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ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN AGGRESSION AND SOCIAL COMPETENCE AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI), aggression, and social competence among university students. A sample of 300 students (150 males and 150 females) from various universities in Islamabad and Rawalpindi was surveyed using purposive sampling. EI was measured using the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS), social competence was assessed using the Tromsø Social Intelligence Scale (TSIS), and aggression was evaluated using the Aggression Questionnaire (AGQ). The study hypothesized that higher levels of EI would be associated with lower aggression and higher social competence. Correlation analysis revealed that EI negatively correlated with aggression ($r = -0.59$, $p < 0.01$) and social competence ($r = -0.183$, $p < 0.01$), while aggression positively correlated with social competence ($r = 0.217$, $p < 0.01$). Interestingly, demographic factors such as gender, educational qualification, and birth order did not significantly influence EI, aggression, or social competence. However, family structure was identified as a significant factor shaping emotional and behavioral traits. These findings underline the complex interplay between EI, aggression, and social competence, emphasizing the prominent role of family dynamics over demographic factors. The study offers valuable insights for developing targeted interventions in educational, familial, and social contexts to enhance emotional and interpersonal skills.

Keywords: *Emotional Intelligence, Social Competence, Aggression, University Students.*

INTRODUCTION

The topic of emotional intelligence (EI) has recently awakened great interest in researchers and mental health professionals. EI proposes a new perspective in the study of emotions, in which they have gone from being originally considered distracting elements of cognitive processes to being considered vital phenomena of the human being, which provide useful information about how to solve daily problems. In fact, seeing from this approach, the intelligent use of emotions is considered essential for one's physical and psychological adaptation (Salovey, et al., 1999).

The definition of emotional intelligence is "the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth" (Mayor & Salovey, 1997, p. 10). Individuals who are aware of what they are feeling will be more skillful about

treating emotional problems and, therefore, will experience more emotional wellbeing, in comparison with less skilled individuals. Likewise, people who easily identify a specific emotion during stressful situations will spend less time attending to their emotional reactions, using fewer cognitive resources, which in turn will allow them to assess alternative actions, keep their thoughts on other tasks, or use more adaptive coping strategies (Extremera & Fernández-Berrocal, 2006).

The transition to university life represents a significant period of change marked by complex social, emotional, and intellectual challenges, requiring students to adapt to unfamiliar and demanding environments. Among the skills essential for this successful adaptation is social competence, often defined as the capacity to interact effectively and adaptively across diverse social contexts (Mundy & Sigman, 2015). Social competence encompasses skills such as communication, empathy, conflict resolution, and the ability to establish and sustain meaningful relationships (Muring, 2022).

Aggression is a multifaceted behavior that can manifest in various forms, such as physical aggression, verbal aggression, and relational aggression. Dodge and Coie (1987) discussed the developmental trajectory of aggression in adolescence, noting its potential 4link to emotional dysregulation and poor social skills. Understanding the underlying mechanisms of aggression is crucial for developing effective interventions to mitigate its negative consequences.

The development of social competence is especially vital in the university context, where students encounter a heightened level of independence, unfamiliar social groups, and greater academic expectations. Research suggests that students with higher levels of social competence demonstrate better adjustment to university life, leading to positive effects on both academic performance and overall well-being (Alzahrani et al., 2019). By building meaningful social networks, socially competent students are better equipped to seek assistance when necessary and manage stress related to academic challenges (Mishra, 2020). Additionally, university students with strong social skills report higher levels of satisfaction with their university experience, a factor that has been linked to retention rates and successful completion of studies.

Beyond immediate academic and psychological outcomes, social competence is increasingly regarded as an essential employability skill. Employers place a high value on graduates who demonstrate effective communication, teamwork, and adaptability competencies integral to professional success (Moeller et al., 2020). Recognizing this demand, universities have begun to emphasize the importance of fostering social competence through both curricular and extracurricular activities, counselling services, and peer mentorship programs. By preparing students to be socially competent, universities help ensure that their graduates are equipped not only for academic success but also for meaningful contributions in their future careers. This emphasis on employability reflects a growing acknowledgment of social competence as a multifaceted skill set that encompasses interpersonal effectiveness and adaptability, which are increasingly relevant in diverse professional environments.

