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Emotional Intelligence and Emotional-Stress Response of Grade-10 Students of Gusa Regional Science High School – X under Modular Teaching Modality

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Abstract The pandemic shifted the world into the new usual way of life, affecting different aspects of development, especially the educational arena. The Philippine education catered to a new paradigm of learning and modeled modular teaching modalities to suffice the need for continuous education. This rapid transition of learning gave rise to numerous reactions from students and other stakeholders. Thus, this study aims to determine the emotional stress response and level of emotional intelligence of students during the implementation of the modular teaching modality. The study used the Perceived Stress Scale Test (PSS) and Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue-SF) as a standardized test to determine the students' level of stress and emotional intelligence. The test was administered to a sample of 113 Grade 10 students, 32 males, and 81 females, at Gusa Regional Science High School-X after the First-Quarter implementation of the modular learning modality. The results indicated a very high emotional stress and average emotional intelligence across gender. The contributory factors that led to increased emotional stress were massive school works, lack of sleep, and academic burnout. Though there is an evident elevated stress response, the students' average emotional intelligence showed the students' capability to cope effectively with academic stress. Further, the score showed no significant difference in emotional stress and emotional intelligence by gender and a negative correlation between emotional intelligence and emotional stress. The study showed that emotional intelligence affects stress and a good indicator for academic and emotional sustainability.

Keywords: *emotional stress, emotional intelligence, modular teaching modality*

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1. Introduction

The world faced a challenging situation when a novel Corona-virus disease (COVID-19) outbreak began in December of 2019 in Wuhan, China. In the Philippines, the first Covid-19 case was reported on January 30, 2020, and the first local transmission was reported on March 7, 2020. Classes were canceled, malls were closed, travels for leisure were prohibited, and people were required to face masks and face shields when outside residence. These abrupt changes brought by this pandemic have had a substantial impact and create considerable stress. This creates utmost importance to monitor and oversee the public mental health of the people, especially the vulnerable, as this pandemic continues to disrupt daily lives [1].

As a result of the required social and physical distancing, the Department of Education in the Philippines has decided to shift its face-to-face classes to different modalities such as modular, online, radio-based instruction, and television-based instruction. In this new way of learning, students are also considered vulnerable. As discussed in the study of Cao et al. [2], students experienced anxiety symptoms. These symptoms are associated with their concerns on the delay of academics, effects of the pandemic on the economy, and its impact on their daily lives. Substantive impacts on students contain several academic problems, including stress during exams, problems in answering their modules, expectations about academic success, or their incapability to understand the lessons [3].

These rapid shifts in the educational system heighten the need to investigate the students' emotional intelligence further. Emotional intelligence (EI) has been widely accepted as a stress buffer [4]. High emotional intelligence entails better well-being, problem-focused coping, and perceived competency. However, lower emotional intelligence entails higher perceived stress [5]. Specifically, the researchers find it of supreme importance to determine the students' level of emotional intelligence and emotional stress in this time of the pandemic. This is to provide realistic data that could be the baseline of giving them appropriate support and intervention.

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought massive changes, which is often termed as "new normal." This pandemic has shifted the world to a new focus and a new way of living daily. The new focus is public health, including mental health and emotional stress. The mental health of the students is also one of today's pressing concerns since it can be a leading impediment to academic success [6].

The survey conducted by Young Minds, as cited in Lancet published on April 14, 2020, specified that 83% of the 2111 student-respondents believed that the pandemic had made their mental health worse and 26% of them stated that they were not able to access mental health support. A timely assessment of the mental health of the students in the United States, conducted through interview surveys and a perceived stress scale, revealed that 71% of the respondents reported an increase in their level of stress and anxiety due to this pandemic [7]. Some of the significant multiple stressors identified are the fear and worry about their health and loved ones, difficulty concentrating, decreased social interactions due to physical distancing, and increased concerns on academic performance. These factors significantly bring a disadvantageous impact on education. The biggest perceived challenge in relation to their increased concern for academic performance was the transition to online classes. Some of the respondents were worried about the quality of their classes and the change of syllabus. Some even mentioned that with the current educational setup, they tend to procrastinate, they had a reduced motivational level and worried about their grades.

