

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Emotional Intelligence as a Predictor of Psychological Well-Being in University Students

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Abstract: The current research was conducted to investigate the connection between emotional intelligence (EI) and psychological well-being (PWB) amongst Peshawar based university students. In particular, the study aimed at determining the role of EI in the PWB among students and demarcating demographic differences in EI between female and male students, contrasted with their respective PWB profile. This twofold objective adds value to the academic discourse of affective competencies within higher education institutions. The sample size was 8 universities that are located in Peshawar; four of them were in the public sector and the other 4 were in the private sector. Four hundred respondents were attracted using random sampling methods. The methodological soundness of the quantitative data was achieved by thoroughly analysing them with the help of the relevant statistical procedures. The results have clearly shown that there is a strong relationship between EI and PWB, which has a consequential effect on academic performance, as well as, the personal life courses of the students. In addition, the data showed that EI profiles of students in their first years of study were significantly different with those of their fellows in their senior semesters. Therefore, the enhancement of PWB among students seems to be dependent on the high levels of EI. These results highlight the necessity of providing universities with specific resources, infrastructural assistance, and guidance services that will support successful emotional regulation and general psychological well-being.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Academic Performance, Undergraduate Students, Psychological Well-being, Emotional Self-regulation, Personality

Introduction

University years can be considered one of the best times to develop emotional abilities that further contribute to well-being of people. Guerra-Bustamante (2019) tested the hypothesis of the relationship between the separate dimensions of emotional intelligence and perceived happiness among undergraduate students. Results show that emotional insights and emotional regulation improvements have a positive behavioral relationship with happiness. The study illustrates the need to initiate interventions that enhance emotional intelligence, hence student happiness and emotional well-being.

Cazan and Nastasa (2015) evaluated the connection of emotional intelligence and academic success and found that emotional intelligence contributes to better adaptation and academic performance in case it is higher. Additionally, high levels of emotional intelligence are associated with lower levels of anxiety, stress, and burnout as well as increased levels of life satisfaction. According to Minz and Singh (2025), emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in the development of the psychological wellbeing of adolescents because it determines emotional regulation, interpersonal relationships, and their resilience. Their study was on gender and residential effects on adolescents in West Singhbhum district, Jharkhand, India. Using a stratified random sample of 80 subjects, emotional intelligence was determined using Mangal Emotional intelligence

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Inventory and psychological wellbeing using Psychological Well-being Scale by Sisodia and Choudhary. A t-test showed the significance of gender effect, that is female adolescents were rated higher in both emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing (p less than 0.01), but residence location did not lead to significant differences. The findings support gender differences in emotional development and refute the fact that geographic variations cause emotional development but note that gender-sensitive programs are necessary to develop emotional intelligence and mental health among adolescents.

One study that only involved male students was the study that considered the correlation between emotional intelligence and perceived social support, and emotional intelligence was found to have a positive correlation with two variables. Besides, the longitudinal correlation between emotional intelligence and wellbeing is partially mediated by perceived social support (Malinauskas & Malinauskiene, 2020). As a matter of theory, people with high emotional intelligence should report higher psychological wellbeing as compared to lower emotional intelligence. The current paper seeks to understand the relationship between emotional intelligence and four aspects of psychological wellbeing namely self-acceptance, life-satisfaction, somatic complaints and self-esteem (Carmeli, Yitzhak-Halevy and Weisberg, 2009). According to Ruiz-Ortega, Sanchez-Alvarez, and Berrios-Martos (2024), academic performance is determined by a very large number of factors. They prove in their work that increased emotional intelligence correlates with improved academic achievements and high scores of psychological wellbeing correlate with high grades. Emotional intelligence, psychological wellbeing and academic performance in their sample of undergraduate nursing students showed significant positive correlation and it was found that emotional intelligence could indirectly affect academic achievement via psychological wellbeing.

