



DOI: [10.71317/jgst.2.8\(s\).2026.468](https://doi.org/10.71317/jgst.2.8(s).2026.468)

Journal of Global Social Transformation

Journal homepage: <https://rjsaonline.org/index.php/JGST>



The Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence, Resilience, and Psychological Well-Being Among University Students: The Mediating Role of Perceived Stress

Shumaira Rahim¹, Sundas Naveed², Asad Ullah³, Humaira Batool⁴

¹ Department of Management Sciences, Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University, Quetta

Email: shumaira.rahim@gmail.com

² Punjab University

Email: naveedsundas63@gmail.com

³ Department of Educational Research & Assessment, University of Okara, Okara, 56300, Pakistan

Email: asadullahsial786@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-1823-5743>

⁴ National University of Modern Languages (NUML), Islamabad

Email: shbatool@numl.edu.pk

ARTICLE INFO

Submission:

July 08, 2026

Revised:

July 24, 2026

Accepted:

August 09, 2026

Available Online:

August 23, 2026

Keywords:

Emotional Intelligence, Resilience, Psychological Well-Being, Perceived Stress, University Students, Mental Health, Higher Education, Student Well-Being, Mediation Analysis, Psychological Adaptation

Corresponding author:

Shumaira Rahim

Email: :

shumaira.rahim@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the association of EI, resilience and psychological well-being to perceived stress in university students. The institution of university offers a host of academic, social and personal demands that can impact students' mental health and overall well-being. Emotional intelligence and resilience are psychological resources which have been identified as playing a role in the learner's stress management and positive psychological functioning. However, there is a lack of understanding on the relationship of these factors with psychological wellbeing, especially for higher education institutions. In the present study the mediator between emotional intelligence and psychological well being was perceived stress and perceived stress with psychological well being was taken as resilience of students. For the respondents in Higher education institutes, it is recommended to use quantitative cross sectional research design. Common instruments for data collection include the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale, Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale, Perceived Stress Scale and the Ryff Psychological Well-Being Scale. The study is based on the assumption that the emotional intelligence, resilience and psychological well being are positively related, and the perceived stress and psychological well being are negatively related. In addition, it is hypothesized that perceived stress will buffer the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being. The findings will contribute to the knowledge of student mental health and provide recommendations that are practical and will be passed on to schools who desire to improve student mental health and performance. The study emphasises the need for ongoing research and development of emotional skills and interventions which build emotional resilience to help buffer students' emotional reactions to stress and elicit positive psychological reactions.

Introduction

Background of the Study

In higher education, well-being is now an important issue around the world. A University student has a number of academic, social, financial and life experiences which could affect their mental health and quality of life. University life can be challenging for students and they may have more expectations placed on their performance in class, experience more social interaction and have an increased chance of not having a career path lined up once they graduate. The challenges can lead to a considerable amount of stress which can have a negative impact on pupils' mental health and their performance.

Over the past few years, there has been an increased focus on psychological factors that can promote students' positive mental health. Some of these factors include emotional intelligence and resilience and have been shown to be important indicators of psychological health. EI is the ability of an individual to sense, interpret, manage and use emotions in an appropriate manner in personal and social contexts. Emotionally intelligent individuals cope better with emotional issues, have positive interpersonal relationships and respond to emotional stress.

Another important psychological attribute that helps people to successfully meet adverse events, challenges and stress is Resilience. When things go wrong, resilient students are more likely to be able to recover and stay motivated and on track to achieve learning goals. Resilience has now been recognized as a protective factor in psychological adaptation and mental health, and is broadly viewed as a key focus point.

Psychological well-being refers to a number of dimensions of positive functioning: self-acceptance, autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationships with others and purpose in life. A psychologically healthy child will undoubtedly be content with his/her life, emotionally balanced and studying.

One concept that is important to the discussion of the relationship between emotional intelligence, resilience and psychological well-being is that of perceived stress. Perceived stress is a person's feeling of stressful situations, and their ability to handle them, based on their self-perception. The students who are more emotionally intelligent are able to regulate their emotions and handle stress better and hence they experience less stress. Likewise, resilient individuals might have difficulties as difficulties instead of as barriers.

