

Emotional Intelligence of Secondary School Students: A Study of Gender Differences

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ABSTRACT:

The present study investigated the disparity in emotional intelligence between female and male teenagers at secondary schools in Islamabad. The study sample consisted of three hundred students (N = 300). They were distributed in two groups: male students (N = 157) and female students (N = 140). The Bar on Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-I) with a Cronbach's Alpha of .827 was used to collect data on students' emotional intelligence levels. In contrast, the demographic sheet was used to collect data about the gender of the students. A total of 258 (female = 123 and male = 135; 86%) responses were received. Statistical analysis reveals that females have a higher emotional quotient than their male counterparts do ($t = 2.97, p < .003$).

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Gender, Secondary School Students, Academic Achievement

Introduction

Emotional intelligence (EI) has gained much importance among researchers, practitioners, and the public alike. Goleman (1998) believes that emotional intelligence is much more important than abstract intelligence. According to Goleman (1998), Emotional intelligence encompasses a range of abilities that include an individual's dexterity to regulate their own behavior and interact effectively with others. It is more appropriate to state that a person's emotional intelligence is determined by the regularity with which they exhibit or use the constituent qualities, or competencies, inherent in emotional intelligence. (Boyatzis, Goleman, and Rhee, 2000) "How he/she engages with himself/herself, their life, their work, and others. It is the ability to: 1) become aware of, understand, and communicate oneself; 2) become aware of, comprehend, and relate to others; 3) control strong emotions and impulses; and 4) adapt to change and resolve issues that may arise in a private or public setting. (Bar-On, 1988).

Review of Related Literature

There is a growing understanding in society that emotional intelligence plays a greater role in one's degree of performance and achievement in life. Often, we see that people with high academic credentials fail badly in their efficacy and professional skills (Bhalla & Nauriyal, 2004). The cause is not the lack of abstract intelligence but the lack of another kind of intelligence that helps

navigate the intricacies of life. The temperamental and intellectual capacities have a crucial role in one's success in life and relate to working in a group. These abilities are confidence, motivation, emotional stability, adjustment, and the ability to work with others. These studies have changed the horizon of the dominance of a single kind of ability and have led to multiple intelligences by Gardner (1983). With the rise of the theory of multiple intelligences, Salovey & Mayer (1990) put forward the idea of multiple intelligences that was later popularized by Goleman (1995).

Gardner (1983, 1999) endeavored to broaden the definition of intelligence and included several important faculties that were previously outside its purview. Intelligence, in his opinion, is "the bio-psychological ability to interpret data that can be triggered in a cultural context to address issues or produce things that are important in a culture. It is because of this that the Standardized psychometric test results fall short of being reliable predictors of future success.

EI was defined in terms of a theory of performance by Goleman (1998) and was contextualized within the perspective of personality theory by Bar-On (1998). The capacity to control one's own and other people's emotions is the unifying characteristic of all the many forms of emotional intelligence, according to Goleman (2001). Accordingly, in a revised version of Mayer and Salovey's model, he has alluded that the most succinct explanation of emotional intelligence encompasses four essential domains: i. self-

awareness, ii. social awareness, iii. self-management, and iv. relationship management

Another widely used definition is provided by Bar-On (2005), who characterizes social-emotional intelligence (SEI) as "a cross-section of interconnected emotional and social competencies, abilities, and facilitators that impact how well we comprehend and communicate with ourselves and others, relate to them, and manage daily impertunity. Bar-On also emphasizes that it is possible to teach and acquire these competencies and skills. The notion that these capacities help manage daily demand and are teachable makes them more attractive than the intelligence quotient (IQ). This is because emotions help people think by drawing their attention to things that are changing, such as work that has to be done or time that is running out. For instance, a book that must be studied for the test or homework that must be finished the following day. Emotions can also help cognition by enabling one to generate emotions on command to comprehend the feelings of students, adversaries, competitors, or coworkers. Emotions can foster creativity by promoting the evaluation of several points of view. (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

Owing to the importance of EI for individual success in life, it is being studied from many dimensions. Among the many dimensions, one important dimension is gender. The causes of this effect could be social and biological. Women have surpassed men in social situations (Singh, 2002; Ryff, Singer, Wing & Love, 2001). Gender, according to Petrides and Furnham (2000), is a social process where some behaviors are more associated with men or women. Assertiveness is dominantly masculine trait, while empathy is a desirable feminine characteristic (Siegling, Furnham, & Petrides, 2015). Some traits are favorable for one gender but not the other. In contrast, Fernández, Cabello, Castillo, and Extremera (2012) said that a vital component of survival is female biochemistry, which is more adapted to the individual's emotions and those of others. The brains of both female and male experience emotions differently, resulting in differences in emotional intelligence (EI) (Craig et al., 2009). Females also process emotions differently in their cerebral cortex than males do (Baron-Cohen, 2003). This is due to biological, developmental, and cultural factors (Uddin, 2017).

Some aspects of the structural makeup of the brain differ significantly in men and women. The hippocampus, or human memory center, is typically larger in women than in men (Daly, 2016). There is evidence of neural connections being denser in men

than in women, which helps to explain women's behavior being more sensitive and absorptive than men's towards knowledge. Women are more conscious and observant throughout the day. Recognizing more specifics and retaining more sensory data than males' perceptions of their environment (Saladin, 2014).

It is evident from the literature that the brain processes emotion in different ways in males and females, and emotions impact human life from all dimensions, like education, career, family life, and overall health and well-being. It is imperative to study the difference in the emotional intelligence of both females and males.

Objectives of the study

To find out if there is any difference in the emotional intelligence of female and male students of secondary schools in Islamabad.

The Hypothesis of the Study

To carry out the research, the following hypothesis was developed.

