

An examination of trait emotional intelligence in pre-service physical education teachers

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Abstract:

Trait emotional intelligence (EI) has gained considerable attention in educational research due to its influence on teaching effectiveness and student outcomes. Despite its importance, there is limited understanding of trait EI among pre-service physical education (PE) teachers, a group for whom EI is crucial given the interpersonal nature of their future roles. This study aims to address this gap by examining the trait EI profiles of pre-service PE teachers and investigating potential differences based on gender, athletic level, and type of sport participation. The study included 926 pre-service PE teachers (499 males and 427 females) from a prominent School of PE and Sport Science in Greece. Participants completed the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Scale (SSREI), which assesses trait EI and its four factors: Emotion regulation of self, Appraisal of emotions of others, Appraisal of emotions of the self, and Using emotions for problem solving. Descriptive statistics and inferential analyses, including MANOVA, were employed to analyze the data. Results indicated that pre-service PE teachers generally exhibit moderate to high levels of trait EI, with a mean overall trait EI score of 2.83 (SD=.42). Gender differences were observed, with females scoring significantly higher in Appraisal of emotions of others and overall trait EI compared to males ($p<.01$). On the other hand, no statistically significant differences observed between participants of different athletic level and type of sport participation ($p>.05$). The findings indicate a generally better-developed capacity for empathy and social awareness among female pre-service PE teachers compare to their male counterparts. These findings further underscore the importance of integrating EI training in PE teacher education programs to enhance future teachers' emotional and interpersonal skills. This study contributes to the literature by providing a comprehensive analysis of trait EI in pre-service PE teachers and student-athletes, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to support their professional development.

Key Words: student-athletes, athletic experience, emotional intelligence, appraisal of emotions, sport participation, gender differences.

Introduction

Physical education (PE), as structured by the curriculum, serves as a primary channel for children and adolescents to develop the essential skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed for active participation in physical activities (PA) throughout their lives (Johnson & Turner, 2016). Yet, evidence suggests that PE is considered to be a marginalized subject in educational contexts (Lee & Cho, 2014) with the ethos and prioritization of PE, for example, in the Republic of Ireland receiving a national average grade C+ (Rocliffe et al., 2023). At a national level, the perceived lack of prioritization of PE is attributed to the absence of formal assessments and the resulting inadequate time dedicated to PE classes (Woods et al., 2023; Institute of Public Health, 2022). The effectiveness of teaching is underpinned by an educator's capacity to elucidate, comprehend, and introspect emotions (Neophytou et al., 2011; Owens & Ennis, 2005). Consequently, the assessment of teachers' insights into their emotional realms frequently assumes a central role in the educational process.

In the context of the current study, emotional intelligence (EI) encompasses the capacity to identify and regulate both personal and others' emotions and can be developed over time (Dhani & Sharma, 2016). This ability, coupled with the skill to assimilate this emotional information for sound decision making in the current context, constitutes a pivotal attribute across various health and education settings (Bru-Luna et al., 2021). EI is utilized daily and is recognized as a trait that can be consciously or unconsciously controlled (Pena-Sarrionandia et al., 2015). Mayer and Salovey (1997) describe EI in "four conceptually related mental processes, involving emotional information" (Lee et al., 2019, p. 263). First, accurate identification of emotions in others and one's self (e.g., facial expressions), second, management of emotions, third, the promotion of emotional and intellectual growth via effective emotional management and fourth, to leverage emotions to enhance reasoning and orchestrating events that stimulate motivation.

In educational settings, trait EI has been linked to improved teaching effectiveness (Asrar-ul-Haq et al., 2017), reduced burnout rates (Cohen & Abdallah, 2015) and enhanced personal wellbeing (Merida-Lopez & Extremera, 2017). Trait EI holds particular significance in the realm of PE as it enhances teachers' abilities to manage their daily work stresses (Gaudreault et al., 2016) and navigate managerial challenges (Carson et al., 2016). Given its relevance to daily interactions, this study aimed to explore the levels of EI in pre-service PE teachers, providing context on potential areas for enhancing trait EI in pre-service teachers for professional growth and student development. Professionally, EI cultivates essential elements for achieving success (Simms, 2016). Elevated levels of EI have been associated with enhancements in critical thinking, prioritization skills and communication skills (Rejeki, 2021; Turner & Lloyd-Walker, 2008; Xu et al., 2019). Such competencies contribute to individuals' ability to assist others in regulating their emotions. Furthermore, research has consistently shown that teachers with elevated levels of EI "are more positive about teaching, receive more support from principals, have better teacher-student relationships, and report greater job satisfaction and less burnout in schools" (Lee et al., 2019, p. 262; Platsidou, 2012). Comparatively, research indicates that PE teachers experiencing emotional exhaustion were more inclined to report dissatisfaction with their roles (Richards et al., 2017).

