

Role of Emotional Intelligence in Creativity of South Asian Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

The forefront of change and development are young adults. The period is critical for protecting health over the life course. Factors like creativity and emotional intelligence foster mental health. The aim of the current study is to understanding the relationship between creativity and emotional intelligence among young adults. The sample of the study ranged from age 18 to 25 and responses (n= 139) were collected using non-probability sampling. The results show a positive relation between creativity and emotional intelligence. The results of hierarchical regression show that when all the 4 predictors, that are perception of emotions, understanding emotions of self, understanding emotions of others and utilisation of emotions are taken together they significantly predict creativity. The study found no significant gender differences in the scores of creativity and emotional intelligence. Towards the end, few suggestion and preventive strategies are also mentioned that will improve the mental health of young adults.

Keywords: *Creativity, Emotional Intelligence, Young Adults, Well-being, Quality of Life*

Young adults in the 21st century live in a global world where demands are higher and place greater stress and burden on them. This period of life is developmentally distinct, critical, unique and worth of attention (Bonnie, 2015). In recent years, more and more young adults are reporting mental illnesses which lead to serious consequences for their well-being and quality of life. Improving the cognitive and interpersonal skills of young adults will help to effectively prevent and treat anxieties, depression and over all improve mental health (“Young People’s Mental Health Is Finally Getting the Attention It Needs,” 2021).

The aim of the society should be to create a better and healthier future for the young adults who are facing more challenges than ever before. Building and strengthening social connections, education and awareness, reducing feelings of loneliness and isolation, creating supportive environments, accessing mental health services all these factors can contribute to better mental health outcomes (The Rise of Mental Health Issues Among Young People: Causes and Solutions, 2001).

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Indian youth face a lot of emotional stress and emotional instability. Due to psychological, economic, social, political, environmental and legal factors they are constantly under pressure taking the step higher from education to employment. Emotional intelligence helps to improve the individual's performance despite the pressure (Anand & Duggal, 2015).

Power (2021) wrote that emotional intelligence gives young adults the ability to identify, understand, control and use emotions of self and others. This helps to keep the distress away and manage the conflicts, fewer mental difficulties, lower stress, to be more assertive and resilient and to develop positive and stable relations which in turn help the individual to succeed in all aspects of life by encouraging better outcomes and improving the quality of life.

Emotions are the source of creative innovations. Emotional Intelligence is found to be related with creativity. Better understanding of emotions can impact the actions an individual takes when producing the best products, innovation, music, services etc. A part of creativity also involves facing the ups and downs of life. Emotional intelligence helps to recognize those challenging situations and manage them efficiently (Ung, 2023). Laycraft (2015) studied creativity in young adults and its role in psychological development. He states that creativity in young adults originates spontaneously and is maintained by complex emotions which are the driving forces in psychological development.

Thus, there a need for studying creativity and emotional intelligence in adults. It is necessary to promote training of socio-emotional development in young adults (Fabio & Caterina, 2020). The Sustainable Development's global goals and targets include the goal of ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all individuals at all ages. Covid-19 has threatened the progress of global health by decreasing life expectancy and increasing prevalence of anxiety and depression around the globe (Goal 3 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.). After the pandemic situation the suicide rates were also impacted. The rates were decreasing from 2010 to 2017 and after covid-19 the rates started increasing with the highest number of suicides in 2020 (Arya et al., 2022). One of the main reasons in the increase in the suicide rates was loneliness and according to science, loneliness is linked to creativity. Being alone and lonely gives space and time for creative activity but has its negative consequences too because being lonely triggers negative emotions and brings out the underlying emotional pain which individuals feel after the social connections are lost (Braff, 2021). Hence social skills training and socio-economic development among young adults will help creative individuals to not become a target of loneliness and yet remain high functioning creative people with a balanced emotional state.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The psychologist Howard Gardner and Robert Sternberg expressed ideas of multiple intelligences during the 1980's. At the same time research on emotions and cognition were being conducted extensively. Intelligence researchers examine specific intelligences such as emotional intelligence. According to Leeper definition, processes which arouse, sustain and direct activity are emotions (Hornung & Smolnik, 2022). Amid such time, Mayer defined emotional intelligence as the capacity or ability to reason with and about emotion (Mayer et al., 2008). The ability to monitor one's own and others feelings and emotions to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions is emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence helps to strengthen the current understanding of emotions and intelligence, it enriches a sense of functionality of human emotions and the breadth of human intelligence (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

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Thinking is fostered by specific emotions, for example creativity is promoted by positive emotions (Mayer et al., 2008). Emotions directly or indirectly influence the components and strategies influenced in problem solving such as flexible planning, creative thinking, mood redirected attentions, motivating emotions etc (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Creativity can be defined as the generation of novel and original ideas, it is also regarded as not just the process of idea generation and problem solving but also the implementation of actual idea (Gurbuz et al., 2016).

