Emotional Intelligence and Emotional Self-Regulation: A Qualitative Case Study of Undergraduate University Students in Peshawar

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Abstract: *This study sought to explore the interplay between emotional intelligence and emotional self-regulation in undergraduate university students. This study was conducted to investigate the emotional intelligence level of undergraduate university students and to examine the difficulties faced by the students in the attainment of their emotional intelligence. The study was conducted in four universities in Peshawar; the sample included forty (40) purposively selected participants. A thematic analysis approach was used to analyze the qualitative findings. The results of the study show that most of the students faced several emotional problems in connection with their academic performance as well as in their personal lives. The findings also show that the students in the early level were significantly different in EI than the students in the senior semesters. These findings suggest that there should be resources, facilities, and guidance services options in universities for students to regulate their emotions properly.*

Introduction

The concept of emotional intelligence has gained much attention from the general public, and there are two major factors: firstly, because of its increasing importance in daily life, and secondly, the importance of emotional intelligence for gaining success in academic fields for students (Mancini *et al.,* 2022). In one of the studies, authors reported that emotional intelligence has a very prominent impact on education, and this is the reason that EI has received great attention from various practitioners around the world (Pishghadam *et al.,* 2022).

There are various explanations for emotional intelligence, and in the past, many authors have defined it in different ways. To sum up all the previous definitions, Mayer *et al.* (2016) defines emotional intelligence as 'the mental ability of individuals to understand, perceive and evaluate their personal emotions as well as emotions of others, and to manage, regulate and also to apply them in daily life.'

Due to its linkages to all areas of human behavior and capacity to influence actual intimate, professional, and organizational results, the definition of EI has historically attracted both academic and non-academic contexts (Salovey *et al.,* 2006). Nonetheless, several studies have sought to create and elucidate these mutual lines of thought.

It is a reality of recent times that more preference is given to the Intelligence Quotient (IQ), but research has also proved that Emotional Intelligence has great importance nowadays, and EI is gaining as much importance and attention as IQ has nowadays. Guillen *et al.* (2022) stated that students with higher levels of EI could judge their emotions in a better way, and they show more empathy towards others as they understand others' emotions equally. In contrast, students who lack emotional intelligence can show

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less empathy to their college mates and feel isolated and abandoned, which leads them to negative behavior and poor performance in the classroom. Guillen further stated in his study that there is a dire need to investigate the various mechanisms through which emotional intelligence positively influences college students' academic performance.

Emotional Intelligence and Education – Studies of Students

College success and good academic performance are a dream of every student, and they try their level best to get good grades. (Liu *et al.,* 2012) and (Pelikan *et al.,* 2021), in separate studies, reported that those students who have good emotional intelligence are more likely to have good academic records and experiences as compared to those who lack emotional intelligence. Rauf *et al.* (2020) and Tam *et al.* (2021) stated that emotional intelligence is a powerful factor in learning motivation, and if students have high emotional intelligence, then they can achieve success and good academic performance.

In light of the various definitions of EI, a dedicated amount of research has linked this phenomenon with university students' academic performances and also with their psychological patterns and well-being. Zysberg and Zisberg (2022) reported that emotional intelligence plays a very important role in decreasing and minimizing worry and thus promotes positive mental states, which lead to better academic performance. Persich et al. (2021) and Mohamed et al. (2022) stated separately that the phenomenon of emotional intelligence helps people to better adapt to the social environment, and this is good for the academic life of students as well because of students' better ability to control their own emotions as well as of emotions of their friends, teachers, and relatives as well. Recent studies conducted by Alam *et al.* (2021), Chang and Tsai (2022), and Iqbal *et al.* (2022) stated the same facts about emotional intelligence that it has a facilitative effect on students learning and academic performance. This is also stated in many studies that students' emotional intelligence can also help them to make positive progress in academic as well as sports activities (Pishghadam *et al.,* 2022; Mercader–Rubio *et al.,* 2022).

