Research Article

Psychological Well-Being As Predictors of Quality Of Life Among Tribal Youth in Wayanad, Kerala

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Abstract

Psychological well-being is an important dimension of human development that may shape individuals' perceptions of their overall quality of life. The present study examines the predictive relationship between psychological well-being and quality of life among Scheduled Tribe youth in Wayanad district, Kerala, with particular attention to five tribal communities: Paniyan, Adiyan, Kattunaykan, Mullakurumar and Kurichyan. A quantitative, cross-sectional research design was adopted, involving 370 respondents aged 19–29 years. Pearson's product-moment correlation and community-wise simple linear regression analyses were employed to examine the relationship between psychological well-being and quality of life. The correlation analysis revealed positive associations between the two variables across all five communities, with correlation coefficients ranging from .306 among Adiyan respondents to .663 among Kurichyan respondents. The regression results further demonstrated that psychological well-being was a positive and statistically significant predictor of quality of life in all five communities. The explanatory power of the regression models varied considerably, with psychological well-being accounting for 44.0% of the variation in quality of life among Kurichyan respondents, followed by Kurumar (30.9%), Paniyan (20.7%), Kattunaykan (12.1%) and Adiyan (9.4%) respondents. The findings highlight the relevance of psychological well-being in understanding quality of life among tribal youth while revealing variations in its explanatory contribution across communities. The study underscores the importance of considering psychological dimensions alongside socioeconomic, cultural and environmental circumstances in research and policy initiatives concerning tribal youth development.

Keywords: Psychological well-being, Quality of life, Tribal youth, Scheduled Tribes, Community-wise regression, Wayanad, Kerala.

Introduction

Well-being has increasingly become an important area of research in understanding human development, particularly in relation to individuals' ability to lead meaningful, satisfying and productive lives. Beyond the absence of illness or psychological distress, well-being encompasses positive functioning, personal fulfilment, emotional stability and the capacity to manage everyday challenges. In this context, psychological well-being and quality of life represent two closely related but conceptually distinct dimensions of human development. Psychological well-being primarily concerns an individual's positive psychological functioning, including self-acceptance, autonomy, personal growth, purpose in life, environmental mastery and positive relationships with others (Ryff, 1989). Quality of life, on the other hand, represents an individual's subjective assessment of their position in life within the context of their culture, value systems, personal goals, expectations and concerns (The WHOQOL Group, 1995). Understanding the relationship between these dimensions is particularly important among young people, whose psychological experiences and life circumstances may influence their overall perception of well-being and life satisfaction.

Psychological well-being extends beyond temporary happiness or the experience of positive emotions. Ryff (1989) conceptualised psychological well-being through six dimensions: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth. These dimensions collectively reflect an individual's capacity to function effectively, establish meaningful relationships, develop personal capabilities and maintain a sense of direction in life. This perspective provides a broader understanding of well-being by emphasising positive psychological functioning rather than merely the absence of negative emotional conditions. Similarly, Diener et al. (1999) highlighted the multidimensional nature of subjective well-being, particularly life satisfaction and positive and negative affect. Although subjective and psychological well-being are related, psychological well-being places greater emphasis on personal development, meaningful engagement and the fulfilment of human potential. These conceptual distinctions are relevant when examining the factors associated with quality of life among socially and culturally diverse populations.

Quality of life is a multidimensional concept that encompasses several aspects of an individual's existence, including physical health, psychological condition, social relationships and environmental circumstances. The World Health

Organization Quality of Life Group emphasised that quality of life should be understood through individuals' perceptions of their circumstances in relation to their cultural and social contexts rather than through objective living conditions alone (The WHOQOL Group, 1995). This approach recognises that individuals living under similar socioeconomic conditions may experience and evaluate their quality of life differently. Psychological well-being may therefore be an important factor in shaping how individuals perceive their everyday circumstances, cope with difficulties, establish social relationships and evaluate their overall life experiences. A positive psychological orientation, a sense of personal competence and meaningful life goals may contribute to more favourable perceptions of quality of life. Consequently, examining psychological well-being as a predictor of quality of life offers an important perspective for understanding well-being beyond conventional socioeconomic indicators.

