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Author(s):

**Dr. Nazir Haider Shah
Nadia Nazir
Dr. Shazia Zamir**

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Comparing Emotional Intelligence and Self-esteem in Secondary School Students of Punjab

Dr. Nazir Haider Shah¹

Nadia Nazir^{2*}

Dr. Shazia Zamir³

Abstract

This study was intended to explore the correlation between emotional intelligence and self-esteem of students studying in the secondary schools of Pakistan. The study explored the role of various demographic variations among students such as gender, grade and family's socioeconomic status in defining their levels of self-esteem and emotional intelligence. The study used the Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) and Self-esteem Questionnaire (SEQ) to measure emotional intelligence and self-esteem, respectively. Using multistage random sampling technique, 300 students studying at various secondary schools located in four districts of Punjab including Rawalpindi, Sargodha, Attock and Mianwali were selected. The findings revealed that there is a strong and positive correlation between self-esteem and emotional intelligence. The results of t-test revealed that there is a significant difference between emotional intelligence and self-esteem scores of boys and girls. Similarly, ANOVA results also showed differences in scores of emotional intelligence and self-esteem with respect to grades and family income. The findings of this research are beneficial for school teachers, psychologists, counsellors and school administrators and highlight the need of preparing the psychological profile of students. Both self-esteem and emotional intelligence are deemed crucial for learning and personality building of young adolescents. Therefore, policy makers, school administration, parents and teachers must expend collective efforts to create a healthy social and psychological capital for Pakistan.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, human development, secondary school students, self-esteem.

Introduction

Life needs wisdom and emotional management leads to wisdom; Sages all over the world have delivered messages of peace and tolerance, thus teaching emotional management indirectly. Emotions arise whenever we

^{1,2}Department of Education, Mohi-Ud-Din Islamic University, Nerian Sharif, AJ&K

³Department of Education, National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad

*Corresponding author: nadianazir481@yahoo.com

feel threatened by a situation; therefore, emotional regulation is of key importance in leading a successful life. Self-esteem is how a person perceives himself / herself. Both of these concepts (emotional regulation and self-esteem) are dynamic and they do not stay constant throughout the life of a person. Indeed, they play a vital role in behavior, learning and motivation to succeed (Schweiger, 2008) and both teachers and parents may have a far reaching influence in positive construction or destruction of what constitutes a healthy and positive image of oneself and life. Emotional intelligence is an important characteristic of an individual's personality when it comes to regulate one's own emotions and managing the emotions of others.

The concept of emotional intelligence has gained wide acceptance among practitioners and academicians over the last two decades (Law, Wong & Song, 2004; Mayer, Roberts & Barsade, 2008). Self-esteem is defined as "favourable or unfavourable attitude toward the self" (Rosenberg, 1965, p.15). It is assessed as an overall personal appraisal of a person (Leary & MacDonald, 2003; Pyszczynski, Greenberg, Solomon, Arndt & Schimel, 2004). Secondary school students are passing through the critical age of adolescence and experiencing many social and biological changes (Wigfield, Eccles, Mac Iver, Reuman & Midgley, 1991); this causes fluctuation in their self-concept and self-worth (Ummet, 2015; Virtanen, Kiuru, Lerkkanen, Poikkeus & Kuorelahti, 2016). Self-esteem may rise or fall by the flow of helpful feelings while inculcating a mind-set of efficacy, capability, acceptability and internal satisfaction (Baudson, Weber & Freund, 2016; Franken, 2008).

People recognize and understand their emotions differently depending upon their personal and social context. Those who are emotionally intelligent enjoy different dispositions toward expressing happiness, self-management and relationship management; such individuals have different mental calibers to recognize and manage their own emotions and ability to recognize emotions in others. Such capacity to manage and express emotions is linked with classroom experiences as well (Coelho, Marchante & Jimerson, 2017; Virtanen et al., 2016). Parents, teachers, achievements and a healthy environment can help students to develop high self-esteem which helps them to escape volatile situations. Contrarily, parents, teachers, and an unhealthy emotional climate (either at home or in classroom) can be the sole reason for students' low self-esteem. Therefore, it is important to

measure the concept of self-esteem as entertained by the secondary school students of Pakistan.

