



DISTANCE LEARNER'S EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND MATURITY

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Abstract

Students' psychological variables i.e., emotional intelligence (EI) play a significant role in academic progress. Students from distance education belong to different age groups and how each age group manages, communicates, and controls their emotions was the focus of the present study. Maturity was from young to mature age-group students. The level of EI of Distance learners (B.Ed) of Allama Iqbal Open University was checked through "Bar-On EQ-I" after validation and pilot testing. Findings indicated that the total emotional quotient decreased as age increased. Emotional intelligence increased in young distance learners and decreased to mature age-group students.

1. Introduction

All human beings express emotions and feelings to interact with others and to define their behavioral and attitudinal front. All Humans' learning has an emotional base, and many factors are attached to balanced emotional functioning, regarded as regulating emotions, understanding, managing, and regulating emotions with others. These competencies are regarded as emotional intelligence. There is an impressive body of knowledge, literature, and studies on this concept. The concept of emotional intelligence (EI) emerged as a result

of exploration of different dimensions of intelligence. The psychologists emphasized not only on the cognitive dimensions but also on non-cognitive dimensions (Duggal, 2022), and presented new theories and concepts of intelligence (Gerow, 1996). The psychologist who conceived intelligence as general mental ability was Sir Francis Galton (Minton, 1998). In 1905, the term quotient of intelligence was coined by Alfred Binet in 1914, and intelligent quotient measurement scale was framed by William Stern (Tayyari, 2004). Later, in 1983, the commendable work done by Howard Gardner on multiple intelligences indicated that eight intelligences compose a person's overall intelligence (Gardner, 1983). Theory related to emotional intelligence was developed by Daniel Goleman (1995) which further elaborated the importance of Emotional Intelligence Quotient (EQ) to measure EI. From this it is deduced that emotional intelligence can be measured through quotient. Singh (2003) debates on EQ that:

“Emotional Quotient (or EQ) is used interchangeably with ‘Emotional Intelligence’. In simple terms, this can be defined as knowing what feels good. A more formal academic definition refers to emotional awareness and emotional management skills which provide the ability to balance emotion and reason so as to maximize long-term happiness (p. 47)”.

Different psychologists elaborated Goleman's ideas of EI that emotional pattern and thinking patterns affect the people greatly (Hookey, 2005). The work of Bar-On is very important for understanding the nature of emotional intelligence. This is evident from the fact that she developed the very first self-report tool on Emotional intelligence (EI). Researchers can use this tool to assess emotional intelligence (EI). Bar-On illustrates emotional intelligence as a person's non-cognitive capabilities, which help him to manage and absorb the psychological and social pressures and environmental demands to get day-to-day success (Bar-On, 2006). Subbarayan and Visvanathan (2011) concluded that emotional maturity of college students was not stable at all. Another very interesting finding of Rai & Khanal (2017). was that emotional intelligence was gender biased but academic achievement was not gender biased. Preeti (2013) found that future success and a strong personality was not possible without positive emotional intelligence. This means that if a student gets maturity in emotions along with academic achievement, then there is an element of life success. The maturity and superbness in personality can be developed among individuals only if training of emotional intelligence is given to them.

EI is defined by Mayer et al. (2000):

“EI refers to an ability to recognize the meanings of emotions, and to reason and problem solve on the basis of them,” and it involves “the capacity to perceive emotions, assimilate emotion-related feelings, understand the information of those emotions, and manage them (p.2)”.