The relationship between psychological well-being and quality of life assumes particular significance in the context of indigenous and tribal communities. Tribal populations experience diverse social, economic, educational, cultural and geographical circumstances that may shape their opportunities, life experiences and perceptions of well-being. For tribal youth, the transition towards adulthood involves negotiating educational and employment opportunities, family responsibilities, social relationships, personal aspirations and changing cultural environments. These experiences may influence psychological functioning and the ways in which young people evaluate their quality of life. Therefore, understanding quality of life among tribal youth requires attention not only to their material and social circumstances but also to their psychological resources, personal development and perceived ability to manage everyday life.

In Kerala, Wayanad is an important geographical context for examining the well-being of tribal populations because the district is home to several Scheduled Tribe communities with distinct social and cultural backgrounds. The experiences of tribal youth cannot necessarily be understood as uniform, as differences in community background and social circumstances may influence their perceptions of psychological well-being and quality of life. An empirical study by Joseph and Jethwani (2023), which examined quality of life and alcohol use among Scheduled Tribe populations in Wayanad, demonstrated the relevance of investigating quality-of-life outcomes within this geographical and social context. Their findings indicated an association between alcohol use and quality of life, while also identifying variations in quality of life according to selected demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. Although this study provides a relevant local perspective, further investigation of the psychological dimensions associated with quality of life among tribal youth remains important.

Against this background, the present study examines psychological well-being as a predictor of quality of life among Scheduled Tribe youth in Wayanad district, Kerala. Drawing on data from 370 respondents belonging to five tribal communities (Paniyan, Adiyan, Kattunaykan, Mullakurumar and Kurichyan) the study investigates the extent to which psychological well-being statistically explains variations in quality of life. Particular attention is given to community-wise differences in the predictive relationship through separate linear regression analyses. The findings are expected to provide empirical insights that may inform discussions on youth development, culturally responsive well-being interventions and the promotion of quality of life among tribal communities.

Theoretical overview

Conceptual Foundations of Well-Being

Well-being is a multidimensional concept that extends beyond the absence of disease, psychological distress or adverse life circumstances. It encompasses individuals' experiences of happiness, satisfaction, personal development, meaningful relationships and effective functioning in their social environments. In psychological research, well-being has traditionally been examined through two broad theoretical perspectives: the hedonic and eudaimonic approaches. The hedonic perspective emphasises happiness, pleasure and the avoidance of pain, whereas the eudaimonic perspective focuses on meaning, self-realisation and the fulfilment of human potential (Ryan & Deci, 2001). These perspectives offer complementary explanations of how individuals evaluate their lives and experience positive functioning. The distinction between these approaches is particularly relevant to understanding psychological well-being and quality of life. While subjective evaluations of happiness and satisfaction reflect how individuals feel about their lives, psychological well-being provides a broader understanding of their capacity to function positively, develop personal strengths and pursue meaningful goals. Keyes et al. (2002) demonstrated that subjective and psychological well-being represent related but distinguishable dimensions of positive human functioning. Consequently, an understanding of quality of life requires consideration of both

individuals' evaluations of their circumstances and their psychological capacities to manage and derive meaning from those circumstances.

Eudaimonic Perspective of Psychological Well-Being

The eudaimonic approach provides an important theoretical foundation for examining psychological well-being. Originating in the philosophical tradition of Aristotle, eudaimonia emphasises living a meaningful and purposeful life through the realisation of one's potential rather than merely pursuing immediate pleasure or happiness. In contemporary psychological research, this perspective has been developed through theories that emphasise personal growth, self-determination, meaningful relationships and effective engagement with life circumstances. Ryan and Deci (2001) explained that the eudaimonic perspective considers well-being in terms of optimal psychological functioning and self-realisation. From this standpoint, an individual experiences well-being not simply because of favourable emotions but also through the development of personal capabilities, meaningful engagement and the pursuit of worthwhile life goals. This theoretical position is particularly relevant to youth populations because the transition towards adulthood involves developing personal identity, establishing independence, building social relationships and identifying meaningful life directions.

In the context of tribal youth, the eudaimonic perspective offers a framework for understanding how psychological resources and personal development may contribute to perceptions of quality of life. Young people may encounter different educational, economic, cultural and social circumstances, but their psychological capacities to understand, manage and respond to these experiences may be important in shaping their overall life evaluations. Thus, psychological well-being can be considered an important dimension in understanding quality of life beyond material and socioeconomic conditions.

