



Exploring the Relationship between Parental Expectations and Mental Well-Being in Young Adults: Correlational Study

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Abstract

Parental expectations play a central role in shaping the developmental experiences of young adults, particularly within the Indian cultural context where academic achievement and career stability are highly valued. While expectations can act as motivating factors that encourage persistence, they may also influence emotional health and self-concept. This study examines the relationship between parental expectations and mental well-being among undergraduate students aged 18–22 years. A purposive sample of 103 college students from urban institutions in India completed the Perception of Parental Expectations Inventory (PPEI) and the Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWB). Data were analyzed using correlation and inferential statistics in JASP statistical software. Findings revealed a small but statistically significant positive relationship between parental expectations and mental well-being, suggesting that students who perceived higher parental expectations also reported greater well-being ($r = .354, p < 0.01$). No significant gender differences were found for either variable. These results suggest that, within the Indian context, parental expectations may function as a source of encouragement and resilience rather than stressors. The study highlights the importance of balanced parental involvement and provides implications for educators, parents, and policymakers in designing support systems that enhance student well-being.

Keywords: Parental expectations, mental well-being, young adults, correlational design, psychological adjustment.

1. Introduction

Educational excellence has become a cornerstone of success in contemporary society, where globalization, technological advancement, and intense competition have redefined the pathways to achievement. Academic qualifications and professional accomplishments are increasingly regarded as prerequisites for upward mobility, financial stability, and social recognition (Salmela-Aro & Upadyaya, 2014). For young adults—particularly those transitioning from late adolescence to early adulthood—decisions regarding higher education, career choices, and long-term goals often dominate life priorities. This developmental stage, frequently overlapping with tertiary education or the initial years of employment, is characterized by heightened intellectual demands, greater independence, and increased responsibilities (Arnett, 2000) [25].

Young adults are expected to demonstrate maturity, autonomy, and self-discipline while simultaneously navigating personal, social, and cultural challenges. They are also confronted with the task of consolidating their identities, forming close relationships, and making decisions that have long-lasting implications (Schulenberg, Sameroff, &

Cicchetti, 2004).

Despite their growing autonomy, parental influence continues to play a significant role during this stage of development. Parents' expectations—often shaped by cultural norms, family values, and aspirations for success—can act as both a motivating force and a source of pressure. Understanding how these expectations intersect with mental well-being is essential, as the balance between striving for achievement and maintaining psychological health influences not only academic and career outcomes but also long-term life satisfaction and resilience.

1.1. Parental Expectations

Parental expectations refer to the beliefs, standards, and aspirations parents hold regarding their children's performance, achievements, and life trajectories. These expectations are deeply embedded in cultural and societal frameworks, often reflecting shared notions of success, social mobility, and familial duty (Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010). They are communicated both explicitly—through direct conversations about goals and performance—and implicitly—through parental behaviours, comparisons with peers, and

reinforcement patterns.

On the positive side, realistic and supportive expectations provide structure, discipline, and encouragement. Such expectations can enhance intrinsic motivation, foster persistence in the face of challenges, and strengthen the parent-child relationship (Wong *et al.*, 2018) ^[27]. Young adults who perceive parental expectations as aligned with their own abilities and aspirations often report higher levels of academic engagement and emotional stability (Rogers, Theule, Ryan, Adams, & Keating, 2009) ^[23]. However, excessively high or unrealistic expectations can impose psychological burdens.

When young adults internalize these standards, they may experience chronic performance pressure, fear of failure, and diminished self-worth. Ang and Goh (2006) ^[12] found a significant association between elevated parental expectations and increased anxiety among adolescents.

Similarly, Deb, Strodl, and Sun (2015) ^[2] highlighted that in the Indian context, academic pressure stemming from parents was linked to heightened stress, emotional exhaustion, and even suicidal ideation. Cultural factors intensify these dynamics. In collectivist societies such as India, China, and many East Asian countries, academic success is not solely viewed as an individual accomplishment but as a reflection of family honour and social standing (Khanna, 2017; Li, 2018). Consequently, young adults may experience heightened tension between pursuing personal interests and fulfilling familial expectations. Failure to meet parental standards can lead to guilt, strained parent-child relationships, and long-term emotional distress (Qin, Chang, Han, & Chee, 2012). Thus, parental expectations function as a double-edged sword—capable of motivating achievement but equally capable of undermining emotional security and psychological well-being when perceived as excessive or unattainable.

