

Life Satisfaction and Psychological Well-being among Young Adult Female University Students

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Abstract

This study was designed to assess the relationship between life satisfaction with two components of psychological well-being (depression and self-esteem) among young adult female university students. Simple random sampling technique was used to draw the sample. Female university students (N=200) age range of 18 to 24 with (Mean age = 21years; S.D=1.67) from different educational organizations of Karachi, Faisalabad and Multan (Pakistan) were included as sample. Demographic form, Satisfaction with life scale (Diener et al, 1985) Siddiqui shah depression scale (Siddiqui, 1992) and Rosenberg self-esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965) were administered to assess the levels of life satisfaction, depression and self-esteem respectively. For statistical analysis Regression and ANOVA were used. Results showed that depression and self-esteem are predictors of life satisfaction and no difference observed in life satisfaction, in terms of perceived family income and age of young adult female university students.

Keywords: depression, self-esteem, life satisfaction

1. Introduction

Women are more susceptible toward development of psychological problems as compare to men. 34 percent of Pakistani population faces different types of psychological problems. In Pakistan women and children are suffering from psychological problems more as claimed by annual report of Human Rights Commission (Kundi, 2011). In young adulthood, females are expected to be good students and at the same time they are also expected to be good home managers. When they try to maintain equilibrium in their responsibilities, some of them do well, and are seemed more satisfied with their lives where as those who have less coping skills and minimum capacity for facing daily problems, may be prone towards poor mental health, which is strongly associated with poor level of life satisfaction.

Most of the research studies deal with children and adolescents. Few researches deal with young adult population, especially females. In Pakistani culture the nature of stressors and criteria of life satisfaction may be different from other cultures. To understand this difference present study is formulated. The aim of present study is to investigate the relationship between life satisfaction and psychological well-being among young adult female university students in Pakistani culture.

Life Satisfaction is an overall assessment of one's feelings, attitudes, behaviors by one's own from ranging positive to negative (Diener, 1984). Shin and Johnson (1978) define the life satisfaction that, it is a global assessment of person's quality of life by his own according to his or her own settled criteria of success. Lawton (1975 & 1984) used the term of morale for describing the life satisfaction.

Psychological well-being is a broad concept. A wide variety of terms, concepts and measures are used by different researchers (e.g. Dattilo, Dattilo, Samdahe & Kleiber, 1994) for describing or studying the phenomena of psychological well-being. Rosenberg (1965) used the terms of self-esteem and self-concept for measuring the concept of psychological well-being. Subjective well-being, quality of life, mentality, mood and affect are also used for describing the psychological well-being (Diener et al., 1999). According to Campbell et al. (1976) psychological well-being is concerned with the assessment of a person's current state of affairs. Positive psychological well-being is a key to have ability to cope with challenges in life. It has many components e.g., depression, anxiety, self-esteem, self-actualization, and stress etc. Numerous problems faced by youth are stress, anxiety, depression, harassment, family problems, poor social functioning, and adjustment. Person with good psychological health can cope better with these problems, and it is essential to lead a good and satisfactory life. It is also important for youth's success in every domain of life. Positive psychological well-being is not only important for leading happy life, but also draws positive impact on person's academic and his personal life achievements.

According to Easterlin (2006) & Lelkes (2008) good job, better physical and mental health, positive life events, healthy interpersonal relationships, and high income are the significant correlates of high level of life satisfaction. Boyce et al. (2010) claimed that person's ranked income position is a key determinant of level of life satisfaction. (Easterlin, 1974; Fery & Stutzer, 2002) concluded that increase in income does not affect the individual's life satisfaction level. Huebner (2000) suggested that like adults, life satisfaction and income has weak relationship in young adult population. Myers & Diener (1995) found that income itself has no significant relationship with life satisfaction, but satisfaction with income is a significant predictor of satisfaction level of life. Different perspectives have different claims about determination of life satisfaction. Researchers proposed different results about deviation in life satisfaction level across age (Campel et al., 1976). According to Baltes & Mayer (1999) health economics status and social contacts continuously change across life. At old age individual may face poorer health, limited social contacts, relations and low income status, which leads to poor life satisfaction level. On the other side, classical and dispositional theories claimed, as age increases life satisfaction level also increases (Carstensen, 1995). Old people know

that they have limited time; so they enjoy minor things and every aspect in their last period of life. In short average life satisfaction level may be constant or changing across life span. Many cross sectional studies claimed constant life satisfaction in people of different ages. Cross national studies also claimed same results (Cantril, 1965; Ingleharts, 1990). Diener & Suh (1999) found no difference in life satisfaction level in people of different countries. Hamarat et al. (2003) explored no difference of life satisfaction level between age ranges 45 to 89.

