



RESEARCH PAPER

Investigating the Differences in Level of Emotional Intelligence, Forgiveness, and Life Satisfaction on the Basis of Gender

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to investigate the gender differences in levels of emotional intelligence, forgiveness and life satisfaction. Gender has been a significant variable in determining well-being. A growing body of literature yields mix results regarding gender-based variations on psychological constructs. It was hypothesized that there will be a significant difference in levels of emotional intelligence, forgiveness and life satisfaction on the basis of gender. A quantitative survey research design employing convenient sampling was used, including individuals between 18-40 years. 502 participants with equal number of males and females were part of the research (N=502). Additionally, qualitative approaches and longitudinal research designs could also help enrich understanding subjective experiences across life stages. The findings indicated no significant gender difference in emotional intelligence and life satisfaction; however, gender differences were evident in levels of forgiveness. By examining these factors this research provided valuable insights for the development of targeted interventions to enhance well-being. For future research incorporating mediating and moderating could help understand underlying mechanisms.

KEYWORDS Emotional Intelligence, Forgiveness, Life Satisfaction, Well-being, Gender

Introduction

As individuals transition from adolescence to adulthood, it becomes important to look at what affects them emotionally. The mental and emotional well-being during this developmental stage is influenced by emotional intelligence (EI), life satisfaction, and forgiveness. Conceptualized by Salovey and Mayer (1990), emotional intelligence is the capacity to manage, regulate and understand one's emotions and the emotions of others effectively. Emotional intelligence is significant in interpersonal relationships, problem-solving, and stress management (Fteiha & Awwad, 2020). For young adults constantly confronted with new challenges concerning their career, intimacy, and identity, the capacity to regulate emotions effectively can boost their quality of life and well-being, leading to a greater sense of purpose, success, and fulfilling relationships (Sanchez-Sanchez et al., 2025). In modern times, forgiveness is viewed as a universal indicator in predicting happiness and satisfaction for both males and females (Paswan, 2024). However, research yields mixed results suggesting no difference in levels of emotional intelligence, forgiveness and life satisfaction. Contrarily, some research argues that females are more forgiving as compared to males, which also leads to better levels of life satisfaction. Research by Ali et al. (2021), also found that males are more emotionally intelligent as compared to females.

Literature Review

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence has been viewed as a game-changer in shaping individuals' lives, by influencing their performance, leadership, and overall wellbeing (Fteiha & Awwad,

2020). It also encompasses the capacity to perceive feelings both in oneself and other individuals, as well as to empathize, understand and manage own emotions, and respond accordingly in the cultural context (Delhom et al., 2017). Peter Salovey and John Mayer define Emotional Intelligence as a capacity of individuals to understand and manage emotions of themselves and others around them (*Emotional Intelligence in Leadership: Why It's Important*, 2019). This ability also directs the thoughts and actions of an individual (Sussane, 2020). Emotional intelligence helps individuals overcome negative feelings, and encourages constructive feelings such as confidence and empathy (Coronado-Maldonado & Benítez-Márquez, 2023). It promotes flexibility, well-being, and happiness leading to desired academic outcomes (Martin et al., 2024).

Forgiveness

Forgiveness as defined by Laura Thompson is the intentional act of letting go vengeful or resentful feeling towards an individual or a group who had offended you, even though the offender may or may not deserve such forgiveness (Thompson et al., 2005). The Triad of Forgiveness as described by Freedman and Enright (2019), has three components of Forgiveness, which include forgiving the self, forgiving others and forgiving the situation. Self-forgiveness entails reconciling with one's self because of past wrong deeds while forgiving others require one to let go animosity towards the offenders. Forgiveness of the situation extends to conditions of life that are beyond an individual's control, for example earthquakes or ailments.

Several empirical research have pointed towards a positive relationship between forgiveness and positive outcome, which include wellbeing, mental health, and strong interpersonal relationship. Research has also pointed out that forgiveness can lesser levels of negative emotion, thereby increasing self-esteem and well-being (Singh & Sharma, 2018).

