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The role of emotional intelligences, self-esteem and time management among young adults

Arina Borah *

Department of Psychology, Dr. Arjun Sekhar PM, Kristu Jayanti College, Bangalore, India.

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Abstract

This study explored the relationships among emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and time management in 202 young adults aged 18 to 26. Employing a quantitative, correlational, cross- sectional design, standardized self-report scales were used to assess these constructs. The research aimed to understand their interconnections and potential implications. Findings revealed a significant negative correlation between self-esteem and time management, suggesting higher self- esteem was associated with poorer time management. No significant correlation was found between emotional intelligence and time management, and a significant negative correlation emerged between emotional intelligence and self-esteem. Regression analysis confirmed self- esteem as a significant negative predictor of time management, while emotional intelligence did not. Mediation analysis indicated that emotional intelligence did not mediate the relationship between self-esteem and time management. The study concluded that the relationships between these factors in young adults are complex and not always as expected. The inverse association between self-esteem and time management challenges conventional assumptions. The lack of a significant link between emotional intelligence and time management suggests emotional abilities alone may not ensure effective time regulation. The findings emphasize the need for integrated interventions combining emotional and self-perceptual development with explicit time management training.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence; Self-esteem; Time management; Young adults; Psychological development

1. Introduction

1.1. Overview

The current study explores how time management, self-esteem, and emotional intelligence are intertwined in the lives of young adults. People have increased demands in the personal, professional, and academic spheres as they move from youth to adulthood. These pressures frequently test their capacity for good time management, emotional control, and self- perception. Self-esteem affects one's motivation, resilience, and interpersonal relationships, while emotional intelligence—the capacity to recognize and control emotions—is essential to adaptive functioning. Effective time management, which includes goal-setting and planning, is crucial for both stress relief and academic performance.

This study intends to investigate how these three conceptions relate to one another, evaluate how they affect academic or professional outcomes when taken together, and look at how they manifest differently among demographic groups. The study aims to offer insights pertinent to educational institutions, mental health professionals, and youth development initiatives. It is based on three theories: Locke and Latham's Goal-Setting and Self-Regulation Theory, Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Theory, and Mayer and Salovey's Ability Model of Emotional Intelligence. In order to develop techniques that promote academic performance, personal development, and overall well-being among emerging adults

* Corresponding author: Arina Borah

in the Indian context, this study aims to investigate the interactions between emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and time management.

1.2. Background of the study

The adolescent-to-adult transition is a dynamic period characterized by dramatic developmental, academic, social, and emotional transformation. Emerging adults, especially those in college or in the early phases of their careers, are anticipated to make independent choices, balance responsibilities, and negotiate interpersonal relationships while pushing for personal and professional development (Arnett, 2000). These expectations usually elicit problems that challenge their ability to control emotions, prioritize time, and self-esteem. Here, emotional intelligence (EI), self-esteem, and time management become essential psychosocial competencies that hold the potential to impact significantly on well-being and success among young adults.

Emotional intelligence, or the capacity to recognize, use, understand, manage, and adapt to emotions in oneself and others (Mayer & Salovey, 1997), has been linked with improved interpersonal relations, academic achievement, stress tolerance, and well-being. Self-esteem, as the person's global judgment of worthiness (Rosenberg, 1965), is critical to influencing confidence, motivation, and resilience. Time management, planning, and conscious control of time invested in activities (Claessens et al., 2007) are vital for academic success, stress elimination, and accomplishment of goals. Goals are often more attainable when individuals possess these skills, as they create a framework for prioritizing tasks and managing challenges effectively. Furthermore, the interplay between emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and time management can lead to enhanced decision-making and a greater sense of fulfilment in both personal and academic pursuits.

The intersection of these three constructs — emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and time management — offers a comprehensive understanding of the internal and external resources that young adults utilize to cope with everyday demands. Investigating their relationship provides profound interpretation for the institutions of education, professionals of behavioral health, and legislators in creating effective interventions that promote holistic development and well-being.

1.3. Emotional Intelligence

The idea of emotional intelligence (EI), originally conceptualized by Salovey and Mayer (1990) afterward made popular by Goleman (1995), who highlighted its applicability in success within one's personal and professional life. An individual's skill to identify and express oneself, make social relations, handle challenges, and make effective use of emotional information depends on the emotional and social intelligence of the individual (Bar-On, 2006).

Based on studies, individuals with high EI are better at coping with stress, resolving conflicts, and maintaining motivation (Schutte et al., 1998). These abilities improve individual performance and lead to healthier workplace environments, promoting cooperation and enhancing general team effectiveness (2002). Emotional intelligence has been linked to enhanced academic performance and psychological well-being in the academic environment (Parker et al., 2004). Emotional intelligence is also believed by Zeidner et al. (2009) to be a burnout, depression, and anxiety-protective factor.

1.4. Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is one key element of personality and is defined as a person's sense of self- worth and confidence (Rosenberg, 1965). It influences the way individuals strive for goals, interact with others, and perceive feedback. Interestingly, low self-esteem has been associated with symptoms of anxiety and depression, as well as poor academic performance, while higher levels of self-esteem, which has often correlated with mental health outcomes, optimism, and good affect (Orth & Robins, 2014).

Based on Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Theory, individuals' interactions with others and how others perceive them determine how they perceive themselves and their value. In addition, self- esteem plays a part in motivation, goal-setting, and persistence—each of which is essential in the educational and early career stages of life (Baumeister et al., 2003).

1.5. Time Management

Time management is a set of skills, tools, and techniques utilized to manage time efficiently in order to achieve particular tasks, goals, and projects (Macan et al., 1990). Good time management has been associated with academic achievement, decreased stress levels, and improved quality of life for students and young professionals (Nonis et al., 2005).

