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## Relationship of emotional intelligence with social anxiety and social competence of adolescents

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### Abstract

**This study was an effort to find out the relationship of emotional intelligence with social anxiety and social competence of adolescents. The study was carried out at Ibne Sina College and SICAS. A sample of 130 adolescents between the ages of 14-16 years was randomly selected. Emotional quotient inventory youth version (EQi- YV) by Baron, Kutcher Social Anxiety Disorder Scale for Adolescents (K-GSADS-A) and Measures of Adolescence Social Performance (MASP) were used to find out the emotional intelligence, social anxiety and social competence respectively. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics as well as independent samples t-test, ANOVA and Pearson correlation coefficient. Results showed that girls experience more social anxiety as compared to boys. Further analysis revealed a negative correlation between emotional intelligence and social anxiety, a positive relation between emotional intelligence and social competence and a negative relation between social anxiety and social competence of both boys and girls.**

**Keywords:** *Emotional Intelligence, Social Anxiety, Social Competence, Adolescence*

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### Introduction

Emotions play a vital part in our lives. They come naturally to us like breathing air. They are an essential way of communication between an individual and his surroundings, we express our feelings and thoughts with the display of a variety of emotions. The word 'emotion' denotes feelings like fear, joy, anger, love, jealousy and anxiety. Expressing emotions is an integral part of our life and are a source of information about how certain things affect us. Goleman (1995) stated that if your emotional abilities aren't in control, if you don't have knowledge regarding self-awareness, if you are not able to direct your stressful emotions, if you lack empathy and effective relationships, then your intellectual intelligence doesn't matter and it would not always guarantee success. Humans are emotional beings and our first response to a stimulus is an emotional one. Emotions can have domineering effect on us and at hands of passion, we overwhelm reason repeatedly. They are the impulses to act, sometimes irrationally that have been

bestowed on us by evolution (Scaruffi, 2006). Emotions retain the power to make or break us. Negative emotions have the ability to make our concentration go crazy thus affecting our performance in the task. On the other hand, positive emotions help boost our confidence and make us strive towards excellence and increase our success rate in both intellectual and interpersonal problems. According to Simon (2002) emotions play a very vital role in the human psyche and have a very significant influence on one's thinking, perceptions and actions. Apparently, emotions are said to be the driving force behind psychological activities. They add colour, flavour to life and help rejuvenate an individual psychologically which helps in focusing on events and objects for welfare (as cited in Gujjar, Naoreen, Aslam and Khattak, 2009).

Emotional intelligence is the undeniable core ingredient which when put into practice opens up wide horizons of benefits ranging from learning, relationships and wellness. It can be perceived as the master aptitude that plays a dominating role on

the other abilities and can either facilitate or interfere with them. It provides one with the skill needed to manage and control our emotions and moods and we can learn how to keep track when we are being swept away and determine how long that feeling lasts. Emotional intelligence helps one to master emotions rather than having a temper outburst or meltdown when the situation is beyond one's control. It not only gives us knowledge regarding our emotions but also helps in understanding the emotional needs of others, having this perception, it allows us to know how others feel and thus helps us in better social functioning (Manktelo & Carlson, 2011).

Academic intelligence has been thought to be pivotal for a successful life and since ages, people have accentuated that IQ is all that one needs to get through in life. There is an immense fixation on academic abilities, which does not prepare one for turmoil that life vicissitudes bestow upon us and we remain defenceless. Our emotional life is a domain that we need to deal with using greater skills that may require securing a set of competencies. A repertoire of work done on the various aspects of emotional intelligence testifies those people who are emotionally adept; who are aware of their emotions, manage them and exercise an effective way of dealing with other peoples' feelings have well-developed emotional skills (Matthews, Zeidner & Roberts, 2002).

The power of emotions can be better understood in moments of impassioned actions that give us second thoughts once the fumes have settled. In our emotional lives imprecision can have a ruinous effect on our relationships with others; we can spring either at or away from the wrong thing or person. These inchoate emotional mistakes can be because our bubbling emotions override our rationale mind and we act without evaluating the situation. Emotional intelligence has been able to

mark its presence in making a person in control of his actions, rethinking his decisions in a practical way and in being more considerate of others around him. Organizations have acknowledged that having high levels of emotional intelligence has worked wonders in overall job performance stressing on having more emotionally urbanized personnel (Naseer, Chishti, Rahman & Jumani, 2011).

