

## Determining the Reliability of the Emotional Competency Module on Malaysian Adolescents

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### Abstract:

This study aims to examine the effectiveness of the Emotional Competency Module developed specifically for adolescents in Malaysia to help address the huge delinquent behavior cases in Malaysia. **Method:** This module is one of the modules that was developed based on Daniel Goleman's four emotion competency constructs. The module reliability instrument was developed based on the objectives of the activities in the module. A pilot test was conducted to measure the reliability of the module. After the pilot test, 19 participants were asked to answer the module reliability instrument and later on a Cronbach's alpha value was analysed. **Results:** All the four domains and the overall module activities items showed very high reliability values. The reliability value showed that the module had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.968 to 0.826. The reliability value of the overall module was 0.985. **Implications:** The findings of the study suggest that the module is effective for adolescents as each activity successfully achieved its objectives. This module also serves as a guideline for psychologists, counsellors and teachers to provide emotional competence training for adolescents. This study provides a new module to train emotional competency specifically for adolescents in Malaysia. Study is significant to provide and prove a new ECM module activities for youngster to improve their emotional well-being.

**Keywords:** Emotional Competency, Module, Reliability, Adolescents, Daniel Goleman

### Introduction

Adolescents are defined as those aged between 10 to 24 years old (Curtis, 2015). This is a phase of life when teenagers struggle to find their self-identity and begin to explore the world. Their curiosities are at it's best at this age. It is at these age that they would require more

attention and care from their parents and the people surrounding them. A previous study showed that delinquent behaviours were lower in those with good emotional intelligence (Abdullah, Lee, Roslan and Baba, 2015). Adolescents with low emotional intelligence are more susceptible to delinquent behaviours. These behavioural problems arise due to many reasons. Some of them are due to the many life challenges and distress that cause them to become unhappy and dissatisfied as youths and commit serious behavioural misconducts such as gangsterism, bullying, drug abuse, sexual misconduct and crime (Hashim, 2007). Meanwhile, a study by Perveen et al., (2018) showed that most adolescents in Malaysia scored average in emotional intelligence in a survey using the Universiti Sains Malaysia Emotional Quotient Inventory (USMEQ-i) indicating that adolescents were not completely emotionally competent and that they are poor in managing their emotions when under pressure (Bahri, et al., 2010).

Consequently, to overcome adolescent emotional and behavioural problems, the Emotional Competency Module was developed which aimed to enhance the overall emotional competence of adolescents in Malaysia. A previous qualitative study by Perveen et al., (2018) showed that adolescents in Malaysia had a wide range of factors affecting their emotional issues such as their living environment, lack of self-acceptance amongst many others. This current study aimed to test the effectiveness of the newly developed Emotional Competency Module.

The module was developed based upon Daniel Goleman's (2001) four emotional competence constructs which are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management. The activities are as listed in Table 1. There are three ice breaking activities, six self-awareness domain activities, eight self-management activities, five social awareness activities and five relationship management activities. Figure 1 shows a framework of the module contents.