Emotions are key determinants of life satisfaction. Level of life satisfaction depends on the nature of emotions. Different studies show that the positive and negative emotions take part differently in developing human life satisfaction. Positive emotional experiences are positively related to life satisfaction (Kuppens, Realo & Diener, 2008). Cohn et al. (2009) concluded that positive emotions are strong predictor of enhancing level of life satisfaction. They also claimed that positive emotions and positive evaluation of one's life form happiness in his or her life. Beutell et al. (2009) revealed that people's life satisfaction is negatively related to depression and anxiety and positively related to self-esteem. Generally most of the researchers studied the current satisfaction with life but other concepts like satisfaction with past life, satisfaction with future life and significant other's views of life also include in the term of life satisfaction. Happiness and quality of life are also interchangeable terms for life satisfaction (Diener et al., 1999).

Guney (2009) claimed that psychological well-being is strongly associated with the life satisfaction. People with poor mental health will not satisfy with their lives. People may have their own needs, desires, wishes, so all these factors play a vital role in determining the criteria of life satisfaction for every individual differently. Minor to great success can contribute in the life satisfaction of any one. Interpersonal relations, having great problems solving abilities, meeting good friends, success in academics or in business or in any job, meeting loving parents, spouse and children, all these things contribute in changing level of satisfaction in life of any one.

Depression is a very common mental health aspect, occurring in every society. Along with other aspects of mental health, it is playing a vital role in the development of stress associated with modern life. A depressed person rarely experiences happiness and usually has low self-esteem and lack of confidence (Seligman, 1990). According to Beutell (2006) satisfaction with life is strongly related to better physical and mental health. Person having positive psychological well-being will satisfy his or her life as compare to those who are not psychologically healthy. Koivumaa et al. (2004) conducted a study on life satisfaction and depression in healthy adults. Sample was consisted of nine thousands six hundred and twenty nine participants. Results of research indicated the strong linear relationship between life satisfaction and depression in healthy adults. Lewis, Dorahy & Schmak (1999) examine the relationship between depression and life satisfaction in Northern Irish Adults. They concluded that depression is a great contributor of life satisfaction and there is significant relationship between life satisfaction and depression in Northern Irish adults. According to Perere (2007) life satisfaction is not a matter of money and material things; it is the result of a person's nature of evaluation of his or her self. It comes from what you have, what you do. It comes from positive self-evaluation of one's life. First step toward happiness and good life is building esteem. Low self-esteem causes depression unhappiness, insecurity and low confidence.

Rayne et al. (1997) assessed the quality of life in the patient of major depressive patient. Quality of well-being was measured by quality well-being scale and depression was measured by administration of Hamilton rating scale. Results of this study showed that severity of depressive symptoms is inversely proportion with quality of life which was measured by quality well-being scale. Guney (2009) claimed that life satisfaction significantly related to anxiety and depression in university students. Swami et al. (2007) conducted their study to investigate the relationship between life satisfaction, depression and loneliness in Malaysian medical students. Results of their study indicated that life satisfaction is negatively correlated

with depression and loneliness in Malaysian medical students. Headey, Kely & Wearing (1993) revealed that depression and anxiety have negative relationship with life satisfaction and life satisfaction has positive relationship with positive effect. Simpson (1996) studied 311 Australian and 250 Nepalese university students on the constructs of life satisfaction and depression. Epidemiological depression scale and satisfaction with life scale were used for measuring the constructs. After detailed investigation, they concluded that life satisfaction is moderately inversely related to level of depression in Australian and Nepalese students.

