

Research Paper

A Study of Relationship between Hardiness and Psychological Well-Being in University Students

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ABSTRACT

University does not arrive gently. It sort of drops young adults into a space where everything feels slightly too much at once. There are assignments piling up, friendships shifting in unclear directions, and this constant, quiet question about what comes next. Some students manage. Some don't. And somewhere in between lies the question this study tries to hold onto what helps people stay psychologically steady when things are not. So, the focus turns inward. Not toward external support systems first, but toward something more personal. Psychological hardiness. A trait, or maybe a pattern, or perhaps just a way of responding that includes commitment, control, and challenge. Not as abstract words, but as lived tendencies. The kind that makes a person lean into difficulty instead of stepping back from it. At the same time, psychological well-being is not treated as a single feeling or a simple state. Drawing from Carol Ryff's framework, it stretches across multiple layers of autonomy that feels real, a sense of managing one's environment, slow personal growth, relationships that are not hollow, purpose that does not disappear under pressure, and an acceptance of self that is not entirely fragile. The study itself is structured, even if the experience it studies are not. A quantitative design. 208 university students. Ages between 18 and 25. Selected randomly across colleges in Indore. Data collected through the Psychological Hardiness Scale developed by Dr. Arun K. Singh and the Psychological Well-Being Scale. Numbers follow. Descriptive statistics. Correlation. Regression. And then something clearer emerges. Not dramatic, but steady. Most students sit somewhere in the middle moderate hardiness, moderate well-being. Not collapsing, not thriving completely either. The relationship between the two variables is not weak. It is present and meaningful. A positive correlation appears, r equal to 0.62, statistically significant. As hardiness increases, well-being tends to move with it. Not perfectly, but noticeably. Regression pushes this a bit further. Hardiness does not just relate to well-being; it predicts it to an extent. About 38 percent of the variance explained. Which leaves more unexplained than explained, but still enough to matter. What this suggests is not overly complicated. Students who are more psychologically hardy are, in general, better able to maintain their well-being while moving through the instability of university life. Not immune. Just better equipped. So, the implication becomes practical. Universities cannot remove stress entirely. That is unrealistic. But they can work on strengthening internal capacities. Counselling spaces, structured programs, small interventions that build commitment, control, and the ability to see challenge as something

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Received: June 08, 2026; Revision Received: September 22, 2026; Accepted: September 28, 2026

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other than threat. If those are strengthened, even slightly, the psychological balance of students might not feel so easily disrupted.

Keywords: *Psychological Hardiness, Psychological Well-Being, University Students, Mental Health*

Higher education does not simply shape students. It presses on them. Quietly at times, and at other moments with a kind of weight that is difficult to name. There are deadlines, expectations, shifting relationships, and then something less visible but more persistent a sense of uncertainty about what any of this is leading to. It accumulates. And when it does, emotional balance is not always stable. The need to understand how students cope, how they hold themselves together under this pressure, becomes less of an academic interest and more of a necessity (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Some internal factors seem to matter more than others. Psychological hardiness is one of them. Not immediately obvious, not always consciously recognized, but consistently present in those who seem to manage stress without completely fragmenting under it. The idea itself is not new. Introduced by Kobasa in 1979, though it does not feel dated. Psychological hardiness is described through three components commitment, control, and challenge. But those words only begin to explain it. In practice, it looks like staying involved even when things feel overwhelming. It looks like believing, at least to some degree, that one can influence outcomes rather than just endure them. And it looks like interpreting difficulty not purely as a threat, but as something that might carry meaning or possibility (Maddi, 2002).

In academic spaces, this orientation shifts behavior in subtle but important ways. Students who are higher in hardiness tend to persist longer. They remain engaged. Setbacks do not disappear, but the response to them changes. Effort continues. Motivation does not collapse as easily. There is a certain steadiness in how they move through challenges (Bartone, 2006).

Alongside this, psychological well-being forms a broader picture. Not just how students feel in isolated moments, but how they function across different areas of their lives. Ryff's framework does not reduce well-being to a single dimension. It stretches it across autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, relationships that feel genuine, a sense of purpose, and self-acceptance that is not entirely conditional (Ryff, 1989).

What is important here is that well-being is not simply the absence of distress. A student may not meet criteria for anxiety or depression and still feel directionless, disconnected, or internally unsettled. Psychological well-being, in this sense, refers to something fuller. A kind of active engagement with life that includes meaning, connection, and a sense of internal coherence. And when it is present, it tends to reflect outwardly better academic adjustment, more stable relationships, and a more effective way of handling stress (Keyes, 2002).

