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## **SOCIO-EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE AS A PSYCHOLOGICAL COMPONENT OF AN INDIVIDUAL'S SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE**

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### **Abstract**

This article presents a theoretical and empirical analysis of the relationship between social intelligence and an individual's socio-emotional competence. Based on an analysis of contemporary scientific approaches, the relationship between these psychological phenomena is clarified, and the appropriateness of considering socio-emotional competence as an important psychological component of social intelligence is substantiated. It is shown that social intelligence provides a cognitive understanding of social situations and of other people's motives and behavior, whereas socio-emotional competence reflects an individual's ability to put this understanding into practice through emotional self-regulation, empathy, social management, and effective interpersonal interaction.

The empirical study involved 76 respondents aged 18 to 23 and used J. Guilford's Social Intelligence Test and A. Shashenkova's Socio-Emotional Competence Questionnaire.

Correlation analysis and the method of contrasting groups were used to analyze the results. Statistically significant relationships were identified between individual components of socio-emotional competence and indicators of social intelligence. The strongest relationships were found for the scales of socio-emotional awareness, social management, and self-efficacy. Individuals with high levels of social intelligence were shown to have higher scores on every component of socio-emotional competence than individuals with low levels of social intelligence. The findings confirm that socio-emotional competence is an important psychological component of social intelligence that contributes to the effectiveness of social cognition, interpersonal interaction, and social adaptation.

**Keywords:** social intelligence; socio-emotional competence; social cognition; social interaction; emotional self-regulation; empathy; social management; self-efficacy; social adaptation.

**Introduction.** The current stage of societal development is characterized by rapid social, technological, and informational changes, which place increased demands on individuals' ability to interact effectively with others, understand their intentions and emotional states, and predict their behavior in various social situations. Under these conditions, social intelligence warrants particular scholarly attention as an integral psychological characteristic that enables successful interpersonal interaction, social adaptation, and productive functioning within a complex social environment.

The growing role of communication, teamwork, and cooperation in professional, educational, and social spheres makes it increasingly relevant to investigate the psychological factors that determine the level of social intelligence development. Such factors traditionally include empathy, social sensitivity, emotional stability, self-regulation, characteristics of interpersonal relationships, and social adaptability. At the same time, contemporary research increasingly emphasizes the role of socio-emotional competence as a complex integrative construct that combines the abilities to recognize one's own emotions, understand other people's emotional states, regulate one's own emotional responses, and build constructive interpersonal interactions.

Socio-emotional competence is regarded as an important resource for successful socialization and effective functioning under conditions of uncertainty, information overload, and persistent social challenges. It enables an individual to interpret social cues appropriately, consider the emotional context of communication, and make effective decisions in

interpersonal interaction. These characteristics largely overlap with the functions of social intelligence, making it possible to regard socio-emotional competence as one of its principal psychological components.

This issue becomes particularly relevant under conditions of martial law and prolonged social instability, when psychological resources that facilitate effective communication, the maintenance of social ties, mutual understanding, and cooperation acquire greater importance. The ability to understand other people's emotional experiences, empathize with them, regulate one's own emotional responses, and resolve interpersonal difficulties constructively becomes an important prerequisite for an individual's social adaptation and psychological well-being.

**Research problem.** Despite the substantial body of research on social intelligence and emotional competence, the relationship between socio-emotional competence and the psychological mechanisms underlying the development of social intelligence remains insufficiently explored. Particular attention should be paid to the role of the individual components of socio-emotional competence - empathy, emotional self-regulation, social skills, and emotional awareness - in enabling an individual's capacity to understand and predict social behavior effectively.

In this context, it is important to investigate socio-emotional competence as a psychological component of an individual's social intelligence. Such research can deepen scientific understanding of the psychological mechanisms of social cognition and interpersonal interaction and delineate prospects for developing programs aimed at fostering social competence and social intelligence in educational and professional settings.

