

Research Paper

Emotional Intelligence and Adjustment Pattern of Undergraduate Students

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ABSTRACT

Emotional intelligence is considered an important psychological construct that facilitates effective management of emotions, stress, and interpersonal relationships, thereby contributing to better adaptation in various life domains. The present study aimed to examine the differences in adjustment patterns among undergraduate students with emotional intelligence high and low levels. A descriptive survey research design was employed for the study. The sample consisted of 500 undergraduate second-year students (250 male and 250 female) aged between 18 and 22 years, selected from different colleges of Odisha, India, using a multistage stratified sampling technique. The Sevenfold Emotional Intelligence Scale (SEIS) and the Adjustment Inventory for College Students (AICS) were used to collect data which were analyzed using independent samples t-test through SPSS software. The results revealed significant differences between students with high and low emotional intelligence in aspects of adjustment, namely educational, social, health, and home adjustment. In each case, students with high emotional intelligence demonstrated better adjustment compared to their low emotional intelligence counterparts.

Keywords: *Emotional Intelligence, Adjustment Pattern, Undergraduate Students, Psychological Adjustment, Higher Education*

The development of emotional intelligence has emerged as a significant aspect of positive mental health in contemporary educational psychology. Many people agree that emotional intelligence is a key factor in helping people deal with academic stress, adjust to new situations, control their stress levels, and do well in school. In the context of higher education, emotional intelligence not only facilitates better academic adjustment but also empowers pupils to comprehend and address the underlying emotional and behavioral factors handing out attainment and failure in distinctive domains of reality.

Emotional intelligence (EI) refers to the ability to understand, perceive, regulate, and manage one's own as well as the emotions of others and use the awareness of emotion to handle thinking and behavior effectively. It is considered a component of social intelligence that involves monitoring emotional states, differentiating between them, and utilizing

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emotional information for adaptive functioning in interpersonal and intrapersonal contexts (Mayer, Salovey, & Brackett, 2004).

Goleman (1998) conceptualized emotional intelligence as comprising five core dimensions: social skills, empathy, self-motivation, self-regulation, and self-awareness. All these dimensions highlight the emotional competencies role in effective social and personal functioning. Expanding on this framework, Singh (2003) emphasized that emotional maturity, emotional competence, and emotional sensitivity are key psychological components that contribute to leadership, interpersonal effectiveness, and empathic understanding. Further, operational refinement of emotional intelligence has been provided by Kaur (2016), who developed the Seven-Fold Emotional Intelligence Scale (SEIS). This model assesses EI through seven aspects: Social Skills, Interpersonal Relations, Empathy and Acceptance of Others, Self-Esteem and Confidence, Self-Motivation, Self-Regulation and Responsibility, Self-Awareness and Appraisal etc. This multidimensional framework offers a comprehensive understanding of emotional functioning in individuals.

Inadequate emotional regulation is often associated with heightened psychological stress, mood instability, feelings of loneliness, and social withdrawal. Persistent difficulties in managing emotions may further increase vulnerability to anxiety and depressive tendencies, which in turn can negatively affect an individual's ability to adjust effectively in academic and social environments.

Adjustment is generally understood as the process through which individuals attempt to manage internal needs and external demands in order to achieve psychological and social balance. It reflects the capacity to cope with everyday challenges through adaptive behavioural and cognitive strategies. Rao (1990) defined adjustment as an individual's effective and harmonious interaction with the environment, enabling a relatively stable and stress-free functioning.

In the present study, adjustment entails a person's ability to handle emotional conflicts, internal tensions, and environmental demands in a balanced manner. It is seen as a sign of psychological integration and well-being, which makes a person, seem well-adjusted in society (Pathak, 1990). Specifically, students' adjustment pattern refers to the extent to which they achieve balance among academic, social, emotional, health-related, and familial domains of life. Effective adjustment enables students to meet educational demands while maintaining psychological well-being and social functioning. Transitioning from higher secondary education to undergraduate studies often involves exposure to new academic environments, social settings, and living conditions. Many students, particularly those living away from home, face challenges in adapting to these changes. Difficulties in adjustment may negatively affect academic performance and, in some cases, contribute to dropout behavior. In this context, emotional intelligence is considered a crucial psychological factor that may facilitate better adaptation to new academic and social environments. Therefore, the present study aims to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and adjustment patterns among undergraduate students.

