

Lecturers' Trait Emotional Intelligence: A Quantitative Study in Sabah, Malaysia

Fung Lan Yong^{1*}, Jovanson Tony², Florence Chuah³
Loreta Ling Ling Uie⁴, Lesley Pien Chong⁵, Nahiyah Al-Azad⁶

¹Postgraduate Studies, Jesselton University College, 88300 Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia
Email: fungyong@jesselton.edu.my

²Marketing Department, Jesselton University College, 88300 Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia
Email: jovansontony@gmail.com

³Inclusive GEMS Consultancy, 46200 Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia
Email: florencecsy@gmail.com

⁴Business Studies, Jesselton University College, 88300 Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia
Email: loretaling8383@gmail.com

⁵Postgraduate Studies, Jesselton University College, 88300 Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia
Email: lesleypien96@gmail.com

⁶Faculty of Engineering, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Sabah, Malaysia
Email: nahiyanalazad@gmail.com

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR (*):

Fung Lan Yong
(fungyong@jesselton.edu.my)

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine lecturers' trait emotional intelligence in Sabah, Malaysia. Sixty-one lecturers from four private higher education institutions (PHEIs) in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah completed a questionnaire on Google Forms and data were analyzed using SPSS 29.0. Results showed that lecturers tend to possess low to low-average levels of perceived trait emotional intelligence (41 to 68.8 percent). A slightly higher proportion of lecturers tend to bond well with closed ones (73.8 percent) and be able to adapt to new environments (70.5 percent). The overall mean score was 3.49/5.0 (69.8 percent), again reflecting lecturers' low-average level of perceived trait emotional intelligence. On the other hand, nonparametric tests revealed nonsignificant differences by way of gender, age, and job experience in perceived trait emotional intelligence. Additionally, Wilcoxon signed rank test based on a hypothesized value of 3.5 showed that all trait emotional intelligence items were significant at $p < 0.001$, having medians that were significantly different from the test value, and were likely to indicate strong disagreement. In view of the findings, some well-established training programs were recommended to enhance lecturers' trait emotional intelligence.

Contribution/Originality: This research offers a valuable contribution by examining lecturers' trait emotional intelligence at private higher education institutions (PHEIs) in Sabah, Malaysia. Besides narrowing the gap that exists in the educational psychology literature, it is the first quantitative study that examines lecturers' trait emotional intelligence in Sabah, Malaysia. Therefore, it adds to the very limited evidence base on

PHEI lecturers' trait emotional intelligence and reports a novel conceptual framework of factors associated with the multifaceted psychological construct.

1. Introduction

Emotional intelligence is defined as individuals' capability to monitor their own and others' sentiments and perceptions, to distinguish among them, and to utilize the information to steer their own thought, feelings, and behavior. Individuals with higher emotional intelligence tend to better regulate their own positive and negative feelings, while effectively discerning others' emotions (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2002; Salovey & Mayer, 1997). Additionally, Goleman (1999) postulated that educators with higher emotional intelligence tend to be more empathic and efficacious in propagating an intellectual and social environment that stimulates students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development.

Some cross-cultural studies have shown that emotional intelligence tends to exert a significant influence on teacher wellbeing, effectiveness, and personal attributes (Fernández-Berrocal et al., 2017; Hassan et al., 2015; Patel, 2017; Srinivasan, 2015). While Patel (2017) found that emotional intelligence tends to be more influential than IQ in predicting teacher effectiveness and students' academic achievement, Fernández-Berrocal et al. (2017) reiterated that it tends to augment teacher wellbeing by helping them cope with negative emotions and by experiencing personal fulfillment in their work. Moreover, other researchers have also found that teachers with higher emotional intelligence tend to experience lower job stress and burnout, while displaying greater school engagement and attainment of students' intellectual and non-intellectual outcomes (Dorman, 2003; Ju et al., 2015; Mérida-López, Extremera, & Rey, 2017; Montgomery & Rupp, 2005). For example, they tend to exhibit a higher level of commitment, vigor, motivation, and teaching immersion, with a lower level of job exhaustion.

A review of literature showed that quantitative research on PHEI lecturers' trait emotional intelligence is lacking in Malaysia, especially in the higher educational landscape in Sabah. Therefore, the primary purpose of this study was to examine lecturers' trait emotional intelligence at four PHEIs in Sabah, Malaysia, which would help fill the research gap and establish a theoretical framework for the study. Lastly, findings of this study would generate novel knowledge on the psychological attributes of PHEI lecturers, which might serve as a useful benchmark in enhancing their mental, emotional, and affective wellbeing.

1.1. Significance of the Study

According to Martínez-Saura et al. (2024), trait emotional intelligence tends to have a significant impact on teachers' emotional wellbeing and overall quality of life. This study would provide a framework for underscoring the need to include emotional competence and coping resilience as part of in-service education for academics at PHEIs in Sabah, Malaysia. Further, findings would provide deeper insight into trait emotional intelligence as an influential variable for professional practice among academics, given that it seems to augment mental health, while optimizing pedagogic practices and inculcating a sense of self-fulfillment and job satisfaction. Besides, this study would broaden the knowledge on trait emotional intelligence as one of the key psychological attributes on which

academics' professional development should be articulated on. Lastly, findings would provide new empirical support for the desirability of trait emotional intelligence as a psychological booster that equips academics with greater ability to protect their own wellbeing, which is another endorsement for emotional intelligence enhancement for professional development and career advancement amongst academics.

