

Leveraging Emotional Intelligence Theory to Enhance Positive Emotions Amongst B40 Malaysian Students During Online Learning

Hashima Hamid^{1*}, Ahmad Rizal Madar², Norkhairolizah Hamzah³,

^{1,3}Department of Professional Education and Graduate, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia, 86400 Parit Raja, Batu Pahat,

²Department of Technology Studies, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia 86400 Parit Raja, Batu Pahat, Johor

*Corresponding author. Hashima Hamid

E-mail address: hashima@uthm.edu.my

Citation: Hashima Hamid, et al (2024), Leveraging Emotional Intelligence Theory to Enhance Positive Emotions amongst B40 Malaysian Students during Online Learning, *Educational administration: Theory and Practice*, 30(4), 10204-10209, Doi: 10.53555/kuey.v30i4.6193

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a shift in the education sector towards online learning, particularly for socioeconomically B-40 students. This transition has caused emotional issues, highlighting the need for measures to manage emotions effectively. The Emotional Intelligence (EI) theory provides a promising approach to addressing these difficulties by enhancing students' ability to identify, interpret, and regulate their emotions. This is a mixed-method study using a sequential exploratory design. A total of 2 schools with the largest number of students from B40 family background were selected along with the teachers and parents. Purposive sampling techniques and a semi-structured interview approach were used for recruitment and data collection. Based on these findings; an emotion management framework grounded in EI theory will be developed. Quantitative data from schools' registries were collected and analyzed to triangulate qualitative findings. This study found distinct emotional problems in online learning, which influenced the development of the framework. The online learning emotion shared by B40 students were grouped under 5 main themes: self-regulation, self-awareness, self-motivation, empathy and social skill. This study highlights the importance of systematically addressing emotional needs to create inclusive online learning environments. The experiences encountered present an opportunity to gain insight into future pandemic preparedness and establish a framework for optimal online learning delivery in Malaysia.

Keywords : Emotional Intelligence Online Learning B40 Malaysian Students

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's increasingly challenging world, with the explosion and development of increasingly sophisticated technology as well as human dependence on increasingly high technology, human emotions and students also change. Emotional intelligence in the sense of the world of Education today has become a hotly debated issue as stated by Iin Andriani, et al.[1] This is because many studies have found that the souls and emotions of Generation Z at this time are so fragile and easily touched by only small issues, and they are quick to lash out and get angry with only a small amount of nicknames and pressure given [2]. Jung, Kudo & Choi [3] in Japan, found that students who went through the online learning process faced problem related to emotional aspects such as anxiety and emotional distress.

Psychological pressure is the foremost impediment to academic success [4]. However, in online learning there are existing challenges especially for students from the B40 socioeconomic group who encounter of the socio economic stressors, effective emotional management becomes even more crucial in navigating the complexities of online learning. This happen because students have a high desire for learning but the obstacles that exist during the online learning process such a weak internet connection, problems with the devices or the learning time hinder their learning process. This situation will cause emotional distress in them. Emotion management is something that is important for an individual in controlling emotions so as to improve emotional development as stated by Rowe and Fitness [5] negative emotions are often considered detrimental to motivation, achievement and learning, in some circumstances they can also be beneficial.

In the years following the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic, online learning has arisen as an important mode of education; yet, there is a significant gap in addressing the emotional requirements of B-40 students, who represent the least fortunate forty percent of the social strata. Despite the rapid evolution of online learning methodologies, they frequently overlook the need for emotional intelligence in supporting the overall development of B-40 students. Thus, there is an urgent demand to create an online learning framework that incorporates emotional intelligence theory to especially target the positive emotions of B-40 students, providing a conducive learning environment that promotes their academic achievement and general well-being.

1.1 Emotion Management

Emotion refer to specific feelings and thoughts, involving both biology and psychology and leading to a tendency to act. According to Fajar Arifianto [6], emotion is the awakening of one's inner feeling and feelings as a result of response to a situation, event or experience. Anxiety and emotional instability occur due to a person's failure to control a positive attitude when something happens in life [7]. This is shows that emotion is something that can be control by a person because a person's failure to control emotions can have an impact on the quality and well-being of his life holistically, including affecting his ability to interact with others. Thus, well-managed emotions could recognize, nurture, and build maturity which ultimately has a positive impact on the well-being of an individual's life and behavior.

