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PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS OF QUALITY OF LIFE AMONG BOARDING STUDENTS: MODERATING ROLE OF COPING STRATEGIES

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Abstract

The present study aimed to find out the relationship between separation anxiety, academic stress, loneliness, quality of life and coping strategies among boarding students. A sample of 300 boarding students were selected from different areas of Lahore through convenient sampling technique based on cross-sectional research design. Separation Anxiety Scale by Manicavasagar et al. (2003), Academic Stress Scale by Rao (2012) Loneliness Scale by Russell et al. (1978), Quality of Life Scale by Burckhardt and Anderson (2003) and Coping Scale by Hamby et al. (2013) were used for data collection in current research. The SPSS 23 was used for data analysis. Results revealed that academic stress and loneliness are strongly correlated under the influence of separation anxiety and therefore students who have increased separation anxiety also develop stress and they are lonelier. There is also a high positive relationship with the academic stress and loneliness. Separation anxiety, academic stress, and loneliness, on the other hand, rank among the strongest negative predictors of quality of life and coping strategies, indicating that the more distress one is, the worse of well-being and less resilient the coping. The coping strategies are also related positively to quality of life, meaning that students who have a better life satisfaction are likely to apply more effective coping strategies. Results revealed that coping strategies did not moderate the relationship between separation anxiety, academic stress, loneliness and quality of life among boarding students. The results indicated that male and female boarding students have no significant difference in separation anxiety, academic stress, loneliness and quality of life as the effect sizes are very small. Nonetheless, males rated much higher in coping techniques than females implying that they have better coping techniques or apply them more frequently. All in all, there is a small difference between genders except on coping strategies.

Keywords: *Separation Anxiety, Academic Stress, Loneliness, Quality Of Life, Coping Strategies*

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1. Introduction

Boarding students represent a psychologically vulnerable group of the population with long-term loss of contacts with the family members and family increased demands in academic area and inaccessibility of the used social support nests. It is always noted that empirically, students enrolled in a boarding school are more likely to have separation anxiety and academic stress and loneliness both of which are detrimental to their emotional stability, social adaptation, and quality of life (Lodhi et al., 2021; Smith and Khawaja, 2019). Addiction The disturbance of attachment causes creates the condition of separation anxiety which is manifested in homesickness, excessive worrying, emotional instability, and inability to adjust to new environments especially in residential educational settings (Bowlby, 1969; Muris et al., 2011). At the same time, the psychological distress state is worsened by academic stress based on performance pressure, the competitiveness factor, and fear of failure that leads to burnout, loss of motivation, and worsened well-being (Misra and Castillo, 2018; Pascoe et al., 2020). The aspect of loneliness further adds to these barriers by building the subjective perception of not fitting in into society, which has negative impacts on self-esteem, emotional regulation, and life satisfaction. All these psychological stressors interact together to negatively influence the quality of life of the boarding students and hence a cohesive psychological framework is required to comprehend the overall impact of the stressors (Cacioppo and Cacioppo, 2018; Hawkley and Cacioppo, 2019).

The dynamics of coping strategies are instrumental in defining how boarding students are at a position to react to a psychological stressor and sustain their quality of living. The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping state that stress outcomes are not only controllable by the external demands but rather, by individual cognitive appraisal and availed coping resources (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Studies have always shown that adaptive coping skills like problem-solving, positive reframing, seeking social

support, mindfulness inseparably shield the adverse consequences of separation anxiety, academic stress, and loneliness on well-being (Compas et al., 2017; Park and Adler, 2003). Otherwise, maladaptive coping methods such as avoidance, denial, rumination, and substance use worsen the emotional distress, and also exacerbate the quality of life (Eisenberg et al., 2017; Sharma and Singh, 2023). A range of researches carried out in various cultural backgrounds suggests that coping strategies act as mediators and moderators, alleviated the negative psychological effect of stressors and increased resilience in boarding students. These results underscore coping as a response to stress as well as an active psychological resource necessary in the emotional adaptation and life satisfaction in residential learning systems (Zhang et al., 2020; Wong and Lim, 2022).

