

## Exploring achievement motivation, adjustment and emotional intelligence of students across different Indian demographic groups

VINEETH V. KUMAR

Associate Professor  
Faculty of Management Studies  
Manav Rachna International University  
Delhi, Faridabad  
India

MANJU MEHTA

Former Professor & Head  
Department of Psychology  
University of Rajasthan, Jaipur  
India

NIDHI MAHESHWARI

Scientist C  
Defence Institute of Psychological Research, DRDO  
Timarpur, Delhi  
India

### Abstract:

*The purpose of the current investigation was to make a comparative study of the level of achievement motivation, psychological adjustment and emotional intelligence of school students across various Indian demographic groups. For the study, a sample of 450 urban tenth grade male students from Jaipur (Rajasthan) belonging to various Indian demographic groups (non-backward = 225, scheduled caste = 75, scheduled tribe = 75 and other backward class = 75, M age = 15.20) were studied. Results revealed a significant difference in the social and educational areas of psychological adjustment of students belonging to different demographic groups. However, no significant difference was found in their level of achievement motivation, emotional adjustment and emotional intelligence.*

**Key words:** achievement, adjustment, adolescent, caste, emotional intelligence, Indian.

## Introduction

Adolescence is a period of transition from childhood to adulthood. The tendency to excel, ability to cope and emotional intelligence of the individual at this stage of life will have a great impact on all their future endeavours. Achievement motivation is important not only for the adolescents' success but also for the growth and success of the entire society and nation as a whole. Achievement motivation can be defined as the striving to increase or keep as high as possible, one's own capability in all activities in which competition with some standard of excellence is thought to involve and where the execution of such activity can, therefore, either succeed or fail (Heckhausen, 1967).

The diverse social demography of India, with its unique cultural and social features adds different connotation to achievement motivation especially for young students. McClelland et al. (1953) at Wesleyan and later Harvard had begun to concentrate on the social origins and consequences of achievement motivation. McClelland (1961) in his thesis, 'The Achieving Society', explained that society containing many people with high need achievement will surely have a rapid rate of economic and technological growth. However, contrasting research findings surface regarding the level of achievement motivation in adolescents with different socio-cultural background. Raizada (1975) studied achievement motivation in various castes of the Indian society and found that SC students possess the lowest level of achievement motivation vis-a-vis their non-backward counterparts viz. Kaiyasthas, Jains, Vaishyas, Brahmins and Kshatriyas. Similarly, Dixit and Pareek (1979) found that achievement

motivation among tribals was much less in comparison to non-backward communities. However, Gupta (1979) found a significantly higher level of need for achievement amongst SC students in comparison to non-scheduled caste students. In many other researches, there were no significant difference between the SC and non-backward students (Gokulnathan & Mehta, 1972; Mehta, 1974; Singh, 1982). But in another study, SC and non-backward students surpassed other backward caste (OBC) and nomadic tribal students in their level of achievement motivation (Adsul & Kamble, 2008). Mehta (1996) also revealed that SC boys have significantly higher level of achievement motivation than ST (tribal) boys. Moreover, Gokulnathan and Mehta (1972) found that tribal adolescents have greater n-Achievement than non-tribals. Similar findings have been compiled in a report by N.C.E.R.T (1970).

Another important indicator of psychological well-being of adolescents is the level of psychological adjustment to the social, educational and emotional challenges of life. Verma (1985) found that conflict, anxiety and frustration significantly affect the adjustment of students. Moreover, social discrimination in the society also affects the values and thinking pattern of individuals belonging to different sections of the society. Individual's reaction to these stresses may either be problem-focused or emotion-focused, depending upon one's personality. Coping and associated adjustment, thus, speaks of a person's personality and his will to survive which gains strength from his social identity. It is reasonable to assume that membership within a caste group enables individuals to perceive a historical connection with their ancestors, transcending generations, which would enhance feelings of temporal continuity (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010). Consequently, non-backward students may perceive greater control over their lives and social environment looking to their privileged position in the society while SCs may exhibit inferiority owing to maintain their continuity with their ancestors. However, when

this identity is obstructed, then the individual will engage in creative coping strategies, functioning at the intra-psychic, inter-personal and inter-group levels, in order to restore and maintain appropriate levels of continuity etc. and thereby to reinstate the principled operation of identity processes (Breakwell, 1986). Coleman (1960) explained that effective adjustment means that an individual copes with the problems in such a way so as to maintain his integrity and well-being. Many studies have been conducted in India regarding psychological adjustment and its various factors. Sujata and Yeshodhara (1986) found that SC/ST students had relatively poor school adjustment compared to non SC/ST students. Bansal (1973) found that non-backward students were better adjusted in the areas of home, school, social and emotional adjustment than the SC students. Similar findings were found by Rangari (1987) also. Ushasri (1980) studied the socially disadvantaged and socially advantaged students and found that the socially disadvantaged students who frequently exhibited symptoms like anxiety, depression etc. were less keenly interested in their academic pursuits and had poor personal efficiency in the planning and using of their time. Also, they displayed lower academic adjustment than the advantaged students.

