

## Predicting Life Satisfaction: The Roles of Emotional Intelligence, Self-Esteem, and Perceived Social Support

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### ABSTRACT

A main goal of psychology is to improve the quality of human life by studying processes and mechanisms underlying human mind and behavior. Thus, the current research aimed to predict life satisfaction in terms of emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and perceived social support. The participants completed Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS), Life Satisfaction, Rosenberg Self-esteem, and Multidimensional Perceived Social Support scales. The results of correlation coefficient indicated that all of the studied variables were positively significantly correlated with life satisfaction. Also, the regression analysis showed that emotional intelligence and perceived social support could predict life satisfaction significantly. The implications and limitations of the research are discussed.

**Keywords:** *Emotional intelligence, life satisfaction, self-esteem, perceived social support*

The new strategies of the World Health Organization (WHO, 2001) state that the focus of researches and studies should be directed upon the health perspective. The international category of function has gone far from diseases and toward health components more closely (WHO, 2001). In this respect, psychological well-being research aims to study and understand what makes people have good feelings toward their own values and standards (Dryden, 2008, translated by Behrouzi & Jelodari, 2014). Life satisfaction is among the factors that psychology, in particular the positive psychology, seek to understand.

Life satisfaction is necessary for a useful, effective, and satisfying living and includes people cognitive evaluations of their lives status (Ghidari & Jelodari, 2015). In fact, life satisfaction is a general concept and mainly dependent on how one perceives his/her entire life

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cognitively and emotionally. Thus, people with higher levels of life satisfaction experience more positive emotions, recall more positive events from their own and others' past and future, and have more positive evaluations from their settings, while others with lower levels of life satisfaction evaluate themselves, their past and future, others, and life events negatively and undesirably and they experience negative emotions such as anxiety and depression more often (Thimm, 2010; Wright, Crawford, & Del Castillo, 2009). Empirical studies have shown that there is a positive correlation between reports of life satisfaction and positive consequences such as positive relationships, higher levels of hope (Rivett & Street, 2009, translated by KarimiNejad, Refahi, Nasiri, & Jelodari, 2016; Gilman, Dooley, & Flarell, 2006), higher sense of personal control and better educational experiences (Jelodari, MohseniSangachin, & Sahaghi, 2015; Gilman & Huebner, 2006) higher levels of social support, social and educational competence and higher emotional self-efficacy (Suldo & Huebner, 2006) self-efficacy (Bozorgpour & Salimi, 2012). Thus, studying the factors which contribute to higher levels of life satisfaction is very important.

Emotional intelligence has shown to have impact on life satisfaction (Urquijo, Extremera, & Villa, 2015; Ruiz-Aranda, Extremera, & Pineda-Galán, 2014). In the recent years, attentions are directed upon emotional intelligence, a set of emotions- and emotional information processing-related skills. The skills are generally related to perceiving emotion, setting/managing emotions, and the capacity to use them (Karimi, Leggat, Donohue, Farrel, & Couper, 2014). Theoretically, emotional intelligence has been shown to be related to several human values such as life satisfaction, quality of interpersonal relationships, and success in jobs which include considerable emotional information such as creativity, leadership, selling, and psychotherapy (Palmer, Donaldson, & Stough, 2002). A long range of empirical evidence emphasize on the importance of considering the relationship between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction (Mohammadi, Jelodari, & Pouya, 2015). It is believed that people with higher emotional intelligence have more capacity to manage their emotions which facilitates the satisfactory sense of life (Wang & Kong, 2014).

Recently, many arguments have been made on the role of self-esteem in live outcomes (Bloomquist, 2013, translated by Roshani, Jelodari, & PondeNezhadan, 2016). Some theorists, e.g. Baumister (2003, cited in Hill, 2015), believe that the self-esteem is a secondary sign – it increases if good things happen, it decreases if bad things happen. However, others believe that a strong sense of self contributes to useful progress, positive experiences, and protection against psychological well-being problem, substance abuse, and antisocial behavior. One can conclude that higher levels of self-esteem tend to increase levels of happiness and life satisfaction (Smith, 2004). It can be consistent with Baumister's belief that an individual avoids threats such as participating in competition in order to avoid threatening his/her own self-esteem. Also, it is believed that self-esteem is responsive toward life events. In other words, life changes which cause make one close to his/her ideals, increase their self-esteem and, in turn, promote life satisfaction.

