Developing an Emotional Literacy Application and Suggest the Educational Framework to Enhance Emotional Intelligence in Sri Lankan School Students

Dewmi Hathurusingha
Department of Software Engineering & Computer Security
NSBM Green University
Homagama, Sri Lanka
Dnhathurusingha@students.nsbm.ac.lk

Dr Mohammed Shafraz
Department of Software Engineering & Computer Security
NSBM Green University
Homagama, Sri Lanka
Shafraz@nsbm.ac.lk

D T Wijesinghe
Department of Software Engineering & Computer Security
NSBM Green University
Homagama, Sri Lanka
diluka.w@nsbm.ac.lk

Abstract*— Emotional Intelligence (EI) is increasingly recognized as a key determinant of student success, resilience, and well-being. However, Sri Lanka's education system continues to emphasize academic achievement while neglecting emotional and social development. The literature review highlights how the absence of EI affects students at multiple stages: difficulties in school learning and peer relationships, challenges in adapting to higher education, reduced performance and teamwork in corporate life, and poor decision-making in personal life. This study addresses this critical gap by proposing a dual intervention—updating the school curriculum to integrate EI as common knowledge and developing an emotional literacy mobile application that enables students to individually assess and manage their emotions. Grounded in the positivist paradigm and adopting a quantitative research design, the study investigates the relationship between EI, emotional literacy, and educational well-being among Grade 10 students in Sri Lanka. A structured questionnaire and pre/post-intervention surveys were administered, with data analyzed using descriptive statistics, regression, and moderation analysis. The quantitative findings confirmed a strong positive relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Educational Well-being ($\beta = 0.700$, $R^2 = 0.490$, $p < .001$), with a large effect size ($\eta^2 = 0.508$). These results empirically validate the study's conceptual model and highlight the moderating role of Emotional Literacy in strengthening student outcomes. This study also elaborates on the ethical procedures, including parental consent and anonymity assurance for minors, ensuring research integrity and reliability. From a broader perspective, the research provides a forward-looking framework that can be scaled across multiple provinces and potentially integrated into Sri Lanka's national education policy. By merging curriculum-level reform with a personalized digital intervention, the model offers a sustainable pathway to enhance student well-being, resilience, and socio-emotional competence. This work holds substantial importance for the scientific community, as it bridges a major contextual gap in Emotional Intelligence and socio-emotional learning (SEL) research within developing nations. It introduces a hybrid framework that combines educational reform with innovative emotional literacy tool, contributing to global discussions on technology-driven SEL advancement and offering actionable insights for policymakers, educators, and researchers.

Keywords—Emotional Intelligence, Emotional Literacy, Educational Framework, Emotional Wheel, Mobile Application, Sri Lankan Schools

I. INTRODUCTION

Education in Sri Lanka has long prioritized academic performance, while largely neglecting emotional and social development. This imbalance has left students vulnerable to stress, anxiety, and poor emotional regulation, with consequences that extend beyond the classroom. The absence of structured Emotional Intelligence (EI) development undermines not only school students' educational well-being but also their success in higher education, workplace readiness, and personal life.

Recent tragic incidents in Sri Lanka highlight this urgent gap. In 2024, cases of suicide among schoolchildren, violent behavior linked to bullying, and students overwhelmed by academic stress demonstrated the severe consequences of poor emotional regulation.

These examples emphasize that while academic achievements are valued, the lack of EI leaves students ill-equipped to manage relationships, adapt to challenges, and cope with setbacks.

Globally, EI is widely recognized as a critical life skill, contributing to academic performance, resilience, and professional success. A lack of EI has ripple effects across domains: in schools, it reduces focus and empathy; in universities, it leads to burnout and disengagement; in workplaces, it fosters stress, leadership conflicts, and poor collaboration; and in society, it contributes to rising rates of violence, family breakdowns, and weakened social bonds. These impacts affect multiple stakeholders—students, educators, employers, families, and communities.

To address these challenges, this study proposes a **dual solution** by integrating EI education into Sri Lankan school curricula to ensure common knowledge for all students and developing a personalized emotional literacy mobile application to help students individually recognize, regulate, and manage their emotions.

