

Research article

UDC 159.9.072.432


<https://doi.org/10.21702/rpj.2021.3.4>

Emotional Intelligence Contributes to the Feeling of Self-Realization: A Case of Russian Young Adults

Eugene F. Borokhovski¹  , Yulia V. Obukhova² 

¹ Concordia University, Montreal, Canada

² Southern Federal University, Rostov-on-Don, Russian Federation

 eugene.borokhovski@concordia.ca

Abstract

Introduction. Young adults compose one of the most dynamic social groups, sensitive to changes. Dependent on various personal characteristics and life circumstances, this sensitivity could lead either to successful social adaptation and subsequent life satisfaction or trigger dysfunctional behaviours and psychological maladaptation. Young adults often face the contradiction between profound need for self-realization and limited capacity for achieving it and need psychological resources to overcome this challenge. This study takes to the next new level empirical exploration of the role emotional intelligence plays in shaping self-realization in young adults.

Methods. The sample of study participants included full- ($N = 52$) and part-time ($N = 60$) university students. They completed demographic forms, Multidimensional Questionnaire on Personality Self-Realization – personal, professional, and social, and the Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire. Correlational and regression analyses were employed for data processing. **Results.** Participants' age, especially in conjunction with the part-time working status was negatively correlated with all three types of self-realization, Hierarchical multiple regression analysis revealed that the general factor of emotional intelligence significantly contributed to self-realization ($p < 0.01$). Furthermore, its interpersonal component was the strongest predictor, uniquely contributing from 7 % to 16 % of explained variability in the criterion variables. **Discussion.** The findings indicate that emotional intelligence is a strong adaptive factor capable of compensating for the negative influence of challenging changes in life circumstances. Implications for further research and applied practice of psychological aid for young adults in their transition from educational to working environments are considered and discussed.

Keywords

self-realization, professional self-realization, personal self-realization, social self-realization, emotional intelligence, interpersonal emotional intelligence, intra-personal emotional intelligence, understanding of emotions, management of emotions, young adults

Highlights

- The role of emotional intelligence in three types of self-realization is explored on a sample of 112 Russian young adults – full-time and part-time (working) university students by means of correlational and regression analyses.
- Participant's age, especially associated with the part-time status, deprives successful self-realization of all types – professional, social, and personal.
- Interpersonal Emotional Intelligence, in particular, uniquely explains 7 %, 11 %, and 16 % of variability in the criterion variables of professional, social, and personal self-realization, respectively.

For citation

Borokhovski, E. F., & Obukhova, Yu. V. (2021). Emotional intelligence contributes to the feeling of self-realization: A case of Russian young adults. *Russian Psychological Journal*, 18(3), 54–69. <https://doi.org/10.21702/rpj.2021.3.4>

Introduction

Research in the field of psychology of personality with the focus on discovering and supporting potentials and conditions for comprehensive personal development is currently becoming more and more relevant. High and constantly elevating attention to personality-related psychological issues is based upon clear understanding of the utmost importance for all aspects of social adaptation of the entire spectrum of so-called SELF-phenomena – such personal characteristics as: capacity for self-education, self-development and self-improvements, often subsumed under the umbrella term of self-realization.

The pace of life in modern society, dynamic and stressful, imposes special demands on our cognition and behaviour, and constantly challenges one's capacity for self-realization. The problem is of particular relevance for younger people, whose strive to fulfill their personal and professional potentials is newly shaped, whereas pertinent competencies are just forming and may not be sufficient to adequately face the trials of adult life. Socioeconomic instability and the uncertainty of complex interpersonal relationships form additional barriers on the path of young adults to successful self-realization. Therefore, self-realization requires carefully balancing the ability to take into account ever-changing life circumstances to adapt to them, and ability to form and maintain independent personal goals and consistently act toward achieving them. Often caught in frustration between these two competing necessities, a person needs help to better understand what factors help or hurt in meeting own life hopes and expectations (i.e., factors that either promote or impair successful self-realization). No wonder, psychological research (this study included) targets to discover and describe these factors of influence.

The concept of self-realization has been the focus of research within various psychological frameworks. Many theoretical schools include in their priorities a strong interest in empirical research of self-realization and related concepts and phenomena. Among the most prominent examples of such psychological constructs, researchers have repeatedly attempted to understand and explain, the following could be named: 'self-actualization' in the humanistic theory of personality (e.g., Maslow, 1987), 'self-identity' in the theory of psychosocial development (e.g., Erikson, 1994), or 'self-efficacy' in the social-learning theory (e.g., Bandura, 1977). Despite differences in terminology and diversity of theoretical origins, the overlap in these and some

related concepts can be quite evident. For example, Brennan & Piechowski (1991) considered the correspondence of the idea and concept of self-actualization with the theory of personality development by Dąbrowski (1972) and empirically demonstrated that self-actualization is nearly identical to the person's ability for the "...deliberate, conscious and self-directed review of life from the multilevel perspective..." (p. 306), i.e., the model's fourth level of personal development.

