



## The Bright and Dark Sides of Emotional Intelligence: Implications for Educational Practice and Better Understanding of Empathy

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In recent years, educational practitioners have become more aware of the importance of cultivating students' social and emotional skills, in order to facilitate adaptation beyond academic contexts. Emotional intelligence (EI), the ability to regulate one's own and others' emotions appropriately, has often been targeted in educational interventions. Previous studies suggest that EI promotes various positive social outcomes such as social support, prosocial behaviour, and subjective well-being. However, a growing body of research has also shown that EI may sometimes lead to antisocial behaviours such as indirect aggression and support for others' retaliation, but this "darker side" of EI tends to be overlooked. We argue that emotional intelligence without empathy can bring about manipulative or aggressive behaviour, and highlight the need to explore further how EI interacts with other personality traits in determining different social outcomes. This review addresses both the "bright" and the "dark" side of EI, aiming to offer a comprehensive, balanced perspective on its adaptive functions. Based on Reinforcement Sensitivity Theory (RST), our paper proposes that there might be a common mechanism by which EI links to both prosociality and aggression. Our analysis leads to the conclusion that researchers need to elaborate on the motivational mechanism underlying the behaviours of emotionally intelligent individuals, while teachers would be well-advised to pay attention to the motivations that support students' socially adaptive behaviours.

**Keywords:** emotional intelligence, emotional competence, prosocial behaviour, antisocial behaviour, Reinforcement Sensitivity Theory (RST).

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## **Introduction**

Nurturing children's social and emotional abilities has been called for (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2015). Social and emotional skills are a prerequisite for student agency — a core educational goal in the OECD Learning Compass 2030 framework (OECD, 2019). To achieve long-term goals and overcome adversity, students need to learn how to exercise agency not only for personal development, but also to the benefit of society, and this requires building strong social skills first. Recently, awareness pertaining to the importance of fostering such skills at school has increased among educational practitioners. Investigating government and school-based educational interventions aiming to improve students' social and emotional skills, researchers have found that these skills predict not just academic achievement, but also good friendships, lifelong learning, and career efficacy (for a review, see Siddiqui & Ventista, 2018).

Emotional intelligence (EI) is one social and emotional skill that has been widely investigated and targeted in educational interventions. EI is defined as the ability to regulate one's own and others' emotions appropriately (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Being a comprehensive construct, EI bears similarity to other related social skills, such as empathy. Empathy refers to the ability to understand others' emotions and vicariously experience what they feel, while emotional intelligence refers to accurate knowledge, identification, and management of emotions in both self and others (e.g., Mikolajczak, 2009; Nozaki, 2015). Although some conceptual overlap between emotional intelligence and empathy exists (e.g., both require accurate understanding of others' emotions), they are distinguishable concepts, as demonstrated by research showing they have different effects on social behavior (Mizokawa & Koyasu, 2015, 2017). Furthermore, studies show that even after controlling for traditional intelligence and other personality traits such as the Big Five, EI significantly predicts various academic and social outcomes, including prosocial behavior (e.g., Brackett et al., 2004; Márquez et al., 2006), thus corroborating the discriminant validity of EI.

Historically, EI has been broadly conceptualized and measured from the following two perspectives: ability EI and trait EI. In 1990, the concept of emotional intelligence was formally defined by Peter Salovey and John Mayer as the “ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions” (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p. 189). According to this definition, EI is an ability (i.e., one's capacity to perceive, use, understand, and manage emotions), therefore it could be measured by maximum performance tests. A widely-used measure of ability EI is the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT; Mayer et al., 2003). The concept of emotional intelligence was popularized a few years later, in Daniel Goleman's bestseller “Emotional Intelligence” (Goleman, 1995). Here, the author argues that EI may be more powerful than IQ in predicting success in various life domains, from intimate relationships to work (although his claims have been later criticized to be implausible by the proponents of the ability model of EI; see Mayer et al., 2000). Goleman defines emotional intelligence as a constellation of skills “... which include self-control, zeal and

