

Emotional Intelligence as Predictor of Self-Actualization

MELINDA PAUSANOS

ORCID No. 0000-0002-7035-0757

ABSTRACT

One of the factors that influence self-actualization is emotional intelligence. Being in control of one's emotions and behavior is an important quality for an older adult to attain self-actualization. This correlational study utilized a multi-stage sample of 180 senior citizens in Tagbilaran City, Bohol. A 3-part instrument package was utilized to (1) describe the respondents' demographic profile and obtain measures for their (2) emotional intelligence using the 30-item Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire-Short Form (TEIQue-SF) and (3) self-actualization using a 16-item questionnaire developed by Boyum (2004). The study made use of descriptive-correlational design to test the hypothesis that the level of self-actualization of older adults is influenced by their level of emotional intelligence. Data analyses revealed that majority of the older adults in the sample have high levels of emotional intelligence and self-actualization. A Somer's *d* further indicated that emotional intelligence is associated with self-actualization ($p=.004$). This signifies that older adults who are emotionally intelligent have a higher probability to be self-actualized. Basing from the study findings, respecting the emotions of older adults and be treated as individuals with dignity is highly recommended.

KEYWORDS

Older adult, emotional intelligence, descriptive-correlational design, Tagbilaran City, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

A theory generated on attaining self-actualization among older adults states that self-actualization of an older adult is attributed to his/her capability as a human being and his/her perspective in life. Its assumption states that an older adult attains self-actualization through one of his or her personal characteristics, which is emotional intelligence. This study attempts to validate this assumption of the theory mentioned.

Self-actualization is a combination of emotional and interpersonal competencies that influence behavior and interaction with others. The purpose of emotional intelligence is to aid the development of the older adults' emotional literacy and self-knowledge in order to produce socially acceptable objectives and to satisfy individual self-actualization needs (Bandura, 1999).

On the other hand, older adult self-actualization can be contributed by many factors such as emotional and social intelligence. Emotional intelligence, among other things is the ability to identify one's emotions, distinguish what one is telling, and discern how one's emotions affect the people around. Emotional intelligence includes one's awareness of other people and their needs.

Moreover, emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognize the meanings of emotion and their relationships and to reason and problem-solve on the basis of them. It is involved in the capacity to perceive emotions, to assimilate emotion-related feelings, to understand the information of those emotions, and to manage them (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Older adults who possess a high level of emotional intelligence have the ability to manage their emotions and direct them towards something productive, motivating themselves and those around them, developing productive relationships, and understanding the inner minds of people and working cooperatively with them to reach organizational goals effectively and efficiently (Bar-On, 2006).

However, self-actualization among Filipino older adults follows a different pattern (Cruz, 2004). According to Bulatao (1989), Filipino older adults' self-actualization is not necessarily and completely patterned after Maslow's concept of self-actualization. A Filipino normally sees himself first as a member of the family and only secondly as a member of an outside group, a quality which shows that Filipinos possess a strong sense of resilience. The Filipino resiliency accounts for the fact that Filipinos can endure life's adversities and can withstand poverty over a long period. This quality is considered as emotional intelligence and cognitive intelligence contributing equally to a person's general intelligence,

which then offers an indication of one's potential to develop self-actualization.

Indeed, many of the problems facing the Filipino older adult today were the direct result of emotional ignorance: depression, addiction, illness, religious conflict, violence and war (Koltko-Rivera, 2006). Older adults have tendencies to maintain a certain level of civilization to assure harmony among them; however, one's personal motivation on maintaining a civil nature has to be considered, as well.

The significance of the study is not only with the emotions of an older person as such but the appropriateness of emotion and its expression. The task is not so much to suppress emotions because every feeling has its value to strike a balance between rational thought and emotions. According to Salovey and Mayer (1990), emotions from the older adult are not just present when they fly off the handle or jump for joy. These emotions are omnipresent in the most subtle ways in all their acts. The impact is for the older adult optimism and being positive to more fully actualize one's potential and lead a more emotionally meaningful life.

Self-Actualization can be attained by choosing the right goals propelled by an innate desire and a strong drive that can overcome negative thinking and obstacles. Inner emotional growth is considered a plus factor which does not happen spontaneously, but this inner emotional growth will help the older adult transcend or grow beyond the conventional stages of his development (Seligman, 2002). This will transform him into an emotionally mature person who can facilitate self-actualization.