This theoretical framework is grounded on the Attachment Theory, Cognitive Discrepancy Theory and Resilience Theory, which together determine the action by which the psychological stressors affect the quality of life. Attachment Theory explains how interrupted caregiver relationships are the cause of separation anxiety and emotional insecurity, especially in the context of boarding (Bowlby, 1969; Brumariu and Kerns, 2020). Cognitive Discrepancy Theory describes loneliness as being an inadequate relationship with others that involves discrepancy between desired and actual social relationships as a cause of dissatisfaction and lowered well-being in case the emotional needs cannot be fulfilled (Peplau and Perlman, 1982). The Resilience Theory also lays emphasis on how adaptive coping mechanisms are considered to be protective factors that help individuals to endure a crisis and to be psychologically healthy (Masten, 2001). Empirical data continuously checks that boarding students with resilience and effective coping report their levels of life satisfaction are stronger despite exposure to stressors, and those who apply maladaptive coping remain psychologically impaired. Thus, the idea of incorporating coping strategies into this theoretical framework offers a powerful foundation of creating and enhancing the quality of life of boarding students based on specific psychological intervention (Naser et al., 2018; Moksnes and Haugan, 2021).

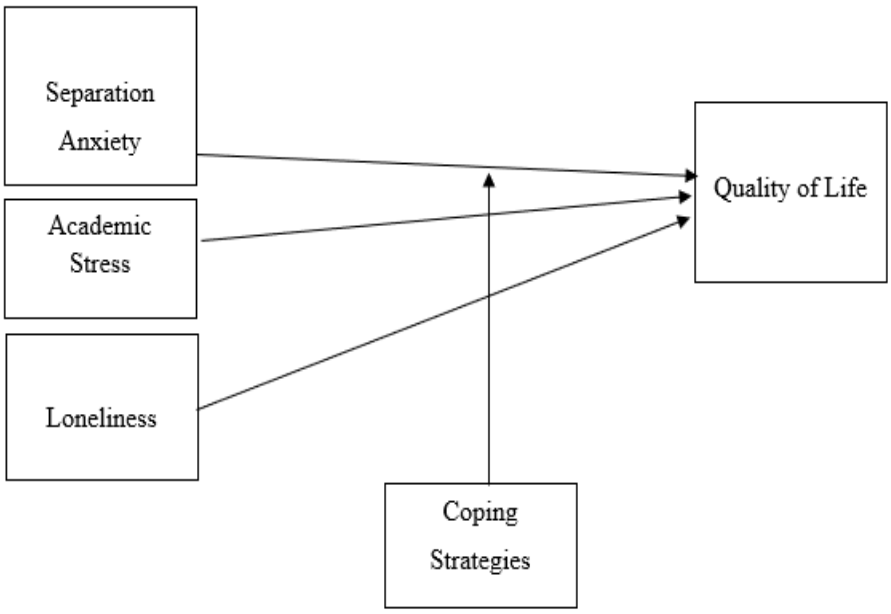
1.1. Objectives of the study

2. To examine the relationship between separation anxiety, academic stress, loneliness, quality of life and coping strategies among boarding students.
3. To investigate the moderating role of coping strategies in the relationship between separation anxiety, academic stress, loneliness and quality of life among boarding students.
4. To measure gender difference in separation anxiety, academic stress, loneliness, quality of life and coping strategies among boarding students.

1.2. Hypotheses

2. There will be a significant relationship between separation anxiety, academic stress, loneliness, quality of life and coping strategies among boarding students.
3. Coping strategies will moderate the relationship between separation anxiety, academic stress, loneliness and quality of life among boarding students.
4. There is significant gender difference in separation anxiety, academic stress, loneliness, quality of life and coping strategies among boarding students.

1.3. Conceptualized Model



2.Methods

2.1. Sample

Convenient sample based on (N=300) boarding students where the inclusion city is Lahore. The age range of boarding students must be between 7 to 18 years.

2.2. Instruments

2.2.1. Separation Anxiety scale (Manicavasagar et al., 2003)

Manicavasagar et al. (2003) developed the Adult Separation Anxiety

Questionnaire (ASA-27) as a self-report measure that was meant to measure symptoms of separation anxiety during adulthood. The scale has 27 items, which represent typical emotional and behavioral displays of separation anxiety. The responses will be evaluated according to the 4-point Likert scale (0 = This has never happened to me to 3 = This happens very often) to be able to evaluate the frequency and the severity of the symptoms. The ASA-27 has shown good psychometric qualities with a reported Cronbach alpha of.95 meaning that it has got an excellent internal consistency and reliability among various populations of adults.