persistence, and the ability to motivate oneself” (p. xii). In 2001, pointing out the difficulty of constructing objective tests of ability EI, Konstantinos Petrides and Adrian Furnham proposed the trait model of EI as an alternative to the ability model. According to the trait model, EI encompassed dispositions and self-perceived abilities, and can thus be measured with self-report scales. Examples of trait EI questionnaires are the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue) and its short form (TEIQue-SF), which measure well-being, self-control, sociability, and emotionality (Petrides & Furnham, 2001), the Profiles of Emotional Competence (PEC) and its short version, measuring intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, such as perceiving and utilizing emotion (Brasseur et al., 2013), and the Emotional Intelligence Scale (EQS), measuring three sub factors of EI: intrapersonal area, interpersonal area, and flexibility (Otake et al. 2001). It is important to note that both ability and trait EI models are grounded in a cognitive and behavioral theory of emotions.

EI has been shown to predict various positive outcomes such as psychological health and high achievement (e.g., Perera & DiGiacomo, 2013; Sánchez-Álvarez et al., 2016). Many studies have pointed out that emotionally intelligent individuals demonstrate higher interpersonal skills and maintain better relationships with others (e.g., Ye et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2020; Zhao, 2020). However, despite the myriad benefits of EI, recent work suggests that it can also facilitate less desirable outcomes, such as indirect aggression or emotional manipulation (Davis & Nichols, 2016). Challenging the shared consensus that EI is mainly a promoter of positive outcomes, we highlight that EI is related not only to interpersonal skills, but also to some forms of aggression. This paper examines the adaptive role of EI, evidencing how both the prosocial, and the antisocial outcomes of EI facilitate individuals’ adaptation to an intricate and challenging social environment. In doing so, we discuss the implications of research findings for educational practitioners, evidencing the aspects that should be taken into account when fostering EI in schools and communities.

### **The Bright Side of EI: Prosociality and Subjective Well-being**

EI predicts various positive outcomes. Past studies have shown that EI increases psychological adaptation, promoting higher levels of subjective well-being (Sánchez-Álvarez et al., 2016, Nozaki & Koyasu, 2015; Ye et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2020), life satisfaction (Kong et al., 2012; Nozaki & Koyasu, 2015), self-esteem (Akamatsu & Koizumi, 2021; Nozaki & Koyasu, 2015), and positive emotions (Zhao, 2020), as well as low levels of negative emotions (Zhao, 2020) and of loneliness (Nozaki & Koyasu, 2015). A meta-analysis by Sánchez-Álvarez et al. (2016) reported a positive correlation of  $r = .32$  between EI and subjective well-being. Therefore, EI seems to be a robust predictor of individual mental health.

As emotionally intelligent individuals are regarded to have good social skills, several interpersonal factors have been postulated as mediators between EI and psychological health. First of all, social support has been widely investigated as mediator (e.g., Kong et al., 2012; Ye et al., 2019; Zhao, 2020). A meta-analysis by Sarrionandia and Mikolajczak (2020) showed a significant positive correlation between EI and

social support ( $r = .33$ ). Individuals with high EI may be able to achieve psychological adjustment by obtaining support from others.

The effects of EI on prosocial behavior have also been examined (Ye et al., 2019; Zhao, 2020). Based on dual exchange theory (Uehara, 1990), prosocial behavior elicits social support from others. Ye et al. (2019) conducted a longitudinal study among Hong Kong Chinese undergraduates and found that EI facilitated the provision of support during the first phase of the study, which in turn facilitated happiness via received support six months later. These sequential mediating effects indicate that emotionally intelligent individuals may skillfully utilize prosocial behavior to obtain social support, which, in turn, may facilitate psychological adaptation. Social support does not only enhance well-being, but also contributes to recovery from past challenging experiences. For example, a meta-analytic review revealed that social support is positively associated with post-traumatic growth (PTG; Prati & Pietrantonio, 2009). Therefore, EI could promote individuals' psychological adaptation via gaining social support across various situations.

