

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# NEED SATISFACTION AND MENTAL WELL BEING AMONG WORKING AND NON-WORKING UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN PAKISTAN: A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

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## Abstract

The purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between need satisfaction and mental well-being among university students in perspective of gender and job status. The sample was randomly selected from different universities of Islamabad, comprised of (N=160; n=80: working; n=40 males, n=40 females, n=80: n=40 males, n=40 females non-working) university students. Age range was 20 to 40. Basic need satisfaction scale was used to measure the satisfaction of basic needs and The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale was used to assess the mental well-being. Results found that Basic Need Satisfaction and Mental Wellbeing has significant relationship ( $r=0.30$ ,  $p=0.000$ ) among university students. Results revealed that there was a significant difference of basic need satisfaction ( $t=-4.68$ ,  $p<0.000$ ) and mental wellbeing ( $t=3.21$ ,  $p<0.002$ ) between male working and female working students. Female working students have high basic need satisfaction ( $M=88.93$ ,  $SD=19.47$ ) and Mental well-being ( $M=52.88$ ,  $SD=9.14$ ) than male working students. While no significant difference of Basic Need Satisfaction ( $t=0.64$ ) and Mental Wellbeing ( $t=-1.31$ ) among overall sample in perspective of gender and job status. *ASEAN Journal of Psychiatry, Vol. 22; No.4.*

**Keywords: Basic Need Satisfaction, Mental Wellbeing, Gender, Working, Non-Working, Adolescent**

## Introduction

Satisfaction of basic needs highly contribute in the motivation towards life. Human beings are motivated by the needs of belongingness, power, freedom, autonomy, self-actualization and self-esteem [1-3]. Children's ways of expression about needs and related behaviours are different than those of adults [4]. Children misbehave to express his feelings of frustration or deprivation related to unfulfilled needs (The Social Skills Groups, 2010). Outcomes of need satisfaction and deprivation are psychological and mental well-being [4]. Competence (on the basis of work and educational problems), autonomy and belongingness are basic needs for satisfaction that

effect well-being. Working students experience more dissatisfaction and deprivation of social, financial as well as psychological needs because of the placement, working hours, responsibilities of their job. On the other hand non-working students experience their lives only as a student, may have the opportunity to satisfy their need of belongingness and competence on the basis of their educational success and limited autonomy. Basic needs mean basic and primary psychological needs and desire and perception of satisfaction of these needs. Self-determination theory [5] proposes that humans have three basic innate needs which control their behaviours across multiple situations. These psychological needs include need for autonomy, competence

and relatedness. Satisfaction of these needs is requisite for all human beings to develop and maintain healthy personality, motivation and psychological wellbeing [6].

#### *Need for Belongingness/Relatedness*

Need to relate with someone, or belong to somebody, to love or be loved and have friends is strongest need like the need for survival. Self-determination theory defines relatedness as feelings, emotions which are related to others in different ways across the situation [7].

#### *Need for Autonomy*

This need can be taken in two terms, one is need for power and the second is need for freedom [4]. It can be fulfilled by having choice to decide from two options [7].

#### *Need for Competence*

Positive feedback on productive activity ultimately increases one's internal motivation to do the same activity and gives the feeling of competence. High intrinsic ability to do the task in a good manner gives feelings of self-competency, hence improves one's performance and level of psychological satisfaction [7].

Psychological or mental wellbeing is one's state of happiness and the optimistic impact it creates upon the individual. Depression decreases the person's mental wellbeing by producing the effects of sadness, despair, hopelessness and sorrow [8]. When students are depressed, they perform poor in academic tasks. Depression interferes with student's level of attention during class which ultimately interrupts with memory, comprehension and concentration process [9,10]

Parental support in the form of social support plays a key role in establishing and maintaining psychological wellbeing especially for students because they are the members of society who are growing and initiating their role in society. Lower support from parents will lead them towards distress, emotional and psychological problems

[10-12] Concealing the emotions of distress is harmful and lead towards negative well-being [13]. Children with high level of self-control skills may have greater need satisfaction and subjective well-being related to school [14].

Dissatisfaction of psychological needs is associated with psychological problems such as depression, anxiety, hostility, somatization and negative self-image [15]. Self-image is significantly associated with satisfaction of belongingness need (11.6%). Competence is linked with depression (10.7%), anxiety and hostility. On the other hand autonomy need is accounted for negative self as well as depression [15]. Working women have less emotional health than non-working women [16]. Gender differences on health problems were partially mediated by basic need and job satisfaction [17]. Flow of academic activities was predictor of burnout in full time working students as compare to part time working students [18].

