

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, LEARNING
STYLES AND EGO IDENTITY**

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ABSTRACT

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, LEARNING STYLES AND EGO IDENTITY

Priyalatha Govindasamy

This study is conducted to explore the relationship between emotional intelligence, learning styles and ego identity of students. It was hypothesized that emotional intelligence does influence student's learning style. Pearson correlation was used to identify the relationship between emotional intelligence and learning styles. Stratified sampling was used to retrieve 100 respondents from UNIMAS student population. Results supported the hypothesis that emotional intelligence has relationship with learning styles in general and positively correlated with group learning style. However, study showed non existence of emotional aspects in experiential learning style. Results of the findings indicated the impact of emotional competencies in one's learning styles. Limitation of the study is discussed and suggestions were made for future study.

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ABSTRAK

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, LEARNING STYLES AND EGO IDENTITY

Priyalatha Govindasamy

Kajian ini dijalankan untuk mengenalpasti perkaitan diantara kecerdasan emosi dan gaya pembelajaran pelajar. Pengkaji mengemukakan hipotesis untuk menjangkakan perhubungan antara kecerdasan emosi dan gaya pembelajaran. Korelasi 'Pearson' digunakan untuk mengkaji hubungan diantara kecerdasan emosi dan gaya pembelajaran. 100 responden dipilih dari jumlah populasi UNIMAS dengan kaedah 'stratified sampling'. Keputusan analisa data menyokong hipotesis bahawa terdapat perhubungan positif di antara kecerdasan emosi dan gaya pembelajaran terutamanya dengan gaya pembelajaran secara berkumpulan. Keseluruhannya, dapatan kajian menunjukkan impak kecerdasan emosi pada gaya pembelajaran seseorang. Seterusnya, limitasi kajian dibincang bersama-sama dengan cadangan untuk kajian akan datang.

Chapter One

Introduction

1.0 Introduction

This chapter comprises the background of the study and the research problem that arises in comparing the previous and current research on emotional intelligence. The research problem enhanced the objectives to study on emotional intelligence. Predictions of relationships were stated as hypotheses. Finally, definition of variables and limitations of the study were discussed.

1.1 Background of the study

As early as 1820's, emotions were acknowledged as an important element in a person's survival and adaptation (Sternberg, Lautrey & Lubart, 2002). Emotional expressions and the views of the outcome of socially and emotionally intelligent behavior is stated as essential in effective adaptation (Bar-On, 2002). Therefore, appropriateness in expressing emotions in the correct situation is mentioned as emotional intelligence (Sternberg, Lautrey & Lubart, 2002). The emerging interest in the field of emotions have resulted a few model of intelligence (Kiersted, 1999). Goleman's mix model and Mayer and Salovey's ability model are among the famous models under the term of emotional intelligence (Chernis, 2000). Even though the models differ but they exhibit distinctively the dimensions of emotional intelligence which is used to measure one's level of emotional capabilities (Kierstead, 1999). According to Seval (2004), the evolvement of emotional concept brought greater interest in research fields and resulted as significant predictors in education, life satisfaction and work performances.

Ego identity is classified as a fraction of personality (Friedman & Schustack, 2001). According to Campbell (2002), identity is made up of two portions and they were the self-concept and self-esteem. Self-concept is known as beliefs about oneself whereas self-esteem is the evaluation on how one feels about themselves (Campbell, 2002). In relation, Walls and Little (2005) mentioned identity as structural or theory that one has about oneself. The self construct of an individual helps one to determine

the sameness and differences with others (Erikson, 1968 as cited in Schwartz, 2005). Moreover, a clear view about oneself gives a personal meaning for individuals and provides individual a better understanding over themselves to venture their goals in life (De Lazzari, 2000).

Learning style is a way an individual acquire knowledge and it depends in the preference of the learner (Jaju & Kwak, 2000). In similar Witkin (1973, as cited in Hong and Chan 2000) mentioned learning styles differ from one to another. Since learning style relates to preference of an individual, learning style does exhibit the characteristics of the learner (Hong & Chan, 2000). In relation Garger and Guild, (1994, as cited in Raven, Carno, Carton & Shellmer, 1993) stated that interactions of personality and behavior is expressed thru learning styles. Moreover, learning style is influenced by individual's perception over the environment and personality traits (Hong & Chan, 2000).

1.2 Research statement

Research on emotional intelligence and academic success was carried out by examining the transition period from high schools to university (Parker, Summerfeldt, Hogan & Majeski, 2002). The study showed emotional transition that is experienced by first year students and the management of it influence academic success. Students who are able to monitor and handle emotions well were associated with academic success (Parker, Summerfeldt, Hogan & Majeski, 2002). Bar-On (2002) stated that

academic success was strongly associated with several dimensions of emotional intelligence like interpersonal, adaptability and stress management abilities. Moreover, emotional intelligence is prescribed as an essential tool in polishing students to study towards their potential and helps one to accept their limits (Seval, 2004).

