

# THE ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: A PERSPECTIVE FROM THE HUMANITIES

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**Abstract--** The present research entitled "The role of emotional intelligence in university students: a view from the human sciences" was conducted to achieve this objective. Documentary reviews were carried out for writers, and a content analysis was performed on previous cases of some students, highlighting theoretical trends from the perspective of emotional intelligence. At this stage and in the content analysis, case studies were selected and the topic was coded, and the results were compared and interpreted by others. The results indicate that emotional competencies (i.e., self-awareness, empathy, and emotional regulation) predict students' academic and social adjustment. As Goleman (1995) observes, emotional intelligence is a stronger predictor of success in life than IQ; it seems to be more important for educational contexts where social and emotional skills determine the outcome. Bar-On (2000) further suggests the role of emotional competencies in the early years of college students, as it is critical to achieving success in higher education. Therefore, it is vitally important to establish different training initiatives aimed at increasing emotional intelligence in tertiary education so that growth is holistic and both cognitive and socio-emotional aspects can be developed in both environments.

**Keywords--** Empathy, Comprehensive training, Emotional intelligence.

**Abstract--** The present research, titled "The Role of Emotional Intelligence in University Students: A Perspective from the Human Sciences," aimed to achieve this objective through documentary reviews for writers and a content analysis of previous cases of some students, highlighting theoretical trends from the perspective of emotional intelligence. At this stage, and within the content analysis, case studies were selected and the topic was coded; the results were compared and interpreted by others. The findings indicate that emotional competencies (namely self-awareness, empathy, and emotional regulation) predict students' academic and social adjustment. As Goleman (1995) observes, emotional intelligence is a stronger predictor of success in life than intelligence quotient; it appears to be more important in educational contexts where social and emotional skills determine the outcome. Bar-On (2000) further suggests the role of emotional competencies in the early years of university students, as it is critical for achieving success in higher education. Therefore, it is of vital importance to establish different training initiatives aimed at increasing emotional intelligence in tertiary education so that growth is holistic and both cognitive and socio-emotional aspects can be developed in both settings.

**Keywords--** Emotional intelligence, Empathy, Holistic education.



## INTRODUCTION

It is important to consider that, in the higher education system, university students are being trained to develop social-emotional skills that enable them to face academic and personal challenges. In light of this, emotional intelligence is a useful quality in a person.

This skill is defined as the ability to recognize, understand, and regulate one's own emotions and the emotions of others through four basic areas of competence, including emotional perception, thought facilitation, emotional understanding, and emotional regulation (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

Goleman (1995) emphasizes that emotional skills may be even more important for success than mental ability. For college students, this means making better-informed decisions and being balanced in life in order to succeed in their studies.

Bar-On (2000) also suggests a model that links emotional intelligence with social and psychological adaptation. This means that in college, young people increase their self-confidence and ability to make good decisions under pressure, with a direct influence on well-being.

Likewise, Niño-González, García-García, and Caldevilla-Domínguez (2017) point out that mastering the ability to cope with emotions at university is as important as acquiring academic knowledge. This approach proved particularly successful at institutions such as IT Pachuca, where students who are taught to recognize and regulate their own emotions improve both their academic performance and their coping skills for the demands of daily life and future employment.

As these authors demonstrate, there is another consensus: it is not only learning that we are trying to achieve with emotional education, but also personal development and greater psychological well-being. They feel secure when they are able to identify their emotions; they know where they come from; they know how to use their emotions effectively. Building that empathy in the long term allows them to discover ways to relate better to their peers and teachers, as well as to withstand academic pressure with a greater level of resilience.



According to Niño-González, García-García, and Caldevilla-Domínguez (2017), this view has always insisted that students should receive some form of education on managing emotions, and learning college skills in emotional management is equally important to achieving the desired educational experience. It also describes how studying emotional education can guide students not only to learn better in school, but also to develop as individuals to overcome the multitude of challenges they experience in their working lives in society.

We advocate for an evidence-based understanding that emotional intelligence should form the cornerstone of university education, as it contributes substantially to academic success and preparedness for the demands of an ever-changing and fast-paced world.

