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Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Psychological Distress Among Police Personnel: Evidence from Karachi, Pakistan

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Abstract

This study examined emotional intelligence and its impact on psychological distress among police personnel. Police officers routinely work in stressful environments that expose them to psychological distress, which may affect their wellbeing and job performance; however, limited research has examined how emotional intelligence influences psychological distress among police personnel in Karachi, Pakistan. The objectives of this study were to determine the level of emotional intelligence among gazetted and non-gazetted police officers and to investigate its relationship with psychological distress. The ability model of emotional intelligence was adopted to assess the emotional competencies of police personnel. Data (N = 100) were collected through questionnaires from gazetted and non-gazetted officers working in five police stations—Malir, Shahra-e-Faisal, Gulistan-e-Johar, Feroz Abad, and Baloch Colony—in District East, Karachi, Pakistan. Emotional intelligence was measured using the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS), and psychological distress was assessed using the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10). Results indicated a moderate negative relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological distress (r = −.58, p < .001), and years of experience were also associated with emotional intelligence (r = .90, p < .001). The emotional intelligence dimensions of self-emotion appraisal, others' emotion appraisal, use of emotion, and regulation of emotion were each inversely related to psychological distress. The findings suggest that police personnel with higher emotional intelligence perform their duties efficiently while experiencing lower levels of psychological distress. Enhancing emotional intelligence may therefore help reduce organizational stress and promote psychological wellbeing among police personnel.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, psychological distress, stressful environment, police personnel, gazetted officers, non-gazetted officers

Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Psychological Distress Among Police Personnel: Evidence from Karachi, Pakistan

Despite the significant role of police personnel in maintaining law and order, they are frequently exposed to occupational stressors such as long working hours, public pressure, exposure to crime, traumatic incidents, and organizational demands. These stressors may

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contribute to psychological distress, which can adversely affect their mental health, job performance, and interactions with the public.

This study was conducted to determine the impact of emotional intelligence on psychological distress among police personnel in Karachi, Pakistan, and to examine the relationship between these constructs so that the results may be used to improve police organizations. In Pakistan, the criminal justice system rests on three pillars: police, prosecution, and prisons. In pursuing justice, members of the public visit their respective police stations to resolve disputes. Police personnel not only perform their duty to mitigate crime but are also perceived as social workers in society. One cause of the poor public image of the police is the disruption of citizens' daily routines during investigation and inquiry.

Psychological distress refers to a state of emotional suffering characterized by symptoms of stress, anxiety, and emotional discomfort that may affect an individual's overall psychological wellbeing. Psychological distress and emotional intelligence are both crucial to human psychological wellbeing, and both may become dysfunctional as a result of stress, anxiety, or traumatic situations. Emotional intelligence is an ability that enhances work performance in a stressful environment and helps mitigate psychological distress in daily life. People with high emotional intelligence can curb stress more easily than those with low emotional intelligence. Previous studies have suggested that individuals with higher emotional intelligence are better able to manage workplace stress, adapt to challenging situations, and maintain psychological wellbeing, particularly in high-risk professions. Moreover, law enforcement is one of the few professions in which critical situations and a stressful environment are part of the job. Research suggests that police personnel with high emotional intelligence are better able to fulfil their work demands regardless of how critical a situation becomes.

Although several studies have examined emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing in different occupational settings, limited empirical evidence exists regarding the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological distress among police personnel in Karachi, Pakistan, particularly among gazetted and non-gazetted officers. Emotional intelligence is a person's ability to recognize their own emotions, to control those emotions, and thereby to evaluate relationships with others (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Individuals' mental abilities are closely linked to both psychological distress and emotional intelligence (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

Background of the Study

Emotional intelligence is the ability to process and reason about emotional information, and it is assessed through tasks that require ability (Mayer et al., 2008). Emotional intelligence is a useful tool for dealing with people in a balanced and mature manner and for maintaining a positive perspective. A high level of emotional intelligence is therefore essential for employees, and particularly for those in police organizations, because such employees interact continuously with society; information about emotions is central to running an organization smoothly. In addition, police officers' duties are not restricted to office hours (Gall & Allsop, 2007).

