A Predictive Exploration of What Uplifts or Undermines Young Adults' Quality of Life

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ABSTRACT: This study aimed to identify key risk and protective factors that predict the quality of life among young adults. A cross-sectional survey of 900 individuals aged 18–25 employed validated assessment tools and neural network analysis through SPSS-24 to determine the most influential predictors. The results highlighted that perfectionism (Importance=0.97; 23.5%) and excessive social media use (0.87; 21.0%) were the strongest risk factors negatively impacting quality of life, while social support (0.415; 48.7%), resilience (0.20; 48.7%), and effective coping strategies (0.127; 30.6%) emerged as the top protective factors. Overall, the findings underscore the significant roles these variables play in shaping young adults' well-being, with social support and resilience positively influencing, and perfectionism and social media use detracting from, quality of life.

KEYWORDS: Academic Stress, Effective Coping Strategies, Excessive Social Media Use, Perfectionism, Quality of Life, Resilience, Self-esteem, Sleep Quality, Social Support

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Introduction

Growing concerns about young adults' deteriorating mental health and well-being in educational settings led to the selection of the topic "A predictive exploration of what uplifts or undermines young adult's quality of life". A developmental period between the ages of 18 and 25 years is termed as young adulthood (Higley, 2019). As students move to universities from college, they have to face various challenges such as leaving home for the first time, adapting to a new lifestyle, academic workload, planning a career and a competitive environment. During this transition period, those who manage stress, build their good relations with others, and get involved in extracurricular activities are able to adapt to that environment, and those who have difficulty adapting to new environments face various psychological problems (Erol et al., 2022). Resilience is defined as "The ability to recover from stressful events is known as resilience. It is characterized by resistance to adaptation and thriving. Resources like optimism, social support, and active coping enable the ability to cope with stress" (Smith et al., 2008). People use it to describe their responses to traumatic and stressful situations. Resilience is the ability to overcome suffering (Longenecker et al., 2012). Resilience is termed both an individual difference characteristic or trait and a coping process within a physical and social environment. To maintain resilience, the young adults reexamine their identity to focus on the positive aspects of their previous functioning (Allen et al., 2018).

Effective coping strategies are the efforts that people make to manage stress and regulate their emotions in difficult situations. Coping measures are important for measuring QoL among young adults. Effective coping promotes resilience, adaptation, and positive outcomes in stressful situations, hence promoting the individual's well-being (Carver, 1997). Young adults who have strong coping skills like avoidance and denial have less emotional distress. Avoidance coping involves cognitive efforts toward denying and reducing stress and anxiety among individuals (Holahan et al., 2005). Coping strategies and positive reframing increase QoL in all dimensions and are identified as predictors of it across psychological and environmental domains (Gattino et al., 2015). Social support is defined as assistance that facilitates the development and maintenance of social relationships with others. It's a supportive action that is needed when an individual has to face a tough time; then he wants his close ones to be there for him. The various sources of social support are identified to peers (Scarapicchia et al., 2017). Social support and social relationships are important for emotional fulfillment. When young adults lack social support, they feel loneliness, and it badly affects their academic performance (Beutel et al., 2017). Self-esteem is a complex mental state that shows how an individual view himself. It is based on positive and negative self-perception. When an individual identifies himself according to three factors qualities, quantities, and character-related behaviors it leads to one's self-esteem. The higher self-esteem means higher confidence in oneself, while the lower self-esteem means a person who doesn't mean much to himself (Bailet 2nd, 2003). Self-esteem acts as a buffer against stressors like depression, anxiety, and panic attacks, allowing the young adults to maintain the equilibrium when there's a change in their life. It has a positive effect on real-life experiences, which directly impacts life satisfaction (Orth et al., 2012). Academic stress refers to anxiety and pressure that arise from educational settings. Young adults often encounter difficulties while studying, such as an overwhelming number of assignments, competition with peers for grades, and strained relationships with lecturers and fellow students, which can result in frustration, anxiety, and depression. This situation is particularly challenging for students who are living away from home (Prabu, 2015).

