

THE IMPORTANCE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE
AND WHY OUR SCHOOLS NEED TO TEACH IT

by

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DEDICATION

To our future generations, I hope you find your purpose.

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ABSTRACT

Emotional intelligence has been acknowledged as a potential advancement in a person's life to reach success, not just financially but success with emotional and mental fulfillment as well. Even though emotional intelligence was narrowly 'discovered' in the 1990s, research has been on a slow, but steady route in observing the effects of emotional intelligence in children, adolescents and adults. In the thesis presented, many studies in children, adolescents and adults have been done to validate that learning emotional intelligence helps build better relationships, self-esteem and improve academic achievement. Researchers are on the right track in studying the impact emotional regulation makes, and it is imperative that our school system implements an emotional intelligence curriculum to avoid children becoming consumed with low self-worth and self-esteem issues. If more children knew how to regulate their emotions when problems arise, they will have a better hold on how to conquer obstacles instead of fighting the depression and anxiety that follows after repressing their emotions to survive. As more time goes on and more studies validate emotional intelligence as a positive influence, it is clear that teaching how to regulate and understand emotions is vital for a child to thrive and become successful in society. Children are the future, and we need to invest in them to make the world a more humbly, prosperous place to live in. No money or education could give a person internal peace, only one's emotion can in the end.

What Is Emotional Intelligence?

Emotional intelligence, a psychological theory that was developed by psychologists Peter Salovey and John Mayer in the 1990s, is the ability to perceive, understand and regulate one's own emotions and the emotions of others. Psychologist Daniel Goleman wrote a popularized book, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* about the five components of emotional intelligence which are self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills.

Emotional intelligence is generally measured by self-report tests and ability tests. In self-report tests, participants will read a statement and rate if they strongly agree, somewhat agree or strongly disagree, somewhat disagree. Ability-based tests are more involved in observing a person's response and skills to a situation, which is then rated by another person. Mental health professionals use the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence test that measures the participants ability to perceive, identify, understand, and manage emotions in situations. The Emotional and Social Competence Inventory test is also used as a self-assessment questionnaire where people will rate their emotional capabilities. This test helps evaluate emotional and social abilities for professionals to determine if they are strong, capable leaders.

How we regulate, express, identify and understand emotions and others are experienced differently (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Mikolajczak et al., 2009; Petrides & Furnham, 2003, as cited in Bayot et al. 2021). Emotional intelligence can be parted into two components: interpersonal and intrapersonal. Interpersonal skills are the ability to

process other's emotions, while intrapersonal skills are the ability to process one's own emotions. Emotional intelligence can be measured through assessment on one's behaviors, cognitions and emotions by direct observation or self-reporting (Bayot et al. 2021).

Comprehensive Well-Being

The research on emotional intelligence has a monumental, positive amount of literature behind it. The physical, psychological and social influence it has is also noted in previous research. Research indicates that higher levels of emotional intelligence impact a greater well-being (Austin, Saklofske, & Egan, 2005, as cited in Bayot et al. 2021), decrease in stress and psychological disorders (Petrides, Pérez-González, & Furnham, 2007, as cited in Bayot et al. 2021), burnout (Lindeman et al., 2017, as cited in Bayot et al. 2021) and an increase in life satisfaction (Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2014, as cited in Bayot et al. 2021). Socially, higher levels of emotional intelligence can be associated with better marital and social relationships (Malouff, Schutte, & Thorsteinsson, 2014; Petrides, Sangareau, Furnham, & Frederickson, 2006; Schutte et al., 2001, as cited in Bayot et al. 2021) and increased social support (Mikolajczak, Luminet, Leroy, & Roy, 2007, as cited in Bayot et al. 2021). Physically, higher levels of emotional intelligence are connected to stronger physical health (Martins, Ramalho, & Morin, 2010, as cited in Bayot et al. 2021).

Resiliency

People with a higher emotional understanding are more familiar in what emotions will be associated in given situations, as they can comprehend that emotions gradually change over time and they know what to expect when faced with alternating events in their lives. Due to this, when a person with a higher emotional understanding is faced with an emotionally instigated event, they are less likely to overreact with emotion. Since appraisals of the unexpected escalates emotional vehemence (Ortony, Clore, & Collins, 1988; Sonnemans & Frijda, 1995, as cited in MacCann et al. 2020) there will be less emotional consequences for people with a higher emotional understanding as they are already internally emotionally prepared for such events (MacCann et al. 2020).

