

Emotional Intelligence in Middle Childhood – Effects of gender and school type

Dr Salma Khanum

Assistant Professor,

Maharani's Science College for Women, Bangalore 560 001

Abstract

Emotional Intelligence is an integral component of mental health. 300 students, both boys and girls, in the age group of 9 – 12 years studying in Government (150) and Private (150) schools were administered the Behavioral and Emotional rating scale (Epstein and Sharma 1998) to determine their level of emotional intelligence. 't'tests and ANOVAs revealed significant main and interactive effects of school set up and gender on this variable and its sub-facets

Introduction

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence refers to an ability to recognize the meanings of emotions and their relationships, and to reason and problem-solve on the basis of them. Emotional intelligence is involved in the capacity to perceive emotions, assimilate emotion-related feelings, understand the information of those emotions, and manage them (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

EQ Qualities

EQ consists of five major qualities or characteristics:

Self-awareness

Mood management

Self-motivation

Impulse control

Interpersonal skills

The first four can be broadly grouped under intrapersonal EQ. They each influence the development of one's courage, perseverance, enthusiasm and passion. Such personal qualities are vital in competitive sports, breakthrough scientific research, inventions, entrepreneurship and extraordinary achievements. They also make the difference because creative solutions or radically new approaches that are usually considered illogical based on conventional wisdom; they only become logical on hindsight.

Intrapersonal EQ qualities are important to all of us in our daily lives. Through self-awareness, we are conscious of our feelings and can deal with them better. Self-awareness also helps us to catch any worrisome episode as soon as possible. Through mood management, we can act to overcome any negativity (e.g. being angry or depressed) that prevents us from accomplishing our goals. To hope or think positively helps us to sustain our morale in the face of setbacks or defeats. Self-motivation is the internal drive to scale new heights, overcome obstacles, disappointments and frustrations, and search proactively for opportunities. It also prompts us to initiate resolving conflicts, seeking clarification and mending relationships. Impulse control allows us to resist temptation and delay gratification; it encourages a person to pursue higher goals as he/she copes better with the stress associated with a difficult task, foregoes short-term rewards for more substantial long-term goals, and follows through on difficult plans.

The fifth quality can be called interpersonal EQ. It is the ability to understand other people: what motivates them, how they work, how to work co-operatively with them. It requires the fundamental skill of empathy – identifying oneself mentally with a person and understanding his/her feelings. Empathy makes other people feel safe enough to talk freely without fear of being judged.

Review of literature

Research linking emotional intelligence with rural and urban backgrounds reveals significant difference in emotional intelligence of rural and urban adolescents, indicating urban adolescents better than their rural counterparts. Male and Female adolescents exhibit same emotional intelligence (Singh,; Chaudhary and Asthana (2008)).

Mergler and Spooner-Lane (2008) investigated personal responsibility, emotional intelligence and self-esteem among a sample of public and private school students in Australia. There were no significant differences on personal responsibility and emotional intelligence, but significant differences were found with respect to self-esteem.

Method

Objective

To study influences of gender and school environment on levels of emotional intelligence in 9-12 year old children.

Hypothesis

Gender and school environment will independently and interactively influence levels of emotional intelligence and its subdivisions.

Operational definitions

Emotional intelligence: The capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships.

School environment: Type of institution and whether the Government or a private body manages it.

Sample

The total sample of 300 children consisted of 150 boys and 150 girls in the age group of 9-12 years. Of these, 75 boys and 75 girls were selected from Government schools and 75 boys and 75 girls were selected from Private schools. All the students were from those studying the state syllabus (SSC).

Tools and techniques

Socio demographic sheet – developed by the researcher to elicit the relevant socio-demographic details such as age, gender, family details, school details.

Behavioral and Emotional Rating Scale (BERS) (Epstein & Sharma, 1998) was used to assess emotional intelligence.

