

The Correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Social Skills among Islamic Boarding School Students: The Moderating Role of Dormitory Multicultural Environment

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Article History: Received: February 16, 2026 Revised: May 13, 2026 Accepted: May 13, 2026 Keywords: emotional intelligence; social skills; multicultural environment; Islamic boarding school; moderation	This study investigates the direct effect of emotional intelligence on social skills and the moderating role of the dormitory multicultural environment among Islamic boarding school students. This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional design that involved 600 students aged 13-18 years from 40 pesantren in Central Java and the Special Region of Yogyakarta, selected through multistage cluster random sampling. Data were collected using three adapted and re-validated instruments: the Emotional Intelligence Scale (16 items), the Social Skills Scale (70 items), and the Multicultural Environmental Perception Scale (12 items). Moderated Structural Equation Modeling revealed that emotional intelligence has a significant positive direct effect on social skills ($\beta = 0.35$; $p < 0.001$). The multicultural environment significantly moderates this relationship ($\beta = 0.18$; $p < 0.01$). Simple slope analysis indicated that in dormitories with high-quality multicultural management, the relationship between emotional intelligence and social skills is strong and positive ($\beta = 0.48$; $p < 0.001$). Conversely, in poorly managed multicultural environments, this relationship becomes non-significant ($\beta = 0.10$; $p > 0.05$). These findings confirm that the translation of internal emotional capacity into external social competence is contingent on the dormitory's social climate. The study contributes to educational psychology by validating a moderation model in Indonesian pesantren.
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INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of globalization and increasing population mobility has had logical consequences, including more intensive intercultural interactions, even in traditionally homogeneous environments such as Islamic boarding schools. Islamic boarding schools, as the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, are currently home not only to students from surrounding areas but also to students from various regions with diverse ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds. Globalization presents complex educational challenges, so Islamic boarding schools in East Java, for example, need to formulate strategies to balance traditional values with the demands of modernity.¹ Collaboration between Islamic boarding schools and Islamic universities is key to integrating a curriculum that combines religious knowledge with worldly skills and explicitly instills the values of multicultural Islamic education, enriching students' perspectives.² Meanwhile, from a more practical perspective, it highlights how crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic have accelerated digital transformation in Islamic boarding schools, spurring innovation in learning methods to adapt to the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0.³

The ability to establish effective social relationships in diverse environments relies heavily on an individual's capacity to understand and manage emotions, known as emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence plays a protective role in interpersonal relationships, as individuals with high emotional intelligence can foster adaptive interactions and reduce destructive behaviors, such as aggression, thereby helping maintain relationship quality and stability. Similarly, in a professional context, emotional intelligence enhances leadership, collaboration, and overall organizational performance by helping individuals navigate complex work environments and improve interpersonal interactions.⁴ From an educational perspective, emotional intelligence is vital for educational leaders to create a positive learning environment and manage conflict effectively, thereby fostering an inclusive organizational climate.⁵

Social skills, as a tangible manifestation of emotional intelligence in behavior, are a crucial competence students must possess. Social skills, such as communication and cooperation, significantly impact students' academic achievement, especially in middle childhood, when assertiveness and cooperation are critical areas for development.⁶ Positive

¹ A. N. Kawakip, "Globalization and Islamic Educational Challenges: Views from East Javanese Pesantren," *Ulumuna* 24, no. 1 (2020): 105–31, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v24i1.385>.

² A. Sirojuddin and J. Ghoni, "Integration of Higher Education Curriculum with Islamic Boarding Schools in the Perspective of Multicultural Islamic Education," *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 8, no. 2 (2025): 265–81, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v8i2.163>.

³ K. A. Us and A. A. Musyaffa, "The Quality of Education in Islamic Boarding Schools in the Revolutionary Era 4.0 in Middle of Covid-19 (Study of Islamic Boarding Schools in Jambi City)," 2805, no. 1 (2023), Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.1063/5.0168158>.

⁴ T. M. H. R. da Silva et al., "Emotional Intelligence in Business: Enhancing Leadership, Collaboration, and Performance," in *Building Business Knowledge for Complex Modern Business Environments* (2024), Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-6447-5.ch006>.

⁵ M. J. Paschal et al., "The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Educational Leadership," in *Insights into International Higher Education Leadership and the Skills Gap* (2024), Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-3443-0.ch016>.

