

**Exploring the Impact of Street Theatre on Emotional Intelligence: A Qualitative Study
Among College Students**

*Dissertation submitted to The University of Kerala in partial fulfilment of the requirement for
the award of the Degree of*

Master of Science in Counselling Psychology

By

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CERTIFICATE



This is to certify that the Dissertation entitled “Exploring the Impact of Street Theatre on Emotional Intelligence: A Qualitative Study Among College Students” is an authentic work carried out by Devadath TB, Reg No. 60423115008 under the guidance of Dr. Ammu Lukose during the fourth semester of M.Sc. Counselling Psychology programme in the academic year 2023-2025.

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DECLARATION

I, Devadath TB , do hereby declare that the dissertation titled “Exploring the Impact of Street Theatre on Emotional Intelligence: A Qualitative Study Among College Students” submitted to the Department of Counselling Psychology, Loyola College of Social Sciences (Autonomous), Sreekariyam, under the supervision of Dr Ammu Lukose, Head Of the Department (In Charge) & Assistant professor in the Department of Counselling Psychology, for the award of the degree of Master of Science in Counselling Psychology, is a Bonafide work carried out by me and no part thereof has been submitted for the award of any other degree in any University.

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DEVADATH TB

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Abstract

The present study aimed to explore the emotional and psychological impact of street theatre on college students, using a qualitative research design. Street theatre, which is commonly used as a public pedagogy and community expression, offers opportunities for experiential learning, social awareness, and personal growth. The objective of this study was to investigate how participation in a street theatre influences emotional understanding among college students. Eight postgraduate students who participated in a street theatre workshop were selected using purposive sampling. Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews and analysed using Braun and Clarke's six-phase model of thematic analysis. The findings revealed six major themes: Emotional Discovery and Self-Awareness, Evolving Emotional Regulation Skills, Empathy and Collective Understanding, Motivation through Emotional Empowerment, Lasting Shifts in Interpersonal Dynamics, and Street Theatre as Therapeutic Expression. Each theme was supported by rich participant narratives and interpreted in the context of relevant psychological theories. The conclusion of the study is that street theatre is not just a means of social critique but also a space for emotional learning and empowerment. It has significant implications for educators, psychologists, and youth development professionals interested in integrating expressive arts into their work.

Keywords: Street Theatre, Emotional Intelligence, Self-Awareness, Empathy, Youth Development, Expressive Arts, Thematic Analysis, Experiential Learning

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Street Theatre

Street Theatre is a method of theatrical performance and presentation that takes place in open public spaces without a paid audience. It is used as a means of communication to disseminate social and political messages, as well as to raise awareness among the general public about pressing social concerns. Grassroots, amateur street theater shows have gained popularity around the world in community organizing, education campaigns, and public health programmes. Themes of street plays have evolved with time, from national awareness to capitalism, peasant and labour movements, environmental issues, communalism, sexual harassment of women, domestic violence, issues related to children's rights, child abuse, HIV/AIDS, corruption, etc. Social Communication Tool - In a practical sense, street play is a type of group drama performed outdoors, mainly on the street, on a college or university campus, at a railway station, in a market, or in slums, where a group of artists can directly interact with a broad section of the audience in order to not only entertain but also to trigger activism. Traditional ways of communication are people's indigenous modes of expression. They're like a tree's roots, without which the tree would fall. Traditional media, in contrast to current mass media, are more intimate, recognisable, and trustworthy, with the majority of literate people understanding their formats, genres, and content. Through open communication, an intentional distortion of the forms might quickly alienate the public. People's hearts and minds are close to the folk media, therefore their attraction is personal and intimate. The different groupings and distinct forms provided for certain homogeneous groups and for specialised objectives can be leveraged to serve people from various regions on their own territory, as it has been done previously. The traditional media's nature makes it an extremely effective medium for mass communication. Traditional media are the most appropriate for bringing about changes in attitudes and promoting new habits in a traditional society, just as a nail

is used to drive out a nail. The fundamental aesthetical aspects of street plays include the incorporation of local languages into songs, dance, and folk arts, the use of minimal props or clothing, and the lack of a theatrical set-up. The shape is maintained as free of hyperbole and as clean as possible, while the tone is set to electric using an experimental approach. In street theatre, the audience comes to the theatre rather than the other way around. Unlike traditional modes of communication, which either use a medium between the communicator and the receiver or do away with the scope for feedback, street plays are primarily community-based, short in length, and allow for post-performance conversation with the audience, unlike traditional modes of communication, which either use a medium between the communicator and the receiver or do away with the scope for feedback.

Street theatre in India, widely known as nukkad natak, represents a vital and enduring form of cultural expression that has evolved over centuries. Rooted deeply in the country's diverse traditions of storytelling, ritual, and community engagement, street theatre has served as a powerful medium for social communication, political discourse, and cultural continuity. Its origins lie in India's rich folk traditions, where performance was not confined to designated stages but integrated into the rhythms of everyday life. Forms such as Jatra in Bengal, Tamasha in Maharashtra, Therukoothu in Tamil Nadu, and Nautanki in Uttar Pradesh functioned as public spectacles, combining music, dialogue, dance, and satire. These performances, accessible and participatory in nature, reflected local concerns, folklore, and moral narratives, making them central to community life.

With the arrival of British colonial rule in the 18th and 19th centuries, a new theatrical form was introduced—the Western proscenium theatre—which became prominent in major urban centers like Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras. However, its reach was mostly limited to the English-

educated elite and middle classes. In contrast, traditional and folk theatre, including early forms of street theatre, continued to thrive among rural and working-class populations. The turning point for modern street theatre as a distinct and conscious movement came in the 20th century, particularly during the national freedom struggle. The late 1930s and 1940s saw the formation of the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA), the cultural arm of the Communist Party of India. IPTA redefined performance as a form of political engagement, staging plays in public spaces to address issues such as famine, colonial exploitation, communalism, and worker rights. This period marked the beginning of modern political street theatre in India—characterized by direct interaction with the audience, minimal use of props, and performances in everyday public locations like markets, factory gates, and train stations.

After independence in 1947, street theatre continued to serve as an accessible platform for social and political commentary. Theatre practitioners began to address newly emerging concerns such as caste discrimination, poverty, women's rights, corruption, and communal tensions. Unlike conventional theatre, street plays required no formal infrastructure and could be staged with limited resources. This simplicity made it possible to reach wider and often marginalized audiences. Influential figures such as Badal Sircar advanced the idea of "Third Theatre," which emphasized performance beyond traditional proscenium boundaries. Sircar advocated for the use of natural settings, physical expressiveness, and audience proximity. Another important contributor was Safdar Hashmi, whose group Jana Natya Manch (JANAM) emerged as a leading force in political street theatre. His work focused on labor rights, social justice, and equity. Hashmi's death in 1989, after being attacked during a street play performance, became a defining moment in the history of Indian theatre, symbolizing both the vulnerability and the resilience of this form.

Street plays are typically short, thematic, and performed in the local language or dialect to maximize relatability. They make use of music, satire, dialogue, and physical movement to communicate ideas quickly and clearly to audiences that often gather spontaneously. Their topics have expanded over time to include contemporary issues such as environmental awareness, education, healthcare, gender violence, digital privacy, and communal harmony. The effectiveness of street theatre lies in its ability to engage with people directly, bypassing economic, linguistic, and cultural barriers that may hinder access to other forms of performance.

Despite its strengths, street theatre faces various challenges. These include lack of formal funding, limited institutional support, unpredictable performance environments, and occasional resistance from authorities or ideological opponents. Furthermore, performers must often adapt to distractions and interruptions, requiring flexibility and resilience. Nevertheless, the form continues to be relevant and influential, particularly among student groups, non-governmental organizations, labor unions, and community activists. In recent years, street theatre has also entered the digital space. Performances are now recorded, shared online, and even live-streamed, extending their reach beyond physical boundaries and allowing broader engagement, including among diasporic and urban audiences.

One of the defining features of Indian street theatre is its collaborative nature. Scripts are often developed collectively, drawing upon the experiences, observations, and inputs of all members involved. This horizontal approach to creativity not only democratizes the artistic process but also ensures that performances reflect the realities and concerns of the communities they aim to represent. The audience, too, plays a participatory role—reacting, questioning, and sometimes even shaping the flow of the performance through their presence and responses.

In short, street theatre in India occupies a unique space in the country's cultural and political landscape. It bridges the gap between traditional folk forms and contemporary activism, between rural storytelling and urban advocacy. Its historical journey—from ancient community performances to politically charged interventions in colonial and post-colonial periods—demonstrates its adaptability and enduring significance. By remaining rooted in local languages, collective practices, and social engagement, street theatre continues to function as an important tool for raising awareness, promoting dialogue, and fostering social change across India's diverse and evolving society.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to identify and manage one's own emotions, as well as the emotions of others. Emotional intelligence is generally said to include a few skills: namely emotional awareness, or the ability to identify and name one's own emotions; the ability to harness those emotions and apply them to tasks like thinking and problem solving; and the ability to manage emotions, which includes both regulating one's own emotions when necessary and helping others to do the same. The theory of emotional intelligence was introduced by Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer in the 1990s, and further developed and brought to the lay public by Daniel Goleman. The concept, also known as emotional quotient or EQ, has gained wide acceptance. However, some psychologists argue that because EQ cannot be captured via psychometric tests (as can, for example, general intelligence), it lacks true explanatory power.

Daniel Goleman's groundbreaking work on Emotional Intelligence (EQ), introduced in his 1995 book *Emotional Intelligence*, reshaped how we understand and evaluate success, particularly in professional settings. Building upon the foundational work of Salovey and Mayer (1989), Goleman argued that emotional intelligence is a more powerful predictor of career achievement

than traditional cognitive intelligence, suggesting it may be twice as important in determining success. Unlike IQ, which measures analytical and technical ability, emotional intelligence focuses on how individuals recognize, understand, and manage their own emotions as well as those of others. Goleman defined EQ as “the ability to identify, assess and control one’s own emotions, the emotions of others and that of groups,” and proposed a five-component model to evaluate and enhance emotional competencies in the workplace. The first component, self-awareness, emphasizes the importance of being in tune with one’s emotions and understanding how they affect one’s thoughts and interactions; it is considered foundational for personal growth and emotional regulation. The second, self-regulation, involves controlling impulsive feelings and behaviors, managing emotional reactions in a constructive way, and adapting to changing circumstances without making rash decisions that could jeopardize relationships or performance. The third, internal motivation, highlights the value of being driven by intrinsic rewards—such as passion and purpose—rather than external incentives like money or status; such motivation fosters greater commitment, persistence, and alignment with organizational goals. The fourth component, empathy, pertains to the ability to sense and respond appropriately to the emotions of others, which enhances interpersonal relationships, collaboration, and conflict resolution. Finally, social skill refers to the capacity to manage relationships effectively, build networks, and navigate social complexities with intention—what Goleman calls “friendliness with a purpose.” These five elements work interdependently to enhance emotional effectiveness and organizational impact, and importantly, Goleman contended that these skills are not innate but can be learned and refined over time. He later expanded this model in 2000, organizing the framework into four broader domains: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management, each encompassing various sub-competencies that together form the holistic structure of emotional

intelligence. Goleman's contribution not only emphasized the practical significance of EQ in enhancing workplace efficiency, leadership, and collaboration, but also challenged the overemphasis on IQ in professional evaluations, advocating instead for a balanced development of both emotional and cognitive capabilities to achieve sustainable success.

Street theatre, a dynamic and community-oriented form of performance art, has long served as a medium for public engagement, social commentary, and emotional expression. Among college students, who are often navigating a complex landscape of academic demands, evolving identities, interpersonal relationships, and future uncertainties, emotional expression becomes a critical need. Emotional intelligence (EQ)—the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and respond effectively to emotions in oneself and others—has emerged as a key determinant of personal and academic success in this context. However, despite its importance, emotional intelligence is not always explicitly taught or fostered within formal educational environments. As a result, many college students face significant challenges in emotional management, including difficulty coping with stress, anxiety, social isolation, impulsivity, and low self-esteem. These emotional challenges not only affect their psychological well-being but also hinder their academic performance, decision-making, and ability to maintain healthy relationships.

In response to these challenges, researchers and educators are increasingly turning to arts-based interventions as innovative and holistic tools for emotional development. Street theatre, in particular, offers a unique and participatory platform for students to explore emotions, confront social realities, and build emotional resilience through creative expression. Unlike conventional therapeutic or classroom settings, street theatre engages the performer and audience alike in a shared emotional and social experience. It facilitates catharsis, self-reflection, empathy-building, and communication skills by enabling students to embody characters, narrate real-life issues, and

express complex emotions in a supportive, collaborative environment. This process helps individuals become more attuned to their emotional states, recognize the emotions of others, and develop skills such as impulse control, motivation, empathy, and social adaptability—all core dimensions of emotional intelligence.

The integration of performing arts into psychological and educational frameworks is increasingly supported by empirical research. Studies in developmental and educational psychology have demonstrated that involvement in performing arts can enhance emotional awareness, foster interpersonal skills, reduce stress, and contribute to overall mental health. For college students, arts-based activities like drama, improvisation, and street performance serve as experiential learning tools that bridge the gap between emotional theory and practice. These interventions are particularly effective because they are participatory, inclusive, and culturally adaptable, making them accessible to diverse student populations. They not only help students externalize and process emotions but also encourage peer connection and collective problem-solving, thereby reinforcing social and emotional learning in a lived context.

Given these benefits, the field of psychology increasingly explores the relationship between emotional intelligence and creative engagement through structured research objectives. These include examining the role of emotional intelligence in student success and retention, evaluating the impact of performance-based interventions on emotional growth, and identifying how emotional competencies can be cultivated through non-traditional pedagogies. Sample problem statements in this domain may include: “What is the effect of street theatre participation on the emotional regulation abilities of college students?” or “How does engagement in performing arts influence the development of emotional intelligence and stress management skills in young

adults?” These questions reflect a growing awareness that emotional competence is not an innate trait but a learnable skill set that can be strengthened through meaningful, embodied experience.

Furthermore, the significance of the performing arts in psychological development cannot be overstated. They activate both cognitive and affective domains, encouraging not only critical thinking but also emotional literacy. The collaborative nature of theatre promotes empathy, active listening, and perspective-taking, while the performative aspects allow for expression, vulnerability, and emotional release. In youth and college students, whose identities are still forming and whose coping mechanisms are in development, these opportunities for emotional exploration and expression are vital. Street theatre, in particular, offers the added benefit of rooting this development in real-world issues, thereby linking personal emotional growth with broader social awareness and civic engagement.

