

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

The current study examined the relationship between socioeconomic status and psychological wellbeing of university students in Pakistan. The Study consisted of two questionnaires i.e. Kuppusswamy scale (Kuppusswamy, 1981) and Ryff's Scale (Carol D. Ryff, 1989). The sample consisted of 113 participants. The sample size was late adolescents (18-24 years). The findings of the study revealed that there is a positive correlation between socioeconomic status and psychological wellbeing. The findings of the study revealed that the psychological wellbeing of female university students is getting more affected from their socioeconomic status than male students. The findings of the current study would be helpful for psychologists, psychiatrists and mental health workers to design different intervention plans for the treatment of different psychological issues of adolescents.

Key words. Adolescents, psychological well-being, Socioeconomics status

Introduction

Socioeconomic status is an important source of healthy inequity, as there is a very powerful relationship between socioeconomic status and psychological or physical health. The current research is an attempt to find out the relationship between socioeconomic status and psychological wellbeing among university students in Pakistan.

Socioeconomic Status

The term "socioeconomic status" refers to a person's or a group's place on the socioeconomic scale. This position is based on a variety of social and economic factors, including income, the level and type of education, the type and prestige of occupation, the location of residence, and, in some societies or segments of society, ethnic origin or religious background.

The impact of SES on psychological health was not significant. Lifestyle had significant positive effects on both physical and psychological health. In addition, lifestyle mediated the relationship between SES and health. This research is helpful in gaining a better understanding of the relationship and mediating mechanism between SES, lifestyle, and health. It is recommended that research with longitudinal design and comprehensive indicators be undertaken in the future (Geng et al., 2019)

Psychological Well-being

Psychological well-being is a core feature of mental health, and may be defined as including hedonic (enjoyment, pleasure) and eudemonic (meaning, fulfillment)

happiness, as well as resilience (coping, emotion regulation, healthy problem solving (Gross et al., 2019).

Psychological wellbeing (PWB) is quite similar to other terms that refer to positive mental states, such as happiness or satisfaction. It is a state of happiness and contentment, with low levels of distress, overall good physical and mental health and outlook, or good quality of life. Self-acceptance, good interpersonal relationships, independence, environmental mastery, a sense of purpose and meaning in life, and personal development and growth make up psychological well-being. Self-awareness and capacities as a positive component of psychological functioning would be included in one's psychological well-being (Huta & Ryan, 2009).

The majority of mental health issues among students are brought on by socioeconomic disparities in our society, which are regarded as the main cause of mental disease. People of low socioeconomic status (SES) are frequently disregarded in a variety of ways. They deal with a variety of pressures, including monetary issues, interpersonal issues, joblessness, and academic failure (Weyers et al., 2010). The low level of socioeconomic status (SES) is one of the current causes of mental illness in the world. This phenomenon not only has an impact on the neighborhood, but it is also seen to be a barrier to pupils' academic success. Compared to pupils from high socioeconomic backgrounds, those from low SES frequently complain about psychological and physical abnormalities such stress, anxiety, and depression (Elgar & Pfortner, 2015). The rise of mental illness among people is significantly influenced by social status disparities. According to the study's findings, those who were less fortunate than others reported higher levels of depression. According to the findings (Afifi et al. 2011), the

decline in the respondent's social standing was connected with an increase in the rate of depression.

From an ecological perspective, both personal and environmental factors contribute to mental health issues. According to a study, those from low socioeconomic origins had more mental stress or psychiatric illnesses. The findings further supported the notion that social status inequality is associated with stress on a local or personal level (Wang et al., 2015).

