

# Correlation Study on Psychological distress and life satisfaction among university students in Delhi

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## Abstract

Psychological distress is a major mental health issue, as the growing number of young people attending university has raised worries about an increase in the demand for student mental health services. The current study's goal is to examine the relationship between psychological distress and life satisfaction among university students in Delhi. Data was gathered from several colleges using a descriptive method and a purposive sampling technique. The Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS-21) by Lovibond & Lovibond (1995) and the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) by Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985) were utilised once the participants' consent was obtained. The findings reveal that there is no relationship between psychological distress and life satisfaction among university students, nor between gender and life satisfaction. The study also found no correlation between psychological distress and gender. Given the low prevalence of psychological distress among university students,

**Keywords:** Psychological distress; life satisfaction; mental health; stress; anxiety; depression.

## Introduction

Adolescence is the time when a person transitions from childhood to adulthood. Between childhood and maturity, it is a phase of physical, psychological, and cognitive growth. It's been defined as a time of opportunity, disappointment, and risk (Chow, 2005; Leffert & Peterson, 1995).

This period, which Arnett dubbed "emerging adulthood" (Arnett et al., 2014), is distinguished by many transitions and testing activities such as family support, friends, professional choices, managing relationships, breakups, financial self-sufficiency, and thinking up for future objectives (Furnham, 2004; Miller, 2017; Schechtaretal., 2018).

Most young adults are confronted with crises in university and college as part of their psychosocial development. Young adults face increased demands in the post-college era, such as health difficulties, schooling, and financial position. As a result, the college years are the most difficult for students since they must maintain their separate lifestyles (Diener and Diener, 1995).

The university years might be seen as a time of adjusting to new academic pressures and personal challenges (Rickinson, 1998). Students confront numerous problems at this phase, including separation from family and friends, health issues, new rules, and the formation of relationships. The threat is one of the primary challenges in this period. The threat to students' mental well-being and psychological distress of adapting or adjusting to a new life is one of the key challenges throughout this era (Roberts & Zelenyanski, 2002). As a result, university years are regarded as one of the most stressful stages of one's life (Cress & Lampman, 2007; Chao, 2012).

### **Psychological Distress among university students**

During their academic years, adolescents are subjected to a variety of physical, emotional, psychological, hormonal, social, and cognitive stresses. These pressures can lead to one or more mental health issues, all of which are serious concerns. According to the Mental Health Commission of New South Wales (2018), psychological distress occurs when a person has exceptionally unpleasant feelings, symptoms, or experiences. Psychological distress, according to the American Psychological Association (APA), is "a combination of uncomfortable mental and physical sensations that are linked with typical mood changes in most people.

Erikson (1996) proposed an eight-stage paradigm of psychosocial development in which an individual experiences diverse challenges. Because most students are entering college and many of them are in the fifth and sixth stages of psychosocial development, the fifth stage is known as identity vs. role uncertainty, while the sixth stage is known as closeness vs. isolation. It shows that college students are able to understand their own identity as well as learn how to connect with society. Social interactions and experiences also aid in the reconstruction of identity and the establishment of values, attitudes, and wants, as well as their goals (Brook & Willoughby, 2015).

### **Life Satisfaction**

Although the terms "life satisfaction" and "happiness" are frequently used interchangeably, they are not the same thing. Life satisfaction is a little more complicated than it first appears. The evaluation of one's life as a whole, rather than just their current state of happiness, is life satisfaction. Happiness, according to Daniel Gilbert, a Harvard University professor of psychology, is defined as "anything we please" (Gilbert, 2009). (Buetell, 2006), a general appraisal of one's feelings and attitudes regarding one's life at a given time, ranging from negative to positive. "Life satisfaction" is defined as a person's positive assessment of the overall quality of his or her life. To put it another way, how much a person enjoys his or her life. " (1996). According to Cribb (2000), life satisfaction, along with other measures of mental and physical health, is one of the markers of "apparent" quality of life. It's also used to describe an appraisal of one's entire living situation based on a comparison of one's desire to one's actual achievement. According to Bradley and Corwyn (2004), life satisfaction is defined as the extent to which fundamental needs are addressed and a variety of goals are reachable.

