

## ASSOCIATION OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND ACADEMIC BURNOUT AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN PAKISTAN

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### **ABSTRACT**

**Objective:** The objective of present study is to investigate the association of emotional intelligence with academic burnout among undergraduate students.

**Hypotheses:** In the light of literature review it was hypothesized that there would be a predictive relationship between emotional intelligence and academic burnout in undergraduate students.

**Research Design:** Correlational Study

**Place and Duration of Study:** Karachi, 2015

**Sample and Method:** For this purpose, sample was collected from different academic institutions of Karachi, Pakistan. Entire sample comprised of 400 undergraduate including females (51.5%, N=206) and males (48.5%, N= 194. Students with both joint family system (N=185) and nuclear family system (N=215) were included. Participants' age range was from 18-25 years ( $M= 21.287$ ,  $SD= 2.126$ ). In order to test the hypotheses, Demographic Form, Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale (SEIS; Schutte et al., 2007), and Academic Burnout Scale (ABS; Breso et al., 2007) were administered. Purposive sampling technique was used to collect the data. Data was scrutinized, scored according to manual and statistically analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, Vol-17.0).

**Results:** Linear Regression Analyses findings show that there is significant positive predictive relationship between emotional intelligence and academic burnout among undergraduate students [ $R^2 = .131$ ;  $F (1,398) = 60.126$ ,  $p<.001$ ].

**Conclusion:** It is concluded that there is a positive association and role of emotional intelligence in predicting the level of academic burnout among undergraduate students.

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**Keywords:** Emotional Intelligence, Academic Burnout, Undergraduates

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## INTRODUCTION

While starting higher education, the individual comes across various events and experiences in new environment. This is the period of transition from school to university. There comes challenging stressors during this time. Students who face continuous difficulties and unable to deal with them may develop emotional problems like academic burnout. A pessimistic way of thinking may come up when students pay less interest in academics and feel mentally tired, with feelings of inefficacy or less responsibility to fulfill their academic tasks timely (Zhang, Gan, & Chan, 2007). Research evidences conducted on nurses, doctors, dentist and managers suggests that work related burnout directly relates to emotional health.

Researchers have found that three major dimensions such as emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and low academic efficacy (Maslach & Jackson, 1981) negatively affects students' academic performance and reduces motivation level toward learning tasks (Yang, 2004). Psychological problems such as low mood, irresponsibility, pessimistic attitude toward curriculum, escape working, and anxiousness are also seen in students in higher education institutions (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Salanova, Martinez, Breso, Llorens & Grau 2005). Likewise, they develop more self-defeating thoughts due to unbearable stress and externalizing negative attitudes toward academics like absenteeism, procrastination, disaffiliation with academic activities, worthlessness and finally they may quit or dropout from program (Salmela-Aro, Kiuru, Leskinen, Esko & Nurmi, 2009). It is found that emotional exhaustion is associated with psychological and social problems in students. It is also evident through research that in case of academic burnout, students usually tend to view events as negative and have pessimistic perception because of cynicism and inefficacy in academics. This may increase due to frequent tests and exams, long study working hours, limited time to conclude daily workload, high self-expectations, limited learned skills, no time to read books, complex course content and heavy workload, just after enter in higher education institutes (Yusof & colleagues, 2010).

It has been found that emotional intelligence as coping constitutes of emotional and social skills that enable a person to understand his or herself or others emotions effectively, develop relations with others and helps to adapt to the environment (Bar On, 2006). Emotional intelligence is defined as "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" (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Students' with high emotional intelligence usually identify their own needs, aware of their strength and weaknesses and easily can manage their emotions in routine matters (Wong & Law, 2002).

Correlates of emotional intelligence and burnout have been investigated amongst teachers by Vaez and Laflamme (2011). They concluded that there were significant negative correlations between Emotional Intelligence and burnout, thus raising teacher's Emotional Intelligence may have positive implications for teachers. Anand and Monika (2017) found negative relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Burnout among employees and less likely to report feeling of occupational stress. The same was explored among teachers and emotional Intelligence also found to have important role to in lowering down of stress level among the sample (Kaut & Kaur, 2013). Among a sample of students emotional intelligence levels of the students and their burnout status was found associated, burnout specifically having negative relationship with general mood and stress management (Erbil, Murat, & Sezer, 2016). Kaur, Sambasivan, and Kumar's (2013) found statistically significant relationship of emotional intelligence, with burnout. They concluded that in the face of stress, emotional intelligence may help reducing burnout.

