

Emotional Intelligence and Classroom Adjustment among College Students

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Abstract

This illustrative study examines the relationship between emotional intelligence and classroom adjustment among college students. A synthetic dataset of 150 hypothetical students was used to demonstrate descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, simple linear regression, and group comparison. Emotional intelligence was represented by a composite score and classroom adjustment by a hypothetical adjustment score. The synthetic analysis produced a positive correlation ($r = 0.556$, $p < .001$) and a positive regression coefficient, indicating that higher emotional-intelligence scores were associated with higher adjustment scores in the illustrative sample. The direction of this synthetic finding is consistent with several published studies reporting positive associations between emotional intelligence and college or educational adjustment, although the literature is not uniform. The findings should therefore be understood as an example of research reporting rather than evidence about an actual student population.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, classroom adjustment, college students, university adjustment, educational psychology, emotion regulation

1. Introduction

The transition into higher education requires students to adapt to new academic expectations, social relationships, routines, assessment practices, and levels of independence. Successful adjustment involves more than academic ability; it also requires students to recognize and regulate emotions, cope with stress, establish relationships, and respond constructively to challenges. Emotional intelligence (EI) broadly refers to abilities or dispositions related to perceiving, understanding, using, and regulating emotions. Different theoretical models conceptualize EI differently, including ability-based models and mixed or trait approaches. Despite these differences, the construct has attracted considerable interest in educational psychology because emotional processes can influence attention, interpersonal behaviour, coping, motivation, and learning. Classroom adjustment in this paper refers to students' ability to adapt to academic and classroom demands, maintain appropriate relationships, manage emotional and behavioural responses, and participate effectively in the educational environment. The relationship between EI and adjustment is theoretically plausible because students who can identify and regulate emotional responses may be better positioned to manage

academic pressure and interpersonal difficulties. Recent research supports the relevance of this relationship but also indicates variability. Studies in India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and other settings have reported positive relationships between EI and adjustment, while some recent work has found only weak or nonsignificant associations. This mixed evidence makes the topic appropriate for further investigation.

2. Objectives

- To examine the level of emotional intelligence among hypothetical college students.
- To examine the level of classroom adjustment among hypothetical college students.
- To determine the relationship between emotional intelligence and classroom adjustment.
- To examine whether emotional intelligence predicts classroom adjustment.
- To compare classroom adjustment across low, moderate, and high emotional-intelligence groups.

3. Hypotheses

H0: There is no statistically significant relationship between emotional intelligence and classroom adjustment among college students.

H1: There is a statistically significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and classroom adjustment among college students.

4. Review of Literature

4.1 Emotional Intelligence

Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso conceptualized emotional intelligence as a set of abilities involving emotional perception, facilitation of thought, understanding, and regulation. Goleman's broader framework emphasized emotional awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Trait emotional-intelligence approaches focus more on typical emotional functioning and self-perceptions.

4.2 Emotional Intelligence and Adjustment

Evidence directly linking EI with college adjustment is increasingly available. Krajniak et al. (2018) examined EI and college adjustment among first-semester freshmen using the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire and the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire. Saini and Tyagi (2024) reported a strong relationship between EI and multiple adjustment domains among university students in India. Caesarania et al. (2024) reported a significant positive correlation ($r = .410$, $p < .05$) between EI and college adjustment among final-year students.

Bajaj and Ayub (2018), studying 200 college students in Malerkotla, Punjab, reported a significant relationship between EI and adjustment across home, health, social, and educational

domains. Their reported correlation was negative because of the direction/scoring of the adjustment measure; they interpreted higher EI as being associated with better adjustment. This illustrates why the scoring direction of adjustment instruments must be checked before comparing correlation signs.

Recent evidence remains mixed. A 2026 study of 300 undergraduate nursing students in Karnataka reported a weak positive association between EI and adjustment ($r = .12$), while finding a significant association between EI and academic performance. A 2026 study of 500 undergraduates in Odisha found significant differences in educational, social, health, and home adjustment between high- and low-EI groups. These findings suggest that EI may be relevant to adjustment, but the magnitude and consistency of the relationship can vary by sample, measure, and context.

5. Theoretical Framework

5.1 Ability Model of Emotional Intelligence

The ability model proposed by Mayer and Salovey views EI as a form of emotional information processing. From this perspective, students who can accurately perceive and understand emotions may be better able to regulate responses and make adaptive decisions in stressful academic situations.

5.2 Self-Determination Perspective

Self-determination theory emphasizes autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Adjustment to college may be supported when students experience competence in academic tasks, meaningful relationships, and sufficient autonomy. A systematic review by Kritikou and Giovazolias (2022) identified self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, learning climate, and faculty, peer, and parental autonomy support as factors relevant to university students' academic adjustment.

6. Methodology

6.1 Research Design

A quantitative correlational design is presented. The numerical data are entirely synthetic and are used only to demonstrate how an empirical study can be analyzed and reported.

6.2 Hypothetical Sample

The illustrative sample contains 150 hypothetical college students. No real participants were recruited for the dataset.

6.3 Variables and Measurement

Emotional intelligence is represented by a hypothetical composite score, with higher values indicating stronger emotional-intelligence functioning. Classroom adjustment is represented

by a hypothetical composite adjustment score, with higher values indicating better adjustment. In a real study, validated instruments such as an appropriate emotional-intelligence scale and the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire or another validated adjustment measure should be selected.

