

Academic Achievement through the Lens of Emotional Intelligence

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Abstract

Emotional intelligence (EI) has garnered significant attention in educational psychology as a potential predictor of academic performance. This article examines the relationship between EI and academic success, integrating findings from various books and scholarly journals. The article explores how emotional intelligence influences cognitive processes, motivation, and social interactions, all of which contribute to academic achievement. Key findings suggest that higher levels of EI correlate with better academic outcomes, providing insights for educators and policymakers to incorporate EI training into curricula. This comprehensive review underscores the importance of emotional intelligence in fostering academic success and overall personal development.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Academic Performance, Cognitive Processes, Motivation, Social Interactions

Introduction

The concept of emotional intelligence (EI) has revolutionised our understanding of human psychology and behaviour. Introduced by Salovey and Mayer (1990) and popularised by Goleman in his groundbreaking book *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* (1995). According to Goleman, EI refers to the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and utilize emotions effectively. This article delves into the relationship between EI and academic

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performance, reviewing evidence from various scholarly sources to highlight the impact of EI on students' academic success. Goleman (1995) argues that EI, which includes skills such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, can be more important than traditional intelligence (IQ) in achieving success and happiness.

Emotions are described as physiological and psychological responses that drive actions and are critical to understanding human behaviour. The Emotional Learning System provides a comprehensive framework for understanding and managing emotions, integrating insights from both cognitive and experiential minds. Its systematic approach to developing emotional intelligence through steps like self-assessment, self-awareness, and self-improvement is commendable, promoting reflective and intentional behaviours over reactive ones. The emphasis on learning styles—auditory, visual, and kinesthetic—and tailored strategies like self-directed coaching, emotional mentoring, and active imagination caters to diverse learners.

The ability to think at a high level is essential for students to master because it encourages their motivation to critically evaluate every problem. Learning motivation and emotional intelligence are factors that determine students' desire or drive to achieve their goals (Misliyanti, Nurhayati, & Taiyeb, 2024). Solving problems and making wise decisions using both thoughts and feelings, or logic and intuition, is part of what we refer to as emotional intelligence (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

A learning process aims to achieve specific outcomes ideally (Siburian et al., 2019). Education in a country can create, produce, and guide individuals who can compete with the progress of the times and possess not only intellectual intelligence but also emotional and spiritual intelligence that benefits themselves, their families, society, and the country (Yachsen, Syarif, & Hamzah, 2019). According to academics, educational success needs to be measured to be understood. It is not solely determined by students' grades, as seen on report cards or diplomas, but can also be known as a standard measure of achievement or success in the cognitive field (Siburian et al., 2019).

Defining Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is the capacity to be aware of, control, and express one's emotions and to handle interpersonal relationships

judiciously and empathetically (Surana, 2021). Emotional intelligence encompasses several competencies and skills, broadly categorized into four main areas: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management (Goleman, 1995). These competencies enable individuals to navigate the complex interplay of emotions in various aspects of life, including academic environments. Salovey and Mayer (1990) define emotional intelligence as a subset of social intelligence involving the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions.

According to Goleman (1995), there are five fundamental aspects of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-management, empathy, motivation, and social skills. These elements are defined as follows:

Self-Awareness: Emotional intelligence in the workplace begins with the individual becoming self-aware. As Socrates advised, "Know thyself!"

Self-Management: With increased self-awareness, you can maintain composure and direct your behaviour toward achieving positive goals.

Motivation: This refers to the ability to pursue goals with energy and persistence. It involves intrinsic drive to continue improving oneself and the organization.

Empathy: This involves setting aside your own agenda to genuinely understand what someone else is feeling.

Social Skills: Social skills are essential for effectively guiding and influencing people. They are highly valued in the workplace as they lead to better communication and job performance.