This combined framework aims to modernize the education system, promote holistic student development, and equip the younger generation with the resilience and adaptability needed for academic, professional, and personal success.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review establishes the theoretical foundation of this study by analyzing how the absence of emotional intelligence (EI) affects students' educational and emotional well-being in Sri Lanka [1], [2]. Research shows that emotional challenges often begin in school and extend into higher education, personal life, and professional environments, leading to issues such as low self-esteem, poor decision-making, weak communication, and difficulties in stress management. Core components of EI, self-awareness, self-management, empathy, social skills, and emotional literacy emerge as critical skills that help students navigate academic responsibilities, build meaningful relationships, and adapt to challenges. A conceptual framework is used to illustrate how these components are interconnected and collectively influence student outcomes, underscoring the need for structured EI development within school curricula and the potential of technology-driven interventions such as gamified emotional literacy applications.

A. Impacts Across Domains

Emotional intelligence (EI) plays a critical role in shaping individuals' ability to succeed academically, personally, and professionally. A lack of EI, however, creates ripple effects that extend beyond the classroom into higher education, workplace environments, and day-to-day personal life. Students who are not equipped with emotional regulation, empathy, and self-management skills often face challenges in coping with stress, building relationships, and adapting to new demands. These deficits accumulate over time, weakening resilience, increasing vulnerability to mental health crises, and reducing readiness for professional and social responsibilities. To capture these multidimensional effects, the following section discusses the impact of limited EI development across four domains: school education, higher education, professional life, and personal well-being.

School-Level Impact: Sri Lanka's exam-oriented education system prioritizes academic knowledge while neglecting socio-emotional development. This has resulted in low self-control, poor decision-making, and reduced resilience among students. Real-world tragedies in 2024, including a suicide pact among private school students [3], the murder of grandparents and a friend by a 15-year-old student [4], and the suicide of an A-Level student due to academic stress and gaming addiction [5], highlight the dangers of ignoring EI development.

Higher Education Impact: Students transitioning to university frequently struggle with stress management, decision-making, and adaptability, leading to burnout and poor mental health [6],. A tragic case at the University of Colombo in 2024, where a student was murdered by her partner due to relationship-related conflict, underscores how insufficient emotional regulation in adolescence can lead to severe outcomes in adulthood [7].

Professional Development Impact: Low EI also affects employability and workplace success. Research highlights that EI is positively linked to job performance and job stability [8], and it significantly influences how individuals cope with workplace bullying and performance under stress [9]. Without EI, young professionals struggle with collaboration, conflict resolution, and leadership, weakening organizational productivity and innovation.

Personal Life Impact: Emotional intelligence is equally important in maintaining a healthy work-life balance and sustaining personal well-being. Studies show that high EI supports stress regulation, adaptability, and resilience, which are essential to balancing academic, professional, and social demands[10]. Conversely, low EI contributes to strained relationships, poor coping strategies, and long-term psychological distress [11].

Collectively, these findings reveal that deficits in EI affect not only educational and career outcomes but also personal and societal stability. This highlights the urgency of integrating structured EI and emotional literacy into the Sri Lankan school curriculum to prepare students for holistic success across all domains of life.

B. Core components of EI

In this research authors broadly defined, Emotional Intelligence as the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and apply emotions effectively in both personal and social contexts. It is typically conceptualized through four interrelated domains: self-awareness, self-management, empathy, and Social Skills. In the Sri Lankan context, studies reveal that adolescents consistently score lowest in self-awareness and self-management, often acting reactively and struggling to regulate stress[13]. Similarly, deficits in empathy and social skills fuel bullying, classroom conflicts, and poor peer relationships [14].

Emotional literacy, as a practical extension of EI, has been recognized globally as a predictor of academic and social success. Programs in countries such as Seychelles and India have embedded emotional literacy into national curricula with measurable outcomes in resilience and classroom well-being [15]. Yet, Sri Lanka has not formally adopted EI or emotional literacy as part of its curriculum, leaving students without structured opportunities to develop these skills.

C. Evolution of Emotional Intelligence and Global Practices vs. the Sri Lankan Context

The concept of emotional intelligence has evolved from early 20th century studies on social intelligence to Mayer and Salovey's Ability Model (1990) and Goleman's influential work (1995), which popularized EI worldwide [16]. Today, EI is recognized as critical for academic success, workplace effectiveness, and societal well-being. However, Sri Lanka's education system continues to prioritize academics over emotional development, leaving students with limited opportunities to build resilience and self-regulation.

