

# Emotional Intelligence as an Antecedent of Relational Social Capital

# İlişkisel Sosyal Sermayenin Öncülü Olarak Duygusal Zekâ

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## Abstract

This research investigates the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and relational social capital. EI is regarded as a social competence which facilitates and promotes the quality of interpersonal and social relationships, and relational social capital is a well-known concept representing those individual qualities and resources such as trust, identification, and obligation or commitment which shape high-quality interpersonal relationships. However, no study to date has empirically examined how relational social capital may be predicted by EI as a component of individuals' social competence. Our main arguments are that the four main dimensions of EI including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management would increase the level of relational social capital among employees. Our structural equation modeling analysis on survey data across 375 employees of 64 randomly selected branches of an Iranian bank shows that although self-management and relationship management dimensions are significantly related to relational social capital, self-awareness and social awareness are not significantly related to this concept.

**Keywords:** Emotional intelligence, relational social capital, self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship management

## Özet

Bu çalışma duygusal zekâ (DZ) ve ilişkisel sosyal sermaye arasındaki ilişkileri incelemektedir. DZ, kişilerarası ve sosyal ilişkilerin kalitesini kolaylaştıran ve des-

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tekleyen bir sosyal yetkinlik olarak tanımlanırken, ilişkisel sosyal sermaye de yüksek-kaliteli kişilerarası ilişkileri şekillendiren güven, özdeşleşme ve yükümlülük veya bağlılık gibi bireysel nitelik ve olanakları ifade eden iyi bilinen bir kavramdır. Bununla birlikte, bugüne kadar hiçbir çalışma, ilişkisel sosyal sermayenin bireylerin sosyal yetkinliğinin bir bileşeni olarak duygusal zekâ tarafından nasıl tahmin etkilenebileceğini görgül olarak incelememiştir. Temel iddiamız; DZ'nın dört ana boyutu olan öz-farkındalık, öz-yönetim, sosyal farkındalık ve ilişki yönetiminin çalışanlar arasında ilişkisel sosyal sermaye düzeyini artıracaktır. Bir İran bankasının rastgele seçilen 64 şubesinin 375 çalışanıyla yapılan anket verilerine ilişkin yapısal eşitlik modelleme analizimiz, öz-yönetim ve ilişki yönetimi boyutlarının ilişkisel sosyal sermaye ile önemli ölçüde ilişkili olmasına rağmen, öz farkındalık ve sosyal farkındalığın bu kavramla ilişkisinin anlamlı düzeyde olmadığını göstermektedir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Duygusal zekâ, ilişkisel sosyal sermaye, öz-farkındalık, öz-yönetim, sosyal farkındalık, ilişki yönetimi

## Introduction

EI refers to the ability of individuals to accurately identify, understand, appraise, and discriminate between positive and negative emotions; and regulate them in the self and others (Mayer et al., 2000, Salovey & Mayer, 1990). These abilities on which EI is constructed make EI strongly associated with individuals' capacities to form and manage interpersonal relationships. Individuals with higher degrees of EI are argued to be able to develop high-quality interpersonal relationships since their high EI enables them to deal more effectively with complicated interpersonal situations (Lopes et al., 2004; Momm et al., 2015; Rode et al., 2017). On these grounds, several empirical studies have shown that EI improves the quality of and satisfaction with interpersonal and social relationships (e.g., Schutte et al., 2001; Lopes et al., 2003; Morrison, 2008).

The interpersonal relationships within collectives and the degree of their quality are mainly represented by the relational dimension of the social capital concept (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Social capital refers to the “the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit” (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998: 243), and relational social capital which is one of the three main dimensions of social capital (i.e., structural, relational, cognitive) mainly concerns the nature and quality of interpersonal relationships and includes such components as trust, sense of reciprocity and community, and identification with as well as acceptance of the norms of the collective (e.g.,

group, team, organization, etc.) by its members (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Considering the critical role of EI in promoting the ability of individuals in effectively managing their interpersonal relationships (Lopes et al., 2004; Momm et al., 2015; Schutte et al., 2001; Austin et al., 2004; Austin et al., 2005; Austin et al., 2007; Zeidner & Olinck-Shemesh, 2010), as well as the strong emphasis of relational social capital on those characteristics that form these high-quality interpersonal relationships, these two constructs appear to be related. Nevertheless, no study to date has examined if and how EI may promote the relational aspects of an organization's social capital, that is, relational social capital. Aiming to fill this gap, this study investigates this research question: Does EI promote the relational social capital within organizations?

This research provides a valuable contribution to the literature on the impact of EI on interpersonal relationships (Lopes et al., 2003; Lopes et al. 2004; Schutte et al., 2001) by showing how the major dimensions of this construct including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management (Boyatzis & Goleman, 2002) are related to the relational social capital which emphasizes on the interpersonal aspect of social capital and qualities required to keep the quality of these relationships high. We also contribute to the literature on the antecedents of relational social capital. The research on relational social capital has mainly investigated this construct as an antecedent of individual and organizational outcomes such as innovativeness and performance (e.g., Karahanna & Preston, 2013; Steinmo & Rasmussen, 2018; Muniady et al., 2015; Li & Sheu, 2014; Ernstmann et al., 2009), while research on the antecedents of this construct is scarce, and its antecedents are yet to be explored (Preston et al., 2017).

