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Emotional Intelligence (EI) In Stress Management: Unlocking The Way To Career Building And Well-Being Of Students

Ruma Gayen

Research Scholar, Department of Education, Kazi Nazrul University, Paschim Bardhaman, West Bengal, India

Abstract:

Stress is an inevitable part of our life, and the ability to manage it effectively is vital for our mental and emotional well-being. Every student aspires for a successful career which can be hampered by the inability to manage stress. To manage stresses, Emotional Intelligence is the necessary psychological factor by which a student is able to control himself with positive outlook. Developing proper emotional intelligence among students is imperative as it equips them with the necessary skills to recognize, understand and regulate their emotions in a proper way to combat the adverse situation. These skills help them manage stress and navigate their potential towards building a successful career.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Stress, Possible causes of stress in students' life, Effect of stress, Role of Emotional Intelligence in Stress Management, Strategies of Stress Management.

In academia, intelligence and hard work are not the sole parameters of being successful; there is another psychological aspect of successful persons called Emotional Intelligence. As we know, there are a plenty of students who are unsuccessful in life in spite of being bright academically. Intellectual ability is not enough to achieve desired goals and successful career in life; it can help a person to get into the work, but Emotional Intelligence helps in management of emotions when having problems, challenges in life. Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to understand, use, recognize and manage one's own emotions properly and positively to remove stress and to sustain a strong and harmonious relationship with others. It helps to face and overcome challenges and solve conflicts. It also helps to be determined, develop strong work ethic and achieve success and career goals despite adversities. It enables a person to be pragmatic, a critical thinker and a good decision maker. High level of Emotional Intelligence has been found to be a forecaster of psychological well-being and healthy psychological adaption. Lower level of emotional intelligence raises the possibility of violent behaviour.

Children, teenagers, or adults who are going to school, college or university and is learning something can be called as a student, WHO defines 'Adolescents' as individuals of 10-19 years age group and 'Youth' as the 15-24-year age group, Undergraduate students usually belong to age category of 18 to 24 (Roy et al., 2021). Students' life is the time where the emotional issues arise mostly. Especially at the adolescent period, students gradually started to separate from their parents, guardians and elders who actually try to guide them in a right way. In student's life, especially in the end of school life and beginning of college life, in the university life, one of the greatest obstacles they face is academic stress due to unhealthy competition, an incompleteness of course, dropped course, study load, pressure of guardians to study more to have outstanding result or experiencing personal issues. In that case, many students lose their emotional stability and unable to handle the stresses and started to be victim of numerous troubles in their present and future life and career. Career is only the aim for which every student actually struggles hard to establish with an esteemed post. But in this competitive world, building a well-established career is the most difficult struggle. Due to this difficulty, students are getting distressed day by day which can have great negative impact on their career to achieve. Therefore, stress management is also vital for them.

Objectives of the study: Emotional Intelligence plays a pivotal role in stress management. Thus, it is very important to teach children to develop their Emotional Intelligence to reduce their stress and unlock the way to build a well-established career. Hence, this study aims to discuss about Emotional Intelligence and Stress Management of students in details. This study explores how Emotional Intelligence does contribute in managing stress and aims to explain the ways to manage the stress in students' life.

Emotional Intelligence: Emotional Intelligence refers to the ability to understand, use, recognize, regulate and manage one's own emotions properly and positively to remove stress, to sustain strong and harmonious relationship with others, to face and overcome challenges and to solve both inner and outer conflict. Emotional Intelligence helps to be determined in work and get success in any field of work, achieve your career and other goals. It can also help to manage one's own feelings, to prepare for action, and enable a person to take decisions regarding the matters most important to him. High level of Emotional Intelligence has been found to be a forecaster of psychological well-being and healthy psychological adaptation. Lower level of emotional intelligence raises the possibility of inaction and consequently frustration and violent behaviour. Emotional Intelligence is also denoted as the predictor of good academic performance and achievement, positive vibes and good career of students. In different stages of education, students generally go through a stressful life due to huge academic pressure, unhealthy academic competition, fear of uncertain future etc. In that case, stress management is very much vital for good performance and good academic career. Adequate level of Emotional Intelligence is also very much necessary to handle the stresses in right time because effective stress management is an art to manage stresses with the challenging circumstances in an immature student's life.

