

Understanding the Relationship Between Self Referential and Socially Oriented Emotional Intelligence Constructs: A Cross-sectional Study

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Abstract

This article aims to investigate the influence of self-perception, self-regulation and motivation on the social awareness and social skills of university students. While Emotional Intelligence is a concept extensively researched in psychology with a substantial body of literature, there is limited empirical data connecting the constructs of self to the social constructs in Emotional Intelligence. The research recognizes the significance of understanding how these intrapersonal and interpersonal factors contribute to the development of social competence in the academic environment. A quantitative survey was used to explore the relationship between these. The sample comprised undergraduate students from diverse academic disciplines, and data were collected through validated self-report questionnaires. The findings underscore the importance of integrating targeted interventions and educational strategies that promote the development of these attributes to enhance students' overall social competence. By fostering a greater understanding of these dynamics, universities can better equip their students with the social skills necessary for successful interpersonal interactions, personal growth, and future professional success.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence; Social Skills; University Students; Emotional Wellbeing; Self-Awareness.

Introduction

In the contemporary era, students find themselves immersed within a dynamic and ever-evolving societal milieu, wherein the acquisition and mastery of skills have an increasingly formidable and indispensable role (1). The intricate interplay between our cognitive processes, the acquisition of knowledge, and the construction of mental models is profoundly dependent upon the utilisation of certain personal and social skills that can be learnt and developed.

In the pursuit of personal and professional growth, one cannot overstate the significance of self-awareness, self-regulation and motivation which are the self-constructs of emotional intelligence. As we navigate the complexities of life, the above-interwoven pillars serve to enhance the social constructs of emotional intelligence which are social awareness and social skills (2). Be it relationships (3,4), career (5) or overall well-being (6), honing these core components of emotional intelligence helps in forming the foundation of both personal and professional excellence in individuals. Though the

above has been consistently proved evident, there are myths that EI cannot be considered intelligence (7). This study aims to explore the different constructs of Emotional Intelligence based on Daniel Goleman's model using previous literature and analyze if the self-constructs of emotional intelligence have an impact on the social constructs of emotional intelligence.

Self-Referential Emotional Intelligence Constructs

Self-awareness is widely recognized as the initial constituent of emotional intelligence, serving as the fundamental basis for self-exploration (8) and the pivotal factor in unleashing one's authentic capabilities (9). Emotional self-awareness refers to the ability to view, think and understand our emotions, thoughts, strengths, weaknesses, and behavioural tendencies (10). The process of introspection and mindfulness allows individuals to acquire knowledge about their responses to various stimuli and comprehend the subsequent impact on their decision-making (11,12) and behavioural patterns that form the self in self-awareness.

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(Received 12th October 2023; Accepted 01st January 2024; Published 30th January 2024)

Individuals who possess self-awareness demonstrate proficiency in monitoring their internal thoughts and emotions, embracing their unique qualities, and utilizing this self-knowledge to purposefully make choices that align with their values and beliefs (13). Moreover, the concept of self-awareness transcends the limits of our cognitive processes and encompasses the realm of interpersonal engagements (14,15). Developing a profound understanding of ourselves enables us to effectively cultivate empathy towards others, thereby fostering more profound interpersonal connections and augmenting the overall quality of our relationships. Research also shows that self-awareness lays a foundation for self-reflection which helps one learn about oneself (16) and therefore it is a positive state which paves the way for personal and social growth.

Upon establishing the foundational framework of self-awareness, the second component of Emotional Intelligence is self-regulation. Self-regulation, in its essence, pertains to the cognitive capacity possessed by individuals to effectively govern their own emotions, impulses, and behaviour in a manner that harmonizes with their overarching long-term objectives and deeply-held principles. The aforementioned phenomenon can be characterized as a dynamic process requiring perpetual vigilance and self-imposed discipline (17). This process enables individuals to effectively withstand enticements, surmount obstacles, and rebound from adversities with remarkable resilience (18). The pursuit of self-regulation entails the deliberate cultivation of emotional intelligence, the acquisition of mindfulness skills to foster present-moment awareness (19), and the cultivation of a growth mindset (20,21). In the face of adversity, individuals who have mastered the skill of self-regulation possess the capacity to maintain a state of composure, engage in a rational evaluation of the circumstances at hand (18), and subsequently, execute a response that propels them towards the realization of their intended objectives. Through the cultivation of inner equilibrium and composure, individuals who possess self-regulatory capacities can engender a sense of trust within themselves, thereby acquiring the esteem and assurance of their peers, even amidst periods of upheaval and turmoil (22). Furthermore, the practice of self-regulation

