

UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONS IN ADOLESCENTS: LINKAGE OF TRAIT EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE WITH AGGRESSION

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ABSTRACT

The objective of present study was to examine the relationship of trait emotional intelligence with aggression. After detailed literature review the following hypotheses were formulated; 1) There would be a negative correlation between Trait emotional intelligence and Physical Aggression, 2) There would be a negative correlation between Trait emotional intelligence and Verbal aggression, 3) There would be a negative correlation between Trait emotional intelligence and Anger, 4) There would be a negative correlation between Trait emotional intelligence and Hostility and 5) There would be a negative correlation between Trait emotional intelligence and Physical Aggression Total. The sample of present study consisted of 140 adolescent. The age range of entire sample was from 12 to 16 years (Mean age = 14.51, years, SD = .978). Among them 71 (50.7%) were male and 69 (49.3%) were female. Their education level was from 7th to 10th Grade. The sample was recruited from different private sector Secondary Schools of Karachi, Pakistan. Personal Information Form was used to take personal information of the participants. Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire-Short Form (TEIQue-ASF; Petrides, Sangareau, Furnham, & Frederickson, 2006) and Aggression Questionnaire (AQ; Bryant & Smith, 2001) were administered to measure the emotional intelligence and aggression, respectively. Pearson's product moment coefficient of correlation 'r' was applied to determine the relationship of trait emotional intelligence with physical aggression ($r = -.203, <.01$), Verbal Aggression ($r = -.191, <.05$), Anger ($r = -.335, <.01$), Hostility ($r = -.164, <.05$) and Aggression Total ($r = -.307, <.01$) Implications of these results are discussed and the avenues for future research have also been suggested.

Keywords: Trait Emotional Intelligence, Aggression, Adolescent

INTRODUCTION

According to Akinboye (2002) emotions are to the base of human integrity, honesty, fairness, dignity and other important human actions. He further put forward that emotions drive human behavior. According to him "no human action, whether good or bad, is emotion free". Obviously, it is the basic fuel which propels one to survive in an effective way. Without it survival would be meaningless. Experiencing emotions is quite important to present oneself as a living being. This is an experience which connects individual to his or her inner world as well as outer world. Emotional intelligence is one of the important variables and has greater influence on human character. It has a pivotal role in the success of various domain of life. Previous researches (Ekamn, Levenson, & Friesen, 1983) have shown that there are at numerous basic emotions which as; happiness, interest, surprise, fear, anger, sorrow and disgust. According to Leventhal (1982) each of these emotions are operating through a control mechanism which serve as a monitor for one of the main aspects of human life.

Controlling ones emotions does not happen automatically. This can be done when someone is in touch with his inner as well as outer world.

Every individual express their emotions in a different way. The expression of emotion in an inadequate way creates abnormality within the person. The expression of emotions in an adequate manner is necessary for better mental health. Further, the expression of emotion in a right way requires first, to ability to understand one's own emotion then and control it in a more effective way is a skill this may helps the individuals to understand others emotions and control their emotions which helps them to adapt to their environment in an effective way. Possibly this phenomena is called as 'Emotional Intelligence'. According to (Petrides & Furnham, 2001) trait EI is "a constellation of emotional self perceptions located at the lower levels of personality".

Aggressive is one of the important factors in child and adolescent development. It is one of a greater concern to educationist and mental health professionals. It is a kind of behaviors that creates certain problems to oneself as well as other people. It is one of the most pressing problems among school-aged children and adolescents. It is one of the main factors that determine ones behavior, personality and integrity.

There are numerous meanings given to aggression and different scholars have defined it in different ways. For example, Scholars (Bushman & Anderson, 2001; Baron & Richardson, 1994) have defined aggression as "any behavior which is directed toward another individual that is carried out with the immediate intention to harm another one. Further, Dollard, Doob, Miller, Maurer, and Sears (1939) defined aggression as an act who's Objective is to give harm to an organism. Human aggression has historically been regarded as being impulsive, thoughtless, driven by anger, having the intention to injury to another one It has been given different names such as; affective, impulsive or reactive aggression (Geen, 2001). Aggression has been considered as harmful to one's life. It may be 'hostile' and 'instrumental'. The hostile aggression has been regarded as the intentionally infliction of harm to another. While, instrumental aggression is regarded as means of getting some objective other than injuring the victim, and as being proactive rather than reactive (Geen, 2001).

