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***Emotional Intelligence Among Psychology
Students: A Field Study at Tlemcen University***

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ABSTRACT

The study examined emotional intelligence (EI) in a sample of 108 students at the University of Tlemcen (38 males, 70 females), testing whether EI varies by age (25 years and older vs. younger than 25 years), gender, and psychology track (clinical vs. educational). Using a descriptive approach, the analyses showed a clear gender gap in overall EI: women scored higher ($M = 177.6857$) than men ($M = 167.1579$), and the difference was statistically significant ($p = 0.007 < 0.05$). Students older than 25 also obtained higher overall EI scores. However, age did not differentiate the EI subdimensions. Finally, specialization within psychology did not produce statistically significant differences.

Keywords: emotional intelligence; Bar-On & Parker scale; university students.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Academic, social, and professional success has long been a central concern, reflecting the broader drive toward personal excellence and self-actualization. For much of the last century, success was closely linked to classical conceptions of intelligence, with widespread belief that general intelligence—the so-called g factor—served as the primary indicator of distinction and high performance (Jensen, 1969, 1998). According to Dermache (2025), intelligence is no longer confined to cognitive performance; it also extends to emotional and social capacities that facilitate personal growth and support psychological adjustment.

Over time, however, this narrow view began to lose ground. Emerging research showed that success could not be reduced to traditional measures of linguistic and logical reasoning, nor captured entirely by conventional IQ tests. Instead, it became increasingly clear that success draws on a more diverse set of intelligences, extending beyond the classical model.

Gardner's work on multiple intelligences (1983, 1993) pushed back against the old idea that intelligence is a single thing. He pointed instead to a range of abilities. Understanding others—what he called interpersonal intelligence—was one. Managing one's own emotions—what he called intrapersonal intelligence—was another (Gardner, 1983, 1993). Around the same time, Sternberg was also shifting the focus, arguing that practical and creative forms of intelligence mattered just as much for success as traditional academic skills (Sternberg, 1985, 1996). Empirical findings have since reinforced these ideas. General intelligence, although important, appears to account for only about 20% of success across academic, professional, and social fields. High IQ alone does not guarantee excellence; there are plenty of exceptions. Most of what accounts for success—close to 80% according to some studies—appears tied to factors beyond general intelligence. Emotional intelligence, in particular, has drawn attention as a major contributor. It involves the ability to recognize, manage, and work with emotions, both one's own and others', bridging what Gardner described as interpersonal and intrapersonal domains (Goleman, 1995, 1998).

Within university life, emotional intelligence often plays a more important role than it is usually given credit for. It not only helps sustain motivation but also strengthens students' ability to manage themselves, organize their work, and deal with academic pressures (Chang & Tsai, 2022; Dong, et al., 2022; Pishghadam, et al., 2022; Ruiz-Ortega et al., 2024).

There is also evidence that students with higher emotional intelligence tend to report less anxiety, suggesting a broader role for EI in emotional regulation and coping. Students who score higher on emotional intelligence measures often cope better with emotional strain, which supports focus, self-discipline, better management of time, and clearer setting of priorities (Shi, Lu, & Du, 2022). It also seems to affect social life where students with stronger emotional intelligence are generally better at forming stable relationships with peers and faculty, using coping strategies that help them

navigate conflict and setbacks. Skills like empathy and communication emerge more easily, where emotional competence is stronger (Ang & Lau, 2024)

Contemporarily, cognitive ability alone no longer explains academic or personal success. Emotional intelligence has come to matter just as much, particularly because it shapes how individuals recognize and manage emotions—skills that prove critical for sustaining relationships and handling the pressures of complex modern life (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009, p. 15).

Yet most educational systems still lean heavily toward cognitive outcomes, giving little space to emotional development. Universities that focus only on academic results risk leaving students unprepared for the emotional and social demands they now routinely face. For students, the pressure is building. Academic expectations, personal stress, social uncertainty—all of it adds up. Anxiety and depression are not rare anymore, and emotional skills are becoming necessary just to stay afloat (Ruiz & Lopez, 2024)

Everyday observation of university life points to clear differences among students. Some find it difficult to take part in campus activities, whether academic, cultural, artistic, or social. They tend to withdraw, avoid contact, and hesitate to build relationships within the university environment. Others show the opposite profile: they adapt quickly, communicate with ease, and sustain positive social interaction. This gap in adjustment and interpersonal engagement may be linked, at least in part, to individual differences in emotional intelligence.

From this angle, emotional intelligence becomes a useful indicator during academic guidance, especially when students choose sub-specializations in psychology. In this discipline, it matters in its own right and should not be treated as less consequential than academic performance. Over time, it may also support students professionally by helping them maintain psychological balance and manage the emotional demands posed by clinical cases in mental health services or by the pressures of educational settings within the broader process of care and support.

Taken together, these considerations motivated the present study. The objective is to explore students' level of emotional intelligence in order to propose ways to strengthen and develop it, in support of their future prospects and, more broadly, the interests of society. Accordingly, the study raises the following questions :

2. Research Questions

- Are there statistically significant differences in emotional intelligence levels according to students' gender?
- Are there statistically significant differences in emotional intelligence levels according to students' age group?
- Are there statistically significant differences in emotional intelligence levels according to students' academic specialization?

