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**Comparing the Psychological Well-being of Working and Non-working
Mothers**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree
of
Masters of Social Sciences in Psychology

By
Ayesha Mir



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ABSTRACT

The well-being of parents is essential for the health and development of both their families and themselves. Both parents contribute greatly to their children's development and growth. In contrast to fathers, however, mothers have higher responsibilities in handling household chores and children, along with their professional obligations. Indeed, the employment status of mothers is a crucial determinant of their life satisfaction and happiness. Due to a lack of comprehensive cross-cultural studies that examine the psychological well-being among working and non-working mothers, the present pre-registered study was designed to explore the difference in psychological well-being measured as happiness and life satisfaction among working and non-working mothers in New Zealand and Pakistan. The study utilized the data from the World Value Survey Wave 7 and employed a quantitative cross-sectional research design to investigate the psychological well-being of 252 working and 206 non-working New Zealand mothers, and 78 working and 78 non-working Pakistani mothers. The findings demonstrated that non-working mothers in New Zealand experienced higher life satisfaction compared to working mothers, whereas in Pakistan, working mothers reported greater life satisfaction than non-working mothers. The result emphasizes the influence of culture, employment status, and social support systems in shaping the well-being of mothers. Recommendations are made for culturally relevant interventions that tackle the challenges faced by mothers in developing and developed countries. Future research can explore socioeconomic status, and ethnicities as additional factors that might influence the well-being of mothers.

Keywords: Well-being, Happiness, Life satisfaction, Working mother, Non-working mother

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Parenthood is an incredible journey where both parents play a role in the development and upbringing of their children. Indeed, research has shown the importance of both parents in the lives of their children (Gežová, 2015). To illustrate, a meta-analytical summary of the literature investigating the father's involvement in early childhood and its relationship with child development comprised of 21 studies over 10 years. McWayne and colleagues (2013) confirmed that the amount and quality of direct involvement of fathers influence the children cognitive abilities and social skills. The contribution of mothers to their children's development is considerably great given that mothers are typically responsible for childcare. Not only do mothers raise their children, but they also help them develop their personalities and provide them with a good education (Aziza, 2020). According to Purnama et al. (2024), mothers frequently take on childcare duties such as managing schedules, caring for their children, and household responsibilities. This presence provides stability and nurtures the development of a child. Positive character development, emotional intelligence and lower risk of antisocial behaviors are all enhanced by the mother-child interaction (Purnama et al., 2024). Mothers are thus responsible for the development of positive behaviors, attitudes, and embedding skills in their children (Dhingra & Keswani, 2019).

In addition to their involvement in child development women also contribute to the workforce. Women's labor force participation is determined by their family circumstances such as income problems, number of children, and education (Klasen et al., 2020). However, it has been discovered that women are increasingly joining the workforce because of their economic conditions or in quest of their identity (Paul, 2020). In September 2024, 67.1% of women were employed according to the Ministry of Women New Zealand (2025). Although Pakistan has

experienced a rise in women's labor participation over the last two decades, currently 26% of women are employed (United Nations, 2023). For a working woman, responsibilities are evolving daily with a focus on their families and careers (Sinha, 2017). Nonetheless, the expectations and responsibilities of mothers often differ based on their roles, whether they are in the workforce or as caretakers at home.

Based on the American Psychological Association (APA, 2010) statistics, stress is increasing rapidly among women where 28% of women reported feeling more stressed in comparison to 20% of men. Not only do women have high stress levels compared to men but there are also differences regarding relationship status: married women experienced more stress in the past five years (56%) compared to single women (41%). Working individuals' mental well-being was directly and profoundly impacted by stress, but the impact was greater for women than for men (Mensah, 2021).

An imbalance between professional and personal life may serve as an additional source of stress among women. According to Obrenovic and colleagues (2020), work-family balance has an adverse effect on the psychological well-being of women indicating that an inadequate balance between work and family will result in deteriorated psychological well-being. Moreover, when psychological well-being is inadequate the job performance also suffers. Working women's work-family balance has been affected by the changes in family structure over the past few decades, including dual-income homes, increased employment flexibility, and more diverse families. Along with this, marital happiness was also associated with greater well-being. Therefore, the two most important factors influencing the overall well-being of working mothers are job satisfaction and marital happiness (Afiatin et al., 2016). On the other hand, primary role of women is to stay at home and manage many responsibilities beyond the household's tasks, including comprehensive

caregiving for their families and children (Durak et al., 2022). Furthermore, they play a vital role in supporting their family's emotional well-being. This often involves sacrificing their psychological well-being while undertaking emotional labor, such as resolving conflicts, offering care, and providing family emotional support (Sahrawat, 2024). Thus, the well-being of women whose primary role is at home is also impacted by various factors, including family dynamics and balancing domestic and childcare responsibilities.

As a result of this, the current study aims to investigate the psychological well-being as indicated by the life satisfaction and happiness of working and non-working mothers in New Zealand and Pakistan. This study will examine the life satisfaction and happiness of working and non-working mothers using the quantitative research method as well as how these groups differ across nations. A brief review of relevant literature is presented below to provide context for the study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Psychological Well-being

Diener et al. (2009) described psychological well-being as the personal assessment of an individual's life, characterized by active involvement, positive feelings, and a sense of purpose. This concept comprises multiple dimensions such as satisfaction, contentment, and a sense of achievement. Moreover, psychological well-being plays a key role in shaping an individual's overall quality of life, reflecting how they feel and function in daily life. According to Dhanabhakym and Sarath (2023), it is a complex concept encompassing emotional and mental well-being, happiness, and an individual's life satisfaction. It includes a range of emotional and mental well-being aspects, including self-reliance, happiness, fulfilling relationships, a feeling of

purpose in life, reduced levels of negative emotions along with growth and personal development (Dhanabhakyaam & Sarath, 2023). Therefore, the psychological well-being of people influences their level of happiness and life satisfaction, which improves their general health (Monika et al., 2023).

Happiness and Life Satisfaction

Happiness is an essential element of well-being and life satisfaction. Happiness increases a person's likelihood of performing better in their lives and being more productive (Afiatin et al., 2016). Happiness can be defined in both psychological and philosophical terms. According to Diener et al. (2018), there is no single factor involved in determining happiness, rather, it can be broken down into a combination of four ingredients- frequent positive effects (experiencing higher levels of pleasant moods and emotions), social relationships (maintaining good quality social connections and relationships), infrequent negative affect (exhibiting minimal levels of unpleasant feeling and moods) and life satisfaction (making positive cognitive evaluations about one's life). In the pursuit of happiness, all these four elements are necessary. Studies have variously defined happiness, as an assessment of life or as an optimal health indicator (Abachizadeh, 2015), a mental state (Qayoom & Husain, 2016), or as a psychological state (Klausen, 2015) as similar to the concept of subjective well-being (Rodogno, 2014).

According to Malvaso and Kang (2022), another dimension of well-being is the individual's level of life satisfaction which is a comprehensive and cognitive assessment of an individual's way of living. Life satisfaction is conceptualized as a state of mind involving cognitive and affective appraisals. It integrates the dimensions of contentment and enjoyment, with its nature ranging from temporary to stable over time (Mansuri & Barad, 2019).

To understand the psychological well-being of mothers, studying happiness and life satisfaction is vital due to its impact on health, relationships, and productivity among mothers; also, a mother's well-being affects the consequences for her and her child. A study by Berger and Spiess (2009) found that the more the mother is satisfied with her life, her children will have stronger verbal abilities and lower levels of socio-emotional concerns. Moreover, a mother's job market status influenced her emotional well-being. Previous research by Keldenich (2021) found that compared to women who work full-time, women working part-time, and those who are self-employed, homemakers, or on maternity leave had a greater level of well-being. In particular, Tohme and Abi-Habib (2022), observed a substantial correlation $r(95) = .79, p = .001$ between work productivity and mother's perspective of competence regardless of the duration of maternal leave.

A mother's happiness may fluctuate with daily activities, but her life satisfaction provides a more detailed understanding of how she assesses her overall life. Happiness and life satisfaction are correlated (Fonberg & Smith, 2019), but the words are proxies for different constructs. Happiness is often associated with emotional experiences such as feelings of joy or pleasure that occur in response to specific events or situations while life satisfaction is a broader cognitive evaluation of the overall life of an individual (Badri et al., 2022).

Problem Statement

A study by Zaidi and Srivastava (2022) explored aspects of general mental health in which their findings showed that mothers who did not work had improved mental health when compared to mothers who worked. According to analysis by Shrivastava and Singh (2022), both professional mothers and homemakers experienced anxiety, however, there was no association between anxiety and life satisfaction for either of the mothers groups. Working mothers were better at managing

their family and work with insignificant disparity found in the mental well-being of non-working and working mothers (Satbhai, 2020).

The findings of Frenchman (2018) indicated that New Zealand's working mothers' mental health which includes stress, depression, and anxiety was elevated by several intricate and interrelated environmental and personal issues. The main causes of anxiety, stress and depression among mothers were the inability to create the appropriate work-family balance, the difficulty meeting other people's expectations, and the struggle of dealing with continuous and ongoing circumstances in their lives. Shannon (2021) explored the working mothers' work-family balance in New Zealand, revealing that many mothers experienced a sense of guilt, particularly when they perceived themselves as not putting enough effort and energy into both jobs and parental responsibilities. Additionally, their study highlighted a discrepancy between their postpartum lived experience and prenatal expectations as many found that motherhood did not come naturally as they had anticipated. A study by Duff (2017) examined the psychological distress among mothers in New Zealand upon returning to work from maternity leave. The study explored factors like social support, work-family conflict, balance, income, and their association with psychological distress. Both work-family balance and conflict were determined to be high. Social support was identified by Duff (2017) as a mediating factor between these variables.

The following sections identify the factors that are affecting the psychological well-being of both groups of mothers in Pakistan. Zeab et al. (2016) revealed that women who were working showed higher levels of stress in comparison to homemakers in Pakistan. Gardazi and his colleagues (2016) identified the various reasons and causes for job burnout and stress in professional mothers in Pakistan. Reasons for work-related burnout include feeling undervalued at work, lacking incentives and credits, unclear job requirements, working in hectic and high-

pressure settings, and completing the same repetitive and uninterested tasks. Personal reasons that lead to stress and burnout are overloading oneself with too much work without time for social interaction and relaxation, excessive expectations, lack of supportive relationships, insufficient sleep, and taking on too many responsibilities without adequate assistance from others. These are the factors that can lead to burnout and stress among Pakistani-employed mothers. Additionally, a comparison study (Kalhor et al., 2023) in Pakistan's Sindh province, evaluated the degree of stress, anxiety, depression, and self-esteem among married homemakers and professional women in Sindh. The comparison analysis demonstrated that working women had a stronger sense of self-esteem than housewives. In contrast, stay-at-home women reported feeling more distressed than employed women.

