



Emotional intelligence (EI) of Primary School Administrators in Songkhla, Thailand: Levels and Demographic Comparisons

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Abstract

This quantitative research Educational Leadership study was designed to: 1) examine the emotional intelligence (EI) of school administrators in Songkhla, Thailand and 2) perform a comparative analysis of their age, academic qualification, and professional experience. The collected data mirrors the perceptions of teachers. There were 309 teachers in the sample, calculated from a population of 1,384 teachers using Yamane's formula. A stratified random sample technique was utilized according to school size, followed by basic random sampling via a lottery system. The research tool was a 37-item questionnaire with a 5-point rating scale that had a reliability value of .981. We looked at the data using the mean, standard deviation, t-test, and F-test, as well as the frequency and percentage.

Educational leaders exhibit high emotional intelligence (EI) and strong self-motivation, implying internal drive. Regional policymakers must adapt leadership programs to capitalize on this existing strength, focusing on advanced strategies instead of basic motivational training. These insights can guide leadership improvement efforts.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence (EI), School Administrators, Primary Education, Songkhla, Thailand, Teacher Perceptions

Introduction

Educational leadership today demands more than administrative efficiency; it requires sophisticated human skills to navigate turbulent political, technological, and social landscapes. Leaders with high emotional intelligence (EI) can manage their emotions, resolve conflicts with empathy, and

sustain collaborative environments, which is crucial for retaining high-quality teachers and ensuring positive learning outcomes.

In the 21st century, political, technological, social, and economic challenges persist. Thailand's 20-Year National Strategy (2018-2037) aims to equip workers with 21st century skills. Many believe boosting emotional intelligence (EI) is vital to achieving this. Globally, there is consensus that both emotional and academic skills are essential to adapt to the rapid changes of the digital age (National Strategy (2018-2037), 2018).

Over the past ten years, emotional intelligence (EI) has become an increasingly important part of mental health and work performance. The World Health Organization (2022) said that more people around the world are facing mental health problems such stress, anxiety, and depression. The National Economic and Social Development Council in Thailand (2024) said that one of the best ways to improve people's lives is to help them become more emotionally intelligent. This program's purpose is to make sure that everyone, regardless of age, stays healthy and encourages others to do the same. It emphasizes on mental and physical health, making ensuring that everyone can obtain mental health care, and stopping people from injuring themselves or killing themselves (United Nations, 2015).

Emotional intelligence (EI) plays an important role in education, especially in evaluating school leaders. Leaders with high emotional intelligence (EI) can manage their emotions, empathize with others, foster positive relationships, and handle stress. These abilities help create an environment where everyone can learn and collaborate effectively (Mental Health America, 2025). Developing emotional intelligence (EI) in educational leaders is essential for guiding schools in a rapidly changing world.

While the importance of Emotional intelligence (EI) is recognized globally, and in Thailand's national policy, its practical application is critical at the local level. The Songkhla Primary Educational Service Area Office 1 (2024) has recognized the necessity of fostering emotional intelligence (EI) among school administrators through continuous training and seminars designed to improve emotional competencies and leadership abilities. These programs are aimed to assist school administrators in operating their schools smoothly and efficiently even when circumstances are continually changing. Given this, emotional intelligence (EI) is thought to be a crucial trait for school leaders since it influences how well they accomplish their jobs and how well they work together. However, a critical problem persists: a lack of diagnostic data hinders effective policy. If administrative Emotional intelligence (EI) is unknown, it can lead to a higher teacher stress, reduce school morale, and failed reform efforts in the Songkhla region.

Numerous studies have examined the emotional intelligence (EI) of school administrators throughout various provinces. There are, however, not many studies that focus on the Songkhla area, which seeks to reform the way schools work and get teachers to work together. This study aims to assess the emotional intelligence (EI) of school administrators in the Songkhla Primary Educational Service Area Office 1, intending to utilize the results to enhance their professional competencies in this area.

Research objectives

1. To examine the emotional intelligence (EI) of school administrators of Songkhla region.
2. To compare their emotional intelligence (EI) based on their age, academic qualification, and professional experience.

