

STUDENTS' EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND THEIR ATTITUDES TOWARDS CREATIVITY INTERFERENCES: LITHUANIAN AND LATVIAN CASE

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Abstract. Emotional Intelligence (EI) has been an important and controversial topic in recent decades. The level of emotional intelligence and creativity among students is an essential dimension of a successful study process, a topic that has not been sufficiently explored. This study, however, is a groundbreaking attempt to investigate this relationship among Landscape Architecture students in Lithuania and Latvia. Creativity, the skill to find new and valuable ideas to react to challenges, problems or needs, is a crucial aspect of this process. Moreover, creativity can usually be a new combination of known knowledge. Different generations are creative but should have a better background and theoretical understanding of emotional intelligence. This understanding is lacking, and this study aims to fill this gap. On the other hand, different generations look at the same reality from various perspectives. Therefore, the study seeks to look at the creativity interferences from the student's point of view. The pilot study, conducted using a questionnaire created by the authors, aims to determine the peculiarities of student's creativity interferences for their successful studies. It also analyses the theoretical background of emotional intelligence and creativity proposed by the scientific literature. It determines students' level of emotional intelligence that would enhance their creativity to manage creativity interferences in achieving success during the study process.
Keywords: landscape architecture students, emotional intelligence, creativity interferences, attitudes

Introduction

More and more learners feel constant tension, emptiness, lack of energy, and inability to concentrate and work productively. Many students feel the factors of burnout while studying, wanting to combine both work and learning at the same time. Unfortunately, such a phenomenon has become entirely normal and socially acceptable. In this way, managing emotions and the ability not to deplete the body's resources become an acute problem in educational and production organizations. Landscape architecture covers the entire range of outdoor design: the fascinating scope of this field ranges from open space planning near, on or even interior design [23]. Therefore, landscape architecture students must be more productive and often meet their expectations of themselves and the organization. This leads to dissatisfaction with each other, a decrease in students' learning activities, and a level of loyalty to the learning organization.

Another strong argument is landscape architecture students' sufficient level of creativity interferences, the inability to cope with frequent stress, fear of making mistakes, excessive flow of information, and too high demands [1]. Unfortunately, most students seek to look like very successful people. In this way, they exhaust their minds and destroy resources, and later, realising their emotions, feelings, and goals is difficult. The consequence is decreased active interest in the pleasures of life and casual communication. Nowadays, the duality of people is observed, as if two lives are lived - in reality and the social space, as a person lives only to solve constantly arising problems, often willing to align not with their strengths but with others; they want to be "like them" to achieve the same results.

Emphasizing the development of emotional literacy, which is determined by emotional intelligence and creativity, should be a crucial aspect of the learning process. However, this dimension must be addressed in higher education organisations, as it creates a significant gap in students' learning experience.

This study aims to analyze the theoretical background of emotional intelligence and creativity proposed by the scientific literature and determine students' level of emotional intelligence that would promote their creativity to manage creativity interferences in achieving success during the study

process. A pilot study was carried out using a questionnaire created by the authors to assess the level of emotional intelligence of students and disturbances in creativity.

The study's results showed the central creativity interference identified by students of Latvian universities. The results were processed using the Microsoft Excel tool.

The importance of emotional intelligence during studies

Screens, (e.g., devices such as smartphones, computers and televisions) emotional intelligence and the development of creativity have become apparent in recent years. Students' emotional intelligence help to create internal environment for creative thinking. "Emotions are part of creative process" [27]. Unfortunately, it must be noted that students are not always able to recognize their emotions, which often leads to many misunderstandings. For others, it is terrifying to admit that all feelings can be felt— such as anger, fear, disgust, wonder... and so on... it is essential to be able to recognize and name them. Then, students can calmly think about it, let go of a destructive emotion but not keep it inside, and constantly return to it. This is especially true when communicating and learning, which can lead to verbal and even physical conflicts. On the other hand, in any dispute, it is crucial to find out the emotions that have engulfed the participants. Then, there is no need to blame anyone but to clarify the essence of the conflict, what problem can be solved, and what new opportunities may arise. Harmony and balance should be the goal in communicating, learning, working, or creating... "Emotions range from eye-clouding rage to pure love, an instantly manifested physiological reaction of the body to the most important signals of the outside world" [5].

