

## Exploring The Relationship between Emotional Intelligence, Spiritual Intelligence and Counselling Self-Efficacy among Counselling Students at Private Universities in Klang Valley, Malaysia

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### Abstract

With the rising awareness of mental health issues among Malaysians, our country needs more competent mental health professionals nowadays. Therefore, in the process of developing a competent counsellor, training the counselling students must be taken seriously to increase their counselling self-efficacy, which involves the emotional and spiritual intelligence components. This study investigates the relationship and predictive variables between Emotional Intelligence (EI), Spiritual Intelligence (SI) and Counselling Self-Efficacy (CSE) among counselling students at private universities in Klang Valley, Malaysia. Participants of this study consisted of 54 counselling students from UNITAR International University (UNITAR) and Management and Science University (MSU). This study used a quantitative approach, with three kinds of instruments, i.e., Counselling Self-Estimate Inventory (COSE), Wong and Law EI Test (WLEIS) and Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory (SISRI-24). The findings revealed a positive relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Spiritual Intelligence with Counselling Self-Efficacy. The multiple regression analysis shows that Emotional Intelligence predicts Counselling Self-Efficacy. However, Spiritual Intelligence, on the other hand, did not predict Counselling Self-Efficacy. This finding shows the importance of nurturing emotional and spiritual intelligence among counselling students to improve their counselling self-efficacy. The educators could focus on assessments and trainings that could enhance students' emotional and spiritual intelligence. Apart, the counsellors themselves could apply some interventions such as through readings, attending seminars or any emotional and spiritual events.

**Keywords:** Emotional Intelligence, Spiritual Intelligence, Counselling Self Efficacy, Private Universities

**Introduction**

Mental disorder has been prevalent in Malaysia, especially among youth. According to the 2019 National Health Morbidity Survey (NHMS), one in every twenty Malaysian children aged five to nine is predicted to suffer mental problems, including developmental disorders (Kaur, 2022). Thus, this has been stressed by Dr. Noor Azmi that approximately 424,000 Malaysian youngsters have mental issues, yet many do not seek help (Star Media Group Berhad, 2022). Sadly, the number of mental health professionals is insufficient to cater to their issues. Our country faces a shortage of mental health professionals, such as psychiatrists, psychologists, and counselling professionals. Currently, Malaysia only has 459 psychiatrists. However, our country needs 720 psychiatrists by 2025 and 952 by 2030 (CodeBlue, 2021), which indicates that Malaysia needs more psychiatrists in terms of numbers and distribution compared to developed countries (Supramani, 2022). These 492 psychiatrists are still 1.46 times lower than the 2025 target and 1.93 times below the 2030 requirement, as reported by Malaysian Medics International (Supramani, 2022).

Meanwhile, Malaysia also came 2,945 short of the 11,000 goal set by the Malaysian Board of Counsellors for the total number of counsellors (Iman, 2021). With the rising awareness of mental health issues among Malaysians, we need mental health workers now more than ever. Iman (2021) emphasised that counselling students should lighten mental health workers' burden. If they are unable to do so, it will create an ongoing cycle of mental health upheaval for everyone concerned. Therefore, the importance of trained professionals in the mental health field cannot be taken lightly. Students are the future workforce that will contribute to the need for mental health professionals. This necessitates the development of competent counsellors among counselling graduates through training and education. As a result, this calls for investigating the factor influencing counselling self-efficacy. Some of the factors that were investigated are emotional intelligence and spiritual intelligence.

**Problem Statement**

Counselling self-efficacy has attracted the attention of many researchers for the past decades. The reason is that competent self-efficacy assists people in completing complex tasks when demanding tasks are viewed as challenges to be overcome rather than obstacles to be avoided (Yusuf et al., 2017). Since counselling professions can be hazardous, a study on counsellors' self-efficacy is appropriate since it may provide insight into their competency. In Malaysia, few studies have been done on counselling self-efficacy. However, most of this research is limited to counsellors and postgraduate students (Subarimaniam, 2018; Praveeniah et al., 2021). Therefore, limited research on counselling self-efficacy among undergraduates in Malaysia, especially in private universities, warrants further research and this is seen as a research gap that the current researcher will fill. Besides, Malkoc and Sunbul (2020) also suggested that their study should be reproduced with students from other institutions' psychological counselling and guidance departments because counselling self-efficacy is crucial for professional satisfaction and counsellor wellness in general.

