

Relationship between Fathers' Emotional Intelligence and Their Children's

Mojgan Mirza and Ma'rof Redzuan

Department of Social and Development Science, Faculty of Human Ecology,
Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia

Abstract: Problem statement: The Emotional Intelligence (EI) construct is a relatively new concept with little empirical research, particularly that related to the link between a father's emotional intelligence and that of his child's. **Approach:** This study attempts to assess the relationship between fathers' and their children's EI skills. This study consisted of three groups (N = 107: year 2, n = 38; year 3, n = 34; year 4, n = 35) of Iranian children who enrolled in Iranian primary school (2007-2008) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and their fathers. The data were collected by employing two selected instruments; Bar-On's EQ_i Adult and Youth Version. **Results:** Pearson correlation between subscales of the father's and children's EI was statistically significant. A ranking, based on the magnitude of the correlation between subscales of father's and their children's EI, was shown as stress management, interpersonal, intrapersonal, general mood and adaptability. It was found that the majority of the children who were in a higher category of EI skills had fathers who were also from the higher level of emotional intelligence. **Conclusion/Recommendation:** With regard to the findings, the many factors related to father and children's EI are important aspects of psychological researchers to consider it for a research topic.

Key words: Emotional intelligence, father, children

INTRODUCTION

The study of EI has become an attractive topic due to the many proposed benefits of EI related to individuals and community's success. The EI is a complex phenomenon that occurs in children and it is found to lead to strong personal relationships (Cooper, 1997) and to improve pro-social behavior and self-management skills in children (Bar-On and Parker, 2000a). Research indicates that children who are able to regulate their emotional reactions in response to others' emotions are more likely to have good social skills and to act pro-socially (Eisenberg, 1996). Researchers who have studied the aspects of emotional intelligence in children unanimously agree that parents have the most profound effect on a child's acquisition of these emotional skills (Cowan and Cowan, 1999).

Recently, researchers have begun to identify parental behaviors that play a role in the social lives of their children (Gottman *et al.*, 1996; Stover, 2003). According to Stover (2003), the role of emotion in children's social behavior is presented as well as parental influences on these skills. In addition, children learn to express, understand and regulate their emotions

in interactions with their parents, siblings and peers (Bar-On *et al.*, 2000). Since parents are strong shapers of child behavior, it is reasonable to believe that parent behaviors also play a crucial role in the social status of children (Stover, 2003). Stover (2003) and parental emotion affect children's emotion and social behaviors by undermining their emotional regulation (Fabes *et al.*, 2001) and parent can foster stronger emotionally intelligence skills in their children (Giammattei, 2007; Giammattei *et al.*, 2007).

Fathers obviously play multiple roles and affect their children's development in many ways (Lamb, 2010). Fathers affect their children directly (e.g., behaviors) and indirectly (as a source of emotion) and both pathways are key to a comprehensive understanding of fatherhood (Lamb, 2010) and father-child relationships. Stover (2003) has shown that several factors related to fathers could have a crucial influence on children's cognitive, social, emotional and behavioral development. Lamb and Levine (1985) argued that fathers begun to take on a more active role in the domestic sphere and fatherhood is undergoing a significant shift. Now more than ever, fathers are taking an active role in support of their children and this is a

crucial period for the development of social and emotional skills in children. By comparison, father contributions have been under-researched (Stover, 2003) than a mother in parenting process but their contribution to their child's emotion-regulation development is nonetheless important (Gentzler *et al.*, 2005). Hence, researchers suggest that, in parenting process related to children's emotions, fathers are very important in the lives of children (Stover, 2003). Although developmental, biological, social and psychological factors relating to child social status area important, this study focused on fathers.