Self-esteem is a powerful concept in the field of human psychology and it has influenced research in education as well. This concept has been studied using various methods and techniques by different researchers. Self-esteem is usually studied as an attitudinal construct as advocated by many cognitive psychologists (Allport, [1937](#); Rogers, [1957](#); Rosenberg, [1965](#)). Park, Kim, Park, Suh and Lee (2016) stated that self-esteem is multifaceted but it is not an ethical skill like being good or bad, positive or negative. Following Landy ([1985](#)), they (Park et al., 2016) also identified that healthy self-esteem is based on a respectable and caring relationship between caregiver and child during infancy. The memories of the past and the realities of the present day attitude of caregivers interact with each other to determine the physiognomies of an adolescent.

Self-esteem is one of the critical factors of Abraham Maslow's 'Hierarchy of Basic Needs' as well. According to Maslow, changes in the needs of a person forces him / her to change his / her objectives and activities. Furthermore, the unfulfilled desires or needs act as a 'magnet', which attracts the attention of a person to fulfill them. After a particular desire or need is fulfilled, it no longer works as a real motivator, as it is demagnetized (Hopper, [2019](#)).

Psychologists have commonly measured two levels of self-esteem, that is, the low level and the high level. The low level requires respect for others, appreciation and consideration of status; while the high level demands ability, independence and success. Maslow believes that individuals may not be able to grow and gain higher self-esteem due to the lack of respect and acceptance (Wright, [2012](#)). Mruk ([2006](#)) indicated that many mental disorders can become the cause of low self-esteem. Román, Cuestas and Fenollar ([2008](#)) concluded that self-esteem is important in learning because he found a strong relation between self-esteem and deep processing as well as struggle.

Feelings are stimulated in normal conditions by any situation in accordance with a personal emotional appraisal of the respective situation. Every feeling that provokes an action, good or bad, small or big, gives very insightful information about the personality. It is noteworthy here that the expression of emotions is not a challenge in itself but choosing the right

attitude at the right time is always a challenge (Vigoda & Meisler, [2010](#)). Mayer, Salovey and Caruso ([2004](#)) defined emotional intelligence as the competence to observe and prescribe emotions in self and others, to understand emotions (both in thought and action) and managing emotions and feelings in oneself and others. Emotional intelligence (EI) is a collection of non-cognitive competencies and abilities that affect the ability of anyone to succeed in coping with environmental pressures and demands (Brown, [2006](#), p. 14).

Salovey and Mayer (cf. Hughes & Evans, [2018](#)) explained the conceptualization of emotional intelligence by dividing it into three comprehensive categories including appraisal and manifestation of emotion, regulation of emotion and the utilization of emotion. They explained emotional intelligence as the subcategory of social intelligence that includes the ability to observe one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to differentiate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions.

Goleman ([1998](#)) elaborated five aspects of emotional intelligence including self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Self-awareness is related to the knowledge of emotions, precise self-assessment and self-confidence. Self-regulation is related to self-discipline, trustworthiness, carefulness, adaptability, and improvement. Motivation is related to success drive, commitment, inventiveness and positivity. Empathy is related to understanding and developing others and nurturing diversity. Social skills are related to effect interaction, leadership and change, building bonds, association, cooperation and team capabilities.

The model contains a series of emotional abilities regarding each aspect of emotional intelligence and shows that emotional ability is not a natural ability, rather, it is a learning ability that must be developed in order to achieve excellent performance. He believes that individuals are born with universal emotional intelligence which determines their potential to learn (Ugaoni, Amu & Kalu, [2015](#)).

Emotional intelligence helps to improve the patterns of behavior of a person, so does self-esteem. Both are considered as vital indicators of the patterns of behavior while defining the behavior of a person. Both disguised psychological characteristics can be the reason for certain patterns of behavior of a person but can't be observed directly. Emotional intelligence

and self-esteem are two important factors that help to change the personality of an individual. When determining a person's behavior, these characteristics are always considered as basic indicators of behavior. The disguised psychological characteristics cannot be observed directly; psychologists reach it through indirect observation of the positive impact casted upon others. However, correct estimation is required, and this hidden ability of correct estimation is unmasked as emotionally intelligent behaviors leading to accurate judgments of emotions and feelings in others (Jarvis, [2000](#)).