Poor time management, however, has been linked to procrastination, reduced productivity, and elevated anxiety. Students who learn time management skills at an early stage are more equipped to deal with academic and professional requirements (Britton & Tesser, 1991).

1.6. Theoretical Structure

The Framework of the Ability Model of Emotional Intelligence, as proposed by Mayer and Salovey

According to this approach, the concept of emotional intelligence (EI) it encompasses a range of cognitive skills that are related with the processing of the emotional awareness and application. The model is divided into four domains, which includes perceiving emotions, understanding the emotions, controlling the emotions, and employing the emotions to aid in thought processes (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). The approach emphasizes how emotions affect behavior and thought processes, emphasizing the cognitive component of emotional functioning.

1.7. The Self-Esteem Theory of Rosenberg

According to Rosenberg's approach, people's sense of self-worth is a social mirror of how they believe other people see them. Adolescence and early adulthood shape this cognitive and affective assessment of oneself.1.5.3 Locke & Latham's Goal-Setting and Self-Regulation Theory (1990)

The fundamental concept of self-regulation, which holds that individual's control, direct, and govern their own behavior in order to accomplish goals, has been used to study time management. Planning, setting priorities, and scheduling are the three main components of time management, and each requires a high degree of motivation and self-efficacy.

1.8. Interaction among Emotional Intelligence, Self-Esteem, and Time Management

Self-esteem and emotional intelligence have a positive relationship, as is indicated by various studies. Individuals who have high EI are more capable of regulating negative self-views and are more aware of their personal strengths and weaknesses, enhancing their self-esteem (Mavroveli et al., 2007). Similarly, it has been found that self-esteem influences time management behaviors; individuals who perceive themselves highly tend to be more proactive, structured, and goal directed (Eilam & Aharon, 2003).

In addition, by motivation, management of stress, and emotional regulation, emotional intelligence facilitates effective time management. Emotionally stable young adults are better at concentrating and managing distractions, which enhances performance and goal achievement (Pehlivan, 2013).

2. Review of Literature

This review sets out to give an objective presentation of the prevailing knowledge regarding Emotional Intelligence (EI), Self-Esteem (SE), and Time Management (TM), focusing on their conceptual underpinnings, empirical evidence, and interconnectivity. Emotional intelligence (EI), which has been linked to improved psychological well-being, academic success, and interpersonal functioning, is generally understood to be the capacity to identify, understand, and control emotions. Self-esteem, or SE, is closely related to emotional intelligence (EI) and has been shown to modulate its impacts on outcomes such as academic motivation and life happiness. Self-esteem and stress reduction are also positively impacted by TM, the behavioural and cognitive ability to organize and manage time. Although each construct has been investigated separately or in combination, few studies have explored their joint impact, especially in young adults undergoing key developmental transitions. This review emphasizes the necessity of integrated studies that investigate how EI, SE, and TM interact to influence psychological functioning and achievement in this group.

Borokhovski and Obukhova (2021) sought to investigate how emotional intelligence influenced Russian young people' self-realization. 112 full-time and part-time university students participated in the study and answered questions about emotional intelligence and self-realization (personal, professional, and social). Regression and correlational analysis were employed. Key findings showed that self-realization was highly influenced by the general emotional intelligence factor, with the interpersonal component serving as the most reliable predictor. According to the authors, emotional intelligence is a potent adaptive element that can offset the detrimental effects of difficult life situations in young adulthood.

Philip et al. (2022) examined the connection between young adults' social support perceived by them and emotional intelligence among individuals aged 20–25. The Provision of Social Relations (PSR) Scale and the Emotional Intelligence Self-Assessment Scale were applied to the study, which consisted of 80 participants divided equally across genders. The

results, which were examined using Spearman's rank correlation, indicated that emotional intelligence and social support from friends and family were negatively correlated. Emotional intelligence was also negatively correlated with total social support. The authors suggest that future studies should examine possible moderating or intervening variables that may account for these surprise findings since these results contradict previous research. They also owned up to the study's drawbacks, such as its brief periods and small participant tool.

2.1. Developmental stages and gender groups

Mello et al. (2022) investigated the self-esteem and time perspective of juvenile, young individuals, middle-aged individuals, and seniors. Among these age groups, the study used by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and tools to measure relative orientations and linkages between the past, present, and future. Age effects and relationships were examined using standard statistical methods. Key findings that demonstrated age-related changes in temporal perspective dimensions showed that self-esteem was adversely connected with a focus on the past and favorably correlated with a focus on the future. The authors suggest that these findings can direct intervention programs that use time perspective to promote psychological health, albeit acknowledging the limitations of the cross-sectional methodology.

Devine et al. (2024) describe a controlled random trial protocol for Bright IDEAS-YA, an intervention aimed at improving psychosocial outcomes in young individuals with novel diagnosis of cancer. The study aims to evaluate the efficacy of this problem-solving skills training compared to enhanced usual care, using surveys at multiple time points to assess changes in depression, anxiety, and psychosocial HRQOL. The principle outcome will be the shift at 6 months, with subordinate endpoints at other time points. They will also explore mediators and moderators of treatment effects, potentially identifying segments of the population those are benefitting from the intervention. The study intends to determine if Bright IDEAS-YA can enhance the psychosocial well-being of this vulnerable population.

