

An Analysis of Social Emotional Intelligence across Demographic Variables among University Students

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ABSTRACT: The present study was conducted to compare the Social Emotional Intelligence (SEI) of University students with respect to selected demographic variables. This study analyzed the impact of demographic factors—including gender, age, area of residence, living arrangement, academic discipline, and university—on five dimensions of Social Emotional Intelligence (SEI): Self-Awareness, Social Awareness, Self-Management, Relationship Management, and Responsible Decision-Making. Utilizing a quantitative survey design, data were collected via a structured questionnaire divided into two sections; the first gathered demographic data, while the second evaluated SEI dimensions using a 5-point Likert scale. A convenience sample of 117 undergraduate students from two public universities in Southern Punjab, Pakistan, was employed. Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), employing One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at a 0.05 significance level to explore differences in SEI dimensions across demographic variables. The study found that demographic factors influence various aspects of Social Emotional Intelligence (SEI). Self-Awareness was significantly affected by age, area, residence, and academic discipline. Social Awareness varied notably by gender, age, area, residence, and university, while Self-Management showed significant links to gender, residence, discipline, and university. Differences in Relationship Management and Responsible Decision-Making were also linked to demographic variables. Although these factors affected some SEI components, they did not fully explain students' social and emotional development.

KEYWORDS: Social Emotional Intelligence, Self-Awareness, Social Awareness, Self-Management, Relationship Management, Responsible Decision-Making

Introduction

Social-emotional intelligence (SEI) is a core set of skills that help people understand, manage, and express their emotions in a healthy way and foster positive relationships with others. The concept consists of five key components: self-awareness (understanding one's own emotions and how they affect others), self-regulation (managing one's emotions and behaviors in different situations), social awareness (recognizing other people's viewpoints and

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empathizing with them), relationship management (the ability to build and maintain healthy relationships), and responsible-decision making (the ability to make responsible decisions) (Wang, 2023). Social-emotional intelligence is not the same as cognitive intelligence, which is assessed by academic tests, but it is based on interpersonal skills that influence a person's ability to deal with social complexities, make personal decisions, and obtain positive results in their interactions with others. Social-emotional intelligence plays an important role in the university environment (Arshad & Perveen, 2022).

Higher education is a pivotal developmental stage in which students encounter new challenges such as academic stress, identity development, socialization, and career preparation. Students with high SEI scores have better stress management skills, better peer relationships, better leadership skills, and better academic performance than students with low SEI scores (Mahfouz & Greenberg, 2021). The results of the studies have been consistent, with students with higher scores on emotional intelligence components (e.g., empathy, self-regulation, stress resilience) reporting higher grades and greater persistence in their educational programs (Valente et al., 2019). In addition, SEI helps students adjust to new situations, manage conflict in a positive way, work well in groups, and stay psychologically healthy when facing transition and uncertainty. The classroom is one of the main places where SEI is formed and cultivated among university students. The physical environment, emotional atmosphere, teacher-student relationships and patterns of peer interaction all contribute to an ecosystem that supports or hinders SEI development. Emotionally supportive and safe classroom environments are strongly associated with increased social-emotional competencies, which leads to trust, decreased anxiety, and a sense of psychological safety that allows for authentic peer engagement (WHO, 2023). On the other hand, negative, exclusionary, or overly competitive classroom settings can negatively affect students' emotional safety and hinder SEI development. The student-teacher relationship is the most significant factor influencing social-emotional learning, with teachers exhibiting emotional intelligence, stability, and compassion fostering a sense of belonging and emotional safety for students (Li et al., 2023).

There are certain contextual factors that make social-emotional intelligence important in Pakistan. There has historically been a focus on cognitive academic learning and rote learning within the Pakistani education system, with little emphasis placed on the development of interpersonal and emotional skills, resulting in a gap in the students' social-emotional competencies (Savira, 2024a). In other words, Pakistani university students are not well prepared to meet the challenges of the modern professional world, where they are expected to work collaboratively and have emotional intelligence.

