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SOCIAL MOTIVATION AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE IN STUDENTS

Abstract: The goal of the research was to identify relations between social motivation structure and emotional competence among students of different psychosocial characteristics. The research was conducted at the Faculty of Philosophy and the Faculty of Economics, East Sarajevo University. The sample consisted of 228 first- and fourth-year students. For the study purposes, we used the social motivation questionnaire and the emotional competence questionnaire. The results of the research will be useful as motivation for further research, as well as in teaching and designing programs which promote students' mental health.

Key words: social motivation, emotional competence, students

1. Introduction

Observing and analysing human behaviour and actions, we conclude that every person has certain needs, i.e., motives that drive them. The type, intensity and direction of motivation will depend on how important an activity that an individual engages in is for their existence. Motivation involves any physiological, psychological, or social factors that drive a person, direct their behaviour, actions, thinking, perception, and learning, on a personal or social level. As a rule, there is

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no difference between people regarding the inventory of biological motives. Every individual is born with biological (physiological) motives, which are necessary for the species survival. Unlike biological motives, there are motives that motivate a person in social interactions and similar situations that give a person a sense of satisfaction. They are responsible for love, cooperation, group role, empathy, communication with others, work commitment, etc. This type of motivation is called social motivation. Social motivation varies from person to person in scope, intensity, and nature, because it depends on several factors, both personal and environmental. Students' academic achievement, as well as success in life, largely depends on the scope, type, and intensity of social motivation. Inspired by this, we examined those elements of social motivation that relate to the need for achievement (targeting excellence, achieving a set of standards, striving for success), then the need for affiliation (desire to have close and friendly relationships) and the need for power (the need to make people behave the way we think they should behave).

The other subject of our research was emotional competence. In the past twenty years, the concept of emotional intelligence has crossed the boundaries of psychology and into mass media, especially after Daniel Goleman, a lecturer at Harvard University and a correspondent for the New York Times, published his book *Emotional Intelligence*. Emotional intelligence is one of the crucial factors "in students' adjustment to real-life situations; we can say that students who possess such abilities are considered well-adjusted and emotionally skilled, whereas those who do not possess these abilities can be less skilled in their emotional and social functioning." (Bogdanović, 2013) ".

2. The structure of social motivation

Achievement theory is sometimes called the need for achievement theory or social motivation theory. The founders of this theory are McClelland and Atkinson. This theory is defined as the individual's disposition to strive for success. Disposition is defined as a relatively permanent personality trait. The structure of social motivation consists of the following components: the need for power, the need for achievement

and the need for affiliation. The need for power can be defined as "the tendency of one social actor, be it an individual or a group, to influence the behaviour of other people" (Franceško, 2013). The need for power also involves feelings of self-worth and ability. The need for achievement has frequently been the subject of research. It involves a strong tendency towards competition, with the goal of surpassing one's own or others' achievements, in professional or private life. A recent study on the need for achievement (success, self-actualization) by Franceško et al. (2002), "four components that further describe this complex motivational disposition" were identified.

These are:

- favouring competition

- achieving goals as a source of satisfaction

- perseverance in achieving goals

- tendency towards planning (Franceško et al., 2002)

Some studies have found a positive correlation between the degree of achievement motivation and IQ, and academic achievement. The studies conducted in developed countries found that the need for achievement is much more developed among certain occupations, such as entrepreneurs, executives, lawyers, etc. (see Đurić, Franceško, Kostić, 2010). The third component of social motivation is the need for affiliation, which involves the desire to be in direct contact with people or to associate with others in different areas of life. Every organization should aim to identify these individuals among their employees and recruit people who exhibit a strong affiliation need, because it is important both for the individual employee's success and for the success of the organization.

3. Emotional competence[2]

Emotional competence is a phenomenon which has attracted the interest of researchers in psychology, sociology, medicine, as well

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[2] Some authors use other terms when talking about the same set of skills and abilities, such as: emotional quotient, emotional literacy, and emotional competence.

as the general public, especially since the publication of the book *Emotional Intelligence* by Daniel Goleman, Harvard University lecturer and The New York Times correspondent. However, interest in emotional intelligence first appeared in the distant past. In his book *Nicomachean's Ethics*, Aristotle referred to this phenomenon in his simple but wise saying: "Anybody can become angry, that is easy; but to be angry with the right person, and to the right degree, and at the right time, and for the right purpose, and in the right way, that is not within everybody's power, that is not easy." This famous saying contains the whole essence of emotional competence. The basic constructs of emotional competence are contained in numerous models of general intelligence.

