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The Relationship Between Individual Social Capital and Life Satisfaction Among University Students in China: The Mediating Role of Resiliency

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Abstract

This present paper has aimed to investigate the university students' life satisfaction in the city of Ji'nan in China. Due to the important role of university students, their life satisfaction has been valuable and necessary to be examined. The extent literature about students' life satisfaction has left a blank for the three variables in the study. Therefore, this paper has tried to give an explanation for the relationship among university students' life satisfaction and individual social capital by the mediating effect of resilience, which may be a new conceptual model seldom conducted in previous studies, especially in Ji'nan. As a non-experimental descriptive research design, a quantitative (deductive reasoning) technique has been employed to quantify the issue, in which survey questionnaire has been used to gather numerical data and then turned into practical statistics.

Keywords: individual social capital; resilience; life satisfaction; university students

1. Introduction

Life satisfaction has been the non-stopping pursuit of all people all around the world, which has attracted the attention of many researchers these years. For university communities, increasing life satisfaction awareness and promotion should be a top priority (Tuckwiller & Dardick, 2018). However, it has turned out to be hard to investigate this dependent variable in this paper because of its subjective peculiarity. Luckily, it has been practicable to analyze the different factors related to life satisfaction.

Apart from that, some researchers have displayed how the different levels of social capital functioned on its dependent variables. A recent study has shown that how each level of social capital influence various health outcomes for different actors remains unknown (Ehsan et al., 2019). Another study focusing an inverse association between the individual/family level of social capital with both depression and anxiety on the one hand, and another association of community/society level social capital with depression on the other hand have been discovered (Han et al., 2020). Therefore, how the aspect of social capital—individual social capital plays its role on life satisfaction has been put forward.

On the other hand, another determinant that has been greatly caught researchers' attention has been proved to positively influence life satisfaction is resilience, which can be seen from the recent existing literature. To be specific, what has come to scholars' mind is the resilience of different country's students ranging from 9 to 12 years (Arslan, 2019), college students (Karaman et al., 2020), and adolescents (Aldridge et al., 2020; Azpiazu Izaguirre et al., 2021; Caqueo-Urízar et al., 2022). Resilience has been proved to accelerate the life satisfaction of people in face of mental health problems (Stanley & Balakrishnan, 2022). However, the definite influence of resilience on university students' life satisfaction has remained unknown.

Consequently, the present study has invited university students to be the participants in order to look into how individual social capital influenced on their life satisfaction in the Chinese context. By the same token, resilience has been recognized to be the mediator to detect its impact on the relationship between individual social capital and life satisfaction of the university students. The results of this study have been anticipated to assist both schools in implementing organizational management practices and university students in fostering their positive state with the ultimate goal to improve the university students' life satisfaction as well as to foster their subjective well-being.

2. Literature Review

This part has put forward a synthetic explanation associated with the relationship between individual social capital, resilience, and life satisfaction.

2.1 Individual Social Capital and Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction can be regarded as a predictor of subjective well-being (Diener et al., 2018), and an overall assessment of feelings and attitudes about one's life at a particular point in time ranging from negative to positive (Ehtiyar et al., 2018) with happiness as the colloquial

form. Happiness of the human being has been a key concern for individuals and societies for ages. In the latest research it was referred to as a cognitive assessment of an individual's entire life (Liu et al., 2022).

More persons of the same age has been now attending universities thanks to China's enormous advancements in higher education over the past few decades (Zhang et al., 2018). University students have been widely regarded as a vulnerable group due to their higher rates of anxiety, depression, substance abuse, and disordered eating than the other people (Browning et al., 2021). They have been also at a critical juncture in their development that will determine how well they grow (Yang et al., 2021). And they have been also currently in a period where they were uncertain about their future goals and continually change their minds, making their level of life satisfaction extremely vulnerable and unstable (Liu et al., 2022).

