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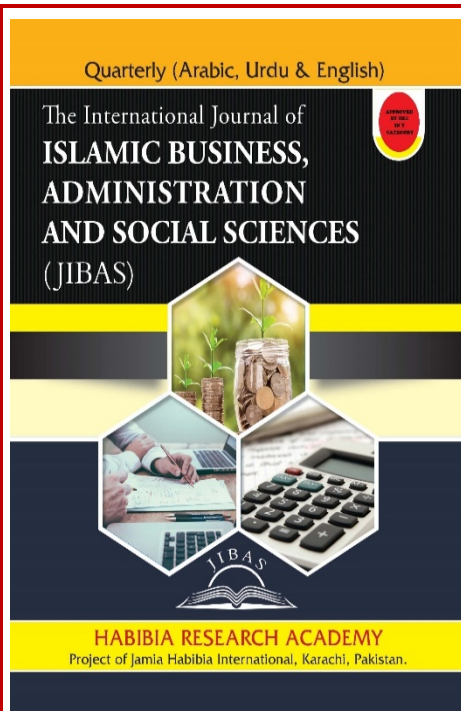
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TOPIC:

THE ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL CAREER AND PARENTAL SUPPORT IN SHAPING LIFE SATISFACTION AND MENTAL WELL-BEING AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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THE ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL CAREER AND PARENTAL SUPPORT IN SHAPING LIFE SATISFACTION AND MENTAL WELL-BEING AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS*Amna Javid,**Um I Lela,**Taskeen Zahra,***ABSTRACT:**

This study explores the relationship between educational career choices, Parental support, life satisfaction, and mental well-being among university students. Using a correlational design and quantitative technique, the research aims to investigate how educational career decisions and family support affect students' overall happiness and mental health. A total of 150 undergraduate students participated in the study, completing questionnaires on the educational career scale, perceived parental support scale, life satisfaction scale, and mental well-being scale. The study utilized numerous instruments, including the RIASEC Inventory Scale for career evaluation, the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS), and the Perceived Parental Support Scale (PPSS). The results demonstrated a substantial positive association between educational career and mental well-being, indicating that professional choices aligned with personal aptitudes positively benefit students' mental health. Parental support was also found to be positively connected to life satisfaction, underlining the critical importance of parental involvement in the emotional and academic well-being of students. The study also studied the mediation impact of parental support, finding it influences the association between mental well-being and life satisfaction, with both direct and indirect effects identified. The study's findings complement to current literature by underlining the importance of aligned educational career choices and strong family support in boosting life satisfaction and mental well-being among university students. These insights have significance for counseling programs, interventions concentrating on parent-child relationships, and professional development activities. Future studies should include bigger and more diverse sample sizes and explore the influence of cultural variances and other psychological factors on these connections.

KEYWORDS: *Career Decision-Making, Student Well-Being, Academic Influence, Family Involvement*

INTRODUCTION:

Investing in one's education is an investment in one's future happiness (Koçak et al., 2021). Education plays a crucial role in shaping a fulfilling life and enhancing mental health. Choosing the right educational field, followed by a relevant vocation and parental support, has a significant impact on university students (Koçak et al., 2021). Education helps individuals acquire knowledge and develop skills necessary for their chosen profession, fostering logical thinking and innovative problem-solving abilities (Lee, 2024). The pursuit

