

Emotional Intelligence and its Application in Family Life: Decoding in the Light of *Amoris Laetitia*

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Abstract

This article examines the integral role of Emotional Intelligence (EI) within family life, contextualized through the teachings of Pope Francis in *Amoris Laetitia*. Describing family as the primary environment for emotional learning, the study emphasizes the necessity for family members to recognize, understand, and regulate their emotions to foster healthier interpersonal relationships. Drawing on foundational theories of EI as proposed by researchers the article outlines key components of EI, such as emotional self-awareness, emotion management, and empathy, which collectively enhance family dynamics. Furthermore, it addresses the challenges that families face in cultivating EI, including societal pressures, cultural influences, and communication barriers, which can impede emotional growth and stability. Through the integration of EI strategies, including effective communication and conflict resolution, the article proposes actionable frameworks for families to improve emotional connectivity and resilience. Ultimately, it illustrates how the principles of EI can not only enrich family relationships but also contribute to the holistic emotional well-being of all members, thereby fulfilling the vision presented in *Amoris Laetitia*.

Keywords: *Amoris Laetitia*, Emotional Intelligence, Challenges, Application, Family Life

Introduction

Family life is considered the first school of emotional learning (Goleman, 1995, p. 216) it is in family that one learns to feel about self and think of others reaction about one's behavior and feelings. But, often family members' ability to identify their own emotions may be a concern in reference to emotional intelligence (EI). Family as a unit should be able to identify and express the feelings of their members while also being aware of their own, in accordance with the concept of EI. Family members can develop wonderful relationships by showing understanding and compassion for others. Every family member need to take ownership of their own well-being before they can learn to regulate their emotions under any situation. Therefore, it is recognized that EI is a critical ability that impacts family members' interpersonal and personal welfare. Within the family, it is encouraged to recognize, understand, and regulate one's own emotions as well as those of other family members. Developing emotional intelligence leads to two benefits for the family: better communication within the family and a healthier family environment. Pope Francis' teachings, particularly those included in his apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love), placed a strong emphasis on love, compassion, and emotional growth within the family. This article aims to cover the basic components of EI, the challenges families face in developing it, and applications of EI supported by Gottman's observations and Goleman's theory of EI. The concepts of EI, the challenges of family life, and the application of EI in a family setting make up the three sections of this article.

The Concept of Emotional Intelligence

The term "emotional intelligence" is derived from the words *emotion* and *intelligence*, both together refers to any agitation or disturbance of the mind, feeling, passion, or any other state of mind. Nonetheless, emotional states like as rage, despair, fear, joy, trust, surprise, contempt, guilt, and so forth are considered experienced (Goleman, 1995, p. 331-332). Author of the 1995 book *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*, psychologist and behavioral science writer Daniel Goleman, the father of emotional intelligence described EI, as the ability to control one's pulse and postpone pleasure; to manage one's feelings and prevent distress from overwhelming one's capacity for thought; to sympathize and to hope are the better qualities (Goleman, 1995, p. 35). The broader understanding of EI would be the

aptitude, talent, skill, or self-perceived ability to recognize, evaluate, and control one's own emotions, others, and groups (Serrat, 2017, p. 320). Thus, emotionally intelligent people are able to perceive other people's emotions as well as know themselves better. It must be noted that EI is often measured as an emotional intelligence quotient (EQ). The following components of EI will help simplify the concept.

The five key component of EI was stated by researchers to prove that emotional intelligence is possible and that it can benefit self and family life by knowing one's emotions, managing one's own emotion, motivating oneself, recognizing emotions in others, and handling relationships (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p.189). On one hand the first three components determine how to manage self, it depends on personal competence, and on the other hand the last two components are determined how one handles relationships depending on social competence:

Emotional Self-Awareness

Gaining emotional self-awareness is an essential first step in becoming emotionally intelligent (Goleman, 1995, p. 46). Understanding and awareness of one's own emotions, a precise self-evaluation based on knowledge of one's strengths and limitations, and self-assurance in one's own abilities and worth are all components of emotional self-awareness. EI is based on self-awareness, which enables people to identify their emotions and comprehend how they affect their actions (Goleman, 1995, p. 326). Additionally, it enables members of the family to examine their emotional states and react to circumstances with more clarity and good intentions. A family with EI is able to recognize, and comprehend the impact of their emotions in their daily life that gradually transform the family.

