Psychology

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PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE DEVELOPMENT IN GENERATION Z UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Summary. *The article investigates the psychological characteristics of emotional intelligence development among Generation Z university students. An empirical study was conducted employing four psychodiagnostic instruments: the Hall Emotional Intelligence Test (EQ Hall), the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT), the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS-36), and the Trait Meta-Mood Scale (TMMS-30). The study involved 33 students enrolled at Simon Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics.*

The findings indicate that the vast majority of participants demonstrate an average level of general emotional intelligence — 45.5% according to the Hall Test and 48.5% according to the Schutte Test — while one in three students exhibits a low level of emotional intelligence. The most alarming result is the critically high prevalence of difficulties in emotion regulation: 84.8% of students display moderate or severe emotional dysregulation, reflecting a deficit of effective strategies for managing negative emotional states under conditions of academic workload and wartime social stressors. The identified phenomenon of

"emotional hypervigilance" suggests that heightened attention to one's own experiences, in the absence of effective regulatory strategies, may exacerbate rather than alleviate difficulties in emotional functioning. The findings may serve as a foundation for developing targeted psychological support programmes for student youth.

Key words: *emotional intelligence, emotion regulation, student youth, Generation Z.*

Introduction. The research topic is relevant because it seeks a deeper understanding of emotional intelligence as an internal mechanism for adaptation and regulation in complex, stressful situations. Emotional intelligence is a fundamental cognitive-emotional resource for individuals, namely the ability to analyse one's own emotional states, which is critically important for students in higher education. This issue has become especially significant during the period of full-scale military aggression, which has led to changes in the conditions of obtaining higher education alongside the development of professional competencies of future specialists. Therefore, the outlined research problem is critically important for analysing emotional regulation, overcoming anxiety, and preventing emotional exhaustion that accompany both the educational process and the challenging socio-political conditions in the country.

The problem of diagnosing emotional intelligence, its models, characteristics, and significance for students has been studied by both foreign scholars (J. D. Mayer, P. Salovey, D. R. Caruso, D. Goleman, R. Bar-On) and Ukrainian researchers (N. Bieliaieva, Zh. Bohdan, I. Videnieiev, I. Vlasenko, A. Herasymchuk, E. Nosenko, O. Plisko, N. Svitlychna, I. Ushakova). Their studies demonstrate that emotional intelligence is not merely a desirable personality trait but rather a foundation that determines students' success, psychological well-being, and adaptability.

Review of Recent Literature and Publications. Emotional intelligence (EI) is one of the key psychological phenomena in contemporary personality psychology, reflecting an individual's ability to recognise, understand, and regulate both their own emotions and those of others, as well as to use emotional information for adaptive behaviour and goal achievement.

Understanding the phenomenon of emotional intelligence is inseparably connected with broader issues of personality psychology. As emphasised by S. D. Maksymenko, personality is an integral system in which cognitive and emotional processes do not merely coexist but mutually determine one another [1]. In this context, emotional intelligence emerges not as a collection of separate skills but as an integrative quality of the individual that ensures adaptive functioning within the social environment.

V. O. Tatenko, substantiating the methodological foundations of contemporary personality psychology, highlights the subjective nature of human psychological activity: personality is not a passive recipient of external influences but an active creator of one's own experience [2]. This thesis directly relates to the nature of emotional intelligence - the ability not only to experience emotions but also to consciously process them within the context of one's personal life project.

T. M. Tytarenko examines personality within the coordinates of "ordinary" and "extraordinary" existence, where emotional experience serves as the most important material for constructing one's life world [3]. Closely related to this is the position of N. V. Chepelieva, who analyses personality self-design within a discursive space: reflection on one's own experiences is viewed as a key mechanism of personal development [4].

Foreign psychology provides a comprehensive theoretical foundation for the analysis of this construct. C. Rogers substantiated the role of empathy and congruence as fundamental conditions for personal growth, effectively outlining the emotional dimension of interpersonal interaction that would later be

conceptualised in theories of emotional intelligence [5]. I. Yalom, in turn, emphasises the therapeutic significance of emotional authenticity and the therapist's capacity for resonant emotional experience with the client [6].

