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EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND CAREER ADAPTABILITY AMONG ESP LECTURERS IN SPECIALIZED HIGHER EDUCATION IN VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines how emotional intelligence (EI) helps ESP teachers in Vietnam's specialized colleges manage their evolving career demands. Data were gathered from 84 actual ESP practitioners using a 40-item survey to examine how they adapt. Specifically, the study focuses on how emotional intelligence helps teachers stay flexible with new teaching methods and tech tools, even when things get tough. The findings show that being good at managing emotions and communicating with people really make a difference in how well a teacher can pivot in their job. From these results, some practical ways for educational managers will be suggested to better support their staff's emotional health and professional growth in the long run.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Professional Adaptability, Higher Education, Vietnam, ESP Lecturers.

INTRODUCTION

The higher education sector has experienced many changes in recent years due to technological advancement, digitalization, and the utilization of artificial intelligence (AI) in teaching and learning. Globalization and interdisciplinary education have also changed academic environments and increased professional expectations for university lecturers (Murtaza & Rashid, 2025). Besides teaching, lecturers are expected to use technology in their classes, improve their professional knowledge and skills, and participate in research activities. As a result, adaptability has become an important competency for lecturers in modern higher education contexts.

ESP lecturers in specialized universities often teach English related to fields such as economics, banking, and finance. Besides language teaching, they also need to understand specialized knowledge and professional terminology in these areas. This can be difficult for lecturers whose background is mainly in English language teaching. Within the higher education transformation, ESP lecturers also have to handle different responsibilities at the same time. As higher education continues to change with new technologies and academic requirements, they need to adjust their teaching methods and update their knowledge regularly. Therefore, adaptability is becoming more important in their professional work.

For university lecturers, emotional intelligence (EI) may be useful when facing stress, emotional pressure, and different challenges at work (Goleman, 1995). At the same time, adaptability is considered an important psychosocial resource for dealing with changing work environments and career-related challenges (Savickas, 2013). Adaptability has become increasingly important in higher education, as lecturers are expected to adjust to evolving technologies, teaching methods, and institutional expectations. Lecturers with higher emotional intelligence may cope better with professional changes, stay resilient in difficult situations, and adjust more easily to current academic environments. For this reason, emotional intelligence may play an important role in lecturers' professional adaptability.

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Although emotional intelligence and adaptability have been widely discussed in education and psychology research, there are still limited studies focusing specifically on ESP lecturers in higher education. In Vietnam, research on these topics remains relatively limited, especially in the context of specialized universities. In addition, few studies have examined how ESP lecturers in institutions focusing on economics, banking, and finance respond to changing professional and academic demands. Therefore, more research is needed to better understand the role of emotional intelligence in supporting professional adaptability among ESP lecturers in specialized higher education contexts.

Based on these research gaps, the study aims to explore emotional intelligence (EI) and career adaptability among ESP lecturers in specialized higher education Vietnam. Specifically, the study examines the levels of emotional intelligence and career adaptability among ESP lecturers, investigates the relationship between the two variables, and identifies which dimensions of emotional intelligence are most strongly associated with career adaptability.

THEORETICAL BASIS

Career Construction Theory and Career Adaptability

This study is based on Career Construction Theory (CCT) developed by Mark L. Savickas. The theory explains how individuals deal with career-related changes and challenges in different work contexts. Within CCT, career adaptability is viewed as a psychosocial resource that helps people adjust to changing professional environments. In higher education, adaptability has become increasingly important as lecturers are expected to respond to technological changes, new teaching demands, and institutional expectations.

According to Savickas and Porfeli (2012), career adaptability includes four dimensions: concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. These dimensions are related to preparing for future career development, making career-related decisions, exploring learning opportunities, and dealing with professional challenges.

Emotional Intelligence

Mayer and Salovey (1997) described emotional intelligence (EI) as the ability to understand and manage emotions. In this study, EI was examined using the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) developed by Wong Chi-Sum and Kenneth S. Law. The scale has been used in many studies in education and workplace settings. It measures four dimensions, including Self-Emotion Appraisal (SEO), Others' Emotion Appraisal (OEA), Use of Emotion (UOE), and Regulation of Emotion (ROE).

