

Emotional Intelligence, Its Relation with Social Interaction and Perceived Social Support

Albulena Metaj - Macula

University of Prishtina,
Faculty of Education, Prishtine

Abstract

The study aims to present the Emotional Intelligence construct, and to determine the extent to which Emotional Intelligence influences social interaction and perceived social support. The study reveals important dimensions within the EI construct and emphasizes the relationships between these dimensions and predictive value for social interaction and perceived social support. Studies in the field of Emotional Intelligence indicate that this new construct of Intelligence, (EI), operates within the social context, therefore, the examination of socially relevant variables is perceived to be crucial for the results of the study. It has been hypothesized that there is a positive relation between Emotional Intelligence, its dimensions and social interaction and perceived social support. Data were gathered through using a structured questionnaire of Emotional Intelligence (Schutte, N. S., Malouff, J. M., Hall, L. E., Haggerty, D. J., Cooper, J. T., Golden, C. J., & Dornheim, L. 1998), Interpersonal Communication Inventory, Millard J. Bienvenu, Sr, 1971) for measuring aspects of social interaction, and Multidimensional Scale on Perceived Social Support, (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet & Farelly, 1998). Correlation analysis was used to test the hypothesis of the study. Preliminary results appear to present interesting data and to offer an initial platform for interaction on the importance and relevance of the study and its related variables.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Social Interaction (interpersonal communication), Perceived social support, Expressing and appreciating emotions, Regulating and using emotions.

Introduction

Emotional intelligence and studies in this field refer to a relatively new concept and a viewpoint / tendency to understand the concept of intelligence from a wider perspective, by emphasizing the emotional aspect as the complementary dimension of the intelligence construct. Emotions are inseparable part and present in our daily life, they seem to be related to our spiritual state and consequently affect how we channel our social interactions, our thoughts and behaviors; in particular how we establish our interpersonal relations with others, and how we manage social dynamics in everyday life. The first researcher to introduce the concept of Emotional Intelligence and enhance the importance of the study in this field as a field of interest was Daniel Goleman, who linked the construct of Emotional Intelligence to the concept of traditional Intelligence (IQ), with an emphasis on intelligence referring much more to human relations, or many often by referring to the competencies and social skills through which we manage ourselves and human interactions. (Goleman, D. 2005). Goleman expanded the concept of Emotional Intelligence and the work of Howard Gardner (1983) on Multiple Intelligences, pointing out that traditional education, which was mainly focused on developing linguistic and logical / mathematical fields, excludes other relevant areas in which people can expose specific skills and abilities in this regard (or in regard of the conceptualization of Intelligence.). In this regard, Goleman focused mainly on the intrapersonal and interpersonal sphere in order to highlight the importance and capacity that these domains can have in the lives of humans' and interactions with others.

When mentioning this kind of Intelligence, Emotional intelligence, one should consider that as such, this cannot exist outside of the social context in which it functions. Studies have shown that interest of research in this field, greatly implies mental and social processes as well. Feelings are inseparable part from intellectual processes and their relevance is distinguished first of all by the influence of feelings on intellectual processes and vice versa; the influence of intellectual processes on the content, expression, and the way of experiencing feelings. At the beginning of the development of

empirical psychology, feelings were attributed to a special positive role in the cognitive processes of reality, moreover there were beliefs that many often feelings were

attributed the same role in recognizing the reality and its forms as well as the intellectual processes (Nushi, P. 2002).

It is also believed that there is a great impact of the cultural context in general when we talk about the relation between our thinking and emotions. This is of particular importance for the study and treatment of this field in the Kosovo context. In the literature, it is emphasized that there are general cultural influences that serve as a context for our perspectives on the relationship between thinking and emotions. For example, in such viewpoint, is mentioned the idea of the Stoics in ancient Greece, which according to them, the reason was superior to emotion, then the idea of the European sentimental movement, according to which there is an innate and pure emotional knowledge, as well as the Romantic movement that reveals the perfect balance between feelings and thinking (Matthews, G., Zeidner, M. & Roberts, R. 2004).

