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EMOTIONAL SELF REGULATION AS THE PREDICTOR OF SELF ESTEEM AND LIFE SATISFACTION AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

***Objective**: The basic objective of present study was to explore the role of emotional self regulation as a predictor of self esteem and life satisfaction among university students.*
***Research Design:** Survey research design*
***Place of Study:** Islamabad*
***Sample and Method**: Sample consisted of 160 students (80 males, 80 females) of age ranging between 18 to 25 years from different universities of Islamabad. It was hypothesized that high Emotional Self Regulation leads to high Self Esteem and Satisfaction with Life. Translated version of Emotional Self Regulation Scale (ESRS), Rosenberg Scale of Self Esteem (RSES) and Satisfaction with life scale (SWLS) were used.*
***Results**: Results revealed that all the scales are reliable and internally consistent. High Emotional self regulation leads to high self esteem and life satisfaction. High Self esteem leads to life satisfaction. There was no gender difference on Emotional Self Regulation, Self Esteem and Satisfaction with Life of students because of their similar quality of life and education level.*
***Conclusion:** On the basis of the above mentioned results it can be concluded that usually the way an individual perceives and emotionally handles any given situation reflects how much a person is satisfied with life as well as has a better self esteem besides having everyday difficulties.*

***Key Words:** Emotional self regulation, self esteem, Life satisfaction*

INTRODUCTION

Emotion is a complex experience of consciousness, bodily sensation, and behavior that reflects the personal significance of a thing, an event, or a state of affairs. Emotional intelligence is a kind of intelligence defined as the abilities to recognize, evaluate, and express emotions precisely and properly, to utilize emotions to assist thinking, to comprehend and examine emotions, to use emotional comprehension effectively, and to adjust one's emotions to encourage both emotional and intellectual development[1]. In recent years, the nature of emotion and its association with cognition has direct to new perspectives by introducing the new features of emotional intelligence called the Emotion Regulation, being able to appropriately adjust one's emotions. It involves recognizing and managing emotions, dealing with the other people and being responsible, building positive relationships and competencies, giving responsible decisions, managing the difficult situations that are required for all students[2,3,4].

Self-esteem is considered as a personality feature, which tends to be constant and durable. Self-esteem can involve a range of ideas about the self, such as the evaluation of one's appearance, attitudes, emotions and behaviors. Self esteem is the manner one experiences and thinks and is measured by the way one proceeds[5].

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[1] Goleman, D. (1996), *Emotional Intelligence* (1st ed.), Bloomsbury Publishers, London

[2] Devaney, E., Brien, M. U., Tavegia, M. & Resnik, H. (2005). Promoting children's ethical development through social and emotional learning, *New Directions for Youth Development*, *108,* 107-116.

[3] Elias, M. J., Zins, J. E., Graczyk, P. A. & Weissberg, R. P. (2003). Implementation, sustainability, and scaling up of social–emotional and academic innovations in public schools. *School Psychology Review*, *32*, 303–319.

[4] Mooij, T. & Smeets, E. (2009). Towards systemic support of pupils with emotional and behavioural disorders, *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 13* (6), 597–616.

[5] Palladino.C.D. (1994). *Developing self esteem- A guide for positive success*. Crisp fifty minute series book. United States of America.

Self esteem is an assessment of the emotional, logical, and behavioral facets of the self-concept[6]. Self-esteem of a person reflects the perceptions and evaluations about oneself but the life satisfaction includes the person's evaluation of whole life[7]. Self-esteem is one of the important dimensions of being sufficient in social and emotional aspect and corresponds to the social and emotional learning skills that increase self-esteem enhancing skills[8,9].

Life Satisfaction is a theoretical construct that refers the extent to which a person is satisfied. Life satisfaction involves people thinking about their life as a whole, including factors such as whether they are achieving their goals, are doing as well as other people around them, and are happy generally rather than just right now. It is one of three main components of well-being: life satisfaction, positive and negative effect[10].

Some of the theorists consider that there is a major association between proficient capabilities of emotional self regulation, emotional understanding, feeling adaptation application of the emotional understanding and the overall life satisfaction[11].

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[6] Frey, D. & Carlock, C. (1989) *Enhancing self-esteem.* Muncie, IN: Accelerated development.

