

The Effect of Anxiety and Emotional Intelligence on Students' Learning Process

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Abstract

A lot of teachers don't know what exactly anxiety and emotional intelligence are and how they can impact on student's learning. Academic Anxiety will be happened amongst students when they feel intense worry about upcoming and previous incidence, too much self-concern and high focus on acting proficiently or they motivate by various items. Students with high level of anxiety most of the time misinterpreted or overstated the importance of the situation. If the situation is not managed correctly negative consequences may happen. In addition, students that show emotional intelligence toward different items can growth their skills in educational situation. Various expressions have been used to describe experience of emotional intelligence and academic anxiety. This study, talk over the relation of those terms associated with characterizing and conceptualizing of working memory, emotional intelligence and learning process.

Keywords: Anxiety, Emotional intelligence, Working Memory, Student's learning

1.1. Introduction

Anxiety is a natural human reaction, and it works as an important psychological function that is felt by many people regardless of age. All children experience anxiety as an alarm system that is activated whenever they perceive situation as dangerous, embarrassing or stressful, in these situations anxiety can help them to better manage the events, while low and controllable level of anxiety can be beneficial, high level of anxiety may negatively impact one's social and personal relationships, and cause physical and emotional problems. (Herrero, Sandi, & Venero, 2006).

In learning context anxiety can affect the ability of receiving information, its processing, and retrieving it when it's necessary (Tobias, 1983). Students with anxiety often experience high and uncontrollable worry about events which accrued in past or may be happened in future, they experience extreme worry about performing completely well, meanwhile they are so self-consciousness and often misinterpreted or overstated the importance of the condition (Vanin, 2008); all of these can negatively impact on learning and information processing via its influences on working memory, leading to poorer academic performances, school dropout or underachievement in school; Finally it can predict significant problems in child life which may do not recover easily (Bigdeli, 2010; Hughes, Lourea-Waddell, & Kendall, 2008; Van Ameringen, Mancini, & Farvolden, 2003). Meanwhile, Emotions have effect full role in motivate of abilities of individuals and improve the process of learning in various fields, especially among student which has strong link with anxiety.

Understanding the effect of anxiety on student's emotional intelligence, their working memory and learning process is crucial for teachers to increase their awareness about the effect of student's anxiety on their learning process.

Thus, it is obvious that teachers for better helping their anxious students to dominate their challenges and dedicate their whole working memory and raising their emotional intelligence resources to the learning tasks; should be well-informed about negative effects of anxiety on student's learning issues, in addition, teachers should be well equipped to recognize what conditions may make the students anxious and try to produce suitable learning condition (Bigdeli, 2010; Cowden, 2010).

On the other hand, Emotional intelligence assumed as one of the separate way for recognizing the real feeling and applies it to make accurate decision in duration of learning process. This inner motivator focuses on moods and reactions in various condition and manages them correctly (Randazzo et al., 2012). In reality, Emotional intelligence is one of the inner motivators that has association with students abilities and improves their learning. In model of Mayor and Slovey referd to the role of emotions as inner motivators. In this model explained about effective emotions on skills and changing them in various forms (Lopes et al., 2004; Tan & Waheed, 2011).

2.1. Anxiety and Learning Process

The term of anxiety is an instant, transitory emotion which can immediately impact on child cognition in specific condition and made them feeling worry, tightness and nervousness, all of these events can extremely impact on memory and learning process (Bigdeli, 2010; MacIntyre, 1995). In the school environment, student usually feels anxiety when they are evaluating by teachers, during exam or giving public performances. Especially, when test anxiety is considered, it can have noteworthy and negatively impact on a student's capability to perform at an ideal level. Huberty (2009) postulated that text anxiety, can lead to noticeable underachievement during time, he also proposed that the consequences of chronic test anxiety such as low level self-esteem may leading to reducing effort and motivation for school tasks.

Anxiety is assumed to consume the necessary resources of working memory, and it can inhibit the student's capability to act well in learning situations. Heimberg et al., (1993) found that people who experience high level of anxiety were less successful at encoding information and less effective at processing events, that's because that lots of their energy and attention wasted for managing anxiety, and fewer clues from the environment will be recognized by them; all of these will lead to losing considerable capacity of their working memory which can negatively impact their learning processes. Likewise, Goleman (2004) shows that brain activity and one's cognition procedure can be impaired and negatively influenced by psychological impact of anxiety. Learning as a cognitive activity is dependent on encoding, storing and retrieval procedures. Each of these processes can be disturbed by anxiety because of its negative impact on one's attention and concentration. (Ansari & Derakshan, 2010; Ansari, Derakshan, & Richards, 2008; Berggren & Derakshan, 2012; Eysenck & Derakshan, 2011; Eysenck, Derakshan, Santos, & Calvo, 2007). Anxious children and adolescents exhibit less capability to keep their attention. Strauss et al., (1987) in their study identified that students who rated by their teachers with high level of anxiety to compare with non-clinical children exhibited more impairment in control of their attention. Watts & Weems (2006) investigated the relationships between intentional control, memory bias and anxiety disorder and found significant correlation between these events. In this sight, Muris (2007) demonstrated that children who have psychopathological complaints such as anxiety disorders exhibited difficulty to control their attention.