Romero-Pérez & Sánchez-Lissen (2022) critically analyzed dominant scientific narratives on effective time management among students from 1990 to 2021, reviewing 51 papers. The study aimed to analyze the implicit assumptions and summarize scientific evidence, finding that research often reflects a dominant societal narrative linking effective time management to performance and self-discipline. However, the authors found a lack of attention to sociocultural and pedagogical aspects and the subjective emotional impact of accelerated instruction, workload, and multitasking on students' well-being. They recommend further investigation into students' collective and individual experiences regarding these emotional impacts.

Smith and Chuning (2023) investigated the efficacy of an online emotional skills training program to improve socioemotional skills. The study reviewed literature underscoring the importance of socioemotional functioning for mental health and various health outcomes. The findings of the efficacy investigation (not detailed in this excerpt) would reveal the program's impact on participants' ability to recognize and regulate emotions. The authors suggest their program could be a valuable contribution to research in this area by providing a scalable intervention for enhancing emotional skills.

Kim and White (2018) conducted a systematic literature review of 23 articles (2004-2014) to understand barriers and facilitators in interpersonal communication between health professionals and young adults to improve health care outcomes. The review identified three major themes: challenges in discussing sensitive issues, the necessity of trust and emotional safety, and the importance of inclusion and autonomy. Key findings highlighted that young clients often face barriers like embarrassment and fear of judgment when discussing private or taboo topics, impacting their willingness to disclose important health information. Recommendations included developing routine screenings, ensuring confidentiality, training health professionals in ethical reasoning and communication skills, and increasing awareness of humanistic engagement.

In a systematic review of 22 studies (2019–2023), Li et al. (2024) Evaluated the effectiveness and user-friendliness of eHealth and tools that facilitate self-management and the transition to healthcare for adolescents and young adults living with chronic illnesses. Features, efficacy, acceptability, usability, and engagement were all assessed as part of the review. While young adults tended to think that these interventions were effective and possible because they were convenient and accessible, the findings indicated that user engagement was variable and tended to decrease over time. Among the elements desired were communication opportunities, disease-specific information, and engaging elements. In order to meet the specific needs of this age group, the authors highlight how important it is to involve stakeholders in the design process.

2.2. Research Gap

While prior research has examined the distinct contributions of time-related variables, self- esteem, and emotional intelligence (EI), there are still significant gaps in the literature. Previous findings revelaed that emotional intelligence (EI) is associated with psychological well-being, academic achievement, and self-esteem (Cheung et al., 2014; Jiménez Ballester et al., 2022).

Additionally, research indicates that time management and perspective can impact life happiness and self-esteem (Mello et al., 2022; Romero-Pérez & Sánchez-Lissen, 2022). Few studies, especially in the case of young individuals, have looked at emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and time management all within the same framework

Young adults experiencing key developmental transitions such as higher education or early career phases have been underrepresented in most prior research, which has tended to focus on re presentative samples or adolescents (e.g., Costa et al., 2021; Usán Supervía et al., 2023). In addition, how these factors interact to influence psychological functioning, adjustment, and performance during this period has been largely overlooked in the literature. Although some studies have examined mediating relationships, such as happiness mediating the association of emotional symptoms and EI (Jiménez Ballester et al., 2022) or self- esteem mediating the impact of EI on academic involvement (Barragán Martín et al., 2021), comprehensive models incorporating time management are scarce.

Lastly, recent findings have reported contradictory results regarding the influence of social factors and support systems on EI (Philip et al., 2022), signalling the need for more comprehensive models that include behavioural factors like time management. Therefore, further research is necessary to explore the unified influence of emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and time management on psychological outcomes among young adults.

3. Method

This chapter outlines the methodology adopted for the present study, which investigates the relationships between emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and time management among young adults. It includes a detailed description of the research design, participants, sampling methods, measures used to assess the key variables, data collection procedures, and the statistical techniques employed for analysis. Ethical considerations guiding the research process are also addressed, ensuring credibility, transparency, and adherence to psychological research standards.

3.1. Need of the Study

The individual roles of emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and time management have all been researched previously, but not much work has been conducted on how these exist in a relationship, especially when considering young adults in India and their experience of the challenges that face higher education or that of their beginning careers. This research is relevant and up-to-date in light of the sociocultural background of Indian teenagers, characterized by high levels of academic pressure, family demands, and formation of a transitional identity.

3.1.1. Objectives of the Study

- To examine the relationship between the emotional intelligence and the self-esteem among the young adults.
- To explore the influence of time management on self-esteem and emotional intelligence.
- To assess the combined effect of emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and time management on academic or professional success among young adults.
- To identify potential differences in these variables across gender, age, and educational levels.

3.1.2. Research Question

- What is the relationship between the emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and time management among young adults?
- How do these factors influence their academic or professional performance?
- Are there any demographic differences (e.g., gender, age, educational level) in the levels of emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and time management?

3.1.3. Hypotheses

- Young individuals' self-esteem and emotional intelligence are positively correlated.
- Effective time management is positively associated with higher levels of self-esteem and emotional intelligence.

- Higher levels of emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and effective time management will significantly predict better overall functioning and adjustment among young adults.
- Gender, age, and educational level will moderate the relationships between emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and time management.

3.1.4. Significance of the Study

This research will contribute to the field of counselling psychology, educational psychology, and developmental psychology by:

- Enhancing understanding of the psychological resources that contribute to young adults' success and well-being.
- Helping institutions design skill-building programs focused on emotional regulation, self- concept, and time management.
- Providing insights for mental health professionals in fostering resilience and productivity among youth.

3.1.5. Research Objectives

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- To explore the influence of time management on self-esteem and emotional intelligence.
- To assess the combined effect of emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and time management on academic or professional success among young adults.
- To identify potential differences in these variables across gender, age, and educational levels.

