



## **The Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Relationship Satisfaction**

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### **Abstract**

**Aims:** Research has shown that emotional intelligence (EI) is a positive predictor of many outcomes in life, including relationship satisfaction. The aim of this study was to build on previous research investigating the relationship between EI and relationship satisfaction by using a self-report ability measure of EI and controlling for demographic variables (gender and age) and relationship characteristics (relationship length and relationship status).

**Method:** The current study consisted of 147 participants. Data was collected from participants using an online survey which consisted of two questionnaires, the Wong & Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) and the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS).

**Results:** Findings from a hierarchical multiple regression analysis showed that EI was a significant, but weak, predictor of relationship satisfaction after controlling for demographic variables and relationship characteristics. Surprisingly, relationship status was the strongest predictor of relationship satisfaction. **Conclusion:** EI may not be a strong predictor of relationship satisfaction for all individuals in all stages of relationships. Future research should aim to discover stronger predictors of relationship satisfaction to provide couples-counsellors with better mechanisms through which they can increase satisfaction in their clients.

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### **Introduction**

Emotions allow us to learn and grow as humans by enabling us to feel the satisfaction of achievements but also the undesirable feeling that comes with regret following poor choices (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 2006). Thus, emotions are important tools for gaining information and guiding our response (Lang, Bradley & Cuthbert, 1998). Emotional intelligence (EI) is the study of how humans use the emotions they recognize in themselves and other people to obtain positive outcomes in life (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 2006). High EI is a predictor of physical and psychological health (Tsaousis & Nikolaou, 2005; Schutte, Malouff, Thorsteinsson, Bhullar & Rooke, 2007). For example, a study found that high EI in adolescents is associated with an increased understanding of the negative effects of smoking which results in reduced engagement in smoking (Trinidad, Unger, Chou & Anderson-Johnson, 2004), therefore reducing the likelihood of smoking related diseases in the future such as lung cancer (Fagerström, 2002). Also, low levels of EI have been linked to higher levels of stress (Zeidner, Matthews & Roberts, 2011). This may be due to the influence of EI on the ability to effectively cope with challenges in life and manage emotions which assists in attaining increased physical and psychological health (Taylor, 2001).

For many decades it was believed by researchers that general intelligence, often referred to as 'g' factor, could empirically serve to explain the many intellectual abilities of a person in predicting academic, career, and life success overall (Jenson, 1998). G factor is a term used to describe a person's general mental ability (Spearman, 1961). The 'g' factor is an underlying factor that explains the associations between peoples' performances on a broad range of cognitive tests such as verbal fluency, mathematical tasks and memory (Jenson, 1998). In other words, individuals who do well on one cognitive task tend to do well on the others, which can be explained by their mental ability or 'g factor'. Although general intelligence is a clearly useful and effective cognitive ability index, the theory that one construct could have such universal significance has been challenged by other researchers

(Mayer, Roberts & Barsade, 2008). Mayer et al., (2008) argued that 'g' factor is too limited and does not explain how some people are academically intelligent yet socially incompetent. Goleman, (1995, 2001) also argued that 'g' is not a sufficient predictor of success in life unless the individual also has adequate social and emotional abilities, as there are many individuals who are intellectually intelligent but do not achieve success.

In the 1990's, the concept of EI was established. The concept was based on the theory brought forward by Thorndike in the early 1900's, named 'social intelligence', which describes peoples' ability to interact with one another and form successful relationships (Kanesan & Fauzan, 2019). Salovey & Meyer, (1990) suggested that two mental processes, thinking and feeling, work concurrently to aid cognitive functions, which have a role in building social intelligence. EI is the concept that these two cognitive processes assist people in managing and recognizing their own emotions and emotions of others, understanding emotion and use these skills to navigate their thoughts and behaviour (Salovey & Meyer, 1990). People high in EI tend to be more self-aware, empathetic and have good communication skills (Goleman, 1995). Individuals high in EI usually have many positive outcomes in life such as high relationship satisfaction (Smith, Heaven, & Ciarrochi, 2008), increased academic and career performance (Chew, Zain, & Hassan, 2013), positive social interactions (Lopes, Brackett, Nezlek, Schütz, Sellin, & Salovey, 2004), and overall well-being (Mavroveli, Petrides, Rieffe, & Bakker, 2007).

What separates EI from other forms of intelligence is the emphasis on personally meaningful information (Mayer et al., 2008). Although EI is distinct from other forms of intelligence, and its role as an intelligence has been questioned (Roberts, Zeidner & Matthews, 2001), Mayer, Salovey, Caruso & Sitarenios, (2001) have demonstrated that EI does fit the criteria as a form of intelligence as it reflects an interrelated group of skills that can be statistically defined as an individual construct with four subscales reflecting the

theoretical framework's four sections. The four sections are the ability to perceive, understand and manage emotions and the ability to use emotions to facilitate thought (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Also, EI is separate from, but linked to, skills such as cognitive ability, and EI increases with age due to life experience (Mayer et al., 2001). Mayer, Caruso & Salovey, (2016) later defined EI as a 'hot' intelligence, which involves the interpretation of information that is meaningful to the person, for example, emotions and social interactions whereas 'cold' intelligence is the process of information that is not personally meaningful such as logical information (Schneider, Mayer & Newman, 2016). By consciously thinking about emotions, behaviours, and social situations, individuals can better assess, deal with, and anticipate the effects of their own behaviour and that of the people around them (Mayer et al., 2016). Research in this area has since shown these emotional skills to be crucial for peoples' social and emotional adaptation (Lopes, Salovey, & Straus, 2003). For example, in children, research has associated the ability to interpret emotions in faces, comprehend emotional language and manage their own emotions to social skills and adaptation, reported by classmates, teachers and parents (Saarni, 1999).

EI continues to be a predictor of social skills in adulthood. A study using self and peer-reports of quality of social interactions found that people who score high in EI report more positive interactions with their friends as well as being reported by their friends as having more positive interactions and displaying more emotional support (Mavroveli et al., 2007). The inclusion of peer-reported social interaction quality in this study shows that an individuals' level of EI can be seen by their peers through their social skills. This finding highlights the importance of EI for forming relationships and influencing the quality of those relationships. Including peer-reports of social interaction quality also dispels some doubts that accompany the subjectivity of self-report questionnaires by showing that an individual's self-reported EI abilities match the reports of their peers.



EI is also a predictor of perceived relationship satisfaction. Relationship satisfaction is defined as an individual's subjective opinion of the quality of the relationship (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993). This means that people who have high EI tend to report more positive relationships with others. A healthy relationship can be an important resource for coping with challenging circumstances and pressures in life and can lead to the well-being and positive lifestyle of both individuals (Vajda & Mako, 2014). Lopes et al., (2003) found that EI was a significant predictor of the quality of social interactions, with people who scored high in EI reporting more positive social interactions in all relationships. As emotions play a huge role in how we interact with other people, the ability to perceive and understand other peoples' emotions, which are facets of EI, assists people in reading and understanding emotional signals given by others which in turn leads to stronger communication, less conflict and more pleasant relationships (Geher & Miller, 2012).