Social and Mental Welfare

Previous studies argue that adolescents with elevated levels of emotional intelligence are more increasingly attentive in social interactions than those with stunted levels of emotional intelligence which can affect an adolescent's cognition either positively or negatively (Ciarrochi, Deane, & Anderson, 2002; Lopez-Zafra et al., 2019, as cited in Wang & Zhang, 2020). It is also observed that emotional intelligence improves mental health and helps alleviate societal pressure (Gong & Zhang, 2012, as cited in Wang & Zhang, 2020). There are also studies that argue that there is a positive relation between psychological perseverance and emotional intelligence (Wen, Liu, & Chen, 2014, as cited in Wang & Zhang, 2020) and can preserve a person's mental health development (Slaski & Cartwright, 2002, as cited in Wang & Zhang, 2020).

One study confirms that emotional intelligence can

positively affect one's prosocial behavior, resilience and social and communal support. The study also argues that to boost optimistic youth growth, targeting and implementing emotional intelligence is key to produce positive results (Zhao et al. 2020). One study observes that a person's socioeconomic position is correlated to preferable emotional intelligence capacities (Côté, Gyurak, & Levenson, 2010, as cited in Costa & Paria, 2020). Due to this, a person with financial difficulties can have increased discord within the family, entailing an inferior ability to handle and regulate their emotions (see Morris, Silk, Steinberg, Myers, & Robinson, 2007, for a review, as cited in Costa & Paria, 2020). Another study observes that implicit theory and emotional intelligence can predict one's educational achievement in regard to their self-awareness and psychological tendencies. It is also suggested that based on previous research as well, students' psychological and inspirational performance should be arrayed to ameliorate scholarly achievement (Costa & Paria, 2020). Many students in school face poverty and/or tumultuous family conflicts, and educational officials need to take heed in seeing how a child's economic and family situation affects them emotionally to succeed mentally and to then succeed academically.

Performance

Research argues that emotional intelligence is a stronger indicator for job performance (Ree & Earles, 1992; Salgado et al., 2003; Schmidt & Hunter, 1998, as cited in MacCann et al. 2020) and academic performance, as some have argued the emotional intelligence is the primary influence of total performance (MacCann et al. 2020). Ability-based emotional intelligence tests are used for selecting potential candidates for acceptance, indicating a standard need to make sure people are emotionally sound

(Libbrecht, Lievens, Carette, & Côté, 2014; Lievens & Sackett, 2006, as cited in MacCann et al. 2020). However, emotional intelligence testing is seldomly used in educational circumstances. It gives to the question that if emotional intelligence testing was used in all schools, would there be an evidential association present? If we knew which students were low in emotional standards, it would only be right for that student to receive more education on regulating emotion for their future's sake.

These connections seem to be casual since it has been shown that when one's emotional intelligence improves, then their physical, social and psychological adaptations improve as well (Karahana & Yalcin, 2009; Kotsou, Nelis, Grégoire, & Miko-lajczak, 2011; Nelis et al., 2011, as cited in Bayot et al. 2021). It has been noted that interpersonal EC (empathetic concern) is imperative to a parent and child's relationship for the child to thrive in their well-being (Perez-Albeniz & de Paul, 2004; Psychogiou, Daley, Thompson, & Sonuga-Barke, 2008; Soenens, Duriez, Vansteenkiste, & Goossens, 2007; Stern, Borelli, & Smiley, 2014, as cited in Bayot et al. 2021).

Coping and Trauma Advantages

PTG (posttraumatic growth) can take place when people encounter beneficial emotional changes after experiencing traumatizing and stressful incidents (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004, as cited in Thomas et al. 2020). CER (cognitive emotion regulation) strategies help one think about how they impact feasible future coping behavior and one's emotional responses. This includes adaptive strategies like positive appraisal (connecting a positive association to an event), putting events into different viewpoints, acceptance of

a situation, positive reclaiming (repositioning one's mindset to focus on the positive) and effectual problem solving (Garnefski et al., 2001, as cited in Thomas et al. 2020).

It has been observed that prominent levels of the adaptive CER strategies (acceptance and positive appraisal) were associated to PTG. Results also showed that additional CER strategies (positive reclaiming and effectual problem solving) are linked with PTG in association to increased emotional intelligence. Since emotional intelligence can be managed (Schutte, Malouff, & Thorsteinsson, 2013, as cited in Thomas et al. 2020) and psychoeducation are included in these CER strategies, it can be argued that emotional intelligence is beneficial for those who have experienced highly stressful, traumatic events. Emotional intelligence has been noted to provide positive outcomes (Armstrong et al., 2011; Sa`nchez-Álvarez et al., 2016, as cited in Thomas et al. 2020), so interceding to enhance emotional intelligence may encourage growth and nurture other elements of one's well-being and health for trauma survivors, not including PTG association (Thomas et al. 2020).

