

## **Emotional Intelligence: Why it is important for the Medical Profession?**

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### **Abstract**

**Emotional intelligence has been proven through various researches to be an important factor in achieving success for most people. Unlike intelligent Quotient (IQ), emotional intelligence (EI) is much more concerned with human factor, empathy, empathetic validation, handling emotions and the ability to react in various difficult situations especially in the professions which have to deal with people on a daily basis. In the medical profession, doctors and other medical professionals have to deal with the public who are under some form of illness and also with the patients' family members. Based on different appreciations, proofs and critiques of emotional intelligence brought by various articles and research, this article highlights the notion that medical professionals who are emotionally intelligent can bring positive impact not only for their patient and the family members of their patients, but also for themselves and the entire medical community.**

### **1.0 Introduction**

#### **Why Emotional Intelligence matters?**

The rules and the values of work are always changing. In previous decades, people were judged by how smart they were by training or their expertise but nowadays, people are also judged by how well they can handle themselves and others around them (Goleman, 1998, pg.3). These concepts are largely irrelevant to academic abilities and in other words it is a different way of being smart, i.e., being emotionally intelligent.

The concept of emotional intelligence was introduced in the early 1990s. It was then popularized by Daniel Goleman. He popularized the concept of emotional intelligence around 1995 in his bestselling book, entitled "*Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*". In his book, he defined "emotional intelligence" as "understanding one's own feelings, empathy for the feelings of others and the regulation of emotion in a way that enhances living". It was stated as a powerful tool and at times even more powerful, than IQ" in predicting how successful a person is in life.

Emotional intelligence does not mean merely "being nice" or "giving free rein to feelings" but it means managing feelings to be able to express appropriately, effectively, and enabling people to work together smoothly towards their common goals. Obviously, this ability is very important for individuals, family as well as the community. Emotional

intelligence has gained a lot of attention in the academic literature in recent decades. (Petrides *et al.*, 2004)

### **What is the difference between emotional intelligence (EI) and emotional quotient (EQ)?**

Emotional intelligence (EI) is always associated with Emotional quotient (EQ). EQ is used to measure the level of EI in a person, often represented with a score in a standardized test. A person with competent EI is said to have a higher level of EQ.

### **Intelligence Quotient and Emotional Quotient (Which is more critical?)**

Emotional quotient (EQ) and intelligence quotient (IQ) are different and there is no known significant correlation between them (Baron *et al.*, 2005), which are considered as entirely separate skills.

Emotional quotient (EQ) determines teamwork, leadership, successful relationship, service orientation, initiative, and collaboration in workplace while long IQ determines success in challenging tasks, ability to solve problems and connecting the dots, solving the unsolvable conditions, conducting research and development.

According to Goleman (1998, pg. 12) , in today's world, the average intelligent quotient score is increasing in most countries because of better nutrition, completion of higher schooling, games, puzzles and creative methods that can increase IQ. A dangerous paradox is that emotional intelligence is declining. Children are becoming more emotionally troubled, lonelier, depressed, angry, unruly, nervous, impulsive and more aggressive. The most telling signs of this are seen in rising rates of problems such as despair, alienation, drug abuse, crime and violence, depression, eating disorders, unwanted pregnancies, bullying and dropping out of school among young people.

There are many studies that have been done over the past decades in the area of emotional intelligence/emotional quotient and intelligent quotient.

A study known as the Somerville study by Snarey and Vaillant (1985), a longitudinal study of 40 years was carried out on 450 boys who grew up in Somerville, Massachusetts. They found out that there was relatively little relation between IQ and success. But, childhood abilities such as handling frustration, controlling emotions, and getting along with other people were able to predict success in later life and work.

In the 1950s, another study was conducted among a group of 80 PhD students at the University of California-Berkeley where they underwent personality tests, interviews, and IQ tests. Forty years later, their career success was evaluated by experts in their field and it was found that social and emotional competence was four times more important than IQ in their professional success (Feist and Barron, 1996).

These studies have shown the significance of how important it is to perceive, understand, and manages one's emotion. Therefore, emotional intelligence may well be another

predicting factor for success. It is a better indicator of success at the workplace to see whether an individual can be a great leader, be able to socialize with co-workers, be a great team player or work by themselves. However, IQ is mainly used as an indicator for academic success and to identify individuals who have outstanding intelligence or mental intelligences.

