

## Fantasy Play and Emotional Competence of Pre-school Children

Dr P. D. Subhash\*

Dr Anu G. S.\*\*

Dr Sulekha Ram\*\*\*

### Abstract

*The paper analyses the relation between fantasy play and emotional competence of pre-school children with a non-experimental research. The study concludes that the pre-school children give first preference to fantasy play during their nursery outdoor play. The study also proves that the children who spent more time in fantasy play possess high emotional competence.*

### Introduction

Early childhood years are considered as the golden years of play, especially fantasy play. Children act out everyday imaginary activities in fantasy play. During fantasy play, a child transforms an object into other objects and acts toward them accordingly. This type of play peaks when the child reaches 4 or 5 years old and helps the development of child's imagination, language skills and social skills. Recent advances in research have drawn attention to the fundamental role of emotional competence in children's development. Acquiring an ability to regulate

emotions and to understand their meaning are key skills that contribute to adaptive social interactions and influence the behaviour of a child. These hallmarks of positive social and behavioural functioning can be seen in children at an early age, and may provide some of the more reliable indicators of those who will become successful and happy adults. Conversely, deficits in emotional competence are frequently seen in children with social and behavioural difficulties.

Goleman (1998) concludes that personal competencies determine how

\* Assistant Professor, PMD, NCERT, New Delhi

\*\* Post Doctoral Fellow, School of Pedagogical Sciences, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, Kerala

\*\*\* Assistant Professor, VDIT, Kishan Vihar, New Delhi

we manage ourselves and social competencies determine our ability to manage with others. The two types of competencies determine the level of emotional competence of how we manage ourselves and others.

West and Albrecht (2007) defined emotional competency as a developed ability and skill in the areas of self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness and relationship management. They further argued that these skills are nurtured, developed and practised until they become competencies and serve as a resource when a tragic event occurs. Early childhood play, especially fantasy play may be one of the key factors for developing the emotional competence of children.

Keeping in view, a non-experimental research was conducted with naturalistic observation to study the relation between fantasy play and personal and social competencies.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The following are the major objectives of the study:

- To study the free play preferences of pre-school children in the nursery outdoor play.
- To study the emotional competence of pre-school children.
- To establish the relation between fantasy play and emotional competence of pre-school children.

### **Methodology**

The researchers used non-experimental method with naturalistic observation for collecting the research data. The researcher's video recorded the nursery outdoor free play activities of the 30 children, (12 boys and 18 girls) between the age group of 4 and 5. The children for the study selected from the nursery classes of Government Higher Secondary School, Kanjiramkulam, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.

### **Tools Used**

The following tools were used in the present study:

- Video camera used for recoding the free play sessions
- Time sampling schedule
- A checklist of behavioural categories employed in the analysis of free play (adapted from Hutt, et al. (1989) and expanded by Suresh and Subhash)
- Emotional competence inventory developed by Pereira and Anu (2010)

### **Administration of the Tools**

A video camera was used for recording the ongoing free play behaviour of children with the help of a skilled technician. Altogether, the researchers recorded 30 free play episodes of these 30 children. Each episode lasted for 3 minutes duration. The researcher used time sampling schedule to find out the play preferences of the pre-school

children in the outdoor free play sessions. Time sampling technique is used to convert the play preferences into percentages. Nicholson and Shipstead (1994) ascertained that sampling can yield quantitative data about the group as a whole (e.g., the incidence of types of play in a pre-school classroom). The researchers selected five types of play to study the free play preference. They are physical play, material play, fantasy play, look and watch play and walk and run. Nicholson and Shipstead pointed out that if the interval of the time sampling is reduced to a minimum of 10 seconds, it would yield a better comprehensive picture of the behaviour pattern of the child. Hence, in the present research, a 10 second time sampling interval is followed to find out the play preferences which are already recorded in the videotape. They also stated that if the observer is interested in the frequency of behaviours, it is worthwhile to record tallies. Hence, tallies were used for recording the presence of each type of free play in the time sampling. These three minutes of continuous free play were divided into time intervals of 10 seconds. The total frequencies of free play preferences were converted into percentages.

Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI) was developed for assessing the emotional competence of children. The age level of the test varies from 4 to 10 years. The emotional competence consists of both personal competence like self-awareness, self-regulation and

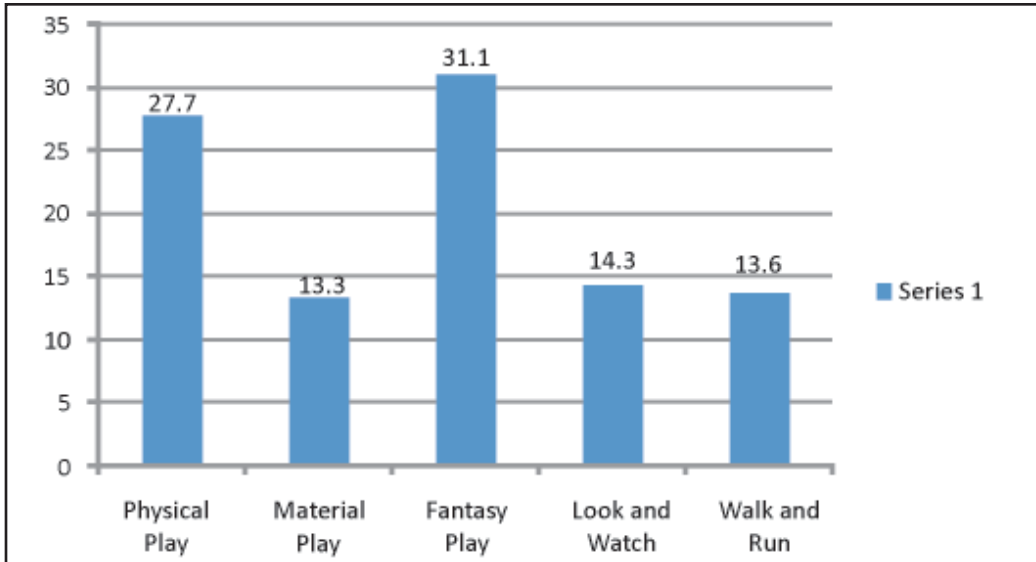
motivation and social competence like empathy and social skills. Both of these competences constitute emotional competence. The unique nature of the ECI was all the items of the test are related with the daily life experiences of the children corresponding to their age level and for the pre-school level with the help of a facilitator the exact emotional competence imbibed in each life statement can be explored. The ECI was administered with an instruction that “there is no right or wrong response in each statement what the students feel will be the correct one”. The response obtained from the students were ranked, scored and tabulated for finding the Emotional Competence. The test was developed, pilot-tested, validated and standardised by Dr Celine Pereira and Dr Anu G. S. (2010). The level of emotional competence was assessed on the basis of high, average and low category.

