



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Seeking Adventure: Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Sensation Seeking among University Students**

<sup>1</sup>Rahma Sohail\* <sup>2</sup>Aminah Nusrat and <sup>3</sup>Ayesha Umar

1. Lecturer, Department of Psychology, University of Wah, Islamabad, Pakistan
2. MS Scholar, Department of Psychology, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan.
3. Lecturer, Department of Professional Psychology, Bahria University, Islamabad, Pakistan

**Corresponding Author**

[rahma.sohail48@gmail.com](mailto:rahma.sohail48@gmail.com)

**ABSTRACT**

The study at present aims to find a relationship between sensation seeking and emotional intelligence among the university students in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. In the present age, there is an increase in the degree of sensation seeking in university students. Emotional intelligence has been since the humanity arose in the history. The university students from cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad constituted the universe of the present research. The Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) and brief version of Sensation Seeking scale by Zuckerman were used to gather data. The results obtained via statistical analysis found a positive correlation between sensation seeking and no significant differences in sensation seeking in males and females. No significant variation in emotional intelligence of males and females were found. The results also found that emotional intelligence explained 17 % variance in sensation seeking. Our results suggest that it would be worthwhile to expand the treatment of sensation seeking to investigate a broader range of outcomes and within the scope of developmental tasks that accompany the transition to adulthood. Doing so might eventually lead to a better understanding of how sensation seeking might be channeled towards healthy rather than health-compromising outcomes.

**Keywords:** Emotional Intelligence, Sensation Seeking, Students

**Introduction**

Emotional intelligence has been since the humanity arose in the history. (Davis 2004), however it appeared late in literature. EI has been explained by Salovey and Mayer (1990) as an intelligence that is linked to an individual's ability to explore and modulate feelings and emotions of oneself and of others and then utilizing this information for future consequences. Recognition, understanding, regulation and utilizing emotions are the 4 components that constitute EI. Emotional intelligence helps an individual in many ways such as high level of EI has positive relationship with positive moods, mental well-being, and higher self-esteem (Mayer, Roberts, and Barsade 2008). Emotion intelligence can be related to sensation seeking. It has been seen that those people who have tendencies towards risk taking behaviors are unable to deal with the problems appropriately. They have low emotional intelligence (Kelley, Schochet, and Landry 2004).

Zuckerman (1994) has described sensation-seeking as "pursuing novel, varied, and profound experiences and sensations, and being prepared to take risks in social, physical, financial, and legal aspects for the sake of these experiences". Trait EI talks about a "cluster of emotional self-concepts positioned low among the hierarchy of personality traits" (Petrides & Furnham, 2003). It showcases the capability to experience and modify personal and others' emotions (Petrides & Furnham, 2003; Petrides, Pita, & Kokkinaki, 2007).

## **Literature Review**

Negative consequences on the lives of individuals who indulge in sensation seeking and risk taking behaviors is also evident from literature. Some of the researchers have studied the construct of sensation seeking throughout the life (Smith, Johnson, & Sarason, 1978; Zuckerman, Buchsbaum, & Murphy, 1980). Despite these facts, only few studies have focused on relations between personality traits and these variables such as the study conducted by Furnham and Christoforou (2007) discovered that trait EI was linked to happiness, and sensation-seeking was an important element of happiness. Mavroveli, Petrides, Shove, Whitehead (2008) analyzed the trait emotional intelligence (trait emotional self-efficacy or trait EI) while signifying its measurement in children. Trait EI portrayed a positive correlation with teacher-evaluated positive attitudes and portrayed a negative correlation with negative attitudes (peer issues, conduct issues, mental symptoms, and hyperactive behaviour).

Interestingly Bacon, Burak, and Rann (2014) showed that in undergraduate female students EI was positively correlated to seeking experiences. To inspect the effect of an emotional intelligence (EI) educational program based on Mayer and Salovey's (1997) psychosocial adjustment model among adolescents, Desireé Ruiz-Aranda, Jose Martín Salguero, and Rosario Cabello, Raquel Palomer, Pablo Fernández-Berrocal (2012) took two groups of Spanish teenagers. The adolescents that had partaken in the emotional intelligence program revealed finer psychosocial adjustment in comparison to the control group teenagers.

