

The Relationship between Emotional Intelligence, Mental Health, and Academic Adjustment in Seventh-Grade Male Students in Bojnourd

Mohsen Jahandoost^{*1}

Abstract

Introduction: One of the challenges students face upon entering the educational environment is their perception of their ability to cope with demands that affect their adjustment. This study aimed to determine the relationship between emotional intelligence with mental health and academic adjustment in seventh-grade male students in Bojnourd city.

Methods: This research used a descriptive-correlational method. The statistical population included all seventh-grade male students in Bojnourd. A sample of 224 students was selected using multistage cluster sampling. Data were collected using the Cron Emotional Intelligence Self-Report Inventory, the Goldberg and Hiller General Health Questionnaire, and the Sinha and Singh Academic Adjustment Inventory. Pearson correlation, regression analysis, and canonical correlation analysis were employed using SPSS version 22.

Results: The findings revealed a significant simple and multiple correlation between emotional intelligence and both academic adjustment and mental health. Moreover, the components of emotional intelligence showed significant canonical correlations with both criteria.

Conclusion: This study showed that emotion plays an important role in improving academic adjustment and mental health of seventh grade male high school students. Emotional intelligence boosters can be considered by the institution as a solution to improve academic adjustment and mental health in educational environments.

Keywords: Academic Adjustment, Emotional Intelligence, Mental Health

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¹ - **(Corresponding author)**, Master of Educational Psychology, Bojnourd Branch, Islamic Azad University, Bojnourd, Iran mohsen199797j@gmail.com



Introduction:

Among the primary challenges students encounter when entering academic environments is their belief in their ability to manage the demands placed upon them—factors that directly influence their level of adjustment (1). Schooling is a life stage characterized by rapid cognitive and behavioral changes, and effectively coping with such changes requires adequate adjustment skills (2).

In general, adjustment is a dynamic process through which individuals strive to align themselves with internal pressures and external demands (3). Adjustment occurs in multiple domains, such as adapting to new environments, establishing interpersonal relationships, and dealing with educational contexts—this last domain is referred to as academic adjustment. Academic adjustment reflects students' ability to adapt to academic demands and the social roles imposed by school as a structured institution (4).

Roeser, Eccles, and Sameroff argue that students who face difficulties in academic adjustment are also more likely to encounter challenges in other areas of life (5). The transition to middle school increases the importance of academic adjustment. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which an individual realizes their own abilities, can cope with normal life stresses, work productively, and contribute to the community (6). Mental health encompasses fostering well-being to prevent mental illness, control contributing factors, ensure early diagnosis, reduce relapse risks, and promote healthy interpersonal relationships (7).

Mental well-being also involves a sense of integration and awareness across all dimensions of the self. It is commonly broken down into three core components: life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect. Goldsmith, Veum, and Darity (1997) described mental health as a person's evaluation of how well their defined goals align with outcomes, leading to a relatively stable and enduring sense of internal satisfaction over time (8).

Individuals with higher mental well-being tend to experience more positive emotions and evaluate their surroundings more optimistically, while those with lower mental health are more prone to interpreting life events negatively and experiencing emotions such as anxiety, depression, and anger.

One key factor that influences academic adjustment is emotional intelligence. Goleman (1997) suggested that emotional intelligence can explain why individuals with average IQs sometimes achieve greater success than those with high IQ scores (9). With the rise of the information age and the increasing value of human interactions, emotional intelligence has become an important organizational and psychological concept.

Emotional intelligence is an umbrella term that includes a range of intrapersonal and interpersonal skills beyond traditional measures such as IQ or technical knowledge. Unlike earlier theories that viewed emotion and reason as opposing forces, emotional intelligence integrates both as essential to adaptation and smart behavior.

The core components of emotional intelligence include:

1. **Self-awareness** – the ability to understand one's emotions and perform accurate self-evaluation,
2. **Self-management** – the capacity to regulate one's emotional states and internal tensions,
3. **Social awareness** – the ability to perceive the emotions and needs of others,
4. **Relationship management** – the skill to elicit constructive responses in others.

