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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Investigating the Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Bullying: A Sample from Pakistani High School Students

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and bullying behaviour, as well as to explore gender differences in both variables among high school students in Pakistan. A total of 313 high school students—143 men and 170 females—were chosen from the cities in Pakistan's Punjab region using a convenient sampling technique. The participants' emotional intelligence was evaluated by the researchers using the emotional intelligence scale, and their bullying conduct was examined using the illusion bullying scale. The results showed a strong negative association ($r = -0.267$, $p < 0.05$) between bullying and emotional intelligence, especially when it came to the bullying's victimization and fighting subscales ($p < 0.05$). Additionally, there were statistically significant gender differences in emotional intelligence, the fighting subscale, the victimization subscale, and the bully subscale ($p > 0.05$), with the exception of the bully subscale. Additionally, the study showed that male students performed better than the score of female students ($p < 0.05$). The study findings also show that emotional intelligence plays a safeguarding role in certain facets of violence among students. The study main objective is to investigate the emotional intelligence and its effect on bullying, including sub-factors of bullying among high school students. Therefore, designing more effective strategies to enhance emotional intelligence, thereby handling aggressive behavior, is important.

INTRODUCTION

As they transition from childhood to maturity, people go through significant changes during adolescence. In this developmental stage, adolescents consider concepts such as self-identity, individuality, and autonomy. According to Hochberg and Konner (2019), teenagers build their social and peer networks in this crucial era of life. To establish a high degree of personality traits in teenagers, experts advise focusing on this age group (Fegert et al., 2020). Since kids and teens spend more time at school than with

their families, peer relationships usually start there. Bullying is an increasingly common problem that needs to be addressed because it is generally known to occur mostly in school settings (Armitage, 2021). Moreover, it is widely recognized that conflicts can arise within peer groups, and, in some cases, they can be helpful (Luthar et al., 2020). The extent of these conflicts depends on how adolescents overcome their conflicts without resorting to bullying behaviours (Garandeau et al., 2022).

In recent decades, bullying has become a prominent societal problem. World Health Organization (WHO) (2018) interpreted the global school student health survey findings, asserting that bullying negatively impacts school students. According to this survey, 33% of students under the age of 13 reported experiencing bullying, whereas 32.3% of students aged 14 and 30.4% of students aged 15 reported similar experiences. Furthermore, they are more prone to have adverse consequences related to this issue. In these circumstances, bullying victims may experience negative effects on their quality of life and mental and physical health (Menesini and Salmivalli, 2017). According to Trigueros et al. (2020), a study conducted on Spanish children revealed that 16.2% of them engaged in bullying at school, with 8.1% reporting being aggressors, 6.8% reporting being victims, and 1.3% reporting both victim and aggressor behavior. Bullying significantly harms Pakistani teenagers' mental health, emotional development, and academic performance in a manner similar to other nations (Rothon et al., 2011). As a result, academics now appreciate how important it is to understand Pakistani culture's tendency toward bullying. As a result, it's imperative to carry out a precise and comprehensive examination of the reasons behind incidences of bullying in educational settings (Shamsi et al., 2019).

Furthermore, it is important to analyze the basic causes of bullying to develop efficient strategies to provide a protective and supportive environment in school (Abraczinskas et al., 2022).

On the other hand, emotional intelligence pertains to an individual's ability to identify, understand, regulate, and sustain their own emotions in addition to those of others (Karibeeran and Mohanty, 2019). This leads to improved communication, empathy, and the growth of positive peer relationships—all essential elements of well-balanced learning environments in schools (Jiang and Lu, 2020).

