

Effect of Social Skill Training on Emotional Intelligence of Adolescents with Specific Learning Disability

Alexander .A .E¹, Mohapatra .B²,

¹Assistant Professor, Rajagiri College of Social Sciences

²Lecturer, NIMH.

Abstract: *Several researches have proved that individuals with Specific Learning Disabilities have low emotional intelligence. An improvement in emotional intelligence significantly improves the individual's academic and other success rates. The present research explored how social skill training could influence emotional intelligence in this population within the Indian context. A sample size of 6 students, who were within the age range of 12-17 years age, diagnosed with Specific Learning Disability, was selected through Convenience sampling. Emotional Intelligence was assessed before and after the intervention through Emotional Intelligence Scale. Results indicated that Social skills Training has a very significant effect on Emotional Intelligence. Domain-wise analysis revealed that social skills training have a significant effect on Understanding emotions, Empathy and Handling Relationships. Therefore, in the light of the Results it was concluded that social skills training is an essential component in the intervention program for adolescents with Specific Learning Disability.*

Keywords: Specific Learning Disability, Emotional Intelligence, Adolescence, Social skills training

1. Introduction

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The Emotional Intelligence of individuals with specific learning disability is a subject of much research in the recent times. The various factors that contribute to a low emotional intelligence have been studied in various ways by various professional. The present study aims to determine the role of social skills on emotional intelligence in adolescents with Specific Learning Disability.

According to Daniel Goleman (1995), our emotions play a far greater role in thought, decision making and individual success, than does intelligence. He conceptualized that how we do in our life is determined not just by IQ (Intelligence Quotient), but by emotional Intelligence which has a higher role. His research proves that 80% of a person's success in life depends on emotional intelligence, and only about 20% depends on IQ (Goleman, 1998).

However, the concept of Emotional Intelligence is incomplete without a discussion on its relationship with social behaviour. Most of the emotional processing involves social stimuli and situations. Concepts like Emotional expressions and Emotional prosody are necessarily social, because they take place in a situation in which two or more people are communicating with one another. John Gottman (1997) suggests that the steady decrease in Emotional Quotient (EQ) in the current decades is due to the reduced social life of a child. Parents have lesser time for their children, fewer relatives visit home and most children enjoy watching TV and playing video games than to spend time in outdoor games. One learns EQ from social life, which has decreased. This is a serious issue of concern as it has been

proved by various researches that EQ predicts higher performance three times better than IQ.

There are a number of programs that aids in improving emotional intelligence. Mayer and Salovey (1997) claim that even if the emotional development in the child's early familial (or social) environment was not entirely optimal, the possibility remains open for remedial learning in the schools to take place to rectify deficits. Emotional education may be provided through a variety of diverse efforts such as classroom instruction, extracurricular activities, a supportive school climate, and the involvement of students, teachers, and parents in community activities.

Several research has proved that individuals with Specific Learning Disabilities have low emotional Intelligence (Rai & Rai, 2012; Goroshit & Hen, 2014; Heiman.T, 2006). Most and Greenbank (2000) suggest that Individuals with SLD have difficulties in interpreting emotion. Ego functions (such as frustration tolerance and consideration for others) may not develop in a normal pattern (Rappaport, 1975). This proves that they have difficulties with intrapersonal and interpersonal domains of emotional intelligence. Moreover, Derr (1986) reports that some learning disabled adolescents use egocentric reasoning strategies and are less able than their peers to make moral decisions based on group norms and expectations. This affects their ability to handle relationships affecting their overall emotional intelligence.

Several reasons have been attributed to this. Johnson and Mykelbust (1967) suggest that the problem originates in damage to the parietal lobe of the right hemisphere of the brain, causing an inability to comprehend. Immaturity has been related to a lag in the development of the central nervous system (Bender, 1968; de Hirsch, Jansky & Langford, 1965). Cott (1972) indicates that socio-emotional & behavioural problems may be caused by the inability of

the blood to synthesize a normal supply of vitamins. He noted improvements in children who had been given large doses of vitamins.

Various techniques have been used to improve emotional intelligence in Learning Disabled. In the present research, the effects of Social skills training were explored. Social skills include a wide range of behaviours and abilities, which can be categorized as behaviours associated with social interactions (Kavale & Forness, 1996), and social competence (McFall, 1982).

