

p-ISSN : 2708-2091 | e-ISSN : 2708-3586

DOI(Journal): 10.31703/gsr
DOI(Volume): 10.31703/gsr/.2024(IX)
DOI(Issue): 10.31703/gsr.2024(IX.III)



www.gsrjournal.com

GSR
Global Sociological Review

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GLOBAL SOCIOLOGICAL REVIEW
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VOL. IX, ISSUE III, SUMMER (SEPTEMBER-2024)


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Article title

University Students' Satisfaction and its Effect on Positive Youth Development: A Gender-Based Comparison from Pakistan

Global Sociological Review

p-ISSN: 2708-2091 e-ISSN: 2708-3586

DOI(journal): 10.31703/gsr

Volume: IX (2024)

DOI (volume): 10.31703/gsr.2024(IX)

Issue: III Summer (September-2024)

DOI(Issue): 10.31703/gsr.2024(IX-III)

Home Page

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Issue: III-Summer (September-2024)

<https://www.gsrjournal.com/Current-issues/9/3/2024>

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Abstract

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Keywords: University Students' Satisfaction, Positive Youth Development, Students' Experiences, Gender-Based Comparison

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Pages: 45-57

DOI:10.31703/gsr.2024(IX-III).05

DOI link: [https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gsr.2024\(IX-III\).05](https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gsr.2024(IX-III).05)

Article link: <http://www.gsrjournal.com/article/A-b-c>

Full-text Link: <https://gsrjournal.com/fulltext/>

Pdf link: <https://www.gsrjournal.com/jadmin/Auther/31rvIolA2.pdf>

Citing Article

05	University Students' Satisfaction and its Effect on Positive Youth Development: A Gender-Based Comparison from Pakistan						
	Author	Akhtar Ali Khalid Saleem Shehzad Ahmad		DOI	10.31703/gsr.2024(IX-II).05		
Pages	45-57	Year	2024	Volume	IX	Issue	III
Referencing & Citing Styles	APA	Ali, A., Saleem, K., & Ahmad, S. (2024). University Students' Satisfaction and its Effect on Positive Youth Development: A Gender-Based Comparison from Pakistan. <i>Global Sociological Review</i> , IX(III), 45-57. https://doi.org/10.31703/gsr.2024(IX-III).05					
	CHICAGO	Ali, Akhtar, Khalid Saleem, and Shehzad Ahmad. 2024. "University Students' Satisfaction and its Effect on Positive Youth Development: A Gender-Based Comparison from Pakistan." <i>Global Sociological Review</i> IX (III):45-57. doi: 10.31703/gsr.2024(IX-III).05.					
	HARVARD	ALI, A., SALEEM, K. & AHMAD, S. 2024. University Students' Satisfaction and its Effect on Positive Youth Development: A Gender-Based Comparison from Pakistan. <i>Global Sociological Review</i> , IX, 45-57.					
	MHRA	Ali, Akhtar, Khalid Saleem, and Shehzad Ahmad. 2024. 'University Students' Satisfaction and its Effect on Positive Youth Development: A Gender-Based Comparison from Pakistan', <i>Global Sociological Review</i> , IX: 45-57.					
	MLA	Ali, Akhtar, Khalid Saleem, and Shehzad Ahmad. "University Students' Satisfaction and Its Effect on Positive Youth Development: A Gender-Based Comparison from Pakistan." <i>Global Sociological Review</i> IX.III (2024): 45-57. Print.					
	OXFORD	Ali, Akhtar, Saleem, Khalid, and Ahmad, Shehzad (2024), 'University Students' Satisfaction and its Effect on Positive Youth Development: A Gender-Based Comparison from Pakistan', <i>Global Sociological Review</i> , IX (III), 45-57.					
TURABIAN	Ali, Akhtar, Khalid Saleem, and Shehzad Ahmad. "University Students' Satisfaction and Its Effect on Positive Youth Development: A Gender-Based Comparison from Pakistan." <i>Global Sociological Review</i> IX, no. III (2024): 45-57. https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gsr.2024(IX-III).05 .						