Finally, findings based on sociometer theory and social network perspective reveal that EI is a predictor of self-esteem and social network centrality. Sociometer theory assumes that self-esteem is a "meter" that reflects one's relationships with others (Leary & Baumeister, 2000), suggesting that we should focus not only on *level* but also *stability* of self-esteem over time. Based on sociometer theory, Akamatsu and Koizumi (2021) conducted a longitudinal study on Japanese high school students with three time points during a year. The results showed that trait EI measured by EQS increases the level and stability of self-esteem. In another research stream rooted in social network theory, Zhang et al. (2020) asked Chinese undergraduates about their own EI and subjective well-being, as well as their perceived position in their friendship network (centrality and peripherality). They revealed that the relationship between EI and subjective well-being was mediated by friendship network centrality. In this research, individuals with high EI were shown to be more centrally located in their friend networks, suggesting that they are better adapted.

Furthermore, such interpersonal outcomes of EI converge in academic achievement, because psychological adjustment predicts academic performance (Credé & Niehorster, 2012; Juvonen et al. 2000). A meta-analysis by Perera and DiGiacomo (2013) reported a positive correlation of  $r = .20$  between EI and academic performance. The authors pointed out that emotionally intelligent individuals' interpersonal skills are advantageous in academic contexts too, because high EI facilitates the maintenance of supportive social relationships. In a following study (Perera & DiGiacomo, 2015), they conducted surveys on Australian university freshmen and investigated the process by which EI predicts GPA. They assumed that intelligence predicts academic performance via two sets of mediators: (1) perceived social support, which promotes psychological adjustment, and in turn academic performance; (2) engagement coping, which enhances academic adjustment, and in turn academic performance. The results showed that EI predicts social support and personal adjustment, although there was a non-significant relationship between psychological adjustment and academic performance controlling for the effect of academic achievement.

## **The Dark Side of EI: Links with Antisocial Behaviors**

To maintain good relationships with others, it is necessary to regulate one's emotions. EI is generally considered to suppress aggression and the motivation to offend others. García-Sancho et al. (2014) conducted a systematic review of previous research investigating EI and aggression and reported that many studies have found a negative correlation between the two. Rey and Extremera (2014) asked respondents from a Spanish university about their motivation to avoid or to retaliate against others who have hurt them. Emotion management (a facet of EI measured by MSCEIT) functioned to suppress retaliation against the perpetrator, thus indicating that EI leads to avoidance of conflict with others who are harmful. Overall, these results converge in supporting the existence of a negative association between EI and aggression.

Recent meta-analytic reviews investigated whether EI has a dark side by focusing on its associations with dark-triad personality traits and emotional manipulation. Miao et al. (2019) revealed that EI is negatively correlated with both Machiavellianism ( $\hat{\rho} = -.29$ ) and psychopathy ( $\hat{\rho} = -.17$ ), and not significantly correlated with narcissism ( $\hat{\rho} = .02$ ). These results suggest that EI may not have a dark side, after all. However, Ngoc et al. (2020) showed contrastive correlations between EI and emotional manipulation. In their review, ability EI was positively ( $r = .10$ ) whereas trait EI was negatively ( $r = -.16$ ) correlated to non-prosocial emotional manipulation. Moreover, the relationship between ability EI and non-prosocial emotional manipulation was stronger among males than females. This moderation effects suggest that some factors (such as gender) may contribute to the emergence or enhancement of EI's dark side.

