

## TRAIT EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND SATISFACTION WITH LIFE IN MEDICAL STUDENTS

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### **ABSTRACT**

**Objective:** Present study aims to investigate predictive association of trait emotional intelligence and satisfaction with life of medical students.

**Design:** Correlational study

**Place and duration of the study:** The study was conducted from January 2016-June 2016 in Karachi, Pakistan.

**Subjects and Method:** total sample comprised of 199 students with male (41%) and female (59%) of ages between 19 to 30 years ( $M= 23.2$ ,  $SD = 2.04$ ) recruited from different medical colleges and universities of Karachi. Following measures (i.e., Personal Information Form, Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire-Short Form; TEIQue-SF, & Satisfaction with Life Scale; SWLS) were administrated. Descriptive statistic was used to elucidate the characteristics of sample and linear regression was applied to investigate the predictive association of TEI and SWL in students of medical institutions.

**Results and Conclusion:** Findings indicated that TEI contributed to 4.3% variance in satisfaction with life variable. The results demonstrate that trait emotional intelligence significantly predicts satisfaction with life. Findings could help the educationist and decision makers to plan interventions for medical students to improve satisfaction with life and wellbeing in future.

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**Keywords:** Emotional Intelligence; Life Satisfaction; Medical Students

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## INTRODUCTION

Medical profession is considered as a highly respected profession and most students want to adopt this profession as their carrier. This profession demands a lot from individuals in cognitive, emotional and social domains; individuals with good intrapersonal and interpersonal resources can better handle the stressful circumstances, on the other side if they are less resourceful in both intrapersonal and interpersonal domain then are prone to social and emotional difficulties. In their research Elam, Strattons, and Andrykowski (2001) found that EI has pivotal role in the mental wellbeing.

There are numerous factors involved in an individual's coping with life stressors; among them emotional intelligence has been considered as an important one. Emotional intelligence (EI) is a well-known area that has fascinated experts in various disciplines for the last many years. According to the construct of Mayer and Salovey (1997), "emotional intelligence is the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotions; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth.

Further, Petrides and Furnham (2001) gave the alternative method of measurement of emotional intelligence in order to create a difference between emotional intelligence as a "cognitive-emotional ability" and emotional intelligence as "a personality trait" which is also known as "emotional self-efficacy." On one hand, this refers to the measurement of EI through self-report techniques (i.e., personality trait) and, on the other hand, it refers to maximum performance (i.e., ability). According to Petrides (2010), EI is defined as "a constellation of emotional self-perceptions, localized at the low level of personality hierarchy and measured through self-reporting questionnaires.

In 1996, Veenhoven, described life satisfaction as a state of feeling, comparative happiness and sadness among medical students. Happiness and success are necessary for life satisfaction. Diener, Smith, Suh and Lucas (1999) asserted that subjective wellbeing is combination of human happiness and life satisfaction which reflects social patterns of the individual's life and significant components of human satisfaction.

Several researches have been conducted on emotional intelligence and subjective wellbeing to see their association. A research conducted by Martinez-Pons (1997) found positive relationship between EI and satisfaction with life, but found a negative relationship with depression. Emotional intelligence helps students to understand in how to appreciate the value of life. Austin, Saklofske and Egan (2005), discussed that interactive aptitudes of emotional intelligence among medical students are related with happiness, life satisfaction and particular interactions. In their study, Nutankumar and Thingujam (2011) examined the association of EI with life satisfaction. Findings showed that emotional intelligence was significantly correlated with life satisfaction. Martinez (1997) explored the relation between emotions and personal functioning such as depressed mood and life satisfaction. Findings showed that there is a significant positive association of EI with life satisfaction; EI is negatively associated with depressive symptoms.

Despite of robust empirical findings of the relationship of ability based emotional intelligence with other health outcome variables globally, in Pakistan we have dearth of researches specifically on the trait based EI and its linkage with life satisfaction of students associated with medical profession. It is therefore present study was planned to determine the predictive role of TEI in satisfaction with life of students in health care disciplines.

