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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Perceived Emotional Abuse, Impulsivity, Psychological Distress, University Students	The aim of the present study was to test link between perceived emotional abuse and psychological distress in university students with a focus on its mediation through impulsivity. The study adopted a cross-sectional design and recruited 300 university students (18-35 years old) from different fields of study. The study provided descriptive statistics to report demographic profile of the participants, such as age, gender and educational level. The results showed perceived emotional abuse was positively and significantly related to depression, anxiety, and stress. The linear regression analysis also showed that perceived emotional abuse predicted psychological distress. However, perceived emotional abuse was not significantly associated with impulsivity & impulsivity was not significantly linked with psychological distress. The impulsivity did not mediate the association between perceived emotional abuse & psychological distress. In this regard, the results added to the current knowledge base by identifying perceived emotional abuse as an important psychological risk factor for university students' mental health. The findings indicated that the link between emotional abuse and distress is likely to be mediated by emotional and cognitive factors, rather than impulsivity.
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INTRODUCTION

University life is a crucial stage of development that is characterized by the academic, social, and psychological development. To most people, the entry into higher education is associated with the beginning of adulthood, which is developmental phase characterized by increasing independence, exploring identities, and development of interpersonal relationships (Abdullah, Khalily, Ruocco & Hallahan, 2023). Though such a stage can bring forth intellectual and personal growth, it can also

introduce students to a range of stress factors that have potential to undermine their mental health. The academic pressure, social expectations, monetary pressures, and changes in living conditions can inculcate a lot of emotional pressure (Akpinar, 2024). In a world of numerous relationship issues that young adults are faced with, perceived emotional abuse has become a valid predictor of health emotional functioning and behavioral consequences (Anagnostopoulou, Kalaitzaki, Tsouvelas & Tamiolaki, 2024). The emotional abuse refers to tedious types of verbal, psychological or relational behavior that diminishes self-esteem, dignity, and emotional safety of a person. Emotional abuse is not physically visible, as opposed to physical abuse, but the psychological effects of the former can be equally harmful.

Emotional abuse manifestation includes criticism, humiliation, rejection, management, intimidation or emotional neglect, which, in cases, send message of inadequacy, worthlessness or love lessness to the victim (Bitsoih, Peckham, Canning, Ong, Becerra & Broussard, 2023). In the event that such interactions are repeated, people tend to internalize negative cognitions about themselves and the relationships they have with others. Persons can, on the other hand, make different interpretations of the same behavior, based on their past experiences, personalities, coping mechanisms, as well as expectations in relationships. The emotional abuse is perceived to play a central role in ascertaining its effects psychologically (Bliton, Clevenger, Zapor, Brem, Shorey & Stuart, 2016). Adolescence is a period that is usually accompanied by the discovery of the intimate relationships, and in this case these relationships may offer emotional support and comfort. Nonetheless, the negative relational dynamics such as manipulation, jealousy, controlling behaviors or emotional withdrawal can arouse the perception of emotional abuse (El-Ayari, Mohamed & Abuzahra, 2025). The interactions with peers may likewise cause emotionally detrimental experiences in the form of the bullying, social ostracism, or ridicule.

The relationship with the authority figures in an academic institution, including the supervisors, can be interpreted as being emotionally abusive at times due to the use of harsh criticism, humiliation, or dismissive behavior (Farrell, Emmerton, Camilleri & Sammut, 2024). The emotional abuse of the university students, in most cases, has its roots in the sphere of family relations. Though the student can achieve physical separation with family when attending college, emotional bonds with family members and relatives still play crucial role. Negative parental criticism, emotional neglect, having unrealistic expectations or emotional support may fuel feelings of inadequacy and stress in students (Iqbal, Rashid, Anwar & Shabeer, 2025). Psychologically, concept of impulsivity is often viewed as multidimensional instead of being mono-dimensional version of behavioral leaning which have led to the development of impulsive behavior. The absence of premeditation is one of the dimensions that is known since it defines tendency to do things without considering the possible consequences of the actions. Consequently, people who are rated high on this characteristic can make decisions quickly without analyzing the potential risks and permanency (Heshmati, Kheiriabad, Azmoodeh, Ghasemi & Pfaltz, 2024).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hunter and Bhat (2022) found that a group of individuals that has an increased vulnerability to emotional and psychological issues is comprised of university students. The higher education often