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Title

University Students' Satisfaction and its Effect on Positive Youth Development: A Gender-Based Comparison from Pakistan

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Abstract

This study investigates university students' satisfaction and its implications for positive youth development (PYD), focusing on gender-based comparisons. Through a comprehensive analysis of survey data gathered from a diverse sample of university students, this research explores how various aspects of university students' satisfaction, including reliability, responsiveness, tangibles, assurance, and empathy influence PYD attributes. The students of 06 public sector general category universities studying in the 1st year (1st and 2nd semester) and the last year (7th and 8th semester) of the BS 4-year program were the target population. By examining potential gender differences in the satisfaction-PYD relationship, this study sheds light on the unique challenges and opportunities faced by male and female students in Pakistan's higher education institutions. The results indicated a significant, and positive relationship between university students' satisfaction and their positive youth development. The findings also affirmed the significant effect on university students' satisfaction with PYD.

Keywords:

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Introduction

Adolescent development encompasses a complex interaction of biological, psychological, and social values (Waid & Uhrich 2019; Waid et al., 2023). Before the early 1990s, several models of intervention or prevention concentrated just about entirely on decreasing risk exposure (Lerner, 2005; Edberg et al., 2022). On the contrary, in the 1990s, another approach associated with positive youth development (PYD) started emerging (Qi et al., 2020). The PYD

perspective shifts the focus from viewing adolescents as "problems" to emphasizing their resources, potential, and strengths (Shek et al., 2019; Buenconsejo & Datu, 2022). In simple terms, this approach prioritizes the promotion of strengths, assets, and positive outcomes over solely addressing risk factors or deficits (Lerner et al., 2005; Kim et al., 2023). In recent years, there has been substantial interest in the positive youth development (PYD) concept as a framework for comprehending and promoting the overall well-being of young adults as they move into



adulthood. As a positive and asset-based approach, PYD emphasizes the cultivation of young people's potential. This encompasses enhancing cognitive, emotional, social, and behavioral capabilities that empower young people to grow well and make positive contributions to society (Lerner et al., 2005; Crall, 2023). Research has demonstrated that positive youth development programs can improve students' self-esteem, resilience, and pro-social behavior.

Positive development can be measured using the "five Cs" of Positive Youth Development (PYD), which are competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring (Bowers et al., 2010; Mesfin, 2022). The ability of young people to successfully navigate the difficulties and contexts of youth life in order to achieve their goals is referred to as competence. When this navigation results in a sense of personal agency and self-esteem, confidence emerges. Character is both the visible expression of moral values through behavior and the internalization of moral standards through ongoing interactions with one's environment. Caring refers to the development of levels of concern for others that are age-appropriate, and connection refers to the individual's integration into and support from a reliable and diverse social network.

PYD traits emerge when adolescents' strengths are supported by the resources available to them in their families, schools, and communities (Balsano et al., 2009; Gomez-Baya et al., 2021). Educational institutions, especially universities, have a crucial role in fostering the development of PYD traits alongside other social factors. This implies that universities have to provide resources that complement the strengths of young students to enhance their overall satisfaction. For instance, research has demonstrated that positive youth development (PYD) qualities and interventions may increase academic achievement among students (Yu et al., 2018). For example, it can go much further if we build into this an understanding of each student's strengths and interests and utilize resources appropriately. This way, students can be well-supported and happy which helps them reach their maximum potential.

There has been an increasing mindfulness of the necessity to evaluate various aspects of university student growth that go beyond merely assessing their academic successes including their overall well-being and satisfaction as well as fostering positive development (Kim et al., 2020). Of particular note is the importance of this recognition within Pakistan itself, a country in which higher education has been subject to much recent change and where gender dynamics remain deeply woven into societal norms (Sain, 2023; Yunis et al., 2018). Additionally, university life is an important developmental period in a person's life and the satisfaction with their university life may also influence the general well-being of people as well as success in their future. For this purpose, universities should support learning environments for students in which they feel satisfied, fulfill their potential, and enhance competencies to adapt to future work conditions (Kim et al., 2020).

