

**Comparative Study**

## **Emotional Intelligence in University Students: A Comparative Study**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Emotional intelligence is referred to as an individual's ability to perceive, understand their own and others' emotions and to regulate them effectively. It is helpful to new college students as well as old ones. It can help them to face adjustment issues, identity issues, workload, maintaining relationships, work pressure, career-related issues, managing personal and social life, etc. This study aims to compare the emotional intelligence between undergraduate and postgraduate students and the two genders (males and females). The hypothesis is assumed to be a significant difference between them. For this, the data was collected from a sample of 120 young adults aged 19-25 years, thirty of each gender (male and female) at undergraduate and postgraduate levels from Amity University, Lucknow Campus, using a stratified sampling method. The questionnaire implemented on the sample was a Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (BEIS-10) consisting of 10 items. The responses were gathered by approaching students on the campus. The data was organized in an Excel file and analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 20. Descriptive statistics and t-test were administered on the collected data. Findings indicated no significant difference between undergraduate and postgraduate students, although postgraduate students had a slightly higher mean than undergraduate students. Between males and females, again no significant difference was found. In the undergraduate sample, males had a slightly higher mean, and in the postgraduate sample, females had a slightly higher mean. These findings suggest that gender, age, and academic experience do not necessarily play a role in increasing emotional intelligence.

**Keywords:** *Emotional Intelligence, Undergraduate Students, Postgraduate Students*

In this Era of Artificial Intelligence, college students are facing many challenges in their lives, such as emotional regulation issues, academic-work pressure, peer pressure, managing interpersonal relationships, stressors of life, emotional exhaustion, burnout, etc. College students, whether they are under post-graduation or under-graduation, face difficulties in managing these life challenges, and here is the effective role of EI, i.e., Emotional Intelligence comes, which plays a vital role in understanding and managing one's own and others' emotions in every aspect of life. Emotional intelligence could be more efficient than general intelligence for a successful life (Goleman, 1995).

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Students who transit from school to university face adjustment issues, identity issues, work load, maintaining relationships, etc. Whereas, under post-graduation students face challenges like research work pressure, career-related issues, managing personal and social life, etc. For both PG and UG students, EI can be more useful in managing these challenges. Although EI develops with age and experience, depending on the individual, now here the question arises, are there any differences in Emotional Intelligence between students under Post-Graduation and Under- Graduation?

Emotional Intelligence refers to an individual's ability to perceive, understand, our own and others' emotions and to regulate them effectively (Mayer, Roberts & Barsade, 2008). An emotionally intelligent person has better decision-making capacities (Alzoubi & Aziz, 2021), a greater level of achievement power in academics, an ability to effectively manage stressful situations, shows empathy, which has a vital role in the overall success of an individual's life (Razzaq, Zadeh & Aftab, 2016).

### COMPONENTS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

The early foundational work on emotional intelligence was done by Daniel Goleman, who gave the concept of five key components that enhance emotional intelligence: Self-Awareness, Social Skills, Self-Regulation, Motivation, and Empathy (Goleman, 2005), which can be helpful in a student's life.

**Self-Awareness:** When we are self-aware, we can better identify our potential and limitations. It involves awareness related to the impact of our own actions, moods and emotions on other people. The ability to identify and interpret our own emotions and how they influence our thoughts, beliefs as well as actions is referred to as Self-Awareness (Drigas & Papoutsi, 2018).

To be a self-aware individual, we must develop skills to recognize our emotions accurately as they appear. By giving attention to our internal feelings, knowing the fluctuations, and recognizing how they impact our behaviours, we manifest as reactions (Cherry, 2023).

College students must enhance their self-awareness by understanding and reasoning with their emotions to identify and recognize them accurately. This will help them deal with their academic and career-related challenges. Individuals with self-awareness usually has awareness of how people perceive them, high self-confidence, self-efficacy, and a good sense of humor (Goleman, 2005).

**Social Skills:** An individual's skill of understanding their own and others' emotions does not matter much until that information is applied effectively in daily interpersonal communications and interactions. This emotional intelligence component plays a vital role in human life (Trigueros et al., 2020).

Social skills include verbal and non-verbal communication skills, skills of persuasion, and active listening skills, which help the person to make deep relationships with other individuals by building a deeper understanding between them and oneself (Cherry, 2023). In a student's life, these social skills are important in the college environment to build relationships with professors and other students and enhance leadership skills in them.

**Self-Regulation:** After being able to understand and recognize emotions, it is also important to regulate and manage our emotions (Drigas & Papoutsi, 2018). This component of

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emotional intelligence means expressing our true emotions in the correct place and time; it does not mean suppressing or hiding our true feelings. Expressing your emotions suitably simply means Self-Regulation (Cherry, 2023).