Other behavioral symptom of anxiety related to learning is difficulty concentrating (APA, 2000). Aronen et al., (2005) explained that anxiety symptoms can negatively impact on concentration and working memory which consequently can negatively influence on child learning process and their academic performances. At the same time, Hadwin et al., (2005) conducted the study to examine anxious individual differences in working memory and concluded that concentration difficulties in anxious children is one of the important items which make them to spend longer time to complete the tasks. Owen et al., (2008) examined if poor working memory was mediated between the relationship between anxiety and educational succeed, and proposed that anxiety by its effect on one's concentration and working memory has the potential to negatively impact academic achievement. High level of distraction has been demonstrated as other reason of negative effect of anxiety on working memory. Lapointe (2013) conducted the study to investigate whether anxiety has been related to one's distraction, intentional difficulties and reducing memory capacity. The result of their study showed the significant positive link between these events but anxiety impairments was specifically related to one's distractibility. In sum, all of these events can decreases resources available for overall processing in children and adolescence (Carthy, Horesh, Apter, & Gross, 2010; Eysenck, 1979, 1992). And negatively impact on their working memory capacity (Lee, 1999; Visu-Petra, Miclea, Cheie, & Benga, 2009).

Reasons of anxiety can be a consequence of psychological and physiological elements which are correlated in a complex way. The student' academic anxiety can be related with many emotional or behavioral problems, but the reality is that it can be well managed (Smith, 2009). Teachers should be well known about how to use the controlling technics like helpful reinforcement, perfect guidelines, etc.; because this kind of direction will help academic anxious students perform better. Academic anxiety is a kind of anxiety that can be learned, and it means that they can be "unlearned". For instance, Parents frequently pass their worry to their children, (Weiten, 2007). Consequently, it is obvious that teachers, parents, and caretakers should be well informed and able to help academic anxious children to deal challenges. Meanwhile in order to raise learning efficiency, teachers should be stimulated to recognize conditions which may provoke child's anxiety and try to make a suitable situation for learning so that students during learning process can use and dedicate the considerable and large part of their working memory (Tummala-Narra, 2009).

2.2. Anxiety and Working Memory

Working memory defined as short-term storage that can keeps and manipulates incoming inputs and incorporates it with other information storage in long-term memory in order to use it in novel conditions. This is the process which is essential for fundamental aspects of usual activities such as learning, reasoning, and reading skills (Baddeley, 1988). One of the important ways that anxiety negatively can impact learning process is by its influence on memory. In this sight memory is the procedure by which inputs is stored for the time we want to use it in future (Kassin, 2004; Yousefi, Redzuan, Mansor, Juhari, & Talib, 2010). Anxiety can cause memory difficulties by preoccupation, producing unrelated thoughts and reducing awareness and attention. Finally when awareness and attention are diminished, disruption of memory and learning will be expected (Eysenck et al., 2007; Gallagher, Rabian, & McCloskey, 2004; Sansgiry & Sail, 2006).

Memory impairment is widespread in anxious children, adolescents, and adults (Berg, Franzen, & Wedding, 1987; Flessner et al., 2010). Specially, anxiety has been known as a noteworthy problem for child learning, because it can negatively impact child's learning through its influence on child working memory. Working memory has a limited capacity and anxiety has been noted to reduce the amount of processing capacity available for working memory tasks (Eysenck, 1992; Lee, 1999; Owens et al., 2008). Good performance of working memory during learning process is so crucial for guiding behavior (Baddeley, 2007; Eysenck, 1979; Flessner et al., 2010; Hayes, Hirsch, & Mathews, 2008; Lee, 1999). And anxiety can negatively impact working memory and learning via its influence on child's capability to properly involve in free recall (Grimley, Dahraei, & Riding, 2008; Mueller, 1979). So, poor working memory has been related to lower academic performance in learning situations (Engelhardt, Nigg, Carr, & Ferreira, 2008; Martinussen, Hayden, Hogg-Johnson, & Tannock, 2005).

