

Creativity and Emotional Intelligence in Adults: A Systematic Review and Recommendations for Future Research

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ABSTRACT

This systematic review aimed to summarize existing empirical studies on the relationship between creativity and emotional intelligence (EI) in adults, focusing on the assessment methods used for these constructs. Following the PRISMA guidelines (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses), 23 empirical articles were selected from PubMed, EBSCO, and Google Scholar databases. The most common approach for assessing creativity was through processes, while EI was often measured as a skill. Most of the reviewed studies showed a positive and significant correlation between EI and creativity. However, it was noted that using the trait approach to measure EI, especially when combined with self-report measures, consistently demonstrated inter-construct relationship. Implications of the study highlight the importance of developing emotional competencies to enhance creativity and personal success in social contexts.

KEYWORDS:

creativity, emotional intelligence, adults, systematic review

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INTRODUCTION

Researchers have been interested in creativity for years due to its significant cultural value in art, science, technology, and politics (Batey & Furnham, 2006). Creativity serves as a tool for renewal and change for the future, acting as an essential instrument across various fields of work. It is associated with originality and innovation in numerous activities (García-Pérez Omaña, 2015). Therefore, creativity is important at an individual level when addressing work-related issues (e.g., managing a boss or writing a report) and also in everyday life (e.g., engaging in a hobby or discovering new ways to entertain a child see Elisondo, 2021; Richards & Goslin-Jones, 2018). Socially, creativity plays a vital role in advancing scientific discoveries, fostering new artistic movements, and developing innovative social programs (Cropley, 2015; Sternberg, 1999).

Creativity is usually defined as the ability to generate and select ideas, solutions, or products that are novel and appropriate (Runco & Acar, 2012). It is a process that involves thinking styles, intelligence, personality, personal skills, self-concept (Lim & Smith, 2008; Sternberg & Lubart, 1997), emotions, life stories, feelings, specific contexts, and social interactions (Elisondo et al., 2009). This capacity to produce original and adaptive solutions reflects brain activity and serves as a crucial factor in its enhancement and growth. In this regard, its influence on neuronal plasticity, cognitive flexibility, and the ability to assimilate information has been examined, as these are essential elements for problem-solving and adapting to shifting environments (Pearl, 2024; Zangeneh Soroush, 2024).

Regarding the assessment methods of creativity, there are instruments of the self-report type, some of which aim to evaluate personality traits associated with creativity, like the Creative Personality Scale (CPS; Garaigordobil & Pérez, 2005). On the other hand, there are performance-based tests, in which divergent thinking (DT) is generally evaluated through the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (TTCT; Torrance, 1966). In this regard, it is worth mentioning that some studies have yielded contradictory results, which could be explained by operationalizing creativity (Said-Metwaly et al., 2017). For example, scores from self-report measures tend to be higher than those from performance-based tests (Martínez & Lagunes, 2020; Parke et al., 2015). The debate on whether self-report assessments and performance tests reach the same conclusions or measure the same aspects of creativity is ongoing (Acar et al., 2021; Reiter-Palmon et al., 2019; Rietzschel et al., 2024). Additionally, new approaches in creativity assessment are being explored, including generative artificial intelligence models to automate evaluation processes (Hadas & Hershkovitz, 2025).

Emotional Intelligence (EI), on the other hand, is the ability to perceive, express, and assimilate emotions through thought, understand and reason with emotion, and regulate emotions in oneself and in others (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). A comprehensive overview of approaches to EI assessment has been examined in recent systematic reviews (Míguez-Torres et al., 2021; Sánchez-Teruel & Robles-Bello, 2018). These studies have identified that most instruments are based on three main models that differ fundamentally in how they conceptualize and measure EI; namely, the ability model, the trait model, and the mixed approach, each with advantages and limitations inherent to the type of tool used (O'Connor et al., 2019).

It is important to recognize that EI includes both interpersonal and intrapersonal components. The interpersonal aspect of EI, which involves perceiving, understanding, and managing emotions in others, has been widely acknowledged in scholarly literature (Bar-On, 2006; Petrides et al., 2018a). This facet encompasses skills such as empathy (the capacity to sense and comprehend others' feelings), social responsibility (identification with the social group and cooperation), and the ability to build mutually satisfying relationships (Bar-On, 2006). In creative contexts, interpersonal EI supports collaborative processes through mechanisms like empathy, which helps in understanding colleagues' emotions, needs, and viewpoints, thereby enhancing communication and making team members feel understood and comfortable (Demetriou & Nicholl, 2022). Additionally, interpersonal skills such as clear communication, inspiring and influencing others, and conflict resolution are vital for fostering and maintaining the collaborative relationships vital for team-based creative work (Zhou & George, 2003). Nonetheless, this review emphasizes intrapersonal EI, due to its greater prominence in the literature on EI and creativity.

Continued interest in EI is attributable to its strong association with leadership in school and organizational environments (Petrides et al., 2018b; Zhou & George, 2003; Uhrich et al., 2021), and with individual and group performance (Valor-Segura et al., 2020). Regarding cognitive skills, studies have yielded inconsistent results (Buşu, 2020). Additionally, it is considered a key predictor of adaptation and success in life, including physical and mental health, social relationships, and work performance (Hoffmann et al., 2020). From a neuronal perspective, these relationships are reflected in observable behaviors and brain activity. For example, it has been shown that individuals who received EI-related training exhibited less brain activity in regions associated with emotional regulation and attention (Hansenne et al., 2014), indicating greater efficiency and less demanding emotion management.

Different conceptions of EI (Bar-On & Parker, 2000; Mayer & Salovey, 2007) have led to the development of diverse assessment methods for the construct (Extremera-Pacheco & Fernández-Berrocal, 2007). On one hand, as with creativity, some measures are self-reported and others are performance-based (Mayer et al., 1999), with significant distinctions between them. Specifically, accuracy of self-report measures is closely related to a person's capacity to judge their abilities, which is generally modest (Brackett & Mayer, 2003). On the other hand, EI ability measures are based on the ability to process and reason emotions, regardless of one's concept of EI (Tu et al., 2018). This variability in the conceptualization of EI and the evaluation methods used could explain heterogeneity of results among studies (Brackett & Mayer, 2003; Tu et al., 2018). This pattern has been confirmed in recent systematic reviews, which identified over 40 different EI instruments across three main models (i.e., ability, trait, and mixed; see Bru-Luna et al., 2021; O'Connor et al., 2019).