engenders a symbiotic relationship with self-awareness, thereby establishing a reinforcing cycle of mutual enhancement. As one engages in the regulation of their affective and behavioural responses, they acquire a heightened level of discernment regarding the underlying catalysts and recurrent sequences that shape their psychological and physiological states. The ongoing and iterative nature of this process of self-improvement bestows upon them the ability to perpetually advance, liberating themselves from the constraints of self-imposed limitations and fostering the development of self-mastery that propels them toward progress (23).

Motivation, an inherent drive that compels individuals to engage in meaningful activities, achieve goals, and passionately pursue their aspirations, is a fundamental requirement for human behaviour and success (24). It is the driving force that propels, sustains, and directs our efforts toward specific outcomes. The undeniable power of motivation is evident when people strive for personal growth, pursue excellence in their chosen professions, or overcome obstacles that impede their progress. At its core, motivation is a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic factors that drive our willingness to participate in activities (25). Intrinsic motivation is an internal drive determined by our innate inclinations, curiosities, and values. In situations where individuals are intrinsically motivated, they experience deep satisfaction and contentment through their active participation in the pursuit of their goals, rather than being motivated only by external rewards (24). The use of this particular form of motivation often leads to higher levels of engagement, creativity, and perseverance as our actions are driven by a genuine passion for our goals. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is fed by external factors such as rewards, recognition, or validation. While it is undeniable that external incentives can influence human behaviour, it is important to realize that the effects of these incentives may only be temporary. To cultivate lasting and sustained motivation, it is critical to develop a deep and inherent connection with the current task (26). Nevertheless, the deliberate integration of internal and external incentives can yield significant results, especially when aligned with an individual's aspirations and values.

Scientists and psychologists have been deeply involved in the study of motivation for some time, leading to a comprehensive understanding of the various theoretical frameworks that illuminate the complexity of motivation. Abraham Maslow's theoretical framework, known as the hierarchy of needs, posits that people are motivated by the desire to fulfill various needs, ranging from basic physiological needs to higher-level needs such as self-esteem and self-actualization (27). Self-determination theory, developed by Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan, emphasizes the significant role of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in enabling and sustaining intrinsic motivation (28). Furthermore, it is critical to recognize that motivation is not a fixed trait, but is influenced by various contextual factors, individual differences, and personal experiences. Some people have an innate tendency to self-motivate, while others may need external support and strategies to cultivate their inner drive (29). It is therefore crucial to fully understand the complex dynamics of the various factors that influence motivation, as this knowledge is essential for creating environments that foster long-lasting engagement and success.

Socially-Oriented Emotional Intelligence Constructs

Social awareness, a fundamental principle in various disciplines, has an impact on the dynamics of human interactions and the formation of social connections and cohesion (30). The cultivation of social consciousness is the basis for effective communication, cooperation and the formation of community bonds. Consequently, social awareness is one of the constructs of emotional intelligence. Empathy, the cognitive and affective capacity that enables individuals to adopt the subjective vantage point of others and fathom the world through their lens, is a crucial component of social consciousness. The concept of empathy is an indispensable cognitive instrument, enhancing our capacity to comprehend the experiences and perspectives of others (31). By cultivating empathy, one can encourage the growth of trust, compassion, and a profound understanding of the human condition. As it facilitates the interconnection of individuals from diverse origins, the aforementioned phenomenon promotes inclusiveness and a sense of harmony in the globalized society of the

