

Research Paper

The Mediating Role of Emotional Intelligence in the Relationship Between Family Climate and Academic Anxiety Among Undergraduate Students

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ABSTRACT

Emotional intelligence is increasingly considered as a critical factor in managing stress and improving student well-being. Research indicates that a supportive family climate plays an important role in enhancing emotional well-being. However, the mediating effect of emotional intelligence in the association between family climate and academic anxiety has remain unexplored. Hence, this study aims to bridge the gap, by examining the mediating role of emotional intelligence in the relationship between family climate and academic anxiety among undergraduate students. The study selected a sample of 300 undergraduates by simple random sampling from various colleges in Imphal West, Manipur. The Emotional Intelligence Scale (Hyde et al., 2021), the Family Climate Scale (Shah, n.d.) and the Academic Anxiety Scale (Cassady, 2020) were employed to measure emotional intelligence, family climate, and academic anxiety, respectively. Data analysis were conducted using Pearson's correlation and mediation analysis. Findings showed that emotional intelligence has a positive correlation with family climate but a negative correlation with academic anxiety. Further, mediation analysis showed that emotional intelligence mediates the association between family climate and academic anxiety indicating that students from emotionally supportive families may develop strong abilities in emotional awareness and regulation, which help lessen the negative effects of academic anxiety. This study highlights the protective function of emotional intelligence and provides important insights for policymakers, educators, and mental health professionals working to enhance student welfare and academic achievement.

Keywords: *Emotional Intelligence, Academic Anxiety, Family Climate, Mediator, Undergraduates*

The educational success and emotional well-being of students are shaped by emotional intelligence and family climate. The family climate (or family environment) consisting of emotional basis for relationships, pattern of communication, and level of support within the family influences all aspects of an individual's adjustment to the environment and academic performance (Chandran & Nair, 2015; Padir, 2025). Strong competition exposes adolescents and young adults to emotional and psychological

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Received: August 26, 2025; Revision Received: August 30, 2025; Accepted: September 03, 2025

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challenges outside of the classroom. Among these challenges, academic anxiety emerges as a major obstacle that hinders cognitive functioning, motivation, and academic success (Gao & Liu, 2025; Wei & Song, 2024).

Emotional intelligence, characterized as the capability to identify, interpret, and adjust emotions effectively, is widely considered an essential factor in managing academic stress and fostering mental well-being of students (Jan et al., 2016; Murillo et al., 2024). Students with well-developed emotional intelligence are more likely to manage academic pressures effectively, build strong social relationships, and maintain better control over their emotional responses. It appears that families providing social support foster higher emotional intelligence, which in turn acts as a buffer against academic anxiety (Padir, 2025; Prasad & Dangwal, 2025). On the other hand, families that exhibit emotional neglect and conflict often interfere with the development of essential emotional skills, thereby increasing academic anxiety.

Academic anxiety is a feeling of excessive worry, fear, and physiological arousal related to academic evaluations like exams, presentations, or coursework. Among undergraduate students, this form of anxiety is widespread and can impair key cognitive processes such as attention, memory, and problem-solving, which are vital for academic achievement (Busch et al., 2023; Song & Hu, 2024). Accumulated pressure due to the demand of meeting excessively high academic expectations together with family or societal expectations could cause chronic stress, emotional exhaustion, and academic disengagement (Ragusa et al., 2023). In this context, emotional intelligence is essential not only for managing stress but also for enhancing academic resilience and motivation.

The family environment is regarded as the fundamental foundation for emotional development during the formative years. Positive family environments marked by warmth, cohesion, and open communication have consistently been associated with higher emotional intelligence, stronger coping skills, and lower academic anxiety (Padir, 2025; Prasad & Dangwal, 2025). When families are perceived as supportive, students are more likely to be cultivated empathy, self-awareness, and interpersonal skills. On the other hand, negative or emotionally unsupportive family environments can reduce academic achievement, making individuals more vulnerable to stress, and hindering emotional learning. Considering such dynamics, it is critical to explore how emotional intelligence operates as a mediator in the interplay between family climate and academic anxiety.

