

*International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*  
Vol. 22, No. 9, pp. 592-616, September 2023  
<https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.22.9.32>  
Received Aug 14, 2023; Revised Sep 11, 2023; Accepted Oct 5, 2023

# Effect of Emotional Intelligence and Personality Traits on the Psychological Well-Being of University Students in Malaysia

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**Abstract.** Psychological distress has been an increasing issue among university students, mainly due to the changes that have taken place brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. It was found that there needs to be more evidence surrounding the topic of psychological well-being (PWB) among university students in Malaysia. This study has examined the effect of emotional intelligence (EQ) and personality traits on the PWB of university students in Malaysia. A quantitative research method using convenience sampling was used in this study. One hundred fifty-one (151) students from public and private universities in Malaysia participated in the study. The questionnaires were used as data-collecting tools and were distributed in Google Forms. Data were analysed using IBM SPSS version 28.0. Regression analysis showed no significant effect of EQ on the PWB of the students. In disparity, personality traits significantly influenced both PWB and EQ of university students in Malaysia. The findings of this study highlight that certain personality traits contribute considerably to the PWB of university students in Malaysia. Hence, it is suggested that university administrators, university students, and other researchers investigate the role of these personality traits in enhancing PWB and EQ among university students.

**Keywords:** psychological well-being; emotional intelligence; personality traits; university students; Malaysia

## 1. Introduction

Emotional intelligence is also known as emotional quotient (EQ), which is the more commonly used term compared to emotional intelligence. In this study, EQ is used as an abbreviation for emotional intelligence. The role of EQ and personality traits in enhancing psychological well-being (PWB) among university

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students in Malaysia is an area of significant interest and relevance in psychology and related fields. Elevated levels of PWB have been associated with better academic performance, social relationships, and overall life satisfaction (Dunn et al., 2020).

Studying the intricate correlation between EQ, personality traits and PWB is imperative for devising efficient interventions and support programmes. Grasping the influence of these factors on individuals' emotional and mental well-being is vital for enhancing their health and quality of life. This research underscores the pressing requirement to explore the association between EQ, personality traits, and PWB among university students in Malaysia.

Recent research on the mental health of university students has highlighted the significant roles of EQ, neuroticism, and academic stress on overall well-being; PWB is considered crucial for students to adapt to university life successfully and is viewed as the outcome of a life well-lived. Understanding EQ and personality traits plays a vital role in improving the PWB of university students. These concepts enable students to regulate their emotions, build positive relationships, develop resilience, acquire effective coping mechanisms, promote self-awareness and self-confidence, and foster adaptability and flexibility. By integrating these concepts, students can lead a more balanced, fulfilling, and mentally healthy life during their university years.

Research studies conducted in various countries have found a significant correlation between stress among university students and mental health issues such as depression and anxiety. For instance, a survey by Safdar et al. (2020) revealed that educational needs and demands were closely associated with symptoms of depression and apparent anxiety. Despite controlling for multiple factors, including personality, other sources of stress, and social support, university students still exhibited substantial levels of distress due to their academic workload.

Several researchers, such as Schimelpfening (2020), Pascoe et al. (2020) and Bisson (2017), have also studied stress and depression elements from a performance perspective and reported that stress and depression negatively affect students' academic performance. The World Health Organization (2021) stated that depression was ranked third among the global disease burden and is predicted to be in first place by 2030. Depression leads to decreased energy, difficulty in thinking, concentrating, and making career decisions (Schimelpfening, 2020). Developing countries, including Malaysia, are experiencing high rates of depression, with insufficient knowledge about mental health being one of the primary causes of this escalation in mental illness (Vilma et al., 2022). Therefore, it is essential to investigate factors that could increase university students' PWB in Malaysia.

Academic success is the aim of university students. For several reasons, academic success is crucial for the youth, especially students, because academic success contributes to intellectual enrichment and builds a foundation for lifelong

learning. Students believe that academic success is vital in opening doors to their future career opportunities and employability in the job market. However, any hindrance can have severe consequences if the students fail academically. They can fall victim to depression (Grover & Furnham, 2020), which can significantly impede their achievements.

According to Anja et al. (2022), the prevalence of mental health problems among university students in ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries is high, with depression and anxiety being the most prominent problems. Consistent with Vilma et al. (2022), several factors, including family issues, adjusting to university life, poor grades, or teacher biases, can contribute to this. Therefore, the urgency to conduct this study was driven by the pressing need to address university students' mental health and well-being challenges.

University students often encounter high academic pressure, stress, and other psychosocial factors that can significantly impact their well-being. Understanding the role of EQ and personality traits in enhancing PWB among students is crucial for designing effective interventions, support systems, and policies. By identifying the factors that influence PWB, this study can contribute to the development of targeted strategies to promote mental health, enhance coping mechanisms, and improve overall well-being among university students in Malaysia. Ultimately, this research has the potential to positively impact the lives of students and create a healthier, more conducive educational environment in the country.

