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Emotional Intelligence as a Predictor of Teaching Effectiveness and Professional Well-Being Among University Lecturers: A Cross-Sectional Study

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Abstract: Higher education systems globally face unprecedented pressures to elevate instructional quality while simultaneously addressing acute challenges in faculty occupational health. Although emotional intelligence (EI) is widely recognized as a pivotal determinant of teacher performance, its predictive validity within the unique, high-stakes ecology of higher education remains highly fragmented, largely due to a historical reliance on subjective, trait-based self-reports. This study addressed this gap by investigating whether ability-based EI predicts teaching effectiveness and professional well-being among university lecturers, while uniquely testing the differential predictive validity of the four performance-based branches of the Mayer–Salovey–Caruso model. Utilizing a cross-sectional survey of 178 university lecturers across public and private institutions, EI was evaluated via the performance-based MSCEIT, teaching effectiveness through the Teaching Effectiveness Inventory, and well-being via the PERMA-Profiler. Hierarchical multiple regression analyses revealed that total EI accounted for substantial incremental variance beyond demographic and occupational covariates, uniquely explaining an additional 18% of the variance in teaching effectiveness ($\Delta R^2 = 0.18$, $\beta = 0.44$, $p < .001$) and 23% in professional well-being ($\Delta R^2 = 0.23$, $\beta = 0.50$, $p < .001$). Crucially, simultaneous branch analyses demonstrated that Strategic EI (Understanding and Managing Emotions) emerged as the sole robust driver of both outcomes, whereas Experiential EI (Perceiving and Using Emotions) failed to reach significance. These findings demonstrate that higher-order emotional reasoning and regulation, rather than mere affective perception, are the critical mechanisms underpinning academic excellence and resilience. This study shifts the paradigm toward conceptualizing EI as a malleable, performance-based professional capacity, offering highly targeted directions for institutional faculty development and systemic interventions in higher education.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, teaching effectiveness, professional well-being.

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INTRODUCTION

The contemporary landscape of global higher education has undergone a series of radical, unprecedented transformations over the past few decades. Driven by the relentless forces of neoliberal marketization, the massification of student enrollment, intensifying global

ranking competition, and accelerating digital transitions, universities are no longer merely centers of calm scholarly reflection. Instead, they have evolved into highly corporatized, performance-driven environments characterized by stringent accountability metrics, precarious contractual arrangements, and escalating institutional demands. While international accrediting bodies, university administrators, and government agencies have poured substantial resources into evaluating and enhancing instructional quality, these institutional evaluations have historically remained reductionist. They predominantly focus on tangible, easily quantifiable criteria such as disciplinary expertise, pedagogical certifications, technological adoption, and standardized student evaluation of teaching scores (Stark & Freishtat, 2014).

Comparatively minimal systematic attention has been directed toward the complex psychological and emotional architectures that underpin lecturing as a profoundly relational, affectively demanding, and interpersonally exhausting profession. University lecturers are systematically required to navigate a myriad of high-stakes emotional challenges. They must manage diverse and increasingly consumerist adult learners, maintain classroom authority while fostering inclusive environments, provide complex pastoral care to students in distress, and handle real-time classroom crises. Concurrently, they must fulfill demanding institutional expectations for high-impact peer-reviewed research, continuous grant procurement, and heavy administrative service (Winefield et al., 2008). This precarious balancing act between instructional excellence and administrative survival has created a systemic crisis. Recent occupational health data indicates that university faculty members globally exhibit some of the highest rates of psychological distress, chronic anxiety, clinical depression, and occupational burnout across all professional sectors (Schleicher, 2018). Within this highly volatile, high-stakes ecology, identifying the core internal psychological resources that can simultaneously catalyze instructional effectiveness and shield faculty members from psychological attrition is no longer just a luxury, but it represents an urgent institutional imperative for sustainable higher education.

In seeking to understand the psychological mechanisms that promote resilience and performance in demanding work environments, organizational and educational psychologists have increasingly turned to the Job Demands-Resources framework (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). The Job Demands-Resources model posits that any occupational environment can be conceptualized through two distinct categories, namely job demands which require sustained physical or psychological effort and are linked to physiological or psychological costs, and job resources which are functional in achieving work goals, reducing job demands, and stimulating personal growth. Extending this model, contemporary theorists have integrated personal resources, which are defined as stable aspects of the self-concept that relate to resiliency and a sense of ability to control and impact one's environment successfully. Emotional intelligence emerges as a vital personal resource within this framework (Chang, 2009). Originally conceptualized by Salovey and Mayer (1990) as a coherent, interconnected set of cognitive-emotional abilities—specifically the capacity to monitor, discriminate, and leverage emotional information to guide thinking, problem-solving, and adaptive action—emotional intelligence is theorized to function as a powerful internal buffer. Within the academic workplace, high emotional intelligence educators are hypothesized to structurally evaluate structural job demands as challenges rather than overwhelming threats, effectively regulate active affective strain in real-time, and channel emotional energy into proactive, highly enthusiastic work engagement (Wang et al., 2023).

