

# Emotional Promiscuity and Emotional Intelligence: An Empirical Study

**Afreen Faiza (PhD Psychology)**

Lab Specialist, Psychology Department, Fatima College of Health Sciences, Abu Dhabi-UAE  
Assistant Professor/ Research Associate, Department of Business Administration and Management,  
Ilma  
University- Formerly Institute of Business & Technology, Karachi, Pakistan

## Abstract

Promiscuous behaviours are evident among students (Cooper, 2002; Douglas et al., 1997). The present study aims to investigate the relationship between emotional promiscuity and emotional intelligence among the student population. 120 individuals with ages ranging from 19 to 26 years participated via an online Google-based survey and completed the Emotional Promiscuity Scale (EPS; Jones, 2011) and Trait Emotional Intelligence Scale Short Form (TEIQue-SF; Petrides & Furnham, 2006). Results showed negative correlation coefficients between emotional promiscuity and emotional intelligence ( $r(120) = -.205, p < .05$ ) and its subscales for well-being ( $r(120) = -.186, p < .05$ ), self-control ( $r(120) = -.214, p < .05$ ), emotionality ( $r(120) = -.219, p < .05$ ), and sociability ( $r(120) = -.237, p < .05$ ). Findings suggest the importance of emotional skills to effectively manage promiscuous emotional behaviours to promote the well-being of students.

*Keywords:* Emotional Intelligence, Emotional Promiscuity, Students

## Introduction

“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.”

(Bible, Galatians 6:7)

The adolescence period signifies dynamic transitions in terms of emotions, physiologies, behaviours and interests along with several challenges (Hurlock, 1982) and young people continuously change their personalities (Cherry, 2017). The adolescent stage encourages romantic relationships and demands certain skills to sustain interactions in healthy manners (Noar, Carlyle, & Cole, 2006; Widman, Choukas-Bradley, Helms, Golin, & Prinstein, 2014).

In today's world, promiscuity is rampant (Brand, Markey, Mills, & Hodges 2007; Jones & Paulhus

2012). Promiscuity refers to the readiness to be involved in romantic activities with several partners and includes two domains: sexual and emotional (Jones & Paulhus 2012). Sexual promiscuity refers to engagement in physical acts with several partners (Garcia et al. 2010) whereas the latter refers to an inclination to readily fall in love, flirt, date and emotional vulnerabilities with individuals other than one's partner (Jones & Paulhus 2012). Sexual and emotional promiscuity leads to sexual as well as emotionally unfaithful acts (Pinto & Arantes, 2016).

People with higher levels of emotional promiscuity (EP) possess greater sensitivity to easily develop feelings of love and love at first encounters (Sprecher & Metts, 1989). However, affective connections can grow with or without sexual relationships (Diamond, 2002; Hendrick & Hendrick, 1987). Individuals with higher levels of EP tend to be emotionally unfaithful to present partners, unreliable, and lack desirability as prospect mate; which leads to unprotected sex and greater chances for sexually transmitted disorders (Lalduhawmi., 2019; Jones & Paulhus, 2012).

Students tend to engage in romantic relationships due to several factors such as personality, libido and lowered emotional intelligence. Lack of skills to control emotions leads towards sexuality and promiscuity (Edobor & Ebiye, 2017). Emotional Intelligence (EI) serves as a key factor for the preferences related to choices opt by partners as well as indulgence in adulterous acts (Salavera, Usan, & Jarie, 2017). EI refers to skill in social and personal awareness, personal and relationship management; ability to accurately access, produce and adjust emotions in oneself as well as in others, assisting in decision makings during interpersonal encounters (Chernis & Goleman. 2001; Killian, 2012; Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

Higher levels of EI prevent maladaptive behaviours and enable one to handle emotional issues (Yip, Stein, Cote., & Carney, 2020). Adolescents with adequate emotional management engage in limited romantic interactions (Hessler & Katz, 2010), and circumvent instant pleasures (Brady, Baker, & Miller, 2020).

Promiscuity casts several adverse effects on lifestyle (Okafor & Duru, 2010), such as indulgence in relationships at young ages, opt bad partners for themselves, inflicting harmful acts towards their current partners, unwanted pregnancies, economic, psychological, and biological drawbacks (Jones, 2011). It is a major issue for the individual as well as society and warrants attention. However, relatively under-investigated topic (Jones & Paulhus, 2012). To our best knowledge, there is a serious lack of research which focused on investigating the relationship between EP and EI among the student population.

The present inquiry aims to investigate the associations between EP and EI. It assumes that: There would be a significant relationship between overall scores for EP and EI.

