



The Relationship between Empathy and Emotional Intelligence among University Students

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Abstract: Empathy and Emotional Intelligence (EI) are pivotal psychological constructs that shape emotional regulation, interpersonal communication, and social well-being. The current study demonstrates the relationship between empathy and emotional intelligence among university students aged 17 to 25 years. A sample of 102 participants were selected through convenience sampling. Empathy was measured using the Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (TEQ), while the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) assessed emotional intelligence. Statistical analysis revealed a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.536$, $p < 0.05$) between empathy and emotional intelligence, indicating that students with higher levels of EI tend to exhibit greater empathy. These findings suggest that the ability to understand and regulate one's own emotions may enhance one's sensitivity to the emotions of others. The results support existing literature emphasizing the role of emotional intelligence in fostering essential social and emotional competencies, such as perspective-taking and interpersonal understanding. The study underscores the potential value of integrating emotional intelligence training into university programs to promote empathy and improve students' psychological and social functioning. Despite its contributions, the study is limited by a small sample size and reliance on self-report instruments.

Future research should consider longitudinal designs and experimental interventions to further explore the dynamics between EI and empathy. A deeper understanding of this relationship may inform the development of educational and psychological strategies that enhance emotional competence in young adults.

Keywords: *Empathy, Emotional intelligence, University students, Emotional regulation.*

1. Introduction

Empathy and emotional intelligence (EI) are fundamental psychological constructs that significantly influence how individuals interact with others, manage their emotions, and navigate social environments. Empathy is defined as the ability to understand and share the feelings of others, promoting compassion, prosocial behavior, and meaningful interpersonal relationships (Davis, 1994). Emotional intelligence, originally conceptualized by Salovey and Mayer (1990), refers to “the capacity to perceive, process, and regulate emotions in oneself and others”. Together, these constructs are essential in supporting effective communication, emotional regulation, and psychological well-being, particularly among young adults in academic settings (Goleman, 1995; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2008).

University students often face heightened emotional and social demands, making the development of emotional intelligence and empathy particularly relevant during this stage of life. Emotional intelligence has been found to facilitate not only personal growth but also empathy and prosocial attitudes, which are critical for academic success and positive peer interactions (Brackett et al., 2006). For instance, Firmanda and Hazim (2025) investigated mountaineering students and reported a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.763$) between emotional intelligence and empathy, accounting for 58.1% of the variance. This indicates that while emotional intelligence plays a key role in fostering empathy, other factors such as personality and social context also contribute.

Despite growing interest in this field, limited research explicitly investigates the relationship between emotional intelligence and empathy in a general university population. The current study seeks to fill this gap by examining the correlation between emotional intelligence and empathy among students aged 17 to 25 years old. The purpose of this study is to determine whether there is a significant positive relationship between the two variables. The alternative hypothesis (H1) assumes that students with high emotional intelligence will also have a higher level of empathy. Understanding this connection is very important. This is because it can affect educational programs

aimed at improving emotional skills and increasing academic performance, social interactions, and general wells for students.

2. Methodology

2.1 Purpose

The purpose of the study is to evaluate the relationship between Empathy and Emotional intelligence among university students.

2.2 Research Objective

To examine the correlation between Empathy and Emotional intelligence.

2.3 Hypothesis

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is a significant positive relationship between Empathy and Emotional intelligence among university students.

2.4 Sample

The sample for this study consisted of 102 university students aged 17 to 25 years. Participants were recruited from various academic disciplines at a large university, ensuring a diverse representation of backgrounds and experiences. The inclusion criteria required participants to be enrolled as full-time students, while those with a history of diagnosed emotional or psychological disorders were excluded to control for potential confounding variables. The sample was chosen using a convenience sampling technique.

2.5 Measures

The Toronto Empathy Scale (TEQ): The Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (TEQ) is a 16-item self-report tool designed to assess emotional aspects of empathy, such as emotional contagion, sympathetic concern, and the tendency to respond emotionally to others' experiences. Participants respond using a five-point Likert scale ranging from "never" to "always". The TEQ has demonstrated strong internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .85$) and good convergent validity with other empathy scales (Spreng et al., 2009). It is widely used in psychological research to measure empathy in both clinical and non-clinical populations.

The Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test: The Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) consists of 33 items, covering perception of emotion, managing emotions, social skills, and emotional regulation. Responses are recorded on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The SSEIT has shown good internal

reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .87$) and has been validated in multiple cultural and academic contexts (Schutte et al., 1998). It remains a popular and accessible tool for assessing trait emotional intelligence in research settings.