1.2. Mental Well-Being

Mental well-being is a multidimensional construct encompassing emotional, psychological, and social functioning. It is not merely the absence of mental illness but involves the presence of positive qualities such as self-esteem, emotional balance, coping skills, resilience, and the capacity to maintain meaningful social relationships (Ryff & Keyes, 1995) ^[17]. For young adults, mental well-being is especially critical, as it influences their ability to navigate academic demands, establish careers, maintain interpersonal connections, and construct a stable sense of identity (Keyes, 2002) ^[9].

This period of life, however, is also marked by increased vulnerability to mental health concerns. University students and early professionals frequently report elevated levels of stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms, stemming from competitive academic systems, uncertain job prospects, financial constraints, and social comparisons (Ibrahim, Kelly, Adams, & Glazebrook, 2013; Huppert, 2009) ^[26]. In fact, the World Health Organization (2020) has identified young adulthood as a critical risk stage for the onset of common mental health disorders. Within this context, parental expectations stand out as a unique stressor. Supportive and well-calibrated expectations may serve as protective factors, bolstering resilience and providing emotional grounding. For example, Wong *et al.* (2018) ^[27] reported that Asian American young adults who perceived parental expectations as encouraging rather than coercive experienced higher self-esteem and greater life satisfaction. Conversely, when expectations are perceived as rigid, unrealistic, or misaligned

with the individual's capabilities and interests, they can erode self-confidence, heighten anxiety, and contribute to depressive symptoms (Ang & Goh, 2006 ^[12]; Deb *et al.*, 2015) ^[2].

Mental well-being in young adulthood is not only a predictor of immediate academic and career outcomes but also a foundation for long-term life trajectories. Poor psychological health during this stage has been linked to lower occupational success, strained interpersonal relationships, and reduced life satisfaction in later adulthood (Schulenberg *et al.*, 2004). On the other hand, strong mental well-being promotes adaptability, fosters healthy identity development, and enables individuals to cope effectively with life's uncertainties. Therefore, understanding the role of parental expectations in shaping mental well-being is vital, particularly in societies where educational and career achievements are closely tied to family reputation and socio-economic security.

2. Materials & Methods

2.1. Statement of the Problem

To investigate the relationship between parental expectations and mental well-being among young adults.

2.2. Objectives

- i). To assess the relationship between parental expectations and the mental well-being of young adults.
- ii). To understand the perception and internalization of academic expectations by students from their parents.
- iii). To recommend practical strategies for parents and educators to support student mental health.

2.3. Rationale and Significance

Addressing the knowledge gap in the existing literature, the present study seeks to explore how parental expectations influence the mental well-being of young adults within the Indian sociocultural context. Young adulthood (ages 18–22) is a pivotal developmental stage characterized by transitions into higher education, entry into the workforce, pursuit of financial independence, and identity consolidation (Arnett, 2000) ^[25]. In India, this stage is particularly shaped by cultural expectations surrounding academic excellence, career stability, and family honour (Chadha & Agarwal, 2020). Within such a setting, parental expectations continue to exert a powerful influence—serving both as a source of motivation and as a potential source of strain when perceived as excessive, rigid, or misaligned with personal aspirations (Deb, Strodl, & Sun, 2015) ^[2].

Although parental expectations can foster perseverance and ambition, they may also hinder autonomy, undermine self-efficacy, and contribute to emotional exhaustion, anxiety, and depressive symptoms (Kumar, 2018). This tension is especially salient in young adulthood, a period during which individuals are expected to make independent life decisions yet often remain bound by familial standards and obligations. Misalignment between personal goals and parental demands can weaken parent-child communication, strain relationships, and exacerbate psychological distress (Menon, Nair, & Thomas, 2024) ^[14].

Existing research on parenting within the Indian context has largely focused on adolescents, examining links between parenting styles and stress or academic performance (Deb *et al.*, 2015; Chadha & Agarwal, 2020) ^[2]. However, relatively little is known about young adults' subjective perceptions of parental expectations and how these perceptions interact with well-being outcomes during this developmental phase. Recent

evidence, such as Menon *et al.* (2024) ^[14], highlights that maladaptive perfectionism fully mediates the relationship between perceived parental expectations and fear of negative evaluation, underscoring how internalized parental standards heighten vulnerability to mental health challenges. Yet, moderating variables such as gender norms, resilience, and educational contexts remain underexplored. Addressing this gap, the present study aims to investigate the relationship between perceived parental expectations and psychological well-being among young adults in India, using culturally validated tools.

