FEAR OF NEGATIVE EVALUATION AND ADJUSTMENT AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS AS A FUNCTION OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND GENDER

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of emotional intelligence is a growing topic for behavioral investigation as researchers strive to understand its influence on various social interactions. This dissertation research is basically concerned with finding out if there is an association between emotional intelligence, adjustment and fear of negative evaluation. Recent research indicates that emotions play an integral part in adjustments and fear of negative evaluation. Review of literature highlights the need for examination of the relationship of emotional intelligence as an overarching concept to the adjustment and fear of negative evaluations. Sample of this study was collected from different colleges in Nagpur. Sixty college students were taken for the study. There are 4 null hypotheses that investigate emotional intelligence and gender differences as a predictor of adjustment and fear of negative evaluation. In which there were 30 were male and 30 were female. Those 30 males and 30 females were again divided into two groups. Those with high emotional intelligence and those with low emotional intelligence. Mangal’s emotional intelligence inventory, adjustment inventory for college students, and brief fear of negative evaluation scales were used for the measurement of all variables. Mean and SD were calculated first and then 2-way ANOVA were applied. Results indicate that there was a significant relationship between emotional intelligence, adjustment, and fear of negative evaluation. No significant difference was found between males and females.

Keywords: Fear of Negative Evaluation, Adjustment, Emotional Intelligence and Gender

INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence draws from the branches of behavioral emotional and communications theories. Goleman is the person most commonly associated with it. (But he is not the only researcher the most distant roots of emotional intelligence can be traced to Charles Darwin’s early work on the importance of emotional expression for survival and adaptation.) Wayne Leon Payne is credited with first using the term “emotional intelligence” in 1985. Soon after, John Mayer and Peter Salovey described it as the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions.

We know that one’s intelligence is an innate as well as acquired intellectual potential. Every child is born with some
intellectual potential that grows and develops with the growth of maturity and experiences. Similarly, one is also born with some innate emotional intelligence, in terms of one’s level of emotional sensitivity, emotional memory, emotional processing and emotional learning ability. This potential (unlike intelligence) is liable to be developed or damaged as a result of one’s experiences. The difference here is between the developmental pattern of innate emotional intelligence as a result of maturity and experiences.

Where general intelligence is generally not subjected to decline or damage with life experiences, the emotional intelligence can be either developed or destroyed depending upon the type of environmental experiences one gets in one’s future life. However, here are enough chances that unhealthy environment influences the lessons taught by parents, teachers and other models may lead to the declining or damaging of one’s innate or previously held level of emotional intelligence. In this way, whatever a person’s emotional intelligence at particular time in life is that level of his emotional intelligence which is with at that time as a result of the ongoing emotional lessons or life experiences.

**Emotional intelligence: conceptualization and scope**

There is a set of conceptually related processes involving emotional information. The mental processes include: (a) appraising and expressing emotions in the self and others, (b) regulating emotion in the self and others, and (c) using emotions in adaptive ways.

**Adjustment**

The concept of adjustment is originated from the biological term ‘adaptation’. Biologists used the term adaptation strictly for the physical demands of their environment but psychologists used term adjustment for varying conditions of social or interpersonal relations in the society. Adjustment may be defined as a process of altering behavior to reach a harmonious relationship with the environment.

Adjustment involves gratification of a person’s need as governed by the demands of various environmental situations. This is not, however, one way process: an individual maintains the balance between himself and his surrounding, either by modifying his own behavior or by modifying the environment. In context, as Arkoff states, adjustment is the interaction between a person and his environment. How one adjusts in a particular situation depends upon one’s personal characteristics and also the circumstances of the situation. In other words, both personal and environmental factor, work side by side in adjustment. An individual is adjusted if he is considered adjusted to himself and his environment.

**Social phobia**

Watson and Friend (1969) defined fear of negative evaluation as “apprehension about others’ evaluation, distress over their negative evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively”.

People’s concern with being evaluated unfavorably by others have been implicated in a number of social psychological phenomena, including conformity, pro-social behavior, self-
presentation, self-serving attributions, social-anxiety, self-handicapping, attitude change, compliance, and social facilitation. Social process in which evaluation apprehension is a factor should be partly mediated by differences to a degree to which individuals are apprehensive about being negatively evaluated by others. People who are highly concerned about being perceived and evaluated negatively would be more likely to behave in ways that avoid the possibility of unfavorable evaluations and, thus, be more responsive to situational factors relevant to such concerns than individuals who are less apprehensive of others’ evaluation of them.

