

# Emotional Intelligence of Parents: A Review

Sucheta Mandal<sup>1</sup>, Vinita Sinha<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Symbiosis Centre for Management and Human Resource Development, SCMHRD, Symbiosis International (Deemed University), SIU, Hinjewadi, Pune, Maharashtra, India

<sup>2</sup> Symbiosis Centre for Management and Human Resource Development, SCMHRD, Symbiosis International (Deemed University), SIU, Hinjewadi, Pune, Maharashtra, India

<sup>1</sup>sucheta\_mandal@scmhrd.edu, <sup>2</sup> vinita\_sinha@scmhrd.edu

## ABSTRACT

The current paper explores the studies which involves around the Emotional Intelligence (EI) of parents. The vast majority of the studies on EI focuses on children's development and the effect of various factors on the EI of children. However, focus on the EI of parents is largely neglected. The current paper reviews the existing studies which have explored the EI of parents. Papers were selected from the SCOPUS, Emerald, Ebsco, Elsevier, Web of Science and Jstor databases. It was found from the review that the scope for exploring EI of parents is present to further elucidate and confirm the relationship between a number of variables

## Keywords

EI, parents, parenting style, children

Article Received: 10 August 2020, Revised: 25 October 2020, Accepted: 18 November 2020

## Introduction

The concept of Emotional Intelligence (EI) was introduced by Peter Salovey and John Mayer [22], based on the research findings of social intelligence by Sternberg, et al. [25]. EI was defined by as the individual's ability to regulate or adjust their and others' feelings and emotions; to differentiate between these feelings and act accordingly [22]. EI was established, as distinctly different from general intelligence and social intelligence, which enabled individuals to modify their emotions when necessary and influence others' emotion to achieve an end. The forerunners of the EI, Mayer and Salovey [22], Goleman [5] and Bar-on [23], emphasizes on two different perspectives of EI. The cognitive ability of an individual was the focus of Mayer and Salovey's work whereas personality traits were the focus for Goleman and Bar-on.

According to Mayer and Salovey [22], EI is constituted of for cognitive abilities of individuals i.e. emotional perception, emotional assimilation, emotional understanding and emotional management. The basic underpinning of this theory is the emphasis of the ability of an individual to be aware of his/her own emotions expressed by them. This starts the individual's journey towards perception of emotion, leading to analysing the emotions by identifying them as distinct from each other and the effect it has on him/her thoughts. This enables the individual to assimilate their emotions, helping them to understand when emotions become complex and the transition of emotions from one to the other. This enables the individual to grasp the process of their emotional journey enabling him/her to control and manage the emotions by curtailing the impulses. This journey empowers the individual to deal effectively with their emotions in difficult situations helping them to behave rationally and be productive.

Reuven Bar-On [23] proposed a different model, focusing on an individuals' ability to develop their emotional intelligence; hence indicating the possibility of an individual

to be emotionally intelligent by presenting five components for his model i.e. intrapersonal, interpersonal, adaptability, stress management and general mood components. The focus of Bar-On's model includes the ability of individuals to not only analyse the relation between the real nature of individuals to emotionally developed but also to judge the ability of the individual to tackle stress optimistically.

The model proposed by Goleman [5], focus on the ability of an individual to progress in their workplace, hence focusing on the emotional journey in one's career based on the five components i.e. self-awareness, self-regulation, social skill, empathy and motivation.

EI has enabled to explain the failures of individuals in spite of higher intelligence quotient (IQ) along with the success of individuals who are academically average to poor but are able to develop a successful career for themselves [5]. The changing society today has posed a number of unprecedented challenges for parents. The necessity to empower parents and develop competencies which can help them deal with this change and attain success in life implies a need to scrutinize the effect of EI of parents [5, 6, 10] and consequently, its effect on children and other related factors. The increase in the mental health issues in recent times, of children has increased nearly twice [17] in the urban cities compared to rural places in India. A number of factors are indicated to impact the mental health of children including home environment [17]. Hence, the role of parents and the factors related to parents are crucial to gauge the core issues which lead to the development of problems with mental health of children.

The current paper explores the available literature which concentrates on the EI of parents. The paper identifies the areas where EI of parents have been given significance and highlights the scope for future studies which should be undertaken. The paper also accentuates the need for such studies in future.

