

# The Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Academic Achievement of College Students

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## Abstract:

With the ongoing development of educational psychology, Emotional Intelligence (EI) has garnered increasing academic attention as a critical factor influencing students' academic outcomes. EI, which involves the capacity to identify, comprehend, manage, and apply emotions, is widely recognized as essential for academic success, particularly in language learning contexts. This study systematically examines the influence of EI dimensions on college students' academic performance in English by synthesizing and analyzing existing literature. A thorough review of international research has been conducted, focusing on the association between EI and the academic performance of non-English majors within the scope of Chinese higher education. The analysis integrates both quantitative and qualitative findings, emphasizing EI's role in managing anxiety and enhancing motivation in English learning. The results demonstrate a significant positive correlation between EI and academic achievement in English, particularly in aspects related to emotional regulation, social skills, and self-management. Furthermore, EI is identified as a mediating factor in promoting academic performance, notably through the reduction of foreign language anxiety and the enhancement of learning motivation. Based on these findings, this paper advocates for the enhancement of EI in higher education as a strategic approach to support students in improving their academic performance.

**Keywords:** Emotional intelligence; Academic achievement; Foreign language Anxiety; Higher education; Non-English majors.

## 1. Introduction

EI has gained increasing attention in educational psychology recently. Emotional Intelligence (EI) refers to the capacity of an individual to identify, comprehend, regulate, and employ emotions effectively. With the emphasis on emotional education in education systems worldwide, EI is progressively acknowledged as a critical determinant of academic success among students. Research on EI in various educational contexts has shown that it can significantly impact a student's academic performance, social competence, and overall psychological well-being.

This study focuses on the role of EI in higher education, especially in English learning for non-English major college students. The study focuses on non-English majors in Chinese colleges and universities, who face unique challenges in English learning, such as foreign language anxiety and lack of motivation, which may affect their academic performance.

While extensive research confirms the positive effects of EI on academic performance, studies specifically targeting non-English major college students, particularly within

the Chinese educational context, remain relatively scarce. This provides an important research opportunity for this study. Many studies have consistently shown that EI is significantly positively correlated with academic success. These studies cover all stages from preschool to higher education and involve student populations from different cultural backgrounds. The existing literature focuses on the following aspects.

First, in terms of research topics and study populations, the majority of studies have focused on preschool and compulsory education to explore the effects of EI on students' early social adjustment and academic performance [1]. However, there is a relative scarcity of research in higher education, specifically regarding English learning for students who are not English majors [2][3].

Second, in terms of research context, most of the studies have been conducted in school settings, focusing mainly on the effects of EI on students' emotional management, motivation, and academic anxiety [4]. The majority of existing research has been conducted in Western countries, with comparatively fewer studies addressing the Chinese

context [5][6].

Finally, in terms of research methodology, most studies have used quantitative research methods to analyze the correlation between EI and academic achievement through tools such as questionnaires and structural equation modeling (SEM) [7][8]. However, recently, qualitative studies such as interviews and case studies have increasingly aimed to explore the role of EI in specific learning environments in greater detail [9].

This study is important as it aims to bridge the current research gap regarding the link between EI and English academic performance among non-English major college students in China. By systematically integrating and analyzing the existing literature, this paper provides a new perspective for understanding the role of EI in specific cultural and educational contexts. The study's novelty is that it focuses on non-English majors and reveals the specific role of EI in reducing foreign language anxiety and enhancing motivation to learn.

Despite the extensive research on the effects of EI on academic performance, some gaps still exist. Most existing studies have focused on language learning and less on other subjects. The performance of EI in different cultural contexts and its long-term effects need to be further investigated. In addition, integrating EI and teaching strategies still needs to be explored in depth.

The aim of this paper is to systematically review the literature to answer the following questions:

1. How do current studies describe the link between EI and English academic achievement in non-English major college students?
2. How does EI affect non-English majors' foreign language anxiety and motivation in English learning?
3. What are the gaps and unresolved issues in current research exploring the relationship between EI and English academic achievement?

This study makes a significant scholarly contribution by synthesizing and analyzing existing literature to better understand the role of EI in foreign language learning. The findings of this paper will provide educators with valuable practical suggestions for incorporating the development of EI in curriculum design to enhance students' academic performance.

This paper first provides a comprehensive literature review related to EI and academic performance. Then, it systematically analyzes this literature to explore the effects of the dimensions of EI on performance in different disciplines and to analyze their role in specific cultural contexts. Finally, the paper will summarize the main findings in the conclusion section and suggest directions for future research and recommendations for educational practice.

