

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND GENERAL WELL- BEING AMONG MIDDLE AGED PEOPLE

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Abstract

Many studies provide evidence that EI can be understood as ability useful for predicting important outcomes such as mental health and progression. More recently, evidence demonstrates that EI is a significant factor in explaining individual emotional reactions to work contexts like performance and leadership. This has led to some authors proposing a relationship between EI and Well-Being. This paper reports the analysis of data of emotional intelligence and well-being collected from a sample of 110 (55 males and 55 females) middle aged employees. Emotional intelligence was assessed using Emotional intelligence scale developed by Hyde, A, Pethe S, 2002 and general well-being was measured using PGI G WBM developed by Verma and Verma, 1989. Analysis of data showed a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and general well-being. It was also observed that emotional intelligence is a predictor of general well- being. Females showed higher levels of emotional intelligence and general well-being compared to males.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, General well- being, Mental health, Middle aged adults, Individual emotional reactions

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Middle adulthood generally refers to the period between ages 40 to 60 (Erikson, 1959). During this period, middle-aged adults experience a conflict between generativity and stagnation. They may either feel a sense of contributing to society, the next generation or their immediate community or a sense of purposelessness. People in their 50s experience multiple changes and transitions, such as decisions about work and employment, illness and death of older parents, children becoming independent and grandparenthood. Many middle aged people experience powerful and emotional upheavals which may be connected with unresolved difficulties in the past, dissatisfaction with the present, a sense of loss opportunities, a fear of diminished opportunities for the future and growing older in an ageist society.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the area of cognitive ability involving traits and social skills that facilitate interpersonal behavior. Intelligence can be broadly defined as the capacity for goal-oriented adaptive behavior; emotional intelligence focuses on the aspects of intelligence that govern self-knowledge and social adaptation. Daniel Goleman, a psychologist and behavioral science journalist, popularized the term emotional intelligence and developed related concepts in his influential book, *Emotional Intelligence* (1995). In *Working with Emotional Intelligence* (1998), Goleman explored the function of Emotional intelligence on the job. According to Goleman, emotional intelligence is the largest single predictor of success in the workplace. Emotional intelligence is defined as a skill of self-control, zeal and persistence and the ability to motivate oneself (Goleman, 1995).

Goleman and others have developed the concept of a testable Emotional Quotient that focuses more on the individual's capacity to deal effectively with others. It evaluates traits and abilities such as self-awareness and empathy, which are sometimes referred to as soft skills. According to Goleman, the four major skills that make up emotional intelligence are:

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Management
- Social Awareness
- Relationship Management.

Salovey and Mayer (1990) defined emotional intelligence as the: "Ability to monitor one's own and other's feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions." According to Mayer & Salovey (1997), Emotional intelligence is the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth. All these definitions differed in certain ways. Overall, behavior is a combination and interaction of cognition, emotion and conation. Bhattacharya (2003) defined emotional intelligence as an aggregate of individuals' cognition of own and others' emotion, feeling, interpretation and action as per environmental demand to manipulate the consequence which in turn results in superior performance and better human relationships.

Considering the definitions given by (Goleman, 1995; Mayer and Salovey, 1997) emotional intelligence can be interpreted as the combination of 'interpersonal' and 'intrapersonal' intelligence. Bernet (1996) proposed a broader view of emotional intelligence and argued that social intelligence is a subset of emotional intelligence. Two types of emotional intelligence models are Ability model which focuses on the mental abilities to define emotional intelligence and Mixed model which defines emotional intelligence as a mixture of abilities and some personality traits and characteristics.

Research findings show that there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and culture, personality, motivation and recognition of facial emotions. Culture plays an important role because culture and traditions, normative patterns and value-orientations are responsible not only for personality development but also for social and emotional development. Ekman (1972) stated that emotions were expressed in a universally similar manner; however, a large number of studies (Matsumoto, 1990; Mandal, Bryden, Bulman-Fleming, 1996) proved the influence of culture on perception, recognition, appraisal, and expression of emotions.