Mohsen Mesgarani, Shahla Shafiee, Edris Ahmadi and Fahimeh Zare (2013) studied the relation between emotional intelligence and internet addiction, sensation seeking and metacognition in the individuals that frequent cafes. Internet addiction and emotional intelligence had a non-significant relationship ( $r=0.028$ ) and with sensation seeking ( $r=0.07$ ) was seen as a result of the study. Ali Khalafi and Yalda Tangestani (2014) conducted a research to compare emotional intelligence and sensation seeking of the delinquent and non-delinquent adolescents in the city of Ahwaz. It was seen that the delinquents had lesser emotional intelligence as compared to normal youth and on the other hand saw higher sensation seeking in delinquents.

Another research on delinquents was conducted by Alison M. Bacon, Hannah Burak and James Rann in 2014 to find out the gender variances in the correlation among sensation seeking, trait EI and delinquent attitude. A positive association was seen between sensation seeking and the incidence of delinquent attitude. It was seen that the trait emotional intelligence had an inverse moderating role in this relationship in the males. While in females with an increase in trait EI had more delinquent behavior. Petrides, Frederickson, Furnham did a research on 650 British secondary school students to examine the function of trait emotional intelligence on educational performance and in deviating behaviors. Trait EI was found to moderate between cognitive ability and educational performance. Moreover, lesser unauthorized leaves were taken by the students that displayed higher trait EI thus reducing the chances to be expelled from their educational institute. It has been found in a research that various happiness conditions (spiritual, interpersonal and negative happiness, and sensation seeking) are predicted by various individual difference characteristics (extraversion, religiousness, trait EI, neuroticism) (Furnham & Christoforou, 2007). To gather information about emotional intelligence, sensation seeking and marital satisfaction; Hatam Siavoshi, Ali Jahanian, Mojtaba Abbasi Asl, Mohammad Mafakheri conducted a research in 2016 on female teachers. Sensation seeking was found to negatively correlate with marital satisfaction, while emotional intelligence displayed a significant positive correlation with marital satisfaction. But between sensation seeking and emotional intelligence a significant relation was seen.

Desireé, Jose, Rosario, Raquel & Pablo (2012) conducted a mediation analysis on adolescent girls on the impact of sensation seeking and social skills on school adjustment and trait emotional intelligence. Trait emotional intelligence positively correlated with social skills and school adjustment on the results of the study and social skills showed positive correlation with school adjustment. Whereas, sensation seeking depicted a negative correlation with school adjustment and also with trait emotional intelligence. Another study (Hoi Yan Cheunga, Timothy Teoa & Ming-Tak Hue; 2015) was conducted on university students to investigate the relationships between emotional intelligence, sensation-seeking and risk-taking behaviors. Results showed that regulation and utilization of emotions had an impact on sensation seeking activities that added to the literature by viewing EI as a predictor for sensation seeking which was a formerly lesser explored relationship.