2.6 Variables

Independent Variable (IV): Empathy

Dependent Variable (DV): Emotional Intelligence

2.7 Research design

The study adopted a quantitative, correlational research design in order to examine the relationship between empathy and emotional intelligence among university students using standardized self-report questionnaires.

2.8 Procedure

The study followed a cross-sectional, quantitative approach to assess the relationship empathy has with emotional intelligence among university students. Participants were recruited via convenience sampling through online announcements and campus flyers. After obtaining informed consent, participants were given a brief overview of what the study is and were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Data were collected using Google Forms, where students completed the Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (TEQ) and the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT). The questionnaires were presented in English, and participants completed them at their convenience within a specified timeframe. Responses were screened to ensure completeness, and data from participants who did not meet the inclusion criteria or submitted incomplete responses were excluded from the analysis. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant university review board in advance to data collection. Participation was voluntary, and students were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. The collected data was securely stored and used solely for research purposes.

2.9 Statistical Analysis

Data analysis was taken place with the help of the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient to examine the relationship between empathy and emotional intelligence among university students. Prior to analysis, the data were screened for completeness and normality to ensure statistical assumptions were met. The significance level was set at 0.05. Results revealed a correlation coefficient of ($r = 0.536$), indicating a moderate positive relationship between the two variables. This correlation was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), confirming that students with

higher emotional intelligence tend to exhibit greater levels of empathy. These results underscore the interconnectedness of emotional competencies and highlight the potential value of fostering emotional intelligence to enhance empathetic capacities among young adults.

3. Analysis of Data

Table 1: *Correlation Analysis*

Variable	N	r	p	Interpretation
Empathy & Emotional Intelligence	102	0.536	<0.05	Moderate Positive

The data analysis revealed a moderate positive correlation between empathy and emotional intelligence among university students ($N = 102$), with a correlation coefficient of ($r = 0.536$). This relationship was statistically significant at the 0.05 level ($p < 0.05$), indicating that as emotional intelligence increases, levels of empathy also tend to rise. The findings support the alternative hypothesis that there is a significant positive relationship between Empathy and Emotional intelligence among university students.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study are in support of the research hypothesis, demonstrating a significant moderate positive relationship between empathy and emotional intelligence among university students aged 17 to 25 ($r = 0.536$, $p < 0.05$). This result aligns with the research question, confirming that individuals with higher levels of emotional intelligence tend to exhibit greater empathy. The outcome suggests that the ability to perceive and manage one's emotions enhances one's capacity of understanding and responding to the emotional experiences of others, which is crucial in social and academic environments.

These findings are consistent with prior research by Mavroveli and Sánchez-Ruiz (2011), who found that emotional intelligence contributes to better emotional understanding and interpersonal functioning in adolescents and young adults. Similarly, a study by Petrides et al. (2004) reported that emotional intelligence significantly correlates with various aspects of social competence,

including empathy. The results of the current study, therefore, add up to the growing body of evidence emphasizing the significance of emotional intelligence in fostering empathy and overall psychological well-being.

However, the study has certain limitations. The use of self-report questionnaires may introduce response bias, and the convenience sampling limits the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the cross-sectional design prevents causal inference. Future research should consider using a longitudinal or experimental design to explore the development of empathy over time and the impact of emotional intelligence training. Expanding the sample to include diverse populations across different cultural and educational contexts would also enhance the applicability of the results.

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the relationship between empathy and emotional intelligence among university students aged 17 to 25. The findings revealed a statistically significant moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.536$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that students with higher emotional intelligence are more likely to exhibit greater empathy. This supports the hypothesis and reinforces the idea that emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in enhancing one's ability to recognize and respond to the emotional experiences of others. These results underline the importance of developing emotional competencies as part of the overall personal and social growth of university students.

The implications of this study are relevant for educational institutions, as they highlight the potential benefits of integrating emotional intelligence training into academic programs. By fostering emotional awareness, self-regulation, and interpersonal understanding, universities can contribute to the development of more empathetic, socially competent, and emotionally resilient individuals. This, in turn, can lead to improved peer relationships, enhanced academic performance, and better mental health outcomes.

Overall, the study contributes valuable insights to the growing field of emotional and social development in higher education contexts. It confirms previous findings that link emotional intelligence with key prosocial traits such as empathy, emphasizing the importance of emotional skills in student well-being and interpersonal effectiveness.

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