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The Role of Social Media Emotional Intelligence in Predicting Well-Being and Academic Performance among Student Teachers

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Abstract:

In an era characterized by pervasive digital interconnectivity, social media has evolved into a primary medium for emotional expression, interpersonal communication, and academic engagement particularly among pre-service teachers navigating emotionally demanding educational settings. This quantitative correlational study investigates the role of Social Media Emotional Intelligence (SMEI) defined as the ability to perceive, understand, and manage emotions within online environments in predicting psychological well-being and academic performance among student teachers. A total of 100 student teachers enrolled in accredited teacher education programs participated in the study. Standardized instruments were utilized, including the Social Media Emotional Intelligence Scale (SMEIS), the Ryff Psychological Well-Being Scale, and self-reported academic performance metrics verified through institutional records. Data were analysed using Pearson's correlation and multiple regression analyses to determine the predictive relationship between SMEI dimensions (emotional perception, expression, regulation, and empathy) and the outcome variables. Findings revealed that SMEI demonstrated a positive and significant correlation with both well-being ($r = .63$, $p < .01$) and academic performance ($r = .48$, $p < .01$). Regression analysis indicated that emotional regulation and online empathy emerged as the strongest predictors of well-being, whereas emotional expression significantly predicted academic success. These results underscore the critical role of digital emotional competence in shaping student teachers' holistic development. Integrating digital emotional literacy within teacher education curricula can enhance emotional resilience, promote psychological well-being, and support academic excellence in digitally mediated learning environment

Keywords: *Social Media Emotional Intelligence, Emotional Regulation, Well-Being, Academic Performance, Student Teachers, Digital Literacy, Emotional Competence.*

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and X (formerly Twitter) are deeply embedded in the daily lives of individuals, including student teachers. These platforms serve as spaces for social

interaction, emotional expression, professional networking, and academic collaboration (Prado & Dela Cruz, 2023). As teacher education programs increasingly incorporate technology, social media use among pre-service teachers has become more than just casual engagement it includes professional and emotional dimensions. While offering opportunities for connection and learning, social media also presents challenges related to emotional regulation, online communication, and psychological well-being. The virtual environment requires users to interpret and manage emotional cues, often through limited textual or visual indicators, demanding a form of emotional intelligence tailored to digital contexts (Goleman, 2021; Nwosu & Chen, 2022). This emerging concept, called Social Media Emotional Intelligence (SMEI), involves the ability to perceive, understand, and manage emotions in digital interactions. For student teachers, developing SMEI is crucial, as they will soon navigate emotionally complex classroom environments. Their ability to manage emotions online may impact their psychological well-being and academic performance, influencing their future success as educators (Robinson et al., 2023).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite growing interest in emotional intelligence and digital literacy, limited empirical research has examined how emotional intelligence manifests in online settings particularly among future educators. The problem addressed in this study is the lack of understanding of how Social Media Emotional Intelligence (SMEI) relates to psychological well-being and academic performance among student teachers. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the level of Social Media Emotional Intelligence among student teachers?
2. What is the level of psychological well-being and academic performance among student teachers?
3. Is there a significant relationship between SMEI on psychological well-being and academic performance?
4. Which dimensions of SMEI significantly predict well-being and academic performance?

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Emotional Intelligence and Academic Outcomes

Emotional intelligence (EI) broadly defined as the ability to perceive, understand, manage, and use one's own and others' emotions (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2008) has long been investigated as a contributor to academic success and well-being. Recent empirical work confirms that higher EI is associated with better academic performance, greater engagement, and improved psychological health.

For example, a study by Banos, Calleja-Nunez et al. (2024) found that among university students, components of EI such as emotional clarity and repair significantly predicted psychological well-being and academic achievement, mediated by academic self-efficacy. In particular, emotional clarity helped students understand their emotional responses to academic stressors, and emotional repair aided recovery from setbacks. Similarly, a study published in *Sustainability* (2021) found that while EI did not exhibit a direct effect on academic performance, it influenced performance indirectly via mediators such as compassion and engagement. Specifically, EI fostered compassion in the educational setting ($\beta = .533$, $t = 8.582$) which then enhanced engagement ($\beta = .186$, $t = 3.816$) and ultimately led to higher academic performance ($\beta = .611$, $t = 4.276$). In teacher-education settings, EI has been linked to stronger teacher-student relationships, better classroom climate, and improved student learning outcomes. For instance, a qualitative study reported that students with higher EI exhibited better self-regulation, social awareness, and relationship management skills all of which contributed to improved academic engagement.