This is a complex concept that covers various aspects of the student experience, such as academic, social, and environmental factors. Contented students are more likely to actively engage in their studies, display positive behaviors, and enjoy an enhanced overall educational journey (Elliott & Healy, 2001). The satisfaction of university students involves a diverse range of elements, including academic experiences, social interactions, campus resources, and extracurricular opportunities. Research has indicated that student satisfaction is correlated with academic achievement (Bean & Eaton, 2000), persistence (Cabrera et al., 1992), and overall well-being (Kuh & Hu, 2001). Students' satisfaction increases their participation, sense of belonging to the academic community, and well-being (Kuh et al., 2006). According to Jadidian and Duffy (2011), the concept that is almost unique to academic satisfaction is the degree to which and interest an individual is satisfied with his / her academic courses and educational programs. There are several research studies including the one done by Sheu et al. (2016) which establish the positive link between self-efficacy, emotional competencies, conscientiousness, and academic satisfaction: all of these are Positive Youth Development (PYD) traits. Similarly, other studies that have been conducted by researchers such as

Wilkins et al (2014), establish the relationship that exists between PYD features such as optimism and hope as well as the general acceptance of school fulfillment. The existing body of scientific literature contains a highly popular hypothesis that characteristics of PYD are useful for determining satisfaction with academic achievements. Such factors are a determinant of what makes students comfortable in schools and thus, understanding such a feeling is important for the development of the students.

Studies on PYD have more recently considered gender as a factor in different developmental outcomes among youth (Bowers et al., 2010). In various past research, it has been proved that the psychosocial development of young people depends on both the theoretical personality characteristics and the environmental variables, and also been established that gender and age differences exist concerning adolescents' well-being. Research studies show that some mental health and well-being outcomes spatially documented propose that girls, but particularly older adolescent females, experience relatively higher levels of self-reported emotional malfunctioning, internalizing dysfunctions, life satisfaction decrease, and more often health complaints than boys do. By adopting the positive youth development (PYD) approach, the focus shifts towards ascertaining inherent positive developmental features of youths; and supporting special personal and social resources that can promote the positive development of youths. Thus, it seems necessary to look at how positive developmental changes in adolescents are linked to the well-being of persons concerning their gender to improve the well-being of adolescents in general. Differences may be observed in the people about coping mechanisms with stress, social relations, and resources that are likely to affect PYD.

Thus, the assessment of gender differences in the link between the satisfaction of university students and PYD would be relevant to avoid inequality and pinpoint the ways to target interventions in the right manner. However, enrolment in higher education is still not balanced by gender and this problem is observed in Pakistan as well. Women have challenges,

such as the culture and education in their country; women's education in most countries is limited (UNICEF, 2023). It is crucial to uncover the ways, in which gender impacts students' satisfaction and positive youth development to close these gaps. In recent years, the Pakistani higher education system has expanded and has also undergone some sort of reform. But as we all know difficulties like scarcity of funds and inadequate gender equality standards are still there. Studies done on the Pakistani population can offer general information and phenomenology of university students in this context (HEC Pakistan, 2021).

This social research will therefore aim to investigate the relationship between university students' satisfaction and positive youth development, with a specific emphasis on gender-based differences. Due to the cultural differences, this research aims to compare and contrast the findings of Pakistani male and female university students' experiences concerning expected differences in the factors as well as the indicators of PYD in order to provide cultural sensitivity. It's important to understand the factors that promote positive youth development in the Pakistani context, mainly because of the country's cultural and social variability. This research aims to illuminate these dynamics in the context of Pakistan and, therefore, contributes to the existing literature in needed ways. Furthermore, this research is intended to make a further contribution to this line of scholarship by analyzing satisfaction levels and their effects on the PYD of university students of different genders in Pakistan. The insight generated from this study can help educational establishments, policy makers and practitioners understand the nature and biology the young university students in Pakistan and design programs and support structures to foster the well-being of these young people.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study at hand was to examine the association between Satisfaction and Positive Youth Development (PYD) among university students with a specific focus on gender differences in the context of

Pakistan. Therefore, by identifying and comparing the levels of satisfaction and the factors that affected the satisfaction of male and female university students this study seeks to contribute to the understanding of the effects of university experiences on positive youth development. Also, the research aims at bringing out gender differences where they exist with regard to students' satisfaction and how the differences affect PYD. Finally, it envisages presenting suggestions that may help formulate positive policies to create such conducive and inclusive for enhancing positive youth development for all learners in Pakistani universities.

