

Emotional Intelligence in Relation to Academic Motivation among Higher Secondary School Students: An Empirical Investigation in District Baramulla, Jammu and Kashmir

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ABSTRACT

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is increasingly viewed as an important psychological resource for students' learning, adjustment, and sustained academic engagement. However, the relationship between EI and Academic Motivation may depend on the social and educational context in which students learn. The present study examined the relationship between EI and Academic Motivation among 200 students of Classes XI and XII enrolled in Government and Private higher secondary schools of District Baramulla, Jammu and Kashmir. A quantitative, descriptive-correlational design was employed, and multistage stratified random sampling was used to select the participants. EI was assessed through the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT), while Academic Motivation was measured using the Academic Motivation Scale adapted by Stover et al. (2012). Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's product-moment correlation, and independent-samples t-tests. Students reported high levels of EI ($M = 123.84$, $SD = 14.62$) and Academic Motivation ($M = 104.92$, $SD = 13.28$). EI was positively associated with Academic Motivation, $r = .648$, $p < .001$. The correlation corresponds to approximately 42% shared variance, although the cross-sectional design does not permit causal interpretation. Private-school students reported higher EI and Academic Motivation than Government-school students, with moderate standardized mean differences. The findings are broadly consistent with recent international evidence but also highlight the need to interpret the relationship through contextual variables such as school climate, teacher support, socioeconomic conditions, academic stress, and experiences of educational disruption. The study concludes with context-sensitive implications for school practice and a future research agenda involving moderation, mediation, multilevel modelling, longitudinal designs, and multiple data sources.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence; Academic Motivation; Higher Secondary Students; School Context; Jammu and Kashmir; Baramulla

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary education increasingly recognises that successful learning cannot be explained by cognitive ability alone. Students enter classrooms with emotional, social, motivational, and contextual resources that influence how they respond to academic demands, persist during difficulty, interact with teachers and peers, and regulate their learning behaviour. Recent work on emotional intelligence has strengthened the argument that emotional competencies can be associated with academic outcomes, but it has also shown that the size and meaning of these associations vary according to the type of EI measured, the outcome examined, and the educational context (MacCann et al., 2020; Arias et al., 2022; Taibolatov et al., 2024). The relationship between Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Academic Motivation is particularly relevant during late adolescence. Students in Classes XI and XII face increasing curricular demands, examination pressure, decisions about further education and careers, and changing social relationships. Emotional awareness and regulation may help students manage frustration, anxiety, disappointment, and academic pressure, while motivation provides the energy and persistence required to remain engaged with learning. Recent research among schoolchildren has reported a positive association between EI and academic motivation (Arias et al., 2022; Taibolatov et al.,

2024), while other studies indicate that EI may operate indirectly through learning motivation, self-efficacy, relational engagement, or other psychosocial processes rather than exerting a simple direct effect on academic outcomes (Chang & Tsai, 2022; Iqbal et al., 2021).

The post-COVID educational context further strengthens the need to examine these variables together. School closures, remote learning, social isolation, altered routines, and uncertainty affected students' motivation and socio-emotional adjustment. A systematic review found that COVID-19-related remote learning was associated with declines in several learning outcomes and that motivational, behavioural, and socio-emotional factors contributed to these changes (Cortés-Albornoz et al., 2023). Research in India during the second wave also highlighted the importance of classroom engagement, grit, uncertainty, and student well-being in understanding students' educational experiences (Kareem et al., 2023). These findings suggest that emotional competence should not be treated as an isolated personal characteristic; rather, its relationship with motivation needs to be considered within the broader learning environment.