In the PE and sports field, a few studies have been carried out to examine the EI levels of students-athletes and pre-service PE teachers. For example, Laborde et al.'s (2016) systematic review concluded that, in the context of sport performance, EI relates to emotions, physiological, stress responses, successful psychological skill usage, and more successful athletic performance. In the context of physical activity, it was found that trait EI relates to physical activity levels and positive attitudes toward physical activity. In Volberding et al.'s (2015) study, the overall EI scores were consistent with prior research on similar PE and athletic student populations, indicating that health-related academic programs do not inherently develop higher EI despite their emphasis on interpersonal interactions. Moreover, Ayan et al. (2017) found no significant differences in EI levels based on gender or place of residence. However, notable differences were observed between students of different academic departments (coaching vs. teaching), class levels (first-year vs. fourth-year), and whether the students were professional athletes. Students in the coaching department and first-year students exhibited higher EI scores, particularly in the sub-dimension of optimism/mood regulation. Furthermore, professional athletes demonstrated higher levels of EI in the use of emotions compared to non-athletes.

Across most studies, the findings emphasize the importance of EI in academic and athletic contexts, particularly for students in physically demanding and high-interaction fields. While differences in EI were linked to academic discipline, professional experience, and athletic participation, most studies highlight the necessity of enhancing EI through targeted curricular interventions. These findings suggest that while some fields naturally cultivate higher EI, structured training is needed to fully develop this crucial skill set in both academic and athletic domains (Ayan et al., 2017; Pujianto et al., 2023; Volberding et al., 2015).

Therefore, recognizing the significance of EI in PE is essential given the diverse contextual challenges that PE teachers encounter, which can impose substantial emotional pressures (Lee, 2019). For instance, PE teachers frequently confront difficulties arising from their marginalization within education settings and suggest that schools may not accord PE the same level of importance as they do traditional academic subjects. Consequently, such experiences have been found to trigger negative emotions among PE teachers (Richards et al., 2018), fostering a perception of being undervalued within the school community (Gaudreault et al., 2016). PE teachers frequently encounter inadequate support and feelings of isolation within school, precipitating the onset of unfavorable emotions (Lee et al., 2019; Lee, 2019). Moreover, PE teachers experience a range of emotions during various instructional scenarios. They may feel frustrated when students blame one another during team building exercises, anxious when demonstrating unfamiliar motor skills or disappointed when students are only willing to engage in invasion games over gymnastics and dance. Thus, it is paramount for PE teachers to acquire the coping mechanisms for dealing with these adverse emotional experiences, as prolonged negativity has been correlated with jobs dissatisfaction and intentions to depart the field in addition to the development of negative emotional, e.g., depression (Schutz & Zembylas, 2009; Lee et al., 2019).

Despite the profound implications, a paucity of evidence exists concerning EI in pre-service PE teachers and further theoretical and measurement progression is required in addition to a wider consideration of EI among alternative populations and cultures (Laborde et al., 2016). To redress this gap in the literature, the primary aims of this study are to elucidate the relationship between pre-service PE teachers and EI and to examine differences in EI based on gender, athletic level (i.e., non-elite athletes, pre-elite athletes, and elite competitors) and type of sport participation (i.e., individual vs team sport).

