



**Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human  
Development**

**EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND STRESS COPING  
STRATEGIES AMONG UNDERGRADUATES IN KOTA  
SAMARAHAN**

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**Bachelor of Science with Honours (Cognitive Sciences)  
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**EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND STRESS COPING STRATEGIES AMONG  
UNDERGRADUATES IN KOTA SAMARAHAN**

CARINA ANAK NICHOLAS NERU

This project is submitted  
in partial fulfilment of the requirement for a  
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The project entitled “Emotional Intelligence and Stress Coping Strategies among Undergraduates in Kota Samarahan” was prepared by Carina Anak Nicholas Neru and submitted to Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Science with Honours (Cognitive Sciences).

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Date:

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<b>Grade</b>
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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and stress coping strategies among undergraduates in Kota Samarahan. Emotional intelligence and stress coping strategies characteristic of the undergraduates in Kota Samarahan were also explained. A 33-items in Schutte's Self-Reported Inventory developed by Schutte et.al (1998) and a 36-items in Adolescent Coping Scale questionnaires developed by Frydenberg and Lewis (1993) were administrated to 94 undergraduates in Kota Samarahan. Data was tested using Pearson Correlation. The findings showed significant relationship between emotional intelligence and stress coping strategies. The respondents' emotional intelligence were characterized balancelly by emotions perception, managing self-relevant emotions, managing others' emotions and utilizing emotions. Most respondent preferred reference to other's coping and productive coping. This study suggests that emotional intelligence is emphasized in youth development program especially in stress coping strategies.

*Key Words:* emotional intelligence, stress coping strategies, emotions perception, managing self-relevant emotions, managing others' emotions, utilizing emotions, reference to other's coping, productive coping

## ABSTRAK

Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji hubungan antara kepintaran emosi dan strategi menangani stress di kalangan mahasiswa di Kota Samarahan. Ciri-ciri mahasiswa di Kota Samarahan terhadap kepintaran emosi dan strategi menangani stress juga telah dijelaskan. Terdapat 33-item dalam borang soal selidik *Schutte's Self-Reported Inventory* yang dibuat oleh Schutte et.al (1998) dan 36-item dalam soal selidik *Adolescent Coping Scale* yang dibuat oleh Frydenberg dan Lewis (1993) telah diedarkan kepada 94 mahasiswa di Kota Samarahan. Data telah diuji dengan menggunakan Ujian Korelasi Pearson. Hasil kajian menunjukkan hubungan yang signifikan antara kepintaran emosi dan strategi menghadapi stress. Kepintaran emosi responden telah disifatkan sama rata dengan persepsi emosi, pengurusan emosi sendiri, pengurusan emosi lain dan penggunaan emosi. Kebanyakan responden memilih untuk strategi rujukan lain dan strategi produktif. Kajian ini mencadangkan bahawa kepintaran emosi ditekankan dalam program pembangunan belia terutama dalam strategi menangani stress.

*Kata Kunci:* kepintaran emosi, strategi menangani stress, persepsi emosi, pengurusan emosi sendiri, pengurusan emosi lain, penggunaan emosi, strategi rujukan lain, strategi produktif

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Emotional intelligence which is mainly about emotional awareness, control and managing, has been found to be important solutions at work and in life (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Therefore, it is very important to have a better understanding of one's emotion and finding various ways to overcome stress. Few researches on emotional intelligence and stress coping strategies were done. Engleberg and Sjoberg's (2003) research revealed that, some individuals who have less ability in realizing their emotions, will have lower levels of social adaptation compared to those who have highly realized their emotions.

Other researches done by Lopes et al. (2004) found that, people who have lower ability in managing their emotions, are not able to acquire social support in stressful situations. Meanwhile, Furnham et al. (2002) and Eskay's (2011) research found that, individuals with high emotional intelligence use more normal coping strategies compared to those with low emotional intelligence who use more avoidance-oriented coping strategies. This means that emotional intelligence and coping strategies play crucial roles in mental health as these two variables enables one to regulate and concede with his or her emotions.

## **Problem Statement**

The undergraduates in Kota Samarahan are exposed to various kinds of stress and are less exposed to the ways to manage as well as coping with their emotions. A student who fail to cope with stress are likely to fail in their academic performance. This study seeked to investigate on how students can recognize their emotions and how far their emotions are able to affect their stress coping abilities. This study was conducted in Kota Samarahan. Therefore, this study seeks to answer these questions:

1. Is there any significant relationship between emotional intelligence and stress coping strategies among undergraduate in Kota Samarahan?
2. What are the emotional intelligence characteristics of the undergraduates in Kota Samarahan?
3. What are the stress coping strategies used by undergraduates in Kota Samarahan?

