



IMPACT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ON PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF MANAGEMENT UNDERGRADUATES: DURING COVID-19 OUTBREAK

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INTRODUCTION

Background of the study

According to studies, people who have a higher level of psychological well-being are more likely to live healthier and longer lives. Therefore, Psychological well-being refers to how well one's life is going. According to Shyu, (2019) individuals' psychological well-being is critical whether they live in the community, work, or deal with a life crisis. The rate and severity of psychological issues among undergraduates are also increasing. (Gallagher and Taylor, 2007). Students at the university level may experience a variety of academic, interpersonal, economic, and cultural challenges that exceed students' capacity to effectively cope while resulting in academic failure, a decline in life satisfaction level, and an enhancement in physical and mental health issues. (Beiter et al., 2015) According to Crocker and Luhtanen, (2003) academics are an important aspect of any college student's life, and without a positive attitude toward academic aspirations, students might suffer from devastating spells of stress. Between 45% and 65% of university students are facing mental health difficulties, while do not seek any professional care. (Morales-Rodríguez et al., 2020)

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant influence on the mental health of individuals in many nations throughout the world. The pandemic situation severely altered their lives: due to university regulations, teaching in presence was prohibited. (Villani et al., 2021) As a result, teachers in many nations have been instructed to relocate teaching and learning to online platforms. (Leal Filho et al., 2021) Therefore, university students were confronted with numerous challenges in terms of online teaching and learning. In Sri Lankan context, few studies have shown that the psychological well-being of undergraduates was heavily impacted by this pandemic situation. During the Covid-19, 59% of Sri Lankan undergraduates were interested in pursuing higher education online, while 41% expressed their dissatisfaction with online learning. (Rameez, et al, 2020)

Thus, Emotional intelligence (EI) is a notion that has piqued the interest of researchers and experts in the field of mental health. Early influential work on EI was undertaken by Salovey and Mayer (1990) who defined emotional intelligence (EI) as "the ability to monitor one's own and other's feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions". According to Salovey and Mayer (1990), higher levels of emotional intelligence result in better psychological and physical well-being. Moreover, emotionally intelligent people are more likely than non-emotionally intelligent people to have a greater level of psychological well-being (Augusto Landa, et al., 2010).

Problem Statement

For undergraduates, entering the university symbolizes a moment of transformation as they, face additional challenges as they make autonomous decisions about their life and studies. (Cleary, et al., 2011) Although academic achievements are crucial to undergraduates, achieving academic goals can be stressful if they don't have a positive mindset. (Shahira et al., 2018) Based on the study by Wimberly et al., (2020), most of the medical undergraduates in Sri Lanka had moderate positive mental health (64.8%) and severe psychological distress (40.4%). The COVID-19 pandemic raises issues about the global population's mental health and with the preventative actions, undergraduates were subjected to additional pressures as e-learning has become a requirement in all universities even though there were challenges.



Students were depressed as they have gone through a roller coaster from attending physical classes every morning to studying online (Thandavaraj, et al., 2021).

A study by Wathelet et al., (2020) on Factors Associated with Mental Health Disorders among University Students in France confined during the COVID-19 revealed that the prevalence of suicidal thoughts, severe distress, high level of perceived stress, severe depression, and high level of anxiety were 11.4% (7891 students), 22.4% (15 463 students), 24.7% (17 093 students), 16.1% (11 133 students), and 27.5% (18 970 students), respectively, and among whom 3675 (12.4%) reported seeing a health professional. According to Gramigna, (2020) “In a national survey of 18,875 French undergraduates, 37% of the participants stated having experienced an episode of depression, and 8% reported having suicidal thoughts “during the pandemic”. During the COVID-19, 59% of Sri Lankan undergraduates were interested in pursuing higher education online, while 41% expressed their dissatisfaction with online learning. Moreover, the conclusions of the research by Mascia et al., (2020) were backed up by evidence of Emotional Intelligence has a positive impact on the psychological well-being of undergraduates in the normal condition.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, it was suggested that Emotional Intelligence may be used as a method to improve student happiness, resulting in maintaining psychological well-being. Based on knowledge through research findings during this COVID pandemic, Emotional intelligence has become more concerned among university students of different countries in maintaining psychological wellbeing. There have been different studies conducted to find the relationship between EI and PWB in different contexts during the normal condition, and results have revealed that there’s a significant relationship between those two variables, such as “Emotional Intelligence and Psychological Well-Being in Adolescents” by, Bustamante, J.G. (2019), “The impact of EI on Psychological Well-being of Public and Private sector Executives: Perspective of Postgraduate Students” by Rathnakara, S. (2014), etc. Among those studies, there’s a lack of research conducted in the Sri Lankan context related to the emotional intelligence and psychological well-being of university undergraduates, especially during the COVID -19 pandemic According to, Makuloluwa and Arachchige, (2015) in the Sri Lankan setting, there is an empirical and knowledge gap regarding the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being of undergraduates. Accordingly, this study investigates the problem of how emotional intelligence impacts the psychological well-being of the management undergraduates during the COVID-19 Outbreak as a contemporary topic among scholars in crisis.