The aforementioned studies have explored general mental health, anxiety, stress, burnout, conflict between professional and family responsibilities, and psychological distress as key indicators of psychological well-being in this population in both countries without delving deeply into the aspect of satisfaction of life and happiness. In order to address the gap, the current study compares the psychological well-being of working and non-working mothers in New Zealand and Pakistan to understand how their respective employment status influences their levels of satisfaction with life and happiness in both countries. Understanding these differences is vital for developing strategies and policies that can better tailor support systems to improve the life standards of both mothers.

Comparing New Zealand and Pakistan

Comparing the psychological well-being of professional mothers and homemakers in New Zealand and Pakistan is important due to the country's radically different cultures, economic conditions, and social structures which impact maternal happiness and life satisfaction. The culture

of New Zealand is primarily individualistic, emphasizing work-life balance, personal autonomy, and self-fulfillment. Working mothers are generally encouraged to pursue careers while maintaining their well-being. In contrast, Pakistan is a collectivistic society where women's roles are strongly influenced by familial and social expectations. Motherhood is often idealized, and working mothers face societal pressures to keep a balance between family and work (Khan, 2021).

According to the International Monetary Fund (2025), the GDP per capita of New Zealand in 2025 is \$48,230 USD, making it a developed nation. In New Zealand, there are better wages, and job opportunities for women many women work out of choice rather than necessity. In contrast, Pakistan is a developing country, reports a GDP per capita of USD 1,590 in 2024 (International Monetary Fund, 2025). In Pakistan due to economic conditions women, especially mothers, work due to the financial necessity of supporting their families and promoting a better family life (Rattani, 2012).

Progressive policies that support gender equality in New Zealand include paid parental leave for 26 weeks (Employment New Zealand, 2025), social support for mothers, and support provided by midwives and Plunket nurses. However, traditional patriarchal norms in Pakistan require mothers to handle a significant amount of childcare and household duties, whether they are employed or unemployed. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Pakistan (2023), reported under the paternity and maternity law bill, working mothers are entitled to paid maternal leave for 180 days when they are expecting for the first time and they get leave for 120 days when expecting again, and later on for 90 days while men are only granted 30 days of paternal leave. There is no social support from the community in Pakistan which may worsen the stress and depression for both stay-at-home and working mothers as professional mothers have a dual burden of work and family where a sense of isolation can occur in non-working mothers (Husain et al., 2012).

The comparison between working and non-working mothers in Pakistan and New Zealand will help bridge the knowledge gap in understanding how socio-cultural and economic environments shape maternal well-being and provide insight for policy development and interventions to improve maternal well-being. Although contextual and cultural factors offer significant insights into potential similarities/distinction in the level of well-being of mothers in New Zealand and Pakistan, such comparison may not comprehensively explain the underlying psychological mechanisms that influence individual experiences. Such an explanation might require a theoretical framework that transcends the descriptive cultural contrasts. Basic Psychological Need Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2017) provides a useful framework for analyzing well-being based on the fulfilment of satisfaction or frustration of fundamental psychological needs. The next section outlines the theory in connection with our hypothesis.

Basic Psychological Need Theory

Basic psychological need theory was presented by Ryan and Deci (2017) as a sub-theory of self-determination theory. According to this theory, well-being and psychological functioning depend on the three essential psychological needs: relatedness, competence, and autonomy. These needs are vital for well-being and thriving; when these needs are not met, the frustration of these needs leads to increased suffering and poor functioning.

Autonomy

The experience of willingness and volition is referred to as autonomy. When this need is satisfied, individuals tend to experience a sense of integrity, and alignment, where their thoughts, emotions, and actions feel authentic and personally meaningful. In contrast, when this need is unmet, people often feel inner tension and pressure, such as being compelled to act in ways that

do not reflect their true values or desires. This theory relates that working mothers may experience autonomy through professional decision-making, career choices, and financial independence. The employment status of women was a major factor in women's decision-making, autonomy, independence, and mobility (Kumar et al., 2024). All these factors can contribute to having better satisfaction with life and psychological well-being. According to Larson et al. (2020), women who had greater autonomy as assessed by income, financial management and education reported greater satisfaction with life and higher levels of psychological well-being. In contrast, non-working mothers might enjoy greater independence in daily life schedules and child-rearing decisions but may encounter societal pressures or financial dependence that impact their sense of self-determination. Women are frequently pressured by their families and societies to put their families before their own personal desires. According to Priyanka and Swathi (2024), despite their important contributions, a lot of women are stuck in a cycle of financial dependency, which prevents them from having financial autonomy because their expenditures are controlled by their families and partners which impacts their psychological well-being.

Competence

Competence indicates an individual's capacity to work efficiently and skillfully; it can be a source of happiness when there are opportunities to utilize and improve expertise, while its absence can lead to feelings of failure and inefficiency. Working mothers may develop competence through their professional accomplishments and parental responsibilities which could improve their overall sense of capability. Working mothers are content when their competence needs are met because they have developed competency in their personal and professional lives. A recent review of evidence-based interventions by Torres and colleagues (2024) concluded that while managing motherhood and career, working mothers developed more interpersonal and problem-

solving skills. Parenting and managing households are the main sources of competence for non-working mothers, who gain knowledge about their family care and child development but their sense of competence in non-family domains may be impacted by difficulties they have in sustaining professional abilities. Women after becoming mothers frequently take career breaks, quit their working hours, or leave their jobs entirely all of which have a detrimental impact on the prospects of advancing their careers (Torres et al., 2024). However, mothers who do not work are not satisfied with their lives because they could feel that they are not doing well in their careers since they are not competent enough for their roles in various occupations. According to Apostu (2017), the requirements of occupational and personal responsibilities were incompatible with reality, and non-working mothers may experience a variety of unpleasant effects from their family and personal lives such as emotional overload, guilt, and exhaustion.

Relatedness

Relatedness is characterized by feelings of warmth, closeness, and being cared for, and this need is satisfied through meaningful relationships and a sense of being valued by others. When this need is unmet, individuals may experience emotional distress marked by loneliness, social isolation, and a perceived lack of belonging. A broad social network including professional contacts may be advantageous for working mothers, but they may find it difficult to maintain these connections due to time constraints. They can maintain these connections if they have social support as Khurshid et al. (2023) concluded that family support, cohesion and family interactions enhanced the working women's work-life balance. In contrast, non-working mothers have time to invest in family and community relationships, potentially developing deeper relationships with their children and local networks, yet they might face challenges in maintaining connections outside of the family sphere. Strange and co-authors (2014) discovered that if mothers who stay at

home devote more time to their families, they may still feel isolated if they do not have close ties with the community. Therefore, both groups of mothers are satisfied with their lives because they have close relationships around them like supportive family and community support.

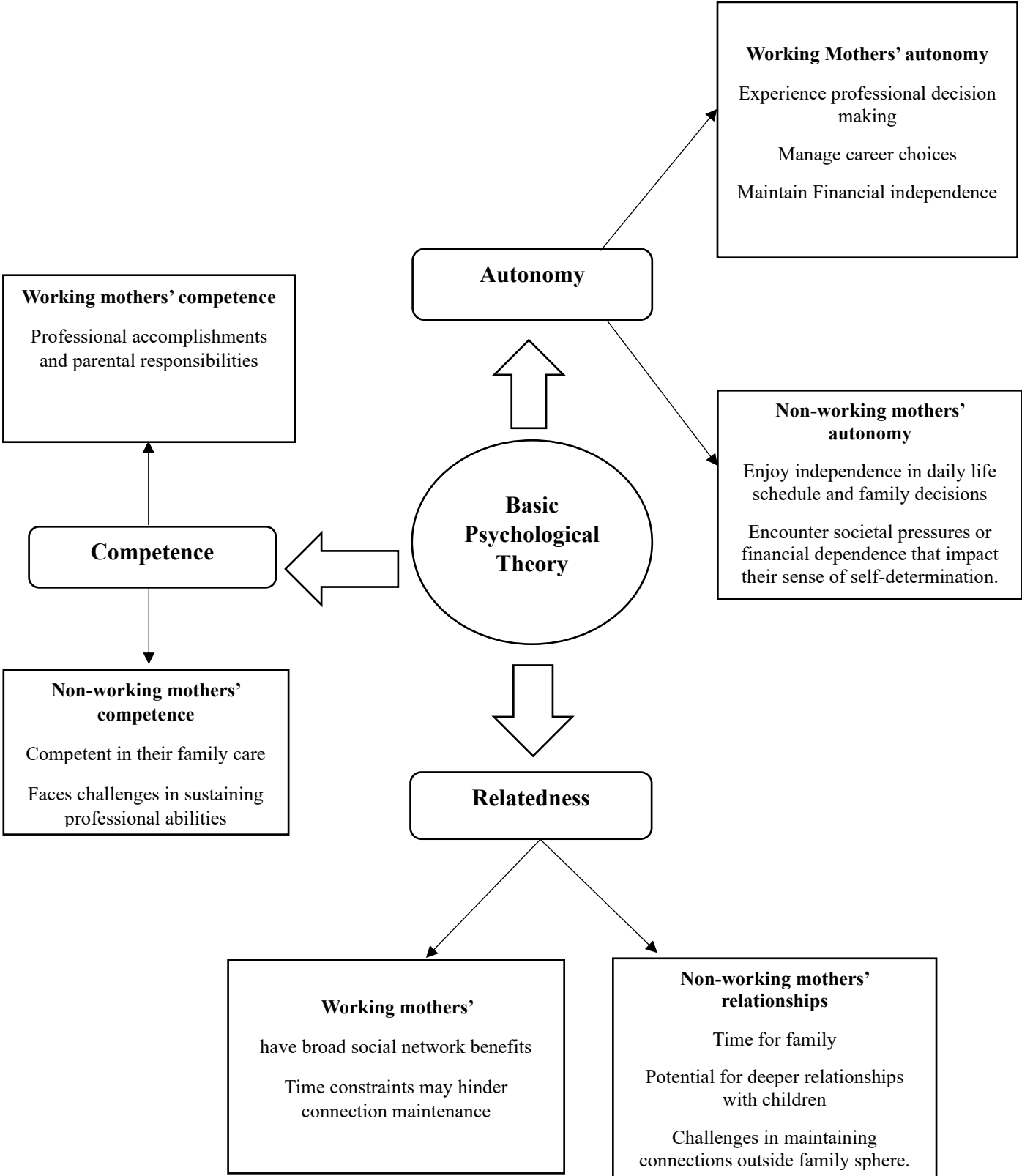
Yu and colleagues (2018) carried out a meta-analysis to investigate how satisfaction with the need for autonomy, as measured by self-determination theory, relates to subjective well-being in both East Asia and Western countries. There were fourteen studies from China and Japan and twenty-two from the United States. Subjective well-being and autonomy were positively correlated in thirty-six independent samples, indicating that higher degrees of autonomy are linked to better well-being. It was also suggested both collectivistic and individualistic societies exhibit a correlation between these two factors.

