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The Importance of Emotional Intelligence (Competence) in Positive Psychology¹

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Abstract

Emotional intelligence is commonly defined as the set of abilities to process emotion-laden information competently.

A series of studies were undertaken in an attempt to determine the adaptive role of emotional intelligence, and its influence on positive outcomes in various situations. Using model of emotional intelligence (Mayer & Salovey, 1997), a set of self-reported scales with appropriate psychometric properties was constructed. The factor-analytic studies revealed three latent dimensions: a) perception and understanding emotion, b) expression and labeling emotion, and c) managing and regulating emotion. The structure closely resembles the factor structure reported in studies using different scales, but within the same model of emotional intelligence (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

The results demonstrated that emotional intelligence has a significantly positive role in many important aspects of human functioning such as: sensitivity for others and one's own emotions, emotional self-concept, coping with stress, maintaining positive mood, and openness.

In regards to prognostic validity of emotional intelligence and competence, the strongest observed relationship was with the quality of leadership, and life satisfaction.

In conclusion it could be said that emotional intelligence does not have to compete emotional with academic or general intelligence, but rather that they could be understood as complementary in reaching the best possible outcome for every human being: to be happy in life.

Introduction

The American Dialect Society selected emotional intelligence as the most useful new word of 1995. It refers to a set of abilities recognizing the meaning of emotional patterns and solving problems that include an emotional context. There are few definitions of EI. The most comprehensive is one that defines EI as a four-level set of abilities, as follows: *Emotional intelligence involves the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotions and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth* (Mayer & Salovey, 1997, p. 5).

Emotional intelligence can be assessed via three types of conceptualizations: 1) as self reported measure, 2) mixed models, or 3) ability conception. Although self-reported measures have been criticized as too subjective and less valid because of strong social desirability tendencies, Bandura (1977) has claimed that people commonly behave according to their thoughts and feelings. McClelland (1973) has published an anthological article in which he appeals to researchers to "test the competencies rather than intelligence". In the recent years there are strong movement for shifting from

ability and aptitude testing to competence testing. Pervin (1990) encouraged researchers to “...call attention to the person’s *cognitive activities* - the operations and transformations that people perform on information, in contrast to some store of cognitions and responses that a person has” (p. 117).

“Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to process emotion-laden information **competently**, and to use it to guide cognitive activities like problem solving and to focus energy on required behaviors” (Salovey, Mayer & Caruso, in press). Emotions are part of many human subsystems (physiological, experiential, cognitive, motivational), and EI could be an important predictor of success in a person’s life (e.g. relationships, family, workplace). There is also a link between EI and positive psychology.

The aim of the poster is to demonstrate the adaptive role of emotional intelligence, skills and competencies, and its positive influence in various situations and in different samples.

Method

Instrument used in every study:

Emotional Intelligence, Skills and Competences Questionnaire (EISCQ) consisting of 45 items, and has the following three Subscales:

- a) Ability to **Perceive & Understand** emotion,
- b) Ability to **Express & Label** emotion, and
- c) Ability to **Manage & Regulate** emotion.

Study 1 <u>Subjects.</u> N=381 - high-school students 16-18 years old <u>Instruments:-</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social Skills Inventory (Riggio, 1986) - Self-Concept Scales - self-esteem, incompetence & steadiness (Bezinović, 1988) - Life satisfaction Scale (Bezinović, 1988) - Mood Scales (Takšić, 2002) 	Study 2 <u>Subjects.</u> N=130 - college students - 19-25 years old <u>Instruments:-</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stress perception scale (PSS-10; Cohen, Kamarick & Mermelstein, 1983) - Big Five Questionnaire (Goldberg, 1995) - Coping Strategies Inventory (Hudek-Knežević, 1998)
Study 3 <u>Subjects.</u> N=193 - college students - 19-25 yrs old <u>Instruments:-</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Empathy as Perspective taking - from Interpersonal Reactivity Index - IRI (Davis, 1980) - Conflict resolution strategies (Rahim, 1988) 	Study 4 <u>Subjects.</u> N=834 - representative sample 15-19-years old high-school students <u>Instruments:-</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ego resiliency scale (Block & Kremen, 1996) - Quality of family interaction (Lacković-Grgin et al. 1995)
Study 5 <u>Subjects.</u> N= 83 - supervisors - age: 23-46 years <u>Instruments:-</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quality of leadership scale (Adapted from Yukl, 1994) 	Study 6 <u>Subjects.</u> N=185 - high-school students 16-18 years old <u>Instruments:-</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working Values Questionnaire (Šverko, 1995)
Study 7 <u>Subjects.</u> N=177 - high-school students 16-18 years old <u>Instruments:-</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Toronto Alexthymia Scale (TAS-20; Bagby, Parker & Taylor, 1993) 	