2.4. Research Design

This study adopts a correlational research design, suitable for examining the statistical relationship between two or more naturally occurring variables—namely, parental expectations and mental well-being. The researcher does not change or control any of the variables. Instead, they simply observe and measure how these two variables behave naturally in real-life settings.

One of the main advantages of this design is that it is simple and cost-effective. It can be conducted using surveys or questionnaires without the need for complex setups or long-term experiments. It is also useful because the data is collected in real-life situations, which makes the findings more practical and relatable. However, the biggest limitation of this design is that it cannot show cause and effect. Even if the study finds that higher parental expectations are linked to lower mental well-being, it cannot prove that one directly causes the other. Other hidden factors, known as extraneous variables, could also influence the results. Additionally, since the study relies on self-report tools like questionnaires, the findings depend on how honestly and accurately young adults respond. Despite these limitations, a correlational design is a strong first step in understanding important patterns and relationships that affect young adult's lives. It can also help guide future research that looks deeper into the causes behind such issues.

2.5. Sample and Sampling Method

The sample for this study consists of college-going students aged between 18 to 22 years, who are currently enrolled in undergraduate programs across various academic streams such as arts, commerce, and science. These participants were selected from urban English-medium colleges in India. Both male and female students were included in the study to ensure gender diversity and broader representation.

This age group is particularly significant because individuals between 18 and 22 are undergoing a critical transitional phase marked by increased academic responsibilities, decisions about career paths, identity formation, and often, relocation from home. Many students at this stage face heightened stress due to academic performance, parental expectations, peer competition, and uncertainty about the future. These factors can have a considerable impact on their mental well-being, self-esteem, and motivation levels.

The method used for selecting participants will be non-probability purposive sampling. In this method, students will be deliberately chosen based on predefined inclusion criteria relevant to the objectives of the study. Participants will not be randomly selected but will be chosen for their alignment with the research for exposure, only those pursuing regular full-time undergraduate programs will be included in the sample. This approach will help ensure a degree of homogeneity in terms of academic environment and life stage, allowing for a

more focused investigation into the psychological and emotional challenges faced by college students during this formative period.

Additionally, to avoid interference from unrelated psychological concerns, students who have been diagnosed with clinical psychological disorders or who are undergoing psychiatric treatment will be excluded from the sample. This step is taken to minimize the effect of extraneous variables that could otherwise influence their mental well-being, separate from the influence of parental expectations. By applying these inclusion and exclusion criteria, the study aims to collect data that is both focused and accurate, enhancing the reliability of the results.

2.6. Hypothesis

- i). There is no significant relationship between parental expectations and overall mental well-being.
- ii). There are no significant differences in the male and female scores on parental expectations.
- iii). There are no significant differences in the male and female scores on mental well-being.

2.7. Tools Used-

i). Perception of Parental Expectations Inventory (PPEI)

The Perception of Parental Expectations Inventory (PPEI), developed by S. Sasikala and S. Karunanidhi (2011) ^[15], is a 30-item self-report instrument designed to assess how individuals perceive parental expectations and the extent to which they feel capable of fulfilling them. Although originally developed for adolescents, it is also applicable to young adults as a measure of perceived parental standards across four domains. These include Personal Expectations, which reflect expectations related to obedience, manners, responsibility, discipline, and personal conduct; Academic Expectations, which focus on academic performance, grades, and learning habits; Career Expectations, which encompass parental expectations regarding future job prospects, financial stability, and career choices; and Parental Ambitions, which represent the projection of parents' unfulfilled personal goals, values, and aspirations onto their children. The PPEI has been established as a psychometrically sound instrument, demonstrating high internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding .90 for the overall scale and acceptable to good reliability across subscales. Test-retest reliability further supports the stability of responses over time. In addition, factor analysis confirmed the four-dimensional structure of the inventory, while expert reviews ensured the clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness of the items, thereby validating its use as a reliable tool for assessing perceived parental expectations (Sasikala & Karunanidhi, 2011) ^[15].

ii). Psychological Well-Being Scale (18 items)

