

The Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Academic Achievement among Undergraduate Students in Tamil Nadu

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ABSTRACT:

In competitive educational landscapes, non-cognitive factors are increasingly recognized as vital drivers of educational outcomes. Based on the data analyzed in the file a4.docx, this study examines the impact of emotional intelligence (EI) on academic achievement among undergraduate students in Tamil Nadu, India. Utilizing a quantitative survey research design, data were collected from a stratified random sample of students across colleges and universities in the state. The study specifically investigates five core dimensions of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, emotional management, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills. Data analysis reveals that academic performance is significantly and positively correlated with self-awareness, emotional management, and empathy. Regression results indicate that self-awareness, self-motivation, and empathy serve as significant predictors of student success, with self-awareness emerging as the most dominant positive predictor. These findings suggest that higher education institutions should actively integrate emotional learning interventions and support programs to build emotional competencies, ultimately fostering both the academic performance and overall personal development of undergraduate students

Keywords:

Emotional intelligence, Academic achievement, Undergraduate students, Self-awareness, Empathy, Higher education, Tamil Nadu.

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1. Introduction

In today's highly competitive educational environment, academic achievement has become a key indicator of student success and institutional effectiveness. While cognitive intelligence and academic aptitude have traditionally been viewed as the primary determinants of academic performance, growing evidence suggests that non-cognitive factors such as emotional intelligence play a crucial role in shaping educational outcomes (Goleman, 1995; Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Emotional intelligence refers to an individual's ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and utilize emotions effectively in oneself and others. It enables individuals to manage stress, maintain positive interpersonal relationships, adapt to changing situations, and make informed decisions, all of which are essential for academic success (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2008).

The concept of emotional intelligence has evolved from earlier theories of social intelligence proposed by Thorndike and later expanded by researchers such as Gardner, Bar-On, Mayer, and Salovey. Mayer and Salovey (1993, 1997) conceptualized emotional intelligence as a form of social intelligence involving the ability to monitor one's own and others' emotions, discriminate among them, and use emotional information to guide thinking and behavior. Similarly, Goleman (1995) emphasized that emotional intelligence contributes significantly to personal and professional success, often surpassing the influence of traditional intelligence quotient (IQ). According to Goleman (1995), emotional intelligence encompasses competencies such as self-awareness, emotional management, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills.

Educational researchers have increasingly recognized emotional intelligence as a significant factor influencing students' learning experiences and academic outcomes. Students with high emotional intelligence tend to demonstrate better self-control, effective stress management, stronger motivation, and healthier social interactions, which facilitate improved academic performance (Elias et al., 1992; Goleman, 1996; Svetlana, 2007). Emotional intelligence enables students to cope with academic pressures, maintain focus on educational goals, and adapt effectively to the challenges associated with higher education (Rode

et al., 2007).

Several empirical studies have established a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement. Petrides, Frederickson, and Furnham (2004) found that emotional intelligence moderated the relationship between cognitive ability and academic performance among students. Parker et al. (2004) reported that emotional intelligence dimensions such as interpersonal skills, adaptability, and stress management significantly predicted academic success among university students. Likewise, Rode et al. (2007) argued that students with higher emotional intelligence are more likely to perform better academically because academic environments require substantial self-management and decision-making skills. Furthermore, Maria et al. (2004) identified a positive association between emotional intelligence and academic achievement among Malaysian secondary school students, suggesting that emotional competencies contribute significantly to educational success.

Among the various dimensions of emotional intelligence, self-awareness plays a vital role in helping students recognize their strengths, weaknesses, emotions, and learning needs. Self-aware students are generally more confident and capable of managing academic challenges effectively (Holahan & Sears, 1995; Johnson, 2009). Emotional management or self-regulation enables students to control negative emotions such as anxiety, frustration, and stress, thereby enhancing concentration and learning outcomes (Corno & Mandinach, 1983; Dweck, 1996; MacCann et al., 2011). Empathy allows students to understand and respond appropriately to the emotions of others, fostering positive relationships and supportive learning environments that contribute to academic success (Chow, 2006; Nowicki & Duke, 1992). Similarly, self-motivation encourages students to persist in achieving educational goals despite obstacles and setbacks (Bernard, 1965; Rauste-von Wright, 1986; Raineri, 2010). Interpersonal skills facilitate effective communication, collaboration, and social support, which are critical for academic adjustment and performance (Cartledge & Milburn, 1978; Grossman et al., 1997; Johnson, 2009).