Though a unifying theoretical concept of self-realization (if ever possible) has yet to be developed, its empirical studies under various frameworks persist. They do face some challenges of insufficient clarity of the respective operational definitions that nevertheless are converging toward some common understanding of the phenomenon. Oxford dictionary of the modern English language defines 'self-realization' as the "fulfillment of one's own potential" (Oxford English and Spanish dictionary..., n.d.). Most likely, this statement refers to achieving maximally possible results, as judged by some objective criteria. It can prove quite difficult to observe self-realization directly and objectively as some degree of match between actual measurable achievements and individual hopes, desires, and expectations (all subjective phenomena, hardly fully recognized by the persons themselves and rarely revealed to outside observers without reservations). Relatively open to observation are just psychological reactions, reflected in cognitive processes of whether and to what degree these personal expectations are met. However, subjective perception by individuals of their own degree of self-realization and subsequent satisfaction/dissatisfaction with it is by no means a less valuable outcome and should be equally in focus of the applied psychological research.

Addressing the issue of self-realization remains very challenging, both from theoretical and empirical perspectives, largely because of the absence of a commonly accepted conceptual paradigm. Even before the advent of the major theories, outlined in the text above, the concept of self-realization and its study, has been for quite a long time embedded within the framework of psychological maturity (Olczak & Goldman, 1975). Moreover, this interest goes back in history as far as to the beginning of 20th century, when Putnam (1915) suggested that person's possibilities are implicitly present throughout the lifetime and are realized (actualized) with the process of psychological maturation.

Connected to that point of view, the process of self-realization is directly linked to a person's internal motivation for self-change dependent on external factors that either promote or obstruct personal development. As a result, a set of related questions have come in focus for our research. Why people are different in achieving self-realization – some fulfilling most of their potential and some struggling with even minor accomplishments? What factors, especially psychological characteristics, are dominant in determining (i.e., predictive of) successful self-realization?

For the purposes of the current study, we used the operational definition of self-realization as outlined within the framework of the systemic approach suggested by Kudinov, Kudinov, Kudinova, & Mikhailova (2017). The framework distinguishes among the following 'instrumental-stylistic' components of self-realization: (1) 'dynamic' (encompasses opposite characteristics of 'activity' and 'inertia'); (2) 'emotional' (represented by opposite characteristics of 'optimistic' and 'pessimistic' attitudes); and (3) 'organizational' (includes opposite characteristics of 'internality' and 'externality'). Together these components describe by what means (i.e., instrumental quality) and how (i.e., stylistic quality) a person approaches the goal of self-realization. The other set of framework components, designated as 'motivational-meaningful' – to reflect driving forces behind actions toward self-realization – features: (1) proper 'motivational' component (contains complementary 'socio-centralized' motivation for self-realization and 'egocentric' motivation for self-fulfillment);

(2) 'cognitive' component (incorporates balancing qualities of 'creativity' and 'conservatism'); and (3) so-called 'prognostic' component (is comprised of contrasting 'constructive' and 'destructive' qualities). To reflect what is predominant in person's objectives and impediments, the framework also introduces relatively independent 'goal-setting' (distinguishes between 'social' and 'personal' intentions) and 'personal competency' (by analogy, focuses on 'social' as opposed to 'personal' barriers/obstacles to effective self-realization) components.

In terms of areas of application, the framework distinguishes among the following types of self-realization. Activity-oriented or *professional* self-realization is characterized by a person's strive toward accomplishments in various areas of professional activity (career, sport, arts, crafts, etc.) and, as a result, toward achieving higher levels of professional competence. *Personal* self-realization has in its focus the goals of personal growth and development to enhance such qualities as responsibility, tolerance, empathy, curiosity, erudition, creativity, ethics, and integrity. Finally, *social* self-realization manifests itself in pursuing socially sanctioned objectives and values through participation in socially beneficial activities (e.g., political, charitable, humanitarian, pedagogical, etc.).

We would argue that among the most effective means of overcoming both these types of barriers is the development of a sufficient level of emotional intelligence, understood as person's ability to establish constructive interpersonal relations, maintain emotional balance and self-control, understand and account for own and other people's emotions. It is quite possible that personal intellectual abilities impact on the content and quality of self-realization. Supposedly, people with lower levels of intellectual abilities (including underdeveloped emotional intelligence) are typically characterized by limited self-concepts, impeded capacity for overcoming self-realization barriers, and by difficulties in their verbal self-expression. Emotional intelligence not only influences self-realization in general, but selectively affects its particular components.

The first notion of "emotional intelligence" belongs to the works of Beldoch (1964) and Leuner (1966) in the contexts of sensitivity to emotional expressions in interpersonal communications and women studies, respectively. Later Gardner (1993) suggested distinguishing between intrapersonal (with the focus on own emotions) and interpersonal (with the focus on emotions of other people) emotional intelligence. A really detailed conceptualization of the phenomenon was attempted only in 1990 by Salovey and Mayer and then, with the release of the book simply entitled "Emotional intelligence" (Goleman, 1995), the term acquired its popularity in both research and applied psychological literature. Currently, conceptual interpretation of the term is split into two quite distinct categories – ability emotional intelligence and trait emotional intelligence (Petrides & Furnham, 2001). The former, also known as cognitive-emotional ability refers to the ability of a person to recognize, process and meaningfully use emotionally charged information, whereas the latter, also often designated as emotional self-efficacy, describes the collection of behavioural, dispositional, and self-perceptual personal characteristics potentially instrumental in dealing with the same (emotion-related) types of information.