⁶ G. P. Martí et al., "Academic Achievement in Middle Childhood: Relationships with Emotional Intelligence and Social Skills," *Revista de Educacion* 2022, no. 395 (2022): 277–303, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.4438/1988-592X-RE-2022-395-515>.

teacher-student relationships and a supportive learning environment play an important role in fostering social skills, which in turn contribute to better academic achievement.⁷ In a professional context, emotional and social competence are key non-technical skills that underlie continued success in careers, particularly in areas such as nursing and health that require high levels of interpersonal interaction.⁸ Teaching social skills not only supports effective learning but also builds healthy relationships that serve as protective factors against emotional and behavioral problems among high-achieving students.⁹

Although emotional intelligence is theoretically positively correlated with social skills, this relationship is not always linear and can be influenced by various contextual factors. The environment, particularly the social climate in the dormitory, plays an important role in moderating, strengthening, or weakening the relationship between internal potential (emotional intelligence) and external behavior (social skills). Social environments, such as dormitories with high collective emotional intelligence, can increase an individual's emotional intelligence and positive affect over time, thereby strengthening social skills.¹⁰ However, contextual issues such as family, school, and peers hurt emotional intelligence and social skills, with a stronger influence on women, thus weakening the positive relationship between the two.¹¹ In educational settings, intrapersonal factors, such as self-perception and self-regulation, significantly affect social awareness and SS, underscoring the importance of a supportive academic climate.¹² Interestingly, this complexity arises in a professional context, with the finding that emotional intelligence and social skills predict student competency profiles, but the relationship is complex and not always linear.¹³ In fact, there is a negative correlation between emotional intelligence and professional competence at the administrative level, indicating that in certain contexts, high emotional intelligence does not automatically translate into stronger job skills.¹⁴

A multicultural dormitory environment, if well managed, provides an authentic

⁷ E. Supriatna et al., "Analyzing Factors Affecting Social Skills Development Among Students in Indonesian Schools," *Islamic Guidance and Counseling Journal* 7, no. 1 (2024), Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.25217/0020247447100>.

⁸ M. Brimble, "BECOMING A SELF-AWARE PROFESSIONAL: Developing Emotional and Social Intelligence," in *A Leadership Toolkit for Nurses and Healthcare Professionals: From Student to Experienced Practitioner* (2025), Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003433354-10>.

⁹ S. N. Elliott et al., "Teaching Social Skills That Enable Learning and Healthy Relationships of High Achieving Students," *Gifted Education International* 41, no. 1 (2025): 32–56, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.1177/02614294241300908>.

¹⁰ N. S. Schutte, "Social Environment Contexts of Trait Emotional Intelligence," *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 24, no. 7 (2014): 741–50, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10911359.2013.866065>.

¹¹ C. Salavera et al., "Contextual Problems, Emotional Intelligence and Social Skills in Secondary Education Students. Gender Differences," *Annales Medico-Psychologiques* 177, no. 3 (2019): 223–30, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amp.2018.07.008>.

¹² J. I. Merlin and S. Prabakar, "Understanding the Relationship Between Self Referential and Socially Oriented Emotional Intelligence Constructs: A Cross-Sectional Study," *International Research Journal of Multidisciplinary Scope* 5, no. 1 (2024): 14–25, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.47857/irjms.2024.v05i01.0122>.

¹³ L. Sánchez-Bolívar et al., "Emotional Intelligence and Social Skills as Predictor Variables of the Competence Profile of University Students," *Educacion XX1* 28, no. 2 (2025): 399–420, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.5944/educxx1.42874>.

¹⁴ J. L. D. Ceballos et al., "Influence of Emotional Intelligence on Job Skills: An Empirical Study in Employees at the Administrative Level," *Estudios Gerenciales* 33, no. 144 (2017): 250–60, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.estger.2017.06.005>.

learning space for students to practice their emotional intelligence. Informal contacts, such as daily interactions with roommates or in one-bedroom apartments, significantly improve students' cultural intelligence, especially in the motivational and behavioral dimensions, which are intrinsically linked to emotion management in cross-cultural contexts.¹⁵ Reinforcing this, Lin (2025) asserts that emotional intelligence, which includes self-emotion awareness, emotion regulation, recognition of others' emotions, and relationship management, is positively correlated with academic motivation.¹⁶ Furthermore, dorm management can proactively integrate emotional intelligence development strategies, such as reflective exercises, role-playing, and mindfulness practices, into its management plan.¹⁷ Thus, a combination of rich informal interactions and structured interventions in a well-managed multicultural dormitory environment can optimally facilitate students' practice and growth in emotional intelligence.

