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Development of Emotional Intelligence of University Students: An Investigation of the Effect of Curricular Activities

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Abstract

Emotional intelligence skills are the driving force for university graduates to be developed holistically. Usually the aspects of psychomotor and effective domain, especially emotional intelligence seems to be less focused on the curriculum at this stage. This study was conducted to explore the effect of prevailing curricular activities on the development of emotional intelligence among university students. The objectives of the study were: i) to measure the emotional intelligence of students at university level; and ii) to compare EI of students having different time of exposure (i.e. Entrance, mid, and final semesters) to existing curricular activities in the universities. A sample of 1775 university students was selected using multistage stratified random sampling technique from six universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province (Pakistan). Self-Report Measure of Emotional Intelligence (SRMEI) based on Goleman's Mixed Model of EI was used as a data collection tool. The results revealed that the students at entrance level were significantly higher in EI than the students in the final stage. These findings lead to suggest corrective measures in curricular activities at the university level.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence (EI), curricular activities, time of exposure, self-report measure of emotional intelligence (SRMEI)

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Introduction

The national development and higher education are closely related to each other. Higher education is viewed as a source of great potential for the socioeconomic and cultural development of the country and it is the conviction that through quality higher education the nation can be transformed into a developed nation within the lifetime of a single generation (Govt. of Pakistan, 1998). The strength of a nation is built on human resource developed by its educational institutions which train the brains, provide skills and open a new world of opportunities and possibilities to the nation. At university level, students must choose subjects and area of study as per their interest and capability. Students' development at universities is the major role of higher education because after passing out this stage, the students have to play their role in practical life. Therefore, they must be fully equipped with all these abilities so that they can play an effective and efficient role in different aspect of life.

It is widely accepted that the success of higher education institutions is dependent on effective as well as competent leaders and leadership. There is also growing evidence to support the proposition that emotional intelligence is strongly linked to effective leadership in the higher education setting. Additionally, the premise that emotional intelligence can influence an individual's job satisfaction is well supported by Parrish and Bern, (2011).Emotional intelligence (EI) means to be able to acknowledge and handle emotions in oneself and in others. The term was popularized by the success of a Daniel Goleman's book "*Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*", which appeared in 1995. He defined emotional Intelligence (EQ) as the ability to identify, assess, and control one's own emotions, the emotions of others, and that in groups (Goleman, 1995, 1998). The term emotional intelligence was coined by Mayer and Salovey (1990). By 1997, they stated that emotional intelligence involves the ability to: perceive, appraise and express emotion accurately; access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; understand emotions and emotional knowledge; and regulate emotions for emotional and intellectual growth. Subsequently, Goleman (1998) identified five social and emotional competencies which make up emotional intelligence, these are: self- awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. The concept of emotional intelligence consists of four sections: managing and regulating emotion, understanding and reasoning about emotion, assimilating basic emotional experiences, and perceiving and appraising emotion (Salovey

& Mayer, 1990; Baggett, Sutarso, Sutarso & Tapia, 1996; Bernet, 1996; Finegan, 1998; Goleman, 1998; Langley, 2000).

Emotional competencies are learned abilities; moreover, emotional intelligence can be developed and improved through training, programming, and therapy (Bar-On, 2002). Naturally the emotional intelligence level is neither fixed nor does it develop only in the early years. Contrasting to IQ which is changed little after teen years, emotional intelligence seems to be largely learned, and it continues to develop as one goes through life and learns from experiences and competences (Goleman, 1998).It is further added that IQ contributes about 20 percent to the factors that determine life success, which leaves 80 percent to other non - IQ factors (Goleman, 1995).Therefore, Zins, Elias and Greenberg (2007, cited in Ahmad 2012),have asserted that the fundamental purpose of the school, college, and university education that students need is not only to get mastery in academics or subject matter but to study and realize how to manage their emotions, be responsible and empathetic, and get practice to make accurate judgments and sound decisions. Moreover, the students can make alternative choices and deal with conflict, and can play a positive role in the community as constructive, committed and effective citizens. Hence, the educationists have suggested that educational intuitions may offer particular training programs of EI competencies development or add EI competencies as an integral ingredient of curriculum (Vandervoort, 2006).

