



ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION

Effects of Personal Growth and Emotional Intelligence on the Subjective Happiness of Undergraduates

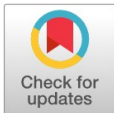
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Abstract— This study investigated the effects of personal growth and emotional intelligence on the subjective happiness of undergraduates. The approach of this research was quantitative, and a cross-sectional research design was used in this study. A sample of 400 undergraduates was selected through random sampling technique from the University of Management and Technology, University of Central Punjab, Comsats University, and the University of Punjab. Three standardized instruments (including trait emotional intelligence questionnaire; personal growth initiative scale – II developed by and subjective happiness scale developed by were used to gather data. The demographic information of the students was also collected. There are strong effects of emotional intelligence and personal growth initiative on the subjective happiness of undergraduates. It was concluded that emotional intelligence and subjective happiness relatively fluctuate depending upon undergraduates' academic workload. This research itself effectively elucidates the importance of emotional intelligence, management of stress, and personal and emotional growth when it comes to determining the subjective happiness of individuals.

Index Terms— Emotional Intelligence, Personal Growth Initiative, Subjective Happiness, Undergraduate.

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Introduction

Emotional Intelligence is the capability to know and control emotions in one and others to make effective decisions. Researchers, scientists, and philosophers have highlighted the importance of emotions in day-to-day life, so its effect on humans has always been an interesting topic (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2017). Personal growth initiative is one of the important dimensions of emotional well-being, which indicates active involvement of individuals in their personal growth development (Anderson et al., 2019). Subjective happiness is a term used for subjective well-being that reveals the emotional constituent of well-being and life satisfaction that reflects the mental component of well-being (Ngamaba, 2016). Rather less information is identified concerning factors contributing to subjective happiness in Pakistan. Furthermore, methods in which personal growth can amplify subjective happiness have not been studied in Pakistani culture. So, the focus of this research was to state this problem by identifying the gap in the literature through investigating the predictive capability of emotional intelligence and personal growth initiative on subjective happiness of undergraduates in Pakistan (Jamal, 2018).

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Significance of the Study

Traditionally, IQ has always been considered very important for success in life. However, not all smart people are successful. Emotional intelligence is an important factor that contributes to success in the workplace and in social relationships and life in general. The effects of improving emotional intelligence are psychological health, teamwork, etc. (Jain & Duggal, 2016). This research can prove to be highly helpful for students specifically from bachelor's programs as it would help them to know and understand their emotional turmoil and its relation with their subjective happiness.

Implications of the Study

Happy students are well-adapted in their learning roles and societal lives (Murphy et al., 2018). Institutes need to make efforts to help out students dealing with their feelings in their daily dealings (Tyng et al., 2017). Thus, educational institutes may get knowledge by considering the emotional well-being of students for their positive mental growth (Gräbel, 2017). Furthermore, it is imperious to increase the sense of responsibility in students because these are associated with goal-directed behavior, which positively reveals incapacity to manage stress and improved educational performance (Reddy et al., 2018).

Objectives

- To assess if students' ability to manage their emotional state contributes to their happiness level.
- To examine the effect of emotional intelligence on the social well-being of undergraduates.
- To find out the abilities in managing social relationships is necessary for happiness.
- To find out the extent to which personal growth and emotional intelligence describe subjective happiness among undergraduates.

RELATED LITERATURE

Emotional intelligence is the ability to sense and effectively regulate the power of emotions in such a way that it becomes a source of human energy, trust, creativity, and knowledge (Martin, 2020). Personal growth focuses on the positive development of an individual within their living conditions (de Freitas et al., 2016), and subjective well-being is a personal measure of assessing one's well-being (Sahai & Mahapatra, 2020). Those people whose subjective happiness levels are high; also have more intelligence of personal growth (Peltzer & Pengpid, 2017; Peltzer et al., 2017). Higher levels of emotional intelligence are inversely related to subjective happiness (Bar-On, 2005; Furnham & Petrides, 2003; Gallagher & Vella-Brodrick, 2008; Geng, 2018; Martins et al., 2010; Ye et al., 2018).

