

## Emotional Intelligence as a Predictor of Sense of Humor and Hope among Adults

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The present study investigated the role of Emotional intelligence in predicting a sense of humor and hope among adults. A convenience sample of 220 adults (20-35years) was taken from Sargodha' men (n=110), and women (n=110), were given the equal representation in the sample. Emotional Quotient Inventory, Multidimensional Sense of Humor Scale and Adult Dispositional Hope Scale were used to measure the emotional intelligence, sense of humor and hope respectively. Simple Linear Regression analysis revealed that emotional intelligence is a significant predictor of hope while non-significant predictor of sense of humor. Moreover stepwise regression revealed that only appreciation of humor is significant predictor of emotional intelligence. Significant gender differences were found in hope and agency subscale of hope and finding revealed that level of hope and agency subscale of hope is higher among men as compared to women. Furthermore t- test indicated that there is no effect of gender on sense of humor and emotional intelligence. Practical implications and limitations and suggestions are discussed.

**Keywords:**Emotional Intelligence, Sense of humor, hope, adults

Emotions give sense about the rationality of actions and provide guidance if a specific behavior will be fruitful or not (Matthews, Zeidner, & Roberts, 2002). According to Mackin, (2006) in order to increase thinking and reasoning capabilities, a person needs emotions or sentiments. If an individual blocks emotions, he will lose the ability of logic, creativity and motivation to perform in a particular situation. Emotions are thought to be a complicated and rich form of knowledge and reasoning and this type of reasoning is known as emotional intelligence. Individuals who have high level of emotional intelligence can interact with community in affectionate and lively manner, adhere, resolve conflicts, manage their drives and can deal with self-encouragement and hope (Goleman, 1995). The present study is aimed at finding out predictability of sense of humor and hope on the basis of emotional intelligence of individuals.

Tugade and Fredrickson (2001) explained that highly emotionally intelligent people perform successfully in a social circle. Such people have

an ability to understand positive sentiments and can use these sentiments to deal effectively with negative stimuli. They can also use positive emotions to direct the goals and motivation towards goals. Hence, such people are optimistic and hopeful. Previous research indicates that emotional intelligence has an association with hope that helps to have an optimistic outlook on future life (Grayson, 2008).

Hope is a mindset that is based on reciprocally resulting sense of successful (1) agency (will power to achieve goals) and (2) pathways (forecasting the ways to meet goals). Both are needed for positive thinking. Agency can also be described as an individual's motivation about his/her personal success linked with the realization of goals. Pathway refers to a person's cognitive ability to make a plan about personal goals and make strategies to overcome obstacles in the pursuit of goals (Louis, 2008). Although these both components are reciprocal, additive and closely related with each other but they are not synonymous (Snyder et al., 1991).

Hope is closely linked with emotional intelligence, because people who have low level of hope are unable to adjust mentally and thus emotionally, they have no ability to learn from their failure, thus cannot make future better (Michael, 2000; & Snyder, 1999). Researches also proved that people with high level of hope shows emotional passion, while those with lower level of hope show emotional tiredness (Snyder, 2000).

Hope and emotional intelligence are valuable traits for leading a practical and professional life. Taksic and Mohoric (2006) proved the role of emotional intelligence in positive outcomes of life through their findings, which indicated significant relation of emotional intelligence with, coping with stress, maintaining positive mood, openness and many other important aspects of human life. While emotional intelligence helps to maintain positive mood, it has also found to be associated with sense of humor, which assist to cope with stress and emotional expression.

As emotional intelligence is specialized to substitute positive emotions for negative ones, sense of humor also changes a person's mood. Furthermore, it has been revealed that four humor styles are also related with five traits of emotional intelligence. It was also noted that a positive humor style is related with high level of emotional intelligence, if only an individual has desire to understand emotions of himself and others. On the other hand, people who use negative styles of humor may also have lower level of emotional intelligence, but don't have awareness and understanding of emotions (Vernon, et al., 2009).

