

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND SOCIAL ANXIETY OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS FROM SAGAING UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION

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Abstract

The main objective of this study was to study the effect of emotional intelligence on social anxiety of undergraduate students from Sagaing University of Education. Moreover, the present study was to find out the differences in emotional intelligence and social anxiety of undergraduate students among demographic characteristics (gender, subject stream and grade). The study adopted a survey research design and employed with a quantitative method. The participants in this study were 954 (male = 485, female = 469) first year, third year and final year students from Sagaing University of Education. As the instrument, the Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) with 60-item designed based on Singh (2004) and the Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS) with 20-item designed based on Mattick and Clarke (1995) were adapted and modified to assess the emotional intelligence and social anxiety of the students. After that, the data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics, *t* test and ANOVA test. The results revealed that demographic characteristic such as gender was found to have significant difference in emotional intelligence and also in social anxiety. Male students had high emotional intelligence and social anxiety than female students. But the students' subject stream and grade were found to have no influence on their emotional intelligence. Students' subject stream did not affect their social anxiety but there was significant difference in social anxiety by grade. Final year students experienced less social anxiety than first and third year students. Emotional intelligence and social anxiety of the students were negatively correlated ($r=-0.202, p<0.01$). Thus, it can be concluded that this study may assist educators in developing a better understanding of the effect of emotional intelligence on social anxiety of the students and it provides an essence that emotional intelligence can be one of the useful tools in handling social anxiety which prevent people from leading the life they want.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Social Anxiety

Introduction

Importance of the Study

Intellectual skills are necessary for students to succeed when they transition from living with their parents to making it in "the real world." However, emotional skills are equally (perhaps even more) important to lifelong success and happiness. Unfortunately, such "soft-skills" are not typically taught in schools where success is measured by test scores not emotional maturity.

Psychologist Daniel Goleman estimated that, at best, people's intelligence quotient (IQ) makes up only 20 percent of the factors that determine life success, while other forces, such as emotional intelligence (EQ), wealth, temperament, family education levels and pure luck make up the balance. That means cognitive skills; verbal comprehension, memory, reasoning and processing speed, will help academically, but they will only get a person so far in life. To really go the distance, those IQ traits should be rounded out with social-emotional skills like motivation, perseverance, impulse control, coping mechanisms and the ability to delay gratification.

According to Psychology today, emotional intelligence involves being able to recognize one's own and others' emotions. This knowledge enables people to control their reactions,

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exercise empathy, put feelings into perspective, and adapt their words and actions so they were appropriate in any given situation. These skills are critical to good mental health, successful personal and professional relationships, and the ability to thrive in high-pressure careers.

Social anxiety is characterized by constant fear of one or more social or performance situations in which the person is exposed to unknown persons or to the possible scrutiny of others. It is a disorder that hinders the psychosocial adjustment of individuals because of the deep anguish and restlessness it generates. In addition, individuals may develop superstitious 'safety behaviors' that are ritually used to reduce anxiety and avoid imagined or feared catastrophic outcomes (Veale, 2003). Physical reactions associated with social anxiety include heightened autonomic nervous system arousal with increased heart rate, dizziness, dry mouth, excessive blushing and feelings of nausea (Muzina & El-Sayegh, 2001). Paradoxically, the safety behaviors may increase the individual's problems. For example, keeping one's arms close to the body may inadvertently increase sweating, whilst holding a hand over the mouth to reduce speech volume may result in others' increased attentions as they struggle to hear the mumbled words (Veale, 2003).

Social anxiety in adolescence is significantly related to other psychopathological disorders, such as loneliness or dysphoria, among others, and with difficulties in interpersonal relationships with peers. Furthermore, in the educational context, socially anxious students often show avoidance behaviors in response to school work, which makes it difficult to test their learning outcomes. As a result, they may present a lack of socio-school adaptation. In addition, adolescents with higher scores in social anxiety present a higher number of victimization behaviors to bullying and cyberbullying.

Salovey, Stroud, Woolery, and Epel (2002) found that high EI among young people between 16 and 23 years old was associated with lower levels of social anxiety and depression, less passive coping, and greater use of active coping strategies, as well as lower levels of rumination and perception of stressors as less threatening. Likewise, some studies confirm that adolescents with lower scores on trait emotional intelligence, specifically in emotional repair, reported a high risk of developing social anxiety characterized by negative thoughts about social interactions.

Aim of the Study

The main aim of this research is to study the emotional intelligence and social anxiety of undergraduate students from Sagaing University of Education.

