

Emotional Intelligence, Spiritual Intelligence, and Self-Efficacy of Guidance Advocates

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Abstract:

This is a descriptive-correlational study using the survey method. This study aimed to determine the levels of emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligence, and self-efficacy among guidance advocates in order to identify areas for growth and development ultimately enhancing professional competencies of guidance advocates, specifically based on their age, gender, years of experience, and professional status. Purposive sampling technique was used to select a total of 74 guidance personnel from both public and private schools in Bacolod City, Negros Occidental. The survey questionnaires used were the Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire, Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory, and General Self-Efficacy Scale. The participants' emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligence, and self-efficacy are positively interrelated and influenced by demographic factors. These findings support the need for a structured, integrative development plan for the guidance advocates that will help them in better understanding themselves and enhance their work efficacy. Results between the competencies of emotional intelligence and self-efficacy correlation coefficients are positive and statistically significant but interpreted as low association. While positive low association between spiritual intelligence and self-efficacy implies that spiritual intelligence increases, the level of self-efficacy also increases, although the relationship is not strong. The correlation results between the components of emotional intelligence, and spiritual intelligence, revealing low but positive associations.

Keywords: *Emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligence, self-efficacy, guidance advocates, development plan*

Introduction:

Schools increasingly rely on guidance advocates to provide guidance, counseling, and life-coaching services that support students' holistic well-being. This reliance has emerged largely from the persistent shortage of registered guidance counselors in the Philippines, which has compelled educational institutions to appoint guidance advocates to assume counseling-related responsibilities (Decena & Singson, 2022). In practice, schools often designate teachers perceived to have motherly traits or those with academic backgrounds in psychology to serve in these roles. Although guidance advocates are expected to adhere to the principles of guidance and counseling, inadequate training renders them vulnerable to the improper application of counseling principles, potentially affecting the quality and ethical soundness of the services provided to students (Decena & Singson, 2022).

Within the field of guidance and counseling, several personal and professional attributes are considered crucial in determining the effectiveness of practitioners, particularly emotional intelligence (EI), spiritual intelligence (SI), and self-efficacy. Emotional intelligence encompasses a range of emotional and social competencies that influence how individuals understand and express emotions, interact with others, and cope with life's demands, challenges, and stressors (Sfetcu, 2023). EI is described as the capacity to recognize, understand, articulate, and appropriately utilize emotions, a competence that is fundamental to effective social and personal functioning. In educational contexts, emotional intelligence has been recognized as essential for building and sustaining interpersonal relationships and for promoting positive academic and psychosocial outcomes (Hernandez, 2022). Empirical evidence further suggests that higher emotional intelligence among school counselors is associated with stronger leadership experiences and leadership self-efficacy (Hilts et al., 2022). Counselors with elevated EI are better positioned to collaborate with team members, contribute to school philosophies and policies, and enhance institutional performance through sound communication, decision-making, and interpersonal skills (Hilts et al., 2022).

Complementing emotional intelligence is spiritual intelligence, which has been conceptualized as the capacity to integrate emotions, cognition, body, and mind in ways that foster balance, meaning, and ethical discernment in life (Chakma et al., 2023). Spiritual intelligence enables individuals to distinguish right from wrong, unlock personal

potential, and cultivate positive human qualities, making it valuable in addressing personal, professional, academic, and social challenges (Chakma et al., 2023). It involves the pursuit and construction of meaning through a deep understanding of life's principles and a connection to higher values (Abdolrezapour & Alipour, 2021). Despite growing scholarly interest in spiritual intelligence and its implications for human functioning, it remains an underexplored construct across disciplines, including education and counseling (Abdolrezapour & Alipour, 2021). Another critical construct in counseling effectiveness is self-efficacy, defined as an individual's belief in their capability to organize and execute actions required to achieve desired outcomes (Wapaño, 2021). Research highlights the central role of self-efficacy in shaping professional competence and identity among counselors and educators. Yao et al. (2021) emphasized that self-efficacy functions as a moderating factor in the development of desirable attributes such as confidence and motivation. Similarly, Perry et al. (2020) found that deliberate practice enhances cognitive processes, including self-efficacy, enabling counselors to design and implement effective interventions that benefit students. Beyond individual practice, self-efficacy has also been shown to be essential in developing intercultural competence, as counselors gain confidence through positive, incremental experiences that prepare them to advocate for diverse populations (Aydogan et al., 2024). Experiential and service-learning approaches have further demonstrated promise in strengthening self-efficacy, particularly among counselors-in-training working with young people with special needs (Frawley et al., 2023).

Recent empirical studies underscore the complex interplay among emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligence, and self-efficacy. Johnston (2021) reported that college counselors are susceptible to burnout, which negatively affects their self-efficacy, and identified burnout, emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligence, psychological ownership, and well-being as significant factors in assessing counselors' self-efficacy. In a related study, Durahim et al. (2023) found that emotional intelligence was positively correlated with self-efficacy among counseling students in private institutions in Malaysia, whereas spiritual intelligence did not significantly predict self-efficacy. These findings nevertheless emphasized the importance of cultivating both emotional and spiritual intelligences to enhance counseling self-efficacy.

