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## DETERMINING THE LEVEL OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE OF FUTURE CYNOLOGISTS

### ВИЗНАЧЕННЯ РІВНЯ ЕМОЦІЙНОГО ІНТЕЛЕКТУ МАЙБУТНІХ КІНОЛОГІВ

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**ABSTRACT**

The **purpose** of the paper is to investigate the essence of emotional intelligence (EI) as an important component for future cynologists' fruitful work in the sphere of rehabilitation of people who have been affected by the war consequences. The authors studied the scientific literature on EI and its role in "Human-Human" and "Human-Animal" interactions in the working sphere. The authors determined the existing EI level of students who have Cynology as their major, outlined the theoretic and empiric outcomes, and stated recommendations for improving future cynologists' professional training.

**Methodology.** The empirical survey had a sample of 36 respondents. They were second-year students aged 18-21, 20 were male, and 16 were female. It was conducted by means of Google Forms on the basis of "Methodology of emotional intelligence diagnosis" by N. Hall (adapted) with subsequent processing and analysis of the results.

**Results.** The study of the literature revealed that EI is of crucial importance for future cynologists' professional fulfillment as it is responsible for the emotional regulation of their behavior, self-motivation, empathy, etc. However, empirically, it was found out that the EI of the respondents had not been sufficiently developed, as 68% of the respondents had a low level of EI integrative index, 22% of the students had the medium level of EI integrative index. Solely 10% of the respondents were recorded to have a high-level EI integrative index.

**Conclusions.** The outcomes of the study revealed that most respondents do not have sufficient EI development, but they have the potential to enhance it. The authors insist on the organization of special educational courses and training to develop the ability of future cynologists to understand their own emotions and the emotions of other people, emotional behavior management, self-motivation, etc.

**Keywords:** canistherapy, emotional intelligence, human-animal, human-human, professional training, war consequences.

**Метою** статті є дослідження сутності емоційного інтелекту як важливої складової плідної роботи майбутніх кінологів у галузі реабілітації осіб, які постраждали від наслідків війни. Автори вивчали наукову літературу про емоційний інтелект і його роль у взаємодії «людина-людина» та «людина-тварина» у трудовій галузі. Визначено також існуючий рівень емоційного інтелекту студентів, які навчаються за спеціальністю «Кінологія»; представлено теоретичні та емпіричні результати; надано рекомендації щодо вдосконалення професійної підготовки майбутніх кінологів.

**Методологія.** Емпіричну базу дослідження становила вибірка з 36 респондентів (20 студентів та 16 студенток) віком від 18 до 21 року, що є студентами 2 курсу. Опитування було проведено за допомогою Google Forms на основі «Методики діагностики емоційного інтелекту» Н. Холла (з адаптацією) з подальшою обробкою та аналізом результатів.

**Результати:** Вивчення літератури показало, що емоційний інтелект має вирішальне значення для професійної реалізації майбутніх кінологів, оскільки відповідає за емоційну регуляцію їхньої поведінки, самомотивацію, емпатію тощо. Проте емпіричним шляхом встановлено, що емоційний інтелект респондентів не був достатньо розвиненими, оскільки 68% респондентів мали низький рівень інтегративного індексу емоційного інтелекту, 22% респондентів мали середній рівень інтегративного індексу емоційного інтелекту, і лише 10% респондентів зафіксовані з високим рівнем інтегративного індексу емоційного інтелекту.

**Висновки.** Результати дослідження показали, що більшість респондентів не мають достатнього рівня розвитку емоційного інтелекту, але мають потенціал для його підвищення. Автори наполягають на організації спеціальних навчальних курсів і тренінгів для розвитку у майбутніх кінологів умінь розуміти власні емоції та емоції інших людей, керувати емоційною поведінкою, самомотивацією тощо.

**Ключові слова:** каністерапія, емоційний інтелект, людина-тварина, людина-людина, професійне навчання, наслідки війни.

## INTRODUCTION

Ukrainian students' emotional intelligence (EI)' development is currently a pivotal issue for educators, due to the increasing stressfulness and danger of living under conditions of martial law. All people in Ukraine have been affected by the war. Students who study and live in the Sumy region, near the front line, suffer from regular daily air raid alerts, shelling, and bombing and have painful memories and traumatic emotional experiences; many of them lost their family members or were forced to change their place of residence (Bilotserkovets et al., 2023).

The outcomes of modern research have proved that it is difficult for a young individual to cope independently with overcoming the existing traumatic situation. However, there are psychological means that can contribute to reducing the impact of traumatic action. One of these means is the development of young people's EI elements such as empathy, emotional self-regulation, managing own emotions, etc., that can be a prerequisite for their psychological recovery (Derevianko, 2022; Lohvys, 2022).

