

# EFFECT OF SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS ON MENTAL HEALTH OF YOUNG ADULTS

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## KEYWORDS

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## ABSTRACT

Mental health problems among young adults have become a growing public health concern, with socio-cultural factors playing a significant role in psychological well-being. This study examined the influence of educational qualification and ethnicity on anxiety and depression among young adults in Pakistan. A quantitative cross-sectional research design was employed. Data were collected from 300 participants aged 18–35 years using a self-constructed questionnaire administered in both English and Urdu. Participants represented both rural and urban populations with equal proportions of males and females. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) in SPSS to examine the effects of qualification, ethnicity, and their interaction on anxiety and depression. The findings indicated that educational qualification had a statistically significant effect on anxiety ( $F(3,288) = 2.93, p = .034, \eta^2 = .03$ ) and depression ( $F(3,288) = 3.99, p = .008, \eta^2 = .04$ ). However, ethnicity and the interaction between qualification and ethnicity did not show significant effects on either outcome. Participants with master's level education and above demonstrated comparatively higher mean scores for both anxiety and depression. Overall, the observed effect sizes were small. The study concludes that educational qualification is associated with variations in anxiety and depression, whereas ethnicity does not significantly influence these mental health outcomes among young adults. The findings suggest that other socio-cultural determinants, including poverty, gender discrimination, media influence, family relationships, and social environment, should be explored in future research to better understand the underlying causes of mental health problems in Pakistani young adults.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Mental health is a fundamental component of overall well-being, enabling individuals to cope with daily challenges, build meaningful relationships, and contribute productively to society. Young adulthood is a particularly critical developmental stage characterized by educational, occupational, and social transitions that may increase vulnerability to psychological distress. During this period, socio-cultural influences such as family expectations, educational opportunities, ethnicity, cultural norms, and social interactions play an essential role in shaping mental health outcomes. Research suggests that these environmental and cultural factors significantly influence the development of anxiety, depression, emotional well-being, and psychological resilience among young adults (World Health Organization [WHO], 2022; Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Socio-cultural factors encompass the beliefs, traditions, customs, values, educational background, socioeconomic conditions, and interpersonal relationships that influence individuals' thoughts, behaviors, and emotional functioning. In developing countries such as Pakistan, rapid social change, urbanization, educational pressures, gender expectations, and cultural traditions create unique psychological challenges for young adults. Previous studies have demonstrated that social support, educational attainment, and cultural environments are associated with mental health, whereas discrimination, social inequality, and limited access to mental health resources contribute to increased psychological distress (Patel et al., 2018; Lund et al., 2018). Understanding these relationships is important for developing culturally appropriate mental health interventions and public health policies.

Despite increasing awareness of mental health issues, empirical evidence examining the influence of socio-cultural factors on the mental health of Pakistani young adults remains limited. Most existing studies have focused on clinical populations or individual psychological factors, with relatively less attention given to the broader socio-cultural context. Therefore, the present study aims to examine the effect of socio-cultural factors, particularly educational qualification and ethnicity, on mental health outcomes among young adults in Pakistan. By investigating variations in anxiety and depression across different socio-cultural groups, this research seeks to contribute to the existing literature and provide evidence that may inform future mental health promotion strategies, educational policies, and culturally sensitive interventions (Riaz et al., 2025; Shoaib, 2024).

## II. METHOD

### Participants

This study has been designed as quantitative research, in which impact of socio-cultural factors on mental health is under consideration. Data for this research has been collected from young people with a range of ages from 18 to 35 years. Three hundred questionnaires comprising 11+38 smartly designed questions have been prepared. The respondents of our survey questionnaire are 50% female and 50% male and 50% of each category are urban and remaining 50% rural. For better and more comprehensive results half of the questionnaires are in English and half in Urdu.

