

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AS PRACTICAL WISDOM: A PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW OF EDUCATOR WELL- BEING AND WORK-FAMILY BALANCE

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ABSTRACT

Emotional intelligence (EI) has become a prominent construct in psychology, education, and organizational studies due to its association with interpersonal effectiveness, occupational performance, and psychological well-being. Despite its widespread application, emotional intelligence is predominantly conceptualized as a set of competencies that facilitate adaptation and effectiveness, leaving its deeper philosophical foundations relatively unexplored. This paper offers a philosophical reinterpretation of emotional intelligence through the lens of Aristotelian virtue ethics, particularly the concept of *phronesis* or practical wisdom. Drawing on philosophical and educational literature, the review examines the conceptual similarities between emotional intelligence and practical wisdom, including self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, contextual judgment, and the integration of emotion and reason in decision-making. The analysis argues that emotional intelligence may be understood not merely as a psychological skill but as a virtue-oriented capacity that supports wise judgment and human flourishing. Attention is given to the relevance of this perspective for educators, whose professional lives require continuous negotiation of emotional, ethical, and relational challenges. The paper further explores the implications of emotional intelligence as practical wisdom for educator well-being and work-family balance, suggesting that these outcomes are best understood within a broader framework of flourishing rather than solely in terms of stress reduction or performance enhancement. Finally, a conceptual framework is proposed linking practical wisdom, emotional intelligence, emotional judgment, work-family balance, educator well-being, and human flourishing. By integrating Aristotelian ethics with contemporary emotional intelligence scholarship, this review contributes to ongoing discussions concerning the philosophical foundations of emotional intelligence and its significance for fostering flourishing educational lives.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence; *phronesis*; practical wisdom; educator well-being; work-family balance; Aristotelian ethics; human flourishing

1. Introduction

Emotions have held a crucial role in philosophical investigation from ancient times. Philosophers have historically endeavoured to comprehend the influence of emotions on human judgment, ethical behaviour, and the desire for a fulfilling existence. Some traditions regarded emotions as impediments to logical deliberation, while others acknowledged them as essential elements of ethical perception and practical reasoning. In Aristotelian ethics, emotions are not irrational forces to be suppressed nor mere passive sensations beyond human influence; instead, they are essential to virtuous conduct when properly directed by reason and practical wisdom (Aristotle, trans. 1999). Consequently, questions concerning the understanding, regulation, and wise use of emotions remain fundamental to broader philosophical discussions regarding virtue, character, and human flourishing.

Recent academic discourse has increasingly explored these issues using the framework of emotional intelligence (EI). Since its initial presentation by Salovey and Mayer in 1990, emotional intelligence has become one of the most significant notions in psychology, education, and organizational studies. Emotional intelligence is generally understood as the capacity to perceive, understand, utilize, and regulate emotions effectively in oneself and others (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Mayer et al., 2004). Comprehensive studies have linked emotional intelligence to various beneficial outcomes, such as improved interpersonal relationships, heightened leadership efficacy, enhanced psychological resilience, greater job satisfaction, and elevated well-being (Joseph & Newman, 2010; Miao et al., 2017; Schutte et al., 2007). Thus, emotional intelligence has emerged as a crucial foundation for comprehending how individuals navigate through emotionally intricate surroundings and address personal and professional issues.

The significance of emotional intelligence is especially apparent in educational environments. Teaching is acknowledged as a profession marked by significant emotional labor, ongoing interpersonal interaction, and considerable professional accountability. Educators are required to encourage learning, manage classroom dynamics, assist students' socio-emotional development, work with colleagues, interact with parents, and adhere to institutional requirements. Such obligations need that educators practice continuous emotional regulation,

empathy, and relationship management. Emotional intelligence is associated with teacher effectiveness, professional commitment, job happiness, and psychological well-being (Brackett et al., 2010; Mérida-López & Extremera, 2017). Furthermore, increasing data indicates that emotional competences operate as significant protective factors against occupational stress and burnout in educators (MacIntyre et al., 2020).

In addition to these professional obligations, modern educators frequently encounter difficulties in reconciling job and familial duties. Increasing workloads, administrative responsibilities, technological connectedness, and performance demands have led to heightened work-family conflict in educational settings. Work-family conflict denotes a type of inter-role conflict when engagement in work and family spheres becomes mutually exclusive, hence impeding involvement in one role due to obligations in the other (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Studies have consistently shown that work-family conflict correlates with negative consequences, such as emotional tiredness, decreased job satisfaction, psychological distress, and impaired well-being (Allen et al., 2000; Nohe et al., 2015). For educators, these conflicts are especially pronounced as teaching frequently transcends regular working hours, resulting in ongoing difficulties in preserving appropriate boundaries between professional and home life.

Although much data connects emotional intelligence to well-being and work-family outcomes, prevailing approaches to emotional intelligence predominantly have a psychological and instrumental focus. Emotional intelligence is sometimes defined as a set of competencies, abilities, or skills that improve adaptation, effectiveness, and performance in diverse circumstances (Goleman, 1995; Mayer et al., 2016). Although these perspectives have produced valuable empirical insights, they frequently neglect profound philosophical inquiries regarding the ethical importance of emotional comprehension, the interplay between emotion and rational judgment, and the role of emotional faculties in attaining a fulfilling life. Consequently, emotional intelligence is often regarded as a practical asset rather than a potential virtue linked to overarching issues of moral development and human wellbeing.

