

**THE EFFECT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE TRAINING PROGRAM ON
SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENT AMONG FIRST YEAR JORDANIAN
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

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Abstrak

Kajian ini bertujuan mengenalpasti kesan program latihan kecerdasan emosi dalam meningkatkan kecerdasan emosi pelajar serta kesan program ini terhadap tahap penyesuaian sosial dan akademik dalam kalangan pelajar tahun satu di dua buah universiti di utara Jordan. Penyelidikan kuantitatif kuasi eksperimen ini meneliti tiga faktor iaitu faktor kumpulan latihan, faktor jantina dan faktor umur dengan menggunakan reka bentuk faktor $2 \times 2 \times 3$. Saiz sampel yang digunakan untuk kajian ini melibatkan 289 orang pelajar tahun pertama (148 orang lelaki dan 141 orang perempuan) yang mengambil bahagian secara sukarela. Pelajar-pelajar ini diasingkan secara rawak kepada dua buah kumpulan. Peserta dalam kumpulan latihan kecerdasan emosi yang berkemahiran diberikan sembilan sesi latihan selama sepuluh hari. Sesi latihan dikendalikan oleh enam orang pelatih. Peserta dalam kumpulan kawalan tidak diberi sebarang latihan. Dua instrumen kajian yang mempunyai kebolehpercayaan dan kesahan yang tinggi digunakan untuk mengukur pemboleh ubah kajian. Instrumen-instrumen kajian tersebut ialah *Emotional Intelligence Appraisal (EIA)* dan *Student Adjustment to College Questionnaire (SACQ)*. Analisis multivariat (MANOVA, Ukuran Berulang ANCOVA, MANCOVA, dan Korelasi Pearson) digunakan untuk menguji hipotesis kajian pada tahap signifikan iaitu $p < .05$. Analisis kovarians multivariat dan Ukuran Berulang ANCOVA memperlihatkan bahawa latihan tersebut berkesan meningkatkan tahap kecerdasan emosi secara signifikan. Namun begitu, peningkatan untuk penyesuaian sosial dan akademik tidak signifikan. Hasil kajian turut mendapati bahawa meskipun kumpulan lelaki memaparkan skor keseluruhan yang lebih baik dalam kecerdasan emosi, namun begitu, perbezaan yang terhasil tidak signifikan. Selain itu, dapatan kajian berhubung ketiga-tiga kumpulan umur juga tidak signifikan. Akhir sekali, terdapat hubungan yang sangat ketara antara kecerdasan emosi yang berkemahiran, jantina dengan umur. Justeru, kajian ini menyarankan agar program intervensi diberikan kepada kelompok populasi sebegini.

Kata Kunci: Program latihan, Kecerdasan emosi, Penyesuaian sosial, Penyesuaian akademik.

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to identify the effect of an emotional intelligence training programme in increasing the level of emotional intelligence, and its effect on the level of social and academic adjustment among first year students in two universities in the north of Jordan. Using the 2x2x3 factorial design, the quasi experimental quantitative study examined three factors which are training group, gender and age. The sample size used for this research consisted of 289 first year students (148 males and 141 females) who voluntarily participated in this study and they were randomly assigned to two groups. The participants involved in the skilled emotional intelligence training group were given nine sessions within the duration of ten days. Participants in the controlled group were not given any training. Six trainers administrated the training sessions in which two highly reliable and valid instruments were used to measure the research variables. The instruments were the Emotional Intelligence Appraisal (EIA), and the Student Adjustment to College Questionnaire (SACQ). The multivariate analyses (MANOVA, Repeated Measure ANCOVA, MANCOVA, and Pearson Correlation) were used to test the research hypotheses at the significant level of $p < .05$. The multivariate analysis of covariance and the Repeated Measure ANCOVA showed that the training was significantly effective in improving the level of emotional intelligence, but the improvement for social and academic adjustment was not significant. The results also found that the male group showed better overall scores in emotional intelligence, but the differences were not significant. Moreover, the results were also not significant among the three age groups. Finally, there were profound interactions between skilled emotional intelligence, gender and age. Therefore, intervention programmes for this particular population are recommended.