Regarding romantic relationships, there is relatively consistent research to support the positive relationship between EI and relationship satisfaction (Brackett, Warner and Bosco, 2005; Batoool & Khalid, 2012; Hasani P, 2012; Malouff, Schutte & Thorsteinsson, 2013). Romantic relationship satisfaction is a predictor of the longevity and stability of relationships (Karimi, Bakhtiyari & Masjedi Arani, 2019). Early research by Fitness, (2001) suggested that increased levels of EI might help individuals to effectively manage emotional decisions that occur when they are trying to forgive. EI may also help individuals regulate negative emotions, such as anger, which may decrease levels of conflict in the relationship, which in turn leads to a more satisfactory relationship (Fitness, 2001). There is controversy over whether both partners in the relationship need to be high in EI for it to influence relationship satisfaction. For example, Schröder-Abé & Schütz, (2011) found that partners of people who scored high in EI reported higher relationship satisfaction than partners of people who were low in EI. However, these results contradict previous research that has found only actor

effects of EI to be significant predictors of perceived relationship satisfaction (Brackett et al., 2005; Smith, Heaven, & Ciarrochi, 2008). These inconsistent findings between studies may be due to methodological differences and different measures of EI. The common assumption held by researchers is that it is generally a person's own subjective experience of the relationship, rather than characteristics of their partner, that determines perceived quality of the relationship (Smith et al., 2008). It has been suggested that high EI may boost an individuals' self-appraisal, therefore, the individual high in EI is more likely to optimistically view aspects of the relationship, contributing to greater relationship satisfaction (Zeidner, Kloda & Matthews, 2013).

Despite the large amount of research in the area of EI and relationship satisfaction, few studies have investigated how demographic variables such as gender or age may interfere with this relationship. Studies examining EI and gender usually find that women score higher than men. Although women tend to score higher than men in most tests measuring ability-based emotional skills (Tucker & Friedman, 1993), deficits in EI appear to have more detrimental effects on males. For example, studies have found that low EI in males but not females, is associated with inability to navigate social interactions (Brackett et al., 2006), unsatisfactory relationships with peers (Brackett, Mayer, & Warner, 2004), and depression (Salguero et al., 2012). It may be due to early childhood interactions with their parents that women have higher EI. For instance, studies have shown that mothers talk about emotions and display a broader spectrum of emotions to their daughters than they do to their sons (Brody, 1985). Researchers have suggested that there may be a minimum degree of EI needed to proficiently assess social situations and make appropriate decisions (Brackett, Mayer, & Warner, 2004). Such researchers have hypothesized that the percentage of men who are below this minimum level might be greater than the percentage of women, which is why men tend to score lower than women in EI and possibly why the effects of low EI appear

to be more detrimental to men (Brackett, Mayer, & Warner, 2004). Therefore, it may be the case that EI and gender interact to predict outcomes in life.

Few studies have considered gender when investigating the relationship between EI and relationship satisfaction, and those that have, have yielded inconsistent results. It is likely that this is at least partly due to different measures of EI used in the studies. On the one hand, using trait measures of EI, a meta-analysis by Malouff, Schutte, & Thorsteinsson, (2013) found no difference between males and females in the relationship between EI and relationship satisfaction, meaning that EI was an equal predictor of relationship satisfaction for men and women. On the other hand, studies have found that EI is a stronger predictor for men than women in terms of perceived relationship quality when ability measure of EI was used (Brackett, Warner, & Bosco, 2005; Zeidner et al., 2013). Trait EI is a controversial measure of EI, with most research indicating that trait EI has high correlations personality frameworks such as the Big Five personality traits, which has led to researchers concluding that trait EI simply comprises of the emotion aspects of personality rather than a form of intelligence (Petrides, Pita, & Kokkinaki, 2007). However, when EI is measured as a set of abilities (ability EI), it shows discriminant validity against these constructs (Lopes, Salovey, & Straus, 2003) and is more consistent with the Mayer & Salovey, (1997) theoretical framework of EI emphasising EI as a form of intelligence. Therefore, it seems that ability EI, but not trait EI, may be a stronger predictor for men when it comes to relationship satisfaction.

Furthermore, research has shown demographic variables and relationship characteristics to be predictors of relationship satisfaction which could potentially affect the relationship between EI and relationship satisfaction. There is some research to suggest that age is a negative predictor of relationship satisfaction (Kurdek, 1999). Research examining partners' ages are mostly concerned with the different developmental difficulties that couples

endure throughout their lives. For instance, the couple may be dealing with mid-life crises (Brim, Ryff, & Kessler, 2004) or retirement (Kurdek, 1999). However, due to the lack of research on age and relationship satisfaction it is unclear whether age has a unique effect on relationship satisfaction or if it is the association between age and relationship length that negatively predicts satisfaction in relationships. Research shows that relationship satisfaction varies based on the amount of time partners have been together (Sorokowski et al., 2017). It appears that relationship satisfaction declines over time, particularly after the first year of marriage (Kurdek, 1999). Such results have contributed to the belief that conflict and hardship arise gradually in a relationship and escalate as time goes on, leading to an increase in dissatisfaction (Huston, Caughlin, Houts, Smith & George, 2001). Therefore, it is possible that age and the length of the romantic relationship may moderate the relationship between EI and relationship satisfaction.

Not only do levels of satisfaction change over time, predictors of relationship satisfaction also vary depending on the stage of the relationship. For example, perspective taking (understanding a situation or idea from an alternate viewpoint, particularly that of another person) is a stronger predictor of satisfaction in couples who have been together for over a year than in couples who have been together for a shorter period of time (Davis & Oathout, 1987). As new relationships move from intense and emotional to a more stable and cordial relationship, the inclination to set aside one's own viewpoint and accommodate that of their partner starts to become more important (Davis & Oathout, 1987). Therefore due to changes in relationship dynamics over time, it is possible that EI may not be a predictor of relationship satisfaction at all stages of relationships.

Further, most studies on EI and relationship satisfaction have focused on married couples (Lavalekar, Kulkarni, & Jagtap, 2010; Hasani, 2012; Zeidner, Kloda & Matthews, 2013; Anghel, 2016). Research shows that married couples are more satisfied in their

relationship than unmarried couples (Brown & Booth, 1996; Stanley, Whitton & Markman, 2004). Therefore it is not possible to generalize the results to couples who have only been together for a short period of time or those who are unmarried, leaving a gap in the literature. Further, a study by Brackett et al., (2005) found only a weak relationship between EI and relationship satisfaction using an ability measure of EI and a sample of young adults in dating relationships. Therefore, it may be that EI is only a strong predictor of relationship satisfaction in married couples.

### **Rationale**

As romantic relationships have an important role for our survival and reproduction from an evolutionary perspective (Fletcher, Simpson, Campbell & Overall, 2015), and given the importance of satisfaction in these relationships for mental health and overall well-being (Vajda & Mako, 2014; Kalhor & Olyaie, 2016), it is necessary to establish whether EI is a predictor of relationship satisfaction regardless of the characteristics of the individual such as gender and age but also the characteristics of the relationship, including relationship status and relationship length. Also, a large amount of the studies on EI and relationship satisfaction use measures of trait EI. Trait EI is highly correlated with personality and weakly correlated with ability EI suggesting that ability EI and trait EI measure separate constructs (Brackett & Mayer, 2003). It is important to clarify to what extent ability EI predicts relationship satisfaction as research shows ability EI can be improved using educational programmes (Dacre Pool & Qualter, 2012). Therefore, educational programmes for ability EI could be incorporated into school settings, which could promote healthy relationships in the future as well as overall well-being. Research suggests that lack of EI abilities can lead to conflict in relationships, which in turn can be extremely damaging to a persons' mental health (Alonso-Ferres, Valor-Segura and Expósito, 2019). Clarifying whether ability EI is a predictor for relationship satisfaction regardless of age, gender, relationship length and relationship status

could be useful information for marriage counsellors when deciding which interventions are suitable for each client.

