

## The Mediating Role of Information Literacy in the Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Library Anxiety (A Case Study of Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University)

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Received: December, 15, 2024; Revised: October, 4, 2025

Accepted: November, 2, 2025; Published: December, 1, 2025

### Abstract

**Purpose:** This study aimed to investigate the status of emotional intelligence, information literacy, and library anxiety among postgraduate students at Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University and to examine the mediating role of information literacy in the relationship between emotional intelligence and library anxiety.

**Methodology:** This research employed a descriptive-correlational design and was analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM). The study population consisted of all postgraduate students at Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University in the academic year 2023–2024 (N = 2218). A sample of 340 students was selected using simple random sampling. Data were collected using three standardized questionnaires: the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT, 1998), the Yazdani Information Literacy Scale (2012), and the Shahbazi et al. Library Anxiety Scale (2022). The reliability of the instruments, as measured by Cronbach's alpha, was 0.89, 0.85, and 0.81, respectively. Data analysis was performed using both descriptive and inferential statistics via SPSS and AMOS software.

**Findings:** The mean scores for emotional intelligence, information literacy, and library anxiety among the postgraduate students were 3.13, 3.24, and 3.08, respectively (on a scale where a lower score for anxiety is favorable). The results indicated significant correlations among all three variables. Importantly, the structural equation model confirmed that information literacy plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between emotional intelligence and library anxiety, with an indirect effect coefficient of -0.18 (product of paths:  $-0.47 \times 0.38$ ).

**Conclusion:** The findings demonstrate that higher emotional intelligence is associated with reduced library anxiety, both directly and indirectly through the enhancement of information literacy skills. This suggests that fostering emotional intelligence and information literacy competencies in students can effectively mitigate the stress associated with library use.

**Value:** This study is the first to empirically investigate and model the tripartite relationship between emotional intelligence, information literacy, and library anxiety using structural equation modeling, thereby offering a more nuanced understanding of the factors influencing library anxiety.

**Keywords:** Emotional Intelligence, Information Literacy, Library Anxiety, Graduate Students, Structural Equation Modeling, Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University

### How to Cite:

Shahbazi, R., & Adlipour, S. (2026). The mediating role of information literacy in the relationship between emotional intelligence and library anxiety (Case study: Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University). *Journal of Knowledge-Research Studies*, 4 (4), 102-119.

Doi: [10.22034/jkrs.2025.20683](https://doi.org/10.22034/jkrs.2025.20683)

URL: [https://jkrs.tabrizu.ac.ir/article\\_20683.html?lang=en](https://jkrs.tabrizu.ac.ir/article_20683.html?lang=en)

Article Type: Original Article

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Publisher: University of Tabriz

E-ISSN: [2821-045X](https://doi.org/10.22034/jkrs.2025.20683)

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## Extended Abstract

**Introduction:** In contemporary academic environments, the mission of libraries and information centers extends beyond the fundamental tasks of collecting, organizing, and providing access to resources. It is equally imperative to identify and enhance factors that directly influence service quality and user experience. Research has identified several key variables affecting individual performance in such settings, including emotional intelligence, stress and anxiety, information literacy, communication skills, and the quality of available resources and facilities.

Stress and anxiety within educational spaces are recognized as significant barriers to effective information retrieval in libraries. Users often experience a range of negative emotions—such as anxiety, fear, and worry—in these environments. Challenges including navigating large library buildings, adapting to new technologies, confronting the sheer volume of available resources, lacking adequate research skills, and experiencing difficulties in peer interactions can transform "using the library" into an "unpleasant experience," a phenomenon widely studied as *library anxiety*.

One critical factor influencing an individual's level of library anxiety is emotional intelligence. The efficient use of library services by students in educational institutions is contingent not only on "appropriate conditions and facilities" but also on maximizing students' "psychological comfort." Achieving this requires an understanding of users' psychological characteristics and emotional complexities. Emotional intelligence, which pertains to an individual's ability to perceive, use, understand, and manage emotions, is intrinsically linked to behavior, mental well-being, and psychological state, thereby positioning it as a potential determinant of library anxiety.

Information literacy constitutes another pivotal factor that can mitigate library anxiety. Defined as a set of essential skills for identifying information needs and locating, evaluating, and using information effectively, information literacy empowers individuals. Those who are information-literate are likely to experience less library anxiety, as they possess a greater sense of control over information sources and the search process. This proficiency reduces time spent searching and alleviates the psychological stress associated with inefficiency.

