

Correlations Between Emotional Intelligence and Instructional Proficiency among Early Career Educators

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Abstract: The initial year of teaching is a crucial stage in professional growth, which is usually associated with high rates of turnover and significant levels of emotional labor. Although teacher training programs have always emphasized pedagogic and subject expertise, the impact of Emotional Intelligence (EI) on the instructional competence of new teachers has rarely been examined. This research examines the relationship between EI and instructional competence among educators who started their careers within five years prior to the experiment (N=120). Using the Quantitative Correlational Design of Research, this study used the Wong & Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) to assess the levels of EI and developed an assessment tool based on the Danielson Framework for Teaching to measure teaching efficacy. Analysis of results obtained with Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation (r) demonstrated a strong positive correlation between total scores on the EI scale and instructional competence ($r = 0.64, p < 0.01$). In particular, Regulation of Emotion was found to be the key determinant of classroom management ability, whereas Social Skills determined students' involvement. The findings indicate that teachers who have higher levels of emotional intelligence are able to deal with the stress associated with their teaching roles and develop the teacher-student relationships needed for effective teaching. The research therefore recommends that EI be considered an integral part of successful pedagogy, not just an auxiliary soft skill. In addition, this study calls for the incorporation of SEL courses in the training of teachers and the adoption of mentoring programs aimed at developing EI skills. Such initiatives will ensure that young teachers remain emotionally resilient within their teaching careers.

Key Words: emotional intelligence (EI), instructional proficiency, early career educators, teacher effectiveness, classroom management, pedagogical competence, novice teachers

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Introduction

In the current world of education, there is a paradigm shift in how the success of an educator should be defined, whereby, besides the academic qualifications in teaching, what really matters is the skill to cope with the social-emotional dynamics in the classroom. The foundation of this concept is Emotional Intelligence (EI): the capacity to perceive, comprehend, and regulate one's emotions as well as the emotions of other people.

When it comes to new teachers (less than five years in service), it takes more than just skills to cope with the realities of a teaching environment characterized by diverse behaviors of learners, administrators' pressure, and high standards of performance. As per research, having the necessary technical knowledge does not seem sufficient in such conditions; what really helps teachers cope and succeed is EI.

Research Problem

Even though there is no dispute in theory about the effect of emotions on cognitive processes, the scientific world is lacking when it comes to the exact link between emotional intelligence and instructional expertise at a time in one's career when they are still a novice. Almost all research has been conducted on seasoned instructors or employees in a general working environment, but none addresses how a beginner's ability to regulate emotions affects their instruction process and environment.

Without such research, schools keep on training their teachers mostly in terms of their hard pedagogical skills without paying sufficient attention to the soft skills that protect against exhaustion and build positive relations with students.

Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to link emotional psychology and pedagogy. This study will:

- Evaluate the current status of the emotional intelligence of a group of newly employed teachers.
- Assess the competence of the above-mentioned educators on the basis of certain criteria.
- Investigate the relationship between particular emotional intelligence factors (such as empathy and self-control) and teaching effectiveness aspects (classroom management and learner participation).
- Determine which factors of emotional intelligence play the major role in predicting high teacher performance during their first three years of teaching.

Significance of the Study

The conclusions drawn from this research can be considered highly important for a variety of stakeholders involved in education. Teacher preparation programs have received an impetus to integrate SEL into their curriculum to guarantee that the future teachers are emotionally ready to handle their duties. From the perspective of educational policies, the findings of the study serve as a ground for implementing EI measures into the certification and recruitment process of prospective educators. As for professional development activities, this study highlights the importance of mentorship programs aimed at developing the skills of emotional coaching.

This research consists of five separate sections: Section I: Introduction, which provides a description of the research purpose and its background; Section II: Literature Review, where current literature is analysed and identified gaps are highlighted; Section III: Methodology, which describes the research design, sample selection, and statistical tools used; Section IV: Results and Discussion, where the obtained results are presented and discussed in light of practical importance; and finally, Section V: Conclusion and Future Research.

