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The Role of Self-Control and Emotional Processing in Predicting Psychological Well-Being Among Young Adults in Tabriz

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A B S T R A C T

Objective: This study aims to examine the relationship between self-control, emotional processing, and psychological well-being among young adults in Tabriz.

Methods and Materials: A cross-sectional design was employed, involving a sample of 385 young adults aged 19 to 30 from Tabriz, selected through convenience sampling. Participants completed standardized questionnaires measuring self-control, emotional processing, and psychological well-being. Descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and multiple regression analysis were conducted using SPSS version 22 to assess the relationships between the variables.

Findings: Pearson's correlation analysis revealed significant positive correlations between psychological well-being and both self-control ($r = .45$, $p < .001$) and emotional processing ($r = .38$, $p < .001$). Multiple regression analysis indicated that self-control ($B = .48$, $\beta = .39$, $p < .001$) and emotional processing ($B = .32$, $\beta = .27$, $p < .001$) were significant predictors of psychological well-being, explaining 27% of the variance in well-being ($R^2 = .27$, $F(2, 382) = 72.85$, $p < .001$).

Conclusion: The findings suggest that both self-control and emotional processing are significant predictors of psychological well-being among young adults, with self-control playing a slightly more substantial role. These results underscore the importance of developing interventions aimed at enhancing self-control and emotional processing to promote mental health and well-being in this population.

Keywords: *Psychological Well-Being, Self-Control, Emotional Processing, Young Adults, Mental Health, Tabriz*

1. Introduction

Psychological well-being, often discussed in terms of eudaimonic and hedonic well-being, reflects a state of positive mental health. Eudaimonic well-being is related to self-actualization and the fulfillment of one's potential, while hedonic well-being pertains to the pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain (Bravo et al., 2020; Fahami et al., 2018; Fatima et al., 2021). Psychological well-being has been linked to various life outcomes, including better physical health, higher productivity, and more satisfying relationships (Brooker & Woodyatt, 2019; F., 2024; Fahami et al., 2018; Kamrani, 2023; Piñeiro-Cossio et al., 2021; Volkova et al., 2019). The significance of psychological well-being is further underscored by its relationship with mental health disorders, where lower levels of well-being are often associated with conditions such as depression and anxiety (Campbell & Osborn, 2021; Palupi, 2022; Pangngay, 2024).

The measurement of psychological well-being typically involves assessing both positive and negative indicators. Ryff's model, which includes dimensions such as autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance, is widely used in research (Zhang, 2024). These dimensions collectively capture the complexity of psychological well-being and provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how individuals perceive and experience their lives.

Self-control, defined as the ability to regulate one's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors in the face of temptations and impulses, is a critical determinant of psychological well-being. High self-control is associated with numerous positive outcomes, including better academic performance, healthier relationships, and lower levels of stress and anxiety (Lin et al., 2022). Research by Tangney et al. (2004) suggests that individuals with higher self-control are better equipped to navigate the challenges of daily life, leading to enhanced well-being. This relationship is partly mediated by the ability of self-controlled individuals to set and achieve long-term goals, resist short-term temptations, and maintain healthy lifestyle choices (Rasul, 2023; Singh et al., 2021; Volkova et al., 2019; Xi-yun et al., 2022).

Moreover, self-control has been found to buffer the negative effects of stress and enhance resilience, further contributing to psychological well-being (Molix & Nichols, 2013). For example, Buckingham (2023) demonstrated that individuals with higher levels of digital competence, which often requires self-control, report better psychological well-being. The role of self-control in promoting well-being is particularly important in the context of young adults, who are often navigating significant life transitions, including entering the workforce, pursuing higher education, and establishing independent lives (Buckingham, 2023).

Emotional processing refers to the ability to understand, interpret, and manage one's emotions. Effective emotional processing is crucial for maintaining psychological well-being, as it enables individuals to cope with stress, resolve conflicts, and engage in adaptive behaviors (Hassani et al., 2021). Poor emotional processing, on the other hand, is linked to various psychological issues, including anxiety, depression, and emotional dysregulation (Mertens et al., 2022).