Emotional intelligence is a skill, and it can be learnt by people of all ages in any stage of adulthood (Smith, 2018). From the work of Snyder and Lopez (2002) it can be inferred that they looked into the basic core of Emotional Intelligence (EI) and determined that emotional intelligence of an individual make the people able to comprehend the situation and convey information regarding emotions in a precise and logical way. It also helps to direct the cognitive abilities and utilize the skills for learning in a way that is personally and socially accepted behaviors. Brackett and Cipriano (2020) state that emotions on the emotional side are related to emotional intelligence and human well-being, that is, the capability to recognize and manage the emotions of people and others; prepare yourself and control your desires; and manage interpersonal relationships effectively. Hine (2007) then revised his definition of emotional intelligence. He redefined EI and linked it to the innate human capacity to recognize, feel, communicate, apply, learn, remember, manage, imagine, understand, discriminate, and explain emotion. Another interesting aspect of emotional intelligence considers a person's ability to understand and know their own emotions, use those thoughts to reduce the emotions of others, and to control or manage their own emotions and those of others effectively to make decisions. McGilchrist et al., 2004). Singh (2003) emphasized emotional intelligence (EI) as a person's competency for acquiring practical skills necessary for life. Generally emotional competence is a domain of emotional intelligence, which is helpful for the development of a person towards the ability to handle situations related to emotions. It also enables the individual to acquire high self-esteem and an optimistic approach for others. According to the view of Pandey (2005) emotional intelligence (EI) is prized because it helps individuals to control feelings and lever stress. Snyder and Lopez (2002) found that emotional intelligence (EI) is of much value because through this we can predict success in workplace, personal relationships, and family functioning. MacGilchrist et al. (2004) further appreciated emotional intelligence (EI) as an important part of psychological theory, indicated that peer relationship, family environment, teachers, media, and personal experience may have an impact on the development of the child's emotional development and intelligence. Psychologists have done different studies on age and emotional intelligence. Matthews, Zeinder, and Roberts (2004) described EI. In this regard, Higgs (2004) studied the emotional intelligence (EI) of call center agents. He chose three

various organizations for this, drawing 289 participants from each as a sample. His survey's findings demonstrated that employees of call centers with high EI also provided the best performance to each organization separately. He also compared the performance of men and women in the organizations with high EI and high output. His research demonstrated a connection between gender and emotional intelligence(EI). The study of Fariselli, Ghini, and Freedman (2008), which studied the relationship between EI and age, is very intriguing. They used the Six Seconds Emotional Intelligence Assessment to conduct the study on 405 Americans. They provided conclusions as:

“We can affirm that there is a developmental component of emotional intelligence; most people will improve in these competencies simply through life experience. This reinforces our claim that emotional intelligence is learnable. Second, we can see that many popular beliefs about with age comes wisdom are overstated. The relationship between EQ and age is very slight meaning there while a slight majority of older people are higher in EQ; there are many young people with higher EQ scores than their older counterparts. So many of our social, educational, and business systems discount the contributions of young people: if emotional intelligence is a critical competence in the current world context, then leaders need to take note of their younger people as an important source of human capital (p.1)”.

In another study conducted by Balçicek and Dengiz (2008) emotional intelligence of male versus female scouts from Turkey and other countries was investigated. It was found that there was no difference between students' emotional intelligence on age. Somehow a slight relationship was found in age and emotional intelligence. In every field of life, the role of emotional intelligence is dominant, and it forms the base of our actions, behaviors, and resultantly human relations with one another. There is research evidence that indicated the role of emotional intelligence when people become mature and vice versa. So, this is an important area of investigation that demands significant careful attention in different cultures, societies, and set-ups.

Objectives

Objectives of the study were to:

1. Assess the students' emotional intelligence level.
2. Examine the relationship between maturity (age) and levels of EI of students.

3. Analyse the relationship between maturity (age) and emotional intelligence in the constructs of emotional intelligence under the constructs of adaptability, intra personal, interpersonal, general mood, and stress management

2. Literature Review

A growing interest has been developed in emotional intelligence and emotional maturity due to the reason for their need for academic achievement and work performance. The research conducted in the educational field about emotional intelligence and emotional maturity for academic achievement is mentioned as the review of the literature.

Kushvinder (2011) found in his study that emotional intelligence is gender restricted. This means that males and females are different in emotional maturity and emotional intelligence. Mishra (2012), Nwadinigwe and Azuka (2012) in their research on the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and academic achievement, found a positive association between academic achievement and emotional intelligence in junior high school students. Preeti (2012) found in her own research that a lack of emotional intelligence is indicative of a weak personality. There was found A high degree of emotional maturity among students of B.Ed (Aumugam, 2014). The results of Wani and Masih (2015) were found to converse with the results of Aumugam found in the research that the majority of Ph.D. students and researchers at Jamia Millia Islamic University are emotionally unstable. The research findings of Bhatnagar and Gill (2015) were also interesting to those who studied the association of EI of senior high school students with EM. It was amazing that there was no association between these two variables.