The problem of social intelligence occupies an important place in contemporary psychological science because it concerns the study of the mechanisms of social cognition, interpersonal interaction, and an individual's effective functioning in the social environment [9]. As social relations become more complex, communication assumes a greater role, and rapid adaptation to social change becomes increasingly necessary, research into the psychological components that enable successful understanding of others and prediction of their behavior acquires particular importance.

The concept of social intelligence was first introduced by the American psychologist E. Thorndike, who defined it as the ability to understand people and act wisely in human relations [21]. Unlike academic intelligence, social intelligence characterizes an individual's effectiveness in processes of social interaction, enabling them to navigate other people's

behavior effectively, consider the social context of a situation, and build productive interpersonal relationships.

The further development of the concept of social intelligence is associated with the work of J. Guilford and his colleagues, who regarded social intelligence as a distinct system of intellectual abilities focused on processing social information [18]. Within the structure-of-intellect model, social intelligence was defined in terms of the ability to understand human behavior, interpret social situations, predict the consequences of interpersonal interaction, and respond appropriately to social stimuli. This approach laid the foundation for developing psychodiagnostic methods to assess social intelligence and for subsequently investigating its psychological structure. In D. Goleman's conception, social intelligence is regarded as an important prerequisite for an individual's effective functioning within the system of social relations. The researcher emphasizes that high-quality interpersonal relationships are among the decisive factors in an individual's mental well-being, while social intelligence provides the psychological foundation for their formation. Social intelligence encompasses a set of abilities and skills that facilitate effective communication and interaction with others. Its structure includes the ability to understand other people's emotional states and intentions, demonstrate empathy, build constructive interpersonal relationships, regulate one's own behavior in accordance with the social context, and influence the course of social interaction [17].

Contemporary Ukrainian researchers [1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10] regard social intelligence as a multicomponent psychological construct comprising cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components. The cognitive component enables an understanding of other people's motives, intentions, and behavioral characteristics; the emotional component relates to the ability to recognize and interpret the emotional states of interlocutors; and the behavioral component manifests in the ability to interact effectively with others, regulate one's own behavior, and adapt to the demands of the social environment. Thus, social intelligence is an important mechanism of an individual's social adaptation and contributes to successful interpersonal interaction.

An analysis of contemporary scientific approaches indicates that social intelligence is not limited to the cognitive processes of social cognition. The effectiveness of understanding others depends substantially on an individual's ability to recognize and regulate their own emotions, consider the emotional states of interlocutors, and build constructive interactions. Therefore, contemporary research is devoting increasing attention to socio-emotional competence as an important psychological component of social intelligence.

One promising direction in contemporary research is the study of socio-emotional competence as a psychological foundation of social intelligence. The concept of socio-emotional competence emerged at the intersection of research on emotional intelligence, social competence, and emotional regulation. In the scientific literature, it is defined as an individual's integrative ability to recognize their own emotions, understand other people's emotional experiences, regulate emotional states, and use emotional information to build effective social interaction [13, 14].

Significant contributions to the development of this field were made by P. Salovey [19] and J. Mayer, who regarded emotional intelligence as a system of abilities related to the perception, understanding, and management of emotions. These ideas were further developed in the work of D. Goleman [17], who emphasized the importance of emotional and social skills for an individual's successful functioning in the social environment. According to his approach, social competence includes empathy, social sensitivity, self-regulation, and interpersonal interaction skills that ensure effective social behavior. According to R. Bar-On, socio-emotional intelligence is a complex system of interrelated social and emotional competencies, skills, and personal resources that enable an individual to recognize, understand, and regulate their own emotions, perceive others appropriately, adapt to changing environmental conditions, and effectively solve personal and interpersonal problems. Together, these characteristics facilitate successful coping with everyday difficulties, demands, and social challenges [16].