3.2. Operational Definitions

The ability to correctly identify, comprehend, the ability to manage both personal and of those of others is referred to in this study as emotional intelligence. Mayer and Salovey's (1997) ability model, which sees emotional intelligence is defined to the combination of cognitive-emotional abilities which are vital for adaptive functioning, serves as the foundation for this idea.

A person's overall subjective assessment of their own value, worth, and self-respect is known as their self-esteem. It shows how much people believe they are capable, self-assured, and worthy of accomplishment (Rosenberg, 1965).

The ability to use time effectively and efficiently to achieve personal, professional, or academic goals is referred to by this phrase. It encompasses planning, prioritization, task management, and goal-setting, according to Claessens et al. (2007).

Young Adults: 18 to 25-year-olds are referred to as young adults for the purposes of this study. Enhanced independence, identity exploration, and readiness for adult duties are the hallmarks of this developmental period (Arnett, 2000).

3.3. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, correlational, cross-sectional design. A quantitative approach was chosen to enable systematic and objective assessment of the relationships among the variables. The correlational framework allowed the researcher to explore the direction and strength of associations between emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and time management.

Additionally, the study aimed to assess how these constructs collectively influence academic or professional performance and whether demographic variables such as age, gender, or education level moderate these relationships. This design enabled analysis without manipulating the variables, ensuring a naturalistic investigation suitable for the targeted young adult population.

3.4. Participants

The study included 202 young adults in the sample, ranging in age from 18 to 26. The purpose of choosing this age range was to concentrate on people who are generally navigating academic transitions, early career experiences, and personal development—situations where time management, emotional control, and self-worth are especially important.

People who were readily available and eager to participate were asked to fill out an online survey as part of the convenience sampling technique used to find participants. Participants ranged in academic and professional

backgrounds and included both men and women. Fluency in English, which is the language of the questionnaire, internet access, recent or ongoing participation in professional or academic positions, and the lack of any confirmed psychological or cognitive impairments were all prerequisites for inclusion.

3.5. Sample

Convenience sampling was employed to obtain 202 sample size. Due to its success and feasibility in accessing the target population under time and budget limitations, this non- probability method was employed.

Participants were invited to participate freely in the study by responding to a Google Form following exposure by internet channels and social media platforms (for example, email, Instagram, and WhatsApp). All respondents had to satisfy the following inclusion criteria: they had to be between 18 and 26 years old, be currently studying or having graduated within the past year from an educational institution, have previous experience in time-managed activities (e.g., internships or part-time work), and have Internet access so they could access and fill out the survey. Responses from individuals who did not satisfy these criteria were not part of the final dataset.

3.6. Measures

Standardized self-report scale were utilized for ensuring correct and consistent evaluation of the main psychological constructs of the study. These measures were all chosen based on their solid psychometric attributes as well as targeting the young adult population.

3.6.1. Emotional Intelligence

The Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i 2.0) or an equivalent proven scale was utilized to assess emotional intelligence. This measure examines one's ability to acknowledge, comprehend, control, and apply emotions productively in individual and social environments. It evaluates different aspects, such as awareness of emotions, expressing oneself, interpersonal functioning, making decisions, and handling stress. The EQ-i 2.0 has reported high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha >.90) and high construct validity among different cultural and demographic samples and is an appropriate instrument to use with young adult populations.

3.6.2. Self-Esteem

Self-esteem was evaluated with the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), a general, 10-item measure of self-worth that is extensively employed. On the RSES, respondents evaluate every item along a 4-point Likert scale from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." Higher ratings correspond to increased self-esteem levels. The RSES has regularly established high reliability with Cronbach's alpha frequently equaling between.85 and.90, and has been demonstrated to be reliable in scores of studies in young adults and adolescents.

3.6.3. Time Management

Time management was assessed through the Time Management Behavior Scale (TMBS) created by Britton and Tesser (1991). It is a 35-item self-report measure assessing individual differences in time-related behaviors and attitudes. The TMBS consists of three main subscales:

Short-Range Planning (e.g., daily goal setting), Time Attitudes (e.g., time control perceptions), and Long-Range Planning (e.g., goal setting for the future).

Each item is scored on a 5-point Likert scale, with greater scores reflecting better time management behavior. The TMBS has been found to have good internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha =.83) and has been extensively utilized in student and young professional research.

Each of the three measures used in this study is a standard instrument and suitable for measuring psychological functioning among young adults, especially in academic and early career settings. Their excellent psychometric characteristics guarantee data reliability as well as validity.

3.7. Procedure

The data collection process followed a structured and ethically guided approach. Participants were recruited online through direct messages, email invitations, and social media posts containing a brief description of the study, eligibility criteria, and a link to the Google Form questionnaire.

Prior to accessing the survey, participants were required to review an informed consent form, which outlined the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of participation, and their right to withdraw at any point. Only participants who actively agreed to the consent were permitted to proceed.

The survey included clear instructions for each section and required approximately 15–20 minutes to complete. All responses were automatically recorded and stored in a secure Google account. Data were monitored for completeness, and submissions with missing or inconsistent responses were excluded from the analysis.

3.8. Data Analysis

The data collected in this study were analyzed using Jamovi statistical software. Descriptive statistics were computed to summarize the key variables, including emotional intelligence, self- esteem, and time management. To examine the relationships among these variables, correlational analyses were conducted using Pearson's or Spearman's correlation coefficients based on the distribution of the data.

Multiple linear regression was used to assess the predictive influence of emotional intelligence and self-esteem on time management. Independent samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA were employed to explore potential group differences based on demographic variables such as gender, age, and educational qualification. A mediation analysis was also performed to evaluate whether emotional intelligence mediated the relationship between self-esteem and time management. All statistical tests were conducted using a significance level of $p < .05$.