Managing Emotions

After family members become conscious of their emotions, the next step is for them to appropriately control or manage it. Controlling one's own spontaneous emotional reactions, managing stress and annoyance, maintaining composure under pressure, and maintaining a positive outlook in the face of challenging familial situations are all examples of emotional regulation (Goleman, 1995, p. 326). Families benefit from self-regulation because it fosters a peaceful environment in which emotions may be constructively addressed by maintaining standards of honesty and integrity, taking responsibility for personal

performance, flexibility in handling change, and welcoming new innovations (Goleman, 1998, p. 26) In short, it's simply the ability to direct negative emotions toward the goal of eventually attaining positive outcomes.

Harnessing Emotions Productively

Managing emotions well entails self-motivation within the framework of EI and a commitment to working toward the family's objectives. Families with greater EI are more adept at establishing and achieving goals, and they maintain their commitment even in the face of challenges within the family. Members of emotionally intelligent families are better at identifying and controlling their emotions (Goleman, 1995, p. 327). This constructive use of emotions creates a supportive atmosphere where family members help one another in maintaining focus on goals in spite of obstacles that may come up. Family members use their EI, for example, to work through problems like financial hardship or interpersonal disputes as a group, strengthening their relationship and will to succeed. Resistant families, which are necessary for conquering challenges, are those that actively practice emotional regulation during trying times. This ability to bounce back from setbacks and go forward together is a result of knowing and feeling each family member's emotional needs.

Empathy

The capacity to comprehend and identify other people's feelings is known as empathy. Taking for granted the one has high EI does not guarantee high in empathy. It calls for leaning and practice (Goleman, 1991, p. 25) However, a family member with high EI can effectively read the thoughts and feelings of other family members, enabling them to forge deeper, more fulfilling bonds with one another. By observing non-verbal indicators like body language, tone of voice, and facial expressions, they can also distinguish between real and fake emotions. Empathy fosters stronger connections and increases understanding and support within the family by stressing the value of empathy in parenting, supporting, recognizing and respecting kids' feelings, and fostering emotional development (Gottman, 2015, p. 25) Members of a family can work together cohesively toward shared goals by learning to really support one another by active listening and empathy.

Handling Relationships

Another word for relationship management is social skills. It is adeptness at inducing desirable responses in others by means of influence, communication, managing conflict, effective leadership in inspiring, nurturing relationships, and having shared goals with others (Goleman 1998, p. 27). In a family setting, social skills are especially crucial for productive partnerships and interpersonal interactions. Members who are identified as having good social abilities, such as the capacity to build relationships with both family members and individuals outside of their immediate circle, they are social stars.

Challenges of Developing Emotional Intelligence in Family Life

In the recent times there is a tremendous technical progress and development but at the cost of diminishing family values like fidelity, integrity and empathy. In a family, relationships, communication, and general well-being are all impacted by emotional intelligence. Pope Francis observations on the importance of EI without mentioning it directly he strongly emphasized on the role that EI plays in comprehending the emotional dynamics of family relationships. The post-synodal apostolic exhortation promotes constructive communication, family bonds in isolation (*Amoris Laetitia*, #32-33), and empathy in marriages by helping partners identify both good and negative emotions. The Apostolic Exhortation emphasizes that love is an active process that changes over time, requiring partners to establish common objectives and reaffirm their commitments (*Amoris Laetitia*, #131). This will not only improves marriages but lays the groundwork for raising emotionally competent kids, grand-parents, in-laws, and relatives in the extended family. Even though EI building blocks are necessary for fostering familial ties, a number of obstacles prevent EI from developing in the setting of family life, which has a substantial impact on relationships and happiness overall. These difficulties are related to a lack of awareness, interpersonal communication, parental attitude toward emotion, cultural influences, and societal pressures.