#### **Rationale of the study**

Dissatisfaction of basic needs has brought remarkable change in emotional and psychological health. Although less empirical evidences are found on this construct in Pakistani sample. This study will be a step towards exploration of effects of academic activities and its association with need satisfaction and mental well-being. In Pakistan, many students bear their academic expenses by their own, usually they are doing some part time jobs. Sometimes, it is their job requirement to improve the education or sometimes, it is their own interest to learn more through proper institutes. For both of the reasons they have to bear their educational expenses. With these financial burdens, they have to manage their job responsibilities as well as their educational activities along with domestic responsibilities. They neglect their selves, and compromise at the risk of their own needs of satisfaction, resulting in bad mental health and low psychological well-being. Hofer and Busch found that positive outcomes can be attained after fulfillment of basic needs [18,19]. Student's psychological health is very important as they are responsible for the moral, psychological and social development of next generation.

## Objectives

1. To investigate the relationship between need satisfaction and mental well-being among working and non-working university students.
2. To explore the gender difference between need satisfaction and mental well-being among working and non-working university students.

## Hypotheses

1. Mental well-being is positively correlated with need of relatedness, competence and belongingness among university students.
2. Non-working university students score high on mental well-being scale as compare to working students
3. Need satisfaction *i.e.*, need for relatedness, need for competence and belongingness will be will be higher in female university students as compare to male university students.
4. Mental wellbeing will be significantly high in female students than male students.
5. Female working university students will show high need satisfaction and mental wellbeing as compared to male working university students.

## Sample

The sample of the current study was comprised of 160 university students with age ranges from 20-40 years recruited through purposive convenient sampling technique from different universities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Categories of the sample made as the following; working males (n=40), working females (n=40), non-working males (n=40) and non-working females (n=40). The participants who were willing to participate in the study were selected.

## Measures

Following measures were used to assess the basic

need satisfaction level and mental well-being among working and non-working university students.

### *Demographic sheet*

The information will be gathered from the participants on the following: age, qualification, major subject, gender, job status, income, family type (joint, nuclear).

### *The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS)*

The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale consists of 14 items rating scale developed by panel of experts. The scale was primarily validated on the student population. Items are scored on five point rating scale ranging from none of the time -1 to all of the time -5. The scale has good Cornbrash's alpha reliability for student sample (0.89), and for general population (0.91). Scale showed significantly high correlation with other mental health and well-being scales but lower relationship with general scales of health. The test-retest reliability of the scale was 0.83 and the internal consistency was >0.70.

### *Basic need satisfaction scale*

Basic need satisfaction scale comprises of 21 items scale which was responded on seven point likert scale. Basic need satisfaction scale was developed by Deci and Ryan in 2003 on the basis of self-determination theory. This general scale of basic need satisfaction used to measure the person's three psychological needs (need for autonomy, competence and relatedness). The scale has also reverse scoring items. The need for autonomy have items 1, 4(R), 8, 11(R), 14, 17, 20(R), competence need have items, 3(R), 5, 10, 13, 15(R), 19(R) and the need for relatedness have items no 2, 6, 7(R), 9, 12, 16(R), 18(R), 21. The scale has good chronbach's alpha coefficient for autonomy ( $\alpha=0.79$ ), competence ( $\alpha=0.73$ ) and relatedness ( $\alpha=0.84$ ) [20].

## Procedure

Permission was taken from Institutional Review Board and also from authorities of different

universities from where data was collected such as Foundation University, NUML University, COMSATS University and International Islamic university Islamabad. Instructions were given to the participants about the study purpose and use of the information and asked them to give response to the presented instruments while keeping in mind the feelings and thoughts about themselves. The

research instruments were administered individually.

### Results

The data was analysed quantitatively on Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) using three statistical techniques t-test, regression analysis and correlation coefficient.

