

Research Paper

## Assessing the Gender Differences in the Level of Life Satisfaction and Depression among Young Adults

Samridhi Gupta<sup>1\*</sup>, Ms. Charu Kriti<sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

Mental health includes emotional, psychological and social well-being. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from child hood and adolescence through adulthood. Low positive emotions as well as high negative emotions are vulnerable factors for both the development and maintenance of depression. Life satisfaction is a measure of person's well-being which is assessed in terms of mood, relationship satisfaction, achieved goals, self-concepts and self- perceived ability to cope with life. It involves a favourable attitude towards one's life rather than an assessment of current feelings. The paper aims to assess the gender differences in the level of Life Satisfaction and Depression among Young Adults. The total 50 people were included in this study out which 25 were male and 25 were female as sample that caters the inclusion criteria. The standardised tests and tools were applied. The finding indicates significant difference ( $p < 0.01$ ) in the level of life satisfaction and depression between the genders among young adults. On the measure of Life Satisfaction, the results suggested a higher level of life satisfaction in males than in females. However, on the measure of Depression, the results suggested a higher level of depression in females than males.

**Keywords:** *Life Satisfaction, Depression, Young Adults, Stress, Well-being*

Life Satisfaction is a measure of a person's well-being, assessed in terms of mood, relationship satisfaction, achieved goals, self-concepts, and self- perceived ability to cope with life. It involves a favourable attitude towards one's life rather than an assessment of current feelings. A young adult is a person in the age range is generally a person in the age range of 18 to 25 years. Like childhood and adolescence, young adulthood is a developmentally distinct period of the life course that can be considered as a critical stage of development (Bonnie, Stroud, and Breiner, 2015). According to Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, Intimacy versus isolation is the sixth stage and it takes place during young adulthood. People who are a successful in resolving the conflict of the intimacy versus isolation stage are able to develop deep, meaningful relationship with others (Cheer, 2017). Men and women are born with various similarities and differences from various aspects. Over the past two decades, there has been has been a surge of research interest in the measure of subjective well-being, including mental and physical health,

<sup>1</sup>Student, Masters of Clinical Psychology, Chandigarh University, Gharuan, Punjab, India.

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Chandigarh University, Gharuan, Punjab, India.

\*Corresponding Author

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happiness and life satisfaction (Levin & Chatters, 1998). A contemporary meaning of life satisfaction is conceptualised as a cognitive, global appraisal that people make when considering their level of contentment with their life as a whole (Suldo & Huebner, 2006). A more common philosophical from realism suggests that society shall provide the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people (Veenhoven, 1984). In essence, life satisfaction is a subjective assessment of the quality of one's life. It is also considered to be an evaluation of one's daily experiences because everyday problems and stressors contribute to how an individual rates his or her satisfaction with life (McKnight, Huebner & Suldo, 2002). The construct of global life satisfaction reflects dispositional tendencies of individual norms, values and self-beliefs. When people are asked to evaluate specific or more concrete domains, individuals are often more constrained by how they feel and think about the domains (giving an explanation of what others think). Thus, positive life satisfaction depends on how 'good' the individual perceives the various life domains to be and the extent to which the individual judge's global issues as being more positively specific and personal. Life Satisfaction, understood as a cognitive judgmental process based on individual evaluation of one's life in general or specific domains, can be an antecedent to self-esteem. Baumeister et al have assumed that self-esteem cannot only cause positive outcomes, but can itself be an outcome of success. Beginning in the 1970s and continuing today, gender has been an important variable in understanding depression. In 1977, Weissman and Kerman reviewed the evidence for differing rates of depression between sexes, in the United States and elsewhere, during the previous forty years. They found that studies showed women experienced depression at rates much higher than men, and critically analyzed the various explanations offered. These included the possibility that the higher rates found in women may not be accurate as well as the possibility that the higher rate found in women may be the result of biologic susceptibility, psychosocial factors such as social discrimination, or female-learned helplessness. Depression rates in young people have risen sharply, especially in females, which is of more concern because adolescence is a period of rapid social, emotional and cognitive development and key life transitions. Adverse outcomes associated with depression in young people include depression recurrence; the onset of psychiatric disorders; and wider, protracted impairments in interpersonal, social, educational, and occupational functioning. Clinical antecedents include depressive symptoms, anxiety and irritability. Depression is highly heterogenous; therefore, a stepwise treatment approach is recommended, starting with brief psychosocial interventions, then a specific psychological therapy and then an antidepressant medication.

