

Role of Age in Empathy of Males and Females

Pratibha* and Alpna Agarwal**

The goal of this study was to determine the role of age in empathy of males and females. Total 120 adults were included in the sample. For this study the sample were divided into three age groups younger adults, middle adults, and older adults. Further there were 20 males and 20 females in each group. Toronto empathy scale developed by Spreng et al. (2019) was used to measure the empathy of participants. The data was analyzed using the mean, ANOVA, and the multiple comparison test (Tukey test). Age and gender are found to be significant at .01 level. According to the findings it can be said that age and gender both significantly affect the empathy.

[Keywords : Empathy, Age, Gender]

1. Introduction

A crucial aspect of a person's personality that plays a role in an emotional connection and also helps to effectively form a bond

* Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, Chaudhary Charan Singh University, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh (India) E-mail: <pratibhapsy29@gmail.com>

** Professor, Department of Psychology, Chaudhary Charan Singh University, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh (India) E-mail: <dralpna2006@yahoo.com>

between the emotional states of one individual and another is called “empathy.” Empathy has relatively recent origins, having been coined by Titchener (1909). Empathy is described as the ability to understand another's point of view and to place oneself in a new situation (Bellet & Maloney, 1991). It's a complex phenomenon that involves a number of functional processes, including emotion perception and contagion (Decety & Jackson, 2006), as well as the ability to react to others' internal states and discern between one's own and others' internal states. Researchers have actually identified two different primary forms of empathy: emotional empathy and cognitive empathy (Healy & Grossman, 2018). Emotional empathy, also known as affective empathy, is conceptualized the ability to respond to another's emotional states with the right emotion is known as emotional empathy (Rogers, et al., 2007). Cognitive empathy also lends itself to be referred as perspective taking, the idea of putting oneself in someone else's shoes (Ratka, 2018).

People have different points of view about young and old people, who are more concerned about others. On the other hand it is sometimes said that younger people are only concerned with themselves, and on the other hand, it is also said that old people do not understand what we are going through. Both stereotypes involve empathy. Empathy is a process and it changes over the life span. Gould and Sylvia (2014) examined empathy and conversational satisfaction in both young and old people. From the results, it was found that the older adults had higher scores on empathic concern than the younger adults. Oh et al. (2020) looked at how empathy changed over time in six different samples. According to the findings, empathy increased throughout time, especially after the age of 40. However, some studies have also given quite the opposite results. Phillips et al. (2002) compared younger and older adults' emotional functioning. According to the findings, it suggests that younger adults reported higher empathy than older adults.

Empathy can be influenced by gender as well. Rueckert and Naybarboard, (2018) investigated empathy and right hemispheric activation on the empathy, the results revealed that men scored lower than women. Cohen and Wheelwright, (2004) conducted a study to examine sex differences in empathy. The results showed that women scored much higher than men. Misra and Yadav (2015) designed a study to examine gender differences in prosocial

behaviour and empathy in Indian youth. Findings suggest that males and females do not differ significantly in empathy levels.

2. Hypotheses

1. There will be significant effect of age on empathy.
2. There will be significant difference in empathy of males and females.

3. Method

3.1 Sample

A total of 120 participants were chosen for this study. There were three age groups younger adults (25-30 years old), middle adults (40-45 years old), and older adults (55-60 years old). Each group included total 40 participants. There were also 20 males and 20 females in each age group.

3.2 Instruments

Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (TEQ) was constructed by Spreng et al. (2009) and the Hindi translation done by Saini and Agarwal has been used for the measurement of empathy. TEQ contained 16 items. All items were to be rated on five point scale. This scale consisted of both negative and positive items. Each item scored 5 to 1 for positive statements and 1 to 5 for negative statements. The coefficient of reliability was determined by using the test-retest scatter diagram correlation. The correlation between the test- retest score was .81. TEQ has high internal consistency and convergent validity.

3.3 Experimental Design

A 3x2 factorial design was used in this study. The study employed two independent variables and one dependent variable. Participants were divided into three groups based on their age younger adults, middle-aged adults, and older adults. The second independent variable was gender, which was split into two categories males and females. The dependent variable for this study was empathy.

4. Results

The purpose of this research was to investigate the role of age in empathy in males and females. A 3x2 factorial design was used for

this purpose. The data was analyzed with the help of SPSS. Table 1 shows the results of the ANOVA.

Table-1 : Summary Table of Analysis of Variance for Empathy

Source of variance	SS	df	MS	F
Age (A)	4443.950	2	2221.975	96.539**
Gender (B)	1710.075	1	1710.075	74.299**
Age x Gender (A x B)	27.050	2	13.525	.588
Within group (Error)	2623.850	114	23.016	
Total	8804.925	119		

** p < .01

The above table shows that the F value for factor A (2, 114) =96.539, p<.01. So age is a significant factor that affects empathy. The F value for factor B is (1,114) = 74.299, p<.01, which is significant. It means that empathy is influenced by gender.

