

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE THE THEORY AND MEASUREMENT OF EQ

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Abstract

The paper examines the modern psychological construct known as emotional intelligence (abbreviated as EQ), developed by American psychologists Peter Salovey and John Mayer, and popularized by author Daniel Goleman in bestselling books since the 1990s. The basic definitions of "EQ" are set forth as the ability to identify, use, understand and manage emotions, both personally and in social relationships. The origins and early studies and theories on related concepts are set forth in a brief review of literature, relating EQ to earlier research on social intelligence and empathy. The use of scales, tests and measures of emotional intelligence is described, and other capabilities are related to EQ, such as altruism, leadership and social engagement. Various criticisms and objections to the theory are noted; however, the paper concludes that Emotional Intelligence, while not as popular or widely studied as it was a decade ago, remains a useful construct for assessing the ability of individuals to understand and control their feelings.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, measurement, theories

Introduction

The psychological concept known as Emotional Intelligence, EI or EQ, is a phenomenon of the last quarter century, although it has roots in much older social and psychological theories. After the publication of behavioral researcher Daniel Goleman's bestselling book, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* (1995), the wider public was introduced to the theory of "emotional intelligence." Mr. Goleman was not the creator of this new psychometric; however, he borrowed this term from the psychologists Peter Salovey and John Mayer, and expanded it into a popular theme. Under the general construct of "EQ," Goleman conceived of emotional awareness as a new function that could be learned, or could exist innately in certain people. According to Goleman, everybody has some level of EQ and anyone can enhance their emotional intelligence to monitor their own emotions and emotional states. Goleman argued that society, whether the public or the private sector should spend more resources on new programs and researches that would help millions of people develop this capacity. Goleman even wanted schools and government agencies to offer classes in emotional intelligence where students could learn and acquire EI before they went off to university or college, since this capacity evidently gets harder to acquire and develop after people reach adulthood.

Other authors have added their own interpretations to the EQ concept. The first example is the original model of emotional intelligence developed by Mayer and Salovey (1993). These researchers regard emotional intelligence as a series of skills that combine *cognitions* (thoughts) and *emotions* (feelings). The authors define emotional intelligence in various ways: the ability to recognize emotions, to access and use emotions to help support cognitive processes, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to handle or regulate emotions in order to promote emotional and intellectual development (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Put another way, emotional intelligence, according to these authors, is made

up of four distinct components: identifying emotions (the ability to recognize emotions in the self and others); using emotions (the ability to invoke and reason with emotions); understanding emotions (the ability to understand complicated emotions and emotional states, especially how these emotions shift from moment to moment); and managing emotions (controlling emotions in the self and others).

Researchers who have developed and investigated emotional intelligence maintain that "EQ" tests for emotional intelligence are important predictors of educational and occupational skills and can account for differences that tests of cognitive ability are unable to predict (Matthews, Roberts & Zeidner, 2004). In spite of this, there remain many difficulties in establishing the claim that emotional intelligence is a viable predictor of outcomes, due to the differences in definitions and the types of measures that are used. The differences include the "reasoning ability" approach of Mayer and Salovey (1993) and the environmental adaptation approach of Goleman (1998). The various models for emotional intelligence have also led to the development of a variety of test instruments to measure emotional intelligence; these include the Mayer Salovey Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) (Mayer & Salovey, 1993), the Emotional Competency Inventory (ECI) (Goleman, 1998), and the Schutte Self Reporting Inventory (SSRI) (Schutte et al, 1998).

As a result of all these variations in approaches to the investigation of emotional intelligence, there is great uncertainty regarding the exact nature of emotional intelligence and its relationship to other attributes like IQ and self-awareness. An additional problem with the research into emotional intelligence is that the majority of these investigations have taken place in the United States, where the theoretical concept evolved. One important element of emotional intelligence is the ways cultural norms and expectations can influence an individual's understanding of emotions, and the ways in which emotional information should be processed. The psychiatric and social usefulness of emotional intelligence as a predictor of other attributes or outcomes has not been extensively tested in different cultural environments, such as the Asian, Arab or African worlds. This America-centered history is a major gap in developing evidence that emotional intelligence is a measurable concept and a universal attribute.

In short, because the concepts of emotional intelligence and emotional competence are relatively new, there is still great controversy regarding the definition of the terms and measures to be employed when testing the relationship between emotional intelligence and other attributes. As we have seen, the general concept of emotional intelligence suggests that an individual can recognize emotions in him or herself and in others, and can use that recognition as the basis for cognition and action. The implication of this theory and model is that an individual with a high level of emotional intelligence is more likely to also demonstrate a high quality of social and interpersonal relationships, and more likely to show compassion, altruism and the ability to express love and other emotions. While this claim has been tested by some researchers, there has been relatively little research into the measurable relationships of the thoughts and feelings of high EQ individuals, and other qualities such as nurturing, empathy, social engagement and moral consciousness. As we will see, the main definitions of EQ and its related capacities tend to revolve around the idea of high-EQ persons thinking and acting more effectively.