The purpose of this article - to identify the psychological characteristics of emotional intelligence functioning among Generation Z university students, with particular focus on the ways emotions are utilised, evaluated, and regulated, as well as to develop practical recommendations for enhancing emotional intelligence under conditions of academic and social stress during the period of full-scale military aggression.

Materials and methods. The empirical study aimed to identify the specific features of emotional intelligence functioning among students, particularly the ways emotions are used in their lives, the evaluation and expression of emotions, emotional regulation, and the use of emotions in problem-solving. The study involved implementing three interrelated stages: preparatory, diagnostic, and analytical-generalising.

The preparatory stage included defining the purpose, objectives, and hypotheses of the study, selecting methodological instruments, forming the sample, and preparing an online questionnaire for data collection. The diagnostic stage involved the direct administration of the survey using four psychodiagnostic methods in the format of an online questionnaire (Google Forms). The survey was conducted anonymously. The analytical-generalising stage included quantitative and qualitative processing of the obtained data, as well as the formulation of conclusions and practical recommendations.

The first component of the study was N. Hall's Emotional Intelligence Test (EQ Hall). The questionnaire consists of 30 statements assessed using a six-point response scale (from −3 - "strongly disagree" to +3 - "strongly agree"). The results are calculated separately for each subscale (6 statements each): a total score of 14 and above indicates a high level of the corresponding EI component, from 8 to 13 indicates a moderate level, and below 8 indicates a low level. In

addition to the individual indicators, an integral level of emotional intelligence is also calculated.

The second method used in the study was the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT). The questionnaire consists of 33 statements evaluated using a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 - "strongly disagree" to 5 - "strongly agree"). Some items are reverse-coded and must be recoded before calculating the scores. The overall emotional intelligence score is calculated by summing all item scores and ranges from 33 to 165 points; a higher total indicates a higher level of emotional intelligence.

The third instrument was the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS). The scale was developed by K. Gratz and L. Roemer in 2004. The questionnaire consists of 36 items assessed using a 5-point frequency scale (from 1 - "almost never" to 5 - "almost always"). A higher total score on the scale indicates more pronounced difficulties in emotion regulation. Scoring is performed both for each subscale separately and for the overall score.

The final instrument was the Trait Meta-Mood Scale (TMMS). The concept of meta-mood assumes that individuals not only experience emotions but also reflect on them: they strive to understand, evaluate, and consciously regulate their emotional states. Responses are assessed using a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 - "strongly disagree" to 5 - "strongly agree").

Results. The study included 33 students at Semen Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics, ranging from first-year to fourth-year. The sample is purposeful and aligns with the study's objectives, as all participants are currently enrolled in higher education. The characteristics of the sample based on key demographic indicators are presented in table 1.

Table 1

Characteristics of the sample (n=33)

Question	Answer options	Number of responses, number of questionnaires	Percentage of responses provided, %
Your gender	Female	24	73%
	Male	9	27%
Your year of birth	2000–2020	33	100%
Type of activity	I am a student	19	58%
	I am a student and work	14	42%

Source: author's work

As shown in Table 1, the majority of study participants are women (73%), consistent with the general trend of a predominantly female audience in psychological studies using student samples. All respondents (100%) belong to the age group born between 2000 and 2020, which corresponds to adolescence and young adulthood-the most favourable period for studying the dynamics of emotional intelligence development. More than half of the respondents (58%) are currently enrolled in school, while 42% combine their studies with other activities or work, which is an important contextual factor in interpreting the results.

