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## Managing social intelligence from the perspective of optimising labour market pricing

**Abstract.** The objective assessment of their labour value by future employers is a pressing concern for all students and graduates of higher education institutions. Young people frequently overestimate their salary expectations, leading to substandard service provision, or conversely, accept low-paying jobs resulting in emotional burnout due to lack of motivation. The purpose of this study was to identify how students with developed social intelligence assess their earnings prospects during their studies, in the first years after graduation and in adulthood. For this, a survey of students was conducted using the TROMSØ test and specially designed questions that helped to identify the respondents' subjective assessment of the value of their working time. The study found a statistically significant relationship between social intelligence and labour market pricing. This dependence is particularly pronounced for wage expectations immediately after the graduation ( $p \leq 0.01^{**}$ ). However, no correlation was found between social intelligence or its components and ambitions for the level of pay during study. It was found that students are willing to look for part-time work for any financial motivation. As for the level of salary that would fully satisfy them in adulthood, the average salary is three times higher than the minimum wage in Ukraine and equals USD 580. By understanding the level of a person's social intelligence, one can build an effective hiring system, gaining an additional tool for assessing possible salary ambitions. This will help to optimise the work of the HR department and understand the range of financial incentives needed required to stimulate a particular employee

**Keywords:** social competence; employment; career guidance; soft skills; HR marketing; labour force; salary

### INTRODUCTION

Pricing in the labour market is an essential element of building mutually beneficial labour relations between employees and employers. Traditionally, there has been a discrepancy between the salary expectations of job seekers and the approach of businesses towards financial motivation. It is

debatable what exactly influences the ambitions of future employees. It is reasonable to assume that, apart from external circumstances, the social and economic background in a country or the world, there must also be an internal, personal factor that forms the basis of a person's worldview.

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Social intelligence (SI), which is a prerequisite for socialisation, is well suited to this role. It helps better navigate the basic trends and norms of social life, which is a major help in finding a job effectively.

Previous research has shown a significant impact of social intelligence on a number of aspects of life that are beneficial to individuals and society, including political, entrepreneurial and civic engagement, a sense of patriotism, and a desire to volunteer (Liadskyi *et al.*, 2022). In the labour market, which is a vital component of socio-economic relations, employees who offer their abilities as a commodity (service) and employers who offer jobs for a fee interact (Teryanik, 2015). Labour market pricing affects the relationship between these parties and considers the basic needs of the population. The determination of labour prices is an indicator of national welfare, efficiency, and stability of social and economic policy. The price of the labour product includes not only the salary paid by the employer according to the current legislation as a reward for the work performed, but various bonuses, surcharges and other forms of material incentives for employees (Danylenko & Diadyk, 2021). It may also include non-monetary components provided by the employer, such as travel to and from work, free housing, meals or cellular phone service, etc. Labour market pricing covers not only the external labour market, but the internal labour market within the enterprise, and it is important to consider trends in different segments of these markets and each production factor. The mechanism of price formation in the labour market is to determine its size at different stages – from employment and the production process, from the resource to the production stage.

A person's financial well-being is linked to many factors. One of them is social intelligence (Shrama, 2019). The nature of this concept has not yet been fully explored by scientists. It is believed that Edward Lee Thorndike first used the term "social intelligence" in 1920 in his publication (Develi *et al.*, 2022). Due to the fact that it was published in the non-scientific publication "*Harper's Journal*", some researchers attribute the role of the author of "social intelligence" to the scientist Harry Barnes, whose monograph used the term in 1926. The authorship is also attributed to John Dewey, whose research interests covered SI as early as 1909, or Lull Herbert Galen, who used the term "social intelligence" in his 1911 publication (Mateyuk & Sukhodolia, 2021).

The beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is marked by an increased interest of psychologists and educators in the cognitive and behavioural characteristics of the individual (Hoseini & Ashrafi, 2020). Researchers are also trying to create an effective system for testing social intelligence. The tests of J. Washington (GWIST), J. Guilford and M.O'Sullivan (Four Factor Test of Social Intelligence) and others are actively used (Gupta *et al.*, 2021). However, each of them has disadvantages, including time-consuming, difficulty in use, and low correlation.

