

The Role of Cognitive Potential in Predicting First-Semester GPA of KIP-Kuliah Scholarship Recipients

Prinska Damara Sastri^{1*}, Recky Recky², Rifqi Farisan Akbar³

Univeritas Indonesia Membangun, Bandung, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: prinska.damara@inaba.ac.id^{1*},
recky@inaba.ac.id², rifqi.farisan@inaba.ac.id³

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the influence of cognitive potential, measured via the Wonderlic Personnel Test (WPT), on the first-semester Grade Point Average (GPA) of KIP-Kuliah scholarship recipients (Class of 2025) at Universitas Indonesia Membangun (INABA). Using a saturated sampling technique, 94 participants were involved, predominantly female, aged 19, from the Communication Science program, with average IQ scores categorized as "Low Average" (80-90). Data were analyzed using simple linear regression, supported by classical assumption tests including normality, multicollinearity, and autocorrelation. The findings reveal a significant influence of cognitive potential on GPA ($p < .05$). Notably, the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = .983$) indicated that cognitive potential accounts for 98.3% of the variance in academic performance, with only 1.7% attributable to external factors. However, the regression coefficient ($B = -2.185$) indicated a significant negative direction, suggesting that higher cognitive scores within this specific group did not correspond to higher academic achievement during the first-semester transition. This phenomenon highlights a critical gap in academic adaptation, wherein students with "Low Average" cognitive profiles may struggle with the heightened analytical demands of higher education in the absence of adequate self-regulated learning strategies. These results underscore the need for institutional interventions, such as specialized academic mentoring, to support scholarship recipients in maintaining their academic eligibility.

Keywords: cognitive potential, Wonderlic Personnel Test, GPA, KIP-Kuliah, academic adaptation

1. Introduction

Education is a fundamental right of every citizen, as mandated by Article 31 of the 1945 Indonesian Constitution (UUD 1945). This article stipulates that every citizen is entitled to education, is obligated to complete basic education, and that the government is required to fund it; furthermore, the state must allocate a minimum of 20% of its budget to education (UUD 1945, Article 31, Paragraphs 1, 2, and 4). Irfani (2025) affirms that the right to education constitutes one of the fundamental rights the state must guarantee, as governed under Articles 27 through 34 of the UUD 1945. A failure by the state to fulfill citizens' educational rights can be categorized as a violation of human rights and applicable legislation (Nazhifah & Najicha, 2023).

In response to this constitutional mandate, the government introduced the Kartu Indonesia Pintar Kuliah (KIP-Kuliah) program as a key educational policy initiative. The KIP-Kuliah program is a higher education affirmation initiative by the Indonesian government, designed to provide access to tertiary education for students from economically disadvantaged families. Since its transformation from the Bidikmisi program in 2020, KIP-Kuliah has reached more than 1.05 million students, with approximately 440,000 alumni having graduated (Puslapdik, 2023).

The selection process for KIP-Kuliah recipients is rigorous, involving multiple administrative and factual verification stages to ensure the program reaches its intended beneficiaries. Despite this, evidence from the field indicates that a considerable number of KIP-Kuliah recipients encounter academic difficulties following enrollment. Research conducted at Universitas Jember revealed that out of 6,730 KIP-Kuliah recipients, only 78 (fewer than 2%) achieved distinguished academic performance (Anam, 2025). Similarly, a study at Politeknik Pertanian Negeri Payakumbuh found that KIP-Kuliah recipients tended to experience a decline in academic achievement each semester, as reflected in their declining cumulative GPA (Permata et al., 2025).

Numerous studies have been conducted to identify factors influencing the academic achievement of KIP-Kuliah recipients, yielding varied results. On one hand, non-cognitive factors have been shown to play a significant role. Permata, Kemala, and Ade (2025) found that learning motivation and learning discipline significantly influenced the academic achievement of KIP recipients at Politeknik Pertanian Negeri Payakumbuh. Meanwhile, Hafiz (2024) demonstrated a significant relationship between self-regulated learning and academic procrastination among KIP-Kuliah students, suggesting that the capacity for self-directed learning is central to avoiding task deferral and sustaining academic performance.

On the other hand, research focusing on cognitive factors has produced findings that are both noteworthy and occasionally contradictory. Lestari (2017) demonstrated that Intelligence Quotient (IQ), as measured by Raven's Standard Progressive Matrices (SPM), was a positive predictor of first-year academic performance among medical students, supporting the assumption that higher cognitive ability corresponds to better academic outcomes. However, divergent findings were reported by Surtiyoni et al. (2026), who found that students with superior IQ classifications actually achieved lower academic results than those with average IQ classifications, with IQ accounting for only 1.7% of GPA variance. A mismatch between cognitive potential and actual academic performance was also identified among KIP-Kuliah students through a data mining approach, in which the implementation of

clustering algorithms revealed that a subset of scholarship recipients experienced a decline in GPA following the commencement of their studies (IEEE Xplore, 2023).

