

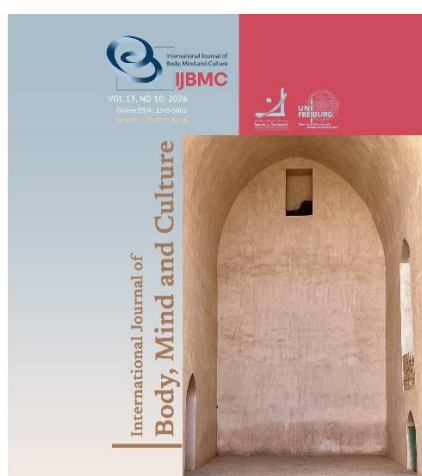
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The Relationship of Personality Functioning and Identity Styles with Psychological Well-Being among Students

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study examined the relationship of personality functioning and identity styles with psychological well-being among female master's students of personality psychology.

Methods and Materials: A descriptive-correlational design was used. The accessible population comprised 216 female master's students of personality psychology at the Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch, Tehran. A sample of 136 students participated. Measures included the Level of Personality Functioning Scale-Brief Form, the Ryff Psychological Well-Being Scale, and Berzonsky's Identity Style Inventory. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlations, and stepwise multiple regression in SPSS version 26.

Findings: The reported stepwise model yielded $R = .910$, $R^2 = .828$, and adjusted $R^2 = .824$, indicating that the retained identity-style variables jointly accounted for 82.8% of the variance in psychological well-being. Normative identity showed the largest reported standardized coefficient ($\beta = .450$), followed by identity commitment ($\beta = .344$) and diffuse/avoidant identity ($\beta = .215$). Personality-functioning dimensions were not retained in the final stepwise model.

Conclusion: Identity-processing variables were prominent correlates of psychological well-being in this sample. The findings support closer attention to how identity processing and commitment relate to well-being in university students, while the cross-sectional design precludes causal interpretation.

Keywords: Personality functioning, Identity styles, Psychological well-being, University students.

Introduction

Psychological well-being is more than the absence of distress; it reflects positive functioning across domains such as autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationships, purpose in life, and self-acceptance (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Among university students, these dimensions are especially relevant because higher education is a period of intensified academic demands, identity exploration, changing interpersonal roles, and growing responsibility. Contemporary research continues to emphasize the importance of reliable well-being assessment in college populations (Nawantara et al., 2026).

One construct that may be related to well-being is personality functioning. The Alternative Model for Personality Disorders conceptualizes personality functioning in terms of self-functioning (identity and self-direction) and interpersonal functioning (empathy and intimacy). Brief self-report measures such as the LPFS-BF were developed to provide an efficient estimate of impairment in these domains (Hutsebaut et al., 2016), with later work supporting the distinction between self and interpersonal functioning (Weekers et al., 2019). Dimensional approaches are increasingly favored because severity of dysfunction can convey clinically meaningful information beyond categorical diagnoses (Hopwood et al., 2018).

Evidence also links personality functioning to broader psychological adjustment. In adolescents, the level of personality functioning can modify associations between maladaptive traits and psychological distress (Benzi et al., 2019). Recent psychometric work has further supported the use of brief personality-functioning measures in young people and in Iranian samples (Wu et al., 2024; Asgarizadeh et al., 2026). These findings make personality functioning a relevant construct when examining positive mental health in university populations.

Identity processing is another theoretically relevant domain. Berzonsky's social-cognitive model distinguishes informational, normative, and diffuse/avoidant identity styles, along with identity commitment. These styles refer to characteristic ways of approaching identity-relevant information and decisions (Berzonsky, 1992; Berzonsky et

al., 2013). Prior research has repeatedly connected identity style with indicators of psychological adjustment. Diffuse/avoidant processing has generally been associated with poorer well-being, whereas informational and normative orientations show more adaptive patterns depending on the outcome examined (Phillips & Pittman, 2007).

