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FROM EMOTION TO ENDURANCE: THE ROLE OF COPING STYLES IN LINKING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE TO FRUSTRATION TOLERANCE AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

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Abstract
*The study explored the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI), coping styles, and frustration tolerance (FT) in young adults. It was hypothesized that EI correlates significantly with emotion-focused coping (EFC), problem-focused coping (PFC), and avoidance coping (AC), and FT. A sample of 300 young adults (146 males, 154 females) from Sialkot's universities participated. Data was collected using a self-developed demographic sheet, Emotional intelligence Scale (WLEIS-U) (Zahra et al., 2020), Brief-Coping Inventory (Nisa & Siddiqui, 2020) and Indigenous Frustration Scale (Zaka et al., 2021) were used. Analysis revealed positive relationships between EI and PFC (r=.499**, **p<0.01) and EFC (r=.357**, **p<0.01), while no significant correlation with AC (r=.077, p>0.05). EI also correlated positively with FT (r=.094, **p<0.01). Regression analysis showed PFC (B = .153, p < .001) and EFC (B= .088, p< .001) as significant predictors, while AC (B= .023, p<.181) and FT (B= .106, p< .103) were not significant predictors of the outcome variable.*
Implication of Study: *Findings of the study provide knowledge about EI and its impact on coping styles and FT among young adults. The study has positive implication for young adults, mental health professional and researchers to provide psycho education in these areas.*

INTRODUCTION

The concept young adulthood is developmental time-based and is generally characterized by the world health organization (WHO) as an age range of 18 to 24 years old and involves identity exploration, setting of goals, and becoming more independent (WHO, 2022). Among the cultures, this is a time of life that involves sociologically important transitions, such as life in education, occupation, and love. Transitions into adulthood hold a lot of potential as well as stress and

emotional challenges to most young adults. A fast-paced 21st century, heightened pressure to live in social, technological, and economic change, increased the need of this age of group to be emotionally flexible and psychologically resilient (Zhou et al., 2023).

Emotional intelligence (EI) has been identified as an important construct in the study of how individuals manage to achieve emotions, manage stress, achieve good health and develop effective relationships. Daniel Goleman discusses EI in terms of a group of competences that consist of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Goleman, 1998). Subsequent studies narrowed down these competencies in quantifiable areas in ways that demonstrated the importance of EI in academic, work, and mental health performance (Lin & Chen, 2023). As much as cognitive intelligence (IQ) has had a dominant role in problem solving, EI has been used to predict success in multi-faceted social and emotional situations (Leon-Barco & Lopez-Ramos, 2020).

The ability-based perspectives of Mayer and Salovey (1997) describe EI as the ability to perceive, use, understand and manage emotions. This framework views EI as along the lines of both an individual personality trait and as a skill that it is possible to learn having through specific training. Neuropsychologically, EI is linked to the work of the prefrontal cortex that coordinates the processes of social cognition, decision-making, and emotional regulations (Sarma, 2021).

Coping styles are the mental and behavioral techniques that people engage in order to deal with stress. In a study by Lazarus and Folkman (1986), coping is categorized into the problem-focused coping (PFC) that involves attempts of trying to change the source of stress and emotion-focused coping (EFC) involving regulation of stress emotion. The third category, avoidance coping (AC), implies distancing physically or mentally or staying away from the stressor, and it is associated with worse psychological outcomes with excessive uses (Yuan & Xie, 2023).

Empirical evidence shows that those who have an EI tend to engage more in adaptive coping methods like PFC and EFC, but they are unlikely to engage in AC (Veisani & Sadeghifard, 2021). These strategies are relevant not only to affecting short-term responses to stress but are also associated with long-term mental well-being and resilience (Wang et al., 2022).

Frustration tolerance (FT) is the ability of an individual to resist challenges and delays without subjecting him/herself to undue stress and unhealthy coping behavior (Mchedlidze et al., 2025). It is low FT that is linked with impulsiveness, aggression, and shyness and high FT that enables perseverance, accomplishment of goals, and emotional balance. Conceptually, FT is differentiated with emotion regulation because the former research is specifically linked to reactions in response to blocked goals or unmet expectations (Qian et al., 2021).

According to the suggestions by the Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis (Dollard & Miller, 1939) and further models, low frustration tolerance can lead to an increased risk of aggressive behaviour, in particular, when facing chronic stress (Zhang & Wang, 2021). Nevertheless, the desire to improve EI through recent interventions has demonstrated the effectiveness to lead to the improvements in frustration tolerance, indicating that emotional competencies might serve as a form of resiliency to prevent maladaptive reactions to frustration (Ben-Amor et al., 2025).

The theoretical and empirical literature implies that there is a connection between EI, coping styles and FT. The ability to recognize and regulate emotions achieved via high EI drives an application of adaptive coping strategies. These coping mechanisms could in turn improve the capacity of an individual to tolerate frustration by lessening the emotional consequences of impediments and setbacks (Tian et al., 2023). On the other hand, insufficient EI can promote the use of avoidance coping and low frustration tolerance as sources of stress and the deterioration of mental health (Nowacki et al., 2024).

