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The Nexus of Peer Group Environment with Emotional Intelligence: A Statistical Analysis

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Abstract

This study investigates the association of emotional intelligence with influencing social factors with in peer group environment. The data are collected from 234 students of two male and one female public sector colleges at Mardan. Using Chi square and Gamma tests, the results reveal significant association of peer group environment with emotional intelligence. Within the case of peer group environment mutual cooperation, regular interaction, sharing and respecting each other's opinion is positively associated with emotional intelligence. In the light of these results, the study recommends that peers should be sensitized to their role and interaction with adolescents in order to get better results in terms of balanced emotional intelligence.

Key Words: Peer Group Environment, Emotional Intelligence, Association, Chi Square, Statistical Analysis

Introduction

Peer group refers to an individual's small, relatively intimate group of peers who interact with each other on a regular basis (Brown, 1990). Many studies show that failure to gain social acceptance in peer group results in social rejection and failure in later stage of life. Unless one has a fair measure of child and adolescent peer group acceptance, it is difficult for one to develop an adult self-image as a competent and worthwhile person. For this reason, efforts are made to raise children's acceptance level in the peer group (Horton and Hunt, 2004).

Peer group in the middle of the teens is considered to be reference group that influence attitude, behaviour, goals of life, line of action and norms of conduct (Horton and Hunt, 2004). Children, who are successful with peers, as shown by studies, are on track for adaptive and psychologically befitted results, whereas

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those who fail to adapt to a peer milieu are at risk for maladaptive outcomes (Parker, Rubin, Price, and DeRosier, 1995). Peer relationships are viewed as more intense, closer, and more influential than those formed during childhood (Berndt, 1982).

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is defined by various scholars. It is a collection of personal, emotional, and social competencies and skills that cement one's skills and abilities to successfully manage the situational expectations and social pressure. According to the definition EI itself can potentially affects the future success of an individual. It is the potentials and skills that make a person understand his/herself in relation to others and thereby increase the chances of success in life (Bar-On, 1997). Similarly, Thorndike and Stein (1937) conducted research on emotional intelligence where they called it social intelligence and defined it as the capacity to comprehend and handle human being. Likewise, Goleman and Cherniss (1998), Asnawi, Yunus, and Razak (2014) explain EI by asserting that it is the skill to understand not only of one's own but others' emotions, its positive and negative message and using it in order to guide thinking and action.

Caruso and Salovey (2004) recommended that emotion is not only significant but also indispensable to make high-quality decisions, take best possible actions to resolve issues, handle change, and do well. Simply, emotional intelligence is the talent to organize and manage both thinking and feeling with the aim to reach to better verdicts and choices. This talent and ability might be influenced by external social environment during the process of socialization. One of the agencies of socialization is peer group. The current study investigates if peer group environment has association with emotional intelligence.

Emotional Intelligence (EI)

As reported by Asnawi, Yunus, and Razak (2014) emotional intelligence (EI) at workplaces is the focus in recent years. Hence EI has been explained by leaps and bounds from various perspectives (Peterson, 1997; Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1995; Bhatia, 2012; Cooper & Sawaf, 1997). Salovey and Mayer (1990) defined an emotional competence based on EI which is expressive in the form of self and social awareness, management, and social skills at workplace. In other words, EI is conceptualised as understanding and motivating oneself along with others, and on job creative performance (Gottman, 1997; Henig, 1996).

According to Asnawi, Yunus, and Razak (2014) while operationalizing emotions explain self-emotions appraisal, others' emotions assessment, use of emotion and regulation of emotion. An individual with high abilities and skills in the mentioned areas of emotion can maintain positive emotions and perform better consistently (Bennets, 1996; Segal, 1997). They believe that people with such skills would be able to handle psychological distress efficiently (Salerno, 1996).

