

# Exploring the Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Psychological Well Being of Young Adults

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**Abstract:** *Psychological well-being can be defined as one's ability to work actively and build a relationship with other individuals along with the capability to foster and demonstrate positive emotions. Emotional intelligence on the other hand can be defined as a set of personal, emotional and social skills and competencies that contributes to an individual's attitudes, behavior and outcomes. It determines one's capability to cope with demands and pressures of the environment. Theory suggests that individuals with a high level of emotional intelligence are more prone to experiencing psychological wellbeing as compared to the ones with low emotional intelligence. The study aims to examine if there is a direct positive correlation between emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing of young adults.*

**Keywords:** *Emotional Intelligence, Psychological Well-being, Young Adults.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

An extremely critical period of development, young adults are perpetually going through mental, physical and psychological change. They are trying to learn about and adjust to the real world while trying to strive for independence from their parents and carve a space for themselves in social groups (Cripps & Zyromski, 2009) Individuals in the age group of twenty to forty years fall in this stage of human development. As per Erikson's theory of personality, young adults are progressing through the psychological crisis of intimacy versus isolation. Faced with increased responsibility, they are confronted with the task of courting and selecting a "mate", marriage and other choices associated with it for example., career decisions, shift in lifestyle, children, etc (Ramya, 2014). The young adult requires certain abilities of strong decision making, career planning, sense of responsibility and being able to accommodate greater demands of self. This is indicative of a shift from the prior stage of crisis of adolescence through psychosocial development of the young adult. Erikson suggests that accomplishment of tasks is directly related to the healthy development of personality. This suggests that life events that proceed smoothly and as expected, encourages the positive development of young adults whereas, failure in achievement can lead to anxiety and have a detrimental impact on development (studymoderesearch, 1999).<sup>1</sup> Experiencing a sense of achievement and positivity becomes a prerequisite for young adults to continue and move ahead in their lives thus, uplifting their psychological well-being. As per the framework of emotional intelligence, one must be capable of understanding and processing emotions efficiently and accurately, be it positive or negative and should be adept at using one's emotion to tackle obstacles, make plans and accomplish what is desired. Hence, positive emotions and psychological well-being are in many important ways related to aspects of emotional intelligence (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

## 2. What is the meaning of emotions?

Emotions can be viewed as organized responses to an event, either external or internal that could either be perceived as positive or negative by an individual. Emotions need to be clearly distinguished from the closely related concept of mood as it more intense and shorter as compared to emotions (Salovey, Mayer, & Mayer, 2004). Emotion can be defined as any thought, feeling, biological or psychological state unique to it and a part of personal tendency to act accordingly. Emotion in the literal sense means "movere" which translates as "to move", thus indicating that in any emotion there is a tendency to do. In cases where our emotions results into actions more often than not happen when watching children or animals and it is only in the case of civilized adults we see the opposite, because in the latter, emotions that are fundamental impulses for doing have been separated from evident responses (Goleman, 1996).

## 3. What do we exactly mean by intelligence?

While intelligence continues to remain a highly discussed subject in the field of psychology, there is a lack of a standard definition of what exactly constitutes intelligence. Some researchers define it as a single, general ability while others suggest that it comprises of a range of skills, talents and aptitudes (Cherry, 2019). Intelligence can also be used as a term to loosely define an individual's preference, aptitude, skills, and traits, learning abilities, style of learning,

capabilities and competencies. Perhaps the most frequently cited definition is Wechsler's statement that "intelligence is the individual's aggregate or global ability to act purposefully, think rationally, and deal with his environment effectively" (Ramya, 2014)

#### **4. Defining Emotional Intelligence:**

Emotional Intelligence can be defined as the capacity to reason about emotions, and of these emotions to enhance one's thinking. It is the ability to perceive emotions accurately, to generate and access emotions that can assist the thought process, to comprehend emotions and emotional knowledge, and to regulate emotions reflectively so as to promote intellectual and emotional growth (Mayer, 2004).

It can also be referred to as one's ability to recognize the meaning of emotions and their relationship, and based on this, to reason and solve problems. It is through emotional intelligence that one can perceive emotions, comprehend feeling related to emotions, understand the information of those emotions and manage them accordingly (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999).