1.2. Research Questions

Three research questions have been formulated to provide pivot and direction in the study. Serving as a compass, they keep the authors focused, thus allowing them to concentrate on the relevant areas of investigation. Besides providing a framework for the entire research process, the research questions also help them define the scope of the study, thus ensuring that the research remains manageable and targeted. The research questions are as follows:

- i. What were the descriptive statistics of PHEI lecturers' trait emotional intelligence in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah and implications?
- ii. Were there any significant differences in PHEI lecturers' trait emotional intelligence in terms of gender, age, and job experience?
- iii. Were any of the trait emotional intelligence items significantly different based on a hypothesized value of 3.5?

2. Review of Literature

First, the literature review enables the authors to contextualize the research problem, gather background information, and establish context for the research. It helps them understand the current state of knowledge on trait emotional intelligence, thus allowing them to identify gaps, issues, or areas for further examination. Second, the literature review helps the authors to build a theoretical framework for the study by providing a foundation for grasping the concepts, theories, and models related to trait emotional intelligence. Third, it provides them with a rationale for the research design, methodology, instrument, and data analysis. Lastly, it supports the significance of the study by demonstrating its relevance in the context of existing knowledge, besides helping the authors to articulate the significance of the study and how it advances understanding of trait emotional intelligence within the local context.

2.1. Teaching Strategies and Teacher Effectiveness

Previous research showed that trait emotional intelligence tends to be significantly linked to pedagogic strategies and efficacy. [Kliueva and Tsagari \(2018\)](#), who investigated the link between trait emotional intelligence and teaching strategies for emotional literacy, discovered that teachers' trait emotional intelligence tends to be linked to pedagogic practices. Further, the educational institution (school versus university) was also found to play a significant role in the implementation of pedagogic strategies, implying that teacher training programs should emphasize the dominant role of emotional intelligence in the classroom.

In their empirical study, [Anwar et al. \(2021\)](#) investigated the correlation between trait emotional intelligence and teacher effectiveness. Findings indicated that trait emotional intelligence tends to enhance teacher effectiveness, resulting in a large effect size. Moreover, academic qualifications were found to moderate the relationship, with higher qualifications yielding a stronger trait emotional intelligence-teacher effectiveness

relationship. Findings imply that educational administrators, stakeholders, and policy makers should emphasize emotional intelligence in promoting teacher effectiveness in the higher education context. Similarly, [Maamari and Salloum \(2023\)](#), who used structural equation modeling to analyze the impact of emotionally intelligent university staff on their teaching effectiveness, confirmed the resulting relationships and model fit. Findings reflect the importance of enhancing university staff's emotional intelligence to improve instructional efficacy, staff-student relationships, intellectual performance, and university rankings.

2.2. Teacher Efficacy

An investigation by [Nikoopour et al. \(2012\)](#) revealed a strong association between trait emotional intelligence and teaching experience, indicating that more experienced teachers tend to demonstrate higher levels of emotional intelligence. Findings imply that more experienced teachers, also characterized by higher self-efficacy, tend to possess greater ability to recognize and handle emotions. Therefore, they tend to possess stronger control orientations to effectively work with problematic students, while experiencing greater teaching satisfaction compared to those with lower emotional intelligence and less working experience.

On the other hand, [Lapornik \(2024\)](#), who studied the link between trait emotional intelligence and language teachers' perceptions, indicated a significant and positive association between higher trait emotional intelligence and self-efficacy, teacher-student bonds, and job satisfaction. Besides, distinctive patterns between trait emotional intelligence factors (emotionality, sociality, wellbeing, and self-control) and specific attitudes were also found. Findings imply that teacher training and professional development programs should include elements of emotional intelligence to modify the perceptions and attitudes among preservice and in-service teachers.

Lastly, [Calma \(2025\)](#), who examined the association between teachers' trait emotional intelligence and efficacy, indicated that it tends to be significantly and positively related to efficacy. Findings imply that teachers with higher trait emotional intelligence tend to demonstrate a higher capacity to recognize students' feelings and emotions, while perceiving themselves as more efficacious in classroom management and instructional strategies compared to those with lower trait emotional intelligence.

2.3. Teachers' Reflective Practices, Wellbeing, and Mental Ability

A study by [Shahivand and Moradkhani \(2019\)](#) investigated the impact of emotional intelligence on teachers' reflective practices. Findings showed that total emotional intelligence and reflective practices tend to be significantly related. Specifically, four variables of emotional intelligence (emotionality, self-control, sociability, and wellbeing) were found to be significantly related to reflective practices, with wellbeing evidencing the highest coefficient. Moreover, five reflection subscales (cognitive, affective, metacognitive, practical, and critical reflection) were found to be significantly related to emotional intelligence, with critical reflection showing the lowest coefficient. Findings imply that training programs should be designed to directly increase teachers' emotional intelligence, while indirectly encouraging them to leverage on effective pedagogic practices.