There is a need for more research in the area of ability EI in relation to relationship satisfaction. The aim of the current study is to determine whether ability EI is a predictor of relationship satisfaction among all ages, genders and relationship types. A sample with a wide age-range of participants who are in different stages of relationship is needed to address the current gap in the literature. The research questions are: 1. Will there be gender and age differences in ability EI scores? 2. Will gender and EI interact to predict relationship satisfaction? 3. Will age, relationship status and relationship length be significant predictors of relationship satisfaction? 4. Will ability EI be a predictor of relationship satisfaction after controlling for gender, age, relationship status and relationship length? Based on the literature presented in this introduction, the hypotheses are 1. There will be gender and age differences in ability EI scores, with females and older adults scoring higher than males and younger adults. 2. There will be an interaction effect between ability EI and gender in predicting relationship satisfaction. 3. Age, relationship status and relationship length will be significant predictors of relationship satisfaction. 4. Higher ability EI will be a predictor of higher perceived relationship satisfaction after controlling for gender, age, relationship status and relationship length.

## Methods

### Participants

Non-probability convenience sampling was used for this study. The survey was posted to the social media sites: Facebook, Instagram and shared among various WhatsApp group chats with a small description of what the study is about and who can participate. In the description, it was encouraged that participants also share the survey with others who they believe would be suitable participants, which in turn, includes an element of snowball sampling. The required sample size for this study is a minimum of 98 participants. This is based on Tabachnick & Fidell, (2007) formula:  $N > 50 + 8m$ . All participants must be over 18 and in a romantic relationship for at least 3 months to qualify for the study. Due to the nature of the study and the sharing of the survey across social media, it is possible that many of the respondents were young adults and/or students of psychology as they would be most interested in the subject. This could cause a bias in the data which is why it is important to identify the ages of participants. There were no incentives offered for participation.

A sample of 147 participants was obtained. 16 participants were not currently in a romantic relationship which meant they didn't meet the criteria for inclusion in this study. However, it was decided not to remove their data from the study as it could provide some interesting information about single people and past relationships. Therefore, the sample consisted of 47 males and 98 females (males were coded 0, females were coded 1). Participants age ranged from 19 to 68 (mean: 40.95 years, SD: 21.63). 46.3% were in a relationship, 2.7% were engaged, 38.8% were married. 10.9% of participants had been in their relationship for less than 6 months, 6.1% between 6 months and 1 year, 23.8% between 1 and 4 years, 18.4% between 5 and 10 years, 7.5% between 11 and 15 years, and 33.3% over 15 years. 93.2% of the sample were straight, 2.7% were gay, 1.4% were lesbian, 1.4% were bisexual and 1.4% preferred not to say.

## Materials/Measures

Google forms was used to create the survey. Demographic questions were included at the beginning of the survey (see Appendix 1). Participants were first asked for their age, gender (options included male, female, or other) and sexuality (options included heterosexual/straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual or other). Participants were then asked how they would describe their current relationship status (options included single, in a relationship, engaged, married, or other). Participants were asked the length of their current relationship (options included less than 6 months, between 6 months and 1 year, 1-4 years, 5-10 years, 11-15 years, or 15+ years).

The survey assessed ability EI using the Wong & Law, (2002) WLEIS scale (see Appendix 2) which is an abbreviated, self-report version of the Mayer Salovey Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) ability scale developed by Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey (1999) to measure levels of EI. The WLEIS is more appropriate for using in online surveys as the MSCEIT takes over 30 minutes to complete and would be very time consuming. The WLEIS is a 16-item scale which takes less than 5 minutes to complete and is a reliable and valid self-report measure of ability EI (Carvalho, Guerrero, Chambel & González-Rico, 2016). Cronbach's alpha was ( $\alpha = .87$ ) which suggests a high degree of internal consistency for the scale with the current sample.

Four elements of EI are measured within the 16 questions based on the Mayer & Salovey (1997) theoretical framework of EI. These are Emotion Regulation (4 items), Use of Own Emotions (4 items), Self-Emotions Appraisals (4 items) and Others Emotions Appraisals (4 items). The questionnaire presents a statement and participants are asked to what degree they agree or disagree with the statement. An example of a statement about Emotion Regulation is "I have good control over my emotions". An example of a statement about Use of Own Emotions is "I always set goals for myself and then try my best to achieve



them”. An example of a statement about Self-Emotions Appraisals is “I have a good sense of why I feel certain feelings most of the time”. An example of a statement about Others Emotions Appraisals is “I am a good observer of others' emotions”. The responses are based on a 7-item Likert scale. These range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). At the end, results were added up to get a total ability EI score and then divided to get a mean score, and higher scores were equal to higher emotional intelligence. The minimum possible mean score is 1. The maximum possible mean score is 7. To get access to the WLEIS, the researcher contacted Dr Won Chi Sum to ask for permission to access the scale for research purposes.

To assess perceived relationship satisfaction, the survey included the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) (see Appendix 3). The RAS can be used to measure relationship satisfaction for people who are in any type of romantic relationship. It is a 7-item scale that uses a 5-point Likert scale to measure relationship satisfaction. An example of a question included in the scale is “ In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?”. At the end, results will be added up to form a total. Question 4 and Question 7 were reversed scored. For example, 1=5 and 5=1. Higher scores are equal to higher relationship satisfaction scores. The minimum possible score is 7. The maximum possible score is 35. The RAS is a reliable and valid measure of relationship satisfaction that is suitable across all age-groups and for married and unmarried individuals (Hendrick, Dicke & Hendrick, 1998).

### **Design and analyses**

This is a quantitative, cross-sectional study design which used an online survey to collect data. For the first research question, gender and age differences in EI were assessed using two independent samples t-tests. Age and gender were the independent variables and EI was the dependent variable. For the second and third research questions, a hierarchical multiple regression was used to 1) investigate whether age, relationship status and

relationship length were significant predictors of relationship satisfaction and 2) investigate whether EI was a significant predictor of relationship satisfaction after controlling for gender, age, relationship status and relationship length. The predictor variables were gender, age, relationship status, relationship length and EI. The criterion variable was relationship satisfaction. For the fourth research question a two way between-groups ANOVA was used to test for an interaction between gender and EI on relationship satisfaction. The independent variables were gender and EI categories (divided into high EI and low EI). The dependent variable was relationship satisfaction.

### **Procedure**

An online survey was created using Google Forms. The title of the survey was 'The Relationship Between Ability Emotional Intelligence and Perceived Relationship Satisfaction'. The link to the survey was posted and shared across the researchers social media platforms, which were Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp. A description was posted alongside the link explaining that the researcher is an undergraduate student conducting this study as part of their thesis and is seeking adults who are currently in a romantic relationship to take part in the survey. It is likely that this survey appealed to psychology students and students who are also conducting research or interested in the area of emotional intelligence, so these people are most likely to participate. It is likely that people who completed the survey were acquaintances of the researcher. To take part, participants must click on the link to the survey. Participants will then be directed to the introduction page which explains the aim of the study and what to expect if they agree to participate (see Appendix 4). Participants were made aware in the introduction page that there are some sensitive questions in the survey and that they can withdraw at any time until they submit their data..

At the end of the introduction page, participants were asked if they consent to take part in the study. To continue to the survey, participants must tick the box next to 'Yes'.

If participants click 'No' they would be redirected to a page stating 'participation declined' where they could exit the page without continuing onto the survey. If participants tick 'Yes', they were able to complete the survey. First, participants were asked a number of demographic questions including age, gender, relationship status, length of relationship and sexual orientation. The survey then assessed ability EI using the self-report WLEIS scale. To assess perceived relationship satisfaction, the survey used the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS). The full survey took approximately 5 minutes to complete. At the end, participants were presented with a debriefing form (see Appendix 5). Contact numbers for Safe Ireland and Women's Aid were provided in the debriefing form for participants who may have been affected by any of the questions in the survey. Participants were also reminded of the anonymity of their data in the debriefing form.

