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AFFECTIVE INTELLIGENCE: COGNITIVE-EMOTIONAL ARCHITECTURE OF INTERSUBJECTIVE COHERENCE

INTELIGÊNCIA AFETIVA: ARQUITETURA COGNITIVO-EMOCIONAL DA COERÊNCIA INTERSUBJETIVA

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Affective Intelligence: Cognitive-Emotional Architecture of Intersubjective Coherence

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ABSTRACT

This article proposes the concept of Affective Intelligence (AI) as a distinct neurofunctional capacity responsible for the integration of affective states into processes of judgment, action, and applied morality. AI is not limited to emotional regulation but encompasses the ability to incorporate emotions into reasoning and complex social interaction. The neurobiological foundation of AI lies in the synergy between cortical and subcortical systems, including the orbitofrontal cortex, ventromedial prefrontal cortex, anterior cingulate cortex, temporoparietal junction, and anterior insula. The functional architecture of AI involves the integration rather than suppression of emotions, empathic proactivity, intrapersonal and interpersonal coherence, and moral affective signaling. This work delineates the concept of AI in relation to emotional intelligence and empathy, exploring its clinical, social, and cognitive implications. It concludes that AI broadens the paradigm of human cognition, integrating emotion, morality, and social adaptability into a structuring function.

Keywords: affective intelligence, neuroscience, emotions, morality, social cognition

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Inteligência Afetiva: Arquitetura Cognitivo-Emocional da Coerência Intersubjetiva

RESUMO

Este artigo propõe o conceito de Inteligência Afetiva (IA) como uma capacidade neurofuncional distinta, responsável pela integração de estados afetivos nos processos de julgamento, ação e moralidade aplicada. A IA não se limita à regulação emocional, mas engloba a competência de incorporar emoções ao raciocínio e à interação social complexa. A fundamentação neurobiológica da IA reside na sinergia entre sistemas corticais e subcorticais, incluindo o córtex orbitofrontal, córtex ventromedial pré-frontal, córtex cingulado anterior, junção temporoparietal e ínsula anterior. A arquitetura funcional da IA envolve a integração e não supressão das emoções, a proatividade empática, a coerência intrapessoal e interpessoal, e a sinalização afetiva moral. Este trabalho delimita o conceito de IA em relação à inteligência emocional e à empatia, explorando suas implicações clínicas, sociais e cognitivas. Conclui-se que a IA amplia o paradigma da cognição humana, integrando emoção, moralidade e adaptabilidade social em uma função estruturante.

Palavras-chave: inteligência afetiva, neurociência, emoções, moralidade, cognição social

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Inteligencia Afectiva: Arquitectura Cognitivo-Emocional de la Coherencia Intersubjetiva

RESUMEN

Este artículo propone el concepto de Inteligencia Afectiva (IA) como una capacidad neurofuncional distinta, responsable de la integración de estados afectivos en los procesos de juicio, acción y moralidad aplicada. La IA no se limita a la regulación emocional, sino que abarca la competencia de incorporar emociones al razonamiento y a la interacción social compleja. La fundamentación neurobiológica de la IA reside en la sinergia entre sistemas corticales y subcorticales, incluyendo el córtex orbitofrontal, córtex ventromedial prefrontal, córtex cingulado anterior, la unión temporoparietal y la ínsula anterior. La arquitectura funcional de la IA involucra la integración y no supresión de las emociones, la proactividad empática, la coherencia intrapersonal e interpersonal, y la señalización afectiva moral. Este trabajo delimita el concepto de IA en relación con la inteligencia emocional y la empatía, explorando sus implicaciones clínicas, sociales y cognitivas. Se concluye que la IA amplía el paradigma de la cognición humana, integrando emoción, moralidad y adaptabilidad social en una función estructurante.

Palabras clave: inteligencia afectiva, neurociencia, emociones, moralidad, cognición social

INTRODUCTION

Understanding human intelligence has proven to be a vast and complex field, with diverse theoretical perspectives and explanatory models. Traditionally, intelligence has been defined as the ability to reason, solve problems, learn, and adapt to new situations. However, this view, focused primarily on cognitive and logical abilities, consistently neglects the crucial role of emotions and affects in shaping human behavior.

