

Psychological Well-Being among Married Adults Across Selected Marital Variables

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Abstract: *Psychological well-being represents positive psychological functioning across multiple domains of adult life. The present study examined psychological well-being among married adults across selected marital and demographic variables using Ryff's multidimensional model. A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design was employed with 108 married adults. Data were collected using a demographic questionnaire and the 42-item Ryff Psychological Well-Being Scale, assessing autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Descriptive statistics, internal consistency analysis, Welch's analysis of variance, Games-Howell post hoc comparisons, independent-samples t-tests, and exploratory Spearman correlations were used. The overall psychological well-being score had a mean of 185.48 (SD = 32.65), with the highest domain mean observed for Personal Growth (M = 32.09, SD = 6.16). The 42-item scale demonstrated high internal consistency ($\alpha = .927$). Significant differences in total psychological well-being were observed across duration of marriage, family structure, and age group. Participants married for more than 20 years had higher scores than those married for less than 5 years, 5–10 years, and 11–15 years. Nuclear-family participants scored higher than joint-family participants. Age group was also significantly associated with total psychological well-being. No statistically significant differences were observed by type of marriage, employment status, parenthood, or gender. Exploratory analyses indicated positive associations of age and duration-of-marriage categories with total psychological well-being. The findings highlight the relevance of marital duration, family context, and age in understanding psychological well-being among married adults, while the cross-sectional design limits causal interpretation.*

Keywords: Psychological well-being, married adults, Ryff scale, marital duration, family structure, age

1. Introduction

Psychological well-being refers to positive psychological functioning rather than merely the absence of psychological symptoms. Ryff's multidimensional model conceptualizes well-being through six dimensions: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. These dimensions capture how individuals manage their lives, maintain meaningful relationships, experience continued development, find direction and meaning, and hold positive attitudes toward themselves [1, 2].

Marriage represents an important social and developmental context in adulthood. It may provide companionship, emotional support, and shared responsibilities, while also involving adjustment, role demands, and interpersonal challenges. Research has demonstrated an association between relationship quality and personal well-being. A meta-analysis by Proulx et al. [3], for example, found an overall association between marital quality and personal well-being, with the strength of association varying according to characteristics including marital duration and gender.

Research has also shown that marital experiences and well-being may vary across stages of adult life. Carr et al. [4], examining older married adults, found that individuals' own marital satisfaction was significantly associated with life satisfaction and momentary well-being. Parenthood represents another potentially relevant life-course context, although its relationship with well-being depends on social

and demographic circumstances rather than following a uniform pattern [5].

The present study was developed from the need to examine psychological well-being among married adults across selected marital variables rather than treating marriage as a single uniform experience. The study therefore examined psychological well-being among married adults using the 42-item Ryff Psychological Well-Being Scale and investigated whether total well-being differed according to selected marital and demographic characteristics.

2. Objectives

- Assess psychological well-being among married adults using the six dimensions of Ryff's model.
- Examine differences in psychological well-being across selected marital variables, including type and duration of marriage, employment status, parenthood, and family structure.
- Examine differences in psychological well-being across selected demographic variables, particularly age and gender.
- Explore associations between ordinal age and marital-duration categories and psychological well-being.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Participants

A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design was used. The final dataset comprised 108 married adults. Participants were

recruited through convenience sampling and completed a self-administered online questionnaire.

Participants represented different age groups, genders, marriage types, marital durations, employment categories, parenthood statuses, and family structures. The largest age group was 31–40 years (36.1%), followed by 41–50 years (28.7%) and 21–30 years (23.1%). Females comprised 75.9% of the sample and males 23.1%. Arranged marriage was reported by 53.7% of participants, while 23.1% reported love marriage and 23.1% love-cum-arranged marriage. Most participants had children (74.1%), and nuclear families constituted 57.4% of the sample.

3.2 Measure

Psychological well-being was assessed using the 42-item Ryff Psychological Well-Being Scale. The scale uses a six-point response format and assesses six dimensions: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life, and self-acceptance.

Items requiring reverse scoring were recoded before domain and total scores were calculated. Each domain contained seven items, with possible domain scores ranging from 7 to 42; the total possible score ranged from 42 to 252.

3.3 Procedure and Data Analysis

Participants provided informed consent before completing the questionnaire. Confidentiality and voluntary participation were maintained in accordance with the research protocol.

Descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alpha were calculated for the six domains and total psychological well-being. Group differences were examined using analysis of variance. Because assumptions of homogeneity were violated for several group comparisons, Welch's ANOVA was used as the primary inferential test where appropriate, followed by Games–Howell post hoc comparisons for significant results. Independent-samples t-tests were used for two-group comparisons. Effect sizes were reported using eta squared (η^2) and Cohen's d. Exploratory Spearman rank correlations were conducted for ordinal age and duration-of-marriage categories. Statistical significance was evaluated at $p < .05$.

