

CHANGES IN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE OF STUDENTS ENROLLED IN *THE EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND SOCIAL COMMUNICATION COURSE*

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Abstract: During the Fall semester of the school year 2021-2022, three concurrent *Emotional Intelligence and Social Communications (EISC)* courses were conducted to assist students' personal development. Using a mixed-method approach, this descriptive study explores changes in the EI levels of students attending these courses. After conducting the survey, which revealed a significant mean difference of 0.12 (95% CI [0.003, 0.237]) between during-course and post-course scores, the researchers employed purposive sampling to select interview participants with the most increased, most decreased, and nearly unchanged levels of EI. The interview data indicated that most interviewees experienced an increase in the ability to consider other perspectives and some in the ability to regulate emotions. On the other hand, emotion management ability seemed to have experienced the slightest improvement. Additionally, the analysis of 20 learner's reflections showed that learners indicating the most recurrent ideas are learners' realisations about self (personal shortcomings, past unfortunate events, existing helpful habits/accomplishment, or intentions of future change/improvement) and statements about benefits of mindfulness (increased perception or relief from unpleasant emotions).

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence and Social Communication, mindfulness, TEIQUE-SF (Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire-Short Form), changes in emotional intelligence

1. Introduction

Despite being a relatively recent concept, first defined in 1990 and introduced to the public five years later, Emotional Intelligence (EI) has quickly gained popularity for being associated with positive outcomes in different aspects of life from occupational, academic, romantic success to leadership ability, improved mental health, and better relationships with friends, family members, and co-workers (Goleman, 1995). Despite the impressive rate at which studies on EI appear, only a reasonably limited amount has focused on the context of academic settings in Vietnam. Therefore, more attention to this area from an EI perspective would likely be welcomed.

For higher education students who are about to enter the workforce, EI is an indispensable asset, as described by Cambridge (2022). EI allows a person to be more self-aware, more resilient, and have better empathy and relationship skills, all of which are necessary for a fast changing, uncertain environment where setbacks are plenty excellent teamwork ability

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is required. To better prepare the students for their future career, the University of Languages and International Studies offers an EI course named Emotional Intelligence and Social Communication (EISC). The course was developed as a joint effort by lecturers and staff from various faculties. Three classes were conducted in the first semester of the academic year 2021-2022 for one special group of students - the ULIS Ambassadors. Given the novelty and the experimental nature of the course, an analysis of emotional intelligence, the ability/characteristic of the students that the course intends to influence is no doubt of great value to the course developers and interested parties.

Thus, the present paper aims to explore changes in students' Trait Emotional Intelligence levels after finishing one of the three EISC classes, using the following research questions for guidance:

1. *What are the changes to Trait EI of those ULIS students who have finished the course, as measured by the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire - Short Form?*
2. *What specific evidence of changes are experienced by this group of ULIS students?*

The focus of the study rests solely on exploring the experience of learners, not assessing the content or quality of the course (any later discussion on the characteristics of the course are either descriptions to help readers visualise the nature of the course or inferences based on what was found out about learners' experience).

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Concept of EI and Different Categorizations

The concept of EI as known by the public nowadays was first defined as “the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions” (emphasis on “ability”) and extensively discussed by Salovey and Mayer (1990). In this study, the two researchers presented a review of a number of studies, all examining “a set of conceptually related mental processes involving emotional information” (p. 190). Said review described these processes, the various attempts at measuring them by other researchers, their contribution to a person's living experience, as well as their correlation to various factors and outcomes, followed by a short summary explaining why these mental processes were included in the concept of Emotional Intelligence. Originally, the processes were divided into three categories: a) appraising and expressing emotions in the self and others, b) regulating emotion in the self and others, and c) using emotions in adaptive ways, together composing an EI model, which describe what abilities or traits EI should include. Over time, other researchers also proposed different EI models. Some, like Mayer and Salovey's model, include only mental abilities (Ability Models), while some include personality traits on top of abilities (Mixed Models) (Goleman, 1995; Bar-On, 2006).

