

## **Perceived Stress, Life Satisfaction and Self-Esteem among Women Studying in Co-Education and Uni- Gender Institutions**

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The aim of the current study is to assess the perceived stress, life satisfaction and self-esteem of women studying in co-education and uni-gender institutions. The sample size of the research was 200 women students, in which 100 were from uni-gender institution and 100 were from co-educational institutions. Convenience and purposive sampling strategy was used to collect the data. A Standardized psychological Urdu version of Perceived Stress Scale, Satisfaction with Life Scale and Self-esteem scale was used to collect the responses of the students. SPSS 19th version was used to analyze the results. Findings showed that women studying in uni-gender have more stress as compared to the students of co-education institution but their self-esteem and life satisfaction was not affected. Results indicated that there is a significant difference between perceived stress, life satisfaction and self-esteem among women students. It also revealed that stress and self-esteem would affect life satisfaction of women studying in co-education and uni-gender institutions. The results also showed significant relationships between perceived stress, life satisfaction and self-esteem. The study will be helpful in improving the educational systems, so that women students would get better environment to boost up their confidence and self-concept.

*Keywords:* perceived stress, life satisfaction and self-esteem

University life is one of the best and unforgettable times of the lives of students because they started to become sensible and pretty mature enough to know their responsibilities as well as they got little more freedom from their families as compared to school and college time.

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Academically it's a very successful time because your performance, test scores and grades have the potential to affect your career. All these factors become the cause of student stress which may affect their life satisfaction and self-esteem. As Rosenberg, (1965) stated self-esteem as persons own believes about him, which might be positive or negative, good or bad, right or wrong.

Lazarus and Folkman, (1984) stated that self-esteem could be a source to cope with stress, persons own believes about their self could moderate once level of stress and life satisfaction is individuals cognitive evaluation about own self in which life events are being compared to the persons self-made standards (Diener and Emmons ,1985; Shin and Johnson, 1978). A stress can be defined as an uncomfortable mental condition in which person suffers from worry and tension caused by problems in your daily life, work or a strong feeling of anxiety and worry which effects both our physical and psychological health(Webster, 2015).

Life satisfaction is defined as the ones satisfaction with his/her own life and environment, their ability to enjoy their experiences with a degree of excitement (Alston and Dudley, 1989). When you are happy with your life it means you are satisfied. It's a kind of happiness that exists within a person when he/she is having a good social circle, positive feelings about one-self and others and spending a healthy life.

Stress is a common problem almost affects all of us at some point in our lives. "Anything that possess a challenge or a threat to our wellbeing is a stress" (Nordquist, 2015). Stress is of two types. Stress that you can endure could be helpful in keeping you energetic, focused and alert. But when it becomes unbearable it can affect mood, health, relationships, quality of life and so on (Segal, Smith, Segal and Robinson, 2015). All these factors have the ability to effect self-esteem in one way or the other. And these influences in return may affect student's life satisfaction. Especially females are affected by stress in many ways. This shifted my idea towards my topic i.e. Stress, life satisfaction and self-esteem in which I was interested and to find the correlation between them. In the present study the main focus are women student's stress, Self-esteem and life satisfaction at uni-gender and co-education institutions.

Selye, (1956) in his research found that stress is not something that is necessarily bad. It depends on how people take it. For instance the stress of doing something creative is beneficial, whereas stress of a failure, insult or disease is harmful.

Lazarus and Folkman, (1985) defines stress in the Transactional model of stress that there is a difference between what person perceives when there is a change in their environment and their inability to deal with the change and create a coping response. Stress is a health related problem which commonly every person suffers in their daily life routines.

Diener and Suh, (1997) defines life satisfaction as individuals own examination about his/her own life. Different Researches have also shown the impact of life satisfaction on adolescents adjustment in a positive way (Gilman and Huebner, 2003; Huebner, 2004).

Need based theories suggest that person will be happy when their need is satisfied. According to the top-down approach stresses that different individuals have different personalities and different criteria's for their life satisfaction whereas the bottom-up approach stress that life events and conditions affect the life satisfaction (Diener, 1984).

Self-esteem is persons overall perception of one self-worth or personal believes that could either be positive or negative. Further he discussed that self-esteem is created through person's life experiences and it then effect person's happiness and life satisfaction (Blascovich and Tomaka, 1993).

In Maslow's famous hierarchy model it is important to satisfy one stage before reaching the next level and self-actualization comes after self-esteem. A person has to fulfill the requirement of self-esteem only then he/she would be able to reach its self-actualization (Maslow, 1943).

