DISCUSSION
The main objectives of this study were threefold.

1) to understand the existing social problems among preadolescents and the strategies used in solving them.
2) to examine the relationship of SPSS with a few psycho social variables and
3) to examine the effect of SPSS training on the selected variables.

The findings are discussed along these three major objectives.

5.1 EXISTING SOCIAL PROBLEMS & SOLVING STRATEGIES.

5.1.1 Social Problems of Children: In this study it was observed that among preadolescents, social problems or problem situations were experienced in interpersonal relations both at home and at school. During middle childhood children are expected to acquire social skills and values, to become aware of social norms and learn how to compromise to resolve conflicts. It is also expected that the child's cognitive maturity and capacity for interpersonal closeness enable the child to make decisions independently in personal situations that is satisfactory to self and others. Many behavioural scientists suggest that preadolescence is particularly a stressful period where the child is being pulled and buffeted by the often conflicting standards of parents and peers (Heatherington M, 1979).
In this context the survey of existing problems suggest that most children experienced difficulty in their dealings with teachers and peers more than with the parents and siblings. Since parental control and acceptance are still valued during this period in the Indian context, the conflicts were diverted towards peers. Hence, maximum number of social problems emerged with the peers and teachers followed by siblings and parents.

Another reason may be the very nature of urban families. As Narchal R and Shukla J.D. (1986) have pointed out that the small families provide a closer relationship between parents and children allowing for greater individualization, shared planning and more democratic cooperation. There was no scope for this type of atmosphere in school where the number was more than fifty in a classroom. The desire for being considered as an important member of the class is not met especially if the performance of the child in social and academic spheres is not remarkable. As a result, children might have felt frustrated and rejected both in relationship with teachers and peers.

Interpersonal problems pertaining to teachers centered around lack of effort on the part of the teacher to make children understand the lesson, being punished for not doing the homework on account of not understanding the lesson,
lack of co-operation between parents and teachers in improving child's behaviour, being scolded for others mistakes and for not showing responsibility, teacher being indifferent to the problems of children and being partial.

Some of the interpersonal problems with peers emerge because of selfish, bossy and dominant peers, being left out of the group, class leaders complaining about them to the teacher and cheating them in homework, language groups being close and dominant, interference of others with the close peer group and not being able to be with the same group in and out of class.

Problems pertaining to siblings emerge because of siblings desire to have the things they posses, being forced to share the space and materials with siblings and imposed role of taking care of the younger ones.

On the home front, children complain of too many restrictions and work at home, high expectations, fight between parents, not being able to relate emotionally to parents. Parents being busy and not able to guide the child. The discontent with the parents is displaced on teachers and it finds support in the peer group, whereas, affairs pertaining to the parents become subjective. Thus, it is observed, that the major existing social problems among preadolescents occurs mainly at school. Hence schools seem to be the apt setting for teaching social problem solving skills. Combs and Slaby (1976) believed that social skills cannot be trained, practiced or researched effectively in isolation from the total normal peer group setting.

However, the inferences are drawn from the data collected from twenty preadolescents contacted during the pilot and first phase of a study. They were from English medium co-educational schools in an urban area and from middle class families and hence the observations are restricted to this population.
5.1.2. **Strategies**: The main steps in any problem situations are perception, memory and applying hypotheses. Accordingly, in the first step children perceive an event, they become aware of a situation that involves some kind of problem to solve. Their perceptions provide them with different kinds of information and the way different objects in the situation look. In the next step children draw forth data from memory that will help them to deal with the new situation. Finally, children consider the ways in which the problem may be solved, choose among them and then act upon their choices.

The strategies reported by the children to solve the problems as identified in the study is given in table 4.2. In the problem situations all forms of Problems Resolution Strategies (PRS) have been given by children except uncertainty. Mutual Compromise and thinking about the problem is adopted by very few children. However, all the children express aggression, overt or covert, and they seek support from others. Children rarely perceive the situation as situations involving resolutions of problem and very few of them think of doing something in return of what they expect from others as a mode of mutual compromise or negotiation. Even when there is direct encounter, forethought is not given to the strategy of direct discussion. From a developmental perspective it is suggested that children become more independent especially with reference to interpersonal problem. But this independent decision making is not seen since children still seek support from elders.

When compared to the ten Problem Resolution Strategies as given by Elias and Clabby, only about thirty three percent solved the problems skillfully as admitted by the children. Most children adopted the strategy of Direct discussion and Support-seeking without giving a thought to its consequences. Aggression was the predominant reaction of all children in problem situations while only thirty three percent
of the children work for the resolution of problems. Pestering in problem situation is not frequently observed.