A person's basic beliefs about oneself are referred as self-esteem. Factors those play significant role in formation of one's self esteem are competence, confidence, achievement, independence, and freedom (Mazhar, 2004). People with depression, anxiety, phobias, psychosis, delusional thinking and having chronic illness and disability possessed by bad feelings and dissatisfaction throughout the life consider themselves as worthless and inferior (Samhsa & Copeland, 2004). Many researchers believe that self-esteem is a circular process, depends on person's success. Success of a person leads him towards self-confidence, confidence empowers people to face new challenges, and hence they become able to cope with life problems which lead toward happy, comfortable and successful life. They also revealed that positive self-esteem plays life immune system of spirit, make individual to face life problems, leading good life (Demand Media, 2008). Many researchers play an important role in finding out the nature, intensity and relationship between self-esteem and person's satisfaction with life. An et al. (2008) planned a study for assessing the relationship between life satisfaction, self-esteem and perceived status. Results of this study showed that life satisfaction of a person is strongly correlated with self-esteem and perceived health. Headey, Kely & Wearing (1993) conducted a study to explore the relationship between life satisfaction, positive effect, anxiety, and depression. Results of this study showed that a negative correlation exists between life satisfaction and depression. Terry & Huebner (2005) investigated the relationship between self-concept and life satisfaction. Sample consisted of 183 elementary school students. They came to know that children can differentiate global life satisfaction from self-concept domains. Diener & Diener (1995) also found strong correlation between life satisfaction and self-esteem at the individual level in entire sample of study.

2. Research Questions

1. Would depression and self-esteem be strong predictor of life satisfaction among young adult female university students.
2. Does Life satisfaction differ in terms of perceived family income and age of young adult female university students.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

This study was conducted in Educational organizations of Faisalabad, Multan and Karachi. The sample consisted of 200 female participants. The ages of participants ranged from 18 to 24 years with mean age of 21 and standard deviation 1.67. Participants who lived with both parents were included. Physically disabled and participants with psychiatric illness were excluded from the study. The entire sample was selected from lower, middle and upper socioeconomic classes. Only female participants were included to enhance the generalization of study results on particular female population.

3.2. Procedure

Researchers approached the different academic institutions/organizations of Faisalabad, Karachi and Multan. A consent letter comprising the aim of the research project and invitation of participants was

provided to the concerned authorities of selected institutions. Questionnaires used in this study also provided them along with consent form. After receiving permission from authorities of host institutions, researchers briefly introduced themselves to the participants and established rapport with them. Researchers also assured that information given by the participants will be strictly kept confidential. After building rapport, researchers explained the purpose of study. Participants were asked to sign an agreement form if they are willing for voluntary participation in this study. Then researchers administered self-developed demographic information sheet (DIS), as per requirement of this study. DIS consisted of age, gender, education, marital status, family structure and family income etc. individuals who full filled the criteria of participation like age rang etc., settled by the researchers according to the requirement of study, included in the sample for further administration of other research questionnaires. Then researchers administered the Satisfaction with life scale, Siddiqui shah depression scale and Rosenberg self-esteem scale in group setting by adopting same procedure and setting for administration of all questionnaires. After data collection, researchers paid thanks to all participants for their voluntary participation and authorities of host institutions for their cooperation in this research project.

3.3. Statistical analysis

Regression and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used in order to compute the relationship between life satisfaction, psychological well-being and impact of perceived family income and age on life satisfaction. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Vol. 19) was used for analysis of data and representation of results.

3.4. Description of Measures

3.4.1. Demographic Information Sheet

Demographic Information Sheet is a self-developed data sheet. It is consisted of age, education, marital status, family structure, family income and disability status of participants. It is developed by the researchers, as per the requirement of this research project.

3.4.2. Satisfaction with Life Scale

Satisfaction with life scale, Urdu version was used. This scale was developed by Diener, Emmon, Larson and Griffin (1985). It was designed to measure a single dimension e.g. global life satisfaction. It is a five point Likert type scale, consists of five items. Responses categories range from strongly disagree to strongly agree and are scored as 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 respectively. This scale is reported to have two month test-retest correlation coefficient .82 and a coefficient alpha of .87.

3.4.3. Siddiqui Shah Depression Scale

Siddiqui Shah Depression Scale is a self-report measure, developed by Siddiqui, 1992 in Urdu language. It is comprised of 36 items and is useful for both clinical and non-clinical population. It measures the level of depression on 4 point likert scale.

3.4.4. Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale

Rosenberg Self Esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965) Urdu version was developed to measure the global self-esteem level. It consists of ten items. It is a self-report measure and measures the level of self-esteem on 4 point rating scale. Higher scores illustrate higher level of self-esteem.

3.5. Operational Definitions

3.5.1. Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction can be defined as the level of enjoyment, well-being and satisfaction with one's life and activities. It was in terms of high score achieved on satisfaction with life scale. It was global assessment of a person's quality of life according to his chosen criteria (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985).

3.5.2. Depression

Depression is a mood state characterized by sadness, isolation, withdrawal, lack of energy, lack of pleasure, low self-esteem, poor school performance, crying spells, eating and sleeping disturbances etc. (APA, 2000).

