

The Mediating Role of Mental Well-Being Between Psychological Resilience, Life Satisfaction and Emotional Intelligence

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Abstract

Mental well-being holds significance throughout all phases of life, spanning from early years and adolescence to adulthood. The purpose of this research was to investigate the potential mediating effect of mental well-being on the relationship between emotional intelligence, life satisfaction, and psychological resilience, which are all dependent variables. The research involved 317 university students who volunteered, with a majority of 303 being female and 14 male. Results revealed that mental well-being acts as a complete mediator in the link between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction, while it partially mediates the connection between emotional intelligence and psychological resilience. The model suggests that individuals, regardless of their level of emotional intelligence, experience greater life satisfaction and psychological resilience when mental well-being is high. It's expected that those with enhanced psychological resilience and life satisfaction, particularly those with a certain level of emotional intelligence, will see a positive impact on their life trajectory when their mental health is supported and strengthened.

Keywords: Mental well-being; emotional intelligence, life satisfaction, psychological resilience.

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Introduction

Positive emotions transcend mere fleeting happiness; they offer fresh perspectives, enhanced problem-solving abilities, and heightened creativity. Throughout history, humanity has strived to attain the positive emotions and sensations associated with this state of mind. The scientific community's efforts in this realm are undeniable. Therefore, research findings shed light on individuals' psychological well-being in a holistic sense (Tay et al., 2013). Seligman (2011) underscores the significance of positive relationships, leading a purpose-driven life, and cultivating a strong commitment to life in his model that explicates the concept of well-being, closely intertwined with positive psychology. In discussions on well-being, the notion of mental well-being encompasses emotional, psychological, and social dimensions (Westerhof & Keyes, 2010).

Emotional Intelligence

Emotions play a crucial role in well-being and the experience of feeling well. Individuals demonstrate the concept of emotional intelligence by perceiving, utilizing, and controlling emotions (Petrides & Furnham, 2003). In the definition of emotional intelligence, Cherniss et al. (2006) characterizes it as the capacity of humans to accurately comprehend and articulate their own emotions while also comprehending the emotions of others and providing suitable responses to them. Research examining the relationship between emotional intelligence and well-being has revealed that individuals with low emotional intelligence experience both physical and mental dissatisfaction (Villanueva et al., 2022). Furthermore, a longitudinal study by Shamshad (2022) demonstrated that emotional intelligence predicts well-being in the context of transformational leadership and self-efficacy, with a serial mediation effect. Emotional intelligence closely links to psychological resilience. Zheng (2021) conducted a longitudinal study, affirming a positive association between increased emotional intelligence and enhanced psychological resilience. In their study involving university students, Sarrionandia et al. (2018) identified that psychological resilience plays a mediating role in the connection between national emotional intelligence and the reduction of stress.

Psychological Resilience

Psychological resilience refers to an individual's capacity to adapt to adversity, bounce back from stressful experiences, and maintain or regain a sense of well-being (Southwick et al., 2014). This construct is closely linked to life satisfaction, emotional intelligence, and mental well-being, all of which play a pivotal role in enhancing resilience (Gao et al., 2017; Ramos-Díaz et al., 2019). While emotional intelligence and psychological resilience have been extensively studied, life satisfaction is also a commonly encountered concept. Ramos-Díaz et al. (2019) discovered that emotional intelligence has a positive impact on life satisfaction, particularly when mediated by psychological resilience. A two-year longitudinal study found that emotional intelligence was positively correlated with life happiness (Sánchez-Álvarez et al., 2015). Together, these interrelated factors may enhance psychological resilience, enabling individuals to not only withstand but also thrive despite life's inevitable challenges, ultimately leading to greater life satisfaction and psychological growth.

Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction, often defined as the cognitive assessment of one's life as a whole, is a critical component of overall well-being (Diener et al., 2013). It is often considered a key indicator of subjective well-being, which also includes emotional and psychological dimensions (Schimmack et al., 2002). The longitudinal study carried out by Wang et al. (2023) showcased a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction, indicating that heightened emotional intelligence contributes to increased satisfaction with life. The longitudinal research conducted on the association between life satisfaction and psychological resilience indicated favorable correlations between psychological resilience and life satisfaction (Kjeldstadli et al., 2006; Zhang et al., 2023). Understanding the determinants of life satisfaction is crucial for developing interventions aimed at improving individual well-being and fostering healthier, more fulfilling lives.

The mediating Role of Mental Well-Being

Mental well-being has increasingly been recognized as a crucial mediating factor in the relationship between various life stressors and psychological outcomes. In the context of psychological research, mental well-being is often conceptualized as a dynamic state that encompasses emotional, psychological, and social dimensions, influencing an individual's ability to cope with adversity. As a mediating variable, mental well-being can explain how and why specific stressors, such as traumatic events or chronic stress, lead to positive or negative outcomes (Teh et al., 2015). Tekkurşun Demir et al. (2018) define mental well-being as the state of being mentally healthy. Furthermore, in the comprehensive definition, it encompasses the ability to recognize and utilize one's abilities, foster positive connections with others, lead a fulfilling and meaningful existence, make valuable contributions to society, experience happiness, derive contentment, and attain inner tranquility. Additionally, mental well-being includes emotions such as serenity, joy, self-assurance, and dedication to society, which are regarded as constituents of mental well-being (Demirtaş & Baydemir, 2019). Research findings indicate that individuals with high levels of mental well-being typically exhibit positive physical and psychological health outcomes. In a study by Keyes et al. (2010) focusing on refugee and migrant students, the relationship between school culture, school commitment, and school support, and the mental well-being of these students was explored. Particularly, the study delved into the role of psychological resilience as a potential mediator in this relationship. Psychological resilience denotes an individual's capacity to adapt and thrive despite encountering significant adversity and substantial challenges throughout life (Masten, 2001). Khawaja et al. (2017) discovered that as young adults' psychological resilience increases, their level of mental well-being also rises. Furthermore, a study conducted by Roulston et al. (2018) determined that a six-week mindfulness training program for university students resulted in enhanced mental well-being and higher psychological resilience. The studies have identified positive correlations between mental well-being and psychological resilience (Duman et al., 2020; Khawaja et al., 2017; Roulston et al., 2018).

The Present Study

Researching the mediating role of mental well-being in the relationship between emotional intelligence, life satisfaction, and resilience is crucial for understanding the intricate connections between these psychological constructs. Studies have shown that emotional intelligence plays a significant role in influencing life satisfaction and mental well-being (Liu et al., 2013). Additionally, resilience has been identified as a key factor in promoting positive mental health outcomes, such as reducing depression and anxiety, and enhancing overall well-being (Muniandy et al., 2021). Furthermore, the mediating effects of resilience and subjective well-being have been highlighted in mitigating the impact of stressors, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, on mental health (Veronese et al., 2021). By exploring how these factors interact and influence each other, researchers can provide valuable insights into developing interventions that enhance resilience and promote mental well-being, especially in challenging circumstances like the current global health crisis. Understanding the importance of researching the mediating role of mental well-being in the context of emotional intelligence, life satisfaction, and resilience is essential for informing interventions that can effectively support individuals' psychological health. Studies have indicated that resilience interventions have the potential to improve well-being and reduce the prevalence of mental disorders, underscoring the significance of resilience in mental health promotion (Ferreira et al., 2021). By investigating these relationships, researchers can identify strategies to enhance resilience, coping mechanisms, and emotional intelligence, ultimately contributing to the development of targeted interventions that promote mental well-being and overall psychological health. Hence, it's crucial to explore how mental well-being may act as a mediator in the connection between emotional intelligence, life satisfaction, and psychological resilience. Upon reviewing the literature, there is a lack of comprehensive studies that address all of these ideas simultaneously. The research holds significance as it represents a novel investigation at present. The current study aims to investigate the role of mental well-being as a mediator between emotional intelligence and both life satisfaction and psychological resilience. In alignment with the primary aim of this study, the research hypotheses are outlined as follows:

H₁: there is a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and resilience.

