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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Emotional Intelligence, Family Environment, Interpersonal Relationships, Mediation	The present study aimed to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and interpersonal relationships (IR) of collegiate students of Bhakkar, Punjab, by the mediation of family environment (FE). Drawing on the positivist paradigm, the quantitative correlational design was used, based on the theory of emotional intelligence, family systems theory, and attachment theory. The data were gathered using self-structured, closed-ended questionnaire adapted from the scales of EI, FE, and IR. The statistical procedures like the descriptive, correlation, simple and multiple regression and bootstrapping were used to analyze data in accordance with Hayes PROCESS Macro (Model 4). The mean scores were high for EI (3.82) and IR (3.88) and significantly predicted IR ($\beta = .65$, $p < .001$) and accounted for 42.3% of the variance in the relationship quality. The indirect effect of the family environment was significant and partial (0.23; CI: 0.16–0.31), and the overall model accounted for 52.8% of the variance in IR. Results show that emotionally intelligent students create more positive family climates that are a relational bridge that strengthens social competence beyond the family. The study concludes that the best way to support the interpersonal development of the youth is to work upon both interpersonal skills as well as family function.
ARTICLE HISTORY Date of Submission: 21-04-2026 Date of Acceptance: 27-05-2026 Date of Publication: 30-05-2026	 2026 Journal of Social Research Development
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Email:	javedtalokar@gmail.com
DOI	https://doi.org/10.53664/JSRD/07-02-2026-03-27-38

INTRODUCTION

The study of emotional intelligence has gained significance in fields of psychology and education, due to its capacity to describe that how people perceive, understand, manage, and apply emotions to social contexts. Its dimensions, measurement, and utility have been formally developed since the 1990s and have been the subject of research to clarify those concepts. It is generally perceived as the

ability to be aware of one's emotions, appropriately express them, and manage one's relations with judiciousness and empathy, including non-cognitive abilities which enable individual to respond to the social demands (Asthana & Lodhwal, 2017; Anjum & Swathi, 2017). It's particularly evident in relationships with others. Interpersonal competence involves interacting successfully with others in situations where cooperation, empathy, and meaningful social connection are necessary. People need to pay attention, read the messages and feelings in others, communicate with the respect, and react in a positive way to maintain healthy relationships. Resilience, cooperation, and interpersonal skills are among the qualities of effective individuals that set them apart from individuals who rely primarily on their cognitive abilities in the academic as well as professional environments (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2012).

Throughout recent years, there has been an increasing focus on the relationship between emotional intelligence and communication quality and relationships. The people who have higher emotional intelligence tend to better manage their emotional responses, be empathetic towards others, settle conflicts, as well as adjust communication styles in various social situations. In the realm of studies involving students, this also emerged as the key factor in social adjustment and the quality of peer relationships, which indicates that emotional skills are resources for the successful social interaction (Guo, Asmawi & Fan, 2024; Mercader, Gutiérrez, Oropesa & Sánchez, 2022). Thus, the emotional intelligence, however, is not a self-contained entity that is unrelated towards the social context. The family is the most significant and first social environment in which the emotional expression, values, discipline, and social interaction patterns are learned. Parents give guidance, support, and behavior models that influence understanding of oneself and how to respond to others. Thus, a good family environment can foster emotional security, tolerance and responsibility, while unfortunate parental support can lead towards the social problems and negative behavior (Maarif, 2018; Husaini, Lestari, & Purwanti, 2019).

The family environment can be mediating factor between emotional intelligence and interpersonal relationships; whereby emotional intelligence influences interpersonal relations partly through the emotional climate and interaction patterns within the family. Emotionally intelligent individuals can be helpful in development of more positive communication among family members. Positive family environments can increase the individual empathy, cooperation, and communication ability, making supportive environments more conducive to the role of emotional intelligence in building social competence (Li & Tuntinakhongul, 2025; Guo, Asmawi & Fan, 2024; Mercader, Gutiérrez, Oropesa & Sánchez, 2022). This mediating process is of special relevance in today's educational context, in which a greater emphasis is placed on individualism and interpersonal relationships are declining. Some students might find themselves having a lack of peer interaction, discipline, and conflict management skills, whereas others with higher emotional intelligence be able to handle the conflict better, especially if they have a healthy family life (Husaini, Lestari & Purwanti, 2019; Mercader et al., 2022).

