# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND SELF-CONTROL AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN WEST COAST OF SABAH

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## ABSTRACT

The primary aim of this study is to identify the relationship between emotional intelligence and self-control among secondary school students in west coast of Sabah. Emotional Intelligence in this study refers to the survey of emotional intelligence experienced by the students, measured using the Goleman Emotional Scale (GES). Meanwhile, Self-Control is measured using the Self Control Scale (SCS). The survey on Emotional Intelligence was carried out with 381 respondents selected through simple random sampling. These students were identified as respondents based on registration records from selected secondary schools. The finding was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The results show a significant relationship between the dimensions of emotional intelligence, Personal Competence, Social Competence, Self-Awareness, Self-Regulation, Self-Motivation, Empathy, and Social Skill with Self-Control. These findings are essential as they are able to directly contribute in enhancing the process of teaching and learning. At the same time, they contribute in enhancing students' overall development, particularly in aspects of physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual development (JERI), aligning with the National Education Philosophy.

**Keyword(s):** Emotional Intelligence, Personal Competence, Social Competence, Social Skills, Rural Area Sabah.

## *ABSTRAK*

*Tujuan utama kajian ini dijalankan adalah untuk mengenal pasti hubungan kecerdasan emosi terhadap kawalan kendiri pelajar sekolah menengah di kawasan Pantai Barat Sabah. Kecerdasan Emosi di dalam penulisan ini merujuk kepada kajian tinjauan terhadap kecerdasan emosi yang dialami oleh para pelajar yang diukur menggunakan Goleman Emotional Scale (GES). Sementara Kawalan Kendiri diukur menggunakan Self Control Scale (SCS). Tinjauan terhadap Kecerdasan Emosi ini dilakukan terhadap responden kajian seramai 381 orang menggunakan persampelan rawak mudah. Pelajar ini dikenal pasti sebagai responden berdasarkan rekod pendaftaran di sekolah menengah terpilih. Bagi tujuan analisis data, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) telah digunakan untuk memproses dapatan data kajian. Hasil kajian menunjukkan wujud hubungan yang signifikan dimensi kecerdasan emosi Kecekapan Peribadi, Kecekapan Sosial, Kesedaran Kendiri, Regulasi Kendiri, Motivasi Kendiri, Empati dan Kemahiran Sosial dengan Kawalan Kendiri. Dapatan ini sangat penting kerana ia secara langsung membantu di dalam memantapkan proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran. Pada masa yang sama ia dapat mewujudkan pelajar yang lebih baik khususnya dalam aspek perkembangan Jasmani, Emosi, Rohani dan Intelektual (JERI) selari dengan Falsafah Pendidikan Negara.*

*Keywords: Kecerdasan Emosi, Kecekapan Peribadi, Kecekapan Sosial, Luar Bandar Sabah.*

## INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence in a psychological context is referred to as an affective domain that plays a role in fostering positive relationships in human life. Salovey and Mayer (1990) defined emotional intelligence as a subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's feelings and emotions, as well as others, differentiate them and use the insight to navigate one's thoughts and behaviour. Meanwhile, Bar-On (1997) defined emotional intelligence as a collection of non-cognitive skills, competencies and capabilities that help people deal with environmental demands and pressures.

Meanwhile, in the educational context, emotional intelligence is seen to be one of the individual potentials that would like to be developed by the Malaysian education system, as outlined in the National Education Philosophy (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2021). This goal is in line with the needs of the 21st century, which emphasises cultivating well-rounded individuals who are balanced in the aspect of physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and social development (Salinah, 2008).

Past literature has indicated that emotional intelligence is an important factor in shaping an effective teaching and learning process (Ahmad & Ambotang, 2020). Previous studies have proven that students who are not emotionally nurtured tend to be less optimal, anxious and less focused in class when learning takes place. Therefore, teachers and parents must pay close attention to this matter.

Accordingly, emotional intelligence among students is capable of producing well-rounded individuals who can control and understand their own emotions while also possessing the self-ability to guide their behaviour in a positive direction.

