

Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Humor Styles in First Year College Students

Zahrasari Lukita Dewi*, Yeremia Yanuardi

Faculty of Psychology, Atma Jaya Catholic University of Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia
Email: *zahrasari.dewi@atmajaya.ac.id

How to cite this paper: Dewi, Z. L., & Yanuardi, Y. (2025). Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Humor Styles in First Year College Students. *Psychology*, 16, 186-201.
<https://doi.org/10.4236/psych.2025.162011>

Received: December 30, 2024

Accepted: February 15, 2025

Published: February 18, 2025

Copyright © 2025 by author(s) and Scientific Research Publishing Inc.
This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

Abstract

Adaptive humor style can help adjust to the social interactions of first-year college students. This study aims to explore how humor style relates to the level of emotional intelligence (EI). This emotional and social intelligence also plays an important role in college success. This study applies a quantitative research method to 131 male and female emerging adult students in their first year of college in Indonesia, using the Indonesian version of the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) and the Indonesian version of the BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i). The results show a significant positive relationship between total EI and affiliative humor and between total EI and self-enhancing humor. This study also finds a significant negative relationship between total EI and aggressive humor, as well as a negative correlation between total EI and self-defeating humor. High EI allows first-year students to manage emotions and respond appropriately to everyday situations. Individuals need these abilities to use adaptive humor. Conversely, low EI makes first-year students less able to manage emotions and respond poorly to situations, leading them to use maladaptive humor.

Keywords

Emotional Intelligence, Humor Style, First-Year Students

1. Introduction

Humor is a habitual behavioral pattern that involves laughing or telling funny stories (Martin et al., 2003). Biologically, humor can reduce stress hormones such as cortisol and epinephrine. In addition, humor produces the hormone dopamine, which is associated with happiness (Berk et al., 2001). Apart from that, humor positively impacts individuals daily. Individuals with a higher sense of humor are more motivated, cheerful, trustworthy, and self-confident. They are also more

likely to develop close social relationships (Kelly, 2002). Furthermore, humor is often associated with reduced levels of depression, anxiety, and stress, as well as improved mood and immunity (Ford et al., 2016). The positive impact of humor occurs when the humor used is good, while the use of poor humor can have a negative effect (Frymier et al., 2008).

Individuals use humor in different ways, referred to as humor style. There are four styles of humor, each with a different purpose: affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive, and self-defeating. The affiliative style is a type of humor that strengthens relationships with others without harming oneself. The self-enhancing style finds a humorous perspective in everyday life. The aggressive style improves oneself by attacking others through jokes. Finally, the self-defeating style is a type of humor that creates laughter through self-deprecating assertions to strengthen relationships with others. The higher the use of affiliative and self-enhancing humor, the greater the psychological well-being and the lower the levels of depression, anxiety, and bad mood; therefore, it is classified as adaptive humor. On the other hand, the higher the use of aggressive and self-defeating humor, the greater the level of neuroticism and the lower the levels of agreeableness and conscientiousness in the individual, which classifies it as maladaptive humor (Martin et al., 2003).

The use of self-enhancing and affiliative humor styles indicates individual happiness. Happy individuals usually use adaptive humor and avoid maladaptive humor daily (Ford et al., 2016). According to Martin et al. (2003), using adaptive humor styles relates to relationship intimacy. Self-enhancing humor is also associated with high individual satisfaction related to social support. In contrast, self-defeating humor correlates with low individual satisfaction regarding perceived social support. This means that satisfaction with perceived social support may be linked to maintaining a humorous and cheerful outlook. Satisfaction with social support connects affiliative humor, self-enhancement, and high levels of individual well-being. A lack of satisfaction with social support also relates to self-defeating humor and low individual well-being (Dyck & Holtzman, 2013).

Humor styles play an important role for students. Based on research from Hong (2014), adaptive humor styles relate to lower perceptions of stress and depression among students. Therefore, students need strategies to improve their adaptive humor styles to prevent depression in college. Research by Chen and Martin (2007) found that students with higher levels of mental health use self-enhancing humor, while those with lower levels tend to use self-defeating humor. Students with higher social skills also utilize affiliative and self-enhancing humor, while self-defeating humor is used by students with lower social skills (Salavera et al., 2020).

Humor is also an important factor in the successful adjustment of first-year students (Hickman & Crossland, 2004). Rumondor (2007) found that first-year students with low stress levels use affiliative humor, while those with high stress levels employ aggressive and self-defeating humor. These results confirm research from Nataatmaja (2012), which identified a relationship between the use of affiliative and self-enhancing humor in first-year students with low stress levels and self-defeating humor in those with high stress levels. This means that utilizing

adaptive humor styles is related to effective stress management in first-year students. Humor also plays a role in forming new relationships (Hickman & Crossland, 2004). The intimacy of a relationship is influenced by humor styles, namely affiliative and self-enhancing, which enhance intimacy (Martin et al., 2003). Furthermore, using self-enhancing humor strongly correlates with the happiness of first-year students (Pietersen, 2015). Research from Sozer et al. (2020) found that employing self-enhancing and affiliative humor styles was linked to successful adjustment, while self-defeating humor was associated with failure in adjustment among first-year students.

