



Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Happiness among Young Indian Adults

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ABSTRACT

Young adulthood is a period full of several new roles, responsibilities, along with personal, social, and cultural pressures in different spheres of life. Generally, young adults enhance their cognitive skills and psychological competencies for self-regulation, mature decision making, maintenance of healthy interpersonal relationships, achievement of goals, wellbeing, and satisfaction in life. Emotional intelligence and happiness play significant roles in determining a young adult's wellbeing, success, and proper functioning. The purpose of the current research is to study the correlation between emotional intelligence and happiness among young adults in the Indian context. Standardized tools like Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) and The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ)- Short Scale were used to measure the emotional intelligence and happiness of young Indian adults. The study was conducted on 61 (M= 22; F= 39) young Indian adults in the age group of 20-24 years. The results indicate that there is a positive significant correlation between emotional intelligence and happiness.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Happiness, Adults, India

Introduction

Positive psychology can be described as the scientific study of optimal human functioning which focuses upon discovering and promoting those factors that allow individuals and communities to thrive (Seligman, 2000). In other words, it refers to the positive aspects of human life like well-being, happiness, and life thriving etc. According to Seligman and Peterson (2005), positive psychology can be used as an umbrella term involving positive emotions, positive character traits, and enabling institutions. Over a significant period, psychology has emphasized more upon human illness, unhappiness and shortcomings than the positive aspects of human potential (Seligman, 2003). Although certain concepts of positive psychology can be traced throughout various fragments of psychology, the concept of modern positive psychology was first formally introduced by Martin Seligman in '*Building Human Strengths: Psychology's Forgotten Mission*' in 1998. Seligman (1999) stated three major aims of psychology- a) to cure mental illness; b) to make lives more fulfilling; and c) to identify and nurture high talent.

Positive psychology greatly emphasizes upon two major aspects of emotion, which are emotional intelligence and happiness. Individuals experience a range of emotions which are feeling states involving physiological, cognitive and behavioural reactions to instances (Passer & Smith, 2011). Emotions are broadly categorized into either six types, namely joy, surprise, sadness, fear, disgust, anger (Ekman, 1992); or eight types which are grouped into four opposite pair of emotions, namely trust- distrust, surprise- anticipation, joy- sadness, anger- fear (Plutchik, 1980).

Although the concept of emotional intelligence was first explored in 1990, by psychologists Peter Salovey and John Mayer in their article '*Emotional Intelligence*' published in the journal *Imagination, Cognition and Personality*, and later popularized by Daniel Goleman in 1995 in his book '*Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*', one can trace its root back to the ancient Indian period.

Indian Psychology is characterized by the holistic thought approach, which promotes development of self and knowledge by reconciling science with spirituality; understanding psychic phenomena and spiritual dimensions of health and wellness (Rao, 2005). It consists of the Indian psychological viewpoints (Salagame, 2001), rooted in diverse traditions of knowledge deliberated upon in various scriptures, philosophical texts, practices, artifacts,

