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Inclusive Learning and Socio-Emotional Intelligence as Predictors of Academic Well-Being among University Students

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ABSTRACT

Inclusive higher education emphasizes the importance of an equitable, supportive, and diversity-appreciating learning environment to improve students' academic well-being. This study aims to analyze the influence of inclusive learning and social-emotional intelligence on students' academic well-being. The method used is a quantitative approach with a correlational design, involving 37 students from various faculties at Musi Charitas Catholic University. Data were collected through the Inclusive Learning Scale, Socio-Emotional Intelligence Inventory, and Academic Well-Being Scale, then analyzed using multiple regression. The results show that inclusive learning and social-emotional intelligence have a positive and significant effect on students' academic well-being. An inclusive learning environment and good social-emotional skills increase student engagement, satisfaction, and emotional balance. This study emphasizes the importance of implementing inclusive learning and social-emotional training in the curriculum to support academic well-being and success in higher education. Keywords: Inclusive Learning, Social-Emotional Intelligence, Academic Well-Being, Higher Education, Student Engagement.

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Introduction

Higher education in many countries is increasingly emphasizing the inclusive learning paradigm as part of a global commitment to fair and equitable quality education. Frameworks such as SDG 4 "Quality Education" and the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring (GEM) 2020 report emphasize that inclusion is not just about access, but also about attendance, active participation, and meaningful learning outcomes for all students (UNESCO, 2020). In this context, improving student academic well-being, encompassing affective, relational, and cognitive aspects, is emerging as a key indicator of the success of higher education institutions.

The term inclusive learning generally refers to institutional policies, practices, and cultures that promote full participation, responsive support for student diversity (e.g., ability, social background, culture, special needs), and equity in access, learning experiences, and

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outcomes(Booth & Ainscow, 2016; Taff & Clifton, 2022). In university settings, this includes flexible curriculum design, equitable assessment, student support services, and faculty-student interactions that value diversity (Marom & Hardwick, 2024; Davis et al., 2024). A scoping study by Taff and colleagues found that a sense of inclusion and belonging in higher education significantly correlated with students' academic outcomes and well-being (Taff & Clifton, 2022).

Meanwhile, social-emotional intelligence (SEI) refers to a person's ability to recognize their own emotions, regulate them, understand the emotions of others, and build and maintain constructive social relationships (Goleman, 1995; Petrides & Furnham, 2007). Frameworks like CASEL expand this construct into five main domains: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2020). Recent meta-analyses and studies have shown that higher levels of EI are associated with better academic performance, higher psychological well-being, and resilience to academic stress (Shengyao et al., 2024).

In relation to student academic well-being, which includes positive feelings about studies, active engagement, supportive relationships with fellow students and lecturers, and meaning in academic activities, these two variables are thought to play a significant role. Inclusive learning environments can increase a sense of belonging, reduce feelings of isolation or discrimination, which in turn strengthens academic well-being (Marom & Hardwick, 2024).

On the other hand, students with strong EQ competencies are better able to manage academic stress, adapt to the demands of independent learning, build supportive social networks, and maintain motivation and self-regulation all elements that support academic well-being and achievement (Habimana, 2024; Shengyao et al., 2024).

Musi Charitas Catholic University, based on its core values of excellence, dignity, and compassion, emphasizes the implementation of a social-emotional learning approach. This not only aims to instill positive attitudes and character in students through course material but also to provide examples through every activity, both inside and outside the classroom.

However, several research gaps remain. First, much inclusive research focuses on primary or secondary education, while higher education contexts are lacking, particularly in non-Western regions (Marom & Hardwick, 2024). Second, few studies simultaneously examine the effects of inclusive learning and social-emotional intelligence on students' academic well-being, using comprehensive analytical models. Third, although the literature on EI and academic outcomes is substantial, research linking EI, academic well-being, and institutional factors of inclusion remains limited in quantity and quality (Alabbasi et al., 2023; Calandri et al., 2025). Therefore, this study aims to (1) analyze the influence of inclusive learning and social-emotional intelligence on students' academic well-being, and (2) test whether these two variables independently or jointly contribute to academic well-being after controlling for demographic and academic variables.