comes with salient evolving changes, like increased autonomy, increased academic requirements, & changed interpersonal relationships. Poor interpersonal experiences, including emotional abuse, can produce affective unsteadiness and psychological ailments (Miller & Racine, 2022). Perceived emotional abuse refers to person subjective experience of emotionally harmful acts in relationships with other people. Unlike physical abuse, emotional abuse does not always imply some physical harm that can be seen; however, its psychological effects can also be as harmful and lasting. The role of emotional abuse as relevant form of psychological maltreatment has gradually been recognized by researchers as the harmful factor affecting emotional development of people, their self-concept, and mental health (Choi & Song, 2025). Perceived emotional abuse is a construct, has particularly consequential value because it predicts subjective evaluation of emotionally harmful experiences. Research found correlation between impulsivity & risk-taking behavior has been widely reported in recent studies.

The impulsive university students are more inclined to undertake activities they consider to have instant gratification even though these might have adverse consequences. These behaviors can be excessive alcohol or drug usage, gambling, unsafe sex and driving recklessly (El-Ayari et al., 2025). According to another study greater impulsivity was associated with the higher prediction of high-risk behavior among students, which also led to emotional distress and low academic achievement. These results also support the dual effects that impulsivity has on behavior and the psychological well-being, which is why it is important as a predictor of maladaptive results (Farrell et al., 2024). The psychological distress is a generalized construct, which is represented as continuum of negative subjective experience of psychological distress in an individual and it is common when individual is overpowered by stressors, which exceed available coping responses. In the university setting, issues of psychological distress have become growing menace since of complex interaction of academic, social, and personal pressures that characterize emerging adulthood (Kanj et al., 2023). Self-esteem moderates effect of stressors; students with lower self-esteem tend to have more negative effect and emotional responsiveness.

Cognitive processes, especially negative appraisal and maladaptive rumination, are crucial in the maintenance and exacerbation of distress. Rumination (defined as a persistent attention to negative experiences or perceived failure) enhances emotional distress and hinders the adaptive problem solving, creating a vicious cycle of distress that may be self-sustaining (in the long term) (Liu et al., 2024). The when-attached theory, the emotion-regulation theory, the stress-vulnerability theory, general strain, and cognitive-appraisal theories are some of theoretical frameworks that explain how emotionally harmful interpersonal experiences can trigger malfunction of emotion regulation and behavioral control (Fernández, Alonso, Sorribes, Villalba & Calderon, 2022). At the same time, impulsivity can become a self-destructive way of coping with the emotions of pain and stress, and it increases psychological problems even further (Harmanci et al., 2021). In this connection, these theoretical connections are essential in discovering the risk factors that imply the weakening of the mental health of students and addressing the determination of different leading measures, which help develop emotional stability and mental comfort in university environment (Granieri, Franzoi & Chung, 2021).

Rationale of Study

The issue of psychological distress in university students has been the growing subject of modern study in psychology. This is a phase of development which is usually marked by growing adulthood and is characterized by a sense of independence, exploration of identity and major changes in life. Psychologically, these changes may be awkward, especially in cases where students are subjected to academic stress, social adaptation, and emotional problems (Heshmati, Kheiriabad, Azmoodeh, Ghasemi & Pfaltz, 2024). In this environment, perceived emotional abuse has been pointed out as a significant risk factor to poor mental health outcomes. Thus, the persistent criticism, humiliation, rejection, and controlling behaviours are examples of emotional abuse that can degrade self-worth, impair emotional regulation and adversely impact psychological functioning (Homoroc, Lauts & Ciabal, 2022).