Although the individual links between emotional intelligence, family climate, and academic anxiety are well documented, there has been limited research on how emotional intelligence mediates these relationships, especially among undergraduate students. The present study aims to fill this gap by investigating the mediating influence of emotional intelligence on the link between family climate and academic anxiety among undergraduate students. The findings are anticipated to offer evidence-based insights that can inform interventions aimed at enhancing emotional development and familial support to alleviate academic stress.

Understanding the mediating role of emotional intelligence is important for developing intervention strategies that enhance students' emotional skills and promote supportive family environments. These insights may guide educational institutions and counsellors in developing focused programs that address academic anxiety through the enhancement of emotional competence and the cultivation of supportive family settings. The findings hold

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practical implication for teachers, policymakers, and mental health experts, highlighting the value of promoting emotional intelligence and cultivating supportive family contexts to strengthen resilience and academic success.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Extensive research has been conducted on how emotional intelligence, family environment, academic well-being, and mental health are related in different groups of students. Andriawan (2023) surveyed the psychological well-being of high school learners with regard to emotional intelligence and educational workload. The findings indicated that lower emotional intelligence is linked to higher occurrence of mental health issues, and a higher educational workload is associated with an increased frequency of these problems. Importantly, emotional intelligence significantly moderated the adverse impacts associated with academic load. This underscores the necessity of interventions that foster emotional competencies to build healthier learning settings.

Kujur (2024) examined the essential role of emotional intelligence in family life based on the teachings of Pope Francis in *Amoris Laetitia*. The study emphasizes the need to identify, interpret, and adjust emotions in fostering healthy family relationships. The study presents a practical framework combining moral perspectives with emotional intelligence theories to build emotional connectivity among families and emotional resilience toward addressing societal pressures and cultural expectations as their main challenges.

Gazquez Linares et al. (2022) investigated the role of emotional intelligence as a mediator in the association between anxiety sensitivity with adolescent academic burnout. They found out that elevated anxiety sensitivity contributed to exhaustion, distrust, and reduced competence, with stress regulation and mood regulation as a key mediator in such results. It therefore postulates that increasing emotional competencies in schools can prevent student from burnout, by building exterior supports for emotional coping and mood control.

Naghavi & Redzuan (2012) investigated the buffering effect of paternal educational background on the association between emotional intelligence and familial context in young adolescence. The results demonstrated that a supportive home environment promotes better emotional intelligence, and this effect is stronger when fathers have higher levels of education. Therefore, the study emphasizes that parental education plays an important role in supporting emotional development within families.

Padir (2025) explored the links between secondary school students' emotional intelligence, social anxiety disorder, and family environment. The findings indicates that social anxiety decreases in a supportive family environment, which, in turn, enhances emotional intelligence. On the contrary, individuals with social anxiety disorder showed low emotional intelligence. The findings imply that with the reduction in social anxiety, supportive family climate promotes the growth of emotional abilities.

Shabani et al. (2011) analyzed how emotional intelligence influences emotional health in secondary school students and assessed whether age alters the strength of this relationship. The results showed emotional intelligence positively influences mental health, whereas the moderating effect of age was insignificant. This study highlights that developing emotional intelligence during adolescence should always be considered a top priority for psychological well-being.

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Sharma & Raina (2024) surveyed primary school children to examine the interrelations among emotional intelligence, family context, and student achievement. The results indicated favourable relationships among emotional intelligence, familial context and student achievement. The study has also found that there were no notable variations in the variables in terms of gender, type of school or family type. This reinforces the importance of fostering emotional intelligence for psychological well-being during adolescence.

Zhao et al. (2024) investigated the interrelationships between depressive symptoms, social support, loneliness, emotional intelligence, and family functioning in Chinese college students. The results showed negative correlations of family dynamics, emotional intelligence, and community support with depressive symptoms but a significant with loneliness. Emotional intelligence and loneliness mediated the link between family dynamics and depression, implying that interventions focused on family dynamics and emotional intelligence may reduce depressive symptoms among undergraduate students.

