

A Mixed-Methods Evaluation of Emotional Intelligence in Adolescents: Gender-Based Comparisons and Developmental Approaches

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Abstract

This study examines the emotional intelligence (EI) levels of adolescents through a mixed-methods approach, comparing male and female students while exploring strategies to enhance EI. A sample of 200 junior college students (100 males, 100 females) was selected using simple random sampling, and their EI levels were assessed using the Emotional Intelligence Scale by A.K. Singh and Shruti Narain. Statistical analysis revealed that both genders exhibited average EI levels, with no significant difference between them. Qualitative insights highlighted the importance of fostering self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills through structured interventions such as journaling, mindfulness, and role-playing. The study underscores the need for integrating emotional intelligence training into educational curricula to help adolescents manage emotions, improve decision-making, and strengthen interpersonal relationships. By adopting a holistic and gender-inclusive approach, this research contributes to the understanding of emotional intelligence development and its role in adolescent well-being.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Adolescents, Developmental Approaches

Introduction :

The construct of emotion constitutes a fundamental component of human personality and a critical factor in the navigation of life. In both personal and professional contexts, the role of emotional intelligence is significant, influencing various aspects of survival and interaction. Emotions are recognized as the most dominant psychological states that characterize human personality, serving as conduits for the expression of internal feelings in an effective manner. As a central aspect of human nature, emotions serve to motivate behaviour, offering individuals multiple opportunities to convey their feelings towards their surroundings. The interplay of emotion and cognition leads to the experience of feelings, wherein emotions function as

powerful motivational systems. These systems not only drive immediate and urgent actions but also facilitate the rapid identification of solutions to pressing challenges. Moreover, emotions are integral to social interactions, playing a vital role in the development and enhancement of both interpersonal and intrapersonal communication. Through emotional expression, individuals are better equipped to forge connections and cultivate relationships, thereby enriching their social environments. Consequently, the significance of emotions extends beyond individual experience, influencing broader social dynamics and interactions.

Emotional intelligence (EI) encompasses the capacity to identify, evaluate, and regulate both personal emotions and those of others, including collective emotional states. This capability plays a significant role in managing additional pressures commonly encountered in educational settings. In the prevailing competitive landscape, in which students are required to execute multiple roles with both efficiency and effectiveness, the cultivation of appropriate attitudes alongside emotional intelligence becomes essential. Such development prepares individuals to navigate the complex challenges associated with life and high-quality education. It is important to acknowledge that emotional intelligence represents a component of social intelligence, characterized by the ability to comprehend and oversee one's own emotional responses as well as those of others.

Literature Review

The significance of intelligence quotient (IQ) as a metric for evaluating individual capabilities has been acknowledged throughout history and continues to be relevant in contemporary assessments (Krančan, 2016, pp. 22). Various research endeavors have explored the multifaceted nature of intelligence, revealing that an individual's attributes extend beyond mere cognitive capabilities, such as comprehension, mathematical skill, and the formation of connections (Krulc, 2017, pp. 427). Emerging paradigms have introduced additional frameworks for evaluating individuals, particularly from an emotional perspective, which some scholars argue contrasts with rational thought processes. Emotional intelligence, which originates from the broader notion of social intelligence, is one such emergent concept. In earlier studies, social intelligence was defined as the capacity to comprehend and influence others while exhibiting prudent behavior in interpersonal contexts. Historically, this construct has been regarded as one of several forms of intelligence. In contemporary understanding, emotional intelligence is viewed as an extension of social intelligence, encompassing the ability to recognize and differentiate between one's own emotions and those of others, as well as the capacity to apply this awareness to inform one's thoughts and actions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990,

pp. 176). The authors delineated social intelligence into five distinct domains: self-awareness, emotion management, self-motivation, empathy, and relationship management. Subsequent investigations have substantiated the assertion that leaders who cultivate trust, respect, and warmth in their relationships with subordinates tend to exhibit greater effectiveness in leadership roles (Salovey and Mayer, 1990, pp. 188).

To forecast leadership effectiveness, researchers have conducted assessments of communication skills, initiative, and interpersonal relationships of individuals (Byrd, 1987, pp. 34). These categories have been identified as possessing greater predictive validity for success compared to traditional metrics such as cognitive intelligence, educational attainment, or accumulated knowledge. However, despite the compelling evidence supporting the importance of socio-psychological characteristics in forecasting leadership performance, it was not until a decade later that this concept gained broader acceptance within both research and practical applications.