H₀₁ There is no significant difference in the emotional intelligence of male and female students at the secondary level.

H₀₂ There is no significant difference in score on sub-scales of emotional intelligence across gender.

Methodology

The research was survey-type and quantitative in nature. Data on pupils' emotional intelligence was gathered using the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory. In 1997, Bar-On created and standardized the EQ-I. On a five-point Likert scale, it is a self-rating scale. The answers are as follows: 1 for very seldom or not true; 2 for seldom true; 3 for sometimes true; 4 for frequently true; and 5 for very often true or true of me. The internal consistency of the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for EQ-I ranges from 69 to 86, according to several studies. (Shaista 2012). According to Devellis (2016), Rothbard & Edward (2003), McAllister & Bigley (2003), Nunnally (1978), and George & Mallery (2014), reliabilities exceeding .70 are acceptable.

The four validity indices factor rendering scores for the following components are included in the 117-item BarOn EQ-I:

- Intrapersonal (self-actualization, assertiveness, independence, self-regard and emotional self-awareness)
- Social-Responsibility, Empathy, and Inter-personal Relationships

- Stress management (impulse control and stress tolerance)
 - Flexibility, problem-solving skills, and reality testing
 - Mood Scale for General (Happiness and Optimism)
- data collected were subjected to a t-test. The following tables give the result of the t-test.

Result

To test the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the emotional intelligence (EI) of both female and male students at the secondary level, the

Table 1

Gender Difference in Emotional Intelligence

EQ-I Subscales	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-Value	df	p-value
EQ-I	Female	121	3.58	.37	3.21	251.47	.001
	Male	134	3.35	.45			

The emotional intelligence score of female and male was analysed using an independent-samples t-test. The scores of males (M = 3.35, SD = .45) and females (M = 3.58, SD = .37; $t(251.47) = 3.21, p = .001$, two-tailed) differed significantly. To find the magnitude of the significance, the effect size was calculated.

The magnitude of the significance in the means (mean difference = .23, 95% CI: -.27 to -.06) was the medium effect (eta squared = .55). For Cohen's d , $d = .2$ = small effect, $.5$ = medium effect, and $.8$ = large effect (Cohen, 1988).

Table 2

The Difference in Sub-Scales Score of Emotional Intelligence Across Gender.

EQ-I Subscales	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-Value	df	p-value
Intrapersonal	Female	121	1.117	.187	.005	249.34	.99
	Male	134	1.117	.234			
Interpersonal	Female	121	.540	.066	3.09	253	.002
	Male	134	.567	.072			
Stress Management	Female	121	.666	.163	10.65	253	.000
	Male	134	.476	.114			
Adaptability	Female	121	.476	.119	13.27	253	.000
	Male	134	.677	.121			
General Mode	Female	121	.584	.102	8.68	253	.000
	Male	134	.480	.089			

An independent-samples t-test was carried out to find the difference in the sub-scales of emotional intelligence scores for females and males. There was non-significant difference in scores for males (M = 1.117, SD = .234) and females (M =

1.117, SD = .187, $t(249) = .005, p = .99$, two-tailed). However, there was a significant difference in the mean score of females and males on sub-scales of interpersonal, stress management, adaptability, and general mode.

Discussion and Recommendations

According to the study, there are notable disparities between male and female secondary school pupils' emotional intelligence. Cabello, Sorrel, Fernández-Pinto, Extremera, & Fernández-Berrocal (2016) support the study's findings. Who administered the MSCEIT (Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test)? A portion of the findings is corroborated by Meshkat & Nejati (2017), who discovered notable variations in emotional self-awareness, empathy, interpersonal relationships, and self-regard, with women scoring higher than men. The findings of Incardinate, Bonichini, and Tremolada (2023), who discovered notable disparities in the emotional intelligence of teenage boys and girls, further corroborate the study.

According to Bar-On's (1997) research, there are no appreciable differences in the overall emotional quotient between men and women. He appreciates that, according to the North American sample, however, women have superior interpersonal skills to men, displaying greater empathy, self-awareness, and a feeling of social responsibility. Contrarily, males appear to have superior intrapersonal and adaptive skills. This suggests that there may be a gender difference in these EI subscales in our group as well.

The idea that females are more emotionally adapted and more susceptible to emotional damage is one of the most prevalent explanations for this disparity in emotional intelligence (Katyal & Awasthi, 2005). In this manner, by the time kids reach puberty, they will have rapidly improved their social abilities and learned to control their emotions.

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Another reason might be based on the fact that girls are commonly extra sensitive emotionally and are also able to express their emotions appropriately, leading to a clear perception and higher emotional empathy than boys (Katyal and Awasthi, 2005). Hence, leading to an increased level of emotional intelligence than is normally acknowledged. Similar outcomes have been concluded by Charbonneau and Nicol (2002), who have expressed that the believed idea of girls are socially more intelligent than boys may be linked to the upbringing style of girls in most societies.

One possible reason for these disparities is that men and women are socialized differently (Duckett & Raffali, 1989; Sandhu & Mehrotra, 1999). During the socialization process, women are urged to be cooperative, expressive, and sensitive to their interpersonal environment, whereas men are led to be outwardly competitive, autonomous, and instrumental (Petrides & Furnham, 2006). Therefore, via their childhood experiences, females learn to value caring and interpersonal ties more than boys do (Gunkel, Lusk, Wolff, & Li, 2007).

From the discussion and literature review, it is clear that females are emotionally more intelligent than males, and the factors that contribute are their brain function, upbringing, and culture. As emotional intelligence can be taught, it is recommended that male students may also be nurtured in the same manner. This shall help overcome the problems of intolerance and extremism in our society.

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