

RESEARCH ARTICLE

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: THE HIDDEN KEY TO ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AMONG PRIVATE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the role of emotional intelligence (EI) in academic excellence among private university students in Bangladesh. Employing a qualitative approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 60 participants, ranging from undergraduate to postgraduate levels, recruited using purposive sampling techniques. Thematic analysis revealed diverse perceptions of EI, its influence on academic performance, and the impact of cultural and gender dynamics. Participants highlighted the importance of EI in managing stress, navigating interpersonal relationships, and overcoming academic challenges. Gender differences were evident, with female participants emphasizing empathy and intuition, while male participants focused on self-regulation and resilience. Cultural influences, including respect for authority and collectivism, shaped participants' emotional experiences and social interactions within academic settings. Despite recognizing the benefits of EI, participants identified challenges such as academic stress and cultural expectations. The study underscores the need for tailored approaches to EI development that account for individual differences and cultural contexts. Practical implications include the integration of EI training and support services into educational programs to promote students' emotional well-being and academic success. Social implications highlight the importance of creating inclusive and supportive environments that foster students' holistic development. The originality of this study lies in its exploration of EI within the specific context of private university education in Bangladesh. Limitations include the small sample size and the focus on private university students, limiting generalizability.

KEYWORDS

Emotional intelligence, Academic excellence, Private university students, Bangladesh, Gender differences, Cultural influences, Qualitative research

1. INTRODUCTION

In the realm of education, the pursuit of academic excellence has always been a focal point for students, educators, and policymakers alike. However, achieving academic success is not solely determined by cognitive abilities or intellectual prowess; rather, it involves a complex interplay of various factors, including socio-emotional competencies. Emotional intelligence (EI), a construct encompassing the ability to perceive, understand, manage, and utilize emotions effectively, has garnered considerable attention in recent years as a potential determinant of academic performance (MacCann et al., 2020). The significance of emotional intelligence in educational settings stems from its capacity to influence students' learning outcomes, classroom behavior, social interactions, and overall well-being (Petrides et al., 2018). While traditional measures of academic success often prioritize cognitive skills and academic achievements, researchers and educators are increasingly recognizing the pivotal role of EI in shaping students' educational experiences and outcomes (Estrada et al., 2021).

This paradigm shift underscores the need to explore the nuanced relationship between emotional intelligence and academic excellence among university students, particularly within the context of private higher education institutions in Bangladesh. Bangladesh, a country with a rapidly growing private university sector, has witnessed a surge in

enrollment rates over the past few decades (Emon et al., 2023; Hasan et al., 2023; Hasan and Chowdhury, 2023). As the demand for tertiary education continues to escalate, private universities have emerged as key players in the country's educational landscape, offering diverse academic programs and attracting a significant portion of the student population (Emon et al., 2023). Against this backdrop, understanding the factors that contribute to academic success among private university students has become imperative for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders in the education sector.

While academic achievement is commonly associated with factors such as intelligence quotient (IQ) and academic aptitude, the role of emotional intelligence in shaping students' academic performance cannot be overlooked (Herrera et al., 2020). Research suggests that individuals with higher levels of emotional intelligence are better equipped to navigate the challenges of academic life, including stress, peer pressure, time management, and motivation (Rehana, 2018). Moreover, emotional intelligence is closely linked to essential skills such as self-regulation, empathy, resilience, and interpersonal communication, all of which are instrumental in academic settings (Antonopoulou, 2024). In the context of Bangladesh's private university sector, where students hail from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and face multifaceted challenges, the role of emotional intelligence in academic excellence takes on added significance.

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The transition to university life, with its academic rigor, social dynamics, and extracurricular demands, can pose considerable challenges for students, impacting their academic performance and overall well-being (Walsham et al., 2023). In this context, understanding how emotional intelligence influences students' adaptation to university life and their subsequent academic achievements is essential for devising effective interventions and support mechanisms. Despite the growing recognition of emotional intelligence as a critical determinant of academic success, empirical research on this topic remains limited, particularly within the context of private universities in Bangladesh. Existing studies have primarily focused on Western educational settings, leaving a gap in our understanding of how cultural factors, educational practices, and institutional contexts shape the relationship between EI and academic performance in the Bangladeshi context (Emon et al., 2023).

Therefore, there is a pressing need for localized research that explores the unique dynamics of emotional intelligence and academic excellence among private university students in Bangladesh. This qualitative research seeks to address this gap by examining the hidden dimensions of emotional intelligence and its impact on academic performance among private university students in Bangladesh. By employing in-depth interviews and thematic analysis, the study aims to uncover the experiences, perceptions, and challenges faced by students in navigating the academic environment through the lens of emotional intelligence. Through this exploration, the research aims to generate insights that can inform educational practices, student support initiatives, and policy interventions aimed at promoting academic excellence and student well-being in Bangladesh's private university sector.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotional Intelligence (EI) has garnered increasing attention in the field of education as researchers seek to understand its implications for academic success and overall well-being among students. This section reviews relevant literature on emotional intelligence, its components, measurement tools, and its association with academic performance, particularly within the context of higher education. Furthermore, it examines studies conducted in diverse cultural settings, including Bangladesh, shedding light on the role of EI in shaping students' educational experiences and outcomes.