Previous studies reveal that the positive association between EI and some forms of antisocial behavior may be moderated by gender and developmental differences. For example, Bacon et al. (2014) showed that higher EI (measured by TEIQue) was associated with more delinquent behavior in female undergraduates in UK. Bacon, Lenton-Maughan, and May (2018) found that the sociability facet of EI facilitated socially deviant behavior in male adults, while emotionality and sociability facets facilitated socially deviant behavior in adolescent females. In another study, Bacon and Regan (2016) showed that EI was positively associated with Machiavellianism and interpersonal delinquency in female college students. Similarly, Hyde et al. (2020) revealed that EI was positively, though weakly correlated with disingenuous emotional manipulation in Australian female employees ( $r = .11$ ), and that EI predicted disingenuous emotional manipulation after controlling for gender in multiple regression analysis. Taken together, these studies suggest that some facets of EI may predict antisocial behaviors in young females and adult males.

The reason why EI may be associated with emotional manipulation and delinquency in young females could be related to a qualitative difference in types of aggressive behaviors. Björkqvist suggested that young males easily resort to direct aggression to deal with harmful or unpleasant others, while young females tend to employ indirect forms of aggression, such as social manipulation or harming the target person in a circumvent manner (Björkqvist, 1994; Björkqvist et al., 2000). Considering their tendency to resort to indirect forms of aggression to protect themselves, females' EI could be more often used as a tool to

manipulate, and sometimes exploit others. As for the positive association between EI and emotional manipulation in adult males, Ngoc et al. (2020) interpreted this moderation based on social role theory (Eagly, 1997). According to this theory, males are expected to occupy more important positions, and their ambitions to get promoted in society should be higher than those of females. Therefore, males could display a higher tendency toward non-prosocial emotional manipulation in the course of achieving their goals. However, social roles change with the times; nowadays, females occupy more important positions in society than before. This might explain why EI was positively correlated with antisocial emotional manipulation in the workplace among females in Hyde et al.'s study (2020). Taking these factors into account, we can assume more complex interactions between not only individuals' gender, but also their age and backgrounds (from temporal interpersonal situations to social systems).

Another line of research hinting to the existence of a dark side of EI reveals the importance of contextual factors. Nozaki and Koyasu (2013a, 2013b) experimentally investigated how people behave when they are ostracized using the cyber-ball paradigm on a Japanese sample. In one study (Nozaki & Koyasu, 2013a) they showed that *when one is ostracized*, EI in the intrapersonal domain suppresses the intention to retaliate against the ostracizer, a result consistent with the conclusions of Rey and Extremera (2014). However, in a second study (Nozaki & Koyasu 2013b) results showed that when *oneself and another are ostracized*, and the other attempts to retaliate against the ostracizer, EI in the interpersonal domain leads to different behaviors depending on one's own level of intention to retaliate. When retaliation intention was low, emotionally intelligent participants tried to suppress other's retaliation, whereas when retaliation intention was high, they supported other's attempts to retaliate. Accordingly, emotionally intelligent people may pursue self-interest by supporting others' aggressive behavior when it matches their own intentions to retaliate. A similar conclusion was drawn by Mizokawa and Koyasu (2017) who showed that when the effect of empathy was partialled out, Japanese participants with high scores in the interpersonal EI domain (as measured with PEC) did not stop someone whom they disliked from accidentally sitting on a dirty bench. Therefore, people with high EI in the interpersonal domain may deliberately refrain from acting prosocially under certain circumstances. Together, these findings reveal that EI may lead to indirect, but not direct aggression. From the outside, such behaviors can appear innocent of any wrongdoing or harmful intention (Björkqvist, 1994). As the desired goal is attained without attribution of blame, and therefore at no cost to the perpetrator (Bacon, Corr, & Satchell, 2018), emotionally intelligent individuals may have a social advantage, as they could keep harmful others away, without explicitly showing their intention.