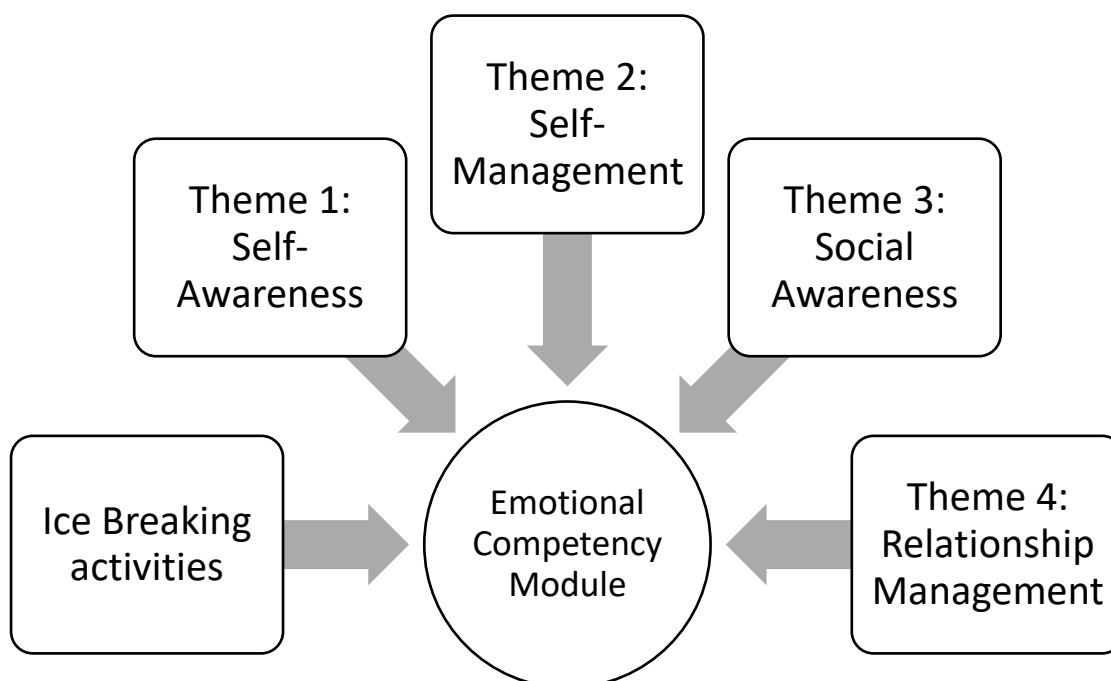


Figure 1: Contents of the Emotional Competency Module

The Emotional Competency Module is essential for addressing a wide range of adolescent emotional problems. A rating scale is developed to test the module effectiveness. The reliability of the the Emotional Competency Module was analyzed. Some of the research questions of this study are as stated below:

- i. Is there any evidence of reliability for the Emotional Competency Module?
- ii. Is there any evidence of reliability for Domain 1: Self Awareness?
- iii. Is there any evidence of reliability for Domain 2: Self-management?
- iv. Is there any evidence of reliability for Domain 3: Social Awareness?
- v. Is there any evidence of reliability for Domain 4: Relationship Management?

### **Literature Review**

There are various kinds of emotional issues that capture the attention of many parties. Nareman Aly Mohamed, Nagwan Mohamed Madbouly and Eman A. Monem A. Rashid (2017) conducted a study on the effect of emotional intelligence enhancement program on suicidal ideations, among attempted suicide adolescents which found that such emotional intelligence enhancing programs could improve depression and emotional intelligence.

Meanwhile, other studies also indicate that emotional intelligence programs or trainings were potentially good in enhancing overall emotional intelligence (Dolev & Leshem, 2017; Castillo & Fisher, 2017; Motamedi, Ghobari-Bonab, Beh-pajooh, Yekta, & Afrooz, 2017; Vijayalaxmi & Kadapatti, 2013). Similarly, enhancing emotional intelligence has been shown to improve behaviours (Dolev & Leshem, 2017), improve the life quality of mothers with children with leukaemia illness (Taghizadeh, Masoompour, & Shrinabadi, 2017), reducing the usage of aggression to solve conflicts violence among adolescence to prevent violence (Garaigordobil & Pena-Sarrionandia, 2015), predict significant changes in confusion, perceived stress, mental health, somatic complaints and vigor (Hodzic, Ripoll, Bernal, & Zenasni, 2015).

Existing research by Zijlmans, Embregts, Gerits, Bosman, & Derksen (2014) showed that emotional training could increase task-oriented coping. On the other hand, a modest improvement in family communication, satisfaction, emotional intelligence as well as a slight improvement in perspective taking and anger expression were also revealed in a study (Platsidou & Tsirogiannidou, 2016).

Several activities were more commonly used in emotional intelligence training. Some of them focused on emotional self-control, emotional self-motivation, purification of emotions and self-affections expressiveness training which had significant effects on social adjustment and social intimacy of women with breast cancer (Mahdavi et al., 2015). Other studies such as one by Castillo and Fisher (2017) recommended expressive writing and deep breathing. In addition, social and emotional learning intervention is effective among Spanish academic contexts (Castillo, Salguero, Fernández-Berrocal, & Balluerka, 2013).

