

***Emotional Intelligence and Academic Success in Higher Education: Insights from an Algerian Case Study at Mohamed Boudief University, M'Sila***

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Received: 12-08-2025

Accepted: 08-11-2025

Published: 01-06-2026

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**Abstract:**

This study examines the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and academic success among undergraduate students at Mohamed Boudief University, M'Sila, Algeria. Using the Emotional Intelligence Scale and GPA records from 210 participants, Pearson's correlation revealed a moderate positive link between EI and academic achievement ( $r = 0.52, p < 0.01$ ). Multiple regression showed self-motivation and emotional management as the strongest predictors of GPA. Semi-structured interviews highlighted EI's role in stress regulation, relationship building, and goal persistence. No significant differences were found in overall EI across gender or field of study, although females scored higher in empathy and interpersonal skills. Findings suggest that EI contributes to academic performance beyond cognitive ability. Integrating EI-focused workshops and mentoring into university programs could strengthen students' resilience, collaboration, and academic outcomes.

**Keywords:** emotional intelligence, university, academic success, students' resilience, self-motivation

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## **1.Introduction**

Emotional intelligence (EI) refers to the ability to perceive, regulate, and manage emotions, enabling flexible thinking and a deeper understanding of their meanings and consequences (Nazari & Emami, 2012). Since the 1990s, EI has been widely examined, with researchers exploring its potential links to psychological and educational outcomes (AL-Qadri & Zhao, 2021). From the perspective of educational psychology and learning, EI skills are expected to be positively associated with academic achievement, serving as an important factor in preventing academic failure (Howard et al., 2021). Furthermore, previous studies have highlighted EI as a significant predictor of various aspects of well-being, health, and overall quality of life (Maalouf et al., 2022; Shafait et al., 2021). EI is considered essential in both personal and professional domains, as it influences one's capacity to control behaviour, navigate complex social interactions, and make effective decisions that lead to positive results. Unlike cognitive intelligence, which generally remains stable over the lifespan, EI has the potential to be developed and improved over time (Dhliwayo & Coetzee, 2020).

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

While academic achievement in higher education is often linked to cognitive ability, research increasingly shows that emotional intelligence (EI) also plays a vital role in student success. Skills such as self-motivation, emotional regulation, and interpersonal competence can influence learning behaviors, stress management, and overall performance. However, EI remains underemphasized in many academic programs, leaving a gap in understanding its contribution

compared to cognitive factors. This study seeks to explore the relationship between EI and academic achievement, identify its most influential components, and assess its predictive value beyond cognitive ability.

### 3. Research Objectives

- To examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement among higher education students.
- To identify the emotional intelligence components that have the greatest influence on students' academic success.

Bouakaz Amel

- To determine the extent to which emotional intelligence can predict academic performance beyond cognitive ability.

### 4. Research Questions

- What is the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement among higher education students ?
- Which components of emotional intelligence contribute most significantly to academic success ?
- To what extent can emotional intelligence predict academic performance compared to cognitive ability ?

## 5.The Theoretical Framework

### 5.1. Historical Evolution of Emotional Intelligence

The roots of emotional intelligence (EI) can be traced back to the early 20th century. In 1920, E. L. Thorndike introduced the concept of *social intelligence*, describing it as the ability to understand and interact effectively with others understanding their motivations, ways of working, and how to maintain productive relationships (Goleman, 1995). Core elements of social intelligence, such as self-awareness, empathy, and interpersonal skills, later became fundamental components of emotional intelligence. By the 1940s, David Wechsler expanded the definition of intelligence to include both cognitive (intellectual) and non-cognitive (emotional) aspects.

However, while the cognitive dimension received considerable attention, the emotional dimension was largely overlooked at the time. In the 1980s, Dr. Reuven Bar-On began investigating factors contributing to life success. His research highlighted the role of non-cognitive abilities and, in 1985, he coined the term *Emotional Quotient (EQ)* as a way to measure aspects of general intelligence related to emotion. Bar-On proposed five core components of EI: intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, stress management, adaptability, and general mood. He emphasized that EI enables individuals to navigate daily challenges, maintain self-control, and build effective social relationships. Similarly, Higgs and Dulewicz (1999) identified seven EI elements: self-awareness, emotional regulation, motivation, interpersonal sensitivity, persuasion, decisiveness, and integrity.

