

Emotional Well-Being and Behavioural Patterns of School Students

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Abstract

Emotional well-being is essential for every human being and it affects their behavioural patterns which eventually affect group life in the family and in all social situations. Major causes of ill-behaviour or misbehaviour are due to the mental health of individuals. Physical health is considered wealth and every effort is made to achieve physical well-being unlike mental well-being. Ordinary, yet required care is not given to behaviour patterns which make people misfit in different situations. The article investigates into the need for mental health care which can lead to congruence in group living. This study has been done on the school students basing on the instrument of William Schutz which is used in many fields to assess behaviour patterns which is known as FIRO-B and FIRO-F. The study helps to diagnose the behaviour patterns of students as regards the key areas of inclusion, control and affection. The result invites persons to live life to enhance emotional wellness and enjoy positive and progressive behavioural patterns.

Keywords: Emotional well-being, Behavioural patterns, Inclusion, Affection, School Students

Introduction

Human beings are constantly striving to achieve happiness. People are busy in amassing and equipping themselves with wealth in cash and kinds, capacity building exercise, soft skill training to add on to happiness. However happiness is an inside job¹ which needs mental health care. In this developing world numerous studies and surveys published every year reveal the emotional state of societies and nations. To better comprehend Emotional Well Being or Emotional Wellness it might be interesting to understand Emotions first. Suppose you're asked "How are you feeling?" your response to this oft repeated question would reveal your mood at that prevailing moment - you may be happy because you got a raise or stressed and angry because of a domestic problem or pain due to illness.

Darwin believed that emotions evolved alongside other important aspects of human and non-human structures and functions. He was interested in the adaptive functions of emotions which are highly specific coordinated modes of operation of the human brain. Darwin viewed emotions as inherited, specialised mental states designed to deal

1 Cf. John Powell S, *Happiness is an Inside Job*, Chicago, Argus Books, 1989.

with a certain class of recurring situations in the world.² The functionalist perspective conceptualises emotions as responses that guide individual behaviour and serve as information that helps the individuals achieve goals.³ Our behaviour is to a large extent guided by our emotions and when an individual's mental state is in harmony then it is reflected in his/her behaviour. Behaviour is the outward manifestation of emotional wellness of an individual. When an individual is in a state of emotional wellness he or she is said to have achieved congruence. Carl Rogers who developed the construct of congruence states that for a person to grow they need an environment that fosters genuineness (openness and self-disclosure), acceptance (unconditional positive regard), and empathy (being listened to and understood). Congruence which exists in a continuum refers to a state of being in which the individual is integrated and authentic, spontaneous and self-disclosing. The individual is genuine. Her or his thoughts, feelings and behaviours are integrated and aligned.⁴

Emotional Well-being and Behaviour

The rapid social and economic change in this era of globalisation has led to an erosion of traditional values and students are faced with uncertain career prospects. As newer work opportunities arise combined with greater spread of education the young individual is equipped with more advanced skills and they do not feel the need to rely on the elders for support or guidance. Due to the increasingly competitive environment young people experience stress in various aspects of their lives and each new generation of students brings a fresh set of challenges. Suicides, increase in adolescent crime rates, depression, lack of social skills, oppositional and aggressive behaviour presents serious challenges for institutions and families. Countless parents and educators continuously struggle with the issue of behavioural change in order to bring about an element of congruence amongst their students.

Aani (name changed) was found smoking with her companion while going to school. Once Anni realised that the news could reach the hostel warden she tells her companion that she would commit suicide if made known. In fear Ali (name changed) her companion informs the hostel in-charge and she spends sleepless night guarding the situation. The guardians are called and they are told to speak only positive aspects of her life and to motivate her towards exams. But fear still exists. Such deviant behaviours are common. While counselling Anni the councillor noticed that she has a broken family - father an alcoholic, living separately, mother living alone struggling for survival and the two other siblings with well-wishers.