A qualitative study that identifies emotional issues faced by Malaysian youths revealed several domains which are professional competence, living environment (negative lifestyle, family background, education system and social media), relationship management (express emotions, communication, problem solving), social awareness (interpersonal relationship), self-management (motivation, maturity, controlling emotion, stress management), self-

awareness (psycho-biology of emotions, emotion regulation, lack of self-acceptance, understanding emotions), institution negative (Future plan, lack volition, punishment, caretaker assertiveness, away from family, stuck here, tight schedule, stress, death of parents, feeling sad), institution positive (positive change, talking straight to the point, scheduled work, unity-brotherhood, learning skills) and ways of coping (interpersonal skills, suggestions for module, healthy activities, teaching social intelligence, parenting skills, emotional management skills, self-awareness skills, social religious values and respect, counselling) (Perveen, et al., 2018).

This enhancing module was designed specifically to address the emotional and behavioural issues experienced by Malaysian adolescents. Meanwhile, plenty of studies have focused on issues such as the development of a career exploration module by Talib, Mohamad and Wahab (2015) for which the module has high validity and reliability and drug addiction modules (Ahmad, Hassan & Abidin, 2008; Ahmad, Mat, Yahaya, Yusof & Alias, 2011). Therefore, it is crucial to address a different aspect of adolescents which focuses on improving the emotional competence of adolescents. Many of the research focus on intervention, program or training-based research. Some of the researches were investigating the role of emotional intelligence many different types of issues among adolescence, adult and other significant population. However, module development on emotional intelligence is unfamiliar among local research. Therefore, a comprehensive module as a management tool to handle emotional issues among adolescence is highly in need.

### **Methodology**

This research is a design and development-based research which has three phases. Phase one: Preliminary study involving a quantitative and qualitative study The study involved 262 participants for the quantitative study and 15 interviews were conducted with counsellors and 13 interviews were conducted with students from 5 Tunas Bakti juvenile schools, 6 national secondary schools from 5 different states (Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, Perak, Terengganu and Melaka) and 4 universities in Malaysia using purposive sampling. Phase two: Module development based on need analysis of phase one. Phase three: Module reliability and pilot test. The part of reliability is the main focus of this research paper.

The rating scale consisting of 131 items was constructed to receive the feedback of the participants during the pilot test. The instrument underwent back-to-back translation and was face validated by professionals as well as university students. Before proceeding to construct the reliability rating scale, it is important to review a suitable framework to properly measure the reliability of the module activities. Russell (1974) stated that all the steps included in the activity needs to be followed thoroughly to measure the reliability of a module. If successful, it means participants master the objective of the intervention (i.e. activity). Therefore, Ahmad and Noah (2005) suggested to measure the reliability value index of a module using the items of either the activity objectives or procedure which will be included into a questionnaire. As a result, the rating scale items were constructed based on the objectives and procedures of each activity in the module.

The items in the rating scale are rated using a 10-point Likert scale with 0 stating that the person 'Strongly Disagree' that the item for the said activity is not suitable for their respective domain and 10 referring that the person 'Strongly Agree' that the item for the said activity is very suitable for the respective domain in the Emotional Competency Module. An

example of an item for the 'The Emotional Brain' activity in the self-awareness domain is "The activity was suitable in enhancing your understanding about the physical attributes of emotions" and "The activity enhances your awareness towards different physical attributes of the emotion". Meanwhile, an example of the 'Emotional Map' activity from the self-management domain is "The activity enhances understanding situations that can cause emotions". Another example of an item for the social awareness domain activity, 'Empathy', is "This activity enhances your awareness towards other people's feelings in different situations". Similarly, the 'Sherlocking' activity in the relationship management domain has different items evaluating its objectives for example, "The activity can enhance your ability to identify verbal communication methods".

Thirty university students were initially recruited to join the pilot program of the module. They were chosen through convenient sampling. An advertisement was posted with the university's permission to recruit the participants for this pilot test. All 28 activities in the module were implemented in the two-day program. However, only 19 participants showed up for both days of the program. All participants were asked to answer the rating scale to rate the suitability of each activity in the module in enhancing their emotional competency.

## Results

The internal consistency of each activity items in the rating scale were analysed and reported in Table 1.