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

Conceptual Framework

This study examines the relationship between Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Career Adaptability among ESP lecturers in specialized higher education institutions. In the proposed framework, Emotional Intelligence is treated as the independent variable, while Career Adaptability is considered the dependent variable. The study assumes that higher levels of emotional intelligence may support lecturers in adapting more effectively to professional and academic changes.

HYPOTHESES

Based on Career Construction Theory and previous studies, emotional intelligence is expected to be associated with career adaptability among ESP lecturers and the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Emotional Intelligence is positively associated with Career Adaptability among ESP lecturers.

H1a: Regulation of Emotion is positively associated with confidence in dealing with professional challenges among ESP lecturers.

H1b: Use of Emotion is positively associated with curiosity toward professional learning and career development among ESP lecturers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Participants

This study employed a cross-sectional quantitative design to examine the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Career Adaptability among ESP lecturers. The participants were ESP lecturers working in specialized higher education institutions in Vietnam, particularly in universities majoring in economics, banking, and finance. Convenience sampling and snowball sampling were used to recruit participants for the study. The sample size was 84 participants, which was considered appropriate for an exploratory study in this context.

Research Instruments

Data were collected using two instruments: the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) and the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS). The WLEIS was used to measure Emotional Intelligence, while the CAAS was used to examine Career Adaptability. All questionnaire items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected through an online survey created using Google Forms. Before the main data collection process, a small pilot test was conducted to check item clarity and wording. Participation in the study was voluntary, and respondents were informed that their responses would remain anonymous and confidential. Informed consent was included at the beginning of the survey before participants completed the questionnaire.

Data analysis

The data were analyzed in Python 3.11 using several statistical libraries, including pandas, scipy, stats models, pingouin, and matplotlib.

Before the main analyses, the dataset was screened for incomplete responses and unusual response patterns. Descriptive statistics were then calculated for all variables, including mean scores, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis values.

Normality was checked using Shapiro–Wilk tests together with histograms and Q–Q plots. Several variables had significant Shapiro–Wilk values, although the skewness and kurtosis values were not considered problematic.

Reliability was measured using Cronbach's alpha. The Emotional Intelligence scale reached 0.907, and the Career Adaptability scale reached 0.927. The sub dimensions ranged from 0.699 to 0.785.

Pearson correlation analysis was carried out to explore the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Career Adaptability. A simple linear regression was also run to examine whether Emotional Intelligence could predict Career Adaptability among ESP lecturers.

A multiple regression model was then used to examine the contribution of the four Emotional Intelligence dimensions (SEA, OEA, UOE, and ROE) to Career Adaptability. Residual plots, Q–Q plots, Cook's distance values, and VIF statistics were checked before interpreting the regression results. No major assumption violations were found.

The study included 84 ESP lecturers from specialized higher education institutions in Vietnam. Female lecturers made up slightly more than half of the participants, while male lecturers accounted for a little under half of the sample. A small number of participants chose not to report their gender.

The largest age group was 30–39, followed by participants aged 40–49. Most respondents held a master's degree, while doctoral degree holders made up the next largest group.

The participants came from different teaching areas, including Economics and Business, Banking and Finance, Technology and Engineering, and Industrial or Technical disciplines. Many respondents also reported having moderate to extensive experience using AI in teaching.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The final sample consisted of 84 ESP lecturers working in specialized higher education institutions in Vietnam. Female participants accounted for 51.19% of the sample, while male participants represented 42.86%; 5.95% preferred not to disclose gender information. Most participants were between 30 and 39 years old (51.19%), followed by those aged 40–49 years (22.62%). Regarding

educational qualifications, master's degree holders constituted the largest group (48.81%), followed by doctoral degree holders (30.95%). Participants also represented diverse teaching contexts, including Economics/Business, Banking/Finance, Technology/Engineering, and Industrial/Technical disciplines. Most respondents reported moderate or extensive AI-related teaching experience.

Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's alpha was used to test the reliability of the variables. SEA, OEA, UOE, Concern, Control, Curiosity, and Confidence all produced reliability values above the acceptable level. The ROE subscale returned a value of 0.699, which was slightly below 0.70.

All corrected item-total correlations were above 0.30. Deleting any item did not noticeably improve the alpha coefficients, so all items were retained.

Table 1. Reliability Analysis

Scale	Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
SEA	4	.721	Acceptable
OEA	4	.728	Acceptable
UOE	4	.728	Acceptable
ROE	4	.699	Marginally acceptable
Concern	6	.746	Acceptable
Control	6	.785	Acceptable
Curiosity	6	.780	Acceptable
Confidence	6	.768	Acceptable
EI_Total	16	.907	Excellent
CA_Total	24	.927	Excellent

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were computed for all study variables. Overall, participants reported moderately high levels of both Emotional Intelligence and Career Adaptability. The mean score for EI_Total was 3.76 (SD = 0.43), while the mean score for CA_Total was 3.55 (SD = 0.41).

SEA had the highest mean value among the Emotional Intelligence dimensions (M = 3.77, SD = 0.48). The lowest mean value was found for ROE (M = 3.74, SD = 0.49). For Career Adaptability, Concern recorded the highest mean score (M = 3.57, SD = 0.43), whereas Confidence showed the lowest score (M = 3.53, SD = 0.45).

The skewness values ranged from −0.23 to 0.37, and kurtosis values ranged from −0.78 to −0.09. These values did not indicate any major normality issues.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
SEA	3.77	0.48	2.75	4.75	-0.23	-0.39
OEA	3.77	0.49	2.75	5.00	0.16	-0.22
UOE	3.75	0.52	2.75	5.00	0.37	-0.25
ROE	3.74	0.49	2.75	4.75	0.20	-0.46
Concern	3.57	0.43	2.50	4.67	-0.05	-0.09
Control	3.54	0.48	2.50	4.67	-0.07	-0.18
Curiosity	3.56	0.46	2.33	4.67	-0.22	-0.10
Confidence	3.53	0.45	2.67	4.50	0.20	-0.78
EI_Total	3.76	0.43	2.81	4.88	0.26	-0.23
CA_Total	3.55	0.41	2.63	4.58	0.05	-0.23

Correlation Analysis

Pearson product–moment correlation analyses were conducted to examine the relationships among Emotional Intelligence dimensions, Career Adaptability dimensions, and the overall composite variables. The correlation matrix revealed a consistent pattern of positive associations across the focal constructs.

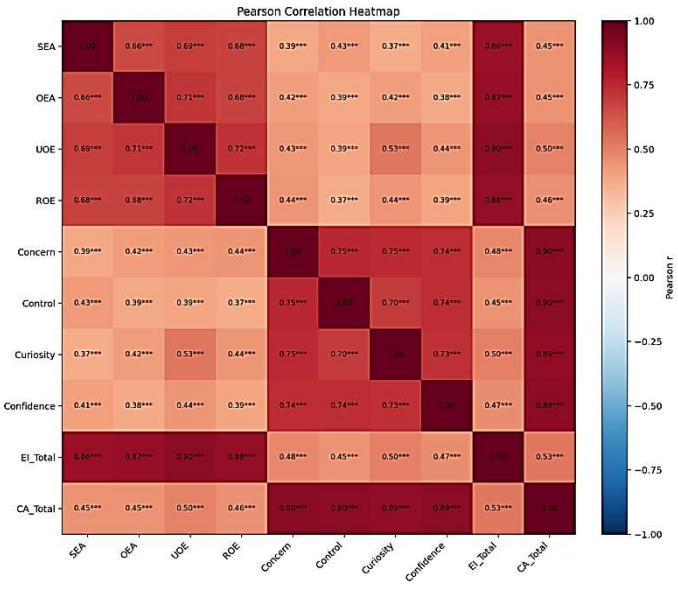

Figure 1: Pearson Correlation Heatmap of Emotional Intelligence and Career Adaptability Variables

Figure 1 shows the Pearson correlation heatmap for the Emotional Intelligence and Career Adaptability dimensions.