To shed more light on counselling self-efficacy, Malkoc and Sunbul (2020) suggested that further study should be done that focuses on other influential factors, such as emotional intelligence. Emotional Intelligence (EI) is vital in helping professionals, especially in counselling. However, Tharbe et al (2020) asserted that most EI research had been conducted in Western countries, where the concept of EI may be different in the Malaysian context. Their study also revealed some unique findings where some components of EI among counsellors and psychologists in Malaysia in managing their emotions differ from the Western

context, which are spiritual, emotional management, and patience. However, Subarimaniam (2018) indicates minimal research on spiritual competencies. The writer argues that this might be due to counsellors' difficulties when incorporating their religious beliefs into counselling since they believe it is a sensitive topic that should not be mentioned in counselling sessions. As a result, the research on the influence of spiritual intelligence (SI) on counselling self-efficacy (CSE) is pertinent as it may address the knowledge gap in the literature. Besides, from their studies, Daganga et al (2020) postulates that even though self-control is not the moderating factor between counsellor's EI and self-efficacy, other factors such as spiritual intelligence, personality, and commitment to the counselling profession might influence it. An extensive literature review revealed that limited studies had been done on counselling self-efficacy and its relationship with EI and spiritual intelligence among undergraduate students in private universities in Malaysia. An effort should be made to study this topic because it provides valuable information for the students in assessing their emotional and spiritual intelligence to increase their counselling self-efficacy, leading to the efficiency of counselling skills. Thus, this study filled in the gap addressed by previous research.

### ***Theoretical Foundation***

Howard Gardner (1983, with his theory of Multiple Intelligence argues that people are not born with all the intellect they will ever acquire over their lifespans. In his book, "Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligence," he suggested that people have different kinds of intelligence. He proposed eight types of intelligence: linguistic intelligence, musical intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, spatial intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, and naturalistic intelligence. Later, he also added the possible addition of ninth intelligence, existentialist intelligence.

Several of Gardner's intelligence theories relate to CSE and EI in trainee counsellors (Harris, 2022). The intelligence is known as interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence. Interpersonal intelligence, which may be related to CSE and EI, involves a deep awareness of the people surrounding them. Intrapersonal, however, enables the individual to grasp their emotional states, feelings, and motivations fully. Thus, Harris (2022) also argues that linguistic intelligence also applies to CSE and EI as the capacity to identify the appropriate words to convey meaning is crucial to counsellors through clarifying, paraphrasing, monitoring, and reflecting the sentiments and emotions of others. He also added that despite scholars addressing the relationship between multiple intelligence theory and self-efficacy, the literature indicates that few such associations exist, revealing study gaps in the research.

### ***Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Counselling Self-Efficacy (CSE)***

Emotional Intelligence (EI) has been said as one of the influential factors in Counselling Self Efficacy (CSE). Clemons (2017) has been investigating whether EI contributes to a CSE. The researcher distributed an online survey to 80 master's level counselling students through convenience sampling. His study revealed that EI is related directly to a counsellor's self-efficacy; whereas EI increases, the CSE increases.

Thus, he also found that EI predicts CSE through the hierarchical regression analysis done throughout the study. He postulates that EI is essential to effective counselling. The study investigated EI as a helpful information processing ability using the traditional method of participants completing real-world tasks that evaluated their abilities. This went beyond

evaluating counsellors' assessments and perceptions of their own EI. As a result, he argued that counselling programmes that focus on developing and nurturing emotion-related abilities and capacities, such as reflecting feelings, processing emotional content, and managing transference and countertransference, may observe higher levels of CSE among students.

Thus, cultivating and supporting EI in counsellor trainees will foster and support their counselling abilities, encouraging trainees to work in more demanding counselling settings and increasing their confidence in meeting the requirements of a broader range of clients (Clemons, 2017). Moreover, this has been proved by other researchers in their study titled "The Relationship Between Emotional Literacy, Cognitive Flexibility and Counseling Self-Efficacy of Senior Students in Psychology and Psychological Counselling and Guidance." Malkoc and Sunbul (2020) found that emotional literacy positively correlates with helping skills and session management self-efficacy. It means that the higher the individual's emotional literacy, the more effectively they can maintain the conditions required for a smooth and effective counselling process and help them cope with challenges that naturally arise due to the nature of the counselling process. The reason is that recognising and managing one's emotions allows the counsellor to understand the feelings of others better and conduct counselling sessions more effectively.

Furthermore, other studies conducted in Turkey ascertain these statements as they found a negative correlation between EI and emotion reflection and between EI and general counselling skills. This indicates that higher EI levels in prospective psychological counsellors led to greater success in identifying emotional reflection statements and improved counselling skills.

