

Prevalence of Emotional Intelligence Among Junior High Students: Implications for Guidance and Counseling

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ABSTRACT

Emotional intelligence plays a vital role in shaping adolescents' personal, social, and academic adjustment, influencing their capacity to recognize, manage, and express emotions effectively. Despite its importance, research exploring the prevalence of emotional intelligence among junior high school students in Indonesia remains limited. Addressing this gap, this study offers baseline descriptive data on the level of emotional intelligence in the Indonesian junior high school context. The study aims to describe the emotional intelligence levels among students at a public junior high school in Yogyakarta City. A descriptive quantitative design was employed to provide an overview of students' emotional intelligence prevalence. The population in this study consisted of all students at the selected school, while the sample comprised 270 students aged 12 to 15 years. The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula, and participants were selected using the Simple Random Sampling technique to ensure equal representation. Data were collected using an emotional intelligence scale developed based on Goleman's theoretical framework and analyzed through descriptive statistics, categorized according to Azwar's standard deviation formula. The findings revealed that most students demonstrated a moderate level of emotional intelligence, highlighting the need for further emotional development efforts in school settings. These results provide empirical insights for guidance and counseling practitioners to design contextual and preventive programs that foster students' emotional growth and interpersonal competence

KEYWORDS

Emotional Intelligence, Adolescents, Descriptive Quantitative, Guidance and Counseling.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, the field of education has undergone a significant paradigm shift. Student success is no longer determined solely by cognitive abilities, but also by the capacity to manage emotions, adapt to social environments, and demonstrate psychological balance when facing the challenges

of academic life (Aroutzidis & Antonopoulou, 2025; Djambazova-Popordanoska, 2016; Guo et al., 2023; Kassaw et al., 2024; Khan & Jameel, 2024; Shengyao et al., 2024). Emotional intelligence has emerged as a key psychological construct that plays a vital role in determining students' psychological well-being, academic performance, and social relationships (Fauzi & Sari, 2018; Fauziah et al., 2024; Hutasuhut & Sari, 2021; Muliani & Tindaon, 2022; Rahmawati et al., 2017). In the context of 21st-century education, international organizations such as UNESCO and the OECD have identified social and emotional competencies as one of the main pillars that must be developed in schools (OECD, 2018). These competencies include the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and express emotions adaptively, both in relation to oneself and to others.

Globally, various studies have confirmed that emotional intelligence is closely related to academic success, emotional well-being, and students' social skills (Guo et al., 2023; MacCann et al., 2020; Salleh et al., 2024; Shengyao et al., 2024). A meta-analysis of more than 200 school-based social-emotional education programs has shown that improvements in emotional intelligence contribute to increased academic performance and a reduction in problematic behaviors among students. Programs that focus on social-emotional learning have been proven to enhance students' ability to recognize emotions, manage stress, show empathy, and interact positively with peers and teachers (Miranda et al., 2024; Utami & Rahmawati, 2024; Wijayanti & Fauzi, 2024). These findings affirm that emotional intelligence is not merely an additional attribute in education, but rather an integral part of students' character and personality development.

In the Indonesian context, attention to students' social and emotional aspects has begun to increase in line with the emergence of various issues related to adolescent psychological well-being. National studies and various reports indicate a rise in cases of academic stress, social conflicts at school, and mild emotional disturbances among junior high school students (Addini et al., 2022; Bariyyah & Latifah, 2015; Dewi et al., 2022). In several regions, students face dual pressures: high academic demands and emotional instability resulting from the developmental dynamics of adolescence. Junior high school is recognized as a critical transitional period from childhood to adolescence, during which individuals begin to construct self-identity, undergo hormonal changes, and develop new cognitive and social capacities (Hamdanah & Surawan, 2022; Hariyono et al., 2024; Nurihsan & Agustin, 2016; Remaja, 2023; Yusuf & Sugandhi, 2018). Without adequate emotional regulation, this period may become vulnerable to the emergence of various forms of maladaptive behavior, such as excessive anxiety, aggression, or a decline in learning motivation.