Regarding the emotional intelligence of the undergraduate students, many researchers have been able to find that the students with lower parental violence tend to have higher emotional intelligence. Students who are emotionally intelligent complete their tasks efficiently and show a willingness to face a higher degree of challenges. Experts stated that emotional intelligence is significant for success achievement. Numerous argued that contentment and success in anyone's life depend on strong relationships, empathy, and good social skills that may be attained through higher rates in emotional intelligence (Afridi & Ali, 2019).

Previous researches revealed that emotional intelligence helps people in their work settings to alter their behavior towards their deeds according to prerequisite (Wolfe, 2019). Some research suggests those students' levels of emotional intelligence increase as they progress in their studies (Bryant & Malone, 2015). Emotional intelligence is an individual's thought of personal mental capability which deals with an individual's ability to comprehend, adjust and show sentiments to adjust with surroundings and sustain good health. Emotional intelligence is considered a key for personal growth initiatives (de Freitas et al., 2016). Researches highlighted that environment plays an important role in developing emotional intelligence among students. A positive association was found between emotional intelligence and subjective well-being (Wen et al., 2020). A comprehensive understanding of well-being needs more than one aspect to emphasize personal achievements, which reflect meaning in life and control on one's life/environment (Khan, 2015). Those emotionally intelligent people can manage their anxiety/stress and share their mental state with others (Wolfe, 2019).

Research Questions

- Does students' ability to manage their emotional state contribute to their happiness level?
- In what ways do we examine the effect of emotional intelligence on the social well-being of undergraduates?
- How do we find out the abilities for managing social relationships is necessary for happiness?
- To what extent do personal growth and emotional intelligence describe subjective happiness among undergraduates?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The approach of this study was quantitative, and a cross-sectional research design was used.

Sample

A sample of 400 undergraduates (including both males and females) was selected by using a random sampling technique. The data for this study were collected from four different universities of Lahore, Pakistan, namely; University of Management and Technology, University of Central Punjab, Comsats University, and the University of Punjab. The reason for the wide spectrum of data collection alludes to the fact that the research had to be done in such a way that it covers a diverse population of students from different institutes and different major backgrounds to trace their emotional intelligence in relevance with the common experience of students regardless of their institutional affiliations.

Inclusion/ Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion criterion of this research was primarily students from the undergraduate program as they are the ones facing the most academic pressure throughout the semesters. Those students who were from 19 years to 22 years of age were included in this research. Unmarried undergraduates were included in this study. Undergraduate students with disabilities were excluded.

Instruments for Data Collection

Three standardized instruments (including Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire developed by [Furnham & Petrides \(2003\)](#); Personal Growth Initiative Scale-II developed by [Robitschek et al. \(2012\)](#) and Subjective Happiness Scale developed by [Lyubomirsky & Lepper \(1999\)](#)) were used to gather data. The demographic information of the students was also collected.

Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed through SPSS. Descriptive and inferential statistics were applied.

RESULTS

The findings of the primary research data obtained from the survey are presented. Descriptive and inferential statistics were applied to obtain numerical and factual results. In the light of the survey conducted under study, the following results were gathered and chalked out as the findings.

Table I
Percentage distribution of trait emotional intelligence among undergraduates

Statements	Com-pletely Disagree%	Strongly Dis-agree%	Dis-agree Some-what%	Neutral%	Agree Some-what%	Strongly Agree%	Com-pletely Agree%
Expressing my emotions with words is not a problem for me.	10.5%	9.3%	11.8%	22.0%	21.0%	10.8%	14.8%
I often find it difficult to see things from another person's viewpoint.	12.5%	8.5%	19.8%	19.5%	24.8%	13.0%	2.0%
On the whole, I'm a highly motivated person.	6.3%	5.0%	10.8%	25.0%	25.8%	15.3%	12.0%
I find it difficult to regulate my emotions	4.8%	7.2%	12.3%	29.5%	24.8%	14.5%	7.0%
I generally don't find life enjoyable.	14.0%	11.3%	16.0%	21.3%	21.3%	11.5%	4.8%
I can deal effectively with people.	7.5%	4.5%	12.5%	17.3%	20.5%	24.3%	13.5%
I tend to change my mind frequently.	6.8%	5.5%	15.3%	27.3%	17.5%	16.3%	11.5%