Aggression is directly linked with the emotions, so it is and an important factor to determining the nature of an individual. According to Patrick, Bradely and Lang (1993), aggression is related to imbalance of neural mechanisms which regulate our emotions. Furthermore, Lopes, Salovey and Straus (2003) found the relationship between EI and peer relationship in students. They found that those students who scored high on the sub scale of "managing emotions" also scored higher on the variable of peer relationship.

Evidence for associations between EI ability and both social and academic success have been presented in many scholarly articles. For example Ciarrochi, Chan, and Caputi (2000) have found relationship of EI with empathy. Further, other researchers (Brackett, Mayer, & Warner, 2004) found high EI is related to less conflicts with peers, and less antagonism with friends (Lopes, Brackett, Nezlek, Schutz, Sellin, & Salovey, 2004; Lopes, Salovey, & Straus, 2003). Still other have found relationship of high EI with lower levels of violence (Brackett, Mayer, & Warner, 2004; Gil-Olarte, Guil, & Mestre, 2004; Trinidad & Johnson, 2002). A research conducted by Goleman (1995) and he argued that the skills and competencies in EI have real and positive impact on adolescents personal as well as scholastic life. He found that those students who are emotionally intelligent have higher levels of psychological adjustment and emotional wellbeing, present a higher quality and greater quantity of interpersonal networks and social support, are less likely to engage in disruptive, aggressive or violent behavior. A research conducted by Johnston (2003) to investigate the relationship between

adolescent emotional intelligence and aggression. They found a significant negative correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Aggression. Further analysis indicated that Stress Management and Intrapersonal measures were significant predictors of Physical Aggression. Children with higher EI also tend to behave in more socially appropriate ways. They tend to behave in a non-aggressive ways at school and as a result they become popular as compared to those who behave in an aggressive way. Those who score low on the variable of EI are likely to involve in socially unacceptable ways like starts to use illegal drugs (Trinidad & Johnson, 2002) at a greater risk for psychiatric problems (depression, anxiety and etc.) (Zeman, Shipman & Suveg, 2002) and involve in violent activities (Winters, Clift & Dutton, 2004).

Researchers have shown relationships between emotional intelligence and externalizing problems. A research was conducted by Liau, Liau, Teoh and Liau (2003) to determine the relationship of Emotional Intelligence with aggression. Researchers found a negatively correlation between EI and aggression and delinquency and was also identified as a moderator between parental monitoring and both aggression and delinquency in an investigation of secondary school students. Researchers (Extremera & Fernandez-Berrocal, 2002) have found that those adolescents who scored high on emotional intelligence are less impulsive, have less aggressive temperament and less justification for aggression. Further these researchers have found that those students with a lower tendency to justify aggressive behavior had reported a greater ability to distinguish their emotions, more ability to repair negative emotions and scored high on the measures of mental health. They also reported to have lower levels of impulsivity and a lesser tendency to suppress negative thoughts.

In their research Trinidad, Unger, Chou, Azen and Johnson (2004) have found that adolescents with low EI are more likely to smoke in the future if they score high on the variable of hostility. Other studies have found more specific patterns. In their research Brackett, Mayer and Warner (2004) found that EI is predictive of everyday behaviors for men than for women. Those men who scored low on EI measure was found to be associated with more involved in alcohol and illegal drugs abuse, were more involved in physical fights and have poor relationships with their peers.

In their research Singh and Saini (2007) found that there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and interpersonal relationships. They further explained that emotional stability is significantly related with managing relationship and integrity. On the basis of those finding they concluded that people are emotionally stable develops healthy interpersonal relationship, are less likely to involve in aggressive behavior and also less develops hostile attitude towards others.

