



Childhood Trauma, Emotional Intelligence and Resilience in Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

The current study aimed to investigate the relationship between childhood trauma, emotional intelligence and resilience in young adults. A correlational research design was used. A sample of 200 young adults aged 18-30 from Lahore, Pakistan was selected. Measuring instruments Childhood Trauma Questionnaire, Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire, and Resilience Scale were used. Findings of the study revealed a positive significant correlation between emotional intelligence and resilience, but no significant correlation between childhood trauma with resilience or emotional intelligence. Results showed that emotional intelligence is a significant predictor of resilience, but childhood trauma is not. No significant gender difference was found between resilience and emotional intelligence, but there is a significant gender difference in childhood trauma, as males reported higher levels of trauma than females. Future research focuses on the protective factors of emotional intelligence that help individuals to be resilient.



Introduction

Adverse events, such as physical, sexual, and emotional assault before the age of 18, are considered childhood trauma. A person's wellbeing in adulthood may be impacted if they were neglected, abused, lost a parent, or lived in a dysfunctional home as a child (Shonkoff et al., 2012). Emotional and psychological well-being are disturbed.

There are emotional and psychosocial difficulties during the adult stage. The psychological and emotional health of individuals can be adversely affected by adverse events. Interpersonal interactions, emotional control, and stable attachments may all be hampered. The traumatic events will persist into adulthood, causing emotional instability, low resilience, anxiety, and despair. Emotional, academic, and social functioning may also be impacted (Cicchetti & Toth, 2005).

Self-awareness, drive, understanding, and interpersonal skills are all "emotional intelligence". Individuals with strong "emotional intelligence" can manage difficulties. Perseverance and childhood trauma were revealed to be positively related. Emotional intelligence, according to Salovey and Mayer's (1990), is the capacity to identify one's own emotions as well as those of others. Strong emotional bonds, psychological well-being, and stress management are all positive attributes that support resilience (Schutte et al., 2007).

The capability to recover from trauma is known as resilience. Internal elements such as coping Included are self-efficacy and techniques as well as outside variables like community and social support (Luthar et al., 2000). In order to support young people' mental health and prepare them to handle the demands of social and scholastic pressure, it is critical to comprehend the idea of resilience (Masten, 2001). As a result, many people who encounter early trauma do not suffer negative effects. Most people are able to overcome obstacles. Strengthening resilience should be the aim of interventions.

According to Cicchetti and Toth (2005), there is a connection between childhood trauma and decreased resilience. Adverse childhood experiences cause children to develop unhealthy coping strategies as adults. These tendencies exacerbate mental health problems and have a detrimental impact on people's adaptive functioning. According to a recent study, resilient people have stable attachments and helpful connections (Luthar et al., 2000).

According to a study from Anda et al. (2006), resilience and childhood trauma are negatively correlated. Those who had gone through trauma demonstrated lower levels of resilience. Additionally, social ties were strained (Anda et al., 2006). Early trauma exposure increases the risk of anxiety, sadness, and stress, and the findings indicate a lack of resilience (Werner & Smith, 1992).

People with strong mental ability are resilient even after experiencing early trauma, according to Armijos et al. (2021). Interventions that promote emotional awareness and regulation, however, also help people become more resilient.

According to Zeidner et al. (2012), psychological well-being and emotional intelligence have been found to be positively correlated. Additionally, Martins et al. (2010) investigate the relationship between university students' resilience and emotional intelligence. "Emotional intelligence" (EI) is a protective characteristic requires research on early experiences.

Many incidences of childhood trauma go unreported in Pakistani culture. UNICEF claims that trauma can take many different forms in children. Social taboos and a lack of information restrict people from obtaining psychological treatment. Programs to raise people's emotional intelligence and resilience must be implemented in communities, schools, and the system of healthcare (Schutte et al., 2007). In Pakistani homes, psychological assistance is frequently discouraged. Boys are typically taught to repress their feelings. The lack of facilities causes trauma to go unaddressed. To develop resilience in such circumstances, a high degree of mental toughness is required. To improve Pakistani young adults' emotional intelligence and resilience, implementation and interventions are required.

The clinical applications of this study are quite important. It describes how resilience and emotional intelligence are related to early trauma. The study also sheds light on the resilience displayed by highly emotionally intelligent individuals. Findings aid in the development of successful solutions by educators, legislators, and mental health professionals. It offers a more comprehensive viewpoint in the fields of trauma studies and psychology.

Literature Review

In order to evaluate early negative experiences that impact psychological well-being and empathy, Irshad and Lone (2025) conducted a study. Data from 272 participants revealed that those who have experienced trauma have worse psychological health and lower emotional intelligence. The study's conclusions showed that people with more traumatic childhood experiences are more likely to develop psychological issues and to have less empathy (Irshad & Lone, 2025).