2.2.2. Academic Stress Scale (Rao, 2012)

Academic Stress Scale (ASS) is a scale created by Kim (1970) and adjusted by Rajendran and Kaliappan (1990) and Rao (2012) to measure academic stress in students. The scale has 40 questions which address various areas of stress which include workload, examinations, peer pressure and parental expectations. The responses are scaled on a 5-point Likert scale, usually between 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree, and the bigger the response the higher the academic stress levels. Its internal consistency has been good with reported Cronbach alpha at between.82 and.86 denoting high levels of reliability in both research and applied educational practices.

2.2.3. Loneliness Scale (Russell et al., 1978)

UCLA Loneliness Scale was first designed by Russell et al. (1978) as a scale to measure subjective experiences of loneliness and social isolation. The scale has 20 items. The rating of responses is given on 4-point Likert scale with values between 1 = Never to 4 = Often, with high score reflecting more loneliness. The scale has shown very good psychometric qualities and Cronbach's alpha has been reported to be between.89 and.94 which indicates high level of internal consistency and reliability among the people of different groups.

2.2.4. Quality of Life Scale (Burckhardt and Anderson, 2003)

Burckhardt and Anderson (2003) Quality of Life Scale (QOLS) will be the measure of quality of life among boarding students. The QOLS is made up of 16 items that are rated on a 7-point Likert scale between 1 = Terrible to 7 = Delighted where a higher rating indicates increased satisfaction and perceived quality of life. The scale has demonstrated high levels of reliability, and the reported values of Cronbach's alpha tend to be between .82 to.92, which indicates high levels of internal consistency.

2.2.5. Coping Scale (Hamby et al., 2013)

The 13-item Coping Scale by Hamby et al. (2013) is sophisticated yet brief in assessing an individual's coping strategies in the face of stress and adversity. This scale is measured around adaptive coping behaviors. Responses are given on a four-point Likert scale (1 = Not True, 2 = A Little True, 3 = Somewhat True, 4 = Mostly True). Respondents The scale is aimed at perceiving general coping tendencies regardless of the context rather than specific situational responses. The 13- item Coping Scale's Cronbach's alpha is reported to be .82 which is reasonably good.

2.3.Procedure

Upon acquiring informed consent from the study participants, a purposive sampling approach was applied Subsequent to obtaining the informed consent participants, were chosen using the pre-selected sampling method. Researchers built rapport with participants and subsequently provided detailed written information about the study aims and objectives. Every participant was guaranteed confidentiality concerning the data collected alongside their right to withdrawal at any stage of the study without suffering penalties. For each measure, all instructions provided by the original measure developers were rigorously followed to maintain consistency across the study. Each assessment was capped with a 35-40-minute-long answer session designed for participants to seek answers to their questions and elucidate further regarding the conducted research.

Sr	Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1	Separation Anxiety	-	.79**	.76**	-.16**	-.18**
2	Academic Stress		-	.65**	-.01	-.20**
3	Loneliness			-	-.25**	-.21**
4	Quality of Life				-	.38**
5	Coping Strategies					-

3.Results

Table 1:*Bivariate Correlation Between Separation Anxiety, Academic Stress, Loneliness, Quality of Life and Coping Strategies among Boarding Students*

Note. *p < .05, **p< .01

Table 1 presents the correlation between the variables of the study. Academic stress and loneliness are strongly correlated under the influence of separation anxiety and therefore students who have increased separation anxiety also develop stress and they are lonelier. There is also a high positive relationship with the academic stress and loneliness. Separation anxiety, academic stress, and loneliness, on the other hand, rank

among the strongest negative predictors of quality of life and coping strategies, indicating that the more distress one is, the worse of well-being and less resilient the coping. The coping strategies are also related positively to quality of life, meaning that students who have a better life satisfaction are likely to apply more effective coping strategies. In general, the trend indicates that emotional and academic challenges are associated with lower well-being and less adaptive coping by boarding students.

