

The AI-EI Nexus: Enhancing Digital Learning to Achieve Sustainable Development Goals

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Abstract

In the current scenario, AI (Artificial Intelligence) is the trending one in computer science, while EI (Emotional Intelligence) makes the towel in psychology. AI driven EI has emerged as a game-changer for education. The synergy of AI and EI can improve education and help to reach Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Educational technologies can embrace AI-powered adaptive learning, as well as the approaches of sentiment analysis and affective computing to create increased engagement, personalized learning as well socio-emotionally. Despite the growing interest in AI-driven innovations in education, the integration of EI into AI-powered learning systems remains an underexplored domain. This paper examines the interaction between AI and EI in crafting digital learning experiences that are as humanized as possible. This is aimed to examine how integrating AI-enhanced technology with a deeper comprehension of human emotions can enhance online learning. In this regard, this study assessed the influences of AI-based EI on student engagement and academic performance. Moreover, it also provides a conceptual framework diagram and an algorithm for AI infused EI in digital learning context. The present study applied the quantitative research methodology, with research sample was 76 engineering students from Delhi region. Data were collected through a systematic questionnaire and statistical methods like correlation, regression were employed using SPSS. The results indicate a positive effect of AI-driven EI on students' engagement and academic performance. This study also addresses key ethical considerations to further guarantee the responsible deployment of AI in emotionally intelligent learning. Furthermore, AI-driven EI technology is transforming the landscape of e-learning platforms and providing mental well-being support to students.

Keywords: AI in Education, Emotional Intelligence (EI), AI-Driven Learning, Student Engagement and AI, Human-Centric AI in Education, Ethical AI in Learning, SDG.

Introduction

As online learning has become more popular, it has increased the demand for making lessons feel more digital and interactive. This paper examines how the synergy of AI and EI might help us to succeed in this endeavour. We will explore how the blend of these two may deliver advanced technology-based learning experiences with a human touch.

Combining AI with EI, enables the opportunity to truly humanize digital learning experiences and enhance them remain engaging, supportive and adaptive to their emotional and cognitive needs; thus technology-based education can be personalized and driven.

The EQ of educators forms the basis of traditional education that addresses the challenges students face, the motivation to help them excel and a safe learning experience. Yet interpersonal dynamics are difficult to reproduce in a digital learning platform. Integrating EI-oriented AI into educational technologies can create a synergy between cognitive learning and emotional well-being, leading to greater student engagement, tailored support and better success rates.

This paper presents an investigation into the confluence of AI and EI with reference to digital learning, discussing the capability of AI epistemology to inform more engaging, adaptive & accessible learning experiences. It also discusses some potential hurdles such as data privacy, bias in emotion recognition and ethical considerations while deploying AI-driven EI models. Thus, it highlights the potential of AI-powered EI in reshaping education for the 21st century by analysing existing trends, developments and future trajectories to achieve SDG.

Understanding AI and EI in Education:

AI is a term for computer systems that can perform tasks that typically require human intelligence, whereas EI signifies the capacity to understand, assess and manage the emotions of oneself and also of other people. In education, they involve:

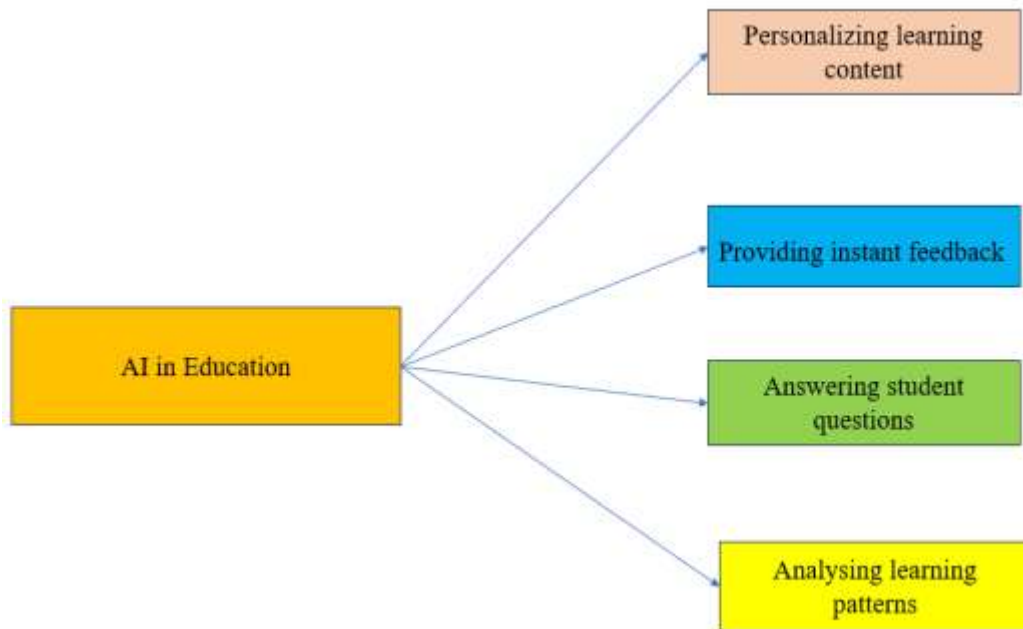


Figure 1: AI in Education

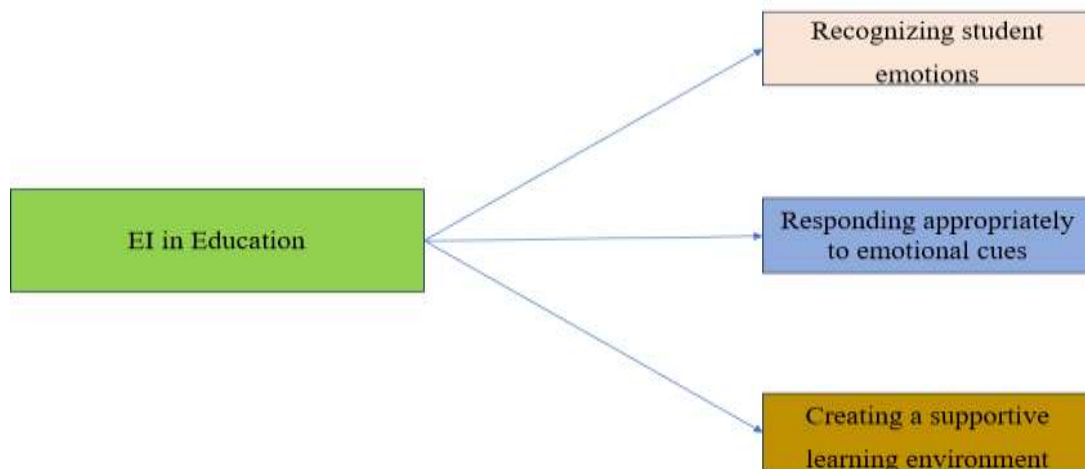


Figure 2: EI in Education

How AI recognizes emotions?

There are several ways to train AI to recognize human emotions:

- Facial expression analysis
- Voice tone analysis

- Text sentiment analysis
- Physiological data (heart rate, skin conductance, etc.)

This enables AI to recognize human emotions and engage accordingly.

Literature Review:

Petrides et al., (2004) suggested that higher EI positively correlates with student engagement, motivation and academic success. D'Mello et al., (2014) proposed that in digital learning environments, where human interaction is limited, embedding EI into AI-driven tools can enhance emotional support, motivation and resilience. Pérez-Marín & Pascual-Nieto, (2011) found that AI-based emotional chatbots provide real-time emotional support to students. Picard, (1997), D'Mello & Graesser, (2012) concluded that AI is revolutionising education with its personalised learning experiences, adaptive assessments and intelligent tutoring systems. Goleman (1995) proposed that utilizing EI concepts in conjunction with AI-powered educational technologies can control a new era of digital educational environments that are more interactive, responsive, and humane. Petrides et al., (2004) investigated that high EI is positively correlated with students' engagement, motivation and academic performance. According to D'Mello et al., (2014) in digital learning environments where human interaction is less frequent, embedding EI can help in maintaining emotional support, motivation and resilience through AI-driven tools. D'Mello et al., (2014) established that emotion aware AI creates a much more interactive and engaging pedagogy, resulting in less disengagement and dropout. Baker et al., (2010) studied that AI-driven EI customizes instructional approaches based on the emotional states of students and is to be believed to enhance understanding and retention. Calvo & D'Mello, (2010) suggested that AI-based Emotion Recognition helps in detection of stress and provides emotional support to the students, thereby improving their students' confidence and resilience.

