

## Exploring the Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Anxiety in Students: A Comprehensive Review

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### ABSTRACT

Emotional intelligence (EI) plays a crucial role in shaping an individual's mental health, particularly in managing stress and anxiety. This review paper explores the relationship between EI and anxiety, highlighting that high EI can serve as a protective factor against anxiety-related issues. Various psychological theories suggest that individuals with well-developed emotional intelligence are better able to recognize, understand, and regulate their emotions, enabling them to cope effectively with stressful situations. This research paper conducts an in-depth review of existing literature to better understand the nature of this relationship. It analyzes findings from studies conducted on various population groups, such as students, working professionals, and individuals from different socio-economic backgrounds. Research findings consistently indicate a negative correlation between EI and anxiety, meaning that individuals with higher EI generally experience lower anxiety levels. The primary reason for this is their ability to manage emotional distress more effectively, develop resilience, and adopt constructive problem-solving strategies. Additionally, this research paper discusses the role of EI in academic performance, workplace efficiency, and overall mental health, making it essential for both personal and professional domains. Although significant research supports this relationship, some critical gaps remain in the literature. Longitudinal studies are needed to establish a causal relationship. Furthermore, an in-depth examination of variations in the impact of EI across different cultural contexts, genders, and socio-economic groups is necessary. Future research should particularly focus on intervention strategies to enhance EI among students and young professionals, as these groups are more vulnerable to stress-related disorders. The findings of this review make it clear that integrating EI training into educational curricula and workplace mental health programs is imperative. Schools, colleges, and organizations should prioritize the development of EI through structured programs, workshops, and counseling sessions. Moreover, advancements in technology can offer potential solutions, such as AI-driven emotional well-being applications that provide real-time feedback and support to individuals struggling with anxiety. Ultimately, EI emerges as a key determinant in reducing anxiety and improving mental health outcomes. Strengthening EI through education, training, and psychological interventions can significantly contribute to building a mentally resilient society. This review highlights the urgent need to incorporate EI development into

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mainstream psychological and educational practices to reduce anxiety and promote overall well-being.

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The phase of high school and intermediate education is the most important and challenging period in a student's life in terms of mental, academic, and social development. During this time, students go through major changes in their academic, social, and personal lives. At this age, students not only have to make decisions regarding their studies and career but also have to maintain a balance between their emotional and mental well-being. The rapidly changing education system, pressure from board exams, expectations from parents and society, and a competitive environment collectively affect students' mental health.

During this phase, most students experience distress, like anxiety being quite common. Anxiety is a natural psychological state, but its prolonged presence significantly affects students' academic performance, social relationships, and overall personality development. On the other hand, Emotional intelligence (EI) is a quality that helps students understand, regulate, and maintain emotional balance in their lives. This ability not only helps them deal with stressful situations but also plays a crucial role in their overall personality development. In today's competitive and rapidly changing society, it has become essential to focus on students' mental health. The race for academic excellence, social comparisons, and uncertainty about the future have put immense pressure on students' mental well-being. Additionally, societal and familial expectations create self-doubt, insecurity, and anxiety in students. In such a situation, understanding the relationship between EI and anxiety is not only important in the field of psychology but also necessary for improving students' mental health.

The objective of this research is to deeply examine the relationship between anxiety and EI among high school and intermediate students. This study will attempt to understand how EI can help students manage anxiety and strengthen their mental health. This research on students' mental health will also be useful for teachers, parents, and policymakers, as it will provide guidance in formulating policies and strategies that address students' emotional and mental needs.

### INTELLIGENCE

The general public's understanding of intelligence is quite different from how psychologists define it. If you observe an intelligent person's behavior, you will find that they have many qualities such as mental alertness, sharpness, the ability to learn quickly, and the ability to understand relationships. According to the Oxford Dictionary, intelligence is the ability to perceive, learn, understand, and acquire knowledge. The early theorists of intelligence also defined it with these qualities.

Alfred Binet was one of the first psychologists to research intelligence. He defined intelligence as the ability to make sound judgments, comprehend well, and present logical reasoning. Wechsler, whose intelligence tests are widely used, defined intelligence in terms of functionality and emphasized its role in adapting to the environment. According to

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Wechsler, intelligence is the overall ability of a person to think rationally, act purposefully, and effectively deal with the environment. Other psychologists, such as Gardner and Sternberg, believe that an intelligent person not only adapts to their environment but also actively changes and improves it.

