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Original Research Article

EMOTION-TO-ACTION IN THE AGE OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: A NEURO-EMOTIONAL FRAMEWORK TO IMPROVE GEN Z PERFORMANCE

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Abstract:

This study examines how emotional patterns and cognitive processes influence learning efficiency among Generation Z students and teachers within modern educational institutions. It proposes a Structured Equation framework integrating core emotional-cognitive learning constructs to understand their collective impact on academic outcomes. A descriptive and applied research design with a mixed-method approach was adopted using purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected from 130 management students and 20 teachers in the KDMC region through structured questionnaires and interviews. Statistical tools including correlation, paired t-test and Single ANOVA were applied for analysis. The study further introduces the conceptual ECF-WR model and proposes an AI-based application to enhance emotional regulation, engagement and overall academic performance.

Keywords: *Gen-Z, Emotional Supply Chain, Neuro Behavioural, Thinking Patterns, Educational Institution.*

Introduction:

This study examines the growing generational gap between teachers and students, particularly in understanding emotional experiences in academic settings. Differences in communication styles, expectations and emotional expression often hinder engagement and learning outcomes. The research identifies students' concerns and maps their emotional flow through systematic data collection and analysis. By treating emotions as measurable units, patterns were identified to assess their impact on academic performance. Based on these findings, an AI-based application is proposed to bridge the gap and promote healthier teacher–student interactions.

Problem Statement:

Due to a prevailing generational gap between Gen Z learners and teachers from earlier generations, there is often a lack of understanding and responsiveness towards students' psychological and emotional needs.This disconnect not only leads to the use of traditional teaching methods but also affects behavioural approaches in academic settings.These approaches do not align with contemporary learning styles, resulting in reduced engagement, ineffective communication, and limited academic growth.

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Significance of Study:

This research is significant as it moves beyond traditional academic metrics by recognizing emotions as measurable drivers of learning efficiency. By examining emotional triggers, cognitive appraisal, regulation mechanisms and engagement patterns, the study provides evidence that emotional energy directly influences academic performance in structured ways. The ECF-WR conceptual model offers a framework to identify emotional waste, optimize emotional capital and improve learning consistency. Additionally, the proposed AI-based application converts these insights into practical solutions, enabling data-driven emotional management, stronger engagement and a more efficient and sustainable academic ecosystems.

Limitations:

Though our study provides valuable key insights it has some limitations that can be considered.

- The proposed research was conducted on a sample size of 150 people in Management domain from KDMC region. However, it can be done on larger sample size from a greater sample space to provide deeper insights.
- The application was tested within a specific academic context and age group, which may limit immediate generalizability. However, this focused scope allowed for deeper contextual insights and stronger internal validity.

Objectives:

- To study the impact of emotional dynamics on academic productivity and classroom behaviour among Generation Z students.
- To evaluate the role of emotional intelligence and psychological awareness training in improving teachers' ability to manage students' emotional transitions.
- To understand whether Stress processing varies as a function of neuro-emotional behavior across individuals.
- To examine the influence of integrated emotional-cognitive regulatory factors on students' learning efficiency and to suggest an AI-based application to monitor and regulate these factors for improved academic outcomes.

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Review of Literature:

Author(s)	Year	Title of the Study	Key Findings	Research Gap Identified	Gap Filled by Present Study
Bandari, M. & Zheng, X.	2024	Academic Stress & Mental Well-Being in College Students	Higher academic stress significantly reduces engagement and overall mental well-being. Emphasizes coping strategies and institutional mental health support.	Does not conceptualize stress as a dynamic neuro-emotional process or examine long-term classroom efficiency impact.	Our Models stress within a Neuro- Emotional Flow framework, identifies burnout zones, and integrates stress processing into the Emotional Supply Chain and SEQ model to explain learning efficiency among Gen Z students.
Einav, M., Confino, D., Margalit , M., & Geva, N.	2024	Teachers' Burnout – The Role of Social Support, Gratitude, Hope, Entitlement and Loneliness	Social support, gratitude, and hope reduce burnout; loneliness and entitlement increase emotional exhaustion. Teacher burnout affects classroom climate and effectiveness.	Treats burnout as an individual outcome rather than a systemic factor influencing student emotional energy and engagement.	The Study teacher emotional states within an Emotional Supply Chain framework, examines emotional spillover effects, and structurally links teacher burnout to student engagement and academic efficiency in the SEQ model.
Gaikwad , A.	2023	Neurological Basis of Emotion, Learning & Memory	Emotional arousal enhances neuroplasticity, reward circuit activation, and memory.	Remains theoretical; does not apply neuro-emotional principles within Classrooms	Embeds neuro- emotional mechanisms into measurable constructs within a structured Emotional Supply Chain and SEQ framework to enhance classroom efficiency and well- being.
Zhang, H., Liu, Y., Jiang, M., Chen, J., Wang, M., & Paas, F.	**2025**	Emotional Artificial Intelligence in Education: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis	AI systems detecting emotional states and providing cognitive guidance significantly improve knowledge acquisition, motivation, and affective outcomes.	Does not integrate AI monitoring within a broader classroom emotional ecosystem including teacher-student interactions.	Proposes an AI- enabled monitoring application grounded in the Emotional Supply Chain model to regulate emotional-cognitive factors and improve academic performance.
Zheng, Y. & Xiao, A.	**2024**	A Structural Equation Model of Online Learning: Investigating Self-Efficacy, Informal Digital Learning, Self- Regulated Learning, and Course Satisfaction	Demonstrates how interconnected psychological constructs influence learning outcomes using SEM and validated model fit indices.	Focuses mainly on cognitive and motivational constructs; does not integrate emotional flow, stress processing, or teacher- student dynamics.	Extends SEM approach to develop a comprehensive SEQ model integrating emotional energy, stress processing, teacher emotional spillover, and digital regulation to predict learning efficiency.

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Research Methodology:

A) Structure:

The study adopts a multidisciplinary framework by integrating concepts from psychology, behavioural science and sociology. It also incorporates technology by proposing an AI-driven application.

B) Design:

The study follows an applied research design as all the findings related to students' emotional triggers, recovery duration, behavioural habits, burnout tendencies are utilised and transformed into practical actionable solutions aimed at improving overall well-being.

C) Nature:

The proposed research is descriptive in nature as it collects and presents first hand insights into how students perceive and manage their emotional energy within the academic environment.

D) Approach:

The study employs a mixed method approach. Both qualitative and quantitative research techniques have been used.The qualitative approach focuses on understanding students' emotional journey within the academic environment. Data from teachers have also been considered to understand whether adequate training to cope up with students not just academically but also in addressing students' psychological needs is provided within institutions or not.While the quantitative approach focuses on collecting data through structured questionnaires, analysing and intrepreting it.

E) Data Collection:

1. **Primary Data**:

A) *Online Survey and Questionaire:*

Primary data was collected through a structured online questionnaire circulated via Google Forms. The survey received an impressive response of 150 respondents from the KDMC region, including 30 teachers and 120 students.Separate sets of questions were designed for students and teachers to ensure accuracy of responses.The questionnaire included both closed-ended questions (Likert scale and multiple-choice) and open-ended questions.A pre- training session was also conducted with teachers to gain primary inputs which helped in refining the questionnaire.

Questionnaire Development:

To test the validity of the instrument, Cronbach's Alpha , Split Half and Spearman Brown's tests were calculated. The values of which were 0.84,0.71 and 0.83 respectively making the questionnaire correlated and reliable.

Sampling Technique:

A purposive sampling method was adopted for the study as only management students and teachers were taken into consideration to obtain subject-specific insights.

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B) ***Interview Method:***

The interview method was also used to collect qualitative insights from professional psychologist, Mrs. Namrata Chandwadkar associated with Mpower (Aditya Birla Education Trust). The discussion focused on common psychological concerns faced by college students and frequency of student visits along with recurring cases. The interviews also explored whether teachers seek psychological guidance for handling student-related concerns and whether an AI-based emotional tracking application could contribute positively.

(Source: Primary Data –Expert Inrterview)

Data Analysis Tools and Statistical Tests:

Data was analysed using statistical techniques like correlation analysis, paired t-test and single-factor ANOVA across MS EXCEL and Structured Equation Modelling was performed using AMOS.

2. Secondary Data:

Secondary data was collected from research papers available on DELNET, INFLIBNET and Google search. Relevant articles, journals, books and reports along with YouTube videos and blogs, were also reviewed to support the research.

Hypothesis:

H0: There is no significant correlation between classroom behavior and academic productivity.

