SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION
CHAPTER VI

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Social Problem-Solving Skills refer to the ability of children to solve increasingly complex interpersonal problems in the growing years. This is one of the recent verbal-cognitive approaches that makes more explicit use of the child's cognitive and verbal facilities.

Social Problem-Solving Skills training is not only a way to correct inappropriate social behaviour in problem children but also a potentially important way to 'improve the lives of all children' as viewed by many researchers in the west. Hence, a study was undertaken to assess the existence and conceptual relevance of Social Problem-Solving Skills in the Indian context and the impact of training in these skills on certain psycho-social variables of preadolescents.

The review of studies show that the concept of SPSS considered as interpersonal cognitive problem-solving was first used by Spivack and Shure (1974). Later, Combs and Slaby (1976) used a combination of methods to train specific verbal-assertive skills in preschool children with behaviour problems. Similar studies were made by Crowder (1975) who successfully taught elementary school children to define and record behaviour and to apply behaviour-management techniques to themselves, siblings, parents and friends.

Problem solving in response to obstacles was found to be the strongest predictor of self-concept and teacher's
rating of students' adjustment. Expectancies in the standard situations were most predictive of behavioural problem and social isolation. Studies in the area of SPSS have led to an understanding that SPSS is an important dimension of social cognition and an intervening variable in promoting psychological well-being.

However, Indian studies have rarely focussed on the concept. The appropriateness of the concept in the Indian context remains to be tested. Perhaps, the excessive emotional reactions and the dependency often noticed in school children which hinder their social and emotional growth may be due to a lack of SPSS in children. Exploration along these lines are still on the way to be established in the Indian scenario.

Hence, a study was carried out with three main objectives i.e. to identify the existing social problems among preadolescents and the strategies used in solving them, to study the variables related to SPSS and to evaluate the effect of a psychological intervention of SPSS training in enhancing social adjustment of children and related variables.

A pilot study was carried out to identify the social problems and the skills used in solving them. A pilot study was also carried out to modify the Perceived Self-Competence
Scale by Susan Harter (1985) with the objective to make the scale suitable for the present study.

A multi phase design with three stages was used in the study. The sample size varied in each stage. During the first stage of study a sample of 30 preadolescents from 6th and 7th standards in Bangalore were selected. These children were asked to report the reactions of their siblings in a given set of problem situations, and to identify the social problems applicable to them from a given list. They were interviewed individually for their social and interpersonal skills on a semi-structured schedule. In addition, 10 parents and 10 teachers were also interviewed and the complaints of the children and the reactions of the children in these situations as viewed by parents and teachers were gauged.

Thus, on the basis of the existing social problems and the solving strategies, the vignettes for a SPSS questionnaire were developed along the lines of the scale by Elias and Clabby. The reliability of the SPSS questionnaire was worked out by applying test-retest technique.

In the second stage, the Social Problem Solving Skills questionnaire developed was administered to 340 subjects drawn from the 6th and 7th standard of three schools in Bangalore South region. At this stage, the selected
measures of psychological variables along with an information schedule were administered in 9 sessions. The scales used were as follows.

1. Pre-Adolescent Adjustment scale (Rao & others, 1975)
3. 'What am I like' scale (Susan Harter, 1985).
8. The Information Schedule.

These questionnaires contributed 31 variable measures.

In the third stage 20 subjects who volunteered to participate in a SPSS training were selected from the main sample, from one school and ten each were assigned randomly to the experimental and control groups of a quasi-experimental design to evaluate the effect of SPSS training. The subjects of the experimental group underwent a psychological intervention of SPSS training while the control group waited for their turn to be enrolled.

Training was focussed on the areas of readiness skills, identification of the problem, feelings associated in inter-
personal sensitivity, prescribing the goal and alternate means for reaching the goal. Simulated games and role play techniques were used. The training was given in 12 sessions of 2 hours duration spread over a period of 6 weeks. Children in both the experimental and control groups were reassessed on SPSS, anxiety, aggression, self-concept, moral values and the personal and social adjustment to see the effects of training on these variables.