Assessing the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the mental health of the students is the focus of the study of Kecojevic et al. [8]. The study concluded that the Covid-19 pandemic had made a significant negative impact on the mental health status of the students. Specifically, the respondents stated that they are experiencing difficulties in their everyday academic lives, and they have a high level of mental health distress. Their ability to focus on academic work decreased while their levels of anxiety increased. One of the causes mentioned for this infamous result is the respondents' elevated concern with the Covid-19 pandemic. This may lead to further detrimental effects on the mental health and their general learning experiences.

In the same study mentioned in the preceding paragraph, the perceived study of the students was identified through a 10-item self-report questionnaire Perceived Stress Scale. Findings show that female respondents have higher levels of perceived stress than their male counterparts. Notably explained for this finding in the study is that the traditional self-concepts of being masculine and feminine can lead to diverse expressions of attitudes and emotions towards any experiences in life. Hence, female students have a higher probability of expressing internalized disorders such as stress.

Further, AlAteeq et al. [9] studied the perceived stress among students in virtual classrooms during the COVID-19 outbreak in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Results showed that at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, a moderate to a high level of stress is evident among the students. A noteworthy finding in the study is that female respondent are reported to have a considerably higher level of stress compared to male respondents. A study by Rosenfield and Mouzon [10] and Goldstein et al. [11] attributed this to several factors such as women's hormonal changes and their ability to express emotions and thoughts in whatever social situations they found themselves.

An individual who possesses a high level of emotional intelligence typically attains more positive outcomes in life, such as psychological well-being, educational and career success. Despite seemingly unknown mechanisms, emotional intelligence (EI) has been suggested to work as a "stress buffer" [4]. In the study of Por [5], which seeks to find out the level of emotional intelligence of the students and its relationship to stress, coping, well-being, and professional performance, the result showed that emotional intelligence is positively related to well-being, problem-focused coping, and perceived competency. However, it negatively relates to perceived stress.

The structure of the brain is closely related, and it is believed that zones with stress, emotion, and intelligence are closely attached. This is the central precept of the study of Jung et al. [12], which examined the multiple associations between stress and emotional intelligence (EI), between EI and intelligence quotient (IQ). The study revealed that stress is associated with Emotional Intelligence. This means that a higher level of stress was related to low Emotional Intelligence. It further stated that *"high levels of Emotional Intelligence may decrease stress because those with high levels of Emotional Intelligence may use proactive and effective coping strategies when dealing with stress. These results are consistent with previous reports describing that higher EI is significantly related to lower stress. Not surprisingly, high levels of anger, one contributor to stress, were related to low levels of emotional regulation. Thus, low levels of emotional regulation may lead to high levels of anger. Emotional Intelligence influences stress level, ability to perform tasks, and effectiveness when working with others. The importance of intelligence Quotient and Emotional Intelligence in cognitive control processes have been established. Participants with a higher self-reported Emotional Intelligence were able to perform more cognitive tasks and did so more effectively than those with lower Emotional Intelligence".*

Gujral [13] further investigated the role of emotional intelligence in coping with stress and improving the performance of an individual. Research data showed that, indeed, individuals who have high Emotional Intelligence have a positive coping style as they build more connection with the people around them. At the same time, those who have low emotional intelligence tend to create problems through their unlikely behaviors, making them more stressed. Emotional intelligence was proved to buffer stress in this study. The study further advised that an individual should develop high emotional intelligence to be able to perform well.

Further, Ishaq, Shabbir, and Khan [14] studied the impact of Emotional Intelligence and Perceived Stress on Life Satisfaction among University Students. The statistics showed that emotional intelligence positively correlates with life satisfaction and negatively correlates with perceived stress. The finding supports the notion that high emotional intelligence equates to better well-being, problem-focused coping, and perceived competency. However, lower emotional intelligence entails higher

perceived stress. Significant to mention is that results depict that female respondents have lower emotional intelligence compared to the male respondents. Males are found to have more life satisfaction than females who have a higher level of perceived stress.