In sum, the extant literature suggests a consistent positive association between EI and academic outcomes (grades, engagement and persistence). However, much of the research highlights indirect paths (via engagement, motivation, or social skills) rather than direct predictive links, which is relevant for the current study's focus on prediction.

2.2 Social Media Use, Emotional Intelligence, and Well-Being

The digital era has placed social media at the centre of many students' interpersonal, emotional, and academic lives. As such, researchers have begun exploring how social media use interacts with emotional competencies and well-being outcomes. A systematic review by Cassio and colleagues (2024) of adolescent populations concluded that lower emotional intelligence is associated with higher levels of problematic social media use (PSMU) and that such use correlates with higher stress, depressive symptoms, and lower emotional regulation. In the context of higher education, a study examining 305 undergraduate students during the COVID-19 pandemic in Pakistan found that emotional intelligence (self awareness, self regulation, social skills) positively influenced use of academic social networking sites (ASNS), which in turn positively predicted academic performance. Specifically, ASNS acted as a mediator: EI → ASNS → Academic Performance. This suggests that digital emotional competence may empower students to leverage online platforms effectively for academic benefit.

Another study of science trainee teachers in Malaysia (Rahman & Hashim, 2025) examined social media habits and found a weak negative relationship between social media usage frequency and academic achievement ($r = -.250$, $p = .003$). The authors observed that while social media provided professional development and networking opportunities, excessive or unregulated use posed risks to both EI and academic success.

Thus, the literature indicates a dual role of social media: when used intentionally and with emotional regulation, platforms may support academic engagement; when used excessively or impulsively, they may undermine emotional well-being and performance. This underscores the notion that digital emotional intelligence is a critical moderator or mediator in the relationship between online behaviours and outcomes.

2.3 Emotional Intelligence in Online and Teacher-Education Contexts

While much EI research has focused on face-to-face settings, recent literature emphasises the shift to digital and hybrid education environments a change accelerated by the pandemic. Within teacher-education programmes, pre-service teachers increasingly engage online (forums, social media groups, virtual practicum supports) and thus need to deploy emotional competencies in digital spaces.

For example, the Malaysian study of trainee science teachers found that participants had multiple social media accounts (average five), used platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp and YouTube, and while they perceived benefits of social media for professional development, they also admitted negative impacts on academic performance and EI. Gender differences were observed ($t(47.319) = -5.408$ for academic achievement; $t(54.434) = -2.535$ for EI).

Moreover, literature on digital emotional literacy suggests that the traditional EI model (perceive–understand–manage) must be adapted for online contexts where cues are different (textual, emoji, imagery) and where asynchronous/remote interactions prevail (Brand, 2020; cited in the review by Cassio et al.). In teacher-education specifically, digital emotional skills the ability to interpret peers'/students' emotions via online affordances, manage one's online emotional expressions, respond empathetically in forums or groups are becoming critical.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative correlational research design to examine the predictive relationship between Social Media Emotional Intelligence (SMEI) and two outcome variables: Psychological well-being and academic performance**.** Correlational designs are appropriate for testing relationships among variables and for determining the predictive power of independent variables without manipulating those (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3.2 Participants

The study included 100 student teachers enrolled in accredited teacher education programs in Gandhigram Rural Institute, Gandhigram, Dindigul District, Tamil Nadu, India. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on the following inclusion criteria:

1. Enrolled in a recognized teacher education program.
2. Active users of at least one social media platform for academic or social purposes.
3. Willing to provide self-reported academic data and participate in survey instruments.

3.3 Tools for the Study:

1. **Social Media Emotional Intelligence Scale (SMEIS)**

- Developed for digital contexts, based on Mayer- Salovey and Caruso's EI model.
- 24 items across 4 dimensions: Emotional Perception (6 items), Emotional Expression (6 items), Emotional Regulation (6 items), and Online Empathy (6 items).
- 5-point Likert scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.
- Reliability (Cronbach's α) = 0.91 (pilot-tested with 30 students).

2. **Ryff Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWB)**

- 18-item short version, measuring six dimensions: self-acceptance, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, personal growth, and positive relations.
- 6-point Likert scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 6 = Strongly Agree.
- Reliability (Cronbach's α) = 0.88.