Significance of Study

In the present competitive academic environment, students experience considerable psychological and performance-related pressure. The increasing emphasis on academic achievement often leads to rote learning practices, where conceptual understanding is limited and learning becomes mechanical in nature. Under such conditions, some students

struggle to cope effectively with academic and life demands, which may result in maladjustment, psychological distress, or disengagement from studies.

Reports from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) highlight concerning trends in student mental health in India. According to the Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India (ADSI) report (2021), 13,089 students died by suicide, reflecting a significant increase compared to previous years. A considerable proportion of these cases has been associated with academic stress and examination-related failure, indicating the urgent need to address student mental health and adjustment issues in educational settings. Research evidence suggests that academic success alone does not guarantee effective functioning in personal, social, and professional domains. Emotional intelligence is being pinpointed as a crucial psychological resource that contributes to better adaptation across multiple life situations, including academic adjustment, interpersonal relationships, occupational functioning, and overall psychological well-being.

Enhancing emotional intelligence among students may support their ability to regulate emotions, manage stress, and respond adaptively to academic and social challenges. It may also enable students to better understand the causes of failure and develop constructive coping strategies. In this context, emotional intelligence is not only relevant for academic success but also for promoting psychological health and effective adjustment. Thereby, the present study has been undertaken to examine the role of emotional intelligence in the adjustment patterns of undergraduate students.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of related literature plays an essential role in research as it helps the investigator to understand existing studies in the concerned field and identify research gaps. It provides a theoretical and empirical foundation for the present study and assists in developing a clearer understanding of how previous researchers have approached similar problems. Without a systematic review of earlier work, it becomes difficult to build a meaningful and scientifically grounded research framework.

Kashish Chopra and Mohammad Imran (2024) conducted a study on the relationship between emotional intelligence and adjustment levels. Their findings indicated that emotional intelligence has a significant influence on psychological well-being. Their findings further mentioned that emotional intelligence role is important in supporting students' mental health during the adjustment process, particularly when they adapt to living away from home in university settings. A strong association was also found between psychological well-being and adjustment levels, highlighting the importance of effective coping and adaptation strategies for maintaining emotional health.

T. Shyamaraja and P. U. Kochrekar (2024) examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and social adjustment among adolescent students. The results indicated a significant difference in social adjustment. The study also reported that emotional intelligence and social adjustment are found to be weakly correlated significantly and positively, suggesting that better social adjustment is connected with higher emotional intelligence among adolescents.

Ageng Apriyani (2023) studied how emotional intelligence is related to deaf individuals' adjustment. The results revealed a positive and significant correlation ($r = 0.674$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that better adjustment is related to higher levels of emotional intelligence. Finally,

the findings stated that individuals with higher emotional intelligence demonstrate more effective self-adjustment in comparison with lower emotional intelligence.

Kumar and Kumar (2022) sought to carry out a differential study on psychological well-being, emotional intelligence, and adjustment among intermediate students. Findings of the study revealed significant differences between boys and girls in adjustment levels and emotional intelligence. Girl adolescents scored more in emotional intelligence, whereas male students showed higher adjustment levels. However, no significant gender differences were observed in psychological well-being.

Mayer and Salovey (2022) reported a weak but positive association between dyadic adjustment and emotional intelligence. Findings from their study claimed that while emotional intelligence maintains relative stability over time, dyadic adjustment tends to decline. The study further indicated that emotional intelligence and duration of marriage have limited influence on dyadic adjustment in married individuals.

Ikpe et al. (2021) examined academic adjustment and emotional intelligence among second-year learners of university in Akwa Ibom, Nigeria. Their findings revealed that academic adjustment and emotional intelligence relationship is significant positive. The study concluded that for effective academic adjustment among university students, emotional intelligence acts as a crucial criterion.

M. T. P. Sabeena (2021) investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and adjustment level. The study reported a weak negative correlation ($r = -0.01261$), which was statistically significant. The findings explained that as emotional functioning improves, adjustment levels may also show variations depending on contextual and personal factors.

P. Arun Kumar (2019) found that most dimensions of emotional intelligence did not show a significant relationship with adjustment components among B.Ed. students. However, certain dimensions such as value orientation, altruistic behaviour, and empathy showed weak associations with adjustment variables. The study concluded that emotional intelligence does not have a strong direct influence on adjustment in the studied population.