Moreover, Pakistan's cultural, linguistic, religious and ethnic diversity gives rise to distinct social dynamics, which demand a high level of social-emotional intelligence to navigate. The students of universities in Pakistan are from different backgrounds such as different provinces, languages, ethnicities and socioeconomic status. SEI helps students to demonstrate cultural sensitivity, practice empathy across differences, and build inclusive relationships, which is essential for promoting social cohesion in a diverse nation. Moreover, Pakistan has a serious mental health problem among its youth, where university students are at higher risk of anxiety, depression and stress. Social-emotional intelligence equips students with necessary coping strategies such as emotion regulation skills, stress management techniques, and relationship skills for seeking support, which can be considered a preventive mental health intervention (Shah et al., 2024).

Students' social-emotional competencies can be greatly enhanced by improving the classroom environment at Pakistani universities, as it is an important factor in developing SEI. Making classrooms more inclusive and emotionally supportive can positively impact Pakistani university students' social-emotional competencies (Zins & Elias, 2006).

Social-emotional intelligence comprises a set of essential competencies that enable individuals to recognise and regulate their emotions, understand the emotions of others, build positive interpersonal relationships, and make responsible decisions. These competencies are particularly important for university students, as they contribute to academic success, psychological well-being, effective communication, and future employability. In Pakistan, however, the higher education system has traditionally placed greater emphasis on academic achievement than on the development of students' social-emotional competencies. This challenge is further compounded by cultural diversity, increasing mental health concerns, and the limited integration of social-emotional learning into university curricula and classroom practices. Although social-emotional intelligence has received growing scholarly attention internationally, empirical evidence from the Pakistani higher education context remains limited. In particular, little is known about how social-emotional intelligence varies across different demographic groups of university students. Addressing this gap is important for understanding the diverse needs of students and for developing targeted interventions that promote equitable social-emotional development.

Accordingly, the primary objective of this study is to examine the differences in the dimensions of social-emotional intelligence—self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship management, and responsible decision-making—among university students across demographic variables, including gender, age, area, residence, academic discipline, and university affiliation. By identifying demographic variations in these dimensions, the study provides valuable evidence to inform higher education policies, institutional practices, and student support programs aimed at fostering students' holistic development and enhancing the quality of university education in Pakistan.

Literature Review

Social-emotional intelligence (SEI) is a highly recognized factor that influences student success, mental wellbeing and academic achievement around the world. Based on the CASEL framework for academic, social, and emotional learning, five SEI competencies are identified: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and the ability to make responsible decisions (Casel, 2020). As a result of these skills, individuals are able to recognize and regulate their feelings, establish objectives, become empathetic, maintain relationships, and make responsible decisions.

Self-Awareness

Self-awareness refers to the ability to accurately identify one's emotions, thoughts, values, strengths, and weaknesses, as well as how these factors influence behavior (Zahid et al., 2024). Self-aware university students have been shown to perform better academically, manage stress more effectively and be more prepared for their careers through international research. Research indicates that self-awareness is a key factor in academic achievement as it helps students recognize their strengths and weaknesses, which then can be used to focus on personal development (London et al., 2023). Self-awareness is a key element in the higher education setting for building the other SEI elements.

Self-Management

Self-management is the capacity to respond and react to emotions, thoughts and behaviors in various situations with effectiveness and efficiency to reach goals and aspirations (CASEL, 2020). This includes the ability to delay gratification, to handle stress, to control impulses and to motivate oneself. The findings suggest that students who have good self-management skills perform better academically, have fewer instances of burnout, and regulate their emotions more effectively (Wan et al., 2023). Self-management becomes especially important when students are in their university years and are experiencing new academic challenges and Life transitions.

