Emotional Intelligence and Life Satisfaction: Re-examining the Link and Mediating Role of Affectivity and Personality in India

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This study re-examines whether the life satisfaction-emotional intelligence linkage observed in predominantly individualistic western cultural context is generalizable in predominantly eastern collectivistic cultural context of India after controlling for affectivity and personality traits of five factor personality theory. Three hundred young adult participants responded to the scales of the emotional intelligence, life satisfaction, affectivity, and personality. Results indicated that life satisfaction's correlation with emotional intelligence is generalizable across the cultures but unlike earlier findings the association is not independent of affectivity or personality (neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness).

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Life satisfaction, Affectivity, Personality

Although a of attention has been paid in the recent years to the idea of emotional intelligence no one still knows what exactly is emotional intelligence. Just like in the case of general intelligence there are multiple perspectives on emotional intelligence. In particular, there are ability and mixed models of emotional intelligence (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2000) in which the former talks about the integration of emotion and intelligence while the latter talks about the integration of emotional ability and personality traits that are already well-studied in the field of psychology (McCrae, 2000). Ability model of emotional intelligence as defined by Mayer and Salovey (1997) includes four interrelated dimensions, that is, identification, understanding, using, and regulation of emotions.

Ability measure: After several revisions the latest test available for the measurement of these four dimensions of emotional intelligence is the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional intelligence Test (MSCEIT version 2; Mayer et al., 2002). Past research has shown that these four dimensions are reliably measured with convergent, divergent, and incremental validity evidences across studies (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004). For instance, overall emotional intelligence measured by this test explained a significant and moderate to large amount of unique variance for positive relations with others and alcohol use after controlling for personality and cognitive ability (Rossen & Kranzler, 2009). The MSCEIT was predictive of social deviance after personality (openness and agreeableness) and verbal intelligence were held constant (Brackett & Mayer, 2003). Emotion regulation ability measured by the MSCEIT was correlated with several indicators of quality of social interaction (interpersonal sensitivity, prosocial tendencies, the proportions of positive versus negative peer nominations, and reciprocal friendship nominations) after controlling for Big Five personality, verbal and fluid intelligence (Lopes, Salovey, Cote, & Beers, 2005).

Self-report measure: The competing and widely used measures of self-reported emotional intelligence include Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQi; Bar-On, 1997) and

Schutte et al. Emotional Intelligence (SEIS; Schutte, Malouff, Hall, Haggerty, Cooper, Golden, & Dornheim, 1998). The former has conceptual correspondence with Five Factor theory of personality (McCrae, 2000). The latter is based on the original definition of emotional intelligence as suggested by Salovey and Mayer (1990). The EQi and SEIS are moderately related to each other but these two are minimally related to the MSCEIT, so the three scales are measuring different aspects of the same person (Brackett & Mayer, 2003).

Rationale for the Selection of the Measure of Emotional Intelligence: Although the MSCEIT seems more promising as a measure of emotional intelligence it was not considered suitable for the present Indian study for few reasons. First, the scoring key in the MSCEIT was decided by either consensus of a large sample drawn predominantly from the West or expert opinion of 21 emotion researchers who are members of the International Society of Emotion Researcher. The ethnicity of the emotion expert is not known. The names of the characters in many emotion-related items were non-Indian and all the facial expressions included were also non-Indian. So, the less familiarity of the items in the test contents among the Indians could lead to low scores of the respondents and psychometric complexities of the test in terms of unsuitable scoring key, reliability, and validity issues. So, this test was not considered suitable in the present study. On the other hand, the SEIS has been widely used in Indian study and found to be at least internally consistent across studies (e.g., Joshi & Thingujam, 2009). So, it was decided to use this scale. However, the SEIS is not considered as type of intelligence measurement, instead it would be treated as individual's perception of emotional intelligence.

