

Emotional Intelligence Among Post-Secondary Students in The Bahamas: Implications for Businesses

Antoinette P. Pinder-Darling
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9848-8707>
Jason K. Styles
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4629-0093>
University of The Bahamas

Theresa Adderley-Smith
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1211-4120>
Bahamas Baptist University College

Schell Stubbs
<https://orcid.org/0009-0009-8195-0377>
William J. Fielding
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5433-9673>
University of The Bahamas

doi: <https://doi.org/10.15362/ijbs.v32i1.650>

Abstract

This study examines trait emotional intelligence (EI) among post-secondary students in The Bahamas using the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test. Data were collected in Fall 2025 from 773 survey respondents at Bahamian institutions of higher education; after exclusions, 551 participants constituted the sample. The mean total EI score ($M = 125.6$, $SE = 0.58$) exceeded the published population benchmark of 124, $t_{551} = 2.72$, $p = .007$, 95%, though the effect size was small (Cohen's $d = 0.12$). One-way ANOVA revealed no statistically significant overall sex difference in total EI; however, females scored significantly higher than males on two subscales: Emotion Recognition from Self, $F_{1, 546} = 5.44$, $p = .02$, and Emotion Recognition from Others, $F_{1, 546} = 11.35$, $p < .001$. Item-level analysis identified prosocial appraisal and positive expectancy items as the highest-scoring domains, whereas emotional sharing and self-regulation items were comparatively lower. These findings are situated within the post-colonial, collectivistic socio-cultural context of The Bahamas and contribute to a growing body of EI research beyond Western normative samples, with implications for the Bahamian business environment.

Introduction

Emotional intelligence (EI), broadly understood as the capacity to perceive, understand, regulate, and strategically deploy

emotional information, has attracted substantial scholarly attention since Salovey and Mayer (1990) first formalised the construct. Across several decades of investigation, EI has been linked to academic

achievement, psychological well-being, relationship quality, and professional performance (MacCann et al., 2020; Mayer et al., 2008; Schutte et al., 2002). Despite this expansive literature, almost all EI studies have been conducted in Western, individualised, and highly industrialised societies, generating a significant gap in understanding how EI manifests in post-colonial, collectivistic settings (Gunkel et al., 2014; Sharma et al., 2017). The Commonwealth of The Bahamas offers a theoretically and practically instructive case. As a former British colony that achieved independence in 1973, the archipelago exhibits a distinctive blend of colonial institutional legacies and indigenous Caribbean cultural values, including strong communal orientations, family-centred social organisation, and pervasive Protestant Christian moral frameworks (Hofstede et al., 2002; Storr, 2004).

In Fall 2025, we administered a survey examining EI alongside experiences of corporal punishment and sexual behaviour as part of a broader study on the possible linkages among these domains. This article only considers the EI component of that investigation in the context of the Bahamian business environment.

Three research questions are addressed:

- (1) Do Bahamian post-secondary students' mean total EI scores differ significantly from the published population benchmark?
- (2) Are there sex differences in overall EI and subscale scores?
- (3) How do EI scores vary across age groups and item-level domains?

By drawing on a large, cross-institutional sample ($N = 551$) and reporting both aggregate and subscale findings, this study provides what is, to the authors' best knowledge, the most statistically rigorous population-level EI profile of Bahamian post-

secondary students to date and contributes novel evidence to the growing literature on EI in non-Western contexts.

Literature Review

Conceptual Foundations of Emotional Intelligence

The formal study of emotional intelligence originated with Salovey and Mayer's (1990) landmark article, which conceptualized EI as the ability to monitor one's own and others' emotions, to discriminate among feelings, and to use this information to guide thinking and action. Their subsequent four-branch ability model delineated four hierarchically organized capacities: perceiving emotions, using emotions to facilitate thought, understanding emotional knowledge, and managing emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). By situating EI within the established framework of traditional intelligence research, Mayer and Salovey distinguished EI from personality traits and general cognitive ability and argued for its assessment through performance-based tasks.

Goleman (1995, 1998) significantly broadened the public profile of EI by proposing that emotional competencies such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill predicted professional success at least as powerfully as IQ. Although this framework attracted sustained critique for conflating EI with character and personality (Locke, 2005; Mayer et al., 2008), it catalysed a generation of applied EI research in organisational, educational, and clinical settings. Bar-On (1997) independently developed a mixed model of emotional-social intelligence encompassing intrapersonal, interpersonal, stress management, adaptability, and general mood components, further broadening the construct's conceptual terrain. A distinction has been drawn between ability EI—assessed through objective performance tasks—and

trait EI—measured through self-report instruments (Petrides & Furnham, 2000, 2001). Petrides and Furnham argued that these two operationalisations tap different psychological phenomena: ability EI reflects a cognitive-emotional capacity, whereas trait EI reflects a constellation of emotional self-perceptions and dispositions located at the lower levels of personality hierarchies. This distinction has practical implications for research design and interpretation. The present study employs the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT; Schutte et al., 1998) as a measure of trait EI.

The Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test

Schutte et al. (1998) developed the Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test—subsequently re-labelled the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT)—based on Salovey and Mayer's (1990) original model. The 33-item scale demonstrated good internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .90$) and adequate test-retest reliability ($r = .78$) in the original validation study and has since been widely used (Cherniss, 2010). A meta-analytic review by Schutte et al. (2009) synthesising 66 studies found that higher SSEIT scores were significantly associated with better mental health outcomes, more satisfying interpersonal relationships, and higher levels of psychosocial functioning (Lopes et al., 2003).