A review of the relevant literature shows that emotional intelligence and emotional maturity play a major role in the performance of graduate and undergraduate students, as well as high school, undergraduate, and undergraduate students in different disciplines like education, medicine and engineering. At the college level, students are emotionally unstable. Emotional intelligence influences a student's personality and is gender specific. This review also showed no association between emotional intelligence and emotional maturity (Rai, D. (2017). Rai, D. (2017) concluded that emotional intelligence (EI) and emotional maturity (EM) assist to determine and define the personality whether a person is emotionally mature or emotionally intelligent. Emotionally intelligent and emotionally mature people most likely have abilities to control their own emotions in different situations. It is not necessary to be emotionally mature without being emotionally intelligent. This means when a person is

emotionally mature, that one is already emotionally intelligent. Lai D. and Kanal Y. K. (2017) suggested that more studies can be conducted in more universities and more samples. Colleges of technology, medical colleges, and secondary schools can also be considered as population groups. In addition, comparative studies on differences in emotional intelligence, emotional maturity, and academic performance between girls and boys. Emotionally aware people can control their emotions and turn them into positive emotions without hurting others. Channeling your emotions into the right channels can help you make productive changes in your personal life and adapt to your environment. Emotionally stable people are able to make the right decisions. By properly dealing with our emotions, we can control and shape our behavior. Emotional intelligence and emotional maturity are important features for a balanced personality and a successful life. Emotional intelligence also contributes to workplace success (Khalili, 2012). The conclusions of Akerjordet & Severinsen (2007) indicate that research on EI is inadequate and in the developing stage, but many studies have already been published. A variety of approaches should be used to build the theoretical, philosophical, and empirical foundations of this concept to improve nursing practice. It has been concluded that EI is also important in other fields such as nursing. EI is considered a skill that deals with personal and interpersonal skills.

Emotional intelligence is acknowledged as a problem-solving skill that incorporates both emotional and cognitive abilities (Ciarochi et al. 2002; Jordan & Troth 2002). It may be crucial in understanding the connections between stress and mental health. According to Ciarochi et al. (2002), emotionally sensitive people may be more vulnerable to the damaging effects of stress. Patients with poor emotional control were less likely to turn to friends, family, and medical professionals for assistance with emotional issues (Ciarochi & Deane 2001). Building a strong bond with a qualified carer may necessitate patient counseling and instruction in emotion-management techniques like EI, which will aid in the promotion of healing (Ciarochi & Deane 2001; Molter 2003).

Through transformative learning models that concentrate on both emotional and intellectual developmental processes, emotional intelligence may be more genuinely and adequately integrated into nursing education (Freshwater & Stickley 2004). EI is seen as a significant component of nursing skills and a beneficial asset for knowledge growth connected to nursing skills based on the findings of multidisciplinary studies (Monti & Tingen 1999;

Freshwater & Stickley 2004). The formation and integration of knowledge-based professional identities in a variety of professions, including medicine, psychology, nursing, and nursing, and emotional intelligence is crucial. It motivates an effort to comprehend one's identity as a carer better. There is an implicit agreement that EI may be improved and developed further through self-reflection and increased awareness, supporting both emotional and intellectual development (Akerjordet & Severinsson 2004).

Knowledgeable people exhibit emotional intelligence (EI), lead lives that honour their own humanity and individuality, offer others trustworthy advice and direction, contribute constructively, take part in group decisions, and make pertinent decisions. It may offer wise counsel regarding engaged behaviour (Adams 1998). The foundation of competencies necessary for community connection and well-being is emotional intelligence (Cherniss, 2002). Emotional intelligence plays a significant role in students' performance. It is generally considered that maturity brings emotional stability. It is also a common concept that mature people are more emotionally intelligent than youngsters. This provokes certain questions i.e., what is the role of age in the emotional intelligence of a person? Whether mature people exhibit higher EI than youngsters? There are different life spans through which an individual moves, and in each stage, there are differences in the patterns of EI. That's why it becomes vital to investigate the level of EI in various categories of age. Interestingly, age-wise comparison of EI is commonly found in the literature on formal education students and less on open distance learning (ODL) scenarios. In ODL, students belong to various age categories and this phenomenon is to be explored in different cultures and different populations. So, the relationship between high and low levels of emotional intelligence in different age groups was explored.

Hypotheses

H₀¹: There is no significant positive relationship between age and the emotional intelligence level of the students.

H₀²: There is no difference between the emotional intelligence (EI) of mature students and the emotional intelligence (EI) of less mature (young) students.

3. Method

3.1 Population and Sample.

Allama Iqbal Open University students (B.Ed) were the population and 469 students were drawn out randomly as a sample by using a table of random numbers.

