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Correlation between emotional intelligence and problem-solving skills of greek social work students

Estudio de correlación entre la inteligencia emocional y las habilidades de resolución de problemas de los estudiantes griegos de trabajo social

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Abstract:

Emotional intelligence and problem solving are of great importance for social work, as this is largely an emotionally demanding and stressful profession as well as an applied scientific field of psychosocial problem solving.

The aim of this research was to investigate the emotional intelligence of social work students in relation to their demographics and study-related characteristics, and their problem-solving skills. The sample included 368 students from the bachelor's degree programme of the Department of Social Work of the University of West Attica in Athens, Greece. The students completed both the Problem Solving Inventory (PSI) and Wong Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS).

The results show a strong correlation between emotional intelligence and problem-solving skills and suggest that emotional intelligence plays a very important role in decision making, action taking and good performance in social work. Implications for additional research and education of bachelor level social work students are discussed.

Keywords: social work, emotional intelligence, problem solving, students, Greece.

Resumen:

La inteligencia emocional y la resolución de problemas son de gran importancia para el trabajo social, puesto que se trata en gran parte de una profesión emocionalmente exigente y estresante, y de una disciplina científica aplicada para la resolución de problemas psicosociales.

El objetivo de esta encuesta fue investigar la inteligencia emocional de los estudiantes de trabajo social en relación con sus características demográficas, las características relativas a sus estudios y sus habilidades de resolución de problemas. La muestra fue compuesta de 368 estudiantes inscritos en el programa de licenciatura de la Facultad de Trabajo Social de la Universidad de Ática Occidental en Atenas, Grecia. Para la recolección de

los datos, los instrumentos principales fueron el Inventario de Resolución de Problemas (PSI) y la Escala de inteligencia Emocional Wong-Law (WLEIS).

Los resultados del estudio demuestran una correlación importante entre la inteligencia emocional y la capacidad para resolver problemas. Se consideran las implicaciones para una investigación adicional y la educación de los estudiantes de trabajo social.

Palabras clave: Trabajo social, inteligencia emocional, resolución de problemas, estudiantes, Grecia.

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1. Introduction

The identification of factors that not only enhance the professionals' adaptability, resilience, challenge-managing skills, but also act in a protective manner by reducing professional stress and burnout rates is a topic of great current scientific interest. Emotional intelligence, as a structural component of human functionality was found to be one of the most significant factors in this regard.

Being an essential element of human nature, emotions influence its aspects, carrying out various purposes and functions. The ways people think and behave are considered important. Emotions assist people in making good decisions, taking action to solve problems, and coping with change and succeeding (Caruso and Salovey 2004).

The concept of emotional intelligence has become a topic of interest for both the scientific community and the general public. Its importance in human relations was first highlighted in the early 1990s. Emotional intelligence was defined by Salovey and Mayer (1990) as people's adaptive ability to perceive, use, understand and manage emotions during problem-solving. Goleman (1996) suggested that there are five components critical to emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Emotional intelligence is an individual's ability to understand his/her emotions, the ability to listen to others and empathise with their emotions, and the ability to express oneself productively (Ioannidou and Konstantikaki 2008).

Various research studies have indicated that emotional intelligence can have a positive impact on work performance, as it allows for improved critical thinking skills, increased decision-making capacity, greater flexibility in negotiation and maintaining cooperation. In particular, emotional intelligence has been identified as an

important factor in adaptive coping and intrapersonal success at the workplace and in other areas of an individual's life (Dulewicz and Higgs 2004). It also promotes high performance through more effective interactions and successful conflict resolution (Shahbazi et al. 2014), helps to increase satisfaction (Namdar et al. 2008) and achieve academic success (Parker et al. 2004), and boosts physical and mental health (Taylor, 2001). Lastly, studies have also highlighted its role in stress regulation (Birks et al. 2009) and prevention of burnout (Grant et al. 2014).

