

## **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND COPING STRATEGIES AMONG UNIVERSITY TEACHERS OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA**

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**ABSTRACT:** The present study investigated the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Coping strategies among university teachers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The research sample comprised of 222 male and 152 female university teachers. Convenient sampling technique was applied to approach the participants from five Universities of KPK. Teachers completed Self-Report Measure of Emotional Intelligence and Brief Cope Scale (in Urdu). Findings indicated significant relationship between Self Report Measure of Emotional Intelligence and coping strategies among teachers.

**Keywords:** Emotional intelligence, Coping strategies, University teachers, Brief cope scale

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to perceive, control and evaluate emotions and ability to understand his or her own emotions and the emotions of others and most commonly include concepts of emotional expression and regulation, self-awareness and empathy (Cherry, 2012; Doyle, 2012; Romanelli *et al.*, 2006). Individuals with lower EI are prone to poor physical and mental health and cannot cope with stressor (Batool, 2011). EI has strong relationship with individual's ability to cope with their environmental stressors. Some previous studies show that people with different level of emotional intelligence prefer different styles of coping strategies: Higher EI is correlated with higher satisfaction with life, better perceived problem-solving coping ability and significant relationship between problem solving and seeking social support, as well as problem solving and dimension of EI (self):self awareness, motivation, empathy and social skill and stress also showed relationship with emotional intelligence(manager); motivation, empathy and social skill (Bastian, 2005; Estelle, 2009).

Abilities to recognize and regulate emotions in ourselves and in others can be assessed through four major domains of EI: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management (Goleman, 2001). People who have a high degree of EI know themselves very well and are also able to sense the emotions of others (Serrat, 2009). The present study is based on Mixed Model of EI (Goleman, 2001) based on the above four components comprising of twenty competencies (Self-Awareness: emotional self-awareness, accurate self-assessment; Self-Management:

self-control, trustworthiness, conscientiousness, adaptability, achievement drive, initiative; Social Awareness: empathy, service orientation, organizational awareness; Relationship Management: developing others, influence, communication, conflict management, leadership, change catalyst, building bonds, teamwork & collaboration). These competencies are not innate capacities, but are learned abilities developed to achieve marvelous performance (Goleman, 2001).

Coping can also be described as thoughts, behaviors, or may be strategies that are used to manage a negative or stressful event like an academic failure (Lazarus and Folkman, 1987; Kaminsand Dweck, 1999; Folkman and Moskowitz, 2004). Folkman and Lazarus defined coping as activities undertaken to tolerate, reduce, master, or minimize environmental or intrapsychic demands perceived to represent potential threats, existing harm, or losses and coping is highly contextual, since to be effective it must change over time and across different stressful condition. Specific behaviors which are used in dealing with a stressor and may even be considered independent of outcome is known coping strategy. (Folkman and Lazarus, 1985)

The level of EI can predict or elaborate ways of coping (effective and ineffective) as life demands and stresses change or increase. Trait EI was associated positively with adaptive coping styles and negatively with maladaptive coping styles (Mikolajczak *et al.*, 2009). EI provides people with better understanding of their reactions to various sources of stress and guidance in coping process (Baker and Berenbaum, 2007). So EI and coping strategies may be interrelated to have an effect on each others. Individuals who are emotionally intelligent can cope better with life's challenges and control their

emotions more proficiently than those that cannot (Taylor, 2001). Many researchers studied the relationship between coping and EI such as Gohm and Clore(2002), Mikolajczak and Lumminet (2008), Ramos, Fernandez-Berrocal, and Extrema (2007). They all reported high EI lead to use of active, positive, problem-oriented and effective coping strategies rather than passive, emotion-focused and negative coping. Research on EI and coping strategies among teachers in Pakistan is sparse. And therefore the present study explores the relationship between EI and coping strategies of university teachers in Pakistan.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The sample for present study consisted of 222 male and 152 female University teachers. The sample was conveniently drawn from the University of Peshawar, Islamia College University of Peshawar, Engineering University of Peshawar, Comsat University of Abbottabad and Hazara University of Mansehra, Pakistan.

**Self –Report Measure of Emotional Intelligence (SRMEI):**(Khan and Kamal, 2010) adapted and developed SRMEI to assess the overall EI and components of EI (Emotional Self-Regulation, Emotional Self-Awareness and Interpersonal Skill). This scale consisted of 60 items rated on 5-point Likert-type scale (5= Always, 4= Often, 3= Moderate, 2= Rarely and 1= Never) and based on positively phrased and negatively phrased items. The score range for SREMI was from the minimum of 60 to maximum of 300. High scores on SRMEI reflected better emotional stability. The Cronbach’s alpha reliability of SRMEI scale was .91.

