

Emotional Intelligence and Social Reticence of Post-Graduate Female Students

V. Vijayalakshmi, Sanghamitra Bhattacharyya,

Indian Institute of Technology Madras, Chennai

Abha Bhartia

J.B.A.S. College for Women, Chennai

and

R. Muthuvel, Chennai

In today's competitive business scenario, there is enormous psychological pressure on the youth population to perform well and succeed in life. Emotional intelligence has now been accepted as crucial to withstand such psychological pressures. Several studies have been conducted to study the level of emotional intelligence among students and its relationship with other variables such as personality, achievement, and well-being. The present study is exploratory in nature and makes an attempt to explore the relationship between emotional intelligence and social reticence among women day scholars (N=26) and women hostel boarders (N=21), pursuing their post graduate courses. The influence of birth order on their emotional intelligence and social reticence has also been studied. Product moment correlation was used to study their relationship and significance of difference between the means of the two groups was computed with the aid of t-test. Results revealed that EI and SR are negatively correlated and there was no significant difference in EI and SR scores of students with respect to birth order and type of residence.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, social reticence, female postgraduate students, birth order

In earlier times, the term 'intelligence' did not include 'emotions' as a constituent. Moreover, the commonly held belief was that emotions and reasoning contradicted each other (Oatley, 2004). It took several centuries for emotional intelligence to be accepted as a critical component of intelligence. Researchers have put forward various definitions of emotions. Ashforth and Humphrey (1995) attempt to broadly define emotions as a subjective feeling state that includes (a) basic emotions such as joy, love and anger, and (b) social emotions, namely shame, guilt and jealousy. This definition also includes related constructs of affect,

sentiments and moods. A by-product of this construct is the concept of Emotional Intelligence (EI) which has gained substantial recognition in recent times. As per Mayer and Salovey (1993), "Emotional intelligence is a type of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use the information to guide one's thinking and actions".

Singh (2006) defines EI as "the ability of an individual to appropriately and successfully respond to a vast variety of emotional stimuli being elicited from the inner self and immediate environment". EI constitutes three

psychological dimensions-emotional competency, emotional maturity and emotional sensitivity-which motivate an individual to recognize truthfully, interpret honestly and handle tactfully the dynamics of human behavior.

Further, EI has also been described as an ability to recognize the meanings of such emotional patterns and to reason and solve problems on their basis. People high on EI are better able to pick up non-verbal cues in a communication procedure. People who cannot marshal some control over their emotional life fight inner battles that sabotage their ability for focused work and clear thought (see for example Mio, 2002; and Druskat & Wolff, 2001). Further, motivating oneself or marshalling emotions is essential for self motivation and creativity (Singh, 2007). Several studies on EI that have been conducted in India have focused on the relevance and prevalence of EI in the Indian business context (e.g., Bhalla & Nauriyal, 2004; Srivastava & Bharamanaikar, 2004; Bindu & Thomas, 2006) or on the development of EI in the Indian socio-cultural context (Sibia, Misra, & Srivastava, 2004).

In today's competitive business scenario, there is enormous pressure on the youth population – especially students - to perform well and succeed in life, their success being measured against certain socially determined parameters. EI has now been accepted as crucial to withstand such psychological pressures. EI of adolescent students has become a topic of interest for several researchers as it is this group of people who are characterized by heightened emotionality. Literature review reveals that dimensions of EI such as self-awareness, empathy, social skills and competence have been explored in detail (see for example, Sibia, Srivastava, & Misra, 2003; Singh, 2007). Social Reticence (SR) is an important component of shyness (Jones & Russell, 1982; Jones, Briggs & Smith, 1986). Jones (1986) describes

shyness as a form of social anxiety in which self-focus and reticence prevent effective functioning in social situations. Further, Phillips (1968) defines reticence as felt anxiety when having to participate in oral communication. Such anxiety is a result of excessive concern regarding one's performance rather than the actual degree of threat or difficulty inherent in the situation.

The aim of the present study is to analyze and establish the association between the EI and SR of post-graduate students and to determine any differences in the EI and SR of the students residing at home (day scholars) and those staying away from home (hostel boarders). It also analyses the influence of birth order on EI and SR with an attempt to investigate whether there are differences in the mean of SR of the norm group compared to the sample study group. To the best of the authors' knowledge, the constructs *emotional intelligence* and *social reticence* have not been studied earlier and therefore the present study is exploratory in nature. Jones, et al. (1986) had studied the degree of SR of over 2500 post graduate female students in U.S.A and thereby developed a norm for the Social Reticence Scale. This norm group has been used in the present work for comparison with the study group.