Review of literature gives us evidence that not a lot of studies have been found on investigating the relationship between emotional intelligence and sensation seeking. Researchers focused on outcome variables for Sensation seeking and also the relationship with the personality traits (Furnham & Christoforou, 2007), but the present study focuses on whether the Emotional intelligence is related to Sensation seeking or not among university students, so that the institutes may focus on building Emotional intelligence in order to curb the risk taking behavior that may lead to multiple problems in youth. The main goals of the study at present are to find the relationship among emotional intelligence and sensation seeking and to find out the relationship of demographic variables such as age, gender, education and family status. The ground basis to take university students is that sensation seeking is higher in them because perceived risk and continued involvement in risk taking behaviors is generally significant at this age. It has also been observed that the adolescents who showcase a higher level of sensation-seeking have less consideration about the outcomes of their behavior. They have low emotional intelligence which has adverse consequences for them (Kelley, Schochet, and Landry, 2004). Horvath and Zuckerman (1993) found sensation-seeking to be a notable predictor of social violations and risky behaviors. Simply put individuals who display a higher level of sensation-seeking are more vulnerable in their ethical and social areas of life (Smith, Johnson, & Sarason, 1978; Zuckerman, Buchsbaum, & Murphy 1980). While reviewing the Pakistani literature it has been found that mostly studies focus on relationships between sensation seeking and personality traits (Ahmad & Naqvi, 2016; Farooq, Khan, & Jabeen, 2015) so more investigation is required in this area of research. In current era there is a need to study the emotional intelligence as a variable in the education sector as the students misperceive the risk and focus to control their emotions in inappropriate ways. The present research will help the parents, teachers and educational institutes to design different programs targeting different issues related to emotional intelligence and the sensation seeking.

In Pakistan, there is a lack of literature regarding the relationship between sensation seeking and emotional intelligence. However few studies focus on sensation seeking, behavioral problems and personality traits. A study conducted in Pakistan shows that revealed positive relationship between sensation seeking and behavior problems, however negative relationship of both of them with social adjustment (Ahmad & Naqvi, 2016). Another study explored the relationship between personality traits (extroversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness & neuroticism), sensation seeking behavior and religiosity among homosexual men of Lahore (Farooq, Khan, & Jabeen, 2015). According to Kelley, Schochet, and Landry (2004), high sensation-seeking adolescents consider less about the outcomes of their behavior. Emotional intelligence is also not built in them.

### **Hypotheses**

1. There is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and sensation seeking among university students.

2. Emotional intelligence is highly likely to predict sensation seeking among university students.
3. Male students have higher level of sensation seeking and lesser level of emotional intelligence as compared to the female students.

## **Material and Methods**

### **Sample**

Utilizing the technique of convenience sampling, data was gathered from various public and private sector universities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The sample comprised of adults (N=100) which were almost equal proportion of males (N=44) and females (N=56). The members of the study at present were aged between 18 and 30. Data was collected from both private and public sector of universities from Islamabad.

### **Operational Definitions**

**Sensation seeking.** Zuckerman (1994) has described the trait of sensation-seeking as “pursuing novel, varied, complex, and profound experiences and sensations, and being eager to take risks in social, physical, financial, and legal aspects for the sake of these experiences’. in the research at hand, Sensation seeking scale is used to measure the sensation seeking. High scores in a scale show higher sensation seeking and low scores show lower sensation seeking.

**Emotional intelligence.** Made popular by Salovey and Mayer (1990) who defined the concept of emotional intelligence as “the subdivision of social intelligence that involves the ability of monitoring feelings and emotions of oneself and of others’, to differentiate between them and to utilizing the gathered information to guide in personal thinking and behaviors”. Emotional intelligence in the present study is measured by using Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT). High scores on the scale show high emotional intelligence and lower scores show low emotional intelligence.

### **Instruments**

**The Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT).** The Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) is a self-report scale given by Dr. Nicola Schutte (1998) comprising of 33 items and it is based off the EI model by Salvooy and Mayor (1990). This scale uses 5 point Likert scale for responses. The SEIS assesses perception, expression, understanding, regulating and harnessing of emotions in oneself and others (Schutte et al., 1998). Schutte and her colleges reported 0.9 reliability. Cronbach’s Alpha is 0.7-0.85.

**Sensation Seeking Scale.** The brief revised version of Sensation Seeking Scale by Zuckerman (1980) is composed of thirteen items. The total score provides an overall assessment of sensation seeking. High scores indicated higher level of sensation seeking and low scores indicated low sensation seeking. Each item contains two statements. The reliability is 0.76 (Suleman& Noor, 2015).

