

Emotional Intelligence: Historical Origins, Theoretical Models, and Contemporary Research - A Critical Perspective

Neha Shukla¹; Dr. Vinita Gupta²

¹Research Scholar, ²(Prof.) Supervisor

^{1,2} Research Centre: DDMPG College, Firozabad
Dr. Bheemrao Ambedkar University, Agra

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Abstract: The concept of Emotional Intelligence (EI) has evolved significantly over the past century, transforming from early notions of social intelligence to a multi-dimensional psychological construct with vast applications in education, psychology, and organizational studies. This paper traces the historical development of EI, beginning with Thorndike's idea of social intelligence in the 1920s, to the formalization of the concept by Salovey and Mayer in 1990, and its popularization by Goleman in the mid-1990s. Through a critical review of major theoretical models—ability, mixed, and trait—the study analyzes how each framework interprets emotional competencies. Additionally, it examines empirical research across global and Indian contexts, highlighting patterns, gaps, and future directions. The goal is to provide a comprehensive and analytical understanding of EI's theoretical evolution, research depth, and practical implications.

Keywords: *Emotional Intelligence, History, Salovey and Mayer, Daniel Goleman, Trait Model, Analytical Review, Theoretical Evolution.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Emotional Intelligence is a very important factor in everyone's life. According to Goleman, emotional intelligence contributes 80% to a person's success, while intelligence (IQ) contributes only 20%. This shows how important emotional intelligence is in our lives. The growing focus on emotional intelligence proves that success in life, education, and career is not based only on mental ability, but also on emotional awareness, self-control, and social skills. Since 1990, emotional intelligence has been a deep subject of academic research. As a result, various models and applications have been developed in the fields of psychology, education, organizational behaviour, and mental health.

Nowadays, many people suffer from emotional problems like anxiety, depression, separation, and stress. Most of these issues happen because of poor emotional management. If a person wants to stay away from such psychological and mental health problems, they must learn how to manage and control their emotions properly. Understanding emotions, controlling them, and handling

them according to the situation has become very important for everyone today.

According to a report by the Government of India, 56 million Indians (about 4.5%) suffer from depression, and 38 million (about 3.5%) suffer from anxiety disorders. As per the National Institute of Health (NIH), around 15% of Indian adults need active mental health intervention. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2023), around 280 million people worldwide are affected by depression. In the United States, depression is the leading cause of disability among people aged 15 to 44 (as per the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, 2023).

Reports also show that in recent years, the risk of suicide has increased, and a major reason behind this is people not being able to manage their emotions effectively.

Emotional Intelligence plays an important role in dealing with stress and depression. It is the ability to understand, manage, and use emotions in a healthy way, which helps people cope with pressure and emotional challenges in life.

According to several studies, individuals with high emotional intelligence are able to balance their emotions effectively along with rational thinking, and they tend to feel less stress in difficult situations. The five key components of

emotional intelligence are important for managing stress effectively, developing time management skills, and facing challenging situations with confidence.