Specific objectives in this study are;

- To examine the emotional intelligence and social anxiety of students from Sagaing University of Education by gender;
- To study the differences in emotional intelligence and social anxiety of students from Sagaing University of Education by subject streams;
- To study the differences in emotional intelligence and social anxiety of students from Sagaing University of Education by grades;
- To find out whether there is a relationship between emotional intelligence and social anxiety of students from Sagaing University of Education or not.

Definitions of Key Terms

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

Social Anxiety: Social anxiety can be defined as an intense fear of negative evaluation from others and a chronic concern and self-doubt about one's social anxiety and social performance (DSM-IV-TR, 2000).

Method

Participants

Participants of this research were first year, third year and final year students from Sagaing University of Education. By using simple random sampling method, the sample of students was identified. The sample for this study was chosen 954 first year, third year and final year students. There are 485 male and 469 female students of the total sample.

Research Design and Method

Quantitative research method was used in this study. Survey method and descriptive research design were used to investigate the effect of emotional intelligence and social anxiety of students from Sagaing University of Education.

Instrumentation

In this study, questionnaires of emotional intelligence developed by Singh (2004) and social interaction anxiety scale developed by Mattick and Clarke (1995) were used to measure students' emotional intelligence and social anxiety. Emotional intelligence scale was grouped into five categories; self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, social awareness and social skills.

Findings

Students' Emotional Intelligence

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for Students' Emotional Intelligence

Variable	No. of Item	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Self-awareness	12	19	48	36.01	3.810
Self-regulation	12	20	48	34.07	3.766
Motivation	12	22	48	35.61	3.813
Social awareness	12	20	48	33.20	4.136
Social skill	12	20	47	33.00	4.263
Emotional intelligence	60	129	237	171.90	15.996

Table 1 revealed that the observed mean score was 171.90 and the standard deviation was 15.996. The theoretical mean score was (150). Therefore, it may be assumed that the emotional intelligence of the students was slightly high.

Table 2 The Result of Independent Samples *t* test for Students' Emotional Intelligence by Gender

Variable	Gender	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Mean Difference
Overall Emotional Intelligence	Male	173.89	16.644	3.934*	952	0.000	4.044
	Female	169.85	15.040				

Note: *The mean difference is significant at 0.05 level.

According to the Table 2, the result showed that there was significant difference between male and female students in overall emotional intelligence ($p < 0.001$). So, it can be said that male students had higher emotional intelligence than female students.

Table 3 The Result of Independent Samples *t* test for Subscales of Students' Emotional Intelligence by Gender

Subscales	Gender	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>MD</i>
Self- Awareness	Male	485	36.06	3.887	.346	952	.729	0.086
	Female	469	35.97	3.733				
Self- Regulation	Male	485	34.46	3.848	3.230*	952	.001	0.784
	Female	469	33.67	3.640				
Motivation	Male	485	35.95	4.013	2.763*	952	.006	0.680
	Female	469	35.27	3.565				
Social Awareness	Male	485	33.76	4.183	4.232*	952	.000	1.123
	Female	469	32.63	4.011				
Social Skill	Male	485	33.67	4.255	5.030*	952	.000	1.371
	Female	469	32.30	4.163				

Note: *The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 3 revealed that there were significant differences in self-regulation, motivation, social awareness and social skill ($p < 0.05$) but no significant difference in self-awareness. Therefore, male students had higher mean scores in self-regulation, motivation, social awareness and social skill but not in self-awareness. So, it was found that male students were significantly higher than female students in the above mentioned subscales of emotional intelligence except self-awareness.

Besides, the subject stream was divided into Stream-1 and Stream-2. Students who are specialized in the subjects of science; Chemistry, Physics and Biology, were identified as Stream-1. Students who are not specialized in the subjects of science, i.e., Economics, Geography, History and who are specialized in the subjects of science plus Economics, i.e., Chemistry, Physics and Economics were identified as Stream-2. In order to compare emotional intelligence between Stream-1 and Stream-2 students, independent samples *t* test was used.

Table 4 The Result of Independent Samples *t* test for Students' Emotional Intelligence by Subject Stream

Variable	Subject Stream	Mean	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Mean Difference
Emotional Intelligence	Stream-1	171.99	15.897	.219	952	.826	0.236
	Stream-2	171.75	16.190				

In order to know students' emotional intelligence difference in subscales, the independent samples *t* test used again.