**Brief Cope Scale:** Brief Cope Scale was translated into Urdu (Akhtar, 2005) and was used in present study. This scale comprised of 4 subscales: Active Avoidance Coping, Problem-Focused Coping, Positive Coping, Religious/ Denial Coping. This scale consisted of 28 items with scoring answers on a four-point Likert scale (1= Never, 2= Very less, 3= Sometimes, 4= Alot).The possible theoretical range of score on Brief Cope was 28 to 112. High score on each subscale indicated more use of that particular coping strategy and low score indicates less use of that coping strategy. The Cronbach’s alpha reliability of Brief Cope Scale was .87 (Carver, 1997).

**Demographic information Questionnaire:** This questionnaire was based on the basic information of the respondents. The variables included age, gender, qualification and work experience.

**Procedure:** Before administering the scales, informed consent was obtained from all the participants. Then they were requested to complete demographic information

questionnaire, which was followed by two questionnaires: SRMEI and Brief Cope Scale. Participants were given approximately 40 minutes to complete the set of questionnaires. After collecting data, SPSS 16 version was used for data analysis. Pearson correlation was applied for testing hypotheses.

## RESULTS

Results revealed a significant positive correlation between EI and Problem Focused Coping,  $r(372) = .14, p < .01$  and Positive Coping,  $r(372) = .16, p < .01$ , and showed significant negative correlations between Active Avoidance Coping  $r(372) = -.38, p < .01$ , and Religious/Denial Coping  $r(372) = -.20, p < .01$ .

**Table 1: Correlation between Problem Focused Coping and Positive Coping with -reference to SRMEI**

| Variable | PFC    | PC     |
|----------|--------|--------|
| SRMEI    | .142** |        |
| SRMEI    |        | .155** |

Note: SRMEI =Self Report Measure Emotional Intelligence; PFC=Problem Focused Coping; PC= Positive Coping. df=372; \*\* p<.01

Table 1 showed significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and Problem Focused Coping and Positive Coping. Statistical findings indicated that Self Report Measure of Emotional Intelligence (SRMEI) was positively correlated with Problem Focused Coping and Positive Coping.

**Table 2: Correlation between Active Avoidance Coping and Religious/Denial Coping with reference to SRMEI**

| Variable | AAC     | RDC    |
|----------|---------|--------|
| SRMEI    | -.375** |        |
| SRMEI    |         | -.196* |

Note: SRMEI= Self Report Measure Emotional Intelligence; AAC= Active Avoidance Coping; RDC= Religious Denial Coping. df = 372; \*\* p<.01

Table 2 showed significant negative correlations among Self Report Measure of Emotional Intelligence, Active Avoidance Coping and Religious Denial Coping. Statistical findings indicated that Emotional Intelligence was negatively correlated with Active Avoidance Coping and Religious Denial Coping.

## DISCUSSION

The present study found a moderate relationship between EI and coping strategies among university teachers of KPK. The data revealed that EI had a statistically positive correlation with problem-focused coping and positive coping, coinciding with study which revealed that EI was positively associated with the problem-focused and positive emotional focused coping styles, and negatively associated with active avoidance coping and religious/denial coping styles (Noorbakhsh *et al*, 2010). It was also reported that EI was positively related to well-being, problem-focused coping and perceived nursing competency, and negatively related to perceived stress (Por *et al*, 2011). It was also observed that a significant relationship existed between problem solving, seeking social support, and problem solving in many dimensions of EI self: self awareness, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Brink, 2009).

The appraisal of emotions in the self and others was positively correlated with problem solving and positive reappraisal coping styles. Emotional regulation of the self was positively correlated with problem solving, confronting coping, self-controlling, positive reappraisal and with distancing, but negatively correlated with avoidance coping style. (Shah and Thingujam, 2008). Emotional Intelligence (intrapersonal and interpersonal) was a significant predictor of active coping strategy (Chan, 2008). Higher levels of EI was applied by (Campbell and Ntobedzi, 2007) who related to lower levels of psychological distress and to more adaptive coping but to less maladaptive coping, and another study showed that Trait EI was negatively associated with depression, somatic complaints and maladaptive coping styles and positively associated with adaptive coping styles (Mavroveli *et al*, 2007), thus a negative correlation between EI and ineffective coping is not surprising (Sahin *et al*, 2009).

The findings of this study revealed that EI had a positive relationship with problem focused coping strategy and positive coping strategy; and negative relationship with active avoidance coping strategy and religious/denial coping strategy of university teachers.

**Conclusion:** Through analysis it was concluded that with higher level of Emotional Intelligence teachers used adaptive coping strategies and with low level of EI teachers used maladaptive coping strategies; The teachers who scored low on EI also scored high on maladaptive coping strategy, these findings should be included in policy making to offer training and workshop to improve the level of EI. Findings may help management of university in making interventions in order to improve emotional intelligence of teachers and to enable them to deal with environmental stressors and difficulties. Study also suggested that professional functioning may be

improved by enhancing emotional intelligence. University teachers play crucial role for building students personality, their future provided they are capable of coping with life and prepare them for the future life provided the teachers have good level of EI and are capable of coping with the challenges in adaptive way.

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