Age is another factor that relates to whether a person will forgive or not. Literature yields mixed results suggesting that that older adults have higher levels of forgiveness than young adults do because they are more experienced emotionally and are relationship oriented (Ghaemmaghami et al., 2011; Miller et al., 2008). It is also associated with higher levels of wellbeing. However, research also indicates that individuals of all age ranges go through some experiences of hurt and betrayal, their coping might not vary greatly. Some might just try to let go of it without engaging in the process of forgiveness (Yu et al., 2023).

Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction, one of the measures of well-being, reflects an individual's global subjective appraisal of their lives (Devi, 2022; Karataş et al., 2021). It interplays with aspects such as hope and optimism to determine how a person perceives or copes with certain tasks (Karataş et al., 2021). Personality factors also determine the levels of life satisfaction. Abdel-Khalek et al. (2022) found that extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness are positive predictors, and neuroticism is a negative predictor of life satisfaction. Life Satisfaction is impacted by mental health. A research conducted by Asif et al. (2020) also stated that anxiety and depression reduces the overall life satisfaction among university students of Pakistan. On the other hand, self-esteem and coping potential is positively related with the level of life satisfaction. Research has focused on gender differences in life satisfaction yielding mixed results (Joshanoor & Jovanović, 2019). While some of the researches posited that women could have higher life satisfaction but things like social pressures, gender roles and educational achievements may influence the difference.

The current research is based on Mayer and Salovey's (1997) ability-based model, which defines emotional intelligence as a cognitive ability that influences how individuals process interpersonal transgressions and regulate emotional responses. This model is based on four primary components: perceiving emotions, using emotions, understanding

emotions, and regulating emotions in oneself and others (Delhom et al., 2017). Their framework indicates that higher levels of emotional intelligence result into better psychological health, relationship, life satisfaction and better ability to make life decisions. Research also found that individuals with high emotional intelligence do report higher levels of life satisfaction, better social adaptability and good problem-solving coping style (Jawabreh, 2024). Literature applying this model often demonstrated gender related patterns suggesting females to be more emotionally intelligent and empathetic than males (Christov-Moore et al., 2014).

The second theoretical foundation of this research is based on Worthington’s (2001) Cognitive Affective Model of Forgiveness, which defines forgiveness as a multidimensional process involving cognitive restructuring and affective transformation of emotional response towards the transgressor. This model illustrates that forgiveness is not only a choice or an action, but also a complex emotional and cognitive processes involving several key components. Cognitive reappraisal refers to reinterpreting the meaning of an offence in order to reduce anger, resentment, betrayal and other negative feelings towards an individual (Baumeister et al., 2007). This shift of cognitive appraisal is crucial in breaking the chain of negative emotions thereby fostering a more balanced and compassionate emotional state. Emotional Regulation involves the need to be able to control emotional responses particularly negative feelings such as anger or hatred when being wronged. It enable individuals to get over hardships and brings healing to their minds, which makes individuals be emotionally well (Baumeister et al., 2007). Previous research indicates that gender differences may emerge in how forgiveness is enacted.

The third theoretical foundation is Diener’s Subjective Wellbeing theory which integrates three components; positive affect, negative affect, and life satisfaction (Larwin et al., 2020). Research suggest greater gender disparities in levels of life satisfaction suggesting males to report higher levels of global life satisfaction due to a range of indictors (Mantsi et al., 2025).