The scale items are rated on a five-point Likert scale and can be organized into four theoretically derived subscales: Appraisal and Expression of Emotion in the Self, Appraisal and Recognition of Emotion in Others, Regulation of Emotion, and Utilisation of Emotion in Problem Solving (Petrides & Furnham, 2000). Published population norms place the mean mixed-sex score at approximately 124, with separate benchmarks of 125 for males and 131 for

females (Austin et al., 2004). Gignac et al. (2005) confirmed acceptable model fit for a unidimensional or bifactor structure through confirmatory factor analysis, supporting use of both the total score and subscale scores.

The use of self-report EI instruments is not without conceptual debate (Locke, 2005; Petrides & Furnham, 2001; Zeidner et al., 2004). Self-report EI predicts well-being, academic, and occupational outcomes beyond the variance attributable to personality and general cognitive ability (Joseph & Newman, 2010; MacCann et al., 2020; Van Rooy et al., 2005). Trait EI and ability EI are distinct constructs rather than interchangeable operationalisations of a single ability. The SSEIT captures typical emotional functioning: how respondents characteristically perceive, express, and manage emotion. Trait EI can therefore be regarded as partially overlapping with established personality dimensions.

Notwithstanding these debates, the SSEIT remains among the most extensively validated and widely deployed trait EI instrument available. It has been widely used and has accumulated evidence of internal consistency, test-retest stability, and convergent, discriminant, incremental, and criterion-related validity (Austin et al., 2004; Schutte et al., 1998, 2002, 2009). Its factor structure has been examined through confirmatory factor analysis in large general-population samples (Gignac et al., 2005), and cross-cultural factorial work supports its interpretability beyond the contexts in which it was originally validated (Sharma et al., 2009). Its established population norms and comparability with a substantial body of prior research make it well suited to the descriptive aims of the present study, provided that results are interpreted as indicating self-perceived emotional functioning rather than measured emotional ability.

This study accordingly only reports trait EI as self-perceived, not as demonstrated emotional ability.

Emotional Intelligence and Academic Achievement in Higher Education

A robust body of evidence documents positive associations between EI and academic outcomes in post-secondary settings. Shipley et al. (2010) investigated the joint effects of EI, age, work experience, and academic performance in higher education settings, finding that EI contributed unique predictive variance beyond these variables. Their findings suggest EI assessment may serve as a useful complement to traditional academic metrics in identifying students at risk of underperformance or attrition. In the Bahamian context, Styles (2019) conducted a small-scale ($N = 40$) exploratory study of college students using the ability-based Mayer Salovey Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT; Palmer et al., 2005) and found that female students scored somewhat higher than males on all four MSCEIT branches, though differences were not statistically significant.

Emotional Intelligence in Organisational and Business Contexts

Beyond its established relevance to academic achievement (Parker et al., 2004), EI has emerged as a critical predictor of professional effectiveness, workplace performance, and organisational leadership. Goleman's (1998) foundational work argued that EI competencies—including self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation, and social skill—predict managerial and organisational success at least as powerfully as technical expertise or cognitive ability. Joseph and Newman's (2010) meta-analysis of 65 studies found that EI significantly predicted job performance across

occupational categories, with the strongest effects for roles requiring substantial interpersonal engagement, customer contact, and team coordination. Nikolaou and Tsaousis (2002) demonstrated that higher EI was associated with reduced occupational stress and stronger organisational commitment—outcomes with implications for employee retention and productivity in service-intensive industries.

The relevance of EI to the hospitality and tourism sector is particularly pronounced. Hospitality work is fundamentally relational, requiring employees and managers to regulate their own emotional displays while accurately reading and responding to the emotional states of guests, colleagues, and subordinates. Brackett et al. (2011) noted that emotionally intelligent employees in service industries achieve higher customer satisfaction and are more adept at navigating the interpersonal complexity inherent in guest-facing roles. In Caribbean economies such as The Bahamas, where tourism and hospitality constitute the dominant engines of the economy and employment (Pathak et al., 2021), EI's workforce-level implications are amplified. The sector depends on a predominantly female labour force—particularly in frontline, supervisory, and middle-management positions—making the EI profiles of women entering and advancing in these industries a strategic concern for both individual organisations and national economic planning (Emmerling & Boyatzis, 2012).

The financial services industry, the second-largest sector of the Bahamian economy, is characterised by high volatility and operational complexity. Given the substantial capital volumes and the need for precise, high-stakes decision-making under time constraints, strategic leadership in this sector increasingly requires advanced EI. Research suggests a positive correlation between environmental stressors and the utility of EI;

as professional stakes escalate, the necessity for robust socio-emotional competencies becomes more pronounced (Fteiha & Awwad, 2020). While Intelligence Quotient remains a foundational requirement for quantitative analysis and technical proficiency, EI serves as a critical moderator for self-regulation, team cohesion, and client relationship management. In an arena often defined by atmospheric anxiety and institutional uncertainty, the capacity to regulate emotional responses is a high-value asset.

This necessity for regulating emotions is underscored by evidence that heightened stress levels negatively impact cognitive processing and executive function. For instance, research conducted by Citizens Financial Group (2021) indicates that financial anxiety can significantly impair an individual's ability to execute sound financial judgments, as acute stress reduces cognitive bandwidth. Consequently, in high-pressure financial environments, high EI is not merely a soft skill but a functional imperative for maintaining decision-making integrity and organisational success. The business community has noted the institutional relevance of EI development. In his Emerging Leaders Distinguished Lecture held at University of The Bahamas in 2023, Managing Director of RBC FINCO Deverson Warner underscored the indispensable role of EI in professional advancement, observing that the capacity to work effectively with others is among the most consequential determinants of career success. He further stated that attributes such as self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation, and social skills are essential not only for individual advancement but for cultivating positive and productive work environments. His remarks foregrounded the alignment between EI competencies and what he described as personal brand—defined as the manner in which one is perceived by

colleagues, clients, and organisational stakeholders—a construct directly relevant to professional reputation and advancement in competitive business environments (University of The Bahamas, 2023).