In a sense, the origins of the concept of emotional intelligence can be traced back to the early 20th century, when Thorndike (1920) introduced the idea of 'social intelligence', then understood as the ability to recognize and efficiently deal with others in the social contexts, i.e., to be affluent in interpersonal relations. Thus, it would be only logical to expect that social intelligence and its derivative (as reflected by the evolution in psychological thinking), emotional intelligence, would play one of the key roles in successful self-realization.

Research literature provides us with a variety of empirical evidence in support of connections between emotional intelligence and self-realization. For example, Kostakova (2014) found statistically significant correlation between professional self-realization and the overall index of emotional intelligence in respondents with moderate and high levels of self-realization. Professional self-realization was also connected to the quality of self-motivation, but only as a tendency. In contrast, respondents with low levels of general self-realization showed only a weak (at a tendency level) link between integral indices of self-realization and emotional intelligence, but a significant negative association of self-realization with a particular component of emotional intelligence designated as 'emotional awareness'. Kostakova explains the latter by suggesting that the knowledge about (awareness of) emotional phenomena alone, without practical components of emotional intelligence (e.g., empathy, mastery of emotional self-control), in fact, may only reduce the applied value of emotional intelligence and weaken professional self-realization.

Another study, carried out by Bar-On (2001), demonstrated that emotional intelligence was highly correlated with a person's ability to successfully employ basic skills. Moreover, emotional intelligence appeared to be more important than cognitive intelligence for personal self-actualization, as being more capable of distinguishing between those high and low in the quality of self-actualization. The link between emotional intelligence and self-actualization also manifests itself in very specific professional contexts, for example, in auditors involved in complex negotiations (Roché, 2009). According to Walter (2015), emotional intelligence is among the strong predictors of teaching ability and professional performance of educators, where teaching self-efficacy mediates the link between the former and the latter. Similarly, a whole array of studies addressed the influence of emotional intelligence on the self-efficacy type of phenomena and performance in higher education and academia. Studies by Ramesh, Samuel Thavaraj, & Ramkumar (2016) and Parker, Duffy, Wood, Bond, & Hogan (2005) reported positive association of emotional intelligence with the academic performance and its subjective perception (i.e., learning self-realization) in college students and in students transitioning from high school to university, respectively.

Indications of some indirect links between emotional intelligence and self-realization are also quite prevalent in the research literature. Foster, Lomas, Downey, & Stough (2018) summarized the findings of many before them to show that emotional intelligence (understood as the ability to regulate and control one's emotions) and mindfulness have links to self-awareness and self-regulation, and then demonstrated that the former are significantly related to wellbeing in Australian adolescents. Gómez-Baya & Mendoza (2018) even suggested emotional education interventions for youth to promote more adaptive reactions to positive and especially negative affects. According to Farnia, Nafukho, & Petrides (2018), emotional intelligence plays an important role in developing and implementing coping strategies to react to challenges of life in general and in career-related decision-making, in particular. Buffering, or protective effects of emotional intelligence against stresses and potential burn-outs, are also quite evident in different professions, for example, in nurses (Szczygiel & Mikolajczak, 2018).

Furthermore, both direct and indirect evidence has by now been accumulated and summarized in the meta-analytical research. For example, Andrei, Mancini, Baldaro, Trombini, & Agnoli (2014) reviewed 77 primary studies that addressed the role of emotional intelligence (operationalized as a personal trait of emotional self-efficacy and assessed with the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire) in determining various aspects of socioemotional well-being of participants in different age groups. Another meta-analysis (van der Linden et al., 2017), based on data from

142 independent sources, found a substantial overlap between the general factor of personality and the trait of emotional intelligence. Though these two meta-analyses did not address directly the question in focus of the current study, their results are indicative of the existence of complex relationships between a whole set of phenomena related to self-realization, on one hand, and various aspects of emotional intelligence, on the other.

There is a whole array of meta-analyses that explore and summarize research findings regarding the relationship between emotional intelligence and various aspects of life and professional activities that, in one way or another, can contribute to perception of self-realization. Joseph, Jin, Newman, & O'Boyle (2015) demonstrated the role emotional intelligence plays in job performance, though they also raised a question of whether its contribution is truly independent of the influence of self-efficacy, general mental ability and some of the Big Five personality traits.

All in all, there is very little doubt that the psychological phenomenon of emotional intelligence, alongside a number of other demographic and personal characteristics, is implicated in self-realization in general, as well as in its various subcomponents, and in multiple application areas. However, the research literature also recognizes the complexity of both concepts of interest, their multifaceted nature and, thus, multilevel and potentially convoluted associations among variables representing subcomponents of the phenomena on either side.

Study Objectives

This explorative study aims to shed some extra light on the relationships that connect emotional intelligence and age-related personal characteristics with general and domain-specific self-realization in Russian young adults by addressing the following research questions:

(1) Does participants' age (and related working status) predict successful self-realization and to what extent?