Social anxiety is the intense and persistence fear that hampers an individual's social growth. A sense of self-consciousness arises from an apprehension of rejection from others or the dread of doing something embarrassing in social situations. Exposure to such situations provokes responses like panic, freezing, blushing and crying and an individual starts avoiding such events. Eventually this impedes the social development, which is essential for all social interactions (Heydrich, 2008).

Adolescence is the time when individuals interact with each other in order to explore the world around them and form new relations. Thus, when adolescents have social anxiety problem then they may face a major block in their social and personality development (Rayuso, 2011).

Individuals who suffer from social anxiety are often spot struggling with ambiguous social situations and may interpret them as threatening which debar future interpersonal interactions. They are more preoccupied with the thought that their social abilities fall short of what is expected of them and they fail to make an impact. The capability of strategizing and distinguishing between various social situations is the basic theory on which the fundamentals of emotional intelligence stands (Miers, Blote, Bogels & Westenberg, 2008). Emotions carry the key to information about our thoughts and intentions. They are communicative and are required for social functioning. To regulate emotional reactions, there is a need to

learn emotional competencies which control impulsive behaviours, over-reactive, or lack of emotional skills. Social adaptation requires maintaining sound interaction with others and for this, emotional abilities and disposition are said to be of high importance in coordinating social encounters (Mestre, Guil, Lopes, Salovey & Gil-Olarte, 2006).

As the network of relations outside of family dilates, the adolescents are exposed to comprehensive set of new social situations where they mingle with strangers or acquaintances. The intensifications of peer interactions have a decisive post in the development and solidification of social development. Most of the interpersonal situations demand assertive behaviours like expressing one's agreement or dislike, standing up for personal rights and rejecting or making requests, which may induce fear or certain level of discomfort in the adolescent (Ingles, Hidalgo & Mendez 2005). A large body of work vouches for the congruent of emotional intelligence with the various dimensions of personality. Emotional intelligence holds the ability to reason about emotions, their management and is believed to catalogue high level, conscious processing and dispensation of emotions. When it comes to dealing with pressures of social interactions, emotional intelligence helps in reducing the levels of anxiety that might be provoked and make the process smooth (Jacobs, Snow, Geraci, Vythilingam, Blair, Charney, Pine & Blair, 2008).

Adolescent is the time of rapid social development as the adolescents are able to identify themselves by interacting with others. At this age, social interactions provide a stepping-stone for an autonomous functioning as adults and training grounds for future interpersonal relations. Social competence is the amalgam of social, emotional and cognitive skills and behaviours that a child needs to

have for a sound social adaptation. Skills and behaviours needed for social development change according to the age of the child and the demand of the situation he is in. Social competence of an individual depends on his social skills, social awareness and self-confidence. One must learn to adopt appropriate social behaviour in a particular interpersonal situation which is acceptable to others. A wide repertoire of social skills helps to restrain oneself from exhibiting egocentric or negative social behaviours, thus proving to be social competent (Welsh & Bierman, 2011).

Social competence is made up of a combination of social skills and behaviours from different dimensions. The prominent domains of interpersonal functioning include commencement of relationships, declaration of personal rights and dissatisfaction with others, emotional support and management of interpersonal conflicts (Wong, 2010). The need to establish stronger interpersonal relations bespeaks of the emergence of emotional sophistication; knowing other's feelings and acting in a manner that further shape those feelings. To possess such interpersonal command one must be able to reach the benchmark of self-control, the ability to soothe oneself, damp our anger, distress, impulses and excitements. Adjusting to others requires modicum of serenity in oneself. Handling emotions in someone else is a fine art of relationships that demands the maturity of two emotional skills; self-management and empathy (Halberstadt, Denham & Dunsmore, 2001). Interactions and behaviours with peers are indicators of social competence. During adolescence, social interactions are more salient to one's development and interpersonal relations are more imperative, hence taking steps in their maintenance also becomes crucial. Pro-social behaviours practiced with peers are

positively related to emotional intelligence (Vorbach & Foster, 2003).

