

Test Anxiety, Emotional Intelligence and Academic Achievement among Students at the Higher Secondary Level**Bilal Ahmad Lone**Ph.D. Research Scholar, Dept. of Applied Psychology,
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Abstract: We are living in the age of Globalization where our traditional ways of living are in transitional phase. Due to privatization, urbanization and liberalization, the youth is in a dilemma where they find themselves unfit and unequipped. A rapid change in family life, pressures of peers and society, today's life style and academic challenges etc. are the factors where there is an increase in competition and stress. The youth is not able to cope up with the negative emotions which have become a stigma of their life.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) has been a popular topic of debate in the field of education in general and management in particular. It is considered as a successful predictor of academic success/performance/achievement. Researchers have claimed that EI predicts success at schools, and colleges/ universities. However, Academic achievement has become an index of child's future in this highly competitive world. Academic achievement has been one of the most important goals of the educational process. The present study provides a further need on how to improve upon the academics of students. Also, the study has shown that emotional well - being could be emphasized on academic success. Implications and recommendations for developing EI among students are discussed.

Keywords: *Academic achievement, Test Anxiety, Emotional intelligence.*

Introduction

Human life, which is the best creation of god, has got two aspects: The biological and sociological or cultural. While the former is maintained and transmitted by food and reproduction, the latter is preserved and transmitted by education. It is through education that he promotes his intelligence and adds his knowledge with which he can move the world for good and for evil according to his wishes. Education in fact, is one of the major "life processes" of the human beings "just as there are certain indispensable vital processes of life in a biological sense. So education may be considered a vital process in a social science. Education is indispensable to normal living, without education the individual would be unqualified for group life (Safaya, 1963).

School teachers and parents always have been concerned about children's academic success and social adaptation both in and out of the classroom. Only recently, however, have researchers realized that a child's emotional life has an impact on these important outcomes (Gardner, 1993). According to Nwosu (2004) creativity can't be created but it can be nurtured or cultivated. Teachers in class rooms should be like gardeners who need to cultivate students' potential so that they will grow into creative adults. As we know, that the importance of creativity is universally recognized, but its cultivation in our classrooms is paradoxically neglected. The teachers and parents should be

flexible and should encourage divergent thinking in children.

Academic achievement

The trend in the academic achievement of secondary school students in the last two decades has become a major source of concern to all stakeholders in the education sector. This is so because of the great importance that education has on the national development of the country. There is a consensus of opinion about the fallen standard of education (Adebule, 2004). Parents and government are in agreement that their huge investment on education is not yielding the desired dividend (Adegbite, 2005).

Poor academic achievement is an achievement that is adjudged by the examiner as falling below an expected standard. Academic failure is not only frustrating to the students and the parents, its effects are equally grave on the society in terms of dearth of manpower in all spheres of the economy and polity (Aremu, 2000). Morakinyo (2003) agrees that the falling level of academic achievement is attributable to teacher's non-use of verbal reinforcement strategy. Adegbite (2005) found out that the attitude of some teachers to their job is reflected in their poor attendance to lessons, lateness to school, and unpleasant comments about student's performance that could damage their ego, poor method of teaching and the likes. Edun and Akanji (2008) asserted that poor academic

achievement among our students is usually attributed to the school authority and teachers' attitude to their work.

Oyinloye (2005) attributes the problem of poor academic achievement to low level of emotional intelligence among secondary school students. He believes that "students who lack emotional intelligence show some adjective challenges or in some ways fail to handle effectively the demands of school work. Such students might be said to have little or no emotional intelligence and may not be capable of attaining personal goals which include high academic achievement." It is apparent that the primary focus of education is academic performance that has been measured using traditional Intelligence tests or other forms of standardized examination, and schools cannot ignore or neglect the development of emotional domains and other personal factors contributing to the success of students (Nelson and Low, 2003). Educators need to build high-achieving, productive and healthy students, which can be achieved through a balance in the cognitive and emotional domains of learning.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence is perceived as a type of aptitude that involves the ability to monitor one's feelings and that of others, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's feeling and thinking (Salovey and Mayer, 1990). According to Weisenger (1998) emotional intelligence is also defined as "the intelligent use of emotions: one intentionally makes one's own emotion work for one by using them to help guide one's behaviour and thinking in ways that enhance one's result". Emotional intelligence skills enable people to reduce negative stress in their life, build healthy relationships, communicate effectively, and develop emotional health. Emotional safety is important at each stage of development. These same skills and competencies are critical to achieving academic and career excellence in life.