Based on these objectives, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Inclusive learning has a positive effect on students' academic well-being.
H2: Social-emotional intelligence has a positive effect on students' academic well-being.
H3: Inclusive learning and social-emotional intelligence simultaneously explain additional variance in students' academic well-being compared to a model containing only one

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predictor.

Theory of Inclusive Learning

Inclusive learning theory emphasizes that educational institutions must design systems that actively reduce barriers and promote the full participation of all students, including those with special needs, diverse cultural backgrounds, or experiences of marginalization (UNESCO, 2020). Models such as the Index for Inclusion developed by Mel Ainscow and Tony Booth highlight three key dimensions: inclusive culture, inclusive policy, and inclusive practice (Booth & Ainscow, 2016). In the context of higher education, recent research indicates that although many institutions have adopted inclusive policies, implementation challenges, including faculty readiness, infrastructure, and curriculum design, remain significant (Oswal et al., 2025; Taff & Clifton, 2022). Technology adoption, universal design, and responsive pedagogical design are crucial aspects of inclusive learning in the digital age (Trespalacios, 2024). This theory provides the basis that an inclusive learning environment can increase a sense of belonging, reduce feelings of isolation, and strengthen positive social relationships, all of which are protective factors for students' academic well-being.

Socio-Emotional Intelligence Theory

The theory of social-emotional intelligence (SEI) was pioneered by Daniel Goleman, with five main domains: self-awareness, self-management, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Goleman, 1995). Furthermore, K. V. Petrides and Adrian Furnham's Trait Emotional Intelligence model expanded the construct to include perceptions and confidence in one's own emotional abilities (Petrides & Furnham, 2007), and has proven reliable for adult populations and college students. Meta-analyses indicate that EI is positively correlated with academic performance and psychological well-being (Brackett & Mayer, 2003). Recent studies in college students confirm that EI predicts non-cognitive outcomes such as well-being, engagement, and motivation (Bereded et al., 2025; Shengyao et al., 2024). KSE theory provides the basis that students who have high socio-emotional competence will be better able to manage academic stress, adapt to learning demands, build supportive relationships, and feel meaning in academic activities, all of which support academic well-being.

Academic Well-Being

Academic well-being is defined as a student's state of well-being encompassing psychological well-being, academic engagement, supportive social relationships, and meaning in learning activities. Martin Seligman's PERMA framework of Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment is often used to model well-being in general and has been applied to higher education contexts (Seligman, 2018). Alternatively, Ryff's (1989) model of psychological well-being, with dimensions such as self-acceptance, positive relations, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth, is also relevant (Ryff, 1989). Research on college students concludes that factors such as belonging, social support, self-regulation, and motivation are significantly related to academic well-being (Tinto, 2017; Wilcox et al., 2005). Thus, the academic well-being framework allows us to measure a more holistic outcome than just academic achievement (grades/GPA), namely how students feel, engage, and thrive in the academic environment.

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Method

The research method used in this study is a causal survey with multiple regression analysis techniques, with the analysis unit of this research being Mahasiswa Business and Management throughout universitas katolik musicaritas who are registered in the Ministry of Religion. The structure of the problem can be visualized more clearly through the path diagram presented below.

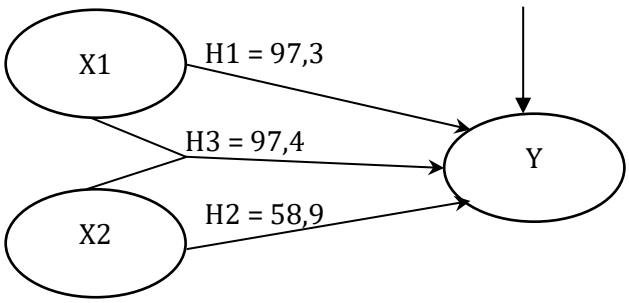

Figure 1. Constellation Model of Study

Sample

The sample in this study comprises 37 students consist of the a view program at a Chatolic Musi Charitas University, representing the full population of 125 students. Additionally, simple random sampling was referenced to reflect the fair selection process, though in practice the entire population was surveyed.