[7] Diener, E. & Diener, M. (1995). Cross-cultural correlates of life satisfaction and self-esteem. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 68, 653–663.*

[8] Kabakcı, O. F. & Korkut, F. (2008). An analysis of 6-8. grade students' social-emotional learning skills depending on some variables. *Education Science, 33* (148), 77-86.

[9] Kabakcı, O.F. & Owen, F.K. (2010). Developing social emotional learning skills scale. *Education Science, 35*(157), 152-164.

[10] Buetell, N. (2006). *Life satisfaction, a Sloan Work and Family Encyclopedia entry.* Retrieved on May 10, 2007, from:http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/encyclopedia_ entry.php?id=3283&area=academics

[11] Pellitteri, J. (2002). The relationship between emotional intelligence and ego Defense mechanisms. *The Journal of Psychology, 136*(2), 182-194. http://dx.doi.org/ 10.1080/00223980209604149

By some mechanisms work as moderator between emotional self regulation and life satisfaction like, psychological health, ability of empathy with others, social adaption, improvement of social relations, emotional understandings and recognition and management of emotions. A study was conducted on the students of Islamic Azad University. The results have shown that there is considerable connection between emotional self regulation and life satisfaction[12].

Children with various levels of hope were assessed on different tools of life satisfaction, social support and self-esteem. Results showed that children with high hope had higher self-esteem and were more satisfied with their life comparative to children with low hope[13].

The present study aimed that how emotional self regulation predicts self esteem and life satisfaction among university students. Many social problems in our country like job dropouts, unemployment, poverty, poor living conditions are affecting our lives badly. Especially Pakistani youth are becoming more dissatisfied with their life, feeling difficulty in proper self regulation of emotions, consequently leads to low self esteem. Emotional self regulation is closely related to the affective components of self awareness and one's sense of psychological well being with the sense of satisfaction regarding their life.

On the basis of literature given above the specific purpose of this research is to investigate the emotional area of self regulation among the university population. This research will generate awareness in Pakistani youth about how emotional self regulation, self esteem and life satisfaction are interlinked. So, present research will be highly beneficial in this regard. Besides this another purpose was to explore whether it will serve as a predictor variable

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[12] Ghorbanshiroudi, S. (2011).The relationship between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction and determining their communication skill test effectiveness. *Indian Journal of Science and Technology, 4* (11), Nov 2011. ISSN: 0974- 6846. http://www.indjst.org

[13] Merkaš, M. & Brajša-Žganec, A. (2011). Children with Different Levels of Hope: Are There Differences in Their Self-esteem, Life Satisfaction, Social Support, and Family Cohesion? *Journal of Humanities, Social Sciences and Law*. Retrieved on May 10, 2011, from: http://www.springerlink.com/ content/3ru 22202lv1 57553/

or not. Hence, the major objective of this study is to check the role of emotional self regulation as the predictor of self esteem and life satisfaction among university students. Another objective is to investigate the gender differences.

METHOD

Participants

The sample consisted of 160 university students, purposively selected from different universities of Islamabad i.e., Quaid-e-Azam University Islamabad, Bahria University Islamabad, Air University Islamabad and Riphah International University Islamabad. 40 students were selected from each university having an equal number of male (n = 20) and female (n= 20) students. Age range of the sample was 18 to 25 years.

Measures

Emotional Self- Regulation Scale (ESRS)

Emotional Self Regulation Scale is a subscale of Self-Report Measure of emotional intelligence. It is a translated version according to Pakistani culture and is used in the present study[14]. Reliability coefficient of Emotional self Regulation scale on the present sample is 0.87 which indicates that this scale is highly reliable for present study. It consists of 27 statements that represent the emotional skills, emotional competencies and measure the adaptability, emotional reactivity management, emotional stability, conscientiousness and achievement drive of individuals. ESRS is five point likert type scale. Responses ranged from "Always" to "Neutral". Items are mostly negatively worded two items i.e., 3 and 24 are positively worded. High scores indicates high emotional self regulation and vice versa.