Research Objectives

Primary objective:

1. To assess the impact of emotional intelligence on psychological well-being.

Secondary objectives:

2. To assess the impact of Self-awareness on psychological well-being.
3. To assess the impact of Self-management on psychological well-being.
4. To assess the impact of social awareness on psychological well-being.
5. To assess the impact of relationship management on psychological well-being.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a quantitative methodology to achieve its objectives of the study, and the deductive approach was used as the research approach of the study. A survey strategy was used as it was associated with the deductive approach. And this study is cross-sectional in nature, and the extent of researcher interference is minimal. Psychological Well-being was measured using 42 items developed by Salleh, (2016). Based on Carl Ryff’s Psychological well-being scales. And Emotional Intelligence was measured using 30 items using the scale developed by Salili (2013). A five-point Likert scale (1= Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree) was used to retain the original scales of the authors, as well as to keep the



comparability of the results. The population of this study represents the management undergraduates from one of the state Universities in Sri Lanka. Sample 248 was drawn using the simple random sampling method and the primary data were collected using a self-administrated survey questionnaire. Multivariate assumptions such as normality, linearity, heteroscedasticity, and multicollinearity were tested using SPSS. The study employed both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques for data analysis. Regression analysis was conducted to test the hypotheses study using SPSS. After drawing the final measurement model, Cronbach’s alpha values, and KMO and Bartlett's Test values were taken to satisfy the reliability and validity requirements. Further, two structural models were built to analyze the data, and each model was tested with the goodness of fit indices.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents’ Profile

Among the 248 respondents, 168(67.7%) respondents were Female while, 80 (32.3%) respondents were male. Further, the majority of respondents were Buddhism 195(78.6%), and respondents under Hinduism, Islam, and Catholic religion categories are 12 (4.8%), 25 (10.1%), and 16(6.5%) respectively among 248 respondents. Among four batches the 16 batches have responded most frequently as there are 82 (33.1%) And there were 62(25%) respondents from each 17 and 18 batch. According to the specialization area, 54(21.8%) respondents were from the department of management studies. And the lowest number of respondents were from the department of operations management which is 29 (11.7%) of the total respondents.

Preliminary Analyses

In the current study, the researcher was able to collect the responses from 248 respondents. Based on the box plot analysis outliers were identified and no action was required due to the absence of critical outliers. To assess the normality of the data set, the researcher used the Histogram, Skewness, and Kurtosis values. According to the Skewness (PWB= -0.517, EI=.136) and kurtosis (PWB= .923, EI=1.689) values, it was concluded that data is normally distributed. Further, according to Mueller, (2015) bell shape of the histogram confirms the normality of the regression model. Thus, in the current study based on the histogram, the researcher identified that the data is normally distributed. The scatter plots ensured the linearity of the variables. Test of Heteroscedasticity confirmed the absence of heteroscedasticity in the study, and it was the ideal situation to continue with the study data analysis using regression models. (Mueller, 2015) The researcher checked the multicollinearity of variables using the variation inflation factor and tolerance value. According to Bhandari, (2020) VIF<10 and Tolerance>0.2. In the current study tolerance values were greater than 0.2 and VIF values were less than 10. Therefore, it was concluded that there’s no multicollinearity in existence.

Assessing Reliability and Validity

According to the results, Cronbach’s alpha value of each construct was greater than 0.7. (PWB=.906, EI = .877). Therefore, it ensures the internal consistency of indicators. In this study, the KMO and Bartlett value got 0.847 and as it is closer to 1 it signifies that these data are valid.