In conclusion, the intersection of street theatre, emotional intelligence, and youth development presents a compelling area for research and intervention. As college students face increasing psychological and emotional pressures, there is an urgent need to adopt integrative, arts-based approaches that foster self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and social connection. Emotional intelligence plays a foundational role in shaping how young individuals adapt, interact, and thrive both during and beyond their academic years. Performing arts such as street theatre offer not only a channel for emotional expression but also a transformative experience that supports psychological development, educational engagement, and personal empowerment. Therefore, understanding and leveraging the power of creative expression in emotional education is not merely beneficial—it is essential in nurturing resilient, emotionally intelligent individuals who can contribute meaningfully to society.

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, there has been growing awareness about the importance of emotional intelligence (EI) in enhancing personal growth, academic achievement, and mental well-being among college students. As young adults navigate the complexities of interpersonal relationships, academic stress, identity formation, and career uncertainty, the ability to understand and manage emotions becomes essential. However, traditional educational environments often lack the tools, space, and pedagogical approaches to effectively foster emotional intelligence in students. The emotional needs of learners are frequently overshadowed by performance-oriented systems, leading to increased levels of anxiety, emotional dysregulation, and detachment.

At the same time, there has been an increasing global interest in arts-based interventions as holistic methods for emotional development. Among these, street theatre has emerged as a unique expressive art form that blends creativity, spontaneity, public interaction, and emotional storytelling. Through its participatory and performative nature, street theatre offers students a platform for self-expression, emotional exploration, collaboration, and social engagement. Anecdotal evidence and experiential observations suggest that participating in street theatre may cultivate key components of emotional intelligence—such as empathy, self-awareness, emotional regulation, motivation, and interpersonal skills. Yet, despite its cultural relevance and educational potential, there is a notable lack of empirical research exploring the psychological and emotional outcomes of street theatre participation, especially within the Indian higher education context.

Moreover, while emotional intelligence has been studied in various educational and organizational settings using quantitative tools, qualitative research that captures the lived experiences of students involved in emotionally expressive, art-based activities remains scarce.

This gap limits our understanding of how such interventions operate at a deeper emotional level and how they can be harnessed to improve emotional well-being in academic settings.

Thus, the present study aims to explore the lived experiences of college students who have participated in street theatre, with the goal of understanding how this creative practice influences their emotional intelligence. Through a qualitative, thematic analysis approach, this study seeks to generate insights into how expressive group performance can contribute to emotional growth, self-discovery, and social bonding among young adults.

Need and Significance of the Study

In today's fast-paced, competitive, and emotionally demanding academic environment, college students frequently encounter challenges that test their psychological resilience, interpersonal skills, and emotional self-regulation. The transitional phase of emerging adulthood, marked by identity exploration, social integration, and academic pressures, makes it imperative for students to possess strong emotional intelligence (EI) skills. Emotional intelligence, defined as the capacity to recognize, understand, manage, and utilize emotions effectively in oneself and others, is now increasingly recognized as a crucial determinant of mental health, academic performance, leadership ability, and personal well-being.

While academic curricula predominantly emphasize cognitive development and technical proficiency, there is a growing realization of the emotional vacuum that students experience in structured educational settings. Conventional pedagogical approaches often fall short in cultivating emotional insight, empathy, and reflective thinking—qualities essential for a well-rounded personality. In this context, experiential learning models and creative interventions, especially those rooted in expressive arts, are gaining recognition as powerful tools to bridge this gap.

Street theatre emerges as one such powerful medium that uniquely combines spontaneity, performance, emotional storytelling, and social commentary. As a participatory and accessible art form, street theatre invites individuals to engage with real-life issues while simultaneously exploring their internal emotional landscapes. The collaborative nature of street theatre—demanding emotional openness, coordination, mutual support, and public expression—makes it an ideal context for fostering various components of emotional intelligence such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, motivation, and interpersonal skills. Unlike traditional theatre, which is often rehearsed and performed in controlled environments, street theatre is dynamic, interactive, and raw—providing ample opportunities for authentic emotional expression and psychological growth.

Despite its widespread use as a tool for social awareness, activism, and education, the psychological effects of participating in street theatre have received little empirical attention, particularly in the Indian academic landscape. There is a notable lack of qualitative, participant-centered studies exploring how involvement in such creative practices shapes emotional development. This presents a compelling research gap, especially considering the rich cultural and political history of street theatre in India and its deep roots in community engagement and youth mobilization.

The current study is significant for several reasons. First, it adds to the limited body of research on arts-based interventions by specifically focusing on street theatre as a psychologically transformative experience. Second, it captures the subjective emotional experiences of college students, offering nuanced insights that go beyond numerical data. Third, it aligns with the goals of the National Education Policy (NEP 2020), which emphasizes the development of socio-emotional skills, holistic education, and experiential learning. Furthermore, the study offers

practical implications for educators, psychologists, counsellors, and curriculum developers interested in integrating creative modalities into student development programs. It may also serve as a foundation for future initiatives in expressive arts therapy and student mental health interventions.

By exploring how engagement in street theatre shapes emotional intelligence, this study seeks to illuminate an under-researched yet vital pathway for emotional and psychological growth among youth. It offers both scholarly and social relevance by combining the domains of mental health, performing arts, and education within a culturally grounded, student-driven context.

CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A well-grounded review of literature is vital to position any research study within its academic and theoretical context. In the present study, which explores how participation in street theatre impacts emotional intelligence among college students, it is essential to examine relevant concepts and findings across three intersecting domains: emotional intelligence, experiential arts-based learning, and the psychological impact of street theatre.

Emotional intelligence (EI), a concept popularized by Daniel Goleman, encompasses a range of intra- and interpersonal competencies that are crucial for adaptive functioning, especially among young adults navigating the challenges of higher education. While EI has been extensively studied in educational and organizational settings, limited research exists on how emotional competencies can be cultivated through creative, expressive, and experiential platforms.

Street theatre—often rooted in social commentary and community engagement—has historically served as a tool for public awareness, activism, and empowerment. As a spontaneous, collaborative, and emotionally evocative art form, it offers fertile ground for emotional exploration, reflection, and transformation. Its participatory nature makes it especially relevant for student populations seeking personal expression, social belonging, and emotional resilience.

A growing body of literature suggests that engagement in performing arts, particularly drama and theatre-based interventions, can significantly enhance components of emotional intelligence, such as empathy, self-awareness, and emotion regulation. However, empirical studies that specifically explore street theatre as a medium of emotional development—particularly within the Indian context—remain scarce. Moreover, most existing research employs quantitative approaches, leaving a gap in qualitative, phenomenological studies that center the voices and lived experiences of participants.

Arias and Neira-Piñeiro (2024) conducted an experimental study to assess the effectiveness of a drama-based intervention in improving emotional intelligence among early childhood learners. The researchers used a pre–post–follow-up experimental design involving 82 children who participated in a two-month structured drama program. Emotional intelligence was measured using standardized tools such as PKBS-2, FEEL, and e-Motion 1.0. The findings demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in emotional intelligence, characterized by enhanced emotional recognition, empathy, and self-confidence, alongside a reduction in negative behaviors. Notably, these positive outcomes were sustained even during the follow-up phase, indicating the long-term effectiveness of drama-based approaches. This study reinforces the potential of performative, expressive arts like drama as valuable tools for developing emotional skills, even in early educational settings. Although conducted with young children, the results have broader implications for arts-based emotional learning models, including in youth and higher education contexts.

Yadav (2024) conducted a qualitative case study to explore how street theatre functions as a tool for enhancing social communication within local communities. The study employed textual and contextual analysis, examining the real-world impact of street theatre performances on communal dialogue and civic engagement. The findings revealed that street theatre significantly improved participatory communication, especially around sensitive social issues such as labor rights, caste discrimination, gender equality, and government accountability. Performances served as emotionally engaging platforms that facilitated public awareness and sparked critical discourse among diverse audience groups. By encouraging open interaction and dramatizing lived experiences, street theatre was shown to empower marginalized voices and foster emotional engagement with social themes. This study affirms the transformative power of street theatre, not

just in communication, but in cultivating empathy, social responsibility, and emotional activation—making it highly relevant for emotionally oriented psychological studies.

Nitima, Katoch, and Pathania (2024) conducted a cross-sectional survey to investigate gender-based differences in emotional intelligence (EI) and their impact on interpersonal relationships among college students. Participants were assessed using standardized emotional intelligence scales alongside interpersonal relationship questionnaires, focusing on domains such as emotional regulation, empathy, and relational dynamics. The findings revealed that male students scored significantly higher than female students in managing emotions and empathy-related components, indicating distinct gender differences in emotional and interpersonal functioning. This study offers valuable insight into the influence of gender on emotional intelligence, which is critical for educators and counsellors aiming to develop inclusive emotional development programs. The results also highlight the importance of tailoring expressive interventions, such as drama or theatre-based workshops, to accommodate diverse emotional profiles among youth.

Gatsakou, Bardis, and Drigas (2022) explored the potential of using theatre-inspired pedagogical tools in distant learning environments to enhance emotional intelligence. The researchers adopted a conceptual-developmental approach, introducing the "Theatre of Mind", a tabletop role-playing simulation conducted through ICT and remote learning platforms. The intervention simulated real-life social and emotional scenarios, offering learners structured opportunities to explore emotional responses in a guided environment. Findings revealed that even in remote settings, participants developed enhanced emotional awareness, empathy, and self-regulation, indicating the effectiveness of theatre-based learning models in cultivating emotional intelligence. This study underscores the adaptability of theatre as a developmental tool across

formats and contexts, further affirming the relevance of performance-based learning in both in-person and digital education.

Evans (2022) conducted an innovative mixed-methods doctoral study at the University of Central Lancashire, exploring how audiences emotionally respond to live theatre. In response to declining theatre attendance, Evans sought to understand how emotions influence audience engagement by introducing a framework for measuring real-time physiological responses during performances. The study involved wearable biometric equipment used on nine participants attending Lauren Gunderson's play "I and You" at London's Hampstead Theatre. Results showed significant physiological arousal—including increased heart rate and skin conductivity—during emotionally intense plot moments, especially at the play's climax. These data were triangulated with participants' self-reported emotions, such as sadness and surprise, confirming alignment between narrative intensity and emotional experience. This study not only affirms the emotive power of theatrical performances but also introduces a scientific model for emotional impact assessment. It reinforces the claim that theatre—by stimulating audience empathy, emotional resonance, and memory—can be used as an effective psychological and pedagogical tool in emotional development.

Alfonso-Benlliure, Motos Teruel, and Fields (2021) conducted a comparative study to examine whether young drama practitioners exhibit higher levels of creativity and emotional intelligence than their non-drama-involved peers. The study involved a sample of 222 adolescents and young adults (aged 13–21) and assessed creative and socio-emotional development in relation to the duration of participation in drama studies. The findings revealed that individuals with over two years of drama experience demonstrated significantly greater creative fluency, flexibility, originality, and self-perceived creativity compared to those with less or no experience. However,

the results indicated no statistically significant differences in socio-emotional intelligence across different levels of drama participation. While creativity was strongly linked to sustained drama involvement, emotional intelligence appeared less influenced by the length of exposure. Nevertheless, participants widely reported perceived emotional benefits such as self-expression, adaptability, and improved confidence, particularly in interviews and discussion groups. This study provides nuanced insights, suggesting that drama training may promote creativity more directly than emotional intelligence, though both are interrelated in the developmental trajectory of youth.

Munro, Lemmer, Pretorius, and Munro (2019) conducted an exploratory study to investigate the impact of theatre-based strategies on enhancing emotional intelligence (EI) in business communication contexts. The study involved participants who engaged in structured theatre-based workshops aimed at developing core emotional competencies. Using the Bar-On EQ-i scale, emotional intelligence was measured both before and after the intervention. The results indicated a statistically significant improvement in participants' emotional intelligence scores, particularly in areas such as self-awareness, empathy, and emotional regulation. The findings support the idea that interactive, experiential methods like theatre can be powerful tools in cultivating soft skills necessary for effective communication and interpersonal understanding, especially in high-stakes professional settings. Although the sample was drawn from business-related domains, the implications of this study are highly relevant to educational psychology and student development, where similar emotional skills are essential.

Rashid (2015) conducted a qualitative analysis of street theatre initiatives by the cultural groups Lok Raqs and Ajoka in Punjab, Pakistan, focusing on how performative arts were used as tools for community development, human rights advocacy, and health awareness. Through a

detailed examination of street performances addressing socio-political issues, the study illustrated how street theatre served as an effective medium for mobilizing public discourse, especially in rural and marginalized areas. These performances not only promoted collective awareness but also provided platforms for feminist engagement and participatory dialogue in traditionally conservative regions. The findings affirmed the transformative power of street theatre as a grassroots communication strategy, capable of fostering emotional connection, social reflection, and behavioral change. While the study was grounded in a sociopolitical context, its implications extend to the psychological sphere, where such emotionally charged public performances can influence participants' empathy, expression, and emotional awareness.

Banerjee (2013) conducted an analytical study exploring the evolution of street theatre and its role in promoting social communication in contemporary India. The research emphasized how street theatre has historically transitioned from a cultural performance form to a powerful communicative tool, particularly effective in community development and public discourse. The study found that street theatre successfully engages both performers and audiences in emotionally charged, participatory storytelling, often centered around social justice, awareness, and advocacy. By dramatizing real-life issues in accessible public spaces, street theatre fosters empathy, reflection, and emotional dialogue, allowing individuals and communities to connect over shared experiences and challenges. Banerjee concludes that street theatre remains one of the most emotionally resonant and socially impactful mediums for addressing grassroots issues, making it highly relevant for studies on emotional expression, community awareness, and youth engagement.

Dattoo and Chagani (2011) investigated the role of street theatre as a form of critical pedagogy within social studies education. Using a dialogical and analytical approach, the

researchers examined a specific street theatre performance, focusing on both its technical elements (e.g., body movement, use of props, audiovisual aids) and its psychological processes, including catharsis and conscientization. The study found that street theatre fosters critical reflection, emotional awakening, and action against social oppression, aligning with the principles of liberatory education. It also engages multiple intelligences, such as visual, emotional, and kinesthetic, making it a powerful educational and emotional tool. The findings emphasize the theatre's ability to encourage self-awareness, social responsibility, and emotional empowerment, which are central to both education and psychological development. As such, this research provides strong support for integrating theatre-based interventions in educational settings aimed at building emotional intelligence.