Consequently, there is considerable empirical evidence supporting both the relationship between the development of emotional intelligence and academic success, as well as the development of positive interpersonal relationships and psychological well-being among university students. Studies collectively show that emotional competencies can help students cope with unexpected problems that are present and may arise in their lives, and once you discover your greatest strengths and weaknesses and delve deeper into your true self, you feel much more confident.

Empathy, in turn, allows students to relate more positively to their teachers and friends, and managing their emotions prepares them for academic stress before it overwhelms them in ways they cannot control. Mayer, Goleman, and Bar-On write that these emotional skills are key to education as a whole.

Research confirms that emotional intelligence needs to be accompanied by academic knowledge, and with its integration into the tertiary education curriculum, emotional intelligence equips young people with a greater capacity not only to develop emotional resilience, but also to become empathetic and better prepared to cope with constant social change.

### **General objective**

To analyze the role of emotional intelligence in university students from a humanities perspective, identifying its influence on academic performance, interpersonal relationships, and personal development.



### **Specific objectives**

- To examine the main theories and contributions of authors such as Goleman and Bar-On on emotional intelligence in the university setting.
- Identify the most relevant emotional skills, such as self-awareness, empathy, and emotional regulation, and their impact on students' academic performance and social adaptation.
- Propose training strategies aimed at strengthening emotional intelligence in higher education, with the aim of promoting the comprehensive training of university students.

### **JUSTIFICATION**

This research refers to the role of emotional intelligence in university students, focusing on the perspective of the humanities because today's students who face these types of challenges in their lives will have to acquire new skills that allow them, in different ways and in different fields, to maneuver and progress in a constantly evolving world. This includes one of the skills of emotional intelligence.

The authors of emotional intelligence are Peter Salovey and John Mayer (1990 and 1997), and we take this opportunity to explain it through four necessary skills included in the introduction to this work. The term was popularized in 1995 by Daniel Goleman and later applied to both teaching and work. He "proposed five emotional competencies: Self-awareness, Self-regulation, Motivation, Empathy, and Social Skills."

By impacting college students with these competencies, we can provide them with information about their strengths and weaknesses, helping them improve self-esteem, impulse control and academic stress, resilience, a stabilized emotional state that will affect academic performance, communicating key messages to group members, leadership, etc.

Therefore, the development of these emotional skills is, on the one hand, the basis for the student's overall academic success at university, which can improve performance, and on the other hand, it is part of the overall development of psychological health, adaptability, and preparation for professional life.

### **DEVELOPMENT**

In this study, a documentary-qualitative method was chosen, which is the case here, where the work was mainly carried out on texts, theories, and previous exposure to emotional intelligence in



university students.

This type of analysis helps us understand the role that emotional skills play in critical areas of academia: academic performance, relationships with teachers and peers, and personal growth. The objective was to review studies and specialized literature found in popular databases, such as Scopus, Redalyc, Scielo, and Google Scholar.

We considered both classic authors (e.g., Salovey and Mayer, Goleman, and Bar-On) who developed the initial theoretical framework of emotional intelligence and more recent research (e.g., Niño-González, García-García, and Caldevilla-Domínguez, 2017; Rodríguez Rodríguez et al., 2021).

The keywords were emotional intelligence, university students, academic performance, interpersonal relationships, and comprehensive training. The selected texts were classified according to their theoretical or practical contribution to forming an updated view of the topic. Based on content analysis, five key dimensions were revealed: self-awareness, empathy, emotional regulation, resilience, and psychological well-being.

From each case study, these data were analyzed and compared, allowing for comparisons of similarities and differences in the implementation of emotional intelligence at the university.

The implementation of the Methodological Process was carried out in three stages:

- a. **Data collection:** search and selection of appropriate academic sources.
- b. **Use of thematic coding and comparison with case studies:** placing findings into categories of analysis.
- c. **Data Interpretation:** critical interpretation from the humanities; linking findings with results for comprehensive student teaching.