Individuals with high fear of negative evaluation, tends to behave in ways designed to avoid the prospect of being evaluated unfavorably. High fear of negative evaluation individual’s work harder on boring tasks when they believe their work will be explicitly approved by others (Watson and Friend, 1969). High fear of negative evaluation individuals attempt to avoid potentially threatening social comparison information to a greater degree (Friend and Gilbert, 1973), and indicate they feel worse about receiving negative evaluations (Smith and Sarason, 1975). High fear of negative evaluation individuals prefers to be in a positive asymmetrical relationship – being liked by another more than one likes the other – rather than a balanced relationship (Smith and Campbell, 1973). High fear of negative evaluation individuals are more concerned with making good impression on others and try harder to so during face to face conversations (Leary, 1980).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Anthony M, Parker James D.S. Summerfedlt Laura, Kloosterman, Patricia [2005] conducted a study, in which there has been no published investigation made on the relationship between social anxiety and emotional intelligence or their shed impact upon interpersonal adjustment. This study examined these questions using structural equations modeling with self-report data from a large non-clinical sample (N = 2629). Emotional intelligence was found to be highly related to social interaction anxiety, but not performance anxiety. A model permitting these three predictors to inter correlate that the emotional intelligence factor was the dominant predictor of interpersonal adjustment, substantially reducing the unique contribution made by interaction anxiety. This pattern reflected the principal contribution made to interaction anxiety by the interpersonal and, particularly, interpersonal domains of emotional intelligence.

Elisabeth Engelberg, Lennart Sjoberg [2004] the present paper deals with the concept of emotional intelligence (S and M) for the main purpose of investigating the claim that it involves emotion perception. The analysis was based on 282 respondents and showed that emotion perception was related to a greater accuracy in the assessment of mood as experienced by others. Results further suggest that EI may be construed, in part, as including emotional reactivity. Another finding was that successful social adjustment was related to a more accurate perception of variations in others mood, which strengthens the hypotheses that emotion perception is essential for adaptation on a social level.
David Akinlolu Adeyemo (2006) The goal of this study was to explore the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and adjustment of students in transition. This has been approached from two perspectives. The first perspective examined the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Adjustment. The second perspective was to see if the strengths of Emotional Intelligence (moderate, high and low) would influence the adjustment of the subjects. The findings indicate that significant relationship exists between Emotional Intelligence and adjustment. This finding corroborates Sjaberg (2001), whose findings demonstrate significant relationship between Emotional Intelligence and life adjustment. The finding is also supported by the work of Greenburg, Kusche, Cook and Quamma (1995). It was established in this work that EI contributes to social and academic adjustment of school children. Second finding of this study shows that there is significant relationship between levels of Emotional Intelligence and adjustment.

Kumar Sunil (2009) investigated the role of emotional intelligence in managing stress and anxiety at workplace. 120 management students were taken for the study. Emotional intelligence scale, stress inventory, general anxiety tests were used for the measurement of all the variables. Descriptive statistics, correlation and regression analysis were used for data analysis. After analyzing the results, it can be said that the hypotheses of the present study i.e., the EI will correlate negatively with stress and anxiety and EI will be predicted through levels of stress and anxiety is partially confirmed. The findings of the present study indicate that the low and high level of EI established relationship to some extent in stress and anxiety. Negative correlation of emotional intelligence with stress and anxiety highlights that emotional intelligence will prove to be a helpful tool in dealing with stress and anxiety at workplace.

Laura J. Summerfeldt et.al. (2005) examined the shared impact of EI and social anxiety on interpersonal adjustment. EI was found to be highly related to social interaction anxiety, but not performance anxiety. A model permitting these three predictors to intercorrelate indicated that the EI factor was the dominant predictor of interpersonal adjustment.

**METHODOLOGY**

**Aim of the study** The main aim of the study is to find out the effect of high and low emotional intelligence & gender on adjustment and fear of negative evaluation.

**Objectives of the study**

- To find out whether the subjects high on emotional intelligence are low on fear of negative evaluation.
- To find out whether the subjects high on emotional intelligence are high on adjustment.
- To find out whether males and females differ significantly with regards to emotional intelligence in fear of negative evaluation.
- To find out whether males and females differ significantly with regards to adjustment.

**Hypothesis**

Subjects high on emotional intelligence have low fear of negative evaluation than subjects with low emotional intelligence.
Subjects with high emotional intelligence have better adjustment than subjects with low emotional intelligence.

Males and females differ significantly on adjustment.

Males and females differ significantly on fear of negative evaluation.

Sample

The total sample of the present study consisted of 60 subjects of which 30 were males and 30 were females (mean age=22). They were further categorized on the basis of emotional intelligence, high and low. Male-female ratio was kept at 1:1.

Tools used for data collection

In the present study, the following papers were used to assess the EI, FNE and adjustment.