Academic stress is higher when the demands of educational institutes rise for young adults, surpassing their self-resources, which then harm them. Depression, behavioral problems, poor time management, and irritability are present among those young adults who have higher academic stress. It's an overwhelming problem that affects students' mental health and well-being (Reddy et al., 2018). Sleep quality is defined as an individual's pleasure with their sleep experience, sleep amount, and feeling refreshed upon awakening. As a risk factor, sleep quality affects the mental health and overall well-being of young adults (Kline, 2020). Sleep quality is important and may affect every aspect of daily life. Low sleep quality has a negative impact on mental health and QoL and decreases life satisfaction. Young adults who sleep well benefit from cognitive function, which is the ability to think rationally. About 29% of the young adult population has sleep disorders that have depressive symptoms. Those individuals who have poor peer relationships could have poor sleep quality (Wang & Bíró, 2021). Excessive use of social media leads to increased feelings of comparison and bitterness, which negatively affect well-being. Digital technologies refer to an improved level of loneliness among young adults, and it is interconnected with decreased life satisfaction. Social media passive use leads to upward social comparison (Marttila et al., 2021). Social media is everywhere, all the time evolving around us. It has become a fundamental part of the lives of young adults. Its excessive use negatively impacts several areas of QoL, including sleep and social relationships. However, more time on social media results in mental health

issues like depression, anxiety, social isolation, and panic attacks, which lead to detrimental effects on quality of life (Twenge et al., 2018).

Perfectionism means setting high personal standards of performance and striving for flawlessness. Perfectionism is considered to be high performance standards combined with a tendency to judgmentally evaluate one's own behavior. It associates with depression, feelings of inferiority, guilt, worthlessness, and helplessness because of their overly self-evaluations (Frost et al., 1990). Perfectionist individuals fear that others will evaluate them negatively, they have social appearance anxiety, which is the fear of how they look. Perfectionism negatively disturbs young adults' quality of life (Maphis et al., 2013). Interventions such as cognitive behavior therapy (CBT), mindfulness-based intervention therapy (MBIs), interpersonal psychotherapy, and self-monitoring strategies resulted in significant reductions in depression, anxiety, and depressive symptoms by restructuring negative thought patterns. It assists young adults in recognizing perfectionist ideas, maintaining their well-being, and maintaining a happy attitude. Furthermore, self-compassion decreases self-criticism and improves emotional well-being (Egan et al., 2011). Quality of life encompasses the well-being of young adults and society as a whole. According to WHOQOL, an individual's perception of life context to their belief system, culture, expectations, and their own standards about life. It is an assessment of their overall well-being (Group, 1998) . QoL is a cognitive assessment of an individual's life, and it provides important signs about their quality of life. As, students shift to university life, many changes occur, like academic expectations and social adaptations, which affect their quality of life (Civitci, 2015). It is a positive feeling a degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, a sense of well-being, or happiness or unhappiness felt by individuals in different facets of their lives (Hill et al., 2010).

Literature Review

Young adults' Quality of Life (QoL) relates to their overall well-being and happiness in a variety of categories, such as mental health, emotional well-being, academic satisfaction, social relationships, work-life balance, and personal growth.

Academic Stress: Mofatteh (2021) conducted a study among university students on risk factors associated with stress. When students come to university from various backgrounds, they have to face various challenges that affect their mental health badly. Primary research articles were used in this as a narrative review of literature. This review identifies six themes linked with stress among students (academic, psychological, biological, lifestyle, and social factors). Academic stress is a major worry for young adults, affecting their overall well-being and academic performance. A research study conducted among university students found a negative correlation between academic stress and well-being, with 119 students aged 18 to 24 participating in the research. The findings specify that emotional intelligence plays essential role in stress reduction among students, emphasizing the requirement for programs that promote emotional regulation abilities to increase academic well-being (Roy et al., 2021).

Sleep Quality: In 2019, cross-sectional research was undertaken using random sampling. Sleep data was collected using the Mini Sleep Questionnaire (MSQ). The research was of a total of 996 undergraduate students who were associated with poor sleep quality, less social support, and suffering from psychological distress. The findings emphasized mental health issues that influence sleep quality, emphasizing the

importance of actions aimed at reducing this issue (Maciel et al., 2023). Sleep is an essential physiological function for humans. Young adults frequently report poor sleep quality as a result of shifting social possibilities and increased academic responsibilities. However, no studies on sleep quality among young adults in educational institutions have been conducted. 2817 students participated in this research. Perceived stress, depression, and anxiety were found to be related to sleep quality. 55.8% of students had poor sleep quality (Lemma et al., 2012).

