

**ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN PREVENTING BURNOUT IN TRAINEE CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST**Rabbia Ashraf<sup>\*1</sup>, Asma Hameed<sup>2</sup>, Faiza Safdar<sup>3</sup>**Original Article**

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**Abstract**

*The present research was aimed to investigate/explore the role of Emotional Intelligence in preventing Burnout in trainee clinical psychologists. Research Design was correlational. The study used purposive sampling strategy. The sample consisted of (n= 85) trainee clinical psychologists from Center for Clinical Psychology, University of the Punjab, Lahore. Emotional Intelligence Scale (Schutte et al., 1998) and Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (Kristensen et al., 2005) were used to research the variables. Descriptive Statistic and Correlation were used to compute results. Significant inverse relationship was found in emotional intelligence and personal burnout and client related burnout (sub-scales of burnout) which depicts that increased emotional intelligence will results in decrease personal and client related burnout. It was concluded that there is a significant inverse relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Burnout. Moreover, it was concluded that individuals with high level of Emotional Intelligence experience less burnout and have low perceived pressure felt due to training. The present study will contribute in the growing research of emotional health in psychologist. Implication of present study will highlight the necessary skill and need required to provide adequate training programs for the trainee to enhance their EI in them.*

**Keywords:** Burnout, Emotional, Intelligence, Training, Responsibility, Ability

**Introduction**

Mental health profession requires a great deal of commitment, empathy, and professional responsibility. It is observed that people in this field not only put efforts to solve the problems of their client but also get involved emotionally with their work and thus they may internalize the problems of their client which may induce stress in them. As it is very demanding profession, so they found no time to relax and detach themselves from the problems. With experience the expert clinical psychologists learn to deal with these issues and become able to regulate their emotions but trainee clinical psychologists entering this field may become overwhelmed by these problems which may induce burnout in them effecting their performance and their interpersonal relationship. In this regard their emotional intelligence may play a role to deal with burnout.

Solvey and Mayer (1990) proposed a mixture of both trait and ability-based model. Goleman (1998) describes emotional intelligence (EI) is recognizing one's own emotional feeling and that of others and regulating them in such a way that enhances living. According to him Emotional intelligence (EI) is one's ability to preserve their enthusiasm and to encounter against unpleasant situation effectively, to manage their own anxiety, regulate their bodily behavior and don't let distresses to spoil their thought, uselessly express sympathy with others and be meaninglessly hopeful (Goleman,

1998). It is stated that EI not only includes one's emotions but their cognitions and socialization as well. It governs the quality of relationships among individuals. In other words, a person who met three components cognitive, physiological and behavioral successfully will possess high Emotional intelligence and is linked with experiencing less negativity in life (Sasanpour et al., 2012). According to Plattor (2016) and it is essential to continually be self-aware to prevent symptoms of burnout from taking over. Psychologists should have good EI as they are the ones providing emotional help and teaching them way to keep their faulty emotions in control to enhance their productivity. Thus, they need to keep their emotions in check as their emotional information assists them in controlling their work exhaustion and enhance work productivity (Ahmed & Khalid, 2014).

Burnout can be defined as the phenomenon that starts with too much level of stress related to the job that is from very long time that tension creates strain the person (stress, anger and tiredness). As a result of the stress, the person might deal with the stress inappropriately in a defensive manner such that the worker may detach himself psychologically from work and become rigid, indifferent and pessimist (Chenris, 2000). Sometimes psychologists have to deal with intense emotionally charged people frequently i.e. they have to deal with emotions like fear, despair, anxiety, guilt, anger or embarrassment. According to Farmer (2004) burnout is a phenomenon that is not a stress itself but involve stress. It is basically due to deprivation of person emotional recourses which are essential to deal with such emotionally charged individuals.

Burnout syndrome often arises of distress and mainly due to the failure of coping strategy of person to handle their ongoing process. Problem arises when our techniques fail or backfire, consequently individual suffer negative results in the form of physical or mental health deterioration such as psychosomatic disorder e.g., headache, insomnia, ulcer, anxiety, depression and alcoholism. It may also affect the institute in which they are performing a professional role. Though all people are equally exposed to the same type of stressors, some people show more consequences of exhaustion and get more affected than others. This shows that individual differs in their ability to cope with stressors. Emotional intelligence in this case is an individual skill which helps to cope with susceptible negative consequences of stress (Landa & Zafra, 2010).