of an enriching and meaningful existence is a top priority in today's rapidly evolving world (Lee, 2024). Parents play an important part in shaping their children's career decisions. (HAN & Yuen, 2023). It is important to incorporate career management skills into the educational process to adapt to the complexities and changes in the workplace (HAN & Yuen, 2023). Lifelong learning and educational achievements contribute to career development and successful transitions from schooling to employment (Lane & Fink, 2015) Career education plays a vital role in preparing students for life after school (Lane & Fink, 2015). Academic career development involves managing responsibilities and experiences in academic and higher education jobs (Müceldili et al., 2023) Parental support, characterized by actions that communicate love and acceptance, significantly impacts a student's academic success Insufficient parental support can lead to negative emotions among children (Müceldili et al., 2023). Parental support helps children cope with anxiety and discomfort, contributing to their overall well-being (Shim et al., 2009). The influence of parental guidance on a student's academic progress has been observed, with students benefiting from constant observation, communication, and parental involvement (Shim et al., 2009). The effects of guidance from parents on the academic selections of children vary based on gender, socio-economic status, and other characteristics. Parental support is linked to perceived barriers and coping efficacy in students' career development. Life satisfaction is an evaluation of one's attitudes and sentiments about their life (Shim et al., 2009). Life is defined as the functional activity unique to organized matter, particularly animals and plants. Thoughts and mindset play a crucial role in determining the quality of life and happiness. Living a meaningful life is essential, and the pursuit of happiness is challenging to articulate (Brown & Lent, 2016).

The factors that influence happiness include a person's environment, disposition, actions, and character. Life satisfaction is more dependent on the quality of time rather than the number of days lived (Brown & Lent, 2016). Happiness is linked to contentment with one's lifestyle and the fulfillment of needs and desires. Research on life satisfaction focuses on factors affecting overall satisfaction and circumstances contributing to happiness (Hollifield & Conger, 2015). Satisfaction in life is a mental evaluation of a person's existence and is associated with mental well-being (Hollifield & Conger, 2015). Expectations and comparisons with societal standards influence life satisfaction (Koçak et al., 2021). Life satisfaction is a component of well-being and includes positive emotions, contentment with the past, present, and future (Koçak et al., 2021). Mental well-being is characterized by happiness, positive relationships, and a sense of purpose. Educational career decisions can impact life satisfaction and mental well-being (Koçak et al., 2021).

Literature Review

The influence of parental support on job self-efficacy has been examined using theories from the United States. A meta-analysis revealed a strong correlation between career self-efficacy and parental support, with higher correlations observed in South Korea and in South Korea, financial, emotional, and communicative assistance from parents played a significant role in shaping job self-efficacy. However, this relationship tends to deteriorate

in both the United States and South Korea after high school and post-secondary education (Youn et al., 2023).

Support from parents has also been shown to be essential for youngsters exploring career options and preparation for the workforce. Research suggests that less career exploration is associated with less parental support, while increased exploration is linked to high optimism and strong parental support. It is important to consider individual characteristics and environmental influences in the study of Professional Growth (Maftei et al., 2023).

The implications of parental guidance on professional choices have been studied in European nations, where parental support was found to greatly affect career decisions. Women reported facing more job setbacks but had similar coping strategies to men, with parents providing more emotional support. Parental support was found to influence how individuals perceive and overcome obstacles in their education and careers (Raque-Bogdan, Klingaman, et al., 2013).

Parents' engagement, professional experience, and decision-making ability were found to influence the vocational identities of college students. The type of employment held by parents had a greater influence on vocational identities than their actual work history (Stringer 2010).

In China, Research has indicated a positive association between profession-related factors and parental professional encouragement. These factors include decision-making, self-efficacy, exploration, and identity. This support was particularly crucial for Chinese vocational school students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and low educational attainment homes. However, research on parental support for careers in China is limited compared to Western countries (Zhang, Yuen, & Chen, 2015).

Adolescence is a time of potential deterioration in academic performance and life satisfaction. Factors such as life satisfaction and school environment directly impact academic performance, while emotional intelligence and resilience have an indirect effect through mediation. These findings have implications for the development of effective educational programs (Izaguirre et al., 2023).

Family's effects on career decisions, and life satisfaction have been explored, revealing that family involvement and perceived support from society had positively contributed to overall well-being and ambitions for professional results. Professional aspirations were found to mediate the relationship between family impact, perceived support from society, and life satisfaction. Additionally, expectations for professional success were found to moderate the connection between satisfaction in life, perceived support from society, and familial influence. Having supportive parents has been associated with a good career and life satisfaction (Young et al., 1995). Psychological components including self-worth and self-confidence have also been found to influence life satisfaction and career adaptability. Higher self-esteem is associated with greater life satisfaction, while enhanced professional adaptability promotes overall self-efficacy (Marcionetti & Rossier, 2019).