An earlier study conducted by Petrides, Sangareau, Furnham and Frederickson (2006) to determine the relationship of trait emotional intelligence with peer relations in children. Results obtained from their research were that those who scored high on trait EI obtained more peer nominations, cooperation and leadership and they obtained fewer nominations for disruption, aggression and dependence. A research conducted by Bernet (1996) found that those males who score lower on the variable of emotional intelligence are more involved in taking illegal drug, higher rates of alcohol use, are involved in deviant behavior, and develops poor relationship with peers (Brackett, Mayer, & Warner, 2004) while higher emotional intelligence related to pro-social behavior and have healthy interpersonal skills (Bernet, 1996). The role of emotional intelligence is quite obvious. It has a pivotal role in different realm of life. Without understanding ones emotions it is not possible to control that emotion adequately. This is to say that it is basic aspect to control undesirable behavior. Keep in mind

the significance of emotional intelligence current study was conducted that how is related with the aggression. Following hypotheses were formulated for current study:

1. There would be a negative correlation between Trait emotional intelligence and Physical Aggression.
2. There would be a negative correlation between Trait emotional intelligence and Verbal Aggression.
3. There would be a negative correlation between Trait emotional intelligence and Anger.
4. There would be a negative correlation between Trait emotional intelligence and Hostility.
5. There would be a negative correlation between Trait emotional intelligence and Aggression Total.

METHOD

Sample

Participants in the present study consisted of 140 students selected from private sector secondary schools situated in different areas of Karachi, Sindh. Their age range was from 12 to 16 years (Mean age = 14.51, years, SD = .978). Their education level was from 7th to 10th Grade. All of them belonged to middle and upper socioeconomic status.

Measures

Demographic Information

Personal information was obtained through items focusing on participant's age, gender, level of education etc.

The Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire-Adolescent Short Form (TEIQue-ASF; Petrides et al., 2006)

This is a 30-item questionnaire and is designed to measure global trait emotional intelligence which covers the trait emotional intelligence sampling domain comprehensively. The items are sampled from the 15 facets of the adult trait EI sampling domain (two items per facet). The TEIQue-ASF does not yield scores on the 15 trait facets, scores on the four traits EI factors can be derived, in addition to the global score. The 30 short statements are responded to on a seven-point Likert scale (e.g. 'I often find it hard to understand other people'). The main target audience is adolescents between 13 and 17 years; however, the TEIQue-ASF has been successfully used with children as young as 11 years.

Aggression Questionnaire (AQ; Buss & Perry, 1992)

Aggressiveness, measured with the Aggression Questionnaire developed by Buss-Perry, 1992; refined version (Bryant & Smith, 2001) was used to measure aggression. This questionnaire consists of 12 Likert-type items rated on a 6-point scale. The AQ is organized into four sub scales: Physical Aggression (PA), Verbal Aggression (VA), Anger (ANG) and Hostility (HO). Regarding the AQ-12, Bryant and Smith (2001) report internal reliability estimates from four samples of American (2 samples), British, and Canadian undergraduate students (total $n = 984$). Reliability estimates ranged from .71 to .76 for anger, from .70 to .75 for hostility, from .73 to .83 for verbal aggression, and from .79 to .80 for physical aggression. Because Cronbach's Alpha is sensitive to the

number of items included in a given scale, these authors also calculate adjusted Alpha coefficients of .88 to .92 for the four subscales using the Spearman-Brown prophecy formula.

Procedure

In this study the sample was recruited from different private sector secondary schools of Karachi. Sample of the present research comprised of 140 secondary school students (*Mean age = 14.51, years, SD = .978*). Their education level was from 7th grade to 10th grade. After getting the informed consent from the participants, they were briefed about the purpose of the study and were assured that the data will purely be used for research purpose and their identifications (names) will not be revealed to anyone. Once the rapport was established the personal information sheet was filled which focused on the participant's age, gender, level of education etc. The Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire was administered to assess the emotional intelligence and Aggression Questionnaire was administered to determine the level of aggression in the participants, respectively.

RESULTS

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for Age of the entire sample

Groups	N	M	SD
Male	71	14.80	0.82
Female	69	14.20	1.03
Total	140	14.51	0.97

Table 2. Relationship of Trait EI with the variables of Aggression

	Variables	Pearson (r)	Sig.
	Physical Aggression	-0.203	0.015
	Verbal Aggression	-0.191	0.022
Trait EI	Anger	-0.335	0.000
	Hostility	-0.164	0.050
	Aggression Total	-0.307	0.000

DISCUSSION

Main objective of present study was to examine relationship of Trait EI with the variables of aggression. Consistent with this hypotheses formulated in this study, it was found that there is a significant negative relationship of physical aggression ($r = -.203, p > .01$), verbal aggression ($r = -.191, p > .05$), anger ($r = -.335, p > .01$), hostility ($r = -.164, p > .05$) and total aggression ($r = -.307, p > .00$) with trait emotional intelligence. It shows that that the higher the level of emotional intelligence the lesser the risk of physical aggression. These findings are consistent with the previous studies which found that emotional skillfulness mediates the relationship between traumatic experiences and aggression. Further they found that experiential avoidance and aggression are associated with each other (Tull, Jakupcak, Paulson & Gratz, 2007).