The connection between hardiness and well-being has not gone unnoticed. There is a pattern across studies. Individuals who are more psychologically hardy often report lower anxiety, lower depressive symptoms, and a greater sense of satisfaction with their lives (Maddi & Khoshaba, 2005; O'Rourke et al., 2010). Within academic environments, this translates into something practical. These students seem more capable of maintaining balance, even when

demands begin to compete with each other in uncomfortable ways. Their development, academically and personally, tends to remain more stable (Crockett et al., 2007).

And yet, something remains incomplete. The relationship between psychological hardiness and well-being, especially in current university populations, is not entirely understood. The context has shifted. Pressures have intensified. Expectations have become more complex, and the psychological load carried by students appears heavier than before (Stallman, 2010). So the question does not disappear. If anything, it becomes sharper.

Understanding how these two constructs interact is not just theoretical. It carries implications. If hardiness does influence well-being in meaningful ways, then it is not enough to simply acknowledge it. It needs to be cultivated. Structured. Integrated into how institutions think about student support.

This study moves in that direction. It attempts to examine, in a more focused way, how psychological hardiness relates to psychological well-being among university students. Not only whether they are connected, but how strongly, and in what manner. And beyond the numbers, there is an underlying intention to translate whatever is found into something usable. Something that can inform how student mental health is approached, rather than remaining as another conclusion that stays confined to paper.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There is already a pattern in the literature. Not perfectly uniform, not identical across contexts, but steady enough to notice. Study after study returns to a similar point psychological hardiness and well-being tend to move together. Sometimes strongly. Sometimes just enough to matter.

Wardani (2020) approached this through first-year students, which is where things often feel the most unstable. 237 individuals, all adjusting to a new academic environment. The findings were not subtle. Academic hardiness showed a direct, significant influence on psychological well-being. What stands out is that this effect held even when coping strategies and social support were accounted for. So, it was not only about external help or learned responses. Hardiness seemed to function from within, almost independently, as if it sustains itself during periods of transition.

A different sample, a different year, but a similar direction. Rayda and Palupi (2022) worked with 148 university students and reported a moderate positive relationship between academic hardiness and psychological well-being. Moderate, not overwhelming, but consistent with what broader positive psychology has been suggesting for a while. That internal attitude commitment, control, challenge are not abstract ideas. They show up in measurable ways in how students function and feel.

Anjum (2022) expands the picture slightly. The study included 208 students and did not isolate hardiness alone. Social support was included alongside it. Still, hardiness remained significant. It was positively related to all six dimensions of Ryff's model autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, relationships, purpose, self-acceptance. Not just one area. All of them. Together with social support, it predicted well-being effectively, but what matters here is that both operated independently. Internal and external resources, not replacing each other, but coexisting.

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Then there is the work by Chuning et al. (2024), where the focus shifts toward subjective well-being and emotional states. The findings hold, but with an added layer. Hardiness correlates positively with well-being, yes, but also negatively with anxiety and depressive symptoms. So it is not only about enhancing positive functioning. It also seems to buffer against psychological distress. A kind of protective mechanism, especially relevant for young adults navigating both developmental changes and environmental pressures.

Mariska and Astuti (2024) report something stronger. Among 221 non-regional students, those dealing with relocation and the disruption that comes with it, the relationship becomes more pronounced. A strong positive correlation, r equal to .674. Hardiness explains nearly half of the variance in well-being scores. That is not minor. It suggests that when students are removed from familiar environments, internal stability becomes even more critical.

Another context. Final-year nursing students, studied by Suprpti and Rahayu (2024). A group already under pressure, academically and professionally. The association between hardiness and well-being remains significant, but here it concentrates more clearly around specific dimensions environmental mastery, personal growth, and purpose in life. Which makes sense. At that stage, students are not just managing tasks. They are trying to make sense of where they are going.

And then Alwan et al. (2025) introduce a slightly different angle. Mindfulness. In a much larger sample of 1,050 students, mindfulness and psychological hardiness show a strong positive correlation, r equal to .66. It raises an interesting possibility. That awareness and resilience are not separate processes. They might reinforce each other. One sharpening perception, the other stabilizing response.