In India, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 places holistic development, experiential learning, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and socio-emotional development alongside academic attainment. This policy orientation is particularly relevant to adolescent learners because schools are expected to create environments that support both academic and personal development. Recent national assessment and school-education reporting also emphasise competency-based learning and educational quality, indicating a policy movement away from a narrow focus on examination performance toward broader learner capabilities (Government of India, 2020; Ministry of Education, 2025). The Jammu and Kashmir context adds an important layer to this discussion. The educational experience of students in the region has been shaped not only by ordinary school-level differences but also, at different points, by disruptions associated with security conditions, public uncertainty, school closures, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Research on children in conflict-affected areas of Jammu and Kashmir has documented interruptions to school functioning and educational continuity, while more recent research has drawn attention to psychological distress and behavioural difficulties among children and adolescents in Kashmir (Kousar & Bhadra, 2021; Dar et al., 2023). Such contextual experiences do not imply that all students are affected in the same way; rather, they provide a rationale for examining whether emotional competencies interact with environmental supports and stressors when students sustain academic motivation. District Baramulla is especially relevant for context-specific educational research because its schools include diverse Government and Private institutions serving students from different socioeconomic, geographic, and family backgrounds. Official education statistics indicate that Jammu and Kashmir continues to have a substantial school system distributed across primary, secondary, and higher-secondary levels, while recent regional statistics show continuing differences in enrolment and retention across stages of schooling (Ministry of Education, 2024; Government of Jammu and Kashmir, 2025). These structural indicators do not by themselves explain students' motivation, but they reinforce the importance of examining psychological variables in relation to the institutional and social environments in which learning takes place.

Against this background, the present study examines EI in relation to Academic Motivation among higher secondary school students in District Baramulla. The study contributes regional evidence to a literature that is increasingly international but remains comparatively limited in Jammu and Kashmir. Importantly, the study does not assume that EI is the sole or direct cause of motivation. Instead, the findings are interpreted as evidence of association, while contextual moderators and mediators are proposed as directions for future research.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework is based on the Ability Model of Emotional Intelligence and Self-Determination Theory (SDT), but the relationship between the two constructs is interpreted more contextually.

Ability Model of Emotional Intelligence

Mayer and Salovey's Ability Model conceptualizes EI as a set of abilities involving the perception, use, understanding, and management of emotion (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Mayer et al., 2008). From this

perspective, students who can identify and regulate emotion may be better positioned to cope with academic setbacks and interpersonal demands. However, the present study uses the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT). Because SSEIT is a self-report measure, the present findings should be interpreted as reflecting students perceived or self-reported emotional intelligence rather than performance-based ability EI. This distinction is important because recent meta-analytic evidence indicates that associations with academic outcomes differ across ability, self-report, and mixed models of EI (MacCann et al., 2020).

Self-Determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory explains motivation in terms of the satisfaction of basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2020). Emotional competence may support motivation when it helps students interpret academic experiences, manage negative emotions, communicate effectively, and maintain relationships that satisfy these psychological needs. At the same time, SDT cautions against treating motivation as an entirely internal characteristic because classroom climate, teacher behaviour, social relationships, and opportunities for autonomy shape students' motivational experiences.

Contextual Extension of the Framework

For Jammu and Kashmir, the theoretical framework can be extended beyond an individual-level EI–motivation pathway. School type, gender, socioeconomic status, parental education, and rural/urban location may alter the strength of the association by shaping students' access to resources, support, expectations, and learning opportunities. Similarly, teacher support, school belonging, self-efficacy, and academic stress may explain part of the pathway between emotional competence and motivation. Educational disruption and uncertainty may also act as contextual conditions that change how students regulate emotions and sustain motivation. are offered as theoretically grounded directions for this research.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To assess the level of Emotional Intelligence among higher secondary school students of District Baramulla, Jammu and Kashmir.
2. To assess the level of Academic Motivation among higher secondary school students of District Baramulla, Jammu and Kashmir.
3. To examine the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Academic Motivation among higher secondary school students.
4. To compare Emotional Intelligence and Academic Motivation between Government and Private higher secondary school students of District Baramulla.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

- **H₀₁:** There is no significant relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Academic Motivation among higher secondary school students.
- **H₀₂:** There is no significant difference in Emotional Intelligence between Government and Private higher secondary school students.
- **H₀₃:** There is no significant difference in Academic Motivation between Government and Private higher secondary school students.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Recent Evidence on Emotional Intelligence and Academic Motivation

Recent evidence generally supports a positive relationship between EI and students' motivation, but the relationship should not be treated as universally strong or causal. Arias et al. (2022), using 541 primary-school students, found a positive and significant association between EI and motivation to study, while also reporting gender differences in EI but not in academic motivation. Taibolatov et al. (2024), studying 682 schoolchildren,

similarly reported a significant positive relationship between EI and academic motivation and found differences across grade and gender. These studies support the basic expectation of the present research while demonstrating that demographic and developmental factors can shape the pattern.