Simpson and Weiner (1989) describe humor as choice of actions, communication or address, which provokes entertainment, happiness, joyfulness, wittiness and enjoyment. According to Thorson and Powell (1993), there are a number of characteristics that should be present in an individual to be humorous i.e., production and social use of humor, appreciation of humor, negation to use humor, attitude towards humor and adaptive humor. Emotional intelligence has always seen to be related with humor's each form. It is the reason that researches find out

positive relationship between self-enhancing humor and emotional intelligence, while negative relationship between self-defeating humor and emotional intelligence (Yip & Martin, 2006). Researchers noticed that humor has relationship with emotional intelligence whether positive or negative it depends on the kind of humor (Karouei, Doosti, Dehshiri, & Heidari, 2008). Fernandez (2011) on the basis of his research proposed sense of humor as a strong essential subset of emotional intelligence.

Numerous studies have explored genetic and environmental bases for this relationship. Strong evidence for the link between emotional intelligence and humor has been investigated by researchers, who assure genetic and environmental factors of correlation between sense of humor's styles and emotional intelligence. In this study the researchers investigated significant relationship between humor styles and five traits of emotional intelligence (Vernonet al., 2009).

A previous study found that people who are high in sense of humor are more optimistic (Thorsen, Powell, Sarmany, Schuller, & Hampes, 1997). Kuiper, Martin, and Dance (1992), also indicated that those who have greater sense of humor possess a more optimistic approach towards life. Westburg and Martin (2003) noted that using laughter and humor to cope with life difficulties and increasing hope is very important in elderly age. The researcher found high degree of relationship between laughter and hope. The link between humor and hope also enlighten by an experimental study. The participants completed Synder state hope scale before and after viewing either humorous or neutral videos. Results show a noticeable increase in hopefulness after watching humorous videos than control group after viewing the neutral video. Thus it shows a significant effect of humor on hope (Vilaythong, Arnal, Rosen, & Mascargo, 2003).

Emotional intelligence is one of the most widely studied phenomenon and is greatly influenced by gender and age. Old adults gain a higher score in level of emotional intelligence than young adults and by conforming effect of

gender they found women, more emotionally intelligent than men (Bastian, 2005). ). The researcher found a high level of emotional intelligence in men than women. In the same way, Ahmed, Bangash and Khan (2009) and Kaneez (2006) revealed gender differences in emotional intelligence. Katyal and Awasthi, (2005) also found higher level of emotional intelligence in girls than boys.

Gender-related differences are more common with respect to styles and types of humor. The researchers have found that rate of enjoyment for aggressive humor is high in men as compared to women (Crawford, & Gressly, 1991). It has been noted that women choose to use cheerful humor style for coping with life difficulties whereas men do not (Fuhr, 2002). While researches report non-significant gender differences with reference to appreciation of humor (Borges et al., 1980). Mickes, Hoffman, Parris, Mankof, and Christenfeld (2012) in their research by exploring gender differences under specific experimental conditions found men more humorous than women

Significant gender differences in level of hope have also been pointed out by many researchers. It has been noted that hope level for women is less than the level of men and this difference increases with age (Steinberg; & Morris, 2001; Larson, et al; 2002). Heaven and Ciarrochi (2008) also investigated the effect of gender by conducting a longitudinal study. The findings show that women are generally higher in level of hope than men.

The current study has aimed to expand our knowledge about relationship among emotional intelligence, hope and sense of humor as all the variables share the same nature. Furthermore, age and gender differences were also explored regarding all the variables of the study.

### **Hypotheses:**

1. Emotional intelligence would be a significant predictor of sense of humor and hope.
2. Sense of humor and level of hope would be positively correlated with each other.
3. Level of hope would be higher among men as compared to women.

4. Sense of humor would be higher among men as compared to women.
5. Emotional intelligence would be higher among men as compared to women.

### **Method**

#### **Sample:**

A convenience sample of 220 young adults was (20-35years) with mean age of 27.5 years (SD = 7.5) were taken from Sargodha city, furthermore men (n=110), and women (n=110), were given equal representation in the sample. All the participants were from the middle socioeconomic class. The criterion of literacy for all the respondents was minimum graduation.