Wintre and Yaffer (2000) conducted a research on first year student's adjustment to university life as a function of relationships with parents and claimed that parental relationship does helps students in adjusting to the new environment. This relationship shows the positive attachment of individual towards their parents (Wintre & Yaffer, 2000). According to Reich and Siegel (2002), ego development of an individual is associated with their attachment security. Therefore, a secure attachment of individual with their parents reflects on one's ego development which probably used in handling relationships in the university life. Besides that, Chickering (1969, as cited in Wintre and Yaffer, 2000) drew a framework on undergraduate's growth with central theme of identity development. Moreover, he classified seven vectors in identity development which were achieving a sense of competence, managing emotions, developing autonomy, establishing own identity, interacting with stress with increasing high tolerance, developing purpose and clarify a personal and consistent set of beliefs (Chikering, 1969 as cited in Wintre & Yaffer 2000).

Keltner and Haidt (2001, as cited in Lopes, Brackett, Nezlek, Shutz, Sellin and Salovey, 2004) mentioned that emotional competencies as an important element for social intentions because emotions serves communicative purposes and social functions on conveying info about people's thought, intention and coordinating social encounters. Due to that people are expected to process emotional information and manage emotional dynamics intelligently to navigate the social world (Lopes, Brackett, Nezlek, Schutz, Sellin & Salovey, 2004). According to Hong and Chan (2000), learning style is influenced by environment and personality traits. Therefore, the navigation of environment would be probably associated with the emotional competencies.

Considerable researches are devoted to understanding the influences of emotional intelligence in academic achievements. This understanding is used as a guide to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and learning style in an academic context. Moreover, the study also encompasses the correlation between ego identity and emotional intelligence. In relation, ego identity is also studied over their correlation with students learning styles.

1.3 Research objectives

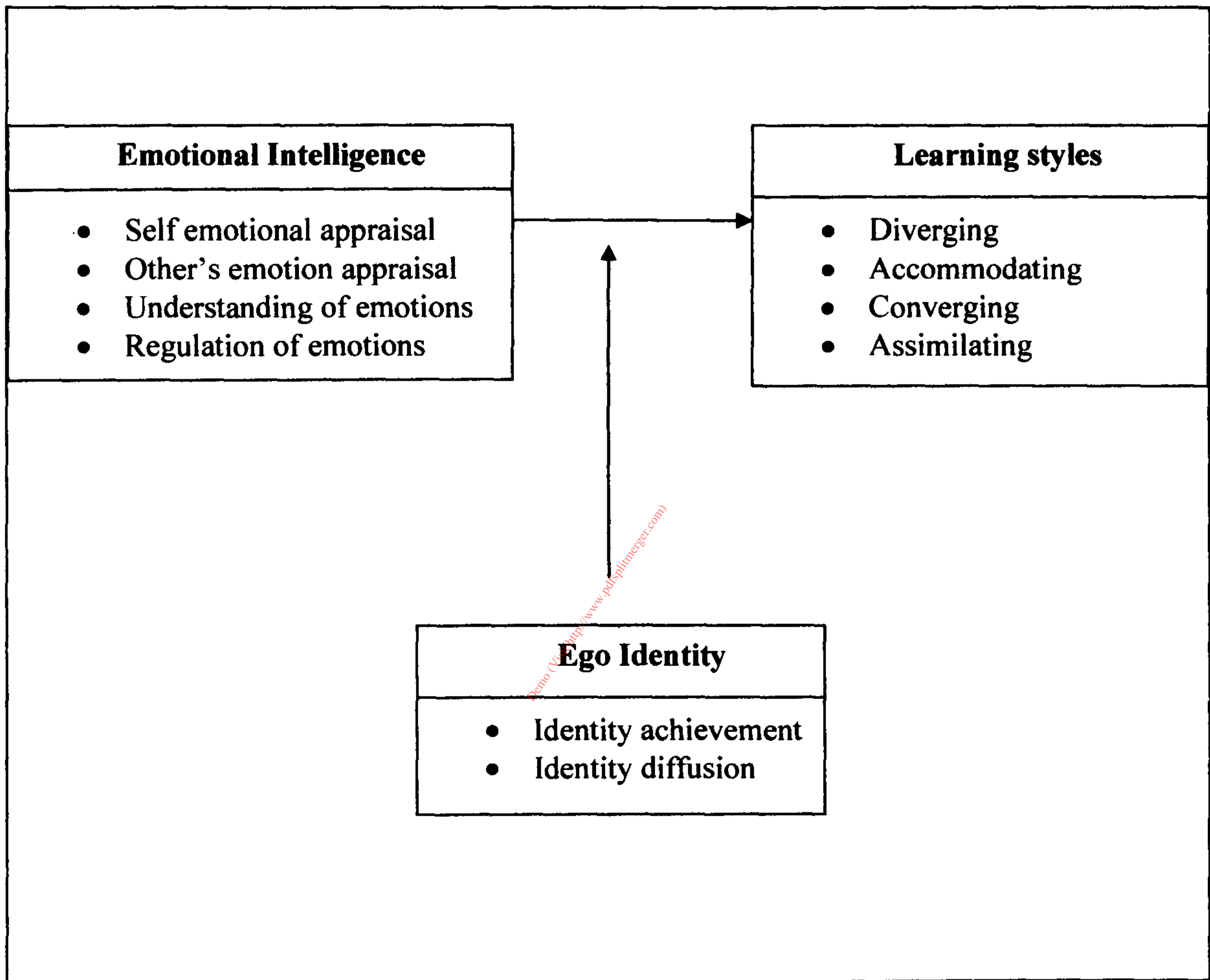
1. To study the relationship between emotional intelligence and learning styles.
2. To study the relationship between emotional intelligence and ego identity.
3. To study the relationship between ego identity and learning style.
4. To study the relationship between emotional intelligence and experiential learning styles.
5. To study the relationship between emotional intelligence and group learning styles.
6. To study the relationship between emotional intelligence and identity achievement.
7. To study the relationship between emotional intelligence and identity diffusion.
8. To study the relationship between ego identity and experiential learning style.
9. To study the relationship between ego identity and group style.

