

The Effect of Personality Traits on Academic Achievement Among University Students

Nurjahan Begum^{1*}, Abdul Wahab Pathath², Hadeel Saleh Alsaque³

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between personality traits and academic achievement among medical students. A sample of 310 medical students from different educational levels participated in the study. The study utilized a self-administered questionnaire to collect data on students' EI and their academic achievement. The results showed that there was a significant difference in EI scores among different age groups and educational levels. The study also found that self-awareness and social awareness were significantly related to academic achievement, while relationship management showed the least improvement in EI. The study highlighted the need for emotional regulation to minimize the impact of academic stress on medical students. The findings suggested the inclusion of EI training in the medical curriculum to enhance the leadership qualities and academic performance of medical students. However, the study had some limitations, such as the sample size and the use of a self-administered questionnaire. Overall, the study emphasizes the importance of EI in medical education and recommends further research in this area.

Keywords: *Personality Traits, Academic Achievement, Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Management*

Emotional intelligence (EI) refers to the ability to identify and distinguish emotions in a way that allows them to be used as a guide for achieving certain objectives.^[1] The literature suggests that individuals with higher EI form stronger and longer-lasting interpersonal relationships^[2], which positively influences general intellectual development and, consequently, contributes to higher academic performance.^{[3],[4]} Moreover, the intrapersonal aspect of EI is related to self-motivation and self-regulation, which supports behavioural traits that may enhance academic performance.^{[2],[4]} EI is linked with emotional well-being, which improves academic performance and lowers stress levels in medical students.^{[5],[6],[7],[8]}

Several medical regulatory authorities, including the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education, have brought to the knowledge that the importance of key competencies for health professionals, many of which reflect the core components of EI.^[9] This highlights

¹Clinical Neuroscience Department, King Faisal University, Saudi Arab

²Clinical Neuroscience Department, King Faisal University, Saudi Arab

³PhD Scholar

*Corresponding Author

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the importance of possessing EI in the medical field. Several studies have also identified a strong direct correlation between EI and academic performance.^{[10],[11],[12],[13]} Possessing EI as a trait leads to better critical thinking, which is often reflected in a student's grade point average (GPA).^[14] Furthermore, individuals with higher EI demonstrate better skills in practical fieldwork.^[15] Students with higher EI have also been associated with more effective clinical adaptability and proactivity during their clinical rotations.^[16] Therefore, identifying reliable predictors of academic performance is essential to demonstrate its association with EI.

As one of the most commonly used predictors of academic performance, although GPA is associated with some statistical limitations, it has proven to be a reliable and consistent measure compared with examination scores and restricted subject evaluations.^{[17],[18]} With regard to the variable of academic success, it is related to intangible factors that influence academic performance (e.g., motivation, study habits, exam habits, diligence, quantity of work, quality of study, and learning environment style).^{[19],[20],[21]}

Worldwide, although several studies have reported that a positive correlation exists between EI and academic performance, some studies have identified no association.^{[22],[23],[24],[25]} Importantly, most previous studies were conducted in Western cultures, and they may not be generalizable to non-Western cultures due to the potential influence of cultural values and religious beliefs on EI. In the Middle East, to the best of the authors' knowledge, only one such study has previously been conducted,^[26] thereby highlighting the need for conducting additional comprehensive studies in the Middle Eastern context. Therefore, this study was undertaken to explore more deeply the association between EI and academic success and academic performance among medical students from a university in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA).

Aims: To study its strong relationship between Emotional Intelligence (EI) and academic performance with respect to emotional awareness, emotional management, social awareness, and stress management among medical students from King Faisal University, Hofuf, Alhassa, Saudi Arabia.

Objectives

1. To find out a significant relationship between EI and academic achievement.
2. To find out a significant relationship between demographic variables and academic performance.
3. To find out a significant relationship between demographic variables and EI.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotional intelligence is the ability to handle emotional components from our surroundings and construct appropriate response strategies to achieve better personal and professional outcomes.^[27]

In Saudi Arabia, only a few studies on emotional intelligence and its impact on academic performance among medical students have been conducted. Some studies on Saudi undergraduate English language students were conducted to determine the relationship between EI and academic achievement.^[28]

Most previous studies, however, were conducted in Western countries and may not apply to non-western countries due to the potential influence of religious background and cultural

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values on emotional intelligence. Several studies have shown a positive correlation exists between emotional Intelligence and Academic achievement and other studies reported no association. [29-30]