However, despite the widely recognized urgency of developing emotional intelligence, empirical studies in Indonesia remain relatively limited and tend to focus on inter-variable relationships such as the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement, academic stress, or social adaptation without mapping the actual prevalence of emotional intelligence among students (Debyo et al., 2024; Yunalia & Etika, 2020). This limitation results in a lack of descriptive data that could serve as a foundation for designing effective guidance and counseling interventions in schools.

Emotional intelligence among junior high school students is a critical issue

in the local context, as early adolescence is marked by a surge in emotional development that is often not yet accompanied by adequate regulatory capacity (Dewi & Yusri, 2023; Yunalia & Etika, 2020). At this stage, students tend to experience conflicts between their desire for independence and their need for social support from both school and family environments. This is where the role of education and guidance and counseling services becomes crucial in strengthening emotional competencies. Guidance and counseling (GC) teachers have the responsibility not only to assist students facing problems but also to help develop their social-emotional potential so they can function optimally in both school and social life (Aisyah, 2018; Batubara et al., 2022; Damanik, 2019). Unfortunately, the practice of GC services in many schools remains reactive provided only after students display problematic behaviors rather than preventive and developmental in nature. Yet, preventive interventions can be far more effective when grounded in empirical data on students' actual conditions, including their level of emotional intelligence.

The theoretical model used in this study refers to Goleman (2007), theory of emotional intelligence, which conceptualizes emotional intelligence as a set of competencies and skills that determine how individuals recognize, understand, and manage their own emotions, as well as interact effectively with others. Goleman divides emotional intelligence into five core components: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. This theory emphasizes that success in learning, work, and social adaptation is more strongly influenced by emotional intelligence than by intellectual intelligence alone. Goleman's conceptual framework provides a comprehensive foundation for understanding emotional intelligence as an ability that can be developed through experience and educational processes. In the context of students, the ability to recognize emotions, manage them constructively, and demonstrate empathy and effective communication are crucial factors that support both academic success and psychological well-being (Andriani, 2014; Prilianto et al., 2024). Thus, this theory positions emotional intelligence not merely as a personality trait, but as a social-emotional competence that can be strengthened through guidance and counseling interventions in schools.

Based on theoretical reviews and previous studies, there remain several gaps that need to be addressed. Research on emotional intelligence among junior high school students has generally focused on urban populations or high-performing schools, while the socio-cultural contexts of regions with diverse educational characteristics have not been extensively explored. This is despite the fact that environmental factors, parenting patterns, and school dynamics can significantly influence the development of adolescents' emotional intelligence. Moreover, most previous studies have emphasized the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement, without thoroughly examining the distribution of emotional intelligence levels among students as a basis for mapping actual conditions in the field. Third, earlier research has seldom been directly linked to the practice of guidance and counseling services in schools. As a result, guidance and counseling (GC) teachers often lack quantitative data that could serve as a foundation for designing contextual emotional development programs tailored to students' real needs. On the other hand, the measurement approaches used in many studies remain generic and have not been fully adapted to the

developmental context of Indonesian adolescents, particularly in terms of language, norms of emotional expression, and surrounding social values. Therefore, this study is necessary to provide a more comprehensive descriptive understanding of the prevalence of emotional intelligence among junior high school students in the local context and its implications for the development of school-based guidance and counseling services.

Although emotional intelligence among adolescents has been widely examined in international research, studies in the Indonesian context particularly those focusing on junior high school students remain limited. Most existing Indonesian studies employ correlational or predictive designs, leaving a shortage of baseline descriptive data that captures students' emotional intelligence profiles at the school level. Addressing this gap, the present study aims to provide a comprehensive descriptive overview of the prevalence of emotional intelligence among junior high school students in Yogyakarta. Rather than analyzing relationships between variables, this research focuses on portraying students' emotional intelligence levels to yield an accurate picture of their emotional conditions. Academically, the study contributes to enriching the literature on adolescent emotional intelligence in Indonesia by offering empirical baseline data at the junior secondary level. Practically, the findings may serve as a reference for guidance and counseling practitioners in designing evidence-based, preventive, and development-oriented interventions that support students' holistic growth.