It has been seen that individuals with well-developed EI are proven to be more practical in the place of work as they can comprehend their emotions and act in control of their emotions. They utilize their emotions as indication to what exactly their body and mind are trying to tell them, and they use their EI to be aware of their own and viewpoint (MTD training, 2010).

Trainee psychologists, when interacting with clients not only they have to be compassionate and empathetic toward the client but also must be vigilant about the self-evaluation from the supervisor in charge. As a trainee, trainee psychologists have an excessive workload, besides consultation sessions with client. In such case if the trainee lacks motivations or social skills to engage with a client then they themselves become exhausted or bored during the session which may in turn affect their work competency. Having good emotional intelligence in trainee will decrease burnout among them and they will be better in working with client (Thomas, 2012). If a trainee better able to handle stress and perform effectively in any situation this can help in their personal success and everyday interactions with others. In general, research has also found a similar characteristic pattern i.e., higher level of psychological adaptation is related with lower stress and burnout level (Landa & Zafra, 2010). Similarly, EI is also related with enhance time management and self-regulation (Azam & Younas, 2014), build effective therapeutic relationships with patients and their families (Khanifar et al., 2012) and reduce psychological exhaustion (Iqbal & Abbasi, 2013). Thus, the review of past

literature has led us to believe that EI is positively associated with health and negative with stress. Thus, present study objective of the research is to investigate the role of emotional intelligence in preventing burnout in trainee clinical psychologists.

### Hypothesis

- Emotional intelligence is likely to have negative relationship with burnout.

### Method

#### Research method

Correlational research design and purposive sampling strategy, which is a technique of non-probability sampling was used in the study. Purposive sampling was used because only female trainee clinical psychologists enrolled in ADCP and MS in Clinical Psychology and have started their placement were included. Clinical internes and demoted trainees were not included.

#### Sample characteristics

The present study was comprised of 85 female trainee clinical psychologists with age ranging from 20 to 26 years ( $M= 23.57$ ,  $SD= 1.29$ ). The data was collected from University of The Punjab, Lahore, as sample for the present study.

#### Measuring instruments

**Demographic Sheet:** Demographic sheet consisted of information regarding participant's age, religion, birth-order, education, marital status and questions about their view about training being a clinical psychologist etc. Emotional Intelligence Scale (Schutte et al., 1998). The Urdu version by Zaidi and Kausar (2013) was used to assess the level of emotional intelligence after taking permission from the authors who translated it. Scale comprised of four subscale of total 83 items rated on 5 point scale (1 = total disagreement, to 5 = total agreement). Psychometric properties of the scale are well defined having internal consistency of .87, and test - retest reliability of .78. This scale has high reliability i.e.  $\alpha=0.80$  for the current study.

Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (Kristensen et al., 2005). The tool was administered in Urdu after translating it according to MAPI guidelines using back to back translations. It was used to assess the feelings of personal, work related and client-related exhaustion. It comprised of 19 item questionnaire with 5 point response category: always (100), often (75) sometimes (50), seldom (25) and never (0). The scale comprised of three sub dimensions. The sub scales has higher correlations among them and an internal consistency above .85. For present research the Cronbach alpha came out to be  $\alpha =0.91$ .

### Results

Descriptive statistics include frequency and percentages of demographics characteristics of participants. Inferential statistics include Pearson product moment correlation to explore the role of emotional intelligence in preventing burnout in trainee clinical psychologists. Additionally Pearson moment correlation was also done to explore the relationship between emotional intelligence and burnout.

