

Emotional Intelligence, Flourishing and Humor Styles: A Correlational Study Among Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

The development of flourishing- a recent concept in the field of positive psychology, has opened the doors to a new direction for research, and the increasing attention towards emotions and its implications has also intrigued researchers to develop more understanding about the concept. The present study aims to investigate the correlation between emotional intelligence, humor styles and flourishing among young adults. For the purpose of this study, a sample of 148 young adults, including 74 men and 74 women, ranging from the age of 20-25 years, were roped in and administered with Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Scale, Flourishing Scale and Humor Styles Questionnaire. The data was analyzed using Pearson product moment correlation and t-test. The findings of the research indicated that there exists a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence, flourishing and positive humor styles, while a negative correlation between emotional intelligence, flourishing and negative humor style- aggressive humor. There were no significant gender differences in terms of emotional intelligence, flourishing and humor styles. This study can be used to add to the existing knowledge about emotional intelligence and flourishing, and the results can be utilized to improve flourishing by inculcating positive humor styles.

Keywords: *Humor styles, Flourishing, Emotional Intelligence, Correlation, Positive Psychology, Positive humor, Negative humor*

The field of psychological research has been opened to new horizons with the introduction of positive psychology and its variables. One such concept is flourishing. The concept of flourishing was initially developed by Corey Keyes and Barbara Fredrickson.

Mental well-being, according to Keyes, does not mean the lack of mental illness. Good well-being, however, is a "distinct dimension of positive feelings and functioning." Individuals that are characterized as flourishing have a blend of high levels of emotions, psychological well-being, and social well-being.

"To flourish," writes Martin Seligman (2011), "is to find fulfillment in our lives, to perform important and worthwhile activities, and to connect with others on a deeper level—in short,

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to live the good life.” Past few decades have witnessed a boon in research towards understanding the relationship between flourishing and other psychological and social variables. Present study also aims to explore one such correlation between flourishing, humor styles and emotional intelligence to add to the scarce knowledge on the subject. Several earlier studies have attempted to establish a significant relation between these variables, but not all three of them together.

Flourishing has been studied with several variables, emotional intelligence being one of them. Emotional intelligence is the ability to interpret and use emotional knowledge in reasoning and other cognitive tasks, and comprises of four abilities- (a) Reliably interpreting and appraising thoughts, (b) Accessing and evoking feelings as they facilitate cognition, (c) Understanding emotional language and using emotional knowledge to monitor one's own feelings and those of others, (d) To foster development and well-being (Salvoe, Mayor 1990). Goleman (1995) suggested that there are five major components of emotional intelligence, *self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills*. Some studies revealed that there exists a relation between emotional intelligence and flourishing, where training to improve emotional intelligence can act as a technique of improving flourishing (Callea, 2019). Emotional intelligence has also been found to be a good forecaster of flourishing (Rey, 2019). However, there still lacks enough evidence to conclude any relationship between emotional intelligence and flourishing and how they might be correlated.

Humor styles represent the ways individuals use humor as a strategy for coping as well as shifting their perspectives (Dozois et al., 2009). Martin et al. (2003) coined four different types of humor- (a) *self-enhancing humor* is used to augment oneself; (b) *affiliative humor* is used to maintain and enhance interpersonal relationships; (c) *aggressive humor* is used to enhance oneself at the expense of others; (d) *self-defeating humor* is used for self-deprecation or self-disparagement. Self-enhancing and affiliative humor are considered as positive humor styles while the other two are categorized as negative ones. All these four humor styles have been studied in relation to emotional intelligence and flourishing in isolation, but not together. Emotional intelligence has been found to be positively correlated to affiliative and self-enhancing humor (positive humor styles) and also strongly predicts them (Ogrulu, 2015). Phenotypic relationship between emotional intelligence and four humor styles has been recorded (Vernon, Villani 2009). On the contrary, emotion intelligence was found to be a non-significant predictor of humor styles (Batool, Sadia, Saba, 2014). Studies stand inconclusive on the relation between humor styles and emotional intelligence as the results stand contradictory to each other. Similarly, the connection between humor styles, emotional intelligence and life satisfaction or subjective well-being has been studied but is not enough to draw any generalized conclusions. Positive humor styles, i.e., affiliative and self-enhancing humor styles, are positively correlated to life satisfaction and emotional intelligence, while negative humor styles, i.e., self-defeating and aggressive humor styles are negatively correlated to life satisfaction and emotional intelligence (Alinia, Dousti, Dehshiri, Heydari, 2009).

