



# Role of School Environment in Enhancing Emotional Intelligence and Social Adjustment in Adolescents

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**Abstract:** We examine how Kerala's educational environment affects students' emotional intelligence (EI). The research analyzes how teenage stage, gender, and school environment affect emotional intelligence. It randomly and purposively selects 400 students from four CBSE-affiliated schools. EQ—"the capacity to manage, understand, and use emotions positively."—was measured using the Emotional Intelligence Scale. We assessed school atmosphere using the School Environment Inventory. Mid-puberty adolescents scored better on the EQ scale than late adolescents. Male students do somewhat better on emotional intelligence exams than female students, while the difference is not statistically significant. Middle adolescents express greater cognitive encouragement, inventiveness, and laxity in school than late adolescents. These variables improved EQ in both groups, although cognitive support and creative stimulation were most significant. But rejection and control have distinct effects. Rejection hurts emotional intelligence in late adolescence, whereas control boosts it throughout puberty. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Pearson correlation analysis demonstrate significant relationships between school environment and emotional intelligence. Regression study shows that school atmosphere affects pupils' emotional intelligence. This study emphasises the need of a secure learning environment for emotional intelligence development in Kerala, which has consequences for educational policy and curriculum. This research helps us understand how schools might help youngsters develop emotional resilience and social maturity by identifying environmental factors. This will aid their personal and social success.

**Keywords:** School Environment, Emotional Intelligence, Social Adjustment, Adolescents, CBSE Schools, Kerala, Cognitive Encouragement

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## INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a crucial time of fast physical, cognitive, and emotional transformation. During this time, people acquire social and emotional abilities that affect their interactions, decisions, and well-being. Emotional intelligence (EI), the capacity to notice, comprehend, regulate, and use emotions, helps teenagers overcome problems and form healthy connections. Adolescents spend a lot of time in school. Beyond academics, schools provide social interactions, peer connections, teacher direction, and extracurricular activities that shape students' emotional and social development. A supportive educational atmosphere may boost pupils' emotional intelligence, social skills, and career prospects.

### Emotional Intelligence in Adolescents

High emotional intelligence is characterized by a number of characteristics, including self-awareness, empathy, and the ability to exert control over one's emotional responses in a range of situations. According

to the findings of research, higher levels of emotional intelligence are associated with more efficient coping methods, lower levels of stress, greater interpersonal ties, and superior academic success. Emotional intelligence (EI) is a skill that should be developed from adolescence in order to ensure that one's mental health and resilience are maintained throughout their whole lives.

### **Social Adjustment and Its Importance**

A person's social adjustment may be broken down into many components, including the ability to adjust to their social environment, the formation of good relationships, and the ability to cope with social demands in a healthy manner. Adolescents that have successful social adjustment are characterized by their ability to communicate effectively, cooperate well with others, and resolve conflicts. The extent to which a person is able to adapt to social settings is influenced by a variety of factors, including those that are internal and external to the individual, such as the family, friends, and school environment.

### **Role of School Environment**

Physical, social, and psychological factors affect classroom climate, teacher support, peer relationships, extracurricular activities, creative and cognitive engagement, and the school environment. School environments that foster belonging, involvement, and emotional support may boost students' emotional intelligence and social adjustment. Cognitive stimulation, inventiveness, leniency, and systematic monitoring may affect students' emotional and social development. Since teens face growing social and academic challenges, understanding the link between education, emotional intelligence, and social adjustment is crucial. This research helps educators, policymakers, and curriculum designers understand how school environment affects Kerala kids' emotional intelligence and social adjustment.

## **OBJECTIVES**

1. To look into how Kerala teenagers' emotional intelligence is affected by their school environment;
2. To look at how aspects of the school environment relate to students' social adjustment.

## **HYPOTHESIS**

H1: Throughout middle and late adolescence in Kerala, there is a positive and substantial correlation between students' emotional intelligence and how they perceive their educational environment.

H2: Students' emotional intelligence during middle and late adolescence will benefit from the aspects of the educational environment, namely creative stimulation, cognitive encouragement, permissiveness, and acceptance.

