

## **Trait Emotional Intelligence as Determinant of Self Concept in Interpersonal Relationships in Adolescents**

**Salman Shahzad\***

Institute of Clinical Psychology, University of Karachi

**Nasreen Begum**

Area Study Center for Europe

**Areej Mukhtar Khan**

Institute of Clinical Psychology, University of Karachi

### **Abstract**

The objective of present study was to explore the role of emotional intelligence in self concept in interpersonal relationships (i.e., family, same sex and opposite sex) in adolescents. After detailed literature review the following hypotheses were formulated; 1) Trait emotional intelligence would be a predictor of self concept interpersonal relationship with family. 2) Trait emotional intelligence would be a predictor of self concept interpersonal relationship with same sex. 3) Trait emotional intelligence would be a predictor of self concept interpersonal relationship with opposite sex. Sample of present study comprised of 143 secondary school students recruited from private sector secondary schools situated in different areas of Karachi. The age range of entire sample was from 12 to 16 years (Mean age = 14.41, years, SD = 1.36). Among them

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to \*Salman Shahzad, Institute of Clinical Psychology, University of Karachi, Karachi, Pakistan. Email: shahzad\_icp@yahoo.com

were 74 (51.7%) males and 69 (48.3%) were females. Out of total sample 104 (72.7%) belonged to nuclear family setup and 39 (27.3%) belonged to joint family setup. Personal Information Form was used to take personal information (age, education, family system, etc.) of the participants. Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire-Adolescent Short Form (TEIQue-ASF, Petrides, Sangareau, Furnham, & Frederickson, 2006) and Self Description Questionnaire-II (SDQ-II, Marsh, Ellis, Parada, Richards, & Heubeck, 2005) were administered to measure the emotional intelligence and self concept in interpersonal relationships of adolescents respectively. In order to interpret the data in statistical terminology descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviations, percentages) was used for getting a better statistical view of characteristics of sample of the data in a summarized way. Simple regression analysis was used to determine the predictive relationship of TEIQue-ASF with SDQ-II in adolescents. The statistical computation was done through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 20.0). Results showed that Trait EI is a significant predictor of self concept in interpersonal relationship i.e., family ( $R^2 = 0.062$ ,  $F(142) = 9.44$ ,  $p < .003$ ) same sex ( $R^2 = 0.10$ ,  $F(142) = 16.60$ ,  $p < .000$ ) and opposite sex ( $R^2 = 0.028$ ,  $F(142) = 4.19$ ,  $p < .042$ ) in adolescents. Overall results indicate that trait emotional intelligence is an important factor for developing self concept in establishing interpersonal relationship in adolescents. Implications of these results the avenues for future research have also been suggested.

*Keywords:* Trait emotional intelligence, self concept, interpersonal relationships, adolescents.

Emotions are the pathways that lead to certain behaviors. Handling of these emotions is an integral part of healthy behavior. The experience of emotions is vital to living a healthy life. People experience all emotions, whether healthy or unhealthy. Adolescents,

however, go through a changing time in their life, which gives rise to emergence of new emotions. Their social and emotional development occurs in this period of time. A healthy development of emotions during adolescence leads towards satisfactory adult life. Emotional intelligence plays a significant role during adolescence.

Much of what we achieve depends on our work. Our success in work is based on our skills, knowledge, and expertise but another part of our success depends on how we get along with others. The ability to interact with people, to understand them, and to achieve our goals through this interaction is called as being emotionally intelligent (Petrides, 2011). Emotional intelligence is our ability to recognize our emotions and what they are telling us; it involves the understanding of how our emotions are affecting people around us. Mayer and Salovey (1997) define in their work that “emotional intelligence involves the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth.”

