



The Level of Emotional Intelligence of the Learners in Distance Education

M. Muthukumar¹ & Dr. A. Edward William Benjamin²

1. Research Scholar, Department of Education, Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli-620024.

2. Research Supervisor, Department of Education, Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli-620024.

Abstract:

Education in the 21st century emphasizes not only cognitive development but also the cultivation of emotional competencies that influence learning, performance, and interpersonal relationships. Recognizing, managing and regulating emotions is important in modern life. In distance education, effective communication is challenging because learners are far away and study independently. The present study looks into the emotional intelligence of distance learners enrolled in various undergraduate and postgraduate courses within South Tamil Nadu zone. A total of 300 students were randomly sampled from institutions delivering distance education programmes. A descriptive survey design was utilized with a standardized Emotional Intelligence Scale. The findings suggest that most distance learners possess a moderate level of emotional intelligence. The Course of study, gender, and age didn't have any significant effect on the dimension of emotional intelligence. This study also demonstrated that learners with high emotional intelligence exhibited better flexibility, motivation, and resilience in learning through virtual platforms.

Keywords: *Emotional Intelligence, Distance Education Learners, Self-Awareness, Motivation, Online learning, South Tamil Nadu.*

Introduction:

Emotional Intelligence (EI) refers to an individual's capacity to recognize, understand, and regulate their own emotions, as well as to perceive and manage the emotions of others. Daniel Goleman (1995) popularized EI and underscored its importance to personal and professional. The ability to recognize, manage, and regulate one's emotions is essential in modern professional and personal settings. However, in distance education, it is often difficult to foster effective communication and interaction because learners are geographically dispersed and their study is largely independent. This structure can contribute to feelings of isolation, reduced social presence, and decreased opportunities for immediate peer or instructor feedback. As a result, learners' emotional responses can significantly influence their persistence, engagement, and overall learning experience. Given these conditions, EI plays a critical role in helping distance learners manage stress, maintain motivation, and sustain active participation in their coursework.

Emotionally intelligent students are better equipped to cope with challenges inherent in remote learning, such as time management, self-directed study, and limited interpersonal connection. Therefore, examining the level of emotional intelligence among distance education learners is vital for informing instructional

design, improving support systems, and fostering environments that promote academic success and emotional well-being.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence is the multi-dimensional ability of a person, who can be defined as who has the ability to command respect by building relationships or has a positive and proactive attitude towards all aspects of life. There are three essential or fundamental components of EI. They are 1. Motivating oneself, 2. Motivating others, 3. Empathizing with others. Peter Salovey and John Mayer (1990) say that emotional intelligence is a critical part of social intelligence. It is to identify, understand, and regulate emotions. Emotionally intelligent people are incredibly self-aware. They are aware of their feelings without allowing themselves to be controlled by overwhelming depression, anxiety, or anger. Their empathy enables them to read others' emotions. They skillfully handle others' feelings, know what to say to grieving friends, encourage colleagues, and manage conflicts well.

Definition of Emotional Intelligence

According to Mohan (2003) Emotional intelligence is a favorable combination of a deep insight into one's emotional and cognitive capacities and a charming flair of communication, empathy, and motivation, leading to personal optimism, interpersonal confluence, and organizational excellence'. Madhumati (2006) defines, 'Emotional Intelligence as the ability and freedom to grow from mistrust to trust, self-doubt to self-empowerment, following to leading, incompetence to competence, isolation to synergy, and despair to hope'. According to Eaton & Johnson (2007), Emotional Intelligence is the ability to inform our decisions with an understanding of our own and others' emotions so that we can take productive action'. Therefore, from the above definitions, it can be drawn that Emotional Intelligence is thinking intelligently with emotions. It is the capacity to deal effectively with one's own and other's emotions.

Components of Emotional Intelligence

Goleman (1998) suggested five primary components of emotional intelligence:

1. Self-Awareness: Recognizing one's emotions, strengths and weaknesses.
2. Self-Regulation: Managing impulses and adapting to change.
3. Motivation: A strong ability to persevere despite obstacles.
4. Empathy: Understanding others' emotions.
5. Social Skills: Managing relationships and facilitating communications.