The relationship between EI and creativity goes beyond simple emotional activation. Recent theoretical developments emphasize that the contribution of EI to creativity lies in meta-emotional abilities: the ability to identify, understand, manage, and strategically use emotional information in creative processes (Hoffmann et al., 2021). This perspective suggests that creative individuals benefit not from specific emotional states but from emotional competencies that allow them to

navigate the emotional demands of creative work, including tolerance for ambiguity, persistence in the face of failure, and emotional regulation during ideation and evaluation phases (Sundquist & Lubart, 2022; Xu et al., 2019).

Overall, studies investigating the connection between EI and creativity have produced inconsistent findings, which may stem from the methods used for assessment (Tu et al., 2018). Some research utilizing self-report scales has identified a positive correlation between EI and creativity in adults (Carmeli et al., 2014; Toyama & Mauno, 2017; Tsai & Lee, 2014). On the other hand, other studies have failed to establish a significant link between EI measured through self-report scales and creativity evaluated via divergent thinking tasks (Guastello et al., 2004; Mishra, 2014).

Despite the importance of creativity and EI for individual adaptation, as well as the hypothesized linkage of these constructs, there are, to our knowledge, no published systematic review studies summarizing the evidence related to these variables. Therefore, this study aims to conduct a systematic review of the existing scientific literature on the relationship between creativity and EI in the adult population. It seeks to analyze the theoretical perspectives involved and identify gaps in knowledge or contradictory results among studies to clarify the relationship between these constructs.

METHOD

This systematic review includes empirical studies on the relationship between EI and Creativity variables in adults from different countries. This systematic search covered studies published between 2000 and 2024 in Spanish and English. Studies using qualitative approaches and grey literature were excluded.

Eligibility criteria

The selection criteria for the studies were: (1) that they aim to analyze the relationship between EI and creativity; (2) that they report the instruments used for measuring EI and creativity, represented by their different terms; (3) empirical studies involving samples of adults without diagnosed pathologies; and (4) full-text peer-reviewed journal articles published in Spanish and/or English.

Search strategy

A thorough review of the literature was conducted using the following databases: Google Scholar, EBSCO, PubMed, and references from retrieved articles. First, the following keyword descriptors in Spanish and English were used for the search: creativity, creative, divergent thinking, emotional intelligence, emotional competence, emotion recognition, and emotional processing. The complete electronic search strategy for the PubMed database was: (creativity [All Fields] OR "divergent thinking" [All Fields] OR creative [All Fields]) AND ("emotional intelligence" [All Fields] OR "emotion processing" [All Fields] OR "emotion recognition" [All Fields] OR emotional processing [All Fields]).

Relevant articles containing terms reflecting EI and creativity, where both terms were found together in the title, abstract, or keywords, were selected. Secondly, the reference lists of the documents identified in the first step were reviewed to find other relevant references (backward search). Finally, the most recent references were retrieved by searching the databases for documents that referred to the documents identified in the previous two steps (backward search).

Study selection and data extraction

Following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA, Page et al., 2021), three judges independently reviewed and selected the studies. All three judges were native Spanish speakers and had English as their second language. The selection process and data extraction involved several steps. First, studies were collected from databases, reference lists, and other sources. After reviewing the titles and abstracts, studies involving individuals aged 18 years and older were included. Two studies that involved university students aged 16 to 69 years were retained, as it is believed that participants aged 16 and 17 share similar contextual and educational characteristics with those who are 18 years old. Subsequently, studies were analyzed based on publication year, type of EI measure, type of creativity measure, results, and conclusions.

Once the document selection was completed, the finalized documents were recorded in an Excel protocol for analysis. Each article was listed in a row, with columns capturing the following information: authors, year of publication, location, sample and its profile, language, instruments used, type of measurement for EI and creativity, design and analysis performed, and summary of results. Following the PRISMA guidelines, the process of selecting articles for this systematic review is detailed in Figure 1 below.

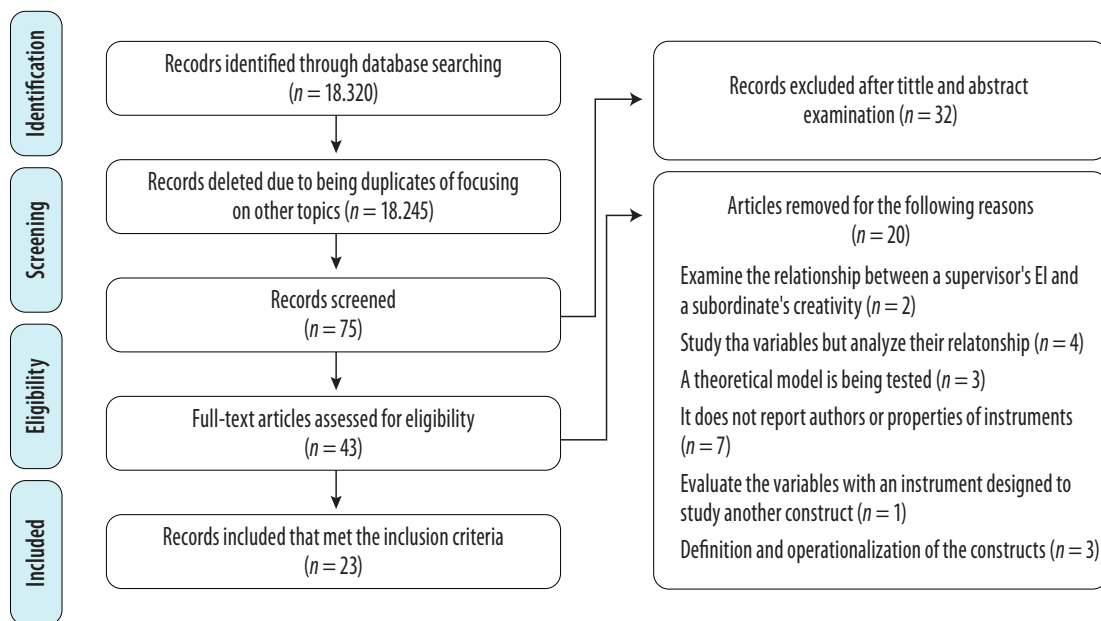


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram of the Study Selection Process (Moher et al., 2015) (N = 18.320)

Quality analysis of primary studies

To minimize bias in the inclusion, the selection process was conducted with the collaboration of three reviewers in two phases. In the first phase, all publications were reviewed to ensure they met the inclusion criteria. In the second phase, we evaluated whether the studies met the required quality standards.

