

Family Dynamics and Life-Satisfaction among Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

The nature and importance of family dynamics and its magnitudes are inimitable in collectivistic culture. The current study aimed to find the uniqueness of the relationship between family dynamics and life satisfaction among young adults. A quantitative, cross-sectional research design was employed on a sample of (n=300) male and female university students aged 19 to 22 years (M=20.40 & SD=1.08), recruited through convenience sampling. Participants completed the Satisfaction with Life Scale (a=0.78) and the Family APGAR Scale (A-Adaptability, P-Partnership, G-Growth, A-Affection, R-Resolve Conflict) (a=0.74). Correlational analyses revealed that all dimensions of family functioning were positively associated with life satisfaction, with affection and conflict resolution showing the strongest relatedness. Hierarchical regression analysis further indicated that both family affection (p=0.01*) and conflict resolution (p=0.01*) significantly predicted life satisfaction, even after controlling for demographic factors. Socioeconomic status (M=2 & SD=0.33 and p=0.004**) also emerged as a meaningful predictor, suggesting that economic stability enhances the benefits of positive family interactions. The results underscore the need for culturally informed family interventions and support programs that strengthen affectionate communication and constructive conflict resolution, particularly in economically disadvantaged families.

KEYWORDS: *Conflict Resolution, Family Affection, Life Satisfaction, Socioeconomic Status, Young Adults*

Introduction

Life satisfaction is an important indicator of psychological well-being, especially during young adulthood, a period characterized by social, developmental, and cultural challenges (Pollmann-Schult, 2014). During this stage, warm and supportive family relationships and effective conflict management are essential for emotional stability and positive adjustment (Curran & Yoshimura, 2016). Most research on family dynamics has been conducted in Western societies, where family structures and cultural values differ from collectivistic cultures such as Pakistan. In Pakistani society, both joint and nuclear family systems shape young adults' experiences, emotional development, and social functioning. While some local studies have examined general family cohesion and support, few have

specifically investigated affection and conflict resolution as distinct dimensions of family life (Afzal et al., 2024).

The family serves as the primary context in which individuals learn to express emotions, develop values, and cope with stress (Riaz & Sarfaraz, 2019). When families lack emotional warmth or fail to manage conflicts effectively, young adults often experience lower life satisfaction, higher emotional strain, and reduced resilience (Pollmann-Schult, 2014; Scharp & Thomas, 2018). Across cultures, research consistently shows that affectionate and supportive family relationships are linked with greater happiness, stronger mental health, and overall well-being (Adhikari et al., 2025).

Affection in family life is considered a fundamental psychological need. The Affection Exchange Theory (AET) posits that expressions of affection from parents, particularly fathers, increase family warmth and are positively associated with both family and life satisfaction among adolescents and young adults (Author(s), Year – placeholder for full AET reference). Similarly, the Interpersonal Acceptance–Rejection Theory (IPAR Theory) emphasizes that feeling accepted and loved within close relationships promotes well-being across cultures (Gorla et al., 2024). Positive family interactions, including affectionate communication, collaborative problem-solving, and mutual understanding, act as protective factors that enhance happiness and mental health (Heinze et al., 2020).

Family support is a strong predictor of life satisfaction, often more influential than peer support (Moed et al., 2015). Systematic reviews and meta-analyses confirm that families characterized by warmth, understanding, and low conflict consistently promote life satisfaction in young people (Benson et al., 2019). These findings underscore the family’s role as the primary context where emotional security and coping skills develop, helping young adults navigate the challenges of increasing independence.

Despite these insights, several research gaps remain. Few studies have examined family affection and conflict resolution together, and the potential mediating role of factors such as belonging is underexplored. Moreover, demographic variables like socioeconomic status and family structure (nuclear vs. joint), which are particularly significant in Pakistani culture, have received limited attention. To address these gaps, the present study explores how family affection and conflict resolution relate to life satisfaction among young adults in Pakistan, while considering the influence of key demographic factors.

