



What emotional intelligence traits make citizens really active? An empirical study



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ABSTRACT

The trait emotional intelligence and its relation to civil organizational membership, labor market status, gender and age was studied in 725 inhabitants of a Hungarian historic town as part of a tourism destination project with the support of the local government. The research also explored the reasons why people chose to settle in this town.

Regarding the research method a firmly reliable and internationally used TEIQue (Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire) was applied. The results showed that locals have average global emotional intelligence level with high *well-being* (including optimism, happiness and self-esteem facets) and *emotionality* (including relationship, empathy, emotion expression and emotion perception facets). Citizens who were active members of a local community (e.g. museum-, sport-, environment protection club or association) gained higher global emotional intelligence averages compared to those who were not members. Those locals who had an active working status and were members of any local community have the highest emotional intelligence averages globally and also on factor levels (*well-being*, *emotionality*, *sociability* and *self-control*). There was a difference in gender: although men's and women's global emotional intelligence levels were similar, women's average scores were higher in *well-being* and *emotionality* while men's in *sociability* and *self-control*. They also differed in the reasons given to choose Veszprém as a hometown. While men rather settled down for work and family reasons, women's decisions were influenced by falling love with the town and surroundings and the school years they spent locally.

The correlation analyses confirmed the relation between emotional intelligence and civil membership and also a strong relationship was found between emotional intelligence and education. *Self-control*, *sociability*, *self-motivation* and *adaptability* were identified as items related to active civil membership. Significant correlation was found between civil membership and emotional intelligence among the 26–35 and 51–64 age groups. Unexpectedly with women no relationship was found between emotional intelligence and civil membership while among men emotionality and well-being showed correlation with membership. Education relations by gender indicated that women's level of education correlates with all emotional intelligence factors except *self-control* whereas men's level of education showed relationships with *sociability* and *self-control*.

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1. Introduction

Tourism is a major economic value in Hungary as it makes a direct contribution to the national economy of 4.6% of GDP and an indirect contribution of 12% (Hungarian Tourism Board 2011). According to the ITB World Travel Trends Report (2010), more than 800 million people travel every year, making the tourism sector one of the leading employers and providing a job to every 12th person—in Hungary, 6.2% of the working population are employed directly in the tourism sector and 5.1% are employed indirectly (Hungarian

Tourism Board 2011). Destination tourism is a segment that Bierman (2003, p.2) defines as “a country, state, region, city or town which is marketed or markets itself as a place for tourists to visit”.

But what influences a person to settle down in a place? Hancock and her research group (2009) found that doctors for instance choose small towns as a long term residence because they are motivated by the wish for a familiar place where it is likely to be involved in the community and give them opportunity for self actualization.

Veszprém is a historic town with circa 63,000 inhabitants dating back more than a thousand years. The place is called ‘Queens’ Town’ as Hungary's first queen, the Bavarian Gizella, was crowned here and she with King Stephen I. founded the Veszprém Bishopric as a pledge to the Catholic Church. The town's geographic

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advantage is the fact that it is situated between Lake Balaton (the largest freshwater lake in Central Europe) and the Bakony mountain range. The town hosts many international events and festivals, economically can boast to have numerous international companies who settled down for a long term and to have the largest university in the region with five faculties. Therefore economically the potentials are four-fold:

- (a) expand the one-day visits
- (b) invite more investors
- (c) provide quality international tertiary education
- (d) and make the town an attractive place to live

All of these will generate more income for the place and raise the standard of living, welfare and well-being of the locals.

The present research was supported by the local tourism destination management organization (TDMO) and city government who approached to have a mutual survey which would reveal the inhabitants' feelings in order to know the reason for settling down and to help develop the town's future tourism and investor marketing. Also among the aims was to see the attitudes and feelings of the people in today's economic difficulties and role of the various civil organizations, associations and clubs in the inhabitants' lives. Local government plays an essential role in creating an environment for locals in which they empower themselves to make collaborative rules of participation and identifies the individuals who form different networks in order to create a mutual sustainable goal for the town (Kusakabe, 2013).

2. Literature review

2.1. Active citizenship

The connotation of active citizenship has a political touch as in most cases the government encourages educational boards to involve youth as early as possible in doing positive things for the local community. The purpose of these is to open locals' eyes to their rights and responsibilities for their settlement at an early age (Lawson, 2001).