Ryff's Six-Dimensional Model of Psychological Well-Being

One of the most influential theoretical approaches to psychological well-being was developed by Ryff (1989). Challenging the tendency to define well-being exclusively through happiness and life satisfaction, Ryff proposed a multidimensional model based on six dimensions of positive psychological functioning. The model integrates ideas from developmental psychology, humanistic psychology and theories of mental health. Ryff and Keyes (1995) subsequently examined the structure of this model and provided empirical support for its six-dimensional conceptualisation. The six dimensions are as follows:

Self-Acceptance

Self-acceptance refers to an individual's positive evaluation of oneself and acceptance of both personal strengths and limitations. It involves maintaining a positive attitude towards one's past experiences and present identity. Individuals with higher self-acceptance are generally more capable of acknowledging their personal characteristics without excessive self-criticism. In relation to quality of life, self-acceptance may contribute to a more positive evaluation of personal circumstances and overall life experiences.

Positive Relations with Others

Positive relations with others involve the ability to establish meaningful, trusting and supportive interpersonal relationships. This dimension emphasises empathy, affection, mutual understanding and the capacity to maintain social connections. Family relationships, friendships and community interactions may constitute important sources of social support, particularly in closely connected community settings. Positive interpersonal relationships may contribute to individuals' sense of belonging, emotional security and perceived quality of life.

Autonomy

Autonomy refers to self-determination, independence and the ability to regulate one's behaviour according to personal values and beliefs. It involves the capacity to make decisions independently and resist inappropriate social pressures. Among youth, autonomy is particularly relevant to educational choices, occupational aspirations, personal relationships and decisions concerning future life directions. A greater sense of autonomy may strengthen individuals' perceptions of control over their lives and their ability to pursue personally meaningful goals.

Environmental Mastery

Environmental mastery concerns an individual's ability to manage everyday responsibilities and effectively utilise opportunities within their surrounding environment. It involves the capacity to organise life circumstances, overcome practical challenges and create conditions that support personal needs and goals. For tribal youth, environmental mastery may be relevant to navigating educational institutions, employment opportunities, healthcare services and other social environments. The ability to manage these circumstances may influence how individuals evaluate their everyday living conditions.

Purpose in Life

Purpose in life refers to having meaningful goals, aspirations and a sense of direction. Individuals with a strong sense of purpose perceive their lives as meaningful and believe that their experiences contribute to personal development and future achievements. Among tribal youth, aspirations relating to education, employment, family life and community participation may contribute to a sense of purpose. This dimension may therefore be associated with more positive perceptions of life and personal fulfilment.

Personal Growth

Personal growth refers to the continuous development of individual capabilities, openness to new experiences and recognition of opportunities for self-improvement. It involves perceiving oneself as developing over time and remaining receptive to learning and new experiences. For young people, personal growth is particularly important because youth is a period characterised by educational development, identity formation and the acquisition of new competencies. Opportunities for personal growth may contribute to a sense of achievement and a more favourable evaluation of quality of life.

These six dimensions provide a comprehensive understanding of psychological well-being as a form of positive psychological functioning. Ryff and Keyes (1995) demonstrated that the dimensions could be examined as distinct but related components of a broader psychological well-being construct. This model therefore provides a theoretical basis for understanding how psychological functioning may be associated with individuals' perceptions of their quality of life.

Theoretical Understanding of Quality of Life

Quality of life is another major theoretical construct in the study of human well-being. It is generally understood as a multidimensional concept incorporating physical health, psychological condition, social relationships, personal circumstances and the surrounding environment. Unlike purely objective measures of living standards, quality of life also incorporates individuals' subjective evaluations of their circumstances. The World Health Organization Quality of Life Group (1995) conceptualised quality of life as an individual's perception of their position in life within the context of their culture and value systems and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns. This definition highlights three important theoretical characteristics. First, quality of life is subjective because it reflects individuals' own perceptions and evaluations. Second, it is multidimensional because it encompasses several aspects of human existence. Third, it is culturally contextual because individuals evaluate their lives within particular social, cultural and environmental settings.

The WHOQOL framework is particularly relevant to studies involving culturally diverse populations because it recognises that quality-of-life evaluations are shaped by the cultural and social environments in which individuals live (The WHOQOL Group, 1995).