Material & methods

Participants

A total of 926 pre-service PE teachers from a major School of PE and Sport Science in Greece participated in the present study. All participants represented a heterogeneous sample of student-athletes who competed at levels ranging from elite/professional competitors to non-elite collegiate athletes, as well as those for whom the primary goal was health and fitness. They were 53.9% males and 46.1% females, with an average age of 21.61±2.62 years. More information regarding the participants demographic characteristics can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the student-athletes

Group		Males	Females	Total
N		499 (53.9%)	427 (46.1%)	926
Age (average years)		21.73±2.34	21.48±2.92	21.61±2.62
Year of studies	1 st year	40 (8.0%)	46 (10.8%)	86 (9.3%)
	2 nd year	75 (15.0%)	81 (19.0%)	156 (16.8%)
	3 rd year	233 (46.7%)	225 (52.7%)	458 (49.5%)
	4 th year	151 (30.3%)	75 (17.6%)	226 (24.4%)
Type of sport	Individual	213 (42.7%)	270 (63.2%)	458 (49.5%)
	Team	286 (57.3%)	98 (23.0%)	468 (50.5%)
	Non-elite athletes	336 (67.3%)	59 (13.8%)	606 (65.4%)
Athletic level	Pre-elite athletes	108 (21.6%)	245 (57.4%)	206 (22.2%)
	Elite competitors	55 (11.0%)	182 (42.6%)	114 (12.3%)

Procedures - Instrument

This is a quantitative, non-experimental, descriptive, and cross-sectional study. Following institutional ethical approval, pre-service PE teachers were recruited via a number of different approaches (e.g., e-mail invitations, invitations in lectures). Participants completed a pencil-paper version of the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Scale (SSREI: Schutte et al., 1998), either before or after formal lectures. All pre-service PE teachers were informed about the purpose of the study, provided informed consent, and it was made clear that participation was voluntary, anonymous, and confidential. The initial SSREI (Schutte et al., 1998) self-report inventory has 33 items (e.g., ‘I am aware of my emotions as I experience them’), focusing on trait EI. It uses a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) 5-point Likert-type scale for responses. Three items are reverse-coded. Each sub-test score is graded and then added together to give the total score for the participant. SSREI demonstrated good reliability (e.g., .90) and validity, while it was unrelated to cognitive abilities and personality dimensions, except for openness to experience (Brackett & Mayer, 2003; Ng et al., 2010; Schutte et al., 1998).

The instrument used in this study was the Greek version of the SSREI (Adamakis & Dania, 2021). This inventory, which is based on Ng et al. (2010) study, has a four-factor higher-order structure, with 18 items, and all three reverse-coded items are excluded. The instrument has been proven valid and reliable in Greek pre-service PE teachers, with acceptable Confirmatory Factor Analysis fit indices and internal consistency indices (Adamakis & Dania, 2021). The internal consistency Cronbach *a* coefficient for the higher-order factor EI was Cronbach *a*=.803, and for each separate factor separately: (a) Emotion regulation of self (7 items) *a*=.716; (b) Appraisal of emotions of others (5 items) *a*=.745; (c) Appraisal of emotions of the self (2 items) *a*=.705; and (d) Using emotions for problem solving (4 items) *a*=.791.

Data analysis

The statistical analysis was conducted with the use of the statistical package IBM SPSS version 29.0 (IBM SPSS Corp., Armonk, NY, USA). Before analysis, variables were screened for accuracy of data entry, missing values, distribution (skewness and kurtosis), and potential outliers. No missing values or outliers were observed, so the data was considered to be univariate and multivariate normal. Data were analysed using descriptive (mean, standard deviation) and inferential statistics [multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA)]. The independent variables for the two performed MANOVA were (a) *Gender*, (b) *Athletic level*, and (c) *Type of sport participation*, on the five factors of EI (four sub-factors and one overall EI factor). In order to control whether the design was unbalanced, the equality of covariance matrices using Box’s M test was used. Furthermore, the partial η^2 was presented as a measure of effect size for *F*-Tests. A partial η^2 value between .01 and .06 was associated with a small effect, between .06 and .14 with a medium effect, and .14 or greater with a large effect (Warner, 2013). For purposes of interpretation, significant multivariate effects were followed by univariate *F*-ratios [analysis of variance (ANOVA)] with Tukey’s follow-up comparisons.