Pelto and Singh (2010) conducted a case study on the use of community street theatre as a public health intervention in Mumbai, India, specifically targeting HIV risk reduction and alcohol misuse awareness. The study analyzed the structure, delivery, and audience reception of street theatre performances conducted in urban neighborhoods with high-risk populations. The results indicated that street theatre served as an effective and culturally relevant medium for communicating sensitive health messages, encouraging behavioral change, and fostering community dialogue around taboo subjects. The emotionally engaging nature of the performances enabled deeper audience connection and retention of information, making it a valuable social intervention tool. This study highlights how emotive storytelling and performance can support psychological awareness, influence behavior, and enhance public health outcomes—demonstrating strong parallels with emotional intelligence development through participatory arts.

Capila and Bhalla (2010) conducted a participatory action research study to examine how street theatre can be used as a tool for edutainment—the fusion of education and entertainment—

among urban youth in Delhi. The intervention involved direct participation of adolescents in the creation and performance of street theatre pieces centered on social themes. The researchers found that the active engagement process significantly enhanced participants' cognitive, social, and emotional competencies, particularly in areas such as critical thinking, self-management, empathy, and social awareness. Beyond skill-building, the performances also fostered a stronger sense of personal identity and civic responsibility, demonstrating that street theatre can serve as both a developmental and pedagogical platform. The study affirms the role of interactive, expressive mediums in facilitating emotional growth and life skill development in youth, making it highly relevant for research into emotional intelligence enhancement through arts-based practices.

Aguilar, Beadu, and Anthony (2009) examined the role of community-based arts in fostering emotional intelligence among adolescents, as published in *Reclaiming Children & Youth*. The authors explored how emotional development is deeply intertwined with the adolescent need for independence, decision-making, and meaningful social interaction. The study emphasized that emotions such as mood, motivation, and affective awareness are critical components of intellectual and personal growth during adolescence. A central argument made by the authors is that a lack of emotional education and support structures leaves young people vulnerable to emotional instability and social alienation. Community-based arts programs, particularly those involving collaborative creation and performance, were identified as natural settings for emotional exploration and interpersonal connection. These environments allow adolescents to navigate their emotional worlds through creative expression, building empathy, self-reflection, and stronger relational bonds. This aligns with broader research into arts-based interventions as tools for emotional skill-building and offers further validation for using performative art forms like street theatre in educational and therapeutic settings.

Research Gap

While a growing body of literature highlights the positive impact of theatre and drama on emotional, cognitive, and social development, a critical review of existing studies reveals several key gaps that warrant further investigation—particularly in the context of street theatre and emotional intelligence among college students.

Firstly, most existing studies focus on traditional or classroom-based drama education, with an emphasis on structured theatre programs or scripted performances. Research on street theatre, a more informal, socially-engaged, and emotionally evocative form of performance, remains limited—especially when evaluated for its psychological and emotional effects on performers themselves rather than just audiences. Street theatre, by nature, involves real-time emotional improvisation, public interaction, and deep personal expression, all of which have the potential to enhance emotional competencies. However, empirical studies assessing how participation in street theatre shapes emotional intelligence—particularly in the Indian collegiate context—are scarce.

Secondly, quantitative studies dominate this field, measuring emotional intelligence through standardized instruments, but offering little insight into the lived experiences and subjective emotional growth of participants. There is a notable absence of qualitative research that captures the nuanced emotional journeys of individuals involved in expressive arts like street theatre. A qualitative approach is essential to understand how performers reflect on, internalize, and emotionally grow through their theatrical engagement.

Thirdly, while existing research covers areas like empathy, creativity, and communication skills, few studies examine emotional intelligence holistically, integrating its core components—self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills—in the context of

participatory arts. There is also limited exploration of gender, cultural, and contextual factors influencing emotional development through theatre in Indian higher education settings.

Finally, despite the increasing popularity of arts-based pedagogical methods in mental health and education, street theatre is underutilized and under-researched as an emotional learning tool, especially in mainstream academic frameworks.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

The success of any research lies in the rigor and relevance of its methodological design. This chapter presents a detailed description of the research process adopted in the present study titled: “A Qualitative Study on the Role of Street Theatre in Enhancing Emotional Intelligence among College Students.” The chapter explains the approach, design, tools, and techniques used to explore how engagement in street theatre contributes to the development of emotional intelligence among young adult learners in a collegiate setting.

Emotional intelligence, a multidimensional construct encompassing self-awareness, empathy, emotional regulation, and social skills, is increasingly viewed as vital for personal and professional success. While a range of educational and therapeutic strategies have been used to enhance emotional intelligence, there is limited research on the influence of performing arts, especially street theatre, in this domain. Street theatre, by its nature, requires performers to inhabit complex emotional roles, respond spontaneously to diverse audiences, and communicate through powerful, emotionally charged narratives. These experiences are believed to nurture deep emotional processing, social awareness, and interpersonal competence—core elements of emotional intelligence.

Given the subjective, experiential, and reflective dimensions of the phenomenon under study, a qualitative, phenomenological research design was deemed most appropriate. The focus was on capturing the lived experiences and personal transformations of students who actively participated in street theatre performances, rather than on numerical measurement alone. Through in-depth interviews, observations, and reflective narratives, the study aimed to understand how such participation influences their ability to perceive, process, and manage emotions in real-life contexts.

This chapter is structured into several key sections, including:

- The research approach and design,
- Details of the research setting,
- Sampling strategy and participant selection,
- The tools and techniques used for data collection,
- The data analysis procedures
- ethical considerations observed during the study.

Together, these methodological components were carefully chosen and implemented to ensure that the research findings are both valid and contextually rich, providing a deeper understanding of the emotional impact of theatre-based expression on college students in India.

Research Approach and Design

The present study adopted a qualitative research approach to explore the emotional experiences and developmental outcomes of college students engaged in street theatre. Qualitative research is particularly suited for inquiries that seek to understand individual perceptions, lived experiences, and complex emotional processes in natural settings. Since emotional intelligence is a deeply subjective and context-dependent construct, it cannot be fully captured through quantitative metrics alone. A qualitative methodology enables the researcher to access the depth, richness, and nuance of participant reflections and experiences.

To further refine the inquiry, a phenomenological research design was chosen. Phenomenology focuses on the lived experiences of individuals, aiming to uncover the essence and meaning of a phenomenon as it is perceived and experienced by participants. In this context, the phenomenon under investigation is the experience of performing in street theatre and its impact

on emotional intelligence development. The design allowed participants to describe their emotional journeys, personal transformations, and interpersonal insights gained through theatre, in their own words and from their unique perspectives.

This design was ideal for uncovering recurring emotional themes such as self-awareness, empathy, emotional regulation, interpersonal connection, and social expression, which are central components of emotional intelligence. Rather than testing predefined hypotheses, the study aimed to discover patterns and meaning through deep engagement with participant narratives.

Furthermore, this approach facilitated the examination of emotional and social learning within the authentic and dynamic environment of street theatre, which inherently involves real-time emotional expression, audience interaction, and collaborative storytelling. Such elements make street theatre a rich site for exploring how emotional intelligence develops through embodied practice and lived experience.

In summary, the qualitative phenomenological approach employed in this study provided a powerful lens to examine the subjective emotional development of student performers, enabling the generation of meaningful insights that can inform future research and practice in arts-based emotional education.

Research Setting

The present study was conducted at (Name of the college is not mentioned to maintain anonymity) an institution, known for its emphasis on community development, social engagement, and experiential learning. The college provides a conducive environment for interdisciplinary and socially relevant research, especially in the domains of psychology, social work, disaster management, and sociology. The campus has a strong tradition of incorporating performing arts and participatory methods, including street theatre, into its academic and extension activities.

The participants of this study were postgraduate students from four academic disciplines:

- M.Sc. Counselling Psychology
- Master of Social Work (MSW)
- MSW Disaster Management
- M.A. Sociology

All participants had attended a formal street theatre workshop conducted within the college as part of their academic or extracurricular engagement. This workshop included practical training in theatrical techniques such as voice modulation, body movement, improvisation, emotional enactment, and social storytelling, specifically aimed at using theatre as a tool for awareness, communication, and transformation.

The performances were designed to be delivered in public and community-based spaces, with themes centered around social justice, mental health, environmental crises, and gender equality. These engagements provided students with the opportunity to translate academic learning into embodied performance, requiring real-time emotional engagement, teamwork, and adaptability—key competencies linked to emotional intelligence.

The participants belonged to the age group of 20 to 25 years, a developmental stage that is critical for the formation and consolidation of emotional, social, and professional identity. Conducting the research within this age cohort allowed for a focused investigation into how emotionally expressive and community-centered practices like street theatre contribute to emotional maturity, empathy, and self-regulation in young adults.

The setting also included both academic spaces (e.g., classrooms, seminar halls) where preparatory activities and debriefings took place, and community or open spaces where

performances were staged. This dual context enabled the researcher to observe and understand the transition of emotional learning from controlled settings to dynamic, unpredictable environments, thereby enriching the depth of qualitative data collected.

Thus, (Name of the college is not mentioned to maintain anonymity) provided a holistic, academically rich, and socially engaged environment that was ideally suited for exploring the intersection of emotional intelligence and street theatre practice among postgraduate students.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The present study employed a purposive sampling technique; a non-probability method widely used in qualitative research to deliberately select individuals who possess specific characteristics and experiences relevant to the phenomenon under study. This approach is particularly suitable when the research seeks in-depth, experiential insights rather than broad generalizations. In this case, participants were selected based on their active involvement in a structured street theatre workshop conducted at (Name of the college is not mentioned to maintain anonymity)

The final sample consisted of eight (8) postgraduate students, all of whom had completed the workshop and had actively taken part in street theatre rehearsals or live public performances organized by the institution. These participants were enrolled in one of the following postgraduate programs:

- M.Sc. Counselling Psychology
- Master of Social Work (MSW)
- MSW. Disaster Management
- M.A. Sociology

The students represented a diverse academic and disciplinary background, yet they shared a unifying experience: engagement with street theatre as both a communicative and expressive medium. Their multidisciplinary foundations offered a rich perspective on emotional growth, empathy, and interpersonal sensitivity from different lenses—psychological, sociological, developmental, and humanitarian.

All eight participants fell within the age range of 20 to 25 years, a developmental phase marked by identity formation, emotional exploration, and growing self-awareness. This age group is especially relevant to emotional intelligence research, as young adults are still shaping their emotional regulation, empathy, and coping strategies in response to real-world challenges and interactions.

To ensure relevance and depth, the following inclusion criteria were established:

- Currently enrolled in a full-time postgraduate program at (Name of the college is not mentioned to maintain anonymity)
- Aged between 20 and 25 years
- Completed a formal street theatre workshop offered by the institution
- Participated in at least one street theatre performance or group rehearsal
- Willing to share reflective insights and participate in semi-structured interviews

Exclusion criteria:

- Students who observed but did not participate in performances
- Individuals who had minimal or no exposure to street theatre
- Unwillingness to provide informed consent or speak about personal experiences

Though relatively small, the sample size of eight was consistent with qualitative research norms, especially in phenomenological studies. Data saturation—the point at which no new themes or insights emerge—was used as the guiding principle to determine sample adequacy. During analysis, it was found that the narratives from these eight participants were thematically rich, recurrent, and emotionally layered, providing sufficient depth for interpretation.

Moreover, the sample offered a balance of gender, discipline, and personality types, which allowed the study to explore how emotional intelligence through theatre may be influenced by both individual traits and shared performative experiences. This purposeful and contextually grounded sampling strategy enabled the researcher to extract meaningful themes and generate insights that are relevant, valid, and deeply contextualized within the lived realities of young adult learners in India.

Tools

In qualitative research, particularly within a phenomenological framework, the choice of data collection tools plays a critical role in capturing the depth, authenticity, and emotional complexity of participant experiences. The present study aimed to explore the lived emotional impact of street theatre among postgraduate students, focusing on the development of emotional intelligence. Therefore, tools were selected to allow for open-ended dialogue, naturalistic observation, and personal reflection within both performance and academic settings.

To ensure a holistic and trustworthy exploration, three primary tools and techniques were employed:

1. Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

The central tool for data collection was a semi-structured interview schedule, crafted to encourage open dialogue while ensuring consistency across interviews. This format allowed participants to narrate their own experiences with minimal restriction, while also enabling the researcher to probe deeper into specific aspects related to emotional intelligence.

The interview schedule included questions designed around the five domains of Goleman's model of emotional intelligence:

Self-awareness: "Have you become more conscious of your emotions during performances?"

Self-regulation: "How do you manage stage fear, anxiety, or emotional pressure during theatre?"

Motivation: "What drives you to participate in socially themed performances?"

Empathy: "Have you ever felt emotionally connected with the characters or audience?"

Social skills: "How has theatre influenced your relationships and communication with others?"

Each interview lasted between 30 to 45 minutes and was conducted in a quiet, familiar environment—often a classroom, seminar room, or open space within the college—to ensure participant comfort. Importantly, with the informed consent of each participant, all interviews were audio-recorded using a mobile phone. This method ensured clear, uninterrupted recordings, which were later transcribed verbatim to retain the tone, pauses, emotions, and spontaneous expressions that are often critical in understanding the internal experiences of participants.

The use of a mobile phone for recording proved to be both practical and non-intrusive, allowing participants to speak freely without the pressure of formal recording equipment.

2. Field Notes and Naturalistic Observation

In addition to interviews, the researcher employed direct observation techniques during live rehearsals, workshops, and public performances. These sessions served as a vital opportunity to observe how emotional intelligence manifested non-verbally—through expressions, tone, posture, movement, and group dynamics.

Detailed field notes were recorded immediately after each observation session. These included:

- Emotional intensity during scenes (e.g., anger, sadness, joy)
- Signs of empathy and bonding among participants
- Reactions to audience feedback or interruptions
- Peer collaboration, conflict resolution, and leadership behaviors
- Emotional debriefing after performances (informal group reflection)

This method allowed for the triangulation of data, validating what participants shared in interviews with how they emotionally engaged in live practice.

3. Demographic and Contextual Profile Sheet

A basic demographic form was used to collect essential participant details. This included:

- Age
- Gender
- Academic program (e.g., MSW, M.Sc. Counselling Psychology)
- Duration of theatre experience
- Number of workshops or performances attended
- Language(s) used in performances
- Preferred roles (actor, narrator, facilitator, etc.)