In a study by Ibrahim et al. (2023), 392 people from Sudan had their emotional intelligence, resilience, anxiety, and depression measured. In adults with a spectrum of low to mild resilience and intermediate to high emotional intelligence, a positive relationship between the two was discovered (Ibrahim et al., 2023).

Elreefay and Elyzal (2023), investigated the relationship between depression and early traumatic events and emotional regulation and resilience. 200 participants were given a questionnaire based on the variables get data them. Childhood have a positive connection with depression. Research indicates that people who are susceptible to depression symptoms are less resilient (Elreefay & Elyzal, 2023).

A study by Beyazit, Yurdakul, and Ahyan (2024), examined 265 individuals (135 girls and 130 boys) to determine the function of behavioral intelligence in the relationship between cognitive regulation of emotions and parental neglect. The factors were measured by the researchers using standardized evaluation instruments. The results indicated that emotional control and parental neglect are significantly mediated by emotional intelligence. This explains why people with higher EI are more likely to use adaptive techniques and why those who have endured early trauma can still control their emotions (Beyazit, Yurdakul, & Ahyan, 2024).

Younas and Anwar (2023), study explores the connection between academic stress and emotional intelligence. Standardized questionnaires were used in the data collection process. Research indicates that people with greater emotional intelligence were less stressed by gender disparities (Younas & Anwar, 2023).

Fatima (2022), a method of correlational research with questions were utilized to examine the relationship between emotions and stress. One-way ANOVA and an independent t-test were used. According to the findings, stress is less likely to affect people with greater EI (Fatima, 2022).

Sahar et al. (2023) investigated the impact of interpersonal skills on resilience. 538 individuals' data was gathered using random sampling. The Schneider Emotional Intelligence Scale and the Wagnild and Young Recovery Scale were utilized for evaluation. Results point to gender differences. In order to strengthen the young adults' resilience, it also recommends implementing an interpersonal skills program (Sahar et al., 2023).

Hypotheses

H1: There is likely to be a significant relationship between childhood trauma, emotional intelligence, and resilience in young adults.

H2: Childhood trauma and emotional intelligence are likely to be the predictors of resilience in young adults.

H3: There are likely to be significant gender differences in childhood trauma, emotional intelligence, and resilience.

Research Methodology

The current study investigates the relationship among young people' resilience, “emotional intelligence”, and “childhood trauma”.

Research Design

To determine the connection between the variables, a correlational study approach was employed.

Sampling Strategy

The technique of purposeful sampling was used to get data.

Participants

200 young individuals were chosen as a sample from various institutions and social media sites.

Measuring Instruments

Bernstein and Fink in 1998 invented a self-report measure of the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ). Childhood trauma was evaluated using CTQ. Items were rated using a 1-5 response scale, and each dimension was scored accordingly.

Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire-Short Form (TEIQue-SF). It was measured using 30 items of TEIQue-SF (Petrides, 2009).

The Resilience Scale (RS). It consists of 25 items and has five dimensions: purpose, perseverance, equanimity, self-reliance, and existential aloneness. It is a valid tool to measure resilience (Wagnild & Young, 1993).

Procedure

Data was gathered using the questionnaire method and a correlational study design. Young adults (18–30 years old) who had suffered childhood trauma completed the questionnaires by visiting universities and completing an online Google application on social media sites. Universities granted permission, and participants and institutions were informed of the goal. The instruments were used with approval. Participants gave their informed consent before to data collection, guaranteeing their voluntary involvement and privacy. The data was then examined using SPSS 27th edition, and the results were presented by ethical guidelines.

Result

Table 1: Demographics of the Participants

Variables	M	SD	n	%
Age	23.55	2.76	-----	-----
Gender				
Men	-----	-----	60	29.6
Women	-----	-----	140	69.0
Education	-----	-----		
Intermediate	-----	-----	22	10.8
Bachelors	-----	-----	110	54.2
Postgraduate	-----	-----	68	33.5
Have you experienced childhood trauma?	-----	-----		
Yes	-----	-----	200	98.5
No	-----	-----	-----	-----
Have you currently or previously undergone psychological therapy?	-----	-----		
Yes	-----	-----	-----	-----
No	-----	-----	200	98.5

Note: N = 200 (Participants average age 23.55 years old (SD= 2.76)

According to Table No. 1, a total of 200 young adults were selected for the study, age 18-30. Both males and females were selected in 60 (29.6%) males and 140 (69.0%) females. The education level of individuals was intermediate, bachelor's, and postgraduate. In which 22 (10.8%) were in intermediate, 110 (54.2%) were in bachelor's, and 68 (33.5%) were postgraduates. Mostly participants were in bachelor's, i.e., 54.2%. Average age of participants were 23.55 years old. 200 young adults (98.5%) were those who experienced childhood trauma and 200 participants (98.5%) were not currently or previously undergone a psychological therapy.

