



Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Life Satisfaction: Mediated by Empathy and Moderated by Conflict Resolution Skills

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ABSTRACT

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This study explores the associations between emotional intelligence, empathy, satisfaction with life, and conflict resolution in a sample of 300 university students (young adults) aged 18–34. Using recognized scales such as the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale, Conflict Resolution Style Inventory, Empathy Concern Scale, and Satisfaction with Life Scale, the study found a noteworthy positive link between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction. Empathy was discovered as a partial mediator in this relationship, enhancing the effectiveness of emotional intelligence by improving emotional awareness. Moreover, conflict resolution was implied to moderate the correlation, strengthening the positive influence of emotional intelligence on life satisfaction. The results emphasize the vital role of emotional intelligence in improving life satisfaction through its effect on both empathy and conflict resolution.



Introduction

Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI), also known as emotional quotient (EQ), refers to the ability to perceive, use, understand, and manage emotions in oneself and others. It encompasses several key components: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Individuals with high EI can identify their own emotions and those of others, allowing them to navigate social complexities effectively (Goleman, 2007). This skill set is particularly valuable in various contexts, including personal relationships and professional environments, where understanding

emotional dynamics can lead to better communication and conflict resolution. Emotional intelligence (EI) is a component of social intelligence that refers to the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions and those of others. It also involves using this emotional awareness to guide thoughts and actions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

Research shows that emotional intelligence isn't a fixed trait—it can be developed over time through different approaches, such as training programs and self-assessment tools like the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i). These tools allow individuals to identify their strengths and pinpoint areas where they can improve (Wong & Law, 2002). As more organizations acknowledge the value of emotional intelligence in leadership and teamwork, building these skills has become increasingly important for personal development and career success.

EI has been theoretically linked to various significant human values, such as life satisfaction, the quality of interpersonal relationships, and success in professions requiring emotional reasoning, including creativity, leadership, sales, and psychotherapy (Bar-On, 1997; Goleman, 1995; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Numerous studies have explored the connection between EI and life satisfaction (Bar-On, 1997; Ciarrochi, Chan, & Caputi, 2000; Martinez-Pons, 1997; Mayer et al., 2000). Research using self-report measures, such as the EQi (Bar-On) and the TMMS (Martinez-Pons), has identified moderate positive correlations between EI and life satisfaction. For instance, Bar-On reported that the total EQ scale score on the EQi showed a correlation of $r = 0.41$ ($P < 0.001$) with the Kirkcaldy Quality of Life Questionnaire.

Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction is a key concept in positive psychology (Gilman & Huebner, 2003). It has been defined as a “cognitive evaluation of one's life” (Diener, 1984, p. 550), representing an overall judgment about one's life circumstances. As a component of subjective well-being (SWB), life satisfaction is connected to but distinct from the emotional aspects of SWB (Lucas et al., 1996). Modern research views SWB as having three elements: positive affect, negative affect, and life satisfaction (Diener, 1984).

Life satisfaction is a complex concept that reflects how individuals perceive the quality of their lives, considering emotional, psychological, and social aspects. It's less about fleeting emotions and more about an overall positive attitude toward life circumstances (Diener et al., 1999). Many factors shape life satisfaction, including personal values, cultural influences, economic conditions, and relationships. Interestingly, research suggests that people tend to experience greater life satisfaction as they age, often due to increased wisdom and a clearer understanding of what truly matters for happiness (Palgi & Shmotkin, 2009).

Theories explaining life satisfaction generally fall into two main categories: bottom-up and top-down approaches. The bottom-up theory suggests that satisfaction in specific areas of life—such as health, relationships, or work—builds up to influence overall life satisfaction (Erdogan et al., 2012). On the other hand, the top-down theory emphasizes the role of personality traits and an individual's overall perspective on life. For example, traits like low neuroticism and high extraversion are strongly linked to greater life satisfaction (McCrae & Costa, 1991). These perspectives show how both external circumstances and internal characteristics shape a person's sense of fulfillment.