There would be a significant relationship between overall scores for EP and EI's subscales.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The sample comprises 120 individuals (53 men; 67 women) recruited from an online Google-based survey with an age range from 19 to 26 years. 87.5% were single/ never married, 10.8% married and only 1.7% were divorced/separated.

### **Materials**

#### **Consent Form**

It contained the brief purpose of the study, mentioning that information would be solely utilized for research purposes. It was also stated that their participation was on a completely voluntary basis for which they do not receive any rewards. Also, they possess full rights to leave this study at any time without any penalty.

#### **Demographic Information Sheet**

A self-developed personal information sheet was made by researchers of the study. It included information about gender, education and marital status.

#### **Emotional Promiscuity Scale (EP) (Jones, 2011)**

It is a 10- item scale which assess the extent of readiness of individuals to engage in romantic relationships. The responses were scored on a five-point Likert scale which ranged from Strongly Agree =5 to Disagree=1. Sample items include, "I fall in love easily" and "I tend to jump into relationships". The scale showed an acceptable value of alpha reliability ( $\alpha = .75$ ) (Jones, 2011).

The alpha reliability of scale for the present study is  $\alpha = .631$

#### **Trait Emotional Intelligence Scale Short Form (TEIQue-SF) (Petrides & Furnham, 2006)**

It is a 30-statement self-report questionnaire which measures global trait emotional intelligence (Petrides & Furnham, 2006). The scale is based upon a longer version of TEIQue, developed by Petrides and Furnham (2003), comprised of four factors of Well-Being (self-esteem-trait happiness

&optimism), Self-Control(emotional regulations, low impulsivity& stress management) Emotionality(emotional expression, perception, relationship skills), and Sociability(social competency, assertiveness, other's emotional management). Responses were anchored on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree=7 to Disagree =1. The tool has been validated through item response theory (Cooper & Petrides, 2010) and rigorously utilized in various settings considering diverse populations (Ali, Amorim, & Chamorro- Premuzic, 2009; Burri, Cherkas & Spector, 2011; Johnson, Batey & Holdsworth, 2009), demonstrates good psychometric properties (Cooper & Petrides, 2010; Petrides & Furnham, 2006). Example items include: "Expressing my emotions with words is not a problem for me"; "Ioften find it difficult to see things from another person's viewpoint". The alpha reliability of TEIque-SF for the present study is  $\alpha = .799$ .

### Procedure

An online Google form was created and disseminated by the researchers of the study to different social networking sites(Facebook, WhatsApp, & LinkedIn) and personal contacts. Online responses were gathered over three months (July- September 2022) from different public and private university students in Karachi-Pakistan. All data was simultaneously scored and entered for analysis in Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.

## Results

**Table 1**

**Demographic Profile of Participants (N=120)**

Demographic variables		Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Men	53	44.2
	Women	67	55.8
Education	Matriculation	56	46.6
	Intermediate	64	53.3
Marital Status	Single Married	10	87.5
	Divorced/separate	5	10.8
	d	13	1.
		2	

Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage counts of participants included in the survey

**Table 2**

Pearson Product-Moment Correlations, Means, Standard Deviations of Emotional Promiscuity, Emotional Intelligence

Measures	EP	EI	Subsc EI EW	SubscE I SC	Subsc EI EM	Subsc EI SOC
EP	----	-.205*	-.186*	-.214*	-.219*	-.237*
Mean (M)	25.9	137.14	30.57	25.72	35.53	26.47
Standard Deviation(SD)	5.25	19.866	4.729	5.033	7.248	5.169

*Note* : EP=emotional promiscuity; EI=Emotional intelligence; SubSc= Subscale; EW=Emotional-Wellbeing; SC=Self-Control ;EM= Emotionality; SOC=Sociability  $p < .05^*$

*Table 2* shows Pearson Product-Moment Correlations, Means, Standard Deviations of Emotional Promiscuity and Emotional Intelligence.

### Discussion

The study aimed to investigate linkages between emotional promiscuity and emotional intelligence among the student population. Significant relationships between two variables corroborate earlier outcomes about lower levels of emotional intelligence for a wide range of promiscuous actions (Cohen & Strayer, 1996; Eisenberg, 2000; Roberts & Strayer, 1996). Promiscuity is negatively correlated with emotional intelligence (Cabello et al., 2016), and individuals with lower levels of EI exhibit delinquent actions as compared to those with greater emotional intelligence (Petrides, Norah & Adrian, 2002).