In summary, using this approach, we have examined the place of emotional intelligence in higher education and developed a broad and well-founded vision. The results suggest practical solutions and theoretical insights that guide future research and general educational policy. All of these studies are, of course, limited. The research used here is documentary in nature, meaning that it is based on secondary data, so it could not yield a direct correlation and cause and effect. However, the application of the methodology ensures a well-structured analysis of the literature and provides a

theoretical basis and guidance for studies on academic emotional quotients throughout university. The analysis followed a complex sequence. First, they generated categories based on canonical works such as those by Salovey and Mayer, Goleman, and Bar-On. Of particular note is the Emotional Intelligence model by Salovey and Mayer (1997), which provided four basic skills:

- **Emotional Perception:** being able to perceive emotions within oneself and in related people (expression, voice, body language) and even in others (art).
- **Emotional Facilitation of Thought:** using emotions as a "tool for better reasoning or decision-making."
- **Emotional Understanding:** the study of emotions and knowing how they grow and progress, their impact and, sometimes, their causes and consequences, the relationship between the other two (how frustration leads to anger, etc.).
- **Emotional Regulation:** regulating one's own and others' emotions in the best possible way (receptive), also known as impulse regulation, staying calm, being positive, and helping others regulate their emotions. As Sigmund Freud emphasized the critical role of unconscious and unexplained ways of feeling in emotional regulation, while Richard Lazarus (1991) established how adaptation is a mechanism of emotional processing and social adaptation (a connection to emotional facilitation), Antonio Damasio (1994, 1999) described the role of passions in decision-making and behavior regulation. The following table summarizes this from below with the Salovey and Mayer Model:

**Table 1.** *Salovey and Mayer's model of emotional intelligence.*

Description	Sex	Salovey and Mayer's Emotional Intelligence Model (1997):			
		Emotional perception	Emotional facilitation	Emotional understanding	Emotional regulation
Student with problems in professional residence	Female	X	X	X	X
Student with problems in professional residence who did not finish	Male	X			
Student with problems in a specialized subject that he did not pass	Male	X	X	X	X
Student with family problems: illness	Female	X	X	X	X
Student with family loss	Male	X	X	X	X

**Source:** *Own elaboration (2025).*

Unlike other approaches, Daniel Goleman has constructed a framework that differs from most other mental models: it has five key elements that emphasize how emotions play a fundamental role in personal and professional success, apart from what IQ suggests. These are five pillars that are easily recognizable and understandable to everyday people:

- **Self-awareness:** the ability to identify and interpret our own emotions. This means knowing how what we experience drives our behavior and decisions.
- **Self-regulation:** the ability to control impulses and deal with emotions. It teaches people to adapt to change and remain calm in high-pressure situations.
- **Motivation:** the internal energy that drives us toward a goal. It's about passion, dedication, and perseverance—the willingness to do it without reward for pursuing your bucket list.
- **Empathy:** the ability to put yourself in someone else's shoes and feel what they feel. You need this to lead, cooperate, and network.
- **Social skills:** These explain how we manage our relationships. They include communication, influence, teamwork, and conflict resolution.

Meanwhile, Rodríguez Rodríguez et al. (2021) find that emotional well-being is linked to motivation and academic engagement. Therefore, this implies that students who acquire these skills are more likely to manage stress.

**Table 2.** *Coleman's model.*

Description	Gender	Goleman's model				
		Self-awareness	Self-regulation	Motivation	Empathy	Social skills Social skills
Student with problems in professional residence	Female	X	X	X	X	
Student with problems in professional residence who did not finish	Male			X	X	
Student with problems in a specialized subject that he did not pass	Male	X	X	X	X	X
Student with family problems: illness	Female	X	X	X	X	X
Student with family loss	Male	X	X	X	X	X

Psychologist Reuven Bar-On developed the EQ-i (Emotional Quotient Inventory), a measure of emotional intelligence that divides emotional skills into 15 main constructs across five main elements. His concept illustrates how emotions govern the way we form relationships, face challenges, and experience life:

- **Intrapersonal:** this is what exists within each of us. It requires recognizing your own feelings (emotional self-awareness), communicating feelings (assertiveness), maintaining a healthy sense of self (self-esteem), self-actualization (self-realization), and making decisions on your own (independence).
- **Interpersonal:** this relates to interaction with others. It involves empathy (putting yourself in someone else's shoes), developing good relationships (interpersonal relationships), and dedication to the public good (social responsibility).
- **Stress management:** emphasize your own ability to remain calm in stressful situations and perform your duties, without letting your feelings get the better of you due to your reaction to stress, as this reflects your tolerance to it (stress tolerance).
- **Adaptability:** this is about being able to assess situations objectively (reality testing), being prepared for change (flexibility), and finding solutions to your problems (problem solving).
- **General mood:** this has to do with maintaining a positive attitude towards life (optimism) and enjoying experiences and relationships (happiness).