Although much work is done in the area of interpersonal problem-solving, cognitive problem-solving and social problem-solving skills the focus was more on training children in these skills rather than identifying the existing strategies. Hence, we do not have much normative data for comparison of performance of children. Although unsuccessful, most of the children follow Problem Resolution Strategy of Direct-discussion and Support seeking. Less than forty percent of the subjects have reported giving up or indulging in fantasy. Thus, the study reveals that preadolescents are not affective decision makers since they seek help from others and show aggression.

These observations support the view of Elias and Clabby (1989). Many children do not learn to be effective decision makers and children need preparation for making decisions under real-life pressures. These skills are not taught systematically to children. Observing and seeing what happens or waiting for someone else to take care of situations as is often emphasized in the culture, may not be equated with deliberate and purposeful Problem Resolution. Even when children have reported resolving the problems there was no guarantee that normal situations or complex situations would be handled effectively.
5.2 CORRELATES OF SPSS

The relationship of SPSS to variables relevant in interpersonal situation was also examined in the present study. The table No.4.4 depicts the correlation between SPSS and variables of Pre-Adolescent Adjustment Scale, Aggression Questionnaire, State-Trait Anxiety Inventory, Perceived Self-Competence Scale and the Test Battery of Moral Development. In addition, the marks obtained by the subjects in their mid-term examination was used as an indicator of scholastic achievement.

5.2.1. SPSS and Academic Achievement:

The significant positive correlation between marks obtained and the variables on social problem solving skills as noticed in this study have also been reported by Marholin D., (1976), Coven, et al 1979), Olexa, D.F. and Forman, S.G. (1984).

The elements of self direction, discipline, comprehension and analytical thinking are likely to operate in both cognitive and social spheres. Children who are better in these abilities are likely to perform better in both the spheres. Academic Achievement is an indicator of an ability to meet the expectation of parents and teachers in the cognitive sphere. This is not without its own demand. Teachers give the high achievers a role in the classroom setting, this attracts the peers toward them as revealed in sociometric studies. As a result, there is more of peer interaction and other activities in school.

On the homefront too, the high achievers are encouraged and ushered forward. Hence, the child puts in more effort to learn social problem solving skills to be in the lime light, thus, academic achievement can be a promoter of SPSS.
5.2.2 SPSS and Adjustment

Children with better adjustment in the area of home, school, peers, teachers and general adjustment tend to score better on Interpersonal Sensitivity and Specificity of Planning as indicated by the significant positive relationship. Children who have better relationship with peer and elders will have greater opportunity to learn social skills (Rubin, H. 1990). These children were likely to have a better perspective of others' needs and expectation. This Interpersonal Sensitivity brings them closer to others and the specificity of planning becomes a strategy for better adjustment. Rubin also suggested that favoured peer status was related to high levels of both interpersonal understanding and perceived social self-competence. The inference is that children with Social Problem Solving Skills tend to show less adjustment problems.

The conducive family atmosphere at home may give rise to conformity behaviour in the child in general. In the Indian setting conformity behaviour is a valued reaction especially in the interaction of the child with parents and teachers, as a result of which home and school adjustment improves. This also may lead to internalisation of certain values like discipline, sincerity and effort which in turn are significant determinants of academic performance and
school adjustment. These inter-relations were indicated in the positive correlation between academic performance and Adjustment on one hand and Social Problem-Solving Skills on the other.

Further, Sharma and Gir (1981), in their study showed that warm, affectionate relationship with both parents and teachers led to a positive perception of the environment and a sense of confidence and personal worth in children (12 - 15 years). They have also concluded that mastering academic skills, development of social skills and emotional stability were essential for the development of a stable sense of competence.

5.3.3 SPSS and Aggression

The relation between Aggression and the various components of SPSS is not significant except on Problem Analysis and Action where the correlation is negative. The low correlation between Aggression and Social Problem Solving Skills may be explained in terms of the interpretation that frustrating social stimulus was a cue for an aggressive response only if the child attributes hostile intent to the stimulus person (Berkowitz, 1977).

In the present study, since the stimulus situation was hypothetical in the test of Aggression, the scope for attribution for hostile intent appeared to be an artifact. As a result of which the relationship between social cognitive skills and Aggression
might have turned out to be non-significant. Accordingly, the assumed relationship between individual differences in aggression and social cognitive skills (Chandler, 1973, Feshbach, 1970) appears to have been nullified in the present context. Nancy, G. and Ronald, G.S. (1989) observed that children with high aggression as compared to their low aggressive peers were more likely to (1) define social problems based on the perception that others were hostility motivated adversaries (2) generate fewer consequences for exhibiting aggression and (3) choose a second best solution, all of which an antithesis of SPSS, leading to a negative correlation as seen in the present study.