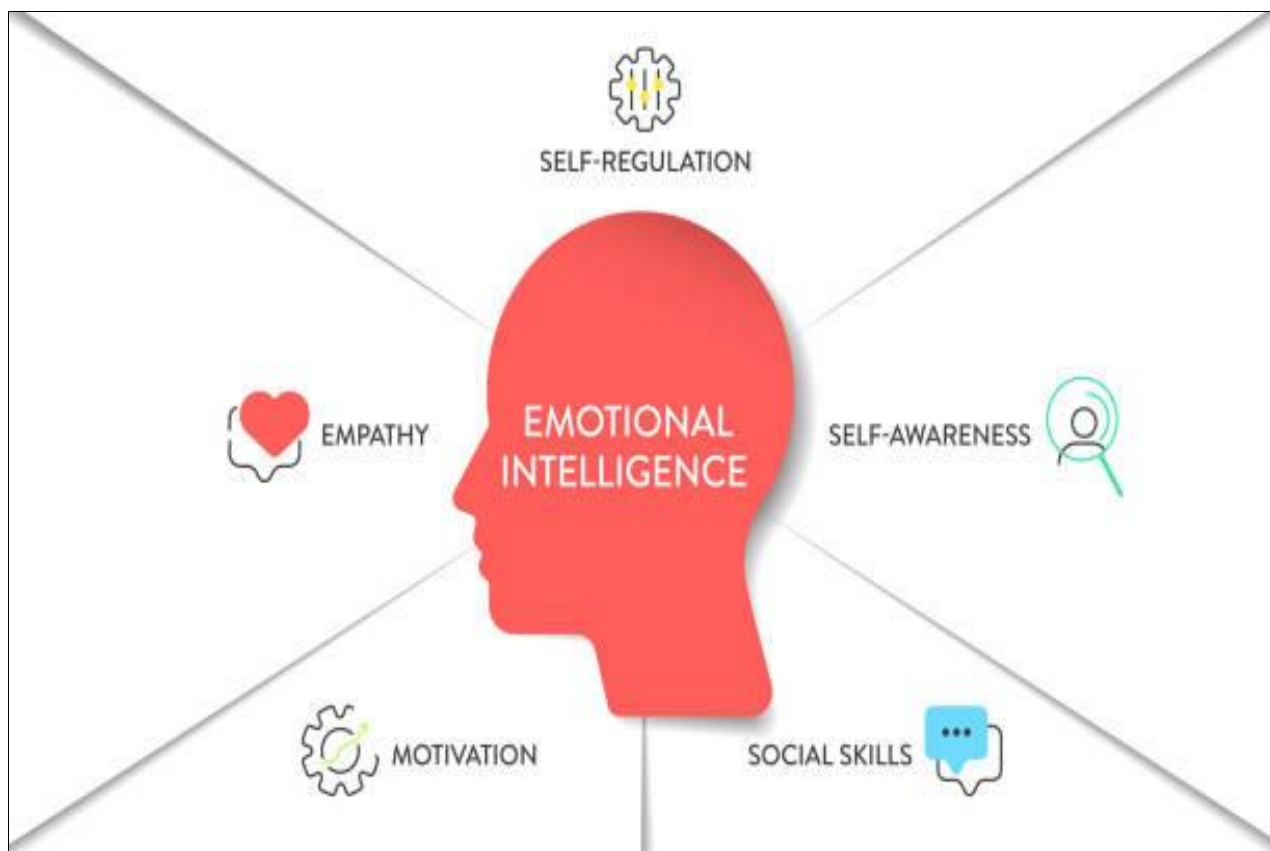


Fig 1 Emotional Intelligence

Source:<https://www.istockphoto.com/photos/emotional-intelligence>.

The objective of this research paper is to describe the history of Emotional Intelligence, review the major theoretical frameworks, and analyze key empirical studies.

II. HISTORY OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

The evolution of Emotional Intelligence (EI) is as old as human civilization itself. Its roots can be traced back to early human societies, including cave dwellers and hunting groups, where emotional awareness, adaptation, and cooperation were essential for survival and functioning. The importance of emotional expression for survival was first formally recognized by Charles Darwin in the 1870s. In his work, he emphasized how emotions help humans adapt and thrive.

The idea of Emotional Intelligence grew out of earlier theories about intelligence and how it is measured. In the early 20th century, psychologists mainly focused on cognitive intelligence—things like memory, logical thinking, and problem-solving. However, Edward Thorndike (1914) was among the first to highlight the role of non-cognitive abilities, introducing the term social intelligence, which he defined as the ability to understand and manage people effectively.

Later, David Wechsler (1943), a pioneer in IQ testing, also noted that non-intellectual factors are important for life

success. Unfortunately, these early insights were mostly overlooked until Howard Gardner introduced his Theory of Multiple Intelligences in 1983. He proposed that human intelligence includes several types—two of which, intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence, closely relate to the idea of EI. Gardner argued that these emotional and social skills are just as important as traditional IQ.

In 1985, Robert Sternberg, a psychologist at Yale, expanded this idea further with his concept of practical intelligence, another element linked to EI. In the following years, psychologists like Reuven Bar-On, Saarni, and Cherniss emphasized that emotional intelligence includes abilities such as maintaining healthy relationships, improving learning, enhancing well-being, and boosting personal performance.

The term "Emotional Intelligence" itself was formally introduced by John Mayer and Peter Salovey in 1990, who are credited with giving it a scientific foundation.

The popularization of EI came through Daniel Goleman's best-selling book *"Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ"*, which reached a global audience. Goleman's work helped people understand that EI is a vital factor in both personal and professional success.

Since then, the field has continued to grow, with more research and practical use in education, business, psychology and leadership.