Evidence from broader academic outcomes is also positive but more qualified. A 2023 systematic review and meta-analysis reported a moderate-to-high association between EI and academic performance, while noting that the effects varied across geographical regions and types of performance measured (Sánchez-Álvarez et al., 2023). A 2024 meta-analysis likewise found a significant relationship between EI and student achievement, reinforcing the educational relevance of emotional competence while not establishing a simple one-directional mechanism (Zhou et al., 2024).

Recent studies also provide alternative explanations. Chang and Tsai (2022), in the context of pandemic-related online learning, found that EI did not directly predict academic achievement but positively predicted learning motivation and self-efficacy, with sequential mediation linking EI to achievement. Iqbal et al. (2021) similarly reported direct and indirect pathways between EI and cognitive outcomes through relational engagement during the pandemic. Such findings suggest that the relationship identified in the present study may represent one component of a larger psychosocial process rather than a standalone causal effect.

Importantly, the literature is not uniformly positive. Differences in measurement, population, academic outcome, and context can produce weaker or non-significant associations. For example, a recent study of university students found that emotional intelligence was not a significant determinant of some motivation indicators after other psychological variables were considered (González et al., 2025). This body of evidence supports a more critical interpretation: EI may be relevant to motivation, but its contribution can depend on the learning environment and on competing psychological and social factors.

Academic Motivation, Self-Determination, and Educational Context

Academic motivation is multidimensional and includes intrinsic motivation, forms of extrinsic motivation, and amotivation. SDT emphasises that the quality of motivation depends on whether students experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Consequently, high total motivation scores should not automatically be interpreted as evidence of strong intrinsic motivation; the motivational orientation of students is also important. The Academic Motivation Scale used in the present study captures these dimensions, although the current analysis reports the total Academic Motivation score.

Pandemic research further demonstrates that motivation is sensitive to changes in the learning environment. Fong (2022) argued that the pandemic altered students' goals, values, expectations, and behavioural engagement through changes in learning arrangements and uncertainty. A systematic review by Cortés-Albornoz et al. (2023) found that motivational and socio-emotional factors contributed to learning difficulties during remote schooling. These findings reinforce the need to understand motivation as an interaction between personal resources and environmental conditions.

Jammu and Kashmir: Contextual and Policy Considerations

The regional context is important because students in Jammu and Kashmir have experienced educational disruptions that differ in timing and intensity from those in many other parts of India. Research on border communities documented disturbed school functioning, dislocation, and obstacles to sustaining education during periods of conflict (Kousar & Bhadra, 2021). Research among children and adolescents in Kashmir has also identified substantial psychological distress and behavioural difficulties associated with exposure to trauma and political conflict (Dar et al., 2023). These findings do not establish a direct link with the EI–motivation relationship studied here, but they provide a strong contextual rationale for examining stress, uncertainty, and school support as possible moderators or mediators in future work.

Policy developments also make the topic timely. NEP 2020 places holistic development and socio-emotional capacities within the broader educational mission. Recent national assessment reporting for Jammu and Kashmir under PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan 2024 frames school quality in terms of competency

development rather than only content recall (PARAKH, 2025). In parallel, official UDISE+ and J&K statistical reports provide evidence of the scale and stage-wise structure of schooling in the Union Territory (Ministry of Education, 2024; Government of Jammu and Kashmir, 2025). Together, these developments create a policy environment in which emotional competence and motivation are relevant not merely as psychological constructs but as components of holistic educational development.

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach and Design

The study adopted a quantitative research approach and a descriptive-correlational research design. The descriptive component was used to estimate the levels of EI and Academic Motivation, while the correlational and comparative components were used to examine associations between the variables and differences by school type. No variable was manipulated; therefore, the findings are interpreted as associative rather than causal.

Population and Sample

The study population comprised students enrolled in Classes XI and XII in Government and Private higher secondary schools of District Baramulla, Jammu and Kashmir, during the academic session 2025–2026. A sample of 200 students was selected using multistage stratified random sampling. Schools were first stratified by management type (Government and Private), followed by selection of schools through simple random sampling. Students were then selected from the sampled schools using proportionate allocation. The final sample comprised 100 Government-school students and 100 Private-school students, with 50 students from Class XI and 50 from Class XII in each school-type group.