It has been difficult for university students to make the developmental transition from childhood to adulthood (Zhang et al., 2018). While some students may successfully overcome these obstacles, others may react negatively to them by becoming extremely stressed out and having a low quality of life (Alorani & Alradaydeh, 2018). Thus, university students must go through significant changes as they transit from adolescence to adulthood, spending less time with family and more with peers (Saether et al., 2019).

Social capital, according to Amati, Meggiolaro, Rivellini, and Zaccarin (2018), has been regarded as a person's network of social resources. And social capital included trust, solidarity, cooperation, and reciprocity (Jia et al.; Lin et al., 2020). In addition, Mahfud and the other colleagues (2020) defined social capital as the benefit attained by people through social connections to increase their ability for social engagement. Social capital, in line with the findings of Luo et al. (2022), has been considered to be the effective interaction networks that enabled social groupings to function.

Additionally, there have been some other executed studies focusing on the predicting function of different levels of social capital on life satisfaction. Friendship that may be regarded as the individual level of social capital, has been positively correlated with life happiness in terms of intensity (measured by how frequently people visit their friends) and quality (measured by how satisfactory people are with their friendship ties) (Amati et al., 2018).

The significantly positive association of neighborhood-based social capital with individual life satisfaction of residents in Rotterdam and Netherlands has been explored (Hoogerbrugge & Burger, 2018), and the association of neighborhood social capital with obesity has been demonstrated by some researchers (Carrillo-Álvarez et al., 2019). There's been another study testifying the predicting function of individual social capital on the life satisfaction among adults in Chinese mainland (Li et al., 2021). The other research has suggested that family social capital was positively related to satisfaction among adolescents (Geraee et al., 2019), and among working women (Khurshid et al., 2023).

Besides, various aspects of social capital have been increasingly discussed in recent literature. A study done by Ehsan and the other scholars in 2019 has indicated the different role played by different factors of social capital on the health results. According to Han and some other

researchers in 2020, the individual/family/ aspect in social capital has been proved to negatively predict the respondents' mental health, including the unclear association of community/society level social capital with depression. The other scholars (Fu & Mao, 2022) have examined the positive effect of the individual social capital on the community participation. Not only individual social capital but also community social capital have been proved to be negatively related to depressive symptoms (Sato et al., 2022). Therefore, the following research hypothesis has been proposed:

H1: Individual social capital had a positive effect on life satisfaction of university students.

2.2 Resilience and Life Satisfaction

Resilience referred to the positive and fluctuating adaptation of people facing adversity (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000), and the ability of youths to handle successfully with the risk factors (Stewart, Reid, & Mangham, 1997). And schools have been regarded as the common place for adolescents to foster their resilience (Aldridge et al., 2020), thus the condition of university students' resilience has been valuable to be explored.

From what recent researchers have suggested in their studies, there has been a positive association between resilience and life satisfaction of different populations especially in schools. There has been a study investigating the positive association of resilience with life satisfaction of students ranging from 9–12 grades in Turkey (Arslan, 2019). Another studies have furthered the significant relationship between resilience and life satisfaction of adolescents in Australian schools (Aldridge et al., 2020), and of college students in Latinx (Karaman et al., 2020). Some other scholars have revealed the direct forecast of resilience on life satisfaction of adolescents aging from twelve to sixteen years.(Azpiazu Izaguirre et al., 2021), and of adolescents in northern Chile (Caqueo-Urízar et al., 2022). And a study done by Stanley and Balakrishnan in 2022 has indicated that resilience can foster the life satisfaction of people with mental health conditions. Based on the above literature, the next hypothesis is developed:

H2: Resilience had a positive effect on life satisfaction of university students.

2.3 Individual Social Capital, Resilience and Life Satisfaction

In order to acquire more resilience, improving social capital has considered to be an effective way, which has been justified by researchers in recent years. Some researchers have found that social capital facilitated resiliency of the residents in Puerto Rico (Delilah Roque et al., 2020), of the community resilience in South Africa (Musavengane & Kloppers, 2020; Abunyewah et al., 2023); the other study in Indonesia (Carmen et al., 2022) and the organizational resilience in Chinese firms (Jia et al., 2020). Another study has focused the increasing effect of social capital on economic resilience in Greek (Tsiapa, 2023). With these literature review as the foundation, the present study has tried to propose that:

H3: Individual social capital had a positive effect on resilience of university students.

