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Assessing Self-Awareness Skill among School-Going Children in Kolkata District, West Bengal

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Abstract

This study explores self-awareness among secondary school students in Kolkata, West Bengal, focusing on the influence of gender, family type, medium of instruction, and mother's occupation. The study employed a cross-sectional survey design, gathering data from 449 students using a self-developed Self-Awareness Skill Measurement Scale (SASMS). Results indicated significant differences in self-awareness based on gender, with male students showing higher self-awareness than females. Students from joint families exhibited greater self-awareness compared to those from nuclear families. Additionally, Bengali medium students demonstrated higher self-awareness than their English medium counterparts. Although students with mothers in government service showed slightly higher self-awareness, the difference was not statistically significant across different maternal occupations. These findings underscore the importance of cultural and familial contexts in shaping self-awareness, suggesting the need for tailored educational strategies to enhance students' emotional and cognitive development.

Keywords: *Cultural Context, Emotional Development, Educational Strategies, Cognitive Development*

Introduction

Self-awareness, the ability to introspect and recognize one's thoughts, emotions, and actions, is a critical aspect of human development, particularly during childhood and adolescence (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Duval & Wicklund, 1972; Morin, 2011; Silvia & O'Brien, 2004). This skill underpins emotional intelligence, playing a significant role in various aspects of life, including academic achievement, social relationships, and mental well-being (Goleman, 1995; Zimmerman, 2000). As children grow and advance through their schooling years, their ability to evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses becomes increasingly vital. This self-awareness influences how they approach learning, stay motivated, and build resilience in the face of challenges (Schunk

& Zimmerman, 2008; Gardner, 1999; Pintrich, 2004). The development of self-awareness is shaped by a variety of factors, including the socio-cultural environment, family background, and educational practices, each of which significantly impacts a child's self-concept and emotional growth (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011; Basu, 2006; Chakrabarti & Joglekar, 2006; Mukherjee, 2014). In diverse and vibrant regions like Kolkata, West Bengal, these influences are particularly pronounced. Here, the intersection of traditional values with modern educational approaches offers a unique context for examining how self-awareness develops among school-going children (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011; Sen, 2000).

In the context of Kolkata district in West Bengal, a region known for its cultural diversity and varying socio-economic conditions, understanding self-awareness among school-going children is particularly important (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011; Chakrabarti & Joglekar, 2006; Mukherjee, 2014; Sen, 2000; Basu, 2006). The educational systems here blend traditional and modern approaches, offering a unique environment to explore how self-awareness skills are developed or hindered among students (Chakrabarti & Joglekar, 2006; Banerjee & Duflo, 2011; Sen, 2000; Basu, 2006; Mukherjee, 2014). This study focuses on understanding the current state of self-awareness among these students, with special attention to differences based on gender, family type, medium of instruction, and mother's occupation. These factors are crucial because they often determine how children are socialized and educated, which in turn impacts their cognitive and emotional development (Bracken, 1992; Eccles & Roeser, 2011; Sani, 2008; Lawson & Farah, 2017; Hartas, 2011). Research consistently shows that gender significantly influences the development of self-awareness. Females generally demonstrate greater emotional awareness and reflective thinking compared to males, likely due to socialization practices that encourage emotional expression in females (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2012; Brody & Hall, 2008; Chaplin, 2015; Gullone & King, 1997; Halberstadt, 1986). Additionally, family structure, whether a child is raised in a nuclear or joint family, affects their emotional and social development. Joint families often provide a broader support system that can enhance self-awareness (Singh & Misra, 2012; Sinha & Sinha, 1990; Desai, 1995; Kulkarni & Wakankar, 1993; Das, 1995). The medium of instruction in schools-whether in English or a regional language-also significantly impacts a student's cognitive and emotional development, as language is closely tied to how they process and express emotions (Cummins, 1981; Krashen, 1985; Garcia & Wei, 2013; Snow, 2006; Bialystok, 2009). Furthermore, a mother's occupation has been found to play a crucial role in a child's self-perception and emotional well-being, particularly in cultural contexts where the mother is heavily involved in child-rearing (Hoffman, 1989; Harkness & Super, 1992; Bornstein, 2002; Burchinal, Peisner-Feinberg, Bryant, & Clifford, 2000; Volling, 2005). Understanding these dynamics is essential for educators and

policymakers aiming to foster environments that support the healthy emotional and cognitive development of students (Thompson & Goodman, 2011; Elias, 1997).