On the other hand, [Izquierdo et al. \(2023\)](#) analyzed the relationship between preservice teachers' emotional intelligence, personal attributes, and general mental ability. Findings revealed that emotional intelligence and personal attributes tend to contribute the most in explaining preservice teachers' level of training. Moreover, intelligence and conscientiousness were also found to directly predict preservice teachers' academic performance. Findings highlight the importance of enhancing the personal attributes and emotional skills among preservice teachers so that they can effectively apply their new pedagogic knowledge and skills after obtaining their testamurs.

2.4. Job Satisfaction, Burnout, Stress, and Mood

In a study that investigated teachers' emotional intelligence in relation to job satisfaction and burnout, [Platsidou \(2010\)](#) disclosed that teachers tend to report fairly high scores in the specific factors of emotional intelligence and overall emotional intelligence. Further, emotional intelligence was found to be significantly associated with job satisfaction and exhaustion; teachers with higher emotional intelligence tend to experience greater job satisfaction and less exhaustion. Lastly, emotional intelligence was also found to significantly predict teachers' personal accomplishment and job satisfaction. Findings imply the cruciality of implementing emotional intelligence enhancement programs to increase teachers' sense of accomplishment, job satisfaction, and wellbeing, which can help alleviate job stress and burnout in the long run.

Similarly, [Martínez-Monteagudo et al. \(2019\)](#), who analyzed secondary school teachers' trait emotional intelligence in relation to anxiety, burnout, depression, and stress, disclosed that teachers tend to be characterized by four distinct profiles of emotional intelligence, including (1) high emotional attention and low emotional healing, (2) low attention and high emotional healing, (3) generalized high emotional intelligence, (4) generalized low emotional intelligence. Findings also showed significant differences between emotional intelligence and anxiety, burnout, depression, and stress. Teachers with high attention and low healing and those with generalized low emotional intelligence were found to experience higher emotional exhaustion, anxiety, depersonalization, stress, and depression, all of which tend to reduce their sense of personal accomplishment and self-efficacy. Findings imply the importance of raising teachers' emotional intelligence to help them gain better cognitive, emotional, and psychological strength.

[Sánchez-Pujalte et al. \(2021\)](#) examined the link between trait emotional intelligence, socioemotional competencies, and burnout, among high school teachers. Findings indicated that emotional intelligence tends to be significantly and negatively related to burnout. Moreover, older and more experienced teachers were found to demonstrate lower levels of burnout. Findings reflect the importance for teachers to adopt protective approaches that can enhance their emotional intelligence and socioemotional competencies, which in turn, can help ameliorate their physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by protracted occupational stress.

In a similar study, [Pandey, Sharma, and Kamboj \(2023\)](#) evaluated teachers' trait emotional intelligence, health, and stress. Findings showed that trait emotional intelligence tends to be positively related to healthful behavior, but negatively related to stress. Findings imply that assessment of teachers' emotional intelligence and healthful behavior should be a part of their routine evaluation and training to improve their teaching efficacy, self-esteem, and overall health.

Lastly, [Martínez-Saura et al. \(2024\)](#), who assessed the trait emotional intelligence and mood among in-service and primary school teachers, revealed that teachers with higher levels of emotional intelligence tend to feel less nervous, tired sad, and moody; rather, they tend to have greater stamina and benevolence. Besides, they also tend to be significantly different from those with lower trait emotional intelligence in terms of all mood states, indicating that such differences tend to have a significant impact on their professional and personal wellbeing.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design and Approach

A quantitative research design was adopted to allow the authors to systematically investigate lecturers' trait emotional intelligence through the use of numerical data and statistical analysis to quantify their trait emotional intelligence, with the primary aim of drawing meaningful conclusions and generalizing results to a broader lecturer population in Sabah. Further, statistical methods were used to calculate means, percentages of agreement, and significant differences by way of age, gender, and work experience. The key elements of the quantitative research design included (1) three succinctly stated research questions, (2) a convenient sample of lecturers as a representative subset, (3) a list of trait emotional intelligence variables to be measured, (4) an appropriate data collection method, (5) specific statistical methods to analyze data, and (5) ethical considerations (i.e., informed consent and privacy protection).

3.2. Research Location

This study was conducted in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, the capital city of the island state where quantitative research on PHEI lecturers' trait emotional intelligence is scarce. Kota Kinabalu was chosen for its distinctive educational landscape, which includes 16 PHEIs ($N = 16$) that can provide a sufficiently representative sample of the lecturer population in Sabah, thus allowing for a relatively fair assessment of lecturers' trait emotional intelligence at local PHEIs.

