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EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

Tayyaba Fatima

BS, Department Islamic Studies, The Cosmic Degree College (For Women) ,University of Okara

ABSTRACT

Emotional intelligence plays an important role in the development and maintenance of healthy interpersonal relationships among young adults. This study examines the relationship between emotional intelligence and relationship satisfaction, focusing on how the ability to recognize, understand, regulate, and express emotions may influence communication, trust, empathy, conflict resolution, and emotional intimacy. Young adulthood is a significant developmental period characterized by changing social expectations, the formation of romantic relationships, increasing independence, and the development of long-term interpersonal commitments. During this stage, individuals may encounter emotional challenges that affect the stability and quality of their relationships. Emotional intelligence may help individuals respond constructively to disagreements, understand their partners' emotional needs, and manage stress within relationships. The proposed study will employ a quantitative, correlational research design to investigate the association between emotional intelligence and relationship satisfaction among young adults aged 18–29 years. Data will be collected through standardized self-report questionnaires measuring emotional intelligence and relationship satisfaction. Descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, Pearson correlation, and regression analysis will be used to examine the data, subject to the assumptions of each statistical test. The study is expected to clarify whether higher emotional intelligence is associated with greater relationship satisfaction and to identify the potential relevance of emotional awareness, emotional regulation, and empathy in interpersonal relationships. The findings may contribute to psychological research, relationship education, and counseling interventions designed to strengthen emotional competencies among young adults.

KEYWORDS: *Emotional intelligence; relationship satisfaction; young adults; emotional regulation; empathy; interpersonal relationships; romantic relationships; communication; conflict resolution; emotional awareness; psychological well-being; relationship quality.*

INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence has become an important concept in contemporary psychology because it helps explain how individuals recognize, understand, express, and regulate emotions in their daily lives. Human relationships are influenced not only by personality, social background, and shared experiences but also by the ability to understand emotional information and respond appropriately to the feelings of others. Emotional intelligence may therefore be particularly important in romantic relationships, where individuals must manage personal expectations, communicate needs, resolve disagreements, and maintain emotional closeness. Sengco, B. T. S., Sagun, P. J., De Roma, J. T., & Febrero, R. (2025). found that The relationship between emotional intelligence and relationship satisfaction has received increasing research attention because the quality of intimate relationships is closely associated with interpersonal functioning and psychological well-being. This finding provides an important empirical foundation for investigating the same relationship among young adults in different social and cultural contexts.Young adulthood is a developmental period in which individuals experience significant psychological, social, educational, and interpersonal changes. During this stage, many individuals begin to establish greater independence, develop a clearer personal identity, and form relationships that may influence their future emotional and social lives. Romantic relationships can provide companionship, affection,

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support, and a sense of belonging. However, they can also introduce challenges associated with jealousy, insecurity, misunderstandings, competing responsibilities, and differences in communication styles. The ability to manage these experiences constructively may influence whether individuals perceive their relationships as supportive and satisfying. Emotional intelligence is relevant to this process because it may help young adults identify their emotional reactions, understand the feelings of their partners, and choose responses that promote mutual understanding rather than unnecessary conflict.

Relationship satisfaction refers to an individual's overall evaluation of the quality and rewarding nature of a romantic relationship. It can include satisfaction with communication, emotional intimacy, affection, trust, mutual respect, companionship, and the way disagreements are handled. Relationship satisfaction is subjective because two individuals may evaluate the same relationship differently according to their expectations, needs, experiences, and personal values. For example, one person may place greater importance on frequent emotional communication, whereas another may value practical support and independence. Consequently, relationship satisfaction cannot be explained by the presence or absence of conflict alone. Instead, it also depends on how partners interpret and respond to their experiences together.Emotional intelligence may contribute to relationship satisfaction by improving emotional awareness and interpersonal sensitivity. Individuals with stronger emotional competencies may be better able to recognize frustration before it develops into an argument, communicate disappointment without hostility, and identify when their partners require reassurance or understanding. Singhal, R., Wiggins, T., Pouwels, S., Rajeev, Y., Madhok, B., Hanif, W., ... & Mahawar, K. (2022). Explained that They may also be more capable of distinguishing between their own assumptions and their partners' actual intentions. These abilities can support constructive communication and reduce the likelihood that ordinary disagreements will become persistent sources of dissatisfaction. However, emotional intelligence should not be viewed as a guarantee of relationship success because relationship quality is also affected by compatibility, trust, external stress, individual circumstances, and the behavior of both partners.Emotional intelligence generally refers to the capacity to perceive, understand, use, and regulate emotions in ways that support effective thinking and behavior. Researchers have developed different approaches to understanding this construct.