From this explanation, humor is important for first-year students because the adjustment of new students in the first year significantly influences academic life during college. This adjustment is also a challenge for first-year students; if not addressed properly, it can cause various problems throughout college life, such as stress, well-being, and academic achievement (Vionita & Hastuti, 2021). First-year students find the transition from high school to college very stressful. They report higher stress levels in their first year of studies than in subsequent years (Parker et al., 2004).

Indonesia consists of 300 ethnic groups with about 700 local languages; the national language, Bahasa Indonesia, unites them all (Badan Pusat Statistik 2009). Each ethnic group has its own unique traditional values, resulting in languages, habits, social rules, and behavioral stereotypes characteristic of that specific group, which significantly contribute to differences in thinking, emotions, and behavioral patterns among Indonesians (Koentjaraningrat 2002). With a collectivist tendency, Indonesian people tend to exist with others from the same ethnic group and do not like to be detached from their ethnic communities (Alisjahbana 1989; Koentjaraningrat 2002). In Indonesia, most teenagers who graduate from high school continue their education at college, so they need to make this transition (Monks et al., 2002).

During the transition, Indonesian emerging adults generally attach to peers, as they have a typical communication style that includes humor. Humor is a universal language but often takes unique forms in different cultures. For Indonesians, humor often draws from everyday life, cultural quirks, and linguistic playfulness. Some expressions of humor that resonate well in Indonesia—such as wordplay, self-deprecating humor, exaggerations, social commentary, cultural and ethnic jokes, as well as slapstick and visual humor—allow personal thoughts, emotions, needs, and even characteristics to be expressed among Indonesian emerging adults. The predominant style of humor used is self-deprecating (Chen & Martin, 2007). Schermer et al. (2019) also note that among the four humor styles, the use of self-defeating humor in Indonesia tends to be higher than in other countries. Dalyan et al. (2022) examine how cultural contexts influence the interpretation of humor in Indonesian dialogues. The research highlights the unique rhetorical styles and stylistic aspects prevalent in Indonesian communication, emphasizing the importance of cultural discourse in understanding humor. Although having an adaptive humor style is important for first-year students during the transition

period, humor tends to be less emphasized in scientific research. Humor has not been considered important or positive in everyday life, especially in Eastern countries like Indonesia, particularly when dealing with difficult situations (Jiang et al., 2019; Yue et al., 2016).

The importance of using adaptive humor styles for first-year students: Several factors influence the use of humor styles, namely culture, personality traits, and emotional intelligence (Fabio et al., 2023; Karahan et al., 2019; Lu, 2023). This study focuses primarily on the emotional intelligence factor and humor styles. Emotional intelligence (EI) is an individual's emotional and social ability to understand themselves and others, establish harmonious relationships, and overcome daily demands and challenges. EI is a component of social intelligence. EI consists of five composite scales, which include several subscales. The first scale is intrapersonal, related to self-awareness of emotions and self-expression. This scale includes several subscales: self-regard, emotional awareness, assertiveness, independence, and self-actualization. The second scale is interpersonal, which pertains to awareness of the social environment and relationships with others. This scale includes several subscales: empathy, social responsibility, and interpersonal relationships. The third scale is stress management, which involves managing and controlling emotions. This scale includes several subscales, namely stress tolerance and impulse control. The fourth scale is adaptability, which relates to managing change. This scale consists of reality testing, flexibility, and problem-solving. The fifth scale is general mood, which pertains to self-motivation. This scale comprises optimism and happiness subscales (BarOn & Parker, 2000).

There have been few researchers who are interested in studying EI, especially regarding its relationship to humor styles. Vernon et al. (2008) observed that individuals with low EI use aggressive and self-defeating humor, while individuals with high EI use affiliative and self-enhancing humor. These results confirm Karahan et al. (2019), who stated that affiliative and self-enhancing humor indicates a high level of individual EI, while aggressive and self-defeating humor indicates a low level of individual EI. According to Kuiper and Harris (2009), individuals who use aggressive humor tend to be unable to consider the emotions of others and have difficulty maintaining emotional control in stressful situations. However, there is contradictory research from Gauri and Kanwar (2022), which states that having an adaptive humor style does not mean having a high EI. Despite these contradictions, and recognizing the importance of first-year students' success in adapting to college, this study aims to explore how EI relates to the four humor styles, focusing on first-year students in Indonesia. This study also examines the relationship between the five EI scales and the four humor styles in first-year students.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

This quantitative study uses a correlational design to measure the relationship

between two variables: Emotional Intelligence (EI) and humor styles. This study's population comprises individuals in their first year of college. The sampling technique used in this study was non-probability sampling, where the researcher selected individuals who were available, accessible, and possessed the desired characteristics. The sample consists of male and female first-year students aged 18 to 25, currently enrolled in the first and second semesters, who have never attended lectures before, with a minimum sample size of 119 individuals. Data collection is carried out using Google Forms, which contain two measuring instruments: the Indonesian version of the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ), adapted by Dr. Rahkman Ardi, and the BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i), the Indonesian version adapted by Dr. Zahrasari Lukita Dewi.