Like achievement motivation and psychological adjustment, emotional Intelligence (EI) also proves to be a significant predictor of student's holistic well-being. EI has been generally described as a competency or ability to perceive and accurately express emotions, to use emotions to facilitate thought, to understand emotions, and to manage emotions for emotional growth (Brackett, Mayer, & Warner, 2004). Many researches (Mayer & Cobb, 2000; Reiff, 2001; Schreier, 2002; Woitaszewski & Aalsma, 2004) have indicated the need for educators in education to explore the role of EI for students. In this era of anxiety, where adolescents are facing newer challenges to their identity, EI can play a significant role.

Austin, Evans, Goldwater, and Potter (2005) suggested that the ability to successfully adjust to changes in life may be related to EI. Higher EI has been linked to greater empathy (Ciarrochi, Chan, & Caputi, 2000), less negative interactions with peers (Brackett, Mayer, & Warner, 2004), higher-quality relationships, less conflict and antagonism with friends (Lopes, Brackett, Nezlek, Schutz, Sellin, & Salovey, 2004; Lopes, Salovey, & Straus, 2003), lower levels of violence and drugs problems (Brackett et al., 2004; Gil-Olarte, Guil, & Mestre, 2004; Rubin, 1999; Trinidad & Johnson, 2002), better psychological adjustment and coping (Salovey, Stroud, Woolery & Epel, 2002; Saklofske, Austin, Galloway, and Davidson, 2007), prosocial behaviour, parental warmth, and positive peer and family relations (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999; Rice, 1999; Salovey, Mayer, Caruso, & Lopes, 2003) and success in personal and professional life (Brown, 1996; Goleman 1995; Hamachek, 2000; Mayer & Cobb, 2000; Reiff, 2001; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Students with high EI possess higher achievement motivation which makes them better learners, more confident, optimistic, creative, flexible, happier, and successful at solving problems, renders better stress-coping ability and higher self-esteem with fewer behavioural problems (Abraham, 1999; Cooper, 1997 & Hein, 2001). Research findings suggest that lower EI is related to mental health problems (Petrides, Perez-Gonzalez, & Furnham, 2007), involvement in self-destructive behaviours such as deviant behaviour and cigarette smoking (Brackett & Mayer, 2003; Rubin, 1999; Trinidad & Johnson, 2002). However, the socio-cultural setup has an impact onto the development of emotional intelligence in individuals. Several experiments showed that being excluded or rejected caused decrements in self-regulation (Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco, & Twenge, 2005). Maltreated children were found to be deficient in behavioural and affective regulation, relative to non-maltreated children (Shields, Cicchetti, & Ryan, 1994). Ciarrochi, Chan, and Bajgar (2001) also explained that

EI was positively associated with skill at identifying emotional expressions, amount of social support, extent of satisfaction with social support, and mood management behaviour.

Scholars studying caste have tended to agree that the presence of castes throughout India is a universal feature (Ghurye, 1969; Anant, 1972; Dumont, 1970; Quigley, 1993; Searle-Chatterjee & Sharma, 1995; Milner, 1994; Srinivas, 1955, 1962, 1998; Smith, 1994). However for administrative purposes, Indian society was classified into Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Other Backward Classes (OBC), and 'non-backward' or as 'general'. The basis of this classification was socio-economic and cultural differences. Many researches have been done to demonstrate either the differences between different social groups or the sociological impact occurring due to these social differences (Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Gayer, 2000; Gecas, 1982; Gorringer & Rafanell, 2007; Mand, 2006; McLoyd, 1990, 1998; Phinney, 1990; Jaspal, 2011; Jodhka, 2004). However the earlier studies conducted with respect to achievement motivation and psychological adjustment in different social sections has demonstrated inconsistent findings. Further differences in emotional intelligence of students belonging to different sections of Indian society have been rarely studied. Hence, the present investigation aims at drawing a comparative account of achievement motivation, psychological adjustment and emotional intelligence of tenth grade Indian students belonging to various sections (non-backward, SC, ST and OBC) of the society.