2.1 Emotional Intelligence: Conceptualization and Components

Emotional intelligence, as conceptualized by Salovey and Sluyter (1997), refers to the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and utilize emotions effectively in oneself and others (Salovey and Mayer, 1990). This multifaceted construct comprises several components, including emotional perception, emotional understanding, emotional regulation, and emotional management (Salovey and Mayer, 1990). Emotional perception involves the ability to accurately identify and recognize emotions in oneself and others, while emotional understanding pertains to the capacity to comprehend the causes and consequences of emotions. Emotional regulation encompasses strategies for managing and modulating one's own emotions, while emotional management involves effectively utilizing emotions to facilitate decision-making, problem-solving, and interpersonal interactions (Salovey and Mayer, 1990). Over the years, researchers have proposed various models and frameworks to conceptualize emotional intelligence, leading to the development of measurement tools such as the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue) and the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) (Petrides, 2011; Mayer and Salovey, 2007). These instruments assess different aspects of emotional intelligence, including trait EI (i.e., self-perceived emotional abilities) and ability EI (i.e., actual emotional skills), providing researchers with valuable insights into individuals' emotional competencies (Mayer and Salovey, 2007).

2.2 Emotional Intelligence and Academic Performance

Numerous studies have explored the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance across various educational levels, from primary schools to universities. While early research focused primarily on the role of cognitive abilities in academic success, recent studies have underscored the importance of socio-emotional competencies, including emotional intelligence, in predicting students' academic achievements (Costa and Fleith, 2019). A meta-analysis examined the association between emotional intelligence and academic

performance (MacCann et al., 2020). The findings revealed a modest yet significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and academic success, with higher levels of EI predicting better academic outcomes, including higher grades, standardized test scores, and graduation rates (MacCann et al., 2020). Moreover, the meta-analysis highlighted the role of specific EI components, such as emotional regulation and interpersonal skills, in predicting academic achievement, suggesting that these skills are essential for students' educational success (MacCann et al., 2020).

Similarly, a longitudinal study examined the predictive validity of emotional intelligence for academic performance among university students over a three-year period (Collado-Soler et al., 2023). The results indicated that students with higher levels of emotional intelligence at the beginning of their university studies were more likely to achieve higher grades and persist in their academic pursuits over time, even after controlling for cognitive abilities and demographic factors (Collado-Soler et al., 2023). This longitudinal evidence underscores the enduring impact of emotional intelligence on students' academic trajectories, highlighting its importance for long-term educational outcomes. Furthermore, research suggests that emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in students' adaptation to the academic environment, particularly during transitional periods such as the transition from high school to university.

A study by Halimi et al. (2021) examined the influence of emotional intelligence on academic adjustment among first-year university students. The findings revealed that students with higher levels of emotional intelligence exhibited better academic adjustment, including higher levels of satisfaction with university life, greater engagement in academic activities, and lower levels of stress and anxiety (Saklofske et al., 2012). These results underscore the importance of emotional intelligence in facilitating students' transition to university and enhancing their overall academic experience.

2.3 Cultural Considerations and Contextual Factors

While the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance has been well-documented in Western educational settings, there is a growing recognition of the need to examine this relationship within diverse cultural contexts. Cultural factors, including values, norms, and socialization practices, may influence the expression and interpretation of emotions, as well as the development of emotional intelligence (Rodriguez 2018; Yang and Wang, 2019). Therefore, it is essential to consider cultural variations in emotional intelligence and their implications for academic success. In the context of Bangladesh, cultural values such as collectivism, respect for authority, and emphasis on social harmony may shape students' emotional experiences and expressions (Nur, 2019).

Moreover, the educational system in Bangladesh, characterized by rote learning, examination-oriented assessment practices, and hierarchical classroom dynamics, may influence students' emotional responses to academic challenges (Nur, 2019). Therefore, understanding the cultural and contextual factors that shape emotional intelligence and academic performance is essential for conducting meaningful research in this area. Studies conducted in Bangladesh have begun to explore the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance within the local context. A study by Hosain (2018) examined the role of emotional intelligence in predicting academic success among university students in Bangladesh. The findings revealed a positive association between emotional intelligence and academic performance, with higher levels of EI predicting better grades and academic satisfaction (Hosain, 2018).

Moreover, the study highlighted the mediating role of self-efficacy in the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance, suggesting that students' beliefs about their academic abilities play a crucial role in translating emotional intelligence into academic success. Similarly, a study explored students' perceptions of emotional intelligence and its impact on academic performance in the context of private universities in Bangladesh (Rahman et al., 2021). The findings revealed that students attributed their academic success to various aspects of emotional intelligence, including self-awareness, self-regulation, and interpersonal skills (Rahman et al., 2021). Moreover, the study identified cultural factors, such as family support, peer relationships, and societal expectations, as influential determinants of emotional intelligence and

academic performance among Bangladeshi students (Rahman et al., 2021).

2.4 Challenges and Limitations in Assessing Emotional Intelligence

Despite the growing recognition of emotional intelligence's importance in academic settings, there are several challenges and limitations associated with its assessment. One major challenge is the lack of consensus on a standardized measurement tool for emotional intelligence. While various instruments exist, such as self-report questionnaires and performance-based assessments, each has its strengths and limitations (Zlotnik and Toglia, 2018). For example, self-report measures like the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue) rely on individuals' self-perceptions of their emotional abilities, which may be influenced by factors such as social desirability bias or lack of self-awareness (Singh et al., 2022). On the other hand, performance-based measures like the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) assess individuals' actual emotional skills through tasks and simulations but may be resource-intensive and time-consuming to administer (Cunliffe, 2020).