Theoretical Relationship between Psychological Well-Being and Quality of Life

The theoretical relationship between psychological well-being and quality of life can be understood through the complementary perspectives of eudaimonic well-being and multidimensional quality-of-life assessment. Psychological well-being concerns the extent to which individuals function positively, develop their capabilities, maintain meaningful relationships and pursue purposeful lives. Quality of life reflects their broader evaluation of physical, psychological, social and environmental circumstances. Although these constructs are conceptually distinct, they share important areas of overlap. Ryff's (1989) model suggests that individuals who experience greater self-acceptance, autonomy, environmental mastery, positive relationships, personal growth and purpose in life possess important psychological resources for managing everyday experiences. These resources may influence how

individuals interpret their circumstances, respond to difficulties and evaluate their overall lives. For instance, environmental mastery may help individuals manage everyday challenges, while positive relationships may contribute to social support and emotional security. Similarly, purpose in life and personal growth may provide a sense of direction and accomplishment. The relationship can also be understood through the broader perspective of self-determination theory. Deci and Ryan (2000) proposed that psychological functioning and well-being are supported by the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence and relatedness. Autonomy concerns the experience of volition and self-direction; competence refers to the experience of effectiveness in interacting with the environment; and relatedness involves meaningful connections with others. When these needs are supported, individuals are more likely to experience positive psychological functioning and personal development. These psychological resources may also contribute to more favourable evaluations of their life circumstances.

The relationship between psychological well-being and quality of life is therefore theoretically supported through several interconnected processes. Psychological resources may influence individuals' ability to cope with everyday challenges, maintain relationships, pursue personal goals and perceive control over their circumstances. In turn, these experiences may be reflected in their overall quality-of-life evaluations. However, this theoretical relationship does not imply that psychological well-being is the only determinant of quality of life. Material conditions, physical health, family circumstances, social support and environmental opportunities also contribute to quality-of-life outcomes.

Theoretical Framework of the Present Study

The present study is primarily grounded in Ryff's (1989) eudaimonic model of psychological well-being and the multidimensional quality-of-life framework developed by the WHOQOL Group (1995). Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) provides an additional explanation of the psychological processes through which autonomy, competence and relatedness may contribute to positive functioning.

Methodology

The present study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to examine the relationship between psychological well-being and quality of life among Scheduled Tribe youth in Wayanad district, Kerala. The study employed a correlational and predictive analytical approach to assess the extent to which psychological well-being statistically predicts quality of life. In addition, community-wise analyses were conducted to examine the predictive relationship separately across five Scheduled Tribe communities (Paniyan, Adiyan, Kattunaykan, Mullakurumar and Kurichyan). The study was conducted in Wayanad district of Kerala, which is characterised by the presence of several Scheduled Tribe communities with distinct social and cultural backgrounds. The district was selected as the geographical setting because of its significant tribal population and the relevance of examining well-being among tribal youth within this social and cultural context. The study population comprised Scheduled Tribe youth aged 19–29 years residing in the selected tribal settlements of Wayanad district. A total of 370 respondents participated in the study. The sample included 108 Paniyan respondents, 49 Adiyan respondents, 53 Kattunaykan respondents, 92 Mullakurumar respondents and 68 Kurichyan respondents. The study examined psychological well-being as the independent variable and quality of life as the dependent variable. Psychological well-being: Psychological well-being was measured using a composite score ranging from 12 to 36. Higher scores represented higher levels of psychological well-being. Quality of life: Quality of life was measured using a composite score ranging from 11 to 33. Higher scores indicated more favourable quality-of-life assessments. The two variables were treated as continuous measures for the purpose of Pearson correlation and linear regression analyses. Information on selected socio-demographic characteristics was collected to describe the background of the respondents. These characteristics included gender, age, tribal community, marital status, educational attainment, family size and reported health problems. Descriptive statistical techniques were used to present their frequency and percentage distributions. The collected data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were employed to address the research objective. Frequencies and percentages were calculated to describe the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. Descriptive measures were also used to summarise the distribution of the psychological well-being and quality-of-life scores. Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was employed to examine the direction and strength of the relationship between psychological well-being and quality of life. The analysis was conducted separately for each of the five tribal

communities to identify variations in the observed relationships. Simple linear regression analysis was performed separately for each tribal community to examine the predictive contribution of psychological well-being to quality of life. Quality of life was specified as the dependent variable, while psychological well-being was entered as the independent variable. Five separate regression models were estimated, one for each tribal community. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was used to assess the proportion of variation in quality of life statistically explained by psychological well-being. Standardised beta coefficients, t-statistics, significance values and 95% confidence intervals were examined to evaluate the direction, magnitude and statistical significance of the regression relationships. All inferential analyses were based on two-tailed tests. A significance level of 5% ($p < .05$) was adopted to determine statistical significance. Results reported by SPSS as .000 were interpreted as $p < .001$. The study involved human participants belonging to Scheduled Tribe communities. Participation was based on informed consent, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the research and the voluntary nature of their participation. Confidentiality and anonymity of the information collected were maintained, and the data were used exclusively for research purposes.

