Impact of Extrinsic Motivation, Bullying and Emotional Intelligence on Academic Performance in University Students

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Abstract

The present study aimed to measure the relationship between extrinsic motivation, bullying, emotional intelligence, and academic performance among university students. It was hypothesized that these variables are interrelated. A cross sectional, correlational design was employed with a sample of N=200 students (Mage = 21 years) selected through convenience sampling. The sample size was determined using G Power 3.1, which suggested a minimum of 85 participants for medium effect size, but was increased to 200 to enhance reliability and generalizability. This ensured adequate power for statistical analyses and reduced sampling error. Data were gathered using standardized instruments, including the Bullying Scale for Adults (Haidl et al., 2020), Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (Schutte et al., 1998), and the Academic Motivation Scale (Vallerand et al., 1992). Analyses conducted via SPSS (v.24) revealed a significant positive association between extrinsic motivation (r = .42, $p < .01$), emotional intelligence (r = .37, $p < .01$), and academic performance. Conversely, bullying demonstrated a weak negative relationship with academic achievement (r = −.18, $p < .05$). No significant gender differences emerged for emotional intelligence, extrinsic motivation, bullying, or CGPA. The results accentuate the importance of nurturing emotional intelligence and addressing bullying in higher education contexts, while also highlighting the constructive role of extrinsic motivation in academic success. The study suggests implementing programs that build students' emotional intelligence alongside anti-bullying initiatives and support systems to create healthier learning environments.

Keywords: Academic Performance, Bullying, Emotional Intelligence, Extrinsic Motivation

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Introduction

According to a UNESCO (2019) report, approximately 30% of Pakistani students aged 13–15 experienced bullying at least once in the previous month. On a global scale, emotional intelligence (EI) scores have shown a consistent decline, with Pakistan following this trend. The State of the Heart (2024) study, recognized as one of the most comprehensive global investigations of emotional intelligence, reported that between 2019 and 2023, global EI scores dropped by an average of 5.54% (Six Seconds, 2024). Academic achievement remains a central concern in education, serving as both a measure of educational system effectiveness and an indicator of individual goal attainment (Steinmayr et al., 2014). A student's performance is shaped by the interaction of external factors such as extrinsic motivation, personal cognitive and emotional abilities, and psychological well-being influenced by family background, upbringing, and past experiences. Ultimately, success across academic disciplines depends on students' ability to interpret, organize, and navigate complex, multidimensional information (Korhonen

et al., 2019). Motivation is the driving force that initiates and sustains purposeful behavior, directing energy toward specific goals (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Extrinsic motivation is defined as behavior influenced by external incentives or consequences. Learners pursue academic tasks for rewards or to avoid failure, often shaped by discipline, social pressure, or incentives. Within Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), motivation arises from self-sufficiency, competence, and affinity. Different forms of extrinsic regulation exist: external regulation, where tasks are performed to gain rewards introjected regulation, where actions are driven by internalized social pressures; and identification, where external influences are integrated into personal goals. Complementary perspectives include Organismic Theory, which addresses the internalization of external motivators; Expectancy Theory, which highlights the relationship between effort and outcomes; and Herzberg's Hygiene Theory, which identifies external conditions that prevent dissatisfaction but do not create sustained motivation. Bullying is one extrinsic factor negatively influencing student well-being and academic achievement. It refers to repeated aggressive behavior marked by a power imbalance (Olweus, 1994). Verbal bullying involves insults and threats (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006), while relational bullying focuses on social exclusion (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). Sexual bullying includes inappropriate language or behavior. Family-based explanations suggest that bullies may emerge from abusive households, while victims may come from overprotective environments. Group dynamics theories highlight the role of peer involvement in perpetuating bullying (Rigby, 2004). Individual differences also contribute, such as low empathy and high aggression among bullies, and low self-esteem among victims (Olweus, 1993; Sutton & Keogh, 2000). Emotional intelligence, characterized as the ability to perceive, understand, use, and regulate emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1997), is positively associated with academic achievement. The Four-Branch Model of EI emphasizes emotion perception, facilitation of thought, emotional understanding, and regulation. Broader EI skills include intrapersonal abilities (such as self-awareness, assertiveness), interpersonal abilities (such as empathy, social responsibility), stress management, flexibility, and overall mood stability. University students' academic achievement plays a critical role in shaping both their educational journey and future personal and professional development. Numerous factors affect academic outcomes, but extrinsic motivation, bullying, and emotional intelligence stand out as particularly influential. While motivation drives students' academic engagement, bullying can hinder performance, and emotional intelligence helps students manage stress and sustain performance. For educators and psychologists, understanding these dynamics is vital to enhancing student outcomes and addressing challenges in academic settings.

