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Chapter 1

Emotional Intelligence among Primary School Teachers in Relation to Gender, Teaching Experience and Type of School

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ABSTRACT

Teachers in Malaysia face increasing emotional demands, making emotional intelligence (EI) essential for sustaining well-being and teaching effectiveness. This study examines EI levels among primary school teachers in Putrajaya, focusing on gender, teaching experience, and type of school (national vs. international). A quantitative survey design was employed, using the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) to measure four EI dimensions: self-emotion appraisal, others' emotion appraisal, use of emotion, and regulation of emotion. Data were collected through an online survey of 67 teachers, and analyzed using descriptive statistics and independent samples t-tests in SPSS. Findings indicate that both male and female teachers reported high EI, with males scoring slightly higher in self-emotion appraisal and regulation, while females excelled in the use of emotion. Teachers with more than five years of experience recorded significantly higher EI than their less experienced peers, particularly in self-emotion appraisal and use of emotion. Furthermore, national school teachers demonstrated higher EI compared to international school teachers, especially in the use and regulation of emotion. These results highlight the importance of teaching experience and school context in shaping EI. From an Islamic perspective, EI aligns with values such as patience (*sabr*), compassion (*rahmah*), and God-consciousness (*taqwa*), emphasizing its role in holistic teacher development. The study suggests integrating EI into teacher education and professional development programs to strengthen resilience, enhance instructional quality, and improve student outcomes.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, gender, teaching experience, type of school, Malaysia

1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching is widely recognized as one of the most emotionally demanding professions, as educators are required to manage their own emotions while simultaneously responding to the emotional needs of their students. Teachers' emotional intelligence (EI) includes self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills, plays a central role in shaping

classroom climate, fostering student engagement, and supporting academic success (Rahman et al., 2024). Teachers with high EI are better able to create supportive learning environments, strengthen teacher–student relationships, and manage classroom behaviour effectively. These skills not only contribute to positive communication and motivation but have also been linked to measurable improvements in student academic performance (Sun et al., 2024; Qazi et al., 2024).

Research demonstrates that teachers' EI directly influences student outcomes. For instance, positive emotional expression by teachers increases students' enthusiasm for learning, while empathy and strong interpersonal skills encourage active participation and engagement (Jaberi et al., 2024). Training programs designed to enhance EI have been shown to improve teacher–student relationships and classroom climate, leading to better academic results (Pattiasina et al., 2024). Studies estimate that classrooms led by emotionally intelligent teachers can achieve up to a 10% improvement in student performance compared to those with lower-EI teachers (Qazi et al., 2024). These findings underscore the importance of equipping teachers with emotional competencies alongside pedagogical and content knowledge.

Despite growing global recognition of the value of EI in education, teachers in Malaysia face substantial challenges that can hinder its development and application. High workloads, administrative burdens, and societal expectations regarding student achievement place considerable stress on teachers, often affecting both their well-being and classroom effectiveness (Yahya & Azman, 2022). While international research has extensively examined EI in education, studies within the Malaysian context, particularly at the primary school level, remain limited. Moreover, the potential influence of demographic factors such as gender, teaching experience, and type of school (national versus international) on EI has not been systematically explored in Malaysia. This lack of empirical evidence presents a gap in understanding how these factors may shape teachers' emotional competencies and, in turn, their teaching effectiveness.

To address this gap, the present study investigates the levels of EI among primary school teachers in Putrajaya, Malaysia. Specifically, it examines differences in EI across gender, teaching experience, and type of school. By doing so, the study seeks to provide insights that can inform teacher education and professional development initiatives. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of integrating EI training into educational policies to ensure that teachers are well-prepared to address both the academic and emotional needs of their students.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Definition of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI) refers to the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions as well as those of others, making it vital for personal and professional success. It influences social interactions, relationships, and overall well-being, and is considered a skill that can be developed through practice. Core components of EI include self-awareness, or recognizing the impact of emotions on behavior (Shafik, 2024); self-regulation, the ability to control impulses (Nasution et al., 2023); empathy, or understanding others' feelings (Farmer et al., 2020); and social skills, which foster effective communication and positive relationships (Dhillon et al., 2021).

2.2 Emotional Intelligence among Teachers

Teachers' emotional intelligence (EI) in Malaysia is influenced by demographic factors such as gender, teaching experience, and school type. While teachers generally demonstrate high levels of EI, variations emerge when these characteristics are considered. Studies on gender reveal mixed findings. Some report no significant differences in overall EI between male and female teachers (Chaudhary & Varma, 2021; Yahya & Azman, 2022). Others highlight gender-specific patterns: female teachers often score higher in self-regulation and interpersonal sensitivity, reflecting greater empathy and expressiveness, while male teachers may show strengths in problem-solving, intuition, or resilience (Ahmad, 2013; Usmani et al., 2023). These findings indicate that gender may shape the way EI is expressed and applied in teaching, even if overall levels remain similar.