Work-life balance and well-being among academics have been studied, revealing poor mental health. Poor work-life balance and a higher chance of quitting are linked to decreased satisfaction with work. On the other hand, a healthy work-life balance is linked

to improved mental health, increased job satisfaction, and decreased intention to quit (Badri, 2019).

Lastly, parental influence has been found to affect life purpose, environmental mastery, and psychological well-being. There is a weak negative correlation between parental influence and autonomy, self-acceptance, and positive interactions with others (Whiston & Keller, 2004).

The demographic description of the participants in the reviewed studies generally included university students from different universities, both men and women, among the 18 to 29-year age bracket. The family systems examined encompassed both joint families and nuclear families, while the academic levels included undergraduate, graduate, and master's students.

The rationale for conducting further research in Pakistan on educational careers, life satisfaction, mental health, and parental support stems from the significance of parental support and educational pursuits for overall well-being. Additionally, there is a lack of research on educational careers in Pakistan, which hinders addressing the social and psychological issues related to this topic.

Significance of the Study

Making an informed decision about one's educational career is essential to feeling fulfilled personally. Finding success and fulfillment in one's work and education can result from making decisions that are consistent with the values, interests, skills, and parental support. It also raises the standard of living and enhances mental well-being. People are more likely to report overall pleasure in various areas of their lives when they are certain of their career, educational goals, and parental support and feel secure in their decisions (Wolman, 1973). Selecting a particular educational path and receiving parental support may improve people's mental health, competence, independence, and self-sufficiency.

Theoretical Framework

The background of educational career decidedness and how it relates to mental health and life fulfillment comes from several different theories, including Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) (Deci & Ryan, 2012). The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) highlights the significance of connection, ability, and independence in one's chosen career, and aligning career choices with one's values (Deci & Ryan, 2012). People are more likely to be satisfied and experience well-being when they have independence, skills, and connections in their professions. Interests, skills, and motivation also play a role in enhancing psychological health (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Students who make their career choices based on their aptitudes, interests, and competence report higher life satisfaction and better mental health (Deci & Ryan, 2012).