Collectively, these studies emphasize the pivotal role of emotional intelligence and family climate in determining emotional health, academic achievement, and resilience of students. The study shows that emotional intelligence supports psychological well-being both directly and by mediating the effects of family dynamics and academic stressors. This implies that educational and mental health programs should prioritize the development of emotional skills and the cultivation of family support.

Objectives of the Study

- i) To examine the association between emotional intelligence and family climate.
- ii) To examine the association between emotional intelligence and academic anxiety.
- iii) To explore whether emotional intelligence functions as a mediator linking family climate and academic anxiety.

Hypotheses of the Study

- H1: Emotional intelligence is positively associated with family climate.
- H2: Emotional intelligence is negatively associated with academic anxiety.
- H3: Emotional intelligence functions as a mediator in the association between family climate and academic anxiety.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Research Design: The study utilized a descriptive survey framework to explore whether emotional intelligence functions as a mediator linking family climate and academic anxiety.

Independent Variable: Family Climate

Mediator: Emotional Intelligence

Dependent Variable: Academic Anxiety

Sample: The study comprised 300 undergraduate students from several colleges in Imphal West, Manipur, selected using simple random sampling. The study ensured voluntary and anonymous participation.

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Instruments: Data were collected using three standardized scales:

- **Academic Anxiety Scale (Cassady, 2020)** consists of 11 items that assessing worry and tension associated with academic tasks.
- **Emotional Intelligence Scale (Hyde et al., 2002)** consists of 34 items assessing self-awareness, emotional control, motivation, emotional sensitivity, and social competence.
- **Family Climate Scale (Shah, 2006)** consists of 90 items assessing family support, cohesion, and communication.

Data Analysis: Data analysis was carried out with the help of SPSS. Pearson’s correlation coefficients tested the bivariate associations, while mediation analysis was carried out using the PROCESS macro, Model 4.

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

1. Correlation Analysis between Emotional Intelligence and Family Climate.

Table 1. Correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Family Climate

Correlations		Emotional Intelligence	Family Climate
Emotional Intelligence	Pearson Correlation	1	.656**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	300	300
Family Climate	Pearson Correlation	.656**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	300	300

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The analysis showed a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and family climate ($r = 0.656, p < .01$), indicating that an increase in family support corresponds with an increase in emotional intelligence. Salovey and Mayer (1990) suggests that emotional intelligence develops through social interaction and emotional support, which are mainly provided within the family environment. Zeidner et al. (2012) also emphasize the influence of family climate in emotional understanding and regulation among child and adolescent populations.

The findings support the view that family climate functions as a major contributor in the development of emotional intelligence (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Zeidner et al., 2012). Educational and psychological interventions designed to enhance emotional intelligence could be more effective if incorporate with family-based approaches and encourage positive family dynamics.

This finding accepts the hypothesis, H1, which proposed that emotional intelligence is positively associated with family climate. This relationship underscores the critical role of the family's emotional environment in nurturing psychological strengths that are crucial for individual well-being and effective interpersonal functioning.

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2. Correlation Analysis between Emotional Intelligence and Academic Anxiety.

Table 2. Correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Academic Anxiety

Correlations			
		Emotional Intelligence	Family Climate
Emotional Intelligence	Pearson Correlation	1	-.889**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	300	300
Academic Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	-.889**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	300	300

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The analysis showed a strong negative association between emotional intelligence and academic anxiety ($r = -0.889$, $p < .01$), indicating that greater emotional intelligence substantially reduces academic anxiety. The hypothesis, H2, which proposed that emotional intelligence is negatively associated with academic anxiety is accepted.

This finding is in line with Salovey and Mayer (1990), who reported that emotional intelligence enables individuals in managing more effectively with stress and academic anxiety. Zeidner et al. (2012) support this finding by emphasizing that emotional intelligence assists students in regulating their emotions, managing academic pressures, and maintaining psychological well-being.

3. Mediation Analysis: Emotional Intelligence as a mediator in the association between Family Climate and Academic Anxiety.

Table 3: Mediation Analysis: Emotional Intelligence as a mediator in the association between Family Climate and Academic Anxiety.