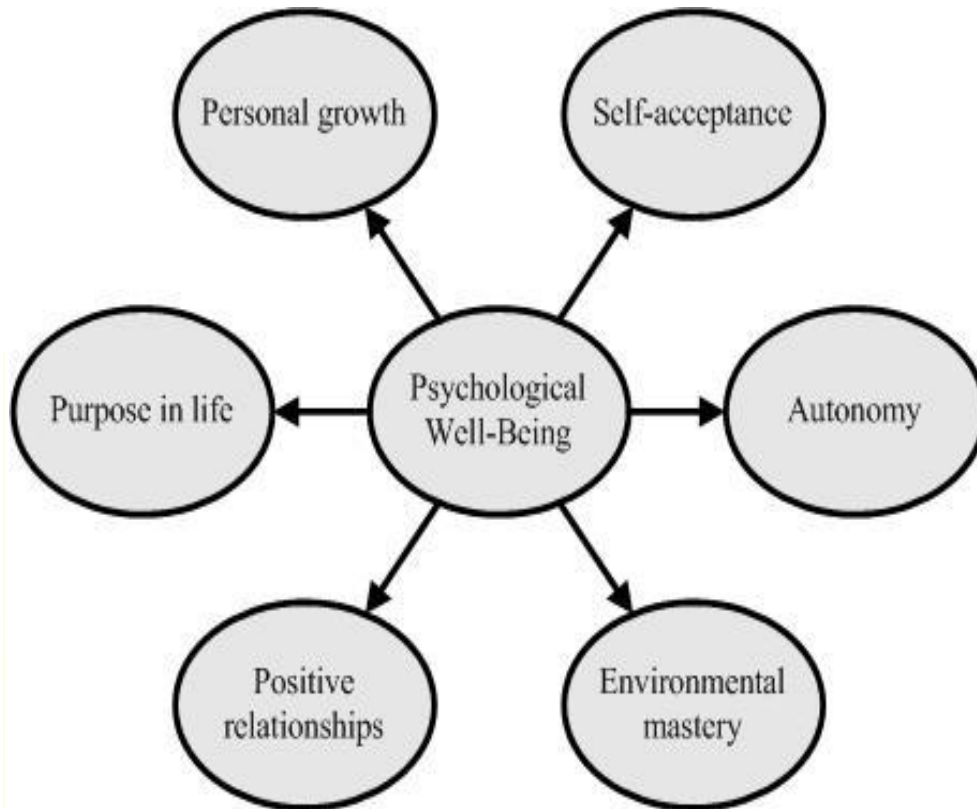
Emotional intelligence has a direct relationship with some personality characteristics like extraversion and openness (Costa, McCrae, 1985). Two personality traits, extraversion and neuroticism were strongly associated with emotional experience and moderate brain reactivity to

positive and negative emotional stimuli (Costa & McCrae, 1985; Canli, Zhao, Kang, & Gross, 2001). A number of researchers documented a close relationship between emotional intelligence and motivation (Ryback, 1998; Weisinger, 1998; Salovey & Mayer,1990; Cooper & Sawaf,1998). Research also revealed that self-regulation factors of emotional intelligence were related to job motivation (Goleman, 1995, 2001; Mayer & Salovey 1990, 1997).

Facial expression contributes to more than 55% in emotional communication (Mehrabian, 1972). Various researchers have also found out significance of facial expressions in the context of emotional communication and resultant interpersonal relationship building process. (Buck ,1981; Ekman, 1984; Izard 1994, Levitt 1964). Goleman (1995) has proposed that empathy is the first sub-component of social cluster of emotional intelligence. Being able to understand and emote with emotional clues is an important requirement in empathy. Empathy requires the skill to recognize emotions and hence the expression of empathy is inevitably culture-specific.

General well-being

Well-being is a positive outcome that is meaningful for people and for many sectors of society, because it tells us that people perceive that their lives are going well. Psychological well-being is conceptualized in terms of satisfaction with life and positive affect balance. PWB stands for psychological well-being, which is a model of well-being widely advocated by a psychology professor, Carol Ryff (1989). She analyzed various approaches to happiness in different sub-fields of psychology and came to the conclusion that well-being should be seen as consisting of six components. These components are: self-acceptance (positive evaluation of oneself and one's life), personal growth, purpose in life, positive relations with others, environmental mastery (the capacity to effectively manage one's life and the surrounding environment) and autonomy and these six components can be accounted for by only two dimensions, one corresponding to hedonic, another to eudaimonic well-being.