Another distinction, between Ability EI and Trait EI, concerns neither the definition nor the model of EI but rather the method through which EI is operationalised (in other words, how this abstract concept is turned into measurable observations). This differentiation was first proposed by Petrides and Furnham (2000), along with the implication that the measure associated with each EI model should be considered the factor that determines the nature of the model instead of the described skills and competencies. This was later further elaborated upon by the researchers in a 2001 publication as follows: when a researcher opts to measure Ability EI, emotional intelligence is being assessed through participants' “actual abilities” to process emotion-related cognitive tasks, using tests of maximal performance in which there are correct

and incorrect answers, similar to IQ tests. In contrast, when another researcher measures Trait EI using self-report items, emotional intelligence is being assessed through participants’ “behavioural tendencies and self-perceived abilities” (Petrides & Furnham, 2001, p. 426).

While Ability EI may seem to be, at first glance, a more direct approach to measuring a concept typically referred to as “Intelligence”, researchers often question the validity of Ability EI tests (namely the Mayer Salovey Caruso EI Test) because of its scoring method. Petrides and Furnham (2000, 2001, 2003) and Petrides (2009, 2011) have persistently contended that the operationalisation of EI as an ability is fruitless because the subjective nature of emotion causes the task of designing test items with objective scoring criteria nearly impossible. While Mayer, Salovey and Caruso attempted to circumvent this issue using consensus-based scoring and expert scoring concurrently (Mayer & Salovey, 2007), Maul (2012) expressed concern about using these scoring methods. The validity of and criticisms towards Trait EI are discussed below in the present study.

2.2. Relevant Framework

Although the existence of multiple definitions and models of EI may cause confusion and the impression that the field of EI is conflicting and disorganised, Cherniss (2010) highlighted that most prominent researchers base their model of EI on one early definition initially proposed by Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso “the ability to perceive and express emotion, assimilate emotional thought, understand and reason with emotion, and regulate emotion in the self and others” (Mayer et al., 2000, p. 396, as cited in Cherniss, 2010). Regarding the models themselves, Ciarrochi et al. (2000) commented that the different models tend to complement each other and generally cover four areas: perception, regulation, understanding, and utilisation of emotion. This was noted by Petrides and Furnham (2001), who employed content analysis to synthesize the different models of EI by Salovey and Mayer (1990), Goleman (1995), and Bar-On (1997), creating their own. The researchers also used this model as the sampling domain for the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire, and subsequently, for the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire Short Form (TEIQue-SF), which is the instrument used in the present study. Thus, to maintain consistency, this paper utilizes the following model of EI as the reference according to which the EI of the target group of ULIS students were examined.

Table 1

The Sampling Domain of Trait EI in Adults and Adolescents (Petrides & Mavroveli, 2020, p. 25)

The Sampling Domain of Trait EI in Adults and Adolescents	
Facets	High scorers view themselves as...
Adaptability	...flexible and willing to adapt to new conditions.
Assertiveness	...forthright, frank, and willing to stand up for their rights.
Emotion expression	...capable of communicating their feelings to others.
Emotion management (others)	...capable of influencing other people’s feelings.
Emotion perception (self and others)	...clear about their own and other people’s feelings.
Emotion regulation	...capable of controlling their emotions.
Impulse control	...reflective and less likely to give in to their urges.
Relationships	...capable of maintaining fulfilling personal relationships.
Self-esteem	...successful and self-confident.
Self-motivation	...driven and unlikely to give up in the face of adversity.
Social awareness	...accomplished networkers with superior social skills.
Stress management	...capable of withstanding pressure and regulating stress.
Trait empathy	...capable of taking someone else’s perspective.
Trait happiness	...cheerful and satisfied with their lives.
Trait optimism	...confident and likely to “look on the bright side” of life.

This table describes Emotional Intelligence to contain 15 different facets, all of which (excluding Adaptability and Self-motivation) are divided into one of four factors: Emotionality, Sociability, Well-being, and Self-control.