Thus, researchers and practitioners must carefully consider the choice of assessment tool and its appropriateness for the context in which it will be used. Moreover, cultural and contextual differences may pose challenges in assessing emotional intelligence across diverse populations. The expression and interpretation of emotions vary across cultures, making it challenging to develop universally applicable measures of emotional intelligence (Huynh et al., 2018). Cultural norms, values, and socialization practices may influence individuals' emotional experiences and expressions, as well as their understanding of emotions and emotional intelligence (Yang and Wang, 2019). Therefore, researchers must take into account cultural considerations when assessing emotional intelligence and interpreting the results, ensuring that the measures used are culturally sensitive and relevant to the population under study.

The literature review highlights the significance of emotional intelligence in predicting academic performance among university students, including those enrolled in private higher education institutions in Bangladesh. Existing research suggests that emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in students' academic success by facilitating their adaptation to the academic environment, enhancing their learning experiences, and improving their overall well-being. Moreover, cultural and contextual factors may influence the development and expression of emotional intelligence, shaping students' academic trajectories and experiences. While research on emotional intelligence and academic performance has made significant strides in recent years, there is still much to learn about the underlying mechanisms and contextual nuances of this relationship, particularly within diverse cultural settings.

Future studies should continue to explore the role of emotional intelligence in shaping students' educational experiences and outcomes, taking into account cultural variations, educational practices, and socio-economic factors. By deepening our understanding of emotional intelligence and its implications for academic success, researchers, educators, and policymakers can develop targeted interventions and support mechanisms to foster students' socio-emotional competencies and enhance their academic performance in Bangladesh and beyond.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research employed a qualitative approach to investigate the role of emotional intelligence in academic excellence among private university students in Bangladesh. Qualitative methods were chosen to explore the lived experiences, perceptions, and challenges faced by students in navigating the academic environment through the lens of emotional intelligence. This approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of the underlying dynamics and contextual factors that influence students' emotional experiences and academic outcomes. Participants were recruited from private universities in Bangladesh using purposive sampling techniques to ensure diversity in terms of age, gender, academic discipline, and academic performance. A total of 60 students participated in the study, ranging from undergraduate to postgraduate levels.

The inclusion criteria for participants included enrollment in a private university in Bangladesh and willingness to share their experiences related to emotional intelligence and academic performance. Data collection was primarily conducted through semi-structured interviews,

which were designed to elicit rich, detailed narratives about students' experiences with emotional intelligence and its impact on their academic journey. The interview guide was developed based on relevant literature on emotional intelligence and academic performance, as well as input from experts in the field. The interviews were conducted in Bengali, the native language of the participants, to ensure clarity and facilitate rapport. Each interview session lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes and was audio-recorded with the participants' consent.

The interviews were conducted in private settings to ensure confidentiality and encourage open communication. The interview questions covered various aspects of emotional intelligence, including self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, relationship management, and their perceived influence on academic success. Probing questions were used to explore participants' responses in greater depth and clarify any ambiguities. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, a systematic approach to identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within qualitative data (Lowe et al., 2018). The audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed verbatim and translated into English for analysis. The transcripts were then coded line-by-line to identify recurring themes, patterns, and categories related to emotional intelligence and academic excellence.

Codes were iteratively refined and organized into broader themes through a process of constant comparison and discussion among the research team. Trustworthiness and rigor were ensured through various strategies, including member checking, peer debriefing, and reflexivity. Member checking involved sharing the preliminary findings with participants to validate the accuracy and interpretation of their responses. Peer debriefing involved seeking feedback from colleagues and experts in qualitative research to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. Reflexivity was maintained through ongoing reflection and documentation of the researchers' biases, assumptions, and preconceptions throughout the research process.

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the study, and informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their participation. Participants were assured of confidentiality, voluntary participation, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time without repercussion. Overall, the qualitative research methodology employed in this study provided valuable insights into the complex interplay between emotional intelligence and academic excellence among private university students in Bangladesh. By capturing students' lived experiences and perspectives, the study contributed to a deeper understanding of the hidden dynamics that shape students' emotional experiences and academic outcomes in higher education settings.

4. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The thematic analysis of the qualitative data revealed rich insights into the role of emotional intelligence in academic excellence among private university students in Bangladesh. The findings are presented below, organized around key themes that emerged from the interviews with participants.

4.1 Perceptions of Emotional Intelligence

Participants in the study offered a spectrum of perceptions regarding the concept of emotional intelligence (EI) and its applicability to their academic experiences. For many students, EI was construed as a pivotal skill set instrumental in navigating the rigors of academia. They viewed EI as comprising the ability to comprehend and regulate emotions adeptly, essential for coping with the myriad stressors inherent in academic pursuits. Several participants highlighted how EI facilitated their capacity to maintain focus and motivation amidst academic challenges. One student articulated, "Emotional intelligence helps me stay focused and motivated, even when I face difficulties in my studies." This sentiment was echoed by others who credited EI for bolstering their resilience in the face of academic pressures.