#### **Instruments:**

*Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-I;* Bar-On, 1996). It was used to measure level of emotional intelligence that is specially designed to measure emotional intelligence among adults. It is based on 125 items that measure 15 conceptual components of emotional intelligence. Which are organized into five subscales intrapersonal scale (39), interpersonal scale (21), stress management scale (18), adaptability scale (24), general (15) and positive impression scale (08). The response format is "not true", rarely true", "sometimes true", often true" and "true of me". Below than 85 scores on Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory are considered low, while greater than 115 is considered high score. Standard score on this scale is 100. Internal reliability coefficient is high for all of the subscales, ranging from .69 to .86, and the overall average internal consistency for complete inventory was .76 (Bar-On, 2004).

*Multidimensional Sense of Humor Scale (MSHS;* Thorson, & Powell, 1993). It contains 24 statements that respondents rate on a five-point Likert scale from 0 = strongly disagree, 1 = disagree, 2 = neutral, 3 = agree, to 4 = strongly agree. Eighteen statements are positively-phrased and six are negatively-phrased to control for response-set bias. Negative items (item no 4, 8, 11, 13, 17 and 20) are reversed in the scoring, blanks are scored as neutrals and will be scored as 2. Addition of scores on all the items gives the total score of individuals on

humor scale. Thus the range of scores is 0 to 96 and higher the scorer higher will be humor level of individuals. MSHS takes maximum ten minutes to complete it. In addition to an overall Sense of Humor score, MSHS measures four different dimensions of sense of humor: (1) humor creation and performance (7 items) (e.g., "sometime I think up jokes and funny stories"), (2) uses of humor as a coping mechanism (7 items) (e.g., "uses of humor and wit help me to master difficult situations"), (3) social uses of humor(5 items) (e.g., "I use humor to entertain my friends"), and (4) attitude about humor and humorous people( 5 items) (e.g., "people who tell joke are a pain in the neck"). The reliability of MSHS is highly significant ( $\alpha = .92$ ) (Kohler & Ruch, 1996).

*Adult Dispositional Hope Scale* (ADHS; Snyder et al, 1991). It was used to measure the level of hope of participants. It comprised 12 items and was designed to measure agency and pathway trait. Thus, it is divided into four items for agency (2, 9, 10, & 12), 4 items for pathway (1, 4, 6, & 8) and the remaining 4 items (3, 5, 7, & 11) are distracters, which are not used for scoring. Scoring can range from 8-64. The ADHS has demonstrated strong Cronbach's alpha reliability of .74 to .84 for overall hope, .71 to .76 for agency thoughts and .63 to .80 for pathway thoughts. The scale demonstrates test-retest correlation of .80 at 10 weeks or larger interval (Snyder et al, 1991).

### Procedure:

All the participants were personally contacted for data collection. Before administering Emotional

Quotient Inventory (EQ-i), Multidimensional Sense of Humor Scale (MSHS) and Adult Dispositional Hope Scale, the participants were briefed about the objectives and usefulness of the study. Personal information of participants was acquired through demographic sheet and the confidentiality of their information was ensured. The participants were asked to fill all these measures according to the mentioned instructions on these three scales. Participants were thanked for their cooperation in the study.

### Results

Data analysis indicates a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and hope ( $r = .28, p < 0.01$ ), which support the hypothesis of present study. While correlation analysis has revealed non-significant relationship between emotional intelligence and sense of humor( $r = .10, p = n.s$ ). Results also show non-significant relation between humor and hope ( $r = .102, p = n.s$ ).

Correlation analysis indicated that people, who are emotionally intelligent, are not humorous always but in order to know whether any subscale of humor is predictor of Emotional intelligence step wise regression was computed. Table 1 reveals that appreciation of humor subscale of Multidimensional Sense of Humor scale is the only significant predictor of Emotional intelligence  $F(1, 219) = p < .01$ , with ( $\beta = .18, t = 2.82, p < .01$ ) with  $R = .18, R^2 = .03$ . Which explain 18% of total variance.