Such contrasting outcomes of EI can be explained by emphasizing the conceptual difference between EI and other social personality traits. Nozaki and Koyasu (2013b) suggested that EI is neither a positive nor negative concept in itself. Mizokawa and Koyasu (2015, 2017) showed that even though empathy and EI are closely related to each other, they have distinct functions in shaping social behavior when the other's effect is controlled for. While empathy refers to sharing others' emotions, and typically leads to increased prosocial motivation, EI reflects knowledge regarding others' emotions. Without empathy, EI could be "abused", and

lead to antisocial behaviors. Björkqvist et al. (2000) also discussed the difference between empathy and social intelligence (a superordinate concept to EI), and suggested that social intelligence without empathy could facilitate aggression. These studies suggest that EI does not by itself lead to prosociality or aggression, but may interact with other personality traits (such as empathy) in shaping social behavior. Supporting this idea, Côté et al. (2011) revealed that emotional-regulation knowledge (a sub factor of ability EI measured with the Situational Test of Emotion Management: STEM; MacCann & Roberts, 2008) amplifies the effect of moral identity on prosocial behavior, as well as that of Machiavellianism on interpersonal deviance among Canadians. Accordingly, EI has the potential to lead to both prosociality and to aggression, depending on individuals' personality.

### **Mechanisms Linking EI to Prosocial and Antisocial Behaviors**

Bacon and Corr (2017) proposed that the behavior of emotionally intelligent people can be explained from the perspective of reinforcement sensitivity theory (RST; Gray, 1982). According to RST, human behaviors are regulated by two basic motivational systems: the behavioral activation system (BAS) and the behavioral inhibition system (BIS). Bacon and Corr (2017) showed that trait EI measured by TEIQue is positively associated with BAS, and negatively associated with BIS, suggesting that emotionally intelligent people are goal-driven and sensitive to rewards. As previous research reveals there might be a link between BAS and antisocial behavior, this result could explain why EI may facilitate not only prosocial, but also antisocial behaviors. In one study, facets of BAS such as goal-drive persistence, reward reactivity, and impulsivity, were shown to be associated with antisocial behaviors, after controlling for socio- economic status (SES) and various types of daily life strain (Bacon, Corr, & Satchell, 2018). What these studies suggest is that the behaviors of emotionally intelligent individuals may be strongly supported by an approach motivation, whether they are prosocial behaviors (e.g., making oneself feel good, gaining later support, gaining a good reputation) or aggressive behaviors (e.g., eliminating harmful others; Bacon & Corr, 2017). These results offer a hint to interpret previous research suggesting there might be a link between EI and indirect aggression. Nozaki and Koyasu (2013b), and Mizokawa and Koyasu (2017) used social contexts where aggression towards someone could be a reward for participants. Considering that in these studies the target of indirect aggression was an ostracizer or a disliked person, emotionally intelligent people might find the sight of the targets' misfortune rewarding. Once rewards are represented, emotionally intelligent individuals may execute behaviors to reach their goals even if those goals are not socially desirable.

Another theory which could explain the link between EI and prosocial, as well as aggressive behavior, is resource control theory (RCT; Hawley & Little, 1999). RCT posits that both prosocial and aggressive behavior can be strategically used by individuals to obtain and control resources that help them thrive in the social world. In order to maximize the acquisition of material and social resources, it is important to strike a balance between these two strategies. Results by Hawley (2011) show that individuals able to enact both strategies have the most efficient acquisition of material and human resources, and are in

socially significant positions. These findings suggest that it is important to exercise prosociality *as well as* aggression, when necessary. Emotionally intelligent individuals may have an advantage in being able to maximize their resources through prosocial and aggressive behaviors, thus easily reaching their goals and obtaining valued rewards.

The relationships between the psychological concepts discussed thus far are depicted in Figure 1.