### **Review of Literature**

**Cho et al. (2021)** investigated the relationship between stress and life satisfaction among Korean university students, with a particular emphasis on the mediational effects of positive affect and self-compassion. As part of the research, 1,087 university students were asked to fill in questionnaires about stress, self-compassion, positive affect, and life satisfaction. In addition, structural equation modelling was used to confirm the direct and indirect connections between each variable and gender differences in life satisfaction. The partial

mediational model best fit the data, and positive affect and self-compassion had significant partial mediational effects, according to the findings. Second, both positive affect and self-compassion mediated the association between stress and life satisfaction among university students. In addition, the partial mediational model suited the data well for both male and female students, while there were gender disparities in several paths. The study is crucial because it provides empirical evidence for the role of self-compassion and good affect in high-stress university students' interventions. Finally, the research emphasises the significance of social support in the execution of intervention programmes aimed at improving life satisfaction. The study's limitations were determined to be geographically unsuitable for other parts of the world, as it focuses solely on the stress levels of Korean pupils.

**Norfaezah Md Khalid (2021)** examined resilience, social support perceptions, and life satisfaction among Malaysian college students. She looked into the relationship between resilience and life satisfaction among Malaysian college students, with social support as a mediating component. A total of 491 students took part in this research. The information was gathered using a series of surveys. Structural equation modelling was used to test the mediation model. The overall effects of resilience on life satisfaction were significant, according to the findings of her research. Furthermore, the impact of resilience on life satisfaction was mediated by social support. In conclusion, she proposes that increasing resilience and social support may improve the life satisfaction of Malaysian college students. The study, however, was limited to Malaysian students.

**Tingting Li et al. (2020)** examined psychological distress and its associated risk factors among university students in Anhui province. A cross-sectional study was conducted on a sample of 1304 students. In this study, a self-administered questionnaire consisting of the general demography and the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) was used. Psychological distress was assessed using the GHQ-12-item questionnaire. A dichotomous category split was imposed on the GHQ-12 for the purpose of analysis. A GHQ-12 score of 4 or higher indicates psychological distress. The results indicated that the education level of the father and mother was associated with the students' psychological distress ( $P < 0.001$ ). Also, a significant association was found between high-intensity exercise and low-intensity exercise and psychological distress. However, the study indicates no significant difference was identified between gender and psychological distress ( $P = 0.173$ ).

**Jorge et al. (2019)** in Spain investigated the incidence of psychological distress in first-year university students, as well as the relationship between family support and the student's work position. This study included data from 4,166 first-year university students from nine universities across Spain. The GHQ-12 was used in conjunction with logistic regression models to determine the prevalence of psychological distress. Psychological distress was found to be prevalent in 46.9% of males and 54.2 percent of females. As family support reduced, psychological discomfort increased in both genders. Psychological anguish was found to be linked to a woman's employment position.

**Moses and Augustina (2018)** investigated how sleep hours and academic achievement affected psychological distress among university students. According to the findings, insufficient sleep and below-average academic performance may be important predictors of psychological distress in the study group. As a result of the findings of this study, psychologists, counsellors, and educators now have the information they

need to construct an intervention that can assist in supporting excellent sleep habits and increased academic achievement in order to alleviate psychological discomfort.

### **Rational of the Study**

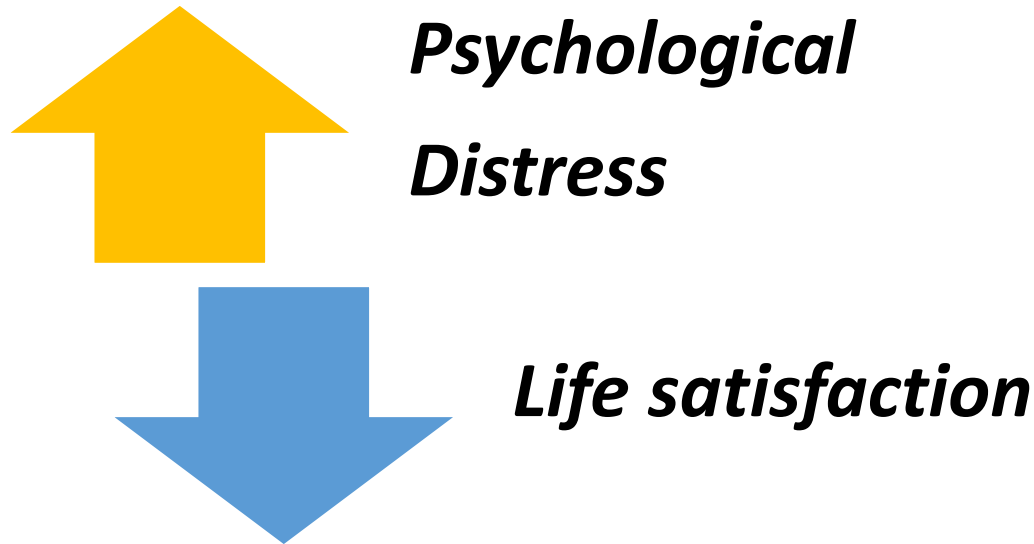
The majority of the studies and research discussed in the review of literature section are either on psychological distress and life satisfaction in relation to depression or on assessing life satisfaction in younger individuals. Furthermore, the researchers' main focus has been on determining the relationship between psychological distress and life satisfaction among university students. Many studies have looked at the impact of psychological distress and life satisfaction on gender or on people with psychological distress, as well as the relationship between life satisfaction and anxiety, mindfulness, and spirituality. The main focus of research is always on young people and their satisfaction. However, a lot of research is on retired people and their past or current experiences that are affecting their level of life satisfaction and psychological distress. There hasn't been any clarification on the interaction between psychological distress and life satisfaction in studies focusing primarily on youth or adults.