In Malaysia, Daganga et al (2020) also investigate the topic of CSE. Using purposive sampling, they examined the relationship between EI and counsellor activity self-efficacy among 118 trainee counsellors in public universities. Their findings revealed that EI is significantly related to the trainee's CSE. Thus, the level of trainee CSE is also moderately confident, with helping skills as the main contributor. Their study was also supported by Clemons (2017), where EI has a predictive relationship with CSE.

Another research supported this research's findings. Johnston (2021) evaluates the roles of EI, spiritual intelligence, psychological ownership, burnout, and well-being in predicting the CSE of 143 college counsellors through convenience sampling. He found out that EI significantly predicted self-efficacy and well-being among the respondents. However, burnout negatively influences self-efficacy.

Moreover, prior research also aligned with the previous research results. Through Pearson correlation analysis, Harris (2022) found that EI was significantly and positively related to self-efficacy. His findings indicate that there is a moderate to strong relationship between EI and CSE. He used convenience sampling and distributed a questionnaire to 117 master-level counselling students. This study also revealed that the counsellor's self-efficacy significantly differed regarding age, years of service, and race. College counsellors over the age of 56 reported higher levels of self-efficacy than those younger, with those between the ages of 61 and 65 reporting the highest levels of self-efficacy. Years of service correlated with age outcomes; college counsellors with more years of experience had better self-efficacy. College counsellors who identified as Black/African American also reported higher levels of self-efficacy. Thus, the regression analysis also shows a predictive relationship between EI and CSE.

To conclude, most of the literature has highlighted the relationship between EI and CSE. It is shown that there is a positive relationship between these two variables. As students' EI increases, their CSE also increases.

### ***Spiritual Intelligence (SI) and Counselling Self-Efficacy (CSE)***

While EI allows for expressing personal traits, spiritual intelligence supports the larger foundations of emotional and intellectual intelligence (Johnston, 2021). As mentioned, limited literature discussed the relationship between SI and CSE, with only a few studies investigating this relation. For example, Subarimaniam (2018) examines the influence of spirituality, religiosity, and multicultural competency on trainee counsellors' self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues. Even though the researcher investigated a specific issue which is the counsellor's self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues, it is still relevant in explaining the relationship between SI and CSE. This study has proven that there is a relationship between spirituality and the trainee's self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues.

This result has also been supported by another study by Praveeniah et al (2021) that analysed the relationship between spirituality and CSE among secondary school students and counsellors in Klang Valley. Their data analysis has shown a significant relationship between spirituality and self-efficacy among counsellors. However, religiosity and CSE have no relation. Therefore, the authors concluded that while some kinds of religion may reflect one's spirituality, other forms of religion may fulfil social or personal needs that are diametrically opposed to spirituality. They also argued that spirituality might differ from institutionalised religion or traditional religiosity for some individuals. As a result, it is crucial for academics and practitioners to understand better and promote the components of spirituality related to positive mental and physical outcomes.

However, another research's finding differs from the previous studies. Johnston (2021) discovered that SI did not significantly contribute to predicting self-efficacy. Since there are limited studies on SI and CSE, we may look towards several past research studies that studied general self-efficacy to gain more insights.

Zamiri et al (2016), for instance, investigate whether SI can predict self-efficacy. Using stratified sampling, they conducted the study on 129 North Khorasan University of Medical Sciences students. After analysing the data through SPSS software, their findings revealed that SI and self-efficacy were statistically significant. Moreover, their multiple regression test (stepwise) also shows that SI can significantly predict self-efficacy scores. Therefore, they concluded that there is a relationship between SI and self-efficacy. Besides, SI also could predict self-efficacy.

Another study also had been conducted with a different sample which is the elderly aged between 60 to 96 years old. Abadi et al (2016) distributed their questionnaire to 226 elderly people in Arak Metropolis. The results show that there is a relationship between SI and self-efficacy. They also found out that the elderly who often go to mosques have higher SI and self-efficacy. Therefore, they argued that SI and self-efficacy could be increased by encouraging the elderly to attend social and religious places.

In 2019, Mohammed also conducted a study to identify the relationship between SI and academic self-efficacy among 320 students at the University of Baghdad. This finding also aligned with previous studies. She revealed that there is a positive relationship between SI and academic self-efficacy among the students. Thus, she also asserted that SI abilities work to organise students' abilities and academic competencies to address cognitive tasks and

achieve the best use of their spiritual and cognitive skills. Therefore, the researcher recommends developing and intensifying guidance and guidance programmes to improve SI and students' academic self-efficacy as they significantly impact all facets of personality.

In a nutshell, the literature reviews revealed that there is a relationship between SI and CSE. However, studies that research specifically the relationship between SI and CSE are still lacking. Therefore, the current study would generate helpful findings on this topic.