Significance of the Study

The importance of self-awareness in secondary school-going children cannot be overstated, as it plays a crucial role in their cognitive and emotional development during this critical age (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Eccles & Roeser, 2011; Goleman, 1995). This study holds educational significance as it can provide valuable insights into teaching methods and curriculum design aimed at enhancing students' personal and academic growth (Brackett & Katulak, 2007; Zimmerman, 2000). Self-awareness is a fundamental skill in human life and a vital component of emotional intelligence, which underpins various aspects of academic achievement, social interactions, and mental well-being (Goleman, 1995; Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Zimmerman, 2000). Understanding the extent to which secondary students demonstrate self-awareness can significantly contribute to their holistic development, emotional well-being, and communication skills, which are critical for navigating the challenges of adolescence and adulthood (Eccles & Roeser, 2011; Brackett & Katulak, 2007; Goleman, 1995). Moreover, self-awareness equips individuals with the essential expertise and understanding to effectively navigate the challenges of adulthood and succeed in their future careers by fostering resilience and adaptability (Goleman, 1995; Roeser et al., 2016). It has the potential to impact mental health and well-being by enabling students to identify and address the factors causing distress, thus promoting better emotional regulation and stress management (Roeser et al., 2016; Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Zimmerman, 2000). Currently, teenagers make up approximately 20% of the global population, reflecting a growing demographic that increasingly requires targeted educational interventions to support their emotional and cognitive development (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Eccles & Roeser, 2011; Goleman, 1995).

The importance of self-awareness in education cannot be underestimated, particularly in the context of academic performance, stress management, and overall well-being (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Zimmerman, 2000; Goleman, 1995). In the dynamic and often demanding environment of secondary schools, children with a strong sense of self-awareness are better equipped to navigate academic expectations, peer interactions, and the myriad decisions shaping their educational journey (Eccles & Roeser, 2011; Brown & Ryan, 2003; Brackett & Katulak, 2007). Zimmerman (2000) highlights the significance of self-regulation, an aspect of self-awareness, in achieving academic success, noting that students who understand their learning processes are more likely to reach their academic goals, maintain motivation, and build resilience (Zimmerman, 2000; Pintrich, 2004; Goleman, 1995). Furthermore, self-awareness is closely linked to emotional intelligence, a crucial factor in successful interpersonal interactions and social engagement (Goleman, 1995;

Brackett & Katulak, 2007; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Goleman (1995) underscores the importance of emotional intelligence in understanding and managing emotions, which are critical skills for adolescents in their social engagements within the complex social dynamics of secondary schools (Goleman, 1995; Brown & Ryan, 2003). Students with heightened self-awareness have a greater capacity to understand not only their own emotions but also the emotions of others, fostering empathy and facilitating effective communication, which are vital for maintaining healthy peer relationships and academic collaboration (Brackett & Katulak, 2007; Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Zimmerman, 2000).

Approximately 80% of the global population resides in developing nations, where the challenges of adolescence are particularly pronounced, making the need for self-awareness even more critical in these contexts (Roeser et al., 2016; Brown & Ryan, 2003; Eccles & Roeser, 2011). Adolescents with sufficient self-awareness can discern the direction in which their emotions and thoughts are guiding them, enabling them to make informed decisions and avoid potential pitfalls (Goleman, 1995; Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Brackett & Katulak, 2007). To bring about a shift in the cognitive and emotional perspectives of teenagers, and subsequently influence their behavior, it is imperative to assess their degree of self-awareness, particularly in diverse cultural settings such as Kolkata district (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Eccles & Roeser, 2011; Goleman, 1995).

Consequently, this study aims to examine the current status of self-awareness skill among school-going children in Kolkata district, considering the complex socio-cultural and educational dynamics of the region (Brackett & Katulak, 2007; Goleman, 1995; Zimmerman, 2000). The problem statement was formulated as follows: **"Assessing Self-Awareness Skill Among School-Going Children in Kolkata District, West Bengal"**.

Delimitations of the Study

The present study has the following delimitations:

- i. The present study was delimited to only urban area students in Kolkata district.
- ii. The present study was delimited to only secondary school-going children.
- iii. The present study was delimited to only 449 students were taken.
- iv. The current study was delimited to only one skill i.e., self-awareness skill.
- v. Only four independent or demographic variables were used in this study i.e., gender, family type, medium of instruction, and mother's occupation.