In the first stage of the analysis, basic descriptive statistics were calculated for all four methods. The results are presented in table 2.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics by research method (n = 33)

Methodology	M	SD	Min	Max	Mdn	Theoretical range
Hall Test	42,00	20,62	1	90	40,00	−90 / +90
Schutte Test (SREIT)	130,15	14,28	93	153	131,00	33–165
DERS-36 Scale	127,64	21,46	81	191	125,00	36–180
TMMS-30 (General)	91,76	12,68	74	150	92,00	30–150
Attention to Feelings	26,76	5,11	16	45	26,00	9–45
Emotional Clarity	37,52	6,30	17	60	38,00	12–60
Mood Recovery	27,48	4,09	22	45	27,00	9–45

Source: author's work

The results of the H. Hall test indicate a moderate average level of general emotional intelligence in the sample (M = 42.00; SD = 20.62). At the same time, the wide range (from 1 to 90 points) indicates significant individual variability: participants range from those with a minimal level of EI to those who demonstrate the highest possible score. Distribution by level: a low level (less than 30 points) was recorded in 11 individuals (33.3%); a medium level (30–60 points) in 15 individuals (45.5%); and a high level (over 60 points) in 7 individuals (21.2%). An illustration of the results of the N. Hall test is shown in fig. 1.

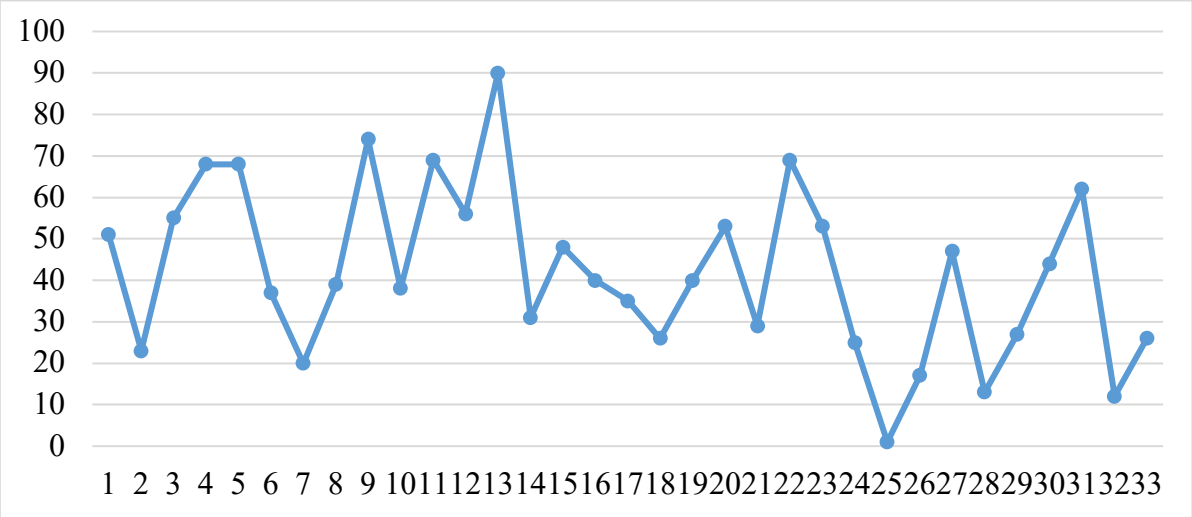

Fig. 1. The results of the H. Hall test

Source: author's work

The vertical axis (OY) shows the respondents' numbers, while the horizontal axis (OX) shows the scores they achieved. Specifically, only respondent number 13 achieved the maximum score of 90, while respondent number 25 achieved the minimum score of 1.

The results of the Schutte test (SREIT) also reflect a predominantly average level of EI in the sample (M = 130.15; SD = 14.28). A low level (less than 120 points) was found in 8 individuals (24.2%); an average level (120–140 points) in 16 individuals (48.5%); and a high level (over 140 points) in 9 individuals (27.3%). Thus, 75.8% of participants demonstrate a moderate or high level of EI

according to this methodology. An illustration of the results from the Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire by N. Schutte (SSEIT) is shown in fig. 2.

