

The Predictive Relationship of Trait Emotional Intelligence with Life Satisfaction among AdolescentsAneela Mushtaq^a, Saima Masoom Ali^a

- ^a PhD (Scholar), Department of Psychology, University of Karachi/ Lecturer Clinical Psychology, Shifa Tameer-e-Millat University, Islamabad Pakistan
- ^b Assistant Professor of Psychology, University of Karachi, Karachi, Pakistan.

Abstract

Every phase of life of human development brings various challenges and Adolescence is one of them. It is a critical developmental period shaped by cognitive, emotional, and social transitions that significantly affect well-being. Current study investigates the predictive role of trait emotional intelligence (EI) on life satisfaction among adolescents, while also exploring gender differences. A mixed sampling approach was used. A sample of 400 adolescents (aged 10–18 years) completed the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire Short-Form and the Satisfaction with Life Scale. Linear regression analysis revealed that trait EI significantly predicted life satisfaction (LS), accounting for 17% of its variance. Female adolescents reported significantly higher levels of both EI and LS than males. These findings contribute to the cross-cultural understanding of adolescent psychological functioning and underscore the need for gender-responsive, emotionally focused educational interventions in low- and middle- income settings. Future research should explore additional mediators and moderators to better understand the complex interplay between emotional traits and well-being across sociocultural contexts..

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Life Satisfaction, Adolescence, Gender.

Correspondence: Aneela Mushtaq

Lecturer in Clinical Psychology, Shifa Tameer-e-Millat University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

Email: aneelamushtaq17@gmail.com

Pages 28-32 /Received, August 30, 2025, Revision Received December 09, 2025, Accepted December 12, 2025

1. Introduction

Various changes occur during the adolescence period such as rapid physical, emotional, and cognitive development. World Health Organization (WHO, 2017) recognized the adolescents stage from ages 10 to 19 years, this phase plays a critical role in shaping identity, autonomy, and future well-being. During adolescence, individuals develop vital life skills such as emotional regulation, decision-making, and social interaction (Cherewick et al., 2023). In Pakistan, adolescents make up nearly 25% of the population, making their mental health a significant public concern (UNICEF, 2023; Hameed et al., 2022). Despite theoretical advancements, few empirical studies in South Asia explore the emotional development of adolescents within sociocultural contexts (Khatiwada et al., 2021).

Developmental theorists such as Erikson and Eccles emphasize adolescence as a period of identity formation and increasing autonomy (Zarrett & Eccles, 2006). These psychosocial transitions affect how adolescents perceive themselves and respond to environmental demands. Bronfenbrenner's ecological model suggests that adolescent emotional development is shaped by interconnected systems family, peers, and culture (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007). Supportive environments can enhance emotional strengths and well-being (Jiménez et al., 2020; Barragán Martín et al., 2021).

Life satisfaction is defined as an evaluation of life quality of an individual based on personal criteria (Diener et al., 2017). Its decline among youth globally has led to increased interest in psychological traits that enhance resilience one of which is emotional intelligence (Inchley et al., 2020). Trait emotional intelligence (EI) defines as an individual's emotional self-perceptions, including the ability to recognize, understand, and manage emotions effectively (Petrides et al., 2016). Higher trait EI in adolescents has been associated with better psychological health, social functioning, and life satisfaction (Blasco-Belled et al., 2020). Notably, adolescents with high emotional clarity and repair but moderate emotional attention report better well-being (Guasp Coll et al., 2020).

Gender plays a key role in the expression of emotional intelligence. Research shows that females often score higher on emotional intelligence, possibly due to gendered socialization patterns (Wierenga et al., 2018; Lopez-Zafra et al., 2019). These differences may contribute to higher reported life satisfaction among female adolescents (Sitter et al., 2021). However, findings vary across cultures and socioeconomic contexts. In Pakistan, cultural expectations and gender norms shape emotional development. Males may be discouraged from expressing emotional vulnerability, while females are often encouraged to prioritize empathy. Such norms influence the development of emotional intelligence and its effect on life satisfaction. Despite these influences, few empirical studies have explored this relationship among Pakistani adolescents.