The quality of the studies that met the inclusion criteria was assessed using a scoring system based on a general evaluation of nine areas (Long & Godfrey, 2004). Each reviewer independently assigned a score and then the evaluations were compared. Each study received a score from 1 to 9 and was classified into one of the following categories as appropriate: low quality (score of 1 to 3), medium (score 4 to 6), and high (score of 7 to 9). In case of differences, the final selection of the article in question was discussed and decided upon.

RESULTS

Main results

The 23 articles included in the systematic review were subjected to a quality assessment, following the procedure described in the methodology. Of the total of 23 articles that met the search criteria and respected the initially proposed design, 19 were rated as high quality, while the remaining four were classified as medium quality, remaining within acceptable limits.

These studies were carried out in different countries, highlighting the geographical diversity of the research. Three were conducted in China ($n=3$), two in the United States ($n=2$), two in Spain ($n=2$), and one study in each of the following countries: Germany ($n=1$), France ($n=1$), England ($n=1$), Taiwan ($n=1$), Portugal ($n=1$), India ($n=1$), Japan ($n=1$), Russia ($n=1$), Iran ($n=1$), Pakistan ($n=1$), Cyprus ($n=1$), Bhutan ($n=1$), Italy ($n=1$), and Turkey ($n=1$). Two studies did not specify their geographical location ($n=2$). All studies were published in English, reflecting the predominance of this language in scientific dissemination on the topic.

Regarding temporal distribution, three studies were identified as published between 2000 and 2010, seven between 2011 and 2015, and thirteen between 2016 and 2024. The sample sizes of the studies varied between 63 and 1,458 participants, reaching a total sample of 7,441 subjects, of which 55.57% were university students, 27.11% were employees of companies, and 17.32% were from the general population. As for the type of study, nineteen investigations corresponded to the *ex post facto* type ($n=19$), in which the data were collected after the phenomenon occurred, and four were classified as descriptive correlational ($n=4$).

Tables 1 and 2 below present the articles that met the inclusion criteria for this research.

Table 1. Articles Included in the Review from the Trait Approach

Author, year and country	Language of publication	Sample	Assessment instruments IE and Creativity	Approach	Results
Wolfradt et al. (2002) (Germany)	English	208 undergraduates (62.5% women and 37.5% men), aged between 16 and 69 years ($M = 28.16 \pm 11.34$).	EIS (Schutte et al., 1998). Creative Personality Scale (CPS; Gough, 1979). Creative Performance Task (creation of an original story).	El as a trait. Creativity as DT and CP.	The Emotional Efficacy dimension of EI demonstrated a low yet significant relationship with creative performance. All EI dimensions were positively correlated with creative personality traits.
Sánchez-Ruiz et al. (2011) (Spain) Ebsco	English	175 undergraduates (53.1% women and 46.9% men, $M = 25.76; \pm 7.07$).	TTCT-Figural Form B (Torrance 1974; Spanish adaptation of scoring criteria by Ferrando et al., 2007). Creative Personality Scale (CPS; Gough 1979). TEIQue v. 1.50 (Petrides, 2009; Spanish adaptation of Pérez-González, 2010).	Creativity as DT and CP. El as a trait.	No relationship was found between EI and creativity from the DT perspective. A positive relationship was found between EI and CP. The four EI traits jointly predicted CP and DT, with Sociability being the best predictor in both cases. Significant negative correlations were found in predicting of DT performance between the Arts group and EI components (negative with Self-Control and positive with Emotionality).
Harris et al. (2013) (United States) Ebsco	English	Study 1: 192 undergraduates (66.1% women and 33.9% men), $M = 22.56 \pm 5.00$. Study 2: 79 undergraduates (58.2% women, 41.8% men, $M = 24.50 \pm 7.37$).	Study 1: problem-solving tasks. Divergent thinking tasks. Solution ratings (rated by judges as negative/positive and non-original/original). EQ-I (BarOn, 1997). Study 2: solution ratings (rated by judges as negative/positive and non-original/original). Idea ratings (rated by judges with the same criteria). EIS (Schutte et al., 1998).	El as a trait. Cognitive and behavioral malicious creativity.	Study 1: EI correlated negatively, being marginally significant, with malicious creativity. Study 2: EI correlated negatively with malicious creativity (controlling for cognitive ability in non-social and emotional tasks)

Author, year and country	Language of publication	Sample	Assessment instruments IE and Creativity	Approach	Results
Pavlova & Kornilova (2013) (Russia) Ebsco	English	145 undergraduates (60.4% women and 39.6% men, $Mdn = 19.00 \pm 3.43$).	Creative Stories Task (Kornilov & Grigorienko, 2010). Cartoon Task (Sternberg, 2006; Pavlova & Kornilova, 2012). Lyusin Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (Lyusin & Ushakov, 2004).	IE as a trait. Creativity as a creative product.	Creativity predicted the use of emotional information in decision-making.
Toyama & Mauno (2017) (Japan) Google Scholar	English	489 employees (82.0% women and 18.0% men, $M = 39.5 \pm 11.00$).	New Brief Job Stress Questionnaire (NBJSQ; Inoue et al., 2014). Emotional Intelligence Scale, Japanese adaptation (EQS; Otake et al., 2001).	Creativity as a personality trait. EI as a trait.	EI predicted creativity. EI, through work engagement, has an indirect effect on creativity.
He et al. (2018) (China) Ebsco	English	213 undergraduates (48.4% men, 51.6% women), aged between 17 and 27 years ($M = 20.01 \pm 1.3$).	EIS (Schutte et al., 1998). WCAT (Williams, 1980; Chinese adaptation of Lin & Wang, 1994).	Creativity as a personality trait. EI as a trait.	EI showed a positive correlation with creativity. The EIS subscales were positively and significantly related to the WCAT subscales, although the correlation was of low intensity. The total EIS score exhibited a strong, positive, and significant correlation with the total WCAT score.
Ferdowsi & Razmi (2022) (Iran) PubMed	English	248 undergraduates (66.9% women and 33.1% men), aged between 20 and 23 years ($M = 21.92 \pm 2.03$).	Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (Torrance, 1990). EQ-I (Bar-On, 2002).	Creativity as a process. EI as a trait.	EI was significantly related to creativity.
Tong et al. (2022) (China) PubMed	English	1458 undergraduates (64.1% women and 35.9% men, $M = 19.46 \pm 1.04$).	Creative Achievement Questionnaire (Carson et al., 2005). Unusual Uses Task from TTCT. (Torrance 1966). RAT (Mednick & Mednick 1962).	Creativity as a process and product. EI as a trait.	Emotional intelligence (EI) is more closely related to domain-specific creativity than to divergent thinking (DT). Resilience mediates the relationship between EI and creativity. Additionally, gratitude moderates this relationship.