3.9. Research Ethics

This study adhered strictly to the ethical guidelines set by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2017). Ethical considerations were addressed at every stage of the research:

- Informed Consent: The goal of the study, confidentiality guarantees, and the participants' freedom to refuse or withdraw at any moment were all explained to them in detail. Participation was restricted to individuals who gave their approval
- Confidentiality: To preserve participant privacy, all data were anonymized and safely kept. No information that could be used to identify the individual was gathered.
- Right to Withdraw: Participation was entirely voluntary. Respondents could exit the survey at any stage, and incomplete surveys were excluded without penalty.
- Debriefing Following completion of the survey, respondents were sent a debriefing message that reiterated the study's confidentiality and anonymity while thanking them for their participation.
- Ethical Review: Before any data was collected, the research methodology was examined and approved by the appropriate institutional ethics committee.

By upholding these principles, the study ensured participant welfare, transparency, and the ethical integrity of its findings.

4. Results

As per Table 9, the mean Time Management scores varied slightly across the four groups: Group 1 (n = 118, M = 54.6), Group 2 (n = 15, M = 58.6), Group 3 (n = 47, M = 53.2), and Group 4 (n = 22, M = 53.0). A one-way ANOVA was conducted (Table 10) to statistically compare these means. The analysis yielded a marginally non-significant result, $F(3,47)=2.73$, $p=0.055$, indicating that there was a trend toward Educational qualification based differences in Time Management, though it did not meet the conventional threshold for statistical significance. This suggests that with a larger sample, particularly in the smaller groups, these differences might reach significance and require further exploration.

4.1. Overview

The study's results and discussion section provides a thorough examination of the connections between young adults' time management, self-esteem, and emotional intelligence. The participants range in age from 18 to 26. Participants demonstrated moderate levels of time management, emotional intelligence, and self-esteem, according to descriptive statistics; self- esteem and emotional intelligence also revealed non-normal distributions. Self-esteem and time management were found to be significantly correlated negatively, meaning that people who had higher self-esteem also reported having worse time management habits. Contrary to earlier studies, emotional intelligence was adversely correlated with self-esteem and did not significantly connect with time management. This conclusion could be the result of contextual or cultural factors.

Regression analysis confirmed that self-esteem was a significant negative predictor of time management, whereas emotional intelligence was not. The association between self-esteem and time management was not mediated by emotional intelligence, according to mediation analysis, underscoring the possibility that emotional intelligence by itself may not have a direct impact on time-related behaviors. Although a little trend suggested that greater educational attainment might be linked to better time management abilities, demographic analysis did not find any discernible gender differences in time management.

These results are interpreted in the discussion in the context of psychological theory and the body of existing literature. It questions the conventional wisdom that suggests improved self- regulation and planning are a direct result of increased emotional intelligence and self-esteem. The study contends that while emotional intelligence is useful in other contexts, it may need supplementary cognitive-behavioral abilities to influence pragmatic behaviors like goal-setting and scheduling, and that overestimated or imbalanced self-esteem may impede time management. The results highlight the value of integrative strategies that combine behavioural training and emotional development to promote young adults' success in school and the workplace.

4.2. Presentation of the Results:

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics

	n	**Mean**	**SD**	**Median**	**Min**	**Max**	**Shapiro- Wilk**
Emotional	202	113.1	16.52	116.0	60	149	< 0.001
Intelligence							
Self Esteem	202	23.6	4.10	24.0	10	34	< .001
Time	202	54.4	7.67	54.0	32	74	0.126
Management							

Descriptive statistics were computed for Emotional Intelligence, Self-Esteem, and Time Management to understand the central tendency, dispersion, and distribution characteristics of the variables. Emotional Intelligence (EI) had a sample size of n=202, with a mean score of 113.10 (SD = 16.52), a median of 116.0, and values ranging from 60 to 149. The Shapiro–Wilk test indicated a significant deviation from normality for EI ($p<.001$) suggesting that the distribution of scores was non-normal. Self-Esteem also showed a non-normal distribution ($p<.001$) and exhibited a mean score of 23.60 (SD = 4.10), a median of 24.0, and a score range between 10 and 34. In contrast, Time Management scores approximated a normal distribution, as the Shapiro–Wilk test yielded a non-significant result, ($p=0.126$). The Time Management variable had a mean of 54.40 (SD = 7.67), a median of 54.0, and values ranging from 32 to 74.

Table 2 Correlation Matrix

	Variables	**1**	**2**	**3**
1.	Emotional Intelligence	-		
2.	Self Esteem	-0.245***	-	
3.	Time Management	-0.006	-0.226**	-

Note **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Pearson's bivariate correlations were conducted to explore the linear associations among Emotional Intelligence, Self-Esteem, and Time Management. A significant negative correlation was found between Emotional Intelligence and Self-Esteem ($r=-0.245, p<.001$), suggesting that higher levels of emotional intelligence was having a weak association with lower self-esteem scores within this sample. Furthermore, Self-Esteem was also significantly and negatively correlated with Time Management ($r=-0.226$, $p<.01$), indicating that individuals with higher self-esteem reported slightly poorer time management capabilities. There was no significant correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Time Management ($r=-0.006$, p=NS) implying no discernible linear relationship between these two constructs.

Table 3 Linear Regression Model Fit

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	df1	df2	p
1	0.235	0.0550	0.0455	5.79	2	199	0.004

A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which Emotional Intelligence and Self-Esteem predicted Time Management. The overall regression model was statistically significant [F(2,199)=5.79,p=.004], indicating that the combination of the predictors significantly explained variance in the outcome variable. The model accounted for approximately 5.5% of the variance in Time Management (R2=0.0550), with an adjusted R2=0.0455, suggesting a modest model fit. While the explained variance is relatively low, the significant F-statistic supports the presence of a meaningful linear relationship between the predictors and the outcome.

