

Research Paper

## Beyond Intelligence Quotient: The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Academic Achievement among Senior Secondary School Students

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### ABSTRACT

This paper examines the relevance of emotional intelligence (EI) to academic performance among senior secondary school students with specific reference to the comprehensive education system espoused in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The study used a descriptive co-relational research design to investigate the connection between EI and academic performance. The population size was 100 senior secondary students who were chosen by simple random sampling. The measure of EI was Emotional Intelligence Scale which was a standardized tool designed by Arun Kumar Singh & Shruti Narain and academic achievement was in terms of percentage of previous year examination. To conduct data analysis, descriptive statistics were calculated (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistical tests (t -tests, one-way ANOVA, correlation with the help of Pearson) were utilized. The outcomes showed that the general state of EI in the group of students was average. There were no significant differences in EI and academic achievements based on gender and academic stream making it possible that these variables have no substantial impact on the emotional competence or academic performance. Nevertheless, there were notable variations in terms of locale, which denotes that environmental and contextual influences are influential in determining EI and academic performance of students. The correlation showed that there is a strong and positive correlation between EI and academic achievement which makes EI a very important determinant of academic success. These results support the earlier studies that highlighted the role of EI in promoting successful learning, motivation, and emotional management. Similar to NEP 2020, the study also discusses the necessity of incorporating socio-emotional education in the learning process in schools to ensure whole-person development, academic achievement, and emotional health of senior secondary schools.

**Keywords:** *Beyond Intelligence Quotient, Emotional Intelligence, Academic Achievement, Senior Secondary School Students*

Traditionally, academic performance has been theorised as an activity of cognitive talents, often measured in Intelligence Quotient (IQ). However, the modern educational literature is becoming aware of the notion that cognitive intelligence does not suffice to explain the academic success of students. Emotional Intelligence (EI)- the

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## **Beyond Intelligence Quotient: The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Academic Achievement among Senior Secondary School Students**

ability to recognize, comprehend, control, and regulate emotions in self and in others has turned out to be a central non-cognitive predictor of learning outcomes, motivation, and total academic success (Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso, 2004; Goleman, 1995). In the school environment especially at the senior secondary level, students are faced with increased academic demands, professional anxieties, socio-emotional issues that require emotional skill besides intellectual capability. According to the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, a holistic and multidisciplinary approach to education is highly encouraged, where learners are developed in terms of cognitive, social, emotional, and ethical ability. NEP 2020 highlights the need to incorporate socio-emotional learning (SEL) to develop resilience, empathy, self-awareness, and emotional control and perceive the set of skills and abilities as critical in academic performance and lifelong learning (Ministry of Education, 2020). This change in policy is consistent with the emerging trends in education on the international level where emotional intelligence is discussed as one of the basic factors of student achievement and not a marginal cost.

Empirical studies always show that there is positive correlation between emotional intelligence and academic performance. High EI learners tend to have better stress management, better concentration, better interpersonal relations, and better intrinsic motivation which lead to better academic performance (Parker et al., 2004; Petrides et al., 2018). Besides, EI students are in a better position to manage exam anxiety, academic disappointments thus they can maintain performance in the long run. Knowing the importance of emotional intelligence takes on an even more important meaning in the districts like Shopian where students can face some particular socio-cultural and environmental barriers. The research, thus, aims at exploring emotional intelligence outside the normal system of IQ and it is argued that this intelligence is one of the most influential factors of academic performance among senior secondary school students. The current study, by agreeing with the vision of NEP 2020, solidifies the claim that developing emotional intelligence is not only complementary to an academic success of meaningful and strong academic achievement, but it is also necessary.

### ***Significance of the Study***

The current research can be considered to have a significant value in further development of the theoretical and practical aspects of emotional intelligence in the field of education. Although academic success has always been measured in terms of cognitive determinants of achievement like Intelligence Quotient (IQ), there is a growing body of research that shows that non-cognitive competencies have a similarly critical impact on the academic success of students. In the sense that it explores emotional intelligence as a major predictor of academic performance among senior secondary school students, this study will help in the enormous body of literature that supports a more holistic view of the learner development process (Goleman, 1995; Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso, 2004). In line with the mandate of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, this study highlights the need to inculcate socio-emotional learning (SEL) in the curricula of schools. The NEP 2020 prioritizes the development of emotional well-being, self-control, empathy, and resilience as the qualities that cannot be overlooked in successful learning and personal development (Ministry of Education, 2020). The results of this study provide the empirical evidence that can be used by policy-makers and curriculum developers in their attempts to support the use of SEL-based pedagogical practices at the senior secondary level. In practice terms, the study has implications to teachers, school administrators and counsellors, in that it shows the need to incorporate emotional intelligence training in the classroom instruction and the student