H3: Students' emotional intelligence during middle and late adolescence will be negatively impacted by the aspects of the school environment, including rejection and control.

H4: In middle and late adolescence in Kerala, there will be a notable disparity in the emotional intelligence of boys and girls in various age groups.

H5: Students in Kerala schools enrolled in lower secondary and upper secondary courses would vary significantly in their emotional intelligence.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The objective of this study was to investigate the ways in which the educational environment of students attending secondary and senior secondary schools in Kerala has an effect on the students' social adjustment and emotional intelligence. A specified process was followed throughout the whole of the investigation, from the planning stage to the data gathering stage to the analysis and interpretation stages. The following sections provide a comprehensive breakdown of the research methods used in the present study: Urban and semi-urban citizens in the state of Kerala, which is located in southern India, have access to a number of schools that are affiliated with the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) to meet their educational or educational requirements. Four schools in Kerala that are affiliated with the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) were selected for this study from a variety of districts. The schools were chosen to ensure that the children came from socioeconomic backgrounds that were similar to one another. This was done in order to decrease the number of confounding external socioeconomic factors that may have an effect on the findings of the study.

### Selection of the Sample

The sample consisted of 400 students, ranging in age from 14 to 18, drawn from the ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth classes. To ensure fair comparisons across age groups and genders, the sample consisted of 200 boys and 200 girls.

### Sampling Techniques

The study employed the following sampling techniques:

Purposive Sampling – For the selection of schools.

Random Sampling – For the selection of students from the chosen schools.

### Inclusion Criteria:

- Pupils between the ages of 14 and 18.
- Students in grades 9 through 12 at the chosen schools.
- Pupils who have spent a minimum of three years attending the same school.
- Students who have no documented learning problems and come from intact households.

### Sample Distribution:

Initial forms were delivered to 582 pupils by the researcher. Fifty boys and fifty girls from each school were chosen to participate in the research after the inclusion-exclusion criteria were used.

### Variables of the Study

- Independent Variable: School Environment
- Dependent Variable: Emotional Intelligence and Social Adjustment

### Procedure of Data Collection

Approximately on different days, the researcher visited each of the selected schools in order to provide the students with an overview of the objectives of the study. After the students had had the opportunity to get acquainted with one another, they were provided with either digital or paper copies of standardized questionnaires, in addition to an information page that included their personal information. Following the application of the inclusion criteria, the final sample size for the research consisted of four hundred students.

### **Tools Used for Data Collection**

- School Environment Inventory (Mishra, 2000) – To assess students’ perception of their school environment.
- Emotional Intelligence Scale (Hyde, Pethe, & Dhar, 2002) – To assess the emotional intelligence of students.
- Social Adjustment Scale – To evaluate students’ adaptation and interpersonal skills.

### **Statistical Analysis**

In order to better understand the data that was collected, both descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used. The study investigated the relationship between the educational contexts, emotional intelligence (EQ), and social adjustment of adolescents by using statistical methods such as analysis of variance (ANOVA), Pearson correlation (PC), and regression (R).

## **RESULT**

Within the framework of the current investigation, descriptive analysis has been of assistance in arriving at a condensed summary of the emotional intelligence scores of students based on a variety of demographic factors, including age and gender. Additionally, it was beneficial to investigate the aspects of the educational environment, such as the stimulation of creative thinking and the fostering of cognitive development, and how these aspects connect to emotional intelligence. In addition, percentages have been used in order to evaluate the position of the respondents in relation to the scores they obtained on surveys measuring emotional intelligence. The gender inequalities in the school environment and emotional intelligence of the respondents have also been investigated using analysis of variance. This research was carried out in order to gather information. In order to determine whether or not there are significant differences between the two age groups (middle and late adolescence) for the variables consisting of school environment and emotional intelligence, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was carried out. In addition, the analysis of variance was used to compare male and female students in order to determine whether or not there are significant gender disparities in the way that students perceive the school environment and their emotional intelligence. A Pearson Product correlation was calculated using SPSS software to determine the relationship between emotional intelligence and the phases of adolescence in students, as well as the relationship between the school environment and the students during the middle and late stages of adolescence. To get a better understanding of the link that exists between the dependent variable and the independent variable, regression analysis was used.