Research Hypotheses

- ✓ There would be a significant relationship between perceived emotional abuse, impulsivity and psychological distress among university students.
- ✓ There would be a significant impact of perceived emotional abuse on psychological distress (depression, anxiety, stress) amid university students.
- ✓ There would be a significant impact of the perceived emotional abuse on impulsive behavior among university students in the particular context.
- ✓ There would be a mediating role of IB between perceived emotional abuse & psychological distress (depression, anxiety, stress) amid university students.
- ✓ There would be significant gender differences in perceived emotional abuse, impulsivity and psychological distress among the university students.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a correlational, cross-sectional design. This design allowed the researcher to investigate how emotional abuse relates to psychological distress and role of impulsivity, without manipulating any variables. The current study used the convenience sampling, a non-probability sampling technique, where participants were selected based on their easy availability & willingness to participate. The study included a sample of N=300 individuals who were enrolled in public or private universities, ranging in age from 18 to 30 years. Therefore, this age range was selected as it represents emerging adulthood, developmental stage associated with emotional and psychological challenges in study.

Research Procedure

The data collection was done among the students of the universities in Faisalabad (both public and private) after receiving formal permission of the institutional ethics review committee in question. The methods of recruiting the participants were convenient and purposive whereby contacts in the universities, permission in the departments and networks of the students were used to reach the eligible respondents. Inclusion criteria were that the participants had to be young adults who were in higher education and anyone who failed to meet the age or enrolment criteria was not allowed to participate. In this linking, self-administered questionnaire comprising of demographic questions

and standardized psychometric scales that were pertinent to the variables of study were used to collect required data.

The questionnaires were administered in institutional and non-institutional university campuses either within a classroom setting (with the consent of the faculty members) or via safe online survey connections sent to students. The participants had enough time to fill in the questionnaire but no time pressure was applied and where clarification was needed, it was given to them to ensure that they understood the items perfectly. All the questionnaires were thoroughly reviewed after the data collection process to ensure that all the questions were answered and in a consistent manner. To guarantee the quality of data, incomplete responses or forms containing a significant amount of missing data were eliminated out of final dataset according to the set exclusion criteria. Following the screening, valid responses were coded and were keyed to a statistical software program to be analyzed in study.

Statistical Analysis

The present study examined the relationships between perceived emotional abuse, impulsivity, and psychological distress using quantitative, correlational design. Descriptive statistics was conducted to explore the distributions and central tendencies of the variables, and reliability analyses were used to confirm the internal consistency. Pearson's correlation analysis was performed to determine the strength and direction of the associations. The mediating effect of impulsive behaviour between perceived emotional abuse and psychological distress was tested with a mediation analysis based on Hayes PROCESS macro of SPSS (version 4.x). The Model 4 was used in particular and this is fitting in a simple mediation analysis. The perceived emotional abuse was inputted as the independent variable (X) in this model, impulsive behaviour as the mediator (M) and psychological distress as the dependent variable (Y).

The importance of the indirect effect was estimated through bootstrapping model with a resample of 5,000 that gives a strong estimation of indirect effects without any assumption of the sampling distribution being normal. Statistical significance was resolute by 95% bias-corrected confidence interval (CI). The indirect effect was deemed important in case confidence interval was not at zero. Besides the indirect effect, direct and total effects were analyzed to gain an insight into the degree to which impulsive behaviour accounted the relationship between perceived emotional abuse and psychological distress. All paths reported standardized coefficients (β), standard errors & p-values. This method of analysis enabled an in-depth evaluation of mediation hypothesis which held that IB would mediate association amidst perceived emotional abuse and psychological distress among the university students.

RESULTS OF STUDY

The data was analyzed using the SPSS Version 28. The study variables were subjected to a series of statistical analyses, such as descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, independent samples t-test, regression analysis and moderation analysis. These techniques allowed the authors to examine the relationships between variables, test for differences between groups, and examine the predictive and moderating effects of variables in model. Descriptive statistics (frequencies & percentages) were

used to describe participants' demographic characteristics. Results of these analyses are reported in the tables below.