H₂: mental well-being mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and resilience.

H₃: mental well-being mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction

Method

Participants and Procedure

In the present study, participants were reached through convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is a nonprobability sampling method that involves selecting members from a target population based on practical criteria like accessibility, proximity, availability, or willingness to participate (Etikan et al., 2016). The study engaged participants through both online and face-to-face. Prior to their involvement, participants received detailed information about the study. Data collection through online channels was publicized on various social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, etc. A total of 317 participants willingly took part in the study. The participants' ages ranged from 17 to 23 years, with a mean age of 19.71 ($SD=1.31$). Among the participants, 303 (95.6%) were female, while 14 (4.4%) were male.

Measures

Emotional Intelligence Trait Scale-Short Form

Petrides and Furnham (2001) originally developed the scale, which was later adapted to Turkish by Deniz et al. (2013). The survey consists of a total of 20 items, with each item rated on a 7-point Likert scale. In the adaptation study of the scale, it was discovered that both the items and subscales of the original and the Turkish version remained consistent. There are a total of four sub-dimensions on the scale. The sub-dimensions encompassed in this context are well-being, self-control, sociability, and emotionality. The scale allows for a maximum score of 140 and a minimum score of 20. Elevated scores indicate a correspondingly elevated level of emotional intelligence. The well-being factor had a reliability value of .72, self-control had a reliability coefficient of .70, and emotionality had a reliability coefficient of .66, sociability had a reliability coefficient of .70, and the overall scale had a reliability coefficient of .81. The analysis in this study showed that the scale had a reliability coefficient of .84.

Brief psychological resilience scale:

The scale originally developed by Smith et al. (2008) was adapted into Turkish by Doğan et al. (2015). It comprises 6 items designed to evaluate psychological resilience and utilizes a 5-point Likert scale. The scale is unidimensional. On the scale, the 'Strongly disagree' choice is assigned a value of 1, while the 'Strongly agree' option is assigned a score of 5. The scale yields a cumulative score of 30 points. Increased scores correlate with elevated levels of psychological resilience. In the Turkish adaptation of the study, Cronbach's alpha reliability was calculated, resulting in a value of .81. In the current study, the reliability coefficient was re-evaluated and also found to be .81.

Life satisfaction scale:

The life satisfaction scale, originally developed by Diener et al. (1985), is a single-dimensional instrument consisting of 5 items rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale. This scale was adapted into Turkish by Dağlı and Baysal (2016), yielding a total score of 25 points, with higher scores indicating greater life satisfaction. The Turkish adaptation demonstrated a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of .88. In the current study, the reliability coefficient was re-evaluated and found to be .84.

Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale Short Form:

The scale utilized to assess individuals' mental well-being was developed by Tennant et al. (2007). It operates on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1= Never 5 = Always) consisting of 7 items. Individuals are asked to fill it out according to their experiences in the last two weeks. Higher scores indicate higher mental well-being. It was adapted into Turkish by Demirtaş and Baydemir (2019). It is a one-dimensional scale. In the Turkish adaptation, Cronbach's alpha reliability was calculated as .84. For this study, the reliability coefficient was checked again and found to be .84.

Data Analysis

In the analysis section of the study, both the SPSS 26 package program and the AMOS program were utilized. Initially, an assessment was made to determine whether variables such as emotional intelligence, mental well-being, life satisfaction, and psychological resilience exhibited normal distribution. Following this, reliability analysis was conducted. Subsequently, descriptive statistics of the variables were examined. Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between the variables, and structural equation modeling (SEM) was initiated based on the significance levels determined from the correlation results. Amos program was used for structural equation modeling and it was used to measure more parameters. In the first stage, latent variables of the variables were created and the measurement model was tested by looking at the relationship between these latent variables (Kline, 2023).

