



*Sociology & Cultural Research Review (SCRR)*  
 Available Online: <https://scrrjournal.com>  
 Print ISSN: [3007-3103](#) Online ISSN: [3007-3111](#)  
 Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](#)  
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21400560>



## **Impact of Students' Emotional Intelligence on Their Motivation towards Learning at Secondary School Level: Locality wise comparison**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The current study studied the impact of students' emotional intelligence on their motivation towards studying at secondary school level by comparing localities. The research approach was quantitative and data were obtained from 434 pupils of public secondary schools (229 urban and 205 rural) using multistage random sampling. Data were collected using Likert-type questionnaires to assess emotional intelligence and four characteristics of learning motivation (intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, self-efficacy for learning and goal orientation). In all of the four characteristics of learning motivation, statistically significant locality-wise differences were found. Urban students were much more intrinsically motivated, extrinsically motivated, efficacious, and goal-oriented than rural pupils. The study has found favourable impact of emotional intelligence on students' desire towards learning and the impact is more for students from localities. The results suggest the necessity to include emotional intelligence development, counselling services and a positive learning environment especially in rural secondary schools for students' motivation and overall academic growth.*

**Keywords:** Emotional intelligence, motivation, secondary school students, Locality

### **Introduction**

Secondary education plays an important role in academic achievement, personal growth, and the development of lifelong learning skills of students. Beyond cognitive talents, students' emotional competences have been increasingly acknowledged by experts for their impact on educational achievements. Among these qualities, emotional intelligence (EI) has emerged as one of the most influential indicators of students' learning behaviours, academic engagement and motivation. Emotional intelligence is the capacity to notice, analyse, manage and make good use of emotions in oneself and others. Students with greater emotional intelligence are often better able to cope with academic problems, handle stress, build healthy interpersonal relationships and stay motivated to learn. Therefore, educators and researchers have turned their attention from the purely intellectual capacities to the emotional competences that enable learners to grow holistically.

The concept of emotional intelligence was introduced by Salovey and Mayer (1990) and popularised by Goleman (1995) who argued that emotional competencies are as important as cognitive intelligence to be able to succeed in academic, professional and social domains. Emotional intelligence is comprised of a number of interdependent qualities including self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. These skills enable students to identify their emotions, manage negative emotions, communicate effectively and respond positively to academic requirements. Students with emotional intelligence are characterised by resilience, tenacity, cooperation and good learning attitude in classroom environment and consequently providing conducive environments for academic success.

Another important aspect influencing the students' academic progress is their motivation to learn. Learning motivation is the internal and external driving force which stimulates and maintains the students' learning activities. Motivated pupils show more curiosity, tenacity, focus and a higher readiness to face up to learning difficulties." Educational psychologists often categorise learning motivation as intrinsic motivation, in which students learn because they are interested and like learning, and extrinsic motivation, in which learning is motivated by external incentives such as grades, recognition, or parental expectations. Motivation, regardless of its source, is one of the biggest determinants of academic engagement, classroom behaviour and educational achievement.

Educational study has recently found a substantial association between students' academic motivation and emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence can help learners manage their feelings of worry, frustration, and academic stress, boosting their confidence and motivation to engage in learning activities. Students who understand and manage their emotions tend to have more intrinsic motivation and more favourable attitudes toward school, as well as greater academic persistence. An investigation on secondary school students recently revealed positive significant relationships between components of emotional intelligence and different aspects of academic motivation, which implies that students with emotional intelligence are more motivated for achievement and are more involved in school learning activities.

Key area for scholarly study is the effect of students' locale on emotional intelligence and learning motivation. Urban and rural areas sometimes present quite different educational options, socioeconomic conditions, levels of parental education, school resources, technology access, and community support. Urban schools often have better access to educational resources, trained teachers, digital technologies and extracurricular activities which may potentially support students' emotional and motivational growth. Rural students may however face problems such as a lack of educational facilities, limited access to learning resources, transportation problems and socio-economic problems. Such contextual variables may affect the emotional capabilities of pupils and their motivating orientations to learning. However, rural areas can also exhibit greater family togetherness and community support that might be positively involved in the emotional development of students.