Teaching experience is another factor linked to EI differences. Many studies suggest that experienced teachers display stronger emotional competencies due to accumulated classroom exposure and life experiences (Yahya & Azman, 2022; Don et al., 2014; Amponsah et al., 2024). Their enhanced classroom management and pedagogical practices are often associated with higher EI (Awwad, 2022). Yet, findings are not always consistent. Some research shows novice teachers demonstrating higher emotional clarity and repair skills, while experienced teachers may suffer from emotional exhaustion (Porras-Cruz & Buitrago-Bonilla, 2024). Others found no significant differences across experience levels (Chaudhary & Varma, 2021). These inconsistencies suggest that external factors, including coping mechanisms, institutional support, and training, may play a crucial role in shaping EI.

School type has also been explored, though evidence remains inconclusive. Some studies report no significant EI differences between national and international school teachers (Chaudhary & Varma, 2021; Don et al., 2014). However, contextual variations matter. International school teachers often engage with culturally diverse classrooms, requiring adaptability, empathy, and cross-cultural competence, but also encountering unique emotional demands (Fernández-Berrocal et al., 2017; Tolentino, 2023). National school teachers, in contrast, often manage larger classes and standardized curricula, which demand strong emotion regulation and stress management skills. Thus, while school type may not directly determine EI, it shapes the contexts where emotional competencies are enacted.

2.3 Emotional Intelligence from the Islamic Perspective

From an Islamic perspective, emotional intelligence (EI) is integral to the teaching profession as it supports moral formation, character development, and holistic education. EI is not only about managing emotions but also about cultivating values, fostering positive relationships, and guiding students' academic and spiritual growth. The Qur'an and Sunnah emphasize the integration of emotional and spiritual development, positioning EI as an essential element of effective teaching and learning.

In Islamic education, EI aligns with the goal of nurturing individuals who are intellectually capable, emotionally balanced, and spiritually conscious (Sofiani et al., 2024). Its classroom application contributes to character building, helping students internalize religious values while promoting prosocial behavior and psychological well-being (Susanti & Nukman, 2024). Teaching methodologies such as role modeling, habituation, and offering advice reflect a holistic approach to cultivating EI, ensuring learners develop both knowledge and virtue (Sofiani et al., 2024).

Furthermore, EI in Islam is intertwined with spiritual intelligence, guiding individuals toward divine consciousness (*taqwa*) rather than personal desires (Sa'idah, 2023). Foundational EI aspects like self-control, empathy, and social skills are embedded in Islamic teachings, which stress patience (*sabr*), compassion (*rahmah*), and forgiveness (Masruroh, 2015). Thus, effective teaching requires integrating emotional, moral, and spiritual dimensions.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine emotional intelligence (EI) among primary school teachers in Putrajaya, Malaysia. A quantitative approach was chosen because it allows for statistical analysis of group differences and provides measurable insights into EI across demographic variables, including gender, teaching experience, and type of school. Data were collected using an online survey distributed via Google Forms, ensuring accessibility, convenience, and efficiency. Responses were exported into IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 26) for analysis, including descriptive statistics and independent samples *t* tests.

The study population comprised 67 primary school teachers from national and international schools in Putrajaya. Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the respondents. Convenience sampling was applied for national school teachers to facilitate direct access, while snowball sampling was used for international schools, with initial participants referring colleagues to participate. This combination enhanced diversity and addressed recruitment challenges.

Table 1 Demographic Profile

Category	Frequency (N=67)	Percentage (100%)
Gender		
Male	50	75
Female	17	25
Teaching Experience		
Less than 5 years	19	28
More than 5 years	48	72
Type of School		
National	47	70
International	20	30

Teachers' EI was measured using the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS), a validated instrument with 16 items covering four dimensions: self-emotion appraisal, others' emotion appraisal, use of emotion, and regulation of emotion. Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The WLEIS has shown robust psychometric properties across cultures, with Cronbach's alpha values typically exceeding .85 (Law, Wong, & Song, 2004). In this study, a pilot test confirmed its reliability, yielding an overall Cronbach's alpha of .96, indicating excellent internal consistency.

The study adhered to ethical research standards. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were informed about the purpose, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Participation was voluntary, and anonymity was maintained by coding responses. Data were securely stored and used solely for academic purposes. Ethical approval was obtained from the institutional review board to ensure compliance with research ethics.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study examined the levels of emotional intelligence (EI) among primary school teachers in Putrajaya, focusing on gender, teaching experience, and type of school. The following sections present and interpret the results.

4.1 Gender Differences in Emotional Intelligence

An independent-samples t test was conducted to compare emotional intelligence (EI) scores between male and female teachers. The results indicated no significant difference in EI scores, $t(98) = 1.18$, $p = .24$, 95% CI $[-0.07, 0.27]$, $d = 0.24$. Male teachers ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.68$) scored slightly higher on self-emotion appraisal and regulation, whereas female teachers ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.74$) scored marginally higher on the use of emotion.