H1: There is a significant correlation between classroom behavior and academic productivity.

H0: Emotional intelligence and psychological awareness training does not significantly improve teachers' ability to manage students' emotions.

H2: Emotional intelligence and psychological awareness training significantly improves teachers' ability to manage students' emotions.

H0: Stress processing does not vary as a function of neuro-emotional behavior across individuals.

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H3: Stress processing varies as a function of neuro-emotional behavior across individuals.

Data Analysis:

Hypothesis 1

Objective - *To study the co-relation between academic productivity and classroom behaviour among Generation Z students.*

Question - When emotionally exhausted, are your study habits affected the most?

CO-RELATION TEST	ACADEMIC PRODUCTIVITY	CLASSROOM BEHAVIOUR
ACADEMIC PRODUCTIVITY	01	0.647
CLASSROOM BEHAVIOUR	0.647	01

(Source: Primary Data -Online Questionnaire)

Interpretation: Since the co-relation value achieved was 0.647, we conclude that the classroom behaviour and academic productivity are moderately correlated.

Thus, we accept the alternate Hypothesis (H1) that is, There is a significant relationship between students' emotional state and their academic productivity and classroom behaviour

Hypothesis 2

Objective - *To evaluate the role of emotional intelligence and psychological awareness training in improving teachers' ability to manage students' emotional transitions.*

Question - 1. How much difficulty do you face while handling the Gen Z students in your class? (PRE-TRAINING)

How much difficulty do you face while handling the Gen Z students in your class? (POST-TRAINING)

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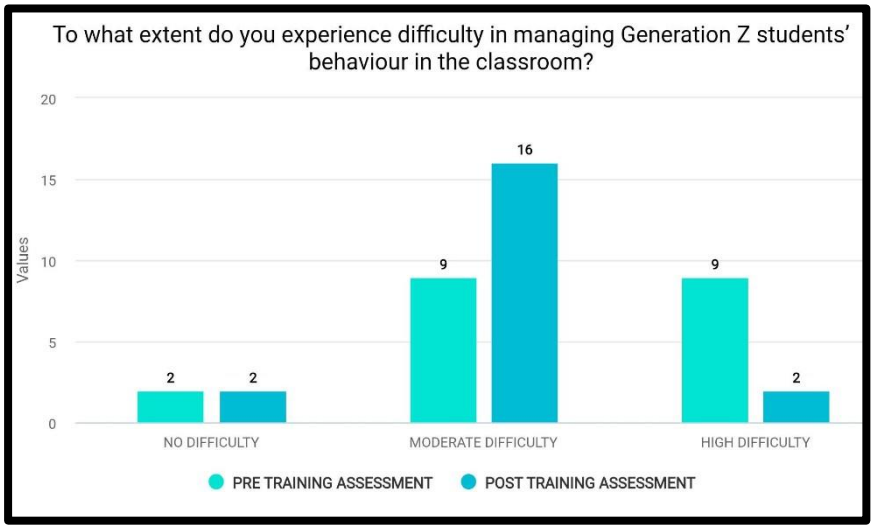

(Source: Primary Data -Online Questionnaire)

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means

	Pre- Training	*Post - Training*
Mean	1.65	2
Variance	0.45	0.2105263158
Observations	20	20
Pearson Correlation	0.6839855681	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	19	
t Stat	-3.198557367	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.0023647293	
t Critical one-tail	1.729132812	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.0047294587	
t Critical two-tail	2.093024054	

As P valus is less than 0.05 we accept H1

Interpretation: From the Data collected 9 Teachers faced High Difficulty before the training whereas only 2 teachers faced High Difficulty after the training was provided. This shows that there is a significant increase in understanding the behaviour of GenZ Students when the teachers are provided with emotional intelligence and psychological awareness training. On performing The PAIRED T-TEST we get the P-value less than 0.05.Thus, we accept the alternate Hypothesis (H2) that is, Emotional intelligence and psychological awareness training significantly improves teachers' ability to manage students' emotions.

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Hypothesis 3

Objective - *To understand whether Stress processing varies as a function of neuro-emotional behaviour across individuals.*

Question -

(Cognitive Distortions based on Situations)

If I fail at one task, I feel like a complete failure.

I often anticipate the worst-case scenario in situations.

I assume I know what others are thinking about me without proof. I overgeneralize based on a single negative experience.

