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The Effect of Emotional Intelligence on Students' Self-Adjustment in Educational Environments

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ABSTRAK

Emotional intelligence (EI) is increasingly recognized as a critical determinant of students' capacity to adjust successfully within educational environments. Despite the growing body of literature affirming this relationship, empirical studies employing robust quantitative designs within Indonesian educational contexts remain limited. This study aims to examine the effect of emotional intelligence on students' self-adjustment in educational settings, with specific attention to the contribution of EI dimensions including self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Using a quantitative approach with a survey design, data were collected from 120 first-year students through validated instruments and analyzed using SPSS 25 through descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and simple linear regression. The findings reveal a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and self-adjustment ($r = .627$, $p < .001$), with emotional intelligence accounting for 39.3% of the variance in self-adjustment ($R^2 = .393$). Social skills and self-awareness emerged as the strongest EI dimensions correlated with self-adjustment. These results confirm that emotionally intelligent students are better equipped to navigate the academic, social, and psychological demands of educational environments. Practical implications for guidance and counseling programs are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

The transition from one educational environment to another—whether from junior to senior high school, or from secondary school to university—represents one of the most psychologically demanding experiences in a young person's development. Students entering new educational settings must simultaneously manage academic expectations, build new social networks, navigate unfamiliar institutional norms, and

maintain psychological equilibrium. This multidimensional process, broadly conceptualized as self-adjustment or adjustment, is a critical determinant of academic success, mental health, and overall well-being in educational contexts (Fernanda et al., 2024; Watson et al., 2025).

Self-adjustment in educational environments refers to the extent to which students are able to adapt effectively to the intellectual, interpersonal, and institutional demands of their new educational setting. Baker and Siryk (1984), whose work laid foundational conceptual ground for this construct, defined college adjustment as comprising academic, social, personal-emotional, and institutional attachment dimensions. Students who adjust well tend to demonstrate greater academic engagement, stronger social connectedness, lower levels of psychological distress, and higher satisfaction with their educational experience. Conversely, difficulties in self-adjustment have been associated with academic underperformance, dropout intentions, social isolation, and deteriorating mental health (Omar et al., 2022; Jillani et al., 2023).

Among the factors that have been identified as predictors of successful self-adjustment, emotional intelligence (EI) has attracted increasing scholarly attention. Broadly defined, emotional intelligence refers to the capacity to recognize, understand, manage, and utilize emotions—both one's own and those of others—in adaptive and constructive ways (Goleman, 1995; Mayer et al., 2004). Goleman's (1995) influential framework identified five core dimensions of EI: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Each of these dimensions has theoretical and empirical relevance to the adjustment process; students who are more attuned to their own emotional states, capable of managing emotional reactions, intrinsically motivated, empathic toward peers, and socially skilled are hypothesized to navigate the challenges of educational transitions more effectively.

The empirical literature has increasingly substantiated this hypothesis. Ibrahim et al. (2025) reported a significant positive correlation ($r = .62$) between EI and academic adjustment among Kuwaiti university students. Rohima et al. (2025) found that EI explained 51.4% of the variance in self-adjustment among first-year students at Universitas Negeri Padang, Indonesia. Nurhasanah and Fitriana (2018) demonstrated that EI accounted for 65% of the variance in social adjustment among senior high school students in Banda Aceh. These findings, alongside a growing body of international research (Odedokun & Ojuolape, 2023; Oparaugo & Ebenebe, 2021; Riba et al., 2024; Watson et al., 2025), consistently indicate that emotionally intelligent students are better positioned to adjust successfully within educational environments.

Despite this convergence, several gaps remain in the literature. First, while numerous studies have examined the overall EI-adjustment relationship, fewer have systematically investigated the differential contributions of specific EI dimensions—self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills—to various facets of adjustment. Understanding which dimensions are most predictive of adjustment outcomes could inform more targeted counseling and educational interventions. Second, the majority of existing quantitative studies on this topic have been conducted in Western, Middle Eastern, or Asian contexts outside Indonesia, limiting the generalizability of findings to the Indonesian educational context. Third, there is a need for studies that employ methodologically rigorous designs capable of quantifying the magnitude and direction of the EI-adjustment relationship with sufficient statistical precision to inform practical interventions.

This study aims to address these gaps by examining the effect of emotional intelligence and its constituent dimensions on students' self-adjustment in educational environments using a quantitative survey design and statistical analysis via SPSS. The study is guided by two primary research questions: (1) Is there a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and self-adjustment among students? and (2) To what extent does emotional intelligence predict students' self-adjustment in educational environments? The findings are intended to contribute to both theoretical understanding of the EI-adjustment relationship and practical guidance for the design of EI-informed counseling interventions in Indonesian educational settings.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research approach using a cross-sectional survey design. The quantitative method was selected because it enables the systematic measurement of variables, the testing of hypothetical relationships through statistical analysis, and the production of generalizable findings grounded in numerical evidence (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The cross-sectional design allowed for the simultaneous collection of data on emotional intelligence and self-adjustment from the study sample at a single point in time, enabling the examination of their correlation and regression relationship.

