Perceived stress, emotional intelligence, and wellbeing of mental health professionals during covid-19 in Pakistan

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Abstract

Purpose - The research aimed to assess the relationship between the perceived stress, emotional intelligence, and wellbeing of mental health professionals during Covid-19 in Pakistan.

Method - The population of this study is (n=150) mental health professionals (psychologists, psychiatrists, psychiatry nurses). Data was collected through purposive sampling strategy.

Result - The results showed that perceived stress has a significant negative association with wellbeing, however, emotional intelligence has a significant positive association with wellbeing. Regression findings revealed that perceived stress and emotional intelligence were significant predictors of wellbeing among mental health professionals.

Implications – This research guided to enhance the emotional intelligence skill. The present study will help to understand the importance of wellbeing, especially among mental health professionals.

Originality – The present study has great importance for mental health professionals. The results of the current study have suggestions for theories in the field of socialization to understand the perceived stress, emotional intelligence, and wellbeing mostly experienced, which increase our knowledge.

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Abstrak

Tujuan - Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menilai hubungan antara stres yang dirasakan, kecerdasan emosional, dan kesejahteraan profesional kesehatan mental selama Covid-19 di Pakistan.

Metode - Populasi penelitian ini adalah (n=150) tenaga kesehatan jiwa (psikolog, psikiater, perawat psikiatri). Data dikumpulkan melalui strategi purposive sampling.

Hasil - Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa persepsi stres memiliki hubungan negatif yang signifikan dengan kesejahteraan, namun kecerdasan emosional memiliki hubungan positif yang signifikan dengan kesejahteraan. Temuan regresi mengungkapkan bahwa stres yang dirasakan dan kecerdasan emosional merupakan prediktor signifikan kesejahteraan di kalangan profesional kesehatan mental. Temuan ANOVA menunjukkan skor kesejahteraan lebih tinggi pada psikiater daripada profesional kesehatan mental lainnya.

Implikasi - Penelitian ini dipandu untuk meningkatkan keterampilan kecerdasan emosional. Studi ini akan membantu untuk memahami pentingnya kesejahteraan, terutama di kalangan profesional kesehatan mental.

Originalitas - Penelitian ini sangat penting bagi para profesional kesehatan mental. Hasil penelitian saat ini memiliki saran untuk teori di bidang sosialisasi untuk memahami stres yang dirasakan, kecerdasan emosional, dan kesejahteraan sebagian besar dialami, yang meningkatkan pengetahuan kita.

Introduction

Coronavirus disease 2019, which is a mild-to-severe respiratory disease produced through a coronavirus (genus: *Betacoronavirus*), is spread mainly through interaction with transferrable substantial (like breathing condensations) and is categorized, particularly, through temperature, coughing, and choking and might progress to pneumonia and lung failure. Coronavirus illness (COVID-19) is novel stress that was initially revealed in 2019 in Wuhan, China, and has not been formerly diagnosed in humans. It is different from SARS, MERS, and influenza. In the previous two eras, more than 10,000 increasing cases, with the death rate of 10% for SARS-CoV and 37% for MERS-CoV, occurred worldwide (Lai et al. 2020).

Mental health professionals experience several problems such as the high risk of infection for themselves and their families, being quarantined from family, being isolated, and being distressed by ever-increasing violence from the public, Selvaraj et al. (2020). Numerous researches from all over the world have revealed that mental health professionals suffer from higher levels of anxiety, stress, sadness,

restlessness, and other mental issues due to working in the COVID-19 environment (Gore, 2020). The purpose of the present study was to examine the association between the perceived stress, emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing among mental health professionals (Psychologist, Psychiatrist, and Psychiatric Nurses) during Covid-19 in Pakistan. People continuously have to adjust to numerous parts, natural stresses, and burdens. During the time of life, people struggle for well-being and pleasure in many areas of life-personal, societal, financial, and marriage, and work (Spanier & Furstenberg, 1982).

In the current era, specialists such as Psychologists, Psychiatrists, and Nurses have to spend extra time in their occupational setting and are more involved in events associated with their occupations. They have rare time to complete their family tasks which might direct to pressure and frustration, Pico et al. (2017). Therefore, in the present research, the researcher was interested to identify the aspects affecting psychological wellbeing as the perceived stress and also to discover how they used their emotions and cope with stress. The present study also provides insight into the clinical setting and in a societal setting that how strategies planners make strategies and enhance the psychological wellbeing of mental health professionals in Pakistan.

