

# EGOCENTRIC CHARACTERISTICS IN EARLY ADOLESCENTS WITH REGARD TO PERSONAL, FAMILIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL VARIABLES

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## Abstract

*Early adolescence is a distinct developmental phase, which qualitatively differs from both latency and adolescent proper. Early adolescent at the terminal stage of concrete thinking, may not be able to perform abstract thinking. So there may be some cognitive distortions within them. One of the cognitive distortions encountered by them is egocentrism. It is the state of being self-centred, preoccupied with one's own concerns to the exclusion of noticing or caring about others. The egocentrism at the early adolescent stage is distinctive and crucial as the cognitive and emotional disequilibrium as well as the psychological vulnerabilities. This study reveals the egocentrism with regard to select attributive variables.*

**Keywords :** Egocentrism, Early adolescent and Cognitive distortion.

## Introduction

Adolescence is a time of transition in which the adolescents must cope with involving his or her mind, body, emotions and social relationships. The term egocentrism is named by child psychologist, Jean Piaget. From his research on developmental stages of children, he noticed that egocentrism was a primary phase for children until about age six. He termed egocentrism as the tendency for children to only be aware of their own needs and thoughts and to basically assume that they are the centre of the world. In this phase, children are not able to consider or grasp the thoughts of others accurately, because they are only able to consider their own desires and opinions. But David Elkind says that egocentrism also occurs in the adolescents' stage (Santrock, 2011). Adolescent egocentrism is the heightened self-consciousness reflected in adolescents' beliefs that others are as interested in them and a sense of personal uniqueness. Early adolescents at this stage have the desire to be noticed, visible and on stage. Eventhough egocentrism is a normal occurrence, for some individuals, it can contribute to reckless behaviour and loneliness. Egocentricity leads some adolescents to think that they are invulnerable.

Burka and Glenwick(1978) say that high egocentrism is associated with shy, anxious behaviour

for girls and acting-out and learning difficulties for boys. The findings of Riely, Adams and Nielson (1984) examine that perceived parental support was associated with diminished egocentrism, while perceived parental rejection was predictive of heightened self-consciousness. Egocentrism contributes to unrealistic optimism (Weinstein and Lachendro, 1982). The existence of the imaginary audience declined with age, as did the personal fable, although the latter did not decline to the same extent as the former (Enright et al., 1979). According to O'Conner (1995), identity development was more strongly and consistently related to ego centrisim.

## Significance of the Study

Child development researchers examine different domains of development, such as physical growth, cognition, language, personality, social relationships, etc. Among them, the cognitive development, the changes over time in children's thinking, reasoning, use of language, problem solving, and learning, play a vital role in an individual. The field is vast and researchers across the world study many different aspects of children's thinking at different points in development (Salkind, 2002).

In addition to the abstract thinking, early adolescents foster egocentrism. Adolescent egocentrism is the heightened self-consciousness of

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adolescents, which reflected in their belief that others are as interested in them as they are in themselves, and in their sense of personal uniqueness and invincibility. Many cognitive characteristics can be studied but the egocentrism is the characteristic which cannot be easily identified by oneself. Because it will diminish as the child grows to adulthood and exceptions are also there. This study helps to know the individual differences in their egocentric characteristic with regard to selected background variables.

### Objectives

1. To find the significant difference, if any, in the egocentric nature of the early adolescents with regard to the personal variables.
2. To find the significant difference, if any, in the egocentric nature of the early adolescents with regard to the familial variables.
3. To find the significant difference, if any, in the egocentric nature of the early adolescents with regard to the institutional variables.

### Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the egocentric nature of the early adolescents with regard to the personal variables.
2. There is no significant difference in the egocentric nature of the early adolescents with regard to the familial variables.
3. There is no significant difference in the egocentric nature of the early adolescents with regard to the institutional variables.

### Methodology

Survey method was adopted for this study.

### Tool Used

A three point scale namely LiWi's scale on egocentrism developed by the authors containing 22 statements was used to identify the egocentric nature of the early adolescents.

The tool was given to three experts in the field of psychology and education for face validity. Based on the suggestions given by the experts, items were reframed apposite to the level of early adolescents. Three point rating scale - always, sometimes and never - was employed. The try out was established using 90 respondents. The respondents were students of standard IX from six schools. The reliability coefficient of the tool was verified using test-retest method, and it was found

to be 0.723. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$ -value for 38 items is 0.700. Items with low correlation value were dropped and 16 items were deleted. To have Cronbach's  $\alpha$ -value as 0.803, the items were reduced from 38 to 22.