One study showed that students with higher emotional intelligence understand and gather information in ways that are appropriate for their academic and social environments. These students were also more likely to refrain from engaging in behaviours that could jeopardize their academic performance, [31] while moderate emotional intelligence is linked to lack of cognitive abilities (e.g., concentration, memory, and information retrieval) and ineffective communication skills. [32] Another study showed inconsistent results with the previous findings that elevated emotional intelligence enhances patient satisfaction and an individual's control of clinical situations, the study found no link between emotional intelligence, academic performance, year of study, and experience. [33] There are some studies discussing the role of gender and its relation with emotional intelligence and academic achievements. One study reported that both academic achievement and emotional intelligence were unrelated to gender which substantiate studies conducted in Pakistan and Sri Lanka. [34] In contrast, according to studies from the United Kingdom and India, female physicians, as well as medical and dental students, have higher emotional intelligence than their male counterparts [35]. Previous research findings vary depending on the control variables included in the research models.

METHODOLOGY

Design setting and participants

A cross-sectional study was done among 310 students from the College of Medicine, King Faisal University, with the help of questionnaires (Emotional Intelligence self-assessment adopted for the San Diego City College questionnaires MESA). This questionnaire study included from first-year till 4th year medical students enrolled at King Faisal University Saudi Arabia, in the academic year 2024-25. The study was conducted between January and March 2024-25.

King Faisal University, Medical College is located in the main city of Hofuf, Alhasa. Its campus has separate branches for male and female students. The curriculum, which is a shared responsibility between basic sciences and clinical faculties, is delivered in a problem-based format (PBL), paired with personal and professional development sessions, patient and themes lecture and other relevant activities. As senior students have more experience with academic life, all male and female medical students preclinical; 4th year and clinical; 5th and final year students (n=310) were participated in the study through online.

Data collection tool and procedure

Academic achievement was assessed using a self-reported GPA for each student's last examination. Self-reported data were used because the university's confidentiality policy prohibits access to records maintained by the assessment unit. At KFU, continuous assessment of student's accounts for 40% of their total mark, and final assessment, conducted at the end of the second semester, accounts for the remaining 60%. The semester GPA is calculated based on the total quality points a student has earned, divided by the credit hours assigned for all courses taken in each semester.

The study initially collected demographic data such as gender, age, year of study and their last GPA through a questionnaire. Then, the other questionnaire we used was the Emotional Intelligence self-assessment adopted from Emily A. Sterrett, Ph. D., in The Manager's

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Pocket Guide to Emotional Intelligence, 2000, HRD Press: were used. It consists of 20 items rating each scale 1 (Never), Rarely, Sometimes, Usually, and last rating is (Always) -5 and further divided into four categories i.e., self-awareness, self- management, social emotional awareness, and relationship management.

The questionnaires were distributed to all the eligible students as well and we made them understand what was the purpose of the research without ethical approval. After that, we sent out an institutional email, WhatsApp group, etc. in order to distribute the questionnaires through the link.

Hypotheses

1. There will be a positive correlation between IE and Academic performance among medical students.
2. There will significant negative relationship between IE and academic performance with low esteem (emotional awareness)
3. 3 There is a positive significant relationship with high IE among medical students with better adaptation skills (relationship management)
4. 4 There is a significant negative relationship between less IE with stressful environment (Social awareness).

RESULTS

Part 1:

Table 1 shows the demographics.

		n	%
Age	15-17	2	0.6
	18-20	280	90.3
	21-23	18	5.8
	24-26	2	0.6
	5.00	8	2.6
level of education	first year	282	91.0
	second year	22	7.1
	third year	2	0.6
	fifth year	2	0.6
	intern	2	0.6

The above table shows that out of 310 students (90.3%) were found the highest percentage scores within the aged group 18–20 years, next is the 21-23 yrs. and the least is 24-26 years among the students. Whereas in of term of education level first year student shows the highest percentage (91) %, and the second year (7.1%) and the third-year students show the least percentage among the education level of students.

Part 2:

Table 2 (a) EI items (Emotional Intelligence)

		Frequency	Percent
Eq categories	Need Improvement	161	51.9
	Good	149	48.1
SelfA	Need Improvement	166	53.5
	Good	144	46.5

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		Frequency	Percent
SM	Need Improvement	153	49.4
	Good	155	50.0
SoA	Need Improvement	146	47.1
	Good	163	52.6
RM	Need Improvement	125	40.3
	Good	185	59.7

The above result shows the Emotional intelligence percentage of the four components. Among these four components, which are needed for improvement, were 53 % in Self-awareness, 49% in self-management, 47% shows social awareness, and 40.3% in relationship management. From this viewpoint highest improvement that is needed is self-awareness and the least improvement is the relationship management.