An effective way to assess the level of social intelligence is the TROMSØ test developed by Norwegian scientists D. Silvera *et al.* (2001). They worked out three basic

components of social intelligence, namely *Social Information Processing*, *Social Skills*, and *Social Awareness*. This test consists of 21 questions that reveal the level of social intelligence of a person, without overloading the process of answering and analysing them. The TROMSØ questionnaire, due to its convenience and ease of interpretation, is the most appropriate for determining the impact of SI on a person's socially useful qualities, as well as their ambitions for a position, salary and career prospects.

From this perspective, one can assume that social intelligence is linked to other manifestations of human social behaviour, including labour market pricing. This process is not limited to the purchase and sale of labour. The wage ceiling is set based on two boundaries: the lower boundary is determined by the official minimum wage and the level below which an employee will not agree to work. In most cases, the upper limit is calculated based on marginal labour productivity and an estimate provided by the company's management. It is not profitable for the latter to pay an employee more than he or she brings in. Therefore, the combination of an employee's ambitions and an understanding of their importance to the company from the employer's standpoint forms an employment contract, which is agreed to by both parties to the process. It is probable that the level of development of a job seeker's social intelligence determines the upper limit of the salary he or she can expect, as well as its lower limit, below which employment will not take place. This assumption became the basis of the study, which was to determine the extent to which students' social competence and SI help them in career guidance and objective assessment of their own competence, the material equivalent of which can be considered a salary.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The survey was conducted among students of the full-time department of Poltava State Agrarian University. The total number of respondents was 102. To determine the level of social intelligence development, they were asked to answer 21 questions of the TROMSØ test. The authors of this questionnaire indicate an acceptable internal reliability of Social Information Processing = 0.81, Social Skills = 0.86, Social Awareness = 0.79 according to Cronbach's coefficient (Silvera *et al.*, 2001). Notably, due to the equivalence of each of the questions, there is no need to introduce additional coefficients when determining the level of social intelligence.

The study was conducted in compliance with ethical standards for interviewing people. All survey participants were fully informed of their anonymity and the purpose of the study. Their personal data is not used in any way and does not pose any possible risks. The study was approved by the Educational Ombudsman of Poltava State Agrarian University.

Since the respondents were students, it was necessary to prepare the questionnaire in such a way as not to overburden them with the same type of questions, as well as to minimise the probability that young people would try to influence the results of the study in any way. First, the survey

was completely anonymous, so no one was concerned about making a positive impression. Secondly, the questions were presented in a scattered manner, rather than sequentially for each block, so students could not perceive a certain logical sequence of the questionnaire. Ten items in the TROMSØ questionnaire are worded in a positive context, and eleven in a negative context, which requires coding. The score ranged from 1 to 7. The first mark corresponds to the statement

“Does not describe me at all”, and the seventh mark corresponds to the statement “Describes me completely”. Interpretation of the survey results involved summing up the item scores for each factor and dividing the sum by the number of items to obtain a score. A high score indicates a person’s ability to correctly assess social situations and phenomena, and the presence of developed communication skills. The questions are listed in Table 1.

**Table 1.** List of questions for the student survey

Block 1. Processing of social information (SP)	Block 2. Social skills (SS)	Block 3. Social awareness (SA)	Additional questions regarding students’ opinions on the desired salary
1. “I can predict the behaviour of other people”.	4. “I often feel insecure around new people I do not know”.	2. “I often feel that it is difficult for me to understand other people’s choices”.	22. What salary would you be willing to work for alongside your studies, given your real capabilities?
3. “I know how my actions make other people feel”.	7. “I can easily adapt to different social situations”.	5. “Other people often surprise me with their actions”.	23. What salary do you expect to receive immediately after graduation, considering your real capabilities?
6. “The feelings of other people are clear to me”.	10. “I can quickly navigate new situations and meet new people”.	8. “People are angry with me, but I do not know why”.	24. What salary would satisfy you, considering your real capabilities?
9. “I understand the desires of other people”.	12. “I find it difficult to establish relationships with other people”.	11. “People often get angry or annoyed when I say what I think”.	
14. “I often understand what other people’s aspirations are, even when I do not ask them”.	15. “It takes me a long time to understand other people well”.	13. “I think people are unpredictable”.	
17. “I can predict how others will react to my behaviour”.	18. “I am good at choosing the right words when talking to new people”.	16. “I often offend others without realising it”.	
19. “I can often understand what other people really mean by their facial expressions, body language, and mimicry”.	20. “It is important for me to find an interesting topic for conversation”.	21. “I am often surprised by the reaction of others to what I do”.	

