

## Emotional intelligence in university students

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### Abstract

This study was conducted to determine the status of university students' emotional intelligence. The sample of this descriptive research is composed of students who have studied at a four year university. They are selected according to criteria of faculty and gender based on the random sampling. The data was collected using "Personal Information Form", Bar-On Emotional Intelligent Inventory. Mean, standard deviation, Independent Samples t-test, one way ANOVA tests were used for the evaluation. This study, female university students' emotional intelligence total scale and all of subscale of the mean scores were determined to be higher than male students. The emotional intelligence of the university students who are training in physical sciences was determined to be higher than that of students studying in other sections. The emotional intelligence of the university students who are training in the first class was determined to be higher than the students studying in other classes. Results: In this study, female university students' emotional intelligence total scale and all of subscale of the mean scores were determined to be higher than male students. The emotional intelligence of the university students who are training in physical sciences was determined to be higher than that of students studying in other sections. The emotional intelligence of the university students who are training in the first class was determined to be higher than the students studying in other classes.

Keywords: University, student, emotional intelligence

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## 1. Introduction

Emotional intelligence involves the ability to be aware of emotions, to cope with emotions, to motivate oneself, to build empathy, and to manage interpersonal relations (Avsar and Kasıkçı 2010; Reeves 2005; Salovey and Mayer 1990). Emotional intelligence is extremely important in the private and professional lives of individuals (Avsar & Kasıkçı 2010). Goleman identifies five components of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, internal motivation, empathy and social skills (Goleman, 2001). These skills and competences are critical for the success of individuals of all ages and professions, particularly for the success of those individuals in professions serving people. What is meant by the word success is not only status, career or wealth. Feeling content, establish good relationships with others, and taking pleasure in life are also factors determining success (Unsar et al. 2009; Acar 2002).

“Self-awareness”, a component of emotional intelligence, is an important determinant of students’ academic achievement (Yazıcı et al. 2011). The ability to work with others, to be tolerant, to respect differences and to solve conflicts with a constructive manner is extremely important for being healthy, strong and successful (Pala 2008).

It is essential to develop students’ emotional intelligence during their university education (Brannick 2009, Stuart 2004). The professionals of the future need emotional intelligence to recognize their own feelings; to perceive, understand and manage the feelings of others; to employ these skills in order to guide their behaviour; and to be happy and successful.

The primary objective of this research was to examine the emotional intelligence status of university students as professionals of the future. Also, the study aimed to determine whether university students’ levels of emotional intelligence differed according to gender and majors.

## 2. Method

This descriptive study was conducted with undergraduate students at Mersin University.

The study population consisted of a total of 10560 students (5236 female and 5324 male students) who were doing their undergraduate degrees during 2011-2012 academic year. The sample, on the other hand, was selected by stratified random sampling method based on major of study and gender. The minimum sample size to predict the population efficiently was estimated to be 10% of the population (Blanche 2006). In this sense, the minimum sample of 523 girls and 1055 constitute the survey, including 532 male students. In light of this, the study sample consisted a minimum of 1055 students (523 female and 532 male students).

## 3. Measures

Data were collected using the Personal Information Form developed by the researchers and the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory through face-to-face interviews.

The Personal Information Form consisted of 12 questions about the university students’ socio-demographic features. The questions addressed the participants’ gender, age, place of birth, previous graduation, current place of residence, family structure, major of study, department, marital status and status of having children.

The Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory was adapted for Turkish culture by Acar (2002). The Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory is a Likert-type scale consisting of 87 items (Acar 2002).

The study was conducted with those students who volunteered to participate in the study after the ethics committee and the institution approved the study, the participants were informed about the purpose and methodology of the study, and their written and verbal consents were received.

#### 4. Statistical analyses

Statistical analyses were performed using MedCalc. The analyses included mean  $\pm$  standard deviation, independent samples t-test and One Way ANOVA, and results were considered significant if  $p < 0.05$ .

#### 5. Results

Table 1. Emotional Intelligence with Socio-Demographic Characteristics of University Students  
**Bar-On Duygusal Zeka Ölçeği**