twenty-first century. Social awareness extends beyond just interpersonal interactions. Understanding the complexities of human behaviour requires an understanding of cultural norms, social issues, and the intricate relationship between individual actions and societal repercussions (32). The cultivation of a heightened social consciousness instills in individuals a keen awareness of the predominant concerns within their communities, thereby increasing the likelihood of their active participation in acts of volunteerism, advocacy for social equity, and support of noble endeavours (33). Professionals must have heightened social consciousness. Socially intelligent leaders and team members can discern and evaluate the prevailing emotional climate within a group, address and resolve any conflicts or challenges that may arise, and ultimately foster an environment characterized by contentment and productive collaboration (34). Leaders should develop a comprehensive understanding of their team members' perspectives and skills to maximize productivity and boost job satisfaction (35). The cultivation of social awareness simultaneously promotes an individual's personal growth and development. A person's emotions, biases, and behavioural patterns can be revealed through self-reflection and empathy practice (33). Self-awareness promotes the regulation of emotions and the improvement of interpersonal relationships. Contemporary scholarly discourse has predominantly centred on the topic of social consciousness. It has been empirically demonstrated that the implementation of social awareness interventions in educational institutions, commercial enterprises, and diverse communities results in a significant increase in conflict resolution skills (36), prosocial behaviour (37-39), critical thinking (40) and the reduction of prejudiced attitudes. Acquiring and cultivating social awareness enhances the human experience and promotes individual growth, while concurrently fostering the development of empathetic, compassionate, and socially integrated communities (41).

Social skills are integral to the development of interpersonal competence and productive interactions and have elicited considerable intrigue and scholarly within diverse academic disciplines (42). Embedded within the intricate

fabric of human interaction, social skills, characterized by the adeptness to manoeuvre through social scenarios with finesse, empathy, and efficacious communication, assume a paramount role in the formation and cultivation of personal connections (43), scholastic accomplishments, and vocational triumphs. Fundamentally, social skills encompass a heterogeneous array of aptitudes that empower individuals to interact with their fellow human beings in manners that cultivate affirmative affiliations, shared comprehension, and collaborative endeavours (44). The proficiencies in question transcend the realm of verbal discourse, encompassing nonverbal indicators, attentive listening, the art of resolving conflicts, empathetic understanding, and a keen awareness of cultural nuances (45). Through the acquisition and mastery of social skills, individuals can adeptly traverse a myriad of social contexts, effectively articulate their thoughts and emotions, and forge amicable and cohesive relationships with their fellow human beings. One of the quintessential components pertaining to social aptitude resides in the realm of efficacious communication, wherein lies the art of cogently expressing one's thoughts and ideas while concurrently exhibiting attentive listening skills towards interlocutors. The reciprocal transmission of information between individuals serves as the fundamental pillar upon which prosperous interpersonal relationships and collaborative efforts are built. Proficient communicators possess not only the dexterity to articulate their viewpoints but also exhibit a willingness to comprehend and value a wide array of perspectives, thereby fostering more profound and fruitful dialogues (46). Moreover, the domain of social skills encompasses the cognitive capacity to apprehend and decipher nonverbal cues, including but not limited to facial expressions, gestures, and bodily movements. Nonverbal communication frequently serves as a conduit for the expression of emotions and attitudes that linguistic utterances alone fail to encapsulate, thereby assuming a pivotal role in facilitating precise comprehension within the realm of social interactions (47). Individuals endowed with robust social aptitude possess the capacity to decipher these subtle signals proficiently, thereby cultivating enhanced empathetic and adaptable

qualities in their interpersonal exchanges. Furthermore, it is imperative to acknowledge that cultural sensitivity holds a paramount position as an integral facet of one's social aptitude within the context of our contemporary globalized society. In light of the coexistence and collaboration of diverse cultures across various domains, it is evident that individuals possessing an elevated level of cultural awareness are endowed with superior capacities to effectively navigate cross-cultural interactions, characterized by an attitude of reverence and admiration. Individuals who possess a heightened sense of cultural sensitivity possess the ability to modify their communication and behavioural patterns in accordance with the diverse cultural norms prevalent in various societies. This adaptive capacity enables them to foster more seamless cross-cultural interactions and exchanges. Within the realm of educational environments, the salience of social skills is notably accentuated (46). It has been observed that students who possess highly refined social aptitudes exhibit a greater propensity for effectively interacting with both their peers and educators. This, in turn, culminates in a more enriched educational milieu, thereby fostering superior academic achievements. The acquisition and cultivation of these proficiencies serve to foster an amicable milieu within the educational setting, engender enhanced cooperation and synergy in collective undertakings, and mitigate occurrences of harassment and marginalisation. Therefore, based on the above literature the following hypotheses were developed and the proposed research model is displayed in Figure 1.

