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Learning with Feelings: Emotional Well-Being Development Among Secondary Students of Thewphaingarm School

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Abstract

This study aimed to identify the current status of the emotional well-being of the secondary students, JHS N=108, HS N=96, at Thewphaingarm School using Descriptive Survey and Simple Quasi-Experimental as research designs. The data reveals that the Junior High School students' emotional intelligence competencies are all within the normal range. However, Self-esteem (10.98), Decision Making and Problem Solving (15.19), and Motivation (16.20) are close to the lower limit of the Normal Range. This suggests that there is a potential vulnerability in these areas. These low-end scores for Self-Esteem, Decision Making and Problem Solving, and Motivation suggest that while the students are not currently deficient, these are the areas where performance is weakest and most susceptible to dropping into the Below Normal range. In the High School level, the students scored mostly in the normal range in the different EQ competencies with the highest in Self-Control (18.07) Taking Responsibility (18.89), Being Considerate (18.86), and Life Satisfaction (18.58). However, Self-esteem (11.10), Relationship Skills (16.63), and Decision Making and Problem Solving (16.67) scored the lowest and are positioned closest to the lower limit of their normal range, making them most susceptible to regression. The High School students exhibit a generally healthy EQ status, achieving a High EQ classification overall, with all individual competencies rated as Normal. The group shows clear strengths in Goodness (Responsibility, Consideration) and Life Satisfaction. However, the primary focus for maintenance and support should be on the competencies clustered closest to the minimum normal thresholds: Self-Esteem, Relationship Skills, and Decision Making and Problem Solving. Proactive steps in these areas are necessary to prevent future performance drops into the "Below Normal" range. With these foregoing results, in the upcoming semester, focus on improving the competencies that fall below the normal range should be considered when designing the Emotional Intelligence Development Program. Continued support from all the administrative and teaching personnel is also encouraged in guiding the students development of their emotional well-being.

Keywords: emotional intelligence; emotional quotient; junior high school; high school; self-control; taking responsibility; motivation; considerate; problem solving; self-esteem; life satisfaction; peace of mind; relationship

I. Introduction

"All learning has an emotional base." -- Plato

Learning does not happen only in the mind but as well as in the heart of the students. Students' well-being/happiness is a focus of school education worldwide (Lucas-Molina et al., (2018); Soutter et al., (2014)). Adolescence is a key transitional stage for physical and emotional development. Establishing good psychological coping mechanisms, a positive and healthy emotional state, and decision-making abilities during this period can lay a foundation for developing self-awareness, which helps to form a positive and healthy mental state and supports comprehensive physical and mental development (Casas,2011).

Proper education is not only instruction in school subjects. It cannot take place in isolation from the emotions of the child.

Emotional Intelligence (EI/EQ) is the ability to retain emotional impulses, to understand other person's innermost feeling and to handle relationships smoothly. (Goleman, 1998).

This involved the following competencies: Self-control, Being Considerate, Taking Responsibility, Motivation, Decision Making and Problem Solving, Relationship Skills, Self-Esteem, Life Satisfaction and Peace of Mind.

In present literature, this is also considered as the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). Social and emotional learning (SEL) is an integral part of education and human development. SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy

for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions. (CASEL, 2021)

The SEL framework from the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning presented the 5 areas of SEL competence as followed:

Self-Awareness includes the ability to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts.

Self-Management is the ability to manage one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations.

Social-Awareness is the ability to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts.

Relationship Skills are the ability to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups.

Responsible Decision-Making is the ability to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations.

In Thewphaingarm School, several intervention programs were implemented to improve the Emotional Well-Being of the students. This is in alignment with the school mantra "Be the Best You Can Be" wherein students are encouraged to adopt a mindset to improve their potential as well as their physical and emotional well-being.

One of the programs implemented was the MI/EQ Sessions facilitated by the Thai Teachers every Friday afternoon. They conduct different activities that aim to develop the different competencies outlined in the Thailand Ministry of Health Activity Guide to Develop the Emotional Intelligence of Adolescents (2018).

Another program was the integration of Emotional Intelligence Micro Activities during the Competency-Based Learning (CBL) sessions of Foreign Teachers. They implemented the micro-activities as part of the preliminary sessions of their weekly CBL classes. These activities were aimed to develop different emotional competencies and were conducted in a simple and easy to follow way.

This study aimed to identify the current status of emotional well-being of secondary students of Thewphaingarm School. It also further identifies the difference of the emotional intelligence result from the previous semester to the current one.

Furthermore, it aimed to answer the following research questions:

What is the emotional intelligence profile in different areas and competencies of the students when grouped according to their grade level?

What is the group profile in relation to their level (Junior High School and High School) of the students as measured by the Thai Emotional Intelligence Test?

What specific Emotional Intelligence competencies need to be developed and be included in the Emotional Intelligence development program?

Is there a significant difference between the Emotional Intelligence Result of the students in the different competencies during the previous and current semester?

II. Methodology

Descriptive Survey and Simple Quasi-Experimental were used as research design.

Descriptive survey allows the researcher to study and describe the distribution of one or more variables, without regard to any causal or other hypotheses (Aggarwal, 2019). In the current research, it is used to describe the status of emotional well-being of the students using the Ministry of Health Emotional Intelligence Test.

The quasi-experimental design is a research methodology that lies between the rigor of a true experimental method (true experimental design includes random assignment to at least one control and one experimental/interventional group) (Hulley, 2013) and the flexibility of observational studies (Maciejewski, 2020). This method is often used in social sciences, education, and public health research. Quasi-experimental designs include the posttest-only design with a control group, one-group pretest-posttest design, and pretest-posttest with a control group (Gray, 2023; Harris et al., 2006). In this study, a comparison was observed between the emotional intelligence of the students during the previous semester and the current one using the one group pretest-posttest design.

