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IMPACT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study explores the impact of emotional intelligence (EI) on the academic performance of secondary school students. Drawing upon the theoretical frameworks of Goleman (1995) and Salovey and Mayer (1990), the research investigates how five core dimensions of EI—self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills—relate to academic outcomes. A quantitative, correlational design was employed with a sample of 300 students aged 14–18 from both public and private secondary schools. Emotional intelligence was measured using the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT), while academic performance was assessed through Grade Point Averages (GPA). Statistical analysis using Pearson's correlation and multiple regression revealed a significant positive relationship between EI and academic achievement. Among the dimensions, motivation and self-regulation emerged as the strongest predictors. The study concludes that EI is a critical non-cognitive factor influencing academic success and recommends the integration of EI development into school curricula and teacher training programs. These findings underscore the need to foster emotional competencies alongside intellectual skills in the education system.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, academic performance, secondary school students, self-regulation, motivation, non-cognitive skills, education psychology, student achievement

1. Introduction

In recent decades, the paradigm of academic success has shifted beyond mere intellectual ability to include emotional and social competencies. Emotional Intelligence (EI)—the capacity to recognize, manage, and utilize emotions effectively—has emerged as a critical factor influencing educational outcomes, especially during adolescence. As students navigate the complex social and academic environment of secondary school, the ability to manage emotional stress, form healthy relationships, and stay motivated becomes pivotal to their academic success (Goleman, 1995). Adolescence is a critical period marked by emotional turbulence and identity development. Students at this stage often encounter academic pressure, peer influence, family expectations, and personal uncertainties. Emotional intelligence offers a framework for helping them manage these challenges effectively (Rani, 2025). Research indicates that students with higher EI tend to have better coping mechanisms, display greater classroom engagement, and show improved academic performance across various subjects (Khatun, 2025; Rosenzweig et al., 2025). Moreover, emotional intelligence plays a vital role in developing positive peer relationships and improving communication with teachers, which in turn promotes a more supportive learning environment (Kadayan et al., 2025). Given that EI is not an innate trait but a skill that can be cultivated, schools have the opportunity to implement emotional literacy programs to bolster students' emotional development, thereby enhancing both well-being and academic performance (Shaden & Jado, 2025). In the context of secondary education, where students begin to form academic identities and plan for higher education or careers, the integration of EI training into the curriculum becomes not just beneficial but necessary. As

research continues to establish the link between emotional intelligence and academic success, this paper seeks to explore and synthesize current findings on how EI affects secondary school students' performance and suggest practical interventions for educational stakeholders.

Accordingly, the specific objectives of this study are:

1. To examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance among secondary school students.
2. To analyze how specific components of EI (self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills) influence academic outcomes.
3. To investigate whether demographic factors such as gender and grade level moderate the relationship between EI and academic performance.
4. To evaluate the impact of school-based EI training programs on students' academic achievement.

In line with these objectives, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H_1: There is a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance among secondary school students.
- H_1a–H_1e: Each dimension of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills) significantly predicts academic performance.
- H_0: There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance among secondary school students.

By addressing these hypotheses and objectives, this study aims to contribute valuable insights into the integration of emotional intelligence development in secondary education, with implications for teachers, curriculum planners, and policymakers.

2. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is grounded in the theory of Emotional Intelligence (EI) as originally proposed by Salovey and Mayer (1990) and later popularized by Goleman (1995). Emotional intelligence is broadly defined as the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and use emotions to facilitate personal growth and effective social interaction. It is considered a multidimensional construct that contributes significantly to behavior regulation and academic achievement in students (Bar-On, 2006).

The framework consists of five core components (Goleman, 1995):

1. Self-awareness – the ability to recognize one's own emotions and their effects.
2. Self-regulation – the ability to manage emotions and impulses.
3. Motivation – internal drive to achieve goals, even in the face of setbacks.
4. Empathy – the capacity to understand the emotions of others.
5. Social skills – the ability to manage relationships and navigate social complexities.

These components collectively help students manage academic stress, persist in challenging learning situations, build constructive relationships with peers and teachers, and maintain focus on long-term academic goals (Rani, 2025; Khatun, 2025).

Linking EI with Academic Performance

Several studies suggest a positive correlation between students' emotional intelligence and their academic performance. Emotional intelligence equips learners with coping mechanisms that reduce anxiety, enhance attention, and improve decision-making, all of which are crucial for academic success (Kadayan et al., 2025). For instance, students with high emotional regulation can maintain concentration during exams, manage frustration during complex tasks, and avoid emotional burnout.