The students who are skilled in self-regulation are good at handling tense situations and managing conflicts effectively. Also, they tend to adapt well to changes and become flexible in hard situations (Cherry, 2023). Individuals with enhanced skill at regulating their emotions usually had strong traits of conscientiousness (Hampson, Edmonds, Barckley, Goldberg, Dubanoski & Hillier, 2016). They take accountability for what they do and carefully consider the effect of their behaviour on other individuals.

**Motivation:** An individual with high emotional intelligence is passionate about fulfilling their desires and needs. They have intrinsic motivation, which is beyond materialistic things like money, appreciation, acclaim, and fame (Trigueros, Aguilar-Parra, Cangas, Bermejo, Ferrandiz & López-Liria, 2019). These individuals experience a state of flow; they get fully engrossed in the activity that they are doing and seek those outstanding moments (Cherry, 2023).

Students who are adequately motivated are oriented towards taking realistic actions. They plan and set objectives, strive to achieve high, and always look forward to developing themselves. They are good at taking initiatives and are usually committed to their objectives (Cherry, 2023).

**Empathy:** It is another skill or component of emotional intelligence. The potential to understand other individuals' feelings and emotions and to understand what they are going through from their perspective is referred to as Empathy (Drigas & Papoutsis, 2018). It simply means being able to understand another individual's emotional experience and acknowledge their emotional states (Cherry, 2023).

This ability to be empathetic plays a significant role in a student's life because it enables them to understand the power dynamics that can help in interpersonal relationships which they build in their college life. It is helpful for guiding student's daily life interactions with another individual.

Individuals with high empathetic ability can understand how this determines their actions and emotions because they also possess the ability to recognize which side holds more power in a relationship. This sense helps in the better interpretation of the situation influenced by power dynamics (Cherry, 2023).

The five key skills of emotional intelligence can help in better decision-making in life, academic achievements, and establishing good relations with others. They also enhance their leadership skills, self-knowledge, self-control and stress management (Cherry, 2023; Gilar-Corbi, PozoRico, Sánchez & Castejón, 2019; Reshetnikov et al., 2020).

### BAR-ON MODEL OF EMOTIONAL-SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE

There is another model of emotional intelligence, which is the Bar-On model of emotional social intelligence. This model suggests that there is a cross-interconnection of emotional-social intelligence in which there are set of emotional social skills that shape how best we can understand and express ourselves, daily life-related challenges like coping, establishing,

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maintaining interpersonal relationships and the use of emotional content efficiently (Bar-On, 2006).

This model consists of five major components. Each component has subcomponents and skills that can be helpful in the overall success of life (Bar-On, 2006). The five components include:

1. **Intrapersonal** component includes self-awareness, self-regard, independence and assertiveness. Self-awareness refers to the identification and understanding of our feelings and emotions and their impact on our thoughts and actions; Self-regard is related to self-acceptance and confidence within ourselves; Independence is related to autonomy, which is making sound decisions without depending on others, and becoming self-sufficient; Assertiveness is related to taking a stand for ourselves, expressing feelings and needs confidently in efficient ways, and saying no when needed (Bar-On, 2006).
2. **Interpersonal** component includes interpersonal relationships, social responsibility, and empathy. Interpersonal Relationships include the establishment of positive relationships and effectively maintaining them; Social responsibility is related to taking accountability for our actions, acting responsibly and showing concern for others for their betterment; Empathy refers to acknowledging and understanding other individuals' feelings and emotions from their perspective, which helps them to better understand their emotional states (Bar-On, 2006).
3. **Adaptability** component includes flexibility, reality testing and problem-solving. Flexibility helps with better adjustment to thoughts, emotions, and behaviors in challenging situations; Reality testing assists us to see the situation in a sorted way, not in distortion due to our emotions; Problem-solving helps in recognizing and resolving our and other issues in effective ways (Bar-On, 2006).
4. **Stress-Management** component includes impulse control and stress tolerance. Impulse control helps an individual manage underlying sudden urges or reactions and to manage emotions, which is helpful in better handling tense situations and preventing their consequences; Stress tolerance refers to the potential to stay calm and cope with challenging situations. This component is important in college life because, on a daily basis, students encounter some sort of difficult situation and emotional intelligence helps to cope with them in a healthier way (Bar-On, 2006).
5. **General Mood** component consists of happiness, optimism and a positive outlook. Optimism helps to stay positive and view difficulties in a positive outlook, as students meet difficulties in daily life, they need to stay optimistic; Being happy comes with a feeling of enjoyment, by which the students can maintain their enthusiasm and enjoy doing activities (Bar-On, 2006).