On the other hand, a poorly managed multicultural environment, for example, through informal segregation between groups or even horizontal conflicts, can actually weaken these positive relationships. Zhang asserts that poor intercultural communication can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts, ultimately decreasing organizational performance.¹⁸ In situations of unmanaged conflict, interpersonal hostility can escalate, characterized by shouting, name-calling, and derogatory comments about other cultures, which creates a toxic environment.¹⁹ Furthermore, inaccurate informal diversity management practices can encourage informal segregation, where ethnic groups tend to group on their own and inhibit innovation.²⁰ In response to these challenges, ongoing diversity training and clear policies to help employees appreciate cultural differences.²¹ Accordingly, establishing organizational norms such as the "golden rule" for taking responsibility for quality and actively collaborating can effectively promote connection and cooperation amid staff diversity.²²

Based on the literature reviewed, there is a significant research gap, especially

¹⁵ X. Lin and G. Q. P. Shen, "How Formal and Informal Intercultural Contacts in Universities Influence Students' Cultural Intelligence?," *Asia Pacific Education Review* 21, no. 2 (2020): 245–59, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-019-09615-y>.

¹⁶ H. Lin, "The Influence of Emotional Intelligence on Academic Motivation Among College Students In Western Inner Mongolia, China," *Journal of the Balkan Tribological Association* 31, no. 5 (2025): 1083–99, Scopus.

¹⁷ R. Velmurugan et al., "Strategies for Fostering Emotional Intelligence in the Classroom," in *Pedagogical Approaches to Bridging Emotional and Cognitive Learning* (2025), Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3373-0184-6.ch003>.

¹⁸ Q. Zhang, "Intercultural Conflict and Conflict Management," in *The International Encyclopedia of Intercultural Communication* (2017), Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118783665.ieicc0004>.

¹⁹ A. A. Camillo et al., "Work-Groups Conflict at Petrotech-Italy, S.R.L.: The Influence of Culture on Conflict Dynamics," in *Cultural and Technological Influences on Global Business* (2013), Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-4666-3966-9.ch015>.

²⁰ A. Manoharan et al., "Informal Diversity Management Practices and Their Effectiveness: In the Context of Ethnically Diverse Employees in Hotels," *International Journal of Hospitality Management* 82 (2019): 181–90, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2019.05.003>.

²¹ M. Skordoulis et al., "Strategic Management of Multiculturalism for Social Sustainability in Hospitality Services: The Case of Hotels in Athens," *Tourism and Hospitality* 5, no. 4 (2024): 977–95, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.3390/tourhosp5040055>.

²² M. C. Munkejord, "Challenging the Ethnic Pyramid: Golden Rules and Organisational Measures towards a More Inclusive Work Environment," *Journal of Nursing Management* 27, no. 7 (2019): 1522–29, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jonm.12838>.

regarding pesantren education in Indonesia. Some studies have shown a positive correlation between learners' emotional intelligence and social skills across various levels of education and have confirmed that a well-managed multicultural environment can catalyze the strengthening of these relationships through intensive informal interactions. However, these studies are generally still bivariate and take place in a conventional campus setting, and have not yet addressed the context of pesantren with its distinctive institutional dynamics. On the other hand, the literature also warns that an unmanaged multicultural environment can trigger informal segregation and horizontal conflicts, thereby weakening positive relationships between individuals. Thus, there is still very limited empirical research that specifically examines the role of moderation from the multicultural environment of the dormitory, either as a reinforcing or weakening variable in the relationship between the emotional intelligence and social skills of students in Islamic boarding schools, which are currently facing an increase in the heterogeneity of students' backgrounds. Therefore, this study offers novelty by filling this gap through a comprehensive examination of the dynamics of moderation in the multicultural dormitory environment on the correlation between students' emotional intelligence and social skills, a field of study that is still rarely explored in Islamic education psychology in Indonesia.

The novelty of this study lies in empirically testing the moderating role of the multicultural dormitory environment in the relationship between emotional intelligence and social skills, a context that is still rarely explored in Islamic boarding school education in Indonesia. So far, research on emotional intelligence and social skills in Islamic boarding schools has largely been bivariate, examining demographic factors without accounting for the multicultural environment as a moderator. Thus, this study offers a more comprehensive model by including the unique characteristics of modern pesantren as cross-cultural social laboratories.