3. Research Hypotheses

- There are no statistically significant differences in emotional intelligence levels based on gender.
- There are statistically significant differences in emotional intelligence levels based on age group.
- There are no statistically significant differences in emotional intelligence levels based on academic specialization.

4. Research Objectives

This study sets out to:

- Examine how emotional intelligence varies among university students according to gender.
- Examine how emotional intelligence varies among university students according to age group.
- Examine how emotional intelligence varies among university students according to academic specialization.

5. Research Significance

The value of examining emotional intelligence among university students can be framed in the following points:

- The study highlights differences in emotional intelligence across gender (female, male), age (>25 years vs. <25 years), and psychology track (clinical, educational). These results can feed future comparative work and help bring conceptual discussions into closer alignment with applied practice.
- Mapping students' emotional intelligence levels makes it possible to identify and mobilise their positive capacities, thereby supporting stronger psychological and social adjustment.
- The findings provide empirical input for the design of guidance and training programmes grounded in students' actual needs, with the potential to improve psychological adaptation and, more broadly, the quality of university life.

6. Conceptual Framework

6.1 Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence, in the formulation proposed by Mayer & Salovey, refers to the capacity to perceive one's own emotions and those of others, to discriminate among them accurately, and to regulate and generate emotions in ways that support thinking. It also involves awareness of emotional regulation as a lever for emotional and intellectual development (Mayer & Salovey, 1997, p. 10)

This perspective is known as the ability model. Building on it, Xiao et al.(2022) treat emotional intelligence as a constellation of cognitive and affective capacities: it allows precise emotion perception, an understanding of how emotions evolve, and the use of emotions to facilitate thinking, followed by effective management of emotions, whether personal or interpersonal.

In the Bar-On model, emotional intelligence is framed differently. It is defined as a set of integrated abilities and non-cognitive competencies that shape an individual's responsiveness and effectiveness when facing surrounding challenges and pressures (Bar-On, 1997, p. 16).

Operationally, in this study, emotional intelligence is defined as the total score obtained by students on the Bar-On and Parker Emotional Intelligence Inventory, standardized for the Algerian context (Jaija & Mansour, 2015). The scale assesses several dimensions:

Intrapersonal competence: the ability to notice one's own emotional states and express them.

Social competence: the capacity to pick on emotional cues from others and interact effectively.

Stress management competence: concerns the ability to regulate emotional responses under pressure and cope with external stressors.

Adaptability competence: the skill to handle stressors and challenges

General positive mood competence: maintaining an optimistic outlook toward life.

Positive impression competence: the ability to display optimism and project a positive emotional stance.

6.2 University Students

The term "university students" in this study refers specifically to third-year psychology undergraduates enrolled during the 2024–2025 academic year at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Tlemcen.

7. Theoretical framework

7.1. Definition of emotional intelligence

A wide body of scholarship has attempted to define emotional intelligence. Daniel Goleman describes it as a set of emotional-psychological capacities that allow individuals to understand their own emotions and those of others, regulate them, and draw on them in the management of thought, behaviour, and interpersonal relationships (Goleman, 1995, p. 60).

Stewart approaches it as a cluster of personality traits, together with social and emotional skills, through which a person first understands personal feelings and then recognises the feelings of others. This supports more effective navigation of professional and social life (Hussein, 2013).

In the Arab context, Al-Masdar frames emotional intelligence as conscious attention to one's emotions and accurate perception of others' emotions, combined with an objective understanding of both. It also includes the capacity to control, organise, and guide emotions in a positive direction, and to use emotional knowledge to enhance motivation and improve social interaction, thereby strengthening positive relationships and supporting success across life domains (Al-Masdar, 2008).

7.2. Models of emotional intelligence

The emotional knowledge model

The Mayer & Salovey model: Often treated as a central theoretical reference, this model has been supported in both foundational and applied research. It focuses on using and adapting emotions in ways that help the person solve problems and adjust effectively to the environment. It includes four core dimensions: emotional perception, psychological integration, emotional understanding, and emotional regulation (Al-Masdar, 2008).

Brackett & Salovey (2006) identify key tools associated with this approach:

1. Self-assessment measures
 - Trait Meta-Mood Scale
 - Self-Report Inventory
2. Ability and Execution Tests
 - Emotional Intelligence Tests (MSCEIT)
 - Multifactor Emotional Intelligence

The mixed model

- **The Goleman model:** As indicated above, Goleman links emotional intelligence to the ability to regulate and differentiate personal emotions and others' emotions, and to use them in managing thought and behaviour. He specifies five dimensions:
 - Knowing one's emotions: awareness of feelings as they arise, and understanding their nature and role in directing thought and behaviour.
 - Managing emotions: organising and controlling emotions in a way that fits the situation, without denying them or being driven by them.
 - Motivating oneself: using emotion constructively to sustain motivation, persist toward goals, and delay immediate gratification.
 - Recognizing emotions in others (Empathy): perceiving others' feelings, understanding them, and responding with social sensitivity.
 - Handling relationships: managing one's own emotions and others' emotions to sustain constructive, effective social interaction (Goleman, 1995, pp. 61–62).
- **The Bar-On model:** Bar-On defines emotional intelligence as a blend of emotional and social skills that shapes the individual's effectiveness in self-understanding, understanding others, building positive relationships, solving problems, and adapting to life's demands.
- **Core components in the Bar-On model:** Bar-On argues that emotional-social intelligence comprises five broad components, each with several subdimensions:
 1. Intrapersonal competence (Intrapersonal): self-awareness, understanding one's feelings, and expressing them constructively.
 2. Interpersonal competence (Interpersonal): perceiving others' feelings, empathising, and building balanced, cooperative relationships.