There is a growing interest in investigating constructs framed within positive psychology as alternative solutions to promote university students' mental health and quality of life. Positive psychology is an approach based on human strengths (Synder & Lopez, 2007). This paradigm includes EQ and personality traits. Our study aims to address a significant gap in research by examining the EQ and personality traits of the PWB among university students in the Malaysian context. It is particularly relevant as there is a lack of studies assessing the PWB in Malaysia. Like many other countries, Malaysia also faces a range of quirks and psychosocial issues. Investigating factors that can contribute to increased PWB among Malaysians, especially university students, becomes even more crucial.

By examining the relationship between EQ, personality traits and PWB in the Malaysian context, our study can provide valuable insights and contribute to the existing body of knowledge regarding the well-being of university students in Malaysia. Understanding how EQ and specific personality traits influence PWB can inform interventions and strategies to promote and enhance Malaysian university students' well-being. This research can help highlight the importance of EQ and personality traits as factors that influence PWB among university students in Malaysia. By identifying the impact of these factors, our study may offer practical implications for educational institutions, policymakers, and student support services to develop targeted interventions and programmes that support the mental health and well-being of Malaysian university students.

Both EQ and personality traits play a significant role in shaping university students' PWB. It is imperative to comprehend the profound impact of EQ and personality traits on one's mental health. Since the COVID-19 pandemic started in March 2020, people worldwide have had to adapt to various life changes. People had to change to protect themselves from being infected by the COVID-19 virus and accommodate a new standard operating procedure (SOP). Governments had to control the spread of the COVID-19 virus and so instituted lockdown/stay-at-home orders (Shah et al., 2020).

In 2022, life started returning to normal, in which people slowly returned to school, college, or the workplace. However, most people still had to work or study from home. Daily lifestyle changes can, directly and indirectly, affect people's functioning, including their emotions. Thus, managing emotions is truly important, especially in trying times. By investigating the core concept of EQ and personality traits in improving PWB, this study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge and provide insights that can inform evidence-based strategies for fostering mental well-being among university students in Malaysia. Understanding the factors contributing to PWB is essential for addressing students' challenges and promoting their overall flourishing. PWB is an essential aspect of every individual's life as it is one factor that determines daily functioning. Maintaining good PWB is necessary for students to learn, do assignments effectively, and attend classes attentively.

With the COVID-19 pandemic affecting daily life routines and norms, most universities encouraged students to study from home. Thus, in-person courses and examinations were changed to keep university students safe. The challenge of online learning during the pandemic was that students faced an extra workload (Kamaludin & Sundarasan, 2023). For example, tests were mainly changed to continuous assessments, which meant that students had to do additional assignments. Besides the additional workload, students were also challenged by slow internet connection in their respective home environments. Thus, maintaining PWB was difficult for students while dealing with many challenges.

A few studies have suggested that the PWB of university students is worrying, and more especially so during the pandemic. A survey among university students at Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA) showed that they suffered from depression (42.2%), anxiety (73.7%), and stress (34.8%) (Shahira et al., 2018). Another study showed that the COVID-19 outbreak increased university students' stress and anxiety levels, especially to students with lower grade point averages. At the same time, the family at home tried to assist students feel comfortable and less stressed but it did not help students' success in coping with and managing their academic performance (Arumugam et al., 2021).

There is still a lack of studies that precisely assess the university students' PWB in Malaysia. EQ is a psychological construct that describes one's ability to manage emotions. A few studies in India, Iran, Australia, and Spain have shown a significant, positive correlation between EQ and PWB among university students (Augusto-Landa et al., 2011; Costa et al., 2013; James et al., 2012; Jugnu &

Vivekananda, 2018; Landa et al., 2010; Yaryari et al., 2007). The existing literature that explores the relationship between EQ and PWB in Malaysia consists of a sample of rural school students in Sabah (Rathakrishnan et al., 2019). Thus, there is a lack of evidence on how EQ plays a role in predicting the PWB of university students in Malaysia.

Personality refers to individual differences in how humans think, feel, and behave (Fredericks, 2019). Personality traits represent enduring patterns of behaviour, thought, and emotion that are relatively stable over time. Most university students are in the adulthood stage. They must be prepared to carry out social responsibilities such as making decisions, choosing peers, building intimate or romantic relationships, ensuring their safety, managing time and finances, and constructing strategies to determine future success. University students come from different backgrounds, and this causes them to go through socialisation processes while dealing with a variety of manners and personalities perhaps different to theirs (Mohd Suhaimi & Mohd Haazik, 2020). Thus, the role of perceived personality traits can be summed up as how individual differences can play a role in the ability of students to manage responsibilities, challenges, and daily interactions.

The research on the effect of EQ and personality traits on PWB among university students in Malaysia holds great potential for promoting student mental health, academic success, and personal development. It provides a valuable foundation for evidence-based interventions; informs institutional policies and support services; and contributes to the overall well-being of university students in Malaysia. EQ is a psychological construct that refers to individuals' ability to perceive, understand, and manage their emotions and those of others. PWB encompasses an overall mental state, including emotional, cognitive, and social functioning. Understanding the relationship between EQ and PWB is crucial, especially among university students who often face various academic and personal stressors.

Considering the Malaysian cultural context when examining the relationship between EQ and personality traits on PWB among university students is essential. Malaysia is a multicultural country with diverse values, beliefs, and societal norms. Cultural factors, such as collectivism, religiosity, and family influence, may shape EQ and personality trait development and its impact on PWB. Future research should explore these cultural nuances to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships.

