

# An examination of emotional intelligence as a predictor of mental toughness; considerations for employee performance and subjective happiness.

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## Abstract

This study explored differences in Mental Toughness between employees of high, average, and low Emotional Intelligence. A quantitative, comparative survey design was employed for the current study, with a sample of 109 professionals. MT was significantly different across EI groups, with higher MT in the 'high EI' group compared to 'low EI', and for the 'average EI' group compared to 'low EI'. MT was also positively associated with employee happiness.

## Introduction

Mental Toughness (MT) refers to an individual's capability to be consistently successful in coping with difficult life scenarios and comprises the following dimensions: **Control** (one's own life and emotions), **Commitment** (to personal achievements and aims), **Challenge** (considers changes in life as challenges not as threats), and **Confidence** (in own abilities and others) (Clough, Earle & Sewell, 2002; Perry et al., 2013).

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is defined as an individual's ability to direct their thoughts and actions based upon reflection on the feelings and emotions of themselves and others.

A breadth of literature suggests that the mechanisms which make the mentally tough such effective performers are very comparable to the abilities that come with being emotionally intelligent.



The current study sought to explore whether Mental Toughness levels differed across employees of varying performance levels and emotional intelligence. The study also investigated possible association between MT and Happiness, as well as differences between sex and across age.

H1- There is positive relationship between MT and Job performance

H2-Employees with higher EI will report higher MT.

H3-Employees with higher MT will report higher happiness levels.

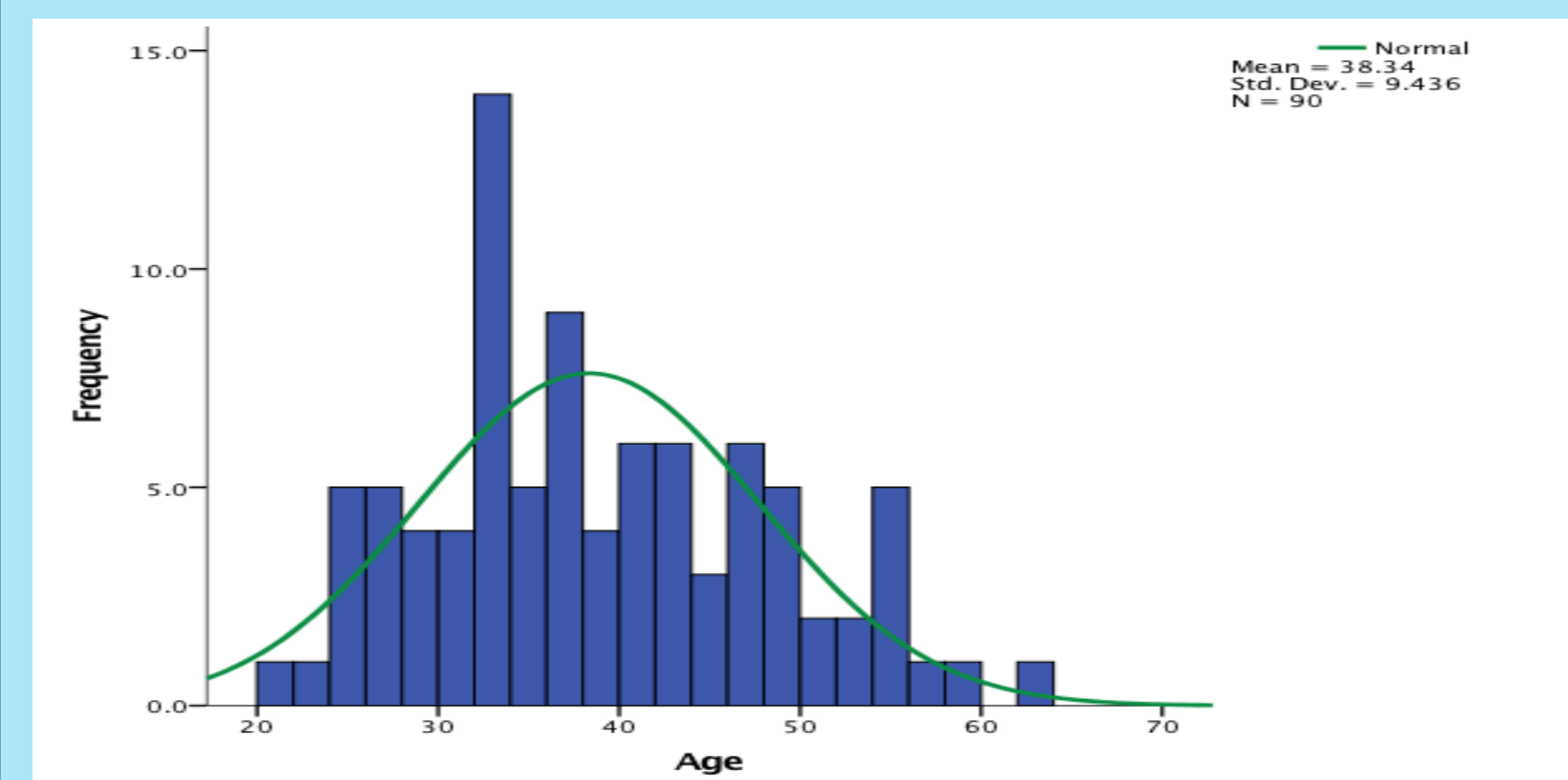
H4-Significant differences will exist in the mean EI of males and females.