Bouakaz Amel

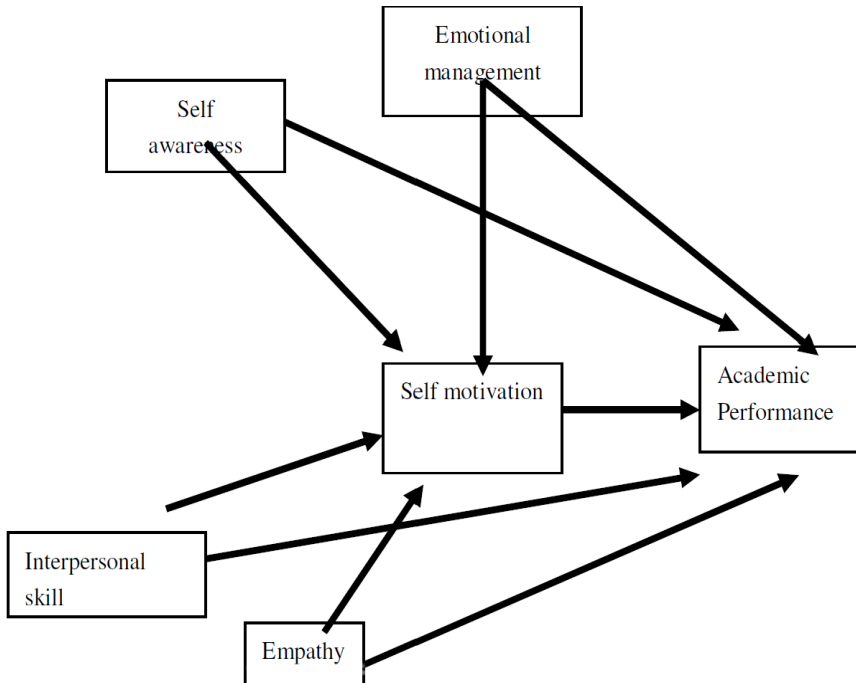
Parallel to these developments, Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (1983) recognized *intrapersonal* and *interpersonal* intelligence as integral to emotional intelligence. Intrapersonal intelligence involves self-awareness, emotional regulation, and goal setting, while interpersonal intelligence concerns empathy, emotional sensitivity, and effective communication together forming a foundation for high EI. The term *emotional intelligence* gained academic definition through the work of John D. Mayer and Peter Salovey in the early 1990s. They defined it as a form of social intelligence involving the ability to perceive, understand, and manage one's own emotions and those of others, using this information to guide thought and action. Their framework identified five main

components: self-awareness, emotional regulation, self-motivation, empathy, and interpersonal skills. In 1997, they refined the definition to emphasize the role of emotions in enhancing thought processes and promoting both emotional and intellectual growth. Later, Mayer et al. (2008) argued that individuals with higher EI process emotional information more effectively, using it adaptively to benefit themselves and others.

The concept became widely recognized following Daniel Goleman's influential 1995 publication, which asserted that IQ accounts for only about 20% of life success, with the remainder influenced by factors such as EI, luck, and social background. Goleman argued that EI has a greater impact on life outcomes than IQ and can be developed through targeted training. He defined EI as the capacity to understand and manage one's own emotions, recognize and influence the emotions of others, maintain motivation, and foster effective relationships. Building on this perspective, researchers have developed models linking EI's core elements particularly self-motivation to academic achievement, highlighting its central role in higher education performance.

Bouakaz Amel

**Figure1: Model Relationship Between Elements of Self-Awareness, Emotional Management, Self Motivation, Empathy and Interpersonal Skills on Academic Performance.**



To reinforce the proposed model, it is essential to review previous research and existing literature that examine the relationship between emotional intelligence particularly its individual components and academic performance.