Character	n(%)	Kisisel Beceriler	Kisilerarası Beceriler	Uyumluluk Boyutu	Stresle Basa Cıkma Boyutu	Genel Ruh Durumu Boyutu	Toplam Olcek
<b>Gender</b>							
<b>Female</b>	524(49.48)	3.53 $\pm$ 0.50	3.66 $\pm$ 0.54	3.44 $\pm$ 0.44	3.10 $\pm$ 0.47	3.58 $\pm$ 0.56	3.50 $\pm$ 0.41
<b>Male</b>	535(50.51)	3.48 $\pm$ 0.49	3.51 $\pm$ 0.52	3.41 $\pm$ 0.46	3.15 $\pm$ 0.49	3.50 $\pm$ 0.57	3.43 $\pm$ 0.40
<b>p</b>		0.085	<b>0.001</b>	0.217	0.058	<b>0.021</b>	<b>0.020</b>
<b>Place of birth</b>							
<b>County</b>	553(52.22)	3.53 $\pm$ 0.50	3.61 $\pm$ 0.53	3.43 $\pm$ 0.45	3.12 $\pm$ 0.46	3.55 $\pm$ 0.56	3.47 $\pm$ 0.40
<b>Town</b>	362(34.18)	3.51 $\pm$ 0.51	3.58 $\pm$ 0.56	3.45 $\pm$ 0.45	3.16 $\pm$ 0.51	3.54 $\pm$ 0.61	3.47 $\pm$ 0.43
<b>Bay</b>	144(13.60)	3.44 $\pm$ 0.48	3.54 $\pm$ 0.50	3.41 $\pm$ 0.48	3.13 $\pm$ 0.52	3.49 $\pm$ 0.53	3.41 $\pm$ 0.40
<b>p</b>		0.175	0.363	0.672	0.468	0.471	0.342
<b>Marital Status</b>							
<b>Married</b>	9(0.85)	3.35 $\pm$ 0.61	3.18 $\pm$ 0.54	3.15 $\pm$ 0.60	3.13 $\pm$ 0.66	3.37 $\pm$ 0.60	3.25 $\pm$ 0.47
<b>Single</b>	1050(99.15)	3.51 $\pm$ 0.49	3.59 $\pm$ 0.53	3.43 $\pm$ 0.45	3.13 $\pm$ 0.48	3.54 $\pm$ 0.57	3.46 $\pm$ 0.41
<b>p</b>							
<b>Family Structure</b>							
<b>Nucleusfamily</b>	878(82.91)	3.52 $\pm$ 0.50	3.59 $\pm$ 0.54	3.44 $\pm$ 0.44	3.12 $\pm$ 0.48	3.54 $\pm$ 0.57	3.46 $\pm$ 0.40
<b>Extended family</b>	154(14.54)	3.42 $\pm$ 0.49	3.58 $\pm$ 0.51	3.38 $\pm$ 0.47	3.19 $\pm$ 0.53	3.53 $\pm$ 0.54	3.43 $\pm$ 0.41
<b>Others</b>	27(2.55)	3.56 $\pm$ 0.59	3.53 $\pm$ 0.70	3.42 $\pm$ 0.62	3.13 $\pm$ 0.55	3.53 $\pm$ 0.72	3.46 $\pm$ 0.50
<b>p</b>		0.061	0.771	0.275	0.239	0.952	0.546

#### 6. Discussion

The average scores of the female participants for the emotional quotient scale and its subscales were higher than those of the male participants. One of the factors affecting emotional intelligence is gender. Research suggested that women tend to have higher levels of emotional intelligence than men (Gurbuz et al. 2008; Koksall et al. 2007; Petrides 2000, Karaka, et al. 2011). However, some studies identified no significant relationship between gender and emotional intelligence (Bırol et al. 2009; Babaoglu 2010; Janissaries et al. 2014; Erdem et al. 2013).

We found that the participants who were living in a nuclear family, who were single and who were living in a city centre had higher levels of emotional intelligence.

Our single participants' higher scores of emotional intelligence than the married ones could be due to the fact that the freedom enjoyed by single students allowed them to take

responsibility and to devote more time to other individuals with problems and, therefore, to develop their emotional intelligence by using it in dealing with a lot more problems.

Also, those participants doing a major of science received higher scores on the emotional quotient total scale and in the subscales than other participants doing different majors. Similarly, Arl et al. found that teacher candidates who were graduates of science received higher scores on the self-regulation subscale than those who were graduates of literature (Arl et al. 2011).

Finally, we found that the participants in their first year of university education received higher scores on the emotional quotient total scale and in the subscales than other participants their second, third or fourth year. In a study by Yılmaz and Ozkan (2011), on the other hand, third year student received the lowest average score of emotional intelligence while fourth year students received the highest average score. Nevertheless, Sevindik et al. (2012) found that first year students had the lowest average score of emotional intelligence while second year students had the highest average score.

To sum up, although it is generally assumed that university education contributes to the development of emotional intelligence among students, our findings showed that university students' level of emotional intelligence tended to decrease through the end of their university education. In light of this, there seems to be a need to revise the curriculum higher education and create educational strategies to improve the emotional intelligence of male students in particular.

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