

Relationship Between Psychological Well-Being and Life Satisfaction Among Parents of Children in Special Schools

KARIYAPPA LIMBU LAMANI¹, SHIVAKUMAR S CHENGTI²

^{1,2}Research Scholar Dept of Psychology Gulbarga University Kalaburagi

Abstract— This study examined the relationship between psychological well-being and life satisfaction among parents of children in special schools. A sample of 100 parents (51 men, 49 women) completed Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale and the Life Satisfaction Scale. Independent samples t-tests revealed no significant gender differences in psychological well-being, but women reported significantly higher life satisfaction than men. Correlation analyses showed strong positive relationships between all dimensions of psychological well-being and life satisfaction. The findings suggest that interventions targeting specific aspects of psychological well-being may enhance overall life satisfaction among parents of children with special needs. The study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of parental well-being in the context of special education and provides insights for developing targeted support programs.

Index Terms- Psychological well-being, Life Satisfaction

I. INTRODUCTION

Raising a child with special needs introduces a unique set of challenges for parents, which can significantly influence their psychological well-being and overall life satisfaction (Blacher et al., 2013; Raina et al., 2005). The dynamic interaction between a parent's mental health and the demands of caring for a child with special needs has drawn increasing attention in recent research (Peer & Hillman, 2014). This study aims to examine the relationship between psychological well-being and life satisfaction among parents of children enrolled in special schools, using Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale (Ryff, 1989) and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985).

Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale offers a comprehensive framework to assess psychological health through six dimensions: self-acceptance,

positive relationships, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). This multidimensional approach has been validated across various populations and shown to be reliable in diverse contexts (Cheng & Chan, 2005; Springer et al., 2011). Meanwhile, the Satisfaction with Life Scale assesses individuals' cognitive judgments regarding their life as a whole (Pavot & Diener, 2008).

Prior studies have demonstrated a strong connection between psychological well-being and life satisfaction in general populations (Keyes et al., 2002; Proctor et al., 2009). For instance, Lappan et al. (2020) found a reciprocal relationship between psychological health and health-related behaviors, suggesting that interventions designed to enhance psychological well-being may have broader effects on health outcomes. Similarly, Morozink et al. (2010) showed that psychological well-being is a key predictor of interleukin-6 levels—a marker of inflammation—underscoring the significant relationship between mental health and physical health, even after adjusting for demographic variables.

However, studies specifically addressing the link between psychological well-being and life satisfaction among parents of children with special needs are sparse and present inconsistent findings. Marks et al. (2004) reported that parents of children with special needs often experience lower levels of psychological well-being, particularly in terms of environmental mastery and personal growth. In a similar vein, Neugarten et al. (1961) found reduced life satisfaction among this group. Conversely, some studies have identified positive effects, such as greater personal development, increased empathy, and strengthened family ties among parents of children with special

needs (Hastings & Taunt, 2002; Scorgie & Sobsey, 2000).

The varied outcomes in these studies may be explained by several factors, such as the severity of the child's condition, the availability of social support, and the parent's coping mechanisms (Ren et al., 2019; Benson, 2010). For instance, King et al. (2006) found that parents who employed adaptive coping strategies—such as seeking social support and cognitive reframing—reported higher levels of psychological well-being and life satisfaction. These findings emphasize the need to consider both risk and resilience factors when examining the well-being of parents of children with special needs.

This study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between psychological well-being and life satisfaction among parents of children attending special schools. Using both Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale and the Satisfaction with Life Scale, this research seeks to offer a more nuanced understanding of parental well-being beyond simple measures of distress or burden.

This research extends the existing literature in several ways. First, it focuses on parents of children attending special schools, a group that may experience unique challenges compared to parents of children with special needs in mainstream education settings (Hodge & Runswick-Cole, 2008). Second, it adopts a multidimensional approach to psychological well-being, allowing for a broader analysis of the different facets of mental health in this population. Finally, by exploring the relationship between psychological well-being and life satisfaction, the study bridges the gap between eudaimonic and hedonic perspectives on well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2001).

The findings from this study will have important implications for designing targeted interventions and support programs to enhance the well-being of parents of children with special needs. By identifying which aspects of psychological well-being are most relevant to this population, practitioners can better tailor interventions to address their unique challenges. Moreover, understanding the relationship between psychological well-being and life satisfaction can guide the development of holistic approaches to

improving quality of life for these parents. This study aims to clarify the complex relationship between psychological well-being and life satisfaction among parents of children in special schools, contributing to a more refined understanding of the parental experience in managing the challenges of raising a child with special needs. The insights from this research may help inform evidence-based practices and policies to support this important yet often overlooked group.

II. METHOD

Participants

The study adopted descriptive research design to examine to study the relationship between psychological well-being and life satisfaction among parents of children in special schools. The study involved 100 parents (N = 100) of children enrolled in special schools located in the Gulbarga region. Participants were recruited through convenience sampling from various special education institutions. To be included in the study, participants had to meet the following criteria: (a) be a parent or primary caregiver of a child attending a special school, (b) have a child between the ages of 6 and 12, and (c) be literate enough to complete the questionnaires.