Behavioural change does not occur in a vacuum, there are a host of causes influencing an individual to behave in a certain way. Family, school and peers are significant

2 Gerrig R J and Zimbardo P G, *Psychology and Life*, New Delhi, Pearson Education, 2006.

3 Fritz Bretherton, et. al., *Learning to Talk about Emotions: A Functionalist Perspective*, *Child Development*, 1986, pp. 529-548.

4 Rogers C, *On Becoming a Person*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1980.

factors in shaping the behaviour patterns and emotional wellness of the young individual. Biologically and socially a human child remains dependent on the parent for survival for a longer period than any other species. Post infancy, the school and later peers enter the child's orbit of existence. When young the individual is dependent but as an adult is expected to be relatively independent. It is apparently characteristic of societies undergoing rapid social change that young people rebel against their parents and teachers to a greater or lesser degree. Young people do not readily accept their automatic right to command. Physical punishment is not only abhorrent but also illegal. The use of naked force may ensure temporary compliance but usually results in the decrease in commitment or total disregard for rules. Warmth and sensitivity to the child's needs stand a better chance in getting the child's cooperation. Love and logic combined with firmness is more likely to result in socially desired behaviours.

Behaviour is extremely complex as it is a function of many factors. These include environment, perception, consequences of behaviour, past experiences and learning, emotions, needs and motivation. Our knowledge base, intelligence, values and goals and expectations also contribute to our behaviour. Biological and genetic factors as well as unconscious processes likewise play a significant role in the way we behave. Behaviour refers to any measurable response of an individual. That is it includes anything the individual does in response to external or internal events. These responses can be overt or observable or covert and not shown openly. Covert behaviours include thinking and reasoning by which we generate ideas, plans and expectations. They also include belief and rules or guiding principles that act as antecedents for our behaviour.⁵

It is a well-established fact that we often behave in a way that is contrary to our feelings. This could be due to a need to belong in a group setting; pressure to conform or to avoid the consequences of not behaving in a certain way. This may also be due to express one's need for affection to give and to receive. Feelings affect our learning, memory, social interaction, beliefs and evaluation of self and others. While behaviour is overt or visible to others, feelings are covert and antecedent to our behaviour. It can be said that feelings are a true barometer of a person's emotional wellness. According to the concept of emotional intelligence, individuals need an awareness of emotion and the ability to perform reasoned action. All behaviours result in positive or negative consequences for the individual and those around him or her.⁶ Therefore self-awareness about one's own behaviour and feelings is the first step toward exploring and changing beliefs, emotions, motivations and behaviour. There are several methods to assess an individual's personality style and one among them is FIRO scales coined by William Schutz (1966).

5 Skiffington S and Zeus P, *Behavioural Coaching, How to Build Sustainable Personal and Organisational Strength*, New Delhi, Tata McGraw-Hill, 2003.

6 Mayer J D and Salovey P, 'Emotional Intelligence and the Construction and Regulation of Feelings', in *Applied and Preventive Psychology*, Vol. 4, 1995, pp. 197 - 208.

The Study

FIRO⁷ (FIRO - B and FIRO - F)

Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation-Behaviour (FIRO-B®) measures behaviour across three dimensions - Inclusion, Control and Affection. Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation - Feelings (FIRO-F®) measures feelings on dimensions of importance, confidence and affection with the importance and confidence of FIRO -F corresponding to Inclusion and Control of FIRO-B. FIRO-B measures an individual's overt (behaviour) and FIRO-F covert (feelings) responses.

FIRO-B instrument is developed by Will Schutz. He developed the FIRO-B theory to aid in understanding and predicting how high-performance military teams would work together. In developing the FIRO-B theory, Schutz begins with the premise that "people need people." He used the term interpersonal to indicate any interaction, real or imagined, occurring between people. He used the term need to describe a psychological condition that, if not satisfied, leads to a state of discomfort or anxiety.⁸

The measuring instrument is called FIRO-B, "Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation." The "B" stands for the aspect of personality being explored - Behaviour whereas FIRO-F seeks to measure an individual's characteristic Feelings towards others.⁹

Interpersonal Needs

Schutz's "people need people" theory states that an individual is motivated by three interpersonal needs viz;