EI, primarily was explained by Salovey and Mayer in 1990 and thereafter gained popular attention of the scholars. The subject of EI emerged in best known (Goleman, 1995) and a number of other trendy books (Cooper & Sawaf, 1997; Gottman, 1997; Salerno, 1996; Segal, 1997), periodicals and daily papers' articles (Bennets, 1996; Henig, 1996; Peterson, 1997). It also attracted electronic media and discussed enormously in talk shows (Hudson, 1998; Davies, Stankov& Roberts, 1998).

Researchers have focussed emotional intelligence in order to find out reasons of the variation in people (Zeidner et al., 2003; Fox, 1994; Asnawi, Yunus, and Razak, 2014). The abilityto cope with stressful conditions and managing them in best possible way is an aspect of EI. Emotional intelligence enables a person to know when and how to express emotions and control them in order to be successful in jobs. The emotional intelligence articulate and equip an individual to argue with his own emotions and read the emotions of others. It could be said on the ground of researches that emotional intelligence is the subject matter of sociology and psychology along with management courses like leadership, organizational behaviour etc. Scholars recognize the role of EI as an important one in predicting successful life both in private sphere and public domain (Bhatia, 2012).

Peer Group Environment

The social condition generated out of the interactive processes within a peer group is known to be the peer group environment for the current study. The influence of peer group environment is determined by various studies (Power, Bowen and Rose, 2005; Harris, 1995; Brown & Klute, 2003). The amount of time spent and the level of intimacy is also researched upon by scholars like Larson, Brown and Mortimer (2002) and Buhrmester and Furman (1987).

The peer group environment framed with flavour of mutual respect (Woolley & Grogan-Kaylor, 2006) care, encouragement, independence (Berndt & Hoyle, 1985) intimacy (Bhatia, 2012) autonomy and self-identity (Gardner, Qualter & Whitley, 2011) is considered to be positively linked with the development of the adolescent. School success, self-esteem, adjustment with the social environment is associated with peer group relationship (Rosenfeld & Bowen, 1998; Powers, Bowen & Rose, 2005). A study of Harris (1995) even concludes that the effects of parenting are smaller than the effects of peer group on development of a person.

Peer group environment provides the young chances to express his/herself with almost independence and without control and guidance of adults. Such interactive processes enhance the social capacity of young to establish his/her own identity (Berndt & Hoyle, 1985; Petrides, Pita & Kokkinaki, 2007), and learn the

art of adjustment in a new group with new value system (Devi and Royal, 2004; fox, 1994).

The amount of time spent in peer group also indicates the liking level of its members for the group. From this time factor, the importance could be determined. In other words, spending time factor determines the importance of the group and thereby its influence on its members (Larson, Brown & Mortimer, 2002; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Healthy relationship with in peer group contributes in emotional and social confidence of adolescent. Peer group with cooperative process enables individuals to produce better results in team than as an individual (Scarnati, 2001). Interdependence in a peer group can be of any among the three types i.e., positive, negative or non-existent (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). Positive one promotes facilitative and supportive interaction while negative one creates oppositional environment among peer (Johnson & Johnson, 1995). Harris and Harris (1996) studied teams and conclude that skills like, care, warm feelings, friendliness and support are essential for a team to be successful. Yost and Tucker (2000) established association of successful team work and emotional intelligence. Similarly, Grossman (2000) contends that group environment with softer skill like adoptability, adjustment empathy are more successful than the group which lack these skills.

Rejection or withdrawal from peer group is associated with low self-esteem, loneliness, depression, negative self-worth, emotional imbalance anxiety in life spam (Rubin & Mills, 1998; Gazelle & Ladd, 2003). Children's beliefs of being rejected contribute in maladjustment in their life at different stages (Sandstorm, Cillessen & Eisenhower, 2003). Peer rejection also leads to aggressive, un-controlled and short attention behaviour (Coie, Lochman, Terry, & Hyman, 1992). Rejected peers mostly consider their selves as less competent, less worthy and less productive (Verschueren & Marcoen, 2002).