Literature review: Emotional Intelligence (EI)

Defining Emotional Intelligence (EI)

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is broadly defined as the ability to perceive, manage, and utilize emotions effectively. This concept is underpinned by several foundational theories. For instance, Goleman (1998) focuses on perceiving feelings, fostering self-motivation, and managing emotions for positive outcomes. In contrast, the Salovey and Mayer (1990) model views EI as the ability to monitor and control feelings and use them to influence thoughts and actions. A third perspective, offered by Bar-On (2000), defines EI as a set of personal, emotional, and social abilities that influence life success through adaptation and empathy.

Conceptual Framework of EI in This Study

This research synthesizes concepts from multiple studies (Polanant (2022), Phonnuaytrakoon (2023), Drigas et al. (2023), and Filice and Weese (2024)) to create a specific EI framework for school administrators. Using criteria for consistency, comprehensiveness, and a 50% frequency threshold, the synthesis yielded four core components for this research's conceptual framework: Social Skills, Self-Regulation, Self-Motivation, Self-Awareness

Component Definitions

The four core components of Emotional Intelligence guiding this research are defined as follows: Social Skills (Ozbey and Gozeler, 2020) encompass abilities like planning, responsibility, assertiveness, communication, and problem-solving; Self-Regulation (Drigas et al. (2023) is the ability to manage one's own emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in various contexts.; Self-Motivation (Mwangi et al., 2024) is the internal psychological state that directs and sustains human behavior and is linked to the drive for

achievement; and finally, Self-Awareness (Bell, 2022) is the competence to evaluate and understand one's emotional strengths and limitations and their impact on the surrounding environment.

Methodology

Ethical Considerations

This research adhered to ethical guidelines, obtaining formal ethics approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the Graduate School of Thaksin University (COA No. TSU 2025_097 REC No.0211). All participants were assured informed consent, strict confidentiality, and anonymity throughout the study.

Population and Sample

The population comprised 1,348 teachers from the Office of Songkhla Primary Educational Service Area 1 during the academic year 2025. The sample consisted of 309 teachers from the Office of Songkhla Primary Educational Service Area 1 for the academic year 2025. Yamane's formula (Yamane, 1973) was used to figure out the sample size. A stratified random sample technique was utilized according to school size, followed by basic random sampling via a lottery system.

Operational Definition of Variables

The variables are operationally defined for measurement precision:

Variable Type	Variable	Operational Definition/ Measurement
Dependent	Emotional Intelligence (EI)	EI (4 components: Social Skills, Self-Regulation, Self-Motivation, Self-Awareness), perceived by teachers (37 items, 5-point scale).
	Age	Age group in years: < 31, 31 – 40, 41 – 50, > 50.
Independent	Academic Qualification	Highest degree achieved: Bachelor's degree vs. Higher than Bachelor's.
	Professional Experience	Experience in years: < 5, 5 – 10, > 10.

Research Tools and Tool Construction

Research Tool

The research instrument was a questionnaire with three parts, as follows:

Part 1: a list of three things that the respondents' demographic information should include: their age, academic qualification, and professional experience.

Part 2: a questionnaire with 37 questions that asks school administrators who work for the Office of Songkhla Primary Educational Service Area 1 to rate their emotional intelligence (EI). The questionnaire utilized a five-point Likert-type rating scale (Likert, 1967).

Tool Construction

The researcher reviewed relevant literature and previous studies on emotional intelligence (EI) to develop a conceptual framework and design a questionnaire for school administrators. Busayarat (2022) and Witirawat (2022) ensured that the questionnaire encompassed all the essential topics. The researcher provided the adviser the questionnaire to read and alter to make sure it was real, covered the proper themes, and used the right terminology.

Then, the Graduate School of Thaksin University was told to engage experts to use the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) approach to check that the content was real. They chose three experts and only kept objects that had IOC values between 0.67 and 1.00. If the IOC value of an item was below this range, it was changed or removed if necessary. Pilot testing was then conducted with a non-sample group of 30 teachers from a distinct educational area with similar characteristics to the target population. The reliability of the tool was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient (Cronbach, 1990), yielding a high score of $\alpha = 0.981$. Prior to the administration of the questionnaire to the sample group for data collection, it underwent additional adjustments.