In contemporary research, social intelligence is viewed not only as a cognitive ability to understand social reality but also as a psychological foundation for effective interpersonal interaction. L. Liakhovets defines it as a complex integrative construct that enables an understanding of oneself and others, the analysis of interpersonal relationships, and the prediction of how social situations will develop, taking into account the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects of interaction [7]. Ya. Kaplunenko adopts a similar position, emphasizing that social intelligence is an important factor in social adaptation and encompasses the ability to understand people's behavior, regulate emotions, establish communication, and interact effectively in various social contexts [2]. This interpretation makes it possible to regard socio-emotional competence as an important component of social intelligence because it enables the practical implementation of skills related to understanding, emotional regulation, and interpersonal interaction.

Empathy occupies a special place in the structure of socio-emotional competence. It enables an individual to understand other people's emotional states, empathize with them, and

take their feelings into account during interpersonal interaction. Empathy is one of the key mechanisms of social cognition and lays the foundation for forming trusting and constructive interpersonal relationships. Researchers emphasize that a high level of empathy is associated with a better understanding of social situations, more effective communication, and a higher level of social adaptability [11].

Emotional self-regulation is another important component of socio-emotional competence, enabling an individual to control their own emotional responses in accordance with situational demands. Effective self-regulation helps reduce conflict in interpersonal relationships, improves the quality of communication, and creates conditions for more successful social functioning. In addition, it supports adaptive responses to stressful situations and contributes to maintaining an individual's psychological well-being.

An analysis of scientific sources [11, 12, 13] supports the conclusion that socio-emotional competence and social intelligence share common psychological mechanisms and overlap substantially in content. Awareness and understanding of emotions, empathy, self-regulation, social skills, and the ability to interpret other people's behavior provide the psychological foundation for the development of social intelligence. In this regard, socio-emotional competence should be regarded as one of the principal psychological determinants of an individual's social intelligence, shaping the effectiveness of social cognition, interpersonal interaction, and social adaptation.

***The aim of the study*** is to theoretically substantiate and empirically investigate socio-emotional competence as a psychological component of an individual's social intelligence.

***The research hypothesis*** is that socio-emotional competence is one of the key psychological components of social intelligence and that its structural components have statistically significant relationships with individual aspects of social cognition and interpersonal interaction.

***Research methods and instruments.*** Social intelligence was assessed using the Guilford Social Intelligence Test, while the socio-emotional components of social intelligence were assessed using A. Shashenkova's "Socio-Emotional Competence" Questionnaire [12], which makes it possible to evaluate an individual's level of emotional awareness, empathy, emotional self-regulation, and social skills. Mathematical and statistical data processing was performed using GNU PSPP 2.1.1.

The study involved 76 participants aged 18 to 23 years. The study was conducted online on the basis of voluntary participation and adherence to the principles of confidentiality.

Table 1 presents the significant correlation coefficients between social intelligence and socio-emotional competence indicators

*Table 1*

**Significant Correlation Coefficients between Social Intelligence and Socio-Emotional Competence Indicators**

| Indicators of socio-emotional competence | Social intelligence indicators |       |       |       |       |
|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|                                          | SI1                            | SI2   | SI3   | SI4   | CS    |
|                                          | SEK                            |       |       |       |       |
| SEK                                      | -358**                         |       | -261* |       | -286* |
| SA                                       |                                | 313** |       | 336** |       |
| SM                                       | 235*                           |       |       | 311** | 294*  |
| SEA                                      | 411**                          | 294*  | 277*  |       |       |
| SoM                                      | 287*                           | 277*  | 344** | 288*  | 229*  |
| SE                                       | 317**                          | 379** |       | 431** | 307** |
| OSEC                                     |                                | 277*  |       |       |       |

Notes. 1) Here and below, leading zeros and decimal points are omitted in the table; 2) the symbol "\*\*\*" denotes a correlation significant at the 0.01 level ( $p \leq 0.01$ ), and the symbol "\*\*" denotes a correlation significant at the 0.05 level ( $p \leq 0.05$ ). Abbreviations for the social intelligence subtest indicators: SI1 – the ability to understand the logic underlying the development of situations and predict the consequences of actions; SI2 – understanding verbal/nonverbal reactions in interpersonal relationships; SI3 – the ability to recognize the hidden meaning of statements; SI4 – the ability to understand people's states, intentions, and motives from their nonverbal reactions; CS – composite score, the general ability to understand human behavior. Abbreviations for socio-emotional competence indicators: OSEC – overall socio-emotional competence; SEK – socio-emotional knowledge; SA – self-awareness; SM – self-management; SEA – socio-emotional awareness; SoM – social management; SE – self-efficacy.

