

BAR-ILAN UNIVERSITY

**Emotional Intelligence and Psychological Capital: A
Comparison between Adults with Intellectual
Disabilities and Adults with Typical Development**

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Abstract

The main goal of the present study was to examine whether a difference exists in emotional intelligence and in the different measures of psychological wealth between adults with intellectual disability (ID) and adults with typical development. The present study included 86 participants aged 18-65 from two groups: 43 with typical development (IQ = 85-130), of whom 19 are men (44.2%) and 24 are women (55.8%) and 43 with mild ID (IQ = 50-70), of whom 20 are men (46.5%) and 23 are women (53.5%).

Three questionnaires that were abbreviated and adapted to the present research population were used to test emotional intelligence: Emotional Intelligence-Psychological Wellbeing- the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire Short Form (TEIQue-SF; Petrides & Furemham, 2003), Emotional Intelligence- Control of Emotions- the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory, Youth Version (EQ-i: YV(s); Bar-On, 2000) and Emotional Intelligence- Understanding Emotions- Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale (SEIS; Schutte et al., 1998). Psychological wealth was measured using an optimism questionnaire (Scheier & Carver, 1985), a hope questionnaire (Snyder et al., 1996), a self-efficacy questionnaire (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995) and a quality of life questionnaire (Reiter & Schalock, 2008; Schalock & Keith, 1993).

The research goals, hypotheses and findings are presented below, with reference to its three parts.

Part A: Differences between the research groups in the level of emotional intelligence, psychological wealth and quality of life

With reference to differences between the research groups in the level of emotional intelligence, we hypothesized that the level of emotional intelligence among the participants with ID is not significantly different from that of the participants with typical development. This hypothesis was supported. The absence of differences between the two groups has several possible explanations: A. Social desirability; B. Idealization of reality; C. Empowerment and activities for strengthening self-image

performed by staff in frameworks for persons with ID which lead to the higher-than-expected self-image among the participants with ID.

We also formulated a research question on differences between the research groups in the level of psychological wealth and quality of life. Differences were found between the research groups, where the hope and self-efficacy scores of the participants with typical development were significantly higher than the scores of the participants with ID. These findings can be explained in the context of the different aspirations and life goals of the two populations. People with ID perceive themselves as less efficacious, strive to fewer goals, and their hope level is therefore naturally lower compared to the population with typical development. Another possible reason for the lower level of hope and self-efficacy among people with ID is the fact that over the course of their lives they are exposed to hurtful, insulting and even aggressive behavior by the environment.

Part B: Correlations between the measures of emotional intelligence and the measures of psychological wealth and quality of life among the two research groups

With reference to correlations between emotional intelligence and psychological wealth among each of the research groups, we hypothesized that the higher the level of emotional intelligence, the higher will be the measures of psychological wealth. The research hypothesis was supported. It was also found that the number of positive correlations between emotional intelligence and psychological wealth is greater among the participants with ID. Our conclusion from this finding was that if we will develop the emotional intelligence through the unique educational and therapeutic conditions found within the school and work frameworks for the population with ID, we will influence their psychological wealth, communication style, self-image and self-efficacy.

Part C: Correlations between the measures of emotional intelligence, psychological wealth and quality of life and chronological age among the two research groups

With reference to correlations between the measures of emotional intelligence, psychological wealth and the quality of life and chronological age among the two research groups, we hypothesized that with the increase in chronological age, the emotional intelligence and psychological wealth will also increase. The research hypothesis was partially supported. Differences were found between the research groups. No correlation was found between the three measures of emotional intelligence, the three measures of psychological wealth and the measure of quality of life and chronological age among the participants with typical development, whereas one significant positive correlation was found among the participants with ID: between the level of their self-efficacy and their chronological age. This finding indicates that the staff in the schools and work frameworks for the population with ID serve as mediators for the acquisition of relevant behaviors and skills and in the creation of opportunities for social interactions. They also encourage the students and trainees so that they will experience positive messages and feelings of ability and success during the day. As a result, their levels of self-efficacy increase with time. This finding supports the Compensation Age Theory (Lifshitz-Vahav, 2015), according to which the adult age is a compensating age in the population with ID and therefore, with the increase in age there is also an increase in the learning ability, which leads to a higher level of self-efficacy.

Part D: Differences between the research groups and gender in the level of emotional intelligence, psychological wealth and quality of life

With reference to differences between the research groups and gender in the level of emotional intelligence, psychological wealth and quality of life, we hypothesized that the level of emotional intelligence and psychological wealth will be higher among women than among men. The research hypothesis was rejected. No differences were found between women with typical development and women with ID in the level of emotional intelligence, whereas the men with typical intelligence were found to have a significantly higher level of emotional intelligence compared to the men with ID, as measured by the two questionnaires. We concluded that the absence of

differences between women with typical development and women with ID in our study stem from a similar level of emotional intelligence. In contradistinction, men with typical development have a higher level of emotional intelligence compared to men with ID.

Part E: Differences with reference to places of residence in the level of emotional intelligence, psychological wealth and quality of life among participants with ID

In this part we formulated a research question regarding differences between places of residence and the level of emotional intelligence, psychological wealth and quality of life among the participants with ID. No significant differences were found between participants with ID who live with their parents and participants with ID who live without their parents in the measures of emotional intelligence and psychological intelligence. However, differences were found in the quality of life, where the quality of life is significantly higher among participants with ID who live without their parents than among those who live with their parents. Our conclusion supports the normalization principle, according to which in Western society, young people live with their families in their parents' home, and upon adulthood they leave their parents' home and move to independent residences in the community. This is also true for people with disabilities. It is assumed that living outside the home, even if this is living with an escort, affords adults with disabilities a better quality of life and comprises a positive experience for them that contributes to strengthening their self-image (Reiter, 1999).

Part F: Contribution of the measures of emotional intelligence and psychological wealth to predicting the quality of life of participants from the two research groups

In this part we formulated a research question as to the contribution of measures of emotional intelligence and psychological wealth to predicting the quality of life of the participants from the two research groups. It was found that among the participants with typical development, the demographic background variables did not contribute to predicting the level of quality of life, however the variable level of optimism made a

significant contribution to a higher quality of life. Among the participants with ID, it was found that of the background variables, only place of residence (without parents) made a significant contribution to predicting the quality of life. Beyond the background variables, the variable of the level of emotional intelligence, as measured by the psychological wellbeing questionnaire, made a significant contribution to a higher quality of life. The findings of the present study are compatible with findings of other researches that found a positive correlation between quality of life and the size of the social network and the extent of social support (Duvdevany, 2008; Seltzer & Krauss, 2001).

In conclusion, the definition of intellectual disability has changed significantly over the years, and thus reflects the changes in attitudes towards this phenomenon and in society's perception of ID. In our study we asked why the emotional component is absent from the new definition of ID. Is this because of lack of awareness to the issue of emotional intelligence? Indeed, this issue has developed only during the course of the last decade with reference to the population with typical development, or did those formulating the definition think that there is no difference in the level of emotional intelligence between people with ID and their peers with typical development?

The findings of this study make an important contribution to the research field and to policy makers. They indicate that people with ID have emotional intelligence abilities as well as abilities in personal dimensions such as psychological wealth compared with the population with typical development, and thus enable the creation of learning contents, social enrichment, leisure activities and lifestyle, accordingly.