Author, year and country	Language of publication	Sample	Assessment instruments IE and Creativity	Approach	Results
Giancola et al. (2022) (Italy) Ebsco	English	68 adults (44.1% men and 55.9% women), $M = 21.37 \pm 1.93$.	TEIQue–SF (Cooper & Petrides, 2010; Italian version, Di Fabio & Palazzeschi, 2011). AUT (Torrance, 1974; Italian version by Sprini & Tomasello, 1989).	Creativity as a personality trait. EI as a trait.	When comparing DT and CT, only DT mediated the relationship between EI and creativity. CT was positively related only to creativity.
Akpur (2024) (Türkiye) Ebsco	English	297 undergraduates (51.2% women and 48.8% men), aged between 18 and 27 years ($M = 19.04 \pm 1.64$).	Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (Deniz et al., 2013). MCTDS (Özgenel & Çetin, 2017).	Creativity as a personality trait. EI as a trait.	EI predicted creativity. The model, including the traits of Openness to Experience, Extraversion, Conscientiousness, and EI, predicted creativity.

Note. EI = Emotional Intelligence; DT = Divergent Thinking; CT = Convergent Thinking; CP = Creative Personality; TTCT = Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking; TEIQue = Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire; EIS = Emotional Intelligence Scale; WCAT = Williams Creative Aptitude Test; EQ-I = Emotional Quotient Inventory; RAT = Remote Associates Test; AUT = Alternative Uses Task; MCTDS = Marmara Creative Thinking Dispositions Scale; M = Mean; \pm = Standard Deviation; Mdn = Median.

Table 2. Articles Included in the Review from the Ability Approach

Author, year and country	Language of publication	Sample	Assessment instruments IE and Creativity	Approach	Results
Ivcevic et al. (2007) (England) Ebsco	English	220 undergraduates, (67.3% women and 28.2% men) aged between 17 and 49 years.	Consequences (subtest of TTCT; Torrance, 1974). RAT (Shames, 1994). MSCEIT version 2.0 (Mayer et al., 2002). American Haiku task (Amabile, 1985).	Creative Behavior. Emotional Creativity. EI as an ability.	No significant relationships were found between EI abilities and creative behavior.
Zenasni & Lubart (2009) (France) Ebsco	English	Study 1: 95 volunteers (51.6% women and 48.4% men) aged between 18 and 73 years ($M = 34.6 \pm 14.8$). Study 2: 100 volunteers (55% women and 45% men), aged between 34 and 59 years ($M = 33.4 \pm 9.7$).	MEIS (Mayer et al., 1999). Emotional Creativity Questionnaire (Averill, 1999). Divergent Thinking Task, assessing fluency and originality. Creative Production Task: create an advertisement/commercial.	Creative Performance. EI as an ability.	Study 1: EI was negatively related to fluency. No relationship was found between emotion identification and performance on creative production tasks. Study 2: There was no significant relationship between EI and performance on creative production tasks when controlling for Alexithymia.

Author, year and country	Language of publication	Sample	Assessment instruments IE and Creativity	Approach	Results
Carmeli et al. (2014) (It does not specify the country) Google Scholar	English	202 employees. 49% women and 51% men ($M = 32.15 \pm 8.41$).	Creative performance ratings (Oldham & Cummings, 1996). WLEIS (Law et al., 2004).	Creativity as a personality trait. EI as an ability.	EI positively correlated with creativity. EI was indirectly related to creativity through vigor and generosity.
Tsai & Lee (2014) (Taiwan) Ebsco	English	170 participants (60% women and 40% men) aged between 26 and 35 years.	WLEIS (Law et al., 2004) Creative performance measure (Zhou & George, 2001).	EI as an ability. Creative performance.	A significant effect of EI on creativity. Employees who have better skills in recognizing their own emotions and those of others can enhance their creativity.
Parke et al. (2015) (United States) Ebsco	English	301 professionals (29.5% women and 70.5% men, $M = 28.71 \pm 4.64$).	MSCEIT 2.0 (Mayer et al., 2002). Creative performance measure (Zhou & George, 2001).	EI as an ability. Creative performance.	The role of emotional facilitation interacts with positive affect to significantly predict creativity.
Takeuchi et al. (2015) (Japan) Ebsco	English	766 participants (55.6% men and 44.4% women, $M = 20.70 \pm 1.90$).	The S-A creativity test (Society for Creative Minds, 1969). EI Scale (EIS; Fukunishi et al., 2001; Uchiyama et al., 2001).	Creative potential measured through DT. EI as an ability.	The scores from the EI scale significantly correlated with Creativity EI facilitates creative potential as measured by DT.
Jafri et al. (2016) (Bhutan) Google Scholar	English	250 employees (58% men and 42% women, $M = 34$). <i>SD</i> not specified.	WLEIS (Law et al., 2004). Creative performance measure (Zhou & George; 2001).	Creativity as a product. EI as an ability.	Positive effect of EI on creativity. Organizational climate and proactive personality moderate this relationship.
Geher et al. (2017). (Country not specified) Google Scholar	English	265 participants from around the world. No details specified.	RMET (Baron-Cohen et al., 2001). 10 creativity indicators in humor production, evaluated by expert judges.	Creativity in the specific domain of humor. EI as the ability of empathic accuracy.	Empathic accuracy, as an element of EI, positively predicts creativity.
Darvishmotevali et al. (2018) (Cyprus) Google Scholar	English	283 employees (52% women and 48% men) aged between 30 and 41 years. <i>M</i> and <i>SD</i> not specified.	WLEIS (Law et al., 2004). 3 items of creative performance (Wang & Netemeyer, 2004).	Creativity as a product. EI as an ability.	Positive effect of EI on creative performance.