In a study by Mehmood and Gulzar (2014), the authors examined the relationship between the emotional intelligence and the psychological wellbeing of the adolescents and identified that emotional intelligence was significantly positively correlated with self-esteem and negatively correlated with depression. These findings indicate that emotionally intelligent people have more adaptive life patterns. According to recent studies, the drop in emotional intelligence levels among teenagers is manifested in the form of despair, alienation, substance abuse, crime, bullying, and school dropout. Ugoani & Akuezue (2013) have used a survey design and statistically through analysis established that emotional intelligence has an impact on the psychological wellbeing of adolescents. Pimple (2023) investigated the psychological wellbeing, which is the presence of positive emotions, life satisfaction, and absence of negative emotions. The resilience, social support, mindfulness, and yoga factors were taken into account. It was shown that emotional intelligence was a key predictor of psychological wellbeing. Purposive sampling and a quasi-experimental separate group design yielded a finding that there was a gender difference of emotional intelligence which favored males but also no substantial gender difference in psychological wellbeing. It is recorded that there is a difference in the emotional intelligence profile of males and females.

Goleman (1998) believed that men and women have dissimilar strengths in certain domains of EI, although overall scores on EI are usually similar. Later experiments also found that females score higher than males on the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (Mayer and Geher, 1996; Mayer, Caruso and Salovey, 2002; Mandell and Pherwani, 2003) and that the results of EI tests in female participants can be correlated with the outcomes in their professional and personal lives (Brackett and Mayer, 2003). In one of their studies, Ruiz-Aranda, Extremera, and Pineda-Galan (2014) discovered that high emotional intelligence decreased tensions and increased the levels of happiness and life satisfaction among female healthcare workers in a 12-week intervention. The connection between emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing of students, teachers, nurses, doctors, and other healthcare workers has been studied in a wide range. Akram, Munir, and Gilani (2020) developed correlational research and selected 1,200 secondary school educators ($n=1,200$) through multistaged random sampling. Psychological wellbeing and emotional intelligence were strongly related as measured using standardized questionnaires. There was a high agreement between teachers and stakeholders and teachers as well as their students. Women and married

teachers scored more on both constructs. The authors suggested special motivational techniques in relation to male and unmarried teachers to increase the emotional and wellbeing outcomes. Ruiz-Ortega, Sánchez-Alvarez and Berrios-Martos restated the fact that academic performance is the consequence of a multifactorial interplay of various components. They studied the relationships between emotional intelligence, psychological wellbeing and academic performance in undergraduate nursing students. The findings indicated that there were very strong positive relationships and that emotional intelligence dimensions have direct and indirect relationships with academic outcomes through psychological wellbeing. In particular, the connection between emotional intelligence and academic performance was mediated by flourishing, which had a direct effect. These results underline the importance of emotional regulation skills in academic performance and psychological wellbeing is a beneficial partial mediator. As a result, nursing students who are more emotionally controlled and with increased psychological wellbeing will have better academic results.

Objectives of the Study

Main objectives of the study were:

1. To investigate relationship of emotional intelligence with psychological well-being of university students
2. To document differences in demographics on emotional intelligence and psychological well-being
3. To investigate the effects of EI on undergraduate students' psychological well-being

Hypotheses

Following are the hypotheses of the study:

H₀1: There is no significant relationship among emotional intelligence and psychological well-being of university students

H₀2: There is no significant difference in demographics between EI and PWB of university students

H₀3: There is no significant effect of EI on undergraduate students' psychological well-being

