

The Relationship between Self-Esteem and Psychological Well-Being among Patients with Anxiety Disorder

Mansi Mishra¹, Dr. Mahewash Hasan², Dr. Nishi Tripathi³

¹P. G. Scholar, Department Psychology Department Of Arts And Social Sciences, SHUATS, Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, India

²Professor, Department Psychology Department Of Arts And Social Sciences, SHUATS, Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, India

Abstract

The present study examined the relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being among patients with anxiety disorder. A quantitative, cross-sectional correlational design was used. The sample consisted 40 patients with anxiety disorder, selected through purposive sampling from a psychiatric hospital in Lucknow. Self-Esteem was assessed using the Self-Esteem Scale by Santosh Dhar and Upinder Dhar and psychological well-being was measured by using Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale. Spearman's rank correlation was used to analyze the relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being. The study concludes that self-esteem alone may not significantly influence psychological well-being among patients with anxiety disorder. The findings highlight the need to consider additional psychological and social factors while understanding mental well-being in this population.

Keywords: Self-esteem, Psychological well-being, Anxiety disorder, Correlation, Clinical psychology

Introduction

Anxiety disorders are among the most prevalent mental health conditions worldwide and affect individuals across different age groups and social backgrounds. They are characterized by persistent and excessive fear, worry, and apprehension that interfere with an individual's daily life. Unlike normal anxiety, which is a natural response to stressful situations, anxiety disorders are long-lasting and often occur without a clear or immediate threat. Individuals living with anxiety disorders frequently experience emotional, cognitive, behavioural, and physical symptoms that impair their quality of life and psychosocial functioning (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2022; World Health Organization [WHO], 2022).

The growing prevalence of anxiety disorders has become a major concern for mental health professionals because of their impact on overall psychological functioning and quality of life. Persistent anxiety not only affects emotional stability but also influences how individuals perceive themselves and interact with their environment. As anxiety continues over time, it may reduce confidence, increase self-doubt, and create difficulties in maintaining positive relationships and achieving personal goals. Consequently, psychological factors such as self-esteem and psychological well-being have gained

increasing attention in mental health research.

Self-esteem refers to an individual's overall evaluation of personal worth and competence. It reflects how people perceive, value, and accept themselves. Individuals with healthy self-esteem are generally more confident, resilient, and capable of coping with stressful situations. In contrast, low self-esteem is associated with self-doubt, negative self-evaluation, and greater vulnerability to psychological distress (**Orth & Robins, 2022**). Among individuals with anxiety disorders, persistent worry and negative thinking patterns may contribute to diminished self-esteem, making it more difficult to cope effectively with emotional and environmental demands.

Psychological well-being is a multidimensional concept that represents positive psychological functioning rather than merely the absence of mental illness. According to Ryff (1989), psychological well-being includes self-acceptance, autonomy, environmental mastery, positive relationships with others, purpose in life, and personal growth. Individuals with higher psychological well-being are generally better equipped to manage stress, maintain meaningful relationships, and pursue life goals. However, chronic anxiety can interfere with these dimensions, resulting in reduced life satisfaction and impaired psychological functioning (**Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Keyes, 1995**).

Previous research has suggested that self-esteem and psychological well-being are closely related. Individuals who possess a positive sense of self often report higher levels of psychological well-being because they are more confident in managing stress and adapting to difficult situations. However, studies conducted among clinical populations have produced inconsistent findings. In individuals diagnosed with anxiety disorders, psychological well-being may also be influenced by the severity of symptoms, coping strategies, family support, treatment adherence, and other psychosocial factors. Therefore, the relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being cannot be assumed to be the same across all populations.

Several studies have reported that self-esteem is positively associated with psychological well-being. Individuals with higher self-esteem generally experience greater life satisfaction, better emotional regulation, and healthier coping strategies, whereas low self-esteem has been linked to increased psychological distress and poorer mental health outcomes (**Sowislo & Orth, 2013; Orth & Robins, 2022**). Nevertheless, findings among clinical populations remain inconsistent. In patients with anxiety disorders, psychological well-being may also be influenced by symptom severity, social support, coping strategies, and treatment adherence, indicating that self-esteem alone may not fully explain variations in psychological well-being.

