

Gender Differences and Construct of the Early Adolescent's Emotional Intelligence

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Abstract: The emotional intelligence construct is a rather novel concept with little empirical support, particularly, in relation to the link between gender and the early adolescent's emotional intelligence. Hence, the specific objective of this research is to determine the relationship between gender and early adolescent's emotional intelligence (EQ). EQ is a set of abilities such as conception, emotion appraisal and expression, emotion management and regulation, and emotion utilization of emotion. The present study was carried out among 234 Iranian students in the second and grades of guidance schools (age 12-15) in Tehran, Iran. The students (girls and boys) were clustered through random and multistage sampling. Data were collected using the Schutte's (1998) Emotional Intelligence Scale. T-test indicates that there is a statistical significant difference between emotional intelligence among boys and girls. [Fataneh Naghavi, Ma'rof Redzuan, Arezoo Asgari, Mojgan Mirza. **Gender Differences and Construct of the Early Adolescent's Emotional Intelligence**. Life Science Journal 2012;9(2):124-128]. (ISSN:1097-8135). <http://www.lifesciencesite.com>. 21

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1. Introduction

Emotional intelligence refers to understanding the feelings of oneself and of others, is related to people, and one's ability to adapt to coping with the immediate surroundings to be more successful in dealing with environmental demands (Bar-On & Parker, 2006). According to new study, there are several notable differences between male and female in term of their emotional intelligence. Male are seen to have significantly stronger interpersonal skills than their female counterparts do, and male also appear to have a stronger sense of self and arrangement better among stress. Goleman (1995) suggests counter views of emotionally intelligent female and male; by contrast, male who are high in emotional intelligence are socially poised, outgoing and happy, and they are also not prone to fearless or worried rumination. Moreover, they have a considerable capacity for commitment to people or causes, for taking responsibility, and for having an ethical outlook, and they are also sympathetic and caring in their relationships. Their emotional life is rich, but more properly, they are relaxing with themselves, others, and the social universe they live in. According to this point of view, female are more attentive of their feelings and those of others, relate better interpersonally, and are considerably more socially responsible than male. On the other hand, male appear to have stronger self-regard and manage better

with immediate problems of a stressful nature than female (Stein, 2004).

According Goleman, the particular sub-components in which female scored superior than male consist of:

- Interpersonal, which refers to the capacity to set up and maintain mutually satisfying relationships that are characterized by intimacy and giving and receiving affection.
- Empathy, which refers to the capacity to be attentive of, to realize and to appreciate the feelings of others.
- Social responsibility, which refers to the capacity to demonstrate one's self as a cooperative, contributing and constructive member in one's social group.

On the other hand, the particular sub-components in which male scored higher than female consist of:

- Stress tolerance, which refers to the capacity to withstand adverse events and stressful situations without falling apart.
- Self-regard, which refers to the capacity to respect and accept one's self as principally good (1995).

Petrides and Furnham (2000) have found the relationship between gender and emotional intelligence among two hundred and sixty

predominantly white participants who had completed a measure of trait emotional intelligence (EI) and assessed their scores. The findings indicated that the woman scored higher than the man on the “social skills” factor of measured trait emotional intelligence. However, it was demonstrated that the man believed they had higher emotional intelligence than the woman. Most of the correlations between the measured and self-estimated scores were significant and positive, thereby indicating that people have some insights into their emotional intelligence. The correlations between the measured and self-estimated scores were generally higher for the man than those of the woman, and a regression analysis indicated that gender is in fact a significant predictor of self-estimated emotional intelligence.

Brudy and Hall (2000) showed in their study entitled, “Sexuality and emotion”, that male and female learn different lessons in managing their emotions. Parents mostly talk to their girls, rather than boys, about their emotions (except for anger). Compared to boys, parents provide more information about feelings to their girls. Since female get mastery over language faster than male, this causes them to become more experienced at precisely expressing their feelings and more skilful in using words to name emotional reactions and replace words for physical reactions than male. Male, for whom emotions expression has not been emphasized, are probably unaware of their and others’ emotional states to a large extent.

Similarly, Hagan, Simpson and Gillis (1985) found that at the age of 10, the percentage of female who show open aggression, like male, when they are angry is almost the same. At the age of 13 years, nevertheless, there is a significant difference between the two genders. Compared with male, female obtain more skills in artistic aggressive techniques, such as collective banning, revengeful gossiping, and indirect avenging.

In their research on gender difference in relation to emotional intelligence, Katyal and Awasthi (2005) used 150 students whom they had selected randomly for estimation of gender differences. The data were collected through standardized “Emotional Intelligence Scale” and the findings showing that the majority of male, female and the total sample had good, followed by a low emotional intelligence. In particular, female were found to have higher emotional intelligence than that of the male. Conversely, the difference touched only 0.10 levels, and hence, the findings were just suggestive of the trend.