## Results

### Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics for all categorical demographic variables are presented in Table 1. 66.7% of the sample were female (N=98) and 33.3% were male (N=49). 93.2% of the sample identified as straight/heterosexual and 2.7% identified as gay. 11% of the sample were single, 46.9% were in a relationship. 2.8% were engaged, and 39.3% were married. 10.9% have been in their relationship less than 6 months, 6.1% have been in their relationship between 6 months and 1 year, 23.8% have been in their relationship between 1 and 4 years, 18.4% have been in their relationship between 5 and 10 years, 7.5% have been in their relationship between 11 and 15 years, 33.3% have been in their relationship for 15 years or more.

Table 1.

*Descriptive statistics for each categorical demographic variable (N = 147).*

Variable	Frequency	Valid %
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	49	33.3
Female	98	66.7
<b>Sexuality</b>		
Heterosexual/straight	137	93.2
Gay	4	2.7
Lesbian	2	1.4
Bisexual	2	1.4
Prefer not to say	2	1.4
<b>Relationship Status</b>		
Single	16	11.0
In a relationship	68	46.9
Engaged	4	2.8
Married	57	39.3
<b>Relationship Length</b>		
Less than 6 months	16	10.9
Between 6 months and 1 year	9	6.1
1-4 years	35	23.8
5-10 years	27	18.4
11-15 years	11	7.5
15 years+	49	33.3

Means and standard deviations (SD) for all continuous variables are presented in Table 2. Participants had a mean age of 39.52 years (SD=14.77), ranging from 19 to 68. A significant result ( $p < .05$ ) on the Shapiro-Wilk test for age and relationship satisfaction, as measured by the RAS, suggest the data is not normally distributed. Examination of the histograms and skewness statistic show that age and relationship satisfaction are negatively skewed. An effort was made to transform the data but did not succeed in eliminating the skewness so therefore the data was not transformed. Six outliers were identified on the relationship satisfaction scale using the boxplot, however, these scores were inside the confines of the viable scores on the scale so were not removed from the data. Emotional intelligence, as measured by the WLEIS was normally distributed as shown by a non-significant result ( $p > .05$ ) on the Shapiro-Wilk statistic.

Table 2.

*Descriptive statistics for each continuous variable (N = 147).*

Variable	Mean (95% Confidence Intervals)	Std. Error Mean	Median	SD	Range
Age	39.52 (37.12-41.93)	1.22	40	14.77	19-68
WLEIS mean	5.38 (5.25-5.51)	.064	5.38	.77	4-7
RAS	27.63 (26.46-28.81)	.6	30	7.21	7-35

*Note:* SD = Standard Deviation of Mean; N = 147

### **Inferential statistics**

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare levels of EI between males and females. There was no significant difference between males ( $M = 5.30$ ,  $SD = .739$ ) and females ( $M = 5.42$ ,  $SD = .792$ ) on scores of emotional intelligence,  $t(145) = -.852$ ,  $p = .396$ , two-tailed (see Table 3).

Table 3.

*Group differences between males and females on scores of emotional intelligence (N = 147).*

	Male			Female			<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI	Cohens <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>					
EI	5.30	.739	49	5.42	.792	98	-0.852	145	.396	-.383, .153	-0.16

*Note:* M= mean score. SD= standard deviation of mean score. n= number of participants.

A second independent samples t-test was conducted to compare levels of EI between two age groups, younger adults (aged 19-39) and middle-aged adults (aged 40-68). There was a significant difference in scores, with middle-aged adults ( $M = 5.63$ ,  $SD = .753$ ) scoring significantly higher than younger adults ( $M = 5.12$ ,  $SD = .714$ ),  $t(145) = -4.16$ ,  $p < .001$ , two-tailed. The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference =  $-.504$ , 95% CI:  $-.74$  to  $-.27$ ) was large (Cohen's  $d = -.70$ ) (see Table 4).

Table 4.

*Group differences between young adults and middle-aged adults on scores of emotional intelligence (N = 147).*

	Young Adults			Middle-Aged Adults			<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI	Cohens <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>					
EI	5.12	.714	72	5.63	.753	75	-4.16	145	.000	-.744, -.265	-0.70

*Note:* M= mean score. SD= standard deviation of mean score. n= number of participants.

Hierarchical multiple regression was performed to investigate the ability of EI to predict levels of relationship satisfaction, after controlling for demographics (age and gender) and relationship characteristics (relationship status and relationship length). Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. The criterion variable, relationship satisfaction, was not normally distributed. However, research has shown that linear regression analyses are robust to violations of normality (Lumley, Diehr, Emerson & Chen, 2002; Knief & Forstmeier, 2018). Additionally, the correlations amongst the predictor variables (gender, age, relationship

length, and relationship status) were examined and these are presented in Table 3. There was no evidence of multicollinearity, as assessed by Tolerance values greater than 0.1.

Table 5.

*Correlation table for all variables.*

Variable	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1. Relationship Satisfaction	1					
2. Gender	.084	1				
3. Age	-.166*	-.017	1			
4. Length of Relationship	.159*	.065	.572***	1		
5. Relationship Status	.269**	.054	.539***	.784***	1	
6. Emotional Intelligence	.154*	.071	.294***	.223**	.136	1

*Note:* ; Statistical significance: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

Each predictor variable was entered in separate blocks so that their unique contribution to the variance in the criterion variable could be assessed. Demographic variables were entered first. In the first step of hierarchical multiple regression, gender was entered. This model explained .07% of variance in relationship satisfaction but was not statistically significant  $F(1, 143) = 1.02$ ;  $p = .313$  (see Table 4 for full details). In the second step of the hierarchical multiple regression, age was entered individually. This model was statistically significant  $F(1, 142) = 4.00$ ;  $p = .048$  and explained an additional 6.1% of variance in relationship satisfaction after gender was controlled for. In the third step of the analysis, length of relationship was entered individually. This model was statistically significant  $F(1, 141) = 14.86$ ;  $p < .001$  and explained an additional 9.2% of variance in relationship satisfaction. In the fourth model, relationship status was entered individually. This model was statistically significant  $F(1, 140) = 15.17$ ;  $p < .001$  and explained an additional 8.5% of the variance in relationship satisfaction. In the fifth and final model of the hierarchical multiple regression, emotional intelligence was entered individually. This model

was statistically significant  $F(1, 139) = 9.07$ ;  $p = .003$  and explained an additional 4.8% of variance in relationship satisfaction after controlling for gender, age, length of relationship and relationship status. After the entry of emotional intelligence at Step 5 the total variance explained by the model was 23.3% ( $F(5, 139) = 9.77$ ;  $p < .001$ ).

In the final model, three out of five PVs uniquely predicted relationship satisfaction to a statistically significant degree. These were age, relationship status and emotional intelligence. Relationship status and emotional intelligence were positive predictors of relationship satisfaction. Age was a negative predictor of relationship satisfaction meaning that younger adults elicited higher scores on relationship satisfaction. Relationship status ( $\beta = .52$ ,  $p < .001$ ) was the strongest predictor (see Table 4 for full results).

Table 6.