Despite the growing body of research on self-esteem, psychological well-being, and anxiety, relatively few studies have specifically examined the relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being among clinically diagnosed patients with anxiety disorder in the Indian context. Furthermore, previous findings have been inconsistent, highlighting the need for further research in clinical settings. Therefore, the present study was undertaken to examine the relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being among patients with anxiety disorder. The findings are expected to contribute to the existing literature and provide useful evidence for psychologists and mental health professionals in planning comprehensive interventions for individuals with anxiety disorders.

Although previous studies have investigated self-esteem, psychological well-being, and anxiety independently, limited research has specifically examined the relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being among patients diagnosed with anxiety disorder, particularly in Indian clinical settings. In addition, existing findings are inconsistent, with some studies reporting a significant

association while others have found weak or non-significant relationships. This lack of consistent evidence highlights the need for further investigation to better understand the relationship between these variables among patients with anxiety disorder.

Methodology

The present study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional, correlational research design to examine the relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being among patients diagnosed with anxiety disorder. A correlational design was considered appropriate because it enabled the assessment of the association between the two study variables without manipulating any conditions. The study included 40 patients diagnosed with anxiety disorder. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique from Noor Manzil Psychiatric Hospital, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India. Only individuals who met the eligibility criteria and provided informed consent were included in the study.

Inclusion criteria -The participants were selected according to the following criteria: Adults diagnosed with an anxiety disorder by a qualified psychiatrist, Individuals who were able to understand and respond to the study questionnaires, Participants who voluntarily agreed to participate by providing informed consent.

Exclusion Criteria- Participants were excluded if they: Had a severe psychiatric condition that interfered with questionnaire completion, Had cognitive impairment or communication difficulties that prevented reliable responses. Declined to participate in the study.

Measures-Three standardized instruments were used to collect data: Self-Esteem Scale developed by Santosh Dhar and Upinder Dhar (2015) was used to assess participants' level of self-esteem, Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale (Ryff, 1989) was used to measure psychological well-being across multiple dimensions, including self-acceptance, autonomy, environmental mastery, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and personal growth. Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale (HAM-A) (Hamilton, 1959) was used to confirm the severity of anxiety symptoms among the participants.

Procedure- Prior to data collection, ethical permission was obtained from the concerned authority. Participants who fulfilled the inclusion criteria were informed about the purpose of the study, and written informed consent was obtained. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured, and participation was entirely voluntary. The questionnaires were administered individually in a quiet and comfortable setting, and participants completed them under the researcher's supervision. The collected data were coded and prepared for statistical analysis.

Statistical Analysis- Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, were used to describe the demographic characteristics of the participants and the levels of self-esteem and psychological well-being. Since the data did not meet the assumptions of normality, Spearman's rank-order correlation was used to examine the relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being. Statistical significance was set at the 0.05 level.

Result and Discussion

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the Participants (N=40)

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	17	42.5
	Female	23	57.5

Occupation	Employed	25	62.5
	Unemployed	15	37.5
Marital status	Married	29	72.5
	Unmarried	9	22.5
	Widow	2	5.0
Total		40	100

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 40 participants included in the study. With respect to gender, 23 participants (57.5%) were female, while 17 participants (42.5%) were male, indicating that females constituted a slightly larger proportion of the sample. Regarding occupation, 25 participants (62.5%) were employed and 15 participants (37.5%) were unemployed. In terms of marital status, the majority of the participants were married ($n = 29$, 72.5%), followed by unmarried participants ($n = 9$, 22.5%) and widowed participants ($n = 2$, 5.0%). Overall, the sample comprised individuals with varied demographic backgrounds, providing a descriptive profile of the participants included in the present study.

