



An Investigation of Well-Being and Personality Traits in Youth: Emotional Intelligence as a Mediator

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ABSTRACT

The well-being of the youth is of great concern for healthy community development and societal progress. The present study explores the relations of personality traits with well-being (WB), mediated by emotional intelligence (EI) in Pakistani youth. A cross-sectional research design was applied to collect data from 703 students (Mean age= 20.65 years, SD= 1.38) selected by stratified random sampling technique from the University of Gujrat. The Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT, Schutte et al., 1998), Personal Well-Being (Office for National Statistics, 2021), and Big Five Inventory (BFI, John & Srivastava, 1999) were used to assess emotional intelligence, well-being, and personality traits such as extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness. Results showed significant positive correlation of WB with EI ($r=.31$, $p<.01$) and personality traits of extroversion ($r=.29$, $p<.01$), agreeableness ($r=.10$, $p<.05$), conscientiousness ($r=.14$, $p<.01$), and openness ($r=.12$, $p<.01$). However, significant negative correlation is found in wellbeing with emotional intelligence ($r= -.91$, $p<0.01$) and neuroticism ($r= -.31$, $p<0.01$). Emotional intelligence has partially mediated between extroversion ($\beta=.08$, $p<.001$) and neuroticism ($\beta=-.04$, $p<.001$) with well-being. However, complete mediation of EI is observed among conscientiousness ($\beta=.12$, $p<.001$), agreeableness ($\beta=.09$, $p<.001$), and openness ($\beta=.14$, $p<.001$) with well-being. Implications are discussed in the light of the present findings of the research.

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1. Introduction

With the prevalence rate of 42.66% depression in undergraduate and graduate Pakistani university students (Khan et al., 2021), exploration of their well-being becomes a crucial concern. The well-being of youth has been found to be related to good academic performance Langford et al. (2014) which in turn serves as a precursor to sound career development and attainment (Arbona, 2000). The very contributing factor to the well-being of adolescents is of emotion regulatory strategies which make the area of emotional intelligence of significant importance (Sánchez-Álvarez, Extremera, & Fernández-Berrocal, 2016). Emotional intelligence is considered to be a general cognitive ability "g factor" of personality and is influenced by and influences personality traits (Schulte, Ree, & Carretta, 2004). Thus, the present study has focused on interaction among well-being, personality traits, and emotional intelligence in Pakistani youth.

1.1. Well-Being

Well-being is defined as a state of happiness, life satisfaction and experience of positive emotions (Diener, 2009). Well-being is an individual's good hedonic feelings and eudaimonic sense of contentment with life purpose and meanings (Sonnentag, 2015). Ryff and Keyes (1995) have proposed six distinct aspects of well-being namely Independence, Ecological

Expertise, Individual Growth, Positive Relations with Others, Aim in Life, and Self-Acceptance. These facets when interacting in fulfilment of existential and utilitarian needs in humans, yield balanced physical and psychological beings (Ryff & Singer, 2008). The well-being of any individual is strongly influenced by the enduring configuration of cognitions, emotions and actions. Thus, comprehension of well-being is inevitable without understanding of personality traits of the individuals.

1.2. Personality Traits

Personality traits are an individual's characteristic configurations of beliefs, feelings, and behaviours that are relatively ongoing in the long run of time (Diener & Lucas, 2019). There are different classifications of personality traits (Buss & Finn, 1987). However, the present study has focused on the five-factor model of personality that presented an ordered organization of personality traits in five basic measurements namely Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness to Experience. Extraversion is expressed in being more chatty, spirited, and confident. Agreeableness showed sympathy, gentleness, and warmth. Conscientiousness is systematized, detailed, and playful. Neuroticism showed the anxious, morose, and apprehensive state of mind. Openness to Experience showed wide interests, imagination and insightfulness (McCrae & John, 1992). The operational definition measures these traits in terms of scores (44 minimum and 220 maximum) obtained via the Big Five Personality Inventory. The higher the score, the stronger will be that particular trait in the individual (John & Srivastava, 1999). These personality traits influence the daily functioning of emotions, requiring their management and sound expression in behaviours. Nevertheless, the emotional intelligence of a person is oscillated by his or her personality traits (Wided & Alfalih, 2023).