H1: Self-awareness has a positive impact on Social Awareness
H2: Self-Awareness has a positive impact on Social Skills
H3: Self-regulation has a positive impact on Social Awareness
H4: Self-Regulation has a positive impact on Social Skills
H5: Motivation has a positive impact on Social Awareness
H6: Motivation has a positive impact on Social Skills

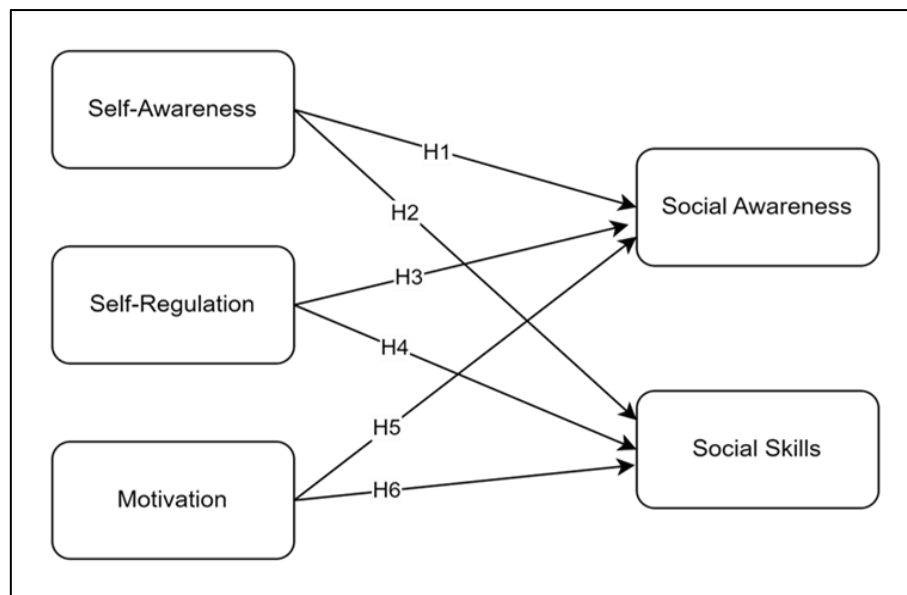


Figure 1: Proposed Research Model

Materials and Methods

The participants included 82 undergraduate senior students at a reputed university in India. The data for the study was collected from the participants in December 2022. The participants were selected using the Simple random sampling technique. The students who were in their final year of Undergraduate studies were included in the study. The students who were in their first, second and third year of undergraduate studies and the postgraduate students were excluded from the study. The participants were informed about the details of the research and informed consent from the participants was taken for the study. The study used the Emotional Intelligence Scale developed by Dr. Shailendra Singh as the data collection instrument (48). The questionnaire measured self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, social awareness and social skills of the students. The questionnaire had a Likert rating from 5- strongly agree to 1 - strongly disagree. The quantitative research methodology was deemed appropriate for the study as the variables were lucid (49). Since the study was exploratory, a cross-sectional study was used. SMARTPLS was used to analyze the collected data. SmartPLS software helps generate measurement models and structural models from the variables used in the study. It also helps

understand which questions did not contribute to the factors used in the study which allows the researchers to modify the questionnaires while developing it for further research, hence smartpls was used in the analysis of data collected.

Results

Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics of the sample for the present study which consisted of 56.1% (n=46) male students and 43.9% (n=36) female students.

According to (50), the PLS technique necessitates a review of the measurement model to discover any inaccuracies in the indicator variables before assessing the structural model. The composite reliability, Cronbach's alpha, individual indicator reliability, communality, and average variance extracted (AVE) are employed in evaluating the internal consistency, convergent validity, and commonality of the reflecting measurement models. Discriminant validity was evaluated by the utilisation of the Fornell-Larcker criteria and HTMT test.