The association between identity processes and well-being may partly depend on commitment. In a large sample of late adolescents, identity commitment mediated several relations between identity-processing styles and Ryff's well-being dimensions (Berzonsky & Cieciuch, 2016). More recent research among university students has continued to examine informational and normative identity styles in relation to life satisfaction and other positive outcomes (Aghabagher et al., 2025). The present study therefore examined the relationship of personality functioning and identity styles with psychological well-being among female master's students of personality psychology.

Methods and Materials

Study Design and Participants

The study used a descriptive-correlational design. The statistical population consisted of 216 female master's students of personality psychology at the Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch, Tehran. Based on the sample size indicated by Morgan's table for the population size, 136 students participated. Participation was voluntary, questionnaires were completed anonymously, and participants were informed that their responses would be kept confidential. Informed consent was obtained before administration.

Instruments

Level of Personality Functioning Scale-Brief Form (LPFS-BF). The LPFS-BF is a 12-item self-report measure designed to assess severity of personality-functioning impairment across self and interpersonal domains. Its content maps onto identity and self-direction within self-functioning, and empathy and intimacy within interpersonal functioning. Items are rated on a four-point scale from 0 to 3. The original brief-form study reported promising construct validity and

acceptable internal consistency (Hutsebaut et al., 2016). Subsequent revisions and psychometric studies have further supported the measure's utility (Weekers et al., 2019).

Psychological Well-Being Scale. Psychological well-being was assessed with the 18-item form based on Ryff's multidimensional model, covering autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Responses are made on a six-point agreement scale. Ryff's model has shown support for the proposed six-dimensional structure (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

Identity Style Inventory. Identity processing was assessed using Berzonsky's identity-style framework. The version used in the source study contained 40 items measuring informational, normative, diffuse/avoidant, and commitment orientations, rated on a five-point Likert scale. The identity-style model and later revised inventory have demonstrated acceptable construct validity across research settings (Berzonsky, 1992; Berzonsky et al., 2013).

Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics of Psychological Well-Being, Personality Functioning, Identity Styles

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Autonomy	3.00	15.00	10.57	2.233
Environmental mastery	4.00	15.00	11.12	2.370
Personal growth	3.00	14.00	10.64	2.134
Positive relations with others	3.00	15.00	10.87	2.600
Purpose in life	4.00	14.00	10.28	2.156
Self-acceptance	4.00	15.00	10.64	2.371
Psychological well-being	35.00	84.00	64.15	11.404
Intimacy	4.00	9.00	7.97	1.195
Empathy	4.00	9.00	8.16	1.162
Identity	4.00	9.00	8.02	1.195
Self-direction	4.00	9.00	8.09	1.141
Informational identity	17.00	50.00	39.13	7.156
Normative identity	14.00	41.00	32.54	5.651
Diffuse/avoidant identity	21.00	37.00	31.91	3.817
Commitment	14.00	45.00	35.00	6.349

In the stepwise regression analysis, diffuse/avoidant identity, identity commitment, and normative identity remained in the final model. The reported model correlation was $R = .910$, with $R^2 = .828$ and adjusted $R^2 = .824$. Thus,

Analysis

Descriptive statistics included minimum, maximum, mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis. Inferential analyses used Pearson correlation and stepwise multiple regression in SPSS version 26. The Durbin-Watson statistic reported for the regression model was 1.580, supporting independence of residuals. Tolerance and variance inflation factor values were also examined and were reported to be within acceptable ranges.

Findings and Results

Descriptive statistics for psychological well-being, personality-functioning dimensions, and identity-style variables are presented in Tables 1-3. The mean total psychological well-being score was 64.15 ($SD = 11.40$). Among the personality-functioning dimensions, empathy showed the highest mean score ($M = 8.16$, $SD = 1.16$), while informational identity showed the highest mean among identity-style variables ($M = 39.13$, $SD = 7.16$).

the retained predictors jointly accounted for 82.8% of the variance in psychological well-being. Personality-functioning dimensions were not retained in the final stepwise model.