Table 2 (b)

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
EQ score	70.7774	8.41628	42.00	96.00
Self-awareness	17.3226	2.58684	10.00	24.00
Self-management	17.5032	2.83590	8.00	25.00
Social awareness	17.7832	2.63004	11.00	25.00
Relationship management	18.2000	3.05060	8.00	25.00

Among the four components of Emotional Intelligence, the highest mean value of Standard Deviation is Relationship management, which is shown among the four categories, like social awareness, self-management, self-awareness, and relationship management.

Part 3: GPA

	Frequency	Percent
D+	24	7.7
C	14	4.5
C+	4	1.3
B	54	17.4
B+	36	11.6
A	76	24.5
A+	102	32.9
Total	310	100.0

The above table parts 3 shows that the percentage of the Academic performance. Among 310 students 32.9% shows A+ grades and it's the highest percentage and least percentage scores is C+ i.e., 1.3 % only.

	GPA
Mean	4.4112
Std. Deviation	0.49442
Minimum	3.25
Maximum	5.00

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Part 4:

Table 4 demo + EQ

	in favor of	p-value
Age * 1. I am aware of the physical reactions (twinges, aches, sudden changes) that signal a “gut reaction.”	21-23	0.006
Age * 2. I readily admit mistakes and apologize.	18-20	0.000
Age * 7. I can engage in an interaction with another and pretty well size-up that person’s mood based on non-verbal signals.	18-20	0.001
Age * 8. Others feel encouraged after talking to me.	18-20	0.003
Age * 9. I consider my “emotional temperature” before I make important decisions.	24-26	0.041
Age * 10. When I feel a strong impulse to do something, I 4 pause to reflect and decide whether I really want to act on it.	18-20	0.003
Age * 14. I can show empathy and match my feelings with those of another person in an interaction.	24-26	0.012
Age * 16. I am respected and liked by others, even when they don’t agree with me.	24-26	0.009
Age * 20. I can effectively persuade others to adopt my point of view without coercing them.	21-23	0.019
level of education * 1. I am aware of the physical reactions (twinges, aches, sudden changes) that signal a “gut reaction.”	third year	0.011
level of education * 12. I can identify the emotion I am feeling at any given moment.	intern	0.046
level of education * 14. I can show empathy and match my feelings with those of another person in an interaction.	first year	0.003
age * EQ categories		0.259
level of education * EQ cat		0.157

The above results revealed that there is a significant difference found in different age group as well as in in education level. Among the four components of emotional intelligent, the highest two components that is in Self-awareness, Social awareness. From the finding we can at least have an idea that medical students need good adaption, social skill, awareness of the surrounding, good motivation, empathy and good communication skill.

Part 5:

Table 5 demo+GPA

	in favor of	p-value
Age * GPA	18-20 A+	0.027
level of education * GPA		0.589

Table 5 the above result revealed that there is significant different found within the age group of 18-20 high grade. That means first year students within the age of 18-20 had excellent academic performance.

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Part 6: EQ+GPA

	in favour of	p-value
GPA_cat * SelfA	good A, need D+	0.003
GPA_cat * 1. I am aware of the physical reactions (twinges, aches, sudden changes) that signal a “gut reaction.”	C	0.020
GPA_cat * 2. I readily admit mistakes and apologize.	C+	0.000
GPA_cat * 3. When I feel angry, I can still stay composed.	D+	0.035
GPA_cat * 4. I generally have an accurate idea of how another person perceives me during a particular interaction.	B	0.002
GPA_cat * 5. In assessing a situation, I look at my biases and adjust my assessment accordingly.	C+	0.000
GPA_cat * 6. I can keep going on a project, despite obstacles.	C+	0.000
GPA_cat * 8. Others feel encouraged after talking to me.	C+	0.000
GPA_cat * 9. I consider my “emotional temperature” before I make important decisions.	C+	0.047
GPA_cat * 10. When I feel a strong impulse to do something, I pause to reflect and decide whether I really want to act on it.	A	0.000
GPA_cat * 11. I can deal calmly, sensitively, and proactively with the emotional displays of others.	D+	0.000
GPA_cat * 13. I am able to honestly say how I feel without getting others upset.	D+	0.000
GPA_cat * 14. I can show empathy and match my feelings with those of another person in an interaction.	C	0.000
GPA_cat * 15. I think about the emotions behind my actions.	B+	0.000
GPA_cat * 16. I am respected and liked by others, even when they don’t agree with me.	B+	0.001
GPA_cat * 18. I am good at managing my moods, and I refrain from bringing negative emotions to work.	C+	0.000
GPA_cat * 20. I can effectively persuade others to adopt my point of view without coercing them.	A+	0.000

		EQ score	Self_awareness	Self_management	Social_awareness	Relationship_management
GPA	Pearson Correlation	.175**	.168**	0.111	0.093	.155**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.002	0.003	0.051	0.103	0.006
	N	310	310	308	309	310

The above result showed that there is a strong significant relationship within GPA and Emotional Intelligent scores among the students. But Some of the questionnaires also shows

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that there was both positive and negative relationship found in self-management and relationship- management. However, the results also revealed that there is strong significant relationship between Self-awareness and Relationship management among the students with respect to emotional intelligent.