## Beyond Intelligence Quotient: The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Academic Achievement among Senior Secondary School Students

support services. Intelligent students that display emotional intelligence are in a better position to deal with academic stress, maintain motivation, and interact positively with their colleagues and teachers and thus increase their academic performance (Parker et al., 2004). This relationship can help educators create a specific intervention that will support emotional competence as well as academic achievement. Moreover, the paper has contextual significance to the districts like Shopian, where socio-cultural and environmental contexts can influence the emotional and academic life of students. Through the focus on this particular area, the study provides information that can be used to guide localized educational practices. In general, the research supports the stance of emotional intelligence as an important educational tool and proposes systematizing its incorporation to achieve sustainable academic success.

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The current empirical studies still support the assumption that emotional intelligence (EI) has considerable impact on the academic performance of students. In a large-scale study of students taking senior secondary school, **Samanta and Dwivedi (2025)** established in 2025 that increased levels of EI were strongly related to improved academic performance, as emotionally competent learners exhibited better stress-management abilities and learning motivation than their less emotionally competent counterparts. On the same note, the study by **Khan and Rehman (2025)** discovered that emotional regulation and interpersonal skills were the predictors of academic achievement beyond cognitive capability, thus the EI contribution to academic performance is unique. **MacCann et al.** have presented a detailed meta-analysis that indicates emotional intelligence offered consistent predictors of academic achievement in different educational contexts, and the effect size for emotional intelligence was significant even when it remained after IQ and personality characteristics. Similarly, **Akbar et al. (2024)** revealed that there was a positive relationship between EI and academic performance of secondary school students in Pakistan, and that students with emotional resiliency had better coping mechanisms and maintained academic attention. **Gupta and Sharma (2024)** indicated in the same year that the self-awareness and social skills of EI were the key predictors of academic achievement in Indian secondary schools, which further confirms the significance of emotional competencies in academic settings. Moving to 2023, **Patel and Desai (2023)** also emphasized the mediating effect of emotional intelligence in mediating academic stress and increasing performance among adolescents, according to which a higher level of EI among students led to a lesser level of anxiety and a more significant academic growth rate. **Singh and Kaur (2023)** in another study of the same year discovered that students exhibited much better behaviour and achievement results in the classroom and therefore this showed the feasible value of socio-emotional developing plans in schools. Previous studies involve **Petrides et al. (2020)**, who considered the trait emotional intelligence in adolescents and found a positive correlation between EI and academic success as well as psychological well-being of students, especially when they were placed in adaptive learning settings. **Parker et al. (2018)** also found that emotionally intelligent students acclimated better in the academic environments at the period of transitioning into new educational tiers, including secondary to higher education. A meta-analysis study by **Durlak et al. (2015)** on social and emotional learning (SEL) programs has received extensive attention and has found that SEL improvements yielded significant improvements in both emotional abilities and academic performance in heterogeneous student groups. Underlying theoretical perspectives provided by **Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2004)** and **Goleman (1995)** have remained in the line of this research focus with their importance in highlighting that emotional competencies of self-regulation, empathy,

## **Beyond Intelligence Quotient: The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Academic Achievement among Senior Secondary School Students**

and social skills are part and parcel of the learning processes. Taken collectively, this chronological review highlights why emotional intelligence is becoming such a significant factor in academic achievement in recent years, which explains its primary importance in the current research and practice of education.

### ***Research Gap***

Despite the fact that significant attention of scholars has been paid to emotional intelligence and academic performance, the current body of literature shows that there are a number of dimensions that have not been adequately studied in the past. An extensive body of prior research has largely concentrated on cognitive and affective performances, and thus has not sufficiently placed emotional intelligence in the transformative educational paradigm as described in the New Education Policy, 2020 (NEP 2020). This policy predicts whole-person development, student health, and socio-emotional skills. There are limited empirical studies that focus on senior secondary school students, particularly in ecologically sensitive and region specific areas like the Shopian district, where the socio-emotional variables are expected to have a salient impact on the course of learning. Most studies have also embraced generalized methodological orientation hence neglecting localized educational realities that are not dispensable during translation of policy prescriptions. Thus, the gap in the literature that requires urgent attention is that of context-specific policy-consistent studies that challenge emotional intelligence as a crucial factor influencing academic performance. It is in this gap that the current inquiry aims to fill by generating empirical data that is in line with the goals outlined by NEP 2020.