The tact of detecting plight and pain of others and then providing them with some solace is a flair for rapport, an emotional skill requisite for preservation of relations. The root of social situations is; initiating interpersonal contact and responding to provocation, which makes it evident that emotions are the basic element of social interaction. The nature of emotional content decides the meaning and course of an interaction. The talent of mediator in case of conflicts, development of personal connections with others and the skill of detecting and having insight to people's feelings fuse together to form interpersonal polish, the important unit for social success. People who apply emotional intelligence in socially challenging situations smoothly connect with others and are astute in reading their reactions, emotions, and handle disputes that may flare up social activities (Shujja, 2008).

Prior studies have highlighted the importance of emotional intelligence, social anxiety and social competence separately but very few (to the researcher's knowledge) have tried to explore whether a person with good IQ is better in social competence and whether a person who is socially competent experiences social anxiety or not. Adolescence is a crucial period for social development in one's life, thus, we must perceive the most favourable stimulation that can be endowed in an adolescent's surrounding which would aid in healthy social development. In this regard, the current research intends to explore the relationship of emotional intelligence, competence and social anxiety among adolescents.

#### **Objectives**

- Find out emotional intelligence, social anxiety and social competence of adolescents.

- Find out the relationship of emotional intelligence with social anxiety of adolescents.
- Find out the relationship of emotional intelligence with social competence of adolescents.

#### **Method**

##### **Participants**

A sample of 130 students (both boys and girls) was randomly selected from Ibne Sina College and SICAS to find of the relationship of emotional intelligence with social anxiety and social competence.

##### **Instruments used**

Three different tests were used to find out levels of each of emotional intelligence, social anxiety and social competence of adolescents. Emotional quotient inventory (EQi- YV) by Baron was used to calculate the level of emotional intelligence in adolescents. The test comprised of 60 items and the respondent had to select from very seldom, seldom, sometimes, often and very often. Kutcher Social Anxiety Disorder Scale for Adolescents (K-GSADS-A) was adapted with the consent of the writer and was used to evaluate levels of social anxiety in adolescents. The adapted scale was then pre-tested on ten adolescents and Cronbach alpha reliability was calculated using the SPSS 15. The test was divided into two sections: section A and section B. Section A was used to score fear and avoidance for 20 different situations with the help of a key: 0 = never, 1 = mild, 2 = moderate, 3 = severe/total avoidance. Section B consisted of 11 items and scored the levels of distress quotient with the help of the key; 0 = never, 1 = mild, 2 = moderate, 3 = severe. In the end the scores for both section A and B was added up. The Measures of Adolescence Social Performance (MASP) was used to calculate levels of social competence in adolescents. It consisted of 50 items which included queries regarding peers, family and school. There were four possible answers; a, b, c

and d for the given situations. The scoring for the four options varied with questions. Question number 38 carried different scoring for both boys and girls.

**Procedure**

A meeting was set up with the administration of both Ibne Sina College and SICAS. The purpose of the study was explained to them. Permission was taken from the principals of the respective schools to conduct research on their students. The school administration and

teachers collaborated and provided help at every step of data collection.

Students were asked to fill the consent form before starting the research. A schedule was made to ensure that the students were contacted only in their free periods. Adolescents were randomly selected from grades 8 to 10 from each school and an id was maintained so that it could be made certain a particular student responded to all three tests.

**Results**

**Table 1: Level of social Anxiety, Emotional Intelligence and Social Competence in Boys and Girls**

	Boys		95% CI	
	Mean	SD	Upper	Lower
Social Anxiety	42.9	15.5	48.6	37.2
Emotional Intelligence	200.7	18.0	207.4	194.1
Social Competence	144.2	15.8	150.0	138.4
	Girls		95% CI	
	Mean	SD	Upper	Lower
Social Anxiety	64.0	20.9	71.3	56.7
Emotional Intelligence	197.0	23.2	205.1	188.8
Social Competence	136.8	15.9	145.1	133.8

**Table 2: Comparison of levels of social anxiety, emotional intelligence and social competence in Boys and Girls**

	Boys		Girls		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Social Anxiety	42.9	15.5	64.0	20.9	-4.569	63	.000
Emotional Intelligence	200.7	18.0	197.0	23.2	.725	63	.471
Social Competence	144.2	15.8	136.8	15.9	1.884	63	.064