These attributes can be taught, learned, and practiced to enhance your emotional intelligence (EI). These elements are crucial for all individuals. Students engaged in the learning process are often driven by the desire for success, which is reflected in positive learning outcomes. Effective learning outcomes are closely tied to the motivation that fuels students' desire for growth. Motivation plays a crucial role in shaping students' learning achievements, influencing them both directly and indirectly. It can drive attitudes and effect changes in these attitudes. Without motivation, individuals are unlikely to participate actively in learning activities.

Goleman (1995) suggests that emotional intelligence should be taught in schools systematically, highlighting its importance in children's lives. He notes that this initiative has been tested in more than 100 schools, leading to a decrease in antisocial behaviour, an increase in prosocial behaviour, and an improvement in academic performance.

“...it facilitates our capacity for resilience, motivation, communication, and our ability to read and navigate a plethora of social situations and conflicts. Emotional intelligence matters...”
(Surana, 2021, p. 21).

As we discuss emotional intelligence, it is helpful to understand what it is not. Surana (2021) notes that emotional intelligence is not agreeableness, nor is it optimism or happiness. It is neither calmness nor motivation. While emotions are natural and universal, emotional intelligence develops over time. It is cultivated as one becomes part of society and is acquired through life experiences or the processes of civilization. Emotional intelligence is quite different from emotional well-being. While emotional intelligence enhances the ability to understand and regulate emotions, emotional well-being is about maintaining a positive mood and high self-esteem (Surana, 2021).

The advantages of emotional intelligence are extensive for both personal and professional achievements. It is a fundamental skill in numerous careers and can significantly enhance success in both academic and professional settings (Surana, 2021). Students with high emotional intelligence are likely to find it easier to express their emotions, act effectively, stay self-motivated, maintain discipline, and exercise strong self-control (Goleman, 2006). Conversely, students with low emotional intelligence may act impulsively or behave in ways that are not aligned with their thoughts (Sk & Halder, 2020). Research conducted by Misliyanti, Nurhayati, and Taiyeb (2024) indicates that learning motivation and emotional intelligence can influence relationships or correlations in training higher-order thinking skills in biology learning. The high-level thinking skills students possess can be a factor in advancing education in the 21st century.

Theoretical Framework

To understand the influence of EI on academic performance, it is essential to consider the theoretical frameworks that underpin these constructs. The Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) is one of the most widely used measures of EI. It assesses four branches: perceiving emotions, using emotions to facilitate

thought, understanding emotions, and managing emotions (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2002). These branches provide a comprehensive view of how EI can influence cognitive and emotional processes in academic settings.

Emotional Intelligence and Cognitive Processes

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to perceive, utilize, comprehend, and manage both one's own emotions and those of others to effectively address problems and regulate behaviour. Emotional intelligence significantly impacts cognitive processes that are critical for academic success. According to research by Mayer, Caruso, and Salovey (1999), individuals with high EI are better at problem-solving and decision-making, as they can manage their emotions and reduce cognitive interference from stress and anxiety. Furthermore, EI facilitates improved memory retention and recall by regulating emotional responses that can disrupt cognitive functions (Rivers, Brackett, Salovey, & Mayer, 2007).

Historically, emotions and cognition were seen as separate, and even conflicting, components of the human mind. However, recent scientific research demonstrates that emotions significantly impact cognitive processes, and finding a balance between cognition and emotion may be the most effective approach for adapting to environmental and social contexts (Ekman, 1989; Lazarus, 1991; Damasio, 1994; LeDoux, 1996; Keltner & Haidt, 2001; Barrett, 2013). Emotional intelligence (EI) is a concept developed over the past 30 years to bridge the gap between emotion and cognition (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Mayer and Salovey (1997) defined this concept as “the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth” (Mayer & Salovey, 1997, p. 3-31).

Motivation and Emotional Intelligence

Motivation is a critical determinant of academic performance, and EI plays a crucial role in sustaining motivation. Students with high EI are more likely to set realistic goals, remain persistent in the face of challenges, and maintain a positive attitude toward learning (Schutte et al., 1998). Goleman (1995) emphasizes that self-motivation, a component of EI, drives individuals to achieve long-term goals by fostering resilience and optimism.