### Analysis and Interpretation of Data

- Free play preference of pre-school children

**Table 1: Free Play Preference of Pre-school Children in the Nursery Outdoor**

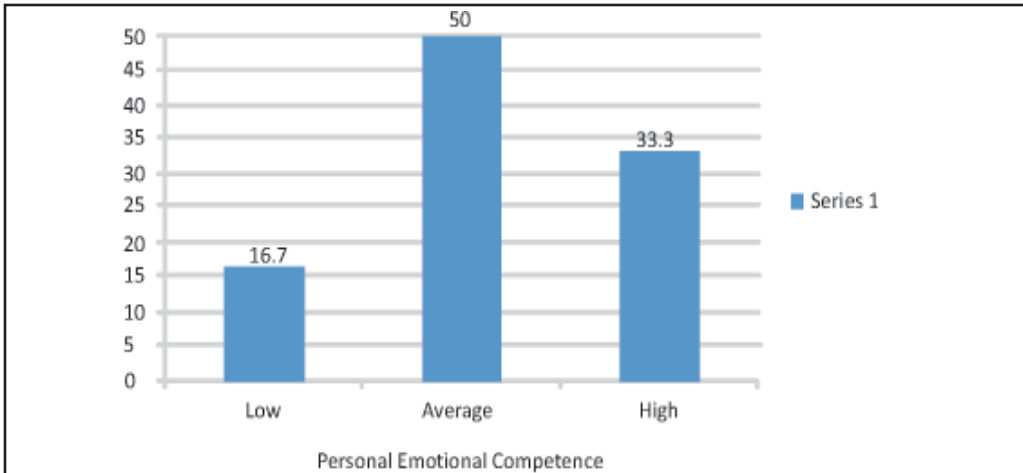
<i>Types o Free Play</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Physical Play	27.7
Material Play	13.3
Fantasy Play	31.1
Look and Watch	14.3
Walk and Run	13.6



**Figure 1:** Free play preferences of pre-school children in the nursery outdoor

Table 1 indicates free play preferences of pre-school children in the nursery outdoor play. They give priority to fantasy play (31.1%). physical play (27.7%) is seen as their second choice. Other choices are

material play (13.3%), look and watch (14.3), and walk and run (13.6%). This shows that most of the pre-school children prefer fantasy play than other types of play in the nursery outdoor play.

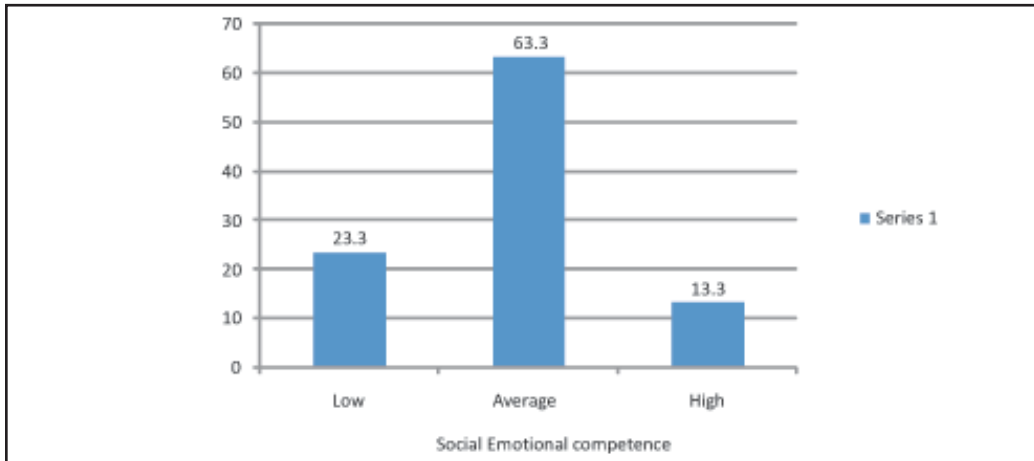


**Figure 2:** Personal emotional competence of pre-school children

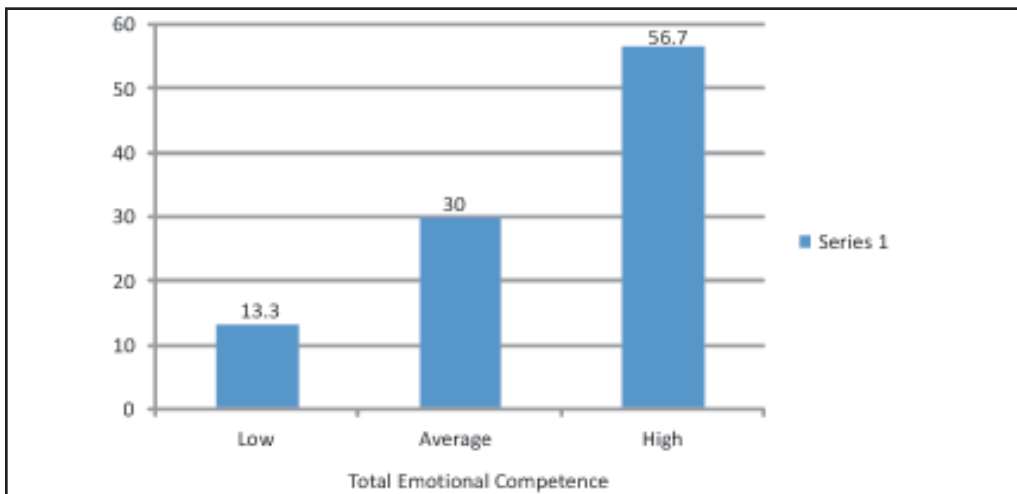
The scores of personal competence of pre-school students show that 50% of students have average personal competence level, 16.7 % of pre-school students have low personal competence level and 33.3% pre-school students have high personal competence level.