METHODOLOGY

The research method used in this study is descriptive quantitative, aiming to provide an overview of the prevalence level of students' emotional intelligence. The population in this study consisted of all students at a public junior high school (SMP Negeri) in Yogyakarta City, with a sample size of 270 students aged between 12 and 15 years. The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula, while the sampling technique employed was Simple Random Sampling to ensure that each student had an equal chance of being selected as a respondent. Data collection was carried out over a two-week period in January 2024.

The research instrument used was an emotional intelligence scale developed by the researcher based on Goleman's (2007) theory, which includes five main dimensions: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Instrument validity was examined using Product Moment correlation analysis, resulting in 41 valid items. The reliability test, conducted using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, produced a value of $\alpha = 0.938$, indicating excellent internal consistency.

Ethical considerations were addressed by obtaining approval from the school administration and securing informed consent from students and their parents or guardians prior to participation. All respondents were assured of confidentiality and voluntary participation throughout the data collection process.

The data obtained from the scale responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including the calculation of mean values, percentages, and categorization of emotional intelligence levels. The categorization of students' emotional intelligence (high, moderate, low) was carried out using the standard

deviation formula adapted from Azwar (2022). The results of this analysis serve as the basis for determining the general overview and distribution of emotional intelligence levels among junior high school students in the study area, which are then used to formulate implications for school-based guidance and counseling services.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of data analysis regarding the emotional intelligence levels of the junior high school students who participated as research respondents.

Table 1. Categorization of Emotional Intelligence

Category	Category Formula	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Low	$X < M - 1SD$	$X < 114$	35	13%
Moderate	$M - 1SD < X < M + 1SD$	$114 < X < 140$	181	67%
High	$M + 1SD > X$	$140 > X$	54	20%
Total			270	100%

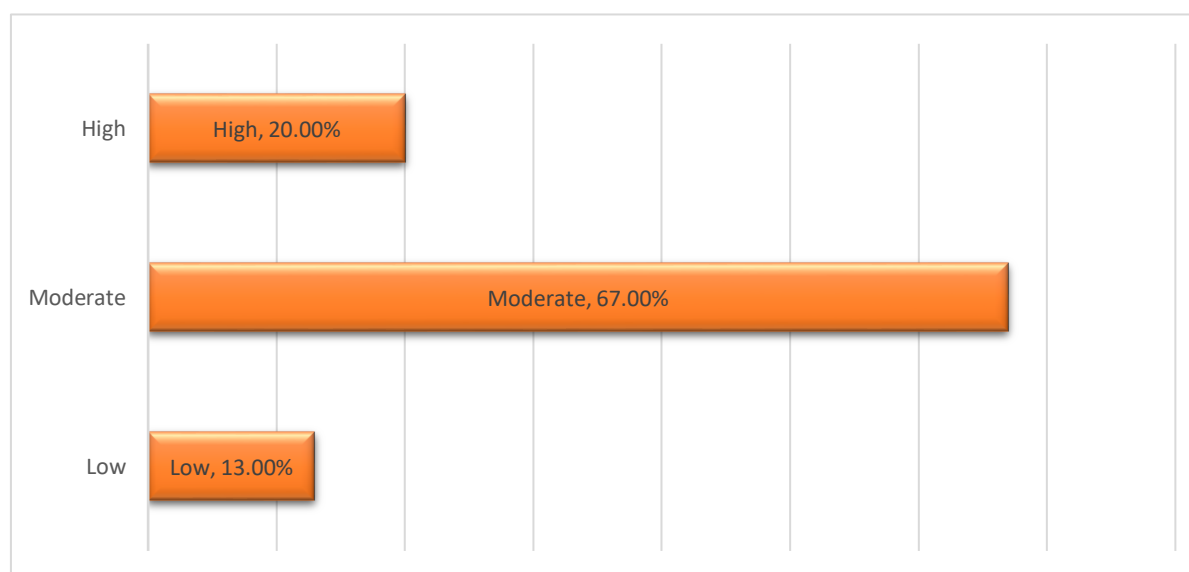


Figure 1. Prevalence of Emotional Intelligence

Based on the data analysis conducted on 270 student respondents, 54 students (20%) exhibited a high level of emotional intelligence, 181 students (67%) demonstrated a moderate level, and 35 students (13%) showed a low level of emotional intelligence. Overall, the average emotional intelligence level of the students falls within the moderate category. This distribution suggests that while most students possess adequate emotional abilities such as recognizing and managing emotions to a functional degree many have not yet reached optimal emotional maturity. The dominance of the moderate category indicates that students are still in the process of developing more refined emotional skills, which is typical for early adolescence and highlights the importance of continuous emotional support and structured guidance within the school environment.

