



RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND WAYS OF COPING STRATEGIES AMONG MEDICAL STUDENTS OF RIMS, IMPHAL

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ABSTRACT

**Background And Objectives:** To study the relationship between emotional intelligence and coping strategies among medical students of RIMS, Imphal. **Methods:** The sample consists of 120 (60 males and 60 females) MBBS students who are within the age range of 20-25 years and who are willing to participate and give informed consent were selected through randomize sampling. Participants were administered Emotional Intelligence Inventory and ways of coping questionnaire respectively. **Results:** The finding of the study showed significant relationship between emotional intelligence and coping mechanism in domains of planful problem solving, positive reappraisal, seeking social support, escape avoidance and self-controlling. **Conclusion:** The present study concluded that there was significant relationship between emotional intelligence and coping mechanism in domains of planful problem solving, positive reappraisal, seeking social support, escape avoidance and self-controlling. Individuals with high emotional intelligence tends to have better and more coping mechanisms and are good at expressing and regulating their emotions than individuals with low emotional intelligence when faced with negative life experiences.

**KEYWORDS :** Emotional Intelligence, Coping mechanism, Medical students.

INTRODUCTION

An emotion is defined in terms of four components. First, you interpret or appraise some stimulus (event, object or thought) in terms of your well-being. Second, you experience a subjective feeling, such as fear or happiness. Third, you have physiological response, such as changes in heart rate or breathing. Fourth, you may show observable behaviors, such as smiling or crying<sup>1</sup>.

Intelligence is defined as the ability to learn from one's experiences, acquired knowledge and use resources effectively in adapting to new situations or solving problems<sup>2</sup>.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is the ability to identify and manage your own emotions and the emotions of others. It is generally said to include three skills: emotional awareness, the ability to harness emotions and apply them to tasks like thinking and problem solving; and the ability to manage emotions, which includes regulating your own emotions and cheering up or calming down other people<sup>3</sup>.

Coping

Lazarus and Folkman has conceptualized coping as a dynamic process rather than an individual trait. It is a set of concrete responses to stressful situations or events that are intended to resolve the problem and reduce stress. Coping styles refers to common recurrent and longer term style of coping that an individual tend to use across a variety of situations<sup>4</sup>. Coping mechanism is described as strategies or efforts used to manage, minimize and learn to deal with harmful situations that cause worries or alleviate or stand for psychosomatic health problems<sup>5</sup>.

Challenges Faced By Medical Students

Indian medical education system is one of the largest in the world. Medical education is facing problems and challenges in India<sup>6</sup>. It has been found that more than half of all medical students suffer from burnout. It is a serious and complex problem. Contributors include lack of appropriate mentorship, poor exercise habits, unhealthy diet, lack of sleep, lack of autonomy, stress in the workplace, exposure to trauma etc. Most often it is a combination of issues<sup>7</sup>.

Objective

To study the relationship between emotional intelligence and coping strategies among medical students.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A cross-sectional study design was used in the present study. The study was conducted in the Department of Clinical Psychology, Regional Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS), Imphal. The sample consists of 120 (60 males and 60 females) MBBS students who are within the age range of 20-25 years and who were willing to give consent for participating in the study were selected. Participants were administered Emotional Intelligence Inventory and ways of coping questionnaire respectively.

Procedures

To proceed with the study, necessary permissions were pursued from the Dean of Academics, RIMS, Imphal. They were informed about the matter of the study prior to its commencement. Participants were recruited from 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years across nine semesters from the degree course of MBBS. They were thoroughly explained about the nature of the research program. Informed consent was taken from all the participants. Confidentiality was maintained till the termination of the study. Participants were administered Emotional Intelligence Inventory to assess the level of emotional adaptability and Ways of Coping Questionnaire to assess the various coping mechanisms either positive and/or negative to deal with stressful situations.

RESULT

Correlation between emotional intelligence and coping mechanism of the study samples

Dimension of emotional intelligence	Coping Mechanism							
	Confrontive	Distancing	Self-controlling	Seeking social support	Accepting responsibility	Escape avoidance	Planful problem solving	Positive reappraisal
INTRAPA	0.097	-0.049	0.223	0.292	0.034	-0.391	0.328	0.394
INTERPA	0.020	0.033	0.125	0.132	0.108	-0.128	0.222	0.214
INTRAPM	-0.010	0.104	0.211	-0.045	-0.126	-0.007	0.235	0.218
INTERPM	-0.149	0.088	0.027	-0.083	-0.140	0.021	0.113	0.110

