
Social And Emotional Competence

Family is a basic unit in the society, that traditionally consists of two parents of the opposite sex rearing their children. Though this is still a reality in the current era, there are a variety of families that are seen. Some of the varieties that are currently seen are a single individual as the parent raising their children, parents are of the same sex and also families that are made up of adoption. Dessai (1994) defines family as a unit of two or more person's united by marriage, blood, adoption or consensual union, in general consulting a single household, interacting and communicating with each other.

India being a country rich with culture and a wide variety of religions, this becomes engraved into each individual. This culture and religion has even influenced the constitution of the country to the extent that the family laws for families of different religions are different based on what the religion does permit and does not permit. This implies that the families in India vary in terms of class, control, distribution of resources, ethnicity, individual choices and roles and relations.

Reviewing the studies on the existing family structures in India, Kolenda in 1987 classified families into collaterally extended household (a sibling bond between two or more married couples), lineal extended household (two couples between whom there is a lineal link, usually between parents and married son or married daughter), nuclear family and forms of nuclear family which is a fragmented or supplemented form of nuclear family, single member households, nuclear pair household, supplemented collateral joint household, supplemented lineal joint household (a lineal joint family including any unmarried/divorced/widowed relatives who do not belong to either of the lineally linked nuclear unmarried sibling), lineal collateral joint household (three or more couples linked lineally or parents and their married sons plus the unmarried children of the couple), supplemented lineal collateral joint household (a lineal collateral joint family including unmarried/widowed/separated relatives who belong to none of the nuclear families lineally) and an unclassified category.

In the last three decades there has been a widespread social change in India that has changed how the whole system works and also the mindset of the people to a great extent. But marriage is still considered as a family affair where it is caste endogamous, universal and family and kin are involved in the selection of the spouse. We currently see considerable change in the process of spouse selection and the age of marriage, but this does not seem to have had any effect on the institution of marriage or how it is perceived. Though there is a lot of information that is available in relation to the formation of marriage, there is scarcity of information that is available about the dissolution of marriage. We also see that there are personal laws that are available for people in different religions with regard to marriage and divorce. For the Christians and the Hindus, marriage is seen as a sacrament whereas in Islam marriage is seen as a contract between two individuals.

In many societies and cultures around the world divorce is accepted and practiced. And moreover, the legal system that is in place also grants the right for divorce. In many of the divorce laws consent from both parties is the only requirement for divorce. Though this is the picture of divorce that is commonly known, it is entirely different in the Indian society. It is still difficult for people to opt for divorce, especially for women. Like mentioned above, India has

different marriage laws for people of different religions.

The common reasons why people in India opt for divorce are cruelty, chronic disease, conversion to another religion, desertion, impotency, infidelity and abuse. Since marriage in India is considered sacred, the couple seeking for divorce are more often than not sent for counseling before the hearing so that they can try to save the marriage if it is possible. Despite all the stigma surrounding divorce that is present in India, we see that there are more and more people that are walking away from their marriages due to a variety of reasons. The court figures from some cities show that divorce rates have doubled or tripled over the recent decades, and surprisingly there is a spike of divorces in the middle and lower classes of the society.

The most affected individual from the divorce of a couple is the children. Though each family and individual is different in terms of personalities, social emotional and economic resources, temperaments, and strengths and weaknesses. It was found by E. Mavis Hetherington and his fellow psychologist that the negative effects that divorce has on a child is short lived and that they fade away eventually. And that there is a minority of children who continue to suffer with anger anxiety, disbelief and shock throughout their life. It is also seen that divorce does have a negative effect on the child's competencies in all areas of life. Some research suggests that they will have trouble in areas of social/work life, communication, academics, emotional or behavioral problems and the like.

Paul R. Amato, in 2001 examined the possible effects that divorce can have on an individual after several years. In this investigation they followed these kids into later childhood, adolescents or teenage years and found that a majority of the children handle divorce well where it was observed that there is a very small difference.

Broad Overview

Social and emotional competence is a key characteristic that an individual has to possess in order to live an effective life. The importance of social and emotional competence becomes increasingly evident from the pre-school age. These are believed to help the individual effectively tackle the complex demands that are placed on them by their environment. It is also believed to be an important goal for every child and adolescent as this then determined their positive outcome, both short term and long term (Collie, 2019).