**Table 1. Predictors of Emotional intelligence among subscales of humor (N = 220)**

Predictors	$\Delta R^2$	B	SE	$\beta$	t
Step 1	.031				
Appreciation of humor		6.36	2.253	.18**	2.82

\*\* $p < .01$

**Table 2. Simple regression analysis for the predictor variable of Hope (N=220)**

predictors	B	SE	$\beta$	t
Constant	260.955	21.266		
Emotional intelligence	2.1	.440	.31	4.78***

\*\*\* $p < .001, R = .31, R^2 = .09, \Delta R^2 = .10$

Table 2 indicates hope as significant predictor of emotional intelligence. Results indicated that model is significant {  $F(1, 210) = 22.91, p < .001$  } at  $(\beta = .31, t = 4.78, p < .001)$  with  $R = .31, R^2 = .09$ . Which explain 31% of variance in emotional intelligence by hope.

Furthermore results also show gender differences in emotional intelligence, sense of humor, hope and agency subscale of hope. Independent sample t test revealed that there are non significant gender differences in emotional intelligence and sense of humor among adults. Furthermore significant gender differences were found in level of hope  $t(218) = 2.05, p < .05$  and Mean and standard deviation revealed that men are high in total hope level ( $M = 48.80, SD = (7.94)$ ), as compare to women ( $M = 46.58, SD = 8.07$ ). t test also revealed that there are significant gender differences in agency subscale of hope  $t(218) = 3.00, p < .001$  as men scored high on agency subscale ( $M = 24.95, SD = 4.35$ ) as compared to women ( $M = 23.00, SD = 5.25$ )

### Discussion

The analysis of data revealed that emotional intelligence is a significant predictor of hope and these results are in support of first hypothesis of the study. Findings of this study are in line with the study of Huy (1999), which revealed a strong relationship between emotional intelligence and hope. Ortony, Clore and Collins (1988), also showed similar findings as they indicated that there is a strong relation between emotional intelligence and hope. The logic behind these results might be the fact that high level of emotional intelligence trigger positive aspects of our thoughts and thus could contribute to hope, which is the name of positive and optimistic approach for the future plans and goals. Another reason for the association between these two variables can be the uncertain and ambiguous situations of modern life. So the person, who is able to manage his/her emotion in such ambivalent situation, may also be motivated and hopeful about their future.

Further analysis of the study has also showed that emotional intelligence is not

related with sense of humor. These results are contrary to the hypothesis of the present study but are compatible with the findings of Teehan and Robert (2006), who designed a research to find out relationship between emotional intelligence and sense of humor by establishing non-experimental correlation research and the results found no relationship between these two variables. The sense of humor is the trait related to entertainment and enjoyment, and there are many types of humor that are based on to pinpoint or humiliation of other's. On the

Other hand emotional intelligence is considered a more mature phenomenon, which is thought to respect and manage emotions. On the basis of these contradictory aspects, no relationship among these variable can be acceptable.

Another justification of non-significant relation between these two traits may be that, humor is used as an element of communication and it is the name of overt expression of feelings. Especially in Pakistani culture, humor is mostly used in order to cope with stress as a form of defense mechanism. On the other hand, emotional intelligence allows more problem focused and emotion focused problem solving. It helps to regulate and utilize emotion except to overly express them. Therefore these both traits cannot be related with each other. Another reason can be the fact that the results are calculated on the basis of participant's self-reported estimate of emotional intelligence and use of humor. They do not provide evidence of actual behaving of individuals in real life situations. That is why it seems possible that self-reported responses may cause non-significant association among emotional intelligence and humor.

Further findings indicated that doubt total humor score is not related with the emotional intelligence but appreciation of humor, which is one of the subscales of Multidimensional Sense of Humor Scale (MSHS) is a significant predictor of emotional intelligence (see Table 1 ). It is noted that appreciation of humor is positively related with Emotional intelligence. The reason may be that appreciation of humor involves both cognitive

and affective dimensions (Gardner, Ling, Flamm, & Silverman., 1975) as emotional intelligence is related to cognitive control over affects. Another reason may be that people who appreciate humor actually understand the ideas of a humorous person and then regulate their affect according to the demanded situation and thus laugh. In the same way emotional intelligence involves understanding other's feelings and regulating one's own feeling as needed.