Current study aims to fill that gap in existing literature through examine the role of trait EI on life satisfaction among adolescents in Karachi, Pakistan. It also explores whether gender differences exist in emotional intelligence and life satisfaction. By using validated tools and focusing on a population underrepresented in the existing literature, the study contributes to a growing body of knowledge on adolescent mental health. The findings can inform culturally relevant emotional development programs that improve well-being among youth, particularly in school settings. The study tested three hypotheses: first, that trait EI predicts life satisfaction among adolescents; second, there is a significant gender difference in trait EI among adolescents; and third,

there is significant gender difference in life satisfaction among adolescents.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

In this study a cross-sectional research design was utilized.

2.2 Sample

The research included a total of 400 adolescents (200 males, 200 females) aged between 10 and 18 years, recruited from both public and private schools located in four cities of Pakistan: Karachi (n=120), Jhelum (n=80), Islamabad (n=100) and Rawalpindi (n=100). Urban areas of these cities were selected from different provinces, aiming to ensure diversity in educational environments and sociocultural exposure. Participants were enrolled in secondary and intermediate grades, covering early (ages 10–14) and middle-to-late adolescence (ages 15–18). A majority of participants reported living in nuclear family system.

Participants were required to be enrolled in grades 8 through intermediate level, with both parents alive and residing with them, and no reported history of psychological disorders or chronic physical illnesses. Participants with physical disabilities, chronic illnesses, or those undergoing psychological treatment were not included in the study. Additionally, participants living with a single parent or without parental guardianship were also not part of the study.

2.3 Instruments

2.3.1 Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS): The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985) assesses subjective life satisfaction through 5 items using a 7 point Likert scale. The range of scores is 5 to 35, where score of 20 indicating a neutral position. The scale has demonstrated strong internal consistency, with alpha values from .79 to .89 in range. It also shows substantial test-retest correlations (.84 & .80 across a one month interval). It was reported by Diener et al. (1985) an alpha level 0.87 and 0.82 test-retest reliability of over two month duration. These findings support the scale's internal reliability and temporal stability. The current study utilized the Urdu version of the SWLS, which has an alpha reliability of 0.90. Elevated scores indicate higher life satisfaction, while lower scores signify reduced life satisfaction (Barki, Choudhry, & Munawar, 2020).

2.3.2 Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire Short Form

(TraitEI): The Trait EI Questionnaire–Short Form (TEIQue-SF), a 30-item scale designed to assess global trait emotional intelligence (TraitEI). It is derived from the full-version of the TEIQue, which comprehensively covers the domain of trait emotional intelligence. Two items from each of the 15 facets were selected for short-form, based primarily on correlation with the overall facet scores. The TEIQue-SF is a 7-point Likert scale, 1 = Completely Disagree to 7 = Completely Agree. A global traitEI score is concluded by averaging all items responses. The TEIQue-SF yields reliable scores that correlate significantly with variables such as coping mechanisms, life satisfaction, personality disorders, perceived work control, and job satisfaction (Petrides et al., 2003). The Urdu version of the scale has demonstrated strong psychometric properties, with a Cronbach's alpha of .889, a Guttman Split-Half coefficient of .862, and a test-retest reliability of .817. It has been validated as a reliable tool for use in the Pakistani context (Shahzad, Riaz, & Begum, 2014).

2.4 Procedure

Following ethical approval from the host institution and permission from participating schools, researchers contacted school administrators and briefed them on the study objectives. After obtaining consent form from parents/guardians and assent from the adolescents, participants were

assessed during scheduled classroom sessions. The questionnaires were administered in a group format in Urdu, ensuring linguistic comprehension. Each session lasted approximately 25 minutes. It was assured to the study participants that their responses will remain confidential and reminded that participation was voluntary, with the right to withdraw at any point. To minimize social desirability bias, participants were encouraged to respond as accurate as they could.

2.5 Data Analysis

The analysis of the acquired data was conducted through Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (version 23) to evaluate the hypotheses.

