

Effect of Emotional Intelligence on the Achievement Motivation, Psychological Adjustment and Scholastic Performance of Secondary School Students

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The *raison d'être* of the present study is to understand the effect of emotional intelligence (EI) on the achievement motivation, psychological adjustment and scholastic performance of secondary school students. For this study, a sample of 450 urban male students of the tenth standard from Jaipur district were studied using Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) by Hyde, Pethe and Dhar, Achievement Value and Anxiety Inventory (AVAI) by Mehta and Adjustment Inventory for School Students (AISS) by Sinha and Singh. In addition, the total percentage of marks achieved by these students in the tenth standard board exams conducted by the Board of Secondary Education, Rajasthan, was taken as the index of their scholastic performance. Results revealed a significant effect of EI on the achievement motivation and educational adjustment of students. However, EI did not have a significant effect on the emotional adjustment, social adjustment and scholastic performance of students.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence (EI), Achievement Motivation, Adjustment and Scholastic Performance

Instances are witnessed in our day-to-day life wherein the brightest of the students in a class do not succeed later in their lives to the degree that their less intellectual counterparts do. These examples are particularly evident in various fields like education, politics, business and administration (Singh, 2002). But then, a question arises: Other than intelligence, what is it that helps a student to succeed in life? Which human quality is it that helps students to function better in all spheres, ranging from career to personal life? The answer may lie in the quotient of intelligence that facilitates the handling of the emotions of self and others effectively; this is popularly known as emotional intelligence (EI). It ensures smooth sailing in the turbulent waves of life and is more important than merely having intelligence alone (Brown, 1996; Goleman, 1995; Reiff, 2001; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Salovey and Mayer (1990) define EI as the ability to: (a) perceive and express emotion, (b) use emotion to facilitate thought, (c) understand and reason with emotion and (d) regulate emotion in self and others. These

researchers conceptualize EI as a mental ability that pertains to an individual's capacity to process and reason with and about emotion-laden information. Understanding one's own emotional processes can have far-reaching effects for social functioning and quality of life. Richardson (2000) indicated that young people who lack social and emotional competence might end up becoming self-centred and unable to empathize with and relate to others. In contrast to Intelligence Quotient (IQ), which is considered relatively stable and unchangeable, researches indicated that EI is acquired and developed through learning and repeated experience at any age; hence, it can be nurtured in individuals (Ashforth, 2001; Cooper, 1997; Goleman, 1995). Looking at the significance of EI in handling life stresses, it can be judged in terms of its impact on the achievement motivation, adjustment and scholastic performance of students.

Achievement motivation can be defined as the striving to increase, or keep as high as possible, one's own capability in all activities in

which competition (with some standard of excellence) is thought to be involved and where the execution of such activity can, therefore, either succeed or fail (Heckhausen, 1967). Research findings have revealed that EI not only affects the way individuals get along with others but also affects how they succeed in their personal and professional life. Dey (2009) revealed that there is a positive impact of EI on academic self-efficacy and achievement. According to Abraham (1999), Cooper (1997) and Hein (1996), students with high EI possess higher achievement motivation, which makes them better learners, confident, optimistic, creative, flexible, happy, successful at solving problems, renders a better stress-coping ability and endows them with high self-esteem and few behavioural problems.

Higher EI has been linked to better psychological adjustment and coping, both in self-reported adjustment and physiological measures (Salovey, Stroud, Woolery & Epel, 2002). They found that students' attention to mood, as reported on the Trait Meta Mood Scale (TMMS), was associated with lowered social anxiety, less passive and more active coping, as well as lowered physiological arousal as measured by cortisol release following the presentation of stressor variables. In addition, studies have shown that EI is related to greater empathy (Ciarrochi, Chan, & Caputi, 2000), less negative interactions with peers (Brackett, Mayer, & Warner, 2004), higher-quality relationships, less conflict and antagonism with friends (Lopes, Brackett, Nezlek, Schutz, Sellin, & Salovey, 2004; Lopes, Salovey, & Straus, 2003) and lower levels of violence and drug problems (Brackett, Lopes, Ivcevic, Mayer, & Salovey, 2004). According to Parker, Hogan, Eastabrook, Oke and Wood (2006), one's ability to successfully adapt to new situations is not related to cognitive ability alone, and various other factors have important implications on academic success. Verma (1985) found that conflict, anxiety and frustration significantly affect adjustment. Subjects with a higher degree of conflict, anxiety and frustration show significantly poorer adjustment. Petrides, Perez-Gonzalez and Furnham (2007) found that EI may be an underlying risk factor for the development of

serious mental health problems rather than the result of such mental health problems. Similarly, Saklofske, Austin, Galloway and Davidson (2007) found that EI was associated with positive coping.