This framework enables a thorough analysis of how overall psychological well-being, such as happiness and satisfaction with life, is impacted by satisfaction and frustration of these fundamental psychological needs in different maternal contexts. According to the theory, the degree to which mothers in both groups can meet these basic needs will significantly influence their overall happiness and satisfaction with life.

Figure 1 represents the theoretical framework model for Basic Psychological Theory. The following section outlines how insights from the reviewed literature inform the rationale, focus, and design of the present study.

Figure 1

Theoretical Framework Model



Linking Literature to the Present Study

The psychological well-being of an individual has been the focus of many research scholars. However, few studies have compared the psychological well-being of employed mothers and housewives. According to Satbhai (2020), working mothers were better at balancing their work and family, whereas the psychological well-being of these two groups did not differ significantly. A study by Zhou et al. (2024) found five key findings about career women's mental well-being: 1. Career women aged 31- 35 faced the highest mental well-being challenges compared to other groups, where well-being differs based on age, childbirth status, and industries. 2. Women's mental health suffers because of the perceived negative effects of motherhood on the workplace. 3. The psychological health of working women was influenced by the perceived detrimental effect of childbirth on the atmosphere of the family. 4. Professional women were dissatisfied with the efficiency of policies in preserving the rights of women. 5. The major needs of working women concentrate on lessening family responsibilities in contrast to putting personal resources into the workplace.

In comparison to homemakers, working women revealed higher levels of psychological well-being, though, those in households with two employed partners perceived less support socially than women in single-income households (Sinha, 2017). Additionally, Singh and Koradia (2017) discovered that working women in schools and banks showed greater psychological stability and better work-life than those employed in colleges and IT companies. These differences were attributed to the flexible work environments and supportive workplace atmospheres in schools and banks.

The well-being of stay-at-home and professional women in various age groups was compared by Parmar (2018). According to his findings, women between the ages of 25 and 40 who

do not work have reported better psychological health than employed women of the same age because working women have two sets of responsibilities and experience more stress in their daily lives than homemakers who only have a responsibility for their families and home duties. In comparison to non-working women, Pakistani working women have lower levels of depression (Zeab & Ali, 2018). Additionally, the analysis of Mishra and Mehra (2019) revealed that life satisfaction was found to be greater among married women who worked than those who were not employed. On the other hand, women who did not work were more stressed than those who did.

Working women in Sheikhpura, Pakistan, faced both psychological and physical problems due to their dual household roles. They experience physical and psychological issues like fatigue, restlessness, anxiety, and a decline in personal satisfaction due to long working hours. They lack interest, restrict their social life to work obligations, and lack enough time for their family and themselves which negatively impacts their psychological well-being and leads to physical and emotional strain like anxiety, fatigue, and stress (Naseem et al., 2024). Similarly, women's long working hours in Dera Gazi Khan, Pakistan, were related to burnout, high blood pressure, and stress. As a result of the lack of familial support, they experience a poor work-life balance, which is linked to hypertension (Sabir et al., 2024).

Working and Non-working Mothers Life Satisfaction

According to Ria and Palupiningdyah (2020), married female nurses' life satisfaction was positively affected by work-life balance. Furthermore, work-life balance serves as the sole mediator in the association between life satisfaction and work engagement. Balance between personal and professional life among workers in New Zealand and Australia was positively correlated with satisfaction with both family and workplace (Brough et al., 2014). Jarden et al. (2022) analyzed the national data set from the Gallup World Poll and discovered that for New

Zealand females aged 40, satisfaction with the standards of life, positive experiences, and household income were significant predictors of life satisfaction. Arshad et al. (2015) investigated the satisfaction of life among non-working and working women in two Pakistani cities, Faisalabad and Islamabad. It was found that working women belonging to Faisalabad demonstrated greater life satisfaction than non-working women. In Islamabad, however, non-working women were more contented than working women because they had greater access to facilities, more freedom, and better economic conditions contributing to satisfaction in their lives.

In contrast to unemployed women, working women demonstrated a significant difference in life satisfaction reporting higher satisfaction (Chauhan, 2015). Married working women living in urban and rural areas were more satisfied than unemployed married women (Singh & Pandey, 2021). Moreover, Rehman and Zafar's (2022) results indicated that Pakistani working women living in urban areas were more satisfied. In comparison, non-working women in rural areas were more satisfied with their lives because they solely had household responsibilities, whereas working women had professional and family duties.

Happiness among working and non-working mothers

Among working women, there is a strong correlation between happiness and optimism. Gorsy and Panwar (2016) found that professional women who were happier were more optimistic and that working women who work in banks have a greater level of happiness and optimism than those who teach in schools. Hamplová (2019) analyzed the data obtained from the European Social Survey and discovered that mothers who stay at home were generally more content than full-time working mothers. Happiness was positively correlated with homemaking, especially for moms who quit jobs for childcare indicates being a housewife is linked with greater happiness. Additionally, Berger (2013) used a fixed effects model to analyze the German GSOEP data.

Findings showed a causal relationship between happiness and employment. Mothers employed on a full-time basis reported more satisfaction and happiness compared to those working part-time or as homemakers. Sato (2022) explored the link between happiness and women's employment considering whether they had children. The Japanese Panel Survey for Consumers (JPSC) data found that when considering fixed effects, women who stayed at home reported greater happiness than working women. Among different groups investigated, the happier were homemakers and employed women without kids, homemakers with children and lastly employed mothers. Furthermore, women without children who work full-time experienced greater happiness than housewives with children.

In working mothers, self-esteem acts as a mediator between happiness and work-family balance. Moreover, keeping an equilibrium between work and family enhanced their happiness. However, self-esteem was found to exert a considerable influence on their levels of happiness than the balance between work and family life (Afiatin & Akhtar, 2018). In Pakistan, according to Khan and colleagues (2022) employed individuals revealed greater happiness, gratitude, and life satisfaction than individuals who did not work. Among non-working individuals, women exhibited greater gratitude, happiness, and a positive outlook on life than men. Factors like gratitude, happiness, and life orientation showed a positive relationship with satisfaction in life indicating that individuals who reported greater satisfaction with life were also associated with enhanced experience of happiness, gratitude, and life orientation.

Based on the scholarly evidence outlined above, the hypotheses of the current study are as follows:

H1: Working mothers will have a higher level of psychological well-being (as measured by happiness and life satisfaction) as compared to non-working mothers in New Zealand.

H2: Working mothers will have a higher level of psychological well-being (as measured by happiness and life satisfaction) as compared to non-working mothers in Pakistan.

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Procedure

The target population for the World Value Survey Wave 7 (Haerpfer et al., 2022) in New Zealand was citizens and residents aged 18 years and above. The participants were selected through the New Zealand Electoral Roll, and the questionnaires were sent to participants through the mail. The survey began in April 2019 with up to four reminders sent to non-respondents. In the initial step, a full questionnaire along with a cover letter outlining the purpose of study (see Appendix D) and a post-paid return envelope were sent to all the participants. After a few weeks, a second letter encouraging participation was sent to those individuals from whom no response had been received. For the third reminder, a full questionnaire was mailed to those who did not respond. Lastly, a last mail was sent to non-respondents urging them to participate in the survey. Out of the initial target of 1200 participants, 1057 responded, with each response reviewed by the principal investigator of the survey (Perry & Yeung, 2021).

For the ethical committee procedure, the application was made by Paul Perry (Principal Investigator of WVS in New Zealand) to the Massey University Human Ethics Committee. According to P. Paul (personal communication, October 11, 2024) the application was submitted to the Ethics committee, and included the initial screening of the questionnaire. This project was evaluated by peer review, following the screening the WVS in New Zealand was classified as low risk. Guidelines for low-risk are attached (see Appendix E).

In the Pakistan World Value Survey Wave 7 (2018), the target population consisted of individuals aged 18 or above residing in Pakistan's four provinces. The sample was based on the Population Projection of 2016, created by Gallup Pakistan using the data from the most recent

national population census conducted in 1998. The survey was carried out according to the population size of the regions and provinces, including some rural and small urban areas. Out of the targeted sample of 2000, the sample data was 1995.

A multi-stage stratified random sampling technique was employed in the survey. According to data obtained from the 1998 census, sampling units were assigned according to population proportionate to size, with provinces being the first tier, followed by the districts. Gallup Pakistan used a computer program to randomly select rural villages and urban census circles and blocks. Villages were the primary sampling units while urban areas' primary sampling units were categorized by districts. Two hundred sampling points were randomly selected, with ten interviews conducted per sampling unit. Households were identified through a random walk process, adhering to the right-hand rule with a standardized interval. Within each selected household, respondents were chosen randomly using the Kish grid method. These procedures ensured the randomization and reliability of the sampling process. Data collection involved in-person interviews using tablets, and quality control was ensured through field supervision, follow-up visits, and central office checks for discrepancies. According to I. Amnah (personal communication, January 1, 2025) all ethical guidelines were followed before the survey and no additional screening questions were added as the global questionnaire by World Value Survey was implemented in Pakistan.

Detailed information regarding the sampling design and procedure for the World Value Survey Wave 7 (WVS7) can be assessed here:

<https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV7.jsp>

Participants

The WVS7 sample in New Zealand consisted of 1,057 New Zealand individuals with an average age of 57.85 years ($SD = 16.4$). The WVS7 sample in Pakistan included 1,995 participants with a mean age of 35.65 years ($SD = 11.38$). Tables 1 and 2 provide an overview of the demographic distribution of the New Zealand and Pakistan samples, respectively.