Mayer et al. (1999) suggested that emotional intelligence enables people to recognise the meaning of emotions and their significance, and to solve problems according to them. Furthermore, emotional intelligence refers to an ability that plays a regulating role in problem coping (Aldea and Rice 2006), and thus is directly related to an individual's problem-solving skills. Problem solving is a self-directed cognitive-behavioural process by which an individual attempts to discover effective or adaptive solutions for specific problems encountered in everyday living (D'Zurilla and Nezu 2010; Heppner et al. 2004). A great number of studies suggest a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and problem-solving skills (Goleman 2006; Mayer et al. 2008). It was shown that emotional intelligence acts as a filter able to evaluate effectively the different stressors, in relation to the extent of their real threat, and therefore to help people cope with stress-induced problems (Alumran and Punamäki 2008). Stress control and regulation of stress-induced emotions broaden the scope of problem solving and lead to appropriate and more effective decisions (Bar-On 2001). High emotional intelligence is associated with our understanding of our own emotions and those of others, as well as with effective emotional and cognitive behaviour processes. These support the processes of adaptation to reality and help people better cope with their interpersonal and social problems (Taylor, Parker and Bagby 1999).

Emotional intelligence and the process of problem solving are inherent in every counselling and therapeutic relationship (D' Zurilla and Nezu 2010). Therefore, it also concerns social work, as this is both a highly emotional, demanding and stressful profession (Collins 2008), and an applied scientific field of problem solving (Zastrow 2009). It is argued that social work practice, which is essentially based on relationships, can only be implemented as long as the social worker is emotionally intelligent (Howe 2008).

Social workers are expected to respond in a safe and effective way to needs arising within a complex, multidimensional, demanding, and constantly changing social context. On a daily basis, they have to work in an environment marked by alertness, anxiety, stress, readiness to act and flexibility to make decisions and resolve difficult issues. These, in combination with scarce resources, lack of qualified staff, low support and high work load in social services, can explain to a significant extent the high levels of stress and burnout reported among social workers (Asimopoulos et al. 2018; Kinman and Grant 2011; Collins 2007). The situations they need to deal with provoke strong emotional reactions and having to work under such circumstances

can be a challenging task even for the most experienced ones (Collins 2008). Kinman and Grant (2011) underline the need for social workers to develop emotional intelligence skills so that they are adequately equipped to efficiently manage and solve the problems they are faced with. The social worker's ability to perceive and understand correctly the emotions expressed by the user, as well as to effectively manage his/her own emotional reactions, are issues of major importance, as they influence his/her judgment on the most appropriate solution. In particular, Morrison (2007) notes that emotional intelligence is of particular importance in social work in terms of social work tasks such as engagement of users, assessment and observation, decision-making, collaboration and co-operation, and dealing with stress.

These are also the major concerns of social work education. Social work students experience stress related not only to the increased demands and difficulties of their academic tasks, but also to the more specific obligations and roles inherent to social work as a psychosocial care, emotional demanding and problem solving profession, and the requirements of the practicum placement and their personal responses to the emotional and psychosocial needs of the clients (Wilks 2008; Grant et al. 2014). The importance and role of emotional intelligence in the educational process concern more generally the field of higher education (Landa 2007), and in particular social work education (Grand et al. 2014). It should be noted that students should develop emotional intelligence skills that would enable them to achieve a more comprehensive preparation in view of their professional practice and future career (Moyer and Wittman-Price 2008). Researchers have shown that problem-solving skills can be improved through education on emotional intelligence issues. This was found to contribute to the development of critical thinking skills, successful communication and sound decision-making by students, whilst strengthening their personal satisfaction, self-confidence and stress-control (Grant et al. 2014; Por et al. 2011; Namdar et al. 2008).

A significant number of research studies worldwide have explored the importance of emotional intelligence in healthcare professionals, such as doctors, nurses, midwives (Shahbazi et al. 2014; Por et al. 2011; Namdar et al. 2008). However, only a few refer to professional social workers or social work students (Grant et al. 2014; Kinman and Grant 2011; Birks et al. 2009). There are also very few papers on the relationship between emotional intelligence and problem-solving skills (Ibrahim et al. 2018; Shahbazi et al. 2014).

In Greece, there are studies exploring emotional intelligence in foreign adolescents and children (Platsidou and Sipitanou 2014), lawyers (Platsidou and Salman 2012), educators (Platsidou 2010), nurses (Symeou et al. 2016), doctors (Ntailianis and Lappa 2017) and one study including a sample of students and professional social workers and nurses (Tsaousis and Nikolaou 2005). The present study is the first study in the country to explore emotional intelligence and its relation to problem-solving skills among social work students.