Besides, Panday and some other scholars in 2021 have examined how different aspects of social capital worked to improve resilience in Nepali communities. And offline bonding has

been proved to reduce resilience of Greek college students (Kalaitzaki et al., 2021). Social capital mechanisms have been examined to be associated with various sets of resilience (Wulandhari et al., 2022). And there has been little known about the mediating role of resilience between the above relationships (Geraee et al., 2019). Consequently, there has come the last hypothesis:

H4: Resilience mediated the relationship between individual social capital and life satisfaction of university students.

Based on the above discussion, there has come the proposed framework just as it has been illustrated in the following Figure1.

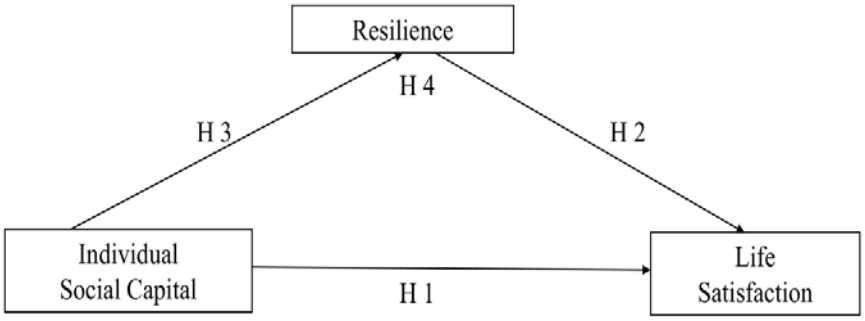

Figure 1. Hypothesized model.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This present study chose the non-experimental descriptive research design, and was quantified using a quantitative (deductive reasoning) approach, in which survey questionnaires were utilized to collect numerical data, which was subsequently transformed into useful statistics (Tan & Kamarudin, 2022). These quantitative data were later analyzed by statistical software. The quantifiable data following statistical treatment allowed the researcher to confirm or deny the assertion of alternate knowledge because it expanded upon the theories already in place (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001; Creswell, 2003; Creswell, 2014). The study was only conducted once and served as a snapshot of a particular group of people at a particular point in time because the researcher chose a cross sectional design due to the short time frame available (Cooper & Schindler, 2006).

3.2 Research Measures

In this study, the independent and mediating variables were measured using mature scales that were derived from earlier research and comprised a seven-point Likert scale that went from (1) “strongly disagree” to (7) “strongly agree”. Measures for life satisfaction (5 items) were adopted from Diener and some other scholars (1985), with individual social capital (5

items)) borrowed from Luo and some other scholars (2022), and resilience (6 items) adapted from Wagnild and Young (1993). And, the initial survey form in English was translated into Chinese by the principal investigator who was fluent in both languages.

3.3 Sample Population

The targeted population in this study was the university students in some universities of Ji'nan. To ensure that the target respondents were appropriate for the study and to be eligible to participate, respondents must fulfill the specified standards.

3.4 Sampling Technique

Non-probability snowball sampling technique was employed to reach the investigated population in Ji'nan of China. Thanks to its flexibility and networking qualities, snowball sampling has become a widely used technique for finding study volunteers. Snowball sampling has grown to be a popular method of recruiting study participants because of its networking properties and flexibility (Parker et al., 2019). By this sampling method, a chosen group of relevant respondents are asked to get in touch with or suggest other related people. Considered to be a hybrid of convenience and purposeful sampling (Rowley, 2014). Besides, compared to the time-consuming probability sampling technique, snowball sampling technique has made the researchers succeed in gathering the usable data of targeted respondents within limited time.