Table 1 Scales Reliability Analysis

	N	Min	Max	M	SD	Cronbach
Eaps total	300	74.00	230.00	180.11	17.34	.743
Ibs total	300	87.00	209.00	142.94	24.99	.793
Ibs (Negative urgency)	300	87.00	209.00	30.73	5.09	.720
Ibs (Premeditation)	300	87.00	209.00	26.36	5.46	.800
Ibs (Lack of (perservance)	300	87.00	209.00	19.26	3.99	.714
Ibs (sensation seeking)	300	87.00	209.00	31.05	5.58	.776
Ibs (Positive Urgency)	300	87.00	209.00	36.35	6.14	.783
Dass total	300	8.00	63.00	31.63	12.36	.908
Dass(depression)	300	8.00	63.00	10.54	4.51	.771
Dass (Anxiety)	300	8.00	63.00	10.59	4.36	.756
Dass (Stress)	300	8.00	63.00	10.50	4.59	.785

Note: EAPS= Perceived Emotional Abuse Scale, IBS= Impulsive Behavior Scale, Dass=Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale

Table shows descriptive statistics & reliability analysis of study variables. The Perceived Emotional Abuse Scale (EAPS) demonstrated good reliability ($\alpha = .743$), indicating acceptable internal consistency. The Impulsive Behavior Scale (IBS) showed high reliability ($\alpha = .793$), suggesting that the scale consistently measures impulsive behavior. Its subscales also showed acceptable reliability, including negative urgency ($\alpha = .720$), premeditation ($\alpha = .800$), lack of perseverance ($\alpha = .714$), sensation seeking ($\alpha = .776$), and positive urgency ($\alpha = .783$). The Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS) demonstrated excellent reliability ($\alpha = .928$), indicating very strong internal consistency. All scales used in study show acceptable to excellent reliability, making them suitable for further statistical analysis.

Table 2 Demographic Information of Participants (N = 300)

Variables	Categories	f	%
Age	18–20 years	76	25.8
	21–25 years	131	44.4
	26–30 years	88	29.8
Gender	Male	107	35.7
	Female	193	64.3
Education	B.Ed.	11	3.7
	BS	213	71.0
	MPhil	76	25.3

Table 2 presents demographic characteristics of study participants (N = 300). The age distribution indicates that largest proportion of participants belonged to the 21–25 years age group (44.4%), followed by the 26–30 years group (29.8%), while 18–20 years age group constituted the smallest proportion (25.8%). In terms of gender distribution, majority of participants were female (64.3%), whereas males represented 35.7% of the sample, indicating a higher participation rate of females

in study. Regarding educational qualification, most of respondents were enrolled in BS programs (71.0%), followed by MPhil students (25.3%), while minimal proportion belonged to B.Ed. programs (3.7%). Demographic profile suggests that sample was largely composed of female undergraduate students within 21–25 years age range, which may be considered while interpreting the findings of the current study.

Table 3 Correlation Between EAPS, IBS, and Subscales of PD (N=300)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. EAPS	-	.056	.177**	.156**	.194**
2. IBS		-	-.043	-.042	-.044
3. Depression			-	.756**	.754**
4. Anxiety				-	.752**
5. Stress					-

Note: EAPS= Perceived Emotional Abuse, IBS= Impulsive Behavior

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson correlation analysis was used to assess the association amid perceived emotional abuse (EAPS), impulsive behavior (IBS) and sub-scales of psychological distress (depression, anxiety and stress). The results showed perceived emotional abuse was positively and significantly correlated with depression ($r = .177, p < .01$), anxiety ($r = .156, p < .01$), stress ($r = .194, p < .01$), suggesting that as perceived emotional abuse increased, the psychological distress of the participants increased. But perceived emotional abuse was not significantly correlated with impulsive behaviour ($r = .056, p > .05$). Likewise, impulsive behavior was not significantly correlated with depression ($r = -.043, p > .05$), anxiety ($r = -.042, p > .05$), stress ($r = -.044, p > .05$). Further, psychological distress sub-scales showed strong and significant positive correlations (depression was significantly related to anxiety ($r = .756, p < .01$) and stress ($r = .754, p < .01$), also, anxiety was significantly related to stress ($r = .752, p < .01$). These findings suggest that depression, anxiety & stress are highly correlated and are likely to occur together.

Table 4 Regression Coefficient of PE Abuse on PD

Variable	B	SE	B	t	p
(Constant)	8.619	7.761		1.111	.268
EAPS Total	.128	.043	.171	2.991	.003

$R^2 = .029, F(1, 298) = 8.948, p = .003$.

