The Relation Between Emotional Intelligence And Behaviour

Abstract

Emotional clarity is the core capacity at work enabling clear access to an emotion that is being experienced. Individuals that understand their own emotions have the opportunity to manage and utilise this information to appropriately to connect with other people (Smith, 2000). Emotional intelligence (EI) has been recognised as a powerful motivator of behaviour (Knight, 2005) providing us with the information to make evaluative judgements and decisions about our actions. A lack of understanding and integration of this information results in behavioural tendencies towards aggressiveness, deception, self-promotion at the expense of others and impulse control issues (Cassel & Bernstein, 2001). This report will outline and discuss the nature of EI and its relationship with problem behaviours and criminality. Specifically, the expression of sexually inappropriate behaviour will be examined in adolescent and adult sex offenders. Emotional literacy programs have been shown to be a valuable asset in cultivating prosocial thoughts in children and formerly incarcerated adults (Waleed, 2017). Future research should focus on investigating the outcomes of these programs as preliminary findings suggest this is effective in reducing recidivism.

Introduction

Emotion and social awareness play a significant role in behaviour (Bear, Manning, & Izard, 2003). Emotional clarity is the ability to identify a mood that is being experienced, and is has been proposed that when people understand their emotions they are more capable of acting appropriately and effectively to meet their needs and life's goals (Smith, 2000). Emotional intelligence (EI) is a form of social intelligence that involves the appraisal and expression of emotion, the regulation of emotion in the self and others, and the utilisation of emotional information to guide one's thinking and actions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). It has been suggested that the construct of EI may have a predictive value with regard to real life outcomes (Sharma, Prakash, Sengar, Chaudhury, & Singh, 2015). Similarly, it provides a framework to understand how emotional states affect an individual's ability to interact with their environment and fulfil their social roles within such environments. However, emotions can serve their purpose only if we are aware of those feelings.

The following report will outline and discuss the nature of EI and its relationship with problem behaviours and criminality. Converging evidence suggests that lower levels of emotional functioning are associated with predicting manipulative behaviours (Davis & Nichols, 2016). Specifically, this report will consider whether EI is an important criminogenic risk factor associated with the expression of sexually inappropriate behaviour and sexual offending. The importance of early intervention and the necessity of providing conditions that foster emotional intelligence will be analysed in relation to at risk individuals and offender's themselves.

Emotional Intelligence and Behaviour

Development of Emotional Intelligence

Weschler (1940) coined the term ‘non-intellective’ abilities referring to personal, affective and social factors that are instrumental in the ‘global capacity of an individual to act purposefully, to think rationally, and to deal effectively with his environment’. Developing these abilities is important to individual well-being (Goleman, 2006). A strong correlation between EI and personality (Schulte, Ree, & Carretta, 2004) has resulted in two perspectives of EI permeating the literature. Trait emotional intelligence (TEI) refers to emotion relevant self-perceptions and dispositions, assessed like personality using self-report questionnaires (Mayer, Catuso, & Salovey, 2008). Ability emotional intelligence (AEI) refers to cognitive abilities specialised for emotional information processing (Petrides, Pita, & Kokkinaki, 2007), assessed like intelligence using maximal performance measures (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2008). Goleman (1995) proposed a functional view of EI that described emotionally intelligent people as those possessing four characteristics:

1. Self-awareness, is the ability to understand one’s emotions and guide decision making;
2. Self-management, is the ability to control one’s emotions adapting to changing circumstances;
3. Social awareness, is the ability to sense and react to the emotional drive of others; and
4. Social skills, is the ability to manage conflict whilst building bonds between others.

Collectively, these constructs promote persistence in situations where individuals encounter barriers to success facilitating effective daily functioning (Sharma, Prakash, Sengar, Chaudhury, & Singh, 2015). Goleman (1995) argues that a lack of understanding and a disconnection from our emotions is the source of society’s dysfunction.

