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Prediction of Life Satisfaction Based on Emotional Intelligence and Coping With Stress Among University Students

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to assess the relationship between university students' emotional intelligence (EI), coping strategies, and life satisfaction. Fostering psychological well-being and academic adjustment in a higher education setting requires an understanding of these relationships. A total of 156 university students 20–35 years old (62 males and 92 females) participated. Participants completed the Self-Reported Scale of Emotional Intelligence (SRSEI), the Coping Inventory (CI), and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWL). Data analysis was used to assess relationships among them. Findings demonstrated a significant positive association between coping with stress and emotional intelligence. Furthermore, coping strategies significantly predicted life satisfaction among university students. Education level and coping with stress were also positively related to life satisfaction. Including stress-reduction and emotional intelligence development strategies in the curriculum is one way to help students have healthier, more fulfilling lives. Additionally, highlighting the significance of emotional intelligence and effective coping techniques.

Introduction

Emotional intelligence (EI) represents a critical dimension of human functioning that enables individuals to navigate emotional and social complexities effectively. It involves the capacity to perceive, comprehend, and regulate emotions within oneself and others, thereby fostering constructive relationships and achieving shared goals (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Goleman,

1995). EI is commonly conceptualized through four interrelated components: emotional self-awareness, emotional self-regulation, social awareness, and interpersonal management (Goleman, 1998). Collectively, these facets contribute to adaptive behavior, effective communication, and enhanced psychological well-being across personal and professional domains.

Coping strategies, according to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), are ongoing behavioral and cognitive attempts to handle demands that are thought to be excessively demanding or beyond one's capacity. Their groundbreaking concept divides coping mechanisms into three categories: avoidance, problem-focused, and emotion-focused. Further factor-analytic studies (Carver, Scheier, & Pozo, 1992) distinguish between adaptive techniques (e.g., active coping, planning, seeking social support, religious coping) and maladaptive strategies (e.g., denial, detachment, substance use). While adaptive coping enables effective problem-solving and emotional adjustment, inadequate coping may provide momentary comfort but often exacerbates stress and psychological distress (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989; Connor-Smith & Flachsbart, 2007).

Neugarten introduced the idea of life satisfaction in 1961 (Ardahan, 2012). reflects an individual's total judgment of life quality and subjective well-being (Graves, Ohlott, & Ruderman, 2007). Further studies suggested that university students are a particularly vulnerable group due to academic expectations, social transitions, and identity formation. Consequently, recognizing how emotional intelligence and coping methods predict life satisfaction has become increasingly vital in helping student mental health and academic accomplishment. (Kartol et al., 2024; Konaszewski et al., 2023; Nguyen, 2022).

As a coping mechanism, substance use is usually linked to lower life satisfaction. Its maladaptive nature has been established by the clear association between it and decreased life satisfaction among college students (Lagos & del, 2016). Although religious coping is often connected with higher life satisfaction, particularly in more religious nations, substance use as coping typically exhibits a negative association with life satisfaction. Cultural norms and individual demographic characteristics may mitigate these effects, influencing the efficiency of both adaptive and maladaptive coping techniques (Joshanloo, 2019).

According to MacCann et al. (2022), positive emotional regulation, social competence, and adaptive functioning have all been repeatedly linked to emotional intelligence. Similarly, coping skills serve as key buffers against stress, influencing psychological resilience and subjective well-being (Lacomba-Trejo et al., 2022). Nevertheless, despite the growing body of research, there are still unanswered questions about how coping strategies and emotional intelligence (EI) interact to affect university students' life satisfaction, especially in diverse cultural and demographic situations.

Literature Review

Emotional intelligence is commonly acknowledged as a crucial aspect of psychological well-being and life satisfaction (Mayer and Salovey, 1997). Individuals with greater EI tend to regulate their emotions well, engage in pleasant social relationships, and demonstrate increased adaptability in stressful situations (Vasiou et al., 2024). It has been determined that emotional regulation and the application of emotions to improve performance are important indicators of life satisfaction (Vilca-Pareja et al., 2022). Because emotional intelligence (EI) satisfies psychological requirements, including competence and autonomy, it indirectly improves life satisfaction (Vasiou et al., 2024).