Historically, the focus on cognitive abilities measurable through Intelligence Quotient (IQ) tests has dominated intelligence research. Brain structures such as the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (DLPFC) and frontoparietal networks have been identified as essential neural substrates for intelligence, fueling the belief that rationality and logic were the cornerstones of higher cognition. However, this dichotomous approach, which separates reason from emotion, has proven limiting in understanding the complexity of adaptive human behavior.

The study of emotions, in turn, has progressed significantly, culminating in the popularization of the concept of Emotional Intelligence (EI) by Daniel Goleman. EI, defined as the ability to recognize, manage, and understand one's own emotions and the emotions of others, has highlighted the importance of the affective world for personal and professional success. Although EI represents an important advance, it focuses primarily on intrapersonal emotional regulation, without comprehensively addressing the functional integration of emotions into moral judgment and social decision-making processes.

More comprehensive models, such as Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences and Rodrigues's (2022) Development of Wide Regions of Intellectual Interference (DWRI) model, have expanded the concept of intelligence to include abilities such as interpersonal intelligence and subjective creativity. However, there remains a need for a stand-alone construct specifically dedicated to the functional integration of emotions as an essential component of human intelligence: Affective Intelligence (AI).

Affective Intelligence, as proposed in this article, goes beyond simple emotional regulation. It refers to the neurofunctional capacity to integrate affective states into processes of judgment, action, and applied morality, allowing emotions to act as important guides for ethical and socially responsible decision-

making. AI recognizes that emotions are not mere "noise" that interfere with rationality, but rather crucial information that can enrich the decision-making process, leading to more adaptive choices aligned with individual and social values.

The relevance of Affective Intelligence becomes even more evident in an increasingly complex and interconnected world, where social interactions require a deep understanding of emotional nuances and the ability to respond empathetically and altruistically. Leaders, educators, healthcare professionals, and all those seeking to build healthy relationships and promote social well-being need to develop Affective Intelligence to successfully navigate the complexities of modern life.

Therefore, this article aims to investigate the concept of Affective Intelligence in depth, examining its neurobiological foundations, functional architecture, clinical, social, and cognitive implications, and its relationship with other constructs such as Emotional Intelligence and empathy. We believe that understanding Affective Intelligence can significantly contribute to the advancement of neuroscience, psychology, and education, as well as provide valuable insights for promoting a more just, compassionate, and empathetic society.

Throughout this article, we will demonstrate that Affective Intelligence is not just an interesting addition to the field of human intelligence, but rather an essential element for understanding social cognition, morality, and adaptive behavior. By including emotions as a core component of intelligence, we can develop a more complete and accurate view of human potential and build a future where reason and emotion work together for individual and collective well-being.

It's also crucial to emphasize that Affective Intelligence, by promoting coherence between what one feels, thinks, and does, contributes to identity stability and moral reliability, essential elements for building healthy relationships and creating a more just and equitable society. Individuals with high Affective Intelligence are able to make decisions that consider the emotional impact of their actions on others, making them more effective leaders, more caring parents, and more responsible citizens.

In short, Affective Intelligence represents a new paradigm in the understanding of human intelligence, which recognizes the relevance of emotions as an essential factor in social cognition, morality and adaptive behavior.

In this context, this article aims to delve deeper into Affective Intelligence, exploring its neurobiological foundations, functional architecture, clinical, social, and cognitive implications, and its relationship with other constructs such as Emotional Intelligence and empathy. We believe that understanding Affective Intelligence can significantly contribute to the advancement of neuroscience, psychology, and education, as well as provide valuable insights for promoting a more just, compassionate, and empathetic society.

In this way, we will delve into a detailed analysis of Affective Intelligence, seeking to unravel its underlying mechanisms and behavioral manifestations, with the aim of providing a solid foundation for future research and practical applications. We believe that Affective Intelligence has the potential to transform how we understand ourselves and others, and to empower us to build a more connected, compassionate, and just world.

Objectives

General Objective

Analyze Affective Intelligence as a distinct neurofunctional construct, exploring its neurobiological foundation, functional architecture, and implications for social cognition, morality, and adaptive behavior.