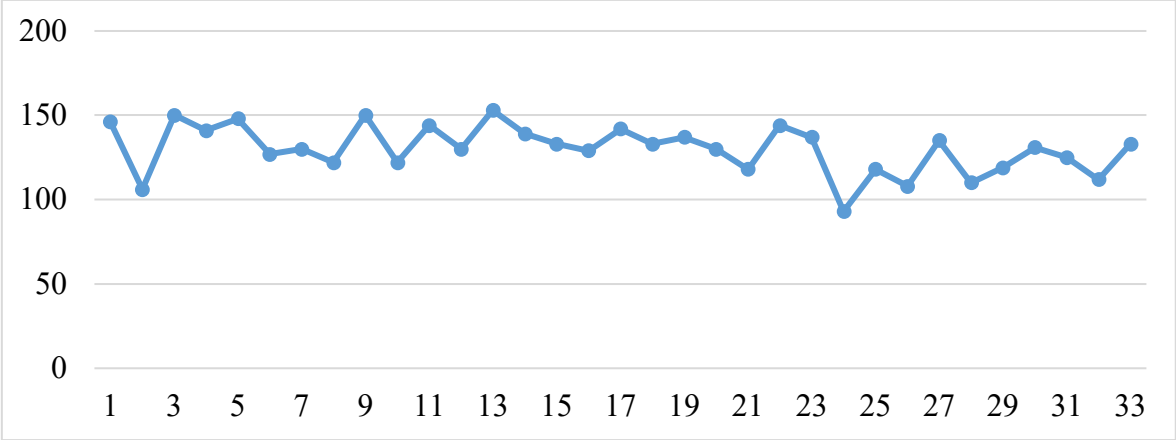

Fig. 2. Results of the Schutte Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT)

Source: author's work

The DERS-36 scores indicate significant difficulties with emotional regulation in the majority of the sample. The mean score (M = 127.64; SD = 21.46) corresponds to 70.9% of the maximum possible score on the scale (180 points), which represents a fairly high level of dysregulation.

According to the calibrated levels: a low level of difficulty (less than 110 points) was recorded in only 5 individuals (15.2%); moderate (110–145 points) in 22 individuals (66.7%); severe (over 145 points) in 6 individuals (18.2%). The obtained data are consistent with theoretical findings regarding increased levels of emotional distress among students in academic and socially stressful situations. An illustration of the results on the Difficulties in Emotional Regulation Scale (DERS) is shown in fig. 3.

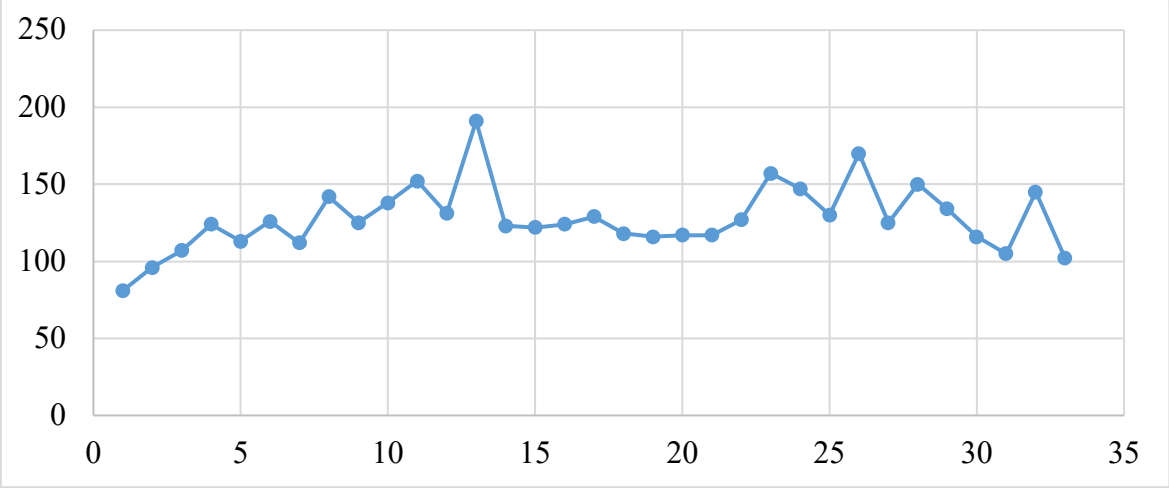

Fig. 3. Results on the Difficulties in Emotional Regulation Scale (DERS)

Source: author's work

An analysis of the TMMS-30 subscales shows that the vast majority of students score at the average level on all three dimensions of meta-mood (Fig. 4).