Table 1. Participant demographic data.

Demographics		Numbers	Percentage (%)
Age	18	49	37.405
	19	75	57.252
	20	3	2.290
	21	1	.763
	22	3	2.290
Sex	Male	54	41.221
	Female	77	58.779
Domicile (Province)	West Java	46	35.115
	Central Java	7	5.344
	East Java	9	6.870
	DKI Jakarta	36	27.481
	Banten	15	11.450
	Yogyakarta	1	.763
	West Sumatera	2	1.527
	Banyuwangi	1	.763
	Lampung	5	3.817
	North Sulawesi	1	.763
	South Sulawesi	4	3.053
	Aceh	1	.763
	East Kalimantan	1	.763
	South Kalimantan	1	.763
	East Nusa Tenggara	1	.763
University	State	55	41.985
	Private	76	58.015
Origin of High School/ Vocational High School	State School	47	35.878
	National Private School	78	59.542
	International Private School	6	4.580

Based on **Table 1**, among the 131 participants, the majority were 19 years old, with 75 participants (57.25%). Regarding sex, most participants were female, with 77 participants (58.78%). Regarding domicile, most participants resided in West Java Province, with 46 participants (35.12%). Then, most participants studied at private universities, with 76 participants (58.02%). Finally, most participants came from National Private Senior High Schools/Vocational High Schools, with 78 participants (59.54%).

2.2. Measure

Data were collected using two adapted measures: the Indonesian version of the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) and the Indonesian version of the BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i). The Indonesian version of the HSQ is a behavioral checklist consisting of 32 items designed to measure four dimensions of humor styles (affiliative humor, self-enhancing humor, aggressive humor, and self-defeating humor) on a Likert scale from 1 to 7, where a score of 1 means “strongly disagree” and a score of 7 means “strongly agree.” Meanwhile, the Indonesian version of the EQ-i is an emotional intelligence assessment consisting of 133 items that measure the total EI score, five composite scales (intrapersonal, interpersonal, adaptability, stress management, and general mood), and 15 EI subscale scores using a Likert scale from 1 to 5, where a score of 1 means “very untrue for me” and a score of 5 means “very true for me.”

3. Results

3.1. Descriptive Analysis of Humor Styles

Based on the descriptive statistics **Table 2** of the humor styles variable, the aspect with the highest average is affiliative humor ($M = 5.107$). Then, the researcher also compared the average humor style dimension with the median of the HSQ. The HSQ measuring instrument has a scale range of one to seven with a median of four. Based on the calculations conducted by the researcher, both aspects of humor, namely affiliative, self-enhancing, and self-defeating, have an average higher than the median value.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of humor styles ($n = 131$).

Aspek	M	SD	Min	Max
<i>Affiliative</i>	5.107	1.635	1.375	7.000
<i>Self-Enhancing</i>	4.178	1.143	1.250	6.625
<i>Aggressive</i>	3.880	1.304	1.125	6.875
<i>Self-Defeating</i>	4.038	1.088	1.000	7.000

3.2. Humor Styles Overview Based on Demographic Data

Regarding sex, male and female students are the most dominant users of affiliative humor. In male students, there is no significant difference in the mean between

the four humor styles, indicating that the use of the humor styles tends to be equal. Meanwhile, the humor styles of female students tend to be more varied. The mean of affiliative humor ($M = 5.394$) is generally higher and fairly different from the mean of the other humor styles, especially when compared to aggressive humor ($M = 3.313$).

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of humor styles variables based on demographic data.

Demographics		<i>Affiliative</i>		<i>Self-enhancing</i>		<i>Aggressive</i>		<i>Self-defeating</i>	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Sex	Male	4.697	2.004	3.896	1.190	4.688	1.160	4.361	1.057
	Female	5.394	1.252	4.377	1.074	3.313	1.087	3.812	1.057
University	State	4.748	1.759	4.184	1.176	4.118	1.290	4.193	1.074
	Private	5.367	1.497	4.174	1.127	3.707	1.296	3.926	1.091
High-School/ Vocational High School	State School	4.210	1.944	4.112	1.346	4.205	1.389	4.205	1.019
	National Private School	5.569	1.208	4.170	1.026	3.776	1.231	3.952	1.098
	International Private School	6.125	.306	4.813	.774	2.688	.517	3.854	1.497

Regarding the university, students from state and private universities are the most dominant in using affiliative humor. Among state university students, the use of the four humor styles tends to be equal. There is no significant difference in the mean between these styles. Meanwhile, private university students exhibit a more varied use of the four humor styles. The mean of affiliative humor ($M = 5.367$) is notably higher and significantly different from the mean of the other humor styles, particularly when compared to aggressive humor ($M = 3.707$). In terms of high school/vocational school origins, students from state, national private, and international private high schools/vocational schools are the most dominant in using affiliative humor.