**Purpose:** This research was conducted to investigate the status of emotional intelligence, information literacy, and library anxiety among Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University students.

**Methodology:** This research employed a descriptive-correlational design and was analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM). The population comprised all postgraduate students enrolled at Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University during the 2023–2024 academic year (N = 2218). A sample of 340 participants was selected using a simple random sampling method.

Data were collected using three validated instruments:

1. The Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT; Schutte et al., 1998).
2. The Yazdani Information Literacy Scale (Yazdani, 2012).
3. The Library Anxiety Scale (Shahbazi et al., 2022).

Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha yielded coefficients of 0.89, 0.85, and 0.81 for the three instruments, respectively. Data analysis was conducted using both descriptive and inferential statistics, performed with SPSS (Version X) and AMOS (Version Y) software.



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**Findings:** The structural equation modeling results are summarized in Table 1. The findings confirm all hypothesized relationships. 1. **H<sub>1</sub>** : A significant negative relationship exists between emotional intelligence and library anxiety ( $\beta = -0.42$ ,  $t = 3.71$ ), confirming the first hypothesis. 2. **H<sub>2</sub>** : A significant negative relationship was found between emotional intelligence and information literacy ( $\beta = -0.36$ ,  $t = 4.19$ ), confirming the second hypothesis. 3. **H<sub>3</sub>** : A significant negative relationship was identified between information literacy and library anxiety ( $\beta = -0.47$ ,  $t = 2.89$ ), confirming the third hypothesis. 4. **H<sub>4</sub> (Mediation)**: The conditions for mediation were met. Since the t-values for the paths from emotional intelligence to information literacy and from information literacy to library anxiety both exceeded the critical value of 1.96, the indirect effect was statistically significant. The analysis confirmed that information literacy partially mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and library anxiety. The specific indirect effect (mediation coefficient) was -0.18, calculated as the product of the two path coefficients ( $-0.36 \times -0.47$ ).



**Table 1. Standardized Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing for the Mediation Model**

Hypothesis	Hypotheses Direction		Standard path coefficient ( $\beta$ )	(t-value)	Result
	From variable	To variable			
H1	Information literacy	→ Library Anxiety (direct effect)	- 0.47*	2.89	Confirm
H2	Emotional Intelligence	→ Library Anxiety (Direct effect)	- 0.42*	3.71	Confirm
H3	Emotional Intelligence	→ Information literacy (Direct effect)	0.38*	4.19	Confirm
H4	Emotional Intelligence	→ Library Anxiety (Indirect Effect) (via Information literacy)	(0.38 × -0.47) = - 0.18		Confirm

P<0.05\*

The goodness-of-fit indices for the proposed structural model are presented in Table 2. The results indicate an acceptable fit between the model and the observed data. Specifically: The normed chi-square ( $\chi^2/df$ ) value of 2.588 falls within the acceptable range, The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) value of 0.076 suggests a reasonable error of approximation, The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) value of 0.95 and the Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) value of 0.92 both exceed the conventional threshold of 0.90, indicating a good fit.

Collectively, these indices demonstrate that the conceptual model provides a largely accurate representation of the relationships among the studied variables.

**Table 2. Goodness-of-Fit Indices for the Proposed Structural Equation Model**

No.	Fit Index	Recommended Threshold	Obtained Value	Interpretation
1	Normed Chi-square / df ( $\chi^2/df$ )	$\chi^2/df < 3.00$	2.588	Good fit
2	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	RMSEA < 0.08	0.076	Good fit
3	Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI)	GFI > 0.90	0.922	Good fit
4	Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI)	AGFI > 0.85	0.880	Good fit
5	Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	CFI > 0.90	0.955	Good fit
6	Normed Fit Index (NFI)	NFI > 0.90	0.930	Good fit
7	Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI/TLI)	NNFI > 0.90	0.927	Good fit



**Conclusion:** Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that information literacy not only directly reduces library anxiety but also acts as a mediator between emotional intelligence and library anxiety. Consequently, a weakness in information literacy can diminish the beneficial indirect effect of emotional intelligence on reducing library anxiety. Therefore, by strengthening students' emotional intelligence and information literacy through dedicated efforts, a further decrease in their library anxiety can be anticipated. The outcome of such initiatives is expected to be enhanced student learning and academic performance, leading to the entry of more qualified graduates into the labor market.

**Value:** The present study provides a novel contribution by being the first to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence, information literacy, and library anxiety using structural equation modeling.

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