

## EXTENDED ABSTRACT

# EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE OF LECTURERS AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENTS: SPECIAL REFERENCE WITHIN AN ONLINE LEARNING PLATFORM IN HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR

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### Abstract

The transformation of the education system from physical to online learning platform is a phenomenon that is experienced within the world. Therefore, the current study attempts to examine the impact of emotional intelligence of lecturers on student engagement through an online learning platform in higher education sector. The unit of analysis is the individual and 200 university undergraduates were drawn from the population conveniently. The data was analyzed through SPSS 21.0. The empirical results revealed that emotional intelligence of the lecturers influence positively and significantly for the student engagement and amongst the dimensions social awareness has the highest influence. Consequently, the current paper recommends that the importance should be given for the development of emotional intelligence of the lecturers in order to maintain student engagement within the online learning platform.

**Keywords:** Emotional intelligence, student engagement, online learning platforms

## 1. Introduction

Being excelled in high education status has been a common and popular trend amongst the younger generation. It is an indication that majority of people spend more time of their lives to educate themselves. With the pandemic situation prevalent within the world, the mostly used and recognized method for learning has become online based learning. According to Kahu (2013) teaching has a significant impact on student engagement in higher education. Welmilla (2020) has revealed that students could be disengaged or even drop out of the studies due to an unfair treatment or negative attitude from their lecturers. In identifying factors which will reduce the student disengagement, Welmilla (2020) emphasizes that lecturers with emotional intelligence will be able to understand the needs of a student before they express them. This will result the lecturers exhibiting care and motivation to the students. Thereby, the current study seeks to examine the effect of emotional intelligence of teachers on student engagement in online learning environment in the higher education sector.

## 2. Problem statement

In the current context, the poor student engagement has been considered as a major challenge (60% for state universities and 70% for non-state universities) within an online learning environment (Asian Development Bank, 2020). In identifying the factors which will cause student disengagement, it was identified that student engagement depends upon emotions (Welmilla, 2020). Further, Welmilla (2020) emphasized that significant level of dropouts has been reported within the universities due to student disengagement. Many researchers have highlighted the effects of soft emotional aspects such as emotional intelligence on student engagement should be explored within different contexts (Kahu, 2013). In addition, limited studies have been conducted in assessing the effects of emotional intelligence on student engagement within Sri Lanka and no recent studies conducted especially during a post pandemic situation.

Thus, when considering the above mentioned circumstances, the problem statement of the current study can be stated as “What is the impact of emotional intelligence of teachers on student engagement through an online learning platform in the higher education sector?”

## 3. General objective of the study

The general objective of the study is to examine the impact of emotional intelligence of lecturers on student engagement within an online learning platform in the higher education sector.

## 4. Specific objectives of the study

There are two specific objectives of the study. Firstly, to examine the impact of social awareness of teachers and student engagement in the higher education sector. Secondly, to examine the impact of relationship management of teachers and student engagement in the higher education sector.

The current study focus upon on social competence of emotional intelligence as it is focusing on the manner in which an individual manages the relationships and interactions among each other (Welmilla, 2020). Thus, social awareness and relationship management dimensions of emotional intelligence is considered.

## 5. Literature Review

Student engagement can be defined as the quality of effort the students by themselves devote to the educationally purposeful activities that contributes directly to the desired outcome (Hu & Kuh, 2002). It has been found that students who has a greater sense of confidence, hopefulness, efficacy and flexibility will show a greater level of engagement. (Hu & Kuh, 2002). Within the online learning environment maintenance of the student engagement is vital and considered as a challenge. Thus, the factors which influence student engagement needs to be explored further.

In identifying the factors which influence student engagement, the emotional intelligence has been considered as a factor within the available limited literature. Within the empirical studies, it has been found that there's a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and student engagement (Celik & Storme, 2018; Urquijo & Extremera, 2017). Zhoc et al. (2020) have stated that emotional intelligence facilitates social interactions which can help students to develop positive feelings and relationships amongst their peers and lecturers. This could improve the engagement of the students. Confirming that Singh (2015) states there is a high requirement of emotional intelligence in the field of teaching professionals of higher education. Hence, based on these above evidences it could be suggested higher the emotional intelligence amongst the lecturers the student engagement within the online platforms could be improved. Therefore, based on the above evidence the following hypothesis is advanced.

H1: There is an impact of emotional intelligence of lecturers on student engagement within an online learning platform in higher education sector. In identifying the dimensions of emotional

intelligence, Goleman has introduced the competency model for emotional intelligence (Alferaih, 2017). It consists of two competencies namely, personal competence and social competence. The personal competence focuses on person's ability to understand his or her self well (Welmilla, 2020). The social competence how well an individual manages relationships with others (Welmilla, 2020). The social competence of emotional intelligence does consist of social awareness and relationship management. The current study will focus on social competence of emotional intelligence. Social awareness is increasing an individual's awareness to keep the emotions of individuals around them (Welmilla, 2020). Relationship management it includes the personal use of awareness of individual and others' emotions to create a secure, effective and long-term relationship (Welmilla, 2020)

Few researchers have focused on the social competence of the emotional intelligence on student engagement. Based on that study, it was identified that the social awareness does influence moderately to the student engagement (Welmilla, 2020). This is based on the assumption that the emotionally intelligent lecturer will be able to understand the mindset and the emotions of the student and keep the control of the classroom environment (Rust, 2014 as cited in Welmilla, 2020). Further, based on Welmilla (2020) it was identified that there is an influence of relationship management and student engagement. This will make the students to consider the classroom as their next comfort zone that is available for them which will make them to engage freely within the lecture. Thus, based on the above grounds the below hypothesis is advanced.