Table 1:  
Reliability Analysis Results

Activity	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Based Standardized Items	Alpha on	N of Items
<b>Ice Breaking Activities</b>				
Name String-Ice Breaker	0.924	0.926		4
Cip, Cap, Cop-Ice Breaker	0.923	0.924		6
Finding Emotions-Ice Breaker	0.928	0.933		6
<b>Domain 1: Self-awareness</b>	<b>0.986</b>	<b>0.987</b>		<b>42</b>
The Emotional Brain: Psycho-biology of emotions	0.956	0.956		6
Emoticons: Understanding emotions	0.938	0.938		6
ABC: Emotion rationalization	0.942	0.943		6
This Is Me: Self-acceptance	0.951	0.952		6
Triple Vision: Self-efficacy/Resilience	0.954	0.955		5
The Best Version of Yourself: Self-esteem	0.923	0.927		7
<b>Domain 2: Self-management</b>	<b>0.980</b>	<b>0.983</b>		<b>34</b>
Emotional Map-Emotion regulation	0.959	0.959		7
Breathing Technique-Controlling emotions	0.826	0.841		2
Progressive Muscle Relaxation-Stress management	0.895	0.895		2
Pop!-Stress management	0.938	0.941		3
Pressure Cooker-Stress management	0.942	0.942		5

Time Flies-Stress management/Time management	0.939	0.941	4
My Spiritual Coping-Stress management	0.934	0.936	4
Move It-Self-motivation	0.932	0.933	3
<b>Domain 3: Social awareness</b>	<b>0.980</b>	<b>0.981</b>	<b>20</b>
One Day: Social responsibility	0.947	0.948	4
Empathy: Empathy	0.949	0.950	5
Colourful Emotions: Empathy	0.946	0.947	3
Life Tree: Social respect	0.943	0.943	4
Colours of Malaysia: Social respect	0.928	0.928	4
<b>Domain 4: Relationship management</b>	<b>0.982</b>	<b>0.982</b>	<b>19</b>
Sherlocking: Communication skills	0.967	0.968	6
Let's Win: Assertive skills	0.907	0.909	3
Maze Runner: Teamwork	0.962	0.965	4
Rabbits and Hyenas: Dealing with criticism	0.956	0.957	4
Sorry Sorry: Emotion expression	0.956	0.957	2
<b>Overall module</b>	<b>0.985</b>	<b>0.985</b>	<b>131</b>

Table 1 shows that all the activities were reported to have high reliability in achieving it's objectives in enhancing every aspect of a person's emotional competence with the highest being reported to have a Cronbach's alpha at 0.968 (Sherlocking-Communication skills) and the lowest with 2 items ( $\alpha = 0.826$ ) which is the Deep Breathing (Controlling emotions) activity. This shows that communication skills were the most effective in enhancing emotional competency skills. This is similar to a previous study by Perveen et al., (2018) which showed that healthy activities like the ice breaker activities can help cope with emotional issues.

Similarly, the domain with the highest reliability index was the self-awareness domain (42 items;  $\alpha = 0.986$ ). This is followed by relationship management domain (19 items;  $\alpha = 0.982$ ) and also social awareness (20 items;  $\alpha = 0.980$ ). and self-management domain which had equal reliability index (34 items;  $\alpha = 0.980$ ).

## Discussion

### Research Question 1: Is there any evidence of reliability for the Emotional Competency Module?

All the domains showed high reliability. The overall module evaluation instrument had 131 items ( $\alpha = 0.985$ ). Hence, it was found that the Emotional Competency Module was highly reliable. This is similar to many previous studies which showed that emotional intelligence training can indeed enhance emotional intelligence (Vijayalaxmi & Kadapatti, 2013; Castillo & Fisher, 2017; Motamedi, Ghobari-Bonab, Beh-pajooh, Shokoohi Yekta, & Afrooz, 2017).