The contribution of this research to the literature is important given that the relationships that individuals build as members of teams, groups, or organizations and the degree of the relational social capital these relationships encompass are argued to be strongly founded on emotional connections (Druskat & Wolff, 2001; Clopton, 2011). Since EI includes the individuals' abilities to regulate one's own and others' emotions through empathy, helping, and building bonds (Goleman et al., 2013), it should be related to those individual characteristics that promote high-quality social relationships or relational social capital. The importance of EI in the creation of relational social capital and high-quality interpersonal relationships is to the extent that Salovy and Mayer (1990) and Crowne (2009) consider EI to be a subset of social intelligence which refers to the ability to know the self

and others, and build strong interpersonal relationships in social environments based on this knowledge. Identification of EI as a subset of social intelligence could attest to its remarkable role in the formation of relational social capital. In spite of such a strong interconnection between the two concepts, no study to date has examined the degree and nature of the relationship between the two concepts, which makes exploration of this relationship an important empirical contribution.

## Theory and Hypotheses

The term social capital is an umbrella concept, on the definitions of which there has been little consensus (Wu, 2008). The definitions of this construct mainly vary in assuming this construct as a property of three different levels of analysis including collective, relationships or ties, and individual levels. Accordingly, Adler and Kwon (2002) divide the definitions of this construct under three categories. The first category regards social capital as a resource embedded in the collective, which ties its actors to one another (e.g., Baker, 1990). The second category of definitions, which are termed bonding views, focus on the internal characteristics of the social actors that promote the cohesiveness of the collective and facilitate the pursuit of collective goals (e.g., Coleman, 1990). The third category of definitions assumes social capital as a property owned by individuals *or* their collectives. For instance, Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998: 243) define social capital as “the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit”. However, in spite of the heterogeneity of views on the definitions of social capital, there is a strong consensus on the multidimensionality of this construct. The three dimensions identified by Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) including structural, cognitive, and relational social capital are the most well-known ones. The *structural* dimension is defined as the relationships, networks, associations, and institutions that link together individuals, groups, and organizations; *cognitive* social capital refers to the commonality of values, beliefs, and norms among individuals/groups/organizations within a social network; and *relational* social capital refers to the quality of relationships (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Bolino et al., 2002; Nyqvist et al., 2014).

The relational dimension emphasizes the nature and quality of interpersonal and social relationships (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Bolino et al., 2002). Re-

lational social capital focuses on those individual characteristics that improve the quality of the interpersonal or social relationships including trust, sense of reciprocity, sense of community, identification with the collective, and intrinsic obligation to accept the norms of the collective (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) assume these four aspects of relational social capital to exist in individuals that promote cooperation and their quality of relationships with other members of the collective. For instance, trust increases receptivity to the exchange of intellectual capital; obligation, which refers to individuals' sense of a duty to undertake responsibilities, increases the level of cooperation and individuals' concern for collective rather than individual outcomes, and individuals' identification with the collective increases motivation to exchange knowledge (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Thus, the nature of the relational social capital is relatively more in accordance with those definitions that highlight the role of individual characteristics as resources in promoting the cohesiveness of collectives (e.g., Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). On these grounds, we argue that EI which is founded on the ability of individuals to control and manage one's own and others' emotions should be directly related to relational social capital which encompasses those individual resources that shape high-quality interpersonal relationships.

EI was first identified by Thorndike in the 1920s, and Salovey and Mayer (1990) define it as a subset of social intelligence that enables individuals to monitor others' feelings and emotions, differentiate among them, and use this information to guide their own emotions and behaviors. In its general sense, EI refers to individuals' ability to express their feelings and emotions in a natural way, and correctly perceive and understand those of others around them (Boyatzis & Goleman, 2002). EI includes intra and interpersonal abilities that can facilitate the management of emotions, affects, and feelings of self and interactions with others. The most frequently used conceptualization of EI is the emotional competency inventory (ECI) by Boyatzis and Goleman (2002), which includes four main dimensions as main emotional competencies. These competencies include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. EI is not only a cognitive but also a social concept. The self-awareness and self-management dimensions are argued to fall within the category of intrapersonal intelligence, and the social awareness and relationship management dimensions fit within the category of interpersonal intelligence competencies (Goleman, 2001; Boyatzis & Goleman, 2002). We argue that these dimensions

of EI should be related to relational social capital. We theorize these relationships in the following sub-sections.

Although our measure of EI includes another dimension called “motivation”, we do not theorize a relationship between the motivation dimension of EI and relational social capital since such a relationship does not appear to be theoretically feasible. The motivation dimension of emotional intelligence refers to individuals’ interest in and motivation to deal with their emotional states and feelings (Weisinger, 2006). For instance, of the items measuring motivation in the questionnaire were, “I try to motivate myself to do things that I do not like”, or “after a failure, I can recover to my normal emotional state fast”. The items mostly deal with the individual or intrapersonal aspect of emotional intelligence without any significant implications for social relationships. Since the items mainly refer to one’s emotions in relation to one’s responsibilities, success and failures, and not emotions in relation to self and others, it cannot be significantly related to the relational dimension of social capital.