## **Method**

### ***Sample***

This study was conducted on 450 urban adolescent tenth grade boys (225 non-backward, 75 SC, 75 ST and 75 OBC) from seven Hindi Medium Government Senior Secondary Schools of Jaipur

(Rajasthan). The various backward sections of Indian society (SC, ST and OBC) combined together constitute 50 percent of Indian population. They are listed on the Ministry of social welfare website. Remaining population constitutes the non-backward category. In order to have a relatively homogeneous sample, the data was collected only from Hindi Medium Rajasthan government senior secondary schools. To control the effect of gender, girls were excluded from the sample. All the schools were affiliated to the Board of secondary education, Rajasthan and age of the students ranged between 14 to 17 years with a mean age of 15.2 years.

### ***Instruments***

*Achievement motivation:* For measuring achievement motivation of subjects 'Achievement Value and Anxiety Inventory' (AVAI) developed by Mehta (1976) was used. The KR-20 reliability of the inventory is 0.67. The inventory consisted of 22 items in Hindi. Each item was followed by six responses. Two each of the six responses were achievement related (AR), task related (TR) and unrelated (UR) to achievement. Subjects had to choose one response for each item. The inventory yielded four types of scores (i) AR- the number of achievement related responses, (ii) TR-the number of task-related responses, (iii) UR- the number of responses unrelated to achievement and (iv) AIVI- the total score which was obtained by subtracting the number of UR from the number of AR score. The total score determined the standing of the individual on the inventory.

*Psychological adjustment:* The adjustment of the subjects was measured under three areas namely: emotional, educational and social respectively by the adjustment inventory for School Students (AISS) developed by Sinha and Singh (1984). The split half, test-retest and KR-20 reliability of the inventory is 0.95, 0.93 and 0.94 respectively. Validity coefficients for the

inventory was determined for each item by biserial correlation method and only such items were retained which yielded biserial correlation with both the criteria: (i) total score and (ii) area score, significance level being .001. The inventory consisted of sixty items in Hindi divided into three independently scored adjustment fields i.e. emotional, social and educational. Twenty items were related to each sub-field. Each item was to be answered in 'Yes' or 'No'. Each 'yes' answered item was counted and considered as a score. High score on the test indicated poor adjustment and low score indicated better adjustment.

*Emotional Intelligence:* Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) developed by Hyde, Pethe, and Dhar (2001) was used to assess the emotional intelligence of the subjects. The split-half reliability of the scale was 0.88. Validity of the scale was deduced from its coefficient of reliability (Garrett, 1981), and was found to be 0.93. The scale consisted of 34 items. Scoring was done on a 5 point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Each item or statement was scored 5 for strongly agree, 4 for agree, 3 for neutral, 2 for disagree and 1 for strongly disagree. In the end total score obtained on all the 34 items were calculated. High score indicated higher emotional intelligence.

***Procedure:***

Achievement Value and Anxiety Inventory (AVAI), Adjustment Inventory for School Students (AISS) and Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) were administered on students in a classroom setting. The scoring was done according to the respective manuals. After obtaining the scores, descriptive statistics of the variables was obtained and one-way ANOVA was calculated to study whether any significant difference exists between the four categories of students. Pair-wise analysis between the four categories revealed the difference

between the groups on the basis of mean score obtained on achievement motivation, emotional adjustment, social adjustment, educational adjustment and emotional intelligence.

## Results

**Table 1: Descriptive statistics and one way analysis of variance for achievement motivation, emotional adjustment, educational adjustment, social adjustment and emotional intelligence among non-backward (NBC), scheduled caste (SC), scheduled tribe (ST) and other backward class (OBC) students (N=450)**

Variables	NBC n=225		SC n=75		ST n=75		OBC n=75		F
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Achievement Motivation	4.87	5.38	4.64	4.38	5.23	5.11	4.44	5.86	.32
Emotional Adjustment	2.53	2.26	2.47	2.07	2.16	2.11	2.64	2.20	.71
Educational Adjustment	4.30	3.25	5.63	3.88	3.04	2.30	3.45	2.69	10.04**
Social Adjustment	5.93	2.37	5.83	2.26	5.29	2.14	6.19	2.20	2.12*
Emotional Intelligence	129.80	13.61	129.59	14.44	127.59	16.95	128.36	16.99	.51

\*p < .05, \*\*p < .01.

