

**Interpersonal Difficulties, Social Intelligence and Mental Health
Problems In University Students**



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DECLARATION

I, Ms. **Zubia Ihsan** ID: **12001162-003** Student of **Top Up MS** in the subject of **Clinical Psychology session 2012 – 2013**, hereby declare that the matter printed in the thesis titled is **Interpersonal Difficulties, Social Intelligence and Mental Health Problems In University Students** my own work and has not been printed, published and submitted as research work thesis or publication in any form in any university, research institution etc in Pakistan or abroad.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to my parents and my best friend,
Because at this day the most important and overwhelming key of my success
is their positive involvement.

Abstract

Present study investigated the relationship among Interpersonal Difficulties, Social Intelligence and Mental Health Problems in University Students. A sample of 448 college students was selected through multiple sampling technique; comprising of 223 males and 225 females of 3rd to 6th year with age range of 18-24 years ($M=20.41$, $SD=1.52$). To measure the Interpersonal Difficulties in students, an indigenous scale on Interpersonal Difficulties was developed according to the Pakistani cultural context by exploring phenomenology which showed high alpha reliability ($\alpha=.87$) and construct validity with 6 factors solution based on Principal Component Factor Analysis. Social Intelligence Scale was used to measure Social Intelligence and it had one positive and one negative pole whereas to measure the Mental Health Problems Student Problem Checklist was used. Demographic Performa was also used to obtain some basic information about research participants like gender, age, area etc. Complete research protocol was administered in small groups of 10-15 students at a time from one class. Psychometric properties of all the measures used in the main study were determined. Regression Analysis revealed the Social Manipulation (-ive pole) was a positive predictor whereas Social Facilitation and Social Adaptability (+ive pole) were negative predictors of Interpersonal Difficulties and Mental Health Problems. Results also revealed that Interpersonal Difficulties including Proneness to Passivity, Low Self Confidence, Lack of Social Support and Lack of Boundaries were also Positive predictors of Mental Health Problems. T-test results revealed the gender differences whereas ANOVA results showed the differences among 4 levels of classes on the research variables. The results are discussed in the specific cultural context of Pakistan.

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Chapter I

Introduction

When an individual experience difficulties in relating with others which leads him towards subjective distress, these difficulties are called Interpersonal Problems (Horney, 1950; Horowitz, 1994; Leary, 1957). The Circumplex Model based on a classification process to divide people according to their interpersonal problems (Gurtman, 1994; Kiesler, 1983; Leary, 1957; Wiggins, Phillips & Trapnell, 1989).

Murphy and Blumenthal (2000) assert that interpersonal problems start from childhood and interpersonal difficulties pattern become stable even in adolescence as well as adulthood and these difficulties also related with parenting, particular experience of parental aggression for both genders (Blumenthal, Neemann & Murphy 1998). Horowitz and Vitkus (1986) and Kiesler (1983) described a theory about Interpersonal Relations and divided Interpersonal Behavior into 2 dimensions. First dimension is Affiliation which range from Hostility to Friendliness whereas second dimension is Power which ranges from Submissiveness to Dominance. They also described 8 different types of Interpersonal problems namely: Intrusive, Overly Nurturant, Exploitable, Nonassertive, Socially Avoidant, Cold, Vindictive and Domineering. These 8 types make 4 opposite pairs around a circumplex as: Overly Cold- Overly Nurturant, Socially-Intrusive, Nonassertive-Dominant, Exploitable-Vindictive. They also described that people influence each other in positive or negative way.

A social cognitive approach put forward by Andersen and Chen (2002) to understand interpersonal problems. They describes that people think and react differently to different social situations and give importance to interpersonal expectations. When

someone imagine the other person's reaction that imagined reaction is probably a reflection of expectation related to the particular situations. Similarly Pierce and Lydon (1998) described that different people have different expectations and also have different interpersonal problems due to individual differences.

Theorists describe different causation of relationship of interpersonal problems. Bowlby (1973) put forward his attachment theory in which he described that people need close relationships with caregivers to increase their safety and survival. Baldwin (1992) added his views that relating with others affects thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and relationships. Early attachment styles start from childhood and continue from adolescent to adult relationship (Grossmann, Winter & Zimmermann, 2002). Similarly, Fonagy, Gergely and Target (2003) believe that adulthood is a period which predicts the attachment as well as relational styles. Cassidy (2008) also gave importance to the interaction with caregivers and described that schema about self and others are developed due to the repeated interaction with caregivers in the beginning in infancy. Talking about attachment and interpersonal relations Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters and Wall (1978) stated that security, protection and nurturing by the consistent attachment figure resulted as positive views of self and interpersonal relations. Secure attachment promotes development of healthy relations over time. While on the other hand Blumenthal & Murphy (2000) described that inconsistent caregiver behavior resulted as negative self image and negative interpersonal relations.

Many researchers show a link of interpersonal problems with attachment style. For instance, those individuals who experience harsh or hostile behavior in their childhood from caregivers, do not trust others and therefore avoid intimate relationship

(Horowitz, 2004). While anxious attachment results as friendly but submissive in their relationships (Horowitz, Rosenberg & Bartholomew, 1993). Similarly a research with graduate students also supported a close association between Attachment styles and Interpersonal Problems as: Hostile Dominant Problems were associated with Avoidant Attachment as well as Anxious Attachment and Friendly Submissive problems were also associated with one another (Chen & Mallinckrodt, 2002). Cloitre and Koenen (2001) described that survivors of child abuse face more problems to relating others, setting appropriate boundaries and being submissive in relationships. The above researches demonstrate a close link between a type of early attachment and its influence in latter interpersonal relationships.

