

Guest Editor's Introduction

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It has been an honor to serve as guest editor for this thematic issue on mental health in Pakistan. Featuring four original papers and 21 abstracts, this edition delves into a rich array of topics addressing critical challenges and opportunities in the country's mental health landscape.

In our first article, Khawaja et al. investigate the socio-ecological factors influencing the psychological well-being of university students. Using a quantitative survey, they examine intra-individual, interpersonal, community, and systemic factors linked to both eudaimonic and hedonic well-being. This study highlights unique strengths and contextual variables within a non-Western setting. The results showed that men reported higher levels of well-being and life satisfaction than women, while gender was not associated with psychological distress. Study limitations include a small sample size, limited age diversity, and recruitment from a single academic program. Despite these constraints, the authors offer practical recommendations for parents, university authorities, and mental health professionals to enhance student well-being in Pakistan.

The second article, by Tariq et al., explores interpersonal difficulties among young adults living near the Pakistan–India border in the Sialkot region. The authors developed an indigenous tool through a systematic three-phase process to capture local challenges. In the final cross-sectional study, 300 men and women completed a 44-item Likert-scale questionnaire. Factor analysis identified three key dimensions: lack of assertiveness, relationship issues, and insecurity about the future. The discussion considers gender differences and the ongoing impact of regional conflict. While the sample size is modest, this work represents an important first step in creating a culturally relevant scale for assessing interpersonal challenges among border communities.

The third article, by Nida et al., compares the defense mechanisms used by individuals with physical disabilities to those of the general population and examines their effects on psychological well-being and resilience. Using the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (SWEMWBS), the authors conducted a survey and statistical analysis. They found that physically able individuals were more likely to employ mature defense mechanisms than their physically challenged peers, and no significant gender differences emerged. The study underscores the potential value of interventions aimed at promoting mature defenses to support the well-being of people with disabilities.

Finally, the fourth article, by Mahmood et al., examines the relationship between social connectedness, self-compassion, and tolerance for disagreement among madrassah students.

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Drawing on social mentality theory, optimal distinctiveness theory, and self-determination theory, the authors surveyed a purposive sample of 250 students using the Social Connectedness Scale-Revised (SCS-R), Self-Compassion Scale (SCS), and Tolerance for Disagreement (TFD) scale. The findings challenge stereotypes of madrassah students as less social or intolerant, offering insights for madrassah authorities on how to foster social interaction, enhance tolerance, and address students' psychological needs.

We hope this thematic issue provides valuable insights and inspires meaningful discussion. Our goal is not only to inform readers but also to spark dialogue and further inquiry into the evolving field of mental health research in Pakistan.