

Self Esteem and General Well Being in Adolescents with Low vs High Emotional Competence

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ABSTRACT

An essential component of youths' successful development is learning to appropriately respond to emotions, including the ability to recognize, identify and describe one's feelings. Emotional competence refers to one's ability to express or release one's inner feelings or emotions. Self-esteem reflects a person's overall subjective emotional evaluation of his or her own worth. It is a judgment of oneself as well as an attitude toward the self. General well being refers to the harmonious functioning of the physical as well as psychological aspects of the personality, giving satisfaction to the self and benefit to the society. The present study focuses on the self esteem and general well being in adolescents with low vs high emotional competence. For this purpose, first of all emotional competence scale was administered on 260 adolescents within the age range of 15-18 years, to identify the low emotionally competent and high emotionally competent adolescents. After the sample selection of 152 subjects (76 low emotionally competent and 76 high emotionally competent) Rosenberg's Self-esteem scale and General well being scale were administered. Results indicate that high emotionally competent adolescents have high self-esteem and better general well being than low emotionally competent adolescents.

Keywords: *Emotional competence, Self esteem and General well being*

Emotional competence refers to one's ability to express or release one's inner feelings or emotions. It implies an ease around others and determines one's ability to effectively and successfully lead and express. The concept of emotional competence is rooted in understanding emotions as normal, useful aspects of being human. The suppression of emotion can be useful to avoid injury, embarrassment and arrest, but teaching people to suppress their inappropriate emotions is part of normal society. Suppressing other people's emotions to avoid conflict or discomfort in oneself can lead to controlling them, which may be unhealthy for all concerned. Emotionally competent people do express emotions

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Received: July 29, 2017; Revision Received: September 23, 2017; Accepted: September 30, 2017

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appropriate to the situation, to their needs and to others, and they attempt not to suppress appropriate emotions, reactions and communications of feelings by others.

Emotional competence can lead to improved health through avoiding stress that would otherwise result from suppressing emotions. It can also lead to improved relationships since inappropriate emotions are less likely to be expressed and appropriate behaviour is not avoided through fear of triggering some emotion. The adolescent years mark an essential time to understand the development of emotional competence. Adolescents experience more frequent and intense emotions than younger or older individuals (Silk, Steinberg and Morris, 2003), perhaps due to neurobiological changes.

In the study of Cheung, Cheung and Hue (2015), emotional intelligence appeared to be a strong determinant of self-esteem and explain away the positive effect of social competence on self-esteem. A study by Ahmad, Imran and Mehmood (2009) showed significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and self esteem. The findings of Coetzee, Martins, Basson and Muller (2006) suggest that emotional competence is closely related to the affective component of self-esteem, particularly one's sense of psychological well-being which is related to feelings of self-worth.

Self-esteem

Self-esteem is an emotional response; a generalized feeling about the self that is more or less positive. "Self-esteem is a general personality characteristic; not a momentary attitude or an attitude specific to individual situations. Self-esteem is a personal judgment of worthiness" (Pervin, 1985). Self-esteem is appreciating one's own worth and importance and having the character to be accountable for oneself and to act responsibly towards others (Podesta, 2001). It doesn't mean seeing oneself as the greatest person in the world, it is not the same as being conceited; but it likes one self, for the most part, as he or she is. It is an affective or emotional aspect of self and generally refers to how one feels about or how one value oneself. Self esteem is a term in psychology to reflect a person's overall evaluation or appraisal of own worth.

Self-esteem is defined as "how much value people place on themselves" (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger and Vohs ,2003). Several previous studies have linked high self-esteem to many positive outcomes, including positive peer relationships (Goldstein, Davis-Kean, and Eccles, 2005), healthy social relationships (Murray, Holmes and Griffin, 2000; Neyer and Asendorpf, 2001; Trzesniewski, Donnellan and Robins, 2003) healthy subjective well-being (Trzesniewski, Donnellan and Robins, 2003) and positive perceptions by peers (Robins, Hendin and Trzesniewski, 2001). Subsequently, low self-esteem has been linked to a number of problematic outcomes, including antisocial behaviour such as bullying, depressive symptoms and health problems (Ma, 2002; Veselska, Madarasova Geckova, Orosova, Gajdosova, Van Dijk and Reijneveld, 2009). Among the many changes experienced during adolescence, self-esteem shifts from rather high during early adolescence to lower in middle adolescence (Kling, Hyde, Showers and Buswell, 1999; Baldwin and Hoffmann, 2002;

