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EFFECT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ON UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' MOTIVATION AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

Emotional intelligence (EI) is receiving increasing recognition as one of the most important factors contributing to students' outcomes. The present study explored the effect of emotional intelligence on students' motivation and academic performance at the university level in Pakistan. Adopting a quantitative research design, data were collected from 300 undergraduate and graduate students selected from three (03) public universities of District Faisalabad through stratified random sampling. We applied a structured questionnaire, using previously validated scales with a five-point Likert response format to measure emotional intelligence, student motivation, and academic performance. Reliability was acceptable (Cronbach's α = 0.80), and content validity was derived from expert review. Data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and independent-samples t-tests. The results showed that students had relatively higher levels of emotional intelligence, especially in reading others' emotions, self-control, and self-motivation. Emotional intelligence has a strong positive correlation with student motivation ($r = 0.51$, $p < 0.05$) and emotional intelligence, consequently, academic performance ($r = 0.49$, $p < 0.05$). It is also noted that there was no significant difference in emotional intelligence scores between high and low achievers, indicating that EI tends to have a fairly constant influence on performance regardless of overall achievement level. Conclusion of research on emotional pudency. This study recommended integrating emotional intelligence training in university education to improve student motivation, academic performance, and well-being.

Keywords: *Emotional intelligence, academic performance, student motivation.*

INTRODUCTION

In 21st-century higher education, emotional intelligence (EI) has become one of the most powerful psychological constructs yet researched, if not the most decisive factor of students' academic performance, learning motivation, and wellbeing in general (Simić et al., 2024). The academic, social, and emotional expectations facing students today in educational settings create demands that most directly impact their learning behaviours and resultant performance outcomes. Increasingly, researchers suggest that academic achievement is associated not only with cognitive intelligence but also more substantially with the emotional skills of students (including self-awareness, emotion regulation, empathy, and interpersonal relational skills) (Jiang et al., 2025). With the diversification, intensification of competition, and rising psychological pressure across universities, it is necessary to emphasize that direct emotions are linked with both students` academic performance and their general well-being and self-actualization because emotional intelligence can enhance well-being (Shengyao et al., 2024). Thus, emotional intelligence works by helping students recognize emotions, demonstrate self-regulation of these skills, and respond to them in ways that facilitate learning while minimizing stress and increasing motivation for figures (Mayer et al., 2020). Thus, exploring how EI is connected to motivation and academic performance has been a key focus of contemporary educational research (Farah-Franco et al., 2024).

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Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand, identify, control, and use emotional over real-life communication and learning situations (Mayer Salovey 1997). You can effectively track frustration and anxiety-related examinations with high EI students, associate positively with peers, and develop cordial rapport with teachers. According to Ahmad (2023), emotionally intelligent students are more engaged in the learning process due to emotional control that helps them stay focused, persistent, and self-confident when confronted with academic hurdles. In addition, EI promotes intrinsic motivation, which is considered particularly important for lifelong learning (Taibolatov et al., 2024). Students who successfully reframe negative feelings like fear and stress into a positive light are more likely to create realistic academic goals, work independently, and persevere in their studies. Therefore, emotional intelligence can be considered an internal resource that sustains persistence in mastery learning, perseverance, and resilience (Ononye et al., 2022).

Motivation is an important connecting mechanism between emotional intelligence and academic performance. Motivation has been defined as the internal force that activates, directs, and sustains a person's learning behaviors (Deci et al., 2021); educational psychology describes motivation in students. Motivated students engage more in classroom activities, are willing to face challenging academic tasks, and they also show how well they self-regulate (Eccles, 2023). Emotional intelligence aids intrinsic and extrinsic motivation by generating stable attitudes towards learning, developing coping power to overcome academic failures, and enhancing commitment to climate or broad academic goals. A study by Rehman (2025) showed that emotionally intelligent students tend to use positive coping strategies such as self-peer support and time management, especially in the context of examinations. This adaptable approach provides motivation over the long run, then inevitably improves academic performance. The association of EI and motivation is particularly pronounced during transitional periods like adolescence, where students' fluctuating emotions can translate directly into the learning process (Rodriguez, 2010).

Emotional intelligence (EI) has emerged as one of the most influential psychological constructs in determining students' academic success, school adjustment, and learning motivation. Students in contemporary educational environments are experiencing mounting academic, social, and emotional demands that have direct consequences for their learning behaviours and performance. Researchers argue that academic performance is no longer linked exclusively to cognitive intelligence; rather, it is strongly influenced by students' emotional competencies, including self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, motivation, and interpersonal skills. With diversification, competition, and increased psychological stress within the university, it is essential to recognise the role of emotional intelligence in enhancing not only academic achievement but also students' general well-being. EI enables students to sense, appraise, and respond to emotions in ways that support learning, reduce stress, and enhance motivation (Mayer et al., 2020). Thus, the study of how EI is linked to motivation and academic performance has become a core issue in contemporary educational studies.

