

Role of Integrity in Relation with Negative Emotions and Behavioral Problems among University Students

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This study was aimed at understanding the role of integrity in relationship of negative emotions with behaviour problems they include aggression, bullying, and shyness among university students. The sample consisted of two hundred and seventy ($N=270$) university students, that comprised of one hundred and thirty-three ($n=133$) male and one hundred and thirty seven ($n=137$) female students of university. The convenient sampling technique was used for data collection. Study measures included, Urdu versions of integrity scale (Schlenker, 2008), aggression scale (Orpinas & Frankowski, 2001), and shyness scale (Cheek & Melichor, 1985) translated by Umar (2016), and Illinois bullying scale (Espelage & Holt, 2001) translated by Shujja and Atta (2013), and negative emotions subscale of Berkeley expressivity questionnaire (Gross & John, 1997) were used to measure the pertinent constructs. Pearson correlation showed the positive relationship between negative emotions and shyness behaviour problem. Hierarchical regression demonstrated that integrity did not moderate the relationship between negative emotions and behaviour problems including aggression, bullying, and shyness. Limitations, suggestions, and practical implications were also thoroughly discussed.

Keywords: integrity, negative emotions, aggression, bullying, shyness.

Integrity is a dimension of quality of following strong principals and being honest. It is an important characteristic of society in different cultures around the world. It is a quality to judge the person's honesty, willingness and commitment to do something good according to moral

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values. Blasi (2005) stated that integrity can be felt as the control and recognition. The willingness for regularity is a component of mutually discussed self-concept that can be observed in moral identity; whereas the integrity is a term that relates to recognition and ethical deeds which are showed in moral command. Integrity plays an important role in moral philosophy and is promoted in society (Schlenker, 2009). A student with high integrity insists that what is right at all times.

The aim of this study is to explore the moderating role of integrity in relationship of negative emotions and behavior problems among university students. In present study the three construct aggression, bullying and shyness used to elucidate the behavior problems of students. The purpose of this study is to see the association of negative emotions and behavior problems among youngsters besides the moderating effect of integrity in this relationship. Eid, and Diener (2001) found that diverse cultures have different rules for the expression and understanding of several emotions.

The experience of negative emotions may be strong and they are found to be associated with aggressive behaviors (Kelly & Barsade, 2001), aggression and bullying (Sampaio, et al., 2015), and shyness (Davis & Buss, 2012). Present study is intended to examine the moderating role of integrity in the relationship of negative emotions and aforementioned behaviors. Asif and Akbar (2016) found that children high in negative emotionality demonstrated higher behavior problems.

Schlenker (2008) holds that individual differences exist within the construct of integrity itself. General rules for moral conduct, are more likely to strive for consistency between belief and action. If a person indulges in some unethical deeds and his/her integrity does not allow him to do something wrong. Than s/he will surely feel sad, and anger.

Integrity and Negative Emotions

Feelings perform an essential role in our lives. Cacioppo (2001) and his fellows revealed that emotions guide us and improve our life. Emotional response can be measured in at least three completely different systems. i.e. emotional reports, physiological reactivity, and overt behavioral actions (Lang, 1969). Present study conceptualized negative emotion as depicted and measured by Gross and John (1997) i.e. negative emotions involve the expression of specific negative emotions including anger, fear, nervousness and upset.

Previous researchers (e.g. Baker, McNulty & Overall, 2014; Lemay, Overall, & Clark, 2012) claim that there are seven basic emotions, including both positive (joy, surprise) and negative (jealousy, sadness, anger, disgust, fear). Negative emotions can be defined as the personality variable that experience the negative feelings and poor self-concept. It is condition in which an individual dislikes people, events,

and even oneself. This feeling can cause the confidence low and as a result he avoids the social situation.

According to Monin and Merritt (2011), when majority of the public perform virtuous deeds for unethical benefits, those people are tending to be moral imitator. Integrity should always be originated from internally developed dedication to virtuous deeds, which can be observed in external behavior with others. People with high integrity feel sad when they see the unethical deeds in the society.

Emotional ventilation is very important in someone's life because through the emotion's person can portray their feelings to the people. Emotional associations with people make someone's behavior problems, events and, situations. Behavior problem is an individual's act that can exert significant health harm or risk to oneself and others and thus elucidates detrimental effect on quality of life of both individual and others (O'Brien, 2003).