A deficit in emotional intelligence (EI) manifests itself in various ways, such as the inability to recognize and name one's emotions, difficulty controlling emotional outbursts, and inadequate stress response [17]. These difficulties can hurt the lives of the individual and those around them. Salovey and Mayer (1990) were the first to define EI as recognising, understanding, and managing one's and others' emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth. Daniel Goleman popularized this concept by emphasizing that EI consists

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Emotional flexibility is the ability to regulate one's emotions flexibly and respond to situations appropriately. It also includes the ability to calm down and relax, which can help one cope better with stress. Viktor Frankl's (1984) works implicitly support emotional flexibility, emphasizing the search for meaning in life and a conscious lifestyle that can help develop greater control over one's emotions.

Emotional flexibility helps us use the "gap between stimulus and response" to choose our response rather than letting our emotions automatically guide our behaviour. This allows us to deal more effectively with difficulties such as negative self-esteem, anxiety, depression and other emotional problems.

Emotionally flexible people are usually more energetic, adapt better to change and can act according to their values even in difficult circumstances. The concept of emotional flexibility has been influenced by social, organizational and clinical psychology research. A growing number of studies show that lower skills related to emotional flexibility lead to lower achievement and well-being; emotional flexibility is the most crucial factor on which spiritual health and success depend; without that, emotional flexibility cannot be learned [15].

Often students cannot correctly name their existing emotional competencies and cannot present them. Personal burnout threatens many full-time students who study and work. Experiencing personal burnout affects the mind, body, and emotions, negatively affecting creativity. Apathy, anger, and indifference appear. This syndrome occurs due to prolonged stress, and often, such individuals strive for extremely excellent results, wanting to move up the learning career ladder. Therefore, to avoid burnout syndrome, it is essential to develop psychological resilience, monitor needs, and control the study and workload.

Today's young students are active entrepreneurs who take proactive change and responsibility for their actions and lives. Entrepreneurship development is about creativity, the path, and the different futures. It is essential to believe that mistakes are a normal process in life, learning from them,

and success does not necessarily come from the first time. It is necessary to encourage young people to try again as it requires non-standard solutions and empathy for other products, services, etc. Young people are now preparing for the future and for futures that, unfortunately, we do not know. We are all the creators of the future because no one can say what will happen in fifteen years. It is necessary not only to have a vision but also to be able to change oneself constantly, continually learn, respond flexibly to situations, and act accordingly to the requirements of the environment, to young people's business ideas: innovation; social sensitivity and environmental impact. It is important to them how to reuse waste, care for nature, buy less, etc. This generation is a digital generation that uses innovative technological tools perfectly. However, the biggest fear of the young is to take risks. The modern generation is a seeker not only profit, but also meaning, freedom, openness, and very high ambitions. This generation breaks stereotypes and all boundaries and tries to do more, faster, but through its own mistakes and experiences.

In 2013, David published an article about his research discoveries. She pointed out that most of today's people often fall on the hook of inflexible negative patterns of behaviour and thinking. The author presented how to develop emotional flexibility, get rid of templates, and successfully change life. Some magazines (Harvard Business Review, HBR) have declared the management's best idea of emotional flexibility for the year. Other magazines (Forbes, Fast Company, The Wall Street Journal) have called emotional flexibility the emotional intelligence of the new generation, a revolutionary thought that will change people's conception of feelings. Emotional flexibility is an event that allows one to be in the here and now with the understanding of when to change behaviour and when to act as always so that life habits do not conflict with a person's aspirations and values. It is necessary to keep down when faced with tricky feelings and thoughts - just let them flow freely, evaluate boldly and uncritically, and then move forward and let the significant changes into one's life.

Emotional flexibility spans four essential phases: acknowledging one's feelings, stepping back and looking from the outside, seeing a broader perspective, going one's own way to create the necessary distance between oneself and one's thoughts, and never stopping [2; 5; 6].

Creativity: importance and challenges

Creativity is the skill to create new and valuable ideas as a reaction to challenges, problems or needs. Creativity is developing a product, process or idea that did not exist before. Landscape architecture students have to know how to help them realize their landscape dreams [26]. However, creativity can usually be a new combination of known knowledge [3]. The five phases of the creativity process demonstrate that the creator needs knowledge about problem formulation, idea stimulation, sorting, selection, validation and application [3] (Table 1).

Creativity can be identified by the following:

1. invent something which has never existed before;
2. invent something which exists elsewhere, but you are not aware of;
3. invent a new process for doing something;
4. reapply an existing process or product into a new or different market;
5. develop a new way of looking at something (bringing a new idea into existence);
6. change the way someone else looks at something.