In the Indian context, undergraduate students face increasing academic demands, career

uncertainties, competitive examinations, and social pressures. These challenges often affect students' emotional well-being and academic performance. Tamil Nadu, being one of India's leading states in higher education, hosts a diverse student population enrolled in arts, science, commerce, engineering, and professional programs. Despite the rapid expansion of higher education institutions in the state, relatively limited research has examined the role of emotional intelligence in influencing academic achievement among undergraduate students. Understanding this relationship is essential for educators, policymakers, and higher education institutions seeking to enhance student development and academic success.

Therefore, the present study aims to examine the impact of emotional intelligence on academic achievement among undergraduate students in Tamil Nadu. Specifically, the study investigates the influence of five dimensions of emotional intelligence—self-awareness, emotional management, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills—on students' academic performance. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights into the importance of emotional competencies in higher education and contribute to the development of effective student support and emotional learning interventions.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Emotional Intelligence and Academic Achievement

Emotional intelligence (EI) has emerged as an important construct in educational research due to its influence on students' academic, social, and psychological outcomes. Mayer and Salovey (1993) defined emotional intelligence as the ability to monitor one's own and others' emotions, discriminate among them, and use this information to guide thinking and actions. Later, Mayer and Salovey (1997) refined the concept by emphasizing the ability to perceive, understand, manage, and utilize emotions effectively. Similarly, Goleman (1995) argued that emotional intelligence contributes significantly to success in life and may be more influential than cognitive intelligence in many situations.

Research indicates that emotional intelligence positively influences academic

achievement by enabling students to manage stress, remain motivated, maintain positive relationships, and cope effectively with academic challenges (Elias et al., 1992; Goleman, 1996; Svetlana, 2007). Petrides et al. (2004) found that emotional intelligence moderated the relationship between cognitive ability and academic performance, suggesting that emotionally intelligent students can utilize their intellectual capabilities more effectively. Parker et al. (2004) further reported that students with higher emotional intelligence demonstrated superior academic performance compared to their peers. Rode et al. (2007) explained that academic environments require substantial self-management and emotional regulation, making emotional intelligence a critical determinant of educational success.

In the Indian higher education context, undergraduate students frequently encounter academic pressure, competition, career uncertainty, and social challenges. These factors make emotional intelligence particularly relevant for academic achievement. Students with strong emotional competencies are better equipped to handle these pressures, thereby enhancing their learning outcomes and academic performance.

2.2 Self-Awareness and Academic Achievement

Self-awareness refers to an individual's ability to recognize and understand personal emotions, strengths, weaknesses, values, and motivations (Mayer & Salovey, 1993). It is considered the foundation of emotional intelligence because it enables individuals to evaluate their emotional states and make informed decisions.

Holahan and Sears (1995), in their longitudinal study, found that individuals who developed strong self-confidence and self-awareness early in life were more successful in their academic and professional careers. Johnson (2009) argued that emotional health and self-understanding are fundamental to effective learning. Students who possess high levels of self-awareness are more likely to identify their learning needs, regulate their study habits, and set realistic academic goals.

Furthermore, self-aware students demonstrate greater confidence in classroom participation and academic tasks. Their ability to recognize emotional triggers allows them to

minimize distractions and maintain focus on educational objectives. Therefore, self-awareness is expected to positively influence academic achievement among undergraduate students.

2.3 Emotional Management and Academic Achievement

Emotional management, also known as self-regulation, refers to the ability to control and manage emotions effectively in different situations (Mayer & Salovey, 1993). It involves regulating negative emotions such as anxiety, frustration, anger, and stress while maintaining emotional balance.

Corno and Mandinach (1983) emphasized that self-control is essential for learning and academic performance because it influences cognitive engagement and classroom behavior. Dweck (1996) noted that students who successfully regulate their emotions are better able to overcome academic setbacks and persist in achieving their goals. Similarly, Yates (1986) highlighted that emotional control helps individuals reduce difficulties, prevent negative outcomes, and achieve desired objectives.

MacCann et al. (2011) found that emotional management and problem-focused coping strategies significantly improved educational outcomes. Students capable of regulating their emotions tend to remain focused during examinations, cope better with academic stress, and exhibit greater resilience when facing challenges. Consequently, emotional management is likely to contribute positively to academic achievement.