Nieto-Carracedo, Gómez-Iñiguez, Tamayo, & Igartua (2024) discuss that emotionally intelligent students tend to have higher levels of motivation, which in turn predicts the use of better learning strategies and ultimately leads to academic achievement. These indirect effects support the first hypothesis: the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement is not direct but is serially mediated by emotional, motivational, and cognitive factors. Specifically, only motivation (value) served as a distinct mediator in the influence of EI on achievement. The relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement is not direct but is mediated by motivational and cognitive factors. For the third hypothesis, self-regulated learning, both the emotional components and cognitive factors, mediated the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement.

Emotional Intelligence and Social Interactions

Social interactions are integral to the learning process, and EI plays a pivotal role in shaping these interactions. Students with high EI are more adept at understanding and managing social cues, leading to better relationships with peers and teachers (Brackett, Rivers, & Salovey, 2011). These positive relationships, in turn, create a supportive learning environment that enhances academic performance. Emotional intelligence (EI) as a concept is derived from the belief that intelligence is not solely determined by cognitive ability but also by social competence (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Salovey and Mayer's (1990) work emphasizes the significance of emotions in shaping social interactions and cognitive processes, which are crucial for academic achievement.

Emotional intelligence is closely linked to academic success, as emotionally intelligent students are more likely to build positive relationships with peers and teachers, leading to increased motivation and better learning outcomes. Bar-On (2006) highlighted the importance of emotional and social competencies in academic performance, suggesting that students with higher EI are more likely to succeed academically. Goleman (1995) supports this view, stating that emotional intelligence contributes to academic success by fostering social skills, empathy, and motivation.

Emotional Intelligence and Academic Performance

Numerous studies have established a positive correlation between EI and academic performance. Students with high EI tend to have better academic outcomes, as they can manage stress, stay motivated, and interact effectively with others (Brackett, Rivers, & Salovey, 2011). For example, a study by Parker et al. (2004) found that EI was a significant predictor of academic success in university students, even after controlling for cognitive ability and personality traits.

Brackett, Rivers, and Salovey (2011) suggest that high levels of emotional intelligence enable students to manage stress effectively, maintain a positive attitude, and remain motivated, which are crucial for academic success. Furthermore, emotionally intelligent students are more likely to engage in self-regulation, a critical factor in academic achievement (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999).

Brackett, Rivers, and Salovey (2011) suggest that emotional intelligence can impact academic performance indirectly through its influence on social interactions and emotional regulation. High EI can help students manage stress, develop positive relationships, and maintain motivation, all of which contribute to better academic outcomes. Students who possess higher EI tend to exhibit more effective stress management strategies, greater self-motivation, and improved relationships with peers and teachers, all of which contribute to academic success.

Furthermore, a study conducted by Parker et al. (2004) found that EI was a significant predictor of academic success in university students, even after controlling for cognitive ability and personality traits. This suggests that EI plays a crucial role in academic achievement, independent of traditional measures of intelligence.

Conclusion

Emotional intelligence is a critical factor in academic performance, influencing cognitive processes, motivation, and social interactions. The evidence reviewed in this article suggests that students with high EI are more likely to succeed academically due to their ability to manage emotions, stay motivated, and build positive relationships. As such, incorporating EI training into educational curricula could be a valuable strategy for enhancing student outcomes.

In conclusion, emotional intelligence is a significant factor in academic performance. The evidence reviewed in this article suggests that

students with high emotional intelligence are more likely to succeed academically due to their ability to manage emotions, stay motivated, and build positive relationships. Emotional intelligence (EI) is a significant predictor of academic success, influencing cognitive processes, motivation, and social interactions. As such, incorporating EI training into educational curricula could be a valuable strategy for enhancing student outcomes. Future research should continue to explore the relationship between EI and academic achievement to better understand how to support students in developing these essential skills.

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