

Emotional Competence and Social Adjustment among College Students

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R. Saravanakumar

Ph.D Research Scholar

*Department of Education, Bharathidasan University
Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, India*

Dr. K. K. Rajendran

Associate Professor

*Department of Education, Bharathidasan University
Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, India*

Abstract

When students enter college, it is a crucial development phase that is characterized by academic, emotional and social issues. Emotional competence has a significant role in helping students to deal with interpersonal relationship, deal with stress and adapt to new environments. The current research analysed the connection between social adjustment and emotion competence in college students. A correlational research design was used, which was quantitative in nature. Undergraduate students in the arts and science colleges were stratified and sampled by the use of a sample size of 400 students. The Emotional Competence Scale and the Social Adjustment Inventory were the means of data collection. Data analysis was done through descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and regression analysis. The results showed that the students were moderately emotionally competent and socially adjusted. The relationship between emotional competence and social adjustment was found to have a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.61, p < .01$). Regression analysis showed that emotional competence is an important predictor of social adjustment, which accounts to 37 percent of the variability. The paper has discussed the significance of cultivating emotional competencies in colleges to promote the social inclusion of students and their overall happiness.

Keywords: Social Adjustment, Emotional Competence, College Students, Emotional Regulation, Interpersonal Skills, Student Well-being.

Introduction

The period of adolescence is replaced by the period of adulthood that is characterised by great psychological and social transformations. College students are faced with new academic challenges, peer networks, cultural diversity and heightened independence. To be successful in these challenges, it is necessary to rely not only on intellectual competence but also on emotions and interpersonal skills. Emotional competence, which is described as the capacity to be able to perceive, understand, control and convey emotions is becoming one of the supporting factors in the personal and social growth of the students (Mayer and Salovey, 1997).

The concept of social adjustment describes the capacity of an individual to develop satisfying interpersonal contacts, adjust to either social settings, and have a stable and harmonious interaction (Baker and Siryk, 1984). In the case of college students, the ability to adapt socially is associated with academic persistence, psychological health and stress minimization. Emotionally competent students can easily regulate their emotions, conflict management and healthy relationships with peers. On the other hand, ineffective emotional management can result in withdrawal, interpersonal conflict and adjustment problems. Even though there is an increased interest in the study of emotional intelligence and competence, there is scant empirical research on how the two factors influence social adjustment in college students, especially in regional settings. The gap is aimed to be filled with the current study.

Review of Literature

Emotional intelligence framework developed by Mayer and Salovey (1997) forms the basis of emotional competence as they conceptualized emotional intelligence as the aptitude to sense, facilitate, cognize and control emotions. Goleman (1995) also noted the practical implications of emotional skills both at a social or a work situation.

It has been found that emotional competence is related to better interpersonal relationships, managing stress, and having a good psychological state (Brackett et al., 2019). With a higher level of emotional regulation, students are more empathetic and socially sensitive, which are the keys to successful interactions with their peers.

In connection to academic success and mental health, social adjustment in college is a topic that has been examined abundantly (Baker and Siryk, 1984). It has been proposed that more emotionally aware and controlled students are more strongly attached to their peers and socially integrated (Parker et al., 2004). Recent studies indicate that emotional skills are among the best predictors of social connectedness and resilience in institutions of higher learning (Extremera et al., 2020). Nonetheless, there have been limited researches on the predictive correlation between emotional competence and social adjustment in undergraduate communities. As such, the paper attempts to empirically examine this relationship.

Objectives

1. To identify the emotional competence levels in college students.
2. To establish the extent of social adjustment in college students.
3. The aim of the study was to determine the association between emotional competence and social adjustment in college students.
4. To find out whether emotional competence is a predictor of social adjustment in college students.

Hypotheses

H1: Emotional competence and social adjustment have a significant relationship among college students.

H2: Social adjustment among college students can be greatly predicted by emotional competence.

Methodology

Research Design

A correlational research design was considered to be quantitative and involved examining the nature of the relationship between emotional competence and social adjustment.

Sample

The size of the sample was 400 undergraduate students who were stratified through random sampling in arts and science colleges. There were both male and female students that belonged to various fields of study.

Instruments

1. Emotional Competence Scale: The scale has captured the dimensions of emotional awareness, emotional regulation, empathy as well as emotional expression. The tool had 30 items with a five-point Likert scale. The coefficient of reliability (Cronbach alpha) was 0.88.
2. Social Adjustment Inventory: This measure evaluated peer relationships, social participation, conflict resolution and college life adaptation. It included 25 items to be managed in a five-point scale. The coefficient of reliability was 0.90.

Statistical Techniques

- Mean and Standard Deviation
- Pearson Product-moment Correlation.
- Simple Linear Regression

The significance level was set to 0.05.

Findings with Interpretations

Data obtained on 400 undergraduate college students were averaged by the aid of the descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and regression analysis. The significance level was set to 0.05.

Level of Emotional Competence

Table 1: Level of Emotional Competence among College Students

| Level of Emotional Competence | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------------------|------------|-------------|
| Low | 70 | 17.5% |
| Moderate | 230 | 57.5% |
| High | 100 | 25.0% |
| Total | 400 | 100% |

The results presented in Table 1 indicate that most students (57.5%) have moderate emotional competence. Approximately, 25 percent display high emotional competence, and 17.5 percent are under the low category. This means that a majority of college students are either building sufficient emotional awareness and regulation abilities, but still it can be refined.