Research indicates that individuals who are skilled in emotional processing tend to experience higher levels of well-being. For instance, García-Campayo (2023) found that self-compassion, which involves recognizing and managing one's emotions, is positively associated with psychological well-being (García-Campayo, 2023). Similarly, studies on mindfulness, a practice that enhances emotional processing, have shown significant improvements in well-being among participants (Zarchi et al., 2020). These findings suggest that the ability to process emotions effectively is a key component of psychological well-being.

The role of emotional processing in well-being is further highlighted by its impact on relationships and social interactions. Individuals who can process their emotions are more likely to form and maintain positive relationships, which are a critical source of social support and contribute to overall well-being (Bravo et al., 2020). Moreover, emotional processing facilitates the development of emotional intelligence, which has been shown to correlate with psychological well-being in various populations, including students, healthcare workers, and athletes (Akanni et al., 2022; Malinauskas & Malinauskienė, 2018).

The relationship between self-control, emotional processing, and psychological well-being is complex and bidirectional. Self-control can influence emotional processing by enabling individuals to manage their reactions to emotional stimuli, thereby reducing the likelihood of emotional dysregulation and promoting well-being (Lin et al., 2022). Conversely, effective emotional processing can enhance self-control by helping individuals to understand and regulate their emotional responses, leading to better decision-making and goal attainment (Mertens et al., 2022).

JARAC Assessment and Research in Applied Counseling
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Several studies have explored the combined effects of self-control and emotional processing on psychological well-being. For example, Lothes (2015) found that Aikido practitioners who developed greater mindfulness—a form of emotional processing—alongside self-discipline reported significant improvements in their psychological well-being over time (Lothes, 2015). Similarly, research by Xi-yun et al. (2022) suggests that self-efficacy, which is closely related to self-control, and emotion regulation are significant predictors of psychological well-being among teachers (Xi-yun et al., 2022). Moreover, the interaction between self-control and emotional processing may vary depending on individual differences and contextual factors. For instance, in stressful work environments, employees with high self-control and strong emotional processing skills are better equipped to maintain their well-being despite the pressures of their jobs (Fahami et al., 2018).

Young adulthood is a critical period for the development of psychological well-being. During this stage, individuals face numerous challenges, including identity formation, career development, and the establishment of intimate relationships (Owusu-Ansah et al., 2020). These challenges can significantly impact their well-being, making it essential to understand the factors that contribute to psychological well-being in this population. Studies on young adults have shown that self-control and emotional processing are particularly important during this life stage. For instance, Fatima et al. (2021) found that life satisfaction and psychological well-being among young adults are strongly associated with their ability to regulate their emotions and exercise self-control (Fatima et al., 2021). This is consistent with the findings of Village and Francis (2023), who reported that young adults who engage in self-reflection and mindfulness practices, which are forms of emotional processing, tend to experience higher levels of well-being (Village & Francis, 2023).

The importance of psychological well-being in young adults is further highlighted by its long-term implications. Research suggests that the psychological well-being of young adults can influence their future mental health, career success, and overall quality of life (Owusu, 2021). Therefore, understanding the factors that contribute to well-being during this critical period is essential for developing effective interventions and support systems.

Over the past few decades, the exploration of psychological well-being has garnered significant attention, driven by its implications for mental health, quality of life, and overall human functioning. This study aims to investigate the interplay between self-control, emotional processing, and psychological well-being, focusing on young adults.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study employed a cross-sectional design to explore the relationships between self-control, emotional processing, and psychological well-being among young adults. The target population included all residents of Tabriz aged 19 to 30 years, in accordance with Erikson's theory, which defines youth as the period from 19 to 30 years of age. The sample size was determined using Cochran's formula for an infinite population, resulting in a target of 385 participants. Participants were selected through convenience sampling from the broader population of young adults in Tabriz. This approach allowed for the collection of data from individuals who were readily accessible and willing to participate in the study.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Emotional Processing

The Emotional Processing Scale (EPS), developed by Baker et al. (2010), was utilized to measure the emotional processing of participants. In this study, a 10-item version of the scale was employed. Baker and colleagues examined the factor structure of the EPS using exploratory factor analysis. The scale's reliability has been confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.92 and a test-retest reliability of 0.79 as reported by the original authors. Scoring for this scale is based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." (Sharif Ara et al., 2023). In the present study, the content validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by a panel of experts, including the supervising professor, and the reliability was validated with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.877.