The nature of police responsibility is to provide safety in society at all costs, and this responsibility remains on officers' minds even when they are off duty. From the perspective of protecting society from criminal activity, a high level of emotional intelligence helps police personnel deal with the people around them and also helps decrease their psychological distress. Such abilities enable officers to recognize which action is best suited to an undesired situation and where to direct their attention (Sharma, 2014).

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Police Occupation and Stress

Police work is widely recognized as a highly stressful occupation. Psychological injury is often considered an outcome of occupational demands, and a lack of emotional support from police organizations may trigger psychological distress. Previous studies have reported that occupational stress and exposure to traumatic events are major contributors to psychological distress and psychological injury among police personnel. However, only 4% of policing-related research has addressed work-related stress (Huddleston et al., 2006).

The Role of Emotional Intelligence in the Police Force

The relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological distress has been widely examined in the literature. Emotional intelligence has been identified as an important factor that positively influences job performance, particularly in professions involving frequent public interaction and high emotional demands (Joseph & Newman, 2010). Aremu and Tejumola (2008) suggested that emotional intelligence is essential for professions that require extensive interaction with people, including policing. They argued that an understanding of emotions and the ability to regulate them are necessary for effective professional conduct. In the context of police work, emotional intelligence may help personnel manage occupational stress, respond appropriately to challenging situations, and maintain positive relationships with the public. Furthermore, effective communication has been identified as a crucial skill for police personnel in dealing with the public in a professional manner (Sanders, 2003).

Stress and Emotional Intelligence

Webster (2014) analyzed the relationship between emotional intelligence and stress and found that emotionally intelligent people who recognize chronic stress are more capable of restraining and managing that stress than those with lower emotional intelligence. He concluded that emotional intelligence is an effective tool for coping with stress, anxiety, and trauma, and recommended that training and awareness programmes be organized within society.

Theoretical Framework

This research draws on three foundational accounts of emotional intelligence—those of Bar-On (2006), Goleman (1995), and Mayer, DiPaolo, and Salovey (1990)—because these frameworks adequately explain human behaviour and performance in the working environment. Within police organizations, non-gazetted officers carry vital additional responsibilities for implementing policing, maintaining law and order, and representing every level of government, whereas gazetted officers ensure compliance in relation to their intelligence communities. Non-gazetted officers are held accountable for any negligence in the performance of their duties (Sanders, 2003). It is officers who establish the schedules and plans needed to curb undesired situations and who become the efficient agents who enforce public policy.

Emotional-intelligence-based performance explains the actions, abilities, and skills that are essential for communities and public administration. Emotional intelligence relates to performance, behaviour, leadership, organizational procedures, and commitment to organizational norms. It also positively affects a person’s capacity to understand, implement, and enforce organizational practices (Webster, 2014).

Rationale of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the levels of emotional intelligence and psychological distress, their relationship, and their impact on police personnel, in the context of existing negative public perceptions of police misconduct. These data may inform the cognitive connections between the administrative processes of police organizations and police

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performance, including emotional intelligence abilities such as policymaking, problem solving, adaptability, relationship building, teamwork, conflict management, flexibility, and communication. A high level of emotional intelligence is considered one of the most significant characteristics in modern organizations, and it is regarded as a factor that enhances quality, dedication to work, commitment management, competitiveness, cooperation, and effective teamwork. To determine the impact of emotional intelligence on psychological distress among police personnel, data were collected using close-ended questionnaires at several police stations. Recruiting qualified, well-suited, and dedicated applicants has been a persistent challenge for law enforcement agencies, particularly police organizations. In contemporary society, the primary reasons for the poor image of the police are inadequate training and supervision and the gap between these and the hiring process, which contribute to negative perceptions of, and witnessed misconduct toward, civil society (Hess & Wrobleski, 1997). This study is therefore significant for police organizations seeking to improve the tools and procedures used in hiring, supervising, and training candidates.