Data Collection Procedures

This study was carried out over the course of one year, adhering to the subsequent steps. The researcher requested a certification letter and an introduction letter from the Graduate School of Thaksin University to present to the school administrators, seeking permission and cooperation in collecting data from the sample group. The researcher then scheduled appointments for the distribution and return of the questionnaires. Out of 309 distributed questionnaires, 294 were returned, representing a response rate of 95.15%. The researcher subsequently checked the accuracy and completeness of the data before proceeding with statistical analysis using a computer-based statistical software package.

Data Analysis and Statistical Methods

Data Analysis

The researcher examined all returned questionnaires for completeness and accuracy and then analyzed the data using a statistical software package. The data analysis was conducted in the following steps: (1) Analysis of personal factors, namely the three independent variables: age, academic qualification, and professional experience. The data were examined by computing the frequency and percentage; (2) Analysis of the emotional intelligence (EI) levels of school administrators. The data were

examined utilizing the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD). The obtained means were then interpreted according to a five-level interval scale based on the concept of interpreting mean scores by range; and (3) Comparative analysis of the emotional intelligence (EI) of school administrators categorized by variables.

Statistical Assumption Testing: Prior to conducting inferential analyses (t-test and ANOVA), statistical assumptions were tested.

- Normality: Assessed via the Shapiro-Wilk test.
- Homogeneity of Variances: Assessed via Levene's test.

Inferential Statistics

- Academic Qualification: Compared using the independent t-test.
- Age and Professional Experience: Compared using One-Way ANOVA. Significant differences were followed up with the Least Significant Difference (LSD) post-hoc test.

Research findings

1. The emotional intelligence (EI) of school administrators was determined to be very high. Self-motivation got the highest average score, followed by self-awareness and self-control. The average score for social skills was the lowest.

Table 1 The mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) of the emotional intelligence (EI) of school administrators, both overall and for each aspect.

No.	Emotional intelligence (EI) of School Administrators	n = 294		Level
		M	SD	
1	Social Skills	4.4193	0.6529	High
2	Self- regulation	4.4371	0.6623	High
3	Self-motivation	4.5143	0.5921	Highest
4	Self-awareness	4.4566	0.6400	High
Total		4.4569	0.6070	High

2. The results of comparing the emotional intelligence (EI) of school administrators categorized by age, academic qualification, and professional experience.

Table 2 A One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) comparison of the emotional intelligence (EI) of school administrators, classified by age, both overall and for each aspect.

Emotional intelligence							
No.	(EI) of School Administrators	Variance	df	SS	MS	F	Sig
1	Social Skills	Between	3	4.315	1.438	3.458*	.017
		Within	290	120.593	0.416		
		Total	293	124.907			
2	Self- regulation	Between	3	2.959	0.986	2.278	.080
		Within	290	125.564	0.433		
		Total	293	128.523			
3	Self-motivation	Between	3	1.440	0.480	1.374	.251
		Within	290	101.280	0.349		
		Total	293	102.720			
4	Self-awareness	Between	3	2.339	0.780	1.921	.126
		Within	290	117.671	0.406		
		Total	293	120.010			
Total		Between	3	2.630	0.877	2.414	.067
		Within	290	105.318	0.363		
		Total	293	107.948			

* Statistically significant at the .05 level

Table 3 Pairwise comparisons of the mean emotional intelligence scores of school administrators under the Songkhla Primary Educational Service Area Office 1, classified by age variable, specifically on the Social Skills dimension, using the Least Significant Difference (LSD) statistic.