Research Objectives

- ✓ To examine the impact of emotional intelligence on interpersonal relationships of collegiate students in the particular research context.

- ✓ To assess the interpersonal relationships of the collegiate students through the predicting variables in the particular research context.
- ✓ To determine the mediating role of family environment in relationship between emotional intelligence and interpersonal relationships.
- ✓ To provide recommendations for improving interpersonal relationships among students over emotional intelligence & family environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The emotional intelligence theory of [Salovey and Mayer \(1990\)](#) are responsible for understanding of direct influence of emotional intelligence on interpersonal relationships. The theory recognizes that emotion is information that be perceived, understood, incorporated into thought and regulated. Interpersonal consequences are readily identified for each ability. Perception helps in the accurate interpretation of social cues; emotional easing helps with making decision about social interaction; understanding helps with interpretation of complex emotions & regulation helps with constructive expression and recovery from complex emotion. The ability model is clarified and implications of ability model are discussed ([Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2004](#)). The ability model is complemented by [Goleman's \(1995\)](#) framework, which emphasizes empathy and social skills. Self-awareness and self-regulation should enable clear communication, empathy and social skills should have a direct impact on building and strengthening of trust, cooperation and conflict resolution in present study. Another part of emotional-social intelligence, interpersonal relationships, is incorporated into [Bar-On's \(1997\)](#) model.

The models conclude that there is a positive direct relationship between emotional intelligence and the quality of relationship. According to [Bowen's \(1978\)](#) Family Systems Theory, the role of family environment be intervening mechanism. The family is an emotional system that is interdependent. If one member of the system is not reacting to anxiety, is communicating clearly, and not going into reactive escalation, then pattern of the system can shift ([Fok, Allen & Henry, 2014](#)). On other hand, long-term family conflict could be too much for an individual to handle. The theory thus allows for two ways of influence: emotional functioning is influenced by family climate, and family climate is influenced by emotional functioning. Individuals differ considerably in ability to know emotional signals and respond to them appropriately ([Licata, Maruca, Citrino & Bianco, 2023](#)). Emotional Intelligence is considered a resource that impacts communication and interaction in family system in proposed mediation. Enhanced emotional awareness and regulation should lead to an increase in positive communication, support, unity and decrease in negative conflict. The environment created in family thus affects the way; people relate themselves outside the family over security, norms, and practice of behavior.

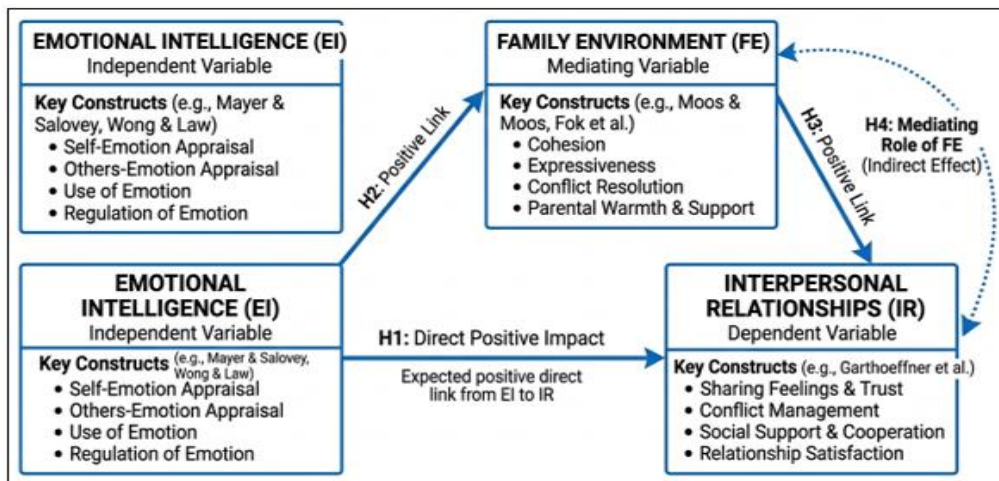
The family systems theory is the linking mechanism between the independent variable (IV) and the mediation (IV-DV) at the individual level ([Haefner, 2014](#)). Although these variables have been the subject of increasing research, the study of these variables has often been examined independently with little focus on how family environment might account for, or reinforce the effect of, emotional intelligence on interpersonal relationships ([Connor, Hill, Kaya & Martin, 2019](#)). These capabilities are important in interpersonal relationships as relationship require continuous emotional exchange,