Criticisms toward TEIQue often focus on two key points. First, the results of the TEIQue correlate so strongly with other personality scales such as the ones by Eysenck or Goldberg that the questionnaire is of little use. Second, the self-report nature of the test causes faking results to increase desirability to be a problem. Regarding the first point, studies exist that prove the TEIQue has incremental validity over other personality scales (Siegling et al., 2015; Andrei et al., 2016). As for the second criticism, a study by Choi and colleagues (2011) suggested that the effect of faking on the criterion validity of Trait EI tests ranges from moderate to low.

2.3. Related Studies

Many studies have been conducted on the topic of EI in the international context. Researchers have been examining the correlations between EI and factors such as wellbeing, success, relationship quality, as well as assessing the impact of EI interventions. Meanwhile, in Vietnam, fewer studies have been conducted, with most focusing on populations of business employee, as opposed to students in an academic setting. Among them, most merely assessed and compared EI scores of different student batches (Phan, 2010), or concentrated on the correlation between EI and different factors (Đỗ, 2014; Trương & Nguyễn, 2015; Nguyen et al., 2020). The current study aims to rectify this by targeting a population of students that has rarely been targeted EI-related study, as well as examining changes in EI before and after an intervention.

3. Methodology

3.1. Overall Research Design

The current descriptive study uses a mixed-method approach to explore changes to the EI levels of students both quantitatively using questionnaires and qualitatively using interviews and document analysis. The quantitative phase allows the researchers to gain an overview of the amount of change since questionnaires as a data collection tool are known to be an efficient and economical way of studying a large sample. Moreover, the use of the TEIQue-SF, a carefully researched and validated instrument allows the current study to benefit from the extensive research efforts that have been invested in the development of quantitative measures of EI.

During the qualitative phase, interviews were conducted to acquire a specific and detailed description of said changes, as experienced by a few individual students. The present study collects data using semi-structured individual interviews. This form of interview, compared to unstructured and (fully) structured interview, allows researchers to better direct the focus of the conversation, thus being able to elicit more information that is potentially relevant (Brinkmann, 2013).

Finally, the researchers also examined reflections produced by learners to gain an additional view on students' experience, one balancing between the level of detail and the amount of data that can be collected. During the EISC course, learners are required to write a short reflection after each lesson, usually following different prompts provided by the course lecturers. At the end of the course, learners would compile all reflection pieces to create one long reflection entry to be submitted as an assignment.

3.2. Research Context

During the first semester of academic year 2021-2021, the University of Languages and International Studies organized three concurrent and near-identical Emotional Intelligence - Social Communication (EISC) courses for ULIS ambassadors. The course designers stated the following goal: “to develop a community of students and lecturers who are self-aware, can regulate emotions, can empathize and connect with each other, create happy lives, successful careers and positively inspire the broader community, toward personal development”.

Further examination of the course content revealed a list of topics discussed throughout the course: Emotional Intelligence, mindfulness, emotions, emotion regulation, empathy/how to look deeply and listen attentively, giving emotional care for others, as well as Buddhist principles including compassion, interbeing, and impermanence. During each lesson, learners are also provided with sessions of guided meditation lasting from 2 to 15 minutes, usually followed by short periods of self-reflection and then circle sharing. At home, students are sometimes required to reflect on certain aspects of life and write down said reflection (or the previously mentioned in-class reflection). There are various other miscellaneous activities during the course, most aiming to encourage self-reflection or to illustrate a knowledge point.

Based on the stated core theory of the EISC course, Petrides’ (2009) model of Trait EI was found to be sufficiently suitable since most of the facets included in the model were likely to be either directly or indirectly taught to learners during the course. For example, lessons 3 and 4 where learners are taught about emotions, and emotion regulation are directly related to the emotion expression, emotion perception, and emotion regulation facets of the TEIQue.

3.3. Research Participants and Sampling

The population of this study are around 109 students enrolled in 3 EISC courses. These students are known as ULIS ambassadors, selected by the University through interviews and are expected to promote ULIS at their past high schools. Participants come from a variety of towns and cities in Vietnam, but all currently reside in Hanoi to pursue the second or third year of their degree in either English Teacher Education, Languages and Culture of different countries, or Language Education and Professional Development at ULIS. Although no information on participants’ sex or gender was collected, the sample is assumed to follow the same female-dominant trend visible in the population of ULIS student.