There has been ample research on EI of University students and their academic or professional success (Jones, 2008; Cook, Bay, Visser, Myburgh, & Njoroge, 2011).

Walsh-Portillo (2011) has reported a significant positive relationship between academic success and higher emotional intelligence on the basis of various studies (Bellack, 1999; Ramos-Sanchez & Nichols, 2007) including some doctoral studies (Feldman, 2003; Holt, 2007; Vela, 2004, Walker, 2006; Westphal, 2007). These studies also reflect a great impact of emotional intelligence on college graduates.

There exists a suitable amount of research that reports the positive impact of EI focused trainings that have been arranged for university students, however, there has been rare research to determine and explore the effect of curricular activities at the university level in developing students EI. Chakraborty (2009 cited in Love, 2014) has claimed that universities and colleges in India have contributed to creating educated illiterates. It was explained this as persons who were jobless brilliant graduates who did not get a holistic and synergistic approach to learning, i.e. they had learnt subject matter, but lacked in the application; they had

knowledge and were deficient in EI skills that are pre-requisite in the world of work. Regarding Pakistan, there has been scare research to establish any claim about the effect of prevailing curricular activities on the development of EI of University graduates. Therefore, it was considered vital to conduct a study with title "Development of Emotional Intelligence of University Students: An Investigation of the Effect of Curricular Activities". Curricular activities refers to curse content, instruction, training, workshop, conferences, symposiums, social and national events arranged informal system of higher education (Hoskins, d' Hombres and Campbell, 2009).

The objectives of the study were: i) to assess students' emotional intelligence at three different stages i.e. entry into University, the middle stage of the program, and exit from the university; ii) to examine difference of EI among students having different time of exposure to curricular activities.

Research Methodology

In conducting this research, cross-sectional cum descriptive research design involving causal comparative research method was used to find out the cause or consequences of different curricular activities on students' EI. For data collection from students of different semesters i-e initial, mid and final semesters at the same time, the cross-sectional survey method was used. The cross-sectional design offers the opportunity for researchers to draw one or more samples from the population at one time (Shaughnessy, Zechmeister & Zechmeister, 2012). Furthermore, this design provides for describing the characteristics of a population or the differences between two or more populations at a particular time, and is more economical due to its single phase of data collection (Sing, 2006).

Population

The population of study consisted of all the113043 students of BS program enrolled in the public sector universities of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in Pakistan (NEMIS, 2017). The target area of this study is comprised of 15 public sector universities of this province.

Sample of the Study

Multistage stratified random sampling technique was used to collect the study sample of 1775 respondents. At first stage, 06 universities were

randomly selected out of 15 universities as the sample of this study. In the second stage, 10 departments (5 from social sciences and 5 from natural sciences) were also selected randomly from each sample university. In third and last stage 30 students (male and female) from each selected department were randomly selected from 04 years BS Programme. (10 students from initial, 10 students from mid and 10 students from final semesters) as a sample of the study; initial level refers to newly enrolled students, mid-level refers to passing of two years in degree programme and final level refers to spending four years in degree programme. Thus, from each university 300 students (male and female) were selected randomly; and in this way from 6 universities, 1800 students constituted the whole sample of the study.

Research Instruments

Self-Report Measure of Emotional Intelligence (SRMEI) developed by Khan and Kamal (2010) from National Institute of Psychology Center of Excellence Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, was used as research instrument for this study. It was a reliable and valid measure of emotional intelligence peculiar to Pakistan's socio cultural environments, and it was designed by using direct assessment method in the form of a self-report measure. It has overall 0.95 alpha coefficient of reliability and contains 60 items with three subscales. The three subscales (sub factors) are Emotional Self-Regulation, Emotional Self-Awareness and Interpersonal Skills based on 11 facets of emotional intelligence i-e Adaptability, Emotional Reactivity Management, Emotional Stability, Conscientiousness, Achievement Drive, Self-Awareness, Perceived Self-Awareness, Self-Confidence, Empathy, Sociability, and Communication. It is a 5-point scale with response categories of 'Always', 'Often', 'Sometimes', 'Rarely', and 'Never' having scores 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The total scores of the scale can range from 60 to 300. There are 23 positively worded statements while the negatively worded statements are 37 which need to have reversed scoring.