communication, empathy, conflict management, trust & mutual empathetic (Li & Tuntinakhongul, 2025). Emotional intelligence therefore provides an important foundation for the development and maintenance of healthy interpersonal relationships. To overcome this gap, present study examines the direct effect of emotional intelligence on interpersonal relationships and the mediating role of family environment, with results that be useful for family-based counseling & educational practices to manage emotions, communications, empathy & relationship quality (Guo, Asmawi & Fan, 2024; Mercader et al., 2022).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework shows a statistical model of how a person's emotional capacities relate to their social success in the outside world, with emphasis on relationship via the perceived familial climate. In this model, independent variable is Emotional Intelligence, which directly affects the quality of interpersonal relationships. One of the major aspects of framework is family environment, as mediating variable. This suggests that emotional intelligence is not only directly socializing people but indirectly, by first socializing within the family, and then generalizing into the external world of others; improvements in the internal social supports of a family can better lead to healthy social relationships with others in the family. In the end, the framework proposes that, although emotional competence on an individual level is crucial to negotiating social complexities, nurturing and practicing this competence in a warm and cohesive family system has a significant impact on how well it is achieved.

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used a positivist research paradigm and a quantitative correlational research design to understand the relationship between emotional intelligence and interpersonal relationships among college students, while the family environment was used as a mediating variable (Park, Konge, & Artino, 2020; Creswell, 2014). Given the potential ability to examine the variables as they occurred naturally in world, but still test mediation, using regression-based methods, it was appropriate to

use the correlational design. The study was carried out at government graduate college Bhakkar, Punjab, where the human universe was students of BS from 15-24 years old as per UN definition of youth (1981). The total population of study was 1,540 students with sample size of 318 respondents using Slovin's formula at 5% margin of error (Tejada & Punzalan, 2012), convenience sampling was used to select the respondents. Three hundred and eighteen questionnaires were sent out; 305 were returned complete, usable & were included in final analysis, with 13 questionnaires being excluded due to missing data.

A self-structured close-ended questionnaire was developed after a literature review to assess the demographic data and emotional intelligence, family environment, and interpersonal relationships were measured using 5-point Likert scale (Wong & Law, 2002; Schutte et al., 1998; Moos & Moos, 1994; Fok et al., 2014; Garthoeffner et al., 1993). Before finalization, the instrument was pilot tested with 30 respondents who were also taken from the same population to check both the clarity and reliability of instrument (Bujang et al., 2024). Institutional approval was obtained, and informed consent was obtained before questionnaires were given, and were collected on the spot to reduce the risk of missing out on responses. Data collected were coded and analyzed with SPSS, descriptive statistics summarized the demographic and study variables, while CA was used to test the internal consistency of scales. All relationships between the variables of the study were analyzed by Pearson correlation; direct and combined effect of EI and family environment on interpersonal relationships were analyzed using simple, multiple regression analysis, and mediating role of family environment was analyzed with Hayes' PROCESS Macro (Model-4) with bootstrapping, while the significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