In recent years, the rise of technology and social media has introduced new dimensions to the study of social competence, particularly among university students. Digital platforms offer students opportunities for communication and networking, yet they also present unique challenges for developing traditional social skills (Alzahrani et al., 2019). Research suggests that excessive use of social media may hinder face-to-face interaction skills, potentially leading to increased social anxiety and decreased empathy (Mishra, 2020). However, other scholars argue that digital tools, when used thoughtfully, can enhance social competence by exposing students to diverse perspectives and fostering cross-cultural communication skills. These findings suggest that the relationship between social media use and social competence is complex, requiring further research to better understand the impact of technology on students' social skill development in university settings.

Social competence is a multifaceted construct integral to the holistic development of university students. Its significance extends beyond academic and mental health benefits, influencing students' employability and future professional success. Recognizing its value, higher education institutions have a responsibility to promote social competence through targeted initiatives that address individual, contextual, and technological factors. The existing literature underscores the importance of fostering social competence in university students to enhance their academic experiences, support their mental well-being, and equip them for success beyond the university environment. As universities continue to adapt to the changing needs of students, prioritizing social competence development will be crucial in preparing students to navigate and thrive in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. The relationship between Emotional Intelligence, Aggression, and Social Competence: The interplay between EI, aggression, and social competence in adolescents is a complex and dynamic process. Research by Brackett, Rivers, and Salovey (2011) suggested that higher levels of EI are associated with lower levels of aggression and higher social competence among adolescents. However, the specific mechanisms underlying these relationships require further exploration.

The role of emotional intelligence (EI), aggression, and social competence in the lives of university students has garnered significant attention due to its implications for personal growth, academic achievement, and social adaptation. Emotional intelligence, conceptualized as the ability to perceive, understand, and regulate emotions, is a cornerstone of effective interpersonal interactions and decision-making (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). University students, as they transition into adulthood, face unique emotional challenges such as academic stress, peer pressure, and career uncertainty. Research has consistently demonstrated that higher emotional intelligence is linked to better stress management, higher academic performance, and stronger interpersonal relationships (Whitney et al., 2004). Moreover, EI is positively associated with resilience, enabling students to navigate setbacks and challenges with greater ease.

Social competence, encompassing the ability to communicate effectively, empathize, and build relationships, has emerged as a key predictor of academic and personal success among students. Studies (Whitney et al., 2004; Wentzel, 2003) have shown that socially competent students are more likely to engage in collaborative learning, build strong peer networks, and achieve higher levels of academic engagement. Social competence is deeply intertwined with emotional intelligence, as both constructs rely on the ability to understand and manage emotions in oneself and others. High levels of social competence have also been associated with reduced aggression, as students with strong interpersonal skills are better equipped to resolve conflicts constructively.

The interrelationship between emotional intelligence, aggression, and social competence has been explored in various studies, revealing a complex but significant dynamic. High emotional intelligence enables students to manage their emotions, understand others' perspectives, and resolve conflicts without resorting to aggression. For example, Petrides et al. (2004) found that individuals with higher EI scores demonstrated lower aggression levels and greater social adaptability. Similarly, socially competent individuals often possess the emotional regulation skills necessary to mitigate aggressive impulses and maintain positive relationships. These findings highlight the synergistic role of emotional intelligence and social competence in reducing aggression and fostering harmonious interactions within university settings.

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Moreover, the university environment plays a crucial role in shaping these traits. Students often encounter diverse cultural and social groups, which can challenge their emotional and social skills. Interventions aimed at enhancing emotional intelligence and social competence have shown promise in reducing aggression and improving overall student well-being. Programs such as peer mentoring, emotional regulation workshops, and conflict resolution training have been particularly effective in cultivating these skills (Brackett & Rivers, 2014).