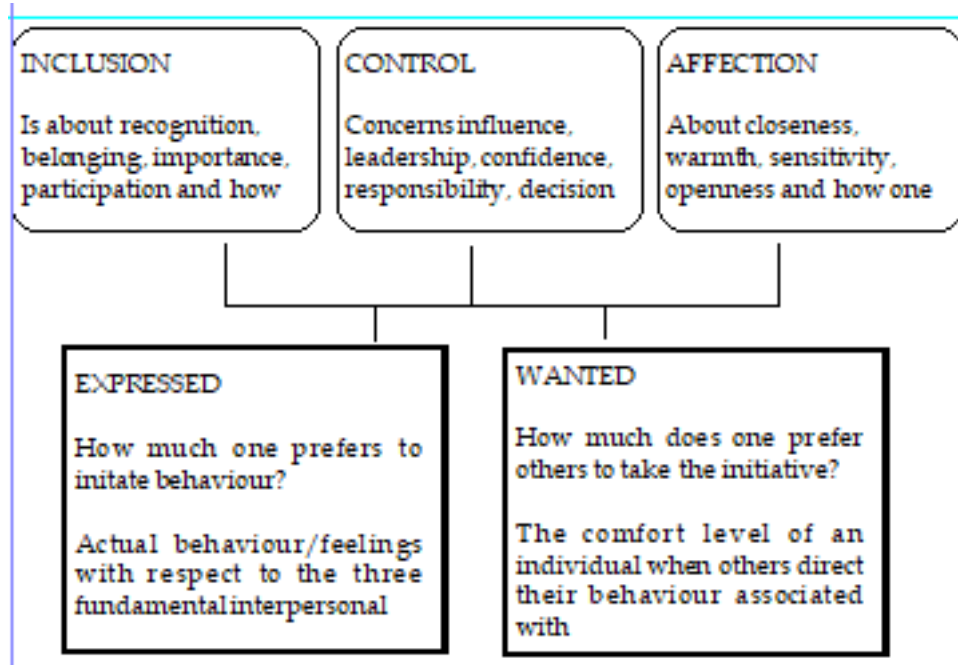
1. *Inclusion*: the amount of belonging, attention, recognition, importance desired in a social setting.
2. *Control*: the desired level of influence, leading, confidence and responsibility.
3. *Affection*: the desired level of rapport, warmth, closeness sensitivity and support.

The concept of FIRO-B is illustrated in the diagram below:

7 FIRO-B & FIRO-F registered copyright of Consulting Psychologist Press, California.

8 Schnell E R and Hammer A, *Introduction of FIRO-B Instrument in Organisations*, CA, Mountain View, 2003.

9 Currie J, *In the Path of the Barefoot Counsellor*, Bangalore, Asian Trading Corporation, 2000.



(Waterman & Rogers, 2003)

Purpose

The FIRO-B assessment is a 54 question, self-administered test that is designed to identify an individual's personal needs for inclusion, control and affection and how these needs influence a person's behaviour towards others. The test results are used in organizational exercises such as, team building and team development, individual development and conflict resolution, by shedding light on issues such as compatibility, tension, openness, trust, decision-making, self-awareness, interpersonal effectiveness, leadership style, personal growth, causes of conflict and how to manage conflict effectively.

Extensive studies by Joe Currie, Eugene Schnell and Allen Hammer, Waterman and Rogers have established the effectiveness of the FIRO instruments in personal development. The FIRO assessment is known to be an ideal method for individuals to gain self-awareness, since the test results will indicate which environments a person is more likely to succeed in and also will provide insight into how one is perceived by others.

The advantages of FIRO-B and FIRO-F can be summarised as follows:

- Easy to understand

- Non-threatening
- Aids in understanding one's behavior and its effect on others
- Increases awareness of one's natural strengths and weaknesses
- Suggests possibilities for improving the way one relates to others

Benefits of FIRO

FIRO is a help in understanding the mental health situation of people. The study indicates the gaps that need to be filled to students for harmonious living which can help them in the family life and social life. Some of the areas of assistance are listed as follows.