Behavior Problems and Integrity

Adolescence and early adulthood have been considered as a critical developmental stages during which there is increase in the prevalence of both internalizing (e.g. anxiety, depression) as well as externalizing behavior problems (e.g. aggression, bullying, delinquency) are usually observed (Coker et al., 2009; Moffitt, 1993). For the present study aggression, bullying, and shyness have been operationalized as indices of behavior problems. There is empirical evidence to the fact that negative emotions are one of the significant factors related directly to behavioral problems or mental health problems during adolescence and adulthood (e.g. Bradshaw, Schaeffer, Petras, & Jalongo, 2010; Mesurado, Belén & Malonda, Elisabeth, 2018).

Moreover, Integrity is assumed to be helpful in shaping the one's behavior according to the personality. People prefer to follow rules are persons of strong character, morality, honesty and self-confidence. If they have high level of integrity they are plausibly surmised to be less aggressive, bully, and shy. Research indicates negative relationship of integrity with aggression (Larissa, et al., 2014), bullying (Pells, Portela, & Revollo, 2016), and shyness (Marian, & Lisa, 2013) because it has been seen that people with strong moral character are satisfied with their deeds and less likely to exhibit problem behavior. It is therefore safely concluded that when high integrity and negative emotions are combined then positively relationship between negative emotions would be reduced. Present study set upon two objectives i.e. to examine the relationship between negative emotions and behavior problem and secondly to explore the moderating effect of integrity in this relationship.

Objectives:

1. To investigate the relationship between negative emotions and behavioral problems.
2. To study the moderating effect of integrity between negative emotions and behavioral problems.

Hypotheses:

In order to accomplish the objective following hypotheses have been formulated:

H1. Negative emotions will positively correlate with behavior problems (aggression, bullying, and shyness).

H2. Integrity will moderate the positive relationship between negative emotions and behavior problems.

Sample

For this study we used convenient sampling technique, and the sample comprised of university students ($N = 270$) including male ($n = 133$) and female ($n = 137$). Convenient sampling technique was used to collect the data from University of Sargodha and GC University Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan. The age of sample ranged between 19 to 24 years ($M = 21.72$, $SD = 2.63$).

Instruments

Urdu versions of following instruments translated by Umar (2016) were used in the present study:

Integrity scale. Schlenker (2008), developed his Integrity Scale (IS) to measure commitment to ethical beliefs. It is an 18-item self-report questionnaire designed to measure commitment to moral principles. It consists on a 5-point Likert scale which are ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Reliability coefficient reported by author was .79.

Negative emotionality facet. It is a sub-scale of Berkeley Expressivity Questionnaire developed by Gross and John (1997). The negative emotionality facet comprises of 6 items using 7-point Likert-type format ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Alpha reliability coefficient for Negative was estimated to be .72. Negativity Expressivity factor mainly focuses on measuring expression of specific negative emotions, i.e. anger, fear, nervousness and upset. High score on the scale means high negative emotions.

Aggression. It is 11-items scale developed by Orpinas and Frankowski (2001). It has Likert-type response format ranging between 0 to 6. Scale measures one of the most dominant and negative behaviours that young generation facing these days, because youngsters are at risk of aggressive or victimized, (Maguire & Patore, 1998). The term aggression is characterized as a scope of practices that can bring about both physical and mental harm to oneself, others or objects in the environment.

Bullying. 9-items scales developed by the Espenlage and Holt, 2001. It is scored on the 4-points Likert type format. It can be defined as the repetitive behaviours that disturb, irritate and harm other people, verbally, psychologically and physically, (Boulton & Underwood, 1992).

Shyness. To assess the shyness among university students, it is 20-items scale which is consists of 5-points Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. It is developed by Cheek & Melichor, (1985). It can be defined as the restrictive behavior. It is the condition in which the person feels awkward, worried or tense while in social encounters, particularly with strangers.

Procedure

The study was conducted at various points of the University of Sargodha and GC University Faisalabad. The places in both the campuses included canteens, playgrounds, library, classrooms etc. First of all every student was requested for participation in the study and were briefed about the aims of study. After getting initial verbal consent the informed consent forms were signed by every participant that ensured their willingness to participate in the study. The participants were then briefed about the nature and purpose of the study. They were assured about the confidentiality of their responses and were requested for their honest responses to every item of the set of questionnaires given to each participant. Demographic information was sought from the participants of the study through demographic data sheet. Afterwards questionnaire booklet along with verbal and written instruction, regarding responding to instruments, were provided to them.