Creativity is considered to be a concept of central importance in many contexts. Creativity and intelligence are widely studied but affect related processes also play an important role in creativity. Affective processes facilitate creative abilities. According to the study, emotional intelligence successfully predicts divergent thinking and creative personality (Sánchez-Ruiz et al., 2011).

Other researchers have also shown strong relations between emotional intelligence and creativity among student leaders thus facilitating the process of divergent thinking. Emotional intelligence is also positively related to creative personality trait, verbal intelligence and intuitive thinking. There is also positive relationship between creative personality and creative performance (Wolfradt et al., 2002). Creativity is not only found to be correlated with intelligence facets (Neubauer et al., 2018) but also found to be positively correlated with proactivity, development of entrepreneurship, need of achievement, self-confidence, internal control, management of relations, self-awareness etc. which are all factors influenced by emotional intelligence (Zakarevičius, 2010).

Creativity is also associated with higher well-being. Post pandemic, Fiori et al., (2022) conducted a study on adults and found out that creative individuals could manage their stress and were more satisfied. Creativity was seen to foster positive emotions and experiences, it promoted creative thinking, which improved quality of life and resilience. The Indian youth continues to be resilient and adaptable during and post pandemic. Creativity has been a means to cope through the mental side effects of pandemic (Youth and COVID-19: Stories of Creativity and Resilience, n.d.).

Ivcevic et al. (2007) state that intelligence is associated with academic achievement whereas creativity is associated with the degree to which a person engages in novel endeavours. Creativity and intelligence are considered mental abilities and as time passed research on intelligence has expanded to emotion related abilities. Emotional intelligence is parallel to emotional creativity and both are linked to creative behaviour.

Today, life of a man is full of difficulties. To face them, individuals need to be equipped with different skill sets. Some factors make positive contributions to an individual's personal and professional life. Considering this importance of emotional intelligence in stress management and ability of adaptation it becomes necessary to study emotional intelligence in young adults who at the age are constantly battling with academic, occupational, relationship and personal stressors. Creativity as a part of the study will help to broaden and look at ways that help young adults deal effectively in stressful situation. The unusual restrictions, confinement and challenges after the covid-19 situation made it clear that the ability to be creative is a necessary condition in everyday life to build resilience, to uplift positive states, become solution oriented, get highly motivated, relieve anxiety, improve emotional regulation and eventually improve themselves (Hofreiter et al., 2021).

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The purpose of the research is to understand the relationship between creativity and emotional intelligence and how emotional intelligence affect creativity among young adults.

METHODOLOGY

Objective - The objective of the study is to understand the relationship between creativity and emotional intelligence and how emotional intelligence affect creativity among young adults.

Hypothesis

H1: Higher the scores of creativity, higher the scores of emotional intelligence.

H2: The higher scores of predictor variable, emotional intelligence predicts higher scores in the response variable, creativity.

Research Design - The research design will be correlational and attempt to establish relationship between the variables.

Sample - The study consisted of 139 young adults, both male and females within the age group of 18-25. The participants will be selected through convenience and snowball sampling.

Participant Inclusion Criteria

- The study sample will be limited to India
- The population will be from urban and metropolitan cities
- Participants within the range of 18-25 years

Participant Exclusion Criteria

- Any individual outside India
- Any individual age below 18 and above 25

Procedure - Data was collected using Google forms. They were sent to individuals who fit the inclusion criteria. Snowball sampling was used to collect large number of responses. The participants could respond to the form if they give consent for the same. They were informed that the data would be kept confidential and used only for research purpose. At the end of the form the participants were debriefed about the research. After collecting the responses, the data was analysed and results were compiled to study the findings.