### **METHOD**

The objective of this study is to assess the gender differences in the level of life satisfaction and depression among young adults.

#### *Hypothesis*

- It is expected that the level of life satisfaction among males is higher than that of females among young adults.
- It is expected that the level of depression and related symptoms are higher in females than that of males among young adults.
- It is expected that there is a statistical significant difference in the level of life satisfaction and depression. The sample included 25 males and 25 females. The survey was made up entirely of young adults (18-25 years). The questions were designed keeping in mind the target population. This research is based on a cross-sectional study of the Indian population recruiting a total of 50 sample (N=50, 25

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Males and 25 Females) among the age group 18-25 years residing in Jammu & Kashmir.

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Data were collected with the help of Forms and Questionnaires to obtain a Quantitative Data. The participants were assured of anonymity. The google form link was sent to the acquaintances and requested them to circulate the same forward. A time span of 15 days was given. The sampling method adopted for data collection was Convenience Sampling Method which is a non-probability sampling method through which research data was collected from conveniently available pool of respondents. The samples were provided with proper instructions and their consent was considered to answer to the questionnaires. Responses were collected and were kept confidential. In addition to sociodemographic questions, psychological variables were assessed by validated and standardised self-report inventories. **Life Satisfaction Scale** developed by Diener in 1985 which is a multi-dimensional self-report measure of general life-satisfaction with health. The scale assesses satisfaction with respondent's life as a whole. SWLS has a low correlation (.09) with measures of affect intensity, showing that it is likely to be reliable over affective states. Scores consist of a raw score (between 5 and 35). Higher scores represent higher life satisfaction. **The Beck Depression Inventory (BDI)** is a 21-item, self-report rating inventory that measures characteristic attitudes and symptoms of depression (Beck, et.al., 1961). Internal Consistency for the BDI ranges from .73 to .92 with a mean of .86 (Beck, Steer & Garbin, 1988). The BDI demonstrates high internal consistency, with alpha coefficients of .86 and .81 for psychiatric and non-psychiatric populations respectively. Finally, they also presented evidence for the content, concurrent, discriminant, construct and factorial validity of the BDI. **t test** is a statistical test that is used to compare the means of two groups. The t test is a parametric test of differences as it makes same assumptions about the data as other parametric tests. **Independent t test** was used if a group comes from two different populations (two different groups i.e., male and female) perform a two-sample t test, this is between-subject designs. **Levene Test** for Equality of Variance is used to check that variances are equal for all samples when data comes from non-random normal distribution. It is an inferential statistic used to assess the equality of variances for a variable calculated for two or more groups. Spearman's rank correlation analysis ( $\rho$ ) was used to investigate the associations between the variables, using the raw scores obtained from two different groups (male and female). **t Test** was used to determine the difference between two means that were associated. The testing used two groups having two variables (male and female; life satisfaction and depression). The mean and standard deviation of the sample were calculated and value is postulated for the mean of the population. The means and standard deviation are calculated for two given samples. Paired observations are made on two samples (Life Satisfaction; Depression). In each case, problems establish multiples of standard errors to which probabilities can be attached. These multiples are the no. of times a difference can be divided by its standard error. With small samples these multiples are larger and the smaller the sample the larger they become. To calculate degree of freedom for 2-sample t-test,  $N-2$  was used since two parameters were estimated. Levene's Test was used to determine that the equal variance and it is statistically significant. 95% Confidence interval for the difference of two means was determined using a formula, to determine lower and upper bound.

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### RESULTS

The purpose of the study was to assess the gender differences in the level of life satisfaction and depression among young adults. A total sample of 50 was considered for the study out of which 25 were males and 25 were females who met the criteria of the study. Mean, Standard deviation (Sds) and Standard error mean was calculated for the two different variables between male and female to find the statistically significant different data.

**Table No.1 - Showing independent Group t-test (Mean, Std. Deviation and Std. Error Mean).**

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Life Satisfaction	Males	25	26.72	4.458	.892
	Females	25	18.20	3.830	.766
Depression	Males	25	9.56	5.694	1.139
	Females	25	23.48	5.394	1.079

The results shown in the table no.1, for N= 25 males and 25 females, the mean was calculated for males and females in the level of life satisfaction and depression and came out to be 26.72 for males in level of life satisfaction; 18.20 for females in the level of life satisfaction while 9.56 in the level of depression for males; 23.48 for females in the level of depression. 4.458 std. deviation for males and 3.830 std. deviation for females in the level of life satisfaction; 5.694 std. deviation for males and 5.394 std. deviation for females in the level of depression indicates that the data is clustered around the mean and is more reliable.