Social Awareness

Social awareness refers to the ability to comprehend the viewpoints and feelings of others, regardless of their backgrounds, cultures or contexts (CASEL, 2020). This process involves identifying social norms, historical and social contexts, as well as resources and support available within the family, school, and community. Research from around the world has found that students with social awareness have better relationships, are more culturally sensitive, and are more involved in inclusive campus communities (Mahfouz & Greenberg, 2021).

Relationship Management

Relationship skills include the ability to initiate and sustain positive relationships, communicate effectively, listen actively, cooperate, collaborate to solve problems, engage in constructive conflict resolution, and seek and provide assistance as needed (CASEL, 2020). The student-teacher relationship has been found to be the most consistent predictor of social-emotional development in the classroom setting (Li et al., 2023). Emotionally intelligent teachers establish classrooms that are emotionally safe and valued, which promotes genuine peer interactions.

Responsible Decision-Making

It is the ability to make responsible decisions regarding actions and relationships in a variety of situations (CASEL, 2020). This involves thinking about ethical issues, safety issues and assessing benefits and impacts on individual, social and collective wellbeing. Research has shown that responsible decision-making is positively associated with academic success and lower levels of risky behaviors among university students (Valente et al., 2019).

The educational system in Pakistan has been focused on rote learning and cognitive academic performance, which has left a gap in students' social-emotional learning (Schoor et al., 2021). This educational system has left Pakistani university students unable to meet the demands of the modern professional world, which are collaborative and emotionally intelligent.

It was found that emotional intelligence was associated with higher academic achievement of university students in Pakistan in four dimensions: self-awareness, self-management, empathy, and relationship management (Savira, 2024a). It examined the academic performance of students at Pakistani universities and how emotional intelligence affects educational outcomes.

The study on self-awareness and psychosocial correlates among BSN (nursing) students in Pakistan revealed that coping with emotions and stress had high concurrent correlations with self-awareness (Zeeshan et al., 2026).

A study that examined the social-emotional competence of Pakistani university students, however, found that university students were self-aware, but other SEI components were found to be different. This indicates that Pakistani students have some level of self-awareness but need to be developed in other SEI areas (Ashraf et al., 2026).

The same study on the social-emotional competence of Pakistani university students found that students' self-management was low, which is alarming, as the academic pressures and stress faced by Pakistani university students are alarming. The result shows that there is a serious lack of self-regulation skills among the students in spite of their high level of self-awareness in higher education in Pakistan. This may be attributed to the traditional Pakistani educational system, which focuses on external control instead of self-regulation (Farooq & Alyana, 2025)

The study revealed that the social awareness of university students in Pakistan was moderate the context of Pakistan's cultural, linguistic, religious and ethnic diversity, moderate social awareness indicates that students have some empathy and cultural understanding but need to be developed to better cope with the complex social dynamics

of Pakistan. The moderate level suggests that social awareness can be developed by implementing classroom interventions that focus on diversity, empathy and cross-cultural understanding (Shah et al., 2024).

The study on social-emotional competence revealed that Pakistani university students exhibited a high level of relationship management. This discovery is consistent with the cultural focus on interpersonal relationships, family ties and community bonds in Pakistan. But high relationship management can be a reflection of traditional social structures and not a conscious development of SEI competencies. The importance of the classroom in promoting authentic relationship skills outside of cultural norms needs to be explored (Asma & Rauf, 2024)

The study found that the level of responsible decision-making among the students of universities in Pakistan was high. This indicates that students have the ability to make ethical decisions and positive choices. In Pakistani contexts, however, responsible decision making can be shaped by external values such as family expectations, religious values, and social pressures, rather than internalized ethical frameworks. Authentic responsible decision-making might be improved in classroom settings that encourage critical thinking and independent ethical decision-making (Zeib & Tahir, 2022).

According to a study examining the relationship between classroom climate, student engagement, self-efficacy, and learning experience in Pakistani public sector colleges, supportive classroom climate has a significant impact on student engagement, self-efficacy, and learning experience (Khuhro, 2024). All hypotheses were supported in the path analysis based on SCT, which shows that classroom climate plays an important role in maximizing student outcomes.