Excessive Social Media Use: The study's goal was to investigate the association between addictive behavior, mobile device use, depression, and suicidal thoughts. The questionnaires were given to 374 young adults, including 58.6% women and 41.4% men. Contrasting utilization of social media, addictive behavior was found substantially connected with melancholy. 36.1% of the sample reported having suicide thoughts within the preceding two weeks (Jasso-Medrano & López-Rosales, 2018). He used a quantitative method to gather data from a group of 90 young adults through a survey questionnaire. According to the data, a significant proportion of them displayed indicators of social media addiction, such as obsessive social media use, withdrawal symptoms, and negative consequences for social media use. Furthermore, students who spent more time on social media platforms were more likely to develop social media addiction. Other traits were also found, like the need for social recognition, peer pressure, and boredom (Akther, 2023). 503 people participated in a study to see how young adults' addiction to social media was affected. Young people aged 17 to 31 years old took part. 163 (32.4%) of the participants are men, while 340 (67.6%) are women. Data collection tools included the Personal Information Form, the Social Media Addiction Scale, the Perceived Social Support Scale, and the Psychological Resilience Scale. There was a negative correlation observed between being addicted to social media and being mentally strong, as well as being hooked to social media and considering social support. Psychological resilience was also found to be a strong indicator of social media addiction, and perceived social support, particularly perceived social support from peers, was a major indicator of this subscale (Bilgin & Taş, 2018).

Perfectionism: The quality of life of young people who are categorized as adaptive perfectionists those with high standards but little distress when they are not met maladaptive perfectionists those with high standards and high distress and non-perfectionists those with much lower standards was compared in a cross-cultural study. The findings showed that the three categories of perfectionists differed in terms of satisfaction dimensions and had varying predictive values for personal standards. Moreover, compared to maladaptive perfectionists and non-perfectionists, adaptive perfectionists reported considerably better levels of enjoyment across a wide range of life domains. In most areas of life, men and women were equal in terms of happiness, except for friendship satisfaction (Gilman et al., 2005). In a different study, 1,916 young adults in four programs reported stress, anxiety, and depression at significantly higher rates than the national norm. In terms of stress, women outperformed men. Third-year students reported less stress than both first- and second-year students, while first-year students reported higher levels of anxiety. Lastly, compared to earlier times, students expressed more anxiety after the COVID-19 pandemic began (Bogardus et al., 2022).

Resilience: In addition to improving mental health and well-being, resilience programs help graduates get a highly desired skill. A systematic assessment observed the impact of therapies meant to increase young adults' resilience on their overall well-being and mental health. Divided into four categories: coaching, skills-

based, mindfulness, and psychoeducation. The treatments were given in person and online. The studies generally showed that, although there is no evidence of a positive effect on depression, therapy could reduce stress and anxiety (Abulfaraj et al., 2024). The cross-sectional survey included 607 individuals, ranging from third-year students to interns. Data was acquired using a self-reported questionnaire and analyzed using t-tests, ANOVA, and linear regression. Resilience was shown to have a substantial association with both life satisfaction (P < 0.001) and happiness (P < 0.001). 66.3% had below-average resilience, whereas 24.7% had below-average life satisfaction. The results indicated that those with high resilience enjoy happier and more fulfilled lives (Aboalshamat et al., 2018).

Effective coping strategies: Research was conducted on the strategies students use to manage stress and what universities offer to support their mental health. It was conducted in 2019 by a survey of over 3200 students from three universities. Young adults propose task-oriented, proactive coping methods to their classmates more often than they use them themselves. The results found that the general mental health knowledge of participants was good, yet help-seeking behavior remains low among those experiencing mental health concerns (Reis et al., 2021). 1072 college students between the ages of 18 and 48 were studied. Four psychological well-being indices—self-acceptance, environmental mastery, life purpose, and personal progress—were evaluated using latent profile analysis. According to the study, the use of the three coping mechanisms increased with psychological well-being. Although coping strategies varied by gender, no interaction effects on psychological well-being were found. The findings indicated that male students were more likely than female students to use positive reappraisal as a coping strategy for academic stress, and that psychological health is essential for encouraging adaptive coping strategies (Freire et al., 2016).

Social support: According to the findings, those with greater social support had higher academic accomplishment, and those with less social support had lower academic achievement. People who receive greater gratitude and encouragement from educators, friends, and family are more interested in learning and have better general health (Chen et al., 2023). During the COVID-19 pandemic, young adults' mental health had gotten worse because they didn't have enough social support. Those who struggle to adapt to online learning lead to stress and mental health issues. It used a purposeful sampling method, and 524 participated. The results showed that psychological well-being and social support are significantly correlated, but there was no difference in psychological well-being between male and female students. It was meant to help teachers, friends, parents, and other relevant parties make a plan to help HEI improve their mental health (Yusof et al., 2022).