Table 1. Distribution of the Sample (N = 200)

School Type	Class XI	Class XII	Total
Government	50	50	100
Private	50	50	100
Total	100	100	200

Research Tools

Emotional Intelligence: Emotional Intelligence was measured using the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) developed by Schutte et al. (1998). The instrument contains 33 items rated on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), with negatively worded items reverse-scored. Total scores range from 33 to 165, with higher scores indicating higher self-reported EI. Because the instrument is self-report, the present study operationalises EI as perceived emotional intelligence rather than performance-based ability EI.

Academic Motivation: Academic Motivation was measured using the Academic Motivation Scale adapted by Stover et al. (2012). The adapted scale contains 27 items assessing intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and amotivation. Items are rated on a five-point scale, with higher total scores representing higher overall Academic Motivation.

Statistical Techniques

The data were coded and analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 29). Descriptive statistics (Mean and Standard Deviation) were used to summarise EI and Academic Motivation. Pearson's product-moment correlation was used to test the relationship between EI and Academic Motivation. Independent-samples t-tests were used to compare Government and Private school students. To strengthen interpretation, standardized mean differences (Cohen's d) were calculated from the reported group means and standard deviations, and the correlation's squared coefficient (r^2) was used as an index of shared variance. These additional effect-size estimates are descriptive and do not change the original inferential tests.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Objective 1: To assess the level of Emotional Intelligence

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Emotional Intelligence (N = 200)

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Level
Emotional Intelligence	200	76	156	123.84	14.62	High

The mean EI score was 123.84 (SD = 14.62), with observed scores ranging from 76 to 156. Within the scoring interpretation used in the original study, the overall level was classified as high. The result indicates generally favourable self-reported emotional competence among the participating students, but it should not be interpreted as evidence that all students possessed uniformly high ability-based EI.

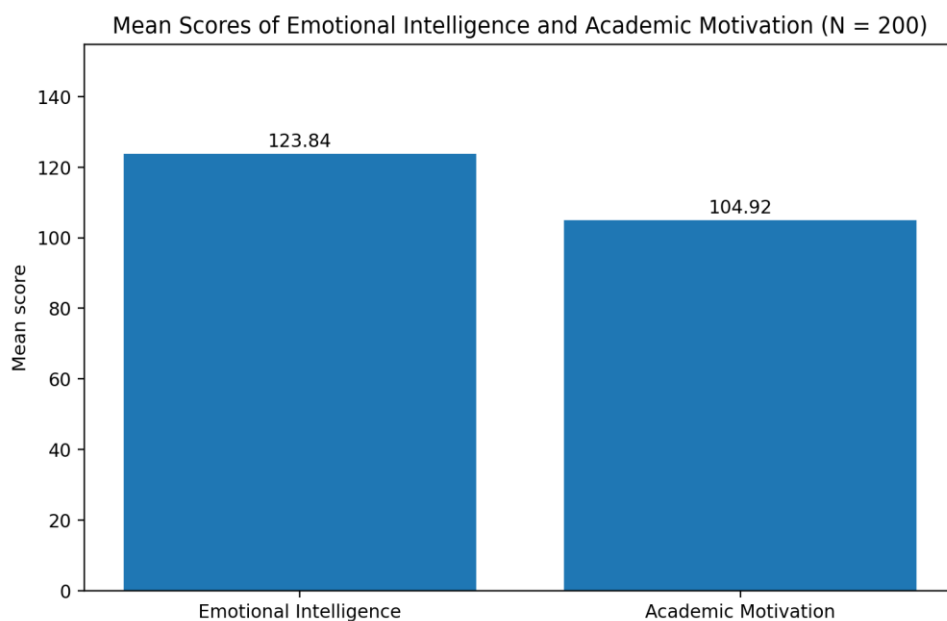


Figure 2. Mean scores of Emotional Intelligence and Academic Motivation.

Objective 2: To assess the level of Academic Motivation

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Academic Motivation (N = 200)

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Level
Academic Motivation	200	61	132	104.92	13.28	High

The mean Academic Motivation score was 104.92 (SD = 13.28), with scores ranging from 61 to 132. The overall level was classified as high in the original scoring interpretation. Because the present analysis uses a total motivation score, the result should not be taken to mean that intrinsic motivation necessarily predominated over extrinsic motivation; the motivational subdimensions were not analysed separately.