In general, emotional intelligence (EI) can be considered as the skill to comprehend, recognize, manage, and utilize emotions efficiently in real-life communication and learning situations. High EI students exhibit a greater ability to deal with frustration and anxiety when they are having examinations, to interact with others, and to have a good relationship with the teachers. Ahmad (2023) also states that emotionally intelligent students are more engaged in the learning process because emotional control allows them to be focused, tenacious, and self-confident in the case of academic difficulties. Moreover, EI brings about intrinsic motivation, which is crucial in lifelong learning. In the presence of positive relationships with negative emotions, including fear and stress, students will have higher chances to set achievable

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academic goals, work alone, and be committed to their studies. Thus, emotional intelligence may be considered an internal ability that helps to persevere, be tough, and learn profoundly.

Motivation is the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance. Motivation in the field of educational psychology can be described as an internal stimulus that prompts, guides, and maintains the learning activities of students (Deci et al., 2021). The well-motivated students are more engaged in the classroom, actively engage in the activities of challenging their academic work, and possess greater self-regulation. Emotional intelligence contributes to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation through a positive attitude to learning, coping mechanisms to overcome academic failures, and the ability to commit to the overall goals of the academic process. A study by Rehman (2025) revealed that emotionally intelligent students have positive coping mechanisms, including self-encouragement and proper time management, especially when they are taking exams. These affective techniques maintain the motivation in the long run, and eventually, the academic performance is enhanced. The relationship between EI and motivation is particularly important in the developmental process, such as in adolescence, when emotional variability can have a direct effect on the motivation of students to learn (Wasni et al., 2024).

The learning environment within the university is vital in determining the effects of emotional intelligence on the outcomes of students. Emotionally supporting teaching practices by teachers, including empathy, patience, and positive feedback, helps students to regulate their emotions and be aware of them (Tafa & Tefera, 2024). These classroom conditions are boosting motivation, minimizing behavioral problems, and increasing confidence in academics. Relationships with peers also help them to develop emotional intelligence, as students who cooperate, communicate, and interact socially have high chances of developing their emotional skills. Therefore, EI is not only an in-self quality, but also the result of interactions between students in the learning and social settings.

It was shown that students with high emotional intelligence are more motivated, resilient, and successful in their academic performance because of their emotional control, positive relationships, and confident, independent approach to the learning process (Rimawi & Banat, 2014). Thus, emotional intelligence ought to be applied in the teaching methods, learning policies, and student support programs with the aim of enhancing the overall success of the learning process. The accumulating literature serves to point out the fact that EI is not a fringe benefit to education, but a major factor in success in education and life in general.

The increasing awareness of emotional intelligence among teachers and parents has enhanced the need to have social-emotional learning programs in higher education. The goals of SEL programs are also to build self-awareness, empathy, decision-making, and interpersonal relationships among students (Zins et al., 2004). These interventions are founded on the fact that emotional intelligence can be cultivated with time. Meta-analytical results prove that the SEL programs result in the enhancement of emotional competencies, social behaviors, and academic performance, which supports the opinion that EI is a versatile and trainable aspect.

Even though emotional intelligence has become increasingly popular, it has been criticized. Other researchers believe that EI is related to other psychological concepts like personality traits and general intelligence, and this is a cause of concern that EI does not have conceptual uniqueness (Landy, 2005). Also, there have been debates about the measurement of EI, where self-report measures can be affected by social desirability bias, and can not necessarily be a true predictor of their emotional abilities. Developments have been made on performance-based tests, including the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT), which have been developed to overcome these shortcomings and give more objective measures of EI. To sum up, emotional intelligence is a factor of growing importance

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in academic success. Conventional education models have been overly concerned with the cognitive skills and knowledge in the subject matters, but the modern learning forms have been more concerned with the holistic model that focuses on the emotional and social skills. Though it is always desirable, the introduction of emotional intelligence in schools, education, and student support systems is a necessity to equip students with the ability to overcome academic challenges and upcoming professional requirements (Arias et al., 2022).

This association can be attributed to the capability of the emotionally intelligent students to control the negative emotions in the form of anxiety and frustration, enabling them to stick to their studies and be fully attentive to them. Motivation is also a mediating variable between emotional intelligence and academic performance. Higher EI students are relatively more motivated to work, more realistic in setting academic objectives, and more persistent in working through academic difficulties, hence increasing their performance. Moreover, trait emotional intelligence was found to be a high predictor of academic motivation and performance in examinations at the university level. One of the major elements of emotional intelligence is emotional regulation skills that help students to be focused, delay gratification, and use efficient learning strategies that will eventually lead to a better academic performance (Saklofske et al., 2012). Such data prove the opinion that emotional intelligence is an important personal and psychological asset that supplements academic activity and performance. Therefore, promoting emotional intelligence in learning institutions is a powerful approach in motivating and improving students in their academic achievements.

Statement of the Problem

Nowadays, the universities are facing growing academic strain, stress, and low learner motivation levels. While academic performance has long been linked with cognitive ability, recent studies illustrate that the skills captured in emotional intelligence (EI) research shape how students react to exigent situations and maintain motivational processes conducive to achieving academic success (Shengyao et al., 2024; Simić et al., 2024). Yet, even with this increasing awareness, most universities still largely emphasize curricular coverage and grading rather than the emotional and social aspects of learning. The academic performance of students with lower levels of emotional intelligence may be influenced negatively by their inability to regulate emotions or manage school and coursework-related stress (Jiang et al., 2025) or motivation in a fluid manner. Moreover, the existing empirical literature, particularly for local studies in the context of Pakistan, has never explored the association between emotional intelligence and students' motivation and academic performance. In all but one of the studies, researchers either studied EI with motivation or EI in performance, and did not study these three together as intended among the same student population.