There are wide individual differences in early adolescent’s emotional intelligence and research regarding these individual differences which were

viewed as an important and necessary extension of past research that focused mainly on normative development (Denham, 1989; Denham, Zoller & Couchoud, 1994; Sarni, 1999; Sroufe, 1996; Steele & Aronson, 1999). Since their young age, females have been found to report, and sometimes, demonstrate more empathy and sympathy than their male counterparts.

The gender of the early adolescent should also be considered in any attempt to understand the possible differences in a family’s emotion socialization practices. For example, anger reactions are more tolerated in male than in female (Condrey & Ross, 1985). In addition, anger responses in female are more likely to be followed by negative emotional reactions from their mothers, whereas the anger responses of male receive more empathic maternal reactions (Malatesta & Haviland, 1982). According to Naghavi & Ma’rof the important point is that, today in the Iran, Iranian families have started to take on roles vastly different from family of previous generations. Moreover, family takes on ever more responsibility for raising their early adolescents than in the generations that preceded them (2012). Family of female anticipates more emotional management and the use of more sophisticated emotion regulation strategies than family’s male (Banerjee & Eggleston, 1993). These findings led us to expect that family’s female would report expressing more emotions than family’s male.

In addition, family’s female were accepted to express more positive emotion and sadness than those of male. Female are also socialized to be more aware to the sadness and hurt feelings of others compared to male (ZahnWaxler, Cole, & Barrett, 1991). According to Naghavi & Ma’rof (2011) Gender differences in EI can be glimpsed from infancy due to the differential teaching given to boys and girls. It is expected that this research would identify different between boys and girls have influences on early adolescents’ emotional intelligence. Although a body of relevant research literature is available, the findings of such research studies which investigated the effects of gender on early adolescents’ emotional intelligence were derived mainly from western-based samples that are socially and culturally different from the Iranian sample.

2. Materials and Methods

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between family functioning, alexithymia and sub-components of the early adolescent’s emotional intelligence among Iranian guidance schools students in Tehran, Iran. The schools were chosen based upon their location and programs of study. The population of research involved in this

study consisted of all the Iranian students who enrolled in guidance schools of Tehran (234 students, academic year 2010-2011).

The data were collected using (Schutte, 1998) Emotional Intelligence Scale for assessing early adolescence's emotional intelligence. To identify the difference between emotional intelligence and gender of early adolescents.

The emotional intelligence scales used to assess emotional intelligence, i.e. Schutte's Emotional Intelligence Self-measuring Scale (introduced by Schutte and her colleagues in 1998 and Mayer and Salovey's original emotional intelligence model, 1990), was used to measure emotional intelligence, which includes emotional conception and appraisal, emotion regulation and emotion utilization. This scale includes 33 self-report items. Some examples of the items included in the scale are:

- A. I can easily identify my emotions and feelings.
- B. I can persuade myself by imagining success in work.
- C. I admire others when they do something good.

The subject selected his/her degree of agreement or disagreement by any of these sentences in a five-point Likert scale, from strongly disagreed = 1 to strongly agreed = 5. In this study, the reliability for the emotional intelligence test was obtained by using Crombach's alpha, $\alpha = 0.84$.

Considering the question and research hypothesise, the following statistical method is used to analyze data: Descriptive statistics was provided to show the variation in the estimated means and standard deviations for each of the dependent and independent variables across the sample. After normality test, In this study, t-test was used for determine the difference between the mean score of emotional intelligence of the groups of boy and girl as the dependent variables.

3. Results and Discussion

Description of the participants

The study was among 7150 girls and boys Iranian students. After determining the sample gathering, 4 regions selected random among Tehran's 19 educational regions. Then, among the guidance schools of each region, 2 schools are selected by simple random method: one girls' school and one boys' school. In each school, pupils are selected from grade 3 and grade 2 by simple random method. The sample (234) consisted of the guidance schools pupils (12-15 years old). The respondents (234) for this study were the early adolescence with 116 boys and 118 girls.

Table 1: A summary of samples for early adolescents by demographic variables

Demographic Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sample	234	100.00
Early Adolescent's		
Gender		
Male (boy)	116	49.6
Female (girl)	118	50.4
Total	234	100

Table2: Descriptive information on emotional intelligence of the early adolescents

Variables	Number	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Emotional intelligence	234	122.82	8.58	0.09	-0.03
Emotional conception & appraisal	234	121.84	9.96	0.09	-0.05
Emotional regulation	234	128.23	8.75	0.07	-0.03
Emotional utilization	234	118.39	7.71	0.10	-0.04

This research studied the effects of gender on the early adolescents' emotional intelligence. Hence, a descriptive analysis of early adolescents' emotional intelligence with respect to gender was obtained. Table 3 presents the descriptive information of the early adolescent's emotional intelligence, according to their gender.