**Table 3: Comparison of Levels of Social Anxiety, Emotional Intelligence and Social Competence According to Age**

	Age 14		Age 15		Age 16		<i>f-value</i>
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Social Anxiety	55.1	18.1	51.4	21.1	55.8	23.9	.295
Emotional Intelligence	201.6	17.7	198.1	20.0	197.4	24.3	.215
Social Competence	140.2	15.1	141.3	20.0	139.3	12.4	.083

**Table 4: Relationship of Emotional Intelligence with Social Anxiety and Social Competence**

	Social Anxiety	Emotional Intelligence	Social Competence (Boys)	Social Competence (Girls)
Emotional Intelligence	-.255(*)			
Social Competence (Boys)	-.135	.201		
Social Competence (Girls)	-.094	.187	.996(**)	

\*P<0.05

**Table 5: Relationship of Emotional Intelligence with Social Anxiety and Social Competence boys and Girls**

	Social Anxiety	Emotional Intelligence
Boys	-.161	
Emotional Intelligence		
Social Competence	-.213	.187
Girls	-.285	
Emotional Intelligence		
Social Competence	.103	.170

Table 1 shows levels of social anxiety, emotional intelligence and social competence of the respondents. For boys, the mean score of social anxiety was 42.9 with upper limit of 48.6 and lower limit of 37.2. The mean score of emotional intelligence was 200.7 with upper limit of 207.4 and lower limit of 194.1. The mean score of social competence was 144.2 with upper limit of 150.0 and lower limit of 138.4.

Whereas for girls, the mean score of social anxiety was 64.0 with upper limit of 71.3 and lower limit of 56.7. The mean score of emotional intelligence was 197.0 with upper limit of 205.1 and lower limit of 188.8. The mean score of social competence was 136.8 with upper limit of 145.1 and lower limit of 133.8.

Table 2 shows the comparison between the levels of social anxiety, emotional intelligence and social competence in girls and boys. To compare the levels of social anxiety, emotional intelligence and social competence the independent sample t-test was used. The comparison between the score shows that there is a significant

difference in social anxiety of boys and girls. The mean score of social anxiety in girls was 64.0 whereas the mean score of social anxiety in boys was 42.9. This indicates that girls experience more social anxiety as compared to boys. The mean score of emotional intelligence in boys was 200.7 and the mean score of social competence in boys was 144.2. There was no statistical difference found in the values of emotional intelligence and social competence of boys and girls.

Table 3 shows that the mean score for social anxiety in adolescents who were 14 years old was 55.1, at 15 years it was 51.4 and at 16 years it was 55.8. ANOVA was used to compare the levels of social anxiety, emotional intelligence and social competence according to ages. This indicates that adolescents who were 16 years old experienced more social anxiety than the ones who were 14 and 15 years old. The mean score for emotional intelligence in adolescents who were 14 years old was 201.6, at 15 years it was 198.1 and at 16 years it was 197.4. This indicates that adolescents who were 14

years old were more emotionally intelligent than the ones who were 15 and 16 years old. The mean score for social competence in adolescents who were 14 years of age was 140.2, at 15 years it was 141.3 and at 16 years it was 139.3. This indicates that adolescents who were 15 years old were more socially competent than the ones who were 14 and 16 years old.

Table 4 shows the relationship of emotional intelligence with social anxiety and social competence among adolescents. Pearson coefficient of correlation was used to calculate the relationship between emotional intelligence, social anxiety and social competence. There is negative correlation between emotional intelligence and social anxiety ( $r = -.255$ ), when the level of emotional intelligence is high the level of social anxiety is low. There is a positive relation between emotional intelligence and social competence boys ( $r = .201$ ), when the level of emotional intelligence is high the level of social competence is also high in boys. There is a positive relation between emotional intelligence and social competence girls ( $r = .187$ ), when the level of emotional intelligence is high the level of social competence is also high in girls. There is a negative relation between social anxiety and social competence boys ( $r = -.135$ ), when the level of social competence is high the level of social anxiety is low in boys. There is a negative relation of social anxiety with social competence girls ( $r = -.094$ ), when the level of social competence is high the level of social anxiety is low in girls.