García-García (n.d.) also points out that emotional training should not be a complement, but a fundamental element of the educational process. Because of this, adolescents increase their adaptability, which is why the following table is provided:

**Table 3.** Bar-On model.

Description	Gender	Bar-On (2000)				
		Intra pers onal	Inter pers onal	Stres s mana geme nt és	Adap tabili ty	Mood genera s 1
Student with problems in professional residence	Female	X	X		X	X
Student with problems in professional residence who did not finish	Male	X		X		X
Student with problems in a specialized subject that he did not pass	Male	X	X	X	X	X
Student with family problems: illness	Female	X	X	X	X	X
Student with family loss	Male	X	X	X	X	X

2. Thematic **coding** and comparison with case studies: each research element was evaluated and classified into categories: self-awareness, empathy, emotional regulation, resilience, and psychological well-being. With reference to the five most significant cases in which I participated as Coordinator of the Industrial Engineering and Industrial Design Program, the context of each case is described **below**:

**Table 4.** *Comparison of case studies.*

Description	Context
Student with problems in professional residence	She completed her professional residency, but her internal advisor was very upset due to the student's lack of communication during the course of her residency. The student did not submit any progress reports. She was given the opportunity to complete her professional residency and graduate.
Student with problems in professional residency who did not finish	He completed his professional residency, but his internal advisor was upset because of the student's lies. The advisor always asked him for his schedule so she could supervise him at the residency, but the student did not provide it. He was given the option of transferring and repeating the year at another technical college, but at that time he did not want to do so. A semester later, he wanted to transfer, but it was no longer possible because he appeared in the system as having withdrawn. His studies were cut short.
Student with problems in a specialized subject that he did not pass	The student had a special subject and was mistreated by the teacher and his classmates. He failed two subjects and had to retake them, but he failed those subjects as well. He had to transfer to another technical college in order to continue his studies. This semester he finished his professional residency and now has a job.
Student with family problems: illness	The student has a sick family member and, despite her situation, she strives to care for her family member and to complete the assignments for each one of her subjects.
Student with family loss	The student arrived drunk with several of his classmates and went to the bathroom, where he felt ill and was punished. He was referred to the psychology department to help him cope with his grief. The student has good grades.

**Source:** *Own work (2025).*

While Caldevilla-Domínguez (2017) argues that emotional education is more than just a positive experience in the classroom, it is also the building of the skills that students need to grow, such as empathy, self-regulation, and resilience. As a result, these skills are essential for fostering students' personal and academic development. The data is coded and entered as follows:

**Table 5.** Coding of information.

Description	Gender	Coding of information				
		Self-awareness	Empathy	Emotional regulation	Resilience	Psychological well-being
Student with problems at residence Professional	Female	X	X	X	X	X
Student with problems in professional residence that was not completed	Male		X			X
Student with problems in a specialized subject that he did not pass	Male	X	X	X	X	X
Student with family problems: illness	Female	X	X	X	X	X
Student with family loss	Male	X	X	X	X	X

**Source:** Own elaboration (2025).

**3. Interpretation:** According to research by Niño-González (n.d.), where students learn to embrace emotional skills to face academic difficulties with confidence, the chances of them remaining students and succeeding in the classroom increase. This knowledge was related to the tables compiled in Table 6 below:

**Table 6.** Interpretation of the information.

Description	Gender	Total
Student with problems in professional residence	Female	17
Student with problems in professional residence who did not finish	Male	8

Student with problems in a specialized subject that he did not pass	Male	19
Student with family problems: illness	Female	19
Student with family loss	Male	19

**Source:** *Own elaboration* (2025).

As seen in case 2, the student suffered from low emotional intelligence and had many problems with decision-making, which became so complex in his case that he was unable to obtain his degree in industrial engineering; therefore, his academic training is incomplete.

