

# Gender Difference of Psychological Well Being among University Students

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## Abstract

*The study is designed to measure the gender difference of psychological well being among University students. Present study hypothesized that there would be a gender difference of Psychological well being among University students. Sample of the present study comprised, 140 university students, divided into two groups, i.e. 70 male students and 70 female students, Age range of the participant is 18 to 22 years, and the mean age of the participants is 20.5, for the measurement of psychological well being; The Ryff Scale of Psychological well being (1998) was used. For the analysis of scores obtained on The Ryff Scale of psychological well being, statistical methods of mean, SD, and t-test were computed with the help of SPSS version 22. Results of the study revealed, that, there was no significant gender difference of Psychological well being on over all subscales of Psychological well being among University students( girls participants, Mean=31.62, boys participants, Mean=31.91,  $t=0.7$ ) except on Personal growth, there was significant mean difference, girls university students received greater scores, and on purpose in life, self acceptance, and on positive relation with others, boys participants received a relatively greater scores than girls participants. Hence the hypothesis of the study is not confirmed.*

**Key words:** Gender difference, Psychological Well being, University students.

## 1. Introduction

Psychological well being has the importance of foundation stone in mental health. Psychological well-being refers to the feelings that, life is going well, to feel good and function effectively. Individual with good level of psychological well being, also feels physical, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual wellness at high level (Shank & Coyle, 2002). University life is filled with challenges and stresses, because the future of an individual's family is depending upon it. During this period of life students feel themselves under lots of pressure to fulfill their aims in education (El Ansari W, Stock C, 2010). It is the career building part of their life where they have to maintain challenges of entering into adulthood and dealing with the various tasks of academic life (Colic Baric I, Satalic Z, Lukesic Z, 2003). They need to be mature psychologically. Psychological well being is an essential quality for university students to deal effectively with the demands of University life. According to Ryff (1998) Psychological well being has strong impact on the management of relationships, management of environment, and self perception, it is the ability which is not only helpful in university life, but also extremely supportive in whole life. Every individual is unique so it will be helpful to know about the gender differences of psychological well being to achieve complete knowledge about unique qualities and self actualization. Considering differences among them will help in the effort to empower individuals to achieve their full-potentials. There is a considerable amount of previous researches to discover the gender difference of psychological well being among adolescences. (Roothman, Kristen & Wissing, 2003; Ryff & Singer, 1996).

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Gender socialization is a way to teach the gender role to the children of different sexes. Gender difference is the outcome of the process of socialization, childhood and the period of adolescence are the special part of life when it is learned.(Beal, C. 1994).

Individuals learn their gender roles by the main agencies of their society e.g. parents, family members, friends, teachers, and media. During the process of gender socialization children learn what it means to be a male or female, and how to behave appropriately according to their gender. Gender socialization is a lifelong process, through its teaching individuals become able to follow the rules of their culture, its traditions, norms and values, which are unique in every society (Haralambos, 1985

Gender differences, are based on the concept of gender, which refers to socially defined differences between man and woman. Though every culture shows the same pattern of gender differences, still in some cultures it is exaggerated and in some cultures it is masked. Emphasis on gender differences or sex roles varies from culture to culture. Results of the study conducted by William and Best in (1990) on 14 cultures to check the sex roles differences through sex role ideology scale, revealed that, traditional cultures including Pakistan ,and Nigeria give much importance on sex role differences than modern cultures including Netherland, and Finland, which gives less importance.

Psychological well being refers, to the optimistic mental health and an individual's search for being happy and satisfied in life. It is believed to be the most important goal of life. The centre of all wishes, desires and motive of life is to be happy (Yildiz, 2002). Psychological well being is an important concept and helpful to deal with the stress in daily life. So, it is also important for the university students in dealing with the stressful challenges of university life. Well being is a broader term which encompasses all aspects of subjective well being, psychological well being, quality of life, being satisfied in life, and optimistic sensation. However, these all terms are not same but are equally required for well being (Dost, 2005). Psychological well being had two components: hedonic, It represents individual's feelings of being happy and satisfied in life, and eudemonic: It express individuals' psychological states of having positive relations and realization of their own existence? (Parkinson, 2006). The roots of psychological well being theory can be traced back in self actualization theory (1968) by Abraham Maslow, Model of psychosocial stages of development (1959) by Erikson, Carl Rogers' model based on the concept of fully functioning person, and the concept of individualization given by Carl Jung(1933).

The Ryffs' model of psychological well being (1989), is the composition of all these theories and models, in Ryff's model the meaning of mental well being or mental health refers to an individual's ability of being wise, joyfulness, and being fit and well in physical, psychological, and social areas of life. It encompasses all aspects of physical, psychological, and social well being. Psychological well being has captured attention in the research of nearly all fields of life (Schmutte & Ryff, 1997).