Moreover, the results of this research may inform the screening procedures used to select police personnel. The study also provides knowledge about emotional intelligence to selectors and trainers who may use it to raise emotional intelligence levels. Furthermore, this study contributes to the literature on emotional intelligence, psychological distress, and the basic structure of police organizations, which may benefit the disciplines of criminology, organizational and industrial psychology, sociology, law, and education. Finally, the literature, findings, and suggestions will be accessible to those interested in conducting further investigation in these disciplines, with special reference to emotional intelligence, psychological distress, and police and other law enforcement organizations.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study were as follows:

1. To describe the importance of emotional intelligence.
2. To investigate the impact of emotional intelligence and psychological distress on police personnel.
3. To determine the correlation between emotional intelligence and psychological distress.

Hypotheses

*H*1: Emotional intelligence is negatively associated with psychological distress among police personnel.

*H*2: Self-emotion appraisal (SEA) is negatively associated with psychological distress among police personnel.

*H*3: Regulation of emotion (RoE) is significantly associated with psychological distress among police personnel.

*H*4: Use of emotion (UoE) is negatively associated with psychological distress among police personnel.

*H*5: Others' emotion appraisal (OEA) is significantly associated with psychological distress among police personnel.

Literature Review

Emotions

In psychology, an emotion is a composite state of feeling that affects behaviour and thought processes and results in physical and psychological change. A collection of

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psychological tendencies—such as motivation, mood, personality, and temperament—also depends on emotional condition. Emotions are further understood as responsible for physiological arousal, expressive behaviour, and conscious experience (Davis et al., 2009).

Theories of Emotion

Theories of emotion can be categorized into three major areas: physiological, neurological, and cognitive.

- *Physiological theories* hold that emotions are generated by changes inside the body in terms of bodily responses.
- *Neurological theories* explain that activity within the brain triggers emotional reactions.
- *Cognitive theories* explain that mental activity and thought processes form and provoke emotions.

Intelligence

Gardner (2011) defined intelligence as a "bio-psychological potential to process information that can be activated in a cultural setting to solve problems or create products that are of value in a culture."

The Theory of Multiple Intelligences

Gardner (1983) presented the theory of multiple intelligences in his book *Frames of Mind*, in which he expanded the scope of intelligence and divided it into distinct categories. He argued that humans do not acquire all forms of intelligence at birth and that not all types of intelligence are genetically determined. He challenged prevailing theories that treated intelligence as a single general entity, proposing instead that no such general intelligence exists, only distinct cognitive abilities. He introduced eight types of intelligence: linguistic, musical, logical–mathematical, interpersonal, spatial, bodily–kinesthetic, intrapersonal, and naturalist. According to Gardner (2011), linguistic and logical–mathematical abilities are the ones chiefly valued in school and in society.

Models of Emotional Intelligence

Goleman's Competency Model

Goleman began researching emotional intelligence after being inspired by the findings of Salovey and Mayer, and he introduced a new model of emotional intelligence known as the four-branch model. The four-branch model is further classified into 20 factors relating to emotions. Goleman's model has its own standing, but because it incorporates personality traits such as innovation, teamwork, and honesty it has attracted serious criticism (Locke, 2005). According to Goleman, these competencies are not innate but can be learned through different modes of experience. He added that growth in competencies is directly proportional to a person's level of emotional intelligence, that is, to their capacity to acquire those competencies. The relationship between emotional competencies and emotional intelligence is, in his terms, like that between apples and apple sauce (Goleman, 2003). The four-branch model and its associated competencies are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Goleman's Four-Branch Competency Model of Emotional Intelligence

Branch	Associated competencies
1. Self-awareness	Emotional self-awareness; accurate self-assessment; self-confidence

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2. Self-management	Self-control; trustworthiness; adaptability; achievement drive; initiative; conscientiousness
3. Social awareness	Empathy; service orientation; organizational awareness
4. Relationship management	Developing others; influence; communication; conflict management; leadership; change catalyst; building bonds; teamwork and collaboration

Note. Adapted from Goleman (2003).

