

## Emotional Intelligence and Personality as Predictors of Psychological Well-Being

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### Abstract

*Research studies have reported elevated rates of psychological distress (e.g., depression). Specific personality traits have been shown to be predictors of a range of psychological problems. The study of happiness and emotional well-being in young people has expanded exponentially in recent years. Psychology has traditionally focused on unhappiness and paid little attention to positive aspects of human potential. This approach has been evident when studying adolescence, since this period of life implies many changes and it has been long described as a moment of stress and difficulties. This conception of adolescence is currently fairly different for studies do not only describe the adolescent as a source of problems but also as a valuable asset in a development process. This change took place with the arrival of positive psychology, as one of its objectives is to promote psychological research and practice in such areas as positive traits (strengths), positive emotions, and their contribution to well-being.*

**Keywords:** - Emotional intelligence, personality, well-being.

### Introduction:

Satisfaction and psychological well-being can be characterized as indicators of good mental functioning. Individuals are in a state of psychological well-being if they have a high degree of satisfaction with themselves, if their mood is good (positive affect), and if they only occasionally experience unpleasant emotions) such as sadness, anger, and inhibitions (negative affect). The perception of psychological well-being can be considered as the cognitive component of life satisfaction as it involves assessments of how people are leading their lives.

### *Emotional Intelligence and Well-Being*

EI can be understood either as a measure of a person's perception of their own emotions, and how they use, understand, and manage their emotions to enhance their personal growth and social relations (1) or as a

measure of a person's capacities for self-awareness, social awareness, and social skills (2). Despite skepticism by some about the construct validity of EI (3), a number of studies have supported the construct of EI in the context of leadership and workplace performance. One meta-analysis (4) examined several projects that tested the incremental validity of EI measures to explain job performance over and above cognitive ability and the "Big Five" personality traits. They concluded that most types of EI do have incremental validity above both personality and cognitive ability, especially in jobs that are high in emotional demands. Another meta-analysis also supported the concept and concluded that "published evidence contradicts extreme claims that EI has no value for leadership theory and practice". Other studies have examined the research on relationships between EI and well-being, specifically measuring physical, mental, and social-emotional criteria. provided a review of the literature in this area in which measures of EI were generally found to correlate positively with measures of psychological well-being and negatively with affective disorders such as anxiety and depression. Although Zeidner et al. highlight some problems in the literature they reviewed, such as the validity of self-reports and other measurement issues, they conclude that EI does appear to be related to a substantial number of health outcomes.

### **Happiness or Psychological Well-Being**

As for the study of happiness, it is essential to point out that there is no consensus about how to define it. the arrival of positive psychology, as one of its objectives is to promote psychological research and practice in such areas as positive traits (strengths), positive emotions, and their contribution to well-being [5] One of the most accepted theoretical approaches states that the construct happiness refers to an emotional and cognitive type of psychological state [6], a positive affective component in which positive emotions and the subjective interpretation of well-being are fundamental [6,7,8,9,10,11,12].

On a theoretical level, the debate on happiness has two main approaches: 1) the hedonic approach, that affirms that happiness is the presence of positive affection and the absence of negative affection; and 2) the eudaimonic approach, that states that happiness is the consequence of full psychological functioning by means of which the person develops his or her potential [13]. In line with eudaimonism, it is noteworthy to mention the psychological well-being multidimensional model [14], focused in the fulfillment of human potential through six key features: autonomy, environmental control, personal growth, positive relationships with others,

purpose in life, and self-acceptance [15]. Both approaches can be integrated in the “three dimensions of happiness” model [1] which are: 1) a pleasant life, understood as a pleasant feeling towards past, present and future; 2) a committed life, by using positive individual features, including character strengths and talents; and 3) a meaningful life, which means to serve and to belong to positive institutions. Subsequently, this model favored the appearance of 24 Strengths Model [16] which focuses on studying happiness in strengths and virtues.

Accordingly, they reinforce the idea of the existence of factors that determine happiness [17]. Then we find the Science of Happiness [12] which claims that happiness can be increased by the individual himself by means of certain activities. For that matter, such a vital period as adolescence is the ideal moment to increase it. In recent years, different theoretical approaches have defended a positive comprehension of adolescence, a crucial stage characterized by plasticity, the acquisition of competences and the achievement of satisfactory levels of well-being and positive adjustments [17]. It is a time when the capacity to appreciate satisfaction with life and well-being increases in a critical and conscious way [18]. Specifically, teaching adolescents to be happy functions with three main goals: as an antidote against depression, as a means of increasing life satisfaction, and as a way to enhance learning and creative thought [19].

## 1.2. Emotional Intelligence

One of the variables that could help to this increase of happiness during adolescence can be emotional intelligence [20]. There are two relevant models of emotional intelligence: Mixed Models and Ability Model. Mixed Models state that emotional intelligence is a compendium of stable personality features, socio-emotional competences, motivational aspects, and different cognitive abilities [21,22,23]. On the other side we find the Ability Model [24] which considers emotional intelligence as an ability focused on emotional information processing [25]. Ever since Model of Emotional Intelligence, this construct is defined as a type of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use the information to guide one’s thinking and actions [24]. Subsequently, said authors included in their definition abilities related to cognitive and emotional clarity, perception, and repair that could generate feelings that eased thinking and abilities of cognitive and emotional regulation [26]. In order to measure this construct, they designed questionnaire TMMS-24, which assesses Perceived Emotional Intelligence through three factors: attention to emotions (capability to feel and express

feelings properly), emotional clarity (capability to understand the own emotional states), and emotional repair (capability to correctly regulate emotional states).

