

Emotional Intelligence and Perceived Stress among College Students

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ABSTRACT

The aim of present study is to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and perceived stress among students. For the research a total of 150 (75 Boys and 75 girls) studying in different colleges of Shahada city of Nandurbar district in Maharashtra were selected using convenience sampling. Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS-SAN) by Dr. Arun Kumar Sing and Dr. Shruti Narain and Perceived Stress Scale by Sheldon Cohen were used for collecting data. Data was analyzed with descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation coefficient and t-test. The results indicate a negative correlation ($r = -0.72$) between emotional intelligence and perceived stress among students. It was also observed that there is a significant difference between students with high emotional intelligence and low emotional intelligence for perceived stress, students with high emotional intelligence experience less stress than the students with low emotional intelligence, also boys and girls perceive stress differently.

Keywords: *Emotional Intelligence, Perceived stress, Boy and Girl College Students*

Over the recent decades, the concept of emotional intelligence has gained widespread recognition. Given the continued impact of stress and emotional disturbances on students, it is crucial to explore whether a high level of emotional intelligence can effectively mitigate perceived stress. This study aims to evaluate the emotional intelligence and perceived stress levels of college students. Additionally, it seeks to investigate the correlation between emotional intelligence and perceived stress.

In 1990, Peter Salovey and John Mayer defined Emotional Intelligence as "the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to distinguish among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions." Dr. Daniel Goleman identified the components of EI as self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skill, which can collectively enhance an individual's ability to manage stress. For instance, self-awareness enables a person to recognize when stress is building up, while social skill facilitates effective communication of one's emotions.

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A growing body of evidence supports the idea that emotional abilities are interconnected with an individual's health and overall happiness. Mental health issues often stem from deficits in understanding and regulating emotions, underscoring the importance of giving more attention to emotional information. In the face of escalating competition and stress across various life stages, emotional challenges have become pronounced among students. Consequently, there is a pressing need to shift focus from traditional stress management techniques towards prioritizing the emotional well-being of students.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence has emerged as a crucial factor in predicting success across a spectrum of skills essential for building a prosperous career, encompassing leadership qualities, effective communication, and the adept handling of environmental stressors (Krishnakumar R, Lalitha S, 2014). Possessing a high level of emotional intelligence empowers college students to better manage their emotions, comprehend the feelings of others, and navigate challenges in both academic settings and life, fostering preparation for a successful career.

Research in the realm of emotional intelligence identifies four key components: the management and regulation of emotions, understanding and reasoning about emotions, assimilating basic emotional experiences, and perceiving and appraising emotions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Baggett, Sutarso, Sutarso & Tapia, 1996; Bernet, 1996; Finegan, 1998; Goleman, 1998; Langley, 2000).

Emotional intelligence plays a vital role in aiding students in overcoming mental health issues stemming from heightened competition and uncertainties. Substantial evidence suggests a direct correlation between emotional abilities and an individual's health and overall well-being. The prevalent behavioral issues among students, particularly those in the arts faculty with limited career opportunities and technical skills, are exacerbated by escalating competition, societal expectations, and challenges in employment and the economy. Recognizing and cultivating emotional intelligence can serve as a valuable resource for mitigating these challenges and promoting mental well-being among students.

Perceived Stress among Students

Perceived stress is the assessment of the extent to which life situations are perceived as burdensome, gauging their unpredictability, lack of control, and overall overwhelming nature. The current landscape of heightened competition and employment uncertainties exposes college students to a stressful lifestyle. While some students effectively navigate stressful life events, leveraging them as positive foundations for their career goals, others grapple with stress-induced physical, behavioral, and psychological challenges. These stress-related issues significantly impact academic performance and overall health, with extreme cases even manifesting suicidal tendencies, as indicated by Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India (2015), where college students accounted for 7% of the population that committed suicide.

Recent studies on stress among students highlight factors such as separation from family support, striving to achieve educational goals amid financial constraints, high personal expectations, time pressures, academic overload, examinations, competitions, and a lack of leisure activities as contributors to stress among college students.

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Additionally, research suggests that a moderate level of stress can serve as a motivational force for productivity and optimal performance. However, when stress surpasses an individual's coping capacity, it can have detrimental effects on both physical and psychological well-being, as noted by Asani M, Farouk Z, Gambo S. in 2016 and Sharp J, Theiler S. in 2018. This excessive stress may also be associated with risky behaviors, including smoking and drug abuse, as highlighted by Tavoracci MP, et al. in 2011. Therefore, understanding and managing stress levels are crucial for maintaining a healthy balance and promoting overall well-being among college students.