3. **Academic Performance**

- Self-reported Grade Point Average (GPA) validated with official institutional records.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

The data collection procedure involved the formal administration of questionnaires, and participants were earnestly requested to respond thoughtfully: The procedure included:

1. **Consent**: Participants were informed about the study purpose, confidentiality, and voluntary participation.

2. **Survey Administration**: Participants completed the SMEIS and PWB scales and provided academic data.

3. **Data Verification**: Academic records were cross-checked with institutional transcripts for accuracy.

4. Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS v28. The following statistical procedures were performed:

1. **Descriptive Statistics** Means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions for all variables.

2. **Pearson Correlation** To assess the relationship between SMEI and outcome variables (well-being and academic performance).

3. **Multiple Regression Analysis** To determine the predictive contribution of SMEI dimensions (perception, expression, regulation, empathy) on psychological well-being and academic performance.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive analyses revealed that student teachers reported moderate to high levels of Social Media Emotional Intelligence (SMEI)**.** The mean total SMEI score was **88.45 (SD = 9.21)** on a 120-point scale, indicating generally strong digital emotional competence. Psychological well-being scores were also moderate to high (M = 87.65, SD = 8.80), and the average GPA was 3.28 (SD = 0.41).

4.2 Sample Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
SMEI Total Score	88.45	9.21	65	110
Emotional Perception	21.50	3.12	14	30
Emotional Expression	22.10	3.35	15	30
Emotional Regulation	22.90	3.05	16	30
Online Empathy	21.95	3.10	15	30
Psychological Well-Being	87.65	8.80	65	105
Academic Performance (GPA)	3.28	0.41	2.1	4.0

4.3 Sample Correlation Table

Table 2. Pearson Correlation Between SMEI and Outcomes

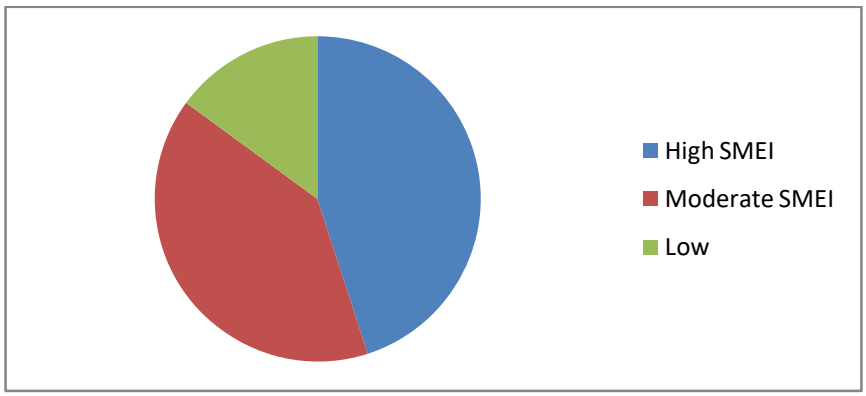
Variable	Well-Being (r)	Academic Performance (r)
SMEI Total Score	.63**	.48**
Emotional Perception	.55**	.41**
Emotional Expression	.50**	.46**

Emotional Regulation	.62**	.40**
Online Empathy	.61**	.39**

Note.p< .01.

Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of SMEI levels among participants:

- High SMEI: 45%
- Moderate SMEI: 40%
- Low SMEI: 15%



This suggests that the majority of participants possess a baseline digital emotional competence conducive to academic and emotional functioning.

4.4 Correlational Analysis

Pearson correlation analyses were conducted to examine the relationships between SMEI dimensions, psychological well-being, and academic performance (see Table 3).

Table 3. Pearson Correlations Between SMEI Dimensions, Well-Being, and Academic Performance

Variable	Well-Being (r)	Academic Performance (r)
SMEI Total Score	.63**	.48**
Emotional Perception	.55**	.41**
Emotional Expression	.50**	.46**
Emotional Regulation	.62**	.40**
Online Empathy	.61**	.39**

Note.p< .01.

4.5. Interpretation:

- SMEI total score shows a strong positive correlation with psychological well-being **(**r = .63**)** and a moderate positive correlation with academic performance **(**r = .48**).** Emotional regulation and online empathy were the strongest predictors of well-being, consistent with prior studies emphasizing self-regulation and digital empathy as key components of adaptive functioning.