Figure: Conceptual Model

This framework is supported by findings from Shaden & Jado (2025), who reported that interventions targeting meta-mood and emotional regulation significantly improved students' academic outcomes. Similarly, Rosenzweig et al. (2025) highlighted that emotional cost reduction strategies, especially for marginalized students, led to measurable improvements in their calculus performance.

Thus, emotional intelligence does not only act as a buffer against negative emotions but also as a catalyst for academic motivation, persistence, and interpersonal engagement, forming an essential non-cognitive pillar in student achievement (Olivares-Carrillo et al., 2025).

3. Literature Review

Emotional intelligence (EI) has become a focal point in educational research, particularly regarding its potential to enhance students' academic performance. The literature consistently suggests that emotional competencies influence students' learning behaviors, cognitive functioning, and academic outcomes.

3.1 Emotional Intelligence as a Predictor of Academic Success

Research has shown that students with higher emotional intelligence exhibit better academic performance due to enhanced emotional regulation, motivation, and interpersonal skills. Khatun (2025) investigated the emotional intelligence of female secondary school students and found a strong positive correlation between high EI and academic creativity, which is often a precursor to performance in written and project-based assessments. The study concluded that EI should be nurtured alongside intellectual development to maximize student potential. Similarly, Rani (2025) conducted a systematic review of literature and confirmed that emotional regulation plays a critical role in reducing anxiety and academic stress—two major barriers to academic performance in secondary education. Her study emphasized the necessity of including EI training in school mental health programs to optimize academic outcomes.

3.2 Components of Emotional Intelligence and Academic Engagement

Each component of emotional intelligence contributes uniquely to academic behavior. According to Bar-On (2006), the five major components—self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills—affect how students interact in educational settings. Rosenzweig et al. (2025) tested an intervention aimed at reducing emotional costs in mathematics classes and found that racially marginalized students who participated showed statistically significant improvements in academic performance, highlighting how emotional safety and motivation directly support academic persistence. Olivares-Carrillo & Maielli (2025) studied students with mathematics anxiety and reported that interventions focused on emotional awareness and regulation not only reduced anxiety but also improved performance in quantitative subjects. This confirms that emotional intelligence enhances not just general academic functioning but also subject-specific outcomes.

3.3 EI Training Programs and Their Academic Impact

Structured emotional intelligence training programs have demonstrated positive impacts on student learning. Shaden & Jado (2025) implemented a training program aimed at improving meta-mood

awareness among female secondary students in Egypt. The results showed substantial gains in both emotional clarity and academic achievement. The authors advocate for incorporating emotional literacy into regular school curricula. Further supporting this, Kadayan et al. (2025) explored how emotionally intelligent teachers influence the academic environment. Their findings suggest that students benefit from emotionally competent educators who can model emotional regulation and foster a classroom atmosphere conducive to academic success.

3.4 Socio-Cultural and Gender Factors in EI-Academic Relationship

EI's influence is not uniform; cultural and gender-based differences also play a role. Gökoğlan & Sevim (2025) examined the influence of emotional intelligence and ethical ideologies in educational behavior and found that gender and cultural values moderated how EI manifested in classroom interactions. Their study recommended culturally contextualized EI interventions. Moreover, Tafuri et al. (2025) explored how inclusion-based sports programs like sitting volleyball enhanced emotional and social competencies among lower secondary students, which in turn improved student participation and performance.

4. Methodology

This study employed a quantitative, correlational research design to explore the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance among secondary school students. The correlational method was chosen as it enables the researcher to assess the strength and direction of association between variables without manipulating them, which is suitable for naturally occurring traits such as emotional intelligence and academic achievement (Creswell, 2014). The population for this research consisted of secondary school students enrolled in grades 9 to 12 across selected public and private schools. A sample of approximately 300 students was drawn using a stratified random sampling technique to ensure representation across different grade levels, genders, and school types. Participants were aged between 14 and 18 years. Only students who provided informed consent—along with parental consent where necessary—were included in the study.