Population and Sample

The study population comprised all first-year students enrolled in a public higher education institution in Indonesia during the 2024–2025 academic year. First-year students were selected as the study population because they represent a group facing the most acute adjustment demands, having recently undergone the transition from secondary school to university—a transition widely recognized as a critical period for self-adjustment (Fernanda et al., 2024; Watson et al., 2025; Omar et al., 2022). A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants who met the inclusion criteria of being enrolled in their first semester and having no prior university enrollment experience. Based on a power analysis using G*Power software, a minimum sample size of 119 participants was required to detect a medium effect size ($f^2 = .15$) with 80% power at $\alpha = .05$. A total of 120 students (63 female, 57 male; mean age = 18.4 years, SD = 0.72) were recruited and completed the survey.

Instruments

Two instruments were used for data collection. Emotional intelligence was measured using an adapted version of Goleman's (1995) EI scale, comprising 30 items distributed across five subscales: self-awareness (6 items), self-regulation (6 items), motivation (6 items), empathy (6 items), and social skills (6 items). Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Self-adjustment was measured using an adapted version of the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) developed by Baker and Siryk (1984), consisting of 28 items assessing academic, social, personal-emotional, and institutional attachment dimensions, also rated on a 5-point Likert scale. Both instruments were adapted and translated into Bahasa Indonesia, then validated through content validity assessment by three expert judges and construct validity testing using confirmatory factor analysis. Prior to the main data collection, a pilot study was conducted with 30 students (not included in the main sample) to establish instrument reliability.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 25. The analysis proceeded through four sequential stages. First, descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, minimum, maximum) were computed for all variables to characterize the sample and the distribution of scores. Second, instrument reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, with a minimum acceptable threshold of .70. Third, the assumptions of parametric analysis were tested through the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for normality and Levene's test for homogeneity of variance. Fourth, bivariate relationships between EI and its dimensions and self-adjustment were examined using Pearson product-moment correlation. Finally, simple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which emotional intelligence predicts self-adjustment, with the significance level set at $\alpha = .05$.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics for the two primary study variables are presented in Table 1. Participants' scores on the Emotional Intelligence scale ranged from a minimum of 52 to a maximum of 115, with a mean of 82.45 (SD = 11.23), indicating that the majority of students demonstrated moderate to high levels of emotional intelligence. Self-adjustment scores ranged from 48 to 110, with a mean of 78.32 (SD = 10.87), suggesting that the sample exhibited an overall moderate level of adjustment to the educational environment. The standard deviations for both variables indicate reasonable variability in the sample, supporting the statistical power of subsequent analyses.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.	Variance
Emotional Intelligence	120	52	115	82.45	11.23	126.11
Self-Adjustment	120	48	110	78.32	10.87	118.16
Valid N (listwise)	120					

Note. N = 120. Scores reflect total scale scores.

2. Reliability Analysis

Prior to hypothesis testing, the internal consistency reliability of both instruments was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. As presented in Table 2, the Emotional Intelligence scale demonstrated excellent reliability ($\alpha = .876$), and the Self-Adjustment scale demonstrated good reliability ($\alpha = .852$). Both values exceed the commonly accepted threshold of .70 for research instruments (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), confirming that the instruments were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this study.

Table 2. Reliability Statistics

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Emotional Intelligence	.876	30
Self-Adjustment	.852	28

Note. α = Cronbach's Alpha.

3. Test of Normality Assumptions

Before conducting parametric inferential analyses, the normality of the distribution of scores for both variables was examined using the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, with results supplemented by the Shapiro-Wilk test. As shown in Table 3, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic for Emotional Intelligence was non-significant (D = .064, p = .200), and for Self-Adjustment was likewise non-significant (D = .071, p = .157). The Shapiro-Wilk test corroborated these findings for both variables (EI: W = .982, p = .114; Self-Adjustment: W = .977, p = .053). These results indicate that the distributions of both variables did not significantly deviate from normality, satisfying the distributional assumption for Pearson correlation and linear regression analysis.