A very famous and well known humanist and psychotherapist in the history of psychology Carl Rogers believed that if a person reaches to its self-actualization level then he/she would be living a happy and healthy life with his/her complete functioning. According to him such an individual would have high self-worth, would trust his/her feelings and would be able to adjust his/her-self according to the environment. By the work of Maslow and Roger it is clear that without satisfying the level of self-esteem one cannot reach its self-actualization level but very few reach to this level. Self-esteem is something that may changes with person's experiences and growing age. The more the motivation level for achievement and with increasing experience there are more chances for a person to gain high level of self-esteem and happiness (Hill, 2015).

Behavior Plasticity theory of Brockner, (1984) explains the individuals outcomes of behaviors are due to the moderating effects of self-esteem(Campbell, 1990; Ganster and Schaubroeck, 1991). The effect of external stimulus such as stress on individual is behavioral plasticity.

The theory posits that individuals having low self-esteem are more prone to be effected by the external stimulus because they are easy to get distracted by the external world whereas individuals with high self-esteem are less vulnerable to get effected because they the less cares about the external world (Baumeister, 1982). Therefore, individuals with having high self-esteem be less prone to get stressed and individuals with low self-worth more prone to get stressed and may seek more ways to cope from the stress (Wu, Li and Johnsen, 2011).

### **Literature Review**

One of the research studies investigated the associations between perceived stress and life satisfaction of Turkish college students by accessing data on 235 students. From which significant negative correlation of life satisfaction with perceived stress were found, which suggested that student's life satisfaction was affected by college stress. Where female students had high life satisfaction then male students (Kaya, Cahit, Tansey, Timothy, Melenkoglu, Macid, Caklroglu and Orhan, 2015).

A study by Farah, (2009) was conducted to find out how low socioeconomic status increases the level of stress in children and adults. In her research she stresses upon poverty which is associated with stress. Poor person with low socioeconomic status would be having high level of stress as compared to high socioeconomic status people because of his/her un healthy lifestyle, money savings instead of expending, leaving their desires behind in order to get food and shelter, living under inferiority complex from those having high socioeconomic status would lead them towards higher chronic stress. The young ones totally unaware of the household problems, money problems etc. would understand the complications of house holding and would get tensed. Their young ones are mostly avoided by their parents because of their day night struggles for money making and house holding. Hence low socioeconomic status people have high level of stress than low socioeconomic status people. Laurence, Williams, and Eiland, (2009) conducted a survey on 453 students in which he revealed that higher level of stress was highly correlated with symptoms of depression due to fear of getting lowest grades or failing in exam, fear of the exam preparation which also negatively affect their self-esteem.

Thawabieh and Qaisy,(2012) conducted a survey in Tafila Technical University on 471 students. The focus of the study was to

analyze the students level of stress in their university environment and to find out how stress of getting low grades or uncomfortable university environment has an effect on their academics due to which students not only suffers emotional but also physical symptoms of stress. The results revealed that female students have more stress as compared to male students because female students comes more under community pressures and cultural restrictions.

Another study conducted by Maryam and Tariq, (2014) who investigated life satisfaction and psychological well-being among adult female university students concluded that self-esteem and depression were predictors of life satisfaction and they observed no difference in life satisfaction.

A study by Cohen, (2009) claimed that positive emotions are strong predictor in increasing the level of life satisfaction. Beutell, (2009) concluded that people's life satisfaction has positive relation with self-esteem and are negatively related to depression and anxiety.

Another study was conducted by Bibi, Chaudhary and Awan, (2015) in which student's level of life satisfaction was explored. The study also explored that culture and age has an effect on student's life satisfaction and that male and female students have same level of life satisfaction there was no significant difference.

One more study was conducted to explore that age and money affect female student's life satisfaction. The results of the study showed that age and money has no effect on female student's level of life satisfaction (Mehmood and Shaukat, 2014). Hubner, Drane and Valois, (2000) in their study also revealed that money has very little or no effect on individuals life satisfaction level.

### **Rationale**

Coeducation is an educational system where girls and boys study together in same environment whereas uni-gender institutions are made separately for both girls and boys. There are so many pros and cons of both institutions but the focus of the current research is that women studying in uni-gender institutions have lack of opportunities to explore their abilities. Society biasness and cultural limitations is an essential element for many women to create obstacle in order to get admission in co-education settings where they can get better opportunities and explore themselves. Lack of interaction with the opposite gender, lack of freedom inside and outside the campus could also make students stressful which

may affect their self-esteem and life satisfaction. Women studying from the middle/lower class mostly suffer from stress and inferiority complex due their conservative family background, financial condition and poor pick and drop facilities. Main concern to conduct this research is to explore all above factors which contribute greatly to make women studying in uni gender institution stressful and they suffer in self-concept and self-perception.