There could be defined different types of creativity, for

Table 1. Phases of Creativity process [construction by Amabile,1996]

Phases of the process	Phases explanation
Problem formulation: Analytical Phase	The formulation constitutes the exhaustive inventory of all information referring to the problem (reasons, objectives... of the problem, release of the constraints and the variables...).
Stimulation of the ideas: Intuitive Phase	Two large currents of techniques coexist: Divergent Techniques: This is a group of divergent techniques for beginning the debate and reframing the situation from several angles. Convergent Techniques: This step combines the forces between the problem and the subjective elements resulting from the divergence phase.
Sorting and selection: Intuitive Phase	Definition: This stage consists of sorting the ideas according to decisive criteria. Finality: To support innovative solutions that answer the initial problems.
Validation of the ideas: Evaluation	This phase consists of formulating the possible solutions and evaluating the solution which will be implemented.
Application of the ideas: Implementation	Solutions that will be applied to the problems after the idea is validated. Selection of indicators to follow the idea's good progress within the innovating/creative process "project."

example:

1. scientific creativity (Mathematic, Discoveries...);
2. organizational creativity and social creativity;
3. artistic creativity (Architecture, Painting...);
4. practical creativity (e.g. Rescue of the crew of Apollo 13 thanks to "do-it-yourself" of the "mailbox");
5. strategic creativity (e.g. The Trojan horse in Greek mythology) [1,9].

For several years, following the transition to market economies in the early 2000s, post-Soviet countries' politicians recognized the need to shift from resource-intensive economic growth towards more sustainable models. These new models emphasize conservation, waste reduction, and efficient resource use.

These could be defined as some cross-cultural approaches to creativity.

Western concepts of creativity are often defined as the quality of a creative product or result, which must meet two main criteria: new and appropriate. This means that creative products and results must be both original and valuable. Originality is the central concept that characterizes creative products, as it provides their unique value and ability to solve problems or satisfy needs in a new way. There is an intense focus on innovative products.

Creativity as a process:

A person can solve problems they may have yet to learn. Procedural creativity is closely related to problem-solving skills [17].

Creativity as a personality:

Personality creativity is how a person's cognitive skills and emotional experiences shape creative outcomes. It is an "aesthetic cognitive and emotional activity" that seeks solutions to problems. Intuition is critical for personality creativity – a person uses it productively to form a connection [28].

Creativity as an environment in which people live and/or work:

The environment nourishes, enriches and stimulates human creativity [4]. For example, socio-cultural environmental elements can "create a context in which creative work is inhibited or facilitated"; they can also "serve to evaluate results and performance" [16].

Eastern concepts:

Product creativity: Less emphasis is placed on the result.

Procedural creativity: The importance of process is strongly emphasized, which may include meditation, "spiritual invocations," chanting, or deity mantras.

Table 2. The West and the East – conceptions of the creative process
 [construction by Shaw, 1985]

Descriptors	West	East
Preparation	Preliminary analysis of the problem.	Preparation involves prayer/meditation for inspiration.
Incubation	Active unconscious work.	Alignment of inner self / being with the spirit of the deity.
Illumination	A sudden burst of insight/imagination/idea/solution to the problem.	Insights: rather self-focused than subject-focused.
Verification	Evaluation of idea/solution; Development .	Personal realization; social communication of achievement.

Creativity of personality: There is a strong emphasis on personality, but not in the way of the West. Personality creativity is related to personal fulfilment.

Environmental creativity: Less attention is paid to the environment. Cross-cultural approaches to creativity: West meets East? The West and the East's conceptions—or descriptors—of the creative process differed significantly regarding techniques and procedures.

The West and East's conceptions of the creative process were analysed more deeply to understand landscape architecture's future.

The creative process can also be detailed in four phases: Preparation, Incubation, Verification, and Illumination [26]:

1. Preparation – a creative person becomes interested in the problem and gathers all the information to address it.
2. Incubation – a creative person unconsciously works on the problem.
3. Verification – ideas are worked into a communicable form.
4. Illumination – possible ideas start to come to light.

There could be some summary of West and East's conceptions of the creative process, designed by authors according to [26, 29] (Table 2). The West's conception of the creative process is somewhat "rational" and requires more evaluation and control than the East's. The East's vision, on the contrary, is more "spiritual" and attaches more importance to concentration and the consideration of the inner self.

The current generation is very creative, but they need the empowerment of others to create, encourage, and praise their unique ideas. The biggest challenge for all of us is screens. When near the screen, it is challenging to concentrate and read. As the child grows up, the time in front of the screen increases (and the desire to hold it in one's hands becomes stronger. It's not just the younger generation is that different, we're all different, and we are all affected by social media. We experience many challenges, and we need to learn to control ourselves.