University students have an extremely competitive lifestyle. There are thousands of students attending the university, and they come from upper-class, middle-class, and lower-class households. It is only normal that each student will compare himself to the other students. The mental health problems are caused by the inferiority complex. According to Goodwill & Zhou (2020), socioeconomic inequality causes a wide range of psychiatric problems. Suicidal thoughts and actions are among the most prevalent among university students. Another study found that among university students, a financial risk factor is linked to stress, hopelessness, and anxiety. The socioeconomic status complex is linked to a higher level of depression, according to the study's findings (Moafatteh, 2021). Another study also concluded that the financial factor is linked with mental health or illness (Mboya et al., 2020). In relation to students' current socioeconomic position, a study by Miron et al. (2019) discovered mental health-related difficulties among them. They discovered that undergraduate students experience higher stress and despair the lower their socioeconomic standing.

SES, PWB and Subjective Factors

The concept of socioeconomic status (SES) is intricate and multifaceted, incorporating both independent, quantifiable qualities (such as income or education) and the subjective assessments of individuals' positions within the socioeconomic spectrum. According to Oakes and Rossi (2003) and Markus and Snibbe (2005), access to material and social elements has traditionally been used to establish objective SES. As a result, this type of SES is typically operationalized by taking into account a number of objective variables that may eventually reflect variations in how easily people have access to material and social resources. Income, educational level, and occupation stand out particularly among the various objective indices of SES (Baker, 2014; Manstead, 2018; Kraus and Stephens, 2012). As further evidence of the significance of wealth, earlier studies have revealed links between this indicator and a wide range of psychological factors, including social trust (Brandt et al., 2015), personality (Piff, 2014), and prosocial tendencies (Piff & Robinson, 2017). Education is frequently regarded as a canonical indicator of objective SES, similar to income. Education level enables researchers to collect pertinent sociocultural and psychosocial-related outcomes (such as behavioral patterns, lifestyle), as synthesized by Markus and Snibbe (2005). Due to its close relationship to earnings and educational attainment (Duncan & Magnuson, 2012) and its ability to differently shape psychological experiences (American Psychological Association [APA] 2007; Kraus and Stephens, 2012), occupation has also been proposed as a further proxy for objective SES. Material resources do not only shape SES.

Personal Factors

According to Zimmermann (2019) the topic of psychological well-being in the modern dimension is challenging for a single-factor analysis, it must be put into practice using a multifactorial technique that can show the relationship between inner-world activity at the level of humans and the extent to which that activity is reflected in the environment. Wagner (2020) argues that rather than internal development, psychological well-being is a byproduct of human activity development in the environment. According to the author, a person can only achieve mental tranquillity, satisfaction from ontological issues, and qualitative approaches to the possibilities of their formation during the long-term period of development and personality formation through their external environment. Thalmayer (2020) emphasizes that a person's psychological well-being has a role in the development of their inner will as a key element of acquiring benefits in the international society. Luchetti (2020) negative socioeconomic changes might stimulate a person's personality to change and only the negative manifestation of such elements can serve as qualitative evidence of their influence on society and the outward expression of character qualities that contribute to psychological well-being.

Literature Review

The term "socioeconomic status" refers to a person's social class or place in society, which gives them purpose. Such implications may positively or negatively shape a people's personality. Whereas the negative perspective is an unfavorable indication of mental illness (Stress, Anxiety and Depression), the positive perception is good and regarded as a sign of psychological wellbeing. In this regard, social and economic

measures are regarded as one of the key foundations for combating mental illness. Social inequality and mental illness are closely related in both adults and adolescents (Adler et al., 2003). The links between mental illness and those with low socioeconomic position are well documented in the literature. A study (Lorant et al. 2003) measure the prevalence of adult depression. They came to the conclusion that adults with low socioeconomic status experience more depression. Kessler and Neighbors (2006) came to the conclusion that poor socioeconomic level is linked to the prevalence of severe psychological distress and medical conditions in the general population.

It has been found that students from underprivileged backgrounds are more prone to mental disorders. According to the researchers' findings, socioeconomic status and depression are related. The findings of their research demonstrated that adults with low socioeconomic status experienced higher levels of depression. There is a positive association between social class and the occurrence of depression using the people's self-reported income, education, occupation, and social class (Freeman et al., 2016; Hoebe et al., 2017; Jo et al., 2011).