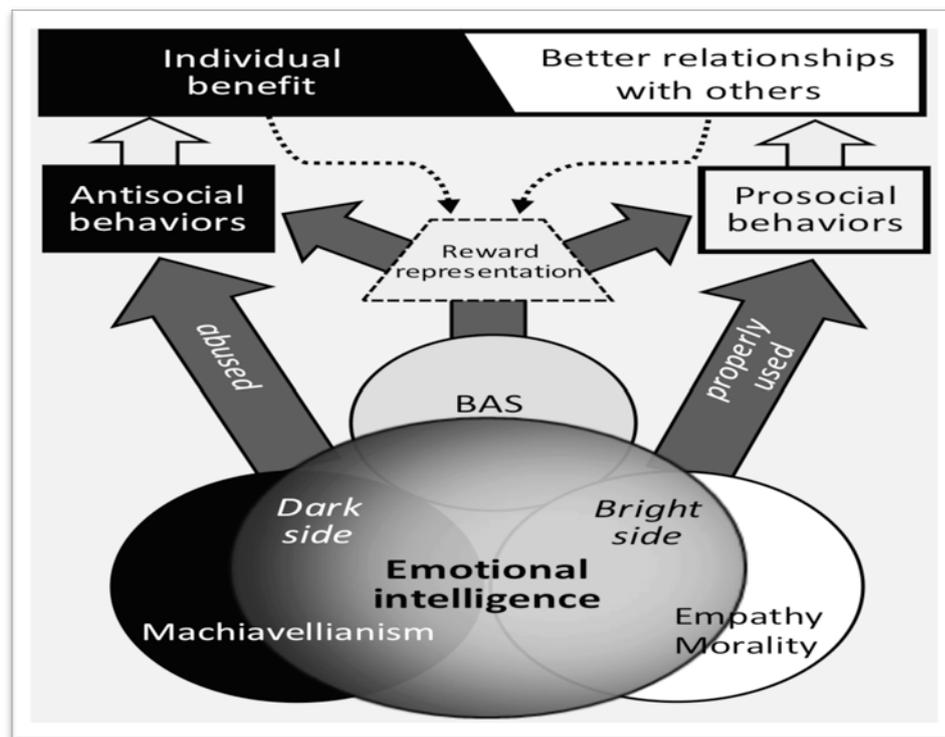


Figure 1. Conceptual Relationships Between Emotional Intelligence, Individual Traits, and Social Outcomes

First, as suggested in Nozaki and Koyasu (2013b), EI is a neutral construct, having both socially desirable (*bright*) and less desirable (*dark*) aspects. The concept of EI has some common characteristics with positive traits such as empathy/morality (Mizokawa & Koyasu, 2015) as well as negative traits such as Machiavellianism (Austin et al., 2007; Miao et al., 2019). The two long arrows located at the bottom part of Figure 1 suggest that the interaction between EI and each of these constructs is what determines the valence of the outcomes (Björkqvist et al., 2000; Côté et al., 2011; Mizokawa & Koyasu, 2015, 2017). Thus, when backed-up by empathy, EI may lead to prosocial behavior (*properly used* EI), while high levels of Machiavellianism may turn emotionally intelligent individuals toward aggressive behaviors (*abused* EI). Second, EI is related to BAS, which may also lead to both prosocial or antisocial behaviors via reward representation (Bacon & Corr, 2017; Bacon, Corr, & Satchell, 2018). Third, as depicted by the arrows in the upper part of the figure, prosocial behaviors may foster better relationships with others, while aggressive behavior may lead to individual benefit in the form of self-protection or social status (Bacon & Corr, 2017;

Bacon, Corr, & Satchell, 2018; Björkqvist et al., 2000). However, clearly splitting outcomes into social and individual benefits is difficult, as they are often interconnected (e.g., people tend to tie good relationships with those who provide more benefit; Uehara, 1990). Finally, the outcomes themselves may be represented as rewards (the dotted arrows), which may, then, push emotionally intelligent individuals to select social behaviors that are consistent with the outcomes via BAS. Accordingly, we suggest that the qualitative difference in reward representation may lead individuals to distinctive social behaviors.