## Literature Review

The focus of research on EI has either revolved around the development of EI of children, training needs and processes for children or the factors related to EI of children and other variables such as mental health, academics, relationships with others. The other focus of EI has been on the organization level, for employers and employees, its effect on their productivity, their life satisfaction, organizational roles, and leadership effects. However, a large gap appears for the research on EI of parents. The effect of EI on parenting style, its impact on parental behavior and effect of children is crucial to help deal with the increase in mental health issues of children.

### Hereditary implication of EI

Research on the trait EI of parents and children have been investigated more frequently, in an attempt to identify the contribution of heredity and environmental factors to the development of EI. It was found that there is a need for re-conceptualizing the social, emotional and personal intelligences. These intelligences proved to be associated with personality traits indicating that a significant relation with the personality traits and emotional intelligence of children along with their parents [20]. In another study EI of both parents and children were assessed by the researchers. This self-reported EI was compared to the perceived EI. The results of this study indicated that the EI reported by parents showed a correlation to the EI reported by children; however, the factors which emerged from this correlation was for parents and children [18]. Additionally, the perceived EI by parents for their children and the perceived of children by their parents also correlated on the same factors for both parents and children, indicating that parents and children appraise each other in similar way [18].

While investigating the impact of trait EI of expecting parents, it was found that excepting the sub-factor of self-control, the EI of parents were stable after childbirth [27]. The study also explores the potential of parents complimenting or attempting to balance each other when the other partner's emotional stability is varying. It was found that compensatory situations arose while managing parenting [27]. This study indicates that a stability in EI of parents can be expected with due support for the respective partners.

The relationship between the perceived EI of parents and children, and the mediating role of EI which was self-reported effecting the mental health of adolescents along with young adults staying with their parents [19]. This study revealed that the perceived EI of both, the parents' on their children and the children's of their parents had a significant impact on the mental health of children. This also impacted the EI of children which was self-reported by them. This study showed the predictive power of EI on the children's mental health [19].

Focus on the comparison of EI of parents and children has indicated a positive relationship [3]. Although the sample for the study was smaller, the results from the study pointed towards a direct relationship between the level of improvement EI of parents and level of improvement of the EI of children [3].

One study focuses on the transmission of trait EI from parent to children and the mediating role of antecedent factors such the psychological control and autonomy support of parents [26]. This study showed that trait EI of both parents had the predictability power in the parents' psychological control and autonomy support. Additionally, the mothers' trait EI, psychological control and autonomy support had a significant power to predict the child's trait EI. The study contributes significantly to the elucidation of the parents' role in the development of trait EI of children [26].

The relation between the EI of parents and children has been investigated along with the impact of EI on children [2]. The study showed a direct and significant correlation between the EI of parents and the EI of children. Since the ability to recognize and manage one's own emotions is essential for the social well-being of individuals, the effect of EI on the life of an individual is portrayed here [2].

The comparison of the IQ and EI of individuals and their parents reveals that males reported higher IQ but lower EI which was reported by the individuals themselves [14]. However, when compared to females reported lower IQ and higher EI when the report was self-made. Additionally, both males and females reported that their fathers possess higher IQ and lower EI when compared to their mothers. This study implies that individuals assume IQ as a primarily masculine trait, whereas EI as primarily a feminine trait [14], thereby assigning fathers with higher IQ and lower EI, and the vice versa for mothers. This indicates a stereotyping of these traits according to gender. The study implies a need to explore the role of gender while using EI in various settings and its implications.

Although a significant number of studies has focused and emphasized the relation of EI with personality and defining EI as a trait of individuals, there is a lack of confirming that EI is indeed a personality factor [13]. In the attempt to distinguish each from the other, a study was conducted. The results indicated a relation with personality, however, a distinction remained from the dimensions of personality. It also showed the predictive potential of EI of satisfaction in life [13].

### Work and family on EI

The relation between EI and work-life balance of individuals has been investigated more often. The life experiences of individuals influence how an individual's EI will change since the development of EI is dependent on the emotions felt in one's personal life, which effects the work life of the individual [28]. Conversely, this particular study reveals that the experiences in the work also influence the growth of EI, indicating that personal life and work life influences equally towards one's EI; hence, a balance between the both is suggested. However, since the research is theoretical, an empirical data is required to suggest the same [28].

Studies indicate that parenting style has a critical relationship with the EI of parents. The perceived leadership behaviour, which is dictated by the style of parenting, and the EI of parents were studied to measure the satisfaction of children with parents [4]. This study revealed that although EI improves the relationship between parent and child, the

leadership of parents impacts the children, indicating the need for improving parental skills [4] to have a positive influence on children.