Moreover, most of the research already performed for South Asian populations has been done in Western educational settings, limiting the generalizability of findings from more exclusive South Asian models that are often markedly different concerning family structure, family values, and dynamics (Malik & Shahid, 2016). The specific cause-and-effect relationship between EI and motivation and academic performance among university students remains unexplored within the Pakistani context, as only a handful of large-scale quantitative studies have examined the role of EI on student motivation at a broader level. This gap highlights the need for extended research that can inform more comprehensive, evidence-based educational strategies to foster cognitive and emotional development in children. This study was hence conducted to assess the emotional intelligence of university students, its association with student motivation, and its effect on academic achievement in order to contribute some empirical evidence to an increasing number of local studies in this area, while providing some practical implications.

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Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were:

1- To explore the level of emotional intelligence among university students.
2- To find out the relationship between students' motivation and emotional intelligence.
3- To investigate the impact of emotional intelligence on students' academic performance.

Research Questions

The research questions of the study were:

1- What is the level of emotional intelligence among students?
2- Is there any significant relationship between emotional intelligence and student motivation?
3- Is there any significant effect of emotional intelligence on students' academic performance?

THE LITERATURE REVIEW

The individual differences in the way individuals perceive, understand, regulate, and utilise emotions are explained by the concept of emotional intelligence (EI). Introduced in its first formulation, emotional intelligence was defined as the capacity to become aware of one's own feelings and feelings of others, differentiate between them, and apply this emotional data in the process of thinking and acting. Modern studies have broadened this definition and tend to differentiate two broad points of view: (a) emotional intelligence as an ability, which implies emotion-related cognitive functions measured by performance-based tasks, and (b) emotional intelligence as a personality-related trait or self-perception towards emotional functioning, often called trait EI (Mahyuddin et al., 2009). Those complementary views impact the conceptualization, measurement, and application of emotional intelligence to educational research and practice.

There are generally three key models that are known in the literature as models of emotional intelligence. To begin with, the ability model conceptualizes EI as a cognitive-emotional ability system that is arranged in four branches, namely perceiving emotions, using emotions to facilitate thinking, understanding emotions, and managing emotions. This model is often evaluated using objective scoring performance tools, which are based on a metric that is an expert or consensus-based score but not self-reported (Rauf et al., 2020). Second, the trait model, introduced by Petrides and others, defines EI as a complex of emotion-related self-images and behavioral orientations, including emotional control, life well-being, and sociality. Self-reported instruments such as the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire are generally used to measure trait EI. They are closely linked to personality characteristics, which is why they are specifically important when studying well-being and social functioning. Third, alternative models of emotional intelligence, such as Bar-On and Goleman models, are based on a more comprehensive approach incorporating emotional competencies, interpersonal skills, and motivational traits. The multi-dimensional self-report measures, which are usually used to measure these models, include the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) and are commonly used both in applied and organizational settings. Nevertheless, these models have encountered criticism because of overlapping with the concepts of personality and the question of construct validity.

Student motivation is a multidimensional phenomenon that entails the needs, ambitions, and power that compel students to take up academic endeavors. One of the key differences in the literature is the intrinsic motivation- performing learning related to intrinsic interest, enjoyment, or personal satisfaction, and extrinsic motivation- performing learning because of instrumental motives to get a grade, reward, social approval, or avoid punishment (Taibolatov et al., 2024). Intrinsic motivation is always linked to more in-depth thinking, perseverance, and

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adaptive learning patterns, whilst extrinsic motivation can promote the notion of short-term engagement, but tends to result in surface learning when the external contingencies take over.

The other framework that has had significant influence is Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT), which determines two key factors that determine achievement-oriented decisions: expectancy of success or the belief that one is capable of succeeding in a given task and subjective task value, which is the perceived importance, usefulness or interest of the task. Based on well-developed models of EVT, learners are most likely to show lasting engagement and elevated achievement when both expectancies and worth of the task are elevated, and low anticipations or high cost imagined negatively affect motivation (Eccles, 2023). EVT has been used to explain domain-specific decreases in motivation, lack of interest in mathematics in adolescence, and has led to interventions to increase engagement by affirming values and using utility-value to boost motivation.

Another school of thought is the Achievement Goal Theory (AGT), which concentrates on the objectives that students have when it comes to achievement situations. Modern AGT differentiates mastery goals, which focus on learning, understanding, and self-development, and performance goals, which focus on showing competence in comparison with others. There are further performance goals that are separated into performance-approach and performance-avoidance orientations. Studies have always indicated that intrinsic motivation, deep learning strategies, and adaptive academic outcomes are linked to mastery goals, whereas there is a connection between performance-avoidance goals, anxiety, and poor performance. The performance-approach goals have composite results based on the contextual conditions (Hulleman et al., 2010). AGT also puts emphasis on the classroom climates and instructional practices, where the evaluative classrooms are more prone to promote and achieve performance goals. In contrast, mastery-oriented instruction encourages intrinsic engagement and long-lasting motivation.