A study by Prakash and Sri Vastava (2004) concluded that people who maintain long-term relationships live longer than those who are alone. These people are emotionally literate and can balance the forces of a changing world. Among the strategies employed by these people are: (1) understanding and managing emotional resources, (2) understanding and using effective communication skills, (3) having the ability to respond to their emotional and physical lives by reframing consciousness, (4) greater sensory acuity, and (5) relaxation techniques for monitoring inner self.

An individual thus attains self-actualization when he/she has a clear sense of self and her/his objectives. He/she shall have reached an advanced developmental stage and shall have been an emotionally mature person. When an individual understands how another feels, he/she can handle relationships more efficiently. Those who have the ability to control their emotions are identified as having high emotional intelligence, and they are described as very successful in most things they try to accomplish (Bar-On, 2006).

These are typical of Filipino older adults who can get things done without much chaos. They are highly emotionally intelligent individuals, in tune with their inner self, know how they react to situations, and how to respond to others. They know that their performance can either ignite success or failure. However, combinations of two emotional and interpersonal competencies influence older adult behavior and interaction with others. These were the aid in the development of one's emotional literacy and self-knowledge in order to produce socially acceptable objectives and to satisfy individual self-actualization needs.

For Filipinos, the close common family ties enable them to return the favors to their parents by taking good care and understand the emotions of older adults when they grow old. Closeness of family ties is predominantly observable in older adult emotions and is of high value.

Finally, emotional intelligence is considered a lifelong process. It can serve for one's entire life, as the basis for self-care, which is the foundation for long-lasting satisfaction, happiness and self-actualization intricately linked to mental, emotional, and physical health (Bar-On, 2006). Hence, the study sought to validate the aforementioned assumption of the theory.

This study aimed to validate the assumption of the Theory on Attaining Self-Actualization among Older Adults by determining whether emotional intelligence and self-actualization significantly correlate with each other. This study hypothesized that persons with high emotional intelligence are those who are self-actualized; hence, the higher the emotional intelligence of a person, the higher is the level of self-actualization.

METHODOLOGY

To meet the study objectives, the researcher made use of a descriptive-correlational design to test the hypothesis that the level of self-actualization of older adults is influenced by their level of emotional intelligence.

Employing a multistage sampling technique, 180 older adults from eight selected barangays in Tagbilaran City, Bohol, participated in the study. Those ages 60 to 75 years old were eligible to participate. The only criteria for exclusion would be the presence of significant cognitive and neurosensory deficits.

Through several home visits conducted by the researcher and her trained research assistants, respondents were personally invited to participate in the study. Prior to data-gathering, informed consent was sought which involved a thorough verbal and written explanation of the study objectives and allowing

time for questions or concerns to be entertained. It was likewise emphasized to the older adults that joining the study is entirely voluntary. They may refuse to answer the questionnaire as they wish and non-participation in the study would not affect them in any way.

Self-report measures were utilized to yield data on the study variables. The three (3) - part research instrument, accomplishable in 30 to 45 minutes, was put together for this purpose. The first part is a researcher-made questionnaire which obtained the demographic profile of each respondent. The second and third parts are standardized instruments namely the *Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire – Short Form (TEIQue-SF)* and *Boyum's Self-Actualization Scale*, which measured emotional intelligence and self-actualization, respectively. To facilitate comprehension of the constructs being measured, the entire instrument package was provided with Visayan translations (the respondents' mother tongue).

Measuring the study's independent variable, the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire – Short Form (TEIQue-SF), developed by Konstantin Vasily Petrides, is a 30-item questionnaire designed to measure global trait emotional intelligence. It is based on the full form of the TEIQue. Two items from each of the 15 distinct facets of the TEIQue (i.e. adaptability, assertiveness, emotional perception) were selected for inclusion, based primarily on their correlations with the corresponding total facet scores (Petrides & Furnham, 2006).

Respondents are required to rate each statement on the TEIQue-SF on a 7-point Likert scale by putting a circle around the number that best reflects their degree of agreement or disagreement with that statement. There are seven possible responses to each statement ranging from 'Completely Disagree' (number 1) to 'Completely Agree' (number 7) (Petrides, 2009). In the study, scores on each statement were summed up and then interpreted as follows: low (score of 30-89), average (score of 90-150) and high (score of 151-180) in emotional intelligence.