Research Objectives

1. To compare the levels of overall satisfaction among male and female students in Pakistani universities.
2. To assess the level of positive youth development among male and female students in Pakistani universities.
3. To investigate the relationship between university students' satisfaction and positive youth development, with a gender-based perspective.
4. To determine the gender-based impact of university students' satisfaction on positive youth development.

Research Questions

1. Are there significant differences in the overall satisfaction levels between male and female university students in Pakistan?
2. Are there gender-based significant differences in the positive youth development of university students in Pakistan?
3. Is there a statistically significant correlation between the levels of student satisfaction and positive youth development indicators among male and female university students in Pakistan?
4. Is there a significant effect of university students' satisfaction on positive youth development based on gender?

Research Methodology

This study aims to examine how university students'

satisfaction correlates with their positive youth development outcomes, taking into account gender-based variations. For this study, a cross-sectional survey design was employed. Given the necessity of collecting data from a widely dispersed population, a survey was the chosen method to fulfill this research objective. Surveys stand as one of the most widely utilized methods of conducting research within the social sciences due to their adaptability and widespread application (Kalof et al., 2008). Within this framework, data is commonly gathered through the distribution of questionnaires, which may be administered in various formats, such as face-to-face, over the telephone, or online (Muijs, 2004). The study's population included all the students enrolled in BS four-year programs offered by 20 public sector general category universities in the Punjab province of Pakistan (HEC, 2023), recognized by the HEC, offering general education programs for both male and female students. To overcome the limited resources and time constraints, a multi-stage sampling technique was carefully employed to select a suitable sample for the research. This technique involves dividing the large population into stages, incorporating elements of stratified sampling, cluster sampling, and simple random sampling to increase the effectiveness of the sampling process (McBurney & White, 2009).

The sampling technique used in this study was multi-stage sampling. In the first stage, Punjab province was divided on the basis of geographical zones; the upper Punjab, the central Punjab, and the lower Punjab (Iqbal et al., 2018; Saleem, 2009). Second, to ensure the generalizability of the study, two universities each from the three regions of interest were selected at random – the total number of six universities in the study constituted the population. In the third stage, four faculties were selected at random from each of the selected universities. After this, one department was conveniently chosen from each faculty of the university. Finally, two classes were purposively selected from each chosen department, one from the first year (either 1st or 2nd semester) and another from the last year (either 7th or 8th semester) of the BS programs. The study gathered responses from 50% of the students of each selected class,

resulting in a total of 1256 students who participated by answering the administered questionnaires.

Collection and Analysis of Data

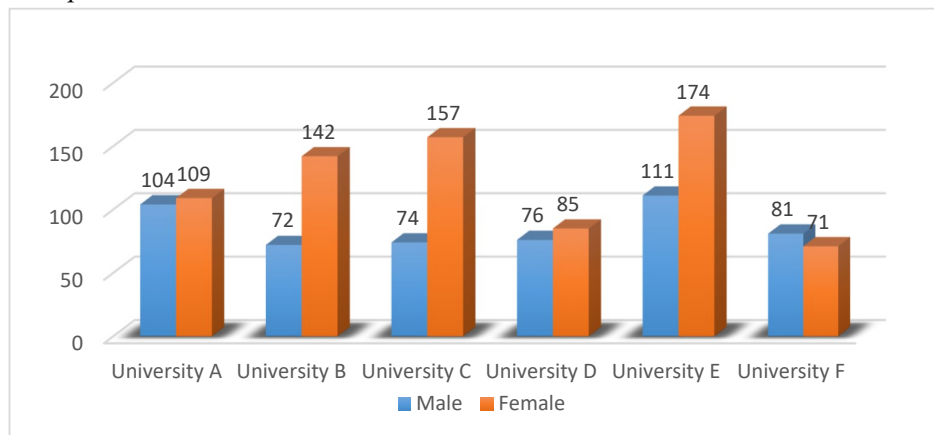
To construct the research instrument for this study, established and validated instruments that had been developed previously were consulted. These instruments included the "Student Satisfaction Survey," developed by Douglas (2006), and the "Positive Youth Development Student Questionnaire" in its short version, crafted by. However, upon careful examination, it became apparent that these instruments had been designed with specific contexts and socio-cultural circumstances in mind, and were not directly