**Source:** compiled by the authors of the study based on D.H. Silvera *et al.* (2001)

The survey was conducted online using a questionnaire created in a Google form. Microsoft Excel was used to process the research results. To establish the relationship between the two variables, the Spearman’s Rank Correlation Coefficient was used, according to the recommendations of V.F. Bosniuk (2020), where X (independent variable) is social intelligence and its components, and Y (dependent variable) is the level of expected wages. The correlation indices were interpreted according to the recommendations of U. Turan (2020) using the Chaddock scale, which can determine the strength of the relationship between two variables: 0.1-0.3 – weak; 0.3-0.5 – noticeable; 0.5-0.7 – moderate; 0.7-0.9 – high; 0.9-1.0 – very high.

## RESULTS

Since SI and EI have a common mental nature, it is logical to assume that social intelligence also affects the amount of salary and the employee’s ambitions regarding motivation at work. Furthermore, SI is more related to planning, as it

focuses on the predictive property of the psyche, unlike EI, which mainly helps in determining current scenarios.

The students of Poltava State Agrarian University, among whom this study was conducted, showed an above-average level of social intelligence. In general, its indicator was at the level of 4.7 points. The range of possible answers was from 1 to 7 points. 21 respondents demonstrated a SI development level below 4 points. The answers of 45 students who took part in the study were within 4-5 points. The level of social intelligence of 24 people was rated from 5 to 6 points. A high overall SI level was found in 12 respondents.

As for their income ambitions, 41.2% of respondents chose to earn more than UAH 5,000 as a part-time job while studying. A similar number of students believe they can earn more than UAH 7,000. The third most popular answer, but by a wide margin, was the result of UAH 3,000 to 4,000 – 8.8% of respondents agreed to pay this amount. The range from 4,000 to 5,000 UAH was attractive for 2.9% of

students. The lowest salary of up to UAH 1,000 was agreed to by 5.9% of respondents.

The situation with salary expectations immediately after graduation is different from the previous point. The highest figure, 29.4% of respondents, expects an income of at least UAH 12,000, 23.5% plan to earn between UAH 8,000 and 1,000, and 17.6% are focused on a systematic income of more than UAH 15,000. Salary ambitions exceeding UAH 25,000 are observed in 14.7% of respondents. An income of UAH 6,000-7,000 is considered acceptable by 8.8% of students. The lowest salary ambitions are among 2.9% of respondents, who expect to earn UAH 5,300. The same percentage, namely 2.9%, of young people expect to start earning UAH 7,000-8,000.

When asked what salary respondents consider to be completely acceptable given their chosen profession and the socio-economic situation in Ukraine, their answers were distributed as follows. The majority of respondents, namely 32.4%, agreed that adequate remuneration for their work should be within UAH 15,000-20,000. Slightly fewer students plan to earn between UAH 20,000 and 30,000 in their adult lives, considering the inflation rate at the time of the survey, as evidenced by the answers of 20.6% of respondents.

The most ambitious of the respondents strive for a stable monthly income of over USD 1,000 (17.6%) and over USD 2,000 (5.9%) among the students who took part in the survey. A salary of UAH 12,000-15,000 was accepted by 11.8% of future specialists, and UAH 10,000-12,000 – by 2.9% of respondents. The lowest salary of UAH 7,000-10,000 is expected by 8.8% of students. This is quite consistent with the distribution of answers about the level of social intelligence.