One of the effective tools for distracting people from painful thoughts and experiencing stressful events is organized work with specially trained animals, in particular through animal therapeutic influences. Today, animal therapy is regarded as a multifunctional method of psychological rehabilitation of people with post-stress reactions caused by war. Currently, among various types of animal therapy, such as hippotherapy, apitherapy, dolphin therapy, hippotherapy, and felinotherapy, etc., dog-assisted therapy is mainly focused on, as there is no need to create separate, special conditions for animals, because dogs coexist well with people, are used to their homes and feel good there (Sokurenko, 2021).

Sumy National Agrarian University (SNAU), Ukraine, provides theoretical training for future breeders, experts, canine instructors, and translators, and assistants of dog exterior experts for the Ukrainian Kennel Union. According to the educational and professional program "Cynology," students study the main canine disciplines for three semesters which are combined into three educational components, namely: "Biology, maintenance, feeding and prevention of dog diseases," "Breed resources, selection and reproduction of dogs", and "Theory of training and special dog breeding with the use of foreign language in a professional direction" (SNAU, 2024).

The **purpose** of the article is to explore the phenomenon of EI as an essential element for future cynologists' professional fulfillment in the field of rehabilitation of people who suffer from the war consequences fulfillment in the field of rehabilitation of people who suffer from war consequences. The objectives of the paper are to study scientific works on the correlation of EI and its role in "Human-Human" and "Human-Animal" interactions in the working sphere; to determine the existing EI level of students majoring in Cynology; to sum up the results of both theoretic and empiric investigations for forming recommendations and improving future cynologists' professional training.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

When analyzing emotions and their regulation, one of the most relevant variables recently researched is the study of EI. The term "emotional intelligence" was first used by the scientists John D. Mayer and Peter Salovey. They described the notion as a

subtype of social intelligence that involves the ability to perceive and integrate emotions to facilitate cognitive activity and understand and regulate emotions for promoting emotional and intellectual growth (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

This integrative personality trait consists of the following skills: to recognize, monitor, and be aware of one's own emotions; perceive, evaluate, and understand the emotions of others; to motivate oneself and others (despite difficulties, persistently going to achieve the goal); restrain impulsive actions, control one's own mood (Bokovets, 2022). Goleman presented the structure of EI, distinguishing system components: self-awareness, self-control, social awareness, and the ability to establish interpersonal relationships. The scientist proved that all these components form the basis of professional success (Goleman, 2020).

According to Halian et al. (2020), EI is considered as a complex of mental abilities related to the processing of emotional information and the generation of an individual's emotional experience in the sphere of "Human-Human" interactions. The authors argue that emotional intelligence contributes to personal growth, efficient professional activity, and a person's career (Halian et al., 2020).

Other scholars suppose that the effectiveness of professional activity depends not only on the knowledge and skills of a specialist but also on the level of intellectual development and of the relationship to the personal inner world and the surrounding world (Zaritska, 2014). Specialists who can cope with their emotions can function in stressful situations faster and much better; they are more proactive and responsible (Furman, 2018; Szczygiał, 2018).

It is obvious that a professional who works in the sphere of "Human-Animal" needs to possess some specific personal features essential for effective interaction, such as safety, emotional satisfaction, compliance with expectations, and the obtained result (Dotsenko, 2019). Interaction with the animal world contributed to the formation of humans' emotional intelligence, the importance of which is now being written so much by scientists.

It gradually became clear that animals are able to contribute to the correction of fears, aggressiveness, feelings of helplessness, and loneliness; they are able to relieve mental tension, allow people to experience changes less acutely, and look for resources within themselves, providing a feeling of confidence and peace. So, animals, even without special training, were among the first – rehabilitators who provided help to people (Sadrytska, 2021).

In primitive society, the belief in the power of the totem animal played the role of a regulator of social interaction because it encouraged people to follow certain norms and rules, determined the nature of communication, and served as the basis of order, well-being, and mental peace of people (Sadrytska, 2021). According to archaeological findings, the history of coexistence and mutual assistance between humans and dogs dates back about 40 thousand years. The very phenomenon of supporting, developing, and therapeutic bio-social influence of dogs has deep historical sources.

