



Emotional Intelligence and Study Habits: A Correlational Study Among Undergraduates

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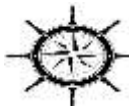
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Abstract

This quantitative study examines the role of Emotional Intelligence (EI) and its relationship with study habits among undergraduate students using a correlational cross-sectional survey design. The study's main focus was to find the association between four EI competencies, namely self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management, and four dimensions of study habits, including time management and routine, integration of internet and technology, focus and distraction control, and study quality. Through stratified random and simple random sampling, 400 undergraduate students (200 from public and 200 from private universities) in Karachi were selected as the sample, without any gender or age bias. Data were collected using the Self-Assessment on Emotional Intelligence scale and a 20-item self-constructed questionnaire on study habits, whose reliability showed good internal consistency; overall Cronbach's alpha was .869 (Study Habits $\alpha = .752$ and SAEI $\alpha = .926$). Pearson correlations revealed statistically significant, strong positive correlations between all dimensions of EI and study habits, with r values ranging from .55 to .91 ($p < .001$). However, the highest correlation was measured between self-management and technology integration ($r = .91$), followed by relationship management and study quality ($r = .86$), and social awareness and time management ($r = .85$). Overall, these findings indicate that students' EI is closely related to effective study habits, highlighting the importance of interventions that promote EI in higher education institutions. Therefore, it is recommended that higher education institutions introduce training programs and workshops to promote students' EI at the higher education level, especially self-management and the constructive use of technology, to improve study habits and academic performance.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence (EI), Study Habits, Undergraduates, Higher Education



Introduction

In higher education, academic success does not depend solely on intellectual ability; non-cognitive factors, particularly study habits and emotional intelligence (EI), also play a significant role in students' academic outcomes (Goleman, 1995; Stankov & Lee, 2025). Study habits refer to a set of consistent behaviors that include time organization, concentration, effective use of technology, and self-reflective study methods (Credé & Kuncel, 2008). Tang and He (2025) highlighted that poor study habits are often associated with academic stress, procrastination, and distraction, especially in the current digital age. EI is defined as the ability to recognize, understand, and use one's own and others' emotions effectively (Kanesan & Fauzan, 2019). The present study is grounded in Goleman's (1995) theoretical framework, which proposes four core dimensions of EI: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management.

Most studies have examined the relation between EI and general academic performance or stress (e.g., Bordbar et al., 2025; Garner et al., 2025), while its detailed association with specific study habit dimensions remains under-explored, especially in the Pakistani context (Suleman et al., 2019). In Pakistan, undergraduate students face multiple challenges, including academic stress and digital distractions, which are related to their study habits. While EI and study habits have been studied independently, their direct association remains largely unexplored. Thus, the present study aimed to examine the correlational association between EI and study habits among undergraduates at public and private universities in Karachi.

Research Objective and Hypotheses

The objective was to examine the correlation between dimensions of emotional intelligence and aspects of study habits among undergraduates.

H: There is a significant correlation between all dimensions of students' emotional intelligence and various aspects of their study habits.

H1a1: Self-management is positively correlated with technology integration.

H1b1: Self-awareness is positively correlated with technology integration.

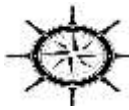
H1b2: Self-awareness is positively correlated with time management and routine.

H1c1: Social awareness is positively correlated with time management and routine.

H1c2: Social awareness is positively correlated with focus and distraction control.

H1d1: Relationship management is positively correlated with study quality.

H1d2: Relationship management is positively correlated with time management and routine.



Literature Review

Extensive literature indicates that EI is central to academic functioning (Saleem et al., 2020; Sultana & Sajjad, 2025). Caesarania et al. (2024) found that EI was significantly and positively associated with college adjustment ($r = .41, p < .05$). Bereded et al. (2025) found that EI was related to academic performance through engagement. Iqbal et al. (2022) found that self-awareness and self-management were positively related to study habits through cognitive engagement.

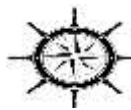
Wijekoon et al. (2017) showed that EI was positively related to academic self-efficacy, while noting cross-sectional limitations. Zhang et al. (2024a) highlighted a dearth of longitudinal research in Pakistan. Recent models suggest self-management is related to digital literacy (Ibrahim et al., 2024), EI is associated with self-regulatory practices (Bordbar et al., 2025), time management is related to engagement (Fu et al., 2025), social skills are associated with collaboration (Altaras Dimitrijević et al., 2025), and EI is positively related to resilience (Zhang et al., 2024b).