Literature Review

Emotional intelligence (EI) is referred to as the capability of perceiving, managing, and assessing emotions. In terms of education, EI has been discussed through Goleman's five dimensions: self-awareness, self-management, intrinsic motivation, empathy, and social skills. EI in teaching is theoretically supported by the concept of the pro-social classroom, which assumes that emotional abilities of teachers create favorable conditions for learning (Arteaga-Cedeño et al., 2022; Zysberg et al., 2017; Wang & Wang, 2022).

Modern literature on the subject underlines that emotional intelligence involves multiple dimensions. These studies' affective competence is essential for teacher effectiveness, whereas this study emphasizes

the dynamic character of these skills, which can be improved through professional development (Dolev & Leshem, 2017; Zaky, 2022).

Instructional efficiency pertains to the capability of teachers to apply educational methods that will yield effective learning results among students. These factors include knowledge about content, classroom management, and self-efficacy.

Teaching efficiency is becoming an area that converges with emotional intelligence, according to modern perspectives. In line with this assertion, this work noted that there is a direct correlation between EI and teaching self-efficacy in difficult situations, such as in online teaching (Ali et al., 2017). Additionally, this study emphasized that while professional competence is important, adversity quotient remains an essential psychological complement to EI (Widodo et al., 2022; Tschannen-Moran & Carter, 2016).

The empirical literature has been quite consistent in establishing a link between Emotional Intelligence (EI) and the dimensions of the teaching profession in a positive way, highlighting the importance of EI as an important factor in determining success. For example, research carried out in this paper has established that instructor performance, especially at higher education level, is highly correlated with the EI levels of instructors (Khassawneh et al., 2022; Dev et al., 2016). In addition to being an important determinant of instructor performance, EI plays a very important role in the life of instructors by serving as a source of psychological energy. According to research carried out, individuals with high levels of EI have higher chances of resisting burnout and occupational stress, factors that commonly affect the lives of instructors (Khassawneh et al., 2022; Wang, 2022). Finally, this study has established that teacher EI has a significant influence on work engagement, which in turn positively impacts student academic performance through a moderated mediation process (Wang, 2022). The impact of EI on teacher performance has been found to be quite common throughout the world (Asrar-ul-Haq et al., 2017; Mohamad & Jais, 2016).

Although the relationship between EI and teacher effectiveness has been studied extensively in cases of veteran teachers and at the university level, a number of crucial lacunae remain present in the existing body of literature (Kaur et al., 2019; Hamzah et al., 2021). Firstly, the dearth of dedicated and longitudinal evidence relating to early career teachers remains a serious issue because this period in particular represents the phase where individuals experience the maximum vulnerability when forming their professional identity and are thus extremely prone to reality shock (Turner & Stough, 2020; Hernández-Barco et al., 2021). In addition, while some studies have considered EI within ESL/EFL contexts, the connection between emotional regulation and proficiency in instruction remains understudied in comparison to issues such as professionalism, ethics, and gender considerations (Dewaele et al., 2018; Ashraf et al., 2017). Finally, very little research has investigated mediating variables such as instructional leadership and institutional context, which influence the effect of a teacher's own EI on instructional performance (Chen & Guo, 2020). Consequently, this research is highly relevant, especially since it focuses exclusively on the early career stage and examines the particular emotional traits required for survival and instructional success.

The literature review indicates that Emotional Intelligence is a multidimensional construct that significantly affects the quality of pedagogy and teacher resilience. Although the international literature confirms that EI is a buffer to occupational stress and improved work engagement, there still exists a major gap in the area of early career educators. It implies that it is not possible to be a professional within the first five years with only content knowledge, but rather by acquiring skills on how to handle emotions and interpersonal skills.

Methodology

Research Design and Participants

Quantitative correlational research design is employed in this study as a research strategy that allows for precise quantification of the connection between Emotional Intelligence (predictor or independent variable) and Instructional Proficiency (outcome or dependent variable). By employing numerical data, it becomes possible to ascertain the nature and magnitude of these correlations statistically. The population includes young career educators identified as full-time secondary school teachers during the initial five years of their working experience. In all, a sample of N=120 educators is used following stringent selection criteria designed to narrow the focus to the novice level of professional development. Part-time tutors, substitutes, and seasoned educators who have served in excess of five years are ruled out from participation in the study. The demographic characteristics of the sample remain varied, with no gender, age (mainly aged 22-30), or subject specialization preferences.

