CHAPTER 4
DISCUSSION
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This chapter will discuss the findings of the present study in light of earlier researches. Besides, implications of the study, limitations of the study, suggestions for further research and conclusion are provided.

Discussion of the Findings

The present study was carried out with the aim of exploring the relationship of Stress, Social Support & Psychological Capital with two measures of Subjective Well-being i.e. Life Satisfaction and Depressive Symptoms. Furthermore, the role of Social Support and Psychological Capital as moderators was also examined. In order to fulfil this aim, data were collected from 300 adult participants and finally analyzed by proper statistical tools. This section is meant to discuss the findings obtained within the context of previous literature.

Gender Differences

The present study indicated significant gender differences on both measures of subjective wellbeing i.e. Life satisfaction and depressive symptoms and also on other study variables. The results revealed that females reported significantly lower level of life satisfaction and higher level of depressive symptoms as compared to males. The present findings are in line with the results of earlier studies carried out in Kashmir which show that women are at greater risk of getting depressed. Amin and Khan also reported the prevalence of depression in Kashmir to be higher (60%) among women as compared to men (51.34%). The ongoing conflict in Kashmir has affected the whole population there but women are the worst sufferers of this violence. Women have specially borne the brunt of endless cross firing leading death and destruction on a massive scale. Women suffer the consequences of war disproportionately and suffer violations of human rights in situations of armed conflict. Kashmiri women suffer both directly and indirectly. Directly they are affected by being victims of rape, molestation and torture and indirectly by witnessing the violence wherein their father, brother, husband, son or other near and dear ones are being snuffed out of existence almost on daily basis. Another reason for why women reported greater number of depressive symptoms may be as Goldstein (2016) suggested that women are at greater risk of having depression than males because women tend to be more tuned into their emotions, and better able to describe them when
depressed. Men might not recognize their symptoms as depression, perhaps denying or hiding their unhappiness, so the illness might get overlooked in men until it becomes more severe.

As expected the results of the present investigation also evidences the low level of life satisfaction among Kashmiri women as compared to men. Life satisfaction is the cognitive component of subjective well-being. The results are obvious as one cannot be depressed and satisfied with life at the same time. As ongoing conflict in Kashmir has affected almost all domains of their life one cannot think of contentment with life in such a situation. The result finds support from the study of Al-Attiyah & Ramzi Nasser (2016). These findings also get strength from the fact that women also scored significantly higher on stress and lower on social support. As far as stress is concerned, numerous studies have found that women tend to be more stressed than men. While examining gender differences in stress and coping styles, Matud (2004) found that women score significantly higher than men in chronic stress and minor daily stressors. It has been found that women have more chronic stress than men (McDonough & Walters, 2001). Gender differences in stress may be due to numerous reasons. Considering women in Kashmir, women find themselves in stressful situation over years more often than men, being vulnerable. Besides, gender specific stressors such as discrimination, abortion, in law problems etc were reported at higher rates by women in the present study (see figure 3.1). There may not be differences in number of stressful events faced by men and women, the differences may be in the way of appraising these events. More often women tend to appraise challenging situations as more stressful than men (Ptacek, Smith & Zanas, 1992).

In the present study age could possibly be a reason of lower Satisfaction in life among women. Although, in a study conducted by Borzumato-Gainey, Kennedy, McCabe and Degges-White (2009) it was found that women in their 30s and 40s have lower life satisfaction levels than other age groups. No such relationship between age and life satisfaction was found in the present study.

The results further revealed that males scored higher than females in terms of Perceived Social Support. Matud (2003) also found the similar results and argued that the differences in Social Support can be attributed to the different socialization experiences and social roles among males and females. Caetano, Silva and Vettore (2012) examined the gender differences in perceived social support and concluded that men score higher than women on perceived social support. In the present study only
married women were included and majority of them were home makers. This could be a possible reason that they scored lower on Social Support. Women are generally considered as providers of Support to other family members. The reason for lower scores of females in Friends and Significant Other Support could be the social setup where married women are not allowed to have friends.