Lack of Awareness and Understanding

There's a chance that many parents don't fully comprehend their feelings and know how to express them. As children become smarter in IQ, their EI gradually declines. Perhaps the parents and even teachers complain that present generation of children are more emotionally immature. Therefore, children are becoming more impulsive and

violent, more anxious and prone to worry, more irrational and agitated, and more lonely and miserable (Goleman, 1998, p. 11). Children learn by watching their parents' emotional reactions, when parents lack emotional literacy it can restrict the development of self-regulation abilities in the family collectively.

Lack of Emotional Education

Many families do not have the resources or understanding needed to support emotional education. Families frequently experience feelings of abandonment as a result of the church's lack of concern and care (*Amoris Laetitia*, #43). Family members may not know how to express their emotions or encourage one another as a result of this deficit, it can cause misunderstandings and improperly handled emotions. Concerning this fact the value of emotional coaching and notes that parents who minimize or invalidate their children's feelings are impeding the growth of emotional intelligence in their own children (Gottman, 2015, p. 124). One of the biggest obstacles is the absence schooling the emotions in challenging situations in the early years of the siblings. However, with the advance in age and experience a considerable knowledge is acquired with adequate skills. But lack of emotional literacy has been the cause of many broken families.

Communication Barriers

Members who possess EI can express their emotions honestly and listen to one another with empathy. On the other hand, a couple's relationship crisis can upset the balance of the family, resulting in arguments and separation. The reason for most marriage therapy fails due to communication barriers preventing resolution to conflicts (Gottman, 2015, p. 10). Emotionally candid conversations are crucial, but they can be challenging to maintain when relationships are tense. Besides, obstacles like generational disparities may make communication difficult. For example, elder generations can view emotional conversations as feeble or superfluous, which could result in a lack of candor and emotional expression within the family.

Parental Attitude towards Emotions

Emotions and feelings are intrinsic and unique to each individual in the family setup (*Amoris Laetitia*, on.143). Parental attitudes and reactions to their emotions as the guardians of the family have a big impact on how emotionally mature kids grow up. EI development may be hampered by immature particular parenting approaches. Parents

that are emotion dismissing for example, minimize or disregard their children's emotions (Goleman, 1995, p. 217), seeing them as issues that need to be resolved quickly, denying their kids of the chance to process and grow from their emotions. In some of the conservative cultural family hold that expressing emotions are not appreciated and children and the adults of such background may suffer from depression in contrary to the fact that emotional wellbeing is based on EI and its competence (Basumatary & Paluri, 2022, p. x).

Societal Pressures

Emotional development is not often prioritized by families due to societal expectations. Marriage and starting a family may be put off by many young individuals due to financial constraints and a fear of being committed. The lack of emotional skill development required to support strong family interactions may result from this cultural disengagement (*Amoris Laetitia*, #33). The development of EI requires strong relational structures and emotional support, but they are frequently compromised by a larger cultural emphasis on autonomy rather than community. Families find it challenging to prioritize emotional ties in today's fast-paced society, which frequently values autonomy. Such stresses have the potential to impair open communication and cause a lack of emotional awareness, both of which are necessary for the development of EI. Therefore, family members find it difficult to communicate their feelings and those of others effectively.

Cultural Influences

Family relations and the growth of emotional intelligence are significantly impacted by cultural trends. In the recent times the trend seems to be more individualistic rather than commutative. All family ties are left up to the whims of individual preferences and life events (*Amoris Laetitia*, #34). Families find it difficult to foster emotional support and understanding among its members due to the growing independence and underlying volatility in interpersonal interactions. Emotional communication becomes more difficult by complex family development, such as easy divorce and family disintegration. Different expectations, backgrounds, and unresolved past grievances are some examples of factors that cause conflict and results in emotional misinterpretation and stress.