Table 2. Levels of Self-Esteem and Psychological Well-Being Among Patients with Anxiety Disorder (N=40)

Level	Self-Esteem		Psychological Well-Being	
	F	P	F	P
Low	10	25.0	24	60.0
Moderate	20	50.0	12	30.0
High	10	25.0	4	10.0
Total	40		40	
	100.0			100.0

Table 2 presents the distribution of participants according to their levels of self-esteem and psychological well-being. Regarding self-esteem, half of the participants ($n = 20$, 50.0%) were classified as having a moderate level of self-esteem, while 10 participants (25.0%) each fell into the low and high self-esteem categories. This indicates that most participants reported a moderate level of self-esteem. With regard to psychological well-being, the majority of the participants ($n = 24$, 60.0%) demonstrated a low level of psychological well-being. In contrast, 12 participants (30.0%) had a moderate level, and only 4 participants (10.0%) were classified as having a high level of psychological well-being. These findings suggest that low psychological well-being was more common among participants diagnosed with anxiety disorder, whereas relatively few participants reported high levels of psychological well-being.

Table 3. Relationship Between Self-Esteem and Psychological Well-Being Among Patients With Anxiety Disorder (N= 40)

Variables	Self-Esteem	Psychological Well-being
Self -Esteem	1.000	-.014 (NS)
Psychological Well-Being	-.014 (NS)	1.000

NS =Not Significant

Table 3 presents the Spearman's rank-order correlation between self-esteem and psychological well-being among patients with anxiety disorder. Spearman's rank-order correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between the two variables. The results revealed a very weak negative correlation between self-esteem and psychological well-being ($r_s = -0.014$). However, the correlation was not statistically significant ($p > .05$), indicating that there was no statistically significant relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being among the participants.

The findings suggest that variations in self-esteem were not significantly associated with variations in psychological well-being in the present sample. Therefore, the proposed hypothesis stating that there would be a significant relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being among patients with anxiety disorder was not supported by the findings of the study.

Discussion

The present study included 40 participants diagnosed with anxiety disorder. The demographic findings showed that the majority of the participants were female (57.5%), employed (62.5%), and married (72.5%). These characteristics provide a descriptive profile of the study sample and help in understanding the background of the participants included in the present study.

The present study aimed to examine the relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being among patients with anxiety disorder. The findings revealed that there was no statistically significant relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being, indicating that self-esteem was not significantly associated with psychological well-being in the present sample. The observed correlation was negligible and negative, suggesting that changes in self-esteem were not accompanied by corresponding changes in psychological well-being among the participants. These findings indicate that the relationship between these two psychological constructs may be more complex than previously assumed, particularly within a clinical population experiencing anxiety disorder. Although self-esteem is often regarded as an important factor contributing to positive mental health, the present findings suggest that it may not independently determine psychological well-being among individuals with anxiety disorder. Psychological well-being is a multidimensional construct that encompasses self-acceptance, autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, purpose in life, and positive relationships with others. These dimensions may be influenced by a variety of psychological, social, and clinical factors, including the severity and duration of anxiety symptoms, coping strategies, social and family support, treatment adherence, resilience, and environmental stressors. Therefore, psychological well-being among patients with anxiety disorder may depend on a combination of factors rather than self-esteem alone.

The descriptive findings of the present study indicated that the majority of the participants demonstrated a moderate level of self-esteem, whereas most participants reported a low level of psychological well-being. These findings suggest that although many individuals maintained a moderate perception of their self-worth, they continued to experience reduced psychological well-being. This pattern may be explained by the complex nature of anxiety disorder, where psychological well-being is influenced not only by self-esteem but also by factors such as symptom severity, coping strategies, social support, and ongoing treatment.

The findings of the present study are not entirely consistent with previous research that has reported a positive relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being. For example, **Sowislo and Orth (2013)** reported that individuals with higher self-esteem generally experience better mental health

and lower psychological distress. Similarly, **Orth and Robins (2022)** suggested that healthy self-esteem contributes to emotional adjustment, resilience, and overall psychological functioning. However, the present findings are consistent with the view that the relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being may vary across different populations and clinical conditions. Individuals diagnosed with anxiety disorder often experience persistent worry, excessive fear, and emotional distress, which may influence their psychological well-being independently of their level of self-esteem. Consequently, improvements in self-esteem alone may not necessarily lead to improvements in overall psychological well-being among this population.