*Hierarchical multiple regression table predicting Relationship Satisfaction.*

Variable	$R^2$	Adj. $R^2$	$R^2$ Change	$B$	$SE$	$\beta$	$t$	$p$
<b>Step 1</b>	.007	.000	.007					
Gender				1.29	1.27	.084	1.01	.313
<b>Step 2</b>	.034	.021	.027					
Gender				1.24	1.26	.082	.988	.325
Age				-.081	.040	-.165	2.00	.048
<b>Step 3</b>	.126	.108	.092					
Gender				.818	1.21	.054	.678	.499
Age				-.185	.047	-.378	-3.93	.000
Length of Relationship				1.58	.409	.372	3.86	.000
<b>Step 4</b>	.212	.189	.085					
Gender				.741	1.15	.049	.645	.520
Age				-.216	.046	-.443	-4.75	.000
Length of Relationship				.145	.536	.034	.270	.787
Relationship Status				3.12	.801	.478	3.90	.000



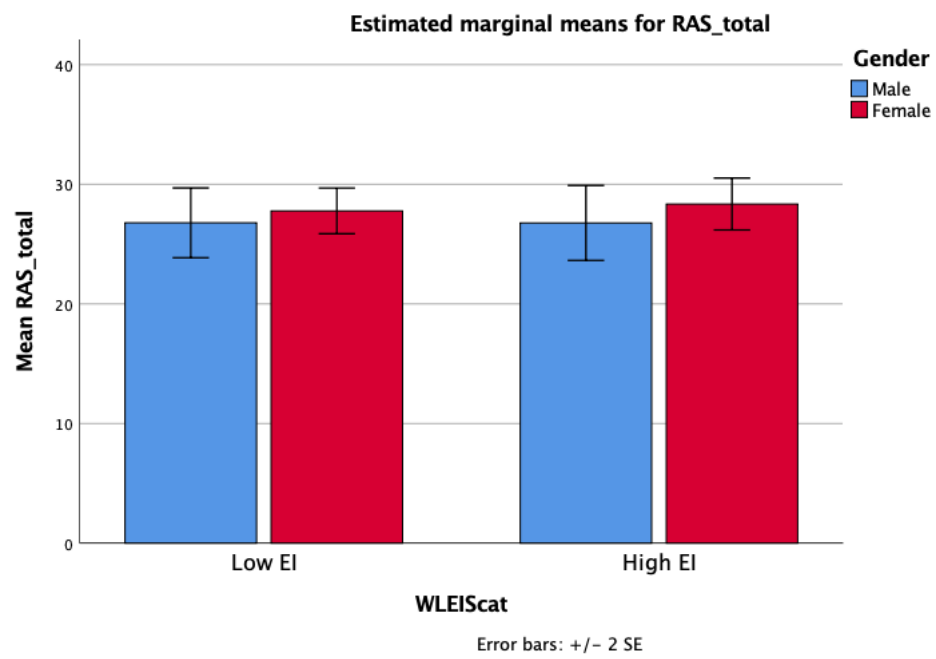
<b>Step 5</b>	.260	.233	.048					
Gender				.487	1.12	.032	.435	.665
Age				-.247	.045	-.507	-5.44	.000
Length of Relationship				-.043	.525	-.010	-.081	.935
Relationship Status				3.37	.783	.517	4.30	.000
Emotional Intelligence				2.16	.719	.232	3.01	.003

*Note:*  $\beta$  = standardized beta value; B = unstandardized beta value; SE = Standard errors of B; N = 147

A two-way between groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore for: (i) emotional intelligence and gender on relationship satisfaction respectively, and (ii) to examine if the effect of emotional intelligence on scores of relationship satisfaction depends on being a male or female. As emotional intelligence was measured as a continuous variable, a new dichotomous variable was created for emotional intelligence using a median split approach. Participants were divided into two groups, high or low, according to their score on emotional intelligence.

The interaction effect between emotional intelligence and gender was not statistically significant,  $F(1, 143) = .05, p = .82$  (see Figure 1). There was also no statistically significant main effect for emotional intelligence ( $F(1, 143) = .05, p = .82$ ) or gender ( $F(1, 143) = 1.01, p = .32$ ) on relationship satisfaction.

Figure 1. Interaction between Emotional Intelligence and Gender on Relationship Satisfaction.



Note: WLEIScat= categories of emotional intelligence levels. RAS\_total= total relationship satisfaction scores.

### Discussion

Previous research has shown EI to be a predictor of relationship satisfaction. However, some studies have yielded inconsistent results in this area. Few studies have controlled for confounding variables in this relationship. Research has shown that age, relationship status and relationship length are also predictors of relationship satisfaction. Furthermore, there are gender differences in EI and the manner in which EI predicts outcomes in life. Based on this, there is reason to believe these variables may interfere with the relationship between EI and relationship satisfaction. Therefore, the aim of this study was to build on previous research in the area of EI and relationship satisfaction by controlling for gender, age, relationship status and relationship length to provide a more accurate understanding of EI and relationship satisfaction. There were four hypotheses formed based on the literature.

The first hypothesis was: there will be gender and age differences in EI scores. This hypothesis was partly supported. Although most research indicates that women are higher than men in EI (Tucker & Friedman, 1993), no significant gender differences in EI scores were found in this study. There is some research to suggest that age mediates the relationship between gender and EI (Fernández-Berrocal, Cabello Castillo & Extremera, 2012). Therefore, it may be that there are only gender differences in EI in certain age groups and due to the wide age range of participants in our sample, no gender differences were found. Although our result is not consistent with most research on EI and gender, it supports research indicating that without the presence of other sociodemographic factors, gender alone does not have predictive value (McIntyre & Edwards, 2009). Instead, it is the interaction between gender and other sociodemographic factors that predicts outcomes in some variables (McIntyre & Edwards, 2009).

However, as expected, there was a large difference between age groups in scores of EI, with middle-aged adults (aged 40-68) scoring significantly higher than younger adults

(aged 19-39). This is consistent with research that suggests EI increases with age due to life experience (Kafetsios, 2004), which in turn supports the argument by Mayer et al., (2001) that EI fits the criteria as a form of intelligence.

The second hypothesis was: gender and EI will interact to predict relationship satisfaction. This hypothesis was not supported as there was no significant interaction effect between gender and EI. While previous research shows that EI is a predictor of relationship satisfaction and research has also found that low EI is associated with negative relationship outcomes for males more so than for females (Brackett et al., 2005), it was expected that EI and gender may interact to predict relationship satisfaction. In other words, it was expected that EI may be more of a predictor of relationship satisfaction for one gender than the other. However, there was no evidence of this in the current study, suggesting that gender and EI do not interact to predict relationship satisfaction. It should be noted that there was a large amount of homogeneity in scores, with the majority of participants scoring high in relationship satisfaction which may have made it difficult to find any existing interaction.

The third hypothesis was: age, relationship status and relationship length will be significant predictors of relationship satisfaction. A hierarchical multiple regression was used to investigate this hypothesis. The hypothesis was partly supported. Demographic variables were entered into the regression first (gender and age) and relationship characteristics were entered in after (relationship status and relationship length) so that their unique contribution to relationship satisfaction could be investigated after controlling for demographic variables. Age and relationship status were significant predictors of relationship satisfaction in this study. As expected, age was a negative predictor of relationship satisfaction meaning that younger adults were significantly more satisfied in their relationship than older adults. Although there is little research on relationship satisfaction and age, findings from early studies on retirement-aged individuals have suggested that relationship satisfaction decreases

in older age (Lee & Shehan, 1989). Most studies focus on age in relation to relationship length when investigating its effect on relationship satisfaction (Dobrowolska et al., 2020). As can be seen in the current study, there is a high correlation between age and relationship length. Therefore, it is unclear whether age itself is an important predictor of relationship satisfaction or whether it interacts with relationship length.

Relationship status was a positive predictor of relationship satisfaction in this study after controlling for gender, age and length of relationship. This means that consistent with previous research (Brown & Booth, 1996; Stanley, Whitton & Markman, 2004), individuals who were married reported being more satisfied in their relationship than those who were not. Surprisingly though, relationship length was not a significant predictor of relationship satisfaction. Based on findings from previous research (Kurdek, 1999), it was expected that relationship satisfaction would decrease as the relationship progressed. However, there was no evidence of such findings in this study. There are two possible ways to interpret this finding. First, it could be that relationship satisfaction remains relatively stable throughout the relationship and does not increase or decrease much. A more plausible explanation is that there may not be a linear relationship between length of relationship and relationship satisfaction. In other words, some research shows that relationship satisfaction is constantly changing due to individual and environmental factors rather than due to the length of the relationship and therefore, the mechanisms through which relationships change over time is not captured by individual, linear assessments (Kurdek, 2005).