The complexity of the relationship between cognitive potential and academic achievement is further elucidated by Kyndt et al. (2021), who assert that during the transition to higher education, cognitive capacity is not the sole determinant of success. Without the adoption of new and effective learning strategies (self-regulated learning), cognitive potential will not convert into positive academic outcomes. This is consistent with the findings of Ramadhani et al. (2021), who demonstrated that self-regulated learning plays an important role in predicting academic success among scholarship recipients. Accordingly, while cognitive potential contributes to academic achievement, non-cognitive factors such as motivation, discipline, and adaptive learning strategies are equally important, particularly among student populations with below-average cognitive profiles such as those examined in the present study.

Drawing from the prior research reviewed above, improving learning quality, motivation, and cognitive potential is critical for KIP-Kuliah recipients to sustain their academic performance. Cognitive ability has been shown to be an important contributing factor. Fikram (2025) found at Universitas Malikussaleh that academic motivation had a positive and significant influence on the academic achievement of KIP-Kuliah recipients, while the scholarship itself had a positive but non-significant effect. Psychological factors such as self-regulated learning have likewise been shown to be important; Hafiz (2024) found a significant relationship between self-regulated learning and academic procrastination among KIP-Kuliah students. Without the adoption of new and effective learning strategies, cognitive potential alone will not translate into positive academic outcomes. Thus, while cognitive potential contributes to achievement, non-cognitive factors such as motivation, discipline, and adaptive learning strategies are equally critical, particularly for students with below-average cognitive profiles.

This study was conducted at Universitas X, a higher education institution located in Bandung, organized under Yayasan X. Universitas X (2023) upholds core values of Integrity, Assertiveness, Wisdom, Analytical Thinking, Progress, Excellence, and Achievement. These values constitute the character of the academic community, which is expected to master knowledge, technology, arts, and entrepreneurship. Consistent with its Analytical value, which emphasizes logic in decision-making, and its value of Progress, which fosters independence, the university is committed to producing graduates who excel at the local, national, and international levels. This commitment is reflected in the university's active participation in the KIP-Kuliah affirmation program, which aims to provide broad and equitable educational access for all segments of society, including students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The Directorate of Student Affairs at Universitas X plays an active role in monitoring the academic development of KIP-Kuliah recipients, including conducting early identification of potential academic difficulties. As is common practice at many higher education institutions, monitoring and evaluation of KIP-Kuliah students represents the university's accountability mechanism for ensuring continuity of study and the proper targeting of educational assistance (Kemdikbudristek, 2023).

To ensure that measurement is more systematic and objective, this study employed a standardized psychological assessment instrument to measure cognitive potential. The

Wonderlic Personnel Test (WPT) was used, a psychological assessment tool developed in 1937 to measure general mental ability, encompassing information processing speed, logical reasoning, numerical ability, and verbal comprehension, administered within a 12-minute time limit. The WPT was selected because of its established predictive validity for academic achievement. A meta-analysis by Robie et al. (2024) found a significant positive correlation between WPT scores and undergraduate GPA ($\bar{r} = 0.27$). Rakhmanov and Dane (2020) also demonstrated that the WPT can enhance the accuracy of first-year academic performance predictions. While the WPT offers advantages in terms of administrative efficiency, its measurement depth is more limited compared to more comprehensive intelligence assessments.

This study was conducted with KIP-Kuliah recipients from the Class of 2025 at Universitas X. The cognitive potential assessment using the WPT was administered at the request of the Student Affairs Directorate, which sought an objective measure of the cognitive capacity of KIP-Kuliah recipients in order to anticipate potential academic difficulties and to provide institutional archival data as a basis for designing targeted support programs. A review of prior research revealed that no study has specifically examined the relationship between cognitive potential, as measured by a standardized instrument such as the WPT, and first-semester GPA among KIP-Kuliah scholarship recipients, particularly at Universitas X.

Existing research has predominantly focused on non-cognitive factors such as motivation and learning discipline among KIP-Kuliah students at other institutions, and has thus not provided an objective picture of the actual cognitive capacity of KIP-Kuliah recipients at Universitas X. Furthermore, the use of the Wonderlic Personnel Test as a measure of cognitive potential has not previously been applied to this student population at this institution.