### ***Self-awareness***

Self-awareness refers to competencies in the awareness of emotions of self, accurate self-assessment, and self-confidence (Lillis & Tian, 2009). Ciarrochi and Mayer (2013: 3) regard it as the ability to “perceive emotions in oneself and others, as well as in other stimuli, including objects, art, stories, and music”. It refers to the consciousness of internal states, preferences, and intuitions; a realistic assessment of self-ability; identification and recognition of one’s own emotions and sources of feelings; and, more importantly, considering the implications and consequences of expressing and showing one’s own emotions (Goleman, 2001; Morley et al., 2010). The ability to consider the implications of expressing one’s own emotions could restrict the expression of those emotions that one may consider having negative consequences for their interpersonal relationships (Harris, 1997; Cook, 1999; Eckroth-Bucher, 2010). For instance, in a study of the causes and consequences of limited self-awareness, Ames and Wazlawek (2014) show that illusions or limited understandings of self and how others would perceive the expression of such behaviors as assertiveness would influence the degree of the accuracy of mutual understandings of such behaviors, which could, in turn, reduce the level of trust and relational social capital. Wells (2015: 2) states that “across different theoretical perspectives, there is an explicit or implicit recogni-

tion that the ability to understand one's own emotional experience is a necessary prerequisite for effective social interactions." Rowe (1999) also empirically shows that self-awareness of nurses improves nurse-nurse and nurse-client interactions since nurses' self-awareness helps them create an environment of a therapeutic environment rich in caring and healing.

These empirical findings and arguments indicate that understanding one's own emotions, that is, self-awareness is one of the critical factors for the creation of relational social capital since self-awareness enables individuals to understand the positive and negative consequences of the expression of their emotions. One with high self-awareness is capable of predicting how the expression of one's emotions or internal states will be perceived by others. This awareness should lead to the expression of those emotions that promote mutual understanding and reduce interpersonal conflicts, as well as avoiding the expression of those negative emotions that are perceived to damage the relationships. Thus, self-awareness could help individuals to acquire and understand their emotional cues more efficiently and know how they should behave and express them, which should, in turn, lead to the expression of those emotions that have positive implications for interpersonal relationships. Thus, self-awareness could play a significant role in promoting relational social capital within organizations. We hypothesize that:

*Hypothesis 1: Self-awareness is positively related to relational social capital.*

### ***Self-management***

Self-management is basically defined as one's effective management of one's emotions (Giganc, 2015). According to Goleman et al. (2013), it is the ability to control one's own emotions and act in reliable and adaptable ways with honesty and integrity. According to Goleman et al. (2001: 49), leaders with high self-management skills "don't let their occasional bad moods seize the day; they use self-management to leave it outside the office or explain its source to people in a reasonable manner, so they know where it is coming from and how long it may last." Goleman et al. (2013) describe this dimension of EI as the ability of individuals at managing internal impulses, disruptive emotions, as well as keeping them in check, and regulating them for the aim of avoiding relational conflicts and disruptions. Individuals with high self-management abilities are also argued to take responsibility for their performance, maintain standards of integrity and

honesty, and be flexible in managing change (Goleman, 1998). Self-management includes the sub-dimensions including trustworthiness, emotional self-control, conscientiousness, adaptability, achievement orientation, initiative, and optimism (Boyatzis & Goleman, 2002).

Considering the abilities that create the self-management dimension of EI, it is argued and empirically shown that higher degrees of self-management in individuals should promote socially appropriate behaviors, and decrease socially undesirable behaviors and behavioral approaches. For instance, Giorgi et al. (2014) argue that individuals with higher degrees of self-management are more likely to treat their customers with organized and relaxed approaches. Siu (2009) also empirically shows that individuals with higher degrees of self-management are relatively less likely to express problem behaviors including physical and verbal aggression, anger, and hostility. Finally, Chan (2003) shows that the self-management dimension (as well as the other three dimensions of EI) predict the use of socially desirable strategies of social coping including valuing peer acceptance and involvement in social activities with peers.

Accordingly, we argue that the self-management dimension of EI which includes competencies in managing the internal emotions, feelings, and impulses predicts the expression of behaviors that are socially desirable and avoidance of those behaviors (e.g., aggression, anger) that could create problems in interpersonal and social relationships. Thus, self-management ability as a dimension of EI should significantly predict relational social capital in organizations since it increases the employees' ability in managing and regulating their emotions and behaviors in a way that will have the least negative and most positive relational or interpersonal consequences. The socially appropriate behaviors emanating from self-management increase the likelihood that individuals behave in accordance with the expectations of others such as peers, coworkers, etc. as well (Goleman, 1998). This could be one of the other major components of self-management that would promote such qualities as trust, an obligation for cooperation, and identification with others in the collective, which are the critical components of relational social capital. To summarize, self-management leads to the expression of behaviors that are socially desirable and would promote the degree of relational social capital in work environments. We hypothesize that:

*Hypothesis 2: Self-management is positively related to relational social capital.*

### *Social Awareness*

While self-awareness and self-management dimensions of EI draw the focus of attention on self, social awareness directs the focus of attention toward others. Social awareness refers to the ability to understand and perceive the emotions, needs, feelings, and internal states of others, and individuals with higher degrees of social awareness are more capable of correctly reading others' nonverbal cues as well as understanding their internal states, feelings, and emotions (Goleman, 1998; Boyatzis & Goleman, 2002; Boyatzis & Boyatzis, 2008). This dimension includes three main sub-dimensions of empathy, organizational awareness, and service orientation (Boyatzis & Goleman, 2002). Empathy refers to one's awareness of others' feelings, needs, and concerns; and what these feelings, needs, and concerns mean and convey (Boyatzis & Boyatzis, 2008; Blickle et al., 2015; Goleman et al., 2013). Organizational awareness refers to a political ability to perceive and understand unspoken communications, and political power relationships in groups (Goleman, 2001). Service orientation is "the ability to identify others' unstated needs and concerns while focusing one's efforts on others" (Morley et al., 2010: 884). We argue that such an ability to correctly understand others' internal states and emotions enhances the social competence of individuals, which refers to individuals' competence in maintaining close relationships and adapting to their social environments (Orpinas, 2010).

