

The Pursuit of an Educational Career and the Role of Mental Well-Being: A Survey among University Students

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: The study aimed to explore how academic career and parental involvement create effects on life fulfillment and psychological well-being of university students.

Methodology: A cross-sectional survey research design is used in this study. A convenient sampling technique with a sample size of 300 participants, having an age range of 18-29 years used in this study. For the targeted population, data were collected from a battery of instruments like demographics questionnaire, RIASEC Inventory Scale, Perceived Parental Support Scale (PPSS), Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS).

Findings: The analysis demonstrated a statistically significant positive relationship between educational career and mental well-being. In addition, results also showed a significant positive correlation with parents' support and satisfaction in life. However, the results demonstrated that parental support did not act as a mediator between mental well-being and life satisfaction.

Conclusion: These findings illuminate critical cultural boundaries in career development theory, revealing that in Pakistan's collectivist context, personal career alignment enhances mental well-being but does not guarantee life satisfaction, likely due to overriding family expectations. The results underscore an urgent need for culturally attuned student support frameworks in South Asian higher education.

Keywords: Career Education, Parents' Support, Life Satisfaction, Mental Well-Being, University Students.

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1. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The "academic career," which describes a person's professional path in higher education, is a related concept. The educational path literature was described as fragmented, predominantly descriptive, and in need of additional integrative research in a recent scoping review. It identified study areas and common approaches by mapping the discipline into eleven subfields (Varela et al., 2025). The topic has grown dramatically; after preliminary searches produced close to 8,000 studies, 324 were selected for in-depth analysis (Varela et al., 2025). Some academics contend that a career in teaching is

intrinsically connected to societal structures from a wider sociological standpoint. Marxist theory underpins the idea of social reproduction, which holds that labor markets and educational systems sustain social inequality over generations by influencing people's educational and professional prospects according to their cultural and social assets (Luo, 2025). Emotional well-being, which is often examined in higher education, is measured by the frequency and intensity of both positive and negative feelings (Muqafii & Nurihsan, 2025). Higher education students' emotional well-being outcomes and predicting determinants were mapped in a systematic examination of the literature conducted in 2025. Social support, resilience, and emotional intelligence are important factors. The importance of emotional well-being throughout one's educational career is shown by longitudinal outcomes, which include superior academic achievement, more resilience, higher-quality social interactions, and better workplace transition readiness (Muqafii & Nurihsan, 2025). Another study reported that Positive well-being is directly impacted by a successful and satisfying career since it gives one a sense of identity, purpose, and achievement (Zhuang et al., 2018). A new set of difficulties arises when one enters the workforce. According to a systematic review, early career well-being depends on several personal resources (self-managing, flexibility, social competency) and environmental elements (training, peer and supervisor support) (Groves, 2025). Burnout is very common; more than half of young workers (53%) report experiencing it a minimum of once a week, which creates an impact on mental well-being (Ames, Choudaha et al. 2023) and 51% for young individuals reported having a mental health issue within the previous year (Ames et al., 2023). A growing body of research showed that the relationship between career and well-being has deep roots. Mental health issues during adolescence and childhood are strongly linked to worse outcomes decades later, according to a comprehensive meta-analysis of registration data. According to the data, individuals with early-life mental- health disorders had 73–140% higher chances of bad educational results and 39–83% a greater possibility of poor adult job market outcomes (Nollet et al., 2026).