The correlation analysis showed a positive relationship between overall Emotional Intelligence and Career Adaptability, $r(82) = .528$, $p < .001$. In general, lecturers with higher Emotional Intelligence scores also reported higher levels of Career Adaptability.

At the dimension level, ROE was positively correlated with Confidence, $r(82) = .394$, $p < .001$. UOE also showed a positive correlation with Curiosity, $r(82) = .526$, $p < .001$.

The Emotional Intelligence dimensions were also positively correlated with one another, with coefficients ranging from approximately 0.66 to 0.72. These correlations suggest that the EI sub dimensions were closely related while still representing different aspects of Emotional Intelligence.

Assumption Checking

Before running the main analysis, the data were checked to see if they met the basic assumptions for correlation and regression, including linearity, normality, equal variance, multicollinearity, and outliers.

For normality, skewness and kurtosis values were within acceptable ranges. Some Shapiro–Wilk tests were significant, but the overall data pattern did not show serious non-normality.

For multicollinearity, VIF values ranged from 2.34 to 2.81, which is still below the common cut-off of 5, so there was no major issue.

Residual checks also looked fine. The plots showed a reasonable linear pattern and stable variance, the Q–Q plot was close to normal, and Cook's distance did not show any strong outliers.

Overall, the data were suitable for running correlation and regression analyses.

Common Method Bias Assessment

Because the study relied on self-report questionnaire data collected from a single survey instrument, Harman's single-factor test was conducted to assess potential common method bias.

The unrotated exploratory factor analysis indicated that the first factor accounted for less than 50% of the total variance. This finding suggests that common method bias was unlikely to represent a serious threat to the validity of the findings.

Regression Analysis

Simple Regression Analysis

A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine whether Emotional Intelligence was statistically associated with Career Adaptability among ESP lecturers. The regression model was statistically significant, $F(1, 82) = 31.76$, $p < .001$, explaining approximately 27.9% of the variance in Career Adaptability ($R^2 = .279$, Adjusted $R^2 = .270$).

The observed explained variance represents a practically meaningful effect size in applied educational and psychological research contexts.

Emotional Intelligence demonstrated a significant positive association with Career Adaptability, $B = 0.498$, $SE = .088$, $\beta = .528$, $t(82) = 5.64$, $p < .001$. This finding indicates that lecturers reporting higher levels of Emotional Intelligence also tended to report higher levels of Career Adaptability.

Residual diagnostics indicated no severe violations of regression assumptions. Residual normality, homoscedasticity, and influential-case diagnostics were all within acceptable ranges.

Table 3. Simple Regression Predicting Career Adaptability

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
EI_Total	.498	.088	.528	5.64	<.001

Model statistics: $R^2 = .279$, Adjusted $R^2 = .270$, $F(1,82) = 31.76$, $p < .001$.

Multiple Regression Analysis

Regression coefficients

Regression coefficients

term	B	SE	95% CI lower	95% CI upper	standardized_beta	t	p
const	1.7111	0.3437	1.0271	2.3952		4.9788	p < .0
SEA	0.0985	0.1247	-0.1497	0.3467	0.1151	0.7899	p = .4
OEA	0.092	0.1243	-0.1554	0.3393	0.1101	0.7399	p = .4
UOE	0.1993	0.1254	-0.0502	0.4488	0.2542	1.5899	p = .1
ROE	0.1005	0.1269	-0.1521	0.3531	0.1205	0.7919	p = .4

Model summary

Model summary

statistic	value
N	84
R-squared	0.2827
Adjusted R-squared	0.2464
F(4, 79)	7.7832
Model p-value	p < .001

A standard multiple regression analysis was subsequently conducted with SEA, OEA, UOE, and ROE entered simultaneously as predictors of Career Adaptability. The overall model was statistically significant, $F(4, 79) = 7.78$, $p < .001$, accounting for approximately 28.3% of the variance in Career Adaptability ($R^2 = .283$, Adjusted $R^2 = .246$).