These dimensions are interconnected and combine to shape learning behavior, emotional regulation, and social adjustment.

Emotional Intelligence in Distance Education

Distance education is based on self-direction and communication through technology. Unlike traditional classrooms, distance education is usually an independent endeavor with less direct support from teachers or faculty. This is why emotional intelligence (EI) also relates to how well a student can cope with the stressors of studying, remain motivated to learn and/or work with their fellow learners in the online environment. Learners with high EI tend to have: Better self-motivation and persistence through online courses, better communication and empathy during online interaction and discussion, Better adaptability to technology or

course-related demands, less academic anxiety and emotional burnout. Conversely Low EI, on the other hand, might result in procrastination, withdrawal and less academic satisfaction.

Objectives of the study

1. To determine the level of emotional intelligence in the distance learners across south Tamil Nadu.
2. To find out whether if there is any difference between undergraduate and postgraduate students emotional intelligence in the distance education.
3. To examine the differences among gender, type of graduates, type of employment and course of study as distance education learners in the Emotional intelligence.
4. To interpret the relationship between male and female in respect to emotional intelligence as distance education learners.

Hypotheses of the study

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested in the study:

1. There is no significant difference in the level of Emotional Intelligence between male and female in the distance education learners.
2. There is no significant difference between male and female mean scores of distance education learners with respect to emotional intelligence.
3. There is no significant difference between the undergraduate and post graduates mean scores with respect to their emotional intelligence of distance education learners.
4. There is no significant difference between private and government employers mean scores with respect to their emotional intelligence of distance education learners.
5. There is no significant difference between arts and science distance education learner of means scores with respect to their Emotional Intelligence

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Hypothesis 1

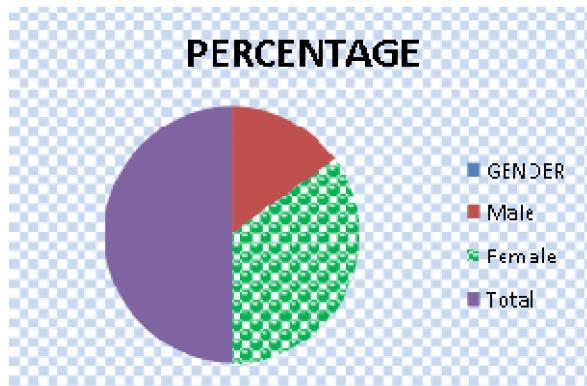
There is no significant difference in the level of male and female distance learners with respect to their emotional intelligence.

Table 1: The table shows that the Percentage of obtained marks of male and female distance learners with respect to their level of Emotional Intelligence.

Variable	N	Obtained marks	Total score	Percentage
Male	90	12094	40401	29.93%
Female	210	28307	40401	70.06%
Total	300	40401	40401	99.99%

The table presents the obtained marks, total scores, and percentages of scores of male and female distance learners in relation to their level of Emotional Intelligence. Out of the total sample of 300 learners, male learners constitute 29.93%, while female learners represent 70.06% of the overall Emotional Intelligence score contribution. Although females have a higher percentage of the total score.

Figure 1. The figure shows that the Mean. SD of male and female distance learners with respect to their level of Emotional Intelligence



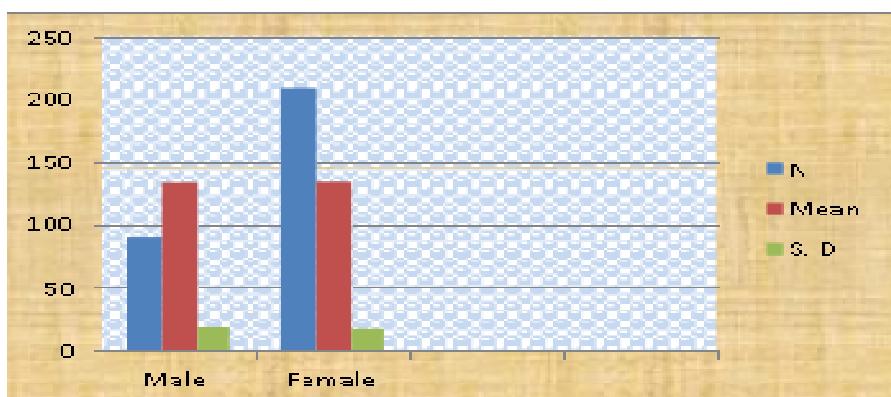
H₂: There is no significant difference between male and female mean scores of distance learners with respect to emotional intelligence.