3.3. Sample and Justification

The sample of this study comprised 61 lecturers ($n = 61$) recruited from four PHEIs in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, who possess at least a bachelor's degree, English proficiency, and a full-time contract at their respective institutions. Initially, deans, coordinators, and registrars of eight randomly PHEIs were contacted via email and phone, but eventually, only four consented that data collection should proceed. Subsequently, the PHEI leaders shared the survey link with lecturers and urged them to respond. Voluntary participation and convenient access were the main considerations of this selection procedure, which could yield a realistic and contextually relevant sample.

Respondents come from culturally, linguistically, and ethnically diverse communities in Sabah. The sample size was determined according to theoretical and statistical considerations. According to the central limit theorem, a minimum of 30 participants is generally sufficient to ensure statistical power and generalizability for basic survey research ([Memon et al., 2020](#); [Roscoe, 1975](#); [RUBIKTOP, 2023](#)). Additionally, the sample was deemed representative of lecturers from the local PHEIs in Kota Kinabalu; hence, selection bias was minimized. Systematic random sampling of PHEIs was initially done,

whereby every second college on the list was contacted. This selection method was practiced for its ability to capture a diverse range of perspectives across different age, gender, and work experience among lecturers. By allowing all eligible PHEIs an equal chance of selection, this method could prevent the under- or over-representation of specific groups, while increasing the generalizability of findings to a broader population of PHEI lecturers.

Additionally, PHEIs were chosen based on their physical proximity to the university college where the first author serves as program leader in its Master of Education in Leadership. In general, the study was delimited by proximity, accessibility, and administrators' willingness to participate in the research study. A total of 61 lecturers responded to the questionnaire online; completion of the questionnaire was interpreted as informed permission, with all participants assured of anonymity and confidentiality.

While the sample size seemed small, it met the minimum requirement for quantitative research in the social sciences, particularly in educational leadership and educational psychology. For example, [Roscoe \(1975\)](#) recommended a sample size of 30 to 500 for most statistical research. This rule of thumb is supported by the central limit theorem, which stipulates that sampling distributions will approach normality when there are 30 or more respondents, allowing for acceptable statistical inference. Furthermore, the current sample size ensured a reasonable margin of error and enough power to identify modest effects in nonparametric analyses, such as the Kruskal-Wallis, Mann-Whitney U, and Wilcoxon signed rank tests, which were used to interpret data in the current study.

The sample consisted of 36.1 percent males and 63.9 percent females. Age-wise, 68.9 percent are 25 to 35 years old, 26.2 percent are 36 to 46 years old, 19.6 percent are 47 to 57 years old, 1.6 percent are 47 to 57 years old, and 3.3 percent are above 57 years old. Experience-wise, 29.5 percent have worked for one to five years, 37.7 percent have worked for six to 11 years, 19.7 percent have worked for 12 to 17 years, and 13.1 percent have worked for more than 18 years (see [Table 1](#)).

Table 1: Demographic Information of Respondents ($n = 61$)

Profile	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	22	36.1
	Female	39	63.9
Age	25-35	42	68.9
	36-46	16	26.2
	47-57	1	1.6
	57 and above	2	3.3
Working experience	1-5 years	18	29.5
	6-11 years	23	37.7
	12-17 years	12	19.7
	More than 18 years	8	13.1

3.4. Instrument

The Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue), developed by [Petrides and Mavroveli \(2018\)](#), was employed for data collection. Comprising 30 Likert-scale questions, it requires answers ranging from strongly agree = 5 to strongly disagree = 1. The developers have extensively described its validity and reliability in a journal article

(Petrides & Mavroveli, 2018). Additionally, Petrides (2009) has also furnished a detailed description of the TEIQue as the operationalization device for trait emotional intelligence (trait EI or trait emotional self-efficacy) in a book chapter. Overall, the questionnaire has adequate reliability and temporal stability at both specific and overall levels with a dynamic and reproducible factor structure. Lastly, it comprises four distinctive, but interconnected dimensions, including emotionality, self-control, wellbeing, and sociability.

To determine its suitability for the current study, it was pilot-tested on 25 local teachers and data were analyzed using SPSS 29.0. Results showed that its Cronbach's alpha is .948, thus indicating its high internal consistency. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was also conducted using the same data with gender, age, and job experience as independent variables. Results showed that its *rho a*, *rho c*, and average variance extracted (AVE) were 0.926, 0.949, and 0.395, respectively.

3.5. Data Collection and Analysis

PHEI lecturers were required to complete the questionnaire on Google Forms and were informed that completion of the survey was their indication of consent to voluntarily participate in the study. Ethical issues were prioritized throughout the data collection procedure. All participants were given informed consent in relation to the purpose of the study, its voluntary nature, and the possibility to withdraw at any time without any repercussions. To ensure confidentiality, all responses were anonymized and the data were securely stored. Only the first writer has access to the data, thus guaranteeing that they would be used solely for scholarly purposes.

Data were automatically transferred onto a spreadsheet and subsequently analyzed using SPSS 29.0. First, the mean score and percentages of agreement on lecturers' trait emotional intelligence were calculated. Second, Kruskal-Wallis H test was conducted to determine if there were any significant differences in lecturers' trait emotional intelligence in relation to age and job experience. Third, Mann-Whitney U test was run to determine if there were any significant differences in terms of gender. Fourth, Wilcoxon signed rank test was used to determine if any of the trait emotional intelligence items were significant at a hypothesized value of 3.5.