The competencies inherent in social awareness enable individuals to adapt themselves to the requirements of their social environment and behave in accordance with their perceptions of the emotional states and feelings of others; thus, they do not behave in ways that create negative emotional states in others, but behaviors induced by social awareness are more likely to promote positive and reduce the negative emotions and feelings in others (Emmerling & Goleman, 2003). In this regard, Deliç et al. (2011) empirically show that social awareness as a dimension of EI reduces narcissism of individuals, which refers to actions and reactions of individuals regardless of the demands of the social environment, but mainly based on one's own specific manner (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). In another study, Amudhadevi (2012) finds that social awareness improves the expressed emotion aspect of interpersonal relationships and reduces interpersonal conflicts. As additional proofs regarding the crucial role of social awareness in interpersonal relationships, Parker et al. (2020) find that social awareness and other dimensions of EI significantly increase satisfaction with interpersonal relationships, and Frye et al. (2006) show that social aware-

ness improves team processes including team maintenance and team task orientation.

We argue that social awareness should improve the relational social capital within organizations given that it increases the ability of individuals in improving the quality of their relationships with others based on the higher degrees of knowledge that they can obtain from the internal states and emotions of others. The empirical evidence we referred to strongly shows that social awareness increases the awareness of individuals regarding the demands of their social environment which is, in turn, obtained through the ability to correctly read and understand others' emotional cues, needs, and demands. Such an awareness and knowledge of the others that it yields increases the likelihood that individuals will act in accordance with the demands of the social environment and others (Boyatzis & Boyatzis, 2008), which should, in turn, promote their relational social capital. We hypothesize that:

*Hypothesis 3: Social awareness is positively related to relational social capital.*

### ***Relationship Management***

Relationship management which is regarded as the art of “handling other people’s emotions” (Morrison, 2008: 974) is another social dimension of EI that includes helping others develop, inspirational leadership, influence, communication, catalyzing change, conflict management, building bonds, and fostering collaboration and teamwork as its main aspects (Boyatzis & Goleman, 2002; Boyatzis, 2002; Morley et al., 2010). Individuals rating high in the relationship management dimension show stronger abilities in managing the emotions, feelings, and internal states of others (Boyatzis, 2002; Boyatzis & Boyatzis, 2008). Since relationship management directly concerns the ability of individuals in managing others’ feelings, emotions, and even behaviors and motivations, this construct has been regarded as one of the key capabilities of leaders (Blake & Mouton, 1964; Stogdill, 1974). Goleman (1998) regards this dimension of EI as a social skill which enables individuals to build mutual trust, esteem, and solidarity (Northouse, 2004). Thus, higher degrees of relationship management skills enable individuals to inspire others, build bonds with them, communicate with them effectively, influence them, and increase their trust and willingness for collective collaboration (Boyatzis, 2002; Boyatzis & Boyatzis, 2008; Goleman et al., 2013). Considering these potential outcomes, empirical studies show that relationship management

promotes such qualities as trust (Mishra, 2007), relationship quality (Smith, 1998), and reduced interpersonal conflicts (Morrison, 2008).

Considering the main aspects and outcomes of relationship management, we argue that this construct could predict relational social capital within organizations through multiple interrelated mechanisms. When individuals are capable of understanding and handling one another's emotions, and helping one another in handling and managing them through mentoring and coaching (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009), their emotional bonds and the degree to which they trust one another should increase (Mishra, 2007). The increased trust, which is a component of relational social capital, should, in turn, promote the degree to which individuals believe in, influence, and effectively communicate with one another (Holton, 1994; Engle & Nehrt, 2011). The higher degrees of trust, belief, effective communication, and influence which we theorize to be outcomes of relationship management are critical components of relational social capital (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Thus, we argue that relationship management which increases individuals' ability to manage the emotions of others can promote relational social capital through increasing such relational qualities as trust, influence, belief, collaboration, and cooperation. We hypothesize that:

*Hypothesis 4: Relationship management is positively related to relational social capital.*

## Method

### *Research Context*

This survey research was conducted within the branches of an Iranian bank. Iran is the 17<sup>th</sup> largest country in the world. The population of the country is 84.06 million people, of whom 75.5% live in urban and 24.5% live in rural areas.<sup>(1)</sup> According to the Global Sustainable Competitiveness Index, Iran ranks 66<sup>th</sup> among 135 countries in social capital.<sup>(2)</sup> Iran is recognized as a collectivist rather than an individualist nation, and it ranks high in other cultural dimensions including uncertainty avoidance and power distance, but low in long-term orientation (Hofstede, 1980).