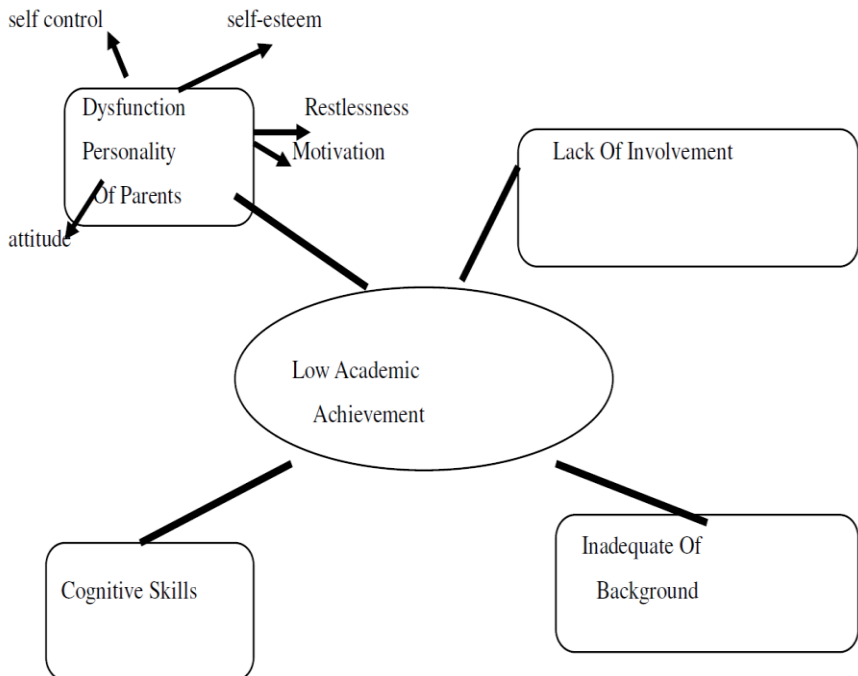
## **5.2. Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Academic Success**

Several factors can contribute to a student's poor academic performance, one of which is dysfunctional personality traits, as these

can negatively influence the development of emotional intelligence and, in turn, hinder academic success.

Bouakaz Amel

**Figure 2: Model of low academic achievement (Adapted from Krouse & Krouse, 1981; Brown & Langer, 1990)**



According to the model, dysfunction can be understood as a set of personality traits characterized by a lack of motivation, low confidence, poor self-esteem, limited self-control, and high levels of anxiety. Students displaying these traits are considered to possess low emotional intelligence, which can negatively impact their academic performance. Petrides et al. (2004) examined the relationship between trait emotional intelligence, academic performance, and cognitive ability, finding that emotional intelligence served as a moderating factor between cognitive ability and academic

achievement. Similarly, Parker et al. (2004) concluded that various components of emotional intelligence can predict academic success. Their study revealed that high-achieving students scored significantly higher than their less successful peers in three areas of emotional intelligence: interpersonal skills, stress management, and adaptability. Rode et al. (2007) proposed two reasons why emotional intelligence is linked to academic performance: first, because academic tasks often involve considerable ambiguity; and second, because much of academic work is self-directed, requiring strong self-management skills. Therefore, students with higher emotional intelligence are more likely to excel academically.

Bouakaz Amel

Svetlana (2007) further emphasized the importance of integrating emotional intelligence training into secondary school curricula, citing the strong relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement.

### **5.3. The Relationship Between Self-Awareness and Academic Success**

Self-awareness involves recognizing personal interests, identifying emotions, and understanding how these emotions influence performance. It plays a vital role in helping individuals acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses, which in turn fosters self-confidence. A long-term study by Holahan and Sears (1995), which followed over 1,000 individuals with high IQs from childhood to retirement, revealed that those who developed self-confidence in their early years achieved greater career success. Similarly, Johnson (2009) emphasized that emotional well-being is essential for effective

learning. The ability to understand how one learns is a crucial factor in academic achievement. Students who are self-aware and intrinsically motivated are more likely to excel academically.

#### **5.4. The Role of Emotional Management in Academic Success**

In the classroom, self-control over both cognition and behavior plays a crucial role in learning and academic performance (Corno & Mandinach, 1983; Corno & Rohrkemper, 1985). A study in Sommerville that tracked 450 men two-thirds from low-income families and one-third with IQ scores below 90 found that IQ had little correlation with career and life success. Instead, success was more strongly linked to the ability to manage concerns, regulate emotions, and maintain positive relationships (Snarey & Vaillant, 1985).

Self-control involves regulating one's behavior, thoughts, and emotions enhancing positive tendencies while reducing or eliminating negative ones. According to Yates (1986), effective self-control can:

1. Reduce challenges encountered,
2. Prevent problems by limiting harmful actions,  
Bouakaz Amel
3. Support the achievement of desired goals, and
4. Prevent performance decline.

