Role of Emotional Intelligence in Managing Research Stress at University Level: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

Young people in all fields of modern science face new challenges due to the changing global landscape. The issues surrounding emotions demand attention to find research-based solutions. The current research aims to understand how emotional intelligence helps scholars in managing the stress related to their research. Data was collected from research students using a descriptive survey design. Three public and three private universities in Jamshoro and Karachi were chosen to conduct the study. Researchers' data were gathered using a census approach. The total number of sample was 663, including 510 M.Phil and 153 Ph.D candidates, including 439 from public universities, 224 from private universities, and 329 male and 334 female students/scholars. The findings indicated that students' EI was low and stress was high. Research stress was found to have a higher negative coefficient (-.750) and a p-value of (=.01), suggesting that emotional intelligence negatively impacts research stress. Thus, research students (MPhil & PhD) with lower emotional intelligence experience more focus. There is evidence that these factors are crucial for comprehending students' emotional intelligence and level of research stress. Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) must first understand the mental health of their research students to develop and design EI courses that will lessen the academic and research stress that university students experience.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Research Stress, University Students.

Introduction

People today are more intelligent and successful than before because we live in a progressive society. Young people in all branches of modern science face new challenges due to the changing global landscape. The issues surrounding emotions demand attention to find research-based solutions. As a result, managing feelings is crucial if the researcher wants to avoid the bad parts and succeed in life. In addition to reasoning skills, students are evaluated on their creativity, emotional intelligence, and interpersonal abilities. Pakistan's educational system in institutions does not support inspirational intelligence training programs. Particularly, students are rarely encouraged to think critically in government-run institutions. Emotional problems have long been a problem for the people of Pakistan. Pakistanis must receive dynamic training to develop the fortitude to cope with life's difficulties (Muteeb, 2020). Their comprehension is superior to others in this regard.

Emotions can be strengthened, used for good, and are more than feelings experienced. It is beneficial because it alters how a person perceives feelings. It redefines "emotions," alters how you perceive the world, and, ultimately, you think clearly and live a better life. Stress levels are lower in high EI individuals than in others. They are generally happier, emotionally stable, and mentally and physically sound. In 2023, emotional intelligence will be one of the most essential skills. That implies that those with emotional intelligence advance more quickly in academics,

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research, employment, and promotion. EI is an ability with four key features rather than merely a trait (Whltbourne, 2021).

Universities today are so preoccupied with finishing the curriculum that they must set aside time to attend to their student's emotional needs and develop their emotional intelligence. Additionally, the student's performance, accomplishments, and adaptability suffered. Students became stressed as a result of this. Students tend to develop emotional disorders the more intense the competition and the higher the expectations of parents and teachers. As a result, it is crucial to teach EI in tertiary institutions. People generally believe that interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships, as well as high EI, influence academic performance. Stress can have a detrimental effect on motivation and academic achievement.

Nearly everything is moving quickly in today's fast-paced world, including culture, society, technology, and education. The various roles that society expects students to play in today's sociocultural, economic, and bureaucratic environments put them under much stress. Because of this, contemporary students are significantly more stressed and anxious than their forerunners. Today's students are regarded as the most competent, particularly in terms of technical competency; those who are capable put unreasonably high expectations on them, compelling them to comply. Depression, anxiety, and stress have a negative impact on both individuals and society. Negative consequences could include reduced ability to complete daily tasks, burnout, and health issues.

The world is filled with challenges. There are many challenges for students pursuing a research degree. Students occasionally stop studying due to high-stress levels from the excessive demands on their social and academic lives. The relationship between emotional intelligence and research stress has not received much attention from M.Phil./Ph.D. scholars; this study differs from other research studies. This study examined how emotional intelligence (EI) helped graduate-level (MPhil/PhD) students manage their research stress.