The scores of social competence of pre-school children reveals that 63.3%, 23.3% and 13.3% of students comes under average, low and high levels of social competence.

The scores of total emotional competence of pre-school children



**Figure 3:** Social emotional competence of pre-school children

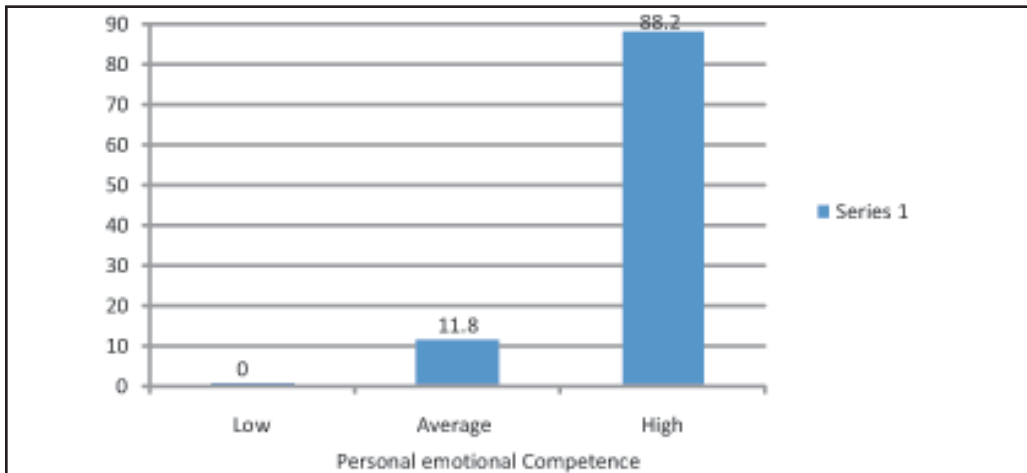


**Figure 4:** Emotional competence of pre-school children

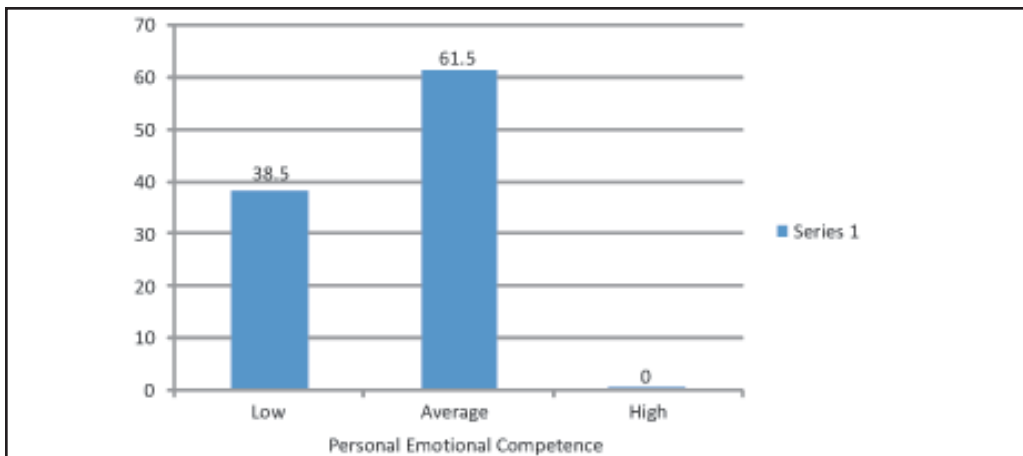
shows that 56.7% of children come under high total emotional competence group, 30% of pre-school children come under average total emotional competence group and 13.3% pre-school children come under low total emotional competence group.