Emotion helps in enhancing our thinking or thought. Thus, it helps thinking to be more intelligent which promote emotional and also intellectual growth. Awareness about emotional intelligence should be exposed at a very young age by seeding the thoughts of sharing, thinking about others, imagining being in the other person's shoes, giving individual space and inculcating the general principles of cooperation. There are toys and games available to increase emotional intelligence, and children who do not do fit well in social setting are known to perform better after taking SEL (Social and Learning) classes.

### **Emotional intelligence (Is it genetic or environmental?)**

Emotional competence refers to one's ability to express or release one's inner feelings (emotions). Emotions are also unpredictable. There is no one who would be able to express themselves, think and behave the same way as others.

However, the development of emotional intelligence is an intentional, active and engaging process. Emotional intelligence can increase as experience increases for a "maturity" effect (Shipley, 2010). It implies a feeling of ease around others and determines one's ability effectively and successfully lead and express.

Intelligence quotient (IQ) has been a well-known predictor of success. However, many people with low IQ are found to be successful especially in the working field. IQ is something that remains unchanged as we grow up while emotional intelligence can change with the increase in our age.

### **Emotional competency**

By understanding emotions, it may be used to relate better to other people, develop stronger relationships, accomplish greater success at work, and one can lead a more satisfying life. Developing emotional intelligence would provide many benefits to a person such as for learning, relationships and wellness if emotional intelligence is used in the right way (Maraichelvi & Rajan, 2013). Emotional intelligence could help individuals to achieve a quality in life that may help them to be successful and satisfied (Yelkikalan *et al.*, 2012). High emotional intelligence means that one is able to recognize their emotion and the emotional states of the others, and engage well with people around them.

Emotional competency stands for the major difference between the mediocre and the best. Emotional competency is a capacity based on emotional intelligence that results in outstanding performance at work. In other words, out-of-control emotions can make smart people stupid (Goleman, 1998, pg. 23). The reason why people cannot use their full potential is due to their emotional incompetence.

## Domains of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence or competence framework can be divided into two, personal competence and social competence. Under these two competencies, Goleman created five dimensions and with a total of twenty-five emotional competencies. Table (1) shows the relationships between the five dimensions and twenty-five emotional competencies under two main competent skills. (Goleman, 1998, pg. 26-27).

<b>Emotional Competence Framework</b>	
<b>Personal competence</b>	<b>Social competence</b>
<p><b><i>Self-awareness</i></b>  <i>(keeping one's internal states, preferences, resources and intuitions)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional awareness</li> <li>• Accurate self-assessment</li> <li>• Self-confidence</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Empathy</i></b>  <i>(awareness of others' feelings, needs, and concerns)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding others</li> <li>• Developing others</li> <li>• Service orientation</li> <li>• Leveraging diversity</li> <li>• Political awareness</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Self-regulation</i></b>  <i>(Managing one's internal states, impulses, and resources)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-control</li> <li>• Trustworthiness</li> <li>• Conscientiousness</li> <li>• Adaptability</li> <li>• Innovation</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Social skills</i></b>  <i>(adeptness at inducing desirable responses in others)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influence</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Conflict management</li> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Change catalyst</li> <li>• Building bonds</li> <li>• Collaboration and cooperation</li> <li>• Team capabilities</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Motivation</i></b>  <i>(Emotional tendencies that guide or facilitate reaching goals)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Achievement drive</b></li> <li>• <b>Commitment</b></li> <li>• <b>Initiative</b></li> <li>• <b>Optimism</b></li> </ul>	

Goleman's model is most widely used in applying emotional intelligence in various workplaces. No one will be perfect in all skills as human beings are imperfect and that imperfectness makes this world more interesting.

## Studies showing the importance of emotional intelligence in various professions

There were numerous studies which suggest that EI is a strong predictor of job performance. The following studies found a positive relationship between high level of EI and higher level of success or job performance.

Reference	Study population	Conclusion of the study	Cross reference
Shipley <i>et al</i> , 2010	China	EI was found to predict employee performance	Law, Wong, & Song (2004).
Shipley <i>et al</i> , 2010	USA presidents	Emotional intelligence was the key quality that distinguished the successful (e.g., Roosevelt) from the unsuccessful (e.g., Carter).	Greenstein (2011).
Goleman (1998)	Eighty Ph.D. students from USA	Emotional intelligence abilities were four times more important than IQ in determining professional success and prestige—even for these scientists.	
Shipley <i>et al</i> , 2010	A meta-analysis of 59 studies	Emotional intelligence correlated moderately with job performance.	Van Rooy and Viswesvaran (2004).

