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CORRELATION BETWEEN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN SAIDA WAHEED FMH COLLEGE OF NURSING, LAHORE

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Abstract

Background: *Emotional Intelligence reflects the capacity of nursing students to comprehend, regulate their emotions and cope effectively with the emotional behaviors. Having low emotional intelligence may cause academic burnout, trouble solving problems, an inability to express feelings properly and tendency to fixate on things rather than learning from them.*

Objective: *To ascertain a correlation between emotional intelligence and academic performance among nursing students at Saida Waheed FMH College of Nursing, Lahore.*

Materials and Methods: *A quantitative descriptive correlation study was conducted using convenience sampling of nursing students (n=152) from BSN 2nd 3rd and 4th year students at Saida Waheed FMH College of Nursing, Lahore. Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) was used and Pearson's correlation was done using Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) version-27.*

Results: *Among 152 nursing students (mean age 22.22 ± 1.39), participants reported generally high emotional intelligence, particularly in managing their own emotions and overcoming obstacles. However, Pearson analysis revealed no statistically significant correlation between any emotional intelligence dimensions and academic achievement (GPA) (P>0.05).*

Conclusion: *students exhibited positive emotional intelligence, there was no statistically significant relationship found between their emotional intelligence scores and their academic achievement (GPA). This suggests that for this group, EI did not significantly predict academic performance.*

Introduction: Emotions play a vital role in shaping human cognition, influencing how individuals perceive situations, direct their attention, learn new concepts, and solve problems (Ali, 2023). In the field of nursing where communication, decision-making, and compassionate care are fundamental emotions are deeply embedded in both academic and clinical experiences (McCloughen et al., 2020). Emotional Intelligence (EI) refers to the ability to understand, manage, and utilize emotions in positive ways that support effective thinking and meaningful interactions (Singh et al., 2022). As the demands on nursing professionals continue to increase, EI has become an essential component of nursing education (Xu et al., 2023).

Within educational settings, emotional intelligence contributes to stress management, teamwork, problem-solving, adaptability, and personal growth (Mayang, 2025). The ability to

regulate one's emotions while recognizing those of others is crucial in environments where patient safety, empathy, and interpersonal communication are highly valued. EI is generally viewed as consisting of five major components: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Isbell et al., 2020). Together, these elements support nursing students in responding constructively to academic pressures and clinical challenges (Aryuwat et al., 2024).

For nursing students, emotional intelligence forms the basis for effective coping, emotional stability, and healthy adjustment to demanding learning environments (Cuartero & Tur, 2021). Students with higher emotional intelligence tend to perform better academically, manage stress more effectively, and maintain greater emotional well-being (Năstasă et al., 2022). Since academic performance reflects a student's knowledge, skills, and ability to apply learned concepts, EI plays an influential role in shaping motivation, study behavior, and resilience (Pashchenko et al., 2024). On the other hand, low EI may lead to academic struggles, emotional imbalance, and difficulty handling stressful or unfamiliar situations (García-Martínez et al., 2021).

Given the emotionally intensive nature of nursing education, developing the capacity to understand and manage emotions is essential for student success (Haver et al., 2025). Although several studies have investigated emotional intelligence among nursing students, many have focused on Western populations where cultural and educational contexts differ significantly (Khan et al., 2021). In countries like Pakistan, cultural expectations, social norms, and demographic factors may influence the development and expression of emotional intelligence (Irfan & Kausar, 2020). Therefore, exploring the role of emotional intelligence in the academic performance of nursing students within this local context is important. Such understanding can guide improvements in teaching strategies, student support systems, and overall academic outcomes.

Material and Methods: This descriptive correlational study was conducted over six months at Saida Waheed FMH College of Nursing, Akbar Chowk, Lahore, to determine the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement among undergraduate nursing students. The study population included 2nd, 3rd, and 4th professional year BSN students, and using Slovin's formula, a sample of 152 students was selected through convenient sampling. Eligible participants were current BSN students willing to participate, while those with significant psychological disorders, active depression or anxiety, or recent major life changes were excluded. Data were collected over five weeks using printed questionnaires and Google Forms after obtaining informed consent, utilizing the validated Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Scale, which consists of 33 items across four factors and uses a five-point Likert scale. The tool, previously validated by Wafa et al. (2022) and reported to have a reliability of 0.90, was used alongside a demographic section. Ethical approval was obtained from the Head of Department, and confidentiality and anonymity were maintained. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, mean, SD) and Pearson correlation analysis were used to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement.

Results: A total of 152 undergraduate nursing students participated in the study. The demographic characteristics are presented in Table 1. Participants ranged in age from 19 to 26 years, with a mean age of 22.22 years (SD = 1.39). More than half of the students were female (55.3%), while 44.7% were male. Most students were enrolled in the 2nd professional year (40.8%), followed by the 3rd year (35.5%) and 4th year (23.7%). Regarding academic performance, 51.3% of students had a GPA between 3.0 and 3.6, while 48.7% had a GPA between 2.0 and 2.9.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 152)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	19–22 years	86	56.6
	23–26 years	66	43.4
	Mean ± SD	**22.22 ± 1.39**	
Gender	Male	68	44.7

	Female	84	55.3
Professional Year	BSN 2nd Year	62	40.8
	BSN 3rd Year	54	35.5
	BSN 4th Year	36	23.7
GPA Range	2.0–2.9	74	48.7
	3.0–3.6	78	51.3
Analyzed by frequency 'n' and percentage "%"			

Descriptive analysis of emotional intelligence items is summarized in Table 2. Overall, the majority of students demonstrated positive emotional intelligence tendencies. Most students agreed that they were able to recall previous obstacles and overcome them (64.5%), generate new ideas when in a good mood (49.3%), motivate themselves by visualizing positive outcomes (58.6%), and use positive moods to continue working despite challenges (53.3%).

