



## Original Article

## Emotional Intelligence and Academic Success among Undergraduate Nursing Students in Pakistan: A Cross-Sectional Study

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## ABSTRACT

Emotional intelligence (EI) is recognized as a key factor in academic achievement, especially in professions like nursing. Pakistan is a country where students of nursing have unique problems that may affect academic achievement and well-being. **Objectives:** To examine how emotional intelligence is related to academic success amongst undergraduate nursing students in Pakistan. **Methods:** The cross-sectional study consisted of 400 undergraduate nursing students admitted to twin cities in Pakistan in nursing institutes. This was done by gathering data through the Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale, and the academic performance of the students was gauged through CGPA. The statistical data analysis was conducted through descriptive statistics and inferential statistics (Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression). **Results:** The high individual correlation ( $r=0.74$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) between EI and the CGPA supports the need to consider EI as an important factor in attaining academic success. The multiple linear regression model revealed that EI had a relationship, which accounted for 25% of the variability in the CGPA, based on the  $R^2$  value of 0.25. Furthermore, the statistical significance of all the subscales as predictors was found to be statistically significant, indicating a positive relationship between greater EI and greater GPAs. **Conclusions:** In this study, EI is mentioned as an important variable in predicting academic success in nursing students in Pakistan. With the support of the specific training which encourages EI, the performance of the students can be improved, and they can be better prepared to meet the needs of the healthcare worker.

## INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence (EI) has become an increasingly popular topic, and its role in academic success and achievement has gained increased importance, especially in the sphere of nursing, where the ability to interact with others and handle stress is a crucial consideration [1]. EI is not an easy concept, as it entails an understanding of oneself, emotional balance, inner motivation, empathy, and interpersonal skills [2]. The nursing learning presents special problems to the students, such as rigorous clinical

practice and academic requirements. EI in this situation can greatly boost learning activities and academic results of learners [3]. Academic achievement is also directly linked to the academic goals, as both environments are defined in terms of high cumulative grade point average (CGPA) and overall academic performance. The nursing profession requires a cognitive and technical skill level, social relationship management skills, and emotional aspects of patient care skills [4]. Most studies conducted



before have depicted that there is a correlation between high EI and high academic performance, which means that students with high emotional intelligence are better at managing stress and developing positive interpersonal relationships within an academic context [5, 6]. Emotional intelligence (EI) increases the effectiveness of students in communication, resiliency, and the strength of students to have high coping skill levels, which are prerequisites of academic success [7]. Although empirical evidence is increasingly pointing to the fact that EI is positively correlated to academic success, there has been scant systematic research that specifically challenges this correlation between the population group of nursing students in Pakistan [8, 9]. Pakistan possesses distinct cultural and educational peculiarities, and they pose certain obstacles and opportunities that can soften such a relationship. The pedagogy of the traditional mode and the culture that has been adapted in the Pakistani society is more inclined towards the value of academic success at the cost of emotional and psychological development of the students [10]. The available scholarly literature on EI in nursing education has described the processes by which EI influences the learning outcomes. These mechanisms are enhanced stress management, enhanced interpersonal competence, enhanced motivation and engagement in instructions [11]. Moreover, high EI learners have high chances of developing good interpersonal relationships with their peers and are more apt to seek assistance when the need arises, therefore providing an academic environment conducive [12]. The competencies are vital to the academic and professional excellence of the students, considering the demanding aspects that accompany the nursing programs [6, 13]. The comprehensive understanding of the significance of the EI in the specified environment is an urgent requirement in order to develop particular interventions that will enable enhancing the educational experiences of nursing students in Pakistan and their performance [14, 15]. The healthcare sector in Pakistan is experiencing a lot of challenges, among them being the acute shortage of skilled nursing staff. Nursing students can increase their emotional intelligence (EI), and the outcomes of the measures can greatly enhance the quality of healthcare delivery. The nursing schools may also contribute to the creation of highly skilled and caring caregivers by teaching students the required skills to regulate their emotions effectively and work in the situation of the highest pressure [11]. In the proposed research, it is presumed to test the predictive capacity of academic achievement of the nursing students according to the EI subscales.