3. Stress management (Stress Management): managing emotions, tolerating pressure, and regulating emotional responses.
4. Adaptability (Adaptability): flexible, reality-based adjustment to new situations and effective personal and social problem-solving.
5. General mood (General Mood): positive affective-motivational functioning, such as optimism and satisfaction with life.

In sum, Bar-On treats emotional intelligence as more than a cognitive capacity. It is a multidimensional psychosocial construct that can be learned and developed, and it supports psychological adjustment, mental health, and academic and professional success (Bar-On, 2005).

Finally, the rise of interest in the emotional dimension of human behaviour reflects a shift from an exclusive focus on mental abilities toward recognising emotions as drivers of individual and social performance. Across models, emotional intelligence is increasingly approached as an integrated set of capacities combining self-awareness, emotional regulation, social competence, and adaptation to environmental demands. The same theoretical landscape also converges on a key point: these competencies are not fixed. They remain open to learning and development, which makes them central to psychological balance, more effective social communication, and success across life contexts.

8. Previous studies

Study by MacCann et al. (2020): This meta-analysis examined the link between emotional intelligence and academic performance, while testing moderators related to measurement type, age, gender, and educational level. It synthesised evidence from 158 papers and a pooled sample of 42,000 learners across university, secondary, and primary education. The review included widely used instruments such as MSCEIT, TEIQue, and EQ-i. Results supported a statistically significant positive association between emotional intelligence and academic performance. Age acted as a moderator, and emotional intelligence continued to predict academic performance even after controlling for personality traits and cognitive intelligence.

Study by Bru-Luna et al. (2021): This systematic review mapped emotional intelligence measurement tools used with adults, with attention to construct structure and psychometric quality, namely validity and reliability. Using a descriptive-analytic approach, the authors screened 2,761 articles indexed in Web of Science (1900–2020) and extracted 40 distinct instruments for analysis. The synthesis suggested that trait-based measures generally show stronger explanatory and predictive value than performance-based tools. The authors also discussed emotion-recognition tests, particularly facial-expression measures such as GERT, MSCEIT, and TIE, where female advantage was frequently reported.

Study by Perazzo et al. (2021): This study evaluated the psychometric performance of the TEIQue-SF in Brazil, using a sample of 512 Brazilian university students and comparative samples from the United Kingdom and Chile. The results showed

statistically significant correlations between emotional intelligence and both life satisfaction and happiness. Trait emotional intelligence also demonstrated incremental predictive validity beyond the Big Five. The study reported statistically significant gender differences favouring males.

Study by Tommasi et al. (2023): This study situated EQ-i emotional intelligence within personality and cognitive ability frameworks and examined gender differences. The sample included 1,063 university students and employees, and the design was descriptive-correlational. Measures covered the Big Five, a fluid intelligence test, and the EQ-i. Findings indicated statistically significant gender differences in specific dimensions, plausibly shaped by cultural context and social norms: males scored higher on stress management and personal competence, whereas females scored higher on the interpersonal dimension (social competence). No statistically significant difference emerged for the overall emotional intelligence score.

Study by Dermache (2025): This local study examined emotional intelligence among students at the University of Djelfa and tested differences by gender, level (Bachelor, Master), and academic stream (scientific, literary). The sample comprised 251 students. A descriptive design was used, relying on an emotional intelligence scale developed by Ben Amor Jamila. Results indicated a moderate emotional intelligence level, with statistically significant differences in favour of females, while no statistically significant differences were observed for level of study or academic stream.

Commentary on Previous Studies

Overall, prior work has linked emotional intelligence to a broad set of variables: personality traits, fluid intelligence, academic performance, life satisfaction and happiness, cultural and social norms, and emotion-recognition capacity. Sample sizes varied widely, and purposive sampling was common. Methodologically, most studies relied on psychometric scales and adopted descriptive designs, either correlational or analytic.

Across findings, gender differences were the most recurrent pattern. The direction, however, was not stable, with results alternating between female and male advantage depending on the measure and context. Age was largely treated as a moderating factor in the emotional intelligence–academic performance association, rather than being tested as an independent grouping variable that could itself generate differences, as in the present study. Finally, the current study aligns with the local evidence in reporting no statistically significant differences attributable to academic specialization.

9. Methodological Framework

9.1 Research Approach

This study employed a descriptive approach, widely regarded as a central methodology in the social and educational sciences. Rather than manipulating variables, descriptive approaches aim to observe and explore phenomena as they occur naturally (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Researchers using this framework gather either

quantitative or qualitative data, seeking to capture behaviours and experiences through systematic observation and interpretation (Johnson & Christensen, 2020).