Nowadays, canistherapy is one of the types of human treatment and rehabilitation with the help of ordinary or specially selected and trained dogs under the supervision of qualified specialists (Komar & Halma, 2012). Cooperation of young people with a dog

performs several functions: motivating, communicative, relaxing, educational; cognitive support, and psychotherapeutic; resource canistherapy classes contribute to the stabilization of the psycho-emotional state, correction, and development of the cognitive sphere, mental and communicative abilities, increase the effectiveness of personality development, education and rehabilitation (Kravchenko, 2021; Iegorchenkova & Pavlenko, 2023).

Moreover, dog assisted therapy has a wide range of functions that already have scientific and practical confirmation, namely, the ability to harmonize and stabilize the mental state of an individual, reducing the level of anxiety and tension; stimulating the activity of the emotional sphere; positive influence on psychomotor development; normalization of the vegetative functions of the human body; actualization of the so-called resource states of the individual; positive influence on the development of communication skills; contributes to the self-realization of the individual, etc. (Kravchenko, 2021).

Despite the fact that the dog-assisted therapy method originated in the USA back in the 60s of the 20th century, for Ukraine, it is a fairly new method of psychological therapy, and as a method of social rehabilitation, it can be confidently called the newest. Since 2010, on the initiative of the Polish Canister Therapy Society, the specialty "dog-assisted therapist" has been included in the state list of professions in Poland. The same specialty exists in the Czech Republic and Spain, in Israel there is a post-graduate education program that allows people to obtain a diploma of the state standard in the specialty of a "Dog assisted therapist". This method has received official recognition in Germany, Lithuania, Norway, and other countries.

Increasingly, this method is gaining popularity in Ukraine: many projects have been implemented, including those with the support of foreign organizations. Nowadays, in our country canine therapy dogs are not certified, but there are dogs that have received a certificate abroad and successfully cooperate in the field of psychological rehabilitation of people, who suffered from war. Namely, the Center of Dog Assisted Therapy in SNAU developed a general short-term program, "Basic postulates of canister therapy," and organized training for canine specialists, in which 113 people from Ukraine and EU countries took part.

The specialists of the center deliver lectures on the humane treatment of animals, such as "Cynology today is a job for the young, patient and talented," etc., master classes in cynology, "Obedient dog," "Four-legged sapper's assistant," "A guide dog is better than a cane," training for children from border areas "Dog assisted therapy as a method of rehabilitation and psychological-pedagogical and social correction" (SNAU, 2024). Students have the opportunity to acquire their practical skills in cynology in a special classroom with an attached kennel for keeping dogs, as well as on a training ground.

In addition to the university's own base, practical classes are also held at the Canine Center of Sumy Main Regional Police Department of the National Police of Ukraine, at the base of the Sumy Regional Dog Breeding Center of the Ukrainian Kennel Union. Future specialists have the opportunity to upgrade their skills in the best canine training centers of our country. SNAU, together with Belgian organization APOPO (Anti-Persoonsmijnen Ontmijnende Product Ontwikkeling), will also establish a center for students who will be able to gain experience in the targeted training of sapper dogs.

**Figure 1**

*Participants of the training “Dog assisted therapy as a method of rehabilitation and psychological and pedagogical and social correction” (Maiorov & Markovska, 2024)*



For our research, the data of the study of EI and personality components of SNAU students who major in Cynology and dog-assisted therapy are of special interest. The importance of EI for such students is hypostasized by researchers as an essential element for their future profession that enables effective interaction in “Human-Animal” and “Human-Human” dimensions. Moreover, it has a crucial effect on their motivation to study and master professional competencies more successfully.

**METHODOLOGY**

The empirical study was conducted on a sample of 36 respondents – future cynologists, second-year students aged 18-21, 16 of whom are female, and 20 are male. The survey was conducted remotely by using Google Forms, taking into account today's challenges of living in the territory under martial law. The representativeness of the sample is ensured by the quota method.

In accordance with the purpose of the scientific research, the authors used the “Methodology of emotional intelligence diagnosis” by N. Hall (adapted by E. Ilyin) with subsequent processing and analysis of the results. The questionnaire was aimed at researching EI as a mechanism that determined the features of emotional regulation of students' role behavior, in particular, its components such as awareness of emotions, the ability to recognize emotions, self-motivation, empathy, and emotion management. The specified technique was designed to determine the ability to understand personal relationships represented in emotions and the ability to manage the emotional sphere on the basis of decision-making.

The questionnaire contains 30 statements that reveal the content of 5 scales: 1) emotional awareness (knowledge of the repertoire of emotions and their expressive expression); 2) managing one's own emotions (regulation of emotions for emotional development, ability to be open to other people's feelings, emotional flexibility); 3) self-

motivation (arbitrary management of one's own emotions); 4) empathy as the ability to identify sympathy and emotional support of others; 5) recognition of other people's emotions (the ability to understand the experiences of others and influence the emotional state of others). The statements are presented in the Table 1.