applicable to the current study's context in Pakistan. Therefore, the researcher made necessary adjustments to tailor the questionnaires to better align with the Pakistani context and obtained the required authorization from the original authors to adapt and modify the questionnaires for use in this study.

Cronbach's alpha was utilized to evaluate the reliability of the questionnaires. The Student Satisfaction Survey by Douglas (2006) and the Positive Youth Development Student Questionnaire (short version) by Richard yielded values of 0.90 and 0.87, respectively. These values indicated that none of the survey items needed to be removed. Furthermore, a few spelling and grammar mistakes were identified and immediately rectified.

Figure. 1

Distribution of Sample



The analysis of the collected data involved the application of both descriptive and inferential statistics through the use of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software.

Findings/Results

The analysis of data revealed the following results.

Table 1

Comparison of Respondents' Responses Regarding Student Satisfaction Based on Gender.

Variable	Respondents	N	Mean	S. D.	t. value	Sig.
USS	Male	518	3.75	.57	1.274*	.203
	Female	738	3.71	.54		

USS=University Students' Satisfaction

The above Table examines the comparison of responses between male and female respondents regarding university students' satisfaction. The analysis indicates a non-significant difference ($p = 0.203 > 0.05$) in the reported levels of satisfaction

between male and female students. Therefore, the data do not offer sufficient evidence to support the presence of a meaningful difference in satisfaction levels between the two gender groups.

Table 2

Comparison of Respondents' Responses Regarding Positive Youth Development Based on Gender.

Variable	Respondents	N	Mean	S. D.	t. value	Sig.
PYD	Male	518	3.94	.47	-.771	.441
	Female	738	3.96	.46		

PYD=Positive Youth Development

Upon comparing responses related to the positive youth development of university students, it became evident that there were no statistically significant

differences ($p = 0.441 > 0.05$) in positive youth development based on gender. The corresponding details are presented in the above table.

Table 3

Gender-Based Correlation Between University Students' Satisfaction and Positive Youth Development

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	Pearson r	Sig.(2-tailed)
USS	Male	518	3.75	.628**	.000
PYD			3.94		
USS	Female	738	4.71	.613**	.000
PYD			3.96		

The table presents statistical calculations, specifically Pearson correlation analysis, to examine the relationship between university student satisfaction and positive youth development based on gender. The

results indicate a strong and statistically significant positive relationship for both male ($r = 0.628, p = 0.000 < 0.01$) and female ($r = 0.613, p = 0.000 < 0.05$) students.

Table 4

Gender-based factor-wise relationship between university student satisfaction and positive youth development for male students

		Character	Connection	Caring	Competence	Confidence
Tangibility	r.	.481**	.481**	.425**	.466**	.391**
	sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Reliability	r.	.485**	.481**	.435**	.475**	.423**
	sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Responsiveness	r.	.414**	.422**	.376**	.402**	.380**
	sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Assurance	r.	.426**	.466**	.414**	.427**	.385**
	sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Empathy	r.	.427**	.456**	.422**	.487**	.445**
	sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

The analysis focused on various factors influencing the satisfaction of male university students and their correlation with the characteristics of positive youth development (PYD). The findings revealed that the tangibility aspect exhibited a significant and positive correlation with all dimensions of PYD, including character ($r = .471, p = .000 < .01$), connection ($r = .412, p = .000 < .01$), caring ($r = .379, p = .000 < .05$), competence ($r = .462, p = .000 < .01$), and confidence ($r = .289, p = .000 < .01$). These results indicate that the tangible elements of university students' satisfaction are closely associated with their well-being and positive development within the university

context. Likewise, the analysis demonstrated that reliability is significantly and positively linked to PYD attributes, such as character ($r = .503, p = .000 < .01$), connection ($r = .525, p = .000 < .01$), caring ($r = .474, p = .000 < .01$), competence ($r = .493, p = .000 < .01$), and confidence ($r = .423, p = .000 < .01$). Similarly, the study revealed that responsiveness, assurance, and empathy within the university student satisfaction framework also display a significant and positive correlation with the PYD characteristics including character, connection, caring, competence, and confidence.