Significance of the Study

Virtually all human beings would testify to the turbulent and chaotic experience one faces due to the stress of academia, along with the countless hormonal changes that occur in young university students, giving rise to drastic vicissitudes in the emotional, social and intellectual realms. The current question aims at clarifying the relevance of emotional intelligence to the group of university students and its immediate relationship with the psychological health of the students. The research attempts to record the antecedents of attenuated EI and PWB of the students, which at some instances lead to the maladaptive consequences. The results of this study have significant significance to educational establishments that endeavor to develop specific programmes that would serve to alleviate psychological challenges among the students such as organization of workshops, seminars and symposiums that would promote awareness of emotional intelligence. Currently, universities and other institutions of higher learning do emphasize more on academic intelligence and neglect EI. In this inquiry, it is contended that HEIs should shift their emphasis to encouraging and nurturing emotional intelligence among their students thus improving productivity and performance in academic and co-curricular activities. The plethora of life challenges facing students in universities form the main driving force behind the choice of this research; it accurately places students in the centre of focus thus shedding light on the hardships that create and accelerate their psychological stressors.

Problem Statement

In modern research, emotional intelligence has been seen as a key predictor of academic achievement and thus, individuals who are emotionally intelligent can cope with the academic stresses and strains with some degree of ease. However, there still is a great percentage of people who cannot properly understand either

the affective states of themselves or of other people. Theorists have argued that the cognitive intelligence in itself cannot support the achievement and personal fulfillment and as students continue their prolonged academic careers, they may face a myriad of challenges in cultivating a sensitive sense of their own feelings and the feelings of individuals around them and their mentors. The present study was planned with the purpose of evaluating the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being in undergraduate students. The challenges that the students have in terms of the understanding of emotional intelligence, the factors that lie behind the high and the low level of emotional intelligence and how these factors affect the psychological well-being, were also ventured into the study. In addition, the study had a purpose of explaining the correlation between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being among this group of undergraduate students. Lastly, the gender-based differences in emotional intelligence and psychological well-being were recorded in the study as well, which gives a detailed description of both constructs in the cohort of students.

Operational Definitions

a. Emotional Intelligence

“The ability or tendency to perceive, understand, regulate, and connect emotions adaptively in the self and in others” (Schutte, et al., 2001).

b. Psychological well-being

“Psychological well-being is a concept that how an individual felt about his or her life that involves their assessment of feelings towards their purpose of life, their potential, their relationship with others and towards the responsibilities of their lives” (Crego et al ,2020).

c. Emotional self-regulation

Emotional self-regulation is a process of understanding, acceptance, and modulation of emotional responses, is a process that children and adolescents carry out in order to adapt to their psychosocial environment, orienting themselves toward the achievement of their evolutionary goals and favoring their mental health (Van Lissa et al., 2019).

Research Methodology

The study used a quantitative survey-based research design, closed standardized questionnaire (Demographic Sheet, Self-Report Measure of Emotional Intelligence (SRMEI) by Khan and Kamal, (2010) developed Self-Report Measure of Emotional Intelligence (SRMEI) with 60 items and Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWB), Developed by psychologist Carol D. Ryff, the 42-item Psychological Wellbeing (PWB) Scale measures six aspects of wellbeing and happiness (Ryff et al., 2007; adapted from Ryff, 1989). Sstratified random sampling was used as sampling technique. The study was conducted in the district of Peshawar, the capital of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The sample constituted 400 undergraduate students in Peshawar.

Data Analysis

Collected data was analyzed by using computer software (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). Correlation, Independent sample t-test and regression model were used for obtaining the results of hypotheses

Results and Discussions

The interpretation and analysis of data are covered in this section. Every detail is included, along with explanations in each part and the relevant tables as needed.

Correlation between EI and PWB

H01: There is no significant relationship among emotional intelligence and psychological well-being

Table 1

EI	Pearson Correlation
	Sig. (2-tailed)
	N
PWB	Pearson Correlation
	Sig. (2-tailed)
	N

To find out the relationship between EI and PWB the correlation model was used. In table $r = .523$ which is showing moderate relationship between EI and PWB, whereas p -value 0.000 which is less than 0.01 showing significant relationship between EI and PWB

H02 A. There is no significant difference between EI and PWB of undergraduate students

Table 2

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	Sig.
EI	Male	135	2.95	.165	.014	-13.50	.049
	Female	257	3.25	.229	.014		

Above table shows the difference between genders on Emotional Intelligence.

