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Teaching Practices and the Development of Emotional Intelligence in University Students

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to analyze the relationship between teaching practices and emotional intelligence in university students. A cross-sectional observational design was employed, with a sample of 393 undergraduate students from two faculties of a private university in Arequipa, who voluntarily and confidentially completed validated instruments to measure teaching practices and dimensions of emotional intelligence. Teaching practices were assessed using a 59-item questionnaire, reduced to four factors, with high reliability ($\alpha = 0.975$), while emotional intelligence was measured with the WLEIS, confirming a four-factor correlated model with adequate internal consistency (SEA = 0.84; OEA = 0.77; UOE = 0.83; ROE = 0.91). Descriptive results indicated that both teaching practices and emotional intelligence were predominantly perceived at intermediate levels, with higher levels in dimensions such as professional ethics and use of emotions, and lower levels concentrated in academic tutoring and emotion regulation. Inferential analyses using Spearman's Rho evidenced positive and significant correlations between teaching practices and all dimensions of emotional intelligence, highlighting a moderate relationship with self-emotion appraisal ($\rho = 0.501$; $p = 0.001$). These findings suggest that a favorable pedagogical environment can enhance students' emotional perception and management, strengthening socio-emotional competencies essential for comprehensive learning. It is concluded that integrating teaching strategies oriented toward emotional development contributes to improving educational quality and student well-being, and future longitudinal and multicentric research is recommended to explore mediators and moderators of this relationship across different university contexts.

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Teaching practices, Emotional intelligence, University students, Emotion regulation, Learning

1. Introduction

Contemporary university education extends beyond technical training and the award of professional degrees, aiming at students' comprehensive development by promoting academic, social, and emotional competencies that are central to personal and professional performance (Fernández-Martínez et al., 2023). In this context, the university curriculum constitutes a complex educational space that brings knowledge construction together with the development of transferable skills needed to respond to an increasingly dynamic social and professional environment.

Among these competencies, emotional intelligence is notable for its role in adapting to change, collaborative work, and the quality of interpersonal relationships, all of which are highly valued in professional settings (Xu et al., 2023). Innovative approaches supported by technological tools and active teaching strategies promote university students' autonomy, critical thinking, and emotional management (Vite, 2026). Their inclusion reflects the need to prepare students to manage the emotional demands of academic and professional life effectively.

In this context, university instructors play a strategic role as learning facilitators and relational role models, influencing the development of emotional and social skills through their teaching practices and everyday interactions (Li and Zhang, 2024). Ethical leadership helps build educational climates grounded in respect and pedagogical support, thereby fostering students' holistic development (Coello, 2025).

Teaching practice comprises the pedagogical, methodological, and relational actions involved in planning, implementing, and assessing the teaching and learning process. It is not limited to transmitting content; it also entails instructional decisions and facilitation strategies that shape students' holistic education (Harrison et al., 2022). From a behavioural perspective, positive reinforcement strengthens motivation and active participation (López, 2025).

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In higher education, teaching practice guides both knowledge acquisition and the development of personal and social competencies needed to meet professional challenges (Khasawneh et al., 2023). Through active and collaborative methods, instructors can help strengthen emotional intelligence, which is essential to self-regulation, empathy, and decision-making (Akram et al., 2022). Technology-mediated methods also support skills such as communication and empathy (Hackett et al., 2024; Wiesner L. & Burgoa G. 2023).

Conceptually, emotional intelligence is defined as the ability to perceive, understand, and regulate one's own emotions, as well as to recognize and manage those of others adaptively (López González et al., 2024). Its development during university is essential for addressing increasingly complex academic, social, and personal demands.

Strengthening emotional intelligence promotes self-regulation, resilience, and interpersonal skills, with positive effects on academic performance and employability (Paredes-Saavedra et al., 2024). Insufficient socio-emotional preparation may constitute a risk factor associated with precarious employment trajectories and social and occupational exclusion (Del Pozo Serrano & Polo Amashta, 2025). Emotional support throughout the educational process is therefore essential (Arteaga, 2025).

Nevertheless, higher education still tends to prioritize the transmission of theoretical knowledge, relegating socio-emotional development (González-Castellano et al., 2023). Evidence indicates that comprehensive, student-centred teaching practices significantly influence emotional intelligence development (Fragoso-Luzuriaca, 2022), particularly when they incorporate collaborative work and pedagogical support (Kerneža et al., 2024; Bautista, 2025). However, a gap remains in understanding precisely how specific teaching practices directly strengthen emotional competencies (Hackett et al., 2024).

