

Available online at <http://www.ijims.com>

ISSN: 2348 – 0343

Gender and socio-economic environment: How do they impact Emotional Intelligence

Vaishali Trivedi

Modern College of Education, Lucknow, India

Abstract

This paper, tries to explain the role of one's gender in his/her emotional intelligence and competencies. Emotional Intelligence is about understanding one's own and other people's emotions along with managing them. It helps him/her inguiding emotions to work along with other abilities in order to fulfill one's goals rather than working against it. In our daily life, we can see that though men and women act same in trivial situations but follow entirely different emotional paths while dealing with day-to-day tasks. Several studies have been conducted regarding the differences in emotional intelligence of men and women and it has been found that, though conclusively one is not better than the other, there are emotional competencies where one has edge over the other. While men are more confident when working alone and are more capable to deal with stress, women are capable of feeling and expressing more complex set of emotions and are more social and can make connections easily. Various scientific studies have been done to give biological clues explaining differences of these emotional responses from men and women but at the same time, it has been found that our social and economic environment also affects why we reacts emotionally in a certain ways.

Key words: gender , socio-economic environment, impact , emotional intelligence

Introduction

Since the mid of 20th century, people started to realize that success in the workplace takes a lot more than book knowledge or even hands-on experience. People at the top of any organization are more likely to be better at emotional intelligence than the people at the bottom.^[3] While emotional intelligence is very much an individual's (emotional) skill, we do see that there is a clear difference between the emotional fabric of men and women. Several researches have been done to find out if one gender is emotionally more intelligent than other or is it one overtakes other in some domains and vice-versa. The most important thing which was found through different researches was that male and female are different not only biologically but emotionally also, which has a great impact on their emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence is not one day deal. Our family, our society, our gender, economic condition all of them contribute a lot in the way we think, handle situation or relationship, how we empathize and most important how to deal with stress. With growing participation of women in every area of work, be it corporate, sport or politics, it has become increasingly more important to understand the role of one's gender in his/her emotional intelligence, or in other words we need to understand in what areas of emotional intelligence, genders effects and that too in what measures. This paper will be stressing on gender and its impact on emotional intelligence, how a male and female are treated in our society right from beginning they are born and as a result how it affects their emotional

intelligence. Also I will try to explain how does gender determines one's emotional responses and eventually facilitates or hinders his or her emotional endeavors. We will also see what types of emotional challenges one is more likely to face because of gender as compared to their companions from other gender.

Literature Review

Emotional Intelligence

"Emotional intelligence is the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth."- Mayer & Salovey, 1997. The five components of emotional intelligence as developed by Daniel Goleman are as follows:

Self-awareness: Recognize and understand your own moods and motivations and their effect on others. To achieve this state, you must be able to monitor your own emotional state and identify your own emotions. Self-awareness depends on one's ability to monitor one's own emotion state and to correctly identify and name one's emotions.^[1]

Self-regulation: The ability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and moods, and the propensity to suspend judgment and to think before acting. Controlling your impulses—instead of being quick to react rashly, you can reign in your emotions and think before responding. You express yourself appropriately.

Internal motivation: Internal motivation is marked by an interest in learning. It is also self-improvement vs. a pursuit of wealth and status (as a pursuit of wealth and status is an external motivator). A passion to work for internal reasons that go beyond money and status -which are external rewards, - such as an inner vision of what is important in life, a joy in doing something, curiosity in learning, a flow that comes with being immersed in an activity. A propensity to pursue goals with energy and persistence.

Empathy: The ability to understand another person's emotional reaction. Awareness or ability to tune in to others and feel what they are feeling is called empathy. Without empathy, we have difficulty sustaining relationships. This is only possible when one has achieved self-awareness—as one cannot understand others until they understand themselves. The ability to understand the emotional makeup of other people gives the skill in treating people according to their emotional reactions.