Hypothesis Testing

H₀1: There is no significant relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Academic Motivation among higher secondary school students.

Table 4. Pearson Correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Academic Motivation

Variables	N	R	P	Decision
Emotional Intelligence × Academic Motivation	200	.648	< .001	Reject H ₀ 1

Pearson's correlation showed a statistically significant positive association between EI and Academic

Motivation, $r = .648$, $p < .001$. The magnitude is moderately strong. The corresponding r^2 is approximately .420, indicating that about 42% of the variance is shared between the two self-reported measures in this sample. A 95% confidence interval for r , calculated from the reported r and sample size, is approximately [.560, .722]. These estimates strengthen the interpretation of the association, but they do not establish that EI causes Academic Motivation. Because both measures were collected by self-report at the same time, common method variance and response-style effects may also have contributed to the observed association.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in Emotional Intelligence between Government and Private higher secondary school students.

Table 5. Difference in Emotional Intelligence by School Type

School Type	N	Mean	SD	T	p
Government	100	120.84	15.28	2.94	.004
Private	100	126.84	13.41	2.94	.004

Private-school students reported higher EI ($M = 126.84$, $SD = 13.41$) than Government-school students ($M = 120.84$, $SD = 15.28$), and the difference was statistically significant, $t = 2.94$, $p = .004$. The estimated Cohen's d is approximately 0.42, representing a moderate standardized difference. The result identifies a school-type difference but does not demonstrate that private schooling itself produces higher EI.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in Academic Motivation between Government and Private higher secondary school students.

Table 6. Difference in Academic Motivation by School Type

School Type	N	Mean	SD	T	p
Government	100	101.68	13.76	3.49	.001
Private	100	108.16	12.28	3.49	.001

Private-school students reported higher Academic Motivation ($M = 108.16$, $SD = 12.28$) than Government-school students ($M = 101.68$, $SD = 13.76$), $t = 3.49$, $p = .001$. The estimated Cohen's d is approximately 0.50, indicating a moderate standardized difference. As with EI, the observed difference may reflect a combination of school climate, teacher support, resources, peer norms, parental expectations, socioeconomic composition, selection effects, or other contextual characteristics that were not measured in the present study.

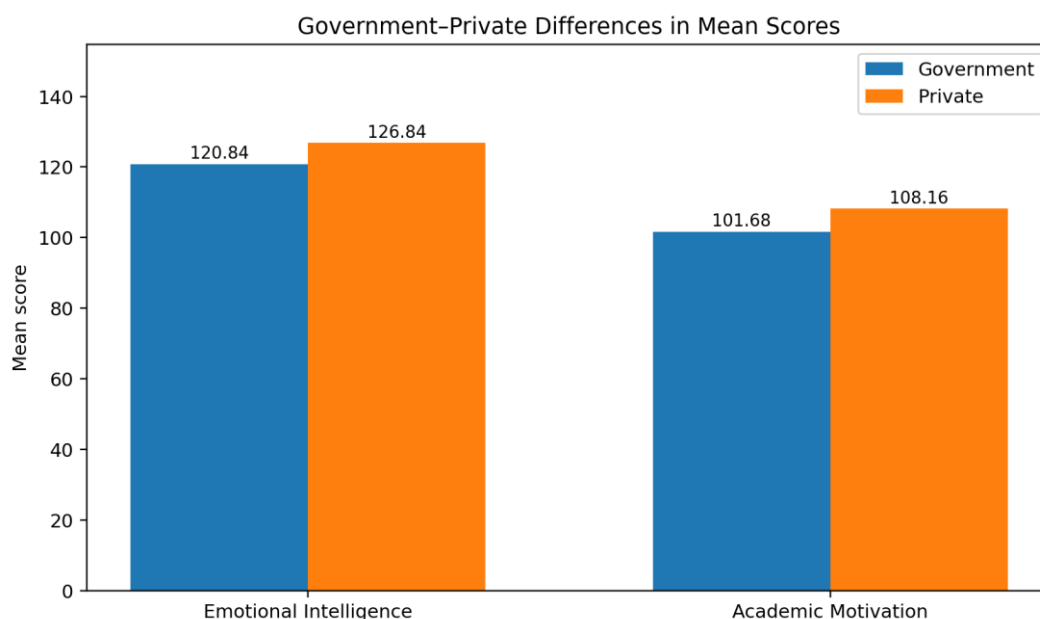


Figure 3. Government-Private differences in mean Emotional Intelligence and Academic Motivation.