## 2. Literature Review

The literature analysis aims to integrate the main findings of existing studies, pinpoint research gaps, and demonstrate how these gaps can be leveraged to formulate new research questions. The relationship between EI and academic achievement will be explored in detail below through a number of key themes and ideas that will be presented in the course of the discussion.

### 2.1 Definition and theoretical framework of EI

EI is commonly defined as an individual's ability to recognize, understand, manage, and utilize emotions [7]. The theoretical framework of EI varies across studies. For example, Mohzan and his colleagues used Bar-On's model of EI, which consists of four dimensions: self-emotional appraisal (SEA), other-emotional appraisal (OEA), use of emotions (UOE), and regulation of emotions (ROE) [7]. In contrast, other studies, such as Yahaya and his colleagues, used different elements of EI, such as self-awareness, emotion management, self-motivation, empathy, and interpersonal skills to explore the effects of EI on academic achievement [1].

To explore the link between EI and academic achievement, it is essential to define emotional intelligence clearly and outline its theoretical framework. The use of a unified model of EI facilitates the comparability of findings and the cumulative nature of the study. Future studies could investigate the applicability of these models across diverse cultural contexts to enhance the generalizability and relevance of the findings.

### 2.2 Relationship between EI and academic performance

EI is recognized as a crucial factor influencing academic performance. Studies by Zhai and Li have identified a strong positive correlation between EI dimensions and English academic achievement [2][3]. In particular, Zhai stated that EI indirectly enhanced students' English achievement by enhancing foreign language pleasure and reducing foreign language anxiety [3]. Li's study further supported this finding by emphasizing the importance of emotionality, sociality, and well-being in learning [2].

Parker and his colleagues, on the other hand, confirmed the pivotal role of EI in high school students, observing that those with elevated EI levels handled academic stress more effectively, indicating that EI aids in managing academic challenges [8]. Similarly, Ding's study reinforced this notion, demonstrating that individuals with higher EI excelled in English language learning [6].

Chen's study further explored the relationship between EI and self-directed learning ability, showing that EI di-

rectly influences English performance and also indirectly improves academic achievement by enhancing students' self-directed learning ability [5].

These studies suggest that EI enhances academic performance directly and also functions as a valuable tool for students in managing academic stress. Educators should incorporate the development of EI into curriculum design to enhance students' overall academic performance, especially when dealing with emotional challenges in foreign language learning.

### 2.3 The mediating role of emotional intelligence

The connection between EI and academic achievement involves critical mediating and moderating variables that should not be overlooked. Yang found through her research that self-efficacy plays an important mediating role between EI and academic achievement [10]. This means that students with high EI usually possess a stronger sense of self-efficacy, manifesting in higher academic engagement and persistence in the face of academic challenges. Similarly, Ding's study showed a negative correlation between EI and academic burnout and that students with high EI performed better in English language learning, suggesting that EI may enhance students' academic performance by reducing academic burnout [6].

Halimi and his colleagues also explored the performance of EI in higher education, noting that EI not only directly affects academic performance but also moderates students' performance in the face of academic stress through emotional management strategies [9].

These studies suggest that EI not only directly affects academic performance, but also plays an indirect role through mediating or moderating variables. This provides new ideas for educational interventions that can indirectly improve students' academic achievement, especially in terms of reducing academic burnout and increasing self-efficacy, by enhancing their emotional intelligence.

### 2.4 Research on EI in cross-cultural contexts

The cross-cultural applicability of EI has also been an important aspect of research. AL-Qadri and Zhao investigated the impact of EI among Arab students, discovering a strong positive relationship between the five EI dimensions and academic achievement, particularly in self-management and emotion regulation areas [11]. Yahaya and his colleagues further examined how EI components affect academic performance across various cultural contexts, highlighting the crucial roles of self-awareness, emotional regulation, and empathy in different cultural settings [1].

These studies suggest that EI has applicability in different cultural contexts and plays an important role in helping

students cope with cultural adaptation and academic challenges. Cross-cultural studies are essential for the global advancement of EI as they offer a foundation for understanding how EI can be effectively promoted worldwide. Upcoming studies should prioritize tailoring EI education to meet the specific needs of students from diverse cultural backgrounds, aiming to optimize EI's impact on academic achievement.

## 3. The causes and foundations of EI

EI is widely recognized as a combination of emotional regulation, social skills, and the ability to cope with stress. Individuals with high EI show greater sensitivity and effectiveness in recognizing and managing emotions, which helps them maintain a positive mindset and greater motivation to learn academically. Yang's study found that EI significantly affects college students' self-efficacy [10]. Students possessing high EI exhibit greater self-efficacy in managing academic challenges, offering theoretical backing for why such students tend to adapt better to academic environments and achieve success. Zhai also noted that students with elevated EI levels experience greater enjoyment in the learning process, with increased foreign language enjoyment being a significant expression of emotional intelligence that indirectly enhances their academic performance [3].

