

Emotional Intelligence and Anxiety Among Adolescents : Gender Differences and Predictive Role of EI Components

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ABSTRACT

The present research examined the association between emotional intelligence (EI) and anxiety among adolescents, with special reference to gender differences. The total sample size of the present study is 200 adolescents (100 males and 100 females). EI and anxiety were measured using standardized psychological tools. Statistical analyses were conducted using an independent sample t-test, Pearson correlation, and regression analysis. From the findings no significant gender differences are found in overall emotional intelligence and its dimensions, whereas female adolescents reported significantly higher levels of anxiety than males ($t = 2.39, p < .05$). The findings revealed a significant negative association between EI and anxiety ($r = -.314, p < .01$). From the regression analysis, it was further revealed that EI components namely Perception of emotion (POE), Managing own emotion (MOE), Managing others' emotion (MOE) and Utilization of emotion (UOE) significantly predicted anxiety ($R^2 = .125$), with perception of emotion emerging as a significant predictor ($\beta = -.235, p < .01$). The analysis indicated that adolescents with high EI tend to experience lower levels of anxiety, emphasizing the importance of emotional skills development for promoting mental well-being.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, anxiety, adolescents, gender differences

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Introduction

EI plays a crucial role in psychological research due to its impact on emotional regulation, interpersonal functioning, and mental health. It is commonly defined as an individuals' ability to perceive, understand, manage, and utilize emotions in oneself and others (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004). During Adolescence emotional intelligence plays a crucial role, as higher EI is linked with better coping ability, emotional stability, and resilience to stress and anxiety. At this stage, adolescents also encounter multiple stressors, including academic demands, peer relationships, identity development, and future-related uncertainties, which increase vulnerability to psychological difficulties, particularly anxiety. Anxiety is among the most prevalent mental health problems in adolescence and has been related with poor academic excellence, social withdrawal, and long-term emotional difficulties (McLean & Anderson, 2009).

Recent research studies describe EI as a protective factor against anxiety. Adolescents with better EI are able to recognize emotional cues, regulate negative emotions, and respond adaptively to stressful situations, resulting in lower levels of emotional distress (Salovey et al., 2002). Research studies further highlight gender differences in EI and

anxiety, with many studies reporting higher anxiety levels among female adolescents, possibly due to heightened emotional awareness, social expectations, and gender-specific stressors (McLean & Anderson, 2009). However, findings related to gender differences in EI remain inconsistent, as some studies report higher emotional intelligence among females while others find no significant differences (Schutte et al., 1998). Additionally, studies emphasize the importance of examining specific emotional intelligence components, particularly perception of emotion, which plays a crucial role in regulating emotions and reducing anxiety (Salovey et al., 2002). Despite increasing research in this area, limited studies have examined the combined influence of EI components and gender on anxiety among adolescents. Therefore, the present study focuses on examining gender differences with respect to EI and anxiety, assessing their relationship, and the predictive role of EI components on anxiety among adolescents.

Rationale

Adolescence is a vulnerable developmental phase marked by increased risk of anxiety due to emotional and social challenges (McLean & Anderson, 2009). EI has been identified as a protective factor against anxiety; however,

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inconsistencies remain regarding gender differences and the predictive role of specific emotional intelligence components (Salovey et al., 2002). Therefore, this study examines the association between EI and anxiety and assess the role of EI components among adolescents.

Aims and Objectives

- To examine the gender differences between male and female adolescents with respect to EI and anxiety.
- To study the relationship between EI and anxiety among adolescents.
- To assess the predictive role of EI components on anxiety.

Hypotheses

- There will be a significant difference between male and female adolescents in anxiety.
- Emotional intelligence will be significantly related to anxiety.
- Emotional intelligence components will significantly predict anxiety.

Methodology

Sample and Procedure

200 adolescents (100 male and 100 female) of Arts, Science and Commerce departments from Fakir Mohan University were selected through convenient sampling method after obtaining permission from the participants. They were informed that their responses would remain confidential and would be used solely for research purposes.

Tools Used

- The Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT)
- Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale (HAM-A)

Statistical Analysis

Independent sample t-test, Pearson correlation and regression analysis were used to examine gender differences, to assess the relationship between EI and anxiety, and to determine the predictive role of EI components on anxiety respectively.

Results

Table 1 t-values indicating differences in EI as well as its dimensions and anxiety levels between male and female adolescents.