Researchers have proven time and again the relationship between EI and SR and the influence of early socialization and family environment on the development of emotional maturity and ability for expressive communication in individuals (Zajonc, 2001). Reticent individuals were five times more likely than non-reticent individuals to have grown up without any siblings or in homes isolated from any kin-family network (Gilmartin, 1987). Crozier (1995) concluded that shyness and reticence significantly correlated with external locus of control and self-esteem. Matsushima, Shiomi and Kuhlman (2000) examined and stated that shyness affects social skills and

self-disclosure. Lopes, Salovey and Straus (2003) explored links between EI, measured as a set of abilities, and personality traits, as well as the contribution of both to the perceived quality of one's interpersonal relationships. The following sections would deal with certain questions that were raised in the present study thereby seeking answers from analyses and interpretations.

Conceptual Model of Emotional Intelligence and Social Reticence

The relationship between EI and SR of post graduate female students constitute the focus of this research. Presented in Figure 1 is the conceptual model together with the direction of hypothesized relationship between different variables explored in this study.

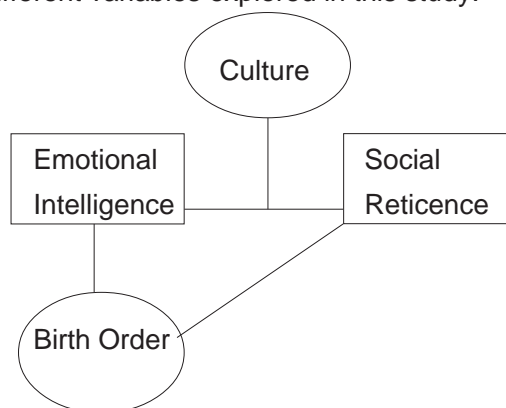


Figure 1: Conceptual Model of EI and SR

The conceptual model attempts to determine the relationship between EI and SR. Further, analysis into whether birth order affects EI and SR has also been undertaken. Even though the aspect of culture has been presented in the model as a role of a moderator on EI and SR, substantial investigation has not been done to establish this path in this work.

Drawing on EI and SR literature, we put forth an extension to the findings of Fujiki, Spackman, Brinton and Hall (2004) which bring to light the relationship between emotion regulation and reticence in children with

language impairment. Rubin, Cheah, and Fox (2001) have also studied emotion regulation, parenting and display of SR in preschoolers and therefore the broader construct of emotional intelligence's (vis a vis emotion regulation) relationship with reticence can be tested through the following hypothesis.

H₁: There will be a significant negative relationship between emotional intelligence and social reticence.

Family relations and communicative patterns therein, have long been established to be significantly related to aspects of EI and reticence in a person's relationship with parents (Gilmartin, 1987; Brackett, Mayer, & Warner, 2004; Kelly, Keaten, Finch, Duarte, Hoffman, & Michels, 2002). Based on the literature gaps perceived with specific reference to family relations, the following hypothesis has been proposed:

H₂: There will be a significant difference in the emotional intelligence and social reticence between day scholars and hostel inmates.

Drawing from the widespread evidence (Leman, 2001; Wallace, 1999) that birth order is an important determinant of personality and intelligence the following hypothesis has been framed:

H₃: There will be a significant difference in the emotional intelligence and social reticence between first borns and the later borns.

Jones and Briggs (1986), in their development and validation of the Social Reticence Scale had studied 1373 female post graduate students from U.S.A for the purpose of normalization of the instrument. Assuming that cultural differences exist in the degree of EI and reticence we propose the final hypothesis.

H₄: There will be a significant difference in the social reticence between the norm group and the study group.

Method

Sample:

Data was collected from women post-graduate students from a women's educational institution located in South India. A sample size of 47 was collected with day scholars (N=26) and hostel inmates (N=21) to study the relationship between EI and SR.

Tools:

The tool chosen to measure *emotional intelligence* was a uni-factor measure developed by Schutte, Malouff, Hall, Haggerty, Cooper, Golden, and Dornheim, (1998). It consisted of 33 items on a 5 point scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". The reported Cronbach's alpha was 0.87 and the test-retest reliability was found to be 0.78. SR was measured using the revised scale developed by Jones and Briggs (1986). The tool consists of 20 items and ranked on a five point scale. The full scale test- retest reliability was found to be 0.81 for men and 0.89 for women with a combined coefficient of 0.87. Since the instrument had to be administered to the present sample of students in the Indian context, face and content validity were ascertained through interviews with experts consisting of select faculty members from educational institutions. Further, construct validity, convergent validity, discriminant validity and predictive validity were established and found to be satisfactory.