Emotional Intelligence and Life Satisfaction: Existing literature show that clarity of feelings component of emotional intelligence as measured by a modified version of Trait-Meta Mood Scale (TMMS; Salovey, Mayer, Goldman, Turvey, & Palfai, 1995) was positively and significantly correlated with satisfaction with life (Palmer, Donaldson, & Stough, 2002). Palmer et al. believe that the clarity of feeling subscale is indexed as perceived ability to understand and discriminate between moods and emotions. Further, Palmer et al. found that the clarity sub-scale predicted life satisfaction after controlling for positive and negative affect. In a different study, Thompson, Waltz, Croyle, and Pepper (2007) reported that satisfaction with life was positively and significantly correlated with all the three subscales of TMMS, that is, attention to feelings, clarity of moods, and mood repair. They further found that only the mood repair subscale predicted life satisfaction. Yet, in a different study, Extremera and Ferna´ndez-Berrocal (2005) found that life satisfaction was significantly and positively correlated with clarity of emotions and mood repair subscales of Trait-Meta Mood Scale, but insignificant and negative correlation was observed with attention to moods. Only the clarity of mood subscale predicted life satisfaction. Using a different measure of emotional intelligence, Gannon and Ranzijn (2005) reported that life satisfaction was found to be positively and significantly correlated with all the subscales of emotional intelligence, that is, a) emotional recognition and expression, b) understanding of emotions external, c) emotions direct cognition, d) emotional management, and e) emotional control; the strongest correlation was with the last two subscales. However, only emotional management subscale predicted life satisfaction. In a different approach, life satisfaction's significant and positive correlation with emotional intelligence was reported by Brackett, Rivers, Shiffman, Lerner, and Salovey (2006). In particular, Brackett and colleagues found that overall emotional intelligence (perceiving, using,

understanding, and regulating emotions) as assessed by ability test and self-report on the basis of the Mayer and Salovey (1997) model was found to be positively and significantly correlated with life satisfaction.

It is observed that the relationship between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction is positive and generally significant although there are mixed results in the association at the subscale levels of emotional intelligence. One possible reason for the different finding is the use of different measures of life satisfaction. Palmer, Donaldson, Stough (2002), Extremera and Ferna´ndez-Berrocal (2005), Gannon and Ranzijn (2005), and Brackett et al. (2006) used satisfaction with life scale developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985 whereas Thompson et al. used a different scale, Extended Satisfaction with Life Scale (Alfonso, Allison, Rader, & Gorman, 1996). Similarly, four different emotional intelligence scales were used by the researchers. In particular, Gannon and Ranzijn (2005) used Swinburne University Emotional Intelligence Test (SUEIT; Palmer & Stough, 2001). Brackett et al. (2006) used a self-report scale developed by them for their own study and Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2002) while the rest of the researchers mentioned above used Trait Meta-Mood Scale (Salovey et al., 1995).

Role of Personality and Affectivity: The role of personality and affectivity in emotional intelligence's linkage with life satisfaction has examined in some earlier studies mentioned above. In particular, Palmer, Donaldson, and Stough (2002) reported that clarity of feeling's correlation with life satisfaction was independent of positive and negative affect. Extremera and Ferna´ndez-Berrocal (2005) found that clarity of feeling's correlation with life satisfaction was over and above mood states (depression) and personality (neuroticism). Gannon and Ranzijn (2005)

provided evidence that life satisfaction was explained by emotional management dimension of emotional intelligence over and above personality traits (Neuroticism, Conscientiousness, and Extraversion) and some demographic variables. However, no one has yet examined the life satisfaction-emotional intelligence linkage in collectivistic cultural contexts such as India.

It was hypothesized in the present study that emotional intelligence assessed by the Schutte emotional intelligence scale (SEIS; Schutte et al., 1998) and its subscales (Ciarrochi, Deane, & Anderson, 2002) are correlated positively with life satisfaction. Further, it was hypothesized that the relationship is independent of affectivity and personality traits. Findings of this study will throw some light in the area of generalizability of life satisfaction's relation to emotional intelligence across the cultures within the personality perspective, not intelligence perspective.

Method

Sample:

Three hundred participants (Mean age = 22.95, SD = 2.86) who were in the age range of 18 to 30 years formed the sample for the present study. There were 152 male and 148 female. The participants who were all nationalities of India reported a minimum of 3 on a 7-point scale of the level of English proficiency with "7" expressing completely fluent and "1" as "not at all fluent". The mean English proficiency was 5.45 and SD was 1.14. The test was administered either in small groups in the classrooms or distributed individually after giving instructions and the filled up questionnaires were returned after one or two weeks.