When a father adopts an emotion-coaching style of fathering, it has an extremely positive impact on his child's emotional development (Gottman *et al.*, 1998; Stover, 2003). Many fathers, however, are not concerned with their children's emotional intelligence and social skills, due to lack of necessary knowledge about the importance of emotional intelligence in child's overall development. Andrews and Wilding (2004) indicated that 46% of fathers were not fulfilling their paternal responsibilities. In addition, most of the fathers were not aware how their fatherhood role might affect their children's emotional intelligence. Moreover, fathers who participated in the study were not aware how they could raise their children's emotional intelligence.

Fathers were not aware that children with poor emotion have often been linked with low popularity (Eisenberg, 1996) and poor academic performance (Gottman *et al.*, 1997; Stover, 2003). These children cannot manage their emotion and behaviors in interaction of the father-child dyad in parenting process (Gentzler *et al.*, 2005). In addition, the ability to regulate emotions develops over the life span, beginning in infancy with important developmental changes taking place into late childhood and possibly beyond (Lamb, 1997; Stover, 2003) and over half of interpersonal success is due to effective emotion regulation and expression (Goleman, 1996).

Consequently, this study is investigated the role of fathers on the development of their children's EI skills and social behaviors by assess the relationship between fathers' and children's EI.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study was carried out among Iranian students who enrolled in Iranian primary schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The school was chosen based upon its location and program of study. This research comprised of 107 (36 boys and 71 girls) students-fathers dyads clustered in three groups based on the

children's ages (8, 9, 10 years old). The sample was made up of 35.5% aged 8 (year two) of schooling, 31.8% aged 9 (year three) and 32.7% aged 10 (year four). The subjects' fathers were graduate students, doing their Master (10.3%) and doctoral degree (89.7 %) in various universities in Malaysia. Their major areas of studies include environment (38.3%), medicine (24.4%), education (20.5%) and engineering (16.8%). The ages of these fathers ranged from 25 to over 40 year old.

The selected instruments were used for data collection; (1) Bar-on Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-I, 1997) for assessing Fathers' EI and (2) the Emotional Quotient Inventory: Youth Version (EQ-I, 2000) for assessing children's EI. In addition, a brief self-designed demographic questionnaire was also used in order to gather relevant background information of the sample in this study. In addition, the SPSS package (V.15) used for statistical analysis of data.

Pearson product: Moment Correlation of analysis was conducted for investigating the associated relationship variables with emotional intelligence of the studied fathers and that of his children. In addition, for determination of the strength or magnitude of relationship between variables, Guilford's role was purposed (Bahaman, 1999). In this analysis father's EI and its subscales was considered as independent variables, whereas children's EI and its subscales was dependent variables

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study is based on a research which is to illustrate the relationship between fathers' and their children's EI. This section presents the results of this study, beginning with description of the respondents' demographic background. The Table 1 describes the population and sample size of the participants.

Children's emotional intelligence: The descriptive analysis of children's emotional intelligence scores and its subscales are presented in Table 2. The total children's emotional intelligence scores demonstrate a slightly positive skew (+0.37, Mode<median<mean). Kurtosis for the total EI score of children indicates a mildly peaked distribution (1.05). Both the Skewness and Kurtosis are low for the most part, indicating that the scores approximate a "normal distribution" or "bell-shaped curve".

Bar-On, 1997a pointed out that the mean and standard deviation of emotional intelligence are 100 and 15 respectively. In addition, EI score between ranges 50 to 90 is considered low and fall in the

category “that needs to be improved”. Scores between the ranges 90 to 110 is in average range indicating effective (satisfactory) functioning ranges. The range 110 to 150 is the high area of relative strength or enhanced skills range. Figure 1 shows the score value of children’s EI, ranges of these scores and its category classes in current study. In addition, the children’s EI scores and its variables (subscales) are in categories of low average and need to be improved. The subscales of children’s emotional intelligence follow a ranking with interpersonal (M = 82.85, SD = 11.4), intrapersonal (M = 77.63, SD = 11.38), general mood (M = 74.17, SD = 9.34), adaptability (M = 68.98, SD = 8.17) and stress management (M = 65.84, SD = 7.7).