Data Collection and Analysis

In order to obtain high levels of internal validity, the collection process will make use of two validated scales of tools. The measurement of Emotional Intelligence will make use of the Wong & Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) and/or the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) that measures the four main aspects, including self-emotion appraisal, appraisal of emotions of others, utilization of emotions, and finally the regulation of emotions. In measuring the variable instructional proficiency, the study will adopt a triangulation method due to limitations associated with single-source data. This is done by making use of the Danielson framework for observation of classrooms, peer evaluation by experienced senior mentors, and teacher self-reports. All data will be analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) in a three-step process; first, descriptive analysis, including means, standard deviation, and frequency distribution, will be carried out, followed by the use of inferential analysis, whereby Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation (r) will be used to establish significant relationships between variables. Finally, multiple linear regression analysis will be used to establish which subcomponents of EI are the best predictors of success as teachers.

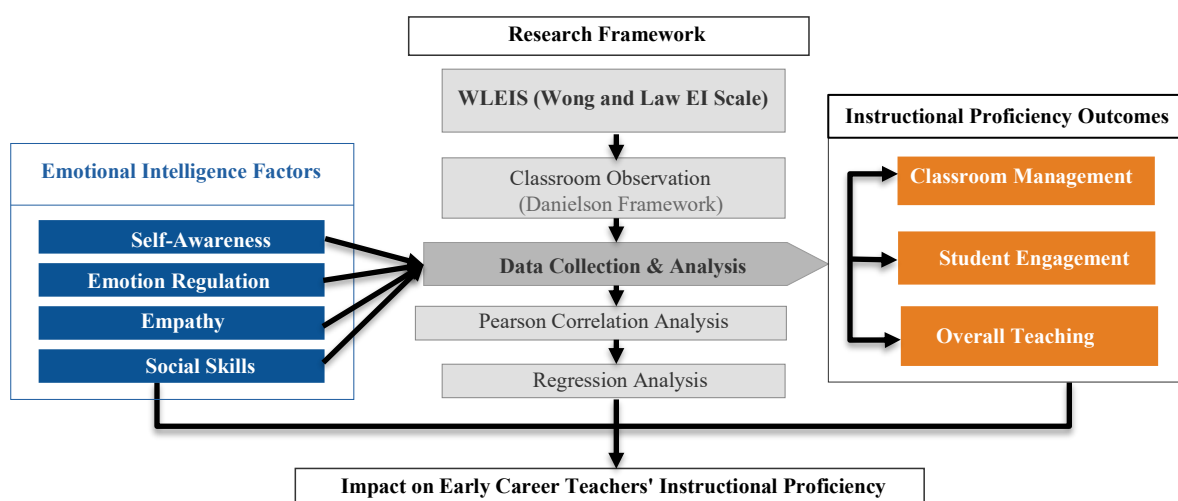


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework for Assessing the Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Instructional Proficiency

Figure 1 highlights the complex connection between emotional intelligence (EI) and instructional efficiency of novice teachers. In the diagram below on the left side, the theory pinpoints four essential EI

aspects: self-awareness, emotion regulation, empathy, and social skills as the most relevant variables. Figure 1 investigates a scientific approach that relies on Wong and Law's EI scale (WLEIS) and the Danielson Framework of classroom observation to collect data. Pearson correlation and regression analysis will be used to find out how each emotional aspect influences such results as Classroom Management, Student Engagement, and Teaching Efficiency.

Results and Discussion

Descriptive Statistics

The analysis was initiated by a summary of the scores of the participants. Emotional Intelligence (EI) had a mean score of 3.82 on a 5-point Likert scale ($SD = 0.45$), indicating that early career educators are moderately emotionally aware.

Standardized Classroom Observations were used to produce Instructional Proficiency scores, which had a mean of 72.4% ($SD=8.12$). A significant difference between sub-domains of EI was noted: educators scored higher in Appraisal of Others' Emotions (Empathy) but scored significantly lower in Regulation of Emotion. This trend indicates that although new teachers are attentive to the emotional conditions of their students, it do not have a strong grip on their own emotional reactions to the classroom's high-stress situations.

