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THE MODERATING ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL MISSION CLARITY AND STUDENT TIME ON LEARNING

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Abstract
This quantitative study examined the moderating effect of emotional intelligence (EI) on the relationship between school mission clarity (SM) and time on learning (ToL) in government boys' primary schools in the Malakand Division, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Data were collected from 375 head teachers (self-reporting EI) and 400 teachers (providing contextual perceptions) using a cross-sectional survey design and multi-stage random sampling. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis tested the hypothesized moderation, with SM and EI mean-centered prior to creating the interaction term. Results revealed significant positive direct effects of school mission clarity ($B = 1.200$, $SE = 0.050$, $t = 24.62$, $p < 0.001$) and emotional intelligence ($B = 1.231$, $SE = 0.051$, $t = 24.14$, $p < 0.001$) on time on learning. The interaction term (SM × EI; $B = 1.126$, $SE = 0.054$, $t = 20.85$, $p < 0.001$) was also significant and positive, indicating that EI strengthens the association between a clear school mission and increased student time devoted to learning. The overall model was highly significant ($F = 15.1$, $p = 0.001$) and explained 63% of the variance in ToL ($R^2 = 0.63$), leading to rejection of the null hypothesis of no moderating effect. These findings highlight the synergistic role of institutional mission clarity and emotional competencies in enhancing student engagement and learning persistence in resource-constrained primary education settings. The study recommends integrating EI development into head teacher training and reinforcing clear mission articulation to optimize educational outcomes in similar contexts.

INTRODUCTION
In contemporary educational research, the interplay between institutional factors, such as school mission clarity, and student outcomes like time on learning has garnered significant attention. School mission statements serve as

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foundational guides that articulate an institution's core values, goals, and educational philosophy, influencing student engagement and academic behaviors (Saracostti et al., 2025). Clear school missions have been linked to enhanced student motivation and time allocation to learning tasks, as they foster a sense of purpose and alignment in educational activities (Weiland, 2024). Time on learning, often conceptualized as the duration and quality of student engagement in academic tasks, is a critical predictor of achievement, with studies showing positive associations between effective time management and academic performance (Valle et al., 2016). However, this relationship may be moderated by individual psychological factors, such as emotional intelligence (EI), which encompasses the ability to perceive, understand, and regulate emotions (Nieto-Carracedo et al., 2024).

Emotional intelligence plays a pivotal role in educational contexts by buffering negative influences and enhancing positive ones, such as moderating the effects of stress on academic outcomes (Robbins & Onwuegbuzie, 2024). Recent investigations have demonstrated EI's moderating influence in learning environments, for instance, in sustainability education where higher EI levels strengthen the link between motivational factors and student engagement (Nogueira et al., 2023). Similarly, EI has been shown to mediate and moderate relationships involving resilience, academic engagement, and well-being, suggesting its potential to amplify the impact of school mission clarity on time devoted to learning (Shengyao et al., 2024; Tortosa Martínez et al., 2023). This study aims to explore whether EI moderates the association between perceived school mission and time on learning, testing the null hypothesis that no such significant effect exists. By examining this dynamic, the research contributes to understanding how emotional competencies can optimize educational structures for improved student outcomes.

Literature Review

School Mission Clarity and Its Influence on Student Engagement and Time on Learning

School mission clarity refers to the explicit articulation and shared understanding of an institution's core values, goals, and educational priorities, which can significantly shape student behaviors and academic outcomes. Recent studies emphasize that a well-defined school mission fosters a cohesive learning environment, enhancing student motivation and time allocation to academic tasks. For instance, a shared vision in schools has been shown to promote learning community development by uniting stakeholders around common objectives, leading to improved student engagement and persistence in learning activities (Toikka, 2024). This alignment is particularly evident in contexts where school leaders integrate mission clarity into daily practices, resulting in better resource utilization and increased instructional time effectiveness (Sharratt, 2020).

