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Research Paper



Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence, Self-Criticism, Depression, Anxiety and Stress in Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the current study is to assess the relationship between Emotional Intelligence, Self-criticism, depression, anxiety and stress among young adults. The study also assesses whether there are significant differences in gender with respect to emotional intelligence, self-criticism, depression, anxiety and stress. A sample of 159 young adults (Male =79, Female =80) aged between 18-25 years participated in the study. The Functions of Self-Criticizing/Attacking Scale (FSCS), Schutte self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT), Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale - 21 Items (DASS-21) were used to study the variables in the study. Pearson's correlation coefficient and independent sample t-test were used for statistical analysis of data. The findings indicated that there was a significant correlation between emotional intelligence, self-criticism, depression, anxiety and stress. The results also indicated that there were no gender differences between the variables. Implications were discussed.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Self-Criticism, Depression, Anxiety, Stress, Young Adults

well-known idea that has recently gained attention in the fields of science, business, education, and other sectors is emotional intelligence. It is the capacity to perceive, communicate, and comprehend one's own and other people's feelings. Until people grow to greater degrees of self-actualization and self-transcendence, when they realize their full potential and motivate others to do the same, they must manage and control their own and others' emotions and demonstrate empathy. In recent years, a major effort has been made to cultivate emotional talents through software, mobile applications, serious games, virtual and augmented reality due to the rapid advancement of technology. Emotional intelligence can be trained through programs and techniques. (Drigas, A. S., & Papoutsi, C, 2018)

Salovey & Mayer first used the phrase "emotional intelligence" to describe the skill to be able to distinguish between one's own feelings and those of other people, behave accordingly, and do so. Goleman holds a five-dimension approach to emotional intelligence that includes self-awareness (self-awareness), control over one's own feelings (self-management), self- motivation, empathy, and social awareness. He defines emotional

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intelligence as the capacity to understand one's own feelings, empathize with others' feelings, and plan to enrich experiences. The interest in the concept of emotional intelligence has dramatically increased in the past few decades.

When we are talking about emotional intelligence, a lot of other aspects come into the picture. The five components of emotional intelligence according to Goleman EQ theory are self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. There are many other constructs that are linked to emotional intelligence. A study conducted by Senyuva et al,.2014 examined the Relationship between self-compassion and emotional intelligence in nursing students. The population of the research consisted of all undergraduate students (571 students) from 2010-2011. The scales used to obtain the data were Selfcompassion Scale and Emotional Intelligence Assessment Scale. Results have shown that there exists a correlation between self-compassion and emotional intelligence. This paper also mentions that self-compassion is negatively associated with self-criticism. Another study titled "The relationship of compassion and self-compassion with personality and emotional intelligence" conducted by Fabio et.al., 2020 establishes the same relationship. In one of their studies, where they examined the relationship between both compassion and selfcompassion, personality traits (Big Five model), and trait EI dimensions, they found that compassion is significantly related to emotional intelligence. One's physical appearance, behavior, interior thoughts and feelings, personality, and intellectual qualities are just a few examples of the many elements of oneself that can be subject to self-criticism. (Gilbert, 2000, 2007). Self-criticism can make people feel in control and "beaten down." Research reveals that the pathogenic aspects of self-criticism may be fueled by the intensity of negative emotions, including (self) wrath, disdain, and contempt (Whelton and Greenberg, 2005). In the past 20 years, a variety of psychological disorders, such as mood disorders, social anxiety, self-harm, anger and aggression, and post-traumatic stress disorder, have been linked to self-criticism. These disorders include mood disorders (Blatt and Zuroff, 1992; Gilbert, 2000; Teasdale and Cox, 2001), anger and aggression (Gilbert and Miles, 2000; Tangney and Dearing, 2002), and post-traumatic stress disorder (Brewin, 2003). Additionally, intense self-criticism that starts young predicts eventual psychological issues (Zuroff et al., 1994).

Joeng and turner conducted a study on the "Mediators Between Self-Criticism and Depression: Fear of Compassion, Self-Compassion, and Importance to Others". The part we need to focus on is the role of self-compassion as a potential mediator between self-criticism and depression. The study tests the possibility of self-compassion leading to people being self-critical and resulting in depression. Even though self-compassion has been shown to be negatively correlated with self-criticisms (Gilbert & Procter, 2006; Neff, Rude, & Kirkpatrick, 2007) there seems to be some overlap between the two concepts, these constructs differ from each other. The results of the study indicated that fear of self-compassion, but not fear of compassion from others, as well as self-compassion and importance are significant mediators between self- criticism and depression. Here, the role of self-criticism comes into play.