Salovey and Mayer introduced the idea of emotional intelligence to highlight the importance of emotions in intelligence, moving beyond the conventional views at the time. They defined emotional intelligence as “a kind of social intelligence that helps a person notice and understand their own feelings and those of others, and to distinguish between them, using this knowledge to guide their thoughts and actions” (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, pp. 67). These two researchers were also among the first to explore ways to measure emotional intelligence reliably and understand its importance. One of the early discoveries was that people who scored higher on emotional intelligence tests were quicker to regain their composure after watching an emotional film (Mei & Omar, 2020, pp. 478). More recent studies show that those who excel in self-awareness and empathy tend to adapt better to change and build strong social connections more easily (Mowat, 2019, pp. 52). Goleman later embraced the term emotional intelligence and, in the early 1990s, popularized it with his book *Emotional Intelligence*, which helped to cement the concept. In that book, he linked insights from social psychology, personality psychology, and neuropsychology (Goleman, 1997, pp. 46). His later research primarily focused on how emotional intelligence influences leadership and interpersonal relationships.

The relationship between emotional intelligence and stability has been examined by **Pečjak and Avsec** (2003, pp. 56-66), who assert that functioning effectively within a stable and predictable environment is generally manageable. However, in contemporary society, such

environments are increasingly rare. The incessant changes characteristic of today's world contribute to a heightened sense of unpredictability, rendering it challenging for individuals to maintain consistent control over their circumstances. This constant state of flux breeds uncertainty, and emotional intelligence serves as a vital resource for fostering inner stability, thereby facilitating effective interpersonal support in the face of ongoing change. In the absence of adequate emotional competencies, individuals may succumb to feelings of fear, hostility, insecurity, and apathy, which may significantly hinder collaborative efforts with others (Jeanne, 2019, pp. 59).

Empirical research has indicated that intelligence quotient (IQ) accounts for approximately 20% of factors influencing life success, whereas emotional components contribute the remaining 80% (Pekaar, 2018, pp. 222-233). This distinction highlights that individuals operate with two cognitive processes: the rational and the emotional. The rational mind engages in analytical thinking and decision-making based on objective facts, functioning logically and methodically. Conversely, the emotional mind is characterized by rapid, impulsive, and intuitive responses, often prompting actions prior to conscious deliberation. Although this emotional response can occasionally distort reality—owing to selective memory or mechanisms of self-justification—it can also be harnessed to generate substantial motivational energy, facilitating endeavors that the rational mind might dismiss as impractical. Thus, it may be posited that some of humanity's most admirable virtues, including sacrifice, selflessness, nobility, and generosity, are rooted in emotional responses. The effectiveness of intelligent behavior is contingent upon the harmonious integration of these two cognitive processes. While a balance typically exists during routine situations, unforeseen life circumstances tend to activate the emotional mind predominantly (Udovč, 2018, pp. 24-26).

The evolution of emotional intelligence has yielded numerous definitions, reflecting the dynamic nature of this field of study. As research continues to expand, scholars have been engaged in a process of continual refinement and modification of these definitions. Presently, three principal models of emotional intelligence have emerged: the ability-based model, the mixed model, and the characteristic-based model of emotional intelligence (Žagar, 2018, pp. 79).

Objectives :

1. To assess the overall Emotional Intelligence of adolescents using a standardized EI scale.

2. To examine the Emotional Intelligence levels of male adolescents.
3. To examine the Emotional Intelligence levels of female adolescents.
4. To compare the Emotional Intelligence levels of male and female adolescents using statistical analysis.
5. To explore effective strategies for enhancing Emotional Intelligence in students through qualitative insights.

Methodology :

1. **Sample Size and Sampling Method:** In the present study, a sample of 200 students, comprising 100 males and 100 females, has been selected. For sampling, Simple Random sampling technique was used for selecting 200 junior college students.
2. **Research Design:** A research design serves as the blueprint for a scientific study, encompassing research methodologies, tools, and techniques employed in the research process. It plays a crucial role in identifying and addressing potential issues that may arise during the research and analysis phases. In the current study, the aim is to investigate the level of emotional intelligence in adolescents and strategies on how to enhance Emotional Intelligence.
3. **Tools Used :** Emotional Intelligence Scale by A.K Singh and Shruti Narain.