Definitions

Emotional Competency: A learned capability based on emotional intelligence that results in outstanding performance at work (Goleman, 1998).

Emotional Competency Inventory (ECI): an instrument developed by Goleman (1995; 1998) to assess emotional intelligence.

Emotional Intelligence: The ability of individuals to understand their own emotions as well as the emotions of others and to use emotions to think effectively (Mayer, & Salovey,

1997).

Mayer Salovey Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT): A test instrument intended to measure emotional intelligence with a strong focus on the ability to use emotional intelligence in practical situations (Mayer & Salovey, 1993).

Schutte Self Report Inventory (SSRI): A relatively brief emotional intelligence assessment tool composed of 33 questions and based on self-reporting (Schutte et al, 1998).

Social Intelligence: A construct similar to emotional intelligence that involves the ability to understand and act on an understanding of a social situation.

Background and Literature

The concept of emotional intelligence actually began evolving from the research of Thorndike and Stein in 1937, which proposed a new construct of "social intelligence" (Freshman & Rubino, 2004). This term was intended to describe the differences that individuals displayed in their social interactions, with some individuals possessing greater ability than others to understand and influence others. Wechsler (1940) then developed a model of intelligence that considered the dimension of intellective intelligence, which involved cognitive skills, and non-intellective intelligence, which involved a social and emotional set of skills. This model gradually evolved, with an increasing amount of evidence suggesting the existence of emotional intelligence that was different from cognitive intelligence. Mayer and Salovey (1993) engaged in research that indicated emotional intelligence involved a set of hierarchical abilities. At the top of the hierarchy is the ability to accurately perceive, assess and express emotions. This is followed by ability to generate feelings when it is necessary to understand the self or others. The next level is the ability to understand emotions, which is followed by the ability to regulate emotions. More recent research into the ability construct of emotional intelligence suggests there are as many as 24 skills or abilities associated with emotional intelligence (Freshman & Rubino, 2004). Goleman's (1998) model is very similar to that of Mayer and Salovey (1993), but focuses on competency rather than ability. Some of the more recent models postulate five *domains* that can be measured to determine the respective abilities of an individual. These domains are: interpersonal skills; intrapersonal skills; stress management; adaptability; and general mood (Hayashi, 2006).

Although the concept of emotional intelligence is different from cognitive or general intelligence, there is some evidence that emotional intelligence affects the way cognitive intelligence is used (Reiff, et al, 2001). Goleman (1995) cites a longitudinal study in which the level of impulse control or self-regulatory behavior among 4 year old children correlated to their later academic performance based on standard measures such as grade point average (GPA). There is also evidence that a higher level of emotional intelligence correlates with goal orientation and life satisfaction among adults (Martinz-Pons, 1997). A study to determine the correlation between the MSCEIT and standard cognitive ability markers has determined that "EQ" is a standard form of intelligence and can be measured if reliable test instruments are developed and validated (Reid, 2003).

There is a great deal of controversy about the various definitions and measures that should be used for the investigation of emotional intelligence due to the relatively recent development of the concept (Yoder, 2005). Mayer and Salovey (1993) developed their emotional intelligence scale, the MSCEIT, to measure emotional intelligence based on their own four component model. It is an ability-based test, which assesses the ability of individuals to perform tasks and solve emotional problems, with the output of the testing process scored to provide an assessment of the functional level for each of the four emotional intelligence components. Goleman (1998) developed the Emotional Competency Inventory (ECI), which measures the presence of various skills or competencies associated with emotional intelligence in an individual. The ECI is a proprietary assessment tool that is

primarily sold to private business, and is not often used in academic study and research. The Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-I) was developed by Bar-On (2000), and has been widely tested in the U.S. to support its validity. The EQ-I is a relatively lengthy and comprehensive test that is structured similarly to some cognitive intelligence tests. A simplified form of emotional intelligence assessment tool was developed by Schutte (Schutte et al, 1998); this is known as the Schutte Self-Report Inventory (SSRI), and has the same level of validity as the EQ-i. In addition to these three frequently used measures of emotional intelligence, there are a large number of test instruments that have been developed by researchers that have been partially or fully validated. As a result, there is little agreement regarding the specific instruments that should be used to assess emotional intelligence.

Some of the investigations of emotional intelligence, however, use qualitative methods in an attempt to broadly examine the concept, due to the uncertainty regarding the definitions, scope and methods of measurement. Yoder (2005) used an interview methodology to examine the perceptions of educational administrators on the issue of emotional intelligence. Yoder's methodology also called for each of the interviewees to take the MSCEIT prior to the interview, to provide a common experience for the interviewees with respect to their understanding of emotional intelligence. The sample size was relatively large for an interview methodology and consisted of 70 participants, with random selection used to identify potential study participants. The findings of the study indicate that emotional intelligence does not consist solely of actions or viewpoints that can be easily measured. As a result, Yoder's findings tend to support the Bar-On approach to emotional intelligence, in which EQ functions apart from cognitive processes but nonetheless can have an impact on cognition.