Table 1 Continue

Statements	Com- pletely Disagree%	Strongly Dis- agree%	Dis- agree Some- what%	Neutral%	Agree Some- what%	Strongly Agree%	Com- pletely Agree%
Many times, I can't figure out what emotion I'm feeling.	10.5%	5.5%	13.3%	19.3%	22.3%	17.0%	12.3%
I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	7.0%	5.3%	11.0%	16.0%	27.0%	20.0%	13.8%
I often find it difficult to stand up for my rights.	10.0%	8.5%	11.5%	20.8%	22.0%	18.5%	8.8%
I'm usually able to influence the way other people feel.	4.5%	8.8%	11.3%	30.8%	24.8%	13.0%	7.0%
On the whole, I have a gloomy perspective on most things.	8.5%	7.0%	11.3%	26.0%	27.3%	13.8%	6.3%
Those close to me often complain that I don't treat them right.	16.5%	13.5%	15.0%	19.5%	13.8%	12.3%	9.5%
I often find it difficult to adjust my life according to the circumstances.	11.3%	7.0%	18.0%	25.5%	18.3%	11.8%	8.3%
On the whole, I'm able to deal with stress.	6.5%	10.5%	13.0%	22.0%	23.0%	13.5%	11.5%
I often find it difficult to show my affection to those close to me.	9.8%	10.3%	11.0%	23.8%	25.8%	10.5%	9.0%
I'm normally able to "get into someone's shoes" and experience their emotions.	2.0%	6.0%	10.5%	36.3%	18.3%	14.8%	12.3%
I normally find it difficult to keep myself motivated.	14.0%	6.8%	19.3%	27.5%	18.8%	9.5%	4.3%
I'm usually able to find ways to control my emotions when I want to.	8.3%	7.8%	17.0%	23.8%	19.0%	15.5%	8.8%
On the whole, I'm pleased with my life.	2.8%	3.3%	11.0%	26.0%	23.5%	18.3%	15.3%
I would describe myself as a good negotiator.	6.3%	6.0%	12.3%	28.5%	22.8%	14.2%	10.0%
I tend to get involved in things I later wish I could get out of.	8.5%	4.8%	9.5%	28.2%	19.5%	16.3%	13.3%
I often pause and think about my feelings.	4.8%	6.0%	9.3%	25.8%	22.8%	18.8%	12.8%
I believe I'm full of personal strengths.	4.8%	4.0%	10.3%	25.3%	25.3%	16.8%	13.8%
I tend to "back down" even if I know I'm right.	6.0%	6.3%	10.5%	23.0%	26.8%	15.5%	12.0%
I don't seem to have any power at all over other people's feelings.	2.5%	8.5%	15.0%	31.3%	25.8%	10.3%	6.8%
I generally believe that things will work out fine in my life.	4.0%	11.3%	11.0%	22.8%	21.5%	19.3%	10.3%
I find it difficult to bond well even with those close to me.	5.5%	4.3%	19.5%	24.8%	21.5%	13.5%	11.0%
Generally, I'm able to adapt to new environments.	4.0%	9.8%	11.3%	24.5%	16.3%	22.5%	11.8%
Others admire me for being relaxed.	9.8%	2.5%	16.0%	22.8%	21.8%	15.0%	13.3%

Table I shows the percentage distribution of trait emotional intelligence among undergraduate students. Students completed the 30 items related to emotional intelligence. There were seven possible responses followed by the students from completely disagree to completely agree. The majority of the respondents somewhat agreed that they frequently feel difficulty in seeing things from others' perspectives and in taking a stand for their rights; they are very motivated and have many potentials, but at times, they cannot understand their emotions. Many undergraduates strongly agreed that they could efficiently deal with society, but sometimes they face difficulty in showing their affection to those near to them.