In most psychiatric hospitals, mental health professionals face increased levels of stressful situations at the workplace, like limited nurses and unpredictable patient behavior like aggression and violence in the unit, Duquette et al. (1994). Psychologists, psychiatrists, and psychiatric nurses also face different types of stressful situations at work. In addition, many individuals working as mental health professionals encounter certain situations that are uncomfortable and disturbing causing stress. Therefore, every individual responds differently to all existing situations in general and the level of discomfort of each individual differs in a given situation. Several different factors influence a professional's response to stress. These factors include past work experiences, professional training, marital status, caregiving pressure at home, responsibilities, and each individual's personality style, Duquette et al. (1994). Thus, work exposure to stressful situations can lead to depression, violent behavior, and other diseases in mental health professionals (Robinson et al. 2003).

In addition, professions in mental health are associated with certain demands related to the job which may create a tense work environment. The perceived stress among mental health professionals creates extreme job stress which could cause several health-related problems and reduce the quality-of-care, Kawano (2008). Most researches on the perceived stress among mental health professionals (psychologists, psychiatrists, and psychiatric nurses) has been conducted in Europe and developed countries. Only a few studies have been conducted in Pakistan and other Middle East countries. Substantial energy has been devoted to determining which characteristics contribute to well-adjusted relationships between perceived stress and wellbeing (Lasswell, 1982).

Additionally, the word "Emotional Intelligence" was formerly established by Salovey and Mayer (1990) and was conceptualized to comprise a group of mental capabilities, for instance, emotional intelligence types containing evaluation and presence of emotion, the parameter of emotion, and the usage of emotion. Emotional Intelligence has a great relationship with wellbeing. For a long time, it was believed that success at the workplace and in other psychosocial domains of life depends on the level of intelligence. Even though, to manage effectively with some specific psychosocial situations of real life, individuals require some other psychological resources other than general intelligence. One such resourcefulness is termed emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995).

Therefore, emotional intelligence is considered an essential factor in the adjustment. Emotional intelligence is a group of abilities regarding emotional state, abilities such as recognizing emotions, encouraging oneself and maintaining one's desires, understanding and processing emotions of others, and managing social relations in a better way (Baron, 2007).

Perceived Stress

Perceived stress is the thought or feeling that an individual has in regards to stress at a given point on schedule or throughout a given time frame. Perceived stress incorporates feelings concerning the wildness and eccentrics of one's life, that how frequently a person has to manage difficult problems, how much variation is happening in someone's life, and trust in someone's skills to handle

hassles or problems. It is not assessing the kind or the frequencies of stressful events which have occurred in an individual life, but how a person thinks regarding the usual stressfulness of their life and their capability to deal with these types of stress. People might suffer from the same negative life events but enhance the effect or intensity of these to diverse perspectives like an outcome of aspects such as nature, coping ways, and assistance (Phillips, 2013).

Furthermore, COVID-19 has a severe influence on the wellbeing of people. People showed that the perceived stress behaviors developed because of limited medical masks and psychological services across the country. Moreover, numerous health care workers work for more than 16 hours a day normally and due to this hectic job duty, they might not have some proper sleep. Many pieces of research revealed that wellbeing issues could happen in both mental health professionals and SARS survivors throughout the SARS epidemic. Another research revealed that the pooled occurrence of stress among medical doctors and nurses was 34% and Pooled occurrence rate of mental stress concerning the effect of events because of the COVID-19 pandemic was 44%. The pressure of these mental stresses was increased among the COVID-19 patients followed through healthcare professionals and other people. In the initial times of the outbreak, several health care professionals in Pakistan were affected by COVID and died. In the outcomes of close interaction with the infected patients, the medical doctors had increased the level of tensions regarding the pandemic, uncertainty of its duration, and the probability of transferring the illness to their family members. The utmost significant reason for tiredness and stress in the medical health care professionals are wearing heavy safety suit for a long time and having problem in performing thr care process.

In addition, according to Freire (2016), well-being is the main feature that affects stress. Mental stress has the most important effect on the wellbeing and the general happiness of individuals, Moeini et al. (2008). The increasing level of perceived stress is associated with a lower level of psychological well-being, Suleman (2018). According to Strizhitskaya et al. (2019), psychological consistency can affect the association between perceived stress and well-being and revealed

that perceived stress has an opposite effect on the psychological consistency of individuals which additionally influences their well-being.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence defines a social, relational emotional working and specifies the degree to which a person be able to assess, regulate and understand emotions in himself, others and then use emotions to reduce difficulties, Schutte et al. (1998). Bandura (1997) defined emotional intelligence as an important factor in which individuals perceive emotions, utilizing emotions to facilitate thinking, empathizing, and then handling emotions. One of the current studies stated that there is no such validated test or scale to measure the level of emotional intelligence. Apart from this disparagement, however, emotional intelligence has a diversity of appearance among the general public, also in certain organizations or industries. In recent years, some employers have managed to even integrate "emotional intelligence tests" into their candidate's job application or interview procedures, depending on the concept that someone with a high level of emotional intelligence would perform better leadership or coworker. Therefore, this explains the presence of emotional intelligence in various fields of life.