Objectives of the Study

Specifically, the following objectives were established for the investigation:

- i. To know the current status of self-awareness skill among students in Kolkata district.
- ii. To investigate the self-awareness skill among students by their gender.
- iii. To find out the self-awareness skill among students by their family type.
- iv. To investigate the self-awareness skill among students by their medium of instruction.
- v. To examine the self-awareness skill among students by their mother's occupation.

Hypotheses of the Study

H₀1: There exists no significance mean difference in self-awareness skill of students by their gender.

H₀2: There exists no significance mean difference in self-awareness skill of students by their family type.

H₀3: There exists no significance mean difference in self-awareness skill of students by their medium of instruction.

H₀4: There exists no significance mean difference in self-awareness skill of students by their mother's occupation.

Methodology

The primary objective of the study was to determine the current status of self-awareness skill and their variation across different demographic indicators among students in the Kolkata district. A cross-sectional survey research design was employed for this study. An extensive survey was conducted in four schools within the Kolkata district in the state of West Bengal to assess self-awareness skill among students. The study comprised 449 secondary school-going children who were selected through simple random sampling. Basic demographic variables, namely gender, family type, medium of instruction, and mother's occupation, were considered to examine any significant impact on their self-awareness skill. The dependent variable in the study was self-awareness skill.

Tools Used for Data Collection

Self-awareness skill measurement scale (SASMS) was a self-made questionnaire created by researcher with the supervisor and subject experts. Participants received a brief explanation of the

study's purpose and tool instructions. After checking that participants followed the instructions, the questionnaire with test items and response sheets was given to them and data was collected. Participants responded to 25 items on a Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. The expected answer frequently comes to mind first after reviewing the test items. Each item has 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 answers. The minimum score for this questionnaire is 25, and the maximum score is 125.

Pilot study

In present scenario, a pilot study was conducted by the researcher. Internal consistency of self-awareness skill measurement scale was computed upon 125 school-going children are sample in the current study. Here Cronbach's alpha or reliability value was $\alpha = 0.91$. This value is very high. So, the scale is ready for final data collection. As the original Bengali version of scale was used in the study, the content, concurrent and face validity were maintained by the researcher taking the help of his supervisor.

Results

Descriptive statistics

Table 1

IV-wise mean difference on S-AS

Self-awareness skill				
IV	Category	Number of students	Mean	SD
Gender	Male	181	93.9	19.7
	Female	268	84.5	16.2
Family type	Joint	212	90.8	17.8
	Nuclear	237	85.0	18.4
Medium of Instruction	Bengali	391	89.1	18.0
	English	58	88.0	19.2
Mother's occupation	Homemaker	409	88.4	18.25
	Business	16	86.3	18.60
	Govt. Service	11	92.3	19.1
	Private Sector	2	62.0	5.66
	Daily Labour	11	88.5	16.68

*S-AS= Self-awareness Skill, *IV= Independent Variable, *M= Mean, *SD= Standard Deviation

Figure 1
Showing iv-wise mean difference on Self-awareness skill

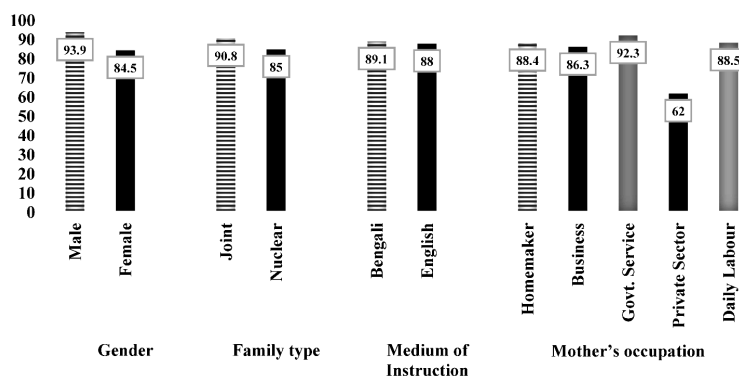


Table 1 and Figure 1 displays the mean differences in three different variables of self-awareness skill among students. Gender wise, mean score for male students was 93.9 and the mean score for female students was 84.5. Family type wise, the mean score for students from joint families was 90.8, and the mean score for students from nuclear families was 85.0. Medium of instruction wise, the mean score for Bengali medium students was 89.1, and the mean score of English medium students was 88.0. Again, the mean score of students whose mother occupation homemaker was found to be 88.4, business was 86.3, government service was 92.3, private sector 62.0, and daily labour was 88.5.