Mayer and Salovey's Ability Model [17], Goleman's Mixed Model [18], Bar-On's Emotional-Social Model, Petrides' Trait Model [19] and the CASEL SEL Framework [20] etc models provide structured approaches to EI. These have been widely adopted across education and business worldwide. By contrast, Sri Lanka has not systematically applied these frameworks, addressing EI reactively, often only after crises such as suicides or bullying rather than embedding it as a life skill.

Countries such as Malaysia, India, and several in Europe have integrated EI and SEL into school curricula, demonstrating improvements in student well-being, classroom climate, and resilience [21] [22]. In contrast, Sri Lanka has not embedded EI or emotional literacy into its education system, with interventions arising only after problems occur. This highlights a significant gap between the best global practices and Sri Lanka's current educational approach.

D. Technology Analysis

Studies highlight the urgent need to integrate Emotional Intelligence (EI) education into Sri Lanka's school curriculum, as adolescents consistently struggle with self-awareness, self-management, and emotional literacy. While curricula can teach general EI concepts, emotions remain highly personalized, for example two students may both report sadness, but one due to neglect and another due to disappointment, demonstrating the need for individualized tools [23]. To address this gap, technology-driven interventions provide a promising pathway.

Mobile applications have become an integral part of daily life among Sri Lankan youth, with research showing that users aged 15–25 are the highest contributors to app engagement and data consumption [24]. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this trend, normalizing smartphones as primary tools for learning and self-development [25]. This shift indicates that app-based interventions can effectively complement formal education while promoting self-directed practice and emotional growth.

Current emotional intelligence (EI) and mental health applications, including *Wysa*, *Woebot*, and *Youper*, rely heavily on conversational agents, cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT)-based prompts, and mood journaling to support users in moments of distress. While these tools provide instant coping strategies such as breathing exercises or relaxation techniques, they are primarily reactive in nature**,** intervening only when users report negative emotions. As a result, they function more as short-term digital companions rather than structured educational systems, offering temporary relief without enabling users to develop deeper self-awareness or long-term emotional regulation skills.

The proposed application addresses these limitations by embedding emotional literacy as a core learning process. Technically, the application leverages Robert Plutchik's Emotion Wheel [26] to create a structured framework for identifying and differentiating emotions. When a student reports a general state such as "sadness," the application guides them through branching logic to determine whether the root cause lies in neglect, disappointment, or hurt. Based on this analysis, the system provides personalized, context-specific strategies. For example, grounding and mindfulness when anger is detected, or self-compassion exercises and reflective journaling when hurt is identified.

A further innovation lies in the Daily Drop feature**,** where users document their thoughts each day. These entries are processed to generate personalized reports and actionable feedback, transforming reflective writing into a diagnostic tool for emotional growth. Over time, this continuous loop of input and feedback enables the development of long-term emotional regulation habits**,** moving beyond the reactive model of existing apps.

Importantly, the workflow of the proposed application was co-designed with psychiatric experts and technical specialists, ensuring both psychological validity and technical feasibility. This expert-driven approach differentiates the application from conventional EI tools, which often rely on generic journaling or meditation prompts without providing culturally contextualized or developmentally tailored guidance.

In summary, the literature highlights the critical role of emotional intelligence in shaping educational, personal, and professional outcomes, while also revealing significant gaps in the Sri Lankan context. Although global frameworks and school-based programs demonstrate the effectiveness of integrating EI and emotional literacy into education, Sri Lanka continues to address these issues reactively rather than proactively. The review also shows that technology, particularly mobile applications, offers a promising pathway to deliver personalized and culturally relevant EI interventions. Together, these insights form the basis for the present study, which proposes a dual approach that curriculum reform and the development of an emotional literacy mobile application to strengthen emotional competence among Sri Lankan school students.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Philosophy

This study adopts a positivist philosophy**,** emphasizing objectivity, quantification, and hypothesis testing. Emotional Intelligence (EI) and its subcomponents, together with Educational Well-being, were assessed using standardized questionnaires, while Emotional Literacy was measured through pre- and post-intervention surveys. This allowed the study to quantify changes in competencies without relying on subjective interpretation. Alternative paradigms such as interpretivism, which emphasizes qualitative narratives, and pragmatism, which combines methods, were not selected since the research focused solely on numerical measurement and statistical validation [27].