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Furthermore, perceived and received social supports have considerable impacts on life satisfaction (Jelodari, Mohseni, & Pouya, 2015). It has also showed that the perceived social support impacts on physical and psychological status, life satisfaction, and different aspects of people life quality (Clara, Cox, Enns, Murray, & Torgruudic, 2003), and it has been known as an effective moderating factor in coping and adapting with stressful life events (Friedlander, Reid, Shupak, & Cribbie, 2007). In perceived social support, the people evaluation of availability of supports in emergency situations is considered (Bruwer, Emsley, Kidd, Lochner, & Seedat, 2008). The concept of perceived social support refers to support in terms of one's cognitive evaluation of his/her own relationships. The theorists of this area believe that all he relationships people have ae not considered as social support unless they are perceived as available and appropriate source for satisfying their needs (Clara et al., 2003). The role of social support as a resource to cope with stresses and physical and psychological symptoms is well-documented (Jelodari, Alipour, RezaiNia, & Refahi, 2014). Social support is a multidimensional construct which includes social network, emotional support, instrumental support, quality of social support, and reciprocal help from others (Bruwer et al., 2008). Social support and quality of relationships are important predictors of psychological well-being and life satisfaction (Siedlecki, Salthouse, Oishi, & Jeswani, 2013). Thus, the current research aimed to predict life satisfaction in terms of emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and perceived social support among students.

### METHODOLOGY

The current study is correlation type. The sample of this study consists of a sample of 150 students, recruited from universities of Dezful, Iran. The participants were chosen voluntarily among all of the students of all fields of faculties. The mean of participants' age was 22.24 (SD = 2.44), with the range of 18 to 33 years; 137 students (91.3%) were in B.A. course, 12 (8%) in M.A., and 1 (.7%) in Ph.D. course.

#### Measures

1. *Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS)*. In this study, emotional intelligence was measured with the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS; Wong, Law, & Wong, 2004) instrument, which contains 16 items grouped in four subscales as follows: (a) self-emotion appraisal (SEA), (b) emotion appraisal of others (OEA), (c) use of emotion (UOE), and (d) regulation of emotion (ROE). Its strong convergence with previous EI measures such as the Trait Meta-Mood and the EQ-i is empirically verified (Trivellasa, Gerogiannisb, & Svarnab, 2013). Furthermore, WLEIS could also predict external variables such as life satisfaction and job performance.
2. *Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSS)*. Self-esteem was measured using the Persian version of the RSS (Rosenberg, 1965, 1979). RSS is a 10-item self-report questionnaire assessing global self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965). Items scored from 1 to 4 (1= strongly agree, 2= agree, 3= disagree, 4= strongly disagree), and it is thought to represent a

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single trait factor of global self-esteem (Tomás, Oliver, Hontangas, Sancho, & Galiana, 2015). Five items were negatively worded (numbers 3, 5, 8, 9, and 10).

3. *The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)*. The scale is a self-report measure of subjectively assessed social support (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, & Farley, 1988). This 12-item instrument uses a 5-point Likert scale. It also has 3 subscales: significant other, family, and friends.
4. *The Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS)*. The Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffen, 1985) is a measure of adult caregiver life satisfaction. In general, measures of life satisfaction require individuals to assess the quality of their lives on the basis of their own unique set of criteria. The SWLS asks adult caregivers to report on satisfaction with their life as a whole.