Emotional Intelligence and Behaviour

External and internal behavioural problems have been consistently associated with lower levels of EI (Knight, 2005). Examples of external problem behaviours involve higher levels of legitimate substance use, poor academic performance and higher levels of aggression and sexual offending (Liau, Liau, Teoh, & Liau, 2003). Examples of internal problem behaviours include stress, depression, lack of empathy and an inability to manage emotional states (Greenberg et al., 2003). As mentioned previously Goleman identified four characteristics of emotional literacy. Behavioural consequences of illiteracy in children involve an inability to think clearly, delinquent and aggressive outbursts, socialising with people who get into trouble, lying and cheating and displaying more demanding and stubborn tendencies (Goleman, 1995). Goleman argues that such children are at greater risk of violence and crime later in life.

The development of self-control is closely related to teaching children the process of ‘perceiving, assimilating, understanding and managing emotions’ (Goleman, 1995). Subsequently, children who do not learn self-control early in life are more likely to remain emotionally uncontrolled, thus putting themselves at risk of criminal behaviour (Cassel & Bernstein, 2001). One study conducted by Liau and colleagues (2003) investigated EI as a potential risk factor influencing problem behaviours in secondary school students. Levels of emotional literacy and internalising and externalising problem behaviours were assessed with self-report questionnaires. Results revealed that emotional literacy was inversely linked to problem behaviours. As such, individuals that display low levels of emotional literacy are at

greater risk of maladaptive developmental outcomes (Liau et al., 2003). Additionally, Liau and colleagues (2003) identified that higher levels of alexithymia are associated with lower levels of EI. Alexithymia is the difficulty in describing, distinguishing and identifying feelings and bodily sensations (Sjoberg, 2001).

Emotional Intelligence and Criminality

Crime and intelligence was investigated by Megreya (2013), determining that, on average, offenders had lower levels of EI than non-offenders. Many offenders have been found to have deficits in emotional functioning, with studies consistently showing that EI is related to aggression and offending (Malterer, Glass & Newman, 2008; Hayes & O'Reilly, 2013; Megreya, 2013). It is the case that persons with low EI levels are more prone to risky behaviour and less able to understand situations from the perspective of others (Henley & Long, 1999). On the other hand, persons with high EI levels demonstrate the ability to moderate their emotions, are less impulsive and more empathetic (Abraham, 1999). One study conducted by Sharma, Prakash, Sengar, Chaudhury, and Singh (2015) examined the relationship between EI and criminal behaviour among convicted criminals. The between-group design consisted of 101 offenders, convicted for crimes such as murder, rape and robbery, and 101 matched normal controls. Individuals with a family history of mental illness, vision or hearing impairment, or history of any psychiatric or physical illness were excluded from the study. The Mangal Emotional Intelligence Inventory (MEII) was administered to measure four aspects of EI: intrapersonal awareness, interpersonal awareness, intrapersonal management, and interpersonal management. Results yielded significantly lower scores on all subscales of EI in the offender group in comparison to the normal control group. These differences emphasise inferiority in overall emotional adjustment and poor emotional control in the offender group.

Emotional Intelligence and Sex Offending

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has released an annual publication presenting statistics about victims of selected offences. Since the beginning of the series in 2010, sexual assault has increased by 40% (7,450 victims). In 2018, the number of victims recorded for sexual assault increased for the seventh consecutive year to 26,312 victims (ABS, 2018). Given the rise in crime that involves a sexual component, it is vital to find those variables that can reduce the expression of sexually inappropriate behaviours. The idea that sex offenders are deficient in EI holds an intuitive appeal. We tend to maintain that individuals who are capable of monitoring their own and others' emotions would be less likely to act in a manner that causes harm. Studies have shown that sex offenders display deficits in a number of emotional capacities, including the management of negative emotions (Bridges, Wilson, & Gacono, 1998), emotional perception (Lisak & Ivan, 1995) and interpersonal relationships (Bumby & Hansen, 1997). Hudson et al. (1993) examined emotion recognition skills of 21 convicted sex offenders in comparison to 54 violent non-sex offenders, providing evidence to suggest emotional functioning deficits in sex offenders and paedophiles. Slides of adult faces and slides of child and adult faces were presented to convicted sex offenders and paedophiles respectively. Emotional states represented in the slides were surprise, fear, disgust, anger, happiness, and sadness. Emotional accuracy and sensitivity to emotional stimuli was seen to be highest in violent non-sex offenders, whilst sex offenders displayed the least sensitivity to emotional stimuli. Similarly, paedophiles displayed deficiencies in judging the emotions of both children and adults (Hudson et al., 1993).