Improvement of Emotional Intelligence of Undergraduate Students

People who possess emotional intelligence may be better able to deal with emotions and assist college students in maintaining sufficient levels of motivation for learning. In any case, social help is especially significant when undergrads face difficulties that are simply impossible for them (Fortes *et al.,* 2022). In light of such studies, it is concluded that college students who receive support from others may be better able to deal with stress and anxiety during their studies because of their high emotional intelligence, which helps them to face challenges head-on.

To put it plainly, there is a need for ample research on the connection between the capacity to understand people on a profound level and better academic performance by students. Although past research has given signs that social help might play an intervening role in the capacity to understand individuals at their core, the role of emotional intelligence is significant here to understand the emotions of others and oneself (El-Sayed *et al.,* 2021).

In their study, Garca-lvarez *et al.* (2021) stated that a growing body of research in the field of emotional intelligence may lead to the development of more efficient strategies for enhancing emotional intelligence protective effect and offering helpful insights into how to increase EI among college students.

Objectives of the Study

The research objectives were:
- To investigate the emotional intelligence level of undergraduate university students.
- To examine the difficulties faced by the students in the attainment of their emotional intelligence.
- To explore the emotional self-regulation of undergraduate students.

Research Questions

The aim of the current research was to answer the following research questions:
1. What is the emotional intelligence level of undergraduate university students?

2. What difficulties do students face in the attainment of their emotional intelligence?
3. What is the level of emotional self-regulation of undergraduate students?

Significance of the Study

The significance of the current research study lies in exploring the importance and impact of emotional intelligence in the academic lives of undergraduate university students. Almost every human being can attest to the turbulent and chaotic experiences that one faces due to teenage and academia-related stress, as well as hormonal imbalances during undergraduate studentship years. Furthermore, various changes in the hormonal levels of undergraduate teenagers produce drastic vicissitudes in the emotional, social, and intellectual domains. These hormonal as well as teenage life challenges faced by undergraduate students present the major reason for the selection of the current study, which specifically makes university undergraduates their focal point in order to highlight the difficulties that create and exacerbate their psychological problems as students. Moreover, along with highlighting the growing psychological unrest among undergraduate students, the present research also provides measures to identify and rectify the turbulent psychological states of the undergraduates and to offer countermeasures, such as the application of Emotional Intelligence (EI) methodologies.

In today's age, the field of Emotional Intelligence is gaining the attention of researchers because the psychological issues and problems prevalent in the Pakistani Pakhtun society are leading to seriously disturbing psychological oddities among men, women, and children (specifically students). In relation to this, such psychological disturbances have underlying implications that are faced by the student alone, resulting in an extremely stressful academic life. These factors are, namely, deficiencies of basic needs, domestic and societal aggression (mainly passive), self-centeredness, higher level of academic competition, especially for GPAs, and racial/ethnic discrimination, while the most dangerous ones they are embroiled (directly or indirectly) in are radicalism, extremism, and terrorism. Due to the above-mentioned plethora of issues facing undergraduate Pakhtun students, it is important for them to avoid giving in to these challenges and face them by utilizing their utmost potential for not only survival but also to become a productive and constructive member of society. Such recognition and use of their internal potential are only possible when they are well-equipped to deal with their emotional intelligence and well-being. Amongst the many and varied constructive potentials housed within an individual student, foremost is the mutual understanding and development of the emotional needs of their own and those of their fellows, which is beneficial in maintaining their own psychological balance. This is especially required in order for young students to develop comprehensive abilities about emotional intelligence for the understanding and management of their and other's emotional well-being.

The purpose of the investigation is to highlight the methods the students under study use to develop attentiveness, responsiveness, and wakefulness with regard to their own emotional understanding and that of others. The study is designed to develop comprehension of the general perceptions about the importance of Emotional Intelligence among students for the purpose of cementing EI's importance in the daily maintenance of their well-being. The study will also help students to realize various gains and benefits of having high emotional intelligence and balanced mental health.

Delimitations of the Study

The study was delimited to private and public sector universities of undergraduate students in Peshawar. As this research was carried out in urban universities in the district of Peshawar, it may not be generalized to other universities that are located in remote areas.

Methodology

The doctoral study from which this paper is drawn used a mixed-methods research design to explore the research questions of the study.