It's crucial to look into the pattern of psychological distress and the elements that influence it during the university years because it's well known that academic demands can produce excessive stress in students, leading to psychological disturbances and depression. Since people's reactions to stressful events vary depending on their characteristics, personality traits, motivational factors, and perceived coping ability, it's critical to look into the relationships between psychosocial factors and mental wellbeing in order to develop appropriate tools and strategies that can effectively address the problem. Psychosocial predictor knowledge may also aid in the diagnosis of psychological disability, which is significant because psychological disability is often asymptomatic and hence harder to diagnose.

Bewick, Koutsopoulou, Miles, Slaa, and Barkham (2010) observed and documented an elevated degree of psychological disturbances among college students. This study will contribute to a better understanding of college students' psychological distress and life satisfaction (variables that may affect

The two factors of psychological distress and life satisfaction among university students were investigated in this study. According to Chao (2012), college students' stress levels have skyrocketed in recent years. As a result, it's critical to recognise and comprehend the aspects that influence students' college experiences.

Many studies have identified mental health as a concern, such as financial debt and/or concerns that arise while a college student is enrolled in a specific course (Bewick, Koutsopoulou, Miles, slaa, & Barkmam 2010). When psychological distress interrupts an individual, educational tasks may be put out of mind.



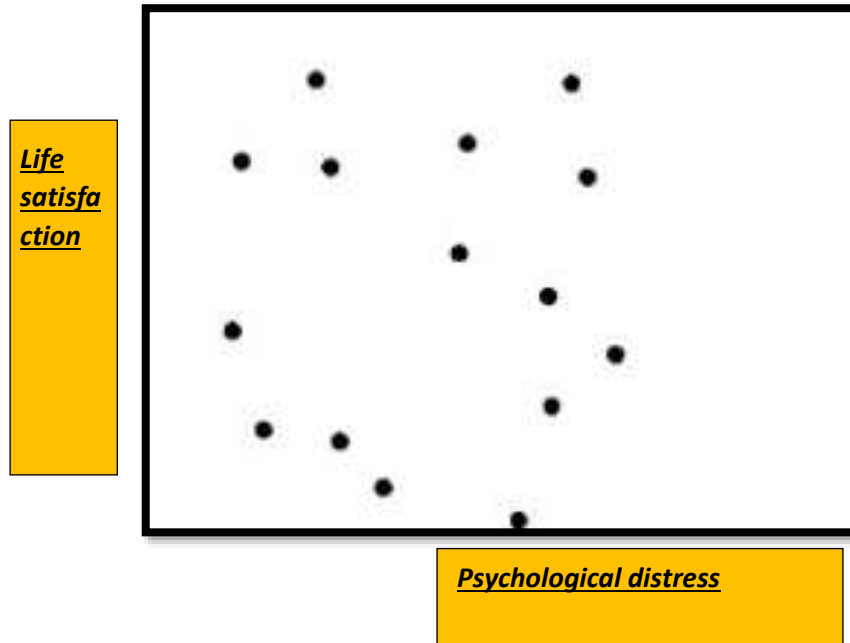
(fig1.2)

***Figure 1.2; The study's conceptual framework of psychological distress and life satisfaction.***

Furthermore, in Scandinavian countries(Northern Europe), research on student mental health has primarily focused on medical students, with studies on the broader student population being uncommon. The current study fills this gap by examining the related and potentially predisposing psychosocial factors that are related to psychological distress and life satisfaction in a cohort of Indian students from various levels and faculties of studies.