### **Research Objective**

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between EI, SI and CSE among undergraduate students in private universities in Klang Valley. The objectives of this research are

- 1) To investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and counselling self-efficacy (CSE).
- 2) To investigate the relationship between spiritual intelligence (SI) and counselling self-efficacy (CSE).
- 3) To identify if emotional intelligence (EI) predicts counselling self-efficacy (CSE).
- 4) To identify if spiritual intelligence (SI) predicts counselling self-efficacy (CSE).

### **Methodology**

The study was conducted at two private universities in Klang Valley, which offer Bachelor of Guidance and Counselling (Hons), i.e. UNITAR International University and Management (UNITAR) and Management and Science University (MSU). Since both universities have less than 100 counselling students respectively, 59 respondents are involved as a research sample.

The researcher used two types of sampling techniques: convenience and snowball sampling techniques. Convenience sampling is based on the willingness of the respondent to complete the survey, which locates respondents wherever they can be found, frequently wherever they are most convenient. In other words, respondents are picked because they are readily available. Meanwhile, snowball sampling is another alternative to convenience sampling, where the researcher will ask respondents to identify others to be included in the sample (Creswell, 2015).

The respondents in UNITAR were approached through WhatsApp group by sending the survey link through the Google Form platform to the group of Guidance and Counselling students only. Meanwhile, the researcher reached out to one of the counselling students pursuing a Bachelor's Degree at MSU and requested that he pass it on to other students. The researcher also asked the other participants to forward the link to their friends taking the same course.

The data were then assessed by using the SPSS software. The measurements are mean, standard deviations, reliability, normality, correlations and multiple regression.

### **Instruments**

#### ***Counselling Self-Estimate Inventory (COSE)***

This instrument consists of 6-point Likert scale forms of questions to measure the respondent's CSE. The questionnaires were adapted from the Counselling Self-Estimate Inventory (COSE) developed by Larson and Suzuki (1992) to measure beginner-level counselling skills. This instrument consists of 37 items that are divided into five subsections known as micro-skills (12 items), counselling process (10 items), dealing with difficult client

behaviours (7 items), cultural competence (4 items), and awareness of values (4 items). Moreover, the instrument has nineteen negative items. The author stated that the item's reliability is internally consistent with the Cronbach Alpha value of 0.93 and test-retest reliability was  $\alpha = 0.87$ . The scores are (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Moderately Disagree, (3) Slightly Disagree, (4) Slightly Agree, (5) Moderately Agree, and (6) Strongly Agree. A higher score indicates higher levels of self-efficacy concerning counselling-related tasks. Nineteen items need to be reversed-score.

The COSE was initially administered to graduate-level counselling students, pre-practicum counsellor trainees, and master's-level counsellors (Karairmak, 2018). Since this applied to the currently targeted respondents, the researcher chose this instrument. Thus, past studies that adopted this instrument also show high reliability of 0.70 (Jaafar et al., 2011; Haley et al., 2015; Zainudin et al., 2022).

### **Wong and Law EI Test (WLEIS)**

This instrument consists of 16 items that used a 7-point Likert scale ranging from (1) Strongly Disagree to (7) Strongly Agree, which measures an individual's EI. The items for this part were adapted from Wong and Law EI Test (WLEIS) (Wong & Law, 2002). According to Ida Hartina Ahmed Tharbe (2020), this self-rated instrument was based on Mayer and Salovey's EI concept, and it was one of the inventories used in recent years. Aligned with the definition of EI in this study, this inventory was chosen. This instrument has four dimensions, known as understanding one's own emotions and the emotions of others and regulating and using them effectively (Ordun & Akün, 2017). Wong and Law (2002) reported that the internal consistency of this instrument ranged from  $\alpha = 0.83$  to  $\alpha = 0.90$ . Thus, Ordun and Akün (2017) adapted this inventory in their studies and reported high reliability  $\alpha = 0.846$ . Their sample was 278 undergraduate students from Istanbul University Business Administration Faculty.

Not only that, but another study in Malaysia has also been done to test the psychometric properties of WLEIS. The researcher sample was 150 newly appointed administrative officers undergoing a compulsory course (Sulaiman & Noor, 2015). They reported each of the four dimensions Cronbach Alpha value of  $\alpha = 0.83$  (self-emotional appraisal),  $\alpha = 0.92$  (others' emotional appraisal),  $\alpha = 0.85$  (regulation of emotion), and  $\alpha = 0.89$  (use of emotion). Hence, the overall coefficient Cronbach Alpha value was 0.91. Therefore, the authors conclude that based on construct and criterion validity validation analyses, this study using Malaysian samples demonstrated that the WLEIS was valid and highly reliable. Besides, the value of Cronbach's Alpha in this pilot study is 0.96. The excellent reliability results in this pilot study have proven that this instrument is valid and reliable.