### **EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE**

EI is an important ability that enables a person to understand, express, and regulate their emotions. In 1990, two renowned American psychologists, Peter Salovey and John Mayer, wrote a detailed article titled *"Emotional Intelligence."* Later, in 1997, they wrote another book, *"What is Emotional Intelligence."* In 1995, Daniel Goleman wrote a very famous book that made the concept of emotional intelligence widely known. This book was titled *"Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ."*

Over time, many definitions of EI have been given. Some of the most popular definitions are as follows:

Mayer & Salovey (1997) defined EI as, "The ability to monitor one's own and other people's emotions, to discriminate between different emotions and label them appropriately, and to use emotional information to guide thinking and behavior."

Goleman (1998) defined EI as, "The capacity to recognise our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships."

Bar-On (1997) defined EI as, "An array of noncognitive capabilities, competencies, and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures."

From these definitions, it is clear that EI is not just about understanding emotions but also about utilizing them positively to make better decisions and handle stressful situations effectively.

EI is important not only for personal success but also for success in the workplace, relationships, and social interactions. A person with high EI is more confident, empathetic, and socially aware. They can build harmony with others and resolve conflicts peacefully. It directly influences an individual's mental and physical health, work efficiency, and relationship quality. Given the complexities of modern life and the rapidly changing environment, EI has become even more important. It serves as a key to maintaining balance in stressful situations, achieving self-satisfaction, and succeeding in various aspects of life.

### **ANXIETY**

Anxiety is a mental state in which a person experiences stress and insecurity. It arises as a response to a specific event, situation, or upcoming challenge. Although anxiety is a common experience, when it becomes excessive or persists for a long time, it can have severe effects on a person's mental and physical health. In today's time, anxiety has become a common mental health issue faced by people of all age groups. This problem becomes even more serious when it is not recognized or managed in time.

There can be several possible causes of anxiety. These include the fear of failure in a task, uncertainty about the future, familial and social pressures, and dissatisfaction with oneself.

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All these factors can affect a person's mental balance and force them to lead a stressful life. The effects of anxiety are not only felt on a mental level but also physically. Common physical symptoms include headaches, fatigue, lack of sleep, increased heart rate, and digestive problems. Talking about mental symptoms, frequent negative thoughts, difficulty in decision-making, lack of self-confidence, and emotional instability are the main ones.

Anxiety can impact every aspect of a person's life. It not only reduces their efficiency but also affects their social and personal relationships. People who live with anxiety for a long time often face problems like isolation, self-doubt, and depression. It can disrupt their daily activities and lower their quality of life.

To understand the meaning of anxiety more clearly, we can study the following definitions; According to the American Psychological Association, "Anxiety is an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts, and physical changes like increased blood pressure."

Anxiety is not the same as fear, but they are often used interchangeably. Anxiety is considered a future-oriented, long-acting response broadly focused on a diffuse threat, whereas fear is an appropriate, present-oriented, and short-lived response to a clearly identifiable and specific threat.

Barlow defined anxiety as, "An uncontrollable, diffuse, unpleasant, and persistent state of negative affect, characterized by apprehensive anticipation regarding unpredictable and unavoidable future danger, and accompanied by physiological symptoms of tension and a constant state of heightened vigilance."

### **THE LITERATURE REVIEW**

There are significant relationships between EI, loneliness, and anxiety among university students. There is a positive relationship between loneliness and anxiety, indicating that loneliness can increase anxiety. In contrast, there is a negative relationship between loneliness and EI [Kesler et al., 2024]. There is a negative relationship between test anxiety and EI, and a positive relationship between EI and academic performance [Rauf et al., 2024]. Individuals with lower anxiety levels are better able to recognize and regulate their emotions, which enhances their EI. Individuals with high EI also have better social skills [Ramos-Galarza et al., 2024]. There is a strong positive correlation between EI and all dimensions of adjustment [Saini & Tyagi, 2024]. Among individuals with low and high levels of EI, there is a positive relationship between EI and anxiety. Among individuals with moderate levels of EI, EI and anxiety are negatively related [Thomas et al., 2023]. High anxiety sensitivity directly affects students' exhaustion and effectiveness levels [Gazquez et al., 2023]. Self-confidence is positively associated with all aspects of EI. Self-confidence improves performance, whereas physical anxiety reduces performance. Emotional management has a positive effect on performance, but emotion perception has a negative effect on performance [Zoghلامي et al., 2023]. Working women have higher EI scores compared to homemakers, while homemakers score higher on the anxiety scale compared to working women, and there is a strong negative correlation between EI and anxiety [Ali, 2023]. There is a negative relationship between EI and anxiety, depression, and stress. Factors of mental health and self-control have a greater impact on anxiety, depression, and stress [Tolsa & Malas, 2022]. Adolescents with high EI experience lower communication anxiety. There is a negative and significant relationship between EI and communication