Table 5 The Results of Independent Samples *t* test for subscales of Emotional Intelligence by Subject Stream

Subscales	Subject Stream	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Mean Difference
Self- Awareness	Stream-1	607	36.01	3.729	-.058	952	.954	-.015
	Stream-2	347	36.02	3.954				
Self- Regulation	Stream-1	607	34.19	3.758	1.271	952	.204	.322
	Stream-2	347	33.87	3.775				

Subscales	Subject Stream	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p	Mean Difference
Motivation	Stream-1	607	35.65	3.782	.449	952	.654	.115
	Stream-2	347	35.54	3.869				
Social Awareness	Stream-1	607	33.23	4.106	.275	952	.783	.077
	Stream-2	347	33.16	4.192				
Social Skill	Stream-1	607	32.90	4.256	-.915	952	.360	-.263
	Stream-2	347	33.17	4.278				

The results revealed that there was no significant difference in self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, social awareness and social skill between Stream-1 and Stream-2 students ($p=0.826$).

The mean and standard deviation for students' emotional intelligence by grade were displayed by using descriptive statistics.

Table 6 Mean Comparison of Students' Emotional Intelligence by Grade

Variable	Grade	N	Mean	SD
Overall Emotional Intelligence	First year	322	170.85	16.780
	Third year	316	171.64	15.546
	Final year	316	173.24	15.572
	Total	954	171.90	15.996

Table 7 The Result of ANOVA for Students' Emotional Intelligence by Grade

Variables		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P
Overall Emotional Intelligence	Between Groups	941.016	2	470.508	1.842	.159
	Within Groups	242896.918	951	255.412		
	Total	243837.934	953			

To explore the differences of students' emotional intelligence by grade, one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted. The results pointed out that there was no significant difference in the mean score of students' emotional intelligence by grade, ($F=1.842, p>0.05$).

Students' Social Anxiety

In terms of descriptive statistics, minimum, maximum, mean and standard deviation of students' social anxiety were calculated to analyze data. The results of analysis were described in Table 8.

Table 8 Descriptive Statistics for Students' Social Anxiety

Variable	No. of item	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Social Anxiety	20	21	71	44.51	9.250

Table 9 The Result of Independent Samples t test for Students' Social Anxiety by Gender

Variable	Gender	Mean	SD	t	df	p	Mean Difference
Social Anxiety	Male	45.62	8.996	3.796*	952	.000	2.258
	Female	43.37	9.377				

Note: *The mean difference is significant at 0.05 level.

The result showed that there was significant difference between male and female students in social anxiety ($p < 0.001$). So, it can be said that male students tend to have more social anxiety in compared with female students.

In order to compare social anxiety between Stream-1 and Stream-2 students, independent samples t test was used. According to the result, there was no significant difference in social anxiety between Stream-1 and Stream-2, as $p = 0.077$.

Table 10 The Result of Independent Samples t test for Students' Social Anxiety by Subject Stream

Variable	Subject Stream	Mean	SD	t	df	p	Mean Difference
Social Anxiety	Stream-1	44.11	9.413	-1.773	952	.077	-1.102
	Stream-2	45.22	8.927				

The mean and standard deviation for students' social anxiety by grade were displayed by using descriptive statistics. According to the result, the mean score of the first year students was 44.98 and that of third year students was 45.99. And the mean score of the final year student was 42.56. Thus the mean score of the final year students was the lowest and that of the third year students was the highest.

Table 11 Mean Comparison of Students' Social Anxiety by Grade

Variable	Grade	No. of Student	Mean	SD
Social Anxiety	First year	322	44.98	8.836
	Third year	316	45.99	9.032
	Final year	316	42.56	9.564
	Total	954	44.51	9.250

To explore the differences of students' social anxiety by grade, one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted. The results showed that there was significant difference in the mean scores of students' social anxiety by grade, ($F = 11.722$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, students' social anxiety was seemed to be affected by grade.

Table 12 The Result of ANOVA for Students' Social Anxiety by Grade

Variables		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P
Social Anxiety	Between Groups	1961.701	2	980.850	11.722	.000
	Within Groups	79574.594	951	83.675		
	Total	81536.295	953			

To investigate more specifically how students' social anxiety differed in relation to their grade, Post Hoc Test was carried out by Tukey HSD method.