Beck (1985) interpreted this issue and argued that anxiety has a negative influence on working memory performance "because the patient who had anxiety disorder utilized a great amount of his cognitive capacity by scanning for threatening stimuli, it can severely restricted the existent amount of attention to other demands . Children diagnosed with an anxiety disorder have been roved to attain lower working memory scores to compare with control group (Grimley et al., 2008; Vasa et al., 2007). Finally, anxious students who their working memory restricted, may easily be overtaxed which consequently it can interfere with their learning process (Naumann, Richter, Christmann, & Groeben, 2008).

2.3. Anxiety and Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence as a powerful inner factor that can growth or improve all facets of behavior and trends among individuals. In reality, emotional intelligence is kind of ability to assessing individuals trends and conduct them in various ways. These kinds of emotions have direct effect to individuals' skills for obtaining social and private performances. This internal factor determined kind of living ,relation and learning (Lopes et al., 2004). Emotional intelligence with all facets has different effect on behavior and options of individuals. Emotions focus on two sides of individuals' behavior and reactions in each level of their life. Based on the roles of emotions, considering to this internal factor and improve, could be so effective for controlling and conduct behaviors and performance. In some cases the presence of this factor is intangible. Furthermore, individuals faced with a lot of conflicts and abnormalities that should be manage correctly. In fact, knowing the emotional intelligence as main part of internal feeling supports individuals to recognizing various situations and selecting appropriate items in their life (Naidoo, 2000).

Emotions have effect full role in motivate of abilities of individuals and improve the process of learning in various fields, especially among student. These emotions refer to internal and external facets of individuals that assumed as inner factor and depend on individuals' personality. The amount and presence of emotions have different results among individuals and this fact drives from individuals' personality. The role of emotion based on learning can be increase or decrease amount of it, basically (Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, & Perry, 2002).

According to the role of emotions as an effective inner motivator, the studies referred that the emotions have strong link with positive and negative inner factors such as anxiety. Most of the time the presence of emotions has positive face and illustrate the amount of skills among individuals. If the emotions determined in a correct way can negative factors same as anxiety decrease and control, considerably. In reality, this process motivates individuals for developing their ability in learning field. Because the presence of anxiety among student assumed as one of the main items in decreasing the amount of learning that with presence of emotions can be limited (Kamae, Weisani, Researchers, Club, & Branch, 2014; Karatas, Alci, & Aydin, 2013; Sajadi, Kiakojouri, & Hatami, 2012).

3.1. Anxious Students

Students who have a high and excessive concern about future and past procedures, too much worry about acting totally well and have a noticeable self-consciousness may experience high level of anxiety. Students with anxiety also may have an anticipation of use in getting information, this prediction can raise their anxieties responses; for instance, anxious students may fell anxiety due to non-understanding or misunderstanding of constructs and doing faults and mistakes (MacIntyre, 1995). One other thing in anxious student which can disturb their learning process is exaggeration of importance of the condition by them. In these entire situations student's mind will be filled with anxiousness subjects, which can negatively affect their attention, interpretation, concentration, memory and learning (Cowden, 2010). Academic anxiety is so disrupting, for example, the mind of students who are anxious are disturbing with unrelated events that are not belong to the learning context (Vassilaki, 2006). According to Sarason (Sarason, 1975, 1988) the mind of students who are anxious about their performance can be preoccupying with irrelevant thoughts that are not related to the subject, which consequently can decrease concentration and impact cognitive performances such as learning.

3.2. Interaction of Academic Anxious Children

Academic anxious students most of the time are decided to withdrawn from other children and choose to keep their distance of other classmate's activities and not join in to other peer's groups. They are frequently repining about tiredness, exhaustion, bad temper, muscle tension, dizziness, vomiting, indigestions and annoyances, headache and other somatic symptoms. They usually decide on to escape any form of condition where disapproval may be happened and always need confirmation (Foxman, 2004). Academic anxious students also are more vulnerable to depression and most of the time they fell dumps (Cunningham, Gunn, Alladin, & Cawthorpe, 2008). In sum, academic anxiety can get raise, and negatively impact on student's wellbeing.

3.3. Operation of Academic Anxious Children in Classroom

According to Cowden (2010), many academic anxious students are frightened of interaction through an educational situations and talking within the classroom in fronts of others make them so anxious, these students most of the times experienced daydream, uneasiness and their mind will be filled with anxiousness thoughts (Spencer, DuPont, & DuPont, 2003). For instance, if anxious students be aware of disastrous condition in the news, or listen that their family or peers are talking over a real-life incident, easily these situations can reduce their concentration as they tend to more focus their attention on these events. When they try to concentrate again and implement their learning process, their thoughts will be overwhelmed with anxieties about other things such as too much worry about school, their performances quality, or musical activities.

