

Emotional Intelligence in the Learning Process: A Case Study of a Lecturer

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Abstract

This study investigates the role of emotional intelligence in the teaching and learning process through a case study of an experienced lecturer in Indonesian higher education. Employing a qualitative approach with semi-structured in-depth interviews, the research examines how the key components of emotional intelligence—self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills—are applied in classroom practice. The findings indicate that emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in fostering a supportive learning environment and enhancing student engagement. The participant employed various emotion management strategies, including maintaining composure in challenging situations, adopting an empathic approach, and cultivating positive relationships with students. Indicators of effective learning identified in this study include students' prompt responses, positive expressions, active participation, sustained focus, and ongoing discussions outside the classroom. These results underscore the importance of developing emotional intelligence among lecturers to enhance teaching effectiveness and overall learning quality in higher education. The study also highlights practical implications, suggesting the value of emotional intelligence training for lecturers and the incorporation of reflective practices to navigate emotional challenges in classroom settings.

Keywords: *Emotional Intelligence; Learning Process; Lecturer.*

Introduction

In the modern era of education, emotional intelligence (EI) has become a critical factor in enhancing teaching and learning (Sadiku & Olaleye, 2020). Emotional intelligence, defined as the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions and those of others (Mayer et al., 2004; Sadiku & Olaleye, 2020; Williams, 2024), plays a pivotal role in creating a positive and productive learning environment. Goleman (2009) emphasizes that EI enables individuals to recognize their own feelings and those of others, motivate themselves, and manage emotions effectively in relationships.

In higher education, lecturers serve not only as knowledge providers but also as mentors and role models. The ability to regulate personal emotions and respond to students' emotions is crucial for effective teaching. Jones (2021) argues that self-awareness—the recognition and experience of one's emotions—is fundamental for educators to navigate the challenges of teaching. Lecturers equipped with EI are better positioned to manage classroom dynamics, engage students, and foster a constructive learning environment (Fahrurrozi et al., 2021).

Literature Study

The concept of emotional intelligence, first introduced by Salovey and Mayer (1990) and popularized by Goleman (1995), has evolved to encompass five core components: self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills (Drigas & Papoutsi, 2018; Singh et al., 2022). Each component is interrelated and enables individuals to manage emotions effectively across personal and professional contexts.

Self-awareness refers to the ability to recognize and understand one's own emotions and their impact on thoughts, decisions, and behaviors (Juwita et al., 2023; Laish, 2023). Lecturers with high self-awareness can identify how their emotional states influence classroom interactions and adjust teaching strategies accordingly (Sutton, 2004; Brackett et al., 2010).

Self-regulation involves the capacity to control emotional responses, maintain composure under stress, and sustain internal balance (Lestari et al., 2023). In educational settings, lecturers often encounter challenging behaviors, administrative pressures, and high workloads. Effective self-regulation allows lecturers to respond constructively to these challenges, provide objective feedback, and maintain a positive classroom climate (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003).

Self-motivation reflects an individual's intrinsic drive to achieve goals, remain resilient in the face of setbacks, and sustain commitment to continuous improvement (Derang et al., 2023). Lecturers with strong self-motivation demonstrate higher resilience, maintain professional enthusiasm, and foster innovative teaching practices (Day & Gu, 2013; Bandura et al., 1999; Klassen & Tze, 2014).

Empathy is the ability to understand and respond to the emotions and perspectives of others (Maranatha & Putri, 2021; Turnip & Naibaho, 2023). In teaching, empathy enables lecturers to identify students' learning challenges and provide tailored support, thereby enhancing engagement and motivation (Cooper, 2004; Noddings, 2019).

Social skills encompass effective communication, collaboration, relationship building, and leadership (Utomo, 2021; Widiastuti, 2022). Lecturers with strong social skills foster inclusive learning communities, manage conflicts constructively, and establish positive relationships with students and colleagues (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). The quality of interpersonal relationships, shaped by lecturers' social skills, directly influences student motivation, engagement, and academic achievement.

Research indicates that lecturers' emotional intelligence not only improves classroom management and learning outcomes but also mitigates stress and burnout associated with the profession (Brackett et al., 2010; Chang, 2009). Moreover, lecturers with high EI provide models for students to develop their own emotional intelligence, in line with Bandura's (1977) social learning theory and Graczyk et al.'s (2000) emphasis on integrating social-emotional learning into curricula.

In the post-COVID-19 era and amidst rapid digitalization, EI has become even more essential for sustaining student engagement in virtual or hybrid learning environments (Sumardi et al., 2023). Cultural sensitivity also plays a critical role in applying EI effectively, especially in diverse contexts such as Indonesia (Extremera et al., 2018). Despite growing recognition of EI in education, limited research has explored how lecturers implement EI in their teaching

practices, highlighting a gap in strategies for translating EI awareness into classroom application (Kaur & Randhawa, 2024; Sudibjo & Sutarji, 2020).