The present study explored the role of emotional intelligence among undergraduate students at the university level. This study underpinned qualitative research methods and tools. Snape and Spencer (2003) state that interviews in qualitative research provide a holistic understanding of research respondents'

views and actions in the context of their overall lives. Kvale (2007: 11) stated that 'interview is thought to be a powerful and unique sensitive method for capturing the experiences and lived meanings of the respondents' everyday world.'

The selection of semi-structured interviews for the current study served a number of purposes. This included getting a deep understanding of respondents' opinions about social reality (Fontana & Frey, 2000) and digging deeper into the perceptions and experiences of the respondents about EI and Psychological well-being.

Research Site

The study was conducted in the district of Peshawar, the capital of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, Pakistan. Peshawar has an area of $74\,521\,km^2$ (28,773 sq. miles). The first phase of the study was a collection of primary data in the form of questionnaires, which were gathered from the undergraduate students through questionnaires from selected Public and private universities of Peshawar. The second phase of the study was the interviewing.

Population and Sampling
Population

Singh and Priyanka (2006) state that a small portion of the population selected for a research purpose is known as a sample. By observing the sample characteristics only, it is possible to make several predictions about the main features of the population. The population of this study will consist of respondents (students) from public and private universities in Peshawar, Pakistan. Undergraduate students of all universities in Peshawar will be the main population for the study. There are 15 prominent HEC-recognized universities in Peshawar, of which seven are public while 8 are private universities.

Sample Size

The sampling frame was selected from universities (both public and private) within the jurisdiction of the District Peshawar. The total sample was selected from 4 public and four private universities to avoid biases and gender discrimination. For the qualitative data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 40 purposively selected participants. The names of the universities are as follows:

A. Public Universities in Peshawar

1. University of Peshawar, Peshawar
2. Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women's University, Peshawar
3. Islamia College University, Peshawar
4. Institute of Management Sciences, Peshawar

B. Private Universities in Peshawar

1. Sarhad University of Science and Information Technology, Peshawar
2. Qurtuba University of Science and Information Technology, Peshawar
3. City University of Science and Information Technology, Peshawar
4. Abasyn University, Peshawar

Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research studies begins early during data collection with emerging themes and interpretations, guided by research questions or working hypotheses and theoretical framework (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Altheide and Johnson (1994) state that qualitative researchers display sensitivity towards the way a process or social situation is interpreted from a particular context and set of values and not simply based on the situation itself. The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed.

Analysis of Qualitative Data

The thematic analysis procedure was a guiding framework to analyze qualitative data, organize the data into more emergent themes of response. As Brun and Clarke (2006) stated, thematic analysis helps to organize the data into categories and identify and report various themes within the data. The data obtained from the interview was transcribed, and the original ideas and thoughts of the respondent were noted as they are. Then, the transcription of interview data was read many times to help the researcher feel familiar with and understand the respondents' feelings, emotions, and experiences. After careful and repeated readings of the written notes of interviews, transcripts with the same themes were grouped into similar categories. Codes that were very similar were integrated into themes, and codes without having any valid and enough information were discarded. The final stage in the qualitative analysis was naming and defining emerging themes.

Ethical Considerations

When conducting research in any field of study, it is strongly recommended that the fundamental ethical principles of honesty, integrity, anonymity, and confidentiality be strictly followed (Johnson & Christenson, 2008). According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), these variables appear to have a positive effect on the quality of the data gathered. Although the topic of the current study was not particularly sensitive in nature, measures were taken to ensure honesty, anonymity, and confidentiality through informed permission, the use of pseudonyms, and honoring the work of earlier researchers on the subject. Before participating in the research as respondents in the current study, the respondents received a thorough explanation of the investigation's facts. The respondents were told of the right to withdraw from research, so they felt and wished to do so. They readily expressed their opinions and experiences without any reluctance or worry. Also, the transcription of the audio data was stored securely together with the audio data itself. The work of different authors and researchers who had made contributions to the subject was duly mentioned and referenced.