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**Table no.2 - Showing Levene's Test for Equality of variances and 95% Confidence interval of the Difference in the level of Life Satisfaction and Depression.**

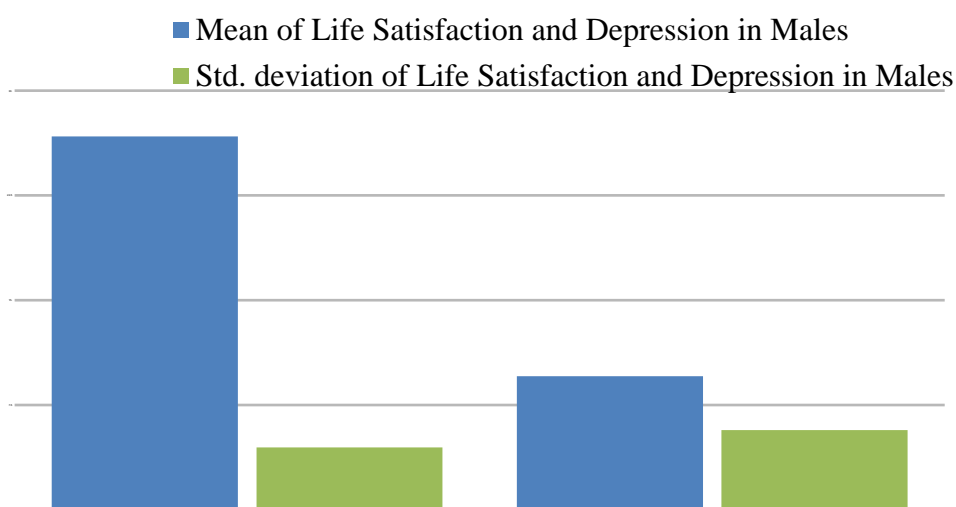
Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper	
Life Satisfaction	Equal variances assumed	1.287	.262	7.248	48	.000	8.520	1.175	6.157	10.883
	Equal variances not assumed			7.248	46.932	.000	8.520	1.175	6.155	10.885
Depression	Equal variances assumed	.087	.769	-8.874	48	.000	-13.920	1.569	-17.074	-10.766
	Equal variances not assumed			-8.874	47.860	.000	-13.920	1.569	-17.074	-10.766

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According to table no.2, The result shows that the Sig. in Levene's test for equality of variances is .262 in the level of life satisfaction and .769 in the level of depression where  $p > 0.05$ , which indicates that the homogeneity assumption of the variance is met. The t-test for Equal variances assumed and Equal variances not assumed in the level of Life Satisfaction is 7.428 and -8.874 for Equal variances assumed and Equal variances not assumed in the level of Depression. The mean difference (Equal variances assumed and Equal variances not assumed) came out to be 8.520 for Life Satisfaction and -13.920 for Depression. The Std. Error Difference between equal variances assumed and equal variances not assumed in the level of Life Satisfaction and Depression is 1.175 and 1.569 respectively. 95% Confidence interval of the difference in the level of Life Satisfaction in Equal variances assumed fall within lower Bound 6.157 and Upper Bound 10.885 while in Equal variances not assumed fall within Lower Bound 6.155 and Upper Bound 10.885. In the level of Depression, Equal Variances assumed fall within Lower Bound -17.07 and Upper Bound -10.766 while Equal Variances not assumed fall within Lower Bound -17.074 and Upper Bound -10.766. Hence, there is 95% probability that interval between X (Lower Bound) and Y (Upper Bound) contains the true value of the population parameter (mean).

### **Graph 1: Showing Mean and Std. deviation of Life Satisfaction and Depression in Males.**

According to Graph No.1, as depicted in Table no.1 the mean value of life satisfaction in males is higher than the mean value of depression in males; the difference in standard deviation for life satisfaction and depression in male is 1.236 this is because of social and cultural expectations as traditional gender roles and societal expectations may place different pressures on men and women which can affect their perceived life satisfaction. Men, on an average may have greater access to career opportunities, higher-paying jobs, and positions of power in certain industries. Empirical research related high satisfaction with work to satisfaction with life was done. A review was conducted on a study which covered more than 350 job satisfaction/life satisfaction relationship reported in 23 studies that vary widely in terms of the sample, instrumentation and date of survey (Rice, Near & Hunt, 2010). For



more than 90% of the cases, the direction of this relationship is statistically reliable. The magnitude of the reported zero-order relationships between job satisfaction and overall life satisfaction is typically modest with correlation mostly for males and females. This typical job-satisfaction/life satisfaction, correlation drops to the low teens when specific facets of