In the Philippine context, empirical evidence likewise points to the relevance of these constructs. Lucero (2021) demonstrated that high levels of well-being among helping professionals were associated with better management capabilities and higher emotional intelligence, revealing positive relationships among emotional intelligence, psychological well-being, and work productivity. It is further noted that emotional and spiritual intelligence significantly influence employee engagement, describing spiritual intelligence as a set of abilities that enable individuals to recognize and apply transcendent dimensions of existence. While both intelligences were positively related, the distinct and substantial role of spiritual intelligence as a personal resource are highlighted. Consistent with these findings, Wapaño (2021) observed that individuals who understand their emotions are more likely to apply emotional knowledge adaptively, particularly in coping with stressful events, reinforcing the role of emotional intelligence in strengthening self-efficacy.

Despite these growing insights, there remains a dearth of literature examining the relationships among emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligence, and self-efficacy specifically within the context of guidance advocates, particularly in the Philippines. Moreover, limited evidence exists on how demographic variables such as age, gender, years of experience, professional status, and type of school influence these attributes. Addressing these gaps is essential, given the expanding responsibilities of guidance advocates and their critical role in supporting student well-being in resource-constrained educational settings.

Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to determine the levels of emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligence, and self-efficacy among guidance advocates and to examine the relationships among these constructs. Specifically, it aims to analyze these variables when respondents are grouped according to age, gender, years of experience, professional status, and type of school. By elucidating these relationships, the study intends to provide empirical evidence that can inform the design of an integrative development plan aimed at enhancing the personal and professional competencies of guidance advocates, ultimately strengthening guidance and counseling practices in Philippine schools.

Review of Related Literature

The increasing reliance on guidance advocates in schools has heightened interest in personal and psychological attributes that support effective counseling practice. Among the most frequently examined constructs in counseling and educational research are self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, and spiritual intelligence, each of which has been shown to influence professional performance, decision-making, and interpersonal effectiveness.

Self-efficacy has been widely examined as a determinant of professional competence, motivation, and resilience among educators and counselors. Rooted in Bandura's (1997) work, self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their capacity to perform tasks successfully. Studies consistently demonstrate that counselors with higher self-efficacy are more confident in decision-making, communication, and problem-solving, particularly in complex or emotionally demanding situations.

Research has identified several mechanisms through which self-efficacy develops. Bandura (1997) emphasized mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and emotional and physiological states as key contributors to efficacy beliefs (Lopez-Garrido, 2023). Mastery experiences, in particular, are repeatedly cited in the literature as the strongest predictor of sustained confidence, as successful task completion reinforces beliefs in personal capability. Conversely, repeated failure may undermine confidence and increase self-doubt. Vicarious experiences—such as observing colleagues or mentors succeed—also enhance efficacy beliefs by modeling attainable success (Lopez-Garrido, 2023).

Social persuasion has likewise been shown to influence self-efficacy, especially when encouragement and affirmation come from trusted supervisors or peers. Positive feedback and verbal support can mitigate early self-doubt and encourage persistence. Emotional and physiological states further shape efficacy beliefs; stress, anxiety, and physical fatigue may lower perceived competence, whereas emotional regulation and well-being contribute to a more resilient outlook. For guidance advocates, self-efficacy is therefore a critical factor in sustaining effective counseling behaviors and professional engagement (Bandura, 1997).

Emotional intelligence has received substantial attention in counseling and educational research due to its role in emotional regulation, interpersonal functioning, and leadership capacity. Emotional intelligence involves the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and utilize emotions effectively in oneself and others (Monet & Shuib, 2024). Studies consistently associate higher emotional intelligence with improved counselor well-being, stronger counselor–client relationships, and enhanced professional performance.

The literature commonly examines emotional intelligence through dimensions such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Monet & Shuib, 2024). Self-awareness enables counselors to recognize emotional triggers and make thoughtful decisions, while self-regulation supports emotional balance in high-pressure situations. Self-motivation has been linked to persistence and professional growth, particularly in challenging counseling environments.

Empathy and social skills are especially relevant in guidance and counseling contexts. Empathy allows counselors to understand clients' emotional states, fostering trust and therapeutic alliance, while social skills support effective communication and conflict resolution. Empirical evidence suggests that counselors with higher emotional intelligence exhibit stronger leadership self-efficacy and greater capacity to collaborate with colleagues and stakeholders (Hilts et al., 2022).

Further supporting these findings, Durahim et al. (2023) reported a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and counseling self-efficacy among counseling students in private universities in Malaysia. Similarly, high emotional intelligence contributes to improved counselor health and more effective counselor–client interactions. These findings underscore emotional intelligence as a central attribute in sustaining counselor competence and psychological well-being.