Pekrun (2006) found that when students use an emotion-aware AI, they have higher performance scores than those who use just traditional digital learning solutions. Luckin et al., (2016) noted that emotion-aware AI is frequently dependent on facial recognition voice analysis and biometric data, which raises as ethical issues relating to the privacy of students. Abdul et al., (2020) suggested that AI systems may have some biases towards the recognition of the emotions of students, which may lead to the unfair treatment of students in terms of gender, ethnicity or cultural differences. Shum et al., (2018) found that the explainability of AI decision-making processes is crucial to gaining trust and acceptance and that without it, few users will take a risk on working with AI in educational environments. Anurag Agarwal et al., (2024) reviewed that the students with higher EQ levels had better academics, indicating that emotional competencies play an important role in the effectiveness of learning. Anurag Agarwal et al., (2025), made a case for AI and EI merging, suggesting that in order for AI systems to be effective in the future, they will need to comprehend and react to the emotional landscape of humans. Anurag Agarwal et al. (2024), found that Educational Robotics (ER) plays an important role in building EI in students and that the inclusion of ER in education promotes learning by doing, improving students' problem-solving skills and creativity.

Quite extensive attention has been attracted to integrate AI with EI within digital learning environments. This integration also focuses on developing more individualized, engaging and effective learning experiences through the identification and adjustment to the emotional states of learners. This review explores the recent developments, applications and ethics of AI-enabled EI in educational settings.

Statement of Problem:

In an era where AI-driven education is growing at an unprecedented rate, traditional digital learning tools generally fail to sense and react to an individual learner's emotional state, resulting in boredom and inferior learning outcomes.

Research Gap:

Even as AI-driven solutions around education become more prevalent, the integration of EI within AI-based education systems and its impact on student academic performance are still relatively unexplored territories.

Research Questions:

1. What would be the major elements of a framework that integrates AI and EI to achieve personalized and adaptive learning?
2. How might AI-driven models be constructed that can successfully integrate EI into online learning contexts in enhancing engagement and academic outcomes of the students?
3. How does emotionally responsive AI impact engagement and academic performance of the students?

Research Objectives:

1. To propose a framework of AI-infused EI in a digital learning environment.
2. To develop an algorithm for AI infused EI in digital learning.
3. To assess the impact of AI driven EI on the engagement and academic performance of the students.

Research Hypothesis:

- Null Hypothesis (H₀1): The integration of AI-driven EI into digital learning environments does not significantly impact students' engagement.
- Alternate Hypothesis (H_A1): The integration of AI-driven EI into digital learning environments significantly enhances students' engagement.
- Null Hypothesis (H₀2): AI-driven EI learning systems do not lead to significant improvements in students' academic performance.
- Alternate Hypothesis (H_A2): AI-driven EI learning systems significantly improve students' academic performance.

Framework Components:

1. AI Technologies (Machine Learning, NLP, Sentiment Analysis, Affective Computing)

2. Emotional Intelligence (EI) Elements (Social Skills, Self-Awareness, Empathy, Self-Regulation, Motivation)



Figure 3: Elements of EI

3. AI-Driven Adaptive Learning System (Personalized Learning, Real-time Feedback, Emotional Support)
4. Student Experience & Engagement (Motivation, Cognitive Retention, Well-being)
5. Ethical Considerations (Bias Mitigation, Data Privacy, Transparency)

Below is the conceptual framework diagram illustrating the integration of AI-infused EI into digital learning environments:

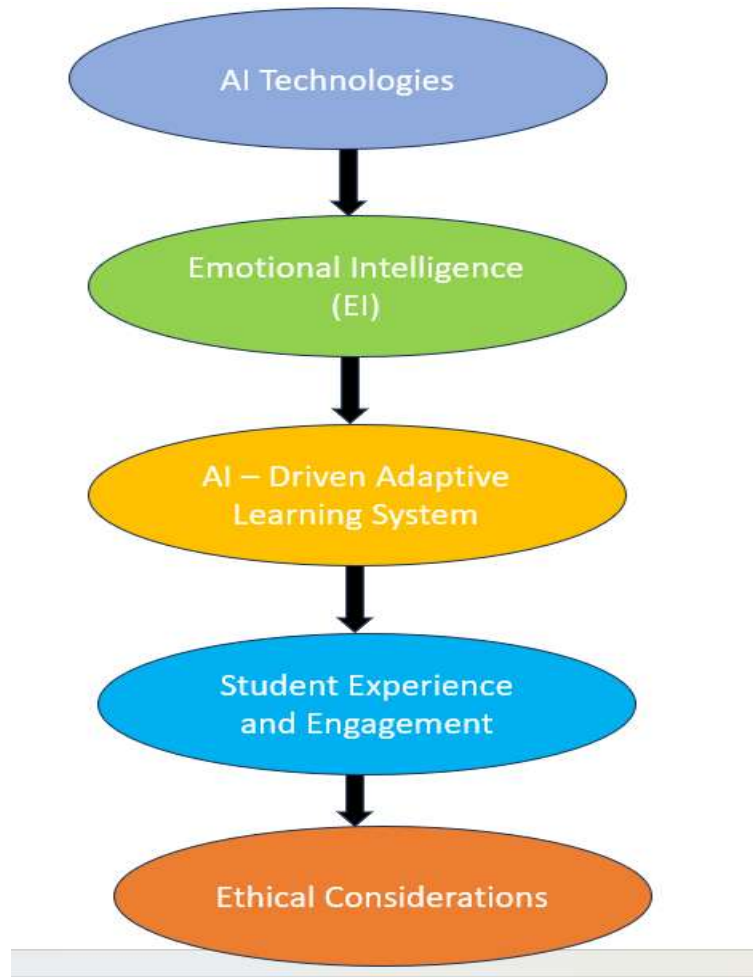


Figure 4: Conceptual Framework Diagram - AI infused EI in Digital Learning

Steps for AI infused EI in Digital Learning:

Step 1: Collecting Data & Detecting Emotion:

- Collect learner data – Extract LMS interaction data, facial recognition, voice tone, typing speed and sentiment from textual responses.
- Sentiment Analysis – NLP for textual emotion recognition, CV for facial expressions, and Voice Analysis for tone recognition.
- Behaviour monitoring – Track levels of engagement, radiance of responses and frequency of participation.

Step 2: Adaptation of Learning to Emotion Awareness:

- Curriculum personalization – Adapt the difficulty and format of the content depending on the emotion of the learner.
- Reduce complexity with more basic explanations or have AI chatbot supplementation if the learner is stuck.

- If engaged, offer tasks at a more advanced level
- Offer Real-Time, Emotionally Aware Feedback.
- When motivation is low, use positive reinforcement.
- All feedback should be given in a way that is constructive and not threatening.
- Dynamic pacing – Modify tuitions according to stress level and engagement.

Step 3: AI Social & Emotional Learning for Educators & Students (SEL):

- Simulated empathy – AI-based chatbots can create human-like feelings and emotions to help learners in their journey.
- Collaborative peer suggestions – AI suggests classmates who you could collaborate with in a study group, based on where your emotional and cognitive strengths are complementary.
- Mindfulness integration – If signs of fatigue or stress are detected during the learning process, AI nudges learners toward short mindfulness breaks.

Step 4: Regular Monitoring & Improvement:

- Real-time EI dashboard – Grant students and instructors' insights about emotional well-being and engagement.
- AI-driven intervention triggers—If continuous stress or disengagement is detected, notify mentors for intervention.
- Model update – Using machine learning, AI updates the EI model periodically and over the time that improves emotional adaptability in teaching strategies.

Such AI infused EI in digital learning eventually helps to improve the levels of engagement, retention and academic performance in the realm of digital learning environments.

Algorithm for AI infused EI in Digital Learning:

Algorithm 1: <i>AI Infused EI in Digital Learning</i>	
<hr/>	
Nomenclature: $n \rightarrow$ Number of Students	$MS \rightarrow$ Mindfulness Suggestion
$ES \rightarrow$ Emotion Score	$SFE \rightarrow$ Student Facial Expression
$CA \rightarrow$ Curriculum Ac-	$SVT \rightarrow$ Student Voice Tone
tion	$STS \rightarrow$ Student Typing Speed
$FB \rightarrow$ Feedback	$TS \rightarrow$ Text Sentiment
$SP \rightarrow$ Suggested Peer	
Input: Student s using Digital Learning Platform LMS	
Output: Dictionary D with key-value pairs for parameters (ES , CA , FB , SP , MS)	
for each s in Digital Learning Platform LMS $s = 1$ to n	