Materials and Methods

This part contains study area, sampling, and tools of data collection, indexation and analysis of the data. Brief of all the mentioned sections is given as under:

Study Area

The present study is carried out in district Mardan where three public colleges are selected through lottery method for data collection. Total numbers of colleges in the study area are 14 where 9:5 ratios exist in male and female colleges (Bureau of Statistics Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 2014). However, as per record of Abdul Wali Khan University, total numbers of Public Sector Colleges (included two post

graduate colleges) at District Mardan are 16 with the ratios of 10:6 of male and female respectively. For this study the researchers use the number available with Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan. Two male colleges and one female college are selected.

Sampling and Sample Size

This refers to the number of subjects selected from the universe to constitute a sample. The size of sample should neither be excessively large nor too small. It should be optimum which covers all aspects a researcher is interested in (Cooper and Schindler, 2006; Kumar, 2008). Respondents are students of class twelve of the selected colleges. They are from both genders divided proportionally to the ratio of 23% female and 77% male. They cover both rural and urban population. They are selected randomly from the total number of students given in table below. Using the magic table given by Sekaran (2003), out of the total population i.e. 601 students (college enrolment list, 2015), a sample size of 234 is randomly selected. Further, respondents are proportionally allocated and thereby selected from the three colleges through the formula used by (Chaudhry and Kamal, 1996), given as under:

$$ni = \frac{n \times Ni}{N}$$

n = Total sample size

ni = Required sample size

Ni = No of the respondent in each sub tribe (strata)

N = Total population size

Table No. 01 Distribution of Population and Sample Size

S.no	Public Colleges	Population size	Sample size

1	Govt Girls Degree College Sheikh Maltun (F)	136	53
2	Govt Boy Degree College Toru (M)	225	87
3	Govt Degree College Mardan (M)	240	94
Total		601	234

Source: Colleges Enrolment Lists (2015)

Tool(s) of Data Collection

Data is collected through a comprehensive questionnaire covering both the variables of the study. The questionnaire is in the format of Likert scale. Data collection through Likert Scale produces reliable results (Cooper and Schindler, 2006; Kumar, 2008; Kothari, 2003). For measuring EI, Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire developed by Anukool Hyde, Sanjyyot Pethe and Upinder Dhar is used. This questionnaire consists of ten aspects which includes, Self-awareness, Empathy, Self-motivation, Emotional stability, Managing relations, Integrity, Self-development, Value orientation, Commitment, Altruistic behaviour. Questionnaire on peer group environment is developed through the help of literature and personal observation. It contains eight items covering feelings for peer group, nature of intra interaction, status of encouraging, frequency of meetings.

Indexation

The process in which two or more items of the same variable are merged in order to measure the perception of respondent is called indexation. As defined it is the procedure of quantifying a variable through calculating the numbers of items in it (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1992; Smith, 1981). Dependent variable i.e., emotional intelligence which has ten aspects with thirty four items spreading with in all the aspects, is indexed for reaching to logical inferences.

Analysis of Data

Analysis of the collected data is carried out through Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS, version 20). The data is shifted to the program after coding it for bi-variate analysis. Further, Chi statistics are used for measuring association between the dependent and independent variable. In order to find the direction of the relationship between the variables, Gamma test is also applied.

Results and Discussion

Study findings regarding emotional intelligence and its influencing social factor is presented and discussed in this chapter. It includes section 4.1 which describes demographic information including gender, age group, education, and college name. Another section 4.2 section explains second stage of analysis which is bivariate. The results are presented and discussed as follow;

Bi-variate Analysis

Relationship between (emotional intelligence) and peer group environment is measured through cross tabulation. The results with cogent reasons and supported with literature are presented and discussed as follows;

Analysis of the Association between Peer Group Environment and Emotional Intelligence

Table 2 shows the findings regarding relationship and direction of association between peer group environment and emotional intelligence. Peer group environment is restricted to eight indicators which covers affectionate, supportive, interactive, respectful and encouraging traits. Each statement is cross tab with emotional intelligence to find out its link.