Result

The socio-demographic profile of the 370 Scheduled Tribe youth respondents indicates variations in gender, age, tribal affiliation, marital status, educational attainment, family size and health status. With regard to gender, females constituted the majority of the respondents (66.2%; n = 245), while males accounted for 33.8% (n = 125). Regarding age, nearly half of the respondents (49.2%; n = 182) belonged to the 23–26 years age group, followed by those aged 27–29 years (33.2%; n = 123). Respondents in the 19–22 years age group constituted 17.6% (n = 65), indicating that the sample was predominantly concentrated in the middle and upper age categories. The distribution across tribal communities showed that Paniyan respondents represented the largest proportion (29.2%; n = 108), followed by Mullakurumar (24.9%; n = 92), Kurichyan (18.4%; n = 68), Kattunaykan (14.3%; n = 53) and Adiyan (13.2%; n = 49). This distribution reflects the representation of five Scheduled Tribe communities in the study area. Regarding marital status, approximately two-thirds of the respondents were unmarried (63.5%; n = 235), while 33.8% (n = 125) were married. A relatively small proportion (2.7%; n = 10) reported being divorced or separated. In terms of educational attainment, more than half of the respondents had completed diploma or technical education (55.4%; n = 205), while 36.5% (n = 135) had higher secondary education. Only 8.1% (n = 30) had secondary-level education, indicating a relatively higher representation of respondents with post-secondary technical or diploma qualifications. With respect to family size, medium-sized families consisting of four to five members were predominant (64.9%; n = 240), followed by small families with up to three members (21.6%; n = 80) and large families with six or more members (13.5%; n = 50). Regarding health status, the majority of respondents (83.8%; n = 310) reported having no health problems, whereas 16.2% (n = 60) indicated the presence of health problems. socio-demographic profile reveals that the study respondents were highly female, concentrated in the 23–26 years age group, and represented primarily by the Paniyan and Mullakurumar communities. Most respondents were unmarried, had diploma or technical educational qualifications, and belonged to medium-sized families.

Regression Model Summary: Psychological Well-Being as a Predictor of Quality of Life

The model summary presents the explanatory contribution of psychological well-being to quality of life among respondents belonging to the five Scheduled Tribe communities. The results indicate variations in the explanatory power of psychological well-being across the communities. Among the five communities, the Kurichyan model demonstrated the highest explanatory power, with an R value of .663 and an R^2 value of .440. This indicates that psychological well-being alone explained 44.0% of the variation in quality of life among Kurichyan respondents. The adjusted R^2 of .432 further indicates that the model retained a similar level of explanatory power after adjustment. The Kurumar model recorded an R^2 value of .309 and an adjusted R^2 of .301, indicating that psychological well-being explained 30.9% of the variation in quality of life. Among Paniyan respondents, the model yielded an R^2 of .207 and an adjusted R^2 of .199, showing that psychological well-being accounted for 20.7% of the variation in quality of life. The Kattunaykan model recorded a relatively lower explanatory power, with an R^2 value of .121 and an adjusted R^2 of .103, indicating that psychological well-being explained 12.1% of the variation in quality of life. The lowest explanatory power was observed among Adiyan respondents, where the R^2 value was .094 and the adjusted R^2 was .075. Thus, psychological well-being alone explained 9.4% of the variation in quality of life in this community. The standard error of the estimate ranged from 1.59240 among Kurichyan respondents to 3.17860 among Kurumar

respondents, indicating differences in the residual variation around the predicted quality-of-life scores. psychological well-being has varying explanatory contributions to quality of life across the five tribal communities. Its highest explanatory contribution was observed among Kurichyan respondents, followed by Kurumar, Paniyan, Kattunaykan and Adiyan respondents. These results highlight community-wise variation in the extent to which psychological well-being statistically accounts for differences in quality of life.