Table 1

Demographics of New Zealand participants in the World Value Survey Wave 7 (N=1057)

Characteristics	<i>f</i>	%
Sex		
Male	440	42.6
Female	594	57.4
Other Missing	21	2.0
No Answer	2	0.2
How many children do you have		
No children	211	20.0
1 child	122	11.5
2 children	332	31.4
3 children	227	21.5
4 children	87	8.2
5 children	39	3.7
6 children	11	1.0
7 children	1	0.1
8 children	2	0.2
10 children	1	0.1
Other missing	24	2.3

Employment status		
Full time (30 hours a week or more)	434	41.0
Part time (less than 30 hours a week)	177	16.7
Self employed	11	1.0
Retired/pensioned	312	29.5
Homemaker not otherwise employed	37	3.5
Student	12	1.1
Unemployed	48	4.5
Other	8	0.8
Other Missing	18	1.7

Table 2

Demographics of Pakistan participants in the World Value Survey Wave 7 (N=1995)

Characteristics	<i>f</i>	%
Sex		
Male	1037	52.0
Female	958	48.0
How many children do you have		
No children	414	20.8
1 child	195	9.8
2 children	372	18.6
3 children	367	18.4
4 children	323	16.2
5 children	161	8.1
6 children	79	4.0

7 children	36	1.8
8 children	21	1.1
9 children	17	0.9
10 children	5	0.3
11 children	1	0.1
12 children	4	0.2
Employment status		
Full time (30 hours a week or more)	657	32.9
Part time (less than 30 hours a week)	162	8.1
Self employed	216	10.8
Retired/pensioned	33	1.7
Homemaker not otherwise employed	768	38.5
Student	57	2.9
Unemployed	101	5.1
Missing	1	0.1

Sample of Main Study

The present study included women from New Zealand and Pakistan who participated in the World Value Survey (WVS) wave 7. The study focuses, especially on mothers. The sample in New Zealand consisted of 465 mothers with an average age of 60.11 years ($SD = 14.8$). The Pakistani sample included 156 mothers with a mean age of 36.77 years ($SD = 11.14$). Mothers were classified into two groups: working mothers and non-working mothers based on their employment status. Tables 3 and 4 summarize the sample for the current study.

Table 3*Demographics of New Zealand participants included in the study (N=465)*

Characteristics	<i>F</i>	%
Sex		
Female	465	100.0
Children		
Have Children	465	100.0
Employment status		
Working Mothers	252	54.2
Non-working mothers	206	44.3
Other missing	7	1.5

Table 4*Demographics of Pakistan participants included in the study (N=156)*

Characteristics	<i>F</i>	%
Sex		
Female	156	100.0
Children		
Have Children	156	100.0
Employment status		
Working Mothers	78	50.0
Non-working mothers	78	50.0

Instruments

Participants completed two rating scales assessing their happiness and life satisfaction detailed below. Demographic data on sex, number of children and employment status was also collected.

Feeling of Happiness

A single-item scale measuring the overall subjective happiness of the life of participants was developed by the World Value Survey. Participants responded to the question “Taking all things together, would you say you are” on a four-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (very happy) to 4 (not at all happy). A lower score indicated a higher level of happiness.

Satisfaction with Your Life

The World Value Survey developed a one-item scale measuring individuals’ satisfaction with their lives. Based on my understanding, this item resembles the one in the Personal Wellbeing Index-Adult 5th edition scale developed by Robert A. Cummins and the International Wellbeing Group (2013). Participants were asked to evaluate their life satisfaction using the following question: “All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days? Using this card on which 1 means you are “completely dissatisfied” and 10 means you are “completely satisfied” where would you put your satisfaction with your life as a whole?”. A higher score demonstrated greater life satisfaction.

Research Design

The study employed a quantitative cross-sectional research design. The analysis centered on two key variables happiness and life satisfaction in the context of New Zealand and Pakistan working and non-working mothers.

The preliminary phase of the study involved pre-registration at the Open Science Framework. After the completion of the pre-registration procedure, the process of analysis began. For the current research, the females who were mothers were selected from the New Zealand data in SPSS. The relevant data set was recoded into binary form with missing categories remaining.

Mothers were identified based on their responses to the question of having children. Employment status was merged into two categories, allowing for classification as either working or non-working mothers (see Table 3). For the analysis, an independent *t*-test was performed to examine the level of differences in feelings of happiness and life satisfaction among working and non-working mothers. The conditions specified that only females with children were included, and the analysis was performed separately for both variables.

The initial descriptive analysis revealed a significant discrepancy in the Pakistan sample sizes between the two groups with non-working mothers having a larger sample size ($n = 711$) compared to working mothers ($n = 78$). A non-parametric test was employed to compare working and non-working mothers in Pakistan. Specifically, the independent Mann-Whitney U test was performed, as the data for these groups did not meet the assumption of normal distribution. Subsequently, to equalize the sample sizes, a sub-sample of non-working mothers was recruited using a random sampling approach, where every second case from the first and last cases in the dataset was chosen until the sample size matched that of the working mothers. An independent *t*-test was conducted to compare the levels of life satisfaction and happiness among Pakistani professional mothers and homemakers.

Departures From Pre-registration

After analyzing the New Zealand data, the study was extended to include the analysis of Pakistan data, the predictions and procedures were the same as the original version.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

We first examined the correlation between the outcome variables for working and non-working mothers across both countries. The correlation between happiness and satisfaction of life among working mothers in New Zealand was strong and statistically significant, $r(244) = -.55$, $p = .001$, 95% CI [-0.63, -0.46] as well as among non-working mothers $r(192) = -.49$, $p = .001$, 95% CI [-0.59, -0.37]. Similarly, significant correlations were observed among the outcome variables for working mothers, $r(76) = -.29$, $p = .009$, 95% CI [-0.48, -0.07], and for non-working mothers, $r(76) = -.33$, $p = .003$, 95% CI [-0.51, -0.11] in Pakistan.

Table 5 presents the results of the independent t -test comparing the levels of happiness and life satisfaction between working and non-working mothers in New Zealand.

Contradicting our prediction, working mothers ($M = 1.69$, $SD = .58$) and non-working mothers ($M = 1.65$, $SD = .57$) showed statistically similar levels of happiness, $t(442) = .680$, $p = .625$. There was a statistically significant difference in satisfaction with life, $t(451) = -.978$, $p = .006$, with a large effect ($d = 1.791$). But again, contradicting our prediction, non-working mothers ($M = 7.79$, $SD = 2.00$) had higher levels of life satisfaction as compared to working mothers ($M = 7.62$, $SD = 1.60$) in New Zealand. Panel A in Figures 2 and 3 depicts these findings.

Table 5

Mean, standard deviation and t-test for feeling of happiness (N=444) and satisfaction with your life (N=453) in the New Zealand sample

Variable	Working mothers		Non-working mothers		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Feeling of happiness	1.69	.58	1.65	.57	.680	.625	0.577
Satisfaction with your life	7.62	1.60	7.79	2.00	-.978	.006	1.791

Note. The sample for working mothers regarding feeling of happiness is $n=247$ while for non-working mothers is $n=197$, with a degree of freedom of 442 for both. For satisfaction of life, the sample size for working mothers is $n=251$ and for non-working mothers is $n=202$, with a degree of freedom of 451 for both. For the happiness scale, a lower score indicates the higher levels of happiness while a higher score represents lower levels of happiness.

Table 6 provides the non-parametric independent sample test for the feeling of happiness and life satisfaction among working and non-working mothers in Pakistan.

A Mann-Whitney U test was performed to compare the differences between feelings of happiness and satisfaction with life among working and non-working mothers in Pakistan. There was no significant difference between the feelings of happiness ($z = -1.261, p = .20$) and life satisfaction ($z = -0.512, p = .60$) among working and non-working mothers in Pakistan.

Table 6

Non-parametric independent sample Mann-Whitney U test for feeling of happiness (N=78) and satisfaction with your life (N=78) in the Pakistan sample

Variable	Group	N	Mean rank	U	Z	P
Feeling of happiness	Working mothers	78	366.81	25,530	-1.261	.207
	Non-working mothers	711	398.90			
Satisfaction with your life	Working mothers	78	381.31	26,661	-0.512	.608
	Non-working mothers	711	394.84			

Note. U = Mann-Whitney U test; Z = z scores.

Table 7 provides the independent *t*-test results for the feeling of happiness and life satisfaction among Pakistani working and non-working mothers.

In contrast to our prediction, working mothers ($M = 1.60$, $SD = .74$) and non-working mothers ($M = 1.73$, $SD = .61$) showed non-significant different levels of feeling of happiness $t(154) = 1.171$, $p = .114$. There was a statistically significant difference in satisfaction with life, $t(154) = -1.232$, $p = .018$, with a large effect ($d = 2.340$). According to our prediction, working mothers ($M = 7.36$, $SD = 2.49$) had higher levels of life satisfaction as compared to non-working mothers ($M = 6.90$, $SD = 2.17$) in Pakistan. Panel B in Figures 2 and 3 depicts these findings.

Table 7

Mean, standard deviation and t-test for feeling of happiness (N=78) and satisfaction with your life (N=78) in the Pakistan sample

Variable	Working mothers		Non-working mothers		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Feeling of happiness	1.60	.74	1.73	.61	1.171	.114	0.684
Satisfaction with your life	7.36	2.49	6.90	2.17	-1.232	.018	2.340

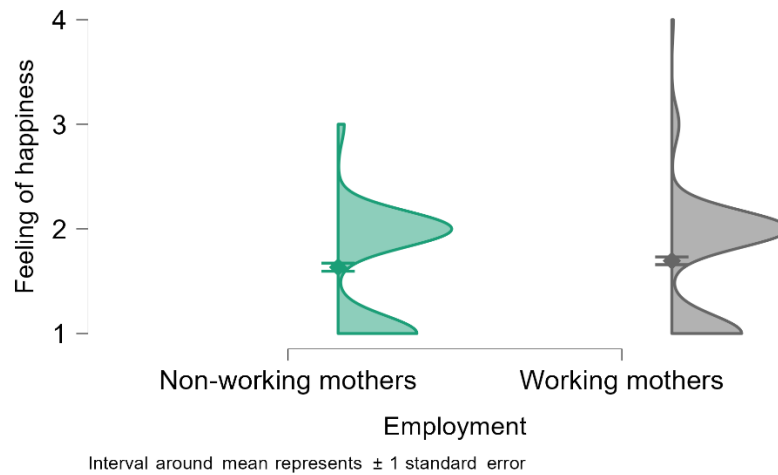
Note. The degree of freedom for feeling of happiness and life satisfaction is 154 for both categories. For the happiness scale, a lower score indicates the higher levels of happiness while a higher score represents lower levels of happiness.