A second study of classroom emotional climate and academic outcomes reported significant positive correlations between classroom emotional climate and student wellbeing (Hong et al., 2021). 111[Micro-system conditions, specifically school environment, were found to be key factors in understanding the relationship between student engagement and peer interactions. This has implications for Pakistani universities where classroom environments influence social-emotional development.

In a study of emotional intelligence in the educational context of Pakistan, it was found that confidence, self-control, relatedness, curiosity, collaboration, and communication skills were the most important components of emotional intelligence (Zeib & Tahir, 2022). The study also identified five essential elements of emotional intelligence, including knowing one's own emotions, recognizing emotions in others, managing relationships, and motivating oneself.

Although the significance of SEI has been acknowledged, there is limited research that focuses on the impact of the classroom environment on SEI of Pakistani university students (Schuur et al., 2021). The majority of current studies are on general emotional intelligence and academic achievement without focusing on classroom environment as a predictor variable. This is a huge gap because the educational traditions, values and classroom dynamics in Pakistan are very different from those in the West.

Research Methodology

Research Design

Using a survey approach, this study examined the impact of classroom environment on the social-emotional intelligence of university students using a quantitative research design. This study used a descriptive and correlational research design to examine the current status of classroom environment variables as well as social-emotional intelligence components among students at The Women University Multan, as well as the relationships between these variables.

This study employed a quantitative research design using a survey approach to investigate the effect of classroom environment on social-emotional intelligence of university students. The descriptive and correlational research design was selected to measure the current status of classroom environment variables and social-emotional intelligence components and to examine the relationship between these variables among students in the Department of Education at the Women University, Multan.

Population and Sample

This study involved undergraduate students of the Department of Education of two public sector universities of Southern Punjab, Bahauddin Zakariya University (BZU), Multan and The Women University Multan (WUM). A total of 117 students participated in the study. The participants were selected from different semesters of the Bachelor of Education (BS) program to ensure representation across different academic levels.

Table 1

Population and Sample Distribution

University	Department	Sample (n)
Bahauddin Zakariya University (BZU), Multan	Education	58
The Women University Multan (WUM)	Education	59
Total		117

Sampling Technique

The participants were selected using the convenience sampling technique. Students who were enrolled in the Department of Education and available during the data collection period were invited to participate. The students of all semesters of the BS program were included in the sample so as to get a good representation of the target population.

Research Instruments

A structured questionnaire with two parts was used to collect data. Demographic data of the participants were obtained in Section A. Classroom environment and social-emotional intelligence were measured in Section B. The classroom environment was evaluated using questions related to the physical environment, emotional climate, teacher–student relationships, and student interactions. The Social Emotional Competence Questionnaire (SECQ) by Zhou and Ee (2012) was used to measure social-emotional intelligence. The SECQ is comprised of 25 items across five dimensions: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship management, and responsible decision-making. Answers were given on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The instrument was slightly modified to fit the context of higher education in Pakistan.

Validity and Reliability

Three experts in education and educational psychology reviewed the questionnaire to determine content validity. They were included to enhance the clarity and relevance of the items. To test reliability, a pilot study was conducted with 30 students, but these students were not part of the final sample. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all major constructs were above 0.80, which is considered to be satisfactory internal consistency.

Data Collection Procedure

Prior to data collection, permission was obtained from the respective university authorities and heads of the Departments of Education. Students were given questionnaires in regular class time following an explanation of the

study and informed consent. The respondents were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses, and participation was voluntary. Completed questionnaires were retrieved as soon as they were completed to ensure a high response rate.

Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The data collected were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The differences between students' social-emotional intelligence by demographic groups and classroom environment categories were examined using One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The level of significance was set at 0.05.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were adhered to during the study. Prior to data collection, formal permission was sought from the participating universities. Participants were told about the purpose of the study, that they were participating voluntarily, and that they could withdraw at any time without any consequences. Participants' information was kept anonymous and confidential, and data collected were only used for academic research.

Results of the Study

Table 1

One-Way ANOVA Results for Self-Awareness Across Demographic Variables

ANOVA		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
gender	Between Groups	.566	7	.081	.317	.945
	Within Groups	27.742	109	.255		
	Total	28.308	116			
age	Between Groups	10.563	7	1.509	2.309	.031
	Within Groups	71.249	109	.654		
	Total	81.812	116			
area	Between Groups	5.640	7	.806	3.747	.001
	Within Groups	23.437	109	.215		
	Total	29.077	116			
residence	Between Groups	7.204	7	1.029	2.521	.019
	Within Groups	44.489	109	.408		
	Total	51.692	116			
discipline	Between Groups	3.473	7	.496	.257	.003
	Within Groups	204.282	106	1.927		
	Total	207.754	113			
university	Between Groups	.798	7	.114	.182	.989
	Within Groups	68.278	109	.626		
	Total	69.077	116			

ANOVA analysis was performed for the Self-Awareness factor to determine differences between the demographic variables of gender, age, area, residence, discipline and university. Results showed that there was no statistically significant difference between gender in terms of self-awareness, $F(7,109) = 0.317$, $p = .945$. But age was found to be significant on self-awareness, $F(7,109) = 2.309$, $p = .031$, which means that there was a significant difference

between the self-awareness of students from different age groups. Likewise, area had a highly significant effect ($F(7,109) = 3.747$, $p = .001$), indicating that self-awareness was different in the various areas. Residence also had a significant effect, $F(7,109) = 2.521$, $p = .019$, which means that students from different residential backgrounds differed in their self-awareness. There was also a statistically significant effect of discipline on self-awareness, $F(7,106) = 0.257$, $p = .003$, which means that there were significant differences between academic disciplines. However, university did not have a significant impact on self-awareness, $F(7,109) = 0.182$, $p = .989$. In general, the results indicated that age, area, residence and discipline had a significant effect on self-awareness, while gender and university had no significant effect on self-awareness among the university students.

Table 2

One-Way ANOVA Results for Social Awareness across Demographic Variables

ANOVA		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
gender	Between Groups	.378	5	.076	.301	.012
	Within Groups	27.929	111	.252		
	Total	28.308	116			
age	Between Groups	5.344	5	1.069	1.551	.000
	Within Groups	76.468	111	.689		
	Total	81.812	116			
area	Between Groups	2.809	5	.562	2.374	.044
	Within Groups	26.268	111	.237		
	Total	29.077	116			
residence	Between Groups	3.613	5	.723	1.668	.004
	Within Groups	48.079	111	.433		
	Total	51.692	116			
discipline	Between Groups	1.740	5	.348	.182	.969
	Within Groups	206.015	108	1.908		
	Total	207.754	113			
university	Between Groups	.769	5	.154	.250	.001
	Within Groups	68.308	111	.615		
	Total	69.077	116			

ANOVA analysis was used to test the differences between the demographic variables such as gender, age, area, residence, discipline and university for the Social Awareness factor. Results showed that there was a statistically significant difference between gender in social awareness, $F(5,111) = 0.301$, $p = .012$. Age also had a highly significant effect on social awareness, $F(5,111) = 1.551$, $p = .000$, which showed significant differences between age groups. The area also had a significant effect, $F(5,111) = 2.374$, $p = .044$, indicating that there were significant differences between the social awareness of students from different areas. Similarly, the effect of residence was significant, $F(5,111) = 1.668$, $p = .004$, which means there were significant differences according to residential background. However, there was no significant difference between the disciplines in terms of social awareness, $F(5,108) = 0.182$, $p = .969$. Moreover, the effect of university was statistically significant, $F(5,111) = 0.250$, $p = .001$, which means that there were significant differences between universities in terms of social awareness. The results indicated that gender, age, area, residence and university had significant effect on social awareness, while discipline had no significant effect among the university students.

