

Stress of Secondary School Students with Respect to Gender and Emotional Intelligence

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ABSTRACT

The present research work was specifically undertaken to study the stress of secondary school students with respect to their gender and emotional intelligence. Survey technique under descriptive method of research was adopted in this present investigation. By employing convenient sampling technique a sample of 1100 secondary school students were selected from four district of Himachal Pradesh. Students Stress Scale by Akhtar (2011) and Emotional Intelligence Scale by Singh and Narain (2014) were used to collect data for the present study. The collected data were analyzed by employing Analysis of Variance (Two way). The major findings of the study revealed that male and female secondary school students possessed similar level of stress. The secondary school students possessing different level of emotional intelligence did not differ significantly from each other with regard to their stress. Further, it also indicated that gender and emotional intelligence do not interact significantly with respect to stress of secondary school students. Therefore, it may be interpreted that the gender and emotional intelligence taken together did not affected stress of secondary school student significantly. Towards the end of the paper major findings, discussion on the results and implications of the findings of the investigation have been discussed in detail.

Keywords: Stress, Gender and Emotional Intelligence

INTRODUCTION

Education is fundamentally a human-centered endeavour. It is a purposeful process aimed at nurturing individuals so they can realize their full potential, take control of their environment, and fulfill their needs. It forms the cornerstone of a nation's progress, prosperity, and development. As the most vital component of human resources, education must aim to make the best use of each person's unique talents. To ensure optimal use of resources, it is essential to guide young minds to grow to their fullest capabilities and train them to utilize available resources wisely. India's current formal education system is largely modeled after the British framework, a legacy of colonial rule. Today, both the central and state governments share responsibility for education in India, though the structure and implementation of school education can differ from state to state. In their pursuit of academic success and admission into prestigious institutions, many students seek extra academic support in the form of private tuitions, often starting as early as middle school. Academic pressure has become a widely recognized source of stress for school students, both in India and globally. Traditionally, stress has been considered an inevitable and even beneficial part of adolescence, helping students build resilience through new challenges. However, increasing academic competition and expectations of perfection have intensified the pressure on students. This has led to a growing concern about the psychological toll of academic demands, with rising instances of anxiety, sleep disorders, dishonesty, depression, and harmful coping mechanisms such as substance abuse.

Emotions significantly influence a person's thoughts, attitudes, biases, interests, and learning experiences often unconsciously. As a result, modern psychology has devoted increasing attention to understanding emotions and their impact. Emotional balance is essential for leading a healthy life, and emotional intelligence (EI) plays a central role in this balance. Education, when approached holistically, aims to develop all aspects of an individual such as physical, intellectual, social, spiritual, and emotional. Real-life experiences show that individuals with high intellectual ability may not always succeed, while others with moderate cognitive abilities thrive, indicating that success is not determined by intelligence alone. Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand, regulate, and use emotions effectively, emerges as a critical factor. In classrooms, both teachers and students are emotionally active participants, and their interactions heavily influence the learning process. Students need to learn how to manage and appropriately express emotions, especially during stressful moments. Classrooms are emotionally rich environments filled with a range of emotions such as happiness, frustration, excitement, and anger. Emotional intelligence is closely tied to stress management; students with higher emotional intelligence are generally better at coping with academic and social challenges. Understanding this relationship benefits students, teachers, parents, and school administrators alike. Developing emotional intelligence can help students lead more balanced, productive lives and contribute positively to society.

School-related stress can seriously affect students' well-being, leading to poor academic performance, fatigue, irritability, and mental health concerns. Excessive pressure to perform well can overwhelm students, particularly during critical transitional phases such as preparing for competitive examinations or adjusting to high school demands. Adolescents may experience more stress than older students due to mounting expectations from parents and teachers, peer competition, and uncertainty about the future. These stressors, either individually or combined, can negatively affect emotional and physical health, leading to disengagement or even dropping out of school (American Youth Policy Forum, 2008).

