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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Emotional Intelligence and Self-Efficacy of Students Studying for a Master's Degree in Business Studies in Kathmandu Valley

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and self-efficacy (SE) among post-graduate students. A total of 272 participants were selected through convenience sampling, and data were collected using self-administered structured questionnaires measuring EI and SE. Structural equation modeling (SEM) with the weighted least squares mean and variance (WLSMV) technique was employed to investigate the associations between four dimensions of EI and SE. Findings indicate that others' emotional appraisal (OEA) and regulation of emotions (ROE) were positively related to SE, whereas self-emotion appraisal (SEA) showed a negative relationship. The fourth dimension, use of emotion (UOE), was not associated with SE. When controlling for gender and marital status, only OEA and ROE remained associated to SE. Additionally, a comparison of estimation techniques revealed that WLSMV provided a better model fit than maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) for latent constructs measured with Likert-scale items. These findings have important implications for university management and educators seeking to understand and enhance students' self-efficacy in the Nepali context.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, WLSMV, SEM, students, Nepal

Introduction

Despite being in a pivotal stage of life and gradually assimilating into society, college students continue to face several psychological issues, including a wide range of negative feelings like anxiety, irritability, despair, impulsivity, etc., and a lack of self-control. The control of emotions, self-efficacy, and other psychological skills have significant impacts on the ability to survive, work, study, communicate with others, and maintain physical and mental well-being. These psychological skills are also crucial for successful societal adaptation. It means they are unable to be aware of the situations and handle the

problems effectively. They largely face psychological problems. Therefore, it is needed to focus on the improvement of the emotional intelligence level of the students (Sun & Lyu, 2022). Emotional intelligence is necessary for every type of workers in organizations irrespective of their positions (Watkin, 2002). It is the way an individual has the capacity to understand himself or herself and others' emotions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Similarly, many researchers have been studying whether emotional intelligence helps in productivity in organizations (Prentice, 2019). This highlights that research related to emotional intelligence has been conducted in the case of employees in organizations. Students in their college life are passing through critical situations and finally go into society, but they show anxiety, bad emotions, and so on. The highly emotionally intelligent people can sensitize others' emotions and feelings and deal accordingly so self-emotion regulation is important for achieving effectiveness in job performance (Liang & Wang, 2018). An individual's traits are affected by their sense of self-efficacy. Individuals having low self-efficacy tend to feel difficulty in solving the problems. People with high self-efficacy are more likely to solve problems themselves (Schaumberg et al., 2013). Developing self-efficacy in students helps drive them to collect data, set goals, and make professional decisions (Linlin, 2017). Students with high self-efficacy become academically, mentally, and emotionally sound (Shuyuan & Zhijian, 2022; Yangbo, 2013). Self-efficacy is concerned with how individuals behave and perform. Moreover, it also helps apply learned skills to perform jobs better. Emotional intelligence is strongly tied to self-efficacy because self-efficacy affects an individual's emotional reaction styles. The emotional response styles are a manifestation of emotional intelligence. Similarly, Annisa et al. (2024) argued that emotional regulation and SE play an important role in minimizing students' academic pressure, while the ability to regulate emotions also enhances students' capacity to cope with social pressure (Paulino et al., 2025). Therefore, it is needed to stay focused on whether college students are being aware of emotions (Sun & Lyu, 2022). Universities may lack education in the areas of emotional intelligence and self-efficacy. So, students with low self-efficacy deny interacting with others, deny actively participating in class activities, lack energy and vitality, and become mentally and physically weak. Therefore, it is important and realistic to foster college students' self-efficacy awareness in their academic achievement (Shuhong & Geikong, 2012)

Kostic-Boanovic (2020) assessed the association between self-efficacy and emotional intelligence of teachers and found a positive relationship between the two. Results of meta-analysis, as shown by Huihua (2012) are a high correlation of emotional intelligence with leadership effectiveness and a moderate correlation with contextual performance, task performance, job satisfaction, self-efficacy, organizational commitment, and innovative behavior. Moreover, emotional intelligence has a negative moderate relationship with burnout stress. Other studies have indicated that emotional intelligence is a very important indicator to determine diverse aspects in organizational life. These scholarships reveal the significance of emotional intelligence on the self-efficacy of students.