1.3. Emotional Intelligence (EI)

Salovey and Mayer (1990) posited emotional intelligence as "the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (p. 89). The dimensions of emotional intelligence, as emerged from the definition, implied identification and understanding of emotions not only in oneself but also in others and to take this information as a base in making decisions for actions and behaviours with others. Schutte et al. (2010) have found in adults with an average age of 40 years that emotional intelligence has acted as a full and a partial mediator of well-being when analysed in relation to cognitive processing and experiential processing of information. Thus, different personalities acquire a high sense of well-being when their ability to regulate emotions interacts with their information-processing styles. However, in undergraduate university students with mean age of 24 years, emotional intelligence was found to be positively correlated with different aspects of well-being such as autonomy, mastery, personal growth, positive relation, purpose in life, and self-acceptance at a significant level (Agu & Nwankwo, 2019). In another sample of youth with a mean age of 17 years (± 1.8 SD), the structure equation model depicted a significant good fit model of emotional intelligence with well-being (Dirzyte & Patapas, 2023).

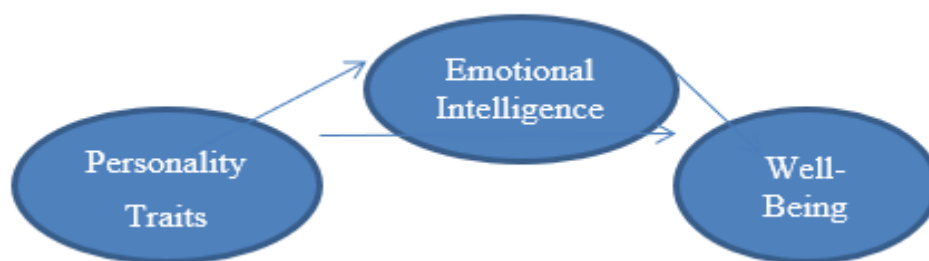
Several researches have posited a significant association between wellbeing, emotional intelligence and personality in Canada (Austin, Saklofske, & Egan, 2005), Greece (Petrides, Pita, & Kokkinaki, 2007), and Spain (Alegre, Pérez-Escoda, & López-Cassá, 2019; Augusto Landa, Martos, & López-Zafra, 2010). In Pakistan, the research on personality traits and emotional intelligence of leaders and employees (Nawi, 2012; Qureshi, 2015) and teachers Asma et al. (2021); Atta, Ather and Bano (2013) were the focus of attention in previous decades. A few studies have concentrated on the examination of the association between emotional intelligence and personality traits of 12 to 18 years old school going boys (Raheem et al., 2023) and university students residing in Karachi (Bukhari & Khanam, 2014), Lahore (Abbas & Khan, 2017), and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Ahmad, Zeb, & Muhammad, 2019). The present study has tried to fill in a gap for exploration of the association among these variables in Punjab, especially Gujrat (Wided & Alfalih, 2023).

2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of the present study is based on the assumptions of the Positive Psychology Theory of PERMA Model (Seligman, 2018). Two salient features, the positive emotions and the relationships, are applied in conjunction with Salovey and Mayer's Model of Emotional Intelligence (1990, 1997). PERMA stands for constructive sentiments,

commitment, interactions, significance, and endeavours (Kovich et al., 2023). These characteristics are exhibited via Openness focusing on significance, conscientiousness focusing on endeavours, extroversion focusing on interactions, agreeableness focusing on positive emotions and neuroticism focusing on significance. Ryff and Keyes (1995) Model of Wellbeing significantly blends into the PERMA model for emotional regulation in the youth (Butler & Kern, 2016; Scalas et al., 2023). These theoretical frameworks implied that central personality traits such as extroversion, neuroticism, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness are well interwoven with experience of psychological well-being. Thus, the intervening emotions are recognized, managed and utilized appropriately; it produces positive mental states that in turn yield positive well-being. Several researchers have investigated well-being with emotional intelligence as a mediator. Well-being in the context of mental health was explored among school adolescents in Australia and established mediation of emotional intelligence (Foster et al., 2018). Among 15 to 66 years old individuals in Italy, emotional intelligence was a significant mediator for well-being and happiness (Callea et al., 2019). This study explored how major personality traits impact our well-being by recognizing, managing, and utilizing emotional energies wisely to yield a positive emotional state and in succession give rise to happiness and prosperousness as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for Emotional Intelligence as Mediator between Personality Traits and Well-Being



The objective of the present study is to explore the mediating role of emotional intelligence between personality traits and well-being in youth.

2.1. Hypotheses

H1: Extroversion indirectly enhances well-being via emotional intelligence among youth.

H2: Agreeableness indirectly enhances well-being via emotional intelligence among youth.

H3: Neuroticism indirectly reduces well-being via emotional intelligence among youth.