### *Rationale of the Study*

Emotional intelligence is helpful to new college students as well as old ones. It can help them face adjustment issues, identity issues, workload, maintaining relationships, work pressure, career-related issues, managing personal and social life, etc. As such, it is important to understand the dimensions that play a role in influencing emotional intelligence. By understanding those influences, individuals can work on themselves, their emotions, and their management in day-to-day life. This developed the area of interest as it focuses on the overall functioning of an individual in personal, academic, and professional domains of life, especially in emerging adulthood because as humans we are evolving with time and thereby our ability to appraise, regulate, and utilization of emotions in fostering a healthy relationship with ourselves and others comes into place.

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Through previous studies, it has been found that emotional intelligence varies with both age and gender. There have been studies that found, in some samples, that males had higher emotional intelligence than females while other studies found the opposite in other samples. Meanwhile, there have been studies that found no difference in emotional intelligence between males and females. Similarly, there have been studies that relate age and academic experience to emotional intelligence. This discrepancy allows for a knowledge gap as different samples may have different results. Therefore, this study is on a new sample to find the relationship between gender, age, and academic experience together with emotional intelligence.

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### *Objectives of the Study*

- To compare the emotional intelligence of male and female students at the undergraduate level.
- To compare the emotional intelligence of male and female students at the postgraduate level.
- To compare the emotional intelligence among undergraduate and postgraduate students.

#### *Hypothesis*

- **H1:** There would be a significant difference in emotional intelligence between male and female undergraduate students.
- **H2:** There would be a significant difference in emotional intelligence between male and female postgraduate students.
- **H3:** There would be a significant difference in emotional intelligence between undergraduate and postgraduate students.

#### *Sample*

The sample comprised 120 young adult participants, thirty of each gender (male and female) at undergraduate and postgraduate levels from Amity University, Lucknow Campus, using the Stratified Sampling Method.

#### *Variable*

Emotional Intelligence which refers to an individual's ability to perceive, understand, our own and others' emotions and to regulate them effectively (Mayer, Roberts & Barsade, 2008).

#### *Research Design*

Ex post facto research design is used to observe the effect of gender, age and academic experience on emotional intelligence.

#### *Tool Used*

##### **BEIS-10 (EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE SCALE)**

A 10-item self-report measure was used to evaluate adults' emotional intelligence (EI). Davies et al. created the BEIS-10 (2010). It is founded on the theoretical framework of Salovey and Mayer (1990), which states that emotionally intelligent people can recognize emotions in others and within themselves, they use emotions to help them think and solve problems, comprehend the meaning of those emotions, and effectively control them. This questionnaire aims to assess the emotional intelligence of university students. The

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participants were supposed to choose one option out of five from a Likert scale that resonated more with them. The total raw score (ranging from 10 to 50) and five sub-scales scores make up the BEIS-10 scores, with higher scores corresponding to higher self-perceived emotional intelligence abilities.

### *Statistical Analysis*

The analysis of data was done using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). For the hypothesis descriptive statistics and parametric t-test were implemented for comparative study.

### *Procedure*

A quantitative approach is used for the comparative study of emotional intelligence between undergraduate and postgraduate students and the two genders (males and females). The data was collected by printed survey forms that contained a standardized scale, i.e., BEIS-10, along with a consent form. All the details about the understanding of the questionnaire and the purpose of the study were clearly mentioned. Participants were chosen by using stratified sampling and were given the self-reporting questionnaire. The responses gathered through data collection were organized and analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). To examine the significant difference between undergraduate and postgraduate students based on two genders (males and females), age, and academic experience, descriptive statistics (mean, SD) and t-test values were used. The statistical significance of the results was determined by interpreting p-values.

## **RESULTS**

Here, the analysis has been undertaken, and based on which we will verify the assumed hypothesis as mentioned in the previous chapter.

**TABLE 1:**

	UG			PG		
	n	M	SD	n	M	SD
<b>Females</b>	30	36.3667	4.40598	30	38.6000	3.55838
<b>Males</b>	30	38.0000	5.46462	30	37.1000	6.06488

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics, such as mean and standard deviation, for emotional intelligence of male and female students at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The sample size taken was 120 (60 of each) undergraduate and postgraduate students, i.e., 30 of each gender (male and female). The mean value for female undergraduates is 36.37 and the standard deviation is 4.41; for male undergraduate students mean value is 38.00 and the standard deviation is 5.47. Similarly, for female postgraduate students, the mean value is 38.60, and the standard deviation is 3.56; for male postgraduate students, the mean value is 37.10, and the standard deviation is 6.06.

**TABLE 2:**

	UG	PG
<b>t</b>	-1.274	1.168
<b>p</b>	0.208	0.249

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It was found that variances were equal for undergraduate males and females. For this here, the Student's t-test was used for interpretation, whose t value is -1.274 and the p-value is 0.208, which is greater than 0.05. This shows no statistically significant difference.