Results

All descriptive statistics of the four factors and the overall EI for the entire sample (*N*=926) are reported in Table 2. In general, pre-service PE teachers showed moderate-to-high EI levels, with an overall EI mean score of *M*=2.83 (*SD*=.42). The participants showed higher levels of Appraisal of emotions of the self, while they scored lower in Appraisal of emotions of others and Using emotions for problem solving.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the factors and overall Emotional Intelligence

	Possible range	Min	Max	M (SD)	> 3/4 (75%)*
Emotion regulation of self	0 - 4	.71	4.00	2.87 (.54)	48.70%
Appraisal of emotions of others	0 - 4	.20	4.00	2.73 (.58)	38.80%
Appraisal of emotions of the self	0 - 4	.50	4.00	2.99 (.69)	67.50%
Using emotions for problem solving	0 - 4	.75	4.00	2.79 (.62)	45.50%
Emotional Intelligence	0 - 4	.94	3.89	2.83 (.42)	36.50%

* Participants’ percentage who had a score higher than 3 out of 4.

Following the initial descriptive analysis of the data, comparisons between groups were performed. The Box-M test of equality of covariance for all MANOVA for the independent variables on the five factors were not statistically significant ($p>.05$) and the normality assumption was assumed for all following analyses. The initial MANOVA for gender indicated that statistically significant differences were observed between males and females on the five EI factors [Wilk's $\Lambda=.984$, $F(4,921)=3.718$, $p=.005$, $\eta^2=.016$], with small effect size. The MANOVA was followed up by post-hoc ANOVA (Table 3), which revealed significant differences for the Appraisal of emotions of others and overall EI factors, with females having significantly higher scores than males ($p<.01$).

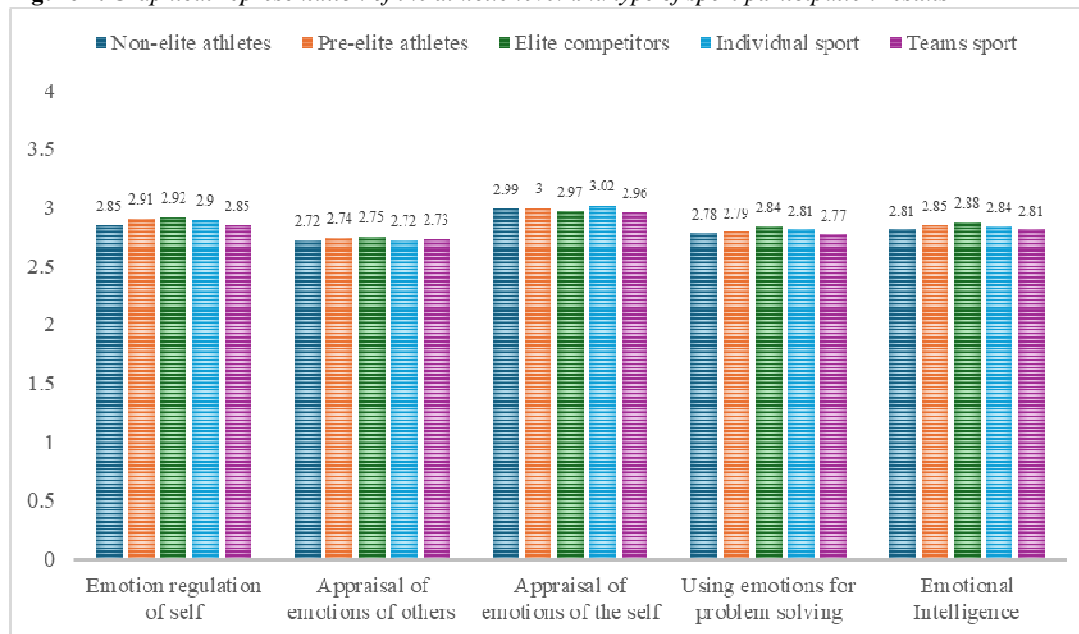
Table 3. MANOVA and post-hoc ANOVA results for Gender

Factors	Gender	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Univariate <i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	partial η^2
Emotion regulation of self	Male	2.86	.52	1.211	.271	.001
	Female	2.90	.56			
Appraisal of emotions of others	Male	2.66	.58	14.777	<.001	.016
	Female	2.81	.57			
Appraisal of emotions of the self	Male	2.96	.69	2.214	.137	.002
	Female	3.02	.69			
Using emotions for problem solving	Male	2.77	.63	1.484	.223	.002
	Female	2.82	.60			
Emotional Intelligence	Male	2.79	.43	7.021	.008	.008
	Female	2.87	.43			