This contextual data helped the researcher identify patterns in how emotional intelligence may develop across disciplines, personality traits, or roles within the theatre group.

Triangulation and Trustworthiness

By integrating data from three distinct sources—interviews, observation, and demographic context—the study achieved methodological triangulation, enhancing the credibility and trustworthiness of findings. The recorded interviews preserved participant authenticity, the field notes provided situated behavioral insight, and the profile sheets offered comparative context.

This multi-modal strategy ensured that emotional development was examined not just as an abstract construct, but as a lived, embodied, and socially contextualized experience within the framework of street theatre performance.

Research Questions

This qualitative study was designed to explore the emotional and psychological impact of participating in a college street theatre workshop, with a focus on how such participation influences components of emotional intelligence (EI). The study draws upon Daniel Goleman's (1995) five-domain model of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Given the expressive, performative, and collaborative nature of street theatre, the following research questions were formulated to guide the inquiry:

General Research Question

How does participation in street theatre influence the emotional intelligence of college students?

This overarching question seeks to explore the broad emotional transformations that occur when students engage in street theatre as a creative, expressive, and interactive group activity. It focuses on the participants' subjective experiences and how these experiences may contribute to growth in key emotional capacities.

Specific Research Questions

1. In what ways does street theatre help students become more self-aware of their emotions, strengths, and vulnerabilities?

This question addresses the first domain of emotional intelligence—self-awareness. It examines how dramatic enactment, storytelling, and role-playing facilitate introspection, the recognition of suppressed or unconscious emotions, and greater clarity about one's inner life.

2. How does participation in street theatre improve students' ability to regulate and express their emotions constructively?

Linked to the EI domain of self-regulation, this question investigates how students develop emotional control, coping strategies (such as mindfulness, breathing, or grounding), and the capacity to express emotions in socially appropriate and personally meaningful ways during and after the workshop.

3. How does involvement in street theatre foster empathy, compassion, and emotional understanding of others?

Reflecting the empathy domain, this question explores how interaction with peers, sharing of personal stories, and the portrayal of emotionally intense roles enable students to better understand, resonate with, and connect to the emotional experiences of others.

4. How does emotional growth during the workshop contribute to students' motivation, confidence, and sense of purpose?

This question aligns with the motivation component of emotional intelligence and seeks to understand how emotional breakthroughs during the workshop translate into increased self-belief, drive, and goal orientation in academic or personal life.

5. What changes do students experience in their social relationships and communication patterns following participation in the workshop?

Connected to the domain of social skills, this question aims to explore whether participants develop improved interpersonal sensitivity, better communication, emotional trust, and stronger relational bonds because of the collaborative nature of street theatre.

Procedure for Data Collection

The process of data collection in this qualitative study was designed to prioritize authentic emotional narratives, comfort, and accessibility, in alignment with the phenomenological research design. Since the focus of the study was on exploring the emotional impact of street theatre from the perspective of student participants, the data collection was intentionally situated within naturalistic and familiar environments where participants felt secure, open, and unjudged.

Participants were selected based on prior rapport and accessibility, primarily from the postgraduate hostel community, where the researcher was able to interact with fellow students in a more informal and trusting context. This method not only ensured participants' willingness and emotional readiness to participate, but also facilitated rich, reflective conversations that revealed the depth and texture of their experiences in street theatre.

Identification and Approach of Participants

The initial stage involved identifying students who had completed the street theatre workshop offered by the college and who had been actively involved in rehearsals or live performances. The researcher chose to engage participants who were easily reachable within the hostel setting and who were personally known to be expressive, reflective, and comfortable discussing emotional experiences.

This deliberate and relational approach allowed the researcher to select individuals from whom in-depth emotional insights could be obtained, aligning with the goals of purposive sampling in phenomenological inquiry. All participants belonged to postgraduate programs such as M.Sc. Counselling Psychology, MSW, MA Disaster Management, and MA Sociology.

Establishing Consent and Comfort

Before initiating the interviews, each participant was personally briefed about the purpose and scope of the study. The researcher ensured that participation was entirely voluntary, and participants were reassured about:

- The confidentiality of their responses
- The non-judgmental, non-evaluative nature of the conversation
- Their freedom to decline or skip any question
- The use of a mobile phone for audio recording solely for transcription purposes

Given the pre-existing relationship between the researcher and participants, a high level of comfort and mutual respect was already present. This rapport significantly enhanced the depth and sincerity of participant responses, particularly on emotionally sensitive topics such as fear, vulnerability, personal growth, and self-perception.

Interview Process and Environment

Interviews were conducted in informal, distraction-free spaces within the hostel premises—such as individual rooms, quiet corners, or shaded outdoor areas. These relaxed environments encouraged participants to engage in candid, heartfelt storytelling, which is central to phenomenological research.

Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes and was conducted using a semi-structured interview guide. This format balanced structure with openness, allowing the researcher to probe deeply into emerging themes such as:

- Emotional reactions during and after performances
- Changes in self-awareness, empathy, and social confidence
- Peer interactions and group bonding through theatre
- Reflections on learning through performance

The conversations were audio recorded on a mobile phone with explicit verbal consent. Recordings were later transcribed verbatim, preserving the authenticity of participant language, tone, and emotional nuance.

Reflective Field Notes and Contextual Insights

Although the primary focus was on interviews, the researcher also maintained reflective field notes throughout the data collection period. These notes documented:

- Observed emotional expressions during rehearsals and performances
- Informal interactions and group dynamics in theatre settings
- Spontaneous insights shared outside the interview context

- Researcher's own emotional responses and observations

These reflections provided valuable contextual depth and helped triangulate the interview data, ensuring the findings were not only grounded in participant narratives but also observationally supported.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data for this study was analyzed using the thematic analysis approach developed by Braun and Clarke (2013), which provides a structured yet flexible framework to identify, interpret, and report patterns of meaning within textual data. This method was particularly suited to the present research, as it allowed for the exploration of nuanced emotional experiences, reflections, and personal insights shared by college students who participated in a street theatre workshop. The analysis aimed to uncover how involvement in such an expressive and participatory art form influenced different dimensions of emotional intelligence—specifically self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, motivation, and social relationships.

The process of analysis began with a deep familiarization with the data. All eight participant interviews were transcribed verbatim and read repeatedly in order to gain an intimate understanding of the emotional and psychological journeys conveyed in the narratives. This phase was not merely about decoding the content of what was said, but also about engaging with how it was said—tone, pauses, silences, and moments of emotional tension or catharsis. During this initial stage, I observed that many participants described the workshop as a turning point in their self-understanding. Words like “I realized,” “I never thought,” and “I felt something shift in me” occurred frequently, indicating that street theatre had triggered emotional insights and internal

reflection. Participants also expressed feelings of emotional safety, community bonding, and empowerment—experiences that set the groundwork for deeper emotional learning.

Following familiarization, the second phase of analysis involved the generation of initial codes. Each transcript was examined closely, and significant statements were identified and labelled with interpretive codes that captured their emotional and psychological essence. These codes reflected a range of experiences, such as overcoming performance anxiety, expressing suppressed emotions, connecting with peers through vulnerability, and discovering new coping strategies. For example, one participant mentioned, “I used to shut down when overwhelmed, but now I try deep breathing like we practiced,” which was coded as emotional regulation and adaptive coping. Another said, “Listening to her story made me realize how quick I am to judge others,” which was coded under developing empathy and reflective awareness. The coding process was inductive, meaning that codes emerged organically from the data rather than being imposed by predetermined categories. This ensured that the analysis remained grounded in the lived realities of the participants.

Once a comprehensive list of initial codes had been generated across all transcripts, the next stage involved searching for broader patterns among these codes—what Braun and Clarke refer to as the search for themes. This step involved grouping related codes under overarching thematic categories that represented meaningful dimensions of the participants’ experiences. For instance, codes such as “realizing suppressed emotions,” “discovering triggers,” and “feeling vulnerable but safe” were clustered into a theme representing emotional self-awareness. Similarly, codes related to learning stress-relief techniques, emotional expression through art, and mindfulness practices were grouped under the theme of emotional regulation. Importantly, themes were developed not merely based on frequency of codes, but on their conceptual richness,

emotional weight, and relevance to the research objectives. This process involved active interpretation and theoretical sensitivity, as I continually related emerging themes to the components of emotional intelligence as conceptualized by Daniel Goleman (1995).

In the reviewing themes phase, each theme was critically examined to ensure that it was coherent, distinct, and robust. This involved returning to the raw data to verify that the codes grouped under each theme genuinely belonged together and accurately reflected what the participants had conveyed. Where necessary, themes were revised, split, or merged to enhance conceptual clarity. For example, what initially appeared as a single theme on social connection was later refined into two distinct themes: one focusing on empathy and collective understanding, and another on lasting shifts in interpersonal dynamics. The review also ensured that the final themes represented a wide range of participant experiences, avoiding the privileging of a few dominant narratives.

Defining and naming the themes was the next critical step, which involved articulating the core meaning of each theme and refining its scope. Each theme was carefully described to encapsulate its psychological depth and emotional complexity. The first theme, Emotional Discovery and Self-Awareness, captured the participants' journey of confronting and acknowledging their inner emotional lives. Many participants shared that the workshop served as a mirror through which they could observe their fears, insecurities, and emotional patterns—often for the first time. Some reported breaking down in tears during rehearsals, while others described moments of profound realization triggered by storytelling or character immersion. The second theme, Evolving Emotional Regulation Skills, illustrated how participants learned practical tools for managing their emotions, such as breathing exercises, mindfulness techniques, and creative expression. These strategies helped them navigate anxiety, performance pressure, and daily

emotional challenges. Participants also reported becoming more mindful of their reactions and learning to pause before responding impulsively—a key marker of emotional maturity.

The third theme, Empathy and Collective Understanding, reflected the powerful impact of shared vulnerability in the workshop setting. As participants listened to each other's personal stories and enacted emotionally charged scenes, they developed a deeper understanding of human complexity and learned to suspend judgment. Many described the workshop as a space where they felt truly seen and heard, and this experience of mutual recognition fostered emotional connection and compassion. The fourth theme, Motivation through Emotional Empowerment, highlighted the energizing effect of emotional validation and support. Participants reported increased confidence in expressing themselves, rediscovering old passions like acting or poetry, and feeling inspired to set new personal or academic goals. This motivation was not externally imposed but emerged from within, driven by the emotional clarity and self-belief nurtured during the workshop.

The fifth theme, Lasting Shifts in Interpersonal Dynamics, described how the group experience transformed the way participants related to others. What began as a group of strangers evolved into a circle of emotional support and trust. Participants noted that their communication with peers became more open, empathetic, and emotionally intelligent even after the workshop ended. They also felt more comfortable asserting themselves and offering emotional support to others, indicating a long-term impact on their social functioning. The final theme, Street Theatre as Therapeutic Expression, underscored the cathartic and healing nature of the workshop. Participants repeatedly used words like “relief,” “healing,” and “release” to describe their emotional experiences. The combination of performance, group dialogue, and expressive arts created a safe space where emotions could be acknowledged and processed constructively. For

some, the workshop served as a form of informal therapy, offering insights and emotional closure that had previously eluded them.

The entire thematic analysis process culminated in the production of a comprehensive interpretive narrative that weaves together the voices of the participants with theoretical understandings of emotional intelligence. The six themes collectively illustrate how street theatre, as an emotionally immersive and socially engaging art form, serves as a dynamic medium for emotional growth. By providing a structure in which students could safely explore, express, and process emotions, the workshop facilitated the development of emotional competencies central to well-being and social functioning. These findings, elaborated further in the next chapter, not only validate the use of creative arts in psychological development but also open up new pathways for experiential learning, therapeutic intervention, and mental health promotion in educational settings.

CHAPTER IV

RESULT & DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings of the present study and discusses their significance in the context of existing theory and research. The aim of this qualitative research was to explore how participation in a street theatre workshop influenced the emotional intelligence of college students. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with eight participants who took part in the workshop, and the responses were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2013) six-phase thematic analysis. The emerging themes are discussed below, each supported by participants' verbatim quotes, and interpreted in light of Daniel Goleman's Emotional Intelligence (EI) theory (1995).

The results revealed six core themes, each representing a significant domain of emotional and psychological change experienced by the participants. These themes are: (1) Emotional Discovery and Self-Awareness, (2) Evolving Emotional Regulation Skills, (3) Empathy and Collective Understanding, (4) Motivation through Emotional Empowerment, (5) Lasting Shifts in Interpersonal Dynamics, and (6) Street Theatre as Therapeutic Expression. These findings offer a deep insight into the way experiential, expressive, and collaborative art forms such as street theatre can function as powerful platforms for emotional learning and personal transformation.

Major themes and subthemes identified which is given below:

Table 1

Identified major themes and subthemes

Major Themes	Sub Themes
Emotional Discovery and Self-Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of suppressed emotions • Reflection on emotional triggers • Clarity of emotional identity
Evolving Emotional Regulation Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of coping techniques (breathing, music, yoga) • Emotional mindfulness • Adaptive responses during performances
Empathy and Collective Understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer bonding through emotional sharing • Emotional resonance with audience • Non-judgmental listening and perspective-taking
Motivation through Emotional Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overcoming stage fear • Boost in confidence and self-belief • Realignment of personal or career goals
Lasting Shifts in Interpersonal Dynamics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthened emotional connections • Improved communication

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust and emotional safety in team environments
Street Theatre as Therapeutic Expression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe emotional space • Emotional catharsis and healing • Group as a medium for emotional release and validation

Theme 1: Emotional Discovery and Self-Awareness

The most foundational and widely expressed experience among the participants was their journey into emotional discovery and self-awareness. This theme captures the deeply personal process through which students began to access, articulate, and understand their own emotions through the medium of street theatre. For many, this process marked the beginning of a new relationship with their inner world—one that was previously characterized by avoidance, suppression, or lack of clarity. Street theatre acted not just as an expressive performance activity but as an emotional excavation tool, enabling participants to confront layers of emotional experience that had long been buried under societal expectations, familial roles, or academic pressure.

Engagement with intense emotional content, the requirement to embody emotionally complex characters, and the non-threatening atmosphere of peer collaboration gave rise to moments of insight, release, and reflection. These emotionally charged moments prompted participants to encounter not just the emotions of the roles they were playing but also those that resided within themselves. As one participant poignantly stated:

> “I thought I was playing a character. But halfway through the rehearsal, I realized I was speaking from a place in me that I didn’t know existed. It wasn’t the script—it was me.”