### **Objectives**

The aim of the research is to find out the difference between perceived stress, life satisfaction and self-esteem among women studying in co-education and uni-gender institution.

- To explore the level of stress of women studying in co-education and uni gender institutions.
- To investigate the relationship between stress, self-esteem and life satisfaction of women studying in both institutions.
- To analyze the effect of self-esteem on life satisfaction of women studying in co-education and uni-gender institutions.
- To find out the impact of stress on life satisfaction of women students.
- To explore whether women are comfortable in co-education and uni-gender institutions.

### **Significance**

The research findings would help to spread awareness in families keeping limited mindset. It would be helpful for the families to gain insight and awareness about women rights which help them to achieve their goal and contribute positively in society. This study will highlight the cultural and society biasness regarding women education. The current study would be helpful for the women who are studying, to overcome their stress and to participate in educational activities with a positive mind set. This study would also be helpful to understand that how to improve the educational system so that women should get the better opportunity to come along and become the primary source for the development of our country. It will help to improve their lifestyle and provide a comfortable environment for the female students in both the institutions. It would help to make such institutions that would be culturally acceptable for most of the families keeping a limited mindset.

### **Hypotheses**

1. Difference in women studying in co-education and uni-gender in relation to self-esteem.
2. Difference in women studying in co-education and uni-gender in relation to life satisfaction.
3. Difference between women studying in co-education and uni-gender institution in relation to stress.
4. Relationship between perceived stress, life satisfaction and self-esteem.
5. Stress would predict life satisfaction among women students.
6. Self-esteem would predict life satisfaction in women students.

### **Method**

#### **Sample**

The sample size for the study was comprised of 200 female students. 100 from co-education and 100 from uni-gender institutions. The sample was taken from Defense Degree College for Girls, Kinnaird College, Government College University and Punjab University. The sample was chosen from the student's studying in graduation and post-graduation level. The age scope of whole chosen respondents was from 18-25 years and they all fit in with distinctive financial status.

Convenience and purposive sampling was used to check the relationships between the variables. Convenience sampling is one of the type of non-probability sampling in which people are selected that are easily available whereas in purposive sampling people are selected for a specific purpose of the study.

#### **Inclusion/exclusion criteria**

- Study focuses on the female students of masters and graduation level from both co-education and uni-gender institutions.
- Male students were excluded.
- Under graduate and post masters students were excluded.

#### **Operational Definition**

Stress is a two-way process, which involves environmental stressors and the response of an individual to these stressors. In short, it's

what we feel when we think we have lost control of events (Lazarus, (1984).

Life satisfaction is it could be person's inner happiness, feeling of completeness, feeling that he/she is something and can have their own ideas, having good relations with other and knew how to overcome daily hazards. It is when person is overall happy with his life not just at some situations (Hayborn, (1982). Self-esteem as persons overall perception of one self-worth or personal believes that could either be positive or negative (Blascovich and Tomaka, 1993).

### **Measures**

#### **Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen, 1983)**

Cohen (1983) Perceived stress scale is a 10 item Likert scale, with having 5 possible responses. Few items are positively worded which contains reverse scoring. The total score can be obtained by summing up all the responses. Higher scores indicate higher stress level where as lower scores are the indication of low level of stress.

#### **Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen and Griffin, 1985)**

Satisfaction with life scale by Diener, Emmons, Larsen and Griffin (1985) is a 7 point Likert scale comprising of 5 items which measures the cognitive judgments of life satisfaction of an individual in the global prospective.

#### **Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965)**

The Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965) is a Likert scale composed of 10 items which was basically designed for the measurement of adolescents and children in the world. The Likert scale has four possible responses. Half of the items are positive and half are negatively worded. The scale contains reverse scoring in some items. The total score of the scale ranges from 0-30 and total score can be obtained by adding the responses of all the items. Higher scores mean high self-esteem and low score means low self-esteem.