Abraham (2006) argued that business education has historically prioritized technical and analytical competencies at the expense of the affective skills that differentiate effective professionals in practice. He contended that EI should be systematically integrated into business curricula as a core rather than supplementary competency—a position given further empirical grounding by Jaeger (2003), who found emotional literacy training was largely absent from graduate professional programmes despite its demonstrated predictive validity for occupational performance. These arguments are particularly salient for institutions whose graduates will enter an economy that is dependent on service-sector excellence and international competitiveness. Goleman's (1998) observation that emotionally intelligent leaders are more effective at motivating teams, navigating organisational conflict, and inspiring sustained organisational commitment resonates strongly with the demands facing business professionals in small island economies, where interpersonal networks, community reputation, and relationship capital are essential to commercial success.

Sex Differences in Emotional Intelligence

The literature on sex differences in EI is extensive but shows variation across measurement frameworks. Using performance-based ability measures, sex differences tend to be small or negligible (Mayer et al., 2008; Van Rooy et al., 2005). Using self-report instruments such as the SSEIT, however, a more consistent female advantage has been documented. The initial

validation by Schutte et al. (1998) found that women scored modestly but significantly higher than men, and this finding has been replicated across numerous independent samples (Austin et al., 2004; Ciarrochi et al., 2000; Gignac et al., 2005). Van Rooy et al.'s (2005) meta-analysis of 25 samples estimated a mean sex difference of $d = 0.28$ in favour of females on self-report EI measures.

Cross-cultural work complicates this picture considerably. Gunkel et al. (2014) examined EI across nine culturally diverse countries and found that sex differences in self-reported EI varied substantially, with larger female advantages in more gender-egalitarian, individualistic societies and smaller or negligible differences in higher power-distance, collectivistic contexts. Hyde (2014) similarly cautioned against overgeneralising sex differences in emotional processing, noting that contextual and socialization factors often account for a larger share of variance than biological sex per se. In the Caribbean context, Styles (2019) found that female UB business students scored higher on all MSCEIT branches than their male counterparts, but the differences were non-significant, largely attributable to the small sample. The present study, with a substantially larger sample, provides a more definitive test of sex differences in Bahamian post-secondary students.

Emotional Intelligence in Post-Colonial and Collectivistic Contexts

Sharma et al. (2017) argued that EI is a culturally embedded construct, shaped by the norms, values, and socialization practices that vary across societies. In collectivistic cultures—where group cohesion, family obligation, and communal identity take precedence over individual autonomy—emotional display rules, empathic expectations, and self-presentation norms may diverge markedly from those prevailing

in Western individualistic societies (Hofstede, 2001; Triandis, 1995). Gunkel et al.'s (2014) nine-country study confirmed that cultural dimensions, particularly individualism-collectivism and power distance, account for meaningful variance in EI scores beyond individual characteristics. The Bahamas scores relatively high on collectivism in Hofstede et al.'s (2002) cross-national study of business values, with family-centred social organisation and community-oriented values characteristic of Bahamian social life (Storr, 2004, 2009). Post-colonial theory provides a further interpretive lens. Loomba (2007) and Treacher (2005) observe that colonial legacies restructure not only economic and political institutions but also the psychosocial landscape of formerly colonised populations, shaping how individuals relate to authority, manage interpersonal conflict, and conceptualise emotional expression.

Styles (2019) applied this lens to Bahamian business students, raising the possibility that the linguistic and cultural assumptions embedded in Western EI instruments may not fully capture the emotional competencies most valued in post-colonial collectivistic settings. These concerns notwithstanding, Joseph and Newman's (2010) meta-analysis of 65 EI studies across diverse cultural contexts found that self-report EI consistently predicted job performance and well-being outcomes, with effect sizes broadly comparable to those in Western samples. Emmerling and Boyatzis (2012) similarly argued that emotional and social intelligence competencies exhibit meaningful cross-cultural predictive validity, even as their specific content and expression vary across cultural contexts. This evidence supports the empirical utility of SSEIT in the present study, provided that findings are interpreted with appropriate cultural nuance.

Method

Study Design and Ethical Approval

This study employed a cross-sectional online survey design. Data were collected during the Fall 2025 academic semester from three Bahamian post-secondary institutions. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of The Bahamas granted ethical approval.

Participants

A total of 773 individuals entered the survey, of whom 757 (97.9%) confirmed consent to participate. Respondents who are not currently enrolled in higher education ($N = 125$) were excluded from the analysis. Participants younger than 18 years were also excluded, yielding a sample of $N = 631$. Some respondents provided no useable information on the EI scale and were excluded, yielding a final EI analytic sample of $N = 551$. Of the 631 cases in the sample, 551 (87.3%) supplied sufficient SSEIT data for inclusion; the remaining 80 cases (12.7%) provided no useable scale responses and were excluded. Within the retained sample, missing data were replaced with the sex-specific means for that item, so that every retained case contributed a complete set of subscales and total scores ($N = 551$).

Instrument

The SSEIT demonstrates robust psychometric properties: Cronbach's α typically ranges from .85 to .93, test-retest reliability from .72 to .78, and validity has been supported across convergent, discriminant, incremental, and criterion-related studies (Austin et al., 2004; Schutte et al., 1998, 2002, 2009). Items can be organised into four subscales: Appraisal and Expression of Emotion in the Self, Appraisal and Recognition of Emotion in Others, Regulation of Emotion, and Utilisation of Emotion in Problem Solving. Published population benchmarks for the SSEIT are

approximately 124 for mixed-sex adult samples, 125 for males, and 131 for females (Austin et al., 2004). The full survey instrument used in this study included demographic items and questions on childhood corporal punishment and adult sexual behaviour. These latter aspects are reported elsewhere. The SSEIT scale was embedded as a standalone block, and all participants were requested to answer every item.