Discussion

The results of the study indicate that, out of 270 student respondents, 54 students (20%) exhibited a high level of emotional intelligence, 181 students (67%) fell into the moderate category, and 35 students (13%) were classified as having low emotional intelligence. These findings suggest that, overall, the emotional intelligence of junior high school students in the study area is at a moderate level. This condition reflects that the majority of students have acquired basic abilities to recognize, understand, and manage emotions but still require reinforcement in applying more adaptive emotional skills within social and academic contexts.

Students with a high level of emotional intelligence tend to be more optimistic, maintain a healthy lifestyle, and possess self-regulation skills that enable them to endure and cope with existing difficulties and pressures (Astuti & Rusmawati, 2022). Conversely, adolescents lacking emotional intelligence may struggle to overcome various problems, particularly those related to developmental tasks, which can lead to deviant behaviors or juvenile delinquency (Dewi & Yusri, 2023). Furthermore, individuals unable to control their emotional life may experience inner turmoil that impairs their ability to focus on tasks and maintain clear thinking (Andriani & Listiyandini, 2017).

Furthermore, it is essential for students to possess emotional intelligence in order to make sound decisions by considering the emotional consequences of their choices. Understanding and managing emotions can guide students in making decisions that align with their values and life goals (Fauzi & Sari, 2018). It is also important for students to be able to cope with failure, frustration, or disappointment, which are crucial components of emotional intelligence. Students with well-developed emotional intelligence can recover and grow from negative experiences, thereby fostering resilience (Setyowati et al., 2012). Emotional intelligence thus aids students in understanding and managing their emotions, while resilience strengthens their ability to recover from difficult experiences. Together, resilience and emotional intelligence support developmental tasks related to identity, relationships, and achievement.

These findings are consistent with research by Mayer et al. (2007) and Salovey & Sluyter (1997) which assert that emotional intelligence develops gradually during adolescence alongside cognitive and social maturation. However, the predominance of the moderate category indicates significant room for development, particularly because junior high school represents a transitional phase from childhood to adolescence, during which emotional regulation, empathy, and social skills are still being formed (Brackett et al., 2025; Goleman, 2007). Therefore, the dominance of the moderate category reflects that most students possess sufficient emotional capacity to manage social and academic pressures but still face challenges in applying emotions constructively (Herdiansyah et al., 2024). This situation warrants serious attention within guidance and counseling services to optimally nurture students' emotional potential.

According to Goleman's theory (2007), emotional intelligence is built upon several interrelated pillars, including self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills. Self-awareness refers to the individual's ability to accurately

recognize, understand, and interpret their own emotions, which serves as the foundation for reflective capacity and behavioral control (Muarifah et al., 2024). Meanwhile, self-regulation pertains to the capacity to manage impulses, inhibit excessive emotional reactions, and adaptively adjust to stressful situations. These two aspects represent the foundation of emotional maturity, enabling individuals to respond to their environment in more constructive ways.

Furthermore, the dimensions of empathy and social skills play a crucial role in the context of interpersonal relationships. Empathy enables individuals to recognize and understand the emotions, thoughts, and perspectives of others, while social skills encompass the ability to build positive relationships, communicate effectively, cooperate, and manage social conflicts. Goleman (2007) emphasizes that the balance among self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills is key to an individual's success in establishing healthy social relationships and achieving psychological well-being. Thus, Goleman's theory positions emotional intelligence not only as an intrapersonal ability but also as a social competence that determines an individual's effectiveness in academic and everyday social life.