Strategies to enhance lecturers' emotional intelligence include professional training programs (Dolev & Leshem, 2017b; Hen & Sharabi-Nov, 2014), reflective practices (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Schön, 2017), mindfulness interventions (Jennings et al., 2017; Flook et al., 2013), mentoring and coaching (Vesely et al., 2013; Rockoff, 2008), and supportive institutional cultures (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Zeidner et al., 2012).

Building on these insights, this study aims to explore how lecturers in Indonesian higher education integrate emotional intelligence components—self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills—into their teaching practices. Through in-depth qualitative inquiry, this research seeks to uncover strategies, challenges, and outcomes associated with the application of emotional intelligence in higher education. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of effective teaching strategies and enhance the quality of learning experiences while providing guidance for lecturers seeking to cultivate a supportive and emotionally intelligent classroom environment.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research approach with a case study design to explore the role of emotional intelligence (EI) in the learning process within higher education classrooms. The case study method is appropriate for examining complex phenomena in depth and in their real-life context (Yin, 2018).

Population and Sample

The population for this study consists of lecturers teaching at higher education institutions in Indonesia. A single participant, referred to as TVW, was purposefully selected as the study sample due to their extensive teaching experience and demonstrated application of emotional intelligence in classroom settings. The purposive sampling technique allows researchers to focus on individuals who possess the knowledge and experience necessary to provide rich and detailed insights into the research topic (Palinkas et al., 2015).

The selection criteria for the informant included:

- Experience teaching at the higher education level for a minimum of five years.
- Demonstrated awareness and practice of emotional intelligence in classroom interactions.
- Willingness to participate in a detailed, in-depth interview and share reflections on personal experiences.

Data Collection

Data were collected using semi-structured, in-depth interviews. This approach enables researchers to explore the participant's perceptions, strategies, and experiences regarding the use of emotional intelligence in teaching while allowing flexibility for follow-up questions and clarification (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

The interview guide included questions focusing on:

- The participant's understanding and perception of emotional intelligence in a teaching
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context.

- Strategies employed to manage emotions during challenging classroom situations.
- Application of emotional intelligence in addressing the diverse emotional needs of students.
- The perceived influence of lecturer emotional intelligence on student engagement and learning outcomes.
- The importance of emotional intelligence in teaching, rated on a scale of 1–10, with an explanation.

All interviews were audio-recorded with the participant's consent and later transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy and completeness of data for analysis.

Data Analysis

The interview data were analyzed using content analysis techniques (Krippendorff, 2018), which involved systematic coding, categorization, and thematic interpretation. The process included:

- Familiarization: Reading and re-reading transcripts to gain an overall understanding of the participant's perspectives.
- Coding: Identifying meaningful statements, concepts, and patterns relevant to the role of emotional intelligence in teaching.
- Categorization: Grouping codes into key themes representing the components of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills) and their application in the learning process.
- Interpretation: Linking emergent themes to the relevant literature and theory to provide contextually grounded conclusions.

To enhance trustworthiness and rigor, the study employed strategies such as member checking, where the participant reviewed the transcript for accuracy, and triangulation, by comparing findings with existing literature on emotional intelligence in education (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

This methodological framework allows for a comprehensive exploration of how emotional intelligence functions in real classroom contexts and provides insights into the strategies lecturers use to manage emotions, engage students, and improve learning outcomes.

Research Results and Discussions

Emotional Intelligence in the Context of Teaching

TVW, a lecturer with 13 years of teaching experience, provides valuable insights into how emotional intelligence (EI) influences the learning process. In the interview, TVW explained that emotional intelligence enables him to navigate various classroom challenges, including managing students' emotional responses and maintaining focus during instruction. His experience illustrates that emotional intelligence is not merely a theoretical construct but a practical skill that can be effectively applied in real-world classroom contexts (Kumarasamy et al., 2022). As Mayer et al. (2004) suggest, emotional intelligence serves as a bridge between theoretical knowledge and practical application in teaching.

According to TVW, emotional intelligence is the capacity to regulate feelings that may influence immediate actions. This definition aligns with Goleman's (2009) conceptualization of emotional intelligence as the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions as well as those of others. Goleman further emphasizes that emotional intelligence can be a stronger predictor of professional success than intellectual intelligence, including in the teaching profession, where managing emotions effectively is critical for fostering a positive

and productive learning environment.