Table 5

Factor-wise relationship between university students' satisfaction and positive youth development for female students.

		Character	Connection	Caring	Competence	Confidence
Tangibility	r.	.471**	.412**	.379**	.462**	.289**
	sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Reliability	r.	.503**	.525**	.474**	.493**	.423**
	sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Responsiveness	r.	.374**	.351**	.306**	.378**	.313**
	sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Assurance	r.	.433**	.469**	.408**	.455**	.410**
	sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Empathy	r.	.366**	.347**	.322**	.399**	.316**
	sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). N=738

Factor-wise analysis of the female university students' satisfaction and their correlation with the characteristics of positive youth development reflected that tangibility is significantly and positively correlated with all the aspects of PYD including character ($r = .471, p = .000 < .01$), connection ($r = .412, p = .000 < .01$), caring ($r = .379, p = .000 < .05$), competence ($r = .462, p = .000 < .01$) and confidence ($r = .289, p = .000 < .01$). It showed that the tangibility aspect of university students' satisfaction is positively related to their well-being and positive development

at the university. Likewise, the reliability is significantly and positively correlated with PYD attributes including character ($r = .503, p = .000 < .01$), connection ($r = .525, p = .000 < .01$), caring ($r = .474, p = .000 < .01$), competence ($r = .493, p = .000 < .01$) and confidence ($r = .423, p = .000 < .01$). Similarly, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy aspects of USS are also significantly and positively correlated with PYD characteristic character, connection, caring, competence, and confidence.

Table 6*The Impact of University Student Satisfaction on Positive Youth Development Based on Gender.*

Regression Weights	Gender	Beta Coefficient	R-square	f	p-value
SS→PYD	Male	.628	.394	335.782	.000
	Female	.613	.376	443.015	.000

Note: $p^{**}<.01$. USS: University Students' Satisfaction, PYD=Positive Youth Development.

In analyzing the impact of university students' satisfaction on positive youth development, a significant role emerged. University students' satisfaction significantly predicted positive youth development for both males ($f = 335.782$, $p = .000 < .001$) and females ($f = 443.015$, $p = .000 < .01$), highlighting the substantial influence of satisfaction on shaping positive youth development in both genders ($\beta = .628$, $p = .000 < .01$ for males, and $\beta = .613$, $p = .000 < .01$ for females). These results affirm

the positive effect of university students' satisfaction on positive youth development. Additionally, the R-square values of .394 for males and .376 for females indicate that the model explains 39.4% and 37.6% of the variance in positive youth development for male and female students, respectively. Notably, the findings suggest a slightly stronger impact of the independent variable, university students' satisfaction, on the positive youth development of male students compared to female students.

Table 7*Factor-wise Impact of University Student Satisfaction on Positive Youth Development Based on Gender.*

Regression Weights	Gender	Beta Coefficient	R-square	f	p-value
Tangibility →PYD	Male	.550	.302	223.627	.000
	Female	.516	.266	267.336	.000
Reliability →PYD	Male	.562	.316	238.732	.000
	Female	.617	.380	451.827	.000
Responsiveness →PYD	Male	.488	.238	160.993	.000
	Female	.440	.194	176.808	.000
Assurance →PYD	Male	.518	.268	189.273	.000
	female	.555	.308	327.873	.000
Empathy →PYD	Male	.547	.300	220.809	.000
	Female	.447	.200	183.979	.000

Note: $p^{**}<.01$. USS: University Students' Satisfaction, PYD=Positive Youth Development.