2. Methodology

2.1. Aim and Research Hypotheses

The aim of this research was to investigate the emotional intelligence of social work students in relation to their demographics and study-related characteristics and their problem-solving skills. The following hypotheses were examined:

- a) There is a relation between emotional intelligence and problem-solving skills of social work students.
- b) There is a differentiation between the emotional intelligence of social work students in relation to their demographics.
- c) There is a differentiation between the emotional intelligence of social work students in relation to study-related characteristics.

2.2. Sample

The research sample (N) included 368 students, out of the 558 registered undergraduate students, from the entire 4-year bachelor's degree programme of the Department of Social Work of West Attika (former Technological Educational Institution of Athens). This specific department is one of the four Social Work Departments in Greece.

2.3. Measurement Instruments

The students completed three questionnaires. These included demographic data, problem-solving skills and emotional intelligence dimensions. In particular:

A) Demographic data questionnaire. The demographic questionnaire gathered information on year of studies, sex, age, ethnicity, place of birth, socio-economic status, marital status, and parental educational level.

B) The Wong Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) by Wong and Law (2002). The scale, validated in Greek language by Kafetsios and Zampetakis (2008), includes 16 items and measures four dimensions of emotional intelligence. In particular: a) self-emotion appraisal (4 items), b) others' emotion appraisal (4 items), c) regulation of emotion (4 items), and d) use of emotion (4 items). All the items are rated based on a 7-point scale, where 1 is attributed to strongly disagree and 7 to strongly agree. This scale has been used in a great number of research studies worldwide, but also in Greece, and has demonstrated high reliability and validity.

C) The Problem Solving Inventory (PSI) by Heppner and Petersen (1982). The scale consists of 32 items that capture an individual's view on one's ability to solve problems in everyday life. It includes three factors: The Problem Solving Confidence (PSC) factor includes 11 items, in which high scores are associated with low levels of problem solving confidence. The Approach Avoidance Style (AAS) factor includes 16 items, in which high scores are associated with a more avoidant style in problem-solving. The Personal Control (PC) factor includes 5 items, in which a high score is associated with a more negative perception of personal control over the problems faced by an individual. All the items are rated based on a 6-point Likert scale, where 1 corresponds to totally agree and 6 to totally disagree. The overall score ranges from 32 to 192. In general, low scores for each factor and in the total PSI are considered to be more functional.

2.4. Procedure and Ethical Issues

The questionnaires were distributed to the students (n=368) that attended the taught modules in December 2015, during the winter semester. Students received an explanation about the aims of the research. They were also told that their participation was totally voluntary and their decision would not affect their grades or educational status. Furthermore, they were asked not to provide any personal data revealing their identity, so as to ensure that their anonymity remains intact, and were assured that their responses would be kept confidential.

The research protocol was submitted, reviewed and approved by the Review Board according to the procedures provided for by the University.

2.5. Statistical Analysis

Quantitative variables are presented with mean and standard deviation (SD). Qualitative variables are presented with absolute and relative frequencies. Pearson correlation coefficients were used to explore the association of two continuous variables. Multiple linear regression analysis was used in order to explore the association of PSI and EI dimensions after adjusting for demographics. Each EI dimension was examined separately in the linear regression models because model diagnostics with two or more dimensions together in the models indicated that the regression estimates were highly collinear. Also, linear regression models were used to explore associations of demographics with EI dimensions. Adjusted regression coefficients (β) with standard errors (SE) were computed from the results of the linear regression analyses. All p values reported are two-tailed. Statistical significance was set at 0.05 and analyses were conducted using SPSS statistical software (version 22.0).

3. Results

The sample consisted of 368 participants with mean age 21.8 years (SD=5.9). 85.6 % of the sample was women and 14.4 % was men. Sample characteristics are presented in Table 1.

TABLA 2: Sample characteristics

	N (%)
Sex	
Men	53 (14.4)
Women	315 (85.6)
Age, mean (SD)	21.8 (5.9)
Year of studies	
1st	111 (30.0)
2nd	115 (31.1)
3rd	61 (16.5)
4th	83 (22.4)
Family status	
Married/ Divorced	21 (5.7)
Unmarried	347 (94.3)
Nationality	
Greek	353 (95.7)
Other	16 (4.3)
Parental family status	
Unmarried/ Divorced/Widowed	89 (24.1)
Married	280 (75.9)
Father's educational level	
Elementary/ Middle school	114 (31.2)
High school	108 (29.6)
Technical school/ University	143 (39.2)
Mother's educational level	
Elementary/ Middle school	81 (22.0)
High school	129 (35.0)
Technical school/ University	159 (43.1)
Grown-up in:	
Small city/ Village	109 (29.6)
Athens/ Other big city	259 (70.4)

Descriptive statistics of PSI and EI dimensions are shown in Table 2. All PSI and EI dimensions were significantly and positively correlated each other (Table 3). Regulation of Emotion exhibited the highest correlation with Personal Control and Problem Solving Confidence along with Total PSI score (Figure 1). Correlations between Use of Emotion and Problem Solving Confidence and between Use of Emotion and Total PSI score (Figure 2) were also high.