Compared with emotional intelligence and self-efficacy, spiritual intelligence remains a less extensively examined construct in counseling research, though interest in its role has steadily increased. Spiritual intelligence has been described as the capacity to derive meaning, values, and purpose from life experiences and to apply these insights in

decision-making and problem-solving. It encompasses qualities such as compassion, holistic thinking, ethical consistency, and awareness of interconnectedness (King, 2008).

King (2008, as cited in Marzban et al., 2022) conceptualized spiritual intelligence as comprising critical existential thinking, personal meaning production, transcendental awareness, and conscious state expansion. These abilities enable individuals to reflect on existential questions, create meaning from experiences, and recognize broader dimensions of existence beyond immediate circumstances. Attributes such as humility, service to others, and the capacity to reframe difficulties within a broader moral or existential context are further emphasized.

Empirical findings on spiritual intelligence present mixed results. While it is reported that higher spiritual intelligence is associated with better problem-solving skills, it was also found that spiritual intelligence positively influences job engagement. These studies suggest that spiritual intelligence may function as a personal resource that supports resilience, ethical judgment, and sustained engagement in professional roles (Johnston, 2021).

However, Durahim et al. (2023) found that although spiritual intelligence was positively correlated with emotional intelligence, it did not significantly predict counseling self-efficacy. This inconsistency highlights ongoing debate regarding the direct role of spiritual intelligence in professional confidence and performance. It is further argued that educational institutions often neglect spiritual intelligence development, resulting in learning environments that inadequately address meaning, values, and holistic growth. Within this context, guidance counselors and advocates may play a crucial role in integrating spiritual dimensions into counseling practices to support student identity formation and resilience.

Recent studies increasingly emphasize the interrelated nature of emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligence, and self-efficacy in counseling practice. Emotional intelligence has been consistently identified as a predictor of self-efficacy, while spiritual intelligence appears to function more indirectly, contributing to resilience, ethical decision-making, and job engagement (Durahim et al., 2023; Johnston, 2021). Counselors who demonstrate strong emotional awareness and regulation are more likely to apply emotional knowledge adaptively, particularly when coping with stress and professional demands (Wapaño, 2021).

Despite these insights, the literature remains limited in examining these relationships among guidance advocates, particularly in the Philippine context. Moreover, few studies explore how demographic variables such as age, gender, years of experience, and professional status interact with emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligence, and self-efficacy. This gap underscores the need for further empirical investigation to inform professional development initiatives tailored to guidance advocates' unique roles and contexts.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive–correlational research design using the survey method to examine the relationships among emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligence, and self-efficacy as they naturally occur within a defined population. Descriptive–correlational designs are appropriate when the objective is to determine the existence, strength, and direction of relationships among variables without manipulating them (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In line with this, Brodowicz (2024) explained that descriptive–correlational research enhances predictive capacity by systematically describing and analyzing the relationships between two or more variables.

The study was conducted in Bacolod City, located in the province of Negros Occidental. Bacolod, widely known as the “City of Smiles,” has a population of approximately 600,000 residents and is historically recognized for its sugar-based economy, which continues to shape its social and cultural landscape. The city hosts a mix of public and private educational institutions, making it a suitable locale for examining guidance advocates across varied school contexts. The respondents of the study consisted of seventy-four (74) guidance advocates from both public and private schools in Bacolod City, Negros Occidental. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants who met specific criteria aligned with the objectives of the study. Specifically, respondents were chosen based on their direct involvement and experience in guidance and counseling-related functions within their respective schools. This sampling technique is a non-probability method commonly used in descriptive research to ensure that participants possess firsthand knowledge and relevant experience regarding the phenomenon under investigation (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Data were gathered using three standardized instruments: the Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire, the Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory, and the General Self-Efficacy Scale. The Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire, developed by Daniel Goleman in 1995, was utilized to measure the respondents' level of emotional intelligence across five components: self-awareness, managing emotions, motivating oneself, empathy, and social skills. The instrument consists of 50 items rated on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 indicates "Does not apply at all," 3 indicates "Applies about half the time," and 5 indicates "Always applies." Items were grouped according to the five emotional competencies, and scores for each competency were summed and interpreted using established ranges: 35–50 interpreted as *Strength*, 18–34 as *Needs attention*, and 10–17 as *Development priority*.

Spiritual intelligence was measured using the Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory (SISRI) developed by David King in 2008. This instrument consists of 24 items designed to assess respondents' sense of meaning, purpose, and perceived significance in life. It employs a five-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (*Not at all true of me*) to 4 (*Completely true of me*). The total score was obtained by summing responses across all items and interpreted as follows: scores from 65–96 indicate *High* spiritual intelligence, 40–64 indicate *Moderate*, and 0–39 indicate *Low*.

The General Self-Efficacy Scale, developed by Ralf Schwarzer in 2014, was used to assess respondents' overall belief in their ability to handle demanding situations effectively. The scale consists of 10 items rated on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Not at all true*) to 4 (*Exactly true*). Total scores range from 10 to 40 and were interpreted as follows: 10–20 indicates *Low self-efficacy*, 21–30 indicates *Moderate self-efficacy*, and 31–40 indicates *High self-efficacy*.