Measure:

a) Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale (Schutte et al., 1998): It is a 33-item scale to be responded to on a 5-point scale ranging

from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". Further, four subscales as identified by Ciarrochi, Deane, & Anderson (2002) were included. The subscales are: perception of emotion, managing others' emotions, managing self-relevant emotions, and utilizing emotions. Higher score indicated higher emotional intelligence.

b) *Satisfaction with Life Scale* (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985): It is a 5-item scale to be responded to on a 7-point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". Higher score indicated higher satisfaction with life. It is a widely used scale and psychometric properties are satisfactory.

c) *Positive and Negative Affect Scale* (PANAS; Watson & Clark, 1994): It is a 20-item scale to be responded to on a 5-point scale ranging from "very slightly or not at all" to "extremely" on the basis of to what extent the respondents have felt the particular affect *in general*. The scale is divided into two subscales, that is, positive affect and negative affect. Higher score indicates higher amount of the affect. Psychometric properties of the scale are satisfactory.

d) NEO-Five Factor Inventory (Costa & McCrae, 1992). It is a 60-item inventory to be responded to on a 5-point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" and the personality dimensions measured by this scale are neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. The inventory is widely used in different nations/cultures.

Results

The data were subjected to normal distribution curve, descriptive statistics, one way-ANOVA, effect size, and reliability analysis. Table 1 provides means, standard deviations, *F*-values, and alpha co-efficient reliabilities of the variables included in the present study. Alpha coefficient reliabilities were adequate for life satisfaction, overall emotional intelligence, perception of emotion and managing self-relevant emotions but a little low for managing others' emotions and utilizing emotions. It is also observed that gender differences were found in agreeableness, life satisfaction, overall emotional intelligence and all its subscales except perception of emotions with low effect sizes. However, there was no gender difference in the remaining scales.

Table 1. Mean, SD, F values and alphas of the variables used in the present study (*n*= 152 for male, *n* = 148 for female)

Variables	Mean	SD	F value	Effect size (eta)	Alpha
1. Life satisfaction	23.09	5.87	4.22*	.12	.78
2. SEIS	126.92	12.30	7.54**	.16	.86
3. Perception	36.39	4.94	2.43 ns	—	.74
4. Self-emotion	35.84	4.03	7.61**	.16	.71
5. Others' emotion	34.96	3.97	4.24*	.12	.64
6. Emotion utilization	15.97	2.24	10.18**	.18	.62
7. Positive affect (PANAS)	38.71	5.77	2.33 ns	—	.80
8. Negative affect (PANAS)	20.80	6.66	.37 ns	—	.85
9. Neuroticism	21.13	7.18	.34 ns	—	.75
10. Extraversion	29.65	5.65	.54 ns	—	.66
11. Openness	26.97	5.36	.62 ns	—	.59
12. Agreeableness	28.58	4.95	5.00*	.13	.53
13. Conscientiousness	32.46	5.52	2.52 ns	—	.70

*p<.05   **p<.01
PANAS = Positive and negative affect scale

Table 2. Pearson's correlations of the variables *(N = 286 to 300)*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. LS												
2. SEIS	.15**											
3. POE	.16**	.78**										
4. SE	.19**	.82**	.44**									
5. OE	.09	.81**	.50**	.59**								
6. EU	-.00	.70**	.36**	.56**	.49**							
7. PA	.14**	.46**	.23**	.48**	.40**	.34**						
8. NA	-.32**	-.14*	-.14*	-.23**	-.00	.05	-.04					
9. N	-.39**	-.15**	-.24**	-.18**	-.00	.04	-.15	.51**				
10. E	.31**	.37**	.23**	.36**	.42**	.17**	.42	-.23**	-.38**			
11. O	.04	.09	.21**	.02	-.04	-.04	-.02	-.12*	-.18**	-.04		
12. A	.20**	.13*	.16**	.08	.20**	-.09	.14*	-.13*	-.31**	.26**	.14*	
13. C	.33**	.33**	.24**	.35**	.28**	.17**	.39**	-.27**	-.35**	.32**	-.01	.28**

*p<.05   **p<.01

LS = Life satisfaction; SEIS = Schutte emotional intelligence scale; POE = perception of emotion; SE = self-relevant emotions; OE = Managing others' emotions; EU = Utilization of emotion; PA = Positive emotions; NA = Negative emotions; N = Neuroticism; E = Extraversion; O = Openness; A = Agreeableness; C = Conscientiousness

Further, in order to have comparison with other findings reported earlier (e.g., Extremera & Ferna´ndez-Berrocal, 2005; Gannon & Ranzijn, 2005) Pearson's correlation was initially carried out with the entire data without dividing into male and female groups (Table 2). It is observed that the subscales of the SEIS are modestly correlated, so they tend to go hand in hand under a common construct. Then, partial correlation showed that life satisfaction's correlation with overall emotional intelligence ($pr = .07$, $p = .23$), perception of emotion ($pr = .10$, $p = .10$), and managing self-relevant emotions ($pr = .08$, $p = .18$) did not remain significant after controlling for positive and negative affects. Similarly, life satisfaction's correlation with overall emotional intelligence