But, in any case, there are some critics of emotional intelligence who claim that it is too vague a concept, it cannot be measured, and the validity of it is suspicious (Shipley, 2010).

### Emotional intelligence and work experience

“Our level of emotional intelligence is not fixed genetically, nor does it develop only in early childhood. Unlike IQ, which changes little after our teen years, emotional intelligence seems to be largely learned, and it continues to develop as we go through life and learn from our experiences—our competence in it can keep growing. In fact, studies that have tracked people’s level of emotional intelligence through the years show that people get better and better in these capabilities as they grow more adept at handling their emotions and impulses, at motivating themselves, and at honing their empathy and social adroitness. There is an old fashion word for this growth in emotional intelligence: *maturity*.” (Goleman, 1998, Pg.7).

Mayer *et al.*, (1999) asserted that in order for emotional intelligence to be considered a standard intelligence, it should increase with age and experience. (Shipley, 2010)

### Emotional Intelligence and Academic Performance

Adolescence is a period of change not only in terms of individual’s physical and cognitive development, but also in the adolescents’ personal and social context. This transition is an

important issue because the transition often generates considerable stress and negative outcomes. There were evidences that students in this stage face adjustment difficulties and challenges (Ishak, 2011).

Adjustment is generally defined as “the psychological process of adapting in coping with, managing their problems, challenging tasks and requirements of daily life”. Positive adjustment can assist students to face challenges, pressures and overcome it to accomplish their goals in contrast to negative adjustment in which it will lead to frustration (Ishak, 2011).

Reference	Study population	Conclusion of the study	Cross reference
Ogundokun and Adeyemo (2010)	200 fresh secondary school students from Nigeria	Emotional intelligence skills are strong predictors of student's adjustment.	
(Ishak, 2011)	111 undergraduate students	Emotional intelligence skills are strong predictors of student's adjustment.	Yip and Martin (2006)
Abdallah <i>et al.</i> , (2004)	205 secondary students from Kuala Lumpur and Shah Alam	Intellectual ability alone is no guarantee for academic success.	
Engelberg and Sjoberg (2004)		Relation between emotional intelligence with the prediction of student's social adjustment	
Ishak <i>et al.</i> , (2011).		Emotional intelligence's effect on students' social adjustment is stronger in the older students' group compared to the younger students' group.	
Joshi <i>et al.</i> , 2012		Emotional intelligence and academic performance correlated well when the study was performed on undergraduate medical students.	
Ogundokun and Adeyemo (2010)	Randomly selected senior secondary school students.	Positive relation between emotional intelligence and academic achievement.	
Libbrecht <i>et al.</i> , (2014),	Undergraduate medical students from a European	Emotional intelligence and IQ is required to achieve success.	

	university.		
Chew <i>et al.</i> , 2013	First and final year undergraduate medical students.	Good EI score is a predictor of good continuous assessment and final examination marks.	
Todres <i>et al.</i> , 2010	Undergraduate medical students from London Medical School.	Significantly higher scores for students in their final year compared to those in the first or second year.	

### **Role of cognitive ability, conscientiousness and emotional intelligence in intellectual academic performance**

Cognitive ability and conscientiousness have traditionally shown strong relations with the cognitive component of intellectual academic performance (Libbrecht, 2014). Lievens *et al.*, 2009 found that conscientiousness was the only trait (among the Big Five personality traits) that consistently predicted intellectual performance throughout medical school. Compared with cognitive ability and conscientiousness, EI may play a less important role in intellectual academic performance, because this facet of performance relies less on emotional processing. EI would be relatively less helpful to solve intellectual problems, such as finding interrelations between facts, ideas, and theories. Cognitive ability and conscientiousness will be positively related to intellectual academic performance.

However, according to Nofle and Robins (2007), personality traits have independent and incremental effects on academic outcomes. EI is proved to be relevant in social situations and therefore, students with higher EI can better regulate anxiety caused by examinations and other forms of assessment, have the ability to understand the source of emotions and to regulate emotions effectively.

### **Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Age**

As for the relationship between emotional intelligence and age, age would be considered as an independent variable where it is seen between students of one age with another (Ogundokun and Adeyemo, 2010). Based on the previous research conducted, the results obtained showed a variation.