Given its flexibility, descriptive research suits studies concerned with identifying characteristics of specific groups, mapping differences between variables, or tracking broader patterns—all aims that fit the scope of the present study (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2019)

9.2 Research Sample

A total of 108 students took part in the study; all enrolled in either Clinical or Educational Psychology at the University of Tlemcen during the 2024–2025 academic year. The sample was drawn randomly. Participants varied in gender—male and female—and were also divided into two age groups (Over 25years, Under 25 years).

Table 01: Characteristics of the Sample

Category	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Male	38	35.2%	35.2%	35.2%
Female	70	64.8%	64.8%	100.0%
Under 25 years	84	77.8%	77.8%	77.8%
Over 25 years	24	22.2%	22.2%	100.0%
Clinical Psychology	66	61.1%	61.1%	61.1%
Educational Psychology	42	38.9%	38.9%	100.0%

Source: Prepared by the researcher

9.3 Instrument Description : Emotional Intelligence Scale

This study relied on the Bar-On and Parker Emotional Intelligence Inventory, which was previously standardized for the Algerian context; the instrument follows a trait-based or mixed model of emotional intelligence, primarily rooted in self-report measures. The first Arabic translation was carried out by Ajwa (2003), followed by a second translation by Rizkallah (2006), after psychometric properties were verified—including translation validity, face validity, construct validity, and reliability measures such as test-retest, split-half reliability, and Cronbach’s alpha coefficient. The Algerian standardization was established by Jaija (Jaija & Mansour, 2015).

Participation was voluntary, and responses contained no identifying information about the targeted participants, in line with established research ethics.

9.4 Scale Description

The inventory consists of 60 items; each rated on a four-point Likert scale (Strongly applies, moderately applies, slightly applies, and does not apply). It measures six core dimensions of emotional intelligence, detailed in Table 02.

9.5 Scoring Method

For positively worded items, responses are scored from 4 to 1. For negatively worded items, scoring is reversed, assigning weights from 1 to 4 accordingly.

Table 02: EI Scale Dimensions

Dimension	Content Description	Item Numbers
Intrapersonal Competence	Recognizing and articulating one's own emotional experiences	7-17-*28-31-43-53*
Social Competence	Interpreting others' emotions and engaging in effective interpersonal interaction	2 -5 -10 -14 -20 -24 -36 -41 -45 - 51 - 55 - 59
Stress Management Competence	Managing stress and navigating emotionally charged situations	3-6*-11-*15-*21-26*—35*-39-46*-49*-54*-58*
Adaptability Competence	Responding flexibly to new circumstances and adapting behaviour accordingly	12-16-22-25-30-34-38-44-48-57
General Positive Mood Competence	Sustaining a generally positive emotional outlook	1-4-9-13-19-23-29-32-37* -40-47-50-56-60
Positive Impression Competence	Ability to display optimism and project positivity	8-18-27-33-42-52

Source: Prepared by the researcher

Note: Items marked with an asterisk (*) are negatively worded and reverse scored.

9.6 Psychometric Properties of the Instrument: Bar-On & Parker Emotional Intelligence Inventory

To ensure the tool's validity for measuring the targeted variables, this study verified several psychometric properties of the Inventory, focusing particularly on its validity and reliability.

9.6.1 Discriminant Validity (Extreme Groups Method)

An exploratory sample of 36 students was ordered from the highest to the lowest based on their total emotional intelligence scores. From this distribution, two groups were formed: the upper group, consisting of 18 students (33%) who scored highest, and the lower group, comprising the 18 students (33%) with the lowest scores. The means of the two groups were compared using an independent samples t-test. Results are detailed in Tables 03 and 04.

Table 03: Means and Standard Deviations for Upper and Lower Groups

		Group Statistics			
	Groups	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error
EI	Lower Group	18	153,7222	8,27331	1,95004
Total	Upper Group	18	190,4444	4,16176	0,98094

Source: Prepared by the researcher

Table 04: t-Test for Comparing the Means of the Lower and Upper Groups
Independent Samples t-test Results

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Significance (p-value).	t	(df)	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower bound	Upper bound
Total Emotional Intelligence Score	Assumption of equal variances	6,062	,019	-16,823	34	,000	-36,72222	2,18286	-41,15833	-32,28611
	Assumption of unequal variances			-16,823	25,086	,000	-36,72222	2,18286	-41,21713	-32,22731

Table 03 reveals that the Levene's test gave a significance value of 0.019, which falls below 0.05. This indicates that the null hypothesis of equal variances should be rejected. Following that, the t-test based on unequal variances showed a t-value of -16.823 with 25.086 degrees of freedom, and a p-value of 0.000. The difference between the means of the lower and upper groups, then, was statistically significant (Table 04). The confidence interval for the mean difference (95), stretching from -41,15833 to -32,28611, did not cross zero, which gives additional support to the result. Overall, these findings confirm that the Bar-On and Parker Emotional Intelligence Inventory, as adapted to the Algerian context, demonstrates good discriminant validity. It shows a clear ability to differentiate students based on their emotional intelligence levels, which supports its reliability for use in this study.