Knowledge of the interaction of these variables in a higher education environment with greater incidence of stress-related problems would be beneficial. The understanding of factors that promote psychological wellness can be utilized in successful interventions aimed at promoting student mental health and success in the university environment.

Problem Statement

Although more and more students of universities are aware that stress in students is a serious issue which has a negative impact on their psychological health, yet many students are experiencing high level of stress. Emotional intelligence, resilience and psychological well being have been investigated individually in the past with very few studies investigating perceived stress as a mediating variable between emotional intelligence and psychological well being in university students.

Research Objectives

The relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological health of college students was explored:

1. To find out whether there is a link between the two factors of resilience and mental health.
2. To find the relationship between emotional intelligence and perceived stress.
3. To investigate the association between perceived stress and mental health.
4. To find the relationship between Emotional intelligence and Psychological well being in Mediation mechanism with Perceived stress.

Research Questions

1. What do the concepts of emotional intelligence have to do with psychological well-being?
2. How is it that acting out is connected to psychological health? Do there exist strong links between resilience and psychological well being?
3. The emotional intelligence is related to perceived stress?
4. How do you think stress (how you feel) affects wellbeing?
5. Is there a mediating relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological well being with perceived stress as the mediator?

Research Hypotheses

H1: Emotional intelligence has a positive relationship with psychological well-being.

H2: Psychological well-being is positively predicted by resilience.

H3: Emotional intelligence is negatively related to H3: Perceived stress.

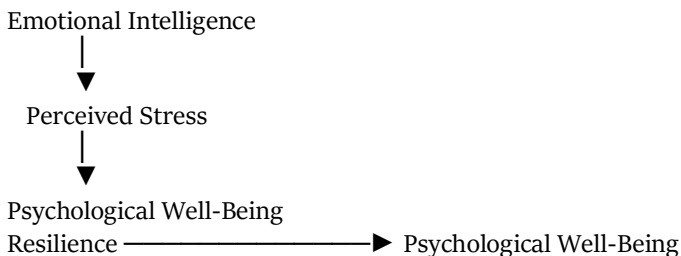
H4: Perceived stress will be negatively related with psychological well-being.

H5: Emotional intelligence, which is a perceived stress mediator and psychological well-being are correlated.

Significance of the study

The findings of the research also have relevance for the field of educational psychology and mental health of students, as it explores the relationship between emotional intelligence, resilience and psychological well being, as well as the mechanisms. The results can be utilized to support evidence-based interventions of the University Management, Counsellors, Teachers for the reduction of stress level and psychological adaption of the students.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



Literature Review

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is one of the psychosocial psychological attributes that is required for personal, social and academic functioning. The idea of emotional intelligence was made popular when the definition by Salovey and Mayer (1990) was developed, which defines EI as the ability to perceive, understand, regulate and utilize emotions effectively. Later, Goleman (1995) added and emphasized their contribution in the area of academic achievement, leadership, interpersonal relations and psychological adaptation.

Emotional intelligence comes in very handy in a college setting when dealing with college related stress, social interactions and personal problems. High emotional intelligence students are likely to have greater emotional skills in the areas of emotional awareness, emotional management and emotional functioning. They are skills which they can learn to use to soothe themselves and improve their mental health.

The relationships between emotional intelligence and self-esteem, life-satisfaction and academic engagement and psychological wellbeing are all positive. Emotional regulation is significant since students with good emotional regulation skills generally experience less anxiety and depression since they can better regulate their emotions. The ability to communicate and relate well with others are also important factors of emotional intelligence that facilitates psychological adjustment.

In recent attempts to measure emotional intelligence in college students, it was found that there is indeed a great correlation between emotional intelligence and mental health and academic performance in college students. There is a correlation between the higher level of EI and the students' higher level of optimism, emotional stability and adaptability. Hence, the concept of emotional Intelligence is perceived as one of the critical protective factors which brings positive psychological results under the circumstances of an educational environment.