Table 2: Summary of Key Emotional Intelligence Responses

Key EI Item	**Agree/Strongly Agree** (%)
Overcome obstacles using past experiences	64.5
Generate new ideas when in a positive mood	49.3
Motivate self through positive visualization	58.6
Use positive moods to persist despite challenges	53.3

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence dimensions and academic achievement (GPA). The results are presented in Table 3. Mean scores for emotional intelligence domains were as follows: Perception of Emotion (M = 30.88, SD = 5.43), Managing Own Emotions (M = 37.76, SD = 6.54), Managing Others' Emotions (M = 26.67, SD = 4.79), and Utilization of Emotion (M = 18.62, SD = 3.07). Correlation coefficients indicated weak and statistically nonsignificant relationships between GPA and all four emotional intelligence dimensions ($p > .05$), suggesting that emotional intelligence was not significantly associated with academic performance among the nursing students.

Table 3: Correlation Between GPA and Emotional Intelligence Dimensions (N = 152)

EI Dimension	**Mean ± SD**	**r**	**p**
Perception of Emotion	30.88 ± 5.43	0.082	.315
Managing Own Emotions	37.76 ± 6.54	0.049	0.546
Managing Others' Emotions	26.67 ± 4.79	0.098	0.229
Utilization of Emotion	18.62 ± 3.07	0.115	0.158

Discussion: This study examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement among undergraduate nursing students, with the aim of understanding whether emotional competence contributes to academic success. The findings indicate that while emotional intelligence is recognized as an important personal and professional attribute, it does not show a significant correlation with academic achievement in this sample (Habib et al., 2023). Emotional intelligence refers to an individual's capacity to recognize, understand, and manage emotions in oneself and others (Buşu, 2020). It encompasses skills such as self-awareness,

self-regulation, motivation, social awareness, and relationship management (Antonopoulou, 2024). Academic achievement, on the other hand, reflects a student's ability to meet educational goals, typically measured by performance indicators such as Grade Point Average (GPA) (Kumar et al., 2021). In the context of nursing education where students must manage stress, interact effectively with patients, and adapt to clinical environments both EI and academic performance are considered essential attributes (Foster & McCloughen, 2020).

The demographic findings of this study showed a higher proportion of female nursing students compared to male students. This pattern is consistent with the general gender distribution commonly observed in nursing programs, where female students frequently constitute the majority (Andrew et al., 2023). Some studies have suggested that female nursing students tend to score higher on emotional intelligence attributes; however, the present study did not focus on gender differences in EI scores, and thus no conclusion regarding gender-related EI variations can be drawn from these results (Prosen, 2022).

When examining the emotional intelligence characteristics of the participants, the findings indicated that many students believed recalling past experiences helped them navigate new challenges, demonstrating reflective capacity an important component of EI (El Othman et al., 2020). A substantial number of participants also reported that being in a positive emotional state enhanced their ability to solve problems (Madden et al., 2020). This aligns with theoretical perspectives on EI, which suggest that positive emotional states support clearer thinking, creativity, and decision-making (Tran & Van Pham, 2024). These responses highlight that nursing students do possess various emotional competencies, including the ability to manage emotions and use them to facilitate learning (McCloughen et al., 2020).

The study also showed that more than half of the students achieved a GPA within the range of 3.0 to 3.6, reflecting generally strong academic standing. Despite this, no statistically significant correlation was found between emotional intelligence subdomains and GPA. In simple terms, having higher EI did not necessarily translate into stronger academic performance (Halimi et al., 2021). This finding is consistent with other research that also reported an absence of a meaningful relationship between EI and academic achievement among nursing students (ALmegewly et al., 2022). The lack of correlation may be partly explained by the fact that GPA is predominantly a measure of cognitive ability, theoretical understanding, and academic skills rather than emotional or interpersonal competence (MacCann et al., 2020). EI, while essential for clinical practice, communication, and stress management, may not directly influence grades in written examinations or theoretical coursework (Romo et al., 2025).

However, it is important to acknowledge that several studies from different educational settings have reported contrasting results, indicating a positive association between EI and academic performance (Sánchez-Álvarez et al., 2020). Such discrepancies may arise from cultural differences, variations in teaching methods, or differing expectations from students in various countries (MacCann et al., 2020). Sample characteristics also play a role; for example, studies involving more gender-balanced samples or those from private educational institutions may observe different EI–achievement patterns (Padilla-Angulo et al., 2022). Additionally, interventions such as EI training incorporated into curricula may enhance students' emotional competencies and indirectly support academic performance, explaining why some studies reported positive correlations (MacCann et al., 2020).

Overall, the findings of the present study suggest that emotional intelligence, although valuable for interpersonal communication, stress regulation, and professional development, may not directly predict academic performance as measured by GPA. Instead, EI might contribute more significantly to clinical competence, communication skills, and professional behavior areas not fully captured by traditional academic assessments (Lee et al., 2025). Future studies may benefit from exploring other indicators of student success, such as clinical performance, teamwork, or patient interaction, to better understand the true impact of emotional intelligence in nursing education.

Conclusions: The results of the study showed very weak correlation between GPA and emotional

intelligence scores. The absence of correlation between emotional intelligence and academic achievement may have come from GPA focus on cognitive skills, overlooking emotional competencies. It is also observed that other factors including motivation, cognitive abilities, and learning strategies which influence the nursing student's performance should be investigated.

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