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient among Childhood Trauma, Emotional Intelligence, and Resilience in Young Adults. (N=200)

Variables	n	M	SD	1	2	3
1. CTQ	200	71.35	4.95	-----	-0.9	-0.5
2. TEIQUE	200	123.53	6.17	-.09	-----	.50**
3. RS	200	142.63	10.04	-.05	.50**	-----

*Note: (n=200) M = mean; SD= standard deviation; n=sample; *p<.05. **p<.01. ***p<.001*

A bivariate correlation was conducted to find out the relationship between the study variables. Results revealed that emotional intelligence has a significant positive correlation with resilience. It shows that individuals with high scores on emotional intelligence tend to be more resilient, which indicates that emotional intelligence enhances person ability to deal with adversity or stressful life events. However, it was determined that childhood trauma has no significant relationship with

emotional intelligence, which indicates that childhood trauma with high or low levels are not associated with emotional intelligence. Similarly, childhood trauma has no significant relationship with resilience, which suggests that higher trauma scores are not necessarily less or more resilient.

Table 3: Multiple Linear Regression (Forced Enter Method) showing Childhood Trauma and Emotional Intelligence as Predictors of Young Adults (N=200)

Predictors	B	95% CI for B		SE B	β	R ²
		LL	UL			
Step I						
1. Constant	44.34	12.74	75.94	16.03	----	.247***
2. CTQ	-.02	-.27	.23	.13		-.01
3. TEIQUE	.81	.61	1.00	.10		.50***

Note: CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit *p<.05. **p<.01. ***p<.001

Table 4 shows regression analysis to examine the predictors of resilience in young adults. Childhood trauma and emotional intelligence were entered as predictors in the regression model (Forced Entry Method).

There were no significant cases found in the data. Assumptions were met. Assumptions of independent error were also met, Durbin Watson value also lies between the range of 1 and 3. Another assumption of no perfect multicollinearity was met as all values were greater than 0.20 tolerance values, which suggests no perfect relationship between predictors exists (childhood trauma and emotional intelligence). Furthermore, assumptions of homoscedasticity, linearity (dots are spread in scatter plots), and normally distributed errors (bell-shaped histogram and no extreme variables in P.P. plots were observed) were met approximately.

In model I, both predictor variables were entered and the regression model was statistically significant, $R^2 = .247$ which indicates that the outcome of the variables is 24.7% with $F(2, 197) = 32.40, p < .001$. Between two predictors trait emotional intelligence appeared as significant positive predictor of resilience, while childhood trauma did not significantly predict resilience.

Table 4: Independent Sample t-test showing Gender Differences in terms of Childhood Trauma, Emotional Intelligence and Resilience

Variable	Males		Females		t(df)	p	95% CI		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
1. CTQ	72.68	5.04	70.78	4.80	2.53 (198)	.012*	.42	3.39	.39
2. TEIQUE	123.37	6.66	123.59	5.97	-.24 (198)	.813	-2.11	1.66	-.04
3. RS	142.65	10.66	142.61	9.81	.03 (198)	.97	-3.02	3.11	.00

Note: Males = 60; Females = 140; M = mean; SD = standard deviation; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit; CTQ = Childhood Trauma Questionnaire, TEIQUE= Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire, RS = Resilience Scale. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001

Gender differences were significant in childhood trauma, $t(198) = 2.53, p = .012$, with males (M = 72.68, SD = 5.00) indicating higher scores on the childhood trauma questionnaire than females (M = 70.78, SD = 4.80). Cohen's $d = 0.39$ effect size indicates a small to moderate difference. No significant gender differences were found in trait emotional intelligence and resilience, as both

variables have same means. It suggests both males and females have equal coping abilities to deal with adversities.

Discussion

The above carried out research has a total portion of individuals, N = 200 individuals, adolescents aged 18-30 years. The research includes collection of 60 males and 140 female young adults. The education level was intermediate, bachelor's, and postgraduate. Data collection was completed by offering an online form on Google on the social media and by visiting universities to fill up the survey forms.

The first hypothesis state, a significant, positive, and strong relationship between emotional intelligence and resilience, indicating that young adults with higher emotional intelligence are more resilient in coping with childhood trauma adversities. However, no significant relationship was identified between childhood trauma and emotional intelligence, which suggests that participants who experienced higher or lower levels of childhood trauma do not associate with emotional intelligence. Furthermore, there is no significant correlation between resilience and childhood trauma, which indicates that individuals with higher trauma were not necessarily less resilient.