The objectives of this study are to: (1) examine the direct effect of emotional intelligence on social skills; (2) test the direct effect of multicultural environment on social skills; and (3) examine the moderating role of multicultural environment in the relationship between emotional intelligence and social skills. The results of this research are expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of educational and social psychology and to provide practical guidance for pesantren caregivers in creating an optimal dormitory climate that supports the overall development of students' potential.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a correlational quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design to test relationships and the moderating effect of variables. The study targeted 600 adolescent students aged 13-18 years who lived in Islamic boarding schools in Central Java Province and the Special Region of Yogyakarta, selected through a multistage cluster-random sampling design. The first stage selected 15 districts in Central Java and 5 districts/cities in Yogyakarta, proportionally to their populations. The second stage involved randomly selecting 2 pesantren from each selected region, for a total of 40 pesantren. The third stage selects 15 students at random from each pesantren who have lived in a multicultural dormitory for at least one academic year.

Three instruments were used in this study. Importantly, all instruments were adapted and re-validated for the Indonesian pesantren context, following best practices for cross-cultural instrument adaptation.²³ The adaptation process involved: (1) forward-backward translation by two bilingual experts, (2) cultural and age-appropriate wording modifications (e.g., changing "university" to "boarding school", "classmates" to "fellow santri"), and (3) empirical re-validation using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) with the study sample.

The Emotional Intelligence Scale was adapted from the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS)²⁴, originally validated among university students in Kuwait. The original 16 items were translated into Indonesian, modified for age appropriateness (for adolescents aged 13-18 years), and contextualized to the pesantren environment. The final scale comprises four dimensions: Self-Emotional Appraisal, Others' Emotion Appraisal, Use of Emotion, and Regulation of Emotions. Validation results using CFA with our sample ($n = 600$) showed an excellent fit: $\chi^2/df = 2.15$, CFI = 0.972, TLI = 0.965, RMSEA = 0.043, SRMR = 0.031. Factor loadings ranged from 0.74 to 0.89. Composite reliability (ω) ranged from 0.82 to 0.88, and Cronbach's alpha ranged from 0.81 to 0.87. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for the scale was 0.58, exceeding the 0.50 threshold. All items used a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree).

The Social Skills Scale was adapted from the framework of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)²⁵, originally validated among Taiwanese high school students. Based on this framework, we developed 70 new items tailored to the pesantren context, measuring five competencies: classroom learning skills, communication skills, individual initiative skills, interaction skills, and job-related social skills. No items were directly adopted; instead, the CASEL framework guided item generation. Validation results using CFA showed optimal model fit: $\chi^2/df = 1.98$, CFI = 0.981, TLI = 0.976, RMSEA = 0.040, SRMR = 0.028. Factor loadings ranged from 0.78 to 0.92. Composite reliability ranged from 0.85 to 0.90, and Cronbach's alpha ranged from 0.84 to 0.89. AVE was 0.62. A 7-point Likert scale was used.

The Multicultural Environmental Perception Scale is a newly developed construct based on the Contact Hypothesis²⁶ (Green & Wong; see also Pettigrew & Tropp, for meta-analytic support). The scale was developed specifically for this study to measure students' perceptions of their dormitory's multicultural climate. It consists of 12 items across three dimensions: perceived diversity, quality of intergroup interaction, and normative inclusivity. Validation results using CFA showed an adequate fit: $\chi^2/df = 2.86$, CFI = 0.954,

²³ Dorcas E. Beaton et al., "Guidelines for the Process of Cross-Cultural Adaptation of Self-Report Measures," *Spine* 25, no. 24 (2000), https://journals.lww.com/spinejournal/fulltext/2000/12150/guidelines_for_the_process_of_cross_cultural.14.aspx.

²⁴ F. Halimi et al., "Emotional Intelligence and Academic Achievement in Higher Education," *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education* 13, no. 2 (2021): 485–503, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JARHE-11-2019-0286>.

²⁵ H. Y. Wang and C. K. Lin, "Factor Analysis of a Social Skills Scale for High School Students," *Psychological Reports* 117, no. 2 (2015): 566–79, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.2466/21.PR0.117c18z5>.

²⁶ D. P. Green and J. S. Wong, "Tolerance and the Contact Hypothesis: A Field Experiment," in *The Political Psychology of Democratic Citizenship* (2010), Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195335453.003.0010>.

TLI = 0.941, RMSEA = 0.056, SRMR = 0.042. Factor loadings ranged from 0.71 to 0.84. Composite reliability ranged from 0.81 to 0.86, and Cronbach's alpha ranged from 0.80 to 0.85. AVE was 0.55. A 7-point Likert scale was used.