Tools

1. Creativity – The Short Scale of Creative self (SSCS) was used in the study. The scale was developed by Karwowski in 2011 to measure creative self-belief. The scale consists of 11 items which are responded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from score 1 (definitely no) to score 5 (definitely yes). The scale measure's creative personal identity (CPI) and creative self-efficacy (CSE). According to Pavlic and colleagues' study, the internal consistence of CPI and CSE was 0.92 and 0.85 respectively.
2. Emotional Intelligence – The Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSREIT) was used in the current study. The scale was developed by Schutte in 1998 and is based on the emotional intelligence model of Salovey and Mayer (1990). The scale consists of 33 items which are responded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from score 1 (strongly disagree) to score 5 (strongly agree). The scale measures regulation of emotion, utilization of emotion and appraisal of emotion. According to Schutte,

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the internal consistence of the test ranges from 0.84 to 0.90 and the test-retest reliability after the time interval of 2 weeks was 0.78.

Data Analysis -The quantitative data was analyzed using statistical package for social science (SPSS). Descriptive statistics like percentages, mean and standard deviation were tabulated. Inferential statistics were calculated using independent sample t-test, Pearson's correlation and hierarchical regression.

RESULTS

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Creativity	139	2.8	5.0	4.12	0.51
Emotional Intelligence	139	88	152	123.42	12.29

Table 1 represents the descriptive statistics of the data. The mean value of the scores of creativity is 4.12 (SD=0.51). The mean value of the scores of emotional intelligence is 123.42 (SD=12.29).

Table 2: Correlation between emotional intelligence, domains of emotional intelligence and creativity

		Domains of emotional intelligence				
		Perception of emotions	Managing emotions of self	Managing emotions of others	Utilization of emotions	Emotional Intelligence
Creativity	Pearson Correlation	0.27**	0.36**	0.25**	0.32**	0.36**
	Significance	0.001	0.000	0.002	0.000	0.000
	N	139	139	139	139	139

** correlation is significant at 0.01 level

Table 2 shows the correlations between creativity and the domains of emotional intelligence. A positive correlation is found between the domains of emotional intelligence and creativity. Firstly, there exist a low positive correlation between creativity and perception of ($r = 0.27$, $p < 0.001$) and managing others' emotions ($r = 0.25$, $p < 0.002$) respectively. Secondly, there exist a moderate positive correlation between creativity and managing emotions of self ($r = 0.36$, $p < 0.00$) and creativity and utilization of emotions ($r = 0.32$, $p < 0.00$). The correlation between creativity and emotional intelligence which was found to be moderately positive ($r = 0.36$, $p < 0.00$).

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Table 3: Prediction of creativity by perception of emotions, understanding emotions of self, understanding emotions of others and utilisation of emotions among young adults (n=139).

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	Standard beta	Std. error	t	Standard beta	Std. error	t	Standard beta	Std. error	t	Standard beta	Std. error	t
Perception of emotion	0.277	0.009	3.379	0.117	0.010	1.254	0.064	0.012	0.579	0.060	0.012	0.542
Understanding emotions of self				0.307	0.015	3.298	0.295	0.016	3.134	0.241	0.019	2.085
Understanding emotions of others							0.094	0.021	0.912	0.078	0.002	0.0743
Utilisation of emotions										0.091	0.025	0.809
R	0.277 ^a			0.381 ^b			0.388 ^c			0.393 ^d		
R²	0.077			0.145			0.151			0.155		
Adjusted R²	0.070			0.133			0.132			0.129		
R² Change	0.077			0.068			0.006			0.004		
F	11.416			11.559			7.974			6.129		

a. Predictors: (Constant), Perception of emotions

b. Predictors: (Constant), Perception of emotions, Understanding emotions of self

c. Predictors: (Constant), Perception of emotions, Understanding emotions of self, Understanding emotions of others

d. Predictors: (Constant), Perception of emotions, Understanding emotions of self, Understanding emotions of others, Utilisation of emotions

Table 3 shows the results of hierarchical regression that was carried out to identify the predictors of creativity by perception of emotions, understanding emotions of self, understanding emotions of others and utilisation of emotions among young adults. In the first model, perception of emotions accounts for 27.7% (p=0.001) variance in creativity. Model 2 predicts 38.1% (p=0.000) variance, Model 3 predicts 38.8% (p=0.000) variance and Model 4 accounts for 39.3% (p=0.000) variance in creativity. The results show that when all the 4 predictors, that are perception of emotions, understanding emotions of self, understanding emotions of others and utilisation of emotions are all taken together they significantly predict creativity better than just any one of the above.