It is known that there's nothing more important for our mental life rather than the quality and significance of emotions for our existence. This is also demonstrated by the fact that many of the great classical philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Spinoza, Descartes, Hobbs, and others have established well-known theories on emotions, conceived as a reaction to some kind of event of importance to the individual that stimulate bodily changes, and typically stimulate characteristics of thoughts and behaviors. (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy).

Considering all this relevant information, this study aims to highlight the role and significance of the emotional intelligence construct and its dimensions, and to evidence how this construct correlates with other important factors in human life, including social and psychological dimensions, more specifically, it seeks to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence (including its dimensions) and social interaction and perceived social support.

EI, social interaction and perceived social support

The most prominent researcher in the field of Emotional Intelligence, Mayer and Salovey, developed the concept of Emotional Intelligence to explain and highlight the importance of emotions in every sphere of our lives. Emotions have a significant impact on our aspirations, attitudes and behaviors. The first emotional attachment is thought to occur at moments when the

mother / caregiver provide the child's primary needs. In this regard, the quality and growth of child interactions with the surrounding environment and the members of this environment (parents, peers, teachers, etc.) can further influence the development and / or weakening of emotional intelligence. (Houtmeyers, 2004; Shapiro, 2000; Sullivan, 1999).

Studies indicate that being intelligent is not the only indicator of success and happiness in life. There are also other emotional and social skills that help us achieve emotional and mental consistence, pleasure in our social interactions, and knowledge and adaption to the environment. What is important to mention is the fact that these skills, which are so important to our daily lives, can be taught and developed further during our lifespan. In this context, I believe that the awareness for the importance of emotions and emotional education represents a very important aspect in many different spheres of life, including social interaction and social support.

The ability to emphasize emotion through interaction and for productive and effective communication with others seems to be an essential requirement for human / human relationships, while non verbal communication may also reveal an entire life of emotions. (Freshwater & Stickley 2004). Emotional intelligence plays an important role in perceiving the moral dimension and sensitivity toward social interaction practices. Interpersonal communication is seen as an essential element of social interaction; it is the way in which the individual realizes oneself. Emotional intelligence includes personal and social competences, where self - management, accountability and commitment experiences are ways of being in this world (in a way, we realize a part of ourselves and professional background) by featuring these competencies through interaction and communication with others.

In general, the concept of human relations (social interaction) is defined as the capacity of individuals to interact with others. This concept examines social dynamics at individual and group level and the relationship between them throughout interaction. The relationship of these variables and emotional intelligence has attracted a great deal of attention in the field of Emotional Intelligence and interpersonal relationships in general. This approach affirms the fact that the absence or presence of these influences has a positive or negative impact on the interaction sphere, more specifically in the field of communication and the quality of social interaction in general. The aspect of social interaction in

this study is measured through a very important dimension of this interaction, Interpersonal Communication, which is one of the many

important dimensions that determine the quality of interpersonal relationships. As Fischer and Van Kleef (2010) have pointed out, the social context and social interaction are closely related to emotions.

Few studies in this area (Brackett, Mayer, & 2004, Ciarrochi, Chan & Bajgar, 2001; Schutte, 2012) show that emotional intelligence development can be better understood in social contexts. This is the way in which we can better understand how emotional intelligence of the adolescents also affects social relationships. It is worth pointing out the impact of this construct and the value foretold even in perceived social support. Perceived social support refers to the perceived feeling and the actuality that the person feels caring and loving, the support available to others and feels to be part of social support groups. These supportive resources can be emotional, tangible (concrete), informative, social, and intangible. Social support can be measured by the perceptions that individuals have about the assistance / support offered, the actual assistance they receive, or the degree / level at which the person is integrated into the social networks. Findings of various researches in this area have shown that emotional skills are very important for social and emotional adaptation. (Salovey, Mayer, & Caruso, 2002).