Table 2: *Coping Strategies Moderating the Relationship Between Separation Anxiety and Quality of Life Among Boarding Students (N = 300).*

	Quality of Life			
Variables	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*p*
Separation Anxiety	.399	.440	.907	.36
Coping Strategies	1.10	.694	1.58	.11
Separation Anxiety x Coping Strategies	-.010	.009	-1.13	.25
R^2	.159			
ΔR^2	.003			

*Note. **p < .01, B = Unstandardized coefficient,*

The moderation analysis in table 2 investigates the differences of coping strategies that affect the relationship between coping and the quality of life and separation anxiety in the case of boarding students. The findings indicate the non-significance of the p-values indicating that neither separation anxiety nor coping strategies play any significant role in predicting quality of life independently. Furthermore, the interaction term (Separation Anxiety × Coping Strategies) is insignificant (p =.25) which shows that concept of coping strategies fails to mediate the relationship between separation anxiety and quality of life. The model accounts for a limited percentage of variance in quality of life (R2 =.159) and the change in variance of interaction (R2 =.003) are insignificant. On the whole, coping strategies do not play a significant role when it comes to the effect that separation anxiety has had on the quality of life of students.

Table 3: *Coping Strategies Moderating the Relationship Between Academic Stress and Quality of Life Among Boarding Students (N = 300).*

	Quality of Life			
Variables	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*p*
Academic Stress	.202	.293	.690	.49
Coping Strategies	.722	.724	.997	.31
Academic Stress x Coping Strategies	-.003	.006	-.525	.59

R^2	.152
ΔR^2	.000

Note. ***p* < .01, *B* = Unstandardized coefficient,

Table 3 indicates the moderation analysis experimenting to test whether coping strategies have an effect on the relationship between academic stress and quality of life. Numbers of the above results suggest that academic stress is not a significant predictor of quality of life, and neither are coping strategies, as their p-values are not significant. The other interaction term (Academic Stress × Coping Strategies) also does not prove to be significant (p =.59), and it shows no moderation effect by the use of coping strategies on the connection between academic stress and quality of life. This model describes a slight bit of variance in quality of life (R2 =.152), and the interaction change is virtually zero. In general, there is no difference in coping strategies that would influence the relationship between academic stress and the quality of life of the students.

Table 4: *Coping Strategies Moderating the Relationship Between Loneliness and Quality of Life Among Boarding Students (N = 300).*

	Quality of Life			
Variables	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*p*
Loneliness	.218	.539	.405	.68
Coping Strategies	.794	.617	1.28	.19
Loneliness x Coping Strategies	-.003	.011	-.808	.41
R2	.180			
ΔR2	.001			

Note. ***p* < .01, *B* = Unstandardized coefficient,

Table 4 shows the moderation test which determines that coping strategies can adjust the correlation between loneliness and quality of life of the boarding students. The findings indicate that the loneliness is not a strong predictor of the quality of life as is the case of coping strategies. Notably, no important interaction term (Loneliness x Coping Strategies) is found (p =.41), suggesting that coping strategies lack the role of mediating the association between the quality of life and loneliness. The model describes a minimal variation in quality of life (R2 =.180), and the improvement in variance is insignificant with that brought about by the interaction (ΔR2 =.001). In general, the coping strategies do not have great effects in reducing the loneliness and its correlation to the quality of life of students.

Table 5: *Mean differences Between Separation Anxiety, Academic Stress, Loneliness, Quality of Life and Coping Strategies among Boarding Students on Gender (n=300).*

	Male	Female

	(*n* = 148)		(*n* = 152)				
Variables	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*p*	Cohen's d
Separation Anxiety	75.66	5.20	75.59	5.97	.108	.91	0.01
Academic Stress	117.36	7.62	117.80	8.00	-.497	.61	0.05
Loneliness	53.58	4.74	53.72	4.88	-.247	.80	0.02
Quality of Life	45.40	5.26	45.66	6.05	-.388	.69	0.04
Coping Strategies	48.99	5.38	46.20	7.35	3.75	.00	0.43

Note. M=M= Mean, SD = Standard Deviation

The results in Table 5 indicate that male and female boarding students have no significant difference in separation anxiety, academic stress, loneliness and quality of life as the effect sizes are very small. Nonetheless, males rated much higher in coping techniques than females implying that they have better coping techniques or apply them more frequently. All in all, there is a small difference between genders except on coping strategies.

