

CHAPTER 10

Emotional Intelligence and Life Adjustment

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Introduction

The popular accounts by Goleman have later been found to be questionable (Matthews, Zeidner, & Roberts, 2002). Yet, there have been studies giving some support to a relationship between EI and life success (Martinez-Pons, 1997–98; Ciarrochi, Chan, & Caputi, 2000), but there is a need for more research oriented toward the validation of the claims made for emotional intelligence as important both in occupational settings and in family or leisure life. Much of the empirical work on EI that is reported is concerned with college students, presumably because such data are easy and cheap to obtain. In this chapter, a more varied and representative sample of participants were approached.

Several ways of measuring the concept have been devised (Bar-On & Parker, 2000; Sjöberg, 2001a, b; Roberts & Schulze, 2005). One approach is the use of questionnaire items measuring such dimensions as alexithymia, empathy, and self-actualization. This methodology was applied in our previous studies of EI where it was found that it was psychometrically feasible and gave promising results with regard to validity beyond what could be obtained with the usual Five-Factor Model (McCrae & Costa, 1987) dimensions (Petrides & Furnham, 2001; Sjöberg, 2001a). In the current chapter, this approach will be called the trait approach to measuring EI.

Meyer, Caruso, and Salovey have devised another major approach to EI, called here the performance approach (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999). The MSCEIT test of EI is based on their approach. EI is measured by means of judgment tasks, where test takers are instructed to judge emotions expressed in, for example, music or art samples, or in social episodes. The “correct” response is usually scored by means of a consensual key established based on norm data or data in an experi-

mental group. In other words, the modal response is scored as “correct.” The reliabilities of this type of measurement have been somewhat problematic to establish but most often they are acceptable, even if lower than the reliabilities of usual ability tests of the corresponding length. Sjöberg found, in two studies of applicants to a highly desirable school (Sjöberg, 2001a, b), some convergence of trait and performance measures of EI. In a third study, with anonymous participants, much higher convergence was found (Engelberg & Sjöberg, 2005). The performance approach is still in an early stage.

EI has so far been relatively little validated and investigated beyond laboratory tasks or in special groups, such as college students (see, for example, Extremera & Fernandez-Berrocal, 2005) where information on various adjustment dimensions has been scarce. The purpose of the present study was to assess the validity of the EI construct on a relatively wide array of criteria, and to do so in a reasonably representative sample of the population rather than in convenience samples. The study also used a design that guaranteed anonymity to respondents and made it less likely that they would give tactical responses. First, the general considerations behind our choices of criteria will be discussed, thereafter an account of the empirical results will be given.

The present study operationalized EI in two ways. First, a number of personality dimensions had earlier been found to form a super-factor that could be interpreted as EI (Sjöberg, 2001a, b) and showed convergence with performance EI and some other personality dimensions, as well as incremental validity beyond what could be obtained by means of the Five-Factor Model. These dimensions were measured in the present study as well. Second, performance EI was measured by means of a shortened version of a social episodes test. This test had been used in previous work (Engelberg & Sjöberg, 2004a, 2004b; Sjöberg, 2001a, b). It is only one aspect of the broad sample of performance measures used in the MSCEIT, but practical considerations made it impossible to incorporate more of the MSCEIT ideas in the present survey design.

It was hypothesized that EI would be higher for women than for men (Barrett, Lane, Sechrest, & Schwartz, 2000; Petrides & Furnham, 2000) and that it would positively correlate with educational level. Age was hypothesized to be negatively related to EI, just as it is to other indices of achievement and performance, even if older people often can compensate well in certain tasks for a decline in basic neural efficiency (Baltes, Dittman-Kohli, & Kliegl, 1984).

Personality and Attitude Constructs

EI should be related to a number of personality constructs, either because it is a precursor of successful achievement or because it is itself caused by a high level of functionality, which is implied by some other personality factor. It was, therefore, hypothesized that EI would be positively related to self-esteem and to persistence in the face of failure, and that it would be negatively related to a tendency to shun from the inner psychological world, here called psychophobia. It should be positively related to creativity.