### **Statistical Analysis**

The statistics that we are going to apply in the present study are

- Independent sample t test
- Pearson Product Moment Correlation



- Linear regression

### Procedure

At first researcher selected the topic that is stress, life satisfaction and self-esteem among women studying in co-education and uni-gender institutions. Stress has been a popular topic in the studies of students' academic performance. Then the researcher selected the scales which would be appropriate for research. So she selected the scale, the standardized Urdu versions of the SWLS Satisfaction with Life Scale and Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) and English version of Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen, 1983). Official permission and informed consent was sort to draw a sample from different universities of Lahore. The questionnaire was administered directly and individually. Few students hesitated and refused to fill the questionnaire while others cooperated with the researcher by giving their responses willingly and with interest. Those respondents who were interested to take part in the study, that were briefed about the research purpose. Some instructions were given to the students to find their true and actual responses. There was no time limit to fill up the questionnaires.

### Results

The purpose of the study was to explore the difference between the women studying in co-education and uni-gender institutions. To find out stress, life satisfaction and self-esteem are interrelated with each other and their effects on each other. The relationships between the variables were also examined.

Table 1  
*Psychometric Properties of Perceived Stress, Life Satisfaction and Self-Esteem.*

Variables	K	M	SD	A	Range	
					Potential	Actual
Perceived stress	10	19.09	6.74	.76	0-40	3-38
Life satisfaction	4	21.15	7.172	.78	-28	5-35
Self-esteem	10	19.49	4.63	.49	0-30	8-51

Table 1 shows that reliability of perceived stress and life satisfaction was good but the reliability of self-esteem was average.

Table 2

*Difference Between Women Studying in Coeducation and Uni-gender Institution Regarding Perceived Stress, Life Satisfaction and Self-Esteem*

	Co-Education		Uni-Gender		t	p	95 % CI	
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL
Perceived Stress	18.24	6.31	20.26	7.16	-2.11	.040	-3.95	-.09
Life Satisfaction	21.01	7.40	21.34	6.87	-.321	.748	-2.33	1.68
Self Esteem	19.10	4.00	20.04	5.36	-1.35	.177	-2.32	.43

Table 2 indicates that there is a significant difference between perceived stress, life satisfaction and self-esteem but there is no significant difference between life satisfaction and self-esteem in co-education and uni gender institution where as there is significant difference between stress in co-education and uni-gender institution.

Table 3

*Correlation Between Perceived Stress, Life Satisfaction and Self-Esteem of Women Studying in Co-Education and Uni-gender Institutions.*

Variables	1	2	3
1 Perceived Stress		-.39**	-.20**
2 Life Satisfaction			.21**
3 Self Esteem			

Table 3 indicates that there is a significant relationship among stress, life satisfaction and self-esteem of women students.

Table 4

*Linear Regression Analysis for Perceived Stress, Life Satisfaction and Self-Esteem Among Women Students*

Variables	B	B	96% CL
Life satisfaction	24.757		[19.49,30.01]
Perceived stress	-.398**	-.374	[-.53,-.25]

Self-esteem	.206*	.133	[.004,.409]
R2	.179		
F	21.20		
$\Delta R^2$	.179		
$\Delta F$	21.20		

Table 4 shows that perceived stress has significantly negative affect on life satisfaction and self-esteem has significant positive affect on life satisfaction. Result also indicates that there is poor explanation of variables in relationships. Table shows  $R^2=17$

### Discussion

The present study was formulated to explore the difference between the women students of co-education and uni-gender institutions. To find out stress, life satisfaction and self-esteem are interrelated with each other and their effects on each other. The relationships between the variables were also examined.

A survey research done by Nikitha, Jose and Valsaraj, (2014) examined the level of perceived academic stress and self-esteem among adolescents. The findings of the study revealed moderate to severe level of academic stress among adolescents whereas their self-esteem was not affected. The study explored that self-esteem and academic stress has low negative but significant relationship with each other.

One more similar experiment was conducted on female students of co-education and uni-gender institutions in which they explored the self-perceptions among female students in both the institutions, to find out the difference in five different domains regarding their self-esteem and in which domain they had higher level of self-esteem. The variables they selected were girl's physical appearance, their behaviors, competition in studies, athletics and social acceptance. The results of the study revealed that female students of co-education and uni-gender institutions were not significantly different from each other but significant difference was found between the selected variables. Female students studying at co-education institutions were having higher level of self-esteem in physical appearance, athletics and social acceptance whereas female students studying at uni-gender institutions were having higher level of self-esteem regarding their academic performance and behavioral conduct. Which

shows that self-esteem of female students was same in both institutions (Granleese and Joseph, 1993).

A survey research was done in Hong Kong on university students at their first year education level. The aim of the study was to analyze the depression, anxiety and stress among the students. The results revealed that 27.5 % students scored higher at depression, anxiety and stress scale (Wong, Cheung, Chan and Tang ,2006).