## **Research Objectives**

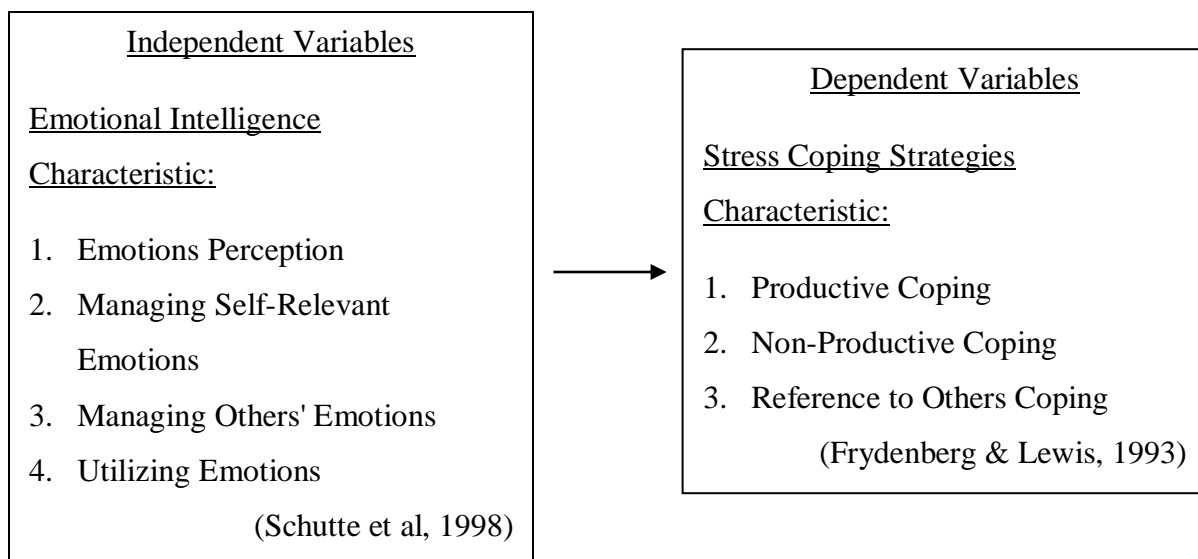
The research was intended to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and stress coping strategies among undergraduates in Kota Samarahan. This research aims to identify:

- The relationship between emotional intelligence and stress coping strategies among undergraduates in Kota Samarahan.
- Emotional intelligence characteristics of the undergraduates in Kota Samarahan.
- Stress coping strategies characteristics of the undergraduates in Kota Samarahan.

## Research Hypothesis

$H_{01}$ : There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and stress coping strategies among undergraduates in Kota Samarahan.

## Conceptual Framework



*Figure 1.* Conceptual Framework

## **Definition of Terms**

### **Emotional Intelligence**

**Conceptual Definition:** Emotional Intelligence is known as one's ability to manage and recognize one's emotion as well as others around them (Stephen, 2010). The concept of Emotional Intelligence (EI) derives partly from earlier ideas about social intelligence (Mayer et al., 1999; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). For this study, Schutte's Emotional Intelligence model was used and it has four dimensions which are emotions perception, managing self-relevant emotions, managing others' emotions and utilizing emotions.

**Operational Definition:** The young adult's emotional Intelligence in this study was measured based on Schutte's Self-Reported Inventory (SSRI) (Schutte et.al, 1998), where emotional intelligence measure the emotions perception, managing self-relevant emotions, managing other's emotions and utilizing emotions.

### **Emotions Perception**

**Conceptual Definition:** Emotions perceptions is an ability to evaluate a person's emotion by reading their body language, and facial expression (Brackett & Salovey, 2006).

**Operational Definition:** Emotion perception were measured based on respondent's awareness, ability to detect and decipher emotions in facial expression, ability to recognize one's own emotions and others, ability to understand others and one's own nonverbal messages, aware of other peoples' feelings, ability to detect changes in one's own emotions and know when to speak one's own problems.