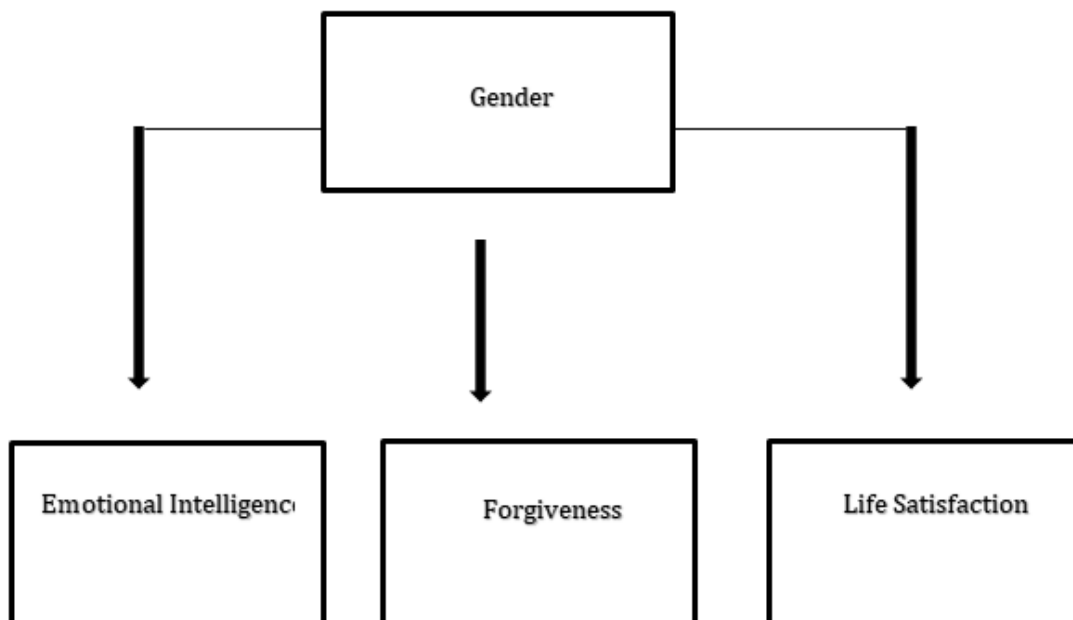


Figure1: Proposed Theoretical Model for the Current Research

Taken together, this framework positions gender as the independent variable and emotional intelligence, forgiveness, and life satisfaction as dependent variables. The theories provide grounds for conceptual understanding of each variable. While the theories do not explicitly

investigate gender-based differences, literature does suggest the ability of males and females to differ in their emotional abilities, process of forgiveness, and life satisfaction outcomes. This theoretical framework therefore supports the central aim of the present research: to investigate whether gender differences exist in the levels of emotional intelligence, forgiveness, and life satisfaction, and to interpret these differences in light of established psychological theories. The current research aims to explore differences in levels of emotional intelligence, forgiveness, and life satisfaction on the basis of gender.

Research Hypothesis

H1: There will be a significant difference in the levels of Emotional Intelligence, Forgiveness, and Life Satisfaction on the basis of gender.

Methodology

Research Design and Participants

A quantitative survey design was employed for the current research. The participants were selected via convenient sampling after informed consent was given by the participants. A total of 502 participants were part of the research.

Inclusion Criteria

- Participants must be within the age range of 18-40
- Participants with minimum 10 years of education
- Participant must be able to comprehend and read English language.

Any responses from participants who did not meet the inclusion criteria were excluded from the research.

Measures

The participants were required to fill a consent form before taking the actual survey. They were debriefed about their right to participate and withdraw from the research at any point without incurring any consequences. They were assured about the confidentiality of the data that was provided by them.

The Demographic Information Form obtained the personal information of participants including questions regarding their age, gender, education level, birth order, number of sibling, income group, marital status, employment status and family structure.

The Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence scale devised by Peter Wong and Kenneth Law in 2002 was adopted. It comprised of 16 items, which are grouped into measuring four broad factors with each containing 4 items; self-emotion appraisal (items 1-4), regulation of emotion (items 5-8), use of emotion (items 9-12), other emotion appraisal (items 13- 16). It is a self-reported measure based on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from seven, which indicates, "strongly agree", to one signifying "strongly disagree". The responses were summed up with a view of arriving at a total score for each participant of the research. This scale measures Emotional Intelligence efficacy and the four dimensions and has an internal reliability of between 0.76 and 0.89.

Thompson et al (2005), Heartland Forgiveness Scale was employed in this research. This scale is made up of three dimensions including; forgiveness of self, forgiveness of others and forgiveness of situation. This self-report measure is composed of 18 items with six items in each subscale. Some items are summed to obtain total and subscale scores while a few items are reversed scored. Cronbach α of the Forgiveness of Self was 0.750, the Forgiveness

of Other was 0.790, Forgiveness of Situations was 0.790, and the Forgiveness of Total was 0.870 (Thomson et al., 2005).