Also, while our study was aimed at individuals who are currently in a romantic relationship, there was a small number of single participants in the sample. It was decided not to remove these participants from the sample. Although the Relationship Assessment Scale asks questions about a current relationship, these participants may have answered based on past relationships. Therefore, our results suggest that single people report less satisfaction in

their past relationships. This finding is understandable as it is likely that these participants were in previous relationships which did not work out possibly due to dissatisfaction.

The primary aim of this study was to investigate if EI is still a predictor of relationship satisfaction after demographic variables and relationship characteristics are controlled for. The fourth hypothesis was: EI will be a significant predictor of relationship satisfaction after gender, age, relationship status and relationship length are controlled for. As expected, EI was a significant predictor of relationship satisfaction after controlling for such variables. Therefore, this hypothesis was supported. Consistent with previous research, EI was found to be a predictor of relationship satisfaction. However, this study builds on previous research by controlling for possible confounding variables in the relationship between EI and relationship satisfaction. Therefore, this study indicates that EI is a predictor of relationship satisfaction regardless of gender, age, relationship status and relationship length.

Although we cannot infer causation based on our results due to the cross-sectional design, our findings provide support for research suggesting that high EI can lead to increased regulation of negative emotions, such as anger, which in turn decreases levels of conflict in the relationship, leading to a more satisfactory relationship (Fitness, 2001). Alternatively, high EI is associated with high self-appraisal and therefore, it could be that people high in EI view their relationships in a more positive manner, resulting in increased relationship satisfaction (Zeidner, Kloda & Matthews, 2013).

However, while EI was a significant predictor of relationship satisfaction in this study, EI only accounted for a very small amount (4.8%) of variance in relationship satisfaction after all variables were controlled for. This suggests that EI alone may not be a very strong predictor of relationship satisfaction. While the majority of research does indicate that there is a strong relationship between EI and relationship satisfaction (Smith et al., 2008;

Batool & Khalid, 2012; Malouff et al., 2013), there is some research which has found small or inconsistent results. For example, Bracket et al., (2005) found effects ranging from  $-.06$  to  $.21$  over four analyses while using an ability measure of EI and a young sample in dating relationships. Therefore, it may be that trait EI is a stronger predictor of relationship satisfaction than ability EI. It could also be that EI is a stronger predictor for relationship satisfaction among older or married couples.

The overall model which included gender, age relationship length, relationship status and EI predicted 26% of variance in relationship satisfaction with relationship status being the strongest predictor. Based on these results, it could be that the two variables that significantly predicted relationship satisfaction, age and relationship status, mediate the relationship between EI and relationship satisfaction. In other words, EI may be a stronger predictor of relationship satisfaction for certain age groups or relationship types. This is consistent with research suggesting that predictors of relationship satisfaction vary throughout stages of the relationship (Davis & Oathout, 1987). Future research should investigate using a mediation analysis whether age and relationship status mediate the relationship between EI and relationship satisfaction.

In summary, our findings suggest that EI is a significant, but weak, predictor of relationship satisfaction after controlling for gender, age, relationship length and relationship status. Our findings support previous research that age and relationship status are also predictors of relationship satisfaction. However, our study did not support research that found length of relationship to be a predictor of relationship satisfaction. Our findings also support research that found age differences in EI. However, in contrast to previous research, we did not find any gender differences in EI scores. The current study has built on previous research by controlling for demographic variables and relationship characteristics when investigating the relationship between EI and relationship satisfaction.

## Implications

From an evolutionary perspective, romantic relationships are a crucial aspect for reproduction in humans (Gonzaga & Haselton, 2008). Relationship satisfaction is a predictor of the longevity and stability of these relationships (Karimi, Bakhtiyari & Masjedi Arani, 2019). Also, given the importance of satisfaction in romantic relationships for overall wellbeing (Vajda & Mako, 2014; Kalhor & Olyaie, 2016), it is important that we discover mechanisms through which we can increase relationship satisfaction in couples. Our results show that, consistent with previous research, EI positively predicts relationship satisfaction. Therefore, if EI can be increased, it could have a positive effect not only on romantic relationships but overall well-being of those involved. Interventions aimed at increasing EI should be implemented as early as possible. The brain's growth from early adolescence to young adulthood is crucial for both physical and emotional development and learning experiences offered during this crucial developmental phase can have a positive impact on life success (Anamitra Basu & Martial Mermillod, 2011). Therefore, our findings support the implementation of the Social Emotional Learning initiative which aims to build EI in school-aged children (Lantieri, 2009), which may help in attaining satisfactory and lasting relationships in the future. Therefore, our findings may be of interest to the department of education.

While EI was a significant predictor of relationship satisfaction in this study, its predictive value was weak. To our surprise, relationship status was the strongest predictor of relationship satisfaction. In this study married people were more satisfied in their relationship even after length of relationship was controlled for. Therefore, it seems that unmarried couples are at most risk for unsatisfactory relationships. Research has suggested that marriage encourages commitment and trust among couples which in turn makes them closer (Hampel, 2002). Our findings may be of value to policymakers as they support schemes such as the



Healthy Marriage Initiative which aims to encourage marriage. However, our finding that relationship status is a predictor of relationship satisfaction needs to be investigated further to fully understand this relationship and discover possible causal mechanisms before any conclusions are made. For example, it may be that people who are more satisfied and trusting in their relationships tend to get married. A longitudinal study would be most appropriate to determine whether there is a lasting increase in satisfaction after marriage or whether individuals who are happier in their relationships are more likely to get married. Overall, our findings have implications for future research, which should aim to discover other factors which may be stronger predictors of relationship satisfaction and be of greater use to couples-counsellors in building relationship satisfaction in their clients.

### **Strengths & Limitations**

There were many strengths to this study. First, our study has added to limited research which investigates the relationship between EI and relationship satisfaction using an ability measure of EI. Ability EI fits the criteria as a form of intelligence whereas trait EI measures the emotion aspects of personality such as empathy and optimism (Lopes, Salovey, & Straus, 2003). To our knowledge, this is the first study to investigate the relationship between ability EI and relationship satisfaction while controlling for gender, age, relationship status and relationship length. However, one limitation of the study is the self-report scale used to measure EI (WLEIS) due to the survey design of this study. Although the WLEIS is based on the ability framework of EI, measurements of abilities usually require a test instead of a self-report assessment. As a result, the possibility of people consciously scoring themselves higher in EI due to social desirability bias is unavoidable. Therefore, this scale likely measures peoples' perceived EI abilities rather than their actual skills. However, research using self-report ability EI measures has shown that an individual's self-reported EI abilities

match the reports by their peers which suggests that people who report themselves being high in EI are actually high in EI (Mavroveli et al., 2007).

A second strength of this study is our large sample (N=147) which consisted of a wide age range of participants (19-68). Also, there was a wide variety in relationship lengths and the inclusion of both married and unmarried individuals allowed us to build on previous research. Therefore, our sample was more representative of the general population. However, a second limitation is that the sample consisted of mostly heterosexual individuals. Thus, these findings may not be generalizable to same-sex couples. Future research should investigate whether EI is an important predictor of relationship satisfaction in same-sex relationships.