(1) <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/iran-population/>

(2) <http://solability.com/the-global-sustainable-competitiveness-index/the-index/social-capital>

We believe that at least one socio-economic feature of the country makes it an appropriate context for this research. Iran is a country with a high ethnic and language diversity. Persians, Kurds, Mazandarani, Gilaks, Lurs, Tats, Balochs, Turkic-speaking peoples (Azerbaijani, Turkmen, Turkic tribal groups), and Arabs are of the main ethnicities spread across the country. Such a strong ethnic diversity makes Iranian organizations ethnically and linguistically diverse contexts. Our sample included 34% Persians, 28% Turkic Speaking peoples, 11% Kurds, 9% Mazandarani, 6% Gilaks, 6% Lurs, 3% Balochs, and 3% unrecognized. The strong diversity, whether it be ethnic, cultural, or gender, increases the importance of EI since it challenges the assumptions of individuals that others (e.g. coworkers, employees, etc.) share the same worldview and perspectives as they do; the diverse context promotes the challenge since in these contexts the same stimuli do not provoke same emotions (Lillis & Tian, 2009; Gardenswartz et al., 2010). The same applies to the concept of (relational) social capital, the importance of which increases with diversity (Adam et al., 2018). The fairly high degrees of ethnic diversity in Iranian organizations, including those we studied, make them interesting research contexts for the relationship between EI and relational social capital.

Additionally, the importance of interpersonal relationships increases in contexts where collectivism is high (Hofstede, 1980). In these contexts, individuals' definitions and identification of themselves are strongly based on the social context and relationships (Triandis, 2018). At the same time, the creation of trust and interpersonal bonds, which shape relational social capital and high-quality relationships, within individuals is more arduous in high uncertainty avoiding cultures since individuals do not easily take the risk of trusting others due to their higher degrees of uncertainty avoidance (Doney et al., 1998). Such a cultural context, in which collectivism and uncertainty avoidance are high, increases the value of those factors that facilitate trust and the creation of relational social capital. Thus, Iran as a country ranked high both in collectivism and uncertainty avoidance is a context where relational social capital should be critical for individual and collective performance due to the collectivist nature of its cultural context, while high uncertainty avoidance makes the formation of relational social capital difficult. This makes the context of Iranian organizations an interesting one to study the antecedents of relational social capital.

### ***Sample Information and Sampling Procedure***

The population of this research includes all the employees of the branches of an Iranian bank across the country ( $N = 10,537$ ). We used a stratified sampling method to get the data on employees' EI and relational social capital. Questionnaires were sent to the branches of the bank across the country. The branches were randomly selected from the groups of branches categorized in four groups corresponding to the north, south, west, and east of Iran. We chose stratified sampling mainly because our goal was to include sufficient subsamples from all parts of the country and find if there were significant differences across the four main regions or not. According to Sekaran (2006), the stratified sampling method can best serve this goal. However, we could not find any significant differences across the groups; therefore, we did not include this part of the analysis in our report. The number of the randomly selected branches added up to 64 in total. The questionnaires were sent to these branches through email, printed at the branches, completed by the participants, and mailed back to the central office in Tehran.

We received 452 questionnaires, out of which 376 were coded and analyzed. The demographic information of the participants included their age (Mean [ $m$ ] = 38 and Standard Deviation [ $SD$ ] = 3.0), gender (69.1% male and 30.09% female), years of work experience ( $m = 12$ ;  $SD = 3$ ), education level (77% Bachelor, 20.3% Masters, and 2.7% High School Diploma Degrees), and marital status (77% married and 23% single). To determine the appropriate sample size, we used Morgan's table (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). The total number of employees was 10,537. According to Morgan's table, a sample of 376 is appropriate and sufficiently representative of this population.

To avoid common method variance, we shared the questionnaires of EI and relational social capital with the employees at separate times. We specified a minimum of four days of time interval for each questionnaire to be filled. We further used Harman's single factor test to detect common method variance (Podaskoff et al., 2003). This test includes an unrotated factor analysis on all the variables which reveals the presence of common method variance if a single factor emerges or one general factor explains a great deal of the variance in the dependent variable (Podaskoff et al., 2003). The results of Harman's single factor test revealed 6 factors which equal the number of factors detected in our confirmatory factor analyses (five factors of EI and 1 factor of relational social capital). Thus, common method variance is not a serious threat to our findings.

### ***Instruments***

EI was measured with Weisinger's (2006) questionnaire of EI, which he designed for use in work environments. The questionnaire consists of 25 items measuring five main competencies including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship management/social skills, and motivation. The questionnaire had already been translated into Persian and used in domestic research. However, we retranslated the scale into English and back-translated into Persian, and compared the two scales to find inconsistencies. Within the translation and back-translation process, some conceptual misunderstandings of the translators were observed, all of which were subsequently worked out. Each of the five dimensions was measured with five items. "I usually recognize if I have stress" (self-awareness), "I rarely fly off the handle at other people" (self-management), "I am always able to see the things from other people's viewpoints" (social awareness), "I am good at reconciling differences with other people" (relationship management), and "I am able to always motivate myself to do difficult tasks" (motivation) are of the examples of the items we used to measure EI and its dimensions.

We used Cronbach's alpha test to assess the reliability of the EI measure, which was 0.893. The reliabilities of the sub-dimensions were 0.894 for self-awareness, 0.923 for self-management, 0.913 for social awareness, 0.903 for relationship management, and 0.889 for motivation. Our review of the literature using this measure of EI on Iranian samples indicates fairly high-reliability scores with a minimum of 0.865. The items of the questionnaire were rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), hence higher scores reflecting higher degrees of EI.

Relational Social Capital was measured based on a measure that had been developed for Iranian organizations in Persian by Faraji and Dehsorkhi (2009), who designed the measure based on Nahapiet and Ghoshal's (1998) three main dimensions of social capital including structural, relational, and cognitive social capital. The process of the development of the scale was a) reviewing the existing measures for social capital, b) identifying the most frequent items, and c) putting the items in clusters through qualitative investigation by asking people to classify the items under three main categories. The relational social capital instrument includes a total of 11 items that emphasize such elements as individuals' identification and trust. "In this branch, we can trust our coworkers when we need

them”, “in this branch, we respect one another’s feelings”, “we comfortably share our work-related problems and issues with one another”, “we tend to support our coworkers emotionally”, and “we believe that the goals and mission of this bank are appropriate” are examples of the items we used to measure relational social capital.