H4: Conscientiousness indirectly enhances well-being via emotional intelligence among youth.

H5: Openness indirectly enhances well-being via emotional intelligence among youth.

Hypotheses 1 to 5 test the mediation of Emotional Intelligence (EI) between Personality Traits and Well-Being in Pakistani Youth.

3. Methods

3.1. Sampling

The sample of the present study was the undergraduate and graduate students of the University of Gujrat. Since, a sampling frame was available; the stratified sampling technique was used to select the sample based on four strata of departments namely Engineering, English, Psychology, and Chemistry. Each was selected from strata of the Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Faculty of Social Sciences, and Faculty of Science. The proportionate random sample was extracted based on the Yamane Formula for sample size (Yamane, 1964). A total of 703 undergraduate and master's students, 542 girls (77.1%) and 161 boys (22.9%) were selected between age range 18 to 24 (Mage=20.65 years, SD=1.38). out of them, 422 (60%) resided in urban areas and 281 (40%) resided in rural areas. There were 249(35.4%) with joint family systems and 454 (64.6%) lived in nuclear families. The inclusion criteria focused on the students between an age range 18 to 24 years who were studying at undergraduate and master levels.

3.2. Measures

An informed consent form along with a demographic sheet was used. In addition, three standardized scales were used. The Big Five Inventory (BFI) consists of 44 items with subscales namely Extraversion (8 items), Agreeableness (9 items), Conscientiousness (9 items), Neuroticism (8 items), and Openness (10 items). The scoring categories ranged between 1 = disagree strongly, 5 = agree strongly. 3-month test-retest reliabilities are from .80 to .90. Validity coefficients are also acceptable (John & Srivastava, 1999). Personal well-being ONS4 comprised four items measured on 11-point Likert scale ranging from 0 to 10, assessed cognitive, affective, and eudemonic aspects of well-being (Office for National Statistics, 2021). The Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) with 33-item, is a self-report on a 5-point Likert scale. The score ranged between 33 to 165. Higher scores showed more EI. It has internal consistency of Cronbach's alpha .90. There is acceptable evidence of predictive and discriminant validity (Schutte et al., 1998).

3.3. Procedure

The students were contacted in their classes after getting permission from the Head of the Department and the teachers of the class. Informed consent forms, demographic sheets, BFI, ONS4, and SSEIT were administered to the students by random sampling technique. They were briefed about the topic and their right to withdraw from research at any time. It took 20 to 25 minutes to fill the instruments. They along with the class teacher were thanked in the end.

4. Results

Correlational and mediational analyses are presented here.

4.1. Correlational Analyses

Table 1 shows mean, standard deviation, and Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient values for well-being, emotional intelligence, and big five personality factors. Significant positive correlation coefficients have been found for well-being with emotional intelligence ($r=.31$, $p<.01$), extroversion ($r=.29$, $p<.01$), agreeableness ($r=.10$, $p<.05$), conscientiousness ($r=.14$, $p<.01$), and openness ($r=.12$, $p<.01$). Similarly, significant positive correlation coefficients are found for emotional intelligence with extroversion ($r=.31$, $p<.01$), agreeableness ($r=.28$, $p<.01$), conscientiousness ($r=.38$, $p<.01$), and openness ($r=.38$, $p<.01$). Significant negative correlation coefficient is present for neuroticism with well-being ($r= -.31$, $p<0.01$) and emotional intelligence ($r= -.91$, $p<0.01$). The values implied for mediation analysis of emotional intelligence between well-being and big five personality traits.

Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient for Well-being, Emotional Intelligence, and Big Five Personality Factors

Variables	M	SD	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. WB	18.28	4.94	.31**	.29**	.10*	.14**	-.31**	.12**
2. EI	125.24	12.62		.31**	.28**	.38**	-.19**	.38**
3. Extroversion	25.26	4.37			.008	.23**	-.29**	.30**
4. Agreeableness	33.20	4.45				.31**	-.17**	.22**
5. Conscientiousness	30.70	4.65					-.26**	.25**
6. Neuroticism	24.15	5.20						-.006
7. Openness	35.06	3.95						-

$p<0.05$ *; $p<0.01$ **

4.2. Mediation Analysis

In Table 2, PROCESS v3.5 in SPSS-24 has been used to analyze the mediating effect of emotional intelligence between the big five personality traits and well-being among adolescents. It was found that the direct effect of extroversion on well-being was significant ($\beta=.24$, $p<.001$). Therefore, a 8% variance in well-being is explained by extroversion personality trait among youth [$R^2=.08$, $F(1, 701)=72.64$, $p <.001$]. However, the indirect effect of extroversion on well-being via emotional intelligence is also significant ($\beta=.08$, $p<.001$). Mediation of EI explains a 13% variance in the well-being among youth [$R^2=.13$, $F(2, 700)=54.75$, $p <.001$]. This partial mediation of EI has enhanced the well-being of extroverts by 13%.

