

Perceived Social Support and Emotional Intelligence in University StudentsSehrish Wazir¹, Horima Akbar²**ABSTRACT**

The present research entitled was conducted to investigate the relationship between perceived social support and emotional intelligence. It was hypothesized that social support has positive correlation with emotional intelligence but negative correlation with female gender. The data was collected from 300 students (134 males and 166 females) from three universities of Southern Punjab. Cross-sectional research design was used. Multidimensional Scale for Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) and Self -Report Measure of Emotional Intelligence (SRMEI) were used to measure the two variables. Results were analyzed by t-test and correlations using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, version 20. It was discovered that perceived social support has a significant positive correlation with emotional intelligence. It was further revealed that family provides more social support as compared to friends and significant others. Gender has no significant impact on perceived social support and emotional intelligence. Recommendations have also been discussed.

Key Words: Perceived Social Support; Emotional Intelligence; University Students

Received: 05 September 2020; Revised
Received: 27 December 2020; Accepted:
28 December 2020

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INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence (EI) is an ability by which an individual recognizes his own as well as others' feelings in order to self-motivate and to manage emotions well at intrapersonal and interpersonal level (Goleman, 1998). Although, the idea of emotional intelligence is new in the field of psychology, it has acquired much attention in the recent years. According to Weiner and Kukla (1970), human emotions and thinking

should not be considered two different subjects. So, to understand human cognition, it is necessary to discuss all the factors that regulate and manage emotions at mental as well as behavioral level.

The idea of emotional intelligence was presented by Edward Thorndike (1920) with his work on social intelligence in which intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence were studied. "The ability model" is one of the three available models of Emotional Intelligence in which Peter Salovey and John Mayer (1990) describe that emotional intelligence is an individual's capability of processing emotional information so that he or she may be able to influence the social world. The second model is known as "The Trait model" suggested by Konstantin Vasily Petrides (2000), who defined emotional intelligence as a disposition in behavior and the perception of one's own abilities which may be reportable and measurable. The Third model has been presented by Daniel Goleman (1998), and is named as "Mixed Model". According to this model, emotional

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intelligence is actually a mixture of human abilities and traits. This model further explains that emotional intelligence is a combination of such skills which are linked to leadership performance.

Emotional intelligence plays a key role in the success and happiness in an individual's life. As Goleman (1995) states that emotional intelligence is the trait that compels individuals to feel motivated, have a better control on their moods and finally be able to defend against the feelings of frustration. Hence, low level of emotional intelligence is a strong causal factor in the development of mental disorders (Austin et al., 2005). Many of the theories regarding emotional intelligence put emphasis on its development in settings concerned with educational learning and students (Goleman, 1995; Gardner, 1993; Mayer & Salovey, 1993; & Kagan, 1994). Graziano conducted a research in 2007 to study the role of emotion-regulation in the initial years of children's education. The research was carried out on 325 kindergarten students. In the light of results, it was concluded that emotion-regulation has a positive link with the classroom performance and academic success of children.

According to Mayer and Salovey (1997), home environment is responsible in generating emotional skills in a person. As a smooth relationship between a child and his parents lays foundations of emotional intelligence skills in the child. It was further described by Mayer and Salovey (1997) that sometimes parents who have poor emotional states are unable to properly interact with their children and it leads to poor emotional skills in their children.

In this perspective, the research work by Garcia and Pintrich (1996) is worth mentioning who studied emotional maturity and occupational aspiration in such a sample which comprised of 40 adolescents who were living at their homes and 40 who belonged to

an orphanage. It was clear from the results that the adolescents living at their homes possess high emotional intelligence as compared to those who were the residents of orphanage.

In the light of above paragraphs, it is obvious that social support is predictive of emotional intelligence (Ciarrochi et al., 2001). Saarni (1999) explained that emotionally intelligent people have the skills to make effective interpersonal relationships and those who possess supportive social relationships would also have higher levels of emotional intelligence. So the link between social support and emotional intelligence is bidirectional.

Perceived social support is an individual's perception about how much his significant others are caring, loving and helping to him. This perception defines the extent to which person is receiving assistance from the important people in his life (Barrera, 1986).

The various sources from which social support is gained include family members, friends, workmates and any special person in an individual's life (Taylor, 2011). Social support from family members is helpful in providing encouragement which in turn makes an individual able to cope effectively with family related stress (Austin et al., 2005). It is a fact that children who receive parental warmth would exhibit proper functioning in various fields of life (Murray, 2009). Researchers have studied positive impact of social support on the development as well as adaptation of kids and young adults (DuBois et al., 1992). In contrast, a lack of social support acts as a risk factor for the development of emotional problems, stress proneness, heightened worry, and self-preoccupation (House, 1981).

Studies reflect that social support influences overall health status of a person by decreasing his chance of experiencing negative emotions (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Krause, 1986). It is also evident that increase

in social support has been negatively correlated with mortality rates, and discomforts faced by individuals (Ghasemi & Jahanbakhsh, 2009).

It has been found that youth receiving optimal levels of social support from families exhibit good adjustment to the academic environment (Richman et al., 1997). Students display outstanding educational performance when their parents provide greater concerns and assistance regarding their education as compared to those whose parents do not (Woolley & Kaylor, 2006). It is observed that positive social relationships are linked to overall improvement in the academic performance of students (Englund et al., 2004).