Table 13 The Result of Tukey HSD Test for Social Anxiety by Grade

Variable	(I) Students' Grade	(J) Students' Grade	Mean Difference (I-J)	P
Social Anxiety	First year	Third year	-1.009	.345
		Final year	2.418*	.003
	Third year	First year	1.009	.345
		Final year	3.427*	.000
	Final year	First year	-2.418*	.003
		Third year	-3.427*	.000

Note: * The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

There were significant differences between first year and final year and also between third year and final year ($p < 0.05$). Thus, it can be interpreted that students' social anxiety depends on students' grade.

Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Social Anxiety of Students

To investigate the relationship between students' emotional intelligence and social anxiety, the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was calculated. So, it was believed that there was a negative relationship between emotional intelligence and social anxiety.

Table 14 The Correlation Between Students' Emotional Intelligence and Social Anxiety

Variable	Emotional Intelligence	Social Anxiety
Emotional Intelligence	-	-0.202**
Social Anxiety	-0.202**	-

Note: The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 15 Intercorrelation for Students' Emotional Intelligence and Social Anxiety

Variables	SeA	SeR	M	SoA	SoS	SA
SeA	-	-	-	-	-	-
SeR	.636**	-	-	-	-	-
M	.575**	.683**	-	-	-	-
SoA	.432**	.572**	.512**	-	-	-
SoS	.462**	.647**	.568**	.594**	-	-
SA	-.184**	-.161**	-.157**	-.131**	-.183**	-

Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). SeA=Self-awareness, SeR= Self-regulation, M=Motivation, SoA= Social awareness, SoS= Social Skill,

SA = Social Anxiety

According to the results, it indicated that the subscales of emotional intelligence were significantly and negatively correlated with social anxiety of the undergraduate students. So, it may be concluded that understand the emotions of self and ability to manage conflicts and emotions on others is the key to relieve social anxiety of the individual.

Results of Simple Linear Regression on Emotional Intelligence and Social Anxiety of Undergraduate Students

To examine how well emotional intelligence can predict social anxiety of undergraduate students, simple linear regression was calculated. To get more exact information, the results can also be seen in the following Table.

Table 16 Results of Simple Linear Regression on Emotional Intelligence and Social Anxiety

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1(constant)	64.573	3.169		20.376	.000
Emotional Intelligence	-.117	.018	-.202	-6.357	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Social Anxiety

Social Anxiety = 64.573-0.117 Emotional Intelligence

So, it can be interpreted that if the students had high emotional intelligence, their social anxiety would be under controlled.