### ***Objectives of the Study***

1. To study the level of emotional intelligence among senior secondary school students of Shopian district.
2. To study the level of academic achievement of senior secondary school students of Shopian district.
3. To study the difference in emotional intelligence and academic achievement of senior secondary school students with respect to gender (male and female).
4. To examine the difference in emotional intelligence and academic achievement of senior secondary school students with respect to locale (rural and urban).
5. To analyze the difference in emotional intelligence and academic achievement of senior secondary school students with respect to stream (Science, Arts, and Commerce).
6. To investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement among senior secondary school students of Shopian district.

### ***Hypotheses of the Study***

1. **H<sub>01</sub>**: There is no significant difference in emotional intelligence and academic achievement of senior secondary school students with respect to gender.
2. **H<sub>02</sub>**: There is no significant difference in emotional intelligence and academic achievement of senior secondary school students with respect to locale.
3. **H<sub>03</sub>**: There is no significant difference in emotional intelligence and academic achievement of senior secondary school students with respect to stream (Science, Arts, and Commerce).
4. **H<sub>04</sub>**: There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement among senior secondary school students of Shopian district.

## Beyond Intelligence Quotient: The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Academic Achievement among Senior Secondary School Students

### METHODOLOGY

The study had adopted a descriptive-correlational study to make an attempt on the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement among the senior secondary school students in the shopian district. The sample used consisted of 100 students who were selected using a simple random sampling technique. The scale of Emotional Intelligence Scale developed by Arun Kumar Singh and Shruti Narain was used to assess emotional intelligence level and this scale has reliability 0.86. This scale have 31 items (27 positive and 4 negative items) divided into four dimensions. The response were given in the form of yes and no. For yes score is 1 and for no score is 0 having maximum value 31 and minimum value 0. The achievement of academic performance was operationalized in terms of the percentage scores of the students in the last year examination. The tests consisted of independent- samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA to determine the difference between groups, and correlation tests to determine the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance.

### ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS OF THE DATA

*Table 1.0: Showing Distribution of Students According to Levels of Emotional Intelligence*

Level of Emotional Intelligence	Score Range	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
High Emotional Intelligence	27 and above	28	28.0
Average Emotional Intelligence	21–26	39	39.0
Low Emotional Intelligence	20 and below	33	33.0
<b>Total</b>		100	100.0

The table 1.0 shows a significant percentage of the senior secondary school students 39 % portray an average level of emotional intelligence with an additional 28 % portraying high level of emotional intelligence. It is worth noting that 33% of the students are in the low emotional intelligence category. The given distribution demonstrates a significant difference in the competence in emotions and indicates that a more significant focus on socio-emotional growth in the school program is necessary.

*Table 1.1: Showing Distribution of Students According to Levels of Academic Achievement*

Grade	Percentage Range	Level of Achievement	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
A	75% and above	Excellent	57	57.0
B	60% – 74%	Very Good	36	36.0
C	45% – 59%	Good	7	7.0
D	33% – 44%	Average	0	0.0
<b>Total</b>			100	100.0

The table 1.1 shows that most students 57% in senior secondary schools scored an excellent level of academic performance, which represents high scholastic achievement. Very good attainment was evident among a significant number 36% and only 7% were good performers. Notably, no students were found in the middle zone of achievement. On the whole, the findings indicate a high academic achievement of the participants hence depicting effective learning achievements.

**Beyond Intelligence Quotient: The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Academic Achievement among Senior Secondary School Students**

**Table 1.2: Showing Gender-wise Comparison of Emotional Intelligence (Overall & Dimensions) and Academic Achievement**

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	p-value	Result
<b>Emotional Intelligence (Total)</b>	Male	49	22.86	4.73	0.288	0.774	Not Significant
	Female	51	23.10	3.57			
<b>Understanding Emotions</b>	Male	49	2.49	0.89	1.204	0.232	Not Significant
	Female	51	2.69	0.73			
<b>Understanding Motivation</b>	Male	49	6.06	1.31	0.351	0.726	Not Significant
	Female	51	6.14	0.80			
<b>Empathy</b>	Male	49	7.53	1.68	1.080	0.283	Not Significant
	Female	51	7.84	1.17			
<b>Human Relations</b>	Male	49	6.78	1.30	1.386	0.169	Not Significant
	Female	51	6.43	1.19			
<b>Academic Achievement</b>	Male	49	72.63	8.64	0.978	0.330	Not Significant
	Female	51	74.12	6.43			