Rationale of the Study

Family plays a vital role in shaping the emotional and social development of young adults. Affection and conflict resolution are key aspects of healthy family functioning that directly influence well-being and life satisfaction. Research from Western societies highlights the benefits of warmth and effective conflict management, but cultural, economic, and structural differences in Pakistan such as joint versus nuclear family systems may alter these dynamics. Despite growing research, limited attention has been given to how affection and conflict resolution specifically relate to life satisfaction in South Asian contexts. Therefore, this study aims to explore how these family factors predict life satisfaction among Pakistani young adults while considering socioeconomic background and family structure, providing insights relevant to culturally informed mental health practices.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the relationship between family affection and life satisfaction among young adults in Pakistan.
2. To investigate the association between family conflict resolution and life satisfaction among young adults in Pakistan.

Hypotheses of the Study

1. **H1:** There will be a positive relationship between family affection and conflict resolution and life satisfaction among young adults.

Methodology

This study used a quantitative, cross-sectional correlational design to explore the relationship between family dynamics specifically affection and conflict resolution and life satisfaction among young adults. A total of 300 participants male and female, aged 19 to 22 years ($M=20.40$ & $SD=1.08$), were recruited through a non-probability convenience sampling method. Students from different academic disciplines, including Psychology, Chemistry, Computer Science, Economics, Mathematics, and English, took part in the research. Recruitment was conducted in classrooms, and participation was entirely voluntary. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection began.

Both male and female students were included to ensure gender diversity. Demographic information such as age, gender, birth order, employment status, family type (joint or nuclear), and socioeconomic status was also collected to provide a deeper understanding of the findings. The study received ethical approval from the relevant institutional review board. Ethical guidelines were carefully followed throughout the process, ensuring confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the participants' right to withdraw at any stage.

Data was gathered using paper-based standardized questionnaires that measured family affection, conflict resolution, and life satisfaction. Each participant completed the survey in approximately 10 minutes. Only fully completed and reliable responses were included in the final analysis. Data were analyzed using SPSS software, with descriptive statistics used to summarize demographic details, correlation analysis to assess relationships among variables, and regression analysis to determine predictive patterns. The overall goal was to understand how different aspects of family relationships and emotional experiences contribute to the life satisfaction and well-being of young adults.

Instruments

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al. 1985)

Developed by Diener et al. (1985), the Satisfaction with Life Scale is a brief, five-item self-report measure designed to assess an individual's overall sense of life satisfaction. It has sound psychometric properties ($\alpha=0.78$) and it was implemented to measure life satisfaction of the participants.

Family APGAR Scale (Smilkstein, 1978)

The Family APGAR Scale, introduced by Smilkstein (1978), measures perceived family support and functioning has high psychometric property ($\alpha=0.74$). It has five components: Adaptability, Partnership, Growth, Affection, and Resolve.

Results

Table 1

Correlation matrix of Satisfaction with Life Scale and Family System (n=300)

Variables	SWLS_T	FS1_A	FS2_P	FS3_G	FS4_A	FS5_R
SWLS_T	1	.29**	.22**	.30***	.30**	.32***
FS1_A	--	1	.51***	.33***	.33***	.47***
FS2_P	--	--	1	.35***	.39***	.33***
FS3_G	--	--	--	1	.37***	.35***
FS4_A	--	--	--	--	1	.24**
FS5_R	--	--	--	--	--	1

Note. F. APGAR= family system APGAR (A= Adaptability, P= Partnership, G= Growth, A=Affection, R= Resolve), SWLS_T= Satisfaction with Life Scale (Total Score).

The correlational findings indicated strong positive interrelations among family support dimensions (FS1_A & FS5_R) and their significant links with SWLS_T, emphasizing family support’s role in life satisfaction.