Results and Discussion

This section discusses the results from the analyses conducted for the hypotheses proposed. The first objective of this study is to examine the relationship between EI and SR. This was achieved using bivariate correlation. The results are presented in Table 1. It can be seen from the table that there is a significant negative correlation ($r = -0.328$) between EI and SR. The correlation between

EI and SR is presented in the form of a scatter diagram in Graph 1. It is evident from the graph that as the level of EI of individuals increases their level of SR decreases. Thus the hypothesis (H_1) stating that there will be a significant negative relationship between EI and SR is accepted at the 0.05 level of significance. The result can be justified by the fact that the construct EI has a positive connotation and signifies an ability to engage in effective interpersonal exchanges whereas SR as a personality trait implies a tendency toward avoidance of interpersonal interactions. It would be intuitively expected of emotionally intelligent individuals to be much more confident internally and this would in turn manifest itself in their interactions with others. Goleman (1995) validated this further by stating that in developing emotional intelligence, "we learn how to feel about ourselves and how others will react to our feelings; how to think about these feelings and what choices we have in reacting; how to read and express hopes and fears". Along similar lines, another significant aspect that can explain this negative relationship is that of communication. There is enough evidence that reticent individuals tend to be anxious, to have deficient communication skills, and to adopt faulty beliefs about communication (Keaten & Kelly, 2000). Moreover, individuals with superior EI have a greater degree of self-awareness and self-esteem and are able to express themselves freely (Raad, 2005), whereas those individuals who are reticent have a problem in expressive communication (Keaten & Kelly, 2000). These explanations therefore validate these findings.

Table 1: Correlation between EI and SR

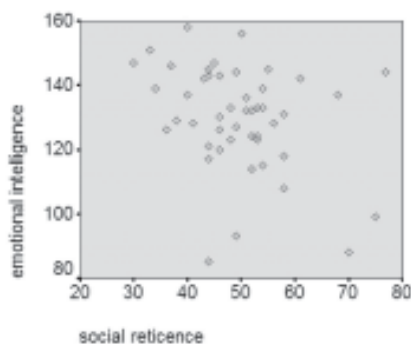
Constructs	EI	SR
Emotional Intelligence (EI)	1	-0.328*
Social Reticence (SR)	-0.328*	1

* $p < .05$

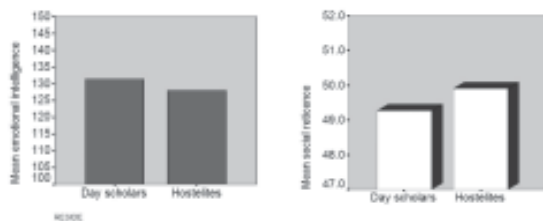
Table 2: Significance of difference between the means of EI and SR with respect to Type of Residence

Constructs	Residence	N	Mean	SD	t-value
Emotional intelligence (EI)	Day scholars	26	131.31	12.046	0.695
	Hostel boarders	21	127.95	20.704	
Social reticence (SR)	Day scholars	26	49.27	11.972	-0.214
	Hostel boarders	21	49.90	7.099	

Graph 1: Scatter plot for EI and SR



Graph 2: EI and SR for Day scholars and Hostel boarders



The second objective of this study is to examine the effect of the type of residence (i.e. day scholars and hostel boarders) on EI and SR. Difference in the means between day scholars and hostel boarders with respect to their EI and SR is analyzed using the t-test. The results are summarized in Table 2 and depicted in Graph 2.

It can be seen from Table 2 that though Day scholars have a higher mean (131.31) for EI compared to Hostel boarders (127.95), t-test reveals that this difference is not

statistically significant. With respect to SR, both the groups have almost equal mean values. Consequently, there is no significant difference in this regard also. Thus the second hypothesis (H_2) stating that there will be a significant difference in the EI and SR between day scholars and hostel inmates is rejected at 0.05 level. Earlier researchers (Barnett, Howard, King, & Dino, 1980; Jones, 1986) prove that it is the early socialization in the family that influences a child's EI and reticence. Since the student population selected for this study had been residing in hostels only for a year at the time of the study, their EI and reticent characteristics had already developed and crystallized, thereby not demonstrating any difference among day scholars and the hostel boarders.