The mean value of males is 2.2954 and SD is .165 and the mean value of females is 3.25 with SD .22973, overall significant value is 0.049, which is less than 0.05 showing significant differences between genders on EI

H02 B. There is no significant difference between EI and PWB of undergraduate students

Table 3

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	Sig.
PWB	Male	135	3.7874	.27330	.02352	-3.195	.380
	Female	257	3.8868	.30217	.01885		

The mean value of males is 3.7874 and SD is .273 and the mean value of females is 3.88 with SD .0189, overall significant value is 0.380, which is greater than 0.05 showing insignificant, and there are no differences between genders on PWB

Regression Model Summary

H03: There is no significant effect of EI on undergraduate students' psychological well-being

Table 4

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	F	Sig.
1	.528	.279	.277	.15784	153.938	0.000

Regression Model to assess the effects of EI on PWB

The above table shows the effect of emotional intelligence on the psychological well-being of undergraduate university students. $R = .52$ (52%) relationship, F -value is 153.938 with significance value is 0.000 which is showing their significant effect of EI on PWB

Discussion

The study examines students' emotional self-regulation and its influence on academic success. On the basis of correlation model, relationship between EI and PWB exist and there is significant difference between genders on Emotional Intelligence. The results showed that here is no significant difference between genders

on Psychological well-being. Also, it depicted that new university student's experience significant stress, impacting their well-being. Thus, this is clear that its overcoming emotional challenges fosters meaningful connections and enhances of self-acceptance. Despite initial difficulties, undergraduates generally exhibit good psychological well-being. This is also the important point highlighted through results that Social science students effectively identify and regulate emotions, aiding intellectual and social growth as compared to basic sciences and engineering students. Overall, this was noted that coping mechanisms include social support, spirituality, and recreational activities were important strategies used by students to manage their emotions and psychological well-being. Thus, emotional intelligence positively correlates with psychological well-being, aiding in stress management and problem-solving.

Conclusion

After the interpretation of the collected data the subsequent conclusions were drawn carefully in light of the findings:

- The study highlights the significance of Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Psychological Well-being (PWB) for university students' overall development and academic progress.
- Undergraduates' diverse activities positively affect their psychological well-being and emotional intelligence, enriching their university experiences.
- Encouraging university engagement enhances students' pursuit of psychological well-being, emphasizing the importance of institutional support.
- High emotional intelligence aids students in managing stress and focusing on academic success, contributing to balanced lives and improved well-being.
- A positive association exists between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being, underscoring the need for self-awareness in educational settings.
- Emotional intelligence should be cultivated not only for academic achievement but also for daily life, necessitating its integration into educational practices.
- Elevated emotional intelligence and psychological well-being foster self-esteem and adeptness in interpersonal relationships, leading to happiness.
- Prior research supports the study's findings, affirming the link between EI, PWB, and success in life.
- Individuals with high EI and PWB exhibit societal adjustment, emotional expression, and enhanced self-image, receiving support and acceptance from others.
- Gender differences in emotional intelligence suggest tailored approaches to support students' psychological well-being, with implications for educators, counselors, and parents in promoting balanced development.

Recommendations

The researcher makes a few recommendations that may be looked into further research after taking the findings of the current study into consideration.

The following recommendations are offered, which are based on the findings:

- All the stakeholders may enhance undergraduate students' Emotional Intelligence (EI) skills to foster effective interpersonal interactions and psychological well-being.
- Universities may employ alternative measures of EI.
- Policy makers may integrate emotional intelligence training into teacher preparation programs to equip educators with skills to promote EI and PWB in students.
- Universities may initiate counseling programs focused on emotional self-direction and constancy to support students during periods of emotional vulnerability.
- Universities may introduce subjects on human or educational psychology across disciplines to enhance self-understanding and interpersonal relationships.

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