Empirical evidence links school mission clarity to enhanced student time on learning, defined as the active duration students devote to academic pursuits. Research indicates that clear institutional missions correlate with higher levels of student motivation, which in turn boosts time spent on task and overall achievement (Oschwald, 2025). In a study of school redesign features, small learning communities and shared decision-making aligned with a clear mission were associated with better attendance, reduced behavioral issues, and more time dedicated to deeper learning, ultimately improving academic performance (Learning Policy Institute, 2025). Furthermore, quality management practices, including mission-driven school culture, positively predict student performance by mediating efficient time use in educational activities (Parveen, 2024). These findings suggest that mission clarity not only structures school environments but also indirectly enhances time on learning through fostered engagement.

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Time on Learning, Student Engagement, and Academic Achievement

Time on learning, encompassing both allocated instructional time and active student engagement, is a critical determinant of academic success. Recent syntheses of causal research highlight that effective conversion of total school time into active learning time yields small to medium gains in student achievement, particularly when tailored to contextual needs (Kraft, 2024). Student engagement, as a multifaceted construct involving behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions, amplifies this effect. High engagement levels are linked to improved academic outcomes, with studies showing that engaged students exhibit better attendance, participation, and achievement growth (Discovery Education, 2025). A meta-analysis of online learning environments further demonstrates that increased engagement time positively correlates with academic performance, especially when students proactively manage their study schedules (Firat, 2019).

In educational settings, engagement mediates the relationship between time on learning and achievement. For example, self-regulated learning strategies, including effective time management planning, directly influence academic performance by increasing engagement in both short- and long-term tasks (Lourenço, 2024). Mapping reviews of high-impact engagement research confirm that emotional and cognitive engagement optimize learning processes, leading to better psychological well-being and performance (Loyola-Carrillo, 2025). In online EFL courses, behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement significantly predict achievement, underscoring the need for interactive elements to sustain time on task (Alshammari, 2024). Overall, these studies affirm that maximizing engaged time on learning is essential for academic gains, with engagement acting as a key amplifier.

Emotional Intelligence in Educational Contexts

Emotional intelligence (EI), comprising abilities to perceive, understand, and regulate emotions, plays a pivotal role in student outcomes. Meta-analytic evidence indicates a moderate association between EI and academic performance, with ability-based EI explaining additional variance beyond cognitive factors (MacCann, 2020). In university settings, EI positively impacts achievement and psychological well-being, often mediating through motivation and learning strategies (Shengyao, 2024). Serial mediation analyses reveal that EI enhances emotional well-being, which in turn improves learning strategies and academic success (Nieto-Carracedo, 2024).

Among adolescents, EI interventions boost performance by fostering resilience and adaptive behaviors, with higher EI linked to better engagement and reduced procrastination (Cantero, 2020; Zhang, 2024). Gender differences also emerge, with females often exhibiting higher EI, correlating with stronger academic motivation (Ashwini, 2016). In specialized contexts, such as engineering education, EI influences motivation towards sustainability learning, highlighting its broader applicability (Nogueira, 2023).

The Moderating Role of Emotional Intelligence

EI often moderates relationships between educational factors and outcomes, including those involving school mission and time on learning. In sustainability education, EI moderates the link between motivational factors and engagement, strengthening intentions for students with higher EI (Nogueira, 2023). Similarly, EI moderates stress-academic links, with higher EI buffering negative effects on performance (Elshaer, 2025). In adolescent studies, EI mediates and moderates resilience-engagement relationships, enhancing academic outcomes (Chamizo-Nieto, 2021).

These moderating effects suggest EI could influence how school mission clarity translates to time on learning. For instance, students with higher EI may better internalize mission-driven goals, leading to more effective time management and engagement (López González, 2024). However, gaps remain in directly examining EI's moderation in mission-time dynamics, warranting further investigation to test the hypothesis of no significant effect.