Accordingly, this study examines the relationship between teaching practices and the development of emotional intelligence among university students. Its objectives are to:

- Analyse the relationship between teaching practices and self-emotion appraisal (SEA) among university students.
- Explore the relationship between teaching practices and others' emotion appraisal (OEA) among university students.
- Assess the relationship between teaching practices and the use of emotion (UOE) among university students.
- Examine the relationship between teaching practices and the regulation of emotion (ROE) among university students.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Study Design

Study design

This study used a cross-sectional observational design to examine the relationship between teaching practices and emotional intelligence among university students. Previously validated measurement instruments were used to obtain reliable information on both variables at a single point in time. This design was appropriate for examining associations between the constructs in a higher-education setting without intervening in or manipulating academic conditions.

2.2 Data and Variables

The study population comprised 393 students enrolled at a private university in Arequipa, Peru, across two academic schools: 206 students from the Professional School of Tourism and Hospitality and 187 from the Professional School of Archaeology. Participants included students of both sexes, aged 18 to 43, all enrolled in undergraduate programmes at the time of data collection.

The inclusion criteria were enrolment in one of the selected professional schools, voluntary agreement to participate, and completion of all assessment instruments. Students who did not provide informed consent or submitted incomplete questionnaires were excluded to ensure the consistency, quality, and validity of the information collected.

2.3 Data Preparation and Analysis

Procedure

Data were collected using a self-administered online questionnaire hosted on Google Forms, which facilitated access and participation for the selected university students. The first section contained informed consent, followed by sociodemographic questions and, finally, the instruments assessing teaching practices and emotional intelligence.

Participation was voluntary, anonymous, and confidential throughout the process. Students were informed that they could withdraw at any time without consequences. Data were collected over a predetermined four-week period, with efforts made to ensure consistent conditions for all participants and to standardize administration.

Measurement instruments

Teaching Practices Instrument

Teaching practices were measured using a questionnaire developed and validated by Hickman Rodríguez et al. (2019) in a university population, specifically among psychology students at a public university in Mexico. The final instrument comprises 59 items, initially organized into nine dimensions addressing areas such as teaching methodology, learning assessment, professional ethics, academic tutoring, and practical activities.

The validation process first assessed content validity through expert and novice-judge review. A pilot study involving 116 students was then conducted to refine the questionnaire before its definitive administration. The instrument was ultimately administered to a large sample of 3,030 university students and demonstrated high reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.975.

Exploratory factor analysis also simplified the original structure to four factors, demonstrating the robustness of the instrument's psychometric properties and supporting its suitability for assessing teaching practices in higher education.

Emotional Intelligence Instrument

Emotional intelligence was assessed using the Wong–Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS), originally developed by Wong and Law (2002) and validated in a Peruvian university population by Merino-Soto et al. (2019). The instrument assesses individuals' ability to perceive, use, and regulate their own emotions and those of others.

The scale comprises 16 items across four dimensions: self-emotion appraisal (SEA), others' emotion appraisal (OEA), use of emotion (UOE), and regulation of emotion (ROE). Responses are recorded on a five-point Likert scale. Validation studies have reported adequate construct validity, a consistent factor structure, and satisfactory reliability coefficients, supporting its use with university students (Carranza-Estebana et al., 2024).

Specifically, construct validity was assessed using confirmatory factor analysis with the WLSMV estimator and polychoric correlations. Results supported a correlated four-factor model with adequate fit indices (CFI = 0.948; TLI = 0.937; RMSEA = 0.083; SRMR = 0.064). Internal consistency estimated using omega coefficients ranged from adequate to high across all dimensions (SEA = 0.84; OEA = 0.77; UOE = 0.83; ROE = 0.91).

Statistical analysis

Data were processed systematically using descriptive and inferential procedures aligned with the study objectives. First, descriptive statistics were used to organize and present the general characteristics of the teaching-practices and emotional-intelligence variables. Frequency and percentage tables described the distribution of students' responses.

Inferential analysis was then conducted using Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (Spearman's rho), given the ordinal nature of the variables and the non-normal distribution of the data. This procedure estimated both the strength and direction of the association between teaching practices and emotional intelligence development.

Data processing and statistical analyses were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 28 and Microsoft Excel. These tools supported database management, calculation of descriptive statistics, and estimation of the corresponding correlation coefficients.

3. Results

[Present the results in the order of the study objectives. Cite each table and figure in the text and avoid repeating all of their data. The following table and figure placeholder are editable examples; duplicate or delete them as appropriate.]

