

Trait Emotional Intelligence and Psychological Wellbeing in Drug Addicts: A Correlational Study.

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Abstract

The objective of the present study was to examine the relationship of Trait Emotional Intelligence (TEI) with psychological wellbeing in people who are drug dependent. After a detailed literature review the following hypotheses were formulated; 1) TEI will be positively correlated with autonomy. 2) TEI will be positively correlated with environmental mastery. 3) TEI will be positively correlated with personal growth. 4) TEI will be positively correlated with positive relations with others. 5) TEI will be positively correlated with a purpose in life. 6) TEI will be positively correlated with self acceptance. The sample of the present study consisted of 99 drug addicts. The age group of the entire sample was 18- 59 years (Mean age = 28.76, years, SD = 8.35). The sample was recruited from different drug rehabilitation centers in Karachi, Pakistan. Personal Information Form was used to record personal information of the participants. TEI Questionnaire-Short Form and Psychological Wellbeing Scale were administered to measure the Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Psychological Wellbeing, respectively. Pearson's product moment coefficient of correlation 'r' was applied to determine the relationship of TEI with variables of Psychological Wellbeing. Overall analysis indicates a significant positive correlation with the variable of Psychological Wellbeing i.e., autonomy ($r = .225, p < 0.05$), environmental mastery ($r = .266, p < 0.01$), personal growth ($r = .323, p < 0.01$), positive relations with others ($r = .272, p < 0.01$), purpose in life ($r = .200, p < 0.05$) and self-acceptance ($r = .403, p < 0.01$). These findings may contribute to understand better the phenomena and also to consider these variables for better outcomes in their lives.

Keywords: Trait Emotional Intelligence, Psychological Wellbeing, Drug Addicts

Introduction

Time of transition from adolescent to adulthood can be stressful as the individual tries to meet new challenges and perhaps adapt different roles in his or her life. Challenges include: leaving home, entering college, finding a job, marriage, and starting a family. These roles and responsibilities affect both their mental as well as physical health, but this depends on how they manage these roles and responsibilities.

Positive psychology represented a swing away from focusing primarily on psychopathology, and the enhancement of optimal human growth and wellbeing. A researcher¹ found that individuals with higher than average Emotional Intelligence (EI) were more successful in meeting environmental demands and pressures than others. Although, a large amount of research has been carried out to verify the relationship between EI, physical and mental health, the relationship of EI with psychological wellbeing with reference to addictive disorders is limited. A recent study conducted aiming to reveal the relationship between EI and health showed that out of 35 studies only 6 dealt with the issue of psychoactive substance use. EI has been found to impact on psychological health. For example, researchers¹ found that EI protected people from stress and lead to better adaptation. Further, Bar-On¹ found that individuals with high trait EI scores believed that they are in touch with their emotions, and they could regulate them in a way that promotes well-being. These individuals enjoy higher levels of wellbeing.

The issue of emotions has been a dominant component of theories and treatments of mental disorders since the end of the 19th century. Even Freud¹ had considered the role of emotions in the development of psychotropic substance dependence. He suggested that an attempt to turn away from a frightening environment, pain or disappointment can be found in the background of psychoactive substance abuse. Furthermore, Rado² discussed that people were addicted to substance use as a way of coping with emotional problems. Other researchers subsequently described the phenomena as a maladaptive way of fighting against psycho social stress such as anxiety, and depression.^{8,9} Meanwhile, research⁸ emphasised the somatically manifested emotions of people suffering from addictive disorders. These emotions are fixed at this level, due to their early traumatic nature. Later, McDougall⁸ also highlighted the importance of people's emotions with addictive disorders, and identified their substance use as a compulsive way of channelling overflowing emotions. We can observe that in all these psychoanalytically oriented theories, substance use possibly serves as a mean to regulate emotions of individuals.