The Linear regression analysis was used to test whether the perceived emotional abuse significantly predicts psychological distress. Thus, the model was found to be significant ($F = 8.948, p = .003$), explaining 2.9% ($R^2 = .029$) of the variance in psychological distress. The findings revealed that perceived emotional abuse significantly and positively predicted DASS ($\beta = .171, t = 2.99, p = .003$) in current study.

Table 5 Regression Coefficient of PE Abuse on IB

Variable	B	SE	B	t	p
(Constant)	128.53	15.01	---	8.56	.000

EAPS Total	.080	.083	.056	0.962	.337
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$R = .056, R^2 = .003, F(1, 298) = 0.926, p = .337$

A linear regression analysis was showed to examine whether perceived emotional abuse predicts impulsive behavior. Results showed that model was not statistically significant, $F(1, 298) = 0.926, p = .337$, explaining 0.3% of variance ($R^2 = .003$). Perceived emotional abuse did not significantly predict impulsive behavior ($\beta = .056, t = 0.962, p = .337$). Independent variable (EAPS) accounted for only 0.3% of the variance in irrational beliefs. These findings indicate that perceived emotional abuse is not a significant predictor of impulsive behavior in this sample, therefore hypothesis was not supported.

Table 6 Impulsive Behavior as a Mediator Between PEA and PD (Depression).

Variables	Effect (b)	P	SE	95% Boot CI	
				LL	UL
EA → Depression	.0462	.002	.014	.017	.075
Direct Effect					
Variables	Effect (b)	P	SE	95% Boot CI	
				LL	UL
EA → Impulsivity	.080	.336	.083	-.083	.244
Impulsivity → Depression	-.009	.356	.010	-.029	.010
EA → Depression	.046	.001	.014	.017	.076
Indirect Effect					
Mediator	Effect	SE	LL	95% Boot CI	
				LL	UL
Impulsivity	-.0008	.0015	-.0049	.0015	

The table explains that results indicated that the total effect of emotional abuse on depression was significant ($b = .0462, p < .01$), suggesting that higher emotional abuse is associated with higher levels of depression. However, direct effect of emotional abuse on impulsivity was non-significant ($b = .0802, p > .05$), and impulsivity also did not significantly predict depression ($b = -.0095, p > .05$). Furthermore, the indirect effect of emotional abuse on depression through impulsivity was not significant ($b = -.0008$), as the bootstrapped confidence interval included zero ($LL = -.0049, UL = .0015$). Consequently, impulsivity did not mediate the relationship between emotional abuse and depression in study.

Table 7 Impulsive Behavior as a Mediator Between PEA and PD (Anxiety).

Variables	Effect (b)	P	SE	95% Boot CI	
				LL	UL
EA → Anxiety	.039	.006	.014	.011	.067
Direct Effect					
Variables	Effect (b)	p	SE	95% Boot CI	

				LL	UL
EA → Impulsivity	.0802	.3366	.0834	-.0838	.2443
Impulsivity → Anxiety	-.0088	.3781	.0100	-.0286	.0109
EA → Anxiety	.0401	.0058	.0144	.0117	.0685

Indirect Effect

Mediator	Effect	SE	LL	95% Boot CI	UL
Impulsivity	-.0007	.0015	-.0045	.0016	

The table explains that total effect of emotional abuse on anxiety was significant ($b = .0394, p < .01$), indicating that emotional abuse predicts anxiety. Still, emotion abuse did not significantly predict impulsivity ($b = .0802, p > .05$), and impulsivity also had a non-significant effect on anxiety ($b = -.0088, p > .05$). The indirect effect was also non-significant ($b = -.0007$), with a confidence interval including zero ($LL = -.0045, UL = .0016$). Thus, impulsivity did not mediate relationship amid emotion abuse and anxiety.

Table 8 Impulsive Behavior as a Mediator Between PEA and PD (Stress).