TABLA 2: Descriptive statistics of PSI and EI dimensions

	Mean	SD
<i>PSI</i>		
Problem Solving Confidence	44.5	7.5
Approach-Avoidance Style	66.5	11.1
Personal Control	18.1	4.7
Total PSI score	129.3	20.3
<i>EI</i>		
Self emotion appraisal	5.24	1.10
Emotion appraisal of others	5.23	0.89
Use of emotion	4.92	1.25
Regulation of emotion	4.47	1.28

Results from multiple linear regression analyses with dependent variables each of the PSI subscales and independent variables each EI dimensions and after adjusting for gender, age, year of studies, marital status, nationality, parental marital status, father's educational level, mother's educational level and place of growing-up are shown in Table 4. All EI dimensions were found to be significantly associated with all PSI dimensions in adjusted analyses. The only exception was the association of Others' Emotion Appraisal subscale with Personal Control that it was not significant in multiple analyses.

Multiple linear regression analyses results with EI dimensions as the dependent variables are shown in Table 5. Self-Emotion Appraisal was found to be greater in women and to be increased as age increases. Also, Regulation of Emotion was found to increase in greater ages. Unmarried participants had lower score on Others' Emotion Appraisal and Use of Emotion dimensions, as compared to married ones.

4. Discussion

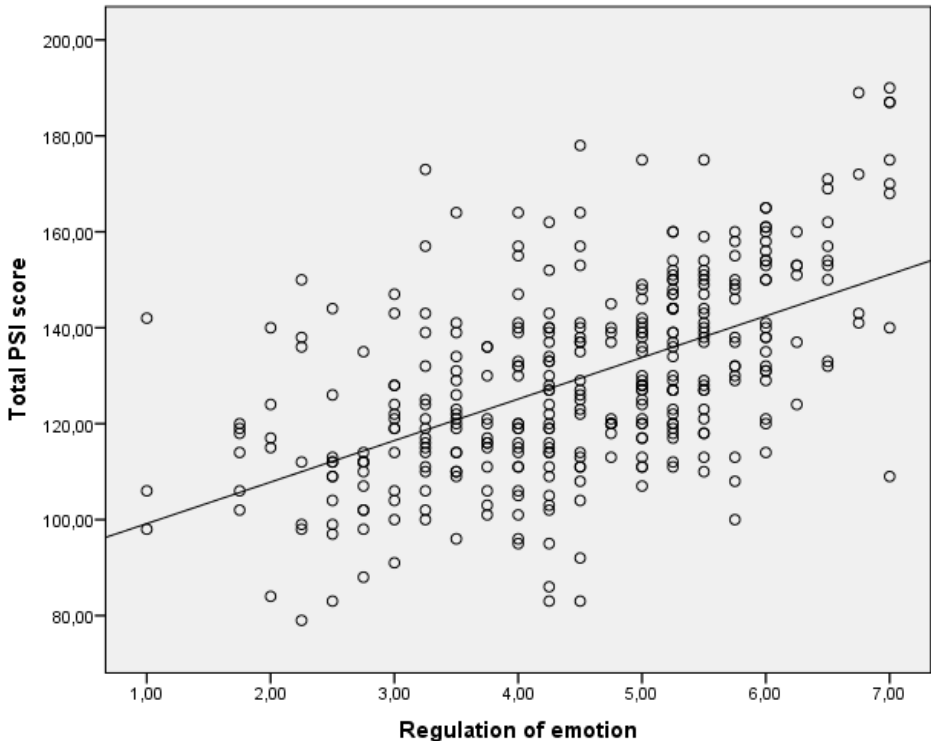
The aim of this research was to investigate the emotional intelligence of social work students in relation to demographics and educational factors and its correlation with their problem-solving skills.