Present study has been undertaken to evaluate the effect of emotional intelligence of students on their motivation to learn at secondary level through area wise comparison. The aim of the study is to examine the predictive power of emotional intelligence on students' learning motivation and to find the major variations between urban and rural secondary school pupils regarding these factors. The findings should contribute to educational theory and practice by offering evidence-based recommendations to teachers, school administrators, curriculum developers, counsellors, and policymakers on how to build emotionally supportive learning environments that boost students' motivation and academic achievements regardless of their origins.

### **Related Literature**

Emotional intelligence (EI) is one of the most prominent psychological categories in educational research because it explains how students perceive, regulate, and use emotions to facilitate learning. As opposed to intelligence quotient (IQ), emotional intelligence is more about emotional awareness, self-regulation, empathy, social competence and interpersonal interactions. Secondary school is a vital time of development, as children face significant emotional, cognitive and social changes which directly influence their willingness to learn. Motivation impacts students' readiness to engage in classroom activities, persevere with

challenging tasks, and achieve academic success. Therefore, the effect of emotional intelligence on motivation of students, especially in rural and urban settings, has been a significant topic of educational research.

The term emotional intelligence was coined by Salovey and Mayer (1990) and defined as the ability to sense, analyze, manage and use emotions effectively.

Later, Goleman (1995) popularised the term by stating that emotional intelligence contributes more significantly to personal and professional success than cognitive intelligence alone. Goleman describes emotionally intelligent people as possessing competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, empathy and relationship management, all of which improve learning and academic achievement. Bar-On (1997) conceptualised emotional intelligence further as a set of emotional and social competences that facilitate effective coping with environmental demands and stressors.

The theoretical underpinning of emotional intelligence fits into the Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020) which states that students are intrinsically motivated when their psychological requirements of autonomy, competence and relatedness are satisfied. Emotional intelligence facilitates these psychological demands by helping students to regulate emotions, build confidence, develop healthy peer relationships, and persist in the face of academic hurdles. Motivation to learn is the internal and environmental elements that originate, direct and sustain students' learning activities (Schunk et al. 2014). Motivation, as Pintrich (2003) states, consists of students' beliefs, goals, interests, values, and readiness to expend effort in the service of learning activities.

Motivated kids are more persistent, focused, curious, and academically engaged. Educational psychologists typically separate intrinsic motivation, which is derived from personal interest and pleasure, from extrinsic motivation, which is motivated by external rewards or the avoidance of punishment. Recent study in education reveals that intrinsic motivation leads to more meaningful learning, creativity, and academic accomplishment than extrinsic drive. Emotional intelligence has a strong impact on internal and extrinsic motivation. When students are adept in identifying and managing their emotions, they are more equipped to concentrate, surmount academic obstacles, and stay motivated in their schoolwork.

According to various empirical investigations, there is a favourable association between emotional intelligence and the academic motivation of school children. In a recent study by Taibolatov et al. (2024), strong positive correlations were observed between emotional intelligence measures and academic motivation in kids. Students who had better levels of emotional awareness and emotional regulation ability had higher intrinsic motivation, stronger achievement orientation and greater desire to participate actively in learning activities. Researchers have said emotional intelligence is a significant predictor of students' educational motivation, and have urged that emotional learning programs be incorporated into school curricula.

Similarly, Lei (2024) investigated the association of emotional intelligence, motivation to learn science and self-regulated learning among STEM students based on the Self-Determination Theory framework. The results showed that emotional intelligence has a positive effect on learning outcomes indirectly through intrinsic motivation and self-regulation. Students with higher emotional intelligence displayed greater tenacity, goal orientation and academic confidence. These results further highlight the motivational importance of emotional abilities in different educational environments.

Study by Mukhtar et al. (2024) investigated the impact of emotional intelligence on students' communication and motivational skills in the secondary school level in Pakistan. Their study

demonstrated that emotional intelligence significantly increased students' motivated behaviours, communication skills, classroom participation, and learning achievement. The researchers proposed that teachers obtain professional training in strengthening students' emotional abilities alongside intellectual education. Research also suggests that emotional intelligence correlates indirectly to academic achievement through greater motivation. Maity and Sharma (2024) revealed that emotional intelligence and achievement motivation jointly predicted academic success among senior secondary pupils.