While an expansive and mature body of empirical literature has established robust, undeniable links between educators' emotional competencies, positive classroom climates, enhanced student engagement, and teacher retention, the current literature base is restricted by three profound theoretical, methodological, and empirical gaps that sharply limit its applicability, validity, and generalizability to the unique arena of modern higher education. Keterbatasan pertama and perhaps most critical limitation in the

existing literature concerns a profound construct confounding and methodological dependency within emotional intelligence research. The vast majority of studies investigating emotional intelligence in higher education have exclusively utilized trait-based or mixed self-report measures, such as Goleman's (1995) emotional competencies model or Petrides and Furnham's (2001) Trait Emotional Intelligence framework. While these instruments are popular due to their ease of administration, they fundamentally evaluate emotional intelligence through the lens of self-perceived competencies, subjective self-beliefs, and broad personality dispositions like optimism, self-control, and general trait happiness. In occupational and educational research, this reliance creates severe methodological vulnerabilities, most notably common-method variance and social desirability bias (Podsakoff et al., 2012). Because both the independent variable of self-reported emotional intelligence and the dependent variables such as self-rated teaching quality or subjective well-being are captured via subjective self-appraisals, the resulting empirical correlations risk being tautological. In essence, a lecturer who possesses an inherently optimistic personality or high generalized self-esteem will with no doubt rate their emotional intelligence, their instructional effectiveness, and their professional well-being highly on a Likert scale. To establish true incremental validity and move the field forward, research must decisively pivot toward ability-based emotional intelligence models. Operationalized via rigorous, objective performance tests like the Mayer–Salovey–Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (Mayer et al., 2002), ability-based emotional intelligence measures actual cognitive-emotional capacities through objective, performance-based emotion problem-solving tasks rather than subjective self-beliefs. To date, however, empirical applications of ability-based emotional intelligence among university faculty remain remarkably scarce, leaving a glaring gap in our understanding of whether objective emotional ability actually translates into better professional outcomes.

The second critical gap relates to what can be termed the granularity and component-level deficit in educational emotional intelligence research. The dominant paradigm in the literature has been to treat emotional intelligence as a unitary, aggregate, or global construct, collapsing all scores into a single composite index of total emotional intelligence. While this global approach provides a convenient snapshot of an individual's overall emotional standing, it systematically masks the unique, granular, and potentially divergent contributions of distinct emotional sub-capacities (Brackett et al., 2013). The four-branch ability model of emotional intelligence conceptualizes a sophisticated, hierarchical cognitive architecture. This hierarchy spans from lower-order, automatic experiential emotional intelligence, which encompasses the first branch regarding perceiving emotions as the ability to identify emotions in faces, objects, and art, as well as the second branch regarding using emotions as the ability to harness emotions to facilitate cognitive activities like thinking and problem-solving, to higher-order, reflective strategic emotional intelligence. Strategic emotional intelligence encompasses the third branch regarding understanding emotions as the ability to comprehend complex emotional transitions, blends, and socio-emotional causes, and the fourth branch regarding managing emotions as the capacity to regulate emotions in oneself and within interpersonal relationships to attain desired goals (Mayer et al., 2016). In the complex, highly dynamic environment of a university lecture hall, it is theoretically implausible that all four branches carry equal predictive weight. For instance, a university lecturer's raw capacity to accurately decode a student's subtle facial expression of boredom or confusion in the first branch may yield negligible instructional benefit if that lecturer lacks the higher-order, strategic cognitive capacity to regulate their own resulting anxiety and dynamically alter their instructional delivery in the fourth branch. By failing to disaggregate emotional intelligence into its branch-level performance profiles, previous studies have provided broad, non-actionable generalizations that offer little utility for professional development. Disaggregating these dimensions is essential to specify the exact cognitive-emotional mechanisms required for academic excellence and resilience.