Emotional intelligence is a confluence of developed abilities to know and value self build and maintain a variety of strong, productive and healthy relationships get along and work well with others in achieving positive results; and effectively deal with the pressures and demands of daily life and work. The development of emotional intelligence is an intentional, active and engaging process. Affective learning requires a person-centered process for student's growth and development. When emotional intelligence skills are the focus of learning, students are building human development behaviours that are intricately related to the positive outcomes of achievement, goal achievement and personal well-being. Since 1990, Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer have been the leading researchers on emotional intelligence. In their influential article "Emotional Intelligence,"

they defined emotional intelligence as, "the subset of social intelligence that involves 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". Emotional Intelligence is not, in itself, sufficient to create optimal outcomes for youth. However, the way of emotional intelligence being used, both by youth and those who support them has a powerful effect on their lives. Emotional Intelligence appears to be a core ingredient that, when developed and well employed, has wide-ranging benefits for learning, relationships, and wellness. Good academic performance is undoubtedly a research after the heart of educational psychologists. In their attempt to investigate what determines academic outcomes of learners, they have come with more questions than answers. In recent times, a prior literature has shown that learning outcomes (academic achievement and academic performance) have been determined by such variables as family, school, society and motivational factors. In the same vein, Parker, et al noted that much of the previous studies have focussed on the impact of demographic and socio - psychological variables on academic performance. Various investigators have engaged in research designed to examine and apply emotional intelligence constructs within academic settings. Lam et al investigated the notion that advanced emotional intelligence was correlated with greater individual performance, often above and beyond that associated with one's level of general intelligence. Jaeger studied the effects of emotional intelligence instruction on academic performance and found out that a greater correlation exists between the emotional intelligence and academic performance. Likewise, Abisamra reported that there is a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement. He therefore canvassed for inclusion of emotional intelligence in the schools' curricula. Petrides, Frederickson and Furnham argued that any investigation of the potential effects of emotional intelligence on academic performance must be pursued in a specific context.

Tests and Examinations

Test anxiety is a type of worry which can appear in test situations having symptoms as common anxiety. These symptoms may include dizziness, hand shivering, sleep loss, uncertainty, agitation, increased heart beat and sweating. Wine (1971) presented an intentional model of test anxiety. According to this model, individuals with test anxiety mostly focus on activities which are irrelevant to given assignments. Mostly their mental obsessions go along with nervousness and they suffer from physical depression and self criticism. Inference model of test anxiety states that recalling of previous information is disturbed by

test anxiety and ultimately individual performance suffers.

Tests and examinations at all stages of education, especially at higher education level have been considered an important and powerful tool for decision making in our competitive society, with people of all ages being evaluated with respect to their achievement, skills and abilities. Zollar and Ben-chain (1990) have the opinion that “the era in which we live is a test-conscious age in which the lives of many people are not only greatly influenced, but are also determined by their test performance”. Test and examination stress is thought to prevent some individuals from reaching their academic potential. It has been found that students consistently perceive examination as a source of increase in anxiety and a situation engulfed with uncertainty/unfairness in letting them demonstrate their true achievements (Zollar & Ben-chain, 1990; Spielberger, 1985). Such feelings among students’ limit their potential performance during the test situation, resulting in higher test anxiety (Hill & Wigfield, 1984) directly causing drop in the student achievement. Therefore, it can be seen as a measurement error towards measuring student achievement as tests are not meant to measure student achievement under intimidating situation but to know their level of achievement in an environment fair enough to let them demonstrate their abilities to the fullest. The researchers have suggested various means to minimize test anxiety with managing external factors like environment of examination hall; behaviour of examiners etc. internal factors like organization of questions in a test, sufficient description of the context, clarity in instruction for students etc. Despite these measures to minimize test anxiety it is generally agreed that it has become most upsetting and a disruptive factor for students. There are number of researches reporting test anxiety as one of the major cause for students’ underachievement and low performances at different levels of their educational life (Oludipe, 2009) and has been shown to affect students’ ability to profit from instruction (Schonwetter, 1995).

Non-Cognitive Correlates

It is most likely that in the absence of intellectual abilities high scholastic achievement is not possible. At the same time the mere presence of superior intelligence does not ensure higher achievement. Many empirical studies based on scientific investigation have shown that pupils of superior intelligence can be underachievers, while some people with average intelligence achieve more than what is expected of them. In the achievement related areas, need for achievement (Need-achievement) has been found to be a significant variable, which contributes to better performances in people (Atkinson, 1958). Mehta Preyag (1969) investigated “need-achievement and school performance”. A sample of 974 higher

secondary students of Delhi was taken for this study. The need-achievement scores showed a highly significant positive correlation with marks in English and Maths, and a good positive correlation with marks in Science subjects and marks in Hindi and Non-science subjects. The result clearly indicated that there is a significant positive relationship between need-achievement and school performance.

