



# The Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Student Success at Secondary and Higher Secondary Levels

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## Abstract

The concept of emotional intelligence (EI) has become increasingly relevant in the discussion of educational success. While traditional metrics such as intelligence quotient (IQ) and standardized test scores remain central to academic evaluation, they often overlook the crucial role of emotional and social competencies. This article explores the importance of emotional intelligence among secondary and higher secondary school students, aged 14–18, a group navigating both the challenges of adolescence and the high academic demands of board examinations, competitive tests, and future career planning. Drawing on existing literature, the paper discusses how emotional intelligence influences academic achievement, resilience, classroom behavior, peer relationships, and mental health at this stage of schooling. It also examines the major components of emotional intelligence, practical strategies for its development in school contexts, and the role of teachers and parents in fostering emotional growth. Finally, the article outlines recommendations for integrating emotional intelligence into secondary and higher secondary education, concluding that emotional intelligence is essential not only for academic success but also for preparing adolescents to transition into adulthood as confident, empathetic, and socially responsible individuals.

**Keywords:** Emotional intelligence, secondary education, higher secondary students, academic success, adolescence, mental health, social-emotional learning.

## Introduction

Secondary and higher secondary education is one of the most critical phases in a student's life. During the ages of 14–18, young people undergo rapid physical, cognitive, and emotional development while facing mounting academic expectations. In India and across the globe, students at this level encounter board examinations, competitive entrance tests, and the social pressures of adolescence. Academic performance during this stage often determines access to higher education and future career opportunities.

While intelligence and academic preparation are undeniably important, they alone cannot guarantee success. Increasingly, scholars and educators recognize the value of emotional intelligence (EI), defined as the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and express emotions in adaptive ways (Mayer *et al.*, 2004; Goleman, 1995) <sup>[4, 3]</sup>. For adolescents, who are in a transitional period characterized by heightened emotional sensitivity, peer influence, and identity formation, emotional intelligence becomes especially significant. Students with higher emotional intelligence are better equipped to manage exam-related stress, resolve peer conflicts, maintain focus, and build confidence—skills that directly contribute to both academic and personal success.

This article explores the role of emotional intelligence at the secondary and higher secondary levels. It analyses its

benefits, core components, and challenges while proposing strategies and policy recommendations for schools, teachers, and parents.

## Emotional Intelligence in the Context of Adolescence

Adolescence is often described as a period of “storm and stress.” Teenagers experience significant hormonal and neurological changes that intensify emotional experiences. This developmental stage coincides with increased academic responsibilities and complex social dynamics. The ability to manage one's own emotions and understand those of others, therefore, becomes a vital competency for survival and growth in secondary school environments.

For example, a student preparing for Class 12 board examinations may experience anxiety and self-doubt. Without emotional regulation, such stress can manifest in poor performance despite adequate preparation. Similarly, peer relationships, which gain importance during adolescence, can cause conflicts or feelings of exclusion if empathy and communication are lacking. Thus, emotional intelligence equips secondary and higher secondary students with the necessary life skills to balance emotional turbulence with academic commitments.

### Benefits of Emotional Intelligence for Secondary and Higher Secondary Students

Emotional intelligence provides wide-ranging benefits for students in this stage of schooling:

- i). **Enhanced Academic Performance:** Students with higher emotional intelligence manage exam-related stress better, maintain motivation, and use effective study strategies. Research indicates that emotional competencies correlate positively with grades and exam outcomes (Parker *et al.*, 2004).
- ii). **Improved Classroom Behaviour:** Emotional intelligence supports impulse control and respect for authority, reducing classroom disruptions and fostering a positive learning environment.
- iii). **Resilience in the Face of Pressure:** Adolescents often face failure in competitive examinations or struggle with comparison to peers. Emotional intelligence provides resilience, enabling them to learn from setbacks instead of succumbing to discouragement.
- iv). **Positive Peer Relationships:** Empathy and communication skills help students resolve conflicts, avoid bullying, and form supportive friendships, which improve both academic engagement and personal well-being.
- v). **Mental Health and Well-being:** Emotional intelligence helps students cope with anxiety, identity issues, and family pressures, reducing the risk of depression and burnout.
- vi). **Decision-Making and Career Planning:** At the higher secondary level, students must make critical decisions about subject choices, careers, and higher education. Emotional intelligence promotes self-awareness, helping them align decisions with personal strengths and values.
- vii). **Leadership and Participation:** Students with strong emotional intelligence take active roles in extracurricular activities, leadership programs, and community initiatives, gaining confidence and essential life skills.

