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Assessment of emotional intelligence of agricultural students: A case from agricultural colleges of Ri-bhoi district, Meghalaya

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Abstract

Emotional Intelligence (EI) refers to the ability to understand, express, and manage emotions in oneself and others. It plays a vital role in personal, academic and professional success. In education, EI supports better mental health, teamwork, leadership and overall performance. Studying EI among agriculture students helps explain how their emotional skills influence learning, stress management, and future work effectiveness. This understanding can guide the development of training programs that strengthen EI, helping students become confident, resilient agricultural professionals. Under this backdrop the present study was undertaken with the following objectives i) To assess the current Emotional Intelligence levels of Agricultural Students ii) To compare Emotional Intelligence level between male and female of agricultural students. The research design was survey design with cross-sectional time horizon. The locale of the study was Umiam and Kyrdekulai. Convenience sampling was adopted and data were collected from 148 out of 280 students after informed consent using google survey. EI was assessed using Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT). The collected data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics and analyzed with SPSS. The study's findings indicate that a minority, specifically 26% of students, exhibit a low level of emotional intelligence. Notably, there is a noteworthy gender disparity, with male respondents demonstrating a higher level of emotional intelligence compared to their female counterparts. Training modules can be incorporated in graduate education programmed to improve EI.

Keywords: Agriculture students, emotional intelligence, gender, Schutte self report emotional intelligence test (SSEIT)

Introduction

Emotions such as happiness, fear, anger, and sadness are fundamental to human life and shape individual behavior and social interactions. The concept of emotional intelligence (EI) defined as the ability to perceive, understand, and regulate emotions to promote intellectual and emotional growth, provides a framework for understanding these differences (Mayer *et al.*, 2004) [7]. EI integrates both cognitive and affective domains, extending beyond traditional intelligence to include emotional awareness and management (Schutte *et al.*, 1998) [12]. Unlike general intelligence, EI is dynamic and can be developed over time, contributing significantly to emotional well-being, academic achievement, mental health and overall life success (Barrett *et al.*, 2001; Parker *et al.*, 2004) [3, 8].

In the context of agricultural education, emotional intelligence is increasingly recognized as essential for

developing competent and resilient professionals. Despite its importance, limited research has focused on assessing EI among agriculture students, where technical training has traditionally been prioritized over socio-emotional skills (Akers *et al.*, 2004) [2]. Assessing EI can enhance students' communication, leadership, teamwork and decision-making abilities while improving stress management and well-being (Brackett *et al.*, 2011) [4]. Therefore, this study aims to assess the level of emotional intelligence among agriculture students in Ri Bhoi district of Meghalaya and examine variations across different groups, contributing to more holistic and adaptive agricultural education.

Objectives

- To assess the current Emotional Intelligence levels of Agricultural Students.
- To compare Emotional Intelligence level between male and female students.

Methodology

Table 1: Research design

Research philosophy: Interpretivism	
Research approach: Deduction	
Methodological choice: Mixed methods	
Strategy: Survey research	
Time horizon: Cross-sectional	
Techniques and procedures	Study area: College of Post Graduate Studies in Agricultural Sciences, Umiam, Meghalaya and College of Agriculture, Kyrdemkulai
	Research respondents: Students of Agriculture sciences
	Sample inclusion criteria: All student enrolled in academic year of 2020-24
	Data collection method: Online survey method
	Tools: SSEIT Questionnaires using Google forms
	Sampling method: Convenience sampling
	Sample size: 148
	Response rate: 52.8%
Data analysis tools: IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 23) and MS-Excel (2021)	

The details of the research methodology is given in the table 1. The study followed an interpretivism philosophy and used a deductive approach. A mixed-method design was chosen, and the research strategy was survey design using a cross-sectional time frame. The study was conducted at the College of Post Graduate Studies in Agricultural Sciences, Umiam, and the College of Agriculture, Kyrdemkulai in Ri Bhoi district of Meghalaya. The respondents were agriculture students, and all students enrolled during 2020–2024 were included as the sample criteria. The sample comprised 148 students out of 280 including UG, PG and PhD, with a sound response rate of 52.8%. Data were collected through an online survey using Google Forms. The collected data were analysed using IBM SPSS (version 23) and MS Excel (2021). Emotional intelligence of agricultural students was measured using a scale Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT). The scale includes 33

statements designed to capture student emotional intelligence level, assessed on a five-point Likert continuum: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Disagree nor Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree, assigned score of 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. For negatively word statement, reverse scoring was applied. Responded were categorized into three groups based on their scores, using cumulative square root frequency method.

Results and Discussion

Table 2 shows that most respondents (48.6%) were in the 21–23 years age group, followed by 24–26 years (24.3%). The majority students were male (62.2%), while females accounted for 37.8%. Most respondents were M.Sc students (40.5%), followed by UG (39.2%) and PhD (20.3%). A higher proportion of respondents were from COA, Kyrdemkulai (39.2%), followed by SNRM (23.0%), SSS (19.6%), SCI (14.2%), and SCP (4.1%).

Table 2: Demographic Profile of students (n=148)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age (years)	≤20	24	16.2
	21–23	72	48.6
	24–26	36	24.3
	≥27	16	10.8
Gender	Male	92	62.2
	Female	56	37.8
Education Level	UG	58	39.2
	M.Sc	60	40.5
	PhD	30	20.3
School	COA, Kyrdemkulai	58	39.2
	SNRM	34	23.0
	SSS	29	19.6
	SCI	21	14.2
	SCP	6	4.1

Note: COA- College of Agriculture, SNRM-School of Natural Resource Management, SSS- School of Social Sciences, SCI- School of Crop Improvement and SCP- School of Crop Protection.