Gender differences were also examined by many researchers and described that different forms of interpersonal problems emerge between childhood and adolescence due to this difference. McNelles and Connolly (1999) as well as Sharabany, Gershoni and Hofman (1981) identified that till adolescence boys and girls, both had similar level of depressive and anxious symptomatology. They also identified that females risk for depression and anxiety through years of adolescence increases with age, while males risk remain same.

Interpersonal relationships are also linked with social problem solving skills and this relationship investigated in many previous studies (Sabourin, Laporte & Wright, 1990). Using the Problem Solving Inventory on adult subjects found that poorer self perception of problem solving was associated with intimate relations. In a study Walker and Johnson (1986) also investigated the association between parents problem solving skills with children's behavior. Better understanding of the problems leads the children

towards decreased in problem along with high level of social competence. McCabe, Blankstein and Mills (1999) Studying a sample of college students and concluded the findings that there was a relationship between poor social problem skills and insensitivity in interpersonal relations.

Interpersonal problems are also associated with different mental health problems especially anxiety and depression is associated with social problem solving ability in normal and clinical samples (D'Zurilla, Nezu & Maydeu-Olivares, 2002). Biglan and colleagues described that depression was associated with lack of problem solving skills while Christensen and Shenk, (1991), Weiss and Heyman (1997) described that lack of social problem skills leads towards relationship dysfunctionality.

Interpersonal difficulties have different effects on individuals who have these problems and most of the effects resulted as negative consequences for adolescents. For example, lack of participation and feel hesitation to ask questions in the classroom which may contribute to a decline in academic achievement (Francis & Radka, 1995; Lawrence & Bennet 1992). Similarly Walters and Inderbitzen (1998) described that avoidance of peer relationships may resulted as isolation and feelings of loneliness while Francis, Last and Strauss (1992) associated the low rate of social reinforcement with the development of depression. Lack of communication and deficit in interpersonal problem solving and social skills can also lead to disturbed and poor relations with parents (Openshaw, Mills, Adams & Durso 1992) and also resulted as the increase risk of substance abuse (Clark & Kirisci, 1996; Clark & Sayette, 1993).

Besides interpersonal problems there is another area that is Social Intelligence which has attained attention of many years. It describes as entirely human ability to

efficiently find a way and discuss complex social environments and relations. According to Gini (2006), it is a difficult concept due to the absence of its operational definition. As originally, it is defined by Thorndike (1920) for the first time and according to the definition, Social Intelligence is “the ability to understand, manage and act wisely in human relations”. Social Intelligence is alike Interpersonal Intelligence that is a type of Intelligence described in Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligence.

The concept of Social intelligence have been operationally defined by many researchers including Goleman (2006) who defined social intelligence in terms of an individual’s ability to deal effectively with the social cognition. Goleman further explained that the concept of social facility builds on social awareness that allows an individual for smooth and effective interactions. Social facility encompasses an individual’s self-presentation, social influence and effective non-verbal communication. Social Awareness on the other hand, refers to the spectrum that runs from primal empathy that ranges from instantaneously sensing another’s inner state to empathic accuracy which refers to understanding one’s feelings and thoughts, to social cognition that reflects complicated social situations. Yet, simply sensing how another feels, or knowing what they think or intend, does not guarantee fruitful interactions among individuals.

In recent years, university students psychological problems related to mental health are also the growing interest by the researcher (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2003). Depression, Anxiety, Phobias, Obsessive Compulsive and Panic Attacks are most common mental health problems (Grant, 2002; McKeon & Mynett-Johnson, 1999; Webb, Ashton, Kelly & Kamali, 1996). A study conducted in Leicester University (2002) to

investigate the factors which leads the students towards distress, academic problems, adjustment issues along psychological and relational issues and it was concluded that those stressors put in individuals towards mental health problems.

Mental Health Problems and academic performance are related to one another. High level of Mental Health Problems leads towards decrease in Academic performance and caused psychological problems (Brackney & Karabenick, 1995). Stallman (2008) founded that prevalence of mental health problems was higher in students as compared to the general population. He also founded that the students who seek help for their problems gradually elevated their mental health problems. Researchers also explain that being a student is also a risk factor for mental health problem. A study was also conducted by Mahmood and Saleem (2011) to develop an indigenous scale for university students according to the cultural context of Pakistan and a scale named as Student Problem Checklist was developed to measure the mental health problems of the university students. In the presents research the focus was also on the Interpersonal Difficulties, Social Intelligence and Mental Health Problems in the university students. There are cultural differences on being a university student. In the western culture, university life starts immediate after the schooling whereas in Pakistani cultural context the bachelor's and master's level (3rd to 6th year) students are university students.

Although many researches conducted on Interpersonal problems that revealed the facts that interpersonal difficulties are associated with early attachment styles, Parenting styles, expectations and social problem solving skills but there was no study in Pakistan that reveal the facts related to interpersonal difficulties. Similarly there were also different studies that identified the leading factors of mental health problems and its

relationship had also seen with academic performance and with health services. Although different studies had conducted on these topics with different variables but Interpersonal Difficulties and Social Intelligence has been neglected areas by the Pakistani researchers and there was no such study that explores the relationship among Interpersonal Difficulties, Social Intelligence and Mental Health Problems in university students.

The theme of this study was all about Interpersonal Difficulties and Social Intelligence of University Students as well as its impact on their Mental Health Problems. Research purpose was mainly to find out the expression of Interpersonal Difficulties in university students according to the Pakistani cultural context and to measure their relationship with Social Intelligence and Mental Health Problems. So this study was an initial step which explored the relationship among these three variables with key Demographic Variables. The research was helpful in understanding that what kind of Interpersonal Difficulties student usually face in their routine life and how intelligently they deal with those problems.