Moreover, participants emphasized the interpersonal dimension of EI, underscoring its role in fostering positive relationships within the academic community. Many students expressed how EI enabled them to communicate effectively and resolve conflicts amicably, thereby nurturing conducive learning environments. As articulated by one participant, "Being emotionally intelligent helps me communicate effectively and

resolve conflicts peacefully." Participants recognized the significance of EI in facilitating collaboration with peers and establishing rapport with professors, acknowledging its value beyond individual academic performance. However, amidst these affirmative perspectives, there existed a cohort of participants who harbored skepticism regarding the practical utility of EI within the academic realm. Some students questioned the extent to which EI directly translates to academic success, positing that diligence and intellectual acumen are paramount. One participant encapsulated this viewpoint, stating, "I don't think emotional intelligence matters much in academics. It's all about hard work and intelligence." This skepticism underscores a divergence in beliefs regarding the salience of EI

vis-à-vis traditional markers of academic achievement, suggesting a need for nuanced exploration. The multifaceted nature of participants' perceptions underscores the complexity inherent in conceptualizing and operationalizing emotional intelligence within the academic domain. While some espouse its instrumental role in bolstering resilience and fostering positive relationships, others remain apprehensive about its tangible impact on academic outcomes. These varying viewpoints elucidate the intricate interplay between individual beliefs, contextual factors, and the perceived relevance of EI in shaping the academic journey of private university students in Bangladesh.

Table 1: Perceptions of Emotional Intelligence	
Participants' Perspectives	Exemplary Statements
Many students viewed emotional intelligence (EI) as crucial for navigating academic challenges and managing stress effectively.	"Emotional intelligence helps me stay focused and motivated, even when I face difficulties in my studies."
	"Being emotionally intelligent helps me communicate effectively and resolve conflicts peacefully."
Some participants expressed skepticism about the practical utility of EI in academic contexts, emphasizing the primacy of hard work and intelligence.	"I don't think emotional intelligence matters much in academics. It's all about hard work and intelligence."
Others acknowledged the importance of EI in interpersonal relationships but questioned its direct relevance to academic success.	"While emotional intelligence is important for social interactions, I'm not sure how much it impacts my grades."
A few participants believed that EI could be developed through conscious effort and practice, suggesting its potential for enhancing academic performance.	"I've been working on improving my emotional intelligence, and I can see the difference it makes in my ability to handle stress and communicate with my peers."
Participants from diverse academic backgrounds expressed varied perceptions of EI, influenced by their personal experiences and cultural upbringing.	"In my field of study, emotional intelligence is underrated, but I believe it's crucial for effective teamwork and leadership."
The majority of participants recognized the value of EI in promoting mental well-being and fostering positive interactions within the university community.	"Emotional intelligence not only helps me academically but also contributes to my overall happiness and satisfaction with university life."
Some participants cited instances where their EI skills had directly contributed to academic success, reinforcing their belief in its importance.	"I credit my ability to manage my emotions during exams for my high grades. Emotional intelligence definitely plays a role in academic achievement."
However, a few participants shared experiences where their lack of emotional intelligence had hindered their academic progress or interpersonal relationships.	"There have been times when I let my emotions get the best of me, and it affected my studies. I realize now the importance of emotional intelligence in overcoming such challenges."
Participants emphasized the need for greater awareness and education on EI within the university curriculum, advocating for workshops and resources to enhance EI skills among students.	"I think universities should offer workshops on emotional intelligence, just like they do for academic skills. It's something that can benefit all students, regardless of their field of study."
Several participants highlighted the role of faculty members in modeling and promoting emotional intelligence within the academic community.	"When professors demonstrate empathy and understanding, it sets a positive example for students and creates a supportive learning environment."
Cultural influences were evident in participants' perceptions of EI, with some emphasizing the importance of cultural norms and values in shaping emotional experiences.	"In our culture, emotional intelligence is valued as much as academic intelligence. It's seen as essential for success in both personal and professional life."
Overall, participants recognized the multifaceted nature of EI and its significance in shaping their academic journey and personal growth.	"Emotional intelligence is not just about managing emotions; it's about understanding oneself and others. It's a skill that's indispensable in all aspects of life, including academics."
While opinions varied, there was a consensus among participants about the potential of EI to enhance both academic performance and overall well-being.	"Regardless of whether you believe in it or not, emotional intelligence can't hurt. It can only make you better equipped to handle whatever life throws your way."
The diverse perspectives shared by participants underscored the complexity of emotional intelligence and its implications for university students in Bangladesh.	"It's fascinating to see how everyone has a different take on emotional intelligence. It just goes to show that there's no one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to understanding and applying EI."

Source: Interview

4.2 Emotional Intelligence and Academic Performance

Participants in the study widely recognized the significant impact of emotional intelligence (EI) on their academic performance. Many students attested to the invaluable role EI played in helping them navigate the academic rigors and excel in their studies. EI was frequently cited as a crucial tool for managing stress, enhancing focus, and regulating emotions during demanding academic tasks, such as exams and assignments. One participant eloquently articulated, "When I feel overwhelmed with deadlines and pressure, I use my emotional intelligence to stay calm and organized. It really helps me perform better academically." This sentiment was echoed by numerous others who acknowledged the instrumental role

of EI in bolstering their academic achievements. Moreover, participants underscored the interpersonal dimension of EI and its profound impact on collaborative endeavors within academic settings.

Many students emphasized how their EI skills facilitated effective communication, teamwork, and conflict resolution, thereby fostering a conducive learning environment. Participants highlighted instances where their ability to empathize with peers, understand diverse perspectives, and resolve conflicts constructively contributed to their academic success. "Emotional intelligence is not just about me; it's also about understanding others and working together effectively," remarked one participant, encapsulating the sentiment shared by many.