Research Objectives

1. To evaluate research students' Emotional Intelligence.
2. To examine the Emotional Intelligence of both male and female research students.
3. To measure the stress level among MPhil and PhD scholars.
4. To calculate the research stress of male and female research scholars.
5. To contrast MPhil and PhD students' emotional intelligence.
6. To assess the stress associated with research of MPhil and PhD students.
7. To investigate how EI affects MPhil and doctoral students' stress levels related to their research.

Significance of the Study

Higher education institutions can use this study to better understand research students' psychological state. Universities would benefit significantly from assessing students' emotional intelligence through tests or other methods, as this would help the students manage their emotions and succeed in their academic endeavors. Due to the importance of emotional intelligence, both the public and private sectors should consider this study's topic academically. Institutions may create EI programs to lessen the strain of coursework and research on university students. Additionally, it can enhance students' capacity to handle the research stress, which could improve both their academic and research performance.

Literature Review

Emotional intelligence includes becoming motivated, effectively controlling difficult emotions and impulses, and maintaining optimism and hope in facing challenges. Rehman (2021) emphasized the significance of emotional intelligence in identifying pupils who require guided

intervention by mentioning. Many researchers have examined the connection between EI and academic achievement at various educational levels. With the support of all stakeholders, educators and students can participate in EI training workshops and awareness sessions.

Garcia et al. (2021) found that women outperformed males regarding emotional intelligence, academic stress, and academic success. EI and academic success are connected and essential for raising academic achievement (Altwijri, 2021). According to studies (Castro & Kee, 2010; Farrelly & Austin, 2007), there are gender differences in sensory EI components such as perception and emotional facilitation. According to some research, women perform better than men across several EI domains. Compared to students in the arts and humanities, male students performed significantly worse on the "use of emotion" test, male students possess greater emotional intelligence than female students. According to Baqutayan (2017), there was no connection between emotional intelligence and stress. The study demonstrated that programs to improve emotional intelligence must be incorporated to manage stress properly.

The findings of Rehana (2016) indicated that male university students scored higher than female students on EI. Students' emotional maturity and stress levels differ. While private university participants are stressed, public university participants have higher emotional intelligence. University students are advised to learn how to enhance their emotional intelligence and self-control in daily life to handle stress successfully. Students studying science are allegedly under more stress than those majoring in business and the arts, according to Kauts (2018). Students' emotional intelligence has also significantly influenced their academic stress. Students with poor emotional intelligence experienced more academic stress than those with vital emotional intelligence.

Doctoral students at the Perdana School of Business experience academic stress for various reasons, including academic pressure, low self-esteem, ineffective time management, and juggling job and family obligations. As a result, pupils employ emotional intelligence as a stress-reduction technique. The principal, professors, and supervisors are urged to look into this issue in great detail and address its impacts by prioritizing students' well-being and ability to graduate on Time (GOT) and have a good time while in school.

Literature Gap

Emotional intelligence abilities can be developed throughout a student's life since they are a component of lifelong learning, which serves as the basis for a balanced lifestyle. The researcher chose this topic because the study will allow us to learn about emotional intelligence and research stress. How emotionally intelligent are research students? Can they control their feeling? Can they manage stress while conducting research? Numerous research studies have been conducted on emotional intelligence and academics, academic performance, and students' learning (Miri, 2016; Suleman, 2019) of secondary school graduate students. EI has been linked to academic success, critical thinking, peer learning, and the desire to seek help (Fernandez et al., 2012). This study differs from other research studies because there has not been much discussion about M.Phil./Ph.D. scholars' emotional intelligence and research stress. This research study explored the role of EI in managing research stress at university level students' (M.Phil./Ph.D.).

Research Design

This study aims to examine the role of emotional intelligence in managing stress-related research metrics. A quantitative research strategy and an explanatory research design were selected to collect the data from the participants.

Population

All enrolled students of public and private universities in Karachi and Jamshoro accredited by the Higher Education Commission made up the study population. It was impossible to gather data from the entire population due to time restrictions.

