

The Integration of Panchakosha Framework in Emotional Intelligence Development: A Holistic Approach to Socio-Emotional Learning in Education

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ABSTRACT: This study explores the theoretical and practical integration of the Panchakosha framework—an ancient Indian philosophical model of human consciousness—with contemporary emotional intelligence theories in educational contexts. Drawing from both Eastern epistemological traditions and Western psychological paradigms, this research proposes that the five-layered Panchakosha model offers a more comprehensive approach to socio-emotional learning (SEL) than conventional Western frameworks, particularly for students in cultural contexts aligned with Eastern philosophical traditions. Through theoretical analysis and comparative framework construction, this paper establishes correlations between specific koshas (layers of existence) and dimensions of emotional intelligence, while proposing methodological approaches for empirical validation. The findings suggest that the Panchakosha framework's holistic integration of physical, energetic, mental-emotional, wisdom-based, and transcendental dimensions provides unique advantages in developing sustainable emotional regulation, cultural congruence, and multidimensional self-awareness in educational settings.

KEYWORDS: Panchakosha, emotional intelligence, socio-emotional learning, Indian philosophy, educational psychology, cultural congruence.

INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence (EI) has emerged as a critical factor in student success, well-being, and leadership development across educational institutions worldwide (Goleman, 1995; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). While Western models of emotional intelligence have dominated academic discourse and practical implementation, there remains a significant opportunity to enrich this field through integration with non-Western epistemologies and philosophical frameworks that offer alternative perspectives on human consciousness, emotion, and self-awareness.

The Panchakosha framework, derived from the Taittiriya Upanishad within Vedantic philosophy, provides a five-layered model of human existence that encompasses physical, energetic, mental-emotional, wisdom, and bliss dimensions of consciousness (Saraswati, 2018). This research explores how this ancient Indian model can be systematically integrated with contemporary emotional intelligence theories to create more culturally responsive and holistically effective approaches to socio-emotional learning, particularly in educational contexts.

The originality of this study lies in its interdisciplinary bridge between Eastern philosophical concepts and empirical psychological constructs, addressing a notable gap in the literature where traditional wisdom traditions remain underrepresented in mainstream academic research on emotional intelligence. By offering a nuanced lens from Indian knowledge systems, this study expands contemporary psychological theories while providing culturally contextualized frameworks for educational practice.

LITERATURE REVIEW

CONTEMPORARY MODELS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Emotional intelligence as a psychological construct has been conceptualized through several influential models. Salovey and Mayer (1990) defined emotional intelligence as "the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions." Their ability-based model focuses on perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotions. Goleman (1995) popularized a mixed model comprising self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, which has gained significant traction in educational and organizational settings.

However, these Western models predominantly emphasize cognitive-behavioral approaches to emotional regulation, often neglecting the embodied, energetic, and existential dimensions that shape human emotional experience (Sharma, 2019). Additionally, research by

Misra & Gergen (1993) highlights that collectivist cultures often integrate emotional regulation across bodily, spiritual, and cognitive dimensions suggesting the need for more culturally diverse frameworks.

THE PANCHAKOSHA FRAMEWORK

The Panchakosha model originates from the Taittiriya Upanishad and describes human existence through five interconnected sheaths or koshas (Rao & Paranjpe, 2008):

1. Annamaya Kosha (food sheath): The physical body, including physiological processes that influence emotional states.
2. Pranamaya Kosha (vital energy sheath): The energetic dimension comprising breath patterns and vital force that directly impacts emotional regulation.
3. Manomaya Kosha (mental sheath): The cognitive-emotional layer involving thoughts, perceptions, and mental processes.
4. Vijnanamaya Kosha (wisdom sheath): The discriminative intellect and higher-order awareness that enables reflection and insight.
5. Anandamaya Kosha (bliss sheath): The innermost layer associated with profound joy, peace, and transcendental awareness.

While research directly linking Panchakosha to emotional intelligence remains limited, studies on yoga psychology and emotional well-being (Desai & Bhatt, 2021) have begun to establish connections between these traditional frameworks and psychological outcomes.

CULTURAL CONGRUENCE IN EDUCATIONAL MODELS

Research in culturally responsive education (Banks & Banks, 2019) demonstrates that learning frameworks are most effective when they align with students' cultural and cognitive structures. Sharma (2020) found that SEL interventions rooted in indigenous frameworks showed higher retention and practice rates in Eastern contexts compared to Western approaches. This suggests that the cultural embeddedness of learning models significantly influences their effectiveness.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research proposes an integrative theoretical framework that systematically maps dimensions of emotional intelligence onto the Panchakosha model, establishing correlations between traditional wisdom and contemporary psychological constructs.

MAPPING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE COMPONENTS TO KOSHAS

Table 1. Correlation between Panchakosha and Emotional Intelligence Dimensions

Kosha (Sheath)	Corresponding EI Components	Manifestation in Emotional Regulation
Annamaya (Physical)	Physiological awareness	Body-based emotion recognition, somatic regulation
Pranamaya (Energy)	Self-regulation, stress management	Breath control, energy regulation
Manomaya (Mental)	Self-awareness, cognitive regulation	Thought processes, emotional labeling
Vijnanamaya (Wisdom)	Social awareness, relationship management	Perspective-taking, empathy, insight
Anandamaya (Bliss)	Transcendent motivation, purpose	Value-alignment, enduring positivity

CONCEPTUAL INTEGRATION MODEL

This research proposes three primary mechanisms through which the Panchakosha framework enhances emotional intelligence:

1. **Layered Developmental Model:** The koshas represent progressive layers of self-awareness that build upon each other, offering a developmental trajectory for emotional intelligence.
2. **Integrated Processing Model:** Unlike compartmentalized Western approaches, the Panchakosha framework emphasizes the interconnection between physical, energetic, mental, and transcendental dimensions of emotional experience.
3. **Cultural Congruence Model:** For students from Eastern cultural backgrounds, the Panchakosha framework provides greater linguistic, conceptual, and epistemological familiarity, enhancing engagement and internalization.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study addresses the following key research questions:

1. How does the Panchakosha framework align with contemporary models of emotional intelligence in psychology and behavioral sciences?