Resilience

Resilience is the ability to respond to adverse events, stressors and difficult situations in a positive manner. It is something dynamic – people recover from difficulties and continue to be productive despite challenges or failures.

The concept of resilience has been of special interest in positive psychology and education. Masten (2014) views resilience as a lack of psychological issues as well as the development and maintenance of adaptive capacities and strengths that allow people to flourish in challenging circumstances.

The students in the University have to experience many stresses such as mental stress from studying, financial stress, instability of work and adaptation problems in socializing. Resilience enables students to remain psychologically balanced and to keep on going with their aspirations, despite these challenges. More resilient kids = more resilient regarding perseverance, confidence and emotional stability.

There have been several studies that have reported a strong positive correlation between resilience and psychological well being. Resilient people experience fewer stressors and emotional distress, and more satisfaction and happiness in life. Resilience also helps to develop pupils' ability to cope well, helping them to see stressful situations as challenges rather than threats.

There are also some indications that being resilient protects against mental health issues. A child's ability to rise to the challenge is less likely to cause him or her to suffer from severe anxiety, depression, or psychological fatigue. Resilience can therefore be a useful tool to help the mental health and wellbeing of the University's population.

Psychological Well-Being

Psychological well-being is complex and reflective of a positive psychological functioning, and life satisfaction. The concept of psychological well-being has been framed as a set of six dimensions by Ryff (1989): self-acceptance, autonomy, environmental mastery, positive relations with others, personal growth and purpose in life.

Psychological wellbeing is more than the absence of mental illness – it's about wellbeing in terms of functioning, having good relationships, and growing. Studies on psychological wellness in the higher education setting have been linked to higher education outcomes such as academic achievement and social adjustment and future success.

The high psychological well-being is reflected in students' engagement in the academic learning and emotional stability. They are better able to have positive relationships, deal with challenges and be content with their learning experiences.

But, the competition in school, the pressure of technology, financial issues and worries about future jobs are all leading to mental health issues with today's college students. The difficulties can take a toll on mental well-being, and lead to a greater risk for stress-related health issues.

The need to highlight from time to time details that support a pupil's psychological well being has been a focus of research. Two other variables come to the fore—emotional intelligence and resilience—and they have the potential to be important factors in positive psychological functioning.

Perceived Stress

Perceived stress is a reflection of one's subjective feelings of stress, unpredictability or being overwhelmed in life situations. Therefore, perceived stress is subjective experiences of stress and personal interpretations whereas objective stress is real stressors.

This idea was first proposed by Cohen et al., (1983) who hypothesized that people would react to similar situations in ways based on their coping styles and psychological characteristics. Keep in mind that the stress reaction can vary among individuals, even when they are in the same circumstance.

University students who perceive high level of stress have been associated with exams, assignments, financial issues, social relations and career issues. Too much stress can make it hard to focus, do less well in school, and have an adverse impact on psychological well-being.

There has been consistent evidence that the amount of perceived stress and psychological wellbeing are inversely related. Those individuals who report that they are experiencing a high level of stress tend to feel less satisfied with life, less emotionally stable and more psychologically distressed.

Importantly, emotional intelligence may be used to reduce perceived stress through boosting emotional self-regulation and coping abilities. Resilient children can cope more effectively with stress, for example, they have adaptive coping strategies and psychological characteristics.

Emotional Intelligence & Psychological Well-Being

Emotional Intelligence and Psychological Wellbeing have been discussed in the field of psychology. High EI individuals are more emotionally balanced, more content with their life and have better mental health.

Emotional Intelligence may have a number of effects on psychological health. The emotionally intelligent are able to effectively control negative emotions and keep them in a positive experience. Second, they have good interpersonal skills which enable them to maintain supportive social relationships. Thirdly, they are more likely to engage in coping responses to problem situations that are adaptive.