Career Development

The individuals need for recognition, ability to take up responsibilities, degree of social compliance and other characteristics revealed in the test provide valuable pointers to the types of job the individual is suited to.

Team Building

The results of FIRO-B and F can be used for improving team effectiveness since the personal profile provided by the test indicates one's need for inclusion, control and affection and how it adds to or subtracts from the team productivity. It can identify the likely causes of tension based on the interpersonal needs of team members the test results can be used to reduce trust deficit within the team and improve communication and decision making.

Conflict Management

As FIRO-B and FIRO-F provide clarification on one's personal characteristics and preferences in interpersonal relations it can help identify sources of conflict, reduce stress, improve communication through acknowledgement of individual differences.

Leadership

FIRO instruments delve into the interpersonal aspects of an individual in the areas of inclusion, control and affection. The results explore and aid in understanding an individual's leadership style and how one is perceived by others and the potential to succeed in a given environment.

Sample Selection

The authors sit together and made a list of schools that are within the possible reach. As per convenience 12 schools are selected. The selection of students is left to the discretion of the Principals concerned expressing the preference to have the senior most class of every school. It is also considered that every participant has spent a minimum of three

years in the said institution. This sample study is to test the relevance of FIRO in an Indian setting. We selected 30 respondents each from 12 institutions, the senior most students who have spent a minimum of three years. The participating Institutions have been grouped under three categories - English Medium, Vernacular Medium and Technical Institutes.

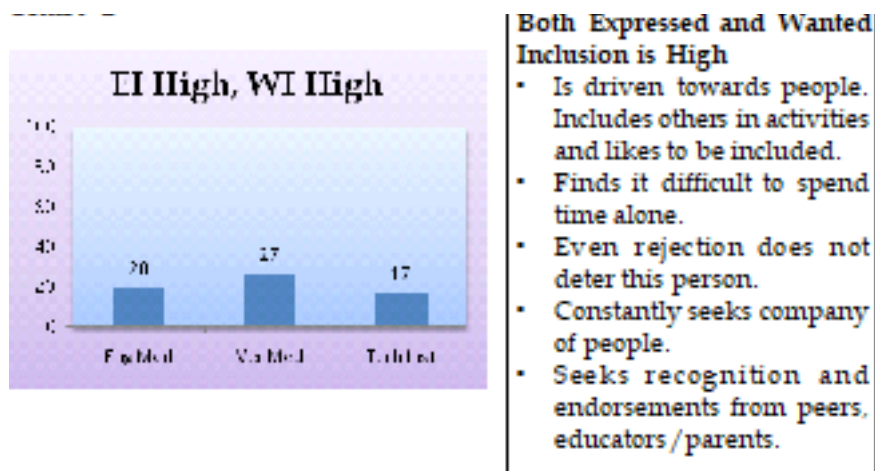
Findings

General Interpretation Guidelines

The findings rest on the assumption that the statements have been correctly understood and honestly answered. Please keep in mind that the interpretations and suggestions are presented as hypotheses or proposals about individuals and not as a final verdict of the student's behavioural style. The data and interpretations are indicators that can be used for honest reflection and self-development.¹⁰ There are no good or bad results and no right or wrong answers in this exercise. The option chosen by the individual is the answer. The scores may be compared with actual behaviour; it would also be useful to look for relationships within scales. (Example - In Control - Low Expressed and High Wanted score is an indicator of a dependent individual, who has need for supervision and prefers others to take decisions for him).

The charts below indicate the possible behavioural characteristics of an individual or group within the given combination of Expressed and Wanted scores in the dimensions of Inclusion, Control and Affection. The charts denote the percentage of students under each category (English Medium, Vernacular Medium and Technical Institutes) with the interpretations alongside.