### Measures

All the questionnaires are self-constructed and then filled by randomly selected students, working males, housewives, working ladies, religious minded and politically minded general public. Data was collected from different educational institutions, markets, offices of Lahore, Hafiz Abad, and Gujranwala cities of Punjab, Pakistan. Each participant has been given a comprehensive introduction of research and requested to fulfil quite honestly and accurately. All the responses have been collected vigilantly and utilized later for statistical analysis in SPSS.

### Procedure

Firstly, we constructed our questionnaires. The present study has been conducted to know and analyse common public qualification, general psychology related socio-cultural information and its impact on their mental health. The data has been collected through a questionnaire survey. With our teacher's permission, we printed our questionnaire and visited many educational institutions, offices, local gathering etc. to get it filled out by quite accurately. At first, we introduce them about ourselves and our purpose of visiting there and then circulate our questionnaires among them. Participants read/ listened questionnaires in detail, filled them and then we collected back. We also created an online version, which many other students, ranging in age from 15 to 25, filled out. The questionnaire consists of 11 + 38 questions. 300 complete responses have been collected. All the answer was digitalized through Ms-Excel, then transferred to SPSS for further analysis. Data was computed for dependent variable i.e. Anxiety, depression, emotional ties, emotions control, life expectancy happiness. Two-way ANOVA test has been conducted to draw further signification of the data.

## RESULTS

**Table I: Descriptive Statistics in Two Way ANOVA for the Impact of Qualification and Ethnicity on Anxiety**

| Qualification     | Ethnicity       | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
|-------------------|-----------------|----------|-----------|
| Under Matric      | Less ethnic     | 26.5000  | 12.02082  |
|                   | Moderate Ethnic | 31.5833  | 8.05050   |
|                   | High Ethnic     | 30.6154  | 7.44467   |
|                   | Total           | 30.7407  | 7.76378   |
| Higher secondary  | Less ethnic     | 30.5000  | 4.94975   |
|                   | Moderate Ethnic | 31.6176  | 8.06419   |
|                   | High Ethnic     | 30.4600  | 7.43464   |
|                   | Total           | 30.9186  | 7.59755   |
| Graduation        | Less ethnic     | 35.8462  | 7.35806   |
|                   | Moderate Ethnic | 33.0274  | 6.99200   |
|                   | High Ethnic     | 33.8333  | 7.39122   |
|                   | Total           | 33.5781  | 7.15477   |
| Masters and above | Less ethnic     | 37.8750  | 8.54296   |
|                   | Moderate Ethnic | 33.4400  | 6.75204   |
|                   | High Ethnic     | 34.3846  | 8.22230   |
|                   | Total           | 34.4576  | 7.67289   |

**Table II: Two-Way ANOVA statistics for Impact of Qualification and Ethnicity on Anxiety**

| Variables       | Anxiety Mean |                  |            |                   | ANOVA          |                |           |          |
|-----------------|--------------|------------------|------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------|----------|
|                 | Under Matric | Higher Secondary | Graduation | Masters and above | Effect         | <i>F-Ratio</i> | <i>Df</i> | $\eta^2$ |
| Less Ethnic     | 26.5         | 30.5             | 35.8       | 37.8              | Qualification  | 2.9            | 3,288     | .03      |
| Moderate Ethnic | 31.5         | 31.6             | 33.3       | 33.4              | Ethnic         | 0.2            | 2,288     | .00      |
| High Ethnic     | 30.6         | 30.4             | 33.8       | 34.3              | Qualification* | 0.5            | 6,288     | .01      |
|                 |              |                  |            |                   | Ethnic         |                |           |          |