**Table 1**  
**Frequencies and percentages of demographic variables of participants (N= 85)**

Demographic variables	<i>f</i>	%
Family system		
Joint	17	20
Nuclear	68	80
Marital status		
Married	11	12.94
Unmarried	74	87.05
Present/ current degree		
ADCP	49	57.64
MS	36	42.35
Last semester GPA		
Below 3	17	20.00
Between 3 and 3.4	40	47.05
Between 3.41 and 3.8	28	32.94
Perception of importance of training		
To some extent not important	1	1.17
Un-certain	14	16.47
Important	17	20.00
Very important	53	62.35
Pressure felt due to training		
Not at all	4	4.70
Moderate	46	54.11
Very much	35	41.17
Emotional problems faced due to training		
Not at all	15	17.64
Moderate	49	57.64
Very much	21	24.7
The objectionf family towards work		
Yes	38	44.70
No	47	55.29
The reaction of participant toward objection		
Aggressive	12	14.11
Assertive	52	61.17
Passive	21	24.70

Table 1 shows that most of the participants' i.e (80%) belongs to the joint family system (87.1%). were unmarried. A greater number of participants perceive their training to be important (62.35%). However, at the same timemost of participant felt much pressure due to training (54.11%) and faced moderate emotional problems due to training (57.64%).

**Table 2**  
**Pearson product moment correlation between emotional intelligence and burnout in trainee clinical psychologists (N=85)**

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	M	SD
1. Emotional intelligence	1	.79**	.87**	.89**	.39*	-.39*	-.48**	-.31	-.48**	127.31	13.77
2. Perception of emotions		1	.59**	.68**	-.04	-.40**	-.31	-.25	-.45**	37.74	5.23
3. Managing own emotions			1	.76**	.19	-.51**	-.52**	-.33	-.46**	35.37	4.77
4. Managing others' emotions				1	.16	-.46**	-.40*	-.23	-.55**	30.06	4.43
5. Utilization of emotions					1	-.07	-.20	-.01	.08	24.14	4.02
6. Burnout						1	.83**	.91**	.81**	135	49.77
7. Personal burnout							1	.74**	.42*	50.12	17.43
8. Work related burnout								1	.60**	54.29	20.09
9. Client related burnout									1	30.60	20.98

\*\* Correlation is significant at .01 level (two tailed)

Table 2 showed that there was a significant inverse relationship in emotional intelligence and burnout which indicates that high the person has emotional intelligence, the low level of burnout the person will experience. The significant inverse relationship was found in emotional intelligence and personal burnout and client related burnout (sub-scales of burnout) which depicts that increased emotional intelligence will results in decrease personal and client related burnout.

**Table 3**  
**Pearson product-moment correlation in burnout and demographic variables in trainee clinical psychologists (N=85)**

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	M	S.D
1 Burnout	1	-	.72**	.68**	-	135	49.78
		1.6 7			.47*		
2 Perception of the importance of training	-	1	-	-.10	-.01	4.37	.88
			1.9 6				
3 Pressure felt due to training	-	-	1	-	-.37*	2.34	.60
				.68*			
4 Emotional problems due to training	-	-	-	1	-.41*	2.09	.69
5 Objection of family towards work	-	-	-	-	1	1.54	.51

Note: \*\* Correlation is significant at .01 level (two tailed)

\* Correlation is significant at .05 level (two tailed)

Table 3 showed that there was a significant positive relationship in burnout and pressure felt due to training which means the more pressure a trainee clinical psychologists feel due to training, the more burnout he will experience. A significant positive relationship was also found between burnout with emotional problems faced due to training which means that the more emotional problems a person has, the high will be the level of burnout. On Contrary, the objection of the family towards work and burnout has significant negative relations which indicate that when there is more objection of the family towards work, the less burnout a trainee will experience.

## Discussion

The present study was conducted to assess emotional intelligence and burnout in trainee psychologists. The study aimed to explore the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Burnout in trainee psychologists. The study included N=85 participants, both male (n= 2) and female (n = 83) of the average age range 20-26.

It was hypothesized that there was likely to be a relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Burnout. The hypothesis was supported by Descriptive analysis and there was a moderately significant relationship found between variables such as the more the trainees can direct their own particular and other feelings, less burnout was experienced by them. The findings are affirmed by past writing surveys that there is a critical relationship between emotional intelligence and burnout (Saiari et al., 2011). There was a strong negative relationship found between Emotional Intelligence and Burnout in Indigenous research (Vaezi & Fallah, 2011; Iqbal & Abbasi, 2013).