Gaventa and Jones (2002) identified and summarized the various definitions and explained the three theoretical approaches to citizenship as follows. According to the *liberal* approach citizenship is conceptualized at the nation-state level where independent and self-interested individuals have equal rights. The *communitarian* theory emphasizes the individual sense of identity and belonging which further shape group identity and rights. The *civil republican* approach states that common public culture shapes civic identity where the emphasis is on taking part in public affairs. Although the three conceptualizations may differ in parts their mutual point lies in the concept of citizens' active participation.

The research of Putnam (1993) confirmed that community activity (e.g. membership of associations or sport clubs) plays a major role in regional differences. Democracy worked where people were actively involved in communities. Moreover active participation increases well-being and quality of life as being a group member with mutual aims improves interaction which then further results in satisfaction (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

To join a group or a community one is said to have high self-esteem so as not to be afraid of being accepted (Anthony, Wood, & Holmes, 2006).

2.2. Emotional intelligence

The origins of emotional intelligence can be traced back to Thorndike, 1920 concept of social intelligence defined as the ability to understand and manage individuals and take sensible actions in

human relations. Nearly forty years later, Eysenck (1958:175) questioned whether personality can be measured and said 'the answer depends on what we mean by personality, what we mean by measurement, and, indeed, one might even maintain that it depends on the meaning of the term "can"'. The contemporary forms of emotional intelligence only appeared in the late 1980s/early 1990s when various terminology emerged (Bar-On 2006; Cooper & Sawaf 1997; Goleman 1996; Payne 1989; Petrides & Furnham 2001) among which Daniel Goleman's (1996) work on emotional intelligence hit a sensitive and thought provoking area that slowly but firmly has influenced even the most 'down-to-earth' economies ever since. Salovey and Mayer (1990:189) were the first to define emotional intelligence as such. Their initial definition of emotional intelligence as 'the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action' was later modified to 'the ability to perceive emotion, integrate emotion to facilitate thought, understand emotions and to regulate emotions to promote personal growth' (Mayer & Salovey 1997:10).

At the beginning of the Twenty-first Century, to diminish misconceptions and clarify the various theoretical distinctions, Petrides and Furnham (2001) examined the state of play of emotional intelligence theories and measurements. According to Pérez-González, Petrides, and Furnham (2005), there is a clear conceptual distinction between ability emotional intelligence (or cognitive-emotional ability) and trait emotional intelligence (or emotional self-efficacy). According to them 'trait emotional intelligence is a distinct, compound trait located at the lower levels of personality hierarchies' (Petrides, Pérez-González, & Furnham 2007, p.26).

Bar-On (2000, 2006) combined previous approaches and used the concept of emotional-social intelligence to define skills, competencies, and facilitators and verify human behavior. Emotional intelligence also bonds numerous fields of psychological science, such as human cognitive abilities, self regulation theory, and neuroscience of emotion (Zeidner, Matthews, & Roberts 2004).

2.3. Measuring emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence measurements have been developed either with a firm or vague theoretical background and information on their reliability, validity and factor structure (Petrides, 2011). To create measures researchers either developed self-report questionnaires (e.g. Schutte et al, 1998) or have evolved test items that are maximized answered on the correct or incorrect basis (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999), assuming they all operationalized the same construct which obviously resulted in conceptual confusion and conflicts (Pérez-González et al., 2005).

Petrides (2009) clearly indicates that emotional intelligence when regarded as mental abilities cannot be measured. Ability cannot be objectively scored as perceptible criteria of scoring and to determine the correct responses are biased (Spain, Eaton, & Funder, 2000; Watson, 2000). Nevertheless researchers such as Mayer, Salovey, Caruso, and Sitarenios (2002) claim that ability tests underwent changes which have improved their validity. Multifactor Emotional Intelligence Scale, (MEIS, Mayer et al., 1999) and its developed descendant the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT, Mayer et al., 2002) are presently the most extensively used ability tests but factor structures and internal consistency of ability measurements still have some queries (Legree, 1995; Pérez-González et al., 2005). Another test co-developed by Mayer (Mayer & Geher, 1996) is the EARS, (Emotional Accuracy Research Scale) which include several situations. The test liability is dubious as it was generated by asking an individual in an interview about the experience in the given situations (Stough, Saktofske, & Rarker, 2009). The other situational judgment test

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