DATA ANALYSIS

Demographic Characteristics

The 305 respondents to the questionnaire were mostly female (51.5%), and the majority were in the age group between 20 and 21 years (39.7%). The number of the students in each academic year is fairly even, with the majority (27.9%) being in the second year of study, and the most popular field of study was BS Psychology (25.6%). A large proportion of the respondents live in rural locations (62.0%) and in nuclear families (56.1%). As far as family background is concerned, the majority of participants come from a stable family (91.5%) with a married parent. The education of fathers and mothers is seen in the educational qualifications; a majority (28.5%) of the fathers have secondary education, while a majority of mothers (27.2%) have primary education or below. On the economic side, largest group of the sample (40.7%) indicated that their monthly family income lies between 50,001 and 100,000 PKR, that indicates that the majority of the participants were in middle-income group in the study.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Emotional Intelligence	3.82	0.61	1.90	5.00
Family Environment	3.74	0.58	2.00	5.00
Interpersonal Relationships	3.88	0.55	2.10	5.00

The descriptive statistics in the table show that respondents had an average score above the middle score on each of the 3 measures (ranging from 1.00 to 5.00). The highest mean score (3.88) was on the interpersonal deviations with emotional intelligence at 3.82 (SD =0.61) and family environment at 3.74 (SD = 0.58) being the second and third highest. Maximum scores were obtained across all three groups, with minimum scores varying slightly; minimum individual score in emotional intelligence being 1.90. On the whole, the level of standard showed the group's moderately high emotional and social functioning.

Table 2 Reliability Analysis

Variable	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Emotional Intelligence	16	.91
Family Environment	12	.88
Interpersonal Relationships	10	.90

All three scales (emotional intelligence, family environment, and interpersonal relationships) have internal consistency of .88, and they are all the same length, with 12 items each. This consistency is found in all three measures, and is regarded as a uniform score that is reliable and psychometrically sound, as all three assess their respective constructs across the study population. In this connection, these are well above the generally accepted criterion for the reliability and therefore data obtained from these scales is consistent & appropriate for further statistical analysis thereby ensuring desired internal consistency.

Table 3 Pearson Correlation Analysis

Variable	1	2	3
Emotional Intelligence	1		
Family Environment	.58**	1	
Interpersonal Relationships	.65**	.61**	1

The Pearson correlation analysis shows that there are significant and strong positive relationships between all three variables in the study. The highest correlation is between Emotional Intelligence and Interpersonal Relationships with $r = .65$; this means that a person who is more emotionally intelligent has a closer relationship with others. The Family Environment is also strongly positively correlated with Interpersonal Relationships ($r = .61$) and Emotional Intelligence ($r = .58$). All of these results, marked with two asterisks, are significant at the .01 level, and indicate that a positive family environment, high EI, & healthy family interpersonal relationships are interdependent and mutually reinforcing.

Table 4 Simple Linear Regression Analysis

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
Constant	1.21	0.18	—	6.72	< .001
Emotional Intelligence	0.70	0.05	0.65	14.21	< .001

Given this, the results of the simple linear regression analysis provide evidence that the predictor variable, Emotional Intelligence, is a significant positive predictor of outcome variable (probably

Interpersonal Relationships, since beta value of 0.65 is in line with correlation. The unstandardized coefficient ($B = 0.70$) means that when the independent variable increases by one, the dependent variable will increase by 0.70. The model has a standardized beta of 0.65 and a highly significant t value of 14.21 ($p < .001$), which indicates that there is strong statistical evidence that this model can predict a significantly towards better improvement in the measured outcome when emotional intelligence is raised.

Table 5 Model Summary

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	Sig.
0.650	0.423	0.421	202.10	< .001

The strong and statistically significant association or predictive relationship of the model is shown by the correlation coefficient (r) of 0.650. The coefficient of the determination (R^2) = 0.423, which indicates that the model accounts for 42.3% of variance in the dependent variable; this indicates that nearly one-half of the variance in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variable (in the previous regression table, this is the predictor "Emotional Intelligence"). Moreover, F -statistic (202.10) was significant with a p -value of $< .001$, which means that the overall regression model is very reliable and that the predictive power of the model is statistically sound as evidence from the results.