This study aims to examine how EI influences academic achievements and to make evidence-based suggestions related to EI development and academic success

promotion in nursing curricula.

## METHODS

This study utilized a cross-sectional analytical research methodology to examine the correlation between emotional intelligence and the academic success of nursing students in the twin cities of Pakistan. The required sample size, calculated using the WHO calculator with a 95% confidence interval, 5% margin of error, and a 50% population proportion, was 377. To account for potential attrition, data were collected from 415 undergraduate nursing students. After excluding 15 incomplete responses during data cleaning, the final sample consisted of 400 participants, resulting in a 96% response rate. These participants were recruited through convenience sampling from four nursing institutes in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, Pakistan, between June 2023 and June 2024. Inclusion criteria required participants to be currently enrolled in a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program and studying in their 2nd to 4th years, with a willingness to participate. First-year students and those on study leave were excluded from the study. In the data collection process, after approval was obtained, the researcher went to the chosen nursing institute to distribute and collect the necessary data collection instruments. To adhere to ethical standards, we acquired official written consent from the directors of the nursing institutes to gather information from their undergraduate nursing students. Data gathering began from February to April 2024, upon authorization. The researcher clarified the study's objectives, prospective ramifications, empirical evidence, and repercussions for the subjects selected for sampling. Every participant subsequently proceeded to endorse an informed consent form that included a comprehensive account of the aforementioned facts. Surveys were handed out to collect data on EO and academic achievement (CGPA), requiring a time commitment of 15-20 minutes. The exam branch of the institute confirmed the participants' CGPA. The entirety of the gathered data was securely stored in a physically secure place and on a computer that required a password for access. Finally, the researcher conveyed gratitude and appreciation to the participants and their respective institutes. The data collection tool included three components for data collection. Following the explanation of the study's objective, the participants were asked to complete the questionnaire. A demographic sheet was created to gather demographic information from the study participants. This document contains data about age, gender, institution name, current semester, last semester CGPA, program, and locality. The present study measured the EI of the respondents with the help of Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Scale (SSREIS), which has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.90 [16]. The scale has also been tested with Pakistani nursing students

and its Cronbach alpha is reported to be .89. The scale is additionally further broken down into the following subscales: perception of emotion (item 1-10), managing own emotions (item 11-20), managing the emotions of others (item 21-27) and using emotions (item 28-33). This scale is measured through the five-point Likert scale with the points as 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Academic Success was operationalised by the use of CGPA. The given investigation takes the CGPA as the most popular measure of academic success, a status supported by both empirical research studies performed in the Kohat district of Pakistan [15] and the studies carried out in the United Kingdom. The academic success criteria were set to 2.00 minimum mean grade and a grading scale of 4.00 as the highest possible grade of the last semester. Besides, the CGPA of the undergraduate nursing students was confirmed from the examination section of their respective institutions. By following the Higher Education Commission, Pakistan (HEC) criteria of CGPA (2015), this present study measured the students' academic success on the parameters (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants

Academic Success	Scale
Average	<2.00
Satisfactory	2.0-2.50
Good	2.51-3.00
Very Good	3.01-3.50
Excellent	3.51-4.00

To perform extensive statistical analyses on the gathered data, SPSS version 27.0 was used. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were applied to summarize categorical variables. Before conducting inferential analyses, the normality of key continuous variables, CGPA and Emotional Intelligence (EI) scores, was assessed using skewness, kurtosis, and visual inspection of histograms and Q-Q plots. The two variables were also observed to be approximately normally distributed, which fulfilled the assumptions of parametric testing. Hence, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was applied to study the association between emotional intelligence and academic achievement. Also, multiple regression analysis was used to establish how emotional intelligence sub-dimensions had predictive value on academic success among undergraduate nursing students.

## RESULTS

The study presents the demographic data of 400 nursing students. The majority of the participants were female (64%) and aged between 21 and 25 years (69.8%). Students are distributed across four institutions, with equal representation from each academic year in the BSN Generic program. Most students (62.7%) come from urban

areas and reside in hostels (74.3%) (Table 2).