The myth that few sexual offences of any serious consequence are perpetrated by adolescents was challenged in a study conducted by Moriarty, Stough, Tidmarsh, Edgar and Dennison (2001). Fifteen male adolescent sex offenders aged 14-17 and 49 non-offending male adolescnts undertook a battery of tests to examine Mayer and Salovey's four branches of emotional intelligence. The four branches explore the ability to: perceive emotions, use emotions to facilitate thinking, understand emotions, and manage emotions so as to attain specific goals. Significant differences were observed in areas of aggression and attention to feelings consistent with reports that adolescent sex offenders are aggressive (Goleman, 1996). Social isolation, an inability to reflect upon and manage emotions and a lack of empathy for their victims was also observed in adolescent sex offenders (Puglia, Stough, Carter, & Joseph, 2005). However, these differences were large enough to provide sufficient support for a significant difference between experimental groups. Similarly, a non-significant trend exposed that adolescent sex offenders were less able to reflect upon and manage emotions as they lacked the ability to pay attention to their feelings. Groth, Burgess and Holstrom (1977) reported that adolescent sex offenders are more likely to experience depressive mood states and emptiness. Consequently, this could suggest that confusions about one's feelings may result in the inability to reverse unpleasant moods. Despite the general pattern of differences in EI between adolescent sex offenders and non-offending adolescents, findings indicated that sex offenders are a heterogeneous group.

A difference among sexual offenders regarding victim empathy has been demonstrated by Fernandez, Marshall, Lightboy and O'Sullivan (1999). To produce a measure of empathy three vignettes were created that described:

1. A non-gendered child (he/she) who was a motor vehicle accident victim who had recovered but was permanently disfigured;
2. A non-gendered child (he/she) who has been sexually molested by an unknown assailant over a period of time but the abuse had ceased; and
3. The offender's own victim(s).

Respondents indicated their recognition of the child's distress and their own feelings about the child for each of the three vignettes. Results revealed that child molesters showed no tendency to display greater empathy toward a particular vignette and the greatest deficiency in empathy was toward their own victims (Fernandez et al. 1999). Puglia et al. (2005) considered this difference to reflect 'offence-specific' deficits in emotional functioning in contrast to 'general' deficits. That is to say, the circumstances in which the sex offence occurs results in specific emotional deficits displayed toward the victim. Puglia et al. (2005) concluded that sex offenders do not display deficits in effective management of emotions, but that they may not have the capacity to implement the knowledge under specific circumstances. That is to say, it is important to consider that a high level of EI may complement malevolent purposes as well as altruistic purposes (Salovey, Bedell, Detweiler, & Mater, 2000).

Intervention Strategies

Emotional deficits in perceiving, assimilating, understanding and managing emotions appear to be related to the commission of offences (Grubin, 1997) and appear to influence recidivism (Ward, Louden, Hudson & Marshall, 1995). Therefore, it is of paramount importance to implement intervention strategies that are multifaceted and address the cognitive, behavioural

and affective functioning of offenders. In order to make evaluative judgements and decisions, Schwarz (2000) notes that emotions provide us with information. Further, high levels of emotional functioning are viewed as a developmental achievement subject to continual growth (Knight, 2005). Bar-On (2002) emphasises that EI can be improved through training and therapeutic techniques, noting that the price of emotional ignorance is associated with behavioural problems. Consequently, the importance of incorporating ‘value-based curricula’ in schools is being recognised in the education sector. As a preventative measure, emotional skills can be enhanced through ‘emotional literacy programs’ (Bar-On, 2002) by providing a clear understanding of the dynamic relationship between emotion and behaviour. Reports highlight those curricula already in place in US classrooms has resulted in: less violence in class, better self-control, greater sensitivity to others’ feelings and increased social awareness (Cherniss, 2002; Norris, 2003). Emotional literacy programs centre around lessons on the concept of self and others, conflict resolution, socialisation, self-advocacy and assertiveness and responsibility (Richardson, 2000).