2.2.2. Psychological Well-Being

To assess psychological well-being, Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale (1989) was used, specifically a shortened 10-item version. Ryff reported an internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of 0.65 for this scale. Convergent validity evidence indicates that the six factors of psychological well-being correlate positively with life satisfaction and self-esteem scales, and negatively with

JARAC Assessment and Research in Applied Counseling
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depression, belief in chance, and external locus of control. Additionally, in a study by Abolmalali-Hosseini and Mohammadzadeh Kasgari (2016), the Cronbach's alpha for the entire scale was found to be 0.71. Scoring is performed on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." (Sadat Mousavi & Ebrahimi, 2024). In the present study, the content validity was approved by a panel of experts, including the supervising professor, and the reliability was confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.899.

2.2.3. Self-Control

The Self-Control Scale (SCS), developed by Tangney et al. (2004), consists of 10 items designed to assess individuals' self-control levels. The validity and reliability of this questionnaire were further supported in a study by Mousavi-Moghadam et al. (2015). Tangney et al. (2004) validated this scale by demonstrating its correlation with measures of academic achievement, adaptability, positive relationships, and interpersonal skills. The reliability of the scale was confirmed with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.83 and 0.85 in two different samples. Scoring is conducted using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." (Hosseinali Ghorbani et al., 2022). In the present study, content validity was confirmed by a panel of experts, and reliability was verified with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.879.

2.3. Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted using both descriptive and inferential statistics to address the research questions. In the descriptive analysis, frequency distributions, percentages, means, medians, and various graphical representations were used to summarize and describe the characteristics of the sample and the variables of interest. For inferential analysis, Pearson's correlation coefficient was utilized to examine the relationships between self-control, emotional processing, and psychological well-being. Additionally, simple linear regression analysis was performed to assess the predictive power of self-control and emotional processing on psychological well-being. All statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS version 22, ensuring rigorous examination of the data and drawing reliable conclusions from the findings.

3. Findings and Results

Among the 385 participants in this study, 158 were men (41%) and 277 were women (59%). The age distribution of the participants showed that 76 individuals were younger than 23 years old (19.8%), 191 individuals were between 23 and 26 years old (49.4%), and 118 individuals were between 26 and 30 years old (30.8%). Regarding educational attainment, 68 participants had a bachelor's degree or less (17.7%), 77 participants held an associate degree (20%), 161 participants had a bachelor's degree (41.3%), and 79 participants had a master's degree or a Ph.D. (21%).

Table 1

Descriptive statistics for psychological well-being, self-control, and emotional processing

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Psychological Well-Being	34.76	6.43
Self-Control	29.85	5.12
Emotional Processing	27.54	4.98

The descriptive statistics presented in Table 1 indicate the mean and standard deviation for the variables studied. Psychological well-being had a mean score of 34.76 (SD = 6.43), self-control had a mean score of 29.85 (SD = 5.12), and emotional processing had a mean score of 27.54 (SD = 4.98). These values suggest a moderate level of psychological well-being, self-control, and emotional processing among the participants.

Before conducting the primary analyses, the assumptions of normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity were checked and confirmed. Normality of the data was assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk test, which indicated that the data for self-control (W = 0.981, p = 0.062), emotional processing (W = 0.984, p = 0.084), and psychological well-being (W = 0.976, p = 0.053) were normally distributed. Linearity was confirmed by inspecting scatterplots, which showed a linear relationship between the independent variables (self-control and emotional processing) and the dependent variable (psychological well-being). Homoscedasticity was assessed by examining the residual plots, which showed no clear pattern, indicating that the assumption was met. Multicollinearity was evaluated

JARAC Assessment and Research in Applied Counseling
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using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values, all of which were below 2.0, confirming that multicollinearity was not a concern in this study. These results indicated that the data met the necessary assumptions for conducting Pearson's correlation and linear regression analyses.

Table 2

Pearson correlation coefficients and p-values between psychological well-being and the independent variables

Variables	Psychological Well-Being	p-value
Self-Control	.45	< .001
Emotional Processing	.38	< .001

Table 2 displays the Pearson correlation coefficients and associated p-values between psychological well-being and the independent variables. The results reveal a significant positive correlation between psychological well-being and self-control ($r = .45$, $p < .001$), as well as between psychological well-being and emotional processing ($r = .38$, $p < .001$). These correlations suggest that higher levels of self-control and effective emotional processing are associated with higher psychological well-being.