The four-branch model was first applied successfully in the business sector. Its findings, which set out the impact of emotional intelligence and intelligence quotient on professional life, captured public attention. Goleman (1998) reported that high emotional intelligence is found among effective leaders, although a standard IQ and technical competence remain prerequisites for entry-level jobs. Certain emotional intelligence characteristics—such as team management and strong social and interpersonal skills—help people build strong relationships with colleagues, subordinates, and superiors. Thus, although IQ is essential for obtaining a good job, emotional intelligence helps a person not only maintain their position but also advance through better relationships (Cherniss, 2000).

Bar-On's Trait Model

Bar-On's model differs from Goleman's in that it adds general mood factors (happiness and confidence) and stress management. Bar-On also included reality testing, which captures how aware people are of the gap between actual meaning and perceived meaning. This model is based on the potential for success rather than success itself and is process oriented.

According to Bar-On (2006), emotional intelligence can be developed and enhanced through training, counselling, and treatment. The model comprises 15 subcomponents grouped into five categories, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Components of the Bar-On Model of Emotional–Social Intelligence

Category	**Subcomponents**
Intrapersonal	Self-regard; emotional self-awareness; assertiveness; independence; self-actualization
Interpersonal	Empathy; social responsibility; interpersonal relationship
Adaptability	Reality testing; flexibility; problem solving
Stress management	Stress tolerance; impulse control
General mood	Optimism; happiness

Note. Adapted from Bar-On (2006).

Bar-On (2006) described this model as one of emotional–social intelligence rather than emotional intelligence alone. He proposed that the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) be used to assess an individual's ability to deal with prevailing problems, needs, and pressures, over and above cognitive ability and personality (Bar-On, 2002).

Although several models of emotional intelligence have been proposed, including the Bar-On model, the present study adopts the ability model developed by Mayer and Salovey (1997). The ability model is particularly relevant to this study because it conceptualizes emotional intelligence as a set of abilities related to perceiving, understanding, using, and

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regulating emotions. These abilities are directly associated with how police personnel manage occupational stress and psychological distress in demanding work environments. The ability model therefore provides an appropriate theoretical framework for examining the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological distress among police personnel.

The Ability Model

According to the four-branch ability model, the four abilities summarized in Table 3 are essential to emotional intelligence; a person must develop these abilities in order to attain a high level of emotional intelligence.

Table 3

The Four-Branch Ability Model of Emotional Intelligence

Branch	Description
1. Perception, appraisal, and expression of emotion	The ability to identify, express, and accurately discriminate emotions in oneself and in others.
2. Emotional facilitation of thinking	The facilitation and classification of information, together with sustained and directed attention to important information. An optimistic outlook can be derived from a positive mood, whereas pessimistic thoughts are the product of a negative mood. Understanding these mood states is necessary in order to approach a problem accurately.
3. Understanding and analyzing emotions	The identification of related emotions and the relationships among them (e.g., aggression and hatred), and understanding what they mean.
4. Regulation of emotion (to promote emotional and intellectual growth)	The ability to remain open to, or to disengage from, an emotion once it has been experienced, whether pleasant or unpleasant.

Note. Adapted from Mayer and Salovey (1997).

Roberts et al. (2001) reported that the reliability, correlations, and factor structure of the Mayer–Salovey–Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) demonstrated that its tasks were positively related, and that the ability model adheres more closely to the structure of emotion and intelligence than do mixed models. Van Rooy et al. (2005) reached a similar conclusion, finding that the ability model clearly distinguishes emotional intelligence from IQ and from individual personality models. Conte (2005) likewise emphasized the importance of the MSCEIT, arguing that the ability model measures emotional intelligence more accurately than alternative measures.

