

The Level of Emotional Intelligence among Persons with Physical Disabilities in South Gondar Zone, Ethiopia

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Received: 09.07. 2022 Accepted: 11.08. 2022 Published: 15.08. 2022

Abstract:

This study explored the level of emotional intelligence (EI) among persons with physical Disabilities in South Gondar zone, Ethiopia, focusing on the influence of participants' sex and onset of disability on their level of EI. For this purpose, a sample of 140 participants' was selected from three administrative towns using Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test questionnaire. Data were analyzed using descriptive (mean) and inferential (T-tests) statistics. Analysis revealed that persons with physical disabilities appeared to have low level of EI. Moreover, the analysis noted that significant difference was not observed in EI of persons with physical disabilities based on their sex and onset of disability. Thus, irrespective of sex and onset of disabilities, the study found that the EI of persons with physical disabilities scored low. Disability People Associations in collaboration with governmental and non-governmental organizations should design continuous training programs regarding EI and life skills.

Keywords: 1.Emotional Intelligence; 2.Persons with Physical Disability; 3.South Gondar Zone

Introduction

Emotional Intelligence (EI) has appeared as an important field of investigation during the last decades. Different scholars define EI in their own way. For example, Goleman, (1998) defines the term EI as “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”. Besides, Mayer, Caruso and Salovey (1999) define EI as ability to acknowledge the meanings of emotion and their relationships and to reason and problem-solve on the idea of them. EI is involved within the capacity to perceive emotions, assimilate emotion-related feelings, understand the knowledge of these emotions, and manage them. Furthermore, Mayer, Roberts, and Barsade, (2007) defines EI as “the ability to carry out accurate reasoning about emotions and the ability to use emotions and emotional knowledge to enhance thought”.

Disability is a global phenomenon that affects the entire world with no any agreed definition. It is not specific to any particular nation state or to any age, color and religion. However, different scholars and organizations

define the term disability in different ways. For instance, Haegele and Hodge, (2016) the word disability refers to the short-term and endless functional limitations suffered by people at any age and under any circumstances. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006) recognizes that 'disability is an evolving concept'. 'Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others'.

In order to understand EI in persons with disabilities, several models have been developed. Of all, Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Ability Model (1997 check) model is the most important one for this study because it is the most commonly used, tested and accepted one which suggests five main areas such as knowing one's own emotions, managing one's own emotions, self-motivation, recognizing emotions of others and handling relationships with others which are equally important for children with different capabilities. They recommend that individuals vary in their ability to process information of an emotional nature and in their ability to relate emotional processing to a wider cognition.

Studies have reported that EI is recognized for the constructive development of youngsters across a various span of disabilities and is an essential ingredient for the effective psycho-social development (Al-Imam and Al-Jawaldh, 2016). That means the more intelligent the person is, the more the person can cope and adapt to the limitations of intelligence in some people with disabilities. It is also a significant factor that allows persons with disabilities to take advantage of their abilities which can permit them to develop a clear understanding of self and others (Al-Tal, *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, Petrovici and Dobrescu, (2014) stated that EI is essential for effective communication, intellectual and emotional development. Controlling one's feelings and conforming them to the environment, as well as trying to understand others and interact appreciatively, are the skills that bring satisfaction and accomplishment to human beings on an individual as well as a social position.

Additionally, Al-Khateeb *et al.*, (2020) acknowledged that EI plays a serious and active role within the psychological state and psychological compatibility of persons with disabilities by leading them to self-realization. Thus, higher levels of emotional intelligence among this group means the lesser personal problems and stress they face in life and thus the less the mental disorders one might face.

Research on EI with regard to certain demographic factors has been reported widely. However, there is very little research on the factors affecting EI of persons with disabilities (Parween, 2015). For example, sex is one factor that influences EI. This effect may be due to the biological and social factors. Socially, female with disabilities are known to have better EI than males (Singh, 2002). The difference between males and females where overall EI was concerned was conflicting in different parts of the world. A study conducted by Van Rooy, Alonso and Viswesvaran, (2005) affirmed that females possessing greater emotional and interpersonal skills as compare to males in the United States. Similarly, in Ethiopia, Yikirbelegn, (2018) acknowledged that females scored higher on overall and specific facets of emotional intelligent than males. However, Ahmad, Bangash and Khan, (2009) found that males have high emotional intelligence than females. On the other hand, a study conducted on undergraduate English majors of Iranian Universities, found that there was no significant difference between males and females on their total score measuring EI (Meshkat & Reza, 2017).