Author, year and country	Language of publication	Sample	Assessment instruments IE and Creativity	Approach	Results
Rodrigues et al. (2019) (Portugal) Ebsco	English	345 undergraduates (62% women and 38% men, $M = 23$). SD not specified.	WLEIS (Law et al., 2004). Puhakka's Creativity Scale (Puhakka, 2011).	El as an ability. Creativity from the interactionist perspective (person, process, environment, and product).	El has a significant impact on creativity.
Tripathi (2019) (India) Ebsco	English	100 undergraduates (55% men and 45% women), aged between 17 and 24 years. M and SD not specified.	Emotional Intelligence Scale (Singh, 2004). TTCT (Torrance, 1990).	El as an ability. Creativity as DT.	El was positively and significantly correlated with creativity. No significant differences were found between sexes regarding El and creativity.
Wu et al. (2021) (China) PubMed	English	663 undergraduates (20.2% men and 79.8% women, $M = 19.71 \pm 0.97$).	PEFSC (Sen et al., 2014) WLEIS (Law et al., 2004).	El as ability. Creativity from the person-context perspective.	El was positively related to creativity.
Liu et al. (2023) (Pakistan) PubMed	English	322 employees (87.6% men and 12.4% women) aged between 20 and 40 years.	Innovative work behavior (Scott & Bruce, 1994). WLEIS (Law et al., 2004).	Creativity as a product. El as an ability.	El was positively correlated with creative performance. El moderated the indirect relationship between humble leadership and creative performance.

Note. El = Emotional Intelligence; DT = Divergent Thinking; CT = Convergent Thinking; TTCT = Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking; MSCEIT = Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test; WLEIS = Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale; MEIS = Multifactor Emotional Intelligence Scale; RAT = Remote Associates Test; RMET = Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test; PEFSC = Person-Environment Fit Scale of Creativity; M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; Mdn = Median; \pm = Plus-Minus Sign.

Assessment of Emotional Intelligence and Creativity

Assessment of El in the analyzed studies was distributed in three approaches: the approach of El as a skill ($n = 10$), the trait approach ($n = 9$), and a mixed perspective of skill and traits ($n = 3$). The most used instrument to measure this construct was the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS; Law et al., 2004). It was used in seven publications.

Regarding creativity assessment approaches, the process approach was the most prevalent ($n = 7$), followed by the product and person approaches with three publications each. Among the combined approaches, two studies incorporated the process and person perspectives, one integrated person and context, and another utilized the interactionist approach that considers person, process, product, and context. The Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (TTCT; Torrance, 1990) was the most commonly used instrument to measure creativity, appearing in five publications.

Relationship between EI and Creativity

Trait-based approach

Of the ten studies on trait EI, one found positive correlations between EI and creativity (Wolfradt et al., 2002), while another identified creativity as a predictor of EI use in decision-making (Pavlova & Kornilova, 2013). In contrast to this causal direction, the remaining eight studies positioned EI as an independent variable and established its role as a predictor of creativity (Ferdowsi & Razmi, 2022; Giancola et al., 2022; Harris et al., 2013; He et al., 2018; Sánchez-Ruiz et al., 2011; Tong et al., 2022; Toyama & Mauno, 2017; Akpur, 2024). Two studies did not find a relationship between EI and creativity when assessed through performance tasks, but they did observe a strong correlation between trait EI measures and creative personality indicators (Sánchez-Ruiz et al., 2011; Wolfradt et al., 2002).

Harris et al. (2013) studied EI in its relationship with malicious creativity (i.e., the intention to inflict harm through novel and original ways). In the two studies they conducted with university students, the authors reported a significant negative correlation between both variables, even after controlling for cognitive ability in tasks that did not involve social and emotional aspects. Pavlova and Kornilova (2013) studied, through regression analysis, the impact of creativity on EI from a product-focused approach, using story production tasks. The results showed that creativity predicted the use of emotional information in decision-making.

He et al. (2018) reported a positive correlation between EI and creativity assessed from the perspective of personality traits, as well as a significant relationship between the total score of the Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS; Schutte et al., 1998) and the total score of the Williams Creative Aptitude Test (WCAT; Williams, 1980). Similarly, Toyama and Mauno (2017) and Akpur (2024) share a focus on individual differences to address creativity. While the former analyzed a sample of employees from companies, the latter focused on university students. In both contexts, EI turned out to be a positive predictor of creativity. Ferdowsi and Razmi (2022) found a positive correlation between EI and creativity measured from the process perspective, using the TTCT (Torrance, 1990). Additionally, the studies of Giancola et al. (2022) and Tong et al. (2022) provided complementary findings from different perspectives. Giancola et al. (2022) compared divergent (DT) and convergent (CT) thinking approaches, finding that only DT was related to EI and mediated the relationship between EI and creativity based on invention production, while CT showed a positive correlation but did not play a mediating role. Tong et al. (2022), on the other hand, focused on creativity from the domain-specific perspective, finding that EI was more related to creativity assessed from specific areas and domains than with DT.

Skills-based approach

Of the 13 studies that addressed EI as a skill, one study conducted correlation analysis (Tripathi, 2019), while the remaining studies utilized more complex analyses such as regressions and structural equations, with EI as the independent variable and creativity as the dependent variable (Rodrigues et al., 2019; Takeuchi et al., 2015; Tsai & Lee, 2014; Wu et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2023; Carmeli et al., 2014;

Darvishmotevali et al., 2018; Jafri et al., 2016). In their study, Tsai and Lee (2014) examined creativity through performance tasks and the ability to implement new ideas. The results revealed a direct positive relationship between EI and creativity, suggesting that a higher ability to recognize one's emotional state and that of others is associated with increased levels of creativity. Carmeli et al. (2014) utilized a mediation model to explore how EI indirectly influences creativity in the workplace through generosity and vigor. The findings indicated that EI employees are more likely to exhibit acts of generosity, which, in turn, foster a sense of vigor that promotes creative behaviors.

