

THE INFLUENCE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND INTRINSIC MOTIVATION ON STUDENT ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT WITH DIFFERENTIATED LEARNING AS A MODERATION VARIABLE AT UPT SMPN IN BANGKALA DISTRICT, JENEPONTO REGENCY

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Received : 20-11-2025

Revised : 07-12-2025

Accepted : 25-01-2026

KEYWORDS

Emotional intelligence;
Intrinsic motivation;
differentiated instruction;
academic achievement;

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of emotional intelligence, intrinsic motivation, and differentiated instruction on students' academic achievement, as well as to examine the moderating role of differentiated instruction among students of UPT SMPN in Bangkala District, Jeneponto Regency. The background of this research arises from the persistent issue of low academic performance, which is presumed to be associated with students' emotional competence, learning motivation, and the implementation of instructional practices that have not fully accommodated diverse learning needs. A quantitative approach was employed using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) through SmartPLS 4. The results indicate that emotional intelligence has a positive and significant effect on academic achievement. Intrinsic motivation also demonstrates a positive and significant influence on students' academic performance. Furthermore, differentiated instruction significantly affects academic achievement, suggesting that instructional strategies tailored to students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles contribute to improved learning outcomes. The moderation analysis shows that differentiated instruction strengthens the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement; however, it does not moderate the effect of intrinsic motivation on academic achievement. Overall, this study affirms the importance of enhancing students' emotional competence, fostering intrinsic motivation, and implementing differentiated instruction to improve academic performance at the junior secondary level. These findings provide valuable implications for teachers, schools, and policymakers in designing more adaptive and student-centered instructional practices.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a systematic process designed to develop the potential of students, both in cognitive, affective,

and psychomotor aspects. In the context of modern education, students' academic abilities are not only seen as a result of the teaching and learning process, but also as a key indicator of the quality of education delivery in schools. Academic achievement is a benchmark for students' success in understanding, mastering, and applying learning concepts. Therefore, various aspects that affect academic achievement need to be comprehensively analyzed so that schools are able to design more effective and sustainable learning strategies.

Nevertheless, the academic achievement of students in various educational units still shows significant variation. In the context of UPT SMPN in Bangkala District, Jeneponto Regency, internal school data shows that most students still have difficulty achieving the Minimum Completeness Criteria (KKM).

Based on the 2024/2025 school year learning outcome report, around 42% of students have not been able to meet the minimum standards in core subjects such as Mathematics, Science, and Indonesian. This achievement reflects the existence of problems in the learning process that are not solely caused by students' intellectual factors, but also related to emotional abilities, learning motivation, and learning environments that have not fully supported student development holistically.

One of the non-cognitive aspects that has a significant effect on academic achievement is emotional intelligence. According to Goleman (2020), emotional intelligence is a person's ability to recognize, understand, manage self-emotions, and foster healthy interpersonal relationships. In the school environment, emotional intelligence is an important element in building students' adaptation to academic pressure, increasing study perseverance, and reducing negative behaviors such as academic stress, anxiety, and low self-confidence. Students who have high emotional intelligence tend to be better able to face learning challenges, manage time, and maintain focus so that they can achieve optimal achievements.

In addition to emotional intelligence, another important factor that also determines a student's academic success is intrinsic motivation. The Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; 2020) explains that intrinsic motivation arises when students have internal drives in the form of interest, curiosity, and a desire to achieve competence. Intrinsic motivation is the driving force that makes students learn not because of external pressure, but because of a personal desire to understand the material and achieve success. Research shows that students with high intrinsic motivation are more independent, committed to learning, and perform better academically than students who rely solely on extrinsic motivation.

Although the factors of emotional ability and intrinsic motivation play an important role, learning success will not be achieved optimally without the right learning strategy. One of the increasingly relevant approaches in efforts to improve the quality of learning is differentiated learning. According to Tomlinson (2014), differentiated learning is an instructional approach that provides opportunities for students to learn based on their interests, learning styles, and academic readiness levels.

This strategy provides space for students with diverse abilities to be actively involved in learning. In many schools that face heterogeneous conditions such as in Bangkala District, the differentiated approach is very relevant because it helps teachers overcome differences in students' abilities and backgrounds.

However, differentiated learning practices in some schools are not optimal due to limited teacher experience, learning planning that does not consider student profiles, and teaching focus that is still uniform. This situation causes students who have different learning needs to have difficulty following the learning process effectively. Thus, differentiated learning has great potential to moderate or strengthen the relationship between psychological factors (emotional intelligence and intrinsic motivation) and students' academic achievement.

Previous empirical studies have revealed that emotional intelligence and intrinsic motivation have an effect on academic achievement. However, research that integrates moderation variables in the form of differentiated learning, especially in the context of non-urban schools such as Jeneponto, is still very limited. In fact, the characteristics of students in this area show a high heterogeneity of abilities and motivation, so the application of differentiated learning

is very important to bridge their learning needs.