Self-esteem also plays a key role in life satisfaction. People with high self-esteem tend to approach challenges with confidence and report a more positive view of their lives (Rosenberg, 1965). In

contrast, low self-esteem can lead to negative self-perceptions and difficulties in social interactions. Emotional factors, such as optimism and hope, further influence life satisfaction—optimistic individuals are more likely to feel content with their lives compared to those with a pessimistic outlook (Seligman et al., 2005).

Measures of life satisfaction capture a wide range of functioning, providing insight into both well-being and psychological difficulties. Unlike traditional mental health scales, which focus on identifying and rating problems, life satisfaction measures allow individuals to report positive feelings and behaviors (Kamman et al., 1984). As a critical indicator of SWB, life satisfaction plays an essential role in positive psychology, which emphasizes identifying strengths and building them as protective factors against psychopathology (Veenhoven, 1988).

In summary, life satisfaction is shaped by a variety of factors, including age, personality, self-esteem, and emotional well-being. By nurturing strong relationships, building self-esteem, and fostering an optimistic mindset, individuals can work toward greater life satisfaction and overall well-being. Understanding these dynamics can provide valuable insights for both individuals and practitioners aiming to enhance quality of life.

Empathy

Empathy refers to the ability to share and understand another person's emotional state or perspective. It is often described as “putting oneself in another's shoes” to vicariously experience their emotions. Empathy is a vital communication skill that is frequently misunderstood and underutilized (Ioannidou & Konstantikaki, 2008). The term empathy originates from the German word *Einfühlung* (“in-feeling”), coined in the 1880s by psychologist Theodor Lipps to describe the emotional appreciation of another's feelings. Empathy has also been defined as the process of understanding someone's subjective experience by sharing it vicariously while maintaining an objective perspective (Zinn, 1993).

Empathy is a nuanced psychological concept that allows people to understand and share the emotions of others. It is often broken down into three key components: cognitive empathy, emotional empathy, and compassionate empathy. Cognitive empathy is the ability to understand someone else's emotions and thoughts, while emotional empathy involves feeling the emotions others are experiencing on a deeper, physical level (Greater Good Science Center, n.d.; Study.com, 2024). Compassionate empathy takes this further by inspiring action to help alleviate another person's suffering (Study.com, 2024). Together, these aspects of empathy play a vital role in building meaningful connections and fostering understanding in relationships.

Research suggests that empathy has evolved over time and is not unique to humans. It has been observed in many species, including primates and some domesticated animals, highlighting its evolutionary significance (Greater Good Science Center, n.d.). In the human brain, empathy is associated with regions like the amygdala and anterior cingulate cortex, which are key to processing emotions (StatPearls, 2023). Additionally, mirror neurons—cells that fire both when we perform an action and when we see someone else perform it—are thought to play a crucial role in empathetic responses (Greater Good Science Center, n.d.). These findings emphasize that empathy is an innate human ability that grows through social interactions and life experiences.

Empathy is fundamental to effective communication and social harmony. It enables people to connect on an emotional level, encouraging prosocial behaviors like kindness and altruism (PMC, 2017). In professional environments, especially in fields like healthcare and education, empathy

can lead to better patient care and improved student outcomes (PMC, 2017). However, while empathy strengthens relationships and fosters understanding, it can also lead to emotional exhaustion if not managed carefully. This highlights the importance of balancing empathy with self-care to maintain emotional well-being (BPS, 2023).