For the quantitative phase, 54 students were convenience sampled through voluntary participation (initially, 70 students responded to the during-course survey; however, the 16 that did not respond to the post-course survey were disqualified). For the next phase involving document analysis and interview, the method of multi-phase sampling was used. From the previous 54-participant sample, learners were once again conveniently sampled through voluntary participation in the form of responding “yes” or “no” to a question requesting access to reflections, then purposively sampled when the researchers selected reflection entries. To select interviewees, the researchers used purposive sampling based on the degree of change to EI as recorded by the questionnaire.

3.4. Data Collection

To collect data for Research Question 1, the TEIQue-SF was administered twice, during and after participants attended the three courses (both times via Google Form). The during-course questionnaires were distributed and collected during the fifth and sixth weeks of the course; the after-course ones were distributed and collected about two months later, a few weeks after the courses finished.

For Research Question 2 the researchers first collected explicit consent to review written reflections from learners of each class, once again, through Google Form. Afterwards, access to the reflection pool was granted by the lecturers in charge of each class. The researchers stopped analysing after the twelfth entry, once saturation of content was perceived to have been achieved.

In the final phase of data collection, based on the levels of EI change gathered from the questionnaires, the researchers formed a list of possible candidates, who were then contacted and solicited optional semi-structured interview sessions lasting around one hour. Six learners were interviewed, two for each level of EI changes. All interviewees were female students in their second year of study. The questions utilized by the interviewer to gain information, according to Creswell and Poth (2018) are created by breaking down research questions into sub questions, then rephrased into ones that interviewee can understand. Interviews were conducted via the online video conference platform Zoom.

3.5. Data Analysis

The TEIQue-SF of the quantitative phase contains 30 questions, all of which are answered by choosing a point on a Likert scale of 1 to 7. The London Psychometric Laboratory (publisher of the TEIQue-SF) provides researchers with a scoring engine that converts a raw data sheet containing the scores of 30 questions as answered by participants into a set of 5 scores (4 factors of Trait EI and a global EI score) for each participant. Each of these five scores is accompanied by a Cronbach's alpha value assessing the internal consistency of the questionnaire items that resulted in this score. While more detailed results would be more desirable, the TEIQue-SF scoring engine does not support for calculating each of the 15 individual facets.

Following the recommendation of the questionnaire's author, only total Trait EI scores were taken into consideration as internal consistency (as indicated by Cronbach's alpha) of the four factors were almost all below 0.7 for both during- and post-course responses. Descriptive and inferential statistical analysis was then conducted using Microsoft Excel built-in formulae and data analysis package. Specifically, the researchers performed a Wilcoxon Signed Rank test to assess differences between mean EI scores during and after the EISC course.

In the qualitative phase, interview recordings were automatically provided by Zoom after each session. Combining notes and audio recordings (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006), the researchers performed manual thematic analysis and summarized the main ideas and stories told by the participants, then grouped them according to research questions: reasons for choosing EISC, general impressions, specific knowledge or skills learned and applied (in other words, changes). Reflection entries, on the other hand, underwent content analysis and were summarized into main ideas, which were then grouped and counted using a table in Microsoft Excel. While the fact that the whole data collection and analysis process was conducted by the same researcher might result in bias, this was necessary due to manpower shortage.

3.6. Ethical Considerations

Throughout the study, research ethics were ensured thanks to the fact that, throughout each data collection step, participants are informed of the nature of the study, assured that participation was entirely voluntary, and made aware of the ability to opt-out at any point during the study. Moreover, no identifiable personal information was collected, and all data was kept confidential.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Research Question 1

What are the changes to Trait EI of those ULIS students who have finished the course, as measured by the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire - Short Form?

In this study, the TEIQue-SF was used to measure how much change occurred throughout the course. Overall, the study observed a difference of 0.12 points between mean during-course scores ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 0.67$) and after-course scores ($M = 4.56$, $SD = 0.7$). A left-tailed Wilcoxon signed-rank test indicated that this difference was statistically significant ($Z = -1.9459$, $p = .0256$).