3.1 Analysis of sociodemographic characteristics

The sample consisted of 393 students enrolled at a private university in Arequipa, Peru, from the Professional Schools of Tourism and Hospitality and Archaeology. No missing data were recorded for the sociodemographic variables considered, supporting the descriptive consistency of the findings and enabling a complete profile of the study population.

The sample included a higher proportion of women, who accounted for more than half of participants, while men represented a smaller share. Most participants were single, a pattern consistent with the typical age and educational stage of university students. Married and cohabiting participants accounted for substantially smaller proportions.

Regarding geographic origin, most students came from Arequipa, followed by Puno and Juliaca; fewer participants came from Lima and Tacna. This distribution indicates a substantial representation of students from southern regions of the country, with local students forming the majority.

The distribution by professional school was relatively balanced, although participation was slightly higher in Tourism and Hospitality than in Archaeology.

Overall, the sample was predominantly female, single, and local, with a substantial representation of students from other southern regions. Frequencies and percentages for these variables are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of university students

Sociodemographic characteristics	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Sex		
Female	238	60.6
Male	155	39.4
Marital status		
Single	356	90.6
Married	27	6.9
Cohabiting	10	2.5
Place of origin		
Arequipa	241	61.3
Puno	64	16.3
Juliaca	41	10.4
Lima	29	7.4
Tacna	18	4.6
Professional school		
Tourism and Hospitality	206	52.4
Archaeology	187	47.6
Total	393	100.0

Source: Authors' own work.

Descriptive analysis of the variables

Across the dimensions assessed, students' perceptions of teaching practice were predominantly at an intermediate level, suggesting a generally favourable picture while leaving room for improvement. Overall, teaching performance was viewed as adequate, although higher levels of excellence were not consistently achieved.

By dimension, professional ethics, attitudes towards students, and teaching methodology had the highest proportions at the moderate level (61.3%, 60.1%, and 58.3%, respectively). These findings indicate that students viewed instructors' ethical conduct, the quality of pedagogical interaction, and the relevance of teaching strategies positively. Punctuality and attendance (58.8%) and overall satisfaction (56.7%) followed the same intermediate pattern, suggesting relatively stable practices consistent with university expectations, though not yet widely rated as outstanding.

Alongside this majority assessment, the results show meaningful variation: high ratings were notable for punctuality and attendance (29.3%), professional ethics (28.8%), and attitudes towards students (26.7%), indicating that some students experienced teaching as strong and consistent. However, low ratings were also present, particularly for academic tutoring (24.4%) and learning assessment (21.1%), pointing to areas requiring priority attention and improvement. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Levels of the dimensions of teaching practice as perceived by university students

Teaching-practice dimensions	Low (%)	Moderate (%)	High (%)	Total

Syllabus coverage	19.8	54.5	25.7	100
Teaching methodology	16.3	58.3	25.4	100
Support materials	18.1	55.5	26.5	100
Attitudes towards students	13.2	60.1	26.7	100
Professional ethics	9.9	61.3	28.8	100
Learning assessment	21.1	52.7	26.2	100
Overall satisfaction	17.3	56.7	26.0	100
Punctuality and attendance	12.0	58.8	29.3	100
Academic tutoring	24.4	51.1	24.4	100

Source: Authors' own work.

Overall, students' ratings of teaching practices were predominantly intermediate, with this level accounting for more than half of participants (56.8%). For most students, pedagogical performance was generally satisfactory, though it retained limitations that could be addressed through improvement initiatives and institutional support.

A further 24.6% of students rated teaching practice as high. This sizeable group indicates that a considerable proportion of students recognized strong, consistent performance across the components assessed, reflecting educational experiences that effectively met academic expectations.

By contrast, 18.6% rated teaching practice as low. These less favourable assessments highlight the need for targeted institutional attention, since unaddressed concerns may adversely affect teaching and learning. Further details are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Overall levels of teaching practices perceived by university students

Level of teaching practice	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Low	73	18.6
Moderate	223	56.8
High	97	24.6
Total	393	100.0

Source: Authors' own work.

The analysis of the dimensions provides an overall picture in which university students' emotional intelligence was predominantly at an intermediate level. This pattern suggests that emotional competencies are still consolidating: they are present, but in most cases have not yet reached an optimal level of maturity.

More specifically, use of emotion (UOE) and self-emotion appraisal (SEA) had the highest proportions at the medium level (58.0% and 56.2%, respectively). This suggests that many students can identify their emotional states and use them functionally in academic and personal contexts, although these skills can still be improved. Others' emotion appraisal (OEA) was also concentrated at the intermediate level (54.7%), indicating that empathic abilities are developing and remain amenable to strengthening.