The study focuses on identifying the emotional intelligence and emotional stress of Grade 10 students while having Modular Teaching Modality during this new normal education. This study is limited to the following parameters: demographic profile of the respondents under modular teaching modality, level of stress of the respondents under modular teaching modality, emotional intelligence of the respondents under modular teaching modality. Specifically, the study aimed to answer the following questions:

(1) What are the levels of stress and emotional intelligence of Grade 10 students of GRSHS-X under modular teaching modality?

(2) Do the levels of emotional stress and emotional intelligence differ significantly by gender? and

(3) Do the levels of emotional stress and emotional intelligence show significant relationship?

2. Methods

The study utilized a descriptive-correlational design. The respondents of this study were the Grade 10 students of Gusa Regional Science High School – X. There were 113 participants, 32 males, and 81 females, who voluntarily participated in the study. To determine the participants, the researchers employed a purposive sampling procedure. The main factor considered in the selection of the respondents was depicted in the several related studies, which revealed that academic related stress negatively predicted intrinsic academic motivation and positively resulted in lack of motivation later years in school upon reaching Grade 12 [15,16]. This purportedly identified that the ages between 14-21 were at high risk for major depression due to academic stress that resulted in concentration difficulties and trouble completing school tasks [17].

In conducting the study, the researchers first secured approval from the Schools Division Superintendent of the Division of Cagayan de Oro. The study was then administered, and questionnaires were floated online using Google Form. The researchers included a thorough explanation of the study's purpose, confidentiality, and instruction in the survey questionnaire. This was to ensure that respondents thoroughly understood the nature and risks of their participation.

Since this study utilized human respondents, certain ethical issues were placed under careful consideration. Prevalent significant issues were also pre-identified to ascertain the utmost ethical research practice, ensure respondents' privacy, and prevent future problems that may arise during this study. The researcher thoroughly emphasized that such participation was voluntary and that they may withdraw their participation anytime.

Further, this research used the following instruments to obtain desired data, to wit: (1) the Perceived Stress Scale was used to measure the level of coping strategy from psychological stress for each individual with reference to gender, age, education, status, and other demographics. It measured how different factors affect the individual level of perceived stress based on their coping mechanisms [18] & Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire- TEIQue-SF, a 30-item questionnaire, was employed to assess emotional intelligence on a global trait and was based on the complete TEIQue form. The study included two elements from each of the TEIQ's 15 facets, mainly based on their correlations with the corresponding total facet scores [19].

Furthermore, the several tools were employed to have an accurate interpretation of the obtained data. Average weighted mean was utilized to describe the respondents' mean sample size, age, demographic data, level of stress, and emotional intelligence. Frequency distribution was utilized to display graphs or data set organized to show the frequency of occurrence of each possible result from respondents' level of stress and emotional intelligence with corresponding values of the central tendencies. Spearman Correlation was used to identify a significant relationship between the respondents' level of stress and emotional intelligence. This approach showed the corresponding values of the respondents' level of stress and emotional intelligence with an appropriate relationship in a scatter plot diagram. Independent Two-Sample t-Test was used to determine significant difference obtained by the respondents' emotional intelligence and emotional stress in terms of gender. This ascertained whether there was a mean difference between the means of two samples/variables. The data, further, corresponding to two samples were the possible result of natural pairings, which means that one observation was made on two sets of respondents (mean scores of male-female), which was tested at $p = 0.05$ level significance.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Levels of Emotional Stress and Emotional Intelligence

The data in Table 1 shows the level of the emotional stress of Grade 10 students of Gusa Regional Science High School – X under modular teaching modality. The data shows that the average mean score for the perceived stress level of Grade 10 students is 22.94 and 24.51, respectively. The result implies that students have a very high level of stress during the 1st Quarter implementation of the modular teaching modality. Females had greater perceived stress mean score (24.51), is supported by the study of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2017, stating that out of the 37% of students who felt very tense in school, girls consistently reported having greater stress compared to boys related to school works.