Social skills: Identifying social cues to establish common ground, manage relationships and build networks. Proficiency in managing relationships and building networks, and an ability to find common ground and build rapport. Hallmarks of social skills include effectiveness in leading change, persuasiveness, and expertise building and leading teams.^[2]

See Table 1: Quadrant of Emotional Intelligence

People with high EQ have a number of strong relationships in all areas of their lives. Emotion is the foundation for creativity, passion, optimism, drive, and transformation. Motivation is a synonym for enthusiasm, initiative, and persistence. Emotional intelligence has been found a reliable predictor of academic performance than general intelligence. Ample of research is done in the previous century concluded that the higher the intelligence of a person the better the academic performance but later observations made in other studies revealed that many adolescent men and women, in spite of having good IQ levels, were not able to show good performance in their

professional life and declining performance is a result of their emotional disturbances, problems in managing relationships and insufficient coping mechanism to deal effectively with environment.

Different factors and Their Relationship with Gender and Emotional Intelligence

Socio-economic Environment variables:

An exploratory study of the relationship between emotional intelligence and socioeconomic status was done by Holmes (2007) in which emotional intelligence was considered as criterion variable and SES as predictor, and measured by household income, parent education and occupation. Bivariate and multivariate correlational analysis revealed significant positive relationship except mother's occupation and household income. Further Namdar, Sahebigh, Ebrahimi and Rahmani (2008) have found a significant relationship between emotional intelligence score and the student's satisfaction of their family socioeconomic status among nursing students.

In order to find out the effect of monthly income on the level of emotional intelligence among B.Ed. teacher trainees (N=300) Gowdhaman and Murugan (2009) have executed an empirical study and results showed that the socio economic status or monthly income do not cause any significant effect on the emotional intelligence.

The relationship between emotional intelligence and socioeconomic status was studied by Jacques (2009) among 221 college students and the study reported that socio economic status did not predicted emotional intelligence.

Cultural effects:

Diener, Suh, Lucas, and Smith (1999) stated that Individualistic cultures emphasize more on the needs of individual hence give more importance to individual's emotional world. Previous research has pointed out that the greater relevance of emotion in this culture is connected to perception of quality of life. Hence, Individualistic culture would have higher levels of perception on themselves. On the other hand, collectivism focuses on people around, individual needs to subordinate to those of the group. So, less attention would be paid on emotional world of the individuals (Fernandez-Berroca et al., 2005)

According to Hofstede (as cited in Stumm, Chamorro-Premuzic, &Furnham, 2009), the term masculinity-femininity refers to the distinctiveness of gender roles within a society. In the study of Paez and Vergara (1995), feminine nations (Chile or Spain) have greater emotional intensity and expressiveness than masculine nations (Belgium or Mexico). According to Basabe, Paez, Valencia, Gonzalez, Rime, and Diener (as cited in Stumm, Chamorro-Premuzic, &Furnham, 2009), higher frequency of positive emotions (joy) and lower frequency of negative emotions (anger) are demonstrated in the culture of femininity.^[7]

Biology of gender:

Some studies have reported gender differences fundamentally in experiential aspects of emotional intelligence, such as perception and emotional facilitation. Other set of studies have found gender differences in strategic aspects of emotional intelligence, such as understanding and managing emotions.Both biological and social explanations have received support from a diverse range of empirical studies on emotion which show greater emotional abilities in women.

Studies of perception, cognition, memory and neural functions have found apparent gender differences. These differences may be attributed to various genetic, hormonal, and environmental factors and do not reflect any overall

superior advantage to either sex. Dr. John Grey explained that men and women communicate, think, feel, react, answer, love and appreciate in a different manner. The deep knowledge about these differences helps to eliminate the frustrations from humane relationships. The self-awareness of men is defined by their ability to obtain the results. The self-awareness of women is defined by their feelings and the quality of her relations.

A woman's brain is predominantly structured to feel empathy, while a man's brain predominantly seeks to understand and construct system. Maybe that's why in the medical and educational area more women work than men, while in the engineering and transporting area, for instance, men are more involved than women. A woman has the ability to see all the details and a man to see the whole situation. Male brain separates language in the left and emotions in the right, while the female's emotions are in both hemispheres. Women are better than men in human relations, in language, emotional and artistic expressiveness, aesthetic appreciation, verbal language and pre-planned tasks. Men are better in performing activities that require spatial skills or in the ability to mentally rotate the image in order to solve a problem. ^[4]

Upbringing of child:

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.

