

Role of Emotional Intelligence, Resilience, and Year of Enrollment for Adjustment Among University Students

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Transition to university and adjustment at university is an important milestone in any individual's life affecting all other life domains. Present research is intended to analyze the role of emotional intelligence, resilience, and year of enrollment in student's adjustment at university. For this purpose, it was hypothesized that a) emotional intelligence and resilience will be significant predictors of students' adjustment in university; b) first-year students will face more adjustment-related issues as compared to second, third, and fourth-year students. Three hundred students between the age range of 17 to 26 years ($M = 20.91$, $SD = 2.01$) from different universities of Karachi participated in the study. Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (Schutte et al., 1998), Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (Connor & Davidson, 2003), and Adjustment Scale (Kaya & Weber, 2003) were administered on participants. Emotional intelligence and resilience were found to be the significant positive predictors of student's adjustment at university. However, contrary to our hypothesis, the first-year students reported better adjustment as compared to all other groups. In addition, second year students scored lowest on adjustment among all groups. Further, second year students have lower resilience as compared to fourth year students. The findings of this research provide implications to enhance students' emotional intelligence and resilience through training sessions by keeping in mind their academic enrollment year.

Keyword: Emotional intelligence, resilience, university students, university adjustment, academic enrollment year

For students, transition from school to university is a demanding experience that may influence their life negatively or it can provide real life satisfaction (Clinciu, 2013). Along with the opportunity for

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psychosocial growth (Gerensea et al., 2017), university students have to adjust themselves socially, academically, and financially (Leary & DeRosier, 2012) which may serve as a challenging experience for them. Moreover, university years are emotionally and mentally more challenging compared to any other stage of education adding lots of pressure and challenges for the individual resulting in physical, social, and emotional difficulties, hence, university adjustment is considered a difficult phase in these years (David & Nita, 2014). Evidence suggests that adjustment is harder for fresh university students who are in their late adolescence phase and may already be confronting many challenges related to physical, academic, social, and emotional adjustment. They encounter problems in emotional management, autonomy, and relationships (Terenzini & Pascarella, 1991). In response to emerging and changing emotional or social situations, university students are at a higher risk of developing psychological problems (Pedrelli et al., 2015).

In United States around 40% of student leave college due to adjustment-related difficulties (Kelly et al., 2007). According to one study, prevalence of adjustment problems in students from Andhra Pradesh, India, and Ethiopia was reported to be about 9 to 19.2% (Devi et al., 2016). Dropout reasons can be broadly divided into economic, academic, and social reasons; however, academic and social reasons are important for university adjustment (Farris, 2010). Keeping Pakistani culture in mind, Pakistani students face similar issues involving monetary problems, lower motivation, problems with teachers and fellows along with academic difficulties leading to adjustment issues (Kazmi & Muazzam, 2017).

Based upon their findings, Rab et al. (2008) reported that overall, 43.7% of medical students have experienced anxiety symptoms and around 19.5% have reported depression. Moreover, students living in hostels scored higher on depression and anxiety as compared to those living with parents. In Pakistan, 16% to 31% of university students experienced severe mental health problems (Saleem et al., 2013).

Students' ability to manage and deal with challenging academic and social demands is indication of psychological well-being and academic success (Leary & DeRosier, 2012). Extreme adjustment issues at university may lead students to take extreme measures if they could not cope with change. Suicide rate in Pakistan is 22% among university students. The main reasons leading to this rate broadly included financial issues, relational problem, and academic stress, more precisely failure in exams, strict attitude of teachers, ragging, domestic issues, parents' strictness, failure in love, life dissatisfaction, and poverty (Shakeel, 2019). This data suggests the significance of

successful transition and adjustment in university. Social scientists are focusing on the factors leading to better adjustment and emotional intelligence and resilience are among these factors.