Research on study habits in Pakistan remains fragmented and predominantly Punjab-centric (Saleem et al., 2020). For indigenous measurement, Malik and Parveen (2013) developed an indigenous standardized inventory titled “Development of an Indigenous Study Habits and Attitude Inventory for the Adolescent Students,” and noted limited research in Sindh, with no published study examining its association with EI at the university level, leaving a significant contextual gap.

Despite this, most research has focused on advanced countries, and only a few studies have been conducted in emerging nations, with few exploring direct links between EI dimensions and study habits. Therefore, the present study examines associations between four EI dimensions and four facets of study habits among Pakistani undergraduates, hypothesizing strong positive correlations.

Theoretical Framework

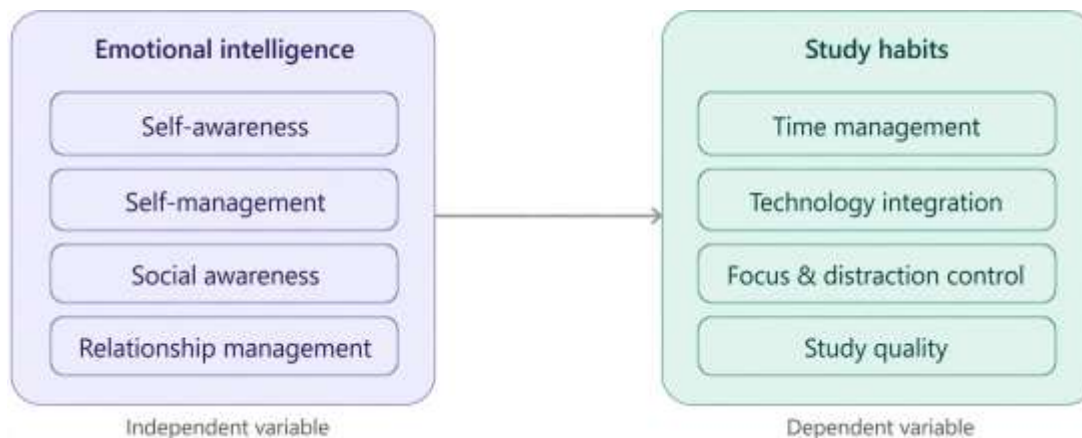
The framework is grounded in Goleman's (1995) model, which conceptualizes EI across four dimensions; self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. According to this model, these competencies facilitate self-regulation, motivation, and effective interpersonal functioning, which subsequently influence students' academic behaviors, including time management, technology integration, focus control, and study quality (Merlin & Soubramanian, 2024). Figure 1 presents EI as the independent variable and study habits as the dependent variable. Integrating Mayer and Salovey's (1997) ability model and Zimmerman's self-regulated learning theory, intrapersonal dimensions, social awareness, and relationship management underpin the regulation of study quality and the management of social distractions. Accordingly, the study hypothesizes that higher levels of emotional intelligence promote effective study habits via enhanced self-regulation and self-management, thereby contributing to



improved academic outcomes. Given the non-experimental design, the relationship between emotional intelligence and study habits is examined as correlational rather than causal.

Figure 1

Theoretical Framework of Emotional Intelligence and Study Habits



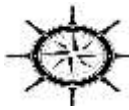
Research Method

This study employed a correlational cross-sectional survey design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Population and Sampling

The population comprised students enrolled in HEC-recognized general universities in Karachi (three public and three private). The sample size was determined using Cochran's (1977) formula for an infinite population (95% confidence, 5% margin of error). The calculated sample size was $n_0 = 384$. A total of 400 students participated in the study, which exceeds the minimum required size. According to Nanjundeswaraswamy and Divakar (2021), this is a standard and authoritative method for unknown populations. A multistage stratified random sampling technique was employed: Stage 1 stratification by institution type, public and private universities. Using the equal allocation method, 200 students were selected from each stratum to ensure balanced and unbiased comparison between groups. Stage 2: In the absence of a centralized database, a list of HEC-recognized universities in Karachi was compiled. Universities were randomly selected through the lottery method. Subsequently, departments within each university were randomly selected. At Stage 3, departmental enrollment lists were obtained from concerned offices and used as the sampling frame. Individual respondents within each stratum were selected through simple random sampling using random numbers generated in MS Excel. No gender quota was set, and no preference was given to any age group; all currently enrolled students aged 18 years and above were given equal opportunity to participate. This procedure avoided selection bias.