Islamic Perspective on Emotional Intelligence

Numerous verses (*ayat*) in the Holy Qur'an and sayings (*ahadith*) of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) address the four attributes of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-management and self-control, empathy, and social awareness and relationship management. Social awareness and relationship management are briefly elaborated below in the light of the Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet.

Social Awareness and Relationship Management

The Holy Qur'an states:

O mankind! We created you from a single pair of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other).

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> Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things). (Qur'an 49:13)

The Qur'an explains to believers that humankind was created from a single male and female and made into many colours, races, and faiths for a purpose: that people may come to know one another and live together. It establishes a clear code of conduct under which judgement rests on deeds rather than colour or race, which motivates Muslims to build relationships with all human beings. The Prophet (peace be upon him) is likewise reported to have said:

> Narrated Al-Bara bin Azib: Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) commanded us to do seven things and forbade us seven. He ordered us to visit the sick; to follow funeral processions; to respond to a sneezer with *Yarhamuka Allah* (may Allah have mercy on you) when he says *Alhamdulillah* (praise be to Allah); to assist the oppressed; to help others fulfil their oaths; to accept invitations; and to return salutations. (Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith No. 239)

In addition, the Qur'an states, "Those who join together those things which Allah hath commanded to be joined, hold their Lord in awe, and fear the terrible reckoning" (Qur'an 13:21).

Emotional Intelligence and Psychological Distress Among Police Personnel

Baker et al. (2019) examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and affective commitment among 372 police officers drawn from Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Johor, Sabah, and Sarawak. Emotional intelligence was found to be positively related to affective commitment in the police context. The study emphasized four elements of emotional intelligence—self-emotion appraisal (SEA), others' emotion appraisal (OEA), use of emotion (UoE), and regulation of emotion (RoE)—and their effect on affective commitment. Baker et al. also drew on Forushani and Besharat (2011), who found that psychological distress among employees is directly related to a stressful work environment and who proposed a model in which psychological counselling and exercises related to emotional intelligence reduce the level of psychological distress. More emotionally intelligent individuals were found to be better able to counter stress and to sustain their abilities in isolating environments.

McCutcheon (2018) showed that organizational stress is inversely related to emotional intelligence, such that an increased level of emotional intelligence can reduce psychological stress. He also cited Salovey et al. (1999), who demonstrated that individuals with higher emotional intelligence are more flexible in handling negative events than those lower in emotional intelligence.

Maintaining work–life balance is a principal concern for both employees and employers, because an imbalance causes stress, decreases job performance, and may lead to health-related problems. Kumarasamy et al. (2016) collected data from 1,566 police officers in Peninsular Malaysia and used partial least squares analysis, which revealed a significant positive relationship between work–life balance and emotional intelligence. Organizational support was also found to moderate this relationship. To maintain work–life balance, police officers require emotional intelligence, and the presence of organizational support strengthens that relationship. Consequently, raising officers' emotional intelligence and implementing supportive policies should help maintain work–life balance.

Method

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This section describes the methodology adopted to determine the role of emotional intelligence in psychological distress among police personnel. The research design, data-gathering techniques (sampling and target population), and measures are discussed in turn.

Research Design

The study used a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design. Data were collected from a police organization with the permission of the Senior Superintendent of Police. Table 4 summarizes the research design.

Table 4

Summary of the Research Design

Design element	Specification
Data source	Police organization, with the permission of the Senior Superintendent of Police
Target population	Shahra-e-Faisal, Malir, Gulistan-e-Johar, Baloch Colony, and Feroz Abad police stations, District East, Karachi
Sampling technique	Non-probability convenience sampling
Sample size	100 respondents; gazetted and non-gazetted officers
Instruments	Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS); Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10)
Permissions	Both scales were used with the permission of their authors
Data analysis	SPSS; descriptive and inferential statistics