Similarly, it was found that variances were not equal for postgraduate males and females. For this here, the Welch's t-test was used for interpretation, whose t value is 1.168 and p-value is 0.249, which is greater than 0.05. This again shows no statistically significant difference.

**TABLE 3:**

	TOTAL SAMPLE		
	n	M	SD
UG	60	37.1833	4.98979
PG	60	37.8500	4.98753

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics, such as mean and standard deviation, for the emotional intelligence of undergraduate and postgraduate students. The mean value for undergraduate and postgraduate students is 37.18, and the standard deviation is 4.99. Similarly, for postgraduate students, the mean value is 37.8, and the standard deviation is 4.99.

**TABLE 4:**

	TOTAL SAMPLE
t	-0.732
p	0.466

It was found that variances were equal for undergraduate and postgraduate students. For this here the Student's t-test was used for interpretation, whose t value is -0.732 and the p-value is 0.466, which is greater than 0.05. This shows no statistically significant difference.

## DISCUSSION

In the present study, we tried to find whether there is a significant difference in emotional intelligence based on two genders (males and females), age, and academic experience using the BEIS-10 scale. After data analysis through SPSS, the findings emphasize no significant difference in emotional intelligence based on gender, age, and academic experience.

The comparison of the emotional intelligence of undergraduate and postgraduate students based on two genders shows a mean difference of 1.6333 in undergraduate and 1.5000 in postgraduate students between males and females, but states no statistically significant result as the p-value is greater than 0.05 in both cases of comparison. These results are supported by previous studies, which also found no difference in emotional intelligence between males and females (Kumar et al., 2022; Mokhlesi & Patil, 2018; Sethi, 2023). But, there have been studies that have been contradicted by this study (Bhat, 2017; Roy et al., 2021). In the undergraduate sample, the mean of males was higher than females (Chauhan, 2020), and in the postgraduate sample, the mean of females was higher than males (Ali et al., 2021; Singh et al., 2024). Since the findings showed no significant difference, which means both males and females can recognize, comprehend, and have the capacity to control and alter their emotional states including the capacity to correctly read and understand, affect, and control the emotional states of others using both spoken and nonverbal clues through emotional

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support, able to utilize their emotions effectively to improve their problem-solving, critical thinking, and creativity.

The comparison of the emotional intelligence of undergraduate and postgraduate with age and academic experience shows a mean difference of 0.6667 between students, but states no statistically significant result, as the p-value is greater than 0.05. Studies have found that emotional intelligence increases with age (Rao & Komala, 2017; Ravikumar et al., 2017), and our study found a similar trend, as the mean of postgraduate students was higher than undergraduate students, but there was no actual difference between the two samples. Hence, the results reveal that emotional intelligence might be a stable trait for which age and academic experience have no role in increasing emotional intelligence.

### *Limitations*

The sample size for the present study was 120 young adults, due to which the results cannot be generalized to the overall larger population. It was limited to college students of one city with an age group of 19-25 years. And focuses on three factors, i.e., gender, age, and academic experience as determinants of emotional intelligence. Data analysis was done through self-report measures, which led to individual perception mistakes and social desirability bias. There are possibilities that, due to a lack of self-awareness, participants may exaggerate or underestimate their emotional intelligence. The result may be affected by other significant factors that were not taken into account, such as personality traits, family background, and socioeconomic level.

### *Suggestions For Future Research*

To get a more comprehensive picture of students' emotional intelligence and for the generalization of results, research must be conducted on a larger population. The study should include participants of different age groups from various universities. A longitudinal study would give better results to check how personal development, academic experiences, social media use, and environmental factors trace the evolution of emotional intelligence over time. Further studies must focus on other factors that influence emotional intelligence on a broader level, such as academic discipline and extracurricular involvement. Incorporating qualitative methods provides more insight into emotional experiences and coping strategies.

## **CONCLUSION**

Emotional intelligence plays an important role in students' day-to-day life. From managing emotions to interpersonal communication, a student requires emotional intelligence in all aspects of their life. This study shows that emotional intelligence does not differ between the two genders (males and females) and age, academic experience also does not play a vital role in emotional intelligence. As such, it can be said that the emotional intelligence levels are similar across gender, age, and academics.

Future research studies should examine other influencing factors of emotional intelligence such, as extracurricular engagement, cultural background, etc. Qualitative research can be used as it may offer a profound understanding of students' emotional growth. This study emphasized the necessity of ongoing initiatives to promote emotional intelligence through focused interventions that will help students, university counselors, and academic advisors as well.



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### ***Conflict of Interest***

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