Results

Convergent & Divergent Validity

Table 1. Correlations between EISCQ subscales and scales from different concepts

Variables	1	2	3	4
Schutte EI scale	.59	.48	.48	.65
Positive mood	.35	.45	.55	.59
Ego resilience	.47	.36	.49	.55
Alexithymia	-.34	-.50	-.42	-.53
SSI - emotional sensitivity	.50	.37	.24	.52
Big five - openness/intellect	.50	.25	.44	.52
SSI - social expression	.34	.45	.34	.50
Emotional orienting coping strategy	.40	.20	.47	.48
Empathy - Perspective taking	.45	.20	.41	.44
Self-esteem	.20	.33	.44	.42
Life satisfaction	.16	.41	.45	.41
Big five - emotional stability	.13	.53	.28	.40
Big five - extraversion	.15	.39	.36	.39
Big five - conscientiousness	.25	.36	.30	.39
Problem solving coping strategy	.36	.26	.27	.38
Big five - agreeableness	.14	.41	.28	.36
SSI - emotional expression	.30	.33	.17	.35
Incompetence	-.18	-.17	-.41	-.33
Steadiness	.22	.14	.32	.30
SSI - social control	.25	.25	.17	.29
Emotional empathy	.43	.15	.09	.27

➤ **Bold p ≤ 0.01**

Legend:

1. Ability to **Perceive & Understand** emotion
2. Ability to **Express & Label** emotion
3. Ability to **Manage & Regulate** emotion
4. EISCQ -total

Predictive Validity

Table 2 Correlations between ESCQ subscales and some criteria (positive outcomes)

Variables	1	2	3	4
Quality of leadership	.46	.46	.52	.61
Positive mood	.35	.45	.55	.59
Ego resilience	.47	.36	.49	.55
Empathy - Perspective taking	.45	.20	.41	.44
Life satisfaction	.16	.41	.45	.41
Stress perception	-.11	-.23	-.54	-.37
Self-actualization values	.21	.26	.33	.35
Negative mood	-.15	-.21	-.38	-.32
Integration as a conflict resolution strategy	.25	.11	.36	.30
Emotional empathy	.43	.15	.09	.27
Quality of family interaction	.05	.08	.25	.15
Team performance	.02	.17	.25	.18

➤ **bold** $p \leq 0.01$

Legend:

1. Ability to **Perceive & Understand** emotion
2. Ability to **Express & Label** emotion
3. Ability to **Manage & Regulate** emotion
4. EISCQ -total

Concurrent Validity

Table 3. Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis with life satisfaction² as criteria (N=190)

Variable	n*	R	R ²	ΔR^2	F(ΔR^2)	p(F)
Self-concept	3	.490	.240	-		
Social Skills	9	.537	.288	.048	2.03	.063
Emotional competence	12	.579	.335	.047	4.16	.007

* Number of predictors included in regression equation

Table 4. Significant predictors of life satisfaction
(Final solution of backward stepwise regression analysis)

R= 0.564 R ² =0.318 R ² _{adjusted} =0.303 F(4,185)=21.53 p(F)<0.0001			
Predictors	β	t	p(t)
Ability to Manage & Regulate emotion	.242	3.36	.001
Self-esteem	.192	2.69	.008
Perceived incompetence	-,189	-2.68	.008
Social expressiveness	.156	2.40	.017

Table 5. Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis with school achievement as criteria (N=177)

Variable	n*	R	R ²	ΔR^2	F(ΔR^2)	p(F)
Academic intelligence	4	.284	.081	-		
Emotional competence	7	.349	.122	.041	2.63	.051

* number of predictors included in regression equation

Table 6. Significant predictors of school achievement (average marks)
(Final solution of backward stepwise regression analysis)

R= 0.312 R ² =0.098 R ² _{adjusted} =0.087 F(2,174)=9.41 p(F)=0.0001			
Predictors	β	t	p(t)
Verbal Cognitive Ability	.236	3.27	.0013
Ability to Manage & Regulate emotion	.196	2.72	.0071

² The Life satisfaction scale consisted of seven items with high internal consistency ($\alpha=0,83$).