Additionally, to decrease bullying behaviour, there is useful information that fostering emotional intelligence may act as a preventative factor and reduce the possibility of individuals being involved in bullying tendencies. Also, research has consistently highlighted that the emotional abilities of adolescents significantly affect bullying (Divecha and Brackett, 2020; Liu and Dong, 2016; Vallejo, 2019). Gender may also have an impact on students' emotional intelligence and bullying tendencies (Quintana-Orts et al., 2019). Because of how they view and respond to events, gender-based social interactions may have an impact on adolescents' emotional intelligence and their propensity for bullying. Bullying tendencies are more common in men than in women, particularly in Pakistani traditional society, where conventional gender norms are highly esteemed (Ahmad and Smith, 2022; Jam et al., 2011). Men in Pakistani culture may, therefore, be less emotionally knowledgeable and self-aware than women. Men are more likely to be the objects of bullying and to act aggressively to demonstrate their dominance and power due to cultural standards and a lack of emotional intelligence. The current study investigates the relationship between emotional intelligence and bullying in a sample of Pakistani high school students. It has profound theoretical implications in the domain of social and education psychology. This research seeks to fill a significant gap in the literature by investigating the relationship between bullying in Pakistani educational institutions and individual differences in emotional capacity. Additionally, the study may clarify how emotional intelligence can mitigate bullying behaviors among young Pakistanis and provide essential insights into cultural factors that affect psychological health and social relationships. This project advances the theoretical foundations of emotional intelligence and has applications for mental health professionals, educators, and legislators attempting to create emotionally supportive learning environments.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There are two main theories for emotional intelligence: (1) the mixed model and (2) the ability model (Joseph and Newman, 2010). The mixed model characterizes Emotional Intelligence (EI) as a composite of skills and personality traits that encourage successful relationships and promote personal growth (Bar-On et al., 2000). This model mainly uses self-report assessments to evaluate emotional intelligence. However, the ability model defines Emotional Intelligence (EI) as the capacity to recognize and use emotions in oneself and others to guide thoughts and behaviors (Mayer et al., 1997). The process model developed by Mayer et al. (2008) provides a conceptual framework for understanding emotional intelligence. It identifies four interconnected skills: perceiving emotions, facilitating or assimilating emotions, understanding emotions, and regulating emotions. These skills can be evaluated on individual and social levels using self-report and ability tests (Fernández-Berrocal and Extremera, 2016; Mayer et al., 2016). Consequently, a high level of emotional intelligence assists in the student's success, skills, happiness, psychological well-being, and learning. In contrast, a lower level of emotional intelligence might be linked to higher bullying tendencies (García-Sancho et al., 2014). Moreover, students who show different types of bullying may experience difficulty in controlling their unpleasant emotions, which enhances their potential to be involved in the incidences of bullying. This ability is related to emotional intelligence, which may improve interpersonal relationships and social behaviours.

According to Mayer et al. (1997), emotional intelligence is the ability to deal with challenges and easily adjust to one's environment. Consequently, those who are better at managing, identifying, and understanding their own emotions and those of others may be more socially adept and have healthier interpersonal relationships (Mayer et al., 2008). Conversely, lower emotional intelligence correlates with turbulent and dysfunctional social relationships. Gender roles in emotional intelligence may help to explain disparities in bullying behaviors further since emotional expressiveness and cultural norms surrounding gender roles influence how people respond to and interpret social cues (Papoutsi et al., 2022).

For instance, socialization may encourage females to prioritize empathy and collaboration, leading to fewer overt forms of bullying (Lian et al., 2023), while it may encourage males to demonstrate power and authority, potentially resulting in more overt violent behavior (Rubin et al., 2020). Thus, the theoretical framework of emotional intelligence provides a structure for understanding how emotional intelligence abilities affect the complexities of bullying behaviour based on gender. The study attempts to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and bullying among high school students in Pakistan. Moreover, the study explores the gender role in the association between bullying and emotional intelligence among high school students in Pakistan. In addition, the study also sees the gender, age, family system, residence, and EI to predict bullying among high school students in Pakistan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Persistent bullying that might escalate into violence creates problems in educational settings. Silva et al. (2020) define bullying as a sequence of deliberate acts of animosity directed towards another person by a violator. A range of activities are involved, including verbal, physical, or psychological isolation of the victim. In this dynamic, bystanders who witness bullying incidents also have a significant impact (Jiang et al., 2022). Furthermore, by taking on the traits of bullying, individuals or groups with authority over others may participate in bullying conduct. As a result, other roles connected to bullying have been identified, such as those of the victim, the bully, and spectators (those who witness bullying take place but do not participate in it) and adolescents who are both bullies and victims of bullying (Camodeca and Nava, 2022; Sabramani et al., 2021). Bullying has far-reaching effects on individuals' well-being, encompassing their mental and physical health, interpersonal connections, and academic success. Also, bullying has extensive ramifications for individuals' well-being, encompassing their mental and physical health, interpersonal relationships, and academic success. It creates a hostile environment for victims, causing numerous negative consequences in their

