

Emotional Intelligence and Self-Esteem: A Correlational Study among University Students

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Abstract: This research examined the association of emotional intelligence with self-esteem among university students in Quetta, Balochistan. Using a quantitative correlational design, data were collected from 219 students aged 17–30 years through online questionnaires comprising the Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (BEIS-10) and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES). Results showed a statistically significant but weak positive correlation ($r=.21$, $p<.01$) between Emotional Intelligence and Self-Esteem. This indicates that higher emotional intelligence is linked to higher self-esteem. Regression analysis confirmed Emotional Intelligence as a significant predictor, accounting for 4.3% of Self-Esteem variance. These findings align with the global literature, which highlights the role of Emotional Intelligence in shaping self-concept and psychological adaptation. The study suggests that enhancing Emotional Intelligence in the university can promote healthier self-esteem and emotional functioning. However, limitations include the use of convenience sampling and self-report measures. Future research should explore additional variables to better understand the mechanism of Emotional Intelligence and Self-Esteem within diverse cultures.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Self-Esteem, Student Well-Being, Positive Self-Concept, Emotional Stability, Psychological Adjustment, University Students

Introduction

The higher academic and social demands can place the students under stress. Especially university students, who are expected to balance their social and academic life to the best of their ability. And it requires not only good social skills and cognitive abilities but also our emotional stability. The way we perform in our academic activities and the way we act in society both have an impact on our self-esteem. Our behavior in social terms and performing in our academic activities, and balancing both are influenced by our emotional intelligence. Due to these reasons, emotional intelligence (EI) and self-esteem have been widely explored by many researchers. As university students are at the early stages of adulthood, balancing their functioning in academic and other roles, their self-esteem and emotional intelligence are very important to be kept at a balanced level.

Emotional intelligence is a term that was introduced by Salovey and Mayer in 1990. This term is used to understand and regulate the emotions of oneself and others around them. EI is an important factor in shaping the ability of people to manage stress in life. Particularly in universities where students have to face academic pressures with career uncertainty and emotional stressors, EI enables them to face the problems with motivation and a positive emotional state.

On the other hand, self-esteem is described as the individual's self-worth and self-acceptance. This term was introduced by Rosenberg in 1965. For university students, students with high self-esteem are mostly actively engaged in all the academic and social activities. And the ones with low self-esteem experience self-doubt, academic and social disengagement. The significance of both emotional intelligence and self-esteem becomes very salient during university years. Because in this phase of life, one experiences the exploration of personal identity and shifting social expectations. Various past studies have documented a positive association of EI with SE. Studies (e.g., Abdullah et al., 2022) suggest that emotionally intelligent

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individuals can better manage their emotions and develop a positive self-concept. Western (Molero Jurado et al., 2022) and indigenous research (Bibi et al., n.d.) both show a significant relationship between the variables.

Despite global interest relationship between the variables was underexplored within a specific culture, especially in developing countries. Cultural differences and social norms can also influence how we regulate and express our emotions. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct such research that is on the local level in academic settings, so that the psychological interventions can be adapted accordingly. This research was conducted to explore the relationship within the population of university students of Quetta.

Literature Review

A study in Spain examined 991 adolescents to explore how EI components—especially emotional clarity and emotional repair—predicted self-esteem and life satisfaction. They observed that EI accounted for 21% of the variance in self-esteem, confirming EI as a significant predictor. (Guasp Coll et al., 2020)

An Iranian study observed a strong positive link of EI with SE in patients with an Intestinal Stoma. The research highlights how EI can buffer psychological distress in medical populations, influencing self-worth during periods of physical and emotional vulnerability (Saati et al., 2021). An Indian study with young adults confirmed a meaningful positive association of EI with SE (Selvan & Vijayan, 2021).

Jawabreh (2024) in a study with senior nursing students identified that EI was moderately and positively associated with SE. A study with Secondary Students in Pakistan found that EI was significantly linked to SE. Additionally, factors like gender, grade level, and family income influenced self-esteem outcomes, indicating that socio-demographic factors moderate the relationship (Shah et al., 2019).