(2) What is the contribution of emotional intelligence in each of the three areas of self-realization: *professional*, *social*, and *personal*?

(3) Are there particular aspects of emotional intelligence that are especially potent in predicting self-realization?

For the purposes of the current study, self-realization, operationalized as self-reported satisfaction with the state of meeting individual goals and expectations in personal, social and professional life, was measured using 'Multidimensional Questionnaire on Personality Self-Realization' (MQPSR), whereas emotional intelligence, understood primarily in terms of ability to understand and manage different levels of affects, was assessed by employing 'Emotional Intelligence (Emln)' questionnaire. Data collected with these questionnaires from the study participants were then subjected to a series of correlational and regression analyses as described in the upcoming Method section.

Methods

One hundred and twelve young adults (average age 25.4 with the median of 22), men and women, volunteered to participate in the study for a credit in an introductory Psychology course for non-psychology learners. They were all undergraduate students at the Southern Federal University (SFU) in Rostov-on-Don, Russia, both full-time (N = 52) and part-time (i.e., combining study and work, N = 60), specializing in different fields of study (e.g., geography, biology). The study received formal approval from the SFU ethical committee for the work involving human participants. All respondents signed the standard consent form that explained to them the study

purposes and procedure and asked their permission to use, on the condition of anonymity, collected data for research purposes only. Participants then received detailed guiding instruction prior to data collection, filled out two main questionnaires and a brief demographic survey in one 50–70-minute session, and were debriefed and thanked upon the data gathering completion.

For the purposes of diagnosing self-realization, the study employed the MQPSR developed by Kudinov & Kudinov (2017). The structure and the levels of participants' emotional intelligence were assessed using the 'Emln' questionnaire by Lyusin (2004). The MQPSR test allows diagnosis of the three types of self-realization: *Social*, *Professional*, and *Personal*. It contains 102 individual questions-statements that compose 16 basic individual scales (belonging to different self-realization components) with an additional scale of authenticity (honesty). Basic scales characterize various aspects of personal self-realization (social corporate self-realizing attitudes; subject-personal self-realizing attitudes; activity; inertia; optimism; pessimism; internality; externality; socio-centralized motivation for self-realization; egocentric motivation for self-fulfillment; creativity; conservatism; constructiveness; destructiveness; social barriers; personal barriers).

The test requires respondents to evaluate the degree of applicability to their own personalities of the statements that reflect various nuances of self-realization in different life circumstances by selecting one of the six provided options, as follows: (1) 'No' (never); (2) 'Most likely (often) no'; (3) 'Sometimes' (neither yes nor no); (4) 'More likely (often) yes'; (5) 'Mostly (typically) yes'; and (6) 'Definitely (always) yes'. After checking results on the additional authenticity scale to ensure respondents' sincerity, positive responses (i.e., corresponding to options 4–6) are added up for each corresponding scale with a potential range of scores from 0 to 36. In addition, it is possible to identify which type of self-realization dominates each respondent's personal profile with 32 items informing each category – i.e., personal, social, and professional self-realization. Kudinov & Kudinov (2017) indicate the range of Cronbach's alpha values for individual scales to be 0.72–0.78 ($N = 587$) and the test-retest reliability coefficient of 0.76 ($p < 0.001$).

The Emln questionnaire contains 46 statements that are to be evaluated by the respondents for the degree of their conformity with each statement on a 4-point scale with the following options: (1) 'Categorically disagree'; (2) 'Rather disagree than agree'; (3) 'Rather agree than disagree'; and (4) 'Completely agree'. The instrument items are combined in five subscales: understanding emotions of other, managing emotions of others, understanding own emotions, managing own emotions, and emotional control (control of expression). Pulled together in different combinations, these five subscales can be converted into four scales of a higher level of interpretation, namely: *interpersonal* emotional intelligence; *intrapersonal* (self-focused) emotional intelligence; *understanding of emotions*; and *managing emotions*. Finally, the total index of emotional intelligence can be calculated as the sum of scores for all test items. The test author reports Cronbach's alpha values for the Emln sub-scales that are used in our study in a range from 0.65 to 0.78, and the corresponding factor loads.

In addition to these two questionnaires, demographic data about each participant's age, gender, field of study, and working status were collected in a form of a short survey.

To address the study's main research questions about connections between major variables we employed correlational and regression analyses, ANOVA, and paired-sample verification t-tests. Coefficients of correlation between various components of emotional intelligence and types of self-realization, sporadically found in the literature and observed in a series of our pilot studies, clustered on average around 0.25. To remain more conservative (cautious) in estimating required

sample size, the expected effect size and the desired statistical power were set at 0.15 and 0.9, respectively. With just two predictors per each independent regression model with the alpha-level of 0.05 for two-tailed test, the recommended sample size was estimated (online G*power calculator) to be no less than seventy-three participants and was in fact exceeded through the recruitment process. All analyses were implemented within the SPSS 24.0.0 statistical software package.

Results

This section reports on the study findings, first providing descriptive statistics and observations associated with different categories of participants, and then reports the results of correlational and regression analyses.