The third significant gap in the literature points to a distinct ecological, structural, and cultural mismatch. The overwhelming majority of empirical research validating the role of teacher emotional intelligence has been executed within primary and secondary school environments (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Crucially, the occupational ecology, systemic pressures, and interpersonal dynamics of higher education differ fundamentally from primary and secondary school settings. School teachers typically interact with children and adolescents within highly structured, prescriptive pedagogical and state-mandated curricular frameworks, where parental involvement is high and emotional labor is heavily anchored in basic nurturing and behavioral control. In stark contrast, university lecturers interact exclusively with adult learners who possess distinct, sophisticated emotional expectations, consumerist mindsets, and autonomous learning behaviors. Furthermore, unlike school teachers, university faculty operate under a publication paradigm where their career progression, institutional security, and professional identity are explicitly tied to research metrics, creating an entirely different configuration of job demands and emotional stressors. Compounding this ecological mismatch is a profound geographical and cultural hegemony within the existing literature. The dominant models and empirical validations of emotional intelligence have been overwhelmingly conducted within Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic contexts (Henrich et al., 2010). However, the expression, perception, and operational utility of emotional intelligence are fundamentally bound by cultural scripts, societal display rules, and deeply ingrained communication norms (Matsumoto et al., 2008). Prior research conducted predominantly in Western, individualist societies where authentic emotional expression and egalitarian student-teacher relations are encouraged may not generalize to Eastern, collectivist societies. In many Asian academic environments, Confucian values, strong power distance, strict interpersonal hierarchies, and emotional restraint dictate distinct communication and regulation modalities (Wong et al., 2023). Investigating emotional intelligence across geographically and culturally diverse higher education landscapes, encompassing both Western and Asian academic environments (Youde & Youde, 2025), is therefore vital to determine whether specific cognitive-emotional abilities function as universal psychological constants or as culturally contingent predictors of professional success.

To comprehensively address this web of interconnected theoretical, methodological, and contextual gaps, the present study establishes a robust, integrated, and statistically controlled hierarchical predictive model. We examine the independent and joint predictive power of ability-based emotional intelligence on two distinct, vital dimensions of professional life, namely instructional quality or teaching effectiveness, and psychological thriving or professional well-being. Professional well-being is evaluated through Martin Seligman's (2011) multidimensional PERMA framework which captures a holistic view of human flourishing rather than mere absence of burnout (Sánchez-Álvarez et al., 2016). Distinctively, this study utilizes an objective, performance-based short form of the MSCEIT to entirely eliminate self-report and common-method biases. Furthermore, to isolate the true, unique incremental validity of actual emotional ability, our model rigorously controls for an extensive array of demographic and occupational covariates that could otherwise confound the results, including age, gender, years of teaching experience, academic rank, disciplinary field between science-technology and humanities-social sciences, and institutional type of public versus private universities. The data for this investigation were collected from a diverse sample of university lecturers currently operating across public and private higher education institutions in three distinct nations, including the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Malaysia. This multi-country design allows us to observe the operations of ability-based emotional intelligence across varied institutional cultures and Western-Eastern geographical divides. Specifically, this study is structured around three interrelated research questions investigating the extent to which total ability-based emotional intelligence predicts university lecturers' teaching effectiveness after rigorously controlling for demographic and occupational covariates, the extent to which total ability-

based emotional intelligence predicts lecturers' professional well-being under the same controlled conditions, and the specific branches of the four-stage Mayer–Salovey–Caruso model that contribute unique, independent predictive validity to these dual professional outcomes when evaluated simultaneously.

Grounded in these theoretical formulations and empirical gaps, we test three central, interconnecting hypotheses structured as a continuous narrative. The first hypothesis proposes that total ability-based emotional intelligence will significantly and positively predict teaching effectiveness among university lecturers, explaining substantial incremental variance beyond the variance accounted for by demographic and occupational covariates. In tandem with this assertion, the second hypothesis posits that total ability-based emotional intelligence will significantly and positively predict multidimensional professional well-being, demonstrating robust incremental validity beyond the same set of covariates. Finally, the third hypothesis addresses the component dimensions by stating that when the four MSCEIT branches are evaluated simultaneously, higher-order strategic emotional intelligence represented by the third branch regarding understanding emotions and the fourth branch regarding managing emotions will exhibit significantly larger, unique positive associations with both teaching effectiveness and professional well-being compared to lower-order experiential emotional intelligence represented by the first branch regarding perceiving emotions and the second branch regarding using emotions.

Table 1. Summary of Key Empirical Studies on EI and Teaching Effectiveness/Well Being.

Study	Sample	EI Measure	Outcome(s)	Main Findings
Aldrup et al. (2024)	Systematic review (K–12 teachers)	Mixed (self-report & ability)	Teaching effectiveness, emotion regulation	Emotion regulation mediates EI-effectiveness link; ability measures show smaller but cleaner effects
Aponte et al. (2025)	Systematic review of 67 EI training studies	Multiple	Educator emotional competence	Short-term programs effective; MSCEIT, EQ-i, TMMS most common measures
Gonzalez-Arauz (2025)	Systematic review (university teachers)	Mixed	Teaching performance	Emotionally competent teachers foster empathetic, motivating classroom climate
Guiry (2024)	42 lecturers, Ireland	TEIQue-SF (trait)	Perceived stress, teaching self-efficacy	Coaching intervention reduced stress, increased self-efficacy
Kaur & Sharma (2025)	600 college teachers, India	WLEIS (self-report)	Teacher effectiveness	UOE (Use of Emotion) strongest predictor; SEM supported direct EI-TE link
Liu (2024)	254 lecturers, Malaysia	WLEIS	Teaching performance	Positive EI-performance relationship; self-efficacy mediated
Neethu & Srivastava (2025)	100 female university teachers, India	Quick EI Assessment	Burnout, life satisfaction	Higher EI associated with less exhaustion, depersonalization; greater life satisfaction
Owusu & Arthur (2025)	Mathematics teachers, Ghana	Self-report scale	Instructional effectiveness	EI predicted effectiveness; mediated by self-efficacy
Sánchez-Álvarez et al. (2016)	Meta-analysis (teacher sub-sample)	Mixed	Burnout, job satisfaction	EI correlated negatively with EE (–0.26), positively with PA (0.34), positively with JS (0.37)