Possible causes for present outcomes for promiscuity include religious, socio-cultural backgrounds, media, internet and parenting styles (Jones & Paulhus 2012; Owuamanam & Bankole, 2013). It infers that modern society is becoming more tolerant towards adolescent sexuality which led towards favourable attitudes towards promiscuous acts (Owuamanam &

Bankole,2013). Modernization jeopardized traditional values and family ties which create a lack of communication, control and time spent among family members, resulting lack of sex education athome(Owuamanam& Bankole,2013). Study shows linkages between promiscuous behaviour andfamilial issues among adolescents (Lykken, 1997). Promiscuous actions of adolescents denote ways to sensibly adjust to societal and familial disruptions (Cherlin & Nancy,1986).

Several factors are included in promiscuous acts including peer pressures which led students to overestimate the romantic engagements of their peers (Scholly et al., 2005; Martens et al., 2006). Also, child-parent relationships hold significance for romantic interactions (Connolly& Mc Isaacs, 2009) as emotional support fosters better communication capabilities (Furman &Shomaker, 2008), negotiations to resolve conflicts(Reese-Weber & Khan, 2005) and promotes emotional intelligence which likely to diminish the prospect of risky acts.

Results show meaningful linkages of EI's subscales for well-being, self-control, emotionality and sociability with emotional promiscuity affirm the fact that indulgence in promiscuous acts and risky romantic affairs exacerbates psychological and mental problems and other failures (Ciairano, Bonino, Jackson & Miceli, 2000). It also infers those lower levels of personal control increase chances for promiscuous acts (Agnew, Brezina, Wright,& Cullen, 2002). The ability of reasoning and understand others' emotions are positively associated with long-term and committed relationships (Hopkins & Deepa, 2018) and decreases prospects for promiscuity. However, poor emotional regulations give rise to isolation and an urge to engage in deviant actions (Petrides, Frederickson, & Furnham,2004) or promiscuous behaviours. Studies showed that individuals with adequate emotional management endorsed fewer romantic mates in their pasts (Hessler & Katz, 2010), which resonates with the fact that engagement in risky romantic actions is an outcome of inadequate handling of emotions among adolescents (Cooper, Shapiro, & Powers, 1998).

The present study holds an important significance as romantic emotional encounters serve as an indicator of an individual's maturity, enable an individual to form interpersonal relationships (Erikson, 1968) determines self-worth, build trust in one's capabilities, cultivate prospect achievements in romantic relationships as well as educational endeavours (Connolly & Konarski, 1994; Brooks-Gunn & Paikoff, 1997). Present exploration implies a need to plan intervention programs to facilitate emotional intelligence to manage healthy romantic relationships among students to promote overall well-being and scholastic success. However, outcomes need cautious

interpretation owing to the small sample size, reliance on self-report scales and sole focus on the student population. It is recommended to carry out future studies considering a larger sample size. The inclusion of other relevant variables such as personality traits, media impacts, parenting styles, and peer influences provides in-depth knowledge about risk and protective factors to design future intervention programs.

### References

1. Agnew, R.S., Brezina, T., Wright, J.P., & Cullen, F.T. (2002). Strain, Personality Traits, and delinquency: Extending General Strain Theory. *Criminology*, 40, 43-72.
2. Ali, F., Amorim, I. S. & Chamorro-Premuzic, T. (2009). Empathy deficits and trait emotional intelligence in psychopathy and machiavellianism. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 47,758-762.
3. Brady, A., Baker, L. R., & Miller, R. S. (2020). Look but don't touch? Self-regulation determines whether noticing attractive alternatives increases infidelity. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 34(2),135-144.
4. Brand, R. J., Markey, C. M., Mills, A., & Hodges, S. D. (2007). Sex differences in self-reported infidelity and its correlates. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*, 57(1-2), 101– 109. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-007-9221-5>
5. Brooks-Gunn, J., & Paikoff, R. (1997). Sexuality and developmental transitions during adolescence. In J. Schulenberg, J. Maggs, & K. Hurrelmann (Eds.), *Health risks and developmental transitions during adolescence* (pp. 180-208). New York: Cambridge University Press.
6. Burri, A. V., Cherkas, L. M. & Spector, T. D. (2011). Emotional intelligence and its association with orgasmic frequency in women. *Journal of Sexual Medicine*, 6, 1930-1937.
7. Cabello, R., Sorrel, M. A., Fernandez-Pinto, I., Extremera, N., & Fernandez-Berrocal, P. (2016). Age and gender differences in ability emotional intelligence in adults: A cross-sectional study. *Developmental Psychology*, 52(9), 1486-1492. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0000191>
8. Chelin, a. and Nancy, R. (1986). Adolescent fertility, An emerging issue in Sub-Sahara African population department. Washington, D. C: World Bank.
9. Cherniss, C., & Goleman, D. (2001). *The emotionally intelligent workplace: How to select for, measure, and improve Emotional Intelligence in individuals, groups, and*

