



Demystifying the Interrelations between Emotional Intelligence, Rational-Experiential Thinking, and Interpersonal Relationships among Young Adults

¹Vallari Saurabh, Masters of Arts, Clinical Psychology, Amity Institute of Psychology and Allied Sciences, Noida, India

saurabh.vallari03@gmail.com

²Dr Pankaj Singh, Assistant Professor, Amity Institute of Psychology and Allied Sciences, Noida, India

psingh32@amity.edu

ABSTRACT

Emotional intelligence is essential in the 21st century for navigating the challenging terrain of relationships, developing empathetic thinking, and promoting effective communication. In addition, young adults who adopt rational-experiential thinking styles benefit from a well-rounded cognitive approach, which improves decision-making and relationship conflict resolution. The purpose of this research was to provide insight on how significantly young adults' interpersonal relationships are impacted by their emotional intelligence and rational-experiential thinking styles. The participants involved 150 young adults (75 males, 75 females), mainly from Delhi NCR. The associations between these variables were studied using correlation and regression analysis, while

gender differences were analyzed using independent sample t-tests. Results showcased significant positive correlations between the three variables ($p < .001$). Regression analysis demonstrated the predictive value of both emotional intelligence and rational-experiential thinking styles in determining the quality of interpersonal relationships. These results reflect on earlier studies and emphasize the need for a deeper comprehension of gender variations in cognitive and emotional functioning. The findings suggest, qualitative research techniques may offer insightful information on how sociocultural factors and individual experiences shape interpersonal relationships and emotional intelligence.

Keywords: *Emotional intelligence, Rational-experiential thinking, Thinking styles, Interpersonal relationships*

INTRODUCTION

"Emotional intelligence is the key to both personal and professional success. It's not just about managing emotions; it's about understanding them in ourselves and others, fostering empathy, and building strong, meaningful connections that enrich our lives." - Daniel Goleman

The bedrock of human interaction is interpersonal relationships, which have a major positive impact on people's general well-being and quality of life. The capacity to successfully traverse emotions and intuitively comprehends the feelings and intentions of others is essential to the success and fulfillment of these partnerships. For young adults to have happy and healthy interpersonal relationships, emotional intelligence (EI) and rational-experiential thinking is essential.

Navigating interpersonal connections in the context of fast socioeconomic change, familial constraints, and social expectations presents many difficulties for Indian young adults (Dasgupta & Warriar, 2019). This includes anything from navigating the difficulties of romantic relationships to comprehending the subtle subtleties of a friend's unsaid emotions. Young adults now traverse a multitude of obstacles and shifts as they carve out their routes in terms of academic pursuits, professions, and interpersonal relationships in a world that is evolving constantly. According to a survey report collected by The Harvard Graduate School of Education (2023), the report identifies the emotional difficulties faced by young adults. They reported feeling unimportant to other people in 44 percent of cases, and loneliness in 34 percent of cases. Their capacity to use emotional intelligence (EI) and rational-experiential thinking to successfully negotiate the intricacies of interpersonal interactions is essential to their success and wellbeing.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE (EI)

Defined as “the capacity to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions, as well as to perceive, interpret, and respond to the emotions of others, EI serves as a critical determinant of interpersonal dynamics” (Goleman, 1995). According to Mayer et al. (2008) “Individuals with high EI demonstrate greater empathy, communication skills, and conflict resolution abilities, all of which are essential for fostering trust, intimacy, and mutual respect in relationships.” The capacity to precisely recognize and comprehend emotions in others and in oneself, both through spoken and nonverbal cues (Schutte et al., 2001).

Two studies conducted by Lopes et al. (2004) on emotional intelligence and social interaction used a sample of 118 college students. Standardized measures of emotional intelligence, personality and interpersonal competence were administered. The results confirmed

a positive relationship between the degree of social connections and the ability to regulate one's emotions. Zysberg et al. (2019) conducted a study on 175 young adults regarding emotional intelligence, attachment styles and satisfactory romantic relationships. The results were concluded through regression analysis, when attachment styles were incorporated in the scenario, emotional intelligence began to positively correlate with satisfaction after initially not doing so.

RATIONAL-EXPERIENTIAL THINKING STYLES

Thinking styles that are rational-experiential are distinct variations in cognitive processing that are represented by a dual-system structure. Analytical, logical, and intentional reasoning are components of the rational system, which emphasizes careful thought and methodical decision-making. The experiential system, on the other hand, emphasizes unconscious heuristics and spontaneous judgment and includes intuitive, holistic, and affect-laden processing (Epstein, 2016).