Alarmingly, statistics reveal that approximately two thirds of prisoners in the US will be rearrested, and that roughly half will be re-incarcerated within three years of release (Bowman & Travis, 2012). Research reveals that self-awareness is the foundation for developing motivation to desist crime (Waleed, 2017) with Watts and McNulty (2016) stipulating that lack of self-control predicts criminal behaviour. Waleed’s (2017) study explored whether practising the internal process of self-reflection would instigate an increased state of self-awareness in six former New York male prisoners. The six former prisoners had been released from prison for at least three years without returning to custody. Open-ended interview questions were used to gather qualitative information to answer the research question: ‘what aspects of emotional intelligence help former prisoners make decisions to desist crime?’ (Waleed, 2019). The notion of teaching oneself to act in accordance with the norms and expectations of mainstream society was consistent across all six participants. Similarly, cultivating prosocial thought and behaviour after undergoing a self-evaluation process lead five out of the six participants to ignore habits that contribute to incarceration. Specifically, participants articulated the importance of understanding the ‘interrelationship between their own emotions, thoughts and behaviour outcomes’, noting the ability to ‘self-monitor positively’ as a correlate with EI.

Conclusion

Emotional intelligence maintains a functional benefit on an individual level and societal level. It allows an individual to persist in situations in which they encounter barriers to success (Goleman, 1995) and promote cohesion and cooperation between individuals in order to fulfil their social roles. The importance of understanding one’s emotions and the emotions of others and being able to effectively utilise this information has been explored in this report. In recognising the dynamic factors that relate to the criminogenic needs of an individual, EI cannot be overlooked. Those who are more capable of connecting thoughts and feelings may be better equipped to negotiate the implications of their own thoughts on behaviour.

References

1. Abraham, R. (1999). Emotional intelligence in organisations: A conceptualisation. Genetic Social and General Psychology Monographs, 125, 209-224.
2. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2019). Crime and justice: Recorded crime - victims.

Retrieved from https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/DA3DED213BAE8114CA257178.001B6949?Opendocument.
3. Bar-On, R. (2002). BarOn emotional quotient inventory - technical manual. North Tonawanda, New York: Multi-Health Systems, Inc.
4. Bear, G., Manning, M., & Izard, C. (2003). Responsible behaviour: The importance of social cognition and emotion. School Psychology Quarterly, 18(2), 140-157.
5. Bridges, M., Wilson, J., & Gacono, C. (1998). A Rorschach investigation of defensiveness, self-perception, interpersonal relations and affective states in incarcerated paedophiles. Journal of Personality Assessment, 70, 365-385.
6. Bowman, S. W, & Travis, R., Jr. (2012). Prisoner reentry and recidivism according to the formerly incarcerated and reentry service providers: A verbal behaviour approach. The Behavior Analyst Today, 13(3)(4), 1555-7855
7. Bumby, K., & Hansen, D. (1997). Intimacy deficits, fear of intimacy and loneliness among sexual offenders. Criminal Justice and Behaviour, 24, 315-331.
8. Cassel, E. & Bernstein, D., (2001). Criminal behaviour. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
9. Cherniss, C. (2000). Emotional intelligence: What it is and why it matters. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Industrial and Organisational Psychology, New Orleans, LA.
10. Fernandez, Y. M., Marshall, W. L., Lightbody, S., & O'Sullivan, C. (1999). The child molester empathy measure: Description and examination of its reliability and validity. Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment, 11(1), 17-31.
11. Goleman, D. (1995). Emotional intelligence. New York: Bantam Books.
12. Goleman, D. (1996). Emotional Intelligence: Why is can matter more than IQ. Great Britain: Bloomsbury Publishing.
13. Goleman, D. (2006). Emotional intelligence. New York, NY: Random House, Inc.
14. Greenberg, M., Weissbergm R., O'Brien, M., Zinz, J., Fredericks, L., Resnik, H., & Elias, M. (2003). Enhancing school-based prevention and youth development through coordinated social, emotional, and academic learning. American Psychologist, 58(6/7), 466-474.
15. Groth, A., Burgess, A., & Holstrom, L. (1977). Rape: Power, anger and sexuality. American Journal of Psychiatry, 134, 1239-1243.
16. Grubin, D. (1997). Predictors of risk in serious sexual offenders. Journal of Psychiatry, 170(32), 17-21.
17. Hayes, J. M., & O'Reilly, G. (2013). Psychiatric disorder, IQ, and emotional intelligence among adolescent detainees: A comparative study. Legal and Criminological Psychology, 18, 30-47.
18. Henley, M., & Long, N. J. (1999). Teaching emotional intelligence to impulsive-aggressive youth. Reclaiming Child Youth, 7, 224-229.
19. Knight, J. A. (2005). Exploring emotional intelligence and IQ: Comparing violent and non-violent criminal offenders. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Information and Learning Company. (UMI 3170704)
20. Liau, A. K., Liau, A. W., Teoh, G., & Liau, M. (2003). The case of emotional literacy: The influence of emotional intelligence on problem behaviours in Malaysian secondary school students. Journal of Moral Education, 32(1), 51-65.
21. Lisak, D., & Ivan, C. (1995). Deficits in intimacy and empathy in sexually aggressive men. Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 10, 296-308.
22. Malterer, M. B., Glass, S. J., & Newman, J. P. (2008). Psychopathy and trait emotional intelligence. Personality and Individual Differences, 44, 735-745.