Generally, this research aims to identify the phenomena of emotional intelligence among secondary school students in the rural areas of Sabah. Specifically, this research aims to justify the relationship between student's emotional intelligence with the following aspects: (i) To identify the relationship between emotional intelligence based on the dimensions of personal competence, self-awareness, self-regulation and self-motivation with self-control; and (ii) to identify the relationship between emotional intelligence based on the dimensions of social competence, empathy and social skills with self-control.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Empirical studies on emotional intelligence have been reporting data on the relationship between emotional intelligence and students' behaviour. Previous literature has also shown several reports indicating that emotional outbursts among students in this country have led to negative incidents which are due to their low emotional intelligence. Social issues involving these students, such as teenage pregnancies, baby abandonment, and peer bullying that result in serious injury and even death are some examples of the negative effects caused by low emotional intelligence (Abdul et al., 2017). In connection with these reported issues, such occurrences have raised numerous questions among researchers, creating awareness among them to conduct studies aiming to identify the phenomena of emotional intelligence among students or adolescents and how it relates to social issues.

### Low Emotional Intelligence and Internal Self-Control

A review of past literature shows that low emotional intelligence is significantly associated with problems in self-control or behaviour among students, such as aggression, depression, and a lack of ability to manage stress effectively. Studies also reveal that individuals with very low emotional intelligence are more likely to engage in substance abuse, alcoholism, vandalism, deviant behaviour, and involvement in physical fights (Yap et al., 2019).

According to a study by Yap et al. (2019), individuals or students with low emotional intelligence often experience dysfunction in daily life, leading to feelings of anxiety, discomfort, and an unable to reach their optimal potential in performing daily tasks. Furthermore, such individuals are also identified to be more prone to develop self-centred personalities and frequently exhibit low empathy in their social interactions with others. These findings underscore the importance of emotional intelligence as a critical factor for enhancing long-term individual performance among students.

Not just that, students or adolescents with low emotional intelligence are more easily drawn into social problems. This is proven by media reports highlighting various social issues involving school students, such as teenage pregnancies, baby abandonment, and peer bullying that result in severe injuries or fatalities. Previous studies also report that students facing emotional challenges tend to show poor behavioural management and are more exposed to problems within the school environment (Asnawi & Madlan, 2020).

### Low Emotional Intelligence and External Self-Control

A review of the literature has highlighted the importance of parents and teachers to pay attention on students' emotional aspects, as this is a key factor in preventing students from feeling anxious during lessons, and helping them maintain good focus. Conversely, neglecting this aspect can lead to adverse outcomes (Ahmad & Ambotang, 2020).

A separate study by Asnawi and Madlan (2020) demonstrated that adolescents with low emotional intelligence often struggle to complete tasks effectively. This aligns with Ahmad and Ambotang's (2020) findings, which indicate that students with low emotional intelligence are less capable of applying classroom learning to community activities, decision-making, and cooperative learning processes. These researchers agree that emotional intelligence can be cultivated through the school system by teaching relevant skills from an early age. For example, academic activities such as reading and discussions can enhance an individual's emotional intelligence.

Moreover, the literature also shows a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and external self-control in academic achievement. This relationship is supported by evidence of a significant correlation between these two variables (Ebinagbome & Nizam, 2016). Similar findings reveal that gifted students with low emotional intelligence exhibit lower academic motivation, leading to lower academic performance compared to students with higher emotional intelligence (Martín et al., 2021).research.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The research design is a crucial aspect of conducting a study. It encompasses several elements, such as data collection, organization, and analysis (Creswell, 2011). Accordingly, this study adopts a cross-sectional design using a survey method with questionnaires. The survey method was selected as it is suitable for the sample size and saves time and effort compared to qualitative methods. Simultaneously, data collection through questionnaires minimizes counting errors and allows for the comparison of respondents' answers (Mohd Majid Konting, 1998). Therefore, the chosen research design directly facilitates the collection, arrangement, and analysis of data related to students' emotional intelligence as respondents, aligning with the study's objectives and justification.

### *Study Sample*

The selection of the study sample in this research was carried out using simple random sampling. This method is suitable for studies involving a large number of respondents. It can also minimise potential bias in the study, maximising external validity which then allows the findings to be generalised to the entire population of interest (Vogt, 2006). Hence, this study used an appropriate sample size, involving 381 secondary school students from rural areas in Sabah (Sabitha Marican, 2009).

### *Study Location*

The research was conducted at secondary schools in rural areas of Sabah. The selection of these schools as the study location was based on statistics indicating a high and concerning level of student disciplinary problems in west coast secondary schools of Sabah (Sabah State Education Department, 2023). This aligns with the literature review, which shows that high disciplinary issues resulting from low self-control are associated with low emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998).