Table 1 and 2 show means, standard deviation and F ratio for the Anxiety, results indicate significant mean differences in Anxiety on Qualification with  $F(3,288) = 2.929$ ,  $MSE = 55.924$ ,  $p = 0.034$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.030$ ; Ethnicity with  $F(2,288) = 0.015$ ,  $MSE = 55.924$ ,  $p = 0.985$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .000$  and Qualification  $\times$  Ethnicity with  $F(6,288) = 0.543$ ,  $MSE = 55.924$ ,  $p = 0.775$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.011$ . Having small effect size ( $< 0.50$ ). The findings reveal that in the Less ethnic, Masters and above ( $M = 37.88$ ,  $SD = 8.54$ ) have the greatest mean scores as compare to Less ethnic, Under Matric ( $M = 26.50$ ,  $SD = 12.02$ ), Less ethnic, Higher secondary ( $M = 30.50$ ,  $SD = 4.95$ ) and Less ethnic, Graduation ( $M = 35.85$ ,  $SD = 7.36$ ). In the Moderate ethnic, again masters and above ( $M = 33.44$ ,  $SD = 6.75$ ) have the greatest mean scores as compare to Moderate ethnic, Under Matric ( $M = 31.58$ ,  $SD = 8.05$ ), Moderate ethnic, Higher secondary ( $M = 31.62$ ,  $SD = 8.06$ ) and Moderate Ethnic, Graduation ( $M = 33.03$ ,  $SD = 6.99$ ). In The High Ethnic once again Masters and above ( $M = 34.38$ ,  $SD = 8.22$ ) have the greatest scores as compare to High ethnic, under matric ( $M = 30.62$ ,  $SD = 7.44$ ) High ethnic Higher secondary ( $M = 30.46$ ,  $SD = 7.43$ ) and High Ethnic, Graduation ( $M = 33.83$ ,  $SD = 7.39$ ). Post-Hoc comparison reveal significance between mean differences across ethnicity level.

Figure I, II &amp; III: Profile Plots

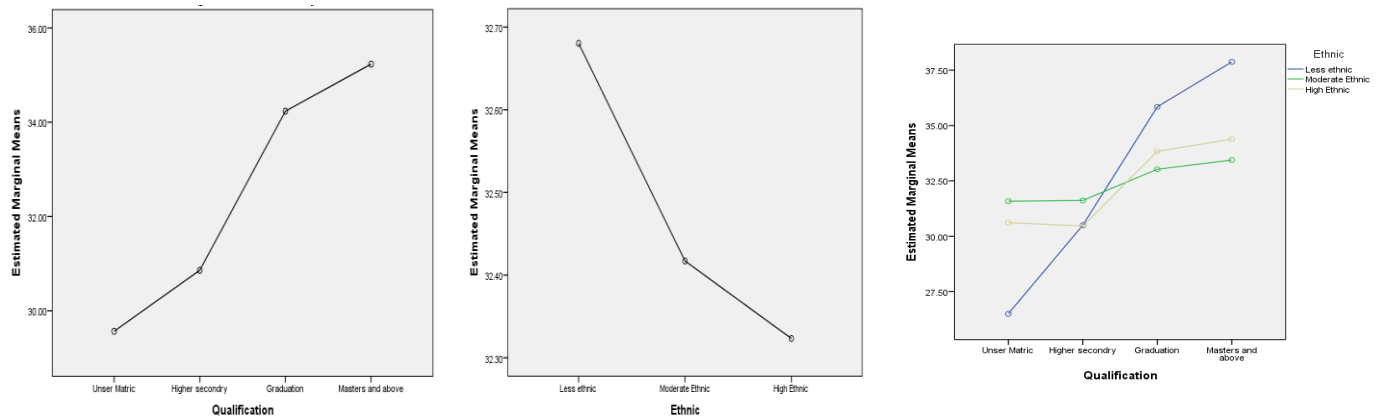


Table III: Descriptive Statistics in Two Way ANOVA for the Impact of Qualification and Ethnicity on Depression