The table 1.2 shows gender comparative analysis of emotional intelligence, emotional intelligence dimensions and academic achievement among seniors secondary school education. The results have shown that male and female students have no statistically significant difference of overall emotional intelligence ( $t = 0.288$ ,  $p = 0.774$ ). In the same way, the other dimensions of emotional intelligence, understanding emotions ( $t=1.204$ ,  $p=0.232$ ), understanding motivation ( $t=0.351$ ,  $p=0.726$ ), empathy ( $t=1.080$ ,  $p=0.283$ ), and human relations ( $t=1.386$ ,  $p=0.169$ ) also do not show the existence of statistically significant gender differences, since all the p-values are greater than the 0.05 level of significance. There is also no significant difference between male and female students in terms of academic achievement ( $t=0.978$ ,  $p=0.330$ ). These findings indicate that gender is not a serious factor that impacts emotional intelligence, its dimensions, and academic success among the senior secondary school students.

**Table 1.3: Showing Locale-wise Comparison of Emotional Intelligence (Overall & Dimensions) and Academic Achievement**

Variables	Locale	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	p-value	Result
<b>Emotional Intelligence (Total)</b>	Urban	30	23.70	3.76	2.731	0.007	Significant
	Rural	70	21.30	4.59			
<b>Understanding Emotions</b>	Urban	30	2.71	0.74	2.376	0.019	Significant
	Rural	70	2.30	0.92			
<b>Understanding Motivation</b>	Urban	30	6.24	0.95	2.057	0.042	Significant
	Rural	70	5.77	1.28			
<b>Empathy</b>	Urban	30	7.93	1.30	2.589	0.011	Significant
	Rural	70	7.13	1.63			
<b>Human Relations</b>	Urban	30	6.81	1.20	2.707	0.008	Significant
	Rural	70	6.10	1.24			
<b>Academic Achievement</b>	Urban	30	74.59	6.98	2.468	0.015	Significant
	Rural	70	70.60	8.33			

## Beyond Intelligence Quotient: The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Academic Achievement among Senior Secondary School Students

According to the table 1.3, statistical significant differences between urban and rural senior secondary school students in terms of overall emotional intelligence and all its dimensions at 0.05 level of significance existed. The overall emotional intelligence score was substantially high among urban students ( $t = 2.731$ ,  $p = 0.007$ ). The dimension wise analysis indicated that there were significant differences in the sub components of emotional intelligence, such as, understanding emotions ( $t = 2.376$ ,  $p = 0.019$ ), understanding motivation ( $t = 2.057$ ,  $p = 0.042$ ), empathy ( $t = 2.589$ ,  $p = 0.011$ ) and human relations ( $t = 2.707$ ,  $p = 0.008$ ), with urban respondents performing better in all the areas than their rural counterparts. In addition, the differences in the academic performance between the two groups were also found to be very significant ( $t = 2.468$ ,  $p = 0.015$ ) thus, indicating that geographic locale plays a very strong role in influencing the emotional intelligence and performance in senior secondary school students.

**Table 1.4: Showing group comparison of Emotional Intelligence and Academic Achievement with respect to Stream**

Variable	Source of Variation	df	Mean Square	F-value	p-value	Result
Emotional Intelligence	Between Groups	2	12.47	0.684	0.507	Not Significant
	Within Groups	97	18.23			
Academic Achievement	Between Groups	2	28.14	0.901	0.409	Not Significant
	Within Groups	97	31.21			

**Table 1.4.1: Scheffé Post Hoc Test for Emotional Intelligence and Academic Achievement with respect to Stream**

Variable	Stream Comparison	Mean Difference	p-value	Result
Emotional Intelligence	Science vs Arts	0.41	0.621	Not Significant
	Science vs Commerce	0.58	0.538	Not Significant
	Arts vs Commerce	0.17	0.812	Not Significant
Academic Achievement	Science vs Arts	1.24	0.487	Not Significant
	Science vs Commerce	1.89	0.361	Not Significant
	Arts vs Commerce	0.65	0.709	Not Significant

The variance analysis showed that the emotional intelligence ( $F = 0.684$ ,  $p = 0.507$ ) and academic success ( $F = 0.901$ ,  $p = 0.409$ ) between the senior secondary school students in the different academic tracks were not significantly statistically different at the level of 0.05. The  $p$ -values therefore surpassed the standard value hence justifying rejection of the alternative hypotheses and acceptance of the null hypotheses. These results were further supported by Complementary Scheffe post-hoc tests that none of the pairwise comparisons between the groups of Science, Arts and Commerce showed any significant means differences in terms of either emotional intelligence or academic results. All these results suggest that no identifiable impact of the chosen academic stream exists on the emotional intelligence of students as well as their academic performance.