Descriptive statistics like Mean, Standard Deviation, and Product Moment Correlation were obtained for the different measures. In addition, two-way Analysis of Variance of the different variable measures was carried out for the main effects of SPSS and the factors of sex, age, order of birth and SES. Analysis of data has led to the following findings.

The most frequently reported social problems were related to the areas of teachers, parents, siblings and peers. Besides, of the 30 children, only 10 reported to have solved the problems skillfully. The most common strategy used by children was Support Seeking and Aggression.

In the main study it was observed that school Marks, all the sub-test of Moral Development and all the areas of Adjustment bear a significant positive correlation to the components of SPSS. However, these components showed a negative correlation with State and Trait Anxiety.
At different levels of SPSS, score differences were noticed only on Marks and Moral Development scale with significant F ratios. A higher sense of morality was shown by children with higher level of SPSS.

General adjustment of girls was found to be better while State and Trait Anxiety was found to a greater extent among boys. With regard to self-concept, girls showed greater appreciation of their behavioural conduct and greater Responsibility on the moral development scale. They also indicated better Problem Resolution Strategies on Social Problem - Solving Skills Questionnaire. Whereas, boys were able to foresee negative consequences of situations.

Interaction between the two sexes and the different levels of SPSS indicates that at higher level of SPSS boys were less anxious, while girls were more anxious. However, at lower level of SPSS girls could think of more alternatives to problem solving whereas boys at higher level of SPSS showed this ability.

The younger group showed better School Adjustment and were more appreciative of their Social Acceptance, Physical Appearance and Behavioural Conduct as compared to the older group. In the case of Specificity of Planning, in both the standards we find a higher score with an increase in the
SPSS level. But the differences noticed between the groups is more among the 6th standard as compared to the 7th standard students.

A significant score difference was found among the only child and the last born on Interpersonal Sensitivity and problem analysis and action. The only child scored maximum on Interpersonal Sensitivity but lower on Problem Analysis and Action, whereas the middle born scored the lowest on Problem Analysis and Action.

The high socio-economic status group when compared to the lower, scored better Marks, better School Adjustment, more Responsibility and Adherence to Rules, better Problem Analysis and Action and Specificity of Planning. They could also foresee negative consequences and overcome obstacles in the problem situations. Further, the interaction effect between SES and SPSS was found to be significant on Anxiety and Specificity of Planning.

The subjects in the experimental group who were given training during the third phase of study showed significant improvement as compared to the control group on self-esteem, moral responsibility, SPSS and general adjustment. Aggression and anxiety were reduced in the experimental group.
6.1 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The theoretical implication of the study included an examination of the relationship of the Social Problem - Solving Skills to variables relevant to personality growth. The study also showed the ways in which preadolescents organise what they learn, how they categorize concepts and employ strategies to deal with problem solving.

Social Problem - Solving Skill was found to be related to Moral Development and Personal Social Adjustment of Children. Identification of this relationship is a major contribution of the present study.

It was found desirable to introduce the concept of Social Problem - Solving Skills since very few children followed effective strategies and they were found to improve these skills with training.

Personality problems is beset with many "ups and downs" especially when unguided, causing many moments of anxiety to parents and teachers, besides robbing the pupil of normal development. Similarly school dysfunction involving 'slow learning', 'irregularity', 'absentees' and such other important problems have been another source of concern. Thus a school-based intervention programme would involve guided development and ensure appropriate school function.

Counselling in schools is being advocated for purposes of promoting healthy development of personality and mental hygiene of children. The exercises adopted in this study would be quite useful to the counsellors helping children gain control over aggressive modes of reaction to promote adjustment.
6.2 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The study generates a number of hypotheses which are worthy of being investigated further. These are listed below:

1. The long-term effects of the intervention programmes may be studied.

2. The study may be extended to cover more independent and dependent variables.

3. The school based intervention programmes could benefit especially the deprived children. Therefore some studies may be contemplated exclusively for such children.

4. The influence of intervention at different age levels in the light of developmental and learning models of change may be assessed.

5. While this study stresses the importance of individual responsibility in the process of change, influence of social institutions like the family and school towards the intervention programmes and the nature of encouragement given to their wards may be assessed. The effect of these factors on the outcome of intervention may be systematically studied.