In modern education, fostering emotional intelligence benefits both teaching and learning. It promotes positive teacher-student interactions, reduces behavioral issues, and creates a safe and encouraging learning atmosphere. Schools that integrate emotional intelligence training into their curriculum contribute to the development of students who are more resilient, mentally healthy, and academically successful. **Kauts (2016)** explored the relationship between academic stress and emotional intelligence among college students in Jalandhar city. The study found that students from the science stream experienced higher levels of academic stress compared to those in humanities and commerce streams. It also revealed a significant negative relationship between emotional intelligence and academic stress, indicating that students with higher emotional intelligence reported lower levels of academic stress. The study suggested that enhancing emotional intelligence could be an effective strategy for reducing academic stress among college students. **Alam (2018)** examined the emotional intelligence of adolescent students. The findings revealed significant differences in emotional intelligence based on school type and gender, with private school students and girls scoring higher than government school students and boys. However, no significant difference was found between rural and urban students. The study concluded that school type and gender influence emotional intelligence, while area of residence does not. It recommended that schools, particularly government institutions, introduce activities to enhance emotional skills and design programs that address the specific emotional development needs of boys and girls. **Baghele et al. (2019)** conducted a study titled "Assessment of emotional intelligence among adolescent students in a selected school in Nagpur." Significant associations were found between emotional intelligence and both gender and age, with female students and older adolescents displaying higher emotional intelligence than males and younger students. The study recommended implementing life skills training and emotional-awareness workshops in schools, with a particular focus on supporting younger male students. **Kumar (2020)** examined the emotional intelligence of higher secondary school students in Nagapattinam district, Tamil Nadu. The study found that emotional intelligence levels among students were generally average. No significant differences were observed based on subject stream, school locality, type of family, father's occupation, or family income. However, female students scored higher than male students in overall emotional intelligence. The findings suggested that most demographic factors had minimal influence on emotional intelligence, except gender. The study recommended incorporating emotional intelligence development programs into school curricula and designing targeted interventions to enhance students' emotional skills and self-awareness. **Halimi et al. (2021)** investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement among undergraduate students in a private university in Kuwait. The findings showed strong positive associations between self-emotion

appraisal and use of emotion with students' academic performance, as measured by GPA. Other dimensions of emotional intelligence did not show significant relationships with academic achievement. The study concluded that students who were better at understanding and using their emotions performed better academically. It recommended that educational institutions incorporate emotional intelligence training particularly in self-emotion appraisal and emotion utilization, into their curricula to enhance academic success. **Jassal (2021)** explored the relationship between academic stress and emotional intelligence in high school students in New Delhi. The findings revealed a significant inverse correlation between emotional intelligence and academic stress, indicating that students with higher emotional intelligence experienced lower levels of stress. Additionally, factors such as gender, family structure, and being an only child were found to influence both emotional intelligence and academic stress. The study recommended that schools implement emotional skills training, counselling sessions, and family-based interventions to enhance emotional intelligence and help reduce academic stress among high school students. **Geetha and Sharath (2023)** examined emotional intelligence among secondary school students. The findings revealed that the majority of students displayed high emotional intelligence. Girls in urban schools scored significantly higher than boys, while no gender difference was observed in rural areas. The study concluded that most students, regardless of school location, showed strong emotional intelligence. It recommended incorporating experiential learning and emotional-awareness activities in schools and encouraged further research into contributing factors across diverse student groups.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To study gender-wise difference in stress among secondary school students.
2. To study the difference in stress among secondary school students with regard to their level of emotional intelligence.
3. To study the interaction between gender and emotional intelligence with regard to stress among secondary school students.

Hypotheses of the Study:

1. There will be no significant gender-wise difference in stress among secondary school students.
2. There will be no significant difference in stress among secondary school students with regard to their level of emotional intelligence.
3. There will be no significant interaction between gender and emotional intelligence with regard to stress among secondary school students.

Methodology

In the present study, survey technique under descriptive method was employed for achieving the objectives of the study.

Sampling

The data were gathered from the four districts of Himachal Pradesh i.e. Kullu, Mandi, Bilaspur, and Shimla. A total sample of 1100 secondary school students was comprised for the study.

Research Tools Used

For the data collection research instruments i.e. Students Stress Scale by Akhtar (2011) and Emotional Intelligence Scale by Singh and Narain (2014) were used. The collected data were analyzed using the statistical method of analysis of variance (Two-way).

Analysis of Data

In order to study the main effect of gender and level of emotional intelligence on stress among secondary school students along with their interactional effect, two way analysis of variance (3x2 factor design) involving three levels of emotional intelligence i.e. high, moderate and low and two categories of gender i.e. male and female, was applied on the mean scores of stress. The means and standard deviations of stress scores with respect to gender and level of emotional intelligence are given in Table 1.