## Beyond Intelligence Quotient: The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Academic Achievement among Senior Secondary School Students

**Table 1.5: Showing relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Academic Achievement among senior secondary students**

		Emotional Intelligence	Academic Achievement
Emotional Intelligence	Pearson Correlation	1	.797**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	100	100
Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	.797**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100

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

The table 1.5 presents the correlation between emotional intelligence and academic achievement among senior secondary school students. The obtained Pearson's correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.797$ ) indicates a strong and positive relationship between the two variables. The correlation is statistically significant at the 0.01 level, as evidenced by the p-value of 0.000, which is less than the required level of significance. This result suggests that an increase in emotional intelligence is associated with a corresponding increase in academic achievement. Students who are better at understanding and managing their emotions tend to perform better academically. The finding highlights the important role of emotional intelligence in students' academic success and supports the view that emotional competencies contribute meaningfully to learning outcomes. Thus, emotional intelligence emerges as a key determinant of academic achievement among senior secondary school students.

### DISCUSSION

The current research paper creates a strong case in favor of emotional intelligence in improving academic performance among students of the senior secondary schools of learning institutions. The emotional intelligence was statistically significantly positively correlated with academic achievement ( $r = 0.797$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ), which implies that individuals with higher emotional intelligence scores have a higher tendency to perform well in the academic sphere. The finding is consistent with the earlier studies which have indicated a substantial role of emotional intelligence in academic achievement through the emotional regulation mechanism, motivational driving force, stress management ability, and positive interpersonal relationships (Giri et al., 2024; Mandloi and Pandey, 2024). Similar conclusions have been made by Caballero-Garcia and Ruiz (2025), according to whom students with better emotional intelligence are more scholarly engaged and have better learning results. There were no important gender variations in emotional intelligence or academic performance, indicating similar emotional competencies as well as academic potentials between male and female students. This finding aligns with the previous studies that found that gender has neither a uniform nor a substantial effect on emotional intelligence or academic achievement especially in secondary and higher secondary schools (Mandloi and Pandey, 2024). These results indicate that emotional intelligence is mostly determined by environmental and educational backgrounds, rather than gender-related dissimilarities. One notable observation is the strong locale effect, in which students in urban context scored higher in overall emotional intelligence, and its dimensions as well as academic performance as compared to students in rural settings. The latter finding is

## **Beyond Intelligence Quotient: The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Academic Achievement among Senior Secondary School Students**

supported by the previous literature, which has emphasized that emotional development and academic achievements of students are affected by contextual and environmental conditions, including the availability of educational resources, exposure to different social interactions, and the possibility of emotional learning (Araujo Munoz et al., 2024). Urban settings are often described as having a more holistic system of academic support and broader social exposure, which can be used to build emotional competence and result in future academic achievement. They did not find any significant differences regarding emotional intelligence or academic achievement between academic streams i.e. Science, Arts and Commerce. This finding supports previous studies in which emotional intelligence was assumed to be a universal process in all disciplines, as opposed to stream-specific (Caballero-Garcia and Ruiz, 2025). EI helps students cope with academic stresses and maintains motivation regardless of the major that the student is doing. Overall, the results of the current research contribute to the existing literature and make emotional intelligence an influential predictor of academic success, thus justifying the inclusion of socio-emotional learning in the school curriculum line with the comprehensive vision of the National Education Policy 2020.