P. Anthony Raj (2018) investigated emotional intelligence and adjustment among Ho Tribe high school students in Jharkhand. The study included 440 students and used percentage analysis, a t-test, and correlation techniques. The findings indicated that students from nuclear families and private schools demonstrated higher emotional intelligence and better adjustment. A significant positive relationship was also observed between emotional intelligence and emotional, social, and academic adjustment.

Kuldeep Singh Yadav (2018) studied the association between adjustment and emotional intelligence among students who belong to senior secondary school. Results of the study argued that pupils with more emotional intelligence showed higher adjustment in academic and social domains.

M. Tripathy and B. Sahu (2018) examined adjustment problems among high- and low-achieving students in high schools of Bhawanipatna, Odisha. The findings showed significant differences between the two groups across educational, social, emotional, health, and home adjustment areas. Moreover, their findings emphasized that adjustment difficulties

significantly affect performance in academia and total psychological well-being, highlighting the requirement of timely intervention and support.

S. Suyatno and K. N. Hidayat (2018) examined how emotional intelligence impacts social adjustment among children who belong to primary school. The study demonstrated that emotional intelligence's impact on social adjustment is positive and significant, indicating that emotionally intelligent students are better able to adapt socially.

Research Gap

Some relevant research gaps are as under-

- Most studies focus on general adjustment or academic outcomes, with limited attention to specific adjustment areas (home, health, social, educational) together.
- Research on emotional intelligence among undergraduate students in India, especially Odisha, is limited.
- Few studies use a comparative design (high vs. low EI groups) with standardized tools like SEIS and AICS.
- Existing findings are inconsistent, indicating a need for further clarification.

Objectives

This study aims at examining the differences in adjustment patterns among undergraduate students with high and low levels of emotional intelligence. Specifically, the study has the following objectives:

1. To examine the difference in home adjustment between undergraduate students with high and low emotional intelligence.
2. To examine the difference in health adjustment between undergraduate students with high and low emotional intelligence.
3. To examine the difference in social adjustment between undergraduate students with high and low emotional intelligence.
4. To examine the difference in educational adjustment between undergraduate students with high and low emotional intelligence.

Hypothesis

In line with the objectives, the following null and alternative hypotheses have been formulated:

- H_{01} : There is no significant mean difference in home adjustment between students with high and low emotional intelligence.
 H_1 : There is a significant mean difference in home adjustment between students with high and low emotional intelligence.
- H_{02} : There is no significant mean difference in health adjustment between students with high and low emotional intelligence.
 H_2 : There is a significant mean difference in health adjustment between students with high and low emotional intelligence.
- H_{03} : There is no significant mean difference in social adjustment between students with high and low emotional intelligence.
 H_3 : There is a significant mean difference in social adjustment between students with high and low emotional intelligence.
- H_{04} : There is no significant mean difference in educational adjustment between students with high and low emotional intelligence.

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H₄: There is a significant mean difference in educational adjustment between students with high and low emotional intelligence.

Variables

- **Independent variables:** Levels of emotional intelligence (low and high)
- **Dependent variables:** Home, health, social, and educational adjustment of undergraduate students.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The present study employed a descriptive survey research design. This design is considered apposite as it allows the investigator to thoroughly examine and describe the polarities in adjustment patterns and emotional intelligence among students in an undergraduate course without manipulating any variables. The study specifically focuses on comparing groups (high and low emotional intelligence) on different aspects of adjustment, namely educational, social, health, and home adjustment. The collected data were analyzed and interpreted using the statistical tool t-test with the help of the SPSS Programme.

Sample

The current study consisted of 500 undergraduate second-year (+3) students selected from colleges located in the districts of Angul, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Mayurbhanj, and Sundargarh of Odisha, India. The respondents were within the age range of 18–22 years and belonged to diverse socio-economic, cultural, and regional backgrounds. Out of the total sample, 250 were male students and 250 were female students.

Most of the participants were residing away from their homes in hostels, rented accommodations, or with relatives for educational purposes. A multistage stratified sampling technique was adopted for participant selection. At the primary stage, districts were chosen, followed by the selection of colleges and students from the respective institutions. Further, gender stratification was applied to ensure equal representation of male and female students in the sample. This sampling procedure was adopted to enhance representativeness and improve the generalizability of the findings.