All source materials were accessed through our university's institutional subscriptions and are properly cited. Following standard academic practice for non-commercial educational research, the adapted instruments developed in this study are considered newly created scales rather than direct reproductions of existing instruments. The original frameworks (WLEIS, CASEL, Contact Hypothesis) served only as theoretical guides. The Multicultural Environmental Perception Scale is an original instrument developed by the authors. All adapted instruments are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Data analysis was conducted comprehensively using JAMOV's SEM module. The first stage involves descriptive analysis and testing of statistical assumptions, including multivariate normality (Mardia's test), linearity, and homoskedasticity. The second stage tested the measurement model, assessing second-order CFA to ensure construct validity. The main analysis stage uses moderated structural equation modeling with maximum likelihood estimation. The moderating effect was tested by examining the interaction between emotional intelligence factor scores and multicultural environments on social skills. The significance of the moderation effect was assessed using critical ratios (z-scores > 1.96) and a 95% confidence interval based on bootstrapping with 5000 samples. To interpret the interaction effect, a simple slope analysis was conducted by plotting the relationship at three levels of multicultural environments: low (-1 SD), medium (mean), and high (+1 SD). Additional analyses include comparative tests of alternative models and analysis of cross-group measurement invariance. The influence of covariate variables (age, sex, and length of stay) was controlled for in the SEM analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

This study involved 600 students (respondents) from 40 Islamic boarding schools in Central Java Province and the Special Region of Yogyakarta. Of the total respondents, 342 (57%) were male, and 258 (43%) were female. The average age of respondents was 15.4 years (SD = 1.6), and they had been living in the dormitory environment for an average of 2.3 years (SD = 1.1). Descriptive statistical analysis showed that the students' emotional intelligence level was in the moderate category ($M = 4.82$, $SD = 0.76$ on a scale of 7), as were their social skills ($M = 4.91$, $SD = 0.81$). Meanwhile, students' perceptions of the multicultural dormitory environment were also positive ($M = 5.12$, $SD = 0.88$), indicating that, in general, students perceived diversity and inclusivity in their living environment.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Category
Emotional Intelligence (EI)	600	2.10	6.80	4.82	0.76	Moderate
Social Skills (SS)	600	2.30	6.90	4.91	0.81	Moderate
Multicultural Environment (ME)	600	2.50	7.00	5.12	0.88	Positive

Before testing the moderating effect, a Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationships between the main variables. The results showed a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and social skills ($r = 0.48$; $p < 0.001$). This indicates that the higher a student's emotional intelligence, the higher their social skills. Additionally, the multicultural environment also had a significant positive correlation with emotional intelligence ($r = 0.31$; $p < 0.001$) and social skills ($r = 0.39$; $p < 0.001$). These initial findings confirm the theoretical foundation stating that the three variables are interrelated.

Table 2. Correlation Matrix Between Variables

Variable	EI	SS	ME
Emotional Intelligence (EI)	1		
Social Skills (SS)	0.48***	1	
Multicultural Environment (ME)	0.31***	0.39***	1
Note: $p < 0.001$			

Before conducting hypothesis testing, it was ensured that the measurement model had good validity and reliability. The Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) for the three variables showed significant factor loadings (>0.70) for each indicator. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for each variable exceeded 0.50: EI = 0.58, SS = 0.62, and ME = 0.55, indicating that convergent validity was met. Meanwhile, the square roots of the AVEs for each variable were greater than their correlations with other variables; thus, discriminant validity was also met. The composite reliability (CR) for all variables was above 0.80, indicating excellent internal consistency.

Table 3. Construct Validity and Reliability

Variable	AVE (≥ 0.5)	$\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$	CR (≥ 0.7)	α Cronbach (≥ 0.7)
Emotional Intelligence (EI)	0.58	0.76	0.88	0.87
Social Skills (SS)	0.62	0.79	0.91	0.90
Multicultural Environment (ME)	0.55	0.74	0.85	0.84

The main analysis in this study tested whether the multicultural dormitory environment moderates the relationship between emotional intelligence and social skills. The SEM analysis with interactions showed that the hypothesized model provided a good fit to the data ($\chi^2/\text{df} = 2.45$, CFI = 0.96, TLI = 0.95, RMSEA = 0.049, SRMR = 0.038). The direct path coefficient between emotional intelligence and social skills in this model remained significant ($\beta = 0.35$; $p < 0.001$). More importantly, the interaction between emotional intelligence and the multicultural environment showed a significant effect on social skills (β

= 0.18; $p < 0.01$). This proves that the multicultural environment significantly moderates the relationship between students' emotional intelligence and social skills.