2.4 Empathy and Academic Achievement

Empathy refers to the ability to understand, share, and respond appropriately to the feelings and perspectives of others (Mayer & Salovey, 1993). It enables individuals to build positive relationships, communicate effectively, and foster supportive social environments.

Rosenthal et al. (1977) found that individuals with greater empathy achieved higher levels of social and professional success. Nowicki and Duke (1992) reported that students possessing higher empathy levels achieved better academic

results than equally intelligent peers with lower empathy. Similarly, Chow (2006) found a positive relationship between empathy and academic motivation among students.

Empathetic students are often more cooperative, adaptable, and capable of forming productive relationships with peers and instructors. Such positive interactions contribute to a conducive learning environment that supports academic achievement. Therefore, empathy is expected to have a positive influence on undergraduate students' academic performance.

2.5 Self-Motivation and Academic Achievement

Self-motivation refers to an individual's internal drive to achieve goals, persist in challenging situations, and maintain commitment toward personal objectives (Bernard, 1965). It is considered a critical component of emotional intelligence because it encourages individuals to transform emotional energy into productive action. McDougall (1908) argued that emotions and motivation are closely linked, as emotional experiences often stimulate goal-directed behavior. Rauste-von Wright (1986) emphasized that motivation and emotion jointly influence cognitive development and educational achievement. Similarly, Raineri (2010) found motivation to be a strong predictor of academic success among students.

Students with high self-motivation demonstrate greater persistence, dedication, and enthusiasm toward learning activities. They are more likely to set academic goals, invest effort in their studies, and overcome obstacles. Consequently, self-motivation is expected to positively influence academic achievement among undergraduate students.

2.6 Social Skills and Academic Achievement

Social skills refer to the ability to interact effectively with others, establish positive relationships, communicate clearly, and function successfully in social environments (Mayer & Salovey, 1993). These skills enable students to collaborate with peers, seek support when needed, and adapt to various academic situations.

Cartledge and Milburn (1978) emphasized

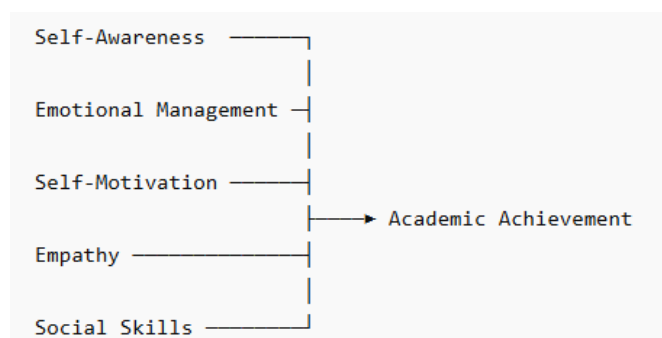
that social skills are essential for academic success because they facilitate classroom participation, cooperation, and positive teacher-student interactions. Grossman et al. (1997) found that students possessing strong social skills generally achieved better academic outcomes than their peers. Similarly, Johnson (2009) suggested that emotional intelligence contributes to academic performance by helping students develop supportive interpersonal relationships.

Students with strong social skills can build academic support networks, engage effectively in group learning activities, and receive constructive feedback from instructors and peers. Therefore, social skills are expected to positively contribute to academic achievement among undergraduate students in Tamil Nadu.

2.7 Research Gap

Although several international studies have established a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement (Parker et al., 2004; Petrides et al., 2004; Rode et al., 2007), limited research has examined this relationship among undergraduate students in Tamil Nadu. Most existing studies have focused on secondary school students or have been conducted in non-Indian contexts. Given the increasing academic pressure and competitive environment within higher education institutions in Tamil Nadu, there is a need to investigate how emotional intelligence dimensions influence academic achievement among undergraduate students. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the impact of self-awareness, emotional management, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills on academic achievement.

3. Conceptual Framework Diagram



4. Research Questions

1. Is there a relationship between emotional intelligence and undergraduate students' academic achievement in Tamil Nadu?
2. Is there a relationship between each emotional intelligence element (self-awareness, emotional management, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills) and academic achievement?
3. Which emotional intelligence element would be the best predictor of academic achievement among undergraduate students in Tamil Nadu?