5.2.4 **SPSS and Anxiety**

The relation between Anxiety and the various components of SPSS was also not significant. In the case of Trait Anxiety, the positively tuned statements of anxiety showed negative correlation with Interpersonal Sensitivity, whereas the negatively tuned statements showed a positive correlation.

In the case of State Anxiety high negative correlation was noticed between positive items and Interpersonal Sensitivity and a significant negative correlation was seen with negative items and Specificity of Planning.
The ratings for the negatively tuned items of Trait Anxiety are related to Interpersonal Sensitivity whereas this relationship is inverse with positively tuned items. High anxiety interferes with logical thinking and decreases attention span and sensitivity to interpersonal cues although an optimum level of anxiety is assumed to be necessary for any efficient performance. However, the difficulties of adjustment to stress and strain of contemporary living have been bemoaned and deplored by every generation since long before Christian era.

Dealing with Anxiety is one of the component of Social Problem Solving Skills. This inadequacy in Social Problem-Solving Skills is not reflected in anxiety scales used in this study, as these responses appear to be influenced by social desirability factor. The inverse relation between anxiety and affective dealing with the circumstances has also been reported by Roma Pal and Govind Tiwari (1970). They suggest that all normal children experience anxiety. This would be seen to a greater extent among youths who are not able to achieve a well-balanced placement in their present circumstances and situations. Spielberger and Smity (1966) observed that the circumstance in which failure is experienced or in which an individual's intelligence is evaluated, are particularly threatening to the individuals resulting in high Trait Anxiety. The authors further assume that individuals who are high in Trait anxiety will exhibit state elevations more frequently than those with low Trait Anxiety.

In the present study it is observed that children with high Interpersonal Sensitivity tend to score low on Trait Anxiety and children with high Specificity of Planning tend to score low on State Anxiety. The affective component of Interpersonal Sensitivity appears to be inversely related to Anxiety. This is in tune with the
observation by Selman, et al (1986), who state that social problem solving involves the integration of several developmental domains including the regulation of emotion, cognitive processing, moral orientation as well as interpersonal negotiation skills.

5.2.5 **SPSS and Self-Competence**

The Perceived Self-Competence of an individual in the areas of Scholastic Competence, Physical Appearance, Behavioural Conduct and Global - Selfworth were positively related to Social Problem Solving Skills. Behavioural Conduct and Global - Self Worth were positively related to Interpersonal Sensitivity. The relationship with other components of Social Problem Solving Skills does not show any significant values (Table 4.4).

Eisenberg and Harris (1984) observed that social competence emphasized effective peer relations and social interaction. Social cognitive changes in perspective taking, conceptions of friendship, interpersonal strategies and problem solving, moral judgement and communication skills promote social competence in children.

Stigler and others (1985) revealed through their study that there was a high correlation between perceived cognitive competence and actual achievement in school in two different cultural groups. The children could judge themselves as important as their peers on the cognitive and social subscale.

However, in the present study, the correlation between self-competence and some of the components of SPSS was low suggesting the independence of these two factors. This may be because of the cultural conditions here, wherein most parents still consider their children dependent and incompetent to handle things independently. This message is repeatedly communicated to children. Hence, children can be trained in SPSS and given charge of resolving social problems.
In this context the significant positive correlation between, perceived Self Competence and Interpersonal Sensitivity as indicated by the responses of the sample to the Group Social Problem Solving Assessment may be noted. According to Carbonelly (1975), the Interpersonal Sensitivity mediates the child to understand the exercise of freedom and control exerted by the parents and teachers. When their parents and teachers showed a positive reaction towards the child's behaviour; the child's perception of his/her competence was likely to increase.

The relationship of Specificity of Planning to various components of Perceived Self-Competence noticed in this study agrees with the observation made by Elias, Beier and Gara (1989). According to them, problem-solving in response to obstacles was the strongest predictor of self-concept and teacher's ratings of students' adjustment.

5.2.6 SPSS and Moral Development

A significant positive correlation was noticed between the variables of SPSS and the components of Moral Development. Children with a high sense of Morality had a higher level of SPSS and children with a lower sense of morality had a lower level of SPSS. Solving problems skillfully appear to aid good moral judgments and vice versa.

The responses of the children in social situations is influenced by earlier outcome in terms of parental support for morality. According to Freud, the content of the culture is internalized through identification with parents who act as a socializing and moral agency. The development of moral concepts was positively related to the child's relationship with parents, teachers and peers (Kothari, 1986). Walker L.J. et al (1996) believed that a thorough sampling of lay people's understanding of morality and experiences in handling moral
problems in everyday life might provide a somewhat different focus and help to re-direct both conceptual and empirical attention to some significant aspects of moral functioning. Maturity of moral judgment was found to be significantly correlated with general cognitive ability and even with intelligence partialled out, with resistance to temptation, reputation for being concerned with the welfare of others, self-confidence and security in social relationship with peers (Harris, S., Mussen, P. and Rutherford, E., 1976).