Table 2

During- and After-Course Means, SDs and Subsequent T-Test Results

Course	N	Means and SD		Results of Wilcoxon signed-rank test
		During-course	After-course	
Total	54	M = 4.43, SD = 0.67	M = 4.56, SD = 0.7	Statistically insignificant difference ($Z = -1.9459$, $p = .0256$).

These means are found to roughly belong to the same range of scores for 503 Hue university students as measured by the TEIQue-SF in a study by Nguyen (2021). While the during-course mean of ULIS students fell within this range, the after-course score was 0.08 points higher than the highest score in Nguyen's study. However, given the small sample of the current study and the resulting vast confidence interval, this comparison can only be used as a reference, not a definitive conclusion that the EISC course was able to increase ULIS students' EI level above the average for Hue students.

After comparing the during- and post-course means, the current paper calculated the increase to be 0.12 points. This change is somewhat similar to the change found in a study by Abe et al. (2013), in which participants were required to answer the TEIQue-SF before, immediately after, and one year after a three-hour workshop. Although the difference between before the intervention and after the intervention was insignificant, there was an increase of 0.23 when EI levels are re-measured one year after.

Moreover, the TEIQue-SF score and evidence collected from interviews seem to support each other. The questionnaire score was mostly able to accurately reflect the direction and even the extent of change recorded in individual interviews. A participant's +0.97 is matched with a mostly desirable improvement, coupled with some concerning tendency. Meanwhile, another's +1.13 is reflected in complete changes that significantly improved quality of life. This similarity was also found in the cases of three other interviewees. There was, however, a case where a participant experienced the most serious decrease in score, but in fact reported more significant change than two others, who have both found almost no change. A possible explanation was provided by Tschannen-Moran and Carter (2016), who proposed that

it seems unlikely that the participants actually declined in their EI skills as a result of the training. What seems more likely is that participants were sensitized to issues of EI they had previously ignored, and thus responded to the questions on the assessment differently on the posttest as a result of a deeper understanding of those survey items. (p. 15)

This is supported by the fact that the participant was sincerely surprised by the fact that there are approaches other than mocking group members and had since tried to be more considerate.

4.2. Research Question 2

What specific evidence of changes are experienced by this group of ULIS students?

Through interviews with individual participants, the researchers hoped to gain an in-depth understanding of and collect evidence on specific changes experienced by learners. In this section, the researchers present findings grouped by themes. Interviewees are referred to using pseudonyms and associated changes to EI to ensure confidentiality. Direct quotations are provided in English translation.

Table 3

Pseudonyms and Corresponding Level of EI Change

Name	Level of EI change
Bucha	- 0.63
Irpin	+ 0.10
Izyum	- 0.80
Mariupol	+ 0.97
Odesa	- 0.03
Mykolayiv	+1.33

4.2.1. Displeased With the Course (Little to No Change)

Two learners, Irpin and Izyum, reported having negative experiences attending the course. Irpin (+ 0.10) reported being discouraged by the course activities such as meditating, circle sharing, (“like meditation for example, I didn’t find it beneficial at all, so ... pass”). The boredom and disinterest towards course activities (which mostly included meditation, self-reflection, and circle sharing) experienced by Irpin was not surprising, as Osin and Turilina (2022) also highlighted in a study how the inability to pay attention and boredom were the two most common obstacle against mindfulness activities. The study also found that meditation caused participants to become reacquainted with and suffer from “the anxiety and frustration they would normally be distracted from by their daily activities”. Given the highlighted coping strategies employed by Irpin (distraction, self-invalidation, unsuccessful self-reassurance), sudden introduction to mindfulness activity was likely to cause overwhelming emotional discomfort to the participant. Similarly, Izyum (- 0.80) reported not paying any attention during lessons, due to her dislike for the manner in which lecturers and classmates interacted (“everyone kept giving each other compliments”) for the information and activities being presented to learners (“they kept making us meditate and taught us some weird things”). As someone who grew up in a household where strong emotions were considered negative, were discouraged, and neglected, the sudden shift towards paying attention to emotions was likely so alienating that caused her to immediately experience contempt.