### Core Components of Emotional Intelligence in Adolescents

For secondary and higher secondary students, the following components are particularly important:

**Self-Awareness:** Recognizing one's feelings, triggers, and academic strengths or weaknesses.

**Self-Regulation:** Controlling emotional outbursts, procrastination, and negative self-talk, especially during exams.

**Motivation:** Cultivating persistence and optimism in the face of academic challenges.

**Empathy:** Understanding peers' emotions, which is essential in preventing bullying and fostering inclusivity.

**Social Skills:** Building friendships, collaborating in group projects, and communicating effectively with teachers and family members.

**Conflict Resolution:** Navigating peer disputes constructively rather than resorting to aggression or withdrawal.

When adolescents develop these components, they are better prepared to handle the dual pressures of academics and adolescence.

### Strategies for Developing Emotional Intelligence at the Secondary and Higher Secondary Level

Schools and families can adopt practical approaches to strengthen emotional intelligence in teenagers:

- i). **Mindfulness Practices in Classrooms:** Short mindfulness sessions before or after lessons help reduce exam anxiety and improve concentration.
- ii). **Reflective Journaling:** Encouraging students to write about their experiences promotes self-awareness and emotional clarity.
- iii). **Role-Playing Activities:** Simulating real-life conflicts helps students learn empathy and conflict resolution.
- iv). **Peer Mentorship Programs:** Older students mentoring younger peers can foster leadership and emotional responsibility.
- v). **Collaborative Learning Projects:** Group activities enhance communication, cooperation, and empathy.
- vi). **Counselling and Emotional Support:** School counsellors should provide spaces for adolescents to discuss personal and academic concerns.
- vii). **Parental Workshops:** Educating parents about emotional intelligence ensures reinforcement of emotional learning at home.
- viii). **Recognition of Emotional Growth:** Teachers can provide feedback not only on academic performance but also on social-emotional competencies.

### Challenges in Promoting Emotional Intelligence among Secondary Students

Despite its importance, the integration of emotional intelligence at this level faces several obstacles:

**Academic Overload:** Heavy curricula and exam-focused education often leave little time for social-emotional learning.

**Teacher Preparedness:** Many teachers lack formal training in emotional intelligence education.

**Cultural Attitudes:** Emotional expression is sometimes stigmatized, with emphasis placed solely on grades.

**Adolescent Resistance:** Some students may resist structured emotional intelligence programs due to peer pressure or lack of awareness.

**Assessment Difficulties:** Measuring emotional intelligence growth reliably remains a challenge for educators.

Addressing these barriers requires systemic reforms in educational policies and teacher training programs.

### Role of Teachers and Schools

Teachers at the secondary and higher secondary levels are uniquely positioned to foster emotional intelligence. They serve not only as academic instructors but also as role models of emotional behaviour. Key strategies include:

- i). Modelling empathy and patience in the classroom.
- ii). Integrating emotional intelligence activities into subjects like literature, social science, and life skills education.
- iii). Creating safe classroom environments where students can express concerns without fear of ridicule.
- iv). Providing constructive feedback that balances academic critique with emotional support.
- v). Encouraging collaborative learning, where students practice communication and empathy.
- vi). Schools must also institutionalize emotional intelligence by embedding it into policies, curricula, and extracurricular activities.

### Recommendations

To promote emotional intelligence effectively at the secondary and higher secondary level:

- i). Incorporate Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) modules into the curriculum.

- ii). Provide teacher training workshops focused on emotional intelligence practices.
- iii). Establish school counselling services accessible to all students.
- iv). Organize parental awareness programs to align home and school efforts.
- v). Recognize and reward emotional competencies alongside academic excellence.
- vi). Create peer-led initiatives such as support groups and student councils.
- vii). Develop national education policies that explicitly address emotional intelligence development in adolescents.

### Conclusion

Emotional intelligence is a critical determinant of success for secondary and higher secondary students. At a stage where academic pressure intersects with emotional volatility, Emotional intelligence equips adolescents with the resilience, empathy, and confidence needed to thrive. Its benefits extend from improved exam performance to stronger peer relationships and better career readiness.

The development of emotional intelligence requires a collective effort from teachers, parents, policymakers, and students themselves. By embedding social-emotional learning into the fabric of secondary education, schools can nurture not only academically competent learners but also emotionally intelligent citizens. Such individuals will be better prepared to face the uncertainties of higher education and adult life with balance, empathy, and resilience.

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