Low SI scores were reported by 20% of respondents. A similar percentage of responses indicated a small salary. Specifically, 17.6% of the students surveyed agreed to low salaries during their studies, 14.6% predicted low income after graduation, and 23.5% anticipated low salaries in their future professional activities. The analysis of the relationship between social intelligence and labour market pricing showed a statistically significant ( $p \leq 0.05^*$ ) positive relationship with the expectations of income after graduation and in choosing the optimal salary (Table 2). In terms of part-time work, no significant correlation was found with the level of their social intelligence. Almost all respondents, regardless of their SI level, expressed a desire to earn as much as possible. However, they had a different view of their income ambitions after graduation and in adulthood.

**Table 2.** The impact of social intelligence on labour market pricing

TROMSØ test criterion/Labour market pricing	Salary while studying	Salary after graduation	Optimal salary	Average value
Spearman's correlation coefficient	0.218	0.418	0.349	0.212
Strength of connection on the Chaddock scale	weak, positive	noticeable, positive	noticeable, positive	weak, positive
Statistical significance of the trait dependence	$p > 0.05$	$p \leq 0.05^*$	$p \leq 0.05^*$	$p > 0.05$

**Notes:**  $p \leq 0.05$  – low statistical significance;  $p \leq 0.01$  – medium statistical significance;  $p \leq 0.001$  – high statistical significance

**Source:** compiled by the authors based on the studies conducted

People with high social intelligence scores (over 5 points) showed a stable desire for high salaries. Those respondents whose SI was not as high lowered the bar for potential income, or rather their own ambitions for it, with each subsequent question. Their average salary did not differ significantly from their wishes for a part-time job while studying. Of the three main components of social intelligence, only SP, the criterion responsible for processing social information, showed a correlation with the level of expected salary. People with a developed ability to collect the necessary data,

analyse it and extrapolate it to their own lives demonstrate better ability to predict the consequences of their actions and the actions of others. The respondents' answers revealed a significant moderate positive correlation between SP and expected earnings after graduation ( $p \leq 0.01^{**}$ ) and a significant positive impact of this indicator on salary ambitions in adult life ( $p \leq 0.05^*$ ), as presented in Table 3. Thus, the high level of development of the ideological component of intellectual activity leads to the desire for career growth and professional success, which is reflected in the corresponding salary.

**Table 3.** The impact of social information processing on labour market pricing

TROMSØ test criterion/Labour market pricing	Salary while studying	Salary after graduation	Optimal salary	Average value
Spearman's correlation coefficient	0.272	0.577	0.390	0.421
Strength of connection on the Chaddock scale	weak, positive	moderate, positive	noticeable, positive	noticeable, positive
Statistical significance of the trait dependence	$p > 0.05$	$p \leq 0.01^{**}$	$p \leq 0.05^*$	$p \leq 0.05^*$

**Notes:**  $p \leq 0.05$  – low statistical significance;  $p \leq 0.01$  – medium statistical significance;  $p \leq 0.001$  – high statistical significance

**Source:** compiled by the authors based on the studies conducted

The study of the possible connection between labour market pricing and such components of social intelligence as social skills and social awareness did not reveal a significant

correlation (Table 4; Table 5). It is assumed that these qualities help in better understanding current scenarios, but do not have a predictive effect in predicting future situations.

**Table 4.** The impact of social skills on labour market pricing

TROMSØ test criterion/Labour market pricing	Salary while studying	Salary after graduation	Optimal salary	Average value
Spearman's correlation coefficient	0.203	0.310	0.193	0.216
Strength of connection on the Chaddock scale	weak, positive	noticeable, positive	noticeable, positive	weak, positive
Statistical significance of the trait dependence	p>0.05	p>0.05	p>0.05	p>0.05

**Notes:** p≤0.05 – low statistical significance; p≤0.01 – medium statistical significance; p≤0.001 – high statistical significance