Overall descriptive statistics and trends

Table 1 provides the summary of the descriptive statistics of the major variables in the study. Among three types of self-realization in our sample, *Personal* self-realization appears to be the dominant one ($M = 79.15$, $SD = 16.48$). This pattern persists when the sample is divided by the participants' status (i.e., 'working and studying' vs. 'studying alone').

Table 1

Descriptive statistics for the study major variables (N = 112)

<u>Variables</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Median</u>	<u>Range</u>
Age	25.38	7.08	22.00	18–48
Personal SR	79.15	16.48	79.00	40–140
Social SR	53.30	19.82	53.50	12–142
Professional SR	62.07	23.15	62.00	20–155
Interpersonal Emln	44.46	6.54	44.00	23–58
Intrapersonal Emln	41.03	7.76	42.00	18–58
Emln: Understanding	43.66	7.49	44.00	26–73
Emln: Management	42.25	6.70	42.00	25–58
Emln: Total	85.56	11.66	87.00	53–110

However, there was an apparent difference between paired scores of these two sub-samples on all three types of self-regulation (Table 2). In all instances, participants, who combined part-time university study and job, showed significantly lower degrees of self-realization.

Table 2
Difference between 'full-time' and 'part-time' students Self-Realization scores: ANOVA summary table

Source	df	Mean Difference ^a	F	MS	p
Personal Self-Realization					
Between	1	7.36	5.81	1510.17	0.018
Within	110			260.17	
Social Self-Realization					
Between	1	7.76	4.40	1678.16	0.038
Within	110			381.23	
Professional Self-Realization					
Between	1	12.54	8.74	4379.51	0.004
Within	110			501.09	

Note: ^aPositive: Always in favour of full-time students.

Interestingly, participants' studying/working status was almost perfectly aligned with their age: older participants combined the two, whereas the younger ones predominantly were full-time students. Average age of the part-time students/workers was 29.8 with the standard deviation of 7.03. These indices for full-time students were 20.29 and 1.56, respectively. These two categories were significantly different at $F = 58.21$ ($p < 0.001$).

We did not observe similar patterns in the data derived from the measures of emotional intelligence. Participant's status affected neither the total index of emotional intelligence ($F = 1.40$, $p = 0.24$), nor its subcomponents: the corresponding independent sample pair-wise comparison t -values ranged from -0.03 to 2.25 (all, but just one – *Interpersonal EmIn*, $p = 0.026$, – statistically *ns*). In other words, while apparently affecting measures of all three types of self-realization, participants' age/status seemingly had no salient effect on their levels of emotional intelligence. In subsequent regression analyses the 'age' variable was used as one of the two continuous predictors, reflecting at the same time participants' standing with respect to their studying/working status.

Correlations among variables

Table 3 presents the cross-correlation matrix of all major variables. In line with the logic and structure of both major questionnaires used in the study, the cross-correlations among sub-scales within each instrument were prominent and significant, but not high enough to consider them

reflecting indistinguishable concepts. We observed significant correlations between the overall index of emotional intelligence and all three types of self-realization, whereas the patterns of correlation between subscales of that index, on one hand, and *personal*, *social*, and *professional* types of self-realization, on the other, were not consistent – only half of them reached the level of statistical significance. Specifically, *interpersonal* emotional intellect and *management* of emotions, both were significantly (though not to the same magnitude) correlated with each of the three types of self-realization; the other subscales of the measure of emotional intellect were not. Age was negatively correlated with all measures of self-realization, though only one coefficient of correlation (that is between age and *social* self-realization) was statistically significant. Age was literally unrelated to the overall index of emotional intelligence ($r = -0.06$), whereas its connections to different components of emotional intelligence were variable encompassing negative and positive correlations in equal proportion (though all – statistically non-significant).

Table 3
Cross-correlation matrix for the study major variables ($N = 112$)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Age	–								
2. Personal SR	–0.131	–							
3. Social SR	–0.163	0.565***	–						
4. Professional SR	–0.085	0.666***	0.695**	–					
5. Total EI	–0.056	0.256**	0.258**	0.250**	–				
6. Interpersonal IE	–0.171	0.419***	0.359***	0.274**	0.813***	–			
7. Intrapersonal EI	0.062	0.047	0.089	0.156	0.828***	0.381***	–		
8. Understanding of emotions	0.004	0.132	0.169	0.110	0.760***	0.672***	0.574***	–	
9. Management of emotions	–0.100	0.232**	0.169	0.258**	0.821***	0.564***	0.797***	0.377***	–

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Predictors of self-realization

To address the major research question about factors contributing to the subjective feeling of meeting one's goals and expectations, as measured by the MQPSR scores, we performed a series of multiple regression analyses with two predictors (age, and the overall score of emotional intelligence) for each of the three criterion variables: *personal*, *professional*, and *social* self-realization. The results are presented in Table 4.