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anxiety [Ulva et al., 2022]. There is a negative relationship between EI and anxiety. This means that adolescents with higher EI tend to have lower levels of anxiety. High EI helps adolescents cope better with stressful situations and improves their mental health [Beydokti et al., 2021]. There is a negative correlation between EI and anxiety among young people, meaning that individuals with higher EI experience lower anxiety. There is a significant difference in EI and anxiety based on gender. Males have higher EI, which helps them cope with anxiety, whereas females lag slightly behind in this aspect [Kumar et al., 2021]. Among female undergraduate students, EI is negatively correlated with academic anxiety, whereas academic anxiety is not related to EI among male undergraduate students [Devi, 2021]. There is a significant difference in anxiety and EI between professional and non-professional college students. However, no significant difference in anxiety and EI is found based on gender. There is a negative correlation between anxiety and EI among professional and non-professional college students, meaning that students with higher EI experience lower anxiety [Prashad, 2020]. Students with higher EI levels experience less academic anxiety, particularly library-related anxiety, whereas students with lower EI levels experience higher library anxiety, which affects their academic performance. This indicates a significant correlation between EI, library anxiety, and academic performance [Jan et al., 2020]. There is a negative relationship between EI and social anxiety. Specifically, components such as emotion evaluation and expression, emotion regulation, and emotional productivity play a supportive role in reducing social anxiety. Mental health components such as anxiety and insomnia are positively correlated with social anxieties [Dehghan et al., 2020]. Various dimensions of EI are associated with competitive anxiety among student-athletes [Ozrudi et al., 2020]. State-trait anxiety and self-esteem are significantly and negatively correlated, and both types of anxiety are negatively correlated with emotional clarity and mood improvement, whereas trait anxiety is positively correlated with emotional attention [Guil et al., 2019]. There is a negative correlation between EI and test anxiety. Students with higher EI tend to have lower levels of test anxiety [Ahmad et al., 2019]. Both state-trait anxiety and trait anxiety are negatively correlated with EI [Castro-Sanchez et al., 2019]. There is a negative relationship between EI and mental health problems. Specifically, physicians with higher EI experience lower levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. EI can play a crucial role in preventing mental health issues, and incorporating it into medical education can be an effective strategy for its improvement [Kousha et al., 2018]. Students with low EI and high rumination experience more anxiety, whereas students with high EI do not show a significant relationship between rumination and anxiety. EI can act as a protective factor that reduces the link between rumination and anxiety. It helps in managing students' mental health, particularly anxiety, and reduces their psychological distress [Liu & Ren, 2018]. There is a significant negative correlation between EI and anxiety symptoms among students. Those with higher EI exhibit fewer anxiety symptoms [Taheri et al., 2018]. Among adolescents, EI is significantly and negatively correlated with test anxiety. Adolescents with higher EI experience lower levels of test anxiety [Tom & Ansia, 2017]. There is a negative correlation between EI and anxiety, meaning that students with higher EI experience lower anxiety. There is no significant difference in EI based on gender, but male students tend to have slightly higher levels of anxiety. Students with higher EI respond better to stressful situations and experience less anxiety [Bhat & Farooq, 2017]. Community health center nurses suffer from high levels of anxiety, and their EI is at a moderate level. Among these nurses, the management of others' emotions is positively related to social anxiety, while the utilization of emotions is negatively related to social anxiety [Wang et al., 2016]. All components of EI have a significant and negative correlation with anxiety, except for empathy, which does not have a significant relationship with anxiety. Enhancing EI can