Results and Discussion
Demographic Data of the Participants
Table 1
The ages of the participants

N=400					
Age		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	18.00	2	.5	2.4	2.4
	19.00	8	2.0	9.8	12.2
	20.00	20	5.0	24.4	36.6
	21.00	15	3.8	18.3	54.9
Valid	22.00	25	6.3	30.5	85.4
	23.00	7	1.8	8.5	93.9
	24.00	3	.8	3.7	97.6
	25.00	2	.5	2.4	100.0
	Total	82	20.5	100.0	
Missing	System	318	79.5		
Total		400	100.0		

Table 2
Gender of the subjects

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
F	193	48.25	48.2	48.5
M	207	51.75	51.7	51.05
Total	400	100.0	100.0	

Emotional Intelligence

EI is the ability to be fluent in emotion. Since EI is not a subject of concern at the school level, children

usually grow up without having a proper understanding of regulating their emotions with regard to varying contexts. EI's major concern is to recognize one's emotional issues, including social interactions and personal interactions, as well as the ability to be emotionally self-aware and positive to emotions.

In the social context, emotional intelligence reflects the way people understand society's perceptions and reactions to their actions, which prompts them to avoid socially taboo actions and topics and act in a way that improves their social comprehension and status. In order to better understand such phenomena, it becomes imperative to employ measures necessary for the shielding of individuals from emotionally dangerous and unstable people (Jennifer *et al.,* 2015).

Moreover, to guarantee affectivity, it is crucial to understand the emotional feelings with the help of empathic tools in order to figure out the causes since feelings and emotions cannot and should not be ignored. In the emotional context, the focus should shift from emotionally harmful actions or thinking and, instead, should prioritize the behavior assigned to health and productivity-related emotions. Hence, there is a need for the acknowledgment of emotions requiring respect and space when it comes to working through psychological difficulties and issues. There is also a need for an understanding of the necessity and importance of negative feelings, such as sorrow and regret, as being productive, having utility, and being useful for learning, dealing with stress, and psychological development.

Managing Emotions

Emotional management has become a necessary part of an individual's life, and EI has a pervasive role in many of the stories and descriptions of one's experiences. In asking the same interview questions from all the participants, their different and varied responses reflected their individual experiences and their abilities in the acquisition of emotional experiences and their management. The following are the experiences of the undergraduate students at the universities of Peshawar.

According to one student:

> *"I am a student, and living in a normal way gets way too hard sometimes because I can't understand people (family members, friends, teachers, classmates) around me. It happens at times when they discuss things indirectly, and I can't get things easily and can't understand them and their way of speaking (speaking indirectly, etc). It doesn't mean that I can't understand things or topics of discussion, but the reality is that I don't want to understand. Rather, I'd curl up on the bed and go to sleep in an attempt to avoid the possibility of confronting and understanding people. It was horrifying to think about the people and my discussions with them. I always try to resolve those emotional issues alone to make peace with myself."*

Here, she admitted that, at times, she does not want to understand the emotions of the people and avoids them in order to lessen her stress. In a similar way, about catering to other's emotional needs and her reaction to them, another female student recounts,

> *"One of my friends likes to make fun of me. She is not harsh or rude to me, but she teases me, and this is her habit. I recently told my mom that one of my friends is very bitter, and she is always tormenting me! "But my mother replied with a comment that she is not your enemy and this is just a gesture of love and care, and you should understand these emotions."*

This showcases that there are lots of people around who are unable to understand emotional boundaries, and one needs to be direct sometimes in order to get the point across. Parents and teachers should help such students understand others and their own emotions in a positive way. So, it is understood that emotional intelligence is a person's ability to identify feelings and the layering of such feelings on not just their own but those of others as well.

Sometimes, there must be a need to relax and not worry about emotions because different people handle things differently. Winning and losing is a part of life. People have different emotions and

experiences when they lose or win. Regarding such an outlook, one of the students replied with very positive answers.