Procedure :

To meet the demands of the current research, 200 adolescents, both male and female, were chosen through simple random sampling. Data was gathered using a standardized questionnaire, with participants providing informed consent. The researcher briefed the participants on the study and instructed them on completing the questionnaire. Ethical guidelines, particularly regarding confidentiality, were strictly adhered to throughout the study. Participants first filled in their basic information, followed by two questionnaires: one assessing emotional intelligence and the other evaluating problem-solving abilities.

Analysis and Interpretation :

1. First objective of the present research was “**To assess the overall Emotional Intelligence of adolescents**”.

To test the above hypothesis, Mean of the overall score was computed. In the table below, Mean of the overall score of Emotional Intelligence test is mentioned.

N	200
Mean	22.2

Table 1 : Mean of the overall score of Emotional Intelligence of the adolescents.

Table 1 shows the mean of the overall score of Emotional Intelligence of the adolescents. According to the norm table of the Emotional Intelligence test, the score obtained from the statistical mean 22.2 lies in the **average category**.

2. Second objective of the present research was **“To examine the Emotional Intelligence levels of male adolescents.”**

To test the aforementioned hypothesis, the mean scores of male adolescents were computed. The table below displays the mean scores for male adolescents in emotional intelligence test.

N	100
Mean	21.35

Table 2 : Mean of the score of Emotional Intelligence of the male adolescents.

Table 2 shows the mean scores of Emotional Intelligence of the male adolescents. According to the norm table of the Emotional Intelligence test, the score obtained from the statistical mean 21.35 lies in the **95 average category**.

3. Third objective of the present research was **“To examine the Emotional Intelligence levels of female adolescents”**.

To test the aforementioned hypothesis, the mean scores of female adolescents were computed. The table below displays the mean scores for female adolescents in emotional intelligence test.

N	100
Mean	23.05

Table 3 : Mean of the score of Emotional Intelligence of the female adolescents.

Table 3 shows the mean scores of Emotional Intelligence of the female adolescents. According to the norm table of the Emotional Intelligence test, the score obtained from the statistical mean 23.05 lies in the **average category**.

4. Fourth objective of the present research was **“To compare the Emotional Intelligence levels of male and female adolescents using statistical analysis.”**

To test the aforementioned hypothesis, t-test was computed. The table below displays the mean scores and Standard Deviation score of the male and female adolescents in emotional intelligence test.

Gender	Male	Female
Mean	21.35	23.05
S.D	1	1.4
N	100	100

Table 4 : Mean scores and Standard Deviation score of the male and female adolescents in emotional intelligence test.

Table 4 shows the Mean scores and Standard Deviation score of the male and female adolescents in emotional intelligence test. Obtained t value -12.1 is less than the table value 1.97 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, there is no Significant difference between the means, which signifies that there is no difference between the levels of emotional intelligence of male and females.

5. To explore effective strategies for enhancing Emotional Intelligence in students through qualitative insights.

1. Promotion of Self-Awareness

The foundational element of emotional intelligence (EI) is self-awareness, which encompasses the ability to recognize and interpret one's own emotions. Encouraging students to engage in reflective practices regarding their emotional responses facilitates a deeper comprehension of the stimuli that provoke such reactions.

Strategies that may be employed to foster self-awareness include the following:

- **Transformative Breathing Exercises:** Implementation of breathing techniques serves to concentrate the mind, allowing students to engage in meditation that fosters an intimate connection with their emotional states.
- **Emotion Charts:** The utilization of emotion charts, either within classroom settings or at home, can be advantageous. This approach prompts students to recognize and articulate their feelings throughout the day.

- **Journaling:** Students may be encouraged to maintain journals documenting their emotions and the circumstances that elicited these feelings. Such an exercise promotes verbalization of emotions and encourages reflection on decision-making processes.

2. Introduction of Self-Regulation Strategies

Following the cultivation of self-awareness, it becomes imperative to equip students with strategies for self-regulation. This component of emotional intelligence is essential, as it empowers individuals to respond to emotional stimuli in a measured manner rather than resorting to reactive and impulsive behavior.