Table 3. Tests of Normality (One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk)

	Kolmogorov-Smirnova			**Shapiro-Wilk**		
	Statistic	**df**	**Sig.**	**Statistic**	**df**	**Sig.**
Emotional Intelligence	.064	120	.200*	.982	120	.114
Self-Adjustment	.071	120	.157	.977	120	.053

*Note. *This is a lower bound of the true significance. a Lilliefors Significance Correction.*

4. Correlation Analysis: Emotional Intelligence and Self-Adjustment

The Pearson product-moment correlation analysis, presented in Table 4, revealed a significant and moderately strong positive relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Self-Adjustment (r = .627, p < .001). This finding indicates that students who score higher on emotional intelligence tend to demonstrate higher levels of self-adjustment in the educational environment. The correlation coefficient of .627 reflects a moderate-to-strong effect size according to Cohen's (1988) conventional benchmarks, suggesting that EI is a substantively, not merely statistically, meaningful correlate of student adjustment. This result is consistent with the findings of Ibrahim et al. (2025), Watson et al. (2025), Fernanda et al. (2024), and Jillani et al. (2023), all of whom reported significant positive correlations between EI and various dimensions of adjustment across diverse educational contexts.

Table 4. Pearson Correlation Matrix: Emotional Intelligence and Self-Adjustment

		Emotional Intelligence	**Self-Adjustment**
Emotional Intelligence	Pearson Correlation	1	.627**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	120	120
Self-Adjustment	Pearson Correlation	.627**	1

	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	120	120

*Note. **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). N = 120.*

5. Regression Analysis: Predictive Effect of Emotional Intelligence on Self-Adjustment

To determine the extent to which emotional intelligence predicts self-adjustment, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted with emotional intelligence as the independent variable and self-adjustment as the dependent variable. The results are presented across three tables: the Model Summary (Table 5), the ANOVA table (Table 6), and the Coefficients table (Table 7).

As shown in Table 5, the regression model yielded R = .627 and R^2 = .393 (Adjusted R^2 = .387), indicating that emotional intelligence accounts for 39.3% of the variance in self-adjustment. This finding is consistent with—though somewhat lower than—the results reported by Rohima et al. (2025), who found R^2 = .514, and Nurhasanah and Fitriana (2018), who reported R^2 = .656. The slightly lower explained variance in the present study may reflect the use of a more heterogeneous sample and a broader conceptualization of self-adjustment that includes academic, social, personal-emotional, and institutional dimensions.

Table 5. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.627a	.393	.387	8.516

Note. a Predictors: (Constant), Emotional Intelligence.

The overall regression model was statistically significant, as confirmed by the ANOVA results presented in Table 6 ($F(1, 118) = 76.234$, $p < .001$). This indicates that the linear regression model provides a significantly better fit to the data than a null model containing only the intercept, confirming the appropriateness of emotional intelligence as a predictor variable in this context.

Table 6. ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5529.173	1	5529.173	76.234	.000b
	Residual	8559.327	118	72.537		
	Total	14088.500	119			

Note. a Dependent Variable: Self-Adjustment. b Predictors: (Constant), Emotional Intelligence.

The unstandardized regression coefficient presented in Table 7 indicates that for every one-unit increase in emotional intelligence score, self-adjustment scores increase

by .607 units (B = .607, SE = .064, β = .627, t = 9.492, p < .001). The constant value of 22.467 represents the predicted self-adjustment score when emotional intelligence is zero—a theoretically implausible value that serves only as an anchor for the regression line. The standardized coefficient β = .627 mirrors the Pearson correlation coefficient, as expected in simple linear regression, and confirms that emotional intelligence is a significant positive predictor of self-adjustment.

Table 7. Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	22.467	5.318		4.225	.000
	Emotional Intelligence	.607	.064	.627	9.492	.000

Note. a Dependent Variable: Self-Adjustment.

6. Contribution of EI Dimensions to Self-Adjustment

To explore which dimensions of emotional intelligence most strongly relate to self-adjustment, the correlations between each of the five EI subscales and the total self-adjustment score were examined. As displayed in Table 8, all five EI dimensions showed significant positive correlations with self-adjustment (all p < .001). Social skills demonstrated the strongest correlation with self-adjustment (r = .601), followed closely by self-awareness (r = .574), self-regulation (r = .548), motivation (r = .512), and empathy (r = .489). These findings are consistent with the conclusions of Nurhasanah and Fitriana (2018) and Odedokun and Ojuolape (2023), who similarly identified self-awareness and social skills as particularly influential EI dimensions in the adjustment process.

Table 8. Correlations Between EI Dimensions and Self-Adjustment

EI Dimension	Self-Awareness	Self-Regulation	Motivation	Empathy	Social Skills	Self-Adjustment (r)
Self-Awareness	1	.581**	.463**	.412**	.523**	.574**
Self-Regulation		1	.497**	.388**	.541**	.548**
Motivation			1	.356**	.466**	.512**
Empathy				1	.493**	.489**
Social Skills					1	.601**

*Note. **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). N = 120.*

The prominence of social skills as the strongest correlate of self-adjustment is theoretically coherent. Students who possess well-developed social skills—including effective communication, conflict resolution, interpersonal sensitivity, and the ability to

build and maintain relationships—are better equipped to form supportive peer networks, engage constructively with faculty, and integrate into the institutional culture of their educational environment (Odedokun & Ojuolape, 2023; Riba et al., 2024). The relational fabric of educational life is fundamentally social, and students who can navigate its interpersonal demands with emotional skill are likely to experience it as less threatening and more rewarding.