The instruments demonstrated strong validity and reliability based on previous studies. The Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire showed excellent reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.932 for the overall scale and its subscales, indicating high internal consistency. It has also demonstrated strong construct validity across multiple validation studies. The Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory exhibited high reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.921, reflecting excellent internal consistency (Wan Zulkifli et al., 2017). Similarly, the General Self-Efficacy Scale has consistently shown high internal consistency and stability, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.80 to 0.90.

For data collection, the researcher formally requested permission to conduct the study from the PGCA–NOGCA of Bacolod City and from selected private schools within the city. Upon approval, the survey questionnaires were distributed electronically using Google Forms. Links to the survey were sent to respondents via personal messages and email. A total of seventy-four (74) active guidance advocates from both public and private schools participated in the study. Each questionnaire was accompanied by a cover letter and an informed consent form explaining the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and assurances of confidentiality and anonymity.

All collected data were processed and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Responses were encoded, checked for completeness, and systematically scored prior to analysis. Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the research process. Respondents were informed that their data would be used solely for academic research purposes, and all responses were treated with utmost confidentiality.

Various statistical tools were employed to address the specific objectives of the study. Frequency counts and percentages were used to describe the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, gender, years of experience, professional status, and type of school. To determine the levels of emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligence, and self-efficacy—both as a whole and when grouped according to demographic variables—the mean and standard deviation were computed. Finally, Spearman's rho was utilized to determine the presence and strength of relationships between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy, spiritual intelligence and self-efficacy, and emotional intelligence and spiritual intelligence, as appropriate to the non-parametric nature of the data.

This methodological approach ensured a systematic, ethical, and statistically sound examination of the relationships among emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligence, and self-efficacy among guidance advocates in Bacolod City.

Results

A total of seventy-four (74) guidance advocates from public and private schools in Bacolod City, Negros Occidental participated in the study, and their demographic distribution reflected both balance and diversity across several characteristics. In terms of age, the respondents were evenly divided: 37 (50.0%) were 31 years old and younger, while the remaining 37 (50.0%) were older than 31 years. The sample was predominantly female (56; 75.7%), followed by male respondents (14; 18.9%), and a smaller group who identified as LGBT/non-binary (4; 5.4%). With respect to professional exposure, a slight majority reported shorter tenure in guidance-related work, with 40 respondents (54.1%) having four years and below experience and 34 respondents (45.9%) reporting more than four years. In professional standing, most participants were guidance associates/designates who were not licensed (58; 78.4%), while 16 respondents (21.6%) were registered and licensed guidance counselors. When classified according to the type of institution, 45 respondents (60.8%) came from private schools, whereas 29 (39.2%) served in public or government schools.

Across the full group, the results indicated that the guidance advocates generally demonstrated strong emotional intelligence across the five domains assessed. When emotional intelligence was taken as a whole, all components were interpreted as “Strength.” Among these domains, self-awareness emerged with the highest mean ($M = 41.88$, $SD = 5.231$), followed closely by empathy ($M = 40.41$, $SD = 5.693$), suggesting that respondents tended to be reflective about their own emotional states while also showing a pronounced capacity to recognize and respond to the emotions of others. The pattern continued with motivating oneself ($M = 39.07$, $SD = 5.538$) and social skills ($M = 38.74$, $SD = 5.698$), both of which remained within the range of strength, indicating goal-oriented persistence and functional interpersonal competence. Although managing emotions registered the lowest mean, it still remained within the strength category ($M = 35.61$, $SD = 5.637$), implying that emotion regulation was also generally developed among the respondents, even if it was comparatively less pronounced than the other domains.

When emotional intelligence was examined across age categories, the results remained consistently strong, with both age groups receiving “Strength” interpretations across all components. Respondents older than 31 posted slightly higher mean values in self-awareness ($M = 42.24$, $SD = 5.659$), managing emotions ($M = 36.68$, $SD = 5.769$), and motivating oneself ($M = 39.62$, $SD = 5.683$), while those 31 and younger registered marginally higher scores in empathy ($M = 40.46$, $SD = 4.919$) and social skills ($M = 39.03$, $SD = 5.167$). Despite these minor differences, the overall pattern suggests that emotional intelligence strengths were evident regardless of age, with variations appearing subtle rather than categorical.