The focus of this paper is to explore the relationship between emotional intelligence, self-criticism, and mental health problems like depression, anxiety, and stress. Emotional intelligence has also been defined as what the individual contributes to the world with an effective self-management, how much sensitivity the person has towards their own opinions and emotions as well as others, whether they have a developed inter-relationship and the

willingness to do a self-criticism in order to find a solution to their personal, developmental and emotional problems (Hamachek D, 2000). The aim here is to emphasize that self-criticism is an aspect of emotional intelligence. Self-criticism can help a person to come up with a solution to their problems. But how much can self-criticism be helpful?

Since Selye used the term "stress" for the first time in his physiological and biological study, it has been the topic of scholarly controversy. The body's general response to any unpleasant stimulus was the original definition of stress. Later, the idea was honed by separating the terms "stressor" and "stress response." A stressor is a stimulation that endangers equilibrium, and the stress response is the body's response to that stimulus in an effort to restore balance (Chrousos, 2009). Cannon was the first to use the word "homeostasis" (1932). He proposed in his studies that several physiological variables, including blood pressure, blood sugar, and intracellular osmolarity, have a preferred setpoint and that a deviation from this set-point is countered by physiological reactions intended to restore the optimal level. Anxiety is part of everyday life. Almost everyone faces anxiety on day-to-day basis. Anxiety is a mood that includes feelings of dread about impending events and is characterized by an uncomfortable state of inner conflict. In contrast to fear, which is defined as the emotional reaction to a present threat, anxiety is characterized as the anticipation of a future threat. Rumination, physical problems, and pacing back and forth are frequent signs of anxiety.

Anxiety is a state of unease and anxiety that is typically misdirected and generalized as an overreaction to a situation that is only perceptually dangerous. Muscle tension, restlessness, exhaustion, trouble breathing, abdominal tightness, motion sickness, and attention issues are frequently present as well. Fear and anxiety are intimately related, (Chand SP et al., 2022). A study by Gilbert et.al.,2007 on "Feeling safe and content: A specific affect regulation system? Relationship to depression, anxiety, stress, and self-criticism". The study found that safe/content positive affect had the highest negative correlations with depression, anxiety and stress, self-criticism, and insecure attachment. While all these studies support the connections between Emotional intelligence, self-criticism and mental health problems like depression, stress and anxiety (which are the focus of this paper) there are limitations in the existing literature. There has not been a clear relationship established between these variables. Also, the lack of knowledge about these variables in the Indian context further puts the emphasis on the need to explore these constructs.

Research questions

- Is there a significant relationship between Emotional Intelligence, Self-criticism, depression, stress, and anxiety?
- Are there any gender differences present in males and females in Emotional Intelligence?
- Are there any gender differences present in males and females in Self-criticism?
- Is there any gender difference present in males and females in anxiety?
- Is there any gender difference present in males and females in stress?
- Is there any gender difference present in males and females in depression?

Objectives

• To study the relationship between Emotional Intelligence, Self-criticism, Depression, anxiety, and stress.

- To study the gender differences, present in males and females in emotional intelligence
- To study the gender differences, present in males and females in Self-Criticism.
- To study the gender differences, present in males and females in anxiety.
- To study the gender differences, present in males and females in stress.
- To study the gender differences, present in males and females in depression.

Hypotheses

- H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between Emotional Intelligence, Self-criticism, depression, stress and Anxiety.
- H_{02} : There are no gender differences present in males and females in Emotional intelligence.
- H_{03:} There are no gender differences present in males and female in Self-Criticism.
- H_{04} : There are no gender differences present in males and females in anxiety.
- H_{05} : There are no gender differences present in males and females in stress.
- H_{06} : There are no gender differences present in males and females in depression.

METHODOLOGY

The study used a descriptive survey method for data collection to study the relationship between Emotional Intelligence, Self-Criticism, Depression, Anxiety and Stress among young adults. The sample consisted of 159 participants aged between 18-25 years (79 males and 80 females). The data was collected using convenient sampling technique.