Research suggests different hypotheses that attempt to explain the nature of social skills deficits in learning disabilities (Forness & Kavale, 1991). First, social skills deficits can be assumed to be a consequence of the neurologic dysfunction presumed to underlie a child's or adolescent's academic skills deficits (Oliva & La Greca, 1988). Second, the academic and learning problems of a youngster with a learning disability result in poor-self concept, rejection or isolation from peers, or other obstacles to the development of social skills (Osman, 1987). Third, children or adolescents with learning disabilities fail to acquire or perform social skills because of limited environmental opportunity to learn and perform such skills and to be reinforced for them (Gresham, 1988).

However, Social skills are the foundations of getting along with others and are required to deal with the demands and challenges of everyday life. They are a very important skill set in a child's life for emotional growth and for developing relationships (Parish. J, 2015). Development of Social skills and its impact on emotional intelligence may thus prove to be a key aspect in improving the lives of the students with Specific Learning Disability.

2. Method

2.1 Participants

A test group of 6 members who were previously diagnosed with Specific Learning Disability, and within the age range of 12-17 years were selected using Convenience Sampling. All of them were undergoing school education. Individuals with any other associated conditions or psychiatric disorders were not included in the study.

2.2 Materials

A Socio Demographic Sheet prepared by the author was used to collect information regarding age, sex, birth order and educational status of parents.

Emotional Intelligence Scale developed by AK Singh and Shruthi Narain was used to measure emotional intelligence of the members in the study group. It has 31 items. The 4 domains of the tool include Understanding Emotions, Understanding motivation, Empathy and Handling Relationships. It has a reliability of 0.86 alpha coefficients and a concurrent validity of .86.

The Social Skills training package was adapted from 'Social Skills Training for Severe Mental Disorders, A Therapist Model' by Patrick Kingsep and Paula Nathan, Centre for

Clinical Interventions. It was validated by Expert opinion and further modified after a pilot study.

2.3 Procedure

Firstly, permission was taken from the relevant authorities, after which Informed consent was taken from the parents and the students participating in the study. They were explained the purpose of the study. After rapport was established, baseline assessment of Emotional Intelligence was done. 6 individuals who have a low score on the scale (84 or below) were selected to be part of the intervention. Intervention was administered in a group setting.

Intervention followed the format of Instruction, Rationale, Discussing components, Modelling, Review, Supervised practise, Positive Feedback, Corrective Feedback, Repeated Supervised Practice and Independent practice. Training was given for 5 skills in 12 sessions. The 5 skills trained include Making Requests, Listening to others, Understanding a Conversation, Reaching a Together Solution and Turning down Unwanted requests or Actions. Each session took about 30-45 minutes for completion. An initial session was for establishment of rapport. Final session was used to revise all the trained skills together. 2 sessions were devoted to each skill being trained. The Emotional Intelligence Scale was administered once again after the intervention to determine the final score.

Data was analysed using paired t-test. Domain-wise analysis was also carried out to determine any significant difference in the scores before and after intervention. Pearson's correlation was used to determine if emotional intelligence and social skills were correlated.

3. Results and Discussion

Results on Table 1 indicates that there is a significant difference in Emotional Intelligence after social skills training in the study group ($p < 0.001$). The mean score of Emotional Intelligence in pre-test condition was 19.67 and in the post test condition was 27. The Standard deviation in the pre-test condition was 0.52 and in the post test condition was 2.19. The t-value was found to be 8.32 which is significant at 0.001 level.

Table 1: Results showing effect of social skill training on Emotional Intelligence in the study group

	N	Mean	SD	Mean difference	t- value
Pre test	6	19.67	0.52	7.33	8.32**
Post test	6	27.00	2.19		

** ($p < 0.001$)

This suggests that Social skill training has a significant level of effect in improving Emotional Intelligence. This is in tune with the various studies that proved that the level of social skills possessed, have a significant influence on the emotional intelligence of a student with Specific Learning Disorder (Bhan. S, 2013; Momeni 2012; Brackett, 2006). This study has further proved this within the Indian Context.

Tables 2-5 show results of the domain-wise analysis of emotional intelligence, post intervention. Results revealed a

significant difference for 3 of the domains in the study; Understanding emotions, Empathy and Handling Relationships. However there was no significant difference in the domain of Understanding motivation, post intervention.

