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A Study on the Relationship between Quality of Life, Emotional Intelligence and Life Satisfaction among Students

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Abstract

Aim: Happiness is a very important issue in the life of every human, which is influenced by many closely-related variables. The purpose of the present study is to explore the relationship of quality of life, emotional intelligence and life satisfaction among the students of Zahedan University, Iran.

Methods: This descriptive-analytic study was done on 204 students (101 males & 103 females) by using census method. Research tools were quality of life, emotional intelligence and life satisfaction scales. These are valid and reliable scales for use in psychological studies. Data were analyzed using Pearson's correlation and T-tests in SPSS software.

Findings: The research findings showed that emotional intelligence had a significant positive correlation with quality of life ($r=.454$, $p<.001$) but emotional intelligence was not associated with life satisfaction. Also quality of life had a significant correlation with life satisfaction ($r=.402$, $p<.001$). The results of t-test revealed that female students showed higher mean scores in quality of life and life satisfaction in comparison to their male student counterparts; however, there was no significant difference between the two groups in emotional intelligence scores.

Conclusion: The results indicated that the higher scores of students' emotional intelligence show the better quality of life they will have. Also quality of life is a variable that increasing students' satisfaction of life. In order to raise the level of mental health, it is necessary to pay attention to the mentioned variables and educating people.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, Life satisfaction, Quality of life

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Introduction

Quality of life is a concept that many attempts in the past three decades have been made in order to define and measure it objectively [1]. But despite extensive research conducted on quality of life, there is no single definition and consensus about it. Some scholars define the quality of life with an objective approach, and consider clear cases related to living standards, including physical health, personal status (wealth, living conditions, etc.), communication, and occupational or other social and economic factors equal to quality of life. In contrast to this approach, there is a subjective approach, which considers quality of life equal to joy or satisfaction of the person, and focuses on cognitive factors in evaluation of quality of life [2]. Besides these two objective and subjective approaches, there is a new approach, called holistic in which the theorists believe that quality of life, like life itself, is a complicated and multidimensional concept, and in the review, they consider both objective and subjective factors [3]. Emotional intelligence is another concept that many studies have been done about it. Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to perceive emotions, as well as assessing and generating emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions in order to promote emotional and intellectual growth. Emotional intelligence is about intelligent use of our emotions. This requires being aware of our feelings and the feelings of others in order to manage our behaviour and relationships effectively. Emotional intelligence is an area of cognitive ability involving traits and social skills that facilitate interpersonal behavior. It is the ability to sense, understand and effectively apply the power and astuteness of emotions as the sources of human energy, information, connection and influence [4]. Research in recent years has confirmed that emotional intelligence is significant in predicting a number of real-life outcomes such as occupational and academic success and quality of interpersonal relations [5]. Emotional intelligence predicts these real life outcomes in a differentiated manner than general intelligence or personality [6]. A study by Reiff et al. (2001) showed that students with learning disabilities had lower trait emotional intelligence scores than their non-disabled counterparts. While an individual's emotion-related self-perceptions are unlikely to be directly associated with better or poorer scholastic achievement, it is possible that they interact with variables such as cognitive ability [7]. Another study showed that trait emotional intelligence moderated the relationship between cognitive ability and academic performance. In addition, students with high trait emotional intelligence scores were less likely to have had unauthorized absences and excluded from school [8]. According to some studies, the components of emotional intelligence are the

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main predictor for mental well-being indicators such as life satisfaction and personal performance [9]. Also people who are able to regulate emotions are related to life satisfaction as well [10]. The sense of well-being or life satisfaction is one of the important mental features that a healthy person should have. Life satisfaction is a consistent and comprehensive concept, which reflects the sense and overall view of people of a community towards the world they live in. Life satisfaction is a clear sign of successful adaptation of individual to changes in various situations. Contrary to common expectation, life satisfaction does not decline by aging, and remains stable throughout the life period. Men and women are similar in their overall levels of life satisfaction [11] though women do report more positive and negative affect. Married people are more satisfied with their lives, and those with life-long marriages appear to be the most satisfied [12]. Social support is positively related to life satisfaction. People who receive supportive social relationship and supportive interpersonal relationship usually have less anxiety because they are glad with their life. It is not important where the social supports come from; be it from parents, peers, teachers, or colleagues, it has been associated with inherent value and self-concept, which leads someone to have a high level of life satisfaction. People who do not receive suitable social support and have not interpersonal relationship are likely to be angry and anxious; this makes them dissatisfied about their life. A supportive social network can help to enhance a person's self-confidence and to help reach goals so that one's life gets more meaningful [13]. Also one of the components of happiness is satisfaction with life. Individuals need to be really satisfied with their life in order to be happy. Unhappiness with life can decrease life satisfaction, which is a risk factor for suicide [14]. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 350 million people worldwide suffer from depression [15]. Therefore, the importance of quality of life can be realized in creating health and happiness. Emotional intelligence can have a role in people's quality of life, can protect people against deviant behaviors such as using alcohol and drugs and violence, vandalism, aggression, social deviations, and risk factors of smoking in adolescents and adults [16]. It has significant negative relationship with some mental health indicators like depression and loneliness [17]. Considering the importance and influence of these variables on each other, and their impact on one's personal and social life, it was decided to follow these objectives in particular:

1- To examine the significant relationship between emotional intelligence and quality of life;

2- To examine the significant relationship between quality of life and life satisfaction;

3- To examine the significant relationship between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction;

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4- To examine the significant difference between female and male groups in mean scores on quality of life and life satisfaction and emotional intelligence.

Methods

This is a descriptive-analytical study, which was done on 204 students of University of Zahedan, Iran by census method .After obtaining their consent to participate in the study, the questionnaires without names were completed by them. Initially, 500 questionnaires were distributed among all the students living in the university dormitories; 204 questionnaires were answered correctly that were analyzed. The students were in the age group of 19-25 years. The research tools were three questionnaires, which were used after receiving the personal information of the students. The first tool was the World Health Quality of Life Questionnaire (WHQOL – BREF). This scale consists of 26 items that assess four aspects of people's quality of life: physical health, psychological health, living environment, and relationship with others. The psychometric properties of the Persian version of this questionnaire are a valid and reliable. Intraclass correlation was greater than 0.7 in all areas, and 0/55 only in the area of social relationships [18]. Cronbach's alpha value in all areas was greater than 0.69. Then the students filled the emotional intelligence questionnaire. The Bar-On emotional intelligence questionnaire includes 117 substances, which has been examined on 3831 people of six countries (Argentina, Germany, India, Nigeria and South Africa) by Bar-On, and has been normalized in North America. The results of normalization showed that the test includes appropriate validity and reliability. It has been translated into 22 languages. The normalized data have been gathered from more than five countries, and several studies have been conducted about the validity and reliability of data [19]. This questionnaire consists of five scales or aspects (intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, confronting stress, adjustment and general mood) and fifteen sub-scales (emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, self-regard, self-actualization, independence, empathy, social responsibility, interpersonal relationship, reality testing, flexibility, problem solving, stress tolerance, impulse control, optimism, and happiness). The answers of the test were arranged in 5-point scale of Likert (Strongly agree, Agree, Somewhat, Disagree, and Strongly disagree). In Bar-On study in 1997, the retest coefficient was reported 0.85 after a month and 0.75 after 4 months. In another study, the internal consistency by Cronbach alpha coefficient was between 0.69 (Responsibility) and 0.86 (Self-esteem) by the average of 0.76 [20]. The questionnaire was applied on Iranian students, and the number of items decreased into 90 items. The obtained results are representative of desired validity and

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reliability of this test among Iranian students. In this study, the reliability of the test was obtained 0.83 by using Cronbach's alpha. The third questionnaire used in this study was Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLC), which was prepared by Diener et al. (1985). It contains five statements that measures cognitive component of subjective well-being, and measures the degree of individual satisfaction to each of the statements by 7-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly disagree (score 1) to Strongly agree (score 7). They reported retest correlation coefficient of this scale in a population of 176 students as 0.82 and Cronbach's alpha as 0.87 [22]. Cronbach's alpha for life satisfaction scale in an intercultural study for the nationalities of the United States, Germany, Japan, Mexico and China was reported as 0.90, 0.82, 0.72, 0.76 and 0.61, respectively [23]. This scale was translated into Persian and its validity by retesting was reported 0.69. Generally, this is a valid and reliable scale to use in psychological studies [24]. Descriptive and inferential statistics (T-test and Pearson's correlation) in SPSS 22 software were used to analyze the data.

Results

In this study, 204 students with the average age of 21.17 years were studied; 103 of them were female and 101 were male. The average and standard deviation values of emotional intelligence, quality of life and life satisfaction scores according to gender are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive indexes for variables

Variables	Female mean ± SD	Male mean ± SD	Total students mean ± SD
Emotional intelligence	307.5 ± 31.9	311.9 ± 30.9	309.71 ± 31.41
Life satisfaction	27.2 ± 11.3	23.5 ± 2.9	25.46 ± 8.50
Quality of life	86 ± 13.6	80.59 ± 8.2	83.39 ± 11.57

* Data are presented for n= (female=103, male=101).

Based on Pearson's correlation test, there is a significant relationship between the total score of emotional intelligence and the total score of quality of life with a correlation coefficient of 0.454 ($p<0.01$); and there is a significant relationship between the total score of quality of life and life satisfaction of students with the correlation coefficient of 0.402 ($P<0.01$) (Table2).