3.5.3. Self Esteem

The sum of person's feelings and thoughts with reference to his or her own self is referred as self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965).

4. Results

Demographic information e.g. Frequency and percentage of family structures in (Table 1), mean and standard deviation of family income are presented in (Table 2). Table 3 illustrated the frequency and percentages of age of the participants. In table 4 ($r = -.352$, $p < .01$) indicated that life satisfaction is negatively related to depression among young adult female university students. Regression analysis of life satisfaction and depression is demonstrated in table 5. Table 6 indicated that ($r = .258$, $p < .01$) which means life satisfaction is positively related to self-esteem among young adult female university students. Regression analysis of self-esteem and life satisfaction is presented in table 7.

Table 1
Frequency of Family structure of sample

Family Structure	Frequency	Percentage
Nuclear	127	63.5 %
Joint	73	36.5%

N=200

Table 2
Mean and Standard Deviation of Monthly family Income of Sample

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Family Income	34925	20627

N=200

Table 3

Age (Years)	Frequency	Percentage
18	20	10 %
19	17	8.5 %
20	48	24 %
21	41	20.5 %
22	34	14%
23	26	13%
24	14	7%

N=200

Table 4

Mean Standard Deviation and Correlation between Life Satisfaction and Depression among female students.

Var	N	Mean	S.D	r.	Sig
DEP	200	16.81	4.84	-.352	.01
	200	20.64	13.39		

Note: LS: Life satisfaction; DEP: Depression.

* $p < .01$

Table 5

Regression Analysis of Depression and Life Satisfaction

Predictive	B	Standardized Error	B	T	P
Constant	20.07	16.81		28.88	.000
DEP	-.127	20.64	-.352	5.29	.000

P=.05

Table 6

Mean Standard Deviation and Correlation between Life Satisfaction and Self Esteem among female students.

Var	N	Mean	S.D	r.	Sig
LS	200	16.81	4.84	.258	.01
SE	200	20.64	4.58		

Note: LS: Life Satisfaction; SE: Self-esteem. ($r = .258$, $p < .01$)

Table 7

Regression Analysis of Self Esteem and Life Satisfaction

Predictive	B	Standardized Error	B	T	P
Constant	11.16	1.536		7.27	.000
SE	.274	.073	.258	3.76	.000

P=.05

5. Discussion

In this chapter researchers discussed the results of current study that either or not depression and self-esteem (components of psychological well-being) are predictors of life satisfaction and either difference occur in life satisfaction in terms of perceived family income and across different age levels.

Young people face a lot of changes simultaneously in their transactional periods. (Schulenberg, Bryant, & O'Malley, 2004). Increased social movements, independence, replacement of childhood characters with adulthood roles, feelings of increased responsibilities, future concerns and formation of family are the major developmental aspects of young adulthood period (Erikson, 1968; Settersten, Furstenberg, & Rumbaut, 2005). At the stage of this journey of development, young people settled new ethical and social codes and compare them with previous childhood invented criteria's of life (Ozbay, 1997). Early adulthood may be a very important stage in physical, cognitive, social and psychological development as well. Most of the psychological, social and physiological changes occur in this period of life. Spirit to meet the Life demands and social roles grow higher in this period of life. Young females struggle to attain balance in their increasing responsibilities of their homes, society and academics. People who are psychologically healthy or have positive psychological well-being face these changes more intelligently and effectively, and solve their daily life problems easily hence experience great satisfaction. Societal attitudes,

norms, culture, religious and ethnic conflicts and extended family structure play a significant role in determining women mental health (Niaz, 2004).

Life satisfaction is not a single entity. It is multidimensional approach. Many areas discussed by different researchers under this broad phenomena, like satisfaction with family life, satisfaction with school life, satisfaction with job, satisfaction with peers etc. (Gilman & Huebner, 2003). Huebner (2004) discussed the predictors of life satisfaction. He claimed that healthy inter and intrapersonal relationships, less physical complaints, positive psychological health is strongly associated with high level of life satisfaction and poor life satisfaction linked with depression, poor self-concept, adjustment problems, alcohol use and different other psychopathologies. Researcher dealing with children and adolescents population also found the strong relationship between life satisfaction, depression, anxiety, self-concept, and personality types.