### **Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory (SISRI-24)**

This instrument consists of 24 items that used a 5-point Likert scale to measure the participant's spiritual intelligence. The researcher adapted Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory (SISRI-24) developed by David King in 2009. The instrument was created using a sample of psychology students to provide a self-report assessment to test spiritual intelligence (Odaci, Değerli & Bolat, 2017). The scores for this instrument are (0) Not at all true of me, (1) Not very true of me, (2) Somewhat true of me, (3) Very true of me, (4) Completely true of me. Only item number 6 requires reverse scoring.

The Cronbach Alpha value for this instrument was  $\alpha = 0.93$ , and the test reliability was  $\alpha = 0.89$  (King & DeCicco, 2009). The SISRI 24 has also been validated by its application in research studies in Malaysia on counselling self-efficacy by (Praveeniah et al., 2021). Thus,

other researchers also analysed the reliability of the instrument through various respondents and settings, such as Indian workers, Hong Kong undergraduate students, and Malaysian delinquent teenagers (Anbugeetha, 2015; Chan & Siu, 2016; Wan Zulkifli, Ishak & Mat Saad, 2017). Their Cronbach Alpha value ranges from 0.87 to 0.92, which is high. A pilot test conducted by the researcher on this study shows a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.96. Since the validity and reliability of this instrument is excellent, it can be used in this study.

### Pilot Study

A reliability test has been done for all variables towards 21 samples. Based on Table 1, Cronbach's Alpha has been used to determine the reliability of this research. The reliability test for dependent variables shows a value of 0.930. Meanwhile, Cronbach Alpha's emotional and spiritual intelligence values are 0.975 and 0.958, respectively. The results obtained for this study's dependent and independent variables have shown excellent reliability.

Table 1

#### *Reliability Analysis Result*

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha
Counselling Self-Efficacy	0.930
Emotional Intelligence	0.975
Spiritual Intelligence	0.958

### Research Findings

#### *Socio-demographic Information*

The study was conducted among counselling students from UNITAR and MSU in the Klang Valley area. These two universities have been chosen because they offer a Bachelor's Degree in Guidance and Counseling. Convenience sampling and snowball sampling have been employed to reach the targeted respondents. As a result, a total of 54 respondents answered the distributed questionnaire. Table 2 shows the demographic of this study's respondents.

Table 2

#### *Demographic Table of Respondents*

Variables	Category	n, (N=54)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	39	72.2
	Male	15	27.8
Age	18 – 20 years old	4	7.4
	21 – 23 years old	32	59.3
	24 – 26 years old	8	14.8
	27 years old and above	10	18.5
Race	Malay	20	37.0
	Chinese	6	11.0
	Indian	10	18.5
	Bumiputera (from Sabah/Sarawak)	7	13.0
Current year of study	International	11	20.4
	First-year	11	20.4
	Second year	12	22.2



Third year	15	27.8
Fourth-year	16	29.6

***What are the relationships between emotional intelligence (EI) and counselling self-efficacy (CSE); spiritual intelligence (SI) and counselling self-efficacy (CSE)?***

The value of  $r$  for EI and CSE is 0.547. This could be interpreted as a positive correlation. Therefore, the alternate hypothesis that has been developed is accepted. Moreover, the strength of the correlation coefficients is moderate. Thus, there is a positive relationship between EI and counselling self-efficacy.

As for SI and CSE, the  $r$ -value is 0.526, indicating a moderate positive correlation. Therefore, the alternate hypothesis is also accepted. Therefore, there is a positive relationship between spiritual intelligence and counselling self-efficacy.

Table 3

***Pearson Correlation's Analysis Results***

		Counselling Self-Efficacy
EI	Correlation Coefficient	0.547**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	54
SI	Correlation Coefficient	0.526**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	54

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

***Are EI and spiritual intelligence significant predictors of counselling self-efficacy?***

Prior to analysis, several tests have been done to test this model fit which are linearity, assumptions of normality, homoscedasticity, absence of multicollinearity and independence of residuals assumption. Linearity was assessed by using the normal P-P scatterplot. Figure 1 shows that the data closely followed the normality trend line. Therefore, a normal distribution was observed on the multiple regression as the clusters fell along the horizontal line.