"I have been in this situation multiple times when I lose, and believe me, the feeling isn't that great because losing is not happiness, and after losing, it's difficult to manage emotions. A person who loses actually feels as if, specifically, his efforts and hard work are washed down the drain. In the beginning, it was very difficult for me to manage my emotions while losing something, but then, as soon as I grew up, I changed myself a lot, and now I feel that I am emotionally much more stable when it comes to managing emotions and I can face losing something and am better equipped at handling failures. I am different now, but it happens with the passage of time, and recently, I look (research) before starting something and expect to pass it with flying colors".

This, then, becomes true that failure is the stepping stone to success, and when one puts in hard work to achieve their goals, then confidence in their success rises to 100%, and the idea of failing cease to matter. This is the reality that, gradually, people understand that failure is unimportant because one should be emotionally strong to deal with success and failure simultaneously because the real competition is with one's own self rather than with anyone else. Furthermore, unsuccessful acquiring of anything does not establish a person's worth or status; it just establishes that one is self-competing and that the thought of deserving better will be the driving motivation required for an individual to strive even harder. This is depicted in another student's comment,

"I must understand that if I make a mistake in doing some task, then I should not blame anyone else. And I know it's very hard to admit my mistakes because it gives me emotional breakdowns, but this is important for me to admit because I should be emotionally composed and strong, and only then can I understand my mistakes".

Emotional Self-Regulation/Understanding of Emotions of Oneself

Under the broader theme of EI, the investigation into the self-regulation of emotions was carried out, where the participants were asked about their methods of emotional self-regulation. In addition to methods, they were also asked about their coping mechanisms in cases of failure of emotions and feelings. In accordance with the sample transcriptions, the responses of the participants were summarised and presented below.

Most participants shared that they felt better after showing emotions and expressing their feelings and that they wanted to spend more time with friends because it lets them release their emotions more easily. Some participants were of the opinion that they couldn't express emotions directly, especially regarding/to their family and friends, so they wanted to engage themselves in activities considered effective and useful for their emotional expressions that were different than the norm. These activities included watching TV, playing football, cricket, or badminton, sleeping, reading books, listening to music, or taking a long walk. One of the respondents reported:

"Whenever I am down and feel tensed due to any reason, then I understand that my mood is bad and I can hurt anyone around me because of my temper tantrums. So, I go to GRC (Golf race course) or some sports club to express my emotions in/through physical activity. The reason is this: in the past, I made the mistake of taking out my anger on my loved ones, especially my parents and siblings."

Yet another respondent stated that:

"Whenever I am emotionally tense, then I prefer to play something because it gives me a very good feeling, and I start to feel good as well. I used to hit things, whether it is a ball or some other equipment in the sports field, and it gives me an impression and feelings like I am throwing my problems far away."

One of the female respondents said that.

"I prefer to play something with my friends or siblings when I am feeling emotionally strange. And I play carom or any board game where I can displace my feelings through some object, and then I release my tensions and frustrations easily because it gives me feelings of relief; hitting a ball feels like hitting your problem."

In support of physical activity, another respondent shared that

"I usually take a walk or engage in physical exercise, which brings a change in my emotions and feelings."

One of the students described his coping mechanism in a beautiful and poignant manner:

"I try to express all kinds of emotions according to situations, and I still celebrate what feels like good news, enjoy when something exciting happens, and dance when others are happy because I want to celebrate other's emotions as well. And then I mourn about whatever feels like bad news, but I hold onto my negative emotions and keep them to myself because I don't want to harm anyone else due to my emotional ups and downs. Thus, for me, negative and bad emotions are personal, and we should manage them on our own. I know it's very hard to tackle and manage such emotions alone, but I take responsibility for my own emotions".

Another student stated that:

"Sometimes it happens that I fail to understand my emotions, but then my inner self helps me to understand and deal with those negative emotions so that I do not endanger myself or others. Obviously, my parents had also advised and helped me to understand people and events, but ultimately, the individual should take responsibility for understanding his /her emotions in order to live a successful and better life".

In the above quote, the student is actually referring to the emotional self-regulation of his emotions, which is very important for every individual. It shows that young undergraduate students can't easily develop an understanding of their emotions abruptly, but with maturity and time, they develop an understanding of the positive and negative emotions, and then they can live better social lives.