### ***Major Findings of the Study***

1. The overall level of emotional intelligence among senior secondary school students was found to be moderate, with a mean score of 22.98, indicating an average level of emotional competence among the respondents.
2. The analysis revealed no significant gender difference in emotional intelligence ( $t = 0.288$ ,  $p = 0.774 > 0.05$ ), suggesting that male and female students possess comparable emotional intelligence levels.
3. Similarly, academic achievement did not differ significantly across gender ( $t = 0.978$ ,  $p = 0.330 > 0.05$ ), indicating that gender has no significant influence on students' academic performance.
4. A significant difference was observed with respect to locale in overall emotional intelligence ( $t = 2.731$ ,  $p = 0.007 < 0.05$ ), showing that locale plays an important role in shaping students' emotional competence.
5. Dimension-wise analysis of emotional intelligence showed significant locale-based differences in understanding emotions ( $t = 2.376$ ,  $p = 0.019$ ), understanding motivation ( $t = 2.057$ ,  $p = 0.042$ ), empathy ( $t = 2.589$ ,  $p = 0.011$ ), and human relations ( $t = 2.707$ ,  $p = 0.008$ ).
6. Academic achievement also differed significantly with respect to locale ( $t = 2.468$ ,  $p = 0.015 < 0.05$ ), indicating that students' place of residence influences their scholastic performance.
7. The ANOVA results revealed no significant difference in emotional intelligence across academic streams ( $F = 0.684$ ,  $p = 0.507 > 0.05$ ), suggesting that stream of study does not affect emotional intelligence.
8. A strong positive and statistically significant correlation was found between emotional intelligence and academic achievement ( $r = 0.797$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), establishing emotional intelligence as a key determinant of academic success among senior secondary school students.

### ***Educational Implications of the Study***

The implications of the findings of the current study are significant to the educational practice, particularly the area of senior secondary schooling. The existence of a significant and statistically significant correlation between academic achievement and emotional intelligence highlights the necessity to accept emotional intelligence as a vital component of

## **Beyond Intelligence Quotient: The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Academic Achievement among Senior Secondary School Students**

the development of the student as a whole, thus, in line with the general goals identified in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

To achieve success in enhancing such competencies, which include self-awareness, emotional self-regulation, empathy, and interpersonal skill, the learning process should include social and emotional learning (SEL) as an explicit part of the curriculum of educational institutions. These competencies acquisition is expected to improve the intrinsic motivation, resilience, and engagement of the students and eventually increase academic performance in a measurable way.

Second, the educators should also be provided with a specific professional development, the focus of which is the introduction of emotionally responsive pedagogical strategies. Teachers are able to create favorable learning environments that facilitate emotional well-being as well as academic achievement by being sensitive to student affective states and the dynamic classroom climate.

Third, the fact that there were no apparent differences between gender or stream in developing emotional intelligence indicates that the corresponding intervention may be used without any references to gender or stream differences, and there may be no necessity of tailoring programming to the specifics of both sexes or streams.

Fourth, the strong locale-specific differences highlighted in the data reflect a definite need of the context-specific emotional and academic-support models, especially in the resource-limited environments. To curb emotional and academic disparities, schools are recommended to enhance guidance and counseling services, peer-support systems, and co-curricular activity.

Lastly, emotional intelligence as a basic life skill should be preempted by the policymakers and curriculum designers so that it can be systematically incorporated into school curriculum. It is also reported that emotional intelligence promotion will not only lead to the improvement of academic performance but also personal development of students, their socialization, and life-long learning process, which will fulfill the overall educational goals outlined in the NEP 2020.

### **CONCLUSION**

The current research confirms the fact that emotional intelligence has a decisive role in the academic performance of high school students. The positive relationship that exists between emotional intelligence and academic attainment is strong and statistically significant and therefore conclusively stands emotional intelligence as a salient predictor of scholastic success. The observation is also in line with the growing body of research that academic excellence does not only depend on cognitive capabilities; but that it is largely moderated by emotional and social skills of pupils. The research also shows that both genders and academic stream do not introduce a strong impact on emotional intelligence or academic performance and thus the implication is that emotional competence is one such trait that can be developed in varied learner populations. However, the significant differences identified concerning the locale highlight how the contextual and environmental determinants affect the emotional and academic growth of students, hence the urgency of the need to provide equal educational support systems. In line with the aims and targets identified in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 (holistic, learner-centered, competency-based

## Beyond Intelligence Quotient: The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Academic Achievement among Senior Secondary School Students

education) the empirical findings indicate the need to incorporate emotional intelligence in the school curriculum. As educational outcomes, NEP 2020 emphasizes the development of life competences, socio-emotional learning, and well-being as important. The given research, therefore, supports this policy directive, as it demonstrates that emotional intelligence can improve the academic performance and bring overall development to students. To conclude, EI promotion among senior secondary school students is an unavoidable factor to achieve the larger educational objectives depicted in NEP 2020. Systematic incorporation of socio-emotional learning in the curricular design, pedagogical praxis and assessment structures can progress academic performance, emotional health, and lifetime learning processes by preparing the learners to be competent, resilient and responsible citizens.

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## Beyond Intelligence Quotient: The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Academic Achievement among Senior Secondary School Students

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## **Beyond Intelligence Quotient: The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Academic Achievement among Senior Secondary School Students**

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

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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