Emotional intelligence and creativity development

People can demonstrate their talents and abilities, and be curious to know how others feel them when they play Life. Playing, as a way of behaving, is very appropriate in childhood when we learn to be and communicate with others. Unfortunately, this game can even be harmful later in life. In training, it is essential to teach 'WATCH'. From what perspective do we see? Landscape architecture students must have intuitive and emotionally friendly feelings about the environment [13]. Creativity primarily manifests in the game, and art was born from the need to feel commonality with others. Changing to the side of playing would be pretty risky. Living for entertainment and consumption and constant satisfaction, a person loses more and more humanity. All kinds of benefits are suitable for a person, but ... it's a detriment to society. Universal virtualization threatens the creation

of relationships between people. No technological leap comes for free. Unfortunately, going out into a cheap and comfortable space can be costly in the future: deteriorating health, a deteriorating ecological situation, increasing wealth inequality, sustainability, etc. Landscape architects can learn about composite materials, fractures, etc. They could create the world as a place of chasing pleasures and excitement. New technologies excite the imagination [7], and birth to new social realities. In addition, it creates aggression because it is not enough for everyone. Religion and myths are necessary and can help reduce outbreaks of aggression and increase communalism, which has led to the formation of democracy. The basis of human innovation is the creation and adoption of quick and high-quality decisions, the practical solution of problems, the management of the situation of rest and play, critical thinking, dreams, and travel when new connections are created in the brain between new and existing information – creative ideas.

Therefore, by developing EI, students can become more productive and successful in their activities and help others become such, too [24]. People with higher emotional intelligence are characterized by greater job satisfaction and organizational commitment [20]. Such employees can control themselves and their emotions regardless of stress, pressure, current disadvantage or emerging challenges [21]. The increased emotional intelligence of landscape architects strengthens communication skills and promotes greater resilience, constructive use of emotions, and excellent adaptation to the changing work environment and needs [22]. However, in all organizations, landscape architecture students have difficulties that lead to frustration. Still, emotionally intelligent people usually understand that there is no need to hold the organization responsible for every negative emotion they experience [18].

Distinguish four phases of learning emotional intelligence [14]. As can be seen, to develop your emotional intelligence, you first need to understand what it is and its components, and then you need to do self-assessment; for this purpose, you can use ECI, EQ-i and similar tests, then improve the competencies using various methods, and it is important to apply new knowledge and skills in real life. It has been observed that practising emotionally intelligent behaviour helps the brain adapt to making such behaviours automatic and changing less valuable behaviours [12].

The already mentioned [14] method distinguish both ways and tools for developing emotional intelligence:

1. distinguish between emotions that are negative and use them effectively,
2. to choose answers wisely, not to draw hasty conclusions,
3. ask yourself questions to highlight changes in behaviour,
4. try to convey your thoughts better and more clearly to those around you,
5. use various tools for stress management, for example, to avoid the use of alcohol or tobacco products, to spend quality time with loved ones,
6. write gratitude journals that develop positivity and reduce stress,
7. practice empathy and think about situations from another person's position.

Creative thinking involves breaking free from habitual and inflexible thought structures, allowing the generation of new and original ideas. This process is essential when generating innovations and new solutions. It involves the fusion of ideas that have not been brought together before and thus leads to the emergence of new concepts.

One form of creative thinking is brainstorming, which involves

combining different ideas to generate new perspectives. This process uses other people's ideas as inspiration and stimulates individual creativity. Creative thinking processes can be accidental or deliberate; for example, sometimes new ideas emerge unexpectedly, but other times, they develop gradually through intelligence and logic [4].

Landscape architects who support "smart growth" seek to develop innovative design solutions to achieve an optimal balance between land use and daily travel. In this context, it is essential to note that there is "good density" and "bad density" in design, just as there is "good design" and "bad design".

Creative thinking can happen spontaneously without specific methods, but deliberate methods, such as brainstorming, can significantly accelerate the development of ideas. These methods encourage the emergence of various ideas that can lead to new lines of thinking and creative processes. Product development using these deliberate approaches is much faster than spontaneous thinking.

Intuitive thinking, which involves imagining or understanding without conscious analysis, is another aspect of creative thinking that allows people to make decisions and generate ideas based on gut feeling and experience.