A more differentiated pattern emerged when emotional intelligence was grouped according to gender. Male and female respondents consistently showed strengths across all emotional intelligence domains, with males obtaining mean values interpreted as strength for self-awareness ($M = 42.00$, $SD = 4.820$), managing emotions ($M = 36.71$, $SD = 6.293$), motivating oneself ($M = 38.93$, $SD = 5.811$), empathy ($M = 41.14$, $SD = 5.005$), and social skills ($M = 39.93$, $SD = 5.771$). Similarly, females obtained strength interpretations across the five domains, registering self-awareness ($M = 42.23$, $SD = 4.839$), managing emotions ($M = 35.79$, $SD = 5.242$), motivating oneself ($M = 39.64$, $SD = 4.863$), empathy ($M = 40.57$, $SD = 5.679$), and social skills ($M = 38.75$, $SD = 5.435$). In contrast, the LGBT/non-binary subgroup displayed a mixed profile: while self-awareness ($M = 36.50$, $SD = 9.747$) and empathy ($M = 35.50$, $SD = 7.326$) still fell within the “Strength” range, their scores reflected development priorities in managing emotions ($M = 29.25$, $SD = 6.131$), motivating oneself ($M = 31.50$, $SD = 9.147$), and social skills ($M = 34.50$, $SD = 8.583$). Thus, whereas emotional intelligence appeared robust among male and female respondents, the LGBT/non-binary respondents exhibited strengths concentrated in awareness and empathy, alongside comparatively lower outcomes in regulation, motivation, and relational execution.

Differences by years of experience further clarified the distribution of emotional intelligence competencies. Respondents with more than four years of experience consistently posted higher means across all domains—self-awareness ($M = 43.32$, $SD = 4.125$), managing emotions ($M = 38.12$, $SD = 4.682$), motivating oneself ($M = 43.32$, $SD = 4.706$), empathy ($M = 42.03$, $SD = 5.137$), and social skills ($M = 39.97$, $SD = 5.137$)—all interpreted as strengths. Those with four years and below also generally fell within the strength category for self-awareness ($M = 40.65$, $SD = 5.785$), motivating oneself ($M = 38.20$, $SD = 6.081$), empathy ($M = 39.03$, $SD = 5.837$), and social skills ($M = 37.70$, $SD = 6.001$); however, their score for managing emotions stood out as a development priority ($M = 33.47$, $SD = 5.547$). This suggests that emotional regulation, more than the other components, may be the domain most sensitive to accumulated professional exposure.

When grouped according to professional status, both licensed and non-licensed guidance personnel continued to show strengths across the emotional intelligence domains. Registered guidance counselors obtained mean values interpreted as strength for self-awareness ($M = 43.25$, $SD = 4.313$), managing emotions ($M = 34.87$, $SD = 4.745$), motivating oneself ($M = 38.63$, $SD = 4.897$), empathy ($M = 41.50$, $SD = 6.000$), and social skills ($M = 38.13$, $SD = 5.726$). Likewise, guidance associates/designates scored within the strength range for self-awareness ($M = 41.50$, $SD = 5.430$), managing emotions ($M = 35.81$, $SD = 5.880$), motivating oneself ($M = 39.19$, $SD = 5.735$), empathy ($M = 40.10$, $SD = 5.622$), and social skills ($M = 38.91$, $SD = 5.729$). In other words, licensure status did not produce categorical differences in interpretation, although slight variations appeared in which domains scored higher for each group.

A similar consistency was observed when results were examined according to type of school. Both public and private school respondents demonstrated emotional intelligence strengths across the five domains. Public school respondents registered mean values interpreted as strength for self-awareness ($M = 41.52$, $SD = 6.817$), managing emotions ($M = 36.28$, $SD = 6.627$), motivating oneself ($M = 39.38$, $SD = 6.710$), empathy ($M = 39.21$, $SD = 6.821$), and social skills ($M = 38.00$, $SD = 6.969$). Private school respondents likewise reflected strength in self-awareness ($M = 42.11$, $SD = 3.961$), managing emotions ($M = 35.18$, $SD = 4.928$), motivating oneself ($M = 38.87$, $SD = 4.703$), empathy ($M = 41.18$, $SD = 4.754$), and social skills ($M = 39.22$, $SD = 4.728$).

Turning to spiritual intelligence, the respondents as a whole obtained a high level of spiritual intelligence ($M = 70.80$, $SD = 13.194$). This pattern remained stable when disaggregated across age, gender, years of experience, professional status, and type of school. By age, both groups were interpreted as high, with 31 years and younger ($M = 70.22$, $SD = 7.910$) and older than 31 ($M = 71.38$, $SD = 17.022$). By gender, spiritual intelligence remained high across all groups, with males registering $M = 73.21$ ($SD = 9.521$), females $M = 70.05$ ($SD = 14.392$), and LGBT/non-binary respondents $M = 72.75$ ($SD = 1.708$). Grouping by years of experience yielded similarly high levels for those with four years and below ($M = 70.40$, $SD = 9.663$) and those with more than four years ($M = 71.26$, $SD = 16.563$). Professional status likewise reflected high spiritual intelligence for both registered guidance counselors ($M = 67.69$, $SD = 13.124$) and guidance associates/designates ($M = 71.66$, $SD = 13.197$). Finally, by school type, both groups again fell within the high category, with public school respondents posting a higher mean ($M = 73.41$, $SD = 15.322$) than private school respondents ($M = 69.11$, $SD = 11.490$).