Chart 1



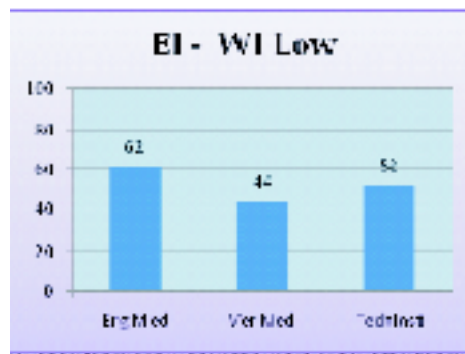
Children studying in the vernacular medium are known to be of poorer economic class. However the larger percentage (27%) of such students in comparison to others

10 *Ibid.*

appear to be more sociable and at ease in groups (Chart 1).

Chart 2

Chart 2



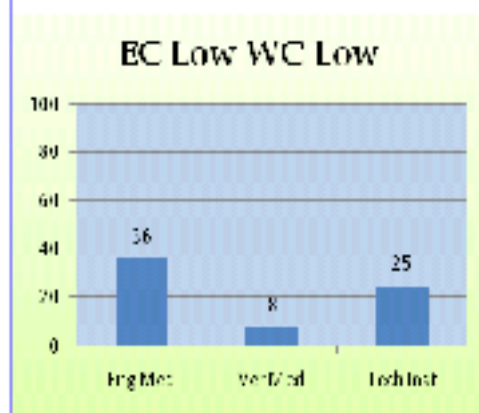
When Wanted Inclusion is Low

- Exclusive and choosy with regard to people.
- Enjoys company of select circle of friends.
- Prefers to spend time in pursuit of his/her own interests.
- Does not feel the need of joining a discussion or stating an opinion.
- Maintains low profile in team or group settings.
- Does not feel the need to share information or take interest in activities of others.

Apparently a child studying in an English medium setting has more open and broader circle as they belong to the higher economic class. However the study reveals that a higher percentage (62%) of English Medium students are reserved and maintains a low profile (chart 2).

Chart 3

Chart 3

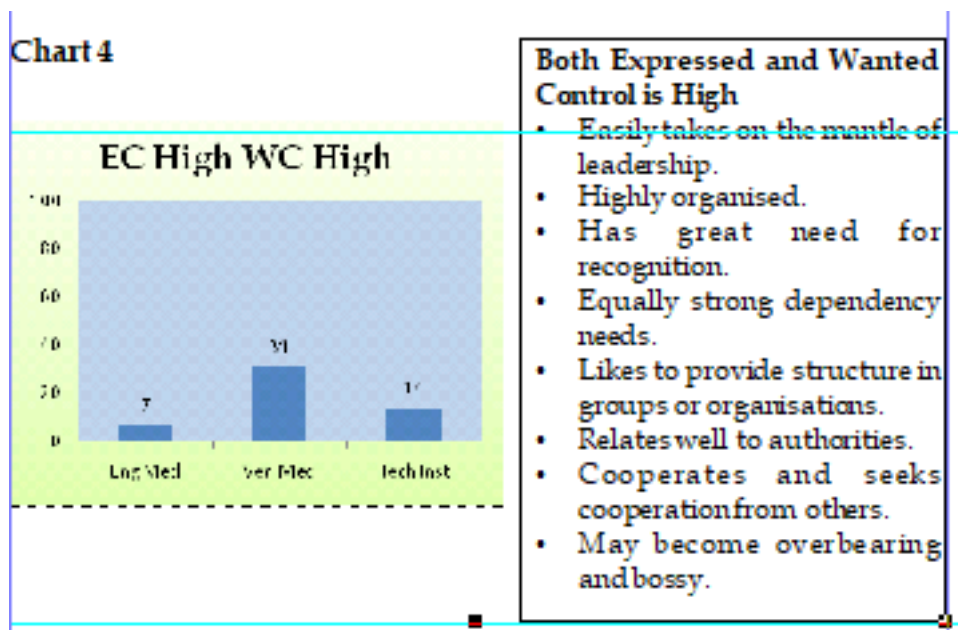


Both Expressed and Wanted Control is Low

- Likes neither to control others nor to be controlled by others
- May harbour doubts about his/her own abilities
- Uncomfortable in structured environments with rules and regulations
- Does not feel the need to define goals and act on them.
- Even when presented with an opportunity does not attempt to influence opinion within the group.
- No pressure to take decisions.