**Table 2: Pair-wise analysis for non-backward, scheduled caste (SC), scheduled tribe (ST) and other backward class (OBC) students on for educational and social adjustment responses**

Variables	Category (I)	Category (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Difference(a)	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Social Adjustment	non-backward	SC	.10	.31	-.50	.70
		ST	.64*	.31	.04	1.23
		OBC	-.26	.31	-.86	.34
	SC	ST	.53	.37	-.20	1.27
		OBC	-.36	.37	-1.09	.37
	ST	OBC	-.89*	.37	-1.63	-.16
Educational	non-backward	SC	-1.33*	.42	-2.15	-.51
		ST	1.26*	.42	.44	2.08

Adjustment		OBC	.84*	.42	.02	1.67
	SC	ST	2.59*	.51	1.58	3.60
		OBC	2.17*	.51	1.17	3.18
	ST	OBC	-.41	.51	-1.42	.60

\*p < .05, \*\*p < .01.

Descriptive statistics for study variables are given in Table 1. ANOVA was conducted to study the difference in achievement motivation, emotional adjustment, educational adjustment, social adjustment and emotional intelligence of students belonging to various demographic sections of Indian society. Results reveal that there is a significant difference in the educational adjustment of students belonging to various demographic sections of Indian society [F (3,446) = 10.04, p<.01]. Table 2 reveals the pair wise analysis among different groups and indicates that tribal (ST) students (M = 3.04) have better educational adjustment than non-backward (M = 4.30) and scheduled caste students (M = 5.63). Other backward class (M = 3.45) students have better educational adjustment than non-backward and scheduled caste students. Similarly, non-backward students have better educational adjustment than scheduled caste students. However, there was no significant difference between tribal and other backward class students. There was a significant difference in the social adjustment of students belonging to different demographic sections [F (3,446) = 2.12, p<.05]. Further, Table 2 reveals that the tribal students (M=5.29) had better social adjustment than non-backward (M=5.93) and other backward students (M=6.19). Further, Table 1 reveals that there is no significant difference between different demographic groups in terms of achievement motivation, emotional adjustment and emotional intelligence, respectively.

## Discussion

The results revealed significant difference in the level of

educational and social adjustment among different demographic groups. ST students were found to be better adjusted to the challenges of education than other categories. Apparently, SC students were found to be lowest in the area of educational adjustment amongst the four categories under study. Probably, the benefits of socio-economic reforms have ensured right to education for all but could not ensure regular attendance of students in classes and continuance of education for them. Because of the poor financial conditions and less educated parents, SC students might face difficulty in continuing their studies for long hours coupled with a paucity of guided instructions at home. Parents of most of the SC students are daily wage laborers who are either involved in sanitation work or are artisans. Therefore, the children have to support their parents during evening hours and that may lead to lack of attention during the classes and not faring well during the exams. Also, at times their stigmatized social identity may not be conducive to the development and maintenance of positive self-conception (Breakwell, 1986), resultantly, they might feel under-confident in asking questions from the teachers and find teachers of no avail to their inability to comprehend instructions. Hence, adjusting to the challenges of school life seems to be a herculean task for them. Results suffice the observation that despite Indian government's efforts to facilitate the integration of the SCs in Indian society, primarily through the co-education of the non-backward children and those of the SCs', segregation tends to persist (Jaspal, 2011). It has been observed that, increasingly, children of non backwards castes are sent by their parents to private schools, which has resulted in majority of SC children at state schools (Jodhka, 2004). Thus, the 'us versus them' conflict prevails and the students are not able to adapt well to these conflicting environments.

On the other hand, most of the ST and OBC students in the present study belong to the Meena and 'Jat' community of

Western India respectively. Although lower on social hierarchy; but post-independence, influence of these communities in the society has increased due to political and economic reforms initiated in the country (like giving back the land from landowners to the people who cultivated it, reservation in jobs etc.). Such socio-economic empowerment has not only improved the financial status of these sections of the society but has also changed the mindsets of its people. These families realize the importance of education and facilitate the educational practices in their children. Adolescents belonging to these categories are able to concentrate well in their studies as they do not have to bear the burden of their families as well as they are not bound by the shackles of social stigma as associated lower castes. They feel confident in clearing their doubts from the teachers and get adequate academic resources for their exam preparation. Irrefutably, these ST and OBC students are able to adapt well to the educational errands in hand and because of the additional familial focus on education, are able to fare well vis-à-vis their non-backward and scheduled caste (SC) counterparts. It also reflects that caste-based patterns of social behavior are consensually accepted by members of these groups and disregarding their social identities they aspire to fare well in education.