Although several studies (e.g., Kostic-Boanovic, 2020; Shuhong & Geikong, 2012; Shuyuan & Zhijian, 2022; Yangbo, 2013) have examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and various organizational dimensions, relatively few (e.g., Shuhong & Geikong, 2012; Sun & Lyu, 2022) have investigated how college students' emotional self-regulation influences their ability to navigate everyday challenges within international contexts. In the Nepalese context, only a limited number of studies have examined emotional intelligence (Thapa & Yadav,

2024; Shrestha, 2025) and self-efficacy (Basnet et al., 2019). For instance, Thapa and Yadav (2024) investigated emotional intelligence among secondary-level students, while Shrestha (2025) examined its relationship with academic performance in higher education. In a non-academic context, Basnet et al. (2019) explored self-efficacy among employees of savings and credit cooperatives. Taken together, these studies remain limited and fragmented, with little focused attention on the association between EI and SE among university-level business students. Nevertheless, the findings derived from studies conducted in different sociocultural settings or among distinct populations may not be directly generalizable to students at Tribhuvan University in Nepal, given potential cultural variations and concerns regarding external validity. Thus, this study aimed to examine the influence of emotional intelligence on the self-efficacy of students enrolled in the Master of Business Studies program at Tribhuvan University. This study aims to compare the effectiveness of different parameter estimation methods in Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Specifically, the study applies the Weighted Least Squares Mean and Variance-adjusted (WLSMV) estimator, which is appropriate for latent variables measured via Likert-scale items, and compares its performance with Maximum Likelihood Estimation (MLE).

Literature Review

Self- Efficacy

Self-efficacy theory postulates that a person's capacity to perform easily in a difficult environment. It involves cognitive mechanisms (Bandura, 1977). Achieving knowledge in specific tasks strengthens one's belief in their capacity (Sherer et al., 1982). They claimed that the higher the emotional intelligence, the higher the self-efficacy of an individual (Hameli & Ordun, 2022). Sherer et al. (1982) categorized self-efficacy into general self-efficacy and social self-efficacy. People's handling capacity in various environments is general self-efficacy (McShane & Glinow, 2018). Students should be encouraged to recognize who they are and understand their emotional state to increase self-efficacy and balance the situation for their growth in the future (Sun & Lyu, 2022). General self-efficacy is an individual's capacity to adjust to a broad range of stressful environments and challenging demands. Meta-analysis showed that the general self-efficacy construct is universally applicable since it showed a meaningful association with other psychological variables (Luszczynska et al., 2005). The construct, general self-efficacy, can be universally applicable. Some common beliefs can be expected from individuals across the nation and sample (Bandura, 2002). Social self-efficacy is a person's ability to handle or tackle social situations (Sherer et al., 1982).

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is one's capability in solving problems and maintaining good relationships with other people (Mayer et al., 2008). The emotional intelligence of employees can help in achieving various results in organizations, for example, employee performance (Lam & Kirby, 2002), and motivation (Christie et al., 2007). Salovey and Mayer proposed the term emotional intelligence in 1990. They define emotional intelligence as one's ability to understand their own emotions and those of people around them, to control and balance the situation. Later on, Goleman (1995) progressed on the emotional intelligence of Salovey and Mayer (1990), proposing it as self-awareness, managing emotion, motivating oneself, empathy, and handling relations.

Emotional Intelligence and Self-Efficacy

Several studies have investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy across various professions, including students and teachers, consistently