**Table 1: Cronbach’s alpha, mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis for basic need satisfaction scale and the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) among working and non-working university students (N=160)**

Scales	No of Items	$\alpha$	M (SD)	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
Basic Need Satisfaction Scale	21	0.72	80.01 (14.64)	46	128	0.81	1.14
Need for Autonomy	7	-	25.19 (5.47)	12	41	0.11	0.07
Need for Competence	6	-	24.18 (5.93)	12	40	0.42	0.08
Need for Relatedness	8	-	30.65 (7.04)	15	51	0.32	0.15
The Warwick-Edinburgh	14	0.75	49.01 (8.43)	32	70	0.07	-0.77

Table 1 indicates the reliability of Basic Need Satisfaction Scale for student sample of the current study. The overall Cronbach’s alpha reliability is good for Basic Need Satisfaction Scale ( $\alpha=0.72$ ). Table also measures the Cronbach’s alpha reliability of The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental

Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) for student population. The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) has shown excellent Cronbach’s alpha reliability ( $\alpha=0.75$ ) for working and Non-working university students.

**Table 2: Pearson correlation between basic need satisfaction, need for autonomy, need for competence, need for relatedness and mental wellbeing (N=180)**

Scale	Co-relation	1	2	3	4	5
1	Mental Wellbeing	-	0.30***	0.16*	0.28***	0.27**
2	Need for Relatedness	-	-	0.88***	0.36***	0.65***
3	Need for Competence	-	-	-	0.82***	0.27**
4	Need for Autonomy	-	-	-	-	0.65***

Note: \*\*\*:  $p < 0.000$ , \*\*:  $p < 0.001$ , \*:  $p < 0.0$ .

The above table no 2 indicates that Basic Need Satisfaction and Mental Wellbeing has statistically significant relationship ( $r=0.30$ ,  $p=0.000$ ) among university students. Results also concluded that there is statistically significant relationship among Need for Autonomy ( $r=0.16$ ,  $p=0.04$ ), Need for Competence ( $r=0.28$ ,  $p=0.000$ ), Need for

Relatedness( $r=0.27$ ,  $p=0.001$ ) and Mental Wellbeing. Results of the above table are indicating that there is a positively significant relationship between Basic Need Satisfaction and Mental Wellbeing among the population of university students.

**Table 3: Means, standard deviations and t-value of the basic need satisfaction and mental wellbeing in male and female university students (N=180)**

Scales	Gender					95% CI		
	Male (n=80)		Female (n=80)			LLd	UL	Cohen's
	M	SD	M	SD	t(df)			
Basic Need Satisfaction	76.1	10.51	83.93	17.03	3.49 (158)**	9.6	25.17	0.55
Mental Wellbeing	44.59	6.78	53.44	7.59	7.78 (158)**	-2.36	2.18	1.23

Note: \*\* $p<0.001$ .

The above table 3 shows the differences between male and female university students in Basic Need Satisfaction and Mental Wellbeing. The results further indicate that there is significant difference between male and female students on Basic Need Satisfaction ( $t= 3.49$ ,  $p<.001$ ). The result shows that Female students have high Basic Need Satisfaction ( $M=83.93$ ,  $SD=17.03$ ) as compared to

Male students ( $M=76.10$ ,  $SD=10.51$ ). The above table further shows that there is also significant difference between the female ( $M= 53.44$ ,  $SD=7.59$ ) and male ( $M=44.59$ ,  $SD=6.78$ ) university students on Mental Wellbeing scale ( $t= 7.78$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Female students have higher Basic Need Satisfaction and Mental wellbeing as compared to male students.

**Table 4: Means, standard deviations and t-value of the basic need satisfaction and mental wellbeing in male and female working university students (N=180)**

Scales	Gender				t-Value	95% CI	
	Male (n=40)		Female (n=40)			LL	UL
	M	SD	M	SD			
Basic Need Satisfaction	72.58	10.47	88.93	19.47	-4.68**	-23.34	-9.35
Mental Wellbeing	46.9	7.39	52.88	9.14	-3.21**	-9.68	-2.27

Note: df=78, \*\*: p<0.000, df=78, \*\*: p< 0.002.

The above table 4 shows the differences between male working and female working university students in Basic Need Satisfaction and Mental Wellbeing. The results indicate that there is significant difference between male and female working students on Basic Need Satisfaction ( $t=-4.68$ ,  $p<0.000$ ). The result shows that Female working students have high Basic Need Satisfaction ( $M=88.93$ ,  $SD=19.47$ ) as compared to

Male working students ( $M=72.58$ ,  $SD=10.47$ ). The above table further shows that there is also significant difference between the female working ( $M=52.88$ ,  $SD=9.14$ ) and male working ( $M=46.90$ ,  $SD=7.39$ ) university students on Mental Wellbeing scale ( $t= 3.21$ ,  $p<0.002$ ). Female working students have higher Basic Need Satisfaction and Mental wellbeing as compared to male working students.