The following methods may be implemented to enhance self-regulation:

- **Deep Breathing Techniques:** Instruction in deep breathing exercises can assist students in alleviating sensations of overwhelm, promoting relaxation of both the mind and body.

- **Positive Self-Talk:** Encouragement of positive self-affirmations when students face challenges aids in reframing negative cognitions, thereby fostering a more optimistic outlook.

- **Time-Outs:** Provision for brief breaks when students experience feelings of overwhelm can be beneficial. A short period of solitude is often sufficient to enable students to regain composure.

3. Promotion of Empathy :

Empathy constitutes a critical facet of emotional intelligence. Instruction aimed at cultivating empathy within students fosters respect for others and enhances social cohesion.

Effective approaches to promote empathy include:

- **Role-Playing Activities:** Engagement in role-playing exercises allows students to assume various perspectives, thereby facilitating an enhanced understanding of diverse emotional experiences in an engaging and interactive manner.

- **Storytelling:** Encouragement of students to share personal narratives about their experiences and emotions can enhance their capacity to relate to others. By listening to and valuing alternative viewpoints, students can nurture their empathetic abilities.

- **Volunteer Initiatives:** Organization of volunteer activities designed to aid marginalized populations enables students to develop both compassion and empathy. Active participation in helping those in need fosters a sense of solidarity and social responsibility.

4. Promote Social Skills and Relationship Building

Strong social skills are an important feature of emotional intelligence. Not only does it strengthen their communication skills, but it also promotes their ability to work through the conflict and becoming good team members who all criticize the relationship. • **Plan group activities:** Arrange group activities in a way that requires students to collaborate and work together to achieve a common goal. This forces them to work as a team and communicate.

- **Conflict resolution exercises:** You can teach students conflict resolution techniques, including active listening, stepping back, and negotiating. These are important skills for maintaining healthy relationships.

- **Embrace diversity:** Embrace different cultures and an inclusive culture. This motivates students to be open to another view and explore the world and create good social ties.

5. Model Emotional Intelligence:

One of the most effective ways to help students develop emotional intelligence is to model emotional intelligence yourself. If you are a parent or teacher, the emotional intelligence you demonstrate in your daily activities will leave a lasting impression on your students.

- **Emotion Management Model:** Show students how to manage their emotions in stressful situations. It also teaches them that with patience and compassion, feelings can last. • **Show Compassion:** Students have to feel heard, acknowledge how they are doing by actively listening.

- **Be a good communication role model:** Make sure you use good communication skills (calm, respectful), even in times of stress.

6. Create a safe and supportive environment

6. Create a Safe and Supportive Environment:

Nurturing Emotional Intelligence in Students in a Safe Environment Safe students are more willing to show emotions, take risks and learn.

- **Promote open communication:** Establish a supportive atmosphere where students can bring attention to their thoughts and feelings without any judgment.

- **Involve in activities with them:** Participate in activities with them when students are going through tough times. Be compassionate and guide them through their challenges.

- **Encourage a growth mindset:** Help students see mistakes as part of the learning process. This allows us to build resilience and develop students' good attitudes towards difficulties.

7. Conclusion :

Nature bestowed humans with emotions. Emotions are significant predictors of anyone's success. The present study provides valuable insights into the emotional intelligence levels of adolescents and the role of gender in shaping these competencies. The findings reveal that while both male and female adolescents exhibit emotional intelligence within the average range, there is no statistically significant difference between their levels. This suggests that gender does not play a decisive role in determining emotional intelligence among adolescents.

Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of fostering emotional intelligence through structured interventions. Strategies such as self-awareness development, self-regulation techniques, empathy-building exercises, and social skills training can significantly enhance students' ability to manage emotions effectively. Given the growing challenges faced by adolescents in academic and social settings, integrating emotional intelligence training into educational curricula can be a transformative approach for their holistic development.

The research also highlights the need for educators and parents to model emotional intelligence in their interactions with students, creating a supportive and inclusive environment that nurtures emotional growth. Future research can further explore longitudinal impacts of emotional intelligence training and its influence on academic success, mental well-being, and career readiness. In conclusion, emotional intelligence is a critical skill that equips adolescents with the ability to navigate their emotions, build meaningful relationships, and adapt to dynamic life circumstances. By implementing targeted interventions, schools and communities can play a pivotal role in fostering emotionally intelligent individuals who contribute positively to society.

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