Emotional Intelligence levels of Agricultural Students

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents Based on Level of Emotional Intelligence (EI) (n=148)

Level of EI	Score Range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Low	92–116.47	39	26
Medium	116.48–127.65	68	46
High	127.66–147	41	28
Total		148	100

Table 3 showed that out of 148 respondents, 68 (46%) had a medium level of emotional intelligence, followed by 41 (28%) with high and 39 (26%) with low levels, indicating that majority of respondents possessed a moderate level of emotional intelligence. These findings are consistent with the theoretical framework of emotional intelligence proposed by Goleman (1995) ^[5] who emphasized that emotional intelligence develops over time through learning and experience. The predominance of a medium level of emotional intelligence suggests that most respondents are still in the process of developing their emotional understanding and regulation abilities. Further, the presence of a considerable proportion of respondents with high emotional intelligence (28%) indicates that some individuals have developed stronger emotional intelligence. At the same

time, the existence of 26% respondents with low emotional intelligence highlights the need for interventions such as training, counselling or educational programs to enhance emotional intelligence levels among students. These results are further supported by the ability-based model of emotional intelligence developed by Salovey and Mayer (1990) ^[11], which suggests that emotional intelligence can be enhanced through learning and practice. Additionally, Mayer *et al.* (2004) ^[7] further emphasized that emotional intelligence is a set of abilities that can be developed and improved over time.

Emotional Intelligence level between male and female students

Study Hypothesis

H₀- There is no significant difference in the Emotional Intelligence level between male and female.

H₁- There is significant difference in the Emotional Intelligence level between male and female.

Table 4: Hypothesis Test Summary

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig. ^{a,b}	Decision
1	The distribution of EIN is the same across categories of Gender.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	.002	Reject the null hypothesis.
a. The significance level is .050.				
b. Asymptotic significance is displayed.				

A Mann–Whitney U test was conducted to compare emotional intelligence (EIN) between male and female respondents. The results (Table 4) showed a significant difference between the groups ($U = 1801.000$, $Z = -3.065$, $p = 0.002$). The mean rank for males (82.92) was higher than that for female students (60.66), indicating that male students had higher emotional intelligence than female students.

Table 5: Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test Summary

Total N	148
Mann-Whitney U	1801.000
Wilcoxon W	3397.000
Test Statistic	1801.000
Standard Error	252.876
Standardized Test Statistic	-3.065
Asymptotic Sig.(2-sided test)	.002

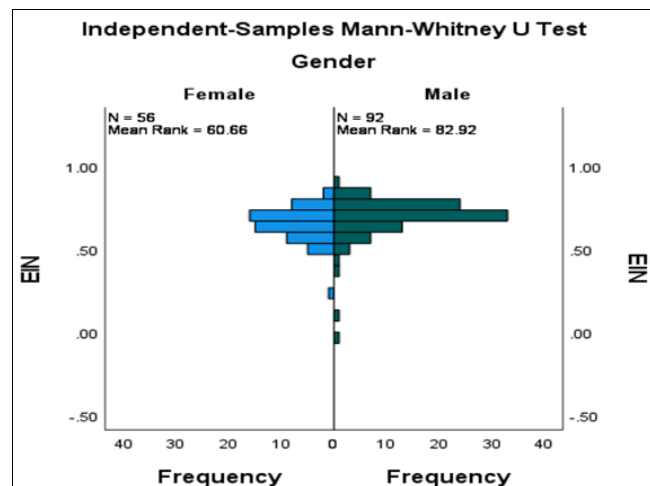


Fig 1: Independent Sample Mann-Whitney U Test for male and female

So, present study revealed a statistically significant difference in emotional intelligence (EI) across gender, with male respondents exhibiting higher mean rank scores than female respondents among agricultural students. This indicates that emotional intelligence varied significantly between gender groups within the agricultural academic context. However, existing literature presents inconsistent findings. Kafetsios (2004) ^[6] reported that females scored significantly higher in emotional intelligence. Similarly, Patel (2017) ^[9] found that female students possessed stronger emotional intelligence than males. These findings contradict the results of the present study, where male

agricultural students demonstrated relatively higher emotional intelligence.

Conversely, some studies support the present findings. Ahmad *et al.* (2009) ^[1] reported higher emotional intelligence among males, particularly in emotional self-regulation. Likewise, Rao and Komala (2017) ^[10] observed that males exhibited higher emotional intelligence than females among youth, the present study aligns with the direction of these findings among agricultural students.

A critical interpretation suggests that gender differences in emotional intelligence among agricultural students may be influenced by the nature of their academic environment, which often emphasizes field-based learning, problem-solving, and practical exposure. Such experiences may enhance emotional self-regulation and self-awareness, particularly among male students, as also suggested by Ahmad *et al.* (2009) ^[1].

Conclusion

Majority of agricultural students possess a moderate level of emotional intelligence, indicating considerable scope for further improvement through targeted interventions and training programmes. A significant gender difference was observed, with male agricultural student demonstrating higher emotional intelligence compared to female. These findings highlight the need to integrate emotional intelligence development into agricultural education to enhance students personal, academic and professional competencies, ultimately contributing to more effective and resilient future agricultural professionals.

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