The use of the four humor styles among students from state high schools/vocational schools tends to be equal. There is no significant difference in the mean between them. In students from national private high schools/vocational schools, the use of humor styles is more varied compared to those from state high schools/vocational schools, with the mean of affiliative humor ($M = 5.569$) tending to be higher and showing a reasonably significant difference compared to the other humor styles, particularly when compared to aggressive humor ($M = 3.776$). Finally, students from international private high schools/vocational schools demonstrate a more varied use of humor styles compared to students from state and national private high schools/vocational schools, with the mean of affiliative humor ($M = 6.125$) being much higher than that of the other humor styles, especially in comparison to aggressive humor ($M = 2.688$).

According to **Table 3**, demographic factors potentially influence the development of the Indonesian humor style. From a cultural point of view, the characteristics of Indonesian males and females are defined culturally rather than biologically.

Cultural norms serve as standard values in determining acceptable or unacceptable humor for males and females. For example, male participants tend to use more aggressive and self-defeating styles compared to females. In contrast, female participants tend to use a more affiliative and self-enhancing humor style than males. In almost all Indonesian ethnic groups, the results make sense since Indonesian males are perceived as influential and superior figures who can be accepted as hard-spoken and aggressive. Conversely, Indonesian females are expected to be softer-spoken and more affiliative. Regarding the types of high schools and universities, some typical communication styles are labeled as standard versus uncommon casual language in academic environments within Indonesian society. The socioeconomic gap and parents' education may play an important role in determining how children communicate with their peers. The results present data that can be studied in greater detail in future studies concerning a broader perspective on explaining humor styles.

3.3. Descriptive Analysis of EI

Based on the descriptive statistics **Table 4** of the EI variable, the scale with the highest average is interpersonal ($M = 3.458$). The researchers also compared the average dimensions of humor styles with the median of EQi. The EQi measuring tool has a scale range of one to five with a median of three. Moreover, the four aspects of EI, namely intrapersonal, interpersonal, adaptability, and general mood, and the total EI score, have an average higher than the median value.

Table 4. Descriptive statistic of EI ($N = 131$).

Aspect	M	SD	Min	Max
<i>Intrapersonal</i>	3.136	.703	1.625	4.500
<i>Interpersonal</i>	3.458	.814	1.380	4.880
<i>Adaptability</i>	3.157	.680	1.270	4.770
<i>Stress management</i>	2.990	.777	1.280	4.780
<i>General mood</i>	3.360	.935	1.410	4.880
Total EI	3.207	.693	1.610	4.590

3.4. EI Overview Based on Demographic Data

In **Table 5**, when viewed by gender, the total score and the five EI scales of female students tend to be higher than those of male students. Although higher, the difference in the mean of the total score and the five EI scales for male students compared to female students is relatively close. The mean of each EI scale is fairly equal between male and female students. No scale has a mean that differs significantly from the others. Meanwhile, interpersonal is the scale with the highest mean for both men and women.

Students from private universities have higher mean total scores and five EI scales than students from state universities. Although higher, the difference in the

mean total score and the five EI scales among state university students compared to private students is not very large. In both state and private university students, the mean of each EI scale is relatively equal. No scale has a mean that significantly differs from the others. Meanwhile, the interpersonal scale has the highest mean for students from both state and private universities.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics of EI variables based on demographic data.

Demographics		<i>Intrapersonal</i>		Interpersonal		<i>Adaptability</i>		<i>Stress management</i>		<i>General Mood</i>		Total EI	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Sex	Male	2.853	.646	3.005	.826	2.901	.650	2.694	.696	2.899	.943	2.870	.653
	Female	3.334	.677	3.775	.640	3.336	.646	3.197	.768	3.683	.787	3.443	.623
University	State	2.977	.742	3.279	.882	3.035	.698	2.820	.808	3.114	.956	3.040	.735
	Private	3.251	.655	3.587	.740	3.245	.658	3.112	.736	3.538	.884	3.328	.639
High-School/ Vocational High School	State School	2.949	.751	3.062	.966	2.947	.737	2.818	.824	2.963	.998	2.953	.783
	National Private School	3.225	.648	3.629	.609	3.258	.589	3.047	.721	3.550	.840	3.320	.587
	International Private School	3.446	.795	4.328	.280	3.495	.988	3.593	.844	3.998	.446	3.728	.651

Finally, looking at the origins of high schools and vocational schools, the total score and the five EI scales of international high schools and vocational schools are higher than those of national state and private high schools and vocational schools. The mean total EI score between students from state and private international high schools and vocational schools shows a relatively significant difference. In addition, the mean interpersonal scale between students from state and private international high schools and vocational schools also demonstrates a notable difference. There is no large difference in the mean between the five EI scales for students from state, national private, and international private high schools and vocational schools, with interpersonal being the scale with the highest mean in all three groups.