However, amidst the prevailing recognition of EI's positive influence, some participants candidly acknowledged encountering challenges in applying EI principles to their academic pursuits. Several students shared experiences where they struggled to regulate their emotions or communicate effectively with classmates, thereby impeding their

academic progress. These challenges underscored the nuanced nature of emotional intelligence and its application in real-life academic scenarios. Participants recognized that developing and honing EI skills requires continuous effort and practice, emphasizing the need for ongoing personal growth and self-reflection.

Table 2: Emotional Intelligence and Academic Performance	
Participants' Experiences	Exemplary Statements
Many students acknowledged the positive influence of emotional intelligence (EI) on their academic performance, citing its role in stress management, focus enhancement, and emotion regulation during exams and assignments.	"When I feel overwhelmed with deadlines and pressure, I use my emotional intelligence to stay calm and organized. It really helps me perform better academically."
	"Emotional intelligence is not just about me; it's also about understanding others and working together effectively."
Participants emphasized the importance of EI in facilitating interpersonal interactions within academic settings, noting its impact on teamwork, communication, and conflict resolution.	"My ability to empathize with peers and resolve conflicts constructively has contributed significantly to my academic achievements."
	"Emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in fostering a positive learning environment and promoting effective collaboration among students."
Some participants candidly shared challenges they faced in applying EI principles to their academic pursuits, highlighting instances where they struggled with emotion regulation or effective communication.	"There have been times when I found it difficult to regulate my emotions, which affected my academic performance. Developing EI skills requires continuous effort and practice."
	"I realized the importance of effective communication in academic settings, especially during group projects where conflicts can arise. EI skills are essential for navigating such situations."

Source: Interview

4.3 Factors Influencing Emotional Intelligence

Participants identified various factors that influenced their development of emotional intelligence, including personal experiences, family upbringing, and cultural norms. Many students attributed their emotional intelligence skills to supportive family environments that encouraged open communication and expression of emotions. "My parents always encouraged me to talk about my feelings and listen to others," shared one participant. "That's helped me become more emotionally aware and empathetic." Moreover, participants highlighted the role of educational experiences and extracurricular activities in fostering emotional

intelligence. Engaging in group projects, participating in student clubs, and attending workshops on emotional well-being were cited as valuable opportunities for enhancing EI skills. "Being involved in extracurricular activities has taught me how to work with different people and manage conflicts constructively," noted one participant. Additionally, cultural influences were evident in participants' perceptions and experiences of emotional intelligence. Some students emphasized the importance of cultural values such as respect, humility, and collectivism in shaping their emotional responses and interpersonal interactions. "In our culture, it's important to show respect and consideration for others' feelings," remarked one participant. "That's something I've learned to incorporate into my interactions with classmates and professors."

Table 3: Factors Influencing Emotional Intelligence	
Influential Factors	Exemplary Statements
Participants highlighted the significant influence of supportive family environments on their development of emotional intelligence (EI), where open communication and expression of emotions were encouraged.	"My parents always encouraged me to talk about my feelings and listen to others. That's helped me become more emotionally aware and empathetic."
	"Growing up in a supportive family environment has provided me with a strong foundation for developing emotional intelligence skills."
Educational experiences, including participation in group projects, student clubs, and workshops on emotional well-being, were cited as valuable opportunities for enhancing EI skills.	"Being involved in extracurricular activities has taught me how to work with different people and manage conflicts constructively."
	"Workshops on emotional well-being have provided me with practical strategies for managing stress and improving interpersonal relationships."
Cultural norms and values played a significant role in shaping participants' emotional responses and interpersonal interactions.	"In our culture, it's important to show respect and consideration for others' feelings. That's something I've learned to incorporate into my interactions with classmates and professors."
	"Cultural practices such as family gatherings and community celebrations have helped me develop a sense of belonging and empathy towards others."
Personal experiences, such as facing adversity or overcoming challenges, also contributed to participants' development of EI skills.	"Going through difficult times has taught me resilience and empathy, which are essential aspects of emotional intelligence."
	"Personal experiences have shaped my emotional intelligence by providing opportunities for self-reflection and growth."
Additionally, interactions with peers, mentors, and role models influenced participants' understanding and application of EI principles.	"Interacting with supportive peers and mentors has taught me valuable lessons about empathy, communication, and conflict resolution."
	"Observing how others handle emotions and interpersonal situations has helped me develop my own emotional intelligence skills."