Sternberg concluded that coping in everyday situations, especially in the sphere of interpersonal relationships, requires other abilities than those measured by conventional intelligence tests. Goleman contrasted the notion of emotional competence with the notion of academic intelligence, showing by effective examples the advantage that emotional competence can have over academic competence in everyday life. Goleman's book with its intriguing title *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* was a bestseller in the USA for two years. The great popularity of this book has also led to an uncritical expansion of the concept definition. According to Vladimir Takšić, this led to a ruthless commercialization of the concept, through an ever-expanding number of various training programs aimed at developing emotional competence, especially in the field of leadership and education. These training programs are uncritically advertised as a cure-all. The concept of emotional intelligence first appeared in scientific publications in the early 1990s. This phenomenon was first examined by two researchers, Peter Salovey from the University of Yale, and John D. Mayer from the University of New Hampshire. Objectively, gradually, and systematically, using scientific methodology, they developed models and tools for assessing emotional competence. According to their research, emotional competence is a set of emotional abilities that enable a person to more accurately assess and recognize the type of emotional expression of their own and others' emotions and abilities and to choose the right way to use emotions and unconscious instinctive mechanisms in interactions with other people, for the purpose of planning and achieving optimal life goals.

To use an IT expression, we can say that emotional intelligence includes the ability to process emotional information. If the measurement shows that a person, in our case a student, has a high degree of emotional competence, they are considered a well-adjusted and emotionally skilled individual, while a person who does not have a sufficient degree of this ability may be less skilled emotionally and socially. The low level of emotional competence in students results in frequent conflict situations with oneself, as well as with the environment, peers, teachers, parents, partners, etc. Consequently, their mental health may suffer. Low emotional competence may also lead to poorer results in any activity. "School psychologists and special education teachers were the first to link what we call emotional intelligence with academic work and achievement" (Shapiro, 1998). Many psychology researchers and practitioners agree that a subject aimed at developing emotional intelligence should be included in the school curriculum.

4. Research Methodology

4.1. Research Problem and Objective

The research problem is to identify the relationship between the structure of social motivation and emotional competence among students of different psychosocial characteristics.

4.2. Research Goals

- To determine whether there is a statistically significant correlation between the structure of social motivation and emotional competence among students
- To determine whether there is a statistically significant variation in emotional competence by demographic variables of respondents: gender and type of faculty

4.3. Research Hypotheses

Based on the stated research goals, the research hypotheses were formulated as follows:

H1: There is a statistically significant correlation between the structure of social motivation and emotional competence

H2: There is a statistically significant variation in emotional competence by demographic variables of respondents: gender and type of faculty

4.4. Research Instruments

1. Social Motivation Questionnaire (based on David McClelland's Learned Needs Theory; see *Managing Today*, Stephen P. Robbins (ed.), Prentice Hall, 1977). McClelland studied acquired needs, which are measured using this questionnaire. These needs are the following: the need for achievement, the need for affiliation / socializing and the need for power.

2. Questionnaire of Emotional Competence, QEC-45 by Professor Vladimir Takšić from the Faculty of Philosophy in Rijeka, Department of Psychology (2002). The questionnaire contains the following subscales: the ability to perceive and understand emotions scale, the ability to express and name emotions scale, and the ability to regulate and manage emotions scale.

4.5. Research Sample

The sample consisted of 228 first- and fourth-year students from the Faculty of Philosophy and the Faculty of Economics, East Sarajevo University. The sample is uniform according to certain parameters (gender, age, type of faculty). The sample was chosen using probability cluster sampling.

4.6. Research Organization and Data Processing Procedures

The research was conducted at the Faculty of Philosophy and the Faculty of Economics, East Sarajevo University. The study was conducted by the author and research assistants from the aforementioned institutions. The data was processed using appropriate computer software programs, correlational analysis, and T-tests.

5. Results

The results will be presented in order of the hypotheses proposed.

I There is a statistically significant correlation between the structure of social motivation and emotional competence among students.

Table 1. Correlations between the structure of social motivation and emotional competence

The structure of social motivation	Achievement	Power	Affiliation	Emotional competence
Achievement	1	-,321	,489	,851
	-	,000	,000	,000
	228	228	228	228
Power	-,321	1	-,281	-,490
	,000	-	,000	,000
	228	228	228	228
Affiliation	,489	-,281	1	,557
	,000	,000	-	,000
	228	228	228	228
Emotional competence	,851	-,490	,557	1
	,000	,000	,000	-
	228	228	228	228

Table 1 shows that there is an evident and statistically significant correlation between emotional competence and the structure of social motivation. A very high positive correlation is evident between achievement

and emotional competence. Negative correlation exists between power and emotional competence, leading us to conclude that a higher level of power indicates a lower degree of emotional competence and vice versa.

II There is a statistically significant difference in emotional competence according to the gender and type of faculty of the respondents

Table 2. Difference in emotional competence between respondents according to gender

		Number of respondents	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	T test	Significance
Gender	Male	114	125,1316	35,71185	162,788	**.000**
	Female	114	176,0877	23,30238		
Total		228	150,6096	39,46081		

Testing the differences between arithmetic means between students by gender, we found that female students are more emotionally competent than male students, and the difference obtained is statistically significant.