Study Habit

The role of study habits in academic achievement has been studied repeatedly during the past four decades. Jain (1967), found that bright achievers were characterized by better study habits and higher achievement motivation than dull achievers. (Shivappa 1980), found that study habits and educational aspiration were positive correlates of academic achievement. Regarding the study of over-achievers and underachievers, a review of the literature shows these two groups differed significantly in regard to their study habits.

Academic Performance and Study habit

Academic performance is complex student behaviour and underlies several abilities, e.g., memory, previous knowledge or aptitude as well as psychological factors such as motivation, interests, temperaments or emotions (Fox, 2004). Educational psychologists and researchers have argued that there are many determinants of academic performance (Furnham, 2003). Danskin and Burnett (1952) found that students getting higher marks had more effective study habits as compared to students who had ineffective study habits and thus lagged behind in studies.

Similarly, L. D. Crow and Crow (1963) found academically poor achievers to have less effective study habits as compared to academically high achievers. In the same context, Sorenson (1964) found that pupils who got more scholarships had better study habits than the pupils who did not achieve scholarships. For academic achievement, being smart is more important than being intelligent and hardworking and involves being practical, having common sense and using better organization and application of good study habits (Clark, 1996). In addition to study habits, researchers have demonstrated the importance of parental involvement in their children’s’ academic performance (Heller & Fantuzzo, 1993; Widlake & Macleod, 1985).

Self Concept

An integrated self-concept acts as a force in maintaining mental health and influences the learning situation. Educators have constant concerns about the relationship between academic achievement and creativity (Powers and Kaufman, 2004). A number of research studies have inclusive results about the relation between creativity and

academic achievement. Many studies support the concept of creativity as a facilitator of achievement (Jackson, 1962). Creativity has very low relation with or is negatively related to academic achievement (Ademola, 2011). Some researchers have revealed that creativity is facilitator for academic achievement and others have studied that there is no or very low relationship between creativity and academic achievement and therefore merits an exploration.

Counselling

- Counselling can help to improve the need achievement of underachievers.
- Counselling can help to improve the study habits of underachievers.
- Counselling can help to improve the academic achievement of underachievers.

Implications

The study revealed the interactive effect among the variables Intelligence, Scientific Creativity, Achievement Motivation, Home Environment and Achievement in Science. Since all these variables are important, the present study indicates certain factors to be borne in mind while we train and nurture our children. The implications revealed by the study are given below.

- **Implications for Teachers**
- Verbal Intelligence and Nonverbal Intelligence develop through reasoning, critical thinking and problem solving. So Science teaching must be aimed at the development of higher order thinking skills
- Provide opportunities for children to express their ideas through verbal as well as nonverbal media.
- 'create' should be taken as a major objective of Science Teaching
- Promote divergent thinking and originality of ideas.
- Understanding the home environment of the learner is a pre requisite for effective teaching.
- Emotional stress is a major cause for cognitive decline and low achievement. So teachers must render comfortable emotional atmosphere for students
- Establishing a cordial relationship with parents of students' and timely Interactions with them may help students to cope with many difficulties. Help learners to set realistic goals and motivate them to achieve their goals.
- Use positive rein forcers for developing proper achievement behaviour.
- Promote Achievement Motivation by combining strong hope for success with low fear of failure.

- -Proper guidance and counselling facilities can be provided to solve the problems and render help for the needy students.

Implications for parents

- Encourage children's critical questioning and divergent thinking habits.
- Discuss daily life situations with children to help them to draw right conclusions and decisions.
- Develop awareness that examination result is not the only criteria for assessing children.
- Their creative potentialities are to be reinforced.
- Emotional support is the most important factor to be provided at home.
- Provide tension free and emotionally relaxed home atmosphere for children.
- Inculcate good values in children through proper interactions.
- Help children to face failures successfully.
- Develop positive attitude among children to boost their self-concept.
- Harsh punishments, sarcastic comments and negative attitudes are to be avoided to develop good self-concept and achievement motivation.

Implications for Students

- Good reading skill, writing skill and vocabulary skills are to be developed for verbal intelligence and creative expression of ideas.
- Present imaginative ideas through verbal as well as nonverbal paths.
- Think for novelty and originality.
- Elaborate and extend the thought process.
- Accept the home environment with all its limitations and try to overcome the deficiencies of the home environment.
- Set realistic goals and plan to achieve the goal.
- Motivation added with hard work is the key component of success in life.

Conclusion

The study concluded that enhancing optimism among students may help them in reducing their anxiety and thus improving their academic performance. As optimism is an important aspect of emotional intelligence, it is suggested that an emotional intervention programme should be organized for the students as well as for the faculty members, in every academic session, so that the faculty members and the students can work together in finding solutions for better stress management and handling anxiety among students.

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