Mangals’ Emotional intelligence inventory

The test has 100 items, 25 each from the four area to be answered ‘yes’ or ‘No’. The reliability of this inventory with split half method is 0.89 and test retest method is 0.92 . The validity has been established by adopting two different approaches namely, factorial criterion related approach, and was found to be substantially high.

Adjustment Inventory for College Students

This inventory has been designed to use with Hindi and English knowing college and university subjects. It has 102 items (Home 16, Health 15, Social 19, Emotional 31 and Educational 21). Coefficient of reliability was determined by (i) split- half method(0.94) (ii) K-R formula -20(0.92) . test- retest reliability (0.93).

Fear of Negative Evaluation Brief Leary(1983) developed a brief version of FNE i.e. convenient for quick and repeated administration. On this questionnaire, respondent’s rate, the degree to which each of 12 statements applies to them on a 5-point likert scale (1= not at all characteristic of me; 5 = extremely characteristic of me). Total scores range from 12 to 60. The items selected for inclusion in the FNEB had satisfactory item-total correlations with the original scale, ranging from .43 to .75. The brief version of the scale also correlates highly with the original scale (r=.96) and the reliability of the FNEB has been established using non-clinical samples. A high level of internal consistency was obtained for the items comprising the FNEB (a =.90) and a test-retest reliability coefficient of .75 was found over a 4-week interval.

Variables

Independent Variable: Gender & EI

Dependent Variable: Adjustment & FNE

Research Design

In the present study there were two major IV namely the factor of gender and the factor of emotional intelligence. Each was varied at two levels thus the 2x2 factorial design was used.

Procedure for data collection

Copies of the tests or the scales were handed over to the subjects and told about the test. Instructions regarding each test were given in detail and they were asked
to fill in the details as asked by the test or scale. They were asked to solve them by not spending too much of time on pondering over the questions. They were also asked to solve all the questions with skipping any. The filled copies were collected from the subjects immediately after they were done.

Statistical treatment of data

First the means and standard deviation were computed. Then the data was treated by two way ANOVA.

Results were interpreted considering the statistical values and the findings of earlier relevant studies.

STATISTICAL INTERPRETATION OF DATA

In the present study effect of emotional intelligence and gender on adjustment and fear of negative evaluation on college students was studied. In other words, the two factors namely emotional intelligence and gender were treated as independent variables. So, 2 x 2 factorial design was used. Subjects were classified in two groups for each factor i.e. high and low emotional intelligence and males and females. Firstly, mean and SD were computed and then two-way ANOVA was applied.

Mean and SD by four groups on fear of negative evaluation are presented below:

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A1B1</th>
<th>A1B2</th>
<th>A2B1</th>
<th>A2B2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>31.07</td>
<td>31.76</td>
<td>24.27</td>
<td>26.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>7.62</td>
<td>10.35</td>
<td>6.08</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A1- Low emotional intelligence    B1 - Male
A2- high emotional intelligence   B2 - Female

Table 2. Summary of two way ANOVA for fear of negative evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>671.98</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>671.98</td>
<td>10.47**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>36.81</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>36.81</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AxB</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within</td>
<td>3389.87</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>60.53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the result it is observed that the effect of A is significant at 0.01 level (F=10.47, p>.01). This implies that emotionally high intelligent subjects are low on fear of negative evaluation (M=25.20) as compared with the subject having low emotional intelligence (M=31.70). In short, we can say that the subjects who are high on emotional intelligence had significantly less fear of negative evaluation. From the table it is observed that there is no significant difference between males and females.

Mean and SD by four groups on adjustment are presented below:

Table 3. Mean and standard deviation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A1B1</th>
<th>A1B2</th>
<th>A2B1</th>
<th>A2B2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>52.13</td>
<td>30.33</td>
<td>25.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Table 4. Summary of two way ANOVA for adjustment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>9550.81</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9550.81</td>
<td>63.75**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>176.81</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>176.81</td>
<td>1.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AxB</td>
<td>36.83</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>36.83</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within</td>
<td>8391.40</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>149.85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The main effect of A i.e., emotional intelligence is significant at 0.01 level (F=63.75). It shows that the subjects high on emotional intelligence scored low on mal-adjustment (M=27.06) as compared to the subjects having low emotional intelligence (M=53.06). That is, they are superior on adjustment. From the table it is observed that there is no significant difference between male and female.

**DISCUSSION**

The present study was aimed at finding the effect of high emotional intelligence and low emotional intelligence along with gender on adjustment and fear of negative evaluation among college students.

Attending college is one of the first major life transitions for many young students. Some students are excited to take on the new experiences of campus life, while others feel apprehensive about making this change.