Conflict Resolution

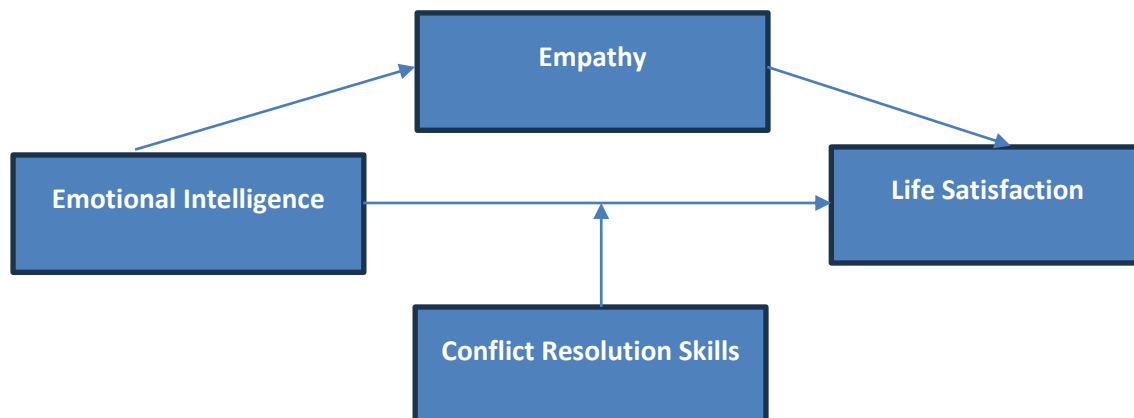
Effective conflict resolution requires considering and respecting others' perspectives (Chen, 2003). Piaget (1932) argued that interpersonal conflict, particularly with peers of equal status, plays a crucial role in reducing egocentrism. Conflict resolution involves a social orientation, emphasizing balancing one's interests with those of others, understanding social norms, recognizing others' needs, and accurately assessing conflict situations to choose the most suitable approach (Putallaz & Sheppard, 1992; Selman, 1980). Key behaviors include reasoning, seeking explanations and justifications, offering alternative solutions, showing a willingness to compromise, and using conciliatory actions such as apologizing and sharing.

Conflict resolution skills are invaluable tools that help people address and resolve disagreements in a constructive and effective way. These skills include techniques like active listening, clear communication, negotiation, and problem-solving. Active listening means giving your full attention to the other person, ensuring their perspective is truly heard and acknowledged. By showing empathy and validating others' feelings, you can create a sense of trust and openness, making it easier to work through disagreements (Fisher & Ury, 2011).

Clear communication is another key part of resolving conflicts. It allows individuals to express their thoughts and emotions openly and assertively, without resorting to aggression or shutting down. Negotiation plays a critical role as well—it's about finding common ground and working together to reach a solution that benefits everyone involved. This often requires creativity and flexibility, as exploring different options may be necessary before landing on a resolution that works (Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993).

Problem-solving is just as important in addressing the root causes of conflicts. By focusing on underlying needs and interests rather than fixed positions, people can uncover innovative solutions that meet everyone's needs (Ury, 1991). Ultimately, developing strong conflict resolution skills doesn't just help settle disagreements it also builds healthier relationships and creates more positive, collaborative environments in both personal and professional settings.

Conceptual Model



Objectives

1. To investigate the association between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction among adults.
2. To examine mediating role of empathy between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction among adults.
3. To examine moderating role of conflict resolution skills between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction among adults.

Hypotheses

1. Emotional Intelligence is positively related to life satisfaction among adults.
2. Empathy mediates the association between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction among adults.
3. Conflict resolution skills moderate the association between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction among adults.

Instruments

Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale

The Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS), developed in 2002 by Wong and Law, is a self-assessment tool designed to measure emotional intelligence across four key areas: Self-Emotion Appraisal (SEA), Others' Emotion Appraisal (OEA), Use of Emotion (UOE), and Regulation of Emotion (ROE). The scale consists of 16 items, with each dimension represented by four items, and uses a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The WLEIS has consistently demonstrated strong reliability and validity in research. For instance, studies report high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values reaching up to .87, reflecting its dependability. Additionally, confirmatory factor analysis has confirmed the scale's four-factor structure, showed good fit indices and supported its applicability in diverse cultural settings (Masood & Akhtar, 2023). This makes the WLEIS a trusted and versatile tool for assessing emotional intelligence across various contexts.