All students face moments of frustration and setbacks in their academic journey. Their ability to regulate negative emotions and maintain resilience is key to attaining their educational objectives (Dweck, 1996). Similarly, research by Walter Mischel on four-year-old children revealed that those who could delay impulses demonstrated stronger academic performance and better social skills during adolescence (Shoda, Mischel, & Peake, 1990). Further support

comes from MacCann et al. (2011), whose findings indicate that improving emotional management skills and problem-focused coping strategies can lead to better educational outcomes.

### **5.5. The Influence of Empathy on Academic Success**

Empathy involves being emotionally attuned to the needs of others and demonstrating genuine concern for their well-being. It includes the ability to interpret non-verbal cues such as tone of voice, facial expressions, and body language. Schools play a vital role in fostering this skill by providing children with opportunities to express emotions related to sympathy and empathy, while also guiding them in regulating negative feelings such as excessive anger or extreme excitement (Fontana, 1984). Rosenthal et al. (1977) found that individuals who can accurately recognize others' emotions and empathize effectively tend to be more successful in both their professional and social lives. Research has also shown that low levels of empathy are linked to weaker academic performance. For example, when two students with equal IQ scores differ in their empathy skills, the one with higher empathy typically achieves better grades (Nowicki & Duke, 1992).

Similarly, Chow (2006) reported a positive relationship between students' empathy levels and their academic motivation, suggesting that empathy can play a role in enhancing academic outcomes.

Bouakaz Amel

### **5.6.The Role of Self-Motivation in Academic Success**

Motivation is the driving force that initiates, sustains, and regulates interest (Bernard, 1965). It is a crucial factor in encouraging students to actively participate in teaching and learning activities,

fostering their desire to keep learning, and creating a more engaging and enjoyable educational experience. This study focuses specifically on *self-motivation* the internally generated drive that naturally emerges from students and serves as a powerful influence on their learning. As a key element of emotional intelligence, self-motivation fuels students' commitment to studying, helps them understand their learning objectives, and ultimately supports higher academic achievement.

Self-motivation is closely linked to emotions, which shape individuals' reactions to others and their surroundings, influencing the ways they adapt and make decisions in life (Kamarudin, 1989). Harnessing children's emotional structures can stimulate their interest in learning. When students experience satisfaction and enjoyment from academic success, they are more likely to sustain active engagement in learning tasks. Emotions are closely tied to motives (McDougall, 1908) and often accompany motivated behavior. For example, individuals tend to repeat actions that bring positive emotional rewards, while avoiding those that produce negative outcomes. Self-motivation within emotional intelligence can be understood through the "expectancy-value" model of motivation, which comprises three components:

1. **Expectancy** – belief in one's ability to complete a task,
2. **Value** – the perceived importance and interest in the task, and
3. **Affective** – the emotional responses associated with engaging in the task.

Both motivation and emotion play significant roles in cognitive development, and together they contribute to overall academic

achievement. This highlights the importance of addressing holistic personality development within education (Rauste-Von Wright, 1986). Supporting this, Raineri (2010) found that motivation was a strong predictor of achievement, particularly among Caucasian students.

Bouakaz Amel

### **5.7. The Impact of Interpersonal Skills on Academic Success**

Low academic performance is often linked to social and emotional challenges faced by students, particularly their ability to apply social skills to seek and receive support from teachers (MacMullin, 1994). According to Scott-Jones and Clark (1986), academic achievement largely depends on an individual's abilities and aspirations. Since the social environment in which learning takes place can either reinforce or hinder behaviors that promote achievement, developing strong interpersonal skills is crucial for academic success. Key social skills such as paying attention, demonstrating perseverance in tasks, and following teachers' instructions and directions play an essential role in fostering positive learning outcomes (Cartledge & Milburn, 1978) A wide range of social skills is essential for academic success. Students who possess strong social skills generally perform better academically than their peers who lack them (Grossman et al., 1997). Those who have not mastered interpersonal skills often face difficulties in forming positive peer relationships, may exhibit problematic behaviors, and ultimately experience lower academic achievement (Sulzer-Azaroff & Mayer, 1986).

Research by Stephen N. Elliott, a psychology professor at the University of Wisconsin, found that students who participated in social skills programs during the 1996–1997 period demonstrated

improvement in these skills, which subsequently led to higher academic performance. His study confirmed a clear correlation between social skills and academic achievement (Sadowski, 1998). Similarly, Johnson (2009) emphasized that emotional intelligence helps students build healthy interpersonal relationships and secure social support, both of which contribute to strong performance in examinations.