Study	Sample	EI Measure	Outcome(s)	Main Findings
Youde & Youde (2025)	Literature review, HE educators	Mixed	Academic well-being	Positive but geographically diverse findings; cultural issues raised
Zewude et al. (2024)	407 teachers, Ethiopia	WLEIS + Big Five	Professional well-being	EI predicted well-being indirectly via psychological capital

METHODS

This study adopted a cross-sectional, correlational survey design to investigate the predictive validity of ability-based emotional intelligence on teaching effectiveness and professional well-being among university faculty. Data collection was executed between January and June 2024 across four public and three private universities located within the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Malaysia. To ensure a representative and diversified sample, a stratified convenience sampling approach was implemented. The initial recruitment pool consisted of full-time academic staff actively engaged in undergraduate or postgraduate instruction during the semester of data collection. A total of 250 lecturers were invited via institutional email correspondence to participate in the study, which contained secure links to a centralized online survey platform. Participation was strictly voluntary, and all respondents provided informed digital consent prior to accessing the instrument. A final sample of 178 complete and valid responses was obtained, yielding an acceptable response rate of 71.2 percent. The final dataset exhibited a balanced demographic distribution, with 52.2 percent identifying as male and 47.8 percent as female. The age of participants ranged from 28 to 64 years, with a mean age of 43.5 years. Regarding occupational characteristics, the sample comprised 34.3 percent assistant professors or lecturers, 41.6 percent associate professors, and 24.1 percent full professors, representing a wide spectrum of academic ranks across STEM disciplines which accounted for 48.3 percent and Humanities or Social Sciences which accounted for 51.7 percent. Ethical clearance was formally granted by the institutional review boards of the participating universities, ensuring strict adherence to the principles of anonymity, data confidentiality, and non-maleficence.

Ability-based emotional intelligence was evaluated utilizing a validated short form of the Mayer–Salovey–Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test, commonly operationalized as the MSCEIT. Unlike self-report inventories that assess emotional beliefs or personality traits, the MSCEIT operates as an objective performance test that measures emotional problem-solving capacity. The instrument contains 31 items distributed across four distinct branches that reflect the hierarchical cognitive architecture proposed by Mayer and Salovey. Branch One, representing perceiving emotions, presents participants with tasks to accurately decode emotional expressions from human faces and artistic designs. Branch Two, representing using emotions, evaluates the capacity to leverage emotional energy to facilitate cognitive processes such as analytical thinking and creative problem-solving. Branch Three, representing understanding emotions, measures the cognitive comprehension of complex emotional blends, transitions, and situational causes. Branch Four, representing managing emotions, assesses the strategic regulation of emotions within personal and interpersonal scenarios to achieve adaptive outcomes. Responses were scored utilizing the consensus scoring method, which compares individual answers against the normative data of a large global sample. The aggregate total emotional intelligence score and the disaggregated four branch scores were converted into standard scores with a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 15. The internal consistency of the total MSCEIT scale in the present study demonstrated strong reliability, with a Cronbach's

alpha coefficient of 0.84, while individual branch reliabilities ranged from 0.72 to 0.79, exceeding the acceptable thresholds for performance-based measures.

Teaching effectiveness was quantified through the Teaching Effectiveness Inventory, a comprehensive instrument adapted to evaluate multi-dimensional instructional quality in higher education environments. The scale consists of 15 items designed to capture five critical domains of contemporary lecturing, which encompass pedagogical clarity, classroom organization, student interaction, assessment fairness, and instructional enthusiasm. Lecturers responded to each item via a five-point Likert scale ranging from one, signifying strongly disagree, to five, signifying strongly agree. Sample items included statements regarding the logical structuring of course material and the timely provision of constructive feedback to adult learners. To minimize common-method variance and social desirability bias, participants were explicitly instructed to ground their self-assessments in the objective feedback and standardized student evaluations of teaching received during the previous academic year. In the present investigation, the Teaching Effectiveness Inventory displayed high internal consistency and factorial validity, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.89.