4.2.2. Helpful Experience

The remaining four learners reported a more pleasant experience with the EISC course. Most of the comments were similar to the main ideas presented in the course reflection entries.

The most often recorded types of main ideas in the reflection entries of 20 learners were, from most recurrent to least recurrent: (a) Information learned from the course, (b) Self-reflection on certain aspects, (c) Experience with meditation, and (d) Various comments on individual lessons, teachers and/or classmates, and the course in general. This convergence helps support the reliability of course reflection as a source of data for the course designers.

Other subjects [...] feel dry, but when I was in this course [EISC] I felt more like I was relaxing, destressing, renewing myself after stressful and tiring lessons in other subjects.

The two first subjects [of that day, before EISC] are always very stressful for me, I don't know what to do, but in this subject, I feel like... I get to go to another world [...] very chill and everybody is nice.

4.2.3. Improved Empathy and Emotion Regulation

Another convergence occurred between the most common reported benefit gained by interviewees, and the most mentioned core theory topics in reflection entries. In both cases, learners reported the most improvement in the ability to listen, to consider another person's perspective; as well as the ability to pay attention to and regulate emotions. This covers three of the four main focuses in the first two modules of the course: self-understanding, self-care, understanding others, and caring for others. The improved ability in these aspects (along with other factors in participants' lives) directly caused learners to experience better interpersonal relationships (less intense fights with parents, better friendships, and better group work), less emotional discomfort, and less academic difficulties (thanks to better group work, better emotional regulation and focus that resulted in more effective work, as well as the ability to overcome fear and seize previously unavailable opportunity).

after the EISC course [...] feelings that I would call "hatred" would pass away very quickly [...] I don't think there's any reason to keep negative emotions inside. They can come and go as they please.

This not only once again proves the well-established link between improved EI and better life outcomes including overall well-being (Goleman, 1995; Tan, 2012) but also vividly illustrates how changes in one area leads to improvement in another. For example, Mariupol recounted how anxiety and shame had often prevented the participant from practicing speaking in English classes. However, after receiving support from close friends, in combination with practicing emotional management strategies obtained from the course, she was able to self-reassure and ignore the remaining worries to perform said activities in class. The story of another participant, Mykolayiv, demonstrated how improved EI lead to improvements in relationships. Before the course, this interviewee reported not having any friendship with classmates, actively isolating herself from the other students out of insecurity about her perceived academic abilities and having different interests. After the EISC course, among other benefits, she reported having improved her sense of self-worth and learned several strategies to respond to strong unpleasant emotions. The former change, in addition becoming more comfortable with classmates as a natural result of studying for a year together, allowed Mykolayiv to not only be more receptive to her friend's attempt at interaction, but also more active in initiating those interaction, and as a result, gain friendships that she previously thought impossible. In addition, by no longer believing that "there is something wrong with me", the participant experienced fewer unpleasant emotions when there were problems. This, coupled with the newly acquired interest in and having strategies to regulate emotions, meant that Mykolayiv was able to more easily navigate academic pressures and her existing relational

conflicts with her mother.

4.2.4. Insufficient Ability to Care for Others

However, caring for others (or the TEIQue facet named emotional management) seems to have seen the least improvement. Bucha and Mariupol both reported employing fairly ineffective strategies because of and despite the course, respectively. Bucha learned that distraction was a valid strategy and started to switch topic, ignore her friend entirely when they start talking about unpleasant emotions, while Mariupol continued to apply own experience of coping to respond to others' distress, despite the course repeatedly warning against this.

Coincidentally, Irpin, who paid attention to the lesson about listening to others and providing emotional support, commented that the core theory, while useful, was highly theoretical and did not help her resolve discomfort that arises when others came to her for support. The difficult emotions described by Irpin are similar to what Teahan (2021) explained to be trigger responses for those suffering from childhood trauma when having to give validation to another person. Due to a lack of personal experience with receiving emotional support during childhood, some are prone to experiencing shame, helplessness, and guilt, believing that no response they give to soothe the other person would be good enough. Others, on the opposite end of the spectrum, feel great discomfort when exposed to others' emotional distress and would attempt to eliminate the other person's emotions by distancing, attempting to problems, or by forcing them to stop having emotions.