Figure 2 presents violin plots illustrating the distribution of feeling of happiness among working and non-working mothers in New Zealand and Pakistan

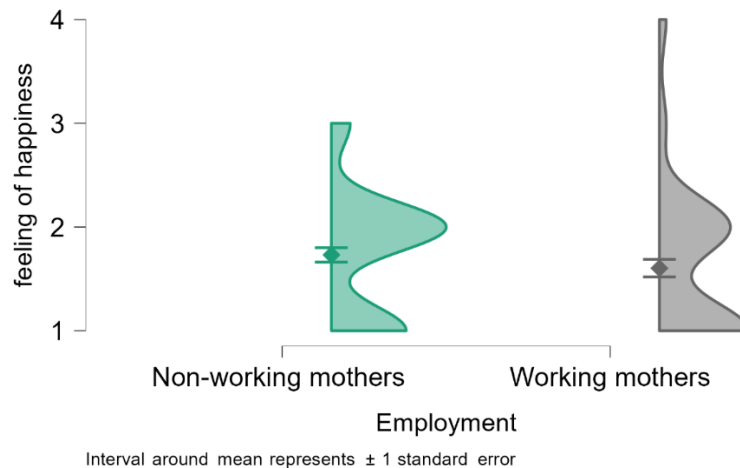
Figure 2

Violin plot for feeling of happiness among working mothers and non-working mothers in the New Zealand (Panel A: $n=247$ working mothers, $n=197$ non-working mothers) and Pakistan (Panel B: $n=78$ for both working and non-working mothers)

Panel A



Panel B



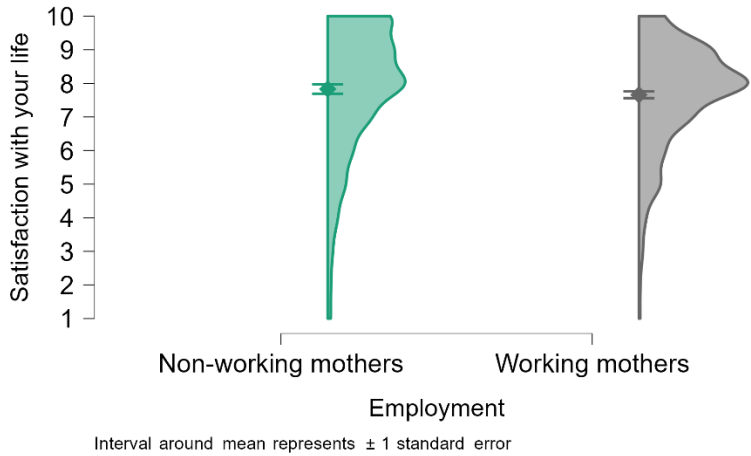
Note. This violin plot was created using raincloud plots in JASP, illustrating the distribution pattern of happiness scores among working and non-working mothers in both samples. The data points indicate the mean happiness scores for each group, while the standard error of the mean is depicted by error bars.

Figures 3 display the violin plot representing the life satisfaction among working and non-working mothers in New Zealand and Pakistan.

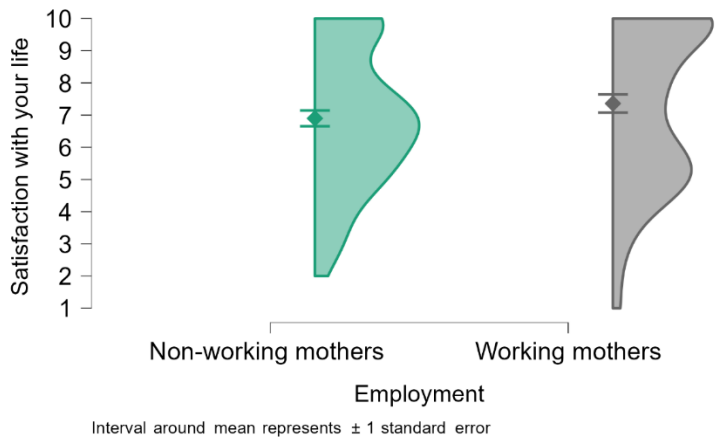
Figure 3

Violin plot for satisfaction of life among working mothers and non-working mothers in the New Zealand (Panel A: n=251 working mothers, n=202 non-working mothers) and Pakistan (Panel B: n=78 for both working and non-working mothers)

Panel A



Panel B



Note. This violin plot was created using raincloud plots in JASP. The violin plot indicates the distribution satisfaction with your life scores among working and non-working mothers in both samples. The data points represent the mean life satisfaction scores for both groups, while the error bars denote the standard error.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

The current study explored the differences in psychological well-being among working and non-working mothers. In particular, it examined the extent to which happiness and life satisfaction would differ among working and non-working mothers in New Zealand and Pakistan. The findings indicated that while non-working mothers had higher life satisfaction than working mothers in New Zealand, working mothers had greater life satisfaction than non-working mothers in Pakistan. This demonstrates the association between employment and life satisfaction, but this relationship varies across cultures. Rather than solely endorsing a solitary narrative of either the advantages or disadvantages of the employment status of a mother, this suggests that the psychological effects of mother employment are intricately woven within the societal context of culture. This approach highlights the significance of understanding how mothers construct and perceive happiness and satisfaction in their lives within their particular cultural contexts rather than assuming a universal standard for women's well-being and roles. It encourages a culturally aware perspective compared to a universal one. This chapter analyses the findings with relevant existing literature and critically examines the theoretical framework of basic psychological need theory and the individualism and collectivism cultural aspects to interpret the results.

The study had two hypotheses. Firstly, psychological well-being specifically life satisfaction and happiness, would be higher in working mothers than in non-working mothers in New Zealand. The second hypothesis of the research was that psychological well-being (life satisfaction and happiness) would be higher in working mothers than in non-working mothers in Pakistan. These hypotheses were backed by the former studies (Sinha, 2017; Jarden et al., 2022; Rehman & Zafar, 2022; Gorsy & Panwar, 2016; & Berger, 2013). Sinha (2017) identified that employed women reported superior psychological well-being compared to housewives. Further

empirical studies reinforce this observation, revealing consistent patterns across different contexts. According to Rehman and Zafar (2022), in contrast to Pakistani non-working women, working women were more satisfied with their lives. Gorsy and Parmar (2016) demonstrated that working women were happier and more optimistic than their counterparts. Jarden and his colleagues (2022) revealed that for the females living in New Zealand, significant life satisfaction predictors were living standards, household income, and positive experiences in life. Berger (2013) revealed that full-time mothers were happier and more satisfied than homemakers or mothers who worked part-time. Most research indicated that employed mothers generally exhibit greater psychological well-being compared to their non-working counterparts.

Contrary to the first hypothesis, findings revealed that non-working mothers in New Zealand are more satisfied with their lives than working mothers. This result corroborates the finding from prior research by Keldenich (2021), who found that in comparison to full-time employers, homemakers have higher levels of effective well-being. The present study results also align with findings from other studies, as both Tres et al. (2011) and Okulicz-Kozaryn and da Rocha Valente (2017) observed the same trends, indicating that being a housewife makes a woman happier than being employed.

The findings of this study align with the second hypothesis that working mothers in Pakistan are more satisfied with their lives than non-working mothers. Arshad et al. (2015) concluded that in Pakistan, working women exhibited higher levels of life satisfaction than non-working women. Supporting this perspective, Zahid and Siddiqui (2023) found that employed women in Quetta, Pakistan, reported significantly greater levels of satisfaction with life than their non-employed counterparts. A prior study by Mishra and Mehra (2019) also revealed that married

women who were part of the workforce showed more satisfaction in life than women who were not engaged in employment.

Contrary to our hypothesis, the levels of happiness did not differ between non-working and working mothers in Pakistan and New Zealand. Limitations such as sample size, environment of the study and differences among the groups were not large, which may have obscured this comparison. Previous research by Andrade (2020) identified that a non-significant result could be a consequence of sample size, as it would not have enough statistical power. Andrade (2013) highlighted that the small sample size studies that were conducted at several locations were impacted by the site and sample discrepancies so in order to even out this variation larger sample size was necessary. According to Sullivan and Feinn (2012), when the effect size is zero and the difference among the groups is small, leading to non-significant findings. To overcome this, future studies could use large samples to better capture variability in both groups. Although happiness and life satisfaction are highly correlated (see results), they might operate differently for working and non-working mothers in both countries.

The discrepancy between the hypothesized and observed results necessitates a thorough and critical reevaluation of the assumptions behind the original hypothesis. Despite the expectation that working mothers would exhibit higher psychological well-being (happiness and life satisfaction), based on the previous studies, the findings in New Zealand suggest that employment status alone insufficiently accounts for variations in well-being. Instead, these findings highlight that the well-being of mothers is not a uniform outcome of employment, but a multifaceted experience shaped by a range of contextual factors. This may include the accessibility of social support systems, the societal respect attributed to caregiving roles, individual experiences of role satisfaction, and the broader structural environment in which women work in their daily lives.

The unexpected results in New Zealand where mothers who did not work reported greater life satisfaction than professional mothers do not necessarily contradict the theoretical foundation upon which the hypothesis was built. Instead, it illustrates the limitation of using previous research (Jarden et al., 2022; Gorsy & Panwar, 2016; & Berger, 2013) universally without considering institutional and cultural diversity. For instance, despite not having a formal job, non-working mothers may have high levels of life satisfaction in situations where they have access to financial stability, substantial social networks, and an appreciation of caregiving as a valuable role. On the other hand, working mothers might be satisfied with their lives in an environment where having a job is seen as necessary for personal autonomy and economic necessity.

Therefore, the findings of the current study do not invalidate the earlier research but rather offer a more refined understanding of when and where its conclusion applies. It is highlighted that there is a need for a more contextualized and adaptable understanding of the experience of mothers' roles whether paid or unpaid. Instead of assuming that employment is a positive or negative indicator of well-being, it is more accurate to consider how mothers perceive their role, what meaning she draws from it and the kind of support she receives from her environment. Beyond generalized assumptions, it is important to interpret the well-being of mothers through a lens that considers personal autonomy, cultural values, lived experiences and sociopolitical context. This emphasizes how vital it is to create approaches that are responsive to various social and cultural contexts and better represent the variety of realities that mothers encounter and navigate their roles across the world.