Father’s emotional intelligence: The descriptive analysis of father’s emotional intelligence scores and its subscales are presented in Table 3. The total EI scores of fathers demonstrate slightly negative skew (-0.28). The negative skew means that scores are slightly more spread out at the low end than the high end of the scores. Kurtosis for the total EI score of fathers indicates a mildly peaked distribution (-1.21). Both the Skewness and Kurtosis are low for the most part, indicating that the scores approximate a “normal distribution”. According to Bar-On, 1997b Bar-On and Parker (2000b) the findings of this study indicated that the mean of the father’s EI is 104, which means that it is in effective function category. Figure 2 shows the score value of father’s emotional intelligence, ranges of these scores and its category classes in current study. In

addition, total of father’s EI and its four subscales (interpersonal, intrapersonal, adaptability, general mood) are in average and effective function category. The subscales of father’s EI follow a ranking with intrapersonal (M = 112, SD = 13.7), interpersonal (M = 107.3, SD = 15.37), general mood (M = 106.23, 16.31), adaptability (M = 100.32, 17.64) and stress management (M = 94.47, 17.36).

Table 1: Summary of samples for children and fathers by demographic variables

Variables	n	%
Sample	107	100.0
Children’s Gender		
Male (boy)	36	33.6
Female (girl)	71	66.4
Children’s Age		
8 (Year 2)	38	35.5
9 (Year 3)	34	31.8
1 (Year 4)	35	32.7
Father’s Age		
25-30	11	10.3
30-35	31	29.0
35-40	42	39.2
>40	23	21.5

Table 2: Descriptive information on children’s EI

Variables	Mean	SD
Intrapersonal	82.85	11.40
Interpersonal	77.63	11.38
Stress management	65.84	7.70
Adaptability	68.98	8.17
General mood	74.17	9.34
Total EI	73.90	9.20

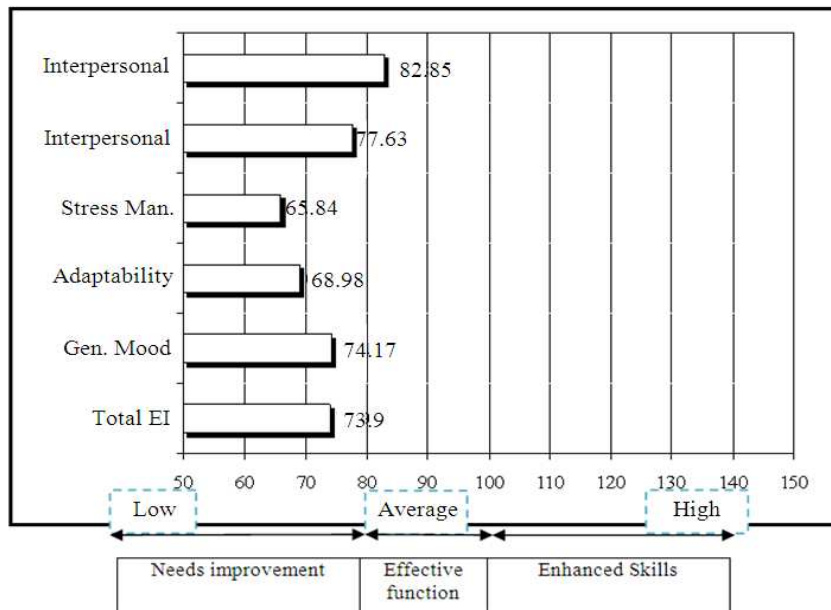


Fig. 1: Mean value score of children’s emotional intelligence and its category classes