4. Findings

4.1. Mean and Percentages

The mean score of lecturers' trait emotional intelligence was 3.49/5.0. Percentages of agreement (strongly agree/agree) were collapsed to gain an overview of lecturers' trait emotional intelligence. Results showed that low to below-average proportions of lecturers strongly agreed/agreed that they have high trait emotional intelligence. A low of 16.4 to 39.3 percent strongly agreed/agreed that they (1) have power over other people's feelings, (2) do not change their minds frequently, (3) would describe themselves as good negotiators, and (4) seldom get involved in things that they wish they could stop later.

Barely 41 to 47.6 percent strongly agreed/agreed that they (1) often find it easy to stand up for their rights, (2) are highly motivated, (3) are able to influence other people's feelings, (4) are able to express their emotions well, (5) never relent if they are right, and

(6) are admired for being relaxed. A low of 50.8 to 59 percent strongly agreed/agreed that they (1) find it easy to keep themselves motivated, (2) often pause and think about their feelings, (3) are full of personal strengths, (4) are able to empathize with others, (5) are optimistic about most things, (6) often treat others right, (7) have a number of good qualities, and (8) can deal effectively with people.

Lastly, only 60.6 to 68.8 percent strongly agreed/agreed that they (1) find it easy to regulate their emotions, (2) find life enjoyable, (3) can figure out their emotions, (4) find it easy to adjust their life according to the situations, and (5) are able to deal with stress. Lastly, 70.5 to 73.8 percent strongly agreed/agreed on only two items, that they (1) are able to adapt to new environments and (2) find it easy to bond well with closed ones (see [Table 2](#)).

Table 2: Percentages of Agreement on Lecturers' Trait Emotional Intelligence

Item	1	2	3	4	5	4+5 (Collapsed)
Expressing my emotions with words is not a problem for me.	4.9	6.6	41	41	6.6	47.6
I often find it easy to see things from another person's viewpoint.	3.3	1.6	41	44.3	9.8	54.1
On the whole, I'm a highly motivated person.	1.6	1.6	50.8	34.4	11.5	45.9
I usually find it easy to regulate my emotions.	1.6	3.3	34.4	50.8	9.8	60.6
I generally find life enjoyable.	1.6	3.3	34.4	41	19.7	60.7
I can deal effectively with people.	1.6	4.9	34.4	50.8	8.2	59
I don't change my mind frequently.	3.3	9.8	54.1	27.9	1.6	29.5
Many times, I can figure out what emotion I'm feeling.	3.3	3.3	27.9	57.4	8.2	65.6
I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	1.6	3.3	36.1	47.5	11.5	59
I often find it easy to stand up for my rights.	3.3	6.6	49.2	34.4	6.6	41
I'm usually able to influence the way other people feel.	1.6	8.2	41	37.7	9.8	47.5
On the whole, I have a bright perspective on most things.	1.6	4.9	39.3	44.3	9.8	54.1
Those close to me often say that I treat them right.	1.6	1.6	42.6	39.3	14.8	54.1
I often find it easy to adjust my life according to the circumstances.	1.6	3.3	31.1	50.8	13.1	63.9
On the whole, I'm able to deal with stress.	1.6	1.6	36.1	50.8	9.8	60.6
I often find it easy to show my affection to those close to me.	1.6	1.6	29.5	52.5	14.8	67.3
I'm normally able to "get into someone's shoes" and experience their emotions.	1.6	3.3	39.3	42.6	13.1	55.7
I normally find it easy to keep myself motivated.	1.6	9.8	37.7	39.3	11.5	50.8
I'm usually able to find ways to control my emotions when I want to.	1.6	4.9	24.6	55.7	13.1	68.8
On the whole, I'm pleased with my life.	1.6	1.6	31.1	49.2	16.4	65.6
I would describe myself as a good negotiator.	1.6	8.2	55.7	27.9	6.6	34.5
I seldom get involved in things I later wish I could get out of.	4.9	4.9	50.8	34.4	4.9	39.3
I often pause and think about my feelings.	1.6	1.6	39.3	45.9	11.5	57.4
I believe I'm full of personal strengths.	3.3	3.3	39.3	42.6	11.5	54.1
I never "back down" if I know I'm right.	4.9	8.2	39.3	37.7	9.8	47.5

I have power over other people's feelings.	8.2	18	57.4	14.8	1.6	16.4
I generally believe that things will work out fine in my life.	1.6	1.6	37.7	45.9	13.1	59.0
I find it easy to bond well with those close to me.	1.6	3.3	21.3	52.5	21.3	73.8
Generally, I'm able to adapt to new environments.	3.3	0	26.2	57.4	13.1	70.5
Others admire me for being relaxed.	0	1.6	50.8	32.8	14.8	47.6

Strongly agree = 5, Agree = 4, Neutral = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly disagree = 1

Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis H results indicated no significant differences in trait emotional intelligence by way of gender, age, and job experience (see Table 3).