Maintaining good mental health is important to live a long and healthy life. According to researchers,² emotional abilities are associated with pro-social behaviour such as stress management and physical health. Taking drugs as well as alcohol abuse may take place to suppress emotions. Generally, the capacity to regulate one's own emotions seems to be linked to a broader capacity for self-control, including the control of impulsive behaviour. Consistent with this conceptualization of psychological acceptance, there is a great deal of research that implicates this individual characteristic in a wide range of psychological problems, from substance abuse to depression and suicide.⁴ There is high co-morbidity of substance abuse and mood disorders and has long been posited that addicts may be taking self-medication to relieve emotional distress.⁴

Research indicates that there is a positive relationship between EI and psychological wellbeing^{5,6,7}, positive mood and self esteem.⁴ Growing as a person and expanding knowledge is a never ending process. People can grow if they are willing to acquire new experiences and seek out potentials. Researchers argue that, individual's self regard is always "on the line" and it requires to be secured against apparent threats. Swann and his colleagues expressed that it is possible that, an individual looks for an increase in their self-regard, by associating people who confirm their identity.⁴ Individuals are likely to keep interpersonal relationships where they are to confirm their personalities. Individual in one way or the other influence their self-regard through positive and negative incidents in life.

Little attention has been paid to how EI, relate to psychological well-being of individuals' behaviour and attitudes, especially individuals with a history of drug addiction. One way of filling the gap created in knowledge in this area is to examine the relationship of psychological wellbeing and emotional intelligence, and their implications for enhancing quality of life and positive personality development. Globally, there have been investigations on the social and emotional aspects of this population. To our knowledge no such research is available in Pakistan. This study investigated the relationship of trait EI with psychological well-being in drug addicts to determine the pattern and linkage, among these two variables in our culture, because, both these play a pivotal role in substance use over time. The concept of EI is relatively new. Emotions play a pivotal role in an individual's life. According to Payne,²¹ logic and reason are superior emotions which affect an individual's thinking and behaviour. EI was first defined by Salovey and Mayer.²² This involves the ability of an individual to monitor his or her own emotions and feelings as well as others' feelings and emotions, to differentiate between each other and to use that information to guide one's thinking. There is evidence to support the association of EI with health.¹⁷ Researchers have found a negative relationship between EI and substance abuse.³

Method

Participants

The sample for the present research comprised 99 poly drug users who had no other illnesses. The sample was recruited from a range of inpatient rehabilitation centers in Karachi. The age range was from 18 - 59 years (Mean Age = 28.76 years). The entire sample belonged to lower socioeconomic status. All the participants were those who approached the treatment centers voluntarily for treatment.

Procedure

Initially, sites of the target population were identified. Then the examiner visited those areas and approached the authorities for treatment and rehabilitation and obtained permission from them to collect data about them. They were provided sample questionnaires. After getting permission the examiner set a time to conduct interviews and to fill out the questionnaires. A letter of consent describing the research project and inviting participants was provided to authorities of respective treatment centers. Then, the researcher established a rapport with the participants. They were briefed about the purpose of the study and they were assured about the confidentiality of their information. All participated voluntarily. Researchers interviewed the participants and collected data about their history of drug use, related problems, including dependency for drugs and their status of knowledge about the risks of taking drugs was also assessed. After conducting brief interviews researchers then administered TEI questionnaire and administered the Psychological Wellbeing Scale (PWS). The individual administration of all these measures was to maintain the quality of responses provided by each participant and also to monitor the difficulty in understanding each statement mentioned in the questionnaires.

Statistical analysis

In order to examine the data statistically, Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS, Vol. 12) was used. Descriptive statistics (Mean, SD, and Percentages) were used to study the sample characteristics and Pearson product moment coefficient.

Description of measures

- a) **Personal Information Form.** A brief semi structured interview form was especially developed for the current research. The information consisted data related to each participant's age, gender, residence, education, marital status, duration of drug addiction and any illnesses related to drug addiction.
- b) **TEI Questionnaire-Short Form (TEI Que-SF).**²³ This is a 30 item questionnaire designed to measure global trait EI. It is based on the full form of the TEIQue, which covers the TEI sampling domain comprehensively. Based primarily on correlations with total facet scores, two items from each of the 15 facets were selected for inclusion in the short form, which uses a 7 point Likert-style response option format, ranging from 1=Completely Disagree to 7= Completely Agree. A global trait EI score was calculated by summing up the item scores and dividing it by the total number of items.

c) **Psychological Wellbeing Scale (PWS).**²⁴ This scale is a theoretically-grounded instrument that focuses on measuring six dimensions of psychological well-being: self acceptance, personal growth, purpose in life, positive relations with others, environmental mastery and autonomy. Each dimensional scale contains nine items equally split between positive and negative items. Items are scored on a 6-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Internal consistency coefficients (alpha) for Ryff's six subscales range from (0.82 to 0.90).