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Impett, Sorsoli, Schooler, Henson and Tolman, 2008), and these developmental processes of self-esteem are different for males and females (Baldwin and Hoffmann, 2002; Robins and Trzesniewski, 2005). Males more frequently have higher self-esteem than females during adolescence (Bolognini, Plancherel, Bettschart and Halfon, 1996; Robins and Trzesniewski, 2005). It is generally believed that there are many benefits to having a positive view of the self. Those who have high self-esteem are presumed to be psychologically happy and healthy (Branden, 1994) whereas those with low self-esteem are believed to be psychologically distressed and perhaps even depressed (Tennen and Affleck, 1993).

General well being

General well being is a probably one of the most important aspects of human beings and state of general well being can be attained in terms of healthy body with healthy mind . General well being as a construct refers to the harmonious functioning of physical as well as psychological aspects of the personality, giving satisfaction to the society (Siwach, 2000). According to Angner (2008), even the philosophical literature refers to the 'simple notion' of well being (i.e. a life going well) in a variety of ways, including a person's good, benefit, advantage, interest, welfare, happiness, quality of life and thriving.

Well being is a general term for the condition of an individual or group, for example their social, economic, psychological, spiritual or medical state. High well being means that in some sense, the individual or group's experience is positive, while low well being is associated with the negative. Well being is a dynamic concept that includes subjective, social, and psychological dimensions as well as health-related behaviours. Broadly, well being has been defined from two perspectives. The clinical perspective defines well being as the absence of negative conditions and the psychological perspective defines well being as the prevalence of positive attributes. Well being generally includes global judgments of life satisfaction and feelings ranging from depression to joy.

Adolescents with higher than average psychological well being are regarded as more successful in meeting situational demands and stressors while a deficit in psychological well being can mean a lack of success and the occurrence of emotional problems (Visser and Routledge, 2007). Du, Li, Chi, Zhao and Zhao (2015) indicated that relational self esteem was positively associated with psychological well being. Norem and Chang (2002) observed a positive correlation between optimism, self-esteem and positive affect. Emotional competence is generally hypothesized to be a good predictor of one's sense of subjective well-being (Zeidner and Olnick-Shemesh, 2010). Carmeli, Yitzhak-Halevy and Weisberg (2009) conducted a study, the results of four hierarchical regression models provide, in general, support for the positive association between emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing components self-esteem, life satisfaction and self-acceptance.

It is evident from the above discussion that the emotional competence is an important and vital concept that is highly probable to be related with self esteem and well being of individuals. High self esteem and general well being are variables which have a positive

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bearing on the adolescents' experience. Emotional control is required to be able to respond to everyday life situations in a competent manner. Emotional competence is developable and its enhancement is extremely desirable so as to equip the individuals to meet life challenges. Therefore, in the present study, an attempt was made to find out the self esteem and general well being in adolescents with low and high emotional competence.

Objective

- To study and compare the self esteem and general well being in adolescents with low and high emotional competence.

METHODOLOGY

Design

A two group design was employed in the present study. Group I comprised of adolescents with low emotional competence and Group II consisted of adolescents with high emotional competence. Each group consisted of 76 subjects with a total of 152 subjects.

Sample

For the purpose of the present study, first of all emotional competence scale was administered on 260 adolescents 10th, 11th and 12th standards within the age range of 15-18 years. To identify the high emotionally competent and low emotionally competent adolescents, Q_1 and Q_3 were calculated and taken as cut off points. Thus a purposive sample of 152 subjects (76 low emotionally competent and 76 high emotionally competent) were selected with mean age of 16.21. Both male and female students were included. The data was collected from the various schools of Rohtak city.