The Significance of Emotional Intelligence in the Learning Process

The findings of this study indicate that emotional intelligence (EI) plays a pivotal role in facilitating the learning process within the classroom. The skills and behaviours of lecturers in applying EI-related strategies can enhance students' cognitive, social, and emotional development (Darmawan & Mardikaningsih, 2022). Emotional intelligence has been shown to positively influence both academic performance and social interaction in educational contexts (Mayer et al., 2004; Sadiku & Olaleye, 2020; Williams, 2024).

Through an in-depth interview, TVW highlighted that the ability to manage both personal emotions and students' emotions is essential for creating a conducive learning environment. This aligns with Darmawan & Mardikaningsih (2022), who argue that a supportive classroom atmosphere, fostered by both lecturers and students, enhances learning effectiveness. Additionally, Mattingly & Kraiger (2019) emphasize that EI interventions can improve teachers' emotional management in professional contexts and positively impact the organizational culture of educational institutions. In line with this, TVW self-assessed his emotional intelligence at 8 out of 10, demonstrating awareness of its importance in his professional practice.

Emotion Management Strategies in Teaching

TVW described concrete strategies for managing emotional situations, such as responding calmly to offended students and using a gentle tone to reduce tension and maintain classroom focus. Botey et al. (2020) argue that emotional intelligence is essential for professional leadership and stress management in teaching contexts. For instance, when a student raised their voice in frustration, TVW applied emotion regulation by responding slowly, using subtle phrasing, and avoiding further discussion of the triggering statement. This approach is consistent with Valente et al. (2019), who found that teachers with high EI employ de-escalation techniques to manage classroom conflict.

Goleman (2009) and Singh et al. (2022) identify five core dimensions of emotional intelligence—self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. TVW's practice particularly demonstrates self-regulation and empathy, as evidenced by his ability to set aside personal concerns and maintain focus on students during lessons.

Empathetic Approach and Lecturer-Student Relations

TVW also employs an empathetic approach to foster closer lecturer-student relationships, paying special attention to students who display signs of confusion or discomfort. Ferry et al. (2023) emphasize that emotional intelligence encompasses the ability to recognize, process, and regulate emotions to respond effectively to emotionally charged situations.

TVW views his role as both a teacher and a supportive guide, reflecting the concept of emotional scaffolding proposed by Rosiek & Beghetto (2009), which emphasizes supporting learners' emotional development through empathetic interactions. Wang (2023) underscores that positive lecturer-student relationships are key predictors of student academic success, particularly in increasingly common online learning contexts.

According to the model of Vesely-Maillefer & Saklofske (2018), lecturer emotional intelligence encompasses a set of competencies including emotional awareness, self-reflection, and responsive practice. TVW demonstrates these competencies by recognizing moments of distraction and adjusting his teaching approach, such as allocating extra time for explanations or transitioning smoothly to the next topic as a classroom management strategy.

Indicators of Success in the Learning Process

TVW identified several indicators that reflect successful learning outcomes, including students’ prompt responses, positive expressions, and active participation in discussions. He observed that students who perceive emotional support from lecturers tend to be more engaged and contribute actively to the learning process. Table 1 presents a summary of these success indicators as identified by TVW.

Table 1.
Indicators of Success in the Learning Process

Indicator	Description
Quick Response	Students give answers quickly
Positive Expression	Students show positive facial expressions (nodding, enthusiastic eye gaze)
Active Participation	Students are actively involved in discussions
Focus	Students pay attention when the material is being explained
Sustainability	Students are still discussing topics or materials given outside of class
Discussion	class

The indicators identified by TVW are consistent with previous research. Banga (2024) found that student engagement is a clear manifestation of an emotionally positive learning experience. Students who feel emotionally secure in the classroom tend to exhibit positive behaviors, as highlighted by Kim (2021), who emphasized the importance of emotional presence in learning, characterized by active participation and positive expressions. These findings align with research demonstrating that emotional intelligence enhances the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process (Mahrita & Cahyono, 2022; Maslikha et al., 2021). Moreover, lecturers’ emotional intelligence plays a central role in creating an inclusive, supportive, and comfortable learning environment, which serves as the foundation for students’ social-emotional development and academic success (Farawowan et al., 2023; Jihaduddin et al., 2020).

Emotional Intelligence and Student Learning Motivation

Research by Arjuna et al. (2024) and Palilingan (2024) highlights the importance of students’ emotional intelligence in fostering positive attitudes and motivation toward learning. This suggests that EI is critical not only for lecturers but also for students to achieve academic success. Shao et al. (2019) propose an interactive model in which lecturers’ and students’ emotional intelligence influence each other within a classroom emotional ecosystem. Lecturers like TVW, who effectively manage their own emotions, contribute to a positive emotional climate that encourages students to develop their own emotional skills.