Studies of EQ, Social Intelligence and Leadership

The possible relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership approach the leadership component from a *transformational* perspective. Barbuto and Burbach (2006) examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership using self-reported and observer-reported data on public officials. The purpose of their study was to determine if emotional intelligence is a predictor of transformational leadership; however, the study was based on the assumption that transformational leadership is more effective than other types of leadership. The findings determined that there was a strong positive correlation between the domains of emotional intelligence and transformational leadership ability in the self-reported data, but no correlation in the data produced by the independent observers of the leaders. The researchers concluded that the difference in findings was due to a bias in the methodology, with different types of instruments used to collect data from leaders and observers. As a result, the study concluded that there is a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and the use and effectiveness of transformational leadership. The area in which there was the highest level of correlation was in the area of interpersonal skills, which supposedly resulted in more effective use of transformational leadership techniques.

Kobe, Reiter-Palmon & Rickers (2001) claimed social and emotional intelligence are overlapping concepts, with emotional intelligence influencing both leadership and social intelligence. Social intelligence implies the ability to understand and manage other people, which are viewed as an essential role of leadership. Social intelligence has been validated as a distinct construct of intelligence and can serve as a predictor of leadership behavior (Bass, 1990). Their study (Kobe et al, 2001) used the EQ-I, while social intelligence and leadership were measured with questionnaires developed for the purposes of the study. The data was analyzed by correlation; there was a positive correlation between all three constructs of social intelligence, emotional intelligence and leadership, with social intelligence and emotional intelligence functioning as predictors of leadership abilities. In addition, there was a positive correlation between social and emotional intelligence, with individuals scoring similarly in

both constructs. The authors contend, however, that the construct of emotional intelligence is not substantially different from that of social intelligence and question whether it is indeed a separate component of intelligence. This criticism basically accepts the motion that a common construct exists, looked at both externally (socially) and internally (emotionally)

Reiff et al (2001) investigated the relationship between learning disabilities and emotional intelligence among college students, with the findings indicating that students with learning disabilities have lower scores in the areas of stress management and adaptability. In addition, the findings of the study indicated that there were gender differences in the relationship between emotional intelligence and learning disabilities. The study involved a sampling of 54 college students with previous identified leaning disabilities and a control group of 78 students with a previously identified learning disability. Emotional intelligence was evaluated using the EQ-I developed by Bar-On (2000), with the findings from the study and control groups analyzed by means of MANOVA statistics. The authors contended that lower levels of emotional intelligence among students with learning disabilities suggested that they should receive additional instruction in the areas of stress management and adaptability.

The literature on emotional intelligence, its measurement and the related concepts of social and cultural intelligence is now extensive, but the construct remains nebulous and difficult to isolate, like many psychological theories. The construct has been tested, measured and analyzed, however, and there is evidence that "EQ" is closely related to positive psychological and social qualities, including empathy, altruism, leadership and social engagement. "High EQ" individuals perform better socially. At the same time, the popularity of the "emotional intelligence" concept has declined, and there is less public and academic discussion, as new themes and theories in psychology and psychiatry emerge. Golemon himself has shifted his writings to the theme of *attention* in a new work called *Focus: The Hidden Driver of Excellence* (2013), suggesting that popular interest is turning back to the old themes of leadership, social action and learning abilities and styles.

Conclusion

The psychological construct of EI or emotional intelligence gained widespread popularity and a certain degree of academic acceptance in the 1990s, but EQ or EI does not yet deserve the claim that it is a "neuroscience." Critics have objected that nearly all measures and tests of EI rely upon self-reported qualities and feelings that are subject to interaction bias, which is the tendency for subjects to present themselves in a positive or ideal social image. Some researchers have raised concerns about the extent to which self-report EI measures like the SSRI correlate with established personality dimensions, such as those within the Big Five (Gignac, 2005). Generally, self-report EI measures and personality measures have been said to converge because they both attempt to measure psychological traits and states, and because they are both measured in the self-report form; specifically, there appear to be two components of the Big Five that stand out as being most related to self-report EI – neuroticism and extraversion. In particular, "neuroticism" has been shown to relate to negative emotionality and anxiety (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

In conclusion, Emotional Intelligence was a highly popular and controversial theory when it emerged in the 1990s, and remains a viable concept despite the lack of empirical proof and reliable measurement. Whether all emotional awareness and expression amounts to "intelligence" remains open to debate. What is certain is that the new ideas of Mayer, Salovy and Golemon raised interest in the emotions as a separate category of psychological capability; this contrasts with the traditional Freudian or Behaviorist view of emotion as an expression of lack of control, or even hysteria. Further researcher into the specific basic of emotional affect in the brain would go a long way toward satisfying the criticism that EI is merely a new word for an old behavior, and a meaningless substitute for clear measures of brain-based intelligence and physiological activity

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