Rationale of the Study

With the rapid growth of population and the scarcity of resources, Pakistan's need for better citizens has increased. This gap could be fulfilled if students excel in the areas of their interest which is highly dependent on the degree of their mental health. As the literature shows that emotional intelligence has been associated with positivity and success in life, its causal factor such as social support needs to be understood in depth. If we have a look at educational settings, there are many jewels and extraordinary minds in the poor state like Pakistan who lack the essential element of social support. Hence, the perception of social support is effective in making the citizens emotionally intelligent so that the fresh minds may play their role in fighting against the crisis our country is facing these days.

In the given perspective, the findings of this research would be vital not only to teachers and educational psychologists but also to the parents and general people of society.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the role of perceived social support for the development of emotional intelligence

2. To explore the level of social support received from family, friends and significant others
3. To assess the role of gender differences in emotional intelligence.
4. To find out the gender differences in perceived social support

Hypotheses

1. Perceived social support has a positive correlation with emotional intelligence.
2. Family provides higher level of social support to an individual than friends and significant others.
3. Males are more emotionally intelligent as compared to females.
4. Males receive more social support as compared to females.

METHOD

Participants

The research was conducted with a sample of 300 students (134 males and 166 females) from B.S and Master programs from the three Universities of Southern Punjab (The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, The Government Sadiq College Women University, Bahawalpur and Baha-ud-din Zakariya University, Multan). Sample included both male and female participants with age range of 18 to 24 years.

Sampling Procedures

The sample size comprised of 300 university students which was calculated by using Raosoft Online Sample Size Calculator. The data was collected using random sampling technique.

Research Design

The present research is a quantitative, cross-sectional study.

Measures

Multidimensional Scale for Perceived Social Support (MSPSS). The questionnaire for perceived social support (Zimet et al., 1988) measures the level of social support a person receives from three important social

areas including family, friends and significant others. There are 12 items in the questionnaire which are rated on a 7 point likert scale. Here 7 indicates very strongly agree whereas 1 indicates very strongly disagree. MSPSS has a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.87 which is considered as good reliability.

Self -Report Measure of Emotional Intelligence (SRMEI). The scale was standardized by Khan and Kamal (2010) and consists of 60 items in which 23 are phrased positively and 37 are phrased negatively. There are five response categories including Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, and Never for each item. The alpha coefficient of

scale is 0.85. The scoring range of scale is between 60 and 300. High score indicates better emotional stability.

Procedure

The data was collected from 300 students from three universities in the form of questionnaires. The students were asked for the willingness of participation through written informed consent. After the collection of data, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), V-20 was used to analyze the data. In analysis of data, descriptive statistics, and t-test were used. The result was described in the form of tables. The research implications and its limitations were also included.

RESULTS

Table 1

Perceived Social Support and Emotional Intelligence with regard to the gender (N = 300)

Variables	Gender of Student		Mean Difference	Std. Error t Difference
	Male (n =134)	Female (n =166)		
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>		
Social Support	66.28 (10.72)	65.90 (11.46)	6.13	6.91 .28
Emotional Intelligence	205.12 (28.53)	204.90 (28.47)	3.27	3.48 .06

Results of the table indicate that student’s gender has no significant impact on the social support and emotional intelligence.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Variables (N=300)

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5
Emotional Intelligence	205.48	27.9					-
Social Support	65.82	11.1	.96**				-
Family’s Support	62	17.9	.91*	.50*			-
Friends’ Support	49.2	10	.78*	.53	.49		-
Significant Others’ Support	48	6.5	.37*	.39	.23	.29	-

The Table 2 shows a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and perceived social support. Emotional

DISCUSSION

Emotional intelligence is an important trait which is predictive of students' success in many areas of their lives. In order to enhance emotional intelligence, it is very necessary to study the role of social support (Lopez-Zafra et al., 2019).

First hypothesis stated that social support is positively correlated with emotional intelligence. Table 2 shows that social support has positive correlation with emotional intelligence. The correlation is significant at 0.01 level which is considered the strong correlation. The more there will be social support, there will be an increase in emotional intelligence of the students. According to these results, hypothesis has been accepted. This is in accordance with the previous findings with university students (Metaj & Macula, 2017).

Secondly, it was hypothesized that out of the three sources of social support (family, friends, and significant others), family is mainly responsible for providing higher levels of social support. Findings approve the hypothesis (Metaj & Macula, 2017). The results are exhibited in table 2 where it is presented that the correlation of family and overall support is significant. Whereas other sources such as friends and significant others have no significant relationship with the perception of social support.

According to third hypothesis, males are more emotionally intelligent when compared with females. Final results of this research demonstrate that gender has no impact on the level of emotional intelligence. So the hypothesis is rejected.

Fourth hypothesis also discussed gender difference regarding the perception of social support. It stated that males generally receive more social support as compared to females.

intelligence is significantly positively correlated with all facets of social support.

The results rejected the hypothesis. So, it is concluded that gender has no significant impact on the perception of social support and consequently the level of emotional intelligence remains the same in both genders. The gender wise results are in contrast with previous research (Soman et al., 2016).

Limitations & Recommendations

1. Private institutions should also be studied with reference to the emotional intelligence and perceived social support in students. As the students of private institutes may show different experiences.
2. Sample size should be large.
3. The participants of age range 18 to 24 years were included in the study. The age range should be increased so the study results in a diverse and better outcome.
4. The limited demographics were used in the study. Socioeconomic status, family structure and academic performance in the institute may also contribute to the perception of emotional intelligence one has in life.
5. The data was collected from only the University students of Southern Punjab. The data can be generalized by collecting it from each institute of Southern Punjab including Schools and Colleges.

Conclusion

The present study concluded that all aspects of perceived social support were found significantly correlated with emotional

intelligence in university students. However, no significant gender differences were found in perceived social support and emotional intelligence.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

SOURCE OF FUNDING

The authors did not receive funding.

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