## **Managing Self-Relevant Emotions**

**Conceptual definition:** Managing self-relevant emotions is an ability to be open to one's own feeling as well as others, capable of promoting personal understanding and growth (Brackett & Salovey, 2006). It also helps to look at stressor or problems in positive ways, understand that emotion is vital for life, one should be aware of one's emotion and recognize them as one way to perceive the stressor or problems in their life (Stephen, 2010).

**Operational definition:** Managing self-relevant were measured based on respondent's ability to face obstacles, their expectation on trying new things, their experiences in positive emotions, motivation and ability to control emotions.

## **Managing Others' Emotions**

**Conceptual definition:** Managing other's emotions is an ability to generate emotions, to relate to others, reflecting one's emotion as well as knowing what is important and what is not (Brackett & Salovey, 2006). They could also help others to solve their problems and solving one's own problem without being emotionally disturbed (Stephen, 2010). This way, they can create new ideas as well as new emotion arises.

**Operational definition:** Managing others' emotions were measured based on the way respondent understand, manipulate and manage others' emotions.



## **Utilizing Emotions**

**Conceptual definition:** is an ability for individual to know when to share one's emotions (Brackett & Salovey, 2006). He or she must acknowledge their emotions, have positive thinking about things around them, expecting good things to happen, ensuring that one's own emotion last longer, aware of mood changes and motivating oneself to have positive thinking that will lead to positive outcomes (Stephen, 2010).

**Operational definition:** Utilizing emotions were measured based on respondent's expectation when mood changes, respondent emotion when solving problems and create new ideas, and how major events affect their life.

## **Stress Coping Strategies**

**Conceptual Definition:** Coping strategies refer to the ways in which people manage demands that appraised as taxing one's resources (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980). Thus, stress coping strategies are methods that are used to overcome stress in our life. Young adults that encountered stress in life tend to deal it with a variety of coping strategies. Folkman and Lazarus (1980) explained that young adults may have the ability to cope with a stressor which is thought to determine the extent to which functioning is compromised.

**Operational Definition:** Coping strategies was assessed using the state version of the Adolescent Coping Scale (ACS) (Frydenberg & Lewis, 1993), that consist 3 dimensions which are productive coping, non-productive coping and reference to others coping.

### **Productive coping**

**Conceptual definition:** Productive coping is an ability to see things on the bright side, doing things which are positive, he or she attempts to solve problems surrounding oneself with friends and family (Frydenberg & Lewis, 1993).

**Operational definition:** Productive coping were measured based on respondent's ability at solving problem, play sports to cope, look at the bright side of things, keeping a healthy life styles, seeing thing in different points of view, going to gym, concentration in work, pay more attention, care and concern for relationship with others, and make good impression.

## **Non-Productive Coping**

**Conceptual definition:** Non-productive coping is an ability where one runs away from problems, they act negatively when a new problem arises, pulling oneself away from public and engaging in activities such as crying, screaming, blaming oneself and others (Frydenberg & Lewis, 1993). They even worry over little or big problems and letting problems sort out itself without any efforts.

**Operational definition:** Non-productive coping were measured based on respondent's worry about future, ignoring the problem, cry or scream, self-blame, keeping feelings to themselves, wishful thinking, giving up easily, prefer to forget about problem, avoid contact with people, self-guilty, keeping secret from others, eat, drink or sleep, and encounter physical pain.

## **Reference to Others Coping**

**Conceptual definition:** Reference to others coping is where one person seek help from others, such as friends and family (Frydenberg & Lewis, 1993). They talk to others for emotional support and improve their relationship with friends and family.

**Operational definition:** Reference to others coping were measured based on seeking supports from friends and family, ask advice from others, read a holy or religious book and believe in God.

## **Demographic**

### **Age**

**Conceptual Definition:** Age is the length of time of how long an organism has lived (Stephen, 2010). Age range from young to adult and lastly old age.

**Operational Definition:** The range of age used in this study for undergraduates were below 20 years old, 21 to 22 years old, and above 23 years old.

### **Gender**

**Conceptual Definition:** Gender is defined as the characteristic of a person who have traits that differentiate men and women in both behavioral and aesthetic, which related to man's masculinity and woman's feminism (Stephen, 2010).

**Operational Definition:** The sample in this study were the undergraduates' gender. They are female and male respondents.

### **Ethnics**

**Conceptual Definition:** Ethnics were defined as a large group of members of people who share common beliefs and heritage (Stephen, 2010), such as Malay, Chinese, India, Iban, Bidayuh and other ethnic group.