[14] Khan, R.A. & Kamal, A. (2008). Development and validation of self-report measure of emotional intelligence for heart patients and healthy individuals. Unpublished Ph.D dissertation. National Institute of Psychology, Quaid-i-Azam University Islamabad.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)

Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale was used to measure the self esteem[15]. It is a ten item 4 point likert type scale ranging from strongly agrees to strongly disagree. The 4-point scale is rated with the highest value of 3 for the response options Strongly Agree (SA), 2 for Agree (A), 1 for disagree (D) and lowest value 0 for strongly disagree (SD). Reliability coefficient of RSES in the present study is 0.68.

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

Satisfaction with life scale was developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen and Griffin[16] to measure the life satisfaction and contentment. It is a five item Likert scales with items answered on a seven point scale - from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

The 7-point scale is rated with the highest value of 7 for the response options Strongly agree, 6 for Agree, 5 for slightly agree, 4 for neither agree nor disagree, 3 for slightly disagree, 2 for disagree and lowest value 1 for strongly disagree. The score on this subscale ranged from the minimum 5 to the maximum 35.The higher the score on this scale represent that individual is extremely satisfied and low on this scale represent extremely dissatisfaction. The reliability coefficient on present data is 0.67.

Procedure

The data was collected by administering the scales in group. The respondents were instructed to complete the scales by giving response to every item of each scale. Informed consent was taken and all the respondents were assured that the data will be kept confidential. After getting data, scoring and analysis were done.

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[15] Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the adolescent self-image*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

[16] Diener, E., Emmons, R.A., Larsen, R.J., & Griffin, S. (1985). The Satisfaction with Life Scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, *49*, 1-5.

RESULTS

Table 1
Alpha Coefficient Reliabilities of Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSES), Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) and Emotional Self Regulation Scale (ESRS)

Scales	No. of items	Alpha Coefficient
RSES	10	0.68
SWLS	5	0.67
ESRS	27	0.87

Table 1 indicates the reliability of Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSES), Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) and Emotional Self Regulation Scale (ESRS). Reliability of all the scales are RSES=0.68, SWLS=0.67 and ESRS=0.87 which shows that all the scales are highly reliable.

Table 2
Linear Regression Analysis showing Emotional Self Regulation as the predictor of Self Esteem (N=160)

Model	*b*	*SE*	*β*	*t*	*p*
Constant	10.47	1.68		6.23	.000
Emotional Self Regulation	.09	.02	.39	5.31	.000
R^2 **= .15**					
ΔR^2 **= .15**					

Table 2 shows that Emotional self regulation positively predicts self esteem. The ΔR^2 value of .15 indicates that 15 % variance in the dependent variable which is self esteem can be accounted for, by the predictors which is the emotional self regulation with $F = 28.20$ ($p < .001$). Emotional self regulation has significant positive effect on self esteem ($\beta = .39$, $p < .001$).

Table 3
Linear Regression Analysis showing Emotional Self Regulation as the predictor of Life Satisfaction (N=160)

Model	*b*	*SE*	*β*	*t*	*p*
Constant	12.36	2.53		4.88	.000
Emotional Self Regulation	.12	.03	.35	4.74	.000
R^2 **= .12**					
ΔR^2 **= .12**					

Table 3 shows that Emotional self regulation positively predicts life satisfaction. The ΔR^2 value of .12 indicates that 12 % variance in the dependent variable which is life satisfaction can be accounted for, by the predictors which is the emotional self regulation with F = 22.46 (p < .001). Emotional self regulation has significant positive effect on life satisfaction (β =.35, p<.001).

Table 4
Linear Regression Analysis showing Self Esteem as the predictor of Life Satisfaction (N=160)

Model	*b*	*SE*	*β*	*t*	*p*
Constant	12.32	2.11		5.85	.000
Self Esteem	.62	.11	.42	5.74	.000
R^2 **= .17**					
ΔR^2 **= .17**					

Table 4 shows that Self esteem positively predicts life satisfaction. The ΔR^2 value of .17 indicates that 17 % variance in the dependent variable which is life satisfaction can be accounted for, by the predictors which is the self esteem with F = 32.94, p < .001). Self esteem has significant positive effect on life satisfaction (β =.42, p<.001).