Table II
Percentage distribution of personal growth initiative among undergraduates

Statements	Dis- agree Strongly%	Disagree Some- what%	Dis- agree a Little%	Agree a Little%	Agree Some- what%	Agree Strongly%
I set realistic goals for what I want to change about myself.	8.3%	7.0%	21.0%	23.3%	20.8%	19.8%
I can tell when I am ready to make specific changes in myself.	5.5%	8.3%	18.8%	29.8%	26.5%	11.3%
I know how to make a realistic plan in order to change myself.	6.8%	9.5%	15.3%	31.8%	21.3%	14.8%
I take every opportunity to grow as it comes up.	5.5%	8.8%	20.3%	28.2%	23.0%	14.2%
When I try to change myself, I make a realistic plan for my personal growth	4.8%	9.3%	21.0%	20.8%	25.8%	18.5%

Table 2 Continue

Statements	Dis-agree Strongly%	Disagree what%	Some-	Dis-agree a Little%	Agree a Little%	Agree what%	Some-	Agree Strongly%
I ask for help when I try to change myself.	6.0%	8.3%		19.3%	24.3%	28.2%		14.0%
I actively work to improve myself.	6.8%	4.8%		17.8%	28.5%	21.5%		20.8%
I figure out what I need to change about myself.	5.8%	7.0%		13.0%	26.3%	28.7%		19.3%
I am constantly trying to grow as a person.	8.3%	9.3%		15.8%	23.5%	23.5%		19.8%
I know how to set realistic goals to make changes in myself.	5.0%	8.3%		20.3%	26.3%	21.3%		19.0%
I know when I need to make a specific change in myself.	2.0%	10.5%		15.8%	30.8%	28.5%		12.5%
I use resources when I try to grow.	5.5%	5.0%		14.8%	29.8%	32.3%		12.8%
I know steps I can take to make intentional changes in myself.	4.3%	6.8%		20.5%	29.8%	19.0%		19.8%
I actively seek out help when I try to change myself.	7.0%	14.2%		16.5%	23.3%	24.8%		14.2%
I look for opportunities to grow as a person.	4.0%	9.0%		12.5%	30.8%	22.8%		21.0%
I know when it's time to change specific things about myself.	3.3%	5.8%		15.5%	32.5%	21.5%		20.0%

Table II shows the percentage distribution of personal growth initiatives among undergraduates. Students completed the 16 items relating to personal growth initiative, which measured the four sub-areas, i.e., willingness for change, plan fullness, etc. The majority of the respondents stated that they make realistic aims for improvement in themselves and can share it with others.

Table III
Percentage distribution of subjective happiness among undergraduates

Statements	Com-pletely Dis-agree%	Strongly Dis-agree%	Dis-agree Some-what%	Neu-tral%	Agree Some-what%	Strongly Agree%	Com-pletely Agree%
In general, I consider myself.	7.8%	9.8%	12.8%	20.5%	19.5%	16.8%	13.0%
Compared to most of my peers, I consider myself.	5.0%	12.8%	14.0%	28.5%	16.3%	17.8%	5.8%
Some people are generally very happy.	2.0%	7.5%	8.8%	28.7%	21.5%	15.3%	15.8%
Some people are generally not very happy.	5.0%	9.3%	21.0%	24.8%	15.8%	9.0%	15.3%

Table III shows the percentage distribution of subjective happiness among undergraduate students. Students completed the four items related to subjective happiness. There were seven possible responses followed by the students from completely disagree to completely agree. Some people stated that they usually stay happy.

Table IV
Pearson correlation of emotional intelligence, personal growth initiative and subjective happiness

		AvgEmInt	AvgPGI	AvgSHS
AvgEmInt	Pearson Correlation	1	.440**	.198**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
AvgPGI	Pearson Correlation	.440**	1	.327**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
AvgSHS	Pearson Correlation	.198**	.327**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table IV shows that there are strong effects of personal growth initiative and emotional intelligence on the subjective happiness of

undergraduates.

DISCUSSION

This study involved the extrapolation of emotional intelligence among university students, specifically in the bachelor's program. This research was an effort to explore certain effects of emotional intelligence and personal growth on students studying in undergraduate programs in different Pakistani universities. In addition to that, it also focused on the phenomenon of subjective happiness, which varies from person to person, and how the ability to manage one's emotional happiness can affect their relationship with their society at large. This study found strong effects of personal growth initiative and emotional intelligence on the subjective happiness of Pakistani undergraduates. These results are consistent with a study conducted in Africa on Ghanaian students by (Kugbey et al., 2018). Some other researches also indicated the positive effects of emotional intelligence on the social well-being of undergraduates, such as high emotional intelligence in youth is associated with reduced depression (Ruiz-Aranda et al., 2014) Salguero, Extremera, & Berrocal, 2012 and subjective happiness (Geng, 2018; Ruiz-Aranda et al., 2014). So, it is confirmed that the findings of this research support a previous study conducted by Kim-Prieto & Eid (2004) that stated emotional intelligence is very important for the social well-being of students.