**Table 5: Mean standard deviation and t-value for male and female university students in need for autonomy, need for competence and need for relatedness (N=180)**

Variables	Male (n=80)		Female (n=80)		t(160)	95% CI p	95% CI LL	UL	Cohen's d
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD					
Need for Autonomy	25.39	4.76	24.99	6.13	0.46	0.64	-1.31	2.11	0.07
Need for Competence	22.76	4.6	25.59	6.75	-3.09**	0	-4.63	-1.02	0.48
Need for Relatedness	27.95	5.54	33.35	7.38	-5.23**	0	-7.44	-3.36	0.82

Table 5 reflects the differences of three Needs (Need for Autonomy, Need for Competence, and Need for Relatedness) in male and female university students. The above table shows highly significant difference between the female and male university students in Need for Relatedness of Basic Need Satisfaction scale ( $t=-5.23$ ,  $p<0.000$ ). Female students might have higher level ( $M=33.35$ ,  $SD=7.38$ ) of Need for Relatedness as

compared to male students ( $M=27.95$ ,  $SD=5.54$ ). Results also indicated that female students also have significantly high level of Need for Competence ( $M=25.59$ ,  $SD=6.75$ ) than male students ( $M=22.76$ ,  $SD=4.60$ ). There was no significant difference in Need for Autonomy among male and female university students of the study sample.

**Table 6: Means, standard deviations and t-value of the basic need satisfaction and mental wellbeing among working and non-working university students (N=180)**

Variables	Male (n=80)		Female (n=80)		t(160)	95% CI p	95% CI LL	UL	Cohen's d
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD					
Basic Need Satisfaction	80.75	17.58	79.28	11.01	0.64	0.52	-1.31	6.06	0.04
Mental Wellbeing	49.89	8.792	48.14	8.02	1.31	0.19	-7.44	4.38	0.17

The above table 6 shows the differences in Basic Need Satisfaction and Mental Wellbeing among Working and Non-working university students. The result indicates that there is no significant

difference of Basic Need Satisfaction ( $t=0.64$ ,  $p=n.s$ ) and Mental Wellbeing ( $t=-1.31$ ,  $p=n.s$ ) among working And Non-working university students.

**Table 7: Moderating effect of gender for the relationship between basic need satisfaction and mental wellbeing (N = 180)**

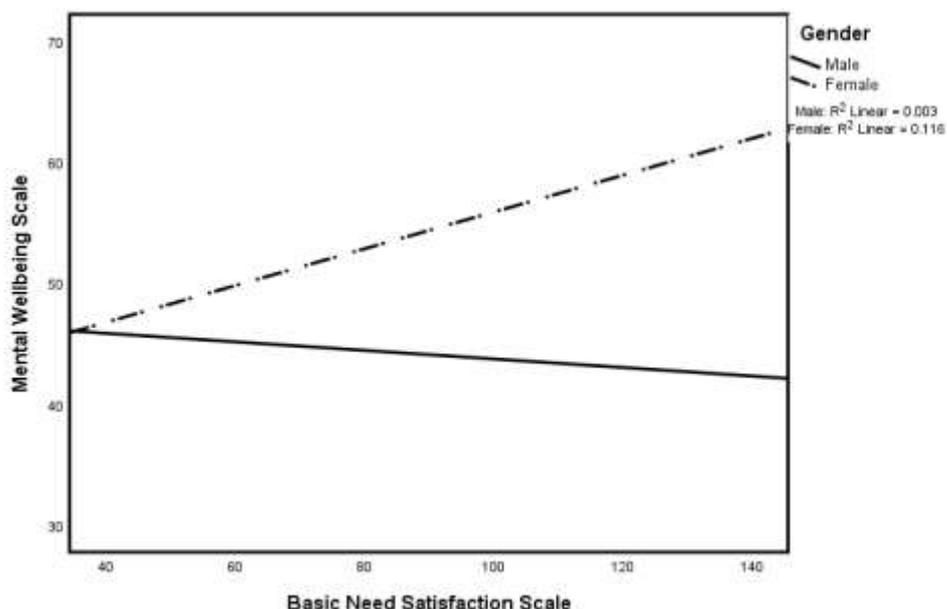
Mental Wellbeing			
Predictor	B	95% CI	
		LL	UL
Constant	47.28***	35.91	58.64
Basic Need Satisfaction	-0.03	-0.18	0.11
Gender	-6.61	-20.41	7.18
Basic Need Satisfaction × Gender	0.18*	0.01	0.36
$R^2$	0.32	-	-
$F$	25.00***	-	-
$\Delta R^2$	.019*	-	-
$\Delta F$	4.53	-	-

