

A Study on the Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Empathy among College Students

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ABSTRACT

Emotional intelligence is considered as a requisite aspect of all intelligence dimensions. Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize and manage one's own emotions and feelings as well as emotions of other people too. It is an important component in enhancing communication and interpersonal relationships. The building of any successful relationship is empathy, which means to understand the feelings of another person. The present study was designed to assess the level of emotional intelligence and empathy and also to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and empathy among college students. The study was conducted with 50 college students in the age group of 17-20 years in Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, Punjab. Random sampling technique was adopted to collect samples for the study. To measure emotional intelligence construct, Emotional Quotient Test by Singh and Chadha and empathy was assessed by using Multi-Dimensional Emotional Empathy Scale by Caruso and Mayer. The results of the study revealed that respondents had medium level of emotional intelligence and empathy. The results highlighted a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and empathy among college students.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, empathy, feelings, social behaviour, success

1. INTRODUCTION

Since 1990s, significance of emotional intelligence (EI) as a recent approach for the assessment of an individual has speedily increased. It is assumed that individual with high emotional intelligence have apparent thought about themselves, their desires, strengths, limitations and is competent to build healthy connections with others. This is basically accomplished by managing emotions as per surroundings [1].

The word 'emotional intelligence' consists of two words i.e. 'emotion' which refers to concentrated feeling of a person and 'intelligence' which is defined as mental ability of a person to deal efficiently with the situation. Emotional intelligence is the ability of an individual to sense and comprehend one's own emotions, to communicate and regulate them properly and to apply them in the method of decision making [2]. The term

'emotional intelligence' was first explained by Salovey and Mayer in 1990 [3] but it was popularized by Goleman in 1995 [4]. According to Goleman (1995) [4], emotional intelligence is an indispensable element in enhancing a person's skills and capabilities in interpersonal relationships and communication. He has also found that intelligence quotient comprises only of 20% in determining a person's success whereas remaining 80% comprises of emotional intelligence. Wherever a person's element is involved, emotional intelligence would be there in action (Jayashree et al 2018). Researchers have proved that emotional intelligence plays a vital role in determining a person's success in life [5][6].

Empathy is defined as an ability to identify and recognize an individual's feelings, reasons of those feelings and to be capable to partake in the emotional experience of a person [7]. Empathy means to understand something as per the perception of other people that can increase and nurture the affection on top of adapting to other people [8]. Empathy comprises of seven domains that are to help others, understand others, expand others, discover diversity, political awareness, service oriented and taking care of others.

Any successful relationship, its understanding and communication can be built on the basis of empathy. It is important for the development of ideas and solutions, in avoiding conflicts, solving problems and effectual communication. Empathy is a crucial competence, which all people must develop so that they can grow and persist in their life [9].

Success in societal relations and in life is a trait of Emotional Intelligence. There is a need to develop the skills to precisely assess other people or group and then react consequently. Therefore, the foremost footstep toward skillful social behaviour is social awareness or knowledge. Such knowledge or skill to harmonize with others and feel what others are feeling is called empathy. In the absence of empathy, we find difficulty in sustaining any relationships. In our daily living, people try to learn how and why a person feels this way and try to view things from other's point of perception. There can be no empathy without self-awareness of one's own emotions. If a person is not able to recognize the feelings of other person then, a problem arises which lowers a person's emotional intelligence [10]. Thus, an assessment of emotional intelligence and empathy would help us in determining the relationship between the variables.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- i. To assess the level of emotional intelligence and empathy among college students.
- ii. To find out the relationship between emotional intelligence and empathy among college students.

3. METHODS AND MATERIALS

3.1 Locale: The study was conducted with graduate students of Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, Punjab.

3.2 Sample Size: The sample consisted of 50 college students of age range between 17-20 years. The sample for this study was equally distributed among genders i.e. 25 males and 25 females.

3.3 Procedure for data collection

The samples were selected from different colleges of Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, Punjab using a random sampling technique. Stratification was based on gender i.e. 25 males and 25 females were selected in the study. The male college students were approached in the classroom and girls in hostels. The study objectives were elucidated to them and after explanation, consent was taken in written form. The participants had complete right to withdraw from the study at any point without questioning and the right to anonymity was followed in the study.