Another factor that affects the EI of people with disabilities stated in literatures is onset of the disability. For example, Parween, (2015) a significant difference was detected from the t-test results when the mean scores were analyzed with regard to onset of visual impairment. Students with acquired visual impairment pursuing higher education were found to have better EI than those with congenital visual impairment. This may be due

to the fact that those who suffer vision loss after birth, as a result of illness or accident, would have had an opportunity to see the world around them and would have learnt the intricacies of emotional behavior.

In Ethiopia, there are some studies that focus on EI. For example, Yikirbelegn (2018) conducted a thesis aiming to find “perceived emotional intelligence, psychological well-being and academic achievement of social science students at Addis Ababa University”. Likewise, Hana (2019) conducted a study with the aim of examining “the relationship between emotional intelligence and multicultural competence of students at Dilla University”. These studies place great emphasis on the EI of adolescents who do not have physical disabilities. There are no known studies on the EI level of people with disabilities in Ethiopia. In addition, there is a paucity of research attempting to examine the difference in EI across demographic factors in the population with physical disabilities. More specifically, as to the search of the researchers, the level of EI among physically disabled people in South Gondar zone is not properly studied and is not known. In summary, a review of the global and national literature reveals a lack of research attempting to relate socio-demographic variables and EI among persons with disabilities, particularly among persons with physical disability. Thus, as a guide to this study, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What is the level of EI among persons with physical disability?
2. Is there a statistical significant difference in EI among persons with physical disability as a function of participants’ sex and onset of disability?

Methods of the Study

Description of the Study Area

The study was conducted in the South Gondar Zone, specifically in the towns of Debre Tabor, Woreta and Addiszemen. The South Gondar Zone is located in the Amhara Regional State of Ethiopia. The capital of the zone is Debre Tabor. South Gondar is bordered by East Gojjam to the south, Gondar to the north, Lake Tana to the west and North Wollo to the east. The highest point in South Gondar is Mount Guna (4,231 meters).

Research Design

To this study, quantitative research approach with descriptive survey design was employed since such design is important and most commonly used type of quantitative design to get relevant data in relation to the current condition of the event and to express ‘what exists’ with respect to conditions in studies such as the extent of EI among people with disabilities. Besides, survey research design is concerned with the present and attempts to determine the status of the phenomena being investigated (Singh, 2006).

Population, Sample and Sampling Technique

The target population for this study was persons with physical disabilities who are currently members of the Disability People Associations (DPAs). The total number of people with physical disabilities was 215 in the study towns. Among them, 117 were men and 98 women. From there, 140 samples were selected for this study. Among them, 76 were men and 64 women. To determine the sample size, the researchers used a simplified formula from Yamane (1967: 886). To select the participants, the researchers used stratified proportional sampling. In each stratum, male and female participants were assigned proportionally. Finally, a simple random sampling technique was applied to select participants from the list of persons with physical disabilities in their respective gender.

Data Gathering Instruments

The instrument used to gather information questionnaires comprising two sections. The first section is to get information on demographic variables concerning sex, age, educational level and onset of the disability. The other section was used to collect data about the participants' level of EI.

The section used to measure EI is the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT). The SSEIT is a 33 item. Items 5, 28 and 33 are calculated inversely. It is a self-report on a five-point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). The items were developed by Schuttle, *et al.*, (1998). The mean EI score is 124; Scores below 111 or above 137 are considered unusually low or high (Malouf, 2014). The total score of the scale is calculated and then all items are summed. The scale has a Cronbach alpha reliability estimate of 0.90 for all items (Schutte *et al.*, 1998). To check the reliability of 33 items, a pilot tasting was conducted by taking 20 people with physical disabilities from a selected town outside the study area. For the present study, a reliability coefficient of 0.82 was determined for 33 items. For those samples who can't write; writers were assigned during data collection times. Each element has been converted to Amharic language for better understanding.

Data Analysis Techniques

Quantitative data analysis technique was employed for the present study. The data gathering through the questionnaire was analyzed by using descriptive statistics such as mean and SD and inferential statistics like one sample t-test and independent sample t test. In order to investigate the overall level of EI for persons with physical disabilities, one sample t-test was employed. Moreover, independent sample t-test was used to determine differences in EI on EI among persons with disabilities based on sex and onset of disability.

Results and Discussions

Results

Demographic Information of Participants

Among 140 sample participants who took part in this study, all respondents returned the survey. Out of this, 76 (54.3%) respondents were males and 64 (45.7%) were females. Concerning respondents' onset of impairment, 80 (57.1%) were congenital disability, 60 (42.9%) was acquired disability.