This exclusion is significant as certain aspects of emotional intelligence have historically been integral to virtue ethics. Aristotle's notion of *phronesis*, sometimes rendered as practical wisdom, provides a pertinent framework for analysing the philosophical underpinnings of emotional intelligence. Practical wisdom denotes the ability to thoughtfully consider issues related to human behaviour and to identify suitable actions in certain contexts (Aristotle, trans. 1999). In contrast to technical skill, practical wisdom encompasses context-specific judgment, moral discernment, emotional restraint, and the capacity to synthesize information, experience, and ethical concerns in decision-making (Annas, 2011; Kristjánsson, 2015). Significantly, Aristotle did not perceive emotions as fundamentally antagonistic to reason. Virtuous individuals cultivate the capacity to perceive and articulate emotions appropriately through the use of practical wisdom.

The similarities between emotional intelligence and practical wisdom are notable. Emotional intelligence underscores self-awareness, emotional management, empathy, adaptability, and proficient interpersonal functioning. Likewise, practical wisdom necessitates self-awareness, emotional equilibrium, empathy towards others' situations, and judicious decision-making concerning actions. Both conceptions entail the amalgamation of cognition and emotion rather than their dissociation. Both focus on negotiating intricate human circumstances to enhance individual and communal welfare. These similarities imply that emotional intelligence may signify more than a psychological skill; it may be perceived as a modern embodiment of practical wisdom.

This philosophical viewpoint is especially pertinent in educational settings. Teaching exceeds a purely technical endeavor focused on knowledge dissemination; it is a moral and relational practice necessitating ongoing discernment of conflicting ideals, obligations, and emotional pressures (Campbell, 2003; Carr, 2000). Educators frequently face circumstances necessitating the equilibrium of professional responsibilities with personal and familial duties, all while prioritizing the welfare of students and colleagues. Examining emotional intelligence via the perspective of practical wisdom provides a more comprehensive understanding of how educators address professional problems, balance work and family, and foster well-being.

This analysis argues that emotional intelligence can be effectively redefined as a manifestation of practical wisdom rooted in the Aristotelian tradition of virtue ethics. The paper aims to integrate philosophical and educational views to transcend competency-based interpretations of emotional intelligence, exploring its importance as a virtue that fosters good judgment, ethical behaviour, educator well-being, and human flourishing. The review specifically aims to: (a) scrutinize prevailing conceptualizations of emotional intelligence; (b) investigate the Aristotelian concept of practical wisdom and its significance for emotional functioning; (c) analyse the conceptual interrelation between emotional intelligence and practical wisdom; and (d) evaluate the implications of this philosophical viewpoint for educator well-being and work-family equilibrium. This interdisciplinary approach contributes to the current discourse on the philosophical underpinnings of emotional intelligence and its significance in promoting thriving educational experiences.

This paper adopts a philosophical narrative review approach to examine emotional intelligence through the lens of Aristotelian virtue ethics. Relevant literature on emotional intelligence, practical wisdom (*phronesis*), educator well-being, work-family balance, and human flourishing was reviewed from foundational and contemporary scholarly sources in philosophy, psychology, and education. Rather than conducting a systematic review, the paper

aims to synthesize key conceptual arguments and identify theoretical connections between emotional intelligence and practical wisdom, with particular attention to their implications for educators' well-being and flourishing.

2. Understanding Emotional Intelligence: From Psychological Competence to Philosophical Inquiry

The concept of emotional intelligence (EI) emerged from growing recognition that traditional conceptions of intelligence were insufficient for explaining successful human functioning in complex social environments. While conventional understandings of intelligence focused primarily on cognitive abilities such as reasoning, memory, and problem-solving, scholars increasingly acknowledged the importance of emotional capacities in shaping thought, judgment, and behaviour. Emotional intelligence was therefore introduced as a framework for understanding how emotions contribute to adaptive functioning and interpersonal effectiveness.

The modern conception of emotional intelligence is generally attributed to Salovey and Mayer (1990), who defined it as the ability to monitor one's own and others' emotions, discriminate among them, and use this information to guide thinking and action. Building upon this definition, Mayer and Salovey (1997) proposed a four-branch model consisting of the abilities to perceive emotions, use emotions to facilitate thinking, understand emotions, and regulate emotions. This approach conceptualized emotional intelligence as a genuine form of intelligence concerned with the processing of emotional information.

The significance of emotional intelligence expanded considerably following the work of Goleman (1995), who broadened the construct to include competencies such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Similarly, Bar-On (1997) conceptualized emotional intelligence as a combination of emotional and social competencies that facilitate effective adaptation to environmental demands. Although these models differ in emphasis, they share the assumption that emotional capacities play an important role in personal, social, and professional functioning.