Table 4. Moderation Test Results

Hypothesis	Variable Relationship	β	SE	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	EI $\rightarrow$ SS	0.35	0.05	7.00	< 0.001	Significant
H2	ME $\rightarrow$ SS	0.22	0.04	5.50	< 0.001	Significant
H3	EI $\times$ ME $\rightarrow$ SS	0.18	0.06	3.00	< 0.01	Significant (Moderation)

Note: EI (Emotional Intelligence), SS (Social Skills), ME (Multicultural Environment)

To understand the direction of the moderation effect, a simple slope analysis was conducted to illustrate the relationship between emotional intelligence and social skills at three levels of the multicultural environment: low (-1 SD), average (mean), and high (+1 SD). The results showed that in a high multicultural environment, the relationship between emotional intelligence and social skills was very strong and positive ($\beta = 0.48$; $p < 0.001$). In an average multicultural environment, the relationship remained positive but was slightly weaker ($\beta = 0.35$; $p < 0.001$). Conversely, in a low multicultural environment, the relationship between emotional intelligence and social skills became non-significant ($\beta = 0.10$; $p > 0.05$). This finding confirms that a diverse, inclusive dormitory environment strengthens the positive impact of emotional intelligence on students' social skills.

Table 5. Simple Slope Analysis

Moderator Level (Multicultural Environment)	β (EI $\rightarrow$ SS)	SE	p-value	Result
Low (-1 SD)	0.10	0.08	0.21	Not Significant
Average (Mean)	0.35	0.05	< 0.001	Significant
High (+1 SD)	0.48	0.06	< 0.001	Significant

These findings provide strong empirical evidence that the social context, in this case, the multicultural climate in the dormitory, plays a crucial role in transforming internal potential (emotional intelligence) into external competence (social skills). In an environment where diversity is managed positively, students have more opportunities and challenges to practice empathy, cross-cultural communication, and conflict management, thereby honing their emotional intelligence into tangible social skills. Conversely, in a less supportive environment, this potential may not develop optimally. The interaction plot below shows that the relationship between EI and SS becomes much steeper when the multicultural environment is high, compared to when it is low, which tends to be flat.

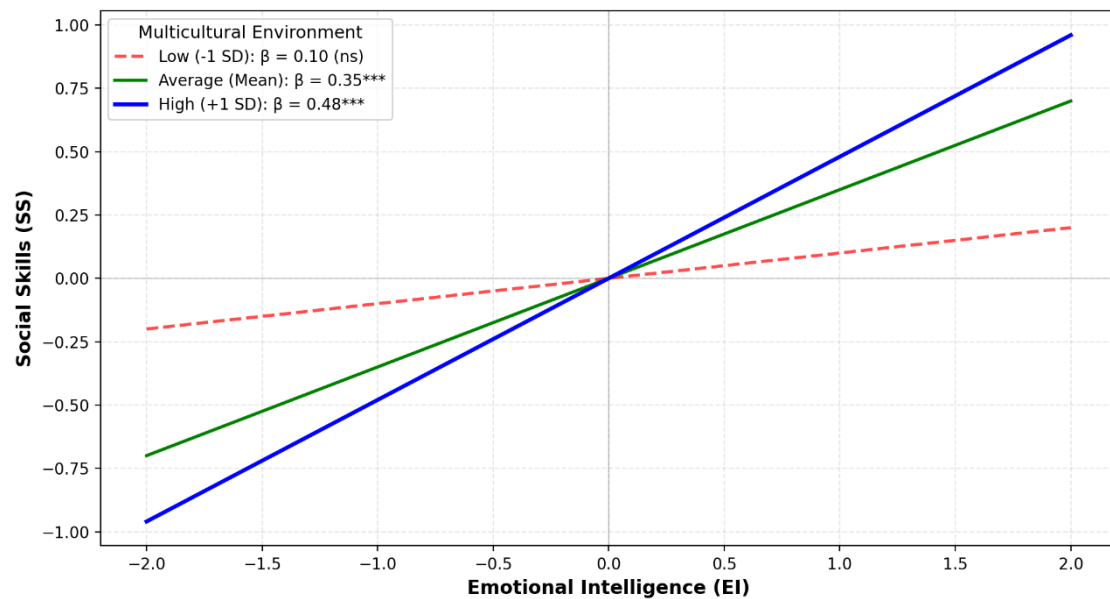


Figure 1. Moderation Effect Plot of Multicultural Environment on the Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Social Skills

Disussion

The findings of this study confirm a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence (KE) and social skills (KS) in Islamic boarding school students ($\beta = 0.35$; $p < 0.001$). These results align with a theoretical framework that posits that emotional intelligence is a basic competency that enables individuals to navigate social interactions effectively. Emotional intelligence includes the ability to understand and manage one's own emotions as well as those of others, which is essential for building healthy interpersonal relationships in a variety of life contexts.²⁷ Core components such as self-awareness, empathy, and social skills help a person communicate more effectively, resolve conflicts constructively, and build lasting relationships.²⁸ The leadership perspective adds that individuals with high emotional intelligence can inspire and motivate others, thereby creating positive, productive social dynamics in both work and educational environments.²⁹