### Relation between Fantasy Play and Emotional Competence of Pre-school Children

- Relation between fantasy play and personal emotional competence



**Figure 5:** Personal emotional competence of children who preferred more fantasy play in nursery outdoor play



**Figure 6:** Personal emotional competence of children who preferred less fantasy play in nursery outdoor play

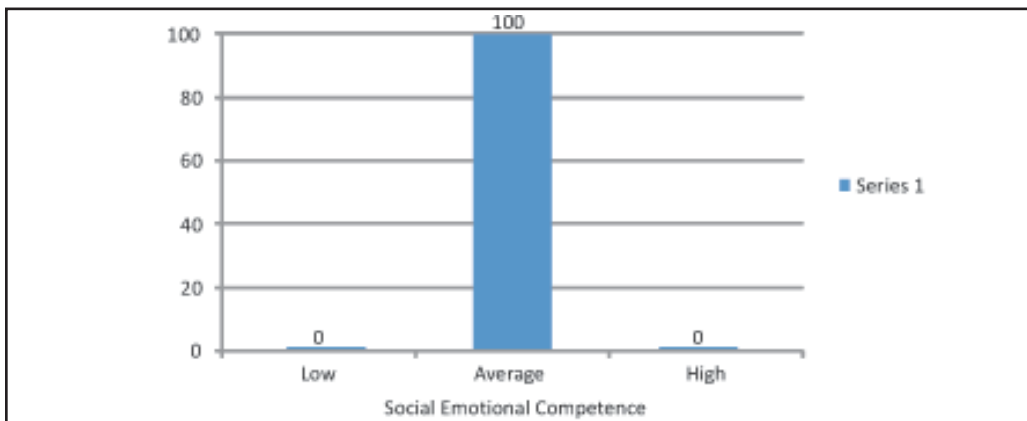
Figure 5 shows the relation between fantasy play and personal emotional competence of children. The children (88.2%) who highly preferred fantasy play in nursery outdoor play possess high personal emotional competence. 11.8% of children have average personal emotional competence.

As far as the personal emotional competence of the children (Figure 6) who have least preference towards

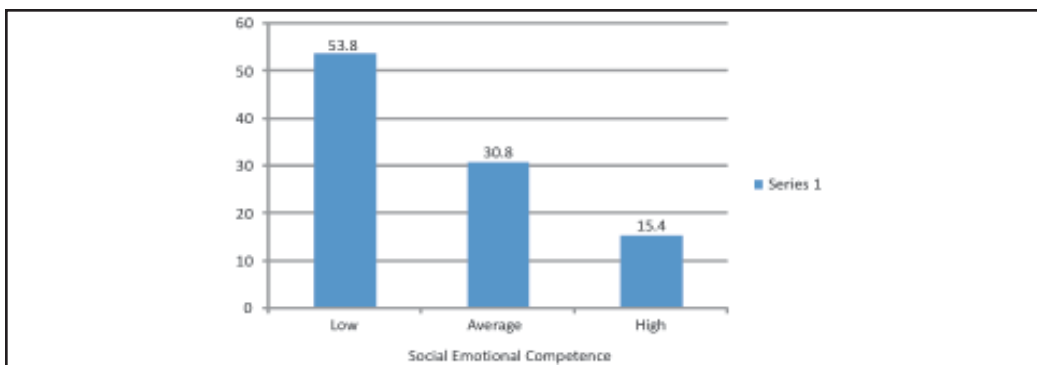
fantasy play in the nursery outdoor play are concerned, 61.5 % of children belong to the average group, 38.5 % of children belong to low group and there is no children in high category.