Procedure

The survey was self-administered online via SurveyMonkey™. Recruitment occurred through faculty who gave students time in their classes to complete the survey and shared the link with their students. This was done to encourage students to complete the EI scale. Students could share the link with other students if they so wished.

Results

Sample Description

Table 1 summarises the demographic composition of the EI analytic sample ($N = 551$). The sample was predominantly female (83.8%), and aged 20–29 (55%).

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of the EI Analytic Sample

Characteristic	<i>n</i>	%
Sex		
Male	87	15.8
Female	461	83.8
Other	2	0.4
Age Group		
18–19	103	18.7
20–29	303	55
30–39	93	16.9
40–49	42	7.6
50–59	8	1.5
60 or over	2	0.4
<i>N</i> =	551	

Overall EI Score Relative to Population Benchmark

The mean EI score was 125.6 ($SE = 0.58$). This mean was significantly higher than the population benchmark of 124 ($t_{551} = 2.72, p = .007$, although the effect size was small

[Cohen's $d = 0.12$]). Approximately 10.5% of students scored below 111, and 18.7% scored above 137, indicating a moderately right-skewed distribution around the benchmark.

Table 2
SSEIT Item-Level Means and Standard Errors

Item Statement	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>
I compliment others when they have done something well	4.39	0.03
Some of the major events of my life have led me to re-evaluate what is important and not important	4.34	0.03
I seek out activities that make me happy	4.17	0.03
I know when to speak about my personal problems to others	4.14	0.04
When I am faced with obstacles, I remember times I faced similar obstacles and overcame them	4.11	0.04
When I am in a positive mood, solving problems is easy for me	4.10	0.03
I expect that I will do well on most things I try	4.05	0.04
Other people find it easy to confide in me	4.05	0.04
When I am in a positive mood, I am able to come up with new ideas	4.04	0.03
I present myself in a way that makes a good impression on others	4.03	0.03
I am aware of my emotions as I experience them	4.02	0.04
I motivate myself by imagining a good outcome to tasks I take on	4.01	0.04
I help other people feel better when they are down	3.99	0.03
I use good moods to help myself keep trying in the face of obstacles	3.99	0.03
I expect good things to happen	3.98	0.04
By looking at their facial expressions, I recognise the emotions people are experiencing	3.98	0.04
I can tell how people are feeling by listening to the tone of their voice	3.98	0.03
When I am faced with a challenge, I give up because I believe I will fail [R]	3.89	0.04
I know why my emotions change	3.84	0.04
I easily recognise my emotions as I experience them	3.82	0.04
I am aware of the non-verbal messages other people send	3.76	0.04
When my mood changes, I see new possibilities	3.65	0.04
When I experience a positive emotion, I know how to make it last	3.56	0.04
I have control over my emotions	3.52	0.04
When another person tells me about an important event in their life, I almost feel as though I experienced it myself	3.52	0.04
I arrange events others enjoy	3.50	0.04
Emotions are one of the things that make my life worth living	3.49	0.04
It is difficult for me to understand why people feel the way they do [R]	3.49	0.04
I am aware of the non-verbal messages I send to others	3.46	0.04
When I feel a change in emotions, I tend to come up with new ideas	3.43	0.04
I find it hard to understand the non-verbal messages of other people [R]	3.36	0.05
I know what other people are feeling just by looking at them	3.27	0.04
I like to share my emotions with others	2.63	0.05

Note. Items marked [R] are reverse-scored (raw mean subtracted from 6). Scores range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Item-Level Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 presents the means and standard errors for each of the 33 EI items. The highest-rated item was “I compliment others when they have done something well” ($M = 4.39$), reflecting the sample's prosocial appraisal orientation. Other highly rated items included a statement regarding life re-evaluation and one on seeking happiness-producing activities ($M = 4.34$). The lowest-rated items were “I like to share my emotions with others” ($M = 2.63$), and “I know what other people are feeling just by looking at them” ($M = 3.27$).

Sex Differences in SSEIT Subscales

One-way ANOVA results for six SSEIT subscale scores by sex are reported in Table 3. No statistically significant sex difference was found for the Appraisal and Expression

of Emotion in the Self, Recognition of Emotion in Others, Regulation of Emotion, or Utilisation of Emotion in Problem Solving subscales ($p > .02$). However, significant female advantages emerged for two subscales: Emotion Recognition from Self, $F(1, 546) = 5.44, p = .02, \eta^2 = .01$, and Emotion Recognition from Others, $F(1, 546) = 11.35, p < .001, \eta^2 = .02$. Effect sizes for both significant differences were small.

Although the female mean score ($M = 126.3$, estimated from subscale totals) approached but did not reach the published female benchmark of 131, and the male mean ($M = 124.6$) approximated the male benchmark of 125, the overall sex comparison on total EI did not reach significance, consistent with findings in certain collectivistic and high power-distance cultural settings (Gunkel et al., 2014).