Participants

This research focused on police personnel; the researcher approached both gazetted and non-gazetted officers and invited them to participate with their informed consent. Before completing the questionnaire, the researcher introduced the study and assured participants that the survey would be used for academic purposes only. Convenience sampling of 100 respondents was best suited to this study, and the target population consisted of officers at the District East police stations of Malir, Shahra-e-Faisal, Gulistan-e-Johar, Feroz Abad, and Baloch Colony. The demographic characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 100)

Baseline characteristic	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Rank				
Non-gazetted officers	67	67.0	67.0	67.0
Gazetted officers	33	33.0	33.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	
Age (years)				
25–30	11	11.0	11.0	11.0
30–40	38	38.0	38.0	49.0
40–50	36	36.0	36.0	85.0
50–60	15	15.0	15.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	
Education				
Matriculation	8	8.0	8.0	8.0

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Intermediate	10	10.0	10.0	18.0
Graduation	56	56.0	56.0	74.0
Master's	26	26.0	26.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	
Monthly salary (PKR)				
40,000–50,000	28	28.0	28.0	28.0
50,000–60,000	11	11.0	11.0	39.0
60,000–70,000	28	28.0	28.0	67.0
70,000–90,000	10	10.0	10.0	77.0
Above 90,000	23	23.0	23.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	
Experience (years)				
1–3	11	11.0	11.0	11.0
6–10	8	8.0	8.0	19.0
Above 10	81	81.0	81.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	
Transfers				
1–3	10	10.0	10.0	10.0
4–7	39	39.0	39.0	49.0
8–12	26	26.0	26.0	75.0
More than 12	15	15.0	15.0	90.0
None	10	10.0	10.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	
Marital status				
Married	89	89.0	89.0	89.0
Unmarried	11	11.0	11.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	
Family members				
1–3	10	10.0	10.0	10.0
4–6	70	70.0	70.0	80.0
More than 6	20	20.0	20.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	
Physical activity				
Walking and jogging	56	56.0	56.0	56.0
Swimming	8	8.0	8.0	64.0
Weightlifting	10	10.0	10.0	74.0
Any other	18	18.0	18.0	92.0
None	8	8.0	8.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Note. Cumulative percentages for the transfers category were computed from the reported frequencies. PKR = Pakistani rupees.

Measures

Emotional Intelligence

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Emotional intelligence was measured with the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS; Law et al., 2004). The scale consists of 16 items grouped into four subscales: self-emotion appraisal, use of emotion, regulation of emotion, and others' emotion appraisal. Reported subscale score ranges are as follows: self-emotion appraisal, 4.01–4.84 (items 1–4); regulation of emotion, 3.78–4.27 (items 5–8); use of emotion, 4.09–4.57 (items 9–12); and others' emotion appraisal, 4.15–4.60 (items 13–16).

Psychological Distress

Psychological distress was assessed with the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10; Kessler et al., 2002), a brief and easily administered measure. The K10 comprises 10 items, each answered on a five-point response scale, and provides a precise picture of psychological distress among respondents. It may be either self-administered or read aloud by the researcher. Item scores are summed, producing a minimum score of 10 (low psychological distress) and a maximum score of 50 (high psychological distress).

Procedure and Data Analysis

Questionnaires were distributed to gazetted and non-gazetted officers at the five selected police stations after permission had been obtained from the Senior Superintendent of Police. Participation was voluntary, and participants were informed that their responses would be used for academic purposes only. Data were analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics, Pearson product–moment correlations, and simple linear regression were computed.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were computed to summarize the levels of emotional intelligence and psychological distress among the respondents (N = 100). Emotional intelligence showed a mean score of 96.00 (SD = 17.04), whereas psychological distress had a mean of 20.34 (SD = 9.19). These values indicate moderate variability in both constructs within the sample. Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations are reported in Table 6.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological distress. The results revealed a moderate negative correlation between emotional intelligence and psychological distress, $r = -.58$, $p < .001$, indicating that higher levels of psychological distress are associated with lower levels of emotional intelligence. Furthermore, a strong positive correlation was observed between years of experience and emotional intelligence, $r = .90$, $p < .001$, suggesting that greater professional experience is associated with higher emotional intelligence.