Figure 2
Hypothesized Model
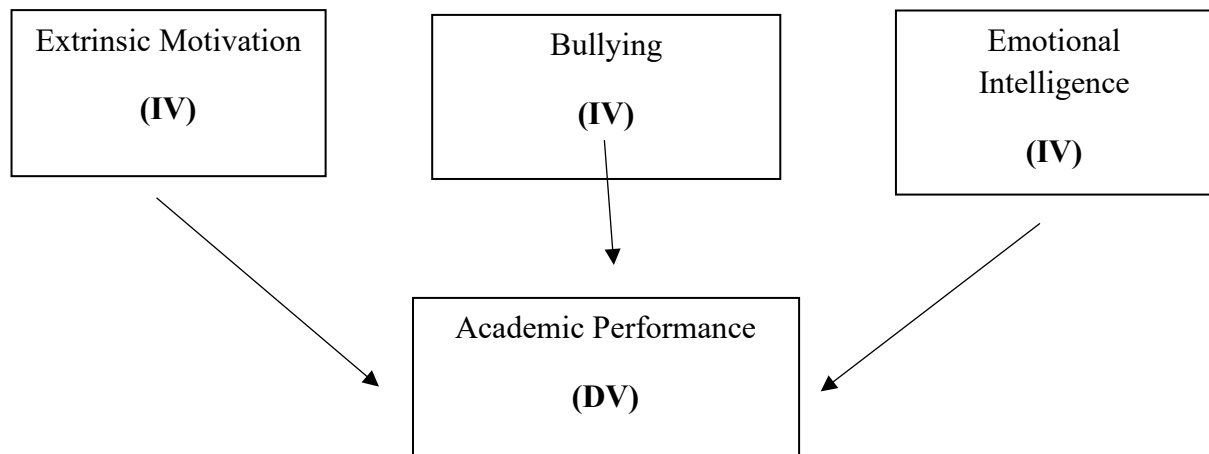
Extrinsic motivation reflects behavior aimed at avoiding negative consequences or gaining external rewards. Although much research has considered both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation together, fewer studies have examined extrinsic motivation independently. Khaliq et al. (2023) explored how external rewards influence undergraduates' academic achievement. Similarly, Ayub (2010) examined Karachi college students and reported that motivation was positively associated with academic success, with variation across gender. In a large-scale study, Liu et al. (2020) tracked 13,799 Chinese students and found that extrinsic motivation promoted achievement, particularly for students with weaker intrinsic motivation. Foong and Liew (2022), investigating first-year chemical engineering students, reported that enrollment boosted both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation while reducing a motivation, confirming the importance of external incentives in student performance. Bullying, as defined by Olweus (1993), is persistent, harmful behavior sustained by power imbalances. Nadeem and Usman (2022) studied 403 students in Punjab and found a significant negative link between bullying and both mental health and academic performance. Muzamil and Shah (2016) reported that socioeconomic challenges coupled with traditional and cyberbullying reduced academic performance. Similarly, Javed et al. (2024) examined gender-based bullying and reported adverse academic and psychological outcomes, including dropout risks. Parveen et al. (2022) observed that verbal bullying was most common and had negative effects on communication, study habits, and academic interest. In Spain, Rusteholz et al. (2021) concluded that bullying impairs performance across subjects, with variation across grade levels. International studies (Irma & Carolina, 2021; Marcos et al., 2023) further confirm that bullying continues to hinder academic adjustment and outcomes in higher education contexts. Emotional intelligence research also highlights its role in academic achievement. Suleman et al. (2019) discovered a significant positive relationship between EI and performance among Pakistani undergraduates, identifying emotional stability, altruism, and relationship management as key predictors. Halimi et al. (2021) studied Kuwaiti students and found that emotional use and evaluation strongly predicted academic success, with no demographic differences. Swanepoel and Britz (2017) also reported that EI contributes to academic success and found no gender differences. More recently, MacCann et al. (2020) emphasized that EI enables students

to manage stress and maintain motivation, while Petrides et al. (2020) confirmed that higher EI supports resilience and academic performance in challenging educational environments. Collectively, these findings highlight the interconnected influence of extrinsic motivation, bullying, and emotional intelligence on academic achievement.