Variable	r^a	R	R^2	R^2 - change	F - change	Sign. F	Final
Personal Self-Realization							
Age	-0.131	0.131	0.017	0.017	1.93	0.168	-0.117
Emln: Total	0.256**	0.282	0.079	0.062	7.36	0.008	0.249**
Professional Self-Realization							
Age	-0.085	0.085	0.007	0.007	0.80	0.373	-0.071
Emln: Total	0.250**	0.260	0.068	0.060	7.07	0.009	0.246**
Social Self-Realization							
Age	-0.163	0.163	0.026	0.026	2.99	0.087	-0.149
Emln: Total	0.258**	0.298	0.089	0.062	7.45	0.007	0.250**

Note: ^aZero-order correlations; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

All three models were statistically significant with the combined effect of the predictor variables, explaining 8 %, 7 %, and 9 % of variability in the criterion variable for *personal*, *professional*, and *social* self-realization, respectively. It is noteworthy to reiterate that the age factor depressed the self-realization scores, whereas emotional intelligence added 6 % to the explanatory power of every corresponding model, as if it compensated for the negative influence of the increase in participants' age.

Finally, given differences in how various components of the emotional intelligence are conceptualized (and subsequently manifested themselves in the observed patterns of correlations among the study variables), we were interested in discovering, how one of them, namely *interpersonal* emotional intelligence, most highly correlated with all three types of self-regulation, would perform as a predictor variable in the hierarchical multiple regression models, similar to those described above, if it is to replace the overall index of emotional intelligence. Please, see Table 5 for the results of these analyses.

The substitution of the total emotional intelligence score with its *interpersonal* component strengthened all models. The proportion of the explained variance increased to 18 %, 8 %, and 14 % for *personal*, *professional*, and *social* self-realization, respectively. The corresponding added contribution of the component of *interpersonal* emotional intelligence alone was 16 %, 7 %, and 11 %. The negative influence of the age factor was further reduced – neither final beta regression

coefficient in either model was significant. Though a large portion of variability in the criterion variables remained unexplained, all regression models were statistically significant ($p < 0.01$ and $p < 0.001$).

Table 5

Regression models explaining variability in three types of self-realization with age and the index of interpersonal emotional intelligence as predictor variables ($N = 112$)

Variable	r^a	R	R^2	R^2_{change}	F_{change}	Sign. F	Final b
Personal Self-Realization							
Age	-0.131	0.131	0.017	0.017	1.93	0.168	-0.061
Interpersonal EmIn	0.419***	0.423	0.179	0.162	21.52	0.000	0.409***
Professional Self-Realization							
Age	-0.085	0.085	0.007	0.007	0.80	0.373	-0.039
Interpersonal EmIn	0.274**	0.277	0.077	0.069	8.20	0.005	0.268**
Social Self-Realization							
Age	-0.163	0.163	0.026	0.026	2.99	0.087	-0.104
Interpersonal EmIn	0.359***	0.373	0.139	0.113	14.32	0.000	0.341***

Note: ^a Zero-order correlations; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Discussion

Self-realization can be viewed as relatively stable psychological characteristics that are not easily transformed with a person's transition through life. Established at the young age, ability to independently plan and implement professional actions, to develop personal trajectories in these domains, to meaningfully and responsibly understand and manage own goal-oriented behaviour stays with the person pretty much unchanged with years and years to pass. In this study we observed lower levels of subjectively perceived self-realization of all types (social to a lesser extent) in older participants, who combined studying and work. One possible explanation for that is the lack of free time that could be devoted to socially desirable activities (e.g., volunteering for non-profit organizations and events), especially under the circumstance of the conflicting priorities in this category of young adults. Volunteering, being involved in creative crafts, helping others can boost self-realization to largely compensate for the deficiency thereof in professional and personal spheres and balance the overall feeling of satisfaction and well-being. But the opportunities for

such activities are very limited for part-time students, especially in comparison with their full-time counterparts, at least time-wise.

With age, young adults tend to be more critical to their achievements by weighing them according to social importance. If the latter is perceived as insufficient, especially within the person's own referent group, satisfaction from such achievements does not lead to higher levels of feelings of self-realization.

In general, young adults are believed to be characterized by high degrees of optimism and self-confidence. Transition to professional careers supposedly opens for them more opportunities for self-realization, but their vulnerability to disappointments also increases proportionally. They are typically satisfied with their past (childhood and student experiences), show genuine interest to new life circumstances, eager to set new goals, but tend to overestimate the degree of control they really can exercise over their changing social and professional environments. Young adults value any subjectively meaningful achievement regardless its social importance, but such satisfaction is typically a short-term one, and dissipates when the specific activity/event, it was associated with, is over. Professional career, on the other hand is a long-lasting endeavour susceptible to downfalls, as much as to accomplishments. Transition from the habitually comfortable and predictable university environment to more diverse and erratic work experiences also associated with new responsibilities of the family life (that often happens simultaneously) poses specific, not so easy to overcome challenges for fulfilling their social, professional, and personal potential.

Under these conditions, emotional intelligence may have a strong compensatory effect. Indeed, in the current study we observed its significant positive association with all types of self-realization. Our findings are largely in line with various facets of research on emotional intelligence, especially those that attribute to it the role of a protective factor against work-related stress.

Specifically, the interpersonal component of emotional intelligence that emerged in our study as the most powerful predictor of various aspects of self-realization has been implicated in successful adaptive behaviours well beyond professional environments. For example, Hall, Andrzejewski, & Yopchick (2009) in a meta-analysis of over two hundred independent studies found that interpersonal sensitivity (a concept apparently synonymous to interpersonal emotional intelligence) was positively associated with various aspects of what they broadly called 'adaptive psychosocial functioning'.

