

A Comparative Study of Emotional Intelligence, Stress and Soft Skills on Senior Secondary School Students of Faridabad City

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ABSTRACT :

The present study is an attempt to find the effect of emotional intelligence on stress and how soft skills play a vital role in overcoming stress on Senior secondary students of Faridabad city of Haryana State . The Researcher had selected 600 senior school students giving representation to types of Schools Government and Private owned and on the basis of gender i.e male and female .The validated inventory of the emotional intelligence, stress and soft skill was used as a tool .The questionnaire contained 60 questions on Emotional Intelligence , 40 questions on stress and 50 on soft skills having five point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree . Pearson coefficient of Correlation ,Mean ,T-test and ANOVA was applied to find relationship between various components of these three dimensions .The study found there is positive correlation between emotional intelligence and other two dimensions .It was found that private school students showcased markedly higher emotional intelligence compared to government school peers and female are shown higher emotional intelligence . The grade level of students, whether 11th or 12th class ,did not impact emotional intelligence in any statistically significant manner. A crucial gender difference was also uncovered , with female students reporting experiencing markedly greater stress relative to their male counterparts across all domains.

Keywords : Emotional Intelligence, Stress , soft skills , Gender ,Grade

INDRODUCTION :

The educational landscape is a complex tapestry interwoven with various dimensions, where students not only acquire knowledge but also navigate an intricate maze of emotions, stressors, and interpersonal interactions. Senior secondary school years are particularly pivotal, marking the transition between adolescence and young adulthood. Youth is living in an anxiety ridden atmosphere. Adolescence is the most vulnerable stage to the emotional problems. Today youth is living in an age of anxiety. This period often bring about intensified academic demands, heightened peer interactions, and self-exploratory journeys, further underscoring the importance of emotional intelligence (EI), stress management, and soft skills.

Faridabad city, with its unique socio-cultural backdrop, presents an opportune setting to delve deep into this exploration. Located in the northern state of Haryana, India, Faridabad stands as an emblematic representation of urban educational challenges, juxtaposed with traditional values, making the study of EI, stress, and soft skills in its senior secondary students particularly intriguing.

This chapter sets the stage for our comparative study, providing a background on the pivotal elements in focus – emotional intelligence, stress, and soft skills – and underscoring their significance in today's rapidly evolving educational and socio-cultural environments.

Understanding the psychological and emotional constructs of students is vital for educators, policymakers, and parents alike. Among these constructs, Emotional Intelligence (EI) has garnered significant attention over the past few decades. This segment explores the evolution of EI within educational settings.

Need and importance of the study:

In the era of a rapidly globalizing world, students are no longer judged purely on academic merit but also on their emotional intelligence, ability to manage stress, and possession of requisite soft skills. It becomes increasingly crucial to understand how these factors interlink and influence a student's holistic development, especially within the unique cultural and social contexts of different regions.

Several studies have illustrated the fundamental role of Emotional Intelligence (EI) in enhancing students' academic achievements, improving their interpersonal relationships, and augmenting their overall well-being (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Brackett et al., 2011). In conjunction with this, students' ability to manage stress has been found to significantly impact their cognitive functions, academic results, and even physical health (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Ayyash-Abdo, 2002). Simultaneously, the burgeoning importance of soft skills, like communication, teamwork, and problem solving, is being emphasized by employers and higher education institutions alike as key attributes for success in the modern world (Robles, 2012).

However, while the global importance of these aspects is well-documented, there remains a pressing need for region-specific studies. Faridabad, with its unique blend of urban development and rich cultural heritage, provides a contrasting environment that might offer unique insights into the interplay of EI, stress, and soft skills among its student populace (Sharma, 2005). Generalized studies or those focusing on western cultures might not necessarily capture the particularities of the Faridabad context, making localized research crucial for more tailored educational interventions (Mishra & Bhatnagar, 2018).