The current study highlights the significant influence of EQ and personality traits on university students' PWB in Malaysia. EQ enhances emotion regulation, interpersonal relationships, academic performance, stress coping, and promotes positive psychological outcomes. However, further research is needed to explore the mechanisms and cultural factors mediating or moderating this relationship. Understanding the impact of EQ and personality traits on PWB can inform interventions and programmes among university students in Malaysia. For that reason, the main objective of this study is to examine the effect of EQ and

personality traits on the PWB of university students in Malaysia. This study has several essential benefits for university students in Malaysia, such as enhancing student mental health, academic success and retention, personal development and life skills, and tailored support and interventions.

Exploring the relationship between EQ, personality traits, and PWB has the potential to lead to tailored interventions that enhance the mental wellness of university students. Additionally, it may aid in determining the variables that contribute to academic achievement and student involvement, allowing educational institutions to establish supportive contexts and resources. Moreover, the research can provide students with valuable feedback on their strengths and areas for improvement, empowering them to cultivate essential life skills. Ultimately, these discoveries can inform the creation of customised interventions and support systems that optimise the efficacy of mental health resources and promote positive well-being outcomes.

The objective of this study was to explore the impact of EQ and personality traits on university students' PWB in Malaysia. The ultimate goal is to improve students' mental health, academic performance, and personal development by providing customised support that considers the cultural relevance of EQ and well-being. In attaining the study's objectives, the following hypotheses were tested at  $\alpha = 0.05$  level of significance.

H<sub>1</sub> = A significant EQ would affect participants' PWB.

H<sub>2</sub> = A significant personality trait would affect participants' PWB.

H<sub>3</sub> = A significant personality trait would affect participants' EQ.

## 2. Literature Review

The following literature review explores the effect of EQ and personality traits on PWB among university students in Malaysia.

### 2.1 Emotional Intelligence

EQ has become a catchphrase in today's world, and has been extensively researched in education and other fields. In Malaysia, the importance of EQ has become increasingly significant for university students, as EQ enhances academic performance, social interactions, and personal development. EQ is a substantial factor in an individual's ability to succeed in most aspects (Sulaiman & Noor, 2015).

EQ is a popular topic in literature and practice, particularly in psychoeducational and mental health contexts. Various scholars conceptualise EQ differently, and three generally accepted models exist. According to Mayer et al. (2016), EQ can be learned, while Bar-On (1997) believed it is innate. Goleman combined both ideas and defined EQ as a mix of abilities and personality traits (Kooker et al., 2007). Mayer et al. (2000) were the first to formally introduce and conceptualise the term into four dimensions: recognising and conveying self-emotions to others; effectively utilising EQ in decision-making; understanding others' emotions; and regulating one's own emotions. People with a high EQ can manage their negative emotions and make sound reasoning in response to those emotions in themselves

and others, which results in a desirable ending (Mayer et al., 2016; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). People with a high EQ would have a more positive life outcome, such as better physical and mental health, PWB, academic achievement, and job-related success (Law et al., 2004; Lea et al., 2019; Śmieja et al., 2014; Wong et al., 2007).

According to a study by Soliman et al. (2017), students with a high level of EQ have better academic performance and higher achievement scores than students with low EQ. Furthermore, students with high EQ tend to have better interpersonal relationships and can resolve conflicts amicably. Additionally, students with EQ can handle stress and pressure better, which helps maintain their good mental health.

Universities in Malaysia aim to develop competent leaders capable of leading and influencing others positively. According to the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education, first-year undergraduate students must participate in university-based co-curricular programs (the Center for Co-curriculum and Student, 2021). These programs are aimed at developing life and leadership skills among students. Therefore, emphasising EQ in university education can enhance leadership skills among students, because EQ contributes to increased self-awareness. Malaysian universities must provide programmes that meet their student's diverse needs. EQ should be emphasised in all curricula to benefit university students. It is crucial to examine the influence of EQ on university students' PWB.

EQ is considered to moderate adverse mental health effects (Grover & Furnham, 2020; Skokou et al., 2021). A higher EQ is associated with better health (Martins et al., 2010). EQ correlates positively with self-efficacy in university students (Wang et al., 2020; Maalouf et al., 2022; Petrides et al., 2011). In addition, people with a higher EQ possess more developed social skills, are prosocial, less conflictive, and are better at coping with emotional difficulties (Skokou et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2018). According to Petrides et al. (2016), people with a low level of EQ are more likely to experience interpersonal difficulties and significant psychological problems.

In this study, we used the trait emotional intelligence (TEI) theory proposed by Petrides et al. (2007), in which they suggest that EQ consists of a set of trait-like emotional self-perceptions. According to this theory, individuals vary in their ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and utilise emotions effectively. These emotional self-perceptions are assessed through self-report measures such as the trait emotional intelligence questionnaire (TEIQue). The TEI theory posits that EQ comprises four main dimensions:

- a) *Self-awareness*: They can accurately recognise their emotional states and understand the impact of their emotions on thoughts and behaviours.
- b) *Emotion regulation*: This dimension focuses on the ability to manage and regulate one's emotions in adaptive ways.
- c) *Interpersonal relationships*: The capacity to navigate social interactions and effectively develop positive relationships. This dimension involves empathy,

understanding others' emotions, effective communication, and building and maintaining healthy relationships.