Again in the area of social adjustment, ST students fared better than the non-backward students and other backward class (OBC) students. With the changing ecological structure, scheduled tribes of India have well settled down in urban areas while giving up their nomadic life. They are now entrepreneurs to rare handicrafts and skills, and are also the pride possessors of their traditional wisdom of puppetry, lac welding, glass-making, tattooing etc. Notwithstanding their settlement of life in urban areas, they did not give away their traditional instinct of gregariousness and could make easy acquaintances with others. Perceptibly, students belonging to this community are socially adaptable, they are able to make

friends with others easily; they participate in group activities, help other students in their tasks and do not hesitate in approaching newcomers. Thus, they are able to adapt better to the dynamic social challenges of their school life than non-backward and OBC students. Nevertheless, with increasing competition and lesser job opportunity, competitive spirit breeds in non-backward and OBC students. As a result, they develop individualistic attitude and tend to focus only on their studies while mingling less with their classmates or out-group members. Thus, they tend to fulfill their academic interests at the cost of their social relations. Nonetheless, there was no significant difference with respect to the emotional adjustment between students belonging to different demographic groups.

Similarly with respect to achievement motivation, there was no significant difference between students belonging to different demographic groups namely non-backward, SC, ST and OBC. Similar findings have been found earlier also (Gokulnathan and Mehta, 1972; Mehta, 1974; Singh, 1982). Irrespective of the category, almost all the students have an urge to improve and achieve the standards of excellence, so that they can become successful in their lives. Therefore, the pattern of development of achievement motivation seems similar in the Indian society across its various sections. It may be indicative of the progress brought out by the socio-economic reforms in the country for over 60 years that has leveled the psycho-social differences prevalent in the erstwhile society. Moreover, sample of the study comprised of urban adolescent boys who had all the media exposure and available resources to form an opinion about what to do in life. It seems that in the urban areas where the caste structure is not as rigid as in rural areas of India, the differences and stereotypes associated with caste system are not so prominent (Dumont, 1988; Gupta, 2004). It can be interpreted that, they might not be subjected to the stigma otherwise associated with their rural counterparts which signifies them to be devalued, spoiled or flawed in the eyes of

others. So the children, as they grow in an urban environment of equal opportunities, don't have clear cut stereotypical boundaries between them. The enriched environment provides these individuals an equal opportunity to develop and prosper. Hence, every student has equal desire to progress in life irrespective of the category they belong to.

Correspondingly, there was also no significant difference in the level of emotional intelligence in students across four sections of the society. Almost all the students exhibited comparable levels of self-awareness, empathy, self-motivation, integrity, value-orientation, commitment, altruism, emotional stability and relationship-development skills. It indicates that the development of emotional intelligence may not be dependent solely on the natural category of the individual in which he is born; rather it may be a function of the socialisation process and the support system he has been bred with. Enriched social support vicariously develops in adolescents an ability to regulate their emotions. Particularly, in the collectivistic culture of India with the philosophy of 'vasudhaiv kutumbakam' (whole world is a family); they universally develop compassion and sensitivity to others' feelings while surpassing their selfish desires and individualistic competition. The humanistic values of collectivistic ecology enable the development of emotional efficacy to transcend the man-made boundaries of caste divisions. Thus, development of emotional intelligence may be a universal phenomenon and is not limited by social-demographic divisions of caste or category in adolescents.

## **Conclusion**

Socially defined categories require differential nurture of its members for their adequate psychological well-being. Though, the policy of protective discrimination has levelled certain differences, yet, it necessitated addressing the needs of other

categories unequivocally. The socio-economic reforms in the country have nurtured a universal culture of emotional adjustment and achievement motivation in the adolescents. However, still the educational and social adjustment in adolescents bear the pangs of societal discrepancies highlighting the dilemma of caste signifying identity or hierarchy. Adolescents belonging to the scheduled castes need to be harnessed with better educational and social policies so that their educational adjustment can be ensured. Nonetheless, social skills need be cherished in the general as well as the OBC students. Thus, it can be concluded that appropriate psycho-social nurture be provided to all the categories that have been socio-economically demarcated. It is only then that the discrepancy between institutional as well as social levels can be streamlined.

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