The data were gathered in respect to the outlined guidelines of the institution. As part of the school program to develop the overall well-being of the students, the Academic and Special Activities Office conducted a Self-Survey using the questionnaire developed by the Ministry of Public Health.

The questionnaire was distributed electronically using Jotform, an online data gathering tool and the data were analyzed using Google Sheet to get the scores for each competency as well as the mean for each class and the overall group. Statistical formulas that include: Frequency, Percentage, Mean and T Test, were also utilized to get the comparative result of the Emotional Intelligence of the students using the data from the previous semester and the current data of the present semester.

A general written consent to the parents were also obtained during the beginning of the academic year to allow the institution to gather such data and other documentation concerns.

The questionnaire was distributed during the last 2 weeks of the semester and the data was analyzed by the academic and special activities team after the data were checked for completion and accuracy.

The instrument used is a validated questionnaire from the Office of the Mental Health Promotion, Ministry of Health, Thailand (2018).

The instrument was then encoded on Jotform, a data gathering tool, to facilitate easy and automated scoring of the results.

The results were then exported in Google Sheets for data cleaning and analysis.

III. Results and Discussion

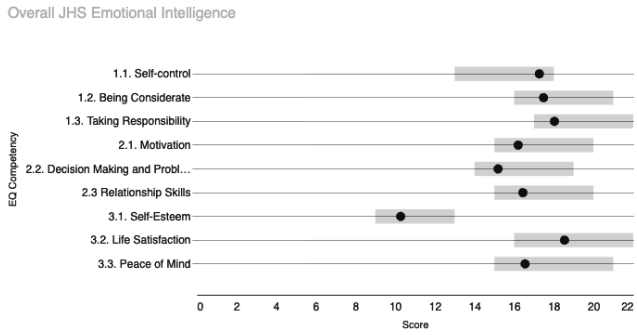

Figure 1

The data reveals that the Junior High School students' emotional intelligence competencies are all within the normal range. However, Self-esteem (10.98), Decision Making and Problem Solving (15.19), and Motivation (16.20) are close to the lower limit of the Normal Range. This suggests that there is a potential vulnerability in these areas.

These low-end scores for Self-Esteem, Decision Making and Problem Solving, and Motivation suggest that while the students are not currently deficient, these are the areas where performance is weakest and most susceptible to dropping into the Below Normal range.

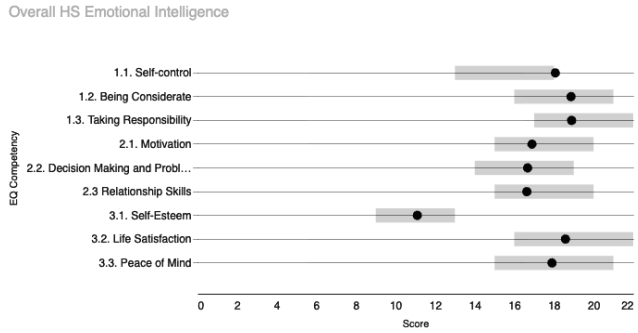

Figure 2

The data in figure 2 reveals that High School students scored mostly in the normal range in the different EQ competencies with the highest in Self-Control (18.07) Taking Responsibility (18.89), Being Considerate (18.86), and Life Satisfaction (18.58). However, Self-esteem (11.10), Relationship Skills (16.63), and Decision Making and Problem Solving (16.67) scored the lowest and are positioned closest to the lower limit of their normal range, making them most susceptible to regression.

The High School students exhibit a generally healthy EQ status, achieving a High EQ classification overall, with all individual competencies rated as Normal. The group shows clear strengths in Goodness (Responsibility, Consideration) and Life Satisfaction. However, the primary focus for maintenance and support should be on the competencies clustered closest to the minimum normal thresholds: Self-Esteem, Relationship Skills, and Decision Making and Problem Solving. Proactive steps in these areas are necessary to prevent future performance drops into the "Below Normal" range.

IV. Conclusions

Based on the foregoing results, the following conclusions are derived:

The JHS students demonstrated a high overall EQ status, with all competencies currently classified as Normal. The main focus for intervention should be on strengthening Self-Esteem, Decision Making, and Motivation to pull these scores further away from the lower boundary of the normal range, ensuring sustained emotional health.

The High School students exhibit a generally healthy EQ status, achieving a High EQ classification overall, with all individual competencies rated as Normal. The cohort shows clear strengths in Goodness (Responsibility, Consideration) and Life Satisfaction. However, the primary focus for maintenance and support should be on the competencies clustered closest to the minimum normal thresholds: Self-Esteem, Relationship Skills, and Decision Making and Problem Solving. Proactive steps in these areas are necessary to prevent future performance drops into the "Below Normal" range.

The JHS students has successfully leveraged S2 (2024-2025) to S1 (2025-2026) to achieve a positive overall increase in EQ, driven primarily by significant gains in Life Satisfaction and Relationship Skills. This suggests a strong foundation in personal contentment and social connection. However, the largest regression in Peace of Mind indicates that while students are socially and generally content, their internal stress and anxiety levels have risen and must be addressed

The High School students are experiencing a measurable regression in their internal emotional regulation and drive, as evidenced by the clear drops in Motivation, Self-Control, and Self-Esteem. While social skills (Being Considerate) remain relatively stable or slightly improved, the challenge lies in helping students manage their internal world and find the drive to succeed. The small overall decline masks these three significant and worrying drops.

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