Emotional Intelligence and its consequences for occupational and life satisfaction – Emotional Intelligence in the context of irrational beliefs

Isabell Welpe, Andranik Tumasjan, Jennifer Stich, Matthias Spörrle, Friedrich Försterling

Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München

LMU

According to Albert Ellis' theory of Rational-Emotive Behavior Therapy irrational beliefs (IB) lead to maladaptive emotions. A central component of irrationality is the denial of one's own possibilities to control important aspects of life. A specific IB is that one cannot control and thus cannot avoid certain emotion states. Emotion research considers regulative emotion control a pivotal component of the concept of "emotional intelligence" (EI). A negative association between IB and EI can thus be theoretically derived from both concepts. Furthermore both should be related to life satisfaction. We examined the relationship between IB and EI using standardized questionnaire instruments and the predictive value of both concepts regarding life satisfaction. We found a significant negative correlation between both conceptions ($r = -.21$). Life satisfaction and occupational satisfaction are better predicted by IB. R^2 increases from .04 to .12 when both concepts are incorporated in regression analysis.

1. Introduction

Emotional intelligence (EI) is a psychological construct that has attracted a lot of attention in recent years and has therefore been intensely examined. Although there are different definitions of EI most of them include the ability to control and regulate one's own emotions. Another important assumption implicitly included in many theoretical frameworks is that high EI should lead to high life satisfaction.

Albert Ellis' Rational-Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) is an effective cognitive therapy which poses that certain irrational beliefs (IB) lead to maladaptive emotions and psychological illness. According to Ellis (1962) one specific irrational belief is that one can neither control nor regulate ones own emotion and thus cannot avoid certain emotion states. According to Ellis this IB like any other irrationality reduces life satisfaction.

Hence, it seems reasonable to test whether reduced perceived emotional self control is connected with irrationality in general to provide evidence for a specific cognitive structure (i.e. irrationality) as a determinant of emotional intelligence. Additionally we examined whether EI or IB is the better predictor of life satisfaction.

3. Results

Reliabilities:
ECI:	.90
ECI cluster self management (SM):	.80
ECI emotional self-control (SC):	.66
Wong & Law (W&L):	.82
Försterling & Bühner (F&B):	.63

Convergent validity:
Both EI-instruments correlated significantly with each other $r = .41$ ($p < .001$) indicating a moderate convergent validity.

Relation EI and IB:
As predicted the Instruments of EI and IB correlate significantly negative with each other (see table 1).

Regression analysis:
Regression analysis for occupational and personal life satisfaction is significant for IB only. General life satisfaction can be predicted by IB as well as (in one case) by Wong and Law (2002) (see table 2).

Table 2: Multiple regressions to predict satisfaction

	Betas	R² (corr)
Regression 1 **Occupational life satisfaction**		
W&L	.16	
ECI	.03	
F&B	**-.30****	**.12**
Regression 2 **Personal life satisfaction**		
W&L	.15	
ECI	-.02	
F&B	**-.28****	**.09**
Regression 3 **General life satisfaction**		
W&L	**.21***	
ECI	.09	
F&B	**-.25****	**.15**

Annotations:
W&L = Wong & Law (2002) Emotional Intelligence scale
ECI = Emotional Competence Inventory 2.0
F&B = Försterling & Bühner (2003) irrational beliefs scale
$F(3, 131) > 7.0$, $p < .01$
* significant at .05 level
** significant at .01 level

4. Discussion

As expected, our results demonstrated a clear negative relation between EI and IB. Especially the competence of emotion regulation which is a component of both emotional intelligence concepts is negatively associated with irrational beliefs.

Predicting occupational, personal and general life satisfaction irrational beliefs proved to be a better predictor than emotional intelligence. It is worth mentioning that the scale by Wong and Law (2002) seems to explain more variance than the ECI.

2. Method

Instruments:
The ECI 2.0 was used as a measure of EI. This instrument assesses emotional competence by means of 72 items which can be classified in 4 clusters consisting of 18 subdimensions. In this study only the self rating version was applied.
As a second emotional intelligence instrument we used the emotional intelligence scale (EI-scale) by Wong and Law (2002) which consists of 16 items that can be classified in four dimensions.
To assess irrational beliefs we used the scale by Försterling and Bühner (2003) which consists of 6 items with 5-point rating scales ranging from 1 ("not at all") to 5 ("absolutely").
Life satisfaction was assessed by means of 3 items ("Overall, how satisfied are you with your personal life/occupational life/your life as a whole?") using 11-point rating scales ranging from 0 ("not at all") to 10 ("absolutely").

German translation of the instruments:
The English versions of the ECI 2.0 and the EI-scale by Wong and Law (2002) were translated independently by 6 persons involved in emotion research. Afterwards 3 other persons being familiar with the concept of emotional intelligence selected the best translation for each item by majority decision. For the other instruments there were already German versions available.

Respondents: 136 respondents (age 18-73, $M = 28.0$, $SD = 9.9$), 94 female and 42 male.

Table 1: Correlations of ECI, W&L and F&B

	ECI	ECI (SM)	ECI (SC)	W&L	W&L (ROE)	F&B
ECI	1	.92**	.43**	.41**	.34**	**-.21***
ECI (SM)	.92**	1	.48**	.40**	.34**	**-.23****
ECI (SC)	.43**	.48**	1	.30**	**.48****	**-.25****
W&L	.41**	.40**	.30**	1	.65**	**-.20***
W&L (ROE)	.34**	.34**	**.48****	.65**	1	**-.34****
F&B	-.21*	-.23**	**-.25****	-.20*	-.34**	1

Annotations:
ECI = Emotional Competence Inventory 2.0
ECI (SM) = cluster "Self Management" from ECI 2.0
ECI (SC) = competence "Emotional Self-Control" from ECI 2.0
W&L = Wong & Law (2002) Emotional Intelligence scale
W&L (ROE) = dimension "Regulation of Emotion" from Wong & Law (2002)
F&B = Försterling & Bühner (2003) irrational beliefs scale
* significant at .05 level
** significant at .01 level

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Contact:
andranik.tumasjan@campus.lmu.de, spoerrle@psy.uni-muenchen.de