Second hypothesis suggests that emotional intelligence significantly predicts resilience, while childhood trauma does not predict resilience, which indicates that past trauma does not determine one's resilience level. These results suggest that individuals bounce back from adversity if they are highly emotionally intelligent. The findings explain the theoretical view that resilience is shaped by psychological resources such as emotional intelligence rather than past traumatic adversities.

Third hypothesis indicates significant gender differences in childhood trauma, in which males report higher levels of trauma than females. The results show that due to socio-cultural dynamics, males are less encouraged to express their vulnerability, which leads to the exposure of adverse experiences. Emotional intelligence and resilience have no gender differences, which indicate that both males and females are similar in emotional and coping abilities. It shows that despite having differences in childhood trauma experiences, both genders have equal ability to develop the emotional and psychological resources necessary for resilience.

A significant relationship was found between variables in the study. The results show that resilience and emotional intelligence have a significant, strong, and positive relationship, which suggests that individuals are highly resilient to bounce back from adversities if they have high emotional intelligence. The existing literature supports the findings that higher emotional intelligence helps individuals to be resilient in dealing with childhood trauma. However, childhood trauma has no significant relationship with resilience and emotional intelligence, which indicates that individual who experience childhood trauma their emotional intelligence is not compromised with their ability to cope with adversities. The regression model showed emotional intelligence as a significant predictor of resilience among young adults, whereas childhood trauma does not predict resilience, which explains that higher emotional intelligence is resilient to bounce back from trauma and past traumatic experiences do not determine one's resilience level. There are significant gender differences between males and females in childhood trauma. This suggests males experienced more childhood trauma as compared to females. It shows that due to cultural contexts, males are often socially suppressed in their emotions, which results in underreporting the childhood trauma they faced and over reporting of female cases because of their cultural conditioning and their sense of openness.

According to study by Cloitre et al. (2009), resilience and childhood trauma are negatively correlated. Traumatic events impair an individual's capacity to overcome obstacles. Childhood trauma does not significantly predict resilience in the current study. Cloitre & his colleagues did concede, though, that access to therapy and social support will help mitigate these impacts, which is consistent with the results of recent studies (Cloitre et al., 2009).

According to a study by Armstrong et al. (2011), university students' resilience is predicted by their level of emotional intelligence. The findings indicate that People with greater mental ability are better able to handle stress, bounce back from hardship, and preserve psychological capacity. Regardless of one's experience of trauma, emotional intelligence increases resilience, according to the current study's findings (Armstrong, Galligan, & Critchley, 2011).

One of the studies shows emotional intelligence and psychological well-being have strong relationship. This supports current study results that emotionally intelligent individuals have the ability to deal with emotional challenges, which contributes in higher resilience (Schutte, Malouff, & Bhullar, 2007).

According to a research conducted by Hernandez et al. (2015), psychological as well as emotional development can be impacted by childhood trauma, but these effects can be mitigated by elements including cultural values, familial support, social support, and cognitive flexibility. These results are somewhat related to the current study, which found that protective variables that affect the participants' lives mean that childhood trauma has no significant connection with mental agility or resilience (Hernandez, Montenegro, & Pons, 2015).

Recommendation

- The mediation and variable moderators will be the main focus of future research.
- A longitudinal design should be taken into account in future studies to monitor their coping skills over time.
- A bigger sample size ought to be used.

Implications

Clinical procedures will be significantly impacted by this study. The study highlights how people with childhood trauma become more resilient when they possess strong emotional intelligence. Future research should focus on developing mental health solutions and elucidating positive feelings that support people in overcoming obstacles.

Policy makers might apply the study's findings in youth-focused mental health initiatives that emphasize the value of psychological interventions in education and behavioral wellness, particularly in Pakistani culture, wherein mental health awareness is low. To comprehend how people manage the effects of childhood trauma and develop resilience, future research will concentrate on modulating and mediator mechanisms

Conclusion

The current research investigates the connection between young adults' resilience, emotional intelligence, and childhood trauma. The findings showed that adaptability and emotional intelligence are related, regardless of early adversity. Resilience in young people is predicted by emotional intelligence. It implies that psychological effects are unaffected by early traumatic events. Men claimed larger childhood trauma than women. Although there were no gender

differences in "emotional intelligence" or resilience, suggesting that both genders are similarly capable of overcoming hardship. The study's findings showed that "emotional intelligence" is an inhibitor that helps people remain resilient in the face of adversity. To look into particular variations in trauma responses and determine which protective elements of emotional intelligence enable people to overcome hardships, future research should concentrate on qualitative and longitudinal approaches.

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