Instruments

For Collection of data suitable tools or tests is of vital importance. Here following tools were used to collect data –

1. **Sevenfold Emotional Intelligence Scale (SEIS):** The Sevenfold Emotional Intelligence Scale developed by Prof. Sarabjit Kaur (2016) was used to measure emotional intelligence among undergraduate students. The scale consists of 70 items covering seven dimensions of emotional intelligence and follows a five-point Likert response format. The tool possesses satisfactory reliability and validity.
2. **The Adjustment Inventory for College Students (AICS):** The Adjustment Inventory for College Students is designed by A.K.P. Sinha and R.P. Singh. It was used to assess students' adjustment patterns. The inventory consists of 102 items measuring home, educational, health, social, and emotional adjustment. This tool has adequate reliability and validity and is widely used in educational and psychological research.

Procedure

Prior to collection of data, permission was solicited from the concerned college authorities. Participants were well aware of the study purpose, and their assent was taken before administration of the tools. The questionnaires were administered in group settings under standardized instructions. Participants were requested to respond honestly and independently, and confidentiality of their responses was assured. After completion, the response sheets were collected, screened, scored according to the respective manuals, and prepared for statistical analysis using SPSS software.

RESULTS

The results are presented hypothesis-wise to provide a clear and systematic understanding of each tested assumption. Each hypothesis is followed by its statistical outcomes.

Hypothesis 1: *There is a significant mean difference in home adjustment between students with high and low emotional intelligence*

Table No. 1 Showing Mean(X), Standard Deviation (SD), Standard Error and t-ratio of the students with high and low emotional intelligent group on the measure of Home Adjustment.

Groups	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error of Mean	Std. Error of Difference	df	t-Value	Level of Significance
High EI Group	261	14.13	0.793	.049	.068	498	34.469	P< 0.05
Low EI Group	239	11.78	0.724	.047				

Table No. 1 Difference Between High and Low EI on the Measure of Home Adjustment. A comparison of home adjustment scores between students with high and low emotional intelligence was carried out using an independent samples t-test to resolve whether a difference exists between the two groups statistically significant. The results demonstrated that pupils with high emotional intelligence (N = 261, M = 14.13, SD = 0.793) scored significantly higher on home adjustment compared to students with low emotional intelligence (N = 239, M = 11.78, SD = 0.724). The obtained difference was statistically significant, $t(498) = 34.469$, $p < .05$. Thereby, the magnitude of the mean difference indicates a clear separation between the two groups, suggesting that emotional intelligence level is associated with variations in home adaptation among pupils of the undergraduate course.

Hypothesis 2: *There is a significant mean difference in health adjustment between students with high and low emotional intelligence.*

Table-02 Showing Mean(X), Standard Deviation (SD), Standard Error and t-ratio of the students with high and low emotional intelligent group.

Groups	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error of Mean	Std. Error of Difference	t- df	Value	Level of Significance
High EI Group	261	13.13	0.786	.049	.065	498	35.606	P< 0.05
Low EI Group	239	10.83	0.642	.042				

Table No. 2 Difference Between High and Low EI on the Measure of Health Adjustment. Among students with high and low emotional intelligence scores, a comparison of health adjustment scores was carried out using an independent samples t-test to find whether a difference exists between the two groups statistically significant. The results in the context of H₂ show that students with high emotional intelligence (N = 261, M = 13.13, SD = 0.786) obtained significantly higher scores in health adjustment than students with low emotional intelligence (N = 239, M = 10.83, SD = 0.642). The difference was statistically significant, $t(498) = 35.606$, $p < .05$. Thus, the intensity of the mean difference denotes a clear partition between two groups, advocating that emotional intelligence level is related to differentials in health adaptation among undergraduate pupils.

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant mean difference in social adjustment between students with high and low emotional intelligence.

Table-03 showing Mean, Standard Deviation, of High and low emotional Intelligence group on the measure of Social Adjustment

Groups	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error of Mean	Std. Error of Difference	t- df	Value	Level of Significance
High EI Group	261	17.19	0.803	.050	.081	498	30.307	P< 0.05
Low EI Group	239	14.72	1.013	.066				

Table No. 3 Difference Between High and Low EI on the Measure of Social Adjustment. The independent samples t-test demonstrated a significant difference in social adjustment according to students with high and low emotional intelligence. Students with high emotional intelligence (N = 261, M = 17.19, SD = 0.803) obtained higher social adjustment scores than those with low emotional intelligence (N=239, M=14.72, SD=1.013). This difference was statistically significant, $t(498) = 30.307$, $p < .05$. Moreover, the magnitude of the mean difference shows a clear separation between the two groups, suggesting that students with higher emotional intelligence showed more social adjustment during the undergraduate period.