Table 2: The table shows that the Mean, SD of male and female mean scores of distance learners with respect to their Emotional Intelligence.

GENDER	N	Mean	S. D	df	't'-value	Level of significance
Male	90	134.38	18.59	298	0.184	Not Significant (0.05)
Female	210	134.80	17.66			

The above table indicates that the mean score of male distance learners (18.59) is higher than that of female distance learners (17.66) in relation to their Emotional Intelligence. However, the calculated t value (1.184) is lower than the table value (1.97) at the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. It is thus concluded that there is no significant difference between male and female distance learners with respect to their Emotional Intelligence.

Figure 2. The figure shows that the Mean, SD of male and female distance learners with respect to their level of Emotional Intelligence.



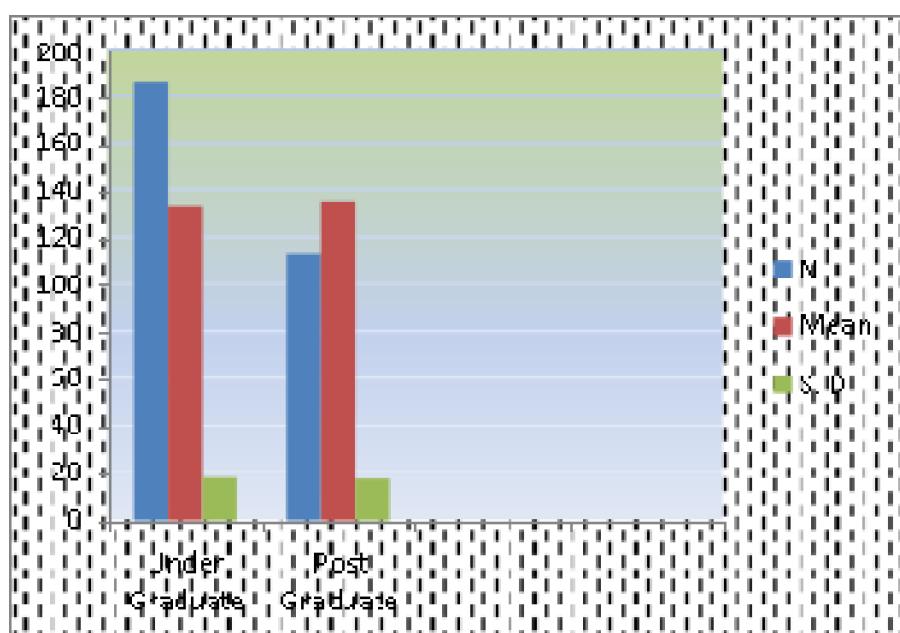
H₃: There is no significant difference between the undergraduate and postgraduates mean scores with respect to their emotional intelligence of distance learners.

Table3: The table shows that the Mean, SD of the undergraduate and postgraduates mean scores with respect to their emotional intelligence of distance learners.

MODE OF COURSE	N	Mean	S. D	df	't'-value	Level of significance
Undergraduate	187	134.11	18.09	298	0.699	Not Significant
Postgraduate	113	135.80	17.66			

The above table indicates that the mean score of **Undergraduate** distance learners (18.09) is slightly higher than that of **Post Graduate** distance learners (17.66) in relation to their Emotional Intelligence. However, the calculated *t* value (0.699) is lower than the table value (1.97) at the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. It is thus concluded that there is no significant difference between undergraduate and postgraduates distance learners with respect to their Emotional Intelligence.