Emotional awareness is one important component of emotional intelligence. It involves recognizing and identifying one's emotional experiences, including happiness, sadness, anger, fear, disappointment, and affection. In relationships, emotional awareness may help individuals understand why a particular situation produces a strong reaction. For instance, a disagreement about time spent together may reflect not simply anger but also an underlying feeling of neglect or insecurity. Recognizing the emotion beneath the immediate reaction can help a person explain their concerns more clearly.Another component is the understanding of emotions. This involves recognizing that emotions can have different causes and may change according to circumstances. Individuals who understand emotions may be better able to appreciate that a partner's silence does not necessarily indicate rejection or that irritation may arise from external stress rather than dissatisfaction with the relationship. Such understanding can reduce premature judgments and encourage individuals to ask questions before drawing conclusions.Emotional regulation refers to the ability to manage emotional reactions in appropriate ways. It does not mean suppressing every negative feeling or pretending to be happy in difficult circumstances. Rather, effective regulation involves acknowledging

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emotions while choosing how and when to express them. In romantic relationships, this ability may help individuals pause before reacting angrily, communicate disagreements respectfully, and return to difficult discussions after becoming calmer. Emotional regulation can be especially valuable when partners have different preferences, expectations, or approaches to problem-solving.Empathy is another interpersonal ability associated with emotional intelligence. It involves attempting to understand another person's emotional experience and considering the situation from their perspective.

Emotional intelligence may contribute to intimacy by helping individuals recognize opportunities for emotional support and respond sensitively when their partners express distress.Empathy can help partners acknowledge one another's experiences without immediately offering criticism or solutions. For example, when a young adult discusses academic pressure, employment uncertainty, or family difficulties, a supportive partner may first listen and acknowledge the emotional burden before suggesting practical steps. Such responses can communicate care and responsiveness. Over time, repeated experiences of being understood may strengthen emotional closeness and contribute to satisfaction.Nevertheless, it highlights the importance of investigating emotional intelligence in culturally appropriate contexts.Cultural context is particularly important when developing questionnaires. Items that assume a particular form of romantic involvement may not be appropriate for every participant. Researchers should use clear, respectful language and ensure that participation does not require respondents to discloseunnecessary intimate information. Where questionnaires are adapted into another language, translation and cultural appropriateness should be considered carefully.Although existing research provides evidence of an association between emotional intelligence and relationship satisfaction, further investigation among specific age groups and populations remains valuable. Findings from married adults, older couples, university students, and individuals from different cultural settings may not be directly interchangeable. Sacco, S., Ashina, M., Diener, H. C., Haghdoost, F., Lee, M. J., Monteith, T. S., ... & Tassorelli, C. (2025). Explains that Differences in age, relationship duration, educational background, measurement instruments, and social circumstances may affect the observed association.The proposed study, Emotional Intelligence and Relationship Satisfaction Among Young Adults, will focus on young adults aged 18–29 who are currently in romantic relationships. This focus will help define the population clearly and ensure that relationship satisfaction is assessed among individuals with relevant relationship experience. The study will examine whether participants with higher emotional intelligence scores also report higher relationship satisfaction scores. It will also provide a framework for considering how emotional awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and communication may be relevant to relationship quality.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

1. To examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and relationship satisfaction among young adults aged 18–29 who are currently involved in romantic relationships.

RESEARCH QUESTION

1. Is there a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and relationship satisfaction among young adults aged 18–29 who are currently involved in romantic relationships?

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotional intelligence has been conceptualized through several theoretical approaches, each emphasizing different aspects of emotional functioning. The ability model focuses on the capacity to perceive, use, understand, and regulate emotions. Trait approaches emphasize individuals' self-perceptions of their emotional abilities, while mixed models incorporate emotional competencies alongside broader personal and social characteristics. These approaches are related but should not be treated as identical. Megan, W., & Setiawan, J. L. (2025). revealed that A study using a self-report trait measure may produce different findings from one using an ability-based performance test because the instruments measure different aspects of emotional functioning.The ability-based perspective is relevant to romantic relationships because partners regularly encounter emotional information that requires interpretation. Facial expressions, tone of voice, word choice, silence, and changes in behavior can communicate emotional states, although these signals are not always unambiguous. An individual who interprets such information carefully may be better able to ask appropriate questions and respond sensitively. Emotional understanding can also help individuals recognize that several emotions may occur simultaneously, such as affection and frustration, or happiness and anxiety.The trait perspective is also relevant because people differ in their beliefs about their ability to manage emotions. These self-perceptions may influence how they approach disagreements and whether they believe they can cope with emotional challenges. However, self-reported emotional intelligence can be influenced by confidence, social desirability, and self-awareness. For this reason, researchers should specify which conceptualization they use and avoid drawing conclusions that extend beyond the chosen measure.