Keywords: Training programme, Emotional intelligence, Social adjustment, Academic adjustment

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Table of Contents

Permission to Use.....	i
Abstrak	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgement.....	iv
Table of Contents	viii
List of Tables.....	xii
List of Figures	xiv
List of Appendices	xv
CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION	1
Background of the Study	4
<i>Brief History on Jordan Higher Education System</i>	4
Problem Statement	6
Purpose of the Study.....	12
Objectives of the Study	12
Questions of the Study	13
Hypotheses of the Study.....	14
Conceptual Framework	14
Significance of the Study	18
<i>Practical Contribution of Study</i>	19
<i>Theoretical Contribution of Study</i>	20
Scope of the Study.....	21
Operational Definitions	21
<i>Emotional Intelligence:</i>	21
<i>Social Adjustment:</i>	21
<i>Academic Adjustment:</i>	22
<i>Training program:</i> -	22
Summary	22
CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW	26
Introduction	26
Emotional Intelligence	27
<i>Emotional intelligence Ability Theory</i>	28

<i>Emotional Intelligence Mixed Theory</i>	29
<i>Emotional Intelligence Trait Theory</i>	30
<i>Dimensions of Emotional Intelligence</i>	31
Emotional Intelligence Measurement Constructs.....	33
Theoretical Support and Links for Emotional Intelligence	35
First –Year Students	36
Adjustment Models	37
Empirical Support for Emotional Intelligence and Adjustment Overview	40
Emotional Empathy.....	41
Self Esteem and Self Control	42
Self Confidence and Self Efficacy	43
Overall Health and Well being	43
Stress Management.....	45
Cooperative and Social Support	45
Social Skills and Communication	46
Social and Academic Adjustment	47
The Need for Emotional Intelligence Training in the University	51
Emotional Intelligence Training Program Development	54
University Student Learner and Emotional Intelligence	59
Content of Emotional Intelligence Training Program	61
Individual’s Variables Influencing Emotional Intelligence	63
Gender and Emotional Intelligence Training	65
Age and Emotional Intelligence Training	67
Summary	69
CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY	71
Introduction	71
Research Design	72
Study Setting	75
Population and Sample of Study	76
Sample Size Procedure.....	76
Study Procedures	78
<i>Pilot Study</i>	78
Data Collection Techniques	84

Translation of the Questionnaire	84
Techniques of Data Analysis	85
Reliability and Validity of the Measurements	86
Exploratory Factor Analyses	87
Confirmatory Factor Analysis	88
Instrumentations	88
Measurement of Emotional Intelligence	89
Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire	92
Data Analyses	100
Correlational Analysis	101
Pre and Post Comparison	101
Summary	102
CHAPTER FOUR EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENE TRAINING PROGRAM	103
Introduction	103
The Emotional Intelligence Training Program Protocol	104
Individuals Involved in the Training Program.....	105
<i>Hours and Duration of Training Program</i>	105
Materials Provided in the Training Program	105
Training Program of Experimental Group	105
Summary	111
CHAPTER FIVE DATA ANALYSIS	116
Introduction	116
Demographic Characteristics	116
Data Normality	117
Correlational Analysis	119
General Exploration of Emotional Intelligence, Social Adjustment and Academic	120
Adjustment in Students	120
Test of Research Hypotheses	124
Summary	134
CHAPTER SIX DISCUSSION	135
Overview	135