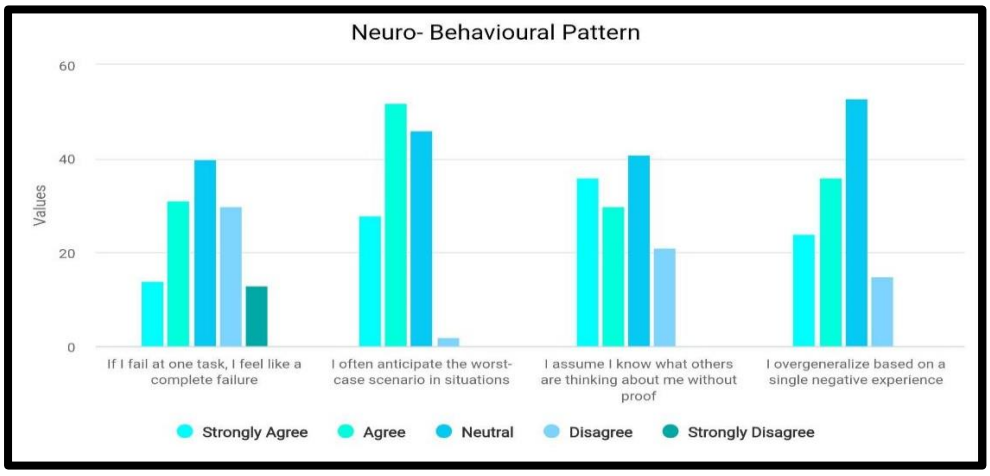
Anova: Single Factor

SUMMARY

Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
complete failure	128	387	3.023437	1.330155
I often anticipate the wor	128	490	3.828125	0.615895
I assume I know what otl	128	465	3.632812	1.131828
I overgeneralize based o	128	453	3.539062	0.864603

ANOVA

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	45.28710	3	15.09570	15.31593	0.0023	2.622452
Within Groups	500.6953	508	0.985620			
Total	545.9824	511				



(Source: Primary Data -Online Questionnaire)

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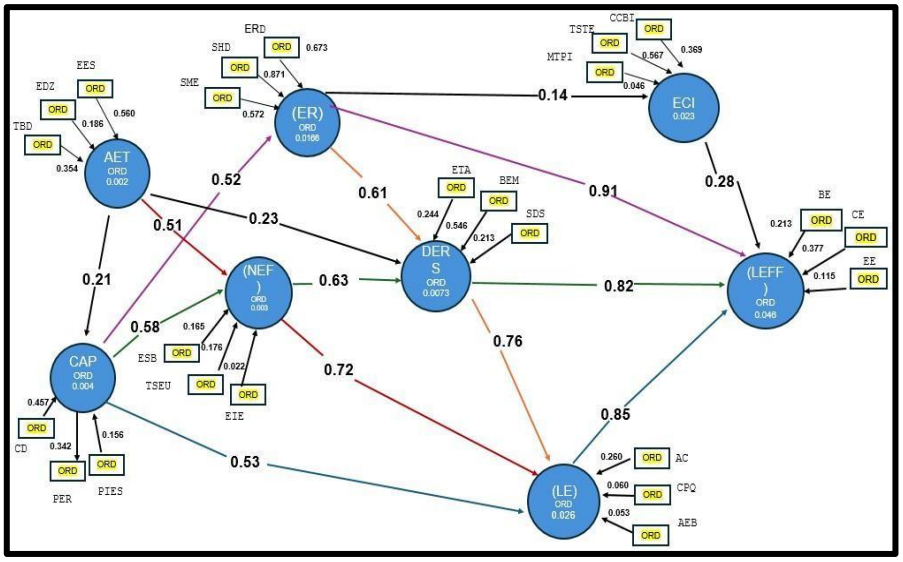
Interpretation: Here we have given different situations to different people, where different people processed stress differently. For instance, a person who over-generalize based on a single experience might not often anticipate the worst and a person anticipating the worst might not over-generalize things.

After running the ANOVA TEST on the collected data the P-value was 0.0023 which is less than 0.05. Thus, we conclude with our alternate Hypothesis(H3)

i.e Stress processing varies as a function of neuro-emotional behavior across individuals.