On the other hand, measuring the study's dependent variable, Boyum's (2004) Self-Actualization scale is a 16-item questionnaire, which requires the respondent to rate on a 10-point scale, the extent to which he/she possesses the qualities of a self-actualized person as described in each item (10 being the score reflecting strong agreement to have possessed each quality). Scores in each item were summed and interpreted as: very low (16-46 points), low (47-73), average (74-103), high (104-131) and very high (132- 160) in self-actualization. The highest score is 160 and the lowest score is 16. However, there are no exact cut-off points for interpretation indicated by Boyum (2004). Grouping of scores was

thus done arbitrarily in the study, bearing in mind the author's comment that the closer one is to 160, the more self-actualized he/she is.

Data collected were subsequently analyzed with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17 software. Data gathered were analyzed using percentage for profiling of respondents and Somer's *d* for determining correlation between emotional intelligence and self-actualization.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 180 older adults who met the inclusion criteria participated in the study. Table 1 presents their demographic profile.

Table 2 Respondents' Demographic Profile (N=180)

Demographic Variables	Frequency	%
Gender		
Male	90	50.0
Female	90	50.0
Civil Status		
Single	7	3.90
Married	104	57.8
Widow/Widower	69	38.2
Educational Attainment		
Elementary	67	37.2
Secondary	50	27.8
College	47	26.1
Post-Graduate	16	8.90
Status		
Not working, with a subsidy	58	32.2
Not working	55	36.8
With pension	46	25.6
Working	21	11.7
Living with		
Children	93	51.7
Spouse	67	37.2
Relatives	12	6.70
Caregiver	8	4.40

Note. Percentage totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Table 1 illustrates the respondent's demographic profile. A total of 180 older adults who met the inclusion criteria participated in the study. There was an equal number of male and female respondents. Majority were married; more than a third were widowed. It is notable that all the respondents have attended school, the highest which is more than a third completed elementary and less than a tenth finished post-graduate education. Among the respondents, the highest that comprised more than a third were not working. Less than a third were not working but were subsidized. A fourth among the number of respondents were receiving pension, and a little above than a tenth were presently working. More than half were living with children; more than a third were living with spouses. Ten percent were living with relatives or caregivers.

Therefore, income and financial status determine the involvement in satisfying activities or the fulfilment of the individuals' need, promoting life satisfaction among older adults (Johnson & Krueger, 2006). The inclusion of personality in addition to health, marital status, and financial resources is needed to obtain a more accurate picture of the foundations of older adults' life satisfaction and self-actualization.

The said findings were similar to the observation of previous studies that Filipino older adults' psychological need in the hierarchy is the need to be reciprocated (Andres & Ilada-Andres, 1996). This is based on the "utang-na-loob" value – a behavior wherein every service received, favor, or treatment accomplished has something in return.

Therefore, the Filipino older adult has a high sense of personal integrity. His integrity and honor are everything to him, so that the wounding of them, whether real or imagined, becomes a challenge to his manhood. He respects other people but he must also be respected and be treated as an individual with dignity (Koltko-Rivera, 2006).

Analysis of the data using Somer's *d* was done, with emotional intelligence being the independent variable and self-actualization the dependent variable. Table 3 shows the cross-tabulation of these variables.

Table 2. Cross-tabulation for Emotional Intelligence and Self-Actualization (N=180)

Self-Actualization ^a	Emotional Intelligence ^b						Total	Computed values	p-value
	Low (n=19)		Average (n=137)		High (n=24)				
	f	%	f	%	f	%			
Very Low	1	5.20	1	0.72	2	8.30	4	Somer's d =0.19 T value = 2.86	0.004**
Low	0	-	10	7.29	3	12.50	13		
Average	1	5.26	13	9.49	9	37.50	23		
High	9	47.36	69	50.36	1	4.16	79		
Very High	8	42.10	43	31.38	10	41.66	61		

^a Mean = 121.12, SD = 27.77; ^b Mean = 132.31, SD = 28.64

** $p < .01$.

As shown in Table 2, many of the respondents had an average emotional intelligence ($n=137$) and most also have high ($n=79$) to very high ($n=61$) levels of self-actualization.