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improve students' mental health and reduce their anxiety. Organizing EI-based workshops in universities can be beneficial for this purpose [Rajabpour, 2014]. There is a negative correlation between test anxiety and EI among high school boys and girls, meaning that students with higher test anxiety tend to have lower EI. However, certain dimensions of EI, such as self-expression, interpersonal relationships, and empathy, do not show a significant relationship with anxiety [Farahati et al., 2011]. A significant negative relationship exists between EI and anxiety symptoms. Components of EI, such as emotional clarity and emotion regulation, are also negatively associated with anxiety symptoms. Emotional clarity and emotion regulation can predict anxiety symptoms, and higher EI, particularly in these areas, can help reduce anxiety symptoms among students [Ali et al., 2011]. Among individuals with generalized social phobia, there is a negative correlation between the intensity of social anxiety and experiential EI, indicating that those with higher social anxiety have weaker abilities to understand and manage emotions [Jacobs et al., 2008]. There is a significant correlation between EI and school-related anxiety. All components of EI, including self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, and communication skills, have a significant impact on school anxiety [Miri & Akbari, 2007]. EI also strongly correlates with social interaction anxiety, meaning that individuals with higher EI experience less anxiety in social situations. However, no significant relationship has been found between EI and performance-related anxiety. EI plays a crucial role in social anxiety and interpersonal adjustment [Summerfeldt et al., 2006].

### ***Research Gap***

In the field of social and educational research, numerous significant studies have explored the relationship between EI and anxiety. However, when focusing specifically on high school and intermediate students, a crucial research gap becomes evident. Most studies have primarily examined young adults, university students, or professional groups, while the relationship between EI and anxiety among high school and intermediate students remains relatively underexplored. This age group faces various physical, mental, and emotional challenges associated with adolescence, making the connection between EI and anxiety particularly important. Stress and anxiety are common experiences for these students, but understanding how their EI influences these challenges is an area with limited research.

In a culturally diverse society like India, this research gap becomes even more significant. Most studies have been conducted in foreign contexts, which differ greatly from India's cultural, educational, and social background. Indian students' emotional and mental well-being is deeply influenced by family values, societal pressures, and academic expectations. As a result, there is a distinct lack of research focusing on EI and anxiety among students within the Indian context. Additionally, factors such as students' rural or urban backgrounds, their socio-cultural environment, and their family dynamics have not been sufficiently studied.

In terms of gender differences, many questions remain unanswered. Some studies have highlighted differences in EI and anxiety levels between male and female students, but these differences have not been specifically analyzed among high school and intermediate students. It is essential to understand how different components of EI, such as self-awareness, empathy, and social skills, impact anxiety levels in adolescent boys and girls. Moreover, the effect of these gender-based differences on students' academic achievement and mental health remains unclear.

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Furthermore, the various components of EI, such as self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills, have generally been analyzed from a broad perspective. Each of these components may have distinct effects on different types of anxiety, such as test anxiety, social anxiety, or generalized anxiety. However, detailed studies examining these nuances remain scarce.

Family background and socio-economic status can also deeply influence this relationship. Factors such as parental education, family structure, and home environment play a crucial role in shaping adolescents' EI and anxiety levels. However, comprehensive studies on these aspects are lacking. It is important to determine whether a supportive family environment enhances students' EI and reduces their anxiety and, if so, how this occurs an unanswered question in existing research.

Another critical aspect is how EI and anxiety evolve over time. It is unclear whether EI and anxiety levels remain stable during adolescence or fluctuate. Moreover, the extent to which an increase in EI can effectively reduce anxiety is yet to be determined.

In the context of test anxiety, it is still uncertain whether EI solely helps in reducing anxiety or also improves students' study skills, time management, and exam preparation strategies. Some studies suggest that EI may act as a protective factor for mental health. However, it is also essential to understand its effectiveness among adolescents and whether it can be enhanced through targeted interventions. There has been insufficient research on the effectiveness of school-based programs and workshops aimed at improving adolescents' EI. It is also noteworthy that the factors influencing the relationship between EI and anxiety, such as social support, self-esteem, and access to mental health services, have not been adequately studied. Furthermore, most studies on this topic have focused on quantitative research, while there is a clear lack of qualitative research. Quantitative research relies on statistical and numerical analysis, which may overlook subtle and deeper psychological aspects. Qualitative research, which includes in-depth interviews, experiential studies, and behavioral analysis, is essential for gaining a more comprehensive and profound understanding of this subject.

Thus, there is a significant research gap in understanding the relationship between EI and anxiety among high school and intermediate students across various dimensions.