Emotional intelligence is an individuals' capability to recognize self and others' emotions, to differentiate between and label different feelings, and to use and adjust emotions as a guide for behaviors and thoughts to adapt within the environment (Coleman, 2008). When facing adversity, emotional intelligence and resilience facilitate individuals to efficiently deal with it. According to Sharma (2012), undergraduate first year students were not as emotionally developed which led to them facing challenges in dealing with the load of the shifting environment. Further, they encountered higher academic problems in comparison to students of final year.

According to Pooley and Cohen (2010), resilience is a personal capability to use internal and external available resources for dealing with various situational and ongoing challenges. Resilience is the process which changes over time due to age related maturation and increased interaction with the environment. As resilience increases, individual's psychological/physical health also improves (Connor & Davidson, 2003). In higher educational context, with the increased cognitive demands, resilience plays an important role (Walker et al., 2006). As resilience is significantly related to academic achievement (Sakiz & Aftab, 2018), it facilitates person to function and cope better if they encounter adverse situation (Kim-Cohen & Turkewitz, 2012), an important consideration for new university students. Emotionally intelligent people are psychologically resilient, and they utilize positive emotions for their benefit (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2002).

In the Pakistani context, limited work has been done to understand the adjustment of university students and factors which influence student's adjustment in university. Existing literature in Pakistan has mainly focused on students' academic achievement, local and international students' social adjustment in Pakistan, and medical students' adjustment in university (Ali et al., 2018; Bibi et al., 2018; Janjua et al., 2011). However, role of personality factors such as emotional intelligence and resilience as well as keeping the academic enrollment year in perspective still need to be considered by researchers in Pakistan. Hence, the current study is aimed to examine the role of emotional intelligence, resilience, and academic year for adjustment in university students.

Hypotheses

Following hypotheses were formulated based on the literature review:

1. Emotional intelligence and resilience will positively predict adjustment of university students.
2. First-year students will face more adjustment issues as compared to second, third, and fourth-year students.

Method

Participants

Using a cross-sectional design, a total of 300 undergraduate students with age ranging between 17 to 26 years ($M = 20.91$, $SD = 2.01$) participated in the study through convenience sampling technique. Sample included equal number of male and female students from different universities of Karachi. Students from all four years of Bachelor program (first year = 24.7 %, second year = 25.3%, third year = 24.7 %, & fourth year = 25.3%) participated in the study. Most of the respondents (68.7%) belonged to the nuclear family system. Students with a previous history of any diagnosed psychiatric problem or those receiving psychological treatment were not included in the study.

Measures

Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Scale

It is a 33-items scale developed by Schutte et al. (1998). It included four subscales: Perceptions of Emotions (items no. 5, 9, 15, 18, 19, 22, 25, 29, 32, & 33), Managing One's Own Self and Emotions (item no. 2, 3, 10, 12, 14, 21, 23, 28, & 31), Managing Others' Emotions (items 1, 4, 11, 13, 16, 24, 26, & 30) and Utilization of Emotions (item 6, 7, 8, 17, 20, & 27). Three items (5, 28, & 33) were reverse scoring. Responses are marked on five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The composite score was calculated by summing all responses, higher score indicated higher level of emotional intelligence. The scale has good internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha ranging from .87 to .90 and test-retest reliability of .78 (Schutte et al., 1998).

Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale-10

This was developed by Connor and Davidson (2003) and consists of ten items which are scored on five-point Likert scale from 0 (*rarely true*) to 4 (*true nearly all the time*). The higher the sum of all item score, higher would be the resilience level. Original authors have reported satisfactory alpha coefficients for the scale ranging from .88 and .89, and test-retest reliability as .87 (Connor & Davidson, 2003).

