

## Emotional Intelligence: Significance of Psychology and Spirituality

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The aim of the present research work was to study emotional intelligence (EI) as a function of different academic subjects of choice, spiritual quotient (SQ), and gender. One hundred and fifty university students doing master degree with age ranging from 21-24 years were selected randomly from three academic departments of Punjabi University, Patiala, Punjab, India, i.e., Science, Arts, and Psychology. Emotional Intelligence Scale (Hyde, Pethe, & Dhar, 2001) and Spiritual Quotient Scale (SQ; Chopra, 2002) were administered individually on all the participants. For analysis, participants were further divided into two groups by using median split half technique on SQ scores, i.e., those who scored high and those who scored low on SQ. These two groups were compared on EI. One way ANOVA (for three academic subjects of choice) was applied to see whether participants studying different academic subjects of choice differ significantly on EI. *t*-test was used to see whether participants high and low on SQ and men and women differ significantly on EI. It was concluded that individuals studying Psychology were more emotionally intelligent as compared to the other two groups. Varied levels of SQ had significant effect on emotional intelligence but gender difference was insignificant. This study has important implications for educational psychologists and EI research.

*Keywords:* emotional intelligence, spiritual quotient, Psychology, gender

Adjustment is a process of adapting one's behaviour to produce a more harmonious relationship between himself/herself and his/her environment (Gate & Gersild, 1973). It is believed that students who receive an exclusive academic environment may be ill equipped for future challenges, both as individuals as well as members of the society. The brightest students as compared to their less intellectual counterparts in a class may not succeed well in life as adults. This is more evident in fields like politics, business, and administration (Singh, 2002), so the question arise that which human quality helps people in their career and personal life? It is usually said that people with high IQ would accomplish more in life, but recent researches indicate that greater predictor of success can be person's emotional and spiritual intelligence rather than his/her intellectual intelligence (Goleman, 1995).

Emotional intelligence (EI) refers to the ability to recognize and regulate emotions in ourselves and others (Goleman, 2001). Salovey and Mayer (1990) defined it as a form of 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. It is the ability to perceive emotions, integrate emotions, to facilitate thoughts, understand emotions, and to regulate emotions to promote personal growth (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Another researcher of the emotional intelligence construct is Bar-On (1997), the originator of the term "Emotional Quotient". He defined emotional intelligence as being concerned with understanding oneself and others, relating to people, and adapting to and coping with the immediate surroundings to be more successful in dealing with environmental demands.

Two models of emotional intelligence have appeared. The ability model defines emotional intelligence as a set of abilities that involves perceiving and reasoning abstractly with information that

generates from feelings (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999; Mayer, DiPaolo, & Salovey, 1990; Mayer & Salovey, 1993, 1997; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). The mixed model defines emotional intelligence as the ability with social behaviors, traits, and competencies (Bar-On, 1997; Goleman, 1995). Thus, emotional intelligence is a broad term that captures a collection of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. It consists of the ability to understand the feelings of others, to empathize, maintain, and develop interpersonal relationships and above all our sense of social responsibility and the ability to understand one's own motivation. Emotional intelligence plays an important role in determining life successes.

Emotional intelligence can have an important impact on everyday life. Palmer, Donaldson, and Stough (2002) have indicated high emotional intelligence to predict life satisfaction. Pellitteri (2002) reported people higher on emotional intelligence to likely use an adaptive defense style and thus to exhibit healthier psychological adaptation. Higher level of emotional intelligence was also associated with an increased likelihood of attending to health and appearance and positive interactions with friends and family. Mayer et al. (1999) found higher emotional intelligence to be significantly correlated with parental warmth and attachment style and Rubin (1999) found it linking with positive interpersonal relationships among children, adolescents, and adults.

Taking into consideration the importance of emotional intelligence in overall well-being of individuals, various researchers have been exploring factors associated with emotional intelligence. Present research work is also intended to explore such factors to contribute in present understanding of emotional intelligence. Two factors have been selected to see their relationship with emotional intelligence. First is the training or knowledge students' get during their academic course work of psychology as a part of their curriculum as they might be in a better position to understand and control emotions. Effect of this training would be examined on emotional intelligence by comparing Psychology students with those of other academic subjects of choice who are not given such training. Although students of Psychology would be compared to two other groups namely Science students and Arts students but our primary objective of this study was to compare Psychology students and non-psychology students.

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The other factor being studied in this study is spiritual quotient (SQ). Since intelligence quotient and emotional quotient have been widely recognized, spiritual quotient is also proving its importance. Vaughan (2002) in the beginning defined spiritual quotient as a spiritual ability. It has since referred to the skills, abilities, and behaviors required to develop and sustain a relationship with the ultimate source of all being. In literature, gender has not been consistent in predicting the level of emotional intelligence. In some studies no clear gender difference have been found (Brown & Schutte, 2006; Depape, Hakim-Larson, Voelker, Page, & Jackson, 2006), while in some, women have turn out to be more emotionally intelligent (Singh, 2002). As there are inconsistencies regarding the effect of gender on emotional intelligence difference in men and women in emotional intelligence would also be examined.