TABLA 3: Correlation coefficients between PSI and EI dimensions

	Problem Solving Confidence	Approach-Avoidance Style	Personal Control	Total PSI score
Self emotion appraisal	0.43***	0.26***	0.29***	0.37***
Emotion appraisal of others	0.33***	0.28***	0.25**	0.28***
Use of emotion	0.61***	0.39***	0.41***	0.53***
Regulation of emotion	0.53***	0.41***	0.54***	0.54***

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

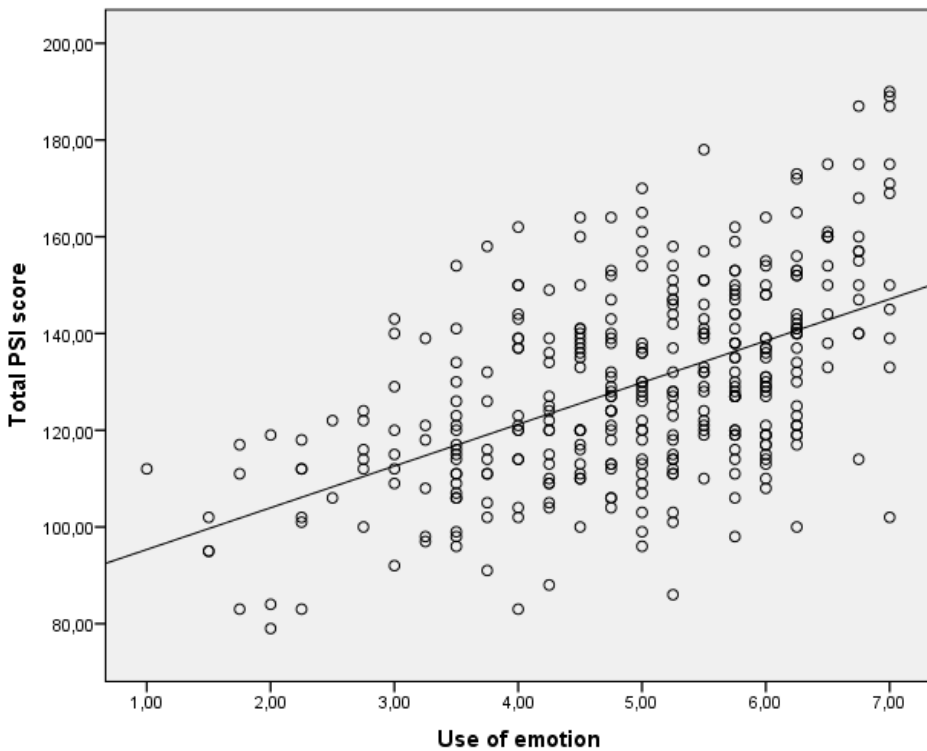
FIGURA 1: Correlation of Total PSI score with Regulation of emotion



The results of the study showed a significant positive correlation among all the dimensions of emotional intelligence and problem-solving skills. The dimension of emotional intelligence related to Regulation of Emotion has shown high correlation with Personal Control and Problem-Solving Confidence factors, as well as with Total

PSI score. Significant correlations were also recorded between the Use of Emotion and Problem-Solving Confidence dimensions, as well as between Use of Emotion and Total PSI score. These results demonstrate that emotional intelligence does not imply and is not only restricted to emotion appraisal, but is also directly related to the functional use of these emotions in decision-making and problem-solving processes. It has been found that students with high emotional intelligence also possessed important problem-solving skills, and vice versa.

FIGURA 2: Correlation of Total PSI score with Use of emotion



This relationship has been revealed in various studies showing a positive correlation between the aforementioned dimensions (Goleman 2006; Mayer et al. 2008). Examples of this include the results of the Shahbazi et al. (2014) study in bachelor students of a nursing and midwifery school, where an important correlation was found between the mean scores of the problem-solving skills scale and the items of the emotional intelligence scale. Also, Sabahattin (2013) found a positive correlation between the sub-dimensions of problem-solving skills and the sub-dimensions of emotional intelligence, among a sample of prospective teachers. Likewise, a Por et al.

