

Gender based empirical study of Emotional Intelligence amongst Students

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ABSTRACT

Emotional Intelligence is a wider term that captures a broad collection of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. There is an accepted belief that women on an average are more sensitive and aware of their emotions and hence show more empathy. Men, on the contrary are more self-confident, optimistic, and adaptable. Diverse biological and social explanations have been given to explain this difference in emotional intelligence in men and women. This has also received support from a wide range of empirical studies of emotion, which show greater emotional abilities in women. Keeping in mind this difference in emotions as revealed by different researchers, an attempt has been made to study the difference on the basis of gender in the emotional intelligence of undergraduate students of different colleges of Chandigarh. Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire-Short Form (TEIQue-SF) developed by Petrides and Furnham was used as an instrument to measure the emotional intelligence. A questionnaire was developed to analyze the difference in the emotional level of the male and female students of different colleges of Chandigarh. It covered thirty questions on emotional intelligence through which Total EI score was calculated. 5 subscales of Emotional Intelligence namely – Well-being, Self-control, Emotionality, Sociability and Global Trait EI were also formed from these questions for which separate scores were calculated. Independent t-test was applied to find out the gender differences in emotional intelligence. The results stated that there was no significant difference in the total emotional intelligence scores of male and females.

1. Introduction

Over the past several years the term Emotional Intelligence (EI) has received much attention as a factor that is useful in understanding and predicting individual's performance at work, at home, at school/college etc. The concept of Emotional Intelligence was first introduced by Salovey and Mayer in the early 1990's and made popular by Daniel Goleman with publication of his book: "*Why it can matter more than IQ*" in 1995. Emotional intelligence is the capacity to create positive outcomes in relationships with others and with oneself. According to Mayer and Salovey (2004), emotional intelligence is the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to differentiate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thoughts and actions. Thus, emotional intelligence is an umbrella term that captures a broad collection of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. An interpersonal skill consists of the ability to understand the feelings of others, empathise, maintain and develop interpersonal relationships and above all our sense of social responsibility. On the other hand, intrapersonal skills comprise of the ability to understand one's own motivation. Emotional intelligence is the concept, which is currently in focus among the general public, practitioners and researchers. It's being widely believed by the public that emotional and social competence is as important, or even more important, than traditional dimension of intellectual ability and personality (Goleman, 1995). It is believed that emotional intelligence plays a very important role in leadership, work life and career development. IQ predicts only about 20 percent of career successes, which leave the remaining 80 percent to other factors such as emotional intelligence (Pool, 1997).

2. Gender and Emotional Intelligence

The popular belief is that women on an average are more aware of their emotions, show more empathy, and are more adept interpersonally. Men, on the other hand are more self-confident, optimistic, and adaptable. A review of the literature on emotions and EI gives a clear idea of the significant differences between men and women in aspects related to the emotional world. In particular, the emotional dimension of human beings has traditionally been linked to a greater extent with the female gender, which experiences positive and negative emotions more intensely than the male gender (Goleman, 1995). These data, in fact, have fed the stereotype, still widely held, that the female gender is more emotional (Grewal & Salovey, 2005).

Biological as well as social factors have been invoked to explain this "feminist vision of emotions." The biological explanation proposes that biochemistry of females is better prepared to consider one's own emotions and those of others as an important element in survival. In support of this idea, certain areas of the brain dedicated to emotional processing can be larger in women than in men.

The explanation centred on social aspects indicates that whereas women receive an education biased towards the emotional, men are taught to minimize certain emotions related to sadness, guilt, vulnerability and fear (Brody & Hall, 2008). Both biological and social explanations have received support from a diverse range of empirical studies of emotion, which show greater emotional abilities in women. These studies conclude that women have greater emotional knowledge, they express positive and negative emotions more fluently and more

frequently, they have more interpersonal competencies, and they are more socially adept (Brody & Hall, 2008; Tapia, 1999).

3. Literature Review

Austin et al. (2005) conducted a study on medical students and concluded that emotional intelligence of female students is significantly higher than that of male students.

Harrod and Scheer (2005) measured emotional intelligence of 200 youngsters between the ages of 16 to 19. The emotional intelligence scores were compared with demographic qualities (age, sex, household income, education level of parents, and place of residence) of the individuals. The findings revealed that there is a positive relationship between levels of emotional intelligence and sex, education levels of parents and household income. There are significant differences between emotional intelligence scores of women and men. Women have higher levels of emotional intelligence.

Tapia (1999) observed that girls score higher with regard to empathy, social responsibilities and interpersonal relationships than boys. More sensitivity was revealed in their relationship with parents, friends and siblings. All these qualities help them to attain more emotional intelligence, compared to boys.

Kafetsios (2004) concluded that females are superior solely on the branch of perception of emotion and experiential. For example, females are more precise in decoding facial expressions than males. Yet, as overall EQ scores, there is no significant difference between genders.

Petrides, Furnham, and Martin (2004) also conducted research which required participants to estimate their parents' EQ. Results revealed that mothers scored significantly higher than fathers. This was explained by reflection of perception on mothers as the 'emotional managers' in the family and their tendency to spend more time on child care.

On the basis of review of literature, following hypothesis has been developed:

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant difference between gender and actual level of EI.

Hypothesis 2: Both females and males perceive that males have higher EI level than females.