Table 1. Community-Wise Regression Model Summary of Psychological Well-Being as a Predictor of Quality of Life among Scheduled Tribe Youth

Tribal community	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Variation explained
Paniyan	0.455	0.207	0.199	20.70%
Adiyan	0.306	0.094	0.075	9.40%
Kattunaykan	0.347	0.121	0.103	12.10%
Kurumar	0.556	0.309	0.301	30.90%
Kurichyan	0.663	0.44	0.432	44.00%

The regression coefficient results indicate that psychological well-being has a positive and statistically significant association with quality of life across all five Scheduled Tribe communities. The unstandardized regression coefficients (B) were positive in every community, suggesting that an increase in psychological well-being scores was associated with an increase in predicted quality-of-life scores. Among Paniyan respondents, psychological well-being emerged as a significant predictor of quality of life (B = 0.309, β = 0.455, t = 5.258, p < .001). The result indicates that a one-unit increase in psychological well-being score was associated with a 0.309-unit increase in the predicted quality-of-life score. Among Adiyan respondents, psychological well-being demonstrated a positive and statistically significant association with quality of life (B = 0.176, β = 0.306, t = 2.206, p = .032). Although the standardised beta coefficient was comparatively lower than those observed in the other communities, the relationship remained statistically significant. Among Kattunaykan respondents, psychological well-being also emerged as a significant predictor of quality of life (B = 0.184, β = 0.347, t = 2.646, p = .011). This indicates a positive association between psychological well-being and quality of life within this community. The relationship was comparatively stronger among Kurumar respondents, where psychological well-being recorded a standardised beta coefficient of .556 (B = 0.440, t = 6.343, p < .001). This suggests a relatively greater predictive contribution of psychological well-being to quality of life among Kurumar respondents. The strongest standardised regression coefficient was observed among Kurichyan respondents (B = 0.358, β = 0.663, t = 7.204, p < .001). The finding indicates that psychological well-being had the strongest standardised association with quality of life in this community among the five groups examined. the regression analysis establishes a positive and statistically significant association between psychological well-being and quality of life across all five tribal communities. The standardised coefficients indicate that the strength of this association was highest among Kurichyan respondents, followed by Kurumar, Paniyan, Kattunaykan and Adiyan respondents.

Table 2. Regression Coefficients of Psychological Well-Being in Predicting Quality of Life across Five Scheduled Tribe Communities

Tribal community	Predictor	B	Std. Error	β	t	Sig.	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
Paniyan	Constant	11.759	1.467	—	8.017	0.000	8.851	14.668
	Psychological well-being	0.309	0.059	0.455	5.258	0.000	0.193	0.426
Adiyan	Constant	18.184	2.199	—	8.271	0.000	13.761	22.607
	Psychological well-being	0.176	0.08	0.306	2.206	0.032	0.016	0.337
Kattunaykan	Constant	18.232	1.759	—	10.365	0.000	14.7	21.763

	Psychological well-being	0.184	0.07	0.347	2.646	0.011	0.044	0.324
Kurumar	Constant	11.345	1.896	—	5.985	0.003	7.579	15.111
	Psychological well-being	0.44	0.069	0.556	6.343	0.000	0.303	0.578
Kurichyan	Constant	17.427	1.553	—	11.22	0.000	14.326	20.528
	Psychological well-being	0.358	0.05	0.663	7.204	0.000	0.259	0.458

Discussion

The present study examined the predictive relationship between psychological well-being and quality of life among 370 Scheduled Tribe youth belonging to five tribal communities in Wayanad district, Kerala. The analysis focused on Paniyan, Adiyan, Kattunaykan, kurumar and Kurichyan communities. Pearson correlation and community-wise simple linear regression analyses were employed to understand the direction, strength and explanatory contribution of psychological well-being to quality of life. The findings revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between psychological well-being and quality of life across all five communities. However, the magnitude of the relationship and the proportion of variation in quality of life explained by psychological well-being differed across the communities.