Table 1. Sample of Research

No	Semester	Number of Informants	Courses
1	Semester 1	7 Student	Basic Education
	Semester 1	7 Student	Midwifery
	Semester 3	6 Student	Accounting
	Semester 3	7 Student	Ners
	Semester 5	7 Student	Management
	Semester 5	3 Student	English Education

Data source: Researcher questionnaire (2025)

Research Background Recent studies have emphasized the significant role of Inclusive Learning and Socio-Emotional Intelligence in enhancing students' academic and psychological development. According to Spratt & Florian, (2015), Inclusive Learning is grounded in the idea that educational environments should accommodate diverse learners by fostering participation, equity, and accessibility. This approach not only supports academic achievement but also cultivates a sense of belonging among students, which is essential for their overall well-being. In addition, Salavera et al., (2019) highlight that Socio-Emotional Intelligence plays a vital role in students' ability to regulate emotions, manage stress, and engage effectively in social and academic contexts. Higher levels of socio-emotional intelligence are associated with greater academic motivation, improved interpersonal relationships, and better mental health outcomes. Based on these theoretical and empirical foundations, this study aims to examine the influence of Inclusive Learning and Socio-Emotional Intelligence as predictors of Academic Well-Being among university

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students. The research employs a quantitative approach using a survey method, and the collected data are analyzed using regression analysis to determine the extent to which the two predictor variables contribute to the students' Academic Well-Being.

Findings

Uji validitas x1 variable Inclusive Learning

Table 2. Validity test of the Inclusive Learning variable

Case Processing Summary			
		N	%
Cases	Valid	37	100.0
	Excluded[a]	0	.0
	Total	37	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

All data (37 respondents) were valid and used in the validity test of the Inclusive Learning variable because no data was omitted (0%). This means that all responses could be analyzed without the problem of missing data.

Uji Reliability X1 variable Inclusive Learning

Table 3. Reliability Statistics variable Inclusive Learning

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.761	15

The Cronbach's Alpha value was 0.761 > 0.70, indicating that the instrument is reliable. This means that the 15 items in the Inclusive Learning variable have good internal consistency and can be trusted to consistently measure the same concept.

Uji validitas X2 variable Socio-Emotional Intelligence

Table 4. Uji validitas variable Socio-Emotional Intelligence

Case Processing Summary			
		N	%
Cases	Valid	37	100.0
	Excluded[a]	0	.0
	Total	37	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

All data (37 respondents) were valid and used in the validity test of the Socio-Emotional Intelligence variable because no data was excluded (0%). Thus, all responses could be analyzed, and the validity test results were fully reliable.

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Uji Reliability X2 variable Socio-Emotional Intelligence

Table 5. Reliability Statistics variable Socio-Emotional Intelligence

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.736	16

The reliability test results for the Socio-Emotional Intelligence variable showed a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.736, indicating the instrument is reliable, as it exceeds the minimum threshold of 0.70. Therefore, the 16 items in this variable have good internal consistency and are suitable for use in research.

Uji validitas Y variable Academic Well-Being

Table 6. Uji validitas variable Academic Well-Being

Case Processing Summary			
		N	%
Cases	Valid	37	100.0
	Excluded[a]	0	.0
	Total	37	100.0
a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.			

All data (37 respondents) were valid and used in the validity test for the Academic Well-Being variable because no data was excluded (0%). This indicates that all respondents had complete data, allowing the validity test to produce accurate and reliable results.

Uji Reliability Y variable Academic Well-Being

Table 7. Reliability Statistics test variable Academic Well-Being

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.756	20

The reliability test results for the Academic Well-Being variable showed a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.756 for 20 items. This value is above the minimum threshold of 0.70, thus concluding that the instrument is reliable. This means that all statement items in the Academic Well-Being variable have good internal consistency and can be relied upon to consistently measure respondents' academic well-being.