Therefore, the findings of this study have important implications for the implementation of Guidance and Counseling (G&C) services at the junior high school level. According to the Permendikbud No 111 of 2014 concerning Guidance and Counseling, one of the basic service functions is the development of students' potential, including emotional potential. Consequently, the results of this study underscore the need for service strategies that focus on the development of emotional intelligence as part of developmental guidance functions. Firstly, school counselors can design group guidance programs with themes such as recognizing and managing emotions, developing empathy and positive communication, as well as coping with social and academic pressures. The Social Emotional Learning (SEL) model can serve as an implementation framework, encompassing five main domains: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

Second, a heutagogical approach in guidance and counseling services can be employed to encourage students to become independent learners in managing their emotions (Handaka et al., 2024; Syamsu & Herdiansyah, 2025). Through self-reflection, mini-projects, and peer-to-peer discussions, students can internalize the values of emotional intelligence as part of their personal responsibility. Third, the findings of this study can serve as a foundation for developing psychopedagogical assessment tools to identify students' emotional intelligence profiles. Such assessments can assist counselors in designing more targeted interventions tailored to the needs of individuals or groups. Theoretically, this study reinforces Goleman's (2007) view that emotional intelligence is not a static ability but can be developed through appropriate social and emotional learning experiences. However, the predominance of the moderate category indicates that the current education system still prioritizes cognitive aspects, while emotional learning has yet to be integrated systematically.

Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge that this study has limitations due to being conducted in only one region; thus, generalizing the results should be done cautiously. Further research could expand the geographical scope and

consider contextual variables such as socio-economic background, family dynamics, and school culture. Overall, the results indicate that the majority of junior high school students possess emotional intelligence at a moderate level, with primary challenges in emotional regulation and social relationship management. These findings suggest the need for systematic integration between academic education and emotional education through guidance and counseling services based on character development and psychological well-being. Emotional intelligence is not only an indicator of social success but also serves as a protective factor against stress, anxiety, and maladaptive behaviors in adolescents. Therefore, schools, as primary developmental environments, must provide safe and supportive spaces for students to recognize, understand, and express their emotions healthily.

CONCLUSION

More broadly, the findings of this study address the primary research objective, which is to map the levels of emotional intelligence among students and identify its implications for school-based guidance and counseling services. The data obtained provide a strong quantitative foundation for guidance and counseling teachers to design more targeted and context-specific interventions. By understanding the proportion of students with low, moderate, and high levels of emotional intelligence, school counselors can develop programs focused on enhancing self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and social skills through both group and individual approaches. In practical terms, these findings also underscore the need for school counselors to integrate structured emotional intelligence modules into their annual guidance plans to ensure continuous and systematic social-emotional development.

These findings also affirm that emotional intelligence is a competency that can be developed through continuous educational processes. Within the school context, social-emotional learning needs to be explicitly integrated into guidance and counseling activities not merely as a response to student problems, but as a proactive component of character development and psychological well-being. As such, this study contributes to strengthening the paradigm of developmental guidance services, as mandated by Permendikbud No. 111 of 2014.

The novelty of this research lies in its descriptive and contextual approach, as it focuses on mapping the actual condition of students' emotional intelligence within a specific educational setting, rather than merely examining correlations between variables. This descriptive mapping serves as a foundational step for designing preventive and promotive guidance programs, offering empirical clarity regarding students' real needs. Additionally, this study underscores the importance of using culturally relevant instruments aligned with the developmental context of Indonesian adolescents to ensure valid and applicable assessments within the school environment.

In conclusion, this study offers not only theoretical contributions to the discourse on adolescent emotional intelligence but also practical benefits for the implementation of school guidance and counseling services. The findings are expected to serve as a reference for school counselors, educators, and

administrators in developing strategies to continuously strengthen students' emotional intelligence. Ultimately, enhancing emotional intelligence will contribute to creating a more empathetic, collaborative, and supportive school climate one that promotes the holistic development of students across academic, social, and emotional domains.

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AI USAGE DECLARATION

During the preparation of this work, the authors used Consensus to assist with literature searching and Grammarly for language editing and proofreading. After using these tools, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the final manuscript's content, accuracy, and originality.

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