23. Mayer, J. D., & Salovey, P. (1997). What is emotional intelligence? In: P Salovey & D Sluyter (Eds) Emotional Development and Emotional Intelligence: Implications for educators. New York: Basic.
24. Mayer, J. D., Caruso D. R., & Salovey, P. (2008). Emotional intelligence meets traditional standards for an intelligence. Intelligence, 27, 267-298.
25. Megreya, A. M. (2013). Criminal thinking styles and emotional intelligence in Egyptian offenders. Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health, 23, 56-71.
26. Moriarty, N., Stough, C., Tidmarsh, P., Edgar, D., & Dennison, S. (2001). Deficits in emotional intelligence underlying adolescent sex offending. Journal of Adolescence, 24, 743-753.
27. Norris, J. (2003). Looking at classroom management through a social and emotional learning lens. Theory into Practice, 42(4), 313-318.
28. Petrides, K. V., Pita, R., & Kokkinaki, F. (2007). The location of trait emotional intelligence in personality factor space. Journal of Psychology, 98, 273–289.
29. Puglia, M. L., Stough, C., Carter, J. D., & Joseph, M. (2005). The emotional intelligence of adult sex offenders: ability based EI assessment. Journal of Sexual Aggression, 11(3), 249-258.
30. Richardson, R. (2000). Teaching social and emotional competence. Children and Schools, 22(4), 246-251.
31. Salovey, P., & Mayer, J. D. (1990). Emotional Intelligence. Imagination, Cognition and Personality, 9(3), 185-211.
32. Salovey, P., Bedell, B., Detweiler, J., & Mayer, J. (2000). Current directions in emotional intelligence research. In M. Lewis & J. M. Haviland-Jones (Eds.), Handbook of Emotions (2nd edn) (504-520). New York: Guilford Press.
33. Schulte, M. J., Ree, M. J., & Carretta, T. R. (2004). Emotional intelligence: not much more than g and personality. Personality and Individual Differences, 37, 1059-1068.
34. Schwarz, N. (2000). Feelings as information: Implications for affective influences on information processing. In G. Clore and L. Martin (Eds.), Theories of mood and cognition: A users handbook. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
35. Sharma, N., Prakash, O., Sengar, K. S., Chaudhury, S., & Singh, A. R. (2015). The relation between emotional intelligence and criminal behaviour: A study among convicted criminals. Industrial Psychiatry Journal, 24(1), 54-58.
36. Sjoberg, L. (2001). Emotional intelligence and behaviour: Exploratory study of people on parole. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation.) Kansas State University, Manhattan.
37. Smith, J. E. (2000). Emotional intelligence and behaviour: Exploratory study of people on parole. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Kansas State University, Manhattan.
38. Waleed, C. A. (2017). What aspects of emotional intelligence help former prisoners make decisions to desist crime?. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation.) St. John Fisher College, Queensland, Australia.
39. Ward, T., Louden, K., Hudson, S., & Marshall, W. (1995). A descriptive model of the offence chain for child molesters. Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 10, 452-472.
40. Watts, S. J., & McNulty, T. L. (2016). Genes, parenting, self-control, and criminal behaviour. International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology, 60(4), 469–491.
41. Wechsler, G. (1940). Nonintellective factors in general intelligence. Psychological Bulletin, 37, 444-445.