Taken together, literature does not feel scattered. It aligns. Not perfectly, but enough to form a coherent understanding. Psychological hardiness consistently appears as a reliable contributor to positive psychological outcomes. Students who stay committed, who believe they can exert some control, who interpret difficulty as something more than just threat tend to report better well-being. Across samples. Across contexts. Across different forms of academic pressure.

Still, even within this consistency, there is space left. The strength of relationships varies. The contexts shift. And the current student environment continues to evolve. Which means the question is not closed. It just becomes more precise.

Rationale of the Study

University students stand in a strange position. Not entirely stable, not entirely lost either. They are expected to perform, adapt, decide, and somehow remain emotionally intact while doing all of it at once. Academic pressure does not come alone. It overlaps with uncertainty in relationships, financial strain, and this persistent question about the future that rarely feels fully answered. When all of this begins to converge, psychological strain is not surprising. It is almost expected. Which makes the search for internal stabilizing factors feel necessary, not optional.

One such factor keeps appearing. Psychological hardiness. It is often described simply, but it does not operate in a simple way. Commitment, control, challenge are not just components, they shape perception itself. A demanding situation does not disappear, but it begins to look different. More manageable, sometimes even meaningful. Students who carry higher levels

of hardiness do not disengage as quickly. They stay involved, even when motivation dips. They tend to believe that their actions still matter, that outcomes are not entirely fixed. And when failure appears, it does not immediately close off possibility. It becomes something to work through, or at least something to interpret differently.

This shift in orientation matters. Not in a dramatic, instant way, but in how it accumulates over time. Engagement continues. Effort is sustained. Emotional breakdown is not eliminated, but it becomes less likely to dominate completely. Which is where psychological well-being begins to connect.

Psychological well-being, especially through Ryff's framework, does not reduce itself to a single feeling of happiness. It spreads across multiple areas self-acceptance that is not constantly collapsing, autonomy that feels real rather than forced, the ability to manage one's environment, relationships that hold some depth, a sense of purpose that does not vanish under pressure, and an ongoing movement toward growth. When these are present, even partially, students function differently. Academically, socially, personally. The two constructs begin to overlap here. Not identical, but intersecting. Hardiness shapes how stress is interpreted. Well-being reflects how life is experienced. And somewhere between interpretation and experience, there is a relationship that still needs clearer understanding.

Existing research has touched on this, but not fully. Some studies examine hardiness. Others focus on well-being. A few connect them. But within the context of contemporary Indian university students, the picture remains incomplete. The environment itself has shifted. Expectations have intensified. Competition has become sharper, and institutional demands feel less forgiving. So the question becomes more immediate. Not just whether hardiness relates to well-being, but how strongly, and in what way, within this specific context.

This study moves toward that gap. It attempts to examine the relationship more directly, grounding it in empirical data rather than assumption. But the intention does not stop at measurement. There is a practical layer beneath it. If hardiness does contribute meaningfully to well-being, then it becomes something that can be developed, not just observed.

The aim, then, is not only to understand, but to translate. Into interventions. Into counselling approaches. Into structured efforts within universities that do more than help students survive stress. Something that allows them to build internal resources, gradually, so that engagement with academic life does not feel like constant strain, but something closer to stability, even if not perfect.

METHOD

Objectives of the Study

- To assess the level of psychological hardiness among university students.
- To assess the level of psychological well-being among university students.
- To examine the relationship between psychological hardiness and psychological well-being among university students.
- To determine whether psychological hardiness significantly predicts psychological well-being in university students.

Hypotheses

- There will be a significant positive relationship between psychological hardiness and psychological well-being among university students.

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- Psychological hardiness will be a significant predictor of psychological well-being among university students.

Sample

The sample included 208 university students from different colleges in Indore. Their ages ranged from 18 to 25, covering both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Male and female students were included to keep the representation balanced, though the focus was not on gender differences.

Sampling Method

Simple random sampling was used. Each student had an equal chance of being selected, which helps in reducing bias. The approach keeps the selection process straightforward, even if it remains limited to students within Indore.

Tools Used

1. Psychological Hardiness Scale

The Psychological Hardiness Scale developed by Dr. Arun K. Singh was used to measure psychological hardiness. The scale assesses the three core dimensions of hardiness: commitment, control, and challenge. It consists of structured items rated on a standardized response format.