lives (Peguero and Hong, 2020; Smokowski et al., 2020). Moreover, Bullying has significant impacts on both the victims and the aggressors. For the victims, it can lead to a lack of trust in others and difficulties with their self-image. As for the aggressors, it can result in maladaptive behaviours and potential involvement in illicit behaviour (Rueda et al., 2021). Thus, being familiar with the problem on the spot is crucial to effectively addressing it and developing ideas on how to stop school bullying. So, it is equally important to intervene when bullying has already occurred (Arslan et al., 2021).

Understanding the root causes of bullying is essential for addressing and preventing bullying behaviors (Cohen and Espelage, 2020). As a result, the concept of emotional intelligence, which encompasses a variety of abilities has gained relevance. Among these abilities include emotional regulation, assessment, comprehension, and control (Mayer and Salovey, 1995; Bru-Luna et al., 2021). Bullying is associated with emotional intelligence attributes such as personality traits, interpersonal skills, empathy, and sensitivity, even though there aren't many studies that relate the two (Nasti et al., 2023; Yudes et al., 2022). The physiological and cognitive alterations that emotions bring about in the brain and body may have a significant influence on a person's capacity for decision-making (Hoemann and Feldman Barrett, 2019; Salovey et al., 2001). Given that emotions have an emotional perception refers to the ability to identify and differentiate one's own feelings and those of others, regulating function offers advantages to people who experience emotions (Hajal and Paley, 2020).

It is well-researched that emotional regulation is a complex skill that requires understanding feelings to manage both our emotions and the emotions of others. Moreover, it comprises various approaches to personal development (Cabello et al., 2016). The issue of school bullying and emotional intelligence has gained much attention in Pakistan. Due to the difference in norms and societal dynamics, the educational setting is quite different from Western culture (Iftikhar et al., 2021). Therefore, it is imperative to see the role of emotional intelligence in adolescent bullying behaviour in Pakistani complex social and educational settings (Siddiqui et al., 2023).

Due to the various societal norms, culture, and customs in Pakistan have a significant impact on emotional intelligence, which contributes to the prevalence of bullying behaviour (Kundi and Badar, 2021). Moreover, the social conditions of Pakistan have made it more intricate with the cause of various customs and norms that have an impact on emotion and contribute to the prevalence of bullying behaviour (Kundi and Badar, 2021). In addition, understanding the Pakistani culture may facilitate the development of interventions that can address the link between emotional intelligence and bullying behaviour.

The research on gender differences in Emotional Intelligence (EI) and aggressive behaviour among Pakistani undergraduate students (Bibi et al., 2020) effectively combines gender differences, emotional Intelligence abilities, and cultural considerations (Sethi et al., 2023). Further, gender differences emphasize the cultural norms that describe gender roles (Schmader, 2023), whereby females are supposed to demonstrate politeness and compassion, while boys are pushed to express violence to comply with masculine standards (Knyazyan and Marabyan, 2023). Moreover, cultural considerations recognize the distinct socio-cultural environment in Pakistan, where gender norms and cultural expectations influence how adolescents perceive emotional intelligence and bullying (Cahill et al., 2023). Moreover, gender differences were also examined by Mthembu (2023), and findings show that females are found in indirect forms of bullying, and males tend to be more involved in physical fighting. Both males and females are equally susceptible to victims of bullying. A study also examined the emotional intelligence of both Pakistani and French students (Ghaffar et al., 2024), indicating that female students were found to have higher emotional intelligence than male students.