Step 1 : Collect student data
 Capture SFE_i
 where $SFE \in \{\text{happy, neutral, sad, frustrated}\}$
 Capture SVT_i
 where $SVT \in \{\text{positive, neutral, negative}\}$
 Capture STS_i
 where $STS \in \{20, 21, 22, \dots, 99, 100\}$
 Assign $TS_i \leftarrow SFE_i \cup SVT_i \cup STS_i$
 where $TS \in \{\text{positive, neutral, negative}\}$

Step 2 : Perform sentiment analysis
 initialize $ES \leftarrow 0$
 if $SFE_i = \text{"happy"}$ then
 increment ES by 1
 if $SFE_i = \text{"sad"}$ or $SFE_i = \text{"frustrated"}$ then
 decrement ES by 1
 if $SVT_i = \text{"positive"}$ then
 increment ES by 1
 if $SVT_i = \text{"negative"}$ then
 decrement ES by 1
 if $TS_i = \text{"positive"}$ then
 increment ES by 1
 if $TS_i = \text{"negative"}$ then
 decrement ES by 1
 return ES_i

Step 3 : Adapt curriculum on the basis of ES obtained in Step 2
 if $ES_i < 0$ then
 $CA_i \leftarrow$ Reduce Complexity, adding AI chatbot support.
 if $ES_i > 0$ then
 $CA_i \leftarrow$ Increase challenge level with advanced tasks.
 return CA_i

Step 4 : Provide real-time feedback on the basis of ES obtained in Step 2
 if $ES_i < 0$ then
 $FB_i \leftarrow$ Stay Positive, You are making progress.
 if $ES_i > 0$ then
 $FB_i \leftarrow$ Great Job! Keep up the momentum.
 return CA_i

Step 5 : Recommend Peer Collaboration
 Assign $SP_i \leftarrow$ Peer List $\{\text{Peer}_1, \text{Peer}_2, \text{Peer}_3, \dots, \text{Peer}_n\}$
 return SP_i

Step 6 : Suggest Mindfulness on the basis of ES obtained in Step 2
 if $ES_i < -1$ then
 $MS_i \leftarrow$ Take a short mindfulness break. Breathe and relax.
 return MS_i

Research Methodology:

This research was conducted in the current academic year among the engineering students in Delhi. The research took a quantitative approach, using a structured questionnaire survey, which was a primary data collection method. The researchers drew a random sample from the over-all population of those engineering students in Delhi region by recruiting 76 students for their sample. The tools used such as MS Excel and SPSS to collect and analyse the data. The research focused on finding relationships between variables using statistical methods, including correlation and regression.

Data Analysis and Interpretation:

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.850	10

Table 1 (Reliability Test)

The Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.850 for 10 items indicates a high level of internal consistency and reliability of the questionnaire used in this study. Since a value above 0.7 is considered acceptable and above 0.8 suggests strong reliability.

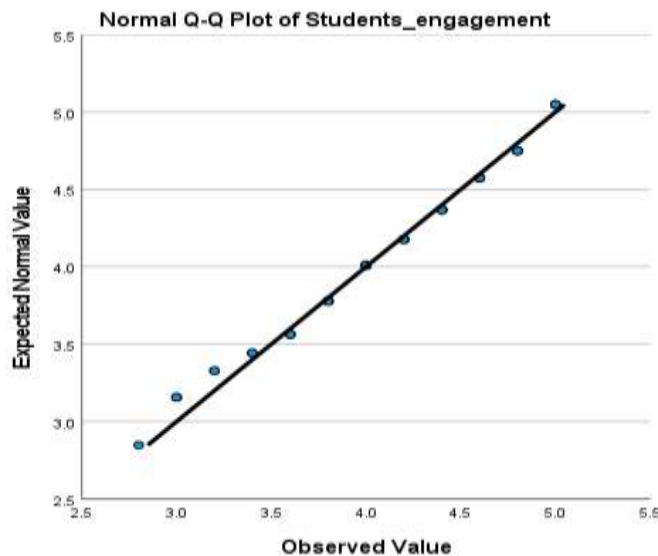


Figure 5 (Normality Test no. 1)

The Q-Q plot for Students' Engagement shows that most of the data points lie along the diagonal reference line, indicating that the distribution of students' engagement scores is approximately normal.