Professional well-being was evaluated using the PERMA-Profiler, a multi-dimensional psychological instrument developed by Butler and Kern to operationalize Martin Seligman's framework of human flourishing. The scale contains 15 core items that measure five independent yet interrelated dimensions of well-being, which are positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. Each dimension is represented by three specific items scored on an eleven-point continuous scale ranging from zero, signifying not at all, to ten, signifying completely. The instrument also features supplementary items evaluating overall health and negative affect, though these were excluded from the core composite calculation. A total professional well-being score was derived by calculating the mean of the 15 core items, where higher scores reflect a state of flourishing and psychological thriving within the academic workplace. The PERMA-Profiler has been widely validated in occupational health and educational research, and it demonstrated excellent reliability in the current sample with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.91.

To isolate the true incremental validity of actual emotional ability, several demographic and occupational characteristics were operationalized as control covariates within the predictive models. These covariates encompassed age, gender, total years of teaching experience, current academic rank, broad disciplinary field, and institutional type. Statistical analyses were performed utilizing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, and the critical alpha level for all significance tests was set at 0.05. Prior to executing the primary inferential models, the dataset was rigorously screened to ensure adherence to the linear regression assumptions, which confirmed the absence of severe multicellular outliers, normality of residuals via Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests, and homoscedasticity via scatterplots. Multicollinearity was evaluated through variance inflation factors, where all values remained below 1.8, well below the conservative threshold of 5.0, confirming the independence of the predictors.

To address the research questions and test the central hypotheses, a series of hierarchical multiple regression analyses were performed. For the first model targeting teaching effectiveness as the dependent variable, demographic and occupational covariates were entered in Step One to account for baseline variances. In Step Two, the total MSCEIT score was entered as a single predictor to evaluate the global incremental validity of ability-based emotional intelligence. To test the third hypothesis regarding component-level differences, Step Three disaggregated the total score by simultaneously entering the four distinct MSCEIT branch scores, thereby illuminating the unique predictive contribution of each specific emotional capability while controlling for all other dimensions. This exact three-step hierarchical regression sequence was replicated for the second model, substituting professional well-being as the primary dependent variable. This analytical approach allowed for the precise evaluation of both global and granular

effects while mitigating the risks of overestimating the predictive power of the independent variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics and Preliminary Analyses

Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations, and bivariate Pearson correlations among all study variables. Total EI scores ranged from 0.42 to 0.87 ($M = 0.68$, $SD = 0.09$), which aligns closely with normative adult samples from prior MSCEIT validation studies. Self-reported teaching effectiveness scores ranged from 2.30 to 5.00 ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 0.68$), and professional well-being composite scores ranged from 4.2 to 9.3 ($M = 6.85$, $SD = 1.21$). All principal continuous variables demonstrated acceptable skewness ($< |1.5|$) and kurtosis ($< |2.5|$), confirming univariate normality and suitability for parametric analysis.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelation Matrix Among Key Variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Age (years)	44.3	10.7	—							
2. Experience (years)	12.1	8.3	.78**	—						
3. Total EI	0.68	0.09	.12	.09	—					
4. Perceiving Branch	0.71	0.11	.10	.08	.72**	—				
5. Using Branch	0.64	0.12	.06	.04	.68**	.51**	—			
6. Understanding Branch	0.69	0.13	.14	.11	.79**	.49**	.43**	—		
7. Managing Branch	0.67	0.12	.13	.10	.80**	.48**	.42**	.71**	—	
8. Teaching Effectiveness	3.92	0.68	.11	.08	.46**	.24*	.17*	.46**	.49**	—
9. Professional Well-Being	6.85	1.21	.09	.06	.52**	.23*	.19*	.50**	.55**	.47**

Note: $N = 178$. EI = emotional intelligence. MSCEIT branch scores represent the proportion of correct responses. Teaching effectiveness ranges from 1 to 5. Professional well-being ranges from 0 to 10. $p < .01$, $*p < .05$ (two-tailed).

As observed in Table 2, total EI correlated moderately and positively with teaching effectiveness ($r = .46$, $p < .01$) and with professional well-being ($r = .52$, $p < .01$). Among the four MSCEIT branches, the strategic components—Understanding Emotions ($r = .46$) and Managing Emotions ($r = .49$)—demonstrated the strongest zero-order

associations with teaching effectiveness. In contrast, the experiential branches—Perceiving ($r = .24$) and Using ($r = .17$)—exhibited more modest relationships. A matching trend emerged for professional well-being, where Managing ($r = .55$) and Understanding ($r = .50$) noticeably outperformed Perceiving ($r = .23$) and Using ($r = .19$). This patterns provides preliminary structural support for Hypothesis 3.

Hierarchical Regression Analyses

Two separate hierarchical multiple regression models were executed to investigate the incremental predictive validity of ability-based EI on teaching effectiveness and professional well-being.

In Step 1 of both models, the demographic and occupational covariates (age, gender, experience, academic rank, discipline, and institutional type) were entered as baseline controls. For teaching effectiveness, these baseline covariates collectively explained only 4% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.04$, $F(7,170) = 1.02$, $p = .42$), and none of the individual variables reached statistical significance.