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meanings embodied in various forms, shared by people in the zone of Indian civilization. Various Indian schools of thought [e.g., Hinduism (shad-Darshana: Sankhya, Yoga, Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Mimamsa, Vedanta), Buddhism, Jainism, Sufism etc] cover the whole range of theistic and atheistic postulates of life; teach the art of liberation from bondage of suffering, ignorance; help in creating a social order of harmony, peace, personal growth, and transcends all religious boundaries, without offending any faith/ideology. The ancient Indian philosophy and literature including the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Yogavasishta, the Bhagwad Gita, the Viveka Choodamani, and great epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata have references on mind, self, and intelligence. They suggested that self-efficacy and perseverance, which are similar to self-awareness and self-management clusters of emotional intelligence can lead an individual to the path of attaining success (Goparaj and Sharma, 2011). The Indian philosophy focuses upon higher levels of self i.e., 'AtmaBodha' which refers to aligning the self (Atman or soul) with the external world (Brahman) for social outcomes that are transcendental, rather than materialistic in nature. Awareness of self focuses on raising one's level of consciousness to the extent that a person forgets about differences of self with others and treats everyone like a family. The concept of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' refers to unity in diversity by discouraging negative stereotypes, prejudices, biases, discrimination, and encouraging individuals to treat everyone like a family, thus instilling the concept of emotional intelligence among Indians. Emotional intelligence as viewed from the Indian context proposes different traits like empathy, kindness, gratitude, respect towards elders, taking responsibility, completing one's duties, benevolence, Ahimsa (non-violence) etc, which have deep connection with emotional expression, responsibility, and the potential to deal with socio-cultural and emotional situations (Anand, 2017). In India, the concept of emotional intelligence has been induced among people by various cultural and spiritual practices (Mishra, 2005). The concept of 'Sama' (avoidance of extreme) and the maintenance of balance or equilibrium in all functioning as proposed by the Sankhya philosophy and Bhagavad-Gita have formulated the concept of wellbeing as epitomized in the Indian tradition (Sinha, 1994). According to Bhawuk (2011), the ancient Indian texts and scriptures like the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Bhagwad Gita, which explored various aspects of happiness and well-being still influence the concepts of happy life among the modern Indians. The Ayurveda described the concepts of Swastha (health), Sukhswarup (happiness or happy life), and Dukhswarup (sadness or unhappy life). For a happy and fulfilling life, the four Purusharthas (life pursuits)- dharma (virtues, rightful obligations/duty), artha (material prosperity), kama (fulfilment of desires) and moksha (liberation) which cover the entire range of human possibilities and strivings, should be pursued in harmony with Dharma (social ethos). Attachment with worldly objects and experiences are purely temporary and are of binding nature, ultimately destroying one's life. An individual with high intellect by denouncing "karmaja-fal" (outcome of karma) and overcoming "moh" (greed/excessive attachment) reaches an "anamaya" state (absence of sorrow) and attains a focused state of mind (yoga prapta) respectively. Through the process of perception, a person develops the cognition (chinta)/thinks (dhyayato) excessively about an object and along with affect, an attachment (sanga) with the object is formed. Desire (kama) towards the object arises from attachment. If fulfilment of desire is thwarted, it leads to anger. Anger leads to "sanmoha" (distorted ideas). Sanmoha leads to "bhranti" (folly). Bhranti leads to buddhinaash (destruction of intellect). Thus, destruction of individual occurs. The Bhagavad-Gita recommends the practise of karma yoga/path of work (doing one's prescribed duties) as the intervention to avoid the unhappiness resulting from pursuing desires through: manan (self-reflection), cintan (self-reflection, contemplation), self-control; awareness of cause-effect relationship; liberation from anger/hostility. Arranged in ascending order of superiority-jnana (knowledge), dhyana (meditation) and giving up the fruits of one's endeavour leads to a peaceful state of mind (sthitaprajna) and attainment of shanti. Shanti begets Mukti-liberation from various attachments and overcoming the various kinds of suffering (kleshas) and ignorance.

Emotions are immensely significant in determining actions and functioning of individuals, and the present study focuses upon emotional intelligence and happiness among young Indian adults.

Emotional Intelligence

Mowrer (1960) stated that the concept of 'emotion' should not be opposed to the concept 'intelligence' because it seems to be a high order of intelligence.

According to Mayer and Salovey (1997), emotional intelligence refers to the ability to perceive, appraise, and express emotion in accurate and adaptive ways; to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; to access or generate feelings when facilitating cognitive activities (like problem solving) and adaptive action; and to regulate emotions in oneself and others.

According to Daniel Goleman (1998), emotional intelligence is the ability required for recognizing feelings of ourselves and others, which can help to motivate ourselves, and handle our emotions properly to achieve the best for ourselves and our relationships. He stated that in order to maintain good relationship with staff, managers need to be emotionally intelligent, and not just exhibit high intelligence quotient and technical skills. Goleman (1995) stated that 80% contribution by emotional intelligence is responsible for life success.

- **Daniel Goleman's Mixed Model (1995):**

1. Self-awareness- It is the ability to read and understand one's own emotions as well as recognize their impact on others (Goleman, 2002). People possessing it have a good sense of humor, high self-confidence, and are aware of how others perceive them. It consists of emotional self-awareness, accurate self-assessment, and self-confidence.
2. Self-regulation/management- It is the ability to manage one's actions, thoughts, and emotions in flexible ways. It refers to regulation of distressing effects like anxiety and anger; inhibition of emotional impulsivity; and achievement of desired results. It includes emotional self-control, conscientiousness, optimism, trustworthiness, adaptability, initiative, and achievement drive. The aim is to recognize 'amygdala hijack' which is hyperactivity in amygdala that causes one to focus and obsess about distressing thoughts; but then bring back mental clarity and concentration to the current task (Goleman, 1995) through the development of effective strategies and social skills.
3. Motivation- Emotionally intelligent people are motivated by things which are beyond mere external rewards. They have high need for achievement; tend to be action-oriented; remain committed; and are enthusiastic about taking initiatives.
4. Empathy- It is the ability to understand feelings of other people. Goleman stated that one must be able to understand oneself properly before trying to understand others. Emotionally mature and empathetic individuals exhibit traits like perception of others; anticipate another person's