Table 4 presents interesting results regarding the different levels of EI and the five composite scales based on various types of schools and universities. In Indonesia, there are different academic curricula and teaching methods between state and private schools and universities, which may impact the development of EI among students. According to the results, more specific studies on EI based on diverse academic curricula and teaching methods could benefit the Indonesian community.

3.5. Results of the Correlation between Humor Styles and EI

Table 6 shows that the correlation between the total affiliative humor score and the total EI score is positive and significant ($r = .465, p < .001$). Thus, it indicates a relationship between total EI and affiliative humor in first-year students. Next,

the correlation between the total self-enhancing score and the total EI score is also positive and significant ($r = .526, p < .001$). Therefore, there is a relationship between total EI and self-enhancing humor in first-year students. Additionally, the correlation between the total aggressive humor score and the total EI score is negative and significant ($r = -.675, p < .001$). Thus, there is a relationship between total EI and aggressive humor in first-year students. Finally, the correlation between the total self-defeating humor score and the total EI score is negative and significant ($r = -.650, p < .001$). Thus, there is a relationship between total EI and self-defeating humor in first-year students.

Table 6. Correlation test of humor styles with total EI.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. <i>Affiliative</i>	—				
2. <i>Self-enhancing</i>	.238**	—			
3. <i>Aggressive</i>	-.244**	-.424***	—		
4. <i>Self-defeating</i>	-.236**	-.116	.549***	—	
5. Total EI	.465***	.526***	-.675***	-.650***	—

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

In addition to the correlation between the total EI score and the four humor styles, **Table 7** shows that there is a positive and significant correlation between the intrapersonal scale and affiliative humor ($r = .432, p < .001$), the interpersonal scale and affiliative humor ($r = .594, p < .001$), the adaptability scale and affiliative humor ($r = .449, p < .001$), the stress management scale and affiliative humor ($r = .190, p = .030$), and the general mood scale with affiliative humor ($r = .444, p < .001$). Furthermore, based on **Table 7**, there is a positive and significant correlation between the intrapersonal scale and self-enhancing humor ($r = .457, p < .001$), the interpersonal scale and self-enhancing humor ($r = .409, p < .001$), the adaptability scale and self-enhancing humor ($r = .450, p < .001$), the stress management scale and self-enhancing humor ($r = .467, p < .001$), and the general mood scale and self-enhancing humor ($r = .515, p < .001$). Then, there is a negative and significant correlation between the intrapersonal scale and aggressive humor ($r = -.596, p < .001$), the interpersonal scale and aggressive humor ($r = -.678, p < .001$), the adaptability scale and aggressive humor ($r = -.530, p < .001$), the stress management scale and aggressive humor ($r = -.632, p < .001$), and the general mood scale and aggressive humor ($r = -.643, p < .001$). Finally, it shows a negative and significant correlation between the intrapersonal scale and self-defeating humor ($r = -.645, p < .001$), the interpersonal scale and self-defeating humor ($r = -.402, p < .001$), the adaptability scale and self-defeating humor ($r = -.664, p < .001$), the stress management scale and self-defeating humor ($r = -.615, p < .001$), and the general mood scale and self-defeating humor ($r = -.511, p < .001$).

Table 7. Correlation test of humor styles with the EI 5-composite scales.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. <i>Affiliative</i>	—								
2. <i>Self-enhancing</i>	.238**	—							
3. <i>Aggressive</i>	-.244**	-.424***	—						
4. <i>Self-defeating</i>	-.236**	-.116	.549***	—					
5. <i>Intrapersonal</i>	.432***	.457***	-.596***	-.645***	—				
6. <i>Interpersonal</i>	.594***	.409***	-.678***	-.402***	.702***	—			
7. <i>Adaptability</i>	.449***	.450***	-.530***	-.664***	.889***	.680***	—		
8. <i>Stress Management</i>	.190*	.467***	-.632***	-.615***	.838***	.532***	.816***	—	
9. <i>General Mood</i>	.444***	.515***	-.643***	-.511***	.907***	.755***	.796***	.769***	—

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

4. Discussion

The results of this study indicate a relationship between EI and affiliative humor in first-year students. This relationship is positive, meaning that the higher the EI in first-year students, the greater their use of affiliative humor. These results align with research by Ogurlu (2015), which stated that students with higher EI tend to use humor to improve their social relationships with others. The results of this study also indicate a relationship between EI and self-enhancing humor in first-year students. This relationship is positive, meaning that the higher the EI in first-year students, the greater their use of self-enhancing humor. These results confirm previous research by Ogurlu (2015), which stated that EI can be used to predict the level of self-enhancing humor. The study concluded that students with high EI are more likely to use humor as a stress-coping mechanism. With a high level of EI, first-year students can effectively deal with stressful situations and manage their own emotions and those of others. According to Karahan et al. (2019), individuals with high levels of EI tend to have better emotional control, understand other people's emotions more effectively, respond appropriately to their situations, and have better relationships with others. Hence, they tend to use adaptive humor.