Variables	Effect (b)	p	SE	95% Boot CI	
				LL	UL
EA → Stress	.0513	.0007	.0151	.0217	.0810

Direct Effect

Variables	Effect (b)	p	SE	95% Boot CI	
				LL	UL
EA → Impulsivity	.0802	.3366	.0834	-.0838	.2443
Impulsivity → Stress	-.0101	.3368	.0105	-.0307	.0105
EA → Stress	.0522	.0006	.0151	.0224	.0819

Indirect Effect

Mediator	Effect	SE	LL	95% Boot CI	UL
Impulsivity	-.0008	.0017	-.0052	.0015	

The table explains that the results showed that emotional abuse significantly predicted stress (total effect: $b = .0513, p < .001$). However, emotional abuse was not a significant predictor of impulsivity ($b = .0802, p > .05$), and impulsivity did not significantly predict stress ($b = -.0101, p > .05$). The indirect effect was also non-significant ($b = -.0008$), as the confidence interval included zero ($LL = -.0052, UL = .0015$). Therefore, no mediation effect of impulsivity was found between emotional abuse and stress.

Table 9 Gender Differences in EA, Impulsivity, PD (Depression, Anxiety, & Stress) (N = 300)

Variables	Male (n = 107) M ± SD	Female (n = 193) M ± SD	t	p	Cohen's d
Emotional Abuse	183.29 ± 8.55	178.36 ± 20.47	2.92	.004	0.29

Impulsivity	142.27 ± 28.74	143.32 ± 22.73	-0.33	.745	-0.04
Depression	12.23 ± 4.68	9.60 ± 4.14	5.032	< .001	0.61
Anxiety	12.29 ± 4.46	9.64 ± 4.03	5.247	< .001	0.63
Stress	12.49 ± 4.63	9.39 ± 4.20	5.904	< .001	0.71

Note: M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, t = t-test value, p = significance level,

An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine gender differences in emotional abuse, impulsivity, depression, anxiety, and stress. The results revealed that the emotional abuse differed significantly across gender, with males reporting higher levels compared to females ($t = 2.91$, $p < .01$). No significant gender difference was observed in impulsivity ($t = -0.32$, $p > .05$). However, significant gender differences were found in depression ($t = 5.03$, $p < .001$), anxiety ($t = 5.25$, $p < .001$), and stress ($t = 5.90$, $p < .001$), indicating that males reported higher levels of psychological distress compared to females in this sample. In this connection, these findings suggest that gender plays a meaningful role in emotional abuse and distress outcomes, although impulsivity appears to be comparable across groups. Moreover, a highly significant difference was observed in the levels of psychological distress across gender, $t(183.87) = 5.55$, $p < .001$. In this linking, male participants exhibited substantially higher levels of distress ($M = 37.36$, $SD = 13.99$) than females ($M = 28.60$, $SD = 11.35$).

This finding highlights a greater vulnerability or higher reporting of depression, anxiety, and stress symptoms among males in this specific academic or social context. The effect size ($d = 0.69$) falls within the moderate-to-large range, emphasizing that gender plays substantial role in determining levels of psychological distress within this population. In contrast to the other variables, the analysis for impulsive behavior revealed no significant difference between males ($M = 142.27$, $SD = 28.74$) and females ($M = 143.32$, $SD = 22.72$), with $t(180.25) = -0.33$ and $p = .745$. The negligible effect size ($d = 0.04$) further confirms that impulsivity levels are relatively uniform across both genders in this sample, suggesting that gender is not a predictive factor for impulsive tendencies in this group. Overall, the data supports the hypothesis that gender significantly influences the perception of emotional abuse and levels of the psychological distress, with males scoring higher in both domains. However, the hypothesis regarding gender differences in impulsivity was not supported by the current findings.