Tools Used

- The Functions Of Self-Criticizing/Attacking Scale (FSCS) This scale was developed by Gilbert, Clarke, Hempel, Miles and Irons (2004) to measure the functions of self-criticism. There are two subscales Self-Persecution and Self-Correction. It is a 21-item scale measuring both factors. The responses are given on a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from 0 = 'not at all like me', to 4 = 'extremely like me'). Cronbach alphas were .92 for correcting and persecuting respectively.
- Schutte self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) developed by Schuttle et.al., (1998) to assess emotional intelligence based on self-report responses to items. The scale has 33 items measured on a five-point scale ranging from 1-strongly disagrees to 5-strongly agree. The SSEIT has demonstrated high internal consistency with Cronbach's ranging from .87 to .90, and a two-week test-retest reliability coefficient of 0.78 (Schuttle et al, 1998)
- Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale 21 Items (DASS-21) The Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale 21 Items (DASS-21) is a set of three self-report scales designed to measure the emotional states of depression, anxiety, and stress. The reliability of DASS-21 showed that it has Cronbach's alpha values of 0.81, 0.89 and 0.78 for the subscales of depression, anxiety, and stress respectively.

Statistical Analysis

The results were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. IBM SPSS-2.0 was used for data analysis. Among descriptive statistics, mean and standard deviation were used; among the inferential statistics independent sample t-test and Pearson's correlation method was used to test the hypothesis.

RESULTS

The results are discussed hypothesis-wise as follows.

H01: There is no significant relationship between Emotional Intelligence, Self- criticism, depression, stress, and Anxiety.

Table 1: Showing the descriptive statistics and correlation between Emotional Intelligence

(EI), self-criticism (SC), anxiety, stress and depression among young adults.

Variables	n	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	
EI	159	122.3	10.51	-	27**	28**	26**	27**	
SC		32.8	14.27	27**	-	.63**	.59**	.70**	
Anxiety		14.5	9.92	28**	.63**	-	.80**	.81**	
Stress		15.4	8.63	26**	.59**	.80**	-	.75**	
Depression		13.1	9.67	27**	.70**	.81**	.75**	-	

^{**}p<0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of Emotional Intelligence, Self-criticism, Anxiety, Stress and Depression among young adults. The mean value for Emotional Intelligence was 122.3, Self-criticism was 32.8, Anxiety was 14.5, stress was 15.4 and depression was 13. The standard deviation for Emotional Intelligence was 10.5, Self-criticism was 14.27, Anxiety was 9.92, stress was 8.63 and depression was 9.67. These values indicate that the spread of scores away from the mean among the five variables was apparently more for Self-criticism, suggesting that there is more variation for Self-criticism among young adults. Pearson's correlation analysis revealed a low negative correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Self-Criticism (r =-.27, p<.01), indicating that more the Emotional intelligence an individual has, the less they will Self-criticize. Emotional Intelligence and Anxiety has low negative correlation (r = -.28, p<.01) which indicates that more an individual has Emotional Intelligence the less anxiety they will experience. It was found that Emotional Intelligence and Stress have a low negative correlation (r = .26, p<.01) indicating that the individual will experience less stress if they have more Emotional Intelligence. Furthermore, we also see that Emotional intelligence has low negative correlation with Depression (r = -.27, p<.01) indicating that the higher the emotional intelligence the less likely a person will experience depression. Meanwhile, Self-criticism was found to have a moderate positive correlation with anxiety (r=.63, p<.01), with stress (r =.59, p<.01), and a strong correlation with depression (r =.70, p<.01) indicating the more the person selfcriticizes, the more they are likely to experience anxiety, stress, and depression. As seen in existing literature, Anxiety is strongly correlated with both stress (r=.80, p<.01) and depression (r = .81, p<.01) indicating that the more an individual experiences anxiety, the more likely they are to experience stress and depression as well. And lastly, it was found that there is a strong correlation between stress and depression (r=.75, p<.01) indicating that the more stress an individual experiences the more likely they will face depression as well. Overall, the results indicate that there is a significant correlation between the variables and therefore, H₀₁ is rejected which states that there is no significant relationship between Emotional Intelligence, Self-criticism, depression, stress, and Anxiety

H02: There are no gender differences present in males and females in Emotional intelligence.