In Australia, career education is described as a structured program designed to help students acquire the knowledge, skills, and mindset needed to make informed choices about their educational and professional pathways, enabling them to participate effectively in the workforce (Education). Parental support is a well-known social factor associated with career education. With the implementation of Curriculum 2013 in Indonesia, students are required to make career-related decisions earlier, emphasizing the need for career planning to begin during elementary high school. This study, investigated by (Chasanah & Salim 2019) found that work-related students' self-efficacy in making professional decisions is significantly impacted by parents' support, while career exploration behavior plays a minor mediating role. Furthermore, self-efficacy is directly impacted by verbal encouragement and instrumental support, whereas it is indirectly influenced by emotional support through exploring activity. The findings align with Social Cognitive Career Theory and reflect the influence of Indonesia's collectivist culture on adolescents' career development (Chasanah & Salim 2019). Parental support, defined by (Guan et al., 2016) enables children to explore various career options and can enhance their drive and self-assurance in pursuing their academic goals. This, in turn, boosts their self-efficacy, helping them react favorably to obstacles to their professional goals. On the other hand, satisfaction in life refers to a person's overall evaluation of the quality and standard of life (Veenhoven, 1996). Extensive work has been conducted by the researchers (Hagmaier et al., 2018) to explore the positive link between life satisfaction and career satisfaction by examining top-down, bottom-up, and interactionist perspectives through two longitudinal studies. The findings show a constant positive correlation between both of these over time, with the upward and reciprocating models receiving more support than the model from below. Furthermore, Study 2 showed that this relationship is moderated by work importance (Hagmaier et al., 2018). Mental health is essential for coping with stress, building and maintaining healthy relationships, and functioning effectively in daily life. The WHO defines well-being as a condition in which individuals recognize the abilities, manage the normal stresses of life, work productively, and make meaningful contributions to their communities (WHO, 2018). A growing body of research by (Barmola, 2013) examines the effects of large-group guidance on 150 males and 150 females make up the 300 high school learners through an

experimental design. The results indicate that guidance plays a significant role in improving students' academic achievement and supporting their career decision-making. However, it shows no substantial impact on their mental health. These outcomes highlight the importance of developing and implementing effective guidance programs in educational institutions to promote students' academic progress and career development (Barmola, 2013).

1.1 Problem Statement

University students frequently face academic and emotional challenges that affect their psychological well-being and overall satisfaction in life (Bayram & Bilgel 2008). A lack of effective career/educational guidance and parental involvement often causes students to experience difficulties in making decisions and dealing with psychological stress (Ghosh & Fouad 2016). As these factors play an important role, there is still a lack of research, especially within the South Asian context, on how they influence students' mental well-being. The present study seeks to address this gap by investigating the influence of academic career and parents' support on life contentment and psychological well-being among university students.

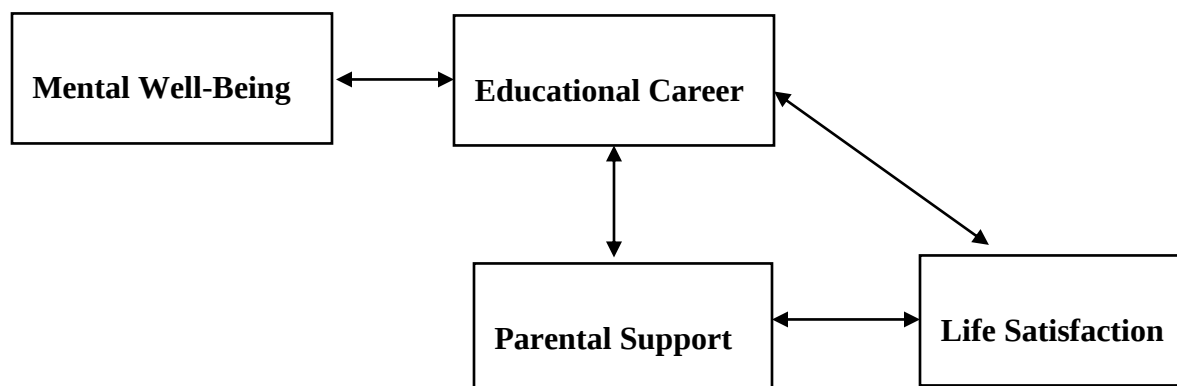
1.2 Significance of the Study

This study examines how academic career support and parental involvement affect life fulfillment and psychological well-being among university students. It highlights a gap in the previous research by exploring all these factors collectively. The findings aim to guide institutions, parents, and mental health professionals in improving student support and psychological outcomes (see figure 1).

1.3 Research Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between educational career and mental well-being.
2. To examine the relationship between educational career and life satisfaction.
3. To investigate the relationship between educational career and perceived parental support.
4. To explore the relationship between Parental support and life satisfaction.
5. To explore the mediating effect of parents' support in the relationship to career education and psychological well-being.