To be more specific and suiting the aim of the study, the researchers have chosen three competency groups of emotional intelligence: 1) People index assessment; 2) Self-management and 3) Relationship management and communication. Self-management is the ability of a person which helps him / her in maintaining his / her emotions and behavior. Relationship management refers to be thoughtful and insightful judgment about the feelings and the emotional and material needs of others, as well as to cooperate effectively responding to situational needs. Thoughts and ideas clearly and briefly indicate to interaction for the ease of effective interpersonal relation (Groth, [2003](#)).

This study is unique because it highlighted the hidden causes of students' behavior in schools. Though most of students appear to have similar nature; yet their behaviors are profoundly different, some are well managed while others reflect poor adjustment. In order to create sensibility in responsiveness among students, teachers and parents must focus to develop intrinsic ability of emotional intelligence and outward attitude of self-esteem in adolescents.

1.1. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were as follows:-

1. To analyze and assess the correlation between self-esteem and emotional intelligence in secondary school students.
2. To explore the role of the demographic variations among students in defining their self-esteem and emotional intelligence.

1.2. Hypotheses

H1: Self-esteem and emotional intelligence of secondary school students are correlated.

H2: There is a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of boys and girls in terms of their self-esteem.

H3: There is a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of boys and girls in terms of their emotional intelligence.

H4: There is a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of students' self-esteem with respect to their grades.

H5: There is a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of students' emotional intelligence with respect to their grades.

H6: There is a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of students' self-esteem with respect to their family's socioeconomic status.

H7: There is a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of students' emotional intelligence with respect to their family's socioeconomic status.

2. Method and Procedure of Study

All secondary school students studying in the districts of Punjab constituted the population of the current study. Multistage sampling was used in the study. In the first stage, four districts (Rawalpindi, Sargodha, Attock and Mianwali) were chosen conveniently. In the second stage, four schools from each district were selected purposively; the schools with the highest number of enrolment in the city area were selected including two boys schools and two girls schools. Finally, using the disproportionate random sampling technique, 20 students were selected from each school, 80 from each district, and 320 from 4 districts. 320 students (160 boys and 160 girls) constituted the target sample but the real data used in the analysis was derived from 300 questionnaires only.

A self-constructed questionnaire comprising three sections was used to collect data. The first section collected information regarding the demographic variables of the study including gender, grades and the socioeconomic status of students' families. The second section comprised Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale (SEIS), founded on Salovey and Mayer's (1997) model of emotional intelligence; it consisted of thirty-three items. In the third section, Self-esteem Questionnaire (SEQ) adapted from Fleming and Courtney (1984) and comprising thirty-six items was included. Frequencies, mean and standard deviation were used to describe the data. Further statistical analysis was done using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. One-way ANOVA was carried out for testing the hypotheses

of the study. Cronbach's Alpha of SEIS and SEQ were .705 and .689, respectively.

3. Results

Table 1

Frequency Distribution of Gender, Grade and Family Income

S. No.	Variables	Demographic Distribution	f	%
1	Gender	Boys	150	50
		Girls	150	50
2	Grade	8 th	87	29
		9 th	93	31
		10 th	120	40
3	Family Income	Less than 50,000	141	47
		51000-75000	78	26
		75000-above	81	27

Table 1 shows that there were 150 male respondents and 150 female respondents. So, the total number of respondents / students was 300. It also reveals that the number of students of 8th grade was 87, the number of students of 9th grade was 93 and the number of students of 10th grade was 120. This table shows that the number of students whose family income was less than 50,000 was 141, the number of students whose family income was between 51000-75000 was 78 and the number of students whose family income was more than 75,000 was 81.

3.1. Correlation Analysis

Pearson Product Moment Correlation (rho) was calculated to test the first research hypothesis. It was observed how the two main variables of the study, that is, self-esteem and emotional intelligence were related to each other.

3.2. T-Test

The t-test was used to test the hypotheses 2 and 3. The purpose was to find gender wise differences between the scores of students on SEIS and SEQ.