Gender variations in life satisfaction and emotional intelligence are also examined in other studies by Mayer et al. (2000), Vilca-Pareja et al. (2022), and Gavín-Chocano et al. (2020). The emotional intelligence (EI) of women is generally higher, especially in emotional awareness and empathy, but the life satisfaction of men is generally higher. Mayer et al. (2000) discovered that when males performed better, women's EI ratings were higher, with

the exception of emotional identification. These differences show how gender may have a moderating role in the relationship between life satisfaction and emotional intelligence (EI) from a major role in stress reduction and overall health. People with high emotional intelligence typically avoid maladaptive reactions like denial or disengagement and instead use adaptive coping strategies like planning, problem-solving, and asking for assistance. (Mohammadi et al., 2009; Austin et al., 2005). People with emotional intelligence can see unpleasant events more positively, which encourages logical problem-solving as opposed to emotional avoidance. (Salovey, Stroud, & Woolery, 2002). Conversely, people with low EI may rely on avoidance, superstition, or substance use as coping techniques, which are often associated with lower psychological outcomes (Lagos & del, 2016).

Substance use as a coping mechanism has been consistently associated with reduced life satisfaction, underlining its dysfunctional character (Lagos & del, 2016). It was explored that substance use is typically positively correlated with social, emotional, and avoidant coping strategies, which in turn impacts life satisfaction. Furthermore, cultural influences can impact these trends. Furthermore, emotional experiences rather than religious or spiritual coping may have a greater influence on fostering life satisfaction in secular contexts. (Joshanloo, 2019). According to the research, higher emotional intelligence is generally associated with a greater usage of adaptive coping strategies that support well-being and life satisfaction and a decreased dependence on maladaptive coping mechanisms like substance abuse. (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989; Connor-Smith & Flachsbart, 2007).

Religious coping entails employing faith-based cognitive and behavioral methods such as prayer, pastoral care, and social support to manage stress (Parodi, 2022). The application of behavioral and cognitive coping mechanisms rooted in one's faith, such as social support, pastoral care, and prayer, to stress management is known as religious coping (Fabricatore et al., 2004). Furthermore, while negative religious coping, like feeling abandoned by God, tends to have detrimental effects, positive religious coping, like seeking spiritual support, is typically linked to increased psychological well-being and life satisfaction (Graça & Brandão, 2024; Mazzuki et al., 2024).

It was examined by researchers that despite rising attention in this topic, cross-cultural discrepancies and mixed findings persist (Abu-Raiya et al., 2019; Habib et al., 2018). Some research finds favorable links between religious coping and life satisfaction, while others note variability based on cultural and religiosity levels. The importance of religious coping as a protective factor thus needs additional research, particularly among different university populations (Saintila et al., 2024).

This study's conceptual framework combines life satisfaction, coping strategies, and emotional intelligence. By enhancing self-awareness and emotional control, emotional intelligence supports adaptive coping (Lacomba-Trejo et al., 2022). The relationship between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction is then regulated or moderated by coping. (Extremera et al., 2020). Higher EI students are more likely to use healthy coping strategies, which improves their level of life satisfaction. (Mohammadi et al., 2009; Austin et al., 2005). However, unhealthy coping strategies like substance abuse or denial are likely to reduce life satisfaction (Lagos & del, 2016). Depending on the person's spiritual orientation and cultural upbringing, religious coping both positive and negative, can either strengthen or undermine these ties. (Graça & Brandão, 2024; Mazzuki et al., 2024).

According to this framework, coping mechanisms influence the connection between life satisfaction and emotional intelligence, and these pathways are influenced by demographic characteristics and religious coping. (e.g., gender, age, and educational attainment). (Cazan & Nastasa, 2015). Thus, emotionally competent adolescents who utilize adaptive coping and positive religious techniques are anticipated to experience higher life satisfaction.