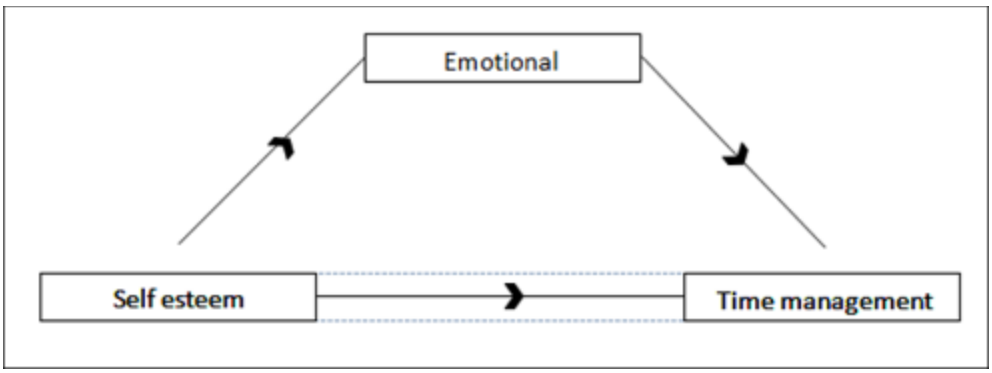
Table 4 Model Coefficients

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p
Intercept	68.5067	5.4540	12.561	<0 .001
Emotional Intelligence	-0.0305	0.0330	-0.923	0.357
Self esteem	-0.4523	0.1329	-3.402	< 0.001

4.3. Dependent Variable Time Management

The regression coefficients provided more detailed insight into the specific contributions of each predictor. Self-Esteem emerged as a statistically significant negative predictor of Time Management (B=−0.4523, SE=0.1329, t=−3.402, p<.001), suggesting that higher self-esteem was associated with poorer time management. In comparison, Emotional Intelligence was not a significant predictor of Time Management (B=−0.0305, SE=0.0330, t=−0.923, p=0.357). The intercept of the model was significant (B=68.51, SE=5.45, t=12.56, p<.001), indicating the average Time Management score when both predictors were held at zero. Collectively, these findings suggest that self-esteem plays a more central role in explaining time management than emotional intelligence.

4.4. Path Model Conceptual Diagram



Path model illustrating the hypothesized mediating role of emotional intelligence in the relationship between self-esteem and time management among young adults.

The model presents standardized path coefficients. While self-esteem significantly predicted both emotional intelligence and time management, emotional intelligence did not significantly predict time management, indicating a non-significant mediating effect.

Table 5 Mediation Indirect and Total effects

				95% C.I. (a)				
Type	**Effect**	**Estimate**	**SE**	**Lower**	**Upper**	**β**	**z**	**p**
Indirect	Self-esteem⇒ Emotional Intelligence Time ⇒ management Self-esteem	0.0301	0.0334	- 0.0354	0.0956	0.0161	0.901	0.368
Component	⇒ Emotional Intelligence Emotional	-0.9873	0.2747	- 1.5258	- 0.4488	- 0.2451	-3.594	< 0.001
	Intelligence ⇒ Time management Self-esteem	-0.0305	0.0328	- 0.0947	0.0337	- 0.0656	-0.930	0.352
Direct	⇒ Time management Self-esteem	-0.4523	0.1320	- 0.7109	- 0.1936	- 0.2418	-3.428	< 0.001
Total	⇒ Time management	-0.4222	0.1285	- 0.6741	- 0.1703	- 0.2257	-3.285	0.001

Note. Confidence intervals computed with method: Standard (Delta method) Note. Betas are completely standardized effect sizes

To assess the potential mediating role of Emotional Intelligence in the relationship between Self- Esteem and Time Management, a mediation analysis was conducted. The indirect effect of Self- Esteem on Time Management via Emotional Intelligence was not statistically significant (B=0.0301, SE=0.0334, z=0.901, p=0.368), with a 95% confidence interval (CI: [-0.0354, 0.0956]). This suggests the absence of a significant mediating pathway.

However, the direct effect of Self-Esteem on Time Management remained significant (B=−0.4523, SE=0.1320, z=−3.428, p<.001), with a confidence interval (-0.7109, -0.1936) indicating that self-esteem directly influences time management. The total effect (B=−0.4222, SE=0.1285, z=−3.285, p=.001) was also significant, confirming that the relationship between Self-Esteem and Time Management is robust even in the presence of a non-significant mediation pathway.

Table 6 Mediation Estimates

95% Confidence Interval							
Effect	**Label**	**Estimate**	**SE**	**Lower**	**Upper**	**Z**	**p**
Indirect	a × b	0.0301	0.0334	-0.0354	0.0956	0.901	0.368
Direct	c	-0.4523	0.1320	-0.7109	-0.1936	-3.428	< 0.001
Total	c + a × b	-0.4222	0.1282	-0.6734	-0.1709	-3.293	< 0.001

The mediation estimates reiterated the results from Table 5 using path labels. The indirect effect, denoted as a×b, was non-significant (B=0.0301, SE=0.0334, z=0.901, p=0.368]), again indicating no mediation via Emotional Intelligence. The direct effect (c) of Self-Esteem on Time Management was significant (B=−0.4523, SE=0.1320, z=−3.428, p<.001). The total effect (c+a×b) remained significant (B=−0.4222, SE=0.1282, z=−3.293, p<.001). Thus, the data support a direct effect model, wherein self-esteem influences time management independently of emotional intelligence.