Table 2: Results showing effect of social skill training on Understanding Emotions

	N	Mean	SD	Mean difference	t- value
Pre test	6	2.33	0.82	1.33	3.16*
Post test	6	3.67	0.82		

* $p < 0.05$

Table 3: Results showing effect of social skill training on Empathy

	N	Mean	SD	Mean difference	t- value
Pre test	6	6.83	1.33	2.83	5.93**
Post test	6	9.67	0.52		

** $p < 0.01$

Table 4: Results showing effect of social skill training on Handling Relationships

	N	Mean	SD	Mean difference	t- value
Pre test	6	5.33	1.21	2.16	5.39**
Post test	6	7.50	1.05		

** $p < 0.01$

Table 5: Results showing effect of social skill training on Understanding Motivation

	N	Mean	SD	Mean difference	t- value
Pre test	6	5.16	0.98	1.00	1.94*
Post test	6	6.16	0.98		

* $p > 0.05$ (NS)

Research suggests that individuals with Specific Learning disability are deficient in role-taking abilities and thus have difficulty understanding and taking viewpoints of other people, and many social and emotional problems result in the interaction between the child and the society (Bryan & Bryan, 1986). The present research focused on role-play and modelling techniques to facilitate learning of social skills. It also included specific sections, which focused on understanding aspects of non-verbal communication and body language.

Every session focused on useful methods of communication that would help in conveying messages effectively. This facilitated their understanding of emotions and skills for empathy. Most of the Role play sessions that were played, were played by interchanging the same characters between the participants, which helps one to understand the same situation from the perspective of the other person. This also could have contributed towards development of empathy.

Handling relationships is another very crucial component that connects emotional intelligence and social skills. Some social skills that were trained for in the present research could have a direct impact on handling relationships. These were skills like 'Reaching a together solution' and 'Turning down a Request'. These skills can have a direct influence on improving or hindering a relationship. Students were trained to perform these skills positively and effectively so as to convey their ideas clearly, avoiding any misunderstandings.

This domain was also found to be significantly improved after the intervention.

However, the domain of Understanding Motivation did not show a significant difference after intervention. The individual's level of understanding motivation was assessed by measuring their ability to resolve problems, learn from their mistakes, and take decisions and the like. The Social skills training package used for this study while focusing on various aspects, may not have contributed much in this dimension. However, towards the last sessions most students were more confident in initiating social interactions, approaching others with an issue and responding with a comment or question. We also tried to determine if the social skill training given brought a significant difference in the social skills of the participants. Results analyzed using paired t-test are described in Table-6, which clearly indicate a significant difference in the scores post intervention.

Table 6: Results showing the effect of social skill training on social skills in the study group

	N	Mean	SD	Mean difference	t- value
Pre test	6	33.33	6.86	8.33	3.14*
Post test	6	41.67	3.08		

* $p < 0.05$

This suggests that the social skills training program was effective to suit its purpose for the study. The program was developed so that 5 different skills would be focused and given training. Each of these domains was found to be improved after the intervention.

Finally, Pearson's Correlation was used to determine the relationship between social skills and emotional intelligence in adolescents with specific learning disability. Table 7 shows that the pearson correlation coefficient 'r' is 0.80, which suggests that Social skills and Emotional Intelligence are positively correlated and the correlation is significant at 0.05 level.

This is consistent with the previous research conducted in this area. A study conducted by Al- Tamimiet al (2016) aimed to find a relationship between social skills, emotional intelligence and religious behaviour. The results had shown a significant positive correlation between social skills and emotional intelligence. This further suggests that social skills training can have a significant influence on emotional intelligence.

Table 7: Correlation between Social skills and Emotional Intelligence in the study group

		Social Skills	Emotional Intelligence
Social skills	Pearson Correlation	1	0.80*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.05
	N	6	6
Emotional Intelligence	Pearson Correlation	0.80*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.05	
	N	6	6

* $p < 0.05$

Therefore, the findings of the present study reveal that Social skill training is effective in improving emotional intelligence of adolescents with specific learning disability,

especially in the domains, Understanding emotions, Empathy and Handling Relationships. It is effective in improving social skills of adolescents with specific learning disability. Social skills and emotional intelligence was also found to have a significant positive correlation in adolescents with s.

This implies that social skills training can be used as an intervention program to improve the emotional intelligence of adolescents with Specific Learning Disability. The Results of the study also prove that Social Skills Training Package is appropriate for the population under study. This study, hence, has essentially revealed that Emotional Intelligence and Social skills are relevant aspects in the study population within the Indian Context. Social skill training might prove to be an inevitable component in the Social and Emotional development of an individual with Learning Disability.

4. Conclusion

The aim of the present study was to find out the effect of social skill training on emotional intelligence of adolescents with Specific learning disability. In the light of the results of the present study, it is concluded that social skills training is an essential component in the intervention of adolescents with Specific Learning Disability. It can be used to improve the emotional intelligence of adolescents with Specific Learning Disability. For the generalization of the results, the study has to be conducted on a larger sample covering a larger locale for sample selection with sufficient data that can facilitate analyses with reference to gender, age, parent's education and birth order.

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