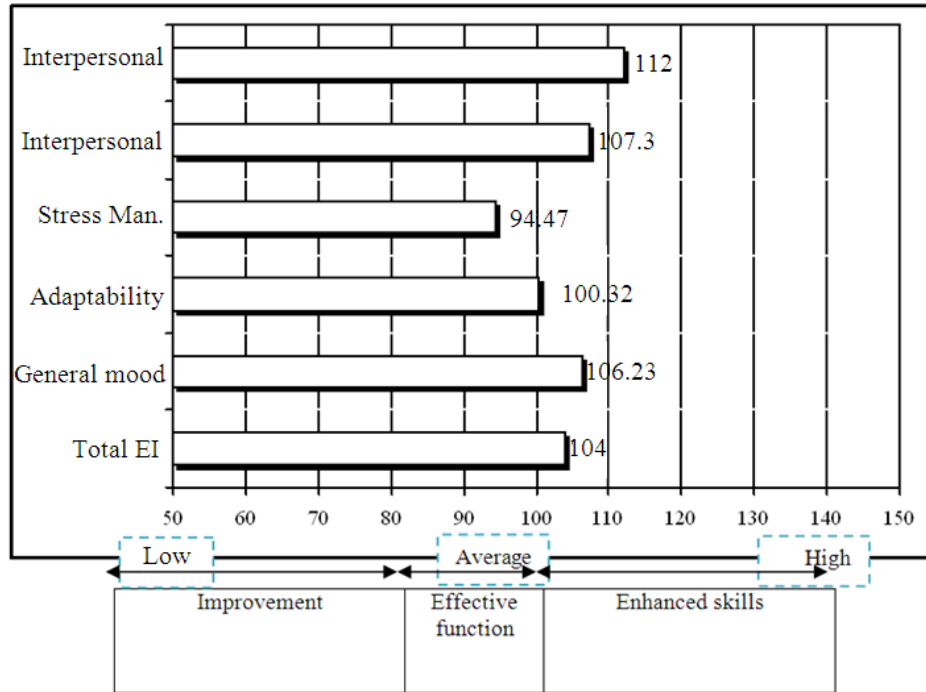


Fig. 2: Mean value score of father's emotional intelligence and its category classes

Table 3: Descriptive information on father's EI

Variables	Mean	S D
Intrapersonal	112.00	13.70
Interpersonal	107.30	15.34
Stress Management	94.47	17.36
Adaptability	100.32	17.64
General Mood	106.23	16.31
Total EI	104.00	15.60

Relationship between Fathers' and Children's EI:

Analysis of this set tested the hypothesis dealing with the strength of relationship between father's and children's EI as measured by the Bar- on Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-I, 1997) and Emotional Quotient Inventory, Youth Version (EQ-i, 2000). In order to determine the direction and strength or magnitude of relationship between variables Pearson Product-moment statistical method (Table 4) and Guilford's rule were used.

For an alpha level of 0.01 and confidence level of 99%, the correlation coefficient between father's EI with children's EI was found to be statistically significant, sig. = 0.000, $\rho < 0.01$. The range of Pearson correlation coefficient (r) between subscales of emotional intelligence for fathers and their children estimated from $r = 0.57$ to $r = 0.68$, $\rho < 0.01$.

Based on magnitude of correlation coefficients between pair subscales of father's emotional

intelligence and their children a rank can be drive as stress management ($r = 0.68$, $\rho < 0.01$), interpersonal ($r = 0.65$, $\rho < 0.01$), intrapersonal and general mood ($r = 0.64$, $\rho < 0.01$) and adaptability ($r = 0.61$, $\rho < 0.01$). In addition, correlation coefficient between father's emotional intelligence and their children's emotional intelligence was obtained $r = 0.68$, $\rho < 0.01$. The direction (Nature) of the relationship between all variables (subscales) of father's and their children's emotional intelligence is Positive. In addition, based on Guilford rule, the strength of relationship between two variables for all subscales of their emotional intelligence was found moderate (substantial) relationship.

As reported above, relationship between pair subscales of children's and their father's emotional intelligence are significant and positive, however, subscales of father's EI, as significance - positive with moderate strength, affects on subscales of children's EI.