Hypothesis 4: There is a significant mean difference in educational adjustment between students with high and low emotional intelligence.

Table-04 showing Mean, Standard Deviation, of High and low emotional Intelligence group on the measure of Social Adjustment.

Groups	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error of Mean	Std. Error of Difference	df	t-Value	Level of Significance
High EI Group	261	18.76	1.240	.077	.098	498	41.376	P< 0.05
Low EI Group	239	14.72	0.899	.058				

Table-04 Difference Between High and Low EI on the Measure of Educational Adjustment. A comparison of educational adjustment scores between students with high and low emotional intelligence was carried out using an independent samples t-test to see whether the difference between the two groups lies statistically significant. On the measure of educational adjustment, students with high emotional intelligence (N = 261, M = 18.76, SD = 1.240) scored significantly higher than those with low emotional intelligence (N = 239, M = 14.72, SD = 0.899). The obtained difference was statistically significant, $t(498) = 41.376$, $p < .05$. Thus, the intensity of the mean difference implies a clear disparity between two groups, projecting that emotional intelligence level is connected with differentials in educational adaptation among undergraduate pupils.

DISCUSSION

The findings in Table No. 1 mention that respondents with higher emotional intelligence show significantly better home adjustment than those with lower emotional intelligence. The result aligns with the theoretical view that emotional intelligence enhances adaptive functioning through better emotional awareness and regulation. Students with higher emotional intelligence seem to respond constructively to family-related stress and adjust effectively to domestic expectations. This finding is in compliance with previous research. Chopra and Imran (2024) reported that emotional intelligence is affirmatively connected with adjustment and psychological well-being among university students. Similarly, Raj (2018) found a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and different domains of adjustment. Yadav (2018) also supported that higher emotional intelligence is linked with better adjustment patterns among students.

The outcomes indicate, in Table No. 2, that emotionally intelligent individuals are more capable of managing stress, maintaining emotional balance, and adopting healthier coping behaviours in daily life. From a psychological perspective, emotional intelligence supports self-regulation and stress management, which are essential for maintaining physical and mental well-being. This result is consistent with previous research. Chopra and Imran (2024) reported that emotional intelligence is positively associated with psychological well-being and adjustment among university students. Similarly, Ikpe et al. (2021) identified that academic adjustment and emotional intelligence are significantly and positive related, highlighting its role in overall adaptive functioning. Raj (2018) also supported that emotional intelligence is linked with better adjustment across emotional and social domains.

Social adjustment reflects how effectively students are able to interact, communicate, and build relationships within their peer and academic environment. The findings in Table No. 3 demonstrate that emotionally intelligent students are generally high skilled in understanding others' perspectives, managing interpersonal conflicts, and maintaining stable peer

relationships. Social adjustment reflects how effectively students are able to interact, communicate, and build relationships within their peer and academic environment. These abilities naturally contribute to smoother social adaptation in college life. The current finding is persistent with earlier investigation evidence. Suyatno and Hidayat (2018) reported that emotional intelligence significantly enhances social adjustment among students. Raj(2018) also found a strong positive relationship between emotional intelligence and social adjustment in adolescent population. Similarly, Chopra and Imran (2024) emphasized the role of emotional intelligence in improving students' adjustment and social well-being during university transition.

In Table No. 4, the findings of the present study reveal that students with higher emotional intelligence demonstrated significantly better educational adjustment, indicating that emotional competencies play an important role in academic functioning. Students who are emotionally intelligent are generally better at maintaining focus, handling academic pressure, and adapting to evaluation-related stress. These psychological resources help them engage more effectively in the learning process. This result is stabled with preexisting empirical outcomes. Ikpe et al. (2021) reported that emotional intelligence is significantly related to academic adjustment among university students. Yadav (2018) also got that student with more emotional intelligence exhibit greater adjustment in academic contexts. In addition, Raj (2018) observed a positive association of emotional intelligence with academic and social adjustment, further supporting the present findings.

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Conflict of Interest

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