



OPEN ACCESS

EDITED AND REVIEWED BY
Wulf Rössler,
Charité University Medicine Berlin, Germany

*CORRESPONDENCE
Carlos Laranjeira
✉ carlos.laranjeira@ipleiria.pt

RECEIVED 14 February 2024
ACCEPTED 15 February 2024
PUBLISHED 23 February 2024

CITATION
Laranjeira C and Lesinskiene S (2024)
Editorial: Break the mental health stigma:
the role of emotional intelligence.
Front. Psychiatry 15:1386289.
doi: 10.3389/fpsyt.2024.1386289

COPYRIGHT
© 2024 Laranjeira and Lesinskiene. This is an
open-access article distributed under the terms
of the [Creative Commons Attribution License
\(CC BY\)](#). The use, distribution or reproduction
in other forums is permitted, provided the
original author(s) and the copyright owner(s)
are credited and that the original publication
in this journal is cited, in accordance with
accepted academic practice. No use,
distribution or reproduction is permitted
which does not comply with these terms.

Editorial: Break the mental health stigma: the role of emotional intelligence

Carlos Laranjeira^{1,2,3*} and Sigita Lesinskiene⁴

¹School of Health Sciences, Polytechnic of Leiria, Leiria, Portugal, ²Centre for Innovative Care and Health Technology (ciTechCare), Polytechnic of Leiria, Leiria, Portugal, ³Comprehensive Health Research Centre (CHRC), University of Évora, Évora, Portugal, ⁴Clinic of Psychiatry, Institute of Clinical Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, Vilnius University, Vilnius, Lithuania

KEYWORDS

mental health stigma, emotional intelligence, life span, stigma, awareness

Editorial on the Research Topic

[Break the mental health stigma: the role of emotional intelligence](#)

The Research Topic “*Break the mental health stigma: the role of emotional intelligence*” endeavours to contribute to the understanding of potential links between emotional intelligence (EI) and mental health stigma. Research findings will inform policymaking, public health, and clinical best practices. Understanding emotions is a fundamental complement to emotional competence, which according to theoretical assumptions is a predictor of social adjustment and mental health. This leads to a positive association between high levels of EI and mental health (1). Emotions are fundamental in the daily lives of individuals, aiding in decision-making and adaptive responses to various adversities. They also play an important role in helping to preserve social well-being and emotional/subjective well-being. Research during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that online EI training is effective at sustaining critical aspects of mental health during a subsequent real-life crisis (2). Knowing how to manage emotions allows individuals to identify their affective states and adjust their reactions, action, thought, and behaviour to adaptively deal with emotional experiences. An individual’s ability to express, self-regulate, and understand emotions is called emotional competence. Conversely, suppressing or denying emotions negatively influences mental health (3). As both constructs, emotions, and well-being, are related, people with a high tendency to suppress/deny emotions tend to present low levels of subjective well-being. EI also plays a significant role in the development of psychosomatic symptoms and disorders when somatic health is related to emotional regulation and general mental health.

The evidence provides a well-documented connection between EI and psychopathologies including depression, stress, and anxiety (4). These conditions are characterized by negative attributions, unpleasant cognitions, and self-stigma. An elevated degree of EI can safeguard against depressive situations by enhancing the recognition of emotions, identifying unpleasant moods, and fostering overall life contentment (1, 5). Research also suggests that individuals with strong emotional abilities are less susceptible to mental health issues, leading to an improved quality of life, well-being, and enhanced sense of belonging (5, 6). EI is a beneficial psychological trait that facilitates the establishment of a balance between challenging life circumstances

and the ability to adjust. Conversely, there is a correlation between low levels of EI and the emergence of depressive and anxiety symptoms (7).

Research shows that EI capacities and coping styles are of utmost importance in family divorce when building mutual parenting is complicated and full of personal and interpersonal challenges (8, 9). Individuals affected by parental divorce have a higher risk of developing a variety of mental health conditions, and psychosomatic and psychosocial disorders. A meta-analysis shows a consistent direction of influence regarding the long-term effect of parental divorce on their children, and further research should focus on developing programs to promote the resilience of children affected by divorce (10). Recent research also demonstrated that adolescents' mental health problems increase after parental divorce, these effects are long-lasting and underline the need for better care for children with divorcing parents (11).