9.6.2 Reliability: Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to assess the internal consistency of both the subscales and the total score of the scale.

Table 05: Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients for the EI Scale

Dimension	N°	Cronbach's Alpha
Intrapersonal competence	6	0.707
Social competence	12	0.772
Stress management competence	12	0.748
Adaptability competence	10	0.806
General positive mood	14	0.822
Positive impression competence	6	0.744
Overall scale reliability	60	0.850

Source: Prepared by the researcher

Cronbach's alpha results presented in Table 05 demonstrate that the EI Scale maintains satisfactory internal consistency across both the total score and the subdimensions. Cronbach's alpha for the full scale came out at 0.850, which is generally taken to reflect good reliability. The scores across the subscales varied somewhat—

ranging from 0.707 to 0.822, but overall remained within an acceptable band which suggests that each dimension taps into a coherent construct with reasonable consistency. These findings are consistent with earlier validation studies, such as Jaija (2015), who reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.671, Saleh (2016) with 0.76, and Merjan (2016) with 0.84.

9.6.3 Statistical Processing: The data were processed using SPSS (version 22), independent-sample t-tests for group comparisons, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and means and standard deviations.

10. Results

H1: There are no statistically significant differences in emotional intelligence levels based on gender. To test the hypothesis, differences were calculated using the independent samples t-test alongside an analysis of variance. The results are presented in Table 06.

Table 06. Emotional Intelligence Score Differences by Gender

Dimensions of EI	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (p)
Intrapersonal Competence	Male	38	2.0877	0.67086	-2.410	106	0.018
	Female	70	2.4048	0.64304			
Social Competence	Male	38	3.2829	0.36737	-0.977	106	0.331
	Female	70	3.3571	0.38258			
Stress Management Competence	Male	38	2.2847	0.51952	-1.664	106	0.099
	Female	70	2.4662	0.55285			
Adaptability Competence	Male	38	3.0105	0.54959	-0.530	106	0.597
	Female	70	3.0657	0.49837			
General Positive Mood	Male	38	3.1203	0.41653	-2.010	106	0.047
	Female	70	3.2663	0.32652			
Positive Impression Competence	Male	38	2.7632	0.48029	-2.361	106	0.020
	Female	70	2.9714	0.41312			
Overall Emotional Intelligence	Male	38	167.1579	20.62081	-2.755	106	0.007
	Female	70	177.6857	18.01492			

Source: Prepared by the researcher

When examining table 6, it becomes clear that no significant statistical difference emerged between male and female students in several areas of emotional intelligence. No significant gender differences were observed in social competence ($p = 0.331$), adaptability ($p = 0.597$), or stress management ($p = 0.099$). While the female subgroup registered a slightly higher average in stress management ($M = 2.4662$) compared to males ($M = 2.2847$), the difference was not large enough to be statistically conclusive.

On the other hand, some dimensions revealed sharper contrasts. Intrapersonal competence, which relates to one's ability to recognize and express internal emotional states, showed a statistically significant advantage among female participants ($M = 2.4048$) compared to their male peers ($M = 2.0877$), with $p = 0.018$. A similar pattern appeared in the general positive mood subscale: female students posted a higher average

($M = 3.2663$), exceeding that of males ($M = 3.1203$), and this too reached statistical significance ($p = 0.047$). The trend extended to positive impression competence, where female students outscored their male peers ($M = 2.9714$ versus $M = 2.7632$), with $p = 0.020 < 0.05$.

Looking at the global emotional intelligence score, females once more showed a statistically significant lead ($M = 177.6857$) over males ($M = 167.1579$), with $p = 0.007 < 0.05$, reinforcing the pattern observed across specific subscales.

H 2: There are statistically significant differences in emotional intelligence levels based on age group.

To test the second hypothesis, differences between age groups were analysed using an independent samples t-test and variance analysis. Table 07 presents the results.

Table 07: Emotional Intelligence Differences by Age Group

EI Dimensions	Age Group	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.
Intrapersonal competence	< 25 years	84	2.2381	0.63282	-1.618	106	0.109
	> 25 years	24	2.4861	0.75967			
Social competence	< 25 years	84	3.3046	0.36986	-1.369	106	0.174
	> 25 years	24	3.4236	0.39617			
Stress management	< 25 years	84	2.4275	0.55465	0.894	106	0.373
	> 25 years	24	2.3144	0.51564			
Adaptability competence	< 25 years	84	3.0381	0.52040	-0.308	106	0.759
	> 25 years	24	3.0750	0.50584			
General positive mood	< 25 years	84	3.2236	0.36720	0.461	106	0.646
	> 25 years	24	3.1845	0.36599			
Positive impression	< 25 years	84	2.8988	0.45184	0.029	106	0.977
	> 25 years	24	2.8958	0.43907			
Overall EI	< 25 years	84	171.7024	18.16178	-2.313	106	0.023
	> 25 years	24	181.9583	22.37522			

Source: Prepared by the researcher

As Table 07 demonstrates, no statistically significant differences were found between age groups across most subdimensions of emotional intelligence:

Intrapersonal competence, while somewhat higher among students aged 25 and above ($M = 2.4861$), did not differ significantly from the younger group ($M = 2.2381$), as $p = 0.109$. Social competence followed a similar trend: students in the older cohort scored slightly higher ($M = 3.4236$), compared to their peers under 25 ($M = 3.3046$), yet the difference did not reach the threshold for statistical significance ($p = 0.174$).