This research will be an excellent endeavour that will benefit students who are unsure about the causes of their worry, tension, and sadness. The study's findings may contribute to the body of knowledge needed to improve the happiness of nervous, depressed, and stressed university students.

For many years, many studies have been conducted in the field of psychological distress and its various dimensions, such as stress, depression, and life satisfaction. Their findings, however, cannot be applied to every geographical region because people differ in their response methods even when they live in the same place. Recognizing the truth, we proposed the hypothesis that psychological distress and life satisfaction have no relationship among university students. Refer to Figure 1.3.



**Figure 1.3.** The correlation between psychological distress and life satisfaction is depicted in this plot. (They are scattered over the plot in a haphazard pattern).

This study explores the relationship between psychological distress and life satisfaction among various biological, developmental, cognitive, social, demographic, and contextual components of psychological distress and life satisfaction. Because there is a lack of understanding about these two variables in relation to mental health in Indian students in general,

In summation, the goal of this research is to determine the link between psychological discomfort and life satisfaction. By exploring the potential links between the study variables and thus trying to expand our scope of understanding of university students' mental health, the study also highlights relationships between gender and life satisfaction and examines the correlation between psychological distress and gender.

## Methodology

### Research problem

The study's objective is to arrive at psychological distress and life satisfaction among university students.

### Objectives

To assess university students' psychological distress and life satisfaction.

To investigate the relationship between gender and life satisfaction.

To determine if there is a link between psychological distress and gender.

### Hypothesis

On the basis of the above-mentioned goals,

**H1:** There is no significant correlation between psychological distress and life satisfaction in university students.

**H2:** There's no correlation between life satisfaction and gender.

**H3:** There’s no correlation between psychological distress and gender.

**Sample**

The current study used a sample of 100 college students from urban areas, with 50 male and 50 female college students ranging in age from 17 to 26 years old. In this context, descriptive statistics and the purposive sampling technique were applied.

**Research Design**

The focus of this research is on university students' psychological distress and life satisfaction. Participants were asked about their emotions and support systems. The DASS-21 (short version) and the SWLS questionnaires were employed in this investigation. Purposive sampling and descriptive statistics were used. The correlation method, the T-test, and the chi-square were applied. This is a strategy for determining the relationship between psychological discomfort and life satisfaction among university students using a correlation design method.

**TOOLS**

The following tools were used in the present study:

Tools Used:

S.NO	Name of the tool	Author and year	No. of items	Reliability/Validity
1)	Depression Anxiety Stress Scale-21	Lovibond and Lovibond (1995)	21 items	Excellent internal consistency, discriminative good convergent and concurrent validity. Excellent values of reliability Strong internal consistency
2)	Satisfaction with life scale (SWLS)	Diener Emmons, Larsen and griffin(1985)	5 items	Adequate criterion validity, good convergent and discriminant validity, High internal consistency

**Demographic Information Sheet :**

A demographic information sheet will be produced to collect information from participants. Gender, age, family type, education, occupation, birth order, and the number of family members were all covered in the questionnaire.



**Statistical Techniques**

The information gathered by the questionnaire was thoroughly reviewed and condensed into a Microsoft Excel sheet so that everything could be seen in one place. Then, with the help of SPSS version 1.0.0.1447, the necessary statistical techniques will be applied. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics. The age of the subjects, depression, anxiety, stress, and life satisfaction were all examined using mean and standard deviation. The frequency and percentage of psychological discomfort and life satisfaction were calculated for gender, age group, and different categories.

Following the aforementioned approaches for describing the data, the t-test, chi-square, and correlation were used to compare the mean values of two groups and establish relationships between variables, respectively.

**TABLE 1: Correlation value between Life satisfaction and Gender**

Correlations			
		PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS	GENDER
LIFE SATISFACTION	Pearson Correlation	.091	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.367	
	N	100	100
ANXIETY	Pearson Correlation	.091	.091
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.367
	N	100	100

Table 1, results indicates the correlation between life satisfaction and gender, the correlation value of life satisfaction and gender is .121 and the Sig. (2 – tailed) value is .232 which is greater than the ( $p > 0.001$ ).

**TABLE 2: Correlation value between Psychological distress and Gender**

Correlations			
		LIFE SATISFACTION	GENDER
LIFE SATISFACTION	Pearson Correlation	.121	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.232	
	N	100	100
ANXIETY	Pearson Correlation	1	.121
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.232
	N	100	100



Table 2 shows that the correlation between psychological distress and life satisfaction, the result indicates that the correlation value of the psychological distress and life satisfaction is .091 and the Sig. (2 tailed) is .367 which is greater than the ( $p > 0.001$ ).