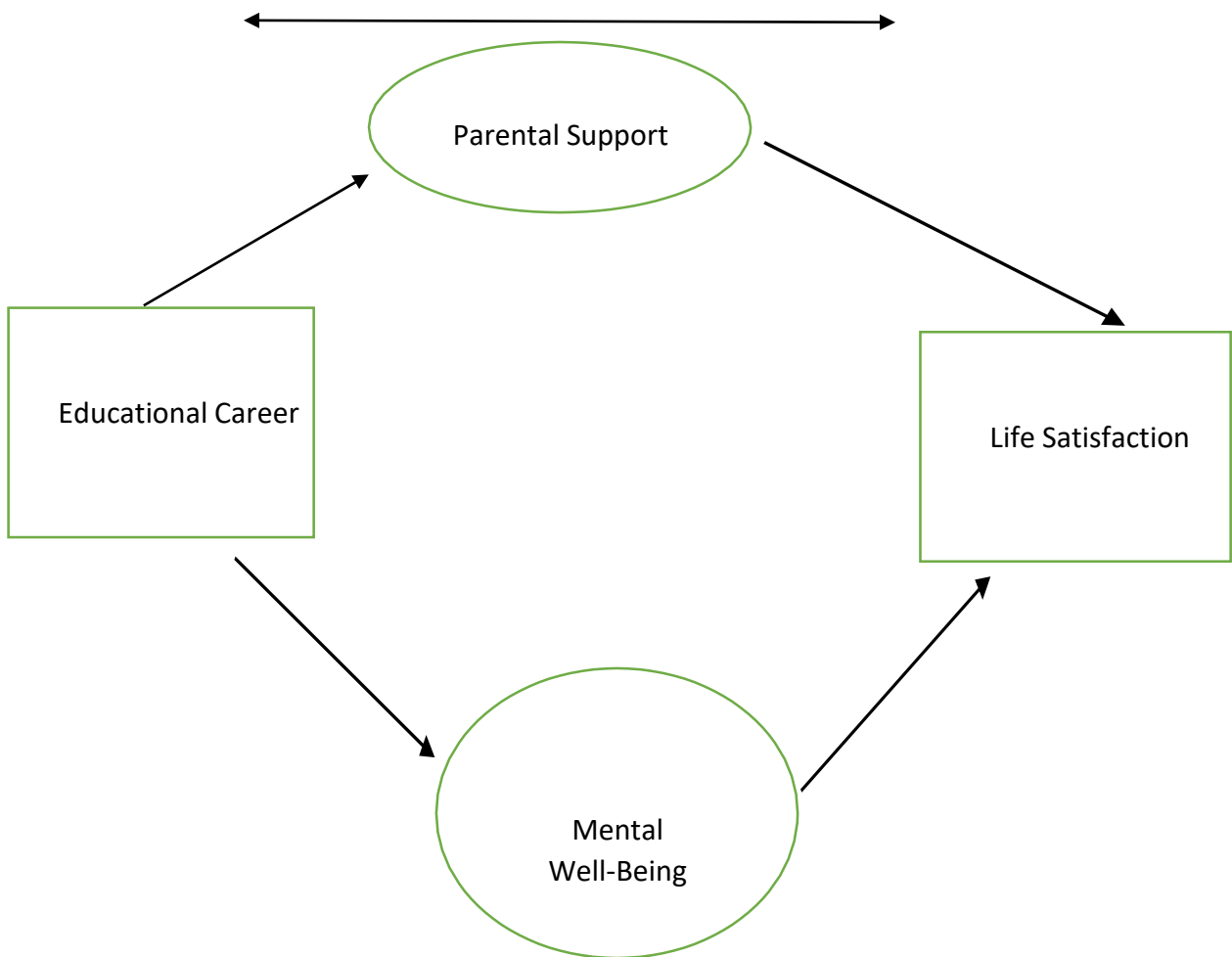
Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) underlines the significance of expectations for results, self-worth, parental support, and personal ambitions for professional advancement (Bandura, 1991). Students with high levels of self-worth, parental support, and positive result expectancies tend to be happier and more content in their chosen careers. Children's decision-making is greatly influenced by parental support and self-confidence in achieving their academic and professional goals (Bandura, 1991).

Subjective well-being and job satisfaction are also relevant to understanding the connection between educational career, satisfaction in life, and mental well-being (Lent & Brown, 2008). Subjective well-being captures overall life satisfaction, including job satisfaction, and has implications for career assessment and intervention (Lent & Brown, 2008).

Aim

The purpose of this study is to investigate the intricate linkage between educational career, parental support, life satisfaction, and mental well-being. It provides valuable insights into the significance of educational career decidedness as a catalyst for personal growth, happiness, and improved mental well-being. Through an in-depth analysis of existing literature, empirical studies, and quantitative analysis, The purpose of this research is to further strengthen our understanding of the psychological aspects of decision-making and how they affect our ability to live fulfilling lives.

Proposed Model



The study design is a correlational design with a quantitative approach. Survey questionnaires were administered to gather data on educational careers, perceived parental support, life satisfaction, and mental well-being.

Objectives

The main objectives of the research are to examine the association between educational career and life satisfaction, investigate the relationship between educational career and mental well-being, analyze the mediating role of parental support in the relationship between educational career and mental well-being, and assess the overall impact of educational career, parental support, and their interaction on life satisfaction and mental well-being.

Hypotheses

- Educational careers will predict life satisfaction.
- There is a positive relationship between educational career and mental well-being.
- Educational careers, based on aptitude, will predict life satisfaction.
- There is a positive correlation between educational career and perceived parental support.
- Parental support is positively related to life satisfaction.
- Parental support mediates the relationship between mental well-being and life satisfaction.