It was found that the direct effect of agreeableness on well-being was insignificant ($\beta=.004$, $p=.926$). However, the indirect effect of agreeableness on well-being via emotional intelligence is also significant ($\beta=.09$, $p<.001$). Mediation of EI explains a 10% variance in the

well-being among youth [$R^2=.10$, $F(2, 700)=35.83$, $p < .001$]. This complete mediation of EI has enhanced well-being of agreeable youth by 10%. The direct effect of conscientiousness on well-being was insignificant ($\beta=.02$, $p=.522$). The indirect effect of conscientiousness on well-being via emotional intelligence is significant ($\beta=.12$, $p<.001$). Mediation of EI explains a 9% variance in the well-being among youth [$R^2=.09$, $F(2, 700)=36.05$, $p < .001$]. This complete mediation of EI has enhanced well-being of agreeable youth by 9%.

It was found that the direct effect of neuroticism on well-being was significant ($\beta=-.24$, $p<.001$). Therefore, a 4% variance in well-being is explained by neurotic personality trait among youth [$R^2=.04$, $F(1, 701)=26.90$, $p < .001$]. Higher the level of neuroticism, the lower is their well-being. However, the indirect effect of neuroticism on well-being via emotional intelligence is also significant ($\beta=-.04$, $p<.001$). Mediation of EI explains a 16% variance in the well-being among youth [$R^2=.16$, $F(2, 700)=65.75$, $p < .001$]. This partial mediation of EI has enhanced well-being of neurotics by 16%. It was noticed that the direct effect of openness on well-being was insignificant ($\beta=.009$, $p=.848$). However, the indirect effect of openness on well-being via emotional intelligence is significant ($\beta=.14$, $p<.001$). Mediation of EI explains a 9% variance in the well-being among youth [$R^2=.09$, $F(2, 700)=35.85$, $p < .001$]. This complete mediation of EI has enhanced the well-being of open youth by 9%.

Table 2: Mediation Analysis for EI in Well-being and Big Five Personality Factors among Youth

			95% CI		
Effect	Estimate	SE	LL	UL	p
Extroversion					
Total	.33	.04	.25	.40	<.001
Direct	.24	.04	.16	.32	<.001
Indirect	.08	.01	.05	.12	<.001
Agreeableness					
Total	.10	.04	.02	.18	<.001
Direct	.004	.04	-.08	.08	.926
Indirect	.09	.01	.05	.13	<.001
Conscientiousness					
Total	.14	.03	.06	.22	<.001
Direct	.02	.04	-.05	.10	.522
Indirect	.12	.02	.08	.16	<.001
Neuroticism					
Total	-.29	.03	-.36	-.22	<.001
Direct	-.24	.03	-.31	-.18	<.001
Indirect	-.04	.01	-.07	-.02	<.001
Openness					
Total	.15	.05	.06	.24	<.001
Direct	.009	.05	-.08	.10	.848
Indirect	.14	.03	.09	.20	<.001

Note. N=703, CI=confidence interval; LL=lower limit; UL=Upper limit

5. Discussion

The aim of this research was to explore the mediating role of emotional intelligence. Its subsequent impact, be partial or complete, on personal well-being and personality traits in Pakistani youth, was explored. Empirical evidence of previous research showed emotional intelligence as a mediator in many studies. Emotional regulatory strategies could be considered the part of emotional intelligence and have been found to be a significant mediator for the well-being of college students in Spain (Extremera, Sánchez-Álvarez, & Rey, 2020). Similarly, the mediating role of emotional intelligence was investigated with well-being among employees and found to be significant in Pakistan. This study has attempted to examine the occurrence of workplace bullying in banks in Pakistan and to identify any relationship between Workplace Bullying and Work Performance and Turnover Intention mediated by organization-based Self-Esteem (Nauman et al., 2019). The results of the present study showed a significant positive correlation between EI and wellbeing (Table 1). Emotional intelligence is significantly correlated with wellbeing in a positive direction (Carmeli, Yitzhak-Halevy, & Weisberg, 2009; Extremera, Sánchez-Álvarez, & Rey, 2020; Vicente-Galindo et al., 2017). Therefore, previous research has highlighted that higher the functioning of regulating emotions intelligently, the better the wellness of individuals and vice versa. EI also significantly correlated with big five personality

