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Relationship Between Gender, Emotional Intelligence, and Academic Performance Among College Students

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Emotional intelligence has been broken down into a four-branch hierarchy comprised of: emotion perception, emotion facilitation of thought, emotion understanding, and emotion regulation (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

A study conducted by Fernández-Berrocal, Cabella, Castillo, & Extremera (2011) found that women displayed a higher emotional intelligence in comparison to men.

Research has found a correlation between GPA and increased emotional intelligence.

With a lack of research conducted on the interaction effect between emotional intelligence, gender, and academic success, our goal was to examine the relationships between these factors.

We hypothesized that women would display higher overall levels of emotional intelligence in comparison to men in all four levels of Mayer and Salovey's model of emotional intelligence.

We also predicted that college students with a higher level of emotional intelligence would perform better academically, as measured by GPA.

Participants completed the Profile of Emotional Competence (PEC) test through the UT Tyler SONA system.

The test consisted of 50 questions measuring emotion perception, emotion facilitation of thought, emotion understanding, and emotion regulation in order to determine a global emotional intelligence score.

Example items include: “I am good at describing my feelings” and “I am good at lifting other people’s spirits.”

Participants were asked to rate their agreement to the statements on a 5-point Likert scale.

Participants were also asked to report their GPA and demographic information consisting of age, ethnicity, marital status, and gender.

All completion, students were debriefed on the purpose of the study and provided with additional resources on how to increase one’s own emotional intelligence.

We found no significant gender differences in global emotional intelligence scores, t(131) = .740, p = .46.

There was also no effect of GPA, or the interaction between GPA and gender, on global emotional intelligence scores, F(2, 127) = 1.67, p = .19.

The results concluded that men and women had relatively similar scores in emotional intelligence overall as a whole. However, when we analyzed the facets of emotional intelligence separately, we found a significant gender difference in emotion perception, t(131) = 2.3, p < .05.

Despite repeated findings that emotional intelligence is a gender dependent trait, this study has not found any correlation between gender and emotional intelligence.

This study did not provide evidence of high emotional intelligence as a predictor of academic success.

There was only a significant correlation between gender and emotion perception, with women displaying higher levels of this facet.

This finding could be a result of biological and social differences between genders working together, thus giving women an advantage (Collignon et al., 2010; Fernández-Berrocal et al., 2011).