Another study conducted by Qadir and Kang (2023) explored the connection between emotional intelligence and bullying behaviour in Pakistani undergraduate students, and the findings of the study indicated a negative correlation between emotional intelligence and bullying behaviour (Qadir and Kang, 2023). There are several types of research that show that individuals who have better emotional intelligence handle the incidences of

bullying comfortably. A study by Siddiquee and Yadava (2024) indicated that emotional intelligence plays a significant role in adolescents decreasing bullying tendencies. The likelihood of victimization among adolescents was significantly predicted by bullying and moral intelligence, which recommends initiatives about priority efforts to decrease bullying behaviour and better moral intelligence (Khonigh et al., 2019). Furthermore, a correlational study between defending behaviour and social-emotional intelligence suggests a dual approach indicating the cultivation of empathy and perspective-taking skills in teenagers with bullying behaviour (Imuta et al., 2022).
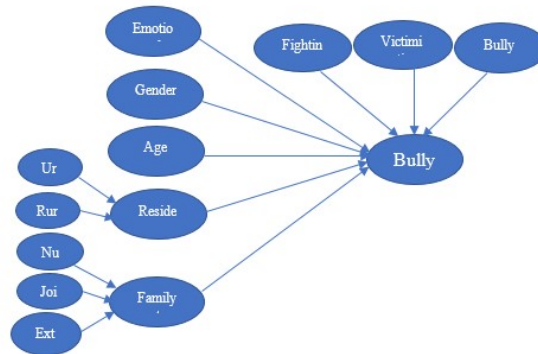

Figure 1: Theoretical framework

Research gap

Despite the growing number of students engaging in bullying behaviors, there is still little conversation on bullying in Pakistani schools (Siddiqui et al., 2023). Previous studies (Abbas et al., 2020; Halima et al., 2021) have focused on the connection between emotional intelligence, spiritual beliefs, emotional regulation, and mental health issues in school-age children. Furthermore, most studies examining the relationship between bullying and Emotional Intelligence (EI) have largely concentrated on Western cultures (Bedell, 2020). There is a dearth of research on this relationship in Eastern countries, especially in Pakistani culture, known for its collectivist values. In this particular cultural context, there is a widespread belief that women should play subordinate roles and that male dominance is a sign of authority.

Moreover, acknowledging the contextual importance of this study, mainly within the Punjab province, is leading to mitigating its significance. Punjab, Pakistan's most populous province with a multicultural landscape, presents a unique environment where emotional intelligence and bullying relationships offer better understanding. Findings from statistical data reveal the alarming rates of bullying acts and their effects on well-being.

The need for additional research on bullying has been the subject of numerous studies; one such study looked at the influence of cyberbullying among Punjabi teens with special needs (Mukhtar et al., 2023). To find out how emotional intelligence influences bullying among Punjabi high school students, more research is necessary. The province of Punjab also represents an ethnic group that can be used to represent Pakistan. Gender norms often place pressure on women, expecting them to be considerate, cooperative, and willing to compromise all the time in the family. Men are often under pressure to act strong and aggressive since these characteristics are seen as markers of masculinity and authority. Therefore, the goal of this study is to look at the important connections between gender inequalities in Pakistani pupils, emotional intelligence, and bullying.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sample and samplying techniques