One of the interviewees further described their emotional understanding as:

"In my view, the role of emotions is that of self-awareness of feelings and gestures, and it helps to use emotions to meet personal growth. My emotions give me this understanding of my wants and my personal improvement techniques. This awareness helps me to achieve my potential and talents fully. I want to know others' emotions as well, and these abilities will help me understand others' feelings and emotions as well."

Another interviewee explained in a similar way:

"The emotional experiences through which I am going are actually my reality of life because they help me to move ahead, and I can make efforts because of understanding my emotions. For instance, I want to create positive relations with others, so I understand now that developing successful emotional relations with others depends on my ability to understand the emotions of other people and relate with them accordingly."

The same experiences were shared by another respondent:

"When I started my studies in the first semester, I was scared by the other students because it was my perception about others that everyone is best at dealing with and handling their emotions except me. And it was, I believed, that they were more confident than me. I would just be a quiet person, relegated to the back benches/benchers. I feel now that I am emotionally better, and I don't feel inferior because I understand others as well as my own emotions".

Emotional Control

For better expression of one's feelings and emotions, it is paramount to engage in communication with others in order to get one's point across. However, a word of caution is that whoever one shares their feelings with must not be judgemental and must be respectful and supportive about their experiences and grievances. Hence, one must consider or confide in their siblings, friends, or a counselor.

One student from the third semester stated that:

"I can't control my emotions easily, so I start shouting and yelling at others, even for small things. I have tried so many things that can be helpful for controlling my emotions but couldn't succeed. Finally, in university, one of my teachers instructed me that if I can't share with others, then it's better to write my emotional experiences into some diary, paper, or laptop. I have learned that everyone has emotional ups and downs, but one must find out the solution for venting out those emotions rather than throwing temper tantrums".

Another student from the second semester stated that.

"I was very emotional during my initial days at the university. I always started crying when I felt that I couldn't handle my emotions well or whenever I felt sad. Still, I become sad because I can't withhold even the bad memories of that specific emotion out of guilt or sometimes due to shame. Then, gradually, I learned that crying is helpful, and the outcome was that now, whenever I feel sad, I cry, and that makes me feel better. But some other good things, which I have learned, in order to control my emotions are watching a movie, reading literature, listening to music that connects with your emotional state, helping you shed tears, and relieving yourself."

Different people handle and manage their emotions differently, and this makes a clear difference in their lives. One student expressed in the following manner:

"I used to be very emotional and couldn't even continue talking when I got emotional on some issue or topic, but then time taught me various things in order to manage my emotions, and due to those strategies, I am feeling psychologically sound. Also, whenever I was talking to someone and got upset or became emotional, I would take a break from the conversation, calm myself down, and then resume that conversation after I felt that I was able to express myself appropriately. Slowly, I have learned that taking breaks when we are emotional could be helpful to manage emotions better, and it can give us a better understanding of our psychological states".

One of the respondents reported:

"Whenever I am down and feel tensed due to any reason, then I understand that my mood is bad and I can hurt anyone around me because of my temper tantrums, so I go to GRC (Golf race course) or some sports club to express my emotions in physical activity. The reason is that in the past, I made this mistake of exploding my anger on my loved ones, especially my parents and siblings."

Discussion and Conclusion

In light of the objectives and findings, subsequent conclusions are drawn:

This study concluded that EI and PWB are important aspects of an individual's life, which are also the focal matter of an undergraduate university student for the achievement and maintenance of their overall well-being and academic progress. Despite excellent teachers, academic brilliance, and a competitive curriculum, psychological well-being and EI are essential aspects in order to lead a successful life.

In the current study, undergraduate students demonstrated that while their lives are filled with a variety of activities based on their interests, EI and PWB are the impetus for a positive impact after achieving psychological well-being and emotional intelligence, ensuring that their lives on campus are filled with wonderful memories rather than solely academic aspects.

The study concludes that, despite participating in a range of activities on campus, students' pursuit of psychological well-being continues through the aforementioned six characteristics. As a result, university students should be encouraged to be active on campus, and the institution should provide adequate room and opportunity to the students for individual growth and development.