TABLE 1

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF STRESS SCORES WITH REGARD TO GENDER AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Sr. No.	Level of Emotional Intelligence (B) Gender (A)		Mean Stress Scores			
			High Level	Moderate Level	Low Level	Total
I	Male	Mean	154.93	160.57	162.00	159.90
		S.D.	22.966	21.616	20.927	21.803
		N	86	382	82	550
II	Female	Mean	159.26	158.91	158.72	158.93
		S.D.	20.829	25.278	21.787	24.198
		N	73	395	82	550
III	Total	Mean	156.92	159.72	160.36	159.41
		S.D.	22.049	23.549	21.359	23.026
		N	159	777	164	1100

Afterwards, the statistical technique of two way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was applied on mean stress scores of secondary school students with regard to gender and level of emotional intelligence (high, moderate and low level). The F-values were computed and the summary of the results are given in Table 2.

TABLE 2

SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR STRESS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH REGARD TO GENDER AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Sr. No.	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares (Variance)	F-Ratio
I	Gender (A)	6.716	1	6.716	0.13 ^{NS}
II	Emotional Intelligence (B)	1075.521	2	537.761	1.015 ^{NS}
III	Interaction (AxB)	1418.261	2	709.130	1.338 ^{NS}
IV	Error Variance	579778.768	1094	529.962	
V	Total	28536364.00	1100		
VI	Corrected Total	582704.622	1099		

NS-Not Significant

MAIN EFFECTS

(a) Gender (A)

The calculated 'F' for the main effect of gender on stress among secondary school students, irrespective of their level of emotional intelligence, came out to be 0.013 which is less than the table value (3.85) even at 0.05 level of significance, for d_f 1 and 1094. Hence, Hypothesis No. 1 that, "*There will be no significant gender-wise difference in stress among secondary school students*" was retained. So, it may be inferred that male and female secondary school students possessed almost similar level of stress.

Further, the mean stress scores of male secondary school students was 159.90 with SD of 21.803 which is somewhat more than the mean stress score of female secondary school students (158.93 with SD of 24.198). On the basis of mean scores, it may be interpreted that male secondary school students possessed little bit high level of stress as compared to female secondary school students.

(b) Emotional Intelligence (B)

The calculated value of 'F' for the main effect of emotional intelligence on stress among secondary school students, irrespective of their types of gender, came out to be 1.015 which is less than the table value (3.00) even at 0.05 level of significance, for d_f 2 and 1094. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 that "There will be no significant difference in stress among secondary school students with regard to their level of emotional intelligence" was accepted. It may be interpreted that secondary school students with different level of emotional intelligence did not differ significantly from each other with respect to their stress.

In addition to this, total weighted mean stress scores of secondary school students with high, moderate and low level of emotional intelligence were found to be 156.92, 159.72 and 160.36 respectively. Therefore, it may be interpreted that secondary school students with low level of emotional intelligence (mean=160.36) and secondary school students with moderate level of emotional intelligence (mean=159.72) possessed significantly better emotional intelligence as compared to secondary school students with high level of emotional intelligence (mean=156.92). Figure 4.8 displays the mean stress scores corresponding to different levels of emotional intelligence.

Interactional Effect (AXB)

The calculated value of 'F' for interactional effect of gender and emotional intelligence with respect to stress of secondary school students came out to be 1.338 which is less than the table value (3.00) even at 0.05 level of significance, for d_f 2 and 1094. Hence, Hypothesis No. 3 "There will be no significant interaction between gender and emotional intelligence with regard to stress among secondary school students" was retained. This showed that gender and emotional intelligence (in combination with each other) did not significantly influence stress among secondary school students. Thus, it may be concluded that the combined influence of gender and emotional intelligence did not significantly impact the stress levels of secondary school students.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

The present investigation was undertaken to study the stress of secondary school students with respect to gender and emotional intelligence. After analyzing the study's findings, it was revealed that male and female secondary school students possessed almost similar level of stress. Hence, it is need that stress management strategies and mental health support in schools should be designed to address the needs of all students, regardless of gender. Educators, counselors, and policymakers should focus on creating inclusive programmes that promote emotional resilience, time management, and coping skills for both boys and girls. Since stress affects academic performance and overall well-being, schools should implement regular stress assessments, provide access to counseling services, and foster a supportive environment that encourages open communication and emotional expression among all students. Further, the results also showed that the secondary school students possessing different level of emotional intelligence did not differ significantly from each other with regard to their stress. In addition to this, it also indicated that gender and emotional intelligence do not interact significantly with respect to stress of secondary school students. It is therefore essential that stress among students may be influenced more by external environmental or academic factors than by individual emotional traits or gender differences. Therefore, educational interventions should focus on creating supportive school environments, reducing academic pressure, and promoting healthy lifestyle habits for all students, rather than targeting

specific groups based on emotional intelligence or gender. Schools should implement broad-based stress management programs, equip students with practical coping strategies, and ensure that support services are accessible to every student, emphasizing the universal importance of mental health care.

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