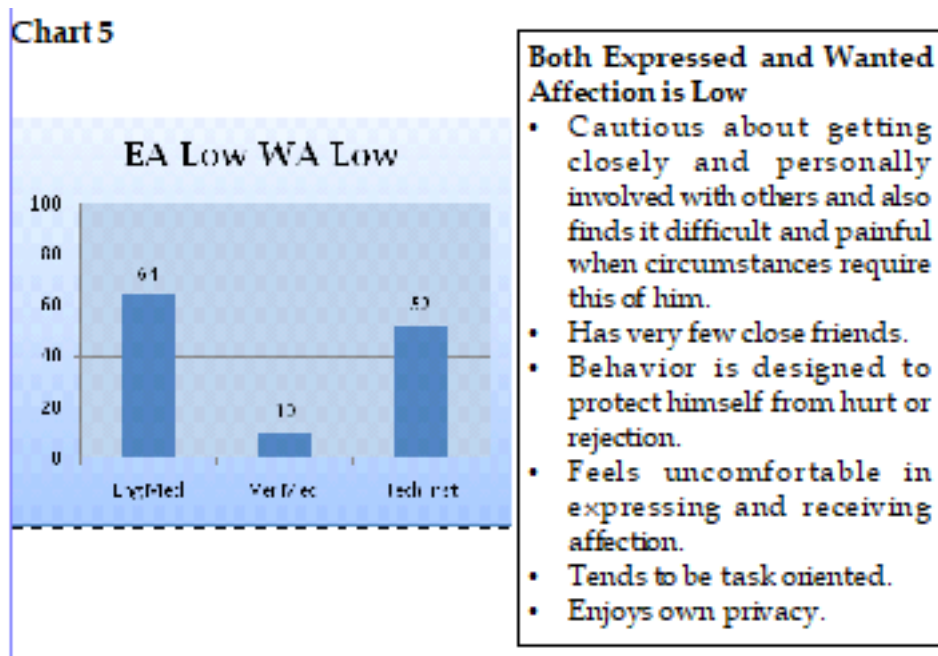
Control is something which is thought to be negative by everyone especially students. However, to 'be in control' means to control and to be controlled are mental skills that one needs to develop. As per the study conducted the larger group of 36% of the English Medium Students want to be free of all controls.

Chart 4



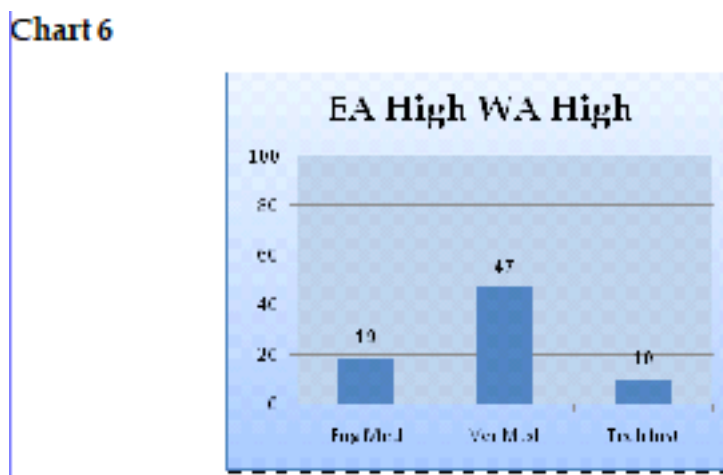
In the present situation of education students in English medium get more exposures for public appearances. However in the present study the larger group is found in the vernacular medium students (31%) who are eager to take leadership initiative. (Chart 4)

Chart 5



Social education is essential to help young people to be socially conscious and contributing. They need to build relationship where they give and receive affection. The present study show that very high percentage (64%) of English Medium students are uncomfortable with affection they receive and give to others.

