

*Using Emotional and Multiple Intelligences to Predict Graduate Online
Students Connectedness*

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the use of online learning in all areas of academia. Colleges were thrust into converting on-ground classes to online venues, creating a need to examine the needs of the learners differently. What is not known is how different intelligence strengths can influence the students' ability to connect to their online learning environment is fundamental to their success (Bollinger & Merindale, 2004). Carthy and colleagues (2022) noted that the need for student support in online education included the coaching of emotional intelligence (EI) strategies, which the participants in the study reported as having a positive effect on academics. The connection between EI and the theory of multiple intelligences is pronounced, especially in exploring Gardner's definitions (Gardner, 2006) of interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences, which correspond with the interpersonal skills and self-awareness constructs of EI (see Goleman, 2005). Using the theoretical foundation of the Community of Inquiry (Garrison et al., 2010), the researcher poses the premise that it is not known if, or to what extent, emotional and multiple intelligences predict graduate school students' sense of connectedness in their online learning coursework. A quantitative predictive correlational study involving online graduate school students from a large university is proposed for the study. The use of a regression analysis procedure using the statistical package for the social science (SPSS) software will provide an analysis of the correlation between the major domains of emotional and multiple intelligences as predictors of graduate school students' sense of connectedness in their coursework.

Keywords: Community of Inquiry, Emotional Intelligence, Multiple Intelligences, Online Learning, Quantitative Predictive Correlational Study, Regression Analysis

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Introduction

Bollinger and Merindale (2004) noted that distance learners have a lower retention rate than students in traditional learning environments. One of the factors associated with this phenomenon is student satisfaction. Satisfaction with an online course has been associated with multiple factors including communication and connectedness with peers and the faculty members. Berenson and colleagues (2008) discussed learning as a function of a student's emotional response to the learning environment. It has been noted that student success in an online class is related multiple psychological factors including emotional self-regulation. Mohamed and colleagues (2022) reported there is a correlation between under college students' emotional intelligence (EI) and overall mental health. Additionally, researchers have found a significant correlation between high levels of EI and academic performance (Rai & Khanal, 2017). These studies were focused on EI whereas Andrei (2023) presented a study on the interactions between EI, spiritual intelligence, and education.

Literature Review

Self-care is universally accepted as important for individuals, especially in highly stressful situations including academia. Loi and Pryce (2022) noted that the stress of college coursework coupled with the pressure to achieve can lead to a lack of sleep and life stresses. The combination of all these stresses can lead to academic burnout, which includes the key dimensions of emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and a reduction in efficacy (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). In their study, Loi and Pryce explored the relationships between academic burnout, well-being, EI, and mindful self-care. Their study data indicated there is a relationship between EI and mindful self-care, which highlights the value of both of the variables.

Carthy and colleagues (2022) found that EI coaching to support university students had a positive effect on academic achievement. In a mixed method study, the researchers stated that participants indicated positive results with the coaching and their wellbeing. Other researchers have presented the use of EI as a means for testing and evaluating social and healthcare student selections (Pienimaa et al., 2023). Pienimaa and colleagues noted that previous researchers had presented EI as a tool to assess the potential applicant's ability to be successful in social care and healthcare studies. These studies presented support for the value of EI in supporting and assessing college students.

Online learners can struggle with being connected in an online classroom environment (Zimmerman & Nimon, 2017). The premise that being connected to a community in the online classroom has been supported by researchers. Zhang and Renshaw (2019) postulated that college students who exhibit high levels of agreeableness and extraversion as measured by the College Student Subjective Wellbeing Questionnaire (CSSWQ). The personality traits of agreeableness and extraversion align to the interpersonal intelligence as presented in the work of Howard Gardner (2006). Gardner discussed a ninth intelligence (existential), which aligns to spiritual intelligence research conducted by other scholars (e.g., Amran, 2022; Vancea, 2014).

Amram (2022) presented an argument for the validity of spiritual intelligence as it meets the criteria used to establish other intelligences espoused by Gardner as well as EI. Several spiritual intelligence scales have been developed to address the thinking related to existential

processing of life in spiritual terms. The instruments that have been developed to date show a correlation to EI, which also is connected to the parameters of multiple intelligences (MI).

Conclusion

The proposed study will explore the correlation between graduate school students' levels of EI, MI, and their sense of connectedness as measured by the Online Student Connectedness Survey (OCSS). The EI instrument can also provide an association between spiritual intelligence (King et al., 2012), which can add to the usefulness of this study. The studies noted in the review of the literature were focused on undergraduate school students, which creates the opportunity for the proposed study to help address a gap in the current literature.

Method and Design

The quantitative approach seeks to determine the relationship between two or more variables (Rahman, 2016). Three validated instruments used in previous quantitative research (Armstrong, 2000; Wong & Law, 2002; Zimmerman & Nimon, 2017) will be used to measure the variables in this study. The research design employed for this study is a correlational-predictive design. Asamoah, 2014 asserted that the correlation design is employed not only to discover the relationships between variables but can also help researchers "predict how one variable might predict another" (p. 50). The EI and MI instruments will be used to determine if or to what extent there is a relationship to students' online student connectedness as measured by the OCSS.

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