4.Discussion

The present study aimed to find out the relationship between separation anxiety, academic stress, loneliness, quality of life and coping strategies among boarding students. A sample of 300 boarding students were selected from different areas of Faisalabad and Kasur through convenient sampling technique based on cross-sectional research design. Separation Anxiety Scale by Manicavasagar et al. (2003), Academic Stress Scale by Rao (2012) Loneliness Scale by Russell et al. (1978), Quality of Life Scale by Burckhardt and Anderson (2003) and Coping Scale by Hamby et al. (2013) were used for data collection in current research. The SPSS 23 was used for data analysis.

The first hypothesis of the study was that there will be a significant relationship between separation anxiety, academic stress, loneliness, quality of life and coping strategies among boarding students. Results revealed that academic stress and loneliness are strongly correlated under the influence of separation anxiety and therefore students who have increased separation anxiety also develop stress and they are lonelier. There is also a high positive relationship with the academic stress and loneliness. Separation anxiety, academic stress, and loneliness, on the other hand, rank among the strongest negative predictors of quality of life and coping strategies, indicating that the more distress one is, the worse of well-being and less resilient the coping. The coping strategies are also related positively to quality of life, meaning that students who have a better life satisfaction are likely to apply more effective coping strategies.

Ribeiro et al. (2018) revealed that the negative correlation between stress and quality of life was stable. The authors infer the fact that high levels of academic stress have the propensity to deteriorate various dimensions of the well-being of students such as physical health, psychological functioning, and satisfaction in life as a whole. This justifies my observation that the quality of life is predicted among boarding students by the presence of separation anxiety, academic stress, and loneliness.

Elsayed (2025) analyzed 520 students also and reported that the perceived stress is significantly negatively correlated with life satisfaction; the relationship between the variables was partially mediated by coping strategies. That is, students who coped to a greater degree also said they are more satisfied with their lives even when they were under stress which is in agreement with what I found out where coping strategies correlate positively with quality of life.

Shim and Go (2025) involved 1,783 students and found that school burnout (which is an overlap with academic stress) had a negative effect on life satisfaction much of sound of loneliness. This empirically confirms my observation that loneliness and stress are most likely to occur in combination and both to be coupled with reduced quality of life.

Vasileiou (2019) investigated the coping mechanism of the loneliness situation among students as they transition into university. It concluded that coping strategies (including social support looking) are employed by a high number of young adults to deal with loneliness and were found to reduce the adverse mental-health consequences. This coincides with my determination that coping mechanisms are associated with improved wellbeing and may neutralize a part of the negative impact of loneliness or separation anxiety.

Peltzer and Pengpid (2015) compared university students and discovered that the greater the perceived stress, the worse the quality of life, and in turn, the less the psychological well-being and satisfaction with life. Significantly, in their work, the authors emphasize the fact that students that used adaptive coping strategies more often (seeking support, cognitive reframing, and active problem-solving, etc.) reported being more overall adjusted despite academic demands. This evidence confirms the fact that coping is a protective factor, which may alleviate a negative effect of stress and loneliness on well-being. This is in line with my results where coping strategies were significantly associated with the quality of life and were seen to counter some of the negative impacts of separation anxiety, loneliness and academic stress among boarding students.

The second hypothesis of the study was coping strategies will moderate the

relationship between separation anxiety, academic stress, loneliness and quality of life among boarding students. Results revealed that coping strategies did not moderate the relationship between separation anxiety, academic stress, loneliness and quality of life among boarding students.

Park et al. (2017) studied undergraduates and found out that even despite the fact that coping strategies were linked with well-being in general, the study did not indicate that coping strategies mitigated the association between academic stress and mental-health outcomes. Providing a reason that causes the coping strategies to cease buffering, the authors claimed that the stress mechanisms become chronic, like in situations that involve academic stress and emotional distress. This is in line with your results that show boarding students had inadequate coping mechanisms to mitigate the ill impact of separation anxiety, academic stress, and loneliness on quality of life.

Duraku and Hoxha (2018) have discovered that the relationship between psychological problems and stress in adolescents was not moderated by coping behaviors when students were characterized with high emotional vulnerability. They observed that positive affective conditions such as anxiety and loneliness have the capability of surpassing the coping mechanisms and diminishing their controlling effects. This upheld your finding that among boarding students subject to separation anxiety and loneliness, the coping mechanisms were inadequate to moderate stress quality life relationship.