The model explained 28.3% of the variance in Career Adaptability ($R^2 = .283$, Adjusted $R^2 = .246$). The overall regression model was statistically significant, $F(4,79) = 7.78$, $p < .001$.

When the four EI dimensions were entered into the regression model together, none of them showed a statistically significant effect. Among the predictors, UOE produced the largest standardized coefficient ($\beta = .254$, $p = .116$).

The EI dimensions were moderately correlated with one another, which may partly explain why the individual predictors did not reach statistical significance in the regression model, despite the acceptable VIF values.

The diagnostic checks did not show any major problems. The residual plots were generally acceptable, and no serious issues related to linearity or residual distribution was observed.

Model statistics: $R^2 = .283$, Adjusted $R^2 = .246$, $F(4,79) = 7.78$, $p < .001$.

Hypothesis Testing

Three hypotheses were evaluated using Pearson correlations and focused regression analyses.

H1 proposed that Emotional Intelligence would be positively associated with Career Adaptability. This hypothesis was supported. Emotional Intelligence demonstrated a statistically significant positive relationship with Career Adaptability, $r(82) = .528$, $p < .001$, and also showed positive statistical prediction within the regression model, $\beta = .528$, $p < .001$.

H1a proposed that Regulation of Emotion would be positively associated with Confidence. This hypothesis was supported. ROE demonstrated a statistically significant positive association with Confidence, $r(82) = .394$, $p < .001$.

H1b proposed that Use of Emotion would be positively associated with Curiosity. This hypothesis was also supported. UOE demonstrated a statistically significant positive association with Curiosity, $r(82) = .526$, $p < .001$.

Table 4. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Relationship	Statistical Evidence	Decision
H1	EI_Total-CA_Total	R = .528, β = .528, p < .001	Supported
H1a	ROE-Confidence	r = .394, p < .001	Supported
H1b	UOE- Curiosity	R = .526, p <.001	Supported

Overall, the findings indicate meaningful positive associations between Emotional Intelligence and Career Adaptability among ESP lecturers in specialized higher education contexts in Vietnam. Given the cross-sectional nature of the study, the findings should be interpreted as correlational and associative rather than causal relationships.

Discussion

Interpretation of Key Findings

This study looked at emotional intelligence and career adaptability among ESP lecturers in specialized higher education institutions in Vietnam. A positive relationship was found between the two variables. In general, participants with higher emotional intelligence scores also reported stronger career adaptability.

The regression analysis produced similar results. Participants with stronger emotional skills also reported higher levels of career adaptability, particularly in dealing with work-related changes and professional demands.

The findings are generally consistent with Career Construction Theory, which views career adaptability as a set of psychosocial resources used to deal with career development and changing work conditions. Within this framework, concern, control, curiosity, and confidence reflect different adaptive capacities related to future planning, decision-making, exploration, and problem-solving. The present study suggests that emotional intelligence may be linked to these adaptive capacities among ESP lecturers.

The findings are also consistent with emotional intelligence theory, particularly the view that emotional intelligence involves the appraisal, use, and regulation of emotions in ways that support effective functioning. For lecturers, emotional intelligence may be especially relevant because teaching requires continuous emotional labor, classroom interaction, responsiveness to learners, and adjustment to institutional expectations. In the context of ESP education, lecturers are also expected to connect language instruction with specialized disciplinary and occupational domains, which may increase the emotional and cognitive demands of professional adaptation.

Comparison with previous literature

The positive relationship between emotional intelligence and career adaptability is in line with earlier studies showing that emotional skills are associated with adaptive career-related capacities. Previous research has suggested that career adaptability supports individuals in dealing with career transitions, changing work environments, and professional uncertainty, while emotional intelligence may help individuals manage emotions, stress, and work-related challenges. The present study adds to this area of research by focusing on ESP lecturers in Vietnam, a population that has received limited attention in studies on career adaptability.