Psychological Well-Being and Quality of Life: An Overall Relationship

The correlation analysis demonstrated positive relationships between psychological well-being and quality of life across all five tribal communities. The correlation coefficients ranged from .306 among Adiyan respondents to .663 among Kurichyan respondents. This indicates that higher psychological well-being scores were associated with higher quality-of-life scores in each community. The findings provide empirical support for the conceptual relationship between positive psychological functioning and individuals' evaluations of their overall life circumstances. This finding is consistent with the multidimensional understanding of psychological well-being proposed by Ryff (1989), which emphasises self-acceptance, autonomy, positive relationships, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth. These dimensions represent important aspects of positive psychological functioning that may contribute to individuals' ability to manage everyday experiences and evaluate their lives favourably. Psychological well-being is therefore not limited to the absence of psychological distress but also encompasses the capacity to develop personal potential and maintain meaningful engagement with life. The relationship observed in the present study can also be understood in relation to the WHOQOL framework, which conceptualises quality of life as an individual's perception of their position in life within their cultural and value systems and in relation to their goals, expectations and concerns (The WHOQOL Group, 1995). From this perspective, psychological well-being may be associated with how individuals interpret their circumstances, manage personal challenges and evaluate their overall life experiences. The positive correlations observed in the five communities suggest that psychological well-being constitutes an important correlate of quality of life among the tribal youth included in the study.

Predictive Contribution of Psychological Well-Being to Quality of Life

The community-wise simple linear regression results further demonstrated that psychological well-being was a positive and statistically significant predictor of quality of life across all five tribal communities. The standardised regression coefficients were .455 for Paniyan, .306 for Adiyan, .347 for Kattunaykan, .556 for Kurumar and .663 for Kurichyan respondents. All five regression coefficients were statistically significant at the 5% level. The findings indicate that psychological well-being had the strongest standardised predictive association with quality of life among Kurichyan respondents, followed by Kurumar, Paniyan, Kattunaykan and Adiyan respondents. The regression coefficients suggest that variations in psychological well-being were more strongly associated with variations in quality of life among Kurichyan and Kurumar respondents than among the other three communities. Nevertheless, these differences in coefficient magnitudes should be interpreted descriptively because separate regression analyses do not establish whether the slopes differ statistically significantly between communities. The explanatory power of the regression models also varied considerably. Psychological well-being explained 44.0% of the variation in quality

of life among Kurichyan respondents, 30.9% among Kurumar respondents, 20.7% among Paniyan respondents, 12.1% among Kattunaykan respondents and 9.4% among Adiyan respondents. The highest explanatory power was therefore observed among Kurichyan respondents, whereas the lowest was recorded among Adiyan respondents. These results suggest that psychological well-being accounts for different proportions of quality-of-life variation across the five communities. However, the remaining unexplained variation indicates that quality of life is associated with factors beyond psychological well-being alone. Physical health, socioeconomic circumstances, family relationships, social support, educational opportunities and environmental conditions may also contribute to individuals' evaluations of their quality of life. This interpretation is consistent with the WHOQOL framework, which recognises quality of life as a multidimensional construct shaped by physical, psychological, social and environmental circumstances (The WHOQOL Group, 1998).

4.3 Community-Wise Variations in the Predictive Relationship

An important finding of the study is the variation in the predictive contribution of psychological well-being across the five tribal communities. Although the relationship was positive and statistically significant in every community, the strength of the association was not uniform. Among Kurichyan respondents, psychological well-being demonstrated the strongest predictive association with quality of life ($\beta = .663$, $R^2 = .440$, $p < .001$). This indicates that psychological well-being accounted for 44.0% of the observed variation in quality-of-life scores in this group. The relatively strong association suggests that psychological well-being is particularly relevant to understanding quality-of-life differences among the Kurichyan youth included in the study. However, the present analysis does not establish the specific social or cultural mechanisms underlying this finding. The Kurumar community also demonstrated a comparatively strong relationship between psychological well-being and quality of life ($\beta = .556$, $R^2 = .309$, $p < .001$). Psychological well-being explained 30.9% of the variation in quality of life among these respondents. This finding indicates a substantial predictive association and reinforces the relevance of psychological functioning in understanding quality-of-life outcomes in this community. Among Paniyan respondents, psychological well-being explained 20.7% of the variation in quality of life ($\beta = .455$, $R^2 = .207$, $p < .001$). Although the explanatory contribution was lower than those observed among Kurichyan and Kurumar respondents, the positive and statistically significant coefficient indicates that psychological well-being remains an important predictor of quality of life within this group. The Kattunaykan model recorded an R^2 value of .121, indicating that psychological well-being explained 12.1% of the variation in quality of life ($\beta = .347$, $p = .011$). Similarly, among Adiyan respondents, psychological well-being explained 9.4% of the variation in quality of life ($\beta = .306$, $p = .032$). Although these two communities recorded comparatively lower explanatory power, the statistically significant positive regression coefficients demonstrate that psychological well-being remains relevant to quality-of-life differences among their youth. The variation across the five communities highlights the importance of examining tribal populations separately rather than treating them as a completely homogeneous group. At the same time, the results should not be interpreted as evidence that community membership itself explains the differences in predictive strength. Further analysis incorporating community interaction terms and relevant socioeconomic variables would be required to examine whether the observed differences are statistically meaningful and to identify possible explanatory factors.