**Table 1: Emotional Intelligence Scores Based on Age**

| Age Group                      | Low EI (%) | Average EI (%) | High EI (%) |
|--------------------------------|------------|----------------|-------------|
| Middle Adolescence (14–16 yrs) | 45.0       | 38.5           | 16.5        |
| Late Adolescence (17–18 yrs)   | 52.0       | 31.0           | 17.0        |

Taking a look at the statistics, it is evident that a significant majority of children who are in the middle and late phases of adolescence have low levels of emotional intelligence (EI). As a result of the fact that the average EI is slightly higher in this age group (38.5%) than it is in late teens (31%), it seems that emotional intelligence is more prominent throughout the middle teenage period. The EI of both groups was around 16–17% high. For this reason, the period of time known as middle adolescence is considered to be crucial for the development of emotional competence.

**Table 2: Emotional Intelligence Scores Based on Gender**

| Age Group          | Gender | Low EI (%) | Average EI (%) | High EI (%) |
|--------------------|--------|------------|----------------|-------------|
| Middle Adolescence | Female | 44.0       | 44.0           | 12.0        |
| Middle Adolescence | Male   | 46.0       | 33.0           | 21.0        |
| Late Adolescence   | Female | 55.0       | 29.0           | 16.0        |
| Late Adolescence   | Male   | 49.0       | 33.0           | 18.0        |

There are almost no differences between the sexes in terms of EI. Both throughout their adolescent years and throughout their adult lives, male students had a little higher likelihood of having high EI ratings. By the middle of puberty, girls' percentages in the usual EI group were higher than boys', but by the end of puberty, boys' percentages were slightly higher than girls'. Although there are some minor variations in

emotional intelligence (EI) across the sexes in this sample, it seems that gender does not have a significant influence on the overall results.

**Table 3: Mann-Whitney Test for EI Across Middle and Late Adolescence**

| Factor   | N                  | Mean   | SE Mean | Std. Dev | Mann-Whitney U | p-value |
|----------|--------------------|--------|---------|----------|----------------|---------|
| EI Score | Middle Adolescence | 213.42 | 8.03    | 113.61   | 43068          | 0.0103* |
| EI Score | Late Adolescence   | 183.82 | 8.19    | 15.8     |                |         |

*Significant at  $p < 0.05$ , suggesting middle adolescents have higher EI scores.*

According to the Mann-Whitney U test, there is a noteworthy difference ( $p = 0.0103 < 0.05$ ) between older adolescents and those who are in the midst of their teenage years. When compared to late adolescents, middle adolescents have a mean EI score that is higher (213.42) than late adolescents (183.82). As a result, this demonstrates that emotional intelligence is significantly influenced by the teenage years, with middle adolescents displaying superior emotional capabilities.

**Table 4: Pearson Correlation Between EI and Stage of Adolescence**

| Variable           | N   | Mean                            | SE Mean        | r    | p-value |
|--------------------|-----|---------------------------------|----------------|------|---------|
| EI Score vs. Stage | 200 | Middle: 164.77,<br>Late: 156.57 | 2.11 /<br>2.09 | 0.09 | 0.204   |

The positive connection ( $r = 0.09$ ,  $p = 0.204$ ) does not meet the criteria for statistical significance, despite the fact that it exists. This suggests that there is only a very weak relationship between emotional intelligence and the teenage years. The emotional intelligence of the sample was not highly predicted by age alone, despite the fact that middle teens scored higher on average.