By exploring the intricate relationships between emotional intelligence, aggression, and social competence in university students, this research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of psychological factors that influence student well-being and social competence as social competence plays a vital role in success. The findings may have implications for designing interventions, counselling services, and educational programs aimed at fostering emotional intelligence, and promoting positive social interactions among university students.

Methods

Research design

The cross-sectional research design was used to see the relationship of emotional intelligence, social competence and aggression across the university students. In this study quantitative research survey method was used to collect data by using questionnaire.

Sample And Sampling Technique Sample Size

The current study's sample was gathered from several government and private universities in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, Pakistan. A sample of 300 students was recruited using the purposive sampling approach. The sample ranged in age from 19 to 28 years. Both male and female students were chosen for the research purpose.

Measures

Informed Consent Form

The research participants will be provided with informed consent prior to administering the questionnaires. A detailed explanation of the study's objectives and methodology will be provided. The freedom to leave the study at any time will be granted to the participants. Participants will be given the assurance that any information they submit will be kept completely private, kept under strict confidentiality, and used exclusively for study.

Demographic Information Sheet

The participants will receive a demographic information sheet that will collect data on age, gender, marital status, education level, and other factors.

The Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale

Measures emotional intelligence. It consists of 16 items and four sub-scales: Self- emotion Appraisal (SEA), Others' Emotion Appraisal (OEA), Use of Emotion (UOE), and Emotion Regulation (ROE). Each sub-scale consists of four items (Wong & Law, 2002). Scoring is done on a 7-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from Strongly Disagree (7) to Strongly Agree (1). Lower scores indicate a lack of emotional intelligence, whereas higher scores indicate a greater level of emotional intelligence. Initial psychometric assessments of the scale indicate reliability, discriminant, factorial, convergent, predictive validity and reliable scale to assess self-reported emotional examination and control (Law, Wong & Song, 2004; Shi & Wang, 2007; Wong & Law, 2002). The alpha coefficients for the four sub-scales were.82 for SEA, .80 for OEA, .79 for ROE, and.78 for UOE. Only the scale's composite score was used in this investigation.

Aggression Questionnaire (AGQ)

The Aggression Questionnaire (AGQ) is a self-report scale that is designed to measure

four major components of aggression (physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger and hostility). The AGQ consists of 29 items which are rated on a Seven-point Likert scale from 1 (extremely uncharacteristic of me) to 7 (extremely characteristic of me). The AGQ yields four primary scales. Descriptions of the scales and item loadings are listed below. Scale scores are calculated as the sum of respective items. Items 7 and 18 are reverse scored. AGQ PHYS (Physical Aggression Scale) items 1-9, AGQ VERB (Verbal Aggression Scale) items 10-14, AGQ_ANG (Anger Scale) items 15-21, And AGQ_HOST (Hostility Scale) items 22-29.

Social Intelligence

The TSIS measures intelligence based on three different subscales: a) Social Information Processing (SP): This subscale measures ability to understand verbal or non-verbal messages regarding relationships, empathy, and reading hidden messages as well as explicit messages posts. b) Social Skills (SS): This subscale measures basic communication skills such as active listening, assertiveness, establishing, maintaining, and breaking a relationship. c) Social Awareness (SA): This sub scale measures the ability to engage in active behavior in accordance with the situation, place and time. Each of the three factors of the scale comprises 7 items which are measured on a 5-point Likert type scale. The initial version has good reliability with Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficients for information processing, social skills and social awareness at 0.81, 0.86 and 0.79 respectively.

Procedure

Present study data was collected from 300 participants of all male and female students within the age range 19 to 28 from different universities in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The confidentiality of the information collected from participants is ensured, and they are informed that the information obtained from them will be kept confidential. Participants were given detailed instructions and encouraged to ask questions if they were unclear. The item booklet, which comprises informed concerned, the three instruments, and some questions about gender, education level, family system, birth order, no of siblings etc. Participants are informed of the purpose of the study. It explained how to complete the questionnaire, and on average participants took 15 to 20 minutes to complete the item booklet. At the end of the survey the participants' cooperation and enthusiasm are praised.