On the "Attention to Feelings" subscale (9 items, range 9–45): low level-4 individuals (12.1%), average-28 individuals (84.8%), high-1 individual (3.0%). On the "Emotional Clarity" subscale (12 items, range 12–60): low level-1 person (3.0%), moderate-31 people (93.9%), high-1 person (3.0%). On the "Mood Recovery" subscale (9 items, range 9–45): no low level was recorded; moderate-22 individuals (66.7%); high-11 individuals (33.3%).

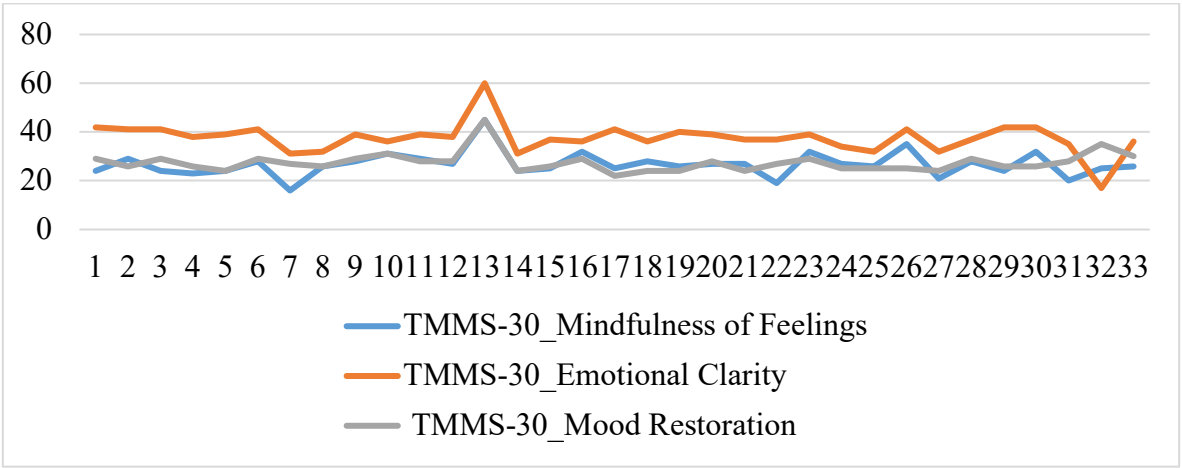

Fig. 4. Results of the Meta-Mood Scales (TMMS-30)

Source: author's work

Thus, "Emotional Clarity" (M = 37.52) emerged as the most developed component of the meta-mood, while "Attention to Feelings" (M = 26.76) and "Mood Recovery" (M = 27.48) fell within the lower half of the average range.

Conclusions. An empirical study conducted using four psychodiagnostic methods (the Hall Test, the Schutte Questionnaire, the DERS-36 scale, and the TMMS-30 scale) showed that the vast majority of students in the sample demonstrated an average level of general EI: 45.5% according to Hall's test and 48.5% according to Schutte's test. At the same time, one in three students (33.3%) exhibits a low level of EI according to Hall, which is a potential risk factor for academic adaptation and psychological well-being. Among the TMMS-30 subscales, "Emotional Clarity" (M = 37.52) was the most developed, while "Attention to Feelings" and "Mood Recovery" fell in the lower part of the average range.

The most alarming finding of the study is the critically high level of difficulty in regulating emotions: 84.8% of students demonstrate moderate or severe emotional dysregulation. This indicates a widespread lack of effective strategies for managing negative emotional states under the conditions of academic workload and social stressors. The identified phenomenon of "emotional hypervigilance" suggests that heightened attention to one's own experiences, in the absence of effective regulatory strategies, does not improve emotional functioning; rather, it may exacerbate difficulties in regulation.

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