One of the most directly relevant contributions is the systematic review and meta-analysis by Jardine et al. (2022). The authors synthesized 90 effect sizes from 78 samples and reported a mean correlation of approximately .37 between emotional intelligence and romantic relationship satisfaction or closely related relationship-quality outcomes. This result suggests a moderate positive association across the included studies. The authors also identified variation associated with factors such as the geographical location of research, the measures used, and participants' relationship status. These differences suggest that the association should not be assumed to be identical across every population or research setting.The meta-analysis provides a strong basis for the present research because it summarizes a wider body of evidence than an individual study can provide. At the same time, its findings do not mean that emotional intelligence alone explains relationship satisfaction. Sengco, B. T. S., Sagun, P. J., De Roma, J. T., & Febrero, R. (2025). Elaborated on A correlation of this size leaves substantial variation associated with other individual and relational factors. It also does not establish whether emotional intelligence directly increases satisfaction, whether satisfying relationships support emotional development, or whether both are influenced by additional variables.Earlier longitudinal work has also examined trait emotional intelligence and interpersonal relationships over time. Research by Petrides and colleagues' broader research tradition emphasizes the potential relevance of emotional dispositions during the transition to adulthood. Longitudinal designs are valuable because they can examine whether emotional intelligence measured at one time predicts later relationship outcomes, rather than relying solely on scores collected at a single moment. Such evidence is useful when developing hypotheses, although it must be distinguished from proof of causation.

Juneja and Bhambri (2025), in Emotional Intelligence and Its Influence on Romantic Relationship Satisfaction, examined emotional intelligence and romantic relationship satisfaction among 120 participants aged 20–30. The authors reported a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and relationship satisfaction using self-report measures and Pearson correlation analysis. Their study is closely related to the present topic because it focuses on young adults and uses a quantitative approach to examine the association between the two variables.This study offers a relevant contemporary comparison, but its results should be interpreted in light of its sample size, sampling approach, measurement instruments, and research context. A finding from one purposively selected sample may not generalize to all young adults. In addition, self-report questionnaires may be affected by participants' desire to present themselves positively or by their current emotional experiences. Replication across different populations would help clarify the consistency of the relationship.Milman (2025) also investigated emotional intelligence and relationship satisfaction among college-aged individuals in an honors thesis at the University at Albany. Antonelli, A., Fry, C., Smith, R. J., Eden, J., Kersey, P. J., Larridon, I., ... & Ulrich, G. F. (2026). found that The study examined emotional competencies and relationship satisfaction in a sample of 72 undergraduate students in romantic relationships. Although an undergraduate thesis is not equivalent to a peer-reviewed journal article, it represents a relevant research example and illustrates the continuing academic interest in the topic among college-aged populations.Taken together, these recent studies support the relevance of investigating emotional intelligence and relationship satisfaction among young adults. They also indicate the importance of examining population characteristics, research methods, and measurement choices when comparing findings across studies.

Emotional regulation may help explain how emotional intelligence relates to relationship satisfaction. When individuals experience anger, anxiety, jealousy, or disappointment, their initial reactions may not reflect their considered intentions. The ability to recognize and regulate these reactions can help prevent temporary emotions from producing unnecessarily hurtful communication.Recent research by Li and colleagues (2025) examined perceived success in regulating emotions and relationship quality in younger and older couples. The researchers found associations between perceived emotional-regulation success and relationship quality, while also reporting differences in patterns across age and gender groups. This work supports the importance of examining emotion regulation as a specific relational process, rather than assuming that all emotional competencies have the same implications.However, regulation strategies differ in their usefulness. Zhang, Y., Yang, Y., Meng, P., Yang, J., Shi, H., Chen, X., ... & Chen, Q. (2025) Explained that Reappraisal, taking a short break, and discussing a concern calmly may help individuals respond constructively. In contrast, habitual suppression or avoidance may leave problems unresolved. Therefore, emotional intelligence should be considered in terms of how individuals understand and manage emotions, rather than simply how frequently they display positive emotions or avoid outward disagreement.An important development in the literature is the examination of how individuals respond to their partners' emotions. Emotional competence may influence relationship quality not only through the management of one's own emotional states but also through the ability to support another person's emotional experience.Xiao, Double, Pinkus, and MacCann's study, Valuing Your Partner More: Linking Emotional Intelligence to Better Relationship Quality, published online in November 2025 and included in a 2026 journal issue, investigated partner-focused emotion-regulation

strategies in heterosexual couples. The research examined cognitive reframing, receptive listening, and valuing the partner as potential mechanisms connecting emotional intelligence with relationship quality. The use of a multiwave design makes this work particularly relevant to understanding how emotional intelligence may be expressed through interpersonal behavior.