- organizations*. Jossey- Bass.
10. Cherry, K. (2017). Freud's Psychosexual Stages of Development. Reviewed by Steven Gans, MD. Updated August 01, 2018. <https://www.verywellmind.com/freuds-stages-of-psychosexual-development2795962>.
  11. Ciairano, S., Bonino, S., Jackson, S., & Miceli, R. (2000). Rapporti affettivi, sessualità e benesserepsicosociale in adolescenza. *Età Evolutiva*, 65, 90-101.
  12. Cohen, D., & Strayer, J. (1996). Empathy in conduct-disordered and comparison youth. *Developmental Psychology*, 32, 988–998.
  13. Connolly, J. A., & Konarski, R. (1994). Peer self-concept in adolescence: Analysis of factor structure and of associations with peer experience. *Journal of Research in Adolescence*, 4, 385-403.
  14. Connolly, J. A., & McIsaacs, C. (2009). Romantic Relationships in Adolescence. In R. M. Lerner L. Steinberg (Eds.), *Handbook of Adolescent Psychology*. Vol 2. Contextual influenceson adolescent development. 3rd Edition (pp. 104-151). Hoboken NJ: Wiley.
  15. Cooper M. L. (2002). Alcohol use and risky sexual behaviour among college students and youth:evaluating the evidence. *Journal of studies on alcohol. Supplement*, (14), 101–117. <https://doi.org/10.15288/jsas.2002.s14.101>
  16. Cooper, A., & Petrides, K. V. (2010). A psychometric analysis of the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire-Short Form (TEIQue-SF) using item response theory. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 92, 449-457. doi:10.1080/00223891.2010.497426
  17. Cooper, M. L., Shapiro, C. M., & Powers, A. M. (1998). Motivations for sex and risky sexual behaviour among adolescents and young adults: a functional perspective. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 75(6), 1528–1558. <https://doi.org/10.1037//0022-3514.75.6.1528>
  18. Diamond, M. (2002). Sex and gender are different: Sexual identity and gender identity aredifferent. *Clinical Child Psychology & Psychiatry*. 7(3):320–334.
  19. Douglas, K. A., Collins, J. L., Warren, C., Kann, L., Gold, R., Clayton, S., Ross, J. G., & Kolbe, L. J. (1997). Results from the 1995 National College Health Risk Behavior Survey. *Journal of American college health*, 46(2), 55–66. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07448489709595589>
  20. Edobor, J.O., & Ebiye, M.D. (2017). Emotional Intelligence As Predictor Of Delinquent Behaviours Among Secondary School Students In Port Harcourt Metropolis,



## Rivers State

21. Nigeria,5(2). *European Journal of Research and Reflection in Educational Sciences*,48-59.  
Eisenberg, N. (2000). Emotion, regulation, and moral development. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 51, 665–697.
22. Erikson E. H. (1968), *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
23. Furman, W., & Shomaker, L. B. (2008). Patterns of Interaction in Adolescent Romantic Relationships: Distinct Features and Links to Other Close Relationships. *Journal of Adolescence*, 31, 771-788.
24. Garcia, J. R., MacKillop, J., Aller, E. L., Merriwether, A. M., Wilson, D. S., & Lum, J. K. (2010). Associations between dopamine D4 receptor gene variation with both infidelity and sexual promiscuity. *PloS one*, 5(11), 141-162.
25. Hendrick, S. & Hendrick, C. (1987). Multidimensionality of sexual attitudes. *The Journal of SexResearch*, 23, 502-52.
26. Hessler, D. M., & Katz, L. F. (2010). Brief report: Associations between emotional competence and adolescent risky behaviour. *Journal of adolescence*, 33(1), 241–246. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2009.04.007>
27. Hopkins, M. & Deepa, R, (2018). The impact of emotional intelligence on ethical judgment.
28. *Journal of Management Development*. 37(6). 503-511. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JMD-02-2018-0045>
29. Hurlock, E. B. (1982). *Developmental psychology: A life-span approach*. McGraw-Hill.
30. Johnson, S. J., Batey, M. & Holdsworth, L. (2009). Personality and health: The mediating role of trait emotional intelligence and work locus of control. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 47,470 475.
31. Jones, D. N, & Paulhus D L (2012). The role of emotional promiscuity in unprotected sex. *Psychology & health*. 27(9), 1021-1035.
32. Jones, D.N.(2011) *Emotional promiscuity: consequences for health and well-being (Doctoral Dissertation)*. Vancouver, Canada: University of British Columbia.
33. Killian, K. D. (2012). Development and validation of the emotional self-awareness questionnaire: A measure of emotional intelligence. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*. 38(3). 502-514. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1752-0606.2011.00233.x>
34. Laldhawmi. (2019). Childhood Gender Non-conformity and Emotional Promiscuity as