Research across diverse contexts has associated emotional intelligence with a range of positive outcomes, including improved interpersonal relationships, psychological well-being, job satisfaction, leadership effectiveness, and occupational performance (Joseph & Newman, 2010; Miao et al., 2017). Within educational settings, emotional intelligence has been linked to teacher effectiveness, resilience, job satisfaction, and reduced burnout (Mérida-López & Extremera, 2017). Consequently, emotional intelligence has become an influential construct in educational and organizational research.

Despite its popularity, emotional intelligence has also generated substantial conceptual debate. Scholars have questioned its definitional boundaries, measurement approaches, and overlap with existing personality constructs (Locke, 2005; Matthews et al., 2002). However, beyond these methodological concerns lies a deeper philosophical issue. Most emotional intelligence research has been grounded in psychological and organizational paradigms that emphasize adaptation, effectiveness, and performance. Emotional intelligence is frequently valued because it enhances leadership, improves workplace relationships, or reduces stress. While such outcomes are important, they encourage an instrumental understanding of emotional functioning.

This instrumental orientation leaves relatively unexplored questions concerning the ethical significance of emotional understanding, the relationship between emotions and moral judgment, and the role of emotional capacities in achieving a flourishing life. Emotional intelligence research often explains how emotions can be managed effectively but provides less insight into how emotions contribute to virtuous action and practical reasoning. Consequently, emotional intelligence is frequently presented as a psychological skill rather than as a virtue associated with wise judgment.

The relative neglect of these philosophical dimensions is noteworthy because emotions have long occupied a central place within ethical thought. Classical philosophers did not merely ask how emotions influence behaviour but also how emotional experiences should be cultivated and directed toward worthwhile ends. Within Aristotelian virtue ethics, emotions are closely connected to character, judgment, and human flourishing. This perspective suggests that emotional intelligence may be understood not only as a set of competencies but also as a form of practical wisdom.

The limitations of purely competency-based approaches therefore create a need for philosophical inquiry. Reconsidering emotional intelligence through the lens of virtue ethics provides an opportunity to move beyond questions of effectiveness and adaptation toward broader concerns regarding character, ethical judgment, and flourishing. Such a perspective invites a reconsideration of emotional intelligence as a virtue-oriented capacity that guides individuals in navigating complex personal, professional, and moral situations. The following section develops this argument through an examination of Aristotle's concept of practical wisdom (*phronesis*).

3. Aristotle's Concept of Practical Wisdom (*Phronesis*)

The philosophical foundations of emotional intelligence can be better understood through Aristotle's virtue ethics, particularly his concept of *phronesis* or practical wisdom. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle developed an ethical framework centered on *eudaimonia*, commonly translated as flourishing, well-being, or living well (Aristotle, trans. 1999). Unlike contemporary perspectives that often equate well-being with subjective happiness or life satisfaction, Aristotle viewed flourishing as the realization of human potential through the cultivation of virtue and the exercise of reason. Human flourishing, therefore, is not a temporary emotional state but a lifelong process of living in accordance with virtue.

Central to Aristotle's ethical theory is the distinction between moral virtues and intellectual virtues. Moral virtues, such as courage, justice, and temperance, are developed through habituation and practice, whereas intellectual virtues concern the cultivation of knowledge and understanding. However, Aristotle maintained that possessing virtues alone is insufficient for ethical action. Individuals must also know how and when virtues should be exercised in particular situations. This capacity is provided by *phronesis*, or practical wisdom.

Practical wisdom occupies a unique position within Aristotle's ethics because it links moral character to action. Aristotle defined practical wisdom as the capacity to deliberate well about matters concerning human life and flourishing (Aristotle, trans. 1999). Unlike technical knowledge (*techne*), which focuses on producing specific outcomes, practical wisdom concerns judgment in situations characterized by uncertainty, complexity, and competing values. It enables individuals to determine appropriate courses of action by considering the particular circumstances of each situation.

A defining feature of practical wisdom is its contextual nature. Aristotle rejected the notion that ethical decision-making could be reduced to universal rules applicable in every circumstance. Instead, he argued that virtuous action requires sensitivity to context and the ability to recognize morally relevant aspects of particular situations. Practical wisdom involves discerning what is appropriate, when it is appropriate, and to what extent it should be expressed. Such judgments cannot be derived solely from abstract principles but require experience, reflection, and moral discernment (Annas, 2011).

Another important aspect of practical wisdom is the relationship between emotion and reason. Contrary to traditions that portray emotions as obstacles to rational thought, Aristotle regarded emotions as integral to ethical life. Emotions influence perception, motivation, and judgment, making them important components of moral decision-making. However, emotions must be guided by reason if they are to contribute positively to flourishing. Virtuous individuals neither suppress emotions nor become dominated by them; rather, they cultivate the ability to experience and express emotions appropriately (Aristotle, trans. 1999).

This integration of emotion and reason is reflected in Aristotle's doctrine of the mean, according to which virtue lies between excess and deficiency. Courage, for example, represents a balance between recklessness and cowardice, while temperance lies between self-indulgence and insensibility. Determining the appropriate mean in a given situation requires practical wisdom because no fixed rule can specify the correct response in every circumstance. Individuals must evaluate contextual factors, balance competing considerations, and exercise sound judgment.