The literature suggests that the relationship between EI and mental health is due to the perception that a more emotionally intelligent individual is more aware of their emotions and better able to regulate them. Therefore, they present higher levels of well-being, a stronger and richer social network, and more effective coping strategies, which reduce levels of internalized and public stigma (12). Stigma is associated with multiple adverse health outcomes, including (but not limited to) delayed treatment initiation, avoidance of clinical interactions, inadequate treatment adherence, psychological distress, mental illness, and a greater probability of recurrence of health issues (13–16). Mental health services have many stigma-related factors needed to design and implement interventions at the individual (patient, staff) and structural level (in health policy and the environment) (17). The health literature has acknowledged the difficulties and repercussions of stigma for some time, but there is still considerable uncertainty regarding the personal experience of those living with stigma. To decrease the stigma associated with mental illness and promote emotional regulation, positive mental health literacy should be considered an outcome of mental health promotion actions and a mediator between mental health and well-being, allowing the person to prevent the development of mental disorders (18). One of the most sensitive and vulnerable groups is children of parents with mental illness (COPMI), they need complex sources for support and strengthening EI. Decreasing stigma and raising awareness of society about sensitive COPMI topics and the complex needs of these families is also of utmost importance and still underdeveloped (17). Children and adolescents who grow up with foetal alcohol spectrum disorders also face stigma and long-term educational, medical, and social difficulties; the importance of finding relative ways to enhance EI is little researched (19).

The present six academic papers focus on different target groups. Three of them are from China (n=3), and there is a single article from Colombia, Turkey, and the United States of America. They appear in distinct formats, including opinion papers, review papers, and empirical papers employing diverse research designs (including cross-sectional and longitudinal studies). Below is a concise overview of their novel contributions and recurring themes. Xu et al., examine “the associations among mental health related eHealth literacy (eHL), mental health-seeking attitude, and

wellbeing among Chinese young electronic media users during the COVID-19 pandemic” (p.1). Bu et al., examine “the associations between attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help, self-stigmatization of seeking help, Perceived Social Support, and optimism in a cohort of Chinese high-school students” (p.1). Wu et al., explore “the self-processing characteristics of individuals with social anxiety disorder from the first-person perspective and the third-person perspective” (p.1). Hernández et al., perform a narrative review “to evaluate the epidemiology, associated factors, quality of evidence and propose possible strategies for the control of suicide in physicians” (p.1). In a longitudinal case-controlled study, Uyar and Donmezgil compared Turkish healthcare and non-healthcare workers in terms of obsessive-compulsive and depressive symptoms. Finally, in an opinion piece, Melita attempts “to summarize the neurobiological and physiological effects of emotional labour on attorneys, as well as provide several means of counteracting them” (p.1).

Understanding the fundamental emotional, cognitive, and social processes and the applied and clinical situations can help unify and expand our knowledge of EI and mental health stigma throughout life, as demonstrated by the papers on this Research Topic. However, the research herein is not extensive; consequently, the results must be evaluated considering the numerous methodological and conceptual limitations cited in the publications. Little researched areas remain on EI's importance in situations when people face significant life challenges such as divorces, complicated grief, mental illness, and crises. Nevertheless, it is our conviction that by providing a comprehensive outline of the subject matter and placing particular emphasis on the latest developments, this Research Topic will prove beneficial to individuals with varying levels of expertise and contribute toward better mental health for everyone worldwide.

Author contributions

CL: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. SL: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

Funding

The author(s) declare that financial support was received for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article. This work is funded by national funds through FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, I.P. (UIDB/05704/2020 and UIDP/05704/2020) and under the Scientific Employment Stimulus - Institutional Call – [<https://doi.org/10.54499/CEECINST/00051/2018/CP1566/CT0012>, accessed on 30 December 2023].

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the reviewers and researchers who contributed to this Research Topic for their insightful and

provocative contributions. A special acknowledgment to the Board of the Frontiers Publishing house.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

