

A META - ANALYTIC STUDY OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

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Abstract

This study is conducted with the aim to elaborate a relatively new concept in Kosovo's context and region too, the concept of Emotional Intelligence, as well as examining the concept's relation with other social and psychological dimensions which have a great impact in our life. It has been hypothesized that EI has a positive correlation with personality traits and social competences and is a great predictor of a positive interaction in several contexts. This Meta - analytical study provides a systematic review of several studies in the field of EI, by combining pertinent qualitative and quantitative study data in order to develop a more common conclusion of the main findings. Therefore, the study reflects in an exploration and analysis of a great part of studies in the field of Emotional Intelligence and its related factors, aiming to offer a platform for discussion and a view for future studies in this field. The study offers a view on predictions as well, deriving from study data's in this field and variables which could be taken into account when examining the concept of EI. The overall findings, present the concept of Emotional Intelligence as an important (crucial) aspect for other relevant psycho - social factors and a factor with a positive correlation with other great part of variables from different studies. Having in consideration the findings from other studies, implications from other fields too and the support from theoretical and practical perspective of similar studies in this field, the overall findings of this study appear to be promising, very interesting, providing hence quite complex analysis and re - emphasizing the need for future research in this field, by widening the spectrum of involving such variables in other related contexts as well.

Keywords: *Emotional intelligence; Ability Based Model; Trait Model; Personality; Social Interaction (perceived social support); Emotional Wellbeing.*

The Conception of Emotional Intelligence

The early studies of Intelligence in the field of Psychology consisted mainly on treating cognitive aspects such as memory and ability to solve problems. However, during this period, there were eminent researchers who considered also other non – cognitive aspects as crucial factors in the conception of intelligence. (Cherniss, C. Emotional Intelligence: Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology. Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations .What it is and why it matters. Rutgers University). Although the traditional definitions of Emotional Intelligence of '90s were dominated by cognitive aspects, researchers have started to understand and acknowledge the role of non cognitive aspects, by describing and exploring other abilities as well, in the context of social interaction, more precisely on the abilities dealing with understanding, identifying, developing and managing social interaction.

Researchers engaged in the study field of Emotional Intelligence have come with different definitions in their attempts to conceptualize Emotional Intelligence from different viewpoints. Among them, there are definitions which highlight EI as an important variable in comparison to Intellectual Quotient, as a factor which assures new ways for understanding and assessing human behavior, attitudes, interpersonal skills and their potentials, or as a complementing aspect of the meaning of Intelligence itself. Other views tend to conceptualize EI as a term which is not very well defined; as a term which in itself reflects more to a myth rather than science itself, and other viewpoints which emphasize that EI provides a basic for crucial competencies in relevant dimensions of life. (Matthews, G., Zeidner, M. & Roberts, R. (2004). Seven Myths about Emotional Intelligence. Lawrence Erlbaum Associate. Vol. 15, No. 3, 179 – 196). Although the concept of EI has evolved a lot, the systematic study of EI dates very often on early '90, in the time when scientific articles have suggested that there is also a human mental ability, not very well known, but very important, ability to resonate on emotions, to use emotions in order to enhance thinking, and to manage emotions in different contexts. The literature indicates that studies and measurements in the field of EI are very much inherited from the work of the pioneers of Psychometry, such as: Albert Binet, Thorndike, and Wechsler. From these developments, in the early 1920, Edward Thorndike was the first to mention the term social intelligence to describe the understanding and managing skills of relations with others, the development of social world. Further on, on 1940, Wechsler has promoted the concept of “non – cognitive” intelligence; the implication of non – cognitive factors in intelligent behaviors. He argued a lot on this matter and highlighted that the overall, comprehensive understanding of Intelligence could not be achieved while these non – cognitive aspects are not described. From this period, the concept of Intelligence has evolved, including a multiple set of abilities that had to do with Intelligence and its relation with other abilities. Despite these developments, the Harvard Gardner's (1983) conception of Intelligence, the existence of Multiple Intelligences, provides a theoretical base to accept different individual's abilities and talents, which includes Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Intelligence. (Brualdi, C. A. (1996). Multiple Intelligences: Gardner's Theory). Gardner's theory on Multiple Intelligences, serves to a great extent to the aim of defining more precisely the concept of Emotional Intelligence. Despite theoretical aspect, a wide range of literature has been consulted and reviewed in order to address empirical findings of this issue as well. As mentioned above, the term of EI seems to be pretty diverse; including a great number of constructs, therefore the review of the literature indicates a conceptual coherence regarding the definitions of Emotional Intelligence.