Academic anxious students may be very silent, agreeing and willing to satisfy others (McLoone, Hudson, & Rapee, 2006). They do so by frequently suffering in quiet Thus, their problems may be neglected. These children feel that they should keep their friends happy and they should not burden them by their worries. They attempt to satisfy others in many ways and its consequence is significant worry on themselves and on their mental state. (Cowden, 2010).

For instance, in the study conducted by Younger, Schneider, & Guirguis-Younger (2008) 227 students recruited for investigating what of students behaviors are related to their anxiety when they are amongst their peers.

The behaviors which were more recognized by these students included the following: be very quiet, self-focused, withdrawal of their peers and friends, avoiding eye contact or mixed up with others, stuttering during their talking. Totally, all of these behaviors in students will raise their loneliness and because of their anxiety they feel uncomfortable when others are around them and all of these will lead to less social interaction with peers on their age mean while it can negatively impact on their self-esteem. In conclusion, school may become a location of worry for these anxious kids.

3.4. Managing Student Academic Anxiety by Teachers

In learning context considering the amount of anxiety is essential because as low to moderate levels of arousal tend to improve learning process, high amount of anxiety can destroy it (Gold, 1995; Morley, Gallate, Hunt, Mallet, & McGregor, 2001). Students who permanently show high levels of anxiety usually display poor learning and memory abilities, in this point, relieving anxiety related-responses or reducing the anxiety level can improve students' students cognitive performance and learning ability (Herrero et al., 2006).

Teachers must be well-informed about anxiety and how it may impact their students. It is obviously necessary that teachers should be knowledgeable about the influences of anxiety on child academic activities via its effects on child memory; also they should be ready to aid students with anxiety to deal with their challenges and experience healthy and good life. Teachers have the power to teach students effective ways of dealing with anxiety and help the students who are overwhelmed with anxiety and feel worry about the effectiveness of their performance, turn their high worry into a constructive shape and made it act more like a motivation, (Klem & Connell, 2004; Murray & Greenberg, 2000; Rankin-Erickson & Pressley, 2000; Wedayanthi, 2012). Teachers can aid the academic anxious students about the effectiveness of their performance, to turn their anxiety into a positive and constructive shape such as motivation. (Weiten, 2007).

LaBillois and Lagace-Seguin (2009) investigated the correlation between student's capability to control their emotions and teacher's different teaching approaches. The result of their study showed that various teaching approaches can be related to various consequences among students with different controlling features. Using flash cards is another strategy and one of the worthy study habits for students to better getting and incorporate information from teacher and bring down their tension during study (Cowden, 2010). Student's learning to control their emotions is an essential skill for academic anxious students. Managing of conflicts, interacting with administrators and energetic listening are just many of the skills that teachers can be learned as a solution for this problem among students. Teachers also by using collaborative learning can raise student's learning and decrease their anxiety related to learning process, meanwhile teachers by keeping their classroom quiet and in hand raise the academic anxious student's attention and consideration and less be distracted by irrelevant things (Ioannou & Artino Jr, 2010). According to a study conducted by Kiluk, Weden and Culotta (2009), active sport participation among students with ADHD disorder would be related to reducing anxiety or depression symptoms. Relaxation also is another effective solution for reducing anxiety. (Williams, 2013).

Training basic information about anxiety, various techniques and strategies and Positive anxiety controlling to students can work to close the gap between children's competences and their academic performances and learning activities (Weinstein & Mayer, 1986; Weiten, 2007). At the end, Teachers can help academic anxious students to be less unfocused and lose their intentional control, less likely to concentrate on non-relevant subjects, and consequently raised their working memory capacity and be more succeed in their learning activities.

4. Conclusion

Academic anxiety can negatively impact on schools activity success and activities as anxious children is self-preoccupying, most of their energy which can be used in their learning process and help to raise their academic succession are wasted and leads to undesirable consequences. On other hand, anxiety by hampering control of attention and concentration can negatively impact on working memory span and emotional intelligence consequently influence on inability and mal performance in learning process.

Teachers can be a part of the healing process, and they should be informed about of academic anxiety and its impact on students learning processes. It is absolutely crucial that teachers must be well equipped to aid academic anxious students to effectively deal with their social and psychological challenges and help them to better act not only socially and academically but also mentally and physically.

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