List of Tables

Table 1.1: Result of Preliminary Research for Student Emotional Intelligence Level.....	10
Table 1.2: Summary of Research Objectives, Questions and Hypotheses.....	22
Table 3.1: Research Variables.....	71
Table 3.2: All the Independent Variables.....	73
Table 3.3: Factor Loading of Emotional Intelligence Appraisal.....	86
Table 3.4: Measurement Validity of Emotional Intelligence Competencies.....	87
Table 3.5: Factor Loading of Social Adjustment Scale.....	91
Table 3.6: Factor Loading of Academic Adjustment Scale.....	92
Table 3.7: Measurement Validity for the Results Constructs.....	93
Table 3.8: Overall Measurement Model Fit for Each Construct.....	93
Table 4.1: Training Program for Emotional Intelligence, Social Adjustment And Academic Adjustment of Each Sessions.....	107
Table 5.1: Descriptive Statistics of Respondents (N=289).....	112
Table 5.2: Result of Normality Tests Measurements.....	113
Result of Pearson Correlation of Variables in the Pilot Study	115
Table 5.3: Results of Leven’s Test of the Research Variables pretest.....	116
Table 5.4: Results of MANOVA for Between-Subject Effects of the Research Variables Pretest.....	116
Table 5.5: Summary Statistics for Emotional Intelligence Scores.....	117
Table 5.6: Summary Statistics for Social Adjustment Scores.....	118
Table 5.7: Summary Statistics for Academic Adjustment Scores	118
Table 5.8: ANCOVA Results for Emotional Intelligence	119
Table 5.9: ANCOVA Results for Social Adjustment	120
Table 5.10: Results of Repeated Measure ANOVA for Social Adjustment.....	120
Table 5.11: ANCOVA Results for Academic Adjustment	121
Table 5.12: Results of Repeated Measure ANOVA for Academic Adjustment.....	121
Table 5.13: Results of MANCOVA for between-subject Effect of the Research Variables.....	122
Table 5.14: Descriptive Statistics of Scores for All Scales.....	123

Table 5.15: Results of ANCOVA for between-subject Effect of the Research Variable.....	124
Table 5.16: Results of ANCOVA for Between-Subjects Effects for Research Variable.....	125
Table 5.17: Descriptive Statistics of Scores for Research Variable.....	125
Table 5.18: Result of ANCOVA for between-subject Effects for Research Variable.....	126
Table 5.19: Result of Repeated Measure ANOVA for Time x Group x Gender Interaction.....	126
Table 5.20: Result of Repeated Measure ANOVA for Time x Group x Gender Interaction Male Sample	126
Table 5.21: Result of Repeated Measure ANOVA for Time x Group x Gender Interaction Female Sample.....	127
Table 5.22: Results of ANCOVA for Between-Subjects Effects for Research Variables	128
Table 5.23: Result of Repeated Measure ANOVA for Time x Group x Age Interaction.....	128
Table 5.24: Result of Repeated Measure ANOVA for Time x Group x Age Interaction: Age (1).....	128
Table 5.25: Result of Repeated Measure ANOVA for Time x Group x Age Interaction: Age (2).....	129
Table 5.26: Result of Repeated Measure ANOVA for Time x Group x Age Interaction: Age (3).....	129

List of Figures

Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework.....	17
Figure 3.1: Scree Plot Emotional Intelligence Appraisal (EIA).....	86
Figure 3.2: Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis for Emotional Intelligence....	86
Figure 3.3: Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis for Social Adjustment.....	94
Figure 3.4: Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis for Adjustment.....	94

List of Appendices

APPENDIX A: Research Instruments.....	172
PART A: Demographic Characteristics.....	173
PART B: Emotional Intelligence Appraisal (EIA).....	173
PART C: Social Adjustment Scale (SACQ).....	175
PART D: Academic Adjustment Scale (SACQ).....	176
APPENDIX B: Emotional Intelligence Ten Days Training Program.....	177
APPENDIX C: Descriptive Statistics: Data Normality.....	194
APPENDIX D: Exploratory Factor Analysis.....	194
APPENDIX E: MANOVA.....	201
APPENDIX F: ANCOVA.....	203
APPENDIX G: MANCOVA.....	208
APPENDIX H: GLM Repeated Measure ANOVA.....	209
APPENDIX I: Results of Structural Equation Measurements'.....	222

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The educational process is generally considered as one of the key factors that form the basis of an individual's development and progress which serve as nucleus for country's development (Khader, 2012). Owing to this general belief, countries concentrate on their educational process to serve as an investment. This is particularly true in higher education systems that display their dedication to expending efforts for the purpose of providing the basic requirements for the learning-teaching process in all aspects, as people hold the belief that progress and development can only be reached through education in its entirety (Khader, 2012). Therefore, in order to achieve the developmental aims of the country, an active educational planning or designing plans should be concentrating on educational improvement as may be required. Accordingly, universities are believed to be the factory that shapes and produces potential leaders who are the main origin of thought and are eventually the measurement of a nation's progress. In the current world, a developed nation is characterized by the number of the quality of its universities as it represents the spirit of a country's culture. Universities are believed to encapsulate the main elements of the nation's progress in various fields such as technology, literature, science and other intellectual domains.