- **Reliability:** The scale has been reported to have satisfactory reliability, with a split-half reliability coefficient of approximately 0.78, indicating good internal consistency.
- **Validity:** The scale demonstrates adequate content and construct validity, as established by expert evaluation and empirical studies. It has been widely used in Indian research settings, making it suitable for the present study.

2. Psychological Well-Being Scale

Psychological well-being was measured using Carol Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale. This scale measures six dimensions of psychological well-being:

- Autonomy
 - Environmental Mastery
 - Personal Growth
 - Positive Relations with Others
 - Purpose in Life
 - Self-Acceptance
- **Reliability:** Ryff's scale has demonstrated high reliability, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.70 to 0.90 across different dimensions.
 - **Validity:** The scale has strong construct and convergent validity and is internationally recognized for assessing psychological well-being in diverse populations, including university students.

Procedure

After obtaining permission from the concerned authorities, the selected participants were contacted and informed about the purpose of the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. The questionnaires were administered individually or in small groups under standardized instructions. Confidentiality and anonymity of responses were ensured. Participants were encouraged to respond honestly, and no time limit was imposed.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION**Objective 1**

To assess the level of psychological hardiness among university students.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics and Level-wise Distribution of Psychological Hardiness (N = 208)

Level of Psychological Hardiness	Score Range*	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Low Hardiness	Below Mean – 1 SD	52	25.00%
Moderate Hardiness	Mean $\pm$ 1 SD	118	56.73%
High Hardiness	Above Mean + 1 SD	38	18.27%
Total	—	208	100%

Overall Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Psychological Hardiness	78.46	11.82

*Score ranges were determined according to the norms suggested in the Psychological Hardiness Scale manual.

Discussion

Table 1 presents the distribution in a way that feels balanced but not entirely reassuring. The mean score of psychological hardiness is 78.46, with a standard deviation of 11.82, placing most students in the moderate range, though not without differences. About 25.00% (N = 52) fall into the low category, where managing stress and maintaining control may be more difficult, while the majority, 56.73% (N = 118), remain in the moderate range, coping with demands but not with strong resilience. A smaller group, 18.27% (N = 38), shows high psychological hardiness, suggesting better stability and a more positive approach toward challenges. Overall, psychological hardiness among students remains mostly moderate, with fewer at the extremes, which quietly points toward the need to strengthen it, especially among those already at the lower end.

Objective 2

To assess the level of psychological well-being among university students.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics and Level-wise Distribution of Psychological Well-Being (N = 208)

Level of Psychological Well-Being	Score Range*	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Low Well-Being	Below Mean – 1 SD	49	23.56%
Moderate Well-Being	Mean $\pm$ 1 SD	121	58.17%
High Well-Being	Above Mean + 1 SD	38	18.27%
Total	—	208	100%

Overall Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Psychological Well-Being	182.64	24.37

*Score ranges were determined according to the norms suggested in Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale.

Discussion

Table 2 presents a similar kind of pattern, though it feels slightly uneven when looked at closely. The mean score of psychological well-being is 182.64, with a standard deviation of 24.37, placing most students in the moderate range, but with noticeable variation. Around

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23.56% (N = 49) fall into the low well-being category, where areas like self-acceptance, purpose, autonomy, and relationships may not feel stable or satisfying. The majority, 58.17% (N = 121), remain in the moderate range, suggesting they are managing their academic and personal lives with some balance, though not without strain. A smaller group, 18.27% (N = 38), shows high psychological well-being, reflecting stronger emotional stability, clearer goals, and healthier interpersonal functioning. Overall, psychological well-being appears mostly moderate among students, with fewer at the higher end, which points toward the need for supportive interventions, especially for those already experiencing lower levels.

Objective 3

To examine the relationship between psychological hardiness and psychological well-being among university students.

Hypothesis:

H₁: There will be a significant positive relationship between psychological hardiness and psychological well-being among university students.

Table 3 Correlation between Psychological Hardiness and Psychological Well-Being (N = 208)

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r-value	Level of Significance
Psychological Hardiness	208	78.46	11.82		
Psychological Well-Being	208	182.64	24.37	0.62	p < 0.05

**Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was used to compute the relationship.*

Discussion

To understand how psychological hardiness and psychological well-being connect, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was applied to data from 208 students. The result shows up in Table 3, but it doesn't really need the table to stand out. The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.62$) points to a moderate, clearly positive relationship. And it is not random. The significance at the 0.05 level confirms that this link actually means something. What it suggests is fairly direct, though not entirely simple. Students who are higher in psychological hardiness tend to report better psychological well-being. Not always perfectly, but consistently enough. The traits tied to hardiness commitment, control, the ability to see challenges differently seem to shift how students experience things overall. Emotional balance improves. Functioning feels steadier.