reporting a significant positive association. For instance, Chan (2008) found that teachers' self-efficacy was related to both intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions of emotional intelligence. Similarly, Ordun and Akun (2017) found a positive association between students' emotional intelligence and self-efficacy. In the workplace context, Rathi and Rastogi (2009) observed that employees with higher emotional intelligence exhibited greater self-efficacy. Mortan et al. (2014) highlighted that the use and regulation of emotions significantly influenced entrepreneurial self-efficacy. Kostic-Bobanovic (2020) also identified a positive association between teachers' self-efficacy and emotional intelligence. In a more recent study, Shubayr and Dailah (2025) investigated nursing students and reported that emotional intelligence was positively associated with self-efficacy but negatively associated with stress levels. Consistent with these findings, several other studies have likewise demonstrated a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy (Abdolvahabi et al., 2012; Chan, 2004; El-Sayed et al., 2014). Taken together, this body of evidence suggests that emotional intelligence and self-efficacy are interrelated constructs, reflecting an individual's capacity to perceive, recognize, and monitor their emotions and those of others across academic, professional, and organizational contexts (Bandura, 1997). Academic researchers in different areas of inquiry have been applying self-efficacy theory to forecast human efficacy from athletic skill to academic achievement for the last 35 years (Artino, 2012). Similarly, students are needed to enhance their coping ability for online education during the pandemic, improving their emotional intelligence (Ainiyah et al., 2021). Thus, these findings highlight the importance of developing emotional intelligence among students to enhance their resilience and ability to adapt to challenging situations. Although studies listed above consistently found a positive association between self-efficacy and emotional intelligence, some other studies conducted in different parts of the world in different professions, while taking into account demographic profiles, have different findings. For example, Kazmi et al. (2021) found no association between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy of teachers from the public college of Pakistan due to gender differences. Similarly, Ahmed et al. (2019), Salvara et al. (2017), and Siddiqui et al. (2020) reported that emotional intelligence was not significantly associated with self-efficacy across gender, highlighting that demographic factor may moderate this relationship in certain contexts. Thus, in this study, the association between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy was examined both with and without accounting for demographic factors, including gender and marital status. Furthermore, emotional intelligence was conceptualized as self-emotional appraisal, others' emotional appraisal, use of emotion, and regulation of emotions, as proposed by Wong and Law (2002), while self-efficacy was treated as a latent variable, measured through two latent constructs: general self-efficacy and social self-efficacy. Building on the reviewed literature and the preceding discussion, this study formulates the following hypotheses:

H1: Self-emotional appraisal (SEA) is positively associated with self-efficacy (SE)

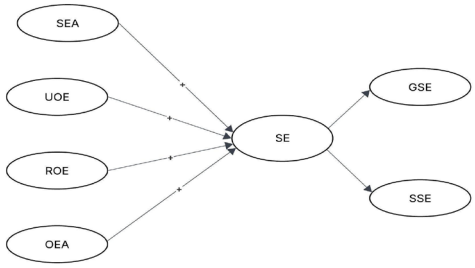
H2: Other's emotional appraisal (OEA) is positively associated with self-efficacy (SE)

H3: Use of emotion (UOE) is positively associated with self-efficacy (SE)

H4: Regulation of emotions (ROE) is positively associated with self-efficacy (SE)

Figure 1

Hypothetical Model Based on the Literature



Note: SE = Self efficacy, SEA = Self-emotional appraisal, OEA = Other's emotional appraisal, UOE = Use of emotion, ROE = Regulation of emotion

Research Methods

Research Design

This study utilized primary data and a quantitative approach to investigate the relationships between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy among Master's students. Philosophical point of view, this study adopted post-positivism, which assumes that an objective reality exists but can only be approximated through empirical measurement and statistical modeling. Ontologically, EI and SE are viewed as real, measurable psychological constructs that exist independently of the researcher among participants of this study. Epistemologically, knowledge about these constructs is generated through quantitative methods, including standardized instruments and SEM to examine association between variables. Axiologically, the study emphasizes objectivity, value neutrality, and the minimization of researcher bias throughout the research process. These philosophical approaches are appropriate for this study as the objective of the study is to test theoretical relationships between EI and SE and draw conclusions based on empirical evidence (Saunders et al., 2009). Furthermore, a cross-sectional correlational research design was employed, with data solicited through self-administered structured questionnaires. Self-efficacy was used as an endogenous variable, and emotional intelligence as an exogenous variable. Students in the Master's of Business Studies (MBS) program of Tribhuvan University (TU)'s constituent campus situated within Kathmandu Valley comprise the population.

Variables and Measures

Respondents' self-efficacy was assessed on the 17-item General Self-Efficacy Scale and social self-efficacy (6 items) (Sherer et al., 1982). Emotional intelligence (EI) was analyzed employing the validated four-dimensional scale by Wong and Law (2002), comprising self-emotion appraisal (3 items)**,** others' emotion appraisal (4 items)**,** use of emotion (4 items), and regulation of emotion (4 items)**.** These measurement scales have been rigorously tested and have demonstrated strong psychometric properties, including high reliability and construct validity (see Sherer et al., 1982; Wong and Law, 2002). Moreover, these instruments continue to be widely used in contemporary research (see Ishak and Jamian, 2021), confirming their suitability and relevance for the present study. Participants' responses were measured using five-point Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree).