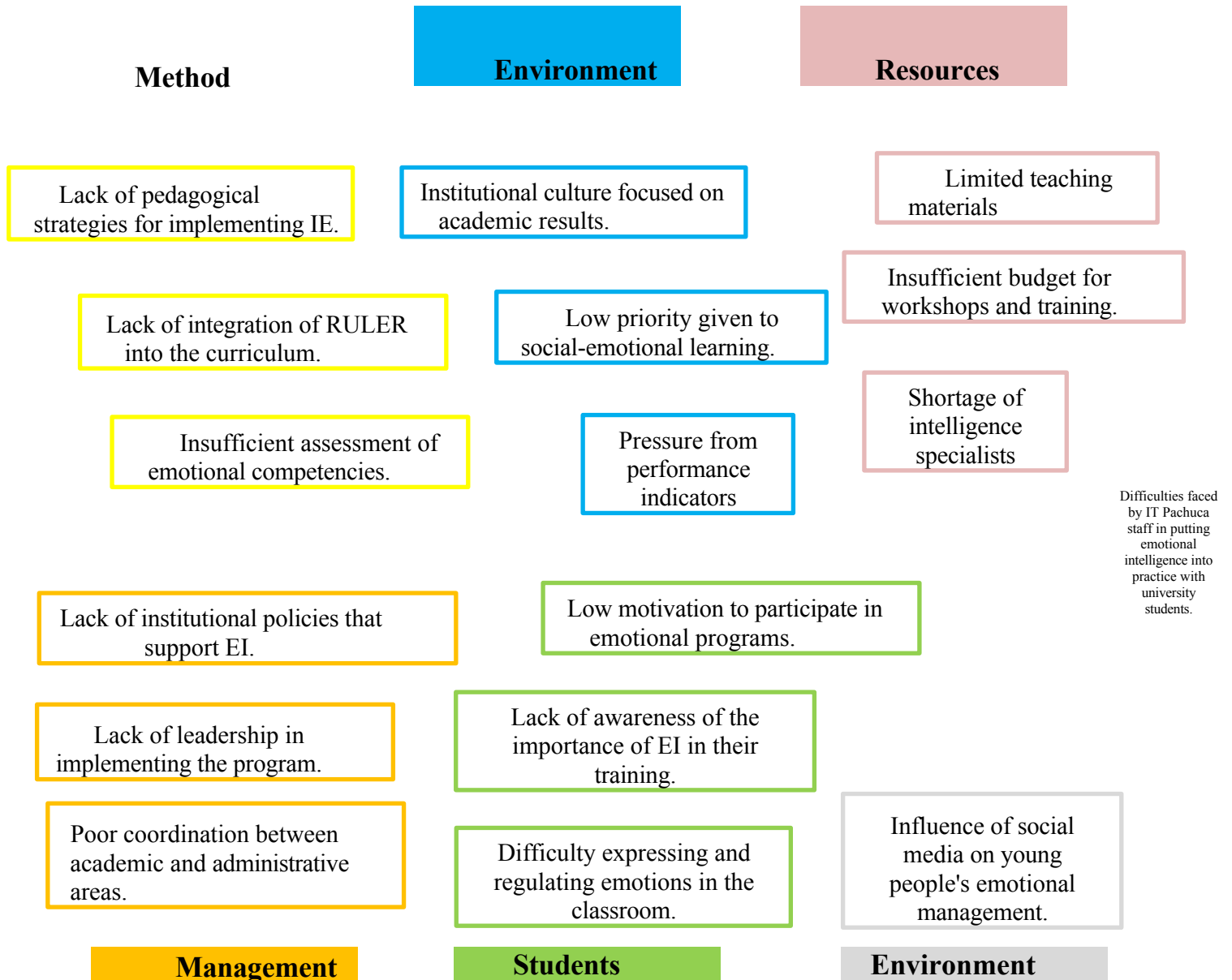
In addition, the information is analyzed using the 5 Whys technique:

- **Because... Why is the development of emotional intelligence in university students so important for their professional development?** Because developing emotional intelligence helps students recognize and manage their emotions, which improves their academic and professional performance.
- **Because... Why does developing emotional intelligence help students recognize and manage their emotions, improving their academic and professional performance?** Because when students manage stress, frustration, and pressure, they can make better decisions and stay motivated in demanding environments.
- **Because... Why does managing stress, frustration, and pressure enable students to make better decisions and stay motivated in demanding environments?** Because it allows students to work more efficiently, improves their communication, gives them more confidence to face adverse situations, resolve conflicts, and adapt to change more quickly.
- **Because... Why does it allow students to work more efficiently, improve their communication, give them more confidence to face adverse situations, resolve conflicts, and adapt to change more quickly?** Because the demands of the working world require students to have developed soft skills such as emotional intelligence, which is a key factor for leadership and collaboration.
- **Because... Why do the demands of the working world require students to have developed soft skills such as emotional intelligence, which is a key factor for leadership and collaboration?** Because professionals with emotional intelligence create positive work environments, increase productivity, and contribute to organizational well-being, which directly impacts the success of the company and their own professional growth.

For this reason, effective training strategies are suggested to cultivate emotional intelligence in

higher education, promoting the comprehensive education of university students, such as Marc Brackett's emotional intelligence model (and his RULER program), which includes: "teaching students and teachers to: **Recognize** emotions, **Understand** their origin and consequences, Accurately **label** what they feel, **Express themselves** appropriately, **Regulate** emotions to achieve goals" (2019), and in this work an Ishikawa diagram is developed:

**Diagram 1.** Ishikawa diagram.



Source: *Own work* (2025).



## DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Next, the data is validated using the analysis of the five most significant cases as a reference. It was observed that of the five students analyzed, four have more developed emotional intelligence, which is why they have favorable academic results, and only one student showed many deficiencies in the development of their emotional intelligence, resulting in a truncated career, as shown in the following table:

**Table 7.** Comparison of information.

Description	Gender	Salovey and Mayer's Emotional Intelligence Model (1997):	Goleman's model	Bar-On Model (2000)	Information coding	Total
		Sum	Sum	Sum	Total	
Student with problems in professional residence	Female	4	4	4	5	17
Student with problems in professional residence who did not finish	Male	1	2	3	2	8
Student with problems in a special subject that he did not pass	Male	4	5	5	5	19
Student with family problems: illness	Female	4	5	5	5	19
Student with family loss	Male	4	5	5	5	19

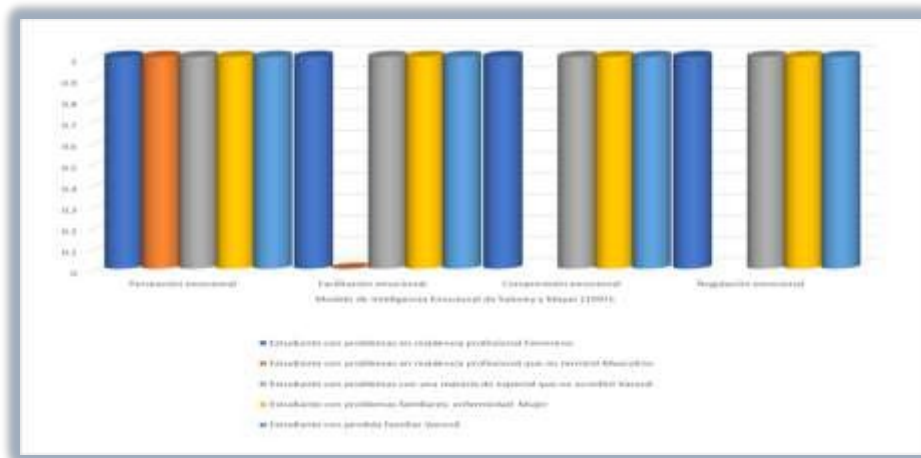
**Source:** Own elaboration (2025).