A positive and significant association ($P<.001$; $\gamma = 0.465$) is observed between liking peer group and emotional intelligence. The findings suggest that a group where one gets social acceptance could be evaluated attractive and productive. On the other hand if the peer group is neither supportive nor encouraging, it may not be liked by members. Such psycho-social acceptance could lead to better emotional intelligence. The findings are in line with Horton and Hunt (2004). Similarly, a positive and highly significant result ($P<.000$; $\gamma = 0.656$) is derived from encouragement in initiatives and emotional intelligence. The findings depict that a group which ridicule and discourage its members could have negative impacts on the emotional intelligence of a member. The future success of a person could be determined by his present or current state of mind and approach to the world. However, it is evident from the findings that if current state of mind is confused and discouraged by those who are supposed to be a source of

encouragement then it could lead to emotional imbalance and failure in life. It could be inferred from the findings that positive role of peer group could have positive impacts on the personality of its members as it is considered to be a reference group that influence the behaviour and attitude of individual more than any other group in life. The findings are in line with Horton and Hunt (2004) and Parker, Rubin, Price & DeRosier (1995).

A positive and significant association ($P<.000$; $\gamma = .631$) is found in equal assistance in routine work and emotional intelligence. The findings suggest that respondents are considering the peer group more important in terms of mutual support and assistance that could have positive effects for the emotional intelligence of individuals. The findings are in agreement with Berndt (1982).

Similarly, a positive and significant association is observed in daily interaction and emotional intelligence. The findings suggest that consistent interaction could develop a rapport among the members and thereby pave the way to a better conducive social environment. Such a socially cohesive and trustworthy group could have positive impacts on emotional intelligence of its members. It could be deduced from the findings that regular interaction indicates the intimate and friendly environment which is positively related with emotional intelligence in accordance with the results. The findings are in consonance with that of Brown (1990) who concludes that peer group is a small and relatively intimate group of individuals who meets frequently.

A positive but relatively significant association ($P<.015$; $\gamma = .362$) is observed in sharing views in a peer group and emotional intelligence. The level of trust in a peer group could be determined by analysing the level and frequency of information and view sharing among members. Contrary to this where members do not share their views with each other could lead to a trust less formation of group and result for its members could be confusion, lack of confidence in each other, and thereby emotional imbalance. Self-image is affected by the environment of peer group. A positive self-image could be developed if the peer group is trustworthy, caring, and sharing. The findings are similar to that of Horton and Hunt (2004).

Similarly, a positive and significant result ($P<.000$; $\gamma = .623$) is detected between respecting opinion and emotional intelligence. This shows a height of social status, level of understanding and maturity of the members of a peer group. It could be assumed that unusual criticism and contradiction by members in a group could lead to an imbalance emotional intelligence.

A positive and significant result ($P<.005$; $\gamma = .378$) is extracted between worrying on friend's sickness and emotional intelligence. Similarly a positive and significant result ($P<.011$; $\gamma = .417$) is derived from expressing happiness on friend's success and emotional intelligence. Here it could be concluded from the findings that in both states of happiness and worry friends mutually cooperate and

share the situation. Such examples of friendship through peer group could really add to a productive self-image and identity formation. It could lead to an emotionally balanced personality and ensure better chances of future success.