Beyond direct academic gains, emotional intelligence encourages good classroom participation. Shao et al. (2025) demonstrated that emotionally supportive learning environments, paired with teacher support, promoted students' learning engagement through greater psychological resilience and academic self-efficacy. Although teacher support remained a key predictor, emotionally competent students responded more positively to instructional techniques and indicated higher levels of classroom motivation.

Educational treatments have similarly showed the potential for boosting emotional intelligence and learning motivation. Jeena (2023) demonstrated that cooperative learning practices greatly boosted emotional intelligence, scientific creativity, and problem-solving abilities among secondary school pupils. Students engaged in collaborative learning environments exhibited improved emotional regulation, empathy, collaboration, and confidence, all of which related to higher academic motivation and classroom participation. Educational neuroscience also supports the relationship between emotions and learning. Positive emotions promote attention, memory consolidation, cognitive flexibility, and executive functioning, but persistent negative emotions decrease concentration and limit learning efficacy. Students who efficiently handle fear and dissatisfaction remain cognitively available for learning activities, hence retaining motivation over longer periods.

In Pakistan, empirical information exploring locality-wise differences in emotional intelligence and motivation remains scarce, particularly at the secondary school level. Most present research focus either on emotional intelligence or academic achievement without simultaneously studying learning motivation across rural and urban schools. Moreover, many earlier research have focussed on university students rather than teenagers, despite adolescence being a vital period for emotional and motivational development.

The present study consequently addresses an essential research gap by analyzing the impact of students' emotional intelligence on their motivation towards studying at the secondary school level while comparing rural and urban settings. Emotional competences such as self-awareness, emotional control, empathy, and social skills raise intrinsic motivation, increase academic engagement, improve persistence, and enhance educational accomplishment. Nevertheless, limited empirical information available about locality-wise comparisons among secondary school pupils in Pakistan. Therefore, the present study contributes to educational literature by investigating how emotional intelligence influences learning motivation across rural and urban secondary schools, thereby providing evidence for developing context-specific educational policies and school-based emotional learning programs.

### **Hypotheses**

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant locality-wise difference in the impact of students' emotional intelligence on their intrinsic motivation towards studying at the secondary school level.

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant locality-wise difference in the impact of students' emotional intelligence on their extrinsic motivation towards studying at the secondary school level.

H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant locality-wise difference in the impact of students' emotional intelligence on students' self-efficacy for studying at the secondary school level.

H<sub>04</sub>: There is no significant locality-wise difference in the impact of students' emotional intelligence on students' goal orientation for learning at the secondary school level.

### Methodology

The present study adopted a quantitative research approach to assess the impact of students' emotional intelligence on their motivation towards studying at the secondary school level through a locality-wise comparison. The population consisted secondary school students enrolled in public schools. A total of 434 students participated in the study, including 229 urban and 205 rural pupils, selected through a multistage random selection approach. Data were obtained using two standardized Likert-type questionnaires measuring Emotional Intelligence and Motivation Towards Learning, with the latter encompassing four dimensions: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic incentive, self-efficacy for learning, and goal orientation. The instruments were validated by professionals, and their reliability was demonstrated by Cronbach's alpha coefficients. The acquired data were examined using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and the independent samples t-test to find locality-wise differences. Statistical analyses were performed using SPSS version 26, with the level of significance set at 0.05.

### Data Analysis

**Table 1**

*Locality-Wise Difference of Impact of Students' Emotional Intelligence on Their Intrinsic Motivation Towards Learning at Secondary School Level*

| Locale         | N   | Mean | Std. Dev. | t-value | Sig. |
|----------------|-----|------|-----------|---------|------|
| Urban Students | 229 | 4.39 | .343      | 2.181   | .007 |
| Rural Students | 205 | 4.01 | .399      |         |      |

Table 1: Difference in the influence of the students' emotional intelligence on their intrinsic motivation towards studying at the secondary school level according to locality. The results show that urban students (N=229) had a higher mean score (M=4.39, SD=0.343) compared to rural students (N=205; M=4.01, SD=0.399) which indicates that urban students have a higher level of intrinsic motivation related to emotional intelligence. The independent samples t-test resulted in a t-value of 2.181 and significant value of .007 which is less than the pre-determined alpha level of .05. Thus, the difference in the observed is statistically significant. Hence, the null hypothesis (H<sub>01</sub>) that there is no significant locality-wise variation in the impact of students' emotional intelligence on their intrinsic motivation towards learning is rejected.