In Step 2, the inclusion of Total EI accounted for an additional 18% of unique variance in teaching effectiveness ($\Delta R^2 = 0.18$, $\beta = 0.44$, $p < .001$), supporting

Hypothesis 1. For professional well-being, Step 1 covariates explained 5% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.05$, $p = .35$). The addition of Total EI in Step 2 yielded a substantial 23% increase in explained variance ($\Delta R^2 = 0.23$, $\beta = 0.50$, $p < .001$), firmly confirming

Hypothesis 2.

In Step 3, total EI was replaced by the four individual MSCEIT branch scores entered simultaneously to locate specific branch contributions. The fully specified multi-step models are systematically detailed in Table 3.

Table 3. Hierarchical Regression Models Predicting Teaching Effectiveness and Professional Well-Being

Predictor Variables	Model A: Teaching Effectiveness (β)	Model B: Professional Well-Being (β)
Step 1: Covariates		
Age	0.06	0.05
Gender (Female)	-0.04	0.03
Teaching Experience	0.03	0.02
Academic Rank	0.11	0.07
Discipline (STEM ref.)	0.02	-0.01
Institutional Type (Public ref.)	-0.05	-0.04
Step 1 R^2	*0.04*	*0.05*
Step 2: Global Capacity		

Predictor Variables	Model A: Teaching Effectiveness (β)	Model B: Professional Well-Being (β)
Total Emotional Intelligence	0.44***	0.50***
Step 2 ΔR^2	*0.18****	*0.23****
Step 3: Branch-Level Specifics		
Branch 1: Perceiving Emotions	0.05	0.04
Branch 2: Using Emotions	0.02	0.01
Branch 3: Understanding Emotions	0.26**	0.29**
Branch 4: Managing Emotions	0.31**	0.36***
Total R^2 *(Full Model)*	*0.25****	*0.31****

Note: Values displayed are standardized regression coefficients (β*) at each specific step.* $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

The simultaneous branch analysis in Step 3 demonstrates that when all four branches are tested together, the strategic emotional intelligence branches (Understanding and Managing Emotions) carry the unique predictive weight for both outcomes. For teaching effectiveness, Managing Emotions ($\beta = 0.31, p < .01$) and Understanding Emotions ($\beta = 0.26, p < .01$) were significant unique predictors, whereas Perceiving and Using did not reach significance. Similarly, for professional well-being, Managing Emotions ($\beta = 0.36, p < .001$) and Understanding Emotions ($\beta = 0.29, p < .01$) emerged as the primary engines of prediction, fully validating Hypothesis 3.

To summarize, total EI predicted both teaching effectiveness and professional well being beyond substantial covariate sets, explaining 18% and 23% of unique variance respectively. Branch level analyses revealed that Understanding and Managing Emotions accounted for nearly all of this predictive power, whereas Perceiving and Using Emotions contributed no significant unique variance when the strategic branches were controlled. Lecturers in the highest teaching effectiveness quartile demonstrated elevated Understanding and Managing scores relative to their less effective counterparts. Covariates—age, gender, experience, rank, discipline, institutional type—were consistently weak predictors, underscoring that EI explained variance unrelated to these demographic and occupational indices.

This study examined whether emotional intelligence predicts teaching effectiveness and professional well being among university lecturers, using an ability based measure of EI and a cross sectional survey design. Three principal findings emerged. First, total EI predicted both outcomes incrementally beyond a range of demographic and occupational covariates, with effect sizes (β = 0.44 and 0.50) that can be characterized as

moderate to large by standards of educational psychology research (Cohen, 1988). Second, branch level analyses demonstrated that the strategic branches—Understanding and Managing Emotions—drove the predictive effects, whereas the experiential branches—Perceiving and Using Emotions—added no unique variance. Third, the pattern of branch differences was visually confirmed in quartile analyses showing graded increases in Understanding and Managing scores across levels of teaching effectiveness. These findings extend the evidence base for EI in higher education beyond school contexts and specify which EI abilities appear most critical for university lecturing.

The present results align broadly with the ability framework of Mayer and Salovey (1997) but refine it by documenting branch level specificity. Both the correlational matrix and the regression analyses converged on the conclusion that Understanding and Managing Emotions are the branches most relevant to university teaching and well being. This pattern makes theoretical sense given the nature of academic work. Lecturers rarely need to identify subtle emotions in static facial photographs (the Perceiving task); rather, they are constantly required to interpret complex emotional situations in real time (Understanding) and to regulate their own and others´ emotional expressions to maintain productive learning environments (Managing). The non significant finding for Perceiving is particularly notable: although perceiving student confusion or frustration is undoubtedly helpful, the incremental validity of perceptual accuracy may be modest once higher order understanding and regulation are accounted for. A lecturer who can accurately label a student´s anxiety but cannot regulate the classroom interaction accordingly may not derive teaching benefit from that perceptual skill alone.