Technological Influence

Adolescents are quite affected to emotionally induced events (Berman, 2018, as cited in Arrivillaga et al. 2020). As technology has been a vital outlet to most, many adolescents have difficulties handling a variety of emotions which can cause them to repress such emotions, and they will likely turn to the internet or their smartphone to avoid stress. If this becomes a repeated determined factor, the repression of emotions could lead them to a dysfunctional coping style and in turn never obtain the needed coping skills to deal with stressful or traumatic events in the future (e.g. Durkee,

Hadlaczky, Weterlund & Carli, 2011; Gansner et al., 2019, as cited in Arrivillaga et al. 2020).

Research has argued that emotional intelligence improves suicide prevention in adolescents with high technology and internet usage. It is suggested in their findings that emotional intelligence can be reinforced by educating adolescents on emotional rationality and problem-solving skills (Mayer et al., 2016, as cited in Arrivillaga et al. 2020) and has been demonstrated in different environments (Hodzic, Scharfen, Ripoll, Holling, & Zenasni, 2018; Kotsou, Mikolajczak, Heeren, Gregoire, & Leys, 2019; Mattingly & Kraiger, 2019, as cited in Arrivillaga et al. 2020). Educational and mental health practitioners and researchers could plan and execute emotional intelligence intercessions to assist adolescents in learning to cope with mental and emotional stress that leads to suicidal impressions (Klonsky, May, & Saffer, 2016, as cited in Arrivillaga et al. 2020).

Emotional Intelligence in School Programs

It has been agreed through research findings that emotionally intelligent people have a healthier well-being and excel better in their jobs. Many researchers, educators and policymakers agree that emotional intelligence is an imperative skill for all students to prosperously advance for their future and success. Evidence concludes that emotional and social programs in school are effectually successful (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011, as cited in MacCann et al. 2020), with implications that noncognitive conceptions are academically influential in a student's performance (Poropat, 2009; Richardson, Abraham, & Bond, 2012, as cited in MacCann et al. 2020).

In saying this, even though there is not an extensive meta-analysis exploring the magnitude of emotional intelligence being correlated with academic performance, but it seems to be underway.

It has been noted that emotional intelligence associated programs have been more successful if they followed a progressive, gradual approach, with allowing sufficient time for competent development, used operative arrangements of learning and had clear learning objectives, (Durlak et al., 2011 as cited in MacCann et al. 2020). Perera and DiGiacomo (2013, as cited in MacCann et al. 2020) observed a robust effect of emotional intelligence on academic achievement in elementary school students compared to university students but noted ability-based emotional intelligence testing was not evaluated. However, Poropat (2009, as cited in MacCann et al. 2020) found notably influential associations between academic achievement and conscientiousness at premature stages of education. This observation suggests that self-control processes like emotional intelligence are a likely determining factor in one's early educational development and achievement.

Students with very limited emotional competence are more likely to have conduct difficulties and higher levels of anxieties with refusal to go to school, and will have a harder time resisting peer pressure, as this shows that learning to regulate emotions at an earlier level will likely determine how a student succeeds academically (MacCann et al. 2020). There is evidence that emotional intelligence may be more highly influential in males compared to females (Brackett et al., 2006; Brackett, Warner, & Bosco, 2005, as cited in MacCann et al. 2020). It has also been observed that females and males encounter emotions differently, as females experience more internal anxiety than males,

while males experience more external anger than females (Chaplin & Aldao, 2013; Fischer, Rodriguez Mosquera, van Vianen, & Manstead, 2004, as cited in MacCann et al. 2020). Uncontrollable anger can cause more damage to educational achievement than anxiety (Pekrun et al., 2002, 2009, as cited in MacCann et al. 2020), so it may be more favorable for males to strive for a higher emotional intelligence to cease consequential means. It has also been observed that higher emotional intelligence is associated to establishing communal relationships in a school setting. Also, it was noted that ability emotion intelligence resulted in more highly attributed social interconnections with others (Lopes et al., 2004; Lopes, Salovey, Coté, Beers, & Petty, 2005, as cited in MacCann et al. 2020).