**Table 3: Pearson correlation (r) table for stress, anxiety, depression, and life satisfaction. In the parenthesis, p-values are mentioned for each correlation value.**

Variables	Stress	Anxiety	Depression	Life Satisfaction
Stress	1.000	0.736 ( $< 0.001$ )	0.786 ( $< 0.001$ )	-0.052 (0.607)
Anxiety		1.000	0.698 ( $< 0.001$ )	-0.064 (0.527)
Depression			1.000	-0.153 (0.129)
Life Satisfaction				1.000

Correlation values are included in table 4. As per the results, stress, anxiety, and depression are highly correlated with each other—stress and anxiety correlation is 0.736; stress and depression correlation value is 0.786; and it is 0.698 for anxiety and depression. These three correlation values were found to be significant ( $p > 0.001$ ). These three variables were negatively correlated with life satisfaction, but the values are very small. Stress, anxiety, and depression have correlation values of -0.052, -0.064, and -0.153, respectively. None of these values were found to be significant. However, for depression, the correlation is slightly higher and the p-value is relatively smaller ( $p = 0.129$ ).

**Discussion**

The purpose of this study is to find out if there is a relationship between psychological distress and life satisfaction among university students. The study's sample is made up of 100 people, 50 of whom are males and 50 of whom are girls. The Satisfaction with Life Scale by Diener, Griffin, Emmons, and Larsen (1985) was used to assess life satisfaction. The DASS-21 was used to assess psychological distress. The following statistical methods were used to analyse the data: Pearson's correlation technique, chi-squared and the t-test. The descriptive method and purposive sampling were applied.

According to Schulenberg, Bryant, and O'Malley (2004), young individuals experienced a lot of changes at the same time during their transactional phases. According to Erikson's theory, the key developmental elements of young adulthood include increasing social engagement, independence, the replacement of childhood characters with adulthood roles, feelings and emotions of increased obligations, future concerns, and the creation of a family (Erikson, 1968; Settersten, Furstenberg, & Rumbaut, 2005). At this stage of growth, young people establish new ethical principles, social codes, and laws, and compare them to previously created life criteria. Early adulthood may be a critical period in three areas of development: physical, cognitive, and social. Many changes, including psychological, social, and physiological changes, can be observed during this period of life. Young women struggle to strike a balance between their growing duties at work, at home, in society, and in academics or institutions. People who are psychologically healthy or have

a positive psychological well-being are able to deal with these changes more wisely, efficiently, and successfully and solve their daily difficulties with ease, resulting in greater satisfaction (Niaz, 2004).

According to the findings, there is no link between life satisfaction and psychological distress among college students, nor between life satisfaction and gender, nor between psychological distress and gender. Based on the current findings (Table 1-8), there is no apparent relationship between Division and any of the research participants' parameters.

According to the findings of the study, there is no significant correlation between psychological distress and life satisfaction among university students after correlation. The first hypothesis of this study was that there is no correlation between psychological discomfort and life satisfaction among university students.

The correlation values are provided in table 7, as can be seen. According to the findings, stress and anxiety have a 0.736 correlation, stress and depression have a 0.786 correlation, and anxiety and depression have a 0.698 correlation. The significance of these three correlation values ( $p = 0.001$ ) was discovered. These three variables were found to have a negative relationship with life satisfaction. However, the correlations were minor.

Correlation values for stress, anxiety, and depression are -0.052, -0.064, and -0.153, respectively. These numbers were not considered to be significant. In the case of depression, however, the correlation is slightly larger and the p-value is lower ( $p = 0.129$ ). So, based on the findings of this study, the null hypothesis was accepted and the alternate hypothesis was rejected. However, the data isn't particularly noteworthy. According to a number of studies, there is no link between psychological distress and life satisfaction among university students. The findings of this study are comparable with those of Abbas and Shah (2017), who found a weak negative connection between stress and life satisfaction. Similarly, Bataineh (2013) explored the academic pressures faced by university students in his study. According to the findings, unreasonable academic overload, insufficient time to study and prepare for exams due to the huge amount of course content covered, high family expectations, and low motivation levels are some of the stressors. Stress is also caused by a fear of failure, which is a major factor. There was no discernible difference in performance amongst students with various specialities. Another possibility is that psychological distress and life satisfaction have a negative relationship. Table 5 reveals that stress, anxiety, and depression are all negatively connected with life satisfaction, but the correlations are minor. Correlation values for stress, anxiety, and depression are -0.052, -0.064, and -0.153, respectively. There was no evidence that any of these numbers were significant. As a result, psychological anguish and life satisfaction have a negative association. This study discreetly confirms Shi and Ji's (2013) research, which indicated that greater levels of anxiety were negatively connected with life satisfaction among 397 people aged 18 to 65. Similarly, Lucas-Carrasco, Sastre-Garriga, Galan, Den Oudsten, and Power (2014) showed a negative association between anxiety and life satisfaction in their research, as did Warnecke, Baum, Peer, and Goreczny (2014). The current study is also based on the findings of Samarana CB, Aroll B, and Fernando AT (2014), who concluded that life satisfaction is negatively related to depression, anxiety, and loneliness.