There are two different constructs of EI, and these can be distinguished on the basis of the assessment schemes used to explain them (Petrides & Furnham, 2000, 2001). Choosing the Trait EI in present study which according to scholars (i.e., Petrides, Pita, & Kokkinaki, 2007) focuses on “emotion related self-perceptions and located at the lower levels of personality hierarchies” can help us to determine the trait based characteristics of students of healthcare discipline and its relationship to satisfaction with life.

Further, Complex inquiries are need of the hour to investigate the phenomena that why few students are performing well and some face problems. This will help in developing understanding about the phenomena. Though, this is not much researched construct in Pakistan and this will help us to accumulate knowledge in this area. Further, this could help us to understand how trait EI relates to healthcare professionals wellbeing. So, conducting studies like this will help us to fill the gap, through this study the effort would be made to determine predictive association of relationship of TEI with SWL in students enrolled in medical colleges. Further, the aim of this study is to utilize the findings to inform policy and decision makers to suggest intervention that would be appropriate

within medical settings. After detail literature review the following hypothesis is framed 1) Trait emotional intelligence will significantly predict satisfaction with life in students of healthcare disciplines.

## **METHOD**

### *Participants*

Sample of 199 medical students were selected from different public and private sector medical colleges/universities located in Karachi, Pakistan. Sample was further divided into two groups males (41%) and females (58% with ages from 19-30 years ( $M= 23.2$ ,  $SD = 2.04$ ), with minimum education of MBBS 1<sup>st</sup> year and maximum education MBBS 5<sup>th</sup> year.

### *Measures*

#### **Personal Information Form**

Personal Information includes participant's age, gender, education, family system, monthly income of family, and etc.

#### **Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire-Short Form (TEIQue-SF; Petrides, & Furnham, 2006).**

The questionnaire has 30 items, designed to measure global trait emotional intelligence (Trait EI). This questionnaire uses a 7 point response option format, ranging from 1 = Completely Disagree to 7 = Completely Agree (Cooper, & Petrides, 2010). Test-retest reliability is ranging from .59 to 0.86. The  $\alpha$  level significance is from .68 to .86.

#### **Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985).**

This measure is used to determine the individual's "satisfaction of life" a whole. This scale comprises of short 5-items with a 7-point response format. The score ranges with minimum of 5 and maximum of 35. The alpha level ( $\alpha$ ) significance of SWLS is from .79 to .89, and found to have high internal consistency, and has good test retest correlations with .84 & .80 over the period of one month interval (Pavot, & Diener, 2008).

### ***Procedure***

First of all both public and private sector institutes (i.e., medical colleges & universities) were listed and then authorizes were approached to obtain permission to collect data. After obtaining permission from all concerned authorities of respective institutions. Participants were then approached and researcher explained the purpose of study individually, using purposive sampling technique. First rapport was established and consent forms were administered. Only those participants were administered the Personal Information Form, TEIQue-SF and SWLS who were willing to participate in the study. In the end all concerned authorities along with participants were acknowledged for their valuable time and participants. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS; V. 24) was used to compute the data. Descriptive statistics was run to describe the frequencies and percentages. Further on, Standard linear regression was applied to investigate predictive relationship between the variables.

The study was conducted as per the ethical standard. Permission was taken from the concerned authorities of institutes. Participants were provided with an informed consent which included the introduction of the researcher such as name, position and affiliation. The purpose of the study and nature of confidentiality was also explained to them. They were also briefed that if at any point in the data collection process they want to discontinue then they are free to do that. After data collection they were thanked for their participation and debriefing was done in the end.

## **RESULTS**

**Table.1**  
*Descriptive study showing the mean age and standard deviation*

<b>Participants</b>	<b><i>N</i></b>	<b><i>M</i></b>	<b><i>SD</i></b>
Age	199	23.2	2.04

**Table 2**

*Model summary of Linear Regression analysis of Emotional Intelligence as a predictor of satisfaction with life in Medical student*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.206a	.043	.038	4.142

a. Predictors: (Constant), Emotional Intelligence

**Table 3**

*Coefficient of Linear Regression with emotional intelligence as a predictor of satisfaction with life in Medical students*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
	B	Std. E.	$\beta$			
1 (Constant)	<b>16.807</b>	<b>2.511</b>			<b>6.693</b>	<b>.000</b>
TEI	<b>.058</b>	<b>.020</b>	<b>.206</b>		<b>2.961</b>	<b>.003</b>

a. Dependent Variable: Life Satisfaction

## DISCUSSION

Findings of present study show that trait emotional intelligence positively predicts satisfaction with life (Table 2 and 3). This shows that trait emotional intelligence has caused 3.8% variance in Satisfaction with life score.