The reliability of the measure has been proved to be much higher than the other translated measures in the Iranian context. Our review of the literature using this measure of relational social capital on Iranian samples indicated that no reliability below 0.833 is reported. In this research, the overall reliability of the relational social was 0.936. The reliabilities of the other sub-dimensions were also satisfactory, with 0.868 for the structural dimension and 0.872 for the cognitive dimension. The reliability score of the overall social capital measure was 0.887.

### ***Confirmatory Factor Analysis***

We used confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with AMOS software to validate our results derived from EFA and evaluate whether or not the measurement model fits our data adequately. The CFA results indicated an acceptable fit for the five-factor model of EI with  $\chi^2 = 664.457$ , comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.932, and root mean square of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.063. We also compared the five-factor model with nested four-factor, three-factor, two-factor, and one-factor models in order to find its relative fit. As shown in Table 1, the five-factor model has a better fit in comparison to all the other nested models. The five-factor model has a better fit than the four-factor model (self-awareness and self-management combined v. motivation v. social awareness v. social management),  $\Delta\chi^2 = 40.799$ ,  $\Delta df = 4$ ,  $p < 0.005$ . The five-factor model also shows a better fit compared with the three-factor model (self-awareness, self-management, and motivation combined v. social awareness v. social management),  $\Delta\chi^2 = 74.647$ ,  $\Delta df = 7$ ,  $p < 0.005$ ; two-factor model (self-awareness, self-management, motivation, and social awareness combined v. social management),  $\Delta\chi^2 = 75.32$ ,  $\Delta df = 9$ ,  $p < 0.005$ ; and one-factor model (self-awareness, self-management, motivation, social awareness, and social management combined),  $\Delta\chi^2 = 76.645$ ,  $\Delta df = 10$ ,  $p < 0.005$ . All the factor loadings of the five factors were significant. Therefore, we conclude that our five-factor model of EI has an acceptable fit for our research.

**Table 1.** Comparing the Fit of Alternative Models for the Five-Factor Model of Emotional Intelligence

Model	$\chi^2$	df	RMSEA	CFI	$\Delta \chi^2$	$\Delta df$
Five-Factor Model	664.457	265	0.063	0.932		
Four-Factor Model (self-awareness and self-management combined v. motivation v. social awareness v. social management)	705.256	269	0.066	0.864	40.799**	4
Three-Factor Model (self-awareness, self-management, and motivation combined v. social awareness v. social management)	739.104	272	0.068	0.856	74.647**	7
Two-Factor Model (self-awareness, self-management, motivation, and social awareness combined v. social management)	739.777	274	0.067	0.855	75.32**	9
One-Factor Model (self-awareness, self-management, motivation, social awareness, and social management combined)	741.102	275	0.067	0.855	76.645**	10

CFA results for the three-factor model of social capital also provided a satisfactory level of fit with  $\chi^2 = 816.626$ , comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.919, and root mean square of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.078. Like the case of EI, we compared the three-factor model with nested two- and one-factor models to find the model's relative fit. Table 2 shows the results. The three-factor model shows best fit compared with two-factor model (structural and cognitive combined v. relational),  $\Delta\chi^2 = 11.544$ ,  $\Delta df = 2$ ,  $p < 0.005$ ; and one-factor model (structural, relational, and cognitive combined),  $\Delta\chi^2 = 107.276$ ,  $\Delta df = 3$ ,  $p < 0.005$ . All factor loadings were significant.

**Table 2.** Comparing the Fit of Alternative Models for the Three-Factor Model of Social Capital

Model	$\chi^2$	df	RMSEA	CFI	$\Delta \chi^2$	$\Delta df$
Three-Factor Model	816.626	249	0.078	0.919		
Two-Factor Model (structural and cognitive combined v. relational)	828.170	251	0.078	0.835	11.544**	2
One-Factor Model (structural, relational, and cognitive combined)	923.902	252	0.084	0.803	107.276**	3

We note that the correlations between the dimensions of both EI and social capital were all below 0.67 which is below the critical value of 0.85 for discriminant validity (Awang, 2014), removing the threat of discriminant validity.

### *Descriptive Statistics*

We conducted a correlation analysis for all variables to understand the relationships among our variables. Table 3 shows the correlations. All the correlations are significant with a 95% confidence interval, and no negative correlations between the main variables are observed. All the correlations were moderate, and no perfect collinearity was observed. We additionally computed variance inflation factors (VIF) to ascertain the absence of multicollinearity (Myers, 1990). The VIF scores average 4.02 ranging from 2.03 to 6.12. Thus, multicollinearity is not an issue for our analyses since none of the VIF scores exceeds 10.