**Source:** compiled by the authors based on the studies conducted

**Table 5.** The impact of social awareness on labour market pricing

TROMSØ test criterion/Labour market pricing	Salary while studying	Salary after graduation	Optimal salary	Average value
Spearman's correlation coefficient	0.184	0.261	0.275	0.212
Strength of connection on the Chaddock scale	weak, positive	noticeable, positive	noticeable, positive	weak, positive
Statistical significance of the trait dependence	p>0.05	p>0.05	p>0.05	p>0.05

**Notes:** p≤0.05 – low statistical significance; p≤0.01 – medium statistical significance; p≤0.001 – high statistical significance

**Source:** compiled by the authors based on the studies conducted

The interpretation of the respondents' survey results showed that social intelligence has a significant impact on many socially important aspects of life. Apart from the desire for self-development, political and civic awareness, a tendency to volunteer and a sense of patriotism, SI is significantly correlated with a person's career guidance behaviour, labour market pricing, and salary ambitions. Since financial well-being is a vital component of life success, raising the level of social intelligence of young people is of great importance in the context of strengthening the economic, political and social security of the country. Further research on this psychological phenomenon will help to better understand the nature of professional success and effective socialisation.

## DISCUSSION

The connection between social intelligence and a person's success in the labour market is a subject of thorough research. In this context, it is relevant to note that SI is closely related to another soft-skill, namely emotional intelligence (EI), which is much better researched. A study of the impact of emotional intelligence on wages among Americans found that employees with higher levels of emotional intelligence earn an average of USD 29 thousand more per year than people with lower levels (Rybalka & Yakunin, 2018). This was explained by an increase in labour productivity. Another study conducted on a sample of 785 people showed that identifying the level of emotional intelligence development can predict professional success, one of the most important criteria of which is salary (Sanchez-Gomez *et al.*, 2021). Analogous conclusions were reached by T. Momm *et al.* (2015), who compared emotional literacy and social influence on annual income. The study of

a sample of 142 employee-peer-manager triads found that the ability to recognise emotions correlates with the level of annual earnings. The authors interpreted these results as the respondents' communication skills. It is assumed that developed emotional abilities allow people not only to process information efficiently, but to use it for effective orientation in the social environment of organisations, which contributes to their success.

Pricing in the labour market demonstrates, among other things, a person's self-respect and assessment of their own capabilities and professional abilities. As a rule, higher salaries are planned by people who are inclined to self-development and personal growth. The study by I. Liadskyi & D. Diachkov (2022) clearly demonstrated the impact of social intelligence on the interest in additional knowledge, skills and abilities, which further explains its impact on labour market pricing. No significant gender difference was found between social intelligence and salary ambitions. This is confirmed by other studies that also show approximately equal development of SI and professional or initial academic performance (Bhat, 2016). This soft skill, along with related emotional intelligence, is becoming an even more important skill in today's digital world, which is dramatically changing the labour market. Specifically, the digital trends of 2021-2022 were also driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has dramatically changed the face of the labour market. Social intelligence has also had a certain impact (Starynska & Spivak, 2021), defining innovative approaches to the formation of labour relations, in particular in the search for remote work or part-time work.

It was proved that managers and employees with developed emotional intelligence are more efficient, creative and make better decisions, which significantly optimises their

work (Bonesso *et al.*, 2019). H. Lyubochkina's (2017) study also points to the creativity of employees characterised by a prominent level of social intelligence. Furthermore, the psychologist points out that people have a better understanding of themselves when their SI is well developed. In other words, by understanding their own motives and goals, it is easier for an employee to determine a decent level of remuneration and its adequacy to their efforts. These findings are consistent with research conducted among students at the Poltava State Agrarian University, which indicates greater awareness and self-awareness about socially relevant issues, including the importance of a salary in meeting basic and essential needs. People with developed social intelligence are better integrated into the labour relations system, tend to work in a team and perform common tasks. This is evidenced by the results of a study by J. Freeman *et al.* (2020). According to the specified study, these people can expect better pay and loyalty from their team and management. According to the results of the student survey, this impact is exerted by social information processing, which allows for effective analysis and use of social information, being guided by the realities of the labour market.

