



# A Study on Interpersonal Relationships of Adolescent Students in Relation to Gender and Social Category in Rangareddy District

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## Abstract

Adolescence is a crucial stage of human development characterized by rapid emotional, cognitive, and social changes. During this period, interpersonal relationships play a vital role in shaping students' identity, emotional well-being, and academic engagement. This study investigates the interpersonal relationships of adolescent students in Rangareddy district, Telangana, with specific reference to gender and social category (SC/ST/BC/OC). A sample of 200 Intermediate students was selected using stratified random sampling. The study employed a descriptive survey method, and data were analyzed using t-tests and one-way ANOVA to test two hypotheses. The results revealed no statistically significant difference in intrapersonal awareness between boys and girls. Similarly, although variations were observed in the mean interpersonal relationship scores across social categories, the differences were not statistically significant. These findings suggest that gender and social category may not have a substantial direct influence on adolescents' interpersonal competencies in the given context. The study highlights the importance of fostering inclusive and supportive school environments that nurture positive peer relationships across all social strata. Implications for educators, counselors, and policy-makers are discussed, and directions for further research are proposed.

**Keywords:** *Adolescents, Interpersonal Relationships, Gender, Social Category.*

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## 1. Introduction

Adolescence is a critical developmental stage marked by significant physical, emotional, and social changes. It is during this transitional phase that individuals begin to form and navigate complex interpersonal relationships beyond the confines of family. These relationships encompassing friendships, peer interactions, and connections with teachers and other adults play a crucial role in shaping adolescents' identity, emotional well-being, academic motivation, and social adjustment.

The quality and nature of interpersonal relationships among adolescents are influenced by a variety of factors, including gender, social background, cultural norms, and environmental settings. Gender differences, for instance, often manifest in the way adolescents perceive, express, and maintain their relationships. Girls are typically observed to emphasize emotional intimacy and verbal expression in their friendships, while boys may prioritize shared activities and group affiliations. Similarly, social categories such as caste, socioeconomic status, and community background can influence access to social resources, peer acceptance, and the quality of social interactions. In a diverse and stratified society like India, these social dimensions play a profound role in adolescents' relational experiences.

Rangareddy district, located in the state of Telangana, presents a unique socio-cultural landscape characterized by a blend of rural and urban populations, varying socioeconomic conditions, and diverse community structures. The educational institutions in the district reflect this diversity, offering an ideal setting to examine how gender and social category affect the interpersonal relationships of school-going adolescents.

This study aims to explore the interpersonal relationships of adolescent students in Rangareddy district, focusing particularly on how these relationships vary across gender and social categories. By doing so, it seeks to contribute to the growing body of educational and

psychological research that highlights the importance of understanding students' social worlds as a means to promote inclusive and supportive school environments.

## 2. Review of Related Literature

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Adolescence is widely recognized as a pivotal stage in human development, characterized by intense emotional, psychological, and social transitions. One of the most significant aspects of this period is the formation and development of interpersonal relationships. These relationships especially with peers play a crucial role in shaping adolescents' identity, emotional adjustment, academic achievement, and future social competence (Steinberg, 2014). As adolescents seek independence from their families, peer interactions become increasingly central to their social world, influencing not only their behavior but also their self-concept and decision-making abilities (Brown & Larson, 2009). Research has consistently shown that gender plays a vital role in shaping interpersonal relationship patterns among adolescents. Girls tend to emphasize emotional closeness, empathy, and verbal communication in their friendships, whereas boys often value shared activities, competitiveness, and group-based affiliations (Rose & Rudolph, 2006; Maccoby, 1998). These gendered differences in relational styles reflect broader socialization processes that begin in early childhood and become more pronounced during adolescence.

Moreover, the role of social category encompassing factors such as caste, class, and community background is particularly significant in the Indian context. India's deeply entrenched socio-cultural structures often influence students' access to peer networks, their participation in group activities, and the nature of their social interactions in educational settings (Desai et al., 2010). Students from marginalized or disadvantaged social categories may experience social exclusion, discrimination, or limited opportunities for meaningful peer engagement, which in turn affects their psychological well-being and academic engagement

(Srinivas, 2003; Ramachandran, 2019). Several empirical studies have investigated the influence of social background on adolescents' interpersonal experiences. For instance, Kumar and Gupta (2015) found that students from higher socioeconomic strata reported more positive and supportive peer relationships compared to their counterparts from economically disadvantaged groups. Similarly, research by Rani and Kaur (2018) suggested that caste-based divisions in schools often translate into informal social segregation, which can limit the formation of cross-group friendships and mutual trust among students.