Pavot and Diener (1993) have developed the Satisfaction with Life Scale. It comprises of 5 items that measure an individual's level of satisfaction with life. The sources for the data in this instrument were adapted from survey and scale questions, which included a 7 Likert scale with the following options; 1- Strongly Disagree, 7 -Strongly Agree. The reliability coefficient, Cronbach α for this scale was found to be 0.87.

Procedure

Permission was obtained from the authors of all measures used in the current research, followed by formally approaching the administration of all data collection institutions. Data was collected from 502 participants (N=502). A total of 251 males and 251 females were part of this research. The data was collected, organized, and assessed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences-Version 26 (SPSS-26). Descriptive Statistics and Independent Sample t test were run in order to obtain research findings. All ethical guidelines instructed as per American Psychological Association were ensured. The participants were given an informed consent form and were debriefed about their right to participate and withdraw from the research at any point without adhering any consequences. They were assured about the confidentiality of the data that was provided by them.

Ethical Considerations

While this research was being conducted, strict ethical considerations were followed. It was ensured that consent was taken from all the participants before collecting the data only. The aim of this research was well informed to the participants. In addition, the confidentiality of all participants was maintained throughout this research and they were ensured that the data collection would only be restricted to the institution and the researcher. Withdrawal rights were also given to every participant.

Results

Table 1
Frequency and Percentage of Demographic Variables

Variables	<i>f</i>	%
Gender		
Male	251	49.9
Female	251	49.9
Age		
18-24	368	73.2
25-30	113	22.5
31-36	17	3.4
37-40	5	1.0
Education		
Matriculation (10 th grade)	9	1.8
Intermediate (12 th grade)	182	36.2
Graduation (14 th grade)	240	47.7
Masters (16 th grade)	72	14.3
Relationship		
Single	384	76.3
Married	70	13.9
Other	49	9.7
Birth Order		

First Born	155	30.8
Second Born	118	23.5
Middle Child	97	19.3
Last Born	109	21.7
Only Child	24	4.8
Employment Status		
Employed Full-time	122	24.3
Employed Part-time	97	19.3
Unemployed	32	6.4
Student	251	49.9
Income Group		
Lower Class	81	16.1
Lower middle	104	20.7
Middle Class	82	16.3
Upper Middle Class	17	3.4
Upper Class	6	1.2
Family Structure		
Nuclear	364	72.4
Joint	139	27.6

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics and Alpha Reliability Coefficients of Emotional Intelligence, Forgiveness, and Life Satisfaction (N=502)

Variables	Items	M	SD	SK	K	α
EI	16	5.49	0.99	-1.34	2.46	0.86
SEA	4	5.44	1.18	-1.34	1.99	0.86
ROE	4	5.59	1.24	0.80	2.50	0.68
UOE	4	5.37	1.24	-1.11	1.18	0.87
OEA	4	4.96	1.31	-0.69	0.07	0.85
HFS	18	80.30	12.98	0.39	0.23	0.83
Fose	6	26.98	5.76	0.40	0.17	0.75
FoO	6	26.96	5.80	-0.133	0.53	0.76
FoSi	6	26.34	5.77	0.38	0.66	0.77
LS	5	23.41	6.40	-0.40	-0.39	0.81

Note: EI= Emotional Intelligence, SEA= Self-emotions appraisal, ROE= Regulation of Emotions, UOE= Use of Emotions, OEA= Others emotion appraisal, HFS= Heartland Forgiveness Scale, FoSe= Forgiveness of Self, FoO= Forgiveness of Others, FoSi= Forgiveness of Situation, LS= Life Satisfaction

Table 3
Gender Differences in Level of Life Satisfaction, Emotional Intelligence and Forgiveness (N=502)

Variables	Males (n= 251)		Females (n= 251)		t	p	95% CI	
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL
EI	5.41	1.09	5.56	0.88	-1.699	0.096	-3.22	0.262
F	77.46	11.16	83.08	14.04	-4.967	0.00	-7.85	-3.40
LS	23.84	6.54	22.95	6.24	1.56	0.117	-2.25	2.01