Figure 2 shows the Measurement model obtained from SmartPLS. The inner model shows the path coefficients and the outer model displays the outer weights / loadings.

Table 1: Demographic profile of the participants

Demographic Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	46	56.1
	Female	36	43.9
Caste	General	39	47.6
	OBC	36	43.9
	SC/ST	7	8.5
Religion	Christian	21	25.6
	Hindu	58	70.7
	Muslim	3	3.7
Family type	Extended family	1	1.2
	Joint family	20	24.4
	Nuclear family	53	64.6
	Single parent family	8	9.8

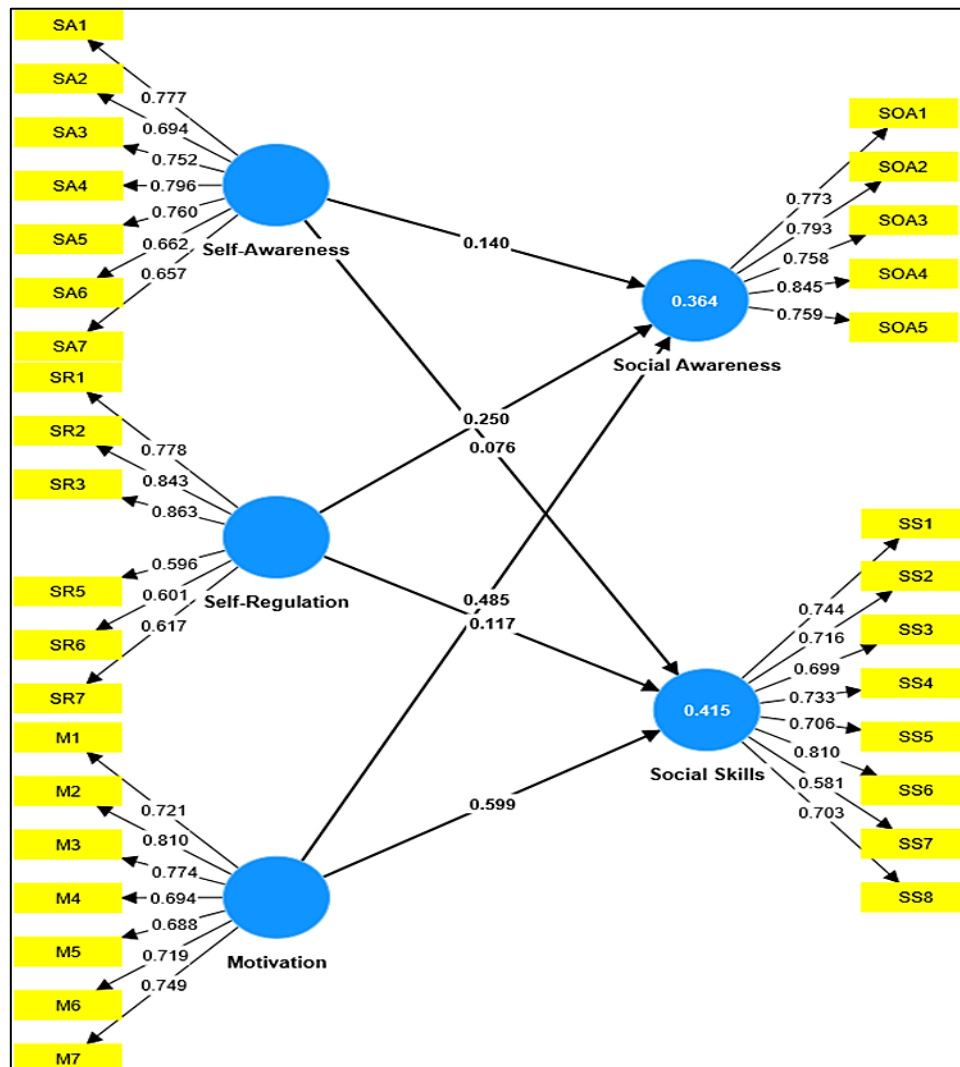


Figure 2: Measurement Model using Smart PLS (PLS-SEM)

Table 2 displays the results of the convergent validity analysis. Initially, at the individual item

level, the loadings of the indicators and the commonality both surpassed the threshold values

of 0.7 and 0.5, respectively. SR4 and SOA6 were excluded from the analysis due to their inadequate contribution to their respective constructs as indicated by their outer loadings. Furthermore, the examination at the level of constructs reveals that Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE) all surpassed the threshold values of 0.7, 0.7, and 0.5, respectively. This suggests that the measures exhibit strong convergent validity.

