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Emotional intelligence of adolescents

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Abstract

Today's adolescent deals with stress and pressure each day. Those who lack the skill to deal with these stresses have a higher chance of acting out due to a lack of mental well-being. Having emotional intelligence skills affects adolescent outlook and attitude. Children develop emotional intelligence during the first 15 years of life as they mature (Goleman, 1995). Emotional intelligence is the new yardstick which is increasingly applied to assess an adolescent's well-being in life. Shaped by childhood experience emotional intelligence can be nurtured and strengthened throughout adulthood with immediate benefit to adolescent's health, relationship and academic work. Emotionally intelligent pupil have the ability to empathize, communicate clearly, control impulses, make thoughtful decision, solve problems and work with others that earn them success. Emotional intelligence skills allows us to be more effective in both academic achievement and personal relationship, and also cope better with transitions, lower dropout from school. Emotional intelligence is not fixed genetically, rather it is largely learned and continued to develop throughout life. Daniel Goleman defined emotional intelligence helps school students do better on tests and create a safe, comfortable classroom environment that makes it easier to learn. Emotional intelligence may be the best predictor of success in life. Finally, emotional intelligence may act as a moderator of the effects of cognitive skills on academic performance.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, adolescent

Introduction

Emotional intelligence is an important psychological attribute of individuals especially adolescents. Conflicts with parents generally become acute during adolescence. Theories and models of emotional intelligence suggest that proper development of emotional intelligence can harmonize interpersonal relation and reduce stress (Goleman, 1995; Mayer *et al.*, 2004; Bar-On, 2006) [4, 2]. Thus emotional intelligence of individuals should be fostered right from infancy so that intense conflicts between parents and adolescents are prevented and mental health of adolescents are secured. Researches by Golman (1995) [4], Mayer *et al.*, (2004); Bar-On, (2006) [2] indicates that individuals become more perspective of others' needs, motives and emotions as they become emotionally more intelligent. Emotional intelligence have also helped them understand parental desire for offspring's motive and affection for offspring emotion.

Emotional intelligence is the innate potential to feel, use, communicate, recognize, remember, describe, identify, learn from, manage, understand and explain emotions (Hein, 2007) [5]. Emotional intelligence affects adolescents' relationship between themselves and with other people. Emotional intelligence both defines adolescents' own development and maturity and also adolescents' relationships with others (Akkoc, 2007) [1]. According to Mangal and Mangal (2009) [7] there are four aspects of emotional intelligence. These are: a) Intra-personal awareness - it refers to the awareness or knowing about one's own emotions. b) inter-personal- it refers to the awareness or knowing about others' emotions. c) intra-personal management - it refers to management of one's own emotions. d) inter-personal management- it refers to the management of others' emotions.

Young people is of paramount importance in a country like India where a large proportion i.e., 41.1% are below 18 years of age early adolescents comprise roughly 12.1% of the population in India. In comparison with cognitive development, socio-economic development of young people lack emphasis in today's achievement - driven society. The present article has however highlighted the pivotal role played by emotional intelligence of adolescents. It advocates proper development on emotional intelligence of adolescents for accurate perception of home environment and better parent - adolescent relation.

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The term adolescence comes from the Latin word *adolescere*, meaning “to grow” or “to grow to maturity”. However, the term adolescence as we know it today has a broader meaning. It encompasses not only physical maturity but also mental (cognitive), emotional and social maturity. Adolescence spans from 12 through 19 years of age and is marked by rapid changes (Morgan *et al.*, 1993) ^[9]. With enhancement of cognitive abilities in adolescence, the perception of parents, parenting behaviors and home / family environments of adolescents become clearer, mature and more nuanced (Youniss and Smollar, 1985) ^[12]. Such perceptions of adolescents are also associated closely with their socio – emotional development (Hurlock, 2007) ^[6]. The aspects of emotional intelligence viz., accurate perception and expression of emotions, ability to access and generate emotions; understanding emotions and emotional meanings; emotional regulation (Mayer and Salovey, 1997; Mayer *et al.*, 2000) generally show remarkable improvement during adolescence (Hurlock, 2007) ^[6].

The theory of emotional intelligence took shape in the 1970s and 1980s in the writing of Peter Salovey and John Mayer. The concept of emotional intelligence has been partly derived from the theory of multiple intelligences Howard Gardner (1983) ^[3]. Gardner’s intra-personal and inter-personal intelligences bare some similarities with the concept of emotional intelligence. Intra-personal intelligence refers to the ability to differentiate among one’s many feelings, intentions and motivation. While inter-personal intelligence is defined as the ability to recognize and distinguish among other persons’ feelings, beliefs and intentions (Smith *et al.*, 2003) ^[10]. Mayer *et al.* (2004) view emotional intelligence as a member of a class of intelligence including social, practical and personal intelligences. These intelligences are said to operate on cognitions pertaining to matters of personal and emotional importance to the individual. They divide the abilities and skills of emotional intelligence into four branches (areas): the ability to a) perceive emotions, b) use emotion to facilitate thought, c) understand emotion and d) manage emotions. Branch one reflects the perception of emotion and involves expression of emotion in the face, voice and related communication channels. Branch two pertains to the capacity of emotions to assist thinking. Some types of problem solving are facilitated by some emotions, recognize their probable trends over time and understand their outcomes. Understanding of emotions develops simultaneously with the development of language and propositional thought. Branch four deals with management of emotions in the context of individual’s goal, self-knowledge and social awareness (Mayer *et al.*, 2004). Emotional intelligence develops somewhat in early adolescence. However, there are individual differences in emotional intelligence. According to Mayer *et al.* (2004) a highly emotionally intelligent person can better perceive emotions, use them in thought, understand their meanings and manage emotions better than others. The individual also tends to be relatively high in social intelligence. The person tends to be more open and agreeable. He or she is less likely to engage in problem and self-destructive behaviors. Such a person tends to have possessions of sentimental attachment at home and experience and more positive social interactions (Mayer *et al.*, 2004). It seems to follow that an early adolescent whose emotional intelligence is yet to develop to its full potential may face difficulties in correctly assessing the emotions of family members particularly parents and responding appropriately. They may sometimes engage in problems behaviors. These

may result in conflicts with parents.