In essence, understanding the dynamic between EI, stress, and soft skills in Faridabad's senior secondary students can pave the way for improved educational strategies, targeted interventions, and a more holistic approach to student development in the city.

Review of related literature :

Evolution of Emotional Intelligence Theory:

The origins of emotional intelligence can be traced back to Charles Darwin's work on the importance of emotional expression for survival and second adaptation. Later, in the 1920s, even though the term "emotional intelligence" was not coined yet, psychologists like Edward Thorndike used the term "social intelligence" to describe the ability to understand and manage other people (Thorndike, 1920).

Conceptualization and Re-emergence in the 1980s:

It was only in the 1980s that the concept began to take a more definite shape. Howard Gardner's seminal work, "Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences" (1983), introduced the idea of multiple intelligences. Gardner described intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences, which, when closely examined, resonate with the modern understanding of emotional intelligence. Intrapersonal intelligence encapsulates the ability to understand oneself, while interpersonal intelligence relates to understanding and interacting with others (Gardner, 1983).

Mayer & Salovey's Model:

In 1990, two pioneering psychologists, John D. Mayer and Peter Salovey, presented a model that explicitly defined emotional intelligence. They viewed EI as "the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (Mayer & Salovey, 1990, p. 189). This marked the beginning of a more empirical approach to the construct, laying the groundwork for many subsequent models.

Goleman's Influence:

Daniel Goleman, in his groundbreaking 1995 book "Emotional Intelligence," brought the concept to the lay audience. He proposed that EI could be as important, if not more so, than the traditional intelligence quotient (IQ) in predicting

success in life. Goleman's work made the concept popular, but it also drew criticism for its broadness and lack of empirical support (Goleman, 1995).

Bar-On's Emotion Quotient Inventory:

Reuven Bar-On (1997) introduced the Emotion Quotient Inventory (EQ-i), an instrument designed to measure various dimensions of emotional intelligence. Bar-On described emotional intelligence as an array of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies, and skills that influence one's ability to cope with environmental demands and pressures (Bar-On, 1997).

Recent Developments:

Contemporary understandings of emotional intelligence continue to evolve. Scholars like Zeidner, Roberts, and Matthews (2008) have offered critical evaluations of different EI models, emphasizing the need for clear operational definitions and rigorous empirical study.

Theoretical Frameworks for Understanding Student Stress

The academic journey, while promising in terms of personal and intellectual growth, is also characterized by a unique set of challenges that can induce stress among students. Various theories and models have been proposed over the years to understand and explain the sources, nature, and implications of student stress.

Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (1984):

One of the most influential frameworks, this model emphasizes the interaction between an individual and their environment. According to this model, stress arises when individuals perceive an imbalance between demands (stressors) and their ability to cope. The appraisal process involves two stages:

Primary Appraisal: Recognizing a potential threat.

Secondary Appraisal: Evaluating coping resources and options.

Students constantly engage in this appraisal process as they navigate academic challenges, personal issues, and developmental tasks (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Maslach's Burnout Model (1982):

Maslach's model of burnout is particularly relevant for understanding chronic stress in academic settings. The model identifies three primary dimensions of burnout:

Emotional Exhaustion: Feeling overextended and drained.

Depersonalization: A negative, detached attitude towards others.

Reduced Personal Accomplishment: Feeling incompetent and unproductive.

Burnout in students can result from prolonged periods of high demand, lack of adequate resources, or feelings of inefficacy in their academic roles (Maslach, 1982).

Albrecht's Four Types of Stress (1979):

Albrecht identified four main types of stress that can be applied to the student context:

Time Stress: Pressures of deadlines and time constraints.

Anticipatory Stress: Anxiety about upcoming events or future uncertainties.

Situational Stress: Immediate challenges and crises that require attention.

Encounter Stress: Stress arising from interactions with others.

Students often grapple with all these types, especially during critical periods like examinations, presentations, and group assignments (Albrecht, 1979).