Figure 1: *Proposed study model*



2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

A Cross-sectional survey research design was used to collect the data from the participants.

2.2 Population and Sample

A cross-sectional survey research design was used for this study. The intended group for this study comprises undergraduate, graduate, and master's university students enrolled in any degree programs at the recognized institutes of Gujranwala. These students are between the ages of 18-29 years. According to a survey, the approximate population of undergraduate university students in Gujranwala Tehsil is ~ 30,000. According to the given population of ~30,000, a sample of 300 participants (university students) will be calculated by using the sample size calculator. Convenience Sampling Techniques were used in this research to collect the information from the population. The participants came from a variety of educational backgrounds and academic fields. This sample allowed us to examine the connection between a person's educational path, life fulfillment, parents' support, and mental health.

2.3 Research Instruments

2.3.1 Demographic Sheet

The demographic information of the study participants was obtained through a demographic form. In research, when inferential statistics are applied to describe the characteristics and composition of a sample, demographic variables are collected. For this study, participants' age, gender, marital status, family system, and educational level were recorded using the demographic form.

2.3.2 RIASEC Inventory Scale

Holland developed the career assessment RIASEC Inventory Scale (Holland, 1959). Six personality types have been identified as a result of this tool classification: realistic, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional. A 41-item RIASEC scale was created and adapted for the Turkish language and cultural background, with every type was represented by 6–7 items. Administered to 364 business professionals, high reliability was shown by the scale, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.889 (Süerdem & Erkök 2016). It takes 10 to 15 minutes to complete the RIASEC Inventory. This consists of a 5-point Likert Scale having ranges from (1) dislike, (2) slightly dislike, (3) neither like nor dislike, (4) slightly enjoy, (5) enjoy.

2.3.3 Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

The Satisfaction with Life Scale was used to evaluate life satisfaction (Diener et al., 1985). The five-item survey gauges an individual's overall cognitive assessment of satisfaction in life. A score of 1 indicates strong disagreement, and a score of 7 indicates strong agreement on this kind of Likert scale. A total score having a range of 5 to 35, where the high scores demonstrates that the participants had high levels of life satisfaction. The alpha coefficient of this scale is .87 (Diener et al. 1985).

2.3.4 Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS)

The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS) was used to measure and evaluate mental well-being by (Tennant et al. 2007). This popular tool evaluates several positive mental health indicators, including self-esteem, optimism, and support. The WEMWBS is a 14-item mental wellness scale used to evaluate psychological functioning and mental health. The score is the sum of each response to each item on the scale, which had a range of 1 to 5. The scale has a minimum value of 14 and a maximum score of 70. Better mental health was linked to higher scores. Scores vary from 14 to 70. Cronbach's alpha values for this scale are 0.91 for the population sample and 0.89 for the student sample (Tennant et al., 2007).

2.3.5 Perceived Parental Support Scale (PPSS)

The Perceived Parental Support Scale (PPSS) (Kristjansson et al., 2011) is a self-report questionnaire called the Perceived Parental Support Scale was created to determine how much support a person believed they had gotten from their parents or other parental figures. It evaluated the degree to which parents help their children emotionally, practically, and informationally, among other ways that may affect their general well-being. The Perceived Parental Support Scale typically asked participants to indicate how much they agree or disagree with a number of statements or topics about parental support. A 4-point Likert scale with five items was given to young and middle-aged adults. Positive perceptions of parental support were associated with high scores, and vice versa. This scale's Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0.77 to 0.87 (Kristjansson et al., 2011).

2.4 Procedure

Formal approval was secured from both the relevant university department and the original creators of the assessment scales. Undergraduate, Graduate, and Master's students were recruited using convenience sampling, resulting in a final sample of 300 participants. Before engaging in research, each participant was given written informed consent. The purpose of the study, method of data collection, maintenance of confidentiality and privacy, and the right to discontinue participation were clearly elaborated to the participants. If participants ask any question it should be addressed throughout the survey. The administration of all the questionnaires required 15-20 minutes.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

From the institutional body, ethical approval was secured for the research study. The researcher briefed the details of the research to the participants which included the study's aims and purpose, after which the participants provided written informed consent. Participants' confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained. The researcher assures the participants that all the collected data will only be used for the stated research purpose, and no identity will be revealed to an external third party.