Ryff and Singer (1996) defined wellbeing as a person's awareness of who they are as well as their capacity for social productivity. According to the hedonic view, happiness is the absence of pain and the seeking of pleasure (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Having a stable financial situation is essential for achieving psychological well-being since it enables one to contribute to society more effectively and thus find joy. We face the psychological impacts of our workplace, social class and current economic state. Yet, the absence of financial resources and resultant financial troubles has a stronger negative influence on families' and children's psychological welfare. Many studies on

human development sought to identify the variables that affect stable family relationships, adolescent behavioral issues, and developmental problems. Developmental processes are influenced by a variety of factors, including parenting style, unusual situations, and financial problems. Family relationships, parental behavior, and raising children are all under pressure as a result of the financial strain and restricted money. An investigation was conducted to check the association between family monthly income and the probability of mental illness. The study's findings showed that family members with low incomes experienced more anxiety and mood-related symptoms than those with high incomes.

Problem Statement

This study aims to explore the relationship between socioeconomic status and psychological wellbeing of university students in Pakistan.

Instruments

Ryffs Scale

It was developed by psychologist **Carol D. Ryff**, the 42-item Psychological Wellbeing (PWB) Scale measures six aspects of wellbeing and happiness: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance (Ryff et al., 2007; adapted from Ryff, 1989). Reliability coefficient of RPWBS was 0.82. Internal consistencies varied between 0.87 and 0.96 and test-retest reliability coefficients ranged **between 0.78 and 0.97** for six subscales.

Kuppuswamy scale

This scale was devised by Kuppuswamy in 1976 and consists of a composite score which includes the education and occupation of the Family Head along with income per month of the family. The Kuppuswamy scale had good reliability and validity for measuring the socioeconomic status of households in rural and urban areas. Another study suggested that the Kuppuswamy scale was a more reliable and valid measure of socioeconomic status than other scales commonly used in India.

Sample

The total sample size of the current research was 120 university students. The target population was the students of both gender of BS and MS that are currently enrolled in universities. The age of BS students was in between 18-22 years and that of MS students was in between 23 to 25 years. The techniques that we used was random sampling technique and the research is correlational research because of the comparison of socioeconomic status with psychological wellbeing of university students.

Results

Table 1

Demographic Profile of the total study sample (N=113)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
18-22	95	84.1
23-25	18	15.9
Gender Males	55	48.7
Females	58	51.3
Educational Status BS	112	99.1
MS	1	.9
Number of Siblings		
1-3	57	50.4
Above 3	56	49.6
Birth Order		
Eldest	37	32.7
Middle	49	43.4
Youngest	27	23.9
Family System		
Nuclear	69	61.1
Joint	44	38.9

Table 1 shows the sample distribution for all participants (N=113) included in the study on the basis of their age (18-23=95, 23-25=18), family status (nuclear=69, joint=44), gender (males=55, females=58), number of siblings (1-3=57, above 3=56), educational status (BS=112, MS=1), birth order (eldest=37, middle=49, youngest=27)

Table 2*Alpha Reliability Coefficient of Scales used in the study*

Scales	No of items	α
Ses	3	.50
Ryff	42	.70

Note: Ses= Socioeconomic Status, Ryff=Psychological Well-being Scale

Table 2 shows that all the two scales possessed good alpha reliability i.e., $Ses(\alpha)=.50$, $Ryff(\alpha)=.70$

Table 3*Correlation of socioeconomic status and psychological well-being (113)*

Variables	Mean	SD	Ryff	Ses
Ryff			-	.71**
Ses				-

Table 3 shows that there exists a significant correlation between socioeconomic status and psychological wellbeing of university students in Pakistan (0.71**)

Table 4*The relationship between socioeconomic status and psychological well-being of university students (113)*

Variables	Males		Females		t	df	P	95%		cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD				Upper	lower	
Ryff	170.78		174.07		2.01	109.4	.05*	11.96	-1.34	0.21

15.09

16.09

Note: df=Degree of Freedom, p=Significance Value, M= Mean, SD=Standard Deviation

Table 4 shows that the relationship between socioeconomic status and psychological well-being of university students, which was evaluated by using independent sample t-test. There was statistically significant difference in the scores of males ($M=170.78$, $SD=15.09$) and females ($M=174.07$, $SD=16.09$), $t_{(109.4)}=2.0$, $p=0.05^*$ (two-tailed). Cohen's d value 0.21 shows moderate effect size.