In summary, the history of Emotional Intelligence reflects a shift from focusing only on thinking and logic to recognizing the power of emotions in shaping intelligence, relationships, and overall well-being. (IJRAR1904810 International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews (IJRAR) www.ijrar.org)

A. Theoretical Frameworks of Emotional Intelligence:

➤ The Ability Model (1990)

The Ability Model of Emotional Intelligence, developed by Peter Salovey and John Mayer, explains emotional intelligence as a set of mental skills that help individuals understand and manage emotions. According to this model, people differ in how well they can recognize emotional signals and use them to make decisions and behave appropriately. Unlike models that see emotional intelligence as part of someone's personality, this model views emotional intelligence as a learnable ability—something that can be practiced and improved over time.

This model is structured around four branches, each representing a different aspect of emotional processing:

- **Perceiving Emotions:** This part is about being able to notice and understand emotions in yourself and others. It includes recognizing feelings through things like facial expressions, body movements, and tone of voice.
- **Using Emotions to Facilitate Thought:** This skill helps you use emotions to enhance thinking tasks such as solving problems, making smart decisions, and being creative.
- **Understanding Emotions:** This involves knowing how emotions work, how they can shift from one feeling to another, and what deeper meanings or causes those emotions might have.
- **Managing Emotions:** This means being able to manage your own emotions and help others with theirs in a healthy way. It includes staying calm under pressure, building strong relationships, and communicating effectively with others.

✓ Measurement tool- MSCEIT (Mayer Salovey)

➤ Mixed Model of Emotional Intelligence

The Mixed Model of Emotional Intelligence brings together both emotional skills and personality traits. Unlike models that focus only on one aspect, this approach provides a more complete picture of emotional intelligence. It suggests that emotional intelligence includes not just the ability to recognize, understand, and control emotions, but also how these emotional skills work along with qualities like motivation, positive thinking, and interpersonal abilities.

B. Main Features of the Mixed Model of Emotional Intelligence-

- **Blends Skills and Traits:** Unlike the Ability Model, which focuses only on emotional skills, or the Trait Model, which looks at how people view their emotional qualities,

the Mixed Model combines both perspectives. It considers what people can do emotionally and who they are as individuals.

- **Broader Definition of Emotional Intelligence:** This model explains emotional intelligence in a more holistic way. It includes emotional and social abilities as well as personality traits that influence how people emotionally respond and interact with others.
- **Focus on Leadership and Performance:** Daniel Goleman's Mixed Model especially highlights how emotional intelligence contributes to leadership and strong performance in areas such as business, education, and team management.

C. Four Domains of Emotional Intelligence

According to The Knowledge Academy, emotional intelligence is divided into four key domains:

- **Emotional Resilience** – Handling stress and pressure effectively
- **Self-Management** – Controlling your emotions and actions
- **Social Awareness** – Understanding the emotions of others
- **Relationship Management** – Building and maintaining positive relationships

D. Personal and Social Competencies

Goleman's model also categorizes emotional intelligence into:

- **Personal Competencies:** Includes self-awareness, self-regulation, and motivation.
- **Social Competencies:** Includes empathy and social skills.
- **Examples of Mixed Models of Emotional Intelligence**

➤ Goleman's Model (1995)

This model highlights five Main elements of emotional intelligence.

- **Knowing your own emotions (self-awareness)**
- **Self-regulation**
- **Motivation**
- **Empathy**
- **Social skills**

These components form the foundation of Goleman's theory, emphasizing the role of emotional intelligence in personal and professional success.

➤ Boyatzis-Goleman Model

As described by *Knowledge Evolved*, this version, developed in collaboration with Richard Boyatzis, organizes emotional intelligence into four key areas:

- **Self-awareness**
- **Self-management**
- **Social awareness**
- **Relationship management**

This framework is widely used in leadership and organizational development programs.

➤ *Bar-On Model*

Developed by Reuven Bar-On, this model focuses on:

- Internal emotional skills
- How we relate to others
- The ability to handle change
- Coping with stress
- Maintaining a positive outlook

In short, the Mixed Model gives a well-rounded picture of emotional intelligence by including both the skills needed to manage emotions and the personality traits that influence how those skills are used in everyday life.

E. Trait Model of Emotional Intelligence

The Trait Model of Emotional Intelligence focuses on how people see and describe their own emotional strengths and tendencies, rather than measuring what they can actually do. It is based on personality and treats emotional intelligence as a group of emotional traits and self-beliefs that are part of a person's overall character.

