



Research Paper

Impact of Emotional intelligence training on students- A conceptual review

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Abstract

Emotional Intelligence (EI) has emerged as a critical competency in educational contexts, significantly influencing students' academic performance, interpersonal relationships, and psychological well-being. As traditional curricula primarily focus on cognitive development, the integration of emotional intelligence training offers a complementary pathway to holistic student development. This conceptual review explores the transformative potential of EI training in educational settings, aiming to synthesize existing literature and identify theoretical foundations that support such interventions.

Drawing on key frameworks, including Goleman's mixed model and Mayer and Salovey's ability-based model of EI, the review examines how emotional self-awareness, regulation, empathy, and social skills contribute to student success. It also analyzes socio-emotional learning (SEL) as a structured approach to EI training within schools.

A conceptual model is proposed, illustrating the dynamic interplay between EI components and educational outcomes, mediated by teacher support and institutional culture. The model highlights how EI training enhances student resilience, engagement, and classroom Behaviour.

The review underscores the need for teacher training, curriculum integration, and long-term assessment tools to measure EI development. It concludes with directions for future empirical research to validate the proposed model and optimize intervention strategies.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Education, Socio-emotional Learning, Student Development, Classroom Behaviour, SEL, Conceptual Framework

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I. Introduction

In recent years, emotional intelligence (EI) has gained considerable traction within educational discourse, shifting from a peripheral concern to a core component of student development. Originally conceptualized in the psychological sciences, EI refers to the capacity to perceive, understand, regulate, and manage emotions—both in oneself and in others. As society confronts increasing mental health challenges,

heightened social pressures, and complex interpersonal environments, educational institutions are beginning to recognize the crucial role that emotional competencies play in fostering student resilience, motivation, and success.

Historically, education systems have prioritized cognitive development, emphasizing standardized testing, academic performance, and intellectual achievement. However, this cognitively focused paradigm has proven insufficient in addressing the full spectrum of student needs. Research increasingly points to the limitations of academic instruction that neglects emotional and social dimensions, especially in the face of growing concerns around student disengagement, anxiety, bullying, and Behavioural issues. This shift has prompted educators and policymakers alike to explore holistic approaches that encompass not only what students know but also how they feel, relate, and adapt within learning environments.

Contemporary challenges such as rising rates of school dropouts, increased classroom conflicts, and pandemic-induced learning disruptions have further emphasized the need for socio-emotional learning (SEL). Students today navigate a world marked by rapid technological change, cultural diversity, and heightened emotional stress. In this context, the ability to regulate emotions, build empathetic relationships, and manage conflict is not merely an ancillary skill—it is central to thriving in school and beyond. Emotional intelligence, therefore, has emerged not only as a protective factor against adverse outcomes but also as a promotive asset for academic engagement and positive youth development.

Against this backdrop, emotional intelligence training—structured efforts to enhance emotional awareness, empathy, and interpersonal effectiveness—has been introduced into educational systems across age groups and geographical contexts. However, despite growing enthusiasm for EI-based interventions, the conceptual underpinnings of such training programs remain fragmented. There is a pressing need to consolidate existing knowledge and develop a theoretical framework that can guide both research and practical implementation in diverse educational settings.

Purpose and Scope of the Review

This conceptual review seeks to develop a comprehensive theoretical understanding of emotional intelligence training and its impact on students. The primary aim is to synthesize the broad and multidisciplinary body of literature related to EI, with a particular focus on conceptual frameworks that underpin training programs designed for students in formal education.

The review first examines foundational models of emotional intelligence, including Mayer and Salovey's (1997) ability model, which emphasizes emotional processing and problem-solving, and Goleman's (1995) mixed model, which integrates emotional competencies with motivational and social dimensions. These models provide differing lenses through which EI training has been operationalized in school programs. By bringing these perspectives into dialogue, the review highlights both convergences and tensions in existing theoretical work.

Another objective is to identify gaps in the conceptualization and application of EI training. While empirical studies have demonstrated short-term improvements in student outcomes following EI interventions, few have systematically addressed the theoretical coherence of these interventions. As a result, there is a risk of misapplication or superficial implementation that lacks long-term effectiveness.

The scope of the review spans all levels of education—from early childhood (K-12) to tertiary and higher education. Emotional intelligence is a developmental construct, and the ways in which it manifests and can be cultivated vary significantly across age groups. Thus, understanding the developmental trajectory of emotional competence is key to designing age-appropriate and culturally responsive training programs.

By focusing on conceptual clarity, this review positions itself to contribute meaningfully to a growing field that intersects psychology, education, and social-emotional development.

Significance of the Review

The importance of this review lies in its effort to bring theoretical rigor to a field often dominated by practice-driven or outcome-focused research. While program evaluations and experimental studies offer valuable insights into “what works,” they frequently omit a deeper interrogation of “why” and “how” these programs work, and under what theoretical assumptions they operate. Without such clarity, there is a risk of overgeneralizing results or misinterpreting the role of emotional intelligence in different educational settings.

For educators, a clear understanding of the conceptual basis of EI training allows for better curriculum integration, instructional alignment, and classroom implementation. Teachers can benefit from frameworks that translate complex emotional competencies into teachable, measurable Behaviours aligned with broader educational goals.