Results

Table 1

Alpha Reliability of the Scales of Study

Scale	Items	<i>A</i>
Integrity	18	.63
Negative Emotions	6	.70
Aggression	11	.81
Bullying	9	.85
Shyness	20	.71

Table 2

Mean, Standard Deviation and Correlation Matrix for the Variables of the Study (N = 270)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Integrity	-	-.21**	-.22**	-.24**	.07	57.6	7.5
Negative Emotions	-	-	.10	.11	.19**	21.7	5.4
Aggression	-	-	-	.67**	.13*	11.3	10.3
Bullying	-	-	-	-	.08	14.0	4.9
Shyness	-	-	-	-	-	57.0	11.2

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 2 shows correlation matrix computed for all the variables of the study.

Table 3

Hierarchical Regression Analysis Showing Moderating Effect of Integrity in The Relationship between Negative Emotions and Aggression (N = 270)

	Predictors	Aggression	
		ΔR^2	β
Step 1	Negative emotions	.01	.01
Step 2	Negative emotions Integrity	.04	.06 -.20**
Step 3	Negative emotions \times Integrity	.004	.44
	Total R^2	.05	

** $p < .01$.

Table 3 shows the moderating influence of integrity on the relationship of negative emotions and aggression. Table represents three models whereas the first model explained the prediction of aggression by negative emotions. The overall model is found to be non-significant.

In second model, negative emotions and integrity both variables are entered in the prediction list. $\{\Delta R^2 = .040, \Delta F(2,27) = 11.13, p < .01\}$. Beta values exhibited that integrity is significant negative predictor of the aggression ($\beta = -.20, t = -3.34, p < .01$). When both values were entered in the predictor list, 4% variance is increased in the dependent variable ($R^2 = .04$).

The third model presents an interaction of negative emotions and integrity predicting aggression. This model is also found to be non-significant with $(\Delta R^2 = .004, \Delta F(3, 27) = 1.08, p > .05)$.

Table 4

Hierarchical Regression analysis Showing Moderating Effect of Integrity in The Relationship between Negative Emotions and Bullying (N = 270)

	Predictors	Bullying	
		ΔR^2	β
Step 1	Negative emotions	.013	.11
Step 2	Negative emotions	.49	.07
	Integrity		-.23***
Step 3	Negative emotions × Integrity	.001	-.23
	Total R^2	.053	

*** $p < .001$.

Table 4 shows the moderating influence of integrity on the relationship of negative emotions and bullying. Table represents three models whereas the first model explains the prediction of bullying by negative emotions. The overall model is found to be non-significant, with $\{\Delta R^2 = .013, F(1,27) = 3.42, p > .05\}$.

In second model, negative emotions and integrity both variables were entered in the prediction list. $\{\Delta R^2 = .049, \Delta F(2,27) = 14.04, p < .001\}$. Beta values exhibited that integrity is significant negative predictor of the bullying ($\beta = -.23, t = -3.75, p < .001$). When both values were entered in the predictor list, 4.9% variance is increased in the dependent variable ($R^2 = .06$). The third model presents an interaction of negative emotions and integrity predicting bullying. This model is also found to be non-significant.

Table 5

Hierarchical Regression Analysis Showing Moderating Effect of Integrity in The Relationship between Negative Emotions and Shyness (N = 270)

	Predictors	Shyness	
		ΔR^2	B
Step 1	Negative emotions	.035	.19**
Step 2	Negative emotions	.001	.18**
	Integrity		-.03
Step 3	Negative emotions × Integrity	.001	.10
	Total R^2	.036	

** $p < .01$.

Table 5 shows the moderating influence of integrity on the relationship of negative emotions and shyness. Table represents three models whereas the first model explains the prediction of shyness by negative emotions. The overall model is found to be significant, with $\{\Delta R^2 = .035, F(1,27) = 9.82, p < .01\}$. Beta values that was also significant predictor of shyness ($\beta = .19, t = 3.13, p < .01$) and has been found the contributing for 3.5% variance in the dependent variable ($R^2 = .035$).