Table 2

Hierarchical Regression Predicting Life Satisfaction (SWLS_T)

Models	Variable	B	Std. Error	t	p
1	Predictor	37.511	10.186	3.683	.000
	Age	-0.312	0.456	-0.684	.495
	Gender	-0.852	1.012	-0.842	.401
	Birth order	-0.036	0.211	-0.170	.865

Models	Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	Work status	-0.769	1.161	-0.663	.508
	Family system	0.182	1.051	0.174	.862
	Socioeconomic status	-4.253	1.479	-2.876	.004**
2	Predictor	30.240	9.375	3.226	.001
	Age	-0.297	0.420	-0.707	.480
	Gender	-0.537	0.925	-0.580	.562
	Birth order	0.087	0.193	0.451	.653
	Work status	-1.691	1.066	-1.586	.114
	Family system	-0.280	0.962	-0.291	.772
	Socioeconomic status	-3.982	1.357	-2.934	.004**
	FS1_A	1.140	0.758	1.504	.134
	FS2_P	-0.175	0.746	-0.234	.815
	FS3_G	1.021	0.658	1.552	.122
	FS4_A	1.680	0.650	2.582	.01*
	FS5_R	2.160	0.831	2.598	.01*

Note. B= Unstandardized coefficient, SEB=Standard Error unstandardized coefficient, t= t-value, p= significance value.

In Model 1, socioeconomic status significantly predicted life satisfaction ($p = .004^{**}$), with lower status linked to lower satisfaction. In Model 2, after adding family dynamics, socioeconomic status remained significant ($p = .004^{**}$). Additionally, affection (FS4_A) and conflict resolution (FS5_R) emerged as significant positive predictors ($p = .01^*$). This suggests that higher family affection and better conflict resolution contribute to greater life satisfaction.

Discussion

This study explored how various aspects of family functioning relate to life satisfaction among young adults. The results provided strong support for Hypothesis 1 (H1), indicating that higher levels of family affection and effective conflict resolution are associated with greater life satisfaction.

Correlation analyses revealed that all family dimensions were positively linked to life satisfaction. Family affection ($r = .30, p < .01$) and conflict resolution ($r = .32, p < .01$) showed the strongest relationships with the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS_T). Adaptability ($r =$

.29, $p < .01$) and growth ($r = .30$, $p < .01$) were also significant predictors, while partnership showed a weaker association ($r = .22$, $p < .05$), suggesting that cooperation within the family, although relevant, may not influence life satisfaction as strongly as emotional warmth and conflict management. Strong interrelations among family variables were also observed, particularly between adaptability and conflict resolution ($r = .47$, $p < .001$), indicating that families who adjust well to challenges tend to handle conflicts more effectively. These results align with previous research emphasizing the role of affectionate and communicative family environments in promoting emotional stability and overall well-being (Kouros et al., 2014; Bowlby, 1969).

Regression analyses further highlighted key predictors. In Model 1, socioeconomic status ($B = -4.253$, $t = -2.876$, $p = .004$) significantly predicted life satisfaction, whereas other demographic factors were not significant. When family dimensions were added in Model 2, affection ($B = 1.680$, $t = 2.582$, $p = .01$) and conflict resolution ($B = 2.160$, $t = 2.598$, $p = .01$) remained significant, alongside socioeconomic status ($B = -3.982$, $t = -2.934$, $p = .004$). These findings suggest that both positive family relationships and financial stability are important for young adults' well-being. The strong effect of socioeconomic status may reflect the ways economic resources facilitate access to opportunities, reduce stress, and support healthier family interactions, particularly in collectivistic cultures where family support is intertwined with financial security.

The outcomes are well explained by **Attachment Theory** and **Family Systems Theory**. Attachment Theory posits that consistent affection and emotional support in early relationships foster secure attachments, trust, and self-worth (Bowlby, 1969). The significant role of family affection in this study suggests that young adults who continue to feel loved and supported maintain higher life satisfaction during emerging adulthood. From a Family Systems perspective, effective communication and conflict resolution help sustain emotional balance within the family unit (Turkewitz, 1984). Families that manage disagreements calmly and respectfully provide a secure environment, promoting psychological adjustment and happiness. Together, these theories illustrate why affection and conflict resolution are critical for life satisfaction and how these processes may interact with broader contextual factors, including socioeconomic status.

Practical Implications

These findings highlight the importance of nurturing emotional warmth and effective communication within families. Programs or interventions that teach family members how to express affection and resolve disagreements constructively could help improve young adults' mental health and life satisfaction. Additionally, support systems targeting families with lower socioeconomic resources are vital, as financial strain can weaken the benefits of positive family interactions and increase stress.

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