**Demographics.** A number of demographics were used to back up our hypothesis. The demographics used included, gender, educational institute, faculty, birth order, family orientation, GPA for academic performance, internet usage along with the time of usage, usage of drugs, online gaming, involvement in sports, novelty seeking activities, physical relationships and rule breaking activities.

## Research Design

It is a correlational, quantitative research using cross-sectional research design. Survey method is used to obtain data from the respondents.

## Procedure

Before the administration of the questionnaires on the participants, informed consent was obtained. The individuals were approached personally after getting permission from the related authorities. Students were requested to fill in the questionnaires. A brief explanation was provided regarding the nature and the purpose of the research. Both verbal and written guidelines were also provided to the participants to achieve accurate and reliable responses. The researcher addressed any query or confusion that arose during this process. It was assured among the participants that the data gathered will be utilized for research purpose only, thus no breach of confidentiality will occur to safeguard their privacy.

## Results and Discussion

**Table 1**  
**Demographic characteristics of the sample**

	f	percentage
Gender		
Male	44	44
Females	56	56
Educational institute		
Govt. institute	51	51
Private institute	49	49
Faculty		
Social sciences	54	54
Management sciences	46	46
Birth order		
First born	35	35
Middle born	31	31
Last born	34	34
Family system		
Nuclear	69	69
Joint	31	31
Internet usage		
Yes	93	93
No	7	7
Rule breaking activities		
Shoplifting	3	3
Physical assaults	11	11
Over speeding	17	17
Law breaking	13	13
no	56	56

Table 1 reveal that there were greater number of females (n=56) participated in the study as compare to male participants (n=44). Higher number of students were from social science (n=54) as compared to management sciences (n=46) Most of the participants were first born (n=35) and last born (n=34) as compared to middle one (n=31) Majority of the participants were from nuclear family system (n=69) as compared to joint family (n=31). Majority of participants were internet users (n=93) as compared to those having no internet use (n=7). Many of the participants were not involved in any rule breaking activity (n=56) as some were involved in over speeding (n=17), law breaking (n=13) and lesser were involved in physical assaults (n=11).

**Table 2**  
**Descriptive Analyses of Scales and Subscales**

Scales	No of items	$\alpha$	M	SD	Ranges		Kurtosis	Skewness
					Potential	Actual		

SS	13	.35	6.52	2.06	0-13	2-12	.38	-.36
EI	33	.81	116	13.4	76-148	33-165	-.28	-.02

Note. SS = Sensation Seeking Scale, EI = Emotional Intelligence scale.

Table 2 shows all alpha reliabilities. Reliability of Schutte Emotional intelligence scale is .81 however Zuckerman's Sensation seeking scale is low i.e.35. The value of skewness is between -1 to +1, which shows that normal distribution of data is present and further parametric statistics can be used.

**Table 3**  
**Correlation among the study variables**

Variables	1	2
SS	1	.46**
EI	.46**	1

Note. SS = Sensation Seeking Scale, EI = Emotional Intelligence scale. \*p < .05. \*\*p < .01

Table 3 shows that Sensation seeking and emotional intelligence were significantly positively correlated with each other (p<.01). The positive sign is interpreted as individuals who have more tendency of sensation seeking have high levels of emotional intelligence.

**Table 4**  
**Differences along Gender on Sensation seeking and Emotional intelligence (N=100)**

Variables	Female (n=56)		Male (n=44)		t	95% CI		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD		LL	UL	
SS	6.41	2.07	6.66	2.05	.43	-5.55	5.26	0.24
EI	116.3	12.9	116.2	14.2	.44	-0.57	1.07	-.14

Note. SS = Sensation Seeking Scale, EI = Emotional Intelligence scale, LL=Lower limit, UL=Upper limit, CI=Class interval

Table 4 indicates mean differences on Zuckerman Sensation seeking Scale(SS) and Schutte Emotional Intelligence scale(EI), showing that there are no significant differences found between males and females on Emotional intelligence and Sensation seeking.