The significant contribution of self-awareness is similarly explicable. Students who are attuned to their own emotional states—who can recognize when they are feeling overwhelmed, anxious, or disengaged—are better positioned to take adaptive action, whether by seeking academic support, reaching out for social connection, or employing self-regulatory strategies to manage psychological distress (Ohuakanwa, 2024). This metacognitive dimension of emotional intelligence functions as a kind of early warning system that enables students to identify and address adjustment difficulties before they escalate into more serious problems.

The present findings also have important implications for understanding the role of self-regulation in student adjustment. Jillani et al. (2023) found that managing one's own emotions was a significant predictor of university adjustment, and the present study' s finding that self-regulation ($r = .548$) is the third strongest EI correlate of adjustment is consistent with this conclusion. Students who can regulate their emotional responses—delaying gratification, managing frustration, maintaining effort in the face of challenge—are better able to sustain the behavioral and motivational patterns required for academic and social success in educational environments.

It is also noteworthy that empathy, while the weakest EI correlate in this study ($r = .489$), remains significantly and meaningfully associated with self-adjustment. Students who are capable of understanding and sharing the emotional perspectives of their peers and instructors are more likely to form the quality social relationships that serve as a buffer against adjustment difficulties. This finding resonates with the conclusions of Kim and Dhammasaccakarn (2024), who demonstrated that self-esteem mediates the relationship between EI and both academic adaptation and psychological well-being among international students, suggesting that the empathy-adjustment relationship may operate partly through improved relational quality and self-concept clarity.

One study that reported a non-significant relationship between EI and adjustment—Ahmad and Tambak (2018) in their investigation of Thai students studying in Indonesia—warrants contextual explanation. The authors attributed their null finding to the compounding effects of language and cultural barriers that may attenuate the normally facilitative effects of EI on adjustment when cross-cultural transition demands are particularly intense. This caveat underscores the importance of attending to contextual moderators of the EI-adjustment relationship, including cultural distance, language proficiency, and the degree of environmental novelty encountered by students.

The practical implications of these findings for guidance and counseling services are substantial. If emotional intelligence—and particularly social skills, self-awareness, and self-regulation—is a significant predictor of self-adjustment, then interventions that develop these competencies among students have the potential to meaningfully improve adjustment outcomes. Macías and Intriago (2024) provided evidence that social-emotional skills development strategies can improve self-regulation, social relationships, and school adjustment. Haver et al. (2025) demonstrated that EI enhancement programs can improve both emotional competency and psychological well-being. Choi et al. (2024) showed that social support moderates the EI-adjustment relationship, suggesting that

school counselors can complement EI development interventions with programs designed to strengthen students' social support networks—particularly for students with initially low EI.

CONCLUSION

This study has provided quantitative evidence for a significant and substantively meaningful positive relationship between emotional intelligence and self-adjustment among students in educational environments. Through Pearson correlation analysis, a moderate-to-strong relationship ($r = .627$, $p < .001$) was established between EI and self-adjustment, and simple linear regression analysis confirmed that emotional intelligence accounts for 39.3% of the variance in students' self-adjustment scores ($R^2 = .393$, $F(1, 118) = 76.234$, $p < .001$). These findings add to an expanding body of international research—including work by Ibrahim et al. (2025), Rohima et al. (2025), Watson et al. (2025), and Fernanda et al. (2024)—that consistently documents EI as a key determinant of student adjustment across diverse educational contexts.

Among the five dimensions of emotional intelligence examined, social skills demonstrated the strongest correlation with self-adjustment ($r = .601$), followed by self-awareness ($r = .574$), self-regulation ($r = .548$), motivation ($r = .512$), and empathy ($r = .489$). These findings indicate that all EI dimensions contribute meaningfully to student adjustment, but that the relational and self-monitoring facets of emotional intelligence are particularly important. This differential contribution has practical significance for the design of EI-based interventions: programs that prioritize the development of social skills and self-awareness may yield the most immediate benefits for students' adjustment outcomes.

The findings have clear and direct implications for guidance and counseling practice in educational institutions. School counselors and college career counselors should consider integrating structured EI development activities—including social skills training, self-awareness workshops, emotional regulation exercises, and empathy-building programs—into both preventive and remedial counseling services. Early identification of students with low EI scores could enable counselors to provide targeted support during critical transition periods, when adjustment demands are most acute. Collaborative programming that combines EI development with social support facilitation holds particular promise, given evidence that social support moderates the EI-adjustment relationship (Choi et al., 2024).

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