The absence of a significant relationship in the present study may also be explained by the relatively small sample size, individual differences among participants, and the cross-sectional nature of the research design, which limits the ability to examine changes over time. Despite these limitations, the study contributes to the existing literature by providing evidence from an Indian clinical sample and highlights the importance of adopting a comprehensive approach to mental health assessment and intervention. Mental health professionals should consider multiple psychological and psychosocial factors when planning treatment for individuals with anxiety disorder, rather than focusing exclusively on self-esteem. Future studies involving larger and more diverse clinical samples and longitudinal research designs are recommended to further examine the relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being and to identify additional factors that may contribute to positive psychological functioning among patients with anxiety disorder.

The findings also indicated that there were no significant gender differences in self-esteem or psychological well-being among the participants. This suggests that both male and female participants experienced comparable levels of these variables within the present sample. The absence of significant differences may be related to the clinical characteristics of the participants and the relatively small sample size.

Conclusion

The present study was conducted to examine the relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being among patients with anxiety disorder. The demographic findings showed that the majority of the participants were female, employed, and married. The descriptive analysis also indicated that most participants had a moderate level of self-esteem, whereas the majority reported a low level of psychological well-being. Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that there was no statistically significant relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being among the participants. Although self-esteem and psychological well-being are widely recognized as important indicators of positive psychological functioning, the findings of the present study suggest that these variables were not significantly associated within the studied sample of patients with anxiety disorder. The observed correlation was negligible, indicating that differences in self-esteem were not accompanied by corresponding differences in psychological well-being among the participants. In addition, no significant gender differences were observed in self-esteem or psychological well-being among the participants.

The findings of this study indicate that psychological well-being in individuals with anxiety disorder may be influenced by a combination of psychological, social, and clinical factors rather than self-esteem alone. Factors such as the severity and duration of anxiety symptoms, coping strategies, social and family support, treatment adherence, resilience, and environmental circumstances may play an important

role in shaping an individual's psychological well-being. Therefore, understanding psychological well-being requires a comprehensive perspective that considers multiple aspects of an individual's mental health and life experiences.

The descriptive findings of the present study showed that the majority of the participants demonstrated a moderate level of self-esteem, whereas most participants reported a low level of psychological well-being. These findings suggest that although many participants maintained a moderate perception of their self-worth, their overall psychological well-being remained low. This indicates that self-esteem alone may not be sufficient to explain psychological well-being among individuals with anxiety disorder, and that other psychological, social, and clinical factors may also contribute to their overall well-being.

Although the findings did not support the proposed hypothesis, the study makes a meaningful contribution to the existing literature by providing evidence from a clinical population of patients with anxiety disorder. It highlights that the relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being may not be uniform across all populations and that findings from non-clinical samples cannot always be generalised to individuals experiencing anxiety disorders. This emphasises the importance of conducting research within specific clinical settings to better understand the psychological characteristics of different patient groups.

The present study also has practical implications for mental health professionals. The findings suggest that interventions designed for patients with anxiety disorder should adopt a holistic approach that addresses multiple dimensions of psychological functioning rather than focusing exclusively on enhancing self-esteem. Comprehensive psychological interventions that promote effective coping strategies, emotional regulation, resilience, supportive interpersonal relationships, and overall psychological well-being may be more beneficial in improving the mental health and quality of life of individuals with anxiety disorder.

In conclusion, the present study provides valuable insight into the relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being among patients with anxiety disorder. While no significant relationship was observed between the two variables in the present sample, the findings contribute to a better understanding of psychological functioning in this clinical population and highlight the need for further research using larger and more diverse samples. Future studies employing longitudinal designs and examining additional psychological and social factors may provide a more comprehensive understanding of the determinants of psychological well-being among individuals with anxiety disorder.

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