



# Emotional intelligence and life satisfaction

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## Abstract

This study examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction. To determine the nature of this relationship, personality constructs known to predict life satisfaction were also assessed (positive and negative affect). Emotional intelligence was assessed in 107 participants using a modified version of the Trait Meta-Mood Scale [TMMS; Salovey, P, Mayer, J., Goldman, S., Turvey, C. & Palfai, T. 1995. Emotional attention, clarity and repair: exploring emotional intelligence using the Trait Meta-Mood Scale. In J. W. Pennebaker (Ed), pp. 125–154. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association] and the Twenty-Item Toronto Alexithymia Scale [TAS-20; J. Psychosom Res, 38 (1994) 26]. Life satisfaction was assessed using the Satisfaction With Life Scale [SWLS; J. Pers. Social Psychol., 69 (1985) 71]. Only the Clarity sub-scale of the TMMS (which indexes perceived ability to understand and discriminate between moods and emotions), and the Difficulty Identifying Feelings sub-scale of the TAS-20 were found to significantly correlate with life satisfaction. Subsequent analyses revealed that only the Clarity sub-scale accounted for further variance in life satisfaction not accounted for by positive and negative affect. This finding provides further evidence that components of the EI construct account for variance in this important human value not accounted for by personality. Implications and directions for further research are discussed. © 2002 Published by Elsevier Science Ltd.

*Keywords:* Emotional intelligence; Life satisfaction; Positive affect; Negative affect; TMMS; TAS-20

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In recent times there has been much interest in the construct of emotional intelligence (EI), a set of abilities relating to emotions and to the processing of emotional information. These abilities generally pertain to the perception of emotions, the regulation/management of emotions, and the capacity to utilise (or reason with) emotions in thought (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2000c). During the last decade research has predominantly concentrated on the theoretical development

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of the construct (i.e. Mayer & Salovey, 1993, 1997), and on the establishment of assessment measures (Bar-On, 1997; Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2000a, Mayer, DiPaolo, & Salovey, 1990; Mayer & Geher, 1996; Salovey, Mayer, Goldman, Turvey, & Palfai, 1995; Schutte et al., 1998). This work has resulted in the development of a number of self-report measures (e.g., the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory, EQi, Bar-On; the Trait Meta-Mood Scale, TMMS; Salovey et al., 1995), and a performance-based measure of EI in which there are more and less correct answers to emotion-related questions based on consensual responses (the Multi-Factor Emotional Intelligence Scale, MEIS; Mayer et al. 2000a). The advent of assessment measures has provided a platform for research to examine the relationship between EI and theoretically related life criteria and test developers have called for researchers to empirically establish the utility of the EI construct (Mayer et al., 2000c).

EI has been theoretically related to several important human values including life satisfaction, the quality of interpersonal relationships, and success in occupations that involve considerable reasoning with emotional information such as those involving creativity, leadership, sales and psychotherapy (Bar-On, 1997; Goleman, 1995; Palmer, Walls, Burgess, & Stough, 2001; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Furthermore, valid measures of EI may aid in the assessment of emotional deficits that are fundamental to affective disorders, such as anxiety and depression, and other constructs such as alexithymia and sociopathy. To-date, there is little research that validates the utility of EI within these domains (Mayer et al., 2000c). Toward this goal, the aim of the current study was to examine whether EI predicts one of the most important human values it has been theoretically related to, namely, life satisfaction (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

Several studies have examined the relationship between EI and life satisfaction (Bar-On, 1997; Ciarrochi, Chan, & Caputi, 2000; Martinez-Pons, 1997, 1999; Mayer et al., 2000a). Research with self-report measures (e.g., the EQi, Bar-On; the TMMS, Martinez-Pons) have found moderate positive correlations between EI and life satisfaction (e.g. the total EQ scale score of the EQi correlated with the Kirkcaldy Quality of Life Questionnaire  $r=0.41$ ,  $P<0.001$ , as reported by Bar-On). Similarly, research with the performance-based measure of EI (MEIS; Mayer et al., 2000a) has found low to moderate positive correlations between EI and life satisfaction ( $r=0.11$ ,  $P<0.05$ ; Mayer et al. 2000a; and  $r=0.28$ ,  $P<0.005$ ; Ciarrochi et al., 2000). Importantly, Ciarrochi et al. (2000) found that EI correlated with life satisfaction ( $r=0.22$ ,  $P<0.05$ ) even after controlling for IQ and personality variables suggesting that EI accounts for unique variance. There is some doubt currently surrounding the predictive validity of self-report measures of EI. While some self-report measures of EI have been shown to correlate with theoretically related variables (e.g. the EQi; Bar-On, 1997; Schutte et al., 1998), it has been suggested that these relationships exist because they are essentially tapping personality traits known to predict these criteria (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2000b; Newsome, Day, & Catano, 2000; Petrides & Furnham, 2000). Several recent studies have found a significant overlap between self-report measures of EI (specifically the EQi, Bar-On) and personality (e.g. Dawda & Hart, 2000; Newsome et al., 2000). The utility of the EI construct (and the validity of EI measures), resides in whether or not it accounts for variance in theoretically related life criteria not already accounted for by intelligence and personality and other well-established psychological constructs (Salovey, Bedell, Detweiler, & Mayer, 2000).

The present study examines the capacity of two self-report measures of component abilities of the EI construct to predict life satisfaction over and above emotionally toned personality traits

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