This study revealed a cross-cultural contrast: in New Zealand, non-working mothers reported higher life satisfaction compared to working mothers, whereas in Pakistan, working mothers indicated greater life satisfaction than homemakers. According to Shulruf and his

colleagues (2011), the basic characteristic of individualism is that people frequently prioritize their own values and goals. In an individualistic culture like New Zealand, voluntary non-working status may reflect personal choices, better financial security, and greater emphasis on work-life balance. Mothers may choose to stay home because of their own choice, which enhances their overall satisfaction. The greater life satisfaction among non-working mothers in New Zealand may reflect the individualistic cultural values that promote their personal choices and well-being over occupational roles, as personal autonomy and self-fulfillment are highly valued by them (Shulruf, 2023). Traditional parenting roles are often supported by state policies such as parental paid leave, work flexibility arrangements, and accessible childcare, which may enable non-working mothers to stay at home without facing financial or social pressure. Moreover, numerous mothers place a high value on dedicating meaningful time to their children. Many stay-at-home mothers believe that being at home with their children makes them a better mom and enhances their parenting skills. Choosing to stay at home may also align with personal values or a desire to prioritize family life and childcare (Jewell, 2016), contributing to a sense of fulfillment in them, which plays a role in creating a sense of autonomy in them.

In a collectivist culture, like Pakistan, employment for women may be associated with empowerment, economic necessity, and social progress. In the Pakistani socio-cultural setting, working mothers play a vital role in enhancing family welfare through their contribution to financial stability. Their income not only supports the fulfillment of basic household needs but also facilitates access to enhance the overall standard of living for the family. Due to the economic conditions of Pakistan, mothers, through financial stability, promote the well-being of their families (Rattani, 2012). Being a working mother can contribute to self-efficacy, financial independence, and status enhancement for mothers, particularly in a society where the female

workforce participation is growing but still met with challenges. For these women, working may enhance their self-esteem, social status, and financial independence, all of which can contribute positively to their well-being. According to a literature review by Shekhawat and colleagues (2022), financial security empowers working mothers with autonomy in decision-making, which enhances their well-being and quality of life. Working mothers experience greater life satisfaction as their employment brings them autonomy and satisfaction when supported by their families and is increasingly seen as the means of achieving empowerment (Zulfiqar et al., 2024).

The current findings reflect how effectively the basic psychological needs are met or remain unfulfilled for working and non-working mothers in New Zealand and Pakistan. Basic psychological need theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017) has three needs: autonomy, competence and relatedness which are important components of psychological well-being as detailed in figure 1. This figure was modified to highlight the study's findings, as shown in figure 4.

In Pakistan, autonomy was shown to be significant. Autonomy refers to the feeling of control and willingness to make choices that are coherent with the interests and values of an individual. When people engage in ways that are consistent with their own beliefs and desires, they feel more in control of their actions instead of feeling under pressure or under external control. Working women demonstrated that employment enabled them to make independent decisions, provide financial assistance for their families, and experience greater control over their lives. Being self-independent gives mothers more self-assurance and enables them to make decisions that suit their preferences, which raises their sense of self-worth and increases their satisfaction with life. The findings of Muhammad and his colleagues (2021) indicated that self-reliant and educated working women exhibit greater empowerment, enabling them to significantly contribute to the decision-making process, hence, enhancing their self-worth. The study's result favors the theory,

as Pakistani working mothers were more satisfied than non-working mothers, as for them, financial independence is essential, and their ability to work exhibits greater influence over life. This also validates the theory idea that autonomy is vital for satisfaction and motivation in life, which overall influences their well-being. However, non-working mothers in Pakistan were restricted to their traditional roles and financial dependency, which limits their sense of self-determination. Their choice to look after household and family is viewed as a social obligation rather than their independent personal choice. According to Ali et al. (2011), the power disparity, where men occupy a dominant position relative to women, along with the substantial role restrictions, financial dependency on husbands, and the influence of extended family deemed to constrain the autonomy of women in Pakistan.

In New Zealand, non-working mothers derive autonomy from managing their households and engaging with their families, which enhances their self-esteem, as this is their personal choice. Zhang and Coene (2024) indicated that for females domestic work, has a greater value and there are three ways for it. Firstly, caring for their children and family fosters a sense of belonging. Since family is considered the core of life, it offers essential emotional support to them. Furthermore, engaging in domestic work validates the feeling of self-efficacy, which varies based on the task. This type of self-efficacy encompasses a feeling of success, and pride in oneself for conquering challenges in carrying out the responsibilities. Consequently, their happiness and sense of empowerment lead to greater life satisfaction. For mothers, the decision to stay home is their personal choice supported by parenting norms and welfare and they possess the autonomy to choose caregiving as a valued role, fulfilling their needs. This theory posits that the fulfillment of autonomy creates a sense of integrity in an individual, thus, our findings corroborate the theory, as both groups of mothers' autonomy needs are satisfied, which leads them towards life satisfaction.

The expression of competence varies across contexts. Competence is an innate desire to feel proficient and accomplished in life, which promotes the well-being of an individual. Pakistani working mothers are competent because they perform their duties skillfully in households and workplaces. They feel competent as they are financially stable and supporting their families, they have recognition from society, and they achieve success in a field that is historically dominated by men. According to Butt and Hussain (2024), Pakistani women who are financially independent felt more empowered and competent to perform their responsibilities. A sense of accomplishment and validation from one's work more effectively satisfies the need for competence. Mothers who work have the opportunity to show their abilities in measurable ways such as succeeding professionally, generating income, and performing well at work. Their sense of competence is reinforced by the rewards, positive feedback and social recognition that come with employment. In Pakistan, intrinsic rewards provide the employee with a sense of achievement and motivation and significantly improve their performance both in males and females (Manzoor et al., 2021). These women see the workplace as a place where they may develop a sense of accomplishment and have their contributions recognized. Their happiness and well-being are much enhanced by this experience of being useful and appreciated outside the house. A strong feeling of self-respect and a sense of mastery can be fostered by effectively managing jobs and family demands enhancing their need for competence and overall well-being.

Although non-working Pakistani mothers have a feeling of inadequacy, they lack appreciation from their families. Mukhtar and co-authors (2025) highlighted that the patriarchal social structure and lack of support from spouses were the contributing factors to postnatal depression and anxiety in married Pakistani women. Domestic work is widely undervalued in Pakistani society; therefore, the competency of mothers who do not work is sometimes questioned.

According to the traditional gender roles, women are usually given caring and household duties which are usually seen as innate obligations rather than competent contributions. Consequently, the crucial and demanding aspects of childbearing, housekeeping and providing emotional support to family members are frequently disregarded or considered routine. According to Akhter and Akbar (2016), these traditional norms of Pakistan cause gender roles to become compartmentalized, with women viewed as the only ones who can handle household duties and children whereas men as the breadwinners. Due to this perspective, a sense of personal or professional achievement, which is essential to the psychological need for competence is denied for non-working mothers. Domestic work provides minimal official recognition in contrast to paid employment, which provides external validation through salary, performance reviews and professional advancement. As a result, stay-at-home mothers may feel that their efforts are undervalued and ignored which would lower their sense of self-efficacy. Despite their enormous contributions, non-working mothers find it challenging to see themselves as competent or productive due to this lack of recognition. In Pakistan, women are viewed as ineffective in all aspects of their lives even after fulfilling the expectations of their domestic role, along with lower self-esteem about themselves and their achievements creating feelings of inadequacy in them (Anjum & Godil, 2019). Their inability to satisfy the need for competence may result in the reduction of levels of life satisfaction and happiness.

In New Zealand, both working and non-working mothers feel competent, either because of their professional achievements or because they have access to various parenting resources, engage in community networks and parent support programs, and get affirmation from their partner for their parenting efforts. Alongside this strong healthcare system, accessible social services can help them feel more capable of handling the duties of raising children. McLeish and Redshaw (2017)

demonstrated that support from peers and trained community supporters increases the emotional wellness of mothers, including their sense of parental competency, self-efficacy, and self-esteem. The findings of Angley et al. (2014) indicated that when caring for and raising a child mothers see social support as a possible resource that boosts their sense of parental self-efficacy. Furthermore, providing care is socially and culturally accepted, which might support the sense of competence that non-working mothers have. In this atmosphere, many mothers see parenting children as an important and skillful activity that enhances their feeling of self-worth rather than as passive reliance. Even when they are not working this validation keeps them feeling capable and purposeful.

Relatedness is the need to have a feeling of belonging and connection with other people. In Pakistan, particularly for women, the opportunities for social connections are limited, but for working mothers work environment offers social networks. They can establish connections with professionals and colleagues, which can create a sense of belonging to them as they are part of progressive circles. These connections provide social recognition, a feeling of belonging and emotional support for them. Solat et al. (2020) indicated that interaction in the workplace directly satisfied the need for relatedness among nurses in Pakistan. Additionally, working mothers gain support, respect from family, and build better relationships by supporting their families financially. Women who are financially independent through employment are empowered and receive respect from their families by contributing more to the household and it was also indicated that resources acquired from the workplace improve their family life (Sabil & Marican, 2011). Their need for relatedness can be significantly satisfied by this sense of belonging inside and outside of the home.