This is a 66-item scale that assesses children's emotional and behavioral strengths in five factor-analytically derived subscales. The first subscale, *Interpersonal Strengths* (e.g., "Uses anger management skills") (15 items), assesses a child's ability to control emotions or behavior in a social situation. The second subscale, *Family Involvement* (e.g., "Participates in family activities") (10 items), focuses on a child's participation and relationship with his or her family. The third subscale, *Intrapersonal Strengths* (e.g., "Demonstrates a sense of humor") (11 items), assesses a child's outlook on his or her competence and accomplishments. Subscale four, *School Functioning* (e.g., "Completes homework regularly") (9 items), focuses on a child's competence in school and classroom tasks. The fifth subscale, *Affective Strengths* (e.g., "Asks for help") (7 items), addresses the child's ability to express feelings toward others and to accept affection from others.

A teacher, caregiver or any adult knowledgeable about the child can complete the BERS. Respondents are asked to rate the child on each of the 66 items on a scale of 0 to 3 (0 not at all like the child to 3 = very much like the child). Respondents are also asked to complete eight open-ended questions about the child (e.g., "What are the child's favorite hobbies or activities?" "Who is this child's favorite teacher?"). The open-ended questions address resiliency and protective factors.

Procedure

Behavioral and Emotional Rating Scale (BERS) (Epstein & Sharma, 1998) Scale was completed by the class teachers of the children. The responses obtained were then scored based on the scoring criteria provided by the authors.

Analysis of results

The data obtained was subjected to qualitative and quantitative analysis. Appropriate Univariate and Multivariate statistical techniques were applied to verify the hypothesis stated that *“Gender and school environment will independently and interactively influence levels of emotional intelligence and its subdivisions”*.

To test this, an ANOVA was done and the results are presented in tables 1 and 2

Table 1: Giving the descriptive measures for the Behavioral and Emotional Rating Scale (BERS) and its subscales.

Sl No	Areas Assessed		Boys		Girls		Total	
			Pvt School	Govt School	Pvt School	Govt School	Pvt School	Govt School
1	BERS Total	Mn	118.77	130.46	132.13	129.52	125.45	129.99
		SD	35.55	24.57	34.97	32.88	35.78	28.93
		Tot SD	124.61 31.01		130.82 33.85		127.72 32.56	
2	BERS-Inter personal Strengths	Mn	41.68	44.11	46.39	43.29	44.03	43.70
		SD	12.23	8.69	11.30	11.60	11.97	10.22
		Tot SD	42.89 10.65		44.84 11.52		43.87 11.11	
3	BERS Family Involvement	Mn	16.27	17.21	16.44	17.75	16.35	17.48
		SD	6.87	5.05	7.37	6.46	7.10	5.78
		Tot SD	16.74 6.02		17.09 6.94		16.92 6.49	
4	BERS School Functioning	Mn	19.78	22.12	23.68	22.15	21.73	22.13
		SD	7.55	5.02	7.15	6.48	7.59	5.78
		Tot SD	20.95 6.50		22.91 6.85		21.93 6.74	
5	BERS Affective Strengths	Mn	18.35	21.32	21.70	20.53	20.02	20.93
		SD	6.57	5.36	6.64	7.30	6.79	6.39
		Tot SD	19.83 6.16		21.12 6.98		20.47 6.60	
6	BERS Intra Personal Strengths	Mn	22.69	25.70	23.92	25.80	23.31	25.75
		SD	8.29	6.08	9.10	7.02	8.69	6.54
		Tot SD	24.20 7.40		24.86 8.15		24.53 7.78	

Table 2 Giving the results of the two-way ANOVA for Behavioral and Emotional Rating Scale and its subscales

Sl no	Variable		MS among	MS within	F ratio
1	BERS Total	Gender	2892.31	1042.74	2.77 ns
		Type of School	1548.14		1.49 ns
		Interaction	3834.19		3.68 ns
2	BERS- Interpersonal Strengths	Gender	284.21	121.86	2.33 ns
		Type of School	8.33		0.07 ns
		Interaction	571.32		4.69 *
3	BERS Family Involvement	Gender	9.363	42.19	0.222 ns
		Type of School	95.20		2.26 ns
		Interaction	2.43		0.06 ns
4	BERS School Functioning	Gender	289.10	43.86	6.59 **
		Type of School	12.20		.28 ns
		Interaction	281.30		6.41 **
5	BERS Affective Strengths	Gender	123.52	42.29	2.92 ns
		Type of School	61.20		1.45 ns
		Interaction	321.37		7.59 **
6	BERS Intra Personal Strengths	Gender	33.00	59.41	.56 ns
		Type of School	447.74		7.54**
		Interaction	23.80		0.40 ns