According to Hu and Bentler (1999), the goodness of fit recommendations of SEM results were taken into consideration. In this context, chi-square, GFI, CFI, NFI, TLI, and SRMR values were taken as a basis. In terms of values, the chi-square test is expected to be less than 5, GFI, CFI, NFI, and TLI, values are expected to be greater than .90 and the SRMR value is expected to be less than .08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Tabachnick et al., 2013). Since the measurement fit values were found to be sufficient, the second measurement part was started. In addition, to determine which SEM model is the best, firstly the significance level and then the AIC and ECVI values together with the chi-square difference test were examined. Whichever model has small AIC and ECVI values, that model was preferred (Browne & Cudeck, 1992).

To support the study, bootstrapping was used to strengthen the significance of the mediation test (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). With the bootstrapping process, the number of samples was increased to 5000 and a confidence interval was created with the bootstrap value. The lack of zero within this confidence interval suggests that the mediation is statistically significant.

Findings

Descriptive statistics and correlation analyses are included in this section. Subsequently, the results of the measurement model and the structural model are presented. In the last stage, the results of the bootstrapping process are presented.

Table 1.

Descriptive statistics and correlations between variables (N=303)

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	1	2	3	4
1. Emotional intelligence	317	92.35	16.96	.050	.137	-			
2. Mental well-being	317	24.76	5.25	-.127	-.153	.76**	-		
3. Resilience	317	18.00	4.78	.155	.412	.56**	.44**	-	
4. Life satisfaction	317	14.96	4.33	-.086	-.055	.47**	.60**	.27**	-

** $p < .001$

According to Finney and DiStefano (2006), the variables should be within the normality criteria of ± 2 for skewness and ± 7 for kurtosis. In Table 1, Skewnesses are between (-.127 and .155) and Kurtosis is between (-.153 and .412), which shows a normal distribution.

When the relationships between variables are analyzed in Table-1, there are significant positive relationships between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction ($r = .47, p < .001$), emotional intelligence and psychological resilience ($r = .56, p < .001$), emotional intelligence and mental well-being ($r = .76, p < .001$), mental well-being and psychological resilience ($r = .44, p < .001$), mental well-being and life satisfaction ($r = .60, p < .001$), psychological resilience and life satisfaction ($r = .27, p < .001$).

Considering the measurement model of emotional intelligence, mental well-being, psychological resilience, and life satisfaction variables, there are 4 latent variables and 11 observed variables. According to the measurement results, $\chi^2/df = 4.61$, GFI .908, CFI .926, NFI .960, TLI .893, RFI .867,

IFI .927, SRMR .032. Factor loadings ranged between .48 and .94. It is plausible to assert that the observed variables effectively represent the latent variables in a meaningful manner.

In the post-measurement structural model, different models of mental well-being among university students' emotional intelligence, psychological resilience, and life satisfaction were tested. Firstly, the full mediator and partial mediator roles for both dependent variables were examined, and in addition, the partial mediator role for life satisfaction and the full mediator role for psychological resilience were tested. However, all of these paths were found to be insignificant. Since they were found to be insignificant, the model with the best-fit index was determined as the full mediating role of mental well-being between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction and the partial mediating role of mental well-being between emotional intelligence and psychological resilience. Considering the fit indices, $\chi^2/df=4.41$, GFI= .906, CFI= .926, NFI= .907, TLI= .899, RFI= .873, IFI= .927, SRMR .06 fit values are at the expected level. The model in which life satisfaction is a full mediator and psychological resilience is a partial mediator shows that it is the best model. The model's path coefficients are depicted in Figure 1.