### Research Question 2: Is there any evidence of reliability for Domain 1: Self Awareness?

Results showed that the module had high reliability in which the self-awareness domain had 42 items ( $\alpha = 0.986$ ). The self-awareness domain in the module which consisted of activities focusing on the psycho-biology of emotions, understanding emotions, emotion rationalization, self-acceptance and self-esteem are all effective in enhancing emotional competence. The Emotional Brain activity has the highest alpha value of 0.956 whereas the self-esteem activity has the lowest Cronbach's alpha value with 7 items ( $\alpha = 0.923$ ). This is

also similar to previous studies by Perveen et.al (2018). Goleman (2001) also stated that knowing the neurological substrates function of the body such as in the psycho-biology of emotion activity is important in emotion intelligence enhancement. Besides, studies by Toyota (2011) showed there was a relationship between emotional intelligence with self-acceptance and self-esteem (Toyota et.al., 2007). Hence, enhancing the self-acceptance and self-esteem can both enhance overall emotional intelligence.

**Research Question 3: Is there any evidence of reliability for Domain 2: Self-management?**

The self-management domain was found to be highly reliable (34 items;  $\alpha = 0.980$ ). The activity with the highest reliability score in this domain is the 'Emotional Map' activity with 7 items ( $\alpha = 0.959$ ) and the breathing technique activity with 2 items ( $\alpha = 0.826$ ). Goleman (2001) states that emotion regulation skill is vital for enhancing emotional intelligence skills. Meanwhile Castillo and Fisher (2017) also showed that deep breathing activity is effective in enhancing emotional intelligence.

**Research Question 4: Is there any evidence of reliability for Domain 3: Social Awareness?**

At the same time, the Cronbach's alpha for the social awareness domain was 0.980. The empathy activity (Emotional Map) which focuses on an art activity in which the participants are asked to draw a mind map to evaluate the primary and secondary emotions involved in a single stressful situation scored the highest Cronbach's alpha with 3 items ( $\alpha = 0.949$ ) whereas the social respect activity scored the lowest (4 items;  $\alpha = 0.928$ ). This is supported by Hajibabaei et.al. (2018) who showed that there was a positive correlation between empathy and emotional intelligence. Hence increasing empathy could also enhance emotional intelligence. Meanwhile, a study by Perveen et.al (2018) showed that social respect was one of the emotional issues faced by youths which was addressed in this module therefore, supported.

**Research Question 5: Is there any evidence of reliability for Domain 4: Relationship Management?**

The Cronbach's alpha for the fourth domain which is the relationship management domain was 0.982. The Sherlocking activity scored the highest (6 items;  $\alpha = 0.967$ ) whereas assertive skills (3 items;  $\alpha = 0.907$ ) activity scored lowest in the relationship management domain. Communication skills is an important skill in enhancing emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2001). Those with good emotional intelligence also possesses good communication skills (Najib, Che Su & Zarina, 2015). Meanwhile, Noghabaei and Azar (2015) showed that assertiveness training significantly increases emotional intelligence. Therefore, these previous studies support the current study that communication skills such as 'Sherlocking' are good in improving overall emotional intelligence.

**Limitations, Implications and Future Recommendations****Limitations and Future Recommendations**

In summary, the newly developed module for adolescents in Malaysia, is found to be reliable. Hence, further studies to test it's interventional-designed study to see it's potential to enhance positive behaviours as well as overall emotional competency of a person is crucial.

### Implications

The findings of the research can help provide better knowledge regarding more current issues of emotional problems faced by adolescents in Malaysia. Besides the results cater youth organizations and governmental organizations to modify their approaches toward the improvement of developing youth skills in this era. The results also show specific emotional competency issues faced by adolescents for which the Emotional Competency Module is developed. This module will benefit all professionals and adolescents in handling their emotions in future.

### Conclusion

The pilot test revealed that the module has a high Cronbach's alpha of 0.985. As Russell (1974) mentions that a module is reliable if all the objectives and steps in the module are met. Therefore, this indicates that the Emotional Competency Module can enhance the emotion competence of adolescents.

The findings of the study indicated that the module is effective to increase emotional competency among youngsters by involving them in the activities of the four domains in the module. The self-awareness domain emphasised to enhance their knowledge, information and insight about their emotions which can reduce their vulnerability and negative emotions. The self-management domain provided them skills to regulate their emotional problems and have the ability to cope up with different situations. The social awareness domain helps them manage themselves while interacting with other people. Relationship management domain enhances their capability in managing their emotions with others. By instilling these four domains activities in adolescents, they can enhance their emotional competency in dealing with daily challenges and they can be more goal-focused and self-directed which ultimately increase their psychological well-being.

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