

Emotional Intelligence and Academic Stress among Undergraduate Students

Sona Roy¹, Sneha Thomas², Dr. Molly Joy³

Students of Kristu Jayanti College, Autonomous, Bangalore and Head of the Department of Psychology

Email: Sona Roy: 20ps101057[at]kristujayanti.com,

Sneha Thomas: 20ps101056[at]kristujayanti.com

Dr. Molly Joy: dr.molly[at]kristujayanti.com

Abstract: *This paper examines the relationship of Emotional Intelligence and Academic Stress among undergraduate students. 119 undergraduate students between the age group of 18-24 (63 females and 56 males) from different colleges of Kerala were selected randomly to know the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic stress. To evaluate Emotional Intelligence Shutte's Emotional Intelligence test (SSREIT) was used, to evaluate the academic stress Academic Stress inventory by Lin & Chen (1997) was used. To analyze the obtained data, Spearman rank order correlation and Mann-Whitney U test was employed. The result of present study indicates that there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and academic stress. Mann-Whitney U test was computed on gender and the results indicated statistically significant difference in emotional intelligence with respect to gender, in which males obtained higher emotional intelligence compared to females. And there was no statistically significant difference in academic stress with respect to gender. This study provides an insight about emotional intelligence, academic stress and gender differences.*

Keywords: emotional intelligence; academic stress; undergraduate students

1. Introduction

Children, teenagers, or adults who are going to school, college or university and is learning something can be called as a student, WHO defines 'Adolescents' as individuals of 10-19 year age group and 'Youth' as the 15-24-year age group, Undergraduate students usually belong to age category of 18 to 24. This is the time where the issues of emotional (if not physical) separation from parents arise. But this sense of separation can be considered as an important step for the establishment of personal values. According to the American College Health Association 2006 survey of college students, one of the greatest barrier college students face in their academic performance was academic stress. 32% of college students reported that academic stress had resulted in an incompleteness of course, dropped course or a lower grade emotional intelligence is key to manage academic stress. So it's very important to teach children to develop their EQ and reduce their academic stress.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotions can be of either positive or negative, each feeling provides us with vital and potentially profitable information every minute of the day. Emotional Intelligence is defined as "The ability to monitor one's own and other people's emotions, to discriminate between different emotions and label them appropriately, and to use emotional information to guide thinking and behavior" (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Emotional intelligence will give better mental health, job performance, and leadership skills although no causal relationships have been found and such findings are more likely related to general intelligence and specific personality traits rather than emotional intelligence as a construct. Emotional Intelligence is an intelligence that talks about the important variance in an individual's problem solving as well as social relationships.

Academic Stress

Stress is the non-specific response made by our body to cope up for the demands made upon it. It is the way that individual's perceive and cope with environmental threats and challenges around them. Stress is normal when it is in small amount and can facilitate individuals to be more active and productive. However, when there are high levels of stress and if it is experienced over a long period of time, it can cause severe mental and physical problems (Alsulami et al., 2018). "Academic stress is defined as the body's response to academic-related demands that exceed adaptive capabilities of students" (Wilks, 2008).

Need and Significance of the study

Emotional changes in young people have strong feelings and intense emotions at different times, Moods maybe unpredictable which can lead to increased conflict. During adolescence and teenage, the regions of the brain that control emotions develop and mature (Johnson et al., 2009). This stage is characterized by problems that can be difficult for parents and teachers who undergo this situation. Gradually they suppress thoughts that are inappropriate and replace actions with goal-oriented behaviors. When this emotional changes occurs, it can affect student's academics, So developing a high EQ can help students to achieve success, manage his or her emotions, it will have an impact on their relationships with classmates and his or her performance in the classroom.

Students with higher levels of emotional intelligence are able to understand and control their emotions better and this may facilitate them to develop self-motivation, effective communication skills, better personal and social adaptation which is an essential skill that helps students to become confident learners, it will improve the process of learning and likelihood of success (Vandervoort, 2006).

If students lack emotional intelligence, it will make them less connected to school and will have a negative impact in their performance in the classroom thus, emotional intelligence plays a major role to help a student for academic achievement by reducing stress. In today's highly competitive world, students face various problems related to academics. We consider this study as an opportunity to create awareness among parents and teachers as to help their children to develop ability to control and understand emotions better.