Stress tolerance and coping skill help the students to promote emotional well-being and to overcome negative emotions. Students with a high degree of coping skills and emotional management perceive the lower degree of stressors because they have outstanding emotional skills to manage emotions in different circumstances, and it helps the individuals to perform better in an academic environment. Moreover, when students attain their better academic grades, outstanding academic performance, and remarkable work efficiency, it usually reduces the chances of academic burnout among students.

Keeping in mind these findings, the present study was conducted in order to understand the association of emotional intelligence and academic burnout among undergraduate students in Pakistan. There have been various studies done on this topic in the Western cultures but limited evidence is available related to Asian countries, namely Pakistan. This study may help to improve students' educational performance in higher education institutions. Further, results of this study will help mental health practitioners, parents, school teachers and student counselors in guiding students toward leading a positive and healthy life.

## **METHOD**

### ***Participants***

Present study sample was consisted of 400 undergraduate students and they were taken from different academic institutions of Karachi, Pakistan. In the sample, female participants were 51.5 (N=206) and male participants were 48.5% (N= 194). Participants were taken from different study programs such as, students from bachelor program (2 years) were 150 and students with BS (4 years) were 250 respondents. Participants with joint family system were (N=185) and with nuclear family system were (N=215). Participants' age range was between 18-25 years ( $M= 21.287$ ,  $SD= 2.126$ ). In current study, only regular students were included. Students with any kind of physical and psychological disability were excluded from the study. Purposive sampling technique was used to collect the data.

### ***Measures***

#### **Demographic Form**

It was administered in order to gather personal information. Items in the form covered mainly three areas i.e. personal information, academic information and parent related information. Personal information was obtained through items focusing the participants' age, gender, grade, birth order, number of siblings, educational level, ethnic group, residential area, family structure and family size.

#### **Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale (SEIS)**

SEIS is originally developed (SEIS; Schutte et al., 2007) to measure general Emotional Intelligence of students. The SEIS bases on emotional intelligence model EQ-I model given by Salovey and Mayer. It is self-report measure that is comprised of 33-items. It has four subscales namely Emotion Perception (EP), Utilizing Emotions (UE), Manage Self-relevant Emotions (MSE) and Manage Others' with Emotions (MOE). Participants can indicate the amount of agreement to each item by using 5-Likert scale, 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Each sub-test score is graded and then added together to give the total score for the participant. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the

original SSEIT subscales is between .70 to .85 significant at .01 level and it indicates high reliability.

#### **Academic Burnout Scale (ABS)**

ABS is designed to measure the academic burnout level among students developed by Breso, et al., (2007). This scale contains 15 items and is has three dimensions. Three dimensions of academic burnout are emotional exhaustion, cynicism and academic efficacy. Emotional exhaustion subscale is comprised of 5 items, cynicism subscale carry 4 items and academic efficacy subscale has 6 items. Each items is rated on 7-point Likert scale from 0 (Never) to 6 (Always). The reliability of these three dimensions (emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and academic efficacy) was calculated 0.70, 0.82, and 0.75 respectively, significant at .01 level.

#### ***Procedure***

Initially, permission was taken from administrative authorities. Researcher briefly explained the purpose of the study and assured them, the received information would be remained confidential and your identity will never be disclosed. After completion of demographic form, The Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale and The Academic Burnout Scale were administered. In the study, data was collected by using purposive sampling technique.

#### ***Statistics Analysis***

In next step, data was scored according to manuals and was transferred to excel sheet for the purpose of statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviations & variance) and linear regression analyses was used to investigate the association among emotional intelligence, academic self-efficacy and academic burnout in undergraduate students. All statistical computation was done through statistical package for social sciences (SPSS, Vol-17.0).

## RESULTS

**Table 1**  
*Demographic characteristics of the sample*

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>% age</b>	<b>Cumulative %</b>
Gender	Female	206	51.5	51.5
	Male	194	48.5	100.0
Marital Status	Married	38	09.5	9.5
	Single	319	90.5	100.0
Father's Education	Below Metric	77	19.3	19.3
	Metric	26	6.5	25.8
	Intermediate	61	15.3	41.1
	Graduation	132	33.0	74.1
	Master	104	26.0	100.0
Father's Occupation	Businessman	92	23.0	23.0
	Govt. Job	107	26.8	49.8
	Private job	115	28.8	78.5
	Unemployed	86	21.5	100.0
Mother's Education	Below Metric	98	24.5	24.5
	Metric	76	19.0	43.5
	Intermediate	80	20.0	63.5
	Graduation	111	27.8	91.3
	Master	35	8.8	100.0
Mother's Occupation	Non-Working	292	73.0	73.0
	Working	108	27.0	100.0
Family System	Joint	185	46.3	46.3
	Nuclear	215	53.8	100.0
Grades	A	211	52.8	52.8
	B	158	39.5	92.3
	C	31	7.8	100.0
Study Programs	Bachelor	150	37.5	37.5
	BS (Hons)	250	62.5	100.0