1.2 Emotional Intelligence Theory

Dulewicz and Higgs [11] describe emotional intelligence as intelligence about being aware of and managing one's own feeling and emotions, being sensitive to and influencing others, motivating, and balancing motivation and monitoring oneself in order to achieve intuition, conscientiousness and ethical behavior. Additionally, Hassan et al., [8] stated that Goleman's theory has articulated five dimensions of emotional intelligence. These dimensions are self-regulation, self-awareness, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Study design

In this study, a sequential exploratory mixed method design to build an online learning emotion management model using control value theory to support the positive emotions of B-40 students after the Covid-19 pandemic. According to Creswell and Clark [12], a sequential mixed method design is a mixed method study design that combines quantitative and qualitative approaches in one study, where qualitative data are obtained in the first phase and quantitative data are obtained in the second phase. Figure 1.3 shows an illustration of a sequential exploratory mixed method design.

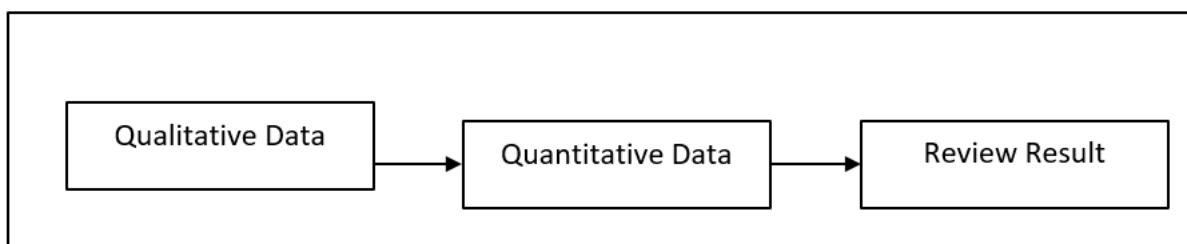


Fig.1.2 Illustration of sequential exploratory mixed method

2.2 Setting

There are 908 low-income schools in Johor, Malaysia. Researchers conducted an evaluation of 90% to 100% of these schools, focusing on those that cater to students from B40 families. Out of the 77 schools that were reviewed, 90% to 100% of the students belonged to B40 backgrounds. The researchers categorized the 77 schools into two groups: out of town and township. From each group, two schools were selected and further categorized into low grade A and low grade B schools. Two schools from each category were divided into two groups: low grade A and low grade B schools. Thus, two schools from each category that had the highest percentage of students from B40 family backgrounds became the locations for the investigators to conduct the qualitative study in this research. The school for the city category that has been selected to represent the grade A lower school is Sekolah Kebangsaan Pasir Puteh and the grade B lower school is Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Tamil) Bandar Segamat. For the out of town category as well, the grade A lower school is represented by Sekolah Kebangsaan (Felda) Tenggaroh 3 and for the grade B school is Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Tamil) Ladang Voules.

2.3 Sampling strategy for the semi-structured interview

We enrolled participants using a purposive sampling strategy. The participants in this study consisted of 4 teachers, 4 students and also 4 mothers or fathers. The sample frame was defined as those from B40 students

family background. We excluded participants who neither gave consent nor signed the consent forms. Other teaching and regional school could not be interviewed due to time and financial constraints.

2.4 Data collection

In the phase of data collection through the method of interview, the investigator carried out aliterature review related to the management of emotions of online learning and the factors that influence the emotional experience of teachers, parents and students towards the implementation of online learning. The interview protocol has been developed based on independent studies related to emotion management. After the debriefing protocol was built then the investigator identified the participants of the debriefing. The researcher has conducted the online interview due to several constraints. The constraints were in terms of time and cost. In terms of time constraints, the investigator has essential work and it is difficult to meet the study participants face to face even though they have made appointments in advance and the distance between the investigator and the study participants is quite far. So the cost for travel is necessary.

Due to the above two factors, the investigator has discussed with the study participants to conduct the meeting online only. Before the meeting was held, the investigator had obtained prior approval from the study participants and set a suitable date and time to make the meeting. The investigator had also informed the study participants that this online meeting was recorded even though the identities of the study participants were kept confidential. The interviewer had no prior relationship with the participants. To ensure the credibility and dependability of the study, the interviewer took notes on the participants' body language and facial expressions and compared them with the themes that were obtained from the transcripts. Participants were encouraged to clarify concepts and validate ideas that were unclear to the researcher.

2.5 Data analyses

Data analysis has been conducted in this study through four processes. The four processes are data transcribing, data cleaning, coding and theme building assuggested by Miles & Huberman [13,12]. The first process was transcribing the data. The data obtained from the audio recordings during the process of conversations between students, mothers or fathers and teachers were transcribed from audio to text form. The researcher used Window Media Player software and Microsoft Word to facilitate the researcher in the process of transcribing the data. The second process was also data cleaning. Data cleaning is done to remove data that contains speech styles, repetition of words and verses that are not relevant to the study. This process was carried out by removing text data that contained connotative speech styles such as 'hmmmm, ahhhh, ooooo' and also cases related to repetition of verses.