Alongside this intermediate-level predominance, a notable proportion of students scored highly across all dimensions, particularly SEA (25.7%) and UOE (25.2%). This finding points to a sizeable group with strong emotional competencies, including emotional self-awareness and adaptive use of emotion in different contexts. However, low scores were also observed, especially for regulation of emotion (ROE) (22.1%) and others' emotion appraisal (OEA) (20.4%), adding a critical dimension to the findings. Details are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Levels of emotional-intelligence dimensions among university students

Emotional-intelligence dimensions	Low (%)	Medium (%)	High (%)	Total (%)
Self-emotion appraisal (SEA)	18.1	56.2	25.7	100
Others' emotion appraisal (OEA)	20.4	54.7	24.9	100
Use of emotion (UOE)	16.8	58.0	25.2	100
Regulation of emotion (ROE)	22.1	52.9	25.0	100

Source: Authors' own work.

Overall, perceived emotional intelligence in the study population was predominantly at a medium level, which included more than half of participants (57.5%). This distribution suggests that students generally have emotional resources to address academic demands and social dynamics in university, although these resources are not yet fully consolidated and could be strengthened.

A high level of emotional intelligence was identified in 23.2% of students, indicating a substantial group with more developed emotional skills and greater command of their affective experiences. By contrast, 19.3% of the sample fell into the low category. This finding highlights the need to design and implement interventions and support strategies to foster emotional development in this group. Details are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Overall levels of emotional intelligence perceived by university students

Level of emotional intelligence	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Low	76	19.3
Medium	226	57.5
High	91	23.2
Total	393	100.0

Source: Authors' own work.

Inferential Analysis

Spearman's rho correlation analysis indicated positive, moderate associations between teaching practices and the different dimensions of emotional intelligence among university students. In particular, teaching practices were moderately and significantly correlated with self-emotion appraisal (SEA) ($\rho = 0.501$; $p = 0.001$), indicating that better pedagogical practices were associated with students' greater ability to recognize and understand their own emotional states. A moderate association was also found between teaching practices and use of emotion (UOE) ($\rho = 0.521$; $p = 0.000$), suggesting that favourable pedagogical environments are associated with the functional use of emotion in academic settings.

Similarly, the association between teaching practices and others' emotion appraisal (OEA) was moderate ($\rho = 0.603$; $p = 0.006$), indicating that teaching strategies were positively associated with the development of empathy and interpersonal emotional understanding, although the p-value was above the stricter significance threshold. Finally, the correlation between teaching practices and regulation of emotion (ROE) ($\rho = 0.563$; $p = 0.004$) confirmed a positive, significant association, suggesting that appropriate teaching practices were linked to students' greater ability to manage and regulate emotional responses. Taken together, these findings support the relevance of instructors' roles in strengthening emotional intelligence in higher education. Detailed results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Correlations between teaching practices and dimensions of emotional intelligence among university students

Related variables	Spearman's rho	Significance (p)
Teaching practices – Self-emotion appraisal (SEA)	0.501	0.001
Teaching practices – Others' emotion appraisal (OEA)	0.603	0.006
Teaching practices – Use of emotion (UOE)	0.521	0.000
Teaching practices – Regulation of emotion (ROE)	0.563	0.004

Source: Authors' own work.

The statistical analysis revealed a direct, positive, and statistically significant association between teaching practices and university students' emotional-intelligence levels (rho = 0.637; $p = 0.003$). A more favourable perception of teaching performance was associated with higher levels of emotional development, suggesting a close relationship between the quality of teaching and the emotional competencies students develop.

These findings suggest that teaching strategies which promote structured, participatory, and reflective learning environments may strengthen skills related to identifying, understanding, and regulating emotions. Teaching practice therefore affects not only cognition but also students' holistic development, fostering an educational climate that supports learning and personal growth. Detailed results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Correlation between teaching practices and emotional intelligence among university students

Related variables	Spearman's rho	Significance (p)
Teaching practices – Emotional intelligence	0.637	0.003

Source: Authors' own work.

Figure 1. [Figure description, units, and required abbreviations.]

4. Discussion

This study primarily examined the relationship between teaching practices and the dimensions of emotional intelligence among university students, including the ability to recognize one's own emotions, understand others' emotions, use emotions functionally, and regulate them appropriately. It also explored how students' evaluations of teaching performance relate to the development of their socio-emotional competencies, with a view to identifying areas for improvement in both pedagogical practice and students' emotional education.