The study comprised a sample of male and female students at high schools in the Punjab region of Pakistan. The target audience from the Province of Punjab was due to several key considerations, such as wider socio-cultural and educational settings, that permitted an investigation. First, in Pakistan,

the province of Punjab is the most populous region. Therefore, by selecting a sample of students from high schools, we aimed to capture an accurate representation of the sample, which reflects broader demographics and cultural diversity. Second, it helps to enhance the generalization of the study findings to a similar population across Pakistan. Secondly, a sample of high school students provides a unique lens through which we can better understand the relationship between emotional intelligence and bullying in a local context, given cultural values, norms, and social dynamics that may impact the phenomena. Last, focusing on Punjab province permits an in-depth investigation of specific challenges faced at regional school levels. Therefore, the current study may provide valuable insights for policymakers and targeted interventions in addressing bullying behaviours and enhancing well-being in the province and beyond. The appropriateness of the sample size was through the power formula (G*Power 3.1) (Faul et al., 2007). The minimum necessary sample size was 107 based on the provided criteria, which included an effect size of 0.15 and a power of 0.95. A total of 317 high school students were given questionnaires; of them, 313 returned the questionnaire. Out of the total, there were 143 (45.68%) boys and 170 (54.32%) girls. The youngest individual was 13 years old, while the oldest was 18. The research team first met with students' parents and school officials to explain the study's goals and highlight the significance of data confidentiality. One of the researchers from the team administered surveys at the appropriate educational institution according to a specified schedule after obtaining essential authorizations.

Research tool

Emotional intelligence scale (Wong and Law, 2002): Emotional intelligence skills are the fundamental components upon which the previously described parts are constructed. Please mark your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements in response to this inquiry. Each of the sixteen factors on the emotional intelligence scale is assigned a numerical score ranging from one to sixteen. The items are evaluated using a 7-point Likert scale, where a score of 1 indicates severe disagreement and a score of 7 indicates strong agreement. The scale demonstrates a reliability coefficient of .88 when used to evaluate emotional intelligence.

Illinois bullying scale (Espelage and Holt, 2013): With 18 items, the instrument consists of three measures, with the first one being the victim scale, which assesses instances of victimization perpetrated by peers. This subscale comprises questions 4, 5, 6, and 7. The scoring scale ranged from 0 to 16, with higher values denoting a greater level of victimization. In addition, it also assesses the frequency of bullying behaviour among young individuals using specific items (1, 2, 8, 9, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18). A numerical scale ranging from 0 to 26 was presented, where higher scores corresponded to a greater frequency of bullying incidents. Items 3, 10, and 12 evaluate physical altercations and the existence of violence for the fighting subscale. The score ranged from 0 to 20, with higher scores indicating a more pronounced violent tendency. The scale has good reliability, which was 0.87 for the overall scale, and the subscale was 0.71, while the fighting subscale was 0.77, and the victim subscale was 0.76.

Ethical approval and informed consent

All ethical formalities were fulfilled before starting the research. The study was approved by the ethical committee of the Guidance and Psychological and Counselling Department at Near East University, Turkey, under the research protocol (NEU/SS/2022/994). All the participants were briefed about the study protocol before distributing the questionnaires, and participants were given the option to discontinue the study. Students were instructed to contact the researcher/facilitator during the data collection process if they required any assistance with the questionnaire. Participants were ensured the privacy and confidentiality of the information they provided. Students were individually assessed for 35_40 minutes every session.

Data analysis

To conduct the analysis, SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) was used for this research. Demographic information about the study's variables is presented in Table 1. To see the association among the study variables, correlation was used to investigate the link between emotional intelligence and bullying. Inferential statistics were used to test the hypothesis, such as multiple linear regression, to

forecast instances of bullying by utilizing demographic variables, including age, gender, family system, residence, and emotional intelligence, as predictors.

RESULTS

The overall score for the Emotional Intelligence (EI) scale was calculated as the sum of the 18 components.

Conversely, the bullying subscales assigned a distinct score to each item within the relevant subscale.

Descriptive analysis

Table 1 shows the demographics of the study variables. First, out of 313 sample participants, male students were 184 (58.8%) and female students were 129 (41.2%).