So, the hypothesis holds. The r-value (0.62) is positive, significant, and difficult to dismiss. Psychological hardiness and psychological well-being are not just loosely connected. They move together in a way that matters. Which leaves a practical takeaway, even if it is a bit understated. If students are better able to manage stress, both academic and personal, it is not only because of what surrounds them. It is also because of what they carry within.

Objective 4

To determine whether psychological hardiness significantly predicts psychological well-being among university students.

Hypothesis:

H₂: Psychological hardiness will be a significant predictor of psychological well-being among university students.

Table 4 Regression Analysis Showing Psychological Hardiness as a Predictor of Psychological Well-Being (N = 208)

Predictor Variable	B	SE B	β	t-value	Significance
Psychological Hardiness	1.28	0.12	0.62	10.67	$p < 0.05$

Model Summary

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F-value	Significance
0.62	0.38	0.38	113.85	$p < 0.05$

Dependent Variable: Psychological Well-Being. Simple linear regression technique was used.

To see whether psychological hardiness actually *does something* to psychological well-being, a simple linear regression was used. Hardiness was taken as the independent variable, well-being as the dependent one, based on data from 208 students. The numbers don't stay quiet. The model shows a multiple correlation coefficient ($R = 0.62$), which already points to a fairly strong link. Then comes $R^2 = 0.38$, meaning 38% of the variation in psychological well-being is explained by hardiness. Not everything, clearly. But not small either. The model itself holds up. The F-value (113.85) is significant at the 0.05 level, so it is not just fitting by accident. The regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.62$) is positive and significant, and the t-value (10.67) says the same thing again, just more forcefully. Hardiness is not sitting on the side. It is actively predicting well-being. Then the more concrete part. The unstandardized coefficient ($B = 1.28$) suggests that with every one-unit increase in psychological hardiness, psychological well-being increases by 1.28 units. A simple statement, but it carries weight. So, the hypothesis is accepted. Psychological hardiness significantly predicts psychological well-being among university students. But the meaning of this does not stay confined to statistics. It points somewhere else. That qualities like commitment, control, and the ability to face challenges differently are not just theoretical ideas. They seem to shape how students actually function, emotionally and psychologically. Students who develop these tendencies do not just manage stress better. They appear more stable overall. Not untouched by pressure, but less shaken by it. And maybe that is where this becomes useful. Because if hardiness contributes this much, then it is not something to just measure and move on from. It can be built. Strengthened. Worked on. Which makes it less of a trait you either have or don't, and more of something that can be developed over time. And if that happens, even partially, the effect on well-being might not be small.

CONCLUSION

This study starts off looking straightforward. Measure hardiness. Measure well-being. See how they connect. But what comes out of it feels a little less neat. Most students are not at the extremes. They are somewhere in the middle. Managing, but not always comfortably. Psychological hardiness is moderate. Well-being too. Which almost sounds fine until you think about what "moderate" really means here. It is not strength. It is more like holding things together, just enough. The connection between the two is clearer than expected. Students who stay committed, who feel some sense of control, who don't immediately collapse in front of challenges they tend to feel better overall. Not perfectly stable, but steadier. There is something about that internal stance that shifts how everything else is experienced. And then the numbers push it a bit further. Hardiness does not just sit alongside well-being. It predicts it. Not completely, but enough to matter. Enough to suggest that this is not a minor factor you can ignore. Which makes things slightly uncomfortable, in a practical sense. Because if this is true, then universities cannot just focus on reducing stress. That only goes so far. Something else has to be built. Commitment. Control. The ability to face difficulty without immediately stepping away from it. These are not quick fixes. But

they are not out of reach either. Especially for students who are already on the lower end. The ones who struggle more quietly. For them, this is not just about improvement. It might be about stability. So, the study does not end with something dramatic. It circles back to something simple, but not easy. Students do not just need support around them. They need something within them that holds. And if that can be strengthened even a little, the rest might not feel as overwhelming as it usually does.

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Acknowledgment

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Jahagirdar, D. (2026). A Study of Relationship between Hardiness and Psychological Well-Being in University Students. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 14(3), 2494-2504. DIP:18.01.227.20261403, DOI:10.25215/1403.227