3.2 Instrument.

The instrument of the study was Bar-On Emotional Intelligence Quotient Inventory (Bar-On EQ-i). It was got from the National Institute of Psychology, Islamabad in English version which was translated into Urdu and administered to the participants. Keeping in view the cultural suitability, out of 133 items 117 items were used in the present study. The inventory was in the form of 5-point response scale. The response options ranged from “very seldom or not true of me (1) to very often true of me or true of me (5)”. The estimated time for the scale for a person to give a response was 30 to 35 minutes. There were five composite scales “Interpersonal Scale, Intra personal Scale, Stress management Scale, Adaptability Scale, General Mood Scale” of the inventory. This inventory had 15 sub scale-scores also: a) Self-regard, b) Emotional self-awareness, c) Assertiveness, Independence and Self-actualization, d) Empathy, e) Social responsibility, and Interpersonal relationship, f) Stress tolerance and Impulse control, g) Reality-testing, h) Flexibility, and Problem-solving, and i) Optimism and Happiness. There were two portions of the inventory. One part was about demographic information of the participants i.e., age, and monthly income, etc. and the second contained the sub scale items of EI. Items that were negatively scored were 62 and those which were positively scored remained 55.

3.3 Pilot testing

it was done on 50 B. Ed distance learners who completed their degree. The sample was randomly selected and Bar-On EQ-i was sent to them through post with a self-addressed envelope to give their responses within 2 weeks. A total of 32 respondents sent back questionnaires. Based on their responses, scale reliability was assessed. The alpha-coefficient reliability of the instrument was 0.91. The following table indicates the reliability of sub scales of the EI inventory.

Table 1

Alpha Reliability Coefficient of the Tool

Sub scales of Bar-On EQ-i	Cronbach's Alpha value
Scale of Adaptability	.661
Intra personal Scale	.781
Interpersonal Scale	.832
Scale of General Mood	.802
Scale for Stress Management	.833

The above table indicates that in all sub scales of Bar-On EQ-i alpha-coefficient reliability is above 60 percent. However, in intra personal EI scale, it is .781* which indicated a good percentage of being this tool reliable.

3.4 Validity of the instrument

Over the last 17 years, nine studies have explored content validity, factorial validity, discriminant validity, and predictive validity of the inventory of Bar-On EQ-i (Akram, 2004).

3.5 Variables

The following were the variables of the study

1. Emotional Intelligence of the students
2. Age of the sample students

4. Results

For the demographic characteristics, descriptive statistics were used. The relationship between age level and emotional intelligence of the students was checked by applying Pearson-r. The following tables indicate the demographic characteristics of respondents:

Table 2.

Descriptive Statistics Different age groups of the students N=469

Variables	1.1.1.1.1 Categories	1.1.1.1.2 f (%)
<i>Age in years</i>	20.0-23.0	161 (34)
	24.0-27.0	199 (43)
	28.0-31.0	52 (11)
	32.0 & above	57 (12)

Table 2 indicates that most (43%) of the participants were adolescents who were in (20.0-23.0 years) young group. In the other group which was from 24.0-27.0 years old, and they were also in youngsters were second most (34%). However, in 28.0-31.0 years of age, there were (12%) and in 32 and above old group there were less (11%) participants.

Table 3

Descriptive analysis of Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i, N=469)

Bar-On EQ-i	F	Mean	SD
	469	360	62

Table 3 indicates that the mean of 469 respondents was 360 and the standard deviation was 62 on Bar-On EQi.

Table 4

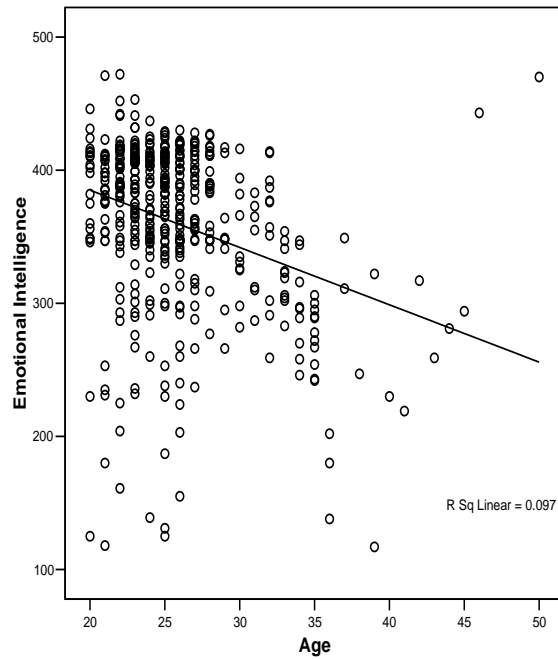
Pearson Correlation between EI Level of Age (N=469)