**Table 3.** Correlations Among the Main Variables and Sub-Dimensions

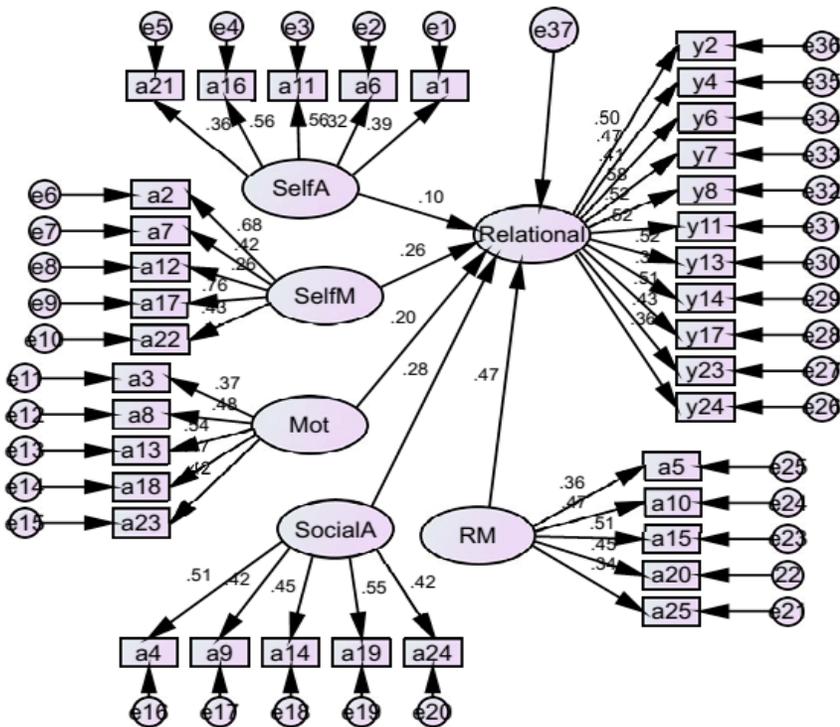
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1 Cognitive	1									
2 Relational	0.56*	1								
3 Structural	0.60*	0.65*	1							
4 Social C	0.81*	0.90*	0.85*	1						
5 Self A	0.42*	0.45*	0.46*	0.52*	1					
6 Self M	0.41*	0.43*	0.53*	0.53*	0.55*	1				
7 Motivation	0.46*	0.45*	0.52*	0.55*	0.53*	0.57*	1			
8 Social M	0.38	0.49*	0.47*	0.53*	0.55*	0.47*	0.51*	1		
9 Relation M	0.33*	0.52*	0.46*	0.52*	0.56*	0.50*	0.49*	0.67*	1	
10 Emotional Int.	0.51*	0.59*	0.62*	0.67*	0.79*	0.79*	0.78*	0.79*	0.79*	1

\*  $p < 0.05$

### *Hypothesis Testing and Results*

We conducted a structural equation modeling analysis using AMOS to test the hypotheses. We modeled a structural equation, in which the dimensions of EI were treated as independent variables and the relational social capital was treated

as the dependent variable. The structural model included dimensions as latent variables with their measures treated as observed variables. Figure 1 shows the model. In the parsimonious model we present in figure 1, we preferred not to include the correlations terms between the dimensions of EI for two reasons. First, both in our CFA and the separate correlation analyses, the correlations between the dimensions of EI were moderate to low, which attests to the discriminant validity of the EI construct. The correlations remained at this level even in the separate structural equation model in which we included correlations between the EI dimensions. Second, the inclusion of the correlations between the dimensions of EI in the structural equation model changed neither the overall fit of the model nor the standardized coefficients significantly. Thus, we present a more parsimonious model without the correlations.



**Figure 1.** Structural Equation Modelling on the Effect of Emotional Intelligence Dimensions on the Relational Dimension of Social Capital

The standardized regression weight of self-awareness on the relational dimension is insignificant. On this basis, hypothesis 1 which postulated the significant effect of self-awareness on relational social capital cannot be confirmed. However, the standardized coefficient of the self-management dimension of EI on relational social capital is significant ( $\beta = 0.26, p < 0.01$ ), which confirms hypothesis 2. The coefficient of the impact of social awareness on relational social capital is not significant, and we cannot confirm hypothesis 3. Finally, hypothesis 4 is confirmed given the significant coefficient of relationship management on relational social capital ( $\beta = 0.47, p < 0.01$ ). Self-management and relationship management have standardized regression weights of  $b = 0.26$  and  $b = 0.47$ , respectively. Table 4 shows these results.

**Table 4.** Standardized Estimate of the Dimensions of Emotional Intelligence on Relational Social Capital

Measure and Parameter	Relational Social Capital Estimate
Self-awareness	0.10
Self-management	0.26***
Social-awareness	0.28
Relationship Management	0.47***
Motivation	0.20

\*\*\*  $P < 0.01$

## Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, the relationships of four dimensions of EI with relational social capital were investigated. The results indicate that although the self-management and relationship management dimensions of EI significantly predict relational social capital, the dimensions associated with awareness (i.e., self-awareness and social awareness) are not significantly related to this construct. Although self-awareness and social awareness dimensions of EI emphasize the cognitive aspects of EI (i.e., awareness of the emotions and internal states of self and others), the self-management and relationship management dimensions are associated with the practical and behavioral aspects of EI. The main implication of these results is that the behavioral aspects of EI associated with the management of emotions and behaviors of self and others are better predictors of relational social

capital rather than the aspects concerning awareness of self and others' emotions. The implication is that only awareness of the emotions of self and others do not promote the quality of relationships and relational social capital, but individuals need to develop the abilities and skills required to manage their own and others' emotions and behaviors in order to increase the level of relational social capital in their social environment. In spite of the insignificant findings regarding the awareness dimensions, we do not totally reject their impacts on relational social capital since these relationships are theoretically valid and sensible. We suggest additional research in different contexts such as other types of organizations, teams, groups, etc. as well as using different measures to check how our findings may vary in these contexts.