Table 1. Emotional Stress Level of Grade 10 Students in GRSHS-X

	Level of Emotional Stress (PSS)			
	N	Mean Score	SD	Interpretation*
Male	32	22.94	5.80	*Very High*
Female	81	24.51	5.84	*Very High*
Total	113			

*Stress Level (PSS): 0-7=very low stress, 8-11 is low stress, 12-15= average stress, 16-20=high stress, >21 =very high stress

The majority of the students (40.7%) averred that they "very often" felt nervous and "stressed," and 35.4% of them "fairly often" felt nervous and stresses. 27.4% and 35.4% responded that they "very often" and "fairly often", respectively, felt that difficulties were piling up so high that they could not overcome them. 18.6% and 38.1% of them answered that they "very often" and "fairly often", respectively, been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly. 19.5% and 39.8% answered that "very often" and "fairly often," respectively, have been angered because of things outside of their control.

Further, results showed that the common factors that contribute to their high level of stress are mostly related to school matters such as too many modules to answers, beating the deadlines, inability to efficiently manage time, unexpected low grades, and uncertainties if they are actually learning or was simply answering the modules. Academic-related factors of stress, such as massive academic works, sleep deprivation, and academic burnout, were also mentioned to contribute to the students' stress. The students expressed their personal reasons behind their stresses as shown in Figure 1.

As shown in Figure 1, students verbalized that they were not free to do whatever they want because they were caught up with massive school-related work at home. As verbalized by, *"not being able to feel free, I always feel like doing these modules were like a prison plus I have to do Kumon which is like modules on modules stacked"*. UNESCO [20] validated the mentioned statement, in which they stated that students in secondary and tertiary levels are more likely to develop stress due to a wide range of ongoing hassles of academic demands. In addition, such validation was related to pressures to achieve higher marks and concerning dilemma on attaining poor grades. The indication of having minimal time to sleep due to answering modules is a serious health risk and reported to be a contributory factor for stress in many young people [21], and vis-à-vis stress may also contribute to a deprived sleeping pattern [22]. Young students often develop stress-related to distance learning or self-learning modules because of the transition, incapability, and immaturity to adapt to a distant education modality [23].

The pandemic created a new scheme of learning delivery, where students are compelled to conform to the new normal learning modality. According to Kecojevic et al. [8], the pandemic has made a significantly negative impact on the mental health of the students who are experiencing difficulties in their everyday academic lives, and that their ability to focus on academic work decreased while their levels of anxiety increased. This will support the results mentioned above expressed by the student's response to the contributory factors of stress. The same conclusion in the study of Son et al. [7] supports the result of this study, where 71% of the respondents reported an increase in their level of stress and anxiety due to this pandemic. Specifically, the study revealed that they had an increased concern for academic performance since the learning delivery mode had unexpectedly shifted for this school year. Mentioned in the study was the respondents' stress that dwells on their doubts regarding the quality of their classes. With the current educational setup, they tend to procrastinate, have reduced motivational levels, and worried about their grades. Wickens [3] shows similar findings and concluded that substantive impacts on students contain several academic problems, including stress during exams, problems in answering their modules, expectations about academic success, or their incapability to understand the lessons.