The process of emotional self-discovery unfolded through three distinct subthemes: (1) Recognition of Suppressed Emotions, (2) Reflection on Emotional Triggers, and (3) Clarity of Emotional Identity.

Subtheme 1.1: Recognition of Suppressed Emotions

One of the most profound experiences articulated by participants was the emergence of long-suppressed emotions during the workshop. These emotions, which ranged from grief and fear to anger and sadness, had often been pushed aside in the pursuit of academic success, maintaining social roles, or due to the discomfort surrounding emotional expression. The performative and improvisational nature of street theatre, however, created a space where emotional barriers began to dissolve. Participants found themselves expressing emotions they had not consciously acknowledged in years.

One participant recounted:

> “We had this scene about abandonment. When I said the dialogue, my voice cracked. I wasn’t thinking about acting anymore—it brought back a memory of when my mother left for work every day and I used to cry alone. That emotion just came back like a wave.”

Another shared:

> “I didn’t realize how numb I had become until I saw others crying during the feedback circle. Then it hit me—I couldn’t even remember the last time I allowed myself to feel that deeply. The workshop kind of woke me up emotionally.”

These narratives reveal that street theatre created opportunities for emotional disinhibition—a necessary step in therapeutic exploration. The combination of structured role-play, physical embodiment, and audience attention allowed participants to bypass mental defenses and directly access emotional content. In therapeutic terms, this can be likened to the uncovering phase of emotional processing, where insight is sparked through unexpected emotional arousal.

This recognition was described as both painful and liberating. Some participants experienced emotional breakdowns or discomfort initially, but overwhelmingly, they reported a sense of relief, clarity, and connection to themselves. For many, it was the first time they confronted feelings they had never named before, such as feeling unworthy, invisible, or emotionally neglected. The emotional safety created by the group was crucial in allowing these expressions to unfold without shame or fear.

Subtheme 1.2: Reflection on Emotional Triggers

As suppressed emotions began to surface, participants started identifying the emotional triggers that evoked these responses. These triggers included certain dialogues, memories, themes such as loss or rejection, and even specific interpersonal interactions within the group. What was particularly notable was that participants did not merely react—they began analyzing the origin of these triggers. This self-inquiry represented a deepening of emotional intelligence and self-reflection.

One participant explained:

> “Whenever someone took over my scene or spoke over me, I would shut down. I thought it was about them being rude. But later I realized I hate being overshadowed because that always happened in my family. That scene made me see that.”

Another reflected:

> “During a role about bullying, I felt tense and sweaty. It reminded me of being teased in school. That fear—I had buried it. But acting it out made it real again, and I finally acknowledged it.”

This subtheme illustrates how the workshop created emotionally resonant situations that mirrored unresolved psychological material. Through experiential engagement, participants moved from unconscious emotional reactions to conscious emotional reflection. They started to ask, “Why am I feeling this?” rather than simply reacting. In Goleman’s framework, this reflects emotional attunement, a core element of self-awareness where one begins to track the inner emotional landscape with increasing clarity and curiosity.

The process of identifying emotional triggers also enabled participants to recognize recurring patterns in their emotional responses, such as fear of abandonment, sensitivity to criticism, or avoidance of intimacy. These patterns, once identified, opened the door for participants to reframe their emotional narratives and gain greater control over their emotional lives.

Subtheme 1.3: Clarity of Emotional Identity

The recognition of suppressed emotions and reflection on triggers gradually led participants toward a more integrated and coherent emotional identity. They began to articulate who they were emotionally—not just as performers or students, but as individuals with inner emotional maps shaped by past experiences, present habits, and future aspirations. Many began questioning the emotional masks they wore daily—such as “being strong,” “being funny,” or “being silent”—and started discovering the authentic self beneath the roles.

One participant described:

> “I always called myself an introvert, but this workshop made me realize I’m just afraid of being vulnerable. That’s different from being introverted. Now I know that.”

Another stated:

> “I used to think I was emotionally mature because I didn’t cry. But now I realize maturity is about understanding your emotions, not avoiding them.”

This clarity of emotional identity is central to psychological differentiation—the process of understanding one’s own emotional experience as separate from learned roles, societal expectations, or inherited beliefs. Participants described this emerging self-knowledge as empowering. They reported increased confidence in their ability to understand and manage themselves, make emotionally aligned decisions, and assert their feelings without guilt or confusion.

The workshop allowed them to “see themselves in high-definition,” as one participant beautifully described. Rather than viewing themselves through filtered images of perfection, productivity, or external validation, they began to accept their emotional realities with honesty and self-compassion.

Theoretical Integration: Goleman’s Emotional Intelligence and Embodied Awareness

This theme aligns directly with Goleman’s (1995) first domain of emotional intelligence: self-awareness—the foundational ability to recognize and understand one’s emotions, their causes, and their effects. In this study, self-awareness was not introduced through cognitive learning but

emerged through embodied emotional exploration, creative expression, and peer reflection. Unlike intellectual self-knowledge, this type of awareness is somatic, relational, and affective.

From a theoretical standpoint, this echoes experiential learning theory and the principles of expressive arts therapy, both of which propose that insight emerges through active engagement with symbols, performance, and relational processes. Street theatre—by its very nature—offers a holistic emotional learning environment, where participants engage cognitively, physically, emotionally, and socially. This allows for deeper, integrative growth that goes beyond surface-level understanding.

The participants' journey through this theme suggests that emotional self-awareness is not merely about identifying emotions but making meaning of them, recognizing their origins, and re-authoring one's narrative with clarity and compassion. It marks the shift from emotional passivity to emotional agency.

Theme 2: Evolving Emotional Regulation Skills

The second major theme that emerged from this study highlights the development of emotional regulation among participants—a core component of emotional intelligence that involves managing emotional responses in a flexible, constructive, and context-appropriate manner. In contrast to the initial discovery of emotions (as explored in Theme 1), this theme focuses on how participants learned to stay emotionally balanced, especially in situations that previously provoked anxiety, frustration, or emotional flooding.

For most students, the street theatre workshop was a novel emotional landscape. Unlike formal classroom environments where emotions are often muted or suppressed, the workshop demanded full emotional presence. This presented both a challenge and an opportunity. While many found themselves overwhelmed at first—by the vulnerability of group sharing or the

emotional demands of performance—they eventually developed strategies to regulate their emotional states. Over time, participants began to demonstrate greater control, adaptability, and inner composure.

Emotional regulation did not arise from didactic instruction but emerged organically through structured experiences, bodily practices, supportive peer feedback, and the process of repeatedly engaging with emotionally rich content. The subthemes that make up this theme include: (1) Use of Coping Techniques (Breathing, Music, Yoga), (2) Emotional Mindfulness, and (3) Adaptive Responses During Performances.

Subtheme 2.1: Use of Coping Techniques (Breathing, Music, Yoga)

Many participants reported that, in the early days of the workshop, they often felt overwhelmed by emotional intensity—particularly during storytelling, improvisations, or performances that tapped into painful memories or challenging topics. However, as the workshop progressed, they began integrating simple yet powerful coping techniques to manage these surges in emotional energy.

Breathing exercises were one of the most frequently cited tools. Whether taught directly by facilitators or adapted from warm-up routines, deep breathing became a grounding ritual before performances and during emotionally heightened states. Participants described how breath helped them reconnect to their bodies, release tension, and re-enter the present moment.

One participant shared:

> “I had always struggled with stage fear. I would feel my throat closing and my body shaking. But during the workshop, we practiced breathing every day. That helped me pause, focus, and center myself before going on stage.”

Others found music to be a vital emotional regulator. After emotionally intense scenes or group discussions, participants often turned to calming soundscapes or favorite playlists to soothe their nervous systems.

Another student reflected:

> “After an intense role-play about trauma, I felt drained. I put on some gentle instrumental music while lying on the grass near the theatre room. It helped me recover emotionally and return to the group.”

Some also described physical practices like stretching, walking, or yoga-inspired movement, which offered somatic grounding and emotional release. These embodied techniques, though subtle, were experienced as life tools—not just useful within the workshop but in everyday life situations involving academic stress, social anxiety, or emotional overwhelm.

These findings resonate with trauma-informed approaches to regulation, where bottom-up regulation strategies (i.e., breath, movement, sensory input) are seen as essential precursors to emotional stability. Participants developed not only cognitive tools but bodily memory of what it feels like to regulate emotion effectively. Such skills reflect emotional self-mastery, which Goleman (1995) defines as the ability to stay composed, think clearly, and respond appropriately under pressure.

Subtheme 2.2: Emotional Mindfulness

Alongside behavioral strategies, participants reported a growing capacity for emotional mindfulness—the ability to observe, label, and track their emotional states in real time. This

subtheme reflects the deepening of emotional literacy, where students became not only reactive beings but reflective emotional observers.

For example, participants described how they became more aware of emotional shifts within their bodies—tightness in the chest, heaviness in the throat, shakiness in the limbs—and learned to interpret these sensations as signals of emotional arousal. Instead of being swept away by these sensations, they began responding with curiosity and care.

One participant described this beautifully:

> “I used to think I was okay if I didn’t cry. But now I realize my body tells me everything. My heart races, my jaw tightens—that’s when I know I’m not okay. I’ve started paying attention to those cues.”

This growing somatic awareness marks a shift toward emotionally embodied mindfulness. Rather than intellectualizing their emotions, participants began to feel with presence—witnessing their internal states without judgment and using that awareness to make intentional choices.

Another participant reflected:

> “When I felt overwhelmed, I would give myself a mental check-in—‘What am I feeling? Do I need to rest? Should I speak or stay silent?’ I didn’t have this habit before. The workshop taught me to listen inward.”

Such responses indicate an integration of intrapersonal sensitivity—a skill that is crucial not only for emotional regulation but for authentic living. Emotional mindfulness fosters what psychologists call emotional granularity—the ability to differentiate between complex emotional

states and respond with precision rather than general emotionality (e.g., “I’m overwhelmed” becomes “I’m disappointed and anxious, but hopeful.”)

The workshop’s structure—characterized by emotional reflection circles, post-performance feedback, and space for silence—helped normalize such mindfulness practices. Participants were implicitly trained to tune in to themselves and others without the pressure to fix or suppress what they felt. This aligns with Goleman’s conceptualization of emotional self-regulation as both awareness and choice, not suppression or denial.

Subtheme 2.3: Adaptive Responses During Performances

Perhaps one of the most sophisticated manifestations of emotional regulation was evident during actual performance situations. Street theatre, by nature, involves unpredictable emotional engagement. Roles often demanded participants to portray emotionally complex characters—victims of violence, socially marginalized individuals, or those suffering from internal conflicts. These characters often evoked personal parallels, challenging students to perform while emotionally activated.

Initially, this was difficult. Some participants reported freezing, crying uncontrollably, or feeling disconnected. However, over time, they began developing adaptive strategies to manage their emotions while remaining emotionally present in the role.

One student described this nuanced process:

> “In one scene, I had to act as someone facing domestic violence. I realized I was getting too emotional—shaking, tearing up. I almost broke character. But I took a breath, grounded my feet, and used that emotion for the character instead of against myself.”

Another participant offered this insight:

> “Earlier, if I cried on stage, I felt ashamed. Now I understand that it’s okay to cry with control—to let emotion move through you, but not take over. That’s the difference the workshop made.”

These examples showcase emotional modulation—a sophisticated EI skill where emotions are not suppressed but channeled purposefully. The line between acting and authenticity blurred, creating a space where participants could access their real emotions in service of the performance, without collapsing into them.

This ability to regulate in high-pressure, public contexts mirrors real-life emotional challenges—public speaking, conflict resolution, giving or receiving feedback, navigating emotionally loaded conversations. The capacity to “stay grounded while expressing” is one of the hallmarks of emotional maturity, and the participants’ growth in this area indicates a leap in emotional development.

Theoretical Integration: Emotional Intelligence and Embodied Regulation

The findings in this theme offer rich evidence for Goleman’s second dimension of Emotional Intelligence: Self-Regulation. As per Goleman (1995), emotional regulation is more than self-control—it involves the transformation of emotional energy into productive expression, maintaining calm under stress, and adapting to change with emotional agility.

In this study, regulation evolved through experiential learning, not abstract instruction. Students became emotionally intelligent by doing—by breathing through anxiety, navigating emotional storms during performances, and returning to reflection and connection. These are deeply embodied competencies that go beyond cognitive strategies.

Moreover, the findings resonate with principles of polyvagal theory (Porges, 2011), which emphasize the role of physiological safety and co-regulation in emotional stability. The workshop, with its blend of movement, vocal expression, group support, and safety cues, allowed for nervous system recalibration—a biological precondition for higher emotional functioning.

The holistic integration of emotional awareness, bodily regulation, interpersonal validation, and creative expression positions street theatre not just as an art form but as a transformational emotional learning environment.

Theme 3: Empathy and Collective Understanding

One of the most profound psychosocial transformations observed among participants during the street theatre workshop was the emergence of empathy—not merely as an abstract concept, but as a felt, embodied, and enacted capacity. This theme encapsulates the participants' journey into recognizing, connecting with, and internalizing the emotional lives of others, both within the theatre group and beyond it. Empathy, as it unfolded here, was not restricted to emotional resonance; it included the ability to feel with others, understand others' perspectives, and cultivate deep emotional solidarity, especially in emotionally charged and socially relevant contexts.

Street theatre, by its very nature, positioned students in roles that demanded emotional attunement—to characters, to real-world stories, and to the lived experiences of others unlike themselves. Through this experiential immersion, participants moved from a predominantly self-focused emotional stance to one that was interpersonally expansive and socially compassionate.

This theme is supported by three deeply interconnected subthemes:

(1) Peer Bonding Through Emotional Sharing, (2) Emotional Resonance with Characters and Audience, and (3) Non-Judgmental Listening and Perspective-Taking.

Subtheme 3.1: Peer Bonding Through Emotional Sharing

A major vehicle for the emergence of empathy was the development of deep emotional bonds between peers. Many participants began the workshop with superficial social relationships—defined by academic convenience or casual familiarity. However, the intensity of the emotional work within the workshop dissolved these barriers, allowing for unprecedented emotional intimacy.

Participants repeatedly described how moments of emotional vulnerability—such as sharing personal narratives, crying during performances, or comforting a fellow actor—created a sense of emotional kinship that had never existed in their previous educational environments.

One participant recalled:

> “When someone broke down during the circle, no one laughed or mocked. We sat with them. Some people cried with them. I’d never seen that kind of emotional support in college before.”