3.4 Research instruments

The study is quantitative in nature so the following tools were used to collect data from the respondents:

- a) Emotional intelligence was calculated by using the Emotional Quotient Test developed by Singh and Chadha. The test has three psychological dimensions: emotional sensitivity, emotional maturity and emotional competency.
- b) Level of Empathy was measured by using Multi-Dimensional Emotional Empathy Scale devised by Caruso and Mayer. This test has six dimensions: Suffering, Positive Sharing, Response Crying, Emotional Attention, Feel for Others and Emotional Contagion.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Assessment of emotional intelligence and empathy among college students

4.1.1 Assessment of emotional intelligence among college students

Data presented in Table 1 highlights frequency distribution of the respondents across different dimensions of emotional intelligence. It was revealed that most of the respondents reported medium level of emotional sensitivity (64%), emotional maturity (72%) and emotional competency (70%). The study revealed that most of the respondents had medium level of emotional intelligence. This finding is supported by Hsieh et al (2014) [11], who revealed that emotional intelligence of college students is above average level.

Table 4.1.1: Per cent distribution of the respondents across different dimensions of emotional intelligence

Dimensions of Emotional Intelligence	Levels	Frequency	Percentage
Emotional sensitivity	High	7	14
	Medium	32	64
	Low	11	22
Emotional maturity	High	5	10
	Medium	36	72

	Low	9	18
Emotional competency	High	11	22
	Medium	35	70
	Low	4	8
Total	High	10	20
	Medium	34	68
	Low	6	12

4.1.2 Assessment of empathy among college students

Data pertaining to the level of empathy among respondents presented in Table 2 revealed that majority of the college students clustered in medium level of all the dimensions i.e. suffering (62%), positive sharing (76%), response crying (68%), emotional attention (74%), feel for others (76%), and emotional contagion (70%). The overview of the distribution pattern highlighted that majority of the respondents had medium level of empathy.

Table 4.1.2: Per cent distribution of the respondents across different dimensions of empathy

Dimensions of Empathy	Levels	Frequency	Percentage
Suffering	High	11	22
	Medium	31	62
	Low	8	16
Positive Sharing	High	9	18
	Medium	38	76
	Low	3	6
Response Crying	High	9	18
	Medium	34	68
	Low	7	14
Emotional Attention	High	8	16
	Medium	37	74
	Low	5	10
Feel for Others	High	8	16
	Medium	38	76
	Low	4	8
Emotional Contagion	High	12	24
	Medium	35	70
	Low	3	6
Total	High	6	12
	Medium	41	82
	Low	3	6

4.2 Relationship between emotional intelligence and empathy among college students

Relationship between emotional intelligence and empathy among college students was explored through correlation method. Various dimensions of emotional intelligence were correlated with different dimensions of empathy to highlight significant relation wherever existed.

Data presented in Table 3 discloses that college students had significant positive correlation between emotional sensitivity and overall empathy ($r= 0.27$), emotional maturity and overall empathy ($r= 0.35$), emotional competency and overall empathy ($r= 0.29$), and emotional intelligence and overall empathy ($r= 0.25$). This result indicates that respondents with good emotional intelligence have good level of empathy. This finding is also in agreement of the study conducted by Bertram et al (2016) [12] who found that empathy levels are correlated with emotional intelligence.

Further, it was observed from the data that there existed a non-significant but positive relationship between suffering and all the dimensions of emotional intelligence. It was highlighted in the study that there was a significant and positive relationship of positive sharing, response crying and emotional contagion with all the dimensions of emotional intelligence and overall emotional intelligence.

Moreover, data depicted that there was a significant positive correlation of emotional attention with emotional maturity ($r= 0.24$) and overall emotional intelligence ($r= 0.21$). furthermore, there existed a significantly positive correlation of feel for others with emotional sensitivity, emotional maturity and overall emotional intelligence.

Table 4.2: Correlation between emotional intelligence and empathy among college students

Dimensions of Empathy	Emotional sensitivity (ES)	Emotional maturity (EM)	Emotional competency (EC)	Emotional intelligence (EI)
Suffering	0.12	0.11	0.08	0.14
Positive Sharing	0.34*	0.39*	0.38*	0.28*
Response Crying	0.25*	0.27*	0.31*	0.26*
Emotional Attention	0.15	0.21*	0.11	0.24*
Feel for Others	0.42*	0.35*	0.18	0.29*
Emotional Contagion	0.36*	0.42*	0.31*	0.26*
Total	0.27*	0.35*	0.29*	0.25*

*significant at 0.05 level of significance

5. CONCLUSION

This study mainly focused on the level of emotional intelligence among college students and its relation with empathy. It was seen that college students had average level of emotional intelligence and empathy. It was also observed that there was a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and empathy.

The conclusion that can be drawn from the study is that emotional intelligence is important in today's world for healthy development, formation of relationship with others and for understanding other people. Further studies can be done to find out the gender difference in the level of emotional intelligence. The study limits itself to the number of respondents that might enhance the generalization of the research findings.

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