Sampling

Sampling allows researchers to conclude the population without counting every single person. The population was typically small, so the researcher polled every member; as a result, the entire population was selected to represent the population in the study. For this study, data from both public and private universities were gathered using the census sampling method. The data was collected from the education departments at public and private universities. Seven hundred sixteen people participated in the sample size calculation for the primary analysis. The sample size consists of 439 students from public universities and 224 from private universities. There were 329 male and 334 female students, 510 M.Phil and 153 Ph.D. scholars. Fifty-three research scholars have yet to respond to the questionnaires. Six hundred sixty-three people made up the final sample.

Research Tools

The researcher used the Schutte, Malouff, & Bhullar (2009) scale to measure the EI of research participants. Within the context of educational research, this questionnaire tried to evaluate the students' emotional intelligence.

The research stress questionnaire included a 5-point rating scale and 37 items of positive and negative phrases in the questionnaire. It was an accurate instrument to gauge the research stress experienced by research scholars. Its five subscales are coursework stress, thesis writing stress, supervisor-related stress, socioeconomic stress, and academic stress.

Rationale for the Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire

More than 1500 times have been spent using the SREIT (Schutte et al., 1998) in various research studies. The best openly accessible, free tool is this one, according to Connor et al. (2019). In earlier studies, the SREIT's overall scores were found to have acceptable internal consistency 0.90 (Schutte et al., 1998).

Rationale for the Research Stress Questionnaire

Research students' lives may be significantly impacted by stress. There have been comparatively few studies on the subject that we are aware of, and even fewer have concentrated on the importance of research to academic identity. The stress of research students was thus measured in the present study using the self-explanatory "Research Stress" scale.

Pilot Testing

In a pilot study, 30 respondents enrolled in private and public institutions in Jamshoro and Karachi participated. Hill (1998) suggested using 10 to 30 people in pilot survey studies.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics of EI Questionnaire

	Reliability	
Questionnaires	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Emotional Intelligence	.884	28
Research Stress	.906	35

Table 1 shows the result that the Emotional Intelligence and Research Stress Questionnaires have very good reliability scores and can be used in research.

Results

Table 2: Emotional Intelligence (Factor wise)

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	SD
Perception of Emotions	663	2.07	.51
Managing own Emotions	663	2.22	.44
Managing others Emotions	663	2.71	.63
Utilization of Emotions	663	2.49	.66
Overall Emotional Intelligence	663	2.34	.34
Valid N (listwise)	663		

Table 2 displays the results for the four above factors. According to Pimental (2010), to determine the minimum and maximum lengths for the five-point Likert scale, the mean was interpreted as follows. The overall mean score (2.34) and SD (.34) indicated low emotional intelligence.

Table 3: Research Stress (Factor wise)

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	SD
Coursework Stress	663	3.90	.56
Thesis writing stress	663	3.93	.53
Supervisor Relationship Stress	663	2.28	.41
Socio-economic Stress	663	3.51	.74
Academic stress	663	3.78	.58
Overall Research Stress	663	3.64	.31
Valid N (listwise)	663		

Table 3 shows the results for the above factors. Utilizing a five-point Likert scale, data was gathered. The students' overall mean score (3.64) and SD (.31) indicated that they were stressed due to their research.

Table 4: Hypothesis Results

Hypothesis		University	N	Mean	SD	SEM	t-value	Sig:
H_1	Emotional Intelligence	Public	439	2.3475	.36132	.01724	*1.143*	*.254*
		Private	224	2.3181	.28541	.01907		
H_2	Emotional Intelligence	Male	329	2.3716	.38066	.02099	*2.581*	*0.01*
		Female	334	2.3041	.28575	.01564		
H_3	Research Stress	Public	439	3.6446	.31987	.01527	-.123	.902
		Private	224	3.6478	.30041	.02007		
H_4	Research Stress	Male	329	3.6077	.33305	.01836	-3.117	.002
		Female	334	3.6831	.28798	.01576		
H_5	Emotional Intelligence	M.Phil.	510	2.2862	.25999	.01151	-5.485	.000
		Ph.D.	153	2.5088	.48148	.03893		
H_6	Research Stress	M.Phil.	510	3.6856	.27237	.01206	5.077	.000
		Ph.D.	153	3.5125	.39450	.03189		