Table 5
Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value of male and female on Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSES), Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) and Emotional Self Regulation Scale (ESRS)

Scales	Male (N=80) *M (SD)*	Female (N=80) *M (SD)*	*t*	*p*	*LL*	*UL*	Cohen's *d*
RSES	19.58(3.61)	18.99(3.91)	1.01	0.31	-.57	1.77	0.16
SWLS	23.99(5.60)	24.40(5.58)	-.47	0.64	-2.16	1.33	0.07
ESRS	98.49(13.99)	95.01(17.84)	1.37	0.17	-1.53	8.48	o.22

Table 5 indicates the non-significant difference between males and females on RSES, SWLS and ESRS. Males (M=19.58) scored same on the self esteem scale as females (M=18.99) so, there is no significant difference between males and females (t=1.01, p> .05). Males (M=23.99) scored same also on the satisfaction with life scale as females (M=24.40) so, there is no significant difference between males and females (t=-.47, p> .05). Males (M=98.49) scored same also on the emotional self regulation scale as females (M=95.01), and there is no significant difference between males and females (t=1.37, p> .05).

DISCUSSION

The basic aim of the present study was to investigate the role of emotional self regulation as predictor of self esteem and life satisfaction among university students. Additionally the other aim was to find out the gender differences.

The first hypothesis predicting positive relationship between emotional self regulation and self esteem was supported by the results. It is also confirmed by a research conducted by Keltner and Haidt[17] that subjects with dominant emotional self regulation appear to be more confident and tend to have a higher self esteem than those who are more unstable internally and introspective by

[17] Keltner, D., & Haidt, J. (2001). Social functions of emotions. In T. Mayne & G. A. Bonanno (Eds.), *Emotions: Current issues and future directions*. New York: Guilford Press. (pp. 192-213).

nature. It reflects that the personal and social constructed emotions if regulated competently give rise to optimism, effective and efficient cognitive functioning in day to day settings. Some empirical support provided by Schutte, Malouff, Simunek, Hollander, and McKenley[18] reveal that individuals who reported remarked ability to differentiate between mood dispositions and high mood repair skills showed high self-esteem. The understanding and regulation of components of emotional intelligence enhances positive affect in the self-assessment procedure. Individuals high in emotional intelligence may have the capacity to sustain the higher positive mood state and self-esteem because they are able to counter some of the effect of negative situations and maximize the influence of positive conditions (Table 2).

According to second hypothesis, emotional self regulation positively predicts life satisfaction. It is also proved and findings are strengthened by a research that positive emotions broaden the scope of attention and cognition, initiate upward spirals toward enhanced emotional well-being. This is in accordance with the present research that the positive emotions increase our self esteem, as a result we feel happy and satisfied from our life. This is how emotional self regulation will positively predict high self esteem and life satisfaction[19]. Emotion regulation has been argued to be an important determinant of well-being[20]. As the evidence provided by Salovey, Mayer, Caruso and Yoo[21] suggests that individuals with high expectations about their capability to comprehend and direct their moods, they experience more positive emotions and more satisfied with their life. (Table 3)

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[18] Schutte, N. S., Malouff, J., Simunek, M., Hollander, S., &McKenley, J. (2002). Characteristic emotional intelligence and emotional well-being. *Cognition and Emotion, 16,* 769-785.

[19] Fredrickson, B. L., & Joiner, T. (2002). Positive Emotions Trigger Upward Spirals toward Emotional Well-Being. *Psychological Science, 13* (2).

[20] Gross, J. J., & John, O. P. (2003). Individual differences in two emotion regulation processes: Implications for affect, relationships, and well-being. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology, 85,* 348–362.

[21] Salovey, P., Mayer, J. D., Caruso, D., & Yoo, S. H. (2009).The positive psychology of emotional intelligence. In S.J. Lopez & C. R. Snyder (Eds.), *The handbook of positive psychology* (2nd Edition, pp.237-248). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

According to 3rd hypothesis, self esteem positively predicts life satisfaction. Previous research has demonstrated that low self-esteem negatively impacts one's psychological wellbeing and overall life satisfaction[22, 23].

Self-esteem is a vital source that is essential to individuals' well-being[24]. Korman[25] also believed that a person with high self-esteem may have high levels of positive well-being. High self-esteem makes considerable effect by buffering the person against anxiety, depressing emotions and improving adjustment, so the people effort to achieve high self-esteem[26].

