

Is Emotional Intelligence Education an answer to adolescents' problems?

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ABSTRACT

The researcher conducts a meta-analysis of studies done in the past two decades on Emotional Intelligence and Adolescence. This analysis was an attempt to unearth the work of researchers who revealed the influence of Emotional Intelligence on solving adolescent's problems. Findings are discussed based on the work of several researchers. It was found that Emotional Intelligence Interventions could change the level of Emotional Intelligence in adolescents and was also an answer to developing competencies in adolescents so as to enable them to solve their problems. Research regarding the effects of such interventions are inadequate in India. Implications for further research has been highlighted.

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Introduction

Psychologists and educationists have incorporated Emotional Intelligence in designing school curriculum. The West has found an answer to adolescent problems encompassing various areas of life- academics, family relationships, conflicts with peers. In a way the West has introduced well designed programmes on Emotional Intelligence which have also been well implemented.

However in India it has still to make a mark and enter the Educational Curriculum.

The Indian tradition particularly followed in the rural areas and those among low socio-economic background makes the adolescent a miniature adult. Girls are often married off at this stage or they elope. Society expects them to dress and act like adults. Expressing emotions freely is not accepted by the society. This holds true for the urban adolescents in Assam. Shaffer (1996)²⁴ had revealed that the adolescents want to achieve 'emotional autonomy', that is, they want to depend on their own emotional strength rather than being dependent on their parents. Negativity in disciplining aggravates the situation. Boys and girls at this stage are reminded of their mistakes and instructions are not given as to what is right and how things should be done. This confuses the young minds. Some households also lack a proper role model. Parents who are illiterate lack a proper hold on their children. Illiterate parents lack confidence in rearing children, particularly when it comes to education. When they discover that their parents are illiterate or less educated, adolescents' confidence on their parents diminishes.

Methodology : Meta-analysis of studies done by researchers since the last 2 decades was done.

Daniel Goleman(1995)¹³ wrote about two model Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Programs: one is called Self-science. Goleman asserted that EQ education is a critical component for improving life-outcomes. Self-science has all the ingredients of Emotional Intelligence. Several studies done abroad have documented that developing emotional competence reduces risky behaviours (such as drug use, dropping out and violence), while increasing pro-social behaviours (such as exercise, positive peer relationships and leadership).

Elias et al (1997)¹¹ stated that to succeed in school, family, friendships, the work-place, community life, and democratic participation, students need a full complement of skills-social, emotional, and academic. According to them, when children enter school they lack social skills; it is only through intervention that they could develop a complement of social, emotional, and academic competencies. Davis (2012)⁸ quotes Gilbert and Orlick's critical importance of teaching skills to elementary-school children that would help them direct the course of their lives. In the US the traditional "Social Skills Training" was replaced or improved and an alternative term was introduced known as "Social and Emotional Learning" (SEL). Davis (2012)⁸ quotes the definition of SEL as given by Norris(2003)¹⁸ as "an approach that teaches individuals to recognize, regulate, and express the social and emotional aspects of their lives, so they can successfully manage life tasks". Unlike social skills training that denotes a more targeted

intervention for children who manifests deficits in one or more skill areas, SEL implies a curriculum for all students .

According to Howing et al (1990)¹⁵, interventions and social skills can reduce the incidences of later anti-social behaviours.

Mayer et al (2001)¹⁷ studied teens' response to EI interventions and proved that increased Emotional Intelligence helps teenagers make more complex, sophisticated, and pro-social decisions.

Elias (2001)¹¹ had stressed the need for a broader educational agenda, since exclusive focus on academic learning was creating lot of academic stress and anxiety among students. Moreover students were ill equipped to face the challenges of life.

Dennis and Anderson (2002)⁹ assessed 205 middle school students in Southern California, measuring both EI and use of alcohol and tobacco and found that the teens with higher Emotional Intelligence were less likely to use alcohol and tobacco.

To address student improvement, Six Seconds conducted a study of 13 different classrooms for six weeks; at first the students completed an assessment, then had six lessons, then another assessment (Fredman, 2003). Results showed that students EQ increased significantly with even relatively brief exposure to the program. This finding made Bar-On, the creator of the EQ assessment tool, to conclude that the program is viable. At the end of the first year, the children were better able to understand and express themselves, to understand and relate with others, to manage and control their emotions, and to adapt to their immediate school environment.

Durlak and Weissberg(2005)¹⁰ studies found SEL programs improved student behaviours.

A large body of evidence shows that schools are the ideal place to implement interventions. Brooks (2006)³ opined that the school serves as both an environment with the power to minimize risks factors and a place where children must learn to master the skills needed to become competent adults. Educators perceive these activities as an integral part of the school's mission.

Petrides (2006)²⁰ studied 160 students belonging to elementary school and revealed that those with higher EQ scores were recognized by teachers and peers both as cooperative and as leaders. And for being neither disruptive nor aggressive.

Fiedeldej and Dijk and the Six Seconds team (2006) assessed an international sample of 2,665 youth ages 7 to 18. The study compared scores on the Six Seconds Emotional Intelligence Assessment-Youth Version with a composite "Barometer of Life"

comprised of Good Health, Relationship Quality, Life Satisfaction, Personal Achievement, and Self-Efficacy. EQ scores were strongly correlated with these outcomes.

The past couple of decades had seen the rise of emotions in education, with a growing movement for a more humanistic, holistic and socio-emotional approach to educational practices. Schools and classrooms are called to go beyond measurable standards and performance indicators and become more engaged with the real world and help in the formation of academically, socially and emotionally literate young people (Cefai and Cooper,2009⁶ quotes Battistich 2001; Cefai 2008;Elias, Arnold and Hussey 2003).