Many empirical studies have found that there are correlations between emotional intelligence and university students' psychological well-being. Positive outcomes of having a high emotional intelligence are an increase in joy, decrease in anxiety, increase in self esteem and improved psychological adjustment.

The above results have been consistent with the following hypothesis:

The emotional intelligence is positively related to the psychological well-being of the university students.

- Young people will discover how to be resilient and healthy in their thinking in this chapter.
- However, one of the factors always mentioned as a key that predicts mental health is resilience. Resilient people recover from failures, adapt to new circumstances and have a healthy attitude.

The university student who is emotionally stable and is able to withstand the difficulties in the university, can be achieved through the use of resilience. The study indicates that resilient children are more content in their lives, have more positive attitudes and are psychologically developed.

Higher education studies have shown resilience to be well correlated with psychological wellness. Adverse events and stress can be detrimental to mental health outcomes and resilience skills can aid towards positive mental health outcomes.

So the hypothesis is put forward that:

The hypothesis suggests that resilience is positively related to the well-being of University students when it comes to the field of Psychology.

Describe what is meant by Emotional Intelligence and Perceived Stress.

Emotional intelligence is seen to have a positive contribution to emotional awareness and emotional regulation which reduces stress. High EI students will most likely be able to respond to emotional reactions and respond to stressful situations better.

There have been a number of studies that have found negative links between EI and perceived stress. People who are emotionally intelligent are likely to be more likely to look at stressful situations as controllable as they use constructive coping mechanisms.

Therefore it is hypothesized that:

The correlation between students' score of UI and perceived stress at the University is negative. There is a negative correlation between the students perceived stress and UI.

Perceived stress and psychological well-being will be shown to be 2.8.

Perceived stress is one of the most important factors regarding one's psychological health and wellbeing. Stress can lead to emotional fatigue, anxiety, depression and unhappiness with life.

There's ample evidence that high stress is detrimental to mental health and function. Many studies have identified high levels of stress as being associated with low levels of happiness and low levels of motivation among students and poor mental health as being associated with high levels of stress.

So, it is assumed that the following:

The hypothesis 4 is that the perceived stress has a significant negative correlation with the psychological well-being of university students.

Perceived stress is a mediator of the relationship between emotional and physical health.

Perceived stress is a mediator between EI and psychological well-being and can give a valuable insight in this relationship. Emotional intelligence can help to improve wellbeing by helping people to perceive less stress and cope better.

Emotionally intelligent students will have greater ability to see and feel stress in a positive way and to be better able to regulate their emotions. That is, there will be less perceived stress and psychological well being will be better.

The indirect pathway from emotional intelligence to well-being, via stress reduction, has been supported by previous studies and is deemed to be a key mediator of this pathway.

Based on this, the final hypothesis is that:

According to the hypothesis H5, the variables emotional intelligence and psychological well-being have a mediating variable of perceived stress among university students.

Table 1: Summary of Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Statement
H1	Emotional intelligence positively predicts psychological well-being
H2	Resilience positively predicts psychological well-being
H3	Emotional intelligence negatively predicts perceived stress
H4	Perceived stress negatively predicts psychological well-being
H5	Perceived stress mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being

Research Gap

While there is literature on the study of emotional intelligence, resilience, perceived stress, and psychological well-being separately, only few studies have explored these variables together in a comprehensive mediation model with university students. In addition, studies are limited in developing countries, especially Pakistan.

The literature so far has largely been on the direct link between emotional intelligence and well-being, with relatively few studies exploring the indirect pathways by which emotional intelligence affects psychological outcomes. Although the mediating role of perceived stress is largely overlooked in higher education.

Hence, this study provides a significant contribution by exploring the direct impact of emotional intelligences and resiliency on psychological well-being of University students and by exploring the mediating role of perceived stress.

Methodology

Research Design

Cross-sectional survey design (quantitative).

Population

Students of public and private universities of Pakistan who have enrolled in universities.

Sample Size

300–500 students.