- d) *Emotional expression*: This dimension focuses on the ability to express emotions in appropriate and constructive ways. It involves effectively communicating emotions verbally and non-verbally, and adapting emotional expression to different social contexts.

## 2.2 Personality Traits

People's personalities are also important factors that can affect their mental health. Having a strong personality helps individuals manage their stress levels. People's personality traits refer to their thinking and behaviour when interacting with others. It is a core factor that affects how they react and adjust to situations. Personality refers to unique and relatively stable qualities characterising an individual's behaviour across different situations over time (Ullah, 2017). It is an essential aspect of human behaviour. Without studying it, the study of human behaviour would be incomplete.

Personality among university students in Malaysia is a vast and complex topic that requires a comprehensive understanding of different factors. A person's personality is a combination of behaviours, attitudes, motivations, and emotions that distinguishes one person from another. It reflects an individual's thinking, feeling, and acting patterns. Personality is consistently a strong predictor of well-being (Ullah, 2017; Diener et al., 2003). Personality adequately conceptualises a person's behaviour in detail, and it is a person's unique pattern of traits. It is vital to study which personality factor contributes to the experience of well-being among university students. According to Osamika et al. (2021), personality traits play critical roles in ensuring persistent strong will in students because it is the content of PWB in individuals and helps increase students' quest to succeed and achieve in life.

University is a critical development stage for students, and their experiences during this period play a crucial role in shaping their personalities. They come from diverse cultural backgrounds. Therefore, it is essential to account for cultural differences when analysing individual personality trait differences. Several studies have been conducted on personality traits among university students in Malaysia (Chung et al., 2019; Sam et al. 2022; Yusoff et al., 2013 & 2021; Zainah et al., 2019; Shen et al., 2022; Abdollahi et al., 2022; Lei et al., 2020; Bhagat et al., 2019). Scholars reveal that students differ in their personality traits. One of the most dominant personality traits among university students in Malaysia is agreeableness. Agreeable students are generally cooperative, kind-hearted, empathetic, and friendly. Another common trait is conscientiousness. Conscientious students are diligent, organised, responsible, and goal-oriented. They tend to be high achievers in academics. Additionally, attention should be given to explore personality traits in this specific context as it was noted that most personality development occurs across lifetime (Roberts & Nickel, 2017).

Some university students in Malaysia display negative personality traits, such as neuroticism. Students with neuroticism personalities can be reactive and easily

bothered by what happens in their environment. These students are easily stressed and may want to avoid persisting in academic challenges or difficulties (Osamika et al., 2021; Antes et al., 2007; Costa & McCrae, 1992). Personality traits among university students in Malaysia is a multifaceted topic. It is critical to do a study examining personalities' effects on university students' PWB.

### **2.3 Emotional Intelligence with Psychological Well-Being**

A study showed that high levels of EQ are linked to higher self-esteem levels, social involvement, sociability, self-regulation, and overall PWB in students (Shaheen & Shaheen, 2006). Research among Spanish female undergraduates also showed a relationship between perceived EQ dimensions and some PWB dimensions (Augusto-Landa et al., 2011). Another study conducted among female undergraduate students in Bangalore City, India, found a significant relationship between EQ and PWB. Specifically, all characteristics of PWB, except for environmental mastery, are linked to well-being. Self-acceptance is related to self-control. Emotionality is linked to personal development and acceptance of oneself. Except for ecological knowledge, sociability is connected to all aspects of PWB (Jugnu & Vivekananda, 2018).

A study conducted among male university students also showed that EQ correlates significantly and positively with PWB, with social support partially mediating the longitudinal relationship between the two constructs (Malinauskas & Malinauskiene, 2020). The studies conducted among female and male university students show that studies with a sample of all female and male students showed the same results that EQ correlates significantly and positively with PWB (Augusto-Landa et al., 2011; Jugnu & Vivekananda, 2018; Malinauskas & Malinauskiene, 2020).

### **2.4 Personality Traits with Psychological Well-Being**

Ullah (2017) revealed that four out of five personality traits from the "big five" dimensions influence the PWB of university students at Aligarh Muslim University significantly. The big five personality traits are neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness, openness to experience and agreeableness.

Neuroticism predicted PWB negatively, whereas extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness to experience predicted PWB positively. Another significant finding is that neuroticism and conscientiousness are revealed to be the common predictors of PWB for both male and female students. However, openness to experience is shown to be a predictor of PWB among female students but not among males.

During the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, it was found that university students' personality traits, such as extraversion, neuroticism, and openness to experience, were associated with a higher likelihood of low PWB among university students. At the same time, agreeableness and conscientiousness show a statistically significant positive relationship with PWB (Gupta & Parimal, 2020).

Another recent study revealed a meaningful positive relationship between personality traits (such as agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience) and PWB among Nigerian undergraduates (Osamika et al., 2021).

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Study Design**

This research used a quantitative design method through an online survey to examine the relationship between EQ, personality traits, and PWB among university students in Malaysia. The questionnaire was distributed through Google Forms by using a convenience sampling technique. This design allows for the collection of numerical data, which can be analysed statistically and enables the generalisability of findings to a larger population by including a diverse sample of university students from different universities in Malaysia. It aligns with Creswell's emphasis on the importance of generalisability in quantitative research (Creswell, 2009).