Source: Interview

Table 4: Challenges and Barriers

Challenges Identified by Participants	Exemplary Statements
<i>Academic stress, time constraints, and workload pressures were cited as major impediments to practicing emotional intelligence effectively.</i>	<i>"When I'm overwhelmed with assignments and exams, it's hard to focus on managing my emotions. I wish I had more time to prioritize self-care and relaxation."</i>
	<i>"Balancing academics with other responsibilities can be challenging, leaving little time for self-reflection and emotional well-being."</i>
<i>Interpersonal conflicts, peer pressure, and social dynamics posed challenges to students' emotional well-being and EI skills.</i>	<i>"Sometimes, conflicts arise, and it's hard to maintain a positive attitude and work together. I think we need more support and guidance on how to handle these situations effectively."</i>
	<i>"Peer pressure and social expectations can make it difficult to express my true emotions and stay true to myself. It's important to learn how to navigate these challenges while maintaining emotional balance."</i>
<i>Cultural and societal expectations placed pressure on students to prioritize academic success over their emotional well-being, creating a sense of imbalance and stress.</i>	<i>"In our society, there's a lot of pressure to excel academically and meet expectations. It can be challenging to prioritize my emotional health when there's so much focus on grades and achievements."</i>
	<i>"Cultural norms sometimes conflict with the principles of emotional intelligence, making it challenging to strike a balance between academic goals and personal well-being."</i>
<i>Limited resources and support systems within the academic environment hindered students' ability to develop and apply emotional intelligence skills effectively.</i>	<i>"I wish there were more resources available to help us cope with stress and build emotional resilience. Sometimes, it feels like we're left to figure things out on our own."</i>
	<i>"The lack of guidance on emotional well-being and conflict resolution in academic settings leaves students feeling ill-equipped to handle interpersonal challenges effectively."</i>
<i>Personal insecurities and self-doubt were identified as internal barriers that hindered students' confidence in applying emotional intelligence principles in academic contexts.</i>	<i>"Sometimes, I doubt my ability to handle stressful situations or communicate effectively with others. It holds me back from fully utilizing my emotional intelligence skills."</i>
	<i>"Overcoming self-doubt and building self-confidence are ongoing challenges that affect how I navigate academic and social interactions."</i>

Source: Interview

Table 5: Strategies for Enhancing Emotional Intelligence

Strategies Shared by Participants	Exemplary Statements
<i>Mindfulness practices, relaxation techniques, and self-reflection were identified as effective methods for cultivating self-awareness and emotional regulation.</i>	<i>"I find meditation and deep breathing exercises helpful in calming my mind and managing stress. It gives me the clarity and focus I need to study effectively."</i>
	<i>"Taking time for self-reflection allows me to identify my emotions and understand their underlying causes. It's a crucial step in developing emotional intelligence."</i>
<i>Social support networks, including friends, family, and mentors, were emphasized as valuable resources for fostering emotional intelligence and resilience.</i>	<i>"Talking to my friends and family helps me gain perspective and feel supported. It's comforting to know that I'm not alone in facing challenges."</i>
	<i>"Having a mentor or someone I trust to turn to for advice and guidance has been invaluable in developing my emotional intelligence skills."</i>
<i>Seeking guidance from trusted individuals, sharing experiences with peers, and expressing emotions openly were highlighted as effective ways to navigate emotional challenges.</i>	<i>"Opening up to my peers about my struggles has helped me realize that I'm not alone in facing difficulties. It's empowering to share experiences and support each other."</i>
	<i>"Expressing my emotions openly, whether through journaling or talking to someone, helps me process my feelings and find solutions to problems."</i>
<i>Participants stressed the importance of educational institutions incorporating emotional intelligence training and support services into their curricula and student support programs.</i>	<i>"I think universities should invest more in promoting emotional intelligence and mental health among students. It's essential for our overall well-being and academic success."</i>
	<i>"Providing workshops on stress management, interpersonal skills, and emotional well-being would equip students with the tools they need to thrive in both academic and personal spheres."</i>
<i>Counseling services, peer support groups, and other mental health resources were suggested as essential interventions for supporting students' emotional well-being.</i>	<i>"Having access to counseling services and peer support groups would make a significant difference in students' ability to cope with stress and develop resilience."</i>
	<i>"Educational institutions should prioritize mental health and emotional well-being by providing resources and support systems that address the diverse needs of students."</i>

Source: Interview

4.4 Challenges and Barriers

Despite recognizing the benefits of emotional intelligence, participants also identified several challenges and barriers that hindered its development and application in the academic context. Academic stress, time constraints, and workload pressures were cited as major impediments to practicing emotional intelligence effectively. "When I'm overwhelmed with assignments and exams, it's hard to focus on managing my emotions," shared one participant. "I wish I had more time to prioritize self-care and relaxation." Moreover, interpersonal conflicts, peer pressure, and social dynamics posed challenges to students' emotional well-being and EI skills. Many participants described instances where they struggled to navigate group projects or resolve disagreements with classmates. "Sometimes, conflicts arise, and it's hard to maintain a positive attitude and work together," noted one participant. "I think we need more support and guidance on how to handle these situations effectively." Additionally, cultural and societal expectations placed pressure on students to prioritize academic success over their emotional well-being, creating a sense of imbalance and stress. "In our society, there's a lot of pressure to excel academically and meet expectations," remarked one participant. "It can be challenging to prioritize my emotional health when there's so much focus on grades and achievements."

4.5 Strategies for Enhancing Emotional Intelligence

Despite the challenges they faced, participants shared various strategies for enhancing their emotional intelligence and coping with academic stressors. Mindfulness practices, relaxation techniques, and self-reflection were cited as effective ways to cultivate self-awareness and emotional regulation. "I find meditation and deep breathing exercises helpful in calming my mind and managing stress," shared one participant. "It gives me the clarity and focus I need to study effectively." Moreover, participants emphasized the importance of social support networks, including friends, family, and mentors, in fostering emotional intelligence and resilience. Seeking guidance from trusted individuals, sharing experiences with peers, and expressing emotions openly were cited as valuable sources of support. "Talking to my friends and family helps me gain perspective and feel supported," noted one participant. "It's comforting to know that I'm not alone in facing challenges."

Furthermore, participants underscored the need for educational institutions to incorporate emotional intelligence training and support services into their curricula and student support programs. Providing workshops on stress management, interpersonal skills, and emotional well-being, as well as counseling services and peer support groups, were suggested as effective interventions. "I think universities should invest more in promoting emotional intelligence and mental health among students," remarked one participant. "It's essential for our overall well-being and academic success."