Based on this background, this study was conducted to analyze in depth the influence of emotional intelligence and intrinsic motivation on students' academic achievement, as well as to test the extent to which differentiated learning can strengthen the relationship between these variables. The results of this study are expected to make a theoretical and practical contribution to the development of learning strategies, especially in schools that face the challenge of student heterogeneity.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a quantitative approach with an explanatory design that aims to explain the influence of emotional intelligence and intrinsic motivation on students' academic achievement, as well as test the role of differentiated learning as a moderation variable. The analysis model used is Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) through the SmartPLS 4 application because it can test the relationship between latent variables simultaneously and does not require normal distributed data. The research was carried out in all junior high school UPTs in Bangkala District, Jeneponto Regency with a population of 1,835 students. The sample was determined using the Slovin formula with an error rate of 5%, so that 328 students were obtained. Sampling uses proportional random sampling techniques so that each school has balanced representation. Data were obtained through the distribution of a Likert scale questionnaire 1–5 which contained indicators of emotional intelligence, intrinsic motivation, differentiated learning, and academic achievement. The number of statements consists of

20 items for emotional intelligence, 16 items for intrinsic motivation, 12 items for differentiated learning, and 10 items for academic achievement. The instrument was tested through external model analysis to ensure validity and reliability, with the results of all indicators meeting the criteria of loading factor, AVE, composite reliability, and Cronbach's Alpha. Data analysis was carried out through two stages, namely descriptive analysis to describe the distribution of data and inferential analysis using PLS-SEM to test the direct and moderate influences. The significance of the influence was determined based on the t-statistic value of > 1.96 and the p-value < 0.05 .

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study show that emotional intelligence has a positive and significant influence on students' academic achievement. These findings corroborate Goleman's theory that the ability to manage emotions plays an important role in supporting perseverance and consistency in learning. Students who are able to manage emotions tend to have an easier time coping with academic pressure, maintaining focus, and adapting to the demands of assignments and assessments. In the context of junior high school students in Bangkala District, skills such as controlling anxiety

during exams, maintaining motivation when facing difficulties, and establishing good relationships with teachers and friends have been proven to make a real contribution to improving learning achievement. This shows that the emotional aspect is no longer just complementary, but an important foundation for academic success. Intrinsic motivation has also been shown to have a significant effect on academic achievement. These findings are in line with the theory of Self-Determination which explains that students who have internal drives—such as curiosity, interest in lessons, and a desire to grow—will be more active, diligent, and responsible in the learning process. Students who are motivated from within tend not to give up easily, are able to manage their time, and show enthusiasm in doing assignments or learning new material. This condition is clearly seen in the results of the study which indicate that an increase in intrinsic motivation provides a direct increase in students' academic achievement in school. Therefore, intrinsic motivation is one of the psychological factors that greatly affects the quality of student learning, especially at the junior high school level, which is an important period of development. In addition to these two psychological variables, differentiated learning has also been shown to have a significant influence on academic achievement. These findings are consistent with Tomlinson's idea that a learning process that adjusts students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles can improve student engagement and understanding. In the context of schools in Bangkala District that have a fairly high diversity of student abilities, the application of differentiated learning is very relevant. When teachers provide a variety of strategies, assignment choices, or material difficulty levels that suit students' needs, the learning process becomes more effective and students' chances of achieving optimal achievement are higher. These findings suggest that teachers' instructional quality has a direct and important contribution in determining academic achievement, not just internal factors of students. The results of the moderation test showed that differentiated learning was able to strengthen the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement. This means that students who have high emotional intelligence will benefit more when they learn in a flexible and appropriate environment their needs. Differentiated learning gives them space to express their emotional potential, work together, manage learning pressure, and optimize their self-strength. In other words, a learning strategy that is responsive to the needs of students makes emotional intelligence more effective in supporting academic success. However, unlike intrinsic motivation variables, differentiated learning has not been shown to moderate the influence of intrinsic motivation on academic achievement. These results indicate that students who have high intrinsic motivation tend to already have a strong drive to learn, so the variation in learning strategies does not provide a significant additional influence. Highly motivated students are usually able to organize their own learning, find additional resources, and set personal learning goals without relying on differences in teaching methods. Thus, the presence or absence of differentiated learning does not substantially change the influence of intrinsic motivation on academic achievement. Overall, the results of this study confirm that students' academic success is the result of the interaction between internal psychological factors and the learning strategies used by teachers. Emotional intelligence and intrinsic motivation remain the important foundations that determine students' readiness and maturity in learning. However, the effectiveness of these two factors is highly dependent on the quality of the learning environment, especially the extent to which teachers are able to implement adaptive learning and according to the needs of students. This study provides an overview that improving academic achievement can not only be done through strengthening students' emotional and motivational competencies, but also through learning interventions that are more responsive, humanistic, and student-centered. These findings can serve as a basis for schools and teachers to design more diverse, flexible, and relevant learning programs, especially in the face of the heterogeneity of student abilities in schools in the Bangkala Region.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study show that emotional intelligence and intrinsic motivation have an important role in improving student academic achievement at UPT SMPN in Bangkala District, Jeneponto Regency. Emotional

intelligence has been shown to have a positive and significant influence, showing that students' ability to appropriately recognize, manage, and express emotions can help them cope with the demands of learning and achieve better academic results. Intrinsic motivation also has a significant effect on academic achievement, which means that students' internal motivations become

The main factor in encouraging engagement, perseverance, and consistency in the learning process. In addition to internal student factors, differentiated learning has been shown to have a direct influence on academic achievement, showing that learning strategies tailored to students' interests, readiness, and learning profiles have a positive impact on learning comprehension and outcomes. This study also found that differentiated learning is able to strengthen the influence of emotional intelligence on academic achievement. This means that students with high emotional intelligence will benefit more optimally when learning is designed flexibly and according to their needs. However, differentiated learning does not moderate the relationship between intrinsic motivation and academic achievement, so it can be concluded that students who have high intrinsic motivation tend to be able to learn independently without relying on variations in learning methods. Overall, this study confirms that students' academic achievement is the result of a combination of internal psychological factors and learning strategies applied by teachers. Therefore, efforts to improve academic achievement require an approach that not only focuses on strengthening students' motivation and emotional intelligence, but also on improving the quality of learning that is responsive, adaptive, and centered on the needs of students.

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