#### **3.2 Participants**

The participants of this study consisted of 151 university students in public and private universities in Malaysia, whose ages ranged from 19 to 33 years old, and who were from diverse backgrounds. The students were selected using a combination of stratified random sampling and convenience sampling techniques. With stratified random sampling, we ensured representation from different types of universities and diverse backgrounds. We divided the student population into groups based on specific characteristics and randomly selected participants from each group in proportion to their representation. This approach helped make sure our sample was representative of a larger population.

Convenience sampling was also used, which means we selected participants who were easily accessible and willing to participate. The students were given a questionnaire and asked to fill it out and provide their opinions independently. The demographic information of the participants was collected to understand the relationships between EQ, personality traits, and PWB among university students in Malaysia. This information about their backgrounds enhances the relevance and comprehensiveness of the study for future research and interventions.

#### **3.3 Selection of Criteria Study**

The criteria defined in this study were that the sample and location selection focused on university students from 20 universities in Malaysia. The study included a sample size of 151 participants, ranging from 19 to 33 years old. Additionally, the sample was diverse, including students from different universities and demographic backgrounds. The study examined the two independent variables of EQ and personality traits. These variables were assessed using validated and reliable instruments, specifically the TEIQue-SF for EQ and the BFI-10 for personality traits. The dependent variable in this study was PWB, which was measured using the well-established Ryff's (1998) PWB Scale.

#### **3.4 Location**

This study was conducted among universities all around Malaysia. Students from both public and private universities in Malaysia participated in this study. Table

1 shows the area of study in general. Considering the confidentiality protections of this study, the location identity was kept anonymous by changing the location name to a code such as location A, location B, etc.

**Table 1: The location of the study**

Location	Codes
Infrastructure University Kuala Lumpur (IUKL)	*Location A to T S
Institut Pendidikan Guru (IPG)	
Kampus Bahasa Antarabangsa	
Open University Malaysia (OUM)	
UCSI University	
UNITAR International University	
University College of Yayasan Pahang (UCYP)	
Universiti Kuala Lumpur (UniKL)	
Universiti Malaya (UM)	
Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK)	
Universiti Malaysia Pahang (UMP)	
Universiti Malaysia Perlis (UniMAP)	
Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS)	
Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS)	
Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI)	
Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)	
Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA)	
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM)	
Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM)	
Universiti Teknologi PETRONAS (UTP).	

\*Note: Locations were coded randomly.

### 3.5 Instruments

In this study, the researcher used a set of questionnaires that consisted of four sections:

1. Section A: Demographic Information.
2. Section B: Trait Emotional Intelligence - Short Form (TEIQue-SF) (Petrides, 2007, 2009a; 2009b; 2010).
3. Section C: Big Five Inventory (BFI-10) (Rammstedt & John, 2007).
4. Section D: Ryff's PWB Scale (Ryff, 1989).

The questionnaire is fully bilingual and uses both the English and Malay Languages, as seen in Table 2 and appendices 1 to 3.

**Table 2: The instrument of study**

Section	Instrument	Items	Source
A	Demographic Information	5	Authors
B	TEIQue-SF	30	Petrides (2007; 2009a; 2009b; 2010)
C	BFI-10	10	Rammstedt & John (2007)
D	Ryff's PWB Scale	18	Ryff (1989)

### 3.6 Research Procedure

This study's research procedure began with reviewing past research regarding the chosen title of the study. A bilingual questionnaire was used and then uploaded

onto Google Form, which was the platform used to distribute the questionnaire after approval from the supervisor. The questionnaire includes an informed consent form, ensuring that each participant participates in the study voluntarily. The questionnaire link was then distributed through social media platforms, such as WhatsApp and Instagram, followed by the screening, analysing, and interpreting of the data that were collected.

### 3.7 Data Analysis

The data in this study were analysed using IBM SPSS version 28.0. This study used appropriate descriptive and inferential statistics to test the hypotheses. Linear regression was used to test the effect of EQ on PWB. In contrast, multiple regression was used to test the impact of personality on EQ and PWB among university students in Malaysia.

## 4. Result and Discussion

### 4.1 Statistical Analysis of the Hypotheses

The statistical analysis of the hypotheses in this study involved regression analysis and the calculation of the significance of the findings using p-values. A significance level of 0.05 was set to determine statistical significance. The following provides a summary of the results and a discussion of the hypotheses.

#### 4.1.1 EQ and PWB of students: Testing $H_1$

Table 3 presents the regression analysis summary of the effect of EQ on participants' PWB.