Table 4: Prediction of emotional intelligence by creative personal identity and creative self-efficacy among young adults (n=139).

	Model 1			Model 2		
	Standard beta	Std. error	t	Standard beta	Std. error	t
Creative personal identity	0.248	1.690	0.003	0.050	1.943	0.525
Creative self-efficacy				0.357	2.137	3.748
R	0.248 ^a			0.387 ^b		
R²	0.062			0.150		
Adjusted R²	0.055			0.137		
R² Change	0.062			0.088		
F	9.017			11.963		

a. Predictors: (Constant), Creative personal identity

b. Predictors: (Constant), Creative personal identity, Creative self-efficacy

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Table 4 shows the results of hierarchical regression that was carried out to identify the predictors of emotional intelligence by creative personal identity and creative self-efficacy. In the first model, creative personal identity accounted for 24.8% ($p=0.000$) variance in creativity and in model 2, creative personal identity and creative self-efficacy together accounts for 38.7% ($p=0.000$) variance in creativity. The results show that both the predictors together predict emotional intelligence significantly better.

Ancillary Observations

Table 5: Gender differences among creativity and emotional intelligence

	Male		Female	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Creativity	4.15	0.50	4.10	0.52
Emotional Intelligence	124.15	14.86	122.98	10.85

Table 5 shows the results of an independent sample t-test conducted to compare the difference of creativity and emotional intelligence between males and females. It was found that there were no significant differences in the scores of creativity for males ($M=4.15$, $SD=0.50$) and females ($M=4.10$, $SD=0.50$). For emotional intelligence too, the mean score of males ($M=124.15$, $SD=14.86$) and mean score for females ($M=122.98$, $SD=10.85$) did not differ significantly.

DISCUSSION

The aim of the study was to understand the relationship between creativity and emotional intelligence among young adults. The current study hypothesised that there would be a positive correlation between creativity and emotional intelligence. This is in line with our hypothesis which suggests that higher the levels of creativity, higher will be the levels of emotional intelligence among young adults. The results of regression show that when all the 4 predictors, that are perception of emotions, understanding emotions of self, understanding emotions of others and utilisation of emotions are all taken together they significantly predict creativity. Likewise for the prediction of emotional intelligence, creative personal identity and creative self-efficacy together predict emotional intelligence better.

The current study hypothesised a positive relationship between creativity and the four domains of emotional intelligence. Research by Hernández-Jorge et al., in 2020 has shown that perception of emotions is strongly related to the recognition of emotions and understanding of emotions. The study also mentions that understanding of emotions is strongly and positively correlated to emotional regulation and understanding of one's own emotions. These domains of emotional intelligence were seen to contribute to creative aspects. Rego et al. (2007) hypothesized that leaders who understand their own emotions are able to foster greater creativity in employees. The results proved that the leaders understanding of emotions of self were positively correlated to overall creativity levels and creative ideas in the self and among employees too.

The current study also hypothesized positive correlation between creativity and overall emotional intelligence and previous studies also have found similar results. Brown and Schutte (2006) reported that higher emotional intelligence is related to positive interpersonal qualities like general psychological well-being, optimism, greater empathy and relationship satisfaction. Creativity also has a positive relation to emotional intelligence which was

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supported by the current study. Qahir in the year 2022 found the same result suggesting that emotional intelligence enhances belief in the strength and capabilities and helps to improve performance using creative ways. Another study demonstrated that individuals having high intelligence possess high emotionality which has a positive influence on self-creativity (Altinay et al., 2021).

The literature for gender differences on creativity suggests mixed results. Some studies have found gender differences among female and male on the scores of creativity and creative performance, some studies have not. The former findings were obtained by Tsai, (2013) which shows that male adults excelled in creative performance even after demographic differences were not existing between the female and male sample. The result was supported by the male's tendency to display boundary breaking thinking and their power to display such thinking. The current study does not show any significant difference between creativity among females and males. Matud et al. (2007) found similar results. Their study results showed minimal gender differences in creative thinking. The study showed that the minimal gender difference also disappears when the sample consists of women having high educational qualifications. This indicates that higher education increases creative thinking and as females of current generations are educating and empowering themselves, there are equalling to males in many areas.