Applications of Emotional Intelligence in Family Life

Pope Francis makes a compelling case for Christians' need to control their emotions. Does this imply, however, that "emotional control" does not include suppressing, denying, or failing to acknowledge one's own feelings? It entails having awareness of one's emotions and the ability to decide how to react in the most healthy way when faced with such emotions (Francis, 2013). Enhancing communication, handling conflict, and building connections are just a few of the ways that integrating EI into family life may foster growth and enhance relationships. Combining the ideas from the founding fathers of EI with the teachings found in *Amoris Laetitia* results in a comprehensive understanding of how emotional intelligence might be actualized within familial connections. The sections that follow go about applying EI inside the family. Creating shared experiences, controlling stress and socio-cultural demands, enhancing marital communication tactics, cultivating emotional intelligence in the provision of care, and emotion coaching approaches are a few of these.

Communication Strategies

Open communication is necessary to foster emotional intelligence in families. A forum for open communication about emotions and worries is provided by scheduling frequent family check-ins or meetings. This practice resonates with Pope Francis' teachings, which highlight the importance of courteous and transparent communication in fostering stronger familial relationships, as it promotes active listening and dialogue. As the document states that the family is the fundamental socialization setting since it is here that people learn how to interact to others, listen and share, be patient and respectful, support one another, and live as a unit (*Amoris Laetitia*, #276). Actively listening to family members affirms their significance and validates their sentiments, which strengthens the bonds between them. Adopting direct communication techniques, employing "I feel" statements, and practicing non-verbal signs like eye contact and open body language can all be beneficial to families. In order to foster a deeper level of understanding and connection goes on to emphasize the importance of couples creating love maps, which are mental outlines of each other's life and worries (Gottman, 2015, p. 37). The basis for a healthier family dynamic is laid by open communication techniques, which further foster an environment in which each family member feels respected and valued.

Communication strategies also include feeling, expressing, nurturing love in a marriage or family life, and dialogue is crucial. Adults and children, men and women, communicate in different ways. They have distinct speech patterns and behavioral patterns. It will rely on how questions are asked and answered, as well as on other elements that shape communication, like timing and voice tone. As such, in order to show affection and promote sincere communication, specific attitudes are needed (*Amoris Laetitia*, #136). As the fundamental components that allow couples to communicate effectively is self-awareness and social skills. Deeper understanding and empathy during conversations are made possible by emotional awareness, which enables partners to recognize their own sentiments as well as those of their spouses and kids. Emotionally intelligent couples are able to identify and react to each other's feelings in a way that creates a supportive atmosphere by having honest conversations about their needs and feelings, and improve their marital satisfaction. Effective communication is crucial for resolving conflicts and providing emotional support.

Conflict Resolution Strategies

While acknowledging the conflicting conditions that arise in marriage, the Church cannot help but speak up for the most vulnerable: the children who suffer in silence most of the time (*Amoris Laetitia*, #245). By knowing how to properly control one's own emotions as well as those of others is essential for settling conflicts and avoid suffering in the family circle. Healthy conversations can result from identifying emotional clues and being aware of one's reactions. According to researchers, emotionally intelligent couples are better able to handle disagreement in a constructive way (Gottman, 2015, p.138) and stay away from negative behaviors like criticism and defensiveness. In this process they learn how to solve problems together, developing empathy, active listening, nonviolence communication, and mutual respect between parties during arguments is just as important to the effectiveness of conflict resolution as addressing the original issue with solution-focused environment.

Emotion Coaching Techniques

In order to help family members learn how to recognize and control their emotions, one must be aware that "prudence, good judgment and common sense are dependent not on purely quantitative growth factors, but rather on a whole series of things that come together deep within each person" (*Amoris Laetitia*, #262). Such awareness will

accelerate a success in mastering managing emotions. The essential components that make up emotion coaching are identifying a one's emotions, using them as a teaching tool, empathic listening, validating emotions, and assisting others in labeling their feelings. In addition to improving parent-child relationships, this approach will help kids and adults become emotionally literate. In order to promote emotional development, parents who engage in emotion coaching can provide a secure platform in which their kids can express their emotions.