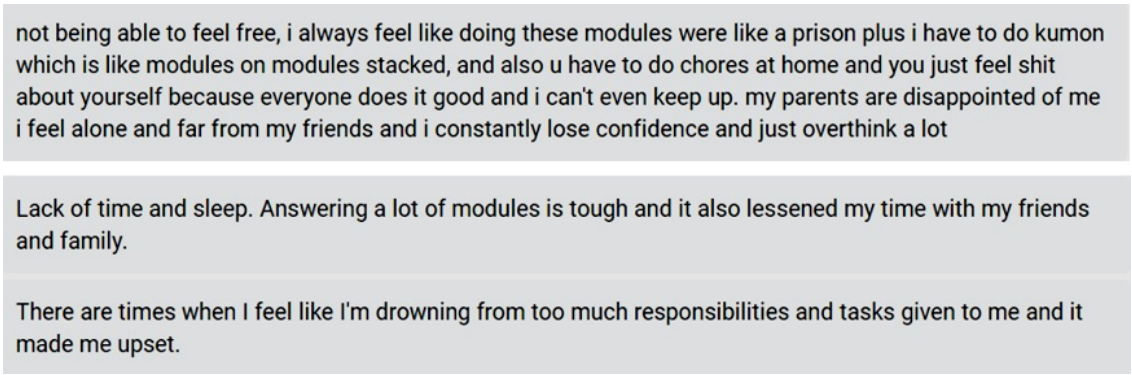

Figure 1. Verbatim comments of students regarding the reasons behind their stress

Table 2. Level Emotional Intelligence of Grade 10 Students in GRSHS-X

Level of Emotional Intelligence (TEIQue)				
	N	Score	SD	Interpretation*
Male	32	3.81	0.76	*Average*
Female	81	4.03	0.91	*Average*
Total	113			

*Level of Emotional Intelligence (TEIQue): 1-3=Low, 3.1- 4.9=Average, 5-7=High

Table 2 clearly reflects that the students got an average level of emotional intelligence, true to both males and females. This means that the Emotional Intelligence (EI) score of the overall sample is on average compared to the standardized sample of the TEIQue, a standardized test for Emotional Intelligence. The average mean scores garnered from the TEIQue-SF Test were consolidated and depicted a score of 3.81 for males and 4.03 for females, with a standard deviation of 0.76 and 0.91, respectively, from the total population sample of 113 Grade 10 students. The data show a lower standard deviation and closer to zero (0.76 & 0.91), which would indicate clustered scores nearer to the average mean score.

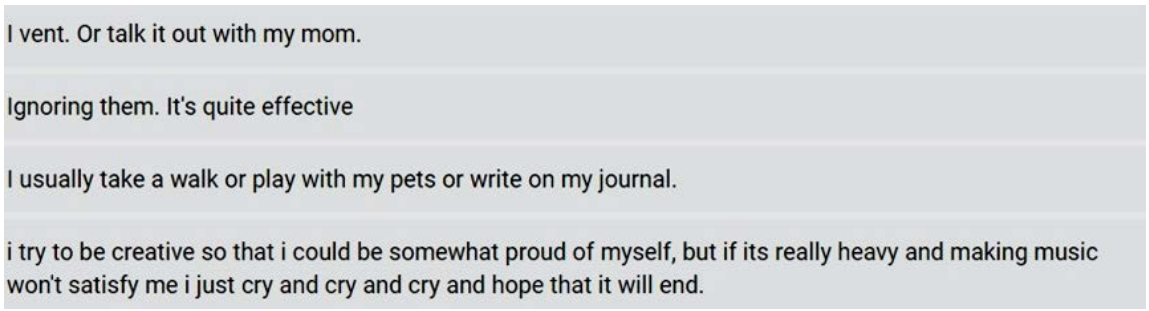

Figure 2. Verbatim comments of students regarding their response to stress

Despite the pandemic, students have shown resiliency in handling stress. The result is supported by the study of Kumar [24], where he found out that the emotional intelligence level of secondary students was average in nature. Both males and females garner an average mean score on all aspects of emotional intelligence; 4.32 for emotional well-being, 3.48 for self-control, 4.24 for emotionality, and 3.65 for sociability. These data state that the students are on the average level of handling their emotions and stress. This adequately shows that they can moderately cope with their emotions in any stressful situation, communicate and use their feelings effectively, especially in managing stress. The following are students' expressions on how they deal with stress or negative emotions.

As shown in Figure 2, the students displayed a positive response to the stress they incurred during the implementation of modular teaching modalities. As verbalized, *"I try to be creative so that I could be somewhat proud of myself, but if it's really heavy and making music won't satisfy me, I just cry and cry and cry and hope that it will end" and "I vent. Or talk it out with my mom"*, are evidence of positive stress management. These are indicators that the students displayed moderate self-control, well-being, emotionality, and sociability. Interpersonal communication, exercise, self-appraisal are some practices that enhance psychological well-being [25]. According to a survey conducted by the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, 86.9% of the students are inclined to extra-curricular activities while 54.1% to sports, which showed emotional and psychological stability among respondents.

