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**Psychological and Competence Pathways to Academic Success at Higher Education Level****Rahat Yasmeen, PhD**

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Email: sehrishnwarraich@gmail.comCorresponding author: Sehrish Naseer, Email: sehrishnwarraich@gmail.com**Abstract**

Academic success of the university students is contingent on various aspects as literature revealed and it is a matter of great concern among various researchers. By considering the gap of literature, current study aimed to find out the psychological and competence pathways to academic success at higher education level. Present study followed quantitative research method; research was descriptive in nature. By using cross-sectional survey research design, data was collected from a sample of 320 undergraduate students. Respondents were selected from four departments of university of Sargodha; department of Plant Pathology (Faculty of Agriculture), Sargodha Medical College (Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences), Department of English (Faculty of Arts and Humanities) and department of Social Work (Faculty of Social Sciences) by using convenience sampling technique. Data was collected online by using Google form by using two adapted questionnaires. Data was analyzed by using moderation and mediating analysis technique; it is established that an insignificant moderating and mediating effect of student's emotional intelligence in relation with generic competence and academic success was found. On the basis of results, it was recommended that instead of focusing solely on grades and CGPA, future studies may look into a wider range of measures of academic success for different results.

Keywords*Emotional Intelligence, Generic Competence, Academic Success, Students, Undergraduate***Introduction**

World is facing various socio-environmental challenges in order to distinguish the global crises which are dependent on survival of the world. In order to counter with this situation, there is a need to make changes to a sustainable society which is supported from different organizations and relevant bodies. In contemporary literature, these requirements have raised the concern of sustainable development among UN state members who are committed to achieve the sustainable development goals by 2030. For sustainable development, it is discussed that students may strive for developing the essential skills including capacity of responsiveness, kindness, harmony and developing competence and open-mindedness. A model has been suggested by researchers; it is discussed that emotional intelligence has an effect on sustainable development of class environment as well as dependent on future of graduates. Emotional

intelligence fosters the growth of assertiveness which increase the engagement of students and it will lead to improved academic performance consequentially. In order to enable students to perform better and increasing their abilities, education must direct the emotional development of students (Estrada et al., 2021).

Emotional intelligence is defined as a capacity of mind for organizing, comprehending and controlling the emotions of own self as well as others. A study established that people who are emotionally intelligent had an increased level of psychological adjustment. In the context of education, it is found that by increasing emotional skills, level of performance can be boosted as well (Chamizo-Nieto et al., 2021). Emotional intelligence is discussed as the capacity to comprehend, absorb the emotions and thoughts, manage feelings of own self as well as others. Today, many researchers assumed emotional intelligence in same way and we have a better level of understanding of “what emotional intelligence is”, “how it can be assessed” and “what it predicts” than we had understanding earlier a decade. Theories concerning emotional intelligence which emphasized that mental skills are different from other models are increasingly acknowledged for more discussion on personality. A problem occurs when investigating the emotional intelligence due to certain theories which aimed to address precisely the emotions and intellect while others intended to address this phenomena by considering wide range of aspects of personality (Mayer et al., 2012). Academic achievement of students is encouraged from their emotional intellect and capacity to manage the emotions. Better emotional intelligence of students assists them in overall development as well as lead them closer to their goal. Emotional intelligence includes capacity to manage emotions effectively, motivate on self and enable to make relationship with others. In educational institutions, understanding of emotional skills is considered as an imperative role in better learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are considered important because they are widely used for determining the effectiveness of a lesson (Goleman, 2011).

Generic competences of students played a significant role in academic success of the students. Students with better generic competence have an improved level of academic output. Generic skills include reading skills, decision power and direction of the programs; these skills are considered common for almost all degrees (Bautista, 2016). According to shah (2009), in higher education, requirement for generic competence is increasingly demanding; the concept of generic competence is supported in higher education. It is discussed that education of graduates; their competence and strengths are some examples which are widely used in higher education and may define the generic competence of students. At institutions, students should strive to acquire the skills including abilities, understanding and values related skills (Lan, 2020). Characteristics are not classified as disciplinary experience and technical competence, which have historically been considered as a cornerstone of the most university courses. These are characteristics which guide graduates to be good representatives socially in an uncertain future (Bautista, 2016). A fundamental goal of education is to grow lifelong learners equipping them with good competences in such a globalized world (Ng & So, 2017).

Substantial developments have been made in traditional education through making useful modification in curricula at university level. In order to improve generic competence of students, university system is striving for presenting new professional courses. Acquisition of generic competence is widely acknowledged among researchers (Bautista, 2016). As per the institutional policies and criteria, universities are not able to claim that their graduates will be equipped with all required generic competence. It is the prime responsibility of the universities to ensure that students who are at undergraduate level must have the ability to develop and

improve their generic competence during studies. During job placement, students are required to reflect and analyze the collaborative interactions accurately with academic as well as with concerned authorities at workplace in order to strengthen the implementation of generic skills which are acquired resultantly university education Crebert (2004).