Diathesis-Stress Model:

This model purports that stress results from the interaction between an individual's vulnerability (diathesis) and external stressors. Some students might be more predisposed (due to genetic, psychological, or behavioral factors) to experience stress or stress-related disorders. When combined with significant academic or personal stressors, these vulnerabilities can amplify the stress experience (Monroe & Simons, 1991).

The Significance of Soft Skills in the Digital Age:

With the rise of technology and automation, soft skills have become even more crucial. While machines can replicate technical abilities, human interaction, creativity, and emotional intelligence remain irreplaceable. The integration of technology in education further underscores the importance of soft skills such as digital communication, online collaboration, and adaptability (Dede, 2010).

Soft Skills and Academic Success:

Research indicates a positive correlation between soft skills and academic performance. Students with better communication, time management, and interpersonal skills tend to perform better academically (Farrington et al., 2012).

In the context of education, soft skills are more than mere adjunct skills; they are integral to holistic development. Their significance spans beyond the classroom, preparing students for the complexities and demands of the modern workforce and society at large.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION

Emotional Intelligence : Emotional Intelligence is an ability ,capacity or skill to perceive ,assess and manage the emotions of one's self ,of others and of groups .Emotional Intelligence is an array of non –cognitive capabilities ,competencies and skills that influences one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures .

Soft Skills: Soft skills, often termed as 'people skills' or 'interpersonal skills', encompass a broad range of non-technical abilities that play a pivotal role in one's ability to interact effectively with others. In the realm of education and employment, soft skills have gained prominence due to their direct impact on collaboration, communication, and conflict resolution, among other areas.

Stress : Stress is a feeling of emotional or physical tension .it can come from any event or thought that makes you feel frustrated ,angry or nervous .

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of researching emotional intelligence, stress, and soft skills in school students are:

To explore the relationship between emotional intelligence and stress and

To study the emotional intelligence of different types of school students of Faridabad city.

To study the stress of different types of school students of Faridabad city.

To compare the emotional intelligence, stress and soft skills of different type of school students of Faridabad city...

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

There will be no significant difference among these variables emotional intelligence, stress and soft skill of different type of school students of Faridabad city.

There is no significant difference in the level of emotional intelligence, stress and soft skills between male and female school students in Faridabad city.

There is no significant difference in the level of emotional intelligence, stress and soft skills between 11th and 12th grade level school students in Faridabad city.

SAMPLE :

Cluster random sampling was used for obtaining sample .A total of 600 students studying in XI and XII standard were selected out of which 300 students from Government School and 300 students from private school .300 boys and 300 girls .same proportion of students of XI and XII class

.TOOL USED:

The tool used for the present study was a validated questionnaire developed containing questions on emotional intelligence, stress and soft skills.

STATISTICAL TECHNIQUE USED:

The statistical technique used for the analysis were Mean ,T-test , Person's coefficient of correlation and ANOVA.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION :

A comparative analysis was conducted to identify relationships between emotional intelligence, stress levels, and soft skills.

Correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Stress

A Pearson correlation test found a moderately strong negative correlation ($r = -0.412$, $p < 0.01$) between emotional intelligence and stress scores. This indicates that students with higher emotional intelligence experienced lower stress.

Correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Soft Skills

There was a moderately strong positive correlation between emotional intelligence and soft skills scores ($r = 0.386$, $p < 0.01$). Students with higher emotional intelligence tended to have better soft skills.

Differences Based on Gender

Female students scored higher on emotional intelligence ($p = 0.012$), soft skills ($p = 0.033$), and experienced greater stress ($p = 0.041$) compared to males.

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Differences Based on Grade Level

The differences between 11th and 12th graders were minor for emotional intelligence, stress, and soft skills.

In summary, the key findings from the comparative analysis are:

Emotional intelligence correlates negatively with stress but positively with soft skills.

Correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Stress

A Pearson correlation test found a moderately strong negative correlation ($r = -0.412$, $p < 0.01$) between emotional intelligence and stress scores. This indicates that students with higher emotional intelligence experienced lower stress.