Another research was conducted by university students to examine their stress. The sample contains students of initial year and final year. The results explored that final year students were having low level of stress as compared to the first year students. The result also indicated significant difference between the university students of educational sciences, finance, administration colleges and other university colleges regarding academic stress. Due to the cultural restrictions and pressures composed by the communities female students were found to be more under stress as compared to male students (Thawabieh and Qaisy, 2012). Bibi, Chaudary and Awan, (2015) conducted a study to find out the impact of culture differences and age on life satisfaction of university students. The sample comprises of students of Muzaffarabad and Hazara University of two different cultures and traditions. The results of the study explored that both area students were having different level of life satisfaction. The life satisfaction of Muzaffarabad university students was less than the students of Hazara University. The findings also showed that culture has an effect on life satisfaction of students and there was a positive relationship between life satisfaction and age.

Asim, (2015) in his co relational research explored the levels of perceived stress and life satisfaction among college going students taking active participation in extracurricular activities. The findings of the study explored that students who have less belongingness in college would have low level of life satisfaction and high level of perceived stress as compared to the students of high belongings.

Stress would predict life satisfaction in female students. As the previous researches also supported the hypothesis. A study was conducted by Huerta, Cortina, Pang and Torges, (2006) on 1,455 female college going students to explore how sexual harassment has an impact on female students. The findings revealed that due to sexual harassment female students are more under psychological stress which would negatively affect their studies, level of satisfaction with their academics, greater body illness and more eating problems.

Another study was conducted by Abolghasemia and Varaniyaba, (2010) to examine the predictors of life satisfaction, the results of the study revealed that stress would predict life satisfaction, as stress would decrease life satisfaction would increase.

The findings also supported the hypothesis. In the previous researches a study was conducted by Suldo and Huebner,(2006), the results of their study show that parental behavioral variables may, to a certain degree, affect the development of adolescents' internal resources such as self-esteem and contribute to their life satisfaction. Although friends' support is a very important determinant of adolescent's subjective well-being, the results suggest that this influence was indirect to global self-worth. Positive interaction with peers may be reflected in the way adolescents evaluate themselves and may enhance their self-esteem and overall life satisfaction. This might be especially important for young people living in poor families who are more socially isolated and have less opportunity to socialize with their peers.

In order to overcome the stress of the students it is important conduct seminars, workshops, to give lectures etc. to the people to give awareness and provide sense of freedom in female students. Girls should be given equal opportunities as boys, so that they could not be lacking behind in any field. Universities should keep some mental health professionals to enhance student's stress, to make them fight with their daily stress and to cope it. Like physical health, mental health is also very important to live a standard quality of life. At any stage of life a person might suffer from any physical problem and with that they might have mental health problem which is also very important to be cured. So mental health professionals should also support the students by timely intervention which is very important for a better quality of life (Bano, Deb, Vardan and Rao, 2015).

There are so many ways to cope with daily stresses like daily exercise, many relation techniques can also be helpful, time management is also very important like everything should be done in their proper time, such as studying, playing games and other indoor and outdoor activities (Carter, Elzubeir, Abdulrazzaq, Revel, and Townsend, 2003).

## **Conclusion**

The conclusion of the current study is that female students studying in uni- gender have more stress as compared to the students studying in co-education but their life satisfaction and self-esteem was

same. A correlation was found between perceived stress, life satisfaction and self-esteem of the female students of both institutions. The study also concluded that self-esteem and perceived stress would affect life satisfaction of female students.

### **Limitations**

- Limited sample size was used in the current research.
- There were few universities covered in this research.
- Gender differences were not explored in this study.

### **Recommendations**

According to the results of the study some recommendations have been formulated that may be helpful in the future researches.

- In future we can find out the relationship and difference of male students also.
- The current research covered few universities of Lahore city only, further the research can also be conducted on different universities of Pakistan.
- Further the research sample could be increased so that it could cover vast population.
- Another group of foreign degree holders could also be included.

The study concluded that wives of emigrants faces loneliness; there was more tension in left behind families; basic needs like emotional needs were not fulfilled; conflict has been develop between spouses; emigration of husband force wives to leave the houses for buying of daily needs, goods; in laws start interference and objections on female outside activities. Moreover, the rate of divorce has not been increased after emigration; emigrant's wives were discriminated by in laws. It is recommended that migrant should increase visiting home or shift their family to abroad to reduce tensions and conflict.

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