**Table 3: Regression analysis summary for the effect of EQ on participants' PWB**

Variable	B	$\beta$	t	p
(Constant)	62.278		7.716	<.001
EQ	0.119	0.157	1.946	.053

Note.  $R^2 = 0.025$

Source: Developed by authors

According to the data, as presented in Table 3, the results of the study indicate that EQ did not have a significant effect on participants' PWB among university students in Malaysia. The statistical analysis showed that the value of  $\beta$  was 0.157, with a t-value of 1.95 and a p-value ( $\beta = 0.157$ ,  $t = 1.95$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) greater than 0.05, which suggests that the relationship between EQ and PWB was not statistically significant. The  $R^2$  value of 0.025 indicates that only about 2.5% of the variance in PWB could be accounted for by EQ. It means that EQ has a fragile predictive power in explaining students' well-being, particularly psychological aspects. Therefore,  $H_1$  that EQ significantly affects PWB is rejected. It is worth noting that previous research has found significant relationships between EQ and PWB (Augusto-Landa et al., 2011; Jugnu & Vivekananda, 2018; Malinauskas & Malinauskiene, 2020; Robarth & Sheese, 2007). However, this particular study suggests that EQ may not strongly predict well-being among university students in Malaysia.

The lack of significance in this study may be due to several factors, including the specific context of university students in Malaysia and the limited research on this relationship. However, it is essential to consider that the correlation between EQ and PWB was still positive, indicating a weak general association between the two constructs. This study suggests that EQ may not be a strong predictor of well-being among university students in Malaysia, particularly in the psychological aspects. The ability to acknowledge, regulate, and organise emotions may be insignificant in determining how well a university student functions daily, at least in this context. However, further research is needed to explore this relationship in more depth.

#### 4.1.2 Personality Traits and PWB of students: Testing $H_2$

Table 4 displays the results of the multiple regression analysis on the effect of students' personality traits on their PWB.

**Table 4: Regression analysis summary for the personality traits affect participants' PWB**

Variable	B	$\beta$	t	p
(Constant)	87.346		5.648	<.001
Extraversion	0.388	0.041	0.499	.618
Agreeableness	-2.278	-0.172	-2.074	<b>.040</b>
Conscientiousness	2.058	0.190	2.259	<b>.025</b>
Neuroticism	-1.329	-0.119	-1.361	.176
Openness to Experience	0.293	0.023	0.279	.781

Note.  $R^2 = 0.080$

Source: Developed by authors

According to Table 4, the variable of personality traits showed a significant relationship with the PWB variable. The  $R^2$  value of 0.080 indicates that approximately 8% of the variance in PWB can be explained by personality traits. The statistical analysis revealed that the F-value was significant ( $F(5,145) = 2.535$ ,  $p < .05$ ), indicating that the overall relationship between personality traits and PWB was statistically significant. Specifically, the dimension of *agreeableness* had a negative  $\beta$  value of -0.172, a t-value of -2.07, and a p-value less than 0.05 ( $\beta = -0.172$ ,  $t = -2.07$ , and  $p < 0.05$ ), suggesting that higher levels of *agreeableness* were associated with lower levels of PWB.

In contrast, the dimension of *conscientiousness* showed a positive  $\beta$  value of 0.190, a t-value of 2.26, and a p-value less than 0.05 ( $\beta = 0.190$ ,  $t = 2.26$ , and  $p < 0.05$ ), indicating that higher levels of *conscientiousness* were associated with higher levels of PWB. Therefore,  $H_2$  related to *agreeableness* and *conscientiousness* as predictors of PWB among university students in Malaysia are accepted. However, the hypotheses associated with *extraversion*, *neuroticism*, and *openness to experience* as predictors of PWB are rejected, as the statistical analysis did not find significant relationships for these dimensions.

The findings of this study suggest that personality traits, specifically agreeableness and conscientiousness, can significantly predict the PWB of university students in Malaysia. These results align with previous studies, such as that of Gupta and Parimal (2020). However, it is worth noting that the study found an adverse correlation between agreeableness and PWB. It may be due to the tendency of agreeable individuals to avoid conflict and prioritise maintaining positive relationships, which can sometimes lead to boundary violations and adverse mental health outcomes (Fredericks, 2019; Mavengere, 2020).

In contrast, conscientiousness was found to have a significant and positive effect on university students' PWB in Malaysia. It suggests that more conscientious individuals with good self-control, discipline, organisation, and commitment tend to have higher levels of PWB. These findings are consistent with previous research by Gupta and Parimal (2020) and the notion that these traits are beneficial for coping with university assessments and personal demands (Jackson & Hill, 2019).

#### 4.1.3 Personality Traits and EQ of Students: Testing $H_3$

Table 5 illustrates the multiple regression analysis between students' personality traits and EQ.

**Table 5: Regression analysis summary for the effect of personality traits on participants' EQ**

Variable	B	$\beta$	t	p
(Constant)	123.238		8.204	<.001
Extraversion	2.479	0.197	3.287	.001
Agreeableness	2.032	0.116	1.905	.059
Conscientiousness	4.489	0.312	5.072	<.001
Neuroticism	-6.397	-0.433	-6.741	<.001
Openness to Experience	-0.884	-0.052	-0.866	.388

Note.  $R^2 = 0.506$

Source: Developed by authors

The findings from Table 5 indicate that the variable of *extraversion* has a  $\beta$  value of 0.197, a t-value of 3.29, and a p-value less than 0.05. The personality traits of variables *conscientiousness* ( $\beta = 0.312$ ,  $t = 5.07$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and *neuroticism* ( $\beta = -0.433$ ,  $t = -6.74$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), are also significant predictors of the PWB variable. It suggests that personality traits can significantly predict participants' EQ. Therefore,  $H_3$  is accepted, as it substantially affects the personality traits of university students' EQ in Malaysia, excluding *openness to experience*.