3. RESULTS

This chapter revealed the findings of the study. The collected data has been analyzed by using SPSS, and the findings included descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage), psychometric properties, correlational analysis, and mediation analyses reported.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N=300)

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Gender	Men	105	35
	Women	195	65
Age	18-22	209	69.6
	23-26	88	29.3
	27-29	3	1.0
Family System	Joint	177	59.0
	Nuclear	123	41.0
Education	Undergraduate	231	77.0
	Graduate	53	17.7
	Masters	16	5.3
Marital Status	Married	1	0.3
	Unmarried	299	99.7

Note. f=frequency, % percentage.

The demographic description of the participants is outlined in Table 1. Among participants, 105 were males, and 195 were females (gender composition) of sample. The distribution of age ranged from 18-29 years. The majority of respondents (69.6%) fall in the category 18-22 years, followed by 29.3% in the

category 23-26 years, while only 1% respondent's fall in the category of 27-29 years. 77% enrolled as undergraduate university students. 59.0% reported as from a joint family system in terms of family structure. 99.7% of respondents were unmarried.

Psychometric Properties of Scales

Table 2: Psychometric Properties of Study Variables (N=300)

Study Variables	Min	Max	M	SD	A
RIASEC	0	151	109.03	38.93	.92
SWLS	5	35	23.34	8.62	.77
PPSS	10	40	30.04	10.53	.86
WEMWBS	14	70	46.17	16.58	.85

Note. RIASEC stands for Career Inventory, SWLS for Satisfaction with Life Scale, PPSS for Perceived Parental Support Scale, WEMWBS for Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale, M for Mean, SD for Standard Deviation, and A for Alpha Reliability.

Table 2 represents the psychometric properties of scales. All the scales Alpha Reliability ranging from .85 to .92, exhibit a high degree of internal consistency.

Correlational Analysis of Study Variables

Table 3: Correlation of Study Variables (N=300)

Study Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. SWLS	-								
2. PPSS	0.181**	-							
3. WEMWBS	0.267***	0.235***	-						
4. Realistic	0.027	0.091	0.308***	-					
5. Investigative	0.071	0.198***	0.426***	0.625***	-				
6. Artistic	0.038	0.121*	0.368***	0.558***	0.646***	-			
7. Social	0.089	0.212***	0.462***	0.627***	0.685***	0.679***	-		
8. Enterprising	0.134*	0.214***	0.500***	0.568***	0.709***	0.632***	0.745***	-	
9. Conventional	-0.025	0.094	0.307***	0.647***	0.678***	0.637***	0.643***	0.595***	-

Note. RIASEC = Career Inventory, PPSS = Perceived Parental Support Scale, SWLS = Satisfaction with Life Scale, WEMWBS = Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 3 represents the correlations among the study variables. Across the majority of study variables, significant positive relationships were observed. With coefficients ranging from low (Artistic and Parental Support, $r = .12$, $p < .05$) to moderate (e.g., Investigative and Well-being, $r = .43$, $p < .001$), both the perceived parental support and mental well-being showed positive correlations with all six RIASEC career path inventory.

The six RIASEC subscales exhibited strong and positive relationships as anticipated, having correlation values ranging from .56 to .74 ($p < .001$), indicating significant shared variance among career interest components. Investigative and Enterprising ($r = .71$, $p < .001$) and Enterprising and Social ($r = .74$, $p < .001$) showed the strongest correlations. The Satisfaction with Life Scale, on the other hand, showed little correlation with career aspects; it only showed a weak correlation ($r = .13$, $p < .05$) with Enterprising. These findings suggest that higher parental involvement and enhanced mental well-being are related to more strong interests in a variety of career paths.