Satisfaction with Life Scale

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), developed by Diener et al. (1985), is a widely recognized tool for measuring overall life satisfaction. This self-report scale includes five statements, with responses rated on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The SWLS is known for its reliability and validity, consistently showing strong internal consistency, with coefficient alpha values often exceeding 0.80. It also demonstrates good temporal reliability and aligns well with other measures of subjective well-being, highlighting its convergent validity. Designed to be versatile, the SWLS is suitable for individuals across different age groups, offering a broad yet reflective assessment of life satisfaction.

Interpersonal Reactivity Index

The Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI), developed by Mark H. Davis in 1980, is a widely used tool for measuring empathy as a multidimensional construct. It consists of 28 items divided into four distinct subscales: Perspective Taking (PT), which assesses the ability to understand others' viewpoints; Fantasy (FS), which measures the tendency to identify with fictional characters in

stories; Empathic Concern (EC), which reflects feelings of compassion for others; and Personal Distress (PD), which gauges discomfort in response to others' distress. Respondents rate each item on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "Does not describe me well" to "Describes me very well." The IRI has been extensively used in research to explore various dimensions of empathy and has consistently demonstrated strong reliability and validity across diverse studies (Pulos et al., 2004). Its versatility makes it a valuable tool for understanding empathy in different contexts.

Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory

The Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (CRSI), developed by Lawrence Kurdek in 1994, is a tool designed to measure how individuals handle conflicts in relationships. Originally, the scale included 16 items grouped into four distinct conflict resolution styles: positive strategies, conflict engagement, withdrawal, and compliance (Kurdek, 1994). Participants indicate how often they use each strategy on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "never" to "always." The CRSI has been shown to have strong validity, including face validity, construct validity, and both concurrent and predictive criterion-related validity. It has also been moderately correlated with related constructs like marital satisfaction, demonstrating its practical relevance (Kurdek, 1994). Over time, the scale has been adapted and validated in diverse cultural contexts, making it a versatile tool for studying conflict resolution across different populations (Delatorre et al., 2017; Dost Gozkan, 2017).

Table 1: Descriptive characteristics of the sample (N=300)

Sample Data		Frequency	Percentage
Age			
	18-25	132	41.1
	26-34	168	52.3
Gender			
	Male	141	43.9
	Female	159	49.5
Family system			
	Joint	133	41.4
	Nuclear	167	52.0
Residency			
	Urban	134	41.7
	Rural	166	58.3
Family income			
	30,000-50,000	19	5.9
	51,000-70,000	41	12.8
	71,000-90,000	40	12.5
	91,000- 120,000	151	47.0
	>120,000	49	15.3

The sample consisted of 300 participants (both male and female) who were aged 18-25 and 26-34 years. In terms of the family system, 41.4% of participants reported having a joint family, while 52.0 % had a nuclear family. In datasets, information about family income is shown.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of all the scales (N=300)

Scales	k	α	M	SD	Range		Skew	Kurt
					Actual	Potential		
WLEIS	16	.84	40.36	10.80	18-72	16-96	.44	.45
SWL	5	.71	11.93	4.04	5-24	5-35	.54	.40
EC	7	.83	15.99	6.05	7-34	7-35	.55	.65
CRSI	16	.73	38.97	9.11	19-60	16-80	.05	-.61

Note: WLEIS= Emotional intelligence; EC= Empathy; SWL=Satisfaction with life; CRSI= Conflict resolution

Table 3 provides the descriptive statistics and alpha reliability coefficients of all the instruments utilized in this study. All scales provide an acceptable range of alpha reliability coefficients. The alpha coefficients vary from .71 to .84 for the scales. Likewise, values of normality have also been analyzed. Skewness and kurtosis values for all scales are between -3 and +3, which is within the normal range (George & Mallery, 2010), indicating the standard distribution of the data. The potential range encompasses the minimum and maximum scores specified by the scale, while the actual range reflects the results obtained.