Objectives

1. To investigate the correlation between extrinsic motivation, bullying, emotional intelligence, and academic performance among university students.
2. To determine whether extrinsic motivation, bullying, and emotional intelligence predict academic performance among university students.
3. To explore gender differences in extrinsic motivation, bullying, emotional intelligence, and academic performance among university students.

Hypotheses

1. There is probably a positive correlation between extrinsic motivation and emotional intelligence with academic performance, and a negative correlation between bullying and academic performance among university students.
2. Extrinsic motivation, bullying, and emotional intelligence are likely predictors of academic performance among university students.
3. There would be gender differences across extrinsic motivation, bullying, emotional intelligence and academic performance among university students

Methods

Research Design

This study evaluated the effects of bullying, emotional intelligence, and extrinsic motivation on university students' academic performance using a correlational research approach.

Sample and sampling strategy

A convenient sampling strategy was employed to gather the data for current study. A sample of *N*=200 university students was selected to take part in the study. The sample size was determined using G Power 3.1, which indicated that at least 85 participants were required to detect a medium effect size (r = .30) at α = .05 with power of .80. To enhance reliability, generalizability, and to account for potential missing data, the sample was increased to 200 participants.

Inclusion Criteria

The study included university students who were enrolled in undergraduate and graduate programs, expressed their willingness to participate by providing informed consent, and agreed to share their Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA).

Exclusion Criteria

Students were excluded if they had withdrawn from the university, were on academic leave, did not provide informed consent, or reported having pre-diagnosed psychological disorders such as depression, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, or bipolar disorder, as identified by a licensed mental health professional prior to participation. The diagnosis was based on participants' self-report of their medical or psychological history, ensuring that the study sample reflected typical academic experiences without the confounding influence of clinical conditions.

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of Sample (N=200)

Variable	f	%	Variable	f	%
Age			**Educational Level**		
M	21.82		BS	152	74.5
SD	1.95		MS	48	23.5
Gender			**Family Support**		
Male	100	49.0	Yes	100	49.0
Female	100	49.0	No	35	17.2

Assessment Measures

Academic Motivation Scale (AMS-C)

The Academic Motivation Scale (AMS-C), developed by Robert J. Vallerand and others (1992), consists of 8 items extrinsic motivation rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (does not correspond) to 5 (corresponds exactly). The scale demonstrated good internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of .80.

Bullying Scale for Adults (BSA)

The Scale (BSA), developed by Ruhrrman and Kaiser (2013). It consists of total 16 items, the first subscale is how did you get bullied and valued on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (never happened) to 4 (always happened) and the second subscale is who bullied you most often and valued on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (never a problem) to 4 (always a problem) and the third subscale is how you taken part in bullying another person and rated on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (never) toward 5 (don't know). With a Cronbach's alpha of .93, the scale has a high level of internal consistency.

The Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence test (SSEIT)

The Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test, developed by Schutte et al. (1998) is a 26-item questionnaire that uses a 5-point Likert scale, where 5 means "strongly agree" and 0 means "strongly disagree." The scale's Cronbach's alpha is .92, indicating great internal consistency.

Academic Performance

The academic performance of students was assessed by their obtained Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA).

Procedure

First of all, topic was permitted by Institutional Review Board of Lahore Garrison University. The original authors were then approached by the email for permission to utilize the scales used in this study. Then Permission was taken from original authors. All scales were in English version. The study's intentions and procedures were explained to the participants. The participants were given detailed information regarding the research and the questionnaire form. Data collection was done by online method through google forms where average time to attempt was explicitly mentioned. The google form link was shared on different social media groups for data collection. In order to recruit participants based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, an initial screening questionnaire was used. The participants were fully appreciated after the collection of data. SPSS was used to analyse the data that had been gathered.

Ethical Guidelines

Throughout the investigation, ethical standards were carefully observed. Formal approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of Lahore Garrison University prior to data collection. Participants were informed about the objectives and procedures of the study and were required to provide informed consent before participation. They were assured that their responses would remain confidential and used only for research purposes. Permission to use the standardized scales applied in the study was obtained from the respective authors. All materials used in this research were properly cited and

referenced to acknowledge original authorship, thereby avoiding plagiarism. Data were reported with accuracy and integrity, ensuring transparency in the research process. Moreover, care was taken to guarantee that no harm or discomfort was caused to participants at any stage of the study.