It has been concluded by various studies that Emotional Intelligence has been playing a vital role in today's working environment (Nordin, 2012). Goleman (1995) albeit cognitive intelligence may give a few people section into a specific setting, emotional intelligence may serve a fundamental part in deciding how effective they will be after entering the setting. As to student analysts, the nearness of elevated level of emotional intelligence might be vital in helping them work with patients from a scope of social foundations. Specifically, emotional intelligence could assume a critical part in their capacity to relate to and address the psychological wellness worries of culturally assorted patients. In another study the role of Emotional Intelligence (EI) assessed a moderator in the process of stress, in the fast-paced, in the world of competition; many people believe stress as a part of their life (Slaski & Cartwright, 2002). Likewise, in similar study conducted by Wons and Matusiewicz (2011). it was explored that persons with a high level of emotional intelligence are more adaptable in adapting to stressors, it additionally expressed that individuals with higher results, if there should be an occurrence of emotional intelligence, tend to attempt the more enthusiastically dynamic acts facing with issue.

Progressively there is a high weight of the educational and trainee system on students, but they are not impervious to emotional strain and anxiety as such. It has been identified that stress remains high for students in healthcare courses. Similar findings were reported in nursing students by Sim and Bang, (2015) they found a negative association of EI with, stress coping, and adjustment. Likewise, research conducted by Cazan and Năstasă (2014) found positive relationship between EI with life satisfaction and a negative with a burnout in students of university which shoes that EI is related with better adjustment and success in academic settings. In light of these findings, it has been assessed that there is a need to improve emotional intelligence and stress coping to encourage adjustment to academic life in students.

The cultural and social elements of Pakistan make interesting anxieties in their lives. (Shah, 2010) students regularly experience exceptional and challenging circumstances throughout their scholastic, practice and individual life, for example, high workload, tight due dates, high targets, sort of work weight to perform, and so on., and at some point dismissal of family against their exchanging are likewise a wellspring of anxiety. Additional analysis done on the research has shown that pressure felt due to training and personal and emotional problem faced due to training have a positive significant relationship with burnout and thus affect the training.

Further, it was revealed that poor stress management and inability to effectively manage your emotions lead to less engagement in work (Schaufeli, 2012). Studies has shown that healthcare professional who are significantly more compelling in various key execution regions including stress administration, demonstrating that these aptitudes are basic for human services experts (Landa, 2010) directed an exploration with nursing understudies have demonstrated that emotional intelligence is an expertise that minimizes the negative anxiety outcomes. In view of the above literature, it can prove that Emotional intelligence is a key factor to manage burnout. So, it can be said that 'emotional intelligence,' is the capacity to limit burnout in trainees, so one ought to

underline on creating emotional intelligence to beat anxiety and poor administration amid preparing to be compelling and fruitful in taking in the practice abilities.

The findings of the present study are well supported by the previous literature; thus the result is in line with previous study. Trainee Clinical Psychologists are the fundamental unit of Mental Health Profession. Trainee Clinical Psychologists are the future Professional. It is important to focus on factors (e.g., inability to manage stress) which may affect their performance as professionals so that these factors can be managed. The study will help in planning specific interventions regarding Emotional Intelligence in trainee Programs. Arranging training session and workshops to teach Trainee Clinical Psychologists self-care behaviors and strategies will help to make them better Professionals. Research has the limitation of generalizability as the data was collected from only one government university department. Moreover, qualitative research can be conducted on the impact of emotional intelligence on Burnout to find the detailed account of problems arises in trainees due to lack of emotional control and understanding. Further, awareness and guidance can be provided regarding the importance of emotional intelligence to reduce stress, anxiety and burnout.

### Conclusion

From the results explained above it is concluded that there is a significant relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Burnout. Moreover, it was concluded that individuals with high level of Emotional Intelligence experience less burnout and have low perceived pressure felt due to training.

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