2. What mechanisms within the Panchakosha framework can be systematically mapped to components of emotional intelligence such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills?
3. In what ways can the Panchakosha framework inform the development of socio-emotional learning programs in educational institutions, and how does it compare with existing Western models?

HYPOTHESES

Based on theoretical analysis and existing literature, this research proposes the following testable hypotheses:

Integrative Efficacy Hypothesis: The Panchakosha framework enhances socio-emotional learning effectiveness by providing a holistic model that integrates physical, emotional, cognitive, intuitive, and transcendental aspects of self-awareness and regulation more comprehensively than conventional Western SEL models.

Cognitive-Emotive Alignment Hypothesis: The emphasis on 'Manomaya Kosha' (mental-emotional sheath) in the Panchakosha framework leads to more integrated emotional processing compared to Western cognitive-behavioral SEL techniques that predominantly emphasize cognitive restructuring over emotional integration.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Emotional Regulation as a Multidimensional Phenomenon

This research posits that emotional regulation is not merely a cognitive process but an integrated phenomenon involving physiological, energetic, mental, and existential dimensions. Western models predominantly frame emotional regulation through cognitive restructuring and behavioral strategies. However, emerging research in affective neuroscience suggests that emotional states are closely linked to bodily rhythms, hormonal states, and physiological responses (van der Kolk, 2014). Example: Studies on heart rate variability demonstrate that emotional regulation depends on physiological rhythms beyond mere cognitive control. Schachter & Singer's two-factor theory of emotion confirms that physiological arousal plays a fundamental role in emotional experience.

The Panchakosha Model's Contribution to Emotional Complexity

The Panchakosha system captures emotional complexity through its layered approach:

- **Annamaya Kosha (Physical Body):** Emotions manifest physiologically through muscle tension, heart rate, and endocrine responses.
- **Pranamaya Kosha (Energy Body):** Breath patterns and bioenergetic activity significantly impact emotional states (e.g., hyperventilation in anxiety, slow breathing for relaxation).
- **Manomaya Kosha (Mental Body):** Thoughts, conditioning, and cognitive strategies engage in meaning-making for emotions.
- **Vijnanamaya Kosha (Wisdom Body):** Reflective awareness, insight, and discernment guide deeper emotional transformation.
- **Anandamaya Kosha (Bliss Body):** A sense of peace and joy transcends temporary fluctuations in emotional states.

This comprehensive framework addresses emotional regulation from multiple dimensions simultaneously, offering a more holistic approach than conventional Western models focused primarily on cognitive processes.

CULTURAL EMBEDDEDNESS OF LEARNING MODELS

SEL frameworks are most effective when they align with students' cultural and cognitive structures. The Panchakosha system aligns deeply with Indian epistemology, where self-awareness develops through layers of consciousness rather than linear progression as in Western models.

In collectivist societies like India, models that embed community well-being and interconnectedness resonate better with students' lived experiences, leading to deeper engagement and internalization of emotional intelligence principles. The linguistic and conceptual accessibility of Sanskrit-rooted frameworks further enhances cognitive ease through cultural synergy.

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Comprehensive analysis of existing knowledge and theory about Panchakosha and Emotional intelligence and understanding how it works.

EDUCATIONAL APPLICATIONS

Pedagogical Integration: The Panchakosha framework can inform educational practice through:

1. Holistic Curriculum Design: Integrating physical (Annamaya), energetic (Pranamaya), cognitive-emotional (Manomaya), wisdom-based (Vijnanamaya), and transcendental (Anandamaya) practices into SEL programs.
2. Experiential Learning: Emphasizing embodied and experiential approaches to emotional intelligence development through yoga, breathwork, mindfulness, reflective practices, and service-learning.
3. Teacher Development: Training educators in Panchakosha principles to facilitate more comprehensive emotional intelligence development among students.

CROSS-CULTURAL APPLICATIONS

While particularly relevant in Indian educational contexts, the Panchakosha framework offers valuable insights for global education through:

1. Comparative Framework Construction: Creating bridges between Panchakosha concepts and established Western SEL models (e.g., CASEL's five competencies).
2. Cultural Adaptation: Modifying terminology and practices to respect diverse worldviews while retaining foundational principles.
3. Global SEL Enhancement: Enriching existing SEL frameworks with multi-dimensional awareness practices derived from the Panchakosha model.

CONCLUSION

This research establishes that the Panchakosha framework offers a promising theoretical foundation for enhancing emotional intelligence development in educational settings. Its five-layered model provides a more comprehensive approach to emotional regulation than conventional Western frameworks by integrating physical, energetic, mental, wisdom-based, and transcendental dimensions of human experience.

The cultural congruence of the Panchakosha framework may particularly benefit students from Eastern backgrounds, while its holistic perspective offers valuable insights for enriching global approaches to socio-emotional learning. Future research should focus on empirical validation, instrument development, and practical implementation strategies to fully realize the potential of this ancient wisdom tradition in contemporary educational psychology.

By bridging philosophical depth with empirical rigor, this interdisciplinary approach has the potential to establish a pivotal new paradigm at the intersection of Indian knowledge systems and contemporary psychology, ultimately enhancing educational practices for emotional intelligence development worldwide.

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