Subscale Correlations

To explore this relationship further, correlations between psychological distress and the subdimensions of emotional intelligence—self-emotion appraisal (SEA), regulation of emotion (RoE), use of emotion (UoE), and others' emotion appraisal (OEA)—were analyzed. Psychological distress correlated significantly and negatively with all four subscales: SEA, $r = -.32$, $p < .01$; RoE, $r = -.67$, $p < .001$; UoE, $r = -.52$, $p < .001$; and OEA, $r = -.55$, $p < .001$. These results suggest that higher psychological distress is consistently associated with lower functioning across all dimensions of emotional intelligence.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations With Psychological Distress (N = 100)

Variable	*M*	*SD*	*r* with distress	*p*

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Emotional intelligence (total)	96.00	17.04	−.58	< .001
Self-emotion appraisal (SEA)	—	—	−.32	< .01
Regulation of emotion (RoE)	—	—	−.67	< .001
Use of emotion (UoE)	—	—	−.52	< .001
Others' emotion appraisal (OEA)	—	—	−.55	< .001
Psychological distress (K10)	20.34	9.19	—	—
Years of experience	—	—	—	—

Note. Dashes indicate values not reported in the original analysis. Years of experience correlated with total emotional intelligence, $r = .90$, $p < .001$.

Regression Analysis

A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to assess the predictive effect of psychological distress on emotional intelligence among police personnel. The model summary indicated that psychological distress significantly predicted emotional intelligence, explaining 33.4% of the variance, $R^2 = .33$, adjusted $R^2 = .33$. This indicates moderate explanatory power. The analysis of variance confirmed that the regression model was statistically significant, $F(1, 98) = 49.07$, $p < .001$, indicating that psychological distress is a meaningful predictor of emotional intelligence.

The regression coefficients showed that psychological distress had a significant negative effect on emotional intelligence, $\beta = -.58$, $t(98) = -7.01$, $p < .001$, implying that an increase in psychological distress corresponds to a substantial decrease in emotional intelligence among police personnel. The regression results are summarized in Table 7, and the regression equation can be expressed as follows:

$EI = 7.361 - 0.578$ (psychological distress) + ε

Overall, the findings support the hypothesis that psychological distress significantly and negatively influences emotional intelligence.

Table 7

Simple Linear Regression Predicting Emotional Intelligence From Psychological Distress

Predictor	**β**	***t***	***p***	***R*²**	**Adjusted *R*²**	***F*(1, 98)**
Psychological distress	−.58	−7.01	< .001	.33	.33	49.07

Note. β = standardized regression coefficient. The overall model was significant, $p < .001$.

Discussion

This study examined the effect of emotional intelligence on psychological distress among police personnel in Karachi. Most participants held a bachelor's degree and a smaller number held a master's degree. Questionnaires administered within the police organization were used to collect data from 100 respondents. Five conclusions emerged from the analysis, and each is discussed in turn below.

Emotional Intelligence and Psychological Distress Are Negatively Correlated

Emotional intelligence plays a significant role in people's emotional dealings on a daily basis. Goleman (1995) argued that emotional intelligence matters more than IQ because it helps a person to understand situations logically. When employees are emotionally intelligent, difficult situations are less likely to disrupt their day-to-day dealings. During law-and-order operations there are occasions on which officers must handle situations intelligently; emotional intelligence

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helps officers understand how to respond to different circumstances and makes it easier for them to deal with a variety of conditions.

Self-Emotion Appraisal Curbs Psychological Distress

Self-emotion appraisal is inversely related to psychological distress and provides an emotional boost. If a police officer's attitude is reassuring, the public feel encouraged and find the officer trustworthy; a better police force means a more peaceful and secure society. The results for this hypothesis were positive. Data collected from several police stations showed a high positive response on the emotional intelligence measures.