Mediation Analysis

Table 4: Mediation Analysis of Study Variables

Effect	Path			β	SE	95% CI		z	p
						Lower	Upper		
Total	MWB	LS	→	0.171	0.035	0.073	0.262	4.782	< .001
Indirect	MWB	PPS → LS	→	0.018	0.010	0.076	0.051	1.938	0.054
Direct	MWB	LS	→	0.153	0.037	0.053	0.246	4.173	< .001

Note. MWB = Mental Well-Being, LS = Life Satisfaction, PPS = Perceived Parental Support, SE = standard error, CI = confidence interval, LL = lower limit, UP = upper limit.

A mediation analysis examined whether “Perceived Parental Support” (PPS) mediates the linkage between “Mental Well-Being” (MWB) and “Life Satisfaction” (LS). Total effect of MWB on LS was significant ($\beta=0.171, p<.001$). PPS had no apparent indirect effect ($\beta=0.018, p=.054$), indicating no mediation. The direct effect remained significant ($\beta=0.153, p<.001$). These results suggest that Perceived Parental Support does not mediate the linkage between “Mental Well-Being” and “Life Satisfaction”; the relationship is primarily direct.

4. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Examining the Pursuit of Career Education is the goal of this study, and the Role of Mental Well-Being: A Survey among University Students. To evaluate career interests, life satisfaction, perceived parental support, and psychological well-being, the psychometric properties of respective variables (scales), the “RIASEC Scale”, the “Satisfaction with Life Scale”, the “Perceived Parental Support Scale”, and the “Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale” (WEMWBS), were determined. A key objective of this study was to investigate the linkage between students' educational career and their mental well-being. It was hypothesized that the academic career of individuals would be positively associated with their mental health. The findings also confirmed the hypothesis that these two research variables have a strong positive link with one another. The finding matches the existing literature, which showed that the career path has a positive impact on the individual's mental well-being. A recent study showed that the students who chase their academic or athletic pathway that aligns with their inner interests and abilities have better psychological well-being (Kim et al., 2020). The next objective of this research was to investigate the association between the support of parents and life satisfaction. The findings showed that a positive relationship exists between these study variables. These findings are consistent with or support the previous findings and literature, which demonstrate that the support from the parents contributes to the high level of fulfillment in children's lives. The above-mentioned study identified the three core dimensions of parental support: extrinsic, intrinsic, and closeness, and the literature found that the children who have high and strong levels of family support across these three dimensions exhibit greater satisfaction in their lives (Young et al., 1995). Another goal of the current research was to investigate the linkage between the academic career and satisfaction in life. The analyses revealed that the career path does not create a significant impact on the satisfaction in the lives of individuals. These findings contradict the previous existing literature (Santilli et al., 2017), which identified that a strong positive relationship exists between the career path and contentment in life. Similarly, another study revealed that if you are satisfied in your academic career path, then it leads to satisfaction in your life (Near, 1984). The present findings don't coincide with the previous findings. One more objective of this study was to explore whether the support of parents mediate the relationship between mental health and satisfaction in life. The results revealed that the support of the parents does not act as a mediator between these two study variables. These findings are in contradiction with the existing literature, which demonstrated that the support of parents positively influences both life fulfillment and the psychological well-being of individuals. A previous study has shown that parental and social support are directly linked to life contentment and well-being (Lu et al., 2018). Hence, the present findings are in contradiction with the existing findings.

5. CONCLUSION

This research investigates the career education, parents' support, mental well-being, life satisfaction among university students. The results confirmed that career-interest alignment improves psychological health by showing a strong positive correlation between career education and mental well-being. Additionally, there was a strong positive correlation between life satisfaction and parental support. Contrary to other studies, however, there was no significant correlation between an educational career and life satisfaction. This is probably because of cultural influences that prioritize family expectations over individual professional preferences. Mediation analysis indicated that parental support does not mediate the relationship between mental health and life contentment. All scales demonstrated strong psychometric properties ($\alpha = .77 - .92$). These findings highlight cultural variations in career development theories and the need for context-specific student support in South Asian settings.

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Conflict of Interest

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