Operational Definition of Independent Variables (Wang & Law, 2002)

Self-emotional appraisal- refers to a person's skills to understand their own emotions and to express them in a natural manner

Others' emotional appraisal- is concerned with a person's capability to know people around him or her. It is also a person's ability to sense others' feelings and to adjust their own sense around the people

Use of emotion is concerned with a person's ability to apply their own emotion for productive and constructive job or activities

Regulation of emotions- refers to a person's ability to regulate their own emotion to eliminate or minimize stress

Operational Definition of Dependent Variable, Self-Efficacy (Sherer et al., 1982)

General self-efficacy indicates that an individual's desire to get something without being restricted to a single skill.

Social self-efficacy is concerned with an individual's capability to tackle social problems.

Data Collection Procedure and Sample

The sample for this study comprised 272 students, studying in the MBS program of TU in the Kathmandu valley. The relationship between emotional intelligence and the self-efficacy of students was assessed, employing the self-administered questionnaire. Among 309 distributed questionnaires, 272 responses were received. Responses were received online using a Google Form as well as in person. Informed consent was taken before distributing the form to be filled out. The researcher took consent from students for the survey and distributed the survey questionnaire after they agreed. The researcher met students visiting the constituent campus and obtained consent from them. The researcher distributed the questionnaire according to their preference, either online or on paper. An email ID or WhatsApp number was requested from students who preferred to fill out the survey questionnaire online. A questionnaire in paper form kept inside the envelope was provided to those who preferred to be filled out on paper. They were requested to fill up by taking a week. They were followed with a reminder after a week. The distribution and collection of data took place from June to August 2025. Convenience sampling under non-probability sampling was used to collect the sample. The convenience sampling was used due to accessibility and time constraints, as participants were selected based on their availability and willingness to participate. This technique is commonly applied in survey research (Saunders et al., 2019).

Data Analysis Plan

When studies focus on the relationship between explanatory and response variables, regression is a widely used method. However, traditional regression is not the best choice when the variables are latent in nature. To examine the relationships between a set of latent explanatory variables and response variables, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is the most appropriate approach. SEM is principally appropriate for modeling latent constructs because it integrates confirmatory factor analysis and path analysis, allowing us to examine both measurement and structural relationships simultaneously and control for measurement error (Hair et al.; 2019, Kline, 2016). The variables examined in our study are latent in nature; therefore, SEM is an appropriate modeling technique. In SEM, while PLS-SEM is widely used method, it treats ordinal indicators, such as Likert-scale items, as continuous, which may lead to biased parameter estimates, particularly when the number of response categories is small (Schuberth, Henseler, & Dijkstra 2018). Thus, estimation methods that account for the ordinal nature of the data, such as the weighted least squares mean and variance (WLSMV) method, are recommended to produce more reliable and unbiased parameter estimates (Li 2016). Thus, SEM with weighted least squares mean and variance adjusted (WLSMV) estimation method to examine the relationships between the response and explanatory latent variables was used. Compared to ordinary least squares and maximum likelihood estimation, WLSMV is more appropriate for ordinal Likert-scale items, such as those employed in the present study (Li, 2016). In addition, the use of SEM with WLSMV doesn't require items to be normally distributed. Model fit was assessed applying multiple indices, including normalized chi-square (χ^2/df), standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), comparative fit index (CFI), and root mean square error of

approximation (RMSEA). For acceptable fit: $\chi^2/df < 3$, SRMR < 0.08, TLI > 0.90, CFI > 0.90, and RMSEA < 0.08 are considered. However, an RMSE between 0.08 and 0.1 is considered a moderate fit, and an RMSE 0.1 is considered a poor fit. For comparison purposes, the default maximum likelihood (ML) estimation method was also applied, and the resulting model was evaluated alongside the WLSMV model using the same fit indices.

The reliability and validity of the measurement instruments were assessed comprehensively. Convergent validity was assessed using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE)**,** with values above 0.50 indicating adequate convergence. Discriminant validity was evaluated using the Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio, with values below 0.85 considered satisfactory. Internal consistency and reliability were assessed using Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CR), with thresholds of > 0.70 indicating acceptable reliability.