3.5 Sampling Size

Given the population of university students in China is huge, it was impossible to touch each university student in limited time. Statistical power, effect sizes, alpha levels, and predictors must all be taken into account when determining the sample size required for study. The G*Power software (Faul et al., 2007; Faul et al., 2009) can help with this process of prior sample size determination. The ideal sample size for this study, 85 responders, was calculated using an a priori power analysis incorporated in the G*Power software based on a medium effect size (f^2), 0.05, and 80% power for the mediation model. Since Kline (2004) claimed that a sample size of over 200 was typically large and suitable for the majority of study models, this study will make use of information from more than 200 respondents.

3.6 Data Collection

A self-administered survey questionnaire, based on earlier research in the field, was utilized in this study to explore the factors impacting life satisfaction among university students. The validity of the instrument was saved by conducting a pretest with five specialists who were proficient in scientific research before distributing the questionnaire to the target audience. The necessary changes as well as revisions to the questionnaire were made as a result of their comments. Subsequently, a pilot study was conducted to identify any shortcomings or inadequacies in the research design. In consideration of the recommendations and feedback provided by the pilot study participants, additional refinement was proposed. Following that the online questionnaire link was sent to several popular websites. Out of the 269 surveys that were gathered, 54 data sets were eliminated since they didn't fit the requirements. As a result,

we ultimately had 215 valid responses for the newly created SmartPLS4 to analyze.

4. Results

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Out of the 261 respondents, 215 questions were considered effective. Among these, 71.6% were male respondents and 28.4% were female respondents. The majority of the female respondents (99.5%) had a major in science and engineering. The proportion of families with only one kid was 36.3%. Approximately 47% of the participants were from rural areas, while the majority of households (38.6%) had an annual income ranging from less than RMB 50,000 to more than RMB 200,000. The characteristics of the respondents are depicted in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondents' profile

Item	Frequency	%
Gender		
Female	154	71.6
Male	61	28.4
Discipline		
Science	214	99.5
Arts	1	0.05
Locality		
Urban	74	34.4
Town	40	18.6
Rural	101	47
Sibling		
Only child	78	36.3
Non-only	137	63.7
Income		
Below 50,000	52	24.2
50,000-100,000	83	38.6
100,000-200,000	61	28.4
Above 200,000	19	8.8
Total	215	100

4.2 Common Method Bias

Research studies that used questionnaires as a method of data collection often relied on a single data source. Although single-source data is commonly utilized by social science researchers, it can result in an artificial connection that diminishes the trustworthiness of the conclusions. Therefore, conducting a Common Method Bias (CMB) test is crucial.

When the independent and dependent variables are measured in the same survey, there is a possibility of encountering common method bias (Kock, Berbekova, & Assaf, 2021). This study utilized procedural and statistical approaches to manage it, both prior to and subsequent to data collection, respectively (Ngah et al., 2021). In the procedural approach, the researchers ensured that the respondents comprehended the anonymity of the data, and accepted the real responses without categorizing them as right or wrong. In addition, a range of established scales were employed to assess the dependent variable and mediator, using a scoring system from 1 to 7. The independent variable was measured on a scale from 1 to 5 (MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012). In the statistical approach, this study utilized the full covariance test described by Kock (2015) in the statistical analysis. Ideally, the VIF values should be below 3, as suggested by Hair et al. (2019). The VIF values for all constructs, as shown in Table 2, fall within the range of 1.097 to 1.379. These values are below the VIF threshold, indicating that CMB is not a significant issue in this study.

Table 2. Full collinearity testing.

ISC	LS	PCR
1.378	1.097	1.369

Note. ISC=Individual social capital, LS=Life satisfaction, PCR=Psychological capital resilience.

4.3 Measurement Model

The study followed a two-step methodology, consisting of the measurement model and the structural model, as recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988).

