, and adaptability are necessary for managing academic pressure and building healthy relationships in colleges and universities. Parenting, therefore, becomes an important foundation in developing these qualities during adolescence.

In conclusion, the study highlights that preparing students for higher education requires more than academic preparation. Strong parental support combined with school efforts can help students develop the social competence needed for future success. A joint effort by parents and educators is essential for the overall development of higher secondary students.

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