Table 3: Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis H Results

Trait Emotional Intelligence	Nonparametric test	p-value
Gender	Mann-Whitney U test	0.306
Age	Kruskal-Wallis H test	0.843
Job Experience	Kruskal-Wallis H test	0.234

Wilcoxon signed rank test based on a hypothesized value of 3.5 showed that all the trait emotional intelligence items were significant at $p < 0.001$, having medians that were significantly different from the test value, and were likely to indicate strong disagreement (see Table 4).

Table 4: Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test Results

Emotional Intelligence	p-value	Conclusion
Expressing my emotions with words is not a problem for me	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
I often find it easy to see things from another person's viewpoint	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
On the whole, I'm a highly motivated person	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
I usually find it easy to regulate my emotions	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
I generally find life enjoyable	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
I can deal effectively with people	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
I don't change my mind frequently	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
Many times, I can figure out what emotion I'm feeling	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement

I feel that I have a number of good qualities	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
I often find it easy to stand up for my rights	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
I'm usually able to influence the way other people feel	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
On the whole, I have a bright perspective on most things	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
Those close to me often say that I treat them right	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
I often find it easy to adjust my life according to the circumstances	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
On the whole, I'm able to deal with stress	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
I often find it easy to show my affection to those close to me	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
I'm normally able to "get into someone's shoes" and experience their emotions	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
I normally find it easy to keep myself motivated	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
I'm usually able to find ways to control my emotions when I want to	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
On the whole, I'm pleased with my life	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
I would describe myself as a good negotiator	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
I seldom get involved in things I later wish I could get out of	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
I often pause and think about my feelings	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
I believe I'm full of personal strengths	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
I never "back down" if I know I'm right	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
I have power over other people's feelings	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement

I generally believe that things will work out fine in my life	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
I find it easy to bond well with those close to me	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
Generally, I'm able to adapt to new environments	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement
Others admire me for being relaxed	<0.001**	Median significantly differed from the test value indicating strong disagreement

** $p < .001$

5. Implications and Recommendations

5.1. Implications

Findings imply that PHEI lecturers tend to have a low to low-average level of trait emotional intelligence. [Ishaka, Iskandar, and Ramli \(2010\)](#) found that Malaysian teachers tend to score low-average in a number of emotional intelligence core-competencies, including emotional awareness, achievement drive, accurate self-assessment, influencing skills, change catalyst, and conflict resolution. Besides, low levels of emotional awareness and accurate self-assessment imply that teachers need to improve their ability to differentiate their internal states, intuitions, resources, preferences. Besides, low scores in core-competencies suggest that teachers need to learn how to effectively identify and assess own feelings, while identifying the resources needed to overcome negative feelings.

[Gong, Chen, and Wang \(2019\)](#) found that employees' emotional intelligence tends to have a positive predictive effect on psychological capital and job performance, while negatively related to job burnout. Moreover, [Radzuwan, Abdullah, and Chan \(2023\)](#) found that Malaysian teachers tend to experience high levels of stress due to their overwhelming workload and responsibilities, besides a lack of control over their work environment, which often lead to feelings of depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, and a decrease in self-efficacy and personal accomplishment. Similarly, [Ani et al. \(2025\)](#) reiterated that primary sources of exhaustion among Malaysian teachers include multifarious administrative tasks, excessive paperwork, and extracurricular commitments, besides the perceived lack of effective administrative support in managing workload and addressing burnout. To the same or even greater extent, these factors may influence PHEI lecturers' perceptions of their own trait emotional intelligence.

5.2. Overcoming Emotional Labor

According to Robin Stern, the cofounder and senior advisor for the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, emotional intelligence is being smart about one's feelings in the service of one's goals ([Anderson, 2024](#)). It is akin to using one's thinking to inform one's feelings, and vice versa, while bearing in mind where one is heading with it. Emotions are information that people collect just by listening to what is going on inside and outside of them. It is therefore important for lecturers to intentionally make sense of that information to identify their emotions so that they can ultimately tame or capitalize on them to exert control. Further, many people in the service sector, including lecturers,

experience emotional labor where they are feeling one thing on the inside, but showing a different expression or emotion on the outside because of environmental or their own internal expectations. It is difficult for them to tune into their emotions at that moment without affecting their tasks at hand. Discrepancy between what they feel and what they show often results in alienated feelings from their own experiences, leading to burnout and exhaustion.

To overcome the state of emotional labor, lecturers need to adopt protective and preventive measures and activities, including mindfulness, proper rest, and healthy nutrition. Besides, they can also start journaling by turning their attention more frequently to themselves and by checking in with their feelings. There is also an app that allows them to check in with themselves any time. When lecturers begin to notice about their own emotional patterns, they become more attuned to their affective wellbeing. This gives them a much better chance of being able to manage their emotions. Lastly, lecturers can alleviate emotional labor by creating safe space to explore what they feeling and why they are feeling the way they are, and its impact on their work performance and interpersonal relationships. PHEIs that create a learning community that allows lecturers to study and train together can equip them with powerful support and scaffolding of skill development (Anderson, 2024).