Pathway	Coefficient (β)	SE	t	p	95% CI (LL, UL)
Family Climate → Emotional Intelligence (a)	0.5329	0.0356	14.9910	<.001	[0.4630, 0.6029]
Emotional Intelligence → Academic Anxiety (b)	-0.4240	0.0164	-25.92	<.001	[-0.4562, -0.3919]
Family Climate → Academic Anxiety (Direct, c')	0.0132	0.0133	0.99	.3234	[-0.0130, 0.0393]
Indirect Effect (a × b)	-0.2260	0.0173	—	—	[-0.2597, -0.1925]
Total Effect (c)	-0.2128	0.0142	-14.99	<.001	[-0.2410, -0.1846]

The analysis showed that emotional intelligence serves as a mediator in the link between family climate and academic anxiety. A supportive family environment was found to strengthen emotional intelligence ($\beta = 0.5329$, $p < .001$), which in turn helps lower academic anxiety ($\beta = -0.4240$, $p < .001$). The direct influence of family climate on academic anxiety ceases to be significant when emotional intelligence is added to the model; however, the indirect effect remains significant, indicating that emotional intelligence emerges as a critical psychological determinant. The results affirm the hypothesis, H3, that emotional

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intelligence functions as a mediator in the association between family climate and academic anxiety.

Gao and Liu (2025) identified emotional stability as a mediator between family functioning and academic anxiety, whereas Zhao et al. (2024) found emotional intelligence as a mediator in the interplay between family functioning and depressive symptoms. A supportive family environment plays a key role in nurturing emotional intelligence, which acts as a buffer against academic anxiety and related psychological challenges. The findings emphasize the importance of interventions that enhance emotional intelligence in order to reduce academic anxiety within educational contexts.

DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that family climate exerts a favorable influence on the emotional intelligence of undergraduate students. These findings support Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which stresses the importance of immediate family on emotional development. Students from communicative and supportive families demonstrated greater emotional intelligence, validating previous research linking harmonious family life to emotional competence and adaptive functioning (Peláez-Fernández et al., 2024). The research reveals that supportive family conditions play a role in enabling the students to better manage academic and interpersonal difficulties.

The findings also indicated a notable inverse association between emotional intelligence and academic anxiety, implying that greater emotional intelligence corresponds to lower anxiety levels among students. This is in line with the ability framework of emotional intelligence (Salovey & Mayer, 1990), which holds stress management requires the capacity to regulate and utilize emotions. The mediation analysis confirmed that emotional intelligence act as a mediator in the association between family climate and academic anxiety. That family climate has no direct effect on academic anxiety indicating emotional intelligence is the primary mechanism through which family environment acts on academic anxiety. This confirms the buffering role of emotional intelligence in academic contexts, which aligns with the earlier works of Cazan and Năstasă (2015) and Shengyao et al. (2024).

These results underscore the need for integrated intervention approaches within educational and mental health practice. Emotional intelligence training, combined with interventions that promote family communication and emotional support, may be effective strategies to alleviate academic anxiety and improve students' mental well-being. The cross-sectional design and focus on a single geographic area limit the scope of the study; however, these features provide a useful foundation for future longitudinal and cross-cultural research. Future research should focus on creating culturally appropriate, long-term programs that enhance emotional and family support to improve student well-being.

CONCLUSION

The present study found that emotional intelligence act as a mediator in the link between family climate and academic anxiety among undergraduates. A supportive family environment promotes higher emotional intelligence, which in turn lower academic anxiety. Emotional intelligence act as the primary means by which family climate influences emotional well-being of students.

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These results highlight the significance of integrating emotional intelligence development into academic programs and fostering a supportive family environment. The study is limited by its cross-sectional design and regional restricted sample. Longitudinal and culturally diverse investigations could further explore these dynamics. Overall, the results highlight the importance of comprehensive interventions that improve academic performance and reduce academic anxiety by combining family involvement with emotional skill development.

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Acknowledgment

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Singh, S.B. & Serto, M. (2025). The Mediating Role of Emotional Intelligence in the Relationship Between Family Climate and Academic Anxiety Among Undergraduate Students. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 13(3), 2972-2981. DIP:18.01.269.20251303, DOI:10.25215/1303.269