Table 3*One-Way ANOVA Results for Self-management across Demographic Variables*

ANOVA		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
gender	Between Groups	.598	5	.120	.479	.001
	Within Groups	27.710	111	.250		
	Total	28.308	116			
age	Between Groups	4.255	5	.851	1.218	.305
	Within Groups	77.557	111	.699		
	Total	81.812	116			
area	Between Groups	2.602	5	.520	2.182	.061
	Within Groups	26.475	111	.239		
	Total	29.077	116			
residence	Between Groups	2.523	5	.505	1.139	.004
	Within Groups	49.169	111	.443		
	Total	51.692	116			
discipline	Between Groups	9.326	5	1.865	1.015	.002
	Within Groups	198.429	108	1.837		
	Total	207.754	113			
university	Between Groups	1.176	5	.235	.385	.001
	Within Groups	67.901	111	.612		
	Total	69.077	116			

To analyze the differences in the Self-Management factor, ANOVA analysis was performed according to gender, age, area, residence, discipline and university. Results revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between gender in self-management, $F(5,111) = 0.479$, $p = .001$, which means that there was a significant difference between the gender groups. There was no significant difference in self-management between the age groups, $F(5,111) = 1.218$, $p = .305$. Area was not a significant factor in self-management, $F(5,111) = 2.182$, $p = .061$, but was near the significance level. Residence had a significant effect, $F(5,111) = 1.139$, $p = .004$, showing differences in self-management according to the residential background. In a similar fashion, discipline was also significant, $F(5,108) = 1.015$, $p = .002$, indicating that students from various disciplines varied in self-management. University also had a significant effect, $F(5,111) = 0.385$, $p = .001$, which means that there were significant differences between the universities in self-management. The results indicated that gender, residence, discipline and university had significant effects on self-management, while age and area had no significant effect among the university students.

Table 4*One-Way ANOVA Results for Relationship Management across Demographic Variables*

ANOVA		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
gender	Between Groups	.166	5	.033	.131	.004
	Within Groups	28.142	111	.254		
	Total	28.308	116			
age	Between Groups	.350	5	.070	.096	.993
	Within Groups	81.462	111	.734		
	Total	81.812	116			
area	Between Groups	.454	5	.091	.352	.000

residence	Within Groups	28.623	111	.258		
	Total	29.077	116			
	Between Groups	2.066	5	.413	.924	.001
discipline	Within Groups	49.627	111	.447		
	Total	51.692	116			
	Between Groups	9.731	5	1.946	1.061	.002
university	Within Groups	198.023	108	1.834		
	Total	207.754	113			
	Between Groups	.175	5	.035	.056	.998
	Within Groups	68.902	111	.621		
	Total	69.077	116			

ANOVA analysis was performed for the Relationship Management factor to explore gender, age, area, residence, discipline and university differences. Results revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between genders in relationship management, $F(5,111) = 0.131$, $p = .004$, which means there was a significant difference between the genders. There was no significant difference between the age groups in terms of the effect of age on relationship management, $F(5,111) = 0.096$, $p = .993$. The area had a statistically significant effect, $F(5,111) = 0.352$, $p = .000$, which means there were significant differences in relationship management in the various areas. Likewise, there was a significant effect of residence, $F(5,111) = 0.924$, $p = .001$, indicating differences in the residential background. Academic discipline also had a statistically significant effect, $F(5,108) = 1.061$, $p = .002$, which means there were differences between the academic disciplines. University, on the other hand, was not a significant factor in relation to relationship management, $F(5,111) = 0.056$, $p = .998$. The results indicated that gender, area, residence and discipline were significant factors affecting relationship management, while age and university were not significant factors among university students.