The transition in the academic setting pervade not only the main setting but also the individual's social and personal-emotional setting as it consists of all the experiences that a student faces after getting registered in the Institute of Higher Learning (Rice,

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instrument containing new constructs. Therefore, the time limitation that surrounds participants' dealing with the instructors may have led to the formers' manipulation of answers due to a number of reasons.

Another reason that could be cited for the insignificant results was attributed to SACQ that has been used to measure students' social and academic adjustment which revealed that eighteen out of thirty nine items were worded negatively. Researchers were warned against utilizing negatively worded items with certain population because of the confusion that they may cause (Elias, 2004). This implied that negatively worded items were not so effective with the participants of the present study. Therefore future studies should restrict the use of negatively worded questions in order to determine whether this has any effects on the final result student adjustment in university setting.

Gender and Age Differences in Emotional Intelligence

The fourth hypothesis attempted to determine if gender made a difference in the level of emotional intelligence. It was hypothesized that male students who participated in the training program did not exhibit higher emotional intelligence mean scores than female students who participated in the training program. Based on a general consensus, female students have been reported to possess higher emotional intelligence compared to male students (Katyal & Awasthi, 2005; Noor-Azniza & Jdaitawi, 2009; and Sanchez-Ruiz et al., 2010), but overall research evidence revealed mixed results regarding the same issue. According to Baron's (1997) study, no significant difference existed between male and female in relation to overall emotional intelligence. Similarly, Barbera,

Charoenchote, Barchard, & Im (2003) revealed no significant differences between male and female concerning emotional intelligence.

In this study, the findings revealed that female participants did not show greater improvement compared to their male counterparts in the variable of emotional intelligence. Moreover, several researchers (Sanchez-Nunes, Fernandez-Berrocal, Montance, & Latorre, 2008) proved the differences between male and female when it came to emotional intelligence which according to them hinges on the type of assessment tool utilized which was either self report or performance measure. Therefore, the finding of the study proved the notion that there were no differences between the genders when it came to training in emotional intelligence. In a similar study, Ofole & Ajibol (2011) also found no significant differences between the genders in emotional intelligence training. In another related study, Singh (2007) found the same result. Hence, this result confirmed prior studies in their notion that there were no differences between male and female in response to emotional intelligence training (e.g. Singh, 2007; Ofole & Ajibol, 2011; Betlow, 2005; Dawda & Hart, 2000; Brown & Schutte, 2006; and Jou & Fukada, 1996). Further study should pay close attention to the design of activities and training sessions based on the gender differences.

The fifth hypothesis proposed was to determine if age groups made a difference in the level of emotional intelligence. It is initially hypothesized that there was no differences between age groups (a- 18-20 years; b- 21-25 years; c- older than 26 years) on emotional intelligence tests. Although, some studies have revealed significant differences between age groups on emotional intelligence (Bar-on, 1997; Noor-Azniza

& Jdaitawi, 2009), this result has not been considered as conclusive. Shipley, Jackson, & Segrest (2010) did not find significant differences between older and younger age student. In this study the result indicated that age groups did not differ significantly in the dependent variable of emotional intelligence's mean scores. This result was somewhat consistent to previous studies (Shanta, 2007). Shanta (2007) found no significant differences between senior and pre-professional students by training them in emotional intelligence. Shipley et al. (2010) did not find significant differences between older and younger students. Akbas (2006) found no significant differences between emotional intelligence and age. Hence, the study contributed to literature by testing the impact of age groups in response to emotional intelligence training which on a review of literature revealed that it was the first of its kind. However, there was insufficient number of research identifying the effect of emotional intelligence training program on student's age. Therefore, future studies should be carried out to specifically address this question.

Gender and Age Differences in Response to Treatment

The sixth hypothesis attempted to determine gender differences in response to the training program. In the treatment group, female's students in this study demonstrated better improvement than the male students. A separate GLM analysis for males and females found that the differences were significant only for females but not for male students. This significant finding may be attributed to the changing of female roles in the society coupled with the greater leadership opportunities that were now available for women compared to the past. Furthermore, in this study females showed that they were

more able to express their emotions as compared to males. Therefore, these factors might lead females to improve their emotional intelligence skills as compared to males.