Self-esteem: Research indicated that a young adult's feelings of self-worth, academic engagement, and drive are some of the factors that affect their success or failure. 243 participants, ranging in age from 19 to 21, took part in the quantitative study. The results showed that self-esteem influences behavioral and emotional disengagement. Motivation had a greater influence on academic engagement, and students' metacognitive engagement predicts their academic success. Young adults' performance would therefore be enhanced by promoting metacognitive strategies that teach them to plan, monitor, and manage their own learning. The current study has a large sample size from two institutions to observe their comparative differences, whereas the previous study only included a limited sample size from one university (Acosta-Gonzaga, 2023). The research was done to assess the self-esteem and academic performance among young adults. 80 participants were selected by purposive sampling, and the results indicated that females have higher academic

performance than males, while males have higher self-esteem among themselves as compared to females. Moreover, a higher level of self-esteem resulted in good academic performance, which improves their QoL (Arshad et al., 2015).

Quality of Life (QoL): 396 young adults enrolled in nursing schools made up the research population for this descriptive and cross-sectional study. The study found a significant positive association between life satisfaction and quality of life, as well as between the four main dimensions of quality of life scores (P<0.05). Additionally, it was demonstrated that young adults' position as nursing students had a favorable effect on their life satisfaction and quality of life. Thus, it is recommended that the educational system be changed to promote greater physical activity among them and improve their satisfaction and quality of life (Yildirim et al., 2013). In this study, first-year young adults' university quality of life was compared to that of their working peers of the same age. Each group's subjects and materials were collected in 1999 from two cross-sectional data sets, which included both males and females between the ages of 20 and 34. According to a gender-based comparison, first-year university students' average reported QoL was worse than that of their working counterparts for both males and females (p < 0.0001 in all cases). In both groups, there was a strong correlation between SRH and perceived QoL. There are variations between young adults and their counterparts who work full-time (Vaez et al., 2004).

Methodology

A cross-sectional survey research design was utilized to enable objective measurement of key variables (protective, risk, and quality of life) (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Multistage random sampling, a probability sampling method, was used. To guarantee varied representation among various student groups, the sample was stratified according to important demographics, such as university, faculty, departments, semesters, programs, and gender (Etikan & Bala, 2017). A total of 900 young adults (aged 18–25) were recruited from University of Gujrat (500) and University of Chenab (400) through multistage random sampling technique. the sample size was worked out by applying the Yamane formula at 0.05 level (Yamane, 1973). The sample included students from various departments and faculties, ensuring diverse representation (Etikan & Bala, 2017).

Inclusion/ Exclusion Criteria

▸   Young adults (ages 18 to 25) voluntarily agreed to participate in the study and provided informed consent.
▸   Those who were below 18 and above 25 age were not part of this study and who were unable to give informed consent owing to cognitive disabilities or linguistic problems.

Standardized scales were used:
▸   Academic Stress – Perception of Academic Stress Scale (Bedewy & Gabriel, 2015)
▸   Sleep Quality – Sleep Quality Scale (Yi et al., 2006)
▸   Excessive Social Media Use – SMEQ (Przybylski et al., 2013)
▸   Perfectionism – Perfectionism Scale (Parker & Tavella, 2021)
▸   Resilience – Brief Resilience Scale (Smith et al., 2008)
▸   Effective Coping Strategies – Brief COPE (Carver, 1997)
▸   Social Support – Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (Zimet et al., 1988)

- ▶ Self-Esteem – Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965)
- ▶ Quality of Life – Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985).

Results and Discussion

Of the total, 44.4% came from the University of Chenab and 55.6% from the University of Gujrat. 68.2% were women and 42.8% were men. The respondents ranged in age from 18 to 25. The majority of students (87%) were enrolled in undergraduate programs, even though 13.0% of them graduated. Of the respondents, 42.8% reside in cities, while more than half (57.2%) reside in rural areas. In the first, second, and third semesters, the percentage of students was at its maximum; in the subsequent semesters, it declined. Participants were selected from the following faculties: science (33.6%), social sciences (14.2%), management and administrative sciences (16.1%), computing and information technology (20.8%), engineering (3.9%), the arts (9.1%), and architecture, design, and fine arts (2.3%).

Furthermore, 90.4% were enrolled in morning sessions, with only 9.6% engaged in evening programs. The majority of respondents had three or four siblings, and 68.3% reported participating in sports, though some did not. Furthermore, 91.4% were single, while 8.6% were married. In terms of living arrangements, 82.3% were family households, with 17.7% being hostile. Parents' educational backgrounds varied; 29.4% of women and 25.9% of fathers completed matriculation, with only a minority earning PhDs. 8.6% of mothers and 9.3% of fathers were considered unqualified. Cronbach's alpha scores vary from.725 to.91, suggesting that all of the variables have good to excellent internal consistency.