This research contributes to the literature on the antecedents of relational social capital. Our review of the literature strongly suggests that studies investigating this construct have mainly studied its outcomes in the individual and organizational levels of analysis (e.g., Karahanna & Preston, 2013; Steinmo & Rasmussen, 2018; Muniady et al., 2015; Li & Sheu, 2014; Ernstmann et al., 2009), research exploring its antecedents is scarce, and more research is needed to understand what individual, group, organizational, and institutional factors predict this construct (Preston et al., 2017). Addressing this research gap, this research is unique in that it investigates the impact of EI as a concept that is argued to have remarkable implications for interpersonal relationships (Lopes et al., 2003; Lopes et al., 2004; Momm et al., 2015; Rode et al., 2017; Schutte et al., 2001). Considering the social nature of EI, it is also argued to be a sub-dimension of social intelligence (Salovy & Mayer, 1990). Druskat and Wolff (2005) and Clopton (2011) argue social capital to be founded and constructed upon EI, and Goyal and Akhilesh (2007) argue that EI and social capital are correlated. Considering this theoretical link, Lee et al. (2013) empirically examine the impact of project managers' EI on their teams' social capital; however, their results are insignificant. We address this research gap with a more scrupulous approach, assuming that EI and its dimensions should be related to those aspects of social capital that target the quality of interpersonal and social relationships, that is, relational social capital. The main theoretical implication of our finding is that EI as a social competence that improves the quality of interpersonal relationships can only be related to those aspects of social capital that target social relationships, and that is its relational dimension.

This research provides several avenues for future research. First, considering the cross-sectional nature of this research, inferring causality for the relationship between EI and relational social capital is not feasible. Future research may investigate this relationship using longitudinal data or other methods such as randomized experiments. Second, the impact of EI on relational social capital could be influenced by other types of intelligence such as cultural (Early & Ang, 2003) or general intelligence (Mackintosh & Mackintosh, 2011). Considering cultural intelligence, for instance, Crowne (2009) regards both emotional and cultural intelligence as subsets of social intelligence and argues that they have some components that overlap. Considering the social nature of both constructs, their interaction may predict even higher levels of relational social capital specifically in culturally diverse environments. For example, one argument may be that the behavioral dimension of cultural intelligence, which refers to the ability of individuals in exhibiting appropriate verbal and non-verbal behaviors while interacting with people from different cultures (Ng & Earley, 2006), may intensify the impact of self-management and relationship management in culturally diverse groups, teams, organizations, etc. Third, this research also has implications for the literature on work teams. The interdependent nature of tasks in teams, the main team feature that distinguishes it from groups (Swaab et al., 2014), makes the role of relational social capital crucial for these social entities. Relational conflict is one of the main hindrances for team effectiveness and performance (Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2015). However, higher degrees of relational social capital would reduce such conflicts and improve performance in teams (Lee et al., 2013). Future research could investigate which aspects of EI are more essential for the creation of relational social capital in teams, as well as the degree to which the degree and nature of these relationships vary across teams and other social entities such as groups and organizations.

The lack of consensus on a common definition of social capital makes research on the antecedents and outcomes of this variable complex (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Wu, 2008). At the same time, it increases the likelihood of confounding levels of analysis in empirical analyses. One of the main sources of this complexity is that all the definitions of this construct do not address one unique level of analysis (Adler & Kwon, 2002). While some definitions target the collective level (e.g., Baker, 1990), others do not regard this resource to be unique to the collective level (e.g., Coleman, 1990). For instance, Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) define social capital as ‘the sum of the actual and potential resources em-

bedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an *individual or social unit*' (p: 243). Nahapiet and Ghoshal's (1998) relational social capital that encompasses identification with, obligation to abide by, accepting the norms of, and a sense of community with the collective by its members is neutral in terms of targeting an individual or a collective level of analysis. Their neutrality indicates that relational social capital could be a resource possessed by individuals *or* their social unit. Our conceptualization and measurement of the concept of relational social capital mainly emphasize this concept as a resource possessed by the individuals which could be influenced by their EI competencies such as self-management or relationship management. The items we used to measure this construct emphasize such elements as trust, identification, and emotional support by individuals which shape relational social capital. This removes the risk of confounding levels of analysis while investigating the impact of EI on relational social capital.

This study is not without limitations. One of the major limitations of the study is the cross-sectional nature of the data, which makes it difficult to make causal inferences from the findings. This is mainly due to the limited time scope and the restrictions set by the bank which was studied. Nevertheless, using structural path analysis is regarded as an acceptable way of theory clarification and assessment of specific causal effects from correlational research data (Cook & Campbell, 1979). We suggest more longitudinal tests to further validate our findings. Another limitation of the study is associated with the sample which only included the employees in the branches. Since the number of surveys filled by such non-employee positions as branch managers was not sufficient for separate analyses, we tested our theory only on the employees working in the branches. We note that we did further tests, including these samples in the analyses, but no significant changes in the findings were observed. Finally, although we reduced the threat of common method variance to the minimum through Harman's single factor test and getting questionnaires filled at separate times, we could not further validate our results using multiple measures and methods for each of our variables. Intending to use multiple measures to test the relational capital, for instance, the time and resource limitations made it impossible for us to apply them and correlate them with the main measure of relational social capital to further ascertain the robustness of our results.

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