Another important aspect treated in this study field appears to be the concept of emotional information, as a way to distinct also among types of Intelligence. In this context, researches of the field have put a great emphasize on a set of Intelligences which function within the framework of social, practical, personal and emotional data as well. This links to a strong argument to an idea of examining the interrelation of this kind of Intelligence (EI) with other relevant factors of social and personal context.

The aim of the study is twofold. First, the study is conducted with the aim to elaborate a relatively new concept in Kosovo's context and region too, the concept of Emotional Intelligence, as well as examining the concept's relation with other social and psychological dimensions which have a great importance in our life. It has been hypothesized that EI has a positive correlation with personality traits and social competences and is a great predictor of a positive interaction in several contexts. This meta-analytical study, provides a systematic review of several studies in the field of EI, by combining pertinent qualitative and quantitative study data in order to develop a more common conclusion of the main findings.

The study reflects in an exploration and analysis of a great part of the studies in the field of Emotional Intelligence, as well as other relevant factors, with the aim to offer a platform for discussion and interaction on future directions of this field.

Secondly, the study aims to offer a view on predictions coming from the study field of EI, as well as relevant variables which have shown to have an impact in this field.

Based on previous study of EI, the study also aims to present the main empirical findings, as well as theoretical perspectives in order to offer a more common understanding of the Emotional Intelligence theme.

The understanding of the meaning of EI, its structure, and the examination of its relation with other relevant variables as well, appear to be among main objectives of this study.

In order to get a comprehensive approach and to widen the understanding on the area of EI and its relation with other relevant variables, a considerable literature has been reviewed and studied from a wide spectrum of this field, from different perspectives. Main contributions and significant results have been identified from previous research of this field. This process has contributed a lot as a guideline, especially during the conceptualization phase of main ideas on hypothesis of the study, therefore the process has contributed to build the foundation and to foresee the future direction of the study. As mentioned above, from the literature review, it can be concluded that there is a wide range of studies and literature in the field of EI, including theoretical and empirical perspective. Having in mind that this field of study was not treated before in our context, it reveals a dimension of the limitation of the study in general, in the meantime it is also considered to be an added value for studies of this field in Kosovo's context, and it contributes to a general understanding of the dimensions of EI and its relation with other related variables of psychological, social and personal dimensions.

Having in mind the great diversity and rapid development of the concept of EI, its interaction with other relevant factors and a lot of assumptions pertaining this study field, the new practices of this field have witnessed that the sphere of EI has gained a huge interest for future studies in the field of Psychology, as well as other related fields.

The issue of terminology of Emotional Intelligence appears to be treated very seriously within the scope of this study field. From the review of the Literature, it is noted a great diversity on tendencies to conceptualize the EI. As a result, one may find several definitions of EI, depending on the viewpoint in which EI was treated and conceptualized. The eminent researchers of this field Peter Salovey and Jack Mayer (1990) have proposed a formal definition of Emotional Intelligence, by defining it as "an ability to monitor our feelings and others, to distinguish their forms and to use the emotional information to facilitate our thoughts". Later on, this definition was reformulated and it was proposed as a definition in the context of four abilities which are related among each other. The abilities include: perception, use of emotion, understanding and managing emotions. (Salovey, P., Grewal, D. *The Science of Emotional Intelligence*. Yale University). This conception which views EI as a field which operates among four based abilities, defines Emotional Intelligence as an ability to percept in a correct way emotions, to understand them, to assess emotions in order to facilitate and generate thinking, and to effectively manage emotions in order to promote intellectual and emotional growth (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). While there is also a narrow viewpoint of defining EI encountered in the literature, the one which defines EI as an ability to identify, assess and manage our and other's emotions, also the way how we behave based on these emotions". In general, Emotional Intelligence refers to a relatively new concept which includes abilities, skills to identify, assess,

understand and manage our emotions and others as well. Thus, in short, Emotional Intelligence presents individual ability to understand their emotions and others too, in order to adapt, to behave appropriately according to certain situations while using these emotions.

Even if it was early used a term in several contexts, the concept of Emotional Intelligence was popularized from Daniel Goleman (1995), a researches which was inspired from the work (study) of devoted researchers of this field, Peter Salovey dhe Jack Mayer. Their work was consisted of the tendencies to describe individual abilities to identify their emotions and others, to distinguish and assess emotions, and also as an ability to use emotions to facilitate thoughts (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). In his well known book “Emotional Intelligence, why it matters more than IQ” Goleman describes very clearly the importance of the concept of Emotional Intelligence and also raises assumptions / predictions which may come out from studying this filed. According to him, “Emotional Intelligence refers to an individual capacity to know ones feelings and thus others too, to motivate one self, and to manage appropriately emotions and our relationships”. (Goleman, 1998). Since it is a relatively new field of study, it can be noticed a huge diversity while conceptualizing EI, and certainly it is well noticed that it is a field of study which is constantly undergoing changes. From the preliminarily researches of this field, it can be noticed a rational theoretical explanation fundamentally deepen / rooted in psychological literature / studies. .