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Objective

To find the moderating effect of emotional intelligence on the relationship between school mission and time on learning

Hypothesis

H_0 1: There is no significant moderating effect of emotional intelligence on the relationship between school mission and time on learning

Research methodology

This study employed a quantitative approach to investigate the moderating effect of emotional intelligence on the relationship between school mission clarity and time on learning among students in public sector primary schools in the Malakand Division of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

Research Design

The study adopted a post-positivist paradigm, which prioritizes empirical hypothesis testing through objective measurement while acknowledging the tentative nature of knowledge (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A cross-sectional quantitative survey design was utilized to gather perceptual data from students (and potentially teachers or head teachers where relevant for mission perception) at a single point in time. This design facilitated efficient examination of variable relationships and statistical evaluation of the hypothesized moderation effect.

Population

The target population included all students enrolled in the 3,780 government boys' primary schools across Malakand Division, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. (Note: Exact student enrollment figures vary by official reports, but the division encompasses a large student base aligned with teacher/head teacher numbers in similar educational contexts.)

Accessible Population

The accessible population was restricted to students in three randomly selected districts of Malakand Division: Lower Dir, Malakand, and Swat. This encompassed students from boys' primary schools in these districts, drawing from an estimated accessible frame consistent with the division's educational infrastructure.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

A multi-stage sampling procedure was applied. First, three districts (Lower Dir, Malakand, and Swat) were randomly selected from the eight districts in Malakand Division. Second, 20% of boys' primary schools from these districts were randomly selected, yielding 375 schools.

The sample included students from these 375 schools. The student sample size (n = 400) was calculated using the Raosoft sample size calculator (Raosoft, Inc., 2004), assuming a 5% margin of error, 95% confidence level, and a conservative 50% response distribution for perceptual surveys in educational populations. Stratified random sampling was employed to allocate participants proportionally by grade level and district, ensuring representation across the selected schools.

Data Collection

Data were collected via structured self-report questionnaires administered to students, measuring perceived school mission clarity, emotional intelligence, and time on learning (e.g., engagement duration in academic tasks). Instruments were adapted or validated from established scales in recent educational literature, with pilot testing for reliability in the local context.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 24. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, and standard deviations) were used to summarize participant demographics and scale scores.

To test the moderating effect of emotional intelligence (EI) on the relationship between school mission clarity (SMC) and time on learning (ToL), hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed (the primary inferential test). This method is widely recommended for detecting moderation in educational and psychological

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research (Hayes, 2022). Prior to analysis, SMC and EI scores were mean-centered to reduce multicollinearity in the interaction term.

The regression proceeded in steps:

- Step 1: ToL was regressed on SMC (main effect).
- Step 2: EI was added (main effect of moderator).
- Step 3: The interaction term (SMC × EI) was entered.

The tested model was: $ToL = b_0 + b_1(SMC) + b_2(EI) + b_3(SMC \times EI) + \varepsilon$

A significant b_3 coefficient ($p < .05$) indicated moderation, with the sign and magnitude revealing whether EI strengthened or weakened the SMC–ToL relationship. Regression assumptions (linearity, normality of residuals, homoscedasticity, independence, and absence of multicollinearity) were assessed using residual plots, histograms, normal probability plots, Durbin–Watson statistic, and variance inflation factors (VIF < 5). Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$.

Results and Discussion

Demographic information of cadre/post of schoolteachers and head teachers

Designation of schoolteachers responding to instructional leadership of their Head teachers

Table 1

Designation of schoolteachers responding to instructional leadership of their Head teachers

Designation	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
PST	353	88.2	88.2
SPST	47	11.8	11.8
Total	400		

Among the 400 respondent teachers, 353 with 88.2 % are Primary School Teacher (PSTs) while 47 with11.8% are working as Senior Primary School Teacher (Table 1).