The Center for the Study of Social Policy in 2013 said that a socially and emotionally competent child will have qualities such as Communication skills, Conflict resolution skills, Empathy, Healthy self-esteem, Morality, Personal agency, Patience, Persistence, Self-confidence, Self-efficacy, Self-control and Social skills. Though this concept seems to be one that is easy to comprehend, we also see that there was no consensus when it came to defining these topics. From all the existing definitions of social and emotional competence it was understood that it is an umbrella term that covers various social and emotional abilities and behaviors.

Social environment is seen to be one of the most important factors for the development of the social and emotional competence in the child (Collie, 2019). For a child the most important social environment then is their family which most often than not includes their parents or caregivers and their siblings, if any.

Divorce rates are increasing at a fast pace in the current era and thus the number of children who end up with disturbed home settings is also increasing. Though parents are sent through counseling and care while and after the divorce, children are more often than not left out of the whole process. The effects that parental separation and the subsequent divorce has on a child is long lasting if they are not attended to in appropriate manners. Thus this study aims to find whether parental divorce has an influence on the development of their child's social and emotional competence.

Theoretical Framework: Social Competence

Social competence is defined as the individual's ability to handle social situations (Orpinas, 2010). This construct is multifaceted and includes the personal knowledge and skills developed that will help the individual function in various life situations. From this understanding, various components have been identified as being included in social competence. The six categories identified by Kostelnik and colleagues in 2002 are, adopting social values, acquisition of interpersonal knowledge and skills, development of a sense of positive self identity, planning and decision making, self regulation in accord with societal standards and development of cultural competence.

Social competence is also characterized by an individual's ability to handle social interactions. The three important aspects of social competence are, the development of self identity in general and a collective identity, the ability to build positive healthy relationships and also effectively solve interpersonal conflicts and the innate desire to be a responsible citizen in one's own society and the world. It is said to be the product of social awareness, social interactions, personal and cultural values related to interpersonal relationships, behavioral skills and emotional process. Along with this, social competence is said to also be a mixture of developmental characteristics, specific social situation and cultural characteristics. Leffert, Benson, & Roehlkepartan (1997) says that social competence involves the personal knowledge and skills which the person develops to deal effectively with life's choices, challenges and opportunities.

A socially competent individual is one that is capable of engaging in satisfactory interactions and activities with peers or adults (Katz et. al., 1995). Factors such as school readiness, emotional health, peer acceptance and social adjustment. Children who are socially competent display higher level of psychological resilience as well as academic and social performance. Whereas those that are not socially competent are characterized by negative behaviors and face problems in their social interactions.

Social competence of an adolescent is determined by the social environment in which they live and interact like their family, community and school. These individuals will also have a strong sense of belonging and are often given opportunities to contribute to the society which is often believed to be influenced by their family environment. (Gillotta, 1990). In a study conducted by Peterson and Leigh in 1990 it was seen that factors like family communication patterns and parenting styles influence an adolescent social competence. The traits associated with social competence is believed to increase with age. During adolescents social competence is usually associated positive aspects like educational attainment, lower levels of substance abuse, self reported delinquency and depression, and employment status (Stepp, Pardini, Loeber, Morris, 2011)

Factors that commonly influence the development of every individuals' social competence are social support, supportive physical and socio-cultural environment and supportive relationships. It was also believed that an individual's race, ethnicity, gender and socioeconomic are the factors that can put barriers on the effective development of social competence. Along with this we also have to talk about the influence of affective (stress management), behavioral (social skills training) and cognitive (problem solving) factors that help in developing and augmenting the social competence. Finally, the influence of school settings in the development of social skills is important as it is seen as a nurturing ground where a child should have social competence for effective interactions and relationships with their peers.

The domains of social competence developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) are, self concept, prosocial behavior, goal orientation, resilience and rational thinking. Self concept is understood in terms of self-awareness; pro-social behavior is understood in terms of communication skills, coping with emotions, interpersonal relationships and skills of empathy; goal orientation is related to creative thinking, decision making, self awareness and critical thinking; and resilience is connected to problem solving skills and the ability to cope with stress and emotions, and rational thinking is associated with decision making and critical thinking.