Generally, children who score low on Moral Development are likely to follow the principle of least effort and least resistance. This may be due to lack of access to alternate models or lack of motivation for alternate behaviour, which also results in showing low SPSS.

**Intercorrelation of SPSS Variables**

An intercorrelation matrix was obtained for SPSS variables which is given at the end of Table 4.4. According to Elias and Clabby (1986), any interpersonal problem situation has the following factors namely, Interpersonal Sensitivity i.e. feelings related to the problems, Problem Analysis and Action i.e. understanding the problem and thinking of ways of solving the problem and lastly, Specificity of Planning which involves thinking of all the consequences and choosing the best solution. Their questionnaire is modelled along these dimensions. In the present study the same model has been adopted. From this point of view establishing inter-correlations among the variables of SPSS provides information on the construct validity of the test and its internal consistency.

A significant high positive correlation was noticed between Interpersonal Sensitivity (GPAIS) and Problem Analysis and Action (GPAPA), as well as Specificity of Planning (GPASP). On the other hand GPAIS, GPASP and Problem Resolution Strategies (PRSPS) are related significantly with all the components of SPSS except Negative Consequences (NCPS). The rest of the variables viz. PRSPS, Alternatives (APS), Specificity of Planning (SPPS) and Obstacles (OPS) are inter-related except with Interpersonal Sensitivity. Prediction of Negative consequences is correlated with SPSS, APS and OPS.

The findings suggest a fair degree of relationship among variables of two SPSS questionnaires. The Group Social Problem Solving Assessment Questionnaire indicates knowledge of various aspects of the ill. The SPSS questionnaire deals with the actual process. The intercorrelations reveal the validity of the two tests. The internal consistency of the two tests is also established.
5.3 SAMPLE DESCRIPTION ON THE VARIABLES

The table 4.3 gives a description of the sample (N=340) on the selected variables. The children in general, have scored a mean marks of 61.58 which appears to be relatively high. But the current system of evaluation is such that each school tries to project good performance of children. Very few children get a low score like 20 or a high score like 90 plus.

Students showed a high positive score on all the variables of Pre-Adolescent Adjustment Scale (PAAS) suggesting good adjustment in children with regard to home, school, peers, teachers and general areas.

According to the authors of State-Trait-Anxiety Inventory (Roma Pal and Govind Tiwari) the average score of anxiety is indicated for boys to be between 32 and 51 for state Anxiety and between 36 and 56 score for Trait Anxiety. In the case of girls it is between 34 and 49 for State Anxiety and between 37 and 57 for Trait Anxiety. Comparatively, the sample showed higher anxiety levels, although it was within the average limits. A possible reason may be the age of the children and secondly most children belong to urban middle class families. High anxiety appears to be a typical characteristic of the middle class families.
The sample appears to be Anxiety prone rather than Aggression prone. Their Aggression score is at the lower range of the average and Anxiety score is at the higher range of the average.

In this study, the mean score as compared to the norms given by author of the scale, Susan Harter, is high on Global Self-worth and Behavioural Conduct than it is for Scholastic Achievement and Social Competence. This may be because the perception of Global-Selfworth involves an idealistic understanding of where children stand in competition with others. There is ample scope for such perceptions in the school situations where most of the children meet the standards set by the elders. This is true of Behavioural Conduct also.

Scholastic Achievement and Social Competence on the other hand represents the more realistic day to day struggle of children. The standards set especially in the middle class families are very high and demanding in terms of friendship expectancies and school performance. Also there is anxiety on entering into a peer group which is typical of preadolescent age. As a result of realistic comparison to the peer group the Perceived Self Competence is less for Scholastic Achievement and Social Competence.

According to A.S. Seetharamu (1972), the author of The test battery of moral development, the statements in the
test corresponding to the absolute level of judgement will appear as the first alternative. However, in the present study it was observed that the absolute level of judgement was not favoured by the children. When the components of moral development are compared, the mean score is low on Kindness and Fair Play (MKF). This may be because when children conformed to kindness and fair play, they might have felt being exploited. Further, the day to day experiences of children in group situation might have made them feel that Kindness and Fair Play would be mistaken for weakness by others. As a result of which they preferred the third alternative which is at the subjective level.

With regard to the variables of SPSS, the sample revealed that in any problem situation the orientation of the children was to accept the situation rather than solve it. Children expressed both positive and negative consequences in equal proportions when they were free to list the consequences. However, when obstacles were given children tend to think of more alternatives.