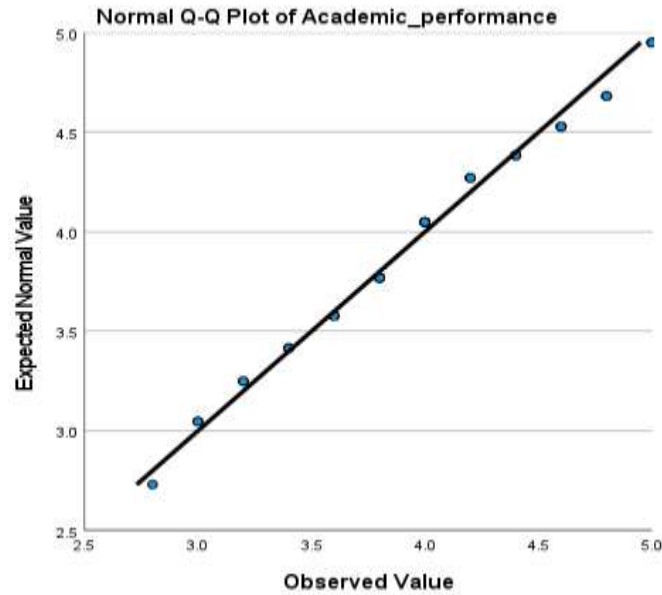


Figure 6 (Normality Test no. 2)

The Q-Q plot for Academic Performance demonstrates that the observed values closely follow the expected normal values, meaning the academic performance scores are approximately normally distributed.

Variables Entered/Removed a			
Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	AI Driven EI b		Enter
a. Dependent Variable: Students engagement			
b. All requested variables entered.			

Table 2

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.885a	0.783	0.780	0.24950
a. Predictors: (Constant), AI driven EI				

Table 3

Coefficients a	
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Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	0.166	0.244		0.680	0.499	
	AI driven EI	0.950	0.058	0.885	16.325	0.000	Significant
a. Dependent Variable: Students engagement							

Table 4

The regression analysis examined the impact of AI-Driven EI technology on students' engagement. The model summary shows an R value of 0.885, suggesting a strong correlation between AI-Driven EI technology and student engagement. The R-Square value of 0.783 means that 78.3% of the variance in student engagement is explained by AI-Driven EI technology. The Adjusted R-Square value of 0.780 further confirms the robustness of this relationship.

In the Coefficients table, the AI-Driven variable has a B value of 0.950 (p-value = 0.000), meaning that a one-unit increase in AI-Driven EI technology results in a 0.950 unit increase in student engagement, which is statistically significant. The Beta value (0.885) also supports this strong effect.

Variables Entered/Removed a			
Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	AI Driven EI b		Enter
a. Dependent Variable: Academic Performance			
b. All requested variables entered.			

Table 5

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.847a	0.718	0.714	0.29168
a. Predictors: (Constant), AI driven EI				

Table 6

Coefficients a					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	

		B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	0.150	0.285		0.525	0.601	
	AI Driven EI	0.934	0.068	0.847	13.724	0.000	Significant
a. Dependent Variable: Academic Performance							

Table 7

The second regression analysis evaluates the effect of AI-Driven EI technology on academic performance. The R value of 0.847 indicates a strong positive correlation. The R-Square value of 0.718 suggests that 71.8% of the variation in academic performance is explained by AI-Driven EI technology.

From the Coefficients table, the B value for AI-Driven EI technology is 0.934 with a p-value of 0.000, meaning that a one-unit increase in AI-Driven EI technology leads to a 0.934 unit increase in academic performance. The Beta value of 0.847 further indicates a strong influence.

Correlations				
		Students' engagement	Academic Performance	AI driven
Students' engagement	Pearson Correlation	1	.698**	.885**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000 (Significant)	0.000 (Significant)
Academic Performance	Pearson Correlation	.698**	1	.847**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000 (Significant)		0.000 (Significant)
AI driven EI	Pearson Correlation	.885**	.847**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000 (Significant)	0.000 (Significant)	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 8

The correlation table provides insights into the relationships between AI-Driven EI technology, student engagement and academic performance:

- The Pearson correlation between AI-Driven EI technology and student engagement is 0.885, which is highly significant ($p = 0.000$).
- The Pearson correlation between AI-Driven EI technology and academic performance is 0.847, also highly significant ($p = 0.000$).
- The correlation between student engagement and academic performance is 0.698, indicating a moderate to strong relationship ($p = 0.000$).