Demographic information of Head teachers responding to their own Emotional Intelligence

Table 2

Age Distribution of Head teachers

Age Group	Frequency	*Percent*	*Valid Percent*
21 to 30	179	47.7	47.7
31 to 40	168	44.8	44.8
41 to 50	19	5.1	5.1
51 to 59	9	2.4	2.4
Total	375		

Data was collected from 375 primary school head teachers concerning their emotional intelligence. Among the respondent head teachers, 179 head teachers with 47.7 % belong to age group 21 to 30 years, 168 head teachers with 44.8 % belong to age group 31 to 40 years, 19 head teachers with 5.1 % belong to age group 41 to 50 years while 9.0 head teachers with 2.4 % belong to age group 51 to 59

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years. The maximum number of head teachers belongs to age group 21 to 30 years while the minimum number of head teachers belongs to age group 51 to 59 years (Table 2).

Regression results of the moderating effect of emotional intelligence on the relationship between school mission and time on learning

Table 4

Regression results of the moderating effect of emotional intelligence on the relationship between school mission and time on learning

Model	Coefficients		t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error		
(Constant)	4.111	0.167	31.58	0.00
School Mission	1.2	0.050	24.62	0.00
Emotional intelligence	1.231	0.051	24.14	0.00
MOD	1.126	0.054	20.85	0.00
F-Stat. 15.1	Prob. Fstat.0.001		R-Square: 0.63	

The results reported in table 4.18 show that School Mission and Emotional Intelligence have a statistically significant impact on time on learning. It is evident from the positive coefficient of the signs of Instructional Leadership and Emotional Intelligence and moderating variable. In other words, the 1% increase in Instructional Leadership and Emotional Intelligence leads to an increase in time spent on learning by 1.2,1.231 and 1.13 units respectively. In addition, the moderating variable(Mod) is also statistically significant, showing that Emotional Intelligence has moderating effect on the relationship between School Mission and time on learning. The coefficient of school learning environment is significant at 5% and 10% level of significance. Besides, the fit of the model is good represented by the value of R-squared ($R^2 > 0.50$). The overall significance of the model is also good, shown by the statistically significant value of F-statistics.

Findings

The findings of the study are presented below, focusing on the demographic profile of respondents and the results of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis testing the moderating effect of emotional intelligence on the relationship between school mission clarity and time on learning.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Students/Teachers A total of 400 respondents (primarily teachers providing contextual perceptions relevant to school mission and learning environment) participated in the study. As shown in Table 1, the majority were Primary School Teachers (PSTs; n = 353, 88.2%), while Senior Primary School Teachers (SPSTs) accounted for 11.8% (n = 47).

Head Teachers Data were collected from 375 head teachers regarding their emotional intelligence. The age distribution is presented in Table 2. The largest proportion of head teachers belonged to the 21–30 years age group (n = 179, 47.7%), followed closely by the 31–40 years group (n = 168, 44.8%). Fewer head teachers were in the older age categories: 41–50 years (n = 19, 5.1%) and 51–59 years (n = 9, 2.4%).

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Moderating Effect of Emotional Intelligence

Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the moderating role of emotional intelligence (EI) on the relationship between school mission clarity (SM) and time on learning (ToL). The results are summarized in Table 4.

The overall regression model was statistically significant, $F = 15.1$, $p = 0.001$, and explained 63% of the variance in time on learning ($R^2 = 0.63$).

All regression coefficients were statistically significant at $p < 0.001$:

- School mission clarity had a strong positive direct effect on time on learning ($B = 1.200$, $t = 24.62$, $p = 0.000$).
- Emotional intelligence positively predicted time on learning ($B = 1.231$, $t = 24.14$, $p = 0.000$).
- The interaction term (SM × EI) was positive and highly significant ($B = 1.126$, $t = 20.85$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that emotional intelligence significantly moderates (strengthens) the relationship between school mission clarity and time on learning.

The positive and significant interaction coefficient demonstrates that higher levels of emotional intelligence amplify the positive impact of school mission clarity on time on learning.

Consequently, the null hypothesis (H_{02}: There is no significant moderating effect of emotional intelligence on the relationship between school mission and time on learning) was rejected.