5.4 LEVELS OF SPSS AND THE RELATED VARIABLES

Table (4.5) distinguishes the three different levels of SPSS namely the low, moderate and high on the selected variables. The mean score at different levels of SPSS showed that score differences were noticed only on marks and moral development with significant F ratios.
Children with low Social Problem Solving Skills were good in their studies. However, their scores were less on adjustment, aggression, anxiety and also on self-concept. This shows that children with low SPSS tend to show more interest in their studies. They kept themselves isolated because of the low SPSS and worked hard. Many studies show that the intra personal aspects of social competence such as social goal setting, problem-solving capabilities and feeling of social support and trust have been linked to intellectual accomplishments (Ford, 1982, 1987; Wentzel, Feldman & Weinberger, 1991). But the current performance of the low SPSS group contradicted our expectations. Current parental influences with emphasis on studies and fear of negative influences of peers predominantly seen among the middle class parents is perhaps reflected here.

Children grouped as high, moderate or low on the basis of a Group Social problem Solving Assessment showed corresponding scores on SPSS questionnaire, thus reflecting the validity of the two Questionnaires.

The variables of Morality were found to be closely associated with SPSS. Children with a high sense of morality had a higher level of SPSS and children with a lower sense of morality had a lower level of SPSS. Thus, adherence to Morality and Interpersonal Sensitivity were found to be responsible for a better Social Problem Solving Skill. Moral development and SPSS are the two dimensions of cognitive development taking place in the preadolescents simultaneously. We do not have much information on the development of SPSS. However, moral development has been extensively studied. Many common processes explain this relationship. Kohlberg (1996, 1981) held that moral judgement progress through an unvarying series of stages. Although
interactions with peers provide input, the progression is irreversible. Kohlberg assessed moral development by having trained coders examine a person's justification for his/her decisions on a series of morally tough calls. Kohlbergians have assumed that all moral decisions are equally amenable to justification. They also speculate on how society might be reorganised to improve the general quality of moral reasoning.

Piaget summarized that child progresses from heteronomous to autonomous morality. Kohlberg elaborated these stages into more broader terms extending to six stages. Research suggests that moral development follows a sequentiality and at every age the development is always to the next higher stage. However, both Piaget and Kohlberg relegated parents to a minimal and non-specific role as agents in their children's moral development. Piaget (1932, 1977) concluded that the sense of justice, though naturally capable of being reinforced by the parents and the practical example of the adult, is largely independent of these influences and requires nothing more for its development than the mutual respect and solidarity, which holds among children themselves.

Similarly, Kohlberg (1969) argued that family participation is not unique or critically necessary for moral development. These theorists regarded parents as a
small part of the general social environment that provide 'role-taking' opportunities but not especially important or distinctive experiences. Their position perhaps represents a reaction against psychoanalytic theory with its preoccupation with early parent/child interactions.

Cognitive developmental theorists believed that parents, because of their position of authority, cannot provide the optimal interactions that stimulate development. They looked outside the family and focussed on the classroom (Powers, 1988; Reimer, 1988).

However, Walker and Taylor (1991) indicated that the children's moral development was best predicted by a parental discussion styles, combined with the presentation of higher-level moral reasoning. Their study revealed that parents are more concerned about their children's moral development than are either peers, teachers or other socialisation agents.

This holds good for the sample studied here. Moral development of children has provided a frame work for SPSS. Children with a sound moral background were found to be at the higher level of SPSS.
5.5 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BOYS AND GIRLS

Gender differences were noticed on PAG, TASP, SASP, HBC, MR, PRSPS and NCPS (Table 4.6). Girls showed better Behavioural Conduct and better Adjustment than boys. They also showed more moral responsibility and had better strategies for the social problem situations whereas the boys could foresee more negative consequences in the social problem situations. Also anxiety was more for boys than girls.

Interaction between gender and the different levels of SPSS was noticed only on Trait Anxiety and Alternatives. At the lower level of SPSS girls thought of more alternatives. While boys at higher levels thought of more alternatives. Boys at higher level of SPSS were less anxious whereas girls at higher level of SPSS were more anxious.

In a study relating test anxiety and different sociometric levels, Anjana (1987) found the mean scores of the boys on test anxiety was higher than that of girls in the Rejected, Mixed and Normal groups. The mean scores of the girls were higher in the Accepted and Isolate groups. The girls seem to have higher scores on general anxiety than boys. But this has not been confirmed in the present study.

Anxiety was more among boys since they were preadolescents, with an increasing sensitivity for peer
pressure and peer affiliation. Also it might be due to the new orientation and set up as they were moving into the male world. Initial moving away from home had effects on the Behavioural Conduct, with the peer group being recognised as a micro-unit of the society.