### RESULTS

*Table 1 Descriptive statistics and correlations coefficients among independents variables with dependent variable (n = 150)*

Variable	M (SD)	life satisfaction
emotional intelligence	60.07 (7.93)	.57 <sup>**</sup>
self-esteem	3.8 (4.97)	.34 <sup>**</sup>
perceived social support	43.03 (8.8)	.59 <sup>**</sup>
life satisfaction	14.78 (4.33)	

<sup>\*\*</sup>  $p < .001$

As shown in Table 1, the mean and standard deviation of emotional intelligence, self-esteem, perceived social support, and life satisfaction were 60.07 (SD = 7.93), 3.8 (SD = 4.97), 43.03 (SD = 8.8), and 14.78 (SD = 4.33), respectively. The table shows the correlation coefficients of emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and perceived social support with life satisfaction. All correlations were positive and statistically significant (all  $ps < .001$ ).

*Table 2 Effects of emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and perceived social support on life satisfaction*

Variable	MR	RS	F P	B	T	P
Intercept	.669	.447	39.341 $p < .001$	-5.076	-2.336	.021 <sup>*</sup>
emotional intelligence				.190	4.712	.000 <sup>**</sup>
self-esteem				.037	.605	.546
perceived social support				.193	5.089	.000 <sup>**</sup>

<sup>\*\*</sup>  $p < .01$       <sup>\*</sup>  $p < .05$

A multiple regression was run to predict life satisfaction from emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and perceived social support. The results showed that the prediction model was fitted and the variables statistically, significantly predicted life satisfaction,  $F(3, 146) = 39.341$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $R^2 = .447$ . Furthermore, the unstandardized coefficients (Bs) showed that emotional intelligence and perceived social support significantly predicted life satisfaction. However, self-esteem failed to predict life satisfaction significantly. Also, the general form of the

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equation to predict life satisfaction from emotional intelligence and perceived social support, is: predicted life satisfaction =  $-5.07 + (0.19 \times \text{emotional intelligence}) + (0.037 \times \text{perceived social support})$

### DISCUSSION

This study aimed to predict life satisfaction in terms of emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and perceived social support. As expected, the results of correlation analysis showed that all of criterion variables were positively correlated with life satisfaction. In other words, the more one is able to recognize his/her own emotions, manage them, and effectively use them to respond to others properly, the higher levels of life satisfaction they may have (Urquijo, et al., 2015). On the other hand, people with higher levels of emotional intelligence can established reasonable balance between their minds and emotions, they are inspiring and directing, they feel worthy and fee higher self-esteem due to being honest with themselves (Rakizadeh & Hafezi, 2016). Though, it also makes sense that emotional intelligence can predict higher levels of life satisfaction among those who are emotionally intelligent.

Also, the results of the current research showed that there was a significant, positive correlation between self-esteem and life satisfaction, notwithstanding, it could not predict life satisfaction significantly. Evidently, people with higher self-esteem simultaneously tend to have more satisfaction with their life mainly because they have higher sense of honor, worthiness, and trust and reliance on self (Moksnes & Epsnes, 2013). However, one reason for inability of self-esteem to predict life satisfaction may be due to other circumstance such as economic status of the society, problems related to student-living circumstances of college students (e.g., living far from their home and family, becoming independent, etc.), which cannot be identified with a simple correlation design.

The findings also showed that perceived social support and life satisfaction were positively related and it can predict higher levels of life satisfaction among people. The research literature also has shown that people perception of the social support they receive from others, including family, friends, significant others, etc., instead of the actual support they receive can be a measure of assurance and encouragement which is, in turn, related with higher levels of life satisfaction (Khan, 2015). Also, the people with higher perceived social support feel more secure in life and cope better with bad life events, as a result, their life satisfaction is directly related to the extend they perceive they have social support (Ali, Deuri, Deuri, Jahan, Singh, & Verma, 2010).

### CONCLUSION

In total, the current research which was done with the aim of identifying the role of emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and perceived social support in prediction of life satisfaction found that the variables increase people feelings of satisfaction with their life by paving the way for identifying problems, findings effective ways of coping, effectively use of resources to solve them, having good feelings about future and being optimistic. They also provide

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infrastructures for healthy growth. Finally, some limitations which the research was faced with should be noted. The research design was correlative which is not a comprehensive way to understand cause and effect relationships, also for better understanding some findings (e.g., why self-esteem could not predict life satisfaction), there is a need to studies with more variables. Also, the recruited sample was confined to college students which differ with general population in many ways.

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