Self-efficacy outcomes similarly indicated strong confidence among guidance advocates. When taken as a whole, respondents demonstrated high self-efficacy ($M = 33.35$, $SD = 3.794$). Across age groups, high self-efficacy was maintained for both 31 years and younger ($M = 32.54$, $SD = 3.371$) and older than 31 ($M = 34.16$, $SD = 3.794$). When grouped according to gender, male and female respondents continued to fall within high self-efficacy, with males scoring $M = 34.43$ ($SD = 3.777$) and females $M = 33.43$ ($SD = 3.592$). The LGBT/non-binary subgroup, however, differed, obtaining a moderate self-efficacy interpretation ($M = 28.50$, $SD = 3.873$). By years of experience, both groups remained within high self-efficacy, with those having four years and below ($M = 32.38$, $SD = 3.303$) and those with more than four years ($M = 34.50$, $SD = 4.055$). Professional status reflected similarly high levels for registered guidance counselors ($M = 33.31$, $SD = 3.198$) and guidance associates/designates ($M = 33.36$, $SD = 3.968$). Finally, when grouped by school type, respondents from public schools recorded $M = 33.69$ ($SD = 4.244$) and private schools $M = 33.13$ ($SD = 3.507$), both interpreted as high self-efficacy.

For the correlational results, Spearman rank correlation revealed statistically significant associations between emotional intelligence components and self-efficacy. Specifically, self-awareness ($p = 0.001$), managing emotions ($p < 0.001$), motivating oneself ($p < 0.001$), empathy ($p < 0.001$), and social skills ($p = 0.004$) were all significant at the 0.05 level, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis for each emotional intelligence component in relation to self-efficacy. Spiritual intelligence was likewise found to be significantly associated with self-efficacy ($p < 0.001$), resulting in the rejection of the null hypothesis for that relationship. Lastly, emotional intelligence and spiritual intelligence also showed significant relationships in several domains: self-awareness ($p = 0.032$), managing emotions ($p = 0.013$), empathy ($p = 0.023$), and social skills ($p = 0.002$) were statistically significant, while motivating oneself was not significantly associated with spiritual intelligence ($p = 0.184$), leading to a failure to reject the null hypothesis for that specific pairing.

Discussion and Analysis

The profile of the respondents reflects the current realities of guidance practice in Philippine schools, where the majority of guidance-related functions are carried out by non-licensed guidance associates or designates rather than registered guidance counselors. The dominance of female respondents and the substantial proportion of early-career practitioners mirror national and regional trends reported in earlier studies, where guidance roles are often assumed by teachers with limited formal counseling training due to the shortage of licensed professionals (Decena & Singson, 2022). This context underscores the importance of examining personal competencies such as emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligence, and self-efficacy, as these qualities may compensate for structural and professional constraints within the guidance system.

The consistently high levels of emotional intelligence across the five domains—self-awareness, managing emotions, motivating oneself, empathy, and social skills—suggest that guidance advocates generally possess strong emotional competencies essential for effective counseling practice. Self-awareness emerged as the most prominent strength, indicating that respondents are highly reflective and attuned to their internal emotional states. This finding aligns with Simsir (2021), who emphasized self-awareness as a foundational component of counselor training, as it enables practitioners to recognize personal biases, emotional triggers, and limitations that may influence counseling interactions. High self-awareness also facilitates ethical sensitivity and authentic engagement, both of which are critical in guidance and counseling contexts.

Empathy and motivation also ranked highly, reinforcing the notion that guidance advocates are generally capable of understanding others' emotional experiences while sustaining personal drive and perseverance. These traits are particularly important in school-based counseling, where practitioners regularly engage with students facing emotional distress, academic pressure, and social challenges. The relatively lower—but still strong—scores in managing emotions suggest that while respondents can regulate emotions effectively, emotional regulation may be more susceptible to situational stressors, workload demands, and limited institutional support. This pattern resonates with findings by Uniyal and Uniyal (2020), who observed that certain emotional intelligence components, particularly emotion regulation, may not develop uniformly across all practitioners and may be influenced by workplace conditions.

Age-related patterns revealed only modest differences, with older respondents demonstrating slightly higher emotional regulation and motivation, while younger respondents showed marginally higher empathy and social skills. These findings support Todorova's (2024) assertion that emotional intelligence develops dynamically across the lifespan, with certain competencies, such as self-awareness, continuing to evolve through accumulated personal and professional experiences. Importantly, the absence of sharp age-based disparities suggests that emotional intelligence is not confined to maturity alone but can be cultivated early in professional practice.

Gender-based analysis revealed a more differentiated pattern. While male and female respondents consistently demonstrated strengths across all emotional intelligence domains, LGBT/non-binary respondents showed developmental needs in managing emotions, motivation, and social skills, despite maintaining strengths in self-awareness and empathy. This finding warrants careful interpretation. It may reflect broader social and institutional stressors faced by gender-diverse individuals, including minority stress, role strain, and limited access to affirming professional environments. Similar complexities have been noted by Trentini et al. (2021), who observed that gender differences in emotional processing are often intertwined with emotional burden and contextual pressures rather than inherent emotional capacity. These results highlight the need for inclusive professional development initiatives that explicitly address the emotional well-being and skill development of underrepresented gender groups within guidance services.