Structured Equation Modelling:

Objective - *To examine the influence of integrated emotional-cognitive regulatory factors on students' learning efficiency and to suggest an AI-based application to monitor and regulate these factors for improved academic outcomes.*



MAIN VARIABLE	SUB VARIABLES
AET	EES-EMOTIONAL ENERGY SOURCES EDZ-EMOTIONAL DRAIN ZONE TBD-TIME BASED EMOTIONAL DRAIN
CAP	CAP-COGNINITIVE DISORTIONS PER-PERCEIGED EMOTIONAL RECOVERY PIES-PERCEIVED INSTITUTIONAL EMOTIONAL SUPPORT
NEF	ESB-EMOTIONAL SPILLOVER BEHAVIOUR TSEU-TEACHER STUDENT EMOTIONAL UNDERSTANDING EIE-EMOTIONAL IMPACT ON ENGAGEMENT
ER	ERB- EMOTIONAL RECOVERY DURATION SHD-STUDY HABIT DISRUPTION SME-SELF MOTIVATION ENERGY
ECI	CCBI- CROSS CONTEXT BEHAVIOURAL IMPACT TSTE- TEACHER STUDENT TRUST AND EXPRESSION MTPI- MOTIVATION THEORUGH POSITIVE INTERACTION
DERS	ETA-EMOTIONAL TRACKING EXPERIENCE BEM-BELIEF IN EMOTIONAL ENERGY SDS-SUGGESTED DIGITAL SOLUTIONS
LEFF	AC- ACADEMIC CONSISTENCY CAP-COGNINITIVE PERFORMANCE QUALITY AEB-ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT BEHAVIOUR
LE	BE- BEHAVIOURAL ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT CE-COGNITIVE ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT EE-EMOTIONAL ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT

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PATHWAY	VALUE FOR PATHWAY	HYPOTESIS	INTERPRETATION
CAP → ER → LEFF (Pink)	0.5 , 0.91	H4: Emotional Regulation mediates the relationship between Cognitive Appraisal Process and Learning Efficiency among Gen-Z students.	Supported
CAP →NEF → DERS → LEFF (Green)	0.58 , 0.63, 0.82	H5: Neuro-Emotional Flow (NEF) and Digital Regulatory System (DERS) sequentially mediate the relationship between Cognitive Appraisal Process (CAP) and Learning Efficiency	Supported
CAP → LE → LEFF (Blue)	0.53, 0.85	H6:Learning Engagement (LE) significantly mediates the relationship between Cognitive Appraisal Process (CAP) and Learning Efficiency (LEFF).	Supported
ER → DERS → LE → LEFF	0.61, 0.63, 0.85	H7: Digital Regulatory System (DERS) and Learning Engagement (LE) sequentially mediate the	Supported
(Orange)		relationship between Emotional Regulation (ER) and Learning Efficiency (LEFF).	
AET → NEF → LE → LEFF (Red)	0.51, 0.72, 0.85	H8: Neuro-Emotional Flow (NEF) and Learning Engagement (LE) sequentially mediate the relationship between Academic Emotional Triggers (AET) and Learning Efficiency (LEFF).	Supported

Interpretation of Hypothesis Result:

H4: CAP → ER → LEFF (pink)

The path Co-efficient (0.50) and (0.91) suggests that there is a very strong positive relationship between Cognitive Appraisal Process (CAP) and Learning Efficiency (LEFF) mediated by Emotional Regulation (ER). This suggests that thinking patterns shape how people regulate their emotions, and emotional regulation ultimately determines learning efficiency.

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H5: CAP → NEF → DERS → LEFF (green)

The path Co-efficient (0.58) , (0.63) & (0.82) suggests that there is a strong positive relationship between Cognitive Appraisal Process (CAP) and Learning Efficiency (LEFF) mediated by Neuro-Emotional Flow(NEF) and Digital Regulatory System (DERS). This suggests that a digital system that monitors the neuro-emotional flow improves the learning efficiency of GENZ students.

H6: CAP → LE → LEFF (blue)

The path Co-efficient (0.53) & (0.85) suggests that there is a strong positive relationship between Cognitive Appraisal Process (CAP) and Learning Efficiency (LEFF) mediated by Learning Engagement (LE) . This implies that students' thinking patterns influence their academic engagement, and higher engagement significantly enhances learning efficiency .