Method

The sample consisted of 150 undergraduate students, including both males and females, selected using purposive sampling techniques. The participants were from different academic disciplines and educational levels, within the age range of 19-25 years old. Exclusion criteria included mental instability, education level below undergraduate, and disability.

The following research tools were employed in the study: demographic information, RIASEC Inventory Scale for career assessment, Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) to measure satisfaction in life, the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS) to assess mental well-being, and the Perceived Parental Support Scale (PPSS) to measure parental support.

The RIASEC Inventory Scale is a career assessment tool based on the Holland Occupational Themes, which categorizes individuals into six personality types. It was used to help participants identify their interests and select careers accordingly.

The SWLS is a 5-item scale that measures overall cognitive assessments of life satisfaction. On a 7-point scale, participants indicate how much they agree with each statement.

The WEMWBS is a 14-item scale that assesses mental health and psychological functioning, focusing on positive aspects of mental well-being. Higher scores indicate better mental health.

The PPSS is a self-report questionnaire that measures individuals' perceptions of parental support. It assesses emotional, practical, and informational support provided by parents or parental figures.

Procedure

The consent of the parents and students was obtained before the data-gathering procedure was initiated. Following this, the students were explained the research's goals during a meeting. After the students got an opportunity to handle the instruments, the instructions were read aloud, emphasizing how important it is to do each assignment. After that, participants were asked to fill out questionnaires regarding the factors of investigation, which in this case included parental support, life satisfaction, career in education, and mental health. To make it easier for them to complete the items, the preferred method of administering the questionnaires was paper copies.

Results**Planned Analysis**

Data from this study were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 24).

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N=300)

Characteristics	<i>n</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 N=frequency of the Characteristics

Table 1 reflects the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Data showsthat 105 of respondents were male and 195 of respondents were females and these were based on gender representation. The age bracket of respondents was 18 to 22, 23 to 26, and 27 to 29 years and the percentage distribution was 69.6%, 29.3%, and 1% respectively. All the respondents were university students. More than half (77%) of respondents were undergraduate students. More than half (59.0%) of respondents were from the joint family system. Most of the respondents (99.7%) were unmarried.

Table 2

Psychometric Properties Minimum, Maximum, Mean, Standard Deviation and AlphaReliability of Scales (N=300)

Item	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>A</i>
RIASEC	0	151	109.02	38.94	.91
SWLS	5	35	23.33	8.61	.75
PPSS	10	40	30.05	10.52	.85
WEMWBS	14	70	46.16	16.59	.84

Note. RIASEC= Career Path Scale. SWLS= Satisfaction with Life Scale. PPSS= PerceivedParental Support Scale, WEMWBS= Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale.

Table 2 in the text displays the mean, standard deviation, and alpha reliability coefficients for various scales. The alpha reliabilities for the RIASEC Scale, Satisfaction with Life Scale, Perceived Parental Support Scale, and Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale range from .84 to .91, indicating good internal consistency. The table also presents the descriptive statistics for each scale, which includes mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum values. Overall, the study's results demonstrate that all scales have reliable measurements and provide valuable descriptive information.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. SWLS	-								
2. PPSS	0.180 **	-							
3. WEMWBS	0.266 ***	0.234* **	-						
4. Realistic	0.028	0.090	0.309 ***	-					
5. Investigative	0.070	0.199* **	0.425 ***	0.625 ***	-				
6. Artistic	0.039	0.120* **	0.367 ***	0.559 ***	0.645 ***	-			
7. Social	0.088	0.211* **	0.461 ***	0.626 ***	0.684 ***	0.678 ***	-		
8. Enterprising	0.133 *	0.215* **	0.500 ***	0.569 ***	0.708 ***	0.631 ***	0.744 ***	-	
9. Conventional	- 0.025	0.095	0.308 ***	0.646 ***	0.679 ***	0.636 ***	0.642 ***	0.594 ***	-

Table 3

Correlation matrix of study variables (N=300)

*Note. * p < .05. ** p < .01. *** p < .001.*

Table 3 represents the correlations between different scales: Satisfaction with Life Scale, Perceived Parental Support Scale, Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale, and Career Path RIASEC Scale.

