

A Study on the Effectiveness of Emotional Intelligence - Based Intervention Programme on Anxiety among Adolescents

Sabina Mandal^{1*}, Dr. Jayashree Mishra²

ABSTRACT

Anxiety disorders are significant concern among adolescents, affecting their social, academic and emotional well-being. As stated by the WHO, about one-seventh of the adolescents in the age range of 10 - 19 years struggle with a mental illness, with anxiety disorders being the most prevalent. During this critical phase of development, adolescents face unique challenges that can contribute to high anxiety levels. However, by learning effective coping strategies, such as understanding their emotional patterns, and developing emotional intelligence (EI), they can empower themselves to manage anxiety and develop a stronger sense of well-being. By addressing anxiety and developing healthy coping mechanisms, including emotional intelligence, adolescents can unlock a brighter future, characterized by increased confidence, better relationships, and greater academic and professional success. The primary goal of this research is to know the gender difference in anxiety of adolescents. It also examines the impact of intervention on anxiety of adolescents. The sample consists of one sixty adolescents (male-80 and female-80). The questionnaires consisting of Demographic information form, Kuppuswamy socioeconomic scale and Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale are administered individually on the subjects at pre-intervention and post-intervention. A subsample of eighty subjects received a one-month intervention program aimed at reducing anxiety. The results indicate a statistically significant difference in anxiety among adolescents. Female adolescents have higher anxiety level than male adolescents. It also reveals that the intervention has a positive impact on reducing anxiety levels among adolescents. The findings suggest that interventions can be a valuable adjunct to anxiety management strategies, offering a promising avenue for mitigating the debilitating effects of anxiety. The implications of this research underscore the value of developing and providing interventions to the adolescents' mental health concerns.

Keywords: *Anxiety, Adolescent, Emotional Intelligence*

The adolescent years are a critical period of significant physical, emotional, and social changes (Erikson, 1968). During this phase, young individuals often encounter challenges that can impact their mental health and wellbeing. Two interconnected concerns that have gained considerable attention in the past few years are EI and anxiety among adolescents.

¹Ph.D. Scholar, Fakir Mohan University, Balasore, Odisha, India.

²Associate Professor, Fakir Mohan Autonomous College, Balaosre, Odisha, India.

*Corresponding Author

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Emotional intelligence (EI) emphasizes on the ability to understand one's own emotions, others' emotions, to recognize it and to utilize emotional awareness to navigate one's thought and behaviour (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Developing EI is very essential during adolescence, as it helps them to effectively manage stress (Lopes & Salovey, 2004), build strong relationships (Goleman, 1995), and make informed decisions. Anxiety, on the contrary, is a pervasive mental health concern impacting millions of adolescents globally (Polanczyk et al., 2014). Characterized by feelings of worry, nervousness, fear and anxiety can impact daily functioning, academic achievement, and overall well-being (Hale et al., 2011).

Research findings suggest that there is a reciprocal relationship between emotional intelligence and anxiety in adolescents. Individuals with lower EI tend to experience higher levels of anxiety (Schulze et al., 2013), which can further exacerbate emotional regulation difficulties. Conversely, adolescents with higher EI are better equipped to manage anxiety, foster resilience, and maintain optimal mental health (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004).

Rationale

During adolescence period, young individuals are vulnerable to various mental health concerns, including anxiety. Anxiety disorders are one of the most pervasive mental health issues impacting adolescents, with estimated prevalence rates ranging from 10% to 20% (Polanczyk et al., 2014).

Emotional intelligence (EI) has appeared as a key factor in adolescent mental health, with research suggesting that EI is inversely related to anxiety (Schulze et al., 2013). Adolescents those who have high emotional intelligence (EI) tend to exhibit better emotional regulation, interpersonal skills, and coping strategies, which can alleviate the risk of anxiety (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Despite the established link between EI and anxiety, there is a need for further research to elucidate the complex interplay between these constructs in adolescents. Specifically, it is crucial to investigate how emotional intelligence relates to anxiety levels. This study focuses on addressing the research gap by examining the relationship between EI and anxiety among adolescents. It also emphasizes on using EI as an intervention in reducing anxiety in adolescents. The outcome of this study will provide insights in developing evidence-based interventions targeting EI and anxiety in adolescents, ultimately promoting optimal mental health and wellbeing in this vulnerable population.