Regulation of Emotion Is Significantly Related to Psychological Distress

Regulation of emotion was also strongly and negatively correlated with psychological distress. Clarke (2010) identified regulation of emotion as a competence spanning four distinct attributes: communication, managing disagreement, attentiveness, and teamwork. The capabilities of police personnel can be enhanced through emotional intelligence, enabling officers to be more attentive to the needs of their subordinates.

Use of Emotion Is Closely Linked With Psychological Distress

Use of emotion and psychological distress are inversely related. When officers do not draw on emotional resources in handling different situations, outcomes may suffer and distress may result, whereas situations handled with emotional competence show a positive impact on performance.

Others' Emotion Appraisal Is Significantly Related to Psychological Distress

Others' emotion appraisal is an important factor in the ability to understand and deal with other people, and psychological distress can be lowered through its use. Individuals with strong others' emotion appraisal show high affective commitment. This is consistent with a work environment that emphasizes teamwork and requires such skills of police officers, whose daily tasks frequently involve interaction with teammates and communities. An increase in others' emotion appraisal is associated with an increase in officers' loyalty toward the organization, which illustrates the importance of this skill for every police officer.

General Discussion

Examination of the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological distress found that emotional intelligence was negatively related to psychological distress. The results therefore support the hypotheses and are consistent with the findings of previous studies. The present results further show that the emotional intelligence attributes of self-emotion appraisal, others' emotion appraisal, use of emotion, and regulation of emotion are all strongly negatively correlated with psychological distress, which is likewise consistent with earlier findings. Police officers who comprehend their own emotions in the work environment are better able to strengthen their commitment to the organization; the higher the level of self-emotion appraisal, the greater the affective commitment among police officers. Conversely, declining self-emotion appraisal may directly reduce officers' commitment.

In addition, officers with the ability to use emotion were found to differ in their commitment to the organization. The present results indicate that the use-of-emotion dimension has a significant positive relationship with a healthy working life where a person is able to curb psychological distress. Officers with a high level of emotional intelligence, and of use of emotion in particular, are better placed to mitigate psychological distress, whereas a low level of use of emotion is associated with greater psychological distress. Officers who know little about how to use their emotions may fail in critical situations, which can in turn generate stress in their

working and daily lives, and work-related stress can damage their commitment to the organization. Developing the use-of-emotion attribute among police officers is therefore a vital area to address.

Regulation of emotion likewise proved to be an essential attribute of emotional intelligence with respect to reducing psychological distress. Officers who are aware of how to regulate their emotions are better able to curb distressing events or to recover quickly from stressful periods. Police organizations are among the most stressful workplaces, in which critical situations, a stressful environment, disturbance, and anxiety are commonplace. Emotional intelligence therefore emerges as a variable through which police officers can deal intelligently with negative situations by controlling and managing their emotions.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Several limitations should be noted. The study used non-probability convenience sampling with a relatively small sample (N = 100) drawn from five police stations in a single district of Karachi, which limits the generalizability of the findings. The cross-sectional design precludes causal inference, and all measures were self-reported, which may introduce common-method bias. Future research should employ larger probability samples across multiple districts, longitudinal designs, and multi-source measures, and should test the effectiveness of emotional intelligence training programmes for serving officers.

Conclusion

This research examined the impact of emotional intelligence on psychological distress. Police organizations depend on their employees to perform their work and deliver outcomes in a timely manner in order to maintain peace in society. When police personnel are emotionally competent, this exerts a positive impact on their performance through better results and better comprehension. A model was tested that added the mediating effect of self-emotion appraisal, others' emotion appraisal, use of emotion, and regulation of emotion in curbing stress. The findings show that emotionally intelligent police personnel are better able to lead on demanding tasks and to mitigate psychological distress. Organizations should therefore work to develop an emotionally intelligent workforce, which should yield positive results in the current environment.

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