According to earlier studies, a person's level of education affects their coping mechanisms and level of life satisfaction. Higher levels of education are frequently linked to better psychological adjustment because they increase access to coping mechanisms, enhance problem-solving skills, and heighten emotional awareness (Joshanloo, 2019; Cazan & Nastasa, 2015). Therefore, university students with higher levels of education may exhibit more flexible coping mechanisms and higher levels of life satisfaction than students with lower levels of education.

Gender, age, and educational attainment are examples of demographic traits that could further affect these associations. (Cazan & Nastasa, 2015). Religious coping is another moderating variable that shows how spiritual beliefs influence psychological adjustment and coping mechanisms. (Fabricatore et al., 2004; Graça & Brandão, 2024). This integrated framework enables a comprehensive understanding of how emotional and spiritual resources jointly enhance student well-being.

Rationale

University students confront many stressors, including academic, social, and personal issues, which can severely impair their mental health and overall life satisfaction. Enhancing student well-being requires understanding the emotional and behavioral elements that enable successful stress management. It is widely accepted that one of the primary factors influencing an individual's capacity to recognize, control, and make adaptive use of emotions is emotional intelligence (EI). Higher EI individuals often have better stress management skills, more resilience, and overall well-being. (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004).

Coping mechanisms, including cognitive and behavioral efforts to control stress, play a significant part in this process. Adaptive methods such as problem-solving are associated with improved psychological outcomes, while maladaptive ones like avoidance often anticipate discomfort. Researching the mediating role of coping styles can increase understanding of how EI promotes life satisfaction (Vilca-Pareja et al., 2022). One essential indicator of subjective well-being is life satisfaction, which is linked to better mental health, resilience, and academic performance (Chýlová & Natovová, 2013).

In order to fill in gaps in the literature, the current study examines the connections between life satisfaction, coping strategies (including religious coping), and emotional intelligence in college students. It also considers education degree as a potential factor impacting coping and well-being. This study emphasizes the significance of culturally sensitive methods to mental health promotion in view of the growing diversity of students' cultures and religions (Saintila et al., 2024; Parodi, 2022). The results could influence the construction of treatments, such as courses on coping techniques and emotional intelligence, to help students better handle stress and lead more satisfying lives.

Objectives

- To examine the relationships between emotional intelligence, coping with stress, and life satisfaction among university students.
- To investigate the impact of emotional intelligence on stress level and life satisfaction of university students.

Hypothesis

H₁: There will be a positive relationship between emotional intelligence, coping with stress, and life satisfaction.

H₂: Emotional self-regulation will predict coping with stress among females as compared to males.

H₃: Religious coping will predict life satisfaction among university students.

H₄: There will be a correlation between education and coping with stress and life satisfaction.

Methodology

Sample

One hundred and fifty students (N = 150), both male and female, ages 20 to 35, will make up the entire sample. Data was collected from students at several universities using convenient sampling approaches.

Instruments

Demographic data sheet

The individuals' demographic data will be gathered using the demographic sheet.

Self-report measure of emotional intelligence (SRMEI)

The Self-Report Measure of Emotional Intelligence (SRMEI) consists of 60 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale, with total scores ranging from 60 to 300. Higher scores reflect greater emotional intelligence. Developed by Khan (2008) for use in therapeutic and social contexts, the SRMEI assesses three key domains: interpersonal skills, emotional self-regulation, and emotional self-awareness. The instrument demonstrates strong internal consistency, with an alpha reliability coefficient of .95 (Khan, 2008).

Cope Inventory

The Multidimensional COPE Inventory, developed by Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub (1989), is a 60-item scale designed to assess individual coping responses to stress. It comprises 15 subscales that measure three major coping dimensions: problem-focused coping (e.g., active coping, planning, seeking instrumental support), emotion-focused coping (e.g., acceptance, positive reinterpretation, religious coping), and less adaptive coping (e.g., venting, behavioral and mental disengagement). Each subscale contains four items, with higher scores indicating greater use of that coping strategy. The inventory demonstrates acceptable internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from .37 to .93 (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989).