The findings provide empirical insight into this relationship. Overall, students' perceptions of teaching practices were predominantly intermediate, particularly for professional ethics, attitudes towards students, and teaching methodology. This reflects a positive assessment of teaching, while also indicating areas for improvement. Although instructors appear to establish appropriate pedagogical relationships and use functional teaching strategies, academic tutoring and assessment require more systematic attention to support more comprehensive and engaging educational experiences.

Similarly, emotional intelligence was predominantly at an intermediate level across all dimensions. Self-emotion appraisal, understanding others' emotional states, adaptive use of emotion, and emotion regulation were mostly at medium levels, indicating functional skills that are still developing. Positive, statistically significant correlations between teaching practices and each dimension suggest that students' favourable perceptions of pedagogical environments are associated with recognition and management of their own emotions, as well as empathy and effective emotional interaction. These findings reinforce the view that instructors' roles extend beyond content delivery and include promoting socio-emotional learning in higher education.

The evidence is consistent with prior research highlighting the importance of emotional intelligence in educational settings. The results align with Jiang et al. (2025), who found a positive association between emotional intelligence and teachers' innovative behaviours, mediated by motivational processes and professional engagement. Liu (2025) likewise reported that higher emotional intelligence among teachers is associated with more effective emotional management and adaptive coping, supporting the view that positive perceptions of pedagogical practice may facilitate students' functional emotional development.

The findings also align with Al Jaberi (2024), who found that teachers' emotional intelligence significantly influences students' academic satisfaction, particularly through empathy and emotion regulation. Similarly, Kyriazopoulou et al. (2025) reported a moderate relationship between emotional intelligence and teacher self-efficacy, with variation by cultural context. This is consistent with the variation observed across the dimensions analysed in the present study.

The results are also consistent with Belgrave Rosales (2025), who argues that a comprehensive approach to emotional intelligence in teacher education can improve pedagogical practice and strengthen students' cognitive and socio-emotional development. Fragoso-Luzuriaca (2022) likewise notes that, although some teaching practices can promote emotional intelligence, their systematic implementation in higher education is often limited. This is reflected in the present findings, where moderate levels predominate in both perceived teaching practice and students' emotional competencies, pointing to areas that need strengthening to promote more robust emotional development.

Taken together, the findings indicate that the relationship between teaching practices and emotional intelligence is central to holistic development in higher education. Intermediate levels in both variables suggest that students have functional emotional resources for meeting academic demands, while also revealing considerable scope to improve pedagogical strategies and create educational contexts that more effectively support socio-emotional and academic learning. From this perspective, the emotional dimension should be explicitly recognized as an essential component of university education.

A key strength of this study is its comprehensive approach, which assessed multiple dimensions of both teaching practice and emotional intelligence and enabled a detailed, multidimensional analysis of their relationship. The methodology, use of validated instruments, and adequate sample size also strengthen the reliability of the findings, supporting a consistent account of students' perceptions in the university context studied.

The study nevertheless has limitations. Its cross-sectional design precludes causal conclusions about the relationship between teaching practices and students' emotional development. In addition, conducting the research at a single institution limits the

generalizability of the findings to other university settings. Future research should use longitudinal designs to examine how these variables evolve over time and multicentre studies involving different programmes, institutions, and cultural contexts to deepen understanding of how teaching practices influence university students' emotional intelligence.

5. Conclusion

The findings demonstrate the importance of teaching practices for the development of emotional intelligence among university students, indicating that appropriate pedagogical environments support the recognition, understanding, functional use, and regulation of emotions. However, the predominance of intermediate levels of emotional competence suggests that, although students possess basic socio-emotional resources, more systematic, intentional teaching strategies and emotional support could substantially strengthen their holistic education. This study offers an integrated account of the influence of pedagogical practice on emotional well-being and highlights the need to treat the emotional dimension as a central component of higher education.

From an applied perspective, the results underscore the value of designing and implementing pedagogical practices that deliberately incorporate emotional skills such as self-reflection, empathy, emotion management, and self-assessment into teaching. They also support the implementation of teacher training and support programmes that promote a holistic educational approach, aimed both at improving the quality of teaching and learning and at creating more balanced, motivating learning environments that are responsive to students' emotional needs.

Regarding future research, the study highlights the value of longitudinal designs and multicentre approaches to examine how teaching practices and emotional intelligence develop across different university contexts. Further analysis of potential mediating or moderating variables, such as academic motivation, learning styles, and institutional climate, would also help inform more precise, context-sensitive interventions. Taken together, these contributions provide a sound basis for further research and for pedagogical strategies designed to promote holistic learning and emotional well-being in higher education.

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