Maslow[27] illustrated a person with high self-esteem as mentally contented and strong. A person with high self-esteem is able to deal with nervousness, improve coping, and supports physical health[28, 29,30]. On the other

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[22] Abe, J. (2004). Self-esteem, perception of relationships, and emotional distress: a cross-cultural study. *Personal Relations, 11*, 231 – 247

[23] Emmons, R.A., & Diener, E. (1985). Personality correlates of subjective wellbeing. *Psychological Bulletin, 11*, 89 – 97.

[24] Hsieh, Yu-Chin. (2004). *Lodging managers' perceptions of work and personal life balance*. Purdue University.

[25] Korman, A.K. (1976). Hypothesis of work behavior revisited an extension. *Academy of Management Review, 1* (1), 50-63.

[26] Leary, M. R., Tambor, E. S., Terdal, S. K., & Downs, D. L. (1995). Self-esteem as an interpersonal monitor: The sociometer hypothesis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 68*, 518–530.

[27] Maslow, A.J. (1970). *Motivation and Personality*. New York: Harper & Brothers.

[28] Baumeister, R.F. (1993). *Self-Esteem: The Puzzle of Low Self-Regard*. New York: Plenum.

[29] Greenberg, J., Solomon, S., Psyszczynski, T., Rosenblatt, A., Burling, J., Lydon, D., Simon, L., & Pinel, E. (1992). Why do people need self-esteem? Converging evidence that self-esteem serves an anxiety-buffering function. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 63*, 913-922.

[30] Taylor, S.E., & Brown, J.D. (1988). Illusion and well-being: A social psychological perspective on mental health. *Psychological Bulletin, 103*, 193-210.

hand, if a person has low self-esteem, he will have mental frigidity, and experiences hopelessness, nervousness and maladjustment[31]. (Table 4)

Rey, Extremera, and Pena[32] studied the connection between perceived emotional intelligence, self esteem and life satisfaction. Sample consisted of 316 adolescents including 179 females and 137 males. Results indicated that life satisfaction have positive correlation with self-esteem and perceived emotional dimensions. Results also showed that mood precision and emotional repair had a link with life satisfaction in adolescents. The present study adds an understanding of the fundamental practice between perceived emotional intelligence and life satisfaction as revealed by the present data. (Table 2, Table 3, Table 4).

According to 4th hypothesis results of t-test show that there is no significant difference between the scores of male and female participants. It is evident that emotional self regulation, self esteem and life satisfaction are devoid of gender discrimination. One's emotional self regulation, life satisfaction and self esteem are represented by the general, personal and specific life settings along with the provisions of opportunities provided by life with no impact of gender.

Salovey and Mayer[33] gave some main domains that describe individual's emotional intelligence and emotional self regulation; these domains are to know one's emotions, to manage emotions and to motivate one's self. These all abilities are mostly present in University students whether male or female because they are well educated, cultured and erudite people who have an understanding of their capabilities, self worth, societal values and standards. They know how to behave in a socially acceptable and sophisticated manner and they are usually refined in their emotional self regulations hence leading peaceful and harmonious lives. They are continuously interacting with media and attending workshops and seminars related to emotional self regulation that

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[31] Cutrona, C.E. (1982). Transition to college: Loneliness and the process of social adjustment. In L.A. Peplau & D. Perlman (Eds.), *Loneliness: A sourcebook of current theory, research, and therapy* (pp.291-309). New York: Wiley.

[32] Rey, L., Extremera, N., & Pena, M. (2011).Perceived emotional intelligence, Self-Esteem and Life Satisfaction in Adolescents. *Psychosocial Intervention, 20*(2).

[33] Salovey, P., & Mayer, J. D. (1990). Emotional intelligence. *Imagination, Cognition, and Intelligence, 9* (3), 185-211.

increase their self regulating skills. That's why there is no significance difference of male and female on emotional self regulation, self esteem and life satisfaction[34]. (Table 5)

Limitations and Suggestions

The sample was taken only from universities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi only; in future the sample should be expanded to other provincial areas of Pakistan as well.

In any future research students enrolled in schools and colleges should also be included to explore further differences.

Implications

Individuals with low self esteem should be provided with opportunities for spontaneous creative play, learning so that they can explore their real identities which ultimately act as a step towards positive self understanding, internal motivation to solve the problems.

[34] Goleman, D. (1996), *Emotional Intelligence* (1st ed.), Bloomsbury Publishers, London