Table 1

Model Summary of Neural Network Predictive Exploration of What Uplifts Or Undermines Young Adults Quality of Life (N=900)

Metric	Training	Testing
Sum of Squares Error	28.77	14.18
Relative Error	.092	0.097
Training Time(sec)	0.11	-

According to the model summary, the sum of squares error for both training (28.77) and testing (14.18) was small, indicating low prediction error and high model performance. Furthermore, the training (.092) and testing (0.097) relative errors were low, showing that the model correctly recognized the data pattern. The training time of 0.11 seconds confirmed the model's effectiveness.

Table 2

Relative Importance of Predictive Exploration of What Uplifts Or Undermines Young Adults Quality of Life (N=900)

Predictor variables	Importance	Normalized importance (%)
Academic stress	0.33	8.0%
Sleep quality	0.24	5.9%
Excessive social media use	0.87	21.0%
Perfectionism	0.97	23.5%
Resilience	.20	48.7%
Effective coping strategies	.127	30.6%
Social support	.415	100.0%
Self-esteem	.014	3.5%

Neural network analysis was utilized to assess the relative importance of risk and protective factors in predicting quality of life. The table showed that perfectionisms (importance = 0.97, importance = 0.97, 23.5%) and excessive social media use (0.87, 21.0%) were the most significant risk factors for predicting quality of life, while academic stress and sleep quality had a lesser impact.

Image 1
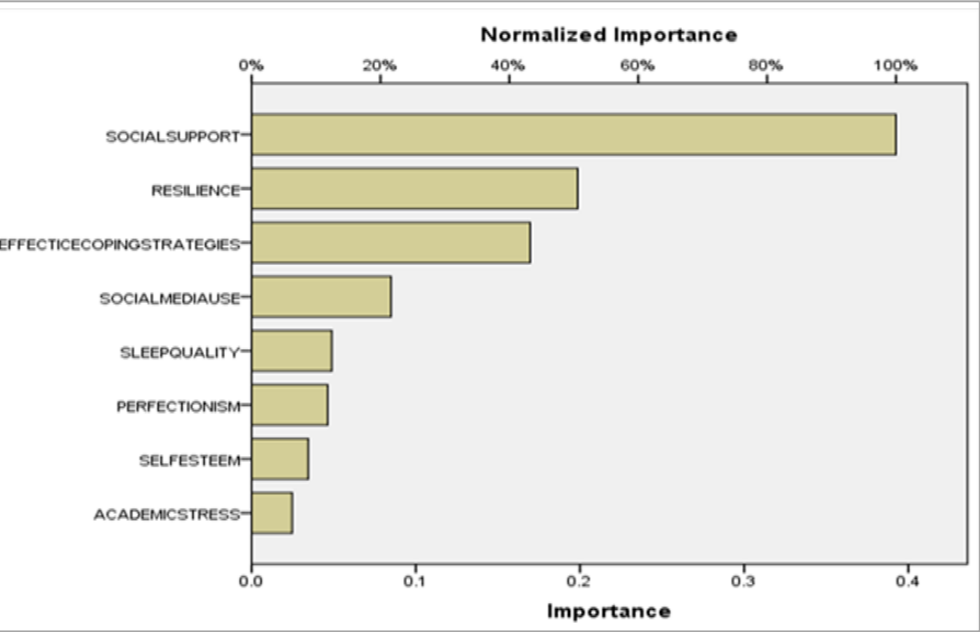
Conclusion

This study indicates relative significance of what uplifts or undermines young adult's quality of life via neural network analysis. It showed that social support was the most powerful protective factor, while effective coping strategies and resilience played a moderate role in predicting quality of life, and perfectionism and excessive social media use were the most significant risk factors for predicting quality of life among young adults. The findings support targeted, student-focused mental health interventions in academic institutions. Programs promoting emotional support, resilience, and reducing perfectionistic impulses can improve young people' quality of life and academic performance.

Limitations and Recommendations

The study's cross-sectional survey research design cannot establish causation; future research should utilize a longitudinal strategy to analyze changes over time. These may cause fatigue and boredom in participants due to their length; there may also be response bias and social-desirability bias. Using mixed methodologies (observation and interviews) and short scales could increase data reliability. These findings are specific to Pakistani students, whereas cross-cultural studies are more effective for comparing behaviors and attitudes across cultures because they increase external validity by collecting data once rather than multiple times.

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