Figure 3: The figure shows that the Mean, SD of the undergraduate and postgraduates mean scores with respect to their emotional intelligence of distance learners



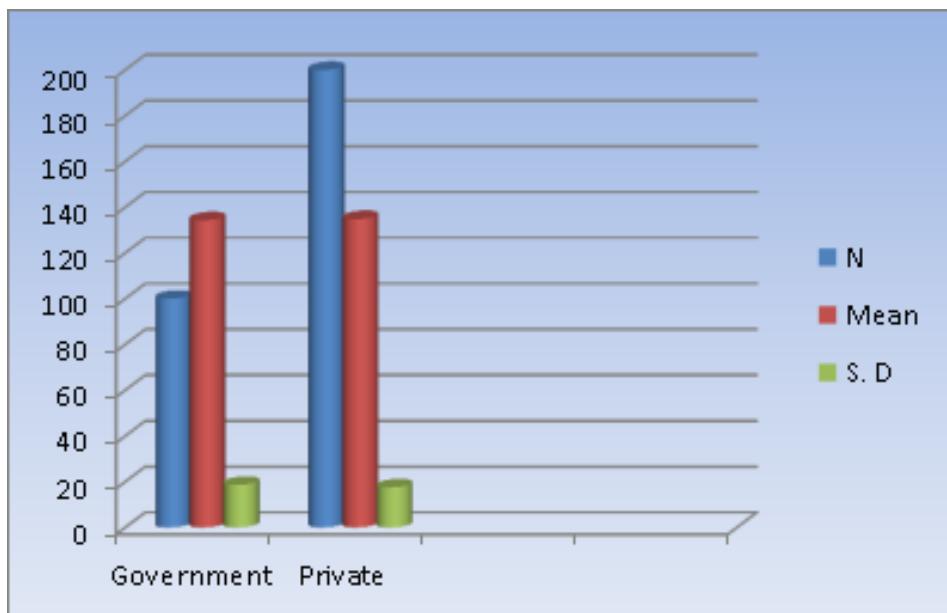
H₄: There is no significant difference between private and government employers mean scores with respect to their emotional intelligence of distance learners.

Table 4: The table shows that the Mean, SD of the private and government employers mean scores with respect to their emotional intelligence of distance learners.

TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT	N	Mean	S. D	df	't'-value	Level of significance
Government	100	134.30	18.67	298	0.252	Not Significant
Private	200	134.86	17.57			

The above table indicates that the mean score of Government distance learners (18.67) is slightly higher than that of private distance learners (17.57) in relation to their Emotional Intelligence. However, the calculated t value (0.252) is lower than the table value (1.97) at the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. It is thus concluded that there is no significant difference between undergraduate and postgraduates distance learners with respect to their Emotional Intelligence.

Figure 4: The figure shows that the Mean, SD of private and government employers mean scores with respect to their emotional intelligence of distance learners.



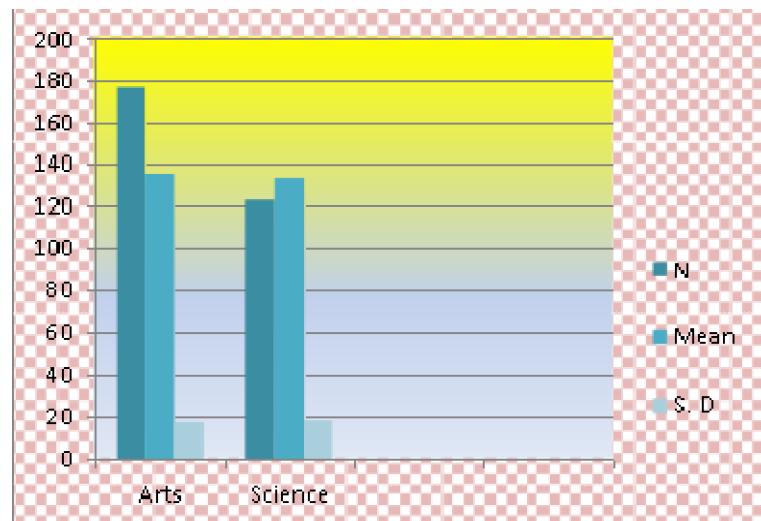
H₅: There is no significant difference between arts and science distance learner of means scores with respect to their Emotional Intelligence