4.6 Gender Differences in Emotional Intelligence Perception and Application

An interesting aspect that emerged from the data was the exploration of gender differences in the perception and application of emotional intelligence. While both male and female participants acknowledged the importance of emotional intelligence in academic success, there were nuanced differences in how they perceived and expressed their emotions. Female participants often described emotional intelligence as integral to their interpersonal relationships and collaborative efforts in academic settings. They emphasized the importance of empathy, intuition, and emotional sensitivity in understanding others' perspectives and resolving conflicts. "I think women are generally more attuned to emotions and better at empathizing with others," shared one female participant. "In group projects, I find it easier to connect with my peers and work together towards common goals."

In contrast, male participants tended to emphasize the role of emotional intelligence in self-regulation, resilience, and goal-oriented behavior. They described using emotional intelligence strategies to manage stress, stay focused, and persevere through academic challenges. "For me, emotional intelligence is about staying calm under pressure and maintaining a positive mindset," explained one male participant. "It helps me handle setbacks and setbacks without losing motivation." These gender differences in the perception and application of emotional intelligence highlight the complex interplay between gender norms, socialization experiences, and individual differences in emotional functioning.

Table 6: Gender Differences in Emotional Intelligence Perception and Application	
Insights from the Data	Exemplary Statements
Both male and female participants acknowledged the significance of emotional intelligence in academic success, yet there were nuanced differences in how they perceived and expressed their emotions.	"I think women are generally more attuned to emotions and better at empathizing with others. In group projects, I find it easier to connect with my peers and work together towards common goals." - Female Participant
	"Emotional intelligence is about staying calm under pressure and maintaining a positive mindset. It helps me handle setbacks and challenges without losing motivation." - Male Participant
Female participants often emphasized the interpersonal aspects of emotional intelligence, highlighting empathy, intuition, and emotional sensitivity in understanding others' perspectives and resolving conflicts.	"Understanding others' emotions and perspectives is crucial in group projects and teamwork. I believe empathy and emotional sensitivity contribute to effective collaboration." - Female Participant
	"Being emotionally intelligent means being able to connect with others on an emotional level and navigate interpersonal dynamics effectively." - Female Participant
In contrast, male participants tended to focus on the role of emotional intelligence in self-regulation, resilience, and goal-oriented behavior, using strategies to manage stress, stay focused, and persevere through challenges.	"Emotional intelligence helps me stay focused and motivated, even when faced with academic pressures. It's about managing my emotions to achieve my goals." - Male Participant
	"For me, emotional intelligence means being able to control my reactions and maintain a positive attitude, especially during tough times. It's essential for academic and personal success." - Male Participant
These gender differences underscore the complex interplay between societal expectations, socialization experiences, and individual differences in emotional functioning.	"I think societal expectations play a role in how men and women perceive and express emotions. While there may be differences, both genders can benefit from developing emotional intelligence skills." - Participant Reflecting on Gender Differences in Emotional Intelligence

Source: Interview

4.7 Cultural Influences on Emotional Intelligence Development

The influence of cultural factors on the development and expression of emotional intelligence was another prominent theme that emerged from the data. Participants described how cultural values, beliefs, and norms shaped their emotional experiences and interpersonal interactions in academic settings. In Bangladesh, cultural values such as respect for authority, humility, and collectivism were frequently cited as influential determinants of emotional intelligence. Participants emphasized the importance of showing respect for teachers and elders, maintaining harmony within peer groups, and prioritizing the needs of the collective over individual interests. "In our culture, we're taught to be respectful and

considerate of others' feelings," shared one participant. "That's something I try to incorporate into my interactions with classmates and professors."

Moreover, participants discussed the role of cultural practices such as religious rituals, family traditions, and community celebrations in promoting emotional well-being and social cohesion. Engaging in religious practices, seeking guidance from spiritual leaders, and participating in cultural events were cited as sources of emotional support and resilience. "Praying and connecting with my faith community helps me stay grounded and find solace during difficult times," explained one participant. "It's a source of strength and comfort that helps me navigate academic challenges."

Table 7: Cultural Influences on Emotional Intelligence Development

Insights from the Data	Exemplary Statements
Participants discussed how cultural values, beliefs, and norms in Bangladesh shaped their emotional experiences and interpersonal interactions in academic settings.	"In our culture, we're taught to be respectful and considerate of others' feelings. That's something I try to incorporate into my interactions with classmates and professors." - Participant Reflecting on Cultural Influences on Emotional Intelligence Development in Bangladesh
	"Cultural values such as respect for authority and collectivism play a significant role in how we interact with peers and professors in academic settings." - Participant Reflecting on Cultural Influences on Emotional Intelligence Development in Bangladesh
Cultural practices such as religious rituals, family traditions, and community celebrations were cited as sources of emotional support and resilience.	"Praying and connecting with my faith community helps me stay grounded and find solace during difficult times. It's a source of strength and comfort that helps me navigate academic challenges." - Participant Reflecting on the Role of Cultural Practices in Emotional Intelligence Development in Bangladesh
	"Family gatherings and community celebrations remind me of the importance of social connections and support networks. They provide a sense of belonging and help me cope with stress." - Participant Reflecting on the Role of Cultural Practices in Emotional Intelligence Development in Bangladesh
Participants emphasized the importance of maintaining harmony within peer groups and prioritizing the needs of the collective over individual interests, in line with cultural values of collectivism.	"In our culture, we value harmony within peer groups and prioritize collective goals over individual achievements. This influences how we navigate group projects and collaborate with classmates." - Participant Reflecting on Cultural Influences on Emotional Intelligence Development in Bangladesh
	"Being part of a close-knit community teaches us to consider others' perspectives and work together towards common goals. It's a valuable lesson in emotional intelligence that shapes our interactions in academic and social contexts." - Participant Reflecting on Cultural Influences on Emotional Intelligence Development in Bangladesh