Regarding studies focused on creative processes, Tripathi (2019) evaluated the relationship between EI and creativity using the TTCT (Torrance, 1990) as a measure. Their findings indicated a significant positive relationship between both variables, with no significant differences based on the participants' gender. Consistently, Takeuchi et al. (2015) focused on measuring creativity in terms of the cognitive processes and structures that lead to creative production. This study reported a positive and significant correlation between EI scores and creativity scores, highlighting that EI facilitates creative potential measured through DT.

Several studies have explored the role of contextual and environmental factors in the relationship between EI and creativity. In a sample of 633 university students in China, Wu et al. (2021) assessed creativity using an instrument focused on the individual and the environment. The results showed a positive and significant relationship between EI and creativity. Additionally, the authors found that EI acted as a moderating variable between parent-child relationship and individual creativity. Darvishmotevali et al. (2018) investigated the relationship between EI and creative performance, highlighting the role of context as a relevant factor in this dynamic. Their results indicated a positive impact of EI on creativity. Environmental uncertainty, defined as the gap between available information and the information needed for decision-making, was identified as a significant moderating factor in this relationship.

From an interactionist approach, Rodrigues et al. (2019) evaluated creativity from four facets (i.e., processes, product, person, and context). In line with previous findings, this study confirmed the influence of EI on creativity in a sample of university students from Portugal. Similarly, Jafri et al. (2016) emphasized the role of the environment and proactive personality, placing these variables as moderating mechanisms between the relationship of EI and creativity. In addition to the direct effect of EI on entrepreneurial creativity, the analyses revealed that both personal initiative and organizational climate significantly mediated the EI-creativity dynamics. Also, in the business context, Liu et al. (2023) found a positive correlation between creativity and EI, highlighting the importance of EI as a moderating factor between humble leadership and employees' creative output.

Parke et al. (2015) explored the impact of emotional facilitation on creativity, revealing that high levels of emotional facilitation during positive affect interactions predict creativity. Conversely, under low levels of emotional facilitation, a negative relationship between positive affect and creativity was observed. In contrast, Geher et al. (2017) conducted a study with 265 participants and found that EI, particularly empathic accuracy, positively correlated with creativity as measured by humor production. Two studies presented results that contradicted previous findings. Zenasni

and Lubart (2009) conducted two studies: the first indicated that EI is negatively related to fluency, suggesting no relationship between emotion identification and performance on creative production tasks. The second study, which included a measure of non-clinical alexithymia as a control, also found no correlation between EI and creative performance. Similarly, Ivcevic et al. (2007) evaluated the relationship between EI, emotional creativity, and creativity using divergent thinking (DT) and combinatorial thinking (CT) measures. The authors reported that self-report measures of emotional creativity were significantly correlated with self-reported creativity measures and DT and CT tasks. However, emotional creativity was only associated with self-reported artistic activity, and no relationship was found between EI and creativity tasks.

In summary, this review reveals that most of the analyzed studies (20 of 23) report positive associations between EI and creativity. The results vary depending on the methodology used, with differences observed between studies that use the trait approach versus the ability approach to assess EI, as well as between self-report measures and performance measures for creativity. Various mediating and moderating factors were identified in this relationship, such as resilience, vigor, divergent thinking, and contextual elements. The prevailing model positions EI as a predictor of creativity, reflecting a growing interest in understanding how emotional skills can influence creative performance in various domains.

DISCUSSION

This study systematically reviewed the scientific literature on EI and creativity in adults, analyzing the relationship between these constructs based on theoretical frameworks and identifying knowledge gaps. Following the PRISMA guidelines, 23 relevant studies that met the established inclusion criteria were selected. Most of the reviewed studies approached EI from the ability model perspective, concentrating on the application of various skills related to emotional processing (Pérez et al., 2005), rather than from the trait perspective. This finding aligns with earlier research (Daus et al., 2012; Voola et al., 2004) and a systematic review by Sánchez-Teruel and Robles-Bello (2018), which noted a higher frequency of EI assessment instruments grounded in the ability perspective. The preference for a skills-based approach primarily stems from its practical advantages. Performance-based tests are more resistant to faked responses, as participants must make an effort to achieve high scores by solving problems and classifying emotions in images, instead of simply agreeing with statements, as in trait-based measures (O'Connor et al., 2019). Furthermore, in self-report measures, individuals often struggle to accurately assess their emotional abilities (Boyatzis, 2018; Sheldon et al., 2014).

In the study of creativity, most research addresses the construct from the perspective of processes (Carmeli et al., 2014; Ferdowsi & Razmi, 2022; Geher et al., 2017; Harris et al., 2013; He et al., 2018; Ivcevic et al., 2007; Parke et al., 2015; Sánchez-Ruiz et al., 2011; Takeuchi et al., 2015; Toyama & Mauno, 2017; Tripathi, 2019; Tsai & Lee, 2014; Akpur, 2024; Wolfradt et al., 2002; Zenasni & Lubart,

2009). These findings align with those reported in a review conducted on Spanish-speaking samples (Jalifi & Krumm, 2021), which found that most of the instruments used, studied, and adapted to evaluate creativity are developed from the person and creative processes approach, with a special emphasis on divergent thinking (DT) tests. Despite the diversity of theoretical perspectives and varied measurement instruments, most studies rely on the DT paradigm formulated by Guilford (1950; see in Ferrándiz García, 2017). This partly reflects what was found in the present review, with the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (TTCT; Torrance, 1990; Torrance et al., 1992) being one of the classic and most frequently utilized instruments. In general, this tendency to prefer DT tasks results in self-report measures being used as complementary or considered as a secondary measure (Kaufman, 2019).