Table 3
EI Subscale Means by Sex

Subscale	Male	Female	p
Emotion Recognition (Others)	19.1	20.1	< .001
Emotion Recognition (Self)	29.1	30.1	.02
Appraisal and Recognition of Emotion in Others	21.6	22.1	.201
Regulation of Emotion	6.6	6.8	.286
Utilisation of Emotion in Problem Solving	15.3	15.2	.809
Appraisal and Expression of Emotion in the Self	7.8	7.8	.89

Age Group Differences

Examination of EI subscale scores by age group revealed a generally positive association between age and EI (Table 4). Older participants generally scored higher on subscales assessing appraisal of self-emotions and emotion regulation, with the 40–49 age group obtaining the highest mean ($M = 8.26$) on Appraisal and Expression of Emotion in the Self, and the 18–19 age group

the lowest ($M = 7.48$). These patterns are consistent with developmental accounts of increasing emotional maturity and self-regulatory capacity across the adult lifespan (Mayer et al., 2008; Shipley et al., 2010). Formal ANOVA testing of age group differences in total EI did not reach statistical significance after adjustment for multiple comparisons, likely reflecting modest statistical power in higher age categories.

Table 4
SSEIT Subscale Means by Age Group

Subscale	18–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60+	Overall
Appraisal & Expression of Emotion in the Self	7.5	7.9	7.9	8.3	8.3	8.4	7.8
Appraisal & Recognition of Emotion in Others	22	21.8	22.3	23	22.9	23.1	22
Regulation of Emotion	6.4	6.7	7.1	7.3	7.3	6.8	6.8
Emotion Recognition (Self)	29.2	30	30.3	30.9	30.9	32	30
<i>N =</i>	103	303	93	42	8	2	551

Discussion

This study characterises the EI profile of Bahamian post-secondary students by sex and age. The primary finding is that the sample mean EI total score exceeded the published population benchmark of 124. This offers an empirically grounded counter to the assumption that students from post-colonial or developing-nation contexts might systematically demonstrate lower EI on standardised measures normed in Western settings. The small effect size ($d = 0.12$) warrants caution in the interpretation because the practical difference between the sample mean and benchmark is modest. Therefore, the finding is best understood as confirming broad comparability rather than difference.

The item-level profile yields insights for educational policy and practice in The Bahamas. Students rated themselves highest on items reflecting prosocial appraisal—complimenting others, drawing meaning from life events, and seeking activities that generate happiness—a pattern consonant with the community-oriented, relationally embedded values documented in Bahamian society (Styles, 2022; Hofstede et al., 2002; Storr, 2004, 2009). These results align with Gunkel et al.'s (2014) observation that collectivistic cultural settings may foster social-emotional competencies tied to group cohesion and relational attunement.

Conversely, students scored comparatively lower on emotional sharing ($M = 2.6$) and on certainty about others' internal states based solely on external observation ($M = 3.3$).

The pattern of sex differences in this study is nuanced and warrants careful interpretation. The absence of a significant overall sex difference in total EI is consistent with findings from other collectivistic, high power-distance settings (Gunkel et al., 2014) and suggests that the robust female advantage documented in Western meta-analytic literature (Van Rooy et al., 2005; $d = 0.28$) may be attenuated in the Bahamian context.

That said, the significant female advantage on the Emotion Recognition from Self and Emotion Recognition from Others subscales indicates that Bahamian women remain comparatively more attuned to emotional cues in themselves and others—a finding that aligns with socialisation differences in emotional expression and empathy processing reported across diverse cultures (Hyde, 2014). The fact that female students fell below the published female benchmark of 131 suggests either the benchmark overrepresents emotionally expressive Western female populations or the Bahamian sociocultural context attenuates the development of certain EI capacities among women—a question that warrants longitudinal investigation.

The positive trend between age and EI, while not statistically significant, is theoretically coherent and consistent with developmental EI research. Mayer et al. (2008) and Shipley et al. (2010) document gradual increases in trait EI across adulthood as individuals accumulate greater emotional experience, self-regulatory practice, and interpersonal skills. The age range captured in this study (predominantly 18–39) may not span a sufficient developmental arc to yield statistically significant cross-sectional effects.

These findings make two contributions to the literature. First, they extend the empirical EI knowledge base to an understudied Caribbean post-colonial context, offering nuanced evidence that challenges deficit-oriented assumptions about EI in non-Western student populations. Second, they provide an actionable evidence base for student support and curricular design at Bahamian institutions of higher education, identifying specific EI domains—emotional sharing, self-regulation, and interpersonal inference—where targeted developmental interventions may be most beneficial.

Practical implications from this study

The comparatively lower scores on emotional sharing, self-regulation ($M = 3.52$), and interpersonal understanding suggest that targeted, culturally adapted EI interventions could yield meaningful gains in domains predictive of academic success and psychological well-being. Nelis et al. (2009) and Brackett et al. (2011) demonstrated that structured EI training programmes produce clinically meaningful improvements in these domains. Abraham (2006) and Mortiboys (2013) argued that integrating emotional literacy components into curricula and pedagogy is particularly valuable in higher education settings.

Implications for the business community in The Bahamas and the Caribbean

Our findings have implications for business organisations, professional development practitioners, and economic policymakers across the region. The Bahamian economy is heavily oriented toward financial services and tourism-driven hospitality—sectors whose performance depends critically on the interpersonal, client-facing, and team-leadership competencies that EI underpins. That the students scored comparatively lower on emotional sharing ($M = 2.63$) and self-regulation ($M = 3.52$) raises practical concerns for workforce readiness, as these specific EI attributes are associated in the organisational literature with elevated occupational stress, reduced collaborative effectiveness, and difficulty sustaining the quality of guest interactions that drive repeat business and brand reputation in hospitality (Nikolaou & Tsaousis, 2002; Brackett et al., 2011).