Emotional intelligence is not only a predictor of mental health but also contributes to academic achievement (10). Hence, identifying factors related to emotional intelligence in adolescents and developing strategies to enhance it may help reduce life dissatisfaction and academic difficulties. These considerations motivated the present study, which aims to explore whether emotional intelligence is related to mental health and academic adjustment in seventh-grade male students in Bojnourd.

Research Method:

This study is a descriptive-correlational research utilizing the correlation coefficient method. The population consisted of all seventh-grade male students in Bojnourd's middle schools during the 2022-2023 academic year, totaling 2,657 students, all male. Multistage cluster sampling was used, with eight schools randomly selected from Bojnourd's middle schools. From each school, two classes were selected, and from each class, 14 students were chosen, resulting in a sample of 224 students.

Research Instruments:

Kron Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (10): This standardized questionnaire, developed by Kron et al. in 2007, consists of 25 questions across four dimensions: 1) Self-awareness, 2) Emotion Management (Self-management), 3) Empathy (Social Awareness), and 4) Social Skills (Relationship Management). Its validity was confirmed through expert opinions from supervisors and advisors, and its reliability was calculated using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a value above 70%, indicating acceptable reliability.

Academic Adjustment Inventory for High School Students: Developed by Sinha and Singh in 1993, this questionnaire measures the adjustment levels of 13-18-year-old Indian high school students in three domains: emotional, social, and academic adjustment, with 60 questions (20 per domain) (11). The questionnaire was validated by correlating scores with hostel management ratings based on data from 60 students at Panta Multipurpose College. Ratings were categorized as very good, good, average, or poor, with a product-moment correlation of 0.51. Higher scores indicate poorer adjustment, while lower scores indicate better adjustment. A preliminary study by Masoudi Nejad in Iran reported reliability coefficients of 0.86 for individual adjustment and 0.87 for social adjustment (12). For validity, item analysis showed significant correlations ($p < 0.001$) for each item using biserial correlation with total and domain scores. Intercorrelations between the three domains were calculated, as shown below.

Correlation of Adjustment Domains (Shared Variance of Scales): Nouri reported a validity correlation of 0.73 with the California Personality Inventory (CPI) (13). The CPI, with 180 yes/no questions, measures individual and social adjustment across 15 subscales. Schaefer reported

reliability coefficients of 0.88–0.90 for individual adjustment and 0.86–0.90 for social adjustment (14). Responses indicating adjustment were scored as 0, and others as 1. Total and domain scores were compared with percentage norms, categorizing students as very good, good, average, poor, or very poor. Students in the very good and good categories were classified as having low adjustment.

General Health Questionnaire (GHQ): This 28-item questionnaire, developed by Goldberg and Hillier using factor analysis, includes four subscales measuring physical symptoms, anxiety, depression, and social functioning, with seven questions per subscale. The GHQ distinguishes individuals with mental disorders from those who perceive themselves as healthy, focusing on common pathological symptoms across various mental disorders rather than specific diagnoses (15).

- **Subscale A:** Includes items about individuals' feelings regarding their health and fatigue, associated with physical symptoms (questions 1–7).
- **Subscale B:** Covers anxiety and insomnia (questions 8–14).
- **Subscale C:** Measures individuals' ability to cope with professional demands and daily life issues, revealing feelings about handling common life situations (questions 15–21).
- **Subscale D:** Includes items related to depression and suicidal tendencies (questions 22–28). Researchers using the GHQ before and after events, such as social changes or therapeutic interventions, can compare pre- and post-test scores to assess the impact of external factors on various symptom domains (15).

Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used for data description. Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS 22, employing stepwise multiple regression and Pearson correlation.