H5-There is a positive correlation between MT and age.

## Method

**Design:** A quantitative, cross-sectional, correlational design was used. Purposive sampling was employed, recruiting participants within specific multinationals.

**Participants:** The sample consisted of 109 individuals (51 males and 58 females) with an age range of 21-62 years ( $M=38.34$ ,  $SD=9.43$ ). The largest proportion of respondents were from the 30-40 year category (See Distribution below).

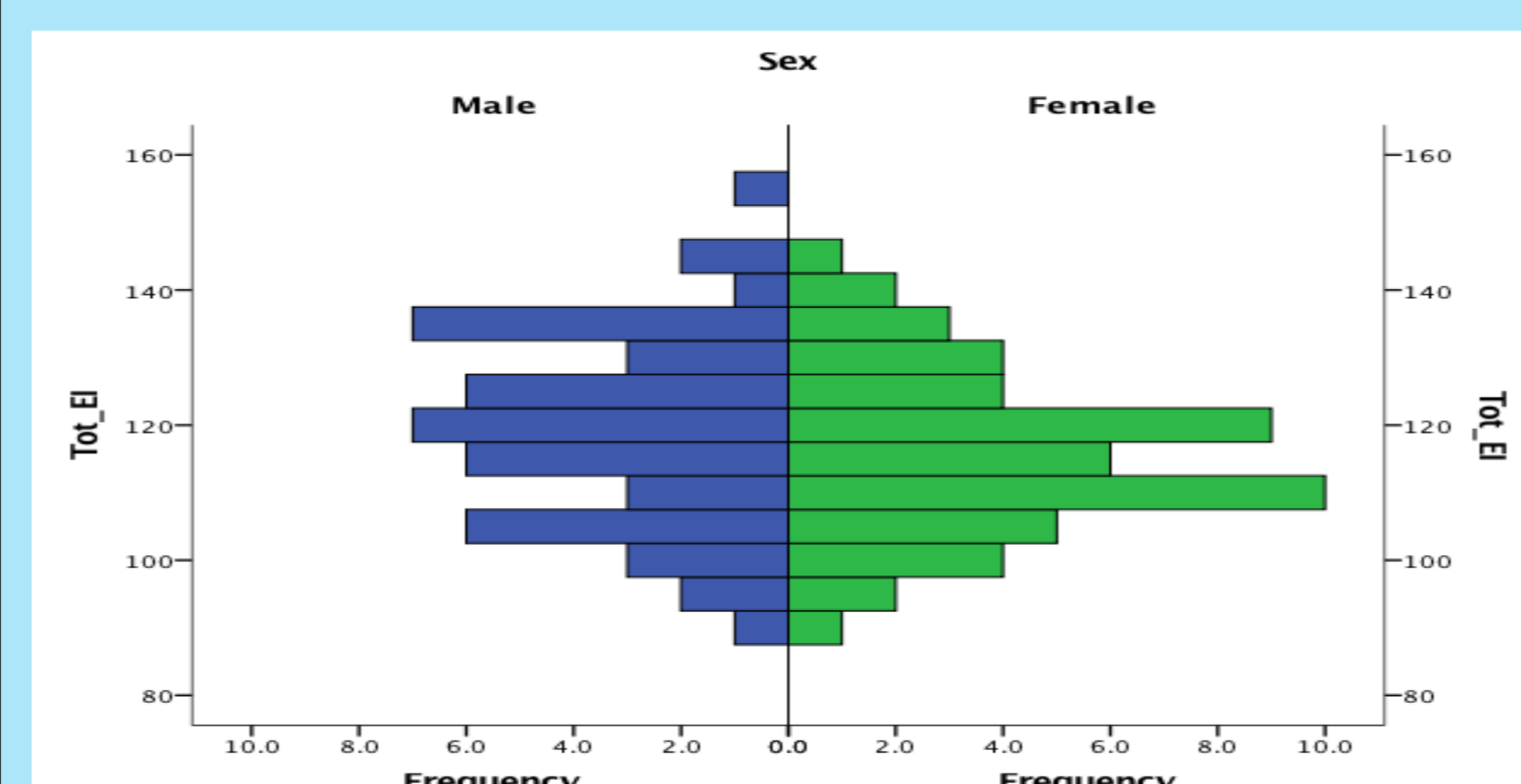


**Materials:** Each participant completed a battery of measures on Mental Toughness (MTQ48; Clough et al., 2002) Emotional Intelligence (Genos EI-inventory; Palmer, Manocha, Gignac, & Stough, 2003) and Subjective Happiness (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999). In addition, information such as age and sex and performance ratings were collected.

**Procedure:** Permission was granted from managers from each company. Participants were emailed a link to complete the question online, subsequent to reading an information page and indicating consent. Approximate completion of the questionnaire was 15 minutes. Participants were debriefed and thanked for their involvement.

## Results

- **MT** was positively associated with **performance**, (Wald  $\chi^2(1) = 6.94$ ,  $p = .008$ ), suggesting that those with higher mental toughness scores reported higher performance ratings.
- **MT** significantly increased across **low** ( $M = 162.70$ ,  $SD = 19.22$ ), **average** ( $M = 179.36$ ,  $SD = 12.55$ ), and **high** ( $M = 188.63$ ,  $SD = 14.46$ ) **EI** level groups ( $F(2, 84) = 20.68$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.33$ ).
- **MT** was positively associated with **Subjective Happiness**, ( $F(1, 89) = 24.66$ ,  $p < .001$ ). MT accounted for 21.7% of the variation in happiness levels.
- There were no significance sex differences in levels of EI between males. As seen below, distributions of **EI amongst sexes** were similar.



- A moderate positive correlation was found between employee **age** and **MT** level ( $r(88) = .30$ ,  $p = .008$ )

## Discussion

- Findings suggests that fostering Mental Toughness may have positive effects on employee performance.
- Indeed, MT training programs may hold potential for increasing workplace performance, in the same way that EI programmes are currently being utilised for similar reasons. Future research could confirm this prediction
- MT is grounded in the ability to successfully utilise emotions, as this study confirmed, MT levels were positively associated with higher EI.
- Workplace happiness is related to an individuals' work life balance and job role experience (Neck et al., 2016). The current study showed that MT levels were positively associated with greater subjective happiness.
- Future research is needed to replicate these findings, specifically with regard to objective performance indicators. Moreover, and as alluded to earlier, intervention research to establish the efficacy of MT training programmes is also required.

## More Information

### Acknowledgments

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