Statistical Analysis
Descriptive statistics, psychometric analysis, the data was analyzed using the independent sample t-test and Pearson's product moment correlation analysis.

Results
Psychometric analysis was conducted to find out the reliability of the scales used in the research. Results are reported in Table 2.

Table 2
Psychometric Properties of Academic Motivation Scale, Bullying Scale for Adult and Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test (N=200)

Scale	M	SD	Range Actual	Potential	Cronbach's α
Academic Motivation Scale	23.35	11.22	8-40	8-40	.96
Bullying Scale for Adult	28.57	10.91	6-60	0-64	.83
Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test	85.43	20.88	35-128	26-130	.94

Note. M = Mean; *SD* = Standard Deviation

All scales had good to exceptional reliability, according to reliability analysis, thus we may go on to inferential statistics.

Table 3
Correlations between Academic Motivation Scale, Bullying Scale for Adult, Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test and CGPA (N=200)

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4
Bullying	28.57	10.91	-	-03	.01	-.01
Extrinsic Motivation	23.35	11.22		-	.41	.72**
Emotional Intelligence	85.43	20.88			-	.37**
Academic Performance	3.09	.51				-

**p< .35, **p< .76*

Bullying and academic performance have a statistically weakly negative association, according to Pearson product moment correlation results. Bullying was not significantly correlated with Extrinsic Motivation (r = -.03, *p* > .05), Emotional Intelligence (r = .01, *p* > .05), or academic performance (r = -.01, *p* > .05). These results suggest that Bullying does not have a statistically significant relationship with these variables. Extrinsic Motivation showed a moderate, positive correlation with Emotional Intelligence (r = .41, *p* < .01), demonstrating that higher levels of Extrinsic Motivation are related with higher Emotional Intelligence. Additionally, Extrinsic Motivation was strongly positively correlated with academic performance (r = .72, *p* < .01), suggesting that students who are more extrinsically motivated tend to have better academic performance. Emotional Intelligence was positively correlated with academic performance (r = .37, *p* < .01), signifying that higher Emotional Intelligence is associated with better academic performance.

Table 4

Gender Differences in Extrinsic Motivation, Bullying, Emotional Intelligence and CGPA in University Students (N=200)

Variables	Men		Women		t (200)	*p*	Cohen's
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			d
Extrinsic Motivation	23.3	11.6	23.3	10.8	0.00	0.18	-.02
Bullying	28.6	10.6	28.5	11.2	0.03	0.32	-.45
Emotional Intelligence	86.4	20.7	84.4	21.4	0.67	0.66	.11
CGPA	3.09	.48	3.09	.54	-0.05	0.28	.000

Note. M= Mean; *SD*= Standard Deviation

Table 5

Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Emotional Intelligence, Bullying, Extrinsic Motivation in University Students (N=200)

Variables	Model			Model 2			Model 3		
	B	**SE**	**β**	**B**	**SE**	**β**	**B**	**SE**	**β**
Constant	3.11	.10	-	2.33	.16	-	2.15	.12	-
BSATS	-.001	.003	-.10						
SSEITS				.009	.002	.37			
AMST							.03	.002	.68
R²	.000			.14			.53		
F	.04			16.14			74.77		
▲R²	-.53			.13			.52		
▲F	.83			.000			.000		

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

Table 5 shows Model 1, Bullying (BSATS) was entered as the sole predictor. There was no statistical significance in the model, R² = .000, F (1, 198) = .04, *p* > .05, indicating that Bullying was not a major predictor of the outcome variable. The regression coefficient for BSATS was B = -0.001, SE = .003, β = -.10, suggesting a small and negative but non-significant effect. In Model 2, Emotional Intelligence (SSEIT) was added. There was statistical significance in this model, R² = .14, F (2, 197) = 16.14, *p* < .001. The change in R² was significant, ΔR² = .13, ΔF = 16.14, *p* < .001, demonstrating that emotional intelligence accounted for a significant amount of additional variance. SSEIT was a noteworthy positive predictor of the outcome variable, B = 0.009, SE = .002, β = .37. In Model 3, Extrinsic Motivation (AMST) was added. This model was also statistically significant, R² = .53, F (3, 196) = 74.77, *p* < .001. The change in R² was again significant, ΔR² = .52, ΔF = 74.77, *p* < .001, showing that AMST contributed significantly beyond the previous predictors. AMST emerged as a strong positive predictor, B = 0.03, SE = .002, β = .68.