**Table 5**  
**Linear Regression Analysis of Emotional Intelligence on Sensation Seeking (N=100)**  
**Model**  
**SS**

Variable	B	SE	B	t	p
Constant					-.89
EI					.06
R					.17
R2		.21			20.49

Note: \*p<.05 \*\*p<.01 \*\*\*p<.001; EI = Emotional Intelligence scale, SS=Sensation seeking scale.

Table 5 shows that Emotional intelligence is significant predictor of Sensation seeking. Results indicate that Emotional intelligence explained 21 % of variance (R2=.17,F=20.49,p<.001) in sensation seeking. ( $\beta=900$ , p<.001)

## Discussion

The present research aimed at investigating the relationship between Emotional intelligence and sensation seeking among university students of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. It also focused on the role of demographic variables (age, gender, education, discipline) with reference to the study variables. It also aims to find the sex differences in sensation seeking

and emotional intelligence among university students as these both variables haven't been addressed before collaboratively. Employing the technique of convenience sampling data was collected from 100 university students. Zuckerman sensation seeking scale (Zuckerman,1980) and Scutte scale of emotional intelligence (Schutte, 1998) were used for this purpose. Initially, the frequencies and percentages of the demographics were obtained. Findings suggest that all the instruments had satisfactory psychometric properties. Descriptive statistics were computed which indicated that data is normally distributed.

Based upon the existing literature, it was hypothesized that there would be a predictive relationship between sensation seeking and emotional intelligence. Results indicate a variance in sensation seeking due to emotional intelligence supported by the study of Cheung, Teo and Hue (2014) that found that emotional regulation had an effect on adventure seeking. One of the studies conducted in Pakistan also revealed positive relationship between sensation seeking and behavior problems (Ahmad & Naqvi, 2016).

Other hypothesis regarding males having higher sensation seeking and females having lesser sensation seeking was generated on the basis of the study of Ball, Farnill and Wangeman(1978). Moreover a meta-analysis of studies also found similar results using Zuckerman's Sensation Seeking Scale, version V (Cross, Cyrene & Brown, 2013).But the results of present study showed there were very insignificant differences among the scores of males and females. It is consistent with the previous research studies done by Fernández Berrocal et al. (2012) which stated that the difference in emotional intelligence cannot be solely because of sex differences but several mediators can also affect it like age. It might be due to the lack of adventure seeking opportunities in university students because of burden of studies.

## **Conclusion**

Emotional intelligence is related to the ability of an individual to identify and know about his own personal emotions as well as the emotions and feelings of the people living around him as well. While sensation seeking is concerned with the ability of an individual to venture into novel activities and endeavor in adventurous activities. As a general understanding an individual who has knowledge about his own emotions will better regulate them and thus will take part in activities that entice him. Present study concluded that is a predictive relationship between sensation seeking and emotional intelligence. The results obtained via statistical analysis found a positive correlation between sensation seeking and no significant differences in sensation seeking in males and females. No significant variation in emotional intelligence of males and females were found.

## **Recommendations**

These results should be interpreted in light of some important limitations. First, the cross-sectional design that we used is not able to directly address issues of directionality or developmental change over time and it's not generalized. The sample is also limited to the educated population including the university students. We acknowledge that the effect sizes that we found attributable to sensation seeking were modest. Nonetheless, the importance of the findings lie not so much in the degree to which they explain risk behavior as sensation seeking is not an explicit, maladaptive risk factor; rather, sensation seeking appears to be a multi-faceted construct that holds certain associations with emotional intelligence at least for college students.

Experimentation undoubtedly plays an important role in the relatively high degree of reckless and health-compromising behaviors found among college students so this study can be done through experimental method also. Still, literature on sensation seeking in adolescence and emerging adulthood has tended to approach sensation seeking as a risk

factor. Our results suggest that it would be worthwhile to expand the treatment of sensation seeking to investigate a broader range of outcomes and within the scope of developmental tasks that accompany the transition to adulthood. Doing so might eventually lead to a better understanding of how sensation seeking might be channeled towards healthy rather than health-compromising outcomes.