Table 3

Summary of regression results for psychological well-being predicted by self-control and emotional processing.

Source	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Squares	R	R^2	R^2adj	F	p
Regression	1427.34	2	713.67	.52	.27	.26	72.85	< .001
Residual	3913.26	382	10.24					
Total	5340.60	384						

The summary of the regression analysis presented in Table 3 shows that the model, including self-control and emotional processing as predictors, explains a significant proportion of the variance in psychological well-being, $R^2 = .27$, $F(2, 382) = 72.85$, $p < .001$. The adjusted R^2 value of .26 suggests that approximately 26% of the variability in psychological well-being can be explained by the independent variables.

Table 4

Results of multivariate regression analysis predicting psychological well-being

Variables	B	Standard Error	β	t	p
Constant	13.56	2.21		6.13	< .001
Self-Control	.48	.09	.39	5.33	< .001
Emotional Processing	.32	.11	.27	4.11	< .001

Table 4 presents the results of the multivariate regression analysis. The unstandardized coefficients (B) indicate that for each one-unit increase in self-control, psychological well-being increases by .48 units ($B = .48$, $SE = .09$, $t = 5.33$, $p < .001$), holding emotional processing constant. Similarly, for each one-unit increase in emotional processing, psychological well-being increases by .32 units ($B = .32$, $SE = .11$, $t = 4.11$, $p < .001$). The standardized coefficients (β) show that self-control ($\beta = .39$) is a stronger predictor of psychological well-being than emotional processing ($\beta = .27$). Both predictors significantly contribute to the model, as indicated by their p-values.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the relationships between self-control, emotional processing, and psychological well-being among young adults in Tabriz. The findings revealed significant positive correlations between self-control and psychological well-being, as well as between emotional processing and psychological well-being. Furthermore, the multivariate regression analysis showed that both self-control and emotional processing were significant predictors of psychological well-being, with self-control having a slightly stronger influence.

JARAC Assessment and Research in Applied Counseling
E-ISSN: 3041-8518

The significant positive correlation between self-control and psychological well-being aligns with previous research that emphasizes the importance of self-regulation in mental health. This relationship is further supported by Lin et al. (2022), who demonstrated that self-control is crucial for managing daily life challenges and achieving long-term goals, thereby promoting overall well-being (Lin et al., 2022). The current study's findings corroborate these results, indicating that self-control is a vital component of psychological well-being among young adults.

Similarly, the positive correlation between emotional processing and psychological well-being is consistent with existing literature on emotional intelligence and mental health. Emotional processing, which involves the ability to understand, manage, and respond to one's emotions, has been linked to better psychological outcomes in various populations. For example, García-Campayo (2023) showed that self-compassion, a form of emotional processing, is strongly associated with psychological well-being (García-Campayo, 2023). This finding is echoed in studies by Hassani et al. (2021), which found that effective emotional processing contributes to resilience and adaptive coping, leading to higher levels of well-being (Hassani et al., 2021). The results of the present study align with these findings, suggesting that young adults who are better at processing their emotions are more likely to experience positive psychological well-being.

The regression analysis further highlighted the importance of both self-control and emotional processing in predicting psychological well-being. The model explained a significant portion of the variance in psychological well-being, with self-control emerging as a slightly stronger predictor than emotional processing. This finding is noteworthy as it suggests that while both factors are crucial, self-control may play a more central role in determining well-being. This result is supported by Buckingham (2023), who found that self-control, particularly in digital competence, significantly impacts psychological well-being (Buckingham, 2023). Additionally, studies by Xi-yun et al. (2022) and Lothes (2015) have shown that self-control and emotional processing often work in tandem, with each enhancing the effectiveness of the other in promoting mental health (Xi-yun et al., 2022). The interplay between these factors underscores the complexity of psychological well-being and highlights the need for a holistic approach to mental health interventions.