2 Results

Linear regression, along with independent sample t-tests, was performed to test the study hypotheses.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics and Demographic Variables among School-going children (N=400)

Group	No. of Participants (N=400)	
	F	%
Age		
10 years – 14 years	120	30
15 years – 17 years	170	42.5
18 years	110	27.5
Gender		
Male	200	50
Female	200	50
Socioeconomic Status		
Lower	150	37.5
Middle	190	47.5
Upper	60	15
Family Structure		
Nuclear	252	68.5
Joint	148	31.5

Table 2
Linear Regression for predictive relationship of Emotional Intelligence with Life Satisfaction (N=400)

R	R ²	Adjusted		F	Sig
		R ²	Df		
.414	.171	.170	398	165	.000

Table 3
Coefficients for predictive relationship of Emotional Intelligence with Life Satisfaction (N=400)

Model	Unstandardized		Standardized		T	Sig
	Coefficient		Coefficient			
	B	Std.Error	Beta			
Constant	25.23	2.80			13.97	.000
Emotional Intelligence	5.33	.41	.414		12.84	.000

Table 2 & 3 shows the linear regression analysis showed a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and life satisfaction, with emotional intelligence explaining 17% of the variance ($R^2 = .171$, Adjusted $R^2 = .170$, $F(1, 398) = 165$, $p < .001$) in life satisfaction scores. For each one-unit increase in EI, life satisfaction

increased by 5.33 points ($B = 5.33$, $SE = 0.41$, $\beta = .414$, $t = 12.84$, $p < .001$). The results were statistically significant ($p < .001$), confirming that higher emotional intelligence is associated with greater life satisfaction among adolescents. The findings highlight the moderate but meaningful impact of emotional intelligence on adolescent well-being.

Table: 4
Difference between male and female on Emotional Intelligence (N=400)

	Male		Female		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Emotional Intelligence	4.24	.60	4.37	.66	-2.84	.005

Table 4 shows there is a significant difference in EI scores between males and females adolescents. Females had higher EI scores ($M = 4.37$, $SD = 0.66$) compared to males ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 0.60$). An independent samples t-test is statistically significant, $t(398) = -2.84$, $p = .005$. This suggests that female adolescents in the sample exhibited significantly higher levels of EI than male adolescents.

Table: 5
Difference between male and female on Satisfaction with Life (N=400)

	Male		Female		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Satisfaction with life	21.57	5.95	24.04	5.70	-5.99	.000

Table 5 shows a significant difference in life satisfaction scores between male and female adolescents. Females reported more life satisfaction ($M = 24.04$, $SD = 5.70$) than males ($M = 21.57$, $SD = 5.95$). The difference was statistically significant, $t(398) = -5.99$, $p < .001$, indicating that female adolescents experience greater life satisfaction compared to male adolescents.

3 Discussion

The results of this study reinforce the growing body of evidence that emotional intelligence plays a meaningful role in adolescent well-being. Emotional intelligence significantly predicted life satisfaction among adolescents, accounting for 17% of the variance. This suggests that while emotional intelligence is not the only determinant of life satisfaction, it is a statistically and practically relevant factor. These results align with previous studies indicating that adolescents with higher emotional self-perceptions such as clarity, regulation, and coping ability are better equipped to manage stress and develop positive relationships, which in turn contribute to overall life satisfaction (Blasco-Belled et al., 2020). The current findings support the work of Hoyos-Cifuentes et al. (2024) and Izaguirre et al. (2023), who have shown that emotional competencies not only enhance well-being but also serve as resilience-building resources during periods of developmental challenge. This connection is particularly important during adolescence, a time when emotional volatility and social pressures are heightened. Adolescents who can navigate emotional stressors more effectively are more likely to report higher life satisfaction, as they interpret experiences through more balanced and adaptive cognitive-emotional lenses (Guasp Coll et al., 2020)

The study also found that female adolescents scored significantly higher on both emotional intelligence and life satisfaction than male adolescents. This gender difference supports existing literature suggesting that females tend to exhibit greater emotional awareness and

regulatory skills, often due to socialization practices that encourage emotional expressiveness and interpersonal sensitivity from an early age (Lopez-Zafra et al., 2019; Wierenga et al., 2018). These emotional strengths may allow female adolescents to manage emotional challenges more effectively and derive greater satisfaction from personal and social relationships. Although adolescence is often considered a more emotionally demanding period particularly for girls due to heightened social expectations and identity pressures their advanced emotional competencies may function as protective factors, buffering against the negative impacts of stress and promoting life satisfaction (Sitter et al., 2021; Ramos-Díaz et al., 2019). In contrast, male adolescents, who may be less encouraged to express or explore emotional states, might lack essential regulatory strategies, which can impair their ability to cope with challenges and reduce their perceived life satisfaction (Baudry et al., 2018). This aligns with the broader ecological understanding of adolescent development, where emotional functioning is shaped by interactions between individual traits and the social environment, as emphasized by Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2007). The school, family, and peer contexts in which adolescents develop either support or hinder the development of emotional intelligence, which in turn affects their life satisfaction (Jiménez et al., 2020; Barragán Martín et al., 2021).