Additionally, the model presented by Goleman (1998) emphasizes emotional intelligence as an extensive variety of skills and talents that determine guidance performance. The researcher contains a series of emotional abilities in all ideas of emotional intelligence. Emotive abilities are not inherent abilities, however, somewhat learned abilities that essentially remain worked and established to obtain extraordinary performance. Researcher suggests that people are innate with a common emotional intelligence which makes their prospective for education-related emotional capabilities. He calls emotional intelligence, a master skill, an ability that deeply touches all other skills, moreover helping or interfering with them. "Emotional intelligence is the ability to know our emotions and others, for inspiring ourselves, for healthily dealing with emotions in ourselves and our affiliation" (Goleman, 1998).

Wellbeing

Wellbeing is the ability to be efficiently involved in work and activities, make vital relations with others, make a process of respect and aim of life, and to expertise optimistic emotions, Hatch et al. (2007). Well-being, however, an obligation to existential difficulties is observed, Keyes et al. (2002). Regarding well-being, main and basic research was directed by Bradburn (1969). Bradburn utilized well-being interchangeably jubilantly and pointed out two perspectives that area unit positive and negative affect on. From this time of reading, being high in well-being determines a worth of positive over negative effect. Bradburn (1969) stressed that although positive and negative affect on area units freelance of every alternative, the occurrence of each positive and negative effect verify the aspect of well-being.

Moreover, Bradburn (1989) did not include self-actualization, respect, and inflated views though many scientists accepted these ideas because of the species of trees within the well-being forest. Perhaps, Bradburn didn't unheeded ideas like autonomy and vanity, which research is considered as being one amongst the pioneers of well-being researches, the stress on positive and negative affect on will be understood like what Bradburn investigation was subjective well-being despite well-being, within the lightweight of the descriptions of subjective and well-being.

Furthermore, Keyes and Ryff (1998) discussed that this theory assessed psychological well-being in a eudaimonic dimension. The six extents of Ryff's theory are unit self-acceptance, optimistic relationships together with others, surrounding mastery, respect, aim in life, and personal development. Consistent with Ryff's theory, self-acceptance defines a personal acceptance of positive and negative factors of personal attitude and is happiness regarding past experiences. Self-acceptance is taken into account like a perspective of psychological well-being since it's acknowledged mutually of the standards required for incorporations of mental state, self embodiment, optimum working, and sensibility.

Moreover, people reported possessing an optimistic relationship with others, an area unit ready to develop heat and inconsistent relationships, mastery of fellow feelings and intimacy consistently like understanding the changes of a relationship.

Each autonomy and settings mastery area unit is about though a private associate with an interactive environment. Respect refers to thus a private survives severally as compared to mastery mentions to the flexibility to regulate setting thanks to individual desires freedom and self-evaluation consistent with self-worth area unit needed therefore as to judge one like independent. However, the feeling of having the ability to deal with daily events is still like an amendment perspective, thanks to a person's desire area unit the qualities of environmental mastery. Clear determination always relates the degree of having a thought consequently in the area unit outlined like an aspect of maturity.

Hence, aim in life is thought to be an important aspect of psychological well-being supported by Allport and other theorists' determination. The aim in life mentions whether or not an individual has purposes for living and trusts in the means of life. The ultimate perspective is individual development related to the degree mentions the capability of a person for growth and discovery. Being hospitable to innovative experiences, observing self as dynamic, and developing consistently like victimization personal potential area unit traits of personal development. Supporting the scale outlined by Keyes and Ryff (1989), respect, competency, and connectedness are revealed to be associated with well-being in studies conducted within the frame of Self-Determination Theory. Self-determination theory defines these three characteristics as basic emotional desires. A lot of specific competencies are found to be the necessity that ought to be consummated most systematically for well-being since competence-need fulfillment is completely and unambiguously associated with vanity and positively have an effect on (Patrick et al. 2007). Additionally, Sheldon and Niemiec (2006) understood that the mastery of balanced regard, competency, and associated-desire fulfillments increased higher levels of well-being. Further, respect was ascertained as a feature that directed well-being.