### *Research Instrument*

The research instrument used by the researcher in this study is presented in Table 1 below:

**Table 1** : Summary of Research Instrument

| Section | Item | Source | Total items |
|---------|------|--------|-------------|
| Section A | Demographics | Construct by researcher | 6 Items |
| Section B | Emotional Intelligence<br>(1) Personal Competence:<br> (a) Self-Awareness<br> (b) Self-Regulation<br> (c) Self-Motivation<br>(2) Social Competence:<br> (a) Empathy<br> (b) Social Skills | Tengku Elmi Azlina Tengku Muda & Arissa Hanis Adelib (2019) | 69 Items |
| Section D | Self Control | Moilanen (2007). | 8 Items |
| | | Total Item | 83 Items |

### *Research Procedure*

Several steps were taken to conduct this study. First, before starting the research, the researcher conducted a literature review of previous studies to gain an understanding of issues related to the education sector. It was found that emotional intelligence is a prominent issue in education, as it is studied not only in the context of education but also in various other disciplines. The researcher then identified the appropriate research instrument to be used.

Then, approval was sought from the Ministry of Education Malaysia and the Sabah State Education Department. Then, permission was obtained from the school authorities after the study location was identified. Subsequently, the survey questionnaire was distributed to gather data related to emotional intelligence and self-control after official approval was granted.

The administered questionnaire was then analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, or the latest version of IBM SPSS, to obtain inferential data. Data were collected and analysed through regression analysis.

## FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

The inferential data from the administered questionnaire were analysed using the latest version of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings of emotional intelligence data among secondary school students in rural Sabah are shown in the following table.

### *Objective 1*

To identify the relationship between emotional intelligence based on the dimensions of personal competence, self-awareness, self-regulation and self-motivation with self-control.

Based on Table 2, the Pearson correlation test shows a significant positive linear relationship between emotional intelligence in terms of personal competence and self-control, with an r-value of .477. Therefore, the analysis indicates that there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence in the aspect of personal competence and self-control among secondary school students in rural Sabah.

**Table 2** : Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence (Personal Competence) and Self-Control

|  |  | Personal Competence | Self-Control |
|---|---|---:|---:|
| Personal Competence | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .477** |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed) |  | .008 |
|  | N | 381 | 381 |
| Self-Control | Pearson Correlation | .477** | 1 |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed) | .008 |  |
|  | N | 381 | 381 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Based on Table 3, the Pearson correlation test shows a significant positive linear relationship between emotional intelligence in the aspect of self-awareness and self-control with a value of r = .419. Therefore, the analysis indicates that there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence in the aspect of self-awareness and self-control among secondary school students in rural Sabah.

**Table 3:** Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence (Self-Awareness) and Self-Control

|  |  | Personal Competence | Self-Control |
|---|---|---:|---:|
| Personal Competence | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .419* |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed) |  | .021 |
|  | N | 81 | 381 |
| Self-Control | Pearson Correlation | .419* | 1 |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed) | .021 |  |
|  | N | 381 | 381 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Based on Table 4, the Pearson correlation test shows a significant positive linear relationship between emotional intelligence in the aspect of self-regulation and self-control, with a value of r = .384. Therefore, the analysis indicates a significant relationship between emotional intelligence in the aspect of self-regulation and self-control among rural secondary school students in Sabah.

**Table 4:** The Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence (Self-Regulation) and Self-Control

|  |  | Personal Competence | Self-Control |
|---|---|---|---|
| Personal Competence | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .384* |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed) |  | .036 |
|  | N | 381 | 381 |
| Self-Control | Pearson Correlation | .384* | 1 |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed) | .036 |  |
|  | N | 381 | 381 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Based on Table 5, the Pearson r correlation test shows a significant positive linear relationship between emotional intelligence in terms of self-motivation and self-control with a value of r = .368. Therefore, the analysis indicates a significant relationship between emotional intelligence in terms of self-motivation and self-control among rural secondary school students in Sabah.

**Table 5:** Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence (Self-Motivation) and Self-Control

|  |  | Personal Competence | Self-Control |
|---|---|---|---|
| Personal Competence | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .368* |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed) |  | .046 |
|  | N | 381 | 381 |
| Self-Control | Pearson Correlation | .368* | 1 |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed) | .046 |  |
|  | N | 381 | 381 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

***Objective 2***

To identify the relationship between emotional intelligence based on the dimensions of social competence, empathy and social skills with self-control.