Contemporary scholars have expanded Aristotle's conception of practical wisdom and demonstrated its relevance to modern professional and ethical contexts. Annas (2011) describes practical wisdom as a form of intelligent virtue that integrates knowledge, experience, and moral understanding. Similarly, Kristjánsson (2015) argues that practical wisdom involves contextually appropriate judgment directed toward both personal and communal well-being. These interpretations highlight the integrative nature of practical wisdom, which combines cognitive, emotional, and ethical dimensions of human functioning.

Recent scholarship has further emphasized the contemporary significance of *phronesis*. Kristjánsson et al. (2021) conceptualize practical wisdom as a form of contextual integrative thinking that enables individuals to coordinate emotions, values, knowledge, and situational factors in decision-making. Extending this argument, Kristjánsson (2024) identifies practical wisdom as a key component of professional ethics, particularly in education, where practitioners regularly face situations involving uncertainty, competing responsibilities, and moral complexity. Effective professional practice therefore depends not only on technical expertise but also on the capacity for prudent and context-sensitive judgment.

The relevance of practical wisdom is particularly evident in teaching. Education is not merely a technical activity concerned with transmitting knowledge; it is fundamentally a moral practice involving relationships, values, responsibilities, and judgments about what constitutes worthwhile educational action (Campbell, 2003; Carr, 2000). Teachers frequently encounter situations that require balancing student needs, institutional expectations, professional obligations, and personal values. Such challenges cannot be resolved solely through rules or procedures. Rather, they require the exercise of practical wisdom, which enables educators to integrate professional knowledge, ethical considerations, and emotional understanding in responding to complex situations. Practical wisdom also provides a valuable framework for understanding well-being. In Aristotelian ethics, flourishing is achieved through the harmonious development of intellectual, moral, and emotional capacities. Well-being is therefore not merely the absence of stress or dissatisfaction but the realization of a meaningful and virtuous life (Annas, 2011). Contemporary research supports this perspective. A recent meta-analysis identified positive relationships, professional competence, autonomy, and work-life balance as important contributors to teacher well-being (Zhou et al., 2024). These findings resonate strongly with Aristotelian conceptions of flourishing, which emphasize the cultivation of personal capacities and meaningful engagement across different domains of life.

Although Aristotle wrote centuries before the emergence of emotional intelligence theory, the conceptual similarities between *phronesis* and contemporary understandings of emotional functioning are striking. Both emphasize self-awareness, emotional understanding, sound judgment, and effective action within complex social

contexts. Practical wisdom therefore provides a robust philosophical foundation for reinterpreting emotional intelligence not merely as a psychological competency but as a virtue-oriented capacity concerned with wise judgment and human flourishing. The following section develops this argument by examining emotional intelligence as a contemporary manifestation of practical wisdom.

4. Emotional Intelligence as Practical Wisdom

The investigations of emotional intelligence and Aristotelian practical wisdom thus far indicate several notable conceptual connections that merit further scrutiny. Despite originating from different intellectual traditions, these notions demonstrate significant conceptual connections. Emotional intelligence elucidates how humans perceive, comprehend, manage, and effectively employ emotions, while practical wisdom pertains to the ability to thoughtfully reflect on activities that promote human flourishing. Both notions underscore the amalgamation of cognition and emotion, the significance of contextual assessment, and the ability to negotiate through intricate interpersonal dynamics. Thus, emotional intelligence can be perceived not just as a psychological skill but also as a modern embodiment of practical wisdom.

The prevailing literature on emotional intelligence has always focused on adaptation, efficacy, and performance. In educational and corporate settings, persons with emotional intelligence are characterized by their ability to control emotions, sustain productive relationships, and adapt adeptly to environmental challenges (Mayer et al., 2004; Miao et al., 2017). Although these viewpoints have greatly enhanced comprehension of emotional functioning, they often neglect a profound philosophical inquiry: what differentiates the effective utilization of emotions from the judicious application of emotions? Addressing this inquiry necessitates transcending mere technical proficiency to encompass wider questions of discernment, virtue, and ethical conduct.

Aristotle's concept of practical wisdom offers a significant framework for tackling this issue. Practical wisdom focuses not merely on attaining desired results but on identifying activities that are truly suitable and beneficial for human flourishing in certain contexts (Aristotle, trans. 1999). It entails the capacity to appropriately assess situations, weigh conflicting values, and engage in actions that enhance both individual and collective welfare. Likewise, emotional intelligence allows individuals to identify emotional information, comprehend its importance, and react suitably in social situations. Both models thus underscore emotional comprehension as a crucial element of competent judgment.

A significant parallel between emotional intelligence and practical wisdom concerns self-awareness. Emotional intelligence emphasizes the ability to recognize and understand one's emotions, strengths, and limitations (Goleman, 1995). Similarly, Aristotle regarded self-knowledge as essential to virtuous action because individuals must understand their dispositions and motivations in order to exercise sound judgment (Annas, 2011). Self-awareness therefore constitutes a foundational element of both emotional intelligence and practical wisdom.