The present research was conducted to determine the particular extents during Covid-19 in Pakistan that should be emphasized when teaching emotional abilities like a variable promoting psychological wellbeing throughout this important era of life. At the end, the abilities of understanding and controlling emotions can be established and enhanced in mental health professionals as a way

for their observation of their personal wellbeing to enhance. Furthermore, future studies should try to examine the effect of other variables on psychological well-being to expand the model of this study.

Research Method

It is correlational research directed with mental health professionals during Covid-19 in Pakistan. Correlational research design was used. We recruited (n=150) mental health professionals (psychologists, psychiatrists and psychiatric nurses) through purposive sampling techniques from different public and private hospitals in Pakistan. The inclusion criteria were: mental health professionals (psychologists, psychiatrists & psychiatry nurses), Both govt. and private hospitals, mental health professionals who have at least 1-year experience, and mental health professionals at the age of between 25-60 years.

Nine members were excluded for not meeting the eligibility criteria. The total sample was made of (n=150) mental health professionals. Mean age of participants was (M = 38.44; SD = 2.52). The mean number of siblings was (M= 4.10, SD=1.60). Most mental health professionals (63%) belonged to urban families contextual. Most participants (57%) lived in a nuclear family system.

Measures

A set of queries were established to capture appropriate personal information regarding mental health professionals. Mental health professionals' details including age, hospital, family background, and family system were the demographic variables of the current research.

Perceived stress scale was originally established by Cohen (1994). Two questions were omitted when utilizing inter-item correlation analysis. This scale has 8 items using a 4-point Likert scale (4= strongly agree, 1= strongly disagree). (i.e. In the previous month, how frequently have you been worried due to something which occurred uncertainly?). The present study found the reliability of the perceived stress scale was (α= .80).

Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale (SEIS) was established by Schutte (1998). This instrument has 33 items. Emotional intelligence reverse scoring items are (7,

28 and 33). All questions of this test is assessed on 5 points Likert scale ranging from (5= strongly agree, 1= strongly disagree). A higher score shows the increasing level of emotional intelligence in an individual. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this scale was .70 to .85, showing high reliability. The present study found the reliability of the emotional intelligence scale was (α= .92).

Psychological Well Being (PWB) Scale was originally developed by Keyes and Ryff (1999). This scale has 42-item for assessing six dimensions of happiness and wellbeing. The original scale has 8 items. Three questions were omitted when utilizing inter-item correlation analysis and one question was skipped from the psychological wellbeing scale. This scale used a 7-point Likert scale ranging from (7= strongly agree, 1= strongly disagree). The total score ranged from 4 to 28, the higher score showed a higher level of wellbeing in an individual. The present study found the reliability of the wellbeing scale was (α= .82).

Procedure

The current research was conducted through the Institutional Review Board of the Mind Healing Psychological Services (SMC-PVT) Ltd. (CUI number: 0155425–20) and conducted between June and September 2021. Before data collection could start, consent to select mental health professionals was required from medical superintendents of hospitals and once consent was taken, mental health professionals were approached. Mental health professionals were systematically informed about the aim of the research and those whose permission was taken, fill the forms confidentially. Even though this research employed paper-and-pencil scales for data collection, those who agreed to participate in the research were given a set of forms to fill. Questionnaires that were fulfilled were prepared for data analyses.

Analysis

Statistical analyses were conducted using significance set at p < 0.05. For the main study variables, means, standard deviations reliability values (i.e., Cronbach alphas) were calculated. It can be seen in table 1 that all the variables were within generally acceptable ranges of ±2. To ensure easy analysis and understanding,

Pearson product moment correlation analysis and hierarchical regression analysis were used.

Results and Discussion

Table 1. Psychometric Properties of Questionnaires

Variables	K	M	SD	α
Perceived Stress Scale	08	84.58	13.36	0.80
Emotional Intelligence Scale	33	130.09	16.36	0.92
Psychological Wellbeing Scale	42	54.10	9.83	0.82

Table 2. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Analysis between Study Variables

Variables	1	2	3
Perceived Stress	-	-0.10^{*}	-0.20^{**}
Emotional Intelligence	-	-	0.54^{**}
Wellbeing	-	-	-

The results in table 2 revealed that perceived stress has a significant negative relationship (r= -.20, p < .05) with wellbeing. However, emotional intelligence has significant positive association (r= .54, p < .05) with wellbeing among mental health professionals.