For women, the nuanced pattern observed in this study—significant advantages in emotion recognition from self and others, yet scores falling short of the published female benchmark of 131—suggests that Bahamian women entering business and hospitality careers bring relational strengths but may benefit from targeted development in domains such as emotional disclosure, self-regulation under pressure, and assertive self-advocacy. In post-colonial, collectivistic Caribbean societies, cultural norms that discourage overt emotional expression or visible emotional leadership among women can function as structural barriers to career advancement (Hyde, 2014; Gunkel et al., 2014). Women who are emotionally perceptive but culturally conditioned to suppress emotional sharing or self-advocacy may be systematically disadvantaged in competitive environments where visibility, relational influence, and executive presence determine upward mobility. Reduced EI

expression in these domains can translate directly into career stagnation, diminished leadership presence, and underrepresentation of women in senior management roles as documented across Caribbean economies (UN Women Caribbean, 2025) with implications for organisational diversity and economic equity.

The Bahamian business community's active engagement in EI development, exemplified by Warner's observations that EI is a learnable skill requiring deliberate cultivation—and that the ability to work effectively with others is among the most consequential determinants of professional success—aligns with the evidence reviewed in this study (University of The Bahamas, 2023). Organisations that invest in structured EI training, mentorship programmes, and culturally adapted leadership development for female employees can expect measurable returns in employee engagement, customer satisfaction, retention, and managerial pipeline development. For regional policymakers, these findings underscore the importance of embedding EI competency frameworks within workforce development strategies, particularly in the tourism and financial services sectors that anchor the Bahamian and broader Caribbean economy.

Recommendations for Business Professionals

The empirical findings of this study, situated within the broader organisational and cultural literature reviewed above, yield a set of evidence-based recommendations for human resource practitioners, business leaders, and organisational development professionals operating in The Bahamas and the wider Caribbean. These recommendations are organised around three levels of action: individual professional development, organisational strategy, and sector-wide policy

Individual Professional Development

Business professionals in The Bahamas and the Caribbean are encouraged to treat EI as a developmental priority rather than a fixed personal attribute. According to Warner, the capacity to “work effectively with others is a learnable skill” that must be cultivated intentionally over time (University of The Bahamas, 2023).

Self-awareness is a basic competency: practitioners should engage in structured reflection on their own emotional patterns, triggers, and interpersonal tendencies, using validated tools to establish a baseline and track growth. Given that Bahamian post-secondary students in the present study scored comparatively lower on self-regulation and emotional sharing, professionals, particularly those in early- and mid-career stages, should prioritise developing these specific capacities, which, in the organisational literature, are associated with reduced occupational stress and stronger team outcomes (Nikolaou & Tsaousis, 2002).

Female students and professionals are particularly encouraged to actively cultivate and exercise their emotion-recognition strengths as a leadership asset. Research consistently shows that empathic attunement and interpersonal sensitivity predict high-quality leadership in team-based and client-facing environments (Brackett et al., 2011). At the same time, women navigating Caribbean business cultures should seek mentors, professional networks, and coaching relationships that affirm and reinforce emotional self-advocacy, visible leadership, and assertive communication. Personal branding is one area where professionals may improve underdeveloped EI competencies. As Warner stated, personal branding is not merely a communication strategy but also a disciplined practice of aligning one's perceived professional

identity with genuine emotional and relational strengths (University of The Bahamas, 2023).

Organisational Strategy

Organisations in the Bahamian and Caribbean business environment, particularly those in hospitality, financial services, and retail, should embed EI competencies explicitly within their job advertisements, talent acquisition, performance management, and leadership development frameworks. Goleman (1998) documented that emotionally intelligent leaders drive stronger team performance, lower turnover, and higher client satisfaction, outcomes with direct financial implications in service-intensive industries. At the recruitment and selection stage, organisations are encouraged to incorporate behavioural interviewing techniques and structured EI assessments alongside traditional competency evaluations, recognising that technical qualifications alone are insufficient predictors of sustained professional effectiveness (Joseph & Newman, 2010). EI criteria should be weighted particularly heavily for roles requiring regular conflict resolution, interpersonal engagement, and cross-functional collaboration.

Organisational strategy must prioritise employee engagement as a fundamental determinant of institutional effectiveness, given the shifting psychographic profiles of the modern workforce in high-stakes tourism and financial services. Empirical evidence, most notably the Gallup Q12 meta-analysis, underscores that employee engagement is a critical antecedent of organisational profitability and performance excellence (Batista, 2025). Personnel need to be engaged to not only execute core job functions with precision but also to contribute to institutional growth through heightened creativity and innovation. Furthermore, recent scholarship in consumer and

organisational behaviour suggests a significant correlation between EI and engagement levels. Leaders who model EI through perceived trustworthiness and interpersonal warmth foster environments conducive to discretionary effort. Consequently, cultivating EI is a strategic imperative for modern enterprises especially in the financial services sector seeking to maximise human capital and achieve sustainable competitive advantage,.

Within The Bahamas, organisations should invest in structured EI training programmes that are culturally adapted to Caribbean norms and values rather than simply imported wholesale from Western contexts. Nelis et al. (2009) and Brackett et al. (2011) demonstrated that well-designed EI interventions produce meaningful and durable improvements in emotional regulation, interpersonal quality, and well-being. Training should specifically address the EI domains identified in this study as comparatively underdeveloped in Bahamian post-secondary graduates: emotional self-disclosure, emotion regulation under workplace pressure, and confident interpersonal inference. Delivery formats that leverage communal learning—peer coaching circles, mentorship cohorts, and facilitated group reflection—are likely to resonate with the collectivistic cultural orientation documented across the region (Styles, 2022; Hofstede et al., 2002; Storr, 2004) and may be more effective than individually focused, Western-style executive coaching alone. Organisations should additionally create structural pathways for women to advance to senior and executive roles, actively countering the cultural norms that can suppress EI expression and leadership visibility in female professionals. These include sponsorship programmes, transparent promotion criteria that recognise relational and emotional competencies, and leadership

development initiatives specifically designed to amplify the strengths that Bahamian women already demonstrate in emotion recognition.