The findings are also similar to earlier research on teachers and educational professionals. In teaching contexts, lecturers often need to respond to institutional changes, technological developments, student needs, and shifting professional expectations. This may be especially relevant for ESP lecturers, whose work frequently involves interdisciplinary collaboration and adaptation to specialized academic contexts.

At the same time, the multiple regression analysis showed that none of the four EI dimensions independently predicted overall career adaptability when all predictors were entered together. One possible reason is that the EI dimensions were strongly related to one another. This result suggests that overall emotional intelligence may be more closely connected to career adaptability than any single EI dimension on its own.

Why ROE is linked to Confidence

H1a was supported, as Regulation of Emotion showed a positive relationship with Confidence. Within Career Construction Theory, Confidence refers to an individual's belief in their ability to deal with career-related tasks and professional difficulties. Lecturers who are better able to regulate emotions may find it easier to manage pressure, uncertainty, and demanding work situations, which could help strengthen their sense of professional confidence.

ESP lecturers often work with both language instruction and specialized subject content. They may also face changing teaching demands and different student expectations. Lecturers who were better at regulating emotions tended to report greater confidence in handling these situations.

Why UOE is linked to Curiosity

H1b was also supported, as Use of Emotion showed a positive relationship with Curiosity. Use of Emotion refers to the ability to make use of emotions in a productive way, particularly when pursuing goals or dealing with challenges. In Career Construction Theory, Curiosity is related to exploring new possibilities, professional opportunities, and future career directions.

In the context of ESP teaching, lecturers who are able to use emotions constructively may be more open to trying new teaching approaches, learning unfamiliar content, or adapting to changes in educational practice. This may be especially important in ESP contexts, where lecturers often need to respond to disciplinary knowledge, technological developments, and changing workplace expectations.

In the present study, lecturers who were better able to use emotions constructively also appeared more willing to explore new teaching approaches, interdisciplinary knowledge, and technology-related practices. This may be particularly relevant in ESP teaching contexts, where lecturers often need to adjust to changes in disciplinary content, student needs, and developments in the workplace.

Contextual implications for Vietnam Higher Education

The findings may reflect the current situation in Vietnamese higher education, where universities are experiencing ongoing changes in teaching practices and technology use. For ESP lecturers, these changes may be more challenging because they often teach both language skills and specialized subject-related content.

The growing use of AI in education has created additional demands for lecturers. Many lecturers now need to work with unfamiliar digital tools, check AI-generated content, and guide students in the academic use of AI. Dealing with these changes may require both professional flexibility and the ability to cope with work pressure.on the ability to adapt professionally and manage work-related pressure.

The findings suggest that professional development programs should extend beyond technical training alone. Support related to emotional management, reflective practice, and professional development may also help lecturers respond more effectively to changing teaching environments and new educational demands.

Theoretical contribution

This study adds to Career Construction Theory by showing evidence that emotional intelligence is positively linked to career adaptability among ESP lecturers. In Career Construction Theory, career adaptability is seen as a set of psychosocial resources that help individuals deal with vocational tasks, transitions, and challenges. The findings suggest that emotional intelligence may serve as a closely related personal resource that supports how these adaptive capacities are developed and used in higher education settings.

The study also contributes to emotional intelligence theory by situating EI in a specific professional and cultural context. Rather than examining emotional intelligence as a general individual trait only, the study shows its relevance to lecturers' perceived capacity to adapt to career demands. The dimension-level findings further suggest theoretically meaningful links between emotion regulation and confidence, and between emotion use and curiosity. These links help clarify how emotional competencies may correspond to specific adaptive career resources.

Practical implications

Several practical implications come out of these findings. First, higher education institutions should consider adding emotional intelligence development into lecturers' professional development programs. Training that focuses on self-awareness, emotion regulation, using emotions in a positive way, and interpersonal sensitivity can help lecturers handle the emotional demands of teaching as well as wider institutional changes more effectively.