Private school students showed higher emotional intelligence and soft skills but lower stress than government schools.

Grade level did not impact the variables significantly.

The analysis provides meaningful insights into the relationships between emotional intelligence, stress, and soft skills among high school students in Faridabad city.

FINDINGS:

1. Emotional Intelligence findings:

Females scored higher than males on all emotional intelligence dimensions. The differences were statistically significant.

Private school students demonstrated higher competencies on all dimensions of EI compared to government schools.

There were negligible differences between grade levels on emotional intelligence abilities.

The data highlights the higher emotional intelligence of females and private school students across competencies like self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation and social skills

2. Stress findings :

Females experienced higher stress overall, specifically greater academic, peer, parental pressure, health issues, and future uncertainty.

Government school students reported higher academic stress, peer pressure, parental pressure, and financial stress compared to private schools.

11th graders showed marginally higher academic stress, peer pressure, parental pressure, and future uncertainty than 12th graders.

The data indicates certain subgroups such as females, government school students, and 11th graders face higher stress levels arising from different sources.

3. FINDINGS OF SOFT SKILLS :

Females outperformed males on most soft skills except for problem solving and leadership.

Private school students demonstrated higher competencies on all soft skills versus government schools.

Grade levels showed little differences, except 12th graders had higher resilience and adaptability.

The results highlight the stronger soft skills of females and private school students across areas like communication, teamwork, creativity, resilience, time management, and adaptability.

Comparative Analysis of All Variables

A comparative analysis was conducted between emotional intelligence, stress levels, and soft skills using multivariate ANOVA:

There was a significant effect of gender on emotional intelligence, stress, and soft skills, $F(3, 596) = 63.244, p < .001$. Females scored higher on emotional intelligence ($p < .01$) and soft skills ($p < .05$), but reported greater stress ($p < .05$).

School type also showed a significant effect on the variables, $F(3, 596) = 422.166, p < .001$. Private school students demonstrated higher emotional intelligence ($p < .001$) and soft skills ($p < .001$), but lower stress ($p < .001$).

The effect of grade level was non-significant on emotional intelligence, stress, and soft skills, $F(3, 596) = 1.244, p > .05$.

There was a significant interaction between gender and school type, $F(3, 596) = 11.633$, $p < .001$. Female private school students showed the highest emotional intelligence and soft skills, but male government school students had the lowest scores. For stress, male private school students had the lowest scores while females in government schools had the highest stress levels.

Implications for Educational Policies

The study provides a comprehensive empirical understanding of the current landscape of emotional intelligence, stress and soft skills among senior secondary students in Faridabad city. The data quantifies specific competencies and subgroups that are excelling versus areas warranting greater policy and pedagogical focus. These multi-dimensional insights pave the path for enhancing educational practices, school cultures and support systems to nurture the holistic development of students as future innovators, collaborators and change makers equipped to thrive amidst complexity...

Policies also need to expressly address the pervasive academic pressure exacerbating student anxiety. Undue emphasis on high-stakes testing and unrealistic performance expectations should be moderated to allow for balanced and flexible learning. Policies mandating reasonable student- teacher ratios and adequate non-academic outlets for recreation, arts, and sports are also vital.

For sustainable change, raising awareness among parents and families emerges as crucial. Schools need to collaborate with parents and sensitize them regarding emotional intelligence, soft skills, and creating psychologically-safe environments for children to thrive.

Conclusion

This research study on emotional intelligence, stress and soft skills among students comes at an opportune juncture when society is being compelled to re-evaluate traditional education paradigms. The findings pave a clear path forward. Education systems need to be re-envisioned as holistic and humanistic ecosystems that empower youth to understand themselves, relate to others, and contribute meaningfully to the world. Only such a paradigm rooted in the harmonious development of human potential can graduate generations of balanced, socially conscious, and interpersonally thriving individuals ready to create an evolved and enlightened society.

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