The average mean score of EI for females is slightly higher than for males (4.03> 3.81), supported by a study of Lee and Loke [25], which states that female students are more likely to *accept stressful events in life that cannot be change* compared males. And females are more prone to discuss their problems and life concerns with people closest to them. However, there is no significant difference in their level of emotional intelligence. This debunks the findings of Ishaq et al. [14], which concluded that female respondents have lower emotional intelligence compared to male respondents.

3.2. Comparison of Emotional Stress and Emotional Intelligence Levels

As reflected in Table 3, the independent sample t-test yielded a T value of -1.289 and a computed probability value of 0.200, which is higher than the 0.05 level of significance. This led to the failure of rejecting the null hypothesis. This means that there is no significant difference in the students' level of emotional stress based on gender.

The result is in accordance with the study of Ptacek et al. [26], stating that the coping tendencies for the stress of both males and females were insignificantly different and showed no difference in coping as evidenced by varied coping management practices. In addition, the effect sizes of the results presented associated with gender roles were statistically weak to moderate [26], indicating that the difference of emotional stress by gender is insignificant. Even though stress levels may also differ by age and gender, the variation of its susceptibility acquired for both males and females is not specifically distinguishable [28].

However, the result is contrary to the study conducted by Kesimci et al. [29], which states that, though not a strong inferring factor, gender as a personal characteristic is associated with stress-related response. And that gender roles are significant in the effect of stress and burnout, where females are more likely to develop higher levels of stress than males with regards to difficulties they acquire from school-related circumstances, perceived as adverse behaviors by peers and school-related activities [30]. These differences were not evident in this study, as supported by Liu & Lu [15], affirming that the descriptive results on academic stress did not differ across gender, providing a moderate fluctuation of differences in academic stress responses.

Table 3. Independent Sample t-Test Table Examining the Difference of Emotional Stress among Grade 10 Students based on Gender

	F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Equal Variances Assumed	0.710	0.401	-1.289	111	.200 ^{NS}	-1.57	1.22
Equal variances not assumed			-1.293	57.269	.201	-1.57	1.21

*Significant at 0.05 level, ^{NS}Not Significant.

Table 4. Independent Sample t-Test Table Examining the Difference of Emotional Intelligence among Grade 10 Students based on Gender

	F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Equal Variances Assumed	1.781	0.185	-1.190	111	.237 ^{NS}	-.21677	.18220
Equal variances not assumed			-1.290	68.099	.201	-.21677	.16805

*Significant at 0.05 level, ^{NS}Not Significant.

The independent sample t-test yielded a T value of -1.19 and a computed probability value of 0.237, which is higher than the 0.05 level of significance. This led to the failure of rejecting the null hypothesis. This means that there is no significant difference in the students' level of emotional intelligence based on gender. Such findings are supported by Katoch's [31] study, which stated that when it comes to gender, students do not differ significantly on their level of emotional intelligence. The result is also similar to the study of Ghorai [32], which revealed that there is no statistically significant difference in the student's level of emotional intelligence when respect to their gender.

The result, however, is contrary to the findings of Kumar [24], which studied Emotional intelligence among secondary high school students. Their studies revealed a significance of the difference between male and female secondary students in relation to their emotional intelligence and that female students' emotional intelligence is better than their male counterparts. Their study concluded that gender affects the level of emotional intelligence of secondary students. Furthermore, the study of Brackett, Mayer, and Warner [33] depicted that emotional intelligence is not predictive and indicative of one's gender behavior. It is not significant in predicting one's implications for people's lives.