Sampling Technique

Convenience sampling

Instruments

Variable	Instrument
Emotional Intelligence	Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS)
Resilience	Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-10)
Perceived Stress	Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10)
Psychological Well-Being	Ryff Psychological Well-Being Scale

Data Analysis

- Descriptive Statistics
- Reliability Analysis (Cronbach Alpha)
- Pearson Correlation
- Multiple Regression
- Mediation Analysis (PROCESS Macro Model 4 / SEM)

Ethical Considerations

Participation will be voluntary, confidential, and based on informed consent.

Results

Demographic Profile of Respondents

400 university students participated in the study. The participants were drawn from various public and private universities throughout Pakistan. The sample consisted of both undergraduate and postgraduate students from different academic field.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 400)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	190	47.5
	Female	210	52.5
Age	18–22 Years	240	60.0
	23–26 Years	120	30.0
	Above 26 Years	40	10.0
University Type	Public	230	57.5
	Private	170	42.5

Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's Alpha values were calculated to determine the internal consistency of the study instruments.

Table 3: Reliability Analysis

Variable	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Emotional Intelligence	16	.89
Resilience	10	.87
Perceived Stress	10	.85
Psychological Well-Being	18	.91

The results indicate satisfactory reliability for all measurement scales, with alpha values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70.

Descriptive Statistics**Table 4: Means and Standard Deviations**

Variable	Mean	SD
Emotional Intelligence	3.92	0.58
Resilience	3.85	0.62
Perceived Stress	2.71	0.69
Psychological Well-Being	4.01	0.57

The findings suggest that students reported relatively high levels of emotional intelligence, resilience, and psychological well-being, while perceived stress remained at a moderate level.

Correlation Analysis**Table 5: Pearson Correlation Matrix**

Variables	EI	RES	PS	PWB
Emotional Intelligence (EI)	1			
Resilience (RES)	.61**	1		
Perceived Stress (PS)	-.54**	-.49**	1	
Psychological Well-Being (PWB)	.67**	.63**	-.58**	1

p < .01

The correlation analysis indicates that emotional intelligence and resilience were positively associated with psychological well-being, whereas perceived stress was negatively associated with psychological well-being.

Regression Analysis

Table 6: Predictors of Psychological Well-Being

Predictor	β	t	p
Emotional Intelligence	.38	8.21	< .001
Resilience	.31	6.94	< .001
Perceived Stress	-.29	-6.18	< .001

$R^2 = .54$

The regression model explained 54% of the variance in psychological well-being. Emotional intelligence and resilience positively predicted psychological well-being, while perceived stress negatively predicted psychological well-being.

Mediation Analysis

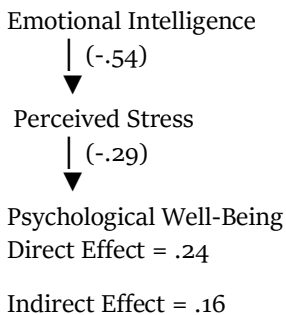
The mediation analysis was conducted using PROCESS Macro Model 4.

Table 7: Mediation Results

Path	Effect	p-value
EI → Perceived Stress	-.54	< .001
Perceived Stress → PWB	-.29	< .001
EI → PWB (Direct Effect)	.24	< .001
EI → PS → PWB (Indirect Effect)	.16	< .001

The indirect effect was significant, indicating that perceived stress partially mediated the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being.

Figure 2. Mediation Model



Discussion

All hypotheses are supported by the findings and they offer important insights into the psychological well-being of university students. Emotional intelligence was found to be a significant positive predictor of psychological well-being. This is in line with previous studies that indicate that emotionally intelligent people have better emotional regulation and coping skills.

The findings showed a positive correlation between levels of resilience and psychological well-being as well. Higher levels of resilience were associated with higher levels of psychological adjustment and life satisfaction in students. This discovery was in accordance with the theory of resilience that states that adaptive coping skills serve as protective factors for mental wellbeing.

As in past studies, emotional intelligence was negatively correlated with perceived stress. Students with higher emotional competencies were more likely to be able to cope with academic and personal problems, and were less likely to perceive stress.