Work-Related Criteria

One major life adjustment aspect is the balance, or lack thereof, between work and life outside work, that is, family and leisure. A balanced life is held to be highly desirable but may not be easy to achieve in times of stress and burnout, demanding much time for a variety of activities such as commuting to work and leaving and fetching children at the day-care center. It is common to hear complaints about being hard-pressed for time and having difficulties in achieving the good life one strives for—the issue that is in focus in the current debate (Crompton & Lyonette, 2006). It should be noted that few men or women in Sweden are full-time homemakers and that consequently there are great time restrictions on their lives in the case that they have formed families and have children.

These problems of balance are partly due to structural conditions beyond the control of the individual, at least under restrictions that may be very hard for him or her to remove. For example, life in a big city involves much commuting time for most of its workforce. But some of the problems may well be assumed to reside in the individuals themselves. Hence, it is reasonable to assume that high EI people cope more successfully with the conflicts arising from modern work and family life (Heiliger & Hingstman, 2000).

High EI should bring tangible rewards in the job context. In particular, we expect those high in EI to achieve more and to get a higher salary, at a given level of education and for men and women separately. People with a high EI should also be better adjusted in work life and value their jobs more positively. Work motivation should also be positively related to EI, and so should job satisfaction.

The successfully adjusted, high EI person should have been able to find and keep a job, which motivates him or her and which he or she finds satisfying. Hence, it is hypothesized that EI is positively related to work motivation and job

satisfaction. On the other hand, the high EI person should be less likely to give very high priority to economic values (Engelberg & Sjöberg, 2006, in press).

Summing up, EI was hypothesized to relate positively to

- Level of education
- Self-esteem
- Persistence in the face of failure
- Creativity
- Good life-work balance
- Salary level
- Work motivation
- Job satisfaction.

EI was also expected to be related to gender, with women holding higher levels of EI than men.

Furthermore, EI was hypothesized to be negatively related to

- Age, younger people being higher in EI
- Psychophobia
- Giving priority to economic values.

Method

A questionnaire was used in this study, it was quite extensive, 34 pages in A4 format, and 750 questions. It opened up with some questions about general political attitudes (not reported here), followed by questions about economic status. Then followed items intended to measure psychophobia, 10 problem episodes each involving 2 actors and 10 emotion judgments, the main questionnaire items needed to measure EI and creativity, questions about work motivation and life-work balance, 22 job risk items (not reported here), and 24 items measuring reactions to failure and frustrations. Finally, a number of questions concerning background data and evaluation of the questionnaire were included, and space was provided for free comments on the study. All items are available on the Web site <http://www.dynami-it.com/institute> (adjustment study).

Time to complete the questionnaire was 60 minutes (median), varying between 30 and 240 minutes. The quality of the design and questionnaire was rated

on 9 scales, overall positively, by the participants, who found it clear and easy to follow (about 90%), meaningful (71%), and interesting (63%). Few had become worried about its risks (6%), but also few had become interested in getting more information about its topics (19%). Most respondents did not feel that the questionnaire was designed to influence their responses in some specific direction (65%).

Participants

The questionnaire was sent to 196 persons, of which 153 (78%) had responded—after two reminders. The respondents were persons who had earlier taken part in our survey research and then indicated that they were willing to participate in yet another study. It is our experience from earlier research that such a group resembles the general population, as far as can be ascertained, quite well (Viklund, 1999). Ninety-four of the respondents were men (61.4%), 59 women; 17% were singles. Age varied from 22 to 77 years, median 49. Many, 77.1%, had children of their own. College education was reported by 32%, about 14% higher than in the population. Grade school or the equivalent was reported by 23.6%, the others were in between in educational level, which was hence quite varying. Four groups dominated orientation of education beyond grade school: health (17%), humanistic subjects (22%), technology (13%), and trade/economics (18%). The proportion of respondents employed full or part time was 63.4%, 10.5% were retired and only 2.6% unemployed. The proportion of full-time students was only 3.3%. Only 20.3% lived in one of the four largest cities in the country, the rest were spread over rural areas or small towns. Median salary was 18,700 SEK/month,¹ varying between 7,600 and 80,000. The proportion that did not state their income was 13.1%. Daily commuting time to work (both trips summed) varied between 5 (or less) minutes and 150 minutes, median 30 minutes.

Summing up, the group was roughly representative of the population with one clear exception: the average level of education was too high. On the other hand, this variable is usually not of major importance and, in addition, we did have a special interest in respondents with a high level of education. It should be noted that the respondents varied very strongly in background data and that very few were students.

