

The Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Perceived Social Support

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Abstract

The study aims at examining and understanding the relation between Emotional Intelligence and Perceived social support in a sample of 525 students of the University of Prishtina. Great number of studies in the field of Emotional Intelligence, have shown that that this new construct of Intelligence, (EI), operates within the social context, therefore the examination of socially relevant variables is crucial for personal and social context. It has been hypothesised that Emotional Intelligence and it's dimensions correlate positively with the Perceived Social Support and the relation between these two variables is a great predictor of positive interactions, interpersonal relationships and is very relevant for the educational context as well. The study is based on the ability and competency based model of the Emotional Intelligence construct. 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 the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet & Farelly, 1998) were administered to gather data in order to test the hypothesis. The preliminary findings support theoretical and empirical perspective, and appear to be promising by emphasizing the Emotional Intelligence construct as an added value for the educational context, in specific for youth interactions and their wellbeing.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Social Interaction, Perceived Social Support, Emotional wellbeing.

1. Introduction

Emotions are inseparable and present aspect of our life and everyday human interactions. They are very much related to our state of mind and ultimately affect critical thinking, our behavior and attitudes. Emotions have impact in how we create relationships with others, and how we manage social dynamics of our daily life.

For more than a century, psychologists and researchers in the field of intelligence have tried to address and measure intelligence. In this way, different tests which are generally intended to measure intelligence quotient were focusing on measuring the different dimensions that were considered relevant to the field of intelligence, such as: verbal comprehension and reasoning, arithmetic and solution problems, etc. However, In this regard, there were researchers who understood and announced that they had considered other non cognitive relevant aspects of particular importance when they've studies in depth intelligence matters. (Cherniss, C. Emotional Intelligence: Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology. Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations .What it is and why it matters. Rutgers University). Psychologists have begun to open debate whether results earned in this type of comprehensive measurement of intelligence were crucial in predicting positive results and if these results guarantee the achievement and success in various spheres of life. With the advancement of empirical research in this area, other relevant factors begin to emerge, which were considered important in the design and structure of intelligence. In this context, there was perceived an extraordinary interest, especially in the kind of Intelligence which functions within the framework of social, personal, practical, and emotional data. New theories and findings in the field of Emotional Intelligence highlighted a concept that looks new and modern, but the origin of which is the earliest and focuses on the emotional learning approach. In fact, researchers in practice had long realized the importance of Emotional Intelligence, and the impact of this construct in many spheres of life (as p.sh education, academic success, interpersonal relationships, interpersonal communication, leadership, development and education of the child, mental health and well-being in general, etc.). There is an understanding of the overall direction of the opinion that psychological processes were considered to be purely cognitive or intellectual, in fact practices in this regard is evidence that it depends on a synergy between cognition and emotions, supported by different forms of cognition.

Eminent researchers in this field, Peter Salovey and Jack Mayer (1990), proposed a formal definition of Emotional Intelligence, defining it as "the ability to monitor, to distinguish, use the emotional information, and to guide our thinking

and actions." Later, this definition was reformulated and was proposed under four similar skills that are related to one another, perception, use, understanding and managing emotions. (Salovey, P., Grewal, D. The Science of Emotional Intelligence. Yale University). This concept, according to which Emotional Intelligence shall operate within these capabilities, defines emotional intelligence as the ability to perceive correctly emotions, to understand, evaluate and move forward, use emotions in order to facilitate thinking and manage emotions effectively, to promote intellectual and emotional growth. (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). While, as a closer definition we encounter often in the literature, is that which defines emotional intelligence as "the ability to identify, assess and manage our emotions and those of others and using appropriately these emotions".

These aforementioned skills to understand and manage themselves and others, as well as the management and development of relations in the world, had previously been addressed in the context of social intelligence. Emotional Intelligence is considered as a construct which is supported of social intelligence, which involves the ability and competence to recognize, understand, access, use emotions to help our performance and manage emotions, in the individual context and those of others as well (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

Emotional competencies are thought to be an important factor for social interactions, taking into account that emotions serve the social functions and communication, and have shown to be crucial for the adequate functioning of social interactions (interpersonal relationships), by transmitting information on the opinions and attitudes of individuals and coordinating social interactions. (Keltner & Haidt, 2001).