Irpin seems to experience emotional responses on both sides of the spectrum. Bucha and Mariupol, on the other hand, both attempted to escape emotions by forcing the other person to talk about another topic or by distancing, respectively.

4.2.5. Emotion Disregard

Another more change is the appearance of a tendency to disregard or to tolerate uncomfortable emotions that some learners exhibited. In Bucha's case, this was likely caused by a prior wish to become less of a burden to other people, and an aversion to uncomfortable emotions, both reported by the participant as possible reasons for her change. For Odesa, a learner who had already practiced meditation and emotion-appraisal, the practice of letting go of emotions stopped being a way of finding inner peace and started becoming an obligation to fulfil. Meanwhile, for Mariupol, the wish to tolerate emotions stemmed directly from the ability to better regulate emotions with meditation and to consider opposite perspectives in a conflict. On one hand, this may allow the learner to react differently whenever she experiences conflict with a family member, often choosing to spend time alone and observe emotions instead of escalating the fight like before. While being able to disregard certain emotions may allow a person to reduce conflict in relationships, there is also a risk that these problems are then ignored instead of being addressed. Whatever the cause though, failure to resolve conflicts in relationships, attempting to make space for others at the expense of the self, or in other words, not setting boundaries is likely to cause "long-term suffering" that erodes the quality of relationships, causing them to be dysfunctional, unreasonable, and hard to manage (Tawwab, 2021).

5. Conclusion

5.1. Summary of Key Findings

This study attempted to explore the changes in emotional intelligence of learners enrolled

in the three EISC courses using a mixed methods approach. The researchers observed a diverse range of changes, in different directions and to different extents.

Quantitative instruments revealed a statistically significant small increase in whole-course global EI scores, while qualitative ones gave a glimpse into the experience of a few learners, in which the changes ranged from highly beneficial, life changing (improved interpersonal relationships and emotion regulation ability); somewhat concerning (increased tendency to tolerate instead of resolving uncomfortable situations); to insignificant (little or no change either because of disinterest in the course or because the learner had already mastered a large portion of the skills and knowledge being taught).

The area of EI that experienced the most impact seemed to be the ability to consider another person's perspective and the ability to regulate emotions, both of which resulted in improved interpersonal relationships, less emotional discomfort, fewer academic obstacles. The ability to provide emotional support (manage others' emotions), however, did not see improvements.

5.2. Implications and Significance

This section outlines a few suggestions for EISC course designers to modify Module 1 and Module 2 of the course.

The first problem that needs addressing is the tendency to suppress emotion, to cope with emotions solely through distraction strategies. While the course did repeatedly emphasize the need to focus more on emotions and to view emotions in a better light and with a changed mind-set, this effort was not able to overcome the participants' existing negative view of emotions. It is suggested that this negative view should be further explored, either during lessons or through personal reflection prompts, by asking learners to identify the cause of this attitude and by helping learners overcoming these causes. Additionally, learners may be referred to resources outside of the course, such as online information from credible sources, or the university's counselling services.

The second problem that existed was the inability by some learners to respond to others' emotions. During the course, there was already an emphasis on being present for the other person, and providing support by exploring the problems experienced by the person experiencing distress. However, based on Irpin's account, additional focus should be given to the difficult emotions experienced by the participant when faced with another person's emotional distress. In addition, the course may also provide cases to demonstrate typical effective ways to respond to specific common situations. Based on these, students would have more to draw from when having to respond to emotional distress, given how Bucha's reason for resorting to changing topics was her perceived sense of futility when attempting to discuss the friend's problem.