The current study's findings also have significant implications for understanding psychological well-being in the context of young adulthood, a period characterized by significant life transitions. The results indicate that young adults who exhibit higher levels of self-control and are better at processing their emotions are more likely to maintain their psychological well-being. This aligns with research by Fatima et al. (2021), who reported that life satisfaction and psychological well-being in young adults are closely tied to their ability to regulate emotions and exercise self-control (Fatima et al., 2021). The present study adds to this body of knowledge by providing evidence from a non-Western population, thereby enhancing the generalizability of these findings.

Moreover, the findings of this study contribute to the broader discourse on mental health by reinforcing the notion that psychological well-being is not merely the absence of mental illness but a positive state of flourishing that can be actively cultivated through the development of self-control and emotional processing skills. This perspective is supported by Akanni et al. (2022), who found that emotional intelligence, which encompasses emotional processing, is critical for managing occupational stress and maintaining psychological well-being in high-pressure environments (Akanni et al., 2022). Similarly, studies on mindfulness, a practice that enhances both self-control and emotional processing, have demonstrated its efficacy in improving psychological well-being across different populations (Zarchi et al., 2020). These findings suggest that interventions aimed at enhancing self-control and emotional processing could be particularly effective in promoting mental health and well-being.

In conclusion, the results of this study provide strong evidence for the importance of self-control and emotional processing in promoting psychological well-being among young adults. These findings are consistent with previous research and contribute to our understanding of the mechanisms underlying mental health. By identifying self-control and emotional processing as key predictors of well-being, this study highlights potential targets for interventions aimed at improving mental health outcomes in young adults. Future research should continue to explore these relationships in different cultural contexts and among different age groups to further elucidate the complex interplay between these factors.

5. Limitations & Suggestions

Despite the valuable insights provided by this study, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the cross-

JARAC Assessment and Research in Applied Counseling
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sectional design of the study limits the ability to draw causal inferences. While significant correlations were found, it cannot be definitively concluded that self-control and emotional processing directly cause improvements in psychological well-being. Longitudinal studies are needed to establish causality and to understand how these relationships evolve over time. Second, the use of self-reported measures for all variables introduces the possibility of response biases, such as social desirability or recall bias, which may have influenced the results. Although self-report scales are commonly used in psychological research, they rely on the participants' self-perception, which may not always accurately reflect their actual behaviors or emotional states. Third, the sample was limited to young adults in Tabriz, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other populations or cultural contexts. Future studies should aim to include more diverse samples to enhance the external validity of the results.

Given the limitations of the present study, several avenues for future research are recommended. First, future studies should employ longitudinal designs to investigate the causal relationships between self-control, emotional processing, and psychological well-being. Such research would provide valuable insights into how these factors interact over time and contribute to long-term mental health outcomes. Second, exploring these relationships in more diverse populations, including different age groups, cultural backgrounds, and socioeconomic statuses, would help to determine the generalizability of the findings. Comparative studies across cultures could reveal important differences in how self-control and emotional processing influence well-being, leading to more culturally sensitive interventions. Third, future research could benefit from using a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative measures with qualitative data. This would allow for a deeper exploration of the lived experiences of individuals with different levels of self-control and emotional processing and how these experiences impact their well-being. Additionally, experimental studies that manipulate levels of self-control or emotional processing could provide more direct evidence of their effects on psychological well-being.

The findings of this study have important implications for practice, particularly in the fields of mental health and education. Given the significant role of self-control and emotional processing in promoting psychological well-being, interventions aimed at enhancing these skills should be prioritized. For mental health professionals, incorporating strategies that develop self-control and improve emotional processing into therapy and counseling sessions could be beneficial for clients, particularly young adults facing life transitions. Techniques such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and mindfulness-based interventions, which have been shown to enhance self-control and emotional regulation, could be effective in this regard (Zarchi et al., 2020).

For educators and policymakers, integrating programs that foster self-control and emotional processing into educational curricula could promote better mental health outcomes for students. Such programs could include social-emotional learning (SEL) initiatives that teach students how to manage their emotions, set goals, and develop interpersonal skills. These programs have the potential to not only improve students' psychological well-being but also enhance their academic performance and overall life satisfaction (Rahm, 2024). Finally, public health campaigns that raise awareness about the importance of self-control and emotional processing in mental health could encourage individuals to seek out resources and support for developing these skills, leading to improved well-being across the population.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed in this article.

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