The results of the correlation analysis indicate numerous statistically significant associations between socio-emotional competence and social intelligence indicators, supporting the assumption that socio-emotional characteristics play an important role in social cognition.

The largest number of significant associations was found for the indicators of socio-emotional awareness, social management, and self-efficacy, allowing them to be regarded as the principal psychological components of social intelligence.

Thus, the "socio-emotional awareness" indicator was positively associated with the "ability to understand the logic underlying the development of social situations" ( $r=0.411$ ;  $p\leq 0.01$ ), "understanding verbal and nonverbal reactions in interpersonal interaction" ( $r=0.294$ ;  $p\leq 0.05$ ), and the "ability to recognize the hidden meaning of statements" ( $r=0.277$ ;  $p\leq 0.05$ ). This indicates that the ability to understand other people's emotions and navigate the social context is an important prerequisite for effective social cognition.

Numerous positive associations were also found between the "social management" indicator and all social intelligence indicators. The strongest association was found with the "ability to recognize the hidden meaning of statements" ( $r=0.344$ ;  $p\leq 0.01$ ). These findings suggest that the ability to build interpersonal relationships, interact effectively with others, and adapt one's behavior to situational demands contributes to a more successful understanding of social information.

The findings regarding "self-efficacy" are of particular interest. Positive correlations were found between the "self-efficacy" indicator and the "ability to predict the development of social situations" ( $r=0.317$ ;  $p\leq 0.01$ ), "understanding interpersonal reactions" ( $r=0.379$ ;  $p\leq 0.01$ ), "interpretation of nonverbal behavior" ( $r=0.431$ ;  $p\leq 0.01$ ), and the "overall social intelligence indicator" ( $r=0.307$ ;  $p\leq 0.01$ ). Thus, confidence in one's own capabilities and readiness for active social interaction are important resources for successful social functioning.

The "self-awareness" indicators also showed positive associations with "understanding interpersonal reactions" ( $r=0.313$ ;  $p\leq 0.01$ ) and the "ability to interpret other people's nonverbal behavior" ( $r=0.336$ ;  $p\leq 0.01$ ). This may indicate that a deeper understanding of one's own experiences and internal states contributes to a more accurate understanding of other people's psychological world.

The "self-management" indicator was positively correlated with the "ability to predict the consequences of behavior" ( $r=0.235$ ;  $p\leq 0.05$ ), "understanding other people's nonverbal expressions" ( $r=0.311$ ;  $p\leq 0.01$ ), and the "overall level of social intelligence" ( $r=0.294$ ;  $p\leq 0.05$ ). This confirms the importance of emotional self-regulation as one of the mechanisms of effective interpersonal interaction.

At the same time, negative associations were found between the "socio-emotional knowledge" indicator and certain social intelligence indicators. Specifically, "socio-emotional