Note. CI: Confidence Interval; LL: Lower Limit; UL: Upper Limit

\*\*\*:  $p < 0.001$  \*:  $p < 0.05$

Table 7 depicts the moderating effect of gender on the relationship between basic need satisfaction and mental wellbeing. The interaction term basic need satisfaction and gender is significantly moderating the relationship between basic need satisfaction and mental wellbeing among university students. The moderating effect is further explained through mod graph in figure 1.

**Figure 1: Graphical representation for moderating role of gender in the relationship between basic need satisfaction and mental wellbeing**



## **Discussion**

Our life and motivation to live, change or improve depends upon the satisfaction of basic needs. There are many types of needs which are regulating and giving direction to our life which are explained initially by Henry Murray in 1938 with the Maslovian concepts of hierarchy of needs. Human beings are motivated by needs of belongingness, power, freedom, autonomy, self-actualization and self-esteem. Current study aimed to investigate the three basic psychological needs such as need for autonomy, competence and belongingness on the student population which is experiencing more need satisfaction or frustration issues because of the ongoing social issues of lack of opportunities for study and further job placements accompanied by other interpersonal issues related to support.

In current research, alpha reliability of Basic Need Satisfaction scale and the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS) was determined to find the reliability of both instruments. The alpha reliability for Basic Need Satisfaction Scale was  $\alpha=0.72$ , which is good whereas Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS) has also shown good reliability ( $\alpha=0.75$ ) for student population. Both scales also showed highly significant correlation among student population which shows the convergent validity of the scales for studied population.

Current study illustrated that there is a significantly positive relationship between basic need satisfaction and mental wellbeing ( $r=0.30$ ,  $p=0.000$ ) among university students. The first hypothesis of the study was about positive correlation between Basic Need Satisfaction and Mental wellbeing among female university students. The results of the Pearson correlation analysis found the positively significant relationship between basic need satisfaction and mental wellbeing ( $r=1.00$ ,  $p=0.000$ ) among female university students. But according to findings there was no relationship found between basic need satisfaction and mental wellbeing ( $r=-0.07$ ,  $p=n.s$ ) among male university students. The more basic psychological needs were satisfied the increased mental and psychological wellbeing will be Observed and reported in female university students. These findings were lined with

previous research conducted by Kamel and Hashish in 2015 on the nursing educators studying in Alexandria university and were also working there. They posited that perceived need satisfaction is significantly correlated with the affective or psychological wellbeing related to job among these academic nursing educators. They further explained that this relationship consequently improve and enhance their tolerance level for uncertain situations related to work and personal life [21].

Psychological wellbeing and job status, achievements and satisfaction of basic psychological needs are important aspects of individual's life. Current study also aimed to test the hypothesis that needs satisfaction will be significantly high in working students whereas mental wellbeing will be significantly high among non-working students. The independent sample t-test was used to test the differences of need satisfaction and mental wellbeing among university students on the basis of job status. Statistical analysis reveals that there is no significant difference of Basic Need Satisfaction ( $t=0.64$ ,  $p<0.52$ ) and Mental wellbeing ( $t=-1.31$ ,  $p<0.19$ ) among working and non-working university students. To further investigate the differences of both constructs in respective sample, data was split between two subgroups of male working university students and female working students in order to establish more useful results. The results of the independent sample t-test proved the important hypothesis that presumed that female working students will show high need satisfaction and mental well-being as compared to male working university students. Finding suggested that there is a significant difference of basic need satisfaction ( $t=-4.68$ ,  $p<0.000$ ) and mental wellbeing ( $t=3.21$ ,  $p<0.002$ ) between male working and female working students. Female working students scored high in basic need satisfaction ( $M=88.93$ ,  $SD=19.47$ ) and Mental wellbeing ( $M=52.88$ ,  $SD=9.14$ ) as compared to male working students. Similar findings were suggested by Sana on the sample of male and female students by using t-test. She revealed that female students have significantly high psychological wellbeing as compared to male

Students because of multiple contributing factors such as biological and psychological differences [22].