The structured questionnaire was administered electronically via a Google Form link distributed through institutional email and WhatsApp. Participation was voluntary.



The demographic composition of the achieved sample is presented in Table 1 as sample characteristics.

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of Participants

	N	%	M	SD
Gender			1.63	.483
Male	148	37%		
Female	252	63%		
Age			1.9175	.87327
18 - 20	137	34.3%		
21 - 23	187	46.8%		
24 - 26	53	13.3%		
27 - 29	18	4.5%		
30 - 32	5	1.3%		
Institution Type			1.50	.501
Public	200	50%		
Private	200	50%		

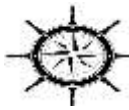
Research Instruments

The Self-Assessment on Emotional Intelligence (SAEI) scale developed by TalentSmart (2021), based on Bradberry and Greaves (2009), was adopted (20 items). A 20-item self-constructed study habits questionnaire was developed covering time management (5 items), technology integration (5 items), focus and distraction control (5 items), and study quality (5 items). Content validity was established through expert review by a panel of experts (PhDs in Educational Psychology and Education). The item-level content validity index (I-CVI) ranged from .80 to 1.00, and scale-level CVI/Average was .89, exceeding .80 (Lynn, 1986).

Face validity was confirmed via pilot testing ($n = 40$). Exploratory factor analysis confirmed a four-factor structure (loadings $> .50$). Responses were on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The reliability of the instrument (Cronbach's Alpha) was .869 for the total 40-item questionnaire, .926 for the SAEI, and .752 for the study habits, all values exceeding the acceptable standard of 0.70, confirming the instrument's high internal consistency and suitability for research.

Data collection and Analysis

Informed consent was obtained from participants before they participated in the study, and ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institution. However, questionnaires were distributed to participants in person so that questions could be explained as needed. Participants



were assured that their data would be kept completely confidential and would be used for research purposes only. Thus, Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 26. Pearson correlation was employed. Assumptions of normality were checked (skewness and kurtosis within ± 2). single-factor test showed the first factor explained 38.21% of the variance ($< 50\%$), indicating no serious common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained, and ethical approval was secured. Participation was voluntary and confidential, with right to withdraw.

Results

A very high correlation was found between self-management and technology integration, $r = .91$, $p < .001$. This was checked for construct overlap through exploratory factor analysis; items loaded on distinct factors (loadings $> .50$), indicating no construct overlap. Harman's single-factor test showed the first factor explained 38.21% of variance ($< 50\%$), indicating no serious common method bias. For descriptive statistics, study habits had $M = 3.13$, $SD = 0.46$ and emotional intelligence had $M = 3.62$, $SD = 0.74$ (Table 2). Skewness and kurtosis values for both variables were within ± 2 , therefore data were approximately normally distributed.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of Emotional Intelligence and Study Habits

Variable	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Study Habits	3.13	0.46	-0.55	0.37
Emotional Intelligence	3.62	0.74	-0.65	0.58

Note. $N = 400$.

Table 3 presents Pearson correlations between the four dimensions of emotional intelligence and study habits. All correlations were positive and statistically significant, $p < .001$. The strongest association was observed between self-management and technology integration, $r = .91$, $p < .001$. Self-awareness was strongly related to technology integration, $r = .82$, $p < .001$, and time management and routine, $r = .81$, $p < .001$. Social awareness showed the strongest association with time management and routine, $r = .86$, $p < .001$, and focus and distraction control, $r = .84$, $p < .001$. Relationship management was strongly associated with study quality, $r = .86$, $p < .001$, and time management and routine, $r = .82$, $p < .001$. Overall, the findings provide support for H.

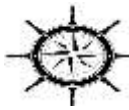


Table 3
Pearson Correlations Between Dimensions of Emotional Intelligence and Study Habits

	Self-Awareness	Self-Management	Social Awareness	Relationship Management	Time Management & Routine	Technology Integration	Focus and Discussion Control
Self-Management	.670 (.000)	1					
Social Awareness	.679 (.000)	.592 (.000)	1				
Relationship Management	.629 (.000)	.558 (.000)	.768 (.000)	1			
Time Management & Routine	.805 (.000)	.603 (.000)	.859 (.000)	.821 (.000)	1		
Technology Integration	.816 (.000)	.91 (.000)	.679 (.000)	.636 (.000)	.700 (.000)	1	
Focus and Discussion Control	.776 (.000)	.774 (.000)	.836 (.000)	.767 (.000)	.744 (.000)	.796 (.000)	1
Study Quality and Self-Awareness	.748 (.000)	.704 (.000)	.797** (.000)	.863 (.000)	.756 (.000)	.740 (.000)	.784 (.000)

Note. $N = 400$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure 2 displays a bar graph of Pearson correlation values between the four EI dimensions and the four study habit dimensions.