### Objectives

The main objectives of this study were:

1. To assess emotional intelligence (EI) in students studying three academic subjects of choice, i.e., Science, Arts, and Psychology.
2. To study whether there is any difference in emotional intelligence (EI) between individuals who are high and low on spiritual quotient (SQ).
3. To study the effect of gender on emotional intelligence (EI).

### Hypotheses

1. Students studying Psychology would be significantly higher on EI as compared to those studying other subjects of choice, i.e., Science and Arts.
2. There would be significant differences in emotional intelligence (EI) between individuals who are high on spiritual quotient and those who are low on it.
3. Women would significantly score higher on Emotional Intelligence Scale as compared to men.

### Method

#### Sample

One hundred and fifty university students doing masters degree with age ranging from 21-24 years ( $M = 22.70$  years,  $SD = 0.89$  years) were selected randomly from three academic departments of Punjabi University, Patiala, Punjab (India), i.e., Science, Arts, and Psychology. Equal number of participants were selected in each group ( $n = 50$ ), and equal representation of men and women was made per group.

#### Instruments

1. *Emotional Intelligence Scale* (Hyde et al., 2001). This self-administering scale consists of 34 items measuring ten sub-categories of emotional intelligence, i.e., Self Awareness, Empathy, Emotional Stability, Self Motivation, Managing Relations, Integrity, Self Development, Commitment, Value Orientation and Altruistic Behavior. Subjects have to respond on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree". High score on this scale shows high level of emotional intelligence and vice

versa. Norms of the scale are available on a sample of 200 subjects. The split-half reliability coefficient has been found to be 0.88 and validity of the scale has been reported to be 0.93 by the authors.

2. *Spiritual Quotient Scale* (Chopra, 2002). This scale measures whether one is spiritually adept and acts with spiritual intelligence or the decisions are driven by ego rather than any spiritual sense. It consists of 10 items, each having four options. Subjects have to complete each item with one of the available options that best describe his/her perception about his/her life. The options have different weightage ranging from 1 to 4 distributed randomly in every item. Dhingra, Manhas, and Thakur (2005) used this scale in their study and found it satisfactorily valid and reliable with reliability coefficient ranging from .63 to .91.

### Procedure

Emotional Intelligence scale and Spiritual Quotient scale were administered on all participants. For analyses, participants were further divided into two groups (high and low scores on SQ) by using median split half technique. One group was of those participants who scored high on SQ and the other group comprised those who scored low on SQ. These two groups were compared to see the differences on EI.

### Statistical Analysis

One Way ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) for three subjects of choice was applied to assess whether students studying different academic subjects of choice differ significantly on emotional intelligence or not. *t*-test was also used to see whether participants high and low on spiritual quotient and men and women differ significantly on emotional intelligence.

### Results

Table 1 shows academic subjects of choice to have a significant effect on emotional intelligence,  $F(2,147) = 3.27, p < .01$ . It is evident that individuals studying Psychology have scored higher ( $M = 136, SD = 11.92$ ) than students studying subjects of Arts ( $M = 133.77, SD = 11.84$ ) and Science ( $M = 130, SD = 11.85$ ). This implies that in the sample under study the individuals who are studying Psychology are found to be more emotional intelligent as compared to their peers studying different subjects.

Difference between high and low spiritual quotient group was found to be statistically significant,  $t(142) = 3.38, p < .01$ . Students who were high on spiritual quotient scored high on emotional intelligence ( $M = 136.54, SD = 11.03$ ) as compared to those who were low on spiritual quotient ( $M = 129.97, SD = 12.22$ ). No significant gender difference was found in terms of emotional intelligence (Table 2).

Table 1  
ANOVA Summary Table for the Effect of Academic Subjects of Choice (Science, Arts, and Psychology) on Emotional Intelligence

Source of Variance	SS	df	MS	F
Academic Subjects of Choice	920	2	460	3.27*
Error	20703	147	141	

\* $p < .01$ .

Table 2  
Mean, Standard Deviation and *t*-test of Two Levels of Spiritual Quotient and Gender for Emotional Intelligence

Variables	Levels	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>
Spiritual Quotient	Low Spiritual Quotient	129.97	12.22	3.38*
	High Spiritual Quotient	136.54	11.03	
Gender	Men	134	12.82	0.74
	Women	132.51	11.28	

\**p* < .01.

### Discussion

It is evident in the results that individuals who are studying Psychology are more emotionally intelligent as compared to those from other disciplines. Students having more SQ also had high level of emotional intelligence as compared to those low on it.

The ultimate goal of education is the overall development of students which includes their success in career and life, mental health, and well-being. There may be a number of factors that help individuals in achieving all these parameters of success. Self-awareness, honesty, knowledge about causes of emotions, motivation, and the ability to analyze and understand relationships are some of the keys to success in life. On summation, these characteristics represent emotional intelligence that leads to success in life (Dunn, 2003). Chatterjee (1998) also stated that it is very necessary to develop emotional intelligence to understand and accept situations and to be successful in life.