Data Collection

Permission for data collection from the Heads of department of sample universities had been taken in advance. Consent forms were also got filled from respondents before administering the questionnaire. The respondents were assured about the confidentiality of their identity and

the information provided by them. They were further assured that the result of study would be shared with them if required. Questionnaires were personally distributed among the male and female respondents and collected on the spot. The data was collected from 10 respondents from each specified semester i-e initial, mid and final semesters according to the sampling scheme of the study.

Data Analysis

At first step, the filled questionnaires which had 5-point scale with five response categories of 'Always', 'Often', 'Sometimes', 'Rarely', and 'Never' were assigned 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 scores respectively. The 23 positively worded statements of the questionnaire were given score in this order while the 37 negatively worded statements were scored in reverse order i.e. 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. The obtained scores were entered in the excel sheet and then transferred into the SPSS (16^{th} version) program. Before analysis, the data was passed through screening process by detecting outliers and missing values.

For analysis, the respondents were divided into three categories i.e. students at entrance level, students at mid, and students at final stage of their studies. The students of first category (entrance level) were newly admitted in the universities and had no exposure to the curricular activities at the university level. The students of the second category (mid-level) had had completed half duration of their BS program and hence had exposure to curricular activities for two years; and the students of the third category (final level) had exposure to curricular activities at the university level for a period equivalent to 4 years. For measuring the EI of students, the collected data were analyzed using first quartile and third quartile as cut points dividing students into three categories, i.e. students with low EI, students with moderate EI, and students with high EI. Furthermore, one sample t-test also applied for determining the EI of students belonging to different categories, i.e. students from entrance level, students from midlevel, and students from final level. Mean score and SD were used as statistical tools for measuring the EI of the students. To examine the effect of prevailing curricular activities on emotional intelligence, the three groups of students were compared for EI by using ANOVA as a statistical tool to determine the effect of curricular

activities on students' emotional intelligence. The analysis and interpretation regarding this comparison is given in the following table.

Table 1

Level of Emotional Intelligence of university students with different duration of exposure to curricular activities

Stage in the Program	Low		Moderate		High		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Entrance level	145	23.4	305	49.2	170	27.4	620	100
Mid-level	156	26.5	293	49.7	140	23.8	589	100
Final Level	167	29.5	271	47.9	128	22.6	566	100
Total	468	26.4	869	49.0	438	24.7	1775	100

Table 1 indicates that at the entrance point, 23% students had low levels of EI, 49% students had a moderate level of EI and 27 % students had high levels of EI. Whereas at midpoint, 26 % students had low levels of EI, 50% had a moderate level of EI and 24 % students had high levels of EI. Furthermore, at final stage, 29% students had low levels of EI, 48 % student had moderate of EI, and 23% students had high levels of EI.

Table 2

Measure of students' Emotional Intelligence level (factors wise)

Measured aspect of EI	N	Test Mean	Mean	SD	SE	t	Sig.
Emotional Self-Regulation (ESR),27x3=81	1775	81	92.10	14.86	0.353	261.22	0.00
Emotional Self Awareness ESA 21x3=63	1775	63	74.910	7.686	0.1825	410.60	0.00
Interpersonal Skills IS 12X3 = 36	1775	36	47.237	5.422	0.1287	366.95	0.00
Total EI 60x3=180	1775	180	214.24	22.06	0.5238	409.01	0.00

Table 2 reveals that t- value in all the cases is significant at $p<0.05$. It is also obvious that calculated mean score of students is significantly higher than the test value. Thus, students have relatively high levels of Emotional Self-Regulation, Emotional Self Awareness, and Interpersonal Skills and EI.