Scholastic performance or academic achievement is a term that generally indicates the learning outcomes of pupils. Achievement of those learning outcomes requires a series of planned and organized experiences. According to Good (1959), academic achievement can be understood as the knowledge attained or the skills developed in the school subjects, which are usually designed by the test scores or marks gained in the scholastic subjects or by the test scores assigned by the teacher. Research findings have been mixed in context of the relation between EI and scholastic performance or academic achievement. High achievers have been identified as self-regulated learners by Rathod (2008). O'Connor and Little (2003) observed associations between overall EI scores and academic achievement (GPA scores). Positive correlations have been found between EI and grades for college students (Barchard, 2003; Brackett & Mayer, 2003; Lam & Kirby, 2002; Parker et al., 2004a) and high-school students (Parker, Summerfeldt, Hogan, & Majeski, 2004b). Moreover, Parker et al. (2004b) discovered that EI is a significant predictor of academic success. Similar findings were reported in other studies also (Low & Nelson, 2004; Brackett, et al. 2004; Brackett & Salovey, 2006; Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2004). Yahaya et al. (2012) revealed that there is a significant relationship between the level of academic achievement and self-awareness, emotional management and empathy.

However, studies have also shown that once general intelligence and personality are partialled out, the relationship between EI and grades drops to insignificance (Barchard, 2003, Brackett & Mayer, 2003; Lam & Kirby, 2002). Dubey (2008) also found that there is no relationship between EI and the achievement of students enrolled in various subjects. Brackett and Mayer (2003) found no correlation between EI and academic performance when personality and verbal Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores (which were used as a measure of cognitive ability) were

statistically controlled. Research using the Assessing Emotions Scale (AES) found small correlations between EI and academic performance (GPA). Similar findings were observed by other researchers (Bastian, Burns, & Nettelbeck, 2005; Newsome, Day, & Catano, 2000; O'Connor & Little, 2003). Barchard (2003) found that measures of cognitive ability and personality characteristics provided the best predictors of academic success relative to EI. Woitaszewski and Aalsma (2004) obtained similar findings when assessing EI and academic success in gifted adolescents. Overall, there has been insufficient evidence to fully understand the impact that EI may (or may not) have on academic success (Zeidner, Roberts & Matthews, 2002). Looking at the existent gaps in knowledge, the present investigation was carried to study the effect of EI on the achievement motivation, psychological adjustment and scholastic performance of secondary school students.

Method

Participants

This study was conducted on 450 urban, adolescent, tenth standard boys from seven Hindi medium government senior secondary schools of Jaipur district. In order to have a relatively homogeneous sample, the data was collected only from Hindi-medium Rajasthan Government senior secondary schools. To control the effect of gender, girls were excluded from the sample. All the schools were affiliated to the Board of Secondary Education, Rajasthan, and the age of the students ranged between 14 and 17 years with a mean age of 15.2 years.

Tools

Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS): The EIS, developed by Hyde, Pethe, and Dhar (2001), was used to assess the EI of the subjects. The validity of the scale was deduced from its coefficient of reliability and found to be 0.93. The split-half reliability of the scale was 0.88. The scale consisted of 34 items. Scoring was done on a 5-point scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Each item or statement was scored 5 for strongly agree, 4 for agree, 3 for neutral, 2 for disagree and 1 for strongly disagree.

In the end, the total score obtained on all the 34 items was calculated.

Achievement Value and Anxiety Inventory (AVAI): For measuring the achievement motivation of subjects, the "Achievement Value and Anxiety Inventory", developed by Mehta (1976), was used. The KR-20 reliability of the inventory is 0.67. The inventory consisted of 22 items in Hindi. Each item was followed by six responses. Two each of the six responses were achievement related (AR), task related (TR) and unrelated (UR) to achievement. Subjects had to choose one response for each item. The inventory yielded four types of scores: (i) AR - the number of achievement-related responses, (ii) TR - the number of task-related responses, (iii) UR - the number of responses unrelated to achievement and (iv) AIVI - the total score that was obtained by subtracting the UR score from the AR score. The total score determined the standing of the individual on the inventory.

Adjustment Inventory for School Students (A/SS): The adjustment of the subjects was measured by the adjustment inventory developed by Sinha and Singh (1984). Validity coefficients for the inventory were determined for each item by the biserial correlation method and only such items were retained that yielded biserial correlation with both the criteria: (i) total score and (ii) area score, significance level being .001. The split half, test-retest and KR-20 reliability of the inventory is 0.95, 0.93 and 0.94 respectively. The inventory consisted of 60 items in Hindi divided into 3 independently scored adjustment fields, i.e., emotional, social and educational. Twenty items were related to each sub-field. Each item was to be answered in "Yes" or "No" format. Each item answered as "Yes" was counted and considered a score. A high score on the test indicated poor adjustment and a low score indicated better adjustment.