The measuring model comprised an evaluation of reliability and validity. In order to assess convergent validity, one can utilize a statistical approach that examines the item factor loading and the average variance extracted (AVE) for each concept, as suggested by Hair et al. (2019). Convergent validity was confirmed by showing that the loading value exceeded 0.708 and the average variance extracted (AVE) was greater than 0.5. In terms of reliability, the composite reliability (CR) was found to be 0.7 or higher, according to Hair et al. (2014) and Hair et al. (2019). The current study's convergent validity and reliability were displayed in Table 3.

Table 3. Convergent validity and reliability assessment.

Construct	Item Code	Loading	CR	AVE
Individual Social Capital (ISC)			0.915	0.683
	ISC1	0.861		
	ISC2	0.857		
	ISC3	0.752		
	ISC4	0.876		
	ISC5	0.779		
Life Satisfaction (LS)			0.899	0.643
	LS1	0.866		
	LS2	0.779		
	LS3	0.868		
	LS4	0.765		
	LS5	0.721		
Psychological Capital Resilience (PCR)			0.950	0.759
	PCR1	0.864		
	PCR2	0.826		
	PCR3	0.896		
	PCR4	0.869		
	PCR5	0.844		
	PCR6	0.826		

4.4 Discriminant Validity

Subsequently, the discriminant validity was assessed using the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlation criterion, as opposed to the traditional Fornell and Larcker technique (Henseler et al., 2015). Hair and other scholars (2019) recommended using an HTMT threshold of 0.85 or lower in cases where the constructs exhibited a more pronounced conceptual distinction. It ensured that the constructions within the research framework were genuinely distinct from each other. The results displayed in Table 4 indicate the distinctiveness of the variables. The values displayed in Table 4 range from 0.543 to 0.645, confirming and verifying the presence of discriminant validity.

Table 4. Discriminant validity assessment (HTMT)

Construct	ISC	LS	PCR
ISC			
LS	0.543		
PCR	0.646	0.565	

4.5 Structural Model

In accordance with the recommendation of Hair et al. (2019), a bootstrapping technique involving 5,000 resamples was utilized in this study. Ngah and his colleagues (2021) identified four criteria that must be satisfied in order to consider a hypothesis supported: (1) The beta value must align with the hypothesis direction; (2) The t-value must be equal to or greater than 1.645for a one-tailed test; (3) The p-value must be equal to or less than 0.05; and (4) The confidence interval must not have a zero straddle between the lower level (LL) and upper level (LL). Furthermore, it was crucial to verify that there was no significant problem of multi-collinearity in the study prior to assessing the hypotheses of the investigation. Diamantopoulos and Siguaw (2006) argued that VIF values should not exceed 3.3 in order to avoid issues with multi-collinearity.

This study examined three specific hypotheses to establish the connection between individual social capital, psychological capital resilience, and life satisfaction among university students. Table 5 demonstrated that there was a significant relationship between individual social capital and life satisfaction ($\beta = 0.265$, $p < 0.01$), as well as between psychological capital resilience and life satisfaction ($\beta = 0.368$, $p < 0.01$). These variables collectively accounted for 32.1% of the variability in life satisfaction. The findings indicated that both individual social capital and psychological capital resilience had a small effect on life satisfaction, with effect sizes of 0.067 and 0.130 respectively. Therefore, hypotheses 1 and 2 were confirmed.

Regarding hypothesis 3, the findings indicated that there is a positive relationship between individual social capital and psychological capital resilience ($\beta = 0.590$, $p < 0.01$), accounting for 34.8% of the variability in psychological capital resilience. The findings suggested that individual social capital had a substantial impact on psychological capital resilience, as evidenced by an effect size of 0.534, therefore providing support for hypotheses 3.

This analysis also examined the role of psychological capital resilience as a mediator within the framework of individual social capital, psychological capital resilience, and life satisfaction. Preacher and Hayes (2008) proposed instructions for testing and verifying the indirect effect using bootstrap analysis. This method allowed for the examination of whether the indirect effect was zero or not, by assessing the confidence interval from lower to upper levels. The findings indicated that psychological capital resilience acted as a mediator in the association between individual social capital and life happiness ($\beta = 0.217$, $p < 0.01$). As there was no intermediate level between the lower and upper levels, hypothesis H4 was confirmed. The Table 5 demonstrated both the immediate and consequential impacts of the study.