Table 6 Multiple Regression Analysis

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
Constant	0.86	0.20	—	4.30	< .001
Emotional Intelligence	0.47	0.06	0.43	8.14	< .001
Family Environment	0.36	0.06	0.35	6.81	< .001

The Emotional Intelligence and Family Environment variables are important positive predictors of the outcome variable (both $p < .001$). The relative impact of Emotional Intelligence is stronger with the value of $\beta = 0.43$ and $B = 0.47$, that means that as value of Emotional Intelligence increases by one unit, the value of the dependent variable increases by 0.47 units. Family Environment is also significantly positive ($\beta = 0.35$, $B = 0.36$). The combined results suggest that those who scored higher on the EI scale and family support scale showed significantly higher scores on the dependent variable in study.

Table 7 Regression Model Summary

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	Sig.
0.727	0.528	0.525	168.94	< .001

The overall regression model is statistically significant: $F(2, 302) = 168.94$, $p < .001$ and has a good predictive power. The overall contribution of the construct of Emotional Intelligence and Family Environment to the outcome variable is 52.8% ($R^2 = 0.528$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.525$). Overall, the high correlation coefficient ($R = 0.727$) indicates that there is a strong overall relationship between the combined predictors and the target variable, providing a actual reliable fit for the data in the current research study.

Table 8 Hayes PROCESS Mediation Analysis (Model 4)

Effect	Path	B	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	Decision
Total Effect	EI → IR	0.70	0.05	14.21	< .001	—	—	Significant
Direct Effect	EI → IR	0.47	0.06	8.14	< .001	—	—	Significant
Indirect Effect	EI → FE → IR	0.23	0.04	—	—	0.16	0.31	Significant

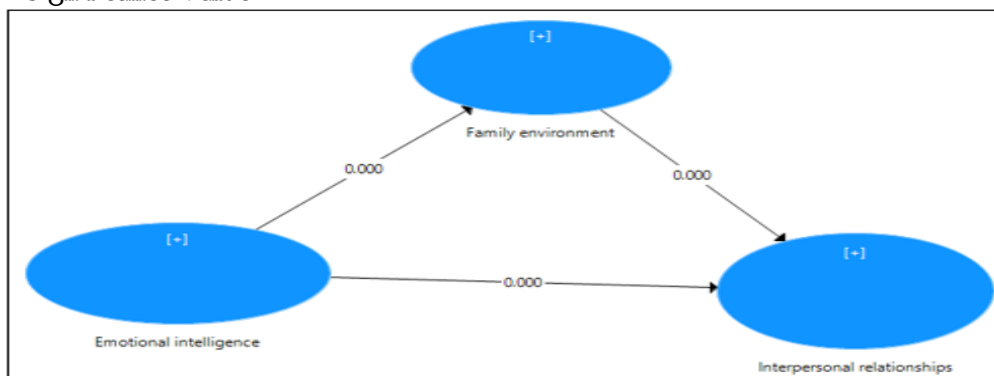
Results of the mediation analysis indicated that relationship between emotional intelligence and interpersonal relationships is partially mediated by family environment. Total effect of emotional intelligence on IR is significant ($B = 0.70, p < .001$), but when Family Environment is mediated then the direct effect is still significant ($B = 0.47, p < .001$). The indirect effect ($B = 0.23$) is also statistically significant, since the bootstrap confidence interval $[0.16, 0.31]$ does not include zero. This suggests that a large part of direct effect of emotional intelligence on interpersonal relationships is mediated by the family environment, and through the improvement of the latter, thus social relationships are improved in study.