5.3. Emotional Intelligence Training Programs

Research shows that emotional intelligence can be invigorated and exercised through specific training programs that focus on its practical applications. According to [Tormey and Corcoran \(2012\)](#), teachers have to teach in classrooms that are filled with excitement, enjoyment, hurt, anger, or boredom at different times. Besides, emotional intelligence training enables lecturers to leverage on emotional information for regulating their own emotions and their students', which can influence the overall teaching and learning process. Emotional intelligence training helps lecturers develop the competence to promote an emotionally-rich classroom life. It encompasses the skills needed in acknowledging and managing emotions, arousing particular emotional states to elicit particular types of thinking, and interpreting the emotional processes amongst students. In general, the intervention program can enhance PHEI lecturers' emotional intelligence through specific activities grounded on the four particular emotional capabilities, including perception, assimilation, understanding, and regulation. Overall, the training program is socially and culturally appropriate to increase PHEI lecturers' (1) emotional management, (2) awareness of their own emotions and their impact, (3) capability to manage students' emotions, (4) awareness of their own body language and its impact, and (5) empathy in their endeavor to modify students' behavior and attitudes.

[Gilar-Corbi et al. \(2018\)](#) elaborated on a successful intervention to develop emotional intelligence among trainee teachers. PHEIs can implement the course, which encompasses emotional intelligence exercises, which can run parallel to the practical components of their pedagogic practices. Intervention sessions include strategies and training that are related to trainees' (1) perceptions and understanding of their own emotions, (2) perceptions and understanding of others' emotions, (3) identification and understanding on how their own feelings influence their thoughts, decisions, behavior, and students, (4) expression of their own emotions and moods, (5) management of stress (6) management of their own emotions, and (7) influence on others' moods and emotions. Lastly, research indicates that trainees tend to demonstrate greater ability to manage

stress caused by performance assessments, implying that emotional intelligence intervention can effectively reduce work stress and burnout among lecturers.

5.4. **Caruso, Mayer, and Salovey (2002) Training Model**

According to [Salovey and Mayer \(1997\)](#), emotional intelligence training encompasses four dimensions, including emotional perception and expression, emotional facilitation of thought, emotional understanding, and emotional management. To raise their emotional intelligence, PHEI lecturers need to acquire the ability to (1) identify how others are feeling, (2) elicit emotions and integrate their own feelings into their thinking, (3) understand the causes of different emotions, and (4) capitalize on their emotions to successfully attain professional and personal goals.

Emotional intelligence training in the four dimensions encompasses several activities. First, trainees need to acquire the capacity to detect, identify, and express different kinds of feelings, which includes encoding, interpreting, and responding to emotional messages that are expressed through body language ([Caruso, Mayer, & Salovey, 2002](#); [Salovey & Mayer, 1997](#)). For example, PHEI lecturers should be able to discern others' fleeting expression of astonishment, anxiety, disappointment, or anger, which in turn, enables them to (1) recognize their own emotions, (2) acknowledge others' emotions, (3) convey their own emotions appropriately, and (4) distinguish between authentic emotions and pretense.

Second, trainees need to improve their capacity for emotional facilitation of cognitive activities, which concentrates on how emotions affect reasoning, decision-making, problem-solving, and creative expression ([Caruso, Mayer, & Salovey, 2002](#); [Salovey & Mayer, 1997](#)). Emotional facilitation enables PHEI lecturers to (1) utilize their emotions to redirect attention to significant things, (2) capitalize on their emotions to facilitate evaluation, recall, and decision-making, (3) consider and appreciate different viewpoints based on their moods, and (4) leverage on different emotions to increase their creativity and problem-solving.

Third, trainees need to acquire the fundamental competency to label emotions (e.g., anxiety, disappointment, sadness, depression), deduce the interrelationship among emotions, see how emotions interact together, and discern how emotions move from one stage to another ([Caruso, Mayer, & Salovey, 2002](#); [Salovey & Mayer, 1997](#)). For example, PHEI lecturers who understand that prolonged disappointment or perpetual sadness can exacerbate depression tend to show greater awareness of the impact of emotions in establishing favorable interpersonal relationships. Ultimately, emotional understanding and awareness enables them to (1) discern the interrelationships among a range of feelings and emotions, (2) discern the causes and effects of distinct emotions, (3) acknowledge multifaceted feelings and emotional blends, and (4) transition from one emotion to another efficaciously.

Fourth, trainees need to acquire emotional management skills, which allow them to control their emotions or even eliminate the destructive ones, such as anger, envy, and jealousy. While attempts to minimize or eliminate emotions entirely can stifle emotional intelligence, emotional regulation tends to be advantageous, as when someone is trying to convince an audience ([Caruso, Mayer, & Salovey, 2002](#); [Salovey & Mayer, 1997](#)). Overall, emotional management enables PHEI lecturers to (1) be open to their own feelings, (2) stay aware of, monitor, and reflect upon their emotions, (3) engage, prolong,

or avoid an emotional state, (4) manage their own motions, and (5) manage others' emotions.