**Operational Definition:** Ethnics were measured by what types of ethnics the undergraduates belong to, either they are Bumiputera or Non Bumiputera individuals. There are many ethnics in Bumiputera group, such as Malay, Iban, Bidayuh, Melanau and so forth. Meanwhile, Chinese and other foreign ethnic are classified as Non Bumiputera.

**Significance of Study:** This study was to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and how the undergraduates are able to relate their emotions with others and the way they cope with their stress. This study also crucial in helping undergraduates to recognize and understand their emotions. So that, they know how to deal with negative consequences when stress is not dealt wisely. Thus, this study aims to recognize undergraduate's emotional intelligence and stress coping strategies in Borneo, Sarawak.

**Scope of Study:** The scope of this study was to investigate the relationship between undergraduate's emotional intelligence and how they cope with their stress using productive coping, non-productive coping and reference to others coping. This study also investigates the emotional intelligence and stress coping strategies characteristics of the undergraduates in Kota Samarahan.

**CHAPTER TWO**  
**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Definitions and Concepts of Emotional Intelligence**

**Emotions**

Emotions are multidimensional phenomena as well as biological response and physiological reactions that prepare one’s body for adaptive actions (Reeve, 1992).

Multidimensional Aspect of Emotions table summarized by Reeve (1992) shown below:

Table 1

*Multidimensional Aspect of Emotions (Adapted from Reeve, 1992)*

Aspect of Emotions Cognitive-Subjective	Contribution to Emotion Feelings	Unit of Analysis Self Report
I. Physiological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arousal Physical Preparation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Brain Structure</li> <li>➤ Autonomic Nervous System</li> <li>➤ Endocrine System</li> </ul>
II. Functional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purpose</li> <li>• Goal Directed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Selection of appropriate responses for the situations</li> </ul>
III. Expressive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Facial expression</li> <li>➤ Bodily expression</li> <li>➤ Vocalization</li> <li>➤ Social Convention</li> </ul>

In addition, emotion is often linked to one’s feeling such as happy, sad, angry, fear, curiosity, excited and so forth. McDougall (2003) described that emotion as the expression of instinctual response or inner striving. Meanwhile, Reeve (1992) argued that emotions are functional and bodily expressions which communicate with our inner emotional experiences to others.

Stephen (2010) found that, emotions have a strong effect on human's judgment stated by Stephen (2010). Stephen (2010) explained that, strong positive emotions are capable of motivating individuals to accomplish positive things in their life, while strong negative emotions are capable of influencing individuals to do negative things, for example, suicidal. Therefore, the more intense the emotions become, the more powerfully it arouses and directs one's behavior (Carlson & Harfield, 1992).

### **Emotional Intelligence (EI)**

According to Salovey et al. (2004), emotional intelligence is the subset of social intelligence which involves the ability to monitor one's own and others feelings and emotions. Mayer et al. (2001) had categorized development of EI into five periods. The five periods are Precursors of EI, Emergence of EI, Popularization, and Broadening of EI and last are the researches and institutionalization of EI as shown below:

Table 2

*The Five Development Periods of Emotional Intelligence (Adapted from Mayer, 2001)*

Period	Descriptions
<p>1990-1969: I Intelligence and Emotions are relatively separated field</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Intelligence research</u></li> <li>➤ Psychometric approach to intelligence is developed and improved.</li> <li>• <u>Emotion research</u></li> <li>➤ Debate about the physiological reaction and emotion which occur first.</li> <li>➤ Darwin's theory about evolution and inheritance of emotion response had viewed as culturally determined.</li> <li>➤ Concepts of social intelligence introduced by Thorndile in 1920.</li> </ul>
<p>1970-1980 II Precursors to Emotional Intelligence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The field of cognition and affect emerged to examine the hoe emotional interacted with thoughts</li> <li>• In 1983, Gardner proposed multiple intelligence theory describe interpersonal intelligence</li> <li>• Empirical work on social intelligence developed four components: social skill, empathy skill, pro-social attitude and emotionality.</li> <li>• Brain research began to separate out the connection between emotion and cognition.</li> <li>• Occasional use of emotional intelligence appeared</li> </ul>
<p>1990-1993 III Emotional Intelligence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mayer and Salovey published a series of article on EI.</li> <li>• First ability to measure EI was published.</li> <li>• Editor of the journal intelligence argued for an existence of EI in the brain science.</li> </ul>
<p>1994-1997 IV The Popularization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 1995, Goleman published EI which becomes a worldwide best seller.</li> </ul>