As for stress management, the trend reversed: younger students demonstrated a marginally higher mean (2.4275) relative to the older cohort (2.3144), yet the difference failed to attain statistical significance ($p = 0.373$).

When it came to social competence, the older students posted a slightly higher average (3.4236), but the younger cohort was not far off (3.3046), and the gap proved non-significant ($p = 0.174$).

Stress management, on the other hand, leaned the other way: students under 25 had a slight advantage ($M = 2.4275$) over those above ($M = 2.3144$), though once again, the p-value (0.373) indicates the difference is not statistically meaningful. ($p = 0.373 > 0.05$).

Adaptability competence and general positive mood displayed almost identical means $M = 3.2236$ vs. $M = 3.1845$ between the two groups ($p = 0.759$ and $p = 0.646$, respectively), suggesting little to no variation. Similarly, positive impression competence produced overlapping averages ($M = 2.8988$ vs. $M = 2.8958$; $p = 0.977 > 0.05$).

However, when looking at total emotional intelligence scores, a statistically significant gap emerged ($p = 0.023 < 0.05$). Students aged 25 and above scored higher overall ($M = 181.9583$) compared to their younger peers ($M = 171.7024$).

H 3: There are statistically significant differences in emotional intelligence scores among university students according to academic specialization.

To test this hypothesis, differences were calculated using an independent samples t-test and an analysis of variance. The findings are presented in Table 08.

Table 08: Differences in Emotional Intelligence by Academic Specialization

Emotional Intelligence Dimensions	Academic Specialization	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p-value
Intrapersonal competence	Clinical Psychology	66	2.3662	0.66488	1.431	106	0.155
	Educational Psychology	42	2.1786	0.66299			
Social competence	Clinical Psychology	66	3.3258	0.35104	-0.181	106	0.857
	Educational Psychology	42	3.3393	0.41946			
Stress management competence	Clinical Psychology	66	2.3375	0.53099	-1.559	106	0.122
	Educational Psychology	42	2.5043	0.55975			
Adaptability competence	Clinical Psychology	66	3.0182	0.52767	-0.709	106	0.480
	Educational Psychology	42	3.0905	0.49771			
General positive mood competence	Clinical Psychology	66	3.1872	0.37163	-0.988	106	0.326
	Educational Psychology	42	3.2585	0.35590			
Positive impression competence	Clinical Psychology	66	2.8939	0.43327	-0.122	106	0.903
	Educational Psychology	42	2.9048	0.47304			
Overall Emotional Intelligence	Clinical Psychology	66	173.4242	18.61601	-0.370	106	0.712
	Educational Psychology	42	174.8571	21.11360			

Source: Prepared by the researcher

Table 08 demonstrates that no statistically significant differences appeared between students specializing in Clinical Psychology and those in Educational Psychology when it comes to emotional intelligence scores across all dimensions. For intrapersonal competence, although students from Clinical Psychology recorded a slightly higher mean (2.3662) than those from Educational Psychology (2.1786), the p-value (0.155) was above the significance threshold, meaning the difference is not meaningful in statistical terms.

The same general trend held for stress management. Educational Psychology students had a modestly higher mean score (2.5043) compared to Clinical Psychology students (2.3375), but again, the p-value (0.122) indicated that the gap lacked statistical significance.

Social competence produced similar findings. The p-value here was 0.857, reinforcing that no substantial difference existed. Likewise, adaptability ($p = 0.480$), positive mood ($p = 0.326$), and positive impression ($p = 0.903$) all showed no real divergence between the two groups.

Turning to the overall emotional intelligence score, the analysis found no significant difference either. The p-value stood at 0.712, confirming the earlier pattern of similarity. Overall, despite minor variations in the means, the emotional intelligence profiles between students of Clinical and Educational Psychology remained remarkably close across all measured aspects.

11. Discussion

11.1 Discussion of the first Hypothesis:

The results reported in Table 06 indicate statistically significant differences in emotional intelligence dimensions by gender, in favour of females. This pattern is consistent with Dermache (2025), particularly with respect to personal competence (Joseph & Newman, 2010), which relates to self-empathy, namely the capacity for a deep understanding of one's internal feelings. Daniel Goleman (1995, p. 30) attributes females' higher scores to socialisation processes that encourage them, more than males, to express and manage emotions. This orientation tends to foster the development of emotional skills, which, in turn, strengthens this dimension of emotional intelligence.

Another notable gender difference emerged in the area of general positive mood. In this sample, female students seemed to manage their emotional states with greater consistency throughout the day. Higher scores may reflect greater flexibility in managing both positive and negative emotions. This finding converges with (Mayer et. al., 2008; Fernández-Berrocal et. al., 2012) on the role of emotion regulation. That competence is also socially and culturally patterned: emotional expression is often encouraged among females, while traditional expectations can constrain its development among males, which may, in turn, shape emotional intelligence growth.