Unlike the Ability Models, which focus on how well someone can process and manage emotions, the Trait Model emphasizes personal emotional style and self-perception.

Proposed by: K. V. Petrides and Adrian Furnham

➤ *Key Concepts of the Trait Model*

- **Self-Perception:** Trait emotional intelligence is based on how individuals think about their own emotional abilities, not necessarily how skilled they actually are.
- **Personality Traits:** This model considers emotional intelligence to be made up of personality traits, rather than cognitive or thinking-based abilities.
- **Subjectivity:** According to this model, emotional experiences are subjective, meaning they feel different for each person. A person's own view of their emotional strengths is central to this approach.
- **Self-Report Measures:** The Trait Model is typically measured using self-report questionnaires, where individuals answer questions about themselves. One commonly used tool is the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue).

Table 1 Comparative Overview of EI Models-

Feature	Ability Model	Mixed Model	Trait Model
Originators	Salovey & Mayer	Daniel Goleman	Petrides & Furnham
Nature	Cognitive ability	Abilities + Traits	Personality-based
Focus	Processing and reasoning	Competencies and social skills	Emotional self-perceptions
Measurement	MSCEIT (performance-based)	ECI, self/peer ratings	TEIQue (self-report)
Application Contexts	Academics, research	Leadership, HR, training	Counseling, personality studies
Scientific Rigor	High	Moderate	Moderate

The different theories of emotional intelligence provide a wide and valuable range of ways to understand how emotions work in our lives. The ability model focuses on emotional thinking skills that can be tested and measured. The next model highlights useful emotional and social skills in daily life while the trait model reflex personal emotional patterns and personality traits. To fully understand and apply emotional intelligence in fields like education and psychology combining the strength of all three models can offer the most complete and useful approach.

III. GLOBAL AND INDIAN RESEARCH ON EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE:

Over the past few decades, Emotional Intelligence (EI) has emerged as a significant construct in psychology and behavioural sciences, drawing global academic and practical attention. The early validation of EI as a measurable ability can be attributed to the foundational work of Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2000–2004). Through a series of empirical studies using the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT), they established EI as a distinct cognitive-emotional ability. Their findings revealed that EI positively correlates with academic achievement,

psychological well-being, and interpersonal competence, laying the groundwork for further exploration across domains.

In the workplace and leadership context, EI gained considerable momentum following Daniel Goleman's (1998) extensive case studies in corporate settings. Goleman's research indicated that emotional intelligence accounts for nearly 90% of leadership success, surpassing traditional predictors like IQ and technical expertise. Expanding on this, Joseph and Newman (2010) conducted a meta-analysis of numerous studies, confirming that EI has a moderate to strong association with job performance, particularly in roles that require frequent emotional interaction and regulation.

In the academic field, researchers such as Parker et al. (2004) found that students with high levels of emotional intelligence exhibited greater academic motivation, resilience, and adaptability to university life. Further solidifying these findings, O'Boyle et al. (2011) conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis involving 191 studies, which affirmed that EI is a strong predictor of both job performance and leadership effectiveness across various professional sectors. Globally, researchers have employed a range of EI

assessment tools, including MSCEIT, EQ-i, TEIQue, and Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI), with studies differing based on whether they utilized self-report instruments or ability-based assessments, in alignment with the theoretical models guiding their research.

IV. RESEARCH ON EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT

In the Indian context, interest in Emotional Intelligence has witnessed significant growth over the last 15–20 years, especially in disciplines such as education, teacher training, adolescent development, and organizational psychology. Indian researchers have increasingly recognized the relevance of EI in academic and professional success, prompting the development of indigenous tools and context-specific investigations.

In terms of academic performance, early Indian contributions include the work of Chadha and Singh (2001), who developed and standardized an EI assessment tool tailored to Indian adolescents. Similarly, Sharma and Meenakshi (2005) observed that students with higher levels of EI demonstrated better classroom behaviour, emotional adjustment, and academic performance.

The role of emotional intelligence among teachers and educators has also been extensively studied. Nath and Pradhan (2012) conducted research on Indian managers and educators, reporting a strong positive link between EI and job satisfaction and professional performance. Adding to this, Kauts and Saroj (2014) studied school teachers and concluded

that those with higher EI experienced reduced occupational stress and demonstrated greater teaching effectiveness.