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. The students reported a high overall level of Emotional Intelligence ($M = 123.84$, $SD = 14.62$) within the scoring interpretation used in the study.
2. The students reported a high overall level of Academic Motivation ($M = 104.92$, $SD = 13.28$).
3. A statistically significant positive association was found between Emotional Intelligence and Academic Motivation ($r = .648$, $p < .001$). The association represented approximately 42% shared variance, but no causal inference can be made.
4. Private-school students reported significantly higher Emotional Intelligence than Government-school students ($t = 2.94$, $p = .004$; estimated $d \approx 0.42$).
5. Private-school students reported significantly higher Academic Motivation than Government-school students ($t = 3.49$, $p = .001$; estimated $d \approx 0.50$).
6. The school-type differences should be interpreted as contextual differences rather than direct effects of school management, because the present design did not measure the socioeconomic, family, school-climate, teacher-support, or other factors that could explain these differences.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The positive association between EI and Academic Motivation is consistent with recent school-based research. Arias et al. (2022) reported a positive relationship among primary-school students, while Taibolatov et al. (2024) found a significant association among secondary schoolchildren. The present finding therefore adds evidence from a geographically and educationally distinct context. However, the present coefficient ($r = .648$) should not be interpreted as evidence of a universal or causal relationship. Differences in age, measurement instruments, school systems, cultural context, and the distinction between self-report and ability-based EI can affect effect sizes. An important theoretical implication is that EI may support motivation through several mechanisms rather than through a single direct pathway. Emotional regulation may reduce the disruptive effects of frustration and academic stress; interpersonal competence may improve teacher and peer relationships; and emotional self-awareness may strengthen students' perceived competence and self-efficacy. This interpretation is consistent with Chang and Tsai (2022), who found that EI was positively related to learning motivation and self-efficacy while its direct effect on academic achievement was not significant. It is also compatible with research showing indirect pathways through relational engagement (Iqbal et al., 2021). Thus, the present correlation can be located within a broader motivational system rather than treated as an isolated EI effect.

The post-pandemic context provides an additional explanation for why emotional resources may be relevant to motivation. Students' educational routines and social relationships were disrupted during COVID-19, and systematic evidence indicates that motivational and socio-emotional factors contributed to learning difficulties during remote schooling (Cortés-Albornoz et al., 2023). In Jammu and Kashmir, educational disruption has also occurred in the context of longer-standing security and social uncertainties. Studies from the region document disruption to schooling and psychological distress among young people (Kousar & Bhadra, 2021; Dar et al., 2023). The present study did not measure exposure to such experiences, so it cannot determine whether they strengthened or weakened the EI–motivation relationship. Nevertheless, the regional context makes such moderation a meaningful direction for future research.

The Private-school students show higher mean scores on both EI and Academic Motivation, but school management is unlikely to be a sufficient explanation. Government and Private schools may differ in student socioeconomic composition, parental education, teacher-student ratios, access to learning resources, parental involvement, academic expectations, school climate, and selection processes. The findings also illustrate the importance of competing theoretical explanations. SDT emphasises autonomy, competence, and relatedness, whereas social-cognitive perspectives highlight self-efficacy and reciprocal interactions between person and environment. From a contextual perspective, students with higher EI may be more likely to perceive and use available support effectively, but supportive environments may also help students develop emotional regulation and motivation. The relationship may therefore be reciprocal. The apparent strength of the EI–motivation relationship must also be considered in light of measurement. Both constructs were assessed through self-report

questionnaires administered within the same study. Students who generally view themselves positively may provide higher ratings on both EI and motivation, producing inflated covariance. Moreover, the SSEIT is a self-report instrument, whereas the Ability Model conceptualises EI as an ability. Future research should therefore combine EI with ability-based measures, teacher ratings, behavioural indicators, or performance-based assessments where feasible. Finally, the study's regional contribution lies more in showing how a well-established psychological association appears among students in Baramulla.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