Table 1: Demographic variables of participants

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	184	58.8
	Female	129	41.2
Age	13-14 years	34	10.9
	15-16 years	210	67.1
	17-18 years	69	22.0
	More than 18 Years	0	0.00
Residence	Urban	63	20.1
	Rural	250	79.9
	Urban	63	20.1
Family System	Nuclear Family	82	26.2
	Joint Family	186	59.4
	Extended	45	14.4
	Total	313	313

The age range of students indicates that 10.9% ranged between 13 and 14 years old, and the majority of the students, 67.1 ranging from 15 to 16 years of age. In addition, 22% of student participants were between 17 to 18 years of age. Regarding residence, most of the students were from the rural side which was 79.9%. Lastly, 59.4% were from the joint family system, and only 14.4% were from the extended family system.

Table 2: The mean, standard deviation, reliability, skewness, and kurtosis values

	Alpha	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis
EMTOTLE	.83	18.00	104.00	64.3597	16.90945	-.612	.394
Bul_ING	.91	16.00	99.00	58.4229	15.38910	-.322	.140
Fighting_SC	.77	4.00	20.00	9.8577	4.29880	.557	-.785
BULLY_SC	.71	9.00	43.00	20.9605	8.11319	.757	-.049
Victm_SC	.76	4.00	19.00	10.4545	4.1350	.408	-.584

The study indicated that skewness and kurtosis analysis revealed a normal distribution for all examined variables, with none exceeding cutoff values. Both scales exhibited acceptable internal consistency; however, the reliability of bullying subscales ranged from 0.71 to 0.91, indicating unacceptable levels (refer to Table 2).

Table 3: Correlations between emotional intelligence and bullying

	1	2	3	4	5
1 Emotional Intelligence	1				
2 Bullying	-.267**	1			
3 Bullying Sc	-.266**	.388**	1		
4 Fighting Sc	-.300**	.365**	.806**	1	
5 Victimization Sc	-.180**	.324**	.456**	.403**	1

$N = 313$, **$p < .001$.

The findings revealed a negative correlation ($r = -0.267$, $p < 0.001$) between emotional intelligence and bullying among students, particularly about the fighting and victimization subscale of bullying ($p <$ 0.001). There was also an inverse association between emotional intelligence, and the bully subscale of bullying among students.

Table 4: Multiple linear regression with demographic variables, emotional intelligence, and bullying

	R^2	$ß$	Std. Error	95 % Cl	p
Bullying	.11				
Age		-.009	1.645	[3.504,2.971]	.871
Gender		.195	1.949	[2.60,10.27]	.001
Family System		.184	1.439	[1.94,7.60]	.001
Residence		.031	2.302	[-3.26,5.80]	.582
Emotional Intelligence		-.174	.068	[-.349, -.083]	.002

N =313, *ß* = Standardized Coefficient beta; CI = Confidence Interval

The results of the above table show that there is a negative relationship between emotional intelligence and bullying. Higher levels of EI were found to be associated with lower levels of bullying. The results indicate that $R^2 = .11$, with $F (5, 306) = 7.839$, $p <$ 0.001. Interestingly, demographic variables like age and residence did not have a significant impact on predicting bullying, while family system and gender were found to be predictors of bullying.

Table 5: Gender comparisons for emotional intelligence and bullying between male and female

	Male		Female			
	Mean	*SD*	Mean	*SD*	*F*	*p*
Emotional Intelligence	83.031	.959	87.454	1.142	6.052	.014
Bullying	52.380	1.174	45.077	1.399	27.468	.000
Bully_Sc	24.775	.612	21.546	.729	2.177	.141
Fighting_Sc	8.775	.225	7.355	.267	54.132	.000
Victimization_Sc	12.791	.316	11.191	.377	17.336	.000

A MANOVA is used to investigate potential differences between male and female high school students in terms of their Emotional Intelligence (EI) and experiences with bullying. The Wilks' Lambda test results with $F (5, 306) = 5.15$, $p < 0.05$, indicating statistical significance. A significant effect of gender was found on the fighting subscale and victimization subscale, suggesting that male high school students.