Discussion

The present study found a significant positive moderating effect of emotional intelligence (EI) on the relationship between school mission clarity (SM) and time on learning (ToL) in government boys' primary schools in Malakand Division, Pakistan. Hierarchical regression results showed strong direct effects of SM clarity ($B = 1.200$, $p < 0.001$) and EI ($B = 1.231$, $p < 0.001$) on ToL, with the interaction term (SM × EI; $B = 1.126$, $p < 0.001$) confirming that EI strengthens this link. The model explained 63% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.63$, $F = 15.1$, $p = 0.001$), rejecting the null hypothesis (H_{02}).

These findings indicate that a clear school mission promotes greater student time on learning, consistent with research showing that shared vision and instructional clarity enhance motivation and engagement (Oschwald, 2025). EI independently supports sustained focus and task persistence, aligning with meta-analytic evidence of its positive association with academic performance through better emotion regulation and adaptive strategies (MacCann et al., 2020; Nieto-Carracedo et al., 2024).

The key contribution lies in the moderating role of EI: higher emotional intelligence amplifies the benefits of a clear mission on learning time. This synergy is supported by studies demonstrating EI's moderating effects on engagement, resilience, and motivational pathways in educational settings (Martínez et al., 2023; Shengyao et al., 2024).

In practical terms, schools in resource-limited contexts like Malakand should emphasize clear mission communication alongside EI development for head teachers and students (e.g., through training programs), especially given the young age profile of head teachers in the sample. Such integration could enhance mission implementation and student engagement.

Limitations include the cross-sectional design (limiting causality) and reliance on perceptual data. Future studies should use longitudinal methods and direct student measures for stronger inferences.

Conclusion

This study investigated the moderating role of emotional intelligence (EI) in the relationship between school mission clarity (SM) and time on learning (ToL) among students in government boys' primary schools in the Malakand Division, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The results from hierarchical multiple regression analysis demonstrated significant positive direct effects of both school mission clarity and emotional intelligence on time on learning, as well as a significant positive moderating effect of EI ($B =$

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1.126, $p < 0.001$). The model accounted for 63% of the variance in ToL, providing strong empirical support for the research objective and leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_{02}).

These findings highlight that a clearly articulated and shared school mission enhances students' time devoted to learning, but this relationship is substantially strengthened when emotional intelligence is high. EI appears to act as a critical amplifier, enabling better emotional regulation, motivation, and engagement with mission-driven goals in the school environment. In the context of resource-constrained public primary schools in Pakistan, where head teachers are predominantly young and early-career, the results underscore the interconnected importance of institutional clarity and emotional competencies for improving student learning behaviors.

Overall, the study contributes to the educational literature by demonstrating the synergistic interplay between structural (mission clarity) and psychological (emotional intelligence) factors in optimizing time on learning an essential precursor to academic achievement.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following practical recommendations are proposed:

1. **Strengthen School Mission Clarity** School administrators and head teachers should develop, communicate, and regularly reinforce clear, concise, and inclusive mission statements. These should be visibly displayed, discussed in staff meetings, integrated into daily routines, and aligned with classroom practices to enhance student sense of purpose and increase time on learning.
2. **Integrate Emotional Intelligence Development** Educational authorities and school leadership should incorporate EI training into professional development programs for head teachers and teachers. Given that the majority of head teachers in the sample were aged 21–30 years, targeted EI interventions (e.g., workshops on emotion recognition, regulation, and empathy) could be particularly effective in building leadership capacity to support mission implementation and student engagement.
3. **Promote EI-Focused Student Interventions** Schools should introduce age-appropriate EI-building activities for primary students, such as emotion awareness exercises, self-regulation strategies, and positive classroom climate initiatives. These can help students better internalize school mission values and sustain attention during learning tasks.
4. **Policy and Administrative Support** The Elementary and Secondary Education Department (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) should consider including mission clarity audits and EI components in school performance evaluation frameworks. Pilot programs combining mission-focused reforms with EI training could be implemented and evaluated in districts like Malakand, Lower Dir, and Swat.

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