Result (see Table 3) showed significant positive predictive role of trait emotional intelligence on satisfaction with life. Previous researches such as; Diener, Emmons, Larsen and Griffin (1985), support this finding satisfaction with life and EI has a significant association with wellbeing. Few other scholars

(i.e., Witter, Okun, Stock & Haring, 1984; Veenhoven, 1994) have also established considerable association of life satisfaction with educational level.

Satisfaction with life has significant role in student's professional advancement, and this linkage of TEI and life satisfaction in healthcare discipline adds up its significance. In other words, the higher the level of EI, the higher would be the influence on the students 'satisfaction with life in general, which could affect their subjective wellbeing. This state of wellbeing is important for students because then they can perform properly in their respective field when they have optimum wellbeing. If their wellbeing is not stable then their performance may decrease and may not be able to contribute to the community. Student's sense of success for career signifies the life satisfaction and is influenced by emotional intelligence. It is true especially for medical students where this field is considered as one of the prestigious field in Pakistani culture. Those who aspire to enter the medical field and if they are selected in this field then they will be satisfied from their life as a consequent. But it is so important to have emotional stability, in depth understanding of the emotions, feelings of oneself as well as others.

In addition, students who have high level of emotional intelligence can comprehend their feelings and can manage their depressive state and other circumstances. They are immense in social interaction and well aware about tackling different issues and try to develop healthy interaction with others. It is important to understand that performance of a student depends on emotional condition along with life satisfaction, when teaching these students to improve their wellbeing and to intact their academic performance.

There is research evidence that maintains the relationship of certain measures of emotional intelligence with life satisfaction, relationship quality, ability to manage mood (Bar-On. 1997). Based on these findings we can say that TEI relates satisfaction with life positively with increasing values both variables.

This research is a valuable piece which focused on trait emotional intelligence, which could help see the future positive outcome of students in the field of health care. However, like other studies, this study also has some limitations which should be improved when conducting research studies like this with students in medical profession. First, the measurement of TEI with other measures like, life satisfaction was completed on through self-reported questionnaires and students at time may consciously suppress their true emotions and feelings. So qualitative interviews would really add valuable point to

understand their true emotions, feelings and behavior, as well as their views about life and level of satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

### ***Conclusion***

Findings of present study allow us to make an important assertion. We take into account that trait emotional intelligence positively predicts satisfaction with life and our results confirm the hypothesis we formulated. TEI as assessed through “TEIQue-SF” which has a significant contribution to life satisfaction in students of healthcare discipline. In medical profession is considered as an important part to be compassionate, this will come when person has developed deep understanding about himself/herself and then be able to understand the feelings and emotions of oneself as well as other people. This can be developed when they enhance their emotional intelligence. As indicated above that trait emotional intelligence contributed in satisfaction with life variable, so future researches should explore the relationship with more diverse groups in healthcare discipline and based of these empirical findings professionals should develop training to build their emotional intelligence and to enhance life satisfaction and wellbeing.

### ***Limitations and Recommendations***

In future, to assess these variables, comprehensive personality assessment is recommended to obtain robust knowledge about the hidden strengths and weakness, this will help in addressing the issues when detected at early stage to improve their wellbeing. Using Short Form of TEI does not give detail information and facets of TEI, so using long version would be helpful to know about the participants’ level of emotional intelligence via different facets, and then related it with other health outcome variables life satisfaction with life. Further, addition of areas such as nurses, and students from other specific discipline could be added to generalize the findings in health care disciplines. And finally it is important to see how personality traits interact with the TEI to contribute in subjective as well as psychological wellbeing of students in the healthcare discipline.

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