Making the Transaction:

Some of the most common changes are:

- New environment and relationship.
- Greater personal freedom
- Added responsibility
- Changing relationship

While some students cope effectively with these changes others find it difficult to cope. The reason might be difference in emotional intelligence.

Emotion results from interaction between physiological stimulation and appraisal of situation identification. When there is physiological stimulation, it is the stimuli, conditions and signs surrounding the individual that specify which emotional state he/she will experience. Mayer and Salovey indicate that emotional intelligence is the ability to perceive precisely, appraise and express emotions of one’s own and others’ access and generate feelings when they facilitate thinking, as well as regulate and utilize emotions in problem solving. A lot of studies have been carried out to find out the importance and role of emotional intelligence. The present research also aimed the same.

The first hypothesis of the study was subjects who are high on emotional intelligence have low FNE than subjects with low emotional intelligence. Thus the hypothesis that subjects high on emotional intelligence have low fear of negative
evaluation than subjects with low emotional intelligence was accepted.

Fear of negative evaluation is one of the factors in social phobia. There are two sub-types of social phobia—generalized and non-generalized. Generalized Social Phobia (GSP) is characterized by a marked fear of most social situations. It is associated with an anomalous neural response to emotional stimuli, and individuals with the disorder frequently show interpretation bias in social situations. From this it might be suggested that GSP involves difficulty in accurately perceiving, using, understanding and managing emotions.

A study was conducted to find out the association between level of emotional intelligence and severity of anxiety in GSP (Madeline Jacobs, Joseph Snow, Marilla Geraci, Meena Vythilingam, R.J.R. Blair, Dennis S. Charney, Daniel S. Pine, and Karina S. Blair). The result of the study indicates that, reduced EI may be causally related to the development of GSP. This position predicts that patients with GSP will show reduced levels of EI.

Thus, there are data to suggest that socially anxious or shy individuals may not perceive social situations accurately. Studies have also shown that socially anxious individuals expect that their social ability falls short of what others expect and doubt their ability to create desired impressions on others (Alden & Wallace, 1995; Carleton, Kelsey, & Asmundson, 2007; Wallace & Alden, 1991, 1997). This data might be taken to indicate that GSP is associated with an impaired ability to analyze or strategize about social situations, interactions, an ability that is often linked with EI.

According to the statistical findings and in agreement with the hypothesis, emotional intelligence is actually related to fear of negative evaluation.

The second hypothesis was that subjects with high EI have better adjustment than subjects with low EI. The hypothesis was thus supported.

Adjustment has been defined differently by psychologist and sociologist and there is not much difference in interpreting its nature. (Webster (1951), Crow and Crow (1956), James Drever (1952), Warren (1961)).

As it is stated earlier, that students face many challenges during academic transition and after transition. For the purpose of explaining these challenges, the word ‘adjustment’ has been defined as a psychological process of adapting to cope with, managing their problems, challenges, tasks and requirements of daily life (Halonen & Santrok, 1997).

A study was conducted by David Akinlolu Adeyemo (2006) to see if the strength of EI (moderate, high and low) would influence the adjustment of the subjects. The findings indicate that significant relationship exist between level of EI and adjustment.

Another study was conducted to investigate the claim that EI involves emotion perception. Thus, an accurate perception of others emotions should be related to heightened reactivity to environmental stimuli, and social adjustment. The finding was that successful social adjustment was related to
a more accurate perception of variations in others’ moods (Elisabeth Engelberg, Lennart Sjoberg (2004)).

Thus, statistical findings of the present study and various researches supports the second hypothesis which state that high EI is involved in better adjustment among college students.

Another factor that was studied is effect of gender on fear of negative evaluation and adjustment. It was hypothesized that there will be significant difference between male and female regarding fear of negative evaluation and adjustment.

The effect of gender was studied because it has been observed that gender role is usually given more importance in Indian culture. In almost all cultures, sex discrimination is observed to some extent. Gender differences in EI can be glimpsed from infancy due to the differential teaching given to boys and girls. The expectations of society and people around, especially parents are different in terms of children’s sexuality. Culturally, girls are mostly expected to be more expressive of feelings, whereas abstaining from feelings expression in boys is strengthened as a manly model. Thus, it is more widely believed that women and men differ with regard to EI but, although findings of the present study seem to contradict this, it could perhaps be an indication that more research into EI and within gender to be carried out to further this discovery.

CONCLUSION

After analyzing the result by using two-way ANOVA, it can be said that the hypothesis of the present study i.e. subjects high on emotional intelligence have low fear of negative evaluation than subjects with low emotional intelligence. Subjects with high emotional intelligence have better adjustment than subjects with low emotional intelligence is confirmed. Gender difference was also studied which was found to be non-significant.

REFERENCES


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