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A Study of the Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Quality of Life and its Components in University Students

Fatemeh Alihosseini
Ph. D. Student, Department of Psychology, Osmania University Hyderabad, India
Fatemeh Hajmohammadi
Master Student of Educational Psychology, Azad Tehran Markas University, Tehran, Iran
Akram Alihosseini
Master of Counseling and Guidance, Khatam University, Tehran, Iran

Abstract:
The present study aims to consider the relationship between emotional intelligence and quality of life and its components in university students. It applies a descriptive, correlation-based approach. The research society consists of all university students at the Azad University, Tehran Markaz Faculty (also called val-Asr) who were fulfilling the necessary qualifications for the Master of Science degree in psychology in the academic year 2014. The sample volume consists of 70 students selected through stratified random sampling out of the entire group of students who were studying in one of psychology-related disciplines, namely clinical psychology, industrial psychology, special-needs children psychology and general psychology. Research tools include emotional intelligence questionnaire and quality of life questionnaire. The results of Pearson correlation test show that there is a meaningful and positive correlation between emotional intelligence and quality of life and its components that are mental health, physical health and social relationship. Put it another way, the students who enjoy a higher degree of emotional intelligence also enjoy better mental and physical health as well as social relationship.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, quality of life, mental and physical health, social relationship

1. Introduction

The term 'emotional intelligence' (EI) was originally used in 1990 by two psychologists namely John Mayer and Peter Salovey who maintained that those who enjoy the intelligence may control their emotions and those of others, discriminate between the positive and negative outcomes of personal emotions and to use emotional information to guide thinking and behavior (Besharat, 2005). Nowadays, mental pressures looms large over human life and for the same reason, the ability to control unfavorable emotions has a significant effect on mental health. Different individuals may battle against life miseries however only those are successful who can provide a due response to emotions. This ability is checked by emotional intelligence.

Individuals who enjoy a higher degree of the EI can also understand and assess their emotional states more effectively. They know where and how to express their emotions. They appropriately control their temper and can provide compromising and adaptive responses to adverse situations. They thus are expected to deal with different life situations more directly. They are more skillful than others in understanding and managing others' emotions and as a result, enjoy more social support and get more satisfaction from the social support than their peers. Emotional intelligence then appears to be in direct relationship with how one can manage stresses (Austin et al, 2004). That is to say those who suffer lack of adequate emotional intelligence could not adapt with stressful and unfavorable situations, show more depressive reactions and suffer hopelessness more than others that would expose them to further negative repercussions.

The present study would then be significant as it considers the significant issue of emotion and its effects on human thoughts, judgment and behavior. Emotion may facilitate or disrupt effective thought and reactions. Studies show that emotional intelligence supplies the sort of knowledge that may leave a powerful impact on the way of thought and behavior of individuals in different social situations (Kiarochi et al, 2007).

Also, the notion of quality of life has been a major concern for policy makers and specialists in prevention science so that it is used as a research parameter in measuring the state of health in a given society. Such researchers as Ravayi (2006) have considered quality of life as a multi-dimensional concept that deals with general health under such categories as physical health, psychological health, social health and spiritual health (Qasemzadeh, 2009). The psychologists tend to adopt a purposeful and existential approach towards the concept. They consider such parameters as favorable living conditions and individual satisfaction as insufficient for judging about quality of life and rather believe quality of life must facilitate development and flourish. In their term, an individual's life would be qualified once others consider his or her life as qualified. In terms of mental attitude, the notion of quality of life denotes how one considers his or her life as joyful and reflects how he or she is satisfied about his or her life.

Existential quality of life considers how deeply an individual considers his or her life as joyful. The approach assumes that an individual would enjoy deep nature as long as he or she is respectful and has the ability to live based on his nature; put it another way, there is a harmony between what he or she seeks from life and what life has granted him or her. The present study especially seeks to consider the quality of life among students taking into account the shift of views among psychologist concerning the concept.

Given the existing researches on emotional intelligence and its relationship with mental health and quality of life, question may rise as to whether there is a relationship between and quality of life. The present study aims to consider the possible link between the two variables.