Petrides and Furnham (2001) attempted to distinguish between trait EI and ability EI. The former involves behavioral dispositions and self-perceived abilities (or emotional self-efficacy), whereas the latter involves actual abilities (or cognitive-emotional ability). Petrides and Furnham consider traits as dispositions distinguishing them from abilities. They emphasize the significance of trait as a dimension of personality and not as a cognitive ability. Ability, however, belongs to the domain of cognition. Trait emotional intelligence includes many dispositions of personality such as assertiveness and empathy (Goleman, 1995). It also includes social intelligence, ability emotional intelligence, and personal intelligence. Trait emotional intelligence has many facets: well being (optimism, happiness, and self-esteem), sociability (emotion management, assertiveness, and social awareness), emotionality (empathy, emotional perception, emotional expression, and relationships), self-control (emotion regulation, impulsiveness, and



stress management), and auxiliary facets (adaptability and self-motivation) (Petrides, 2008). These facets along with one's own perception of abilities determine self-efficacy. If someone perceives himself /herself as capable to maintain healthy relationships with others, then he/she will feel competent and satisfied. On the other hand, if the individual unable to develop self-efficacy then he/she may feel incapable and inadequate. Trait emotional intelligence helps in developing one's self-concept.

A recent study conducted in Pakistani indicates that emotional intelligence and self-esteem are strongly associated (Haq & Abbas, 2011). Self-esteem is one of the important facets of building up one's self-concept. Being emotionally intelligent can help boost one's self-esteem, hence improving one's self-concept. Self-concept refers to how good a person feels about himself. According to Higgins (1987), discrepancies in the self-concept lead to the absence of positive outcomes resulting in dejection-related emotions. With such dejection-related emotions, a person has problems in daily life. An individual may have problems associated with development of satisfactory interpersonal relationships due to poor self-concept. The degree to which one relates with others depends upon the self-concept and self-esteem. A study revealed that trait self-esteem highly relates with how people feel included or excluded in interpersonal relationships (Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995). The theory of self-esteem posits that the more an individual evaluates the self (i.e. higher self-evaluation), the less likelihood is to respond to others' evaluations (Jones, 1973).

According to Craven and Marsh (2008), people with good self-concepts are likely to be more effective and psychologically well-adjusted as compared to those with low self-concepts. There are various dimensions of self-concept in adolescents, which include parent relationships, same-sex relationships, and opposite-sex relationships (Marsh, 1992). In a study conducted by researchers (Schutte et al., 2001) it was found that people with high emotional intelligence also had good close and affectionate relationships, good social skills, empathic perspective-taking, and

self-monitoring in social situations. Individuals with high emotional intelligence tend to have better interpersonal relationships. Their ability to understand not only their emotions but also the impact of their emotions on others helps them in understanding others better; it makes them more empathic towards others. This empathy helps them in developing better and healthier interpersonal relationships.

Considering the above-mentioned literature on trait emotional intelligence and self-concept along with the role of emotional intelligence in interpersonal relationships, the present study is being conducted. This research will help us understand the significance of trait emotional intelligence in self-concept building leading towards interpersonal relationships, namely with family, same-sex individuals, and opposite-sex individuals among Pakistani adolescents. There is a vast area of research conducted in the Western countries on this topic; however, the dearth of information on this topic in the Asian countries (namely Pakistan) necessitates that more studies be conducted here. Therefore, the following hypotheses were formulated:

1. Trait emotional intelligence would be a predictor of self-concept in interpersonal relationship with family.
2. Trait emotional intelligence would be a predictor of self-concept in interpersonal relationship with same sex.
3. Trait emotional intelligence would be a predictor of self-concept in interpersonal relationship with opposite sex.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The sample for the present research comprised of 143 adolescents. The sample was recruited from different private sector secondary schools situated in different areas of Karachi. The age range of the entire sample was from 12 years to 16 years (Mean Age = 14.41 years; SD = 1.36). Among them 74 (51.7%) were males and 69 (48.3%) were females. Out of total sample 104 (72.7%) belonged

to nuclear family setup and 39 (27.3%) belonged to joint family setup. The data was collected from those who showed willingness to participate in the study.

## **Measures**

### **Personal Information Form**

The Personal Information Form included participants' age, gender, name of school, education level, medium of instruction at school, academic family structure, monthly income of family and etc.

### **The Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire-Adolescent Short Form (TEIQue-ASF; Petrides et al., 2006).**

It is a simplified version, in wording and syntactic complexity, of the adult short form. The items are sampled from the 15 facets of the adult trait EI sampling domain (two items per facet). The TEIQue-ASF does not yield scores on the 15 trait facets, scores on the four trait EI factors can be derived, in addition to the global score. The 30 short statements are responded to on a seven-point Likert scale (e.g. 'I often find it hard to understand other people') which can be downloaded from [www.psychometriclab.com](http://www.psychometriclab.com). In this sample, Cronbach's alpha for the scale was 0.82.