Findings:

Table 1: Descriptive Findings of Research Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	N
Academic Adjustment	13.6	3.45	5	20	190
Emotional Intelligence	58.08	15.01	20	94	190
Self-Awareness	16.74	4.62	5	26	190
Self-Management	12.53	4.03	2	20	190
Social Awareness	17	5.73	3	28	190
Relationship Management	12.51	4.15	4	20	190
Mental Health	64.81	10.41	27	88	190

As shown in Table 1, the mean and standard deviation for academic adjustment are 13.6 and 3.45, for emotional intelligence 58.08 and 15.01, for self-awareness 16.74 and 4.62, for self-management 12.53 and 4.03, for social awareness 17 and 5.73, for relationship management 12.51 and 4.15, and for mental health 64.81 and 10.41, respectively.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix of Emotional Intelligence and Its Components with Mental Health and Academic Adjustment

	Mental Health	Academic Adjustment	Criterion Variable / Predictor Variable
Emotional Intelligence	$r = 0.22, P < 0.01^{**}$	$r = 0.25, P < 0.01^{**}$	
Self-Awareness	$r = 0.15, P < 0.05^*$	$r = 0.09, P < 0.05$	Components of Emotional Intelligence
Self-Management	$r = 0.21, P < 0.01^{**}$	$r = 0.24, P < 0.01^{**}$	
Social Awareness	$r = 0.16, P < 0.01^{**}$	$r = 0.18, P < 0.01^{**}$	
Relationship Management	$r = 0.20, P < 0.01^{**}$	$r = 0.30, P < 0.01^{**}$	

- = Significant at the 0.05 level.
- ** = Significant at the 0.01 level.

Hypothesis 1: Emotional intelligence is related to mental health in seventh-grade male students in Bojnurd. Table 2 shows a correlation coefficient of 0.26 for the relationship between emotional intelligence and mental health, significant at $P < 0.01$. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was confirmed.

Hypothesis 2: Emotional intelligence is related to academic adjustment in seventh-grade male students in Bojnurd. Table 2 indicates a correlation coefficient of 0.22 for the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic adjustment, significant at $P < 0.01$. Thus, Hypothesis 2 was confirmed.

Hypothesis 3: Components of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management) are related to academic adjustment in seventh-grade male students in Bojnurd.

Table 3: Regression Analysis Results for the Relationship between Emotional Intelligence Components and Academic Adjustment Using Simultaneous Entry

Predictor Variable	MR	R ²	F, P	Regression Coefficients				Intercept
				1	2	3	4	
Self-Awareness	0.09	0.009	F = 1.80, P = 0.18	$\beta = 0.09, b = 0.07, t = 1.34, p = 0.0001$				12.45

Self-Management	0.24	0.06	F = 6.009, P = 0.003	$\beta = 0.006$, b = 0.005, t = 0.08, p = 0.93	$\beta = 0.24$, b = 0.21, t = 3.18, p = 0.002		11.08
Social Awareness	0.25	0.064	F = 4.23, P = 0.006	$\beta = 0.03$, b = 0.005, t = 0.43, p = 0.66	$\beta = 0.21$, b = 0.18, t = 1.34, p = 0.01	$\beta = 0.08$, b = 0.04, t = 0.83, p = 0.40	11.01
Relationship Management	0.32	0.10	F = 5.53, P = 0.001	$\beta = 0.03$, b = 0.02, t = 0.41, p = 0.67	$\beta = 0.15$, b = 0.13, t = 1.77, p = 0.07	$\beta = 0.08$, b = 0.05, t = 0.75, p = 0.45	$\beta = 0.28$, b = 0.24, t = 2.98, p = 0.003

Table 3 shows that the multiple correlation coefficient for the linear combination of predictor variables (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management) is MR = 0.32. Since only the regression coefficient for relationship management was significant, Hypothesis 3 was not confirmed. The results indicate that emotional intelligence components explain 10% of academic adjustment variance, meaning 10% of academic adjustment can be predicted using these components. The standardized (β) and unstandardized (b) weights show that only relationship management significantly predicts academic adjustment.

Hypothesis 4: Components of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management) are related to mental health in seventh-grade male students in Bojnurd.