#### **5. The Four Branch Model of Emotional Intelligence:**

The four-branch model of emotional intelligence describes the four areas of capacities and skills that collectively define the many areas of emotional intelligence (Mayer & Salovey, What is emotional intelligence? Emotional Development and Emotional Intelligence, 1997). To be more specific, the four-branch model defines emotional intelligence as the ability of an individual to do the following:

- Accurately perceiving emotion: The most basic area involves the ability to receive and express emotions nonverbally. Emotional expressions like laughter, happiness, sadness, fear and anger can be put another this category. It is also the capacity to perceive emotions in the face and voice of other individuals accurately (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2016).
- Facilitation of thought through emotions: This can be categorized as the capacity of emotions to control and guide the cognitive system and promote thinking. Therefore, it is important to have a good system of emotional input that directly impacts thinking especially in the case of important matters (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2016)
- Understanding emotions: It is our emotions that convey information. Fear indicates an urge to escape, anger makes one want to harm and attack others, happiness usually makes us want to join and enjoy with other people, and so forth. Thus, one of the most important skills is the ability to comprehend emotional messages and the actions associated with them (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2016).
- Managing Emotions: It is important to understand that emotions convey information and that it can be managed. When one's emotion is under voluntary control, one remains open to emotional signals if it is not too stressful, painful or overwhelming. The ability to manage and regulate one's and other's emotions to further one's own and others social and personal goals is an important aspect of this area of skill (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2016)

#### **6. Mental Ability Models of Emotional Intelligence:**

A model of mental ability of emotional intelligence is a set of abilities that accounts for how the emotional reports of people vary in their accuracy and how a more accurate understanding of emotion leads to a better problem solving in the emotional life of an individual. This model describes several discrete emotional capabilities divided into four hierarchical classes or branches (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2016). The theory of the four branches begins with basic skills involving perception and evaluation of emotions. The second branch involves integrating emotion into cognition, evaluating and comparing various emotions to sensations and thoughts, and directing attention to trusting emotions. The third branch involves enough understanding of emotions to recognize their effects and use the ability of reasoning to restore emotional balance. The fourth branch requires the high levels of management skills along with the ability to regulate emotions in self and others. This model of emotional intelligence claims that emotional intelligence is a subset of social intelligence, which itself is a subgroup of general intelligence. If emotional intelligence is to be considered as intelligence, it needs to meet the following criteria of intelligence: it must meet intelligence criteria's like mental problems must be either wrong or right, the set of mental abilities must be measurable and inter-correlated, with age, the skills should increase (Ramya, 2014)

#### **7. On Mixed Models of Emotional Intelligence:**

Collaboration, teamwork, initiative, motivation, dedication, achievement, service collaboration, etc are important traits of one's personality. But the important question here is if these traits are in any way related to emotions, intelligence or their combination. The models that associate the qualities of emotional intelligence with other traits of

the personality that have nothing to do with emotions or intelligence are often specified as the mixed models of emotional intelligence. This term for this model has been coined keeping in mind that it mixes together the important ideas of emotional intelligence with a variety of other personality traits (Mayer J. , 2004)

### 8. Who among is Emotionally Intelligent?

Emotional Intelligence leads to the improvement of an individual's social effectiveness. The increase in emotional intelligence directly leads to better social relations. An individual with high emotional intelligence can grasp and perceive emotions better in comparison to others and are less likely to engage in problematic behavior and situations thus, refraining from destructive habits and behavioral patterns like the use of violence and abuse with others, excessive drinking, smoking, drug abuse, etc. Individuals with high emotional intelligence are likely to have possessions of sentimental attachment towards home, positive social relations and interactions with others, particularly if one also has the skill regulating and managing one's emotions. They may also be more adept at describing and motivational aims, goals and missions (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, Emotional Intelligence. Theory, Findings and Implications , 2004)

It is important to note that the particular kind of push that emotional intelligence can give to an individual will can be subtle and it needs effort to be identified easily. It will not be apparent in all social situations (Mayer J. , 2004)

### 9. Psychological Well-Being:

One of the most cherished goals of humanity can be said to be psychological well-being. This includes physical and mental wellness. It is a somewhat flexible concept that has to do with everyday life activities and feelings of individuals. These feelings could range from being negative and being strain full like anxiety, depression, anger, emotional exhaustion, frustration, etc., to a state which can be identified as positive mental health (Shah, Punia, & Poonam, 2014)

It can also be defined as the state that develops from the feeling of satisfaction with one's personal, financial and professional situation. It is a multidimensional construct that is inclusive of both cognitive and emotional elements. Bradburn (1969) considered wellbeing in terms of positive affect as opposed to seeing it in terms of negative affect. The experience of subjective well-being includes the experience of positive affect along with the cognitive element of satisfaction with life minus the absence of negative affect. It can be described as living life well as per the definition of Hupper et al. (Ramya, 2014)

As per Professor Carol Ryff's model (1989), psychological well-being is multidimensional and is not restricted to merely happiness and positive emotions. A good life is one which is balanced and wholesome, engaging in different aspects of well-being (Henn, Hill, & Jorgensen, 2016)

The six categories of well-being defined by Ryff are as follows:

**Self-Acceptance:** One can possess a high or low level of self-acceptance. When an individual possesses a positive attitude towards themselves and is accepting of their good and bad qualities are said to have a high level of self-acceptance. Whereas, when one is dissatisfied with themselves and often remain critical and unhappy about their personal qualities and past choices, wishing to be a different person are said to have low level of self-acceptance (Ryff & Singer, 1998)

**Personal Growth:** When an individual feels a sense of continued development, continuously growing and expanding, realizing their potential and keep themselves open to new experiences are said to be experiencing strong personal growth. On the other hand, one experiences weak personal growth when they continuously sense stagnation in their lives and a lack of improvement and achievement leading to feelings of boredom and disinterest in life (Ryff & Singer, 1998)

**Purpose in Life:** Individuals having goals and a sense of direction in life and have aims and objectives for living are said to have a strong purpose in life. When one lacks a sense of meaning in life and has few goals and ambition, can be said to have a weak purpose in life (Ryff & Singer, 1998)

**Positive Relations with others:** Individuals who have warm, trusting relationships with others, are concerned about their welfare and are capable of feeling affection, empathy, sympathy, etc will have strong personal and social relations. On the other hand, someone who is incapable of trusting, forming and maintaining relationships and tend to remain isolated have weak relations. They are barely concerned about others and more often than not remain frustrated in their existing relationships (Ryff & Singer, 1998)

**Environmental Mastery:** Individuals with the ability to highly master their environment can control the array of external activities around them and can make effective use of the opportunities presented to them thus, creating and

choosing contexts that suit their personal values and needs. The one's with low environmental mastery have difficulty managing their everyday affairs and lack a sense of control of their external world. They are unable to sense change or improvement in their lives (Henn, Hill, & Jorgensen, 2016)

**Autonomy:** People with high autonomy are independent and self-determining. They are capable of regulating emotions and the resulting behavior from within. When one is concerned about the expectations of others, they are unable to think and make decisions for themselves. They conform to social pressures while relying on external judgements to make decisions (Henn, Hill, & Jorgensen, 2016)

### **Emotional Intelligence and Psychological Well-Being**

There is the expectation that emotionally intelligent individuals should be able to identify and attend to fluctuations of emotion in themselves and others, be better informed about emotional states of their own and others and engage in emotional self-regulation more frequently. The relationship between these two interesting variables can be more complex than a simple linear relationship. Diener and colleagues claim in the review of psychological well-being research that "personality is one of the strongest and most consistent predictors of subjective well-being" "personality is one of the strongest and most consistent predictors of subjective well-being" (Karim, 2009). There are several reasons in this nexus why psychological distress can be influenced by Emotional Intelligence. Research suggests that emotional intelligence skills and characteristics contribute to good physical and psychological health. People who are emotionally intelligent have good physical and psychological health as they are better able to cope with the challenges of life and are better able to control their emotions (Ramya, 2014).

### **10. Analyzing the connection between Emotional Intelligence and Psychological Well-Being of Young Adults”**

The two very interesting concept of emotional intelligence and psychological well-being are very interesting areas of study. Many a time, it has been noticed that those who experience a good psychological wellbeing have very strong emotional control (i.e. high emotional intelligence). There have been studies conducted on adolescents but nothing much to do with young adults. They undergo a great pressure in this particular age (20-40), like settling in job, marriage, family and many other responsibilities which requires for one to have emotional intelligence in order to deal with and maintain psychological wellbeing. Hence, it is very important to study the population of young adults and to understand how the lack of emotional intelligence could affect a person's psychological well-being and vice-versa. This is especially necessary to be studied in the context of India as the studies in this topic are few (Ramya, 2014)

In a research conducted by Cazan and Nastasa (2014) to study the relation between emotional intelligence and satisfaction with life among young adults in universities, the analysis showed that emotional intelligence was largely and significantly related to their level of happiness and satisfaction with life. Students displaying high level of understanding and ability to receive and express emotions reported greater satisfaction with life. The study concluded that the lack of emotional intelligence was directly related to burnout and feelings of frustration. For these young adults, negative emotions were a dominant factor in their lives, and they lacked a sense of purpose in life thus, experiencing reduced personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion along with low levels of self-efficacy (Maslach, Leiter, & Schaufeli, 2008). The study with young adults in Chinese Universities showed that emotional intelligence is related to success and adjustment in academic settings. It showed that the higher the level of emotional intelligence, lower is the level of negative emotions like anxiety, stress, burnout and eventually resulted in psychological well-being and greater satisfaction with life. This report was not just applicable for students but also for young adults in professional spaces. Such burnout in young adults can be described as mental, physical and emotional exhaustion that is a result of long-term involvement in emotionally demanding situations. Such burnout could directly result in lower motivation, frustration, cynicism having a negative impact on one's level of achievement and accomplishments. On the other hand, individuals who are capable of feeling and expressing themselves better were found to be more satisfied with their lives. Satisfaction with life ensures that people feel better and express positive effects. Satisfaction with life is a cognitive component of well-being, according to Pavot and Diener (Cazan & Nastasa, 2014)