Another area of convergence is emotional regulation. Emotional intelligence research identifies emotional regulation as a key competency associated with resilience and effective functioning (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Aristotle expressed a comparable idea through the virtue of temperance, which involves experiencing and expressing emotions appropriately in accordance with reason (Aristotle, trans. 1999). Emotional regulation may therefore be viewed as a practical expression of Aristotelian moderation.

Empathy represents a further point of conceptual overlap. Emotional intelligence frameworks define empathy as the capacity to understand the feelings and perspectives of others (Goleman, 1995). Likewise, practical wisdom depends upon moral perception, or the ability to recognize ethically relevant features of situations and appreciate how actions affect others (Kristjánsson, 2015). Empathy thus contributes not only to interpersonal effectiveness but also to moral understanding and virtuous conduct.

The interplay between emotions and judgment enhances the link between emotional intelligence and practical wisdom. Modern philosophical discourse has progressively contested the conventional belief that emotions are fundamentally antagonistic to rationality. Nussbaum (2001) contends that emotions encompass evaluative assessments of issues deemed significant to individual well-being. Emotions thus furnish essential insights on values, relationships, and life objectives. This viewpoint closely corresponds with emotional intelligence theory, which perceives emotions as significant sources of knowledge rather than as disruptive elements. Both traditions acknowledge that sound judgment relies not on the repression of emotions but on their comprehension and suitable integration within decision-making processes.

Recent philosophical research has strengthened the connection between emotions and practical wisdom. Martínez-Priego and Romero-Iribas (2024) contend that emotions are integral to *phronesis*, forming a crucial element of effective deliberation and judgment. Their analysis indicates that emotionally informed decision-making necessitates the amalgamation of affective awareness and logical thinking, so reinforcing the notion that emotional intelligence and practical wisdom possess shared conceptual underpinnings. Emotion and reason collaborate to direct humans toward judicious and ethically sound actions, rather than acting as opposing forces.

A significant similarity pertains to contextual sensitivity. Emotional intelligence is often linked to adaptability and flexibility in reaction to evolving situations. Effective emotional functioning necessitates the acknowledgment that various situations require distinct emotional responses. Practical wisdom thus underscores context-dependent reasoning instead of strict compliance with universal principles. Aristotle asserted that ethical actions cannot be

simplified into rigid formulas, as each circumstance has distinct attributes necessitating thorough assessment (Aristotle, trans. 1999). Practical wisdom so empowers individuals to reconcile conflicting factors and ascertain what is suitable in certain situations. This contextual orientation differentiates emotional intelligence and practical wisdom from strictly rule-based approaches to human behavior.

Modern educational philosophers have also highlighted that effective teaching relies on context-sensitive judgment rather than strict compliance with established protocols. Heilbronn (2024) contends that effective teaching involves both practical wisdom and the ability to identify timely moments for action, contemplation, and intervention. This perspective supports the Aristotelian notion that prudent action arises from contextual understanding rather than rigid adherence to rules. This idea is especially pertinent to educators who must consistently address varied student needs, classroom dynamics, and professional obligations.

The ethical aspect of emotional intelligence offers the most compelling rationale for its redefinition as practical wisdom. Critics have observed that emotional intelligence, when regarded exclusively as a talent, does not inherently ensure ethical conduct. Individuals may possess advanced emotional talents yet utilize them for manipulative, self-serving, or unethical ends (Locke, 2005). This constraint underscores the significance of amalgamating emotional faculties with ethical reasoning. Practical wisdom resolves this issue by linking emotional comprehension to virtuous character and ethical behavior. In the Aristotelian tradition, emotional talents have moral importance when aimed at valuable objectives and aligned with the quest of flourishing. Reconceptualizing emotional intelligence as practical wisdom adds an ethical underpinning frequently lacking in competency-based approaches.

Recent research strongly advocates for the merger of emotional intelligence and practical wisdom. Kristjánsson et al. (2021) define *phronesis* as a type of contextual integrative thinking that allows individuals to harmonize emotions, values, knowledge, and situational elements in decision-making. Building on this premise, Kristjánsson (2024) defines practical wisdom as a psycho-moral integrator that allows professionals to harmonize conflicting factors in ethically intricate scenarios. In educational environments, this ability is crucial since educators must consistently reconcile professional duties, student well-being, institutional demands, and personal principles. These data indicate that emotional intelligence is more correctly perceived as a virtue-oriented capacity encompassing emotional comprehension, ethical contemplation, and judicious decision-making, rather than simply a set of competencies.

The reconceptualization of emotional intelligence as practical wisdom also enhances broader dialogues regarding human flourishing. The literature on emotional intelligence predominantly highlights outcomes including performance, productivity, and stress alleviation. Although these results are undeniably significant, Aristotelian ethics advocates for a more holistic comprehension of well-being. Human flourishing encompasses the cultivation of character, significant relationships, ethical conduct, and the actualization of human potential (Annas, 2011; MacIntyre, 2007). Emotional intelligence facilitates the achievement of these objectives by allowing individuals to adeptly manage emotional experiences, foster meaningful relationships, and respond effectively to life's obstacles. From this philosophical perspective, emotional intelligence is not simply a tool for success but a virtue that fosters flourishing in both personal and professional spheres.

