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THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT
Emotional intelligence (EI) has undergone significant theoretical evolution since its introduction. This article provides a comprehensive historical review of EI, focusing on major models such as the ability model by Salovey and Mayer, Goleman's mixed model, Bar-On's social-emotional framework, and the trait model developed by Petrides. The review discusses how these models differ in definitions, assessments, and theoretical scope, while also noting the global parallels in philosophical traditions that echo EI principles. Although fragmented, the field of EI is maturing through integrative frameworks that align emotional skills with broader psychological constructs. The article concludes by highlighting the current challenges and directions in refining EI as a valid construct for research and application.

KEYWORDS: *Emotional Intelligence, Ability Model, Trait EI, Mixed Model, Goleman, Mayer and Salovey, Bar-On, Theoretical Development*

1. INTRODUCTION
Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to identify, understand, manage, and use emotions effectively in oneself and others. Initially formulated by Salovey and Mayer (1990), EI emerged as a distinct psychological construct with broad implications for education, leadership, and mental health. The construct gained extensive attention following Goleman's (1995) most popular work, leading to multiple interpretations, models, and measures. This article traces the theoretical development of EI from its early conceptualizations through its present forms. It also explores the influence of non-Western philosophies on EI and proposes directions for future integration.

2. HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS
Prior to EI's formal emergence, thinkers like Thorndike (1920) and Gardner (1983) laid the groundwork through concepts of social and multiple intelligences. Thorndike introduced "social intelligence" as a crucial aspect of adaptive behavior, defined as the ability to understand and manage men and women, boys and girls, to act wisely in human relations. Wechsler (1940) also acknowledged the role of non-intellective factors in general intelligence, suggesting that emotional and social factors were integral to understanding human behavior.

Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences expanded the concept of intelligence to include interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences, which involved understanding others' emotions and one's own emotional states. These ideas were instrumental in broadening the framework for how intelligence was conceptualized, paving the way for the emergence of EI as a standalone construct.

3. SALOVEY AND MAYER'S ABILITY MODEL
Salovey and Mayer (1990) defined EI as a form of intelligence involving the monitoring of emotions and using them to guide thought and behavior. Their model, later refined (Mayer & Salovey, 1997), comprised four branches: (1) perceiving emotions, (2) using emotions to facilitate thought, (3) understanding emotions, and (4) managing emotions. This model treats EI as a measurable cognitive ability, distinct from personality. Tools like the MSCEIT were developed to assess these abilities via performance-based tasks.

The strength of this model lies in its empirical focus and clarity. By conceptualizing EI as a type of intelligence, Salovey and Mayer placed it within a scientific framework that could be objectively tested. Research using the MSCEIT has shown that individuals with high ability-EI tend to perform better in social settings, exhibit better mental health outcomes, and have more effective interpersonal communication. However, critics argue that the ability model may be too narrow, potentially neglecting the dispositional and personality-based aspects of EI that are influential in real-world settings.

4. GOLEMAN'S MIXED MODEL
Daniel Goleman (1995) broadened the definition of EI to include emotional and social competencies critical for workplace success. His mixed model encompassed self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. While Goleman's model popularized EI and stimulated its application in organizational and educational settings, it was also critiqued for conceptual ambiguity and for mixing cognitive abilities with traits.

Goleman's framework gained rapid popularity due to its practical implications, especially in leadership and organizational development. The model's appeal lies in its accessibility and relevance to real-life situations. Goleman argued that EI could matter more than IQ in determining success, especially in fields that require collaboration,

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leadership, and emotional labor. His Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI) was used in training and performance evaluations across corporate sectors. However, the mixed nature of this model, combining traits, abilities, and competencies, made it challenging to define EI precisely, and led to questions about the scientific validity of Goleman's claims.

5. BAR-ON'S EMOTIONAL-SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE MODEL

Reuven Bar-On (1997, 2006) proposed a mixed model focused on emotional and social functioning. His EQ-i instrument assessed EI across five dimensions: intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, adaptability, stress management, and general mood. This model emphasized well-being and adjustment but was often challenged for overlapping with personality constructs.