Table 3

ANOVA showing significance of difference of Emotional Self- Regulation and its five sub factors among students at different stages

Aspects of EI (Factor and sub factors)	Comparison	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Sq	F	Sig
Adaptability	Between groups	3.554	2	1.777	0.065	0.937
	Within groups	48554.325	1772	27.401		
	Total	48557.879	1774			
Emotional Reactivity Management	Between groups	95.880	2	47.940	2.278	0.103
	Within groups	37292.318	1772	21.045		
	Total	37388.197	1774			
Emotional Stability	Between groups	187.907	2	93.953	4.363	0.013
	Within groups	38155.629	1772	21.533		
	Total	38343.536	1774			
Conscientiousness	Between groups	20.941	2	10.470	2.529	0.080
	Within groups	7335.857	1772	4.140		
	Total	7356.798	1774			
Achievement Drive	Between groups	82.955	2	41.477	4.450	0.012
	Within groups	16517.752	1772	9.322		
	Total	16600.706	1774			
Emotional Self-Regulation	Between groups	1114.312	2	557.156	2.529	.080
	Within groups	390336.614	1772	220.280		
	Total	391450.926	1774			

Table 3 reflects that there was no significant difference (F=0.065, 2.278, 2.529, 2.529 and p>0.05) among the comparative groups of students having different stages in BS program in the universities regarding adaptability, emotional reactivity management, Conscientiousness, Emotional Self-Regulation. Moreover, this table also reflects that there exists a significant difference (F=4.363, F=4.450 and p<0.05 respectively) in emotional stability, and in achievement drive (F=4.450, and p<0.05) between at least one pair of comparative groups of students having different stages in BS program in the universities. Further difference among pairs has been identified through Post-hoc test in the underlying table.

Table 4

Post-hoc test showing significance of Emotional Stability, Achievement Drive between different pairs of comparative groups

Aspects of EI Factors and Sub factor	Comparative Pairs		Mean Difference (i-j)	SE	Sig.
	I(Semester)	j(Semester)			
	Initial	Mid	0.17784	0.26700	0.801
Emotional Stability		Final	0.76681*	0.26977	0.018
	Mid	Final	1.12997	1.29649	0.684
	I(Semester)	J(Semester)			
Achievement Drive	Initial	Mid	0.34559	0.17567	0.145
		Final	0.51708*	0.17749	0.015
	Mid	Final	0.17150	0.17971	0.634

Table 4 indicates that students at entrance and mid of the B.S programs (p>0.05) as well as at mid and end of the BS programs(p>0.05) had no significant difference between their emotional stability and achievement drive scores. However, significant difference was found in emotional stability(i-j=0.76681, p<0.05) and achievement drive (, i-j= 0.51708, p<0.05) of the students at entrance of BS program and exit of BS program.

Table 5

ANOVA showing significance of difference of Self-Awareness, Perceived self-assessment, self-confidence, and Emotional Self Awareness among students atdifferent stages

Aspects of EI Factor and sub factors	Comparison	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	P
Self-Awareness	Between groups	48.847	2	24.423	0.792	0.453
	Within groups	54641.089	1772	30.836		
	Total	54689.936	1774			
Perceived self-assessment	Between groups	168.190	2	84.095	5.910*	.003
	Within groups	25213.303	1772	14.229		
	Total	25381.493	1774			
self-confidence	Between groups	12.969	2	6.435	1.077	0.341
	Within groups	10582.857	1772	5.972		
	Total	10595.726	1774			
Emotional Self-Awareness	Between groups	501.185	2	250.592	4.257*	.014
	Within groups	104303.572	1772	58.862		
	Total	104804.757	1774			

*significant at 0.05 level of significance

Table 5 reflects that there was no significant difference regarding self-awareness ($F=0.792$, $p>0.05$) and self-confidence ($F=1.077$,$p>0.05$) among the comparative groups of students having different stages in BS program in the universities. Moreover, this table also reflects that there exists a significant difference regarding perceived self- assessment ($F=5.910$,$p<0.05$) and Emotional self-awareness($F=4.257$, $p<0.05$) between at least one pair of comparative groups of students having different stages in BS program in the universities. Further difference among pairs has been identified through Post-hoc test in the underlying table.