Ryff's model of psychological well-being

Highly emotional intelligent individuals are likely to experience higher psychological well-being when compared to individuals with lower emotional intelligence (Gallagher and Vella-Brodrick, 2008, Mikolajcak, Nelis, Hansenne & Quoidbach, 2008). High emotional intelligence may facilitate the way that an individual deals with stressful events, through accurate perception, understanding and regulation of the negative emotions of the self and others, leading to more effective coping. Many studies show that EI is significantly related to performance, progression and leadership. EI is a significant factor in explaining individual emotional reactions to work contexts (e.g. job satisfaction, stress at work etc.) and existence of association between EI and the emerging field of positive psychology and, in particular, the concept of Well-Being.

Higgs, M.J. and Dulewicz, S.V. (2007) studied in-work managers and found significant relationships between emotional intelligence and measures of Well-Being as well as a number of relationships between 'Big 5' personality factors and Well-Being measures. However, Emotional intelligence explained more variance in Well-Being measures than personality factors alone. This

finding provides important evidence to support the validity of the emotional intelligence construct.

Carmeli, A, Yitzhak-Halevy, M, Weisberg, J (2009) studied positive association between emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing components – self-esteem, life satisfaction, and self-acceptance. Only marginal significant support was found for the negative relationship between emotional intelligence and somatic complaints. This study indicates that employees who experience a psychological state of wellbeing may function better than employees who experience emotional deficit. Zeidner, M, Matthews, G, Roberts R.D (2012), review the pivotal role of emotional intelligence in well-being and health and found that EI is predictive of various indicators of well-being as well as physical and psychological health.

Mavroveli, S, Petrides, K.V, Rieffe, C and Bakker F (2007) found that Trait EI is positively associated with adaptive coping styles and negatively associated with depressive thoughts and frequency of somatic complaints. Higher EI has therefore been associated with healthy psychological functioning that includes higher optimism, greater feelings of emotional well-being and low levels of depression (Mikolajczak, Petrides, Coumans & Luminet, 2009; Salovey Mayer, Goldman, Turey & Palfaiet, 1995; Schutte et al., 2002).

In the relationship between EI and health, which includes mental, physical and psychosomatic health, it was found that people with a high EI will be less likely to experience mental health problems (Petrides, Perez-Gonzalez & Furnham, 2007; Schutte et al., 2007). Consequently, it has been theorized that individuals who are able to regulate and understand their emotions have better experience of emotional health (Kafetsios & Zampetakis, 2007; Lyubomirsky, King & Diener, 2005; Mikolajczak et al., 2009).

Research shows that though men and women have similar levels of well-being, this pattern changes with age and has changed over time and younger and older adults tend to have more well-being compared to middle-aged adults (Inglehart, 2002). Contradictory findings regarding gender differences in psychological well-being have been reported (Gray, 1992). There has, however, been no conclusive evidence that has been presented to support the basis to gender

differences in psychological well-being (Mandell &Pherwani, 2003; Mahon, Yarcheski & Yarcheski, 2005; Petrides & Furnham, 2000).

Objectives

To find out if there is an association between emotional intelligence and general well being among middle aged people.

To determine if emotional intelligence is a strong predictor of general well-being among middle aged people.

To understand if there is gender difference on the correlation between emotional intelligence and general well being among middle aged people

To understand gender differences in emotional intelligence and general well being among middle aged people

Hypotheses

Emotional intelligence is positively correlated with general well- being among middle aged people.

Emotional intelligence is a predictor of general well- being among middle aged people.

Correlation between general well- being and emotional intelligence is stronger for males than females.

There are gender differences on emotional intelligence and general well-being among middle aged people.

Methodology

Sample:

110 middle aged employees between the age group of 40 to 55 years were the participants of the study. Data was collected through purposive sampling technique from the state of Kerala, India. The sample included 55 males and 55 females.

Inclusion criteria: Individuals who were graduates, English literate, married with children, working and from middle socio economic status were selected for the study.

Exclusion criteria: Illiterate people and people with psychiatric illness were not included in the study. Unmarried people and people without children are also not included in the study. Employment is an important criterion for the sample selection.