The second MANOVA based on the athletic level of the pre-service PE teachers (i.e., non-elite athletes, pre-elite athletes, and elite competitors) indicated that there were no statistically significant differences observed between non-elite athletes, pre-elite athletes, and elite competitors on the five EI factors [Wilk's $\Lambda=.993$, $F(8,1840)=.865$, $p=.546$, $\eta^2=.004$], with minimum effect size (Figure 1). Since no statistical significance was observed in this specific analysis, no further follow-up tests were performed.

The final MANOVA for type of sport participation (i.e., individual – team sport) showed that there were no statistically significant differences between participants in individual and team sports, on the five EI factors [Wilk's $\Lambda=.996$, $F(4,921)=.822$, $p=.511$, $\eta^2=.004$], with minimum effect size (Figure 1). Since no statistical significance was observed in this specific analysis, no further follow-up tests were performed.

Figure 1. Graphical representation of the athletic level and type of sport participation results



Discussion

The concept of EI has been proposed as a pivotal factor in the regulation of emotions (Laborde et al., 2016; Petrides et al., 2007), and EI is a fundamental attribute for all individuals, particularly those who interact on a regular basis with students. Furthermore, Laborde et al. (2016) systematic review underscored the significance of EI in sports and exercise, highlighting that EI contributes to better stress management and performance outcomes. Pujianto et al. (2023) mentioned the importance of EI among student-athletes, noting that high EI levels correlate with better performance and interpersonal relationships. Thus, it is of major importance

to estimate and understand the EI levels of individuals who are going to become teachers and educators after graduating from a teacher education program. This study sought to determine the level of EI of pre-service PE teachers, and, taking into account that this group has extensive athletic experience, to examine differences in EI based on gender, athletic level (i.e., non-elite athletes, pre-elite athletes, and elite competitors) and type of sport (i.e., individual vs team sport).

The initial findings regarding the EI levels of pre-service PE teachers indicate a moderate-to-high overall EI mean score, with notable differences in specific EI components. Participants demonstrated higher competency in the Appraisal of emotions of the self, compared to lower scores in the Appraisal of emotions of others and Using emotions for problem-solving. This suggests that pre-service PE teachers are relatively more adept at understanding and managing their own emotions than at recognizing others' emotions or employing emotions in decision-making contexts.

This pattern aligns with previous research in the field of EI among university students, particularly in the context of PE and related disciplines. In their study on the EI levels of undergraduate kinesiology students, Volberding et al. (2015) found that students exhibited moderate levels of EI, with a focus on self-awareness and emotional regulation. The similarity in findings suggests that pre-service PE teachers and students in kinesiology programs generally have a moderate level of EI, particularly in managing their own emotions. In addition, Pujianto et al. (2023), in their study of EI among student-athletes highlighted similar patterns, where student-athletes showed strengths in emotional self-management but relative weaknesses in the emotional appraisal of others. This consistency across studies highlights a trend where students involved in PE-related fields may possess relatively balanced emotional self-awareness and regulation skills, though they might struggle more with understanding others' emotions, and they might require further development in understanding and using emotions to navigate social situations and problem-solving.

Regarding possible gender differences, the results of the current study contribute to the understanding of gender differences in EI among pre-service PE teachers. The findings suggest that female participants exhibit higher levels of EI, particularly in the Appraisal of emotions of others and overall EI factors.

Research has consistently shown that gender differences exist in EI, with females typically scoring higher than males on various EI measures (Ayan et al., 2017; Pujianto et al., 2023; Volberding et al., 2015). In this study, the finding that female pre-service PE teachers had higher scores in the Appraisal of others' emotions aligns with previous literature. This higher score could indicate a generally better-developed capacity for empathy and social awareness among female pre-service teachers, consistent with traditional gender socialization patterns that emphasize relational and empathetic skills in women (Volberding et al., 2015). Schutte et al. (1998) further found that women tend to excel in recognizing and understanding emotions, which is a critical component of EI. This advantage may stem from socialization processes that encourage emotional expressiveness and empathy in women from an early age, leading to enhanced skills in emotional perception and regulation compared to their male counterparts.