Methodology

There was pilot quantitative research about students' emotional intelligence and creativity interference in the learning process. The authors created a questionnaire based on scientific literature analysis to determine students' attitudes. The mentioned method enables information gathering and helps discover original facts that are useful for scientific interpretation and discussion. In investigating students' experiences regarding the level of emotional intelligence and creativity interferences, respondents were asked to mark their answers based on the Likert scale.

The anonymous questionnaire consisted of two statements: level of emotional intelligence and creativity interferences. The first block of the questionnaire consisted of fifteen statements based on Goleman's model of emotional intellect. The second block of the questionnaire included five types of creativity interferences, each composed of 5 – 6 statements. The groups of creativity interference were personal and organizational. Personal creativity interferences were perception, rationality, emotionality, expression, and organisation. The respondents answered the questionnaire using the Likert scale, and their answers were interpreted using the Microsoft Excel tool. The questionnaire was created online, and students answered it by indicating the link address in two Lithuanian and Latvian universities from April to June 2024: 141 in Lithuania and 122 in Latvia. The distribution of respondents by gender is shown in Figure 1.

The respondents were primarily women in the first age group (18-20). Lithuanian and Latvian students were from various undergraduate programs: landscape architecture, politics, social sciences, informatics, arts, criminology, law, economics, management, and environmental engineering.

Study results

The development of emotional intelligence is essential for both students and educators, especially in industries that are intertwined with the arts. Students with a high or average level of emotional intelligence will have more opportunities to adapt to difficult situations in studies, research, and work. The study results confirmed that respondents perceive emotional intelligence as essential for studying and working, interacting with others, and personally.

The research revealed that the respondents can identify individuals with high emotional intelligence by evaluating

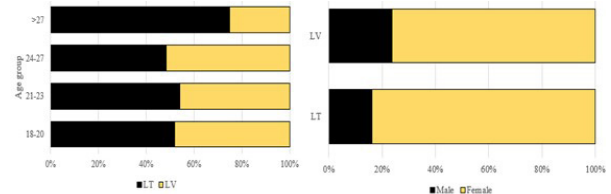


Fig. 1. Distribution of Lithuanian and Latvian respondents by age groups and gender in % [created by the authors based on the data of the 2024 survey]

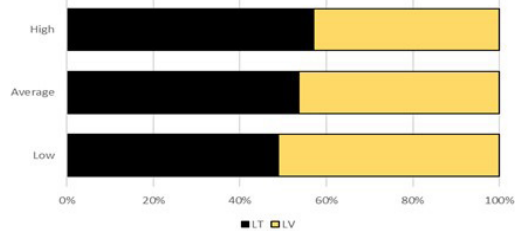


Fig. 2. The level of Lithuanian and Latvian respondents' emotional intelligence in % [created by the authors based on the data of the 2024 survey]

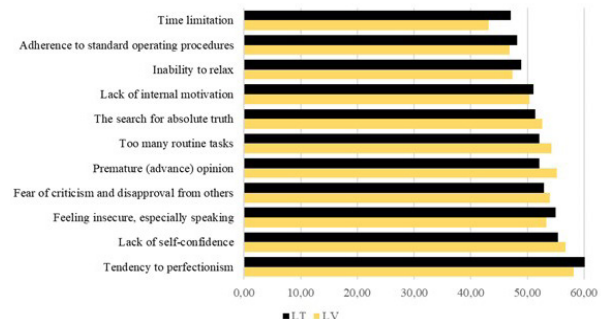


Fig. 3. Distribution of respondents' opinions about the most problematic creativity interferences in Lithuania and Latvia in % [created by the authors based on the data of the 2024 survey]

their qualities, such as empathy, attention and patience, and those with low emotional intelligence, who will collide with aggressiveness, selfishness and impulsiveness. The results show that most respondents in both countries rate their level of emotional intelligence as average (Figure 2).

Summarising the social skills of the respondents, the majority of them like to organise groups, teach others, avoid conflict, do not find it challenging to build relationships with others, and feel that others share their feelings and experiences with them. It is also quite common for respondents to choose the neutral option and not to have a strong belief in their social skills. To summarise the study in Lithuania and Latvia, the emotional intelligence of students of a higher educational institution can be assessed as not very high, but at the same time, not very low. Several things need to be developed, both on the part of the organisation and on the part of the students themselves.