In addition, the results of this study show a relationship between EI and aggressive humor in first-year students. This relationship is negative, meaning that the higher the EI in first-year students, the lower their use of aggressive humor. The final result of this study describes the relationship between EI and self-defeating humor in first-year students. This relationship is negative, meaning that the higher the EI in first-year students, the lower their use of self-defeating humor. These results are consistent with previous research by Karahan et al. (2019). According to the study, it is clear that students with low levels of EI are less able to deal with difficult situations in everyday life and are also less able to manage their own emotions and those of others, resulting in inappropriate responses. According to Kuiper and Haris (2009), individuals who use aggressive humor tend to be

less capable of interpreting other people's emotions and are less able to manage their own emotions in difficult situations. Additionally, individuals who use self-defeating humor tend to hide their feelings and try to seem always happy. Those who use self-defeating humor are less effective at coping with stress. Moreover, they tend to care more about other people's feelings than their own (Kazarian & Martin, 2004).

In more depth, this study found that the five EI scales were also positively related to using affiliative humor. This means that the ability to recognize and express one's own emotions, understand other people's emotions, establish good relationships with others, manage and control one's emotions, adapt to the environment, and create a positive mood will lead first-year students to use affiliative humor. Of the five scales, the two that have the most substantial relationship with affiliative humor are the interpersonal and adaptability scales. The interpersonal scale refers to the ability to perceive the social environment and create strong relationships within it. The adaptability scale pertains to the ability to manage change and solve problems arising from those changes (BarOn & Parker, 2000). This occurs because first-year students can manage the social changes they face using effective interpersonal and adaptability skills, and they understand how to establish and strengthen positive relationships with others. Hence, the humor they use aims to build strong relationships, specifically affiliative humor. First-year students can also address problems with others through humor. These results confirm the theory of affiliative humor from Martin et al. (2003), which states that the characteristics of affiliative humor involve making jokes as a way to facilitate relationships by fostering intimacy and reducing tension with others. Furthermore, these results are also supported by previous research from Ogurlu (2015), which indicates that EI can predict the level of affiliative humor, suggesting that individuals with high levels of EI tend to use affiliative humor to enhance social relationships with others.

Then, the five EI scales are also positively related to using self-enhancing humor. This means that the ability to realize and express one's own emotions, recognize the emotions of others, establish good relationships with others, manage and control one's emotions, adapt to the environment, and create a good mood will lead first-year students to use self-enhancing humor. Of the five scales, the scale that has the most substantial relationship with self-enhancing humor is general mood, which discusses the ability to create a good mood by seeing the positive side of everyday life. This can happen because by seeing life from the positive side, first-year students can find humor even in bad situations, which increases the use of self-enhancing humor. This result confirms the theory of Martin et al. (2003) that self-enhancing humor will direct oneself. Individuals can do this if they can see life from a funny and cheerful point of view. Stress management is the second scale with the most substantial relationship with self-enhancing humor. This can occur because having the ability to manage emotions effectively, especially negative emotions, prevents first-year students from feeling overwhelmed when faced with stressful situations, allowing them to still find the humorous side of these

circumstances, which is a manifestation of self-enhancing humor. This result is consistent with the theory of [Martin et al. \(2003\)](#), which states that the main focus of self-enhancing humor is the regulation of negative emotions by adopting a funny perspective without needing other people.

In addition, the five EI scales are negatively related to the use of aggressive humor. This means that the inability to recognize and express one's own emotions, understand the emotions of others, establish good relationships, manage and control one's emotions, adapt to the environment, and create a positive mood will lead first-year students to use aggressive humor. Of the five scales, the one with the most substantial relationship to aggressive humor is the interpersonal scale, which indicates that the inability to establish good relationships with others will increase the use of aggressive humor. This can occur due to a lack of awareness and the inability to build relationships. First-year students tend to pay less attention to the impact of their words and actions on others, leading them to use humor that can hurt others. This is also related to the second EI scale, which has the most substantial relationship with aggressive humor, namely the general mood scale. This general mood scale includes a person's happiness and satisfaction with others ([BarOn & Parker, 2000](#)); therefore, the use of aggressive humor increases with the dissatisfaction first-year students feel toward others. This may happen because aggressive humor serves as a way to express their dislike or dissatisfaction. Both of these results support the theory of [Martin et al. \(2003\)](#), which states that aggressive humor involves making fun of others through ridicule, sarcasm, and satire.