1. About 2,000 US \$.

Scale Construction

Reliabilities were estimated by means of Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1951). The empathy (Hogan, 1969) scale of Mehrabian and Epstein (Mehrabian & Epstein, 1970) was used (present alpha = 0.80, 33 items), as well as the Jones and Crandall scale of self-actualization (Jones & Crandall, 1986) (present alpha = 0.67, 15 items). Furthermore the alexithymia scale of Bagby, Parker, and Taylor (1994) was translated and employed here (present alpha = 0.84, 20 items), measuring ability to identify and describe feelings, as well as tendency to shun away from emotional dimensions in thought and social relations. These are concepts close to EI, and EI and alexithymia have been found to be strongly (negatively) related (Sjöberg, 2001a; Parker, Taylor, & Bagby, 2001). Roger and Najarian (Roger & Najarian, 1989) described a set of items measuring four aspects of emotion control; we used those measuring emotional inhibition (alpha = 0.73, 15 items). Nineteen of the items of the scale of Machiavellianism (Christie & Geis, 1970) and 6 additional items written for the present study were used (present alpha including the new items = 0.73). This scale measures a cynical and manipulative attitude and has been found to be a negative indicator of EI (Sjöberg, 2001).

Several scales were taken from current research in our unit: a belief that one is needed at the workplace (alpha = 0.84, 4 items), mental energy and work motivation (Sjöberg & Lind, 1994) (alpha = 0.92, 11 items), creativity (alpha = 0.78, 23 items), social indifference (alpha = 0.82, 14 items), aggression (alpha = 0.61, 4 items), emotional inhibition (alpha = 0.65, 4 items), and social isolation (alpha = 0.60, 4 items). A self-esteem scale (alpha = 0.79, 8 items) was included. Two separate scales measured life-work balance: work interfering with leisure/family (alpha = 0.91, 11 items) and leisure/family interfering with work (0.88, 6 items). Psychophobia was measured with 14 items and an alpha of 0.78. Persistence in the face of failure was measured with 24 items and an alpha of 0.86. Job satisfaction was measured with two questions, which were pooled for the analysis. The Crowne-Marlowe scale of social desirability (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960) was also used, 32 items with an alpha of 0.79.

The items were presented in random order. They were judged on a four-point response scale with the items "agree absolutely," "agree to some extent," "disagree to some extent," and "disagree absolutely."

The 10 indices mentioned above were standardized to z-score format and then pooled (averages) after appropriate reversals for each individual to a final

score measuring self-report EI, which had an alpha of 0.87. The intercorrelations of the indices are given in Table 10.1.

Table 10.1. Intercorrelations EI trait scale indices (scales have been reverse-coded such that high scores indicate high levels of measured EI).

	Alexithymia	Social indifference	Fatalism	Self actualization	Machiavellianism	Empathy	Emotion control	Emotional inhibition	Social isolation	
Alexithymia	1.00									
Social indifference	0.71	1.00								
Fatalism	0.58	0.54	1.00							
Self actualization	0.67	0.67	0.39	1.00						
Machiavellianism	0.64	0.65	0.54	0.48	1.00					
Empathy	0.42	0.61	0.26	0.40	0.50	1.00				
Emotion control	0.62	0.70	0.32	0.53	0.42	0.51	1.00			
Emotional inhibition	0.23	0.30	0.10	0.32	0.08	0.33	0.45	1.00		
Social isolation	0.45	0.51	0.19	0.47	0.31	0.22	0.39	0.02	1.00	
Aggression	0.36	0.45	0.39	0.25	0.41	0.25	0.30	0.07	0.12	1.00

There were 10 vignettes describing social problem episodes, each to be judged on 10 emotion scales for each actor, in all 20 judgments for each vignette. They were subjected to consensual scoring, that is, the modal responses in the whole group were first determined and then used to construct the scoring key. A score was then obtained for each respondent and vignette, varying from 0 to 20. The 10 vignettes were then treated as items, and an alpha of 0.96 was obtained. The total score, the average of the 10 vignettes, was used as a performance measure of EI.

Results

Performance and trait EI were correlated, $r = 0.19$, $p = 0.019$. The social desirability scale correlated 0.32 with the EI questionnaire score ($p < 0.0005$), and non-significantly (-0.16) with performance EI. Partialling out social desirability from the relationship between the two EI measures changed little; it was raised to 0.24 ($p < 0.01$). A similar control for relationships to be reported below produced only very marginal changes.