- Indicators of Socio-sexual Orientation: A Study Among Mizo Youth[ Master's Thesis, Mizoram University Aizawl]
35. Lykken, D. T. (1997). Incompetent parental. Its causes and cures. *Child Psychiatry and HumanDiet*, 27(3), 129 – 137.
  36. Martens, M. P., Page, J. C., Mowry, E. S., Damann, K. M., Taylor, K. K., & Cimini, M. D. (2006). Differences between actual and perceived student norms: an examination of alcohol use, drug use, and sexual behaviour. *Journal of American college health*, 54(5), 295–300. <https://doi.org/10.3200/JACH.54.5.295-300>
  37. Noar, S. M., Carlyle, K., & Cole, C. (2006). Why communication is crucial: meta-analysis of the relationship between safer sexual communication and condom use. *Journal of health communication*, 11(4), 365–390. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10810730600671862>
  38. Okafor, H. C., & Duru, N. E. (2010). Sexual promiscuity among female undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Imo state: An issue for healthy living. *Edo Journal of Counselling*, 3(1), 100-109. <https://doi.org/10.4314/ejc.v3i1.52687>
  39. Owuamanam, D. O. and Bankole, O.M. (2013). Family Type And Attitude To SexualPromiscuity of Adolescent Students In Ekiti State, Nigeria. *EuropeanScientific Journal*, 17(9), 171-177.
  40. Petrides, K. V., & Furnham, A. (2003). Trait emotional intelligence. Behavioural validation in two studies of emotion recognition and reactivity to mood induction. *European Journal of Personality*, 17, 39–57.
  41. Petrides, K. V., & Furnham, A. (2006). The role of trait emotional intelligence in a gender-specific model of organizational variables. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 36, 552-569. Retrieved from doi:10.1111/j.0021-9029.2006.00019.x
  42. Petrides, K.V. & Norah F. & Adrian F. (2002). The role of trait emotional intelligence in academic performance and deviant behavior. *Personality and individual differences*. 36(1) 277- 293.
  43. Petrides, K.V., Frederickson, N., & Furnham, A. (2004). The role of trait emotional intelligence in academic performance and deviant behavior at school. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 36(2), 277–293. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869\(03\)00084-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869(03)00084-9)
  44. Pinto, R. & Arantes, J. (2016). The Relationship between Sexual and Emotional Promiscuity and Infidelity. *Athens Journal of Social Sciences*. 4(4), 385-398.
  45. Reese-Weber, M., & Khan, J. H. (2005). Familial predictors of sibling and romantic-

- partner conflict resolution: comparing late adolescents from intact and divorced families. *Journal of Adolescence*, 28, 479–493
46. Roberts, W., & Strayer, J. (1996). Empathy, emotional expressiveness, and prosocial behavior. *Child Development*, 67, 449–470.
47. Salavera, C., Usan, P., & Jarie, L. (2017). Emotional intelligence and social skills on self-efficacy in secondary education students. Are there gender differences? *Journal of Adolescence*. (60).39-47. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2017.07.009>
48. Salovey, P., & Mayer, J. D. (1990). Emotional intelligence. *Imagination, Cognition, and Personality*. 9(3). 185-211.
49. Scholly, K., Katz, A. R., Gascoigne, J., & Holck, P. S. (2005). Using social norms theory to explain perceptions and sexual health behaviors of undergraduate college students: an exploratory study. *Journal of American College Health*, 53(4), 159–166. <https://doi.org/10.3200/JACH.53.4.159-166>
50. Sprecher, S., & Metts, S. (1989). Development of the „Romantic Beliefs Scale“ and examination of the effects of gender and gender-role orientation. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 6, 387-411.
51. The Holy Bible: New International Version (2006). Galatians 6:7; copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society.
52. Widman, L., Choukas-Bradley, S., Helms, S. W., Golin, C. E., & Prinstein, M. J. (2014). Sexual communication between early adolescents and their dating partners, parents, and best friends. *Journal of Sex Research*, 51(7), 731–741.
53. Yip, J. A., Stein, D. H., Cote, S., & Carney, D. R. (2020). Follow your gut? Emotional Intelligence moderates the association between physiologically measured Somatic markers and risk-taking. *Emotion*. 20(3). 462-472. <https://doi.org/10.1037/emo0000561>