Hypothesis of the study:

H1: Emotional Intelligence and its dimensions have positive relations with social interaction (models of interpersonal communication).

H2: Emotional Intelligence and its dimensions have positive relations with perceived social support.

Methodology:

Design: The design of the study corresponds with the non – experimental, correlation study design, aiming at revealing the relationships between Emotional Intelligence and its dimension, Social Interaction (measured through a interpersonal communication dimension) and Perceived Social Support.

Sample: The sample of this study, consisted of 525 students of the University of Prishtina, department of Psychology and Department of Education (Pre –school), from the cohort age: 18 – 26+. The selection has been assigned with randomly assigned groups and it reflected on rural and urban areas. Demographic data are seen as an added value for analyzing the context of several variables of the study and including them into the post hoc analysis of the whole study.

Measurements: The study is based on the ability and competency based model of the Emotional Intelligence construct, using an Emotional Intelligence Scale (Schutte, N. S., Malouff, J. M., Hall, L. E., Haggerty, D. J., Cooper, J. T., Golden, C. J., & Dornheim, L. (1998) and two other instruments: Interpersonal Communication Inventory, Millard J. Bienvun, Sr, 1971) and the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet & Farely, 1998) were administered to gather data in order to test the hypothesis. Initially, a procedure of testing the reliability and validity of the questionnaire took place, in order to ensure that the questionnaires are valid for the context of the study.

Procedure: Initially, a pilot study has been undertaken (in a sample of 70 respondents) to test the reliability and validity issues. Before this, a factor analysis of the used instruments was undertaken in order to test the homogeneity of the items within the scale. After the Cronbach's alpha test, the results supported the reliability and suitable aspects for the usage of instruments in the Kosovo's context for academic purposes. Before the administration of the final instruments, the aims of the study have been declared and the consent from the Universities actors and students were advised appropriately to continue further with the administration of the instruments.

Results

Correlation between Emotional Intelligence, Interpersonal Communication and Perceived Social Support

Correlations

		Int.Comm	Total_EI	MSPSS
Interpersonal Communication	Pearson Correlation	1	.008	-.036
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.855	.418
	N	518	482	516
Total_EI	Pearson Correlation	.008	1	.314**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.855		.000
	N	482	489	487
MSPSS	Pearson Correlation	-.036	.314**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.418	.000	
	N	516	487	523

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Coorelation between dimensions of Emotional Intelligence and Interpersonal Communication Correlations

		Int.Co mmuni c.	VEI	RRE I	PEI
Interpersoanl Communicatio n	Pearson Correlation	1	0.017	0.058	0.024
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.703	0.2	0.587
	eN	518	517	485	516
Assessing and expressing emotions	Pearson Correlation	-0.017	.762**	.694**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.703		0	0
	N	517	524	491	522
Regulating Emotions	Pearson Correlation	0.058	.762**	.764**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.2	0	0	
	N	485	491	492	490
Using emotions to	Pearson Correlation	-0.024	.694**	.764**	1

solve problems	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.587	0	0	
	N	516	522	490	523

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2- tailed).

Correlations between dimensions of Emotional Intelligence and Perceived social support

Correlations

		PSP	AEM	RE	UE
Perceived Social support	Pearson Correlation	1	.369**	.268**	.198**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
Assessing and expressing emotions	Pearson Correlation	.369**	1	.762**	.694**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
Regulating Emotions	Pearson Correlation	.268**	.762**	1	.764**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
Using emotions to solve problems	Pearson Correlation	.198**	.694**	.764**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	523	522	490	521
	N	522	524	491	522
	N	490	491	492	490
	N	521	522	490	523