B. Approach

The study adopts a deductive approach**,** progressing from theory to hypothesis testing. The research framework was constructed based on existing literature on EI, Emotional Literacy, and Educational Well-being, and was validated through quantitative data collection. This approach supports positive stance and ensures that theoretical assumptions are rigorously tested with empirical evidence.

C. Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework, illustrated in Fig. 1, outlines the hypothesized relationships of this study. Emotional Intelligence (EI) is modeled as a multidimensional construct in self-awareness, emotion management, empathy, and social skills that expected to positively influence Educational Well-being. Emotional Literacy is introduced as a moderating variable that strengthens this relationship. This framework serves as the foundation for the hypotheses and guides the methodological design of the research.

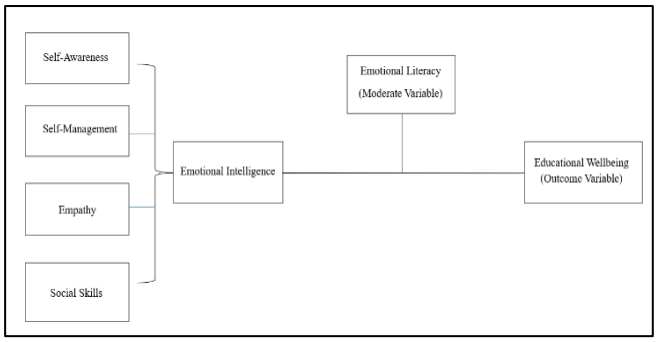

Fig 1. Conceptual Framework

D. Hypothesises

The following hypotheses were formulated based on the conceptual framework:

- **H_0**: There is no significant relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Educational Well-being.
- **H_1**: Emotional Intelligence has a significant positive effect on Educational Well-being.
- **H_0m**: Emotional Literacy does not significantly moderate the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Educational Well-being.
- **H_1m**: Emotional Literacy significantly moderates the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Educational Well-being.

E. Data collection

This study relied primarily on primary data**,** collected directly from students through structured questionnaires and pre/post-intervention surveys. Secondary literature was also reviewed to guide the design of instruments, establish benchmarks, and ensure validity in sampling and analysis.

The target population consisted of Grade 10 students (approximately 180) from St. Joseph's Girls' School, Nugegoda. This group was selected due to their developmental stage, where academic pressure and emotional stress are particularly significant. Using a non-probability convenience sampling method**,** 150 students were included in the study. While this sampling approach allowed efficient data collection, it may limit the generalizability of the findings, as participants were drawn from a single school. Future research should replicate the study across multiple schools and provinces to enhance external validity. Ethical approval was obtained prior to the study, with written parental consent collected for all participants, and students' anonymity strictly maintained throughout the data collection process. This sample size aligns with previous educational psychology research and was sufficient for statistical tests such as descriptive analysis, paired t-tests, regression, and moderation analysis.

F. Questionnaire design

The survey instrument was structured to measure three constructions:

1. **Emotional Intelligence (EI):** Self-awareness, emotion management, empathy, and social skills.
2. **Emotional Literacy (EL):** Pre- and post-intervention surveys evaluating students' ability to identify and describe emotions after exposure to the Emotional Wheel and emotion vocabulary awareness.
3. **Educational Well-being (EWB):** Indicators such as academic satisfaction, participation, emotional stability, and school experiences.

All items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), ensuring consistency and ease of analysis. EL surveys also captured changes in emotional vocabulary and expression. The instruments were adapted from validated scales and enhanced with Robert Plutchik's Emotion Wheel under the guidance of psychiatric experts**,** ensuring both cultural relevance and theoretical grounding.

G. Data analysis

Reliability

Scale: ALL VARIABLES

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	144	99.3
	Excluded[a]	1	.7
	Total	145	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.824	23

Fig 1 SPSS Reliability Output (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.824)

The internal consistency of the questionnaire was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha. The analysis was conducted across all 23 items with 144 valid responses. The overall Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was 0.824, which exceeds the recommended threshold of 0.70, thereby indicating good internal consistency and reliability of the measurement tool. This confirms that the items used in the study were consistent in measuring the intended constructs.

IV. STUDY DESIGN

A. App Overview and Workflow

This study employed a dual intervention to enhance Emotional Intelligence (EI) and educational well-being among Grade 10 students in Sri Lanka. The intervention comprised two components: curriculum-level integration of EI concepts and the use of a technology-driven Emotional Literacy Mobile Application, **MINDLY**. **The MINDLY application was designed to provide students with an engaging, age-appropriate platform for assessing and managing their emotions.** Key functional features include:

- **User Authentication:** Secure registration and login using Firebase Authentication, with password reset and session persistence.
- **Profile Management:** Personal profiles capture basic student details and preferences to personalize guidance and reports.