As mentioned above, it is impossible to treat the study of EI outside the context in which it functions. Great number of studies have noted that while treating the studies of EI, a great number of variables are implied, variables which are important for psycho - social and personal context, the context in which the EI abilities function.

Results

In general, the results from the analysis of data of the great number of studies which have been considered, indicate that EI appears to be a crucial factor in predicting the success in life, as factor which impacts interpersonal relationships, academic performance, and generally the individual wellbeing.

The examination of the relation between the abovementioned variables, and other related implications, appear to provide interesting results from which one could highlight helpful predictions for the study field and its added value for several contexts.

Data from the studies which were carefully analyzed highlight that there is a great number of studies which suggest and predict promising results in the context of individual’s social and emotional competencies, which are valued as key factors in many important aspects of the life, important also for maneuvering social world.

The empirical studies of this field emphasize the construct of EI as a continuity and complementary aspect of the cognitive intelligence (IQ), as a predictor of prosocial behaviors, positive relationships, adaptive and organizational skills, and also as a predictor of Leadership Performance in different fields.

From the studies which highlight the predictions fom EI and its relation with relevant factors of social nad personal context, considerable attention has been given to researches which have treated EI from its general viewpoint but also in relation with specific variables which will be described in the result section.

These studies show that practical and psychological value exist in order to understand emotions, those personal and others as well, managing emotions in an effective way and its usage in order to facilitate thought and reasoning. In general, findings from this study field have proven to get important results in the context of relation among EI and other aspects, such as: personality traits, interpersonal relationship, perceived social support from parents and friends, emotional wellbeing, etc.

In this view, important findings from this study field are highlighted also in the context of interrelation of all above mentioned factors with the variable of EI. In a study conducted by Peter Salovey and Daisy Grewal on the relation of EI with personality traits, it was found that the results from each component of EI (perception, usage, understanding and managing emotions) do correlate fairly with one – another and with the EI branch as well, and

the general results seem to be very reliable. (Mayer et al., 2003). In another study, Lopes, Salovey, and Straus (2003) have found low correlation, but positive among results of the tests of EI from Mayer Salovey and the Caruso and the Big Five Personality Inventory. More concretely, main characteristics which are linked with five main fields of this Inventory have been investigated. However, this test does not measure only the abilities of EI, which differ from the personality traits in this regard, but also it measures the tendencies to respond to a positive manner in a social aspect. (Salovey, P., Grewal, D. Yale University. (2005) The science of Emotional Intelligence. American Psychological Society, Volume 14, No. 6).

Moreover, the results from this meta analysis indicate that Emotional Intelligence, as well as cognitive Intelligence too, correlate poorly with personality traits. Despite this, during the analysis, it was found also that there are other studies too which contradict these findings. Paul N. Lopes, Peter Salovey and Rebecca Straus (2003) in a more or less same study have been suggesting that EI has an added value (up warding) in relation with personality traits. It is important to highlight findings from other set of data too, indicating that students who showed higher scores in the abilities of EI have had tendencies as well to show higher level of empathy, qualitative relationships, emotional and psychological wellbeing.

There were other studies which were focused on the examination of the relation and significance of each component of EI with other relevant social factors. In a study which aimed at examining the relation between the EI abilities (dimensions) and pro social behaviors, Lopes et al (2003) have found that high scores on the managing emotions dimension of EI correlated positively with the quality of interpersonal relationship (friendship). Additional studies in this field highlighted that the dimension of managing emotions of EI, measured through Mayer, Salovey and Caruso Emotional Intelligence test has predicted important aspects of social sensitiveness and the quality of interpersonal relationships. (Cote, Lopes, Salovey, & Beers, in press: Predictions to pro social and other positive behaviors)

Therefore, findings from these studies indicate that the ability of managing emotions could play an important role in the ways of communication and social interaction, to understand and use appropriately personal emotional abilities and those of others as well. These study findings have highlighted the need for future studies too by widening the spectrum of other related aspects too.

In the context of main studies of Emotional Intelligence, and main findings from the study field, through the analysis of the data, other important aspects have been reexamined which treated the dimension of gender differences in relation with EI and its main components (dimensions). These studies present a very interesting results and appear to be a valued foundation for further studies and analysis in this field. Several studies were analyzed and data appear to show significance in relation with gender differences and the operationalization of abilities of EI (Brackett, A. M., Mayer, D. J., Warner, M. R. Emotional intelligence and its relation to everyday behavior. University of New Hampshire, Department of Psychology, Conant Hall, 10 Library Way, Durham, NH 03824, USA).