Note: EI= Emotional Intelligence, F= Forgiveness, LS= Life Satisfaction, M= Mean, SD= Standard Deviation, t= Variance

Discussion

Table 1 and Table 2 illustrate the descriptive statistics for all the research variables. As per the values, the data, levels of skewness and kurtosis indicate normal distributions. The Cronbach alpha reliabilities of all the scales and subscales range from 0.75 to 0.87 indicating good acceptable internal consistency.. However, the subscale Regulation of

Emotions has an alpha of 0.68 suggesting a moderate reliability. Table 3 shows the difference between males and females scores on the variables of emotional intelligence, forgiveness, and life satisfaction. indicating that there is a significant difference between male and female mean scores on the variable of forgiveness while no differences were found in levels of emotional intelligence and life satisfaction.

The research hypothesis stated that there will be a significant difference in emotional intelligence, forgiveness, and life satisfaction on basis of gender. The findings suggest a difference in the level of forgiveness on the basis of gender such that females are more forgiving as compared to males. Literature suggests that females tend to have traits such as agreeableness, empathy, desire to maintain and preserve relationships therefore, they are more inclined towards forgiveness rather than seeking revenge, adopting a care and relationship-oriented approach. Their ability to forgive also decreases their tendency to have symptoms of depression or anxiety (Miller et al., 2008). On the other hand, males are more oriented towards seeking justice through fair means, which also aligns with Kohlberg's theory of moral developments that suggested that males while making decisions of forgiveness tend to view whether the transgressor is admitting to their mistakes then they might forgive, but if they sense any element of injustice which with their rules of fairness, they are less likely to forgive (Kaleta & Mróz, 2021). The findings are in line with numerous research that concluded a gender difference in level of forgiveness of male and females. However, some research suggest a no significant difference in levels of forgiveness on basis of gender, while empirical findings also suggest that women are less forgiving towards themselves and situations, but not towards the people around them (Sarfaraz et al., 2024).

In addition, analysis related to gender differences, in accordance to emotional intelligence and level of life satisfaction, found no significant difference. Literature suggests that females being more expressive as compared to males tend to have higher levels of emotional intelligence (Meshkat & Nejati, 2017). This relates with the notion that from a very young age only, girls are taught to be more empathetic and nurturing, traits that have been associated with femininity since a very long time (Khandelwal, 2024). However, recent research suggests no gender differences in emotional intelligence. Just like females, males also have developed the ability to understand, manage and regulate their emotions and the emotions of people around them. This has become a powerful tool and game changer as in all fields of life emotional intelligence has its role (Tommasi et al., 2023).

Literature regarding levels of life satisfaction on basis of gender yields mixed results some suggest a difference while majority are of the view that the level of life satisfaction does not differ based on gender (Daly & Silfiasari, 2020). A research conducted found gender differences yet they were significantly small (Joshnloo & Jovanović, 2019). Similarly, another research findings suggested no difference on basis of gender in levels life satisfaction. However, some research report higher levels of life satisfaction in males than females (Gupta & Kriti, 2023). This might be due several factors which include gender role, responsibilities, freedom, economic status rights unequally distributed across some societies. However, individual experiences and opportunities also have an integral part in it (Becchetti & Conzo, 2021).

Conclusion

The current research aimed to investigate the difference between levels of Emotional Intelligence, Life Satisfaction, and Forgiveness on the basis of gender. The research findings suggest no gender differences were found in levels of emotional intelligence and life satisfaction. However, as research also suggests that females adopt a care and relationship-oriented approach while males are oriented towards seeking justice, gender differences were found in levels of forgiveness such that females are more forgiving as compared to males.

Recommendations

For future research, it is recommended to incorporate mediating and moderating variables such as personality traits, coping mechanisms, social support, socioeconomic backgrounds to understand the underlying mechanism. Additionally, qualitative approaches and longitudinal research designs could also help enrich understanding subjective experiences across life stages.

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