Finally, the results of this study indicate that the five EI scales are negatively related to the use of self-defeating humor. This means that the inability to recognize and express one's own emotions, understand the emotions of others, establish good relationships, manage and control one's emotions, adapt to the environment, and create a positive mood will lead first-year students to use self-defeating humor. Of the five scales, the one that has the most substantial relationship with self-defeating humor is adaptability. This suggests that poor adaptability will increase self-defeating humor. This result can arise from the inability to adjust to changes during the transition from high school, often leading to stress for first-year students. The second EI scale most closely associated with this type of humor is intrapersonal, which includes the ability to express one's emotions effectively. These first-year students may not adequately express their stress, so they resort to self-deprecation as a form of self-defeating humor. According to [Martin et al. \(2003\)](#), using self-defeating humor represents a repression of destructive emotions, such as stress, and serves as a way to conceal negative feelings.

EI can be viewed as part of personality competencies in individuals ([BarOn & Parker, 2000](#)) and can explain humor styles. Personality factors, such as traits and self-esteem, may influence how individuals utilize different humor styles. Furthermore, humor styles that emphasize social interaction and communication also suggest the potential for social factors to affect how individuals engage with humor in their social lives.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the results of the correlation test, there is a positive relationship between EI and adaptive humor styles (affiliative and self-enhancing) in first-year students, meaning that the higher the EI, the greater the use of adaptive humor styles. Conversely, there is a negative relationship between EI and maladaptive humor styles (aggressive and self-defeating) in first-year students, indicating that the higher the EI, the lower the use of maladaptive humor styles.

Several limitations should be noted. First, the study participants mainly come from rural communities, large cities, and some populous provinces in Indonesia, which do not represent the entirety of Indonesian society. Significant variations in how Indonesians express and communicate with each other in family and social life may relate to the development of emotional intelligence (EI) and humor styles. Second, some items in the Indonesian version of the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) and the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-I) are lacking. Greater validity and reliability of the measurements could provide more confident results.

Concerning the results and limitations of this study, more research is still required, as there are many other social groups in Indonesia with various characteristics that may influence their emotional intelligence (EI) and humor style development. Additionally, further research can also utilize different constructs to correlate with humor styles to expand knowledge about the construct of humor styles. Universities should pay more attention to the emotional intelligence of first-year students. An intervention program can increase EI early in college for students with low EI. Then, a seminar can be held at the beginning of college that discusses the importance of EI and humor styles during the adjustment period to college. In this way, students can adapt better and gain a more satisfying experience in their first year of college. Our findings, which point to the variability of Indonesian emotional and social capabilities, will enable interventions through EI as a trainable aspect of personality. This intervention idea could also support the development of Indonesia's quality of life and academic achievement among emerging adults by applying EI measurement as a diagnostic test and theoretical framework for the intervention program.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References

- Alisjahbana, S. T. (1989). *The Concept of Culture and Civilization: Problems of National Identity and the Emerging World in Anthropology and Sociology*. Dian Rakyat.
- Badan Pusat Statistik Indonesia (2009). *Data demografik Indonesia, 2008*. <https://www.bps.go.id>
- BarOn, R., & Parker, J. D. A. (2000). *The Handbook of Emotional Intelligence: Theory, Development, Assessment, and Application at Home, School, and in the Workplace*. Jossey-Bass.
- Berk, L. S., Felten, D. L., Tan, S. A., Bittman, B. B., & Westengard, J. (2001). Modulation of