In addition, the Fornell-Larcker analysis provides evidence that the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct surpasses the correlations observed with other constructs, as presented in Table 3. All constructs exhibited discriminant validity.

The results of the HTMT analysis revealed that all the values were found to be statistically distinct from 1. Additionally, the HTMT ratio of correlation presented in Table 4 indicates that all the values fall below the threshold of .90, hence confirming the discriminant validity of the reflective constructs. The structural model was assessed once convergent and discriminant validity were fulfilled.

SEM was analysed by bootstrapping with 5000 samples and Table 5 displays the bootstrapping path coefficients results. H1 seeks to assess whether self-awareness has a significant impact on social awareness. The result of the hypothesis revealed that self-awareness does not have a significant impact on social awareness ($\beta = 0.140$, $t = 1.29$, $p > .05$) and hence the hypothesis was rejected. H2 seeks to assess whether self-awareness has a significant impact on social skills. The result of the hypothesis revealed that self-awareness does not have a significant impact on social skills ($\beta = 0.076$, $t = 0.6$, $p > .05$) and hence the hypothesis was rejected. H3 seeks to assess whether self-regulation employs a significant impact on social awareness. The result of the hypothesis revealed that self-regulation does have a significant impact on social awareness ($\beta = 0.485$, $t = 1.98$, $p < .05$) and hence the hypothesis was accepted. H4 seeks to assess whether self-regulation has a significant impact on social skills. The result of the hypothesis revealed that self-regulation does not have a significant impact on

social skills ($\beta = 0.117$, $t = 0.6$, $p > .05$) and hence the hypothesis was rejected. H5 seeks to assess whether motivation has a significant impact on social awareness. The result of the hypothesis revealed that motivation has a significant impact on social awareness ($\beta = 0.485$, $t = 5.20$, $p < .05$) and hence the hypothesis was substantiated. H6 seeks to assess whether motivation has a significant impact on social skills. The result of the hypothesis revealed that motivation has a significant impact on social skills ($\beta = 0.599$, $t = 6.0$, $p < .05$) and hence the hypothesis was substantiated.

Discussion

This study purposed to provide empirical evidence on the impact of the self-constructs of emotional intelligence on the social constructs of emotional intelligence which contributes to the development of these constructs in university students systematically. According to the hypotheses formulated from previous literature and theoretical underpinnings, it is posited that the self-constructs of emotional intelligence should have an impact or potentially augment the social constructs ie., social awareness and social skills. According to the first hypothesis (H1), self-awareness has an impact on social awareness. Only when a person is self-aware, they can develop social awareness (51).

However, the results from the present study show that self-awareness does not have a direct impact on social awareness. It is imperative to acknowledge that the task of self-evaluating one's emotional capacities is inherently arduous. The task of discerning the veracity of emotional phenomena eludes even the most erudite scholars within the domain. One of the primary rationales underlying this phenomenon pertains to the dearth of opportunities individuals encounter in obtaining an impartial and unbiased evaluation within the realm of affective experiences, particularly when juxtaposed with alternative domains (52). Hence, it can be considered that social awareness should be consciously developed once self-awareness is developed as it has no direct impact on social awareness or social consciousness. H2 seeks to assess if self-awareness has an impact on social skills.