Table 1

Demographic Profile

Status	Category	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	84	30.90
	Female	188	69.10
	Total	272	100
Age	20-25	78	28.70
	26-30	186	68.40
	31-35	8	2.90
	Total	272	100
Marital status	Unmarried	228	83.80
	Married	44	16.20
	Total	272	100
Job status	Not employed	205	75.40
	Employed	57	21.00
	Self-employed	10	3.70
	Total	272	100
Study in semester	Second	135	49.60
	Third	43	15.80
	Fourth	94	34.00
	Total	272	100

Note. Field Survey, 2025

All data were entered in SPSS version 28 (IBM Corp., 2021), and statistical analyses, including SEM, were performed in R 4.4.3 using the lavaan package (Rosseel, 2012).

Table 1 shows a higher percentage of female students (69.10 %) as compared to male students (30.90%). Most of the students were 68.40 % age group between 26-30, while 20.9 % were between 31-35. Regarding marital status, 83.80% were unmarried, and 16.20% were married. 75.40% of students were not in employment, followed by 21% were in employment, and only a few percentage (3.7%) were in self-employment. Most of the students (49.60%) were from the second semester, followed by 34 % from the fourth semester, 15 % from the third semester.

Results

Table 2 presents the factor loadings, AVE, Cronbach's alpha, and composite reliability. All factor loadings exceeded 0.60, AVE values were above 0.50, and CR were greater than 0.70. Cronbach's alpha values were also above 0.70, except for SSE (0.68), which is slightly below the recommended threshold. These results show that the measurement model indicates adequate convergent validity and reliability.

The measurement model exhibited satisfactory fit to the data, with a normalized chi-square (χ^2/df) of 2.96, CFI = 0.98, TLI = 0.97, RMSEA = 0.085, and SRMR = 0.080. Overall, the fit indices indicate that the measurement model is excellent in capturing the intended constructs and their psychometric properties.

Table 2

Factor Loadings and Psychometric Properties of the Measurement Model

Latent Variables	Items	Factor Loadings (λ)	AVE	α	CR
GSE	GSE6	0.797	0.59	0.76	0.79
	GSE9	0.816			
	GSE10	0.738			
	GSE14	0.72			
SSE	SSE2	0.625	0.53	0.68	0.71
	SSE5	0.814			
	SSE6	0.731			
SEA	SEA1	0.606	0.6	0.74	0.76
	SEA2	0.739			
	SEA3	0.944			
ROE	ROE1	0.772	0.64	0.75	0.81
	ROE2	0.773			
	ROE3	0.858			
OEA	OEA1	0.738	0.65	0.78	0.77
	OEA2	0.799			
	OEA4	0.871			
UOE	UOE1	0.710	0.55	0.73	0.72
	UOE2	0.837			
	UOE3	0.662			

Table 3 presents the HTMT in the upper triangle, the square root of AVE on the diagonal, and correlations among the latent constructs in the lower triangle. All HTMT values are below 0.90, and all inter-construct correlations are lower than the corresponding square roots of AVE. These results indicate that the measurement model demonstrates satisfactory discriminant validity.

Table 3

Validity Analysis

	GSE	SSE	SEA	UOE	ROE	OEA
GSE	**0.813**	0.77	0.329	0.671	0.669	0.597
SSE	0.784	**0.754**	0.43	0.694	0.859	0.459
SEA	0.382	0.441	**0.74**	0.601	0.542	0.361
UOE	0.624	0.72	0.601	**0.804**	0.791	0.406
ROE	0.703	0.812	0.554	0.809	**0.805**	0.395
OEA	0.506	0.585	0.378	0.414	0.389	**0.805**

Table 4 presents the results of three structural models. Model 1 includes all relationships between endogenous and exogenous variables as specified in the hypothetical model, controlling for gender and marital status, using the WLSMV estimation method. Model 2 examines the same relationships without controlling for gender and marital status, also using WLSMV. Model 3 uses maximum

likelihood (ML) estimation to examine the same relationships. The results indicate that Models 1 and 2 produced comparable results, whereas Model 3 demonstrated poorer fit relative to the WLSMV models. These findings confirm that WLSMV estimation is more appropriate than ML estimation for the present data.