Level of Social Adjustment

Table 2: Level of Social Adjustment among College Students

| Level of Social Adjustment | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------------|------------|-------------|
| Low | 65 | 16.25% |
| Moderate | 240 | 60.0% |
| High | 95 | 23.75% |
| Total | 400 | 100% |

As it is shown in Table 2, 60 percent of students show moderate social adjustment. Almost 23.75% demonstrate high adjustment and 16.25% portray low social adjustment. This implies that the majority of students are relatively socially appropriate, but some minority may have challenges with peer relations and also adjustment to the college life.

Relationship between Emotional Competence and Social Adjustment

Table 3: Pearson’s Correlation between Emotional Competence and Social Adjustment

| Variables | r | p-value |
|--|------|---------|
| Emotional Competence & Social Adjustment | 0.61 | 0.000 |

The correlation analysis shows that there exists a strong positive correlation between emotional competence and social adjustment ($r = 0.61$, $p < 0.01$). The r is positive indicating that increased level of emotional competence is linked with improved social adaptation among college students. The p -value (0.000) is less than 0.05, which proves that the correlation is statistically significant. Thus, the hypothesized statement according to which emotional competence and social adjustment are significantly related is accepted.

Prediction of Social Adjustment by Emotional Competence

Table 4: Regression Analysis Predicting Social Adjustment

Model Summary

| R | R ² | Adjusted R ² | Std. Error |
|------|----------------|-------------------------|------------|
| 0.61 | 0.37 | 0.36 | 8.45 |

ANOVA

| Source | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | p-value |
|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|---------|
| Regression | 18562.34 | 1 | 18562.34 | 232.45 | 0.000 |
| Residual | 31544.21 | 398 | 79.26 | | |
| Total | 50106.55 | 399 | | | |

Coefficients

| Predictor | B | Std. Error | Beta | t | p-value |
|----------------------|-------|------------|------|-------|---------|
| Constant | 48.32 | 3.12 | — | 15.48 | 0.000 |
| Emotional Competence | 0.72 | 0.05 | 0.61 | 15.25 | 0.000 |

The results of the regression analysis show that emotional competence is a significant predictor of social adjustment ($F = 232.45$, $p < 0.05$). The value of R^2 at 0.37 implies that emotional competence captures 37 percent of the social adjustment variance in college students. The positive regression coefficient ($B = 0.72$) implies that a one-unit rise in emotional competence will lead to a rise in social adjustment by 0.72 units. The beta value of the stock ($= 0.61$) is standard and therefore represents a high predictive power.

Therefore, emotional competence is a very important predictor of social adjustment and the hypothesis according to which emotional competence is a major predictor of social adjustment is accepted.

Major of Results

1. Most of the students are characterized by moderate emotional competence.
2. Most of them show moderate social adjustment.
3. Social adjustment is positively related to emotional competence.
4. Social adjustment is predicted by emotional competence as it explains 37% of the variance.

Educational Implications

The conclusions of the current research are insightful in regards to higher educational institutions, faculty and staff, counselors and policy makers. Given that the emotional competence was identified to be a key factor on social adjustment in college students, the institutions should acknowledge emotional development as a crucial part of whole person education and not a supplement of academic performance.

To start with, the socio-emotional learning (SEL) programs must be incorporated into the curriculum of colleges. Emotional awareness, emotional regulation, development of empathy, and interpersonal communication workshops may enhance students and help them build relationships and solve conflicts well. Integrating the aspect of emotional skills development in orientation programs and value education classes can help provide a less difficult social adjustment to college life.

Second, counseling and mentoring interventions are to be concentrated on the improvement of emotional management and coping mechanisms. Common stress management, conflict resolution, and peer interaction skills sessions can be organized regularly in professional counseling units. Social withdrawal and maladjustment can be avoided by early detection of low emotionally competent students.

Third, faculty members need to embrace conducive classroom behaviors which promote open communication, participatory learning, and interaction among peers. Empathy, cooperation and social bonding amongst students can be established through group discussions, team projects and interactive matters. The establishment of learning environments that are safe emotionally leads to academic and social development.

Fourth, institutions are encouraged to support extracurricular and co-curricular activities which encourage social activities. Engaging in clubs, cultural activities, and community service enables the students to apply emotional and interpersonal skill in the actual social context of the life, hence enhancing the adjustment.

Lastly, emotional competence as a measure of student well-being and retention should be identified by policy makers in the higher learning institutions. Social adjustment of students can be very much improved by institutional policies aiming at the promotion of psychological health, peer mentoring services, and the creation of inclusive campus cultures.

Conclusion

The current research paper investigated the connection existed between emotional competence and social adjustment among college students. The results showed that most of the students displayed moderate scores in emotional competence and social adjustment. Noteworthy beneficial correlation was established between emotional competence and social adjustment, which means that students with more powerful emotional perceptiveness, control, and empathy can fit into social settings better.

Regression analysis also supported the same fact that emotional competence is a significant predictor of social adjustment, which accounts for a high level of variance. This brings out the importance of emotional skills in interpersonal functioning and adaptation in institutions of higher learning. Emotional competence does not only ease positive peer relations but also enhances resilience and social confidence.

Finally, emotional competence can be considered a platform of healthy social adjustment in college students. Colleges and universities should thus focus on the development of emotional skills as well as academic education. The enhanced emotional competence will help to safeguard a better social integration, improvement of the well-being, and more supportive campus atmosphere among the students.

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