Ryff (1989; 1991), formulated six optimistic factors of Psychological well being including (1)self acceptance which shows an individual's self respect or self esteem; (2)positive relation or the ability to maintain good and positive relations with others without tussles and quarrels ; (3)autonomy which represents an urge to be dominant on others, and an ability to sustain it; (4) environmental mastery or an individuals' mastery or skills to deal with environmental challenges, and changes in an effective way; (5) purpose in life which describes the importance of having goal in life; (6) Personal growth or an individual's perception about oneself to feel as continuously growing and able to deal with new experiences.

The results of previous studies conducted regarding gender difference in psychological well being suggested inconsistent results in terms of gender differences (Abbu-Rayya, 2005; Roothman et al., 2003;Ryff & Singer, 1998;).A study conducted by Perez, A.

J,(2012) on, Gender Difference in Psychological Well-being among Filipino College Student samples, results revealed that, female subjects received greater scores on positive relations with others, and purpose in life, while the male participants received greater scores on autonomy aspect of Ryff scale of psychological well being. The study conducted by Sagone & Caroli (2014) on relationship between psychological well being and resilience in middle and late adolescents, finds boys scored significantly high on self acceptance and environmental mastery as compared to girls.

Pirtle and Plata (2008), finds male and female equal in psychological well being. Results of a recent Pakistani study conducted by(Shafiq, S,Naz, R, N,& Yousaf, B 2015) on one hundred University students revealed that, there was insignificant gender differences between Assertiveness and Psychological Well being among University students. There is a need to conduct more researches to assess the gender difference of psychological well being in Pakistan.

Present research is aimed to explore the gender difference of psychological well being among university students. The hypothesis of the study was that, there would be a gender difference of psychological well being among university students. . Present study was conducted on Sindh University students, because university is a place, where students come from various parts of the Sindh,it gives a better chance to study and assess their personality and mental health , including psychological well being.

In all over Pakistan we can see gender discrimination, Sindh is also not exceptional. From early childhood male and female are treated differently at home, male children are assumed to be independent, strong, assertive, task oriented, whereas females are expected to be caring, sensitive, less aggressive and family oriented. Through gender socialization individual becomes able to follow the rules of their culture, its traditions, norms and values, which are unique in every society.

Individual's whole personality and life as well as their future perspective have a strong impact of gender socialization including psychological wellbeing. In Sindhi culture where Female always considers as an object of obedience and loyalty and females has no right to take independent decision for their life. In such type of culture to investigate gender difference in psychological wellbeing is very important.

## 1.2 Research Objectives

In present study following objectives are formulated:

1. To measure the psychological well being of female University students.
2. To measure the psychological well being of male University students.
3. To investigate the gender difference of psychological well being among male and female University students.

## 2. Research Methodology

The research design for present study is quantitative research, based on survey method. Simple random sampling technique was used for data collection.

**Table 1**

Research design	Quantitative
Participants	140 university students
Population	Students from seven departments of University of Sindh, Jamshoro
Sampling	Simple random sampling
Research tools	Questionnaire developed by Ryff (1989) Personal information Questionnaire

## 2.1 Participants

According to the nature and requirement of the present study, 140 University students were selected, divided into two groups I.e. 70 male students, and 70 female students. Subjects were studied in seven departments, (economics, English, sociology, Psychology, social work, Mass communication and Philosophy) of Sindh University. Ten students (five boys, five girls) from each department were randomly selected. From 170 participants 19 boys students and 16 girls students belongs to rural areas of, Sindh, remaining 105 students belongs to Urban areas of Sindh. The age range of the participants was 18-22 years. The mean age of the subjects was 20.5.

## 2.2 Measures

Following measures were used in the study;

### 2.2.1. Ryff's Psychological well- being Scale.

The Psychological well being scale developed by Carol Ryff (1989), was used in present study for the measurement of psychological well being. The scale consists 84 items (14 for each scale). The scale consists of statements reflecting the six areas of psychological well being. These are (1) Autonomy, (2) Environmental mastery, (3) Personal growth, (4) Positive relations with others, (5) Purpose in life, (6)(Self acceptance. Respondents have to rate statement on scale of 1 to 6 with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 6 denotes to strong agreement. The high total score of each category indicates the mastery of that particular area of psychological well being. The reliability of the test is 0.86 (Dierendonck, et 2007). High score on each dimension or aspect shows respondents skills in that area of life. The low score on any aspect indicates respondents' feelings of being comfortable with particular state.

### 2.2.2. Personal information Questionnaire

This questionnaire was based on the, personal information of the subjects, i.e. name, age, language, marital status, area of province from student belongs, (Rural or Urban) Family system (nuclear or traditional).