Definitions of Emotional Intelligence:

Mayer and Salovey (1997) further elaborated that emotional intelligence is the ability to perceive emotions, to assess and generate emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions, so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth.

Daniel Goleman (1998) defines Emotional Intelligence is “the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships”.

Basic Components of Emotional Intelligence (EI): EI is not same as IQ, it is identical as to academic intelligence, which defines as the cognitive ability that basically helps in gaining new knowledge, in adjusting with changing environment. Emotional Intelligence generally does not get changed over a person’s life time, it can be nurtured, developed in a healthy way by teaching and learning the emotional intelligence skill. EI has some basic components such as:

- **Self-awareness:** Self-awareness is the basic trait which is defined as the heart of emotional intelligence. It is the ability to diagnose and understand of one’s own feelings, moods, emotions, drives as well as their impact on others. It is the ability to be emotionally aware which leads a person to assess himself properly and contributes to elevate the level of self-confidence. Self-awareness comprises emotional self-awareness that helps to understand the feeling of oneself and also the reason behind that feeling. This awareness also helps in realization one’s own strength and limitations which is called acute self-assessment. Person with high accurate self-assessment is aware of his own abilities and confines along with he can be aware about his faults, check his own behaviour and try to learn from their mistakes, and give effort to improve where it is required.
- **Self-regulation:** Self-regulation refers to self-control, that is-the ability to regulate your emotions and behaviour with the demand of the situations which may lead to act appropriately in various situations. It strives a person to resist for an urge, drives him to put endeavour and act for reaching to the anticipated goals.
- **Interpersonal skills:** Interpersonal skill is a social skill which comprises of being aware, understanding, and appreciating the feelings, thoughts of others. It helps to develop constructive, cooperative and empathetic attitude, helps to be involved in social group. This skill helps in establishing and balancing a satisfying relationship with others.
- **Adaptability:** Adaptability is the ability to adjust with the surrounding environment to satisfy one’s needs and demands. It is the ability to cope with feelings, thoughts, emotions and behaviour with the changing circumstances to equilibrium in the environment. A student must have the ability to cope with any problematic, difficult situation, to adapt the challenges with a positive optimistic attitude to satisfy his own needs and keep balances with the circumstances for continuing his further education.

- **Stress Tolerance:** Stress tolerance is the ability to bear the painful stressed moments or adverse events, and strong emotions without sinking into the trouble or without breaking down, rather energetically coping with stress.
- **General Mood:** There are two factors that facilitate to have emotionally stabled behaviour: optimism and happiness. Optimism refers to the positivity which helps to build an attitude to look at the brighter side of life even in the adversity, never lose the hope, never being given up. Happiness refers to the feelings of satisfied with one's life, to enjoy oneself and others, and to have fun and express a positive outlook.
- **Motivation** – Motivation is a force which makes a person energetic to put effort for struggling and achieving the goals. It is that factor which enables a person to act with a positive attitude over the challenges and adversity. Motivation can be internally or externally. Internal motivation is defined as intrinsic motivation which comes from the inner force, own desires of a person; whereas external motivation is defined as extrinsic motivation that comes from the outward force like encouragement, praises, positive feedback. For having proper level of emotional intelligence, motivation has sole contribution as a factor.
- **Empathy** - It is that ability which helps a person to understand why any person is in highly charged emotional situation or why he gets anger, loses emotional control. It helps a person to have an empathetic attitude for others and enable that person to understand feelings, emotions, mental state of others. It is also the ability to understand the causes of emotions and their relationship to our human psychological needs, especially our unmet emotional needs. It elevates patience in a person.

What is Stress?