The level of EI can be explained by early family education, social environment, and personal experiences. The family environment is crucial in shaping EI. Individuals with high EI often come from supportive and understanding families. In such environments, they learn to manage their emotions effectively. Interactions with parents and family members also help them develop strong social connections.

In addition, interpersonal interactions and social experiences contribute to the shaping of emotional intelligence, and involvement in enriching social activities can foster better social skills and emotional management.

## 4. Mechanisms of EI on Academic Achievement

The impact of EI in academics is reflected in several key aspects. First, college students exhibiting high EI often possess a stronger sense of self-efficacy, believing in their ability to handle academic challenges and achieve success. This belief makes them more resilient in the face of difficulties and less likely to give up due to setbacks. This is supported by a study conducted by Wang and Cai, which found a significant positive correlation between dimensions of EI, such as introspection, interpersonal relationships, and stress management, and English performance

[4].

Parker and his colleagues also demonstrated that EI plays a crucial role in coping with academic stress in high school, and that students with high EI perform better in coping with complex academic situations [8]. Furthermore, students with high EI excel in teamwork. Teamwork and group learning have become important forms of learning in modern educational environments. Students with high EI can better understand and coordinate among team members, promote effective communication and cooperation, and thus improve the overall learning efficiency and performance of the group. Good teamwork experience not only enhances individual academic performance but also strengthens students' social skills, laying a foundation for future career development.

In addition, students with high EI usually have higher levels of motivation, especially in foreign language learning. They are able to effectively manage the anxiety generated during the learning process. The importance of EI in academic success is further supported by Ding's finding that students with high EI perform better in English language learning [6].

#### **4.1 Wider Impact of EI on Student Development**

EI significantly affects academic performance and is essential to the broader development of students. Halimi and AlShammari's study highlighted that EI is significant in addressing academic challenges in higher education, particularly in cross-cultural contexts, helping students adapt more effectively to diverse cultural and academic environments [9]. Additionally, research by AL-Qadri and Zhao emphasizes the impact of EI on students' ability to cope with academic stress and manage their emotions, which directly enhances their academic performance [11].

Students with high EI tend to interact more effectively with faculty and peers, allowing them to build deeper relationships that provide academic support and positively influence their mental health and overall well-being. Individuals with high EI are more capable of handling academic pressures and life challenges, which enables them to maintain a high level of psychological resilience during demanding academic tasks. This resilience contributes to immediate academic success and positively influences long-term career development and quality of life.

Through reviewing existing literature, this study highlights the crucial role of EI in students' academic success. Enhancing EI supports students in thriving within their academic environment and establishes a solid groundwork for their future careers. It is recommended that educators focus on fostering emotional intelligence, aiding students in managing academic stress, and boosting their academic

performance through emotional education and social skills training. These findings emphasize the importance of EI education in the modern education system, especially at the higher education level, where EI development should be an important part of students' overall development.

### **5. Conclusion**

By integrating and analyzing the existing literature, this study found a significant positive correlation between EI and college students' academic performance in English, especially in the dimensions of affectivity, socialization, and self-management. The study shows that EI not only directly enhances students' English learning performance but also indirectly contributes to academic achievement by alleviating foreign language anxiety and enhancing learning motivation. Therefore, it can be concluded that in higher education, especially for non-English majors, the cultivation and development of EI is crucial for enhancing academic achievement.

In addition, the study found that the role of EI may vary across cultural and educational contexts, which provides new insights for educators globally and emphasizes the broad applicability of EI as an educational strategy. This finding for educational practice implies that by integrating the development of EI in curriculum design, students can be more effectively assisted in overcoming emotional barriers and enhancing academic performance.

This study fills a gap in the research on the connection between EI and English academic accomplishment among Chinese non-English major college students. It provides new theoretical support for academic research in this area. At the same time, this study provides practical suggestions for educators to incorporate the development of EI into their teaching practices, which will help students better manage the emotional challenges of learning and thus improve their academic performance.

Although this study provides important insights into emotional intelligence, there are still some shortcomings. First, this study relied heavily on literature analysis and lacked empirical data support. Future research should further validate these findings through fieldwork or experimental studies. Second, other factors, such as family background and school environment, may have an impact on how academic success and EI are related. Future studies should consider the role of these variables and explore the specific implementation methods and effect assessment of EI training, to provide more operational guidance for educational practice.

Future research could also concentrate on the correlation between EI and performance in particular subjects, especially on enhancing student performance through targeted



training. Cross-cultural research should continue to explore the global application of EI to provide more specific guidance for multicultural education.

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