An important insight from the interview with TVW was the impact of cognitive conditions on EI. He noted that when he is distracted or overwhelmed with work, his responsiveness to students may decrease. This aligns with Rupperecht et al. (2019), who found a reciprocal relationship between educators’ cognitive load and emotion regulation, suggesting that

reducing cognitive load can enhance emotional management in teaching contexts.

Emotional Intelligence and Social Skills Development

Emotional intelligence also supports the development of social skills critical for academic interaction. Zins et al. (2007) found that EI contributes to collaboration, communication, and conflict resolution skills, which are essential in learning environments. Arjuna et al. (2024) further show that students with high EI demonstrate stronger study motivation and more effective coping with academic stress.

Research by Lavy & Naama-Ghanayim (2020) underscores the influence of educators' positive emotions on students. Lecturers who model positive emotional behaviors foster both a pleasant learning environment and the development of students' social skills. TVW exemplifies this by remaining calm and responding with a soft tone in conflict situations, providing students with practical examples of effective emotional regulation and conflict management.

Practical and Theoretical Implications

This study confirms prior findings (Sudibjo & Sutarji, 2020; Absah et al., 2020) on the positive effect of EI on lecturer involvement and institutional performance. However, it emphasizes the practical application of EI in teaching—a dimension often underexplored in previous research. Unlike studies focusing solely on theoretical aspects, this research highlights how lecturers apply EI strategies in real classroom situations, influencing both the learning environment and student engagement.

Trigwell (2012) observed that students report higher satisfaction when lecturers manage emotions effectively, creating a safe emotional climate. This aligns with TVW's indicators of success, such as active participation and positive expression. In higher education, Khadim (2020) found that lecturers with high EI navigate complex challenges, including online teaching transitions during the COVID-19 pandemic, reflecting TVW's flexible approach to students' emotional needs.

Emotional Intelligence Development Guide for Lecturers

Based on TVW's experiences and current literature, the following strategies can support the development of lecturers' emotional intelligence:

- **Regular Reflection:** Engaging in reflective practice to evaluate emotional interactions with students and identify areas for improvement (Vesely-Maillefer & Saklofske, 2018).
- **Self-Awareness Development:** Recognizing personal emotional triggers and developing coping strategies (Goleman, 2009).
- **Empathetic Communication Skills Training:** Practicing active listening and non-verbal communication to strengthen emotional connections with students (Wang, 2023).
- **Stress Management:** Implementing techniques to manage workload and emotional demands in teaching (Rupprecht et al., 2019).
- **Creation of Emotional Learning Communities:** Establishing networks of lecturers to share best practices and challenges in applying EI (Shao et al., 2019).

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to more effective teaching strategies. Understanding the function of emotional intelligence in teaching allows lecturers to create supportive, inclusive, and emotionally safe learning environments, benefiting both student outcomes and lecturer satisfaction and performance.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study confirms that emotional intelligence (EI) plays a critical role in the learning process within higher education classrooms. Insights from TVW, a lecturer with extensive teaching experience, demonstrate that the ability to manage both personal and students' emotions significantly contributes to creating a conducive and supportive learning atmosphere. Lecturers who effectively apply emotional intelligence not only handle challenging emotional situations skillfully but also foster higher levels of student engagement, participation, and responsiveness in the learning process.

The study also identifies key indicators of success in learning, including students' quick responses, positive expressions, and active participation, all of which are strongly influenced by lecturers' emotional intelligence. These findings align with existing literature, suggesting that educators' EI contributes not only to improved learning outcomes but also to the development of students' social skills, motivation, and emotional competence. Therefore, integrating emotional intelligence into teaching practice emerges as a crucial factor in enhancing the quality of higher education.

Overall, emotional intelligence is not merely an individual attribute but a foundational component in creating effective, inclusive, and emotionally supportive learning environments. Educational institutions should prioritize providing training, resources, and institutional support to help lecturers develop their EI, thereby improving both student learning experiences and lecturers' professional satisfaction.

However, this study has several limitations, including the focus on a single lecturer and a specific Indonesian cultural context. Therefore, future research should consider:

- Conducting comparative studies across multiple institutions to explore variations in the application of emotional intelligence in different cultural and organizational contexts.
- Developing valid and reliable instruments for measuring lecturers' emotional intelligence tailored to the higher education environment.
- Implementing longitudinal studies to evaluate the long-term effects of EI development programs on teaching quality, student outcomes, and lecturers' psychological well-being.

By addressing these areas, future research can expand understanding of how emotional intelligence can be systematically cultivated to enhance teaching effectiveness and the overall educational experience.

Acknowledgements

We sincerely thank TVW for generously sharing his knowledge, experiences, and insights regarding the application of emotional intelligence in teaching. His contributions were invaluable to this study and greatly enriched our understanding of how emotional intelligence functions in the higher education classroom.

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