Table 7 Path Estimates

95% Confidence Interval							
	Label	**Estimate**	**SE**	**Lower**	**Upper**	**Z**	**P**
Self-esteem → Emotiona Intelligence	a	-0.98273	0.2747	-1.5258	-0.4488	-3.594	<0.001
Emotional Intelligence →Time management	b	-0.305	0.0328	-0.0947	0.037	-0.930	0.352
Self-esteem →Time management	c	-0.4523	0.1320	0.7109	-0.1936	-3.428	<0.001

The path coefficients revealed that the path from Self-Esteem to Emotional Intelligence (a) was statistically significant and negative (B=−0.9873,SE=0.2747,z=−3.594,p<.001), suggesting that higher self-esteem was associated with lower levels of emotional intelligence in this sample. However, the path from Emotional Intelligence to Time Management (b) was not significant (B=−0.0305,SE=0.0328,z=−0.930,p=0.352), which explains the non-significant mediation result. The direct path from Self-Esteem to Time Management (c) remained significant and negative (B=−0.4523,SE=0.1320,z=−3.428,p<.001). These findings confirm that although there is a significant relationship between self-esteem and emotional intelligence, the latter does not significantly transmit the effect of self-esteem onto time management.

Table 8 Gender Difference in Time Management (Independent t test)

		N	**Mean**	**SE**	**Statistic**	**P**	**Mean Difference**	**SE Difference**
Time Management	Male	89	54	0.912	-0.741	0.460	-0.860	1.90
	Female	113	54.8	0.646				

An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine whether there were significant differences in Time Management scores based on gender. Males (n = 89) had a mean score of 54.0 (SE = 0.912), while females (n = 113) reported a slightly higher mean of 54.8 (SE = 0.646).

However, the difference was not statistically significant, t=−0.741,p=0.460, with a mean difference of -0.860 (SE difference = 1.90). This suggests that gender does not appear to significantly influence time management abilities.

Table 9 Educational Qualification in Time Management

	Educational Qualification	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**SE**
Time Management	1	118	54.6	8.03	0.739
	2	15	58.6	6.76	1.745
	3	47	53.2	7.43	1.083
	4	22	53.0	5.87	1.251

Table 10 Educational Qualification in Time Management (ANOVA)

	F	**df1**	**df2**	**p**
Time Management	2.73	3	47	0.055

5. Discussion

The current investigation sought to explore the interconnection between emotional intelligence (EI), self-esteem, and time management among young adults between 18 and 26 years old. The results showed new perspectives in how these constructs interact with one another, specifically in the scenario of academic development and early professional growth. In this discussion, the results of the current research are interpreted using the declared hypotheses, contrasted with existing studies, and their potential theoretical as well as practical implications are mapped out.

Hypotheses

- H1 was not supported: Emotional intelligence and self-esteem showed a negative correlation.
- H2 was partially supported: Self-esteem was negatively correlated with time management; emotional intelligence showed no significant link.
- H3 was partially supported: Self-esteem significantly predicted time management, but emotional intelligence did not.
- H4 was not supported for gender; partially supported for educational level with a trend suggesting higher education may relate to better time management.

5.1. Emotional Intelligence, Self-Esteem, and Time Management

Descriptive statistics showed that participants showed moderate levels of emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and time management. The Shapiro–Wilk test showed, however, that emotional intelligence and self-esteem were not normally distributed, while time management scores were, warranting the utilization of parametric tests for the latter.

Correlation analysis indicated a significant negative correlation between emotional intelligence and self-esteem ($r = –.245$, $p < .001$), which implies that participants with greater emotional intelligence reported a little lower self-esteem. This result is contrary to the current literature, which generally indicates a positive correlation between EI and self-esteem (Cheung et al., 2014; Costa et al., 2021). One possible reason for this counterintuitive finding would be that participants who are more emotionally aware are also more self-critical, and therefore potentially lower in their self-perceived value. Cultural or contextual factors might also have distorted how the constructs of self-esteem and emotional intelligence were being defined or manifested by participants.

Contrary to what might have been predicted, emotional intelligence was not correlated at all with time management ($r = –.006$, $p > .05$). This result is at odds with earlier studies that propose that people with high emotional intelligence are more capable of time management because they have better self-regulation and emotional control (Jiménez Ballester et al., 2022; Romero-Pérez & Sánchez-Lissen, 2022). One interpretation is that although emotional intelligence can support interpersonal functioning and stress management, it might not automatically lead to effective time- related behavior without other influences like motivation or executive functioning.

Self-esteem, however, was identified as a significant negative predictor of time management ($r = –.226$, $p < .01$), and the relationship also stood in the regression analysis ($B = –0.4523$, $p < .001$). Though existing literature tends to equate superior self-esteem with better self-regulatory capacities (Mergler et al., 2007), the current data indicate that greater self-esteem could, occasionally, be combined with overconfidence, lack of diligence, or absence of structured time routine. This paradox contradicts habitual perceptions and accentuates the relevance of investigating functional self-esteem manifestation as opposed to presuming a general positive connotation.

5.2. Mediation Analysis

A mediation analysis was used to examine if emotional intelligence mediated the relationship between self-esteem and time management. While self-esteem significantly predicted emotional intelligence, and also significantly predicted time management, emotional intelligence did not significantly predict time management. Consequently, the indirect (mediated) effect was not statistically significant, and the direct effect was still significant.