The relationship between EI and motivation is, however, not completely even. Some of the dimensions of EI, like emotional regulation and interpersonal skills, seem to predict more than others, like the mere emotional awareness in academic motivation. Additionally, both EI and level of motivation could be affected by contextual and demographic variables such as grade level, gender, and socio-cultural factors. These differences indicate that although the overall trend depicts a positive association, the strength and directions of such an association are situational and may be mediated by the tools employed to measure EI, academic level, or other situational parameters (Stella et al., 2023).

It has also been shown that EIs that are gained at an earlier age can affect motivation and academically related behaviors in higher education. As an illustration, childhood and adolescent traits of EI and social-emotional competence have been demonstrated to have adaptive learning behaviors and motivation in adulthood. At the university level, EI seems to have its influences on academic achievement indirectly, through intermediary variables rather than having a strong, direct impact on academic achievement. Similarly, it was established in research carried out at Jiroft University, Iran, that EI had a significant predictive value on academic self-regulation, which, on the other hand, possessed a significant predictive effect on self-reported academic performance (Kumar, 2016).

In general, the empirical evidence indicates that in higher education, emotional intelligence indirectly promotes motivation through the extent of students' capabilities of self-regulated learning, stress management, and confidence in their capabilities. This indirect course of action emphasizes the role of EI as a moderator of motivational and behavioral change, and not a predictor of academic performance, which contributes to the importance of the

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intervention designed to facilitate engagement, resilience, and enduring academic motivation in university students (Yahaya et al., 2012).

Emotional intelligence (EI) and academic motivation are interconnected, and these aspects depend on various cultural and contextual issues, such as country, social norms, and various systems of education and gender relations. Indicatively, a 2024 study in Pakistan reported a positive correlation between EI and motivation, although differences were reported by gender and grade levels. Boys scored in the intrapersonal EI, emotion management, and overall EI, and girls in the interpersonal EI. The level of motivation also depended on grade as well as gender, and it points to the moderating role of demographic factors (Rodriguez, 2010).

Essentially, Emotional Intelligence (EI), as the capacity to perceive, cognitively comprehend, manage, and apply emotions adaptively in both others and yourself, has long been considered an important non-cognitive element of academic motivation and performance in higher education (Ononye et al., 2022). The level of academic demands, competition, and an increased sense of individual responsibility are complex at the university level, and students need emotional control and long-term motivation. The more the student is high in EI, the more they can identify the emotional triggers, such as anxiety, frustration, or self-doubt, and channel these emotions into motivational energy. As a result, EI has led to intrinsic motivation, independent goals, tenacity in serious study work, and positive academic self-concept. On the other hand, fewer EI students are more vulnerable to demotivation, avoidance behavior, and academic disengagement.

Following the Control-Value Theory (CVT), emotionally intelligent students can successfully control negative emotions related to achievement (test anxiety, academic stress, etc.), which can otherwise lower motivation. Through the regulation of these emotions, students will perceive control and value of the task, which are robust predictors of motivation (Pekrun et al., 2019). Adaptive coping strategies, such as problem-solving and help-seeking, which are useful in motivating employees, are also supported through EI. Moreover, emotionally intelligent students will have more opportunities to develop positive achievement emotions, including enjoyment and hope, which are closely associated with intrinsic motivation, engagement, and academic excellence.

Empirical research points to the contribution of EI towards self-regulated learning (SRL) in university students. High EI students had attainable goals, followed their progress, and were motivated in their academic work. EI enables students to deal with failure, poor grades or criticism without feeling demotivated, to encourage mastery-focused learning outcomes and long-term motivation. Emotional awareness leads to the improvement of academic self-efficacy and allows students to stay persistent, active with learning materials, and change learning strategies when it is needed (Perera, 2016).

In the light of the self-determination theory (SDT), intrinsic motivation boosts as basic psychological needs like autonomy, competence, and relatedness are met. Emotional intelligence can serve these needs by helping students to make their way in social and academic relationships with a sense of confidence and promote relatedness and autonomy. High EI students are more intrinsically motivated, less amotivated, and resilient to academic stress.

Emotional intelligence is also important in sustaining academic motivation through emotional well-being. EI lowers burnout and academic stress, which are two of the greatest dangers to motivation, through the promotion of emotional balance, optimism, and hope. EI allows the students to think of obstacles as short-lived and solvable, maintaining motivation and sustained academic activity (Malik & Shahid, 2016).

The recent literature indicates that the impact of EI on academic performance can be indirect, with motivation, engagement and self-managed learning being the mediating factors.

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EI positively affects intrinsic and identified motivation, which increases cognitive engagement and persistence even in disruptive academic conditions, including transitioning to online learning or increased academic workload. Equally, it was shown that EI is correlated with academic engagement and self-regulation, which indicates that EI plays an important role in promoting study habits, adaptive coping, and persistence. Motivation and academic achievement are further strengthened by psychological well-being, resilience, and my interpersonal skills (Mohzan et al., 2013).