The chosen variables have been in the market of research for several years and have been studied in depth individually, but there exists a deficiency in terms of research and results when it comes to understanding the relation between these variables together. The present aims to understand how humor styles, emotional intelligence and flourishing can be correlated to each other and how their correlation might be used towards the advancement of mental well-being and leading a flourished life.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives

- To find the relationship between Emotional intelligence, humor styles and flourishing among young adults.
- To find the relationship between Emotional intelligence and Humor styles among young adults.
- To find the relationship between Emotional intelligence and flourishing among young adults.
- To find the relationship between Humor styles and flourishing among young adults.
- To find whether there exists a gender difference between the Emotional intelligence, Humor styles and flourishing.

Hypotheses

- H-1 There will be a significant relationship between Emotional intelligence, Humor styles and flourishing among young adults.
- H-2 There will be a significant relationship between Emotional intelligence and Humor styles among young adults.
- H-3 There will be a significant relationship between Emotional intelligence and flourishing among young adults.
- H-4 There will be a significant relationship between Humor styles and flourishing among young adults.
- H-5 There will be a gender difference in terms of these three variables among young adults.

Sample

The sample comprised of one hundred forty eight persons, equally distributed among males and females, ranging from the age of 20-25 years. All the subjects were young adults, competent in reading in English.

Variables

The study involves the following variables-

- **Emotional intelligence-** The ability of a person to control his emotions so that those feelings are communicated properly and effectively (Goleman, 1995).
- **Humor styles-** Different types of humor people use to cope up with situations. These can be positive as well negative styles.



- **Flourishing-** According to Martin Seligman (2011), “to flourish is to find fulfillment in our lives, accomplishing meaningful and worthwhile tasks, and connecting with others at a deeper level—in essence, living the good life”.

Instruments

Three measures were used in this study,

Humor Styles Questionnaire- Rod Martin and Patricia Doris (2003) created the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) to assess human variations in humour styles. Humor is a personality trait that has been found to be relatively stable over time. It's often thought of as a one-dimensional characteristic. Individuals, on the other hand, tend to vary in how they use satire in their personal lives, and different types of humour appear to have different results. The Humor Styles Questionnaire was created to discover how people's humour styles vary and how these discrepancies affect their health, well-being, relationships, and other outcomes. The Humor Styles Questionnaire is a 32-item self-report questionnaire that assesses how people use humour in their daily lives. On a scale of 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree), participants rate how much they agree with each comment (e.g., "I love making people laugh") (totally agree). In the case of reverse coded objects, the ranking moves from 1 (totally agree) to 7 (strongly disagree) (totally disagree). The questionnaire assesses two significant facets of humour. The first factor assesses whether humour is used to improve one's self-esteem or interpersonal relationships. The second criterion assesses whether the humour is inherently benevolent or has the ability to be negative and damaging. Affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive, and self-defeating humour styles result from the interaction of these influences. The four dimensions of humour styles are measured using this scale, which provides dimensional ratings. Internal consistency of 0.71 to 0.81 and test–retest reliabilities of 0.80 to 0.85 show the four scales' reliability. Theoretically significant differential associations with other indicators of sense of humour, self-esteem, psychological well-being, aggression, coping, intimacy, social support, relationship satisfaction, and so on, provide evidence of validity.