As much as the interaction between EI and coping has been heavily explored among the Westerners, there has been little research concerning these said constructs, coupled with FT, specifically in South Asian cultures. The communication of cultural norms about emotion expression, interpersonal

relations, and managing stress might affect the development and use of emotional abilities of the young adults (Shi & Yue, 2021). This research paper will fill this gap and assess the relationships between EI, coping style, and FT among Pakistani university students adding to the literature in the world concerning emotional competence and psychological robustness.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

The current aims:

- To investigate the relationship between EI, EFC, PFC and AC among young adults.
- To investigate the relationship between EI and FT among young adults.
- To investigate the relationship between EFC, PFC, AC and FT among young adults.

1.2 Hypothesis

Following are hypotheses of the current study:

1)EI would have significant relationship with EFC, PFC and AC among young adults.

2)EI would have significant relationship with FT among young adults.

3)EI is likely to predict EFC, PFC, AC and FT among young adults.

Method and Participants

The cross-sectional process in this study was used and correlational research design was applied, and the variables examined were emotional intelligence, coping strategies and frustration tolerance among young adults. The respondents were 18-24 years age group young people (146 male and 154 female) from 3 universities of Sialkot namely University of Sialkot, University of Management and Technology and Government Murray college Sialkot and the sample was random. The subjects were males and females, with lower, middle and upper socio-economic status, and were living in nuclear and extended families. A demographic sheet, Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (U) (validated by Zahra et al., 2020) showed that questionnaire sub-scale level reliabilities ranged from 0.772 to 0.774, while the Brief-COPE Inventory (validated by Nisa & Siddiqui, 2020) recorded reliabilities for the subscales of 0.77 (problem-focused coping), 0.67 (avoidance coping), and 0.66 (emotion-focused coping), and the Indigenous Frustration Scale for Emerging Adults (validated by Zaka et al., 2021) showed General reliabilities at 0.93 for full scale, while subscales ranged from 0.80 to 0.87. After institutional ethical permission and adequate informed consent, groups of participants were asked to fill out paper questionnaires that took them about 25–30 minutes to complete, with confidentiality and anonymity ensured. Descriptive statistics were computed using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 24), potential predictors of frustration tolerance were determined with a Pearson product-moment correlation analysis for bivariate analyses and with multiple regression analysis.

Results

Table 3.1

Summary of Socio-demographic and Characteristics of the entire sample.

Variables	F	%
Gender		
Male	146	48.7
Female	154	51.3
Age Group of Participants		
18-21	187	62.3
22-24	113	37.7
Number of Siblings		
1-4	173	57.7
5-8	127	42.3
Birth Order		

First Born	102	34.0
Middle Born	114	38.0
Last Born	84	28.0
Education Level		
Graduation	270	90.0
Post-Graduation	30	10.0
Family System		
Nuclear	180	60.0
Joint	120	40.0
Level of Income		
30,000 – 50,000	58	19.3
51,000 – 70,000	50	16.7
71,000 – 1Lac	90	30.0
100,000 – 150,000	37	12.3
150,000 – Above	65	21.7
Socioeconomic Status		
Lower	49	16.3
Middle	201	67.0
Upper	50	16.7
Marital Status		
Married	36	12.0
Unmarried	264	88.0

N=300

Table 3.2

Pearson Product Moment Coefficient of Correlation analysis of Variables (N=300).

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
EI	78.77	16.04	-	.499**	.077	.357**	.094
PFC	23.44	4.92		-	.278**	.635**	.204**
AC	23.70	4.68			-	.360**	.385**
EFC	19.77	3.94				-	.340**
FT	68.62	18.03					-

Note: *EI= Emotional Intelligence, PFC= Problem Focused Coping, AC= Avoidance Coping, EFC= Emotion Focused Coping, FT= Frustration Tolerance, M= Mean, SD= Standard Deviation, *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level; **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.*

Table 3.2, results indicates that both the Emotional Intelligence (EI) is significantly and positively correlated with Problem-Focused Coping (PFC; r=.50, p< .01) and Emotion-Focused Coping (EFC; r=.36, p< .01), but not both Avoidance Coping (AC) and Frustration Tolerance (FT). PFC correlates positively with AC (r=.28, p< .01), EFC (r=.64, p< .01) and FT (r=.20, p< .01). EFC and FT are also positively correlated with AC (r=.36, p<.01), EFC (r=.39, p<.01) and FT (r=.34, p<.01), respectively. In general, EI is associated with an increase in adaptive ways of coping.

Table 3.3

Multiple Regression analysis showing independent variable Predicting difference dimensions of dependent variables in adults (N=300).