Second, career development support for ESP lecturers should place greater emphasis on strengthening career adaptability. This can be done through workshops on goal setting, interdisciplinary curriculum design, AI-assisted teaching, and reflective career planning. Such activities may contribute to building key adaptability resources, including concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. This is particularly relevant in specialized institutions where language teaching is closely linked with disciplinary knowledge and professional practice.

Third, institutional leaders should recognize that digital transformation goes beyond technology alone. As lecturers adjust to AI-supported teaching, changing student expectations, and interdisciplinary collaboration, they may also need both emotional and professional support. Mentoring schemes, peer learning groups, and an institutional culture that encourages experimentation and innovation can help lecturers adopt new practices in a more sustainable and less pressured way.

Limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study used a cross-sectional design, so the findings cannot establish causal direction. Although emotional intelligence was positively associated with career adaptability, it cannot be concluded that emotional intelligence leads to higher career adaptability. It is also possible that lecturers with stronger career adaptability develop more confidence in managing emotional and professional demands.

Second, the study relied on self-report questionnaire data. Participants' responses may have been influenced by social desirability, self-perception bias, or common method variance. Future studies could combine self-report data with interviews, classroom observations, supervisor evaluations, or longitudinal professional development records.

Third, the sample consisted of 84 ESP lecturers in Vietnam. Although the sample is appropriate for the analyses conducted, the findings should not be generalized too broadly to all lecturers, all English language teachers, or all higher education systems. ESP lecturers in specialized institutions may face distinctive interdisciplinary and technological demands that differ from those of lecturers in other fields.

Fourth, one EI dimension, ROE, showed reliability very close to but slightly below the conventional .70 threshold. Although item-total diagnostics did not suggest item removal, future studies should continue to examine the measurement properties of this dimension in Vietnamese higher education contexts.

Future Research Directions

Future research could follow lecturers over time to see how emotional intelligence and career adaptability develop, especially with the growing use of digital tools and AI in teaching. This would also help show more clearly which one changes first, or whether they influence each other over time.

It would also be useful to look at factors that may explain or shape this relationship. Things like teaching self-efficacy, digital skills, professional identity, work stress, institutional support, and readiness for AI could all play a role. Studies could also compare ESP lecturers from different regions, types of institutions, subject areas, and levels of experience with AI-based teaching.

Finally, interviews or mixed-method studies could help capture lecturers' real experiences in more detail. Talking directly with ESP lecturers may show how they deal with emotions, stay curious, and build confidence in interdisciplinary and AI-supported teaching environments. This would help make the survey results more grounded and useful for designing training and development programs.

In summary, the study shows that emotional intelligence is positively linked to career adaptability among ESP lecturers in specialized higher education in Vietnam. The findings support the use of Career Construction Theory and emotional intelligence theory in explaining how lecturers adapt professionally during digital transformation and AI-supported teaching. Although the results should be interpreted with caution due to the cross-sectional design and the limited scope of the sample, they still point to the need to strengthen both emotional competencies and career adaptability in lecturer development programs.

CONCLUSION

This study looked at the relationship between Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Career Adaptability (CA) among ESP lecturers in specialized higher education institutions in Vietnam. Based on Career Construction Theory and emotional intelligence theory, it examined whether emotional skills are connected to how lecturers adapt in more digital and interdisciplinary teaching settings.

The results show a clear positive relationship between EI and Career Adaptability. Lecturers with higher EI also reported stronger adaptability resources, including concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. The regression results suggest that EI is an important psychological factor linked to professional adaptability.

At the dimension level, Regulation of Emotion was linked to Confidence, while Use of Emotion was linked to Curiosity. In other words, lecturers who manage their emotions well tend to feel more confident in dealing with work challenges, while those who use emotions in a positive way are more willing to explore new teaching methods and ideas.

These findings are relevant in the context of digital transformation and AI in teaching. As universities adopt more AI tools and interdisciplinary approaches, lecturers are expected to adapt not only in skills but also in how they handle emotional and psychological demands.

However, the study is limited by its cross-sectional design and self-report data.

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