No.	Age	Less than 31 years (M = 4.2727)	31-40 years (M = 4.5434)	41-50 years (M = 4.3273)	More than 50 years (M = 4.5258)
1	Less than 31 years (M = 4.2727)	-	.2707**	.0545	.2530*
2	31-40 years (M = 4.5434)	-	-	.2162*	.0177
3	41-50 years (M = 4.3273)	-	-	-	.1985
4	More than 50 years (M = 4.5258)	-	-	-	-

* Statistically significant at the .05 level

** Statistically significant at the .01 level

Table 4 A comparison of the mean (M) standard deviation (SD), and t-test results of the emotional intelligence (EI) of school administrators, categorized by academic qualification, both overall and for each aspect.

No.	Emotional intelligence (EI) of School Administrators	Educational level (n = 294)				t	Sig
		Bachelor's degree		Higher than a Bachelor's degree			
		n = 237		n = 57			
		M	SD	M	SD		
1	Social Skills	4.3993	0.6648	4.5024	0.5994	-1.070	.285
2	Self- regulation	4.4172	0.6736	4.5197	0.6118	-1.050	.295
3	Self-motivation	4.5156	0.5999	4.5088	0.5636	.078	.938
4	Self-awareness	4.4515	0.6534	4.4781	0.5859	-.281	.779
Total		4.4459	0.6189	4.5026	0.5574	-.633	.527

Table 5 A One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) comparison of the emotional intelligence (EI) of school administrators, classified by professional experience, both overall and for each aspect.

Emotional intelligence							
No.	(EI) of School Administrators	Variance	df	SS	MS	F	Sig
1	Social Skills	Between	2	1.627	0.814	1.920	.148
		Within	291	123.280	0.424		
		Total	293	124.907			
2	Self- regulation	Between	2	1.163	0.582	1.329	.266
		Within	291	127.360	0.438		
		Total	293	128.523			
3	Self-motivation	Between	2	0.443	0.221	.630	.533
		Within	291	102.277	0.351		
		Total	293	102.720			
4	Self-awareness	Between	2	1.385	0.692	1.698	.185
		Within	291	118.625	0.408		
		Total	293	120.010			
Total		Between	2	1.046	0.523	1.424	.242
		Within	291	106.902	0.367		
		Total	293	107.948			

Results and Discussion

The study's results showed that the school leaders had a lot of emotional intelligence (EI) in general (Table 1). Self-motivation got the greatest score when each part was looked at on its own. Next came self-awareness and self-control, and social skills had the lowest average score. These outcomes illustrate that school leaders may work hard to attain their goals and stay motivated and determined even when things get challenging. These traits are very important for leaders these days. The results are similar to those of Wongkanlaya and Intarak (2024), who looked at the emotional intelligence (EI) of school administrators and how well instructors worked together. They found that self-motivation was the most important factor. Furthermore, the findings align with the study by Simla

and Rattanasiraprapa (2022), which examined the emotional intelligence (EI) of school administrators, indicating that self-motivation was also very high.

The results of the comparison of emotional intelligence (EI) among school administrators, classified by age, academic qualification, and professional experience, are discussed as follows (Table 2).

Overall, the results showed that teachers of different ages didn't have very diverse views on how emotionally intelligent the school administrators were (Table 2). This phenomenon may be due to the fact that teachers of all ages possess sufficient expertise within the educational system to consistently assess and comprehend the emotional intelligence (EI) of administrators, regardless of their age. Also, people in this sector may have similar emotional intelligence (EI) features that affect how they lead. This might make teachers of all ages see and judge them the same way. The collaborative organizational culture in the local educational setting may also enable a cohesive assessment of the administrators' managerial efficacy. However, upon examining each component, significant differences were observed among teachers of varying ages at the .05 level regarding their assessments of the social skills dimension (Table 3). This could be because the teachers are of different ages and have varied levels of experience, which influences how they see what administrators do to build relationships, communicate, and work together. In this regard, older teachers may value working together and getting to know each other, whereas younger teachers may value being able to adjust and adapt. These findings indicate that school administrators ought to adjust their interpersonal dynamics and communication tactics to cater to instructors of diverse age groups, hence fostering effective collaboration. The results align with those of Boonsiri (2024), which found no significant differences in emotional intelligence (EI) across various age groups. They also align with the research conducted by Busayarat (2022), which demonstrated significant age-related differences in teachers' assessments of administrators' emotional intelligence (EI).