## **6. Research Methodology**

### **6.1. Research Design**

This study adopted a quantitative correlational research design to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and academic achievement among higher education students. A supplementary qualitative component was also included to gather students' perceptions of the role of EI in their academic performance.

Bouakaz Amel

### **6.2. Participants**

The study sample consisted of 210 undergraduate students (122 females, 88 males) enrolled at University of Mohamed Boudief – Msila during the 2024–2025 academic year. Participants were drawn from various faculties, including Education, Arts, and Sciences, using stratified random sampling to ensure gender and program representation. The age range was between 18 and 24 years.

### **6.3. Research Instruments**

The study employed three main instruments to collect data. First, the **Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS)**, adapted from Schutte et al. (1998), comprised 33 items assessing five dimensions of EI: self-awareness, emotional management, empathy, self-motivation, and

interpersonal skills. Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with the scale demonstrating high reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.88$ ). Second, **academic achievement** was measured using participants' cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) obtained from official university records. Finally, a **semi-structured interview protocol** was administered to a subsample of 20 students to explore their perceptions of how EI influences academic performance.

#### **6.4. Procedures**

The study followed standardized research procedures to ensure validity and ethical compliance. Ethical approval was obtained from the university's Research Ethics Committee prior to data collection. Participants were recruited through faculty announcements and online student platforms, ensuring a diverse sample across faculties. Data collection was conducted over a three-week period, during which students first completed the Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) online, and their Grade Point Average (GPA) records were accessed with their consent. In addition, a subsample of participants took part in qualitative interviews, conducted either via Zoom or in person, each lasting approximately 20 minutes. Data analysis was performed using SPSS v.26, applying descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and multiple regression for the quantitative data, while thematic analysis was employed to interpret the qualitative interview responses.

Bouakaz Amel

## 6.5. Results and Discussion

**Table 1 : Descriptive Statistiques**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>
Emotional Intelligence	3.84	0.52	2.50	4.90
GPA	3.21	0.47	2.10	4.00
Self-Awareness	3.76	0.58	2.20	4.90
Emotional Management	3.85	0.55	2.30	4.80
Empathy	3.89	0.53	2.60	4.90
Self-Motivation	3.91	0.49	2.50	4.90
Interpersonal Skills	3.80	0.56	2.20	4.80

The descriptive results indicate that students, on average, reported relatively high levels of emotional intelligence ( $M = 3.84$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ), with scores ranging from 2.50 to 4.90. Among the EI components, **self-motivation** had the highest mean score ( $M = 3.91$ ), suggesting that students generally perceive themselves as being driven and able to sustain effort toward academic goals. **Empathy** followed closely ( $M = 3.89$ ), reflecting a strong ability to understand and relate to others' emotions. **Emotional management** ( $M = 3.85$ ) and **self-awareness** ( $M = 3.76$ ) were also moderately high, indicating good emotional regulation and awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses. **Interpersonal skills** scored slightly lower ( $M = 3.80$ ) compared to other EI domains, but still showed a generally positive trend.

The average GPA ( $M = 3.21$ ,  $SD = 0.47$ ) falls within the upper range of academic performance, with scores spanning from 2.10 to 4.00. The relatively small standard deviations across variables suggest that there is limited variability in the sample, meaning most students

scored within a fairly similar range on both EI and academic performance. These results imply that the participants generally exhibit well-developed emotional intelligence skills, which may play a role in maintaining their strong academic outcomes.

Bouakaz Amel

**Table 2: Relationship Between EI and Academic Achievement**

Question	Results
What is the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement among higher education students?	Pearson's correlation revealed a moderate positive relationship ( $r = 0.52, p < 0.01$ ).

The findings indicate that students with higher emotional intelligence tend to achieve better academic results. This aligns with the studies of Parker et al. (2004) and MacCann et al. (2011), which suggest that emotionally intelligent students are better at managing stress, staying motivated, and engaging with academic tasks, leading to improved GPA performance.

**Table 3: Key Components of EI Predicting Academic Success**

Question	Results
Which components of emotional intelligence contribute most significantly to academic success?	Multiple regression showed <b>self-motivation</b> ( $\beta = 0.36, p < 0.01$ ) and <b>emotional management</b> ( $\beta = 0.29, p < 0.05$ ) as the strongest predictors. Empathy ( $\beta = 0.18$ ) and interpersonal skills ( $\beta = 0.15$ ) also contributed, while self-awareness had the weakest effect.