In the Indian educational landscape, school environments are not only learning spaces but also social arenas where adolescent identities are shaped and negotiated. The teacher-student relationship, peer acceptance, and group affiliations are all influenced by socio-cultural factors such as gender norms and caste identities (Bhatty, 2006). Additionally, the intersectionality of gender and social category creates layered experiences for adolescents; for example, girls from marginalized communities may face dual challenges related to both gender discrimination and caste-based exclusion (Rege, 1998). Despite the significance of this issue, there remains a gap in localized and context-specific studies that explore how gender and social category together shape adolescents' interpersonal relationships, especially in semi-urban and rural districts like Rangareddy. Most existing research tends to generalize findings across broader national contexts without acknowledging regional diversities. Thus, there is a pressing need to undertake district-level investigations to understand the nuanced interpersonal dynamics experienced by adolescents in diverse socio-cultural settings.

This study seeks to fill that gap by exploring how interpersonal relationships among adolescent students in Rangareddy district vary with respect to gender and social category. In doing so, it builds upon a growing body of literature that recognizes the importance of

relational experiences in the overall development and educational success of adolescents (Wentzel, 2010; Crosnoe, 2011).

### 3. Need and Significance of the Study

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Adolescence is a critical developmental period marked by significant shifts in social awareness, identity formation, and emotional sensitivity. During this time, peer relationships become central to an adolescent's psychological and social development, profoundly influencing academic motivation, school engagement, emotional well-being, self-esteem, and behavioral patterns. Consequently, understanding the nature and quality of these relationships is essential for fostering healthy adolescent development and creating supportive educational environments.

In India's diverse and stratified society, adolescent interpersonal relationships are often shaped by socio-cultural factors such as gender roles, caste identities, and socioeconomic status. Despite policy interventions promoting inclusivity, students from marginalized social categories (e.g., Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes) may still encounter social exclusion or discriminatory treatment in schools. Similarly, traditional gender norms can influence peer interactions, leading to varied patterns of socialization and emotional expression.

Rangareddy district in Telangana, a microcosm of India's socio-cultural diversity, serves students from various backgrounds. However, empirical research on how these demographic variables influence adolescent interpersonal relationships in this specific region remains limited. Investigating these dynamics at a local level is crucial for developing context-specific educational policies and psychosocial interventions.

This study addresses a significant research gap by providing district-specific insights into the interplay of gender and social category in shaping interpersonal relationships among school students in semi-urban and rural areas like Rangareddy. The findings will offer valuable educational and psychological insights for educators, counselors, and policymakers, informing student-centric support systems. By highlighting disparities, the study aims to contribute to strategies promoting social cohesion, peer inclusivity, and emotional safety in schools, thereby empowering teachers and school leaders to foster mutual respect and collaboration among diverse student groups. Furthermore, its outcomes will serve as a foundational reference for future research in adolescent psychology, educational sociology, and inclusive pedagogy, particularly within the Indian context. This timely study, by examining interpersonal relationships through the dual lens of gender and social category, enhances our understanding of adolescent experiences and supports the broader goal of building equitable and inclusive educational environments.

#### **4. Objectives of the Study**

1. To analyze the differences in interpersonal relationships among adolescent students across gender and social categories.
2. To assess the interpersonal communication and conflict management skills of Intermediate students.

#### **5. Hypotheses of the Study**

1. There is a significant difference in intrapersonal awareness between male and female students.
2. There is a significant difference in interpersonal relationship scores among students belonging to different social categories (SC/ST/BC/OC).

## 6. Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design to investigate interpersonal relationships among adolescent Intermediate students in relation to gender and social category. A total of 200 students were selected using stratified random sampling from government and private junior colleges in urban and rural areas of Rangareddy District, Telangana. This approach ensured adequate representation across institutional types, locations, and demographic subgroups.

A self-developed questionnaire was used as the primary tool for data collection in this study. It was specifically designed to assess the psychological dimensions of adolescent students' emotional and relational competencies in the context of Intermediate education.

The tool comprised 52 items covering three major dimensions:

1. Intrapersonal Awareness and Emotional Regulation
2. Help-Seeking and Support Utilization
3. Interpersonal Communication and Conflict Management

Each item was rated on a three-point Likert scale (Disagree, Neutral, Agree), capturing students' agreement with statements related to emotional self-awareness, communication behavior, and support-seeking tendencies.

The tool was validated through expert review and piloted for clarity, consistency, and relevance to the adolescent demographic. It demonstrated acceptable reliability and internal consistency, making it suitable for measuring the target constructs among Intermediate students.

**Hypothesis-1:** *There is a significant difference in intrapersonal awareness between boys and girls.*

To test the above hypothesis t-test has been employed.

**Table.1. Showing Gender-wise Comparison of Intrapersonal Skills among Intermediate Students**

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% CI of the Difference
Boys	144	46.87	5.44	0.45	0.766	194	0.444	0.695	[-1.09, 2.48]
Girls	56	46.17	6.06	0.84					

The above table presents a comparison of intrapersonal skills between boys and girls using an independent samples t-test. The mean score for boys ( $M = 46.87$ ,  $SD = 5.44$ ) was slightly higher than that of girls ( $M = 46.17$ ,  $SD = 6.06$ ). However, the difference in mean scores is not statistically significant. The t-value obtained was 0.766 with 194 degrees of freedom, and the corresponding p-value (Sig. 2-tailed) was 0.444, which is greater than the alpha level of 0.05. This suggests that there is no significant difference in intrapersonal skills between boys and girls in the sample. Additionally, the 95% confidence interval for the mean difference ranges from -1.09 to 2.48, indicating that the observed difference could be due to sampling variability.