### **RESULTS AND CONCLUSION**

The findings of this study indicate a significant negative correlation between EI and anxiety among students, meaning that as EI increases, anxiety levels decrease. EI encompasses key abilities such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and interpersonal effectiveness, which promote stress management and emotional stability. Students with high EI are more capable of recognizing their emotions, understanding their causes, and adopting effective strategies to cope with academic pressure and personal challenges. As a result, they are less likely to experience severe anxiety, which could otherwise negatively impact their focus, academic performance, and social interactions.

The study also highlights that anxiety can manifest in various forms, such as excessive worry, nervousness, lack of confidence, and even physical symptoms like headaches or fatigue. However, students with strong EI handle stressful situations in healthier ways, such as seeking social support, practicing mindfulness, or adopting problem-solving behaviors.

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Additionally, EI fosters resilience among students, enabling them to manage failures, difficulties, and high-pressure situations without excessive anxiety. Some studies suggest that there are gender-based differences in the relationship between EI and anxiety, with males generally demonstrating better emotional regulation, which may result in lower anxiety levels. However, this relationship has been observed consistently across different age groups and educational levels, from high school to university.

Thus, it can be concluded that EI plays a crucial role in reducing anxiety among students, as it provides essential emotional and psychological coping strategies. The ability to recognize, understand, and manage emotions not only reduces stress but also enhances confidence, decision-making ability, and mental health. Considering the increasing academic competition, peer pressure, and social expectations, promoting EI among students has become extremely important. Schools, colleges, and parents should adopt structured training programs, psychological counseling, and practical activities such as mindfulness, meditation, and communication skills workshops to foster EI development. If EI is integrated into the academic curriculum, it can help students become more self-reliant, improve their academic performance, and lead a healthy, balanced life. Future research should focus on developing practical interventions that strengthen EI and reduce anxiety so that students can face academic and life challenges with confidence and emotional stability.

### *Future Prospects of EI and Mental Well-Being*

The conclusions of this study make it clear that there is a significant negative relationship between EI and anxiety. Individuals with high EI tend to have lower levels of anxiety, indicating that EI plays a crucial role in maintaining mental health. However, this field is still full of possibilities for extensive research, and various aspects need to be explored in greater depth. In the future, broader and more diverse research can be conducted on this subject. It is necessary to analyze this relationship based on different age groups, educational backgrounds, and cultural diversities to understand whether this effect is universally applicable to everyone or if there are variations due to different social and economic conditions. For example, a study can be conducted to determine whether the impact of EI and anxiety differs among students living in rural and urban areas.

Additionally, concrete steps need to be taken to develop EI within the education system. Mental health awareness programs, workshops, and counseling sessions can be made mandatory in schools and colleges to help students recognize and manage their emotions. At the same time, teachers and parents also need to be made aware of this subject so that they can take better care of students' mental health. In this era of technological advancement, the use of digital platforms and artificial intelligence-based mental health applications could also be an area full of possibilities. Various online tools and mobile applications can be developed to help students measure and enhance their EI. For example, smartphone applications that automatically analyze users' behavior and emotional responses while providing personalized suggestions could offer a new approach to mental health management.

Moreover, it is essential that future research examines whether interventions designed to enhance EI are genuinely effective in reducing anxiety. Long-term studies should be conducted to assess whether implementing EI training programs in schools and colleges leads to improvements in students' mental health and whether these effects persist in their professional and personal lives. Another crucial research direction could be studying the

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impact of gender, family background, and socio-economic factors. Do EI and anxiety have different relationships for boys and girls? Is this effect stronger or weaker for students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds? Finding answers to these questions will not only lead to a deeper understanding but also help in creating better policy interventions. Ultimately, the findings of this study could have significant implications for the education system, mental health professionals, and policymakers. If EI is developed as an essential skill within the education system, it will not only help in reducing anxiety but also enhance students' self-acceptance, self-confidence, and social skills.

In the future, necessary steps should be taken to make mental health more inclusive in the mainstream education system. This can include incorporating mental health curricula, counseling services, and group discussions in schools and colleges, enabling students to better understand their emotions and effectively deal with mental health issues such as anxiety. More research and efforts are required in this direction to develop a balanced education system that focuses not only on academic achievements but also prioritizes mental and emotional development. Until the education system recognizes EI as an essential skill and takes active steps to develop it, tackling issues like anxiety effectively will remain a challenge. Through further research and interventions in this field, the establishment of a mentally healthy society will become possible.

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