Mubashir et al. (2023) studied Pakistani adolescents and observed a meaningful association of EI with SE. In a study with undergraduates at the University of Peshawar, it was observed that EI significantly predicted self-esteem along with academic achievement (Muhammad et al., 2024). In a study, Molero Jurado et al. (2022) examined the association of EI with SE among Spanish physicians. They found that physicians with higher self-esteem demonstrated better stress management, adaptability, and positive mood, all essential components of EI. The study also revealed gender differences, with women scoring higher in interpersonal EI and men in adaptability.

Another study with students across six health professional programs found a significant association between self-esteem, emotional intelligence (Sa et al., 2019). A study by Pérez-Fuentes et al. (2019) investigated how emotional intelligence (EI), self-efficacy, and empathy predict self-esteem among Spanish nurses. Results showed that EI dimensions, particularly mood, adaptability, and intrapersonal skills, had a significant positive association with self-esteem, with mood emerging as the most significant predictor.

Methodology

A correlational and cross-sectional design was used to explore the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and self-esteem (SE) among university students.

Objective of the study

To explore the relationship of Emotional Intelligence (EI) with Self-esteem (SE).

Hypothesis

H1: Emotional intelligence would be positively linked with self-esteem.

Participants

The sample consisted of university students from various Institutes in Quetta, Balochistan. The sample size consisted of 219 participants. And the age range was from 17 – 30 years. Both male and female participants were included in the sample.

Instruments

Data was collected through structured online questionnaires distributed via Google Forms. The questionnaire consisted of:

Demographics: Age, Gender, Enrolled students.

Emotional Intelligence Scale: The Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (BEIS-10), a self-reported measure consisting of 10 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1= Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), was used to measure the emotional Intelligence of participants.

Self-Esteem Scale: The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, a widely used self-report measure to assess global self-esteem, was used to measure the participants' self-worth. It consists of 10 items rated on a 4-point Likert Scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Both are Likert scales that demonstrated strong reliability and validity in various previous studies.

Ethical Consideration and Procedure

The study adhered to APA 7 ethical standards, i.e., permission was obtained from the institute, and the internal committee of the psychology department granted approval to conduct the study. Authors of the questionnaires were contacted to obtain permission for their use in data collection. Participants were approached with an online consent form, which clearly stated the voluntary nature of participation and informed them that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Demographic and study questionnaires were subsequently completed by the participants via Google Forms, taking approximately 20 to 30 minutes. The participation of the respondents was acknowledged and appreciated. The confidentiality of the participants was maintained throughout the study.

Results

Data was analyzed using SPSS, version 26. Descriptive statistics were calculated for demographic data and overall EI and SE scores. Pearson's Correlation Coefficient was used to examine the relationship between the variables. Regression analysis was conducted to find out the predictive value of EI on SE. An independent Samples T-Test was run to explore the mean score difference.

Table 1
Demographic Description of Participants (N=219)

Characteristics	Category	f	%
Gender	Male	113	51.6
	Female	106	48.4
Age	17-23	174	79.5%
	24-30	45	20.5%

Table 1 describes the demographic characteristics of the participants in terms of gender and age categories. It shows that out of the total participants, 51.6% were male (113participants) and 48.4% were female (106 participants). Regarding age, 79.5% of participants were between 17-23 years old (174 participants), while 20.5% were aged between 24-30 years (45 participants). This indicates that the sample mostly comprised young adults, with almost equal representation of both genders.

Table 2
Distribution of the Scores for Emotional Intelligence and Self-Esteem Scale (N=219)

Variables	Items	M	SD	α	Range		Skew
					Min	Max	
BEIS-10	10	36.47	7.477	.79	12	50	-.996(.166)
RSES	10	17.43	5.653	.76	0	30	-.156 (.166)

Note. BEIS-10 = Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale, RSES = Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.

Table 2 presents the score distribution of scales such as Mean, median, standard deviation, Range (min/max), and Skewness. The lowest value of BEIS-10 was 12, and the highest was 50, whereas the lowest value of RSES is 0, and the highest is 30.