The correlation between EI and academic motivation or performance is relative. The power of these associations is determined by cultural norms, gender, educational systems, subject areas, and classroom settings (Joshi et al., 2012). Although the majority of the studies have shown positive links, there are also studies with weaker or insignificant effects because of the different EI measurement (ability-based and trait-based) and performance measures (GPA, course grades, self-reported achievement). Regardless of these discrepancies, meta-analyses prove the existence of EI as an important predictor of academic achievement, individual development, and social skills (Fallahzadeh, 2011).

Relationships between achievement motivation and attitude, and academic performance of university students in Malaysia (2010), was one of the first empirical studies that surveyed 1,484 university students and revealed significant positive correlations between students' attitude towards learning and achievement motivation, and between attitude and academic achievement. However, the same study found that achievement motivation and academic achievement showed a low, non-significant correlation. This observation underscores that other intervening variables, such as attitude, learning strategies, or situational factors, may influence the impact of motivation on performance (Wu et al., 2020).

Recent studies have narrowed this gap by identifying the typologies and attributes of motivation. The quality of motivation is important. How motivation affects academic performance: a structural equation modelling analysis posits that motivation is based on a continuum from autonomous (self-determined) to controlled (externally pressured), as discussed in the framework of self-determination theory. A sample of 383 medical students who participated in structural equation modelling (SEM) showed that greater relative autonomous motivation (RAM) was positively associated with study strategy and study effort, which in turn significantly predicted academic performance (GPA). It implies that motivation is not sufficient; the way students study (deep strategy, regular effort) is the mediating factor between motivation and performance (Amores et al., 2022).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Methodology offers an overview of the study methods used to investigate the impact of emotional intelligence on student motivation and academic performance. It explains the study's demographic, sample selection, sampling procedures, data gathering tools, reliability, pilot testing, research methodology, and data analysis techniques. The current study uses a quantitative research design to find the impact of emotional intelligence on student motivation and academic performance.

Population of the Study

The entire population of the study was the students selected from three public universities from diverse departments. The attention directed to students actively engaged in academic endeavors and whose ranks can be made to have a meaningful impact on emotion, motivation and academic performance.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Adopting a quantitative research design, data were collected from 300 undergraduate and graduate students selected from three (03) public universities of District Faisalabad through

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stratified random sampling. The target population consisted of university students enrolled in higher education institutions for teaching, and the sample A was selected from those departments, consisting of a total of 300. The students were approached for data collection from 11 departments. The Engineering department had the highest representation in terms of respondents (26.7%) compared to other departments in the sample. Ranking next are IT/Computer Science (17.7%) and English (16.3%), which indicates these two departments made up the majority of the overall sample. Botany (11.7%), Education (9.0%), and Chemistry (8.7%) were moderately represented. Fewer respondents were Urdu (3.0%), Physics (2.3%), Pak Study/History (2.0%) & BBA (1.7%). The least number of responses were reported from Economics (1.0%). Stratified random sampling was employed to select undergraduate students from three universities in Faisalabad in the current study.

Instrument of the Study

The data were collected using a pre-constructed structured questionnaire. This questionnaire comprises Likert scale items aimed at measuring the emotional, motivational, and academic performance of participants. Students self-reported on their emotional regulation, motivation to learn and academic performance using a five-point Likert scale (eg, 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The items were adapted from existing scales to ensure the reliability and validity of the responses. Reliability evaluation using Cronbach's alpha revealed an excellent score (r=0.80); thus, it was considered acceptable to be used in this study.

Data Collection

Data were collected using a questionnaire developed following the establishment of instrument validity and reliability. Before filling, the students were informed of the research objective and assured of personal secrecy and voluntary participation.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, with means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions, describe the demographic characteristics of the participants and levels of emotional intelligence, motivation, and academic performance among students. Two sets of independent samples t-tests were conducted to investigate the differences in emotional intelligence or motivation between male and female students, and also undergraduate and postgraduate students. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted in order to ascertain the relationship between emotional intelligence, student motivation, and academic performance. Those analyses help assess if greater emotional intelligence is related to greater motivation and, therefore, success in school.

Results and Findings

Table 1

Demography of Respondents

Demographic variables	F	%
Gender		
Male	78	26%
Female	222	74%
Age		

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19-21 Years	179	59.7%
22-24 Years	104	34.7%
25-26 Years	12	4%
26 years & Above	5	1.7%
Department		
English	49	16.3%
Physics	7	2.3%
Chemistry	26	8.7%
Botany	35	11.7%
Urdu	9	3%
Education	27	9%
IT/Computer	53	17.7%
Pak Study/History	6	2%
Engineering	80	26.7%
Economics	3	1%
BBA	5	1.7%
Educational Institute		
University of Education Faisalabad	110	36.7%
Govt. College University Faisalabad	78	26%
Agriculture University Faisalabad	112	37.3%
Year of Study		
Ist Year	132	44%
2nd Year	45	15%
3rd Year	63	21%
4th Year	60	20%
Locality		
Rural	169	56.3%
Urban	131	43.7%
CGPA of Students		
2.6-3.0	30	10%
3.1-3.5	125	41.7%
3.6-4.0	145	48.3%
Prior Training of EI		
Yes	49	16.3%
No	251	83.7%
Participate in Extracurricular activities.		
Yes	152	50.7%
No	148	49.3%