### Sample

The accessible population for this study is all high and higher secondary school students in Tirunelveli district. The data were collected from 596 students of standard IX from 21 schools which include government, aided and private schools.

### Data Analysis

**Table - 1 : Significance of difference in egocentric nature of secondary students with regard to personal variables.**

Personal variable	N	Mean	SD	t	p	
Gender	Male	302	64.91	10.36360	4.967	0.000*
	Female	294	61.044	8.57851		
Medium	Tamil	297	63.284	9.87717	0.704	0.482 <sup>NS</sup>
	English	299	62.724	9.55273		
Residence	Day Scholar	563	63.065	9.76301	0.707	0.517 <sup>NS</sup>
	Others	33	61.937	8.85724		

\* Significant at 1% level NS - Not Significant at 5% level

**Table - 2 : Significance of difference in egocentric nature of secondary students with regard to familial variables**

Familial variable	N	Mean	SD	t	p	
Parental Status	Both Parents	566	63.001	9.616	0.506	0.988 <sup>NS</sup>
	Single Parent	30	63.03	11.55		
Mothers Employability Status	Employee	339	63.323	10.3	0.924	0.356 <sup>NS</sup>
	Not an Employee	257	62.581	8.873		

NS - Not Significant even at 5% level

**Table - 3 : Significance of difference in egocentrism with regard to institutional variables**

Institutional	Source of Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean	F value	P value
Type of School	Between	117.108	2	58.554	0.620	0.538 <sup>NS</sup>
	Within	56000.844	593	94.436		
Nature of School	Between	1334.001	2	667.000	7.220	0.001**
	Within	54783.952	593	92.384		
Locality of School	Between	134.786	2	67.393	0.714	0.490 <sup>NS</sup>
	Within	55983.166	593	94.407		

\*\*Significant at 1% level NS - Not Significant even at 5% level

**Table - 3 (a) : Scheffe's test result showing the significant difference in the egocentrism of early adolescents with regard nature of school**

Govt	Nature of School		Mean difference	Std. Error	P Value
	Aided	Private			
64.389	61.280	-	3.108	0.966	0.006*
-	61.280	64.220	2.936	0.936	0.008*
64.389	-	64.220	0.168	1.044	0.987 <sup>NS</sup>

\* Significant at 1% level NS - Not Significant even at 5% level

### Findings and Interpretations

Table 1 reveals that there is no significant difference in egocentrism with regard to medium of instruction and mode of residence. And only

with regard to gender early adolescents show significant difference at 1% level of significance. The male students exhibit more egocentric characteristics than their counterparts.

From the table 2, it is found that there is no significant difference in egocentrism with regard to familial variables.

Table 3, reveals that there is no significant difference in egocentrism with regard to type of school, nature of school and locality of school. The early adolescents studying in government schools show more egocentric characteristics than their counter parts.

Based on the above result, it is evident that there is significant difference in egocentrism with regard to gender and nature of school. Evolutionary Psychology has addressed gender differences in many social behaviours and also many studies found significant results especially in gender. From this, it is understood that there is gender difference in cognition aspects. Egocentrism leads them to be highly critical of authority figures, unwilling to accept criticism and quick to fault others (Feldman, 2011).

Burka and Glenwick (1978) also say that high egocentrism associated with shy, anxious behaviour for girls and acting-out and learning difficulties for boys. From this study, it is found that boys exposed more egocentric nature may be because of their biological characteristics. In this study compared to girls, they feel that they are very unique, expose heroic characteristics and often wish to become leader of their peers.

In the case of government school students due to the lack of social cognitive skills, they exhibit egocentric characteristics. Research says that students studying in unisex and co-education schools show significant differences in their social values and personal variables, academic behaviours and achievement, attachment with parents and teachers, and perception about the climate (Levinson, Cookson and Sadovnik, 2002).

### Recommendations

Through various life skill developmental programmes, the early adolescents can be trained to think before acting, to consider the impact of this egocentric behaviour on maintaining relationships. The heightened egocentric behaviour shrinks the social characteristics of an early adolescent. Social interaction has to be encouraged in classroom

situations, so that children can learn from one another. Social perspective training, Interpersonal cognitive problem solving training and value education can be given at earlier stages to minimize the egocentric behaviour. The Jigsaw puzzles and building blocks of different sizes and shapes develop the child's capacity for abstract thinking (Weiler, n.d). These activities are sure to hold the interest of the children and help them to develop abstract thinking. The involvement of teachers and parents takes a predominant role to diminish the egocentric nature among early adolescents and encourages altruistic behaviour.

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