

**ARE THE CLAIMS FOR EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE  
JUSTIFIED?  
EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE PREDICTS LIFE SKILLS,  
BUT NOT AS WELL AS PERSONALITY AND  
COGNITIVE ABILITIES.**

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## ABSTRACT

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is held to explain how emotions may function to advance life goals, with the basic proposition being that individuals monitor and discriminate emotions within themselves and others to solve problems. A number of different theories of EI have been proposed and consequently there is still controversy about the best way in which to conceptualise and measure EI. It is, nonetheless, agreed that the relevance of EI is largely dependent on it being able to predict significant life outcomes. Academic achievement, life satisfaction, coping, problem-solving ability and anxiety are variables that have relevance in academic, occupational and interpersonal situations. The relationship between these variables and EI was assessed in two diverse populations (University sample: N=246; mean age=19.9; Older community sample: N=212; mean age=51.6). The magnitude and direction of findings in both studies were found to be remarkably similar. As expected, older adults (community sample) were found to score significantly higher on EI than younger adults (University sample). Few gender differences in EI, however, were apparent, but those that were significantly favoured females. Previously identified relationships suggesting that self-report EI measures are moderately-to-highly correlated to personality, whereas ability EI is reasonably distinct from other constructs, were also upheld. Inconsistent with previous research, however, differential associations between EI and verbal and abstract reasoning ability were not observed. Fitting theoretical expectations, in both studies EI was low-to-moderately correlated with higher life satisfaction, problem and emotion focused coping and perceived problem solving ability and with lower avoidance coping and anxiety. However, the correlations for academic

achievement were not significant. These correlations were found to be higher for self-report EI than they were ability EI, perhaps due to method variance with the life skills. Nevertheless, despite these low-to-moderate correlations, hierarchical regression analyses controlling for personality and cognitive abilities revealed that the incremental predictive validity of EI was 7% at most. This finding was found for all life skills regardless of the EI measure involved. This raises some implications for the field of EI and highlights that personality and cognitive abilities should be taken into account when making assertions about EI's predictive power.

## STATEMENT

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University library, being available for loan and photocopying.

Signed:

Dated:

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