The third process was also recoding. Miles and Huberman [13] have stated that decoding is the process of labelling or giving a certain code to a unit of data. A code is a tag or label to signify a unit of meaning to something descriptive information In this research, the researcher has created an index code for each transcription. The process of indexing the transcripts was done by labelling a separate code to each study participant. Coding was performed by researcher and inter-coder reliability was conducted and discussed with the research team. Various details of the interviews were grouped under themes derived from the transcripts as agreed by all authors. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data from the interviews. Themes were also discussed, and all disagreements were systematically resolved. Themes and sub-themes are presented with illustrative quotes, with participant pseudonyms.

3. Results

Twelves (12) participants partook in the interview. These included students, teachers and parents. Perspective of emotional management are grouped under 5 themes: self-regulation, self-awareness, self-motivation, empathy, and social skill. Where applicable, these findings were supported by secondary data from the school registries.

3.1 Self-Regulation

The instructors' concerns about the implementation of online education approaches during the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted their initial reluctance to embrace fresh and seemingly complex pedagogical advances. Despite their worries, educators recognised the importance of switching to online instruction for their own and their students' well-being. This emerging scenario highlights a delicate process of self-regulation within the educational environment, in which educators balance their concerns to protect the educational process in the face of unusual conditions.

“When MoE give an order to do T&L by using online platform, we are so worried. We are not familiar with that method. But we just have to accept it because that is the best thing from the Ministry of Health to ensure that we are all safe from being affected by covid 19” (PKBG1-10, Teacher)

Participant spoke about their fear and worries during covid-19 online learning. Their concerns were mostly about the unfamiliarity and perceived complexity of this change. Despite their worries, the teachers recognized

the need for online instruction to ensure the safety of themselves and their students. This dynamic emphasizes a twofold process of self-regulation in the educational setting. Furthermore, The acknowledgment of external factors such as parental involvement and compliance with regulatory guidelines reflects an awareness of the emotional and logistical support necessary for fostering positive learning experiences post-pandemic.

"We had to accept because we had to understand there are pandemic situation. We can't go to school like usual. For me it's ok with T&L through online but we hope to get the support from all parties. I mean the parents especially. Because when we do T&L with online platform, parent are there with the student to assist" (PKBG2-21, Teacher)

3.2 Self-Awareness

Among the participants, three highlighted challenges encountered in adapting to online learning, particularly in the context of a home environment characterized by familial distractions and limited access to resource. For example: The student reports having difficulty keeping focus and consistency due to the presence of siblings and intermittent technological challenges with mobile devices.

"It's hard to learn at home. I have two more siblings. They always messed up or I can't go online. I learned to use a mobile phone. Sometimes it's ok. Sometimes it's not ok" (PKBP2-11, Student)

Furthermore, some participant mentioned that promoting online learning in a rural location where connectivity and accessibility difficulties are significant obstacles.

"I just accept the online learning. But I have to be prepared because I teach at the rural area so it's difficult to make sure 100% of students can participate in online learning. I put it in my mind that all of my student is trying to participate in online learning. But if there isn't that, there may be some unavoidable constraints. I'm thankful and continue the T&L as usual even if it's a little or more students who are online" (PKLBG3-22, Teacher)

Despite these constraints, the teacher takes a proactive approach, accepting the realities of online learning while working to ensure equitable participation among students. This demonstrates a heightened sense of self-awareness in understanding the contextual aspects that influence the implementation of online teaching tactics and possible disparities in student involvement.

Furthermore, some participants highlighted that the online learning faced significant challenges due to financial constraint or limited access to the internet connectivity at home.

"I still prefer to study at school. I can meet friends at the school. At home, i have learn by using mobile phones. I have to use mom or dad's cell phone. Sometimes need to buy internet data bundle. Otherwise, there is no internet. If there is no internet, I can't go online" (PKLBP3-11-8, Student)

3.3 Self-Motivation

The relationship between motivation and emotional experiences in the transition to online learning is worth exploring. At first, students may be hesitant to engage in digital learning due to unfamiliarity, leading to feelings of uncertainty and discomfort. However, once they start participating in online classes and experience positive interactions, their motivation can be enhanced by factors such as enjoyment of interactive activities and a sense of connection with peers.