A final limitation in this study was the homogeneity of scores on the relationship satisfaction scale (RAS). The data was highly negatively skewed with the majority of participants scoring high in relationship satisfaction. While the online survey included an information sheet (see Appendix 1) that highlighted the anonymity of the survey, the RAS was at the end of the survey so it is possible that the participant may have forgotten what they'd read in the introduction. There were some sensitive questions in the RAS such as "How much do you love your partner?". As a result, it is possible that the participant may not have answered with complete honesty. It may have been beneficial to reiterate the anonymity of the survey just before the beginning of the RAS so that participants felt confident to answer more honestly. The violation of the normality assumption may have affected our factorial ANOVA as one of the assumptions of a factorial ANOVA is that the dependent variable (relationship satisfaction) is normally distributed.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of this study was to provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between EI and relationship satisfaction by controlling for demographic variables and

relationship characteristics. EI was a significant, but weak, predictor of relationship satisfaction after controlling for gender, age, relationship status and relationship length. Thus, the current study provides support for initiatives such as Social Emotional Learning, aimed at increasing emotional abilities in school-aged children. However, to our surprise relationship status was the strongest predictor of relationship satisfaction in this study which suggests that individuals in the dating stage of a relationship may need more support in increasing satisfaction within the relationship. This raises concern for the quality of relationships among those who are unmarried and suggests these individuals may benefit from services such as couples counselling to increase relationship satisfaction. Future studies should use a longitudinal design to investigate whether marriage increases satisfaction or whether satisfied couples are more likely to marry. Overall, while many studies have found strong to moderate associations between EI and relationship satisfaction, it seems that after controlling for demographic and relationship variables, EI only has a small predictive value towards relationship satisfaction. Therefore, couples-counsellors may be better off focusing on improving other aspects of the relationship.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1.

#### Demographic Questions

2. Age \*

3. Gender \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Female

Male

Other:

4. Relationship Status \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Single

In a relationship

Engaged

Married

Other:

5. How long have you been in your current relationship? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Less than 6 months

Between 6 months and 1 year

1-4 years

5-10 years

11-15 years

15 years+

6. Sexual Orientation \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Heterosexual/Straight

Gay

Lesbian

Bisexual

Prefer not to say

Other:

## Appendix 2.

**Wong & Law Emotional Intelligence Scale****W.L.E.I.S Emotional Intelligence Scale**

This is a short 16-item measure of emotional intelligence, developed for use in management research and studies. The items on the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) are based on the ability model of emotional intelligence. A list of statements are provided below, and to complete this questionnaire, mark the extent to which you agree or disagree to each of the statements using this guide: 1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3= Slightly Disagree 4= Neither Agree nor Disagree 5= Slightly Agree 6= Agree 7= Strongly Agree

7.

I have a good sense of why I feel certain feelings most of the time. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Strongly Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Strongly Agree

8.

I have a good sense of why I feel certain feelings most of the time. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Strongly Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Strongly Agree

9.

I have a good understanding of my own emotions. \*



*Mark only one oval.*

Strongly Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Strongly Agree

10.

I really understand what I feel. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Strongly Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Strongly Agree

11.

I always know whether I am happy or not. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Strongly Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Strongly Agree

12.

I always know my friends emotions from their behaviour. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Strongly Disagree

1

2

3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
Strongly Agree

13.

I am a good observer of others' emotions. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Strongly Disagree  
1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
Strongly Agree

14.

I am sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Strongly Disagree  
1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
Strongly Agree

15.

I have a good understanding of the emotions of the people around me. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Strongly Disagree  
1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6

7  
Strongly Agree

16.

I always set goals for myself and then try my best to achieve them. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Strongly Disagree

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7

Strongly Agree

17.

I always tell myself I am a competent person. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Strongly Disagree

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7

Strongly Agree

18.

I am a self-motivating person. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Strongly Disagree

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7

Strongly Agree

19.

I would always encourage myself to try my best. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Strongly Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Strongly Agree

20.

I am able to control my temper so that I can handle difficulties rationally. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Strongly Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Strongly Agree

21.

I am quite capable of controlling my own emotions. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Strongly Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Strongly Agree

22.

I can always calm down quickly when I am very angry. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Strongly Disagree

- 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5
  - 6
  - 7
- Strongly Agree

23.

I have good control of my emotions. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Strongly Disagree

- 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5
  - 6
  - 7
- Strongly Agree

Appendix 3.

**Relationship Assessment Scale**

**Relationship Assessment Scale**

This is a 7-item scale designed to measure general relationship satisfaction. Please answer each item using the 5-point scale.

24.

How often does your partner meet your needs? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Poorly

1

2

3

4

5

Extremely Well

25.

In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Unsatisfied

1

2

3

4

5

Extremely Satisfied

26.

How good is your relationship compared to most? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Poor

1

2

3

4

5

Excellent

27.

How often do you wish you hadn't gotten in this relationship? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Never

1

2

3

4

5

Very Often

28.

To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Hardly At All

1

2

3

4

5

Completely

29.

How much do you love your partner? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Not Much

1

2

3

4

5

Very Much

30.

How many problems are there in your relationship? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Very Few

1

2

3

4

5

Very Many

#### Appendix 4.

### **Participant Information Sheet**

You are invited to take part in a research study. The following text will give you all of the information regarding the details of the study and what the survey will involve for the participant. Please read this page thoroughly. This study will be supervised Dr. Michael Cleary-Gaffney. Contact details for myself and my supervisor are provided below. If you have any questions about any aspects of the study, please do not hesitate to contact one of us. Once you have read the information page, you can decide whether or not you would like to take part.

My name is Stella Gilmore. I am a final year undergraduate Psychology student in National College of Ireland. I am conducting this study as part of my thesis. The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and perceived relationship satisfaction in adults while taking into account demographic variables and relationship characteristics. Emotional intelligence, measured as a set of abilities, is the skill involved in managing and recognizing a persons' own emotions and emotions of others, distinguishing them from one another and to using the skill to navigate their thoughts and behaviour (Salovey & Meyer, 1990). Relationship satisfaction is defined as an individual's subjective opinion of the quality of the relationship. Research has shown that there are gender and age differences in emotional intelligence. Also, age, relationship status and relationship length predict relationship satisfaction. However, to our knowledge, there is no research which has investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and relationship satisfaction while controlling for these variables.

We are looking for adults over the age of 18 who are currently married or in a romantic relationship and have been for at least 3 months to take part in this survey. The survey will consist of two questionnaires. The first questionnaire is the Wong & Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS). The second is the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) which measures perceived relationship satisfaction. Participants will also be asked for their gender,



age, marital status, length of relationship and sexuality. The survey will take approximately 5 minutes to complete.

Participation is completely voluntary. At the end of this page, you will be asked if you consent to taking part in this study. To continue onto the survey, you must click the box next to 'yes, I consent'. Participants can withdraw consent at any stage of the survey until they press 'Submit'. If you would like to withdraw your consent throughout the survey, you can simply exit the page and your progress will be cancelled and the researcher will not receive any of your information. Data will only be available to the researcher after you press 'Submit' at the end of the survey.

If you do decide to participate in the survey your data will be completely anonymous. A unique ID number will be attached to your data. Therefore, it will not be possible for you to withdraw consent once you have submitted your survey. The researcher and supervisor will be the only individuals who will have access to the anonymous data from this survey to ensure complete confidentiality of the participants. The data will be used for research purposes only.

There are no direct benefits to participating in this study. However, by taking part in the survey you will be contributing to the growing research on emotional intelligence and relationship satisfaction. Investigating this relationship and the role that gender and length of relationship play, will help researchers to further study this topic and could provide therapists with a deeper understanding of relationship satisfaction and aid their approach to promote healthy relationships for their clients.

There are minimal risks involved in participating in this study. However, some questions may cause minor distress to the participant. If you are affected by any questions in the survey, please do not hesitate to contact one of the helplines provided at the end.