<b>Reference</b>	<b>Study population</b>	<b>Conclusion of the study</b>	<b>Cross reference</b>
Ogundokun and Adeyemo (2010)	N = 40	Performance ratings showed more positive relations with age	Waldman et al., (1986)

		for professionals than for non-professionals.	
Ogundokun and Adeyemo (2010)	review of 22 years of articles published in 46 behavioral science journals, total of 96 independent studies that reported age-performance correlations. N= 38,983	Overall meta-analysis procedures revealed that age and job performance generally were unrelated. However, for very young employees the relation between age and job performance was consistent and modestly positive.	McEyoy and Cascio (1989)
Ogundokun and Adeyemo (2010)	Meta-analysis on the relationship between age and job performance that includes 10 dimensions of job performance.	Age was largely unrelated to core task performance, creativity, and performance in training programs, it demonstrated stronger relationships with the other 7 performance dimensions.	Ng and Feldman (2008)
Fariselli <i>et al.</i> , 2008.	405 American people age between 22 and 70 years	EI increases slightly with age.	
(Ishak, 2011)		No significant relationship between emotional intelligence and of both social adjustment and academic adjustment and also with gender. However, the moderating effect of age on the relationship between emotional intelligence with social adjustment and academic adjustment were established.	

Vasiliki and Orgeta (2009) discovered that as people aged, they regulated emotions better. Furthermore, this study is supported by another study (Blanchard *et al.*, 2007) which was

published in the Journal of Gerontology (2007) which states that people understand themselves and other people more as they age. Older adults are better at solving interpersonal dilemmas than younger adults.

### **Emotional Intelligence and Professional Success**

Managing emotion is important in our daily life as we need to manage our emotions on a daily basis to form better relationships with others. Emotion is a delicate thing and it varies among people. Maintaining emotions can be difficult sometimes. Thus, this will be the distinct characteristic to differentiate between the best leader and a mediocre one. Being a successful leader and manager is about how well you handle your emotions of others, and find a successful solution in solving their problems. So, emotional competence that is based on emotional intelligence can be a measuring tool for performances at work.

Emotions facilitate one's thinking by which any emotional event that any individual experiences will assist in his/her intellectual processing. In short, emotion makes thinking more intelligent and that one thinks intelligently about emotion.

Goleman (1998, pg. 22), quotes an example of two students, named Penn and Matt. Penn was brilliant, creative and assigned as the best Yale student. He knew that he was exceptional and even one of his professors thought that he was "unbelievably arrogant". But he looked excellent in his CV and he was offered employment by top organizations and he was picked first after interviews. But when his arrogance came across clearly; he ended up with only a second-tier job offer. Whereas Matt, who was also a Yale student in the same field as Penn, was not academically brilliant but possessed a good personality. Everyone who worked with him liked him. Matt ended up with several job offers and went to be successful in his field, while Penn lost his position after two years at his first job.

Goleman concluded the story as "Penn lacked – and Matt had – emotional intelligence". He also stated as "the more complex the job, the more emotional intelligence matters and on the other hand, out-of-control emotions can make the smart people stupid".

### **Emotional Intelligence and One's Own Health Status**

There is confirmed association between emotional and the physical health of an individual. Wrongly handled emotions could lead to unnecessary mental distress while prolonged mental distress can result in disruption of physical health. Emotional distress may lead to cardiovascular disruption or disease and a list of other disease conditions.

No one is able to completely avoid mental distress or problems in this world. But people who are aware of their thoughts and feelings can manage their responses in the best possible way. People with good emotional competency are able to find ways to cope with stress and problems. Positive emotions will result in positive thoughts and reactions in a proactive way resulting in a positive effect on health. Relationships are also influenced by EI because by understanding and managing our emotions we are able to interpret and deal

with our feelings in a more constructive way. With a great EI we are going to be better at relating and understanding people that we are in relationship with.

Emotionally intelligent individuals could cope with mental stress in a better way than others which could result in better physical and mental well-being. It also can help to alleviate anxiety and avoid depressions and mood swings. Stress nowadays is one of the main causes of health problems especially at the workplace and in academic settings where society expects more from us.

### **Why it is important to access one's emotional intelligence (EI)?**

Many researches had been carried out in the field of emotional intelligence and in spite of some critics regarding emotional intelligence as irrelevant, it is still important to access our emotional intelligence.

It is still important to access or study EI because it has been proved that there are confirmed associations in many positive areas and aspects of our lives.

According to previous studies mentioned earlier, a high level of emotional intelligence directly correlates to a positive attitude and a happier outlook, including greatness and happiness in life. It is also important for physical health, mental well-being, relationships, conflict resolution and even more so in the area of success and leadership. In addition, a high level of EI is directly correlated with professional success especially in the professions which have to deal with a lot of people on a daily basis like the medical profession.