The findings of this study confirmed some results of previous researches and supporting findings in Roberts and Strayer (1987)'s study which suggested that the fathers are important agents in the socialization of children's emotion. The findings of a research by Dunn (1987) also indicated that the father's role is less than that of the mother on social interactions of children but it is not negligible.

Table 4: Pearson correlation coefficient between subscales and total of father's and their children's EI

	Children					
	Intrapersonal	Interpersonal	Stress management	Adaptability	General mood	Total EI
Fathers						
Intrapersonal	0.64**	0.65**	0.68**	0.62**	0.68**	0.68**
Interpersonal	0.63**	0.65**	0.70**	0.64**	0.69**	0.69**
St. Manag.	0.59**	0.60**	0.68**	0.63**	0.67**	0.66**
Adaptability	0.58**	0.61**	0.69**	0.61**	0.66**	0.65**
G. Mood	0.57**	0.58**	0.65**	0.60**	0.64**	0.63**
Total EI	0.62**	0.64**	0.70**	0.64**	0.69**	0.68**

$\rho < 0.01$, **: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

CONCLUSION

The analysis of data in this study attempted to determine strength of relationship between fathers' EI as measured by the five subscales and component of Bar-On model and their children's EI. The results indicated a significant relationship between pair subscales by ranking stress management ($r = 0.68$, $\rho < 0.01$), interpersonal ($r = 0.65$, $\rho < 0.01$), intrapersonal and general mode ($r = 0.64$, $\rho < 0.01$) and adaptability ($r = 0.61$, $\rho < 0.01$). In addition, relationship between fathers' EI and their children obtained significant positive relationship, statistically, ($r = 0.68$, $\rho < 0.01$). Moreover, relationship between each subscales of father's EI and subscales of children's EI was found significantly correlated, range $r = 0.57$ to $r = 0.70$, $\rho < 0.01$. Consequently, the findings have shown that skills of fathers' EI as a significance and positive factor with moderate strength affect on skills of children's EI. According to Goleman (1999), many believe that the characteristics listed above are the abilities that it needs to develop in people. The identification relationship between father's emotional intelligence and their children EI can provide significant impacts on the development of pro-social skills and empowering children through the higher education process.

This study has implications for future practice, research and theory. The results are interesting for several constituencies of student affairs practitioners and those children who receive their services. Children activities staff may use the results of this study to design training activities to enhance particular components of EI. If these professionals know the EI levels of their children, they can design educational opportunities around specific EI components. Furthermore, this study revealed that fathers and their children were in effective function and improvement season in their EI scores, respectively. If a school program aspires to graduate students with exceptional EI-like skills, then this study is of value because it illustrates the need for EI-skill training among all fathers and their children. Another service that could be

provided to schools is the option to have students conducts a mini-session on EI training for a specific condition of term. The presentation could consist of a brief overview of what EI is and how the different sub-components can affect group effectiveness and social behaviors.

Results of this study may also be used by children activities staff to market extracurricular opportunities. If fathers and their children are aware of their strengths and weaknesses in relation to EI subcomponents, then they may be persuaded to participate in development programs of EI skills and social behaviors that help them strengthen areas of weakness. Finally findings of this research may also be used by parents, especially fathers, for improvement their awareness and knowledge about their children for help them to have a greater career success in his or her life in an optimum condition.

REFERENCES

- Andrews, B. and J.M. Wilding, 2004. Student mental health, life stress and achievement. *Br. J. Psychol.*, 95: 509-521.
- Bahaman, A.S., 1999. Malaysia: Statistics for Social Research with Computer Application. 1st Edn., UPM Press, Kuala Lumpur.
- Bar-On, R. and J.D.A. Parker, 2000a. The Handbook of Emotional Intelligence: Theory, Development, Assessment and Application at Home, School and in the Workplace. 1st Edn., Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, ISBN-10: 0787949841, pp: 528.
- Bar-On, R. and J.D.A. Parker, 2000b. BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory: Technical Manual. 1st Edn., Multi-Health Systems, North Tonawanda, New York, ISBN-10: 015802558X, pp: 86.
- Bar-On, R., J.D.A. Parker and Elaine, 2000. Development of emotional expression, understanding and regulation in infants and young children, the handbook of emotional intelligence.
- Cooper, R.K., 1997. Applying Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace. *Train. Dev.*, 51: 31-39.