If you would like any further information regarding the study please contact myself at [x16431464@student.ncirl.ie](mailto:x16431464@student.ncirl.ie) or my thesis supervisor at [michael.cleary-gaffney@ncirl.ie](mailto:michael.cleary-gaffney@ncirl.ie).

Thank you.

## Appendix 5.

### Debrief

#### Debrief

The Relationship Between Ability Emotional Intelligence and Perceived Relationship Satisfaction.

This survey was created to analyze the relationship between ability emotional intelligence and relationship satisfaction while taking into account demographic variables and relationship characteristics. The research shows that people with high emotional intelligence tend to be more satisfied in their relationship. Research also suggests that gender, age, relationship length and relationship status may interfere this relationship. Thus, we hope to address this gap in the research using the information you have provided in this survey. The expected outcome is that demographic variables and relationship characteristics will affect the relationship between ability emotional intelligence and relationship satisfaction.

The researcher conducting this study and their supervisor are the only persons who will have access to the participant data. Participant data is completely anonymous and it will not be possible for participants to be identified using any of the information they have provided.

If you were affected by any of the questions in the survey you can contact the below helplines to speak to someone:

- Women's Aid – 1800 341 900
- Safe Ireland – 1800 938 095

If you have any queries or feedback regarding this study, do not hesitate to contact:  
the researcher - [x16431464@student.ncirl.ie](mailto:x16431464@student.ncirl.ie).  
thesis supervisor - [michael.cleary-gaffney@ncirl.ie](mailto:michael.cleary-gaffney@ncirl.ie)

We would like to thank you for your time and participation in this study.

## Appendix 6.

### Evidence of SPSS data file

FYPdata.savzscores.sav [DataSet1] - IBM SPSS Statistics Data Editor

	Name	Type	Width	Decimals	Label	Values	Missing	Columns	Align	Measure	Role
1	Age	Numeric	5	0		None	None	11	Right	Scale	Input
2	Gender	Numeric	8	0		{0, Male}...	None	8	Right	Nominal	Input
3	Relationships...	Numeric	40	0	Relationship St...	{1, Single}...	-99	47	Right	Nominal	Input
4	Relationships...	Numeric	27	0	How long have ...	{1, Less tha...	None	27	Right	Nominal	Input
5	SexualOrie...	Numeric	40	0	Sexual Orienta...	{1, Heteros...	None	50	Right	Nominal	Input
6	WLEISQ1	Numeric	1	0	I have a good s...	None	None	11	Right	Scale	Input
7	WLEISQ2	Numeric	1	0	I have a good u...	None	None	11	Right	Scale	Input
8	WLEISQ3	Numeric	1	0	I really underst...	None	None	11	Right	Scale	Input
9	WLEISQ4	Numeric	1	0	I always know ...	None	None	11	Right	Scale	Input
10	WLEISQ5	Numeric	1	0	I always know ...	None	None	11	Right	Scale	Input
11	WLEISQ6	Numeric	1	0	I am a good ob...	None	None	11	Right	Scale	Input
12	WLEISQ7	Numeric	1	0	I am sensitive t...	None	None	11	Right	Scale	Input
13	WLEISQ8	Numeric	1	0	I have a good u...	None	None	11	Right	Scale	Input
14	WLEISQ9	Numeric	1	0	I always set go...	None	None	11	Right	Scale	Input
15	WLEISQ10	Numeric	1	0	I always tell m...	None	None	11	Right	Scale	Input
16	WLEISQ11	Numeric	1	0	I am a self-mo...	None	None	11	Right	Scale	Input
17	WLEISQ12	Numeric	1	0	I would always ...	None	None	11	Right	Scale	Input
18	WLEISQ13	Numeric	1	0	I am able to co...	None	None	11	Right	Scale	Input
19	WLEISQ14	Numeric	1	0	I am quite cap...	None	None	11	Right	Scale	Input
20	WLEISQ15	Numeric	1	0	I can always ca...	None	None	11	Right	Scale	Input
21	WLEISQ16	Numeric	1	0	I have good co...	None	None	11	Right	Scale	Input
22	RASQ1	Numeric	1	0	How often doe...	None	None	11	Right	Scale	Input
23	RASQ2	Numeric	1	0	In general, ho...	None	None	11	Right	Scale	Input
24	RASQ3	Numeric	1	0	How good is yo...	None	None	11	Right	Scale	Input
25	RASQ5	Numeric	1	0	To what extent...	None	None	11	Right	Scale	Input
26	RASQ6	Numeric	1	0	How much do y...	None	None	11	Right	Scale	Input
27	WLEISQtotal	Numeric	8	0		None	None	12	Right	Scale	Input
28	RASQ7	Numeric	7	0	How many pro...	{1, 5}...	None	8	Right	Scale	Input
29	RASQ4	Numeric	8	0	How often do y...	{1, 5}...	None	8	Right	Scale	Input

Data View Variable View

IBM SPSS Statistics

Appendix 7.

Evidence of SPSS data output - Regression

Output2Fyp.spv [Document2] - IBM SPSS Statistics Viewer

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>														
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations			Collinearity Statistics		
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF	
1	(Constant)	26.776	1.037		25.812	.000	24.725	28.826						
	Gender	1.286	1.270	.084	1.012	.313	-1.226	3.797	.084	.084	.084	1.000	1.000	
2	(Constant)	29.986	1.906		15.732	.000	26.218	33.754						
	Gender	1.243	1.258	.082	.988	.325	-1.243	3.729	.084	.083	.082	1.000	1.000	
	Age	-.081	.040	-.165	-1.999	.048	-.160	-.001	-.166	-.165	-.165	1.000	1.000	
3	(Constant)	27.989	1.892		14.796	.000	24.249	31.729						
	Gender	.818	1.205	.054	.678	.499	-1.565	3.201	.084	.057	.053	.991	1.009	
	Age	-.185	.047	-.378	-3.930	.000	-.277	-.092	-.166	-.314	-.309	.669	1.494	
	How long have you been in your current relationship?	1.577	.409	.372	3.855	.000	.768	2.386	.159	.309	.303	.667	1.500	
4	(Constant)	26.669	1.835		14.535	.000	23.041	30.296						
	Gender	.741	1.149	.049	.645	.520	-1.531	3.013	.084	.054	.048	.991	1.009	
	Age	-.216	.046	-.443	-4.752	.000	-.306	-.126	-.166	-.373	-.357	.648	1.543	
	How long have you been in your current relationship?	.145	.536	.034	.270	.787	-.915	1.205	.159	.023	.020	.353	2.834	
	Relationship Status	3.119	.801	.478	3.895	.000	1.536	4.701	.269	.313	.292	.373	2.679	
5	(Constant)	26.482	1.843		14.368	.000	22.838	30.126						
	Gender	.679	1.150	.045	.590	.556	-1.596	2.954	.084	.050	.044	.988	1.012	
	Age	-.225	.046	-.460	-4.861	.000	-.316	-.133	-.166	-.381	-.365	.627	1.595	
	How long have you been in your current relationship?	.111	.537	.026	.207	.836	-.951	1.173	.159	.018	.016	.352	2.844	
	Relationship Status	3.174	.802	.487	3.956	.000	1.588	4.760	.269	.318	.297	.372	2.691	
	WLEIScat	1.148	1.110	.080	1.035	.303	-1.046	3.343	.030	.087	.078	.945	1.058	

a. Dependent Variable: RAS\_total

Excluded Variables <sup>a</sup>							
Model	Beta In	t	Sig.	Partial Correlation	Collinearity Statistics		
					Tolerance	VIF	Minimum Tolerance

IBM SPSS Statistics Processor is ready      Unicode:ON