

# Emotional Intelligence and Anxiety in Adulthood: Differences between Men and Women

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#### INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence (EI) refers to the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and use emotions effectively in oneself and others, influencing thought and behaviour (Mayer et al., 2016).

High levels of EI are linked to lower levels of anxiety, and this relationship tends to be more evident in women when compared to men (Augusto-Landa et al., 2024). Emotionally competent individuals can recognise and manage their emotions in ways that support wellbeing and effective functioning (Salovey & Mayer, 1990), allowing them to regulate their emotions adaptively in potentially stressful social and emotional situations (Salovey, 2001). Individuals with lower levels of EI tend to deal negatively with anxiety and may have more difficulty understanding and managing emotions appropriately (Augosto-Landa et al., 2024; Castro-Sánchez et al., 2022; Liu & Ren, 2018; Noorbakhsh et al., 2010) and ineffectiveness in maintaining and valuing emotionally positive experiences, which makes it difficult to develop lasting emotional states of well-being (Daros et al., 2021; Salovey, 2006; Bar-On, 2006). Low levels of EI act as predictors of maladaptive behaviours associated with high levels of anxiety (Solla & Moraes-Rodriguez, 2021).

METHOD		
Sample		ortuguese Adults
	Age	18 to 67 ( $M = 34.92$ , $SD = 13.14$ )
	Sex	37   Q 66

Women tend to present higher levels of EI (Cabello, 2016; Extremera-Pacheco et al., 2006; Pulido & Herrera, 2018; Tsausis & Nikolaou, 2005). When compared to men, women tend to be more effective in the components of perception and emotion evaluation, demonstrating greater sensitivity in identifying and expressing emotions (Tsausis & Nikolaou, 2005). However, some studies suggest that the emotional regulation component appears to be more developed in men (Augosto-Landa et al., 2024; Bar-On et al., 2000).



This research aims to analyze the relationship between EI and anxiety in a sample of Portuguese adults and to verify whether there are differences between men and women in EI and anxiety.



Anxiety

All participants agreed to participate in the study. The Egas Moniz School of Health and Science Ethics Committee approved this study. The participants Procedure completed an online Sociodemographic Questionnaire, the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS; Rodrigues et al., 2011), and the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS; Apóstolo et al., 2012).

## RESULTS

### DISCUSSION

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1. Self-Emotion Appraisal		0.41**	0.49**	0.61**	0.81**	-0.45**
2. Others' Emotional Appraisal			0.41*	0.40**	0.68**	-0.08
3. Use of Emotion				0.45**	0.77**	-0.22*
4. Regulation of Emotion					0.82**	-0.43**
5. WLEIS Total						-0.39**
6. Anxiety						

#### **Positive Correlations**

There are statistically significant positive correlations between all WLEIS subscales.

#### **Negative Correlations**

- Anxiety and Self-Emotion Appraisal (r = -0.45, p < 0.001)</li>
- Anxiety and Use of Emotion (r = -0.22, p = 0.399)
- Anxiety and Regulation of Emotion (r = -0.43, p < 0.027)</li>
- Anxiety and WLEIS Total (*r* = -0.39, *p* < 0.001)</p>

In agreement with the literature, this study reveals that higher EI levels are associated with lower anxiety levels (Augosto-Landa et al., 2024; Castro-Sánchez et al., 2022; Liu & Ren, 2018; Noorbakhsh et al., 2010). People with high EI are less sensitive to disapproval from others, worry less about events they can not control (Extremera-Pacheco & Fernandez-Berrocal, 2005), and have the capacity to lower negative emotions to handle problems and lessen anxiety symptoms (Liu & Ren, 2018).

The results indicate that men have higher levels of emotional regulation, in line with previous studies (Augosto-Landa et al., 2024; Bar-On et al., 2000). Men appear to be more effective in managing their adverse events and have a greater ability to control (or repress) emotions (Bar-On et al., 2000; Nolen-Hoeksema, 2012). Men also tend to perceive themselves as more competent and emotionally intelligent, while women tend to underestimate their competence in managing emotions (Sojer et al., 2024).

Higher levels of anxiety were found in women, in line with other studies (Carneiro Pinto et al., 2015; Extremera et al., 2006; Pulido & Herrera, 2018; Tsausis & Nikolaou, 2005). This result may be attributed to the lower quality of performance in emotional regulation, which is typically observed in women (Bailly et al., 2023). Women are more likely to focus their attention on negative emotional aspects, resulting in high levels of rumination and catastrophizing, and consequently, greater anxiety (Bailly et al., 2023; Nolen-Hoeksema, 2012; Nolen-Hoeksema & Aldao, 2011).

El can act as a protective factor against anxiety in adulthood (Castro-Sánchez et al., 2022), enabling individuals to develop more effective emotional, psychological, and social adjustment strategies (Extremera-Pacheco & Fernandéz-Berrocal, 2005; Mandell & Pherwani, 2003). According to the literature, emotional regulation is one of the most important components of El in managing negative emotional experiences. The ability to create effective emotional regulation strategies that reduce negative emotions and, consequently, stabilize the emotional experience, will be crucial in managing adverse emotional experiences (Liu & Ren, 2018; Noorbakhsh et al., 2010).

Men have higher levels of Emotional Regulation [M = 14.83, SD = 2.82; t(101) = 1.39, p <</p> 0.001].

Women have higher levels of Anxiety [M = 6.57, SD = 6.29; [t(101) = 4.23, p = 0.042].

This research contributes to the understanding of the relationship between EI and anxiety symptoms and the identification of differences between men and women in these variables, allowing for the identification of possible intervention strategies that are better adapted to the individual's specific characteristics.

REFERENCES

#### CONTACTS

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