## References

- Ahmad, S., & Naqvi, I. (2016). Moderating Impact of Social Adjustment on the Relationship between Sensation Seeking and Behaviour Problems Among Adolescents. *Pakistan Journal of Psychological Research*, 31(1), 267.
- Bacon, A., Burak, H., & Rann, J., (2014). Sex differences in the relationship between sensation seeking, trait emotional intelligence and delinquent behavior. *Journal of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology*, 25, 673 – 683.
- Cheung, H. Y., Teo, T., & Tak, M., (2017) Association among emotional intelligence, sensation-seeking and risk-taking attitudes of university students. *Journal of Risk Research*, 20, 569-589.
- Davis, M. 2004. *Test Your EQ: Find out How Emotionally Intelligent You Really Are*. London: Piatkus Books.
- Fathabadi, J., Nikooyeh, E., & Zarani, F. (2017). The mediating role of social skills and sensation seeking in the relationship between trait emotional intelligence and school adjustment in adolescents. *Journal of adolescence*, 59, 45-50.
- Farooq, F. Khan, A. & Jabeen, T. 2015. Personality Traits, Religiosity and Sensation Seeking Behavior among Homosexual Males. *Pakistan Journal of Professional Psychologists*. 6, 1-14.
- Furnham, A., and I. Christoforou. 2007. "Personality Traits, Emotional Intelligence, and Multiple Happiness." *North American Journal of Psychology* 9 (3): 439–462
- Kelley, A. E., T. Schochet, and C. F. Landry. 2004. "Risk Taking and Novelty Seeking in Adolescence: Introduction to Part I." *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1021(1): 27–32.
- Mayer, J. D., R. D. Roberts, and S. G. Barsade. 2008. "Human Abilities: Emotional Intelligence." *Annual Review of Psychology* 59 (1): 207–536.
- Mayer, J. D., & Salovey, P. (1997). What is emotional intelligence? In P. Salovey & D. J. Sluyter (Eds.), *Emotional development and emotional intelligence: Educational implications*, 3-31. New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- McCrae, R. & Costa, P. (1987). *Validation of the five factor model of personality across instruments and observers*. <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1987-15614-001>
- Mesgarani, M., Shafiee, S., Ahmadi, E., & Zare, F., (2013) Studying the relationship between internet addiction and emotional intelligence, sensation seeking and metacognition among those who referred to cafes. *International Research Journal of Applied and Basic Sciences*, 4, 889-893.
- Petrides, K. V., & Furnham, A. (2003). Trait emotional intelligence: Behavioural validation in two studies of emotion recognition and reactivity to mood induction. *European Journal of Personality*, 17(1), 39e57.
- Petrides, K. V., Pita, R., & Kokkinaki, F. (2007). The location of trait emotional intelligence in personality factor space. *British Journal of Psychology*, 98(2), 273-289.

- Petrides, K. V., Frederickson, N., & Furnham, A. (2004). The role of trait emotional intelligence in academic performance and deviant behavior at school. *Personality and Individual Differences, 36*(2), 277-293.
- Salovey, P., and J. D. Mayer. 1990. "Emotional Intelligence." *Imagination, Cognition and Personality 9* (3): 185-211.
- Sulaiman, W. S. W., & Noor, M. Z. M. (2015). Examining the psychometric properties of the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligences Scale (WLEIS). *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities, Special Issue, 2*, 81-90.
- Wong, C. S., & Law, K. S. (2002). The effects of leader and follower emotional intelligence on performance and attitude: An exploratory study. *Leadership Quarterly, 13*, 243-274.
- Zuckerman, M. (1994). *Behavioral expressions and biosocial bases of sensation seeking*. New York: Cambridge.
- Zuckerman, M., M. S. Buchsbaum, & Murphy, D. L. (1980). Sensation Seeking and Its Biological Correlates. *Psychological Bulletin 88* (1), 187-214.