Variable	Gender	Mean	SD	t	p
Emotional Intelligence	Male	124.66	16.31	.59	.55
	Female	126.02	16.13		
Perception of Emotion (POE)	Male	35.28	5.87	.30	.76
	Female	35.52	5.36		
Managing Own Emotion (MOE)	Male	35.87	4.96	.50	.61
	Female	35.48	5.94		
Managing Others' Emotion (MOE)	Male	29.90	4.87	.64	.52
	Female	30.35	5.03		
Utilization of Emotion (UOE)	Male	23.84	4.53	.77	.43
	Female	24.32	4.18		
Anxiety	Male	18.02	10.15	2.39	.01
	Female	21.36	9.60		

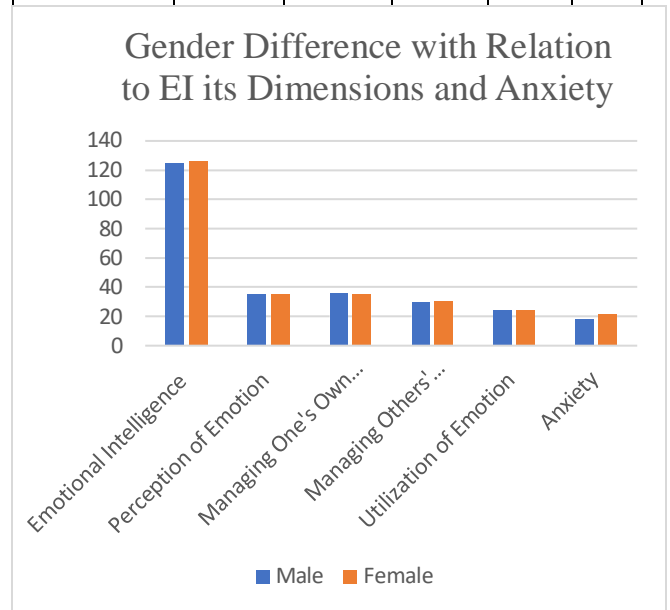


Figure 1: Gender difference with relation to EI, its dimensions and anxiety

Table 2 showing Inter-correlation amongst measures of EI as well as its dimensions and anxiety of adolescents'

	Emotional Intelligence	POE	MOE	Managing Others' Emotion	UOE	Anxiety
Emotional Intelligence		.792**	.820**	.800**	.772**	-.314**
POE			.497**	.529**	.478**	-.326**
MOE				.588**	.624**	-.267**
Managing Others' Emotion					.592**	-.236**
UOE						-.261**
Anxiety						

Regression Analysis

Table 3 shows the model summary of the different dimensions of EI that predicts anxiety.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.354	.125	.107	9.445

Predictors (constant): POE, MOE, MOE, UOE

Table 4 showing the URC (B) for all the predictor variables, the std. Error, the standardized coefficient beta values, the constant, t-value and significance.

Model	Unstandardized coefficients	Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.

	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(constant)	45.70	5.15		8.87	.000
Perception of emotion	-.419	.148	-.235	-.283	.005
Managing own emotion	-.168	.170	-.092	-.0985	.326
Managing others emotion	-.011	.186	-.006	-.060	.952
Utilization of emotion	-.202	.213	-.088	-.0950	.343

Dependent Variable: Anxiety

Data Analysis

Gender Differences in EI and Anxiety

No significant gender differences have been found from independent sample *t*-test results with respect to overall emotional intelligence and its dimensions. However, a significant difference was observed in anxiety. Female adolescents showed higher anxiety levels compared to males ($t = 2.39, p < .05$).

Relationship Between EI and Anxiety

The Pearson correlation analysis showed a significant negative association between EI and anxiety ($r = -0.314, p < .01$). This indicates that adolescents with high EI have low anxiety. All dimensions of EI showed significant negative correlations with anxiety, suggesting that better emotional perception, understanding, and management are linked with reduced anxiety.

Regression Analysis

The regression analysis predicted the role of EI components on anxiety. It was statistically significant and explained 12.5% of the variance in anxiety ($R^2 = .125$). Among the EI components, perception of emotion emerged as a significant predictor of anxiety ($\beta = -.235, p < .01$). Other components, namely MOE, managing others' emotion, and UOE, were not found to be significant predictors. This suggests that adolescents who are better at perceiving emotions in themselves and others are also better at managing anxiety.

Discussion

The results suggest that EI plays a very vital role in relation to anxiety among adolescents. The observed negative association indicates that those with higher EI tend to cope more effectively with anxiety and emotional difficulties.

The higher anxiety levels observed among female adolescents may be due to increased emotional sensitivity, social expectations, and academic stress. The significant predictive role of perception of emotions highlights the importance of emotional awareness in reducing anxiety. These findings support the view that emotional intelligence skills can act as protective factors against anxiety during adolescence.

Conclusion

The study concludes that EI is negatively related to anxiety among adolescents. Adolescents those who have high EI experiences less anxiety. EI, particularly the ability to perceive emotions, plays a significant role in predicting anxiety. Interventions that focus on strengthening EI can play a role in lowering anxiety and supporting adolescents' overall mental well-being.

Implications

The results suggest that EI training programs may be beneficial in school settings, as they can enhance adolescents' ability to recognize, understand, and regulate emotions. By improving emotional awareness and management skills, such interventions have the potential to help adolescents cope with anxiety more effectively. Furthermore, mental health and school-based interventions should prioritize the development of emotional skills, as fostering these abilities may contribute to better psychological well-being during adolescence.

Limitations and Future Direction

The present research has certain limitations. It was carried out with a particular group of participants, so the findings may not apply to a wider population. Future studies could

address this limitation by including children as well as adults as samples across different regions and socio-cultural contexts. Additionally, longitudinal research designs may provide deeper insights into the causal relationships between EI and anxiety, allowing for a better understanding of how emotional skills can help in managing anxiety.

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