2. Literature Survey

The study conducted by Ahmad et al., (2009) investigated Emotional Intelligence among males and females. The research sample had one hundred and sixty subjects in which 80 were males and 80 were females, the results of the study demonstrated that there was a significant relationship between emotional intelligence among male and female and males have high emotional intelligence when compared with females

Fallahzadeh, (2011) studied on emotional intelligence and academic performance among the medical science students. The sample consisted of 223 adolescent students, 70 males and 153 females and there was a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance while findings indicated a relation between its subcomponents emotional intelligence, and academic performance. There were significant differences in the emotional intelligence scores by habitat of students, low level of emotional intelligence indicated meaningful relation between total and some components of emotional intelligence with academic performance, the role of emotional intelligence is important as it helps improve the mental health of students and successful completion of tasks.

Sen et al., (2020) studied on emotional intelligence and perceived stress among the undergraduate students of Arts and Science colleges, the sample included 720 students who were aged 18 years and above from four colleges in Puducherry. The study showed that there was no significant association between emotional intelligence and perceived stress, and a weak significant correlation existed between emotional intelligence and academic performance. It was also found that gender, year of study, volunteering with youth organizations, and mother's occupation were significantly associated with emotional intelligence.

Miri et al., (2013) investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic stress in students of medical sciences in which 260 students were included, Out of 260 students, 65.8% were females and 33.1% were males. it was found that there was no correlation between mean of emotional intelligence and academic stress. But, there was a significant difference in mean of emotional intelligence between the two genders, where girls obtained higher in emotional intelligence compared to boys. And there was no relationship between gender and academic stress.

3. Methodology

Research Design: The study on Emotional Intelligence and Academic Stress among undergraduate students is a correlational study with a quantitative approach which is carried out among undergraduate students. The study consists of 119 undergraduate students (56 males and 63 females). Questionnaires were circulated through Google forms due to the pandemic situation and results were analyzed and interpreted.

Variables of the study: Emotional Intelligence

- Academic Stress
- Gender

Operational definitions of the key concepts:

Undergraduate students: In this study undergraduate students can be operationally defined as a college or university student who's not a graduate student. They are high school graduate and have been accepted to college, but haven't been graduated from college yet. Undergraduate students usually belong to age category of 18 to 24.

Emotional Intelligence: "The ability to monitor one's own and other people's emotions, to discriminate between different emotions and label them appropriately, and to use emotional information to guide thinking and behavior" (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

Academic Stress: "Academic stress is defined as the body's response to academic-related demands that exceed adaptive capabilities of students" (Lin & Chen, 2009)

Tools used for study:

- a) **Socio-demographic data sheet:** This tool is developed by the researcher to elicit the demographic information of the subjects employed in the study, which included age, gender and so on.
- b) **Emotional Intelligence Scale:** To evaluate Emotional Intelligence Shutte's self-report Emotional Intelligence test (SSREIT) has been used. The scores will range between 33 and 165, in which higher scores will indicate higher characteristics of emotional intelligence, the subscales include assessment and expression of emotional intelligence, Assessment of management and adjustment, Assessment of utilization of EI. Studies on this scale has shown that the reliability is above 90%
- c) **Academic Stress Inventory :** Academic stress inventory of students at universities and colleges developed by (Lin & Chen, 2009) was used to measure the academic stress of students. The scale involves seven factors which are as follows teacher stress, results stress, test stress, studying in groups stress, peer stress, time management stress and self-inflicted stress, the scores range between 34 to 165, in which higher score will indicate higher academic stress. The total variance in this inventory was 70.91%. The Cronbach reliability test was carried out and the α value obtained was between 0.85 and 0.92 an α value of the overall academic stress questionnaires was 0.90.

Universe of the study: The universe of the study were Undergraduate students who were selected from the state of Kerala. These students belonged to various government and private colleges of Kerala.

Objectives

- 1) To find out level of emotional intelligence and academic stress among undergraduate students
- 2) To find out relationship between emotional intelligence and academic stress
- 3) To find the gender influence on emotional intelligence and academic Stress

Hypothesis: H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and academic stress of undergraduate students.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in emotional intelligence among undergraduate students based on their gender.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in academic stress among undergraduate students based on their gender.

Statistical techniques: In the present study descriptive and inferential statistics were employed for data analysis.

Descriptive statistics: Frequency, percent, mean and standard deviation

Inferential statistics: Spearman Rank Order Correlation test was used to find out the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic stress.