(2011) study conducted among nursing students revealed a positive correlation between problem-solving skills and emotional intelligence, thus confirming the results of Mathew and Zeidner (2001), according to which individuals with high emotional intelligence tend to employ more active coping strategies. Furthermore, Salovey et al. (2000) suggest that the greater emotional intelligence is, the more effective problem solving is, as it enables people to see the problem from many different angles. This is in line with the results of Shewchuk et al. (2000), who showed that problem-solving skills in individuals depend on their cognitive and behavioural abilities, thus leading to more appropriate and mature emotional reactions to problems and eventually to better problem solving.

TABLE 4: Multiple linear regression analyses results for the association of PSI and EI

	β^+	SE ⁺⁺	P
<i>Problem Solving Confidence</i>			
Self emotion appraisal	2.71	0.34	<0.001
Emotion appraisal of others	2.61	0.42	<0.001
Use of emotion	3.59	0.25	<0.001
Regulation of emotion	2.89	0.27	<0.001
<i>Approach-Avoidance Style</i>			
Self emotion appraisal	2.42	0.54	<0.001
Emotion appraisal of others	3.30	0.65	<0.001
Use of emotion	3.33	0.44	<0.001
Regulation of emotion	3.36	0.44	<0.001
<i>Personal Control</i>			
Self emotion appraisal	1.12	0.22	<0.001
Emotion appraisal of others	0.12	0.28	0.675
Use of emotion	1.50	0.18	<0.001
Regulation of emotion	1.92	0.17	<0.001
<i>Total PSI score</i>			
Self emotion appraisal	6.23	0.95	<0.001
Emotion appraisal of others	5.85	1.19	<0.001
Use of emotion	8.36	0.74	<0.001
Regulation of emotion	8.11	0.74	<0.001

⁺regression coefficient adjusted for sex, age, year of studies, family status, nationality, parental family status, father's educational level, mother's educational level and place of growing-up ; ⁺⁺Standard Error

Moreover, according to the results of this study, some of the demographic factors in the social work students' sample, in particular age, gender and marital status, affect their emotional intelligence. Many researchers have mentioned the impact of demographic variables on emotional intelligence scoring.

TABLE 5: Multiple linear regression analyses results with EI dimensions as the dependent variable

.	Self emotion appraisal		Emotion appraisal of others		Use of emotion		Regulation of emotion	
	β (SE)+	P	β (SE)+	P	β (SE)+	P	β (SE)+	P
Sex								
Men (reference)								
Women	0.37 (0.18)	0.036	0.22 (0.15)	0.145	-0.07 (0.21)	0.754	-0.25 (0.21)	0.231
Age	0.07 (0.02)	<0.001	0 (0.01)	0.894	0.03 (0.02)	0.153	0.06 (0.02)	0.001
Family status								
Married/ Divorced (reference)								
Unmarried	0.21 (0.38)	0.583	-0.45 (0.19)	0.023	-0.73 (0.28)	0.009	0.58 (0.45)	0.195
Nationality								
Greek(reference)								
Other	-0.25 (0.27)	0.362	0.3 (0.23)	0.198	-0.22 (0.33)	0.505	-0.17 (0.32)	0.608
Parental family status								
Unmarried/ Divorced/ Widowed (reference)								
Married	-0.03 (0.14)	0.837	-0.16 (0.12)	0.176	-0.12 (0.16)	0.458	0 (0.16)	0.996
Father's educational level								
Elementary/ Middle school (reference)								
High school	0.12 (0.17)	0.488	0.04 (0.14)	0.800	0.09 (0.2)	0.646	0.1 (0.2)	0.619
Technical school/ University	0.14 (0.16)	0.393	0.11 (0.14)	0.398	-0.04 (0.19)	0.846	0.16 (0.19)	0.398
Mother's educationalevel								
Elementary/ Middle school (reference)								
High school	0.09 (0.18)	0.620	-0.15 (0.16)	0.331	0.04 (0.22)	0.856	-0.12 (0.22)	0.576
Technical school/ University	0.04 (0.18)	0.841	-0.06 (0.16)	0.718	0.08 (0.22)	0.730	-0.13 (0.22)	0.562
Grown-up in:								
Small city/Village (reference)								
Athens/ Other big city	0.01 (0.13)	0.947	0.1 (0.11)	0.393	0.02 (0.16)	0.880	0.18 (0.16)	0.241

+regression coefficient (Standard Error)