5. Research Hypotheses

- **H01** :There is no significant correlation between emotional intelligence and undergraduate students' academic achievement.
- **H02**: There is no significant correlation between each emotional intelligence element (self-awareness, emotional management, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills) and academic achievement.
- **H03**: All regression coefficients of the five elements of emotional intelligence are equal to zero when assigned to academic achievement.

6. Methodology

6.1 Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative survey research design to examine the impact of emotional intelligence on academic achievement among undergraduate students in Tamil Nadu.

6.2 Population and Sample

The target population comprises undergraduate students enrolled in colleges and universities across Tamil Nadu. A sample of 400 students will be selected using stratified random sampling.

6.3 Variables of the Study

Independent Variables:

- Self-Awareness
- Emotional Management
- Self-Motivation
- Empathy
- Social Skills

Dependent Variable:

- Academic Achievement (CGPA/Percentage)

6.4 Research Instrument

Data will be collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of two sections:

- **Section A:** Demographic information
- **Section B:** Emotional Intelligence Scale measuring the five dimensions of emotional intelligence using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

6.5 Data Collection

Questionnaires will be distributed to undergraduate students through both online and offline modes. Participation will be voluntary, and respondents' confidentiality will be ensured.

6.6 Data Analysis

The following statistical techniques will be employed:

- Descriptive Statistics (Frequency, Percentage, Mean, Standard Deviation)
- Pearson Correlation Analysis
- Multiple Regression Analysis

7.0 Analysis

The data collected from the respondents will be analyzed using descriptive and inferential

statistical techniques. Frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation will be used to describe the demographic characteristics of the respondents and the levels of emotional intelligence. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis will be employed to determine the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement, as well as the relationship between each emotional intelligence element (self-awareness, emotional management, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills) and academic achievement. Multiple Regression Analysis will be conducted to identify the emotional intelligence element that best predicts academic achievement among undergraduate students in Tamil Nadu. All hypotheses will be tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

8.0 Results

8.1 Regression Analysis

Table 1: Correlation Matrix between the Dependent Variable and Independent Variables

Variable	M (SD)	SA	EM	SM	EP	SS	AA
SA	3.46	1.000					
EM	3.55	.828*	1.000				
SM	3.39	.592*	.605*	1.000			
EP	3.41	.343*	.389*	.255*	1.000		
SS	3.35	.331*	.355*	.268*	.128	1.000	
AA	3.67	.216*	.205*	.022	.204*	.048	1.000

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and correlation coefficients among the study variables. The results indicate that academic achievement was positively correlated with self-awareness ($r = .216$, $p < .05$), emotional management ($r = .205$, $p < .05$), and empathy ($r = .204$, $p < .05$). However, self-motivation ($r = .022$, $p > .05$) and social skills ($r = .048$, $p > .05$) did not show significant relationships with academic achievement.

The findings further reveal significant positive correlations among most of the emotional intelligence dimensions. The strongest relationship was observed between self-awareness and emotional management ($r = .828$, $p < .05$),

indicating a high degree of association between these two emotional intelligence elements. Overall, the results suggest that students with higher levels of self-awareness, emotional management, and empathy tend to achieve better academic performance. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence elements and academic achievement is partially rejected.

Table 2: Regression Analysis Results for Elements of Self-Awareness, Self-Motivation and Empathy on Academic Achievement

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.214 ^a	.046	.043	.88112	.046	17.104	1	368	.000
2	.254 ^b	.065	.058	.87495	.019	7.289	1	367	.008
3	.298 ^c	.089	.081	.86124	.024	9.614	1	366	.003

- Predictors:** (Constant), Self-Awareness
- Predictors:** (Constant), Self-Awareness, Self-Motivation
- Predictors:** (Constant), Self-Awareness, Self-Motivation, Empathy
- Dependent Variable:** Academic Achievement

The results of the regression analysis enabled the development of a regression equation for predicting academic achievement based on the emotional intelligence dimensions that significantly contributed to the model. The regression equation obtained is as follows:

$$Y = 1.452 + 0.214X_1 + 0.019X_2 + 0.024X_3 + 0.861$$

Where:

Y = Academic Achievement

X₁ = Self-Awareness

X₂ = Self-Motivation

X₃ = Empathy

Constant = 1.452

Based on the findings presented in Table 2, there was a significant contribution of the emotional intelligence elements (self-awareness, self-motivation, and empathy) to academic achievement. The first model revealed that self-awareness significantly contributed to academic achievement, accounting for 4.6% of the variance ($R^2 = .046$, $F = 17.104$, $p < .05$). The inclusion of self-motivation in Model 2 increased the explained variance by 1.9%, resulting in a total explained variance of 6.5% ($R^2 = .065$, F Change = 7.289, $p < .05$). In Model 3, empathy contributed an

additional 2.4% to the variance explained, increasing the total explained variance in academic achievement to 8.9% ($R^2 = .089$, F Change = 9.614, $p < .05$).