H2: There is an impact of social awareness of lecturers on student engagement within an online learning platform in higher education sector.

H3: There is an impact of relationship management of lecturers on student engagement within an online learning platform in higher education sector.

Based on these the following conceptual framework is proposed.

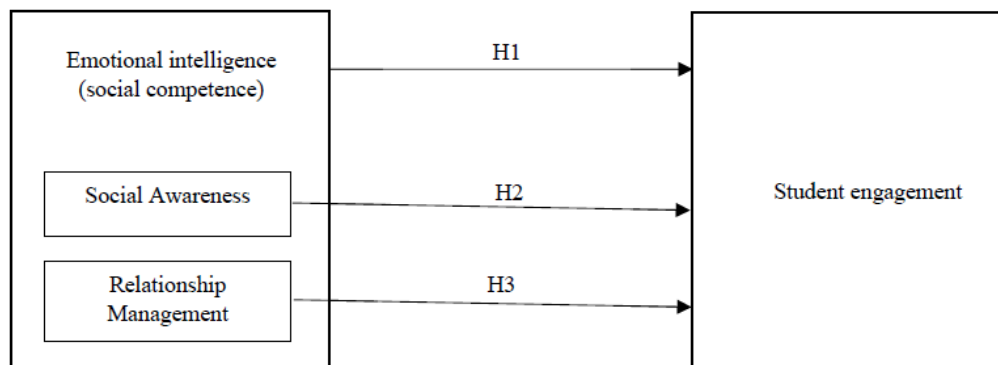


Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

## 6. Methodology

This research was designed under the positivism philosophy and deductive research approach. The quantitative survey research method is deployed for the current study. The undergraduates who are reading for their degree programs within the higher education sector is the population of the study. A convenience sample of 200 undergraduates were drawn out from the population. A self-administered standard questionnaire was developed to collect data from the respondents. The data was collected through an online platform and analyzed using Microsoft excel and SPSS 21.0.

## 7. Results and discussions

Initially the data was entered into the SPSS 21.0. Thereafter, the reliability and validity of the measurement scales was assed and the demographic composition of the sample was analyzed. After

testing for the multivariate assumptions of normality and linearity, the data was forwarded for the performance of parametric tests of correlation and regression to understand the level of relationships and to test the hypothesis.

**Table 1.** Correlation coefficients

variable	Emotional Intelligence	Social Awareness	Relationship Management
Correlation Coefficient	0.675	0.664	0.611
Sig value (2 tailed)	0.00	0.00	0.00

Source: Survey Data (2021)

Based on the table 1, it indicates that at 99% confidence level, the relationship between the emotional intelligence, social awareness and relationship management are positive and significant. Furthermore, in looking at the dimensions, it could be stated that the relationship of social awareness is bit higher with comparison to the relationship management. Thereafter, the regression analysis was conducted to test the hypothesis.

**Table 2.** Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Beta Value	Sig Value	Decision
H1	0.456	0.000	Accepted
H2	0.438	0.00	Accepted
H3	0.374	0.00	Accepted

Source: Survey Data (2021)

Based on the table 2, all the hypothesis are accepted. It could be seen based on the statistics the impacts of all the independent variables (emotional intelligence, social awareness and relationship management) on the dependent variable (student engagement) is positive and significant. Further, based on these regression statistics the below equation is derived.

$$\text{Student engagement} = 1.251 + 0.447 \text{ social awareness} + 0.208 \text{ relationship management}$$

## 8. Conclusion and Implications

The aim of the current study is to examine the effect of emotional intelligence of the lecturers on the student engagement within an online learning platform in the higher education sector. Based on the statistics it was identified that there is a significant positive impact on student engagement through emotional intelligence in an online platform in higher education sector in Sri Lanka. Further, it identified that the social awareness and relationship management are positive and significant as well. These results are in align with the findings of Welmilla (2020) which was conducted in a physical learning environment.

Practically, the current study emphasizes the importance of emotional intelligence of lecturers to improve the student engagement within the online learning environment. Thus, the steps should be taken within the higher education sector to improve the emotional intelligence capability of lecturers. The lecturers should be given training to engage emotional intelligent teaching. Within the virtual environment the lecturers need to personalize the classroom to the students, these could be by creating chat rooms in relation to the topics and providing personalized feedback when grading the assignments of the students. These would motivate the student to engage more with the work.

Further, not like within the physical environments the lecturers need to be flexible in relation to the work of the students as students are struggling with the current challenges (example; the signal issues, not having infrastructure etc.). The lecturer needs to create an open environment where students could raise their concerns and enjoy their learning experiences by enhancing their engagement. This will result them reducing the boredom, anxiety and stress that is presence among the students.

The research was conducted within a controlled environment which is considered as the limitation of the study. Thus, as a future direction for the research the study could be conducted in different cultural contexts to generalize the findings of the study. Further, the study was conducted as a cross sectional study. This will result in not being able to monitor the changes over a period of time. Thus, a future researcher could conduct a longitudinal study to understand how student engagement would change through the emotional intelligence of the lecturers.

Conclusively, it can be stated that emotional intelligence of the lecturers will positively and significantly affect the student engagement within online learning platforms in higher education sector. Further, it was identified that these influences do change based on the level of social competence of emotional intelligence (social competence and relationship management) within a lecturer. Finally, the current paper highlights the importance of emotional aspects within a lecturer to improve the student engagement through online platform rather improving the technology and advanced platforms to conduct lectures.

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