Table 4: Regression Analysis Results for the Relationship between Emotional Intelligence Components and Mental Health Using Simultaneous Entry

Predictor Variable	MR	R ²	F, P	Regression Coefficients				Intercept
				1	2	3	4	
Self-Awareness	0.15	0.02	F = 4.87, P = 0.07	$\beta = 0.15$, b = 0.35, t = 2.19, p = 0.029				58.84
Self-Management	0.22	0.052	F = 5.15, P = 0.007	$\beta = 0.08$, b = 0.18, t = 0.08, p = 0.93	$\beta = 0.18$, b = 0.46, t =			55.84

					2.31, p = 0.022			
Social Awareness	0.22	0.052	F = 4.44, P = 0.018	$\beta = 0.07$, b = 0.16, t = 0.82, p = 0.41	$\beta = 0.17$, b = 0.43, t = 1.90, p = 0.01	$\beta = 0.02$, b = 0.05, t = 0.28, p = 0.77		55.76
Relationship Management	0.25	0.06	F = 4.09, P = 0.017	$\beta = 0.07$, b = 0.16, t = 0.84, p = 0.40	$\beta = 0.14$, b = 0.36, t = 1.10, p = 0.11	$\beta = 0.05$, b = 0.09, t = 0.45, p = 0.16	$\beta = 0.14$, b = 0.45, t = 1.40, p = 0.16	54.66

Table 4 shows that the multiple correlation coefficient for the linear combination of predictor variables is $MR = 0.25$. Since none of the regression coefficients were significant, Hypothesis 4 was not confirmed. The results indicate that emotional intelligence components explain 6% of mental health variance, meaning 6% of mental health can be predicted using these components. The standardized (β) and unstandardized (b) weights show that none of the components significantly predict mental health.

Hypothesis 5: Components of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management) have a canonical correlation with mental health and academic adjustment in seventh-grade male students in Bojnurd. Canonical correlation analysis was used to examine the multivariate relationship between the predictor variables (emotional intelligence components) and criterion variables (mental health and academic adjustment). This analysis treats predictors and criterion variables as separate sets to determine their interrelationship. The primary goal is to identify the number of dimensions needed to understand the relationship between the two sets. The canonical correlation coefficient is comparable to the determination coefficient (R^2) in regression analysis, representing the shared variance between the two sets.

The first step in canonical correlation analysis is evaluating the canonical model. The most common significance test is the F-test, typically using Wilks' Lambda, Hotelling's Trace, Pillai's Trace, and Roy's Largest Root. Table 5 presents the significance tests for the canonical correlation model.

Table 5: Canonical Correlation Model Results for Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, and Relationship Management with Mental Health and Academic Adjustment

Statistical Index	Value	F Ratio	Hypothesis df	Error df	Significance Level (P)
Tests					
Pillai's Trace	0.132	3.29	8	370	0.001
Wilks' Lambda	0.868	3.36	8	368	0.001
Hotelling's Trace	0.150	3.43	8	366	0.001
Roy's Largest Root	0.122				

Table 5 shows that Wilks' Lambda is 0.86 ($F(8, 368) = 3.36, P < 0.01$), indicating a significant relationship between the two sets of variables. Thus, Hypothesis 5 was confirmed. Wilks' Lambda represents the variance not explained by the model, so the effect size ($1 - \lambda$) indicates the shared variance explained by the model. The model explains 14% of the variance in self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management with mental health and academic adjustment. The second step is determining the number of canonical dimensions needed to understand the relationship. The number of canonical functions equals the number of variables in the smaller set (two criterion variables), and not all may be significant.

Table 6: Indices for the Two Canonical Functions

Dimension	Canonical Correlation	Squared Correlation	Wilks' Lambda	F Ratio	DF1	DF2	Significance Level (P)
1	0.34	0.12	0.86	3.36	8	368	0.001
2	0.10	0.01	0.98	0.66	3	185	0.57

As shown in Table 6, the number of canonical dimensions is two, equal to the number of criterion variables. The F ratio for the first dimension is significant, so only the coefficients for the first function are analyzed further.