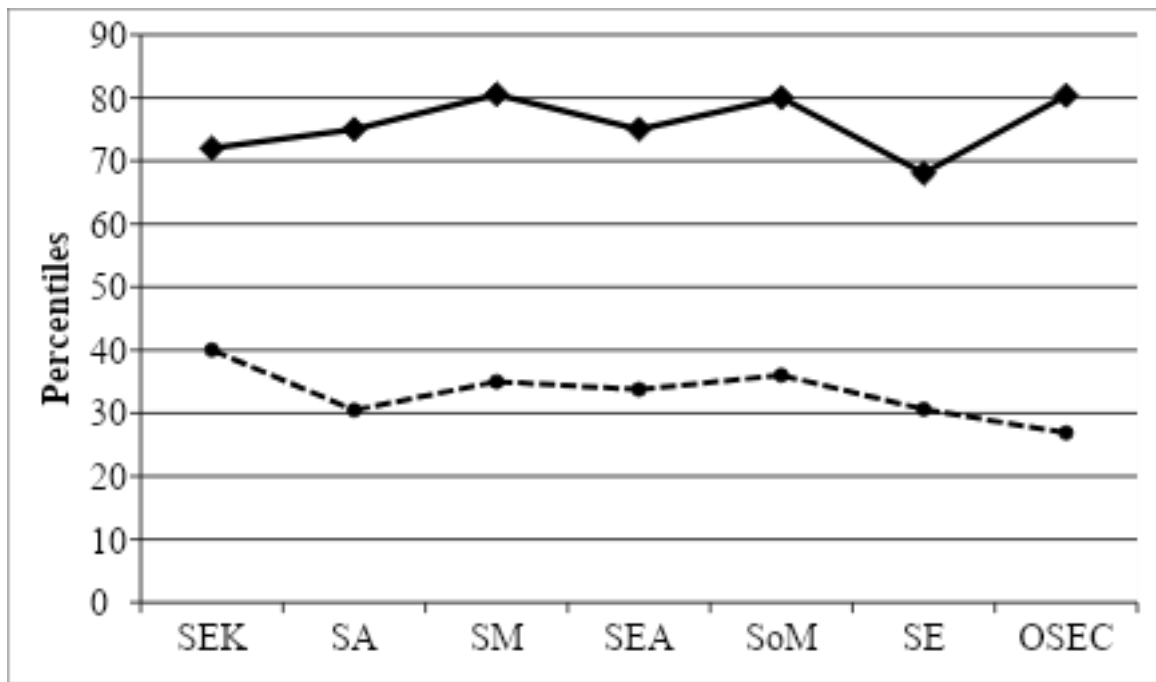
knowledge" was negatively correlated with the "ability to predict the development of social situations" ( $r=-0.358$ ;  $p\leq 0.01$ ), the "ability to recognize the hidden meaning of statements" ( $r=-0.261$ ;  $p\leq 0.05$ ), and the "overall social intelligence indicator" ( $r=-0.286$ ;  $p\leq 0.05$ ). These findings may indicate that socio-emotional knowledge is not always directly transformed into the ability to solve social-perceptual tasks effectively. Skills in the practical application of socio-emotional knowledge in real-life interpersonal interactions are likely to be more important for the successful functioning of social intelligence.

Thus, the findings indicate that the psychological components of social intelligence are not so much knowledge about social interaction as well-developed skills in socio-emotional awareness, social management, self-efficacy, self-regulation, and self-awareness. This makes it possible to regard socio-emotional competence as an important resource for the development of an individual's social intelligence, enabling successful understanding of others, prediction of social situations, and effective interpersonal interaction.

The analysis of the theoretical and empirical literature and the results obtained through correlation analysis suggest that socio-emotional competence may manifest differently in individuals with different levels of social intelligence. To examine this, raw scores were converted into percentiles, and the method of contrasting groups was applied. Based on percentile scores, the total sample ( $n=76$ ) was divided into two groups: participants with high scores on the overall social intelligence indicator (SI<sub>max</sub>,  $n=18$ ) and participants with low scores on the overall social intelligence indicator (SI<sub>min</sub>,  $n=14$ ).

Figure 1 presents the profiles of socio-emotional competence indicators in groups of individuals with different levels of social intelligence. Socio-emotional competence indicators are plotted on the X-axis, and their percentile values on the Y-axis. The value of each indicator is the arithmetic mean of that indicator for all members of each group, calculated separately. The range from 0 to 25 (the first quartile of the distribution, Q1) is considered the range of low indicator values; from 25 to 50, the range of weakly expressed values (the second quartile of the distribution, Q2); from 50 to 75, the range of sufficiently expressed values (the third quartile of the distribution, Q3); and from 75 to 100, the range of highly expressed indicator values (the fourth quartile of the distribution, Q4). The midline of the series passes through the 50th percentile.