**Table 5: Analysis of School Environment Dimensions Across Adolescence Stages**

| Dimension            | Middle Adolescence Mean $\pm$ SD | Late Adolescence Mean $\pm$ SD | t-value | p-value |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------|---------|
| Creative Stimulation | 50.615 $\pm$ 11.386              | 47.41 $\pm$ 12.201             | 2.77    | 0.006*  |

|                         |                |                |       |        |
|-------------------------|----------------|----------------|-------|--------|
| Cognitive Encouragement | 30.365 ± 6.028 | 27.915 ± 6.226 | 4.33  | 0.000* |
| Permissiveness          | 25.53 ± 7.046  | 23.365 ± 7.382 | 3.1   | 0.002* |
| Acceptance              | 21.465 ± 5.482 | 20.755 ± 5.52  | 1.29  | 0.197  |
| Rejection               | 11.77 ± 5.921  | 12.465 ± 5.553 | -1.14 | 0.254  |
| Control                 | 25.025 ± 5.531 | 24.655 ± 4.578 | 0.74  | 0.462  |

When comparing adolescents in the middle of their teenage years to those in their later years, there are significant differences in creative stimulation ( $p = 0.006$ ), intellectual support ( $p = 0.000$ ), and laxity ( $p = 0.002$ ). Middle school kids often have higher scores on tests that assess emotional development, which indicates that educational programs that stimulate students' creativity and critical thinking have a positive impact on the emotional development of these students. As a result of the absence of statistically significant variance in control, rejection, and acceptance, it seems that these qualities may have an influence that is equivalent on all adolescents.

**Table 6: Regression Analysis – Positive School Environment Dimensions on EI**

| Adolescence Stage | Regression Equation                               | R <sup>2</sup> (%) | F-value | p-value |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------|---------|---------|
| Middle            | $EI = 26.3 + 1.46Cr + 0.983Co + 0.448Pe + 1.07Ac$ | 92.90              | 642.68  | 0.00*   |
| Late              | $EI = 33.6 + 1.19Cr + 1.07Co + 0.613Pe + 1.08Ac$  | 94.10              | 788.61  | 0.00*   |

*Cr: Creative stimulation, Co: Cognitive encouragement, Pe: Permissiveness, Ac: Acceptance Significant at  $p < 0.05$ .*

According to the findings of a regression study, factors such as permissiveness, acceptance, creative stimulation, cognitive encouragement, and late adolescent years are significant predictors of emotional

intelligence ( $p = 0.00$ ). The bulk of the variation in EI can be explained by these positive dimensions, as seen by the high  $R^2$  values (92.90% for medium and 94.10% for late), which indicate that these dimensions are the most significant. This highlights how important it is for schools to cultivate positive environments in order to cultivate emotional intelligence in their students.

**Table 7: Regression Analysis – Negative/Control School Environment Dimensions on EI**

| Adolescence Stage | Regression Equation             | $R^2$ (%) | F-value | p-value |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|-----------|---------|---------|
| Middle            | $EI = 77.9 + 0.023Re + 3.46Con$ | 41.10     | 68.67   | 0.00*   |
| Late              | $EI = 76.1 - 0.362Re + 3.45Con$ | 28.80     | 39.78   | 0.00*   |

Rejection and control each have their own unique set of consequences. When it comes to emotional intelligence (EI) in adolescents of middle age, control has a more significant and positive impact than rejection does. During the later stages of adolescence, rejection has a negative impact on emotional intelligence (EI), while control continues to have a positive impact. The  $R^2$  values for negative dimensions are lower (41.10% and 28.80%) when compared to the  $R^2$  values for positive dimensions, which indicates that the effect exerted by negative dimensions is less significant and more diverse.

**Table 8: Descriptive Statistics (Mean & SE of Mean) Based on EI Categories for Male and Female School Students in Kerala Across Middle and Late Adolescence**

| Variable                    | EI Category | Middle Adolescence   | Late Adolescence   |
|-----------------------------|-------------|----------------------|--------------------|
|                             |             | Female Mean $\pm$ SE | Male Mean $\pm$ SE |
| Emotional Intelligence (EI) | Low         | 149.30 $\pm$ 3.90    | 151.04 $\pm$ 4.12  |