Table 6

Post-hoc test showing significance of Perceived self- assessment and Emotional Self Awareness between different pairs of comparative groups

Aspects of EI	I(Semester)	J(Semester)	i-j	SE	Sig.
	Initial	Mid	0.64873*	0.21704*	0.012
Perceived self-		Final	0.64245*	0.21929*	0.014
assessment	Mid	Final	0.00628	0.22203	1.000
	Initial	Mid	0.98243	0.44145	0.084
Emotional Self		Final	1.21607*	0.44602*	0.025
Awareness	Mid	Final	0.23364	0.45159	0.875

*significant at 0.05 level of significance

The post-hoc test indicates that students at mid and final of the B.S programs ($p>0.05$) had no significant difference between their perceived self-assessment scores. However, a significant difference was found between the perceived self-assessment score($i-j= 0.64245$, $p<0.05$) of the students at the entrance of BS program and exit of BS program. Furthermore, data shows a significant difference between the perceived self-assessment scores($i-j=0.64873$, $p<0.05$) of the students at entrance of BS program and mid of BS program.

Furthermore, this table indicates that students at entrance and mid of the B.S programs $p>0.05$) as well as at mid and final of the BS programs ($p>0.05$) had no significant difference between their emotional self-awareness scores. However, the data ($i-j=1.21607^*$, $p<0.05$) reflects a significant difference between the emotional self-awareness score of the students at entrance of BS program and final of BS program.

Table 7

ANOVA showing significance of difference of Interpersonal Skills

Aspects of EI Factor and sub factors	Comparison	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Sq	F	Sig
Empathy	Between groups	26.457	2	13.229	2.687	0.068
	Within groups	8725.338	1772	4.924		
	Total	8751.795	1774			
Sociability	Between groups	31.206	2	15.603	2.499	.082
	Within groups	11062.653	1772	6.243		
	Total	11093.859	1774			
Communication	Between groups	49.991	2	24.996*	3.959	0.019
	Within groups	11186.417	1772	6.313		
	Total	11236.408	1774			
Interpersonal Skill	Between groups	93.312	2	46.656	1.588	0.205
	Within groups	52064.190	1772	29.382		
	Total	52157.502	1774			

*significant at 0.05 level of significance

Table 7 reflects that there was no significant difference ($p>0.05$) relating to empathy, Sociability and Interpersonal Skill among the comparative groups of students having different stage in BS program in the universities.

This table also reflects that there exists a significant difference ($F=3.959$, $p<0.05$) between communication score of at least one pair of comparative groups of students having different stages in BS program in the universities. Further difference in communication scores among pairs has been identified through Post-hoc test in the underlying table.

Table 8

Post-hoc test showing significance of Communication between different pairs of comparative groups

Communication	i(Semester)	j(Semester)	i-j	SE	Sig.
	Initial	Mid	0.23710	0.14457	0.261
		Final	0.40813*	0.14607	0.020
	Mid	Final	0.17104	0.14789	0.512
	Initial	Mid	0.98243	0.44145	0.084
		Final	1.21607*	0.44602	0.025
	Mid	Final	0.23364	0.45159	0.875

*significant at 0.05 level of significance

Table 8 indicates that students at entrance and mid of the B.S programs ($p>0.05$) as well as at mid and end of the BS programs($p>0.05$) had no significant difference between their communication scores. Furthermore, the data ($i-j= 0.40813, p<0.05$) reflects a significant difference between the communication score of the students at entrance of BS program and exit of BS program.

Table 9

ANOVA showing significance of difference of EI (overall) among students at different stages

Aspects	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Between groups	4226.043	2	2113.022	4.355	0.013
Within groups	859704.754	1772	485.161		
Total	863930.798	1774			

Table 9 reflects that there exists a significant difference ($F=4.355$, $p<0.05$) between the EI score of at least one pair of comparative groups of students having different stages in BS program in the universities. Further difference of EI score among pairs has been identified through post hoc test in the underlying table.