The study by Ribeiro et al. (2021) focused on coping behaviors in college students and found out that coping did not mediate the relationship between perceived stress and life satisfaction as a significant number of students employed coping strategies infrequently or adopted both adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies. Coping mechanisms do not hedge results in life when they are not enacted in sustained, working ways. This is in line with your finding that coping among boarding students did not make a significant difference in adjusting the relationship of stressors (separation anxiety, academic stress, loneliness) and the quality of life.

Li and Zhang (2019) researched for first-year university students who lived away from home and discovered coping was not a significant moderator of loneliness and well-being. They proposed that the effectiveness of coping is lessened by factors in the environment, including difficulties in adjustments, a lack of autonomy and networks. Students who are boarding have the same contextual constraints, where a moderating effect of coping strategies on quality of life would have been undermined.

Sahin and Arslan (2020) found out that coping strategies failed to mediate interaction between anxiety symptoms and quality of life in adolescents. They concluded that stressor-related with anxiety has a direct and strong impact on well-being which

cannot be counter-acted through coping. This agrees with the results of yours: separation anxiety- the variant of anxiety-based distress, academic stress, and loneliness, can have such significant psychological pressure that they will not be offset by coping mechanisms, and their negative effect on the quality of life will manifest.

The last hypothesis of the study was that there is significant gender difference in separation anxiety, academic stress, loneliness, quality of life and coping strategies among boarding students. The results indicated that male and female boarding students have no significant difference in separation anxiety, academic stress, loneliness and quality of life as the effect sizes are very small. Nonetheless, males rated much higher in coping techniques than females implying that they have better coping techniques or apply them more frequently. All in all, there is a small difference between genders except on coping strategies.

Pascoe et al. (2020) meta-analyzed academic stress among international students and discovered a sign of little or no gender disparities in most indicators of stress. They claimed that despite the fact that females occasionally exhibit a slightly higher emotional reactivity, there are no differences in amounts of stress among the genders in organized academic settings. This validates your conclusion of male and female in the boarding school where there was no significant difference in the academic stressing.

Marques et al. (2018) studied separation anxiety symptoms in adolescents and it was found that there was no gender variation persistently and significantly. They emphasized that gender is a less important factor in causing adolescent separation-related distress than are the contextual factors (e.g., boarding environment, autonomy transitions). This is consistent with your findings that do not tell whether there is a gender difference in separation anxiety in boarding students.

A large-scale study conducted by Soest et al. (2020) on the topic of loneliness produced statistically insignificant results, particularly in an institutional or structured living, where both genders have to deal with the same social restrictions. Your outcome is well justified in their findings which prove that male and female boarding students are lone at the same level with no considerable gender gap.

Hussain et al. (2022) compared the quality of life between male and female students in universities and on the results, both populations did not differ much on the quality of life, as both have the same academic, social, and environmental pressures. This is in line with your observation that quality of life does not significantly differ male and female boarding students.

Sahu and Rath (2018) discovered that, as opposed to female learners who

preferred to lean more towards emotional coping or avoidance coping, male students scored considerably higher on problem-oriented coping and employed more active coping strategies. Their findings affirm you're finding that males scored higher on coping strategies implying that they are likely to employ coping strategies more frequently or more eminently. This confirms the gender variation observed in your research solely in the coping strategies.

4.1.Limitations Of The Study

- The sample of present study was collected from Lahore, which is not true representative of all university students. In future, it would be more appropriate to select the sample from different cities as well.
- The present study was done by cross-sectional research design, in future longitudinal study can be conducted on this topic, help to generate rich data and have more comparability in the study.
- Another limitation of the study is that only self-reported information was used for analysis which can be biased

4.2.Recommendations

- The areas from Lahore provided the sample for the current study. It would be better to choose the sample in the future from more various places. The current study used a cross-sectional research design; however, in the future, longitudinal research on these variables. This will increase the efficacy of the study, produce richer data, and increase the study's comparability.
- The study's use of just self-reported data for analysis, which can be biased, is another drawback. The interview method can also be utilized to obtain a more thorough and in-depth understanding of a phenomenon. Convenient sampling produced the sample. To provide a fair and accurate sample representation, future studies should use random sampling.
- In order to improve the research effort, recommendations are made for future studies in light of the implications listed below. First, more research is needed to clarify additional contextual elements that affect. To improve the generalizability of the study's findings, data can also be gathered from other cities as well. For the accurate representation of the population, random selection might be used. Future studies would benefit from samples with a wider range of ages and demographic characteristics.

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