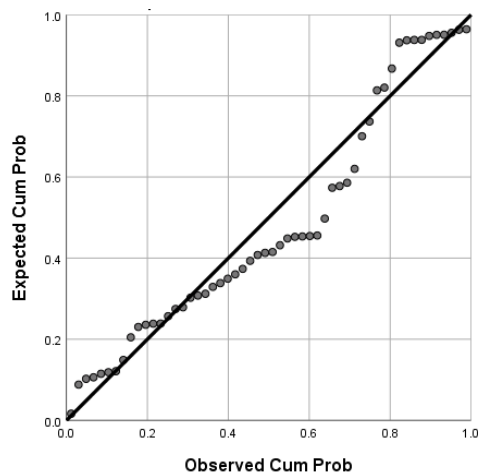


Figure 1 Normal P-P Plot for Regression with EI and Spiritual Intelligence Counselling Self-Efficacy

Next, the researcher also tests the assumptions of normally distributed residuals by plotting residuals against predictor variables. Because determining linearity with a standard plot was difficult, the researcher ran a non-linear best-fit line known as the Loess Curve through the scatterplot to detect any nonlinearity. According to the Loess curve, the relationship of standardised predicted to residuals appeared to be roughly linear around zero (Refer Figure 2). As a result, because the residuals appeared to be randomly scattered around zero, it is concluded that the relationship between the response variable and predictors was zero. This plot also supported the linearity assumption for multiple regressions performed for this study.

The researcher then used the same residual scatterplot to test the homoscedasticity. Again, the assumption was met, as an absence of a clear pattern could be seen in the residual scatterplot in Figure 2.

Moreover, the multicollinearity was tested by running the co-efficient with collinearity statistical test in SPSS. The reason is that predictor variables should be independent of each other. A variance inflation factor (VIFs) below 10 indicates that the association between predictor variables is low. From Table 8, all of the VIFs were below 10, indicating no multicollinearity, and the tolerance was above 0.1. Therefore, the assumption of the absence of multicollinearity was met.

Finally, Durbin-Watson Test was used to assess the autocorrelation between the residuals. The result of the Durbin-Watson test in Table 9 shows a value of 1.442, which falls around 2. This indicates that there is no autocorrelation. Nayebi (2020) postulates that a value close to 0 or 4 indicates that the adjacent residuals correlate. These results have shown that all the assumptions of multiple regression were met, and the researcher proceeded to do the multiple regression analysis.

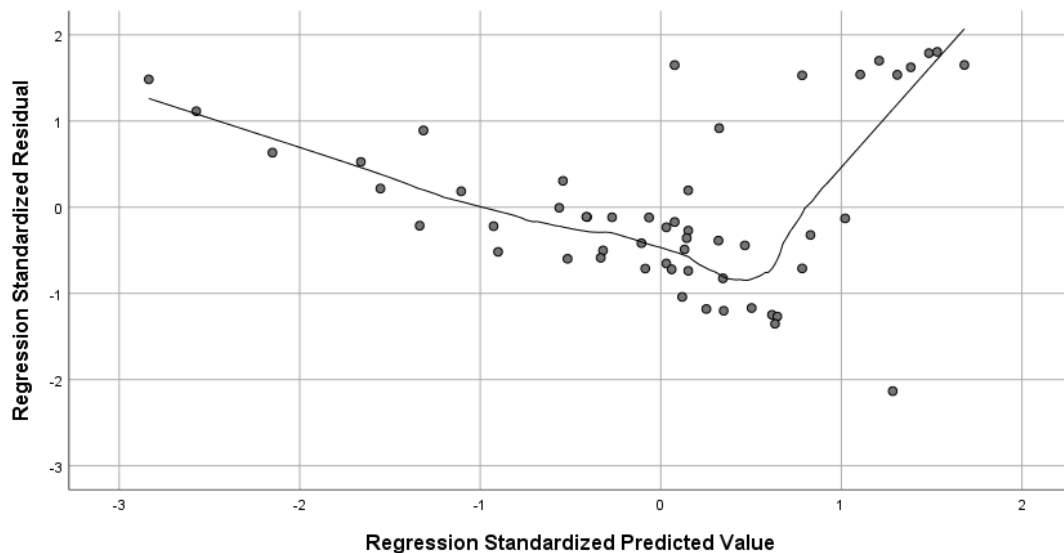


Figure 2 Residuals Plot for Regression with EI and Spiritual Intelligence Predicting Counselling Self-Efficacy

The finding of multiple correlation analysis is shown in Table 4. The significance level that was set in this study was 0.05. Therefore, a value of significance higher than 0.05 indicates that it does not influence counselling self-efficacy. Based on Table 10, only EI is statistically significant at 0.039. This indicates that EI predicts counselling self-efficacy. Meanwhile, spiritual intelligence is statistically insignificant at 0.101. Therefore, spiritual intelligence does not predict counselling self-efficacy.