Regarding the relationship between EI and creativity, most of the reviewed studies report significant positive associations between the constructs (Akpur, 2024; Carmeli et al., 2014; Darvishmotevali et al., 2013; Ferdowsi & Razmi, 2022; Giancola et al., 2022; He et al., 2018; Jafri et al., 2016; Liu et al., 2023; Rodrigues et al., 2019; Takeuchi et al., 2015; Tong et al., 2022; Toyama & Mauno, 2017; Tripathi, 2019; Tsai & Lee, 2014; Wolfradt et al., 2002; Wu et al., 2021). This result is in line with the findings of the meta-analysis conducted by Xu et al. (2019), who found positive and moderate correlations between the variables, supporting the hypothesis that EI can be related to creativity through different affective links (Jafri, 2018; Parke et al., 2015). In this sense, individuals with high levels of EI would be more effective in using their positive or negative affect to facilitate thinking, leading to a greater possibility of creative productions (Jafri, 2018).

This dominance of positive associations (20 out of 23 studies) indicates that the link between EI and creativity may reflect a core adaptive mechanism: emotionally intelligent individuals can leverage their emotional regulation skills to enhance affective states that foster creative thinking (Parke et al., 2015; Sundquist & Lubart, 2022). Neuroscientific evidence supports this view, showing that the volume of gray matter in brain regions linked to emotional regulation partially mediates the EI-creativity connection (He et al., 2018). This supports the idea that EI is not just a correlate of creativity but an active facilitator of the creative process through specific mechanisms like emotional facilitation and cognitive reappraisal (Ivcevic & Brackett, 2015), suggesting that developing emotional skills could be a direct way to boost creative potential.

As observed in this review, while there is evidence that creativity predicts EI (Pavlova & Kornilova, 2013), most studies report the opposite, positioning EI as a precursor to creativity. This could be explained by the fact that both EI and creativity are closely intertwined with the act of creation in many areas and throughout the creative process (Glaveanu et al., 2013). Furthermore, Tsai and Lee (2014) point out that research has primarily focused on the direct effect. In addition, Vratskikh et al. (2016) highlight the neglect of exploring underlying mechanisms and variables that could enhance this relationship in the background.

Most reviewed studies acknowledge the connection between EI and creativity, highlighting the moderating and mediating effects of various factors. Contextual variables, such as organizational climate (Jafri et al., 2016) and the relationship between humble leadership and creative perform-

ance (Liu et al., 2023), have been identified as mediating and moderating influences. Additionally, cognitive variables like DT mediate the relationship between EI and creativity, unlike CT (Giancola et al., 2022). Lastly, individual variables such as resilience mediate the relationship between EI and creativity (Tong et al., 2022), along with vigor and generosity (Carmeli et al., 2014). These components create a profile of an individual's creative potential from a multivariate perspective (Lubart et al., 2015), operating differently from one another depending on the context and the specific task at hand (Sundquist & Lubart, 2022).

While various authors have reported an association between EI and creativity (Harris et al., 2013), it is essential to recognize that some studies have found weak correlations. Obilor and Amadi (2018) stress the importance of interpreting data, especially the Pearson correlation coefficient (r), by considering statistical significance and effect size. This caution is necessary to prevent overestimating the practical significance of statistically significant but small effect associations.

A notable point is about the findings based on the instruments used (Sánchez-Ruiz et al., 2011; Wolfradt et al., 2002). It is observed that when evaluating creativity through performance tasks related to trait EI, no significant relationship is found. However, through self-perception measures of creativity in the same studies, a substantial relationship with the measure of trait EI is evident. This discrepancy can be attributed to common method variance, a frequent issue in self-administered assessments, where changes in the true correlations between study variables occur (McGonagle, 2017). Thus, correlations can increase or decrease unintentionally as a result of the evaluation method used (Malhotra et al., 2017). On the other hand, although people with high levels of EI are generally more adept at finding creative solutions to everyday problems (Kidwell et al., 2008), this does not guarantee strong performance in objective tests of creativity. This variation in measurement methods complicates comparisons of the results obtained (Kaufman, 2019; Ng & Feldman, 2012). Additionally, discrepancies in the relationship between EI and creativity may also be influenced by how creativity is assessed, whether in a general or domain-specific context. Actually, Tong et al. (2022) found a stronger correlation between EI and creativity when focusing on specific creative domains and achievements compared to DT. This suggests that EI may facilitate creativity selectively, operating more effectively in areas where domain-specific emotional knowledge is relevant for creative performance. Therefore, the relationship between EI and creativity may be influenced by different variables, and this interaction can vary depending on the specific domain, task nature, or stage of the creative process (Caroff & Lubart, 2012).

Beyond methodological issues, discrepancies may also stem from the theoretical framework adopted. The Cognitive Processing Theory (Mayer et al., 2000) suggests a weak or non-existent link between EI and creativity, as they operate in different cognitive systems. On the other hand, the Emotional Motivation Theory (Gable & Harmon-Jones, 2010) proposes that emotional regulation plays a significant role in the relationship between EI and creativity, leading to stronger associations. Therefore, findings regarding a stronger correlation when using self-perception measures align with the Emotional Motivation Theory, emphasizing the influence of emotional regulation and motivation on creativity. Additionally, the lack of a connection in purely cognitive tasks sup-

ports Mayer et al.'s Cognitive Processing Theory (Mayer et al., 2000) and highlights the importance of considering emotional factors in understanding creativity. Overall, the current results suggest that creative cognition (measured through performance-based tasks) and EI may involve distinct cognitive processes, while EI potentially contributes to creative personality.

When analyzing the results based on the context in which the studies were conducted, distinct patterns emerge when comparing academic and work environments. In university contexts, representing 55.57% of the total sample, the relationship between EI and creativity tends to manifest primarily through measures of DT and cognitive tasks (Sánchez-Ruiz et al., 2011; Tripathi, 2019; Wolfradt et al., 2002). In organizational environments, comprising 27.11% of the sample, this relationship is evident in applied creative performance and innovative behaviors (Carmeli et al., 2014; Jafri et al., 2016; Liu et al., 2023). This distinction can be attributed to the different demands and expectations of each context; while the academic environment encourages exploration of ideas without restrictions on applicability, the work environment requires that creativity be directed toward implementable solutions that yield tangible results. Additionally, in organizational contexts, moderating factors such as organizational climate (Jafri et al., 2016) and leadership (Liu et al., 2023) appear more frequently, but are absent in studies focusing on student populations. These contextual differences may also suggest that EI enables implementation and application of creative ideas more than their initial cognitive generation. In academic settings, where evaluation of ideation processes prevails, EI shows less influence. In organizational contexts, where creativity requires social navigation and practical implementation, EI emerges as a determining factor.