Table 10

Post-hoc test showing significance of EI between different pairs of comparative groups

Comparative Pairs		Mean Difference	SE	Sig.
i (Semester)	j(Semester)	(i-j)		
Initial	Mid	2.53846	1.26737	0.135
	Final	3.66842*	1.28050	0.017
Mid	Final	1.12997	1.29649	0.684

*significant at 0.05 level of significance

Table 10 indicates that students at entrance and mid of the B.S programs ($p>0.05$) as well as at mid and end of the BS programs ($p>0.05$) had no significant difference between their EI scores. However, data ($i-j=3.66842$, $p<0.05$) reflects a significant difference between the EI score of the students at entrance of BS program and exit of BS program.

Conclusions and Discussion

The research data about the measure of the students' EI level reveals that 23 % students have low EI, 50 % have moderate EI and only 27% have high level EI (table 1). As factor-wise and overall level of EI is concerned, students have a significantly higher level of emotional self-regulation, emotional self-awareness, and interpersonal skills and EI as whole, as compared population mean for each ($p < 0.05$). This shows that in all the 11 sub factors of EI, students have a substantial level of EI. It can be further inferred that students are considerably adaptable to the new circumstances and situations in the university and they have significant ability and flexibility to take in new ideas and situations, extensive rationality, less escapism, a good quantity of self-control, less anxiety and fear and a considerable level of stability to get by new things at university level. This result also indicates regulation and discipline while performing duties and accomplishing university level tasks, it also reveals that students have significant innovative power to deal with these new initiatives. Students have substantial potentiality, less pessimism and have the urge to improve themselves by absorbing the fresh changes at university level. They are significantly certain about their work, have considerable adjustment, power and are conscious of their duties in the university settings. Moreover, these results also indicate that students are largely aware about their inner selves, their feeling, their emotions

related to the university environment. Furthermore, students have mainly the ability to convey their positive or negative feelings about others easily at university settings. These findings are in line with the claim by Khan and Kamal (2010).

A significant difference among the EI scores was observed ($p<0.05$) for the students having no exposure to curricula activities, students having two-year exposure to curricular activities, and students having four-year exposure to curricular activities at university. The comparison of EI scores revealed that students at entrance level in the program have significantly high score in EI ($p<0.05$) than the students at final level of the BS program. Moreover, a significant difference ($p<0.05$) was observed regarding emotional self-awareness as the factor of EI, and sub-factors like emotional stability, achievement drive, perceived self-assessment, and communication for the students at entrance and in exit stage in the university. However, comparison for some other factors of EI showed that there was no significant difference ($p>0.05$) regarding emotional self-regulation, interpersonal skills, and sub factors i-e adaptability, emotional reactivity management, conscientiousness, self-confidence, self-awareness, empathy and in sociability, among the groups of students having different time of exposure to the curricular activities. These results are very much shocking as curricular activities at university level has no effect or reverse effect on the development of emotional intelligence of the students. The findings of this study are partially concordant with the finding by Salehi, Zadeh, Ghaderi and Tabasi (2016) who investigated the effect of education and academic environment on emotional intelligence for accounting students in Iran and found no significant effect of these variables on students EI.They concluded that specialized and general courses that are offered in an educational program, usually lack in capacity to improve EI of the learners. Kavanagh and Drennan (2008) argued that only technical knowledge and skills do not account for the development of EI. According toDe Villiers (2010), training of general skills like communication skills, problem solving and critical thinking skills, leadership and group work skills, moral and spiritual values, and self-management skills may develop the students to face unpredictable situations. Thus, the findings of this study entail that the curriculum and curricular activities of the universities needs to be designed adequately to develop the emotional intelligence of university students, as emotional intelligence is a key capability for managerial success (Malik &Shahid, 2016).

As far as decay in EI of the students after having an exposure to the curricular activities at university in the current study is concerned, there exist some factors that deteriorate the students' emotional strength. These factors may be learning environment prone to stress because of scarce facilities or deficient curricula and instruction as indicated by Isani and Virk (2005).

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