Table No.2 Relationship between Peer Group Environment and Emotional Intelligence

Peer Group Environment	Attitude	Emotional Intelligence			Total	Statistics
		High	Moderate	Not sure		
I like my peer group	Always	164 (70)	47(20)	23(10)	234(100)	χ^2 =18.115 (.001) γ =0.465
We equally encourage each other in taking initiatives	Always	117(50)	47(20)	23(10)	187(80)	χ^2 =36.115 (.000) γ =0.656
	Sometime	23 (10)	24 (10)	0 (0.0)	47(20)	
We equally assist each other in routine work	Always	70(30)	47(20)	23(10)	164(70)	χ^2 =32.891 (.000) γ =.631
	Sometime	47(13.0)	23(10)	0(0.0)	70(30)	
We meet every day on a specific time	Always	47(20)	17(7)	6(3)	70(30)	χ^2 =16.08 (.004) γ =.432
	Sometime	70(30)	30(13)	17(7)	117(50)	
	Never	19(8)	13(6)	15(6)	47(20)	
We share views with each other	Always	117(50)	24(10)	23(10)	187(70)	χ^2 =12.366 (.015) γ =.362
	Sometime	24(10)	23(24)	0(0)	47(20)	

We respect each other's opinion	Always	117(50)	70(30)	24(10)	211(90)	χ^2 =32.890 (.000) γ =.623
	Sometime	12(5)	6(3)	5(2)	23(10)	
If one friend becomes sick others become worry	Always	94(40)	47(20)	23(10)	164(70)	χ^2 =14.143 (.005) γ =.378
	Sometime	24(10)	23(10)	0(0)	47(20)	
	Never	11(5)	7(3)	5(2)	23(10)	
We equally become happy on the success of each other	Always	117(50)	70(30)	24(10)	211(90)	χ^2 =13.154 (.011) γ =.417
	Never	12(5)	6(3)	5(2)	23(10)	

Survey, 2015

Note*Frequency with percentage in parenthesis

Conclusions and Recommendations

The present section concludes the findings and thereby policy recommendations are provided in line with the results of the study as follows;

Conclusions

The aim of this research work is to investigate the association of emotional intelligence with peer group environment. Emotional intelligence, a dependent variable is measured through a Likert scale devised by Anuka Hyde, Sanjyyot Pethe and Upinder Dhar (2002). Peer group environment, an independent variable, is measured through a Likert scale prepared by the researchers with the help of literature and personal observation.

The study demonstrates that in peer group environment, mutual cooperation, regular interaction, sharing and respecting each other's opinion was positively associated with emotional intelligence. It could be concluded that healthy and cooperative peer group environment contributes positively to the emotional intelligence of adolescents.

In a nut shell, emotional intelligence is the social product of the investment of social capital in the socialization agencies. The psycho social acceptance of and by a peer group have positive impact on emotional intelligence of its members. Encouragement and support by significant others with in a peer group reduces the chances of failure in life and positively contributes to emotional intelligence. Frequent social interactions provides chances of information sharing through which rapport develops among the members of a group. Correspondingly, such interactive milieu develop social cohesion and strong social fabric which result into trust and confidence among members. Such an environment of trust and confidence raises feelings of respect and care for interactive partners which is the sign of maturity and emotional intelligence.

Recommendations

Following recommendations are provided:

The study recommends that all the three agencies are exerting its influence on the emotional intelligence of the adolescents therefore all the stakeholders including, parents, peers, and teachers should be sensitized regarding their role and interaction with adolescents in order to get better results in terms of balanced emotional intelligence.

It is also suggested that a forum for a dialogue is to be provided by the government to all the stakeholders like parents, students, community leaders, teachers and media personals to discuss regularly the environment of the home, peer groups, and academic institutions and suggest improvement in it.

Further research is suggested on the subject of emotional intelligence at different level of academic institutions in both public and private.

Peer Group Environment

In light of the study findings, peer group has an influencing role in emotional intelligence of adolescents. It is evident that positive attitude produces positive emotions which ultimately contributes in quality, healthy and cooperative peer group environment. It is therefore suggested that special programs of awareness be launched for youth focusing on the positive role of them within their peer group. It is also suggested that members of peer group should encourage and assist each other in taking initiatives, share views with each other, respect each other opinion, and express feelings for each other's.

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