The comparison of the emotional intelligence (EI) of school administrators, categorized by academic qualification, indicated no significant disparities in instructors' perceptions, whether evaluated collectively or by individual component (Table 4). This consistency may arise from similar interactions and shared professional experiences between teachers and administrators across all academic qualifications, including standardized training and self-development activities that produce comparable emotional intelligence (EI) among administrators. These findings align with the studies by Witirawat (2022), which demonstrated that there were no differences in teachers' perceptions of administrators' emotional intelligence (EI) across various academic qualifications. However, they differ

from the study by Busayarat (2022), which indicated statistically significant variations among teachers of varying levels.

The comparison of the emotional intelligence (EI) of school administrators, categorized by professional experience, showed that teachers with different levels of experience did not notice any big differences in the administrators' emotional intelligence (EI), both in overall and for each aspect (Table 5). This may be due to the fact that all teachers receive training and growth in a standardized education system, which makes it easy to evaluate how well administrators are performing their duties. Also, administrators in the same area often work together on projects and share their experiences, which leads to similar management styles and ways of showing emotions. These findings are consistent with prior studies conducted by Thongyod and Thongprong (2023), and Phanphet and Lapcharoen (2023), all of which indicated that teachers' views of administrators' emotional intelligence (EI) remained unchanged with increased experience.

Conclusions

1. The study results on the emotional intelligence of school administrators under the Songkhla Primary Educational Service Area Office 1, overall, were at a high level. When considering each dimension individually, it was found that the Self-Motivation dimension had the highest mean score, followed by the Self-Awareness of Emotion dimension and the Self-Regulation of Emotion dimension, respectively. The Social Skills dimension had the lowest mean score.

2. The results of the comparison of emotional intelligence among school administrators under the Songkhla Primary Educational Service Area Office 1, classified by the variables of age, academic qualification, and professional experience, are as follows:

2.1 The results of the comparison of school administrators' emotional intelligence under the Songkhla Primary Educational Service Area Office 1, classified by age, found that overall, teachers of different ages did not differ in their opinions regarding the administrators' emotional intelligence. However, when considering the age variable by dimension, it was found that teachers of different ages did differ in their opinions regarding the administrators' emotional intelligence under the Songkhla Primary Educational Service Area Office 1 on the Social Skills dimension, with a statistically significant difference at the α level of .05.

2.2 The results of the comparison of school administrators' emotional intelligence under the Songkhla Primary Educational Service Area Office 1, classified by the variable of educational level,

found that overall and by dimension, teachers with different educational levels did not differ in their opinions regarding the administrators' emotional intelligence.

2.3 The results of the comparison of school administrators' emotional intelligence under the Songkhla Primary Educational Service Area Office 1, classified by the variable of work experience, found that overall and by dimension, teachers with different work experience did not differ in their opinions regarding the administrators' emotional intelligence.

Recommendations

Recommendations on management practices (Policymakers and Administrators)

1. The Area Office must revise Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements to prioritize systematic training in Social Skills and Self-Regulation over existing high-scoring competencies.
2. Implement focused training programs to enhance Social Skills, specifically addressing effective communication and collaboration with diverse teacher age and experience groups.
3. Standardize the use of 360-degree feedback to formally assess and integrate EI components into annual performance reviews and career progression criteria.

Recommendation for further research (Researchers)

1. Future study should investigate pragmatic approaches for enhancing the social competencies of school administrators, emphasizing action research or experimental initiatives.
2. Future study should investigate pragmatic approaches for enhancing the social competencies of school administrators, emphasizing action research or experimental initiatives. This would assist in pinpointing effective strategies to improve communication skills, foster relationships, and facilitate collaboration with school personnel.
3. Future research should examine the factors and methodologies that affect the motivation of school administrators to comprehend the mechanisms and structures of successful motivation. Then, the results could be used to establish rules or sample models for encouraging good leadership in other schools.

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