DISCUSSION

The current study explains how our findings align with existing theoretical conceptualization based on the relationship between emotional intelligence and bullying—the social learning theory and the theory of cognitive postulates that individuals' emotional abilities impact their behavior. The notion, according to which peers with higher degrees of emotional awareness, regulation, and enhanced interpersonal skills behave less violently and hostilely, was validated by our findings. Moreover, our discussion elucidates and develops a deeper understanding of the qualities of emotional intelligence that may act as barriers against bullying. It also provides informative data regarding the relationship between bullying and emotional intelligence in Pakistani high school pupils. This study examines the relationship between bullying behavior and emotional intelligence in Pakistani high school students. The study suggests several approaches to understanding how physical acts, victimization, and bullying relate to emotional intelligence.

This study may contribute to the body of knowledge by elucidating the relationship between bullying and emotional intelligence in Pakistani high school students. The results of this study support previous research by demonstrating a link between

bullying and emotional intelligence. The current research extends theoretical understanding by looking at the sub-facets of emotional intelligence and its relationship to bullying, including sub-factors among high school students. The study's findings suggest that some interventions could raise people's emotional intelligence and educate them on how to use it to reduce bullying. The results may help legislators, parents, and educators design and implement more successful intervention programs for managing emotions and avoiding bullying in schools. By fostering a more supportive and tolerant environment, better social-emotional learning programs might be created and implemented to reduce bullying behavior in schools. The study emphasizes the significance of understanding environmental and cultural elements. This study provides insights, particularly about the dynamics of Pakistani social and cultural norms and values, which significantly influence bullying behavior. This research also illuminates some challenges Pakistani high schools face in creating culturally sensitive intervention programs that successfully address kids' unique needs at the classroom level.

Findings

The current study's findings were consistent with the previous literature that a significant association was found between emotional intelligence and bullying behaviors (García-Sancho et al., 2014; Masum and Khan, 2014). In this study, emotional intelligence proved to be a significant factor that influences bullying behavior, and it states that low emotional intelligence may lead to increased engagement, bullying perpetration, victimization, and physical fights. Hence, the findings support the idea that enhanced emotional regulation and better understanding may reduce bullying behaviors. A plausible elucidation provides the basis that teenagers with lower emotional intelligence may fight to comprehend and try to manage emotions effectively, leading to a higher likelihood of engagement in bullying acts. Furthermore, an individual's inability to understand and manage emotions may lead to a maladaptive view of social cues, which leads to misinterpretations and resulting aggressive responses (Defoe, 2016). This inability to cope and regulate emotions may create inadequate adaptive

reactions and foster an environment favorable to bullying behaviors. Findings also indicate a strong negative correlation between bullying and its subscale (victimization, bullying, and fighting) and emotional intelligence. For this, a previous study also supports the notion and verifies these study findings (Balootbangan and Talepasand, 2015; Raskauskas et al., 2010). Since the study findings are consistent with our research, which makes it clear that emotional intelligence and bullying are complex concepts with various facets.

The study found that when it comes to demographic factors like age, gender, and family structure, emotional intelligence was a strong predictor of bullying behaviors. On the other hand, gender and family systems did not significantly affect prediction. This shows that independent of urban and rural factors, emotional intelligence has a significant influence in reducing bullying tendencies among Pakistani teenage school students. This raises the possibility that improving emotional intelligence by understanding, recognizing, and controlling emotions may reduce bullying behaviors. Furthermore, there were notable gender disparities in bullying behavior and emotional intelligence among Pakistani high school students, especially in the victim and fighting subscales.

Therefore, the previous study validates the present study findings and supports the hypothesis that gender differences exist in the context of emotional intelligence and bullying behavior among high school students. Moreover, gender differences in bullying subscales may introduce the complexity of comprehending the relationship between emotional intelligence and bullying engagement. Hence, the findings indicate that male high school students often score higher on the victim and fighting sub-scales than female students. Furthermore, the basic idea and the study's findings were supported by previous research (Galindo-Domínguez and Losada, 2023; Imuta et al., 2022). Additionally, the findings of additional research (Saleem et al., 2022; Srivastava and Dey, 2020; Vega et al., 2022) supported the idea that there is a negative but significant correlation between bullying behaviors and emotional intelligence among Pakistani high school students. These studies support the second hypothesis, which maintains a

negative correlation between bullying and emotional intelligence among Pakistani high school students, in addition to supporting our findings. The study supports the notion that greater levels of a high school student's emotional intelligence correlate with lower bullying behaviors. This study looked into the possible role of improving emotional intelligence in reducing bullying incidents.