Analysis of data revealed non-significant gender differences in Emotional intelligence and these results are against the hypothesis of the study. These results are supported by a research that also found non- significant gender differences in emotional intelligence (Martin & Kuiper, 1999). Another study justifies our findings, showing no gender differences in level of Emotional intelligence (Abdullah, 2006). Nasir and Masrur (2010) observed no effect of gender on Emotional intelligence. The reason may be that previously women mostly used to live in houses, and to take care their family and home was their only responsibility, but now the trend has been changed. The number of both men and women is equal in practical and professional fields. Thus both face similar life challenges and difficulties. Therefore they have similar emotions and emotional understanding. Emotional intelligence was equally distributed between men and women, contrary to the common stereotype, that women are more emotionally intelligent than men. According to the researchers gender differences are more likely to vary with reference to culture (Fischer, Mosquera, Vianen, & Monstead, 2004). Thus as the culture differ gender differences are probable to change. Therefore it is possible that in Pakistan no gender differences exist with respect to emotional intelligence.

Results of the current study showed non-significant gender differences in humor and these findings are against the hypothesis of the study i.e. sense of humor would be higher among men as compare to women". results are consistent with Crawford and Gressley (1991) who indicated that overall on all the subscales of humor men and women are equal, non-significant differences were found on humor

production, enjoyment of cartoons, enjoyment of sexual humor and impulsive laughing on jokes. McGee and Shevlin (2009) also reported non-significant relationship between gender and humor and mentioned that Culture does effect on the use of humor with respect to gender (Nevo & Nevo, 2001). The results are also supported by another study conducted by Ghayas (2010), who revealed that men and women don not differ in their level of humor.

Data analysis further revealed gender differences in hope and agency subscale of hope and these results are in line with the hypothesis of the study which was i.e., men will be more hopeful as compare to women. Findings of Chang (2003) are in line with our results. Dipietro, Welsh, Raven and Server (2007), also reported men having high level of hope than women. The reason of gender differences lies in our Pakistani culture, where men receive more opportunity for their careers as compare to women. Therefore they are more optimistic about their future. In another study the researcher find the similar results while examining level of hope in parents. The findings reported mothers low in hope as compare to men and level of agency was high among men as compared to women. (Kashdan, Pelham, Lang, Hoza, Jacob, Jennings, Blumenthol, & Gangy., 2002).

### **Limitations and Suggestions**

The study includes some limitations that should be addressed in future researches. A small sample of only literate individuals barely allows for true representation of whole population. Thus, for future exploration, it is suggested to use large number of sample with wider age range. On the other hand future research should also allow participation of illiterate individuals as well, so that the results can be generalize on broad level. Use of self-reported measure is another limitation of present study. It seems reasonable to suppose that participants have given biased and socially desirable response therefore findings do not reflect people's most everyday use of humor, hope and emotional intelligence. So attention should be given to use performance tools to get better idea of these traits.

## Practical Implications

The findings of the current study can be fruitful for the researchers, psychologists, and counselors to better understand the role and nature of emotional intelligence humor and hope. It would be helpful for understanding the basic reasons which are working behind the low level of hope among women which might be one of factor behind different psychological problems for which women are already vulnerable.

## Conclusion

From this research, it is concluded that emotionally intelligent people are also more hopeful while it is not necessary that they are humorous. Research demonstrates that people with high level of emotional intelligence are able to appreciate humor but do not have ability of social use of humor, humor production, negation to use humor, adaptive humor and attitude towards humor. The study demonstrates that gender did not play an important role in determining the relationship among emotional intelligence, and sense of humor in adults. But men are found to have high level of hope as compare to women. On the other hand, both men and women were found to be equal in sense of humor and emotional intelligence.

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