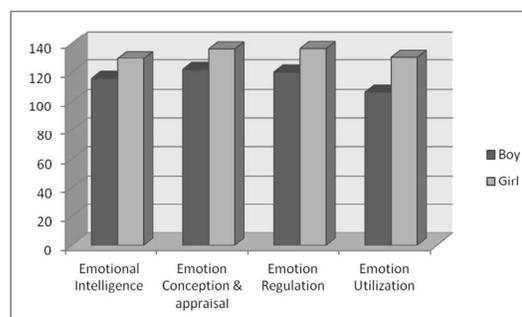


Figure 1. The mean value of the early adolescents' emotional intelligence and its subscales in terms of gender

Table 3. Descriptive information of the early adolescence's emotional intelligence and its factors in terms of gender

Variables	Number		Mean		SD	
	Girl	Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl	Boy
Emotional intelligence	118	116	129.52	115.96	5.51	4.97
Emotion conception & appraisal	118	116	136.12	121.84	5.41	4.51
Emotion regulation	118	116	136.36	120.10	4.78	5.01
Emotion utilization	118	116	130.47	106.31	6.02	3.99

The mean value score of the early adolescents' emotional intelligence, with respect to gender (Table 3 and Figure 1) show a rank between the sub-scales of emotional intelligence for both girls and boys. This particular rank includes emotional intelligence, emotion conception and appraisal, emotion regulation and emotion utilization. Table 3 shows that the

average of the early adolescents' emotional intelligence and its factors are higher in girls than boys. In addition, the scores dispersion of emotional intelligence, emotion conception, and emotion utilization factors are also higher in girls than in boys.

In relation to gender, a comparison carried out for the mean of the two groups in this study (boys and girls, as presented in Table 4) indicated that the emotional intelligence of girls is higher than that of the boys. In addition, the t-test technique was also used to test the difference between emotional intelligence of the two groups, with boys (M=115.96, SD=4.97) and girls (M=129.52, SD=5.51), statistically. The statistical finding indicated that there was a noticeable difference between emotional intelligence of the boys and that of the girls ($t=19.77$; $p<0.01$). Table 4 presents the statistical information on early adolescents' emotional intelligence in terms of gender. Table 5 shows a summary of the t-test results for the early adolescents' emotional intelligence in terms of gender.

Table 4: Descriptive and statistical information on the early adolescents' emotional intelligence in terms of gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	SE Mean
Girl	118	129.52	5.51	0.51
Boy	116	115.96	4.97	0.46

Table 4 indicates that the emotional intelligence of girls (M=129.52; SD=5.51), which is higher than the emotional intelligence of boys (M=115.96; SD=4.97). In addition, the findings of the previous study on the comparison between the emotional intelligence of the samples according to their gender have also indicated that girls are more aware of their feelings and those of others and can relate better interpersonally compared to boys. Nonetheless, boys seem to have stronger self regard and cope better with immediate problems of stressful nature than girls (Goleman, 1995, Stein, 2004).

Table 5: A summary of the t-test results for early adolescents' emotional intelligence by gender

		t-test for equality of means		Sig	Mean difference
EI	Equal variances assumed	T	Df		
	Equal variances assumed	19.77	232.00	0.000	13.57
	Equal variances not assumed	19.79	230.29	0.000	13.57

Note: $P<0.01$

The result indicated that there is a significant difference in the early adolescents' emotional intelligence based on gender. In other words, girls have significantly higher emotional intelligence than

boys. It seems that further to individual differences of men and women, the expectations of the society and also the people around them, especially the parents, are different in terms of children's sexuality. Culturally, girls are mostly expected to be more expressive of feelings, whereas abstaining from feelings expression in boys is strengthened as a manly model. The fact that girls develop verbal skills earlier than boys means that they are more skilled at articulating their feelings and have greater expertise in the use of words. Hence, girls have more information about the emotional world and they therefore speak more about their emotional aspects and use emotional terms more often than boys (Brody & Hall, 1993; Fivush, 1991). In addition, the findings of the previous study on the comparison the emotional intelligence of the samples according to their gender also indicated that girls were more aware of their feelings and those of others and could therefore relate better interpersonally than boys (Stein, 2004). Meanwhile, Petrides and Furnham (2000) have demonstrated that boys self believed that they have higher emotional intelligence than girls. With respect to gender, however, the differences in the scores for emotional intelligence are still being developed (Schutte *et al.*, 1998) and the result of test of analysis of differences between emotional intelligence of boys and girls confirmed some findings of the previous study.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the current research, girls were found to have greater propensity for emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995; Katyal & Awasthi, 2005). This study found a greater percentage of boys who scored in a trend of the lower category of emotional intelligence than girls. According to Salopake (1998), emotional intelligence is a learned ability and it tends to improve as people mature. So, regarding to this finding understanding the emotional intelligence levels of early adolescents, specifically among different genders may be useful to practitioners to identify areas for other steps of their life and for early adolescents' social activities that are crucial for their achievements in life. For this reason, gender education of mutual learning would be provided to help students learn how to appropriately deal with people.

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