Bar-On (1997), for his part, saw mood regulation as central to emotional intelligence, linking it to broader aspects of individual well-being and psychological resilience. In the current data, female students scored higher in the dimension related to positive impression. This behaviour may reflect deeper, socially embedded norms that have historically placed greater emphasis on women's responsibility to maintain emotional balance in social settings; these roles may create added pressure to project emotional poise and adaptability.

Recent literature, such as the work by Kotsou et al. (2019), points to a possible explanation: women may be responding to internalized social expectations that reward emotional sensitivity and interpersonal fluency. As such, self-report instruments like

those that the one used in this study could be picking up not only genuine skill, but also a socialized attentiveness to emotional cues—especially among female participants, who may be more inclined to describe their emotional patterns with greater clarity.

Tommasi et al. (2023) diverges from the present findings on one specific point: their results indicate higher male scores on the personal competence dimension. They suggest that this pattern may be shaped by cultural factors and prevailing social norms, which supports the need for future studies conducted across more varied cultural contexts.

For the overall emotional intelligence score, the present results favour females, with a 10.5-point difference. This contrasts with Perazzo et al. (2021).

Another possible explanation for female students' stronger performance is their enhanced sensitivity to emotional cues—especially facial expressions—a skill highlighted in the work of Bru-Luna et al 2021.

Some research has further underscored the impact of stereotypical gender roles on EI, noting that women tend to outperform men in emotionally expressive environments due to the social pressures placed on them (Fischer et al., 2018). However, other studies have cautioned against reducing these findings to cultural factors alone. Neurological and hormonal differences—such as the role of estrogen in shaping empathy-related brain regions—may also play a part (Andreano & Cahill, 2009).

Taken together, these findings point to a complex interplay between biology and environment in shaping emotional intelligence differences between men and women.

11.2 Discussion of the Second Hypothesis:

Table 07 shows that, although students aged 25 and above scored slightly higher in intrapersonal competence ($M = 2.4861$) than their younger counterparts ($M = 2.2381$), the difference was not statistically significant. Still, this subtle trend may point to a modest improvement in self-awareness with age. As individuals accumulate life experience and navigate more complex social situations, they may gradually develop a deeper understanding of their emotional states. Such growth likely unfolds through adaptive learning processes—where reflection on personal reactions becomes more deliberate, and emotional regulation improves accordingly.

This interpretation aligns with findings by (Salovey & Mayer 1997; Álvarez et al., 2015), who noted that aging is often accompanied by better emotional insight. Regarding social competence, the older group also registered slightly higher means, yet once again, the variation remained below the threshold of statistical significance. Even so, the direction of the data might reflect a limited edge in empathy or social communication that grows with age. Still, the gap is too narrow to lend support to any firm conclusion about age-related effects. Students tend to move through the same courses, share similar academic routines, join the same collaborative projects, and operate under the same institutional demands.

These overlapping experiences may flatten age-related differences in emotional development. Several recent studies have noted that for university students, emotional

and interpersonal skills are more likely shaped by academic interactions—like collaborative assignments or classroom discussions—than by chronological age alone (McKay & Sridharan, 2024; Algouzi et al., 2023; De Prada et al., 2022).

Greater social maturity is generally expected to consolidate in adulthood; however, it does not develop in a strictly linear relationship with chronological age, particularly when individuals lack opportunities for lived experience and sustained social roles (Anand & Bharti, 2021). This implies that social maturity progresses primarily through experience and role acquisition, such as leadership responsibilities, marriage, and parenthood, especially after the early-emerging adulthood period (18–25 years). For students over 25, it is possible that they have not yet had markedly different life experiences from those a few years younger, which may limit any social advantage.

In the context of our study, the mean average score exhibited a marginal elevation in the younger demographic of participants (less than 25 years). While this difference did not attain statistical significance, it merits further exploration. It has been argued that younger students are better equipped to navigate academic stress because they are more embedded in the academic system without as many outside obligations, which is because older students are obliged to manage academic studies whilst also fulfilling competing demands on their time. These demands include employment, familial obligations, and other responsibilities, which can impose further layers of strain (Gross, 2015). While the evidence suggests that age itself is not necessarily the cause, it is clear that, when combined with accumulated psychological and biological pressures, as highlighted in some studies and, this combination may potentially contribute to a more limited emotional margin (Roy et al., 2018; Rentscher et al., 2021).

The data showed no significant age-based differences for the remaining subdimensions ($p > 0.05$) namely adaptability, general positive mood, and positive impression. The means for both groups were found to be remarkably similar. The research findings indicate that adaptability, defined as the ability to adjust to changing situations, is less influenced by age and more so by stable personality traits and environmental exposure. Conversely, positive mood has been shown to be indicative of contextual variables, including but not limited to perceived social support and mental health, rather than being exclusively dependent on age.

The absence of substantial differences across these dimensions may be attributed to the common nature of university life itself. The students within the scope of this study are presumably facing challenges and opportunities that are comparable, irrespective of their age. Miao et al. (2020) proposed that, when environmental factors such as educational and economic conditions are constant, age might exert a lesser influence on emotional intelligence. MacCann et al. (2020) treated age as a moderating variable in the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance. The study also suggested that, among older learners, both cognitive strategies and academic experience play a salient role.