Measures

Emotional intelligence scale (Hyde, A, Pethe S, 2002) was used to measure emotional intelligence. This scale has 5 factors namely self- awareness, empathy, self -motivation, emotional stability, managing relations, integrity, self- development, value orientation, commitment, and altruistic behavior. The split half reliability coefficient was found to be 0.88. the scale has high validity(0.93).

PGI G W B M (Verma, S.K, Verma, A 1989) was used to measure the general well-being. The scale has 20 items giving a overall measure of general well-being. The reliability of the scale is 0.98 and validity is 0.49.

Statistical analysis

The present study uses quantitative methodology to investigate the association between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being. To verify the first three hypotheses Correlation analysis and further linear regression analysis is used. To verify the fourth hypothesis, t test is used.

Results

The main objective of the study was to investigate the association between emotional intelligence and general well-being among middle aged people.

Table 1

Mean and standard deviation

Variable	N	Mean	Standard deviation
General well being	110	12.01	3.41
Emotional intelligence	110	61.70	16.08

Table 2

Results of correlation analysis between emotional intelligence and general well being

Variable	Emotional intelligence	General well being
Emotional intelligence	...	** 0.84

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

The results indicate that there exists a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.84$, $p < 0.01$) between emotional intelligence and general well-being.

Table 3

Results of linear regression analysis for the variables emotional intelligence and general well being

Variable	R	r square	Df	F	p
Emotional Intelligence	0.836	0.699	1 108	250.97	0.001

The model revealed that emotional intelligence accounts for 69 percent of the variance in general well being with a Pearson $r = 0.83$, $F(1, 108) = 250.97$, $p = 0.001$. Significant results on linear

regression analysis indicate that emotional intelligence is a predictor of general well-being. A bivariate correlation and regression analysis was conducted using emotional intelligence as a predictor of general well-being.

Table 4

Mean and standard deviation for males

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Emotional intelligence	54.43	11.61	55
General Well being	10.83	2.99	55

Table 5

Results of correlation analysis between emotional intelligence and general well-being among females

Variable	Emotional intelligence	General well being
Emotional intelligence	...	** 0.82

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Significant positive correlation ($r = 0.82$, $p < 0.01$) between emotional intelligence and general well-being is observed among females.

Table 6

Mean and standard deviation for females

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Emotional intelligence	68.96	16.72	55
General Well being	13.18	3.43	55

Table 7

Results of correlation analysis between emotional intelligence and general well being among males

Variable	Emotional intelligence	General well being
Emotional intelligence	...	**

0.81

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Significant positive correlation ($r = 0.81, p < 0.01$) between emotional intelligence and general well-being is observed among males. Results of correlation analysis reveal that the existing association between emotional intelligence and general well-being does not differ between males and females.

Table 8

Results of t test for gender differences in emotional intelligence and general well being

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	Standard deviation	t value
Emotional intelligence	Male	55	54.44	11.61	5.29 **
	Female	55	68.96	16.72	
General well being	Male	55	10.84	2.99	3.82 **
	Female	55	13.18	3.43	

** Significant at 0.01 level

The results of t test indicate that there is significant difference between males and females on emotional intelligence. Females scored higher on emotional intelligence measure ($M=68.96, SD=16.72$) compared to males ($M=55.44, SD=11.61$) and the t value (5.29) is found to be significant at 0.01 level.

The results of t test indicate that there is significant difference between males and females on well-being. Females scored higher on general well-being ($M=13.18, SD=3.43$) compared to males ($M=10.84, SD=2.99$) and the t value (3.82) is found to be significant at 0.01 level.

Discussion

On the basis of the obtained result, it is observed that there exists a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being which confirms the first hypothesis. This indicates that people with higher level of emotional intelligence experience higher level of general well-being. High emotional intelligence can facilitate the ability of the

individuals to deal with the stressors and thereby enable them to acknowledge and understand feelings in themselves and others and respond appropriately to it. High level of emotional intelligence may awaken intuition and curiosity which in turn assist in anticipating an uncertain future and plan actions accordingly resulting in the experience of positive emotions and facilitates well-being. This finding can further be explained based on the fact that emotional intelligence motivates people to pursue their unique potential and purpose, and activates innermost potential values and aspirations, transforming them from things they think about, to what they do.