Psychological Capital was found to differ significantly across gender with males scoring higher than females. The results found support from earlier research findings (Lehoczky, 2013). Riaz and Batool (2014) also found that males scored higher than females on Psychological Capital. perhaps it may be due to the reason that our women participants were all married and homemakers. Psychological capital resources i.e. resilience, self-efficacy and hope are state-like characteristics and can be developed during the process of coping with adversities and through a variety of experiences in and around the outside world. Women are generally deprived of these opportunities and thus lack such experiences.

**Predictors of Life Satisfaction**

The primary aim of the present study was to find the predictive relationship of stress social support and PsyCap with two essential components of subjective well-being i.e. Life satisfaction and depressive symptoms. As we go through the results we find that stress emerged to be the strongest negative predictor for Life Satisfaction. The findings found support from previous research. Errol, Dennis, Karen, Don, Kenneth and Ferda (2010), examined Global life satisfaction across three age groups and it was found that perceived stress predicts life satisfaction significantly. In a study Bratt, Stenstrom and Rennemark (2016), found that the stressful life events have negative association with Life Satisfaction. In yet another study (Kumar, Shaheen, Rasool & Shafi, 2016), the relationship between psychological distress and life satisfaction was examined. DASS (Depression Anxiety Stress Scale and Satisfaction with Life Scale) were administered on 398 university students. Results indicated a significant negative correlation between psychological distress and life satisfaction. Kang, Chapin & Kim (2017) found that lower levels of stress were directly associated with higher levels of Life Satisfaction.

Social Support emerged as a strong positive predictor of Life Satisfaction even after controlling for the effect of demographic variables such as age, gender and marital status. Earlier researches corroborate these findings. Most prominent study in this field is
that of Diener and Oishi (2000), in which 55 nations (one third of world population) were included. The researchers concluded that a good relationship was the only common predictor of happiness. In a study conducted by Ilahan (2011) in order to investigate the predictive values of optimism and perceived support in determining life satisfaction, perceived social support was found to predict life satisfaction significantly. Ike and Obinna (2013) have also found that perceived social support significantly predicts Life Satisfaction. Good social support helps a person live more satisfied life. In a society like Kashmir, relationships are given priority among other assets in one’s life. People in Kashmir are closely knit together through the bonds of brotherhood, love and caring. These relationships and the support they provide to an individual go a long way to enhance one’s satisfaction with life. Support systems like family, friends and others can be regarded as sources of one’s satisfaction with life. In the present study support from family came to be most important predictor followed by significant others support. Friends support, however, did not find a place as predictor of life satisfaction. In their study “Very Happy People” Diener and Seligman (2002) stated that satisfying social relationships are central to human happiness, so much so that happiness cannot occur without them (Diener and Seligman, 2002). Karademas (2006) support those claims as he reports a direct positive relationship between social support and life satisfaction.

Besides, Psychological Capital was also found to predict Life Satisfaction significantly. In earlier researches similar results were found (Singh and Mansi, 2009; Tripathi and Pankaj, 2011). Arab et al (2015) also found that Psychological Capital correlated positively with Life Satisfaction. Psychological Capital plays a crucial role in determining how a person is going to deal with his/her life. It makes a person strong from within so that he/she can apprise life in a positive way. Among the components of Psychological Capital, Resilience and self-efficacy emerged as significant predictors of Life Satisfaction. These findings are supported by earlier studies conducted by Abolghasemi and Varaniyab (2010) to determine the relationship of resilience and perceived stress with Life Satisfaction in a sample of 120 students. Results showed that Resilience scores were positively related to Life Satisfaction. What is unique to resilience is that it serves as a reactive function after challenges and setbacks are encountered. According to the resiliency model presented by Richardson and Waite (2002) when an individual experiences adversity, he/she may experience little or severe disruption in life. When he/she reintegrates the disruption, one of the four outcomes is that the individual reintegrates with resiliency i.e. he learns some skills knowledge,
strengths or competence from the process of coping with the event that in turn increases his ability to effectively cope with life adversities in future. Individuals who believe that they can do something about their stress have a positive psychological adaptation relative to those who do not hold such adaption (Roddenberry & Renk, 2010). While examining the relationship between self-efficacy and life satisfaction of young adults, Caker (2012) found that self efficacy significantly predicted life satisfaction.