- **Journaling:** Multi-mode journaling (Reflection, Gratitude, Healing/Coping) tagged with Plutchik's Emotion Wheel for emotion tracking and analysis.
- **Emotion Identification:** Students select primary and sub-emotions, enabling the app to provide tailored feedback and visualization of mood patterns.
- **Guidance / Recommendation Engine:** Tiered interventions include Instant Actions, Daily Practices, and Long-Term Growth Recommendations for sustained emotional development.
- **Emotion-Based Video Learning:** Age-appropriate video lessons explain emotions, their causes, and coping strategies.
- **Quizzes & Assessments:** Short quizzes reinforce learning and track progress.
- **Reminders & Notifications:** Firebase Cloud Messaging delivers nudges for journaling, quiz completion, and daily practices.
- **Reports & Analytics:** Monthly PDF reports summarizing mood trends, quiz results, journaling habits, and recommendations.
- **Admin Panel:** Two-tier administration (Super Admin, School Admin) with secure access, reporting, and oversight.
- **Security & Privacy:** Data encrypted in transit and at rest, with consent and guardian notifications managed responsibly.

Prototype and App Access:

- MINDLY App APK: Click Here
- Mobile App Prototype: Click Here
- Super Admin Dashboard Prototype: Click Here
- School Admin Dashboard Prototype: Click Here

B. *System Architecture*

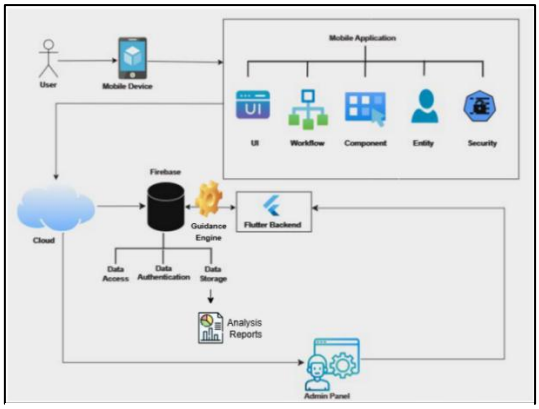

Fig 2. System Architecture

The MINDLY Emotional Literacy Mobile Application is built on a robust and scalable architecture to support cross-platform deployment and secure handling of sensitive student data. The **frontend** is developed using the Flutter framework, ensuring consistent performance on both iOS and Android devices, with responsive layouts achieved through **flutter_screenutil** and interactive visualizations via **pie_chart** and **fl_chart** libraries. The **backend** leverages Firebase services, including Authentication for secure login, Cloud Firestore for real-time NoSQL data storage and synchronization, Firebase Functions to power the serverless recommendation engine, and Firebase Cloud Messaging for timely notifications and reminders. **Security and privacy** are prioritized through the use of **flutter_secure_storage** and **permission_handler**, which encrypt sensitive data and manage runtime permissions, ensuring ethical compliance and protecting minors' personal information. This architecture supports scalable deployment, real-time analytics, and reliable delivery of personalized emotional-literacy interventions.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. *DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS*

Descriptives

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
EI_Total	144	42.00	76.00	60.3056	7.46861
WB_Total	144	13.00	32.00	24.4653	3.66406
Valid N (listwise)	144				

Fig 3. Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis was first conducted to summarize the data. The results showed that the overall Emotional Intelligence (EI) levels among students were moderate to high, while Educational Well-being (WB) also showed similar distributions. These findings indicate that the sample had sufficient variability for further statistical testing.

B. *CORRELATION ANALYSIS*

Correlations

Correlations

		EI_Total	WB_Total
EI_Total	Pearson Correlation	1	.700**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	144	144
WB_Total	Pearson Correlation	.700**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	144	144

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Fig 4. Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between EI and Educational Well-being (**r =.700, p < .001**). This indicates that students with higher EI scores also reported greater levels of educational well-being, supporting the study's hypothesis that EI contributes significantly to positive academic experiences.