The analysis revealed that the dormitory's multicultural environment had a significant direct effect on students' social skills ($\beta = 0.22$; $p < 0.001$). These findings underscore the importance of social context in shaping interpersonal competence. The multicultural and well-managed dormitory environment provides daily opportunities for students to interact across cultures, exposing them to diverse perspectives, communication styles, and social norms. A multicultural environment helps students become more aware and open-minded,

²⁷ N. M. Ashkanasy and A. Battel, "Emotional Intelligence," in *Encyclopedia of Mental Health, Third Edition: Volume 1-3*, vol. 1 (2023), Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-323-91497-0.00035-7>.

²⁸ K. P. Cattani, "Emotional Intelligence," in *Encyclopedia of Sport Management, Second Edition* (2024), Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781035317189.ch176>.

²⁹ L. Lei, "Emotional Intelligence in Leadership," in *Elgar Encyclopedia of Leadership* (2025), Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781035307074.00034>.

enhancing their understanding of different cultural viewpoints and differences.³⁰ Structured interactions, such as random roommate placement, can reduce prejudice, increase a sense of belonging, and foster cognitive benefits, including creativity and perspective-taking. Space optimization and cultural integration in residence management can significantly improve the student experience and the quality of their social interactions.³¹ Meanwhile, effective hostel management should include improving communication and services to foster a supportive environment for positive intercultural interaction.³²

The most significant finding of the study was confirmation that the multicultural environment moderated the relationship between emotional intelligence and social skills ($\beta = 0.18$; $p < 0.01$). These results provide empirical support for the theoretical argument that contextual factors can reinforce or weaken the translation of internal capacity into external behavior. External factors, such as the presence of other individuals, food availability, and seasonal changes, significantly influence behavioral choices by altering the brain's neurochemical environment, which, in turn, shapes the selection of motor and behavioral programs.³³ In an organizational context, factors such as leadership style and organizational culture can significantly shape how employees' internal capacities are expressed in productive behavior.³⁴ The absorptive capacity of an organization, shaped by internal characteristics (strategic priorities, communication processes) and the external environment, can enhance the translation of internal capacity into improved organizational performance.³⁵ Meanwhile, a supportive organizational context and effective leadership can significantly facilitate the realization of internal capacity into effective leadership behaviors.³⁶

Simple slope analysis revealed an essential finding that in dormitories with low multicultural environmental quality, the relationship between emotional intelligence and social skills became insignificant ($\beta = 0.10$; $p > 0.05$). This means that even students with high emotional intelligence may also fail to develop adequate social skills if they live in a multicultural environment that is not well managed, characterized by informal segregation, intergroup tensions, or a lack of inclusive norms. Multicultural environments characterized by informal segregation and intergroup tensions can hinder the development of social skills,

³⁰ J. M. Martin et al., "Building a Diverse Curriculum: The Role of Diversity across Communication Coursework," *Qualitative Research Reports in Communication* 21, no. 1 (2020): 1–9, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17459435.2019.1677750>.

³¹ X. W. Tong and M. J. Kim, "A Conceptual Framework to Enhance Students' Experience in Dormitories through Space Optimization and Cultural Integration," *Journal of Asian Architecture and Building Engineering*, ahead of print, 2025, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13467581.2025.2481288>.

³² Z. Altinay et al., "Assessing Student Satisfaction and Institutional Efficiency in Dormitory Management: A Qualitative Analysis Based on Student Perspectives," *Sustainability (Switzerland)* 16, no. 20 (2024), Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16208823>.

³³ V. E. D'Yakonova, "Neurotransmitter Mechanisms of Context-Dependent Behavior," *Neuroscience and Behavioral Physiology* 44, no. 3 (2014): 256–67, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11055-014-9905-6>.

³⁴ W. van Breukelen, "The Importance of Context in Research on Organizational Behavior," *Gedrag En Organisatie* 25, no. 3 (2012): 244–53, Scopus.

³⁵ G. Harvey et al., "Analysing Organisational Context: Case Studies on the Contribution of Absorptive Capacity Theory to Understanding Inter-Organisational Variation in Performance Improvement," *BMJ Quality and Safety* 24, no. 1 (2015): 48–55, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjqs-2014-002928>.