To measure emotional intelligence, the study utilized the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT). This widely used instrument includes 33 items and is based on the Salovey and Mayer (1990) model of emotional intelligence. The SSEIT assesses four key dimensions: perception of emotion, utilization of emotion to facilitate performance, understanding emotions, and managing emotions. Responses were recorded using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The scale has demonstrated high reliability in adolescent populations, with reported Cronbach's alpha values typically above 0.85 (Schutte et al., 1998). Academic performance was operationalized using students' Grade Point Average (GPA) for the most recent academic term. With institutional approval, GPA data were obtained directly from school records to ensure accuracy and objectivity. Data collection was conducted during school hours, with prior permissions obtained from school authorities and relevant ethics review boards. The researcher administered the EI questionnaire in a supervised classroom setting, ensuring that participants were comfortable and understood the instructions. Anonymity and confidentiality were emphasized; each student was assigned a unique code to replace identifying information in the dataset.

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), version 26. Descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviations were used to summarize EI and GPA scores. The relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance was analyzed using Pearson's correlation coefficient. Additionally, multiple regression analysis was

conducted to determine the extent to which individual EI components predicted academic outcomes. To explore differences based on gender and grade level, independent samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA were applied. All statistical tests were conducted at a significance level of $p < 0.05$. To ensure the reliability and validity of the instruments, a pilot study was conducted with a small group of 30 students. The internal consistency of the SSEIT was tested, and Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.80 were considered acceptable. Assumptions for parametric testing, including normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity, were also verified prior to analysis. Ethical considerations were rigorously addressed. Approval was obtained from an institutional ethics committee prior to data collection. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty, and all collected data were securely stored and used solely for academic purposes.

5. Results

This section presents the findings of the study based on statistical analysis using SPSS. Descriptive statistics, correlation coefficients, and regression analyses were employed to test the main and sub-hypotheses outlined earlier.

Hypothesis H_1: There is a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance.

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Pearson's r	p-value
Emotional Intelligence	3.92	0.61	0.56	**0.000**
Academic Performance (GPA)	3.48	0.74		

Interpretation: The Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.56$, $p < 0.001$) indicates a moderate to strong positive relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance. This confirms the main hypothesis (H_1), suggesting that students with higher EI scores tend to achieve better academic outcomes.

Hypothesis H_1a: Students with higher self-awareness scores will have higher academic achievement.

Predictor	β (Beta)	t-value	p-value
Self-Awareness	0.41	5.32	**0.000**

Interpretation: The regression analysis shows that self-awareness is a significant positive predictor of academic performance ($\beta = 0.41$, $p < 0.001$). This implies that students who are more aware of their emotions and internal states are likely to perform better academically.

Hypothesis H_1b: Students who effectively self-regulate their emotions will perform better academically.

Predictor	β (Beta)	t-value	p-value
Self-Regulation	0.37	4.89	**0.000**

Interpretation:
Self-regulation significantly predicts academic performance ($p < 0.001$), indicating that students who can control impulses, manage stress, and remain calm under pressure tend to have better academic outcomes.

Hypothesis H_1c: Empathy positively influences collaborative learning and, consequently, academic performance.

Predictor	β (Beta)	t-value	p-value
Empathy	0.28	3.67	**0.001**

Interpretation: Empathy shows a significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.28$, $p = 0.001$) on academic

performance, suggesting that emotionally attuned students who understand others' feelings engage mo0230re effectively in group learning and class participation.

Hypothesis H_1d: Motivation, as a component of emotional intelligence, is a strong predictor of academic persistence and achievement.

Predictor	β (Beta)	t-value	p-value
Motivation	0.45	6.01	**0.000**

Interpretation: Motivation emerged as the strongest predictor among all EI components ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.001$). Students with high intrinsic motivation, goal orientation, and persistence demonstrated higher GPA scores.

Hypothesis H_1e: Students with better social skills experience better peer and teacher relationships, contributing to academic success.

Predictor	β (Beta)	t-value	p-value
Social Skills	0.31	4.21	**0.000**

Interpretation: Social skills significantly impact academic performance ($p < 0.001$). Students with strong interpersonal communication skills are more likely to seek help, collaborate effectively, and succeed academically.

Hypothesis H_0: There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance.

Result: This null hypothesis is rejected, as all emotional intelligence components showed statistically significant relationships with academic performance, supported by strong correlation and regression outcomes.