Table 2.*Summary of the Final Stepwise Regression Model*

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	SEE	F (3, 132)	P
.910	.828	.824	4.786	211.474	< .001

Table 3.*Retained Predictors in the Final Stepwise Regression*

Predictor	Standardized β	p
Normative identity	.450	< .001
Commitment	.344	< .001
Diffuse/avoidant identity	.215	< .001

Among the retained predictors, normative identity had the largest reported standardized coefficient ($\beta = .450$), followed by commitment ($\beta = .344$) and diffuse/avoidant identity ($\beta = .215$). These coefficients should be interpreted as relative regression weights within the final model rather than as percentages of variance uniquely explained by each predictor.

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study examined personality functioning and identity styles in relation to psychological well-being among female master's students. The most prominent result was that the final stepwise regression retained three identity-related variables—normative identity, commitment, and diffuse/avoidant identity—while the personality-functioning dimensions were not retained. The overall reported model accounted for a large proportion of variance in psychological well-being, with normative identity showing the largest standardized coefficient.

The prominence of identity processing is consistent with prior work linking identity style to psychological adjustment. Phillips and Pittman reported poorer psychosocial functioning among adolescents characterized by a diffuse/avoidant orientation relative to informational or normative styles (Phillips & Pittman, 2007). Berzonsky and Cieciuch further showed that identity commitment can explain part of the association between identity-processing styles and multiple dimensions of psychological well-being (Berzonsky & Cieciuch, 2016). These findings support the view that identity formation is not only a developmental task but also a potential resource for positive functioning.

Normative identity should nevertheless be interpreted carefully. A normative style involves reliance on expectations and standards from significant others and social reference groups. Depending on context, this orientation may support stability, purpose, and environmental mastery while potentially constraining autonomy or personal growth. This mixed pattern has been reported in prior research (Berzonsky & Cieciuch, 2016). The present finding that normative identity had the largest coefficient therefore does not imply that a normative orientation is uniformly adaptive across all dimensions of well-being.

Identity commitment was also retained in the final model. Commitment can provide continuity, direction, and a stable basis for decision making, which may be especially important during emerging adulthood and graduate study. Recent work in university samples continues to examine identity styles in relation to life satisfaction and positive psychological outcomes (Aghabagher et al., 2025). The result is also conceptually compatible with Berzonsky's earlier work on identity processing and coping (Berzonsky, 1992).

Personality functioning remains theoretically relevant even though its dimensions were not retained in the final stepwise model. Self and interpersonal functioning reflect core capacities involving identity, self-direction, empathy, and intimacy, and impairment in these areas has been linked to psychological distress and interpersonal problems (Benzi et al., 2019). Contemporary research also supports dimensional assessment of personality functioning and continues to refine brief measurement approaches in both clinical and nonclinical populations (Weekers et al., 2019; Asgarizadeh et al., 2026). Thus, non-retention in this

particular model should not be interpreted as evidence that personality functioning is unrelated to well-being in general.

Several limitations should be considered. The study was cross-sectional, so causal conclusions cannot be drawn. The sample was restricted to female master's students from one field and one university branch, which limits generalizability. Data were based on self-report measures and may be affected by shared-method variance and response bias. In addition, the stepwise regression approach is sample-sensitive and can overestimate the stability of selected predictors. Future studies should use larger and more diverse samples, preregistered hierarchical or structural models, and replication across institutions. Longitudinal designs would also help clarify the temporal relationships among identity development, personality functioning, and psychological well-being.

In conclusion, identity-processing variables were the principal predictors retained in the reported regression model. The findings highlight the relevance of normative identity, identity commitment, and diffuse/avoidant identity to psychological well-being among the participating students. University-based programs that strengthen reflective identity exploration, coherent goal commitment, and adaptive coping may be useful targets for further investigation, but intervention implications should be tested directly rather than inferred from the present correlational data.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants. Ethical

considerations in this study were that participation was entirely optional.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contribute to this study.

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