For policymakers, this review provides a conceptual map that can inform the design and scaling of emotional intelligence programs. Given the increasing interest in nationwide SEL mandates and mental health initiatives, a firm theoretical foundation is essential for policy design, resource allocation, and program evaluation.

For researchers, this review identifies areas where theoretical development is still needed. These include the longitudinal impact of EI training, cross-cultural applicability, developmental considerations, and integration with academic curricula. Moreover, by proposing a unified conceptual framework, the review contributes to educational psychology by linking emotion theory, pedagogy, and developmental science.

Ultimately, the significance of this review extends beyond academic discourse. In a world increasingly characterized by emotional complexity—whether in digital spaces, workplaces, or civic life—schools must prepare students not just to learn but to live well. Emotional intelligence training, if grounded in sound theory and integrated thoughtfully, offers a pathway to achieve this vision.

II. Review of Literature

The concept of emotional intelligence (EI) has its roots in early theories of social intelligence, first introduced by Edward Thorndike (1920), who defined it as the ability to understand and manage people. This laid the groundwork for later developments in recognizing non-cognitive aspects of intelligence. Howard Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences further expanded this perspective by proposing interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences, emphasizing that emotional and social capabilities are distinct from traditional IQ.

The modern conception of emotional intelligence emerged with the work of Salovey and Mayer (1990), who defined EI as the capacity to perceive, use, understand, and regulate emotions to enhance thought and Behaviour. Their ability model, grounded in cognitive-emotional processes, became foundational for EI research. Later, Daniel Goleman (1995) popularized the concept by proposing a mixed model that combined emotional skills with personal and social competencies, linking EI directly to success in school and work environments.

These models—Mayer & Salovey's ability model, Goleman's mixed model, and Bar-On's emotional-social intelligence model—have informed various frameworks used in educational contexts. Each emphasizes different mechanisms but collectively support the integration of emotional learning in pedagogy, laying the foundation for structured EI training programs across educational levels.

The Role of Emotions in Learning

Emotions play a critical role in shaping how students absorb, process, and retain information. Neurobiologically, the amygdala and prefrontal cortex interact to mediate the balance between emotion and cognition, influencing attention, memory, and learning outcomes (Gkintoni et al., 2023). Emotional regulation, a core component of emotional intelligence (EI), enhances academic performance by allowing students to manage anxiety, frustration, and distractions, thus improving focus and task persistence (Reis da Silva, 2024). Furthermore, emotionally competent students exhibit higher motivation and engagement, as EI facilitates goal setting, optimism, and adaptive coping strategies, especially in challenging learning environments (Gkintoni et al., 2023).

EI develops across a student's life span, with certain emotional skills more salient at different educational levels. Early childhood offers a critical window for cultivating basic emotional literacy, while adolescence presents opportunities to strengthen self-regulation and empathy amid rapid cognitive and social change (Gkintoni et al., 2023). Research underscores that EI training is most effective when aligned with students' developmental needs and maturity levels.

Personality traits such as openness, conscientiousness, and extraversion significantly influence EI development (Gkintoni et al., 2023). Moreover, socioeconomic status and cultural background shape emotional expression and regulation norms. Gender differences have also been documented, with girls typically scoring higher on empathy and interpersonal EI measures, while boys may excel in managing stress and assertiveness (Gkintoni et al., 2023).

A positive school climate fosters emotional safety, supporting the internalization of EI skills. Teacher-student relationships marked by empathy and trust enhance students' self-esteem and social learning (Paschal et al., 2024). Peer interactions, especially cooperative and emotionally rich exchanges, contribute to social problem-solving abilities. Family and community contexts also play a pivotal role in shaping emotional competence, reinforcing or contradicting school-based EI initiatives (Reis da Silva, 2024).

EI training is associated with improved academic focus, enhanced problem-solving, and resilience in the face of failure. Students with higher EI levels demonstrate stronger participation and sustained classroom engagement (Gkintoni et al., 2023). EI enhances self-esteem, reduces anxiety, and improves interpersonal relationships. It also supports leadership development and reduces Behavioural issues, promoting a harmonious school culture (Paschal et al., 2024).

Proposed Emotional Intelligence Assessment Tools

1. Emotional Intelligence Measurement Tools

To measure **pre- and post-training EI levels**, use the following validated instruments:

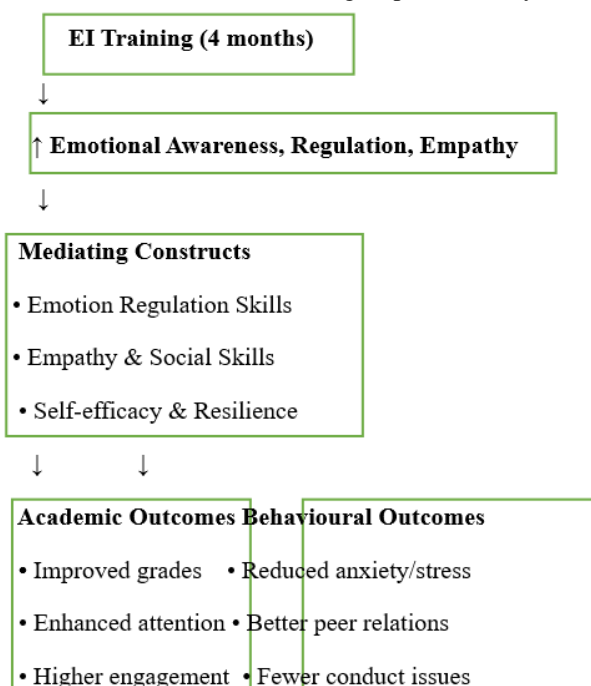
Tool	Description	Target Group
Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT)	A 33-item self-report inventory based on Salovey & Mayer's EI model. Measures perception, understanding, regulation, and use of emotions.	Secondary and higher education
Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire – Adolescent Short Form (TEIQue-ASF)	Measures global trait EI and its four factors: well-being, self-control, emotionality, and sociability.	Ages 12–18
Emotional Quotient Inventory: Youth Version (EQ-i:YV)	Assesses intrapersonal, interpersonal, adaptability, stress management, and general mood.	Ages 7–18
Mayer–Salovey–Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT)	Performance-based test measuring EI abilities (perceiving, using, understanding, managing emotions).	Higher education

2. Behavioural and Academic Outcome Tools

Domain	Tool	Description
Behavioural	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)	Measures prosocial Behaviour, peer problems, conduct issues, emotional symptoms, and hyperactivity.
	Student Engagement Instrument (SEI)	Captures emotional and cognitive engagement in school.
Academic	Grades & Test Scores	Collect official grades from core subjects. Compare baseline vs. post-intervention performance.
	Teacher Ratings	Use rubrics to evaluate academic motivation, class participation, and collaboration.

Conceptual Model: Impact of EI Training on Student Outcomes

Model Title: 4-Month EI Training Impact Pathway Model



Model Explanation

- Input: Emotional intelligence training delivered via SEL-based curriculum, workshops, role-playing, and reflection activities.
- Mediators: Internalized EI skills such as self-awareness, emotion regulation, and social competence.
- Outputs:
 - Academic: Improved concentration, resilience, and academic performance.
 - Behavioural: Enhanced self-regulation, social Behaviour, and emotional well-being.

Expected Outcomes of the Proposed EI Training Model

Implementing the 4-month Emotional Intelligence (EI) training based on the proposed conceptual model is expected to produce significant academic and Behavioural improvements among students. The model assumes that by enhancing key emotional competencies—self-awareness, emotion regulation, empathy, and

social skills—students will experience multidimensional benefits that translate into observable outcomes in both classroom Behaviour and academic performance.

Academic Outcomes

Students are expected to show improved academic resilience and focus. Enhanced self-regulation and reduced emotional reactivity will likely lead to better concentration during tasks and improved performance in assessments. Increased motivation and self-efficacy are also anticipated, promoting active participation and perseverance in academic challenges. Teachers may observe higher engagement levels, more consistent homework completion, and greater collaborative learning Behaviour in group settings.

Behavioural and Psychosocial Outcomes

Behaviourally, students are likely to demonstrate improved interpersonal relationships, reduced peer conflicts, and greater empathy. Emotional intelligence training fosters an understanding of emotional cues and social responsibility, which can enhance peer cooperation and classroom harmony. Additionally, self-reported and teacher-rated measures may reveal reductions in anxiety, stress, and conduct issues. Students are also expected to show higher prosocial Behaviour scores on tools like the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ).

Overall, the EI training is anticipated to cultivate a more emotionally safe, academically engaged, and socially constructive school environment. These outcomes, if sustained, could form a foundation for broader well-being and lifelong learning success.

III. Conclusion

The findings projected by the proposed emotional intelligence (EI) training model underscore the transformative potential of socio-emotional learning in educational contexts. Over the course of a structured 4-month intervention, students are expected to experience measurable growth in emotional regulation, empathy, and interpersonal skills. These emotional competencies are not only foundational for psychological well-being but also act as powerful drivers of academic success, Behavioural stability, and student engagement. The conceptual model affirms that emotional and cognitive development are deeply intertwined and must be cultivated simultaneously to support holistic education.

Integrating emotional intelligence training into the core educational framework demands a paradigm shift in policy thinking. First, educational policy must formally recognize emotional intelligence as a core component of student development, alongside literacy and numeracy. Curriculum guidelines should mandate age-appropriate EI instruction across all grade levels, supported by structured lesson plans and teacher training modules.

Second, teacher professional development programs must include EI assessment literacy and classroom strategies for fostering emotionally intelligent learning environments. Incentivizing EI-aligned teaching through policy measures—such as recognition, funding, and performance assessments—can accelerate institutional adoption.

Third, EI outcomes should be embedded into school evaluation systems, alongside academic metrics, to reflect a more comprehensive picture of student growth. Finally, national education policies should encourage longitudinal studies and pilot programs to evaluate the sustained impact of EI training, thereby refining best practices and implementation models.

Embedding EI training into policy will ensure emotionally intelligent, academically resilient, and socially responsible future generations.

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