The importance of EI Education is also reflected in the words of Cefai and Cooper (2009)⁶, who said that as young people seek to establish themselves as autonomous and resilient citizens in a fast-changing world, they need to have the competencies and resources to achieve their goals, to solve problems effectively, to engage in healthy relationships and to sustain their psychological and social wellbeing. When children leave school, they need to have learned the requisite academic and scientific skills to enable them to function as self-reliant citizens and to gain access to opportunities and resources. He further stressed the need that the children have to be creative in problem-solving and capable of taking decisions, to maintain interpersonal relationships, to communicate effectively with others and to make an intelligent use of resources. Hence, focusing on a holistic approach would provide the relevant education to prepare children for the world outside school.

Durlak et al (2011)¹⁰ found that a number of school-based programs that focus on social and emotional learning have shown positive effects for children's social and emotional skills and well-being as well as for academic performance . Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) training generally includes, but extends beyond the competencies generally used to define Emotional Intelligence. Besides overlapping competencies such as recognition and regulation of emotions, they often include training in other areas such as setting and achieving goals and making responsible decisions. In their meta-analysis of 213 SEL intervention studies, Durlak et al (2011)¹⁰ found significant mean effects for SEL interventions in improved social emotional skills and positive social behaviour, fewer conduct problems and emotional distress, and better academic performance .

Ruiz et al (2012)²¹ analyzed the effects of an Emotional Intelligence education program based on Mayer and Salovey's(1997) model of adolescent psychosocial adjustment. Participants were 147 high school students aged between 13 and 16 years, of whom 69 were in the control group and 78 were in the

training group. The research was conducted by adopting a quasi-experimental pretest-intervention-posttest design during two academic years. Students who participated in the EI program reported better psychosocial adjustment (eg., lower levels of depression and anxiety, less somatization, and social stress, and higher self-esteem).

Castillo et al (2013)⁵ mentions about the growing literature supporting the programs that promote emotion-related abilities among youth (Durlak et al, 2011)¹⁰. These initiatives called SEL interventions appear to have promising benefits, including the reduction of aggressive behaviours and fostering of socio-emotional skills and mental health.

Schutte, Malouff and Thorsteinsson (2013)²³ has stated that Emotional Intelligence has been of interest to researchers and practitioners in fields ranging from organizational management to sports science; and mentions about an early feedback from Emotional Intelligence training program with school children (described by Brackett and Katulak, 2006) which had found beneficial effects for school-related performance as well as interpersonal relations.

Intervention studies reviewed by Schutte, Malouff and Thorsreinsson (2013)²³ has revealed that Emotional Intelligence training can influence a variety of outcomes, including wellbeing, physical health, relationships, work performance, and even change in personality traits.

Brackett, Divecha, and Stern (2015)² stated that a meta-analysis of 213 studies found that emotional intelligence can be taught to both children and adults that yielded positive outcomes.

Calero, Barreyro, and Injoque-Riclea (2018)⁴ study the relationship between emotional intelligence, self-concept, and self-esteem and revealed that positive self-evaluation regarding emotions, emotion comprehension and recovery can minimize the effect of negative experiences.

Karibeeran and Mohanty (2019) analysed the theories and models of emotional intelligence and arrived at a theoretical frame work which explains the factors such as family, school and media, that can contribute towards improving the emotional intelligence of the adolescents.

Furqani Z.A (2019)¹⁸ reviewed 15 journals that discussed the relevance of emotional intelligence in relation to complex adolescent issues. The research noted that emotional intelligence is essential for the adolescent in dealing with the situations of this particular stage.

Studies done in India:

On examining the effect of a self enhancement programme that had EI as a component, significant differences were found in the post test

scores of 343 students in a study conducted by Amudhadevi and Velayudhan (2007)¹.

Pareek, Mittal, Hunger and Kaur (2005) trained eight subjects on enhancing Emotional Intelligence through a "Basic Human Process Laboratory Course" and the effect resulted in significant improvement in post mean scores of overall EI and its components except motivation and social skills.

Kaur (2011)¹⁶ had conducted an intervention on 40 college students and the results clearly demonstrated the positive impact of the intervention program on the emotional intelligence skills of the group exposed to the intervention program. Hence it supports Cortina et al's (2007)³⁰ views that interventions play a crucial role towards the positive and healthy development of adolescents; and that interventions have a positive educational, social, psychological, cognitive and economic impacts.

Karibeeran and Mohanty (2019)²¹ analysed the theories and models of emotional intelligence and arrived at a theoretical frame work which explains the factors such as family, school and media, that can contribute towards improving the emotional intelligence of the adolescents.

Conclusion : There is a need for more meticulous studies on the processes involved in shaping emotionality of adolescents.

How family dynamics and parent's emotionality effect the emotionality of children should be explored.

More assessment tools are required to test adolescents' individual needs, such as the adolescent without his/her biological parents, adolescents with a single parent, tech savvy adolescents.

Adolescents with addictions, with behavioural and learning difficulties.

Likewise, interventions should be developed suited to the individual requirements of the adolescents.

Educationists and policy makers should emphasize on teaching EI as seriously as science, mathematics or any other subject.

Parents and teachers should also be included in the EI intervention so as to derive better outcomes from such interventions. Considering the fact that India has the world's largest adolescent population, lot of problems have been observed due to lack of understanding of the period of adolescence. It is deep rooted in our culture that the adolescents are treated as children and at the same time they are also expected to act like adults. Emotional Education during this period would go a long way in addressing their social, psychological and educational problems. By incorporating aspects of health, moral and spiritual values and also career orientation, the study opens up

new areas of research which can be action oriented and put to practice.

To conclude examining the effect of one particular factor would not help to arrive at definite conclusion because the individual is shaped by so many factors in the family, the society, the environment; but researchers who had carried out an action research can definitely announce to the world that EQ can be developed.

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