

A New Focus: Emotional Intelligence and Dental Professionals

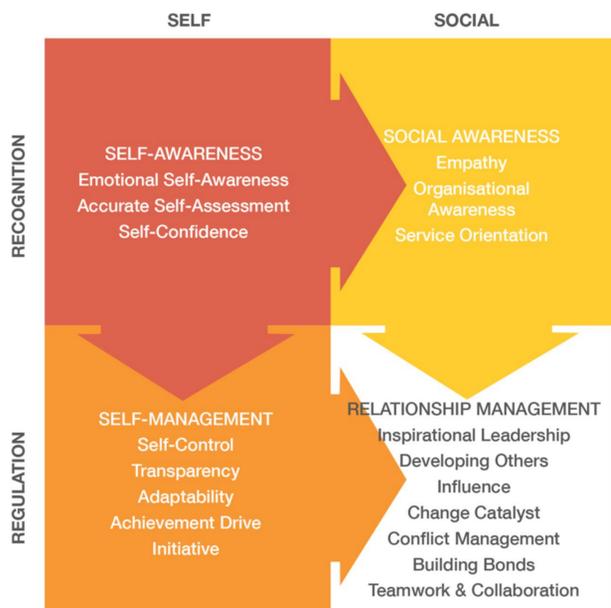


INTRODUCTION

Raising awareness of the concept of emotional intelligence may be beneficial in the dental field. Emotional intelligence is the capability to perceive and manage one's emotions and the emotions of others (Gokhale et al., 2019). Emotional Intelligence (EI) may often be also referred to as Emotional Quotient (EQ). Emotions play a substantial role in the dental workplace environment among dentists, dental hygienists, patients, and dental staff (Gokhale et al., 2019). Challenges and lack of emotional intelligence may be noticed among individuals or team interactions. Some studies suggest that simulation and role-playing exercises may help improve emotional intelligence (Errante et al., 2018). Understanding and assessing emotional intelligence is essential in healthcare because critical components of successful clinical practice are not necessarily directly related to core knowledge or hands-on technical, clinical skills (Parks et al., 2019). For instance, the use of emotional behavior and facial expression has been conveyed in meta-analyses as a critical component of clinical competence. (Parks et al., 2019). In addition, the concept of emotional intelligence adopts that individuals with high emotional intelligence have improved interpersonal and communication skills (Weng et al., 2011). Research has demonstrated that emotional intelligence positively influences both social relationships and job satisfaction (Weng et al., 2011).

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE DOMAINS

- **SELF-AWARENESS:** Involves distinguishing one's own emotions and being mindful of how our emotions are perceived by others (Partido et al., 2020).
- **SELF-MANAGEMENT:** Capability to manage one's conduct by thinking carefully before action (Partido et al., 2020).
- **SOCIAL AWARENESS:** Being attentive to the feelings of individuals (Partido et al., 2020).
- **RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT:** Involves the skill to create, observe, and maintain effective emotional associations with others (Partido et al., 2020).

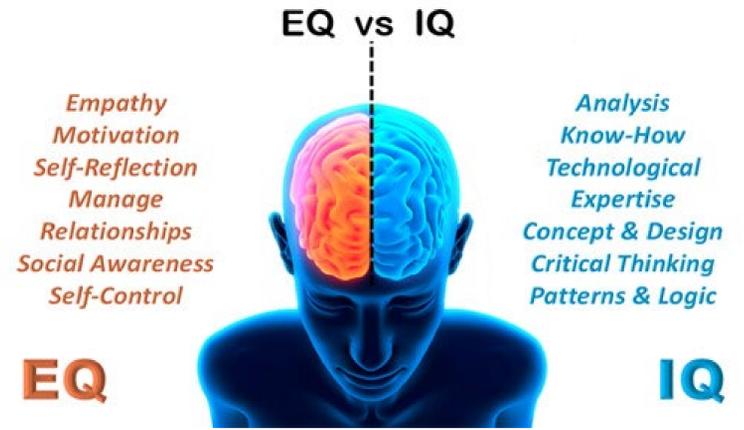


Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Model (2002)

[Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Model]. (2021). Retrieved from <https://globalleadershipfoundation.com/deepening-understanding/emotional-intelligence/>

DENTAL PROFESSIONAL AREAS OF FOCUS

- **Reflection vs. Reaction:** Emotions are contagious and there is nothing more powerful and more influential than simply the power of pause when beginning to develop one's emotional intelligence (Hegarty, 2018).
- **Professionalism:** Emotional intelligence traits such as self-awareness, self-management, empathy and social awareness are all main elements of professionalism for health professionals (Farah-Franco et al., 2017).
- **Adaptability:** Emotional intelligence will help professional relationships by helping in influencing the dental professional to interpret one's own emotions and those of others, remain composed under pressure, and be positive and adaptable to change (Fox, 2013).
- **Patient Satisfaction:** Patient surveys suggested that health professions with higher emotional intelligence greater patient satisfaction in treatment care (Parks et al., 2019).
- **Teamwork and Communication:** Consecutive evaluation of yearly emotional intelligence training resulted in self-identified enhancements in professional teamwork and conflict resolution (Parks et al., 2019).
- **Leadership:** Correlations have been found in leadership traits associated with emotional intelligence and building health professional and patient relationships (Parks et al., 2019).
- **Social Awareness:** According to Parks et al. (2019), community-based success in multicultural environments with diverse ethnicities is increasingly linked to self-aware and socially aware professionals, conveying how emotional intelligence components are essential aspects of professional aptitude.



How to Unlock Your Career Super-Power, Emotional Intelligence [Digital image]. (2020). Retrieved from <https://www.boyermanagement.com/dynamic-training-news/how-to-unlock-your-career-super-power-emotional-intelligence>

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND PROFESSIONALISM

- According to a study on second-year dental students by Partido et al. (2020), assessing the relationships between emotional intelligence and professionalism, emotional intelligence showed a significant correlation with professionalism, and several emotional intelligence domains predicted multiple domains of professionalism.
- Conscientiousness and humility were domains of professionalism that were found to be correlated to the emotional intelligence domains of self-awareness and self-management (Partido et al., 2020).
- The agreeableness domain of professionalism was significantly correlated with the emotional intelligence domain of empathy (Partido et al., 2020).
- Understanding methods to improve EI levels may contribute to helping dental students in their advancement and growth of professionalism skills (Partido et al., 2020).

JOB SATISFACTION, STRESS AND BURNOUT

Emotional intelligence may play a significant role as a buffer against perceived stress (Saddki, 2017). A substantial amount of research has been published regarding the association between emotional intelligence, job performance, and burnout among health care professionals (Branscum et al., 2016). A study by Gong et al. (2020) conveyed a significant association between high emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. Results of the study indicated work engagement facilitates the link between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction (Gong et al., 2020). Therefore, emotional intelligence is associated with job satisfaction through work engagement, which revealed that individuals with high emotional intelligence prospectively display greater work engagement and experience more satisfaction with their job (Gong et al., 2020).

In addition, the results of a study by Partido (2020), determining whether associations exist amongst emotional intelligence, stress, and burnout levels, suggested that components of emotional intelligence such as empathy and self-awareness significantly predicted stress levels. Interestingly, empathy and self-awareness predicted the level of burnout (Partido, 2020). In addition, emotional intelligence has also been shown to play a significant role in job performance. Research has shown that individuals with high emotional intelligence are able to cope with emotional stress and pressure and react more positively (Branscum et al., 2016). Further research is needed regarding improving emotional intelligence levels to endure stress and curtail burnout.

CONCLUSION

Although emotional intelligence is a relatively new topic, the research has conveyed many benefits when implemented and utilized. Research suggests that emotional intelligence may help communication skills, adaptability, job satisfaction, professionalism, leadership traits, and patient satisfaction. Therefore, exploring training courses and assessments on emotional intelligence for health care professionals may be advantageous. Further research is still needed on the role emotional intelligence plays in the dental profession.

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