Statistical Analysis

the current study was conducted to investigate the role of emotional intelligence aggression and social competence among university students. spss-23 was used for correlation, anova, and t-test.

Ethical consideration

Ethics of the American Psychiatric Association was considered while conducting this study. Initially, the permission was taken from the Supervisor to start the study. The concept of debriefing, informed consent and confidentiality was used. The researcher assured the participants that they are not going to be harmed physically or emotionally and can withdraw from the study at any time. At the end of the study, the participants are acknowledged for their cooperati

Results

Demographic Characteristics.

Table1: Frequency and percentage of participants (N=300)

Descriptive Characteristics	f	%
Gender		
Male	90	30
Female	210	70
Education		
BS	254	84.7
MS	46	15.3

Birth Order		
Youngest	93	31
Middle	124	41.3
Eldest	82	27.3
Only child	1	.3
Family System		
Joint	93	31.0
Nuclear	207	69.0

Table 1 showed the demographic characteristics highlight key patterns in the sample composition. Of the 300 participants, 70% were female, and 30% were male, indicating a female-dominant sample. Educational qualifications showed that a significant majority held a bachelor's degree (84.7%), while a smaller proportion (15.3%) had a master's degree. Regarding family systems, the nuclear family structure was predominant (69%), compared to joint families (31%). Birth order revealed a diverse distribution: middle-born individuals made up the largest group (41.3%), followed by the youngest (31%), eldest (27.3%), and only children (0.3%).

Psychometric Properties

The purpose was to verify here liability of the measures which were used in this study, as well as the applicability of the scales for the student's population (N=300)

Scale	M	SD	Range		Cronbach 's α	Skewness	Kurtosis
			Potential	Actual			
SC	92.69	16.89	0-50	0-47	.86	.17	-.93
EI	58.36	8.10	0-40	0-49	.82	.05	-.09
AG	83.88	17.55	18-90	18-66	.89	.22	-.45

Table2: Mean, standard deviation, alpha coefficient, minimum and maximum values for Emotional Intelligence, Social Competence and Aggression (N=300).

Note: SC=Social Competence, EI=Emotional Intelligence, AG= Aggression

Table 2 shows that psychometric properties for the scale used in present study. The Cronbach 's α for Social Competence was .86 which indicated high internal consistency. The Cronbach 's α for Emotional Intelligence was .82 which indicated internal consistency. The Cronbach 's α for Aggression Scale was .89 which indicated high internal consistency. The skewness of Social Competence Scale and Emotional Intelligence Scale are less than 2 which indicate unilabiate symmetry is not problematic but the skewness of Difficulty in Emotional Regulation Scales are more than 2. The kurtosis of Total Aggression is less than 2 which indicate unilabiate symmetry is not problematic.

Correlations Among Variables

	EI	AG	SC
Emotional Intelligence	-	-0.59	-.183**
Aggression		-	.217**
Social Competence			-

Table 3: Pearson Correlation among Study Variables

Note: SC=Social Competence, TEI=Emotional Intelligence, AG=Aggression

The Pearson correlation analysis provided significant insights into the relationships between variables. Emotional Intelligence (EI) negatively correlated with both Aggression (AG, r = -0.59) and Social Competence (SC, r = -0.183, p < 0.01). This suggests that higher emotional intelligence is associated with lower aggression and slightly reduced social competence. Aggression (AG) positively correlated with Social Competence (SC, r =

0.217, $p < 0.01$), indicating that individuals with higher aggression levels may also exhibit enhanced social competence, possibly due to assertive or confrontational social interactions.

Family System Comparison

Table 4

	Nuclear n=204		Joint n=96			
Variables	M	SD	M	SD	t(298)	P
EI	59.29	7.64	56.36	8.71	2.95	.003
AG	82.31	18.12	87.26	15.84	-2.28	.023
SC	92.02	17.99	94.11	14.27	-1.00	.31

Note: SC=Social Competence, EI= Emotional Intelligence, AG=Aggression

Table no 4 shows that people who live in nuclear family system have high scores on Emotional Intelligence (17.60, 10.09) as compared to those who live in Joint family system (15.89, 10.59). People who live in nuclear family system have low level of Aggression (52.48, 10.71) as compared to those who live in joint family (53.54, 10.26). People who live in joint families have a high level on Social Competence (22.06, 6.29) as compared to those who live in nuclear family system (20.83, 5.86).