With regard to gender, the dimension of Self-emotion Appraisal is found to be higher among women and tends to increase with age. Emotion Appraisal concerns in particular the degree to which these people are aware of the emotions they experience, and also the degree to which they can verbally and non-verbally express these emotions to others. George (2000) argues that accurate emotion appraisal enables people to form judgments and make decisions, and furthermore it is related to the concept of empathy that helps people provide useful social support and maintain positive interpersonal relationships. This finding related to the gender factor is in line with previous surveys showing that women score higher than men in specific and different dimensions of emotional intelligence (McIntyre 2010; Tapia and Marsh 2006). Kewalramani and Manju (2014) suggest that men and women differ in the way they are emotionally intelligent, and that women are more aware of their emotions and show more empathy. This fact is supported by social theories according to which whereas women receive an education biased towards the emotional, men are taught to minimise certain emotions related to sadness, guilt, vulnerability and fear (Joseph and Newman 2010), and that women outscore men in empathy (Baron-Cohen 2002; Kafetsios 2004). However, the findings of this study are not in line with other studies showing no gender-related difference as regards emotional intelligence (Wing and Love 2001; Singh 2002), or studies showing that women outscore men in the emotional intelligence levels (Farrelly and Austin 2007; McIntyre 2010). In general, the study findings regarding the gender factor in relation to emotional intelligence are contradictory and not consistently confirmed. This is probably due to a combination of other factors, such as the use of different scales, different sample characteristics, as well as social and cultural factors.

When it comes to age, our study indicated that the dimension of Emotion Regulation scored more among the older students. This finding related to the age factor is in line with previous studies indicating that emotional intelligence increases with age (Fernández-Berrocal et al. 2012; Kafetsios 2004; Sliter et al. 2013). Goleman (1996) and Bar-On and Parker (2000) argue that there seems to be a correlation between age and emotional intelligence increasing with age. In this regard, Fariselli et al. (2008) suggest that as age increases, the various life experiences also increase leading to a greater understanding of emotions, as does the experiential knowledge of their differences and results, thus enhancing people's emotional self-awareness and intelligence. In particular, as regards emotion appraisal and regulation, Sliter et al. (2013) suggest that these may be obtained through lifelong experience. Age increase is also connected with progress in the educational process in relation to the year of study. In our sample, and for a large number of respondents, age increase appears to be related to the maturity process, at both a physical and psycho-emotional level, however in combination with the education provided, ultimately bringing along changes at multiple levels (Berrocal et al. 2012).

Finally, as regards marital status, in our study, unmarried students recorded lower scores in the dimensions of Others' Emotion Appraisal and Use of Emotions, in comparison with married students. This finding in regard to the marital status factor is in line with

previous surveys (Extremera and Fernandez 2005; Mohammad et al. 2013). According to Kalyoncu et al. (2012), marriage requires characteristics like adaptation to personal differences, meeting different expectations and demands, showing empathy, and the ability to compromise; therefore, marriage may be thought of as an institution that requires the use of emotional intelligence. It seems that the variety of roles and the requirements arising from a stable marital relationship provide people with an ability to appraise others' emotions and control their own urges, through the recognition of each other's needs and the required adaptability. Therefore, people who have managed to establish a marriage institution are expected to have better-developed emotional intelligence.

This study is the first to be conducted in Greece in relation to emotional intelligence and problem-solving skills of social work students. Nevertheless, even though it provides useful relevant data, it also faces some limitations. Its results cannot be generalised to the whole population of social work students in Greece, since the sample included students from just one social work department. Moreover, no control group has been included in the methodology. Therefore, it is important to expand the research study to a wider and more representative sample of students from all the social work departments of the country and to compare the results with students of other professional qualifications.

5. Conclusions

The research examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and problem solving, as well as the relationship between demographic factors and emotional intelligence among Greek social work students. The results showed that emotional intelligence can be identified as an important predictive factor of the students' problem-solving skills, and that there are considerable differences in certain emotional intelligence dimensions in terms of gender, age and marital status.

These provide useful insight for implementing curricular changes. Emotional intelligence, as a set of competences and skills, is an important quality dimension in social work practice (Howe 2008), that could be improved and enhanced through education (Chang 2008). This, according to the findings of this research, may also improve the students' problem-solving skills. To this end, social work students should be supported and strengthened through appropriate and effective learning and experiential processes, within the context of an 'emotional curriculum' (Grand et al. 2014), in order to be able to cope with the emotional requirements of social work.

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