The following questions revealed respondents' attitudes about creativity interferences in the study process and workplace. The questionnaire was designed using 22 statements about creativity interferences: Too much control; Passiveness; Envy and lack of ideas; Group pressure; Insecurity; Apathy; Lack of perception; Fear of failure; Lack of tolerance; Stress; Lack of rationality, Lack of emotional support; Lack of self-expression; Lack of supportive environment; Lack of problem-solving interest; The search for absolute truth; Compliance with the usual modes of operation; Strained relationships with others; Lack of inner motivation; Lack of persuasion; Fear of theft of ideas; Red tape and instructions.

The respondents identified the most problematic creativity interferences. Figure 3 shows the level of creativity interference.

Conclusion

Sufficient research supports the essential role of emotional intelligence in managing stress and implementing change. It indicates that study/work satisfaction and relationship building depend directly on emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence can be developed using the materials and methods of various study programs, especially in landscape architecture. Research shows that high emotional intelligence could be beneficial for students and professors in academic institutions. Moreover, high emotional intelligence helps students to accept the stress of change, build good relationships with educators, and increase attachment and pride in your university.

Consequently, students must first develop a good understanding of the process and components of emotional intelligence before they can develop creativity. Then, they need to use self-assessment. It is essential to develop competencies using various methods, and applying new knowledge and creativity skills in real life. Moreover, it has been observed that while practising creative behaviour helps the brain adapt to make the right decisions in studies as well as workplaces. Music therapy is very useful for development of emotional intelligence and creativity too. This active participation is crucial for students' personal and professional growth.

Many authors emphasize emotional intelligence and creativity as the most essential global skills in the 21st century. Most students will work in international organizations, therefore they must gain and develop the creativity skills.

The pilot study results reveal that students need to improve their emotional intelligence and creativity skills, which are crucial in every study and workplace in order to increase their studies and job satisfaction. Therefore, the pilot study allows us to claim that most Lithuanian and Latvian students have a medium level of emotional intelligence. Moreover, emotional intelligence can influence creative expression, which is essential in landscape architecture and art programmes. Gamification and digitalization play a crucial role in offering a more favourable learning environment to develop creativity skills and overcome challenges – (creativity interferences). Most of the respondents in the study agree that creativity is a valued skill and could be developed as students are encouraged to become more creative at university. Thus, emotional intelligence is highly valuable competence in an educational institution. However, the study results indicate that the students mentioned some personal reasons that hinder the development of creativity which is about understanding, appreciating, and learning different skills or competencies and using and applying them in everyday life. Moreover, some respondents gave reserved answers, indicating the need to clarify whether they consider the development of emotional intelligence and creativity essential during their studies. This proposition could be interpreted as the fact that students still need explanation of the significance and value of the development of emotional intelligence and creativity skills while studying at university.

To sum up, educational institutions, especially universities, play a vital role in developing creativity skills. Research shows that most respondents consider creativity competence in great demand, and recognize that universities offer opportunities and conditions to promote students' creativity. Due to these circumstances, it can be concluded that the development of emotional intelligence and creativity are essential competencies both in education and the labour market, and educational institutions must consider to promote them.

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Kopsavilkums

Emocionālā inteliģence pēdējo gadu laikā ir bijis svarīgs un pretrunīgs temats. Emocionālās inteliģences un radošuma līmenis studentu vidū ir būtiska veiksmīga studiju procesa dimensija, tēma, kas nav pietiekami izpētīta. Šis pētījums ir jauns mēģinājums izpētīt attiecības starp ainavu arhitektūras studentiem Lietuvā un Latvijā. Radošums, prasme atrast jaunas un vērtīgas idejas, lai reaģētu uz izaicinājumiem, problēmām vai vajadzībām, ir būtisks šī procesa aspekts. Turklāt radošums parasti var būt jauna esošo zināšanu kombinācija. Dažādas paaudzes ir radošas, taču tām vajadzētu būt labākai pieredzei un teorētiskai izpratnei par emocionālo inteliģenci. Šis izpratnes trūksts, un šī pētījuma mērķis ir aizpildīt plaisu arī starp dažādām paaudzēm. No otras puses, dažādas paaudzes skatās uz vienu un to pašu realitāti no dažādām perspektīvām. Tāpēc pētījuma mērķis ir aplūkot radošuma traucējumus no studenta viedokļa. Pilotpētījums, kas veikts, izmantojot autoru izveidoto anketu, paredz noskaidrot studentu radošuma traucējumu īpatnības sekmīgām studijām. Tajā analizēts arī zinātniskajā literatūrā piedāvātais emocionālās inteliģences un radošuma teorētiskais pamatojums. Tiek noteikts studentu emocionālās inteliģences līmenis, kas veicinātu viņu radošumu.