Tools

- 1. Emotional Competence Scale:** Emotional Competence Scale has been developed by Sharma and Bhardwaj in 2007. The inventory consists of 30 items measuring the following five competencies i.e. (a) adequate depth of feeling (ADF), (b) adequate expression and control of emotions (AEC), (c) ability to function with emotions (AFE), (d) ability to cope with problem emotions (ACPE) and (e) enhancement of positive emotions (EPE). All these items are incomplete statements and each one carrying 5 options and corresponding values are 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 from upper to lower end. The total of five competencies will provide the score for emotional competence. A high score is indicative of higher emotional competence. The test-retest reliability of the scale is 0.74 and split half reliability is 0.76. The validity of this scale has been determined with factor A and C of 16 personality factor questionnaire and was found to be 0.64 and 0.69 respectively.
- 2. Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale:** The Rosenberg self esteem scale was developed by Morris Rosenberg (1965). The Rosenberg self esteem scale is a 10 item self report of global self esteem. It consists of 10 statements related to overall feelings of self acceptance. The items are answered on a four point scale ranging from strongly agree to

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strongly disagree. Higher scores indicate a higher level of self esteem. The internal consistency of this scale is 0.78 and Cronbach alpha is 0.77.

- 3. General Well Being Scale:** General Well Being scale (Kalia and Deswal, 2011) comprises of 55 items related to four dimensions. In the present scale the authors have taken the four dimensions of well being (a) Physical Well Being (b) Emotional Well Being (c) Social Well Being (d) School Well Being. It is a self reporting five point scale. Items of scale are in question form demanding information for each in either of five options i.e. 'Strongly Disagree', 'Disagree', 'Undecided', 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree'. The response categories to be scored for positive items is 'Strongly Disagree-1', 'Disagree-2', 'Undecided-3', 'Agree-4' and 'Strongly Agree-5'. In case of negative items the scoring procedure is to be reversed. The total range of scores varies from 55 to 275. Therefore, higher scores indicate the enhanced sense of general well being and vice-versa. Coefficient of reliability was determined by the split half method and applying Spear- Brown correlation formula and it was found 0.99. The construct validity was worked out by calculating the correlation of different subscales of general well being scale with total scale score. The correlations ranged from 0.63 to 0.71.

Personal Data Sheet

This was administered to seek information regarding the socio-demographic information e.g. education level, SES, type of family, occupation of parents, birth order, number of siblings etc. to attain maximum equation of the subjects.

Procedure

After establishing rapport with the subject, detailed instructions for filling out the scales was given. First of all, emotional competence scale was administered on 260 adolescents within the age range of 15-18 years. Q_1 and Q_3 were calculated and cases below and above these limits were identified as the low emotionally competent and high emotionally competent adolescents respectively. After the sample selection of 152 subjects (76 low emotionally competent and 76 high emotionally competent) Rosenberg's Self-esteem scale and General well being scale were administered. Subjects filled the two scales. After collecting the data, the scoring was done as per the manuals. The data was tabulated and subjected to statistical analyses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study aimed at assessing and comparing the self esteem and general well being in adolescents with low vs high emotional competence. For this purpose mean scores of both the groups (i.e. low emotional competent and high emotional competent adolescents) were calculated and t-test was applied for testing the significance of difference. The mean scores and t-values of two groups on self esteem and general well being have been depicted in Table 1.

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Table I: Summary table showing the Mean Scores, S.D.'s and t-values of low emotionally competent and high emotionally competent adolescents (N= 76 in each group)

Variables	Level of Emotional Competence		t-value
	Low	High	
Self esteem	16.88±3.11	19.03±3.23	4.19**
Total Well Being	164.99±12.75	168.91±7.55	2.31**
Physical Well Being	36.86±5.81	40.38±4.22	4.29**
Emotional Well Being	42.19±4.80	43.55±4.30	1.85
Social Well Being	54.58±7.99	56.63±5.86	1.82
School Well Being	31.31±6.38	28.03±6.19	3.24**