1. Schools should treat socio-emotional learning as part of routine educational practice rather than as an isolated counselling activity. Classroom activities can include emotion identification, emotional regulation, perspective-taking, conflict resolution, reflection, and cooperative learning.
2. Teachers can strengthen motivation by combining emotional support with autonomy-supportive practices: offering meaningful choices, giving constructive feedback, recognising effort and improvement, and creating opportunities for students to experience competence.
3. Government schools should not be interpreted as inherently deficient on the basis of the present findings. Instead, the observed mean differences justify a diagnostic examination of school-level conditions such as teacher support, school climate, counselling access, learning resources, parental involvement, and student socioeconomic background.
4. School counsellors and teachers can use brief screening and referral mechanisms to identify students experiencing persistent academic stress, disengagement, or difficulties in emotional regulation. Such interventions should be supportive and non-stigmatizing.
5. At the policy level, programmes implementing NEP 2020's holistic-development agenda in Jammu and Kashmir should incorporate measurable socio-emotional and motivational outcomes alongside academic indicators. Monitoring should consider differences across rural and urban settings and across socioeconomic groups.
6. Given the region's history of educational disruption, school-continuity planning should include psychosocial support, flexible learning arrangements, communication with families, and strategies for restoring classroom belonging after prolonged interruptions.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- I. Future studies should test whether gender, socioeconomic status, parental education, rural/urban location, and school type moderate the EI–Academic Motivation relationship. Interaction terms or multi-group structural equation modelling can be used to examine whether the strength of the pathway differs across these groups.
- II. Potential mediators should include academic self-efficacy, teacher support, school belonging, academic stress, resilience, and perceived autonomy/competence/relatedness. A mediation model could determine whether EI is associated with motivation partly through these psychosocial mechanisms.
- III. Longitudinal designs should be prioritised to examine directionality. Cross-lagged panel models could test whether EI predicts later motivation, whether motivation predicts later emotional competence, or whether the relationship is reciprocal.
- IV. Multilevel modelling would be appropriate when students are nested within schools because school climate, teacher practices, and school resources may create shared contextual effects. This approach would prevent school-level influences from being incorrectly attributed to individual students.
- V. Future research should combine self-report measures with teacher ratings, behavioural observations, ability-based EI assessments, academic records, and qualitative interviews. Such multi-method designs would reduce common method bias and provide a richer understanding of students' experiences.
- VI. Research in Jammu and Kashmir should explicitly measure educational disruption, perceived uncertainty, connectivity and learning-access conditions, family support, and school continuity. This would allow the regional context to be incorporated analytically rather than mentioned only as background.

- VII. Intervention studies are also needed. Rather than assuming that EI automatically produces higher motivation, controlled or quasi-experimental studies can test whether structured socio-emotional learning programmes actually improve emotional competence and specific forms of academic motivation.

CONCLUSION

The present study found a statistically significant positive association between Emotional Intelligence and Academic Motivation among higher secondary school students in District Baramulla, Jammu and Kashmir. Students also reported higher mean EI and Academic Motivation in Private schools than in Government schools. These findings are broadly consistent with recent international evidence, but their significance lies in extending the discussion to a context in which students' educational experiences may be shaped by diverse social, institutional, and historical conditions. The interpretation moves beyond the simple conclusion that “higher EI causes higher motivation.” Instead, the evidence supports a more cautious proposition: emotional competence is associated with students' motivational experiences, while the strength and meaning of that association may depend on school climate, teacher support, socioeconomic conditions, self-efficacy, academic stress, and wider contextual experiences. The future research in Jammu and Kashmir should therefore move from correlation to explanation by testing mediation, moderation, multilevel, longitudinal, and mixed-method models. Such work would provide a stronger basis for designing educational interventions that are both psychologically informed and contextually responsive.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

The study was conducted in accordance with ethical principles governing research involving human participants. Permission to conduct data collection was obtained from the relevant educational authorities and participating school heads. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, participation was voluntary, and confidentiality and anonymity were maintained.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that there are no financial, personal, professional, or other conflicts of interest that could have influenced the conduct, analysis, interpretation, or reporting of this research.

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