6.4 Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistics, Pearson product-moment correlation, simple linear regression, and a three-group descriptive comparison were used. Statistical significance was set at .05 for the illustrative inferential tests.

7. Results

7.1 Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Emotional Intelligence	150	72.82	9.44	40.0	95.0
Classroom Adjustment	150	80.22	9.26	56.2	95.0

The hypothetical sample showed a mean emotional-intelligence score of 72.82 (SD = 9.44) and a mean classroom-adjustment score of 80.22 (SD = 9.26).

7.2 Correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Classroom Adjustment

Variables	N	Pearson r	p
Emotional intelligence ↔ Classroom adjustment	150	0.556	< .001

The synthetic Pearson correlation was $r = 0.556$, $p < .001$, indicating a positive association between emotional intelligence and classroom adjustment in the illustrative dataset. The coefficient of determination was $R^2 = 0.309$, meaning that approximately 30.9% of the variance in adjustment is statistically associated with EI in this synthetic dataset. This value is not an empirical estimate for a real student population.

7.3 Simple Linear Regression

Predictor	B	SE B	t	p	R ²	Decision
Emotional intelligence	0.546	0.067	8.145	< .001	0.309	Illustrative significant

	positive predictor
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The illustrative regression equation is Classroom Adjustment = 40.48 + (0.546 × Emotional Intelligence). The positive slope indicates higher predicted adjustment at higher EI scores in the synthetic dataset.

7.4 Adjustment by Emotional-Intelligence Level

EI Level	N	Mean Adjustment	SD
Low	50	74.55	8.39
Moderate	50	80.59	8.12
High	50	85.52	7.91

The descriptive grouping shows a progressive increase in mean adjustment from the low- to the high-EI group. Because the dataset is synthetic, this pattern is illustrative rather than a claim about actual college students.

8. Discussion

The synthetic results show a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and classroom adjustment ($r = 0.556$). The direction is consistent with several published studies. Caesarania et al. (2024) reported $r = .410$ ($p < .05$) between emotional intelligence and college adjustment among final-year students. Saini and Tyagi (2024) likewise reported a strong relationship between EI and multiple adjustment domains among university students in India. A 2026 study of 500 undergraduates in Odisha found that students with high EI demonstrated better educational, social, health, and home adjustment than students with low EI. These studies provide empirical support for expecting a positive relationship.

However, the literature also cautions against assuming that the relationship is universal or large. A 2026 cross-sectional study of 300 undergraduate nursing students in Karnataka found only a weak positive association between EI and overall adjustment ($r = .12$) and reported no significant association with overall adjustment, despite a significant association with academic performance. This suggests that adjustment is multifactorial and may depend on academic environment, social support, personality, stress, institutional climate, and measurement choices.

The present synthetic coefficient should therefore not be interpreted as proof that EI causes classroom adjustment. The correlation and regression are included to demonstrate statistical reporting. In a genuine study, causal conclusions would require stronger designs and careful control of confounding variables.

8.1 Comparison with Previous Studies

The illustrative result is broadly compatible with the positive direction reported in several studies but should not be compared numerically as though the samples were equivalent. Differences in emotional-intelligence models, adjustment instruments, academic disciplines, year of study, culture, and sampling procedures can change effect sizes. Bajaj and Ayub (2018), for example, used an adjustment measure in which the scoring direction produced a negative correlation sign while their interpretation indicated better adjustment among higher-EI students. This highlights the importance of understanding measurement direction before comparing coefficients.

9. Educational and Psychological Implications

- Colleges can incorporate emotional-awareness, emotion-regulation, communication, and interpersonal-skills activities into student-development programmes.
- Orientation programmes can address emotional coping and adjustment challenges during the transition to college.
- Faculty can create classroom climates that encourage respectful communication, belonging, and constructive responses to academic setbacks.
- Counselling and student-support services can provide targeted assistance to students experiencing persistent emotional or adjustment difficulties.
- Interventions should not assume EI is the only determinant of adjustment; academic workload, peer relationships, family support, institutional climate, and financial or environmental pressures should also be considered.

10. Limitations

The central limitation is that all numerical data are synthetic. Therefore, no empirical conclusion can be drawn about actual college students. The paper also uses a simple correlational model and does not account for potentially important variables such as personality, academic stress, social support, socioeconomic background, year of study, or institutional context.

11. Recommendations for Future Research

- Use validated emotional-intelligence and college-adjustment instruments with documented reliability and validity.
- Recruit students from multiple colleges and disciplines to improve generalizability.
- Examine whether EI predicts academic, social, and emotional adjustment separately.
- Use longitudinal designs to examine whether EI contributes to adjustment over the transition into higher education.
- Test whether social support, self-efficacy, academic stress, or belonging mediates or moderates the EI-adjustment relationship.

- Evaluate whether structured emotional-intelligence interventions improve adjustment outcomes.

12. Conclusion

Emotional intelligence is a theoretically relevant and potentially useful factor in understanding how college students adapt to academic and interpersonal demands. The illustrative analysis shows how a positive EI-adjustment relationship can be examined through descriptive statistics, correlation, regression, and group comparison. Published evidence generally supports a positive association, although recent research also demonstrates that the strength and significance of the relationship can vary. Future empirical research using real, ethically collected data is needed to determine the magnitude and mechanisms of the relationship in specific college contexts.

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