Schutte Emotional Intelligence Test- The Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) is a method of measuring general Emotional Intelligence (EI) that consists of four sub-scales: emotion perception, emotion use, self-relevant emotional regulation, and emotion regulation of others. It is based on Salovey and Mayer's model (1990). The SSEIT model and the EQ-I model of Emotional Intelligence are closely related. The SSEIT contains a 33-item self-report with answers on a scale of 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). Each sub-test score is graded, and the final score for the individual is then added together. Schutte and her team used an emotional intelligence scale with a reliability level of 0.90. Overall, the EI score is fairly reliable for adults and youth; however, the using emotions sub-scale has shown poor reliability (Ciarrochi, Chan & Bajgar, 2001). They also found a mediocre link between the SSRI and self-reported EI, the Big Five EI scale (0.51), and life satisfaction (Petrides and Furnham, 2000). The poorest result was the SSRI association for well-being parameters, which was less than 0.20.

The Flourishing scale- The Flourishing Scale, developed by Diener in 2009, is an 8-item overview indicator of a respondent's self-perceived success in key areas including relationships, self-esteem, purpose, and optimism. A single psychological well-being score is given by the measure. The scale consists of 8 items which are scored on a 7 point likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly disagree). The scale was found to have a reliability of 0.82, and item total correlation of 0.52.

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Procedure

This study, to see the correlation between emotional intelligence, humor styles and flourishing, was conducted on a sample of young adults, ranging from the age of 20 to 25 years. The subjects were firstly asked for their informed consent and then the above-mentioned psychological tools were sent to them via google forms.

Scoring for the results was done by the researcher with the help of the standardized scoring sheets provided by the makers.

RESULTS

The present study aims to see if there exists any correlation between emotional intelligence, humor styles and flourishing in young adults. After collection of data, descriptive statistics, t-test and correlation were computed. Data was analyzed using JAMOVI, a 3rd generation analysis spreadsheet, used as an alternative to SPSS. The findings of these analysis are mentioned below-

Table No. 1 Group descriptive

	Group	N	Mean	Median	SD	SE
Self-Enhancing Humour	Female	74	37.1	37.0	8.08	0.939
	Male	74	38.0	38.0	7.12	0.828
Self-Defeating Humor	Female	74	29.6	30.5	8.28	0.963
	Male	74	32.9	32.5	8.33	0.968
Affiliative Humour	Female	74	40.6	41.0	8.58	0.997
	Male	74	41.9	41.0	7.94	0.923
Aggressive Humour	Female	74	24.0	23.0	6.88	0.800
	Male	74	27.1	26.0	8.45	0.983
Flourishing	Female	74	44.9	46.0	7.99	0.929
	Male	74	43.5	43.5	9.07	1.054
Emotional Intelligence	Female	74	130.0	128.0	17.04	1.981
	Male	74	130.9	133.5	14.87	1.729

A Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was computed to examine the correlation between Emotional intelligence, Humor styles and Flourishing, whose results are mentioned in Table- 2.

Table No. 2 Correlation between humor styles, emotional intelligence and flourishing among young adults

	self-enhancing humour	self-defeating humour	affiliative humour	Aggressive humour	flourishing	emotional intelligence
self-enhancing humour	—					
self-defeating humor	0.208*	—				
affiliative humour	0.506***	0.058	—			
aggressive humour	0.101	0.368***	-0.042	—		
flourishing	0.298***	-0.187*	0.344***	-0.361***	—	
emotional intelligence	0.386***	-0.037	0.420***	-0.313***	0.691***	—

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

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Flourishing was found to be positively correlated with Self enhancing humor ($r = 0.298, p < 0.001$), and Affiliative humor ($r = 0.344, p < 0.001$). However, it was negatively correlated with Aggressive humor ($r = -0.361, p < 0.001$).