Table 2: Results of the Measurement Model: Convergent Validity

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Motivation	0.861	0.87	0.893	0.544
Self-Awareness	0.855	0.867	0.888	0.533
Self-Regulation	0.845	0.882	0.867	0.526
Social Awareness	0.847	0.854	0.89	0.619
Social Skills	0.862	0.867	0.892	0.509

Table 3: Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	Motivation	Self-Awareness	Self-Regulation	Social Awareness	Social Skills
Motivation	0.737				
Self-Awareness	0.471	0.73			
Self-Regulation	-0.023	-0.169	0.726		
Social Awareness	0.545	0.326	0.215	0.786	
Social Skills	0.632	0.338	0.091	0.574	0.714

Table 4: Discriminant Validity HTMT

	Motivation	Self-Awareness	Self-Regulation	Social Awareness	Social Skills
Motivation					
Self-Awareness	0.542				
Self-Regulation	0.173	0.222			
Social Awareness	0.588	0.361	0.217		
Social Skills	0.703	0.366	0.204	0.655	

Table 5: Bootstrapping Path Coefficients

Hypothesis	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
Self-Awareness -> Social Awareness	0.139	0.139	0.108	1.293	0.196
Self-Awareness -> Social Skills	0.069	0.081	0.1	0.692	0.489
Self-Regulation -> Social Awareness	0.252	0.245	0.127	1.989	0.047
Self-Regulation -> Social Skills	0.116	0.064	0.183	0.632	0.527
Motivation -> Social Awareness	0.488	0.507	0.094	5.205	0
Motivation -> Social Skills	0.602	0.586	0.1	6	0

According to the present study, results show that self-awareness does not have a direct impact on social skills. This could be because only when social awareness is enhanced social skills can be enhanced in an efficient manner. In the absence of social awareness, it is impossible to build good social skills. The H3 hypothesis was significant in the study showing that self-regulation has an impact on the social awareness of individuals but surprisingly H4 was rejected showing that self-regulation did not have an impact on the social skills of the students, unlike the studies before (53). This can be understood that self-regulation can only enhance self-development skills rather than social skills. H5 and H6 were significant and the data showed that motivation influences both social awareness and social skills (54). There is a limited body of research that has focused specifically on the constructs of emotional intelligence therefore, this study serves as a foundational investigation in exploring how these constructs can be built as a whole or as a process and how these constructs complement each other as they can be referred to as a “5 in 1” skillset which will lead to the enhancement of emotional intelligence and subjective wellbeing (55) in university students. The cultivation of these competencies of emotional intelligence may be effectively fostered through the provision of opportunities for engagement in cultural and artistic endeavours (56). Though most previous studies have shown that emotional intelligence has positive effects on academic performance (57), resilience and (58) overall being, the current

study results show that self-awareness does not have an impact on social awareness and social skills. This could only mean that the 5 skills or components of emotional intelligence have to be consciously developed individually and the self-constructs do not necessarily have a direct impact on the development of social constructs.

The study was subject to certain limitations. The primary modality employed for data acquisition in this investigation entailed the utilisation of a self-report questionnaire, as opposed to experimental or observational methodologies. Given the exploratory nature of the study, the sample size was relatively small. Notwithstanding these aforementioned limitations, it is imperative to acknowledge that the present study constitutes a noteworthy and substantial contribution towards the advancement and enhancement of emotional intelligence within the context of university students.

Conclusions

To conclude, the results from the present study help suggest that the dimensions or constructs of emotional intelligence have to be consciously developed individually. Despite multiple empirical evidence, the current study shows that self-awareness does not contribute to social awareness and social skills in individuals. Self-awareness might allow the development of social awareness and social skills with the help of mediating variables such as motivation or social support. Future studies can look into it and study these variables to develop a different model in the

development of the different dimensions of emotional intelligence in a more in-depth manner. To apply the study highlights in future studies, the researchers can delve deeply into the components of emotional intelligence by collecting data in both survey and interview methods which would help answer the question of how the components of self-contribute to the social constructs in students. When the how is answered, the topic can be looked into from a sociological perspective as well.

Abbreviations

Nil

Acknowledgement

Nil

Author Contributions

Ida Merlin J- Conceptualization, methodology, software, validation, formal analysis, investigation, resources, data curation, writing—original draft preparation; Prabakar S - writing—review and editing, supervision.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Ethical Statement

Ethical review and approval were not applicable. Informed consent was obtained from all the participants and the participant data has been fully anonymized.

Funding for the Study

The current study did not receive any funding.

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