



IMPACT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ON ACADEMIC STRESS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Modern technology has become an integral part of the daily lives of the new generation in the fast-changing 21st century. As a result of instant access to digital information and communication technologies via mobile phones and the internet, this generation is called the 'Digital Generation'. Without understanding real love and association with family and friends, they confine themselves to the digital world. People with high emotional intelligence (EI) feel a sense of association and belongingness. A person's emotional intelligence is their ability to comprehend and cope with difficult and complex situations in life. By overcoming stress, EI can enhance productivity. An analysis of the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Academic Stress is presented in this paper.

KEYWORDS : Emotional Intelligence, Academic Stress, Digital Generation

1. INTRODUCTION

Technology has become the podium for instantaneous gratification in all aspects of the lives of the new digital generation. Mobile phones and access to the Internet and digital information have made life more comfortable for all generations, not just Gen Y, Gen Z, or Millennials. This generation is known as the 'Digital Generation'. They confine themselves to the digital world lacking to experience real unconditional love and connection with their family and friends. They lack in interpersonal skills as they are addicted to social media- Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram and interact mainly via text, instant message or other electronic platforms. Lacking face-to-face interaction makes it difficult for them to portray themselves and understand others (Yesnick, J., 2016). They fail to understand the concept of self-awareness, self-management, empathy, social awareness and social skills- widely known as emotional intelligence.

Decades of research point out that in a highly stressed environment for learners at every level of education, emotional intelligence is the critical factor for academic success. Emotional Intelligence is the competence of a person to understand the concept of emotions and intelligence which further enables a person to cope with difficult and complex situations in life. EI may contribute as a driving force to enhance their productivity by overcoming stress. Emotional intelligence focuses on self-awareness, self-regulation, social skills, empathy, self-management, interpersonal relationship and teamwork. It is observed that creative and successful people have traits of high emotional intelligence (Rehana, R., 2018).

Stress is not a new term for the modern digital generation. It is a way that our body replies and interprets the anxieties faced by a person in the relationships and the surroundings. Everyone faces two types of stress- "good stress" and "bad stress". The stress that triggers and motivates us to do our best work is "good stress". Good stress builds the road to resilience in dealing with our adversities by encouraging us to develop effective management of strategies. On the other hand, bad stress influences our best contribution by overpowering our coping mechanisms. Stress can become grief when we are unable to cope or show our inability to meet the challenges. It is suggested to convert bad stress into good stress by confronting challenging situations and finding suitable solutions (Rowniyar, P., 2016). Such competence in accentuating good stress in place of bad stress is known as emotional intelligence.

Academic stress is mental pressure faced by students due to certain projected or expected academic loads or failure resulting in frustration. Students have to face many academic loads, for example, examinations, peer pressure, expectations of teachers and parents, self-evaluation, etc. These loads put the students under stress.

This paper develops an understanding of the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic stress of digital generation students. The objectives of the study are as follows:

- To study the significance of Emotional Intelligence for the digital generation students
- To explore the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and academic stress

2. Literature Framework

2.1 Is EI significant for digital generation students?

The digital generation has grown up with technology at their fingertips. They have easy access to all kinds of information. They are found to be more informed, but are they emotionally intelligent? They communicate through Whatsapp, Twitter, Facebook, text messaging, etc. and are fully integrated within social media. While spending hours they don't understand body language, facial expressions and refinements of speech. They consider the other person from the likes and smiley at the end (Trachtenberg, E. 2012).

In the past four decades, the shocking stories of students getting prone to suicide have caught our attention. It is emerging as the second prominent cause of death among students. It is difficult to recognize those with suicidal tendencies as they are introverted and resistant to seeking help (Rowniyar, 2016). Emotional intelligence helps in developing a positive attitude to solve problems, control impulses and manage stress for the betterment of oneself and others.

In the digital age, EI is essential for adapting to complex multi-generational challenges, building strong relationships, better navigation of opportunities, making concentrated efforts and outperforming the rest.