C. Regression Analysis

A linear regression was conducted to examine the predictive effect of Emotional Intelligence (EI) on Educational Well-being (WB). The model was statistically significant, $F(1,142) = 136.675$, $p < .001$, with an R^2 value of 0.490, indicating that EI accounts for approximately 49% of the variance in Educational Well-being. The standardized regression coefficient confirmed that EI had a strong positive effect on Educational Well-being ($\beta = .700$, $t = 11.691$, $p < .001$). The effect size ($\eta^2 = 0.508$) indicates a large practical impact, demonstrating that approximately 50.8% of the variance in educational well-being can be explained by EI, validating the effectiveness of the intervention model. This result supports the hypothesis (H_1) that higher levels of EI are associated with greater educational well-being.

Additionally, model assumptions including normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity were checked and satisfied, confirming the validity of the regression analysis.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.700[a]	.490	.487	2.62471

a. Predictors: (Constant), EI_Total

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Unstandardized Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	3.746	1.786		2.098	.038
	EI_Total	.344	.029	.700	11.691	<.001

a. Dependent Variable: WB_Total

Fig 5. Regression Analysis

EI_Total

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1.00	38	67.7895	5.36333
2.00	51	60.7647	4.78158
3.00	54	54.4259	5.61199
Total	143	60.2378	7.45027

Fig 6 Mean Emotional Intelligence across academic performance levels (High, Medium, Low)

As shown, high-performing students ($M = 67.79$, $SD = 5.36$, $N = 38$) reported higher Emotional Intelligence compared to medium-performing students ($M = 60.76$, $SD = 4.78$, $N = 51$) and low-performing students ($M = 54.43$, $SD = 5.61$, $N = 54$). The one-way ANOVA revealed a statistically significant effect of performance level on EI, $F(2,140) = 72.32$, $p < .001$. The effect size was large ($\eta^2 = 0.508$), indicating that about 51% of the variance in EI can be explained by academic performance level. Post-hoc Tukey tests confirmed that all three groups differed significantly from one another.

VI. Conclusion and Future Work

This study confirms that Emotional Intelligence plays a critical role in shaping the educational well-being of Sri Lankan school students. The findings demonstrate a strong positive relationship between EI and wellbeing, with regression results showing that EI explains nearly half of the variance in student outcomes. Group comparisons further revealed that high-performing students generally display stronger EI competencies, while low-performing students face greater challenges in emotional regulation and resilience. Importantly, exceptions, students who perform well academically but possess weak EI highlight the need for cultivating emotional literacy across all groups, not only those at academic risk.

Further In light of the above comparison, **this study** confirms that Emotional Intelligence plays a critical role in shaping the educational well-being of Sri Lankan school students.

TABLE 1 COMPARISON OF GLOBAL EI/SEL IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORKS VS SRI LANKA'S CURRENT CURRICULUM

Dimension	Global Frameworks (Ex: CASEL)	Sri Lanka Current Curriculum [28]
Core Competencies	Self-awareness, Self-management, Social awareness, Relationship skills, Responsible decision-making [29]	"Socio-emotional skills" included in national textbooks but with limited depth and explicit assessment
Systemic Implementation	School-wide, community-engaged, policy-driven, ongoing training and evaluation [30]	Curriculum mentions socio-emotional skills but lacks national rollout strategy, monitoring & evaluation
Technology & Innovation	Increasing adoption of digital tools, AI-driven SEL, scalable platforms Ex: Wysa, Woebot	Limited use of dedicated emotional literacy mobile apps or AI in SEL in Sri Lankan schools
Assessment & Evidence	Strong emphasis on empirical outcomes, effect sizes, replication across contexts	Sparse local data, limited large-scale studies measuring effect sizes in Sri Lanka

Together with evidence from literature, which underscores EI's impact on education, corporate environments, and personal life. This study provides strong justification for updating the education framework to formally integrate EI as a core component of learning. At the same time, the research emphasizes the parallel need for a personalized approach through a mobile application that delivers emotional literacy awareness, emotional support tailored to individual student needs.

While EI and educational wellbeing analysis has been completed, the emotional literacy questionnaire analysis is ongoing, and development of the Emotional literacy mobile application is in progress**.** Ultimately, the goal is to showcase the importance of Emotional Intelligence by institutionalizing EI education within Sri Lanka's national curriculum, while simultaneously empowering students with a personalized tool to strengthen their emotional and social development, thereby nurturing a well-rounded and holistic future generation.

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