5.5. Emotional Intelligence Instructional Package

[Joshith \(2012\)](#) elaborated on the effectiveness of an emotional intelligence program designed to promote innovative teaching, which was based on an instructional package encompassing [Goleman's \(2000\)](#) five dimensions of emotional intelligence, including self-awareness, managing emotions, motivating oneself, empathy, and handling relationships. The package provides sufficient activities to promote or develop the five dimensions of emotional intelligence. First, the objective describes the aim each task. Second, the thumbnail describes what to do in each task. Third, the outcome describes the expected results of the tasks. Fourth, the audience comprises what sample is using the package. Fifth, the materials comprise the resources needed for task execution. Sixth, the time matrix allocates time to specific segments of the package. Seventh, the instructions consist of detailed information about what should be done for each task. Lastly, the task card comprises a set of questions for data collection. Additionally, a modular approach is used to conduct the activities or execute the tasks.

Findings showed that the package tends to significantly influence the relationship between emotional intelligence and teaching competency, implying that the intervention package should be implemented to enhance lecturers' emotional intelligence to inculcate pedagogic competency, which enables them to (1) achieve long-term success, (2) gain awareness of interdependence, (3) assume personal responsibility for choices and consequential thinking, (4) create a learning environment that enthuse and sustain student curiosity, and (5) and demonstrate intrinsic motivation in fostering academic achievement.

5.6. Socioemotional Training

[Valente, Lourenço, and Dominguez-Lara \(2022\)](#) reiterated that teachers should receive emotional intelligence training to deal with emotional issues and situations. Students in the 21st century need to acquire a socioemotional education to promote sustainable humanity; they need emotionally intelligent teachers who are aware of their own capabilities and emotional needs to create a learning environment that boosts the development of the same socioemotional competences amongst students, while acting primarily as a role model for these skills. Moreover, previous research showed that teachers' emotional intelligence (identification, understanding, use, expression, and regulation of emotions) can be enhanced by implementing a scientifically validated training program with evidenced benefits, which include (1) increased happiness and life satisfaction, (2) reduced job stress, burnout, ailments, and cortisol levels, (3) improved employability rates, and (4) improved family relationships, compared to the control group.

5.7. RULER for Schools

Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence has developed RULER for schools, which is a systematic approach to foster socioemotional learning ([Yale School of Medicine, n. d.](#)). RULER encompasses the five emotional intelligence skills that individuals require in order to (1) recognize their own emotions and others', (2) understand the causes and effects of emotions, (3) label nuanced emotions, (4) express emotions according to sociocultural

norms, and (5) regulate emotions with effective strategies. It aims to infuse the principles of emotional intelligence in relation to the ways which leaders manage, teachers instruct, and students acquire knowledge. Additionally, development of the five RULER skills relies on four techniques, including the Charter, Mood Meter, Meta-Moment, and Blueprint, which are methodically introduced to all stakeholders, including principals, teachers, parents, and students.

In the context of PHEIs, Charter enables lecturers to develop and sustain positive emotional settings by establishing mutual norms about how individuals intend to feel, and how they can assist each other to experience those feelings. Next, Mood Meter enables lecturers to increase self-awareness and social awareness, while encouraging them to develop an intricate and refined range of emotions (passion, affection, ardor, sensations, sentiments) and various measures to regulate them in a socially and culturally appropriate manner. Besides, Meta-Moment equips lecturers with a process to respond to variety of emotional scenarios, which involves emotional regulation or the process of managing their reactions to emotionally-charged situations. Therefore, it requires lecturers to improve their emotional awareness, cognitive reappraisal, mindfulness, and behavioral adjustments. Overall, Meta-Moment enables lecturers to align with their best selves, while also promoting favorable interpersonal relationships and healthful living. Lastly, Blueprint helps lecturers develop empathy and conflict resolution skills, while serving as a framework for them to reflect on conflict and rehabilitate affected individuals or groups.

6. Limitations

To conclude, this study has some limitations that may affect generalizability of findings. While the sample size is deemed appropriate for exploratory research on lecturers' emotional intelligence, generalizability of findings may be limited by convenience sampling. While the questionnaire has high reliability, it only provides self-reported data, which can be inaccurate because of social desirability and bias. Lecturers' perceptions and interpretations of the items are primarily subjective, which could affect data consistency or accuracy. Additionally, it also suffered from a low response rate, which may potentially skew the findings. Lastly, the standardized items may not be adequate for exploring such a complex construct as trait emotional intelligence. In trying to reduce a complex phenomenon into quantifiable data, loss of valuable context and individual experiences may occur. Lastly, it is worth suggesting that future research on trait emotional intelligence also incorporate a qualitative perspective to generate in-depth understanding of lecturers' own interpretations of the professional and psychosocial factors that shape their trait emotional intelligence.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

This study has strictly adhered to all ethical procedures involving the use of human subjects. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents who were ascertained of their anonymity, with their responses kept strictly confidential. They were also informed that the study was of low risk and that they could stop participating any time without any repercussions.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors report no potential conflict of interest regarding this study in terms of the research, or publication of this article.

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