Moreover, the moderate relationship between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction implies that other factors likely contribute to adolescents' overall well-being. Social support, academic performance, self-esteem, and resilience have all been shown to impact life satisfaction and may interact with emotional intelligence in complex ways (Azpiazu Izaguirre et al., 2021). In Pakistan, where cultural expectations and gender norms heavily influence emotional expression, the development of emotional intelligence may also be unevenly supported across gender and family structures (Kong et al., 2019). These findings suggest the need for culturally sensitive interventions, particularly in school settings, that aim to foster emotional competence across all students, with particular attention to equipping boys with the tools for emotional regulation, self-awareness, and social empathy. Given that emotional intelligence is a malleable trait, school-based programs that integrate emotional skills training into the curriculum have the potential to significantly enhance adolescent life satisfaction and broader psychological adjustment (Kern et al., 2020). These programs can also challenge rigid gender norms by creating safe spaces for emotional expression among boys and girls alike.

Implications

The study's findings suggest that promoting emotional intelligence (EI) in adolescents could significantly improve their life satisfaction, making it important for educational systems to incorporate EI training into curricula. Gender differences, with females reporting higher EI and life satisfaction, highlight the need for tailored interventions, especially for boys, to enhance emotional expression and regulation. The research also contributes to the understanding of EI in South Asian contexts and calls for further exploration of cultural factors and additional variables like social support. Overall, the study supports the integration of EI programs in schools to foster better emotional health and resilience among adolescents.

Limitations

This study provides valuable insights into the role of EI in predicting life satisfaction among adolescents in Karachi, Jhelum, Islamabad, and Rawalpindi, Pakistan, while highlighting gender differences. However, there are some limitations as well. Current study utilized a global emotional intelligence (EI) score without analyzing individual subcomponents such as emotional regulation or perception

which may have contributed differently to life satisfaction, particularly in a culturally stratified context like Pakistan. Furthermore, important psychological mediators such as depression, anxiety, or stress were not controlled for, limiting understanding of whether EI directly influences life satisfaction or operates through these affective states. The exclusion of school-level variables such as teacher support, peer dynamics, and exposure to emotional learning further narrows the interpretive scope, especially given disparities in educational quality across Pakistan. The sample treated adolescents as a single developmental group without distinguishing between early, middle, and late adolescence an oversimplification that overlooks potential variation in emotional maturity and well-being across age cohorts.

References

- Azpiazu Izaguirre, L., Fernández, A. R., & Palacios, E. G. (2021). Adolescent life satisfaction explained by social support, emotion regulation, and resilience. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *12*, 694183. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.694183>
- Barki, N., Choudhry, F. R., & Munawar, K. (2020). The satisfaction with life scale: Psychometric properties in Pakistani population. *Medical Journal of the Islamic Republic of Iran*, *34*, 159. <https://doi.org/10.47176/mjiri.34.159>
- Barragán Martín, A. B., Molero Jurado, M. D. M., Pérez-Fuentes, M. D. C., Oropesa Ruiz, N. F., Martos Martínez, Á., Simón Márquez, M. D. M., & Gázquez Linares, J. J. (2021). Interpersonal support, emotional intelligence and family function in adolescence. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *18*(10), 5145. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18105145>
- Baudry, A. S., Grynberg, D., Dassonneville, C., Leloirain, S., & Christophe, V. (2018). Sub-dimensions of trait emotional intelligence and health: A critical and systematic review. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, *59*(2), 206–222. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sjop.12416>
- Blasco-Belled, A., Rogoza, R., Torrelles-Nadal, C., & Alsinet, C. (2020). Emotional intelligence structure and its relationship with life satisfaction and happiness: New findings from the bifactor model. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, *21*(6), 2031–2049. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-019-00164-2>
- Bronfenbrenner, U., & Morris, P. A. (2007). The bioecological model of human development. In W. Damon & R. M. Lerner (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology: Theoretical models of human development* (6th ed., Vol. 1, pp. 793–828). Wiley.
- Guasp Coll, M., Navarro-Mateu, D., Giménez-Espert, M. D. C., & Prado-Gascó, V. J. (2020). Emotional intelligence, empathy, self-esteem, and life satisfaction in Spanish adolescents: Regression vs. QCA models. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *11*, 1629. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01629>
- Hoyos-Cifuentes, J. D., Fernández-Otaya, F. A., Rodríguez-Gómez, W. F., & Bernal-Torres, C. A. (2024). Emotional intelligence, human values, and content creation by girls in emerging economies. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, *29*(1), 2306886. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673843.2024.2306886>
- Izaguirre, L. A., Rodríguez-Fernández, A., & Fernández-Zabala, A. (2023). Perceived academic performance explained by school climate, psychological variables, and life satisfaction. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, *93*(1), 318–332. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjep.12496>
- Jiménez, M. N., Saez, I. A., & Etxaniz, I. E. (2020). The role of perceived social support in predicting emotional intelligence among adolescents. *European Journal of Education and Psychology*, *13*(2), 97–110. <https://doi.org/10.30552/ejep.v13i2.316>
- Kern, M. L., Williams, P., Spong, C., Colla, R., Sharma, K., Downie, A., ... & Oades, L. G. (2020). Systems informed positive psychology. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, *15*(6), 705–717. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2020.1818813>