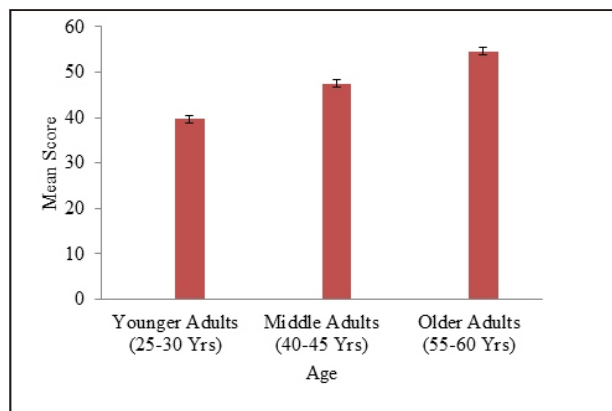
Tables-2 and 3 show the mean scores. Figures-1 and 2 represent the mean scores as bar graphs.

Table-2 : Mean scores and standard error of empathy for age

Age	N	Mean	Std. Error
Younger adults	40	39.650	.779
Middle adults	40	47.475	.761
Older adults	40	54.550	.800

The mean table shows that older adults have a higher level of empathy than middle adults and middle adults have higher level of empathy than younger adults.

Figure-1 : Mean Scores of empathy according to age group



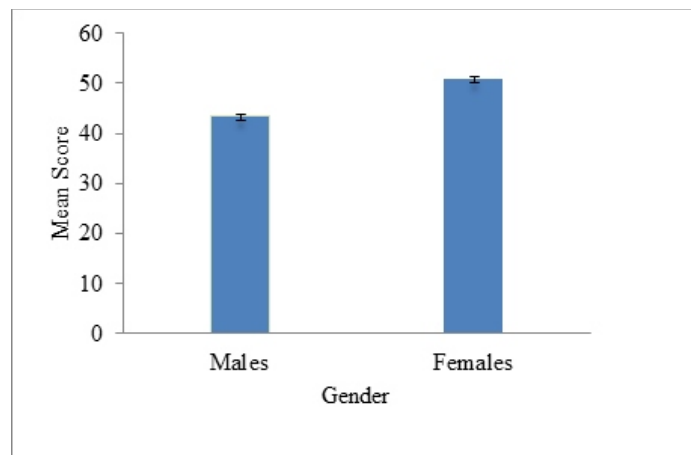
The figure shows that younger adults and middle-aged adults have a lower level of empathy than older adults.

Table-3 : Mean scores and standard error of empathy for males and females

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Error
Males	60	43.450	.636
Females	60	51.000	.638

The above table also indicates that females have a higher level of empathy than males

Figure-2 : Mean Scores of Empathy of males and females



The difference between the scores of males and females is shown in Figure-2. Table-4 shows the results of the Tukey multiple comparison test.

Table-4 : Summary of Tukey Multiple Comparison Test for main effect of age on empathy

Age	Younger adults, Middle adults, Older adults	Mean Difference
Younger adults	Middle adults	-7.825*
	Older adults	-14.900*
Middle adults	Younger adults	7.825*
	Older adults	-7.075*
Older adults	Younger adults	14.900*
	Middle adults	7.075*

* $p < .05$

Table-4 on the preceding table indicates that at .05 level, all three comparisons are significant. These combinations are younger adults and middle-aged adults, older adults and younger adults, and middle-aged adults and older adults.

5. Discussion

Empathy is the ability to emotionally recognize what another person feels, seeing things from their point of view and putting yourself in their position. The findings of this study reveal a significant level of empathy among people of various age and gender. So the first hypothesis there will be significant effect of age on empathy is accepted. Empathy is higher in older adults than in other age groups (middle adults and younger adults). In comparison to other age groups, middle-aged adults show moderate empathy and younger adults have very low empathy. These findings are supported by various researches. Sylvia (2014) found that the older adults had higher score on empathic concern than the younger adults. Oh et al. (2020) suggested that empathy increased across the lifespan, particularly after age 40.

In the present research, gender also significantly affects empathy, so the second hypothesis that there will be significant difference in empathy of males and females is accepted. According to the findings, females exhibit more empathy than males. Females are better recognizing facial expressions and emotions than males. These findings are supported by various researches. Rueckert and Naybar, (2018) found that the men scored significantly lower than women on empathy. Cohen and Wheelwright, (2004) also suggested that women scored significantly higher than men.

6. Conclusion

From these observations, we can conclude that age and gender significantly affect empathy. Middle-aged and younger adults show less empathy than older adults. Females have a higher level of empathy than males.

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