4. Quantitative Findings and Statistical Results

4.1 Psychological Well-Being and Reliability

The overall psychological well-being score was $M = 185.48$, $SD = 32.65$. Among the six dimensions, Personal Growth had the highest mean score, followed by Purpose in Life and Positive Relations. Environmental Mastery had the lowest domain mean.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Internal Consistency of Psychological Well-Being Dimensions

Dimension	M	SD	Cronbach's α
Autonomy	30.77	6.81	0.747
Environmental Mastery	28.83	6.97	0.735
Personal Growth	32.09	6.16	0.668
Positive Relations	31.51	6.71	0.73
Purpose in Life	31.61	5.43	0.542
Self-Acceptance	30.67	7.97	0.846
Total PWB	185.48	32.65	0.927

Source: Calculated by the Researcher based on the study data.

The total 42-item scale demonstrated high internal consistency ($\alpha = .927$). Domain-level alpha coefficients ranged from .542 for Purpose in Life to .846 for Self-Acceptance. The comparatively lower reliability coefficient for Purpose in Life should be considered when interpreting findings involving this dimension.

4.2 Group Differences

Table 2: Inferential Analysis of Total Psychological Well-Being

Variable	Primary Analysis	p	Effect Size
Type of marriage	Welch ANOVA	0.632	$\eta^2 = .008$
Duration of marriage	Welch ANOVA	0.001	$\eta^2 = .086$
Employment status	Welch ANOVA	0.12	$\eta^2 = .056$
Parenthood	t-test	0.591	$d = .118$
Family structure	Welch ANOVA	0.028	$\eta^2 = .120$
Age group	Welch ANOVA	0.012	$\eta^2 = .119$
Gender	Welch t-test	0.396	$d = -.187$

Source: Calculated by the Researcher based on the study data.

Type of marriage was not significantly associated with total psychological well-being, $p = .632$. Similarly, employment status did not produce a statistically significant difference, $p = .120$. Parenthood was also not significantly associated with total psychological well-being, $t = .539$, $p = .591$, $d = .118$.

Duration of marriage showed a significant difference, Welch's $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .086$. Participants married for more than 20 years had a mean total PWB score of 204.82, compared with 178.44 among those married for less than five years and 177.67 among those married for 5–10 years. Games–Howell comparisons showed significant differences between >20 years and <5 years ($p = .0003$), >20 years and 5–10 years ($p < .001$), and >20 years and 11–15 years ($p = .017$).

Family structure was also significant, Welch's $p = .028$, $\eta^2 = .120$. Mean total PWB was 194.11 for nuclear-family participants, 176.61 for joint-family participants, and 151.20 for extended-family participants. The Games–Howell comparison between nuclear and joint families was significant ($p < .001$). The extended-family group was very small ($n = 5$), so comparisons involving this category require caution.

Age group showed a significant difference, Welch's $p = .012$, $\eta^2 = .119$. Mean PWB scores were 169.40 for ages 21–30, 181.97 for 31–40, 197.52 for 41–50, 199.20 for 51–60, and 197.63 for 61 years and above. Significant Games–Howell differences included 41–50 versus 21–30 ($p < .001$), 51–60 versus 21–30 ($p = .001$), and 61+ versus 21–30 ($p = .002$).

The smaller 51–60 and 61+ groups warrant cautious interpretation.

Gender was not significantly associated with total PWB. Females had $M = 184.43$ ($SD = 33.26$) and males had $M = 190.52$ ($SD = 30.40$); Welch's $t = -0.858$, $p = .396$, $d = -.187$.

4.3 Exploratory Associations

Spearman analysis showed a positive association between age-group category and total psychological well-being ($\rho = .324$, $p < .001$). Duration-of-marriage category was also positively associated with total PWB ($\rho = .245$, $p = .011$).

At the domain level, age category was significantly associated with Autonomy ($\rho = .333$, $p < .001$), Environmental Mastery ($\rho = .404$, $p < .001$), Personal Growth ($\rho = .252$, $p = .009$), Positive Relations ($\rho = .253$, $p = .008$), and Self-Acceptance ($\rho = .211$, $p = .029$). The association with Purpose in Life was not statistically significant ($\rho = .134$, $p = .169$).

Duration of marriage showed significant associations with Autonomy ($\rho = .218$, $p = .023$), Environmental Mastery ($\rho = .347$, $p < .001$), Positive Relations ($\rho = .191$, $p = .048$), and total PWB ($\rho = .245$, $p = .011$). Associations with Personal Growth, Purpose in Life, and Self-Acceptance were not statistically significant.