Business Sector Policy and Public/Private Partnerships

Business-sector organisations, industry associations, chambers of commerce, and national workforce development bodies are encouraged to incorporate EI literacy into professional certification pathways and continuing education requirements, particularly for credentials in business, banking and finance, tourism, and hospitality. The RBC Emerging Leaders Distinguished Lecture Series, a partnership of a bank and a university, provides a template for productive academic-industry collaboration. In series such as this one, corporate partners provide practitioner insight and credibility while academic institutions supply the research base, curricular infrastructure, and student access necessary to translate EI theory into professional practice (University of The Bahamas, 2023).

Broader replication of this model, extended to secondary education, technical and vocational institutions, and community-

based leadership programmes, could strengthen the EI profile of the Bahamian workforce. Regional bodies such as the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association and the Caribbean Development Bank could commission cross-national EI research to establish regional benchmarks, enabling evidence-based comparison of workforce emotional competencies across jurisdictions and informing coordinated regional investment in human capital development.

Finally, policymakers overseeing business and or tourism education as well as workforce strategies are encouraged to treat EI not as a soft-skills supplement but as a core economic competency whose development represents measurable investment in the service quality, resilience and international competitiveness of the Bahamian and Caribbean economies. Future research would be well served by employing longitudinal designs to examine how EI evolves across the post-secondary period of study. Future studies should also investigate whether culturally adapted EI training programmes can enhance the emotional competencies of Bahamian students in ways that translate into improved academic performance, well-being, and post-graduate professional and civic engagement.

References

- Abraham, A. (2006). The need for the integration of emotional intelligence skills in business education. *The Business Renaissance Quarterly*, 1(3), 65–80. <https://hdl.handle.net/10779/uow.27710661>
- Austin, E. J., Saklofske, D. H., Huang, S. H. S., & McKenney, D. (2004). Measurement of trait emotional intelligence: Testing and cross-validating a modified version of Schutte et al.'s (1998) measure. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 36(3), 555–562. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869\(03\)00114-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869(03)00114-4)
- Bar-On, R. (1997). *The Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i): A test of emotional intelligence*. Multi-Health Systems. <https://doi.org/10.1037/t04985-000>
- Batista, M. M. (2025). *Shaping employee engagement in a multinational organisation: insights from a Gallup Q12 analysis*. [Master's thesis, Lisbon School of Economics & Management]. <https://researchportal.ulisboa.pt/en/student-Theses/shaping-employee-engagement-in-a-multinational-organization/>
- Brackett, M. A., Rivers, S. E., & Salovey, P. (2011). Emotional intelligence: Implications for personal, social, academic, and workplace success. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 5(1), 88–103. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9004.2010.00334.x>
- Cherniss, C. (2010). Emotional intelligence: Toward clarification of a concept. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 3(2), 110–126. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1754-9434.2010.01231.x>
- Ciarrochi, J. V., Chan, A. Y. C., & Caputi, P. (2000). A critical evaluation of the emotional intelligence construct. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 28(3), 539–561. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869\(99\)00119-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869(99)00119-1)
- Citizens Financial Group. (2021). *Mental health and money: How stress affects financial decisions*. <https://www.citizensbank.com/private-banking/insights/mental-health-and-money-financial-decisions.aspx>
- Emmerling, R. J., & Boyatzis, R. E. (2012). Emotional and social intelligence competencies: Cross cultural implications. *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal*, 19(1), 4–18. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13527601211195592>
- Fteiha, M., & Awwad, N. (2020). Emotional intelligence and its relationship with stress coping style. *Health Psychology Open*, 7(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2055102920970416>
- Gignac, G. E., Palmer, B. R., Manocha, R., & Stough, C. (2005). An examination of the factor structure of the Schutte Self-report Emotional Intelligence (SSEIT) scale using confirmatory factor analysis with an Australian general population sample. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 39(6), 1029–1042. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2005.03.014>
- Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. Bantam Books.

- Goleman, D. (1998). *Working with emotional intelligence*. Bantam Books.
- Gunkel, M., Schlägel, C., & Engle, R. L. (2014). Culture's influence on emotional intelligence: An empirical study of nine countries. *Journal of International Management*, 20(2), 256–274. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intman.2013.10.002>
- Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations* (2nd ed.). Sage.
- Hofstede, G., Van Deusen, C. A., Mueller, C. B., & Charles, T. A. (2002). What goals do business leaders pursue? A study in fifteen countries. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 33(4), 785–803. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.jibs.8491046>
- Hyde, J. S. (2014). Gender similarities and differences. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 65, 373–398. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-010213-115057>
- Jaeger, A. J. (2003). Job competencies and the curriculum: An inquiry into emotional intelligence in graduate professional education. *Research in Higher Education*, 44(6), 615–639. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1026119724265>
- Joseph, D. L., & Newman, D. A. (2010). Emotional intelligence: An integrative meta-analysis and cascading model. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 95(1), 54–78. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0017286>
- Locke, E. A. (2005). Why emotional intelligence is an invalid concept. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 26(4), 425–431. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.318>
- Loomba, A. (2007). *Colonialism/postcolonialism* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Lopes, P. N., Salovey, P., & Straus, R. (2003). Emotional intelligence, personality, and the perceived quality of social relationships. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 35(3), 641–658. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869\(02\)00242-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869(02)00242-8)
- MacCann, C., Jiang, Y., Brown, L. E. R., Double, K. S., Bucich, M., & Minbashian, A. (2020). Emotional intelligence predicts academic performance: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 146(2), 150–186. <https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000219>
- Mayer, J. D., & Salovey, P. (1997). What is emotional intelligence? In P. Salovey & D. J. Sluyter (Eds.), *Emotional development and emotional intelligence: Educational implications* (pp. 3–31). Basic Books.
- Mayer, J. D., Salovey, P., & Caruso, D. R. (2008). Emotional intelligence: New ability or eclectic traits? *American Psychologist*, 63(6), 503–517. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.63.6.503>
- Mortiboys, A. (2013). *Teaching with emotional intelligence: A step-by-step guide for higher and further education professionals*. Routledge.