This interpretation holds particular significance for educators. Teaching necessitates ongoing interaction with emotional, relational, and ethical dilemmas that demand more than mere technical proficiency. Educators must evaluate student needs, classroom dynamics, professional obligations, institutional standards, and personal commitments. Such decisions sometimes entail conflicting values and emotionally intricate situations. Emotional intelligence, perceived as practical wisdom, offers a paradigm for elucidating how educators incorporate emotional comprehension, ethical contemplation, and contextual discernment in their professional endeavours. Emotional intelligence serves not merely as a business skill but as a virtue that fosters effective teaching, significant relationships, and thriving educational practices.

Collectively, these conceptual similarities indicate that emotional intelligence and practical wisdom are not separate or opposing conceptions, but rather complementing viewpoints on human functioning. Emotional intelligence offers a modern lexicon for articulating abilities that Aristotle linked to practical wisdom, such as self-awareness, emotional control, empathy, contextual judgment, and the quest for flourishing. Reframing emotional intelligence as practical wisdom so enhances both paradigms. It offers emotional intelligence research grounded in a robust philosophical framework, while concurrently illustrating the enduring significance of Aristotelian ethics in comprehending modern educational and professional contexts. This viewpoint is especially significant when analysing educator well-being and work-family balance, matters that necessitate continuous integration of emotional insight, ethical discernment, and pragmatic thinking.

5. Implications for Educator Well-Being and Work-Family Balance

The redefinition of emotional intelligence as practical wisdom has considerable consequences for comprehending educator well-being and work-family equilibrium. Although emotional intelligence has typically been regarded as a psychological asset that improves job performance and social interactions, analysing it through the perspective of practical wisdom offers a deeper insight into its contribution to fostering success in educational environments. This viewpoint redirects focus from emotional intelligence to the wider abilities of ethical reasoning, contextual

awareness, and harmonious existence. For educators, who consistently manage intricate professional and personal obligations, practical wisdom provides a crucial foundation for comprehending the role of emotional intelligence in enhancing well-being and fostering sustainable professional practice.

5.1 Teaching as a Moral Practice

Teaching has traditionally been viewed as more than only a technical endeavor focused exclusively on the dissemination of knowledge. Educational philosophers have repeatedly posited that teaching is inherently a moral endeavor encompassing relationships, values, obligations, and assessments of what constitutes valuable educational action (Carr, 2000; Campbell, 2003). Educators do not merely provide information; they cultivate learning environments, impact student growth, and make choices that effect the welfare of others. Thus, successful teaching necessitates evaluative skills that surpass mere technical proficiency and procedural understanding.

The ethical aspects of education are especially apparent in contexts marked by uncertainty and conflicting obligations. Educators must equilibrate equity and empathy, uphold discipline while fostering student independence, and address varied learner requirements within institutional limitations. Such circumstances rarely result in uncomplicated resolutions. Instead, they necessitate context-specific consideration of what is suitable in specific situations. Aristotle's notion of practical wisdom offers a valuable foundation for comprehending these professional requirements, since it highlights the ability to make accurate judgments in circumstances when universal principles fall short (Aristotle, trans. 1999).

Recent literature has emphasized the significance of practical wisdom in educational practice. Kristjánsson (2024) contends that teaching necessitates a psycho-moral integration through which educators harmonize conflicting values and obligations in the pursuit of favorable educational outcomes. Heilbronn (2024) asserts that effective teaching relies on the ability to identify suitable instances for intervention, direction, and reflection. These viewpoints indicate that effective teaching depends not solely on professional knowledge but also on wisdom-related abilities encompassing judgment, emotional intelligence, and ethical awareness.

From this approach, emotional intelligence aids teaching not just by improving communication and relationship management but also by facilitating the application of practical wisdom. Self-awareness allows educators to identify emotional impacts on their decisions, empathy fosters comprehension of student experiences, and emotional regulation permits measured responses to difficult circumstances. Emotional intelligence serves as a crucial element of wise educational practice.

5.2 Emotional Intelligence and Educator Well-Being

Educator well-being has become an increasingly important concern within contemporary educational research. Teachers frequently experience occupational stress arising from workload demands, administrative responsibilities, accountability pressures, classroom management challenges, and emotional labour. Prolonged exposure to such demands can contribute to burnout, emotional exhaustion, diminished job satisfaction, and reduced professional commitment (Mérida-López & Extremera, 2017). Research consistently demonstrates that emotional intelligence functions as a protective resource in such contexts. Teachers with higher levels of emotional intelligence generally report greater job satisfaction, stronger coping abilities, lower burnout, and more positive interpersonal relationships (Brackett et al., 2010; Mérida-López & Extremera, 2017). By enabling educators to recognize emotional stressors, regulate emotional responses, and maintain constructive relationships, emotional intelligence supports psychological resilience and professional effectiveness.