In our society, male secures more responsibilities related to support, society and familial expectation regarding future achievements as compared to females. These responsibilities and expectations pose greater stress, anxiety and apprehension. Because of these psychological issues, male tend to suppress rather less likely to satisfy their physical, psychological and financial needs so that they can generate better for their family and their future. On the other hand females get need satisfaction from multiple resources and feel more psychological health because of less familial or societal pressure to support others. But opposed this logic by finding that men have high opportunities to grow, achieve and get prestigious employment and having more social authority than females so that there must be higher level of subjective well-being than females [22,23].

Contradictory to the findings, the current study also established the facts that there is a significant gender based difference of basic need satisfaction ( $t=3.49$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and mental well-being ( $t=7.78$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) among total male and female sample of the university students. According to a renowned Islamic scholar and historian Ibn Khaldun, "Compassion and affection for one's relatives or blood relations is innate part of the human nature which is a divine gift from God for the purpose of mutual support and help" [24,25]. According to Islamic Psychotherapeutic model, individuals are interconnected with others and living in the community so that they are responsible for management of their social, familial and interpersonal relationship which is termed as haquq-ul Ibaad (the rights of the servants of God). Satisfaction or deprivation of these innate needs of belongingness or relatedness may lead the person towards distress, anxiety, social isolation, feelings of social incompetency or other mental, behavioural and psychological issues [25].

Current research also lined with these beliefs by examining the three innate basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness and extended the results by adding the analysis of

three basic psychological needs and their gender based differences. The results illustrated that need for competence is significantly high in female university students ( $M=25.59$ ,  $SD=6.75$ ) than males ( $M=22.76$ ,  $SD=4.60$ ). Need for relatedness ( $M=33.35$ ,  $SD=7.38$ ) is higher among female students than male students ( $M=27.95$ ,  $SD=5.54$ ). This can be assumed that females are more dependent on the support of others in spite of required freedom to work, study and nurture. This support and help makes the women develop more need for relatedness and attachment. Satisfaction of need for relatedness helps an individual to perform with their full potential in society which in turn improves their psychological wellbeing shows highly significant difference between the female and male university students in Need for Relatedness of Basic Need Satisfaction scale ( $t=-5.23$ ,  $p<0.000$ ). Female students might have higher level of Need for Relatedness as compared to male students. Results also indicated that female students also have significantly high level of Need for competence than male students

## **Conclusion**

The current study was aimed to investigate the relationship between Basic psychological need satisfaction and mental wellbeing among university students and also to find out the gender based as well as job status based differences in basic need satisfaction and mental well-being. The results revealed that there is significant relationship between basic need satisfaction and mental well-being among university students. Whereas findings also suggest no significant correlation between need satisfaction and mental wellbeing in university students based on job status (working, non-working). This finding was showing the results of total working and non-working student sample without separating against gender. When the t test analysis was used to find out the difference of need satisfaction and mental wellbeing among working and non-working students on the basis of gender, this revealed the significant difference of both constructs. Female working university students have more propensities for basic need satisfaction and increased level of mental wellbeing as compared to male working students. The multitasking improves and nurtures their need for autonomy

competency and belongingness which ultimately lead towards psychological and mental wellbeing.

#### *Theoretical and practical implications*

The current study will be a significant contribution in the area of research related to student population. Students tend to be more multitasking, energetic and answerable to their elder ones. Students who are taking responsibility of their own studies and expense are more prone to stress related to work, education, finance and interpersonal issues. Current study will help to point out the importance of working students in the area of research so that future researchers may attempt to explore more areas of strength and difficulties in students.

#### *Limitations*

The current study was limited to small sample of 80 males and 80 females from student population which was very less representation of the study population. This was further divided so the sub-sample was consisting of 40 male working, 40 non-working male, 40 female working and 40 non-working female. Another limitation of the study was that there are lot of other contributing factors and variables which are of great importance in the relationship between basic need satisfaction and mental wellbeing which were not been studied and discussed in the study. These factors may include personality characteristics, job nature, nature of the subject area, individual differences, and differences in opportunities related to environmental and educational issues which must be studied in future.

#### **Conflict of Interest**

Authors declared no conflict of interest.

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