

Psychology of Emotion: Theory and Applications
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Module 12, Lecture 30: Emotional intelligence, health and well-being

I welcome you all to Module number 12 of this course, which focuses on the Applied Aspects of Emotional Intelligence. This is the second lecture of this module, making it lecture number 30 overall. Today, we will discuss how emotional intelligence is connected to or can be applied in the context of health and well-being. To provide a brief recap of our last lecture, we discussed the application of emotional intelligence in the workplace context. We explored various research findings and theoretical possibilities regarding how emotional intelligence is relevant in the workplace, specifically in relation to job performance, job satisfaction, positive organizational attitudes and behavior, leadership, and organizational stress. While some possibilities were overstated in certain variables, many research findings support the idea that emotional intelligence plays a significant role in the workplace, especially in situations where human interaction and emotions are crucial, such as service-oriented environments. Now, let's delve into today's lecture, which will focus on health and well-being and their potential connection with emotional intelligence. We will discuss both physical health and mental health, as well as variables related to well-being.

Emotional intelligence is relevant to the context of health broadly because emotional dysfunction often underlies various disorders, particularly psychological disorders. Many clinical disorders stem from issues with emotion regulation or inappropriate emotional responses. Consequently, problems in emotional aspects can lead to various mental health issues, which in turn can impact physical health because mental and physical health are interconnected. For instance, individuals with depression often experience irrational fears and a pervasive sense of impending doom, reflecting emotional disturbances inherent in the disorder. Similarly, individuals with impulse control disorders may exhibit unusual emotional behaviors such as arson or kleptomania due to their inability to regulate impulses effectively. These examples highlight how emotional issues can manifest in various behavioral and psychological disorders, affecting both mental and physical health.

There's often a compulsion to engage in certain behaviors that individuals struggle to control, indicating issues with emotion regulation. Autistic children may struggle with social and emotional functioning to the extent that they have difficulty forming connections, even with their parents. Disorders like autism and social anxiety hinder the formation of connections with others, particularly in autism, where emotional dysfunction can inhibit relationship-building. Many psychological disorders involve inappropriate or excessive emotional reactions, such as unwarranted anxiety or anger outbursts triggered by stress. These reactions are indicative of problems in emotion regulation or expression. Deficiencies in emotional intelligence are evident in individuals with clinical disorders, where basic emotional abilities like self-understanding and appropriate expression are lacking.

This deficiency in emotional intelligence can contribute to various mental and physical disorders. Research has shown that negative emotions, like distress, can directly impact physical health, while positive emotions, such as happiness, can promote health and longevity. There is a physiological link between emotions, stress, and physical diseases, and emotional intelligence may play a role in moderating this connection. Stressful or distressing emotions, such as anxiety or depression, can lead to physical illnesses by influencing physiological responses. Several factors influence the relationship between distress, stress, and physical health, including physiological responses to stressors.

Whenever we experience distress or stressful situations, they can trigger responses in the sympathetic nervous system and neuroendocrine system. Stress activates certain brain centres, like the hypothalamus, which in turn activates glands such as the adrenal gland. This activation can lead to the release of hormones like cortisol and adrenaline, as well as the activation of the sympathetic nervous system, resulting in increased heart rate, sweating, and heightened energy levels. Chronic stress, however, can lead to prolonged release of these hormones, which may have adverse effects on the body. Cortisol, for example, can weaken the immune system and increase cholesterol levels, potentially leading to heart diseases. Additionally, intense emotional experiences, especially those that cause rapid increases in heart rate, can strain the heart and contribute to heart diseases. Thus, mental experiences like distress, stress, and trauma can directly impact the body's physiology, leading to various physical ailments.

Negative emotions and stressful events can also influence behavior, leading to unhealthy practices like smoking, excessive drinking, lack of sleep, and insufficient exercise. These behaviors, in turn, can exacerbate health issues. Moreover, emotional distress may interfere with adherence to medical advice, further complicating health conditions. Emotional intelligence (EI) can mitigate the negative impact of distressing emotions on physical health by helping individuals better manage and cope with their emotions. EI enables individuals to express, understand, and regulate their emotions effectively, thus reducing the physiological and behavioral repercussions of stress. Emotionally intelligent individuals are more likely to employ healthy coping strategies, minimizing the adverse effects of stress on their physical well-being.