1.4 Hypotheses

- 1. There is a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and learning styles.**
- 2. There is a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and ego identity.**
- 3. There is a negative relationship between ego identity and learning styles.**
- 4. There is a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and experiential learning styles.**
- 5. There is a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and group learning styles.**
- 6. There is a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and identity achievement.**
- 7. There is a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and identity diffusion.**
- 8. There is a negative relationship between ego identity and experiential learning style.**
- 9. There is a negative relationship between ego identity and group learning style.**

1.5 Conceptual Framework

Chart 1.0



1.6 Definition

1.6.1 Emotional Intelligence

Conceptual definition

An ability to monitor our own and other's feelings and emotions to discriminate among them and to use this to guide our thinking and actions (Mayer & Salovey, 1990).

Operational definition

To determine how well students know how they feel and others feel and differentiate these feelings and apply it in daily life.

1.6.2 Ego Identity

Conceptual definition

Acceptance of and being comfortable with one's physical self, sense of direction and consequently and ability to make decisions (Tan, Kendis, Fine & Porac, 1977).

Operational definition

Knowing who they are and how they are different from others by picturing the self they have accepted.

1.6.3 Learning styles

Conceptual definition

Biologically and developmentally imposed set of personal characteristics that make the same teaching and learning strategy effective for some and ineffective for others (Brickell, 1993).

Operational definition

A pattern that students use to gain and analyze the information learned in academic setting.

1.7 Limitations

Since the study is carried out among the student of University Malaysia Sarawak, the research findings may not be generalized to other population. The limited sampling procedure is a setback in this study. The total of 100 respondents is not sufficient in representing a larger sample. However, cost restricts researcher from recruiting more participants in this study. Besides that, the self-reported method in distributing questionnaire did not guarantee the return of the same number of questionnaires.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This chapter explored the entire three variables (emotional intelligence, ego identity and learning styles) in detail. Clarification was started with the historical background and literature review on the variables. Later, literature reviews were organized to support the relationships between variables.

2.1 Historical background of Emotional Intelligence

2.1.1 Emotions

The concept of emotions existed as early as 1581, whereby Plato talked about emotions in his philosophy (Salovey & Pizarro, 2002). Besides philosophers, emotions were also described by evolutionist Charles Darwin as functional responses that mobilized organism for performance of adaptive actions (Salovey & Pizarro, 2002). Later, emotions became popular among the psychologist and came out with their own perceptions. Mayer and Salovey (1990), viewed emotions as an organized response, crossing the boundaries of many psychological, cognitive, motivational, experimental system. It's a feeling state which includes physiological responses and cognitions that conveys information about relationships (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999). Moreover, one's emotions are illustrated as shortcut which allows one to bypass the process of eliminating all possible options (Salovey & Pizarro, 2002). However, as emotions aids to reason it is used to guide one's life (Salovey & Pizarro, 2002).