Table 2: Significance of difference in males and females in Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	p
Males	79	122.52	11.32	.149	.88
Females	80	122.26	10.14		

p < 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 2 shows the gender differences in Emotional Intelligence. The mean value for males was 122.42 with a standard deviation of 11.32. The mean value for females was 122.26 with a standard deviation of 10.14. To determine whether the observed difference in means is statistically significant for the population, a t-test was conducted. The calculated "t" value for Emotional Intelligence for males and females was found to be .14 with a corresponding "p" value of .88. Since this value is not statistically significant at 0.05 level, we accept hypothesis H_{02} which states that there are no gender differences present in males and females in Emotional intelligence.

H03: There are no gender differences present in males and female in Self-Criticism.

Table 3: Significance of difference in males and females in Self-criticism

Self-Criticism	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	р
Males	79	35.24	14.87	1.53	1.28
Females	80	31.58	10.14		

p<0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 3 shows the gender differences in Self-Criticism. The mean value for males was 35.24 with a standard deviation of 14.87. And the mean value for females was 31.58 with a standard deviation of 10.14. To determine whether the observed difference in means is statistically significant for the population, a t-test was conducted. The "t" value for Self-Criticism in males and females was found to be 1.53 with a corresponding "p" value of 1.28. Since this value is not statistically significant at 0.05 level, we accept the hypothesis H₀₃ which states that there are no gender differences present in males and female in Self-Criticism.

H04: There are no gender differences present in males and females in anxiety

Table 4: Significance of difference in males and females in Anxiety

Anxiety	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	р
Males	79	12.75	10.21	-1.64	.101
Females	80	15.49	9.69		

p<0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 4 shows the gender differences in Anxiety. The mean value for males was 12.75 with a standard deviation of 10.21. The mean value for females was 15.49 with a standard deviation of 9.69. To determine whether the observed difference in means is statistically significant for the population, a t-test was conducted. The "t" value for Anxiety in males and females was found to be -1.64 with a corresponding "p" value of .101. Since this value is not statistically significant at 0.05 level, we accept the hypothesis H_{04} which states that there are no gender differences present in males and females in anxiety.

H05: There are gender no differences present in males and females in Stress.

Table 5: Significance of difference in males and females in Stress

Stress	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	p
Males	79	13.35	10.81	-1.87	.065
Females	80	16.43	7.15		

p<0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 5 shows the gender differences in Stress. The mean value for males was 13.35 with a standard deviation of 10.81. The mean value for females was 16.43 with a standard deviation of 7.15. To determine whether the observed difference in means is statistically significant for the population, a t-test was conducted. The "t" value for Stress in males and females was found to be -1.87 with a corresponding "p" value of .065. Since this value is not statistically significant at 0.05 level, we accept the hypothesis H₀₅ which states that there are no gender differences present in males and females in Stress.

H06: There are gender differences present in males and females in Depression.

Table 6: Significance of difference in males and females in Depression

Depression	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	p
Males	79	11.20	11.25	-1.84	.067
Females	80	14.18	8.67		

p<0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 6 shows the gender differences in Depression. The mean value for males was 11.20 with a standard deviation of 11.25. The mean value for females was 14.18 with a standard deviation of 8.67. To determine whether the observed difference in means is statistically significant for the population, a t-test was conducted. The "t" value for Stress in males and females was found to be -1.84 with a corresponding "p" value of .067. Since this value is not statistically significant at 0.05 level, we accept the hypothesis H₀₆ which states that there æ no gender differences present in males and females in Depression.

Contrary to the results, Ahmad et al., (2009) found that gender differences are present where males have higher emotional intelligence as compared to females on some subscales of emotional intelligence i.e. Assertiveness, Independence, Stress Tolerance and Impulse Control. It suggests that men show more assertiveness, self-recognition about themselves, show more independence and management according to the situations than the women.

CONCLUSION

The following conclusions are drawn based on the research questions raised

- The results from the statistical analysis indicated that there is a low negative correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Self-criticism.
- There is a moderately positive correlation between self-criticism, anxiety and stress, and strong positive correlation between self-criticism and depression, suggesting that people who self-criticize are more likely to experience anxiety, stress, and depression.
- There is a strong correlation between anxiety, stress and depression.
- Furthermore, the results indicate that there are no significant difference present between males and females in the variables.

Implications

The present study has important implications for understanding the relationship between Emotional Intelligence, Self-Criticism, Depression, Anxiety and Stress. It also presents the need to study and explore the type of self-criticism and how it affects us in an Indian Context. New interventions can be made to tackle which kind of self-criticism affects us more adversely and enhance the emotional intelligence of people so they are less susceptible to depression, anxiety and stress

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Conflict of Interest

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