Findings:

The integration of AI-driven EI into digital learning environments significantly enhances students' engagement (i.e. fails to reject the alternate hypothesis).

AI-driven EI learning systems significantly improve students' academic performance (i.e. fails to reject the alternate hypothesis).

When AI and EI are paired in digital learning, they:

- Even determine student emotions by facial expressions, tone of voice or writing style.
- Modify pedagogical approaches according to student emotional state.
- Respond with empathic support to student questions or concerns.
- Make room for personalized paths, both academically and emotionally.
- Enhances learning engagement and interactivity.
- Individual student needs better understood.
- Increase in student motivation and engagement.
- Decreases feelings of isolation in virtual learning situations.
- Improves student-institutions communication etc.

Challenges:

Though integration of AI and EI in digital learning is a boon, yet it has its challenges:

- Protecting involved parties' privacy and the emotional data collected.
- Creating AI that understands complex human feelings.
- Cultural variation in emotional expression.
- Using technology, while still keeping people in the process of educating.

Ethical Considerations:

As AI and EI converge within the virtual walls of the digital learning landscape, we must tread with caution in terms of an ethical use. We need to ensure that such tools respect people's privacy and don't supplant human conversation. AI should be used to assist learning not take the teaching process entirely. And it's also essential to create systems that are equitable and avoid discriminating against any groups of learners. Students need to have clarity on when AI is being used and how it works, so that they can understand what is going on. The aim should be to build learning experiences that are high-tech and human-friendly, assisting students not only in thinking but also in emotional growth. Exploring these ethics can make digital learning more effective, as well as more caring, for all involved.

Limitation:

EI-integrated AI-based digital learning in India and around the world is fraught with challenges like inaccurate recognition of emotions, ethical challenges surrounding data privacy and AI bias. While the AI adoption is at an advance stage in developed nations, the digital divide and infrastructural constraints in India render accessibility a challenge, thus making equitable implementation a challenge in itself. Furthermore, excessive dependence on AI might decrease human communication while technological limitations can hinder the accessibility and customization of learning settings.

Future Research Directions:

To advance and expand upon this space, researchers might:

- Culture is a key factor in the recognition of emotions by AI systems.
- Explore ways to preserve the human element in the age of AI-assisted learning systems.
- It is important to develop better tools to measure the impact of emotionally intelligent AI on learning outcomes.

Discussion:

AI based EI clearly possesses the power to revolutionize digital learning places by enabling them to be more personalized, emotionally intelligent and human-centric. Nonetheless, ethical issues, bias and implementation obstacles need to be overcome to guarantee equity, transparency and efficiency. As humans and A.I. collaborate more closely, we must consider what's right and just. We need to ensure it is used to help people and not harm or disenfranchise them. And we must safeguard the privacy of individuals as well as their private information in the usage of AI systems. Another big challenge is ensuring that AI doesn't discriminate against particular groups of people. What we do need is clarity when speaking to AI versus a real person. As AI gets smarter, we'll be forced to make choices about how much control we give it and which jobs are better left to people. If we consider these questions, we will be able to determine how humans and AI can work together in the future for the benefit of humankind. Together, AI and EI can make education more accessible, effective and inclusive for all students, supporting the goal of quality education for everyone.

Conclusion:

A human brain and an AI engine make a powerful team. By 2030, AI is predicted to contribute, no less, than \$15.7 trillion to the world economy. AI systems are now highly sophisticated, but they have yet to establish a genuine experience of emotion as humans do. But AI can be a tricky beast, as it can be programmed to understand and respond to human emotions, which are integral to working with humans and AI. AI can never replace human intelligence (AI is not to supersede humans, it is here for the acceleration of the human capacity). Combining EI with AI can't only make the digital learning experience but also highly effective. Online teachers need to use technology to design more empathic, human-based digital education. While this domain progresses, there are obstacles to overcome and more studies needed to maximize the potential benefits.

AI can personalize learning by providing feedback for every student's pace and strengths. Sharing the early sign of super generative content by inverting if this can be the future of education. It can also give immediate feedback and provide it with more help, if needed. On the other hand, EI teaches students to recognize and regulate their emotions, which are starting blocks for learning and socializing. With the added dynamic of EI, institutions can produce improved learning through a more refined technology with a twist on emotion — AI plus EI equals great learning. This blend can ensure that students from all walks of life receive a quality education, a pivotal SDG.

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