The results indicate that personality traits significantly impact university students' EQ in Malaysia. Specifically, *extraversion*, *conscientiousness*, and *neuroticism* were found to predict university students' EQ significantly. Previous studies examining the relationship between personality traits and EQ among university students are still relatively limited. This current study aligns with previous studies conducted by Shefabhai (2018) and Ghaiabi and Besharat (2011).

Both studies reported significant correlations between extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness to experience, and university students' EQ. However, Shefabhai's survey (2018) did not find a significant correlation between neuroticism and EQ. Despite this, Ghaiabi and Besharat (2011) reported a negative relationship between neuroticism and EQ. These findings can be further explained through the following possibilities.

Individuals who score high in extraversion tend to enjoy life, as previous studies have noted that extraversion increases one's propensity to experience pleasure (Ghaiabi & Besharat, 2011). Additionally, it prepares individuals to feel positive emotions, which can enhance their capabilities, particularly in social and interpersonal interactions (Ghaiabi & Besharat, 2011). Existing studies suggest that individuals who score higher in conscientiousness may be more skilful in managing their negative emotions (Javaras et al., 2012). Conscientiousness and effortful control are concepts related to development (Caspi et al., 2005) and are closely linked to emotion regulation (Robarth & Sheese, 2007). In contrast, neuroticism is generally characterised by a tendency to experience negative emotions. It is associated with emotional instability, irritability, moodiness, distress, poor coping skills, and sadness (Goldberg et al., 2006).

## 5. Conclusion

The study was successfully conducted in Malaysia. It aimed to explore the impact of EQ and personality traits on university students' PWB. The study addressed several hypotheses and yielded relevant findings. The propositions put forward by the study are that first, EQ does not significantly predict university students' PWB in Malaysia ( $H_1$ ). This unexpected result highlights the need to explore additional variables that may influence well-being in this context. Further research can delve into these variables to gain deeper insights into the factors affecting the PWB of Malaysian university students.

Second, the proposition  $H_2$  is that agreeableness and conscientiousness significantly predict university students' PWB in Malaysia. These specific personality traits were identified as significant predictors of PWB, aligning with previous studies. It emphasises the role of these traits in shaping students' well-being. Interventions and support programmes should consider these personality factors to enhance the emotional well-being of university students.

Third, the proposition  $H_3$  is that extraversion, neuroticism, and openness to experience do not significantly predict university students' PWB in Malaysia. These personality traits did not have a significant impact on PWB, according to the study's findings. Additionally, the study found that extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience significantly predict EQ among university students in Malaysia ( $H_3$ ). This proposition provides valuable insights into the relationship between EQ, personality traits, and PWB among Malaysian university students.

These findings contribute to the existing literature by explaining the relationship between EQ, personality traits, and PWB in a Malaysian university student

population. The results have practical implications for educational institutions in developing interventions and support strategies to improve students' emotional well-being and overall psychological health. Further research can build upon these findings to deepen our understanding and promote the psychological health and satisfaction of university students in Malaysia.

## 6. Limitation

It is essential to note the limitations of this study. The study is based on classical true-score, generalisability, and item response theories, the dominant theories in educational assessment (Allen & Yen, 1979). Classical true-score theory states that a student's observed score ( $X$ ) is a combination of the student's actual score ( $T$ ) and some error ( $E$ ). However, the  $E$  is not a mistake but a theoretical construct considering the inability to measure concepts perfectly. The generalisation theory extends classical true-score theory measurement by showing that it does not have to be restricted to the two-component linear model of valid and error scores – the true-score theory.

The study primarily focuses on university students in Malaysia. Therefore, the analysis can only be applied to Malaysian university students and not to all students in Malaysia's education system due to the specific criteria selected for this study, such as the academic level or age groups. The findings may not fully reflect the complexity and diversity of Malaysia's student population. Therefore, it is crucial to exercise caution when applying the results of this study to broader sample populations.

The second limitation of the study is the study variables and instruments. The study relied on specific measurement tools, such as the TEIQue-SF, BFI-10, and Ryff's PWB Scale, to assess EQ, personality traits, and PWB. Using these particular instruments may only capture some aspects and variations of EQ, personality traits and well-being that other measurement tools may encompass.

The last limitation is the study design and data analysis. This study used the quantitative method, limited to linear and multiple regression, for the data analysis. It captures data at a specific point in time. The study was determined to be a quantitative design, and the result was only based on respondents' self-reports, and not in-depth findings.

## 7. Implication and Future Study

This study has significant practical implications for educational institutions, professionals, and policymakers involved in promoting the well-being of university students in Malaysia. Foremost, the study emphasises the importance of recognising the influence of EQ and positive personality traits on the PWB of university students. Educational institutions should prioritise interventions and programmes that focus on developing EQ and positive qualities, such as empathy, resilience, and emotional regulation. These can be achieved through workshops, training sessions, and counselling services provided by lecturers, counsellors, and other campus professionals. By actively promoting the development of these

traits, universities can enhance students' emotional well-being and overall psychological health.

