Striving for Social Harmony Reduces Sex Differences in Emotional Intelligence

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Abstract

This paper is a comprehensive literature review, reporting how emotional intelligence depends upon culture and sex norms. The construct of emotional intelligence involves five domains, including expression, perception, facilitation, understanding, and regulation and—in the present context—emotion expressions are defined to mean verbal and nonverbal behaviors used to display emotional states. In the paper, I show how cultural norms influence emotional intelligence, including the impacts that individualistic and collectivist cultures have on emotional intelligence's various manifestations. Further, the published research literature shows that emotional intelligence is influenced by sex norms, both in terms of childhood and adult impacts. Sex norms are not absolute but, rather, they also develop in the context of regional and national cultures. Consideration is given in the presentation to the construct of emotional intelligence from international perspectives.

What are the Components of Emotional Intelligence (EI)?

Emotion expression

Verbal and nonverbal behaviors used to display emotional states.

E.g., Smiling and saying "I am happy today."

Perception

The ability to accurately recognize emotions in oneself and others.

E.g., Associating someone's frown with sadness.

Facilitation

The use of emotion to accomplish goals.

Understanding

The knowledge of the relationships between emotions and how emotions change over time.

Regulation

The conscious or unconscious modification of emotions.

E.g., Enhancement, reduction, and change.

What are Individualist and Collectivist Cultures?

Individualist cultures emphasize the individual, valuing autonomy and independence.

E.g., Many European countries, USA, Canada

Collectivist cultures value the relationships within a group. Maintaining social harmony is more important than asserting oneself.

E.g., Asian countries, such as Japan, Korea, China

How Do Culture and Sex Norms Affect EI?

Individualist Cultures and EI

- EI is used to achieve personal success.
- People are likely to share personal feelings and expect others to express their emotions, as well.
- People consciously exaggerate emotions to emphasize individuality.
- People may have difficulty understanding complex emotions but are relatively good at perceiving what emotion someone is feeling.

Collectivist Cultures and EI

- EI is used to achieve group success.
- People prefer less intense emotions.
- People are unlikely to share their personal feelings.
- People are more likely to understand complex emotions but may have difficulty perceiving emotions because emotion expressions are so often muted.

Individualist Cultures, Sex, and EI

- Females are thought of as emotional beings.
- They express emotions more often and more intensely.
- They learn to perceive emotions earlier in life.
- They understand complex emotions better.
- They have more detailed and complex perceptions.
- They use both adaptive and maladaptive emotion regulation more often.

Collectivist Cultures, Sex, and EI

- Both males and females are expected to control their emotions
- Females consciously regulate their emotions to mirror how males unconsciously regulate their emotions, especially through the use of disengagement
- Females are more adept at perceiving negative emotions
- They understand complex emotions better
- They are better at describing their emotions

Conclusion

Sex differences in EI are smaller in collectivist cultures. Even when there are sex differences within collectivist cultures, these are small compared to sex differences within individualist cultures. Also, many different countries are classified as being generally individualist and many as generally collectivist, but each country has its own culture and sex norms. Additional research is needed.