Another shared:

> “The girl I barely spoke to at the beginning became someone I could cry in front of. There were no masks in those moments. That honesty brought us all closer.”

This emotional co-presence, where peers witnessed and validated one another’s emotional truths without judgment, led to an atmosphere of mutual care and solidarity. Participants felt seen, held, and understood, fostering what is referred to in therapeutic literature as empathic attunement—an affective alignment where individuals emotionally “tune in” to each other’s experiences.

The emotional safety created in these interactions also deepened students' capacity to care for others—even those they initially disliked or felt indifferent toward. By observing the vulnerabilities of others, students came to appreciate the shared emotional struggles that unite all people, thus cultivating a broader and more inclusive sense of compassion.

Subtheme 3.2: Emotional Resonance with Characters and Audience

The second powerful entry point into empathy was the embodiment of characters whose lives were often starkly different from the participants' own. Whether portraying a survivor of domestic violence, a person living in poverty, or someone marginalized by caste or gender, students had to engage with real emotional realities through performance.

This process required participants to step outside their personal experiences and into the emotional world of someone else—inhabiting the fears, hopes, traumas, and aspirations of another. Such role immersion produced moments of deep emotional resonance, where participants not only intellectually understood their characters but felt their pain, anger, or longing as if it were their own.

One participant reflected:

> “I played a character who was homeless. I had never imagined what that feels like. But when I sat on the pavement as part of the scene, and people walked past me like I was invisible—it crushed me. I suddenly understood what invisibility feels like.”

Another participant shared:

> “I had to act as a young boy facing abuse. It was hard. I kept thinking—how many children go through this silently? It made me want to protect them. It changed how I view children in real life.”

These experiences echo what empathy theorists like Carl Rogers and Martin Hoffman describe as affective empathy—the capacity to emotionally “move into” another’s experience. The embodied, performative nature of street theatre allowed empathy to bypass cognitive abstraction and enter the realm of felt experience.

Additionally, many participants spoke about performing in front of live audiences, often drawn from nearby communities. The visible emotional reactions of the audience—tears, silence, applause, or verbal expressions—reinforced participants’ sense of emotional responsibility. They came to understand that their performances were not just self-expression but acts of emotional communication and service.

> “When a woman in the audience cried during our scene, I felt something shift. I realized—this isn’t just acting. We’re holding someone else’s pain. That’s a responsibility.”

This dual empathic process—toward characters and toward the audience—deepened students’ emotional maturity and widened their emotional scope. Empathy became not just interpersonal, but societal, fostering a sense of emotional justice and human solidarity.

Subtheme 3.3: Non-Judgmental Listening and Perspective-Taking

The final and perhaps most nuanced aspect of this theme was the development of empathic listening—the skill of hearing another person’s emotional truth without interruption, comparison, or premature advice. Participants admitted that before the workshop, they often defaulted to judgmental or defensive listening, shaped by bias, impatience, or a desire to respond rather than understand.

However, as the workshop unfolded, many began to slow down their internal reactions and listen from a place of presence, humility, and emotional openness.

One participant described this shift:

> “I used to interrupt people or give solutions quickly. But during one reflection circle, someone shared something painful, and I just sat there—silent. I realized they didn’t want advice. They just wanted to be heard.”

Another explained:

> “I remember someone saying they hated their mother. My first thought was—how can anyone say that? But I kept listening. They talked about neglect and emotional pain. By the end, I understood them. I didn’t judge. That’s new for me.”

This transformation reflects the growth of cognitive empathy—the ability to take another’s perspective and understand it within their unique emotional context. Such non-judgmental listening not only enhanced peer relationships but also contributed to emotional de-escalation, trust-building, and mutual learning.

Furthermore, many participants reported that this new listening skill began spilling into their personal lives. They described better conversations with parents, fewer arguments with friends, and more emotional patience in daily interactions. This signals that the workshop did not simply foster empathy within its own setting, but catalyzed an empathic orientation toward life itself.

Theoretical Integration: Goleman's Empathy and Social Awareness

This theme is in direct alignment with Goleman's third domain of emotional intelligence: Empathy and Social Awareness. According to Goleman (1995), empathy is the cornerstone of social intelligence—it enables us to attune to others' emotional states, understand their needs, and respond with appropriate sensitivity. The street theatre workshop offered participants multiple empathic entry points: through character immersion, emotional mirroring, peer vulnerability, and communal performance.

In developmental psychology, this kind of empathy is often categorized into two forms:

Affective Empathy: Feeling what another feels.

Cognitive Empathy: Understanding what another feels and why.

Both forms were clearly observed in the participant narratives, often occurring simultaneously through the hybrid structure of performance and reflection. Moreover, the iterative nature of the workshop (multiple sessions, feedback loops, audience interactions) provided opportunities to revisit and deepen empathic responses over time, moving empathy from a fleeting feeling to a sustained relational skill.

From a pedagogical lens, this supports the role of arts-based interventions as powerful tools for social-emotional learning (SEL), capable of bridging gaps in emotional intelligence that traditional education often overlooks. By offering embodied experiences of otherness, street theatre acted as an empathy incubator, allowing students to stretch their emotional imagination and expand their emotional capacity.

Theme 4: Motivation through Emotional Empowerment

A striking and consistently echoed transformation across the participant narratives was the emergence of a renewed sense of emotional empowerment, which led to a deepened internal motivation. This theme reveals how the process of engaging in street theatre became a catalytic experience—one that allowed students not only to explore their emotions but to reclaim agency over them. With this emotional ownership came enhanced confidence, resilience, and clarity of purpose. Unlike traditional motivation that stems from grades, parental approval, or societal validation, the motivation that arose during this workshop was intrinsic, emotionally aligned, and personally transformative.

As participants navigated the emotionally rich terrain of theatre—stepping into roles, confronting fears, exposing vulnerabilities—they began to experience a profound internal shift. Many who had entered the workshop with hesitation, shame, or fear found themselves emerging with a newfound sense of strength, voice, and vision. This emotional empowerment ignited within them the desire not just to perform, but to live more authentically, driven by purpose and emotional alignment.

This overarching transformation is best captured through the following three subthemes: (1) Overcoming Stage Fear, (2) Boost in Confidence and Self-Belief, and (3) Realignment of Personal or Career Goals.

Subtheme 4.1: Overcoming Stage Fear

One of the most immediate challenges that many participants reported was the fear of performing in front of others. While the fear appeared on the surface as performance anxiety, deeper exploration revealed that it was often tied to fear of judgment, fear of failure, fear of rejection, and in some cases, fear of emotional exposure. The stage, for many, was not just a

physical platform—it was a symbolic space where their identity, voice, and emotions would be made visible.

Participants described how the initial sessions induced tremors, dry throat, dissociation, and panic. However, what stood out in their narratives was how this fear did not lead to avoidance; instead, it became a point of transformation. The consistent exposure to performance, coupled with emotional safety and peer support, allowed students to gradually desensitize their fears and step into courage.

One participant revealed:

> “The first time I had to perform a monologue, my mind went blank. I wanted to run away. But I looked at the circle, and I saw my group silently cheering me on. I took a breath and spoke. That changed something inside me.”

Another shared:

> “I had always been told I was ‘too quiet,’ that I lacked presence. But here, my silence was respected, and when I chose to speak, it mattered. That made me brave enough to face the stage.”

These experiences echo the psychological concept of exposure with safety—a therapeutic model in which individuals confront fears in a controlled, supportive, and validating environment, allowing them to rewire their emotional associations. The participants’ capacity to stay present despite fear reflects emotional courage, a powerful predictor of long-term self-motivation.

Furthermore, the process of overcoming stage fear was not linear. Participants cycled through phases of fear, tentative action, feedback, and recalibration. This iterative process

contributed to emotional resilience, teaching them that failure, awkwardness, and fear were not obstacles—but portals to personal growth.

Subtheme 4.2: Boost in Confidence and Self-Belief

The dismantling of fear was accompanied by a surge in confidence, not just in performance skills, but in the overall sense of self-worth and capability. Participants began to express greater conviction in their emotions, perspectives, and presence. What is particularly significant is that this confidence was not derived from applause, approval, or external validation—but from the internal recognition of emotional capacity.

One participant explained:

> “Before this, I never thought I had anything meaningful to say. But when I stood in front of the group and shared my truth—and they listened—I felt powerful for the first time.”

Another recounted:

> “I’ve always struggled with self-doubt. But after each scene, each reflection, I started believing in myself. Not just as a performer—but as a person who matters.”

This self-belief, rooted in emotional expression, mirrors the process of self-actualization, as described by Maslow (1968). Participants were not merely learning new skills—they were becoming more of who they already were, peeling away layers of inhibition and internalized self-rejection. This form of confidence is existentially deep, because it arises not from egoic superiority but from emotional authenticity.

Additionally, this confidence was contagious. Participants reported noticing how their peers also began standing taller, speaking louder, and expressing emotions with more conviction.

There was a collective rising, where each individual's empowerment inspired the others, reinforcing a positive emotional feedback loop.

In psychological terms, this process aligns with Bandura's theory of mastery experiences—that confidence is built not by avoiding challenge, but by confronting it and succeeding through one's own efforts. The street theatre space, with its low risk but high emotional reward, provided the perfect setting for such mastery to emerge.

Subtheme 4.3: Realignment of Personal or Career Goals

Perhaps the most profound ripple effect of this emotional empowerment was the way it led many participants to re-evaluate their life choices—especially their academic or career paths. Engaging deeply with emotionally resonant themes, connecting with social issues, and discovering new parts of themselves prompted participants to ask existential questions: “Is this really the life I want?” “Am I living someone else's dream?” “What am I truly passionate about?”

One participant shared:

> “I was studying business because that's what my family expected. But during the workshop, I felt something light up inside me. I realized I love storytelling. I want to do something that lets me create.”

Another reflected:

> “After doing a scene on child abuse, I couldn't stop thinking about kids who go through that. I now want to work in social work or education—something meaningful. The theatre helped me hear that voice.”

This realignment of goals is not a superficial change of mind. It represents a fundamental shift in motivation—from conforming to outer expectations to aligning with inner emotional truths. Participants began setting goals that were personally meaningful, socially conscious, and emotionally resonant.

Such alignment reflects the shift from extrinsic motivation (doing something for reward or avoidance) to intrinsic motivation (doing something because it matters to you)—a key dimension in Goleman’s emotional intelligence framework. Moreover, this process signals the emergence of purpose-driven identity, where one’s sense of self is deeply intertwined with values, passions, and emotions.

In many cases, this realignment also involved emotional grief—grieving the years spent suppressing creativity, denying inner voices, or following paths out of fear. Yet, the theatre space held that grief with dignity and allowed it to transform into clarity, direction, and renewed drive.

Theoretical Integration: Goleman’s Motivation Domain of Emotional Intelligence

This entire theme is rooted in the fourth domain of Daniel Goleman’s Emotional Intelligence framework—Motivation. Goleman (1995) emphasizes that emotionally intelligent individuals are driven by inner purpose, passion, and persistence, rather than external incentives. Motivation in this context is not task-specific—it is existential, touching one’s sense of why they do what they do.

The street theatre workshop, in this light, became a psychosocial incubator for this inner motivation. Through emotional struggle, expressive freedom, collective bonding, and performance pressure, participants were able to connect their emotional experiences to a deeper vision of themselves. They began to see their emotions not as obstacles, but as compasses, pointing them toward life paths that were more honest, more fulfilling, and more alive.

Moreover, this theme aligns with Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (2000), which posits that true motivation arises when individuals feel autonomy (ownership of choice), competence (belief in ability), and relatedness (emotional connection to others). The workshop cultivated all three—giving students emotional autonomy, performance competence, and social connection.

Theme 5: Lasting Shifts in Interpersonal Dynamics

> “It is not just that I changed—I think my way of relating to others has completely transformed. I now listen differently, speak differently, and connect more genuinely.”

- Participant Reflection

While earlier themes illuminated internal transformations such as emotional discovery, regulation, empathy, and confidence, this theme delves into how those inner changes translated into sustained, outward shifts in social relationships. The emotional intelligence cultivated during the workshop did not remain confined within the group setting. Instead, it permeated participants' everyday interpersonal spaces, reshaping how they formed, maintained, and nurtured relationships—with classmates, family, partners, and even strangers.

This theme emphasizes that emotional growth cannot be isolated from social behavior. As participants became more in touch with their emotional truths and learned how to communicate with vulnerability and respect, their interpersonal dynamics evolved—sometimes in subtle ways (like listening more attentively), and at other times in deeply impactful ways (like confronting family conflict or reconnecting with estranged friends).

Critically, this transformation was not a matter of acquiring “skills” in a mechanical sense. It was a reorientation of relational being—a shift in how participants viewed others, how they interpreted social cues, and how they responded emotionally within relationships. Their emotional

intelligence became relational intelligence: not just knowing how to feel, but how to be with others emotionally.

Three central subthemes illustrate this transformation: (1) Strengthened Emotional Connections, (2) Improved Communication, and (3) Trust and Emotional Safety in Team Environments.

Subtheme 5.1: Strengthened Emotional Connections

Prior to the workshop, many participants described their social lives as “casual,” “surface-level,” or “functional.” Relationships revolved around shared tasks, academic convenience, or habit. Emotional intimacy was rare and, in some cases, feared. However, through the process of collective emotional exploration, participants experienced a deepening of emotional connection—built on vulnerability, empathy, and shared emotional resonance.

Participants began to value emotional closeness, which they once avoided. The intense affective nature of the workshop—performing emotional scenes, crying in front of peers, listening to personal traumas—acted as a catalyst for what one participant called “real connection.”

> “Before this, I wouldn’t talk about emotions with anyone—not even my best friend. But now, I can just sit with someone’s pain and be there. I feel closer to people now, even if we don’t talk every day.”

Another said:

> “We stopped pretending. Everyone has something inside them—hurt, anger, love, sadness. When I saw that in others, I couldn’t unsee it. It made me feel closer to everyone.”

This transition represents a shift from transactional to transformational relationships. Emotional openness no longer felt risky—it became a foundation for connection. Students also spoke about forgiving people more easily, reaching out to those they had judged, and even rebuilding broken relationships, citing their own increased emotional capacity as the key.

From a psychological lens, this reflects a move toward attachment security—where individuals feel emotionally safe to depend on and connect with others without fear of rejection or engulfment. The workshop acted as an emotional rehearsal space, allowing students to practice and internalize relational closeness in ways they had not before.