**Significant beyond .01 level; *Significant beyond .05 level; ns not significant

From tables 1 and 2, we can see that on interpersonal strengths - a sub area of behavioral and emotional rating scale - significant interactive effects of gender and school can be seen. Girls from private schools show the greatest levels of interpersonal strengths, followed by government school boys followed by government school girls and lastly private school boys.

School functioning – another sub area of the Behavioral and emotional rating scale reflects significant gender differences. The girls show greater levels of school functioning than do boys. Significant interactive effects can also be seen with private schoolboys showing least levels of school functioning. The greatest school functioning is seen among private school girls, followed by government schoolgirls, followed by government schoolboys.

The sub area of Affective Strengths also shows significant interactive effects of gender and school with least strength shown by private schoolboys. Greatest affective strength is shown by private schoolgirls, followed by government schoolboys and then by school government girls.

In the sub area of Intra Personal Strengths significant school differences are seen with children from government schools displaying greater levels of intrapersonal strengths than their private school age mates.

Discussion

Emotional Intelligence was assessed by administering the behavioral and emotional rating scale (Epstein and Sharma, 1998)

Gender and school type did not significantly affect the composite BERS score; however, the sub scores of Interpersonal strengths, school functioning and affective strengths show significant interactive effects of gender and school. Private school girls have scored the highest on all three subareas and the private school boys have scored the least.

The subarea of school functioning also shows significant gender differences with girls being higher on school functioning than boys. Here again, the greater tendency of females to be relationship-oriented is reflected as also the tendency to achieve more in academics. These results are in consonance with the findings of Underwood & Bjornstad (2001) who reported significant but quite modest correlations between children's self-reports of their emotional behavior and their behaviors as coded during play session. There was some evidence that for girls, self-reports corresponded to emotional behaviors more strongly than for boys.

The Intrapersonal sub area of the BERS scale shows that government school children are more aware of their personal strengths than the private school children. In the government school setting, the children have to be self reliant for almost all aspects of their day-to-day life. Hence they have to be more aware of their strengths and weaknesses.

6. Conclusions

- On interpersonal strengths - a sub area of behavioral and emotional rating scale - significant interactive effects of gender and school can be seen.
- School functioning – another sub area of the Behavioral and emotional rating scale reflects significant gender and interactive differences.
- Sub area of Affective Strengths also shows significant interactive effects of gender and school.
- Sub area of Intra Personal Strengths significant school differences are seen.

References

Epstein and Sharma (1998)-[http://www.google.co.in /search?client=firefox-a&rls=org.mozilla%3Aen-US%3Aofficial&channel=s&hl=en&q=Epstein+and+Sharma%2C+1998&meta=&btnG=Google+Search](http://www.google.co.in/search?client=firefox-a&rls=org.mozilla%3Aen-US%3Aofficial&channel=s&hl=en&q=Epstein+and+Sharma%2C+1998&meta=&btnG=Google+Search)

Mayer and Salovey(1997)-<http://www.google.co.in /search?hl=en&q=Mayer+and+Salovey%2C+1997&meta=>

Mayer, Di Paolo and Salovey(1990)-<http://www.google.co.in /search?hl=en&q=Mayer%2C+Di+Paolo+and+Salovey%2C+1990&meta=>

Singh.M; Chaudhary.O.P and Asthana.M (2008)- Impact of Locale and Gender on Emotional Intelligence of Adolescents. **Psycho-lingua, vol 38 (1) pg 52-56**

Mergler, A.G and Spooner-Lane, S (2008)-<http://www-atypon-link.com/AAP/doi/abs/10.1375/aedp.25.2.4>

Underwood.M.K & Bjornstad G J (2001)- Children's emotional experience of peer provocation: The relation between observed behavior and self reports of emotions, expressions & social goals. **International journal of behavioral development, 25 (4), pg 320-330**