III There is a statistically significant difference in emotional competence between respondents by type of faculty

Table 3. Differences in emotional competence between respondents by type of faculty

		Number of respondents	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	T test	Significance
Faculty	**Faculty of Philosophy**	**114**	**159,9561**	**26,65758**	**13,495**	**,000**
	Faculty of Economics	114	141,2632	47,34136		
Total		228	150,6096	39,46081		

Table 3 results show that there is a significant difference in the total score of emotional competence between students from different faculties on the sample level. Namely, the Faculty of Philosophy students have been shown to be more emotionally competent compared to the Faculty of Economics students.

6.   Discussion and conclusion

Based on theoretical considerations, it can be concluded that the problem of social motivation is complex and very important in the life of every individual. It involves a specific way of thinking and solving everyday personal, professional and life problems in the social environment in which people live and work. Without the energy we draw from social motivation, no human being could reach self-awareness and perform the social functions which are essential for governing the world around us. Only through interactions with others can an individual enact prosocial values (attitude towards self, others, and groups). Although the importance of emotional competence was recognized only recently, emotional competence is essential for achieving goals, maintaining healthy relationships, and individual mental health. Knowing and governing oneself is one of the greatest victories a person can achieve. People who possess self-knowledge and self-control (who have reached an enviable level of self-confidence, self-esteem, etc.) can govern their lives better and make more rational and pragmatic decisions, with minimal or no contamination from pathological factors such as depression, anxiety, phobia, hypersensitivity, impulsivity, obsession, etc.

As shown above, we found a statistically significant correlation between the structure of social motivation and emotional competence among students; more specifically the part of the social motivation related to achievement and emotional competence. This implies that the skill of recognizing and controlling emotions is an important factor for the level of achievement and vice versa. Students who during their upbringing were exposed to educational practices that encouraged them to compete (not at any cost) with others, to excel in their tasks, and who were rewarded for success, developed a strong achievement motivation.

This finding indicates the need to encourage young people to succeed during upbringing, both in the family and school. It is also essential to use a system of adequate stimulative measures and actions that evoke pleasant emotions in the child. If children are encouraged to compete with others and to perform well in their tasks and if they are rewarded for their achievements, it is likely that they will develop a strong achievement motive. If, on the other hand, competition is not encouraged and if there is no positive response to the child's achievement, it is likely that this motive will not develop. In short, we can safely assume that the acquisition and development of this motivation will depend on parents' behavior towards children. On the other hand, it is necessary to encourage and train children to develop emotional competence from a young age.

The results have shown a negative correlation between the level of power and emotional competence. A higher level of power indicates a lower degree of emotional competence. Apparently, emotions and power, i.e., the need for power and emotional competence do not "go hand-in-hand". This finding evidently warrants further research.

The results have also shown that female students are more emotionally competent than male students, with a statistically significant difference. This result was not altogether unexpected, as it confirms some already existing opinions of gender differences. Indeed, experience has confirmed that women are better than men in assessing personality at first glance. The reason for this is women's preoccupation with their appearance and what others think of them. Women's appearance is an important factor of achievement in many fields. Hence the attention paid to the exterior, in this case emotional expressions. The female students are likely to have developed this skill to a higher degree, which results in a higher emotional competence. Over the long years of evolutionary development, women were those who acquired an amount of emotional competence that helped them in child-rearing, e.g., mothers can identify her child's needs by the child's crying, etc.

The research also yielded interesting results related to the nature of the relationship between emotional competence of students from different faculties. The results have shown that students from the Faculty

of Philosophy are more emotionally competent than students from the Faculty of Economics. Obviously, the content of their studies has an impact on the development of competence. It is generally known that, for instance, psychology students are in some way sensitized to emotionality in general, because the skills such as identifying and controlling emotions are very important for success in their future occupation.

The research relevance is related to the choice of the research problem itself. Browsing through book shops and online and physical libraries, it is evident that the subjects of motivation and emotional have captured the attention of the reading public, as nearly one third of all the book titles contain words such as "motivation" or "emotional intelligence". Another argument in favour of the relevance of these phenomena is a multitude of self-help programmes, training courses, and online guidebooks. However, in a host of quick fixes that promise higher achievement and better emotional control, it is not an easy task to find the right ones. If students acquired theoretical knowledge of these components and then applied it in their day-to-day life, it is to be hoped that they would be better equipped to identify their weaknesses and then improve them. This would lead to a higher self-satisfaction, self-confidence, and academic achievement, as well as better interpersonal relationships with parents and peers.

The results obtained can be applied in practice, in areas such as resolving students' learning or behavioural difficulties, students' mental health care units, counselling, designing programmes and workshops for students aimed at improving elements of social motivation, developing emotional intelligence among students, etc. This research and the correlations observed demonstrate the high complexity of these phenomena and the necessity of further multidisciplinary research. The future implications of this research could be related to exploring new ideas about the influence of pathological conative factors on social motivation and emotional competence.

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