Indeed, self-reliance supported by a person's ability to understand and control emotions may enable in young adults true confidence and elicit trust and respect from others in various social and professional environments. In addition, skilful recognition and management of emotions projected to a person by other people are instrumental in more reliably evaluating the needs and motives of others in important social interactions. An emotionally balanced, attentive and constructive person usually motivates and inspires colleagues, creates more productive collaborative working environment, and serves as a model for others. As a result, subjective feeling of self-realization in so-characterized people is substantially higher than in their emotionally less intelligent counterparts.

In our study the interpersonal component of emotional intelligence was the strongest predictor of all three types of self-realization. Based on these data, we would suggest that interpersonal emotional intelligence could be the key factor in compensation for potential decline in self-realization of young adults with the increase in age and the accompanying change in status from the full-time student to combining studying with working. Participants with high levels of interpersonal emotional intelligence not only strived for more successful personal, professional,

and social self-realization, but also seemed to be better equipped to actually achieve it. It should not come as a surprise, as the ultimate applied value of the emotional intelligence is in its contribution to the adequate decision-making that takes into account affective components of events and situations for assessing more precisely personal meaning of all their nuances and potential consequences.

Some researchers, including the authors of several meta-analyses mentioned above, have questioned to what extent the construct of emotional intelligence is independent (i.e., distinguishable) from other personal characteristics, in particular, specific combinations of the Big Five personality traits (e.g., Joseph et al., 2015), as there are data that indicate high correlations between the former and the latter. This question, though it extends well beyond the scope of the current study, is with no doubt worthy of further conceptual and empirical exploration, and we intend to pursue it in the upcoming research, alongside clarification questions about the psychological nature of the connection between emotional intelligence and self-realization.

Though regression models assessed in the study successfully explained up to 20 % of variability in the criterion variables of personal, professional and social self-realization, it is quite obvious that other factors, beyond age and emotional intelligence, influence subjective perception of self-realization. In our view, further research should include exploring such factors as professional specialization and extent of work experience, history of academic achievements (e.g., the highest obtained degree or current educational level of respondents), cognitive abilities, and personal psychological characteristics (e.g., perseverance, initiative, responsibility) in their connections to all aspects of self-realization.

The study implications for the applied psychological practice point toward some specific suggestions for optimizing psychological aid for young adults experiencing difficulties in professional and social adaptation. One of them is activities devised with the goal of developing emotional intelligence and associated competencies of more balanced perception and understanding of one's life circumstances and of efficient management of interpersonal relations, the idea that recently finds more and more empirical support (e.g., Thory, 2016). Emotional intelligence enriches our arsenal of effective adaptive means far beyond basic instinctive urges to run away, fight, or to detach from the reality. It allows for more fine-tuned to a particular situation psychological and behavioural choices, and professional psychologists are partly responsible for providing their clientele with some adequate means for mastering emotional intelligence and subsequently contributing to the feeling of self-realization.

References

- Andrei, F., Mancini, G., Baldaro, B., Trombini, E., & Agnoli, S. (2014). A systematic review on the Predictive Utility of the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue). *Applied Psychology Bulletin*, 271(62), 2–29.
- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 84(2), 191–215. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.84.2.191>
- Bar-On, R. (2001). Emotional intelligence and self-actualization. In J. Ciarrochi, J. P. Forgas, & J. D. Mayer (Eds.), *Emotional intelligence in everyday life: A scientific inquiry* (pp. 82–97). Philadelphia, PA: Psychology Press.
- Beldoch, M. (1964). Sensitivity to expression of emotional meaning in three modes of communication. In J. R. Davitz et al. (Eds.), *The communication of emotional meaning*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