Hence, emotions have an effect on our important decisions, behaviors, ways of thinking and attitudes. Mayer and Salovey, developed the concept of emotional intelligence to explain the importance of this construct in our daily interactions. Studies indicate that that Emotional Intelligence starts to develop at birth, and then the first emotional attachment of the child appears to be provided by mothers of caregivers to fulfill their adequate needs. This is an interesting argument to consider other relevant factors within our lives that can have an impact to strengthen or weaken our capacity for emotional intelligence dimensions (e. i: parents, siblings, friends, teachers, etc). (Houtmeyers, 2004; Shapiro, 2000; Sullivan, 1999). Understanding this approach, it is very crucial that the educational system should be oriented toward the integral approach of the development of human being, by always balancing cognitive and emotional dimensions. Even if there seems to be a deficiency in certain aspects related to emotional education, this appears to be a task that all relevant actors should act and cope together with the aim at developing Children's and adults' in a variety of emotional skills which certainly have great impact in their social interactions and success in different spheres of life.

1.1 Aim of the study

From the general point of view, the study aims to understand the relationship between Emotional Intelligence construct and Perceived social support. Furthermore, in specific, the study aims to deepen the understanding of how the dimensions of Emotional Intelligence Construct relate to the dimensions of Perceived Social Support (as a modality of social interaction). The Emotional Intelligence dimensions include: appraisal and expression of emotions; regulation of emotions; utilization of emotions in solving problems, which are examined for the relations with Perceived social support within the Family, Friends and Significant others dimensions / categories).

More concretely, the Objective of this research include:

Objective 1. To examine the relationship between Emotional Intelligence Construct (including its dimensions) and Perceived Social Support.

Research question 1.1: What kind of relationship exists between the dimension of expressing and acknowledging emotions (EI) and perceived social support?

Research question 1.2: What kind of relationship exists between the dimension of regulating emotions (EI) and perceived social support?

Research question 1.2: What kind of relationship exists between the dimension of using emotions for problem solving situations (EI) and perceived social support?

Research question 1.3: Which is the relation between dimensions of Perceived Social Support (family, friends and other significant) and the dimensions of Emotional Intelligence Construct?

2. Methodology

Design: The design of the study corresponds with the non – experimental, correlation study design, aiming at revealing the relationships between Emotional Intelligence and Perceived Social Support variables, mentioned on the Objective section of the study.

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. Unfortunately, as a result of the dominance of female students in education and psychology department, a priori sample survey does not reflect significant gender differences, but there are few exceptions within the results.

Measurements: The study is based on the ability and competency based model of the Emotional Intelligence construct. 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 the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet & Farelly, 1998) were administered to gather data in order to test the hypothesis.

Procedure: Initially, a pilot study has been undertaken to assess the reliability and validity issues. 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 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.

3. Results

3.1 Correlation Analysis: Emotional Intelligence and Perceived Social Support:

		Total_el	MSPSS
Total_el	Pearson Correlation	1	.314**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	489	487
MSPSS	Pearson Correlation	.314**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	487	523

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

3.2 Correlation Analysis (between dimensions of the Emotional Intelligence construct: Appraisal and expression of emotions; Regulation of Emotions; Utilization of Emotions in solving problems and dimensions of Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (Perceived Social support among: Family, Friends and Significant others):

	VEI	RREI	PEI	MSPSS significant others	MSPSS Family
VEI	1	.762**	.694**	.328**	.379**
		.000	.000	.000	.000
	524	491	522	524	522
RREI	.762**	1	.764**	.244**	.297**
	.000		.000	.000	.000
	491	492	490	492	490
PEI	.694**	.764**	1	.148**	.221**
	.000	.000		.001	.000
	522	490	523	523	521
MSPSS significant others	.328**	.244**	.148**	1	.599**
	.000	.000	.001		.000
	524	492	523	525	523
MSPSS Family	.379**	.297**	.221**	.599**	1
	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	522	490	521	523	523
MSPSS Friends	.237**	.147**	.136**	.662**	.444**
	.000	.001	.002	.000	.000
	524	492	523	525	523

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

4. Discussion

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. Generally, the results seem to be supportive from the perspective of predictive validity of emotional intelligence on the variable of Perceived Social Support. In this context, recognition, appraisal, evaluation, regulation / management of emotions and use emotions, are considered as basic skills and competencies to ensure the quality of interpersonal relationships, successful communication, coping with social dynamics, etc.