The results indicated the variety of responses focusing on emotional intelligence and subjective happiness. It elucidated that emotional intelligence is affected by the positive and negative experiences of undergraduate students. The multitude of effects of emotional intelligence and personal growth is affective on the individuals' subjective happiness; therefore, the results can reflect the fluctuation of subjective happiness from person to person. Primarily, a quantitative research methodology of survey questionnaire has been employed in this research which has been able to chalk out the results effectively. The research was carried out while keeping in view the research objectives and the research questions. The first research question was about the effects of emotional intelligence on the social well-being of undergraduates. During the collection of data, multiple students reacted to the questions multiply, especially the questions focused on the emotional intelligence of the students. The findings regarding the aforementioned question have been able to conclude that most students did not find it difficult to talk about their emotional turmoil through their words. In particular, 14.8% of the respondents completely agreed that it is not much difficult for them to voice their emotional problems. On the contrary, about 10.5% of the respondents were completely disagreeing with the statement and had a hindrance in voicing their emotional concerns. In addition to that, a stunning 7% of the respondents completely agreed that they usually find it difficult to regulate their emotions. The second research question was about the students' ability to manage their emotional state contributes to their happiness on a subjective level or not. It was found in this study that subjective happiness is highly fluctuating as it depends upon one's self and their ability to handle emotional turmoil or academics in a way that does not affect their subjective happiness. The findings of this research regarding the aforementioned question of subjective happiness have been able to enunciate that about 4.8% of the respondents completely agree that they do not find their life enjoyable and are rather not happy as compared to many others. On the contrary, about an astonishing 14% to 16% of the respondents have disagreed with the aforementioned statement and found life enjoyable as they were probably more focused and more reliable in managing their subjective happiness (Wigtel & Henriques, 2015).

In addition to that, the third question of this research focused on how the abilities for managing social relationships are necessary or helpful for the happiness of individuals? The undergraduate students are exposed to a variety of people from different backgrounds and academic majors; therefore, the amount of social attraction that they are exposed to is manifold as compared to any other individual. Therefore their subjective happiness may also become influenced by the social relationships that they have.

This research also aims to explore the dimensions and relation between the emotional happiness of individuals and the effect it has on their subjective happiness. This research also clearly pens down the clear association between the aforementioned two terms. However, contrary to his research which does not find any relation between emotional happiness and its variants such as psychological happiness. This research, on the contrary, finds a certain connection between the psychological health of a person and their subjective happiness (Guerra-Bustamante et al., 2019).

CONCLUSION

This research examined the importance of emotional intelligence, as well as personal growth, which cannot be denied at all when it comes to determining the subjective happiness of undergraduate students. Undergrad studies is a time of high academic and social pressure characterized by the stress of grades and the upcoming professional life, which is why the subjective happiness of individuals is often compromised. It was concluded that there are strong effects of personal growth initiative and emotional intelligence on the subjective happiness of undergraduates.

It was also concluded that emotional intelligence in students of bachelors and their subjective happiness relatively fluctuate depending upon their academic workload. Personal growth initiative is a relative term when it comes to the subjective happiness of undergraduate

students. The research itself has been effective in elucidating the importance of emotional intelligence, management of stress, and personal and emotional growth when it comes to determining the subjective happiness of individuals.

Limitations

- The data collection was difficult due to the limited time and pandemic outbreak.
- The study does not take into account any temporal influences on the students who are filling the questionnaires concerning their subjective happiness.
- Often students are not readily available to let their emotional stress reflect on questionnaires which were one of the challenges faced during the data collection.
- Not taking all students also is another limitation as they also face academic and emotional stress.

Future Research Directions

- This study can be re-conducted with a larger sample.
- It can be re-conducted with the comparison of private and government institutes of Pakistan.
- It can be re-conducted with primary/secondary school students.
- Future studies can be done to find out the differences in students' attitudes by comparing their backgrounds in rural or urban areas.
- This research was quantitative further qualitative research can be done on exploring levels of a personal growth initiative, emotional intelligence, and subjective well-being among university students. Teachers or administrative staff may be included in it.

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