Overall, emotional intelligence is expected to improve health outcomes by promoting positive health practices and facilitating adaptive responses to stressors. It enhances individuals' ability to manage their emotions in a manner conducive to their overall health and well-being. Individuals with high emotional intelligence (EI) are more likely to engage in proactive self-care practices, which can have a positive impact on health behaviors negatively affected by stress. Health-promoting behaviors such as exercise and a balanced diet are directly related to higher emotional intelligence, potentially mitigating the negative behavioral impacts of stress and negative emotions. Thus, higher EI can be linked to better physical health.

The concept suggests that high EI should lead to more successful and efficient self-regulation through health-related behaviors, thereby encouraging help-seeking and maintaining health regimens. Positive behaviors facilitated by higher emotional intelligence may contribute to better health outcomes. Lower stress reactivity, associated with EI, could also play a role in

promoting physical health. Individuals with higher emotional intelligence are better equipped to cope with stressful situations, experiencing less emotional reactivity. They may perceive environmental stressors as challenges rather than stressors, which can lessen the physiological impact of stress on the body.

EI-related competencies are also likely to promote more active coping strategies, including treatment-seeking and adherence to medical regimens, which can reduce the severity and chronicity of illnesses. Furthermore, individuals with high EI are often rooted in supportive social networks, benefiting from meaningful relationships and increased social support during times of crisis. This enhanced coping ability, facilitated by social support, can contribute to better physical health outcomes. Additionally, high EI individuals are less likely to develop problematic habits such as addiction, gambling, or excessive drinking. Their ability to regulate emotions and impulses may prevent the development of maladaptive behaviors that can negatively impact physical health.

Overall, emotional intelligence is linked to better physical health through various mediating variables, including proactive self-care practices, efficient self-regulation, coping strategies, social support, and avoidance of maladaptive behaviors. These factors collectively contribute to improved health outcomes in individuals with higher emotional intelligence. They will also have fewer unhealthy habits like smoking, drinking, and drugs, as we have already discussed. They'll have better interactions with healthcare professionals, understanding and utilizing healthcare resources more appropriately. They are likely to employ more frequent task-oriented coping strategies to deal with health problems, using healthier coping mechanisms such as seeking social support from the right people. They will have greater social support resources to rely upon during times of stress and illness, along with problem-solving strategies.

Additionally, experiencing positive emotions has a beneficial impact on the immune system. Individuals with higher emotional intelligence are more likely to experience positive emotions, which can counteract the negative impact of stress on the immune system. These factors collectively contribute to better physical health outcomes. Now, let's delve into specific research findings connected to this topic. Meta-analysis, conducted by Shute et al. in 2007, aimed to assess the degree of association between emotional intelligence and various health indices, including physical, mental, and psychosomatic aspects. Meta-analysis summarizes diverse studies in a particular area and identifies trends in research findings. This study revealed a significant and positive correlation between emotional intelligence and each type of health indicator. Specifically, emotional intelligence exhibited a moderate positive relationship with physical health, with a coefficient of 0.22. It also showed a similar correlation with mental health (0.23) and a slightly stronger positive relationship with psychosomatic health (0.31).

Another meta-analysis by Martins et al. also distinguished between physical, psychosomatic, and mental health with emotional intelligence. In 12 independent studies of physical health, the average correlation with EI was 0.27, and in 16 studies of psychosomatic health, the average was 0.33. These findings indicate a modest connection between emotional intelligence and positive health-related indicators and behaviors. Overall, research findings suggest a modest correlation between emotional intelligence and positive health-related indicators and

behaviors, both directly and indirectly. Emotional intelligence not only directly influences health indicators but also promotes health-related behaviors, such as engaging in activities like dieting and exercising, through another mechanism.

Positive health-related behaviors, which promote health, have also been found to be positively associated with EI. Individuals with higher EI are more likely to engage in activities that promote health, such as dieting and exercising. Low EI, especially among college students, has been linked to an increased risk of engaging in potentially harmful behaviors such as illegal drug use, excessive alcohol consumption, and deviant behaviors. Research also indicates that males, in particular, with low emotional intelligence, are more likely to engage in these harmful behaviors, which can negatively impact physical and mental health.