The Psychological Well-Being Scale (18 items), developed by Ryff and colleagues (Ryff *et al.*, 2010; Ryff & Keyes, 1995) ^[16, 17], is designed to assess six key components of psychological well-being. These components include Autonomy, which reflects independence and self-determination; Environmental Mastery, referring to one's ability to manage life situations effectively; Personal Growth, which involves openness to new experiences and continued self-development; Positive Relations with Others, encompassing the capacity to form and sustain warm, trusting, and satisfying interpersonal relationships; Purpose in Life, which captures having meaningful goals and a sense of

direction; and Self-Acceptance, representing a positive attitude toward oneself and one's past experiences. The scale consists of 18 items rated on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 7 (Strongly Disagree), with several items reverse-scored to minimize response bias. Subscale scores are calculated by summing the items corresponding to each domain, with higher scores reflecting greater psychological well-being. Psychometric evaluations of the scale indicate strong reliability and validity across diverse populations. Internal consistency for the subscales is generally satisfactory, with Cronbach's alpha values typically exceeding .70. Construct validity is well established, as the scale aligns with Ryff's multidimensional model of well-being, and its factor structure has been successfully replicated across cultural contexts. Furthermore, large-scale studies such as the MIDUS II project have provided normative data, enhancing the interpretability of scores within adult populations (Ryff *et al.*, 2010; Ryff & Keyes, 1995) [16, 17].

2.8. Procedure for Data Collection

Data was gathered online using Google Forms. The link of the form was distributed through college-affiliated networks. The form will begin with an informed consent section, where participants were briefed about the purpose of the study, their rights, and the voluntary nature of participation. Since the participants are adults, parental consent will not be required. All responses will be kept anonymous and treated with strict confidentiality. Clear instructions were provided within the form, and participants were also be given a contact number and email address for any queries or concerns related to the

study.

2.9. Proposed Method of Data Analysis

The data was analysed using JASP software. The following statistical approaches will be implemented:

- Used Spearman's Correlation Coefficient to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between parental expectations and mental well-being.
- Performed an independent samples t-test and Mann-Whitney u-test to examine whether gender differences are present in parental expectations and mental well-being.

3. Results and Discussions

The current study aims to examine the relationship between perceived parental expectations and mental well-being among college-going young adults (18–22 years) and to test gender differences on key study variables.

Null Hypothesis-

H1: There is no significant relationship between parental expectations and overall mental well-being.

H2: There are no significant differences in the male and female scores on parental expectations.

H3: There are no significant differences in the male and female scores on mental well-being.

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Descriptive statistics were calculated for each of the variables, as well as for male and female participants separately.

Table 1: Shows the Demographic Details of the Participants.

Characteristics	n	%
Gender		
Male	60	58.25
Female	43	41.75
Age		
18-19	46	44.66
20-21	39	37.86
22	16	15.53
Education		
Engineering	6	5.83
B.Com	6	5.83
Diploma	5	4.85
Psychology	3	2.91
Commerce	2	1.94
Others	81	78.64

3.1. Parental Expectations

Descriptive statistics indicated that participants scored relatively high on perceived parental expectations ($M = 129.40$, $SD = 65.11$), with scores ranging from 36.00 to 569.00. The median value of 127.0 suggested that half of the sample perceived expectations above this level, reflecting that most young adults reported consistently elevated parental demands. The distribution was non-normal (Shapiro-Wilk = 0.504, $p < .001$), with clustering toward the higher end, which highlights that moderate to high parental expectations are a shared experience among students in this age group. This finding underscores the social reality in India, where higher education and professional achievement are strongly emphasized by parents as indicators of family honour and

security (Deb *et al.*, 2015; Uji *et al.*, 2014) [2, 24].

When gender differences were considered descriptively, male participants ($N = 60$) reported slightly higher levels of parental expectations than female participants ($N = 43$). While this difference was not statistically tested at this stage, it points toward a possible trend wherein sons are perceived, or perceive themselves, as bearing stronger academic and career pressures. This observation resonates with prior findings suggesting that Indian families often associate greater responsibility with male children, particularly in terms of financial security and career stability (Khaleque & Rohner, 2012) [5]. At the same time, the uniformly high levels of expectations reported across both genders reflect that academic pressure is a pervasive cultural phenomenon, not

confined to one gender alone (Deb *et al.*, 2015) ^[2]. Thus, the current findings partially support earlier research while also pointing toward the cultural salience of parental expectations across all students.