A final observation regarding the total emotional intelligence score is in order: a higher level of performance was demonstrated by the older group in comparison to the younger group ($M = 181.96$ vs. $M = 171.70$), with a p -value of 0.023. While the subdimensions did not attain significance in isolation, the collective result may suggest an accumulative effect. This outcome may be explained by the concept of low statistical power, particularly in studies with limited sample sizes, where smaller effects in individual subscales may not appear significant in isolation, but produce meaningful results when aggregated (Ferguson, 2009). In summary, minor advantages in domains such as intrapersonal and social competence may accumulate to generate a more robust overall profile. This pattern is consistent with the broader literature, which suggests that emotional intelligence tends to develop incrementally with age, particularly as individuals encounter increasingly sophisticated social experiences (Mayer et al., 2016).

11.3 Discussion of the Third Hypothesis:

The hypothesis examined whether there were statistically significant differences in emotional intelligence scores among university students based on academic specialization. The data in Table 08 shows that there are no significant differences between students majoring in Clinical Psychology and those in Educational Psychology, in terms of total emotional intelligence scores or any of the specific dimensions. While there were minor divergences in the mean values (for instance, Educational Psychology students scored 2.50 in stress management compared to 2.34 among Clinical Psychology students), these differences were not statistically significant. This outcome clearly shows that academic specialization, at least within the psychological sciences, is not the determining factor in shaping students' emotional intelligence which is consistent with the study of Dermache (2025).

There is no doubt that the key to this lies in the clear structural and pedagogical overlap between the two programs. There is a clear link between the two, both of which draw from a shared theoretical base and emphasize similar psychological competencies such as behavioral analysis, emotional regulation and interpersonal communication. It is clear that these commonalities in curriculum design will dilute any differential impact that program focus might otherwise have.

This view is supported by recent research. Kotsou et al. (2019) made a strong case that emotional intelligence is more closely linked to lived experience, accumulated life challenges, and environmental context than narrowly defined academic training. Empathy, self-awareness and relationship management are all key attributes that develop through interaction and repeated exposure to emotionally complex situations. Psychology curricula, whether clinical or educational, invariably involve emotionally charged material and human-centered tasks, which undoubtedly stimulate comparable developmental pathways. Emotional intelligence is not fixed; it can be enhanced through structured learning and reflection. It is clear that no significant divergence was observed since both specializations include concepts like emotion regulation, adaptive coping, and personal resilience as part of the curriculum.

The results definitively show that emotional intelligence is more of a general personal skill than a specialized trait. Future research should contrast psychology students with those in non-related fields, such as engineering or computer science, to clearly highlight potential disciplinary effects.

Practically, the present findings can inform efforts to develop university students' emotional intelligence through training and awareness initiatives that recognise individual differences associated with age and gender. These programmes should cover emotion regulation, strengthen self-awareness, and support a more positive mood, with targeted attention to male students and younger students.

At the university level, emotional intelligence workshops can be embedded within psychological support services to improve adjustment, reduce the pressures associated with university life, and enhance students' social competence. At the same time, the absence of differences related to academic specialisation may simplify implementation, since these programmes can be extended across disciplines without tailoring them to a specific field of study.

12. Conclusion

This research set out to investigate how emotional intelligence presents itself among university students, particularly in relation to gender, age, and specialization. Results showed that some emotional competencies—most notably self-awareness, general mood regulation, and the ability to project a positive image—were more developed among female participants. These disparities likely trace back to how emotional habits are shaped early on, with women often encouraged to attend to and articulate emotional states more openly. Still, not all dimensions showed variation: in social and adaptive competence, both groups performed similarly, hinting at a more balanced skill set in those domains. With regard to age, the data showed a significant difference only in the total emotional intelligence score. Students aged 25 and above reported higher global scores than their younger peers.

Although this result was not mirrored across the individual subdimensions, it may reflect the cumulative impact of life experience and exposure to emotionally complex situations. Such experiences likely shape greater self-awareness and regulation capacities, even if not uniformly across all measured traits. On the other hand, the comparison between Clinical and Educational Psychology students yielded no statistically significant differences in any of the emotional intelligence dimensions. Despite some variation in means—particularly in stress management—the similarity in core curriculum content and shared academic environment may contribute to this outcome. Both specializations emphasize emotional understanding and human behaviour as foundational skills, which could explain the convergence of emotional profiles among students in both tracks.

13. Recommendations

- Future research should consider larger, more demographically varied samples, especially when investigating the influence of age. Including disciplines beyond psychology such as engineering, literature, or medicine—might also reveal how emotionally relevant skills align with field-specific demands.
- Longitudinal studies would allow for closer tracking of emotional intelligence development among students. Such studies could help isolate how educational and life milestones interact to shape emotional intelligence.
- Universities might consider building emotional intelligence development into curricula. This could take various forms—short workshops, expert-led seminars, or integrated class activities—aimed at strengthening emotional intelligence among students. As this ability increasingly intersects with students’ academic and eventual professional success.
- Embed specialised emotional intelligence training within university services through structured psychological support and pedagogical mentoring (TUTORAT). The programme should include practical workshops delivered under the supervision of psychology and education specialists.

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