Similarly, in support of the findings of current study Liau and associates (2003) added that secondary school students who have lower level of emotional intelligence show higher levels of aggressive behaviors and are more involved in delinquent behaviors.

Over all analysis shows that there is a strong association between trait emotional intelligence and aggression. There are numerous reasons to support these findings. First, those who are emotionally intelligent have a greater level of self understanding and have greater ability to understand their emotions and regulate them appropriately. Thus trait EI serves as a protective factor against the problems behaviors. Another factor which is to be considered is that emotionally intelligent individuals are less apt to engage deviant behaviors because they know the consequence of their behaviors. Further, those who are more emotionally intelligent emotionally involved in their family, siblings as well as with peers that why they protect them and show more concern for their emotions and feeling than those who are less emotionally intelligent. Because of this they have healthy interpersonal relationships with their peers and they are more popular among their peers. Thompson and Calkins (1996) put forward that aggressive individuals are or they have been functional over their particular antecedent. Those who have been victimized by their peers or adults may develop hostile attitude towards others. Those who are aggressive and hostile attribution lose their functionality. This may facilitate to maintain maladaptive behavior. Keep in mind all these empirical findings which may be helpful to understanding the causes, and dynamic of such problems behavior. And it is essential design the effective cognition and emotion focused intervention programs to help them to get rid of these issues.

Researches on EI help us to determine the function of individual's emotional resources. So, in connection with this the findings of research shows that students with higher level of trait EI can be expected to present lower risk for impulsivity, violence and aggressive behavior. Researches conducted by Rubin (1999).to determine the relationships of emotion intelligence with violence and lack of prosocial behavior in adolescents. These findings have confirmed a significant negative relationship between emotionally intelligence and aggressive behaviors in students and their teachers rated them higher on prosocial behavior as compared to their peers

Although these findings lend support to the hypothesized formulated in current study. But these findings should be interpreted cautiously until they have been replicated with larger sample size and also with the inclusion of more diverse group of adolescents. As discussed previously that the sample in this study was drawn from students with middle and upper socioeconomic background. Future research should focus on whether the findings hold in other populations such as low socio economic background. Furthermore, the measures we used were self-report measures, which can be problematic because there are chances that these students may hide their problems.

Parents do have greater influence on their children social and emotional development. According to Parke (1994) parents influence their children's development in different ways such as by indirect exposure to parental and familial interactions, by teaching and coaching; and by regulating opportunities in the environment". Similarly, Cummings and Davies (1994) argue that when these parents are unable to control their own aggression and hostility their children experience the similar problems. On the other hand Eisenberg and associates (1991) added that when parents creates nurturing and secure environment and encourage their children to express their emotions in socially acceptable way then they may be empathetic and socially expressive.

In Pakistan the education in school aimed to get through the examination or getting high grades in their respective classes. It means that this system focuses only on the cognitive domain. We are missing an important domain which is the 'affective domain'. In order to if we want our children to become the leaders of tomorrow it is imperative to focus on both cognitive as well as affective domain and in primary to secondary level of education it should be incorporated in the curriculum. Mental health professionals as well as educationists should consider that whether emotions are good or bad these are the integral part of the human development and this should be considered likewise.

In the light of literature and findings of current study so far, it is conclude that lack of emotional intelligence is a strong determinant of aggression in adolescents. In sum, current study provides preliminary knowledge about the relationship between these variable which are important component of emotional development. While interpreting the results of present study it is imperative to be aware that the adolescents' perceptions of their own behaviors. In future studies, there is a need to incorporate the reports of parents and teachers, in order to obtain more accurate information to objectively accurately assess their emotions and feelings. Further, future research should be replicated by examining the children in the primary as well elementary schools. Because the emotional and cognitive changes that occur in childhood have greater impact on the later stage of life.

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