**Predictors of Depressive Symptoms**

Stress emerged as a significant negative predictor for Depressive Symptoms. Stress has been found to be the most powerful predictor for depressive symptoms in earlier studies also (Aranda, Castaneda, Lee and Sobel, 2001). Mild and moderate stressful life events have been found to be positively related to increase in Depressive Symptoms (Sangeun & Kenneth, 2013). Armstrong and Boothroyd (2008) conducted a study on 125 adolescent girls and found that stressful life events were significant predictors of emotional problems and other psychological problems. Stressful life events are the cause for the onset of depression (Hammen, 2005; Kendler et al. 1999) and in many cases trigger episodes of depression (Kendler, Karkowski and Prescott, 1999). It has been found that certain types of life events like loss and humiliation trigger depressive episodes (Kendler, Heetema, et al., 2003). Depressive episodes often develop after a major negative life event (Paykel, 2001). In 2000, Kendler, Thornton and Gardner, found a strong association between life event occurrence and the onset of major depression. In another study carried out by Blonski, Henk, Albertina, Elisabeth & Peter (2016), it was found that people higher on depression have experienced more negative events.

Social support emerged as a strong negative predictor for Depressive Symptoms even after controlling for the demographic variables and stress, as all the three dimensions together made a significant increase in the variance. Social support has been found to be a significant negative predictor for depressive symptoms in previous research studies as well. Karen, Timothy, Shigehiro and Sheena (2013) while examining the relationships among different types of social support and different facets of subjective wellbeing found that social support acts as a significant predictor of life satisfaction and negative affect. Thus, people with more perceived social support have more satisfied and less depressed lives. The feeling of having someone whom a person can rely upon goes a long way in enhancing a person’s satisfaction with his/her life and reducing depressive
symptoms. The absence of Support systems can lead to less satisfied lives. As can be seen in many studies loneliness or absence of support systems is one of the major causes of depression. Waite et al., (2006), found that loneliness or lack of social support is a unique risk factor for Depressive Symptoms. Kim et al (2004) along with Lee and Lee (2006) claimed that there were negative correlations between social support and depression. Moreover, among the dimensions of Social Support, family and significant others support emerged as significant negative predictors of depressive symptoms. Friends support, however, did not have significant predictive relationship with both life satisfaction and depression. The finding of the present study is in consonance with earlier researches conducted by Zhu, Hu and Efird (2012) and Ko and Seo (2011) who contended that depression had a significant negative relationship with family support but not with friends support.

PsyCap also emerged as a significant negative predictor of Depressive Symptoms though its contribution was not very high as it accounted only 1.7% of the total variance in depressive symptom. The finding is supported by the results of a research study conducted by Afzal, Malik and Ata (2016) in which PsyCap was found to predict positive emotions positively and negative ones negatively. Among PsyCap components, only hope emerged as significant negative predictor of depressive symptoms. The finding is in line with earlier studies. Valle et al (2005) carried out a longitudinal study in order to analyse the cognitive-motivational construct of Hope as a Psychological Strength in adolescents. Results revealed that adolescents reporting higher initial levels of Hope were more likely to report higher levels of Global Life Satisfaction a year later.

A comparison of predictors among males and females indicate towards commonalities as well as differences in predictors of life satisfaction and depression. Though stress was a common predictor of both life satisfaction and depressive symptoms, it was stronger predictor for females as compared to males. Stress contributed 38.8% of variance in life satisfaction and as high as 54.4% in depression among females, whereas for males this contribution was comparatively much lower i.e. 17.4% and 23.2% for life satisfaction and depression, respectively. Another important observation was that social support was highly important for life satisfaction among females as 40.4% variance was accounted by social support whereas only 6.6% variance was accounted for males. Family support and significant others support were significant predictors of life satisfaction among females, with family support emerging as a stronger predictor as compared to significant others support. However, significant others support
was significant predictor of life satisfaction among males. For depression, this difference was not very high as social support accounted for 11.7% of the total variance in depression among females whereas 8.9% among males. However, the source of social support was different in both the groups as friends support significantly negatively predicted depression among females and support from significant others predicted depression among males.

Psychological capital was equally good predictor of life satisfaction among both males and females as same amount of variance (3.4%) was accounted for by this variable. However, self-efficacy came to be a significant predictor of life satisfaction among females whereas for males resilience came to be significantly related to life satisfaction. Psychological capital significantly predicted depression only among males with resilience to be the only component which had significant negative predictive relationship with depression. For females, psychological capital did not predict depression.