Satisfaction with life scale

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985) assesses overall life satisfaction using five items, rated on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 7 ("strongly agree"). Total scores, which range from 5 to 35, reflect the individual's overall life satisfaction, with higher scores indicating greater satisfaction. The scale demonstrates strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.79 to 0.91 (Clench-Aas et al., 2011).

Procedure

Official approval was sought from the administration of various Peshawar universities prior to data collection. Data for the study of the connection between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction was gathered through a survey approach. To facilitate improved response, collaboration, authentic engagement, and personal interaction, the researcher visited each responder in person. The study's goals and objectives were explained to the participants, and rapport was established. Subjects were provided with self-administered questionnaires. The subjects were instructed before the questionnaire was given, and they will be given further explanations if they need them to ensure that the questionnaire is clear. The self-report measures of emotional intelligence, coping inventory, and life satisfaction scale are all part of the surveys.

Results

Table 1

Psychometric properties of major study variable (N=156)

Variables	N	Items	Mean	SD	Alpha Reliability coefficient	Range Actual Potential		Skew
CI	156	60	156.5	20.85	.878	93-204 300	60-	.027
SRMEI	156	60	206.5	22.93	.853	141-266 300	60-	.101
SWLS	156	5	24.8	6.01	.782	10-35 35	5-	540

Table 1 shows the alpha coefficients for each scale range from .782 (LSS) to .878 (CI), indicating strong internal consistency. The SRMEI (M=206.5, SD=22.93) and CI (M=156.5, SD=20.8) mean scores indicate that people had a high degree of emotional intelligence and stress management. A noteworthy high degree of life satisfaction was shown by the SWLS, which produced a mean score of 24.8 (SD = 6.01). All variables have a normal distribution when the skewness values are near zero.

Table 2Summary of intercorrelation, mean, standard deviation to estimate the correlation and strength of linear relationship between all variables among students (N=156)

		CI	Rcop	Csub	Eitotal	ESRS	ESAS	ISS	Ls
1	CI	1							
2	RCOP	.468**	1						
		.000							
3	CSUB	.057	339**	1					
		.480	.000						
4	EI	005	.250**	360**	1				
		.951	.002	.000					
5	ESRS	134	.128	298**	.888**	1			
		.096	.111	.000	.000				
6	ESAS	.103	.307**	337**	.821**	.554**	1		
		.203	.000	.000	.000	.000			
7	ISS	.214**	.236**	163*	.429**	.028	.441**	1	
		.007	.003	.042	.000	.724	.000		
8	LS	.124	.287**	058	.289**	.304**	.220**	.022	1
		.122	.000	.472	.000	.000	.006	.789	

M		156.15	14.10	5.30	206.73	88.72	72.56
45.45	24.58						
SD		20.85	2.22	2.67	22.93	16.28	7.03
6.28	6.01						

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01 & ***p<.001

Table 2 illustrates significant relationships among life satisfaction, coping strategies, and emotional intelligence (EI) and its subscales. Religious coping was positively associated with EI subscales emotional self-regulation, emotional self-awareness, and interpersonal skills, as well as with life satisfaction. In contrast, substance use coping showed a negative association with life satisfaction.

Table 3 Hierarchical regression analysis showing emotional self-regulation, emotional self-awareness, and interpersonal skills as predictors of coping (N=156)

Model Male (n=62)			Female (n=92)				
		В	SE(B)	β	b	SE(B)	В
1	Constant	157.76***	15.952		177.79	11.64***	
	ESRS	013	.184	009	242	.126*	196
2	Constant	105.50***	24.761		151.81	23.77***	
	ESRS	285	.202	200	353	.154*	286
	ESAS	1.06*	.397	.380	.490	.392	.156
3	Constant	96.791***	25.625		141.98	25.20***	
	ESRS	180	.218	127	309	.158*	250
	ESAS	.719	.481	.258	.260	.439	.083
	ISS	.545	.439	.186	.492	.425	.132