Results and Discussion

Results show that there is a significant effect of EI on the achievement motivation of students (Table1). Students with high EI had higher achievement motivation than students with lower EI (Table1). This indicates that achievement

motivation in students is influenced by their ability to handle and regulate emotions. EI may enable them to assess situations objectively and visualise candidly the consequences of their probable actions. They may easily be able to shun their impulses like partying all the time, going out with friends, engaging oneself in more pro-social activities etc., and instil dynamism in them to progress creatively towards the desired goal, individually. Dubey (2012) found that there is a positive relationship between EI and the academic motivation of adolescents. Students with high, moderate and low academic motivation differ from one another on EI. Moreover, by transcending or overpowering their petty impulses, they are able to understand the feelings and expectations of others who are associated with them. These may be their parents, friends, teachers etc. Subsequently, the tendency to fulfil the expectations of others catalyzes their need for achievement, especially in order to prove themselves doing good for those who care for them. They are then ready to embrace success with definitive actions and enough motivation to achieve the super-ordinate goals for the greater good. Notwithstanding the turbulences, they aspire to fly high all by themselves. Mahyuddin, Elias and Noordin (2009) also found a significant relation between emotional quotient and the achievement motivation of adolescents. Similarly, Richter and Onas (1971) found that emotional stability is one of the most important pre-requisites to develop achievement motivation and, ultimately, success in an individual's life. In such situations, studies have also revealed that EI ignites a strong

n-achievement in individuals, which not only leads to their academic success but also to their overall success in career and life (Busato, Prins, Elshout, & Hamaker, 2000; Neisser et al., 1996; Ridgell & Lounsbury, 2004). On the other hand, students with low EI are not able to control and regulate their emotions. They lack the emotional stability and self-discipline needed to deal with challenging and stressful situations of life. Therefore, they generally try to avoid challenging ambitions and goals. As this avoidance tendency rises in these students, the achievement motivation gradually declines, which is later reflected in their inability to perform in academics as well as in their future career too.

EI also has a significant effect on the educational adjustment (Table 2) of students. Students with higher EI have better educational adjustment than students with lower EI (Table 1). The school environment creates challenging situation for students at every step, whether it is curriculum, school discipline, peer relationships, time-management or interacting with teachers. EI in a student creates self-awareness of not only one's emotions but also that of others. Students with high EI have better coping mechanisms and strategies. They indulge in active or problem-focused coping, which is typically associated with healthier, more positive outcomes; whereas less emotionally intelligent students engage in emotion-focused coping strategies, such as distancing, minimization, avoidance and selective attention, which are generally considered less functional and inferior forms of coping (Lazarus, 2000; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Moos, 1992).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the achievement motivation, emotional adjustment, social adjustment, educational adjustment and scholastic performance of high and low emotionally intelligent secondary school students (N=450)

| Variables | High EI Gp n=219 | | | Low EI Gp n=231 | | |
|------------------------|------------------|-------|-----|-----------------|------|-----|
| | M | SD | SE | M | SD | SE |
| Ach Motivation | 5.53 | 5.34 | .36 | 4.15 | 5.05 | .33 |
| Emotional Adjustment | 2.37 | 2.16 | .15 | 2.58 | 2.22 | .15 |
| Social Adjustment | 5.92 | 2.36 | .16 | 5.78 | 2.23 | .15 |
| Educational Adjustment | 3.78 | 3.09 | .21 | 4.54 | 3.34 | .22 |
| Scholastic Performance | 60.41 | 10.13 | .66 | 58.82 | 9.37 | .62 |

High EI gp = High emotional intelligence group

Low EI gp = Low emotional intelligence group

Table 2. ANOVA for the achievement motivation, emotional adjustment, social adjustment, educational adjustment and scholastic performance responses of high and low emotionally intelligent secondary school students

| Variables | F | p value |
|------------------------|------|---------|
| Ach Motivation | 7.88 | 0.01 |
| Emotional Adjustment | 1.03 | 0.31 |
| Social Adjustment | 0.38 | 0.54 |
| Educational Adjustment | 6.21 | 0.01 |
| Scholastic Performance | 2.98 | 0.08 |

Understanding the limitations of self and accepting the strengths of others goads students with high EI to adore their teachers and abide by the moral code of conduct and discipline. They try to acknowledge varied perspectives and invigorate their personality with the school instructions and social skills learnt therein. This enables them to adjust in a better way in the school environment.