Furthermore, the overall higher EI scores among females in this study may reflect broader trends identified in the literature. Women often engage in more relational and emotional processing, which can enhance their emotional awareness and interpersonal skills. For example, studies have shown that women are generally more attuned to social cues and more adept at managing emotions in social contexts, contributing to their higher EI scores (Austin et al., 2004). This gender disparity in EI not only affects personal relationships but can also influence professional environments, particularly in fields such as education, where emotional awareness and interpersonal skills are crucial for effective teaching and student engagement. This might suggest that pre-service female PE teachers may be better equipped to engage empathetically and understand the emotional states of others, potentially making them more effective in roles requiring interpersonal sensitivity. These competencies are crucial in educational settings, where understanding and managing students' emotions can enhance learning and development outcomes.

Several factors contribute to the observed higher EI levels among female teachers in the education profession. One significant factor is the inherent socialization processes that encourage emotional expressiveness and empathy in women. Females are often socialized to be more attuned to their own emotions and the emotions of others, which enhances their emotional awareness and interpersonal skills. For instance, studies have shown that female teachers excel in various EI components, including self-awareness, empathy, and social skills, which are crucial for effective teaching and classroom management (Nagaraj & Ramesh, 2020; Usmani, Dilshad, & Rasool, 2023). This emotional competency allows them to better navigate the emotional landscape of the classroom, fostering supportive learning environments.

These differences may have implications for teaching effectiveness, student-teacher relationships, and overall performance in educational settings. Future research should explore the specific factors that contribute to these gender differences and investigate ways to enhance EI competencies in both male and female pre-service PE teachers. However, the relatively small effect sizes indicate that while gender differences exist, they are not overwhelmingly large, suggesting that both male and female pre-service PE teachers possess relatively similar EI competencies. This opens opportunities for targeted interventions to further develop EI across all pre-service teachers, regardless of gender, to prepare them for the varied emotional demands of teaching and coaching in PE settings.

Since the vast majority of pre-service PE teachers are student-athletes with extensive athletic experience, there was an attempt to investigate potential differences in EI between participants with different athletic level (i.e., non-elite athletes, pre-elite athletes, and elite competitors) and type of sport participation (i.e., individual vs team sport). The study's findings indicate that there were no statistically significant differences in EI levels based on the athletic level or type of sport participation among pre-service PE teachers and student-athletes. This lack of differentiation suggests that neither the competitive level nor the nature of the sport significantly influences the EI dimensions measured in this specific cohort and raises interesting questions about the relationship between athletic experience and EI. This could imply that the training, experiences, and personal development associated with PE programs contribute to a generally uniform level of EI, irrespective of specific sport-related variables. The lack of significant differences might also indicate that foundational aspects of EI are cultivated similarly across different athletic experiences, focusing on broader educational and psychosocial factors rather than the specifics of sport participation.

Laborde et al.'s (2016) systematic review on EI in sports and exercise found that while EI is beneficial for athletic performance, its development is not necessarily contingent on the type of sport. Furthermore, previous studies, such as those by Volberding et al. (2015), have suggested that EI may be influenced by athletic experience, with elite athletes often demonstrating higher EI due to the demands of competitive sports. However, the current study's findings challenge this idea, indicating that simply being an elite or pre-elite athlete does not inherently confer advantages in EI. This suggests that other factors, such as training, environment, or individual personality traits, may play a more significant role in the development of EI than athletic level alone. Similarly, the lack of differences between individual and team sport participants aligns with findings from Ayan et al. (2017), which indicated that EI levels did not significantly differ based on the type of sport. This is somewhat surprising, as team sports are often thought to foster social skills and emotional awareness due to the collaborative nature of the activities. However, the current study suggests that both individual and team athletes may develop comparable levels of EI, potentially due to the shared experiences and challenges inherent in both types of sports. Several implications can be drawn regarding EI among pre-service PE teachers and student-athletes. These implications span educational practices, training programs, and future research directions. Initially, the findings highlight the importance of integrating EI development into PE and kinesiology curricula. Given that both male and female pre-service PE teachers demonstrate moderate-to-high levels of EI, with certain gender differences, targeted training could further enhance these skills. Programs could include specific modules on emotional awareness, empathy, and emotional regulation, particularly emphasizing the appraisal of others' emotions and using emotions for problem-solving. In addition, considering the observed gender differences, with females generally showing higher EI, particularly in empathy and social awareness, there could be a tailored approach to training. For example, training programs could provide additional support to male pre-service in developing these skills, while also ensuring that female pre-service teachers continue to develop strengths in self-regulation and decision-making.