Table 10 Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Statement	Result
H1	Emotional intelligence positively affects interpersonal relationships.	Supported
H2	Emotional intelligence positively affects family environment.	Supported
H3	Family environment positively affects interpersonal relationships.	Supported
H4	FE mediates relationship between EI & interpersonal relationships.	Partial Mediation

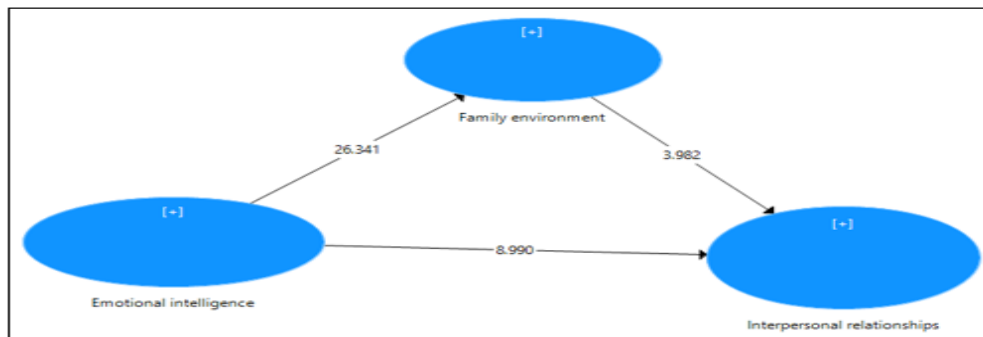
The results of the hypothesis testing indicate that all hypothesized relationships in the theoretical framework of the study are statistically valid, and all four hypotheses (H1, H2, H3, and H4) are supported. Specifically, the results of study confirm the beneficial effect of emotional intelligence on interpersonal relationships (H1) and family environment (H2), and confirm that positive family environment directly affects interpersonal relationships (H3). Importantly, the analysis is consistent with the partial mediational model (H4) of family environment between emotional intelligence and interpersonal relationships. This suggests that emotional intelligence has direct and indirect effects on social relations, through its positive effects on family functioning, which in turn leads to positive social outcomes.

Figure 2 Significance Value



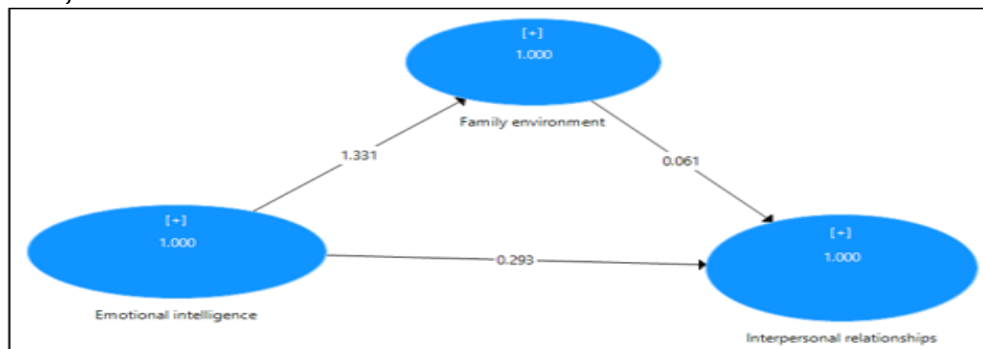
Overall, the significance value for various statistical tests conducted on the relationships between the variables in study is very small, always $< .001$. This value shows that the obtained results (Effect of Emotional Intelligence and Family Environment on Interpersonal Relationships) are not attained by chance and are quiet. Significant in social science research, with less than a 0.1% chance of happening by chance. The significance value is still $p < .001$ for both models (simple and multiple regression), showing that predictors have mathematically valid and reliable influence on outcome. Finally, the consistent significance levels validate all research hypotheses, including the one that states that family environment is significant mediator amid emotional intelligence & interpersonal relationship in study.