In addition, students undergo the joy of getting older mixed with the pain of bearing greater responsibility tainted with a fear of failure. EI enables them to remain focused on their studies in trying times, without digressing to the luring fantasies of the modern world. Nandwana and Joshi (2010) also expressed that the more emotionally intelligent an adolescent is, the more easily he bears the turmoil and pressures of this age group. Romanelli, Cain and Smith (2006) opined that students with high EI were found to have more-adaptive coping strategies and better time management skills; whereas students with low EI were found to be involved in unhealthy behaviours, such as smoking, procrastinating and withdrawing socially. EI also facilitates the students' progression towards the desired goal, which is generally to excel in their class. The tendency to achieve reaps greater interest in studies and better adjustment with the school climate, wherein the student does not get bored, makes proper notes, comprehends the instructions well, does not like holidays, participates in competitive activities and prepares well for the exams. Hence, such students with

higher EI are able to achieve better educational adjustment than students with lower EI. A study by Parker et al. (2006) is also indicative of the findings, as the dropout rate of high emotionally intelligent students has been found to be significantly lower than that of students with lower EI. Similarly, Saklofske et al (2007) found that EI enhances positive coping in students. Punia and Sangwan (2011) as well as Mahmoudi (2012) found that EI had a significant positive relationship with the adjustment of students. Thus, students with higher EI are better educationally adjusted than their peers who are less emotionally intelligent.

However, EI was not found to significantly affect the emotional and social adjustment (Table 2) of students. Student-age, coupled with the kind of prevalent socialization process, is marked by an "identity crisis", wherein there is a tendency to excel and achieve more and more, notwithstanding the decline in a collectivistic approach. According to Nandwana and Joshi (2010), today's youth is living in "an age of anxiety". The all-pervasive atmosphere encourages adolescents to compare themselves constantly; consequently, the new generation has to live, eat and breathe competition, which makes them vulnerable to the threats of various psychosomatic problems. This rising competition, along with this striving for one's identity, gives rise to a fear of failure in students, wherein they hesitate in sharing their notes with their peers, feel shy of clearing any doubts with the teacher during the class, feel jealous of other students who are performing well, ignore the appreciation of fellow students by the teacher, find it difficult to work with peers, are unable to take on sarcasm, hesitate in responding to teachers and seniors and feel guilty while interacting with juniors. Although, they may be able to regulate their own emotions and impulses and focus on their studies, they fail to regulate and take on the emotions expressed by others, perhaps their teacher, fellow students, juniors etc. Thus, EI fails to affect the emotional as well as the social adjustment of students.

Results also revealed that there is no significant effect of EI on scholastic performance

of students (Table 2). Students with high and low EI (Table 1) didn't differ significantly in their levels of scholastic performance. Results signify that mere regulation of one's emotions does not ensure scholastic performance. Barchard (2003), as well as Brackett and Mayer (2003), also found that EI was a poor predictor of academic success. Rather, ability has to be executed to change to action. Probably, certain other factors like the student's capacity to benefit from the instructions, his ability to reproduce during exams what has been learnt in school, his ability to address the issues in question, his never-failing attitude and his receptivity and ability to prioritize resources might matter more while achieving good grades in school. Bastian et al (2005) also found that EI's ability to predict academic success is generally weaker than other predictors, such as cognitive ability and personality. Other than cognitive ability and personality, researchers have also identified learning style as an important predictor of academic performance (Hudak & Anderson, 1990). Similarly, Van Der Zee, Thijs and Schakel (2002) found that personality was a better predictor of academic success than EI. It seems scholastic performance is mainly influenced by intervening variables, such as intelligence, short-term memory, working memory, processing speed, attention, learning style, verbal ability etc. Other than these, the personality and self-discipline of a student also play a key role in determining his scholastic performance. Thus, EI has a negligible impact on the scholastic performance of students.

Conclusion

Students with high EI have higher achievement motivation and better educational adjustment than students with low EI. However, due to the impending "identity crisis", coupled with burgeoning competition, EI is a feeble predictor of emotional and social adjustment as well as the scholastic performance of the students. Thus, it can be concluded that for igniting dynamism in students and creating an interest in studies while shunning impulses of self, the contribution of EI is noteworthy. Parents as well as academic institutions should promote the ability of students to handle one's emotions in an appropriate

manner and should give regular training on the soft skills. However, in order to magnify the impact of EI on the interpersonal adjustment and performance of the students, care should be taken to reduce the burden of cutthroat competition on the students and to facilitate healthy, collaborative environments.

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