Research Questions

- 1 Is there a significant influence of cognitive potential (Wonderlic Personnel Test scores) on the first-semester GPA of KIP-Kuliah recipients from the Class of 2025 at Universitas X?
- 2 To what extent does cognitive potential (Wonderlic Personnel Test scores) contribute to predicting the first-semester GPA of KIP-Kuliah recipients from the Class of 2025 at Universitas X?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Academic Achievement

Academic achievement refers to the outcomes attained by an individual in the mastery of knowledge and skills developed through instruction, commonly expressed through numerical grades assigned by instructors (Wittig, 1981). At the tertiary level, student academic achievement is represented by the Semester Grade Point Average (GPA) for each semester and the Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) aggregated across all semesters. According to Wittig (1981), academic achievement in the form of learning outcomes and GPA encompasses problem-solving, mastery of subject matter, sustained attention, comprehension, and the extraction of core principles that can be meaningfully integrated and applied.

2.2 Wonderlic Personnel Test (WPT)

The Wonderlic Personnel Test (WPT) is a general mental ability test developed to assess an individual's capacity to comprehend instructions, potential for rapidly learning new tasks, problem-solving ability, and capacity for generating new ideas and directions (Wonderlic Inc., 2015). The official WPT manual defines it as "a general mental ability test to measure an applicant's ability to understand instructions, potential for learning a new job quickly, ability to solve problems, and ability to come up with new ideas and new work directions" (Wonderlic Inc., n.d.).

The WPT consists of 50 items to be completed within 12 minutes, covering several ability domains: information processing speed, logical reasoning, numerical ability, and verbal comprehension. Two primary versions of the WPT exist: the WPT-R (Wonderlic Personnel Test-Revised) and the WPT-Q (Wonderlic Personnel Test-Quicktest), which is a shorter version designed for pre-testing purposes (Beat the Wonderlic, 2015).

2.3. Previous Research

A number of previous studies have examined the relationship between cognitive potential and GPA in KIP-Kuliah recipient students.

Table 1. Summary of Relevant Previous Studies

No.	Author(s) (Year)	Title	Key Findings	Relevance to Current Study
1	Anam, A. K. (2025)	Causes of KIP-K scholarship recipients not achieving academic success at the University of Jember	Out of 6,730 KIP-K scholarship recipients at the University of Jember, only 78 students (less than 2%) achieved outstanding academic performance	Supports the phenomenon that KIP-K scholarship recipients tend to experience academic difficulties despite rigorous selection, aligning with the findings of this study
2	Fikram, M. (2025)	The influence of KIP-K scholarships, learning motivation, and interest in higher education on the academic achievement of first-year students	KIP-K scholarships have a positive but non-significant effect on academic achievement, while learning motivation has a positive and significant effect	Strengthens the argument that non-cognitive factors (such as motivation) are more dominant than financial assistance alone, relevant to this study's finding of a negative correlation between IQ and GPA
3	Nuraeni, F., Kurniadi, D., &	Implementation of the K-Means algorithm for	Some KIP-K scholarship recipients experienced a decline in	Supports this study's finding that KIP-K students are vulnerable

No.	Author(s) (Year)	Title	Key Findings	Relevance to Current Study
	Dermawan, G. F. (2023)	clustering the characteristics of students receiving Kartu Indonesia Pintar Kuliah (KIP-K)	Grade Point Average (GPA) from semester 1 to semester 4	to academic performance decline during the early semesters, especially those with below-average cognitive profiles
4	Lestari, S. M. P. (2017)	Analysis of psychological examination aspects as predictors of first-year student performance at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Malahayati, class of 2013	IQ measured by the <i>Raven's Standard Progressive Matrices (SPM)</i> is a positive predictor of first-year student academic performance	Serves as a comparison : this previous study found a positive correlation between IQ and GPA, contrasting with the current study's negative correlation, highlighting the importance of population context and measurement instruments
5	Rakhmanov, O., & Dane, S. (2020)	Improving the prediction accuracy of academic performance of the freshman using Wonderlic Personnel Test and Rey-Osterrieth Complex Figure	The Wonderlic Personnel Test (WPT) can improve the prediction accuracy of first-year student academic performance	Validates the use of WPT as an instrument in this study to measure the cognitive potential of KIP-K scholarship recipients
6	Surtiyoni, E., et al. (2026)	Intelligence quotient and academic achievement: A correlational study of guidance and counseling undergraduates	Students in the superior IQ category actually had lower learning outcomes compared to those with average IQ, with IQ contributing only 1.7% to GPA	Highly relevant: supports the finding of a negative correlation in this study, demonstrating that high IQ does not guarantee high academic achievement without the support of other factors
7	Robie, C., et al. (2024)	A meta-analysis of the relationship between Wonderlic test scores and school success	There is a significant positive correlation between WPT scores and undergraduate student GPA ($\bar{r} = 0.27$)	Validates the general use of WPT as a predictor of academic achievement, but this study found opposite