Table 5: The table shows that the Mean, SD between arts and science distance learner of means scores with respect to their Emotional Intelligence

ACADEMIC STREAM	N	Mean	S. D	df	't'-value	Level of significance
Arts	177	135.45	17.60	298	0.906	Not Significant
Science	123	133.54	18.38			

The above table indicates that the mean score of Arts distance learners (17.60) is lesser than that of science distance learners (18.38) in relation to their Emotional Intelligence. However, the calculated t value (0.906) is lower than the table value (1.97) at the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. It is thus concluded that there is no significant difference between Arts and Science distance learners with respect to their Emotional Intelligence

Figure 5: The figure shows that the Mean, SD between arts and science distance learner of means scores with respect to their Emotional Intelligence



Methodology

- **Research Design:** Descriptive Survey Method
- **Population:** Distance education learners from universities' offering Distance Education.
- **Sample:** 300 students (90 male, 210 female) randomly selected from under graduate and postgraduate courses.
- **Instrument Used:** Standardized **Emotional Intelligence Scale** (developed by Hyde, Pethe & Dhar, 2002) covering self-awareness, empathy, motivation, emotional stability, and social competence.
- **Data Analysis:** Percentage analysis, mean, standard deviation, and t-test were employed to interpret the data.

Findings and Discussion

Based on the statistical analysis conducted, the following findings were obtained.

1. The mean score for Emotional Intelligence among male distance learners (18.59) was greater than that of female distance learners (17.66). However, the T-test results ($T=1.184$) were less than the critical table value of 1.97 at the .05 level of significance. As such, the null hypothesis is accepted, meaning there is no significant difference in Emotional Intelligence and male and female distance learners.
2. Undergraduate distance learners had a mean score of 18.09 in comparison to a mean score of 17.66 for postgraduate students. The calculated T value (0.699) was less than the value from the table (1.97). This one summons deliberations of no statistically significant difference between undergraduate and postgraduate distance learners.
3. Distance learners from a public institution had the mean score of 18.67 in comparison to 17.57 for distance learners from private colleges. The T value (0.252) was lower than the value of the table. Therefore, there is no difference between these two groups relative to Emotional Intelligence.
4. Students in the natural science fields had a higher mean score (18.38) compared to those in the arts and humanities fields (17.60) for Emotional Intelligence. However, the T value (0.906) was lower than the

value from the table (1.97). Therefore, there is no statistically significant difference in Emotional Intelligence and the two fields of study arts and sciences.

Discussion

The research study findings show that Emotional Intelligence among distance learners does not significantly differ based on gender, qualification, type of institution, or academic discipline. Although small variations in mean scores were noted, they were statistically insignificant. This indicates that Emotional Intelligence is more closely shaped by personal experiences, emotional maturity, and self-regulation rather than demographic or academic factors.

Since distance learning demands skills like self-motivation, adaptability, and emotional management, learners across different groups seem to develop similar emotional competencies over time. The results also support the idea that Emotional Intelligence is a universal human ability developed through life experiences and social interactions, not just academic exposure. Overall, the study concludes that Emotional Intelligence among distance learners remains consistent across diverse demographic and academic backgrounds and is primarily influenced by personal emotional awareness and coping strategies.

Implications of the Study

- Emotional intelligence training should be included as part of distance learning orientation programs.
- Mentorship and peer support groups can help learners enhance emotional and social connections.
- Academic institutions should develop digital counselling and emotional well-being initiatives.

Conclusion

Emotional Intelligence significantly influences the academic and emotional well-being of distance education learners. The study revealed that learners with high EI are better equipped to handle academic challenges, manage time effectively, and maintain motivation despite limited direct contact. Hence, distance education programs must integrate emotional learning strategies to foster resilience, self-regulation, and empathy among students. Enhancing emotional intelligence can lead to more satisfying and successful distance learning experiences.

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