³⁶ N. Alhassan, "Developing Effective Leadership in Small Businesses: Identifying Key Contextual Factors," in *Strategic Leadership and Management* (2025), Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.1201/9781998511433-16>.

even among individuals with high emotional intelligence.³⁷ Without inclusive norms in organizational culture, students may struggle to apply their emotional intelligence to build positive social interactions.³⁸ Social skills depend heavily on interpersonal context, and an unsupportive environment can inhibit an individual's ability to respond adaptively, even if they have good emotional capacity.³⁹ Cultural intelligence (CQ) becomes an important mediator, where, without an understanding of cultural nuances, emotional intelligence alone is not enough to navigate a complex multicultural environment.⁴⁰ Educational interventions that integrate emotional and cultural competencies are essential to help students overcome challenges in diverse environments and develop the social skills they need.⁴¹

This research provides several theoretical contributions to the field of educational psychology and Islamic education. First, this study extends research on emotional intelligence and social skills to the unique context of Islamic boarding schools, an educational setting that has been underrepresented in the literature. Second, the study validates a more comprehensive model by including environmental factors as moderators, going beyond the bivariate approach that colored much of previous research. The excellent structural model fit indices (CFI = 0.96; RMSEA = 0.049) provide confidence in the robustness of these findings. Third, by using the Contact Hypothesis to conceptualize multicultural environments, this study bridges social psychology and educational research, offering a framework for understanding how intergroup contact conditions affect individual development.

The findings of this study have significant practical implications for caregivers, managers, and educators in Islamic boarding schools. The role of moderation in a multicultural environment suggests that interventions to improve students' social skills should not only focus on individual-level training in emotional intelligence but also on addressing the dormitory climate. Specifically, pesantren leaders can: (1) deliberately create opportunities for positive intergroup contact through structured activities that mix students from various backgrounds; (2) establish norms of inclusivity and respect for diversity explicitly; (3) training dormitory caregivers in conflict mediation and cross-cultural communication; and (4) implement programs such as reflective exercises, role-playing, and mindfulness practices that have been shown to foster emotional intelligence. Future research may explore the specific mechanisms by which multicultural environments moderate effects,

³⁷ R. Thompson, "A Qualitative Phenomenological Study of Emotional and Cultural Intelligence of International Students in the United States of America," *Journal of International Students* 8, no. 2 (2018): 1220–55, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1250423>.

³⁸ A. Lourenço et al., "Emotional Intelligence: A Catalyst for Organizational Culture and Climate in Higher Education," in *Building Organizational Capacity and Strategic Management in Academia* (2024), Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-6967-8.ch007>.

³⁹ C. Ramos-Galarza et al., "Relationship between Emotional Intelligence, Social Skills, and Anxiety: A Quantitative Systematic Review," *Emerging Science Journal* 8, no. 6 (2024): 2570–84, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.28991/ESJ-2024-08-06-025>.

⁴⁰ C. Bratianu et al., "The Impact of Knowledge Dynamics on Multicultural Leadership and the Mediating Role of Cultural Intelligence," 2024-September (2024): 103–8, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.34190/eckm.25.1.2465>.

⁴¹ M. F. Stewart et al., "Engineering Student Learning and Emotional Competencies," paper presented at 2010 IEEE Transforming Engineering Education: Creating Interdisciplinary Skills for Complex Global Environments, 2010, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.1109/TEE.2010.5508871>.

perhaps using longitudinal designs that track student development over time. In addition, comparative studies across types of pesantren (salaf vs. modern) can illuminate how institutional characteristics shape these dynamics. Finally, intervention studies that experimentally manipulate aspects of the dormitory environment will provide the strongest evidence for causal relationships and offer evidence-based practical guidance.

CONCLUSION

This study empirically confirms that the multicultural dormitory environment significantly moderates the relationship between emotional intelligence and social skills among students at Islamic boarding schools. While emotional intelligence positively correlates with social skills, this relationship is substantially strengthened in dormitories characterized by high-quality multicultural management, where students have ample opportunities for positive intergroup contact, inclusive norms, and structured intercultural interactions. Conversely, in poorly managed multicultural environments marked by informal segregation or intergroup tensions, even students with high emotional intelligence may fail to develop adequate social skills, rendering the relationship non-significant. These findings underscore that translating internal emotional capacity into external social competence is not automatic but highly contingent on contextual factors, particularly the dormitory's social climate. The results contribute theoretically to educational psychology by validating a comprehensive moderation model in the underexplored context of Indonesian pesantren, and offer practical implications for caregivers and educators to intentionally design dormitory environments that foster diversity, inclusivity, and positive intergroup contact as essential catalysts for optimizing students' holistic development.

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