Table 5: Gender-Based Analysis

	Female n=210		Male n=90			
Variables	M	SD	M	SD	t (298)	P
EI	58.18	8.05	58.77	8.25	-.573	.56
AG	84.46	18.15	82.53	16.08	.868	.38
SC	93.70	15.14	90.34	20.31	1.57	.12

Note: SC=Social competence, EI=Emotional Intelligence, AG=Aggression

Table no 5 Gender comparisons did not yield significant differences. Emotional Intelligences cores were comparable between females (M=58.18, SD=8.05) and males (M =58.77, SD=8.25), with no significant difference (p=.56). Similarly, Aggression and Social Competence scores were not significantly different across genders (p=.38 and p=.12, respectively). These findings suggest that gender may not be a critical factor influencing these traits in the sample.

Educational Qualification Comparison

Table 6

	BS n=254		MS n=46			
Variables	M	SD	M	SD	t (298)	p
EI	58.04	8.14	60.09	7.75	-1.57	.11
AG	83.38	17.09	86.65	19.86	-1.16	.24
SC	93.61	17.32	93.61	14.44	-.40	.68

Note: SC=Social competence, EI=Emotional Intelligence, AG=Aggression

Table no 6 shows Participants with a master's degree scored slightly higher on Emotional Intelligence (M = 60.09, SD = 7.75) and Aggression (M = 86.65, SD = 19.86) compared to those with a bachelor's degree (M = 58.04, SD = 8.14; M = 83.38, SD = 17.09, respectively). However, these differences were not statistically significant ($p > .05$). This indicates that educational attainment might not substantially influence emotional intelligence, aggression, or social competence.

Birth Order and Trait Analysis

Table 7

	Younger n=93		Middle n=124		Eldest n=83		
Variables	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	F
EI	57.18	9.01	58.95	6.71	58.76	8.90	.95
AG	85.78	17.81	81.65	17.58	84.91	17.05	1.48
SC	93.28	18.72	93.24	14.50	91.40	18.15	.60

Note: SC= Social Competence, EI= Emotional Intelligence, AG= Aggression

Table no 7 shows the analysis of birth order effects on the three psychological traits (EI, AG, and SC) revealed no significant differences among youngest, middle, and eldest children. Emotional Intelligence, Aggression, and Social Competence scores were similar across all birth order groups, with F-values of .95, 1.48, and .60, respectively. These findings imply that birth order is not a significant predictor of these traits.

Discussion

The study aimed at examining the relationship between emotional intelligence, aggression, and social competence among university students. For this purpose, three scales were used: the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) (Wong & Law, 2002), the Aggression Scale (Buss & Perry, 1992), and the Tromso Social Competence Scale (TSC) (Torgersen, 1995). First, frequencies and percentages for demographic variables for the complete sample were acquired in the Main Study (N=300) to gain a better knowledge of the sample characteristics on the variables under study (see Table 1). In the Main Study, reliability estimates of the overall scales were good after analysis of all demographic variables. A table was also constructed (see Table 2) to assess alpha reliability and normal distribution of data on the entire sample to check psychometric features of the scale.

Moving forward, to check the relationships between our study variables, Pearson correlation was computed (see Table 3), which showed that, for our hypothesis, it was assumed that emotional intelligence would be a significant predictor for social competence even after controlling aggression. This hypothesis was accepted, aligning with Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Theory (Goleman, 1995), which states that individuals with greater emotional regulation experience reduced aggression and enhanced social competence. Moreover, a negative correlation was found between emotional intelligence and aggression, supporting the General Aggression Model (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). A positive correlation was observed between aggression and social competence, indicating that competitive academic environments may cause an increase in both social competence and aggression (Salmivalli, 2010). A positive correlation was also found between emotional intelligence and social competence, further confirming the interconnectedness of these constructs.