In general, the topic of financial motivation is closely related to the level of employees' expectations regarding remuneration and their sense of gratitude. The research by L. Gulliford *et al.* (2019) shows that social intelligence determines a person's self-control and gratitude, which harmoniously complements the results of the survey of students at Poltava State Agrarian University. This aspect further explains the need to analyse the SI of job applicants to understand their ability to work in a team and to appreciate motivation, including in financial terms. A prominent level of social intelligence reduces conflict in the team, minimises market pricing, and minimises destructive forms of demonstrating disagreement with managers and employees (Rahim *et al.*, 2018). Accordingly, this soft skill helps to reduce tension among staff, including in the area of labour market pricing. Other researchers, including S.J. Obot (2021), who came to this conclusion based on the responses of 305 respondents from secondary education institutions, also advise developing the social intelligence of employees. In Obot's opinion, staff with developed SI are better capable of managing their personal and professional

lives and perform their duties more effectively in communicating with other people.

Thus, these studies conclude that social intelligence affects labour market pricing. People with a higher level of social intelligence have higher salaries and better opportunities for development. They are also better equipped to adjust to the digital world and operate more productively in teams.

## CONCLUSIONS

This paper covered a statistically significant impact of social intelligence on the pricing of salaries. This dependence is especially evident in the case of the social information processing component, which demonstrated a moderate positive relationship ( $p \leq 0.01^{**}$ ) with immediate post-graduation salary expectations. On average, respondents expressed a desire to receive UAH 12.6 thousand. However, no correlation was found between social intelligence or its components and ambitions for the level of pay during study. Students demonstrated their willingness to work extra hard for any financial motivation. As for the level of salary that would fully satisfy them in adulthood, the average salary level is about UAH 21,600 (USD 580). A significant positive correlation ( $p \leq 0.05^*$ ) with this indicator was demonstrated by such a component of social intelligence as social information processing. The study revealed a tendency for social intelligence to influence labour market pricing, but further research on large samples of not only students but also adults seeking employment is needed to confirm this.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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## **Управління соціальним інтелектом з позицій оптимізації ціноутворення на ринку праці**

**Анотація.** Питання об'єктивної оцінки майбутнім працівником вартості своєї роботи є актуальною проблемою для кожного студента чи випускника закладу вищої освіти, оскільки молоді люди часто або значно завищують свої очікування щодо заробітної плати та просто не можуть надати послуги відповідної якості, або, навпаки, беруться за низькооплачувану роботу та починають емоційно вигоряти, оскільки не отримують належної мотивації. Метою дослідження було виявити наскільки студентська молодь з розвиненим соціальним інтелектом оцінює свої перспективи заробітку під час навчання, у перші роки після випуску та у дорослому житті. Для цього проводилося опитування студентів з використанням тесту TROMSØ та спеціально розроблених питань, що допомогли виявити суб'єктивну оцінку респондентами вартості свого робочого часу. Дослідження виявило статистично значимий зв'язок соціального інтелекту з ціноутворенням на ринку праці. Особливо яскраво ця залежність прослідковується з очікуваннями заробітної плати одразу після випуску ( $p \leq 0,01^{**}$ ). Проте не виявлено кореляції між соціальним інтелектом чи його компонентами та амбіціями щодо рівня оплати під час навчання. Було встановлено, що студенти ладні шукати підробіток за будь-яку фінансову мотивацію. Щодо побажань відносно рівня заробітної плати, який цілковито задовільнить їх уже в дорослому віці, то в середньому її рівень втричі перевершує розмір мінімальної заробітної плати по Україні та дорівнює 580 USD. Розуміючи рівень розвитку соціального інтелекту людини, можна побудувати ефективну систему найму, отримавши додатковий інструмент для оцінки можливих амбіцій щодо заробітної плати. Завдяки цьому вдасться оптимізувати роботу кадрової служби та розуміти діапазон фінансової мотивації, необхідної для стимулювання конкретного працівника

**Ключові слова:** соціальна компетентність; працевлаштування; профорієнтація; soft-skills; HR-маркетинг; робоча сила; заробітна плата