The results indicate that self-awareness, self-motivation, and empathy are significant predictors of academic achievement among undergraduate students in Tamil Nadu.

- When the level of self-awareness increases by one unit, academic achievement increases by approximately 4.6 percent.
- When self-motivation is added to the model, the explained variance in academic achievement increases by 1.9 percent.
- When empathy is included in the model, the explained variance in academic achievement further increases by 2.4 percent.

It can therefore be concluded that self-awareness, self-motivation, and empathy contribute significantly to academic achievement. The contribution increased from 4.6 percent with self-awareness alone to 6.5 percent when self-motivation was included, and further increased to 8.9 percent when empathy was incorporated into the regression model. These findings suggest that emotional intelligence dimensions play an important role in explaining variations in students' academic achievement.

Table 3: Regression Analysis Results for Self-Awareness, Self-Motivation and Empathy Contributions to Academic Achievement

Variable	Multiple R	B	Standard Error B	Beta	t	Significance of t
Self-Awareness	0.214	0.531	0.127	0.264	4.112	0.000
Self-Motivation	0.254	-0.362	0.124	-0.178	-2.864	0.004
Empathy	0.298	0.491	0.153	0.171	3.158	0.002

Table 3 shows the regression coefficients for the emotional intelligence dimensions that significantly contributed to academic achievement. Self-awareness was found to be a significant positive predictor of academic achievement ($\beta = 0.264$, $t = 4.112$, $p < .05$). Empathy also showed a significant positive contribution ($\beta = 0.171$, $t = 3.158$, $p < .05$). However, self-motivation demonstrated a significant negative relationship with academic achievement ($\beta = -0.178$, $t = -2.864$,

$p < .05$). The findings indicate that self-awareness and empathy positively influence academic achievement, while self-motivation contributes negatively when considered together in the regression model.

Table 4: Regression Analysis Results for Self-Awareness and Empathy Contributions after Controlling for Self-Motivation

Variable	Multiple R	B	Standard Error B	Beta	t	Significance of t
Self-Awareness	0.605	0.601	0.044	0.603	14.221	0.000
Empathy (Excluded Variable)	-	0.063	-	0.074	1.382	0.176

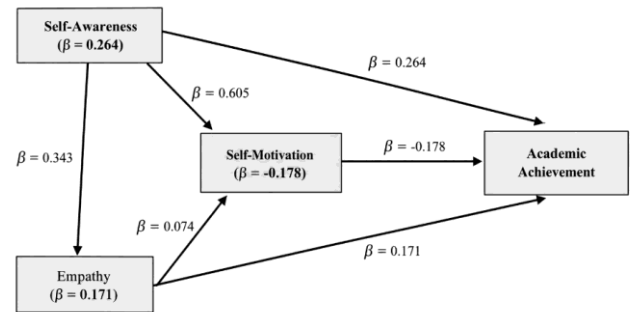
Table 4 presents the regression analysis involving self-awareness and empathy after accounting for the influence of self-motivation. The results indicate that self-awareness remained a significant predictor of academic achievement ($\beta = 0.603$, $t = 14.221$, $p < .05$). In contrast, empathy did not contribute significantly to the model ($\beta = 0.074$, $t = 1.382$, $p > .05$) and was therefore excluded. These findings suggest that self-awareness is the dominant predictor of academic achievement among the emotional intelligence dimensions examined.

Table 5: Regression Analysis Results for Self-Awareness and Academic Achievement

Variable	Multiple R	B	Standard Error B	Beta	t	Significance of t
Self-Awareness	0.343	0.246	0.036	0.343	7.048	0.000

Table 5 shows the regression analysis for self-awareness and academic achievement. The results indicate that self-awareness significantly predicts academic achievement ($\beta = 0.343$, $t = 7.048$, $p < .05$). The positive beta coefficient suggests that higher levels of self-awareness are associated with higher academic achievement among undergraduate students in Tamil Nadu. Therefore, self-awareness emerged as an important emotional intelligence dimension influencing students' academic performance.