Values expressed as mean ± 1 standard deviation

***significant at $p < .01$*

From table I, it is concluded that there are significant mean differences ($t = 4.19$; $p < .01$) between both the groups on the scores of self esteem. From the mean values it can be indicated that low emotionally competent adolescents have low self esteem (mean=16.88) and high emotionally competent adolescents have high self esteem (mean=19.03). This implies that emotionally competent people do express emotions appropriate to the situation, to their needs and to others, and they attempt not to suppress appropriate emotions, reactions and communications of feelings by others. Self-esteem is an emotional response; a generalized feeling about the self that is more or less positive. Thus, adolescents with high emotional competence have high self esteem and place high value on themselves. There are some studies in the line of present results. Ahmad, Imran and Mehmood (2009) showed significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and self esteem. Similarly, Cheung, Cheung and Hue (2015) reported emotional intelligence appeared to be a strong determinant of self-esteem and explain away the positive effect of social competence on self-esteem. At a psychological level, higher trait emotional competence is associated with greater well-being and higher self esteem (Schutte, Malouff, Simunek, McKenley and Hollander, 2002) as well as a lower risk to develop psychological disorders (Gross and Munoz, 1995) or burn-out (Mikolajczak, Menil and Luminet, 2007). Accordingly, emotional competence is likely to underlie social competence and mediate the contribution of self esteem to well being.

Table I also showed that on total well being, significant mean differences ($t = 2.31$; $p < .01$) are found between both the groups. Low emotionally competent adolescents are low on total well being (mean=164.99) and high emotionally competent adolescents are high on total well being (mean=168.91). Thus it concludes that emotional competence leads to improved health. Well being is highly related with contentment, happiness and satisfaction with life experiences. It is a combination a positive affect (in absence of negative affect) and general life satisfaction. Adolescent well being is a relatively broad concept referring to a good or satisfactory condition of existence- a state characterized by health, happiness and prosperity. It refers to the functioning of an adolescent at a high level of behavioural and emotional adjustment and adaptiveness and not merely an absence of illness (Reber and Reber, 2001).

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Caroli and Sagone (2014) reported that highly efficient adolescents were more likely to be able to manage their social context and to develop a sense of personal improvement in various aspects of self and a positive self-image than lowly efficient ones. Adolescents with higher psychological well being are regarded as more successful in meeting situational demands and stressors while a deficit in psychological well being can mean a lack of success and the occurrence of emotional problems (Visser and Routledge, 2007).

Kulshrestha and Sen (2006) indicated significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and subjective well being. The persons with high emotional intelligence are happier and more successful in maintaining their relations, are capable of striking a balance between emotion and reason. Emotional competence is generally hypothesized to be a good predictor of one's sense of subjective well-being (Zeidner and Olnick-Shemesh, 2010).

The two groups were further compared on four dimensions of general well being. These sub variables are physical well being, emotional well being, social well being and school well being. Table I also showed that there are significant mean differences between the two groups on its two dimensions i.e. physical well being ($t= 4.29$; $p<.01$) and school well being ($t=3.24$; $p<.01$). From the mean it can be values concluded that low emotionally competent adolescents have low physical well being (mean=36.86) and high emotionally competent adolescents have high physical well being (mean=40.38). The adolescent years mark an essential time to understand the development of emotional competence. Adolescents experience more frequent and intense emotions than younger or older individuals (Silk, Steinberg and Morris, 2003), perhaps due to neurobiological changes. Thus an emotionally competent individual expresses his/her emotions appropriately and avoids stress that in turn positively affects the physical well being of the individual.

Interestingly, on school well being subscale, low emotionally competent adolescents are significantly high on school well being. It indicates that at school adolescents feel happy and enjoy their time because at school they have their friends, their peer group with whom they feel comfortable. Adolescence is the age, where peer group is more important than anything else. Further, this could also be due to mediating role of other psychological variables, such as personality traits, parenting styles and family educational styles.

No significant differences were found on the other two dimensions of well being i.e. emotional well being and social well being. Subjects of both the groups have control over emotions and experience their connections with others and the strength of those relationships to an almost equal degree.

Thus in a nut shell, emotional competence is what results and enhances an individual's self esteem and helps them attain an overall increase in their quality of life or well being. According to Daniel Goleman (1998), emotional competence is a learned ability. It is an essential component of youths' successful development. Thus the present study implicates that for the betterment or successful development of adolescents, emotional competence is

required. There is a need to develop the interactive and responsive environment for making them emotionally competent.

Acknowledgments

The author appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest: The author declared no conflict of interest.

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How to cite this article: Kohli S, Malik A, & Rani V (2017). Self Esteem and General Well Being in Adolescents with Low vs High Emotional Competence. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, Vol. 4, (4), DIP:18.01.146/20170404, DOI:10.25215/0404.146