Normality Test

Table 8. One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test				
		Academic Well-Being	Inclusive Learning	Socio-Emotional Intelligence
N		37	37	37
Normal Parameters[a,b]	Mean	66.08	48.32	53.84
	Std. Deviation	11.622	9.089	7.343

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Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.097	.131	.105
	Positive	.097	.131	.105
	Negative	-.092	-.090	-.056
Test Statistic		.097	.131	.105
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.200[c,d]	.110[c]	.200[c,d]

a. Test distribution is Normal.
b. Calculated from data.
c. Lilliefors Significance Correction.
d. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

Because all significance values (Sig. > 0.05), the data for the three variables—Academic Well-Being, Inclusive Learning, and Socio-Emotional Intelligence are normally distributed. Therefore, the data meet the assumption of normality and can be further analyzed using parametric statistical methods.

Uji homogenitas

Table 9. Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Test of Homogeneity of Variances					
		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Inclusive Learning, Socio-Emotional Intelligence,Academic Well-Being	Based on Mean	2.039	2	108	.135
	Based on Median	1.832	2	108	.165
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	1.832	2	90.455	.166
	Based on trimmed mean	1.985	2	108	.142

Since Sig. > 0.05, it can be concluded that the data are homogeneous, meaning that the variances between groups in the variables Inclusive Learning, Socio-Emotional Intelligence, and Academic Well-Being are equal. Thus, the assumption of homogeneity is met, and the data are suitable for further parametric analysis such as ANOVA or regression.

Table 10. X1-Y pengaruh Inclusive Learning terhadap Academic Well-Being among

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.987[a]	.973	.973	1.922

a. Predictors: (Constant), Inclusive Learning

The R value = 0.987 indicates a very strong and positive relationship between Inclusive Learning and Academic Well-Being. The R Square value = 0.973 means that 97.3% of the variation in Academic Well-Being can be explained by Inclusive Learning, while the remaining 2.7% is influenced by other factors outside the model. Thus, Inclusive Learning has a very large and significant influence on students' Academic Well-Being.

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Table 11. X2-Y pengaruh Socio-Emotional Intelligence terhadap Academic Well-Being among

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.768[a]	.589	.578	7.554
a. Predictors: (Constant), Socio-Emotional Intelligence				

The R value = 0.768 indicates a strong and positive relationship between Socio-Emotional Intelligence and Academic Well-Being. The R Square value = 0.589 means that 58.9% of the variation in Academic Well-Being can be explained by Socio-Emotional Intelligence, while the remaining 41.1% is influenced by other factors outside the model. Thus, Socio-Emotional Intelligence has a fairly strong and significant influence on students' Academic Well-Being.

Table 12. X1 and X2–Y: The influence of Socio-Emotional Intelligence on Academic Well-Being among university students

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.987[a]	.974	.972	1.945
a. Predictors: (Constant), Inclusive Learning , Socio-Emotional Intelligence				

The R value = 0.987 indicates a very strong and positive relationship between the combination of Inclusive Learning and Socio-Emotional Intelligence with Academic Well-Being. The R Square value = 0.974 indicates that 97.4% of the variation in Academic Well-Being can be explained jointly by both independent variables, while 2.6% is influenced by other factors outside the model. Thus, both Inclusive Learning and Socio-Emotional Intelligence simultaneously have a very large and significant influence on students' Academic Well-Being.

Discussion

This study aims to analyze the effect of inclusive learning and social-emotional intelligence (SEI) on the academic well-being of college students. The results of the analysis show that both variables have a positive and significant relationship with academic well-being, both partially and simultaneously. These findings emphasize the importance of integrating aspects of the learning environment (inclusiveness) and personal character (social-emotional competence) in creating meaningful, healthy, and sustainable learning experiences.

Socio-Emotional Intelligence and Academic Well-Being

The second finding shows that social-emotional intelligence also has a positive effect on academic well-being. Students with high levels of social-emotional intelligence (SEM) are better able to manage stress, adapt to task pressure, and maintain learning motivation than their peers with low levels of SEM. This finding aligns with Goleman, (1995) theory, which emphasizes the role of self-awareness, self-management, empathy, and social skills in managing emotional demands. In the Trait Emotional Intelligence model by Petrides & Furnham, (2007), SEM reflects self-confidence in one's own emotional abilities, which is a

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protective factor against academic burnout. Several studies support this relationship. Shengyao et al., (2024) found that SEM positively correlated with students' psychological well-being through the mediation of positive characteristics such as optimism and resilience. Bereded et al., (2025) showed that academic engagement mediates the relationship between KSE and academic achievement. Similarly, Dey et al., (2025) confirmed that KSE reduces academic stress and improves student performance. Psychologically, KSE improves students' ability to regulate their emotions (emotional regulation), recognize their own and others' feelings (empathy), and build supportive relationships with lecturers and peers. These processes strengthen self-efficacy and academic motivation, two key factors in academic well-being (Fredrickson, 2001; Seligman, 2018).