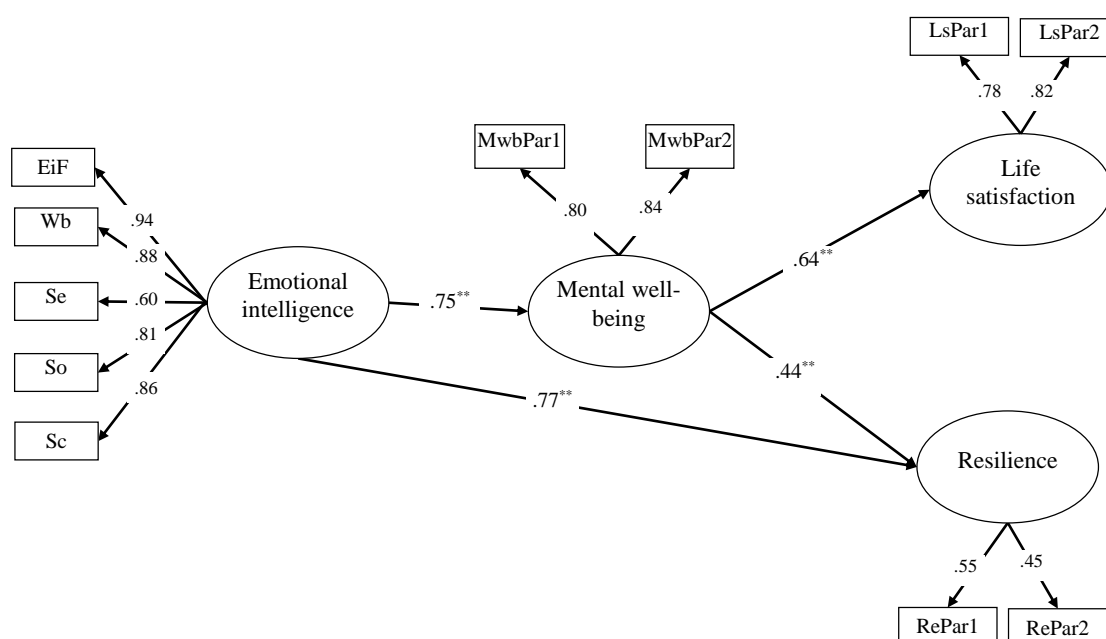


Figure 1. Standardized factor loading for the fully mediated structural model. *Note.* $N = 317$; ** $p < .001$; EIF emotional intelligence total; Wb well being; Se sensuality; So sociability; Sc self control; *MwbPar* parcels of mental well being; *LsPar* parcels of life satisfaction; *RePar* parcels of resilience

Discussion, Conclusion, and Suggestions

In short, mental well-being refers to being in good mental health (Tekkurşun Demir et al., 2018). In addition, it has been conceptualized as the capacity to contribute to society, lead a meaningful life, experience happiness, cope with the situations faced in life, and take responsibility (Demirtaş & Baydemir, 2019). The study was conducted to measure the mediating effect of mental well-being between emotional intelligence, life satisfaction, and psychological resilience. As a result of the analysis of the collected data, it was found that there was a full mediating effect of mental well-being between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction and a partial mediating effect of mental well-being between emotional intelligence and psychological resilience. The results are discussed below within the scope of the hypotheses.

Initially, upon investigating the mediating role of mental well-being between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction, it was found that a complete mediating relationship was present. Thus, when the mental well-being of individuals with high emotional intelligence levels increases, their life satisfaction also increases, and when the mental well-being of individuals with low emotional intelligence levels increases, their life satisfaction also increases. In addition, if mental well-being is low, life satisfaction is also low. Research by Sammer and Majeed, (2022) has shown that emotional intelligence positively influences life satisfaction and is a significant predictor of life satisfaction across different populations. Similarly, Carmeli et al. (2009) demonstrated a positive association between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being components, including life satisfaction. Also, previous studies have found positive correlations between mental well-being and life satisfaction. For instance, Gale et al. (2013) observed that an improvement in mental well-being leads to increased life satisfaction. Additionally, in a two-year longitudinal study, Sánchez-Álvarez et al. (2015) found that emotional intelligence was positively associated with higher levels of life satisfaction. These findings suggest that mental well-being plays a crucial role in enhancing the impact of emotional intelligence on life satisfaction. Understanding this interplay is vital for developing interventions to promote overall well-being and satisfaction, especially in high-stress environments like healthcare settings or during challenging times such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

The other hypothesis is that mental well-being has a partial mediating role between emotional intelligence and psychological resilience. It was concluded that when the mental well-being of individuals with high emotional intelligence levels increases, their psychological resilience increases, and when the mental well-being of individuals with low emotional intelligence levels increases, their psychological resilience increases. Consistent with the outcomes of the present research, a recent study conducted by Ime (2023) reveals positive associations among psychological resilience, emotional flexibility, and mental well-being. Additionally, Yıldırım (2019) found that resilience partially mediates the relationship between stress and life satisfaction. These findings suggest that mental well-being acts as a bridge between emotional intelligence and resilience, influencing how individuals navigate stressors and maintain psychological health. This interconnectedness underscores the importance of considering mental well-being as a key factor in understanding the relationship between emotional intelligence and resilience, emphasizing the need for interventions that promote mental well-being to enhance overall psychological resilience.