Moreover, psychological well-being was negatively related with perceived stress. Stress management research is, therefore, important in higher education, as there were significant associations between higher stress levels with lower psychological functioning among students.

The mediation analysis showed a partial mediation effect of perceived stress between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being. This discovery indicates that emotional intelligence is one factor in wellbeing that helps students to perceive less stress and cope better with problems.

Overall, the study was successful in establishing emotional intelligence and resilience as beneficial psychological tools that can boost students' mental health and well-being.

Conclusion

This study investigated the correlation between emotional intelligence, resilience, perceived stress and psychological well-being among university students. The results showed that EI and resilience have positive impact on psychological well being and that perceived stress has negative effect on psychological well being of the students.

The study also concluded that psychological well-being is partially mediated by perceived stress when looking at the link between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being. The results of this study emphasize the role of emotional capabilities and resilience in improving the psychology of positive aspects among university students.

Sites of mental health need to be emphasized and emotional intelligence, resilience and stress management are among them that are relevant for the mental health of universities. These interventions can make a difference in terms of positive impact on the wellbeing of pupils, learning outcomes and quality of life.

Recommendations

- Courses for the development of EI should be available at University.
- Student counselling centres should have Stress Management Workshops.
- Services need to include resilience building interventions to support students.
- There shall be regular awareness programmes on mental health on campuses.
- Future policies to make psychological well-being a factor of academic achievement

Limitations

- A cross sectional design is incapable of determining causation.
- Convenience sampling can impact generalizability.
- Self-report answers can lead to response bias.
- This study was conducted among only the university students of Pakistan.

Future Research Directions

- Longitudinal studies looking at changes in student well-being over time.
- Comparative studies of public and private universities.
- Exploring other mediators/moderators like social support and academic self-efficacy.
- Inter-cultural studies with students from other countries.

References

1. Cohen, S., Kamarck, T., & Mermelstein, R. (1983). A global measure of perceived stress. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 24(4), 385-396.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2136404>
2. Connor, K. M., & Davidson, J. R. T. (2003). Development of a new resilience scale: The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC). *Depression and Anxiety*, 18(2), 76-82.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/da.10113>
3. Ryff, C. D. (1989). Happiness is everything, or is it? Explorations on the meaning of psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57(6), 1069-1081.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.57.6.1069>
4. Salovey, P., & Mayer, J. D. (1990). Emotional intelligence. *Imagination, Cognition and Personality*, 9(3), 185-211.
<https://doi.org/10.2190/DUGG-P24E-52WK-6CDG>
5. Wong, C. S., & Law, K. S. (2002). The effects of leader and follower emotional intelligence on performance and attitude. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 13(3), 243-274.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/S1048-9843\(02\)00099-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1048-9843(02)00099-1)
6. Tugade, M. M., & Fredrickson, B. L. (2004). Resilient individuals use positive emotions to bounce back from negative experiences. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 86(2), 320-333.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.86.2.320>
7. Extremera, N., & Rey, L. (2016). Ability emotional intelligence and life satisfaction. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 102, 98-101.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2016.06.051>
8. Smith, B. W., Dalen, J., Wiggins, K., Tooley, E., Christopher, P., & Bernard, J. (2008). The Brief Resilience Scale. *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 15(3), 194-200.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10705500802222972>
9. Keyes, C. L. M. (2007). Promoting and protecting mental health as flourishing. *American Psychologist*, 62(2), 95-108.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.62.2.95>
10. Liu, Y., Wang, Z., & Lü, W. (2013). Resilience and affect balance as mediators. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 54(7), 850-854.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2012.12.010>
11. World Health Organization. (2022). *World Mental Health Report: Transforming Mental Health for All*. World Health Organization.
<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240049338>
12. UNESCO. (2024). *Mental Health and Well-Being in Higher Education*. UNESCO.
<https://www.unesco.org>



2026 by the authors; Journal of Global Social Transformation (JGST). This is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).