### Relation between Fantasy Play and Social Emotional Competence of Children

Figure 7 reveals that 100% children preferred more fantasy play in nursery



**Figure 7:** Social emotional competence of children who preferred more fantasy play in nursery outdoor play

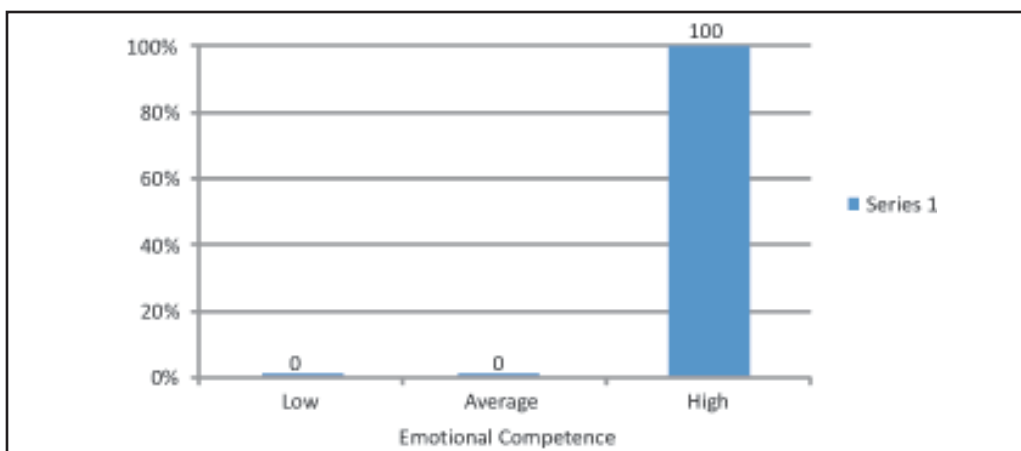


**Figure 8:** Social emotional competence of children who preferred less fantasy play in nursery outdoor play

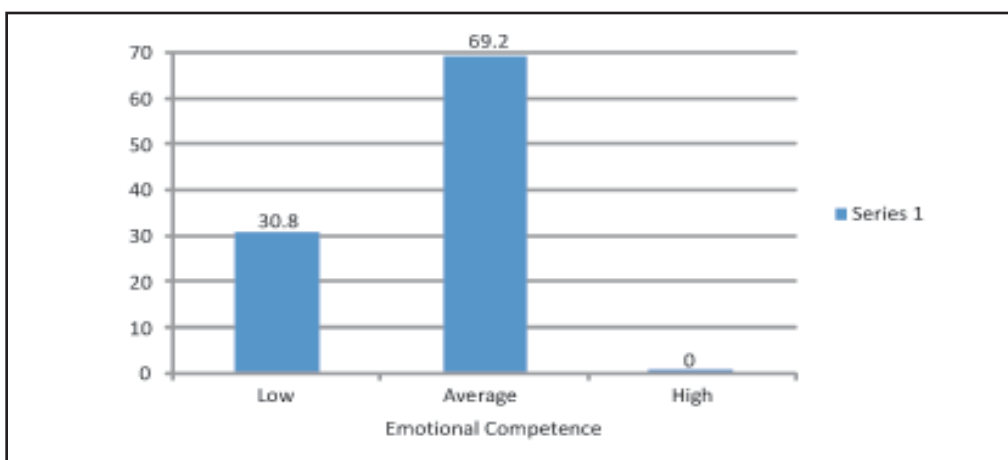
outdoor play and possess social emotional competence.

Figure 8 depicts results just opposite to the earlier finding that 53.8% of children who have least preference towards fantasy play in

nursery outdoor play came in the group of low social emotional competence whereas 30.8% of children came in the average group and 15.4 % children came in the group of high social emotional competence.