In addition, in case of low mental well-being, there is a low psychological resilience. The positive correlation between mental well-being and psychological resilience is well-supported by various studies. This correlation suggests that mental well-being plays a crucial role in fostering resilience, potentially acting as a protective factor against stressors and contributing to individuals' ability to adapt positively to adversity. Research consistently shows that higher levels of mental well-being are associated with greater psychological resilience, indicating that individuals with better mental health are more likely to exhibit resilience in the face of challenges (Zhang et al., 2023). Also, in the literature review, it was concluded that people with high mental well-being have very good physical and psychological health and strong life qualities (Keyes et al., 2010). In addition, it was concluded that mindfulness training for university students for six weeks increased mental well-being and also increased their psychological resilience (Roulston et al., 2018). By recognizing the link between mental well-being and psychological resilience, interventions can be designed to enhance both aspects concurrently, thereby fostering a more comprehensive approach to promoting individuals' mental health and well-being. Overall, the positive correlation between mental well-being and psychological resilience underscores the importance of addressing both factors in mental health promotion efforts to support individuals in building resilience and maintaining positive mental health outcomes.

The study findings suggest a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and various aspects of well-being, such as life satisfaction and psychological resilience. The results indicate that mental well-being fully mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction, emphasizing the influence of individuals' mental states on their overall satisfaction with life. Moreover, mental well-being partially mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological resilience, highlighting the role of emotional intelligence in individuals' ability to cope with challenges and recover from adversity. These findings underscore the complex interplay between emotional

intelligence, mental well-being, and different facets of overall well-being, emphasizing the importance of emotional factors in understanding individuals' satisfaction with life and resilience to stressors. Understanding the mediating effects of mental well-being between emotional intelligence and various well-being indicators can have significant implications for interventions aimed at enhancing individuals' overall well-being. By acknowledging mental well-being as a mediator, interventions can target both emotional intelligence and mental well-being to enhance outcomes like life satisfaction and psychological resilience. This study contributes to the existing literature emphasizing the role of emotional intelligence in promoting well-being and resilience, elucidating the mechanisms through which emotional intelligence influences individuals' overall satisfaction with life and ability to navigate challenges effectively. Ultimately, these findings highlight the importance of considering emotional factors in interventions and programs designed to improve individuals' well-being and resilience in diverse contexts.

Although the study explains the relationship between emotional intelligence, life satisfaction psychological resilience, and mental well-being, it should be noted that there are some limitations. First of all, the generalisability of the sample and sample size is limited. The majority of participants are girls include potential gender bias in the findings, as the results may not be generalizable to a more diverse population. Therefore, its generalisability can be increased with students from different cultures and different large samples. Secondly, the mediating variable could have been the case of looking at different concepts other than the concept of mental well-being. The study is limited to the mediating effect of the mentioned concept between emotional intelligence, life satisfaction, and psychological resilience. Thirdly, the participants participated according to their own ideas about data collection. Different collection methods can be used. Finally, our research is a cross-sectional study. Cross-sectional studies are insufficient in terms of causality. For this, causality can be emphasized in longitudinal studies.

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Ethics statement: The researchers declare that they carried out the study by adhering to the ethical rules that must be followed in human experiments as stated in the Helsinki Declaration of 1975. Before the administration of measures, participants were informed about the aim of the study by the authors. Participants were asked whether they were volunteers to participate in the study. Then the measures were administered to the only volunteer students. Before completing the measures informed consent was obtained by all participants.

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