**Table 2**

*Summary of Linear Regression Analysis with Emotional Intelligence as predictor of Academic Burnout*

<b>Model Summary</b>							
<b>R</b>	<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Adj. R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Std. Error of the Est.</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>df1</b>	<b>df2</b>	<b>Sig</b>
.362	.131	.129	9.825	60.126	1	398	.000

*Dependent Variable: Academic Burnout*

*Predictors: (Constant), Emotional Intelligence*

**Table 3**

*Summary of Coefficient statistics with Emotional Intelligence as predictor of Academic Burnout*

<b>Model</b>	<b>Unstandardized Coefficients</b>		<b>Standardized Coefficients</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>95% Confidence Interval for B</b>	
	<b>B</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>Beta</b>			<b>Lower Bound</b>	<b>Upper Bound</b>
	(Constant) 22.348	3.298		6.777	.000	15.865	28.831
ABS	.218	.028	.362	7.754	.000	.162	.273

*a. Dependent Variable: Academic Burnout; ABS= Academic Burnout Scale*

## DISCUSSION

Findings reported there is significant relationship between emotional intelligence and academic burnout among undergraduates'. Findings (see Table 1) are consistent with hypothesis, depicting a significant predictive relationship between emotional intelligence and academic burnout ( $r= .362, p<.001$ ). The analysis among variables i.e. academic burnout and emotional intelligence has shown that, level of academic burnout was highly linked with emotional intelligence among undergraduates'. Emotional Intelligence helps lower down cynicism, greatly associated with lower emotional exhaustion and academic inefficacy by enhancing dedication, and absorption (Durán. et al, 2006). Findings are consistent with recent researches that emotionally intelligent individuals show lower symptoms of job burnout in both educational and workplace settings (Durán, Extremera, & Rey, 2004). This indicates that emotional intelligence play

controlling role in reducing academic burnout (Eisenberg, Gollust, Golberstein, & Hefner, 2007; Schaufeli, Martínez, Marqués-Pinto, Salanova, & Bakker, 2002).

Hidden positive resources of human and exposure to stressors in environment makes it difficult to cope through problems. Due to the lack of understanding of resolution of their problems, students tend to perceive lack of power to produce desired effects for their problems (Görgens-Ekermans, & Brand, 2012). Salovey and Mayer (1990), ability based model proposed that it is learned capability of individual to perceive, assimilate, understand, and manage emotions in oneself and others (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2000) that allow to process emotional information and make the person able to cope in with external and internal demands of stressful situation (Salanova, et al., 2005; Caruso & Salovey, 2004). These results support the idea that the positive influence of emotional intelligence on academic burnout explained stronger influence of personal accomplishment (Gil-Olarte, et al., 2006).

Salovey and Grewal (2005) reported emotional management skills to play an important role in understanding the emotions in the critical situation of one's self and others. Sometimes situations become critical for undergraduate students. The study pressure, high parental demands, and expectations of high grades in the examination, and other related aspects create pressure or stress in students and it can be one reason for academic burnout. In this direction, capability of emotional intelligence help to regulate the stressors and to manage the situation properly but individual with low capability feel difficulty to manage the situation and feel more emotionally disturbed and perceive symptoms of burnout (Ekermans & Brand, 2012; Platsidou, 2012).

Emotional intelligence usually helps the individual to manage stress in difficult situations. In fact, students believe that struggling hard is an important factor for better academic performance and high academic achievements. Although struggling hard creates psychological pressure amongst students but if they manage it properly, they can achieve their goals successfully. Students with good emotional capabilities manage their workload and perceive lower degree of academic burnout. Thus emotional Intelligence seems to play important role in predicting burnout and might be helpful for students studying and working in high stress environment.

### ***Conclusion***

It is therefore concluded that the importance of emotional abilities for predicting academic burnout in undergraduate students is very high. This capability may help the student to perform healthy daily life functioning and management as well as play a better role to maintain educational performance. Institutions must require planning some psychosocial policies because just training students in emotional abilities to be able to adequately manage their academic tasks may not be sufficient to cope effectively with educational demands. These findings provide baseline and guidelines for mental health professionals, parents, and educationists that academic stress may not be the only perspective, focuses on the individual stress experience. Range of other educational burnout variables (i.e., obsolete methods of assessment; high concentration of exams in a short period of time; lack of mechanisms of guidance and counseling etc.) are also need to be focused where educators and policymakers should make efforts to adapt educational methods to prevent academic stress.

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