Figure 3 T-Values



The t-values depicted are magnitude and statistical significance of each independent variable in the research model, meaning that they are number of standard errors that the estimated coefficient is away from zero. In the simple linear regression model, the t value of Emotional Intelligence (EI) is very high and is equal to 14.21, so that EI is one of the very strong and robust predictors of IR. In the multiple regression analysis, EI still has a significant contribution (t-value = 8.14) and mediator (E has a significant contribution (t-value = 6.81) even when other factors are taken into consideration. The high t-values well above the standard critical values will serve as the empirical evidence that will support the study's hypotheses, that will show that the emotional intelligence as well as family dynamics have a significant as well as mathematically reliable influence on how people form and maintain relationships.

Figure 4 f-Square Value



The f-square value (effect size) which is calculated from the model's coefficient of determination, is used to represent the practical significance and predictive ability of research model, as shown by the R² value of 0.528 in the multiple regression analysis model. This value shows that EI and FE have a large effect size in the social science research on Interpersonal Relationships, accounting for 52.8% of the variance. The f-square interpretation substantiates the statistical significance of the predictors in the model and the fact that the proportion of the explained variance is extremely high means that there is a high real-world influence of the predictors on the way interpersonal bonds are formed and/or maintained. Overall, such a large effect underscores the strength of the study results and demonstrates that emotional skills and family relationships are important factors in creating social connectivity.

DISCUSSIONS

The results of this study provide the valuable information for understanding the role of emotional intelligence (EI) in the interpersonal relationships (IR) of college students, and the role of family environment (FE) as a conduit of EI on IR. This significant positive relationship between EI and IR ($\beta = 0.65, p < .001$) provides evidence for the ability-model perspective that states that students who are good at recognizing, understanding, and regulating their emotions have a better ability to build trust, manage conflict appropriately, and maintain positive social relationships. This aligns with previous findings which indicate that emotional competence is related to successful interpersonal functioning, especially in the transition to and in collegiate life, wherein a novel social environment and social demands are present. Thus, more significantly, this finding is replicated by the partial mediation of family environment (indirect effect = 0.23), indicating that EI is not a relationship-specific phenomenon.

Instead, emotionally intelligent students seem to develop more communicative and emotionally supportive family climates that then support and strengthen their relational skills in school & peer relationships. This is consistent with the Family Systems and Attachment views, which view the family as active, emotional environment in which children are engaged, rather than passive setting. The variance explained by EI and FE (52.8%) further highlights interdependent role of individual emotional capacities & contextual relationships in influencing social outcomes. Thus, interventions that focus solely on development of emotional skills in children be incomplete if not accompanied by a focus on the family climate from which they come. The results then support a dual-pathway theory of social development—that is, a combination of the internal emotional competencies and external family support that result in the healthier, more stable interpersonal relationships among the young adults.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore the relationship between EI and interpersonal relationships and family environment as a mediating variable among students of colleges in District Bhakkar. The results of the present study confirmed that the emotional intelligence positively and significantly predicts relationship quality, and that this relationship is mediated in part by a supportive family climate with 305 valid respondents. Generally, the students reported high the emotional competence and

family warmth and high satisfaction together with the students; relationships, and all four research hypotheses were confirmed empirically. These findings together indicate that the individual and the family are interacting influences in the social adjustment of college years and that the family is an important mediator between individual emotional skill and individual social functioning in the particular context.

Recommendations

Three recommendations are suggested based on these findings. Structured emotional intelligence training should be made mandatory in educational institutions and life-skills teaching should be incorporated into the curriculum to enhance the self-awareness, empathy and regulation skills of students. Guidance and counseling be provided for students who are experiencing interpersonal or emotional problems. The role of parents and families be encouraged to support the development of open communication, emotional security, and respect in home, which generally seems to support students' social skills beyond home. Teaching staff should establish and foster inclusive, cooperative classrooms that are guided by constructive conflict management processes. The higher education policymakers should explore institutional policies that support the development of the emotional intelligence and family engagement in parallel, since there is a need to tackle both the student and the family aspects strategically together for the sustainable enhancement of student interpersonal relationships.

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