According to the findings of the current study, there is no significant association between life satisfaction and gender. The second hypothesis in this study was that there is no link between life happiness and gender. The correlation values are provided in table 5, as can be seen. Life satisfaction and gender have a correlation value of .121, and the sig. (2-tailed) value is .232, both of which are greater than ( $P > 0.001$ ). It signifies that the

current study's null hypothesis is accepted; we can't reject it because the p value is somewhat higher; thus the null hypothesis is accepted, and we discovered that there is no correlation between life satisfaction and gender among university students. Other research, such as Huebner (2004), which explored the determinants of life satisfaction, found that strong interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships, as well as excellent psychological health, are linked to a high level of life satisfaction. When we talk about life satisfaction, we are talking about a multidimensional perspective, not a single concept. The Miqdad Daly Ahmad study (2018), which looked into the relationship between life satisfaction and gender and came to the conclusion that there isn't one, revealed that gender has no effect on psychological well-being, according to earlier studies (Perez, 2012) from nations such as Italy and the Philippines. We might compare our findings to those of (Mayungbo, 2016; Roothman, Kirsten, & Wissing, 2003), researchers demonstrated that gender has no bearing on a person's life satisfaction. There are many studies that contradict our findings, such as (Meisenberg & Woodley, 2014), Qatar, and the United Kingdom, which all claim that gender is associated with life satisfaction.

According to the findings of the current study, there is no significant correlation between psychological distress and gender. Hypothesis 3 was that there was no relationship between psychological distress and gender in this study. Table 6 shows the correlation between psychological distress and life satisfaction. The result shows that the correlation value of psychological distress and life satisfaction is.091, and the sig. (2 tailed) is.367, which is greater than was no relationship between psychological distress and gender in this study. Table 6 shows the correlation between psychological distress and life satisfaction. The result shows that the correlation value of psychological distress and life satisfaction is.091, and the sig. (2 tailed) is.367, which is greater than ( $P>0.001$ ).

According to our findings, there is no link between psychological distress and gender. Despite the fact that our findings contradict Kaur's (2014) findings, which found that academic stress had a negative impact on teenagers' mental health, In comparison to boys, girls, according to studies, have poor mental health and experience more stress. The current study, which backs up Khan and Kausar (2013), demonstrated that stress had a deleterious influence on academic performance with no significant gender differences. Every student should study on a regular basis since it relieves academic strain and allows them to achieve their objectives. Some researchers agree with this study and claim that there are no differences between female and male university students (Deniz, 2006), while others claim that there are gender differences in anxiety among undergraduates, with females reporting higher levels of anxiety than males (Chapell et al., 2005). In contrast to our findings, a Turkish and a Canadian institution showed that female students had significantly more depressive symptoms than male students.

## Conclusion

Although there has been little research on the relationship between psychological distress and life satisfaction among university students, this study was undertaken to determine the relationship between psychological distress and life satisfaction among university students. A total of 100 students were involved in this study, 50 of whom were male and 50 of whom were female. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics.

- The following are the study's main findings: According to the findings of this study, there is no correlation between psychological distress and life satisfaction among university students.
- The study's second biggest finding is that there is no correlation between life satisfaction and gender.

- There is no relationship between psychological distress and gender, according to the research. The researcher did not measure other variables that could have influenced the variables in this investigation, which was a drawback of the study.

As a result, the researcher hypothesised that there could be additional variables or factors that influenced university students' life satisfaction and psychological distress.

### Implications

- a) Students with low levels of psychological distress and life satisfaction will benefit from this study.
- b) This study can serve as a supporting document for some interventional programmes aimed at reducing psychological distress and increasing life satisfaction.
- c) The study's findings can be used to demonstrate the impact of gender and socioeconomic status on an individual's psychological distress and life satisfaction.

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