Table 4

Model Comparison

	Normalized Chi-Square	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
Model 1	3.33	0.97	0.97	0.85	0.78
Model 2	2.97	0.98	0.97	0.085	0.08
Model3	5.25	0.70	0.64	0.125	0.084

Table 5 presents the results of the confirmatory factor analysis. In Model 1 (controlling for gender and marital status), OEA (β = 0.33, $p < .001$) and ROE (β = 0.76, $p < .001$) were significantly positively associated with SE. In contrast, UOE (β = 0.03, $p = .798$) and SEA (β = –0.13, $p = .083$) were not statistically significant.

In Model 2 (without controlling for gender and marital status), OEA (β = 0.34, p < .001) and ROE (β = 0.67, p < .001) remained significantly and positively associated with self-efficacy (SE). Contrary to expectations, SEA (β = –0.13, p = .048) exhibited a significant negative relationship, while UOE (β = 0.15, p = .232) was not statistically significant.

Overall, the results of Model 2 provide support for Hypotheses 2 and 4, whereas Hypothesis 3 was not supported. Although Hypothesis 1 proposed a positive association between SEA and self-efficacy, the results indicate a significant negative relationship. This unexpected finding may reflect cultural differences among students in Nepal, as well as variations across professions and geographic regions in other studies. To better understand this result, further qualitative research exploring diverse professional, cultural, and geographic contexts may be warranted.

Table 5

Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Models	Predictor	Estimate	SE	z-value	p-value	Std. Estimates
Model1	UOE	0.031	0.121	0.256	0.798	0.034
	OEA	0.293	0.049	6.017	0.000	0.330
	ROE	0.617	0.092	6.732	0.000	0.757
	SEA	-0.147	0.085	-1.735	0.083	-0.132
	Gender	0.174	0.098	1.777	0.076	0.263
	Marital Status	0.371	0.145	2.562	0.010	0.561
Model 2	UOE	0.139	0.116	1.194	0.232	0.150
	OEA	0.302	0.051	5.953	0.000	0.340
	ROE	0.570	0.103	5.521	0.000	0.670
	SEA	-0.138	0.07	-1.976	0.048	-0.127

In Model 1, which controlled for gender and marital status, only Hypotheses 2 and 4 were supported. The results indicate that OEA and ROE remained significantly and positively associated with self-efficacy, while SEA and UOE did not reach statistical

significance.

Discussion

This study analyzed the association between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy among students enrolled in a master's degree program. It also, examined the potential effect of demographics such as gender and marital status. Among the four dimensions of emotional intelligence, SEA was found to be negatively associated with students' self-efficacy, contrary to previous findings (Ordun & Akun, 2017), which reported a positive relationship. The observed inverse relationship between SEA and self-efficacy may reflect cultural, demographic, or situational factors, suggesting that greater emotional awareness does not necessarily translate into higher confidence in one's abilities. According to social cognitive theory, individuals with higher emotional intelligence are generally expected to exhibit greater self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). However, in the case of students with lower emotional intelligence, particularly those with limited self-emotion appraisal, higher levels of self-efficacy may still emerge. One possible explanation is that reduced awareness of one's negative emotional states may buffer against self-doubt, thereby indirectly enhancing self-efficacy. Furthermore, they may stay focused on their work with high dedication and continuation, where emotional factors are less relevant. Those who are low in appraising their own emotion could have high self-efficacy. This result shows exceptions depending on the situation and task to be performed, and individual personality. As indicated by this result, despite the literature showing that the higher the emotional intelligence, the higher the self-efficacy, it may not be the same everywhere and every time. In contrast, other dimensions of emotional intelligence, such as OEA and ROE, remained positively and significantly associated with self-efficacy, suggesting that students' capability to recognize and manage emotions in themselves and others contributes to higher self-efficacy. These findings are consistent with Mortan et al. (2014), who reported that individuals capable of understanding others' emotions and regulating their own emotions tend to exhibit higher self-efficacy. However, the current study found that UOE was not significantly associated with self-efficacy, which contradicts Rathi and Rastogi (2009), and Hameli and Urdin (2022) who reported that employees with higher emotional intelligence in the workplace demonstrated greater self-efficacy. This discrepancy may be attributable to differences in statistical techniques; Rathi and Rastogi (2009) applied linear regression on constructs measured with Likert-scale items, whereas latent variable models, as used in the present study, provide a more robust estimation for such constructs. Cultural and geographical differences may also contribute to this variation. Furthermore, ROE was positively associated with self-efficacy among management students, aligning with the findings of Shubayr and Dailah (2025), who reported that nursing students capable of managing their emotions exhibited higher self-efficacy. This suggests that the capacity to regulate or manage one's own emotions indicates greater self-efficacy, irrespective of students' academic streams, whether