In the domain of career guidance and decision-making, Mishra and Mohapatra (2016) investigated the relationship between EI and career indecisiveness in Indian adolescents. Their findings suggested that students with higher emotional intelligence were better equipped to make realistic career choices, showing greater clarity and confidence in goal setting.

Indian scholars have also underlined the need for cultural adaptation in the study of emotional intelligence. Recognizing that emotional expression and regulation are influenced by socio-cultural norms, researchers have emphasized the importance of using culturally appropriate tools. Popular EI measurement instruments in India include the Mangal Emotional Intelligence Inventory, Chadha's Emotional Intelligence Scale, and Singh's Emotional Intelligence Inventory, all of which have been validated for Indian populations and are widely used in educational and psychological research.

In conclusion, both global and Indian research converge on the significance of emotional intelligence as a key determinant of success in academic, professional, and interpersonal domains. While global studies have offered robust methodological frameworks and cross-cultural insights, Indian research has contributed valuable contextual depth, emphasizing the cultural nuances of emotional processing and the need for indigenous evaluation tools.

➤ Analytical Observations-

Table 2 Comparison of Global and Indian Studies on Emotional Intelligence

Focus Area	Global Studies	Indian Studies
Measurement Tools	Highly standardized (e.g., MSCEIT, EQ-i, TEIQue)	Combination of standardized and indigenous tools
Domains of Research	Workplace, leadership, academic success	Education, career, and mental health
Research Rigor	Emphasis on longitudinal and meta-analytic studies	Predominantly cross-sectional in nature
Gaps	Cultural diversity underrepresented	Limited application of ability-based tools
Strength	Strong empirical base across multiple disciplines	Increasing relevance in youth education and guidance

Note. MSCEIT = Mayer–Salovey–Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test; EQ-i = Emotional Quotient Inventory; TEIQue = Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire.

Research on emotional intelligence has advanced significantly across the world and is gradually gaining momentum in India as well. International studies are often recognized for their strong research methodologies and well-validated findings, whereas Indian studies offer valuable insights that are deeply rooted in local culture and context-specific situations. However, in India, there is still a need for more in-depth and long-term research, particularly studies that involve practical interventions or training programs. Future research should focus more on how students can develop emotional skills and enhance their self-confidence.

V. RESEARCH GAPS AND FUTURE DIRECTION IN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE RESEARCH

Although a considerable amount of literature supports the value of Emotional Intelligence (EI) across academic achievement, workplace success, and personal well-being, several important areas remain insufficiently explored. Many existing studies have focused on general relationships between EI and performance outcomes, but have not deeply examined how, why, or under what conditions EI produces

those outcomes. For example, there is limited understanding of the developmental pathways of EI, the influence of culture on emotional processing, and the role of EI in shaping long-term behavioural and psychological outcomes.

In the Indian context, while interest in EI is steadily increasing, the research often lacks methodological depth, cultural adaptation, and large-scale validation. Most studies rely heavily on self-report tools without triangulation through behavioural or observational methods. Moreover, longitudinal and experimental designs, which are essential for establishing cause-effect relationships and tracking emotional development over time, are still rare.

Identifying and addressing these gaps is not only important for refining theoretical frameworks but also vital for designing effective educational interventions, mental health programs, and career guidance systems. Especially in a culturally and linguistically diverse country like India, there is an urgent need for more context-sensitive research that reflects the real emotional experiences and challenges of its youth population. Filling these gaps will strengthen the application of EI across education, psychology, and policy-making, making it a more impactful and transformative tool.

VI. CONCLUSION

The journey of Emotional Intelligence (EI) from its early beginnings to how it's used today shows a major change in how we understand human abilities—beyond just IQ or academic intelligence. This review looked closely at the three main models of EI: the Ability Model, the Mixed Model, and the Trait Model, and explained their key features, tools used to measure them, and the research backing them.

Studies from around the world strongly support the idea that EI helps people do better in school, manage relationships, and succeed at work. In India, research on EI is increasing, but it's still limited in depth and quality—especially in areas like career choices, rural populations, and long-term studies with real-life training programs.

There are still some important gaps in Indian research, like the lack of tools suited to local culture, too much dependence on self-report surveys, and very few studies that follow people over time. This review highlights the need for a broader, more practical, and culturally aware approach to studying and using Emotional Intelligence—especially in developing countries like India, where emotional skills can help students grow, make better career choices, and improve education.

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