Chart 6

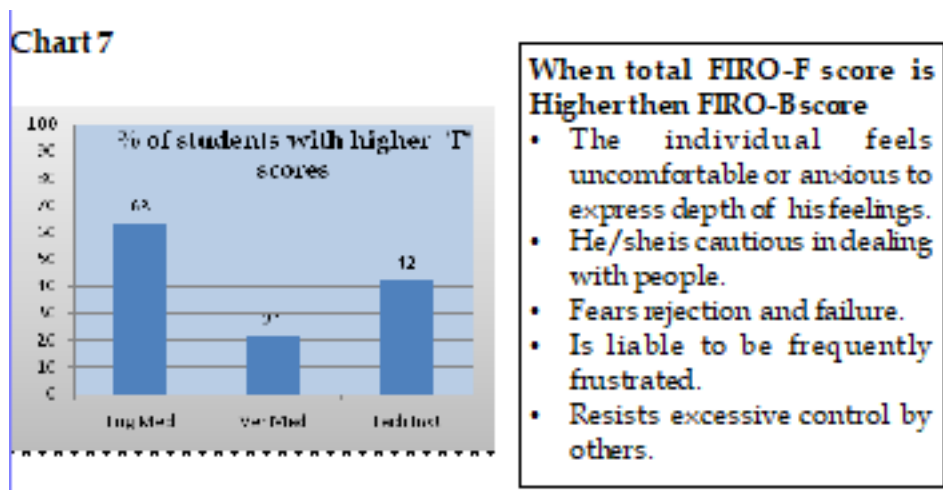


Both Expressed and Wanted Affection is High

- Is friendly open and optimistic. Values trustworthiness.
- Initiates close personal relationships and also has a strong need for others to move closer to him/her.
- May find it difficult to say 'No' or control interruptions at work.
- Prefers to motivate others by praise and support and also best motivated in the same way.
- Skilful in conflict resolution and negotiations.
- May be open to manipulation by others.

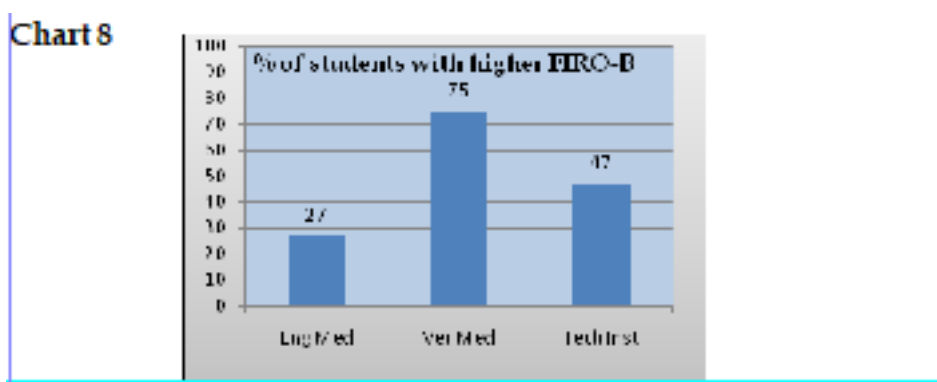
Chart 5 states that Students from English medium are not free in the area of affection. More number of students (47%) of vernacular medium seems comfortable in receiving and giving affection.

Chart 7



Expression of feelings help emotional wellness and suppression of feelings can lead to deviant behaviours. A high percentage (63%) of English Medium students are uncomfortable in expressing feelings.