Two well-known aesthetics pertinent to this investigation are: The rational thinking style places a strong emphasis on analysis, reasoning that is objective, and logic. Facts, evidence, and methodical methods to decision-making are given priority by those with a predominant rational style (Kirby et al., 2006). The experiential thinking style is defined by, "a predilection for creativity, intuition, and personal experience." When making judgments, people with a predominant experiential style frequently rely on their emotions, intuition, and a need for novel experiences (Kirby et al., 2006).

A study was conducted by Wu et al. (2023) on explaining health misinformation belief through news, social, and alternative health media use: The moderating roles of need for cognition and faith in intuition. The sample was collected from 3664 young adults through surveys. Results showcased that people with higher NFC and FI believed in health misinformation.

In a study on the importance of faith in intuition, the need for cognition, and the attitude-formation process in strengthening relationships by Zimmerman et al. (2011) two experiments were conducted. 105 undergraduate students were administered the Rational-Experiential Inventory (Pacini & Epstein, 1999) and a conditioning procedure. Results showcased that for attitudes developed by evaluative conditioning, faith in intuition affected the strength of the implicit-explicit link.

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

According to Reis and Aron (1996), interpersonal relationships are, “a framework of connections within society that exist between people and are distinguished by different levels of closeness, reciprocity, and interdependence.” These connections can be classified as work colleagues, romantic partnerships, friendships, or familial connections. Well-being, mental health, and general life satisfaction are all strongly impacted by the caliber of one's interpersonal relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 2017).

Parameswari (2015) conducted a study on interpersonal relationships and college students. 200 participants were selected through stratified random sampling from two colleges. The FIRO-B questionnaire (Schultz, 1958) was used to measure interpersonal relationship maintenance and satisfaction. Results discovered that there was a substantial gender difference in the interpersonal relationship's expressed inclusion as well as envisioned control aspects.

Hsieh et al. (2014) conducted a study on emotional intelligence and interpersonal relationships of college students. 600 students were selected from three colleges. A prepared questionnaire was emailed to them, and a cross-sectional study design was used. Results confirmed

that interpersonal relationships among college students were positively correlated with their emotional intelligence.

Rationale for the Present Research

Fewer studies have looked at the links between emotional intelligence and rational-experiential thinking and their combined influence in young adults, despite a large body of research examining the separate contributions of both to interpersonal relationships. Research that has already been done frequently concentrates on emotional intelligence or rational-experiential thinking alone, ignoring the potential benefits of both in combination on interpersonal dynamics. I have always been fascinated by the significant influence that emotional intelligence and rational-experiential thinking have on interpersonal relationships, as someone who has depended on these qualities to navigate both the personal and professional arenas of life. My own experience has made me eager to find out if other people perceive the world, likewise, using their emotional intelligence and rational-experiential thinking. Moreover, methodological constraints limit our comprehension of the convoluted relationships between EI, rational-experiential thinking, and interpersonal connections. These include the use of self-report measures and the absence of longitudinal investigations. It would also increase our theoretical understanding about societal interaction and decision-making processes by researching the connections among emotional intelligence, rational-experiential thinking, and interpersonal relationships in young individuals. Essentially, this research is an ongoing quest to comprehend the subtleties of human relationship and the influence of emotional intelligence and rational-experiential thinking on interpersonal relationships, rather than just an academic endeavor. I want to learn more about myself and other

people on this journey, and develop empathy, a sense of connection, and progress on both a personal and professional level.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the study is to study the interrelation between emotional intelligence, rational-experiential thinking, and interpersonal relationships among young adults.

HYPOTHESIS

- There will be a positive relationship between emotional intelligence, rational-experiential thinking, and interpersonal relationships among young adults.
- There will be gender differences among males and females in emotional intelligence, rational-experiential thinking, and interpersonal relationships.
- There will be a positive effect of emotional intelligence and rational-experiential thinking on interpersonal relationships among young adults.

METHOD

SAMPLE

A total sample of 150 young adults (75 males, 75 females) was collected in the age range 18-25 through online and offline distribution of the questionnaires.