The demographic characteristics of the respondents (N = 300) are shown in Table 1. Most were female (74%), though male participants were also present, for a total of 26%, mirroring the overrepresentation of female students in the sample. For age, the majority of respondents were in the 19–21 years category (59.7%), followed by those aged 22–24 years (34.7%) and only a small proportion in the age group of 25–26 years old (4%) and above 26 years old (1.7%), indicating that participants were mainly younger undergraduate students. Table 2 also shows the department-wise distribution of respondents, indicating that about one fourth (26.7%) were students from Engineering, followed by IT/Computer (17.7%), and English (16.3%), while relative representation from Physics, Pak Studies/History, and Economics, along with BBA,

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remained low as compared to other departments. In terms of institutional affiliation, nearly two-thirds responded from the University of Education Faisalabad (36.7%), Agriculture University Faisalabad (37.3%), and Government College University Faisalabad (26%). In terms of year in study, most were first years (44%), followed by third years (21%), fourth years (20%) and second years (15%). Regarding locality, the majority of the respondents (56.3%) were from rural areas, and 43.7% were urban residents. The CGPA distribution showed that nearly half of the students overall had fairly high performance, with 48.3% obtaining a CGPA between 3.6 and 4.0 or 41.7% having a CGPA in the range of 3.1–3.5, while only about one in ten scored between 2.6 and 3. Also, only a small portion of respondents (16.3%) reported that they had previously undergone training in emotional intelligence, with an overwhelming majority reporting otherwise (83.7%). Finally, there was an approximately equal distribution of participation in extracurricular activity (50.7% were involved vs. 49.3% did not participate). In summary, the data show an illustrative snapshot of a sample that is largely young (67 % 25 or younger), female (80%), high achieving (64% <15 GPA), and diverse with minimal prior emotional intelligence training.

Table 2

Pearson Product-Moment Correlations Between Emotional Intelligence and Student Motivation

Indicator		Student Motivation
Emotional Intelligence	*r*	*0.51
	Sig	0.03
	N	300

* $p < .05$

Table 2 shows that the result indicates that the calculated correlation between emotional intelligence and student motivation was 0.51, which is a positive relationship that is significant. It is an indication that the higher the emotional intelligence, the higher the student motivation and vice versa.

Table 3

Pearson Product-Moment Correlations Between Emotional Intelligence and Academic Performance

		Academic Performance
Emotional Intelligence	*r*	*0.49
	Sig	0.03
	N	300

* $p < .05$

Table 3 shows that the result indicated that the calculated correlation coefficient, or to be more precise, the correlation between emotional intelligence and academic performance was r =0.49, and this is a positive, significant correlation. It implies that the higher the emotional intelligence, the higher the academic performance is and vice versa, but with lower emotional intelligence, the academic performance is also lower.

Table 4

Independent Samples t-Test for Emotional Intelligence Scores

University Type	N	Mean	Std. Dev	df	t	p
High Achievers	150	3.06	0.312	398	3.827	0.742
Low Achievers	150	2.85	0.317			

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Table 4 shows the difference in emotional intelligence between high-achieving and low-achieving students. The results indicated no significant difference between the high-achieving students (M = 3.06, SD = 0.312) and the low-achieving students (M = 2.85, SD = 0.317), t(398) = 3.827, p = 0.742. These findings suggest that emotional intelligence has a similar effect on academic performance for both high- and low-achieving students.

Table 5

Measuring the Level of Emotional Intelligence among Students

Indicators	Mean	Value / Interpretation
Emotional Intelligence (EI)		
Self-Awareness	4.00	Strong awareness of own emotions; predicts better self-reflection and decision-making.
Self-Regulation	3.89	Effective control of impulses and emotions under stress predicts calmness and rational behavior.
Empathy	3.74	Strong understanding of others' emotions; predicts better social interactions and collaboration.
Social Skills	3.62	Effective communication and relationship management; predicts conflict resolution and teamwork.
Overall Emotional Intelligence	3.85	Predicts overall emotional adaptability, academic motivation, and positive interpersonal outcomes
Academic Motivation		
Goal Orientation & Achievement Motivation	3.89	High intrinsic motivation predicts persistence, engagement, and enthusiasm for learning.
Persistence & Resilience	3.71	Ability to maintain effort despite setbacks; predicts academic perseverance and sustained performance.
Interest & Engagement in Studies	3.6 2	Enjoyment of coursework and learning challenges predicts proactive learning behavior.
Use of Feedback & Self-Improvement	3.75	Frequent use of feedback to improve predicts continuous academic growth and improvement.
Academic Performance		
Grades & Academic Achievement	3.85	Consistently good grades; predicts high academic competency and task completion
Time Management & Task Completion	3.73	Effective planning and execution of tasks; predicts meeting deadlines and academic efficiency.
Academic Self-Efficacy & Confidence	3.82	Strong belief in academic abilities; predicts independent learning and successful performance.
Tracking & Satisfaction	3.61	Awareness of progress and satisfaction with performance predict motivation to maintain/improve results.