### **Emotional intelligence and the medical profession**

In the medical profession, the health care needs of the population and the demands of the patients have changed throughout the years.

According to Wallace (1997), the real issue regarding the relationship between the public and the institution of medicine is "trust". He also suggests that the essential way for medical schools to help to restore public trust is to select and nurture professionals who see medicine in a broad social context, who have learned to listen to feedback, who are capable of responding and communicating clearly and honestly in those areas and about those issues where they are uniquely qualified to contribute.

Nowadays, it is widely demanded that medical schools must increase their emphasis on overall competency of medical students in the interpersonal dimension of practicing medicine. Effective communication and interpersonal sensitivity during interactions between doctors and patients could have a positive impact on therapeutic outcomes. Good interpersonal sensitivity with the patients is an essential ability for a medical professional. Good interpersonal skills can be predicted with their "bedside manners." Ability to manage the emotions effectively should promote effective social interaction between medical professionals and patients. The emotional intelligence level of a medical professional may predict performance on the interpersonal aspects of medical work.

According to Libbrecht (2014), there is an important need to identify predictors of these behaviors, which are the predictions of “bedside manners” in medical practice. It has become a priority for the medical profession to find reliable and systematic ways to identify potential physicians who will exhibit these interpersonal behaviors. Medical schools, which teach content that is very technical, are increasingly acknowledging that interpersonal skills and personal characteristics (also known as soft skills or 21<sup>st</sup> century skills) which represent core dimensions of academic performance are vital for medical students.

For example, medical students who understand that patients are anxious because of a particular procedure should be able to support patients effectively by reassuring them that the procedure will not have unanticipated negative consequences. In contrast, medical students with lower EI who attribute the anxiety to an incorrect cause, for example, by believing that a patient is chronically anxious, will have difficulty providing support, and this would impede performance on the interpersonal aspects of doctor-patient communications. This definitely means that people need medical professionals with high emotional quotient or emotional competence. (Libbrecht, 2014)

Emotionally intelligent individuals will be able to provide better social support, develop close interpersonal bonds, take the perspective of their interaction partners and empathize with them because they know why they feel the emotions that they do. Therefore, it is quite clear that we need to improve the overall emotional competency of medical students.

The importance of emotional intelligence in medical profession has also been mentioned in a journal published by researcher Salekzamani (2009). In the article, the researcher stated that the content of emotional intelligence is to have empathy, having self-awareness, being able to handle relationships and being able to manage ones emotions. The researcher also mentioned that emotional intelligence may be able to effect interpersonal communication and team-leadership skills in medicinal practice which would in turn increase the satisfaction of patients as well as patient safety.

Birks and Watt (2007) have also supported the importance of emotional intelligence in the medical profession. According to their findings, most patients criticised about the lack of communication of the doctors instead of the clinical competence of the doctor. A variation can be seen where some doctors are better at patient care compared to others. Being able to understand better the patient’s emotions could influence the record taking of the patient’s history and diagnosis made by a doctor other than being able to understand the reasons why the patient is able or unable to accept some treatments.

Based on these studies, it can be shown that having a high emotional intelligence is an important trait required by the medical profession. Not only will doctors be able to understand patients better, the quality of the medical profession-patient relationship can also be improved other than being able to increase the contentment of the patients with the care received by them.

## **Conclusion**

The findings from different studies have suggested that the current university entrance procedures may be too narrow, especially for medical schools that choose to value interpersonal performance in their curriculum. Medical school applicants with high scores on general mental ability measures can be expected to do well on the intellectual courses (Libbrecht, 2014). Upon finding in some studies, that EI does not predict intellectual academic performance, one reaction might be to call for a broadening of the curriculum to include interpersonal courses, thus making it likely that EI would show validity (Libbrecht, 2014).

Emotionally competent doctors, nurses, health care workers in medical professions are highly demanded nowadays. These professionals could have empathic validation, resulting in better patient doctor relationship with trust, patient satisfaction, with efficient and effective treatment outcomes. The good news is that unlike IQ, emotional intelligence can be improved (Goleman, 1995).

All in all, it can be concluded that we, medical lecturers and the medical universities, should not only try to nurture highly intellectual and intelligent medical doctors with emphasis on cognitive domain but also should have more interest on emotional intelligence, which is the component of the affective domain of the medical students, who are going to become medical doctors in the near future.

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