**Table 1**

*N. Hall's "Methodology of Emotional Intelligence Diagnosis" Questionnaire*

Nº	Statements	Points
1	For me, both negative and positive emotions serve as a source of knowledge about how to act in life.	
2	Negative emotions help me to understand what I should change in my life.	
3	I am calm when I feel pressure from other people.	
4	I am able to observe the change in my feelings.	
5	When necessary, I can be calm and focused to respond to life's demands.	
6	When necessary, I can evoke a wide range of positive emotions, such as fun, joy, upliftment, and humor.	
7	I observe what I feel.	
8	After something has upset me, I can easily deal with my feelings.	
9	I am able to listen to other people's problems.	
10	I don't dwell on negative emotions.	
11	I am sensitive to the emotional needs of others.	
12	I can have a soothing effect on other people.	
13	I can force myself to stand up again and again in the face of an obstacle.	
14	I try to approach life's problems creatively.	
15	I respond adequately to other people's moods, motivations, and desires.	
16	I can easily enter a state of calmness, readiness and concentration.	
17	When time allows, I address my negative feelings and figure out what the problem is.	
18	I am able to calm down quickly after an unexpected accident that got me upset.	
19	Knowing my true feelings is important for me to maintain positive mood.	
20	I understand other people's emotions well, even if they are not expressed openly.	
21	I can recognize emotions well by facial expressions.	
22	I can easily push aside negative feelings when action is needed.	
23	I am good at picking up signs in communication that indicate what others need.	
24	People consider me to be a good connoisseur of other people's experiences.	

- 25 People, who are aware of their true feelings, can manage their lives better.
- 26 I am able to improve the mood of other people.
- 27 You can consult with me on issues of relationships between people.
- 28 I tune in well to other people's emotions.
- 29 I help others to use their motivation for achieving personal goals.
- 30 I can easily switch off from experiencing trouble.

The respondents were asked to write a number based on their degree of agreement with it to the right of each statement: completely disagree (-3 points); mostly disagree (-2 points); partly disagree (-1 point); partly agree (+1 point); mostly agree (+2 points); completely agree (+3 points). Scale 1 is reflected by items 1, 2, 4, 17, 19, 25. Scale 2 is represented by items 3, 7, 8, 10, 18, 30. Scale 3 is shown by items 5, 6, 13, 14, 16, 22. Scale 4 is traced by items 9, 11, 20, 21, 23, 28. Scale 5 is indicated by items 12, 15, 24, 26, 27, 29.

Levels of partial emotional intelligence are scored in accordance as follows: 14 or more points correspond to the high level; 8-13 points single out the medium level; 7 points or less present the low level. The integrative index of EI, taking into account the dominant scale, is determined by the following quantitative indicators: 70 points and more reveal the high level; 40-69 points correspond to the medium level; 39 and fewer points signify the low level.

Eventually, conclusions and recommendations were formed. These recommendations are aimed at improving the effectiveness of future cynologists' professional training.

## RESULTS

After processing the results of the conducted research, the authors found out that the general indicator of the level of EI among future cynologists had not been sufficiently developed. So, 68% of the respondents had a low level of EI integrative index, and 22% of the respondents had a medium level of EI integrative index. Only 10% of the respondents with the high-level EI integrative index were recorded.

Pointing out individual EI components, the authors obtained the following distribution of indicators. They are presented in detail in the Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Individual EI components distribution (n=36)*

Scales	Low level (%)	Medium level (%)	High level (%)
Emotional awareness	18	51	31
Empathy	27	43	30
Self-motivation	26	40	34
Recognizing the emotions of others	35	44	21
Managing emotions	62	28	10

The obtained outcomes indicated a relatively low level of the ability of most respondents to understand personal relationships, which are represented in emotions, and manage



the emotional sphere on the basis of decision-making. This category of respondents tended to attach too much importance to their own emotional sphere, feelings and experiences but were not able to analyze them. They had certain difficulties in understanding the feelings and emotions of others and in recognizing emotional states. They were not inclined to adequately respond to them.

22% of the respondents with an average level of development of the integrative indicator of emotional intelligence were characterized by the fact that they understand their own and other people's psycho-emotional state relatively well, were positive towards themselves and others, and were able to control their emotions with the help of volitional self-regulation. Solely 10% of the participants had a high level of EI that is associated with personal well-being, quality of social relationships, professional effectiveness, the ability to adapt to a stressful environment, to adapt to changes, and to solve personal and interpersonal problems of everyday life.

