

Emotional Engagement among High School Students

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ABSTRACT

Emotional engagement is a critical component of student's learning reflecting the affective, cognitive and motivational involvement of students in academic activities. The present study was carried out on High School Students to find the gender differences in Emotional Engagement. The study consisted 205 High School Students, 106 Girls and 99 boys from Bangalore High Schools. Emotional Engagement Scale developed by Dr. Neha Sharma & Mr. Gaurav Sejwal was administered. Data was analyzed using frequency distribution and independent samples t-tests to examine differences based on gender. The mean score for boys ($M = 172.27$, $SD = 23.27$) was higher than that of girls ($M = 165.94$, $SD = 20.86$), indicating that boys demonstrated greater emotional engagement in the assessed activities. The independent-samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference between genders, $t(203) = 2.04$, $p = .04$, suggesting that gender is associated with variations in emotional engagement among high school students. These results suggest that boys may experience or express higher levels of emotional engagement than girls. The present study on emotional engagement among high school students holds considerable significance for students, teachers, schools, and the broader field of educational research. Emotional engagement is a critical aspect of student development, as it directly influences academic performance, motivation, social relationships, and psychological well-being. Understanding the factors and dimensions of emotional engagement can help educators, administrators, and policymakers create effective strategies to enhance student involvement and learning outcomes.

Keywords: Emotional Engagement, High School Students, Emotional Engagement Scale

The high school stage is a crucial transitional period marked by increased academic expectations, identity formation, and emotional sensitivity. During adolescence, students often face challenges such as peer pressure, performance stress, and changing relationships with teachers and parents. Emotional engagement becomes especially important in helping students cope with these demands and remain connected to the learning process. Students who experience positive emotions such as interest, enjoyment, and belonging are more likely to participate actively in classroom learning and develop stronger academic resilience. (Eccles & Roeser, 2011; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Emotional engagement is an essential component of students' academic life, particularly during the high school years, when adolescents experience rapid psychological, emotional, and social development. Emotional engagement refers to the feelings, attitudes, and emotional responses that students develop toward learning, teachers, peers, and school activities. It plays a significant role in shaping students' motivation, persistence, and overall school adjustment. High school students who feel emotionally connected to their learning environment are more likely to demonstrate positive academic outcomes and healthy psychological well-being. (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Skinner & Belmont, 1993).

Emotional engagement is closely linked to the broader concept of student engagement, which includes behavioral, cognitive, and emotional dimensions. Among these, emotional engagement is considered central because it reflects students' internal emotional connection with school. It involves feelings of enthusiasm, attachment, enjoyment, and a sense of belonging within the school environment. Emotional engagement fosters meaningful learning experiences and enhances students' willingness to invest effort in academic tasks. Without

emotional engagement, students may feel disconnected, leading to boredom, anxiety, or even dropout tendencies. (Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008; Finn, 1989).

One of the key importance of emotional engagement is its impact on academic achievement. Students who are emotionally invested in learning are more likely to attend classes regularly, focus on tasks, and persist through challenges. Emotional engagement promotes intrinsic motivation, which encourages students to explore concepts, seek understanding, and perform better academically. For example, high school students who enjoy science experiments or literature discussions are more likely to study regularly, participate in class, and achieve higher grades. (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Significance of the study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to enhance educational practices, improve student outcomes, and promote holistic development among high school students. By focusing on emotional engagement, the study underscores the importance of addressing students' affective needs alongside cognitive learning, contributing to a more supportive and effective educational environment.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Davis, S. K., Niven, K., & Carroll, M. (2024) Teacher attrition is a global crisis, often precipitated by emotional disengagement. This longitudinal study over one academic year examined antecedents of emotional engagement in 322 secondary school teachers. We focused on the personal resource of psychological capital (PsyCap: hope, efficacy, resilience, optimism) and the contextual resource of perceived collegial support. Cross-lagged panel analysis revealed that baseline PsyCap and collegial support both independently predicted higher emotional engagement at year-end, even after controlling for burnout levels. Notably, collegial support also strengthened the positive relationship between PsyCap and emotional engagement. Qualitative analysis of open responses identified specific supportive behaviors—such as shared planning and emotional validation—that fuelled teachers' passion. The study concludes that interventions to boost both individual PsyCap and team-level supportive cultures are dual pathways to sustaining the emotional engagement vital for teacher retention and effectiveness.