Table 3: Correlation matrix between EI, EC, SWL, CRSI (N=300)

	Variables	1	2	3	4
1.	EI	-			
2.	SWL	.71**	-		
3.	EC	.77**	.77	-	
4.	CRSI	.45**	.46**	.51**	-

Note: EI= Emotional Intelligence; EC= Empathy; SWL= Satisfaction with life; CRSI= Conflict Resolution.

The table displays the Pearson correlation coefficients among four variables. Emotional Intelligence is positively associated with satisfaction with life ($r = .71$), Empathy ($r = .77$), and Conflict resolution ($r = .45$) with $p < .01$, indicating that higher emotional intelligence is linked with higher satisfaction with life, empathy, and conflict resolution. Satisfaction with life is positively connected with empathy ($r = .77$) and conflict resolution ($r = .46$) with $p < .01$, indicating that greater satisfaction with life is linked to higher empathy and conflict resolution. Empathy is positively correlated with conflict resolution ($r = .51$) with $p < .01$. Higher levels of empathy lead to higher conflict resolution.

Table 4: Regression Coefficients of Independent Variables on Dependent Variable (Satisfaction With Life)

Variables	B	SE	t	p	95%CL
Constant	1.13	.64	1.74	.000	.57 - 2.25
EI	.10	.02	5.07	.000	.06 - .14
EC	.34	.03	8.97	.000	.27 - .42
CR	.03	.01	1.69	.000	.05 - .08

Note: EI= Emotional Intelligence; EC= Empathy; SWL= Satisfaction with life; CRSI= Conflict Resolution.

The table provides the results of a regression analysis examining the predictors of the outcome variable. The constant is highly significant ($B = 1.13$). Emotional intelligence is significantly predicting the outcome ($B = .10$). Empathy has a positive effect ($B = .34$). Finally, the conflict resolution is a significant positive contribution ($B = .03$). All predictors are significant at the $p < 0.001$ level, with 95% confidence intervals.

Table 5: Mediating role of empathy between emotional intelligence and satisfaction with life (N=300)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>95% CI</i>	
					<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
Total effect	.51	.26***	.01	17.55	.23	.29
EI- SWL (c)						
Direct effect						
EI-EC (a)		.43***	.02	20.81	.38	.47
EC- SWL (b)		.37***	.03	10.01	.29	.44
EI- SWL (c')		.10***	.02	5.20	.06	.14
Indirect effect						
EI-EC-SWL	.63	.15***	.01		.12	.19

Note: EI= Emotional Intelligence; EC= Empathy; SWL= Satisfaction with life; CRSI= Conflict Resolution.

$p < .01^{**}$; $p < .001^{***}$

Table 5 presents the findings of a mediation study that investigates the indirect impact of emotional intelligence on the satisfaction of life. The investigation focuses on the mediating impact of empathy. The results suggest that empathy influences the relationship between emotional intelligence and satisfaction with life. The regression analysis, which includes the total effect of predictor variable (emotional intelligence), reveals 51% variance in satisfaction with life. The indirect effect demonstrates that the relationship between emotional intelligence and satisfaction with life is partially mediated by empathy. The mediation explains an additional 12% increase in satisfaction with life. The increase in emotional intelligence increases the level of empathy, which increases the satisfaction of life.

Table 6: Moderating Role of Conflict Resolution on Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Satisfaction with Life (N=300)

<i>Predictors</i>	<i>Child Screen Time</i>		
	<i>B</i>	<i>95% CI</i>	
		<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
Constant	11.74***	11.39	12.08
Emotional Intelligence	.22***	.19	.26
Conflict Resolution	.07***	.03	.11
Emotional intelligence * Conflict resolution	.03*	.02	.06
R ²	.53***		
ΔR ²	.06*		
F	111.02***		

Note: * $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$

The moderation analysis confirms that emotional intelligence has a substantial positive effect on the Satisfaction with life, representing that as emotional intelligence increases, the outcome variable also increases. Conflict resolution has a significant positive impact, indicating that as the conflict resolution increases, the outcome variable increases. The interaction term (emotional intelligence * Conflict resolution) is also considerable and positive, indicating that the relationship between emotional intelligence and the outcome variable is strengthened by increased conflict resolution.