METHODOLOGY

Variable under Study

1. Independent Variable

- Emotional Intelligence
- Gender

2. Dependent Variable

- Perceived Stress

Objective of Study

1. To measure level of Emotional Intelligence among college students.
2. To measure level of Perceived Stress among college students.
3. To explore relationship between emotional intelligence and perceived stress among college students.
4. To study the relationship between emotional intelligence in high and low stress boys and girls students.

Hypothesis

1. There is a negative co-relation between emotional intelligence and perceived stress.
2. Students with high and low emotional intelligence differ significantly on perceived stress.
3. There is no significant difference between boys and girls on perceived stress.

Sample

A total of 150 students (75 Boys and 75 Girls) studying at UG and PG level of different colleges in Shahada taluka of Nandurbar district were selected using convenience sampling method.

Measuring Device

1. **Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS-SAN) by Dr. Arun Kumar Sing and Dr. Shruti Narain** was used for collecting data for emotional intelligence. The Scale consists of 31 items covering four areas i.e. Understanding Emotions, Understanding Motivation, Empathy and Handling Relations. Higher the score on the test higher is the Emotional Intelligence.
2. **The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) by Sheldon Cohen** was used to measure perceived stress among undergraduate arts students. The test consists of 10 questions based on how unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overloaded respondents find their lives. The scale also includes a number of direct queries about current levels of experienced stress. PSS scores are obtained by reversing responses to the four positively stated items (items 4, 5, 7, & 8) and then summing across all scale items.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

On the basis of results obtained on the test Persons correlation was calculated to study the relationship between emotional intelligence and perceived stress and results were recorded in table No.1. It can be observed that the correlation coefficient between emotional intelligence and perceived stress is -0.72 which is significant at 0.01 level. The result indicates that there is a significant negative relationship between emotional intelligence and stress. College students with high scores on emotional intelligence experience less stress in life as compared to students with less emotional intelligence. Hypothesis 1 is accepted.

Table No.1 Co-relation between Emotional Intelligence and Perceived Stress

Variables	N	r
Emotional Intelligence & Perceived Stress	150	-0.72**

***Significant at 0.01*

The collected data was analyzed by t test to find the mean difference of high and low emotional intelligence and stress among college students. The results are noted in table no.2.

Table No.2 Comparison between high and low emotional intelligence and perceived stress of College Students

Sr. No	Group	Variables	Mean	SD	t
1	High Emotional Intelligence	Perceived Stress	29.67	3.54	6.08**
2	Low Emotional Intelligence		34.35	4.64	

***Significant at 0.05*

Table No.2 presents the difference between the level of emotional intelligence and stress among college students. The results indicate the mean score of high emotional intelligence (M=29.67) is smaller than the low emotional intelligence students on stress (M=34.35) with SD=3.54 and SD=4.64 respectively. The t-value came out to be 6.08 which is extremely significant at 0.05 level.

This implies that students possessing high emotional intelligence encounter lower levels of stress due to their proficiency in empathy, emotional stability, relationship management, values, motivation, commitment, and altruistic behavior. Such students exhibit elevated levels of self-awareness, engage in self-development, and demonstrate self-motivation. These attributes assist college students in navigating challenges that contribute to heightened stress in their lives. Hypothesis 2 is accepted.

In Table No.3, results for difference in perceived stress among boys and girl’s college student is presented. The obtained results show the mean scores for boys M=29.66 is smaller than the mean score of girls M=35.04. The t-value was found to be 8.42 which is significant at 0.05.

Table No. 3 Difference between boys and girls students on stress.

Group	Variable	N	Mean	SD	t
Boys Undergraduate Students	Perceived Stress	75	29.66	26.01	8.42**
Girls Undergraduate Students		75	35.04	24.87	

***Significant at 0.05*

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The obtained results can be due to the reason that the factors causing stress among students such as competition, high career and personal expectation, educational goals, financial limitations, high personal expectations, academic overload, examinations and lack of leisure are slightly different for both boys and girls students.

It is important to note that stress levels can vary widely among individuals and are influenced by various factors such as personality, coping mechanisms, and life circumstances. While some studies suggest gender differences in stress responses, it's essential to avoid making broad generalizations. Stress is a subjective experience, and both boys and girls can face unique challenges that contribute to their individual stress levels. Boys and Girl students may experience and perceive different life events which causes stress for them. Hypothesis 3 is rejected.

CONCLUSION

1. Students with high scores on emotional intelligence perceive less stress in life as compared to students with less score on emotional intelligence.
2. Gender may play role in perception of stressful events as boys and girls experience have different perception of stress.
3. Factors like competition, personal and career expectation, academic pressure, interpersonal relations are contributing to high stress in students.
4. Students who are able to understand emotions, have good empathy, are self-motivated and self-aware perceive life events as less stressful.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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