Mothers who do not work could feel more socially isolated as they lack social connections. Women may not have any social settings where they can interact with their peers, and traditional

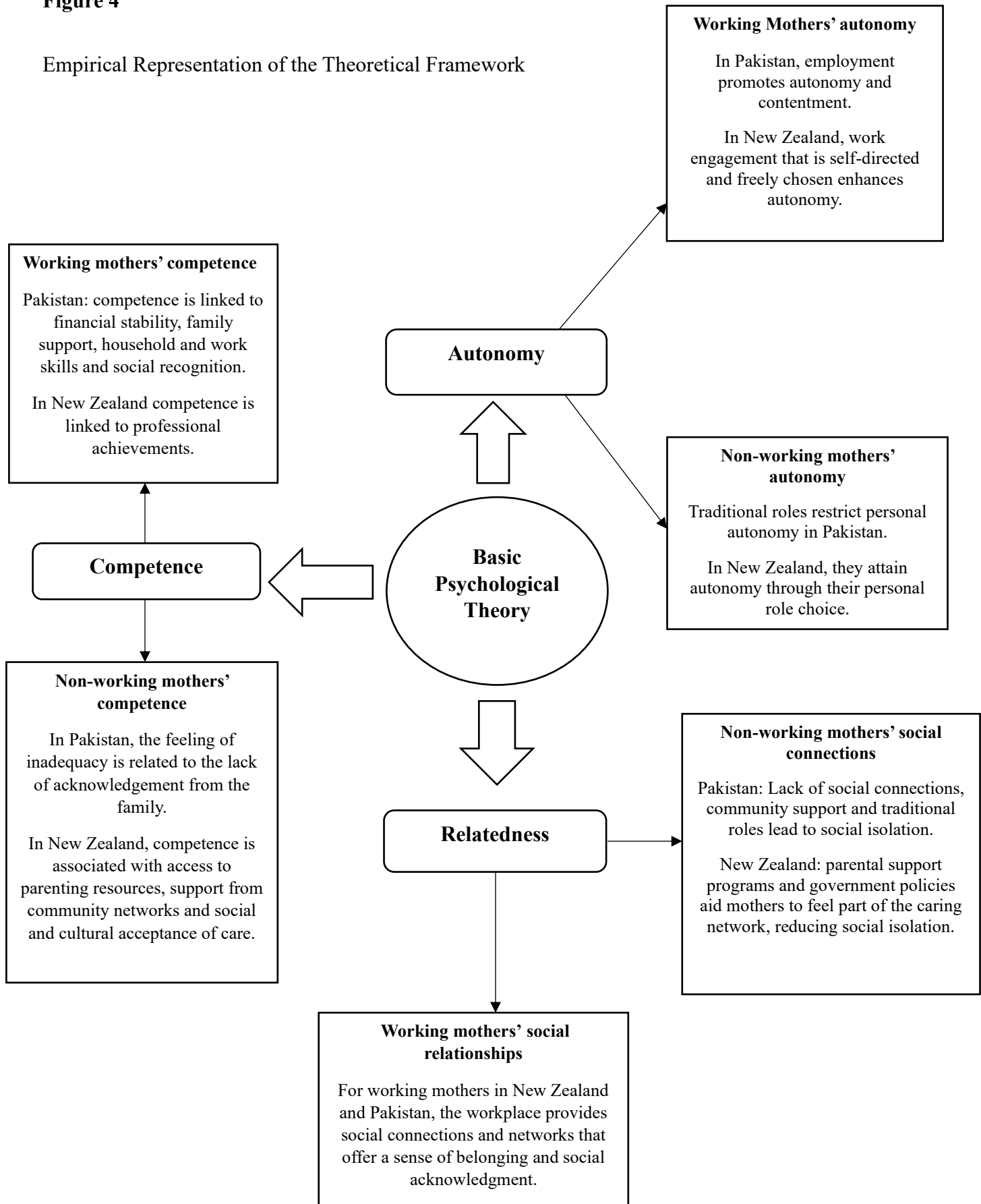
roles frequently limit their engagement outside the homes. In the absence of organized community support and formal networks, non-working mothers stay isolated in their homes, which might affect their sense of belonging. According to Maqsood and his colleagues (2022), women were frequently socially excluded in Pakistan's rural communities of Faisalabad city, and these women were particularly susceptible to social isolation, which can negatively affect their social and family life.

Non-working mothers in New Zealand benefit from parental support groups, which provide them an opportunity to join local activities with their children and also emphasize the bonding between children and parents. Through these programs, these mothers can continue to have important interactions outside the nuclear family. Government initiatives like subsidized childcare and paid parental leave can also aid them to integrate socially and lessen loneliness. Due to this, moms who do not work are not stigmatized or socially isolated rather they feel a part of the caring network. Family support, altruistic assistance from family, government, community, and decision-making support were positively related to the psychological, social, and emotional well-being of women (An et al., 2024). Furthermore, both groups' familial support created a sense of relatedness that promoted social belonging and emotional connections.

The findings indicate that all three needs are necessary in both cultures, although what fulfills these needs differs across cultures. In New Zealand non-working mothers are satisfied with their lives because their caring roles enable them to fulfill their need for autonomy (freedom of decision), competence (effective parenting), and relatedness (strong community and family ties). Whereas, working women in Pakistan are satisfied with their lives because work is a unique way to satisfy the need for relatedness (wider social networks), competence (accomplishments and recognition), and autonomy (independent choice despite conventional norms).

Figure 4

Empirical Representation of the Theoretical Framework



In Pakistan, employment may act as a source of pride and identity for mothers, whereas in New Zealand, opting to leave work signifies their choice in line with their fulfillment. This discrepancy highlights how cultural values influence the meaning and impact of work and motherhood on their subjective well-being. Ultimately, these results emphasize that only through employment status, maternal well-being cannot be understood. Instead, it reflects the combination of cultural values, societal norms, personal preferences, and available support systems. Considering these complexities is essential to develop supporting programs and policies that acknowledge their diverse experiences and promote the mother's well-being. The next section outlines and highlights the limitations and implications of the research.

Limitations

Despite the significant findings, the research has some limitations that are important to address. Firstly, the research was conducted in a limited geographical area. The study focused on intercountry differences and neglected the intracountry differences as cultural norms differ across regions, ethnicities, and religious backgrounds, which might potentially influence the experience and perceptions of satisfaction with life and happiness among mothers. The sample size was comparatively small and may not reflect the larger population of mothers in both countries. Socioeconomic status and education levels can be other factors affecting the research findings. The research exclusively utilized self-report instruments for assessing life satisfaction and happiness. Despite the use of standardized instruments, self-report assessments are inevitably prone to biases such as socially desirable responses. Cultural and language variations may have influenced the participants' interpretation and response to the specific items. Participants might have given responses they thought were socially acceptable, especially in a collectivist cultural context like Pakistan, where self-presentation may be influenced by community attitudes and conventional

roles. There may be subtle cultural differences in what life satisfaction and happiness represent, which could affect the comparability and accuracy of data gathered from the two countries.

Cross-sectional design is another limitation, as this design limits the capacity to investigate changes in well-being over time or to establish causation. For instance, differences in psychological well-being between both groups of mothers were observed; it is impossible to determine whether these differences were directly caused by employment status or whether mothers' choice about employment was impacted by their pre-existing levels of life satisfaction and happiness. The family dynamics, nature of employment as a part-time or full-time worker, satisfaction with the job, and the availability of childcare support were not accounted for in the study, which may have significantly influenced the psychological health of mothers. The oversimplification of the association between motherhood, psychological health, and employment can be another limitation. Lastly, the personal and circumstantial preferences to be a housewife or a working wife/mother, which might be closely related to their life satisfaction and contentment, have not been probed. The decision to be a housewife/stay-at-home mother and working wife/mother impacts the psychological well-being differently, such as working willingly or working to overcome the financial pressure, lack of childcare facilities, and cultural expectations.

Implications and Future Recommendations

It is important to develop strategies and guidelines that enhance the well-being of professional mothers and homemakers. In New Zealand, stay-at-home mothers may benefit from community-based programs such as peer mentoring programs, mother support groups, flexible learning, and volunteer opportunities that will allow them to maintain social connection, identity, and a sense of purpose. Despite having a supportive welfare and labor system in New Zealand, working mothers should continue to have inclusivity and flexibility in the workplace. Employers

should implement family-friendly policies like job-sharing plans, hybrid working systems, and frequent assessments of employee's well-being. In order to ensure that mothers from indigenous communities, ethnic minorities and migratory backgrounds are not left behind, culturally appropriate services should be given to them.

In Pakistan, it is important to enhance women's access to workplace regulation support programs for mothers, which could include adaptable working schedules and the availability of childcare on the workplace premises. Interventions should concentrate on reducing stress and improving the balance between occupational and personal life. Through partnerships between public and private organizations, workplace childcare facilities, parental leave, and mental health services centers catered to working women's needs can be established. Emotional and practical support for working women at home could also be improved by programs that teach families and spouses the value of shared caregiving responsibilities. Additionally, these programs need to focus on increasing their independence and decision-making in their homes, possibly incorporating spouses and in-laws to foster mutual support, and understanding. Furthermore, public awareness programs in Pakistan can aid in changing the cultural perceptions of working mothers. They can highlight employed mothers' dual roles as caretakers of their families/households and economic contributors might also aid in lessening the stigma associated with them.

Government initiatives in Pakistan should focus on empowering mothers who do not work by offering community-based programs that include social engagement activities, skill-building courses and psychosocial educational workshops that strengthen their identities outside domestic roles. It is essential to establish a support group of local women and mothers through which they can facilitate connections, share experiences, and receive recognition from each other for their

caregiving role. Media campaigns can help by changing the perception of people by highlighting the fact that providing care and housekeeping is a skilled and worthwhile contribution to society.

In the future, longitudinal research can be done to examine how mothers' happiness and life satisfaction change over time as they transition into and out of employment. This research did not study the ethnicities of the population, so future research can be expanded to explore the well-being of mothers belonging to different ethnic groups. Future research could also examine the well-being of Pakistani-employed mothers and homemakers living in New Zealand, as well as explore the psychological well-being of New Zealand mothers living abroad. It is also recommended that future studies consider comparisons based on the ages of the mother and children, along with the socioeconomic status of the family, as these factors may have a significant impact on well-being. Furthermore, it will be valuable to investigate how variables like social support, financial stability, autonomy, and job type act as a moderator or mediator in the link between the mother's work status and well-being.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the research was intended to investigate role of cultural context in shaping the association between motherhood, well-being, and employment by comparing the life satisfaction and happiness of working and non-working mothers in New Zealand and Pakistan. The findings demonstrated a meaningful contrast between the two countries: non-working mothers in New Zealand indicated higher satisfaction with life, whereas in Pakistan, working mothers revealed greater life satisfaction. Overall, these results highlight how the meaning and impact of work vary across cultures. It also emphasizes the significance of considering employment status when discussing the well-being of mothers.

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Appendix A

Instruments

Feeling of Happiness

Q46. Taking all things together, would you say you are (*read out and code one answer*):

- 1 Very happy
- 2 Rather happy
- 3 Not very happy
- 4 Not at all happy

Satisfaction with life

(SHOW CARD 5)

Q49. All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days? Using this card on which 1 means you are “completely dissatisfied” and 10 means you are “completely satisfied” where would you put your satisfaction with your life as a whole? (*Code one number*):

Completely dissatisfied										Completely satisfied
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

Appendix B

Personal Communication for WVS New Zealand

Paul Perry <P.E.Perry@massey.ac.nz>
To: Ayesha Mir <mirayesha180@gmail.com>

11 October 2024 at 10:24

11 October 2024

Dear Ayesha,

Thanks for your email. Apologies for taking two days to respond.

I am very happy to see students using the WVS and New Zealand data.

In doing the last World Values Survey in New Zealand I went through normal Massey University Human Ethics Committee procedures. This initially involves a low risk screening questionnaire, among other things, to determine whether a proposed project needs to submit a detailed proposal in full to the committee. As a consequence, the WVS in New Zealand survey was deemed to be of low risk.