Subtheme 5.2: Improved Communication

With the emergence of emotional awareness came the natural evolution of communication patterns. Many participants admitted that prior to the workshop, their communication relied on avoidance, sarcasm, or over-intellectualization. Emotions were minimized, deflected, or suppressed. However, within the emotionally expressive culture of the workshop, they began reclaiming the language of emotion.

One participant described this shift beautifully:

> “I learned to say ‘I feel hurt’ instead of acting cold. I learned to say ‘I need support’ instead of pretending to be okay. It’s scary but freeing.”

Another reflected:

> “The most powerful moment was when I apologized to a classmate after a disagreement. I wasn’t defensive. I said how I felt. And we had a real conversation—one that healed something.”

This kind of communication—emotionally honest, non-defensive, and grounded in empathy—is what scholars term emotional literacy. Participants weren’t just “talking better”—they were communicating with emotional integrity.

A remarkable feature was the transfer of these communication patterns to real-life contexts. Students reported being more transparent with parents, more responsive to friends in emotional distress, and more willing to set healthy boundaries.

One student shared:

> “After the workshop, I finally had the courage to tell my dad how his silence affected me. I didn’t blame him—I just spoke honestly. He didn’t say much. But he started checking in with me. That was new.”

This suggests that emotional communication, once modeled in a safe context like theatre, carries over into everyday life, resulting in healthier, more conscious, and more healing interactions.

Subtheme 5.3: Trust and Emotional Safety in Team Environments

Trust emerged as both a process and a product of the workshop. Initially, many participants entered the space with emotional guardedness. But as peers began sharing vulnerable truths—abuse, loss, anxiety, loneliness—a sense of collective safety developed. The group evolved into what one participant called “an emotional ecosystem”—where each person’s openness nurtured the courage of others.

> “One girl cried during a reflection, and instead of awkward silence, we all just stayed with her. We let her cry. We were present. That moment made me trust the group in a way I never had before.”

Another participant described:

> “I used to keep my feelings to myself in any group. But here, it felt like everyone was carrying each other’s emotions gently. That changed how I trust people now.”

This mutual trust did not emerge from abstract rules—it came from embodied, shared emotional experiences. The group served as a container for emotional risk, and in doing so, offered corrective relational experiences—experiences that rewire the belief that vulnerability leads to rejection.

This kind of group dynamic reflects what therapeutic community theorists refer to as emotional holding environments (Winnicott, 1965)—spaces where individuals are emotionally “held” by the collective, allowing them to take emotional risks and expand their psychological range.

Furthermore, many participants reported carrying this emotional trust into new group settings, such as class projects, family meetings, or friend circles. They began modeling emotional safety for others, thus becoming change agents in their social environments.

Theoretical Integration: Relational Emotional Intelligence and Group Emotional Dynamics

This theme exemplifies the fifth component of Goleman’s Emotional Intelligence framework—Social Skills, with an emphasis on the relational application of emotional competencies. Goleman argues that emotionally intelligent individuals can build strong interpersonal bonds, resolve conflict, and inspire emotional trust—and all of these were observable in this study.

Additionally, this theme supports the growing scholarship around relational emotional intelligence (REI)—the ability to use emotional skills to build, maintain, and heal relationships.

The workshop didn't just teach EI traits in isolation; it created a relational field where those traits were enacted, refined, and reinforced.

The group also functioned as a transformative microculture, where empathy, vulnerability, active listening, and accountability were normalized. As students participated in this culture, they internalized its relational norms, which then influenced how they behaved in the outside world.

In terms of group psychology, the trust that developed in the ensemble reflects what Amy Edmondson (1999) termed psychological safety—a condition that enhances collective creativity, open feedback, and honest communication. The workshop was not just emotionally therapeutic—it was relationally reparative.

Theme 6: Street Theatre as Therapeutic Expression

> “It felt like something broke open inside me—not in a bad way, but like light entering a place that had been shut for years.”

—Participant Reflection

This culminating theme explores the profoundly therapeutic nature of street theatre as experienced by participants. What began as a creative workshop gradually transformed into a psychosocial healing space, providing opportunities for emotional expression, psychological release, personal integration, and even spiritual clarity. Participants consistently described the process as freeing, purifying, illuminating, and at times, even life-altering.

Though the workshop was not designed as a formal psychotherapeutic intervention, its emotionally immersive methodology—characterized by roleplay, improvisation, storytelling, reflection, embodiment, and peer support—mirrored the principles of expressive therapy, group psychotherapy, and trauma-informed care. These spontaneous therapeutic outcomes highlight the

power of creative spaces in unlocking emotional blockages, revisiting inner wounds, and enabling catharsis within a community container.

This theme captures three critical mechanisms that made the street theatre process therapeutic: (1) Safe Emotional Space, (2) Emotional Catharsis and Healing, and (3) Group as a Medium for Emotional Release and Validation.

Subtheme 6.1: Safe Emotional Space

Healing begins with safety. Participants unanimously emphasized that one of the most transformative aspects of the workshop was its unusually high level of emotional safety. This safe space was created not through rules alone, but through energetic modeling, emotional vulnerability, mutual trust, and the non-hierarchical, participatory structure of the theatre process. Unlike academic or home environments, where emotional expression was often judged, minimized, or avoided, the workshop offered permission and protection—to feel, to speak, to cry, to be angry, to be silent.

> “There was no ‘right’ emotion here. I didn’t have to justify why I felt what I felt. People just allowed me to feel it.”

—Participant’s reflection

The concept of psychological holding (Winnicott, 1965) is central here. The group functioned as a holding environment, where participants could regress into vulnerable emotional states without the fear of rupture or rejection. This emotional safety facilitated deep inner access to long-suppressed emotions and allowed for emotional risk-taking, which is often the first step toward healing.

Furthermore, the physical space itself—open circles, shared meals, rehearsals outdoors—reinforced this psychological containment. Participants were not confined to desks or stages but invited to inhabit their bodies freely, creating a sensorial openness that encouraged emotional release.

Subtheme 6.2: Emotional Catharsis and Healing

A hallmark of therapeutic change is catharsis—the sudden release of repressed or pent-up emotions. This was vividly present in participants’ narratives. Whether through yelling in scenes, breaking down in rehearsals, or improvising with full emotional force, many participants experienced what they described as “a kind of emotional explosion”—but one that brought relief, not harm.

> “It felt like I was letting out something I had been carrying since childhood. I didn’t expect to cry. But I did. And I didn’t feel ashamed.”

This emotional discharge is not mere venting. As per Aristotle’s original conception and later Freudian theory, catharsis is emotionally purgative—it cleanses the psyche and makes space for integration. In the workshop, this process was magnified by the embodied nature of theatre. Participants weren’t just talking about emotions—they were moving, vocalizing, and embodying them, resulting in a somatic-emotional synergy that intensified the healing effect.

For example, several participants reported experiencing physical shifts post-performance:

- Lighter chest
- Release of tension in the jaw or shoulders
- A sense of energy or tingling
- Feelings of stillness or clarity

These align with somatic therapy principles, which argue that trauma and emotion are stored in the body (Levine, 1997). When accessed and expressed through physical action—as in theatre—emotional material is metabolized holistically, leading to deeper and longer-lasting healing.

Subtheme 6.3: Group as a Medium for Emotional Release and Validation

One of the most profound findings of the study is that healing did not occur in isolation. Participants did not simply express emotions into a void. They did so in the presence of a witnessing, receptive, emotionally present group. The validation that emerged from being seen in one's vulnerability—and seeing others in theirs—was described as deeply humanizing and emotionally corrective.

> “We’ve all felt alone at some point. But here, when someone cried, we cried too. When someone laughed, we laughed. It was collective. I didn’t feel alone anymore.”

This process aligns with relational-cultural theory, which posits that healing arises from mutual empathy and relational connection, not from individual achievement (Jordan, 2010). The group became a co-regulating emotional body, helping members process grief, anger, shame, and joy without isolation.

It also aligns with Yalom’s therapeutic factors of group therapy, particularly:

- Universality (“I’m not alone in my pain”)
- Altruism (“I can help others heal”)
- Group cohesion (“We are in this together”)
- Emotional catharsis and
- Interpersonal learning

In this way, street theatre inadvertently became a group therapeutic journey, where each member contributed to the emotional ecology of the whole. Healing was no longer an individual pursuit—it was a shared, circular, reciprocal process, where each performance, each story, and each tear added to the group’s collective transformation.

Theoretical Integration: Street Theatre as a Therapeutic and Emotionally Restorative Process

The therapeutic transformations observed in Theme 6 are strongly supported by theories in embodied psychology, expressive arts, trauma recovery, and relational healing. Although the workshop was not clinical, its structure and spirit aligned with many evidence-based psychological models of emotional transformation.

In essence, the street theatre process became a multidimensional healing ritual—a space where:

- The body remembered and released,
- The voice spoke unspeakable truths,
- The group mirrored back wholeness,
- The soul found rest through expression.

This theme affirms that theatre, when practiced with emotional honesty and community spirit, becomes not just art—but medicine.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Summary

The present study titled “Exploring the Impact of Street Theatre on Emotional Intelligence: A Qualitative Study Among College Students” was undertaken to explore how active participation in street theatre influences the emotional intelligence of college students. Emotional Intelligence (EI), comprising components such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, is increasingly recognized as a vital aspect of holistic personality development, especially among young adults navigating academic, social, and personal transitions. While emotional intelligence has often been explored through educational, psychological, and intervention-based lenses, limited research exists on its development through culturally rooted, performative approaches such as street theatre. Recognizing this gap, the study aimed to qualitatively examine the lived emotional experiences of students engaged in a theatre-based environment and how such experiences contribute to emotional growth and transformation.

The research adopted a qualitative, phenomenological design to capture the subjective emotional journeys of the participants. A total of eight postgraduate students from various academic streams of (Name of the college is not mentioned to maintain anonymity) who had undergone a month-long street theatre workshop, were selected using purposive sampling. The data collection was conducted through semi-structured, in-depth interviews that allowed participants to reflect on their emotional processes, relational changes, and intrapersonal insights that arose during and after their engagement with the workshop. The rich narratives provided were transcribed and analyzed using Braun and Clarke’s six-phase thematic analysis framework, which offered a structured yet flexible method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning.

The analysis revealed six major themes that captured the essence of the participants' emotional evolution through the workshop: (1) Emotional Discovery and Self-Awareness, (2) Evolving Emotional Regulation Skills, (3) Empathy and Collective Understanding, (4) Motivation through Emotional Empowerment, (5) Lasting Shifts in Interpersonal Dynamics, and (6) Street Theatre as Therapeutic Expression. Each theme was further supported by relevant subthemes and enriched by participant quotations, offering deep insights into how theatre-based embodiment, reflection, and shared vulnerability helped in uncovering suppressed emotions, regulating difficult feelings, enhancing perspective-taking, reinforcing interpersonal connection, and even promoting emotional healing.

In essence, this study not only confirms the potential of street theatre as a dynamic, emotionally immersive experience but also presents it as a valuable tool for emotional education and psychological well-being. The findings demonstrate that when students are placed in expressive, embodied, and communal contexts, they naturally begin to engage in emotional reflection, develop interpersonal empathy, and build emotional resilience. The results affirm that street theatre is not merely an artistic or educational exercise, but can serve as an emotionally transformative space that cultivates multiple dimensions of emotional intelligence in a meaningful and lasting manner.

General Research Question:

How does participation in street theatre influence the emotional intelligence of college students?

Street theatre provided a space for deep emotional exploration and expression: The workshop environment offered students a safe and supportive setting where they could express a range of emotions—both positive and negative—through dramatic performance. The freedom to

embody different roles and situations helped them connect with their inner emotional landscape, allowing for deeper understanding and emotional clarity.

The process encouraged awareness of emotional patterns and self-reflection: Participants reported becoming more conscious of their emotional responses in various life situations. By performing emotionally intense scenes and engaging in reflective group discussions, students developed the ability to identify emotional triggers, recognize suppressed feelings, and understand their habitual ways of reacting.

Students developed greater emotional regulation and control: The demands of performance and group collaboration required students to manage their emotions effectively. Many participants described learning how to stay grounded during high-pressure or emotionally charged scenes, using techniques like breathing, movement, and intentional focus to regulate emotional intensity both during the workshop and in everyday life.

Empathy and perspective-taking were naturally cultivated through roleplay and group bonding: Acting out diverse characters and social scenarios helped students step into others' emotional experiences. Witnessing their peers' stories and vulnerabilities fostered a sense of emotional resonance, compassion, and non-judgmental understanding, which are central to empathetic capacity.

Motivation, confidence, and emotional resilience were significantly enhanced: Participants shared that overcoming stage fear, contributing to social messages, and emotionally investing in performances led to a renewed sense of confidence and purpose. The workshop acted as a catalyst for emotional empowerment, encouraging them to take emotional risks and pursue personal or academic goals with increased determination.

Social and relational skills were improved through emotional sharing and teamwork: Collaborative rehearsals, mutual feedback, and shared emotional experiences fostered stronger interpersonal connections. Students reported improved communication, better listening, and a deeper level of trust in their relationships, both within the group and in their external social circles.

Overall, the study confirms that street theatre is an emotionally enriching and psychologically transformative process. The integration of expression, embodiment, reflection, and community allowed students to experience substantial growth across all domains of emotional intelligence. The findings support the use of theatre as a creative and culturally relevant method for enhancing emotional capacities in youth.

Specific Research Question 1:

In what ways does street theatre help students become more self-aware of their emotions, strengths, and vulnerabilities?

Street theatre enabled students to observe and reflect on their emotional reactions: Through roleplay and emotionally charged performances, participants encountered a wide range of feelings—from joy and pride to fear and sadness. This immersion helped them identify emotions that they had previously ignored or suppressed. Many became more aware of how certain situations made them react internally, which marked the beginning of emotional self-awareness.

The process of enacting diverse characters helped students recognize hidden aspects of themselves: By stepping into the shoes of different characters—some of whom reflected real social struggles—students confronted parts of their own personality, values, and emotional tendencies. Some participants reported identifying with the roles they played, which triggered personal reflection about their fears, beliefs, and emotional patterns.

Guided reflection and group sharing deepened their emotional insight: The post-performance discussions and reflection circles created a space for introspection. As students shared what they felt during rehearsals or scenes, and listened to their peers' emotional journeys, they gained insight into their own emotional identities, strengths, and blind spots.

Students became more accepting of their emotional vulnerabilities: Many participants noted that they previously viewed vulnerability as a weakness. However, the theatre experience helped reframe vulnerability as a strength and a source of connection. As they began to acknowledge and accept their emotional sensitivity, they moved toward greater emotional maturity.