This study was able to highlight changes to learners' EI levels and, based on that data, suggest a few courses of actions to the EISC course designers. The helpful and meaningful change recorded confirms the case that interventions can help improve learners' EI level to a certain extent, which is also supported by a number of other studies (Kotsou et al., 2019). This paper has contributed to the growing number of studies that explore the use of interviews in emotional intelligence research. It has found qualitative interview to be a suitable method to effectively explore and assess emotional intelligence of individuals. The interview data had also confirmed the accuracy of the TEIQue-SF in measuring changes of EI for the participants who were interviewed. By exploring participants' experience with emotions in-depth, the interviews

in this study were able to not only confirm the correlation between EI in improved outcomes, but also highlight how EI was able to interact with aspects of life such as relationships and academic performance to produce these positive life outcomes. Finally, the study seems to also be one of the first attempts at studying the emotional intelligence of ULIS students, specifically.

5.3. Limitations

Despite best efforts, the current study is limited due to the following factors. First, there were factors that limited the choice of data collection instruments; the questionnaire response rate; the number of interview participants, as well as reflection pieces that could be studied for the research. Second, the two questionnaires were administered during-course and post-course, despite the fact that measuring pre-course EI level would have likely resulted in more accurate reflection of the changes of students' EI throughout the whole course (as opposed to the changes that happened between a portion of the course). Finally, the qualitative side of the research, despite benefitting from a rich sum of data provided by participant, may have suffered from fairly rudimentary analysis methodologies.

5.4. Recommendations for Further Research

Future researchers may consider replicating the study with a larger sample to improve generalizability, or with a different quantitative instrument of measuring EI, to examine whether different measuring tool might lead to different results. Should the TEIQue continue to be used, there should be a switch towards the TEIQue long form instead of the short form, so that individual facets and factors may be considered, thus allowing more in-depth analysis of the quantitative data. Moreover, a different approach to assessing the effectiveness of the EISC course would be to shift the focus of the study from being solely on learners to also assessing the EISC course contents and material, based on the existing literature about EI training.

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NHỮNG THAY ĐỔI VỀ TRÍ TUỆ CẢM XÚC CỦA SINH VIÊN THAM GIA KHÓA HỌC *TRÍ TUỆ CẢM XÚC VÀ GIAO TIẾP XÃ HỘI*

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Tóm tắt: Trong Học kỳ I của năm học 2021-2022, 3 lớp của học phần mới *Trí tuệ cảm xúc và Giao tiếp xã hội* (TTCX-GTXH) được tổ chức để hỗ trợ quá trình phát triển cá nhân của sinh viên. Nghiên cứu sử dụng phương pháp hỗn hợp nhằm tìm hiểu những thay đổi về TTCX của sinh viên sau khi hoàn thành học phần này. Sau khi điều tra và tìm ra một sự khác biệt đáng kể ở mức 0.12 (95% CI [0.003, 0.237]) giữa điểm TTCX trung bình của tất cả sinh viên trong và sau khóa học, nhóm nghiên cứu đã chọn có chủ đích một số ứng viên để phỏng vấn, dựa trên tiêu chí những sinh viên có mức TTCX tăng nhiều nhất, tăng ít nhất, và gần như giữ nguyên. Dữ liệu phỏng vấn cho thấy đa số các sinh viên này cải thiện khả năng nhìn nhận quan điểm của người khác, và một số sinh viên trong nhóm này đã nâng cao khả năng điều chỉnh cảm xúc của mình. Mặt khác, năng lực quản trị cảm xúc dường như được cải thiện ít nhất. Thêm vào đó, phân phân tích các chiêm nghiệm của 20 sinh viên cho thấy các ý tưởng xuất hiện phổ biến nhất là các chiêm nghiệm về bản thân (những điểm yếu, các sự kiện không may trong quá khứ, các thói quen có ích/các thành tựu đã có, hoặc các dự định cải thiện bản thân trong tương lai), và các chia sẻ về lợi ích của việc thực hành mindfulness (thấu hiểu hơn hay giải thoát khỏi những cảm xúc tiêu cực).

Từ khóa: Trí tuệ cảm xúc và Giao tiếp xã hội, chánh niệm, TEIQUÉ-SF (Bảng hỏi điều tra trí tuệ cảm xúc với tư cách là một đặc điểm-Mẫu ngắn), thay đổi về trí tuệ cảm xúc