3.2. Mental Well-Being

Descriptive statistics showed that the participants reported an overall mean score of 76.50 (SD = 17.15) on the mental well-being scale, with scores ranging between 27.00 and 119.00. The Shapiro–Wilk test indicated no significant deviation from normality ($W = 0.979$, $p = .110$), suggesting that the distribution of well-being scores approximated normality. This variation reflects that while some students experienced relatively high levels of psychological well-being, others reported lower scores, indicating possible vulnerability to stress or adjustment difficulties. Previous research has similarly noted wide variability in well-being among Indian youth, where strong academic and social demands create both resilience in some students and heightened psychological distress in others (Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Deb *et al.*, 2015) ^[17, 2]. Ryff's multidimensional model of well-being emphasizes domains such as autonomy, personal growth, and purpose in life, which may be particularly sensitive to the pressures of young adults. When gender differences were considered descriptively, female participants reported slightly lower average mental well-being compared to their male counterparts. However, inferential tests (see Section 5.5) revealed that these differences were not statistically significant ($t(101) = -0.109$, $p = .913$; $U = 1165.5$, $p = .407$), indicating that both groups experienced comparable levels of well-being. This finding aligns with some studies that have found negligible gender differences in global well-being among young adults (Keyes, 2005; Joshanloo, 2014) ^[21], but it also contrasts with other reports suggesting that female students often display lower psychological well-being due to higher perceived stress and societal expectations (Brougham *et al.*, 2009). Therefore, the present results contribute to the mixed evidence base, suggesting that in this cohort, gender did not exert a significant influence on mental well-being.

Table 2: Shows Descriptive Statistics of Parental Expectations and Mental Wellbeing

	Parental Expectations	Mental Wellbeing
Mode	134.1	87.38
Median	127.0	77.00
Mean	129.4	76.50
Std. Deviation	65.11	17.15
95% CI Std. Dev. Lower	57.27	15.09
95% CI Std. Dev. Upper	75.46	19.88
Skewness	4.671	-0.338
Std. Error of Skewness	0.238	0.238
Kurtosis	26.92	0.270
Std. Error of Kurtosis	0.472	0.472
Shapiro-Wilk	0.504	0.979
P-value of Shapiro-Wilk	< .001	.110
Minimum	36.00	27.00
Maximum	569.0	119.0

3.3. Interrelationships between the Parental Expectations

Bivariate correlation was conducted using Spearman's rho for normality of the parental expectations data. Results showed a small but significant positive correlation between parental

expectations and mental well-being ($\rho = .316$, $p = 0.01$). This indicates that higher levels of perceived parental expectations are associated with higher mental well-being among participants. Therefore, the alternate hypothesis which stated that there is a significant relationship between parental expectations and mental well-being was supported.

The results of the bivariate correlation analysis showed a small but significant positive relationship between parental expectations and mental well-being ($\rho = .316$, $p = 0.01$). This suggests that students who perceived higher parental expectations also reported higher levels of psychological well-being. While the effect size is modest, it highlights that in this sample, parental expectations may not necessarily be a source of distress but can also act as a motivating factor that fosters resilience, purpose, and positive psychological outcomes.

Similar findings have been observed in contexts where parental involvement and guidance are framed as supportive rather than controlling, thereby contributing to the student's sense of competence and achievement (Roth *et al.*, 2009; Kapadia & Verma, 2015) ^[23].

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Table 3: Shows Spearman's Correlations for Parental Expectations and Mental Wellbeing

S. No.	Variable		Parental Expectations		Mental Wellbeing
1.	Parental Expectations	Spearman's rho	—		
		p-value	—		
2.	Mental Wellbeing	Spearman's rho	0.316	**	—
		p-value	.001		—
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$					

At the same time, this finding contradicts much of the prior literature that links high parental expectations to poorer mental health outcomes, such as increased anxiety and academic stress (Deb *et al.*, 2015; Uji *et al.*, 2014; Khaleque & Rohner, 2012) ^[2, 24, 5]. The positive association in this study may reflect cultural nuances where students internalize parental expectations as a sign of care and investment in their future rather than as undue pressure. Based on these results, the null hypothesis, which stated that there is no significant relationship between parental expectations and mental well-being, was rejected, and the alternate hypothesis was accepted.