MEASURES

- **Schutte's Emotional Intelligence Test:** This scale was developed by Schutte et al. (1998). SSEIT is a 33-item scale used to measure certain aspects of emotional intelligence like managing emotions, utilization of emotions, social skills, and appraisal of emotions. The instrument uses a 5-point Likert scale that ranges from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. Reverse scoring is administered in response to items 5, 28 and 33.
- **Rational Experiential Inventory:** The scale was developed by Epstein et al. (1996). The REI's 10 item version was developed for students, with five Need for Cognition items and five Faith in rational-experiential thinking items. The instrument uses a 5-point Likert scale that ranges from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree.
- **The Functional Idiographic Assessment Template-Short Form (FIAT-SF):** The scale was developed by Callaghan in 2006. The scale measures functional emotional behavioral management techniques with respect to individual differences. The short form of FIAT-Q consists of 32 self-report items that cover a range of six subscales. Reverse scoring is administered in response to 7 items- 16, 17, 18, 19, 23, 25 and 27.

PROCEDURE

The participants were informed about the purpose of the research. The data was then collected through online and offline distribution of the standardized scales. Confidentiality was assured and participants were thanked for their cooperation.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

RESULTS

Table 1:

<i>Descriptive of the combined data</i>							
		Schutte's Emotional Intelligence		Rational Experiential		FIAT-SF	
		Test		Inventory			
N			150		150		150
Mean			122		33.6		99.9
Median			123		34.0		101
Standard deviation			13.3		4.23		17.6

Table 2

<i>Correlation between variables</i>							
		Schutte's Emotional Intelligence		Rational Experiential		FIAT-SF	
		Test		Inventory			
Schutte's Emotional Intelligence Test			—				
Rational Experiential Inventory		0.984	***		—		
FIAT-SF		0.987	***	0.985	***		—
<i>Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001</i>							

Table 3*Linear Regression between variables*

Model	R	R ²
1	0.990	0.980

Table 4*Comparing t-scores among males and females*

		Statistic	df	p
Schutte's Emotional Intelligence Test	Student's t	3.38	148	< .001
Rational Experiential Inventory	Student's t	3.75	148	< .001
FIAT-SF	Student's t	3.65	148	< .001

Note. $H_a: \mu_{\text{Female}} \neq \mu_{\text{Male}}$

DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to explore the interrelation between emotional intelligence, rational-experiential thinking, and interpersonal relationships among young adults. The results indicated that there exists a significant positive correlation between all the three variables. Correlation analysis was administered, a strong positive correlation was observed between emotional intelligence and rational-experiential thinking ($r=0.984$, $p<.001$) this means that higher scores of emotional intelligences are correlated with higher scores on tests of intuitive reasoning and rational decision-making. Moreover, a significant positive correlation was also found out between emotional intelligence and maintaining satisfactory interpersonal relationships ($r=0.987$, $p<.001$) this indicates that when presented with difficult circumstances, people with higher emotional intelligence typically use more flexible and successful methods to manage their emotions.

Further, results indicated a significant positive correlation between rational-experiential thinking and maintaining satisfactory interpersonal relationships ($r= 0.985$, $p<.001$). This indicates people who make decisions with more reason also tend to use more flexible and effective techniques for controlling their emotions. The regression analysis indicated that there exists a statistically significant relationship between the predictors i.e. emotional intelligence and rational-experiential thinking and the outcome variable i.e. satisfactory interpersonal relationships ($r=0.990$). With the coefficient of determination ($R^2= 0.980$), the predictors i.e. emotional intelligence and rational-experiential thinking can account for almost 98% of the variation in interpersonal relationship (FIAT-SF) scores. Whereas, past researchers, Jokić and Purić's (2019) study discovered an although more contrary link, that emotional intelligence had a favorable impact on both experiential and rational thinking styles, the influence may only be partial.

Additionally, independent sample t-tests indicated significant differences between males and females in emotional intelligence, rational-experiential thinking, and interpersonal relationships ($p < .001$). Comparatively, to men, women often have higher mean scores on all metrics. This indicates that females generally have greater levels of emotional intelligence, rationality and intuitiveness, and functional emotional control in comparison to men. Therefore, research suggested that women are more perceptive of social cues, relational dynamics, and emotional information, which makes them more adept at handling interpersonal relationships (Cross & Madson, 1997).

The findings of this study fail to reject the alternative hypothesis demonstrating significant positive relationships and significant differences between males and females between emotional intelligence, rational-experiential thinking, and interpersonal relationships. Suggesting that people with higher emotional intelligence and rational-intuitive thought tend to demonstrate more flexible and successful emotional management, which improves psychological health and interpersonal relationships. In contrast, Fincham et al. (2007) discovered that relationship satisfaction was worse among couples experiencing high levels of "cognitive conflict" that is, overanalyzing conflicts.