Stress is a psychological response that every individual experiences in his life in many cases. Stress can be defined as a real or anticipated disruption of homeostasis or an anticipated threat to well-being (Ulrich-Lai & Herman, 2009). Stress is a natural part of everyone's life which may arise in different forms due to different reasons. It is that psychological issue where everyone reacts to it both physically and mentally either to fight with it or to flee from it. If anyone accepts the stressful situation with a negative attitude, he would feel more distressed, depressed, anxious. Distress is another form of stress which may provoke a person intensely with negativity. Distress is defined as bad stress that may affect a person negatively and in a destructive way. But on the other hand, there is another form of stress which is defined as eustress that leads a person to feel positive, optimistic, strong to fight and overcome the challenges. This eustress is denoted as good stress for a human being. Eustress helps a person to be energized to confront challenges and drives to antidote to boredom. The impact of stressful situation on an individual generally depends how an individual perceives of that event or situation. If a person thinks the situation is unmanageable, uncontrolled, then his stress will get turned into distress and lead him to the destructive ways. It means it's all about to perception of person to stress: the man who accept an event with positive stressor whereas other person experience same event as a negative stressor.

If stress occurs in small amount for a short period of time, it is acceptable and quite natural. At times it can be a blessing in disguise as it facilitates a person to be more energetic and productive. Nevertheless, when there are high levels of stress and if it is experienced over a longer period of time, it can cause severe mental and physical problems (Alsulami et al., 2018).

Stress in student's life is very natural specially for students in higher education due to excessive academic-related demands and pressure that sometimes shatter their adaptive capabilities with adversity. Stress in student's life impact very badly, they lose their emotional control which in turn affect their academic performance and achievement and block the path of their career building due to emotional disbalance and discouragement towards studies.

Possible Causes of Stress in Student's Life: Stress can happen for various reasons. Students suffer from stress frequently and the most obvious reasons behind stress in their students' life are:

- Increased academic pressure, changing academic habits, heavy course loads may result in increased stress in student's life. In this competitive world, unhealthy competition among the students is getting raised day by day, thus students start to feel stressed to have progress by competing with others for achieving the desired results with the best which is also a big reason for increasing stress in students.
- Students often have to move new institutions for higher studies, for example primary to high school, high school to college or college to university; students sometimes find it difficult to cope with the new environments which may cause stress.
- The issues in balancing the academic side perfectly along with practicing the extra-curricular activities like sports, drawing, dancing, singing may result to enhance the stresses in students.
- Sometimes weak financial condition, earning responsibilities in early age among poor students may hamper their academic performance, decrease their academic motivation which may cause depression and stress among them.
- Sometimes personal causes in life like family issues, failure in relationship, losing close friends, death of family members etc. can elevate the stress level among students which can be obstacles to their academic performance.
- Insecure future career or lack of job opportunity has been identified as the most vital cause of raising emotional disturbance and stresses in students now-a-days.
- High expectations of parents and family can instil severe stresses in children. In many cases, it is observed that parents are putting pressure on their children to be rank holder in semester or exams. They put their personal aspirations forcefully on their child to fulfil societal expectations which can be detrimental to students mental health and may lead to severe stresses and frustrations.
- In many cases, parents compare the academic performance of their children with children of their colleagues or friends. This put unnecessary pressure on the students

to do better and cause severe mental health issues. It may also lead to low self-esteem among them.

- Emerging needs to be connected in technology, internet and to be present and responsive in social media have also been found to be a major cause behind elevated stress level among students.

Effects of Stress in students: Stress can affect a student both physically and psychologically which may result in emotional disturbance, unnatural behaviour, adjustment issues and hamper their academic performance and achievements. If a student finds himself experiencing physical illness, mental issues, emotional disturbance frequently, then he is likely to feel distressed. Some major effects of getting stressed are:

- **Physical Health Issues:** Frequent stress can cause physical issues in students or in any individual like hormonal imbalances specially in girls' students. Stress hormones can raise digestive issues and gastrointestinal problems, unnatural blood pressure, can raise the feeling of fatigue, headache, weakened the immune system. It may also increase back pain, muscle tension, makes sleeping disorder like insomnia, heart palpitation, hypertension, skin problems. Sometimes, it may reduce appetite for food or in some cases may cause increased appetite for unhealthy foods. If a student is unfit and unhygienic, it would hamper his academic interest, motivation, attention which as a whole can result to bad academic performance and an uncertain future.
- **Emotional Issues:** Once stressors stimulate one's instincts, he may experience numerous emotional disturbance and emotional issues like raising anxiety, depression, irritation, anger, fears, overthinking, burnout. Stress hormones raise frequent mood swings in students, makes some different type of phobia, makes student unable to utilize their emotion in a proper way.
- **Psychological Issues:** If a student does feel distressed frequently, he would be demotivated to his academia, interest and concentration would get decreased for learning, would lose self-confidence, memorizing power would also get decreased, the students would be unable to remember the learnt things even he would be unable to remember the things learned in last class.
- **Aggression:** Once stressors start to stimulate a person even with the slightest provocation, it makes him irritable, violent, rudeness and hostility in his behaviour, loss his patience, develop short-temper issues.
- **Behavioural Issues:** Frequent stresses can strive to have some behavioural issues like feeling isolated, having aggressive behaviour, uncontrolled speech and bad language, rude in voice, lacking in time management, inability in adjustment, make student unable to balance healthy relationship with peers, teachers or some others.

Role of Emotional Intelligence in stress management: Emotional intelligence plays a pivotal role in recognizing stress, Students who have high levels of emotional intelligence, are able to understand and control their emotions better and this may facilitate them to develop some skills to manage their stresses, overcome the stressful situation and help in establish a good career in future by focusing on their present life. Emotional Intelligence

helps in better mental health and well-being, job performance. By developing Emotional Intelligence, one can be able to be more conscious to the early signs of stress, such as increased irritability, difficulty in concentrating, or physical symptoms like headaches or fatigue. Knowing these indications of getting stress allows a person to follow proactive strategies to manage stress before it worsens for longer.

- **Identify the Source of Stress:** The first step of handling a stressful situation is to figure out what is, actually stressing you out. To understand the aspects of the situation that make things difficult for you can help you to find out the way to manage these feelings, to solve the problem of causing stress and to reduce the stresses. A person with high emotional intelligence always tries to identify the source of stresses, source of problems at first which leads him to come out from the adverse situation.
- **Self-Awareness:** A basic component of EI is self-awareness which enables individuals to identify the emotions and triggers associated with stress. In a stressful situation, a student with having adequate level of self-awareness can be able to recognize his/her own strength besides having limitations, weakness and try to restart with a positive vibe instead of giving up after being failed.
- **Emotional regulation:** Emotionally intelligent individuals can have the ability to regulate, manage their emotion in a right manner in a stressful situation. Proper level of Emotional Intelligence strives to act and behave wisely according the situation. For this managing ability, an individual should follow some strategy like deep breathing, mindfulness, or progressive muscle relaxation.
- **Self-control:** Sometimes there are certain aspects of a situation you can change, even if you cannot change the overall situation. When it is impossible to change the situation, it gets necessity to focus in changing one's own-self and need to have proper self-control ability. Self-control can help a person to feel more empowered and less helpless when you are handling a stressful situation.
- **Attitude:** It is not in our hand to always control the situation we face, but we do have a choice to choose the way of how we face it. So, a person can perceive an attitude which can contribute in determining whether he perceives each situation as a threat or a challenge. A person with high EI always seeks to have a positive attitude to the adverse situation and take the situation as a challenge and never quit on the situation. Therefore, he can be able to avoid the stresses in adversity.
- **Cognitive reformation:** EI enables students to challenge and reframe negative thoughts, promoting a more balanced and positive perspective on stressful situations.
- **Problem-solving:** Emotionally intelligent individuals do not afraid of facing challenges, they always confront the challenges with creativity, positivity and adaptability, which helps to reduce stress, to manage the stresses. Proper level of EI leads a person to solve a problem, conflict by thinking, analysing the problems critically and more intelligently.