**Moderators of Life Satisfaction**

A close examination of the results of moderation analysis revealed the significant role of social support as a moderator in the relationship between stress and life satisfaction. The significant interactional effect suggests that social support acts as a buffer against stressors and helps in maintaining Life satisfaction. Thus, those who perceive high social support have the highest level of life satisfaction under both low and high stress conditions. These findings are in line with our expectations and in consonance with the results of earlier research work. It has been found that lower levels of stress and greater levels of perceived social support are directly associated with higher life satisfaction. (Kang, Chapin and Kim, 2017). In another study, Milesova, Gvozden, Richter, Milosen & Niklewski (2017) also found that Social support moderated the association between stress and Life Satisfaction.

The role of psychological capital as a moderator in the relationship between stress and life satisfaction was also observed in the present investigation. Moderation analysis indicated that PsyCap acts as a significant positive moderator between stress and life satisfaction. Persons with high psychological capital experience more satisfaction with life under both low and high stress conditions, whereas persons with low PsyCap experienced low level of life satisfaction even under low stress condition. This buffering
effect of PsyCap has been found in earlier studies also (Rioli, 2012). PsyCap comprises of positive psychological strengths that buffer the effects of stressful situations and thus makes sure that well-being is not hampered.

**Moderators of Depression**

Consistent with our expectations the findings of the present study add support for the role of social support as a stress buffering factor in depression. Social support emerged as a significant moderator in the relationship between Stress and Depressive Symptoms. The positive association between stress and depressive symptoms is found to be significantly exacerbated for low social support persons than for persons with high social support. Thus, impact of stress on depression is lesser in persons with high social support. This finding is supported by earlier research studies which found the similar results. For example, Milesova, Gvozden, Richter, Milosen & Niklewski (2017) examined the role of Perceived Social Support in the association between stress and depressive symptoms. After analysing data, it was found that Perceived Social Support acts as significant moderator in the relationship of Negative Life Events and Depression. Warheit (1979) also found that the persons with personal, familial and interpersonal resources had significantly lesser depressive symptoms than those without such resources.

PsyCap, which comprised of hope, resiliency and self-efficacy, was also found to moderate the relationship between stress and Depressive Symptoms. Persons with high psychological capital experienced lesser number of depressive symptoms under both low and high stress conditions. In other words, PsyCap buffers the impact of stress so that relationship between stress and depressive symptoms is reduced under the availability of PsyCap. Though PsyCap was seen as poor predictor of depression, it buffered the impact of stress on depression significantly. The present findings get support from earlier studies conducted on psychological well-being which advocate the role of psychological capital in buffering the impact of stress on negative outcomes. In a study conducted by Rioli (2012) PsyCap was found to buffer the impact of stress so that the relationship between stress and negative outcomes was reduced. Thus enhancing PsyCap of a person may be helpful in reducing depression and increasing life satisfaction.

The results of the present investigation also suggest the moderating role of gender in life satisfaction and depressive symptoms. Females, in the present study are found to
be more prone to have the lowest level of life satisfaction and nearly highest level of depressive symptoms under high level of stress. Perhaps, due to significantly higher level of psychological capital resources as compared to women, men are able to cope with stresses effectively and thus maintain their psychological wellbeing.

**Conclusion**

An overview of the findings of the present study suggest that though all people in conflict affected part of Kashmir experience high level of stress, women are the worst affected segment of this population which has been continuously burning in the fire of armed insurgency and counterinsurgency. Their subjective well-being is highly deteriorated on account of the ongoing violence. They have lowest level of life satisfaction and highest level of depressive symptoms. This is a matter of serious concern for all-like mental health workers, physicians and human rights groups and many others. In these terribly violent conditions social support from family, significant others, and friends is the most important factor that protects the people of Kashmir from the adverse effect of stresses caused on account of stressful life events. Family support is particularly important for satisfying experience of life for women. The present study also brings out the importance of friends support for women for dealing with depression in times of grief. Psychological capital resources are also important buffering the impact of stress on life satisfaction and depression. However, these resources facilitate a person in appraising the life in a positive way and being satisfied with life.