Temporal distribution of the analyzed studies indicates an evolution in the methodological and conceptual approaches used to explore the relationship between EI and creativity. Earlier studies, such as those by Wolfradt et al. (2002) and Ivcevic et al. (2007), were characterized by a descriptive correlational approach that focused on direct correlations between the two constructs. In contrast, more recent research, including Tong et al. (2022), Giancola et al. (2022), and Liu et al. (2023), has adopted more complex methodologies that incorporate mediating and moderating variables, reflecting a more nuanced understanding of the relationship. Despite this methodological evolution, it is important to note that all the analyzed studies maintain a cross-sectional design, which significantly limits the ability to establish causal relationships between EI and creativity. This common characteristic hinders our understanding of how this relationship may develop over time. Nevertheless, there has been an increasing clarification in the categorization of EI, progressing from more general definitions to approaches that distinctly differentiate between skills and traits (Sánchez-Ruiz et al., 2011; Carmeli et al., 2014), as well as between different facets of each construct. Furthermore, there has been an increase in the application of advanced statistical techniques, including structural equation modeling and mediation-moderation models (Carmeli et al., 2014; Rodrigues et al., 2019; Wu et al., 2021). This methodological and conceptual advancement reflects maturation of the field and suggests that future research should continue this trend toward more integrative explanatory models and the inclusion of longitudinal designs.

Regarding conceptualization and operationalization of creativity, while many studies have used established theoretical frameworks like person, processes, product, and context (Akpur, 2024; Batey, 2012; Carmeli et al., 2014; Darvishmotevali, 2018; Ferdowsi & Razmi, 2022; Giancola et al., 2022; He et al., 2018; Jafri et al., 2016; Liu et al., 2023; Pavlova & Kornilova, 2013; Takeuchi et al., 2015; Tong et al., 2022; Toyama & Mauno, 2017; Tripathi, 2019; Wu et al., 2021), other research has assessed creativity using alternative indicators such as humor and malicious creativity (Geher et al., 2017; Harris et al., 2013) or has proposed new theoretical approaches such as the interactionist model (Rodrigues et al., 2019). This diverse landscape reflects what Martínez & Lagunes (2020) and Said-Metwaly et al. (2017) noted, observing the frequent use of terms related to creativity as if they were interchangeable. This lack of conceptual uniformity complicates precise definition of the variable and hampers the ability to compare results across different studies. In line with this, it is essential for both EI and creativity to clearly state the theoretical model adopted for each construct. Thus, an important methodological decision before incorporating EI measures is to determine whether the trait, ability, or mixed approach will be used, depending on the research objective (i.e., O'Connor et al., 2019). This would not only enhance interpretation of the results but also facilitate comparability between studies and strengthen conclusions about the relationship between both constructs.

CONCLUSIONS

Results of this systematic review offer relevant information from the past twenty-five years on the link between EI and creativity. Most studies have shown positive and significant associations between these constructs. Additionally, our analysis adds to the existing literature by uncovering intricate patterns that go beyond simple linear relationships. Various factors that impact this connection have been identified, enhancing our comprehension and emphasizing the multifaceted nature of this association. The findings suggest that the method of measuring the constructs can influence interpretation of the results, potentially explaining the variability observed in the analyzed studies. Specifically, it was noted that using a trait-based approach to evaluate EI usually resulted in significant correlations with creativity, particularly when combined with self-report measures of creativity. This indicates that the choice of assessment tool can affect identification of relationships between the constructs and the strength of these correlations, highlighting the importance of considering methodological factors when interpreting the outcomes.

On the other hand, despite increased publications over the past twelve years, research on the relationship between EI and creativity remains scarce. Geographical analysis reveals a concentration of studies in China, the United States, and Europe, with little to no research in regions such as Latin America and Africa. This distribution raises concerns about generalizability of findings across different sociocultural contexts. A significant gap in knowledge on the topic has been identified specifically in Spanish-speaking populations, which is worrisome given that perceptions of EI and creativity may vary based on cultural factors. Furthermore, prevalence of English as the primary

language of publication may hinder representation of research conducted in other linguistic contexts. Therefore, it is important to consider cultural differences to prevent unwarranted extrapolation of results and concepts to underrepresented populations in the current literature.

Finally, one of the biggest challenges in studying the relationship between EI and creativity lies in its assessment. There is a need to build and validate instruments for different age groups and sociocultural contexts (Krumm et al., 2018; Saldaña et al., 2020). This would allow for more precise measurements, thereby strengthening validity of conclusions about the interrelationship of these constructs in various environments and populations.

Implications and recommendations

Considering relevance of creativity and EI in academic, social, and personal contexts (MacCann et al., 2020; Mestre et al., 2006; Mohzan et al., 2013), future research should firstly focus on theoretical studies. Secondly, it should also hone in on developing practical strategies to cultivate these abilities, enabling individuals to navigate various social environments successfully. A promising approach would be to create interventions that simultaneously target creativity and EI, leveraging the connections established throughout this review.

Future research needs to investigate Spanish-speaking contexts to establish cross-cultural comparisons. Furthermore, while some studies utilizing self-report and performance measures were identified, it is important to emphasize that combining both types of measures within the same study would facilitate a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the relationship between EI and creativity. This approach would help address the limitations inherent in each type of measure and provide insights into the mechanisms linking these constructs across diverse contexts and populations.

Likewise, future research would benefit from adopting longitudinal designs that evaluate how the development of EI influences creative potential over time. Such studies would provide more robust evidence regarding the causal relationships between both constructs and identify critical periods when interventions in emotional skills could significantly impact creativity. It would also be valuable to examine specific components of EI—perception, facilitation, understanding, and emotional regulation—and their relationship with such dimensions of creativity as fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration. This detailed analysis would make it possible to design interventions focusing on those aspects of EI that most influence specific dimensions of the creative process, thus optimizing the effectiveness of development programs. Lastly, given increasing digitization of educational and work environments, exploring how emotional and creative competencies manifest and interact in virtual contexts is advisable. Understanding whether these new modes of interaction require adaptations in traditional models of EI and creativity would offer valuable insights into addressing the challenges of contemporary environments.

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