## **Conclusions and Future Directions**

Even though abundant research shows EI links to prosociality (e.g., Ye et al., 2019; Zhao, 2020), this review underlines that EI is just *one form of intelligence*, and that seemingly prosocial behaviors of emotionally intelligent individuals might be driven by self-interest rather than prosocial motivation. Therefore, researchers and practitioners should be aware of the fact that EI has the potential to lead to both prosocial and aggressive behaviors. Furthermore, it is important to note that when EI is *abused* in executing aggressive behaviors, the agents hide their aggressive intention skillfully. Although applied fields such as educational psychology emphasize the importance of EI in improving students' social adaptation and performance (e.g., Perera & DiGiacomo, 2013, 2015), teachers should also bear in mind that high-achieved or well-accepted students might enact aggressive strategies, without being noticed. Paying attention not only to socially adaptive behaviors, but also to the motivation underlying them, is required.

The *silent aggressiveness* of emotionally intelligent students might lead to one of the most hazardous problems in school, bullying. In general, EI is negatively related to bullying (García-Sancho et al., 2014), suggesting that students with high emotional intelligence can perceive and understand others' feelings and thus avoid doing what is disliked by others. However, some kinds of bullying such as social exclusion and relational bullying require high levels of social and emotional cognition (Sutton et al., 1999). Traditionally, bullies were regarded to be more aggressive, less adapted, and lacking in social skills (e.g., Frey et al., 2000; Okayasu & Takayama, 2000; Tang, 2018). However, growing evidence shows that bullies are not just aggressive but also prosocial, hence they obtain a high position in the classroom hierarchy (for a review see Tang, 2018). These characteristics are common with those of emotionally intelligent individuals discussed so far: capacity of enacting both prosocial and (sometimes) aggressive behaviors, and perceived high centrality in friendship network. Therefore, one cannot rule out the possibility that some bullies may actually have high EI.

Furthermore, even when they are not bullies, students with high EI could advocate other students' bullying. Bullying has several layers consisting of the bullied child, bullies, and bystanders (Morita & Kiyonaga, 1994; Salmivalli, 1999). The latter can be further categorized into the following subcategories, according to their commitment to the bullying phenomenon: (1) assistants, who join the bully and become bullies themselves; (2) reinforcers, who support the bully; (3) outsiders, who do not intervene; and (4) defenders, who help the bullied child (Salmivalli, 1999). As bystanders, emotionally intelligent students may

take the role of defenders, or remain outsiders, depending on their underlying motivation. Furthermore, considering that emotionally intelligent individuals sometimes enact indirect aggression through the manipulation of others (Mizokawa & Koyasu, 2017; Nozaki & Koyasu, 2013b), bystanders high in EI might also take the role of reinforcers. More specifically, if bullying is consistent with bystanders' interests, such as when they dislike the bullied child, or when bullying provides them the chance to move up to a higher status in the classroom, emotionally intelligent bystanders who seemingly look to be *outsiders* may tolerate others' bullying, thus becoming *silent reinforcers*.

The role of EI should also be discussed from the perspective of the bullied child. As mentioned in the "bright side" review section, EI enhances personal resilience, coping, and social support (e.g., Downey et al., 2010; Kong et al., 2012; Ye et al., 2019; Zhao, 2020), all of which are essential factors that contribute to post-traumatic growth (Prati & Pietrantonio, 2009). Additionally, comparing the effects of lifetime trauma experience and trait EI measured on TEIQue-SF on adult psychiatric symptoms, Rudenstine and Espinosa (2018) revealed that the positive effects of trait EI on individual health are larger than the negative effects of past lifetime trauma, thus indicating that EI could be a key in enhancing the health of individuals who experienced trauma. Therefore, EI may help students overcome adverse childhood experiences, such as bullying. Furthermore, coping under stressful situations and PTG promote individual EI (Nozaki, 2012; Nozaki, 2013; Nozaki & Koyasu, 2013c), hinting to the existence of a positive loop in which coping enhances EI, which in turn facilitates PTG.