"It was hard for me to accept for the first time. Because it feels like it's hard. I have a sister. But after that i think online classes is quite interesting for me. The teacher does online quizzes like quizzes. Then you can chat with friends. But it's not the same as studying at school"(PKBP2-24, Student)

Additionally, participant identified of fear and gratitude. The fear arises from technological limitations, while gratitude is due to the supportive atmosphere provided by the family member. Despite of studying from home without a personal mobile phone presents challenges, the participant remains motivated by the chance to engage in online classes and interact with teachers and peers.

"I don't really like studying at home because I don't have a mobile phone. I have to borrow from my sister. Luckily i have a very supportive sister. When I get an opportunity to join online class, I can meet teachers and I can meet friends. It's fun even online. The teacher is also supportive. Learning is not as full as going to school"(PKLBP3-17, Student)

3.4 Empathy

According to some participant, they have to collaborate to provide access to online classes for their child. *"It's really hard for me. Because I am lorry conductor, my wife have online business. My wife and I have agreed that if my son has an online class, she will help. She will give mobile phones for T&L purpose. That's all I can do. If I want to buy another mobile phone for my kid, I can't afford it yet. Maybe later" (PKLBIB4-43,*

Parent)Furthermore, some participants identified various factors influencing student's online involvement and achievement. Instead of imposing strict standards, the teacher takes a compassionate approach, closely monitoring student engagement through various communication channels and actively working to overcome any obstacles to internet access. *"I can see from the student achievement. We can't have high expectations because not all students can go online. We can monitor through student engagement online, assignments given in Telegram and also during quizzes. I also show to them that I care about my students. I will ask the reason if students often cannot get online"* (PKBG1-170, Teacher)

3.5 Social Skill

The participant highlighted the importance of social skills in learning, whether through family support and interaction during study sessions at home or through collaborative interactions between teachers and students during online learning. *"I'm teaching math, so I will do the questions together with the students. So there are some interaction between students and me. We do it casually and we don't stress with the students"* (PKLBG4-265, Teacher) Additionally, some participant mentioned that active participation and social engagement during online learning. For example : conversation with friends, answering teacher's questions and helping friends. *"I make sure that if the teacher asks a question, he has to answer. Then always help his friends. Communicate with his friends. Don't be silent and sit alone"* (PKLBIB3-346, Parent)

Online Learning Emotion Management Framework

Individuals in online learning environments have a range of emotional experiences moulded by anxiety caused by deadlines and technological challenges, frustration caused by complex course contents, and joy caused by good learning results. These experiences include core emotions like joy and grief and secondary emotions like pride and jealousy, which are caused by self-evaluation and comparison to peers [9]. The online learning experience substantially impacts these emotions; well-structured courses with interactive aspects and timely feedback promote positive emotional states, whereas technological problems and feelings of isolation can intensify negative emotions. Thus, emotion management strategies are considered for fostering a positive and supportive online learning environment. As supported by Ishak [10] stated that providing social support networks, including peer interactions, mentorship, and access to counselling services, offers students a sense of belonging and assistance during challenging times. Additionally, positive reinforcement through celebrating achievements, offering constructive feedback, and fostering a growth mindset encourages resilience and motivation. Inclusive design principles ensure that the online learning environment is accessible to all students, considering diverse backgrounds and learning needs. By integrating these strategies, educators can create a nurturing atmosphere where students feel supported, empowered, and equipped to navigate their emotions while achieving academic success. The online learning emotion management framework was shown in figure 3.