Discussion

Convergent and Divergent Validity of EISCQ

Emotional competence was measured by the Emotional Intelligence, Skills and Competences Questionnaire (**EISCQ**; Takšić, 1998; Takšić, 2000; Takšić, 2001a; Takšić, V., Jurin, Ž & Cvenić, S., 2001; Takšić, V., Tkalčić, M. & Brajković, S. (2001) that consists of 45 items divided into three subscales: a) the **Perceive and Understand** emotions scale has 15 items; in the different studies coefficients of reliability were between $\alpha=0.85$ and $\alpha=0.90$), b) the **Express and Label** emotions scale has 14 items with a range of reliability between $\alpha=0.79$ and $\alpha=0.82$), and c) the **Manage and Regulate** emotions scale has 16 items and internal consistency ranged from $\alpha=0.71$ to $\alpha=0.78$. There were moderate positive correlations between the subscales (0.35-0.51) that allowed the researcher to form a linear combination measure of overall emotional competence with the reliability between $\alpha=0.88$ and $\alpha=0.92$ (Takšić, 2000b).

The EISCQ was compared with the scales that measure similar constructs (personality traits, self concept, social skills, and coping strategies). As was expected, the highest correlations emerged with alexithymia (reversed), emotional sensitivity and social expression as social skills, and the emotional oriented coping strategy. Among Big Five dimensions the highest correlation was found with openness/intellect, stressing the connection of emotional ability with cognitions. But, as Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) concluded, the absolute values of coefficients of correlation (0,48-0,52) still support a hypothesis that emotional competence is not only a “*new word for old concept*” or reflection of *deja vu*, but is a distinct construct of so called (positive) “emotional traits” (Mayer, 2001).

Predictive Validity

Psychometric literature stresses the importance of the predictive validity of every new established (psychological) instrument in a validation procedure. The highest predictive validity EISCQ is for quality of leadership supporting many theoretical hypotheses about the significant role of emotional abilities and competences in the leadership process (Goleman, 1998; Cooper & Sawaf, 1998; Ryback, 1998). Also, there is some empirical evidence of a positive relationship between EI and leader effectiveness ($r=0.51$; Rice, 1999; cf. Salovey, Mayer & Caruso, 2002). But in this study emotional intelligence was negatively associated with team’s speed in handling customer

complaints ($r=-0.40$). In the present study emotional competence continued to have a positive association with team performance. However, only the correlation with the Manage and Regulate emotion scale was significant.

The EISCQ scales have high positive correlations with maintaining **positive** mood, and with the ego resiliency.

Concurrent Validity

Life satisfaction and empathy were chosen as criteria by the authors of theory of EI (Mayer & Salovey, 2000). They presumed that every instrument that has the intention to measure EI, must show positive relationship with that two constructs. The EISCQ scale satisfies these criteria.

Following the idea proposed by Mayer & Salovey (1990) that the emotionally intelligent person does not ask how much they will earn in a life, but he/she tends to be happy in the their life, life satisfaction was established as the main criteria for concurrent validity procedures. The EISCQ scale has significantly contributed to explaining the variance in life satisfaction, even when they are the last variable entered in a regression equation. The results of stepwise regression analyses (Table 4) demonstrated a strong evidence and superiority of emotional management skills and competences in establishing life satisfaction (explaining about 11% of variance).

Higher correlations were found between the EISCQ scale and the cognitive aspect of empathy (perspective taking), than with its emotional aspect.

There is also significant correlation between the EISCQ and a school achievement. The correlation remained significant even though: a) the EISCQ scale was entered in regression equation after the battery of four tests of academic (classical) intelligence, and b) in spite of different methods of assessment (self-report vs. ability).

In **conclusion** it could be said that the **EISCQ** scale shares some amount of common variance (up to 28%) with the scales derived from similar constructs. However, due to sufficient reliability of the scales, a great deal of true variance remains unique (more than 40%). Finally, this true variance of the EISCQ scale has unique contribution in explaining a variance of a life satisfaction and (many will say surprisingly) school achievement.

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