Table 4  
*Results of Multiple Linear Regression for EI and SI*

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Standard Error	Beta	t	
(Constant)	2.373	0.334		7.108	0.000
EI	0.189	0.089	0.348	2.116	0.039
Spiritual Intelligence	0.243	0.145	0.275	1.671	0.101

Based on the results, there is a significant relationship between counselling self-efficacy and EI and SI among 54 counselling students from UNITAR and MSU. The data analysis also shows that there is a moderate positive relationship between both independent variables and the dependent variable. Moreover, the results also revealed that only EI predicts CSE, while SI does not contribute significantly to CSE. Therefore, the alternate hypothesis that states SI predicts CSE was rejected. However, three alternate hypotheses that have been developed were accepted. Four research questions with the proposed hypotheses and results are summarised in Table 5.

Table 5

*Summary of Research Questions*

Research Questions	Hypothesis	Results	
RQ1: What is the relationship between EI and counselling self-efficacy?	There is a positive relationship between EI and counselling self-efficacy.	Accepted ( $r = 0.547$ )	There is a positive relationship between EI and counselling self-efficacy.
RQ2: What is the relationship between spiritual intelligence and counselling self-efficacy?	There is a positive relationship between spiritual intelligence and counselling self-efficacy.	Accepted ( $r = 0.526$ )	There is a positive relationship between spiritual intelligence and counselling self-efficacy.
RQ3: Is EI a significant predictor of counselling self-efficacy?	EI predicts counselling self-efficacy.	Accepted ( $B = 0.189, t = 2.116, p < 0.05$ .)	EI predicts counselling self-efficacy.
RQ4: Is spiritual intelligence a significant predictor of counselling self-efficacy?	Spiritual intelligence predicts counselling self-efficacy.	Rejected ( $B = 0.243, t = 1.671, p > 0.05$ )	Spiritual intelligence does not predict counselling self-efficacy.

**Discussion**

The current study complements previous research and advances the literature by showing the relationship between EI, spiritual intelligence and counselling self-efficacy, demonstrating a moderate positive relationship between the three constructs and a predictive relationship between EI and counselling self-efficacy.

***Research Question 1: What Is the Relationship Between EI and CSE?***

From the results obtained, it can be concluded that there is a relationship between EI and CSE. This finding is consistent with a previous study done by Daganga et al (2020), where their results also show a moderate positive correlation ( $r = 0.54, p < 0.01$ ). Thus, they also found that the level of EI and CSE among the counsellor trainee were high and moderately confident, respectively. Their sample is similar to the current study sample. Nevertheless, their sample consisted of public university counselling students undergoing counselling practicum. They also argue that a counsellor's ability to comprehend fundamental presumptions about human EI is the foundation for improving that counsellor's competence and skills.

Thus, another study done by Harris (2022) also revealed that EI was also positively related to self-efficacy ( $r = 0.50, p < 0.01$ ). The sample that was utilised in his study was master counselling students. According to Salovey and Mayer (1990), individuals will be able to solve their "problems adaptively" when they approach life tasks with EI. They postulate that the

perception of individuals toward the problem and how they understand their internal emotional experience shapes them. Therefore, this would allow them to be creative and adaptable in developing potential alternative solutions. They are more likely to integrate emotional aspects when selecting a problem solution.

### ***Research Question 2: What Is the Relationship Between SI and CSE?***

Pearson analysis in this study revealed that there is a positive correlation between SI and CSE. This result was supported by another researcher that also found a positive relationship between spirituality and CSE among the counsellors in secondary schools in the Klang Valley area (Praveeniah et al., 2021). Even though the researcher used spirituality as their independent variable, the instrument utilised was similar to the current study, which is SISRI-24. They elucidate that having spirituality makes counsellors more capable and confident while working with clients. Hence, counsellors that are spiritually attuned are more capable of handling any scenario due to a higher self-efficacy. According to Zakaria et al (2020), being spiritual and efficacious are individuals' preferences, and both can guide behaviours.

Thus, Subarimaniam (2018) findings also aligned with the current study. The correlation analysis shows a positive correlation between spirituality and self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues ( $r = 0.241$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

### ***Research Question 3: Is EI a Significant Predictor of CSE?***

The findings show that EI is a significant predictor of CSE. Based on these results, as EI increase, CSE also increases. These results were also found in many studies aligned with previous studies (Clemons, 2017; Daganga et al., 2020; Johnston, 2021; Harris, 2022).