It is concluded that a high level of emotional intelligence can help students calm themselves in difficult situations, after which they can focus on their studies and absorb other information as well. Thus, it will contribute to a balanced life, and they will have better psychological well-being than those who have low EI.

According to the study, there is a favorable association between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being. Aside from successful and well-planned learning strategies, students should be able to recognize themselves, particularly their emotional selves, in order for their performance to not be hampered in any manner.

It is concluded that emotional intelligence should be recognized not only for academic performance but also for daily living and that university education should instill the concept of EI in students through numerous approaches. With the world's and the education sector's changing demands, attempts to promote students' emotional intelligence and psychological well-being should be considered during the teaching and learning processes in schools, colleges, and universities.

The study concluded that high emotional intelligence and balanced psychological well-being facilitate a person's ability to gain a positive sense of self-esteem. People who have a high level of self-esteem are more open to other people as well as to themselves, and they also handle various tasks more intelligently, which ultimately leads to a happy life.

The study by Mathew *et al.* (2002) fully confirmed the current study's finding that EI and PWB are crucial to a person's success in life. He established a significant association between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being. According to his opinion, "poor emotional intelligence is a crucial reason for the development of diverse psychopathologies, such as mood disorders and anxiety."

The study's main finding is that those with high EI and PWB are comparatively well-adjusted in society and have an open mind to the needs of others. Such individuals with high EI are able to meaningfully express their feelings, which leads to receiving love and support from society and those around them. It is also a factor in improving an individual's confidence and enhancement of their image of themselves.

Based on the results of the current study on the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being among undergraduate students, it was also concluded that there is a gender difference regarding emotional intelligence since female students showed increased emotional intelligence than male undergraduate students. Thus, this study is very helpful for maintaining students' psychological processes, their emotional lives, and their overall psychological well-being. This study is significant for parents, teachers, psychologists, and educational counselors for disclosing the development of emotional intelligence, which can lead to a better and balanced psychological well-being of undergraduate students at the university level.

Recommendations

The study's recommendations are divided into two sections. Firstly, it addresses the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being, and secondly, it provides recommendations for further investigation in this field. The researcher offered the following recommendations in light of the study's goals and findings.

The link between emotional intelligence and psychological health suggests that undergraduate student's EI skills should develop and evolve in order for them to be able to interact with other people with enhanced effectiveness.

It is recommended to future researchers for use as a different measure of EI, such as the Multifactor EI scale, because of its claim as being a direct measure of EI.

For future research on EI and PWB, the aspect of moral development can be added to the study in order to assess whether students with high EI and PWB also inhibit high levels of moral development.

Since the improvement of students' PWB is strongly correlated with emotional stability, the current study's findings call for the inclusion of emotional intelligence training in teacher preparation programs for both pre-service and in-service educators so that the teachers can cultivate EI and PWB skills in their pupils. Therefore, teaching and learning processes must include the compulsory development of emotional skills.

Since the students are more vulnerable to emotional adjustment issues at the start of a new session or class, thus programs like counseling for the enhancement of emotional skills—emotional self-direction and emotional constancy—are necessary.

The present study recommends that every discipline should have one subject, human psychology or educational psychology, to understand their own self and others.

The study was conducted in eight universities in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province's Peshawar district; therefore, its findings might not be applicable to the entire country. Therefore, it is advised that further research on the association between EI and PWB should be conducted by expanding the sample size, covering more cities, and at the provincial level as well.

The researcher recommends investigating EI and PWB by relating them with age, income, locality, type of job, levels of experience, and types of qualification.

The present study is a mixed-method study that triangulates the data on EI and PWB. The researcher, therefore, recommends investigating the problem using a pure qualitative or quantitative research paradigm.

Because in-depth studies are necessary to establish the impact of all the features of EI and PWB, some longitudinal studies on EI and PWB may also be undertaken to support the conclusion of the present research.

The research was only conducted on the EI and PWB of eight universities in the Peshawar district due to a lack of funding, time, and feasibility concerns. Therefore, it is recommended that other universities of KP should be included in such research for future investigations.

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