The third objective is to understand the effect of birth order (i.e. first born, later born) of the respondent on the level of EI and SR. There have been several attempts at understanding the significance of ordinal position especially with respect to variables such as anxiety, dependence, and conformity, educational achievement, and personality characteristics (Schachter, 1959; Ernst & Angst, 1983). However, variables such as anxiety and scholastic achievement have not been proved with certainty to be affected by birth order. Therefore in this study there has been an attempt to address this issue.

Table 3: Significance of difference between the means of EI and SR with respect to Birth Order

Constructs	BO	N	Mean	SD	t-value
Emotional intelligence (EI)	1	18	131.50	20.36	0.554
	2	29	128.76	13.62	
Social reticence (SR)	1	18	46.61	7.38	-1.618
	2	29	51.38	11.04	

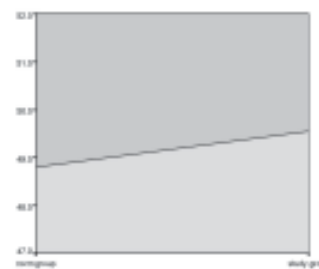
The difference in EI and SR with respect to birth order is analyzed using the t-test. The results are presented in Table 3. It can be noticed that the first borns (mean of 131.50) seem to have better EI compared to later borns (mean of 128.76). However, this difference is not statistically significant. In the case of SR, the later borns are more reticent (mean of 51.38) compared to the first borns (mean of 46.61). In this case also, the difference in means is not significant. Thus, the hypothesis (H_3) stating there will be a significant difference in the EI and SR between first borns and the later borns is rejected at 0.05 level. This could be due to the fact that the group is highly homogenous in age, education and gender, thereby reducing the impact of birth order on the variables. This could also be because we have classified the birth order as first borns and all the others as later borns and this may have possibly nullified the effect.

Earlier studies have shown that culture is an influencing factor in development of personality traits like reticence (Rubin et al., 2001; Heinrichs, Rapee, Alden, Bögels, Hofmann, Oh, & Sakano, 2006; Sibia et al., 2004). Thus, an attempt was made to compare the means of the study group to that of the norm group. The results are presented in Table 4 and visually depicted in Graph 3.

Table 4: Significance of difference between the mean scores of study and norm group on SR

Social Reticence	N	Mean	SD	t value
Study group	47	49.55	9.99	0.517
Norm group	13	73	48.80	13.00

Graph 3: The means of norm group and study group on SR



It can be seen from Table 4 that though there is a difference in the means of the two groups, the t-test is not significant at the 95% level of confidence. However, with the increasing influence of other cultures, as well as changes in earlier stereotypical perceptions of women’s roles in our society, and increasing participation of women in higher education, it is possible that cultural differences among young people from different backgrounds are declining.

Conclusion

In view of the current scenario of education, this paper brings to light several critical insights. Firstly, the importance of being ‘emotionally intelligent’ cannot be overstated in the present context of extremely high levels of competition. Secondly, the construct of social reticence is especially significant in a time where the ability to communicate effectively is expected as a prerequisite for effectiveness in all walks of life. One of the significant findings of this study is the negative relationship between emotional intelligence and social reticence. Thus, by

increasing the emotional intelligence of individuals, their levels of social reticence can be decreased thereby improving their communication skills and confidence. Educational institutions could play a major role in this regard. Since the study was done in the context of student population, other researchers can examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and social reticence in other contexts. Though the effect of type of residence and birth order on emotional intelligence and social reticence were not statistically significant, they merit deeper investigation. Given the exploratory nature of this study and the small sample size, the findings reported need to be interpreted with extreme care until further work in this area offer confirming proof of the same.

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V.Vijayalakshmi, Research Scholar, Department of Management Studies, Indian Institute of Technology Madras, Chennai – 600 036, India, Tel: 91-044-22574550, Email: vijivenkatraman@gmail.com, vijivenkatraman@yahoo.com,

Sanghamitra Bhattacharyya, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Management Studies, Indian Institute of Technology Madras, Chennai – 600 036, India. Tel: 91-044-22574566 Email: sangha@iitm.ac.in

Abha Bhartia, Lecturer, Department of Psychology, J.B.A.S. College for Women, Chennai

R. Muthuvel, PhD, Research Consultant and Psychologist, Chennai

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