H7: ER → DERS → LE → LEFF (orange)

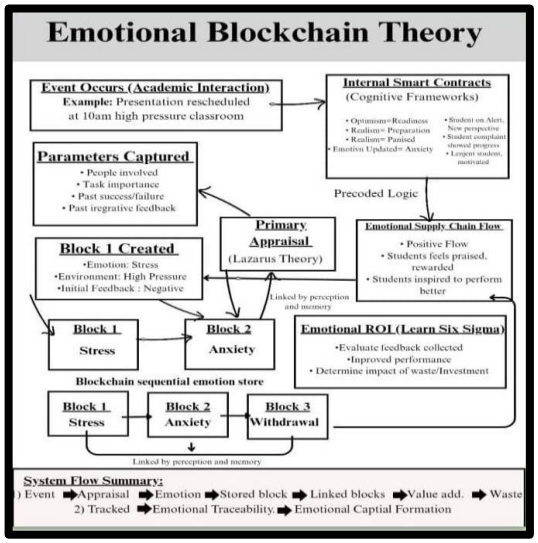
The path Co-efficient (0.61) , (0.63) & (0.85) suggests that there is a strong positive relationship between Emotional Regulation(ER) and Learning Efficiency (LEFF) mediated by Digital Regulatory System (DERS) and Learning Engagement (LE). This indicates that students who are able to regulate their emotions utilize Digital Regulatory Systems as a supportive tool which strengthens their learning engagement and theory by increase learning efficiency

H8: AET → NEF → LE → LEFF (red)

The path Co-efficient (0.51) , (0.72) & (0.85) suggests that there is a strong positive relationship between Academic Emotional Triggers (AET) and Learning Efficiency (LEFF) mediated by Neuro-Emotional Flow(NEF) and Learning Engagement (LE). This means that academic emotional incidents affect the emotional flow of students , which influences their engagement in class and thereby affect the learning efficiency.

EMOTIONAL CAPITAL FLOW WASTE:

REDUCTION MODEL



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Based on the structured questionnaire, several recurring emotional patterns were observed:
Emotional responses were not triggered merely by events but by interpretations of those events.
The following three Theories lay the foundation of the The ECFWR Model

1. **Cognitive Appraisal Theory:**
   It states that emotions rise from an individual's interpretation of events rather than from the events themselves.Within the Emotional Blockchain Model, this theory defines how emotional "blocks" are created.
2. **Circadian Rhythm Theory:**
   It explains the biological timing factor behind emotional reactions i.e., how the same event can create different emotional intensity depending on what time it happens.
3. **Lean Six Sigma Waste Theory**:
   derived from operational excellence frameworks, defines waste as any activity that does not add value to a system.In the Emotional Blockchain Model, emotions are treated as operational inputs.Lean Six Sigma introduces the concept of:
   - Emotional Waste
   - Emotional Return on Investment

   It ensures that emotional flows are assessed not only psychologically but systemically.
   The model operates on four core mechanisms:
   - ✓ Emotional Generation
   - ✓ Emotional Encoding and Storage
   - ✓ Emotional Linkage and Flow
   - ✓ Emotional Value Evaluation
   - ✓ In the same way that blockchain securely stores transactions in sequential blocks, emotional events in daily academic interactions also get stored subconsciously in the minds of individuals. Each emotional experience whether positive or negative acts like a data block that carries information such as what happened, at what time, under what conditions, as per Lazarus's Cognitive Appraisal Theory, which states that people don't react to situations but rather to how they interpret them.
   - ✓ Just like a new block in blockchain is linked to the one before it, every emotional incident is influenced by past experiences. Here, cognitive thinking style helps in deciding how the person will react emotionally based on predetermined patterns.
   - ✓ Once an emotion is created and internally processed, it doesn't remain isolated. It flows to others. If these emotional exchanges generate negative energy without contributing to growth, they form emotional waste, similar to Lean Six Sigma's concept of process waste. On the other hand, when emotions are invested positively they create Emotional ROI, in terms of motivation, productivity and performance.