Interpretation through the Eudaimonic Perspective of Well-Being

The findings can be interpreted through the eudaimonic perspective, which understands well-being in terms of meaning, personal development and optimal psychological functioning rather than happiness alone. Ryan and Deci (2001) distinguished hedonic well-being, which emphasises pleasure and positive affect, from eudaimonic well-being, which focuses on self-realisation and the fulfilment of human potential. This distinction is relevant to the present study because psychological well-being may influence quality of life through individuals' sense of purpose, personal growth, autonomy and ability to manage their environments. Ryff's (1989) six-dimensional model further suggests that positive psychological functioning involves the ability to maintain meaningful relationships, accept oneself, exercise autonomy, manage everyday circumstances and pursue personal goals. These dimensions provide a theoretical explanation for why individuals with higher psychological well-being may also report more favourable quality-of-life assessments. For example, a stronger sense of environmental mastery may be associated with greater perceived ability to manage everyday challenges, while positive relationships may contribute to social connectedness and support. Self-determination theory also offers a complementary explanation. Deci and Ryan (2000) proposed that autonomy, competence and relatedness are fundamental psychological needs associated with

human motivation and well-being. The satisfaction of these needs may support positive psychological functioning and meaningful engagement with life. In the context of tribal youth, these theoretical perspectives highlight the potential relevance of personal agency, social relationships and opportunities for development in understanding quality-of-life experiences. Nevertheless, the present study did not separately measure these psychological mechanisms, and their role should therefore be understood as a theoretical interpretation rather than a directly tested explanation.

Quality of Life within the Cultural and Social Context of Tribal Communities

The community-wise findings also highlight the importance of understanding quality of life within its broader cultural and social context. The WHOQOL framework emphasises that individuals evaluate their lives in relation to their cultural values, social environments, personal expectations and life goals (The WHOQOL Group, 1995). Consequently, quality of life cannot be understood exclusively through individual psychological characteristics or material conditions. The five communities examined in this study represent distinct social and cultural backgrounds within Wayanad district. Their experiences may differ in terms of family structures, community relationships, educational opportunities, occupational circumstances and access to services. Such contextual factors may contribute to differences in the ways psychological well-being is associated with quality of life. The variation in R^2 values observed in the present study provides an empirical reason to investigate these relationships within specific community contexts. However, the present regression models included psychological well-being as the sole predictor and did not control for socioeconomic or other contextual variables. Therefore, it is not possible to determine whether the community-wise variation in explanatory power reflects differences in social conditions, psychological experiences, measurement characteristics or other unobserved factors. Future studies could incorporate these variables to develop a more comprehensive understanding of quality-of-life differences among tribal youth.

Conclusion

The findings have implications for understanding youth development and well-being in tribal communities. The positive association between psychological well-being and quality of life across all five communities indicates that psychological functioning deserves attention alongside conventional indicators such as education, income, employment and physical health. Youth development initiatives may therefore benefit from incorporating opportunities that support personal growth, self-confidence, meaningful social relationships, autonomy and the development of life goals. The comparatively high explanatory contribution observed among Kurichyan and Kurumar respondents also indicates the value of further examining the relationship between psychological well-being and quality of life within individual communities. Rather than adopting a uniform approach, programmes intended to promote youth well-being should consider the distinct social and cultural circumstances of the communities concerned. Community participation and culturally appropriate programme development may help ensure that interventions reflect the experiences and priorities of tribal youth. Nevertheless, the present study does not directly evaluate the effectiveness of any intervention or establish that improvements in psychological well-being will necessarily cause improvements in quality of life. Its contribution lies in identifying a consistent positive predictive association that can inform future research, policy discussions and programme development.

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