These results contradict the hypothesis of mediation and imply that emotional intelligence is not an explanatory process by which self-esteem affects the management of time. This finding contradicts previous studies that have established EI to act as a mediator of the impact of self- esteem on well-being or academic achievement (Barragán Martín et al., 2021; Jiménez Ballester et al., 2022). It is also possible that other mediators—e.g., intrinsic motivation, academic engagement, or goal orientation—may more effectively explain this relationship and should be investigated in future research.

5.3. Gender and Educational Differences in Time Management

Independent samples t-test revealed no significant gender variation in time management, as earlier studies have indicated that time-related behaviors are not significantly different among male and female young adult students (Usán Supervía et al., 2023). This could mean that both sexes experience equal stress and challenges in using time during transitions in academics and careers.

Though a one-way ANOVA testing educational qualification returned a marginally non-significant result ($p = .055$), a trend was found through which individuals who had higher levels of educational qualification (postgraduates) showed improved time management. This trend could be an indication of the gradual impact of academic exposure, maturity,

and life experience on one's capacity to manage and prioritize time in a correct manner. Nonetheless, the disparate group sizes and restricted sample for some qualification levels merit caution in interpretation and demand replication with a better-balanced sample.

6. Summary

6.1. Overview

This section provides a concise synthesis of the study's key findings and their broader implications. It revisits the central aim of exploring the interrelationship between emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and time management among young adults. The section summarizes the statistical outcomes and theoretical interpretations derived from the data analysis.

Furthermore, it draws conclusions based on the study's objectives, reflects on unexpected results, and suggests the practical relevance of the findings in psychological and educational contexts.

6.2. Summary

In this study, young individuals between the ages of 18 and 26 had their emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and time management examined. The Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i 2.0), Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), and Time Management Behavior Scale (TMBS) are standardized tools used to gather data from 202 individuals in a quantitative, correlational study design.

The following are the study's main conclusions:

- In both correlation and regression studies, self-esteem strongly predicted worse time management and had a negative connection with it.
- Time management and emotional intelligence did not significantly correlate, indicating that time- use habits may not be directly influenced by emotional awareness.
- An unexpected finding that may have been impacted by cultural influences or increased self- awareness leading to self- critical judgement was the negative correlation between emotional intelligence and self-esteem.
- Mediation analysis showed that emotional intelligence does not mediate the relationship between self-esteem and time management.
- No significant gender differences were observed in time management scores, while educational qualification revealed a marginally significant trend, suggesting that more advanced education may be associated with improved time management.
- These findings reflect the nuanced and often counterintuitive dynamics among key psychological variables in emerging adulthood.

7. Conclusion

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on young adult development by examining how emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and time management intersect during a critical life stage. The findings challenge simplistic assumptions, particularly the notion that higher self-esteem and emotional intelligence inherently promote better time management. The negative relationship between self-esteem and time management highlights the need to differentiate between adaptive and potentially inflated self-perceptions. Additionally, the non-significant role of emotional intelligence in predicting time use behavior suggests that cognitive and motivational mechanisms may play a more direct role in effective time management.

Given these insights, psychological interventions should consider pairing self-esteem and emotional intelligence enhancement with explicit training in time-related skills such as goal- setting, prioritization, and planning. Furthermore, these results invite future research to explore alternative mediators and the role of cultural context in shaping how young adults perceive and apply emotional and behavioral competencies.

7.1. Implications

The findings of the present study offer several meaningful implications for theory, practice, and further inquiry. Theoretically, the unexpected negative relationship between self-esteem and time management, as well as the lack of a significant correlation between emotional intelligence and time management, challenges the conventional

understanding of these constructs as inherently positive and mutually reinforcing. It highlights the need for more nuanced conceptual models that consider contextual and functional aspects of psychological traits. In terms of educational and institutional relevance, the results suggest that enhancing students' emotional or self-perceptual competencies alone may not translate into better time management. Therefore, interventions in academic or organizational settings should incorporate structured skill-building components such as planning, prioritization, and self-regulatory techniques alongside self-esteem or emotional intelligence training. Clinically, this study informs counselors and mental health professionals that fostering emotional awareness or boosting self-esteem may not directly improve daily functioning unless paired with behavioral coaching strategies.

7.2. Limitations

It is important to recognize that the study has a number of limitations despite its insightful findings. First of all, it is challenging to ascertain the direction of influence due to the cross-sectional design, which restricts the capacity to establish causal links between the variables. Second, the study only used self-report measures, which are vulnerable to social desirability bias and could not be a reliable indicator of true internal moods or behaviors. Thirdly, because the participants might not be representative of the larger young adult community, the convenience sampling approach may limit the findings' generalizability. The results' generalizability to other populations may also have been limited by the cultural context of the study, which may have affected how participants understood and answered questions about emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and time management. Finally, although emotional intelligence was explored as a potential mediator, the study did not consider other potentially relevant mediating or moderating variables such as personality traits, academic stress, or motivation.

7.3. Recommendations for Future Research

To address the limitations and build upon the current findings, future research should consider several directions. First, longitudinal and experimental studies would be beneficial in exploring how the relationships between emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and time management evolve over time, and in establishing causality. Researchers are also encouraged to incorporate additional psychological constructs, such as executive functioning, goal orientation, resilience, or academic motivation, which may better explain the dynamics observed in this study. Moreover, conducting cross-cultural comparative research could provide insight into how cultural values shape the perception and interplay of emotional and behavioral competencies. Future studies should also aim to include objective tools—such as time-tracking applications or behavioral assessments—to supplement or validate self-report data. Lastly, intervention-based research that combines emotional intelligence training with time management and goal-setting workshops could provide applied insights into the practical development of these skills among young adults and evaluate their impact on academic and professional outcomes.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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