Adjustment Scale

It was developed by [Kaya and Weber \(2003\)](#) and has 28-item to measure students' overall adjustment in university. It contained four subscales: Social Adjustment (items 1 to 7), Academic Adjustment (items 8 to 13), Institutional Adjustment (items 14 to 20), and Personal Adjustment (items 21 to 28). The items were scored on a seven-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Ten items were reverse scored (items 3, 4, 12, 17, 20, 21, 23, 24, 27, & 28). According to the original authors, Cronbach's alphas for the scale ranged from .70 to .83. Adjustment score was calculated by summing responses on all items. Composite scores were used in the present study. Higher overall score reflected higher level of adjustment in university students.

Procedure

After receiving permission from the higher authorities of universities, participants were approached on the university premises and were provided with the consent form. Keeping in view of the ethical guidelines, participants were briefed about the research purpose along with right to withdraw and voluntary participation. They were assured about confidentiality. Subsequently, they were provided with the scale booklet, and they were provided with adequate time to fill in forms and were assisted suitably during the administration process for answering their queries. In the end, participants were thanked for their participation in the study.

Results

Descriptive statistics were used along with inferential statistics. Multiple regression analysis was performed to analyze combined effect of emotional intelligence and resilience as predictors of adjustment of university students. ANOVA was used to analyze the impact of academic year on student's adjustment in university.

[Table 1](#) shows the descriptive statistics related to scales. Skewness value is suggestive of normal distribution of data. Further, Cronbach alpha values of Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Scale and its subscales Perception of Emotions, Managing Own Emotions, Managing Others' Emotions, Utilization of Emotions; Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale-10; and Adjustment Scale lie in adequate range.

Table 1*Descriptive Statistics of the Scales Used in the Study (N = 300)*

Variables	k	α	M	SD	SK	Range	
						Act.	Pot.
SSEI	33	.88	118.69	16.67	-.95	49-159	33-165
PoE	10	.68	34.29	5.90	-.27	17-48	10-50
ME-own	9	.70	22.17	5.28	-1.07	14-45	9-45
ME-others	8	.64	28.52	4.85	-.84	11-40	8-40
UE	6	.68	22.71	3.99	-1.07	6-30	6-30
CDR-10	10	.80	23.75	7.26	-.13	4-40	0-40
AS	28	.67	122.33	15.36	-.32	77-164	28-196

Note. k = no. of items; SK = Skewness; Act. = Actual; Pot. = Potential; SSEI = Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Scale; PoE = Perception of Emotions; ME-own = Managing Own Emotions; ME-others = Managing Others' Emotions; UE = Utilization of Emotions; CDR-10 = Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale-10; AS = Adjustment Scale.

Table 2 shows correlation among study variables and results suggest that emotional intelligence has significant positive correlation with resilience and students' adjustment in university. Similarly, a significant relationship is indicated between resilience and students' university adjustment.

Table 2*Correlation Matrix for Study Variables (N = 300)*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Emotional intelligence	-						
2. Perception of Emotion	.83	-					
3. Managing own Emotion	.83	.54	-				
4. Managing other Emotion	.83	.57	.58	-			
5. Utilization of Emotions	.83	.58	.63	.63	-		
6. Resilience	.38	.34	.38	.27	.26	-	
7. University Adjustment	.27	.21	.25	.20	.21	.28	-

Note. Grey highlights show inter-subscale and subscale-to-total correlations of Schutte Self-report Emotional Intelligence Scale.

All values are significant at $p = .001$.

Table 3 shows the combined impact of emotional intelligence and resilience on student adjustment in university with $F(2,297) = 18.81$ at $p < .05$. The R^2 -value of .112 reveals that predictors explain 11.2 % of variance in outcome variable. Findings suggest that emotional intelligence and resilience positively predict students' adjustment in university.

Table 3

Multiple Regression Analysis Showing Predictive Role of Emotional Intelligence and Resilience for Adjustment in University Students (N = 300)

Variables	B	95% CI		SEB	β	t	p
		LL	UL				
Constant	91.15	79.24	103.06	6.05		15.06	.000
EI	.17	.064	.27	.05	.18	3.13	.002
R	.45	.21	.70	.12	.21	3.63	.000

Note. CI = Confidence Interval; LL = Lower Limit; UL = Upper Limit; EI = Emotional intelligence; R = Resilience.