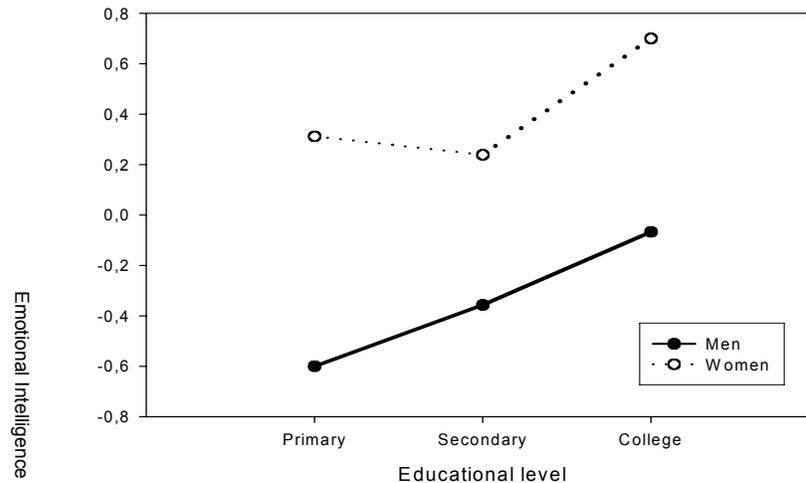


Figure 10.1 Mean EI (trait) in z-score format against educational level, for men and women separately

Women got a higher score than men in EI (questionnaire scale), $t(151) = 4.639$, $p < 0.0005$. The size of the difference in SD units was very large indeed, 0.72. Performance EI showed the same tendency but the difference was somewhat smaller. Educational level, scored in three categories, correlated 0.33 ($p < 0.0005$) and 0.20 ($p = 0.019$) with questionnaire and performance EI respectively. Figure 10.1 is a plot of trait EI (in z-score format) against educational level, for women and men separately. It is seen that the very large gender difference existed at all educational levels. The EI measures, in the same order, also correlated with age: -0.17 ($p = 0.036$) and -0.32 ($p < 0.0005$). Hence, the background data hypotheses were supported.

Personality and Attitudes

These results partly confirm the hypotheses. Life-work balance was clearly related to EI (Table 10.3). On the other hand, neither work motivation, job satisfaction, nor salaries were related to EI at this level.²

2. There were some indications of a positive relationship between EI and work motivation for men, and a negative for women. This finding should be followed up, and may reflect varying priorities of the genders between work and family/leisure.

Table 10.2 Correlations among EI and personality/attitude variables.

	Trait EI	Performance EI
Self esteem	0.392***	0.079
Psychophobia	-0.694***	-0.256**
Persistence	0.207*	0.002
Creativity	0.523***	0.158*

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

The table shows the hypothesized relationships to hold, most clearly for trait EI but with the same tendencies for performance EI.

Table 10.3 Correlations among EI and work related criteria.

	Trait EI	Performance EI
Family/leisure disturbed by work	-0.586***	-0.244**
Work disturbed by family/leisure	-0.319***	-0.072
Work motivation	0.147	-0.156
Job satisfaction 1	-0.092	0.019
Job satisfaction 2	-0.012	-0.047
Salary	0.034	0.123

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001

Since women reported a lower salary than men did and at the same time had a higher EI, an analysis considering gender would be more informative. A scrutiny of the data thus showed that performance EI did have incremental validity with regard to salary. In a regression analysis of salary, this EI measure was entered as an independent variable together with gender and level of education. The amount of explained variance (adjusted) was 0.184, and all three independent variables gave a significant addition to the model (EI weakest), see Table 10.4.

A major interest of the present study was the validity of the measures for the subgroup of respondents who had had a college education, see Figure 10.2. It is seen that the salary increment was about 50% when EI increased from the lowest to the highest 20%.