Although the statistical difference was not significant, the patterns align with previous findings suggesting that gender may shape how EI competencies are expressed. Male teachers often emphasize self-regulation and problem-solving, while female teachers demonstrate stronger emotional expressiveness and empathy (Chaudhary & Varma, 2021; Usmani et al., 2023). These complementary strengths highlight the potential value of gender-sensitive approaches in EI development programs to support effective classroom practice. From an Islamic perspective, both male and female teachers are encouraged to embody *rahmah* (compassion) and *sabr* (patience), reinforcing EI as a universal trait essential for nurturing relationships and guiding students' holistic development (Anwar et al., 2020).

4.2 Teaching Experience and Emotional Intelligence

An independent-samples t test was conducted to compare EI scores between teachers with 1–5 years of experience and those with more than 5 years. The results showed a significant difference, $t(98) = 2.99$, $p = .004$, 95% CI $[0.10, 0.50]$, $d = 0.60$, indicating a medium effect size. Teachers with more than 5 years of experience ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.71$) scored higher in self-emotion appraisal and use of emotion compared to those with 1–5 years of experience ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.68$).

These findings suggest that EI tends to develop with professional experience, supporting studies that link prolonged exposure to classroom dynamics with enhanced emotional management and resilience (Don et al., 2014; Yahya & Azman, 2022). Experienced teachers may be better equipped to regulate emotions, manage stress, and foster stronger teacher–student relationships, which are critical for effective classroom management (Amponsah et al., 2024; Awwad, 2022). However, literature also notes that early-career teachers may sometimes display higher emotional clarity and repair skills, while experienced teachers may face emotional fatigue due to accumulated stress (Porras-Cruz & Buitrago-Bonilla, 2024). From an Islamic perspective, the stronger performance of experienced teachers can be associated with *hikmah* (wisdom), which grows with age and experience, enabling educators to act with balance, patience, and emotional maturity.

4.3 Type of School and Emotional Intelligence

An independent-samples t test was conducted to compare EI scores between national and international school teachers. The results indicated a significant difference, $t(98) = 2.99$, $p = .004$, 95% CI $[0.10, 0.50]$, $d = 0.61$, suggesting a medium effect size. National school

teachers ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 0.66$) reported higher EI scores, particularly in the use and regulation of emotions, compared to international school teachers ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 0.79$).

The higher EI scores among national school teachers may reflect differences in institutional context. Teachers in national schools often manage larger class sizes and standardized curricula, which may foster stronger emotion regulation and stress management skills (Yahya & Azman, 2022; Don et al., 2014). By contrast, international school teachers face unique challenges associated with cultural diversity and varied student backgrounds, which may require heightened adaptability and empathy but also present different emotional demands (Fernández-Berrocal et al., 2017; Tolentino, 2023). These contextual differences highlight that while school type may not directly determine EI levels, it shapes the ways teachers apply emotional competencies in practice. From an Islamic perspective, such differences resonate with the Qur'anic principle of *ta'aruf* (mutual understanding) in diverse settings (Qur'an 49:13), reminding educators of the universal obligation to demonstrate fairness, empathy, and compassion across all teaching environments.

5. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study emphasize the importance of emotional intelligence (EI) as a core competency for primary school teachers. High levels of EI, particularly in self-awareness, regulation, and empathy, are vital for effective classroom management, fostering student engagement, and strengthening teacher–student relationships (Yahya & Azman, 2022; Don et al., 2014). The results suggest that teacher education programs in Malaysia should incorporate EI development into both pre-service and in-service training. Professional development workshops focusing on stress management, empathy-building, and emotional regulation could further enhance teachers' capacity to address classroom challenges (Chaudhary & Varma, 2021).

This study has several limitations. First, the relatively small sample size ($N = 67$) limits the generalizability of the findings, as it may not capture the full diversity of Malaysian primary school teachers. Larger and more varied samples are needed to improve external validity (Chaudhary & Varma, 2021). Second, the study relied on self-reported data through the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS). Although the instrument is reliable, self-reporting carries the risk of social desirability bias, where participants may overestimate their emotional abilities (Law, Wong, & Song, 2004). Third, the cross-sectional design prevents establishing causal relationships between demographic factors and EI. Longitudinal studies would better capture how EI develops across teachers' careers (Amponsah et al., 2024).

Future research should expand to include teachers from diverse educational contexts, such as rural, urban, private, and religious schools, for a more comprehensive understanding of demographic and contextual influences on EI (Tolentino, 2023). Mixed-methods designs incorporating classroom observations, peer evaluations, and interviews could reduce reliance on self-reports and provide richer insights (Fernández-Berrocal et al., 2017). Studies should also evaluate the effectiveness of EI training programs in enhancing teacher performance and student outcomes, contributing to evidence-based educational practice (Don et al., 2014).

This study contributes to literature on EI by examining gender, teaching experience, and school type among Malaysian primary teachers. Findings show that while both male and female teachers demonstrate high EI, more experienced teachers generally score higher in self-awareness and regulation. Differences between national and international school teachers further highlight the role of contextual factors. These results underscore

the need to integrate EI training into teacher preparation and professional development, recognizing EI as a professional skill that strengthens teacher effectiveness, resilience, and student achievement (Yahya & Azman, 2022; Don et al., 2014).

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