in management, nursing, or other disciplines. These results emphasize the nuanced role of emotional intelligence in improving students' perceived capability, suggesting that not all emotional intelligence dimensions uniformly enhance self-efficacy across different cultural and academic contexts. The above discussion is based on Model 2, where gender and marital status were not controlled. When these demographic variables were accounted for in Model 1, only OEA and ROE remained significantly associated with self-efficacy, while UOE and SEA were not significant. Although no previous studies were found that directly controlled for these demographic factors using SEM, research conducted in different populations and professional contexts has reported similar findings. For instance, Kazmi et al. (2021) found no relation between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy among teachers in public colleges in Pakistan, attributing this to gender differences. The non-significant relationships between self-efficacy and the exogenous variables UOE and SEA in the present study may likewise be influenced by differences in gender and marital status.

Methodologically, this study employed the SEM with the WLSMV estimation approach, which has been shown to be more robust than the MLE method when analyzing models with ordinal indicators. This finding is consistent with Li (2016), who demonstrated that SEM with WLSMV provides more accurate parameter estimates for latent constructs measured using Likert-scale items. Thus, the present results reinforce the methodological advantage of using the estimation technique WLSMV over MLE in SEM analyses involving ordinal data.

In addition to the methodological contributions, this study contributes to the growing body of knowledge regarding the association between EI and SE. Moreover, the findings contribute to the social cognitive theory, showing the person's beliefs in his or her capacity (self-efficacy) are not only affected by cognitive factors but also by emotional awareness.

The academician can use insights from these findings to develop interventions that enhance both emotional intelligence and self-efficacy. Moreover, curricular developers may realize the importance of incorporating these insights in teaching strategies to develop resilient graduates in Nepalese universities.

Conclusion

Although the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and self-efficacy (SE) has been studied in various contexts, it has not been explored among Nepali university students, whose experiences may differ due to cultural and contextual factors. This study found that one's skill to know and control emotions in oneself and others contributes positively to students' self-efficacy, highlighting the importance of emotional awareness and regulation in fostering confidence. Interestingly, students with lower self-emotion appraisal sometimes exhibited higher self-efficacy, possibly because reduced awareness of negative emotional states can buffer against self-doubt. In contrast, the ability to actively use emotions did not appear to influence self-efficacy, suggesting that managing and understanding emotions may be more critical than employing them in daily situations. These findings underline the nuanced role of emotional intelligence in fostering self-efficacy and point to the potential benefits of developing emotional awareness and regulation skills in educational settings. Finally, this study demonstrates the value of using robust analytical approaches, such as SEM with WLSMV, when examining latent constructs measured with ordinal data.

Limitations

Although every aspect of the study has been critically evaluated and presented, it is not without limitations due to several constraints. The study relies on self-reported survey data (demographics and Likert-scale responses), assuming participants' honesty. Thus, incorporating qualitative research to explore the in-depth psychological states of participants would strengthen the study's findings; however, this was not undertaken due to time constraints. Human psychological states change over time; however, this cross-sectional study collected responses at a single time point. Future research should adopt a longitudinal design to better capture these temporal changes. The study is quantitative in nature; thus, in-depth philosophical discussions (e.g., ontological, epistemological, and axiological perspectives) have not been presented. The findings of this study are based on graduate students from Kathmandu-based colleges. Therefore, it may not be generalizable to all graduate-level students.

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Availability of Data and Materials

Data are safely stored. They will be made available in special request.

Conflict of Interest

I hereby declare that there is no conflict of interest in relation to this manuscript.

Ethical Compliance

This study involved human participants; however, no human biological data or tissue was used. We declare that the study was conducted in accordance with accepted ethical standards.

Consent for Publication

"Not applicable"

Plagiarism and AI Use

The manuscript is free from plagiarism and improper use of AI-generated content. Use of Open Writefull was limited to language support and has not replaced original scholarly contribution.

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