Variables	B	SE B	t	P	95% of CI
Constant	11.36	1.23	9.17	.000	[8.92, 13.80]
PFC	.153	.015	9.949	.000	[.123, .184]
Constant	21.92	1.35	16.17	.000	[19.25, 24.59]
AC	.023	.107	1.340	.181	[-.011, .056]
Constant	12.15	1.06	11.36	.000	[10.04, 14.25]
EFC	.088	.013	6.599	.000	[.062, .114]
Constant	60.284	5.210	11.57	.000	[50.03, 70.53]
FT	.106	.094	1.634	.103	[-.022, .233]

Note: *PFC= Problem Focused Coping, AC= Avoidance Coping, EFC= Emotion Focused Coping, FT= Frustration Tolerance*

As the table 3.3 results on the regression indicate, Problem-Focused Coping (PFC) (B = .153, p < .001) and Emotion-Focused Coping (EFC) (B= .088, p< .001) obtain significant positive coefficients, which means that the higher these measures of coping styles, the higher the results on the outcomes. On the contrary, Avoidance Coping (AC) (B= .023, p<.181) and Frustration Tolerance (FT) (B= .106, p< .103) are not significant predictors of the outcome variable. This signifies that adaptive coping strategies are more influential in the determination of the dependent measure as opposed to avoidance or frustration tolerance.

Discussion

Numerous International and Pakistani research studies supported our research findings. Hypothesis 1 and 2 showed that EI has positive relationship with EFC and PFC whereas no significant relationship with AC and FT. Research study Masha'al et al. (2024) found that emotional intelligence (EI) is crucial in guiding nursing students' coping, with higher EI leading to more problem-focused strategies. Lu et al. (2022) showed psychiatric nurses with elevated EI preferred positive coping styles, indicating EI aids stress regulation. Zhang et al. (2024) noted gender differences in medical students, where those with higher EI utilized active coping methods. Khorasani et al. (2023) demonstrated EI training improved medical students' stress management and problem-focused coping. Arora & Sikhwal (2023) linked trait EI in adolescents with better coping, while Doğru et al. (2022) confirmed strong EI predictive properties across occupations, supporting various studies highlighting EI's beneficial role in adaptive coping and resilience.

A research study by Farheen et al. (2021) found that problem-focused and religious/emotional coping protected against burnout in Pakistani medical students, while avoidant coping increased stress. Haider et al. (2022) linked resilience and adaptive coping to higher life satisfaction during COVID-19, whereas avoidant coping correlated with lower well-being. Maqsood et al. (2024) showed that adaptive strategies improved psychological well-being among teachers, mirroring positive findings in emotional coping. Perveen et al. (2024) indicated that adaptive coping moderated distress, while Khan et al. (2021) associated religious coping with lower anxiety. Overall, studies emphasize adaptive coping's benefits and the maladaptive nature of avoidance across various populations. Lazarus and Folkman's transactional stress and coping model (1984), suggesting that individuals with higher EI effectively utilize adaptive coping mechanisms. Reduced stress reaction proposed by Mayer and Salovey's mastery model of EI (1997) also support our hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3 revealed that EI is likely to predict EFC, PFC, AC and FT among young adults. Research study by Li & Liang in 2022 found that problem-focused engagement positively correlates with resilience, while emotion-focused

engagement also predicts resilience when expressive suppression is low, Problem-focused disengagement negatively predicts resilience. Wang et al. (2023) revealed that approach-oriented coping significantly predicts frustration tolerance. However, frustration tolerance's predictive role was not supported. Allen MT. (2021) demonstrated that approach coping correlates with lower perceived stress, while avoidance coping showed no significant stress improvement over time.

A study by Malik et al. (2022) found problem-focused strategies positively influenced coping success in Pakistani medical residents, while avoidance coping did not. Haider et al. (2022) identified resilience and adaptive coping as strong predictors of life satisfaction in medical students, with avoidance coping showing weak or non-significant correlations. Noureen et al. (2021) confirmed that problem-focused coping reduced burnout, while avoidant coping was insignificant. Tahir et al. (2022) showed adaptive strategies predicted lower academic procrastination, unlike avoidance strategies.

Conclusion

Overall, this research paper discussed the correlation between El coping style and FT among young adults. The results confirm the hypotheses and it has been suggested that El plays a significant role in determining coping patterns and more tolerance of frustration. Individuals who have too much El are more likely to adopt adaptive coping skills and demonstrate high level of tolerance to frustration. The predictive El on coping styles and frustration tolerance is also identified in the study, which portrays that emotions intelligence can be a true asset regarding regulating emotions during a difficult situation. Taken all in all, the given research not only helps remind us of the significance of El in the context of coping and resilience, but it also serves as the evidence of the potential academic value of the interventions designed to acquire the skills of emotional intelligence to exercise reasonable control over frustration and foster a healthy lifestyle.

Limitation and Recommendation

The study's findings are limited to young adults in Sialkot's universities, lacking broader applicability. Increasing the sample size could enhance the generalizability of results. The research focuses on emotional intelligence, coping styles, and frustration tolerance but overlooks other influencing factors like personality traits and cultural influences, potentially limiting understanding. To deepen insights, it's essential to investigate these constructs across diverse cultures and age groups. Future studies should explore qualitative approaches to enrich findings and broaden perspectives on the topic.

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