EI is not only directly connected to health-related behaviors but also directly related to various physical health indicators. Empirical evidence supports various hypotheses and theoretical propositions. Additionally, research shows that adolescents with low EI, as determined by various indicators of emotional intelligence, are at a heightened risk of alcohol and tobacco use. They may struggle to effectively manage their emotions in response to peer pressure related to smoking, drinking, and the use of unhealthy substances. Conversely, adolescents with higher EI may possess strong abilities in processing social information, including social risks, and employ a wider range of coping strategies when faced with situations that could increase the risk of smoking and other behaviors. They are also more likely to recognize unwanted peer pressure and resist it effectively.

Now, let's explore how emotional intelligence is related to mental health and well-being. Mental health encompasses disorders and illnesses as well as well-being. Emotional intelligence plays a significant role in determining one's mental health and subjective well-being. Emotional dysfunctions are closely associated with the development of mental diseases. Many psychological disorders are essentially disorders of emotions, highlighting the crucial role of emotional intelligence. Mental health is intricately linked to well-being, and various indicators of well-being are directly connected to one's emotional life. How individuals experience life largely depends on their emotional expressions, whether they feel happiness, unhappiness, or sadness. Therefore, mental health is strongly connected to emotional intelligence, particularly in terms of emotion regulation, which is vital for maintaining mental well-being. Many individuals with mental health issues may also exhibit a lack of emotional intelligence in certain dimensions or overall.

These are positive health-related behaviors that promote health and have also been found to be positively associated with EI. People with higher emotional intelligence are more likely to engage in activities that promote health, such as dieting and exercising. Low EI, especially among college students, especially males, has been found to be at risk of engaging in potentially harmful behaviors such as illegal drug use, excessive alcohol consumption, and deviant behaviors. Research also shows that college students, especially males, with low emotional intelligence, are more likely to engage in these harmful behaviors, which are detrimental to physical and overall mental health. EI is also connected to health-related behaviors as well as directly related to various physical health indicators. This is supported by empirical evidence

showing various hypotheses and theoretical propositions. Other research indicates that adolescents with low EI, as determined by various indicators of emotional intelligence, are at a heightened risk of alcohol and tobacco use. Low EI has been linked to risky behaviors such as alcohol and tobacco use.

Adolescents may also struggle to effectively manage their emotions in response to peer pressure related to smoking, drinking, and the use of unhealthy substances. These struggles are connected to low EI and certain behaviors that could impact health. Conversely, adolescents with higher EI may possess strong abilities in processing social information, including social risks, and employ a wider range of coping strategies when faced with situations that could increase the risk of smoking and other behaviors. They are also more likely to recognize unwanted peer pressure and resist it effectively. Students and adolescents with higher EI are less likely to engage in these risky behaviors like alcohol and drug use, as they are better able to manage their emotions and resist peer pressures. This connection between EI and behavior also influences health outcomes.

Now let's explore how emotional intelligence is related to mental health and well-being. When discussing mental health, there are two aspects to consider: disorders and illnesses, and well-being. Both aspects are connected to emotional intelligence. Mental health involves more than just the absence of diseases; it also encompasses well-being. According to the WHO definition, being healthy entails the presence of positive qualities, known as well-being. Therefore, being mentally healthy requires not only the absence of disease but also indicators of well-being.

Physical health has already been discussed in terms of possibilities and research findings. There is ample support for the idea that emotional elements play a significant role in determining one's mental health and subjective well-being. Emotional dysfunctions also play a significant role in the development of mental diseases. Many psychological disorders are essentially disorders of emotions, highlighting the crucial role of emotional intelligence. Mental health is directly connected to well-being, which, in turn, is connected to one's emotional life. How individuals experience life largely depends on their emotional expressions, such as happiness, unhappiness, or sadness. Therefore, mental health is strongly connected to emotional intelligence, particularly in terms of emotion regulation, which is vital for maintaining mental well-being. Many individuals with mental health issues may also exhibit a lack of emotional intelligence in certain dimensions or overall. For example, mental disorders like anxiety and depression are characterized by excessive negative emotions, which could be linked to a lack of EI. Some disorders, like conduct disorders, can be linked to a lack of self-control, while others, like autism, may involve difficulty in social interaction, which is a key aspect of emotional intelligence. EI may play a significant role in various mental disorders, especially those involving emotional disturbances, impulse control issues, and social interaction issues.

Let's now delve into some specific evidence related to emotional disorders or affective disorders and their association with self-reported emotional intelligence. So every disorder may have some individuals who, you know, exhibit extreme forms of the disorder, while aspects of the disorder could also be found in normal populations, although not at the same extreme level. For example, some people may score high on measures of depression but may not meet the

criteria for clinical depression. Therefore, it's possible for normal individuals to have high or low scores on symptomatic disorders. Even in normal populations, emotional intelligence has been linked to various disorders like anxiety and depression in individuals who do not meet clinical criteria.