Table 3
Correlation Coefficient between Emotional Intelligence and Self-Esteem (N=219)

Variables	BEIS-10	RSES
BEIS-10	-	.21**
RSES		-

Note. BEIS-10 = Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale, RSES = Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. ** $p < 0.01$.

The table shows a small positive correlation (.21**) between Emotional intelligence and Self-Esteem, which is statistically significant at the $p < .01$ level. This means, as Emotional Intelligence scores increase, Self-Esteem scores also tend to increase slightly as well, and this relationship is unlikely due to chance, though it is weak in strength.

Table 4
Regression Coefficient of Emotional Intelligence and Self-Esteem (N=219)

Variable	B	SE	β	R^2
Constant	11.694	1.869		
EI	.157	.050	.21	.043

Note: BEIS-10 = Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale, RSES = Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, *** $p < .001$.

The results of the regression analysis show that Emotional Intelligence is a significant predictor of the outcome variable. The unstandardized coefficient (B) of .157 indicates that for each one-unit increase in Emotional Intelligence, the outcome increases by .157 units. The standardized beta (β) of .208 suggests a small positive effect. The standard error of B is .050, indicating your estimate of how precise this estimate is; the overall R^2 was .043, meaning that Emotional Intelligence accounts for 4.3% of the variance in the outcome variable. Overall, the statistical model is significant at $F = 9.832, P < .001$.

Discussion

There is substantial literature on emotional intelligence and self-esteem among students; however, such studies are limited in Pakistan, particularly in Quetta. Therefore, this study was conducted to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and self-esteem among university students in Quetta, Balochistan to fill the gap in the literature and to provide useful implications.

The correlational analysis indicated a positive and significant relationship between emotional intelligence and self-esteem among university students in Quetta, Balochistan. This means that as emotional intelligence increases, so does self-esteem. This finding supports the hypothesis of the present study and aligns with results documented by both Western and Indigenous research (e.g., Guasp-Coll et al., 2020). Findings reported by Anila et al. (2023) support the assumption that emotional factors play a vital role in forming self-perceptions. This result is also consistent with Salovey and Mayer’s (1990) concept of EI as an important factor in psychological adaptation, and with Rosenberg’s (1965) assertion that self-esteem reflects an individual’s internal self-worth.

The regression analysis revealed a significant effect of emotional intelligence on self-esteem among university students in Quetta, Balochistan. This finding is consistent with previous and recent studies reporting a positive and significant effect of emotional intelligence on self-esteem among students (Alipour et al., 2024; Miezah et al., 2025).

These findings are relevant to Quetta’s cultural context, where students face numerous stressors such as limited academic resources and traditional social expectations. In such circumstances, emotional intelligence can play a crucial role in helping them face these challenges without undermining their confidence and self-perception.

Conclusion

The current research provides evidence for a positive association between emotional intelligence and self-esteem, suggesting that emotional intelligence is important not only for interpersonal and academic functioning but also for the development of a healthier self-concept. Therefore, emotional intelligence can be recognized as a key element in students' overall development (Nie et al., 2025; Sun & Lyu, 2022).

Limitations

This study employed a convenience sampling method, which may limit the generalizability of the results to the broader student population. The reliance on self-report questionnaires introduces the possibility of social desirability and response biases. Furthermore, the cross-sectional design restricts the ability to infer causal relationships between EI and SE. The study also did not account for potential moderating or mediating variables, such as cultural norms, personality traits, or social support, that may influence the observed association.

Recommendations

Future research should adopt probability sampling methods to enhance representativeness and external validity. Longitudinal or experimental designs could better establish causal links between Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Self-esteem (SE). Additionally, incorporating qualitative methods or multi-informant assessments may provide richer insights. Exploring cultural, gender, and socioeconomic factors will deepen the understanding of the EI–SE relationship in diverse student populations.

Implications

The findings highlight the importance of emotional intelligence (EI) as a contributing factor to self-esteem (SE) among university students in Quetta, Balochistan. Even though the correlation was weak, the significant association suggests that fostering EI through targeted training, counseling programs, and curriculum integration could promote healthier self-perceptions and emotional resilience. Universities could implement workshops and peer-support initiatives to strengthen students' emotional skills, thereby indirectly improving overall well-being and academic adjustment.

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