**Figure 9:** Total emotional competence of children who preferred more fantasy play in nursery outdoor play



**Figure 10:** Total emotional competence of children who preferred less fantasy play in nursery outdoor play



### **Relation between Fantasy Play and Total Emotional Competence of Children**

Figure 9 clearly proves that 100% of children who highly preferred fantasy play in nursery outdoor play possess high total emotional competence.

Figure 10 gives a different picture regarding total emotional competence of children who gave less preference to fantasy play in nursery outdoor play. 69.2% of children came in the average group when the scores regarding the total emotional competence is taken into consideration. 30.8% of children came in the low group and there are no children in the high group.

### **Conclusions and Suggestions**

The research concludes that the pre-school children give first preference to fantasy play than other types of free play, such as physical play, material play, look and watch, and walk and run in the nursery outdoor play. In the case of personal and social competence, most of the pre-school children come in the average group. But in the case of total emotional competence, just above fifty per cent are in the high group.

The research clearly proves that

there is a strong relation between fantasy play and emotional competence of pre-school children. The children who spent more time in fantasy play possess high emotional competence. The children who preferred more fantasy play in the nursery outdoor play have high level of personal emotional competence and total emotional competence. But in the case of children who preferred more fantasy play in the nursery outdoor play have average level of social emotional competence. On the contrary, the pre-school children who preferred less fantasy play in the nursery outdoor play have average level of personal emotional competence and total emotional competence. Additionally, majority of the children who preferred less fantasy play in the nursery outdoor play have low social emotional competence.

Children's social and emotional competence is critical for the development of sound relationships with family members and their peer groups. Opportunities to play fantasy play activities in the pre-school environment and at home, can play an important role in developing emotional competence among children.

### **REFERENCES**

- WEST, N. T. AND ALBRECHT, K. 2007. 'Building emotional competence: A strategy for disaster preparation and recovery.' *Exchange: The Early Childhood Leaders' Magazine Since 1978*, 175, 20-25. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. EJ 763 220).

- PAREEK, S., et al. 2005. 'Enhancing emotional intelligence and enriching meaning in life: An intervention study.' *Psycho-lingua*, 35(2), 97-105.
- KREMENTITZER, J. P. 2005. 'The emotionally intelligent early childhood educator: Self-reflective journaling.' *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 33(1), 3-9. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. EJ 757 703).
- TIWARI, P.S.N. AND SRIVASTAVA, N. 2004., Schooling and development of emotional intelligence, *Psychological Studies*, 49(2&3),151-154.
- NELSON, D. AND LOW, G. 2003. *Emotional Intelligence: Achieving Academic and Career Excellence*. Prentice Hall., New Jersey.
- CHERNISS, C. AND GOLEMAN, D. 2001. *The Emotional Intelligent Workplace*. Jossey-Bass. San Francisco.
- COBB, C. D. AND MAYER, J. D. 2000. 'Emotional intelligence: What the research says.' *Educational Leadership*, 58, 14 - 18.
- GOLEMAN, D. 1998. *Working with Emotional Intelligence*. Bloomsbury, London.
- GOLEMAN, D. 1995. *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter more than I.Q.*, Bantam Books, New York.
- BAR-ON, R. 1997. *The Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i): A Test of Emotional Intelligence*, Multi-Health Systems, Toronto, Canada.
- ELIAS, M. J., et al. 1997. *Promoting Social and Emotional Learning: Guidelines for Educators*. VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development., Alexandria.
- MAYER, J. D. AND GEHER, G. 1996. 'Emotional intelligence and the identification of emotion.' *Intelligence*, 22, 89-113.
- NICHOLSON, SHERIL L. AND SUSAN, SHIPSTEAD, G. 1994. *Through the Looking Glass Observations in the Early Childhood Classroom*. McMillan Publishing Company, USA.
- HUTT, et., al. 1989. *Play, Exploration and Learning: A Natural History of the Pre-school*. Routledge, London.