The next step of the study was to identify the specific features of individual manifestations of socio-emotional competence in the provisionally defined groups with different levels of social intelligence (see Fig. 1).



Notes. Abbreviations: OSEC – overall socio-emotional competence; SEK – Socio-Emotional Knowledge scale; SA – Self-Awareness scale; SM – Self-Management scale; SEA – Socio-Emotional Awareness scale; SoM – Social Management scale; SE – Self-Efficacy scale.

Individuals with *a high level* of social intelligence are characterized by high scores across all components of socio-emotional competence. The most pronounced indicators in their profiles are socio-emotional knowledge, self-management, social management, and overall socio-emotional competence.

Such respondents navigate social situations effectively, possess knowledge of the patterns governing interpersonal interaction, and are able to take account of the emotional behavior of others. They demonstrate a well-developed capacity to understand the social context of communication, interpret verbal and nonverbal cues, and predict potential outcomes of interpersonal interaction. They exhibit a well-developed capacity for reflection and can analyze their own experiences, motives, and behavior. In addition, a high level of self-management indicates effective control over emotional responses, the ability to regulate one's behavior in accordance with situational demands, and the capacity to maintain emotional stability even under challenging interactional conditions. An important characteristic of this group is a high level of social management, manifested in the ability to build constructive relationships, cooperate effectively with others, consider the interlocutor's interests, and maintain productive communication. They adapt more readily to new social

conditions, integrate more successfully into diverse social groups, and are more likely to initiate interaction. Thus, a high level of social intelligence is associated with well-developed skills in emotional self-regulation, social interaction, reflection, and social adaptation, creating favorable conditions for effective personal functioning in interpersonal contexts.

Individuals with **a low level** of social intelligence are characterized by lower scores across all components of socio-emotional competence. Particularly pronounced differences are observed in self-awareness, self-efficacy, and overall socio-emotional competence.

Members of this group have less-developed knowledge of the specific features of social interaction and human emotional functioning. They experience greater difficulty understanding other people's behavioral motives, interpreting nonverbal cues, and predicting how interpersonal situations will develop. A lower level of self-awareness may indicate limited reflectivity and difficulty recognizing one's own emotional states and the causes of one's own behavior. They demonstrate a reduced ability to control emotional responses and behavioral manifestations in social situations. Such individuals may experience difficulties with social adaptation, uncertainty in interpersonal interaction, and insufficient effectiveness in using social resources. They are less flexible in communication and have difficulty establishing and maintaining constructive relationships and resolving interpersonal problems. They tend to lack confidence in their own abilities, make limited use of personal resources, and show less readiness for active social self-actualization. Thus, respondents in the low social intelligence group are characterized by less-developed skills in social cognition, emotional self-regulation, and interpersonal interaction, which may hinder social adaptation and effective personal functioning in the social environment.

Thus, the findings allow socio-emotional competence to be regarded as an important psychological component of an individual's social intelligence, ensuring the effectiveness of social cognition and interpersonal interaction.

**Conclusions.** The theoretical analysis of scientific approaches demonstrated that social intelligence is a complex, multicomponent construct that integrates the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral mechanisms of social cognition and interpersonal interaction.

Statistically significant relationships at the 1% and 5% significance levels were established between indicators of social intelligence and socio-emotional competence. The strongest associations involving social intelligence indicators were found with socio-emotional awareness, social management, and self-efficacy.

It was established that individuals with a high level of social intelligence demonstrate statistically higher levels of socio-emotional competence, particularly on the self-awareness,

self-management, social management, and self-efficacy scales. This indicates that effective social cognition is combined with an individual's ability to recognize their own emotional experiences, regulate emotional responses, interact constructively with others, and confidently realize their own potential in interpersonal interaction.

Thus, the findings allow socio-emotional competence to be regarded as an important psychological component of an individual's social intelligence, ensuring the effectiveness of social cognition, interpersonal interaction, and social adaptation.

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