Years of experience emerged as a more salient differentiating factor, particularly in managing emotions. Guidance advocates with more than four years of experience demonstrated stronger emotional intelligence across all domains, while those with four years and below showed a development priority specifically in emotional regulation. This finding suggests that emotional regulation may be honed through prolonged exposure to counseling situations, organizational challenges, and repeated interpersonal interactions. While this contrasts with Uniyal and Uniyal's (2020) claim that emotional intelligence does not significantly vary with years of service, it aligns with their observation that social awareness tends to improve with prolonged professional engagement. The present findings imply that early-career

guidance advocates may benefit most from targeted mentoring and reflective supervision focused on emotional regulation and stress management.

Professional status and type of school did not produce categorical differences in emotional intelligence levels, as both licensed and non-licensed practitioners, as well as public and private school respondents, consistently demonstrated strengths across all domains. This suggests that emotional intelligence may be shaped more by role demands and daily practice than by formal credentials or institutional affiliation alone. Gojar et al. (2025) similarly emphasized that guidance associates often develop functional counseling competencies through on-the-ground experience, despite the absence of licensure, reinforcing the importance of continuous professional development across all guidance roles.

The findings on spiritual intelligence revealed uniformly high levels across all demographic groupings, indicating that guidance advocates generally possess a strong sense of meaning, purpose, and value orientation in their professional roles. This result supports Durahim et al. (2023), who identified spiritual intelligence as a key resource for mental health professionals, contributing to resilience, ethical clarity, and holistic well-being. The stability of high spiritual intelligence across age, gender, experience, professional status, and school type suggests that spiritual intelligence may function as a deeply rooted personal resource rather than one that is easily shaped by demographic factors alone. Nonetheless, slight variations were observed. Older and more experienced respondents exhibited marginally higher spiritual intelligence, supporting Mohammadi and Fardebrahimi's (2023) and Mehri et al.'s (2025) findings that spiritual intelligence, particularly meaning-making, may deepen with age and professional exposure. Public school respondents also showed higher mean spiritual intelligence than their private school counterparts, though this contrasts with Sharma and Sharma's (2024) conclusion that school type does not significantly influence spiritual intelligence. These differences may reflect contextual demands unique to public school settings, such as higher student loads, resource constraints, and exposure to diverse social issues, which may foster deeper reflection and reliance on internal value systems.

Self-efficacy results further reinforced the overall competence of guidance advocates, with high self-efficacy observed across the sample. This suggests that respondents generally believe in their capacity to perform guidance-related tasks effectively, a critical factor in sustaining motivation and professional engagement. These findings align with Naqiyah and Sholeha (2023), who reported high self-efficacy among school counselors, particularly in delivering core guidance services. The higher self-efficacy observed among older and more experienced respondents supports Priyadharsan and Saravanabawan's (2021) assertion that accumulated experience enhances confidence and perceived competence.

Gender-based differences in self-efficacy mirrored patterns observed in emotional intelligence. While male and female respondents maintained high self-efficacy, LGBT/non-binary respondents reported only moderate self-efficacy. This echoes Amthul (2022), He and Wong (2021), and Moraga-Pumarino et al. (2025), who documented gender-related variations in self-efficacy across contexts. These findings underscore the importance of creating affirming environments and targeted support systems that address the unique challenges faced by gender-diverse practitioners, as self-efficacy is closely tied to professional persistence and well-being.

The correlational analyses provide further insight into the interplay among emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligence, and self-efficacy. The significant, albeit low, correlations between all emotional intelligence components and self-efficacy suggest that while emotional intelligence contributes to confidence in professional abilities, it is not the sole determinant. This supports Mohd Nasir et al. (2023), who found emotional intelligence to be significantly related to counseling self-efficacy but emphasized the role of additional cognitive, experiential, and contextual factors. The modest strength of these relationships implies that self-efficacy is a multifaceted construct shaped by emotional skills, mastery experiences, organizational support, and personal resilience.

Similarly, the significant but low association between spiritual intelligence and self-efficacy indicates that spiritual intelligence may indirectly support confidence through mechanisms such as purpose, inner stability, and ethical grounding. This finding aligns with Saxena and Soni (2023) and Bali-Mahomed et al. (2022), who highlighted the role of spiritual resources in enhancing psychological well-being and counseling effectiveness, even when direct predictive effects are limited.

Finally, the observed relationships between emotional intelligence and spiritual intelligence—significant for self-awareness, managing emotions, empathy, and social skills, but not for motivating oneself—suggest partial overlap between these constructs. This pattern supports Abdul Rahim et al. (2023), who argued that emotional and spiritual intelligences are distinct yet complementary dimensions of counselor development. Emotional competencies related to awareness, regulation, and relational sensitivity appear more closely aligned with spiritual capacities such as meaning-making and compassion, whereas motivation may be influenced more strongly by personal goals, organizational context, and external reinforcement.