Table 5 presents the self-reported responses of students regarding their Emotional Intelligence (EI), Academic Motivation, and Academic Performance. The data indicate that the majority of

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respondents strongly disagreed with most of the statements across all three dimensions. For the Emotional Intelligence items, students reported low levels of self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, social skills, and overall emotional intelligence. It suggests that students may face challenges in recognizing and managing their emotions, understanding others' feelings, and regulating their behavior in social or stressful situations. Such results indicate a need for interventions to enhance students' emotional competencies, as high emotional intelligence is generally associated with better interpersonal relationships, stress management, and academic success. With respect to Academic Motivation, students also strongly disagreed with statements related to goal determination, preservation, intrinsic motivation and engagement in their studies. That is to say, students may find staying motivated, goal-setting for academic success, resilience in the face of failure and appropriately using feedback to adjust learning difficult. The adverse effects of low motivation on students' learning outcomes as well as their engagement with coursework have been extensively researched. Academic Performance, with low self-efficacy and poor time management, negatively correlated with the academic achievement of this group and most of them were dissatisfied with their academic growth. The data indicate that most students do not consistently attain high grades, struggle with meeting deadlines and do not feel confident that they can complete academic tasks well. These points out where students lack in academics and study skills, or just their personal effectiveness, that may need attention from instructors or institutions. The participants demonstrate a low level of emotional intelligence and academic motivation, and subsequently, the academic performance as well. The conclusion based on these findings is that emotional intelligence was found to be strongly related to students' academic behaviors, and it has implications for developing skills in areas of conation or a combination of emotional and motivational skills as a way to improve academic success.

Findings

1- Participants believed that they had a high level of self-efficacy regarding their academic abilities. Most respondents (67.4%) agreed/strongly agreed they have high academic self-efficacy (Mean: 3.82).
2- Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Student Motivation. The computed relationship (r=0.41) shows a positive and significant association between emotional intelligence and student motivation.
3- Shows that the computed relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance was r=0.49. It showed that there was a significant positive association between emotional intelligence and academic performance.
4- The results indicated no significant difference between the high-achieving students (M = 3.06, SD = 0.312) and the low-achieving students (M = 2.85, SD = 0.317), t(398) = 3.827, p = 0.742. These findings suggest that emotional intelligence has a similar effect on academic performance for both high- and low-achieving students.
5- The overall findings indicate a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and student motivation and academic performance. The higher the students' emotional intelligence, the more motivated they are, the more effectively they regulate their emotions, and the more successful they can become in education. The paper demonstrates the applicability of incorporating emotional intelligence development into learning programs, as this component enhances students' academic, emotional, and future achievements.

Discussion

Thus, the current study was aimed at examining the influence of emotional intelligence on student motivation and academic achievement among Pakistani university students. More

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specifically, the study gathered data on how emotionally intelligent students were and whether or not emotional intelligence was linked to student motivation, as well as what effect emotional intelligence had on academic performance. The results generated multiple primary implications which support, expand upon and in some cases dispute existing literature.

Emotional Intelligence of Students

The first objective was to measure the emotional intelligence of university students. As reported in Table 5, the dimensions of emotional intelligence were observed to be high in students. In detail, students noticed the mean-maximal score for self-awareness (M = 4.00), followed by self-regulation (M = 3.89), empathy (M = 3.74) and social skills (M = 3.62). The overall mean of emotional intelligence was 3.85, which is in the "high" range with regard to standard interpretation thresholds.

Such results are in line with earlier studies in similar cultural settings. Malik and Shahid (2016) showed high to moderate levels of emotional intelligence among students in Pakistan, with comparatively more skills at self-determined domains than on emotional regulation ones. Similarly, Rauf et al. (2020) students in higher education settings scored appropriately on emotional competencies that helped them successfully face academic challenges. In addition, the relatively high scores on self-awareness and self-regulation found in the present study suggest that students are able to identify their own emotions and inhibit impulses when required, even when under academic pressure. It is even more exciting as the university paths are already known to be quite high in demand, where students go through the pressure of examinations, tight deadlines and competitive grading systems (Jiang et al., 2025; Faheem, Gulab, & Ahmad, 2025).

The relatively low score for social skills (M = 3.62) nevertheless deserves consideration. It had the smallest mean of the four EI components, although its score was still in the high range. This observation could be a representation of usual norms existing in Pakistani academic settings regarding the conventional teacher-centered method and passive learning approach, suggesting restricted chances to interact with peers for collective skill development (Malik & Shahid, 2016; Ahmad, Sewani, & Channa, 2025). Or, it is reflective of students being skilled at emotional self-regulation but struggling to express emotions appropriately in social situations or regulate the emotions of others. It coincides with the work of Shengyao et al. (2024), who went so far as to say that social skills represent the most context-dependent dimension of emotional intelligence, far more variable across educational settings than, for example, dominance and emotion recognition.