\*\* Correlation is significant at 0.01 level

\*Correlation is significant at 0.05 level

This table shows the coefficient of correlation (r-value) between different dimensions of emotional intelligence and various mechanism of coping in students of MBBS from RIMS, Imphal. "Intrapersonal awareness" a type of scores of emotional intelligence positively correlate with Confrontive (r= 0.097) and Accepting responsibility (r= 0.034) but not at 0.05 or 0.01 level of significance. Further, self-controlling (r= 0.223) is positively correlated at 0.05 significant level and seeking social support (r= 0.292), Planful problem solving (r= 0.328) and positive reappraisal (r= 0.394) are positively correlated at 0.01 level of significance. Other dimension of coping strategies such as Distancing (r= -0.049) is negatively correlated not at level of significance. However, escape avoidance (r= -0.391) is found to be negatively correlated at 0.01 significant levels. "Interpersonal Awareness" negatively correlate with Escape Avoidance (r= -0.128) and positively correlate with confrontive coping (r= 0.020), Distancing (r= 0.033), Self-controlling (r= 0.125), Seeking social support (r= 0.132) and Accepting responsibility (r= 0.108) but not at any level of significance. Further, Planful problem solving (r= 0.222) and Positive reappraisal (r= 0.214) are positively correlated at 0.05 significant level. "Intrapersonal Management" positively correlated with Distancing (r= 0.104) and negatively correlated with Confrontive (r= -0.010), Seeking social support (r= -0.045), Accepting responsibility (r= -0.126), and Escape avoidance (r= -0.007) but not at significant levels. However, Self controlling (r= 0.211) and positive reappraisal (r= 0.218) are both correlated at 0.05 significant levels and Planful problem solving (r= 0.235) correlated at 0.01 significant level. "Interpersonal Management" positively correlated with Distancing (r= 0.088), Self controlling (r= 0.027), Escape avoidance (r= 0.021), Planful problem solving (r= 0.113) and Positive reappraisal (r= 0.110) although not at a significant level. Furthermore, it is negatively correlated with Confrontive (r= -0.149), Seeking social support (r= -0.083) and Accepting Responsibility (r= -0.140) although not at a significant level.

## DISCUSSION

The present study was carried out to find out the relationship between emotional intelligence and coping strategies among medical students. Findings from the present study indicates the relationship between dimensions of emotional intelligence and various coping mechanism of MBBS students. "Intrapersonal awareness" a type of scores of emotional intelligence positively correlated with self-controlling, seeking social support, Planful problem solving and positive reappraisal, however, escape avoidance was negatively correlated. Other copying mechanism such as with confrontive, accepting responsibility and distancing were not correlated with intrapersonal awareness.

"Interpersonal awareness" a type of scores of emotional intelligence positively correlated with Planful problem solving and positive reappraisal. Other copying mechanism such as confrontive, accepting responsibility, self-controlling, seeking social support, escape avoidance and distancing were not correlated with intrapersonal awareness.

Further, "Intrapersonal management" a type of scores of emotional intelligence positively correlated with planful problem solving, self-controlling and positive reappraisal. Other copying mechanism such as confrontive, accepting responsibility, seeking social support, escape avoidance and distancing were not correlated with intrapersonal awareness. Also, "Interpersonal management" a type of scores of emotional intelligence were not correlated with copying mechanisms of Planful problem solving, self-controlling, positive reappraisal, confrontive, accepting responsibility, seeking social support, escape avoidance and distancing.

It was found in literature that higher EQ would prevent one from using unhealthy styles of coping. Further, it was found that being more emotionally mature would make one to utilize problem solving, accepting and redefining problem and distracting oneself adaptively from stress. Being more emotionally competent would allow one to elicit social support system in a stressful situation.<sup>3</sup> In another study it was indicated that medical students adopted active coping strategies (positive reframing, planning, acceptance and active coping) rather than avoidant strategies (denial, alcohol/drug use and behavioral disengagement).<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, it was found that although moderately correlated doctors who are high on emotional intelligence are more effective in managing stress.<sup>10</sup>

Similar research from on non-medical students also corroborated that Positive reappraisal way of coping was found to be positively and significantly correlated with three subscales of perceived emotional intelligence, that is, appraisal of emotions in self, appraisal of emotions in others and emotional regulation of the self. It may be noted that positive reappraisal way of coping used in the present study involves efforts to cope by creating positive meaning by focusing on personal growth. Further, it was also indicated that EQ was negatively correlated with maladaptive coping styles such as avoidance and rumination.<sup>11</sup> Another literature reveals that high Emotional intelligence lead to better adaptive coping on contrary to low Emotional Intelligence.<sup>12</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The present study may be concluded that there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and coping mechanism in domains of Planful problem solving, positive reappraisal, seeking social support, escape avoidance and self-controlling. Individuals with high emotional intelligence tends to have better and more coping mechanisms and are good at expressing and regulating their emotions than individuals with low emotional intelligence when faced with negative life experiences. One hopes that this study will help in better understanding of emotional intelligence among young adults (Medical students) and lead the pathway for proper nurture and guidance of the students and successful prevention of their stressors in a more positive outcome. Further, it would also pave way for training and management of enhancing emotional intelligence at par general intelligence to a holistic adjustment process.

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