The lack of significant differences in EI based on athletic level and type of sport participation suggests that coaching programs should not differentiate EI training based on an athlete's competitive level. Instead, comprehensive EI training should be provided to all student-athletes, emphasizing emotional regulation, stress management, and empathy, regardless of their level of competition. Therefore, coaching and athletic programs should uniformly promote EI skills, emphasizing the importance of emotional competencies in all settings. This might involve incorporating exercises and discussions that promote teamwork, collaboration, and empathy in individual sports contexts and self-reliance and introspection in team sports contexts. The study's findings indicate that factors beyond athletic level and sport type may play a role in EI development. Future research could explore the influence of personality traits, coaching styles, and educational environments on EI. Understanding these factors could provide deeper insights into how EI can be nurtured effectively. Furthermore, longitudinal research could help in understanding how EI develops over time, particularly in relation to different educational and athletic experiences. This could inform the design of interventions aimed at enhancing EI among pre-service PE teachers and student-athletes at various stages of their careers. Likewise, given that socialization processes influence gender differences in EI, future studies could explore how cultural and societal norms shape EI development. This could provide a broader understanding of how-to tailor EI training to different cultural contexts and promote inclusivity in educational and athletic settings. Finally, future studies could explore the effectiveness of targeted interventions designed to enhance specific EI components, such as empathy, emotional regulation, and emotional problem-solving.

These interventions could be incorporated into PE curricula and training programs, with studies measuring their impact on both male and female pre-service PE teachers. Experimental designs with control groups could assist in establishing causal relationships between these interventions and EI development. It should be noted that a limitation of this study relates to the sample characteristics and method. While the study includes a relatively large sample, it did not follow a random-sampling method, and it is limited to pre-service PE teachers, which may not be representative of other groups or populations. The findings may not generalize to in-service teachers or those from different educational or cultural backgrounds. Also, the study's cross-sectional nature limits the ability to establish causal relationships between the variables studied. This design only provides a snapshot of the participants' EI at a single point in time, without considering changes over time. Finally, the

study focuses specifically on trait EI as measured by the SSREI, which may not capture all dimensions of EI, such as ability EI and those involved in emotional performance or competency in real-world contexts. These limitations suggest caution in interpreting the results and underscore the need for further research to explore these aspects in more depth and across diverse populations.

Conclusion

This study concludes that pre-service PE teachers exhibit moderate-to-high levels of EI, with a particular strength in the Appraisal of emotions of the self. This indicates that these individuals are relatively skilled at recognizing and managing their own emotions. However, they demonstrate lower proficiency in Appraisal of emotions of others and Using emotions for problem solving, suggesting a gap in their ability to understand others' emotions and apply emotional insights to practical scenarios. Furthermore, significant differences between male and female pre-service PE teachers were observed, indicating a generally better-developed capacity for empathy and social awareness among female pre-service teachers compare to their male counterparts. Lastly, the research found no significant differences in EI based on athletic level, or type of sport participation. This uniformity across these variables suggests that the observed levels of EI are consistent among pre-service PE teachers regardless of these factors. The study highlights the importance of enhancing EI among future educators, particularly in areas related to understanding and utilizing emotions in interpersonal contexts. Educators and coaches should aim to create environments that support the emotional development of pre-service PE teachers and student-athletes. This includes fostering open communication, encouraging emotional expression, and providing opportunities for developing social skills. Such environments can help individuals better manage stress and enhance their overall wellbeing. Educational institutions and sports organizations should further recognize the importance of EI and provide resources and support for its development. This could include funding for EI training programs, workshops, and resources for teachers and coaches to help them integrate EI development into their practice.

Conflicts of interest - No conflicts of interest to declare.

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