Table 5. Hypotheses testing

Hypo	Relationship	Beta	Se	*T* value	*P* value	LL	UL	R2	f2	VIF
H1	ISC-LS	0.265	0.081	3.276	0.001	0.099	0.420	0.321	0.067	1.534
H2	PCR-LS	0.368	0.084	4.396	0.000	0.194	0.522		0.130	1.534
H3	ISC-PCR	0.590	0.052	11.279	0.000	0.473	0.679	0.348	0.534	1.000
H4	ISC-PCR-LS	0.217	0.051	4.250	0.000	0.114	0.316			

Note. Individual Social Capital (ISC), Psychological Capital Resilience (PCR), Life Satisfaction (LS).

For prediction power, this study employed the root mean square error (RMSE) as a measure to quantify the extent of prediction error of endogenous structural indicators. The purpose was to assess the predictive capability of the model. Hence, this study examined the RMSE values of each indicator in comparison to the benchmark values of the linear regression model (LM). Table 6 showed that the majority of the "PLS-LM" values were below 0. These findings suggested that the root mean square error (RMSE) values for the majority of indicators in the partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) study were lower than the RMSE values of the linear model (LM). This implied that the model possessed a modest level of predictive capability.

Table 6. PLS predict

Item	PLS RMSE	LM RMSE	Q2 _Predict
LS1	1.210	1.237	0.169
LS2	1.231	1.256	0.111
LS3	1.11	1.137	0.224
LS4	1.299	1.315	0.095
LS5	1.536	1.56	0.097
PCR1	0.821	0.826	0.265
PCR2	0.891	0.902	0.207
PCR3	0.84	0.826	0.259
PCR4	0.877	0.89	0.29
PCR5	0.906	0.914	0.204
PCR6	0.877	0.885	0.242

5. Conclusion

The present work has aimed to provide a significant contribution to the existing research in the following ways. The study has examined the life satisfaction of university students by considering their individual social capital. Furthermore, the association mentioned above has incorporated the utilization of psychological capital resilience as an important mediator. Furthermore, the study has expanded and prolonged the existing literature on the life satisfaction of university students.

Life satisfaction is a fundamental concept that reflects the overall quality of people's living conditions. Study utilized individual social capital as the precursor and psychological capital resilience as the intermediary to elucidate the life satisfaction of university students. The findings demonstrated a favorable correlation between individual social capital and life satisfaction, aligning with previous research conducted by researchers who had established the positive association between individual social capital and life satisfaction (Piao et al., 2021). Consequently, it was evident that individual social capital was crucially important to life satisfaction from the positive side. The other factor determining university students' life satisfaction was psychological capital resilience. The results also demonstrated a positive correlation between psychological capital resilience and life satisfaction, which aligns with previous research undertaken by Karaman with the other researchers (2020) and Stanley with Balakrishnan (2022). Therefore, it was determined that psychological capital resilience has a favorable impact on the life satisfaction of university students. Furthermore, this study examined the role of psychological capital resilience as a mediator in the connection between individual social capital and life satisfaction.

6. Limitations an Future Research

However, this study has encountered certain limitations despite the aforementioned conclusions. Research on the life satisfaction of university students should be expanded in various situations to provide vital knowledge on how to effectively organize and create activities that enhance their life satisfaction. Furthermore, it is crucial to extensively investigate additional significant factors that can predict life satisfaction. These factors should be examined to complement the existing research on their potential role as mediators or moderators within the framework. Given the aforementioned constraints of this study, further investigations should prioritize examining diverse people across various geographical areas. To evaluate the similarities and differences between international and local university students, conducting a comparative study between local and foreign university students would be desirable.

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