Table 3. Pearson's correlations of the variables in the study among the males and females (*n* = 144 to 147 for female, *n* = 147 to 152 for males)

	Life satisfaction	
Variables	Males	Females
1. SEIS (Schutte emotional intelligence scale)	.07	.21**
2. POE (perception of emotion)	.07	.24**
3. SE (managing self-relevant emotions)	.12	.23**
4. OE (managing others' emotions)	.09	.07
5. EU (utilization of emotions)	-.10	.06
6. PA (positive affect)	.03	.24**
7. NA (negative affect)	-.26**	-.37**
8. N (neuroticism)	-.32**	-.46**
9. E (extraversion)	.31**	.30**
10. O (openness to experience)	.00	.08
11. A (agreeableness)	.17*	.20*
12. C (conscientiousness)	.29**	.36**

*p<.05   **p<.01

(pr = .02, p = .72), perception of emotion (pr = .02, p = .80), and self-relevant emotions (pr = .02, p = .73) did not remain significant after controlling for neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Later, gender-wise Pearson's correlation was computed and found that whatever significant correlation observed between life satisfaction and subscales of emotional intelligence in the entire data was seen only among the female group, not among the male group (Table 3). Although level of English proficiency was significantly correlated with life satisfaction (r =.18, p<.01, N = 299) and perception of emotion (r = .15, p<.05, N = 295) it did not play a significant role in life satisfaction-perception of emotion linkage as the partial correlation remained significant (pr = .15, p<.05, N = 291).

Discussion

The focus of the present study was to re-examine whether the life satisfaction-emotional intelligence linkage observed in individualistic western cultural context is generalizable in collectivistic cultural context of India after controlling for affectivity and personality traits of five factor personality theory. It was found that life satisfaction was significantly correlated with overall self-reported emotional intelligence and some of its subscales, that is, perception of emotion and managing self-relevant emotions but these associations did not remain significant after controlling for either positive-negative affects or personality traits (neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness). So, life satisfaction's relation with emotional intelligence is not beyond affectivity or personality; these findings are somewhat opposite to what other researchers reported earlier (e.g., Gannon & Ranzijn, 2005). One possible reason for the discrepancy in the finding is that the present study used self-report emotional intelligence scale developed by Schutte and colleagues (Schutte et al., 1998); this scale

has never been used in the earlier studies where life satisfaction's correlation with emotional intelligence was observed. Another possible reason could be attributed to the cultural difference as the present study was conducted in India which is predominantly collectivistic culture (Verma & Triandis, 1999) whereas other studies were conducted in predominantly individualistic cultures (e.g., United States). So, on the basis of the present and earlier findings it can be suggested that the correlation between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction could be generalized across the cultures but it cannot be generalized that the life satisfaction-emotional intelligence linkage is independent of affectivity or personality traits.

It is suggested that further similarities and differences across the self-rated emotional intelligence could be empirically explored in future research so that correlates of emotional intelligence could be generalized to a great extent. Although all the self-report emotional intelligence scales mentioned in this article (Austin, Saklofske, Huang, & McKenney, 2004; Brackett et al., 2006; Palmer & Stough, 2001; Salovey et al., 1995; Schutte et al., 1998) for understanding its correlation with life satisfaction are all based on the ability model of emotional intelligence proposed by the same scholars (Mayer & Salovey, 1997, Salovey & Mayer, 1990) there is some conceptual difference between the original and revised models. The original model has three dimensions whereas the revised model has four dimensions. Besides, the self-report emotional intelligence scales designed on the basis of the ability model have different subscales, making it more difficult to generalize the findings. Another area that can be explored in future research is to examine the life satisfaction-emotional intelligence linkage with the help of observer rated scales.

Suggestions for application of the present research findings are: a) correlates

of emotional intelligence found in individualistic cultures should be cross-checked in collectivistic cultures. The present findings seem to support the proposition that emotional intelligence is a culturally-shaped construct, that is, there are culture-specific and culture-general elements (Sharma, Deller, Biswal, & Mandal, 2009). The present findings also pose question to the generalizability of the correlates of emotional intelligence that are reported elsewhere on the basis of the data collected from predominantly individualistic culture (e.g., Schutte, Malouff, Bobik, Coston, Greeson, Jedlicka, Rhodes, & Wendorf, 2001).

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