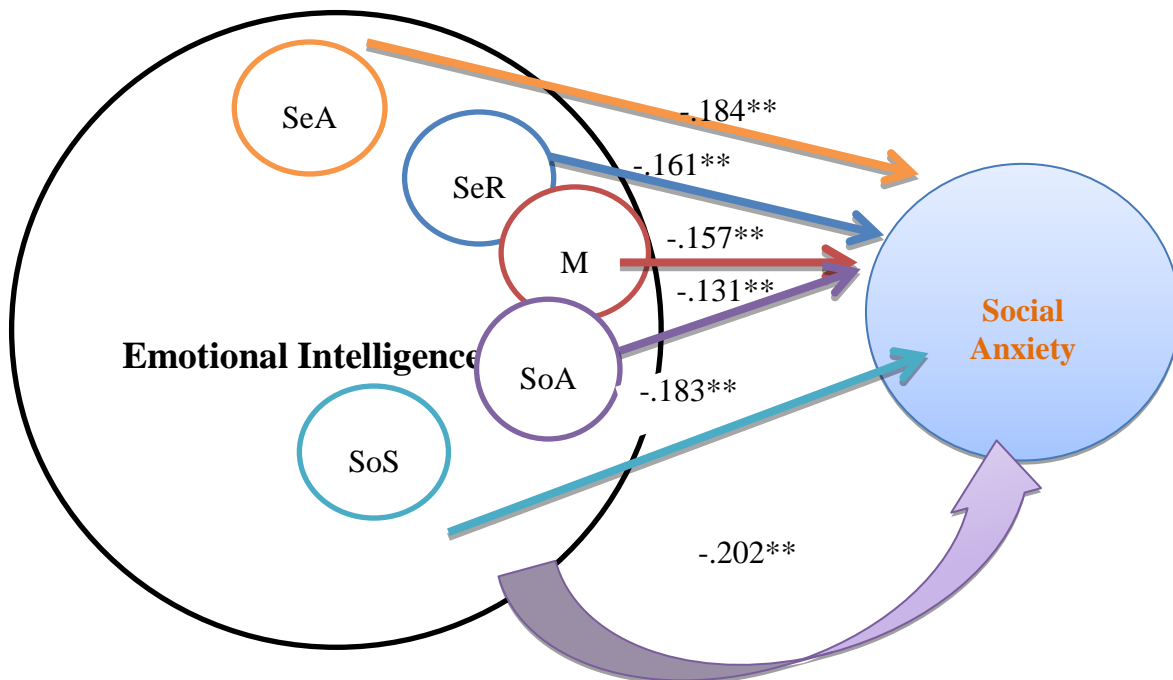


Figure 1 Relationship Model Between Emotional Intelligence and Social Anxiety

According to the result, the simple linear regression correlation coefficient (R) = 0.202 and adjusted R square was 0.404. Thus, it can be concluded that 4% of social anxiety can be predicted from emotional intelligence.

Conclusion

So, the main purpose of this research was to study the emotional intelligence and social anxiety of undergraduate students from Sagaing University of Education. Moreover, gender differences, differences in subject streams and grade differences were also examined. And then, the relationship between emotional intelligence and social anxiety of undergraduate students from Sagaing University of Education was observed. Finally, regression analysis was conducted to predict social anxiety from emotional intelligence. The number of 954 undergraduate students was selected from Sagaing University of Education as the participants of the present study. Emotional intelligence scale developed and standardized by Singh (2004) was used to investigate students' emotional intelligence. And then to investigate students' social anxiety, social interaction anxiety scale developed by Mattick and Clarke (1998) was used. The Emotional Intelligence Scale consists of five subscales: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, social awareness and social skill and consists of 60 items (12 items consist in each subscale). The Social Interaction Anxiety Scale consists of 20 items.

The descriptive analysis revealed that the average value of mean score for students' emotional intelligence was 171.90 and that for social anxiety was 44.51. Mean comparisons for the five subscales of students' emotional intelligence showed that students had the highest emotional intelligence in self-awareness. According to the Goleman (1995), self-awareness is the

ability to read one's emotions and recognize their impact while using gut feelings to guide decisions. Based on the result that students had the highest self-awareness among other subscales, it may be assumed that students can best recognize their emotional state and whenever they used their immediate feeling or reaction in making decisions, they already considered the effects of these decisions on self and others. Moreover, the mean score of the students in the subscale of social skill is the lowest. So, it might be assumed that students may be weak in the ability to interact with other people and ability to influence the emotions of the other person.

According to the *t* test result, although male students and female students did not differ in the subscales of emotional self-awareness, male students had higher in overall emotional intelligence than female students. Generally, it might be assumed that male students outperformed female students in recognizing and understanding emotions of others and in using this awareness to manage behavior and relationships according to the situation. This finding was consistent with the previous study conducted by Chu (2002) and Ahmad and Khan (2009). According to Ahmad and Khan (2009), one of the reasons for males had high emotional intelligence than females are that men are a powerful member in our society.

Comparing with students' emotional intelligence by subject stream, the result of *t* test indicated that students' emotional intelligence did not differ in respect with their subject stream they learned. So, subject stream did not affect the emotional intelligence of the students. The success that the students got from the school or institution or university was typically measured by test scores but not by emotional skill (soft-skills) which was also important for lifelong success and happiness.

Besides, the result of ANOVA among different grade indicated that the emotional intelligence of students did not differ by their grades. According to Bar-On (2000), Bradberry and Greaves (2005), Singh (2006) and Stein (2009), the overall emotional intelligence increases with age, i.e., in transition from young adulthood to middle age and then from middle age to mature age. The young adulthood group is youngest group of all which has the basic learning stage. This stage is also considered inexperienced and naive. According to Erik Erikson (1963), young adulthood is the age group of people from 17-year to 23-year old. But young adulthood group had no significant correlation between components of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1988; Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Maddocks & Sparrows, 1998). The participants in this research: first year, third year and final year students, belonged to the young adulthood and thus it is clear that their emotional intelligence did not differ whatever their grade will be.

As the next study, the result of *t* test for social anxiety of the students by gender showed that male students had higher mean score than female students. It can be said that male students seemed to have more social anxiety than female students. This finding was consistent with the previous studies conducted by Hirai et al. (2011) and Iancu et al. (2006). Based on the above result, one of the possible reasons for male students score higher in social awareness may be that they can sense and understand other's emotions, although they showed some deficits in social skill, i.e., unable to fulfill timely demands in all areas of functioning during social interaction. Hence, they may develop fear of negative evaluation or rejection which triggers social anxiety in some situation. As female students were less sensitive to other's emotions, they might experience less social anxiety than the male did.