Considering that both bullying and childhood victimization are risk factors for adult criminality (Sourander et al., 2007, 2009, 2011), preventing bullying is a priority for educational practitioners. We suggest that teachers should pay equal attention to the EI of all actors (bully, bullied, bystander). Interventions aiming to prevent bullying should target empathy and moral character alongside EI, so that students put their EI to good use. The purpose of such interventions should not be to "challenge" bystanders to intervene (for more on concerns about approaches that seek to turn bystanders into active defenders, see Downes & Cefai, 2019), but to help students empathize with and support the victim. As for interventions aiming to help bullied children overcome this adverse experience through EI, emphasis should be placed on the expression and acceptance of emotion rather than emotional control, as control of trauma-induced intense emotion may backfire (on the limits of a control approach to emotion, see Creighton & Downes, 2017).

The studies reviewed so far have important implications for educational intervention. Past literature on EI offers strong theoretical considerations and empirical evidence on how to increase individual EI (e.g., Hodzic et al. 2018; Mattingly & Kraiger, 2019). Considering the darker sides of EI underlined in this review, teachers should be wary of interventions that target only EI. Unbalanced EI without morality or empathy could lead to undesirable outcomes (Côté et al., 2011; Davis & Nichols, 2016; Mizokawa & Koyasu, 2015; Ngoc et al., 2020). Interventions focusing solely on EI might foster skills that could lead to the manipulation of others or bullying among students with high Machiavellianism or low empathy. Therefore, in educational practice, teachers should target not only EI, but also other personality traits (e.g., Machiavellianism, empathy, and moral identity), in order to nurture harmonious characters.

Another argument of this review is that EI has important motivational aspects, as suggested by RST. Because emotionally intelligent individuals may be more sensitive to rewards, practitioners should analyze what can be a reward for students. Well-established reward-based educational practices such as applied behavioral analysis (ABA; Baer et al., 1968; Slocum, 2014) could provide hints on how to integrate motivational perspectives into EI interventions. By paying attention to the balance between different personality traits, as well as the motivational aspect of EI, educational practitioners may lay the foundations for healthy EI growth. As indicated so far, properly used EI could enhance not just students' own well-being, but also their friends' and their community's well-being, which is the one of the ultimate goals set by OECD (2015).

As for future directions, more studies employing children and adolescent samples are needed in order to expand current educational implications. Most research revealing the darker sides of EI recruited undergraduates or adult samples (e.g., Mizokawa & Koyasu, 2017; Nozaki & Koyasu, 2013b). Studies revealing EI's effects on adolescents' socially deviant behaviors also relied on retrospective answers from emerging adult samples (Bacon, Lenton-Maughan, & May, 2018). However, children and adolescents live in very complex social worlds, having to manage close friendships, rivalries, and school cliques (e.g., Mizuno & Tang, 2019; Tang, 2018). Thus, more nuanced effects of EI could be detected in younger sample.

In addition, considering the importance of the motivational aspects of EI, more research focusing on the relationship between EI and the characteristics of the targets of prosocial/aggressive behavior is needed (i.e., do emotionally intelligent people engage in prosocial behavior toward those who are more profitable for them, or aggressive behavior toward those who are more harmful for them?), as well as on emotionally intelligent people's motivation for prosocial/aggressive behavior (i.e., is the prosocial/aggressive behavior of people high in EI driven by self-oriented motivation?). Furthermore, considering that EI is associated with reward sensitivity (Bacon & Corr, 2017), future research could employ a reinforcement learning paradigm to examine whether reward learning rates are actually higher in emotionally intelligent people. In addition to monetary rewards, social rewards (smiles and praise from others) could also be included in this paradigm (Jones et al., 2014), and research may examine how individuals with high EI respond to qualitatively different rewards. In doing so, future research will be able to elaborate on the process by which EI predicts both positive and less desirable social outcomes.

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