Chart 8

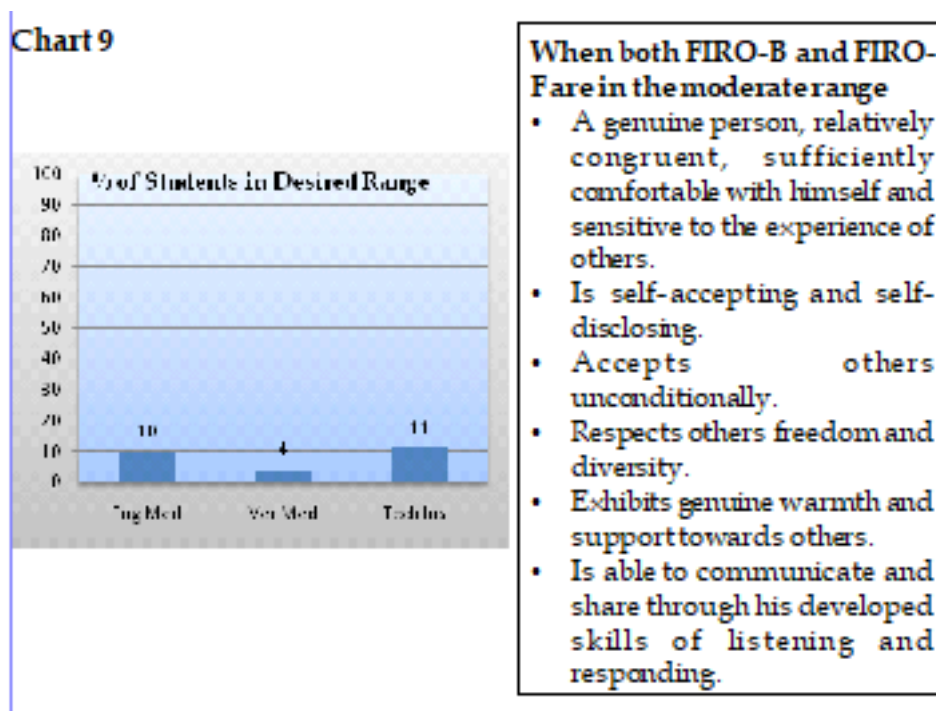


When total FIRO-B score is Higher than FIRO-F score

- Tries to conform to norms.
- Usually this conforming may be due to internal or external pressures.
- May feel stressed due to constant compulsion to behave
- Involvement with others usually a source of satisfaction, but relationships may become frustrating and interfere with career.

Rules and discipline are part of every society. However as the society progresses especially in wealth value system and rules are less. In the study a very high percentage (75%) of Vernacular Medium students feel stressed due to social restrictions.

Chart 9



Everyone wants to enjoy wellness. It is human relationship that builds wellness in human being. In the present study a very small group seems to be emotionally well integrated. Technical Institute students (11%) seem to be more emotionally well-adjusted than their English and Vernacular Medium counterparts.

Conclusion

The content of Emotional Wellness may usefully be seen as a set of social skills some of which are more difficult to learn than others. Family, peer groups and school environment to a large extent are responsible for the development of emotional wellness of an individual. The FIRO instruments help generate self-awareness and

it is extremely important to take care of emotional health for enhancement of the physical, mental, social and spiritual health of the individual and consequently for society at large. When a child suffers physical ailments, immediate care is taken to normalise the health, while there is indifference or denial to any exhibits of aggression, anger or depression. Adequate care and lack of timely intervention tends to destabilise individual and social harmony. The study indicates that only a small percentage of the students are in the desired or ideal range. The prevalence of extreme scores in the areas of Inclusion, Control and Affection impact the individual and could be a possible cause for disharmony in relationships.

Schutz himself indicated that for each of the interpersonal areas the following three characteristics would be evident in an individual 1) deficient 2) excessive 3) ideal. An individual with deficient inclusion scores would tend to be a loner and excessive inclusion indicates an over-social individual. An individual with deficient control scores typifies an abdicrat whereas a person with high control is most likely to be an autocrat. Deficient affection scores indicate a pessimistic individual and an excessive affection scores points to an overly optimistic individual open to manipulation. Individuals in the moderate range are sociable, self-confident and genuinely affectionate. To minimise destabilising factors it is important to supplement academic curriculum with wellness programs for young people. Building self-awareness, developing effective communication and interpersonal skills, anger management, nurturing talents are some areas in which educators need to devote attention for their holistic development. However, the quality of nurturance in the family usually determines the degree of emotional and social wellness of the child.