Clemons (2017) found a predictive relationship among master counselling students. He suggested that counsellors with high EI may feel more efficacious in their counselling abilities. Thus, he asserted that to support and nurture students' counselling skills and encourage them to work with more difficult counselling situations, it is crucial to cultivate and nurture EI in counsellor trainees. This will help them feel more confident in their ability to meet the needs of a broader range of clients.

Besides, Daganga et al (2020) also emphasised the importance of developing a high EI in the counselling profession as it enhances the counsellor's effectiveness. It is said that EI is the key trait that differentiates counsellors from other professions. However, their study found a moderate level of counselling self-efficacy among the students. This could be influenced by the lack of opportunity for these students to apply their counselling skills to various clients and the need for better supervision and support when dealing with difficult clients. This is supported by four major sources of self-efficacy, as highlighted by Bandura (1997), which are (1) mastery experience, (2) social persuasion, (3) vicarious learning, and (4) physiological and anxiety state.

Johnston (2021) also supported current research findings as his study found that EI influences CSE. His research also yields an interesting finding that while EI supported a counsellor's self-efficacy and well-being, it acted as a counter to burnout. Gutierrez and Mullen (2016) state that EI could be a preventative factor for counsellors' burnout. This is important as burnout can adversely affect the counsellor's mental, emotional and physical health, leading to the counsellor's impairment. However, the sample utilised for this study was counsellors that have between one to five years of experience.

Moreover, Harris (2022) also argued that the construct of CSE and EI are developmental and flexible as they are conceptualised as generative skills or abilities. His study also shows that EI was a very strong predictor of CSE and perceived stress. The multiple regression analysis that has been done shows that EI predicts CSE where the self-efficacy score would increase by 1.19 units with every one unit increase by EI ( $B = 1.19, t = 4.69, p < 0.001$ ).

***Research Question 4: Is SI a Significant Predictor of CSE?***

However, the current study has revealed that SI is not a predictive variable of CSE. This result also aligned with a previous study by Johnston (2021). As the author argues, this result could be due to the lack of power and variance of this variable to emerge as a predictor.

Due to a lack of research on this topic, the researcher could not compare it with other studies that generated similar results. Nevertheless, this finding is noteworthy as there needs to be more research exploring the predictive relationship between SI and CSE. Thus, these findings might open up new possibilities and raise new questions for future research.

However, Subarimaniam (2018) found a different result than the current study. Multiple regression analysis results show that spirituality influences the counsellor trainee's self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues [ $F(3, 144) = 17.9, p = 0.004$ ]. The sample used was master counselling students from private universities. This difference is perhaps due to the different instruments used by this researcher. Smith (2013) mentioned that spiritual intelligence is not spirituality or religion, nor is spirituality synonymous with religion.

**Conclusion**

The current study contributes to the current literature by providing the relationship between EI, SI and CSE among counselling students, especially in the Malaysian context. These results also indicate the importance of nurturing EI among counsellor trainees to develop a higher CSE. Thus, it has also been proven that EI influences counselling abilities among counsellors (Odaci et al., 2017). Therefore, these results highlighted the importance of EI in predicting CSE. The findings on the relationship between SI and CSE also help add to the current literature, as information on this topic has been limited.

Additionally, addressing the importance of EI and SI could strengthen and evolve the counselling profession. For instance, the counsellors could apply some interventions to increase their EI and SI through readings, seminars, or even going to spiritual places. Hence, Gutierrez and Mullen (2016) also mentioned that in addition to implementing a wellness strategy, counsellors (especially beginner counsellors) should think about deepening their understanding of how emotions affect their health (i.e., raising their cognitive-emotional aptitude).

Furthermore, this study's results help educators understand the role of EI and SI toward students' CSE. For example, educators could focus on assessments and training that enhance students' EI. Thus, they also could tailor specific interventions based on the student's EI.

Future research suggested that future researchers replicate the current study using a larger sample, such as postgraduate counselling students at other private universities, to capture more fully the potential contributions of these factors.

The future researcher can also combine quantitative and qualitative methods to generate more information and avoid biases in data analysis. For example, including qualitative studies based on interviews might explore more factors contributing to students' counselling self-efficacy.

This study attempts to examine the relationship between EI, SI and CSE. As a result, it is found that both independent variables have a relationship with CSE. However, only EI was a significant predictor of CSE. SI, on the other hand, did not contribute to the understanding of CSE. As a result, only one alternate hypothesis has been rejected, which states that SI predicts CSE.

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