emotional response to a situation; being interested in and concerned about another person's worries and needs; understanding of society's norms, and reasons behind actions of other people.

5. **Social skills-** Individuals with high emotional intelligence can interact well with others. They exhibit good communication skills, good time management, prominent leadership qualities to manage a group or organization, and efficient problem-solving abilities to resolve difficult situations by using negotiation or persuasion.

Goleman's model was redesigned in 2002 with four domains (Boyatzis and Goleman, 2002): self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship management. Social awareness refers to the ability to accurately notice others' emotions; evaluation of situations; and prevention of negative emotions. It includes empathy, service orientation, organizational awareness. Relationship management refers to the ability of understanding one's own emotions, that of others, and to manage social interactions successfully. It includes inspirational leadership, influence, developing others, conflict management, teamwork and collaboration, change catalyst, and building bonds.

▪ **Ability Model by Salovey and Mayer (1997):**

Salovey and Mayer identified four different levels or branches of emotional intelligence-

1. **Perceiving emotions-** To understand emotions, one has to first understand them accurately. It involves understanding non-verbal signals such as facial expressions and body language.
2. **Reasoning with emotions-** It involves emotions in promotion of thinking and cognitive activities. Emotions help us to prioritize what we attend and react to; we respond emotionally to those things or events that garner our attention.
3. **Understanding emotions-** Emotions perceived by us can carry a wide variety of meanings. If one is expressing anger, the observer must try to understand the cause and meaning behind such emotions and expressions.
4. **Managing emotions-** Regulation of emotions, appropriate responses, responding to others' emotions are significant aspects of emotional management.

According to Salovey and Mayer, these four levels are arranged from basic to higher and more psychologically integrated processes, e.g., the lowest level focuses upon simple abilities like perception and expression of emotions, while the highest level focuses upon the conscious and reflective emotion regulation.

▪ **Trait Model by Petrides (2001):**

Trait emotional intelligence refers to a cluster of emotional self-perceptions located at the lower levels of personality. It explains the perceptions of our emotional world. It describes the nature of our emotional dispositions, and how efficient we think we are in terms of perceiving, understanding, managing, and utilizing our own and others' emotions.

Emotional intelligence can be improved by practicing proper observation of feelings; taking responsibility for our feelings and actions; utilizing active listening skills, practicing empathy; and practicing responding accurately instead of reacting impulsively.

The journal *Annual Psychology* published a review stating that there is a positive correlation between higher emotional intelligence and the following factors-

1. **Better social relations among children and teens:** Emotionally intelligent children and teens engage in good social interactions and relationships, and refrain from socially deviant behaviours.
2. **Better social relations among adults:** Adults with higher emotional intelligence have better self-perception of social ability, and more successful interpersonal relationships, harmonious intimate relationships with less interpersonal aggression and problems.
3. **Better academic achievement:** Research has shown that there has been significant increase in academic achievement among emotionally intelligent individuals.
4. **Better psychological well-being:** Individuals with higher emotional intelligence tend to experience higher life satisfaction, self-esteem, and lower levels of insecurity, depression, poor health choices and behaviours.
5. **Better social relations at work:** Individuals with high emotional intelligence exhibit better social dynamics and negotiating abilities at work.
6. **Better self-compassion:** An individual with high emotional intelligence tends to have a better understanding of herself, and makes conscious decisions based upon both emotions and rationale.

Thus, emotional intelligence is a fundamental aspect of one's life, which can influence the success rates in his or her relationships and career to a great extent.

Happiness

According to Veenhoven (1984), *overall happiness* refers to the degree or extent up to which one judges the overall quality of his life as a whole in a favourable manner. In the affective context, according to Wessman & Ricks (1966), happiness refers to an overall evaluation of the quality of one's own experience while conducting vital affairs. It represents a conception arising from affective life, that indicates a decided balance or positive affectivity over a significant period. In the cognitive context, according to McDowell & Newell (1987), happiness is an aspect of life-satisfaction which refers to personal assessment of an individual's condition in comparison to an external reference standard or aspirations.