4. Objectives of the Study

A review of the literature on emotions and EI gives a clear idea of the significant differences between men and women in aspects related to the emotional world. In particular, the emotional dimension of human beings has traditionally been

linked to a greater extent with the female gender, which experiences positive and negative emotions more intensely than the male gender. Keeping in mind this difference in emotions as revealed by different researchers, an attempt has been made to study the difference in the emotional intelligence on the basis of gender of undergraduate students of different colleges of Chandigarh. So the objectives of the study are:

1. To explore the gender differences in the actual Emotional intelligence level.
2. To examine the perception differences in the self-estimated EI level among both genders.

5. Methodology

Sample

The research sample comprised of 80 undergraduate students of different colleges of Chandigarh. The whole sample was divided into two groups. Group A comprised of forty students (n = 40) who were male, group B also comprised of forty subjects (n = 40) who were female.

Tools for Analysis

For analyzing the data, percentage was used to find out the perception in the self-estimation regarding the level of Emotional Intelligence (EI). Independent t-test was applied to find out the gender differences in emotional intelligence.

Measurement of Emotional Intelligence

Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire-Short Form (TEIQue-SF) developed by Petrides and Furnham (2006) was used as instrument to measure the emotional intelligence. A questionnaire was developed to analyze the emotional level of the students; this questionnaire was divided into three parts. Section A contained a personal data in which participants were asked information relating to their name, gender, age etc. Section B of the questionnaire covered thirty questions on emotional intelligence through which Total EI score was calculated. 5 subscales of Emotional Intelligence namely – Well-being, Self-control, Emotionality, Sociability and Global Trait EI were also formed from these questions for which separate score were calculated. Items were responded to on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1(Completely Disagree) to 7 (Completely Agree). Section C consisted of a survey question (which gender has higher level of Emotional Intelligence) to obtain the information on the perception of genders.

6. Results and Discussions

The data were analyzed by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Table 1 shows the mean, minimum, maximum, and standard deviation values of the Emotional Intelligence (EI) total score and its subscales of all the respondents.

	N	Total Score	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Well being	80	42	12	42	29.39	5.328
Self-control	80	42	14	38	25.65	4.063
Emotionality	80	56	21	50	37.27	6.645
Sociability	80	42	8	40	25.6	5.14
Global traits	80	28	11	28	18.05	3.557
Total EI Score	80	210	84	198	135.96	19.04

The total EI scale consisted of score 210, out of which maximum score obtained by the respondent was 198 and minimum was 84. The average EI score of the respondent was 135.96 with the standard deviation of 19.04. Similarly the

average scores of 5 subscales namely well-being, self-control, emotionality, sociability and global traits were 29.39, 25.65, 37.27, 25.6 and 18.05 respectively.

	Male	Female	t value	df	sig.
N	40	40			
Well being	29.55	29.225	0.149	62.602	0.882
Self-control	25.725	25.575	0.137	78	0.891
Emotionality	35.475	39.075	-2.502	73.108	0.015**
Sociability	25.65	25.55	-0.022	78	0.983
Global traits	18.25	17.85	0.439	78	0.662
Total EI Score	134.65	137.275	-0.705	78	0.483

Table 2 presents the results of independent t-test. The t-test was computed to determine the significance of difference between male and female on level of their Emotional Intelligence (EI). The results stated that there was no significant difference in in the total emotional intelligence scores of male (M = 134.65) and females (M = 137.27). It is evident from the results that scores of males and females vary

significantly only in the category of emotionality which signify that females have more emotionality than males whereas for all other traits, the difference is not statistically significant. Thus, hypothesis 1 is rejected. Overall it can be concluded that gender does not have any effect on the level of emotional intelligence of a person.

Table 3 Frequency (Percentage) of Self-Perception on Which Gender has The Higher Level of EI

Gender	Male	Female	Total
Male	32 (80%)	8 (20%)	40 (100%)
Female	27 (67.5%)	13 (32.5%)	40 (100%)
Total	59 (73.75%)	21 (26.25%)	80 (100%)

Table 3 shows the comparison of frequency (percentage) in order to find out which gender has higher expectation of EI level. Table 3 demonstrates the percentage distribution from both genders. The results indicate that 59 participants (73.75%) out of 80 participants fall into the category of male, where they think males have higher EI level. Out of 59 participants, there are 32 males and 27 females (80% and 67.5%, respectively). 80% of males' participants have highly perceived their own gender to be better in EI level, whereas 67.5% females' participants have the same thought. In conclusion, majority of males and females perceived males have higher level of EI.

On the other hand, 21 participants (26.25%) out of 80 participants fall into the other category where they think females have higher EI level. Out of 21 participants, there are 8 males and 13 females (20% and 32.5%, respectively). 20% of males' participants have perceived females are better in EI level, whereas 32.5% females' participants have the same thought. In short, minority of participants perceived females as higher level of EI compared to males.

A total of 73.75% from both gender perceived males are higher in EI level. Thus, this has supported hypothesis 2, which emphasized that both genders perceive males to have higher level of EI.

7. Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to determine the gender differences in the actual Emotional intelligence level and to examine the perception differences in the self-estimated EI level among both genders. The results conclude that there is no significant difference in the actual level of emotional intelligence between males and females whereas the perception of both the genders is that males have higher level of emotional intelligence.

The small size of the sample is a limitation of the study. So care should be taken while generalising the results. Further research can also focus on the study of other important factors like impact of age, social status etc. on the emotional intelligence

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