Self-awareness extended beyond the workshop into personal life: Students reported applying their increased emotional awareness to real-life situations, such as recognizing when they were anxious, overwhelmed, or emotionally distant in social or academic settings. This translated into more conscious behavior and improved emotional decision-making.

Specific Research Question 2:

How does participation in street theatre improve students' ability to regulate and express their emotions constructively?

Street theatre provided students with a structured space to process intense emotions safely: Through repeated rehearsals, emotionally demanding scenes, and audience interactions, students encountered high-pressure emotional moments. Within this environment, they learned to navigate and manage those feelings without becoming overwhelmed. The theatrical setting allowed them to practice emotional expression in a way that was both meaningful and contained.

Students developed healthier coping mechanisms to deal with emotional overload: Several participants reported that they began using conscious strategies like deep breathing, mindful

grounding, physical movement, and expressive dialogue during the workshop to calm themselves before or after emotionally intense performances. These strategies were then applied outside the workshop in academic and personal situations.

Emotional regulation was reinforced through team dynamics and mutual accountability: Working in a group demanded emotional cooperation. Students often had to adjust their tone, body language, or emotional energy to maintain group harmony during practices. This helped them become more aware of how to manage emotions not just internally, but in social interactions, thus improving both self-regulation and interpersonal responsiveness.

Constructive emotional expression was normalized and encouraged: Participants shared that before the workshop, they often bottled up feelings or expressed them through anger or withdrawal. However, through performing scenes that required vulnerability and emotional openness, they gained confidence in articulating feelings such as sadness, fear, and anger in healthy, expressive ways.

Students became more aware of emotional boundaries and control: While exploring emotional depth, participants also learned how to balance vulnerability with emotional safety. They began recognizing when to open up and when to pause, and how to express without overwhelming themselves or others—a key part of effective emotional regulation.

Specific Research Question 3:

How does involvement in street theatre foster empathy, compassion, and emotional understanding of others?

Playing diverse characters enabled students to step into the emotional realities of others: By enacting the roles of individuals facing social injustice, marginalization, or emotional hardship, students were required to understand lives and emotions that differed greatly from their own. This

process encouraged them to imagine what others feel and go through, thereby strengthening their empathetic awareness.

Personal sharing within the group created emotional resonance and mutual understanding: The storytelling and rehearsal process involved open conversations about participants' own life experiences, struggles, and emotions. Listening to peers share their pain, fears, or hopes created emotional closeness and deepened their ability to feel compassion toward others.

Observing emotional vulnerability in others built non-judgmental acceptance: Seeing fellow participants cry, struggle, or express anger during scenes allowed students to normalize emotional expression and accept the emotional experiences of others without judgment. This helped them cultivate emotional sensitivity and a more caring attitude.

The collaborative nature of theatre demanded emotional attunement: Since scenes were built together, students had to read each other's emotional cues and adjust their own energy accordingly. This practice of tuning into group dynamics helped improve their emotional understanding of how others think, feel, and respond.

Empathy developed during the workshop extended into real-life relationships: Many participants reported that they began showing more compassion in their everyday interactions—with friends, family members, and classmates. They became more open to listening, more patient in conflicts, and more sensitive to the emotional needs of others.

Specific Research Question 4:

How does emotional growth during the workshop contribute to students' motivation, confidence, and sense of purpose?

Emotional breakthroughs during performances led to increased self-belief: Students reported that facing emotionally intense scenes helped them overcome personal limitations like

fear, shame, or self-doubt. Successfully expressing difficult emotions in front of peers and audiences gave them a sense of achievement, which translated into higher confidence in handling challenges beyond the workshop.

Students felt more motivated to express themselves and take initiative: Many participants described feeling more driven after realizing they could voice powerful social messages through performance. This connection between personal emotion and social impact gave them a renewed purpose and inspired them to speak up more, both creatively and in academic settings.

Overcoming stage fear and emotional inhibition built emotional courage: Several students shared that prior to the workshop, they struggled with stage fright, emotional suppression, or fear of judgment. Engaging repeatedly in expressive group work helped them gradually face these fears, and the supportive group environment made them feel validated and encouraged.

Emotional growth improved academic and personal goal clarity: Through introspection and emotional alignment during the workshop, students gained clarity about what they valued and what gave them emotional fulfillment. This clarity often influenced how they approached personal ambitions, academic work, or career choices with more motivation and direction.

The sense of collective purpose inspired a deeper emotional commitment: Performing on socially relevant topics created a shared sense of mission among participants. Students reported that the emotional connection to the group's goals made them more invested and emotionally engaged, further fueling their internal motivation and drive

Specific Research Question 5:

What changes do students experience in their social relationships and communication patterns following participation in the workshop?

Students developed stronger emotional bonds with peers through shared vulnerability: The collaborative nature of street theatre required students to open up emotionally in front of each other. Sharing personal experiences, enacting emotionally charged scenes, and witnessing each other's raw emotions created deep connections based on trust and mutual understanding. Many participants described the group as feeling like a "safe emotional family."

Communication became more open, empathetic, and emotionally attuned: Students noted that their style of communication shifted after the workshop—they became more comfortable expressing emotions honestly, listening with empathy, and responding with emotional sensitivity. Several reported that they began having more meaningful conversations with friends and family members, breaking away from surface-level interactions.

Participants learned to balance emotional expression with listening and support: Engaging in scenes that demanded both speaking and silent presence helped students become better at both expressing themselves and holding space for others. This emotional balance translated into improved interpersonal relationships and reduced emotional misunderstandings.

Group trust fostered emotional safety and mutual respect: The workshop environment was consistently described as emotionally non-judgmental and accepting. This helped students feel emotionally safe, allowing them to explore feelings and express themselves freely. As a result, they became more respectful and trusting in other social contexts as well.

Improved social confidence and relational sensitivity extended beyond the workshop: Many participants shared that they felt more confident approaching people, resolving conflicts,

and initiating emotional conversations after the workshop. Their increased emotional intelligence helped them navigate relationships more thoughtfully and with greater emotional maturity.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study offer important implications for the fields of education, mental health, youth development, and applied theatre. First and foremost, the results highlight the value of street theatre as a practical, accessible, and emotionally enriching tool for enhancing emotional intelligence among college students. Unlike conventional classroom-based emotional education, the street theatre workshop allowed students to engage emotionally, physically, and socially, making the learning process both experiential and transformative.

In the context of higher education, this study suggests that integrating street theatre or similar expressive arts into academic environments can promote the emotional development of students in ways that are both meaningful and lasting. Colleges and universities may benefit from adopting theatre-based emotional intelligence programs as part of co-curricular or wellness initiatives. These workshops can help students not only in improving emotional awareness and regulation but also in developing empathy, communication, and relational skills that are essential for academic collaboration and life beyond campus.

For counsellors, therapists, and educators, the results provide a strong case for using creative, group-based, and embodied methods to foster emotional insight and healing, especially among youth. Street theatre, as shown in this study, can serve as a complementary tool for mental health interventions. It allows individuals to explore deep emotions in a safe, non-clinical setting, and can be especially effective for those who struggle with verbal expression or emotional avoidance.

In the broader community and youth development sectors, the implications of this study support the inclusion of street theatre in initiatives aimed at empowering young people, building emotional resilience, and strengthening peer relationships. Community organizations, NGOs, and schools can use theatre as a form of social-emotional learning, particularly in contexts where traditional therapy or emotional education may not be feasible.

Overall, the study underscores the need to recognize and integrate emotionally intelligent, arts-based methodologies within youth-centric programs and institutional frameworks, given their capacity to support emotional growth, self-awareness, group cohesion, and psychological well-being.

Limitations of the Study

Although the present study contributes meaningful insights into how participation in street theatre influences emotional intelligence among college students, it is important to acknowledge several limitations that may have influenced the scope, depth, and generalizability of the findings. Recognizing these limitations allows for a more balanced interpretation of the results and highlights areas for improvement in future research.

Firstly, the study's sample size was limited to eight participants, all drawn from a single postgraduate institution. While the richness of qualitative data allowed for in-depth exploration, the small and relatively homogenous sample restricts the generalizability of the findings to broader populations. All participants shared a similar educational background, cultural context, and had volunteered for a structured workshop environment, which may have introduced selection bias. The experiences reported may not reflect those of students from different academic disciplines, undergraduate programs, socio-economic strata, or geographical regions.

Secondly, the research relied solely on self-reported data obtained through semi-structured interviews. While this approach enabled participants to express their personal experiences in depth, it is subject to potential biases such as memory distortion, selective recall, or social desirability. Participants may have emphasized certain experiences while minimizing or omitting others—either intentionally or unconsciously—based on how they wished to be perceived by the researcher. Additionally, emotional topics such as vulnerability, fear, or past trauma may not have been fully disclosed, despite efforts to ensure a safe and non-judgmental environment.

Another limitation is the short duration of the intervention and absence of longitudinal follow-up. The street theatre workshop lasted only one month, and data were collected shortly after its conclusion. While participants reported immediate emotional transformations, the study did not assess whether these emotional changes were sustained over time. Long-term emotional development requires reinforcement, and without follow-up assessments, it remains unclear whether the growth observed during the workshop had lasting effects on students' emotional intelligence.

Moreover, the study focused exclusively on qualitative exploration and did not include any standardized measurement tools for emotional intelligence. Although the phenomenological approach provided valuable insights into lived experiences, the absence of validated quantitative instruments limits the ability to objectively assess emotional growth or compare pre- and post-intervention outcomes. The integration of both qualitative and quantitative methods could enhance the reliability and comprehensiveness of future research.

Lastly, the findings may also be influenced by the unique cultural and institutional context in which the workshop was conducted. The supportive environment of the college, openness of the group, and presence of trained facilitators may have played a significant role in fostering

emotional expression and group cohesion. Such contextual factors may not be replicable in all settings, thereby affecting the applicability of the findings across different institutions or populations.

Despite these limitations, the study offers valuable groundwork for future inquiries into arts-based emotional development, and paves the way for deeper exploration through expanded methodologies and more diverse participant groups.

Suggestions for Further Research

The findings of this study open up several promising avenues for future exploration into the role of street theatre and other expressive arts in fostering emotional intelligence. While the current research provides rich insights into the emotional transformations of a small group of college students, further studies are needed to deepen, diversify, and expand the understanding of this phenomenon across broader contexts.

Firstly, it is recommended that future research involve a larger and more diverse sample. Expanding the demographic scope to include undergraduate students, individuals from different academic disciplines, institutions, and socio-economic backgrounds would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of how street theatre affects emotional intelligence in varied contexts. A larger sample size would also enhance the credibility and transferability of findings across different student populations.

Secondly, there is significant value in conducting longitudinal studies to examine the long-term effects of street theatre on emotional intelligence. While the current study captures immediate emotional shifts following a one-month workshop, it does not assess whether these changes are sustained over time. Future research could include follow-up interviews or assessments at multiple

intervals (e.g., 3 months, 6 months, or 1 year) to understand the permanence and evolution of emotional growth.

Third, it would be beneficial to integrate quantitative methods and standardized EI assessment tools in future studies. Using validated instruments such as the Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS), Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue), or the Mayer–Salovey–Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) can provide measurable data on changes in emotional intelligence before and after intervention. A mixed-methods approach combining qualitative depth with quantitative validity would offer a more robust picture of the emotional impact of theatre-based interventions.

Moreover, future research can explore comparative studies involving different forms of performative or expressive arts—such as psychodrama, playback theatre, dance movement therapy, or visual arts—and compare their respective influence on emotional intelligence. This could help identify which art forms are more effective in cultivating specific emotional skills and under what circumstances.

In addition, it would be valuable to examine the role of facilitators, group dynamics, and cultural context in influencing the emotional outcomes of such workshops. Future research can investigate how the presence of trained facilitators, the emotional tone of the group, or socio-cultural factors shape participants' willingness to engage, express, and reflect emotionally.

Finally, future studies could explore the application of street theatre as an intervention for specific populations, such as adolescents in schools, individuals with emotional dysregulation, or marginalized groups experiencing social exclusion. Understanding how theatre can serve as a therapeutic and educational tool for diverse and vulnerable populations would significantly broaden its applicability and impact.

In conclusion, the scope for further research in this domain is vast and dynamic. By building on the findings of this study and addressing its limitations, future scholars can continue to explore how expressive, embodied, and community-centered practices like street theatre can contribute meaningfully to emotional development, mental health, and social transformation.

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Appendices

Appendices A. Participant Consent Form

Title of the Study: The Effect of Street Theatre Workshop Among College Students

Name of Researcher: -----

I hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature and purpose of the research study and my participation in it. I understand that:

Participation is voluntary.

I can withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

My identity and responses will be kept confidential.

The data will be used only for academic research purposes.

Signature of Participant: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

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Appendices A. Semi-structured Interview Guide

Self-Awareness

1. Can you describe how participating in street theatre helped you understand your own emotions better?

(Follow-up: Were there any specific moments or roles that made you reflect on yourself?)

2. Did you notice any change in how you identify your emotional strengths and weaknesses after the street theatre experience?

(Prompt: For example, knowing what makes you confident or nervous.)

Self-Regulation

3. Have you noticed any change in how you manage or control your emotions after being involved in street theatre?

(Prompt: For instance, staying calm under pressure or avoiding emotional outbursts.)

4. What are some emotional regulation skills you feel you developed through the theatre activities?

(E.g., deep breathing, reframing thoughts, delaying reactions.)

Empathy & Understanding Others

5. Did acting or interacting with others during the street theatre make you more aware of other people's emotions?

(Prompt: Did it help you better understand different perspectives or feelings?)

6. Were there moments when you emotionally connected with your audience or fellow performers?

Can you describe one such moment?

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Motivation & Goal Setting

7. How has street theatre influenced your personal motivation or attitude towards your life goals?

(Prompt: Did it make you feel more confident or driven?)

8. Can you share any goals you set after participating in street theatre, and what emotional drive pushed you toward them?

Long-Term Impact & Lifestyle Changes

9. It has been a while since the theatre workshop — how do you feel it has impacted your daily life or decision-making now?

(Prompt: Emotional control, communication, relationships, or career choices?)

10. In which areas of your life (like academics, friendships, family, or work) do you see a lasting impact of your theatre experience?

Reflection & Emotional Growth

11. Looking back, what emotional lesson from the street theatre do you still carry with you today?

12. If someone is struggling emotionally, do you think street theatre could help them? Why or why not?