**Table 2:** Demographic Characteristics of the Study Participants

Variables		Frequency (%)
Age of Respondents	15-20 Years	121 (30.2%)
	21-25 Years	279 (69.8%)
Academic Program	BSN Generic	400 (100%)
Current Study Year	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	132 (33%)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	132 (33%)
	4 <sup>th</sup> Year	136 (34%)
Locality	Urban	251 (62.7%)
	Rural	149 (37.3%)
Residence	Day scholar	103 (25.7%)
	Hostelite	297 (74.3%)

Note: f = frequency, % = percentage

Results present the correlation between emotional intelligence and college achievement in 400 undergraduate nursing students. The Pearson correlation coefficient (*r*) of 0.74 shown in the table indicates that emotional intelligence has a very high positive relationship with academic success as measured by the CGPA of students. This link has a statistical significance that has been proven with a *p*-value of 0.000, which highlights the positive association between emotional intelligence and academic success. The positive correlation is quite high, which means that students who belong to higher levels of emotional intelligence tend to do well in school (Table 3).

**Table 3:** Correlations (*r*) Between EI and Academic Success Among Undergraduate Nursing Students (*n*=400)

Variables	r-Value	p-Value
Emotional Intelligence vs Academic Success	0.74	0.000

The results include the findings of a multiple linear regression model, which predicts the academic success of the students (CGPA) through four emotional intelligence subscales. Diagnostic tests of collinearity were performed, and all the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were less than 5, meaning that there was no multicollinearity. This model accounts for 25% of CGPA ( $R^2 = 0.25$ ), implying that academic performance is moderately influenced by emotional intelligence. All four EI subscales, perception of emotions, managing one's own emotions, managing other emotions, and utilization of emotions were statistically significant predictors of CGPA ( $p < 0.001$ ). The positive standardized beta coefficients ( $\beta$ ) indicate that higher scores on each subscale are associated with higher academic achievement (Table 4).

**Table 4:** Multiple Linear Regression Coefficients of EI Subscales in Predicting Student Academic Success (CGPA) (*n*=400)

Variables	B	$\beta$	SE	T	p-Value	95% CI for B
(Constant)	23.05	—	3.22	7.16	<0.001	16.72, 29.38

Perception of Emotions	0.89	0.43	0.13	6.85	<0.001	0.63,1.15 0.63,1.15
Managing Own Emotions	0.24	0.50	0.04	6.00	<0.001	0.16,0.32 0.16,0.32
Managing Other Emotions	0.87	0.44	0.14	6.21	<0.001	0.59,1.15 0.59,1.15
Utilization of Emotions	0.16	0.40	0.06	2.67	0.008	-

**Note:** CI= Confidence Interval

## DISCUSSION

The study explored that there was a strong and positive relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance among nursing students in a nursing institute in Pakistan ( $r=0.74$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). These findings support the past studies in various fields of discipline. In a study conducted by Fillipova and Bialov, students with greater emotional intelligence are positively associated with academic success, which led to the conclusion that they have a stronger ability to cope with stress, maintain their motivation, and actively engage in the learning environment [17]. Additionally, the current results match research held on students in Pakistan by Suleman *et al.* which revealed that EI has a positive effect on academic performance [15]. The experiment has shown that those students with better scores in the parameters of emotional intelligence (EI) showed better competence in the handling of academic stress and achieved higher academic results compared to those with lower EI scores. Ahmed *et al.* also indicated that EI has a substantial impact on the educational achievement of Pakistani university students, especially when it comes to the field where interpersonal communication needs to be frequent [18]. Thus, this data incriminates the role of EI as an important factor of academic success in the discussed context. The results of the current study indicate that the EI training should be integrated into the nursing curricula in connection with the improvements of the academic results of the students and their preparation to face the upcoming professional life challenges. Moreover, the paper has explored how EI subscale variables contribute to the academic achievement of undergraduate Pakistani nursing students as indicated by cumulative grade point average (CGPA). The results also indicate that EI is a strong predictor of academic success as it explains 25% of the variation in the academic performance in CGPA ( $R^2 = 0.25$ ). All four subscales of EI reported statistically significant correlation with CGPA. The subscale that measured the perceptions connected to the emotion presented a significant positive contribution to predictive outcomes of school participation, which reinforces the importance of the ability of students to both effectively perceive and understand emotions in themselves and others. Similar findings were cited by Rehman *et al.* which showed that