Integrating Inclusive Learning and Social-Emotional Intelligence

A combined analysis showed that inclusive learning and Social-Emotional Intelligence simultaneously contribute to academic well-being. An inclusive learning environment provides a social-psychological context that supports the expression of positive emotions, while Social-Emotional Intelligence serves as an internal resource to maximize the benefits of that environment. This synergy can be explained through the Broaden-and-Build theory Fredrickson, (2001) positive experiences in inclusive environments expand students' cognitive and social capacities, while their emotional skills help build long-term psychological resources such as resilience and optimism. The combination of these two factors results in more stable academic well-being than either factor's effect alone. These results also extend the study by Rodríguez-Ledo et al., (2018), which demonstrated a similar relationship between mindfulness, emotional intelligence, and social adjustment in adolescents. This research confirms that this cross-variable relationship remains relevant in higher education contexts, strengthening the argument that social-emotional development and inclusive learning environments should be implemented simultaneously.

Practical Implication:

Lecturers need to integrate the values of inclusion and social-emotional learning into their teaching practices, for example through cross-disciplinary collaborative learning, adaptive formative assessment, and empathy-based reflective activities. Therefore, core values should not only be taught through courses and become mottos, but also serve as the foundation for each course and student affective development.

Universities should consider incorporating student well-being indicators into their internal quality assurance systems. Orientation programs and student support centers should emphasize developing a sense of belonging and managing academic stress. Strengthening social-emotional learning (KSE) can be achieved through mindfulness training, peer mentoring, and co-curricular activities that encourage empathy and self-reflection. Furthermore, providing complaint services or addressing student social-emotional well-being is essential.

Limitation and suggestion for further research

This study has several limitations. First, the cross-sectional design does not allow for strong causal inference; longitudinal research is needed to assess the dynamics of relationships between variables throughout the study period. Second, the use of self-reported data opens up the possibility of social-desirability bias; a mixed-methods approach or behavioral observation could enhance external validity. Third, the sample

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came from a single institution with specific cultural characteristics; replication across universities and cultures is needed for broader generalization. Fourth, the instrument used was a standardized instrument with characteristics that differed across the study locations.

Further research is recommended to:

1. Develop instruments relevant to Musi Charitas Catholic University's core values: excellence, dignity, and compassion, embodied through a social-emotional learning approach.
2. Examine the role of sense of belonging, academic engagement, and self-efficacy as mediators between inclusivity and well-being.
3. Use multi-level analysis to evaluate differential effects at the classroom or faculty level.
4. Develop experimental interventions that integrate inclusive and social-emotional training into the university curriculum.

Conclusion

This research confirms that inclusive learning and social-emotional intelligence are crucial factors contributing to student academic well-being. An inclusive learning environment creates a sense of acceptance, safety, and respect, thus fostering engagement and satisfaction in the learning process. Furthermore, social-emotional intelligence helps students manage their emotions, build positive relationships, and maintain academic motivation, all of which enhance their well-being on campus. The implications for universities are clear: student well-being should be placed alongside academic achievement as a key indicator of institutional success. Universities need to develop policies that foster a culture of inclusion across all aspects of campus life and strengthen social support for students.

Strategic recommendations include developing a curriculum based on inclusive values and providing social-emotional training for students. Learning should be designed to foster empathy, cross-cultural collaboration, and self-reflection. Furthermore, training for faculty on inclusive pedagogy and emotional regulation should be prioritized to make classroom interactions more supportive and humanistic. Thus, the integration of inclusive learning and social-emotional empowerment can foster a healthy, empowering, and sustainable academic environment for all students.

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