Learning outcomes of the students are evaluated from the universities authorities by assessing their competence (Shah, 2017). An individual capacity to work in a particular profession is defined as a competence (Shah et al., 2012). Various studies have been conducted in order to improve the performance of teachers as well as students and for sorting out the concerned issues. Literature revealed that few number of studies have been conducted which studied emotional intelligence and academic output collectively (Bucholc & Liberska, 2016). Existing literature showed that various aspects can play their role in affecting academic output of the students (Heffner & Antaramian, 2016). A significant association has been observed between emotional intelligence and academic output of the students. It is a matter of increased interest for educators and policy makers that emotional intelligence is an aspect which is vital in order to support the abilities of the students for their professional life. Literature established that social and emotional intelligence are considered essential aspects in order to determine academic output of the students (MacCann et al., 2020).

Existing literature revealed that numerous studies have been conducted by considering association of emotional intelligence generic competence and academic success of the students. Generic competence is considered as an essential aspect for development of a graduate in all speres of life. Today, university education is making efforts to enable students to acquire as well as develop generic competence, and eliminating the complications which are faced by students while learning these skills (Chang et al., 2016). It is evident that emotional intelligence has been considered as a meaningful aspect of academic success at university. By considering the role of emotional intelligence and generic competence in academic success of students, the present study aimed to explore the moderating effect of emotional intelligence of students in relation with generic competence and academic success at undergraduate level.

Present study contributes to predict the moderating effect of emotional intelligence of students in relation with generic competence and academic success. We first, classify the role of student's emotional intelligence as a moderating factor in relation with generic competence and academic success at undergraduate level. Secondly, this study will provide substantial contribution into existing body of knowledge; however various studies has been conducted in the context of current phenomena but no study has investigated the relationship of generic competence and academic success with the moderating role of emotional intelligence. Finally, current study will contribute to the policies to provide direction to policy makers by suggesting measures to improve the emotional intelligence through organizing activities which can play favorable contribution towards the emotional intelligence as well as generic competence in order to achieve the academic success which is considered as a significant aspect.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

An increased amount of attention has been paid to emotional intelligence since the bestseller book was released in 1995; however, there is more interest is arousing in new concept; researchers have been investigating it from previous two decades. Since Darwin's time, various concepts and definitions of emotional intelligence have been emerged which led to some ambiguity about how it should be defined, assessed and used? According to the Encyclopedia of Applied Psychology, there are three main models of emotional intelligence including Mayer and Salovey model, Goleman model and Bar-On model. Various studies have been conducted on

academic and professional performance in order to explain emotional intelligence as a predictor of individual performance (Bar-On, 2010).

Emotional intelligence is defined as an ability to perceive, express and assess emotions accurately. It is referred as an ability to manage and control emotions in order to bring harmony for growth of an individual. Literature showed that higher emotional intelligence leads to greater well-being and satisfaction, increased work performance, pro-social behavior and less violent behavior of an individual. It is evident that emotional intelligence had a positive relationship with good mood and a negative correlation with bad mood (Acebes-Sánchez et al., 2019). Growth and well-being of an individual is contingent on environment of an educational institution which has a significant effect on academic success of the students. Various studies have been examined the aspects concerning association of emotional intelligence and academic success; still, emotional intelligence is a matter of concern among empirical researchers for the success of the student. In order to understand the association between emotional intelligence and academic success, various aspects of individual as well as environment has been studied in numerous studies (Chamizo-Nieto et al., 2021).

Literature indicates that better ways of teaching and learning supports students to learn generic competence including problem-solving, communication and teamwork which are essential for all graduates of higher education (Hande et al., 2015). Universities are directed to upgrade their techniques for teaching and learning as well. European Union supported the competency-based education, training and learning for developing the best practices and increasing support for workers. The idea of "competence" is associated to several frameworks and standards that improves the assessment of learning results.

For an overall progress, European Qualifications Framework (2008), highlighted the liability and autonomy of an individual in order to explain competences such as essential skills to use abilities as well as capacities at work place as well as in universities. In order to put in practices, there are different means to consider the concept of competence and competence-based education and training. Theoretically and practically, policies of institutions for final examination and assessment of competences varies; an evaluation criterion must be approved in order to formulate policies that can be implemented efficiently so that an effective and systematic competences can be developed.