References

- Nyarko F, Peltonen K, Kangaslampi S, Punamäki RL. Emotional intelligence and cognitive skills protecting mental health from stress and violence among Ghanaian youth. *Heliyon*. (2020) 6:e03878. doi: 10.1016/j.heliyon.2020.e03878
- Persich MR, Smith R, Cloonan SA, Woods-Lubbert R, Strong M, Killgore WD. Emotional intelligence training as a protective factor for mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Depress Anxiety*. (2021) 38:1018–25. doi: 10.1002/da.23202
- Patel J, Patel P. Consequences of repression of emotion: physical health, mental health and general well being. *Int J Psychother Pract Res*. (2019) 1:16–21. doi: 10.14302/issn.2574-612X.ijpr-18-2564
- Foster B, Lomas J, Downey L, Stough C. Does emotional intelligence mediate the relation between mindfulness and anxiety and depression in adolescents? *Front Psychol*. (2018) 9:2463. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2018.02463
- Moeller RW, Seehuus M, Peisch V. Emotional intelligence, belongingness, and mental health in college students. *Front Psychol*. (2020) 11:93. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00093
- Gross JJ, Uusberg H, Uusberg A. Mental illness and well-being: an affect regulation perspective. *World Psychiatry*. (2019) 18:130–9. doi: 10.1002/wps.20618
- Kulkarni PY, Velhal G. Low emotional intelligence: A precursor of mental health derangements among adolescents. *Cureus*. (2023) 15:e46321. doi: 10.7759/cureus.46321
- O'Hara KL, Sandler IN, Wolchik SA, Tein JY, Rhodes CA. Parenting time, parenting quality, interparental conflict, and mental health problems of children in high-conflict divorce. *J Fam Psychol*. (2019) 33:690–703. doi: 10.1037/fam0000556
- Slanbekova G, Chung M, Abildina S, Sabirova R, Kapbasova G, Karipbaev B. The impact of coping and emotional intelligence on the relationship between posttraumatic stress disorder from past trauma, adjustment difficulty, and psychological distress following divorce. *J Ment Health*. (2017) 26:334–41. doi: 10.1080/09638237.2017.1322186
- Çaksen H. The effects of parental divorce on children. *Psychiatrike = Psychiatriki*. (2022) 33:81–2. doi: 10.22365/jpsych.2021.040
- Tullius JM, De Kroon ML, Almansa J, Reijneveld SA. Adolescents' mental health problems increase after parental divorce, not before, and persist until adulthood: a longitudinal TRAILS study. *Eur Child Adolesc Psychiatry*. (2022) 31:969–78. doi: 10.1007/s00787-020-01715-0
- Trigueros R, Navarro N, Cangas AJ, Mercader I, Aguilar-Parra JM, González-Santos J, et al. The protective role of emotional intelligence in self-stigma and emotional exhaustion of family members of people with mental disorders. *Sustainability*. (2020) 12:4862. doi: 10.3390/su12124862
- Schlozman S, Beresin EV, Balon R, Coverdale JH, Brenner AM, Louie AK, et al. Stigma and mental health: A proposal for next steps. *Acad Psychiatry*. (2016) 40:735–9. doi: 10.1007/s40596-016-0601-4
- Stangl AL, Earnshaw VA, Logie CH, van Brakel W, C Simbayi L, Barré I, et al. The Health Stigma and Discrimination Framework: a global, crosscutting framework to inform research, intervention development, and policy on health-related stigmas. *BMC Med*. (2019) 17:31. doi: 10.1186/s12916-019-1271-3
- Dolezal L. Shame anxiety, stigma and clinical encounters. *J Eval Clin Pract*. (2022) 28:854–60. doi: 10.1111/jep.13744
- Laranjeira C, Carvalho D, Valentim O, Moutinho L, Morgado T, Tomás C, et al. Therapeutic adherence of people with mental disorders: an evolutionary concept analysis. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. (2023) 20:3869. doi: 10.3390/ijerph20053869
- Lesinskiene S. An exploration of the possibilities of current mental health services to tackle transgenerational effects of parental mental illnesses on offspring adjustment in Lithuania. *Front Psychiatry*. (2021) 12:764394. doi: 10.3389/fpsy.2021.764394
- Carvalho D, Sequeira C, Querido A, Tomás C, Morgado T, Valentim O, et al. Positive mental health literacy: A concept analysis. *Front Psychol*. (2022) 13:877611. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.877611
- Lesinskiene S, Žilinskas E, Utkus A, Marčiukaiytė R, Vasiliauskaitė G, Stankevičiūtė R, et al. Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders and inadequacy of care: importance of raising awareness in clinical practice. *Children (Basel Switzerland)*. (2023) 11:5. doi: 10.3390/children11010005

Publisher's note

All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers. Any product that may be evaluated in this article, or claim that may be made by its manufacturer, is not guaranteed or endorsed by the publisher.