In this context, another key area of EI was highlighted, the one which has to do with the predictions criteria from the study of EI, according to which the social interactions have been considered to be more positive for females in comparison to males. According to common ideas of popular and scientific psychology, it is believed that females are more competent than males with regard to emotional sphere. There is a general opinion that females appear to better in the “sensation” of emotions, mainly those of others, and have greater tendencies toward psychological analysis of their own behavior and others as well. It is mentioned very frequently that females are more skilful at manipulating other’s emotions, but they’re not always capable of managing their emotions. (Lyusine, D. B. (2006). Emotional Intelligence as a Mixed Construct Its Relation to Personality and Gender. Journal of Russian and East European Psychology. Volume. 44). However, despite these results, an issue to investigate further whether existing studies could be gathered in a common model of EI remains a challenge of this study field. (Matthews, G., Zeidner, M. & Roberts, R. (2004). Seven Myths about Emotional Intelligence. Lawrence Erlbaum Associate. Vol. 15, No. 3, 179 – 196).

Even if there is a strong evidence which highlights that Emotional Intelligence is a distinct ability which could be easily measured (Brackett & Mayer, 2003; Ciarrochi, Chan, Caputi, & Roberts, 2001; Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999; Mayer, Salovey, Caruso, & Sitarenios, 2003), however, there are still uncertainties regarding the issue of what could be predicted through the studies of EI. In this regard, few preliminary data from this study field, suggest that the low results (level) of Emotional Intelligence are linked with the involvement in a self – destructive behaviors, such as: deviant behaviors and smoking. (Brackett & Mayer, 2003; Rubin, 1999; Trinidad & Johnson, 2001), whereas high results from measuring EI are linked with positive results, such as: positive behaviors, parenting warmth, positive relations among peers and family (Mayer et al., 1999; Rice, 1999; Salovey, Mayer, Caruso, & Lopes, 2001). Based on these preliminary studies, the researchers of this field have found that further studies to assess the validation of EI are quite necessary.

Conclusion

The idea that emotional competencies and resilience are crucial for the adaption in different spheres of life, has raised the interest for studies in the field of EI, and has inspired great number of social and emotional programmes which resulted from the predictions of the study data in the field of EI. A set of recommendations and suggestions have been highlighted in this study field. There are few well known claims that emphasize that the Emotional Intelligence tests are great predictors of educative criteria's and those related with profession, despite what general intellectual ability foresees. From this general point of view, the study field has important implications for the social and educative environment, in particular as an incentive to improve the emotional functioning in our everyday life and to promote positive aspects of the behavior as well. Study findings from Peter Salovey and Daisy Grewal, recommend that Emotional Intelligence predicts the success in different life spheres, among which personal sphere and relations at work. Salovey, P., Grewal, D. Yale University. (2005) The science of Emotional Intelligence. American Psychological Society, Volume 14, No. 6).

The benefits from this study field appear to be present also in the aspect of awareness raising on emotional and motivational aspects of educators and managers in order to address seriously issues dealing with emotional sphere. There is a general understanding in the direction of thinking that psychological processes were considered to be totally cognitive or intellectual, whereas in fact it is being demonstrated that this depends also on the synergy between emotion and cognition, supported by different forms of cognition. (Clore & Ortony, 2000; Zeidner & Matthews, 2000). In this regard, the issue of developing programmes to enhance emotional and social skills seems very rationale. These programmes are believed to support the enrichment of Emotional competencies through the participation in the respective programmes (e.i conflict management, understanding other's perspective, verbal communication skills, training, etc). (Matthews, G., Zeidner, M. & Roberts, R. (2004). Seven Myths about Emotional Intelligence. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Vol. 15, No. 3, 179 – 196).

At the very end, this field of study has been followed by a number of critiques as well. They were generally addressed in the field of EI and its dimensions. Criticism has been presented from different viewpoints, by focusing initially in the issues of conceptualization and definition, and later on, on the implications which resulted from the gathered data and analysis of this study field. The literature review indicates that general critiques, the common ones in this field were raised on the definition of EI, the conception of this notion. The notion was widely conceived and the definition proved to be unstable. In this regard, the main aspects were common critiques could be present, were: Criticism on theoretical base of EI; criticism on construct validity; criticism on measurement aspects; criticism on the power of predictive claims in this field.

Findings from the review of the literature and the empirical practices as well indicate that educators have embraced the Emotional Intelligence in curricula's and school environments. Considering that the school environment appears to provide one of the important contexts for learning these emotional skills and competencies, this presents an added value for future directions of the study field as well.

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