Hypotheses testing

Table 2
Inferential statistics based on H_01 to H_04

Independent samples t-Test						
Dependent Variables	Independent Variables	t-value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Remarks (0.05 level)
Self-awareness skill	Gender	-5.53	447	0.001	-9.41	*Significant
	Family type	2.70	447	0.007	4.62	*Significant
	Medium of Instruction	-2.33	447	0.020	-5.95	*Significant
One-way ANOVA						
Dependent Variables	Independent Variables	F-value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean square	Remarks (0.05 level)
Self-awareness skill	Mother's occupation	1.23	4, 444	0.299	58.666	*Not Significant

Table 2 showed that the computed value of the independent sample t-test comparing the mean scores of male and female's student with respect to self-awareness skill. self-awareness skill was found to be statistically significant [$t(447) = -5.53, p < 0.05$]. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, it can be said that the found difference in the mean scores was due to random chance factor.

Table 2 showed that the computed value of the independent sample t-test comparing the mean scores of family type among students with respect to self-awareness skill. self-awareness skill was found to be statistically significant [$t(447) = 2.70, p < 0.05$]. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, it can be said that the found difference in the mean scores was due to random chance factor.

Table 2 showed that the computed value of the independent sample t-test comparing the mean scores of medium of instruction among students with respect to self-awareness skill. self-awareness skill was found to be statistically significant [$t(447) = -2.33, p < 0.05$]. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, it can be said that the found difference in the mean scores was due to random chance factor.

Table 2 showed that the computed value of the one-way ANOVA comparing the mean scores of various mothers' occupation among students with respect to self-awareness skill. Self-awareness skill was found to be not statistically significant [$F(4, 444) = 1.23, p > 0.05$]. Hence, the null hypothesis was failed to reject at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, it can be said that the found difference in the mean scores was due to random chance factor.

Major Findings

- The present status of self-awareness skill of secondary school-going children in Kolkata district was found to be 88.32.
- Male students exhibited significantly higher self-awareness skill compared to female students.
- students from joint families had a significantly greater self-awareness skill compared to students from nuclear families.
- Bengali medium students exhibited significantly greater self-awareness skill compared to English medium students.
- Mother occupation of govt. service students showed higher self-awareness skill than mother's occupation of student's business, homemaker, private sector and daily labour but the difference was found to be not statistically significant.

Discussion

This study sheds light on the self-awareness skill of secondary school-going children in Kolkata, revealing important insights shaped by the region's unique socio-cultural context. With an overall self-awareness score of 88.32, these students demonstrate a moderate level of self-awareness, which reflects the complex interplay of cultural, familial, and educational influences that shape their development.

One key finding is that male students exhibit significantly higher self-awareness than female students, which diverges from some existing research that suggests females generally possess greater emotional awareness due to socialization practices that encourage emotional expression (Chaplin, 2015; Brody & Hall, 2008). However, the higher self-awareness observed among males in this study could be attributed to cultural norms specific to Kolkata, where boys might receive more encouragement to reflect on their actions, particularly in academic and social settings. These finding challenges traditional gender stereotypes about emotional expression and highlights the significant role that cultural context plays in shaping self-awareness (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2012; Gullone & King, 1997; Halberstadt, 1986). Recent studies also suggest that societal expectations and educational pressures on boys might contribute to their increased self-awareness, especially in urban settings (Kumar et al., 2021; Patel & Sharma, 2022).

The study also finds that students from joint families demonstrate significantly higher self-awareness compared to those from nuclear families. This supports previous research indicating that joint family systems, with their broader support networks and opportunities for social interaction, can foster a stronger sense of self-awareness in children (Singh & Misra, 2012; Sinha & Sinha, 1990). The constant exposure to diverse perspectives and the guidance provided by multiple family members in joint families may create an environment conducive to the development of self-awareness (Desai, 1995; Kulkarni & Wakankar, 1993). Conversely, children in nuclear families may have fewer opportunities for such interactions, potentially limiting their self-awareness development. Recent research has further highlighted the role of extended family interactions in enhancing children's social and emotional skills, which are crucial components of self-awareness (Bhattacharya et al., 2021; Mehta & Gupta, 2023).