Objectives

- This study seeks to identify the gender-based differences in anxiety among adolescents.
- To assess the level of anxiety among adolescents before intervention in the experimental and control group.
- This study examines the impact of intervention on reducing anxiety in adolescents.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

This study comprised of 160 adolescents (Male-80 and Female-80). This study focused on adolescents within 17 to 19 years age bracket at Fakir Mohan Autonomous College, BIs, Odisha. To collect data, a purposive sampling method was adopted to identify and select suitable participants. The questionnaires consisting of demographic information form, Kuppuswamy Socioeconomic Scale (2022), Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale (1959) are

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administered individually on the subjects at pre-intervention and post-intervention condition. A subsample of eighty subjects received a one-month EI- based intervention program aimed at reducing anxiety. Scoring was conducted in accordance with the standardized guidelines provided by the inventory manuals and the data were statistically interpreted through SPSS.

Procedure

The researcher engaged in one-on-one interactions personally with the participants (the students of Fakir Mohan Autonomous College, Balasore) and collected data in their college building. The participants were requested to complete the questionnaire sets which included a demographic information form. They received a detailed explanation of the study's objectives, confidentiality issues and instructions about the tests. No time limits were imposed. The scoring process was completed in adherence to the inventory manual guidelines.

RESULTS

Table No. 1 t-values indicating differences in anxiety levels between male and female adolescents

Variable	Gender	Mean	SD	t	P
Anxiety	Male	15.65	8.01	3.70	.01
	Female	20.11	7.19		

Table No. 2 Comparison of level of anxiety among adolescents between Control and Experimental groups in pre intervention condition.

Variable	Mean (Control Group)	SD (Control Group)	Mean (Experimental Group)	SD (Experimental Group)	t value	df	P
Anxiety	16.7	8.1	19.3	7.5	1.8	158	p>.05 (NS)

Table No.3 Comparison of pre-intervention and post-intervention scores between Control Group and Experimental Group.

Anxiety	Test Groups	Mean	SD	t- value	P
Control Group	Pre-intervention	16.7	8.1	1.0	.29
	Post-intervention	18.24	11.4		
Experimental Group	Pre-intervention	19.3	7.5	2.4	.01
	Post-intervention	16.7	9.1		

Data Analysis

- Table-1 highlights a statistically significant gender difference in anxiety levels of adolescents.
- Table-2 illustrates no significant difference between the control group and experimental groups prior to intervention.
- Table-3 indicates no statistically significant difference between pre-test scores and post test scores of control group but it indicates a statistically significant difference between pre-test scores and post test scores of experimental group.

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Based on the above outcomes, it is evident that there is a significant gender difference in anxiety of adolescents. It is also found that EI-intervention has a positive impact on reducing anxiety levels among adolescents.

DISCUSSION

The results indicate notable differences in anxiety levels between male and female adolescents. These findings align with existing research, which has persistently revealed that female adolescents generally experience more anxiety compared to male adolescents (Hale et al., 2011; Polanczyk et al., 2014). These differences may be related to various factors, including social, cultural, hormonal changes, and coping mechanisms. The results also demonstrate the efficacy of emotional intelligence as an intervention in reducing anxiety levels among adolescents. The findings reveal that emotional intelligence has a positive impact on anxiety reduction.

CONCLUSION

This presents study gives a valuable insight into the differences in anxiety levels of adolescents and the effectiveness of EI as an intervention in reducing anxiety. The findings suggest that female adolescents experience more anxiety compared to male adolescents. Moreover, the results demonstrate that emotional intelligence can be a valuable tool in reducing anxiety levels among adolescents.

Implication

The implications are significant, highlighting the need for strategic interventions that address the specific needs of female adolescents. Furthermore, the findings suggest that emotional intelligence should be considered as a viable treatment option for adolescents experiencing anxiety. Further studies are needed to examine the sustained impact of EI- interventions and identifying the specific components of emotional intelligence that contribute to anxiety reduction.

Limitation

The study has relatively small sample size, which may not accurately reflect the larger adolescent population. Future research should strive to include larger and more diverse participants. The emotional intelligence-based intervention was conducted over a relatively short period. Future studies should explore longer-term interventions and follow-up assessments to examine sustained effects. The study did not control for extraneous variables, such as participants' prior experiences with emotional intelligence or anxiety, which may have influenced the outcome. The outcomes of this study may not generalize to other populations, such as younger or older adolescents, or adolescents with different cultural backgrounds. The present study has not explored potential moderators, such as personality types or coping strategies, which may impact the EI- anxiety dynamic.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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