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Conclusion

Emotional Intelligence construct is perceived as ones ability / skill to accurately perceive emotions, to assess, understand, manage, use emotions to facilitate thoughts and effectively solve problem situations, in order to promote intellectual and emotional growth. (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Interpersonal relations are considered to be complex phenomenon as well, consisting of a lot of emotional overtones and aspects of social support in individuals lifespan. Analysis of findings indicates that there is a strong positive correlation between Emotional Intelligence construct, its dimensions and Perceived Social Support, and a relatively low correlation among Emotional Intelligence construct, its dimensions and Interpersonal Communication. This approach supports the predictive validity from the empirical studies that the emotional intelligence competencies and skills, and its dimensions, may predict the quality of interpersonal relationships, more concretely the level of participants' social support in different contexts and relationships dimensions / modalities (friends, families and significant persons in our lives). Despite the fact that majority of the dimensions of Emotional Intelligence indicate positive correlations with the perceived social support variable, the dimension of appreciation and expression of emotions from the Emotional Intelligence construct, appear to mostly influence perceived social support variable, meaning that the greater the capability to assess and express emotions, the higher appreciation of social support is perceived among respondents. Since the Interpersonal Communication Inventory is used to measure a dimension of a social interaction variable, and considering the complexity of the social interaction aspect, a relatively low correlation between Emotional Intelligence, and its dimensions (sometimes negative correlation) may indicate that the higher the capability to let emotions interfere with expression and communication, the lower the capability to assess and express emotions, manage and regulate them (use them to solve problems). Data from this field of the study, indicate that individuals who are more emptied to percept and understand the emotional information in the daily interaction, have tendencies to report more satisfied interactions among people and have tendencies to perceive greater social support as well. In general, this viewpoint apperas to be an added value toward an undstanding of the ipmortnace of emotional intelligenece construct and its dimensions, as relevant to the emotional wellbeing, to acknowledge emotions, to express

and manage properly, and to be aware how all these variables impact our social interaction (quality of intrapersonal communication) and social support. (Salovey, Mayer, & Caruso, 2002)

Results of the study indicate that individuals, who possess Emotional Intelligence skills at higher levels, have more tendencies to report greater social support, whether from family, friends or other persons of particular importance in their life. In this context, recognition, appraisal, evaluation, regulation / management of emotions and use of emotions, are considered as basic skills and competencies to ensure the quality of interpersonal relationships, successful communication, coping with social dynamics, etc.

Whilst, in terms of analyzing the correlations between the dimensions of emotional intelligence and dimensions of perceived social support, it is indicated also that in principle, all the dimensions of Emotional Intelligence construct (Assessing and expressing emotions, Regulating Emotions, Using emotions to solve problems) correlate positively (sometimes with strong positive correlations) with the dimensions of Perceived Social Support, meanwhile the dimension of the participants perceived support from family, appears to be the most highly correlated dimension with the appreciation and expression of emotions dimension from the Emotional Intelligence construct, without excluding the relations of other relevant variables that seem to correlate pretty well (positively) with each others.

Relevant studies have been conducted as well in this field, aiming at examining the relation, linkage and significance of the separate components of IE in relation to other factors. In a study aimed at examining the linkage between IE components and aspects of pro social behavior, Lopes et al. (2003) found that high scores in the emotion management component were positively correlated with the quality of interactions on the level of friendship. Thus, the results of other studies in this area have shown that Emotional Intelligence (emotion management dimension), measured through the Mayer, Salovey and Caruso instruments, has predicted important aspects of social sensitivity and the quality of interactions. (Cote, Lopes, Salovey, & Beers, in press: Predictions to pro social and other positive behaviors). In summary, it is noticed that the studies that examined the relation between Emotional Intelligence and social interaction have resulted with a very important and promising findings, which seem to be very supportive and added value for the studies in the Kosovar context as well. While, on the other hand, the need for further study, to understand how we can teach / educate individuals to be intelligent in emotional terms, and how to be productive members of society, remains a challenge and need for the future studies in this field. (Roberts et al., 2007).

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