In second model, negative emotions and integrity both variables are entered in the prediction list. Beta values exhibits that integrity is non-significant predictor of the shyness ($\beta = -.03, t = -.54, p > .05$). The third model presents an interaction of negative emotions and integrity predicting shyness. This model is also found to be non-significant.

Discussion

Before accounting for hypotheses testing the psychometric soundness of all the measurement instruments was perused. To undertake this purpose, reliability coefficients and descriptive statistics were spawned for all scales (see Table 1). The demonstration of low to moderate values of standard deviations of certain scales provided an evidence that the scale means were good estimate of their corresponding parameters. Results also revealed that all instruments of the present study yielded adequate index of alpha reliability that is greater than .70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), except integrity scale. The relatively low alpha value of integrity scale i.e. .61 might be subjected to the random responses by the sample anyhow this value is considered to be acceptable for social sciences with caution as recommended by George and Mallery (2003).

In order to examine the first hypothesis a correlation matrix was computed (see Table 1) and results revealed that negative emotions were

found to be significantly and positively correlated with shyness but not with aggression and bullying. The long duration of negative emotions affect one's life and causes the results in various behavior problems so a positive relationship between negative emotions is logical. Moreover, it has been seen that the people, who are chronically suffering any kind of negative emotion in their lives, are at a bigger risk for depression, anxiety, and any other distress but current findings did not demonstrate a significant relation of these emotions with aggression and bullying. A plausible explanation might be that social desirability can dampen the relationship between variables. As Fisher (2000) and Maryon and Gordon (2000) revealed that in research when self-reported measures are used there is probability of potential threat of contamination because of the social-desirability response bias.

Secondly cognition is an integral part of emotion that may lead to interpretation of behaviors. The sample of present study was comprised university students so there is possibility that they hide their emotions and gave fake responses or interpret their negative emotions distinct from problem behaviors. It seems reasonable to state that cognitive bias may affect the relationship of negative emotions with aggression and bullying. They may tend to cognitively justify their negative behaviors. Findings of Crocker et al. (2013) provide an empirical evidence to support our results who found that cognitive biases are also source of deficits in depression and anxiety.

The results of the current study did not support our second hypothesis that stated "integrity will moderate the positive relationship between negative emotions and behavior problems". It was assumed that youngsters with high level of integrity do not involve in unethical activities and they feel less negative feelings as compare to the people who are low on integrity scale. So the combined effect will weaken the relationship of negative emotion and behavior problems but current results displayed integrity as non-significant moderator.

There may be certain explanations regarding current findings. For example, individual differences do exist in integrity, aggression, bullying, and shyness that possibly can influence that combined interpretation integrity and negative emotions thus reducing their impact on behavior problems including aggression, bullying, and shyness. Males exhibit higher aggression and bullying, whereas females are usually high on shyness. Schlenker (2008) also provide support to current results who in his study found that individual differences exist within the construct of integrity itself. General rules for moral conduct, are more likely to strive for consistency between belief and action.

Moreover, according to Monin and Merritt (2011), when majority of the public perform virtuous deeds for unethical benefits, those people are tending to be moral imitator. Integrity should always be originated

from internally developed dedication to virtuous deeds, which can be observed in external behavior with others. Social support may also be an influencing factor that can reduce the combined effect of integrity and negative emotions on behavior problems in university students. There is evidence that social support can influence behavior problems in certain ways. For instance, Camara, Bacigalupe, and Padilla (2017) explained that perceived social support help adolescents for adjustment of their behavior problems by coping with stressors thus reducing the impact of integrity and negative emotions.

Conclusion

It is elucidated that negative emotions significant positive with shyness among students with behaviour problems. Integrity was not found significant moderator in relationship of negative emotions with aggression, bullying, and shyness.

Limitations and Suggestions

Findings of the present study are also limited in terms of education which might limit the generalizability of these findings. Data was obtained through the through self-report measure. Only self-report measure cannot be relied upon, because of the chances of social desire ability. In order to reduce the socially desirable responses a mixed method approach is recommended for future empirical efforts. The sample of the present study was confined to the students who belong to the University of Sargodha and GC University, Faisalabad, it is therefore suggested that a larger sample size should be approached from the different universities of Pakistan, to maximize the external validity.

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