Additionally, it was hypothesized that females would exhibit higher emotional intelligence compared to males. However, no significant differences were found, leading to the rejection of this hypothesis (Brackett et al., 2004). Lastly, it was assumed that senior university students experience higher levels of emotional intelligence, aggression, and social competence compared to junior students, but no significant differences were found in this regard.

The study explains the interconnectedness among emotional intelligence, aggression, and social competence, emphasizing the need for universities to adopt comprehensive approaches to evaluate these traits. Strategies such as emotional regulation workshops, conflict resolution assistance, and peer mentoring programs would help increase emotional intelligence and social competence while controlling aggression (Zeidner et al., 2012). The present study provides practical contributions and educational implications in the field of clinical psychology. Mental health professionals should develop a reinforcing and non-biased environment for students to reduce aggression symptoms and enhance social competence, ultimately

fostering emotional intelligence (Mayer et al., 2008). Clinical psychologists should also create awareness to assist students with psychological issues related to aggression, social competence, and emotional intelligence. Students experiencing these challenges should be encouraged to share their concerns without hesitation.

Limitations

Despite its strengths, the study has certain limitations. The reliance on self-report instruments may introduce bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The cross-sectional nature of the study limits the ability to determine causality. Additionally, the sample being drawn from a specific context restricts the generalizability of the findings. Future research should adopt longitudinal designs and examine these constructs across multiple contexts to gain a deeper understanding of their relationships. Additionally, future studies should incorporate qualitative methods such as focus group discussions and open-ended interviews to allow students to share their experiences freely (Creswell, 2013). Self-reported data may introduce bias, and the cross-sectional design limits causal inferences. The sample's lack of diversity affects generalizability, and important contextual factors like family dynamics and socioeconomic status were not extensively explored. Future research should adopt longitudinal designs and consider broader influences for a more comprehensive understanding of these constructs. Advanced neuropsychological assessments should be developed to identify the areas of the brain affected and how students' psychological functioning is influenced. Task-based assessments should also be employed to help students develop coping strategies for issues related to emotional intelligence, aggression, and social competence.

Recommendations

To support university students in developing emotional intelligence, reducing aggression, and enhancing social competence, universities should incorporate emotional intelligence training into both academic curricula and extracurricular activities. Workshops on emotional regulation, stress management, and communication skills can help students navigate challenges and build resilience. Peer mentoring programs and group activities that encourage collaboration and empathy can foster social competence while creating a supportive community. Additionally, conflict resolution training should be implemented to help students manage aggression constructively and promote positive interactions. Faculty and staff should be equipped with the knowledge to identify signs of emotional distress and provide appropriate guidance or referrals to mental health services. Universities should also establish dedicated counseling centers and support groups to address students' emotional and psychological needs. By embedding these initiatives into the broader university culture, institutions can create an inclusive environment that prioritizes emotional and social well-being, leading to improved academic performance, stronger interpersonal relationships, and enhanced overall student satisfaction.

Conclusion

This study examines the interconnectedness of emotional intelligence, aggression, and social competence among university students, highlighting their influence on well-being, relationships, and academic success. Emotional intelligence is essential for managing stress, fostering meaningful interactions, and adapting to academic challenges, while social competence enhances collaboration, empathy, and effective communication, contributing to both personal and professional growth. Conversely, aggression, often associated with low emotional intelligence and poor social skills, can hinder individual progress and disrupt campus harmony. The findings emphasize the importance of universities implementing targeted interventions such as emotional regulation training, conflict resolution programs, and collaborative learning opportunities to enhance students' emotional and social skills while reducing aggression. By fostering an inclusive and supportive campus culture, these efforts can improve student engagement, academic performance, and overall satisfaction. Future research should

explore these dynamics across diverse populations and over time develop more effective strategies for student development, ensuring they are well-equipped for success beyond university life.

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