Additionally, integrating EQ development programmes into university curricula can enhance students' PWB. Incorporating EQ training into the academic curricula, universities can provide students with structured opportunities to develop their EQ skills, interpersonal relationships, stress management abilities, and resilience. These programmes can be designed to align with Malaysia's cultural values and norms, ensuring their relevance and effectiveness.

Furthermore, the study highlights the need for further research to deepen our understanding of how EQ and personality traits influence PWB among university students in Malaysia. Future studies can explore the relationships between EQ, personality traits, academic performance, social connections, and other relevant factors. This research can provide specific recommendations for improving PWB among students and contribute to developing evidence-based interventions.

The implications of this study have broader implications for policymakers as well. Policymakers can leverage the results to establish protocols and regulations that prioritise the well-being of students. This study can incorporate EQ training within the educational curricula, allocating resources to support interventions that address personality traits and EQ and creating a nurturing an inclusive campus environment.

Lastly, this study's implications provide practical recommendations for educational institutions, professionals, and policymakers involved in promoting the well-being of university students in Malaysia. Stakeholders can enhance students' emotional well-being and overall psychological health, creating a healthier and more supportive community for university students in Malaysia, by emphasising the development of EQ and positive personality traits, integrating EQ programmes into the curricula, conducting further research, and formulating supportive policies.

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## Appendix 1: Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire Short Form (TEIQue-SF)

Instructions: Please answer each statement below. Each statement has seven possible responses ranging from 'Completely Disagree' (number 1) to 'Completely Agree' (number 7).

No.	Statement	Scale
1.	Expressing my emotions with words is not a problem for me.	_____
2.	I often find it difficult to see things from another person's viewpoint.	_____
3.	On the whole, I'm a highly motivated person.	_____
4.	I usually find it difficult to regulate my emotions.	_____
5.	I generally don't find life enjoyable.	_____
6.	I can deal effectively with people.	_____
7.	I tend to change my mind frequently.	_____
8.	Many times, I can't figure out what emotion I'm feeling.	_____
9.	I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	_____
10.	I often find it difficult to stand up for my rights.	_____
11.	I'm usually able to influence the way other people feel.	_____
12.	On the whole, I have a gloomy perspective on most things.	_____
13.	Those close to me often complain that I don't treat them right.	_____
14.	I often find it difficult to adjust my life according to the circumstances.	_____
15.	On the whole, I'm able to deal with stress.	_____
16.	I often find it difficult to show my affection to those close to me.	_____
17.	I'm normally able to "get into someone's shoes" and experience their emotions.	_____
18.	I normally find it difficult to keep myself motivated.	_____
19.	I'm usually able to find ways to control my emotions when I want to.	_____
20.	On the whole, I'm pleased with my life.	_____
21.	I would describe myself as a good negotiator.	_____
22.	I tend to get involved in things I later wish I could get out of.	_____
23.	I often pause and think about my feelings.	_____
24.	I believe I'm full of personal strengths.	_____
25.	I tend to "back down" even if I know I'm right.	_____
26.	I don't seem to have any power at all over other people's feelings.	_____
27.	I generally believe that things will work out fine in my life.	_____
28.	I find it difficult to bond well even with those close to me.	_____
29.	Generally, I'm able to adapt to new environments.	_____
30.	Others admire me for being relaxed.	_____

## Appendix 2: The Big Five Inventory-10 (BFI-10)

**Instructions:** How well do the following statements describe your personality? Each statement has five possible responses ranging as below.

1	2	3	4	5
<b>Disagree strongly.</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Agree Strongly</b>

I see myself as someone who...

<b>No.</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>Response</b>
1.	...is reserved	_____
2.	...is generally trusting	_____
3.	...tends to be lazy	_____
4.	...is relaxed, handles stress well	_____
5.	...has few artistic interests	_____
6.	...is outgoing, sociable	_____
7.	...tends to find fault with others	_____
8.	...does a thorough job	_____
9.	...gets nervous easily	_____
10.	...has an active imagination	_____

### Appendix 3: Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale

Instructions: Response to each statement below to indicate how much you agree or disagree.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Somewhat agree</b>	<b>A little agree</b>	<b>Don't know</b>	<b>A little disagree</b>	<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>

No.	Statement	Response
1.	"I like most parts of my personality."	_____
2.	"When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out so far."	_____
3.	"Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them."	_____
4.	"The demands of everyday life often get me down."	_____
5.	"In many ways, I feel disappointed about my achievements in life."	_____
6.	"Maintaining close relationships has been difficult and frustrating for me."	_____
7.	"I live life one day at a time and don't really think about the future."	_____
8.	"In general, I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live."	_____
9.	"I am good at managing the responsibilities of daily life."	_____
10.	"I sometimes feel as if I've done all there is to do in life."	_____
11.	"For me, life has been a continuous process of learning, changing, and growth."	_____
12.	"I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how I think about myself and the world."	_____
13.	"People would describe me as a giving person, willing to share my time with others."	_____
14.	"I gave up trying to make big improvements or changes in my life a long time ago."	_____
15.	"I tend to be influenced by people with strong opinions."	_____
16.	"I have not experienced many warm and trusting relationships with others."	_____
17.	"I have confidence in my own opinions, even if they are different from the way most other people think."	_____
18.	"I judge myself by what I think is important, not by the values of what others think is important."	_____