However, among girls Behavioural Conduct and General Adjustment was better because of the pressure of socialisation and they showed appropriate behaviour in accordance to the expectation of their elders. In the present Indian social situation, the girls are brought up to take more challenges and are expected to show more maturity. Because of the socialization effect in the Indian set up girls show more responsibility on the morality items and more strategies in solving social problem situations.

In social problem situations boys thought of more negative consequences which may be because of their anxiety and an increased awareness of the realities of the external world, where their expectations may not be always met with.

There are evidences from the studies that boys and girls differ in their pattern of values. Boys are more rebellious against discipline than girls and less willing to conform to rules (Deluty, 1983). During middle childhood boys and girls acquire different social skills, values and goals. They become aware of social norms and learn how to compromise to resolve conflicts. It is a time of egocentric
concern and growing capacity for decision making. The quality of social relationships depends on the capacity for interpersonal closeness, language and cognitive maturity. (Newman, B.M., 1978) and Decision Making styles (Panch, R., 1995)

Granleese, J., Trew, K. and Turner, I. (1988) observed that in the Perceived Self - Competence Scale girls were significantly lower on physical and general competence than boys. Intercorrelations of Perceived Competence Scale for girls demonstrated significantly stronger associations between physical and cognitive competence and physical and general competence than for boys. Mac Donald and Parke (1984) observed that competent boys had fathers who were physically playful, eliciting positive effect during play and mothers who were verbally stimulating; competing girls had fathers (not mothers) who were verbally stimulating. However, boys and girls did not show significant differences in their Perceived Self Competence except on Behavioural Conduct in the present study.

Many of the variable measures selected for study have not revealed significant differences in scores between boys and girls. The most important among these variables is aggression. As reported in many studies, the socialization process encourages boys to express assertiveness and aggression and to control and suppress tender feelings (Maccoby and Jackline, 1974; Spencer, Helmerich and Stapp,
1975). Between the two sexes, girls score more on super ego strength, are tender and show submissive, controlled, socially precise behaviour (Achalakumari, Y. 1987). This fills the typical Indian feminine stereotype and supports the view that girls show more social maturity than boys. (Rao, N. 1978).

Perhaps, over the decade girls have been exposed through various media to the many roles available to them. This in general has brought in a change in the attitude towards feminine stereotype. Girls at present are also encouraged to be aggressive and assertive especially in the middle class families. Significant differences no longer exist in risk taking (Sundar, D.L., 1995)

5.6 AGE - GRADE DIFFERENCES

The subjects in the present study were classified as belonging to 2 age levels. One between 10 years to 11 1/2 years studying in the 6th standard and the other between 11 1/2 years to 13 years and studying in the 7th Standard. Although the 2 age levels fall within the range of preadolescence stage of development, the developmental status of children at these 2 age levels may not be similar. Significant changes in social (Levine, 1982, Moore and Underwood, 1981), cognitive (Inhelder & Piaget, 1958, Kohlberg, 1966) and social cognitive (Ervin & Kuhn, 1979; Flavell, 1978) aspects of behaviour have been reported at this stage of development.
The mean score at the two grade levels (Table 4.7) differed on PAT, TASN, HAC, HG, MH and GPAIS. The younger group showed better school adjustment and scholastic achievement. The seventh standard children had difficulty in adjusting to school which might be because of the peer pressure and the more realistic orientation towards their cognitive capabilities and attitude towards self which occur as children grow. However, on the remaining variables the older group showed a better performance although not significant.

Interaction effect was seen on the variables HSA, HBC and GPASP. The younger group with lower SPSS had a perception of Social Acceptance. Whereas among the older group it was noticed at the higher SPSS level. Among the younger group children with moderate SPSS, their Behavioural Conduct was lower but this was high with children in the higher SPSS. However, the older group showed good Behavioural Conduct at the moderate SPSS level. Among the high SPSS group the younger children were better able to plan in solving social problems.

Many studies indicate a gain on the Social Acceptance score over the years suggesting an increase in sensitivity to individual personality differences and a preparation to be helpful to the people around (Feshback, 1979).
With maturation and experience the child become more and more able to foresee the probable outcomes of alternative overt acts. He tries them out mentally before performing them physically. Subjects with favoured peer status showed high levels of both interpersonal understanding and perceived social self-competence with the relation between peer acceptance and interpersonal understanding being stronger for older than for younger subjects. Psychologists have concluded that peer which tends to increase as children grow interaction is a significant force in the development of normal social relationships and social skills (Rubin K.H. 1990). However, the study confirms no dramatic changes taking place during preadolescence.

5.7 ORDER OF BIRTH

Children with different order of birth, i.e., whether the child was the first born, last born, the middle or the only child were compared at the different levels of SPSS. However, differences in the order of birth did not show much significant results. (Table 4.8) Significant score differences were observed only on GPAIS and GPAPA. The only child showed a better inter-personal sensitivity whereas the middle born showed lower Problem Analysis and Action.