Correlational Analysis

In order to investigate the correlation between the variables, a Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was used. The findings showed that there is a significant positive and statistically significant correlation between overall EI and Instructional Proficiency ($r = 0.64$, $p < 0.01$).

The data show that the higher the emotional intelligence of an educator, the higher the likelihood that he or she will be more effective as an instructor. In particular, the area of Regulation of Emotion was most likely to be correlated with classroom management ($r = 0.71$), and the area of Social Skills was most likely to be correlated with the level of student engagement. These results confirm that emotional competencies cannot be considered peripheral ones, but it go hand in hand with pedagogical performance.

Table 1 Correlation Matrix between EI Domains and Proficiency Outcomes

Independent Variable (EI)	Instructional Proficiency (r)	Significance (p)	Strength of Relationship
Total Emotional Intelligence	0.64	< 0.01	Strong Positive
Regulation of Emotion	0.71	< 0.01	Very Strong
Social Skills	0.59	< 0.01	Moderate/Strong
Appraisal of Others' Emotions	0.42	< 0.05	Moderate

Table 1 reveals that the data demonstrate that the most important factor to achieve classroom management success is Regulation of Emotion, and Social Skills is the primary driver of student engagement. These results propose the view that pedagogical performance is a part of the emotional infrastructure of the pedagogy.

Implications for Teaching Practice

The results of this study provide immediate and meaningful implications for classroom practice. As regards classroom management, teachers with higher self-regulation skills show less inclination to respond

with punishment to student misconduct, adopting a calmer, more assertive demeanor, which helps defuse tensions. This emotional control leads to improved relations between teachers and students, since a high emotional intelligence quotient enables teachers to form connections faster and create a psychologically safe atmosphere where learners are encouraged to experiment. Moreover, teachers' overall efficacy is substantially increased in cases when educators have the ability to read the emotional state of learners based on non-verbal signs, thus altering their teaching methods to adapt to the emotional responses of frustrated or bored students. Overall, it may be inferred that managing emotions is just as important in pedagogy as delivering the actual content.

Challenges and Limitations

While acknowledging all these positive findings in terms of the correlations found, one needs to note some limitations inherent to this study, which should be mentioned. First and foremost, self-reports can suffer from self-reporting bias, and the use of emotionally intelligent self-reports might cause participants to rate themselves higher than it actually are due to social desirability. Another issue related to the limitation of the study results' generalizability is concerned with the specificity of the chosen sample, with $N=120$ participants selected based on the geographical location. In addition, although there was an attempt to use standardized observation rubrics to assess the proficiency level, performance can be influenced by external factors (school environment and socio-economic status of the students) that are not taken into consideration. To deal with the limitation found and conduct further analysis, one can conduct a longitudinal study, which would allow observing the correlation of emotional intelligence and proficiency as a teacher progresses from being a novice to an expert.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The main objective of the research was to test the association between Emotional Intelligence (EI) and teaching effectiveness in early career teachers. The statistical analysis reveals that the correlation between the two constructs is high, positive and statistically significant ($r = 0.64$, $p < 0.01$). The information shows that the skill of an educator to control his or her inner emotional condition and decipher student behavior is a fundamental factor of pedagogical achievement. Noteworthy results indicate that, although the emotional awareness of novice teachers is slightly high ($Mean = 3.82$), their competence is often undermined by the reduced level of emotional self-regulation. This is statistically reflected in the fact that the correlation between Regulation of Emotion and classroom management is extremely strong ($r = 0.71$) and that emotional stability is a major contributor towards the sustenance of an effective learning environment. On the basis of such statistical observations, a few implications can be drawn in the field of education. Teacher preparation programs should shift the focus away off the traditional pedagogy towards the mandatory aspects of the Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), so that the future educators are able to develop better self-regulation prior to setting into the high-stress-setting. In addition, school districts ought to introduce specific professional development aimed at emotional coaching as social skills were identified to have a significant relationship with student engagement ($r = 0.59$). Lastly, educational policy-makers ought to be able to integrate emotional competence into teacher assessment systems because it should recognize that an emotional infrastructure of a teacher is as important to student achievement as their teaching practice. Future studies should consider longitudinal designs to monitor the development of these correlations beyond the first five years of novice level and investigate direct correlations between teacher EI and quantitative student academic success in a wide range of cultural contexts.

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