Similarly, Emotional intelligence was also found to be significantly positively related with Self enhancing humor ($r = 0.386, p < 0.001$), and Affiliative humor ($r = 0.420, p < 0.001$). However, there was a significant negative correlation between Emotional intelligence and Aggressive humor ($r = -0.313, p < 0.001$).

A significant positive correlation was found between emotional intelligence and flourishing ($r = 0.691, p < 0.001$).

Table No. 3 Independent t-test

		Statistic	df	p
self-enhancing humour	Student's t	-0.648	146	0.518
self-defeating humor	Student's t	-2.365	146	0.019
affiliative humour	Student's t	-0.975	146	0.331
aggressive humour	Student's t	-2.421	146	0.017
flourishing	Student's t	1.039	146	0.301
emotional intelligence	Student's t	-0.344	146	0.731

To test the hypothesis that there will be gender differences among Emotional intelligence, humor styles and flourishing, an independent samples t-test was performed. It can be seen from the Table 3 that there exists a significant difference between males and females in terms of Self-defeating humor ($p = 0.19$) and Aggressive humor ($p = 0.17$), where males exhibit higher scores in aggressive ($M = 27.1$) and self-defeating humor ($M = 32.9$) as compared to females.

DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence, humor styles and flourishing among young adults. The sample included 148 young adults ranging from the age of 20- 25.

The stated variables- emotional intelligence, flourishing and humor styles, were studied with the help of Schutte Self report Emotional intelligence test, Flourishing Scale and Humor Styles Questionnaire respectively.

The scores obtained through the collected data were then analyzed to reach to a conclusion. This chapter involves the interpretation of the analyzed data in relation to the formulated hypotheses and objectives, to reach to an inference about the correlation among the variables.

According to Hypothesis 1 (H1), there was assumed to be a significant correlation between emotional intelligence, humor styles and flourishing among young adults. From Table- 2, it can be seen that there exists a significant correlation between emotional intelligence, flourishing ($r = 0.691, p < 0.001$) and positive humor styles, i.e., self-enhancing and affiliative humor. This indicates that young adults with higher emotional intelligence exhibited higher levels of flourishing and positive humor styles.

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In Hypothesis 2 (H2), it was hypothesized that there will be a significant correlation between emotional intelligence and humor styles among young adults. From the results in Table 2, it can be inferred that there exists a significant correlation between the two variables. Emotional intelligence was found to be significantly positively correlated with self-enhancing humor ($r=0.386$, $p < 0.001$) and affiliative humor ($r = 0.420$, $p < 0.001$), and negatively correlated with aggressive humor ($r = -0.313$, $p < 0.001$). However, there was no significant correlation between emotional intelligence and self-defeating humor. Thus, young adults with higher levels of emotional intelligence show greater scores in positive humor styles but lower in aggressive humor.

Hypothesis 3 (H3) postulated that there will be a significant correlation between Emotional intelligence and flourishing among young adults. From Table- 2, it can be inferred that there exists a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and flourishing ($r=0.691$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that young adults who stand higher in emotional intelligence, show greater levels of flourishing as well.

According to Hypothesis 4 (H4) it was assumed that there will be a significant correlation between humor styles and flourishing among young adults. From Table- 2 it can be seen that there exists a significant positive correlation between flourishing and positive humor styles, i.e., self-enhancing humor ($r = 0.298$, $p < 0.001$) and affiliative humor ($r = 0.344$, $p < 0.001$). It was also seen that flourishing was negatively correlated with aggressive humor ($r= -0.361$, $p < 0.001$). However, there was no significant correlation found between flourishing and self-defeating humor.

In Hypothesis 5 (H5), it was hypothesized that there will be gender differences among young adults in terms of emotional intelligence, flourishing and humor styles. Data from Table- 3 indicates that there exists a significant difference between males and females in terms of self-defeating humor ($p = 0.19$) and aggressive humor ($p = 0.17$), where males scored higher in self-defeating and aggressive humor as compared to females. However, no significant gender differences were found between males and females in terms of emotional intelligence, humor styles and flourishing.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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