Table 2

Pearson Product Moment Correlation of Student Scores on Self-esteem and Emotional Intelligence

No.		N	M	SD	R	p-value
1.	S.E	300	110.20	15.875	.624*	.006
2.	E.I	300	125.14	10.164		

The results indicate that there is a strong, positive and significant correlation between the research variables, that is, self-esteem and emotional intelligence of secondary school learners.

Table 3

Gender Wise Mean, Standard Deviation and t-distribution based on Secondary School Students' Scores on Self-esteem and Emotional Intelligence

No.	Gender	N	M	SD	Df	T	p value	Cohen's d	
1.	S.E	150	Boys	114.90	13.022	298	5.360	.000	.618
	Girls		105.50	17.078					
2.	E.I	150	Boys	122.36	9.748	298	-	.000	.567
	Girls		127.92	9.835					

According to the results displayed in Table 3, there is a significant statistical difference between the mean scores of SEIS and SEQ of boys and girls. Boys enjoy a higher sense of self-esteem than girls (MBoys 114.90 > MGirls 105.50; $p < .001$). On the other hand, results displayed in the second row specify that girls possess higher emotional intelligence than boys (MBoys 122.36 < MGirls 127.92; $p < .001$). However, Cohen's d values .618 and .567 indicate that the effect size is moderate.

3.3. Analysis of Variance One Way ANOVA

One way ANOVA was conducted to test the research hypotheses 4 and 5. The aim was to determine the statistically significant difference in the mean scores of students' self-esteem and emotional intelligence with respect to their grades. The differentiated effect was calculated by applying

the Post Hoc Test. The results indicate that there is significant difference between means of different groups with respect to emotional intelligence ($p \geq .000$) but not self-esteem ($p \geq .583$).

Table 4

Mean, Standard Deviation and One Way ANOVA based on Students' Scores on Self-esteem and Emotional Intelligence with respect to their Grades

No.	Grade	M	SD	Df	t-value	p	Tukey value
1.	S.E 8 th	110.41	14.936	299	0.541	.583	
	9 th	111.39	15.110				
	10 th	109.13	17.123				
2.	E.I 8 th	121.66	8.354	299	11.659	.000	
	9 th	128.71	10.032				9 th >10 th
	10 th	124.90	10.603				10 th >8 th

Table 5

Mean, Standard Deviation and One Way ANOVA based on Students' Scores on Self-esteem and Emotional Intelligence with respect to their Family's Socioeconomic Status (Income)

No.	Family Income	M	SD	Df	t-value	p value	Tukey
1.	S. <50,00	104.6	16.691	29	26.24	.000	>75000
	E 0	6		9	4		>51000-
	51000-75000	110.5	11.939				75000>50,000
	8						
2.	>75,00	119.4	13.257				
	0	8					
	E.I <50,00	124.4	11.236	29	2.623	.074	
	0	0		9			
51000-75000	124.1	6.564					
9							
	>75,00	127.3	10.817				
	0	3					

Post HOC test further reveals that the students of 9th grade scored highest on SEIS followed by the students of 10th and 8th grades, respectively.

One way ANOVA was further conducted to test the research hypotheses

6 and 7. The aim was to determine the statistically significant difference in the mean scores of students' self-esteem and emotional intelligence with respect to their family income. The differentiated effect was calculated by applying the Post Hoc Test. The results indicate that there is significant difference between means of different groups with respect to self-esteem ($p \geq .000$) but not emotional intelligence ($p \geq .074$).

Post HOC test further reveals that students with the highest family income scored highest in self-esteem, while scores gradually decreased with the decreasing income level.

4. Conclusion

The first hypothesis (H1) is accepted as there is a strong and positive correlation between the two major variables of the study, that is, self-esteem and emotional intelligence (see Table 2, p. 7).

The second hypothesis (H2) is upheld as there is a statistically significant difference between secondary school boys and girls in their scores on self-esteem. Boys have higher self-esteem than girls (see Table 3, p. 7).

The third hypothesis (H3) is accepted as there is a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of boys and girls in terms of their emotional intelligence. Girls have higher emotional intelligence as compared to boys (see Table 3, p. 7).