Research demonstrates that people having elevated emotional intelligence often display more empathy. In particular, findings revealed a substantial association between emotional intelligence and empathy, inferring that as emotional intelligence expands, so does the volume for empathetic understanding. Emotional intelligence and empathy are profoundly tangled; elevated emotional intelligence nurtures better empathy, which in turn smooths improved interpersonal contacts and emotional networks among individuals (Korkman & Tekel, 2020).

Research points out that individuals with advanced emotional intelligence are disposed to account for improved life satisfaction. As a case in point, a study that examines medical students detected that emotional intelligence strongly forecasted life satisfaction, with a favorable impact operating as a mediator in this context (Asif et al., 2022). Besides, emotional intelligence assists in life satisfaction by prompting positive affect while relieving negative affect. This twofold impact stress's crucial role of emotional regulation in elevating subjective well-being (Kong et al., 2019).

Research carried out by Doktorová, Hubinská, and Masár (2020) uncovered a considerable positive link between empathy and life satisfaction among young adults. Their research pointed out that individuals exhibiting elevated cognitive empathy scores correlated with enhanced life satisfaction, recommending the capacity to empathize with others constructively alter an individual's sense of well-being. The study showcased a substantial association, reflecting a solid link between these two variables. Observations indicate that empathy aids in life satisfaction by nurturing social ties and emotional reinforcement. Research confirmed that strengthening empathy could drive better life satisfaction, notably among young adults navigating significant overcoming life transitions (Beefathima & Joy, 2023).

Scholars have introduced tentative proof that EI is pivotal in adeptly handling disagreements. Emotions and conflicts are tightly bound that claim that it's impossible to know when you're in a conflict until you feel it and become emotionally engaged. Due to the stresses they entail, tensions, and insecurities in individuals or organizations, conflicts are deeply rooted in emotions. Hence their aptitude to handle their emotions and those of other individuals showcasing higher EI are assumed to be capable of integrating the effective approaches for tackling personal disputes, like coordination and flexibility. High EI is tied to efficient strategies for conflict resolution that are effective (Malik et al., 2023)

This study is subjected to a number of limitations. The implementation of cross-sectional design impedes the proficiency to establish causal links between emotional intelligence, empathy, conflict resolution, and life satisfaction. As well, dependence on self-reported data might result in partiality, compromising the validity of the outcomes. The sample might exhibit be deficient in diversity, it is geared towards particular demographics, including university students, restricting extent of applicability to diverse populations. Furthermore, the study could overlook for extra moderating or mediating factors, including personality traits that might shape the relationships. Subsequent studies should implement longitudinal designs, leverage more measurable indicators, and incorporate diverse populations to enhance broad applicability. Looking into other factors and

implementing experimental interventions to boost emotional intelligence, empathy, and conflict resolution skills additionally offer crucial insights.

Conclusion

Research frequently endorses the favorable link between emotional intelligence, life satisfaction, empathy and conflict resolution. Korkman and Tekel (2020) manifested that emotional intelligence cultivates empathy, which fortifies social bonds and emotional well-being. Doktorová et al. (2020) found a significant link between empathy and life satisfaction, underlining the value of social connections and emotional reinforcement. Malik et al. (2023) Spotlighted that individuals with elevated emotional intelligence adopt effective conflict resolution techniques, further boosting life satisfaction. Jointly, these conclusions accentuate the reciprocal nature of these factors and their vital role in cultivating well-being, laying the foundation for future research to implement actionable interventions and amplify the grasp of these relationships.

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