It has been empirically supported that some factors can be manipulated to enhance emotional intelligence of students and it is being successfully practiced (Riemer, 2003). In the present research, studying Psychology and being spiritually inclined came out to be the two significant factors for enhanced emotional intelligence. This may have been influenced by the fact that students who are studying Psychology are given special training as a part of their curriculum that makes them more aware of the significance of emotional well-being and mental health as they learn various skills like conflict resolution and stress management to cope with day to day problems. During their studying they are made aware of skills, attitudes, and competencies that determine ones behaviors. This awareness may lead to positive changes in their specific reactions which further help them in adjusting with self and others. In Psychology curriculum, all its fields lead to ultimate goals of achieving positive mental health. Applied Psychology being a helping profession sensitizes and trains students to gain insight, achieve positive self-perceptions, and enhance self-esteem so that they can become psychologically healthy enough to motivate others to reach similar standards of personal well-being and productive expressions of their potentialities to promote mental health which is emotional and spiritual resilience (World Health Organization, 2001). Psychology students are also exposed to different kinds of healthy coping mechanisms which help them in becoming resilient and to develop better problem solving skills. Thus, this diverse and in-depth exposure to all these phenomena definitely effects their emotional intelligence either directly or indirectly. Such kind of awareness or knowledge is not available to students other than those studying Psychology (whether Science or Arts) as indicated by

the results of the current study.

According to Riemer (2003), emotional quotient (EQ) is an acquired skill and can be modified. This indicates that education has a prime role in enhancing EQ levels of students. Goleman's (1998) study showed that introducing EQ skills to engineering students at the very start of the course proved helpful in facilitating students learning. Goleman suggested that rapport, empathy, persuasion, cooperation, and consensus building are significant aspects of emotional intelligence. Therefore, these exercises can be integrated into the course to promote EQ skills.

There are many benefits of focusing on emotional intelligence in higher education (Cohen, 1999; Goleman, 1995; Topping, Holmes, & Bremner, 2000). It has been found that by introducing the concept of emotional intelligence in primary and secondary schools curriculum it is affective in raising students' emotional intelligence and reducing their emotional and behavioral problems (Caplan et al., 1992; Cohen, 1999). Similar findings were expected at college level as well and inclusion of such classes in the syllabus resulted in higher scores on standardized achievement tests (Hawkins, Von Cleve, & Catalano, 1991). Knowledge about oneself and others is a significant predictor of academic and general success (Cohen, 1999; Goleman, 1995).

Another significant factor, as found in this study is "Spiritual Quotient" which refers to the skills, ability and behaviour required to guide individuals throughout life (Vaughan, 2002). Emmons (2000) construe spiritual quotient as a frame which contains ability to solve problems by spiritual resources. Dhingra et al. (2005) has found significant correlation between emotional intelligence and spiritual quotient in a North Indian sample. This implies that if SQ of the individual can be enhanced through one or another way then their EQ is likely to increase. Zohar and Marshall (2003) stated that SQ is the necessary foundation for effective functioning of both IQ and EQ. Spirituality takes more importance when we talk about it in Indian context. It is interesting to note that certain sections in Atharva Veda are meant for those components of growth and development which at present are considered the key elements of emotional intelligence like self-control etc. 'Ahimsa' method is a part and parcel of all Eastern religions and cultures which helps to establish peace and harmony at interpersonal and personal levels (Rangaswami, 1994). Spirituality is based upon one's belief system which governs emotions (Miller, 1985; Propst, 1980). Belief system of an individual can be modified to have desirable emotions and behaviours. Thus, enhancement of spirituality will serve two purposes, one is the intrinsic value of spirituality as mentioned earlier and other is based upon the finding of the present study that if spirituality is increased it will lead to improvement in emotional intelligence.

No significant differences were found between men and women on emotional intelligence. Thus, the present study shows that emotional intelligence is not affected by gender. In one study, it has been found that, on average, women are more aware of their emotions and show more empathy while men are more self-confident, optimistic and adaptable. In general, considering the overall ratings for men and women, the strength and weakness average out and both seem to have same emotional quotient (Simmons, 2001).

### Limitations

As mentioned earlier, our sample was delimited to university students of the age range 21-24 years only thus, generalization of

the findings to all students should be made cautiously. Level of emotional intelligence is dependent upon various other factors such as parenting and family environment but the present study was aimed to explore the effects of only few factors. Other relevant factors should be studied and included while implementing the findings.

### Recommendations

The inclusion of a focus on some sort of psychological training like teaching conflict management skills as a part of the college/university curriculum could lead to a wide variety of positive outcomes and ultimately enhancement of emotional intelligence. Increasing emotional intelligence can lead to better adaptation both at personal and social level. The educational experience would also tend to be more balanced as it would focus on educating the person on the whole and would improve the educational environment.

### Implications

The present study emphasizes the need to integrate EQ skills in modern education which will help students to become successful in their fields. Also, if psychological training has the potential to improve mental health, then it must be incorporated into bringing up of present day children so that their resilience is ensured and they can effectively face the challenges of life and work towards actualization. In short, Psychology, more or less must be a part of academic curriculum for each kind of learning.

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