III. MEASURES

Psychological Well-Being

Psychological well-being was evaluated using Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale (Ryff, 1989). This 42-item scale assesses six dimensions of psychological well-being: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationships, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Each dimension consists of seven items rated on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree), with higher scores reflecting greater psychological well-being. Previous studies have demonstrated good reliability and validity for this scale (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). In this study, the overall Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .80.

Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction was measured using the Life Satisfaction Scale (LSS) developed by Kumar and Dhyani (1988), which identifies individuals with low

life satisfaction who may benefit from psychological support. The LSS consists of 54 items (45 positively worded, 9 negatively worded) rated on a 3-point scale. This scale has demonstrated satisfactory psychometric properties, with a split-half reliability of .68 and adequate face and content validity (Kumar & Dhyani, 1988). Scores range from 1 to 3, with higher totals indicating higher life satisfaction, and the scale can be analyzed either overall or in specific areas.

Procedure

Special schools within the targeted area were contacted to participate in the study. Parents received information about the study through these schools, and those meeting the inclusion criteria were invited to participate. After completing a demographic questionnaire that collected information on their age, gender, educational background, and their child’s age and gender, participants completed the Psychological Well-Being Scale and the Life Satisfaction Scale. The order in which the scales were presented was randomized to control for potential order effects. The assessment process took approximately 30-40 minutes per participant.

Results

Table 1. Correlation Matrix of Life satisfaction with the subscales of wellbeing

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Life								
satisf	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.7	0.6	
actio	2*	8*	8*	0*	4*	7*	9*	
n	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01, 1. Autonomy 2. Environmental Mastery 3. Personal growth 4. Positive Relations 5. Purpose in life 6. Self-acceptance 7. Wellbeing total score 8. Life satisfaction total score

Table 2. Shows the Independent Samples t test results with descriptive statistics

	Group	N	Mean	SD	t	p
Psychological Wellbeing	Men	51	151	24.2	-0.140	0.88
	Women	49	152	27.3		

Life Satisfaction	Men	51	101	33.3	-2.281	0.02
	Women	49	116	31.0		

Note. df 98

Results and discussion

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare psychological well-being and life satisfaction between men and women who are parents of children in special schools. There was no significant difference in psychological well-being scores for men (M = 151, SD = 24.2) and women (M = 152, SD = 27.3); t(98) = -0.140, p = 0.889. However, there was a significant difference in life satisfaction scores between men (M = 101, SD = 33.3) and women (M = 116, SD = 31.0); t(98) = -2.281, p = 0.025. A correlation matrix revealed significant positive correlations between all dimensions of psychological well-being and the total well-being score were significantly positively correlated with life satisfaction scores.

The results of this study provide valuable insights into the relationship between psychological well-being and life satisfaction among parents of children in special schools. The absence of significant gender differences in psychological well-being aligns with previous research by Ryff and Keyes (1995), who found minimal gender variations in overall well-being. However, the significant difference in life satisfaction scores between men and women, with women reporting higher satisfaction, contrasts with some earlier findings. This discrepancy may be attributed to the unique context of parenting children with special needs, where mothers often take on primary caregiving roles and may derive greater satisfaction from their caregiving experiences (Hastings & Taunt, 2002). The strong positive correlations between all dimensions of psychological well-being and life satisfaction support the theoretical framework proposed by Ryff (1989) and align with previous studies in general populations (Keyes et al., 2002; Proctor et al., 2009). These findings suggest that the multidimensional approach to well-being is relevant and applicable to parents of children with special needs, extending the generalizability of Ryff’s model. The significant correlations between individual dimensions of psychological well-being and life satisfaction provide nuanced insights into the

experiences of these parents. For instance, the strong correlation between self-acceptance and life satisfaction ($r = 0.77$, $p < .01$) suggests that parents who have come to terms with their circumstances and accepted their roles may experience greater overall satisfaction. This finding resonates with the work of King et al. (2006), who emphasized the importance of cognitive reframing in promoting well-being among parents of children with special needs. The positive correlation between environmental mastery and life satisfaction ($r = 0.68$, $p < .01$) indicates that parents who feel competent in managing their daily lives and external demands tend to report higher life satisfaction. This aligns with the findings of Marks et al. (2004), who identified environmental mastery as a key challenge for parents of children with special needs. Our results suggest that interventions aimed at enhancing parents' sense of control and competence in their caregiving roles may have positive impacts on their overall life satisfaction. The relationship between positive relations and life satisfaction ($r = 0.60$, $p < .01$) underscores the importance of social support for these parents, in line with previous research by Ren et al. (2019) on the protective role of social connections in promoting resilience among caregivers of children with special needs. These findings have important implications for designing support programs and interventions for parents of children in special schools. By addressing specific dimensions of psychological well-being, such as enhancing environmental mastery skills or fostering positive relationships, practitioners may effectively improve overall life satisfaction among these parents. Moreover, the gender differences in life satisfaction highlight the need for tailored approaches that consider the unique experiences and challenges faced by mothers and fathers in this context.

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