As shown in Table 4, an Independent samples t-test was used to compare the emotional intelligence of public and private university students. Without much fluctuation, the mean score for private colleges was 2.3181, while the mean score for public institutions was 2.3475 (t= 1.143, p=.254). As a consequence, $H0_1$ was approved. The mean scores for males and females

differed substantially (t= 2.581, p= 0.01) (M= 2.3716, SD=.38066; M= 2.3041, SD=.28575). Thus, $H0_2$ was rejected. The mean scores for public universities were 3.6446, and for private institutions were 3.6478. The results showed no statistically significant differences (t= -.123, p=.902). Hence, H_{03} was approved as a consequence. The male and female mean scores differed significantly (t= -3.117, p=.002) from each other (M= 3.6077, and M= 3.6831 respectively). H_{04} was thus rejected. The mean scores for the M.Phil. (2.2862) and Ph.D. (2.5088) differed significantly (t= -5.485, p=.01). Therefore, $H0_5$ was rejected. The research stress of M.Phil. (3.6856) and Ph.D. (3.5125), which shows mean scores were significantly different from one another (t=5.077, p=.01). Hence, $H0_6$ was rejected.

Hypothesis 7

Table 5 demonstrates that the independent variable (emotional intelligence) can explain 56% of the variance in research stress with statistical significance, F= (848.375), p=.05.

Table 5: Regression Model Summary (Dependent Variable: Research Stress)

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Sig.
1	.750[a]	.562	.561	.000
a. Predictors: (Constant), EI				

Table 6: Multiple Regression Coefficients [DV: Research Stress]

Model				Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta (Standardized)		
1	(Constant)	5.271	.056		93.479	.000
	EI	-.695	.024	-.750	-29.127	.000
a. Dependent Variable: RS						

Research stress has a higher coefficient (-.750), as shown in Table 11, and the result is significant at p .01. This implies that EI has a negative impact on research stress. H0 7 was, therefore, rejected.

Discussion

The study aimed to look into possible research goals, such as how much stress research students were under, how much emotional intelligence (EI) they had, and how EI and stress related to each other. The study was also planned to evaluate the hypotheses resulting from the objectives. The overall EI of the students was low, as indicated by scores of (M=2.34 and (SD=.34) on the EI scale. According to Ukey's (2020) argument, participants from all postgraduate years had low EI because of their extensive workload, which impacts students' emotional intelligence. Shahzad et al. (2014) and Fida (2018) said that emotions and emotional capacity are significant in each person's life. This skill makes it possible to be comfortable, achieve more, and deal with life's difficulties.

After considering emotional intelligence, the researchers used the mean and standard deviation to assess the students' research stress. Students reported high levels of research stress, as shown by the overall mean score of 3.64 and the SD (.31). Papadopoulos (2015) claimed that postgraduate students experience much stress. According to Reddy's (2018) results, academic stress continues to have a negative impact on student's mental health and general well-being.

The first hypothesis supported the idea that there are no appreciable differences between public and private university research students regarding their EI levels. It confirms a prior

Manichander (2021) study that found no appreciable differences in emotional intelligence between postgraduate students at government and private universities. It also supports a prior study by Burgess-Wilkerson (2013) that discovered no differences in EI skills between the two student populations despite differences between the two universities. The results demonstrate that both public and private sector universities require the development of students' emotional intelligence; as a result, research scholars from both institutions should be capable of handling the stress associated with their work.

The second hypothesis shows that neither gender significantly differs from the other in terms of emotional intelligence among research students. The results indicate a significant emotional intelligence gap between male and female students. On assessments of emotional intelligence, male students score higher than female students. It backs with an earlier study by Ali (2021), who discovered that male and female students differed considerably in emotional intelligence. Furthermore, it supports a prior study by Barros (2021), showing a significant correlation between male and female students. Higher EI scores were found in males than females. Additionally, it backs up a previous study by Ajmal (2017) that found a significant gender gap in male students' emotional intelligence (EI) scores, showing that men had greater EI levels than women.