### Mood and EI

The impact of parental mood can have a major role in the development of children [15]. This study explores the EI, subjective well-being and mood of parents with gifted children. The results from the study indicates that EI had a significant potential to predict the subjective well-being of parents; whereas, mood acted a mediator. With the increased pressure of nurturing gifted children to their highest potential, parents subjective well-being suffered [15].

EI of parents of parents with and without addiction problems, and their general health was compared along with the EI of children [8]. In both the parents and children the trait EI was measured. Parents with addiction were found to exhibit poorer general health and lower trait EI. The study demonstrated a stronger relation between depression and poorer general health than the group of parent without addiction [8]. Both the studies on parents with gifted children [15] and the study with parents having addiction problem [8] indicates a strong relation of EI with mood of parents.

Similarly, for parents with children who have special needs are in greater stress [24]. Studies with such parents exhibited that EI was the major predictor for growth which is related to stress, emphasizing the importance of EI. On the other hand, the control group of parents with children without any clinical needs, implied the necessity for social support in their growth [24]. This again accentuates the relation of mood with EI of parents.

Parents face with a number of hurdles while dealing with children. Health of children often pose as a concern for parents leading to stress. The ability of parents to cope with these challenges the level of the parents' EI is crucial [12]. A study aimed at presenting the emotional response of parents and children to significant health issues information and the relationship with EI was conducted. The study reveals that children who were able to communicate adequately with their parents regarding their health, reported lesser usage of medications compared to children who did not seek help from their parents. Additionally, children reported lesser symptoms who had higher confidence and worried less [12].

### EI and training

Focus on developing the EI of care-givers of children is significantly low [16]. EI enables individuals to recognize emotions in oneself and others, and enables to manage the same to bring a positive change within children. The study highlighted the low number of research on studies involving development of the empathy and mindfulness skills of care-givers; however, there was a lack of studies on child welfare professionals. This indicated the need to focus on the research of development or training of professionals working on child welfare, which maybe then compared with the parents who are more involved in the welfare and development of children [16]. Along with professionals of child welfare, teachers play an equally important and a

similar role as parents. Training given to teachers to regulate one's emotions revealed that the well-being of teachers was directly linked to the development of their EI [1].

A study was conducted to estimate the effect of training for parents [21]. The family communication, perspective on expression of anger, EI and family satisfaction were measured before and after the training was provided to the parents. The results showed a change before and after the training was provided. The EI was found to act as a mediator with the other variables which shows the significance of EI with the communication and satisfaction within the family [21]. The exploration for improvement or well-being of learners, teachers and parents reveal that improving EI, improved communications and consequently the quality of life for all [7].

In another study involving teachers, showed that teachers in the lower grade level did not show an increase in EI in spite of the rise in their professional level, indicating the need to provide training for growth of EI. The study also reveals that prospective teaches with neglecting parents received even lower scores for EI, showing the effect of parenting style [11].

## Methodology

All the papers selected for review in this paper have been chosen from SCOPUS, Emerald, Ebsco, Elsevier, Web of Science and Jstor databases. Search on the databases were made with the phrase 'EI of parent'. The papers spanned from 1990 till 2021, with the filter of subject such as psychology, social sciences, humanities and mental health, and English as the written language for the papers. Only the papers which are journal articles were. A total of 1633 results appeared from all the databases combined. Out of the total search results, 23 papers were selected which focused on the EI of parents rather than the singular topic of EI. The chosen papers specifically dealt with either the EI of parents or individuals in similar standing such as care-givers.

## Discussion

The review of EI of parents illustrates the significant dearth of information on the impact of parents EI, the antecedents which lead to the growth of EI of parents and the relation of EI of parents to the well-being of children. Although research on EI has been conducted since its conception, most of the research pertains to the EI of children, relation of EI of children to other behavioural manifestations and the techniques to help improve the EI of children.

The current paper underlines the prominence of the effect of EI of parents. Regardless of EI considered to be a part of a personality trait or an ability of an individual, each of the studies shows the need for a deeper understanding of EI of parents which has shown to have direct and significant impact on the development and well-being of children.

## Conclusion

It can be concluded that the scope of research for EI of parents is the need of the current times. Distinguishing the factors which influences the EI of parents and the effect it

has on the lives of the children will help improve a number of concerns for children, enable in a better environment and help children develop positively

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