### **Self Description Questionnaire (SDQ-II, Marsh, Ellis, Parada, Richards, & Heubeck, 2005).**

The SDQII-S (Self-Description Questionnaire II for Short; Marsh, Ellis, Parada, Richards, & Heubeck, 2005) is a 51 item self-report inventory that has been modified from the original 102 item SDQ-II (Marsh, 1992) to measure junior and senior high school age self concept in the following areas: Non-academic Self (Physical, Appearance, Same-sex Relations, Opposite-sex Relations, Parent Relations, Emotional Stability, and Honesty-trustworthiness), Academic-self (Math, Verbal, and School), and Self-esteem. The Total self-concept score is the sum of the different subscales. The



participants respond on a six-point Likert response scale ranging from 1 = false to 6 = true.

The psychometric properties of the original SDQII-S were sufficient with good reliability and higher order confirmatory factor models applied in Australia. Internal consistency of the Total Self concept scored .90, and the reliability coefficient for the SDQII-S factor ranged from .56 to .90 (median = .76; Marsh et al., 2005).

### **Procedure**

The sample for the present research comprised of 143 adolescents. Before the collection of data, first the researcher visited different secondary schools to seek permission and only few schools gave permission for data collection. The researcher met with the school authorities and gave them the permission letter along with the sample of questionnaires. After getting permission from the school authorities the researcher with the help of class teachers approached to the students to take their consent for participation in study. Only those students were included in the study who showed their willingness to participate. The researcher then established rapport with them and they were briefed about the purpose of the study. Ethical issues were also discussed with the participants. The researcher tried his level best to maintain all ethical standards with the objective of no harm intended to the participants, they were assured of complete confidentiality. The participation in this study was voluntary. The researcher gave the Personal Information Form to fill out and then administered TEIQue-ASF and SDQ-II. After the administration of the measurers the researcher thanked all the participants for their cooperation.

### **Statistical Analysis**

In order to examine the data statistically, Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS 20) was used for statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics (Mean, SD, and Percentages) were used to study the sample characteristics and simple regression analysis was applied to determine the predictive relationship between the variables of the study.

## Results

Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics for the Gender, Family System and Age of the Entire Sample*

Variables	n	Percentage	
Gender	143	100%	
Males	74	51.7	
Females	69	48.3	
Family system	143	100%	
Nuclear	104	72.7	
Joint	39	27.3	
Age	N	M	SD
Total	143	14.41	1.36

Table 2

*Summary of Linear Regression with Trait EI as Predictor of Self Concept in Interpersonal Relationship of Adolescents*

Variables	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	Sig	df
Relationship with Family	0.25	0.06	9.44	.003	
Relationship with same sex	0.32	0.10	16.60	.000	1,142
Relationship with opposite sex	0.170	0.028	4.196	.042	



## Discussion

Trait emotional intelligence is our ability to comprehend our emotions and understand how they affect people around us. It helps in improving self-concept and relationship-building. The present study examined the role of emotional intelligence in self-concept in interpersonal relationships (i.e., family, same sex and opposite sex) in adolescents. Results revealed that trait emotional intelligence is a significant predictor of self-concept in interpersonal relationship i.e., family ( $R^2 = 0.062$ ,  $F(142) = 9.44$ ,  $p < .003$ ) same sex ( $R^2 = 0.10$ ,  $F(142) = 16.60$ ,  $p < .000$ ) and opposite sex ( $R^2 = 0.028$ ,  $F(142) = 4.19$ ,  $p < .042$ ) in adolescents (See Table II). These results suggest that trait emotional intelligence is significant for the development of self-concept in establishing healthy interpersonal relationships in adolescents.

Previous research suggests that emotional intelligence is associated with interpersonal relationships (Lopes, Salovey, & Straus, 2003). The study indicates that emotional intelligence is related to self-reported satisfaction in social relationships. Those who are able to manage emotions effectively reported positive relations with others, perceived parental support, and less negative interactions with close friends. These findings are consistent with the present research, i.e., high emotional intelligence is associated with satisfactory family relations.