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 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.

Mohanty and Devi, L. (2010) in their study, revealed that good education and occupation of parents in positively and significantly affects the interpersonal relationship (EI) of the adolescents. It means that parents having good occupation have adolescents having the ability in establishing and maintaining mutually satisfying relationship characterized by emotional closeness and intimacy. ^[6]

Emotional competencies of men and women

Studies conducted by Bar-On (2002, p. 39) concluded that gender and age have an impact on emotional intelligence. Males scored higher with intrapersonal intelligence than females. Females exhibited significantly higher interpersonal scores than males. However, no significant correlation existed for stress management and adaptability score with gender and age. Males tended to score higher than females in the general mood scale. Alumran and Punamaki (2008) conducted a study examining gender and age differences in emotional intelligence among 312 Bahraini adolescents and discovered that gender not age was significantly correlated with emotional intelligence. Girls showed higher interpersonal skills. These findings support earlier studies conducted by Day & Carroll, 2004; Ciarrochi, Chan, & Bajar, 2001; Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999; Palmer, Monach, Gignac, & Stough, 2003; Van Rooy, Alonso, & Viswesvaran, 2004.

Similarly, Ciarrochi, Chan, Bajar (2004) found that girls were more adept at perceiving emotions, regulating emotions, and utilizing emotions for building relationships. Palmer, Monach, Gignac, and Stough (2003) confirmed those findings with women attaining higher levels of interpersonal skills and emotional awareness. Although, Petrides and Furnham (2003) discovered that men perceive themselves to possess higher EI levels than women. Hopkins (2004, p. 148) concluded that women leaders demonstrate a broad range of emotional competencies. Hopkins stated, "Women are expected to demonstrate the soft skills, and therefore emotional intelligence competencies are not acknowledged as extraordinary behavior." Mandell and Pherwani (2003) affirmed the gender differences between males and females in emotional intelligence among female managers with a mean score of 109.56 for female managers and a mean score of 98.31 for male managers. Differences in emotional intelligence levels indicate a definite gap in workers' ability to cope with stress and deal with crisis management so much a part of the corporate world.

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.

Petrides, Furnham, and Martin (2004) also conducted research which required participants to estimate their parents' EQ. Results showed mothers being significantly higher than fathers. According to Goleman (as cited in Petrides, Furnham, & Martin, 2004), this is explained by reflection of perception on mothers as the 'emotional managers' in the family and their tendency to spend more time on take caring children.

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.

The improvement of the emotional intelligence should start in the childhood by education given by the adults to the children. The emotional knowledge should be used as a guide in the social world for the children and the teenagers. It is known that parents talk to their daughters rather than sons about emotions. And many adults make the mistake to tell a little boy, for instance, "don't cry, you are not a girl." What message will the little boy get? He will assume that it is not allowed for a boy/man to show his emotions. And he will grow up with this misconception, he will try hard to hide his emotions in the future and this will further aggravate his way in life. The emotional intelligence can be developed successfully during childhood through good education given by the adults to children, as well as during life through self- education, for both genders. Keeping a balance between emotions and judgments ensures unbiased judgments and avoid errors and prejudice. ^[5]

Discussion

Emotional Intelligence is not a single skill, but a combination of many fundamental human (emotional) skills - such as understanding what you or others are feeling and managing emotions e.g. stress, anger, depression, worry or anxiety. It also involves managing emotions in others - by sympathizing, motivating or resolving their conflict. It is a subjective skill. Though many tools are available to express it in numeric, these measures are more or less relevant only when we are doing a comparative study. There has been a lot of studies to find out who is conclusively superior between male and female in terms of Emotional Intelligence (using measurement tools developed by different techniques developed by researchers) but as evident from researches done so far i.e. Biological, psychological and empirical studies, we cannot say for certain if one is emotionally superior than the other. What did come out of studies is that men and women have some edge in certain domains of emotions based on their gender.