Daniel Goleman (1995) ^[4] advocate the concept of emotional quotient (EQ). According to him the concept of intelligence quotient (IQ) is too restricted. It ignores essential behavioral and personality elements and concentrates only on logical reasoning ability. Goleman (1995) ^[4] pointed out that success in life requires more than possession of high IQ. He argued that high EQ promotes successful life. He suggested that EQ comprised two aspect:- a) understand oneself, one’s goals, intentions, responses and behavior; and b) understanding others and their feelings. Goleman (1995) ^[4] also distinguished the following five domains of EQ :- i) knowing one’s own emotions; ii) managing one’s own emotions; iii) motivating oneself; iv) recognizing and understanding other peoples’ emotions; and managing relationships i.e., managing the emotions of others. He believed that development EQ helped in stress-reduction, reduction of conflicts, improvement of interpersonal relationships and achievement of stability, continuity as well as harmony (Goleman, 1995) ^[4]. It can be assumed therefore that possession of low EQ among many adolescents may impede their attainment of social maturity and pose problems in perception on familial context.

Similarly, Bar-On’s model demonstrates how emotional and social intelligence are closely linked and more important of adolescent’s behavior. This model by Reuven Bar-On represents further development of the concept of emotional intelligence and its overlap with the concept of social intelligence. The Bar-On model (2006) ^[2] posits that interrelated emotional and social competencies, skills and facilitators influence intelligent behavior. The emotional and social competencies, skills and facilitators comprise the five major components :- a) ability to recognize, understand and express emotions and feelings; b) ability to understand other’s feelings and to relate with them; c) ability to manage and control emotions; d) ability to manage, change, adapt and solve personal and interpersonal problems; and e) ability to generate positive affect and be self-motivated. Each of these components includes several intimately associated competencies, skills and facilitators. Bar-On proposes that emotionally and socially intelligent individuals are aware of others’ emotions, feelings and needs; and are able to establish as well as maintain cooperative, constructive and mutually satisfying relationships.

Theory of mind is the ability to attribute mental states i.e., beliefs, intents, pretension, knowledge etc. to oneself and others; and to understand that others have beliefs, desires and intention that are different from one’s own (Wikipedia, 2012). It is obvious that understanding the perspective of oneself and more importantly those of others has vital implication for perceptions of home (family) environment, emotional intelligence and social maturity of individuals. The theory of mind continues to develop over childhood years. It improves significantly with the individual’s entry into adolescence. According to Piagetion viewpoint, adolescents’ cognitions are marked by reflective thinking or meta cognition (Morgan *et al.*, 1987) ^[9]. Adolescents and adults occasionally reflect on their own thinking process by assessing what they thought the about a situation or how they could have been mistaken in a belief. This kind of thinking about thinking is termed reflective thinking or meta – cognition (Smith *et al.*, 2003) ^[10]. The ability of reflective thinking (meta cognition) helps adolescents and adults in constantly refining their perceptions, emotions and social cognitions. It vastly enhances the precision of the theory of mind that they may have in early

adolescence, the capacity for reflective thinking (meta cognition) is just developing. So although early adolescents tend to re-evaluate their beliefs and thoughts, they may yet lack the expertise to detect all the errors in their beliefs and thoughts about themselves and others. As a result they may adopt a critical approach in perceiving their home (family) environment; their own and others' emotions; and their social relationships but their attributions about themselves and other may not be largely accurate. So they may suffer somewhat from misperception of home environment and deficits in emotional intelligence and social maturity.

Emotional intelligence among the highly educated section of the society in India. However the vast majority do not seem aware the construct. People are also mostly ignorant about the value of emotional maturity. Parent as well as educators now a days are more concerned about examination performance of young people. Pressure for achieving excellence is making young people prone to frustration and stress. They feel physically and psychologically exhausted. There is distortion in adolescents' perception of parental needs, motives and emotions. In the face of parental pressure many young people view parents as unloving and harsh. Parenting goals and adolescents' expectations tend to be discordant.

At home adolescents' emotional intelligence can be enhanced through cooperative play, reading and telling stories, taking care of siblings and aged relatives making guest feel comfortable, helping in household chores. At school also cooperative play, group activities, reading and telling stories, creative writing, feeling and expressing emotions through music, dance and dramatics etc. may foster social-emotional development. Parents and teachers must get young people involved in pro-social activities e.g., doing voluntary work orphanages, old age homes etc. school counselors should engage children and adolescents in role playing, relaxation training, vipassana, counseling etc. Role playing helps young people understand the perspectives of others particularly their parents. Relaxation training and regular practice of vipassana may reduce stress among children and adolescents. Counseling of parents and adolescents are recommended so that there is no discordance between parenting goals and adolescents' expectations. The psychological attribute of emotional intelligence of adolescents have been found to predict several dimensions of their home perception. This is an addition to the academic discourse in the area. It has plugged a lacuna in knowledge. Besides, this outcome has practical implications. Training programs to develop the attribute of emotional intelligence is recommended. These would be beneficial in decreasing distortions in adolescents' perception of family and improving their family relations.

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