No.	Author(s) (Year)	Title	Key Findings	Relevance to Current Study
				results in the KIP-K scholarship recipient population, indicating the uniqueness of this population

These studies emphasize the important role of cognitive potential in predicting GPA in KIP students. However, a gap remains: no research has specifically examined the relationship between cognitive potential (measured by standardized tests such as the WPT) and first-semester GPA in the KIP-Kuliah student population. Existing research has focused more on non-cognitive factors such as motivation and study discipline in the KIP-Kuliah student population at other universities, thus failing to provide an objective picture of the actual cognitive capacity of KIP-Kuliah students.

3. Research Method

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative approach with a correlational-predictive design. This design was chosen because the study aimed to examine the relationship and predict the extent to which cognitive potential (WPT scores) influences the first-semester GPA of KIP-Kuliah scholarship recipients (Sugiyono, 2019). A correlational-predictive design enables the researcher to identify the contribution of the independent variable to the dependent variable, as well as to determine the predictive validity of the measurement instrument.

3.1.1 Population and Sample

The population of this study comprised all KIP-Kuliah scholarship recipients from the Class of 2025 at Universitas X. A total sampling technique (saturated sampling) was employed, in which the entire population served as the study sample. A total of 94 students were included in the sample.

3.1.2. Instrument and Data Analysis Technique

Cognitive potential was measured using the Wonderlic Personnel Test (WPT), a general mental ability test developed by Wonderlic Inc. to assess an individual's ability to comprehend instructions, potential for rapidly learning new tasks, problem-solving capacity, and capacity for generating new ideas and directions (Wonderlic Inc., 2015). The WPT consists of 50 items to be completed within 12 minutes, encompassing four main components: information processing speed, logical reasoning, numerical ability, and verbal comprehension (Beat the Wonderlic, 2015).

Academic achievement was measured using documented first-semester Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) data obtained from the Academic Affairs Office of Universitas X. According to Wittig (1981), academic achievement in the form of grades and GPA reflects learning outcomes that encompass problem-solving, mastery of subject matter, and the ability to integrate core principles.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

This section presents the main findings of the study and interprets the results based on the collected data. The findings address the role of cognitive potential in predicting the first-semester GPA of KIP-Kuliah scholarship recipients at Universitas X.

Table 2. Summary of Respondent Characteristics

Characteristic	Category	N	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	20	21.3%
	Female	74	78.7%
Age	17 years	1	1.4%
	18 years	24	33.8%
	19 years	37	52.1%
	20 years	9	12.7%
Study Program	Psychology	14	15.6%
	Management	25	27.8%
	Accounting	12	13.3%
	Communication Science	35	38.9%
IQ Category	Mentally Defective (<70)	2	2.1%
	Borderline Defective (70-79)	24	25.5%
	Low Average (80-90)	44	46.8%
	Average (91-110)	20	21.3%
	High Average (111-120)	4	4.3%
	Superior (>120)	0	0%

The study sample consisted of 94 participants enrolled at Universitas X under the KIP-Kuliah scholarship, selected using a saturated sampling technique. The majority of respondents were female, aged 19, enrolled in the Communication Science program, and classified in the Low Average IQ category (80-90). Data were analyzed using simple linear regression to

examine the influence of Wonderlic Personnel Test (WPT) scores on the first-semester GPA of KIP-Kuliah scholarship recipients at Universitas X.

Significance Test (t-Test)

Table 3. Coefficients

Coefficients ^a												
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	185.187	3.422		54.124	.000	178.393	191.980					
X1	-2.185	.029	-.992	-74.380	.000	-2.243	-2.127	-.992	-.992	-.992	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: Unstandardized Residual

Based on the Coefficients table, a t-value of -74.380 was obtained with a significance level of .000. Given that the significance value (Sig. < .05), it can be concluded that there is a significant influence of cognitive potential on GPA among KIP-Kuliah scholarship recipients at Universitas Indonesia Membangun. Furthermore, the regression coefficient (B = -2.185) and the standardized coefficient (Beta = -.992) indicate that the direction of this influence is negative. This means that each unit increase in WPT scores was associated with a decrease in GPA within this study population.