The hypothesis that emotional intelligence predicts general well-being of middle aged adults was supported by the present findings. This study reinforces prior evidence linking emotional intelligence with general well-being (Salami O S, 2002, Mavroveli S, K. V. Petrides, Rieffe C, Bakker F, 2007). Individuals with high emotional intelligence may faithfully observe the procession of their thoughts and their impact on emotion whereas individuals with low emotional intelligence may tend to ruminate about the antecedents and consequences of their problems. This in turn leads highly emotionally intelligent individuals to interpret stressful conditions, if unavoidable in a more benign and less stressful way viewing them more as challenges than as threats. Therefore, it can be inferred from the present finding and previous research (Salovey. P., Stroud, L.R., Wollery, A., & Epel, E, S (2002), that emotional intelligence may be a good predictor of general well-being because individual who make sense out of their feelings have also been shown to have greater rebound from induced negative mood and reduced rumination.

The finding that there is no gender difference on the correlation between emotional intelligence and general well-being rejects the third hypothesis. This suggests that for both males and females, emotional intelligence is an important factor for general well-being. They do not necessarily differ in the degree of association. Implied in gender differences are psychological characteristics that include self-esteem, sense of coherence and mastery, particularly in relation to health (Denton et al., 2004) that could be regarded as moderator variables. (Gallagher, E. N. & Vella-Brodrick, D. A, 2008).

The finding of the present study indicates that, females have higher level of emotional intelligence compared to males which confirms the fourth hypothesis proving that there is gender difference in emotional intelligence. This finding can be explained by the fact that women tend to be better at emotional empathy than men, in general. This kind of empathy fosters rapport and chemistry. People who excel in emotional empathy make good counselors, teachers, and group leaders because of this ability to sense in the moment how others are reacting (Goleman, D.2011). Women are more likely to be more expressive than men and have better ability at interpersonal skills. The present finding is in line with the previous studies which states that women recognize other people's emotions better and are more perceptive and have greater empathy. (Argyle, 1990; Hargie, Saunders and Dickson, 1995; Lafferty, 2004; Tapia and Marsh II, 2006; Trobst, Collins and Embree, 1994). Biological basis of this gender differences are explained in numerous studies. Certain area of the brain which processes expression of emotions is larger in women than men (Baron- Cohen 2003, 2005; Gur, Gunning-Dixon, Bilker & Gur, 2002).

The hypothesis that there is gender difference in general well-being is supported by the study. The findings that females have higher level of general well-being could possibly be explained on the basis of their higher score on emotional intelligence. According to Diener (1993), emotions are central to well-being and owing to women's higher score on emotional intelligence, they may be evaluating life in a positive manner and there by experiencing more pleasant emotions. Therefore, the positive effects of higher level of emotional intelligence among women is contingent upon other roles that women hold like work-life balance, motherhood which facilitates psychological well-being. According to work and family facilitation perspective, resources from one role help performing the other role (Barnett & Baruch, 1985; Voydanoff, (2004, 2005). High levels of emotional intelligence also enables healthy interpersonal relationships among women. Although studies on comparative analysis of well-being has found only minimal gender related differences in psychological well-being, we can attribute the obtained gender difference to the fact that women's life conditions are now dramatically different from what they were few decades ago.

Summary and conclusion

On the basis of the findings of the present study, it can be inferred that emotional intelligence play a vital role in the general well-being among middle aged people. A significant positive correlation was found between the study variables, emotional intelligence and general well-being and it can be inferred that emotional intelligence may be used as a predictor for general well-being. The study also found that there are gender differences on emotional intelligence and general well-being. Women are found to have a higher level of emotional intelligence and general well-being compared to men.

Overall, the findings confirm the hypotheses proposed for the study and support previously observed similar findings. The present findings lay the ground work for future studies to investigate the pivotal role of emotional intelligence in mental health and to extend the research in emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is conceptually related to many other psychological constructs such as ego strength, optimism, hardiness, psychological mindedness, and therefore research on the relationship between all of these constructs and emotional intelligence is required to further establish the validity of the findings (Carr, A.2004).

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