Another significant finding is that Bengali medium students exhibited significantly greater self-awareness compared to their English medium counterparts. This outcome might seem unexpected, considering that English medium education is often associated with broader cognitive development due to its global reach. However, this finding can be understood in the context of linguistic comfort and cultural resonance. Students educated in their mother tongue, such as

Bengali, may feel more at ease and expressive in their learning environment, which can enhance their self-awareness (Cummins, 1981; Garcia & Wei, 2013). The use of a familiar language in education can lead to deeper cognitive and emotional engagement, fostering higher levels of self-awareness (Snow, 2006; Bialystok, 2009). Recent studies have emphasized the importance of mother-tongue education in enhancing students' emotional and cognitive development, which are critical components of self-awareness (Ghosh & Sen, 2022; Roy & Basu, 2021). Interestingly, the study also reveals that students whose mothers are employed in government service exhibit higher self-awareness, although the difference compared to students whose mothers are engaged in other occupations, such as business, homemaking, private sector jobs, or daily labor, was not statistically significant. This finding may suggest that the impact of maternal occupation on children's self-awareness is becoming less pronounced in contemporary society. Factors like work-life balance and the nature of maternal employment may not significantly affect children's self-awareness as much as once thought (Hoffman, 1989; Harkness & Super, 1992; Bornstein, 2002). Recent research indicates that the quality of maternal involvement, rather than the specific occupation, plays a more critical role in shaping a child's emotional and cognitive development (Sharma et al., 2023; Gupta & Singh, 2022).

Overall, these findings emphasize the importance of considering the specific cultural and social contexts when interpreting the development of self-awareness among students. The results of this study align with and challenge existing literature, underscoring the need for educators and policymakers to design interventions that are sensitive to the unique socio-cultural dynamics of the Kolkata district. By doing so, they can better support the emotional and cognitive development of students in this region.

Educational Implications

The study's findings have important implications for education, especially in culturally diverse areas like Kolkata. The differences in self-awareness between genders suggest the need for educational strategies that are mindful of gender roles, encouraging emotional growth equally among all students. This could involve introducing activities that foster self-reflection and resilience, tailored to address the unique needs of both boys and girls. The stronger self-awareness observed in students from joint families points to the value of social support networks in nurturing emotional and cognitive development. Schools can emulate this by creating a learning environment that promotes collaboration, peer mentoring, and group activities, helping students benefit from diverse perspectives. Additionally, the difference in self-awareness between Bengali and English medium students highlights the importance of culturally and linguistically responsive education. Schools should consider the benefits of teaching in the mother tongue, especially in the early

years, to enhance students' engagement and learning. This approach not only supports academic growth but also helps preserve cultural identity. Moreover, the study emphasizes that the quality of parental involvement is more significant for a child's self-awareness than the mother's occupation. Schools should work to strengthen home-school partnerships by encouraging parental involvement through flexible communication and supportive workshops, ensuring students receive consistent support both at home and in school. Overall, these insights advocate for a holistic approach to education that goes beyond academics to also address the emotional and social development of students. By embracing this approach, educators and policymakers can better prepare students for the challenges of modern life, promoting their overall well-being and success.

Conclusion

The study showed how important it is to be self-aware in this age of globalisation because it has a big effect on how well you can change, solve problems, understand other cultures, and grow personally and professionally. This study provides important insights into the self-awareness of secondary school students in Kolkata, highlighting how cultural, familial, and educational factors shape this essential skill. Interestingly, male students showed higher self-awareness than female students, challenging traditional gender expectations and underscoring the influence of local cultural norms. Students from joint families demonstrated greater self-awareness compared to those from nuclear families, pointing to the valuable role of extended family support in nurturing emotional and social growth. The observation that Bengali medium students had higher self-awareness than their English medium counterparts suggests that comfort with one's native language plays a significant role in emotional and cognitive engagement. Additionally, the study found that a mother's occupation had less impact on self-awareness than the quality of maternal involvement, reflecting changes in societal dynamics. These findings underscore the need for educational strategies that consider the unique cultural and social contexts of Kolkata. By aligning with these specific dynamics, educators and policymakers can more effectively support the emotional and cognitive development of students, promoting their academic success and overall well-being.

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