However, the differences between the mean scores showed that female students improved their emotional intelligence better than male students. This finding was against the notion that there were no differences between males and females in response to training program (Betlow, 2005; Dawda & Hart, 2000; Brown & Schutte, 2006). Therefore, further study needed to explore the gender differences in response to treatment.

The last hypothesis attempted to determine age differences in response to the treatment. It was initially believed that students' age might differ in their ability to acquire components of emotional intelligence. The results supported that there were significant group and age interactions. This notion was further compounded by a number of researches confirming that elderly individual has higher emotional intelligence level as compared to younger individual, and claiming that emotional intelligence can increase with age. Nevertheless, the present study's results supported the research hypothesis that elderly students significantly differ in emotional intelligence. It was found that elderly students assigned to training groups produced significantly greater emotional intelligence scores than younger students. However, since elderly individuals tend to manage their emotions as well as socialize with other as compared to younger individuals, the probable reason for the present finding might be due to the fact that emotional intelligence primarily dealt with managing one's emotions as well as social skills.

Upon comparison between the main scores of the students' age on the pretest and post-test, it has been revealed that there was an increase in overall students' performance level for emotional intelligence. The findings indicated that the students have taken enough training that led to the improvement of emotional intelligence skills. However, the present study provided empirical evidence by examining the differences between age groups in response to training treatment that has never been examined, therefore, further study needed to explore the age differences in response to treatment.

Implications

In higher education, the evaluation of student's adjustment in the university has been recently considered as a major focal point. Based on several studies' reports on the issue of a large number of first year students leaving the university before obtaining their degree, there was an encouragement from the previous studies to create training programs in order to smoothen out student's adjustment in the university. Therefore, in response to the literature, the current study attempts to develop an emotional intelligence program in order to enhance students' emotional intelligence skills and to facilitate both students' social and academic adjustment to university through four key components: (a) improving self awareness, (b) enhancing students' emotional management; (c) increasing social awareness among students, and (d) improving manage relationship with others.

A thorough look at the previous literature review regarding the topic revealed that no such study has been carried out on a training program that especially catered to the improvement of first year students' emotional intelligence and adjustment to the

university. Therefore, the researcher found it imperative to create a program catering to the emotional intelligence, social adjustment and academic adjustment of first year students since these adjustments were linked to Jordanian students' success (Jensen et al., 2007; Goleman, 1998; Nelson & Low, 2003).

The current study's analysis of results showed statistical significant results regarding the improvement of student's emotional intelligence, but not for improvement of social and academic adjustment to college questionnaire (SACQ). Therefore, the researcher urged further researches from carrying out several theoretical, empirical and methodological implications in higher education settings.

As mentioned earlier, despite the previous researchers efforts in testing the relationship between emotional intelligence and both social and academic adjustment (Abdallah et al., 2004; Adeyemo, 2003), there was still a strong urge from the academics to create an emotional intelligence training program in order to enhance first year students adjustment which have already been proposed but not empirically tested as yet. This study attempted to present a new contribution by developing an emotional intelligence program based on the conceptualization of various emotional intelligence theorists who claimed that emotional intelligence training program influenced first year student adjustment to university (Goleman, 1998; Ba-ron, 2005; Low & Nelson, 2005). The findings from the present analysis revealed empirical partial consistency with the previous studies claiming that emotional intelligence can be developed through a training program. On the other hand, the present study failed to find an empirical support for the emotional intelligence program influencing student's social and

academic adjustment. Moreover, the findings indicated no differences in social and academic adjustment between experimental control groups which called for future studies to explore the topic further.

In addition, the study contributed another implication regarding the methodology area in terms of changes in design of previous studies. Most of the previous studies have concentrated on studying the relationship between research variables but in contrast with them, this study has utilized a quasi-experimental design by developing a training program to identify the effect of this training program on the research variables (emotional intelligence, social adjustment, and academic adjustment). Furthermore, it has been recommended by previous studies that the data collected from the questionnaire survey should be tested for reliability and content validity as well as construct validity. The current study enhanced the construct validity for measurement through the establishment of convergent validity and discriminant validity in actual tests for the main survey by using SEM analysis via AMOS. In other words, the present study answered the research called made by academic researchers (Davies et al., 1998; Matthews et al., 2002) and provided a more empirical inquiry in establishing a more reliable, valid measurement of emotional intelligence construct.