Next, in comparing the students' social anxiety by their subject stream, it was found that male and female students did not differ in experiencing social anxiety according to their subject

streams. Social anxiety sometimes caused by intense fear of negative evaluation from others (DSM-IV-TR, 2000). It is cleared that whatever the subject stream may be, they did not feel or they did not fear that they will be negatively evaluated by others.

Then, according to the result of ANOVA among different grades, students' social anxiety tends to differ by their grades. From the Post Hoc test, it can be interpreted that the final year students had the lowest social anxiety. This finding was consistent with the previous study conducted by Villiers (2009) and found that only the age of the student was involved to some degree in the level of social anxiety; in other words, the older the student, generally the lower the levels of social anxiety. Since meeting new people, living in new environment and interacting with certain authority may trigger social anxiety in everyone, final year students, in comparing with the first year and third year students, will be more familiar with the custom, culture of University and familiar with more authority in the University. Moreover, with respect to their grade and age, it was clear that final year students had low level of social anxiety than other students: first year and third year students.

In order to find the correlations among the variables in this study, correlation matrix were applied. This matrix indicated that the emotional intelligence was negatively correlated. But the strength of the correlation is slightly weak. This means that if the students' had high emotional intelligence then they would experience less social anxiety. Moreover, the five subscales of emotional intelligence were significantly correlated with their social anxiety. And the intercorrelations for subscales of emotional intelligence were also significantly correlated with each other.

Finally, the researcher tried to find good predictor of undergraduate students' social anxiety. Simple linear regression was applied to find the model summary for students' social anxiety. The simple linear regression correlation coefficient (R)=0.202 and adjusted R square was 0.0404. It can be concluded that 4% of social anxiety can be predicted from emotional intelligence.

Discussion and Suggestion

The possible solutions to overcome anxiety in social situations might be firstly considered the relationship of emotional intelligence and social anxiety. Emotional intelligence was known as one of the constructs that could bring success, well beings and happiness to one's life.

The most common example of social anxiety is anxiousness about public speaking. Making small talk, eating in front of others and using public restrooms also can trigger worry and unease for some. Social anxiety is defined as anxiety anticipating a social situation, or anxiety during or after that situation, Weeks (2012) said. "At the heart of social anxiety is the fear of evaluation." There are many ways which we can use to overcome social anxiety. One of the ways is to challenge own mentality and negative thoughts which can be an effective way to reduce symptoms of social anxiety. Next, instead of focusing on self and what other people are thinking of, focusing should be on other people and try to be present, make genuine connections. By making small lifestyle changes can help to improve self-confidence and ability to cope with anxiety symptoms. The last and most important is to find the social situation and engage in it.

Thus, emotional intelligence can be associated with superior social functioning, through greater emotional understanding of others and more adaptive interpersonal relationship skills, thus fostering more pleasant social interactions. Emotional intelligence could act by reducing the

frequency and duration of negative emotions that appear as a consequence of certain stressful events and social interactions. So enhancing emotional intelligence can be the useful tool in relieving the social anxiety that one experienced.

Acknowledgements

The completion of this study has been a journey that would not have been possible without the support of several key people. First and foremost, I would like to offer my respectful gratitude to Dr. Saw Pyone Naing (Rector, Sagaing University of Education), Dr. Myat Myat Thaw (Pro-Rector, Sagaing University of Education) who allowed me to do this study.

I am very much grateful to Dr. Khin Hnin Nwe (Associate Professor, Head of Department, Department of Educational Psychology, Sagaing University of Education) and Dr. Tin Maung Win (Deputy Director General, Department of Basic Education) for their invaluable suggestions, caring attitude and patience with me throughout the process and, for their contributed so many hours beyond the work week and even on holidays to my research to ensure it was at the level it needed to be. I would also like to offer deepest thank to my supervisor Dr. Myo Ko Aung (Associate Professor, Department of Educational Psychology, Sagaing University of Education) for his generous help, encouragement and motivation.

I would like to offer special thanks to my external examiner Prof. Dr. Khin Thuza Saw (Retried Principal, Thingangyun Education College) for her essential help of assessing my research study and invaluable comments for my study. Continually I would like to give my appreciation to all the participants from Sagaing University of Education Township for their enthusiastic cooperation in this study. Special and with deepest thanks go to my beloved parents for their invaluable encouragement, supports and understands me during this research study. Without their continuous encouragement and warmly support, it may not be possible to make my dream come true.

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