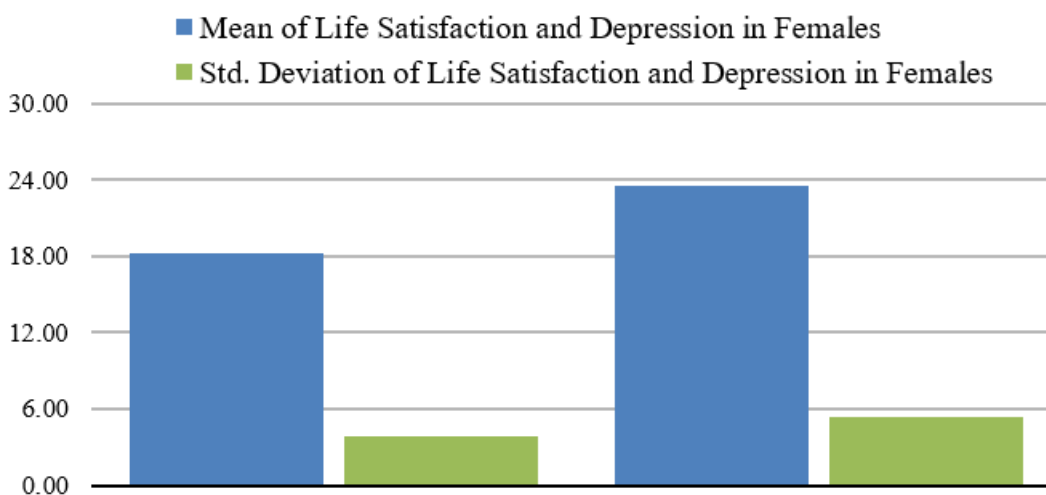
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life satisfaction, such as marital or leisure satisfaction, are used instead of overall life satisfaction.

### **Graph 2: Showing Mean and Std. deviation of Life Satisfaction and Depression in Females.**

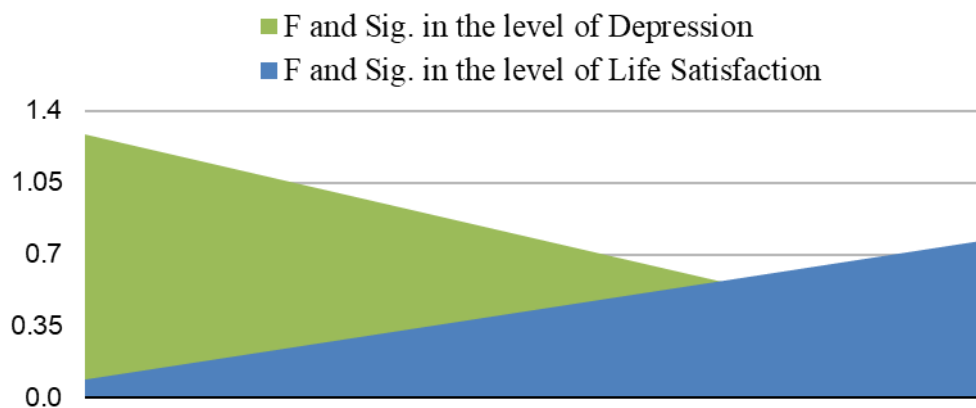
According to Graph No. 2, as depicted in Table no.1 the mean value of life satisfaction in females is lower than the mean value of depression in females; the difference in standard deviation for life satisfaction and depression is 1.564, this is because of reason for gender disparity which have complex depression rates and likely influenced by a combination of biological factors like hormonal differences between men and women, particularly fluctuations in estrogen and progesterone levels throughout the menstrual cycle, pregnancy and menopause as a result increases the vulnerability to depression in women; psychosocial factors as women often face unique psychosocial stressors that may contribute to depression. These include gender discrimination, gender-based violence, societal expectations and the challenges associated with multiple roles such as being caregiver, juggling work and family responsibilities and experiencing more interpersonal relationship difficulties; cultural and societal factors such as societal norms related to femininity, body image, and beauty standards can contribute to stress, self-esteem issues, and body dissatisfaction in women.