Table 3. Hierarchical Regression Analysis between Study Variables

	Wellbeing	
	Mental Health Professionals	
Predictors	Δ R²	β
Step 1	0.11^{**}	
Perceived Stress		-0.20^{**}
Step 2	0.18^{***}	
Emotional Intelligence		0.45^{***}
Total R²	31%	

The results in table 3 revealed that the first model found significant prediction F (1, 148) = 23.81 p < .001, R²=. 23 and accounted for 23% of the variance in wellbeing. Last model found a highly significant prediction F (2, 147) = 33.92 p < .001, R²=. 31 and accounted for 31% of variance in wellbeing.

Table.4 One Way ANOVA					
Mental Health Professionals				df	*p*
Psychologists	**Psychiatrists**	**Psychiatric Nurses**			
M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)			
PWB	80.36 (12.68)	129.69 (11.36)	11.37 (11.10)	147	.04

The results in table 4 showed that an equal variance of one-way ANOVA to reveal has a statistically reliable difference between the mean number of mental health professionals, wellbeing for psychologists 80.36 (12.68), for psychiatrists (M=129.12) (s=11.10) and psychiatric nurses, t(497)=.94, p=.04, a=.05. ANOVA findings showed that wellbeing score was high in psychiatrists compared to other mental health professionals.

The current study results showed that perceived stress has a significant negative relationship with wellbeing, however, emotional intelligence has a significant positive relationship with wellbeing. The regression findings revealed that perceived stress and emotional intelligence were significant predictors of wellbeing among mental health professionals. Moreover, the findings revealed that psychiatrists have a higher level of wellbeing compared to other mental health professionals (psychologists and psychiatric nurses).

In the previous literature, a research was conducted to explore the mediation effect of subjective happiness on the association between the perceived stress and wellbeing of medical professionals who are engaged in hospital responsibilities. The findings showed that there is a significant effect of perceived stress on well-being. Perceived stress lesser subjective happiness which in turn affect the wellbeing of medical health care professionals. A high score of subjective happiness decreases the impact of perceived stress on wellbeing.

In addition, a study was conducted to examine the role of life gratification, wellbeing, hopefulness, and self-capability, on the perceived stress and psychological wellbeing among adults. The findings revealed psychological wellbeing showing a positive relationship with gratification, wellbeing,

hopefulness, and self-capability, and it showed a negative association with self-perceived stress. In adjusted analyses, higher life satisfaction and lower stress levels were related to the increasing levels of wellbeing. Increased levels of wellbeing and self-capability were related with lower level of stress (Heizomi et al, 2018).

Moreover, Nagahi and Morteza (2014) directed research to examine the impact of emotional intelligence on the well-being of 800 employees. The findings of the research showed that emotional intelligence has a significant positive influence on the psychological well-being of the workers. Another study was 'conducted to assess the relationship between the extents of emotional intelligence (concentration, clarity, and repair) and diverse levels of perceived wellbeing (low, medium, and high) in adolescents. The outcomes revealed that as the capability of understanding and control of emotional intelligence enhances, wellbeing also rises. Adolescence is perceived as a wonderful time in life to motivate the growth of emotional capabilities which participate in the higher level of wellbeing among people. According to this perspective, this research stresses the desire to find out experiences that lead to the betterment of the emotional intelligence of adolescents and then enhance their wellbeing and well-being.

The area of wellbeing of mental health professionals in Pakistan has obtained limited attention. Few pieces of research were conducted on this topic and very rare with mental health professionals these researchers concluded a high prevalence of mental health problems in Pakistan. The current research was conducted to complete the measuring of the perceived stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing of mental health professionals during COVID-19. Therefore, researchers hope that the data collected from the current research will encourage others to learn more about the Pakistani society and population as well to encourage more researchers with this population. We hope that the present research will offer valuable information for future generations of researchers and health care providers.

Conclusion

The findings of the current research recommended that administration and policy-makers should try to improve the emotional intelligence of mental health professionals to achieve positive consequences. To do so, the head of hospitals should   affect mental health professionals' self-acceptance, self-control, self-encouragement, social awareness, and social abilities positively. Finally, we create awareness that research is a good way to develop strategies, enhancing psychological wellbeing and happiness that can reach all the professionals and shut down potential imbalances in the learning of those assets. The present research was conducted to determine the particular extents during Covid-19 in Pakistan that should be emphasized when teaching emotional abilities like a variable promoting psychological wellbeing throughout this important era of life. In the end, the abilities of understanding and controlling emotions can be established and enhanced in mental health professionals as a way for their observation of their wellbeing to enhance. Furthermore, future studies should try to examine the effect of other variables on psychological well-being to expand the model of this study.

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