



Psychological Characteristics of Emotional Intelligence Formation in Generation Z

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Abstract

The rapid development of digital technologies and social media has significantly transformed the psychological development of modern youth, particularly Generation Z. This generation has grown up in a technologically advanced environment characterized by instant communication, virtual interaction, and continuous access to information. Such conditions have reshaped not only cognitive processes but also emotional and social behaviors. The present article examines the psychological characteristics influencing the formation of emotional intelligence in Generation Z. The study analyzes the role of digitalization, family environment, education, social media, peer relationships, and mental health factors in shaping emotional competencies among young people. The article also explores theoretical perspectives proposed by leading scholars such as Daniel Goleman, Peter Salovey, and John D. Mayer regarding emotional intelligence and its significance in personal and social adaptation. The findings suggest that emotional intelligence has become one of the most important psychological resources for Generation Z in coping with stress, maintaining interpersonal relationships, and achieving psychological well-being in the digital era.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, Generation Z, psychology, digital communication, empathy, self-regulation, social media, mental health, youth development, emotional awareness.

Introduction

The twenty-first century has introduced dramatic social and technological transformations that directly influence human psychology and interpersonal communication. Among the generations shaped by these changes, Generation Z occupies a unique position because its members have grown up entirely within the digital age. Smartphones, social media platforms, online education, and virtual communication are deeply integrated into their everyday lives. Consequently, the



emotional and psychological development of Generation Z differs substantially from that of previous generations.

Researchers emphasize that emotional intelligence has become increasingly important in modern society because technological advancement alone cannot guarantee successful social adaptation and psychological well-being [1]. Emotional intelligence enables individuals to recognize emotions, regulate emotional reactions, empathize with others, and maintain healthy interpersonal relationships. In the context of Generation Z, emotional intelligence is especially significant due to the psychological pressures associated with digital communication, social comparison, academic competition, and uncertainty about the future.

According to Daniel Goleman, emotional intelligence contributes more significantly to life success than traditional cognitive intelligence in many situations [2]. Modern employers, educators, and psychologists increasingly recognize emotional intelligence as an essential component of leadership, teamwork, communication, and stress management. Therefore, understanding the psychological mechanisms behind emotional intelligence formation in Generation Z has become an important scientific and social issue.

The concept of emotional intelligence emerged in psychology during the late twentieth century. Initially, intelligence was understood mainly in cognitive terms, focusing on logical reasoning and analytical thinking. However, psychologists gradually recognized that emotional competencies also play a fundamental role in human behavior and adaptation.

The first scientific model of emotional intelligence was introduced by Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer, who defined emotional intelligence as the ability to perceive, understand, manage, and utilize emotions effectively [3]. Their model emphasized that emotions are not obstacles to rational thinking but important psychological signals that guide human behavior.

Later, Daniel Goleman expanded the theory by integrating emotional intelligence into broader social and organizational contexts. Goleman identified five major components of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills [2]. According to his perspective, emotionally intelligent individuals demonstrate stronger interpersonal relationships, better decision-making abilities, and greater psychological resilience.

Contemporary psychological research supports the idea that emotional intelligence significantly affects mental health, academic achievement, leadership



abilities, and professional success [4]. In Generation Z, these competencies become particularly important because digital communication often reduces direct emotional interaction and increases psychological vulnerability.

Generation Z possesses distinctive psychological features shaped by the digital environment, globalization, and rapidly changing social conditions. Unlike previous generations, they experience emotional development within a world dominated by online communication and technological dependency.

One of the primary characteristics of Generation Z is digital immersion. From early childhood, they interact with smartphones, tablets, and social media platforms. Researchers argue that continuous exposure to digital environments changes attention span, emotional processing, and communication styles [5]. While digital tools facilitate rapid information exchange, excessive virtual interaction may reduce opportunities for developing face-to-face emotional communication skills.

Another important characteristic is increased emotional sensitivity. Studies indicate that Generation Z demonstrates higher awareness of psychological well-being and mental health issues compared to earlier generations [6]. Young people today openly discuss anxiety, depression, emotional burnout, and psychological stress. This openness may positively contribute to emotional awareness; however, it also reflects growing emotional vulnerability associated with social pressure and online comparison.

Social media significantly affects self-perception among Generation Z individuals. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat encourage constant comparison with idealized lifestyles and appearances. According to social comparison theory, repeated exposure to unrealistic standards may negatively influence self-esteem and emotional stability [7]. Consequently, many young people experience anxiety, loneliness, and dissatisfaction despite constant virtual connectivity.

Generation Z also demonstrates strong individualism and self-expression. They value authenticity, diversity, and personal freedom. These qualities may support emotional openness and self-awareness, which are important aspects of emotional intelligence. However, excessive focus on individual identity may sometimes complicate interpersonal compromise and emotional cooperation.

The family remains the first and most influential environment in emotional development. Psychologists emphasize that emotionally supportive parenting contributes significantly to empathy, self-confidence, and emotional regulation skills [8]. Children who grow up in families characterized by trust, emotional warmth, and effective communication are more likely to develop strong emotional intelligence.



Conversely, emotionally distant or conflict-oriented family environments may hinder emotional growth. Lack of parental attention and emotional neglect often reduce a child's ability to recognize and express emotions appropriately.

Schools and universities play a major role in shaping emotional competencies. Modern education increasingly recognizes the importance of social-emotional learning programs that teach empathy, teamwork, communication, and stress management [9].

Teachers also influence students' emotional development through classroom interaction, emotional support, and conflict resolution practices. Educational systems that encourage emotional expression and psychological safety contribute positively to emotional intelligence formation.

Digital communication presents both opportunities and risks for emotional development. Online platforms enable self-expression, social interaction, and global communication. However, excessive internet use may reduce emotional depth in relationships and increase psychological isolation.

Researchers note that online communication often lacks nonverbal emotional cues such as facial expressions and tone of voice [10]. As a result, Generation Z may encounter difficulties in interpreting emotional subtleties during real-life interaction.

Adolescence and young adulthood are periods during which peer influence becomes particularly strong. Friendships provide opportunities to practice empathy, cooperation, emotional support, and conflict resolution. Positive peer relationships contribute to psychological stability and emotional maturity.

Mental health challenges among Generation Z have become a major concern for psychologists worldwide. Anxiety disorders, emotional burnout, depression, and stress-related problems are increasingly common among young people [11].

Emotional intelligence functions as an important protective factor against psychological difficulties. Individuals with high emotional intelligence demonstrate stronger coping mechanisms, better stress management, and healthier interpersonal relationships. Self-awareness allows individuals to recognize emotional distress early, while self-regulation helps prevent impulsive reactions and emotional exhaustion.

Empathy and social support also contribute significantly to psychological resilience. Emotionally intelligent individuals tend to maintain stronger support networks, which improve emotional stability during stressful situations.

Conclusion

The formation of emotional intelligence in Generation Z is influenced by complex psychological, technological, and social factors. Digitalization has transformed



emotional communication patterns, creating both developmental opportunities and psychological risks. Although Generation Z demonstrates high emotional awareness and openness regarding mental health issues, they also face increased emotional vulnerability due to social media pressure, academic stress, and rapid societal change.

Emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in helping young people adapt to modern social realities, maintain psychological well-being, and establish healthy interpersonal relationships. Therefore, families, educational institutions, and society should actively support the emotional development of Generation Z through emotional education, psychological support, and healthy communication practices.

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