CONCLUSION

Research has linked Emotional Intelligence (EI) to bullying in both its aggressive and victimized forms. All aspects of bullying, with the exception of the bully subscale, exhibit gender disparities. The results underscore the importance of emotional intelligence in addition to the detrimental psychological effects of bullying. Enhanced recognition of the factors linked to bullying advances our comprehension of this phenomenon and facilitates the development of preventive and corrective measures. Focusing on developing qualities that improve emotional regulation and prevent bullying in individuals is the aim.

The study concluded that some therapies might improve emotional intelligence and teach people how to use it to lessen bullying. The findings facilitate implementing and creating more effective intervention programs for emotion management and eradicating bullying in schools for parents, educators, and legislators. By creating and implementing improved social-emotional learning programs that promote a more welcoming and helpful environment, bullying behavior in schools may be reduced. The study emphasizes the importance of comprehending the effects of culture and environment. One area where this study offers insights is the dynamics of social and cultural norms and values in Pakistan, which have a significant impact on bullying behavior. Additionally, this study highlights a few of the difficulties Pakistani high schools encounter in developing culturally aware intervention programs that effectively cater to the individual requirements of students in the classroom.

These studies also show how well emotional intelligence therapies work in treating the complex problems related to bullying. As a respected scholar, I beg schools and decision-makers to consider fostering emotional intelligence to reduce bullying by promoting an environment of compassion and respect. Further investigations into this link may reveal factors that are not readily apparent, and that influence the association between bullying behaviors and emotional intelligence.

Implications

The present study may contribute to knowledge by elucidating the relationship between emotional intelligence and bullying among Pakistani high school students. The findings of the current also support the past literature through the link between emotional intelligence and bullying. Moreover, the present research enhances theoretical understanding by investigating the sub-facets of emotional intelligence and its effect on bullying, including sub-factors of bullying among high school students. The present research findings suggest that specific interventions enhance emotional intelligence and how to utilize emotional skills effectively in reducing bullying. The study may help parents, teachers, and policymakers to use and develop better intervention programs for managing emotions and bullying behavior in school. Implementing and developing better social-emotional learning programs may foster a supportive and more conducive environment within the school setting and reduce bullying behavior. The study highlights the significance of understanding cultural and contextual elements. This study provides insights, particularly in the Pakistani context, where social and cultural norms and values are dynamics and have a significant influence on bullying behavior. This study also provides an understanding of specific challenges in Pakistani high schools by knowing the development of culturally sensitive intervention programs. It may address the unique needs of students at the school level.

Limitations and future recommendations

Recognizing the limitations of this investigation is crucial. The study's cross-sectional nature makes establishing a causal association between bullying behavior and emotional intelligence unfeasible. Longitudinal studies may close this gap by providing a more comprehensive understanding of the interactions between these variables across time. One possible explanation for the study's restricted generalizability to different cultural contexts is its

exclusive emphasis on Pakistani high school students. Future studies may include people from a wider variety of cultural backgrounds to make the findings more applicable. To sum up, this study contributes to the existing literature by clarifying the negative association between bullying behavior and emotional intelligence in Pakistani high school students.

These results highlight the efficacy of emotional intelligence therapies in dealing with bullying's complex problems. As a respected academic, I urge teachers and politicians to consider fostering an environment of mutual respect and compassion via the cultivation of emotional intelligence to reduce bullying. Future studies may probe deeper layers of this connection, revealing unseen factors that moderate the dynamic between emotional intelligence and bullying conduct.

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