- Cowan, C.P. and P.A. Cowan, 1999. When Partners Become Parents: The Big Life Change for Couples. 1st Edn., Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, NJ., ISBN-10: 0805835598, pp: 258.
- Dunn, T., 1987. Partitioning of Hf, Lu, Ti and Mn between olivine, clinopyroxene and basaltic liquid. *Contributions Mineral. Petrol.*, 96: 476-484.
- Eisenberg, M., 1996. The thin glass line: Designing interfaces to algorithms. *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems: Common Ground*, Apr. 13-18, ACM Press, Vancouver, BC, Canada, pp: 181-188. DOI: 10.1145/238386.238474
- Fabes, R.A., S.A. Leonard, K. Kupanoff and C.L. Martin, 2001. Parental coping with children's negative emotions: relations with children's emotional and social responding. *Child Dev.*, 72: 907-920. PMID: 11405590
- Gentzler, A.L., J.M. Contreras-Grau and K.A. Kerns, 2005. Parent-child emotional communication and children's coping in middle childhood. *J. Soc. Dev.*, 14: 591-612.
- Giammattei, S., Yeung, W.J., J.F. Sandberg, P.E. Davis-Kean and S.L. Hofferth, 2007. Children's time with fathers in intact families. *J. Marriage Family*, 63: 136-154.
- Giammattei, S.V., 2007. *Family Relations and Emotional Intelligence of Children Raised by Lesbian or Heterosexual Parents*. 1st Edn., Alliant International University, California, USA., ISBN-10: 0549149422, pp: 153.
- Goleman, D., 1996. *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*. 1st Edn., Bloomsbury Publishing, London, ISBN-10: 0747528306, pp: 356. New York: Bantam.
- Goleman, D., 1999. *Working with Emotional Intelligence*. 1st Edn., Bloomsbury Publishing, London, ISBN: 0747543844, pp: 383.
- Gottman, J., J. Declaire and D. Goleman, 1998. *Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child the Heart of Parenting*. 1st Edn., Simon, New York, ISBN-10: 0684838656, pp: 240.
- Gottman, J.M., L.F. Katz and C. Hooven, 1996. Parental meta-emotion philosophy and the emotional life of families: Theoretical models and preliminary data. *J. Family Psychol.*, 10: 243-268.
- Gottman, J.M., L.F. Katz and C. Hooven, 1997. *Meta-Emotion: How Families Communicate Emotionally*. 1st Edn., Routledge, ISBN-10: 0805819967, pp: 366.
- Lamb, M.E. and J.A. Levine, 1985. The role of the father in child development: The effects of increased paternal involvement. *Adv. Clin. Child Psychol.*, 8: 229-266.
- Lamb, M.E., 1997. *Fathers and Child Development: An Introductory Overview and Guide*. 1st Edn., Wiley, New York.
- Lamb, M.E., 2010. *The Role of the Father in Child Development*. 5th Edn., John Wiley and Sons, USA, New Jersey, ISBN-10: 0470599960, pp: 544.
- Roberts, W.L. and J. Strayer, 1987. Parents' responses to the emotional distress of their children: Relations with children's competence. *Dev. Psychol.*, 23: 415-422. DOI: 10.1037/0012-1649.23.3.415
- Stover, J., 2003. *Fathers' Meta-emotion and Children's Social Status*. 1st Edn., Seattle Pacific University, pp: 170.