### 1.3. Happiness or Psychological Well-Being and Emotional Intelligence

Scientific literature highlights the major role of emotional intelligence when determining individual happiness [20]. Numerous researchers have related emotional intelligence with psychological constructs that are closely associated with happiness, such as subjective well-being [27,28], higher rates of positive emotional states and decrease of negative emotional states [29], satisfaction with life [20,30,31,32], better psychological functioning and social competence [33], and better social relations; and negative associations with loneliness [34,35,36,37,38,39,40]. Other studies have focused on the relationship between emotional intelligence and variables connected with well-being in young people, such as physical and mental health [41,42,43] and perception of stress [44]. There is therefore clear evidence that capacities of emotional intelligence predict aspects related to personal well-being and a positive relation between life satisfaction and subjective happiness [45,46].

For this matter, Hills and Argyle [47] composed the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire, which evaluates subjective happiness from these psychological dimensions, including items focused on life satisfaction, positive emotions, physical and mental health, or social relationships.

More specifically, studies made from mixed models note that the trait emotional intelligence is a constellation of capacities and self-perceived attitudes related with emotion [48]. In this regard, different studies note the existence of a positive correlation between emotional intelligence as a trait and perceived happiness [49,50]. On the other hand, from the ability model, research based on Spanish adolescent subjects shows that the abilities of clarity and repair are positively correlated with life satisfaction whereas attention correlates negatively in adolescents [51]. In the same way, the dimensions of emotional recognition and expression, and the control of emotions mediate in the relationship between fully dispositional mindfulness and subjective happiness [52]. However, it should be considered that self-perceptions and attitudes associated with people's emotions—such as emotional regulation, relationship skills, and social competence—determine variation in happiness to a large degree [50]. Henceforth, research shows that emotional intelligence abilities imply a skill that allows adolescents to guide their thoughts and ponder over their emotions, helping them to improve their well-being levels [53]. These studies suggest that important interventions may

be performed to promote flourishing and happiness, enhancing emotional intelligence through specific training [54].

The present study seeks to analyze in a sample of adolescents, the association between of the dimensions of emotional intelligence (attention, clarity, and repair) and different levels of perceived happiness (low, medium, and high). It will also identify the sensitivity and the ability to distinguish scores obtained in the Spanish version of the questionnaire Trait Meta Mood Scale [55], from which high happiness is more likely to exist.

### **Discussion:**

The present study has aimed to analyze the relationship between the dimensions of emotional intelligence (attention, clarity, and repair) and happiness in a sample of adolescents and identify the cut-off points in the emotional intelligence scores, above which high happiness is more likely.

The detailed analysis of the results demonstrates a clear association between emotional intelligence and happiness. In general, these results agree with other research analyzing the association between emotional intelligence and happiness [46,56] or variables connected with it, such as personal and social adjustment [34,35,36,37,38,39,40]. To be precise, our results show that as emotional clarity and repair increase the individuals perceive themselves to be happier, and when they decrease they are less happy. No association has been found with the attention dimension. They agree with studies on adolescent populations that have found correlations between emotional clarity and repair, but not emotional attention, and variables closely related to happiness, such as well-being and psychological health [57,58,59] and quality of life [60].

This positive relation between happiness and emotional clarity and repair factors show that both abilities are indicators of a better emotional adjustment in adolescents [61,62,63]. Thus, the scores for clarity and repair above which happiness is maximized are situated within the established ranges for adequate emotional clarity and repair [55]. The results underscore that emotional repair has a greater association with happiness. In this line, several researchers have noted that the repair of emotions is fundamental for appropriate psychological functioning and mental health [64,65,66,67]. Adolescents with higher levels of emotional repair tend to carry out pleasant distracting activities, which can contribute to a greater feeling of happiness [68].

However, the question is: why is emotional attention not related to happiness? Although emotional attention is necessary for adaptation, paying too much attention to emotions is usually associated with maladaptive factors incompatible with happiness, such as anxiety, depression, hypervigilance,

rumination, and catastrophization [32,33,51]. Therefore, from this point of view, excessive attention must be associated with low happiness. In contrast, emotional attention implies being aware of the feelings that produce pleasure (happiness) or discomfort (unhappiness). All emotions have a positive function and situations that cause discomfort are inevitable. Therefore, happiness cannot depend on their absence, but on a balance between the quantity and intensity of pleasant/unpleasant. In such a way, people who pay too much attention to their emotions and moods and do not have an adequate emotional clarity and repair would not be capable enough to understand and regulate the different emotional states [69,70,71,72].

### Conclusion:

The conclusions of the present study support the idea that some capacities may help to increase the attainment of health and emotional well-being during adolescence. More precisely, it has shown that as adolescents' capacities of comprehension and emotional regulation increase, so does their subjective happiness. The important role of emotional regulation should be stressed because it is an additional factor associated with happiness.

Finally, we are aware that the educational context is the best setting in which to establish policies promoting emotional health and well-being that can reach all the students and put an end to possible inequalities in the learning of those resources. This study has attempted to determine the specific dimensions that should be focused on when teaching emotional capacities as a variable promoting happiness and emotional well-being and health during this key period of life. To be exact, the capacities of understanding and regulating emotions can be developed and increased in adolescents as a way for their perception of their own happiness to increase.

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