Note: For the R2 model concerning males, the results are as follows: R2 = .000 and $\Delta R = .017$ for step 1; R2 = .108 and $\Delta R = .078$ for step 2; R2 = .078 and $\Delta R = .063$ for step 3. (R2 model for female) R2 = .039, $\Delta R = .028$ for step 1; R2 = .055, $\Delta R = .034$ for step 2, and R2 = .039, and $\Delta R = .028$ for step 3. *p < .05, **p < .01 & ***p < .001

Table 3 shows that emotional intelligence is a significant predictor of coping with stress style, with emotional self-regulation in females being more influential than emotional self-awareness and interpersonal skills in predicting coping with stress, while emotional self-awareness in males is more influential in predicting coping than emotional self-regulation and interpersonal skills.

Table 4Hierarchical regression analysis showing religious coping and substance use coping as predictors of life satisfaction (N=156)

Model		Male (n=62)		Female (n=92)			
		В	SE(B)	β	b	SE(B)	β
1	Constant	13.91	5.00**		13.61	3.75***	
	Rcop	.737*	.355*	.259	.789	.261**	.301
2	Constant	14.34*	6.01*		9.96	4.73*	
	Rcop	.721	.380	.253	.914	.278**	.349
	Csub	.032	.248	017	.388	.309	.133

Note: (R2 model for male) R2=.067, ΔR =-.051 for step 1, R2=.067, ΔR =-.036 for step 2, Note: (R2 model for female) R2=.091, ΔR =-.081 for step 1, R2=.106, ΔR =-.086 for step 2, *p<.05, **p<.01 & ***p<.001

Table 4 shows that religious coping is a significant predictor of life satisfaction among students. Religious coping is more influential than substance use coping in predicting life satisfaction. However, religious coping is higher among females as compared to males in predicting life satisfaction among university students.

Table 5

Hierarchical regression analysis showing education and coping style as predictors of life satisfaction (N=156)

Model		В	SE(B)	В
1	Constant	21.12	1.48***	
Edu		1.78	.728*	.194
2	Constant	13.97	4.01**	
Edu		1.96	.727**	.213
CI		.044	.023**	.151

R2 model for male) R2=.015, ΔR =.009 for step 1, R2=.015, ΔR =-.002 for step 2, *p<.05, **p<.01 & ***p<.001

Table 5 demonstrates that life satisfaction is significantly predicted by both education and coping style, with coping style playing a contributing role in amplifying the predictive power of education.

Discussion

The study aimed to investigate the connection between university students' emotional intelligence, stress coping strategies, and life satisfaction. Many academics have shown that coping mechanisms and emotional intelligence are related; however, the majority of these investigations have been carried out on non-clinical populations. (Eskay 2011). A recent study has established a substantial correlation between elevated emotional intelligence and enhanced coping skills and personal well-being (Austin et al. 2005). The results of this study corroborate previous research showing that adaptive stress coping strategies and emotional intelligence are positively correlated, leading to increased life satisfaction.

The impact of gender on EQ has also been the subject of some research. According to Crick (2003), when it comes to adaptability and aspects involving interpersonal relationships, women are more capable than men. Bar-On and Parker (2002) discovered that women had greater strength than men in interpersonal connections, empathy, and responsibility. According to an analysis of recent research, male students did better than female students in the emotional self-awareness component of emotional intelligence, whereas female students performed better in the emotional self-regulation component when it came to adaptive stress coping.

Previous studies looked at the beneficial correlation between emotional intelligence and positive religious coping. However, effective coping strategies, emotional intelligence (EI), perceived stress, and reported stress were all found to be negatively correlated. (Austin et al., 2010). Religious coping and life satisfaction among college students were shown to be positively and significantly correlated in the current study. Additionally, the research showed that female students utilized religious coping mechanisms more frequently than their male counterparts.