The results indicate the following significant relationships:

There is a positive and significant correlation between Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being and Perceived Parental Support ($p < .001$, $r = 0.234^{***}$).

The realistic career path is positively and significantly related to well-being ($p < .001$, $r = 0.309^{***}$).

Investigative career path has a positive and significant relationship with Perceived Parental Support ($p < .001$, $r = 0.199^{***}$), well-being ($p < .001$, $r = 0.425^{***}$), and Realistic career path ($p < .001$, $r = 0.625^{***}$).

Artistic career path has a weak but significant positive relationship with Perceived Parental Support ($p < .05$, $r = 0.120^*$), and significant positive relationships with Mental Well-being ($p < .001$, $r = 0.367^{***}$) and Realistic ($p < .001$, $r = 0.559^{***}$) and Investigative career paths ($p < .001$, $r = 0.645^{***}$).

Social career path is positively and significantly correlated with Perceived Parental Support ($p < .001$, $r = 0.211^{***}$), Mental Well-being ($p < .001$, $r = 0.461^{***}$), Realistic ($p < .001$, $r = 0.626^{***}$), Investigative ($p < .001$, $r = 0.684^{***}$), and Artistic career paths ($p < .001$, $r = 0.678^{***}$).

Enterprising career path has a weak but significant positive relationship with Satisfaction with Life Scale ($p < .05$, $r = 0.133^*$), and significant positive relationships with Perceived

Parental Support ($p < .001, r = 0.215^{***}$), Mental Well-being ($p < .001, r = 0.500^{***}$), Realistic ($p < .001, r = 0.569^{***}$), Investigative ($p < .001, r = 0.708^{***}$), Artistic ($p < .001, r = 0.631^{***}$), and Social career paths ($p < .001, r = 0.744^{***}$).

Conventional career path has a significant positive relationship with Mental Well-being ($p < .001, r = 0.308^{***}$), Realistic ($p < .001, r = 0.646^{***}$), Investigative ($p < .001, r = 0.679^{***}$), Artistic ($p < .001, r = 0.636^{***}$), Social ($p < .001, r = 0.642^{***}$), and Enterprising career paths ($p < .001, r = 0.594^{***}$).

Table 4

Results of the Mediation Analysis

95% CI							
Effect	Path	β	SE	Lower	Upper	z	p
Total	Mental Well-Being → Life Satisfaction	0.170	0.036	0.072	0.261	4.781	< .001
Indirect	Mental Well-Being → Perceived Parental Support → Life Satisfaction	0.019	0.010	7.642	0.050	1.939	0.053
Direct	Mental Well-Being → Life Satisfaction	0.152	0.036	0.052	0.247	4.172	< .001

Note. SE= standard error, CI= confidence interval, LL= lower limit, UP= upper limit.

The table provides information on the effects of mental well-being on life satisfaction, including total, indirect, and direct effects. Total Effect:

The "Total" path shows a β coefficient of 0.170, indicating a positive relationship between mental well-being and life satisfaction.

The standard error (SE) is 0.036.

The 95% confidence interval (CI) ranges from 0.072 to 0.261.

The z-value is 4.781, and the p-value is less than 0.001, indicating statistical significance.

Indirect Effect:

The "Indirect" path represents the relationship between mental well-being, perceived parental support, and life satisfaction.

The β coefficient is 0.019, indicating a positive indirect effect.

The SE is 0.010.

The 95% CI ranges from 0.007 to 0.050.

The z-value is 1.939, and the p-value is 0.053, suggesting marginal statistical significance.

Direct Effect:

The "Direct" path represents the relationship between mental well-being and life satisfaction, excluding the influence of perceived parental support.