Based on Table 6, the Pearson r correlation test shows a significant positive linear relationship between emotional intelligence in the aspect of social competence and self-control with a value of r = .552. Therefore, the analysis indicates that there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence in the aspect of social competence and self-control among secondary school students in rural Sabah.

**Table 6:** Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence (Social Competence) and Self-Control

|  |  | Personal Competence | Self-Control |
|---|---|---|---|
| Personal Competence | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .552** |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed) |  | .002 |
|  | N | 381 | 381 |
| Self-Control | Pearson Correlation | .552** | 1 |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed) | .002 |  |
|  | N | 381 | 381 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed

Based on Table 7, the Pearson r correlation test shows a significant positive linear relationship between emotional intelligence from the aspect of empathy and self-control with a value of r = .521.

Therefore, the analysis indicates a significant relationship between emotional intelligence from the aspect of empathy and self-control among secondary school students in rural Sabah.

**Table 7:** Relationship between Emotional Intelligence (Empathy) and Self-Control

|  |  | Personal Competence | Self-Control |
|---|---|---|---|
| Personal Competence | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .521** |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed) |  | .003 |
|  | N | 381 | 381 |
| Self-Control | Pearson Correlation | .521** | 1 |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed) | .003 |  |
|  | N | 381 | 381 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Based on Table 8, the Pearson r correlation test shows a significant positive linear relationship between emotional intelligence in terms of social skills and self-control with a value of r = .493. Therefore, the analysis indicates that there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence in terms of social skills and self-control among secondary school students in rural Sabah.

**Table 8:** The Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence (Social Skills) and Self-Control

|  |  | Personal Competence | Self-Control |
|---|---|---|---|
| Personal Competence | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .493** |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed) |  | .006 |
|  | N | 381 | 381 |
| Self-Control | Pearson Correlation | .493** | 1 |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed) | .006 |  |
|  | N | 381 | 381 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

### *Discussions*

This writing has discussed the results of statistical test analysis using inferential methods. The results show that emotional intelligence according to the dimensions of Personal Competence, Self-Awareness, Self-Regulation, and Self-Motivation has a significant relationship with Self-Control. The data also indicates that the dimensions of Social Competence, Empathy, and Social Skills are also related to Self-Control among secondary school students in rural Sabah.

Thus, the findings of this study are in line with the findings of Noriah Mohd. Ishak et al., (2001), who indicated that adolescents with high emotional intelligence are able to complete tasks more effectively. This emotional intelligence can be developed through the school system when students are taught relevant skills starting from primary school.

At the same time, the findings of this study also align with Lickona (1993), when he agreed that a positive school culture is one of the factors for good emotional intelligence. Activities that involve students with the school climate, such as opportunities for students to make their own decisions, cooperation in the learning process, reading, discussion, and smart sharing between schools and parents, can enhance students' emotional intelligence.

Additionally, the findings of this study are consistent with other previous research

conducted by Saemah et al., (2008), which showed that the dimensions of emotional intelligence are capable of shaping the personality of individuals or students to face future life challenges. This is particularly the case with dimensions such as self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, spirituality, and maturity.

Similarly, the study by Martín et al., (2021) proves that their findings are consistent with this study, where a significant influence between emotional intelligence and learning behavior was found, as gifted students with high emotional intelligence scored higher in academic achievement compared to students with low emotional intelligence.

The study conducted by Ahmad & Ambotang, (2020) also supports the findings of this study, as their overall research results show that emotional aspects are emphasized in the education system because students who are not nurtured with emotional factors by teachers and parents tend to struggle with optimal learning processes, become easily stressed, anxious, and unable to focus well during learning. This means that the higher the emotional intelligence, the lower the academic stress experienced by students. Consequently, it can reduce behaviors of worry and discomfort when carrying out assigned tasks, help students function well in life, and allow them to develop their potential optimally.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this writing has provided the researcher a clearer understanding of the importance of emotional intelligence especially among students or adolescents, as emotional intelligence has a greater impact on determining an individual's success compared to Intelligence Quotient (IQ). This enlightens the justification on why the Malaysian education system, through the National Education Philosophy implemented by the Ministry of Education Malaysia (2021), emphasizes the balanced development of human capital in terms of physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and social aspects (Salinah, 2008), which ultimately aligns with shaping students' emotional intelligence to meet the educational demands of the 21st century.

**Co-Author Contribution**
The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Ethics Statement**
The research followed all applicable ethical standards. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was ensured.

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