University students report higher levels of life satisfaction after receiving an education and learning strategies to manage stress, according to the current study's findings. Educational attainment strongly correlates with life satisfaction. (Moody, 2002). Despite debates over the nature and predictive value of this link, life satisfaction and education are positively connected. (Amaike, B., 2006)

The current study discovered a substantial negative correlation between emotional intelligence (r = -.360, p < .01) and substance use coping (SCUB) and its subcomponents. Despite this, there was no statistically significant relationship between SCUB and life satisfaction. The negative trend suggests that students who rely on substance use as a coping strategy may exhibit lower emotional intelligence and potentially reduce life satisfaction. These findings are consistent with studies demonstrating that whereas dysfunctional coping strategies, like substance abuse, are linked to emotional problems and a lower degree of satisfaction, adaptive coping mechanisms, like religious coping and emotional intelligence, are linked to improved psychological well-being (Lagos & del, 2016; Mazzuki et al., 2024; Mohammadi et al., 2009; Austin et al., 2005).

Overall, the results imply that emotional intelligence promotes life satisfaction both directly and indirectly by boosting adaptive coping strategies, particularly religious coping while maladaptive approaches such as substance use predict lower emotional functioning and diminished well-being. These findings underline the relevance of emotional and spiritual resources in creating psychological resilience among university students and give significant insights into developing targeted interventions aiming at boosting emotional competence, coping abilities, and overall life satisfaction.

Limitations

Despite many limitations, this research study provides substantial support for the intended objectives. The limitations related to the research population and study type restrict the generalization and interpretation of the cognitive factors influencing the study variable, which should be considered.

Practical Implications

The study's results have significant real-world consequences for counselors on college campuses, teachers, and lawmakers. Colleges and universities would do well to include emotional intelligence courses in their curricula so that students can learn to cope with stress in healthy ways and ultimately enjoy life more. To further enhance students' well-being, mental health support programs should incorporate religious and spiritual coping skills. Universities should prioritize holistic educational approaches that target both academic knowledge and emotional well-being, as education is linked to adaptive stress coping mechanisms and life satisfaction. One strategy to assist students in living healthier, more satisfying lives is to include techniques for stress management and emotional intelligence development in the curriculum.

Recommendations

Future studies should use cross-cultural and longitudinal designs to better understand how life satisfaction, coping strategies, and emotional intelligence develop in various cultural and educational contexts. Experimental and intervention-based studies are recommended to establish causal linkages, notably through emotional intelligence and coping skills training programs aiming at enhancing students' psychological well-being. Broader and more diversified samples across universities, age groups, and socio-economic situations might boost the generalizability of findings. Further variables should also study additional mediating and moderating variables such as resilience, personality traits, and social support to understand the pathways associated with emotional intelligence, coping, and life satisfaction.

Conclusion

To increase their standard of living, undergraduates and graduates require internal aid. Examining a sample of college students' emotional intelligence (EI), coping methods, and life satisfaction was the main goal of the study. Naturally, a person's capacity to manage stress and their capacity to tolerate or suffer it are both influenced by their emotional intelligence. The study discovered a substantial relationship among life satisfaction, coping style, and emotional intelligence in both the male and female groups. Compared to the male students, the correlation was higher for the female students. The study's findings show a favorable relationship between college students' emotional intelligence, coping strategies, and overall life satisfaction. Previous studies have shown that those with greater emotional intelligence scores also typically had better coping strategies, which helped explain their high levels of well-being. Additionally, gender differences were evident, with female students exhibiting a high degree of emotional self-control. The female students mostly relied on religious coping mechanisms, but the male students demonstrated a high level of emotional self-awareness. Additionally, the study demonstrates that religious coping mechanisms and life satisfaction are positively correlated, especially for women in college. However, substance use and life satisfaction are negatively correlated. Additional data suggests that academic success is associated with better coping strategies and fewer unpleasant emotional experiences, both of which have a major impact on stress reduction and life satisfaction. Furthermore, the findings highlight the importance of fostering emotional intelligence and promoting adaptive coping strategies in educational settings to enhance students' resilience, mental health, and overall life satisfaction.

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