2.2 Do EI and Academic Stress relate to each other?

Gradually the traditional theory of intelligence is getting replaced by new theories. Over a period of time, numerous intelligence theories have been recognized- General intelligence by Charles Spearman, multiple intelligence by Howard Gardner (1983), Triarchic intelligence theory by

Robert Sternberg, the emotional intelligence theory by Mayer and Solvay (1990) then Goleman (1995). It has been emphasized by several researchers that IQ alone is not the only measure of success, there are other factors- emotional intelligence; social intelligence, and empathy which play a starring role in the impressive achievements of an individual (Goleman, 1995). Emotional intelligence is the aptitude to regulate and differentiate between one's own and other's feelings and emotions which motivates one to monitor one's thinking and action with the aim to stimulate emotional and intellectual growth.

Fisher (2010) found that stress, depression and anxiety are common among university students due to poor academic performance. The student's psychological, behavioural and cognitive processes in life are affected by academic stress. It may result in depression, burnout, panic attacks and nervous breakdowns. Mayer (2010) pointed out that an inferior level of emotional intelligence may result in the immersion of authoritarian behaviour, anxiety, violence and offensive behaviour and persecution in bullying. On the other side, higher emotional intelligence is the competence to regulate, control and manage feelings and emotions to overcome stress for achieving success in different spheres of life (García, 2021).

Baker (2013) pointed out that several social, interpersonal and academic demands are faced by university students which can build stress and anxiety among them. The immediate challenge which students face is unrealistic and impulsive decisions imposed by parents. Social support from family, friends and community is required to reduce stress, and improve their motivation level and academic performance.

Walkins (2014) explored that individuals possess a wide range of skills and abilities such as intrapersonal relationships, and expected universal and professional skills where emotional intelligence is a shade. Furthermore, it is the ability to self-control our emotions and interpersonal relationships that result in the peculiar progression of the human being. This can be achieved by identifying, conceiving and regulating emotions.

The modern age is the age of anxiety where students are aggressive, confused and lack direction. They are exposed to social stress and show meaningless and destructive behaviour resulting in low self-esteem, depression, drug abuse and suicide cases. EI helps to develop the competence to modify, adapt and find alternatives to convert bad stress into good stress (Rowniyar, P., 2016). Kauts, D. S. (2016) designed a study on 300 students from six-degree colleges. He found that emotional intelligence is essential for a balanced life. College students get significantly influenced by their academic stress.

Rehana, R. (2018) in his study of exploring the relationship between EI and academic stress of university students found that they are negatively correlated. Students of public sector universities were experiencing comparatively lower academic stress than private university students. There is a significant correlation in demographic factors: age, wage, education and sex for measuring emotional intelligence level and stress among university students. Results revealed that boys attained higher emotional intelligence in comparison to girls.

3. METHODOLOGY

The conceptual study has been carried out by using secondary data. To build an understanding of the issue numerous recent studies- research papers, articles, newsletters and other publications are analyzed which helped to understand and create a fresh way of looking at an issue.

4. CONCLUSION

The results of the study suggest that emotional intelligence helps in developing a positive attitude to solve problems, control impulses and manage stress for the betterment of oneself and others. While posting a message on social media, EI enables an individual to appropriately choose content to convey accurately. EI growth in different individuals may help in getting success, but it cannot decrease academic stress. Several other studies emphasize that students with high emotional intelligence have low academic stress though individual differences must be considered.

5. Implications

Emotions have significant importance not only for students but also for teachers. It helps teachers to perform their work effectively by arousing interest in lessons with emotional appeal. Even students can make extraordinary achievements as emotions prove to be a strong motivating factor. Parents and teachers should take the necessary steps for developing the emotional intelligence of the digital generation to overcome academic stress. They must provide effective learning culture by promoting stress management and developing emotional intelligence skills in the digital generation.

6. Limitations And Future Scope

This study is subject to several limitations. The first and most obvious limitation is that no empirical study has been undertaken to develop an understanding of the concepts. The second limitation is that the highlighted concepts cannot be generalized. The third limitation is that EI varies in different individuals. Finally, no conclusive scientific evidence is available to support these perceptions.

Further research in diverse areas like the impact of EI on gender studies, etc. would contribute considerable insight to understanding other variables necessary for the growth of digital generation in the changing scenario. Even a study conducted over a period of time can provide a comparative study for further in-depth contribution to the concepts.

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