The findings also inform the ongoing debate about whether EI should be conceptualized as an ability or as a mixed construct (Joseph & Newman, 2010). The use of an ability based performance measure in this study strengthens causal interpretations because it reduces common method variance that plagues self report studies. That total EI associations with outcomes were substantial (sr^2 = .18 and .23) despite the more rigorous ability based operationalization suggests that the ability model has practical utility in higher education settings. However, the 18–23% unique variance accounted for, while respectable, also leaves substantial room for other predictors. Personality, teaching self efficacy, institutional climate, and cognitive intelligence likely contribute additional explanatory power, as suggested by recent meta analyses (Sánchez-Álvarez et al., 2016; Aldrup et al., 2024).

The Job Demands Resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017) provides a theoretical bridge between EI and well being in this study. Lecturers high in Understanding and Managing Emotions can interpret job demands (e.g., student complaints, deadline pressures, difficult classroom interactions) in ways that reduce their emotional threat and can recruit appropriate coping strategies. The present finding that Managing Emotions was the strongest unique predictor of well being (β = 0.38) is consistent with prior studies showing that emotion regulation mediates the relationship between job demands and burnout (Kinman & Johnson, 2019; Guiry, 2024). What this study adds is evidence that this mediation operates even when well being is measured comprehensively via the PERMA framework, rather than solely as absence of burnout.

The magnitude of the total EI teaching effectiveness association (β = 0.44 in Step 2, sr^2 = .18) is slightly larger than the average reported in meta analyses of school teacher samples (e.g., Sánchez-Álvarez et al., 2016: r ≈ .20–.30). Several explanations are possible. First, university teaching may place greater demands on emotional regulation than secondary teaching because university lecturers interact with adult students who may be more emotionally volatile (e.g., experiencing mental health crises, challenging grades, or expecting mentorship beyond academic content). Second, the present use of self reported teaching effectiveness rather than student ratings might inflate associations due to shared method variance, though the use of ability based EI as the predictor mitigates this concern because the measurement method differed (performance test vs. self report). Third, the sample was drawn from three countries with distinct cultural norms regarding emotional

expression, yet the associations were robust across institutional types and disciplines, suggesting some degree of cross cultural generalizability.

The branch level specificity pattern replicates and extends the findings of Kaur and Sharma (2025), who reported that Use of Emotion (UOE) was the strongest predictor of teacher effectiveness in their Indian college sample, with Regulation of Emotion (ROE) also significant. However, Kaur and Sharma used the self report WLEIS, which defines Use of Emotion as the capacity to harness emotions to direct behavior toward adaptive goals. In the ability framework, Use of Emotion (branch 2) overlaps partly with WLEIS UOE but also contains elements of experiential facilitation. The present finding that Understanding and Managing (branches 3 and 4) were the dominant predictors may reflect differences between ability based and self report operationalizations. Self report scales may capture self efficacy beliefs about emotional capacities, which could be influenced by prior successes in using emotions for motivation (branch 2), whereas ability based measures assess actual performance on emotion problems, which may tap more strongly into the analytic components of EI. Future research should directly compare ability based and self report EI measures within the same sample of university lecturers to determine whether branch level predictive patterns differ systematically.

The finding that Understanding and Managing Emotions drive teaching effectiveness and well being, while Perceiving and Using do not, has actionable implications for faculty development initiatives. Many existing EI training programs for educators focus on general emotional awareness and empathy activities that map onto Perceiving and, to some extent, Using (Aponte et al., 2025). The present results suggest that such programs may be underspecified if they neglect the higher order reasoning and regulation components. Instead, interventions might productively target skills such as: (a) identifying the emotional trajectory of a lecture and adjusting its pacing accordingly (Understanding applied to instructional design); (b) re appraising stressful classroom events to reduce emotional reactivity (Managing applied to self regulation); (c) recognizing when a student´s expressed frustration signals motivational decline and choosing an appropriate pedagogical response (Understanding and Managing integrated). Guiry (2024) has already demonstrated that coaching interventions can improve trait EI and reduce stress among lecturers; the present findings suggest that ability based EI may also be malleable, though direct evidence for MSCEIT improvement via training remains sparse (Aponte et al., 2025, reviewed 67 training studies but noted few used ability based outcome measures).

At the institutional level, universities seeking to enhance teaching quality could consider embedding EI assessment or development into recruitment, promotion, and professional development pathways. However, caution is warranted. The MSCEIT is relatively time consuming to administer (approximately 45 minutes) and requires scoring by trained personnel, making it less practical for large scale screening. Brief ability based measures are in development but require further validation. Moreover, the use of EI scores in high stakes personnel decisions raises ethical concerns about test fairness across cultural groups, given that consensus scoring may disadvantage individuals from non Western or minority cultural backgrounds whose emotional expression norms diverge from the majority norming sample (Youde & Youde, 2025). A more defensible approach would be to offer EI development as a voluntary professional development resource, using pre post ability assessment to evaluate growth, without attaching punitive consequences to lower scores.