Findings of current study showed no effect of income and age on life satisfaction. Previous existing literature on this debate by different researchers from all over the world is not unidirectional. Results of previous studies on effect of income on life satisfaction of people contradict to each other. According to Diener & Diener (1995) income and social status draw significant impact on individual's life satisfaction level. Tuzgol-Dost (2007) claimed positive relationship between economic status and life satisfaction level in young university students, as income increases, life satisfaction level also increases. Esterlin (2006) & Lelks (2008) also explored similar results. Boyce (2010) also claimed that an individual's level of life satisfaction depends on his economic status. On the other hand, many researchers claimed that no relationship exists between people's level of life satisfaction and their economic status. Frey & Sustz (2002) rejected the idea of existence of significant relationship between life satisfaction and income. He claimed income has no impact on life satisfaction. Hubner, Drane & Valois (2000) had found weak or no relationship between individual's financial status and life satisfaction. Myer & Diener (1995) drew same findings. Results of current study also find no relationship between age and life satisfaction level of young female university students.

Results of this study support the idea that income does not determine the level of life satisfaction as claimed by some researchers (e.g., Hubner, Drane & Valois 2000; Myer & Diener, 1995). Previous findings of some researchers support our results that life satisfaction remaining constant or not significantly change across age. For example many cross sectional studies claimed constant life satisfaction in people of different ages. Cross national studies also claimed same results (Cantral, 1965; Inglehumt, 1990). Diener & Suh (1999) found that life satisfaction level holds no difference among people of different countries. Hamarat et al. (2003) concluded that there is no difference of life satisfaction level between age ranges of 45 to 89.

Depression and self-esteem are most popular psychological and social constructs. Depression and low self-esteem are significant determinants of many problems. People who have significant level of depression and low self-esteem do not enjoy their lives like normal people due to feelings of worthlessness. They negatively evaluate themselves as compare to normal people. Low confidence, aggression, lack of interest in daily life activities, lack of decision making abilities are the result of low self-esteem and depression. Low level of self-esteem and poor self-image lead to a number of mental disorders, e.g. depression, anxiety, phobias, that effect directly or indirectly person's level of life satisfaction. Findings of the present study showed that depression and life satisfaction are negatively related ($r = -.352$, $p < .01$) to each other and findings also showed the depression as a predictor of life satisfaction in young adult female university students. When people do not have sufficient coping skills to deal with daily life problems, depression directly affect their level of life satisfaction. Similar findings were revealed by some researchers (e.g. Seligman, 1990; Beutell, 2006; Lewis et al., 1999), in their findings they suggested the strong negative correlation between life satisfaction and depression. According to Headey et al. (1993) it is very rare that a

person is satisfied with his life and he is depressed also. Simpson (1996) also drew same conclusions in his studies about the relationship between the variables of depression and life satisfaction.

Self Esteem and life satisfaction positively correlates to each other as our hypothesis was evidenced and results showed that self-esteem is strong predictor of life satisfaction. Findings also claimed that self-esteem as compare to depression is a strong predictor of life satisfaction among young females. According to the results of present study people who evaluate their lives negatively will not be satisfied as compare to those people who evaluate their lives positively. Negative evaluation of one's self is cause of low self-esteem which leads toward depression, and people with depression feel discomfort with their lives, some time they want to get rid from their lives. Zhang and leung (2002) claimed that people's levels of life satisfaction strongly related to their levels of self-esteem. There could be a possibility that people with low self-esteem are mostly dependent and are not capable enough to make their own decision confidently. They feel themselves as worth less and useless, and incapable. Such people often face failure due to their own negative evaluation about their own selves. Results of hypothesis 2 ($r=.258$, $p <.01$), positive relationship between life satisfaction and self-esteem also confirmed by the findings of researchers (Diener & Diener, 1995; Terry & Huebner, 2005; An et al., 2008; Zhang & Leung, 2002) that people with higher level of self-esteem are more satisfied with their lives as compare to people with low level of self-esteem. Insecurity, inability, disability, fear and disappointment are the important ingredients of low level of self-esteem, people with these characteristics are less likely to be satisfied with their life. Person with low self-esteem tends to keep himself isolated and wants an escape from life problems.

6. Conclusion

People who are psychologically healthy may appreciate their achievements, and have a good sense of gratitude. They accept their short comings and failure and they also accept the responsibilities of their failure and have abilities to face their daily life challenges. Female students with low psychological well-being cannot properly concentrate on their studies, and hence result in gaining low grades. Poor mental health also effect student's physical health, emotions, interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships.

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