- **Objective happiness theory (Kahneman, 1999):** There is prejudice in the broad and holistic perspective of the concept of well-being. Instead, the valid measure of well-being includes the assessment of the immediate moment or experience.

- **Psychological well-being theory (Ryff, 2013):** Happiness is combined of different positive psychological parameters, like personal growth, autonomy and environmental mastery.
- **Onion theory of happiness (Czapinski and Peeters, 1991):** Happiness can be represented as a three-layered onion, where the core refers to the will or motivation to live and positive sources of attraction; the middle layer refers to the general subjective well-being; and the outer layer refers to the present effective experience and satisfaction, including hedonistic happiness.
- **Social-psychological prosperity/ flourishing theory (Diener et al., 2010):** An individual can be happy by becoming engaged in daily activities; empathizing; helping others; and having meaningful relationships with others.
- **Subjective well-being theory (Diener, 2000):** A happy individual experiences more positive feelings than negative feelings, which results in balanced experiences and life satisfaction.
- **Eudaimonic well-being theory (Waterman et al., 2010):** Happiness can be experienced through indulgence in self-discovery, self-expression, and a positive approach during development or utilization of one's potential to the best.
- **Authentic happiness theory (Seligman et al., 2005):** Happiness is comprised of three elements- positive emotions (subjective emotions like excitement, pleasure, comfort etc.), engagement (subjective emotion of being involved in a task where a person experiences absolute pleasure by losing awareness about his own identity) and meaning (objective emotion including the journey of finding the true meaning and purpose of one's life).

Thus, happiness is one of the key resources to an individual's healthy and prosperous life. Yoga, meditation, travelling, pursuing hobbies, relaxation, healthy diet, adequate sleep, proper lifestyle, spending quality time with family and friends, participating in charity and social work etc. can provide happiness.

Young Adulthood

According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2016), an adult should be aged more than 19 years of age, unless national law delimits an earlier age. The Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine (2017) states that the young adult age group ranges from 18 to 25 years.

Young adults have several new experiences during this period like living independently, establishing new relationships, getting involved in romantic relationships, having new physical surroundings, social groups, and exploring different career pathways, hobbies etc.

Young adulthood is a period of immense physical and psychological development, accompanied especially by the process of meaning making and identity formation. Meaning making refers to the ability by which larger implications of a particular event can be reflected upon by individuals (Lawford & Ramey, 2015), and the lessons learned can be applied by them in decision-making, and can get reflected in current behaviours. Thus, this skill which usually develops in late adolescence and young adulthood, with the onset of abstract thought related to increased cognitive growth can help individuals to find purpose in life's experiences (Bluck, 2013). Identity formation is a very significant aspect of young adulthood, in which an individual undergoes a process of forming an identity, along with healthy family and social relationships, that influences his or her life's outcomes and successes (Scales, 2016).

Several other factors are responsible for the overall development and wellbeing of the individuals, and also for the prevention of risky and illegal behaviours.

Purpose of the Study

The aim is to study the relationship between emotional intelligence and happiness among young Indian adults.

Hypothesis

There is a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and happiness among Indians in early adulthood.

Methodology

Sample

The study was conducted on 61 participants (M= 22; F= 39) from Kolkata, West Bengal. The sample consisted of young adults in the age group of 20-24 years. Purposive sampling method was used to collect data.

Measures

The standardized tools used in this study were:

1. **Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS):** Developed by Wong and Law in 2002, the WLEIS is a self-administered test which includes sixteen items under the following domains- Self Emotion Appraisal (SEA), Regulation of Emotion (ROE), Understanding of Emotion (UOE), and Other's Emotion Appraisal (OEA). Each domain consists of four items. Participants are required to rate each item on a seven-point scale (where 1 refers to strongly disagree and 7 refers to strongly agree). A total score is obtained by adding up the ratings given on each item; and four subscale scores are obtained by adding up the ratings of the four items in each subscale. The reliability coefficient of the scale as measured by Cronbach's alpha is in the range of .79 to .86. Internal consistency reliability for the four factors ranged from .83 to .90. The items have been generated, tested and cross-validated through a rigorous development process.