It could be surmised that older people were less emotional and more objective, less likely to allow hopes, fears, or ego defense to distort observation. Humans have one basic motive which is the tendency to self-actualize (Bandura, 1999). Furthermore, one of the respondents in the sample stated, "*Karon nga tiguwang nako Ma'am, makasabot nako, makapasensya pa jud ta* (Now that I'm old, I can easily understand and have more patience)."

The said findings also manifested a positive psychology that has focused on increasing attention to the sweetest emotions of happiness, joy, love, curiosity, hope, and gratitude" (McCullough, Tsang, & Emmons, 2004). "Strengths 'of the heart'— zest, gratitude, hope, and love— are more robustly associated with emotional intelligence and life satisfaction than are the more cerebral strengths..." (Seligman, 2002).

It was also notable on Table 2, only a few older adults have very low emotional intelligence ($n=19$) and very low ($n=4$) to low ($n=13$) levels of self-actualization. These findings mean that older adults generally do not easily give in to difficulties in life. By nature, Filipinos possess a strong sense of resilience. This resiliency

accounts for the fact that they can endure life's adversities and can withstand poverty over a long period. Filipinos can still laugh or brush away a tear and can make a humorous comment in the face of a tear-jerker scene (Bulatao, 1989).

One of the older adult's responses goes, "*Nindot jud ug naa ta sa ato mga anak Ma'am, bisan unsa kalisod* (It is nice to be with children despite crises)." Older adults are indeed able to deal with stresses in life as long as they are with their families which serve as avenues for interaction. Cohesiveness and sense of belongingness are best expressed in families who should strengthen their support, respect, and love for the older persons (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

Moreover, it could be observed in Table 3 that a trend somehow exists in which those with high to very high levels of self-actualization are those older adults who have average to high levels of emotional intelligence.

A Somer's *d* analysis further indicated that a significant association exists between emotional intelligence and self-actualization, $d=0.19$, $p=.004$. This means that one's guess for the older adult's level of self-actualization improves by 19% by knowing their level of emotional intelligence. Thus, older adults who are more emotionally intelligent have a higher probability to be self-actualized. The more one is not affected by his environment, the more he/she becomes contented with his/her life.

These results support the concept that the emotional intelligence slightly relates with the ability to enjoy various aspects of older adult life in particular and the whole life in general. The level of self-actualization reflects the fact that human beings are not simply biological machines. As they mature, they become more aware of themselves, and they are increasingly driven by a sense of personal integrity and spirituality leading to life satisfaction (Bredle, Salsman, Debb, Arnold, & Cella, 2011).

This idea is reinforced by one of the respondents who said, "*Ako kalouy sa Diyos dai, makabuga jud ko sa ako gibati ilabi na sa ako mga anak, kaning tiguwang nata* (With God's grace, now I'm old, I can express my feelings freely to my children)." Older people often feel good and at ease in both work, leisure and in family. They are able to level off their feelings without inhibitions and enjoy the opportunities, having fun especially with the members of the family.

In fact, most of the respondents commented they usually pause and think about what they felt and be usually able to find ways to control their emotions when they want to. Generally, they are able to adapt and believe that things will work out fine. A respondent who scored high in emotional intelligence shared: "*Kanang mga problema, lamas na sa kinabuhi* (Problems are spices or trials of

life).” This was affirmed by another respondent, “*Makapogong man sad ko.* (I am usually able to find ways to control my emotions when I want to)”.

According to Salovey and Mayer (1990) emotions from the older adult are not just present when they fly off the handle or jump for joy. They are omnipresent in the most subtle ways in all their acts. This holds true to the comments of the respondents that they mostly admire being relaxed. On the whole, they are pleased with their life being in the family constellation. The impact is in the older adult’s optimism and being positive to more fully actualize one’s potential and lead a more emotionally meaningful life.

CONCLUSION

The study validated one of the assumptions of Attaining Self-actualization among Older Adults. Emotional intelligence has a bearing on self-actualization. The higher the emotional intelligence of the older adult, the higher is his/her level of self-actualization. Stability and control of one’s emotions enables a person to develop a sense of contentment and security in old age.

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