Specific Objectives

1. Identify and describe the brain areas and neural circuits involved in Affective Intelligence, including the orbitofrontal cortex, ventromedial prefrontal cortex, anterior cingulate cortex, temporoparietal junction, and anterior insula.

2. Elucidate the functional architecture of Affective Intelligence, detailing the processes of emotional integration, empathic proactivity, intrapersonal and interpersonal coherence, and moral affective signaling.

3. Discuss the clinical, social, and cognitive implications of Affective Intelligence, including its relationship to psychopathology, education, leadership, and subjective creativity.

Literature Review

The quest for a comprehensive understanding of human intelligence has led researchers from various fields to explore the complex interactions between cognition and emotion. Traditionally, intelligence

was viewed as a solely rational capacity, focused on solving logical problems and adapting to the environment. However, this view has proven incomplete, as it neglects the fundamental role of emotions and affects in shaping human behavior and decision-making.

The concept of Emotional Intelligence (EI), popularized by Daniel Goleman, represented an important milestone in the appreciation of emotions as an essential component of intelligence. Goleman (1995) defined EI as the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions and the emotions of others, highlighting its importance for personal and professional success. EI has been associated with a number of positive outcomes, such as better job performance, healthier relationships, and greater psychological well-being (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2008).

However, EI focuses primarily on intrapersonal emotion regulation, without comprehensively addressing the functional integration of emotions into moral judgment and social decision-making processes. Furthermore, some critics argue that EI is a vague and ill-defined construct that overlaps with other personality traits, such as extraversion and conscientiousness (Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade, 2008).

In contrast, moral neuroscience has demonstrated that emotions play a crucial role in ethical decision-making. Studies of patients with lesions in the ventromedial prefrontal cortex (vmPFC) and orbitofrontal cortex (OFC) have revealed that these brain regions are essential for integrating emotions into moral judgment. Patients with lesions in these areas exhibit cold utilitarian behavior, characterized by an inability to make fair decisions or decisions that are sensitive to the suffering of others (Koenigs, Young, & Adolphs, 2007).

The temporoparietal junction (TPJ), in turn, has been identified as a brain region fundamental to theory of mind—the ability to understand the mental states of others. Activation of the TPJ is directly associated with understanding others as subjects with autonomous intentionality (Schurz et al., 2014). This ability is essential for empathy and social decision-making that takes into account the needs and feelings of others.

The anterior insula, another brain region important for Affective Intelligence, is responsible for integrating internal body perception (interoception) with emotional awareness. The anterior insula plays a fundamental role in building affective self-awareness consistent with practical empathy (Craig, 2009). Its joint activation with the anterior cingulate cortex (ACC) forms the salience network, which guides

attentional focus to emotionally relevant information, especially in complex social situations (Seeley et al., 2007).

The anterior cingulate cortex (ACC) plays a role in resolving conflicts between emotion and logic and is involved in detecting moral dissonance and making decisions under affective ambiguity (Shackman et al., 2011). The ACC integrates emotional and cognitive information to guide behavior in situations that require careful assessment of the emotional and moral consequences of actions.

The DWRI (Development of Wide Regions of Intellectual Interference) model proposed by Rodrigues (2022) had already emphasized the importance of cross-activation of multiple functional nuclei for the development of full intelligence. According to this model, intelligence is not limited to logical reasoning but also encompasses subjective creativity, empathy, and the ability to adapt to complex contexts.

Recent studies on leadership and creativity have shown that the ability to anticipate others' emotional reactions, act with affective responsibility, and maintain subjective coherence with the group is associated with more sustainable and innovative results (Brackett, Rivers, & Salovey, 2011). Leaders with high Affective Intelligence are better able to inspire trust, motivate their teams, and create a positive and productive work environment.

In summary, the literature review indicates that the neurofunctional components of Affective Intelligence are already understood separately. What we propose with this article is the unification of these systems into a legitimate, autonomous, and measurable cognitive function, focused on ethical coexistence, subjective creativity, and complex adaptive action. We believe that Affective Intelligence represents a new paradigm in the understanding of human intelligence, recognizing the importance of emotions as an essential agent of social cognition, morality, and adaptive behavior.