There is evidence from the RULER Feeling Words curriculum (a developmental emotional intelligence program for secondary school students) that emotional intelligence training programs improve grades while also increasing one's emotional and social capabilities when compared to control groups (Brackett, Rivers, Reyes, & Salovey, 2012, as cited in MacCann et al. 2020). It has been argued that schools are successfully equipped to advocate social-emotional resiliency (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Jones, Brown, & Aber, 2011; Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004, as cited in Castro-Olivo et al. 2016) with amalgamation of positive emotional-social knowledge and capabilities, managing skills, acceptance of relationships and peers and problem-solving means. There is evidence that shows that increased levels of emotional-social abilities are connected to decreased levels of destructive behaviors like poor attendance or dropping out in school, alcohol and drug abuse, conduct difficulties,

and enhanced academic achievements (Ali, Dwyer, Vanner, & Lopez, 2010; Durlak et al., 2011; Najaka, Gottfredson, & Wilson, 2001, as cited in Castro-Olivo et al. 2016).

A study shows that emotional intelligence can decrease an adolescent's perception of body dissatisfaction and argues it would be beneficial for social-emotional programs to implement emotional intelligence practices to positively support adolescents' autonomy and self-esteem (Petrides et al. 2016, as cited in Gugliandolo et al. 2020). Another study concluded that emotional intelligence played a factor in academic achievement among adolescents. In testing the student's emotional intelligence, it was observed that students who were academically successful scored higher than those who were in the unsuccessful group (Gangolu, 2020). It was also suggested that students who were unsuccessful and low in emotional intelligence lacked scholastic inspiration and encouragement (Drago, 2004, as cited in Gangolu, 2020).

It has been noted in one study that older adolescents and girls scored higher than most on emotional intelligence testing, as there were notable changes in emotional intelligence in the 18 months' interval as considered by result-based apparatus. The study concluded that emotional intelligence varied by gender in early adolescence (Čikeš & Buško, 2020). Emotional intelligence research on children and adolescents are overall sparse (Billings, Downey, Lomas, Lloyd, & Stough, 2014, as cited in Čikeš & Buško, 2020) adding that a majority of studies apply ability-based representations. Due to lack of methodological empirical evidence on the youth, there is also a paucity of emotional intelligence measures associated as well that needs addressing (Čikeš & Buško, 2020).

Final Thoughts

I believe it's imperative to teach kids about emotional regulation at an early age, as some kids don't confide in teachers or peers about their home or personal situations due to embarrassment or other circumstances. If kids are given the correct tools to deal with their emotions, I believe there's a better chance of them succeeding academically higher than average. As stated earlier, research indicated that technology has been an outlet for children & adolescents in stressful situations, this causes kids to repress their emotions and not deal with them in a healthy way. This will in turn make children develop maladaptive coping skills that will affect their entire future and their relationships. Children's brains aren't fully developed, so it's crucial for them to learn how to deal with their emotions when they arise for better autonomy and self-esteem. Since emotional intelligence can be reinforced by educating children and adolescents on emotional rationality and problem-solving skills, it may alleviate hostility and bullying. If more kids learned about this then there might be a decline in aggressive behavior in schools and even in general.

The main question that is asked is, "Aren't parents supposed to be teaching their children how to deal with emotions? Why should schools have to?". While I agree that parents should be the ones teaching their children how to deal with their emotions, not every child grows up in a good home. Sadly, there is hidden abuse that children grow up in, and some children think it's normal to be abused and neglected. All kids need to know what healthy emotions and boundaries are and what they look like, and how to recognize what isn't healthy. The education system needs understand that while it's important for schools to teach children how to academically succeed, if kids are emotionally unwell,

there is no successful reality for these kids. There are many people that have financially succeeded in their lives but commit suicide due to internal factors like depression.

Although education reform is not easy to change, it is crucial for us as a society to understand how important emotions play in our everyday lives. If children were given the right direction in how to perceive and understand their emotions and others, there will likely be less despondency, animosity and violence in the future and for generations to come. We take our education seriously, but emotions are a key factor in succeeding in life. Financial means can only make a person happy temporarily, as they still search for the next best thing to satisfy them, when in the end it's our internal state that needs to be well sound for true happiness. We need to invest in our children; they are our future, and we will depend on them when we grow older. We want our younger generations to be more successful than us, and I think implementing emotional intelligence in the school system would be beneficial for all of us in the end. I believe it could create more unity and less division, more love and less hate, and could increase more peace within all of us.

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