Cultivating Emotional Awareness in Caregiving

Emotional intelligence is the ability to identify one's own feelings as well as those of others, to motivate self, and to control one's own and other people's emotions (Goleman, 1998, p. 317). Being emotionally aware is what it means to be a caretaker. Emotional awareness improves a caregiver's capacity to control their own emotions while being sensitive to the emotional states of people they look after. Self-awareness comes first and it is fundamental to psychological insight (Goleman, 1995, p. 60). This understanding, for instance, enables caretakers to respond more compassionately to the emotional needs of their loved ones and to offer better emotional support. Understanding EI helps caregivers overcome obstacles, prevent compassion fatigue, and create constructive relationships that are advantageous to both the caregiver and the person they are caring for. The ability to control one's emotions while being sensitive to the emotional needs of the person receiving care is a crucial component of EI in caregiving. Subsequently, that enables the caregiver to see how the law harvest operates in the family life (Chattopadhyay, 2006, p. 129). The capacity of caregivers is to offer their loved ones compassionate and efficient support that can be further improved by promoting emotional awareness through self-care activities.

Building Shared Experiences

Family members should spend regular quality time together by participating in rituals and sharing stories that can generate a sense of community and understanding. Family dinners, game evenings, or group projects are examples of these shared experiences that strengthen emotional ties and raise emotional consciousness among all involved. Families may foster a supportive atmosphere where everyone feels heard and respected by purposefully giving priority to shared experiences, which improves emotional well-being in general. This family project is crucial because there is a familial connection.

The energetic connections that bind the family members have great range of effects on their physical body (Henderson, 2015, p. 183). Physical illnesses sometimes reveal the emotional wounds that can only be rectified by building shared experiences. Similarly, the families often experience problems when one of their members is emotionally immature because he or she still bears the scars of earlier painful experiences (*Amoris Laetitia*, #239). Such experiences will require reconciliation and healing among the members of the family. Thus building shared experience can be an effective platform for solving unresolved issues.

Managing Cultural Pressure and Stress

Emotional intelligence is measured with the competence with regard to self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills for handling emotions (Goleman, 1998, p. 317). The level of cultural pressure and stress holds good only to the level of competence lacking in the person. The culture of extreme individualism, fear of loneliness (*Amoris Laetitia*, #33-34) can be managed by cultural activities like dance, yoga, meditations and so on. Dance therapy is intended to employ dance as a psychotherapy tool to enhance the integration of emotions, social interactions, cognition, and body. Dance therapy has been proven to have a very positive impact on interpersonal skills (Samuel, 2022, p. 13). Similarly, yoga performs the cycle of emotional release a perfect tool in managing the cultural pressures and stress (Henderson, 2015, p. 110). Family and group activities promote a loving atmosphere where all family members' feelings are respected. Families become more skilled at managing outside pressures, lowering stress levels, and boosting themselves by cultivating emotional skills and become emotionally intelligent.

Conclusion

This article emphasizes the crucial role of Emotional Intelligence (EI) in family life, drawing on Pope Francis's insights from *Amoris Laetitia*. It highlights that the family is a primary environment for emotional development, where recognizing, understanding, and regulating emotions are essential for strong relationships. By integrating EI theories with moral and ethical perspectives, this study shows how emotional awareness, regulation, and empathy enhance communication and satisfaction within families. It also addresses challenges like societal pressures and cultural expectations, advocating for a proactive approach to nurturing EI. The article provides practical frameworks,

such as nurturing effective communication and empathy, which families can adopt to strengthen their emotional bonds. Ultimately, it concludes that cultivating EI not only improves relationships but also contributes to overall emotional health, aligning with *Amoris Laetitia's* vision of resilient, nurturing family structures that adopt long-term emotional stability and fulfilment.

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