- Brennan, T. P., & Piechowski, M. M. (1991). A developmental framework for self-actualization: Evidence from case studies. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 31(3), 43–64. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022167891313008>
- Dąbrowski, K. (1972). *Psychoneurosis is not an illness*. London: Gryf Publ.
- Erikson, E. H. (1994). *Identity and the life cycle*. New York: Norton.
- Farnia, F., Nafukho, F. M., & Petrides, K. V. (2018). Predicting career decision-making difficulties: The role of trait emotional intelligence, positive and negative emotions. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9, 1107. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01107>
- Foster, B., Lomas, J., Downey, L., & Stough, C. (2018). Does emotional intelligence mediate the relation between mindfulness and anxiety and depression in adolescents? *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9, 2463. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.02463>
- Gardner, H. (1993). *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences*. New York: Basic Books.
- Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Gómez-Baya, D., & Mendoza, R. (2018). Trait emotional intelligence as a predictor of adaptive responses to positive and negative affect during adolescence. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9, 2525. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.02525>
- Hall, J. A., Andrzejewski, S. A., & Yopchick, J. E. (2009). Psychosocial correlates of interpersonal sensitivity: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior*, 33, 149–180. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10919-009-0070-5>
- Joseph, D. L., Jin, J., Newman, D. A., & O'Boyle, E. H. (2015). Why does self-reported emotional intelligence predict job performance? A meta-analytic investigation of mixed EI. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 100(2), 298–342. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0037681>
- Kostakova, I. V. (2014). Emotional intelligence as a factor in professional self-realization psychologists. *Science Vector of Togliatti State University. Series: Pedagogy, Psychology*, 4, 84–87. (in Russ.).
- Kudinov, S. I., Kudinov, S. S. (2017). The development of a technique of research of self-identity. In S. I. Kudinov (Ed.), *Vysshaya shkola: opyt, problemy, perspektivy: Materialy X Mezhdunarodnoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii (Higher school: experience, problems, prospects. Materials of the International Scientific and Practical Conference)* (pp. 3–15). Moscow: RUDN Publ. (in Russ.).
- Kudinov, S. I., Kudinov, S. S., Kudinova, I. B., & Mikhailova, O. V. (2017). The role of persistence in students' self-realization. *International Journal of Cognitive Research in Science, Engineering and Education*, 5(2), 19–25. <https://doi.org/10.5937/IJCRSEE1702019K>
- Leuner, B. (1966). Emotional intelligence and emancipation. *Praxis der Kinderpsychologie und Kinderpsychiatrie*, 15(6), 196–203.
- Lyusin, D. V. (2004). Modern representations of emotional intelligence. In D. V. Lyusin, D. V. Ushakov (Eds.), *Sotsial'nyy intellekt: teoriya, izmerenie, issledovaniya (Social intelligence: Theory, measurement, research)* (pp. 29–36). Moscow: IP RAS Publ. (in Russ.).
- Maslow, A. H. (1987). *Motivation and personality*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Olczak, P. V., & Goldman, J. A. (1975). The relationship between self-actualization and psychosocial maturity. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 31(3), 415–419. [https://doi.org/10.1002/1097-4679\(197507\)31:3%3C415::aid-jclp2270310307%3E3.0.co;2-c](https://doi.org/10.1002/1097-4679(197507)31:3%3C415::aid-jclp2270310307%3E3.0.co;2-c)
- Oxford English and Spanish dictionary, synonyms, and Spanish to English translator. (n.d.). *Self-realization*. Retrieved from <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/self-realization>
- Parker, J. D. A., Duffy, J. M., Wood, L. M., Bond, B. J., & Hogan, M. J. (2005). Academic achievement and emotional intelligence: Predicting the successful transition from High School to University. *Journal of the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition*, 17(1), 67–78.

- Petrides, K. V., & Furnham, A. (2001). Trait emotional intelligence: Psychometric investigation with reference to established trait taxonomies. *European Journal of Personality*, 15(6), 425–448. <https://doi.org/10.1002/per.416>
- Putnam, J. J. (1915). *Human motives*. New York: Little, Brown and Company.
- Ramesh, S., Samuel Thavaraj, H., & Ramkumar, D. (2016). Impact of emotional intelligence on academic achievements of college students – A review. *International Journal of Business Management & Research*, 6(2), 25–30.
- Roché, H. (2009). *The Relationship between self-actualization and emotional intelligence* (Dissertation). University of South Africa, Pretoria. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/10500/634>
- Szczygiel, D. D., & Mikolajczak, M. (2018). Emotional intelligence buffers the effects of negative emotions on job burnout in nursing. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9, 2649. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.02649>
- Thorndike, E. L. (1920). Intelligence and its uses. *Harper's Magazine*, 140, 227–235.
- Thory, K. (2016). Developing meaningfulness at work through emotional intelligence training. *International Journal of Training and Development*, 20(1), 58–77. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijtd.12069>
- van der Linden, D., Pekaar, K. A., Bakker, A. B., Schermer, J. A., Vernon, P. A., Dunkel, C. S., & Petrides, K. V. (2017). Overlap between the general factor of personality and emotional intelligence: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 143(1), 36–52. <https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000078>
- Walter, O. (2015). Can emotional intelligence predict teaching ability? In L. Zysberg, S. Raz (Eds.), *Emotional intelligence: Current evidence from psychophysiological, educational and organizational perspectives* (pp. 223–236). Hauppauge, NY: Nova Science Publishers.

Received: July 15, 2021

Revision received: September 16, 2021

Accepted: September 20, 2021

Author Details

Eugene Borokhovski – Dr. Sci. (Psychology), Affiliate Associate Professor, Concordia University, Montreal, Canada; Scopus Author ID: 36860439400, SPIN-code: 2340-9518; e-mail: eugene.borokhovski@concordia.ca

Yulia Vladimirovna Obukhova – Cand. Sci. (Psychology), Associate Professor, Department of Psychology of Development, Southern Federal University, Russian Federation; Scopus Author ID: 57221959662, ResearcherID: B-4588-2017, SPIN-code: 6252-4724; e-mail: yvobuhova@sfedu.ru

Author Contributions

E. Borokhovski contributed to study conceptualization and research design, performed statistical analysis of the data obtained and interpreted the results, prepared and edited the manuscript main text.

Y. V. Obukhova contributed to study conceptualization and research planning, organized and coordinated the data collection, prepared the literature review, participated in data analysis, and interpreted the results.

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.