The results of the Spearman's correlation analysis indicated a small but statistically significant positive relationship between parental expectations and mental well-being ($\rho = .316$, $p =$

.001). This suggests that students who perceived higher levels of parental expectations also reported higher levels of psychological well-being. Although the correlation was modest in strength, it highlights that in this cohort, parental expectations did not act as a purely negative stressor but were instead associated with slightly better well-being outcomes.

One possible explanation is that students may interpret parental expectations as a sign of care, support, and investment in their future, which can promote motivation, a sense of direction, and resilience (Kapadia & Verma, 2015; Roth *et al.*, 2009) [23].

At the same time, this result contradicts much of the earlier research summarized in the literature review, which emphasized the negative consequences of high parental pressure. For instance, Deb *et al.* (2015), Uji *et al.* (2014), and Khaleque and Rohner (2012) [2, 24, 5] reported that stronger parental expectations were often linked to anxiety, academic stress, and reduced mental health in adolescents and young adults. The present finding therefore diverges from these trends, suggesting that the relationship between expectations and well-being may depend heavily on the way such expectations are perceived—whether as controlling or supportive. Based on the current results, the null hypothesis (H_{01}), which stated that there is no significant relationship between parental expectations and mental well-being, was rejected, and the alternate hypothesis (H_{11}) was accepted.

3.4. Gender-specific Observations

Gender Difference in Parental Expectations

Table 4: Shows Independent Samples T-Test & Mann–Whitney U test conducted for Parental Expectations

	Test	Statistic	df	p
Parental Expectations	Student	1.347	101	.181
	Mann-Whitney	1,347.000		.705

An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine gender difference in parental expectations. The results showed no statistically significant difference between male and female participants ($t(101) = 1.347$, $p = .181$), with a small effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.27$). Similarly, a non-parametric Mann–Whitney U test confirmed the absence of gender differences ($U = 1347.000$, $p = .705$), reinforcing the conclusion that parental expectations were comparable across genders in this sample. Although female participants reported slightly higher mean scores than males at the descriptive level, these differences were minimal and not meaningful statistically. This suggests that in the present study, parental expectations were perceived at broadly similar levels across genders. Such findings are consistent with portions of the reviewed literature, which highlighted that both male and female students often experience similar levels of parental pressure in the context of academic achievement and career-related expectations (Kapadia & Verma, 2015; Verma & Gupta, 2019). As noted in the review, the emphasis on educational success in Indian families tends to be equally strong for sons and daughters, reflecting changing social values and the growing importance of equal opportunities in higher education. At the same time, the absence of a gender difference contradicts other evidence discussed in the literature review. For example, Deb *et al.* (2015) [2] reported that female students frequently face stronger parental monitoring and academic pressure, while Uji *et al.* (2014) [24] suggested that daughters in collectivist cultures may be more

affected by family expectations than sons. International research also supports this trend: Brougham, Zail, Mendoza, and Miller (2009) [22] found that women were more likely to perceive heightened external expectations and associated stress compared to men. The present findings therefore diverge from such results, suggesting that in this particular sample, female participants did not experience disproportionately higher parental expectations. Possible explanations may include shifting parental attitudes in urban contexts, an increasing recognition of gender equality in education, and greater emphasis on merit-based success for both sons and daughters. Thus, while the alternate hypothesis (H_{11}) was not supported, the results contribute to the debate by showing that gender differences in parental expectations may not be universal but instead context-dependent, shaped by evolving cultural norms and situational factors.

3.5. Gender Differences in Mental Well-Being

Table 5: Shows Independent Samples T-Test for Mental Wellbeing

	t	df	p
Mental Wellbeing	0.069	101	.945

Note: Student's t-test.

Independent samples t-test was conducted to examine gender differences in mental well-being. The results showed no statistically significant difference between male and female participants ($t(101) = 0.069$, $p = .945$), with a trivial effect size (Cohen's $d \approx 0.014$). Although female participants reported slightly lower mean scores than males at the descriptive level, these differences were negligible and not meaningful statistically. This suggests that in the present study, mental well-being outcomes were broadly comparable across genders. Such findings are consistent with portions of the reviewed literature, which highlight that both male and female students experience the pressures of academic expectations and career preparation in similar ways during young adulthood (Kapadia & Verma, 2015; Verma & Gupta, 2019).