- Neuroimmune Parameters during the Eustress of Humor-Associated Mirthful Laughter. *Alternative Therapies in Health and Medicine*, 7, 62-76.
- Chen, G., & Martin, R. A. (2007). A Comparison of Humor Styles, Coping Humor, and Mental Health between Chinese and Canadian University Students. *Humor—International Journal of Humor Research*, 20, 215-234. <https://doi.org/10.1515/humor.2007.011>
- Dalyan, M., Darwis, M., Rahman, F., & Latjuba, A. Y. (2022). Cultural Discourse in Indonesian Humor: A Case Study of Some Short Dialogues. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 12, 1009-1018. <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1205.24>
- Di Fabio, A., Gori, A., & Svicher, A. (2023). Relationships between Humor Styles and the Big Five Personality Traits in Workers: A Network Analysis. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 20, Article 1008. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20021008>
- Dyck, K. T. H., & Holtzman, S. (2013). Understanding Humor Styles and Well-Being: The Importance of Social Relationships and Gender. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 55, 53-58. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2013.01.023>
- Ford, T. E., Lappi, S. K., & Holden, C. J. (2016). Personality, Humor Styles and Happiness: Happy People Have Positive Humor Styles. *Europe's Journal of Psychology*, 12, 320-337. <https://doi.org/10.5964/ejop.v12i3.1160>
- Frymier, A. B., Wanzer, M. B., & Wojtaszczyk, A. M. (2008). Assessing Students' Perceptions of Inappropriate and Appropriate Teacher Humor. *Communication Education*, 57, 266-288. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03634520701687183>
- Gauri, & Kanwar, M. (2022). Humour Styles and Its Relationship with Emotional Intelligence and Optimism. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 10, 1489-1496.
- Hickman, G. P., & Crossland, G. L. (2004). The Predictive Nature of Humor, Authoritative Parenting Style, and Academic Achievement on Indices of Initial Adjustment and Commitment to College among College Freshmen. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 6, 225-245. <https://doi.org/10.2190/uq1b-0ubd-4axc-u7wu>
- Hong, E. (2014). The Mediating Effect of Humor on the Relationship between Perceived Stress and Depression in College Students. *The Journal of Korean Academic Society of Nursing Education*, 20, 558-568. <https://doi.org/10.5977/jkasne.2014.20.4.558>
- Jiang, T., Li, H., & Hou, Y. (2019). Cultural Differences in Humor Perception, Usage, and Implications. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, Article 123. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00123>
- Karahan, T. F., Yalcin, B. M., Erbas, M. M., & Ergun, S. (2019). The Relationship between the Dominant Humor Style, Emotional Intelligence, and Problem-Solving Skills in Trainee Teachers in Turkey. *Humor*, 32, 73-95. <https://doi.org/10.1515/humor-2017-0083>
- Kazarian, S. S., & Martin, R. A. (2004). Humour Styles, Personality, and Well-Being among Lebanese University Students. *European Journal of Personality*, 18, 209-219. <https://doi.org/10.1002/per.505>
- Kelly, W. E. (2002). An Investigation of Worry and Sense of Humor. *The Journal of Psychology*, 136, 657-666. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00223980209604826>
- Koentjaraningrat (2002). *Manusia dan kebudayaan di Indonesia*. Djambatan.
- Kuiper, N. A., & Harris, A. L. (2009). Humor Styles and Negative Affect as Predictors of Different Components of Physical Health. *Europe's Journal of Psychology*, 5, 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.5964/ejop.v5i1.280>
- Lu, J. G. (2023). Cultural Differences in Humor: A Systematic Review and Critique. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 53, Article 101690. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2023.101690>
- Martin, R. A., Puhlik-Doris, P., Larsen, G., Gray, J., & Weir, K. (2003). Individual Differences

- in Uses of Humor and Their Relation to Psychological Well-Being: Development of the Humor Styles Questionnaire. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 37, 48-75.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/s0092-6566\(02\)00534-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0092-6566(02)00534-2)
- Monks, F. J., Knoers, A. M. P., & Haditono, S. R. (2002). *Psikologi perkembangan pengan-tar dalam berbagai bagiannya* (4th ed.). Gajah Mada University Press.
- Nataatmaja, F. (2012). *Hubungan antara humor styles dan stress pada mahasiswa tahun pertama fakultas "Y" Universitas "X" Bandung*. <http://repository.maranatha.edu/12774/>
- Ogurlu, Ü. (2015). Relationship between Cognitive Intelligence, Emotional Intelligence and Humor Styles. *International Online Journal of Educational Sciences*, 7, 15-25.
- Parker, J. D. A., Summerfeldt, L. J., Hogan, M. J., & Majeski, S. A. (2004). Emotional Intel-ligence and Academic Success: Examining the Transition from High School to Univer-sity. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 36, 163-172.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/s0191-8869\(03\)00076-x](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0191-8869(03)00076-x)
- Pietersen, A. (2015). The Relationship between Humour and Happiness amongst First Year University Students [Skripsi].
- Rumondor, P. C. (2007). *Hubungan dimensi humor styles dengan stres pada mahasiswa tahun pertama*. <https://lontar.ui.ac.id/detail?id=124410&lokasi=lokal>
- Salavera, C., Usán, P., & Jarie, L. (2020). Styles of Humor and Social Skills in Students. Gender Differences. *Current Psychology*, 39, 571-580.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-017-9770-x>
- Schermer, J. A., Rogoza, R., Kwiatkowska, M. M., Kowalski, C. M., Aquino, S., Ardi, R. et al. (2019). Humor Styles Across 28 Countries. *Current Psychology*, 42, 16304-16319.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-019-00552-y>
- Sozer, Ö., Dursun, S., Yortan, N., Guresen, U., & Sakiroglu, M. (2020). Direct and Indirect Relationships between Personality Characteristics, Humor Styles and University Adjust-ment: The Mediating Role of Humor Styles. *Studies in Psychology-Psikoloji Calismalari Dergisi*, 40, 533-559.
- Vernon, P. A., Petrides, K. V., Bratko, D., & Schermer, J. A. (2008). A Behavioral Genetic Study of Trait Emotional Intelligence. *Emotion*, 8, 635-642.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0013439>
- Vionita, S., & Hastuti, R. (2021). Gambaran College Adjustment Mahasiswa Baru di Masa Pandemi COVID-19. *Jurnal Muara Ilmu Sosial, Humaniora, dan Seni*, 5, 73-81.
<https://doi.org/10.24912/jmishumsen.v5i1.9971.2021>
- Yue, X., Jiang, F., Lu, S., & Hiranandani, N. (2016). To Be or Not to Be Humorous? Cross Cultural Perspectives on Humor. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 7, Article 1495.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.01495>