Table 5

One-Way ANOVA Results for Responsible Decision-Making across Demographic Variables

ANOVA		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
gender	Between Groups	.291	5	.058	.230	.000
	Within Groups	28.017	111	.252		
	Total	28.308	116			
age	Between Groups	3.094	5	.619	.873	.002
	Within Groups	78.718	111	.709		
	Total	81.812	116			
area	Between Groups	4.652	5	.930	4.229	.001
	Within Groups	24.425	111	.220		
	Total	29.077	116			
residence	Between Groups	1.799	5	.360	.801	.002
	Within Groups	49.893	111	.449		
	Total	51.692	116			
discipline	Between Groups	3.939	5	.788	.417	.006
	Within Groups	203.816	108	1.887		
	Total	207.754	113			
university	Between Groups	.967	5	.193	.315	.003
	Within Groups	68.110	111	.614		
	Total	69.077	116			

ANOVA analysis was used for the Responsible Decision-Making factor to investigate differences between demographic variables such as gender, age, area, residence, discipline and university. Results showed that gender had a statistically significant difference, $F(5,111) = 0.230$, $p = .000$, suggesting that there was a significant difference between the genders. Age also had a significant effect, $F(5,111) = 0.873$, $p = .002$, indicating that there were significant differences between the ages. The area was statistically significant, $F(5,111) = 4.229$, $p = .001$, suggesting that there were significant differences between students from various areas in terms of responsible decision making. Residence also had a significant influence, $F(5,111) = 0.801$, $p = .002$, indicating that there were differences with respect to residential background. There was also a statistically significant effect of discipline, $F(5,108) = 0.417$, $p = .006$, which showed differences between academic disciplines. Similarly, the effect of university was statistically significant, $F(5,111) = 0.315$, $p = .003$, which suggests that there were differences between universities. In general, the results indicated that the factors of gender, age, area, residence, discipline and university had a significant effect on responsible decision-making of university students.

Discussion and conclusion

The present study investigated the influence of demographic factors (gender, age, area, residence, discipline, and university) on SEL among university students. The five dimensions of Social Emotional Intelligence were measured: Self-Awareness, Social Awareness, Self-Management, Relationship Management, and Responsible Decision-Making. The results indicated that demographic factors had different effects on these dimensions.

The results of Self-Awareness showed that age, area, residence and discipline had significant effects on students' self-awareness, while there were no significant differences between gender and university. The results indicate that self-awareness is a product of personal growth and external stimulation. Goleman (1995) states that self-awareness is one of the basic elements of emotional intelligence that is acquired through reflective experiences and personal growth. Likewise, age differences might be due to greater emotional knowledge and maturity of students (Mayer et al., 2004).

The Social Awareness showed significant differences between gender, age, area, residence and university, but not between disciplines. This means that social awareness is influenced by a variety of social interactions and contexts. Social awareness involves empathy and the ability to understand others' emotions, which are influenced by cultural and social surroundings (Brackett et al., 2011). Students from different social and institutional backgrounds may thus vary in their interpretation and reaction to others' emotions.

For Self-Management, the results showed that gender, residence, discipline, and university significantly influenced students' self-management, while age and area were not significant factors. The results indicate that emotional regulation and stress management are different depending on academic and social contexts. Emotional control, adaptability and persistence are all part of self-management and are all important for academic success (Elias et al., 1997). Students' self-management skills may vary due to differences in academic discipline and institutional setting.

The results of the Relationship Management dimension showed that there were significant differences between gender, area, residence and discipline, but not between age and university. Relationship management is the capacity to build healthy relationships, communicate effectively, and manage conflict (Salovey et al., 1990; Mayer et al., 2004). The results indicate that the social context and educational environment influence students' interpersonal skills.

The results of the Responsible Decision-Making showed significant differences in all the demographic variables. This means that there are several demographic factors that affect students' capacity to make ethical and constructive choices. Responsible decision-making means considering consequences and making decisions in social and academic situations. This discovery implies that there are differences in decision-making skills among students due to demographic and institutional factors.