Despite the urge of employment for the graduates and potential of learning to support the competence development of students, universities are required to design the curricula of institution as per the needs. Among educational community, the concept of competence, level and focus of relevant debate has been changed; it has various implications in sciences and practices. The ideas of "competency" and "competence" which offered various justifications differs paradigmatically (Brauer, 2021). Educational success is highly broad field and encompasses a wide range of conclusions related to academics; there are different criteria's that can be used to determine the academic achievement. Some common aspects like procedural and declarative knowledge gained through educational systems are included in academic achievement. Other criteria of curricular like grades or performance on a test, and an educational degrees and certificates included in academic achievement (Steinmayr et al., 2014).

Studies considering the aspects which can affect academic achievement has extensively emphasized the cognitive dimension and affective factors has been disregarded; for instance, intelligence is considered as a requirement for academic success. It is acknowledged that a student who is more intelligent is more likely to be successful in achievement rather than who are less intellectual; however, intelligence is considered as one among several substantial aspects which may affect academic success of the student (Sikhwari, 2007).

Existing literature revealed that emotional intelligence and generic competence of students are strongly associated to academic achievement; on the basis of discussed arguments, following hypothesis has been developed:

"There is statistically significant moderating role emotional intelligence of students in the relationship between generic competence and academic success".

Methodology

The methods utilized to carry out this study were described in this section.

Study procedure

A quantitative research method by following cross-sectional survey research design was used in this study. Quantitative research is a process of attaining quantitative data that are evaluated numerically by using various methods and certain statistics (Creswell, 2017). Survey was carried out in order to gain the perceptions of the respondents about the nature of the existing problem. According to local legislation and institutional requirements, ethical review and approval was not required for the current study on human participants. But while preparing this manuscript all other ethical considerations were fulfilled and participants consent were received.

Population and sample of study

Population of the present study includes all the undergraduate students from university of Sargodha. For the current study, convenience sampling technique was used to select the sample. According to Etikan (2016), respondents of the target population who met practical requirements are included in convenience sampling. Four departments; Department of Plant Pathology (Faculty of Agriculture), Department of English (Faculty of Arts and Humanities), Department of Social Work (Faculty of Social Sciences) and Sargodha Medical College (Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences) were selected for the sample. Total sample of the study consisted of 320 respondents from selected departments of various faculties.

Study instruments

Two adapted questionnaires were used in this study i.e. "Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale" "WLEIS" developed by Wong and Law (2002) and "Generic Competence Scale" "GCS" which was developed by Shah (2009). Both questionnaires were based on seven-point Rating Scale. Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale contained 16 items and Generic Competence Scale contained 19 items. Demographic information of the respondents was also collected along with above mentioned instruments. Academic success of the students was measured through their marks and CGPA.

Data collection procedure

Data was collected from respondents online by using Google form. Questionnaires were shared with teachers through email, and with students by sharing through WhatsApp groups of their classes.

Data analysis

Data was analyzed by using moderation and mediating analysis technique. In moderation analysis, a researcher needs to know whether a moderator variable/ variable has any influence on an independent variable's effect on the outcome variables. In mediator variable researchers check the indirect effect of mediator between independent and dependent variable (Hayes, 2012).

Results

Table1: Moderating effect of Student's Emotional Intelligence in relation with Generic Competence and Academic Success at undergraduate level

| <i>R</i> | <i>R-sq</i> | <i>MSE</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>df1</i> | <i>df2</i> | <i>p</i> |
|----------|-------------|------------|----------|------------|------------|----------|
| .0718 | .0051 | 33.5477 | .5451 | 3.0000 | 316.0000 | .6518 |

| | <i>β</i> | <i>p</i> | <i>LLCI</i> | <i>ULCI</i> | <i>R²</i> | <i>R² Change</i> |
|----------|----------|----------|-------------|-------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Constant | 69.9891 | .0000 | 64.3743 | 75.6039 | | |
| GCS | .0496 | .2089 | -.0279 | .1272 | .0051 | .0033 |
| EI | .0208 | .6557 | -.0708 | .1124 | | |
| GCS × EI | -.0005 | .3037 | -.0014 | .0004 | | |

Table 1 presented that generic competence was insignificantly related to academic performance. Moreover, emotional intelligence insignificantly moderated the relationship between generic competence of the students and academic success as the interaction effect i.e., that generic competence × emotional intelligence → academic performance ($\beta = -.000, p = .303$) was insignificant. On the basis of the results, formulated alternative hypothesis was rejected "there is statistically significant moderating role of students emotional intelligence in the relationship between generic competence and academic success".

Table2: Mediating effect of Student's Emotional Intelligence in relation with Generic Competence and Academic Success at undergraduate level

| <i>Effects</i> | <i>β</i> | <i>SE</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>P</i> | <i>95% CI</i> | |
|-----------------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|---------------|-------------|
| | | | | | <i>LLCI</i> | <i>ULCI</i> |
| Direct Effect | | | | | | |
| GC → AS | .0150 | .0206 | .7284 | .4669 | -.0255 | .0556 |
| Indirect Effect | | | | | | |
| GC → EI | -.0117 | .0178 | | | -.0469 | .0221 |
| Total Effect | | | | | | |
| GC → EI → AS | .0033 | .0123 | .2670 | .7896 | -.0208 | .0274 |

Note: If “zero” falls inside the 95% CI, then don’t refuse the null hypothesis; mediation cannot be assumed.