However, interpreting emotional intelligence solely as a stress-management resource provides only a partial understanding of its significance. The Aristotelian framework developed in this paper suggests that educator well-being should be understood not merely as the absence of distress but as a form of flourishing characterized by meaningful engagement, virtuous action, and personal fulfillment. From this perspective, emotional intelligence contributes to well-being because it supports the capacities necessary for living and working well.

Recent evidence supports this broader understanding of well-being. A meta-analysis conducted by Zhou et al. (2024) identified positive relationships, professional competence, autonomy, and work-life balance as key contributors to teacher well-being. These findings resonate strongly with Aristotelian conceptions of flourishing, which emphasize the harmonious development of human capacities and meaningful participation in worthwhile activities. Emotional intelligence, understood as practical wisdom, enables educators to cultivate these conditions by facilitating sound judgment, constructive relationships, and adaptive responses to professional challenges.

Furthermore, emotional intelligence may enhance a sense of purpose and meaning within educational work. Practical wisdom encourages individuals to consider not only how to act effectively but also why particular actions are worthwhile. Teachers who possess such capacities may be better equipped to align professional activities with personal values, thereby enhancing both occupational satisfaction and overall well-being. Emotional intelligence therefore contributes not merely to psychological adjustment but to the broader pursuit of flourishing.

5.3 Emotional Intelligence and Work-Family Balance

Alongside professional concerns, educators often face obstacles in reconciling work and familial obligations. Teaching frequently encompasses activities that extend beyond official working hours, such as lesson preparation, evaluation, student assistance, administrative duties, and professional development. These pressures may generate difficulties between professional and personal roles, hence exacerbating work-family conflict.

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) characterize work-family conflict as a type of inter-role conflict where engagement in work and family spheres becomes mutually exclusive. Subsequent studies have shown that work-family conflict correlates with emotional weariness, psychological distress, decreased life satisfaction, and worse occupational well-being (Allen et al., 2000; Nohe et al., 2015). For educators, such tensions may be especially pronounced due to the substantial emotional involvement inherent in teaching, which frequently transcends the classroom.

Conventional methods for achieving work-family balance often prioritize time management, role differentiation, or institutional assistance. Although these tactics are beneficial, the current analysis indicates that practical wisdom provides an alternative viewpoint. Work-family balance transcends mere time allocation; it necessitates astute decision-making concerning conflicting obligations, personal principles, and relational commitments. Such decisions necessitate contextual awareness and ethical consideration rather than strict compliance with established regulations.

Emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in this process. Self-awareness allows individuals to identify developing tensions between work and familial obligations. Emotional control aids in managing stress related to conflicting responsibilities. Empathy enhances comprehension of the needs and expectations of family members and colleagues. Emotional intelligence fundamentally facilitates the application of practical wisdom by allowing individuals to assess situations judiciously and react in manners that enhance long-term well-being.

From an Aristotelian viewpoint, balance does not signify an equal allocation of attention among all aspects of existence. It entails recognizing suitable reactions to evolving situations while maintaining a focus on thriving. Practical wisdom allows individuals to discern when professional obligations should be prioritized, when familial duties necessitate increased focus, and how to ethically reconcile conflicting demands. Emotional intelligence, defined as practical wisdom, thus functions as a crucial asset for managing the intricacies of work-family balance.

Collectively, these observations indicate that emotional intelligence significantly influences educators' lives more than is commonly acknowledged. In addition to improving performance and interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence fosters prudent teaching, professional satisfaction, and a harmonious lifestyle. Interpreting emotional intelligence as a manifestation of practical wisdom allows for the understanding of educator well-being and work-family harmony not only as desired outcomes but as essential elements of human flourishing.

6. Towards a Philosophical Framework of Educator Flourishing

The analysis presented in this paper suggests that emotional intelligence may be understood as a contemporary manifestation of Aristotelian practical wisdom. While emotional intelligence is commonly examined as a psychological competency, the Aristotelian perspective reveals its broader significance as a virtue-oriented capacity that integrates emotional awareness, ethical judgment, and context-sensitive action. This interpretation provides a valuable framework for understanding educator well-being and work-family balance because it situates emotional functioning within the wider pursuit of human flourishing.

At the foundation of the proposed framework lies *phronesis* or practical wisdom. Aristotle regarded practical wisdom as the intellectual virtue that enables individuals to deliberate effectively about matters concerning human flourishing (Aristotle, trans. 1999). Within educational contexts, practical wisdom allows teachers to navigate competing responsibilities, evaluate complex situations, and make judgments that balance professional obligations with personal commitments. It therefore serves as the philosophical basis for wise action in both professional and personal domains.

Emotional intelligence represents the practical expression of this wisdom in emotionally complex situations. Through capacities such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, and empathy, educators are able to recognize emotional information, understand its significance, and incorporate it into decision-making processes. Emotional intelligence thus facilitates emotional judgment, which may be understood as the ability to respond to emotionally significant situations in ways that are both ethically appropriate and contextually sensitive.

The exercise of emotional judgment has important implications for educators' ability to maintain work-family balance. Rather than being merely a matter of time management, work-family balance requires ongoing deliberation regarding competing responsibilities, values, and relationships. Emotional intelligence, guided by practical wisdom, enables educators to navigate these demands thoughtfully while preserving meaningful engagement in both professional and personal life.