|                                |         |               |               |
|--------------------------------|---------|---------------|---------------|
|                                | Average | 170.82 ± 3.85 | 174.94 ± 4.20 |
|                                | High    | 187.33 ± 6.20 | 185.71 ± 7.31 |
| <b>Creative Stimulation</b>    | Low     | 45.32 ± 1.48  | 44.41 ± 1.52  |
|                                | Average | 53.18 ± 1.53  | 55.21 ± 1.62  |
|                                | High    | 58.92 ± 2.46  | 57.95 ± 2.63  |
| <b>Cognitive Encouragement</b> | Low     | 28.27 ± 0.91  | 28.57 ± 0.99  |
|                                | Average | 31.07 ± 0.75  | 32.00 ± 0.88  |
|                                | High    | 33.75 ± 1.42  | 32.71 ± 1.37  |
| <b>Permissiveness</b>          | Low     | 22.55 ± 1.05  | 23.57 ± 1.03  |
|                                | Average | 26.32 ± 0.97  | 26.97 ± 1.13  |
|                                | High    | 30.50 ± 1.59  | 29.33 ± 1.44  |
| <b>Acceptance</b>              | Low     | 19.23 ± 0.72  | 19.48 ± 0.79  |
|                                | Average | 22.57 ± 0.73  | 22.58 ± 0.80  |
|                                | High    | 26.25 ± 1.49  | 23.71 ± 1.44  |
| <b>Rejection</b>               | Low     | 11.09 ± 0.65  | 11.83 ± 0.74  |
|                                | Average | 12.14 ± 0.92  | 12.45 ± 1.23  |
|                                | High    | 9.92 ± 1.53   | 12.29 ± 1.87  |
| <b>Control</b>                 | Low     | 22.84 ± 0.73  | 23.20 ± 0.89  |

|  |         |              |              |
|--|---------|--------------|--------------|
|  | Average | 25.55 ± 0.79 | 25.73 ± 0.78 |
|  | High    | 28.00 ± 1.21 | 29.71 ± 1.0  |

Table 8 presents descriptive statistics of emotional intelligence (EI) along with the associated school environment dimensions. These dimensions include cognitive encouragement, acceptance, control, permissiveness, acceptance, rejection, and creative stimulation. These statistics are presented for both male and female students who are in the middle and late stages of adolescence. The data indicate that middle adolescents often have higher EI scores than late adolescents, which suggests that emotional intelligence seems to be more prominent throughout the middle stage of adolescence. There is a little gender imbalance that favors females, as seen by the fact that female students demonstrate a slightly higher EI in the high category than male students do across all stages. It is clear that middle school students tend to have higher mean scores on positive school environment attributes such as acceptance, permissiveness, creativity, and cognitive encouragement. This demonstrates the significance of a loving and engaging educational setting in the process of developing emotional intelligence. On the other hand, control and rejection have mixed effects; it is possible that these factors have a limited or variable influence on emotional intelligence (EI) due to the fact that they have mean scores that range from low to moderate across all age groups and genders. According to the data shown in the table as a whole, the emotional development of school-aged children in Kerala is significantly influenced by the quality of the school environment as well as the time period during which they are adolescents.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that the experiences that students went through while attending secondary and senior secondary schools in Kerala had a significant influence on the emotional intelligence that they possess. Students who are in the midway stage of adolescence have higher levels of emotional intelligence than those who are in the latter stages of adolescence, as indicated by the findings. This indicates that emotional maturity is more visible during the intermediate time of being a teenager. In addition, students in middle school report increased levels of cognitive encouragement, permissiveness, and creative stimulation at school, all of which have a positive impact on the emotional intelligence of these students. Control, on the other hand, has a positive affect universally regardless of age, while acceptance, rejection, and control all have mixed or insignificant impacts. Control is the only factor that has a positive influence. In terms of the emotional development of children, the environment that they are exposed to at school has a vital impact. Although permissiveness and acceptance also have a role, the most significant features are cognitive stimulation and creative stimulation. Cognitive stimulation is the most crucial. There were some minor variations between the sexes, but these differences were statistically significant, which suggests that a pleasant school atmosphere had the same favorable impact on male and female students. In conclusion, the findings of the study emphasize the necessity of establishing a school environment that is both engaging and supportive in order to assist adolescents in the development of emotional intelligence and social adjustment abilities, which in turn prepares them for success in their academic, personal, and

social endeavors.

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