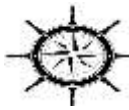
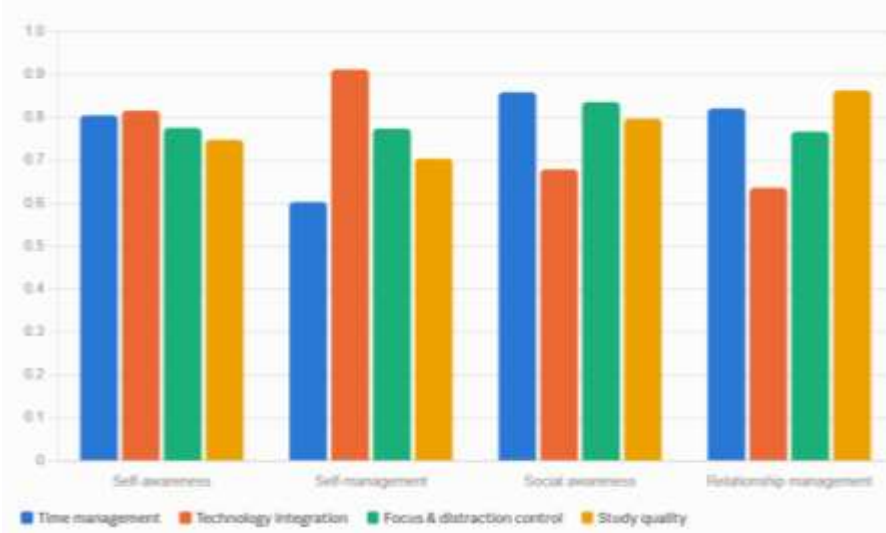


Figure 2

Bar Graph Showing Correlations Between EI Dimensions and Study Habits



Discussion and Conclusion

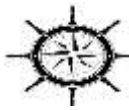
Discussion

The present study found that all four dimensions of emotional intelligence were positively related to different aspects of study habits. The strongest relation was observed between self-regulation and technology integration, $r = .91$, $p < .001$. This indicates that students who reported higher self-regulation also reported higher constructive use of technology for study. This result is in line with Iqbal et al. (2022), who reported a positive relation between emotional intelligence and cognitive engagement in study habits. It is also consistent with Goleman's (1995) framework, where self-management was theoretically linked with self-regulation.

Self-awareness was strongly related to time organization, $r = .80$, $p < .001$, and technology integration, $r = .81$, $p < .001$. This suggests that students with higher awareness of their own emotions also reported better time management.

Social awareness was strongly related to concentration and distraction control, $r = .83$, $p < .001$. This relation suggests that awareness of social and environmental cues was associated with better focus during study. Relationship management showed the strongest relation with study quality, $r = .863$, $p < .001$, indicating that students with higher interpersonal skills also reported higher reflective learning. This is consistent with Zhang et al. (2024a), who found a positive relation between the social aspects of emotional intelligence and academic behavior.

Overall, these findings are in line with the meta-analysis by MacCann et al. (2019), which reported a positive relation between emotional intelligence and academic outcomes beyond IQ and personality. Similarly, Bereded et al. (2025) reported a positive relation between emotional intelligence and academic engagement, and Caesarania et al. (2024) reported a positive relation



between emotional intelligence and college adjustment. Thus, the present results support the view of Stankov and Lee (2025) that non-cognitive factors are related to academic success.

Conclusion

The study found that EI (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management) was strongly and positively associated with all aspects of study habits, with the strongest association between self-management and technology integration. Findings suggest EI was related to effective learning strategies. Higher education institutions may consider EI-based support programs. Future research may use longitudinal or experimental designs.

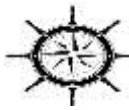
Limitations

The present study concludes that students' EI [self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management] was strongly and positively associated with all aspects of their study habits, with the strongest association found between self-management and technology integration.

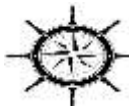
Overall, the findings suggest that EI was related to students' effective learning strategies. Higher education institutions may consider EI-based interventions as part of academic support. Future research may use longitudinal or experimental designs to examine the relation between EI and study habits among students of different levels.

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