As noted in your review, several Indian studies have suggested that family support and resilience factors can buffer the negative effects of parental expectations for both genders, leading to comparable levels of psychological well-being despite external stressors. At the same time, the absence of a gender difference contradicts other evidence discussed in the literature review. For instance, Deb *et al.* (2015) [2] and Uji *et al.* (2014) [24] reported that female students were often more vulnerable to internalizing difficulties such as anxiety, stress, and lower levels of well-being under parental and academic pressures. International research also echoes this trend: Brougham, Zail, Mendoza, and Miller (2009) [22] found that women reported significantly higher stress and less effective coping strategies compared to men.

The present findings therefore diverge from these results, suggesting that in this specific cohort, female participants may not have experienced disproportionately lower well-being. Possible explanations include evolving gender roles in urban educational contexts, greater academic opportunities for young women, and increased family or peer support, which may have helped offset traditional vulnerabilities. Thus, while the alternate hypothesis (H_{12}) was not supported, the results extend the debate by showing that gender differences in mental well-being may not be universal but instead context-specific, varying with cultural and situational factors.

3.6. Summary of Finding on Hypotheses

Taken together, the results provide a nuanced understanding of the research problem. The correlation analysis revealed a small but significant positive relationship between parental expectations and mental well-being, thereby rejecting H1 (null) and supporting the alternate hypothesis that such expectations and well-being are significantly related.

However, independent t-tests examining gender differences in both parental expectations (H2) and mental well-being (H3) showed no statistically significant differences between male and female participants. Thus, both H2 and H3 were supported, indicating that gender did not play a significant role in shaping either the level of perceived parental expectations or mental well-being outcomes in this cohort. The present findings therefore highlight that while parental expectations do influence well-being, these effects operate largely independent of gender, pointing toward broader cultural patterns of shared academic and career-related pressures in young adulthood.

4. Conclusion

From the current research study, it can be inferred that parental expectations are significantly and positively related to the mental well-being of college-going young adults (18–22 years). The findings suggest that, contrary to much of the prior literature, parental expectations in this sample did not function solely as a source of stress but, when supportive, acted as a motivator that contributed to resilience, purpose, and overall psychological well-being (Bandura, 1997; Masten, 2014). Gender differences were found to be statistically insignificant for both parental expectations and mental well-being, indicating that these factors operate as shared experiences across male and female students. Thus, the study highlights that the influence of parental expectations is not universally negative but depends on the way such expectations are framed and interpreted (Conger & Donnellan, 2007)^[29].

Moreover, the results underscore the importance of contextual and cultural factors in shaping students' perceptions, as expectations in collectivist cultures may often be internalised as care, guidance, and investment in one's future (Chen, 2010). These insights contribute to a more balanced understanding of parental influence, suggesting that expectations, when appropriately moderated, may serve as protective factors rather than risk factors for student well-being.

5. Implications

The present study highlights a positive association between parental expectations and mental well-being, contrasting with prior research that emphasized their detrimental effects (Deb *et al.*, 2015; Uji *et al.*, 2014)^[2, 24]. Findings suggest that when expectations are perceived as supportive rather than controlling, they can foster resilience, motivation, and a sense of purpose (Masten, 2014). Interventions should not aim to eliminate expectations but to reshape them through parental guidance workshops, student resilience training, improved parent–student communication, and institutional support systems.

Implementation of this work would involve integrating such psychoeducational and support programs within academic institutions and family settings. By reframing expectations as growth-oriented and empathetic, they can serve as protective factors that enhance psychological health while addressing cultural contexts (Chen, 2010).

6. Future Recommendations

Future research should address the study's limitations by using larger, more diverse, and randomly selected samples to enhance generalisability (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Mixed-method approaches, including interviews and multi-informant reports, can reduce self-report bias (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004), while longitudinal and experimental designs may clarify causality and test intervention effectiveness (Menard, 2002). Consideration of variables such as socio-economic status, academic performance, coping strategies, and family communication is important (Conger & Donnellan, 2007)^[29], along with cross-cultural comparisons to determine whether the positive association is context-specific or universal (Chen, 2010). Expanding the scope to include dimensions like self-efficacy, peer influence, and resilience would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Bandura, 1997; Masten, 2014).

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