**Table 2**

*Locality-Wise Difference of Impact of Students' Emotional Intelligence on Their Extrinsic Motivation Towards Learning at Secondary School Level*

| Locale         | N   | Mean  | Std. Dev. | t-value | Sig. |
|----------------|-----|-------|-----------|---------|------|
| Urban Students | 229 | 4.523 | .391      | 3.214   | .001 |
| Rural Students | 205 | 4.29  | .410      |         |      |

Table 2 shows the variation in the impact of emotional intelligence of the students towards their extrinsic motivation towards learning at secondary school level in the localities. The results show that students in urban areas (N=229) scored higher (M=4.523, SD=0.391) than students in rural areas (N=205; M=4.29, SD=0.410). This means that students in urban areas have higher extrinsic incentive to emotional intelligence. An independent samples t-test yielded a t-value of 3.214, p = 0.001, which is less than the accepted alpha level of 0.05. This demonstrates that the gap between the urban and rural students is statistically significant. So, the null hypothesis (H<sub>02</sub>) which states that there is no significant locality-wise variation in



the impact of students' emotional intelligence on their extrinsic motivation towards learning at secondary school level is rejected.

**Table 3**

*Locality-Wise Difference of Impact of Students' Emotional Intelligence on Their Self-Efficacy for Learning at Secondary School Level*

| Locale         | N   | Mean | Std. Dev. | t-value | Sig. |
|----------------|-----|------|-----------|---------|------|
| Urban Students | 229 | 4.41 | .439      | 2.910   | .004 |
| Rural Students | 205 | 4.19 | .410      |         |      |

Table 3 shows the impact of emotional intelligence of students on self-efficacy for learning at secondary school level locality-wise. The results indicated that urban students (N = 229) have higher average scores (M = 4.41, SD = 0.439) than rural students (N = 205; M = 4.19, SD = 0.410), implying that urban students have stronger self-efficacy for learning related with emotional intelligence. The independent samples t-test showed a t-value of 2.910 and a significance value ( $p = 0.004$ ) that was less than the alpha threshold of 0.05. This illustrates that the gap between the urban and rural areas is statistically significant. Thus, the null hypothesis ( $H_{03}$ ) which states that there is no significant difference in the impact of students' emotional intelligence on students' self-efficacy for learning in the secondary school level based on locale is rejected.

**Table 4**

*Locality-Wise Difference of Impact of Students' Emotional Intelligence on Their Goal Orientation for Learning at Secondary School Level*

| Locale         | N   | Mean | Std. Dev. | t-value | Sig. |
|----------------|-----|------|-----------|---------|------|
| Urban Students | 229 | 4.50 | .452      | 2.425   | .024 |
| Rural Students | 205 | 4.43 | .489      |         |      |

Table 4 shows the locality-wise difference in the effect of students' emotional intelligence on their goal orientation for learning at the secondary school level. Results show that urban students (N = 229) scored higher (M = 4.50, SD = 0.452) than rural students (N = 205; M = 4.43, SD = 0.489), implying that urban students are more inclined towards goal orientation in relation to emotional intelligence. The independent samples t-test gave a t-value of 2.425 and a significant value ( $p = 0.024$ ) which is lower than the specified alpha level of 0.05. This shows that the urban students and rural students are statistically different. Therefore, the null hypothesis ( $H_{04}$ ) that there is no significant locality-wise difference in the impact of students' emotional intelligence on students' goal orientation for learning at secondary school level is rejected.

## Results

The present study investigated the locality-wise influence of students' emotional intelligence on four characteristics of motivation towards learning at secondary school level. The results indicated that there were statistically significant differences between urban and rural students in all characteristics of learning motivation.

Urban students' intrinsic motivation (M = 4.39) was substantially higher than that of rural students (M = 4.01), demonstrating that emotional intelligence is more associated with intrinsically driven learning among urban students. Accordingly, the null hypothesis 1 was rejected.