The implications of this approach extend beyond the idea that emotionally intelligent individuals simply understand their own feelings. In a relationship, emotional competence can also involve responding to a partner without dismissing their experience, helping them consider alternative interpretations, and demonstrating that their concerns matter. These behaviors may promote a sense of responsiveness and mutual appreciation. Nonetheless, supporting a partner's emotions should not be confused with taking responsibility for controlling those emotions or agreeing with every interpretation they express.Empathy and communication are closely related to the interpersonal expression of emotional intelligence. Individuals may possess emotional knowledge but still struggle to communicate effectively when they become defensive, anxious, or overwhelmed. For this reason, the relationship between emotional intelligence and satisfaction may depend partly on whether emotional understanding is translated into constructive interaction.Empathetic listening can help partners identify the concerns beneath one another's statements. Xiao, H. H., Double, K. S., Pinkus, R. T., & MacCann, C. (2026). Explains that It may reduce premature judgments and allow individuals to clarify what they mean. Likewise, clear emotional expression can help partners distinguish a request for support from an accusation or criticism. These processes can improve the likelihood that both partners feel heard and understood.Nevertheless, communication is reciprocal. An individual may communicate calmly and empathetically without receiving the same response from their partner. Consequently, individual emotional intelligence may be associated with relationship satisfaction without fully determining it. Research that measures both partners' emotional competencies and reports may provide a more complete picture of these interactions than studies relying on one partner's questionnaire responses alone.

METHODOLOGY

The proposed study, entitled Emotional Intelligence and Relationship Satisfaction Among Young Adults, will use a systematic quantitative approach to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and relationship satisfaction among individuals aged 18–29 years who are currently involved in romantic relationships. The methodology will be designed to ensure that the research question is addressed through clearly defined variables, appropriate psychological measurement instruments, ethical recruitment procedures, and suitable statistical analyses. The target population will consist of young adults who meet the age and relationship-status requirements, with participants recruited from universities, colleges, community networks, or other appropriate settings, depending on institutional permission and access. A non-probability convenience sampling technique may be used if participants are recruited from accessible populations, although purposive screening will be required to ensure that all participants satisfy the eligibility criteria. The proposed sample size will be approximately 200 participants, subject to a formal power analysis that considers the anticipated effect size, desired statistical power, and significance level. Participation will be voluntary, and individuals will be informed about the purpose of the study, the nature of the

questionnaire, their right to discontinue participation, and the procedures used to protect confidentiality. Data will be collected using a demographic information sheet and established instruments for emotional intelligence and relationship satisfaction. An appropriate emotional intelligence measure, such as the Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale, may be considered alongside a relationship satisfaction measure such as the Relationship Assessment Scale. The final selection will depend on the instruments' psychometric properties, suitability for young adults, availability of authorized versions, scoring requirements, and cultural appropriateness. If data are collected in Pakistan or another multilingual context, the researcher will consider language comprehension and any necessary translation procedures.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study will employ a quantitative, non-experimental, cross-sectional correlational research design. A quantitative approach is appropriate because both emotional intelligence and relationship satisfaction can be measured using structured psychological questionnaires, allowing their scores to be analyzed statistically. The non-experimental nature of the design means that the researcher will not manipulate participants' emotional experiences, assign them to relationship conditions, or attempt to change their romantic relationships. Instead, naturally occurring differences in emotional intelligence and relationship satisfaction will be examined. The cross-sectional component means that information will be collected from participants at one principal point in time, making the design practical for investigating an association within a defined population. The independent or predictor variable will be emotional intelligence, represented by the score obtained from the selected instrument, while relationship satisfaction will serve as the outcome variable. These labels describe the statistical model and do not establish that emotional intelligence causes relationship satisfaction. The target population will comprise young adults aged 18–29 who report being in a current romantic relationship, and the researcher will specify eligibility criteria before recruiting participants. Relationship duration, age, gender, educational status, and other relevant demographic information may be collected where justified by the research objectives and ethical requirements. The sampling procedure will be reported transparently so that readers can assess the representativeness and limitations of the sample. Standardized instructions will be used to minimize differences in how questionnaires are administered. Participants will complete the instruments independently and will be encouraged to respond honestly rather than according to perceived social expectations. The researcher will use appropriate scoring procedures and examine the data for missing responses, unusual values, and violations of statistical assumptions.