| Qualification     | Ethnicity       | M       | SD      |
|-------------------|-----------------|---------|---------|
| Under Matric      | Less ethnic     | 12.0000 | 1.41421 |
|                   | Moderate Ethnic | 14.5833 | 3.72847 |
|                   | High Ethnic     | 15.4615 | 4.17563 |
|                   | Total           | 14.8148 | 3.85344 |
| Higher secondary  | Less ethnic     | 9.5000  | .70711  |
|                   | Moderate Ethnic | 14.3529 | 4.68319 |
|                   | High Ethnic     | 14.3000 | 4.35773 |
|                   | Total           | 14.2093 | 4.47244 |
| Graduation        | Less ethnic     | 16.6154 | 4.27275 |
|                   | Moderate Ethnic | 14.6027 | 4.22867 |
|                   | High Ethnic     | 15.6429 | 4.53615 |
|                   | Total           | 15.1484 | 4.35635 |
| Masters and above | Less ethnic     | 18.2500 | 3.45378 |
|                   | Moderate Ethnic | 15.3200 | 4.15050 |
|                   | High Ethnic     | 16.6154 | 4.63100 |
|                   | Total           | 16.2881 | 4.33530 |

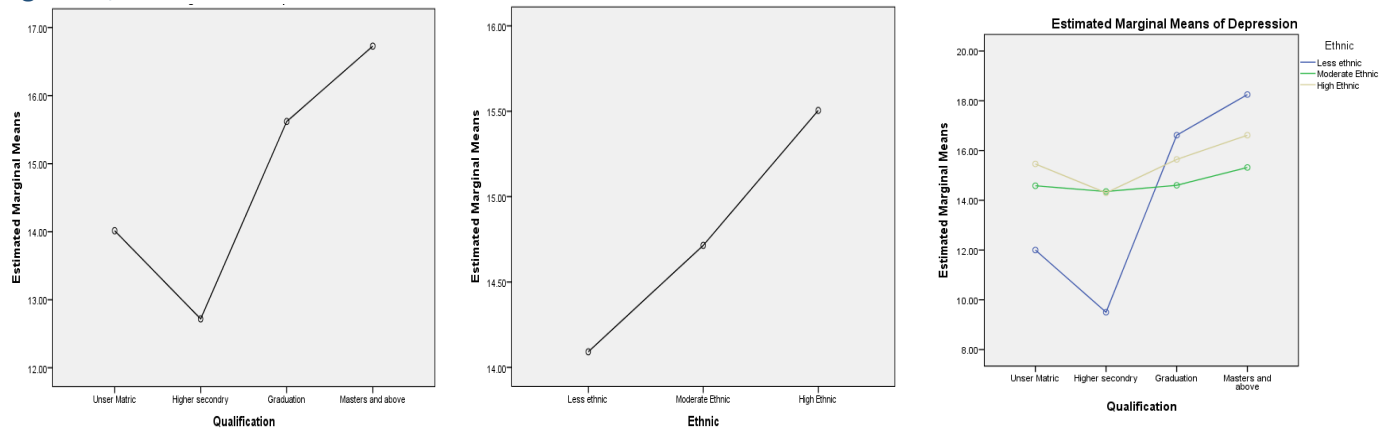
Table IV: Two-Way ANOVA statistics for Impact of Qualification and Ethnicity on Depression

| Variables       | Depression Mean |                  |            |                   | ANOVA                 |         |       |          |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|------------|-------------------|-----------------------|---------|-------|----------|
|                 | Under Matric    | Higher Secondary | Graduation | Masters and above | Effect                | F-Ratio | Df    | $\eta^2$ |
| Less Ethnic     | 12.0            | 9.5              | 16.62      | 18.25             | Qualification         | 3.99    | 3,288 | .04      |
| Moderate Ethnic | 14.5            | 14.3             | 14.60      | 15.32             | Ethnic                | 1.17    | 2,288 | .08      |
| High Ethnic     | 15.4            | 14.3             | 15.64      | 16.62             | Qualification* Ethnic | 1.14    | 6,288 | .02      |