Table 5 shows that relationship of emotional intelligence with social anxiety and social competence of boys and girls. Pearson coefficient of correlation was used to calculate the relationship between emotional intelligence, social anxiety and social competence of boys. There was a negative relationship between emotional intelligence and social anxiety ( $r = -.161$ ), in

boys when the level of emotional intelligence is high the level of social anxiety is low. There is a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and social competence ( $r = .187$ ), when the level of emotional intelligence is high then the level of social competence is also high in boys. There is a negative relationship between social competence and social anxiety ( $r = -.213$ ), when the level of social competence is high, the level of social anxiety is low.

Negative relationship between emotional intelligence and social anxiety ( $r = -.285$ ), in girls too. There is a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and social competence ( $r = .170$ ), when the level of emotional intelligence is high the level of social competence is also high. There is a positive relation between social anxiety and social competence ( $r = .103$ ), when the level of social competence is high the level of social anxiety is low. This indicates that relationship do exist either positive or negative, between the three variables. Although there exists a positive relation between social anxiety and social competence but it is not statistically very significant.

### Discussion

The analysis of data collected with the help of the sample relevant to the study suggests that girls are more socially anxious as compared to boys. Results indicate a significant relation between emotional intelligence, social anxiety and social competence of adolescents. It was concluded that emotionally intelligent adolescents are better in controlling their emotions and are less prone to social anxiety. It was brought to notice that both in boys and girls, levels of emotional intelligence affect the social competence of adolescents. The more a person has control over his emotions, higher are the chances to be socially competent. Furthermore, it was concluded that in both genders; the

more an individual was socially competent, the less was the level of social anxiety or more socially anxious individual experienced relatively less social competence.

Studies on the relationship between emotional intelligence and social anxiety suggested that there was a relationship present between emotional intelligence and social anxiety. According to Kashdan & Herbert, (2001) a person's emotions controls his social anxiety in matters of social settings and limits his actions and reactions to various social stimuli. Ruth (2011) suggested that the wide sphere of emotional intelligence includes interpersonal and intrapersonal abilities that enable a person to overpower the complications that social anxiety may exhibit in social surroundings. Papnis (2007) supports the findings that higher levels of emotional intelligence contribute to lower social anxiety levels.

In accordance to these, the current study finds that a relationship exists between emotional intelligence and social anxiety. It was found that adolescents who had higher levels of emotional intelligence were less socially anxious. However as compared to boys, the girls were more socially anxious. Zeff (2005); Summerfeldt, Koolsterman, Antony and Parker, (2006) have concluded their studies with the findings that low emotional intelligence gave way to social interaction anxiety. Cuncic (2012) reported that as compared to normally developed adolescent; teenagers with social anxiety had to deal more with impaired mixed-group interactions. In association to this, the current study found that an interdependent relationship was present between social anxiety and social competence. The present study reached to the conclusion that more socially competent adolescents had to face less social anxiety than adolescents with poor social skills.

Findings of a research by Lope, Nezelek, Shutz, Sellin and Salovey (2004) conclude that emotional intelligence enables a person to utilize their emotions for improving their level of social competence. Analysis of success in social interactions by Smith, Heaven and Ciarrochi, (2008) uncovered that emotional intelligence has a significant importance in communications and social interactions. In relation to this, Mavroveli, Petrides, Rieffe and Bakker (2007) declared that during adolescence social interaction is at its peak. Emotional self-efficacy is seen as a positive social skill. It helps in making the process of social interactions easier and more enjoyable.

### **Conclusion**

It can be concluded from the current study that a significant positive relation exists between emotional intelligence and social competence. The varying levels of emotional intelligence can be held in account of the changes in the levels of social competence. This study showed that higher levels of emotional intelligence increases the social competence of adolescents.

Furthermore, negative relation was found between social anxiety and social competence in both boys and girls. The study also revealed that girls experience more social anxiety as compared to boys. Further analysis revealed a negative correlation between emotional intelligence and social anxiety.

### **Recommendations**

In the light of present study, recommendations are made for future research:

The research at hand relies on self-report questionnaires; there is a chance of vulnerability to distortions and biased responses. Data can be collected from a variety of sources like; family, friends and teachers by administering standardized tests. The study can be re-conducted with a larger sample taken from different

institutions. Several other factors like socio economic status, family environment and parenting style should also be considered for future research.

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