4.5.1 Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analyses were conducted to determine the extent to which SMEI dimensions predict psychological well-being and academic performance**.**

4.5.1 Prediction of Psychological Well-Being

Table 4. Multiple Regression of SMEI Dimensions on Psychological Well-Being

Predictor	B	SE B	B	t	P
Emotional Perception	0.85	0.25	0.22	3.40	.001
Emotional Expression	0.64	0.28	0.16	2.29	.024
Emotional Regulation	1.12	0.31	0.29	3.61	<.001
Online Empathy	1.05	0.27	0.28	3.89	<.001

Model Summary:

- R^2 = .57, F(4,95) = 31.62, p **<** .001

Interpretation:

- SMEI dimensions collectively explain
- 57% of the variance in psychological well-being**.** Emotional regulation (β = .29, p < .001) and online empathy (β = .28, p < .001) are the
- strongest unique predictors**.**

4.5.2 Prediction of Academic Performance

Table 5. Multiple Regression of SMEI Dimensions on Academic Performance (GPA)

Predictor	B	SE B	B	t	p
Emotional Perception	0.06	0.03	0.18	2.00	.048
Emotional Expression	0.08	0.03	0.23	2.67	.009
Emotional Regulation	0.05	0.03	0.14	1.67	.098
Online Empathy	0.04	0.03	0.11	1.33	.186

R^2 = .31, F(4,95) = 10.62, **p < .001**

4.6. Interpretation & Discussion

- SMEI dimensions collectively explain 31% of the variance in academic performance**.**

- Emotional expression (β = .23, p = .009) and emotional perception (β = .18, p = .048) are the significant predictors, suggesting that the ability to interpret and express.
- The present study examined the role of Social Media Emotional Intelligence (SMEI) in predicting

psychological well-being and **academic performance**

among student teachers. The findings support the hypothesis that SMEI is a significant predictor of both outcomes, with notable differences in the strength of influence across variables.

4.6.1 SMEI and Psychological Well-Being

The results showed a strong positive correlation between SMEI and psychological well-being **(**r = .63, p < .01**).** Multiple regression analysis revealed that emotional regulation and online empathy were the strongest predictors of well-being. These findings align with prior research emphasizing the centrality of self-regulation and empathy in managing stress, sustaining positive social interactions, and fostering resilience (Nguyen & Dawson, 2022; Prado & Dela Cruz, 2023).

The results further corroborate Ryff's model of psychological well-being (1989, 2014)**,** demonstrating that the ability to perceive, manage, and respond to emotions in online environments contributes to self-acceptance, positive relationships, autonomy, and purpose in life. In the context of student teaching, these competencies are critical as pre-service teachers navigate emotionally complex practicum environments and peer interactions online.

4.6.2 SMEI and Academic Performance

SMEI also showed a moderate positive correlation with academic performance **(**r = .48, p < .01**).** Emotional perception and expression emerged as the significant predictors, suggesting that the ability to interpret and communicate emotions effectively in online academic spaces supports better engagement with coursework, collaborative projects, and teacher-student interactions.

These findings support the broader literature on emotional intelligence and academic outcomes**,** which posit that emotionally competent students manage stress more effectively, maintain focus, and exhibit higher motivation (Mayer et al., 2008; Goleman, 2021). Moreover, the results highlight the digital dimension of emotional intelligence, where online emotional literacy is essential in hybrid or fully digital learning environments.

5. Key Findings

1. High SMEI predicts higher psychological well-being among student teachers, with emotional regulation and online empathy being the most influential dimensions.
2. SMEI positively predicts academic performance**,** with emotional perception and expression as significant contributors.
3. Student teachers generally exhibit moderate to high levels of SMEI**,**
4. suggesting a baseline competency in digital emotional skills.
5. Digital emotional competence is a critical factor for both personal and academic development in teacher education programs.
6. **Conclusion**

This study provides empirical evidence that Social Media Emotional Intelligence (SMEI) is a significant predictor of student teachers' well-being and academic performance. Emotional regulation and online empathy were found to be especially influential for well-being, while emotional perception and expression were more strongly associated with academic success. The findings highlight the need to integrate digital emotional competence into teacher education curricula, aligning with the evolving demands of 21st-century learning environments where online interactions are central. Overall, the study contributes to the growing literature on digital emotional intelligence and offers practical insights for preparing future teachers to navigate emotional and academic challenges in both traditional and online settings.

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