In conclusion, it can be said that life is full of experiences and there is no guarantee that all experiences are positive. Some stressful experiences take a heavy toll on person’s wellbeing. What matters important at that time is, the availability of resources. These resources like support from different sources, positive strengths e.g. hope, resilience, efficacy, etc. determine the course of a person’s well-being during times of stress.

In the following section, some implications based on the findings of the current study are provided.

**Implications**

Subjective well-being of Kashmiri people is an important area which needs to be explored by the researchers as most of the studies conducted till date have mainly
focused the negative aspects of psychological functioning such as depression, PTSD, etc. The current study adds to the research on positive aspects. In this way it is an humble attempt to make contribution to the area of positive psychology.

The results of the present study underscore the importance of two of the important positive psychology variables i.e. social support and psychological capital resources in effectively coping with the ongoing violence in Kashmir and maintaining subjective well-being in the face of stressful life events. The results indicate that Social Support and PsyCap serve as important protective factors against distress, thereby increasing Life Satisfaction and reducing Depression.

WHO (World Health Organization) has emphasized the mental health impact of war or armed conflicts throughout the world by mentioning: “10% of the people who experience traumatic events will have serious mental health problems and another 10% will develop behaviour that will hinder their ability to function effectively” (WHO Report 2001). Keeping this in consideration one could imagine the condition of people who have been living under the constant exposure to armed insurgency in Kashmir for more than last two decades. Hence, the present study has implications for each and every person living in Kashmir - professional or non-professional.

The results of the current study also suggest that individuals should strive for support while encountering any stressful situation. As individuals with better social support systems will be better able to cope with stressful situations and thus they will maintain their well-being at higher levels.

The results of the study have important implications for mental health professionals and also for physicians who have been dealing with the people who are affected by violence. Present study implicates that despite the fact that large portion of population suffers from depression; they possess the resources like social support and psychological capital. These resources can be inculcated during therapies so as to help people in distress and live a better life.

The current study suggests that women folk are the worst affected segment of kashmiri population having higher level of depressive symptoms and very low level of life satisfaction, therefore, there is special need of professional help for women in order to orient them regarding adjustment and coping with stressful situations in life so as to prevent negative psychological outcomes and improving their psychological well-being.

Besides, as it is necessary to probe the reasons and remedies of increasing mental health issues in Kashmir.
Limitations and Suggestions

Any investigation in spite of sincere efforts on the part of the investigator, has certain limitations. The present study also suffers from some shortcomings or loopholes.

The present study used a sample from only violence affected districts. Future study should use a comparative sample from those areas which are not affected or are less prone to violence. But “individual research ventures, even when confined to a particular segment of society are irreplaceable in their own way. Through them the direct ways for more broad based and meaningful research becomes clear” (Ahmad, 1989).

The participants of current study comprised of 300 adult Kashmiris. Thus, sample size could be mentioned in limitations. Future researchers may replicate this study with larger and more heterogeneous samples in order to enhance the generalizability of results.

There are also methodological and measurement limitations as data collected in this study were based on self-report measures. Self-report measures can cause problems in a sense that most often people hide their true feelings and give responses by faking good or faking bad. Although participants were repeatedly told that their responses would be kept confidential there might have been apprehensions in the minds of participants which would have affected their responses. During the course of data collection it was realised that the information taken through self-report measures should be supplemented by semi-structured interview schedules. Moreover, people who are already affected by violence may feel threatened by the questions asked in psychological tests. They may hide certain information on sensitive issues due to security reasons.

This study presents, perhaps, first systematic effort in research on PsyCap in general population. More research is required in this area to have a deeper understanding of psychological capital resources which may be helpful in coping with distress in an effective way and maintain subjective wellbeing.

The current study was correlational and cross sectional. Thus, causal inferences could not be made. In future, longitudinal researchers may be carried out in order to determine the long-term effects of stress, social support and PsyCap on Subjective Well-being.

In the present study, only three variables were examined for their impact on subjective wellbeing. Other personal and social factors may also be included in future research.
studies in order to understand more about the protective factors and their effect on wellbeing.

Furthermore, future research may combine the qualitative information with the quantitative information to reach a more meaningful conclusion. A lot of information underneath what may appear numerically can only be captured qualitatively. Thus, qualitative analyses will best add the rich information to the study.