Successful management of these challenges contributes to educator well-being. Consistent with Aristotelian ethics, well-being is understood not simply as the absence of stress or dissatisfaction but as a condition characterized by meaningful engagement, virtuous action, positive relationships, and personal fulfillment (Annas, 2011). Educators who exercise practical wisdom are therefore better positioned to achieve sustainable well-being while maintaining harmony across different life domains.

Ultimately, these processes contribute to human flourishing, the central aim of Aristotelian ethics. Flourishing encompasses not only professional effectiveness but also ethical integrity, personal growth, meaningful relationships, and balanced living. Emotional intelligence, understood as practical wisdom, becomes an important resource through which educators pursue these outcomes.

The conceptual relationships developed throughout this paper are summarized in Figure 1.

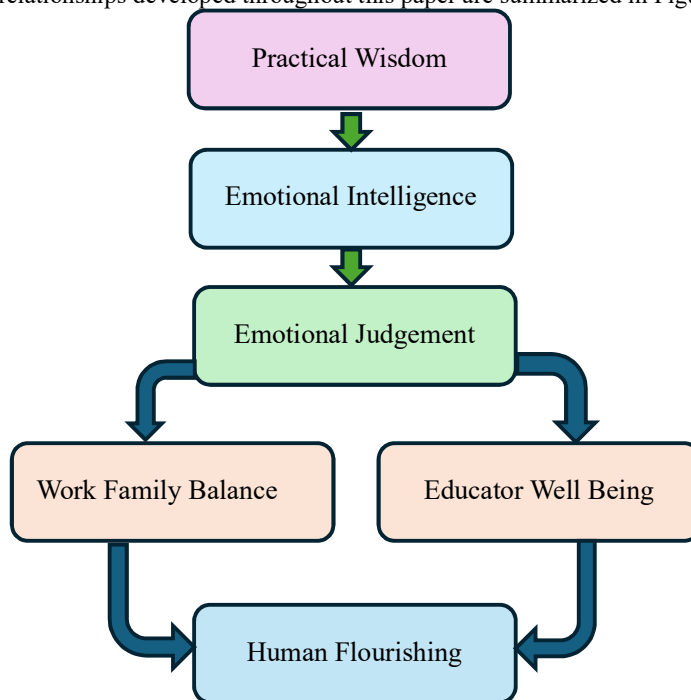


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework Linking Practical Wisdom, Emotional Intelligence, Emotional Judgement, Work-Family Balance, Educator Well-Being, and Human Flourishing.

The framework proposes that practical wisdom provides the philosophical foundation for emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence supports emotional judgment, which facilitates work-family balance and contributes to educator well-being. Together, these elements promote human flourishing. Although presented sequentially for conceptual clarity, these relationships should be understood as mutually reinforcing dimensions of a flourishing educational life. By integrating Aristotelian virtue ethics with contemporary emotional intelligence scholarship, the framework offers a philosophical perspective for understanding educator well-being and work-family balance as outcomes of wise emotional functioning and virtuous living.

6.1 Limitations

This review is conceptual and philosophical in nature and does not provide empirical evidence to test the proposed relationships among practical wisdom, emotional intelligence, work-family balance, educator well-being, and human flourishing. The analysis is primarily grounded in the Aristotelian tradition of virtue ethics and therefore does not examine alternative philosophical perspectives that may offer different interpretations of emotional functioning and well-being. Future research may empirically evaluate the proposed framework and explore its applicability across diverse educational and cultural contexts.

7. Conclusion

The growing interest in emotional intelligence has generated substantial research in psychology, education, and organizational studies, highlighting its importance for interpersonal effectiveness, job performance, psychological well-being, and resilience. However, emotional intelligence has largely been examined as a competency or skill, with relatively limited attention given to its philosophical foundations and ethical significance.

This review has argued that emotional intelligence may be fruitfully understood through the Aristotelian concept of *phronesis* or practical wisdom. Both constructs emphasize the integration of emotion and reason, contextual judgment, self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and the capacity to navigate complex human situations. Viewed from this perspective, emotional intelligence extends beyond technical competence and may be regarded as a virtue-oriented capacity that supports wise and ethically informed action.

This philosophical reinterpretation is particularly relevant to educators, whose professional lives involve continuous engagement with emotional, relational, and moral challenges. By facilitating sound judgment, meaningful relationships, and context-sensitive decision-making, emotional intelligence contributes not only to effective teaching but also to educator well-being and the management of work-family responsibilities. Within an Aristotelian framework, these outcomes are best understood as dimensions of flourishing rather than merely indicators of performance or stress reduction.

The paper proposed a conceptual framework linking practical wisdom, emotional intelligence, emotional judgment, work-family balance, educator well-being, and human flourishing. By integrating insights from virtue

ethics and contemporary emotional intelligence scholarship, the framework offers a philosophical lens for understanding how emotional capacities contribute to flourishing educational lives. Overall, viewing emotional intelligence through the lens of practical wisdom enriches current understandings of emotional functioning and highlights its role in promoting ethical judgment, balanced living, educator well-being, and human flourishing.

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