	Emotional Intelligence Level of Students
Age	-.313.0*
N	469

*p≤0.01

Table 4 demonstrates an inverse significant relationship which is also moderate between (-.315.0*) age level and emotional intelligence of the respondents. It shows that mature students got low scores in EI inventory. Moreover, the students in the low age category had higher EI than mature students. scatter gram in the following on emotional intelligence of students and their age groups indicate the pictures in more detail:

Scattered Gram showing Emotional Intelligence Level of Students vs Age Groups



The scattergram indicates that there was an inverse relationship between the Emotional intelligence (EI) of students and their age group. There were the majority of students (20-28 years) with high levels of EI whereas, some students (30 and above) had moderate and distance earners in the age group 45-50 had low levels of emotional intelligence (EI).

Table 5
Pearson Correlation between the Sub-Scales of Emotional Intelligence and Maturity(Age wise) (N=469)

Relationship b/w emotional Intelligence and age level	N	Sig (2-tailed)	Pearson r
Adaptability and Age	469	.000	-.29**
Intra-personal Intelligence and Age		.000	-.29**
Intra-personal Intelligence and Age		.000	-.35**
General Mood Scale		.000	-.30**
Stress Management EM and Age		.000	-.26**

*p≤0.01

Table 5 indicates inverse but statistically high significant relationships in all the five sub-scales of EQ-i. In intrapersonal emotional intelligence, the relationship coefficient -

.29** indicates that with an increase in age or maturity emotional intelligence decreases. Interpersonal emotional intelligence is a very important aspect, and, in a day, a person is 90%+ is thought to be involved in communicating with his/herself. Findings indicate that in this scale, the high age group category is also statistically significant and inversely correlated (-.35**). Stress management is another important area of a person's success in day-to-day activities and here again, on this sub-scale, age is inversely correlated (-.26**). Statistically significant inverse correlations in the adaptability scale (-.29**) and general mood scale (-.30**) with maturity indicates that as the lifespan increases, emotional stability, management, and communication decrease.

5. Discussions and Conclusions

Emotional intelligence provides a base for emotional actions i.e. using and managing emotions with one's own self, communicating feelings with others, using thinking to manage in stressful situations, and showing happy face according to situations by hiding your inner sad feelings. The empirical results of this study indicated that age is not associated with high levels of emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence has a moderate inverse relationship with age, indicating that youngsters exhibit higher levels of emotional intelligence than mature ones. Literature also supported these findings and indicated inverse as well as slight positive relationship of age and EI. EI of male versus female scouts from Turkey and other countries was investigated. Their research indicated no difference between emotional intelligence and age. Contrary findings by Noor and Hanaf (2017) concluded that adulthood and EI had relationship for university students. So, the emerging adults may find help to deal efficiently with the behavioral and emotional problems which they face during their progress toward maturity.

Another empirical finding of this research was that emotional intelligence in five aspects (interpersonal, intrapersonal, stress management, adaptability, and general mood) was not positively correlated with age. In all these five aspects of distance learners, younger students showed higher values of EI than adults. Chen, Peng, and Fang (2016) also suggested that adults may receive more training on emotional wellbeing. So, it is said that age variable does not have significant positive relationship with emotional intelligence. Adulthood also had no positive relationship with emotional intelligence. In intrapersonal management of emotions young students were better than older ones. Same was the case in other aspects of emotional management i.e., communicating emotions while interactions in stressful situations;

emotional dialogue with others; adapting emotions of others or adapting emotional behaviors of others and general mood emotional management. Since emotional intelligence reflected no relationship with age of distance learners, so it is recommended that this phenomenon may be compared in varied populations i.e., comparison between formal and non-formal educational settings and emotional intelligence may be conducted. Emotional intelligence may be compared with other socio-economic, personality and socio-cultural variables. Training programs on balancing, managing, and communicating emotions may be arranged for mature students in higher institutes. Literature review by Galdona, et. Al (2017) suggested exploration of EI with aging as older people more need emotional control. Studies may be conducted for long periods to have longitudinal effects between emotional intelligence and other variables. In-service teacher training programs may be focused on emotional intelligence development programs.

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