Limitations of the Study

The current study possessed some limitations, the first one being the sample of the study as the study used purposive sampling consisting of first year university students. Through the use of a purposive sample, the researcher has limited the ability to generalize the results of the study into a broader sample (Fisher et al., 2002). In

addition, the sample may not represent a bigger population because it was taken from only two universities in Northern Jordan disregarding others. In other words, generalization across geographical as well as demographical areas was not confirmed.

Secondly, based on study conducted by Brewer & Hunter (1989) (as cited in Elias, 2004), carried out nonrandom sampling for the purpose of experimental controls that can be considered valid to a certain limit. Hence, the present study recommends that future studies to examine the association between the variables through different sampling methods.

Thirdly, the study exhibited limitation in the use of (SACQ) developed by Baker & Syrik, (1999), in measuring social and academic adjustment in university students as the SACQ has its disadvantages when evaluating first year students' adjustment. Furthermore, Baker & Syrik (1999) also recommend that SACQ's results should be taken at a suitable time.

Fourthly, due to the fact that quantitative data is taken through self-report measures, there is ample chance that participants manipulated their answers for several reasons. They might have gotten bored with the test battery and chose answer to get over it quickly, to satisfy the researcher; therefore, they might have voluntary or involuntary chosen answers which were not their true experience (Creswell, 1994). Finally, the fact that the training program was only for a short period of time, may also limit the generalization. In other words, the short time period allowed might not be effective. The final limitation was the fact that there was a marked lack of universities' sources.

Recommendations for Future Study

As for recommendations for future research, this study recommends and proposes the following:

Firstly, based on the limitation of the current study, ample opportunities were presented for future research while using the same design and framework. Future researches should look into and studied all Jordanian public and private universities. Secondly, the time period of the current study is significant to the outcome. Therefore, this study recommended that future research should appropriately allocate more time for similar studies.

Thirdly, a thorough look at literature revealed the similarity in the constructs of emotional intelligence and student adjustment. Due to the similarity of the questions assessing emotional intelligence and student's adjustment such as: "I communicate well", "talk directly to people to whom you have a difficult situation", "manage yourself well with others", "show empathy to other person's feelings". Questions assessing student adjustment to college included: "I am very involved with social members in college", "I have several close social friends in college", "I have some good friends in college with whom I can talk about the problem I may have". Therefore, the apparent similarity in these construct could mean the overlap measurement of the two constructs. Therefore, it is recommended that the current study should be replicated through the utilization of various measures of emotional intelligence for the purpose of defining the aspects of emotional intelligence that were related to social and academic student adjustment.

Fourthly, most literature reviews concerning student's adjustments have been carried out and have reached to the same conclusion: most training or intervention results had a positive impact upon the student's knowledge, social skills and satisfaction (Pasha & Golshekoh, 2008; Below, 2005; Noor-Azniza, 2005; Schutte, & Malouff, 2002). In the present study, the social and academic adjustment scores indicated improvement owing to emotional intelligence training although the differences of the improvement were not significant. Hence, future studies were recommended in order to integrate training with other skills like problem solving skills, critical thinking skills, self efficacy, social skills and some other required skills related to academic domain.

Fifthly, the study made effective use of quantitative methodology but recommended that future researches use qualitative methods to shed a light on student's perception of the transition to the university. Sixthly, future works should also study demographic differences other than the ones already studied in first year student adjustment. For instance, socioeconomic differences, marital status, type of university, and major of study.

Finally, the study recommended on enlightening the students and the workshop members of the educational sector in the importance of emotional intelligence through the provision of emotional intelligence skills in the curriculum and the facilitation of emotional intelligence training sessions.

Summary

The current study investigated the effectiveness of an emotional intelligence training program in a group of first year university students. A number of research objectives were identified and examined throughout the study. The overall objectives of this study were investigated due to the lack of literature examining the role of emotional intelligence in the student's adjustment, particularly literature including both social and academic adjustment. The results of the study provided rationale for the development of an emotional intelligence training program to teach student's on utilizing the skills of emotional intelligence more effectively in the university environment and how to deal with the negative emotions in transition to new environment.

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