When it comes to deal with situations testing their emotional management skills or judging emotional intelligent, both genders show some characteristic difference in their approaches and responses. Below we will be touching several key emotional areas based on our understanding from various research studies and see how each gender is likely to react to the given emotional circumstances.

Emotional Upheavals (stress, depression or anxiety): As evident from researches done, we can say that in this domain men are generally more emotionally intelligent than women. Men are able to handle stress better and women have been found to be more prone to depression. Similarly when it comes to take (emotional) shock, men have been found to have an edge absorbing them than women. Similarly women suffer more from anxiety. The reason being women feel and express a wider range of emotions and they dwell on the issues a lot more than men do.

Empathy, Sympathy and Care: Known since the dawn of our race and also confirmed by different scientific and empirical researches is the fact that women outrun men in empathy. Since our childhood, we have realized this fact by knowing that mothers are always considered as epitome of care. Other researches have also found that this trend continues even further in life as they are often more expressive in their caring emotions as sisters and wives. Through several studies, it has been found that wives are better able to recognize the stress of their husbands than the other way. Similarly women are found to be easily disturbed by other's pain (empathy). Similarly if a group of girls are playing, and any girl gets hurt, they stop playing and take care of their distressed partner (care) which is not the case for boys.

Team work, Independence and Confidence: As mentioned above, several psychological tests have proved that men are considered to be more of lonely and act-alone type compared to women who always try to form groups and make (emotional) connections. One reason might be the social environment where men are supposed to not show their weakness and are expected to take care of themselves. Women on the other hand have been found to be more involved in teamwork and participation.

Aggression and Confrontation: Men and women both show aggression from time to time but they have very different way to show their aggressions - both in terms of expression and tone of aggression. Men's aggression has been found to be more of confrontation and upfront verbose and many a times involves fight. Women have been found to follow indirect vendetta such as vicious gossip and ostracism.

Conflict Management: Researchers have found that men and women follow very different paths when it comes to resolve their conflicts. Men are more into getting the solution and tend to talk to the point and about facts. Women have been found to be more inclined to discuss the issue. They are more towards getting their problem acknowledged and emotions conveyed. A classic example we can think of is the way a couple resolves the problem where husband tries to find the solution and quickly get away with it while wife would like to discuss it more.

Relationship Building and Socializing: Men are inherently found to be driven more by self-dependence and autonomy while women have been more inclined towards connectedness. Therefore it has been found that women are more likely to form a larger social circle than men. As an example we can always find even stranger women to form groups and start talking to each other while men in the same situation are more likely to keep to themselves.

Roots are in socio economic environment and biology

It has been agreed upon by researchers that emotional intelligence is a skill that can be learned and improved. The way men and women act differently is influenced not only by their biology but also by their socio-economic training. As mentioned previously, women are more capable of understanding and forming/expressing a larger and more complex set of emotions than men. Their linguistic capabilities develop rather early in their childhood than men and limbic brain is bigger and more developed (hence more expressive and dominant in forming their emotions). But socio-economic factors also impact how men and women act and react. The roots of these factors are visible in the beginning of childhood itself. The way parents treat their kids have been found to be a key indicator. While parents discuss causes and consequences with their sons, with girls they discuss more about emotions and connections. A

girl child playing with her doll and imitating her family with it does come from her inherent biology (as they are able to understand emotions of a family better at that stage than their kid brothers who play with their toy guns and cars) but their surrounding social environment only helps this. A boy child, having developed their right brain (the one that deals with space, speed etc.) more than girl child, is more inclined towards playing with cars and toy guns. As they grow girls get closer to their mothers and starts understanding emotional relationships in family while boys are more drawn out of family circle and more into sports.