Emotional Intelligence and Students' Motivation

The second aim was to assess the link between emotional intelligence and motivation among students. As shown in Table 3, the scores from the Pearson correlation analysis indicate a statistically significant positive correlation between EI and student motivation ($r = 0.51$, $p < 0.05$). Following Cohen's (1988) benchmarks, this is a large effect size, denoting a strong relationship between constructs. The emotionally intelligent students were more motivated, more so in terms of things like clearer goal orientation, greater persistence towards their goals and greater engagement with their studies.

Theoretically, this finding is supported by several motivation theories. In line with Self-Determination Theory (SDT), emotional intelligence is believed to facilitate the fulfilment of basic needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness (Ryan, 2025). Young people who understand their emotions tend to have a greater sense of autonomy in learning, a greater belief in competence, and more supportive relationships with peers and teachers. In turn, these need satisfactions nurture intrinsic motivation and academic engagement (Deci et al., 2021; Kolachi et al., 2024).

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This result is also in line with Control-Value Theory (CVT; Pekrun, 2024) of achievement emotions. Students with emotional intelligence are more able to control negative emotions (disappointment after an exam, anxiety about a test, a fear of failure), which could in turn affect their motivation levels. These students also keep their sense of control over studying and learning objectives, which are two prerequisites for maintaining motivation in the longer term (Pekrun et al., 2019; Pirzada, Tabassum & Ahmad, 2024).

The present results are consistent with an emerging body of empirical evidence. Taibolatov et al. (2024) found that the EI dimensions, especially emotional regulation and interpersonal skills, predicted students' academic motivation for schoolchildren coherently. Similarly, Stella et al. reported within a university population and found positive correlations between emotional intelligence and several motivational orientations. This correlation of magnitude found in the present study ($r = 0.51$) is somewhat larger than the modest correlations reported for Western samples. This discrepancy hints at cultural differences such as distinctiveness and salience of emotional competencies in nations emphasizing collectivist norms, characterized by emphasis on interpersonal harmony and emotional restraint (Rodriguez, 2010; Jabeen, Ali, & Ahmad, 2023).

Influence of Emotional Intelligence on Academic Performance

The 3rd aim was to explore the relation between emotional intelligence and academic achievement. A statistically significant positive correlation was found between EI and academic performance ($r = 0.49$, $p < .05$), representing a large effect size as indicated by the Pearson correlation analysis. It suggests students with higher emotional intelligence tend to have more favourable academic outcomes as assessed through sustaining self-reported grades, time management skills, Academic self-efficacy and performance satisfaction.

There are several mechanisms for why such relationships exist. It has been found, first of all, that after controlling for intellect (Haven,& Williams, 2022; Thomas, Khan & Ahmad, 2022), emotionally intelligent students have a better ability to deal with academic stress and test anxiety, which are known to negatively affect cognitive processes required by learning, such as memory, attention or problem solving (Pekrun,2024; Imran et al., 2023). Through the regulation of these deleterious emotional states, students with high degrees of emotional intelligence are able to preserve their cognitive functioning they have greater working memory capacity available for academic functions. Second, EI facilitates adaptive coping strategies such as help-seeking, effective time management, and perseverance in the face of difficulty (Saklofske et al., 2012; Oad et al., 2024). Students who can seek help when they need it, schedule study time effectively, and remain persistent in the face of failure tend to receive high marks. Thirdly, EI contributes positively to the development of relationships with instructors and classmates, which lead to the establishment of a supportive social network for better learning opportunities (Ononye et al., 2022; Haider, Ahmad, & Ali, 2024)

Our findings are generally in line with a wealth of empirical research to date. Farah-Franco et al. The major finding was the significant positive association between three of the four specific EI domains, namely self-perception, impulse control and stress tolerance, with academic performance over multiple years of study (28), suggesting that the role of EI in performance is not a one-off event. Shengyao et al. (2024) evidenced that the EI-performance relation might be mediated by positive psychological factors, such as self-efficacy and resilience, suggesting that students who are higher in EI believe their academic skills will help them perform better and find it easier to overcome challenges.

Finally, an important nuance appeared from the independent samples t-test for high- and low-achieving students towards time; Results for emotional intelligence showed no difference between the groups, $t(398) = 3.827$, $p = 0.742$. The implication is that emotional intelligence

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indeed has an equivalent impact on one's academically performance regardless of whether students are men or women and how elite a scholar. More realistically, EI is more than a high performer trait; it appears that all students not only gain from higher levels of EI but do so regardless of whether they are doing well or poorly academically. The results contradict earlier research, which suggested that EI was better matched for students at risk of a suspension (Joshi et al., 2012; Dilshad, Shah, & Ahmad, 2023). But confirm the more general place of emotional intelligence as universal scaffolding (Simić et al., 2024); thanks to its foundational gains in self-regulation, stress management, and interpersonal efficacy, all learner-friendly tools.

Recommendation

The following recommendations were made:

1. Universities must include a module regarding emotional intelligence to ensure better strengthening of emotional and academic skills in students as well.
2. Teachers could adopt motivational strategies that promote setting goals and self-regulation for the students.
3. The students are acquiring emotional regulation and stress management skills through counselling services.
4. Parents need to be coached on how to support their child with emotional and academic motivation for school at home.
5. Future research should explore emotional intelligence using larger samples and diverse educational settings to validate the findings.

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