In this context, Affective Intelligence differs from emotional intelligence (Salovey, Mayer, & Caruso, 2002) in that it is not limited to the perception and regulation of emotions, but rather actively integrates them into decision-making and moral judgment. Affective Intelligence also differs from empathy (Decety & Jackson, 2004), which can be a passive or reactive emotional response to social stimuli, while AI involves proactive and intentional action based on understanding others' emotions.

Furthermore, Affective Intelligence is distinct from affective decision-making (Koenigs, Kruepke, & Newman, 2010), which can occur even in individuals with dysfunctional morality, influencing choices

despite ethical deficits. Affective Intelligence, in turn, presupposes a solid ethical foundation and a commitment to social well-being, guiding decision-making toward fair and equitable outcomes.

Therefore, Affective Intelligence represents a groundbreaking synthesis of concepts and discoveries from different fields of neuroscience, psychology, and philosophy, which seeks to provide a more complete and accurate understanding of the complexity of human intelligence. We believe that Affective Intelligence has the potential to transform how we understand ourselves and others, and to prepare us to build a more connected, compassionate, and just world.

METHODOLOGY

This article adopts a theoretical and exploratory approach, based on a comprehensive review of the scientific literature on intelligence, emotions, moral neuroscience, and social cognition. The methodology used involved the following steps:

1. Literature Review: Systematic searches in databases such as PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, using terms such as "emotional intelligence," "moral neuroscience," "social cognition," "empathy," "affective decision-making," and "prefrontal cortex."

2. Article Selection and Evaluation: Critical analysis of the identified articles, based on criteria of relevance, methodological quality, and scientific rigor. Prioritization of empirical studies, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses.

3. Synthesis and Integration of Results: Identification of patterns, convergences, and divergences in the results of the analyzed studies. Construction of an integrative theoretical model of Affective Intelligence, based on findings from neuroscience and psychology.

4. Conceptual Delimitation: Clear and precise definition of the concept of Affective Intelligence, distinguishing it from other related constructs, such as emotional intelligence, empathy, and affective decision-making.

5. Discussion of Implications: Exploration of the clinical, social, and cognitive implications of Affective Intelligence, based on scientific literature and theoretical reflections.

6. Elaboration of Conclusions: Synthesis of the main findings of the study and presentation of perspectives for future research and practical applications of Affective Intelligence.

The selected articles were analyzed qualitatively, focusing on identifying the neurobiological mechanisms underlying Affective Intelligence, describing its functional architecture, and discussing its implications for human behavior and society. The results were interpreted from an interdisciplinary perspective, integrating insights from neuroscience, psychology, philosophy, and education.

DISCUSSION

This proposal for Affective Intelligence (AI) seeks to fill a gap in the literature by offering a construct that integrates cognition and emotion more comprehensively and functionally than traditional approaches. Unlike emotional intelligence, which focuses primarily on regulating emotions, AI proposes that emotions can and should be integrated into decision-making and moral judgment, enriching and making them more adaptive.

The neurobiological foundation of AI, based on the synergy between cortical and subcortical systems, such as the orbitofrontal cortex, ventromedial prefrontal cortex, anterior cingulate cortex, temporoparietal junction, and anterior insula, provides a solid foundation for understanding the neural mechanisms underlying the integration of emotion and cognition. These brain areas, together, enable individuals to assess the emotional impact of their actions on others, make decisions that consider social well-being, and act ethically and responsibly.

The functional architecture of AI, which involves the integration rather than suppression of emotions, empathic proactivity, intrapersonal and interpersonal coherence, and moral affective signaling, describes the cognitive and emotional processes that allow individuals to use emotions as a guide to action. Empathic proactivity, for example, involves the ability to anticipate the emotional reactions of others and act in ways that avoid causing harm or suffering.

Intrapersonal and interpersonal coherence, in turn, refers to the ability to align one's feelings, thoughts, and actions, acting authentically and in accordance with one's values. This coherence is essential for building healthy relationships and maintaining moral integrity.

Finally, affective moral signaling involves the ability to use emotions as a feedback system to evaluate the morality of an action. This signaling can involve feelings of guilt, shame, or remorse when an action is considered morally wrong, or feelings of pride, satisfaction, or joy when an action is considered morally right.