Table I: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	76	54.3
Female	64	45.7
Onset of Disability		
Congenital	80	57.1
Acquired	60	42.9

Level of Emotional Intelligence among Persons with Physical Disabilities

The first section this study planned to address was the level of EI for people with motor disabilities. Participants' were asked 33 questions about their level of EI with a rating on a 5 point Likert scale: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4) and Strongly Agree (5). One sample t-test was used to determine their level of EI. The score ranged from 33 to 165, with the higher scores indicating more characteristic EI (Schutte *et al.*, 1998). The mean EI score is 124; scores below 111 or above 137 are considered unusually low or high (Malouf, 2014).

Table II: Level of EI among People with Motor Disabilities Mean, Standard Deviation, t- obtained value: (N=140).

One-Sample Test
Test value = 124

Variable	N	Mean	SD	t-obtained	df	Sig (2-tailed)	Mean Differen
Overall EI	140	106.2571	32.36669	-5.551	139	0.000	-17.74286

As it can be seen from Table 2, the obtained result revealed that the mean value of respondents' overall level of EI score was (M=106.25, SD=32.36), indicating low EI. This tells us the level of EI for people with physical disabilities is low.

The Influence of Socio-demographic variation in Emotional Intelligence

In order to check normality, preliminary assumption testing was conducted prior to conducting inferential statistics such as independent sample t-test and one sample t-test. Skewness and kurtosis are the two techniques used to verify whether or not the data are normally distributed (Kline, 2011). The examination of levels of skewness and kurtosis values of each variable indicated that the scale (s) was/were normally distributed.

The influence of Sex on EI among Persons with Physical Disabilities

The other section this study aimed to address was the difference in EI across respondents' sex. For this purpose, descriptive statistics and independent sample t-test were used.

Table III: Independent Sample t-test Analysis for Sex

Sex	N	Mean	SD	t	Df	p
Male	76	105.3289	33.29440	-.369	138	0.713
Female	64	107.3594	31.45537			

As it can be observed in Table 3, the study result revealed that even if there is a small mean difference found between male and female in their EI, however, an independent sample t-test found that there is no statistically significant difference found between male and female at the $p=0.05$ level, $t(138) = -.369$, $p = 0.713$. Thus, for this study sex does not have an effect on EI.

Influence of onset of disability on EI among persons with physical disabilities

The last section this study intended to address was the difference in EI between congenital and acquired disability. For this purpose, independent sample t-test was employed.

Table IV: Independent Sample t-test Analysis for Onset of Disability

Onset of Impairment	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p
Congenital	80	103.3625	32.36432	-1.224	138	0.223
Acquired	60	110.1167	32.23436			

As it can be observed in Table 4, the study result revealed that even if there is a mean variation between congenital (M=103.36, SD=32.36) and acquired (M=110.11, SD=32.23), an independent sample t test result indicated that there was no statistically significant difference found between congenital and acquired disability at the $p=0.05$ level, $t(138) = -1.224$, $p= 0.223$. Thus, we can conclude that there is no statistically significant difference observed in EI between congenital and acquired disability.

Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the level of EI for persons with physical disabilities in South Gondar zone. The obtained result revealed that the mean value of respondents' level of EI score was (M=106.25, SD=32.36), indicating low EI. The finding was consistence with Naz, (2016) reported that physically challenged students have low EI compared to normal students. Because of their disability, physically disabled people experience helplessness, a lack of initiative and drive, and feel insecure. They tend to be withdrawn, unmotivated, lazy, overly sensitive to criticism, stressed, uncommunicative, and pessimistic (Naz, 2016). Likewise, Rajput, (2013) discovered that able-bodied students outperformed their disabled (sensory and orthopedic) peers in terms of confidence and EI. This means that having a disability seriously affects confidence and EI.

Concerning sex this study did not find any significant difference in EI. But the mean scores of female students were found to be higher than males. Similar results were found in a study conducted by Parween, (2015) to identify variables influencing EI of visually impaired students in higher educational institutions. The results revealed that girls scored higher EI though not significantly higher than their counterparts on EI.

The results obtained from the analysis of EI scores with respect to onset of impairment revealed that there was no statistically significant difference observed between congenital and acquired disability. However, the mean scores of persons with acquired physical impairment are higher than those with congenital physical impairment. The finding is consistence with Parween, (2015) found that students with acquired visual impairment scored higher EI than congenital visual impairment.

Conclusion

Based on the findings obtained from this study, it could be concluded that the overall EI among persons with physical disabilities was minimal. The findings further led to the conclusion that the level of EI among persons with physical disabilities did not depend on the sex that signifies that male and female levels of EI are not different. Moreover, the level of EI was not influenced by the onset of disability among persons with physical disabilities. That is, persons with physical disability whose onset of the disability is congenital and acquired did not show different levels of EI.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank all respondents who participated in this study and provided pertinent data. Without their willingness and collaboration, this work would not have been in this form.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest concerning the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding Statement

This research was not supported by any agency or organization.

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