The present study reveals that trait emotional intelligence is a predictor in self-concept in interpersonal relationships among adolescents. A reason for this could be that trait emotional intelligence brings happiness in individuals since they are capable of understanding emotions effectively. They are able to utilize their emotional intelligence in understanding others' emotions as well, which helps in healthy interpersonal relationships. As a recent study reveals that adolescents' trait emotional intelligence predicts happiness in terms of others' feelings, i.e., having warm feelings for others and being interested in others (Platsidou, 2013).

Moreover, the results of the present study indicate that trait emotional intelligence is a predictor in development of self-concept in establishing relationships with family. Healthy family relations include understanding each other, cooperation, having united relations, and the ability to control one's emotions in order to prevent oneself from hurting others. The various dimensions of trait emotional intelligence help adolescents to have self-control and the ability to understand family members' emotions. Adolescents are better able to understand their family members' emotions, which leaves them with better relations with family members. Research evidence indicates that understanding one's emotions, understanding other people's emotions and the ability to control emotions are strongly associated with family environment, unity, and control (Ozabaci, 2006).

Trait emotional intelligence is not only a predictor of self-concept in family relations but also in relationships with the same sex among adolescents. Trait EI helps in building self-confidence and improves self-efficacy. Adolescents tend to feel a rush of emotions in their lives. They may not be able to regulate emotions adequately. They may also go through peer problems. However, emotional intelligence helps in building their self-concept which further helps in having satisfactory same-sex relationships. As the results of the present study suggest, trait emotional intelligence predicts self-concept in the building of same-sex relationships. Another reason for this result could be the increased sociability characteristic of adolescents. As stated by Petrides (2008), sociability (including emotion management, assertiveness, and social awareness) is a feature of trait emotional intelligence.

Results of the present study also reveal that trait emotional intelligence serves as a predictor of self-concept in opposite-sex relationships. As mentioned above, adolescents go through a rush of emotions during this stage. There is a mishandling of emotion regulation that can lead to disturbed relationships with the opposite sex. A reason of this study's results could be that nowadays in Pakistan, co-educational schools are common. Studying in

in co-education builds self-confidence and ability to maintain healthy relationships with the opposite sex. Emotionally intelligent children are capable of not only understanding their emotions but also others' emotions; therefore, adolescents of this study would have been able to manage their emotions effectively with the opposite sex.

## **Conclusion**

As the results of this study suggest the role of trait emotional intelligence in both same-sex and opposite-sex relationships, it can be concluded that trait EI helps in building self-concept in social relationships. Adolescents are more concerned with their peer relations. Previous research supports the idea that emotionally intelligent adolescents receive more nominations by their peers of being cooperative and having high leadership qualities (Mavroveli, Petrides, Rieffe, & Bakker, 2007). Their ability to perceive, appraise, and express emotions adequately, to understand their and their peer's emotions, and to regulate their emotions appropriately gives adolescents emotional and intellectual growth. Such growth helps adolescents develop healthy same-sex and opposite-sex relationships.

## **Limitations and Recommendations**

The findings of this study also have some limitations. Firstly, the sample size is small. A larger sample would increase generalizability of the findings. Secondly, this research caters the significance of trait EI and its role in self-concept of adolescents; however, traits start building up in childhood. Studying this phenomenon in childhood would bring out results that would help us in understanding the role of trait EI in childhood development. Moreover, gathering the sample from more schools of Karachi will give results that could provide a broader understanding of the objective of this research. The results from the present study provide us with many implications. These results point us to potentially fruitful applications for mental health professionals, clinicians,

researchers, parents, and educational policy makers. Mental health professionals and clinicians can understand the dynamics of trait EI and disturbances that it may cause in adolescents' relationships with family, same-sex, and opposite sex people. Educationists can use this data to spread awareness in schools regarding ways of improving trait EI among children. Keeping in mind these results and limitations of this study, future researchers can focus on this topic in more detail to overcome the dearth of information we have on this topic in Pakistan.

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