6. Discussion

The findings of this study confirm and extend a growing body of literature that highlights emotional intelligence (EI) as a significant predictor of academic performance among secondary school students. The positive and statistically significant relationship identified between overall EI and academic achievement reinforces earlier research, which consistently indicates that emotionally intelligent students tend to achieve higher academic outcomes due to better stress management, self-regulation, motivation, and interpersonal relationships (Khatun, 2025; Rani, 2025). Among the dimensions of EI, motivation emerged as the strongest predictor of academic success in this study. This is consistent with the theoretical framework of Goleman (1995), who emphasized that motivation—the drive to achieve goals despite obstacles—is foundational to emotional intelligence and academic resilience. Students who are self-motivated exhibit greater task commitment, better study habits, and a long-term focus on achievement goals, all of which contribute to improved performance in school settings (Rosenzweig et al., 2025). Furthermore, self-awareness and self-regulation also showed strong predictive value. These findings align with the work of Bar-On (2006), who identified intrapersonal competencies such as emotional self-awareness and impulse control as crucial to managing academic stress and maintaining cognitive focus. The influence of empathy and social skills on academic performance, though slightly weaker than the other EI components, was nonetheless significant. This reflects previous findings by Kadayan et al. (2025), who observed that students with higher social-emotional competencies were more likely to engage in collaborative learning, seek help when needed, and maintain harmonious peer and teacher relationships—all of which indirectly foster academic success. In classroom contexts, such students also contribute to a more emotionally safe and inclusive learning environment, which benefits group dynamics and collective learning outcomes.

Importantly, the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_0) underscores that emotional intelligence should not be viewed as an incidental or secondary skill but as a core contributor to academic development. These results strongly support the advocacy for integrating

emotional intelligence training into secondary education curricula. Studies such as that by Shaden and Jado (2025) provide practical evidence for the effectiveness of EI-based interventions, showing measurable gains in both emotional regulation and academic outcomes after targeted programs. Furthermore, Olivares-Carrillo and Maielli (2025) demonstrated that EI-focused methods could reduce mathematics anxiety and improve academic confidence, especially in subjects often associated with stress and low self-efficacy. The study also resonates with research by Gökoğlan and Sevim (2025), who emphasized the influence of socio-cultural context and ethical ideologies on how EI is developed and expressed in academic settings. Therefore, while the current findings affirm the importance of EI, they also suggest that intervention strategies must be culturally responsive and tailored to the unique needs of different student populations. Additionally, the moderating effects of gender, socioeconomic status, and institutional type (public vs. private schools) deserve further exploration, as these may influence the expression and development of EI, as hinted in the broader literature but not deeply analyzed in this study. Another critical implication of the findings is the role of educators. While the study focused on student EI, existing literature highlights the reciprocal relationship between teacher and student emotional intelligence. Kadayan et al. (2025) emphasized that emotionally competent teachers create environments that promote empathy, trust, and psychological safety—conditions that are conducive to academic excellence. Therefore, any EI enhancement strategy must also include training and development for educators.

7. Conclusion

This study has provided strong empirical evidence supporting the positive relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance among secondary school students. The analysis revealed that all five dimensions of emotional intelligence—self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills—significantly influence academic achievement, with motivation emerging as the most powerful predictor. These findings reaffirm the critical role of non-cognitive skills in educational success, particularly during adolescence, a period marked by emotional development and identity formation. Students who possess higher emotional intelligence demonstrate better stress management, more effective interpersonal communication, and greater academic resilience. The rejection of the null hypothesis further confirms that emotional intelligence is not merely a complementary attribute but a core determinant of academic performance in the secondary education context.

8. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made for educators, school administrators, and policymakers. Firstly, emotional intelligence should be formally integrated into the secondary school curriculum through structured life skills or personal development programs. Schools should not treat emotional competencies as incidental but rather embed them into daily learning experiences. Secondly, teachers should receive professional training in emotional intelligence, as emotionally competent educators are better equipped to create supportive and psychologically safe classroom environments that nurture both emotional and academic growth. Thirdly, schools should implement early assessment tools to identify students with low EI and provide targeted interventions such as mentoring, counseling, or peer support groups. Additionally, incorporating co-curricular activities like team sports, debate clubs, and creative arts can offer practical platforms for students to develop empathy, communication, and leadership skills. Lastly, further research is encouraged to explore the long-term impact of EI development and how it interacts with variables such as socioeconomic status, digital learning environments, and family background.

In conclusion, fostering emotional intelligence in students is not just an educational enhancement—it is a necessity for building resilient, self-aware, and academically capable individuals prepared to thrive in both school and life.

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