Table 2: Pearson's correlation between EI and LS with QL

Variables	Quality of life	P value
Emotional intelligence	0.454	0.000*
Life satisfaction	0.402	0.000*

*P< 0.01.

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However, no significant relationship was seen in correlation of emotional intelligence total score with life satisfaction score in the sample investigated (Table 3).

Table 3: Pearson's correlation between EI and LS

Variables	
Emotional intelligence	**Life satisfaction**
Pearson's correlation	0.074
P value	0.22

*P<0.01.

The results of t-test revealed that female students had higher mean scores on quality of life and life satisfaction in comparison to their male counterparts (p<0.05) but there was no significant difference between the two groups in emotional intelligence score (Table 4).

Table 4: T-test results to compare male and female students based on different variables

Variables	Female mean ± SD	Male mean ± SD	t-test	Df	P value
Emotional intelligence	307.5 ± 31.9	311.9 ± 30.9	-0.713	102	0.47
Life satisfaction	27.2 ± 11.3	23.5 ± 2.9	2.25	102	0.02*
Quality of life	86 ± 13.6	80.59 ± 8.2	2.481	102	0.01*

*P< 0.05

Discussion

The results of the present study showed a significant positive correlation (p<0.001) between emotional intelligence and quality of life in male and female students. Different studies confirm this finding, and express the significant relationship between emotional intelligence and quality of life [25-27]. For instance, Jennifer Min in 2014 investigated the relationship of emotional intelligence with job stress and quality of life, and found a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and quality of life, and an inverse relationship with job stress [28]. Generally, those who have high emotional intelligence, have the ability to control, identify and use emotional competences, and can deal with life events and problems with expanding their insight and positive attitude towards events and using proper strategies in order to confronting problems and improving their mental health. In addition, the optimistic view of these people can improve their immune system resulting in improving their health [29]. In fact, people with high emotional intelligence are consider stressful events as a challenge and an

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opportunity of learning, not a threat to security; as a result, they experience less physiological and emotional disorders, and have higher quality of life.

Also based on the study's second objective a significant correlation was observed between quality of life and life satisfaction ($p<0.001$). Given that quality of life includes some aspects of physical and mental health, as well as environment and social relations health, high score in quality of life means that the individual has acceptable health; then it seems natural that one who has high quality of life, also has a great deal of satisfaction. As the studies have shown, there is a positive correlation between quality of life and satisfaction in other aspects of life. In a study in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan for improving couple's quality of life on marital satisfaction and mental health, in the experimental group, in which the couples attended in training sessions to improve romantic relationships, improve love attraction and respect, improve intimacy, power sharing, conflict resolution skills, overcome permanent problems and give sense to life, effectiveness was observed and satisfaction of life increased significantly [30]. Also the results in another study showed that high score of quality of life has effect on job satisfaction [31].

The third objective was to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction; however, in this study, no significant relationship was observed between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction in the samples under study. In support of this finding, in a study on employed women, the results showed that emotional intelligence has no significant role in prediction of their life satisfaction [32]. On the relationship between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction, previous studies are not concordant, and report a low to moderate correlation range between these two structures [9, 33]. So this relationship has always been in doubt and subject to research [10], while other researches show strong relationship between these two variables [34]. For example, Mehta and Mehta (2015) showed that emotional intelligence is a good predictor for life satisfaction [35]. In the existing contradictions, two factors of contradictions resulting from applied tools and interaction or intermediary role of other variables are pointed out such as personal or demographic characteristics in relation between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction.

Finally, the fourth objective was to review the significant difference between female and male groups in mean scores on quality of life and life satisfaction and emotional intelligence. Based on the T-test results, quality of life score among the female students in the present study is significantly higher than in male students, and in this case, females are more satisfied

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with their living conditions than males, while there is no significant difference in emotional intelligence between the female and male students' scores. In other studies about gender differences, there are little and controversial findings about the relation of emotional intelligence, quality of life and life satisfaction scores. For example, Saadat et al. (2010) found no relationship between quality of life score and gender [27]. Bisegger et al. (2005) in their review on a number of children found out that both genders have a very high quality of life, while with increasing age, score of health-related quality of life in female teenagers significantly decreases as compared to male teenagers [36]. In connection with satisfaction, it was observed that life satisfaction, especially education satisfaction is more in girls than in boys [37]. Also regarding emotional intelligence, it was found out that emotional intelligence is higher in girls than in boys [38, 39]. While in another study, higher emotional intelligence was found in boys than in girls [40]. The difference in results may be due to differences in the groups studied and also difference in the tools used.

Conclusion

Since quality of life includes different personal and social aspects, which are important in health and life satisfaction, and since emotional intelligence as an important variable in life can affect health and quality of life directly, it is necessary to pay attention to these variables and their relationship and train young people in order to strengthen them.

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