Results

Table 1

Descriptive statistics of age in the entire sample

Variables	Minimum	Maximum	M	SD
Age	18	59	28.76	8.35

Table 2

Descriptive statistics for the demographic characteristics of the sample

	N	%
Marital Status		
Single	57	57.6
Married	42	42.4
Family System		
Nuclear	49	49.5
Joint	50	50.5

Table 3**Relationship of TEI with autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life and self acceptance**

Variables	N	Pearson (r)	Sig.
Autonomy	99	.225*	.025
Environmental Mastery	99	.266**	.008
Personal Growth	99	.323**	.001
Positive Relations with others	99	.272**	.006
Purpose in life	99	.200*	.048
Self acceptance	99	.403**	.01

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Discussion

Findings of the present study are consistent with the previous study conducted by Bar-On²⁵ who reported that EI can predict the overall ability to self-actualise. These findings suggest that individuals who perceive themselves as self-determining and independent have the ability to face social stress and those who think and act in certain ways, develop certain abilities to regulate their behaviour with internal frame of reference and also evaluate positively their personal standards. The second hypothesis of this study shows that there is a positive relationship between TEI and environmental mastery. A study conducted has ²⁶ asserted that psychological health can be accounted for, in part, by one's ability to set and work towards goals that are congruent with a sense of the self (goal self-integration), an ability that would seem to depend on individual self-awareness. The third hypothesis suggested that "TEI is positively correlated to personal growth". Several researchers have found more important reasons to support these findings, for example, ²⁷ self-reported well-being was greater for individuals who held intrinsically oriented goals (e.g., personal growth, satisfying relationships and community contributions). These findings support the view that those who have higher levels of TEI, would have higher levels of personal growth also.

The fourth hypothesis suggested that TEI is positively correlated with positive relations with others. The present findings are consistent with other reports,²⁸ i.e. inadequate social and emotional support is associated with better health habits. Thus, those who are able to manage their own emotions are in a position to influence other people's expectations for social interaction. They may also be able to develop effective strategies to have better social interaction. Fifth hypothesis also shows that "TEI is positively correlated with a purpose in life". It means that those who have higher TEI would develop better goals and targets in their lives, have a sense of direction and give positive meaning to their present and past lives. Sixth and final hypothesis shows that "TEI is positively correlated with self-acceptance". Some studies²⁹ have shown that those who have higher levels of self acceptance have higher self regard. They found that individuals with higher levels of self regard tend to see themselves as effective and adequate and report higher self worth and value. The research findings are consistent with the interpretation that TEI and variable of psychological well beings discussed above are associated with each other. Researchers have done conceptual and empirical work on EI and psychological wellbeing, which is still necessary to refine these conceptual frameworks with reference to drug addiction and other psychiatric problems.

In summary, there is limited empirical research on the construct of psychological well-being and TEI. It is hoped that this study may help professionals to have an in-depth understanding to enhance treatment strategies. It may be premature to claim that the pattern of results of the present study is universal, and the results clearly extend the generalisation of TEI psychological well being in drug addicts. Yet, future studies are necessary to assess generalisation, by adding more diverse groups of participants from a broader range of treatment settings to collect more data. More sophisticated analysis will include assessment of the role of variables such as ethnicity, support system and socioeconomic background. Further, it is important to determine the individuals' wellbeing by extending to other areas, such as social and emotional problems. Rather than focusing on these two factors with only drug addicts, that may limit the researchers' views about the dynamics of psychopathology, there is a need to understand the causal relationship among the variable studies, to use preventive strategies, to overcome this problem. These findings may further develop insights into the psychological processes underlying drug addiction.

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