- **Social support:** Individuals with strong social skills like communication skill, interpersonal skill can build and maintain a network of supportive relationships, providing them with the emotional resources needed to cope with stress.
- **Decision-Making Ability:** High emotional intelligence improves decision-making abilities. The students who have a good understanding of themselves and are able to calm in any difficult situation, can remove all irrelevant emotions, anger, fear and can have the proper decision-making ability.
- **Emotional Intelligence and Communication:** Emotional intelligence is closely related to communication skills. Individuals with high level of EIs tend to have proper communication abilities. A proper communication skill is also necessary to manage a stressful situation for students.
- **Better personal and social adaptation:** A person with high EI is able to cope with the challenging difficult situation than a less emotionally intelligent one. They seem to have a good personality, well-adjusted behaviour, have better social adaptability to keep balances his surrounding environment and to satisfied his needs.
- **Building Resilience with Emotional Intelligence:** Emotional intelligence has sole contribution in one's resilience which leads a person to fight, to be strong and positive in adverse and stressful situation. People who are high in EI are also able to reduce the stress you feel as they manage their daily life and pick themselves up when they fall. In fact, emotional intelligence is considered to be a direct source of resilience.
- **Emotional Intelligence and Self-Motivation:** Emotionally intelligent person is able to recognize his own strength and limitation, able to understand own feelings along with recognizing the cause behind that feeling, are able to control his own emotions, thus he also can motivate to pick own-self up when he breaks down, gets failure. So, after getting failure in academic, not having good result, unable to establish the career on right time, a student with high level of EI never gives upon anything, he always seeks for a better day and better time ahead.
- **Raising Confidence:** Emotionally stable person is more confident than others. In stressful situation, confidence is recognized as the most important factor to overcome the challenges, obstacles and it is very much needed to stand again with a positivity to go forward. Thus, every student in any stage of education, he must be emotionally stabled one to be confident to fight all the adverse situation. Each student needs to be confident and should believe his own-self that he will be there in his desired occupation or in an esteemed post one day surely.
- **Interpersonal Relation:** A healthy relation is very much important in student's life for their academic performance and success, further career and for their well-being. Those students, who have proper level of emotional intelligent, are able to build and balance a healthy relation to their peers, teachers, parents and also with others which helps the person to share the issues with others and his peers, teachers or others related

to him can give him positive support to stay positive and to come out from that stressful situation.

Managing Stress: As noted in the above paragraph, you can learn to manage stress. The most vital step to manage stress is understanding yourself better as how you accept and react the different situations, what causes you stress, and how you behave when you feel stressed. Once one can follow this step, then he must take the following steps next:

- **Self-understanding:** The first step to manage stress is to understand own-self according to the situation. A student or any person first needs to understand, recognize and analysis the causes of stress, check the way how he does react and behave to the stressful situation, check the negative effect of the behaviour and after checking and recognizing, he must need to change the way of reaction and take the stressful situation with an unruffled mind. He should to believe in his own-self and own potential.
- **To-do list for setting priorities:** A student must need to use and follow the time-management tips such as need to make a To-Do list every day for their better result and well-established career. A student must need to decide the most important task for him to get done today. At the end of that day, he must need to check his to-do list for concerning about the tasks he has done today and also for concerning about the tasks which are left to do for the next day. This habit to enlist the priorities helps him to get more conscious that he is working on his most immediate priorities, thus he does not feel the stress to remember what he needs to do next to next or no stress will arise because of forgetting to do any task.
- **Practice facing stressful moments.** One should think about the situation he expects to face and should be prepared to give reactions to situation in a positive way. A student must need to be mentally prepared to practice in dealing with the challenge, obstacles and must have the attitude to accept that our life is full of challenges. A students must be prepared to accept the real fact that student's life goes on with ups and downs until achieving the desired outcome and establishing a good career. If one experiences that speaking in front of a group makes you frightened or bewildered, must need to practice doing it to avoid the fear, perhaps with a trusted friend.
- **Examine your expectations.** It is essential to set a realistic goal in everybody's life. It is good to put effort to achieve the desires, but one should make sure that his expectations are realistic and affordable. We should accept the reality that nobody is perfect. We must enjoy the liberty in making mistakes, and must need to remember that mistakes are the good teacher of our lives. Everybody should be sure to be satisfied with doing the best as putting his tireless effort either he gets success to achieve or not.
- **Live a healthy lifestyle.** For avoiding the stresses and handling the stressful situations, a healthy lifestyle must need to be followed as like getting plenty of exercise, eating healthy foods are must necessary. A student needs to allow time for proper rest and relaxation. Find a relaxation technique such as prayers, yoga,