5. Discussion

The present study examined psychological well-being among 108 married adults using Ryff's multidimensional framework and considered whether well-being varied across selected marital and demographic characteristics.

The overall findings indicate that psychological well-being was multidimensional rather than uniformly related to every marital variable. Personal Growth had the highest mean among the six dimensions, suggesting that continued development and openness to growth were prominent aspects of participants' reported well-being. Positive Relations and Purpose in Life also showed relatively high domain means. These findings are consistent with Ryff's conceptualization of well-being as positive functioning involving relationships, meaning, development, and self-regulation [1, 2].

One of the principal findings was the significant difference between duration-of-marriage groups in total psychological well-being. Participants married for more than 20 years had higher mean PWB scores than several shorter-duration groups. The exploratory correlation likewise showed a positive association between marital-duration category and total PWB. This pattern is compatible with previous research indicating that marital duration can be relevant to the relationship between marital quality and well-being [3]. However, the present cross-sectional design cannot establish that longer marriage itself produces greater well-being. Age, cohort characteristics, relationship quality, socioeconomic circumstances, and other unmeasured factors may also contribute.

Family structure also showed a statistically significant difference. Nuclear-family participants had higher total PWB scores than joint-family participants in the present sample. This finding should not be interpreted as evidence that one family arrangement inherently produces greater psychological well-being. Family structure may operate alongside autonomy, privacy, caregiving responsibilities, social support, economic conditions, and interpersonal relationships. The very small extended-family subgroup also limits the stability of comparisons involving that category.

Age-group differences were another important finding. Participants aged 21–30 had lower mean PWB than several older age groups, and age category showed a positive association with total PWB. Environmental Mastery also demonstrated a comparatively stronger positive association with age category. One possible interpretation is that adult development may be accompanied by greater experience in managing responsibilities and life circumstances. Nevertheless, because age was analysed categorically and the study was cross-sectional, developmental change cannot be inferred directly from these results.

In contrast, type of marriage, employment status, and parenthood did not show statistically significant differences in total PWB. This is noteworthy because previous literature has identified marriage, employment, and parenthood as potentially important contexts for well-being. Research on parenthood emphasizes that its relationship with well-being depends on broader social and life-course conditions rather than producing a uniform effect across adults [5]. The absence of a significant difference in the current sample therefore does not imply that these variables are irrelevant; rather, their effects may depend on other characteristics not measured in the present study.

Gender differences were also non-significant. Although males had a somewhat higher sample mean than females, the effect was small and the statistical comparison was non-significant. This finding suggests that gender alone did not account for substantial variation in total psychological well-being within the present sample.

Overall, the findings suggest that psychological well-being among married adults may be better understood through life-course and family-context factors than through a simple distinction between different types of marriage or parental status.

6. Implications

The findings have relevance for counselling psychology and relationship-focused interventions. Assessment of married adults should consider broader contextual factors such as stage of marriage, age, and family structure, rather than assuming that marital status alone explains psychological well-being.

Counsellors working with married adults may consider domains such as Environmental Mastery, Autonomy, Positive Relations, Purpose in Life, and Self-Acceptance when exploring well-being. The findings also suggest the

value of adopting a developmental perspective when understanding couples at different stages of married life.

Future studies could examine marital satisfaction, relationship quality, perceived social support, conflict patterns, and socioeconomic factors alongside duration and family structure to better understand the factors associated with psychological well-being.

7. Limitations

The study has several limitations. First, the cross-sectional design prevents causal conclusions. Second, convenience sampling and the sample size of 108 participants limit generalizability. Third, some demographic categories were small, particularly the retired and unemployed groups and the extended-family, 51–60, and 61+ categories. Fourth, the study relied on self-report measures, which may be influenced by response tendencies. Finally, the study examined selected demographic and marital variables but did not directly measure marital satisfaction, marital quality, conflict, social support, or relationship adjustment.

8. Conclusion

The present study examined psychological well-being among 108 married adults using Ryff's six-dimensional model. Overall psychological well-being was $M = 185.48$ ($SD = 32.65$), and the 42-item measure demonstrated high overall internal consistency ($\alpha = .927$). Significant differences in total psychological well-being were observed across duration of marriage, family structure, and age group, while no statistically significant differences were observed according to type of marriage, employment status, parenthood, or gender.

The findings indicate that psychological well-being among married adults may vary according to broader life-course and family-context characteristics. Duration of marriage, family structure, and age emerged as significant correlates of differences in reported well-being, whereas marriage type, employment status, parenthood, and gender did not show statistically significant differences in the present sample.

However, the observed relationships are associational and should not be interpreted causally. Larger, more diverse, and longitudinal studies incorporating direct measures of marital quality, relationship functioning, social support, and other contextual factors are needed to further clarify these patterns.

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