The results reveal that self-motivation and emotional management are the most critical emotional intelligence skills for academic success. Motivation drives persistence in achieving goals, while emotional management enables students to maintain focus and composure under academic pressure. These competencies seem essential for navigating the challenges of higher education.

Bouakaz Amel

**Table 4: EI vs. Cognitive Ability**

Question	Results
To what extent can emotional intelligence predict academic performance compared to cognitive ability?	When controlling for prior academic scores, EI explained <b>18% of the variance</b> in GPA.

This result underscores the independent role of emotional intelligence in academic achievement, beyond cognitive ability. It supports Petrides et al. (2004), who argued that academic success is shaped not only by intellectual capacity but also by emotional competencies that influence learning and performance.

**Table 5: Students' Perceptions of EI**

Question	Results
How do students perceive the role of emotional intelligence in their academic journey?	Thematic analysis identified three themes: <b>Stress Regulation, Relationship Building, and Goal-Oriented Persistence.</b>

Students expressed that emotional intelligence helps them manage exam stress, build collaborative relationships with peers, and maintain commitment to academic goals despite challenges. These perceptions confirm the quantitative findings, highlighting that EI supports both cognitive performance and social engagement in the learning process.

**Table 6: Gender and Field Differences in EI**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Results</b>
Are there significant differences in emotional intelligence across gender and field of study?	Females scored higher in empathy and interpersonal skills ( $p < 0.05$ ). No significant differences in overall EI by gender or across fields of study.

Bouakaz Amel

The gender differences found align with existing research showing that females often score higher in socially oriented emotional intelligence dimensions. However, the absence of significant differences in overall EI suggests that both male and female students possess similar overall emotional intelligence capacities.

**Table 7: Institutional Strategies to Foster EI**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Results</b>
What strategies can higher education institutions implement to foster emotional intelligence for better academic outcomes?	Students suggested <b>EI workshops, mentoring programs,</b> and integrating EI skill-building into coursework

The proposed strategies reflect the need for structured emotional intelligence development in higher education. These recommendations echo MacCann et al. (2020), who emphasized that targeted EI training can enhance academic achievement, employability, and lifelong personal skills.

## **7. General Discussion**

The findings of this study demonstrate a clear and meaningful relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and academic achievement among higher education students. Quantitative analyses revealed that students with higher EI tend to achieve better GPA scores, supporting prior evidence that emotional competencies enhance learning outcomes (Parker et al., 2004; MacCann et al., 2011). Importantly, self-motivation and emotional management emerged as the strongest predictors of academic success, underscoring the role of persistence and stress regulation in navigating academic challenges. Moreover, EI accounted for a significant portion of academic performance variance even after controlling for cognitive ability, reinforcing the notion that intellectual capacity alone does not fully explain success in higher education. Qualitative data from student interviews highlighted that EI not only supports cognitive performance but also facilitates social relationships, peer support, and resilience in the face of obstacles.

Bouakaz Amel

Gender-based analysis indicated that females scored higher in empathy and interpersonal skills, while no significant overall EI differences were found between genders or academic disciplines. This suggests that certain EI components may be more gender-influenced,

but the core EI abilities necessary for academic success are widely distributed. Finally, students' suggestions for institutional strategies such as EI workshops, mentoring programs, and curriculum integration reflect an awareness of the importance of emotional skills for academic, social, and future professional success. These findings align with recent calls to incorporate socio-emotional learning within higher education frameworks (MacCann et al., 2020).

## **8. Conclusion**

This study reinforces the significant role of emotional intelligence in academic achievement, demonstrating that EI contributes to performance beyond cognitive ability. Self-motivation and emotional management are particularly influential in supporting persistence, focus, and resilience among higher education students. While gender differences emerged in specific EI dimensions, the overall capacity for emotional intelligence is broadly shared across student groups. The integration of EI development strategies such as workshops, mentoring, and curriculum-based training can enhance not only students' academic outcomes but also their readiness for future professional and personal challenges. As higher education moves toward more holistic models of student development, fostering emotional intelligence should be regarded as an essential component of academic excellence.

Bouakaz Amel

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Bouakaz Amel