2. **The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ)- Short Scale:** The OHQ was developed by Michael Argyle and Peter Hills at Oxford University (Hills and Argyle, 2002). It consists of 29 single items that have to be answered by the participants on a uniform six-point Likert scale (where 1 refers to strongly disagree and 6 refers to strongly agree). It has demonstrated high scale reliability with value $\alpha(168)=0.91$. The OHQ short scale can be used during limited time and space by using discriminant analysis of the full scale. Eight items have been successful in classifying the scores with an accuracy of 90%, and the correlation between the results of the full and short scales was greater than 0.90 and highly significant, $P<0.001$. The sum of item scores measures overall happiness. High scores indicate greater happiness.

Procedure

The objective of the study was explained to the participants, and standardized scales (WLEIS and OHQ- Short Scale) were administered using Google forms upon receiving consent from them. The participants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses. Each participant was appreciated and thanked for their cooperation.

Analysis of Data

Results

N, Mean and Standard Deviation of data is shown in Table 1. Correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Happiness is shown in Table 2.

Table 1: shows N, Mean and Standard Deviation

	Emotional Intelligence (Total)	Self Emotion Appraisal	Regulation of Emotion	Understanding of Emotion	Other's Emotion Appraisal	Happiness
N	61	61	61	61	61	61
Mean	5.675	5.695	5.415	5.87	5.734	5.74
Standard Deviation	1.491	1.491	1.731	1.601	1.01	1.53

Table 2: shows the correlation between emotional intelligence and happiness

	Self Emotion Appraisal	Regulation of Emotion	Understanding of Emotion	Other's Emotion Appraisal	Happiness
Self Emotion-Appraisal					
Regulation of Emotion		0.901	-		
Understanding of Emotion		0.864	0.907	-	
Other's Emotion Appraisal		0.629	0.753	0.669	-
Happiness		0.894	0.924	0.943	0.720

Emotional Intelligence (overall) and Happiness: R = 0.955.

Note: Significant at $p<.001$

Discussion of Results

Results indicate that there is a positive significant correlation ($r= 0.955$, $p< .001$) between emotional intelligence (overall) and happiness. There is a positive significant correlation ($r= 0.894$, $p< .001$) between self-emotion appraisal and happiness. An individual with high SEA ("I really understand what

I feel” or “I always know whether or not I am happy”), i.e., his/her perceived ability to understand his/her own emotions tends to experience higher levels of happiness. There is a positive significant correlation ($r=0.924$, $p<.001$) between regulation of emotion and happiness. A person with high ROE (“I have good control of my own emotions”) i.e., one’s perceived ability to regulate their own emotions can be expected to be happier. There is a positive significant correlation ($r=0.943$, $p<.001$) between understanding of emotion and happiness. An individual with high UOE (“I would always encourage myself to try my best”) i.e., perceived tendency to motivate the self to enhance performance experience higher levels of happiness. There is a positive significant correlation ($r=0.720$, $p<.001$) between other’s emotion appraisal and happiness. A person with high OEA (“I have a good understanding of the emotions of people around me”) i.e., perceived ability to understand other peoples’ emotions is expected to experience higher levels of happiness.

Furnham and Petrides (2003) conducted research upon first-year undergraduate students to investigate the association between happiness and trait emotional intelligence (or emotional self-efficacy), which is a component of emotional intelligence. Results of the study indicate positive significant relationship between these two variables. It showed that emotion-related self-perceptions and dispositions like, emotion regulation, social competence, relationship skills etc. determine a large amount of variance in happiness. However, the strength of this relationship might vary across different cultures (Schimmack, 2002). In a study (Platsidou, 2013) conducted upon adolescents and young adults, the findings suggest that those with high proficiency in emotion appraisal might experience high personal efficacy and vigour; individuals with high optimism, mood regulation, and social skills tend to enjoy elevated levels of most components of happiness.

Conclusion

The data of the present study indicates that young adults with high emotional intelligence tend to experience higher levels of happiness. Thus, it can be concluded that emotional intelligence and happiness are significant factors in determining an individual’s wellbeing and proper functioning in life. Adopting different skills and strategies, which have been mentioned earlier in this paper are expected to help individuals to improve and enhance their emotional intelligence, and attain happiness which can help them to handle and overcome the outcome of negative stressors and other potential difficulties in life.

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