### **Graph 3: Showing Levene's Test for Equality of Variance in the level of Life Satisfaction and Depression.**



According to Graph No.3, there is a statistical significant difference in the level of life satisfaction and depression in males and females among young adults where  $p > 0.05$ , which indicates that the homogeneity assumption of the variance is met. Above depicted graph and research has shown that women tend to have higher rates of depression compared to men and factors that contribute to these differences can include social and cultural influences, societal expectations and gender roles can shape the way men and women experience and express their emotions; biological and hormonal differences such as fluctuations in genetic predisposition, can influence the prevalence and manifestation of depression in men and women differently. Individual experiences can vary greatly and these gender differences should not be oversimplified or generalised.

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Levene's Test for Equality of Variances.

### ANALYSIS

The purpose of the study was to assess the gender differences in the level of life satisfaction and depression among young adults. Positive psychology has recently developed a classification of human strength which is evaluated by investigating the strengths and life satisfaction in the community. In general, young adults have higher levels of strength related to exploring the world. Many factors influence subjective well-being and life satisfaction such as socio-demographic factors which includes gender, age, marital status, income and education and psychological factors include health and illness, functioning ability, activity level and social relationships. Symptoms of depression in young people include feeling of grumpy, having trouble sleeping, feeling worthlessness or guilty, eating or more than usual and gaining or losing weight.

The percentage of adults who have experienced the highest number of symptoms of depression is those who fall in the age range of 18 to 25, with a whopping 21% reporting having experienced symptoms of depression. The leading causes that contribute to the high rates of depression for this age group are academic pressure, social stressors, exposure to challenges, relationships difficulties and social media.

Depression has impacts on physical health; if left untreated, chronic depression can cause weakness immunity, fatigue or difficulty sleeping, digestive issues, high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, inflammation and worsening of chronic conditions. Depression is more common among young adults aged 18 to 25 years more than 17%, and increased most rapidly among adolescents and young adults and increased among nearly between gender, racial/ethnic, income and education.

The prevalence of depression in women is higher than men; its global annual prevalence was 5.5% and 3.2%, representing a 1.7- fold greater incidence in women. Depression is more than twice as prevalent in young women than men but this ratio decreases with age. Young women are at higher risk for major depression and mental disorders globally.

In study of dizygotic twins, women displayed more sensitivity to interpersonal relationships, whereas men displayed more sensitivity to external career and goal-oriented factors (Kendler KS and Gardener CO, 2014).

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The increased prevalence of depression of depression correlates with hormonal changes in women, particularly during puberty, prior to menstruation, following pregnancy and at perimenopause, suggests that female hormonal fluctuations may be a trigger of depression.

Depression looks different in men, “Women with depression may come in crying; men may come in acting out in anger,” says Andrew Angelino, M.D., Chait of Psychiatry at Howard County General Hospital. The difference appear as early as adolescence with depressed girls more likely than boys to be dissatisfied with their body image and to have guilt, feelings of failure, difficulty concentrating and sadness. Depressed boys, on the other hands are more likely to have lost interest in their usual activities and to be more downcast and tired in the morning. Men and women also cope with depression in different ways, with women are more likely to seek help whereas men are four times more likely to externalise their feelings.

Empirical research related high satisfaction with work to satisfaction with life was done. A review was conducted on a study which covered more than 350 job satisfaction/life satisfaction relationship reported in 23 studies that vary widely in terms of the sample, instrumentation and date of survey (Rice, Near & Hunt, 2010). For more than 90% of the cases, the direction of this relationship is statistically reliable. The magnitude of the reported zero-order relationships between job satisfaction and overall life satisfaction is typically modest with correlation mostly for males and females. This typical job-satisfaction/life satisfaction, correlation drops to the low teens when specific facets of life satisfaction, such as marital or leisure satisfaction, are used instead of overall life satisfaction.

In a longitudinal design, 650 young adolescents’ multi-faceted self-efficacy beliefs (academics, social and self-regulatory), academic achievement and peer preference in middle school were used to predict the life satisfaction five years later (Vecchio, Gerbino, Pastorelli, Bove and Caprara, 2007). Hierarchical regression analysis showed that for both genders, academic and social self-efficacy beliefs in early adolescence than early academic achievement and peer preference. Furthermore, change in academic and soul self-efficacy beliefs significantly contributed to predict life satisfaction over the course of five years.