Linnenbrink-Garcia, L., & Patall, E. A. (2022) This meta-analysis synthesizes results from 49 school-based intervention studies (K-16) conducted between 2000-2020 that aimed to foster emotionally supportive learning environments and subsequently enhance students' emotional engagement. Emotional support was defined as teacher warmth, respect, responsiveness to student needs, and a focus on creating a safe, belonging-focused classroom climate. The random effects analysis revealed a significant, moderate overall effect ($g = 0.47$) of these interventions on students' self-reported emotional engagement (interest, enjoyment, sense of belonging). Moderator analyses indicated that interventions were most effective when they: (a) combined direct teacher training with curricular materials focused on social-emotional learning, (b) lasted for a full academic year or longer, and (c) were implemented in middle school settings. The findings underscore that emotional engagement is malleable and can be systematically nurtured through targeted efforts to make classrooms more emotionally supportive, with implications for reducing disaffection and promoting positive academic trajectories.

Boyle, E. A., Connolly, T. M., & Hainey, T. (2019) This study investigates the relationship between the psychological state of flow, emotional engagement, and learning outcomes in digital game-based learning (GBL). A sample of 213 secondary school students played a serious game designed to teach history. Data were collected via in-game metrics, the Flow State Scale, a post-game emotional engagement questionnaire (measuring feelings of excitement, investment, and character empathy), and pre-post knowledge tests. Path analysis revealed that flow experience (characterized by a balance of challenge and skill, focused attention, and loss of self-consciousness) was a significant and strong predictor of emotional engagement. Emotional engagement, in turn, was the most significant direct predictor of knowledge gain. The findings suggest a sequential process in effective GBL: well-designed games facilitate flow, which fosters a state of high emotional engagement, and it is this affective investment that drives the cognitive processing necessary for learning. The study provides empirical support for designing educational games that prioritize creating immersive, emotionally compelling experiences to maximize instructional efficacy.

The review of literature clearly indicates that emotional engagement is a crucial factor influencing high school students' academic performance, motivation, and overall psychological well-being. The present study seeks to address the underexplored aspects of emotional engagement among high school students in urban Indian schools, focusing specifically on gender differences, the study aims to provide a more detailed and contextually relevant understanding of students' emotional involvement in learning, thereby contributing to both theory and practice.

Objective of the Study:

- To examine gender differences in overall emotional engagement levels among high school students.

Hypothesis of the study:

- There is no significant difference in the overall emotional engagement levels between male and female high school students.

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive research design. The design is suitable for describing the current levels of emotional engagement among high school students and comparing these levels across gender.

Sample

A total of 205 High School Students studying in Government and Private schools in Bangalore Urban, Karnataka.

- 106 girls and 99 boys
- Students selected from both Government and Private schools
- Students from diverse socio-economic and educational backgrounds

Variables of the Study

Dependent Variable:

- Emotional Engagement

Independent Variables:

- Gender (Male, Female)

Tools of the Study

1. **Demographic/Personal Information Schedule:** Collected data on gender, age, class, type of school, family type, and socio-economic status.
2. **Emotional Engagement Scale (Dr. Neha Sharma & Mr. Gaurav Sejwal)(2025):** The Emotional Engagement Scale developed by Dr. Neha Sharma and Mr. Gaurav Sejwal was used in the present study to assess the emotional engagement levels of high school students. The scale consists of 50 items, including 34 positively worded statements and 16 negatively worded statements. It follows a five-point Likert-type format, ranging from *Strongly Agree (5)* to *Strongly Disagree (1)*. The instrument measures emotional engagement across five major dimensions, namely Absorption, Attention, Boredom, Enthusiasm, and Enjoyment, providing a detailed understanding of students' emotional involvement in academic learning.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability: The Emotional Engagement Scale demonstrates high internal consistency. The reliability of the tool was established using Cronbach's alpha method, and the coefficient was found to be 0.880, indicating that the scale is a reliable measure of emotional engagement among students.

Validity: The validity of the scale was ensured through both content and construct validation procedures. Content validity was verified by 15 experts in the fields of education and psychology. Construct validity was supported through significant positive correlations between the dimensions and the total score, such as Absorption (.724**), Attention (.803**), Boredom (.666**), Enjoyment (.773**), and Enthusiasm (.665**). These correlations confirm that the scale effectively measures the construct of emotional engagement.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process was conducted systematically. Permission was obtained from the school authorities prior to administering the tools. The researcher established rapport with the students to ensure cooperation and comfort. The Personal Information Schedule was administered first, followed by the Emotional Engagement Scale. Clear instructions were provided, participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was assured. After completion, all questionnaires were collected and checked for completeness to ensure accurate data.