DISCUSSION

The current study aimed to investigate associations amid perceived emotional abuse, impulsivity and psychological distress in university students. The transition to university is commonly viewed as developmental period characterized by academic, social & identity challenges, financial pressures, and growing independence. While this time of life can be related to development and freedom, it be associated with emotional vulnerability. In this regard, perceived emotional abuse, impulsivity and psychological distress are key factors of interest (Irshad & Lone, 2025). In the present study, the relationships between perceived emotional abuse, impulsivity and psychological distress were examined, the predictive effects of emotional abuse upon distress and impulsivity, and the role of impulsivity as a potential explanatory factor between emotional abuse and emotional distress. The study explored links between perceived emotional abuse, impulsive behaviour and psychological

distress in emerging adults. This involved exploring association amid perceived emotional abuse and depression, anxiety & stress; whether perceived emotional abuse predicted impulsive behavior and psychological distress; whether impulsive behavior mediated relationship between perceived emotional abuse and psychological distress; and whether there were gender differences across key study variables.

The study offers valuable insight into the emotional health of emerging adults and is consistent with recent research which suggests that emotionally harmful interpersonal experiences are strongly associated with poor mental health. Hypothesis 1 of current was that the one important finding of the current study was that perceived emotional abuse was positively and significantly related with depression, anxiety and stress confirming the first hypotheses of the study. The greater the reported emotional abuse, greater the psychological distress. This result is in line with recent evidence that emotional maltreatment is one of strongest interpersonal predictors of ensuing emotional problems. These results also support dual effects that impulsivity has on behavior and psychological well-being, that is why it is important as predictor of maladaptive results. Recent research has indicated that people exposed to verbal derision, rejection, handling, criticism & invalidation are at greater risk of depressive symptoms, generalized anxiety, trauma-related stress, and poorer quality of life (Iuso et al., 2022).

The recent trauma-focused research has come to view emotional abuse as damaging as some forms of physical abuse because it is targeted at personal identity and sense of worth and safety (Kanj et al., 2023). The findings of the current study, which revealed a strong association between perceived emotional abuse and depression, are consistent with the recent studies showing that the childhood experiences of emotional abuse are associated with hopelessness, negative self-schemas, shame, and low mood. Recent research has reported that both childhood and adolescent emotional abuse is a predictor of depressive symptoms in university students and young adults, through the mechanisms of the self-criticism and difficulty in regulating emotions (Kaya et al., 2023). This implies that over time, people begin to internalize the negative messages and develop negative views of the self and emotional fatigue. Therefore, during the transition to adulthood, when a sense of identity and social acceptance are vital developmental issues, these emotional scars may be expressed as depression (Kayis, 2022).

CONCLUSION

This study suggests perceived emotional abuse is a significant psychological predictor of distress for university students. While not as physically observable as physical assaults, there is an association between emotional abuse and mental health. Greater perceived emotional abuse is associated with higher levels of depressive, anxiety and stress symptoms. This research confirms emotionally abusive experiences should be taken seriously in research and practice. It also finds that emotional abuse was a significant predictor of general psychological distress. Thus, emotionally abusive experiences add to emotional distress over and above other academic and life stressors. Although the statistical effect size was small, it is nevertheless substantially relevant in practice because the psychological

disorders typically have multiple causes. In this linking, emotional abuse seems to be one of the significant causes.

A second finding was that impulsivity was not a prominent variable in study's model. Impulsivity was not significantly predicted by emotional abuse, and impulsivity was not significantly related to depression, anxiety and stress. Also, impulsivity did not play a mediating role in the relationship between emotional abuse and psychological distress. This finding might indicate that the effect of emotional abuse on psychological distress be through internal emotional and cognitive mechanisms rather than impulsive behavior. The study thus concludes that students who have experienced emotional abuse may be more likely to suffer internally (sadness, worry, fear, tension, and low self-esteem) rather than to exhibit impulsive external responses. This shows covert nature of emotional distress. Thus, the students may suffer from deep emotional distress while attending the class and performing academically.

Recommendations

- ✓ The researchers should include the additional psychological mediators, such as emotional regulation strategies, self-esteem, coping styles, attachment insecurity as well as maladaptive cognitive schemas.
- ✓ Future research should use probability sampling techniques to improve representativeness and generalizability of findings.
- ✓ Studies should incorporate multi-method approaches (interviews, behavioral assessments, or clinician-rated measures) to reduce reliance on self-report data.
- ✓ Future models may compare impulsivity with stronger theoretical mediators for internalizing outcomes to improve explanatory power. Diverse samples from different age groups and non-student populations should be included in future research.

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