DISCUSSION

The present research aimed to assess the relationship between Emotional intelligence with the Academic Achievement. The results also revealed that there is a significant difference found in different age groups as well as in education level. At the mean time, we can also identified that there is a significant difference found in the two components, also that is in Self-awareness, Social awareness among the respondents. However, we can finally say from the results that age factor and grades highly depend on emotional intelligence.

However, the result also revealed that out of 310 students (90.3%) were found the highest percentage scores within the aged group 18–20 years, next is the 21-23 yrs. and the least is 24-26 years due to social activity need to experience in any type of situation (Emotion). This also confirms that the higher the percentage GPA shows among students, is better adaption skill along with the better grade in year the of education level. Therefore, it shows that the students had strong emotional control despite having societal pressure, whether its personal or social issues. Our studies proved Hypotheses 2 and 3. Self-efficacy is one of the social cognitive functions and defined as one's belief in one's ability to succeed at tasks. Self-efficacy is suggested to be related to EI. Furthermore, self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills are necessary components of effective leadership. EI can improve the features necessary for a worthy and influential leader.⁸ However, medical students are exposed to many stresses, especially the academic stress, which may affect EI.⁶ From the findings we can at least have an idea that medical students need good adaptation, social skills, awareness of the surroundings, management, good motivation, empathy and good communication skills, etc.

Whereas in of term of education level first year student shows the highest percentage (91) %, and the second year (7.1%) and the third-year students show the least percentage among the education level of students with respect to emotional intelligent.

Further, our research also found that Emotional Intelligent and its four components were need improvement first is 53 % in Self-awareness, 49% in self-management, 47% shows social awareness and 40.3% shows in relationship management. From this viewpoint highest improvement need is self-awareness and least improvement is the relationship management. Our study also clarified every that human being needs to improve any kind of experience whether it's a personal or professional in life. Worldwide, although several studies have reported that a positive correlation exists between EI and academic performance, some studies have identified no association.^{[22],[23],[24],[25]}

Our studied also found that there is a strong and significant relationship between GPA with Emotional Intelligence scores among the students. But some of the questionnaires also shows that there was both a positive and negative relationship found in self-management and relationship management. However, the results also revealed that there is a strong and significant relationship between Self-awareness and Relationship management among the students concerning emotional intelligence. Our study was supported by Brackett, et.al 26. Similarly, we found a positive correlation between EI score and self-efficacy, which agrees with another Iranian study.⁹

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Furthermore, many previous studies^{3,21,29} have demonstrated a negative association between EI and perceived stress, which agrees with our findings. Hence, effective regulation of emotional response is important for mitigating the impact of stress ¹⁷, and stress management can improve EI. Therefore, there is a significant negative relationship between less IE and stress environment (Social awareness). Hence proved our first and fourth hypotheses too.

CONCLUSION

From our results and discussion it showed that presence of positive association between EI and better academic performance, which coincides with many other studies.^{3,7,20,23,24} EI can be seen as an ability-based skill that allows training in specific competencies, which lead to fewer learning problems and better academic achievement.² EI was positively associated with better academic performance. Further self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills are necessary components of effective leadership. EI can improve the features necessary for a worthy and influential leader.⁸ However, medical students are exposed to many stresses, especially academic stress, which may affect EI.⁶ It was negatively correlated to perceived stress. Training on EI is recommended to be an integral part of medical curricula. This training needs to be interdisciplinary and as a holistic part of the existing curricula. This can be done through practical and applied preparation. Furthermore, students need to have opportunities to practice EI skills. EI intervention studies need to be done through the involvement of EI within the medical curriculum. In addition, more training is required for improving students' adaptation skills in stressful situations. Conducting stress management courses is also required.

Limitations of the Study:

Two notable limitations affected the recent study: 1. There was a time limitation. 2. The results would have been better if we had assessed a larger sample size for both males and females.

Recommendation

1. Giving a stress management program to easily identify the relationship management among students.
2. Giving counseling to students who cannot control their emotions.
3. Constructing special units in educational institutions to provide support for people who have less skill in communication.
4. Conducting further studies about the relationship between EI and Academic achievement over longer periods with a larger sample size.
5. In addition, more training is required for improving students' leadership capacity and self-efficacy through curriculum and extracurricular activities.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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