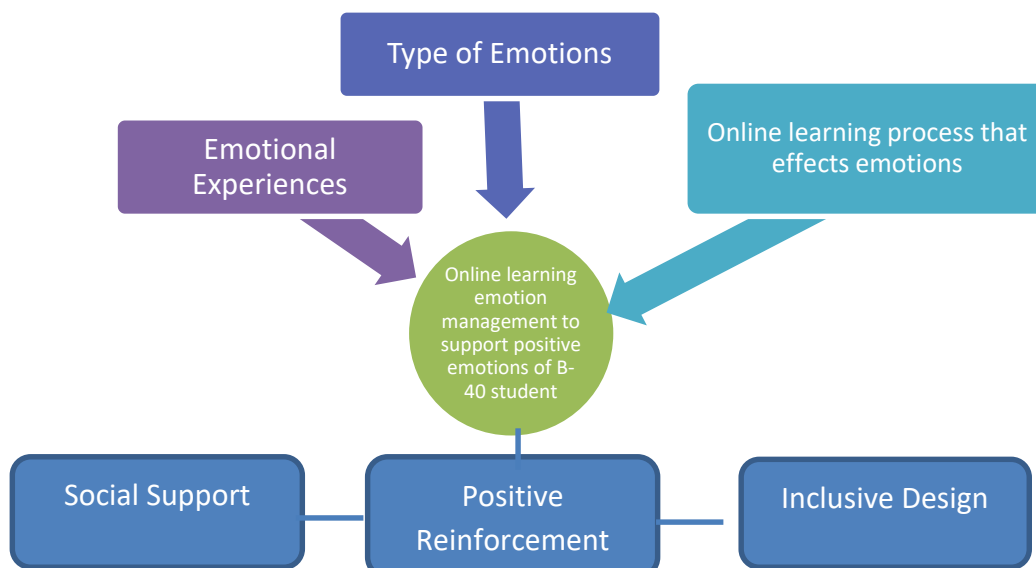


Fig.3 Online Learning Emotion Management Framework

4. Conclusions

This study brings attention to the existing shortcomings in online learning. It emphasises the influence of COVID-19, including the emotion experiences and online learning process arise that affect student's emotion for B40 students backgrounds. This paper underscores that online learning process is not adequately resourced and require strengthening in all aspects. The emotional experiences encountered during COVID-19

pandemic present an opportunity to gain insight into future pandemic preparedness and establish a framework for optimal online learning emotion management in Malaysia. A crucial aspect of seizing this opportunity involves re-evaluating teaching strategies and approach on online learning environment and fostering favourable learning conditions for students. However, the effective implementation of EI strategies necessitates comprehensive support from educational institutions, policymakers, and communities. This includes providing resources, training for educators, and collaboration with mental health professionals to address complex emotional needs. Ongoing research and evaluation are also crucial to assess the efficacy of EI interventions in online learning for B40 Malaysian students and refine strategies accordingly. With concerted efforts and a commitment to holistic education, leveraging emotional intelligence can empower B40 students to thrive both academically and emotionally in the digital age, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Acknowledgement

This research was supported by University Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM) through Tier 1 (Vot Q176).

References

1. Chillakuri B. (2020b). Understanding Generation Z expectations for effective onboarding. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JOCM-02-2020-0058>
2. Andriani, Lisnawati Ruhaina, Nanik Prihartanti, (2022). Relationship between Self-Efficacy, Emotional Intelligence, and Parental Social Support with Learning Motivation of University Students in Distance Learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic *Journal An-Nafs Kajian Penelitian Psikologi* 7(2):153-170. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10.33367/psi.v7i2.23159>
3. Jung, I., Kudo, M. & Choi, S. K. (2012). Stress in Japanese learners engaged in online collaborative learning in English. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 43 (6): 1016-1029.
4. Mishra, L., Gupta, T. & Shree, A. (2020). Online teaching-learning in higher education during lockdown period of COVID-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Educational Research Open*, Volume 1,
5. Rowe, A. D., & Fitness, J. (2018). Understanding the Role of Negative Emotions in Adult Learning and Achievement: A Social Functional Perspective. *Behavioral sciences (Basel, Switzerland)*, 8 (2), 27.
6. Fajar Arifianto. (2014). Pengaruh motivasi diri dan persepsi mengenai profesi akuntan publik terhadap minat menjadi akuntan publik pada mahasiswa prodi akuntansi fakultas ekonomi Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta. *Jurnal Nominal*, 3(2), 150-161.
7. Aziz, A., Razak, N., Zulkifli, N., Amat, M., Othman, M., & Musa, N. (2021). Systematic Review of Stress and Coping Strategies during Pandemic COVID-19 Among Students in Higher Learning Institutions. *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (MJSSH)*. <https://doi.org/10.47405/mjssh.v6i11.1172>
8. Hasan, N. & Bao, Y. (2020). Impact of “e-Learning crack-up” perception on psychological distress among college students during COVID-19 pandemic: A mediating role of “fear of academic year loss”. *Children and youth services review*, 118, 105355. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chilyouth.2020.105355>
9. Nylor D. & Nyanjom, J. (2020). Educators' emotions involved in the transition to online teaching in higher education. *Higher Education Research & Development*, DOI: 10.1080/07294360.2020.1811645.
10. Ishak, S. (2022). Measuring Students' Emotion On Online Learning During Covid-19 Pandemic Using Conditional Probability. *The European Proceedings of Multidisciplinary Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.15405/epms.2022.10.33>.
11. Dulewicz, V., & Higgs, M. (2000). Emotional intelligence—A review and evaluation study. *Journal of managerial Psychology*, 15(4), 341-372
12. Creswell, J. W., Shope, R., Plano Clark, V. L., & Green, D. O. (2006). How interpretive qualitative research extends mixed methods research. *Research in the Schools*, 13(1), 1-11.
13. Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1984). Drawing valid meaning from qualitative data: Toward a shared craft. *Educational researcher*, 13(5), 20-30