Statistical Analysis

Descriptive Statistics:

- Frequency distribution of overall emotional engagement levels

Inferential Statistics:

Independent Samples t-test:

- Gender differences in overall emotional engagement

Table 1: Gender Difference in Emotional Engagement Levels among High School Students

	Group	A total Scores on Emotional Engagement				
		N	Mean	SD	t	p
A total Scores on Emotional Engagement	Boys	99	172.27	23.27	2.04	.04
	Girls	106	165.94	20.86		
	Total	240				

A t-test for independent samples was conducted to examine whether emotional engagement scores differed significantly between boys and girls. The mean score for boys ($M = 172.27$, $SD = 23.27$) was higher than that of girls ($M = 165.94$, $SD = 20.86$), indicating that boys demonstrated greater emotional engagement in the assessed activities. The independent-samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference between genders, $t(203) = 2.04$, $p = .04$, suggesting that gender is associated with variations in emotional engagement among high school students. This effect, though statistically significant, may be considered moderate given the overlap in standard deviations.

These results suggest that boys may experience or express higher levels of emotional engagement than girls in this sample. This could reflect differences in motivation, classroom participation, or interests in school-related activities.

DISCUSSION

The results of the independent-samples t-test showed a statistically significant difference in overall emotional engagement scores between boys ($M = 172.27$, $SD = 23.27$) and girls ($M = 165.94$, $SD = 20.86$), $t(203) = 2.04$, $p = .04$. Boys demonstrated higher overall emotional engagement than girls, leading to the rejection of the

hypothesis. This suggests that gender is associated with variations in emotional engagement among high school students. One possible explanation is that boys may express or experience emotional involvement in a more observable or energetic manner, resulting in higher engagement scores. Their classroom participation, interests in learning activities, and motivation levels may also differ from girls, reflecting these results. These findings align with studies by Reeve (2006) and Fredricks et al. (2004), who reported that boys often exhibit higher observable engagement, but partially contradict Wang, Wilkins, and Eccles (2016), which found girls to be more emotionally engaged in some school contexts. The discrepancy may reflect cultural, social, and school-specific factors influencing gender differences.

The present investigation into emotional engagement among high school students revealed several significant insights regarding gender differences in emotional engagement. The study found that male students exhibited higher overall emotional engagement than female students. The independent-samples t-test showed a statistically significant difference, with boys reporting greater emotional involvement in learning activities. This suggests that boys may express more energy, motivation, and positive affective experiences during school-related tasks.

Implication of the study:

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, several recommendations can be made to enhance emotional engagement among high school students and to guide future research in this area.

- The study highlights the need for gender-sensitive strategies to promote emotional engagement. Since boys exhibited higher levels of Enjoyment and Enthusiasm, educators should design activities and learning experiences that foster similar affective engagement among girls. Incorporating collaborative tasks, interactive discussions, and experiential learning may encourage female students to actively participate and enjoy classroom activities, thereby increasing their emotional connection to learning.
- Educators and policymakers should use findings from emotional engagement research to inform curriculum design, teaching methods, and school policies. Promoting environments that value student voice, encourage active participation, and nurture positive emotions can lead to improved academic outcomes, better school adjustment, and overall psychological well-being among high school students.

CONCLUSIONS

The present study was conducted to assess the emotional engagement of high school students and to examine differences based on gender. Overall emotional engagement differed significantly between male and female students, with boys exhibiting higher engagement scores than girls. This indicates that male students may express greater energy, motivation, and positive emotions during academic activities. The study confirms that emotional engagement is a multidimensional construct influenced by individual characteristics such as gender. Students' emotional involvement plays a crucial role in shaping learning experiences, motivation, and overall academic adjustment. These findings have practical implications for educators and policymakers in designing programs and teaching practices that enhance emotional engagement, reduce boredom, and promote positive emotional experiences among high school students. Fostering emotional engagement is essential for creating motivated, attentive, and emotionally connected learners. Implementing these recommendations can enhance students' learning experiences, reduce boredom and disengagement, and promote a more effective and supportive educational environment.

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