There is no statistically significant gender difference in the intrapersonal skills of Intermediate students. This implies that both boys and girls in the study sample possess comparable levels of emotional self-awareness and regulation.

Hypothesis-2: *There is a significant difference in intrapersonal and interpersonal scores across social categories (SC/ST/BC/OC).*

To test the above hypothesis one way ANOVA has been employed.

**Table.2. Showing comparison of Students' Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Relationships by Category**

Category	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F Value	Sig. (p)	df
SC	113	111.99	8.5319	2.152	.095	3,196
ST	9	119.66	15.9295			
BC	69	113.10	8.8236			
OC	9	110.00	15.0249			
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>112.63</b>	<b>9.4716</b>			



The table presents the mean scores of intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships among students across different social categories Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Backward Classes (BC), and Other Castes (OC). The highest mean score was observed among ST students ( $M = 119.66$ ), followed by BC ( $M = 113.10$ ) and SC ( $M = 111.99$ ). The OC group had the lowest average score ( $M = 110.00$ ). Despite these observed differences in mean values, the ANOVA test yielded an F-value of 2.152 with a p-value of 0.095, which is not statistically significant at the conventional 0.05 level. This result suggests that the differences in intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship scores among the four caste categories are not statistically meaningful and could be due to chance or sample variability. The variation within groups appears to be larger than the variation between groups.

However, the p-value is approaching significance and may indicate a trend, particularly considering the small group sizes for ST and OC ( $n = 9$  each), which might limit statistical power.

## 7. Discussion

The findings of the present study aimed to examine interpersonal relationships among adolescent students in relation to gender and social category in Rangareddy district. Two hypotheses were tested using inferential statistics, namely the independent samples t-test and one-way ANOVA.

The first hypothesis, which postulated a significant difference in intrapersonal awareness between boys and girls, was not supported by the data. Though boys ( $M = 46.87$ ) had a slightly higher mean score than girls ( $M = 46.17$ ), the difference was statistically insignificant ( $t = 0.766$ ,  $p = 0.444$ ). This finding suggests that gender does not play a defining role in shaping intrapersonal awareness a key component of interpersonal relationships—among

Intermediate students in this sample. This result aligns with recent shifts in adolescent development literature, which suggest that emotional self-awareness and regulation are becoming more equally distributed among genders due to changes in parenting practices, educational exposure, and social conditioning (Steinberg, 2014; Rose & Rudolph, 2006).

The second hypothesis examined whether interpersonal and intrapersonal scores differed significantly across social categories (SC/ST/BC/OC). Although some variation in mean scores was observed particularly with Scheduled Tribe (ST) students scoring higher ( $M = 119.66$ ) than other groups the one-way ANOVA yielded an F-value of 2.152 with a p-value of 0.095, indicating no statistically significant difference. This result suggests that social category, as defined in this study, does not significantly influence interpersonal relationship skills among adolescents in the selected sample.

However, it is worth noting that the p-value approached significance, and the small sample size for certain groups (e.g., ST and OC) may have limited the statistical power of the analysis. This highlights a potential area for further investigation with larger and more balanced group sizes. It is possible that social category exerts a more subtle or indirect influence on adolescents' relational development potentially mediated by school culture, teacher support, and peer norms that may not be easily captured through quantitative comparison alone.

These findings challenge some traditional assumptions that caste and gender uniformly dictate interpersonal dynamics during adolescence. Instead, the results hint at a gradual normalization or convergence in emotional and social competencies among students from diverse backgrounds, possibly due to increased access to education, digital media, and inclusive school environments in semi-urban areas like Rangareddy.

## 8. Conclusion

This study sought to explore how gender and social category influence the interpersonal relationships of adolescent students in Rangareddy district. The results revealed no significant gender differences in intrapersonal awareness and no statistically significant variation in interpersonal relationship scores across social categories. These findings underscore the evolving nature of adolescent development in India, particularly in educational settings that foster equality and social integration.

The study contributes to the limited body of localized research on adolescent interpersonal relationships and provides valuable insights for educators, school counselors, and policymakers. It reinforces the importance of focusing on individual emotional competencies and school climate rather than relying solely on demographic categories when designing interventions to support adolescent well-being.

Nonetheless, future studies should consider using qualitative methods or mixed-methods designs to capture the nuanced and culturally embedded experiences of adolescents, particularly those from marginalized groups. Expanding the sample size and including more balanced representation from each social category could also yield more definitive conclusions.

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