Mann-Whitney U test was used to determine the significance of difference between means and standard deviation of gender groups in their emotional intelligence and academic stress

4. Results and Discussions

The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between the emotional intelligence and academic stress among undergraduate students. Total sample sizes of 119 undergraduate students within the age group of 18 to 24, the sample includes students of various private and government colleges. The data was entered into Microsoft

Excel and then exported into SPSS for further statistical analysis.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Emotional intelligence and Academic Stress among Undergraduate students

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Emotional Intelligence	86.61	81.126	119
Academic Stress	102.22	22.608	119

(** - significant at 0.05 level)

The table shows the Mean and Standard Deviation of Emotional Intelligence was 86.61 and 81.126 respectively, which indicates moderate level of emotional intelligence. The Mean and Standard Deviation of Academic Stress was 102.22 and 22.608 respectively, which indicates moderate

level of academic stress. Academic Stress has higher Mean and Emotional Intelligence has higher Standard Deviation.

Table 2: Spearman Correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Academic Stress among Undergraduate Students

	N=119	rho	p
Emotional Intelligence		0.365	0.001
Academic stress			

(** - significant at 0.05 level)

The table shows the spearman correlation calculated for the two variables i.e. Emotional Intelligence and Academic Stress. The correlation coefficient and the significance value are 0.365 and 0.001 thus $p < 0.05$, hence the null hypothesis is rejected and there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and academic stress among undergraduate students. The spearman correlation value is 0.365 that shows a moderate positive correlation. Existing literature (Bhat, 2017) reveals the same that there is a relationship between emotional intelligence and academic stress, the study (Subramanyam, 2016) indicated the same and found out that students with low emotional intelligence experienced more academic stress, such students will have low capacity to reason about their feelings that hinders their thinking and thus affects academic stress.

Table 3: Mann-Whitney U test of Emotional Intelligence among Undergraduate students

D.V	Gender	n	Mean Rank	U	p
Emotional Intelligence	Females	63	53.95	1383.0	0.042
	Males	56	66.80		
Academic Stress	Females	63	58.67	1680.5	0.656
	Males	56	61.49		

(** - significant at 0.05 level) D.V=Dependent Variable

Table 3 shows the summary of the Mann-Whitney U test, it indicates the level emotional intelligence among males and females. The mean rank of emotional intelligence for females and males are 53.95 and 66.80 respectively. The U and the significance value are 1383.000 and 0.042, (since $p < 0.05$), the null hypothesis is rejected and there is a significant difference in emotional intelligence among males and females of undergraduate level, male students have higher emotional intelligence compared to female students, similar findings were observed in the study (Rehana, 2018), it was found out that boys achieved greater emotional intelligence than girls and another study revealed that men had higher emotional intelligence, as they show more of assertiveness, independence, self-regulation and management of emotions better than women (Kaneez, 2006) The mean rank of academic stress for females and males are 58.67 and 61.49 respectively. The U and the significant value are 1680.50 and 0.656, (since $p > 0.05$), the null hypothesis is accepted, thus there is no significant difference in academic stress among males and females of undergraduate level. Which was also seen in the study (Godati et al., 2015) in which there were no statistically significant association between academic stress and gender Whereas in the study (Rehana, 2018) it was found that females had higher academic stress than males

5. Summary and Conclusion

The major purpose of this study was to examine relationship between emotional intelligence and academic stress. Depending on the findings of the study, the following concluding notes were made:

- There is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and academic stress.
- There is a significant difference in emotional intelligence among undergraduate students with respect to their gender, male students have higher emotional intelligence compared to female students
- There is no significant difference in academic stress among undergraduate students with respect to their gender.

6. Limitations of the Study

- As the sample was taken from a particular state, Kerala, it cannot be generalized to the whole population.
- Participants had to fill the questionnaire online. This also could have affected the concentration of the participants resulting in inaccurate responses.

7. Suggestions for Future Studies

- In future this study can be implemented in a large population
- We can conduct a pre-test and post-test to students after giving some training program to undergraduate students to increase emotional intelligence and reduce academic stress.
- We can try extending the study to undergraduate students of various states of our country.

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Authors Profile



Sona G Roy, student of Kristu Jayanti College, Autonomous, Kothanur, Bangalore



Sneha Susan Thomas, Student of Kristu Jayanti College, Autonomous, Kothanur, Bangalore.



Dr. Molly Joy, Head of the Department of Psychology, Kristu Jayanti College, Autonomous, Kothanur, Bangalore.