Similar findings emerged from studies involving patients diagnosed with mental disorders. Even among individuals with mental disorders, such as anxiety and depression, similar patterns were observed, with low EI scores being prevalent. When emotional intelligence is tested as ability, it means testing certain abilities that individuals develop in their lives rather than just aspects of personality. Differences in EI scores were observed between individuals with clinical conditions and those without. Individuals with certain clinical disorders tended to have lower EI scores compared to those without these disorders. However, it's difficult to determine whether low EI causes these disorders or if it's the other way around. It's possible that low EI may lead to certain disorders, or it's possible that individuals with these disorders may score low in emotional intelligence. Therefore, the relationship between low EI and disorders may vary depending on the individual case.

For example, one study suggested that depression might lead to lower EI rather than the other way around. Similarly, a study by Sommerfeld et al. in 2011 found that individuals with clinical anxiety disorders like panic disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorders, and social phobia had low EI scores. Research evidence is also available in the context of disorders related to social deviance and impulse control. Low EI has been associated with externalizing behavior and social deviance, particularly among individuals with problems in socially appropriate behaviors or psychopathic traits. Conversely, high EI in adolescents and adults seems to help them handle social situations better, as dealing with social situations is a key aspect of emotional intelligence.

Individuals with low EI may struggle to manage their emotions when faced with peer or societal pressures related to smoking, drinking, and unhealthy substances. They are more likely to succumb to these pressures compared to individuals with high EI. Additionally, low EI is linked to more severe addiction issues, including smoking, alcohol consumption, and drug use. Understanding and managing emotions play crucial roles in preventing addictions. Some dysfunctional social interactions, such as difficulty connecting or forming relationships with others, are also connected to low EI. Conditions like schizophrenia and autism, characterized by difficulty with social connections and interactions, may be related to lower emotional intelligence.

Another condition, called Alexithymia, is strongly connected to emotional intelligence. Alexithymia refers to difficulty or inability to recognize and explain one's feelings. Individuals with Alexithymia may struggle to understand and express their own emotions, leading to challenges in managing them. This condition includes symptoms such as difficulty identifying and describing emotions, reduced empathy, and difficulty distinguishing between different emotions. Research shows that individuals with Alexithymia tend to score lower on emotional intelligence tests, indicating a strong link between Alexithymia and low emotional intelligence. Although Alexithymia and emotional intelligence may be distinct conceptually, there is a

strong overlap between them, with individuals with high emotional intelligence lacking the qualities associated with Alexithymia.

Difficulty monitoring other people's feelings and emotions is not a part of Alexithymia, but individuals with high levels of Alexithymia may have difficulty accurately identifying emotions in others' facial expressions. Additionally, they may have limited capacity to empathize with others' emotional states. Alexithymia is linked to difficulties in discriminating between different emotions and limited ability to think about and use emotions to cope with stressful situations. Overall, individuals with Alexithymia lack many of the emotional abilities associated with emotional intelligence, and research confirms this connection.

Moving on to indicators of well-being, emotional intelligence has been linked to various outcomes, including happiness, optimism, better mood, life satisfaction, self-esteem, and satisfaction in various contexts such as work. Individuals with high EI tend to experience better mental health and greater life satisfaction. Research also indicates that emotionally intelligent people are more likely to handle social situations better, leading to greater social competence and richer social networks. They are better able to regulate their emotions, repair relationships, handle social stress and conflicts, and experience lower levels of negative emotions and higher levels of positive emotions.

This summarized diagram from Zidner and colleagues in 2011 illustrates how emotional intelligence could lead to psychological health and well-being. Emotional intelligence enables more adaptive coping with social demands, greater social competence, richer social networks, better emotional regulation, repair of relationships, better handling of social stress and interpersonal conflicts, lower levels of negative emotions, and higher levels of positive emotions, all contributing to better psychological health and well-being.

In summary, emotional intelligence plays a significant role in various mental disorders, as well as in promoting mental health and well-being. This concept has numerous applications in the domains of health and well-being therapies and is highly significant in these contexts. With this, we conclude this lecture, and the next one will focus on applications, marking the end of this series. Thank you.