2. Research Goals
The main goal is to consider the relationship between emotional intelligence and quality of life in university students.

The study also aims to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and aspects of quality of life (mental health, physical health and social relationship).

3. Research Hypotheses
1. There is a relationship between emotional health and quality of life.
2. There is a relationship between emotional health and mental health.
3. There is a relationship between emotional health and physical health.
4. There is a relationship between emotional health and social relationship.

4. Research Method, Sampling Method
The present study applies a descriptive, correlation-based approach. The research society consists of all university students at the Azad University, Tehran Markaz Faculty (also called val-Asr) who were fulfilling the necessary qualifications for the Master of Science degree in psychology in the academic year 2014. They are 1357 students.

The sample volume consists of 70 students selected through stratified random sampling out of the entire group of students who were studying in one of psychology-related disciplines, namely clinical psychology, industrial psychology, special-needs children psychology and general psychology. First it was determined how many percent of the students who study in the four disciplines and then the percentage was administered to the sample to yield a chosen group.

Discipline	Society no	Percent	Sample no
Clinical	492	36%	25
Industrial	230	17%	12
Special-needs children	233	18%	13
General	402	29%	20
Total	1357	100%	70

Table 1

5. Research Tools

5.1. Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire
Emotional intelligence questionnaire was developed by Bradberry and Greaves in 2005. The test yields a score for general emotional intelligence and four scores for the four emotional intelligence skills, namely self-consciousness, self-management, social consciousness and management of relationship. The test consists of four sections, each examining one of the four emotional intelligence skills. Questions no 1 to 6 examine self-consciousness skill, questions 7 to 15 examine the self-management skill, questions 16 to 19 tests the social consciousness skill and questions 21 to 28 examines management of relationship skill. Ganji (2005) has calculated the reliability of the questions through a test replication in a 36-strong group as 78%, 86%, 73% and 89% for the four IE skills respectively. Cronbach's alpha for male and female groups and the entire group has been 88%. To measure the validity, the test was conducted along with a Bar-On IE test in a 31-strong group that yielded a correlation coefficient of 68% that is meaningful at 99% level (Bradberry & Greaves, 2005, translated by Ganji, 2007).

5.2. Quality of Life Questionnaire
Quality of life questionnaire is an inter-cultural index that was developed in 1994 by several researchers at the behest of the World Health Organization (WHO) in a bid to assess the quality of life in various individuals. The questionnaire considers 24 aspects for quality of life, categorized in six separate domains. A short form of the index includes 26 questions that altogether aim to assess four separate spheres of an individual's life. The four spheres deal with physical health, psychological health, living environment and relationship with others and consist of 8, 7, 6 and 3 questions respectively.

Having conducted necessary calculations, a score would be gained for each sphere based on a 4-20 scoring range. The score four stands for the worst situation while 20 stands for the best. The scores may also be converted based on a 0-100 range. Nasiri (2006) has developed an Iranian-style version of the index called IRQOL. The researcher has reported the descriptive reliability and internal consistency coefficients (a) of the index in a sample of 302 university students at Shiraz University as 87% and 84% respectively. The retest reliability coefficient was calculated as 67% while the result of its simultaneous validity with General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) was described as satisfactory. The present study applies the Iranian-style version.

6. Data Analysis
The present study applies descriptive statistics to describe the available data. It also applies analytical statistics (Pearson correlation) to examine how meaningfully the variables are related with one another. Pearson index was applied because the data of both variables run at an interval scale.