The fourth hypothesis (H4) is rejected as there is no statistically significant difference observed in the mean scores of self-esteem with respect to students' grades (see Table 4, p. 8).

The fifth hypothesis (H5) is upheld as there is a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of emotional intelligence of students with respect to their grades. Students of 9th grade scored higher on emotional intelligence tests than students of 10th and 8th grades, respectively (see Table 4, p. 8).

The sixth hypothesis (H6) is upheld as there is a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of students' self-esteem with respect to their family's socioeconomic status. Students with higher income background scored higher on SE scale; the scores decreased with the decrease in income (see Table 5, p. 8).

The seventh hypothesis (H7) is rejected as there is no statistically significant difference in the mean scores of students' emotional intelligence with respect to their family's socioeconomic status (see Table 5, p. 8).

5. Discussion

The results show considerable difference in the scores of self-esteem and emotional intelligence among various demographic groups. Adolescent students always differ in the way they feel, act, think and want (Revelle, Wilt, & Condon, 2011). Successful exhibition of what they want requires emotional management skills, like self-esteem, emotion regulation, and emotional expressivity (Ummeet, 2015). Perry, Turner and Meyer (2006) explained that the classroom setting contains a difficult combination of information processing and emotional reception that might affect students' learning processes.

Self-esteem is hard to be constructed without social support (Kong, Ding & Zhao, 2015). Belonging to the traditional Pakistani families, boys have higher self-esteem than girls since boys are taught to be dominant and assertive (Mir & Wani, 2018). On the other hand, girls are taught to be tolerant in a traditional society making them score better in self-regulation, resilience and perseverance (Ahmad, Bangash & Khan, 2009; Kumar, 2014). The results resemble the findings of Eisenberg (1994), which proved girls as gentler and emotionally receptive as compared to boys.

Bibi (2016) also proved in her research that there exists a strong positive relationship between self-esteem and emotional intelligence among university students. The results of strong correlation between self-esteem and emotional intelligence guide us to further assume that students with high self-esteem also show better academic performance. Adolescents with high self-esteem scores are found to be more resilient against adversities in life; moreover, they tend to use "better self-regulation strategies than adolescents with lower self-esteem" (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger & Vohs, 2003).

Low self-esteem, on the other hand, is associated with negative mental models of the self in relationships (Crocker & Park, 2004). Low self-esteem may cause aggression, anti-social behavior and delinquency (Donnellan, Trzesniewski, Robins, Moffitt & Caspi, 2005), as well as poor health and limited economic prospects during adulthood (Trzesniewski et al., 2006).

Secondary school students whose monthly family income is above than 75,000 have higher emotional intelligence than others. Socioeconomic status is one of the major predictors of self-confidence and social influence. Lack of money and other physical resources may cause shame and guilt in students, which may further lead to anxiety and depression (Sowislo & Orth, [2012](#)). Researchers are of the view that predictive emotional capabilities enhance people's capacity to recognize and register their emotions, thus helping them to build models of positive emotions and a repertoire of enduring personal resources (Kong et al., [2015](#)).

6. Suggestions for Improvement

In order to meet the challenges of life is a sign of healthy self-esteem and emotional intelligence, the ability of emotional intelligence and attitude of self-esteem must work as protective shield for the adolescents. An adolescent who knows his strengths and weaknesses and feels good about himself / herself seems to have an easier time managing his / her struggles and standing firm in depressing situations.

Adolescents with higher emotional intelligence and self-esteem tend to have a fulfilling life and they enjoy their achievements to the fullest; moreover, they are able to face difficult times. Such adolescents are realistic and generally confident, while adolescents with low self-esteem can find challenges to be frustrating and nerve-wrecking. Therefore, it is recommended that in order to develop into emotionally mature adult parents, teachers and administration may focus on building the positive self-esteem and emotional intelligence of school going students irrespective of their abilities and disabilities.

7. Recommendations for Future Research

The study has suggested some lines for future research. The current study covered four districts of Punjab. However, research may be conducted in other districts of Punjab. The study can be further expanded by investigating the psychological problems of students. It is suggested that a replica study needs to involve a greater number of students for data collection.

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