Discussion

The current research was intended to find out the relationship between socioeconomic status and psychological well-being among university students. The first hypothesis in current research was that the socioeconomic status will be positively correlated to psychological wellbeing. The results of the study showed the positive correlation (0.71**) between socioeconomic status and psychological well-being among university students. The relationship of household monthly income is considered as pivotal for the happiness and prosperity of the family members. It has been observed that the families with low-income category report many mental health problems as compared with high income category. Inequalities in social status play a vital role in the increase of mental illness among the individuals. The results of the research proved that the deprived people reported higher level of depression as compared to privileged peoples. The results also concluded that the increase rate of depression was associated with decreasing of social position of the respondent (Afifi et al., 2011). Another study described that the prevalence of depression among university student was due to income inequality, family structure, and the level of parental education (Steptoe et al., 2017) factors. A study concluded that the individuals belong to low socioeconomic backgrounds reported higher level of mental stress or psychiatric disorders. The results also confirmed that the inequality in social status also linked with stress at regional or individual level (Andrew, Garofalo & Yali, 2006; Goodwill & Zhou, 2020; John, Mboya, & Kibopile, 2020; Wang et al. 2015).

The second hypothesis of the study was intended to find out the effect of socio-economic status on males. The second hypothesis in current research was not proved

that males are more effected by socioeconomic status than females (Males ($M=170.78$, $SD=15.09$) and Females

($M=174.07$, $SD=16.09$), $p<0.05^*$). The finding of the current research is incoherence with the findings of previous researches that males are more effected by their socioeconomic status than women and healthy and happy individuals are more productive and better contribute to the economic progress and prosperity of the country. Males' individuals also report better interpersonal relationships, which is closely linked to positive physical and mental health. Socioeconomic status is one of the important factors that have profound effect on males with respect to their psychological and mental health (Bender, and Habermalz, 2005; Kerkhof's and Lindeboom, 2009; Smith, J.P., 2007; Van Kippers Luis, 2009).

Females are often more affected by socioeconomic status (SES) due to systemic factors that contribute to gender disparities. In many societies, women historically face barriers in accessing education, healthcare, and employment opportunities, which are often linked to SES. Lower SES can limit resources and opportunities for females, impacting their overall wellbeing and life outcomes. Additionally, gender roles and stereotypes may further constrain women's choices and opportunities, exacerbating the impact of SES on their lives. Addressing gender-based inequalities is crucial for creating a more equitable society and reducing the disproportionate impact of SES on females.

Conclusion

Our research on the relationship between socioeconomic status and psychological wellbeing of university students of Pakistan was carried out in order to explore the

impact that socioeconomic status cause on psychological wellbeing. Current research was carried out by collecting data from different Universities of Pakistan. As the name indicated, our research consists of only University student's sample. Socioeconomic status and students self worth and mental health/sanity, since students of both genders are still in their developing ages and are affected by several factors, it is important to understand how socioeconomic status effect their psychological wellbeing. The current research is a step towards understanding this relationship by reviewing the negative effects of the above relationship. We want to increase public awareness of this issue. Most of the people are unaware of the fact that socioeconomic status along with other factors can also affect their psychological wellbeing. As early adult males and females are in their growing stages of life, they are developing physically, mentally, and socially. They need to know the importance of socioeconomic status and how it affects their psychological wellbeing.

In future we hope that our research raises awareness on this topic. Our research could sense of responsibility among people to know the importance of their psychological wellbeing and to have a healthy environment.

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