DATA ANALYSIS

The collected data will be analyzed using an appropriate statistical package, such as IBM SPSS Statistics, R, or another validated software program available to the researcher. Before conducting the principal analyses, the dataset will be screened to confirm that participants meet the eligibility criteria and that questionnaire responses have been entered and scored correctly. Missing data will be examined to determine their extent and pattern, and any treatment of missing responses will follow the instruments' scoring guidance and a prespecified analytical plan. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, will be calculated to summarize demographic characteristics and the

distributions of emotional intelligence and relationship satisfaction scores. Where appropriate, score ranges, histograms, and other diagnostic summaries will be examined to identify unusual distributions and potential data-entry errors. Internal consistency will be assessed using a suitable reliability coefficient, such as Cronbach's alpha or McDonald's omega, where supported by the scale and analysis. The principal inferential analysis will examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and relationship satisfaction. Pearson's product-moment correlation will be used if the variables are measured appropriately and the relevant assumptions, including linearity and the influence of extreme observations, are sufficiently satisfied. If those assumptions are not suitable, Spearman's rank correlation may be used as an alternative. The correlation coefficient will indicate the direction and strength of the association, while the confidence interval will communicate the precision of the estimate. A conventional significance level of .05 may be specified in advance, and the resulting p-value will be interpreted alongside the effect size and confidence interval.

FINDINGS

The findings section will present the actual results obtained after data collection and statistical analysis. As no completed questionnaire dataset has been provided, the following describes the outcomes the proposed study will examine rather than claiming that particular findings have already been observed. First, the demographic findings will summarize the age range, gender distribution where collected, educational background, and relationship-duration characteristics of the participants. These details will help readers understand the composition of the sample and assess the extent to which the results may be relevant to other young adults. Second, descriptive findings will summarize the participants' emotional intelligence and relationship satisfaction scores. The means and standard deviations will indicate the overall distribution of scores, while reliability estimates will provide information about the internal consistency of the selected measures in the sample. Third, the main finding will be determined through the correlation analysis. A positive and statistically significant correlation would indicate that higher emotional intelligence scores tend to occur alongside higher relationship satisfaction scores within the sample. A negative correlation would indicate an inverse association, whereas a correlation close to zero would suggest little evidence of a linear or monotonic relationship, depending on the statistic used. The strength of the observed association and its confidence interval will be important in determining the practical relevance and precision of the results. If regression analysis is conducted, the findings will also describe whether emotional intelligence is statistically associated with relationship satisfaction after accounting for any prespecified covariates. Any conclusions will be restricted to what the chosen design and measurements can support. A positive association would be consistent with the literature suggesting that emotional awareness, emotional regulation, and interpersonal responsiveness may be relevant to relationship quality, but it would not establish that emotional intelligence directly causes satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

The proposed study, Emotional Intelligence and Relationship Satisfaction Among Young Adults, focuses on an important issue in interpersonal psychology: whether the ability to understand and manage emotions is associated with how young adults evaluate their romantic

relationships. Emotional intelligence may be relevant to relationship satisfaction because relationships require individuals to communicate personal needs, respond to emotional experiences, understand different perspectives, and manage disagreements constructively. Emotional awareness can help individuals recognize their feelings, emotional understanding can help them interpret situations more carefully, and emotional regulation can support considered responses during stressful interactions. Empathy and receptive listening may also help partners feel understood and valued. Existing research, including a meta-analysis by Jardine et al. (2022) and more recent studies published in 2025–2026, provides a basis for investigating these processes further. Nevertheless, relationship satisfaction is complex and cannot be explained by emotional intelligence alone. Compatibility, mutual respect, trust, commitment, external pressures, communication patterns, and the behavior of both partners may also contribute to relationship outcomes. The proposed quantitative, cross-sectional correlational design will allow the researcher to examine the direction and strength of the association between emotional intelligence and relationship satisfaction among young adults aged 18–29. The use of appropriate standardized instruments, ethical recruitment procedures, reliability assessment, and transparent statistical analysis will help ensure that the research is conducted systematically. The study may have practical implications for relationship education and counseling by identifying emotional competencies that deserve further attention.

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