The study's third hypothesis is that there is no distinction between public and private university students regarding the stress they suffer due to their research. Research stress levels among students in public and private universities were the same. The results demonstrate that research students at both public and private universities experience stress. It backs up the Chaudhry (2012) study, which found no discernible difference in stress levels between public and private institutions. University students in the public and private sectors report high stress levels (Thenmozhi, 2020).

According to study hypothesis number four, there is no difference in the stress levels of male and female research students. The results showed that female research students experience higher stress levels than male students. As a result, organizing various awareness seminars for female scholars would help them focus more and lessen their research tension. It validates the earlier research by Graves (2021), which discovered that females had more significant stress than males. The stress levels of female professional students were much higher than male students (Kalpana, 2020). According to earlier research by McLean (2022), female students reported higher stress levels than male students, which raises the possibility that university stress management programs may require a gender-specific focus.

The study's fifth hypothesis focuses on the emotional intelligence (EI) of M.Phil. and Ph.D. students. According to the findings, Ph.D. research students had more emotional intelligence than M.Phil. students. Bahat (2020) found that students in higher-year courses had greater levels of emotional intelligence, which improved relationships, communication, and well-being in the classroom. The more experienced Ph.D. academics get, the more self-assured they become. M.Phil. scholars need to concentrate more.

The study's sixth hypothesis supported the claim that There is no distinction in the stress that Ph.D. and M.Phil. students go through. The findings narrated that Ph.D. research students are less stressed than M.Phil. research students. At that point, M.Phil. students are inexperienced and lack research knowledge. Therefore, M.Phil. students must focus more on developing emotional intelligence and decreasing stress. Khurshid (2015) found that Ph.D. students were less worried during coursework than M.Phil. students. Hugo (2017) says graduate students are more prone than the general public to feel overworked, underpaid, and anxious.

The seventh hypothesis focuses on how emotional intelligence affects M.Phil. and Ph.D. students' research stress. The research revealed a more significant negative coefficient (-.750, p.01) and a significant outcome for research stress. It suggests that EI significantly and negatively impacts research stress. This study adds to that conducted previously by Ngui and

Lay (2020), who found that respondents' emotional intelligence significantly influenced their stress levels. It also supports previous research by Alam (2021), which found that EI significantly influences a student's stress.

Conclusion

Emotional intelligence is crucial in helping M.Phil and Ph.D students in managing the stress associated with their research. M.Phil and Ph.D students at Sindh's public and private institutions experience research stress due to a lack of emotional intelligence. Their academic and scientific performance may suffer as a result. They may, however, employ emotional intelligence to lessen the stress associated with their study. The results of this study are expected to provide educational institutions with new information and lead to changes in the M.Phil and Ph.D educational systems.

Recommendations

Our results show that different policies should be implemented to assist research scholars in managing, controlling, using, and improving their emotions. The significance of negative emotion-supportive study settings for M.Phil and Ph.D students is that they significantly influence stress. Several awareness workshops should be held for female students to improve their emotional intelligence and lessen the stress associated with their studies. Universities in both the public and private sectors should implement emotional intelligence programs to help students develop strong enough emotions to handle the stress of their research. It is advised that private and public institutions instruct students from prominent families in socialization skills since successful socialization techniques can change conduct. Students' research knowledge may be updated through coursework, seminars, and brainstorming sessions, relieving tension. It is advised that various courses be developed to help research students manage socioeconomic and academic stress.

Further study into the causes of stress or psychological discomfort is necessary to create techniques to enhance students' academic and research experiences. Additionally, recognizing stress and suffering in cohorts of research students may offer a chance to intervene, enhancing student retention and academic and research success. Universities should hold various workshops and seminars for the student's emotional growth. They could get instruction in stress management and encourage positive thinking among academic and extracurricular pupils.

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