Hypotheses Testing

Table 01 presents the results of testing the hypothesized direct relationship between Emotional Intelligence the Psychological Well-being.

Table 1: Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	β	P-Value	Result
H1: Emotional intelligence has an impact on psychological well-being	.50	0.000	Accepted
H1a: Self-awareness has an impact on Psychological the well-being	-.010	0.839	Rejected
	.155	0.008	Accepted



H1b: Self-management has an impact on psychological well-being			
H1c: Social awareness has an impact on psychological well-being	.212	0.000	Accepted
H1d: Relationship management has an impact on psychological well-being	.155	0.000	Accepted

Source: SPSS output, 2022

Hypothesis 01 investigated the impact of Emotional Intelligence on Psychological Well-being. The results demonstrated a positive and significant impact of Emotional Intelligence on Psychological Well-being ($\beta=.503$, $p<.001$). Thus, the hypothesis was supported.

Discussion

The research question of this study aimed to investigate the impact of Emotional Intelligence on Psychological Well-being (Does Emotional Intelligence impact on Psychological Well-being?). Findings revealed that there's a significant impact of emotional intelligence on the psychological well-being of management undergraduates during the COVID-19 outbreak. ($B = .503$). The results supported the findings of the study by Rathnakara, (2014) during the normal condition. Other findings of the current study were self- awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management has an impact on psychological well-being of the management undergraduates during the COVID-19 outbreak. Thus, the findings of the study reveal that there's a negative impact ($B= -0.010$) of self-awareness on the psychological well-being of management undergraduates during the COVID-19 Outbreak. However, the study of Lorevic D. Stefaniak (2018) reveals that there is a significant relationship between self-awareness and psychological well-being during the normal condition. Therefore, the result of the current study during the pandemic shows the different results in comparison to studies during the normal condition. According to the current study, self- management has a positive impact on the psychological well-being of management undergraduates ($B=.155$). The results supported to the Cramm et al., (2012). Moreover, based on the findings of current study social awareness ($B=.212$) and relationship management ($B= .155$) also have a positive impact on the psychological well-being of management undergraduates. And those results support to the findings of Yu, Shek, and Zhu, (2018).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The frequency and severity of psychological issues among undergraduates have been increasing (Gallagher and Taylor, 2007). Maintenance of the Psychological well-being of the Undergraduates has become crucial during the COVID -19 Outbreak. Through this study, the researcher was able to find that there's an impact of Emotional Intelligence on the Psychological Well-being of Management Undergraduates during the COVID – 19 Outbreak. Among the Sub-variables, it was revealed that self-management, social awareness, and relationship management have an impact on Psychological Well-being while self-awareness showed a negative impact on the Psychological Well-being of management undergraduates during this pandemic situation. Finally, researchers concluded that Emotional Intelligence has a significant impact on Psychological Well-being, and dimensions of Emotional Intelligence such as self-management, social awareness, and relationship management has a significant impact on the Psychological Well-being of Management Undergraduates during the COVID-19 Outbreak. And study concludes that Self-awareness has a negative impact on the Psychological Well-being of Management Undergraduates during the COVID-19 Outbreak.

Recommendations

The researcher recommends that interventions to boost the psychological well-being of Sri Lankan undergraduates are required especially during the pandemic situation while engaging in an Online learning platform. As the study revealed that there's an impact of Emotional Intelligence on the Psychological Well-being of the Management undergraduates,



interventions need to be taken by the academic heads through the University level or faculty level to boost the Psychological Well-being of Undergraduates While taking necessary policy decisions to enhance the Emotional Intelligence of the Undergraduates. Moreover, uplifting positive mental health through positive emotions, meaning, and social connection may minimize burnout and distress, and enhance the psychological well-being of the Undergraduates. Even though the academic activities are conducted through the online platform, network building programs, workshops and counseling sessions need to be organized by faculty level. Moreover, the study solely considered Emotional Intelligence to address the research problem while ignoring the other alternatives available for enhancing the psychological well-being of the Undergraduates. Therefore, the scope of the research is limited to the examination of Emotional Intelligence as the method of addressing the research questions. Therefore, in future studies, researchers can use other factors that can have an impact on the psychological well-being of Undergraduates in future studies such as academic stress. etc.

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