## 2.3 Procedure

For data collection subjects were approached to their respective departments. Subjects were informed about the research. After taking their consent and willingness to participate in the study, two questionnaires were administered on them, 1. Personal Information questionnaire, and Ryff Scale of Psychological well being. First they filled the Personal information questionnaire, which takes ten minutes, then Ryff scale of Psychological well being was administered on them, within 40 minutes they filled it. Total it takes 50 minutes for each participant to fill out both questionnaires. All the participants of the study were instructed to read carefully all the questions, and feel free to ask any question which comes in their mind regarding questionnaire and scale.

## 2.4. Analysis of the Results & Discussion

For the measurement of the level of psychological well being difference among male and female university students, the mean scores on total and subscales of psychological well being scale were computed with the help of SPSS version 22. Result table show insignificant difference between the scores of male and female university students. Mean of the both groups shows the difference on the aspects of Psychological well being; male university students received relatively greater scores on positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self acceptance aspects of psychological well being whereas female university students received higher scores on personal growth. There was insignificant difference between the

scores on autonomy, and environmental mastery subscales of psychological well being of the both groups. Over all the results of the study shows male subjects received relatively greater scores on psychological well being as compared to female subjects.

**Table 2:** Means, S.D. and t- test of the scores of male and female university students on Psychological well being scale

Subscales	Girls students		Boys students			
	N= 70 Mean	S.D	N= 70 Mean	S.D	T	P
Autonomy	25.34	8.72	25.58	9.90	0.29	N.S
Environmental mastery	35.40	10.70	33.78	7.38	0.88	N.S
Personal growth	33.60	8.42	29.70	9.80	2.13*	0.05
Positive relations with others	29.28	9.54	31.34	9.23	1.09	0.05
Purpose in life	31.84	10.24	34.14	5.49	1.39	0.05
Self acceptance	34.10	8.67	36.94	10.64	1.46	0.05
Over all Psychological Well being level	31.62	9.7231	31.91	8.06	0.70	

$df= 98$ , \*  $p < 0.05$

Table 1 is presenting the mean, SD, and t-value of the scores of girls and boys participants on Ryff's Psychological Well Being scale. According to the findings, significant differences found on the scale of Personal Growth among boys and girls participants (girls mean= 33.60, boys mean= 29.30,  $t= 2.13$ ). While insignificant differences found on the other five subscales of Psychological well being scale which are autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, self-acceptance etc among girls and boys participants.

## Discussion

The aim of the present study was to examine the gender difference of psychological well being among University students, who come from rural and urban areas of Sindh, Pakistan, and belongs to different social and cultural backgrounds. Male and female receive different treatment during the process of socialization, which puts great impact on their psychological well being. Findings of the present study have indicated personal growth as an important component of well being because significant gender differences have been found only on this component of psychological well being. Personal growth refers to the abilities to gain something new from each and every experience. It is the quality which enables an individual to grow as a person with increased in awareness and uniqueness. People who are high on this dimension of psychological well being are better able to develop their potentials continuously, perceives themselves as growing and feeling betterment in their life. They always take new experience as a challenge and want to try it.

Interestingly female subjects received greater scores on personal growth dimension of psychological well being as compared to males. These findings are consistent with the previous studies (Kaplin, Shema & Leite, 2008; Lindfors, Berntsson, Lundberg, 2006; Ryff, Singer, 1996). Pakistani culture is Eastern in nature, thus male child given more importance due to the future security concept than females but this unequal treatment energize girls to



prove their importance in every walk of life. They become motivated and concentrate on their self-growth.

Which enables them to grow as an individual with increased awareness and uniqueness. They always take new experience as a challenge and face it with courage. It is interesting that although females during the socialization process do not get enough opportunities, freedom, and essential resources to develop skills which make them able to achieve, such type of competency but they are more psychologically balanced as compared to male.

#### 4. Conclusion

Gender differences in socialization and gender role has a strong impact on the personality development of a child, whether boy or girl. Male dominant societies believe in the more empowerment of a male as compared to a female and such type of rearing practices also put impact on psychological well being of individuals. Beside all the hindrances and hurdles from home to society females proved themselves stronger as compared to males. It is important to consider that males need to be focused more in order to become more emotionally and psychologically stable and balanced.

#### Suggestions and recommendations

Present research gives some suggestions for the future researchers, who are interested to conduct researches in the same area. The sample of the study is limited to only 140 university students; in future the sample size should be increased to understand the problem more accurately. Other demographic and confound variables, e.g., socio economic status, language of the participants, family system (nuclear or traditional) should also included in future studies. Present study was conducted on University students, so the same topic can be conducted on School and college students. There are several international eye catching researches on gender difference of psychological well being, but a very few researches have been conducted in Pakistan, so there is a need to be conducted other studies also on this topic in future.

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