Discussion

This study investigated the interplay between bullying, extrinsic motivation, emotional intelligence, and academic performance (measured by CGPA) among university students. The findings suggest that these factors are interrelated and collectively shape students' academic outcomes. The instruments used demonstrated good reliability, supporting the accuracy of the findings.

Consistent with earlier research, extrinsic motivation was positively related to academic achievement. Students driven by rewards such as recognition, grades, or praise tended to perform better

academically. This aligns with Self-Determination Theory, which posits that external incentives, when perceived as supportive rather than controlling, can enhance motivation and performance (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Vallerand et al., 1992). In practical terms, students who are more driven by external factors are more likely to persist in their studies, seek assistance when needed, and maintain concentration—all behaviors that contribute to success (Taylor et al., 2014).

In contrast, bullying and academic success had a weakly negative correlation. Although not statistically noteworthy in this study, the tendency is consistent with prior research indicating that bullying can undermine performance (Nansel et al., 2001; Olweus, 1994). Victims of bullying often experience reduced self-esteem, anxiety, and stress, which may disrupt their concentration and engagement in academic activities (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006). These findings emphasize the importance of addressing bullying in higher education to minimize its potential negative effects on students, even when the statistical evidence appears limited.

Academic achievement was found to be significantly positively predicted by emotional intelligence. Students who effectively regulate their emotions, show empathy, and maintain strong interpersonal relationships are better equipped to cope with academic stress and engage constructively with peers and faculty (MacCann et al., 2020; Petrides et al., 2020). These abilities not only enhance emotional well-being but also contribute to improved academic outcomes (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

Bullying, extrinsic motivation, emotional intelligence, and academic achievement did not differ by gender. This implies that the experiences and reactions of the male and female students in our group are comparable. While some prior studies have reported gender variations, the absence of differences here highlights the importance of context, cultural influences, and

assessment tools in shaping findings (Fernández-Berrocal et al., 2012).

Regression analyses further clarified the role of each variable. Bullying alone did not significantly predict academic outcomes, whereas emotional intelligence contributed strongly to explaining performance. When extrinsic motivation was added to the model, its predictive strength further increased, indicating that both emotional intelligence and extrinsic motivation play central roles in academic achievement. Bullying, by comparison, exerted minimal direct influence (MacCann et al., 2020; Vallerand et al., 1992).

Conclusion

Overall, this study accentuates the intricate connections between emotional intelligence and, extrinsic motivation, bullying, and academic achievement in university students. Emotional intelligence and extrinsic motivation emerged as strong predictors of academic success, while bullying displayed only a weak negative association. These results emphasize the importance of fostering students' emotional intelligence, encouraging healthy motivational strategies, and addressing bullying within educational institutions. Future research should continue to explore these dynamics to inform policies and interferences that indorse student well-being and academic growth.

Limitations and Suggestions

The study was limited to university students, restricting the generalizability of results to supplementary age groups or academic levels. The cross-sectional design averts conclusions about causal relationships among emotional intelligence, motivation, bullying, and academic achievement. This is a limitation because such a design only captures associations at a single point in time rather than tracking how these variables influence each other over longer periods. Cultural and contextual factors may have shaped participants' self-reports, influencing the applicability of findings to different populations. Based on these limitations, it is

suggested that future research extend investigations to high school and postgraduate students to examine whether emotional intelligence plays a similar role in diverse academic settings. Researchers should also explore the combined influence of intrinsic motivation and emotional intelligence on academic performance. Furthermore, longitudinal studies are recommended to assess the long-term effects of bullying on academic trajectories and professional outcomes.

Implications

Educational institutions should incorporate recognition and reward systems to strengthen students' extrinsic motivation, while ensuring balance with intrinsic motivation. Promote Emotional Intelligence Development: Universities should integrate emotional intelligence training into academic and personal development programs to help students better manage stress and interpersonal challenges. Institutions should establish comprehensive anti-bullying policies, awareness campaigns, and support systems for victims to ensure safe and supportive learning environments that promote academic success.

Ethics Statement

All the ethical standards of APA were met. Informed consent was taken in written form from all the respondents to participate in this study.

Contribution of Authors

Mehwish Bibi: Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing – Original Draft, Maliha Khalid: Methodology, Writing - Reviewing & Editing, Supervision

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest declared by the authors.

Source of Funding

The authors declared no source of funding.

Data Availability Statement

The datasets of the current study are not available publicly due to ethical reasons but are available from the corresponding author [M.B.] upon the reasonable request.

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