Table 4 shows the impact of emotional intelligence subscales on students' adjustment in university with $F(4,295) = 6.09$ at $p < .05$. The R^2 -value of .076 reveals that predictors explain 7.6% of variance in outcome. Findings suggest that managing own emotions has significant positive effect on students' adjustment in university. Findings on other subscales are nonsignificant.

Table 4

Multiple Regression Analysis of Emotional Intelligence Subscales as Determinants of Students Adjustment in University (N = 300)

Variables	B	95% CI		SEB	β	t	P
		LL	UL				
Constant	92.23	80.01	10.45	6.20		14.85	.000
PoE	.19	-.18	.57	.19	.07	.99	.321
ME-own	.47	.03	.92	.22	.16	2.11	.032
ME-others	.13	-.35	.62	.25	.043	.53	.591
UE	.17	-.45	.79	.31	.045	.54	.582

Note. CI = Confidence Interval; LL = Lower Limit; UL = Upper Limit; PoE = Perception of Emotions; ME-own = Managing Own Emotions; ME-others = Managing Others' Emotions; UE = Utilization of Emotions.

Table 5 shows mean, standard deviation and F -values of student's adjustment across academic years. Results indicate significant mean differences across academic year on students' adjustment in university. The value of η^2 indicates small effect size. The post hoc analysis suggests significant group mean difference at $p = .05$ level between first year students and second year students with 95%CI [3.14, 15.7]; further, among students of second year and third

year with 95%CI [-14.4, -1.8]; similarly, among second year and fourth year students with 95%CI [-14.4, -1.9]. Students of 2nd year have scored lowered than students of other groups. Moreover, results suggest nonsignificant mean differences on emotional intelligence of students across academic year. Table 5 indicates significant mean differences in resilience of students across academic years. Effect size suggests a small effect size. Post hoc analysis indicates significant group mean difference at $p < .05$ between 4th year and 2nd year students with 95%CI [.70, 6.7].

Table 5

Mean, and Standard Deviation and One Way Analysis of Variance in Adjustment, Emotional Intelligence, and Resilience (N = 300)

Var.	1 st Year ^a	2 nd Year ^b	3 rd Year ^c	4 th Year ^d	$F(3,296)$	η^2
	$M(SD)$	$M(SD)$	$M(SD)$	$M(SD)$		
Adj	125.3(14.1)	115.9 (16.0)	124.0 (16.57)	124.1(12.7)	6.36 ^{**}	.06
EI	117.6(17.88)	116.6(16.3)	119.32(17.10)	121.1(15.2)	1.06	.00
R	23.46(8.05)	22.16(7.17)	23.51(7.09)	25.87(6.28)	3.53 [*]	.03

Note. ^a $n = 74$; ^b $n = 76$; ^c $n = 74$; ^d $n = 76$. Adj = Adjustment; EI = Emotional intelligence; R = Resilience.

^{*} $p < .05$.

Discussion

Present research intends to analyze the role of emotional intelligence, resilience, and academic enrollment year in student's adjustment in university. Findings suggest emotional intelligence and resilience are significant positive predictors of university adjustment of students, hence, hypothesis one has been supported (Table 3). Previous research conducted in different cultures exhibits the same trend. For example, Tekie (2014) suggested significant role of emotional intelligence and resilience in predicting student academic adjustment and emotional intelligence leading to better student social adjustment. Similarly, resilience and emotional intelligence have predicted improved coping in the university setting (Howell, 2004; Parker et al, 2004). Edward and Warelow (2005) suggested that coping includes emotional intelligence and resilience, which helps an individual to cope with difficult situations like transitioning to university effectively. Armstrong et al. (2011) suggest emotional intelligence is associated with resilience as the behavior of an emotionally intelligent individual is adaptive in stressful situations. Emotional intelligence and resilience are interrelated and work by facilitating each other (Table 2) thus, play significant role in predicting the student's adjustment in university. Further, subscales

of emotional intelligence caused variance of around 7% in the students' adjustment in university. Moreover, among all domains of emotional intelligence, Managing Own Emotions appeared to be a significant positive predictor of students' adjustment in university (Table 4). College students with capability to manage their own emotions also have an ability to positively adjust their behavior resulting in better adjustment, self efficacy, psychological safety, and learning engagement in university (Lei, 2022).