- Khatiwada, J., Muzembo, B. A., Wada, K., & Ikeda, S. (2021). Perceived social support and life satisfaction among Nepalese migrants in Japan. *PLOS ONE*, *16*(2), e0246271. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0246271>
- Kong, F., Gong, X., Sajjad, S., Yang, K., & Zhao, J. (2019). Emotional intelligence and life satisfaction: The mediating role of social support and affect. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, *20*, 2733–2749. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-018-00075-0>
- Lopez-Zafra, E., Ramos-Álvarez, M. M., El Ghoudani, K., Luque-Reca, O., Augusto-Landa, J. M., Zarhouch, B., ... & Pulido-Martos, M. (2019). Social support and emotional intelligence as protective resources for well-being in Moroccan adolescents. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *10*, 1529. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01529>
- Martela, F., & Sheldon, K. M. (2019). Clarifying the concept of well-being: Psychological need satisfaction as the common core connecting eudaimonic and subjective well-being. *Review of General Psychology*, *23*(4), 458–474. <https://doi.org/10.1037/gpr0000177>
- Petrides, K. V., Pita, R., & Kokkinaki, F. (2007). The location of trait emotional intelligence in personality factor space. *British Journal of Psychology*, *98*(2), 273–289. <https://doi.org/10.1348/000712606X120618>
- Ramos-Díaz, E., Rodríguez-Fernández, A., Axpe, I., & Ferrara, M. (2019). Perceived emotional intelligence and life satisfaction among adolescents: The mediating role of resilience. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, *20*(8), 2489–2506. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-018-0052-5>
- Salovey, P., Stroud, L. R., Woolery, A., & Epel, E. S. (2002). Perceived emotional intelligence, stress reactivity, and symptom reports: Further explorations using the Trait Meta-Mood Scale. *Psychology & Health*, *17*(5), 611–627. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08870440290025812>
- Shahzad, S., Riaz, Z., & Begum, N. (2014). Urdu translation and psychometric properties of the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire–Short Form (TEIQue–SF). *Asian Journal of Management Sciences & Education*, *3*(1), 130–140.
- Sitter, K. G., Huebner, E. S., & Hills, K. J. (2021). Calling for social support: What types matter for early adolescents' life satisfaction? In J. F. Helliwell (Ed.), *The Pope of Happiness: A Festschrift for Ruut Veenvhoven* (pp. 227–241). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-56542-5_14
- UNICEF. (2023). *The state of the world's children 2023: For every child, health, education, protection*. <https://www.unicef.org/reports/state-of-worlds-children-2023>
- Wierenga, L. M., Bos, M. G., Schreuders, E., van der Kamp, F., Peper, J. S., Tamnes, C. K., & Crone, E. A. (2018). Unraveling age, puberty, and testosterone effects on subcortical brain development during adolescence. *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, *91*, 105–114. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psyneuen.2018.02.034>
- World Health Organization. (2017). *Global accelerated action for the health of adolescents (AA-HA!): Guidance to support country implementation*. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241512343>