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APPLICATION:

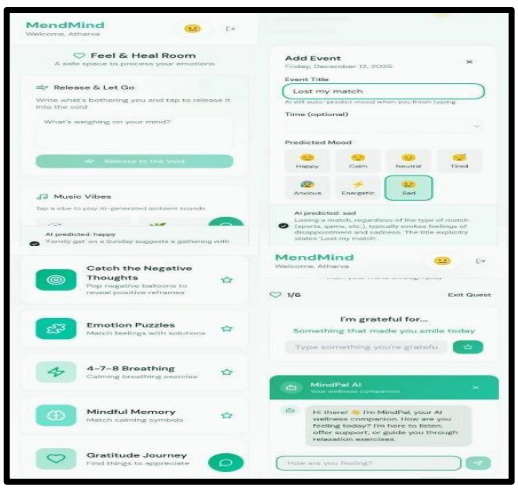
On the basis of the emotional patterns and challenges identified through our study we have developed an AI-based wellbeing application called MEND MIND. The application is designed as a practical implementation of our ECF WR model tested and validated through SEQ model. Rather than functioning as a basic mood-tracking tool, MEND MIND operates as an intelligent emotional- learning regulation system that detects, monitors and enhances emotional and cognitive processes in real time to improve learning efficiency.

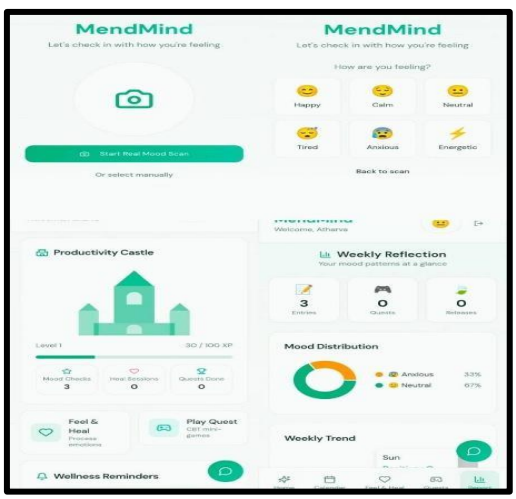
One of its core features is mood-activated login where the application detects the user's emotional state and energy levels at the time of entry through AI- based facial and behavioral recognition. Based on this detection, the entire interface theme changes accordingly.

Alligning with concept of emotional block identification(H4).The application also includes an interactive AI-powered smart calendar. Users can schedule tasks and the system analyzes activity patterns, emotional fluctuations and engagement levels to detect potential burnout zones. It sends alerts and notifications when emotional overload is predicted, supported by (H5) and (H7) aimed to conserve emotional capital and minimize emotional waste.

To support emotional recovery, MEND MIND offers "Feel & Heal" room with calming games, music and therapeutic relaxation activities,aligning with (H8) By regulating emotional intensity, students can re-engage academically with improved focus and efficiency.

In addition, the platform provides personalized therapy sessions, consultancy services and group therapy options, reinforcing emotional regulation aligning with (H6 & H7). An integrated AI Chabot ensures real-time support, enabling users to express concerns, receive suggestions and process stress immediately. Overall, MEND MIND transforms both the SEQ model and the ECF-WR conceptual framework into a practical, AI-enabled ecosystem. By detecting emotional states, regulating neuro-emotional flow, monitoring burnout risks, strengthening engagement and managing emotional capital, the application systematically enhances learning efficiency and overall mental wellbeing among Gen Z students.





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Suggestions:

Based on the findings of the research, the following suggestions are proposed:

Provide teachers with training in emotional awareness and intergenerational understanding. Structured programs should be introduced to strengthen teachers' emotional intelligence and improve their understanding of Generation Z behavioural patterns.

Ensure students have safe and supportive environments to express their emotions. Institutions should promote psychologically secure spaces that encourage open communication and emotional expression.

Orient parents to contemporary emotional needs. Awareness sessions can help parents understand current emotional challenges faced by students and provide consistent support at home.

Extend emotional wellness initiatives to organizations and corporate settings. The emotional management framework may also be applied in professional environments to enhance productivity and reduce stress.

Conclusion:

The study concludes that emotions are not invisible classroom experiences but are active forces shaping academic success. Structured Equation Modeling revealed that unmanaged emotional triggers indirectly reduce engagement and performance while emotional regulation and digital support systems significantly strengthen learning efficiency. When emotional waste accumulates, productivity declines; when emotional capital is nurtured, trust and motivation flourish. The findings highlight that bridging the generational gap is not about changing students or teachers but about redesigning emotional ecosystems. By introducing the ECF-WR conceptual model and an AI-based solution, this research redefines education as a human-energy-driven system where emotional intelligence becomes the foundation of sustainable academic excellence.

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