Analysis of findings indicates that there is a strong positive correlation between Emotional Intelligence construct and Perceived Social Support. This approach supports the predictive validity from the empirical studies that the emotional intelligence competencies and skills, may predict the quality of interpersonal relationships, more concretely the level of participants' social support in different contexts. The more developed these skills are at the individual level, the greater seem to be chances that people perceive their interpersonal relations supportive in different contexts (family, friends and significant others).

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 correlate positively (sometimes with strong positive correlations) with the dimensions of Perceived Social Support. In this context, it is noticed that the higher the capacity of the individual to appreciate, express, manage and use their emotions and others as well, the higher are participants' tendencies to perceive their relationships as more supportive within the family context, friends and significant others contexts. From this perspective, 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.

In this regard, it is worth mentioning the impact of the Emotional Intelligence construct and its predictive validity in the perceived social support variable (Salovey, Mayer, & Caruso, 2002).. In the context of these results, it is thought that there is a convergence between the findings of other studies that also emphasize that emotional competencies are associated with social adjustment. A large number of studies with children suggest that the capacity to decode, understand and regulate emotions is associated with social and emotional adjustment. (Eisenberg, Fabes, Guthrie, & Reiser, 2000; Halberstadt, Denham, & Dunsmore, 2001). In this regard, the assessment of school-based interventions, which emphasize the development of emotional competencies, suggests that learning about emotions contributes to social and academic adjustment as well. (Greenberg, Kusch, Cook, & Quamme, 1995). On the same way, the evaluation of interventions within wider communities should be taken into account in order to emphasize the importance of social and emotional competencies in the quality of interpersonal relationships and perceived social support, in different settings, such as: schools, families, society, working environment, etc.

5. Conclusions

Emotions have impact in how we create relationships with others, and how we manage social dynamics of daily life. Emotional competencies are thought to be an important factor for social interactions, considering the fact that emotions serve the social functions and communication, and have shown to be crucial for the adequate functioning of social interaction (interpersonal relationships), by transmitting information on the opinions and attitudes of individuals and coordinating social interactions. (Keltner & Haidt, 2001).

Analysis of findings indicates that there is a strong positive correlation between Emotional Intelligence construct and Perceived Social Support. This approach supports the predictive validity from the empirical studies that the emotional intelligence competencies and skills, may predict the quality of interpersonal relationships, more concretely the level of participants' social support in different contexts and relationships dimensions. Despite the fact that majority of the dimensions from the variables of the study indicate positive correlations, the dimension of the participants perceived support from family, appears to be the most highly correlated dimension (positively) with the appreciation and expression of emotions dimension from the Emotional Intelligence context.

These results indicate that family is an important variable in this context, and can be considered as an asset and added value for emotional learning and support, and strengthening the belief that emotions and their impact on interpersonal relations is an indicator of our mental health and emotional wellbeing. The data from the literature review and the findings from the study indicate that the scope of the study has important implications for social and educational context, especially as a driver to improve emotional functioning in everyday life and to promote the positive aspects of

behavior.

Hence, in conclusion, the skills / emotional intelligence competencies have proven to be extremely important for the development aspects of interpersonal relationships. Such competencies, to recognize, assess, manage and use emotions in a positive and constructive way, enable people to be happy, to perceive their interpersonal relationships from a positive point of view, to have more self-confidence as a result of perceived social support, and ultimately to show greater success in the dynamics of everyday life.

This approach, ensures that perceived social support is an important segment, which is influenced by the Emotional Intelligence construct, and many often, the field of Emotional Intelligence, forms the foundation for the potential of perceived social support.

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