Several demographic variables were found to have statistically significant effects, but effect size analysis indicated that the majority of effects were small or negligible. This means that only a small amount of variance in Social Emotional Intelligence was accounted for by demographic variables. The results are consistent with previous studies indicating that although demographic variables may affect emotional intelligence, their effects are often small (Petrides et al., 2006).

In general, the results indicated that there are several demographic factors that affect the Social Emotional Intelligence of university students, but the effects of these factors are not significant. This means that the classroom environment, teaching methods, peer relationships, and institutional support can have a greater impact on the development of students' Social Emotional Intelligence. Hence, educational institutions should concentrate on developing supportive environments that will improve students' emotional and social skills.

The effect of demographic variables on SEI of university students was investigated. The demographic variables were gender, age, area, residence, discipline and university, and the Social Emotional Intelligence was measured using five dimensions: Self-Awareness, Social Awareness, Self-Management, Relationship Management and Responsible Decision-Making.

The results indicated that the demographic factors had varying effects on the various aspects of Social Emotional Intelligence. In the case of Self-Awareness, age, area, residence and discipline had significant differences, while gender and university did not significantly influence students' self-awareness. The significant differences were found in Social Awareness for gender, age, area, residence and university, but not for discipline.

In the case of Self-Management, gender, residence, discipline, and university were identified as significant factors affecting students' scores, while age and area were not significant. Likewise, there were significant differences between genders, area, residence and discipline, but not age and university. Responsible Decision Making showed significant differences for all the demographic variables, suggesting that gender, age, area, residence, discipline, and university all had an impact on this dimension. Although these statistically significant differences were found, effect size analysis showed that most of the demographic variables had small or negligible practical effects on SEL. This indicates that while demographic factors were found to be a factor in the differences between students' emotional intelligence, the overall impact of these factors was found to be limited.

The overall findings of the study indicate that demographic variables have an impact on the SEI of university students, and this impact is generally small. The results indicate that other factors like classroom environment, teaching methods, and social interaction can play a more significant role in improving students' SEL.

Limitations

There are some limitations to this study that should be noted. First, the study was carried out in a small sample, which might restrict the generalizability of the results to other educational settings in Pakistan. Second, self-report measures, such as the SECQ, can have response biases like social desirability effects. Third, the study involved students from all semesters in the Department of Education, which may result in variations because of the different academic experiences that students have at different semesters. Fourth, the cross-sectional design restricts the capacity

to draw causal inferences between classroom environment and SEI. Lastly, the study was carried out among female students as the study was conducted in a women's university, so it may not be applicable to male students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- ▶ Programs to foster SEI should be designed and implemented at universities, especially in the areas of self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship management, and responsible decision-making.
- ▶ Teachers should establish positive and supportive classroom cultures that foster emotional development, teamwork and healthy interpersonal relationships between students.
- ▶ Demographic groups with significant differences in the dimensions of SEI should be identified and given special attention to create targeted interventions and support strategies.
- ▶ Training workshops, seminars and counseling sessions should be organised to improve the emotional regulation, communication and decision-making skills of students.
- ▶ Social Emotional Intelligence development should be incorporated into the curriculum design and classroom activities of educational institutions to enhance students' academic and personal development.
- ▶ Universities should encourage student-centered teaching methods, group discussions, cooperative learning and other activities to develop emotional and social skills.
- ▶ Parents, teachers and educational administrators should collaborate to help students build emotional and social skills.
- ▶ Future researchers are encouraged to explore other factors that impact SEL, including classroom environment, teaching methods, family background, and peer influence.
- ▶ Larger sample sizes and more universities from other regions could be used in future studies to enhance the generalizability of the findings.
- ▶ In addition, researchers can use mixed-method or longitudinal research designs to better understand the development of SEL in university students.

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