2.1.2 Intelligence

Sternberg (1997, as cited in Sternberg, Lautrey & Lubart, 2002) described intelligence as an analytic, practical and creative forms that allows people to deal with situations that range from automatized, well-known tasks to highly novel problem solving tasks. Intelligence was viewed as a capacity to reason validly about information (Mayer, Caruso & Salovey, 1999). Mayer, Caruso and Salovey (1999)

also added intelligence as broad set of abilities. According to Wechsler (as cited in Mayer & Salovey, 1990) intelligence was defined as an aggregate or global capacity of the individual to act purposefully, to think rationally and to deal effectively with his environment. Due to that, intelligence is expected to help in interacting successfully with one's context and adapting themselves or shaping the context to fit one's abilities (Stankov, 2002 as cited in Seval, 2004).

2.1.3 Emotional Intelligence

The term emotional intelligence first appeared in a series of academic articles authored by Mayer and Salovey (1990, 1997). However, these publications generate little attention (Kierstead, 1999). Remarkably in 1995, emotional intelligence gained popularity through Daniel Goleman's masterpiece called "Emotional Intelligence" (Bar-On, 2002). Despite the popularity and interest in emotional intelligence over the past decade inspired scholars in twentieth century and even historical roots can be tracked back to the nineteenth century (Bar-On, 2002). Sternberg, Lautrey and Lubart (2002) mentioned about Charles Darwin (1872) publication on emotional and social intelligence which emphasize on importance of emotional expressions for survival and adaptations. In addition, Edward Thorndike (1920) contributed in the field of emotional intelligence under term called *social intelligence* (Bar-On, 2002). However the early theorists were overlooked over the emergence of Theory of Multiple Intelligence by Howard Gardner (1983). Mayer and Salovey (1990) coined the term emotional intelligence and described it into four dimension model. Later, many

theorists came up with their models and research on emotional intelligence (Bar-On, 2002). According to Kierstead (1999), concept of emotional intelligence is an umbrella term that captures a broad collection of individual skills and dispositions usually referred to as soft skills or interpersonal skills that are outside the traditional areas of specific knowledge, general intelligence, technical and professional skills. In addition, the properly used emotions are essential tools for our day to day life and affects of our relations with others or our self-identity and the ability to complete a task highlight the significance of emotional intelligence in our daily life (Culver, 2000).

Due to that, idea of emotional intelligence was commonly studied in psychological, educational and management areas (Mayer & Salovey, 1993). Early development of intelligence by psychologist focused mainly on cognitive aspects of an individual such as memory and problem solving (Cherniss, 2000). However, theorist's like Wechsler noted the importance of non-cognitive aspects in adapting and succeeding in their live (Chernis, 2000). Around 1920's, E.L Thorndike a psychologist came up with his theory called 'social intelligence' which emphasized non-cognitive aspects (Cherniss, 2000). Thorndike (1920, as cited in Bar On, 2005) distinguished social intelligence from other forms of intelligence and defined as an ability to perceive one's own and others internal states, motivates and behaviors and act toward them optimally on the basis of that information (Mayer & Salovey, 1990). Though Thorndike was the pioneer, but his theory was overlooked when Howard

Gardner (1983) introduced the Multiple Intelligence Theory (Rhee, 1999). Rhee (1999) defined Multiple Intelligence as the capacity to solve problems. The Multiple Intelligence Theory encompasses seven distinct intelligences (Sobel, 2001). Table below illustrates the seven intelligences.

Table 1 Multiple Intelligence Theory (Sobel, 2001)

Intelligence	Descriptions
Logical-Mathematical Intelligence	Ability to detect patterns, reason deductively and think logically. This intelligence is most often associated with scientific and mathematical thinking.
Linguistic Intelligence	This intelligence includes the ability to effectively manipulate language to express oneself theoretically or poetically.
Spatial Intelligence	Ability to manipulate and create mental images in order to solve problems.
Musical Intelligence	Capability to recognize and compose musical pitches, tones, and rhythms.
Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence	Ability to use one's mental abilities to coordinate one's own bodily movements.
Naturalist intelligence	Ability to recognize plants, minerals and animals, including rocks and grass and all variety of flora and fauna.
The Personal Intelligences	Interpersonal feelings and intentions of others--and intrapersonal intelligence-the ability to understand one's own feelings and motivations.

Even though Gardner (1983, as cited in Sobel, 2001) did not use the term emotional intelligence but his concepts were foundations for later models and theories in the field of emotional intelligence. Mayer and Salovey was the pioneer who coined the term emotional intelligence (Cherniss, 2000). According to Mayer and Salovey (1990), emotional intelligence is an ability to monitor our own and other's feelings and emotions to discriminate among them and to use this guide our thinking and