3.3. The Relationship between Emotional Stress and Emotional Intelligence among Grade 10 Students based on Gender

As shown in Figure 3, emotional stress and emotional intelligence are indirectly proportionate to each other. The data showed an average negative correlation. It implies that high emotional intelligence leads to a low emotional stress response. This result is in line with the findings of several studies which conclude that higher emotional intelligence negatively relates to perceived stress, as shown in the study of Lea et al. [4] and Por [5]. Jung et al. [12] further support this result as the study yielded a higher level of emotional intelligence related to lower Emotional Stress. Findings simply support the notion that if an individual's emotional intelligence increases, his ability to cope with stress increases. In other words, it is sufficient to say that those who have higher emotional intelligence experience less stress.

Although there was no relationship between gender and total score of academic stress, there were some significant differences in its subsequent other aspects, including pressures/stressors and individual interests. Gujral [13] explained the role of emotional intelligence in coping with stress and improving the performance of an individual. Indeed, individuals who have high Emotional Intelligence have a positive coping style as they build more connections with the people around them. At the same time, those who have low emotional intelligence tend to create problems through their unlikely behaviors, making them more stressed. Emotional intelligence was proved to buffer stress in this study. The study further advised that an individual should develop high emotional intelligence to be able to perform well. Ishaq et al. [14] reinforce the study result and explain that high emotional intelligence equates to better well-being, problem-focused coping, and perceived competency. However, lower emotional intelligence entails higher perceived stress. Students are, therefore, efficient in utilizing pressure coping strategies, and it is highly recommended that teachers should provide guidance to students regarding emotional intelligence and stress coping styles [34].

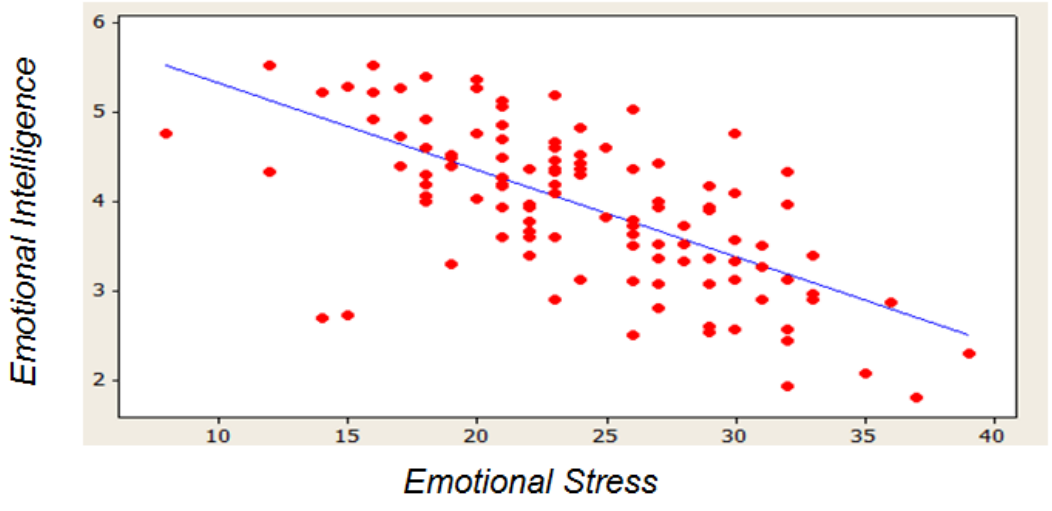

Figure 3. Scatter Plot Showing the Relationship between Emotional Stress and Emotional Intelligence (**Pearson correlation value: -0.653 (moderate negative correlation)*)

4. Conclusion

The present study aimed at exploring the emotional stress and emotional intelligence of the Grade 10 students in Gusa Regional Science High School – X. From the findings of this study, it can be derived that the students have a higher level of stress and average emotional intelligence across gender under the modular teaching modality. Higher emotional stress was caused by massive academic works, academic burnout, and sleep deprivation. In addition, students feel pressured to attain higher marks, which led to academic distress. On the other hand, the students' emotional stress and emotional intelligence did not differ significantly when grouped according to gender. Emotional intelligence negatively correlates against emotional stress. This implies that higher emotional intelligence

leads to a lower emotional stress response. Therefore, students were effective in applying coping strategies necessary in adapting to the new normal education.

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