CONCLUSION

The study's conclusions highlight the nuanced associations between young adults' interpersonal relationships, emotional intelligence, and rational-experiential thinking. The findings are impressive as how thoroughly emotion, cognition, and social behavior interact, highlighting the elaborate nature of relationships. By offering tangible evidence of the associations between emotional intelligence, cognitive styles, and interpersonal relationships, this study adds to the expanding corpus of research on these topics. Through elaborating on these findings, researchers

can investigate the fundamental processes and constraints of these relationships, enhancing theoretical frameworks and models in the study of psychology. To gain a deeper understanding of the fundamental processes underneath the observed correlations and differences, future studies could explore factors like socioeconomic status, growth-related progressions, and circumstances that may modify the relationships between emotional intelligence, cognitive styles, and interpersonal functioning. Studies that follow the developmental processes of emotional intelligence and cognitive processing from adolescence to adulthood may be able to clarify the cyclical nature of these relationships. In terms of practical implications, the results highlight how crucial it is to develop young adults' emotional intelligence and cognitive flexibility in order to support positive interpersonal interactions. Cultivating emotional awareness, empathetic thinking and cognitive flexibility through interventions may provide useful tools for navigating social situations and building deep relationships in both the personal and professional spheres.

REFERENCES

- Cross, S. E., & Madson, L. (1997). Models of the self: self-construals and gender. *Psychological bulletin*, 122(1), 5.
- Epstein, R. (1996). *Cognition, creativity, and behavior: Selected essays*. Praeger Publishers/Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Fincham, F. D., Beach, S. R., & Davila, J. (2007). Longitudinal relations between forgiveness and conflict resolution in marriage. *Journal of family psychology*, 21(3), 542.
- Hsieh, M. C., Wang, T. S., Fan, C. P., & Huang, C. I. (2014). A study of the emotional intelligence and interpersonal relationships of college students in Southern Taiwan. *Universal Journal of Management*, 2(8), 133-138.
- Jokić, B., & Purić, D. (2019). Relating rational and experiential thinking styles with trait emotional intelligence in broader personality space. *Europe's journal of psychology*, 15(1), 140.
- Kirby, S. L., Greaves, L., & Reid, C. (2006). *Experience research social change: Methods beyond the mainstream*. University of Toronto Press.
- Klinkosz, W., Iskra, J., & Artymiak, M. (2021). Interpersonal competences of students, their interpersonal relations, and emotional intelligence. *Current Issues in Personality Psychology*, 9(2), 125-134.
- Lopes, P. N., Brackett, M. A., Nezlek, J. B., Schütz, A., Sellin, I., & Salovey, P. (2004). Emotional intelligence and social interaction. *Personality and social psychology bulletin*, 30(8), 1018-1034.

- Lopes, P. N., Salovey, P., & Straus, R. (2003). Emotional intelligence, personality, and the perceived quality of social relationships. *Personality and individual Differences*, 35(3), 641-658.
- Mayer, J. D., & Salovey, P. (1995). Emotional intelligence and the construction and regulation of feelings. *Applied and preventive psychology*, 4(3), 197-208.
- Parameswari, J. (2015). Interpersonal relationship among College Students: an assessment. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 2(2), 40-44.
- Schutte, N. S., Malouff, J. M., Bobik, C., Coston, T. D., Greeson, C., Jedlicka, C., ... & Wendorf, G. (2001). Emotional intelligence and interpersonal relations. *The Journal of social psychology*, 141(4), 523-536.
- Wu, Y., Kuru, O., Campbell, S. W., & Baruh, L. (2023). Explaining health misinformation belief through news, social, and alternative health media use: The moderating roles of need for cognition and faith in intuition. *Health Communication*, 38(7), 1416-1429.
- Zimmerman, I., Redker, C., & Gibson, B. (2011). The role of faith in intuition, need for cognition and method of attitude formation in implicit–explicit brand attitude relationship strength. *Journal of consumer Psychology*, 21(3), 290-301.
- Zysberg, L., Kelmer, G., & Mattar, L. (2019). Emotional intelligence, attachment, and satisfaction with romantic relationships among young adults: a brief report. *Psychology*, 10(05), 694.