Secondly, the urban students' extrinsic motivation (M=4.523) was substantially higher than the rural students (M=4.29). This statistically significant difference shows that urban kids with high emotional intelligence are more responsive to external academic incentives, such as grades, recognition and prizes. Thus, the second null hypothesis was rejected.

Urban students reported considerably stronger self-efficacy for learning ( $M = 4.41$ ) than rural students ( $M = 4.19$ ). The results imply that emotional intelligence is more successful in boosting students' confidence in their academic ability in urban educational environments. Thus the third null hypothesis was rejected.

Urban students had considerably higher goal orientation for learning ( $M = 4.50$ ) than the rural students ( $M = 4.43$ ). The difference was statistically significant although the mean difference was relatively smaller. This shows that the emotional intelligence favourably affects the students' commitment to reach their academic goals. Hence the fourth null hypothesis was rejected.

### **Discussion**

The present study explored the locality-wise effect of students' emotional intelligence on motivation towards studying among secondary school students. The result repeatedly showed that urban students scored much higher than rural students on intrinsic motivation, extrinsic drive, self-efficacy for learning and goal orientation. The results show that there is a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and the different dimensions of learning motivation, and the degree of this link is influenced by proximity.

The first discovery was that emotional intelligence has a considerably bigger effect on the intrinsic motivation of urban pupils than rural students. Students with higher emotional intelligence are more capable of controlling their emotions, learning activities, and sustaining their interest in academic projects. The finding is in line with the study of Taibolatov et al. (2024) where emotional intelligence of school pupils has greater academic motivation, persistence, and involvement in learning activities. Similarly, Bagum et al. (2023) observed that emotional intelligence significantly impacts students' learning habits and academic growth at the secondary school level.

For the second finding, there was a significant difference in extrinsic motivation between localities with the urban students having higher mean scores. The availability of academic possibilities, recognition systems, technology resources, and supportive learning environments may make urban school pupils more susceptible to external motivators. These results are in agreement with Goleman (1995) who stated that emotionally intelligent people use both internal and external sources of motivation to be successful. This finding is consistent with previous educational studies showing that emotionally supportive school environments promote students' academic engagement and motivational results (Taibolatov et al., 2024).

The study indicated that urban pupils with emotional intelligence reported considerably higher self-efficacy for learning compared to their rural peers. Emotional intelligence helps the learners to manage the stress, to conquer the academic difficulties, and to preserve the confidence in challenging learning conditions. The finding is in line with Salovey and Mayer's (1990) theoretical position that efficient emotional regulation enhances individuals' adaptive behaviours and decision-making abilities. Likewise, previous studies revealed that emotionally intelligent kids are more confident, resilient, and academically persistent than children with weak emotional competence (Bagum et al., 2023).

The results showed that emotional intelligence had a substantial effect on students' goal orientation, and urban students had a higher academic goal orientation than rural students. It means that emotionally intelligent pupils are more devoted to accomplishing educational goals and staying focused on the long-term academic performance. Schools in metropolitan areas can also enhance kids' goal-directed behaviours through better educational facilities, family involvement, teacher assistance, and learning materials. Taibolatov et al. (2024)

validated this finding by reporting that emotional intelligence enhances students' accomplishment motivation and commitment to educational goals.

### Recommendations

- Educational authorities should embed organised emotional intelligence (EI) courses into the secondary school curriculum by means of life-skills education, classroom activities and social-emotional learning (SEL) initiatives. These programs should aim to build students' self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, interpersonal skills and decision-making abilities, which can improve intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy and goal-oriented learning.
- The rural students scored significantly lower than the urban students in intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, self-efficacy and goal orientation. Policymakers and school administrators ought to give priority to the provision of counselling services, teacher mentoring, co-curricular activities and improved learning resources in rural schools. Creating learning environments that are emotionally supportive can assist bridge the gap in motivation to learn based on locale.
- Teachers need ongoing professional development on how to integrate emotional intelligence practices into their classroom teaching. Training should help teachers identify students' emotional needs, develop positive teacher-student relationships, use motivational teaching strategies, and foster inclusive classroom environments that encourage students' confidence, resilience, and dedication to academic goals, especially in rural community schools.

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