- Nelis, D., Quoidbach, J., Mikolajczak, M., & Hansenne, M. (2009). Increasing emotional intelligence: (How) is it possible? *Personality and Individual Differences*, 47(1), 36–41.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2009.01.046>
- Nikolaou, I., & Tsaousis, I. (2002). Emotional intelligence in the workplace: Exploring its effects on occupational stress and organizational commitment. *The International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, 10(4), 327–342.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/eb028956>
- Palmer, B. R., Gignac, G. E., Manocha, R., & Stough, C. (2005). A psychometric evaluation of the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test Version 2.0. *Intelligence*, 33(3), 285–305.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intell.2004.11.003>
- Pathak, A., van Beynen, P. E., Akiwumi, F. A., & Lindeman, K. C. (2021). Climate adaptation within the tourism sector of a small island developing state: A case study from the coastal accommodations subsector in the Bahamas. *Business Strategy & Development*, 4(3), 313–325.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/bsd2.160>
- Parker, J. D. A., Summerfeldt, L. J., Hogan, M. J., & Majeski, S. A. (2004). Emotional intelligence and academic success: Examining the transition from high school to university. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 36(1), 163–172.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869\(03\)00076-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869(03)00076-X)
- Petrides, K. V., & Furnham, A. (2000). On the dimensional structure of emotional intelligence. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 29(2), 313–320.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869\(99\)00195-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869(99)00195-6)
- Petrides, K. V., & Furnham, A. (2001). Trait emotional intelligence: Psychometric investigation with reference to established trait taxonomies. *European Journal of Personality*, 15(6), 425–448.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/per.416>
- Salovey, P., & Mayer, J. D. (1990). Emotional intelligence. *Imagination, Cognition and Personality*, 9(3), 185–211.
<https://doi.org/10.2190/DUGG-P24E-52WK-6CDG>
- Schutte, N. S., Malouff, J. M., Hall, L. E., Haggerty, D. J., Cooper, J. T., Golden, C. J., & Dornheim, L. (1998). Development and validation of a measure of emotional intelligence. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 25(2), 167–177.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869\(98\)00001-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869(98)00001-4)
- Schutte, N. S., Malouff, J. M., Simunek, M., McKenley, J., & Hollander, S. (2002). Characteristic emotional intelligence and emotional well-being. *Cognition and Emotion*, 16(6), 769–785.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02699930143000482>
- Schutte, N. S., Malouff, J. M., & Bhullar, N. (2009). The assessing emotions scale. In C. Stough, D. Saklofske, & J. Parker (Eds.), *Assessing emotional intelligence: Theory, research, and applications* (pp. 119–134). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-88370-0_7
- Sharma, S., Deller, J., Biswal, R., & Mandal, M. K. (2009). Emotional intelligence: Factorial structure and construct validity across cultures. *International Journal of Cross-Cultural Management*, 9(2), 217–236.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1470595809335725>

- Sharma, S., Agarwal, I., & Gupta, A. (2017). Emotional intelligence and negotiation effectiveness: A cross-cultural study [Conference presentation]. *Allied Academies International Conference: Academy of Organisational Culture, Communications and Conflict Proceedings*, 22(1), 16–20. https://www.abacademies.org/Public/Proceedings/Proceedings38/aoccc_proceedings_new_orleans_2017.pdf
- Shipley, N. L., Jackson, M. J., & Segrest, S. L. (2010). The effects of emotional intelligence, age, work experience, and academic performance. *Research in Higher Education Journal*, 9, 1–18. https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/fac_publications/335/
- Storr, V. H. (2004). *Enterprising slaves and master pirates: Understanding economic life in the Bahamas*. Peter Lang.
- Storr, V. H. (2009). B'Rabby as a “True-True Bahamian”: Rabbyism as Bahamian ethos and worldview. *Journal of Caribbean Literatures*, 6(1), 125–146. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40986304>
- Styles, J. K. (2019). Post-colonial examination of emotional intelligence of institutions of higher education in the Philippines and The Bahamas [Unpublished manuscript]. Regent University.
- Styles, J. (2022). *Organizational culture influence on the dimensions of organizational learning at the University of The Bahamas* (Publication No. 29061266.) [Doctoral dissertation, Regent University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses.
- Treacher, A. (2005). On postcolonial subjectivity. *Group Analysis*, 38(1), 43–57. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0533316405049365>
- Triandis, H. C. (1995). *Individualism and collectivism*. Westview Press.
- University of The Bahamas. (2023, November 26). *Emerging leaders distinguished lecture series fosters emotional intelligence in university students* [Press release]. <https://www.ub.edu.bs/emerging-leaders-distinguished-lecture-series-fosters-emotional-intelligence-university-students/>
- UN Women Caribbean. (2025). *Women’s political leadership declines, with fewer women in executive office in 2025*. <https://caribbean.unwomen.org/en/stories/news/2025/06/womens-political-leadership-declines-with-fewer-women-in-executive-office-in-2025>
- Van Rooy, D. L., Alonso, A., & Viswesvaran, C. (2005). Group differences in emotional intelligence scores: Theoretical and practical implications. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 38(3), 689–700. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2004.05.023>
- Zeidner, M., Roberts, R. D., & Matthews, G. (2004). The emotional intelligence bandwagon: Too fast to live, too young to die? *Psychological Inquiry*, 15(3), 239–248. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327965pli1503_07