The relationship between an independent and a dependent variable that is not mediated by a third variable is examined in a direct effect analysis. The relationship between the independent and dependent variables, which is mediated through a third variable, is examined “indirect Effect.”

Total effect shows the overall model including direct and indirect effect. It provides sum of direct and indirect effects.

Table 1 showed that direct effect was insignificant with ($\beta = .0150, LLCI = -.0255, \text{ and } ULCI = .0556$ with a 95% bootstrap confidence interval); so, generic competence (independent variable) has an insignificant direct effect on academic success (dependent variable). Researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis which states the effect between generic competence and academic success was not direct. Indirect effect was insignificant with ($\beta = -.0117, LLCI = -.0469, \text{ and } ULCI = .0221$ with a 95% bootstrap confidence interval); so, emotional intelligence has insignificant mediating effect between generic competence and academic performance. Researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis which showed that the mediating effect of emotional intelligence with generic competence and academic success was not direct. Total effect was also insignificant with ($\beta = -.0033, LLCI = -.0208, \text{ and } ULCI = .0274$ with a 95% bootstrap confidence interval). Researcher

failed to reject another null hypothesis which states that the relationship among the emotional intelligence, generic competence and academic success was not direct.

Discussion

Main goal of current research was to find out the moderating and mediating effect of emotional intelligence in relation with generic competence and academic success. The results of the present study showed an insignificant moderating effect of emotional intelligence in relation with generic competence and academic success. On contrary, examining association between emotional intelligence as well as academic success takes place in the context of the transition of college to higher educational institutions (Parker et al., 2004). Similarly, the findings of a study indicated a substantial moderate association was found between emotional intelligence and academic success of students. Students with higher emotional intelligence tends to more concerned with attainment of academic benchmark and more responsible citizen of the society which is predefined by the institutions of higher education (Venkateshwar & Warriar, 2022). According to findings of a study, grit and emotional intelligence were strongly correlated to some extent. No matter how little, emotional intelligence and tenacity have a favorable impact on level of satisfaction of an individual. Both grit and emotional intelligence are learnable skills so people can get training to enhance their performance as well as subjective well-being (Ain et al., 2021). The effects of parenting methods on academic achievement in language (for male) and science were strengthened by general trait emotional intelligence, well-being and self-control (for female). These results are important for understanding the potential useful contribution for emotional intelligence of adolescents in relationship between parenting and academic achievement (Kokkinos & Vlavianou, 2021). Educational achievement was strongly correlated through various aspects of emotional intelligence. During shifting of an institution, importance of emotional and social competence was explored in relation with results (Parker et al., 2004). An insignificant mediating effect of emotional intelligence in relation with generic competence and academic success was observed in the current research. The study of Barchard (2003), result was in support of current study as the emotional intelligence did not work significantly in the prediction of academic success. Likewise, Zee et al. (2002) predicted that emotional intelligence did not impact the academic achievement significantly when it is correlated with social interactions. It was implied in their results that generic competence operate independently in contributing to the factors of emotional intelligence and academic achievement. In contrast, several studies have found significant mediating roles of emotional intelligence in academic settings . according to the Alvarez et al. (2016) in the relationship between personal resources and academic engagement the mediating effect of emotional intelligence was significant. The study of MacCann et al. (2020) revealed that emotional intelligence has significant role in the academic performance beyond the effects of personality and intelligence.

Conclusion

Higher education is the practice of selecting, commercializing and using knowledge for societal growth. Through higher education, students are exposed to knowledge from various horizons in the form of subjects and modules which fosters their personal and professional development. The formal education that a student gets in a university is typically known as higher education (Venkateshwar & Warriar, 2022). Current study intended to find out the moderating and mediating effect of emotional intelligence in relation with generic competence and academic success. The results of the current study showed an insignificant moderating and mediating effect of emotional intelligence in relation with generic competence and academic success. Every area of human life is affected by emotional intelligence (EI), which has developed significantly

over the past ten years. An important instrument of a student's development in higher education is their academic performance (Venkateshwar & Warriar, 2022).

Recommendations

The goal of the current study was to fill the knowledge gap regarding academic success, generic competence and emotional intelligence in the context of university. On the basis of results, it was recommended that instead of focusing solely on grades and CGPA, future studies may look into a wider range of measures of academic success for different results. Moreover, it was recommended that future studies may look at how emotional intelligence affects generic competence and academic success over the long term by using longitudinal data. For more generalizability of the results, sample size may be expanded in future studies.

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