So we can see that the biological impetus is only taken further by favorable social factors. When this social environment gets disturbed by unusual events then typical Emotional Intelligence prediction also go awry e.g. a girl child taking care of her family or doing job away from her home town. Here Social factors make her learn new emotional skills such as independence, able to manage emotions (as no support from family) and protect themselves when confronted. Here again it is proved that social factors shape and sometimes reshape our emotional learnings. Economic factors also play their role in emotional learning. They are not different from social factors but are mentioned differently so that could be understood in detail. Economy helps not only better education but also better job, work environment, open society and more exposure. It eventually leads an individual to have more opportunity to hone their emotional learning and skills and hence become more emotionally intelligent.

In essence, as researches have pointed out, our brain has plasticity when it comes to improving emotional intelligence. Gender plays a role in forming our natural emotional inclination to all life situations but in most of the trivial cases, it is same for men and women. Only in some specific situation it is distinguishable. But other factors (social, economic, age etc.) also affect our overall emotional intelligence. We keep learning and enhancing these skills with our experiences and exposure to new challenges etc. Emotional learning is an ongoing process with lifelong training. Biology will always remain the underlying layer forming the basis of emotions of men and women but other factors will eventually be able to tone it up or down based on life's experiences and learnings.

Conclusion

Scientists and researchers have still not come to conclude about who among men and women is more emotionally intelligent. Part of the reason for the question remain unanswered is that emotional intelligence is a very complex concept covering a wide range of human emotions, behavioural actions and responses. On a similar note a lot has been studied regarding effect of gender on different human emotional competencies and on how gender affects typical emotional responses under various situations. While Men have been found to be more independent, confident, talk to the point and are able to handle stress management than women but lag behind when it comes to express emotions and understand feelings of others. Women are also more social and connect to others more easily. They are better at understanding pain and stress of other people and naturally more caring. The root of different emotional fabric of men and women comes from their inherent biology but only to be further enhanced by our social and economic environment. At the same time, given right environment and grooming, one can learn desired emotional skills irrespective of his or her gender since our brain is not rigid and acts as plastic when it comes to learning new things and can easily adapt to new socio economic changes.

Further research and study: Emotional intelligence and its relation with gender has been studied a lot but still there are several questions unanswered and needs to be poked further to have better understanding of how they act together and EI is influenced by one's gender. We also need to do more research to study the relationship of different components of emotional skills with gender to get some definitive idea. The study will involve not only empirical analysis but also will require psychological tests and training to understand how much inherent gender effect can be undermined with training. The upside of such a study is its application in several pockets of life - on the home front, we will be able to understand the relationship of kids (girl child and boy child) with parents and between husband and wife, while on the other hand, in office and public life, one can effectively utilize or leverage edge from different emotional skills based on gender for effective work allocation or completion. It will eventually help leaders in understanding different emotional needs of their workforce based on their gender and apply entirely different solutions to resolve their emotional or psychological concerns and issues based on the understanding of relationship of gender and emotional intelligence. In a world divided by half based on gender, studying how one's emotional needs and understanding is different from other's will really bridge the gap between the two and bring them together and multifold their achievements.

References

Websites

1. http://www.sonoma.edu/users/s/swijtink/teaching/philosophy_101/paper1/goleman.htm
2. <http://inspirebusinesssolutions.com/blog/5-main-components-of-emotional-intelligence>
3. <http://www.asacenter.org/Resources/articleDetail.cfm?ItemNumber=13040>

Journal

4. Vaibhav P. Birwatkar. Gender: An Emotional Intelligence Perspective, Future of Medical Education
5. FatanehNaghavi, Ma'rofRedzuan. The Relationship Between Gender and Emotional Intelligence, World Applied Sciences Journal 15 (4): 555-561, 2011 ISSN 1818-4952
6. FatanehNaghavi, Ma'rofRedzuan, ArezooAsgari, MojganMirza. Gender Differences and Construct of the Early Adolescent's Emotional Intelligence, Life Science Journal, 2012; 9(2)

Thesis

7. Lim Tze Shin, Gender Differences in Emotional Intelligence: Are you as smart as you think emotionally [B.Sc. Honors Thesis]. Selangor, Malaysia – UniversitiTunku Abdul Rahman, 2011

Figures and Tables

Table 1: Quadrant of Emotional Intelligence ^[1]