Further, present findings suggest first-year students were more adjusted as compared to second year. Further, second year students scored lowest on adjustment as compared to other groups (Table 5), contrary to Hypothesis 2. First-year students adjustment was better than second year students it could be because that initially students are excited to start university life, they put in efforts to socialize with their fellow students, enjoy new-found liberty socially and academically at university. Efficient management of these situations enhances students' positive emotions and sense of efficacy. Higher efficacy serves as main ingredient for motivation leading to better academic adjustment (Yadak, 2017). Further independent or self-regulated learning at university encourages student's interest and desire to learn. Individual driven by intrinsic motivation may perform academic activity for pleasure and self-satisfaction rather than being controlled by external factors like in extrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). In initial years of university, students may view university as place to explore and indulge in risk-taking behavior as they do not have adult responsibilities (Ravert, 2009), hence, they spend time in intellectual growth, personality growth through self-expression, making friends, and socializing (Buote et al., 2007; Schwartz et al., 2005; Swenson et al., 2008).

Similarly, first-year students may be more optimistic about the future which also could have affected their adjustment in a positive direction as compared to other groups; in third and final years, students get exposure related to academic as well as practical aspects of chosen field leading to enhanced motivate and sense of achievement as compared to the second-year students. Moreover, as academic pressure is comparatively low in the first year, it might also be one of factor for better adjustment as compared to second year students, however in third- and fourth-year focus is on major subject instead of electives.

In addition to this, academic year had significant impact on resilience of students (Table 5) and students in final year had higher level of resilience as compared to second year students, as handling and managing difficulties during academic years makes individual

resilient. Second year students have lower resilience level which can be one of influential factor contributing to lowest adjustment in second year students as compared to students from other groups. Resilience may also be affected by different sociodemographic variables such as gender, age, higher income, and educational level (Campbell-Sills et al., 2009), hence, future studies can incorporate these factors in relation with student's resilience.

Limitations and Recommendations

Participants were recruited only from one city for this study which restricts generalizability of findings; for future, it is suggested that participants may be selected from diverse backgrounds to strengthen research findings generalizability. It is also recommended for future studies to examine and incorporate other educational fields, that is, engineering, business, medical, etc. to investigate and compare the similar phenomenon in those fields. Further, to explore and compare the same phenomenon in students residing in hostels. Self-report questionnaires were included for measuring constructs. These are often subject to impression management; thus, self-report questionnaires usage can be counted as a limitation. Therefore, it is suggested that future research should include qualitative analysis also.

Implications

Research findings can be utilized by the educationist, student counselors, educational, and school psychologists to design workshop and capacity building programs for spreading awareness regarding downsides of adjustment issues in universities, reasons for adjustment issues, and their symptomatic manifestations. Further, to develop programs to enhance student's emotional intelligence and resilience levels considering the academic year to enhance their coping abilities. This research would be beneficial for the development of emotional intelligence and resilience building strategies/programs that could be incorporated in the educational system by educationists. Moreover, teachers could incorporate effective ways by which they can enhance students' emotional intelligence and resilience from the beginning that would facilitate better adjustment in various aspects of their future life and goals.

Conclusion

It can be concluded based on statistical inferences that emotional intelligence and resilience serve as significant predictors for adjustment of students in university. Moreover, the academic year has

a significant influence on student's adjustment at university, however, the effect size was small. Female students were found to be better adjusted at university.

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