A study was conducted to identify the particular dimensions of authoritative parenting (strictness-supervision, social support/involvement, and psychological autonomy granting) that are related to Life Satisfaction during early, middle and late adolescence, as well as to explore the hypothesis that LS serves as a mediator between authoritative parenting adolescent internalising and externalising behavior (Suldo & Huebner, 2004). A sample of 1201 middle and high school students completed self-report measure assessing thesis constructs, Results indicates statistically significant relationships between each authoritative parenting dimensions were positively related to LS, perceived parental social support emerged as the strongest correlate. Important developmental differences were revealed, including the finding that the association between parenting behaviors and adolescents’ LS changed as children aged. Last, Ls fully mediated the relationship between social support and adolescent problem behavior and partially mediated relationships between the remaining authoritative parenting dimensions. (i.e. strictness-supervision, psychological autonomy granting) and maladaptive adolescent behavior.

A study was conducted on whether social activities and relationships in adolescence are related to life satisfaction in young adulthood (Kekkonen, et.al, 2020). The psychosocial background characteristics of the study subjects (n=787, aged 13-18 years) were recorded by



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using self-rated questionnaires. Five years later, the Life Satisfaction (LS) scale was used to measure the participants' life satisfaction. Of the baseline variables, a low frequency of meeting with friends and subjective loneliness among males and a low number of recreational sporting hobbies among females associated with lower life satisfaction in young adulthood. The association between the frequency of meeting friends in adolescence and life satisfaction in young adulthood was mediated by the level of loneliness and Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) score in adolescence. Findings indicated that loneliness in adolescence may associate with low life satisfaction and related problems in young adulthood.

The results of the study support that the leading cause of depression can be violence among adolescence as indicated in a study which was conducted to assess the relationship between adolescents' dating violence victimization and their psychological well-being (Callahan, et.al, 2003). The participants were 190 high school students, ages 13 to 19 years, with just over half being boys (53%) and the remainder being girls (47%). Data were collected using self-administered questionnaires. For girls, increasing levels of dating violence were related to higher levels of post-traumatic stress and dissociations, even after controlling for demographic, family violence, and social desirability variables. For boys, the levels of victimisation were related to higher levels of anxiety, depression, and post traumatic stress, even after controlling for other variables. For both boys and girls, victimisation was related to lower levels of life satisfaction, but not after controlling for the demographic, family violence, and social desirability variables. The research questions were discussed in relation to the developmental challenges faced by adolescents.

A present study investigated the mediating role of self-esteem and the moderating role of gender in the relationship between ethnic identity components (i.e., exploration, resolution, affirmation) and depressive symptoms and life satisfaction (Watson, 2017). Participants were 294 Mexican descent adolescents (55.4% female) ages 14 to 18 years ( $M = 15.27$  years;  $SD = 1.00$  years). A mediated multi group path analysis was conducted. The final model indicated that self-esteem is a potential mediator between life satisfaction due to significant indirect relationships. The full model achieved acceptable model fit. Ethnic identity exploration was not significantly related to self-esteem, and no gender differences were present in the model. The study helped those working with Mexican descent youth come to a better understanding of self-esteem as a potential mechanism through which ethnic identity is related to psychological functioning (i.e., life satisfaction and depressive symptoms).

It was assumed on the basis of results shown above that there would be a significant difference in the life satisfaction and depression in males from that of females among younger adults.

### ***Limitations of the Study***

The study was conducted at Jammu City, Jammu & Kashmir and the sample was taken only from people residing in different areas of Jammu City. On the other hand, the study was conducted only on male and female late adolescence and young adults across 18-25 years of age, if middle and old age group were included the results could be widely varied.

## **CONCLUSION**

Mental health is a wide field that entails variables such as the presence of positive feelings like life satisfaction and negative emotions like sadness, stress, anxiety and depression. Adolescence is the period of transition from childhood to adulthood and it is a critical step that involves the promotion of emotional habits that foster mental well-being. Depression is a common and serious medical illness that negatively affects how an individual feel, think and act. Depression has been known as the first mental health priority among young adults due to the stressful challenges of life which is threat to well-being and it has the ability to cause significant impairment. Young adults with unsuitable mental health conditions are exposed to social exclusion, educational problems, and physical illnesses. The transition to adulthood holds new challenges for family relationships across and within generations. Young adults are critically impacted by the manner in which they experience their transition to adulthood and by the results if these transitions. Exploration relates to the degree to which they are committed to their choices, or the extent to which their life choices reflect their values and beliefs. Well-being is associated with high-commitment, high in-depth exploration and low reconsideration of commitment. Parents can influence their child's life satisfaction through financial support, different levels of emotional support such as advice, comforting and listening.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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