Contribution of Variables

Table 4. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	Change Statistics			Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
						F Change	df1	df2		
1	.992 ^a	.983	.983	22.99482739	.983	5532.357	1	94	.000	2.058

a. Predictors: (Constant), X1

Based on the model summary table, the R^2 value was .983, indicating that cognitive potential accounts for 98.3% of the variance in the GPA of KIP-Kuliah recipients from the Class of 2025, while the remaining 1.7% is attributable to other variables not examined in this study.

4.2 Discussions

The findings of this study demonstrate a significant, albeit negative, influence of cognitive potential on the GPA of KIP-Kuliah recipients from the Class of 2025 at Universitas Indonesia Membangun. The negative direction indicates that each unit increase in WPT scores was paradoxically associated with a decrease in GPA within this population. This finding contradicts the meta-analysis conducted by Robie et al. (2024), which reported a significant positive correlation between WPT scores and academic achievement broadly, and undergraduate GPA specifically. That meta-analysis confirmed that, in general, higher WPT scores correspond to higher GPA outcomes. The findings from KIP-Kuliah recipients at Universitas INABA present a divergent and even opposing pattern.

However, comparable findings have been reported in other studies. Surtiyoni et al. (2026) found, in a study of Guidance and Counseling undergraduates, that students with superior IQ classifications actually achieved lower academic outcomes than those with average IQ classifications, with IQ accounting for only 1.7% of GPA variance. Kyndt et al. (2021) argued that cognitive ability does not directly translate into academic success without the concurrent adoption of new learning strategies. For students categorized as Low Average, even marginal increases in the cognitive demands of university coursework, in the absence of adequate Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) strategies, can precipitate a substantial decline in academic performance.

This pattern is also consistent with the cognitive profile of the KIP-Kuliah student population. As shown in Table 1, the majority of respondents (72.3%) were classified in the Low Average (80-90) and Borderline Defective (70-79) categories. Wexler (2023) noted that

the Low Average (80-89) and Below Average (70-79) groups do not differ significantly in adaptive and academic functioning, suggesting that small IQ differences within the 70-89 range do not produce meaningfully different academic outcomes. Additionally, Hafiz (2024) highlighted the importance of non-cognitive factors among KIP-Kuliah students. In groups with below-average cognitive capacity, factors such as academic procrastination may explain why precisely predicted cognitive potential nevertheless correlates negatively with actual outcomes. Students who perceive themselves as having somewhat higher cognitive ability relative to their peers may underestimate the challenges of the first semester, ultimately to the detriment of their GPA.

Regarding the contribution of cognitive potential in predicting GPA, the study data show that cognitive potential accounted for 98.3% of the variance in the GPA of KIP-Kuliah recipients from the Class of 2025. This is an exceptionally high figure, indicating that general mental ability is the predominant determinant of early academic success for this group. This is consistent with Rakhmanov and Dane (2020), who found that the WPT effectively enhances the accuracy of first-year academic performance predictions. Kyndt et al. (2021) emphasized, however, that during the transition to higher education, cognitive capacity is not the sole determinant of success. Without the adoption of new and effective learning strategies, cognitive potential alone will not translate into positive academic outcomes. This explains why KIP-Kuliah recipients with Low Average IQ profiles in this study experienced a performance decline (negative correlation) when confronted with increased academic demands in the first semester.

5. Conclusion

This study arrives at several key conclusions regarding the relationship between cognitive potential and academic achievement among KIP-Kuliah scholarship recipients from the Class of 2025 at Universitas X:

- Significant but negative influence: Statistical testing revealed a significant influence of cognitive potential (Wonderlic Personnel Test scores) on first-semester GPA. However, this influence was negative in direction ($B = -2.185$), meaning that each unit increase in cognitive potential scores was associated with a decrease in GPA within this population.
- Highly dominant predictive contribution: Cognitive potential demonstrated a predominant predictive contribution, accounting for 98.3% of the variance in student GPA. This indicates that general mental ability is the primary determinant of early academic success for KIP-Kuliah recipients at this institution.
- Vulnerable respondent profile: The majority of respondents (72.3%) were classified in the Low Average (80-90) and Borderline Defective (70-79) IQ categories. The near-total dependence of GPA on cognitive factors (98.3%) places students in these categories in a position of heightened vulnerability to academic difficulties.
- Importance of adaptation and learning strategies: The negative influence observed suggests that cognitive potential alone does not automatically translate into academic achievement without the concurrent development of Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) strategies and effective academic adaptation during the university transition. The increase in cognitive demands in higher education, in the absence of adequate learning

strategies, appears to be the primary driver of academic performance decline among students with below-average IQ profiles.

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