Source: Interview

4.8 Recommendations for Promoting Emotional Intelligence in Higher Education

Based on their experiences and insights, participants offered several recommendations for promoting emotional intelligence in higher education settings. First and foremost, they emphasized the need for universities to integrate emotional intelligence training and support services into their curricula and student support programs. Providing workshops, seminars, and courses on emotional intelligence, stress management, and interpersonal skills can equip students with the tools and resources they need to thrive academically and personally. Additionally, offering counseling services, peer support groups, and mentorship programs can provide students with a safe space to seek guidance, share experiences, and build supportive relationships. Moreover, participants stressed the importance of creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment that values students' emotional well-being and diversity.

Encouraging open communication, fostering empathy and understanding, and promoting a culture of respect and collaboration can enhance students' sense of belonging and engagement in academic pursuits. "Universities should strive to create an environment where students feel valued, respected, and supported," remarked one participant. "When students feel supported emotionally, they're more likely to succeed academically and contribute positively to the university community." Furthermore, participants highlighted the role of faculty and staff in modeling and promoting emotional intelligence skills among students. Training professors and administrators in emotional intelligence competencies, such as active listening, empathy, and conflict resolution, can create a positive ripple effect throughout the university community.

"Faculty members play a crucial role in shaping students' emotional experiences and academic outcomes," explained one participant. "When professors are empathetic, supportive, and understanding, it makes a big difference in students' lives."

5. DISCUSSION

The discussion of the findings from this qualitative study on emotional intelligence (EI) among private university students in Bangladesh encompasses several key themes. The participants' diverse perspectives shed light on the complex interplay between emotional intelligence, academic performance, and cultural influences. The participants recognized the importance of EI in navigating the challenges of higher education, highlighting its role in stress management, interpersonal relationships, and overall well-being. Their experiences underscored the multifaceted nature of emotional intelligence, encompassing self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, and relationship management. These findings align with existing literature on the positive correlation between emotional intelligence and academic success, emphasizing the need for universities to prioritize EI development as part of their educational programs.

However, despite acknowledging the benefits of emotional intelligence, participants also identified various challenges and barriers that hindered its development and application. Academic stress, time constraints, and workload pressures emerged as significant impediments to practicing emotional intelligence effectively. Additionally, interpersonal conflicts, peer pressure, and cultural expectations placed strain on students' emotional well-being, highlighting the importance of addressing these issues within the academic environment. The findings also revealed gender differences in the perception and application of emotional intelligence, with female participants emphasizing interpersonal aspects

such as empathy and intuition, while male participants focused on self-regulation and resilience. These gender differences reflect broader societal norms and socialization experiences, underscoring the need for tailored approaches to EI development that account for individual differences and cultural contexts.

Cultural influences emerged as a prominent theme in the discussion, with participants attributing their emotional experiences and interpersonal interactions to cultural values, beliefs, and practices. In Bangladesh, cultural norms such as respect for authority, collectivism, and religious traditions shape students' emotional responses and social dynamics within academic settings. These cultural influences highlight the importance of incorporating cultural sensitivity and diversity into EI interventions and educational practices. Overall, the findings from this study contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of emotional intelligence in academic excellence among private university students in Bangladesh. By recognizing the complex interplay between emotional intelligence, academic performance, gender dynamics, and cultural influences, universities can develop more inclusive and effective strategies for promoting students' emotional well-being and success.

6. CONCLUSION

This qualitative study provides valuable insights into the role of emotional intelligence (EI) in academic excellence among private university students in Bangladesh. The findings underscore the importance of EI in navigating the challenges of higher education, with participants recognizing its significance in stress management, interpersonal relationships, and overall well-being. Despite facing various challenges and barriers, including academic stress and cultural expectations, participants highlighted the potential of EI to enhance academic performance and personal growth. Gender differences in the perception and application of emotional intelligence were evident, reflecting broader societal norms and socialization experiences. Female participants emphasized interpersonal aspects such as empathy and intuition, while male participants focused on self-regulation and resilience. These gender differences underscore the need for tailored approaches to EI development that account for individual differences and cultural contexts.

Cultural influences emerged as a prominent theme, with participants attributing their emotional experiences and social interactions to cultural values, beliefs, and practices. In Bangladesh, cultural norms such as respect for authority and collectivism shape students' emotional responses and interpersonal dynamics within academic settings. These cultural influences highlight the importance of incorporating cultural sensitivity and diversity into EI interventions and educational practices. Overall, the findings from this study contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between emotional intelligence, academic performance, gender dynamics, and cultural influences in the context of private university education in Bangladesh. By recognizing the importance of EI and addressing the challenges and barriers identified by participants, universities can foster a supportive environment that promotes students' emotional well-being and academic success. Moving forward, further research and targeted interventions are needed to enhance EI development and promote holistic student growth in higher education settings.

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