AI is distinct from empathy, which can be a passive or reactive emotional response to social stimuli, while AI involves proactive and intentional action based on understanding others' emotions. Furthermore, AI is distinct from affective decision-making, which can occur even in individuals with dysfunctional morality, influencing choices despite ethical deficits. AI, in turn, presupposes a solid ethical foundation and a commitment to social well-being, guiding decision-making toward fair and equitable outcomes.

The clinical implications of IA are significant, as low levels of IA are associated with a range of psychopathologies, such as compensatory narcissism, functional alexithymia, and externalizing disorders. Therefore, assessing IA can be useful in the diagnosis and treatment of these conditions.

The social consequences of AI are also important, since AI is the foundation of mature moral judgment. AI development should be encouraged in educational settings through the analysis of real-life dilemmas, empathetic accountability, and the reinforcement of others' perspectives.

Ultimately, AI's cognitive inferences are relevant to understanding leadership and subjective creativity. Leaders with high AI are better able to create sustainable solutions in complex human contexts, and subjective creativity depends on sensitivity to human aspects and consequences, not just logical originality.

Finally, AI represents a new way of thinking about human intelligence, one that recognizes the importance of emotions as an essential element of social cognition, morality, and adaptive behavior.

It's important to emphasize that Affective Intelligence isn't limited to mere emotional "sensitivity," but involves a complex set of cognitive and emotional skills that enable individuals to understand, evaluate, and utilize emotions effectively in various situations. AI empowers individuals to make more informed decisions, build healthier relationships, and contribute to a more just and equitable society.

Furthermore, Affective Intelligence is not a fixed and immutable trait, but rather a capacity that can be developed and honed throughout life. Through education, practice, and reflection, individuals can learn to integrate emotions into their decision-making process, develop empathy, and act more ethically and responsibly.

AI, therefore, represents a promising path for promoting individual and collective well-being and deserves to be explored in depth by scientific research and educational and social practices. By

recognizing and valuing the importance of emotions, we can build a more connected, compassionate, and just world.

Intelligence, in its functional totality, is best understood when considering both IQ and Affective Intelligence (AI). The higher both are, the more functional and comprehensive an individual's intelligence. Therefore, intelligence is not simply the result of psychometric scores, but of a neurofunctional integration that allows for coherence between logic, affectivity, creativity, and adaptability.

Having a high IQ but low affective intelligence corresponds to the partial development of certain cognitive domains, which prevents comprehensive brain homeostasis. It's a fragmented, non-linear intelligence that compromises adaptive and social efficiency.

It's crucial to consider what we truly value: possessing high specific cognitive abilities with high affective intelligence, even without formal giftedness, or having psychometric giftedness (IQ ≥ 130) with low affective intelligence and interpersonal maladjustment. The goal should be the DWRI standard: high brain connectivity, high IQ, equally high affective intelligence, with neurofunctional homeostasis above the linear average.

In a hypothetical example of a linear distribution for homeostasis (IQ + AI combined):

• Linear 5: IQ 5 + AI 5 → average functional threshold

• Linear 8: IQ 8 + AI 8 → high adaptive functionality

• Linear 10: IQ 10 + AI 10 → DWRI pattern (high intellectual interference with affective balance)

Maladjustments arise when there is disparity:

• IQ 5 + AI 3 → low affective interference: relational instability, low impact

• IQ 8 + AI 10 → highly adaptive functional intelligence, even without formal giftedness

In the graphical interpretation of the DWRI model, full intelligence is manifested when the IQ curve follows the AI curve in ascending linear parallelism. The greater the congruence between the two variables, the greater the overall efficiency of the mind, which characterizes true intelligence according to the DWRI model.

CONCLUSION

This study proposed the concept of Affective Intelligence as a distinct neurofunctional capacity responsible for integrating affective states into processes of judgment, action, and applied morality. AI is not limited to emotional regulation but encompasses the ability to incorporate emotions into reasoning and complex social interaction.

Future validation of this concept requires empirical studies with functional brain mapping, genetic analysis of correlation with practical empathy traits, and differentiation of functional connectivity patterns in individuals with different levels of IA.

Affective Intelligence is the neurofunctional capacity to integrate emotions with cognition to act with intersubjective coherence, anticipating social impacts and making ethical decisions based on understanding the other as a legitimate part of the decision-making process itself.

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