Table 10.4. Regression analysis with salary as dependent variable Standardized

Effect	Coefficient	t	P(2 Tail)
Constant	0.000	4.784	0.000
Performance EI	0.180	2.092	0.039
Educational Level	0.303	3.521	0.001
Gender	0.323	-3.767	0.000

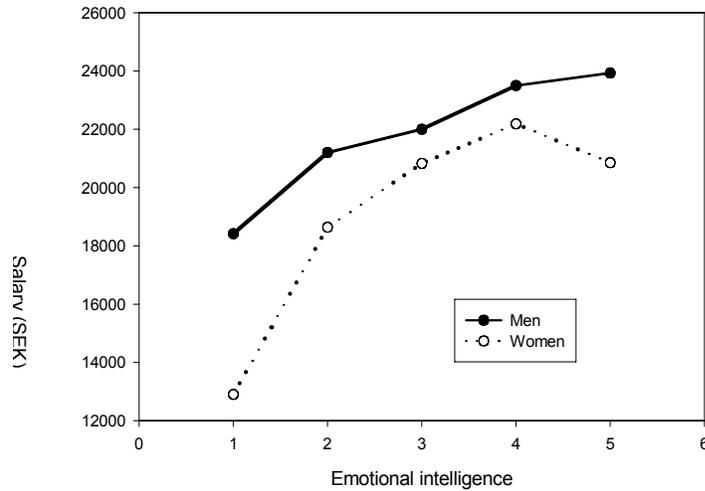
Priority to economic values was measured by a question about the importance of economic aspects for vocational choice. It correlated -0.31 ($p < 0.0005$) with trait EI and -0.08 with performance EI (not significant). A question about perceived economic success also gave a negative correlation with EI: -0.23 ($p = 0.005$) and -0.18 ($p = 0.028$) for questionnaire and performance EI respectively. Hence, there was clear support for the hypothesis that those with a high EI were less likely to see economic values as the most important ones.

Discussion

It was found that the two approaches to measuring EI converged significantly. In addition, they tended to show much the same correlations with other variables. Trait EI was throughout most strongly related to other variables, with the exception of salary level. It should be noted that the two EI measures sample very different types of behavior and are based on very different scoring philosophies. Controlling for social desirability did not produce anything beyond marginal changes of the results. These results agree with other current work, for examples, that by Schutte and colleagues (2007) who found trait measures of EI to be related to health more strongly than to performance measures. Further support for the trait approach is found in Furnham and Petrides's (2003) study on EI and happiness.

The present results support, in most respects, the EI construct, and its frequently postulated relation to successful life adjustment. High EI was associated with a better life-work balance and higher salary (especially for college-educated

Figure 10.2. Mean salary plotted against performance EI in five groups, each including 20% of the sample, for college-educated respondents (men and women) only.



respondents).³ Furthermore, high EI was associated with better handling of failure and frustration, more creativity, less psychophobia, and higher self-esteem.

With regard to demographics, especially women, highly educated people, and young people displayed high EI. EI was not associated with work motivation and job satisfaction, neither with making economics a high priority in life. On the contrary, high EI respondents downplayed economic values. Hence, the high EI people seemed to have skills that help them toward success in various spheres of life, both at work, and in achieving a balance between work and family/leisure. However, they had no one-sided priority of work and hence did not show extreme values of work motivation. It is interesting to note that they still achieved higher salaries on the average. Maybe economic success is not always, or even often, positively related to a one-sided priority given to economic goals and heavy work. It is

³ Some of this effect was due to low EI respondents reporting only part-time work. The sample was too small for a powerful analysis with these subjects deleted, but the tendency was the same. Part-time work can, of course, be a consequence of vocational failure—suggested by the present results—as well as the effect of many other factors.

possible that these dynamics function in different ways for men and women but a larger sample is desirable for investigating these details.

Finally, the very large gender difference in EI, favoring women, found in the present study calls for some comments. The difference agrees well with previous work (Petrides & Furnham, 2000; Engelberg & Sjöberg, 2004a). One cause of such findings could be that women react with stronger emotions than men under similar circumstances (Fujita, Diener, & Sandvik, 1991; Grossman & Wood, 1993; Bradley, Codispoti, Sabatinelli, & Lang, 2001). Engelberg and Sjöberg found that women had both a higher EI than men did, and a higher level of habitual affect intensity (Engelberg & Sjöberg, 2005). It is possible that women are more interested than men are in emotional and relationship problems and issues, and that women share those interests with other women. In this way, they develop skills and knowledge related to emotional life. Whatever the reason for the gender difference in EI, it is a very important factor to consider in many contexts, including the selection of personnel for high-level management jobs, where complaints about lacking emotional and social skills, and consequent failure, of executives are quite common (Levinson, 1980; Greiner, Cummings, & Bhambri, 2003)

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