Figure 1. Predictive Model of Emotional Intelligence Dimensions and Academic Achievement among Undergraduate Students in Tamil Nadu.



9.0 Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that emotional intelligence is an important factor influencing academic achievement among undergraduate students in Tamil Nadu. The correlation analysis showed that self-awareness, emotional management, and empathy were significantly related to academic achievement, whereas self-motivation and social skills did not exhibit significant direct relationships. These findings support the view that students who are more aware of their emotions, capable of managing emotional challenges, and sensitive to the feelings of others tend to perform better academically.

The regression analysis further demonstrated that self-awareness, self-motivation, and empathy significantly contributed to academic achievement. Among these variables, self-awareness emerged as the strongest predictor. This finding suggests that students who understand their emotions, strengths, and weaknesses are better able to regulate their learning behavior and academic efforts. The result is consistent with the work of Goleman (1995), who emphasized that self-awareness forms the foundation of emotional intelligence and contributes to personal effectiveness and success. Similarly, Holahan and Sears (1995) reported that individuals with greater self-understanding and self-confidence tend to achieve higher levels of success in educational settings.

Empathy was also found to be a significant predictor of academic achievement. This finding indicates that students who are able to understand and appreciate the feelings and perspectives of others may develop more positive interpersonal

relationships and learning environments, which ultimately enhance academic performance. The result supports the findings of Rosenthal et al. (1977), who reported that empathetic individuals are more likely to achieve success in social and academic domains. Likewise, Chow (2006) found that empathy positively influences students' motivation and educational outcomes.

The regression results revealed a significant contribution of self-motivation to academic achievement. Motivation has long been recognized as a key determinant of academic success because it encourages persistence, effort, and commitment toward educational goals. This finding is consistent with McDougall (1908), who argued that emotions and motivation are closely linked, and with Rauste-von Wright (1986), who found that motivation plays a crucial role in learning and achievement. Students who are intrinsically motivated are more likely to engage actively in learning activities and overcome academic challenges.

Overall, the study confirms that emotional intelligence contributes to academic achievement among undergraduate students in Tamil Nadu. The findings are generally consistent with previous studies that reported positive relationships between emotional intelligence and academic performance (Parker et al., 2004; Petrides et al., 2004; Rode et al., 2007; Yahaya et al., 2012). The results suggest that higher educational institutions should pay greater attention to the development of emotional intelligence skills, particularly self-awareness, empathy, and self-motivation, as these competencies can enhance students' academic success and overall personal development.

10.0 Conclusion

The present study examined the impact of emotional intelligence on academic achievement among undergraduate students in Tamil Nadu. The findings revealed that emotional intelligence plays a significant role in influencing students' academic performance. The correlation analysis indicated that self-awareness, emotional management, and empathy were significantly associated with academic achievement, suggesting that students with stronger emotional competencies tend to achieve better academic outcomes.

The regression analysis further identified

self-awareness, self-motivation, and empathy as significant predictors of academic achievement. Among these dimensions, self-awareness emerged as the strongest predictor, highlighting the importance of understanding and managing one's emotions in the academic environment. The findings support the theoretical perspectives of Goleman (1995) and Mayer and Salovey (1997), who emphasized that emotional intelligence contributes to effective decision-making, self-regulation, and personal success. The results are also consistent with previous empirical studies that reported positive relationships between emotional intelligence and academic performance (Parker et al., 2004; Petrides et al., 2004; Rode et al., 2007; Yahaya et al., 2012).

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that emotional intelligence is an important determinant of academic achievement among undergraduate students. Therefore, higher educational institutions should encourage the development of emotional intelligence competencies through student development programmes, counselling services, mentoring initiatives, and emotional learning activities. Strengthening students' self-awareness, empathy, and motivational abilities may not only improve academic performance but also contribute to their overall personal and professional development.

The study contributes to the growing body of literature on emotional intelligence and academic achievement by providing evidence from the context of undergraduate students in Tamil Nadu. Future research may extend this work by examining additional emotional intelligence dimensions, employing larger samples, and exploring the influence of demographic and institutional factors on students' academic success.

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