The β coefficient is 0.152, indicating a positive direct effect.

The SE is 0.036.

The 95% CI ranges from 0.052 to 0.247.

The z-value is 4.172, and the p-value is less than 0.001, indicating statistical significance.

In summary, the table suggests that mental well-being has a positive and significant impact on life satisfaction. It influences life satisfaction both directly and indirectly through perceived parental support. The indirect effect is marginally significant, while the direct effect is statistically significant.

Discussion

The current study aimed to examine the impact of educational career and parental support on life satisfaction and mental well-being in university students. Psychometric characteristics of four scales were established: RIASEC Scale for career path, Satisfaction with Life Scale for life contentment, Perceived Parental Support Scale for parental support, and Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) for mental well-being.

Regarding the linkage between educational career and life satisfaction, the findings of this research contradicted some previous literature. The study found that educational career had a significant impact on life satisfaction, which differed from past findings that suggested a positive relationship between educational career and life satisfaction {De Neve, 2012 #12}. One possible explanation for this discrepancy could be cultural differences, specifically the influence of family expectations. In certain cultures, such as Pakistan, there may be a lack of a positive relationship between educational career (based on aptitude) and life satisfaction due to familial pressure to pursue fields that are considered prestigious or popular.

On the other hand, the study confirmed the hypothesis that educational career is positively related to mental well-being. The findings demonstrated a positive significant relationship between educational career and mental well-being, aligning with previous literature that highlighted the positive influence of academic career choices based on aptitude on mental well-being {De Neve, 2012 #12}

Furthermore, the study supported the notion that parental support is positively related to life satisfaction. The findings showed a positive relationship between parental support and life satisfaction, consistent with previous research indicating that both maternal and paternal support contribute to higher life contentment in children (Stankov, 2013).

The study also explored whether parental support mediated the relationship between mental well-being and life satisfaction. The results revealed a positive significant relationship between parental support, mental well-being, and life satisfaction. This finding was consistent with previous literature indicating that social support, including parental support, influences mental well-being and life satisfaction, underscoring the importance of parental and social support in overall life fulfillment and mental well-being (Stankov, 2013).

Conclusion

This study illustrates the major influence of educational career choices and parental support on the life satisfaction and mental well-being of university students. The findings underline the beneficial association between job pathways aligned with students' aptitudes and their mental health. Similarly, the important role of parental support in promoting life satisfaction is obvious. The mediating function of parental support in the relationship between mental well-being and life satisfaction further underscores its crucial importance. The present study demonstrated that educational career and parental support have a significant impact on the life satisfaction and mental well-being of university students. The findings contribute to the existing knowledge by highlighting the importance of educational career choices and parental support in enhancing life satisfaction and mental well-being.

among students. The implications of the study suggest the need for counselling programs, awareness campaigns, and interventions that focus on improving parent-child relationships, career development, and mental well-being. Future research should consider larger sample sizes, cultural variations, and longitudinal designs, and explore the relationships between these variables and other psychological factors.

Implications

The study's results have practical consequences for educational and counseling programs. They highlight the need for efforts that create alignment between students' educational trajectories and their interests and skills, which could increase their mental well-being. Additionally, there's an imperative for programs that engage parents in the academic and vocational decision-making processes, thereby enhancing students' life satisfaction. Educational institutions and policymakers should consider integrating these characteristics into their student support services and curriculum design. The findings also underline the necessity of designing family-based interventions and workshops that focus on boosting parental involvement in their children's academic lives.

Limitations

Despite its merits, this study has drawbacks. First, the sample size was rather limited and confined to undergraduate students from a specific geographic location, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Future research should involve a wider, more diverse sample, including students from various educational levels and areas. Second, the study employed self-report questionnaires, which can be vulnerable to response biases. Further research could apply a mixed-methods approach to triangulate data and get deeper insights. Lastly, the cross-sectional design of the research limited the capacity to infer causal implications. Longitudinal research could provide better understanding of how educational job choices and family support influence life satisfaction and mental well-being.

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