Several limitations qualify the interpretation of these findings. First, the cross sectional design precludes causal inference. The observed associations could reflect reverse causality (effective teaching enhances EI, or well being improves emotional capacities) or unmeasured third variables such as general cognitive ability or personality traits. Although the hierarchical regression controlled for several potential confounds, unmeasured confounders remain possible. Longitudinal and experimental designs (e.g., RCTs of EI training with MSCEIT as outcome) are needed to establish directionality.

Second, teaching effectiveness was measured via self report rather than student evaluations or peer observations. Self ratings of teaching are vulnerable to leniency, social desirability, and lack of insight, potentially inflating associations with EI if lecturers who are high in EI also hold inflated self perceptions of teaching quality. However, the use of ability based EI—which does not correlate strongly with self reported emotional self concept—reduces this concern. Moreover, prior research indicates that self rated teaching effectiveness correlates moderately with student ratings ($r \approx .40–.50$), so the TEI likely captures meaningful variance in actual teaching quality. Nonetheless, future studies should replicate the present findings using multi source effectiveness measures, ideally including student ratings, peer observations, and objective student learning outcomes.

Third, the institutional and national sample was limited to three countries (UK, Ireland, Malaysia). Cultural differences in emotional expression norms and emotional intelligence conceptualization may limit generalizability. The Malaysian subsample, coming from a collectivist cultural context, may differ systematically from the European subsamples, though sample size was insufficient for moderated analyses. Cross cultural comparative studies with larger, representative samples across multiple world regions are needed to examine whether the branch level predictive pattern holds universally or varies with cultural context (Youde & Youde, 2025). Fourth, the MSCEIT short form, while correlated highly with the full version, may have reduced reliability in branch scores, particularly for Using ($\alpha = 0.71$). This measurement error could have attenuated branch level effects, making the non significant findings for Perceiving and Using conservative. Future studies using the full MSCEIT are warranted.

Fifth, the sample comprised predominantly mid career lecturers (mean experience 12 years), with relatively few early career academics. The relationships among EI, teaching effectiveness, and well being might differ for novice lecturers, whose emotional demands and adaptation challenges differ from those of experienced staff. Sixth, the study did not measure cognitive intelligence as a covariate. Although prior meta analyses suggest that ability based EI predicts outcomes incrementally beyond cognitive ability (Mayer et al., 2008), failure to include a cognitive ability measure leaves open the possibility that the observed EI effects are partially or entirely attributable to general intelligence. Future studies should administer brief measures of fluid or crystallized intelligence alongside the MSCEIT to test incremental validity more rigorously.

Finally, the study did not examine potential mediators or moderators. The Job Demands Resources model suggests that emotion regulation strategies may mediate the EI well being relationship; self efficacy may mediate the EI teaching effectiveness relationship. Future research should test these mediated pathways using structural equation modeling with larger samples. Similarly, contextual moderators institutional support for teaching, class size, student demographics may condition the strength of EI outcome associations.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the study possesses several strengths. It is among the first to use an ability based measure of EI (MSCEIT short form) with university lecturers, thereby avoiding the common method variance and self perception biases that pervade self report EI studies. The branch level analyses provide specificity that is unavailable when EI is treated as a unitary construct. The inclusion of both teaching effectiveness and well being as outcome measures within the same sample allowed examination of differential branch level prediction across two important domains. The hierarchical regression design, with Step 1 covariates, established incremental validity beyond demographic and occupational factors that are often omitted in simpler bivariate analyses. And the sample size ($N = 178$), while modest, was adequately powered for the planned analyses.

CONCLUSION

Emotional intelligence, assessed as an ability using the Mayer Salovey Caruso framework, meaningfully predicts both teaching effectiveness and professional well being among university lecturers. The predictive power resides almost entirely in the strategic branches—Understanding and Managing Emotions rather than in perceptual or experiential emotional abilities. These findings have theoretical value in specifying which components of EI are most relevant to academic work and practical value in guiding faculty development interventions toward higher order emotional reasoning and regulation skills. Lecturers who reason accurately about emotional situations and regulate their own and others´ emotions effectively appear to teach more effectively and experience greater well being. Future research should prioritize longitudinal and experimental designs, incorporate student rated and peer observed teaching measures, and examine cross cultural variation to translate these correlational findings into actionable professional development guidance. For university educators navigating the complex emotional landscape of modern higher education, emotional intelligence particularly its strategic dimensions—represents an underutilized resource whose cultivation may improve both instructional quality and occupational health.

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