As we can see from the models developed by Salovey and Mayer (1997), Goleman (1995, 1998), and Bar-On (2000), four of the students demonstrate emotional and social balance, which translates into greater well-being and adaptability. In contrast, the case of the student with low scores (total of 8) shows the opposite side of the story and reminds us of the importance of developing emotional intelligence in students, which is a vital skill that can open or close doors in academic and personal life. Thus, the case of the student who did not graduate would not be an isolated case, as it coincides with the

A tendency observed in various universities throughout Latin America, where dropping out in the final stages, such as in this case the professional residency stage, is usually linked to a lack of adaptability and stress management. According to recent studies, emotional intelligence is an important factor in reducing dropout rates at the university level, as pointed out by Otero and Quenema (2025), who emphasize that a lack of socio-emotional skills is not only reflected in final grades but also in students' persistence in their university studies, which could explain this situation.

**ANALYSIS OF RESULTS**

Taking Salovey and Mayer's Emotional Intelligence Model as a reference, which refers to four dimensions: perceiving, using, understanding, and regulating emotions, all geared toward personal and cognitive development, the following graph was created comparing the five cases:

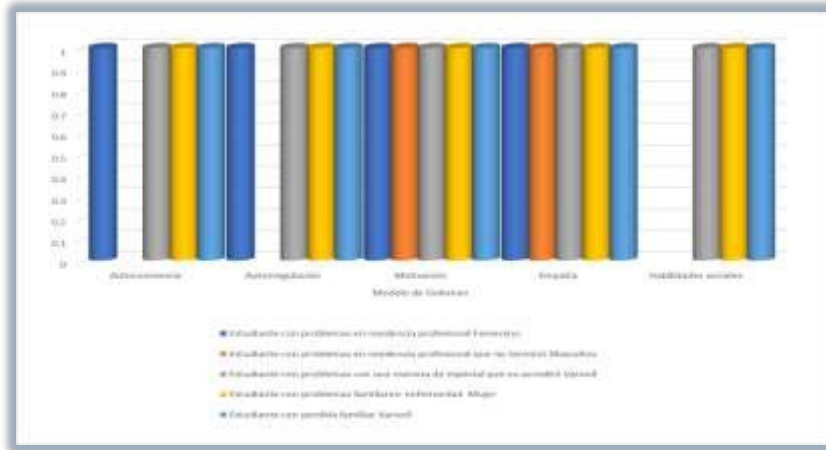


**Graph 1.** Salovey and Mayer's Emotional Intelligence Model.

**Source:** Own elaboration (2025).

Analysis: As can be seen, four of the five students have developed all four dimensions, and only one student has developed one dimension, resulting in poor academic performance.

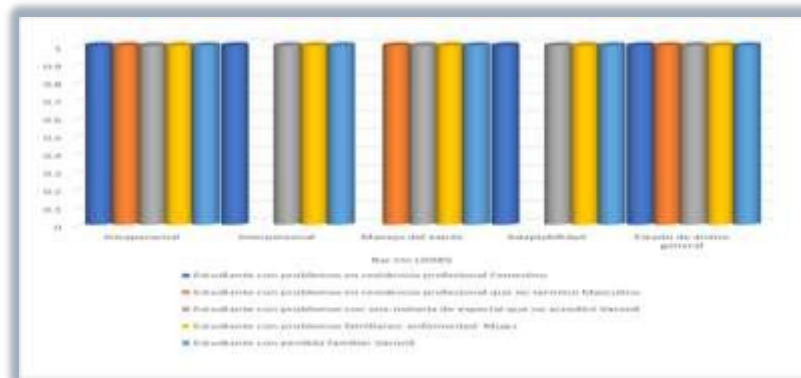
Moving on to Goleman's model, it talks about practical skills that we use every day, especially at work, in leadership, and in our personal relationships, such as self-esteem, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, as shown in the following graph:



**Graph 2. Goleman Model.**

**Source:** *Own elaboration (2025).*

Analysis: As can be seen, four of the five students have developed the five competencies we use in our daily lives, and only one student has developed two of these competencies, resulting in poor academic performance and a truncated career. Bar-On's model (2000) organizes emotional intelligence into five dimensions, as shown in the following graph:

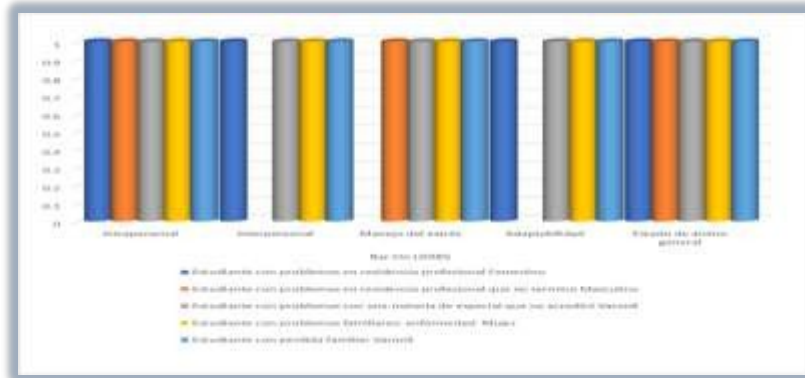


**Graph 3. Bar-On Model.**

**Source:** *Own elaboration (2025).*

Analysis: As can be seen, four of the five students have developed the five competencies we use in our daily lives, and only one student has developed two of these competencies, resulting in poor academic performance and a truncated career.

The Bar-On Model (2000) organizes emotional intelligence into five dimensions, as shown in the following graph:



Graph 3. Bar-On Model

Source: Own elaboration (2025).

Analysis: As can be seen, four of the five students have developed all five dimensions, and only one student has developed two of these dimensions, resulting in a lack of adaptability to the options offered, poor stress management, and a lack of assertiveness.

By organizing and coding the information, it was possible to see more clearly the relationship between how students manage their emotions and the results they achieve in their academic life. By assigning a value to competencies such as self-awareness, empathy, emotional regulation, resilience, and psychological well-being, a relationship was developed that shows how emotions directly influence the path that each student takes within the university.



Graph 4. Coding of information.

Source: Own elaboration (2025).



Analysis: As we can see, four of the five students have developed all five competencies, namely self-awareness, empathy, emotional regulation, resilience, and psychological well-being, while one student has only developed empathy and psychological well-being.

All the responses confirm what the authors have already suggested, as follows:

- Christiano Fabian Machuca Sole (2022), a neuroeducator who discusses the role of the "Emovere zone" in influencing emotional action.
- Susan David (2016), who explores the impact of emotional flexibility on private and professional relationships.
- Martyn Newman (2007), who applies Emotional Intelligence to leadership and business management.
- Paul Ekman (2003), who analyzed microexpressions and emotion recognition through research to contribute practical ideas about EI.
- David Caruso (2002), co-creator of the MSCEIT test to measure emotional intelligence in four areas.
- Adrian Furnham (2001), together with Petrides, developed the trait EI model and its relationship to personality.
- Richard Boyatzis (2000) worked with Goleman to develop an emotional competence model for assessing leadership and organizational development.
- Jack Block (1995) studied the relationships between personality, emotions, and adaptation that led to the EI model.
- Howard Gardner (1983) developed a theory describing the development of multiple intelligences, in which interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence are direct precursors to emotional intelligence.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on research on the topic: "The role of emotional intelligence in university students: a perspective from the humanities" and the analysis carried out on the content and literature presented, we discovered how important it is to include the development of emotional intelligence in our subjects for each of our university students. This is to equip them with the necessary tools to respond both academically and economically, react quickly when things change, and make definitive decisions. To this end, it is stated that emotional intelligence is an essential tool that is needed in the classroom. Therefore, it is a necessary task to promote awareness and introduce measures such as those adopted by Marc Brackett (in his RULER program) for the overall improvement of our university students.

## FUTURE WORK

Based on this research, it is necessary that in the near future, all subjects consider the development of emotional intelligence with each university student in order to promote their development in each of these competencies.

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Role	Author(s)
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Writing - Review and editing	Cruz Jiménez Regina
Visualization	Cruz Jiménez Regina
Supervision	Erika Gutiérrez González
Project Management	Erika Gutiérrez González
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