Bar-On's model is particularly notable for its clinical and psychological orientation. It was designed not only for organizational settings but also for use in psychological assessment and intervention. The EQ-i became one of the most widely used EI instruments and was normed on large international samples. Bar-On posited that emotional-social intelligence is an important determinant of human performance and success and can be developed over time. Despite its contributions, the model faces criticism for its broad scope, as many of its components, such as optimism and happiness, are typically studied under positive psychology or personality research.

6. TRAIT EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Petrides and Furnham (2001) introduced the trait model of EI, framing it as a constellation of self-perceptions linked to personality. Their Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue) measures domains such as emotionality, self-control, well-being, and sociability. Unlike ability-based models, trait EI is measured through self-report and reflects typical behavior rather than maximum performance.

Trait EI has garnered attention for its stability and ease of measurement. It aligns with established personality theories and complements the Big Five model, offering incremental validity in predicting well-being, job satisfaction, and social interactions. Researchers have also linked trait EI with coping mechanisms, emotional regulation strategies, and psychological resilience. However, because trait EI relies on self-report data, it is susceptible to social desirability bias and subjective distortion. This limitation has prompted some scholars to advocate for multi-method assessments that combine self-report with behavioral or observational measures.

7. CONCEPTUAL AND MEASUREMENT CHALLENGES

The field of EI has been marked by divergent models and measurement tools, leading to conceptual fragmentation. Critics argue that mixed models lack discriminant validity and that trait EI overlaps substantially with established personality dimensions. Ability models have been defended for their precision but critiqued for their narrow focus and artificial testing formats. Calls for greater theoretical clarity and standardized measurement continue.

One of the major challenges in EI research is achieving consensus on what constitutes emotional intelligence. Different models emphasize different aspects—some focus on abilities, others on traits, and yet others on learned competencies. This plurality has led to confusion and difficulty in comparing research findings. Moreover, the wide range of available EI assessments—ranging from objective tests to subjective self-assessments—further complicates the empirical landscape. As a result, meta-analyses often struggle to draw definitive conclusions about EI's predictive power or practical utility.

8. CULTURAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES

Although EI research has largely emerged from Western psychology, similar ideas appear in non-Western traditions. Ancient Indian, Chinese, and Greek philosophies emphasized emotional regulation and interpersonal harmony. For instance, the Bhagavad Gita advocates for emotional balance through detachment and self-awareness—principles akin to modern EI. Similarly, Confucian and Buddhist teachings stress self-control, empathy, and social harmony.

These traditions suggest that emotional competence has long been valued across cultures, even if framed differently. Scholars have begun exploring how cultural norms influence the expression and measurement of EI. In collectivist societies, for instance, emotional expression may be subdued to maintain group harmony, affecting how EI is perceived and assessed. This raises important questions about the universality of EI constructs and the need for culturally sensitive models and instruments.

9. INTEGRATION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Efforts have emerged to integrate the disparate EI models. For instance, Hughes and Evans (2018) proposed an integrated model situating EI within broader affective and cognitive processes. Such frameworks aim to preserve the strengths of each model while clarifying boundaries and enhancing empirical rigor. Cross-cultural studies also suggest that EI has global relevance, with parallels in philosophical traditions from India, China, and other cultures emphasizing emotional balance and self-regulation.

Future research is likely to focus on refining EI measurements, developing culturally inclusive frameworks, and examining the neurological and developmental foundations of EI. Neuropsychological research is already shedding light on the brain mechanisms involved in emotional processing, particularly the roles of the amygdala, prefrontal cortex, and limbic system. Developmental studies are exploring how EI evolves across the lifespan and how it can be enhanced through education and training. These avenues hold promise for deepening our understanding of EI and expanding its applicability.

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10. CONCLUSION

The evolution of emotional intelligence reflects an ongoing dialogue between theory, measurement, and practical application. From its roots in social and multiple intelligences to its modern conceptualizations as ability, trait, or competency, EI has grown into a multidisciplinary field. While debates over definition and scope persist, the field is converging toward more coherent and comprehensive models. Future research must aim to refine EI's conceptual core, validate its measurement tools, and explore its real-world implications across cultures and contexts. Through continued refinement and integration, emotional intelligence can offer a valuable framework for understanding human behavior in diverse settings.

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