Taken together, the findings suggest that guidance advocates in Bacolod City possess strong emotional and spiritual foundations and high self-efficacy, but that targeted interventions—particularly for early-career practitioners and underrepresented gender groups—may further strengthen emotional regulation, motivation, and confidence. The integrated development of emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligence, and self-efficacy emerges as a critical pathway for enhancing guidance advocates' personal well-being and professional effectiveness within the evolving demands of school-based guidance and counseling.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, several conclusions are drawn regarding the profile, competencies, and interrelationships of emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligence, and self-efficacy among guidance advocates in Bacolod City.

First, the demographic profile of the respondents reflects the prevailing structure of guidance services in schools. While the distribution of respondents by age was evenly split, the majority were female, had four years or less of experience, and were non-licensed Guidance Associates or Designates, most of whom were affiliated with private schools. This profile highlights the continued reliance of schools on non-licensed personnel to deliver guidance services, underscoring the importance of strengthening their personal and professional competencies to ensure effective support for students.

Second, emotional intelligence emerged as a significant strength among guidance advocates, with all five components—self-awareness, managing emotions, motivating oneself, empathy, and social skills—falling within the strength category. Among these components, self-awareness stood out as the most prominent. Higher emotional intelligence scores were generally observed among respondents aged 31 years and older, those with more than four years of experience, and those working in public schools. Gender-based differences revealed that female respondents tended to score higher in self-awareness and motivation, whereas male respondents demonstrated relatively stronger competencies in managing emotions, empathy, and social skills. These findings suggest that emotional intelligence is well developed among guidance advocates but also shaped by age, experience, work context, and gender-related factors.

Third, the study found that guidance advocates demonstrated a high level of spiritual intelligence overall. Respondents who were older, more experienced, working in public schools, and serving as guidance associates or designates reported relatively higher spiritual intelligence. This indicates that spiritual intelligence may deepen with professional exposure and sustained engagement in guidance work, serving as a stable internal resource that supports meaning-making, ethical judgment, and holistic practice.

Fourth, self-efficacy among guidance advocates was also found to be high. Higher levels of self-efficacy were observed among respondents aged 31 years and older, males, those with more than four years of experience, guidance associates or designates, and those working in public schools. These findings suggest that confidence in professional capability is influenced by accumulated experience, role demands, and contextual exposure, rather than by licensure status alone.

Fifth, correlational analyses confirmed that all five components of emotional intelligence were positively associated with self-efficacy, although the strength of these relationships was generally low. Among the components, motivating oneself showed the strongest association with self-efficacy, highlighting the role of internal drive and perseverance in fostering confidence in one's professional abilities. Spiritual intelligence was likewise found to have a low but positive

association with self-efficacy, indicating that a strong sense of purpose and meaning may contribute to, but does not solely determine, one's belief in personal competence. Moreover, most components of emotional intelligence—except motivating oneself—were positively associated with spiritual intelligence, suggesting partial overlap between emotional and spiritual domains, particularly in areas related to awareness, regulation, empathy, and interpersonal sensitivity.

The study establishes that emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligence, and self-efficacy are positively interrelated constructs that are shaped by key demographic factors such as age, gender, years of experience, professional status, and work setting. Although the relationships among these variables are modest in strength, their combined influence underscores the importance of addressing guidance advocates' emotional, spiritual, and efficacy-related capacities in an integrated manner. These findings strongly support the need for a structured and integrative development plan that will enable guidance advocates to deepen self-understanding, strengthen emotional and spiritual resources, and enhance their overall effectiveness in delivering guidance and counseling services.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the personal and professional competencies of guidance advocates, particularly in the areas of emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligence, and self-efficacy.

Educational institutions, especially those employing Guidance Associates or Designates, are strongly encouraged to establish a systematic and integrative professional development program that deliberately targets emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligence, and self-efficacy. Given that many guidance advocates are non-licensed, early in their careers, or relatively young, development initiatives should be needs-based, inclusive, and developmental rather than remedial. Programs such as structured workshops, mentorship and coaching arrangements, reflective supervision, and customized training modules should be prioritized to address identified gaps while reinforcing existing strengths. Institutions are further encouraged to adopt mentorship and peer-support systems, pairing less experienced guidance advocates with seasoned practitioners to promote experiential learning, emotional regulation, and confidence-building through guided practice. Such arrangements may help mitigate challenges related to emotional regulation and professional self-doubt, particularly among novice guidance advocates and those from underrepresented groups.

School administrators and policy-makers should also ensure that inclusive and affirming professional environments are cultivated, particularly for gender-diverse guidance advocates. Targeted initiatives that promote psychological safety, inclusivity, and respect for diversity can help strengthen emotional well-being and self-efficacy, ultimately leading to more effective guidance services.

Finally, continuous assessment and evaluation of guidance advocates' emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligence, and self-efficacy are recommended. Regular monitoring can help institutions tailor interventions more effectively, ensuring that professional development efforts remain responsive to evolving needs and aligned with best practices in guidance and counseling.

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