Discussion and Conclusion:

Emotional intelligence is related to mental health in seventh-grade male students in Bojnurd. As shown in Table 2, there is a significant correlation between emotional intelligence and mental health. In other words, students with higher emotional intelligence exhibit better mental health. These findings align with studies by Aghababaei, Farahani, and Mehrabadi (16), Safavi and Mousavi (17), and Farhangpour, Khedavi, and Adib (18). These results suggest that optimism, or the general expectation that positive events will outweigh negative ones in the future (even if unrealistic), can influence behavior and coping with life's stressors (19). Optimistic individuals expect positive outcomes, fostering positive feelings and higher mental health (20). Even when faced with stressors, optimistic individuals use positive coping strategies, believing they can resolve issues through effort, which enhances their mental and physical health (21). Another finding was the impact of two

emotional intelligence subscales, emotion perception and emotion management, on physical health, consistent with studies by Salovey et al. (22) and Besharat (23). These studies indicate that individuals capable of perceiving and managing emotions in various situations are physically healthier, while those lacking control over negative emotions are more prone to mental disorders.

Emotional intelligence underpins an individual's beliefs and values, shaping their actions and lifestyle. Due to its connection to meaning, values, and inner awareness, emotional intelligence can transform individuals, enhancing their quality of life (17). Individuals with social awareness act on others' emotions rather than merely feeling them, understanding how their words and actions impact others. If their behavior negatively affects others, they adjust it, thereby improving their mental health.

Emotional intelligence is related to academic adjustment in seventh-grade male students in Bojnurd. As shown in Table 2, there is a significant correlation between emotional intelligence and academic adjustment. Students with higher emotional intelligence exhibit better academic adjustment. No studies directly addressing the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic adjustment were found domestically or internationally. However, studies on related variables, such as academic achievement and motivation, align indirectly with these findings. The results are consistent with studies by Mansour and Shahsavari (24), Tavakkolizadeh, Soltani, and Panahi (25), Hamidi and Sedaghat (26), Sohrabi (27), Farahangpour, Khedavi, and Adib (18), and Smith (28). These findings suggest that strengthening the three components of emotional intelligence—self-awareness, social awareness, and self-management—enhances academic adjustment. Students who develop self-awareness can understand their emotions, recognize their strengths and limitations, build self-confidence, and influence others, improving their adjustment. Those who enhance social awareness can align their emotions with school and classroom strategies, foster empathy, understand school dynamics, and enhance school establishment, improving their adjustment. Students who strengthen self-management can control their emotions and influence others' behavior, manage workplace stress, and gain commitment through honest and adaptive behavior, contributing to school achievements and better adjustment.

Components of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management) are related to academic adjustment in seventh-grade male students in Bojnurd. Table 3 shows a multiple correlation coefficient of 0.32 for the relationship between emotional intelligence components and academic adjustment. Since only the regression coefficient for relationship management was significant, Hypothesis 3 was not confirmed. Only relationship management significantly predicts academic adjustment, explaining 12% of its variance. This suggests that higher relationship management scores are associated with better academic adjustment. No studies on this specific topic were found. These findings indicate that relationship management, by fostering greater attention to individuals and their environment, enhances social relationships and, consequently, academic adjustment. A key factor in adjusting to various environments and individuals is being attentive and responsive to surroundings, enabling adaptive reactions.

Components of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management) are related to mental health in seventh-grade male students in Bojnurd. Table 4 shows a multiple correlation coefficient of 0.25 for the relationship between emotional intelligence components and mental health. Since none of the regression coefficients were significant, Hypothesis 4 was not confirmed. The components explain 6% of mental health variance, meaning 6% of mental health can be predicted using these components. None of the components significantly predict mental health.

Components of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management) have a canonical correlation with mental health and academic adjustment in seventh-grade male students in Bojnurd. Table 6 shows a canonical correlation coefficient of 0.34, with the squared correlation indicating that emotional intelligence components explain 12% of the variance in mental health and academic adjustment. The results suggest that relationship management, self-management, and social awareness are more significant in explaining mental health and academic adjustment.

Ethical Considerations: After obtaining university approval and necessary permissions, the study's objectives and procedures were explained to participants, and their consent was obtained. Participants were assured that results would be shared upon request and that participation was voluntary, with the option to withdraw at any stage without consequences.

Study Limitations: Like other studies, this research had limitations, including participants' psychological and emotional states during questionnaire completion, which may have affected response accuracy and was beyond control.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare that this work is an independent study with no conflicts of interest with any organizations or individuals.

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