Better Inter-personal Sensitivity among the 'only child' might be because of the more frequent parental interactions with the child. The child in turn role plays these models
of parents with their peers and teachers. The absence of siblings also avoids them of the problems associated with such relationship. Hence, they were able to perceive the inter-personal situations from an adult perspective and were also able to deal with them effectively.

The middle born children showed lower score on Problem Analysis and Action which may be because they were not given much importance in the family. They either follow the elder or the younger sibling and try always to be on the safer side. Hence they do not give much thought in analysing any problem situation or act upon it.

Kerberg, P.F. and Richards, A.K. (1988), claims that siblings can be the target of conflict, they can facilitate its resolution or contribute to less satisfactory outcomes. It is also supported by Dunn, J.F. (1988), that the relationship between young siblings in its emotional power and intimacy, its qualities of emotional competitiveness and ambivalence, and its level of emotional understanding can be used to provoke or support. Such situations are entirely absent in the homes of the only child. Melloo, S. (1990) observed that positive developmental outcomes were more for the only child, first born and children from two child families.
The trend of the data by Bharati, V.V. and Venkataramaiah (1976), suggested that while the first born tends to be more anxious in smaller families (2-3 children), the last born child tends to be more anxious in larger families (4-5 children). Gates, L. et al (1988), too observed that the first born subjects scored significantly lower on depression than second, third, fourth born and the youngest subjects. The first borns showed significantly less trait anxiety and also higher levels of self-esteem. However, these observations have not been confirmed in the present study.
A child cannot be isolated from the social and cultural milieu in which he exists. Any variable introduced in a child's environment is likely to be perceived in the background of the cumulative effect of the earlier environmental influences and current environmental pressures. Of the numerous environmental factors, the focus of this section is on the socio-economic status of the family.

In the present study three levels of socio-economic status of children were inferred on the basis of education, occupation, income of their parents and the number of children in the family. The children were mainly from low middle class, middle class and high middle class and they were classified into low, middle and high SES group.

Significant results were obtained when the high SES group was compared to the low and middle SES groups. The high SES group had high academic achievement, showed better school adjustment and they perceived themselves to be socially accepted by their peers. They also showed more of responsibilities and conformity to rules on the test battery of moral development. Further, they showed a high score on the SPSS questionnaire. These differences may be attributed to difference in the family environment.
A high scholastic achievement associated with high SES (Morrison and McIntyre, 1971) has been confirmed in the present study. The middle-class and the upper-middle class parents emphasize the value of schooling and academic achievement as the stepping stone to vocational and social mobility (Kendal and Læser, 1969). Scholastic achievement was found to be related to factors like education of parents, their reading interests, living space, income, parental encouragement and the like (Fraser, 1959).

Middle class parents support individuality, they are found to be supportive, affectionate, permissive and less rigid in adherence to rules whereas lower class parents place greater stress on obedience and rely more on exercise of authority through physical punishment. (Bronfenbrenner, 1963; Kohn, 1968).

In a longitudinal study by Colby, A., Kohlberg, L. and others (1983) moral judgement was found to be positively correlated with age, SES, I.Q. and education and this also has been confirmed in the present study. Tachuck, K. and Mohanty (1974), observed that high SES subjects performed better than the low SES subjects on verbal and non-verbal ability. Greater differences between the SES groups occurred among the older subjects than the younger. Besides, the cognitive skill of the low SES child progressively retarded whereas that of the high SES child developed faster. The
Children from lower SES tend to be more aggressive as they are more often exposed to coercive and aggressive interaction in and around the family. These differences appear in decision making styles as well (Pack, R., 1995)

Interaction between SES and SPSS showed that among the high SES group, maximum anxiety was seen with lower level of SPSS. Whereas, children with moderate level of SPSS showed minimum anxiety. These differences were not noticed in the middle SES group, whereas in the low SES group maximum anxiety level was seen with moderate SPSS.

Children with high SPSS among both the high and middle SES groups had higher Specificity of Planning, whereas this was not so in the case of lower SES group. Parents' sharing of the problem solving skills and reasoning out with children to convince them in conflicting situations more often seen among the educated parents might have led to a better problem-solving skill among their children.

5.9 EFFECTS OF INTERVENTION

An intervention programme for enhancing social problem-solving skills and related variables among children was evaluated by comparing the pre and post assessment of experimental- and control group. Ten children were given training in Social Problem-Solving Skills and they constituted the experimental group. The remaining ten kept in the waiting list constituted the control group.
The experimental group who were given training in SPSS showed an improvement in personal and social adjustment, self-concept and gained control over aggression and anxiety as compared to the control group (Table 4.10). The SPSS training also had a positive effect on children with regard to Social Problem - Solving Skills and Moral Development.