teenagers who possess better skills of emotion perception have greater adaptability to the affective needs in academic settings [19]. When the ability to perceive emotions is improved, the learning and problem-solving capacity of an individual will be increased, thus resulting in excellent academic performance [20, 21]. This leads to the need to integrate emotional awareness training in the learning programmes to complement the academic success that students are exposed to by preparing them with skills to adapt, thus enhancing the learning process and overall performance. Similarly, the EI subscale of emotional self-regulation and academic success was significantly correlated. This finding conforms to the findings of the literature available internationally, including an investigation carried out by MacCann *et al.* who stressed the importance of self-regulation in academic settings [22]. Possession of emotional self-regulation skills enables students to enhance concentration, minimise stress, and become more motivated, therefore, positively impacting academic achievements [15]. The competencies are particularly applicable to the Pakistani case, considering cultural and social constraints of the students of the country where the Russian language is studied, as was demonstrated by Ramadan *et al.* [23]. These findings are consistent with the works of Christianson, who found that high performance in academic and clinical zones and the ability of nursing students to handle emotion showed a positive correlation. The experience gained over time suggests that interpersonal skills might be developed to enhance the group performance and academic outcomes of nursing programmes [12]. The ability to react to the feelings of other people has also been identified as a key predictor of school success and interpersonal skills in the educational environment, where teamwork and negotiation skills are vital. A high degree of expertise in manoeuvring the feelings of peers can lead to improved relationship aspects within the group and conflict management, which are all vital in the achievement of excellence in nursing institutions where teamwork is at the core [24]. The research conducted by Saeed *et al.* and Talman *et al.* proves the idea that nursing students who possess strong skills in handling the emotions of others have a high standard of success in educational and clinical settings [25, 26]. In addition, the subscale which identified positive use of emotions had a positive relationship with the academic performance of nursing students. The same finding agrees with the earlier research, which postulates that the ability to harness emotions positively enhances the ability to make judgments and come up with new ways of approaching problem-solving. Excellence in academics is primarily based on competencies, and this fact is supported by past studies [27, 28]. Siddiqui supposed that



when students are trained to apply their emotions in a learning context, they will have a better chance of coming up with new solutions to the thorny problems, which will improve their academic performance [29]. Overall, such findings can be compared with the existing literature regarding the relationship between EI and academic performance, not only throughout the world, but also in the Pakistani context. The results of the research are consistent with other studies that were done previously, which indicate that emotional intelligence, particularly subscales, plays a very important role in predicting academic success among nursing students in Pakistan. The facts show that the subsequent advancement of emotional intelligence (EI) can be a strategic move towards the facilitation of academic success in the sphere of nursing education. Another example, which should be investigated in future studies, is the ability to change the academic performance based on EI and test the interventions applied to develop EI skills in nursing students, which will allow the development of more effective educational activities to improve academic and professional development.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study highlights the crucial role of emotional intelligence (EI) in predicting the academic achievement of undergraduate nursing students in Pakistan. The results indicate that those with higher levels of emotional intelligence, namely, in the domains of emotional perception, emotional management (both self and others), and the utilization of emotions, tend to have improved academic success, as assessed by their CGPA. Integrating emotional intelligence (EI) development into nursing education is crucial because it enhances students' ability to manage stress, collaborate effectively, and overcome the challenges of academic and clinical settings. Considering the specific cultural and socioeconomic influences in Pakistan, promoting EI among nursing students might have the dual benefit of enhancing their academic performance and equipping them with the necessary emotional skills required in the healthcare field.

## Authors Contribution

Conceptualization: SB

Methodology: SB, SK, AJ

Formal analysis: SB, SK

Writing review and editing: SB, SK, AJ, AG, KP

All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

## Conflicts of Interest

All the authors declare no conflict of interest.

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