Variable	Single	Married	Total	Female	Male	Total
Frequency	48	22	70	54	16	70
Frequency percentage	68.6%	31.4%	100	77.2%	22.8%	100
Cumulative frequency	68.6	100		77.2	100	

Table 2: Descriptive data on demographic variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Number
emotional intelligence	110/61	23/52	49	149	70
quality of life	79/03	16/76	48	107	70
mental health	29/13	8/02	13	44	70
physical health	24/19	5/09	10	32	70
social relationship	25/71	4/94	15	34	70

Table 3: Descriptive data on scores of emotional intelligence and quality of life and its components

Variable	Correlation Coefficient	Significance Level	Number
emotional intelligence and quality of life	0/86	0/00	70
emotional intelligence and mental health	0/84	0/00	70
emotional intelligence and physical health	0/80	0/00	70
emotional intelligence and social relationship	0/72	0/00	70

Table 4: Results of Person correlation coefficient in the assessment of how meaningfully emotional intelligence is related with quality of life, mental health, physical health and social relationship

The above tables indicate the following.
- There is a meaningful and positive relationship ($p<0/01$, r= 0/86) between emotional intelligence and quality of life. That is to say the research hypothesis is confirmed with p=0/99
- There is a meaningful and positive relationship ($p<0/01$, r= 0/84) between emotional intelligence and mental health. That is to say the research hypothesis is confirmed with p=0/99
- There is a meaningful and positive relationship ($p<0/01$, r= 0/80) between emotional intelligence and physical health. That is to say the research hypothesis is confirmed with p=0/99
- There is a meaningful and positive relationship ($p<0/01$, r= 0/72) between emotional intelligence and social relationship. That is to say the research hypothesis is confirmed with p=0/99

7. Discussion and Conclusion
The results of Pearson correlation coefficient indicates that there is a meaningful relationship between emotional intelligence and quality of life among university students (*r=0/86, p<0/01*). The finding is consistent with that of Ahadi et al (2009) and indicates that those individuals who enjoy a higher degree of emotional intelligence may also adapt more effectively with the problems of life and live more satisfied.
Broach researches have shown that emotional intelligence skills play a more effective role in educational, vocational and social lives than attitude and general intelligence. Emotions are able to drive the attention to everywhere, thus leaving their impact on learning, memory and behavior (Kiarochi, 2007 translated by Paad, 2009). Those with higher emotional intelligence also command a better skill in controlling and guiding life situations and checking in their emotions and feelings. Such individuals are more optimistic and hopeful about their life and show more resilient about stresses (Kiarochi, 2000).
There is a meaningful relationship between emotional intelligence and mental health (*r=0/84, p<0/01*). The finding shows consistent with that of Hadadi Kouhsar et al (2006) and indicates that those with higher emotional intelligence tend to show fewer signs of disorder following an accident, distractive thoughts, or pre-motivation due to harmful experiences than those who suffer a low EI score.
There is evidence at hand that substantiates the role of emotional intelligence in checking in stresses and securing mental health. The evidence shows that emotional intelligence immunizes individuals against mental pressure and keeps them from depressive states (Kiarochi, 2000). Human being, having assisted by emotional intelligence, is able to manage life pressures that are emotional at one aspect. Studies show that emotional intelligence serves to control life pressures and their impact on mental health (Kiarochi, 2007 translated by Paad, 2009).

There is also a meaningful relationship between emotional intelligence and physical health of the university students (*r=0/80, p<0/01*). The finding shows consistent with that of Goshtasbi (2004) and Kiarochi (2000) and indicates that those individuals who are able to understand their emotions and manage them in various situations are also in command of more healthy bodies while those lacking the ability to control their emotions may also suffer negative emotions and may be exposed to different mental-physical diseases.

There is also a meaningful relationship between emotional intelligence and social relationship among the university students (*r=0/72, p<0/01*). The finding shows consistent with that of Hadadi Kouhsar et al (2006) and Lopes (2004) and indicates that emotional intelligence has a direct relationship with the ability to sympathize with others, compromise the life and enjoy more satisfaction with life. The researchers showed that emotional intelligence may help to check in inter-personal problems and improve social relationship.

Those university students who enjoy a higher degree of emotional intelligence also enjoy mental health, physical health and better social relationship. Emotional understanding would also improve once emotional intelligence improves, making an individual more able to establish affective relationship with others and express sympathy with them, hence cutting on the amount of inter-personal problems.

One may also conclude that quality of life would improve once negative emotions including anxiety and depression are managed, inter-personal affairs are addressed and mental and physical health is improved. It is recommendable then to pave the ground for an improvement in emotional intelligence in university students through relevant training workshops.

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