In the factor-wise analysis exploring the influence of university students' satisfaction on positive youth development, a significant impact was observed. Key aspects of university students' satisfaction, namely tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, emerged as significant predictors of positive youth development for both genders. These findings underscore the substantial role of satisfaction in shaping positive youth development across genders. Furthermore, the R-square values provide insight into

the percentage of variance in positive youth development accounted for by the satisfaction factors for both male and female students. Overall, these results affirm the statistically significant positive effect of university students' satisfaction on positive youth development.

Discussion

The analysis results showed that there is no significant difference in the level of satisfaction among university

students by their gender. It therefore implies that in the sample the gender factor is not useful in explaining the variation in satisfaction levels of university students. This result gave consistency to the opinion posited by Mohamad et al., (2020), Hung et al., (2010), Yu et al., (2022), and Goswami and Dutta (2016) where they discussed. In his study, Suarman (2014) found that there was a nominal significant difference in female and male students' perception of the quality of teaching. Further, the findings highlighted in this study reveal an insignificance of positive youth development of university students. Contrary to what was obtained in the current study, the previous study conducted by Tome and colleagues (2021) identified some gender-related differences in young people's well-being (Shahid, Saleem, & Farooqi, 2023).

The study also established the existence of a positive and statistically significant correlation between the satisfaction levels of university students and positive youth development; regardless of gender differences. Similarly, consistent with the findings, (Mohamad et al., 2014) found that various domains of positive youth development had varying effects on youths' perceived life satisfaction. The study also showed that female youths had higher levels of pro-social norms and self-rated life satisfaction than male youths. Furthermore, this study has also investigated, for each of the factors, the correlation between university student satisfaction and positive youth development with reference to those factors. By doing so, the study was able to reconfirm the proposition about high correlation existence between these two variables. They were valuable and contributed to developing comprehension of the kind of association that exists between university student satisfaction and positive youth development.

This study exposed that, university students' satisfaction is vital in predicting PYD for both male and female students. The findings also revealed that the satisfaction that university students have with aspects of positive youth development was greatly associated with the multivariate differences, for both sexes and students from different universities. This conclusion reflects the result obtained from the study

done by (Mohamad et al., 2014). Furthermore, every factor of the university student satisfaction, namely tangible, reliability, responsiveness assurance, and empathy was significant and a positive predictor of PYD for both males and females. These facts stress the important role of satisfaction as a major mediator of PYD for males and females.

Conclusions

The present study was conducted with the objective of identifying the satisfaction level of university students regarding positive youth development in Pakistani universities. It bears stating here that, the study at hand identified a non-significant difference in the level of satisfaction between male and female university students. This implies that, in the context of the study, gender does not play a role in determining the level of satisfaction among university students. It suggests that male and female students who are represented by the respondents suggest equal satisfaction with the university experience. In addition, the study established that there was no significant difference between male and female university students in terms of positive youth development, and thus factors promoting positive youth development are consistent across male and female university students.

Even when gender differences were controlled, it was established that university students' satisfaction was positively related to PYD, and this was a statistically significant finding. This highlights the importance of a satisfying university experience in promoting positive developmental outcomes for students. In a factor-wise analysis, all aspects of university student satisfaction—tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy—displayed a significant and positive association with positive youth development outcomes (character, connection, caring, competence, and confidence) among both male and female respondents. This suggests a comprehensive association between satisfaction factors and positive youth development characteristics among university students across genders.

The findings revealed a significant role of university students' satisfaction in predicting positive youth development for both male and female students. The results indicate a robust positive effect of university students' satisfaction on positive youth development, with substantial contributions to explaining variance in both male (39.4%) and female (37.6%) students. Notably, while the impact is strong for both genders, there is a slightly stronger influence on the positive youth development of male students compared to

female students. In essence, the findings underscore the pivotal role of university students' satisfaction in shaping positive developmental outcomes, with nuanced gender differences in the strength of this impact. Furthermore, through a factor-wise analysis, it was established that all factors contributing to university students' satisfaction serve as significant predictors of Positive Youth Development (PYD), playing a substantial role in shaping PYD outcomes across genders.

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