meditation, or breathing exercises always helps to reduce muscle tension, improve concentration, keep our mind calm. It should be followed to take a few slow, deep breaths whenever someone feels stressed. One should breathe from the abdomen and, on the time of exhaling, one must say silently to his own-self, "I feel calm." At the same time, a student or any person must need to avoid some harmful activities like taking alcohol, drinking caffeine, drugs, smoking, late night sleep, overreliance in smartphone, technology, social media, games which may result to release stress.

- **Accept the changes:** A student always should to learn to accept the change as it is a part of life. Nothing stays the same as long. A student must remember that many people belong to disadvantaged, deprived backgrounds have gone on to enjoy great success in life.
- **Practice Positive Self-Talk:** A positive self-talk in daily life can change our life with a positive vibe. Positive self-talk refers to use and think more optimistic thing in your head, to focus more on possibilities, to aspire for achieving the dream result and dream job he desires, to be more confident. It is the ability to look on the bright side of anything, maybe it is full of negativity. If a student can learn to emphasize on his particular goals, it can make him able always to find alternative ways which will be possible for him to reach his goals.
- **Change the situation as one's own abilities:** In many cases, a stressful situation can be changed or turned into a positive vibe by a person or a student himself, even if he is unable to change the overall situation, he should focus on those things which can be controlled by himself, this ability can make him more empowered, enthusiastic and less helpless when he faces a stressful situation.
- **Create a New Life Plan:** People who can balance the way of living in the moment and making plans for the next are the most resilient to face of daily stress and stressful situations. A student always need to know where he wants to go, what he actually wants and knowing all of that, he should to have a plan for the future, which can help to minimize stress in the present. Changing the planning according to the values and priorities can be helpful and inspiring for the student, even if those plans will not so fruitful for a little while longer.
- A student must schedule time for the vacation, sometimes it is needed to break the boring routine, change the hobbies, and should try for fun activities. Students must manage their time to arrange leisure time for doing something they really enjoy to do.
- A student sometimes needs to avoid classes, tuitions, self-study time back-to-back and needs to do refreshing activities.
- A student should build a habit to say the word 'no' for ignoring the negative and hurtful things, he must be habituated in spending time on the most important responsibilities and priorities instead of giving priorities to other's need.
- A student needs to be expertized in managing his time. He should build a habit to read books, view motivational videos, and learn how to manage time for self-upgradation.

Once he learns to cut down time wasters, he will find more time to recharge himself positively.

Conclusion: The hardest thing in this competitive 21st century is to establish a career and to reduce the unemployment rate. Unemployment rate among Indian youths has skyrocketed in recent years with fewer jobs available amid burst in population. The present scenario of job market is really scary and only available to extremely talented and hard-working students. Average students who are already victim of the unemployment and those who haven't finished their education, both are distressed and frightened for their career. This uncertain and stressful life can impact their health, relationship, academic performance and achievements so on and so forth. Thus, for their physical and mental well-being and to excel in life both professionally and personally, students must be capable to manage their stresses effectively. It is imperative that they develop skills to combat mental health issues by themselves as access to psychologists is not a feasible option for all of them. In this aspect, developing Emotional Intelligence can be a critical combat tool in fighting mental health issues and stresses, with far-reaching implications for physical health, mental well-being, resilience, personal growth, academic performance and career. From this study, it is concluded that by prioritizing the development of emotional intelligence in various aspects of life, individuals can unlock the path of career building, improve their ability to manage stress, and enhance overall well-being.

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