Attached is a copy of the cover letter that was included when the paper surveys were posted out to the people that were part of the sample. Note, near the bottom, a paragraph dealing with the issue of ethics, and the name and contact details of the Director at Massey involved with ethics at the time, if they had any concerns. If memory serves, exactly one person made contact this way to the director about the wording of one question. The director responded in detail to that person.

As to the handling of ethical matters with the WVS in other countries you might want to have a look at the WVS website: (<https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org>). If you have specific questions, you should try contacting the WVS administrator, whose details should be on the website. The different countries in the WVS operate with a common and very substantial core set of items (to which they may add items for their own country), but are administered and funded independently in each country.

I would be curious to know what your research project problem involves. Please feel free to contact me if you think I can help you some more.

I wish you well with your research.

Paul

Paul Perry
School of People, Environment and Planning
Massey University
Palmerston North

Appendix C

Personal communication for WVS Pakistan

Information Regarding World Value Survey Pakistan

Amnah Imtiaz <amnah.imtiaz@gallup.com.pk>
To: Ayesha Mir <mirayesha180@gmail.com>
Cc: Bilal Gilani <bilal.gilani@gallup.com.pk>

1 January 2025 at 14:37

Dear Ayesha,

Thank you for the email. I am sharing brief details of the sampling procedure and respondent selection, as well as the informed consent procedure. I hope this helps address your questions.

1) Sampling procedure and Respondent Selection:

The World Value Survey was a nationally representative face-to-face survey conducted across the four provinces of the country. The survey was conducted in 200 locations (sampling points) that were randomly drawn using the 2017 census as the frame. Within each selected location, a household was randomly selected following the right hand rule of the random walk process following a standardized interval. Within each selected household, respondent was randomly selected using the KISH grid method. Using these steps randomization of the process was ensure.

2) Informed Consent:

Only adults (18+ respondents) were interviewed during the survey. Verbal informed consent was taken from the respondents for participation in the survey. The participation was voluntary, and respondents were allowed to terminate the interview / refuse further participation at any point in the survey.

Please let me know if I can help you with anything further.

Best,
Amnah

Information Regarding World Value Survey Pakistan

Amnah Imtiaz <amnah.imtiaz@gallup.com.pk>
To: Ayesha Mir <mirayesha180@gmail.com>
Cc: bilal.gilani@gallup.com.pk

9 January 2025 at 08:14

Dear Ayesha,

The previous wave was based on 1998 census data. The information in the document is correct.
[Quoted text hidden]

Information Regarding World Value Survey Pakistan

Amnah Imtiaz <amnah.imtiaz@gallup.com.pk>
To: Ayesha Mir <mirayesha180@gmail.com>
Cc: bilal.gilani@gallup.com.pk

7 January 2025 at 03:38

Dear Ayesha,


Thank you for your email and the follow-up questions.

1) An IRB was not required for this study

2) There were no additional screening questions added. We had the kish grid implemented that listed all 18+ respondents from a household and one respondent was randomly selected for the survey. I have attached the questionnaire used for Wave 7. The global questionnaire was implemented in Pakistan as it is.

Let me know if we can help you with anything further.

[Quoted text hidden]

 F00011012-WVS_WAVE_7_MASTER_QUESTIONNAIRE_2017-2021_ENGLISH.pdf
746K

Appendix D: Cover Letter of World Value Survey Study New Zealand



COLLEGE OF
HUMANITIES AND
SOCIAL SCIENCES
TE KURA PŪKENGĀ TANGATA

November 2019

THE WORLD VALUES SURVEY IN NEW ZEALAND

We invite you to complete the enclosed questionnaire and become part of the 2019 World Values Survey in New Zealand. This study is part of an international research project carried out in over 90 countries around the world, mostly through universities. This is the 6th time this survey has been undertaken in NZ since the 1980's. For a better idea of what this project is about please visit the World Values Survey website: www.worldvaluessurvey.org. Taken together the entire project represents the world's largest social science data set.

The information being collected is important. It will help us understand what New Zealanders think and feel about their lives, their country, and the direction New Zealand is taking. It will also help us to see how New Zealanders differ from people in other countries, and how their views may have changed over time.

You are one of only 4000 New Zealanders, randomly selected from the NZ electoral roll, that are being asked to help this study by taking the time to fill in the enclosed questionnaire.

The survey asks about many different subjects, including your views about work, family life, community, the environment, migration and government. It seeks your opinions on many important political, social and moral issues. It is **not a commercial exercise**. It is **not a political poll**.

This research is being carried out by Massey University. The main researchers for this study are Dr. Paul Perry and Dr. Polly Yeung. Paul has been involved with every NZ values survey since the first one in 1985.

For an accurate picture of New Zealand we need as many people as possible to complete the survey. **Your participation is completely voluntary. However, your views are very important to us**, and we hope you will share some of your time and fill out the survey. You have the right to decline to answer any particular question. Completion and return of the questionnaire implies consent. Please return it in the enclosed postage-paid envelope.

The survey is not short, but the issues it covers are interesting and important matters of concern to many people in this country and the wider world. It should not take more than an hour to complete. **Please be assured that all of the information you supply is completely confidential.** Our interest is in the collective picture of New Zealand. **No individual information will ever be published and users of the data will not be able to identify individuals.** The number on the front of the survey is there only to allow us to cross off your name once you have returned the survey.

You do not need to send it in immediately. You might wish to do it over several sittings. We would be happy to get surveys returned through the end of November.

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be of low risk. Consequently it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researchers named in this document are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researchers, please contact Professor Craig Johnson, Director (Research Ethics), email humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

If you have any questions about the items in the survey, or how to fill it out, please contact Paul Perry or Polly Yeung via email, or phone, using the details below.

Our sincere thanks for your help, without which this research could not take place.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Paul Perry
School of People, Environment and Planning
Phone: 06 356 9099 extn 83650
Email: P.E.Perry@massey.ac.nz

Dr. Polly Yeung
School of Social Work
Phone: 06 356 9099 extn 83514
Email: P.Yeung@massey.ac.nz

Appendix E: Guidelines for Low Risk of WVS Study New Zealand

GUIDELINES FOR LOW RISK NOTIFICATIONS

1 Low Risk Notification

When submitting a Low Risk Notification, staff researchers and supervisors are fully responsible for ensuring the accuracy of the information provided and compliance with research guidelines.

A low risk research project is one in which the nature of the harm is minimal and no more than is normally encountered in daily life.

Research considered low risk **does not receive approval from a Human Ethics Committee**. A Low Risk Notification is used to record the research on the Low Risk Database which is reported in the Massey University Human Ethics Committee Annual Report. The Ethics Administrator should be notified if situations subsequently occur which cause the researcher to reconsider the initial ethical analysis.

A Low Risk Notification is issued for a maximum period of three years. **Low Risk Notifications must not be submitted if recruitment and/or data collection has already begun.**

A sample of Low Risk Notifications is audited periodically to ensure University wide compliance with guidelines.

Note: If a sponsoring organisation, funding authority or a journal in which you wish to publish requires evidence of Committee approval (with an approval number), you will have to provide a full application to a Human Ethics Committee.

Discussion and Analysis of Ethical Issues

It is essential to include details of the discussion and analysis undertaken prior to the submission of the Low Risk Notification (refer Q4 of the Low Risk Notification form). In the case of supervised student research, it is important that the supervisor has instructed the student in the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations Involving Human Participants and that ethical analysis of the project has been discussed with the supervisor. For research undertaken by staff, indicate who has been consulted in order to confirm the initial ethical analysis.

Please note that completion of the screening questionnaire only determines the type of procedure to be followed; it does not constitute "evaluation by peer review".

2 Submission of Notifications

2.1 Submission Timeline

Notifications may be submitted at any time of the year. Researchers should generally allow at least two weeks in their project timetable for processing of the notification.

2.2 Notification Processing Procedure

Please note that upon submission to the Research Ethics Office, all Low Risk Notifications are checked for completeness before being entered on the database. The

Ethics Administrator with responsibility for the Low Risk Database will contact researchers in cases where documentation is incomplete. In addition to the database, a hard copy file is maintained on each notification, including correspondence with researchers, in the event of queries or external audit.

One copy of the Low Risk Notification, with the completed "Screening Questionnaire to Determine the Approval Procedure" attached, should be submitted as follows:

1. Low Risk Notifications for staff based at either the Palmerston North or Wellington campus; and student notifications where the Chief Supervisor is based at either the Palmerston North or Wellington campus:

External Mailing Address

Ethics Administrator
Research Ethics Office
Massey University
Private Bag 11222
Palmerston North 4442

Internal Mailing Address

Ethics Administrator
Research Ethics Office
Courtyard Complex, PN221
Turitea
Palmerston North

2. Low Risk Notifications for staff based at the Albany campus and student notifications where the Chief Supervisor is based at the Albany campus:

External Mailing Address

Ethics Administrator
Research Ethics Office
Massey University
Private Bag 102904
North Shore City 0745

Internal Mailing Address

Ethics Administrator
Research Ethics Office
Room 3.001B, Level 3
Quadrangle A Building
Albany Campus

An acknowledgement letter will be sent to the researcher. **Recruitment and/or data collection must not begin until this letter has been received.**

3 Documentation

Note that when submitting a Low Risk Notification, researchers do not need to provide the documents (i.e. Information Sheet, Consent Form, etc) that they will use during the research; however, these documents may be requested by the Ethics Administrator during an audit. Researchers are reminded that it is their responsibility to ensure that their documentation follows the same formats as provided on the website for applicants who are submitting a full application to a Human Ethics Committee, eg:

3.1 Information Sheet

The same format should be used; however there are changes to the Compulsory Statements, as follows:

- a) The **Committee Approval** statement must be changed to:

"This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human

Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Dr Brian Finch, Director, Research Ethics, telephone 06 356 9099 extn 86015, email: humanethics@massey.ac.nz".

- b) Given that the research project has been judged to be low risk, do not include the "**Compensation for Injury**" statement unless you are aware of circumstances which might make it appropriate. If in doubt, discuss with the Chair of a Human Ethics Committee.

3.2 Participant Consent Form

3.3 Confidentiality Agreements

3.4 Authority for the Release of Transcripts

4. Support from Massey University

Provided that researchers have made every effort to implement the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations Involving Human Participants, the University will provide support in the event of complaints from participants. However, any researcher who proceeds with a project which does not comply with the Code should be aware that Massey University may be unable to provide protection should a complaint be laid.