As per a study conducted by Trude Burger (2009) to understand psychological well-being and emotional intelligence in teachers, training on emotional intelligence was given to the teachers and a baseline survey was conducted in two intervals before the commencement of the training programme. The participants were also immediately assessed post training. Though the findings of the study reflected limited effectiveness of the training on Emotional Intelligence, in increasing emotional intelligence and decreasing occupational stress. Nevertheless, there was an evident improvement in physical and psychological health and significant decrease in conflict in personal and professional life.

Another study conducted by Samuel o. Salami (2010) which examined the contribution of emotional intelligence, self-efficacy and psychological well-being to the behavior and attitudes of students in a University in Kwara State, Nigeria. The respondents who fall in the category of young adults, responded to a set of questionnaires that aimed to measure Emotional intelligence, psychological well-being (happiness, motivation, sense of purpose, satisfaction, etc.) and self-efficacy and student's behavior and attitudes. The analysis reflected that happiness, life satisfaction, self-

efficacy, emotional intelligence all predicted the behavior and attitudes of students. The results of this study highlighted the need to emphasize on positive psychology in order to improve the positive elements in students proactively rather than trying to solve again and again the problems that emerge in order to improve the quality of higher education.

In her paper Strength and Vulnerability Integration: A Model of Emotional Well-Being across Adulthood, Susan Turk Charles (2010) uses the model of strength and vulnerability integration to study and explain the factors that have an influence on the emotional well-being and emotional regulation across adulthood. This model argues that adult development trajectories are marked by enhancements related to age in the use of strategies that serve to limit or avoid as a whole the exposure to negative stimuli but by age-related vulnerabilities in situations that generate high levels of sustained emotional excitement. When older adults refrain from or limit their exposure to emotional strains, their response is better than that of younger adults however, when they experience high levels of emotional excitement, the advantages of not having age on their side restricts their ability to gain emotional well-being and older adults face greater difficulties in returning to homeostasis. This model can be used to understand the trajectory of emotional experience and well-being across the life span of an adult (Charles, 2016).

Another study conducted by Ramya S (2014), with the aim to ascertain if there is a relationship between psychological wellbeing and emotional intelligence in young adults in the age group of 20-40. This study was undertaken using the tools of Mangal's Emotional Intelligence Inventory – to examine the level of emotional intelligence in young adults and the Ryff psychological wellbeing scale- to understand psychological wellbeing in subjects of study. The relations between the two was eventually examined using the Pearson's product moment correlation. The study highlighted that there was a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing among young adults which meant that high levels of emotional intelligence was directly related to high levels of psychological being in this age group. The findings of this study are supported by several other studies like that of Abraham Carmeli, et al. (2009), Augusto Landa et. Al, (2010), etc. Emotionally intelligent young adults were found to be able to better cope with the frustrations and problems of life and could manage their emotions more effectively. When it comes to gender, it was found that there was no significant difference between the correlation of Emotional Intelligence and Psychological Well Being in men and women (Ramya, 2014).

## 11. CONCLUSION:

This study was conducted to ascertain if there was a relation between emotional intelligence and the psychological and subjective wellbeing of young adults. It can be concluded from the findings that there is a significant relationship between the level of emotional intelligence and the capacity of a young adult to positively deal with the challenges thrown by life in this especially testing phase of adulthood. Several studies conclude that higher the level of emotional intelligence, better the ability to stay happy, motivated, have a sense of purpose in life, etc., directly impacting the capability to accomplish and achieve. Higher levels of Emotional Intelligence also suggested that individuals are more capable of managing and sustaining relationships and being able to care and empathize for anyone other than themselves whereas, young adults with low levels of emotional intelligence were found to be incapable of building or preserving relationships or having a sense of care and understanding towards others. Gender of the individual did not influence the correlation between the two variables and psychological wellbeing was rather seen as one's way of perceiving and feeling life which had nothing to do with gender. Fredrickson's (2000) in this study suggested many strategies for intervention that could help in preventing and treating health problems related to psychological wellbeing. He suggested that relaxation therapies like muscle relaxing exercises, meditation, decreasing the intensity of unpleasant events and increasing the rate of engagement in positive activities, building empathy between people, etc., could help people in building resilience and personal strength to deal with the frustrations and challenges of life. At the same time, it was also suggested that giving feedback to people regarding their levels of Emotional Intelligence thus, helping them become aware of their own resources could help in lowering psychological distress (Karim, 2009)

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