factors such as extroversion, conscientiousness, openness, agreeableness, and neuroticism (Table 1). In a Dutch sample of adults with a mean age of 44 years (± 11.97 SD), neuroticism was the strongest correlate of EI followed by Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, and Openness (Petrides et al., 2010). In a sample of undergraduate students, with a mean age range between 19 to 21 years, extroversion, neuroticism, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness strongly predicted emotional intelligence (Siegling, Furnham, & Petrides, 2015). Another study reported extroversion and emotional stability (opposite of neuroticism) to be strongly correlated with emotional intelligence (Van Der Zee, Thijs, & Schakel, 2002).

Extroversion and neuroticism were partially mediated by EI to effect well-being. Hence, hypotheses 1 and 3 have been confirmed by the findings of the present study. The characteristics of extroversion demanded a wide sphere of interactions with known and unknown people. Hence, partial emotional management would serve the purpose of rapport building and assertiveness among youth. So far the trait of neuroticism is concerned, high anxiety and fearful states hamper appropriate emotional regulatory strategies in the student. However, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness were completely mediated by EI to enhance the well-being in university students. Hypotheses 2, 4, and 5 of the present study have been confirmed by the findings of this research. It is evident that the exhibition of positive personality characteristics such as agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness is completely possible by appropriate regulation and management of emotions among individuals. Extroversion is positively correlates with wellbeing in terms of wellbeing experienced at a significant level (Brown, 2015). However, neuroticism is an inverse significant predictor of well-being (Lewis & Cardwell, 2020; Ng, 2012; Sobol-Kwapinska, 2016). On the other hand, extroversion is a positive significant predictor of wellbeing (Lewis & Cardwell, 2020; Librán, 2006; Trott & Smith, 2019). Conscientiousness has been found to be unrelated to wellbeing for its impact on organization employees (Pickett et al., 2020). Openness and agreeableness have been found to be ineffective predictors of wellbeing among undergraduate students of veterinary medicine, medicine, pharmacy, dentistry and law (Lewis & Cardwell, 2020).

In Pakistan, Mehmood and Gulzar (2014) and Shaheen and Shaheen (2016) reported a positive significant relationship between emotional intelligence and well-being among twelve to eighteen-year-old school going children. Among an average of 19 and 25 years old university students, emotional intelligence positively predicted wellbeing (Butt, 2014). Bano and Pervaiz (2020) investigated a positive impact of emotional intelligence on the wellbeing of medical students. Bukhari and Khanam (2014) studied a significant positive relationship of emotional intelligence between extroversion, agreeableness, openness, and conscientiousness and significant negative relationship with neuroticism among university students. The present research has highlighted the mediating role of emotional intelligence in the enhancement of wellbeing in relation to the innate personality temperament of individuals.

5.1. Limitations and Future Research

The limitation of the present research is the extraction of samples only from one university in Punjab. Further studies must employ cluster sampling techniques by involving other metropolitan universities of Punjab. Glimpses of personality traits are accessible via Western measures. However, the element of social desirability in the self-reporting has not been eliminated. Further, a longitudinal research design would have given better explanation effects of emotional intelligence on well-being and the big five personality factors as youth turns into adulthood. The present study has based results on cross-sectional research design therefore one should be causation to generalize the mediating role of EI on personality in the long run across life span. Moreover, the scales should be translated, adapted, and validated with reference to Pakistani culture in future studies.

5.2. Practical Implementation for the Universities

The findings of the present study posited that the youth studying at the undergraduate level exhibited enhanced wellbeing while their personality traits are significantly mediated (either partially or completely) with emotional intelligence. Hence, the counselling services in the universities should deem to devise and inculcate emotional intelligence training programs for the youth. According to the experts Akbar et al. (2011); Fakhar et al. (2020); Hina and Rasul (2023); Javed and Nasreen (2013); Suleman et al. (2019), these efforts would directly

boost their academic performance and achievements. Thus, career success in stable job acquisition is possible.

6. Conclusion

Emotional intelligence has partially mediated between extroversion and neuroticism with well-being. However, complete mediation of EI is observed among conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness with well-being. Implications are for psychologists and clinical psychologists to devise emotional intelligence training programs and interventions in universities for better results of the subjective well-being of the youth in Pakistan.

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