Table 3 and 4 shows means, standard deviation and F ratio for the Depression, results indicate significant mean differences in Depression on Qualification with  $F(3,288) = 3.99$ ,  $MSE = 18.758$ ,  $p = 0.008$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.040$ ; Ethnicity with  $F(2,288) = 1.17$ ,  $MSE = 18.758$ ,  $p = 0.312$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .008$  and Qualification  $\times$  Ethnicity with  $F(6,288) = 1.14$ ,  $MSE = 18.758$ ,  $p = 0.342$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.023$ . Having small effect size ( $< 0.50$ ). The findings reveal that in the Less ethnic, Masters and above ( $M = 18.25$ ,  $SD = 3.45$ ) have the greatest mean scores as compare to Less ethnic, Under Matric ( $M = 12.00$ ,  $SD = 1.41$ ), Less ethnic, Higher secondary ( $M = 9.50$ ,  $SD = 0.71$ ) and Less ethnic, Graduation ( $M = 16.62$ ,

$SD= 4.27$ ). In the Moderate ethnic, again masters and above ( $M= 15.32, SD=4.15$ ) have the greatest mean scores as compare to Moderate ethnic, Under Matric ( $M= 14.58, SD= 3.73$ ), Moderate ethnic, Higher secondary ( $M= 14.35, SD= 4.68$ ) and Moderate Ethnic, Graduation ( $M= 14.60, SD= 4.23$ ). In The High Ethnic once again Masters and above ( $M= 16.62, SD= 4.63$ ) have the greatest scores as compare to High ethnic, under matric ( $M= 15.46, SD= 4.18$ ) High ethnic Higher secondary ( $M= 14.30, SD= 4.36$ ) and High Ethnic, Graduation ( $M= 15.64, SD= 4.54$ ). Post-Hoc comparison reveal significance between mean differences across ethnicity level.

**Figure IV, V & VI: Profile Plots**



### III. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to determine how socio- cultural factors affect the mental health of the young adults. This is a descriptive study that used a quantitative questionnaire and stratified sampling to get data from both male and female participants. Anxiety and depression, the most common effects of the socio- cultural problems have been analysed in detail. Qualification as an independent factor or variable 1 was chosen. Qualification of a person has direct relationship with the mental growth and mental health. Qualification improves the ability of a person to understand and evaluate cultural factors, social issues and religious thinking. A well educated person is in better position to deal with society, peer group, family, media and other influencing characters of society. Qualified persons from all the segment of society were given questionnaires. Participant's qualification: Under matric (27 = 9 %), higher secondary (86 = 29%), graduation (128 = 43%) and masters and above (59 = 20).

Ethnicity, the tendency to follow the traditional norms and values is an important factor that plays a vital role in one's life, behaviour, social and religious thinking. We tried to find its significance over the mental health of a person (Riaz et al., 2025). It is common perception that more the ethnicity means more a person has ill mental health. However, it has not been proved significantly according to results of the surveys. Qualification and ethnicity are quite different in nature and impact. However, partial  $\eta^2$  of qualification and ethnicity for Anxiety and Depression are just 0.011 and 0.023 respectively that means both have small effect size ( $< 0.50$ ). It is evident by the statistical results that qualification and ethnicity have meagre effect on Anxiety and Depression. It is also clear out of the data that the most educated class has the highest mean and standard deviation both for anxiety and depression (Shoaib, 2024).

### IV. CONCLUSION

Mental health is as important as human life itself as with good mental health life is simply a burdensome and threat not for the person for the society as well. Young adults are the back bone of the nation. It is not acceptable to grow the youth with good mental health. However as before prescription diagnosis is compulsory, a thorough analysis of the causes of mental health problems is quite necessary. Anxiety and Depression are the most common mental health issues of the nation right now. There is a long list of socio- cultural factors that may affect the mental health of young adults. Till now in Pakistan like conservative and traditional society true causes of these issues are not still identified. Impact of other socio- cultural factors such as poverty, gender discrimination, bad

company, delayed marriages, poor marital relationships and negative media affects must also be studied and analysed to search out the main causes of mental health problems in young adults. Our study shows that education and ethnicity are not an important cause of widely spreading anxiety and depression. It may be said that education and ethnicity are the healing factors for mental illness or in other words if we want to grow the young adults we should educate them and train them to love and follow the norms and values of their culture.

#### Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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