It is important to pay attention to the possible negative consequences of a low level of EI and the lack of ego development, which can impede interpersonal communication with clients in the process of dog-assisted therapy sessions. The specifics of the professional activity of cynologists include not only work with frequent changes of location, violation of the diet and sleep regime, night shifts, high responsibility for the consequences of the implementation of decisions, organization of work in the "human and dog" system but it is also characterized by great physical and emotional stress due to the fact that they cooperate with service dogs, which have their own unique character and behavioral characteristics (Sokurenko, 2021).

Analyzing the data on individual EI components distribution, the authors found out, that the medium level on the scale of emotional awareness was revealed in 51% of the respondents, 31% of the participants had the high level, and 18% of the respondents had the low level correspondently. Individuals with high scores on this scale are characterized by the ability to understand well both their own emotional states and the ones of people around them.

Johnson & Blanchard (2016) have revealed that the ability to regulate negative emotional states and continue positive ones makes it easier to cope with stressful situations. The scholars identified pathways through which the perception of mood affects the feeling of stress. The authors stated that understanding how emotional intelligence affects psychological well-being may help people to overcome challenges they face in their career path (Aguilar & George, 2019; Asieieva et al., 2021).

Empathy is a necessary condition for personality development, a sign of its emotional and social maturity. Regarding the indicators of the level of empathy, the authors found the following outcomes: 43% of the respondents demonstrated a medium level, 30% of the participants revealed a high level, and 27% of the participants showed a low level. The low level indicates that the individual experiences difficulties in communication and does not know how to empathize and emotionally respond to feelings.

People with a medium level of empathy keep their feelings, thoughts, and emotions under control but are not always able to share their emotions. They understand the emotional upheavals of other people well, but they believe that it is not necessary to flaunt their feelings. And, after all, a high level of empathy is a feature of an individual who feels a vivid emotional response to experiences, often without separating their

emotional problems from the problems of other people. Such people are inclined to empathize with both loved ones and strangers (Bilotserkovets et al., 2021).

Indicators on the self-motivation scale also show the medium level of development inherent to 40% of the respondents. 26% of the students-participants have a low level, and 34% of them possess a high level. This indicates the level of desire for activity and interaction and management of their behavior.

Analyzing the indicators on the “recognition of other people’s emotions” scale, the authors noted that 21% of the respondents had a high and 44% – the medium level of development of the ability to find a common language and maintain relationships with other people and influence the emotional state of interlocutors. 35% of the participants demonstrate a low level of development of this skill.

Nevertheless, it has been stated that the optimization of the relationship between people is influenced by the tolerance level, namely their perception that the needs and motives of someone’s behavior may not coincide with the needs and motives of another human’s behavior, etc. (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

On the scale of “management of emotions,” the authors observed 62% of the respondents with a low level of development of the ability to control and direct their own impulses and impulses, and 28% of them possess a medium level. Solely 10% of future cynologists demonstrated that they had a high level of emotional self-regulation. Thus, it is obvious that the participants in the research have not developed a sufficient level of EI, though they have the potential to do so.

## DISCUSSION

Numerous empirical studies proved the trainability of EI and the efficacy of EI training programs, such as, for instance, mindfulness and scaffolding capacity-building programs. They revealed that increased EI could also improve people’s health, well-being, and performance by enhancing the ability of an individual to put himself/herself in others’ shoes, adapt, intuition, empathy, self-awareness, balance, handle his/ her own emotions and those of others (Furman, 2018; Halian et al., 2020; Goleman, 2020; Derevianko, 2022). Great attention is paid to the conditions of conflicts and war (Holubnycha et al., 2022), (Kostikova et al., 2023), (Vaintraub, 2024).

## CONCLUSIONS

Therefore, taking into account the results of the conducted research and the processed psychological literature, the authors have stated that emotional intelligence is a set of cognitive, personal, motivational, and volitional traits that are necessary for the formation, realization, and personal development of a person is an important component of the professional development of future cynologists.

It is essential because they are trained to be the specialists who practice canister therapy, vectoring to develop their clients’ ability to harmonize and stabilize mental state, reducing the level of anxiety and tension, stimulating the activity of their emotional sphere, positively influencing their psychomotor development; actualize resource states of individuals; affect the development of their communication skills, etc.

Thus, the outcomes of the study revealed that most respondents do not have a sufficient level of EI development, but they have the potential to enhance it. The authors recommend that specially designed educational programs and socio-psychological training should be organized to develop the ability of future cynologists to understand their own emotions and the emotions of other people, practical self-knowledge skills, emotional behavior management, etc.

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## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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