Gender difference studies of emotional intelligence suggest women having higher emotional intelligences than men. Some studies suggest no gender differences. Rego et al. (2007) found that emotional intelligence predicts the health levels of female students but not of male students. Females seem to be better aware of and understand emotions and have better empathy. They attribute the cause to the way society socializes the two genders differently (Arteche et al., 2008). Contrary findings suggest that males have better emotional intelligence than females. A study by Ahmad et al., (2009) revealed that males have high level of emotional intelligence and they supported their results by reasoning that males are good at managing and expressing emotions due to the fact that emotional intelligence primarily deals with social skills and because males have good social skills than female, their emotional intelligence is better.

The current study did not find any significant gender differences for creativity as well as emotional intelligence. The reasons could be unequal proportion of female and males in the study. A study by Meshkat & Nejati, (2017) stated that there exist no gender differences in female and males on the scores of overall emotional intelligence but gender differences were found in domains of emotional intelligences. Another reason for no differences could be the social change that gives females more power to get access to education and jobs that males get (Meshkat & Nejati, 2017). The social roles and status of female and male is also becoming similar (Fischer et al., 2018), especially in metropolitan cities and because the sample of the current study consisted of individuals living in metropolitan cities the individual differences were not significant. According to Matud et al. (2007), measuring variables such as creativity are a complex matter as it involves multiple personal, professional, social and cultural factors and the differences among females and males will keep on undergoing changes as the societies change over time.

CONCLUSION

The current study assessed the relationship between creativity and emotional intelligence. There exists a moderate positive correlation between creativity and emotional intelligence. A positive correlation also exists between creativity and the 4 domains of emotional

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intelligence, perception, understanding emotions of self, understanding emotions of others and utilization of emotions. The study also assessed how gender interact with creativity and emotional intelligence.

Young adults constitute precious resources of India as they are characterized by growth and development. During this period, they are influenced by various intrinsic and extrinsic factors affecting their health and safety. Nearly 10-30% of them suffer from health impacting conditions and behaviours and hence the study will help to make all realise that there is a need of public health professions and policy making (Sunitha, 2014). According to their survey, only 41% of young adults in India believe that it is good to get support for mental health problems (UNICEF Report Spotlights on the Mental Health Impact of COVID-19 in Children and Young People, n.d.). Hence the study will help to stress on the fact that mental health interventions, management workshops and seminars, presence of psychologist at every place, integrations of mental health in general and primary care services are the need of the hour in India. In such condition, recognizing, achieving and maintaining good mental health requires building and strengthening protective factors like emotional intelligence and creativity and implementing strategies for their development that will boost the mental health of individuals (About Mental Health Issues, n.d.).

Strategies and interventions to improve emotional intelligence led to desirable work-related outcomes, academic achievements and employability, increases self-awareness and self-efficacy and remain emotionally functioning (Pool & Qualter, 2012). Coaching skills, conflict management, self-efficacy training, social relationship building are some interventions to improve emotional intelligence which should be employed among young adults. More such interventions which are specifically based on emotional intelligence, have a conceptual framework and are using exercises based on scientific evidence are needed to fulfil the need of improvement in emotional intelligence (Kotsou et al., 2018). Integrative body mind training programs are proven to improve performance related to creativity, divergent thinking task, and yielded better emotional regulation (Ding et al., 2014). Such training programmes need to be implemented for young adults to prosper in life and help to maintain good quality of life.

Besides the contributions of the study, there are a few limitations. Firstly, the study uses self-reports measures that would make the participants respond in a highly desirable way, also creativity being measured by a scale cannot assess true creativity as that assessed by experimental methods. Secondly, the measure for emotional intelligence used in the current study was developed in 1998, further researchers could use newer measures. Thirdly, the sample was restricted majorly to Mumbai and Bangalore and was selected through non-probability sampling method. The sample size for the ancillary observations was not equal. Another limitation was that other intervening variables like self-efficacy, resilience, locus of control, social support etc. could be measured to see their impact on the relationship of these variables.

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Conflict of Interest

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