Under normal circumstances children in the middle school age become aware of social norms and learn how to compromise to resolve conflict. Preadolescence is a time when egocentric concern still persists and growing capacity for decision making slowly emerges. The quality of social relationships depends on the capacity for interpersonal closeness, language and cognitive maturity. (Newman, B.M., 1976). But this is a gradual growing process as seen in the performance of the control group. A time gap of about two months by itself would not result in any significant change in behaviour. Rather, a decrease was noticed in the control group on School Adjustment, thinking of Alternatives and Specificity of Planning. The only desirable change noticed was a reduction in anxiety.

In the experimental group significant changes were noticed on 27 of the 34 variables after intervention. These changes were greater in the experimental group than in the control group. These changes may be attributed to the nature of the exercises used in the intervention programmes.
which reinstated their need and provided the alternatives to change. Also most of the subjects felt a need to improve on these factors as a result of their first exposure to the measures of these variables.

The intervention programme attempted at bringing in awareness of interpersonal virtues in the child in contrast to the existence of aggression in human relations. Through a conscious choice between egoistic and altruistic drives, the child was able to adopt moral attitudes fitting his or her own nature (Biran, S, 1980), so that they can learn alternative ways of solving problems without having to rely on aggressive techniques to gain their objectives (Bron, L.D. 1980, Lochman, J.E. et al, 1985)


Many studies revealed that sociometric status, prosocial behaviour, adjustment, self reliance and social problem-solving skills were found to have increased after training which involved a wide range of activities like role-play, coaching, behavioural rehearsal and role model.
The role-play situations helped to develop empathy for others. Hence the changes noticed on these self-report measures may be due to the generalisation of role play experience into day to day behaviour and an attitude of seeking new experiences generated by these experiences. These findings support our result with respect to self-esteem and adjustment.

Low Self-Concept subjects were able to recognise their worth and abilities in a secure environment with Social Support especially during sharing which enables to improve their self-esteem. During the training program children were involved in actual problem solving with a sense of cooperation and participation, which in turn created more opportunities for communication, empathy and for recognising and rewarding the efforts of each other.

By adapting the technique of stay calm and VENT there was a reduction of aggression and anxiety. Thinking of consequences and alternatives had a direct impact on moral reasoning. These exercises focused on understanding why people act as they do and also provided alternate modes of responses in a given situation. It also provided a framework to understand one's responses to others and an awareness of the choice of alternate responses. Besides, the problem diary aided in solving their day to day problems. Thus training in Social Problem-Solving Skills improved these skills in children.
In the school curriculum emphasis is not given to control of aggression and anxiety in children, also alternate modes are not available to them. Most children tend to show a moral perspective in terms of the relative advantage one can have in the situation following the principle, "I scratch your back and you scratch mine," instead of adhering to absolute principles.

In summary, children tend to have a more realistic perception of their competence and their Social Problem-Solving Skills is limited in its scope. The general picture of the child is revealed here. The demographic variables like age, sex and order of birth were found to affect the behaviour to some extent.

However, the social ecological factors were found to influence behaviour from a socio-economic status perspective. Effects of intervention program suggests that when attention of children was drawn to the crucial points of development by providing alternative modes of behaviour, the children quickly adopted such changes in their behaviours. The children become more and more able to foresee the probable outcomes of alternative overt acts. They try them out mentally before performing them. Thus, remarkable developments occur in the youngster's ability to think. The study has revealed that children need help to avoid harm from peer pressure, loss of confidence and lack of caring. They need help to promote and build the kinds of skills for productive competent social living and skills that help to envision a pathway for themselves in the future despite present difficulties.
Although every effort was sincerely made to minimise the effect of the various sources of errors and to maintain objectivity and scientific attitude, some of the limitations of the study are as follows:

1) The study was restricted to English Medium Schools out of necessity. Further, the sample was restricted to schools with at least two sections in each standard with the enrolment beyond thirty.

2) Another limitation arises with reference to the nature of the tests used in the study. The Perceived Self Competence and the SPSS questionnaires were not standardised on a comparable sample. While adapting due care was taken to ensure that they were made suitable for the present study.

3) Although a number of variables are bound to be involved in any behaviour of the type considered for study, the scope of the study was restricted to a limited number of independent and dependent variables.

4) The training programme was stretched over 12 sessions and only 10 children underwent this programme on a trial basis. The programme could be added in the curriculum of the school and it could also be given for a longer duration for its proper evaluation. The generalisations drawn here are limited in scope.

5) A follow up study was not made to observe the sustained or long term effect of intervention.