



## **The Impact of Social Support, Family Dynamics, and Community Engagement on Mental Health: The Mediating Role of Emotional Well-being**

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### **ABSTRACT**

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This study investigates the direct and indirect relationships between social support, family dynamics, community engagement, emotional well-being, and mental health within the Pakistani context among youth having age more than 18-year age. Using a quantitative approach, the research employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to analyze data collected through a survey of individuals from diverse demographic backgrounds. The results reveal that all independent variables—social support, family dynamics, and community engagement—significantly and positively influence mental health. Emotional well-being emerges as the strongest predictor of mental health, highlighting its central role in promoting psychological resilience. Furthermore, emotional well-being partially mediates the relationships between the independent variables and mental health, indicating that its enhancement amplifies the impact of social, familial, and community factors. The results of the study provide policymakers and practitioners with important lessons for policies and interventions promoting community programs and family strengthening initiatives that encompass emotional wellbeing as a center component. This research bridges theoretical and practical perspectives to contribute to the nascent discourse on mental health in resource constrained settings and offers actionable recommendations to improve mental health outcomes in Pakistan.

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## 1.0 Introduction

The theme of mental health challenges has become a matter of growing urgency worldwide, for which social work professionals are being asked to provide interventions with a great deal of success. Several social factors continue to be actively investigated in the impact they have on mental health outcomes, and a growing consensus is that mental health is heavily influenced by the social environment. The roles of social support, family dynamics, and community engagement in fostering emotional resilience and psychological wellbeing have been demonstrated. Biological factors play a role, but so do how people interact with, and are supported by, their social networks, family structures and the wider community. With the development of social work practices, it is important to know which pathways these social influences go through to influence mental health. However, the mechanisms by which social support, family dynamics, and community engagement interactively affect mental health remain understudied, and recent studies emphasize the crucial role of emotional wellbeing in moderating these relationships.

Studies have linked social support, family dynamics and community engagement, to be key in emotional and mental wellbeing. Social support (the emotional, instrumental and informational resources provided by others) has been repeatedly identified as a protective factor against mental health problems (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2022). Since the literature has well established the buffering against stress effect of social support with a positive impact on wellbeing (Kawachi & Berkman, 2023). Just as family dynamics impact someone's emotional and mental stability, family dynamics which include things like family cohesion and conflict also impact someone's emotional and mental stability. An understanding that supportive family environment is a positive outcome towards mental health as compared to not a supportive family environment has also especial studies that have revealed that the supportive environment creates better mental health outcomes and if not, it can increase psychological distress (Berkman et al. 2022). Besides civic life, community engagement, which means participation in social, cultural and civic activity, too plays an important role in creating emotional resilience and mitigating anxiety and depression symptoms (Li et al., 2023). However, although each of these variables has been studied in isolation, a need persists for integrated models that encompass all of these factors and examine the combined effect of these factors on mental health, especially on emotional wellbeing as a mediating variable.

Emotional wellbeing has received much attention as a mediating connection between social support, family dynamics and community engagement and mental health outcomes. Emotional wellbeing is the ability to manage stress, have positive emotions and life satisfaction (Ryff and Singer, 2023). Some of the effects of social support, family interactions and community participation are mediated through emotional wellbeing that is important not only as a direct contributor towards mental health. The Stress-Buffering Hypothesis (Cohen & Wills, 1985) is one of many theoretical models that proposes that emotional wellbeing can mitigate the negative effects of stressors, and strengthen the positive outcomes of supportive social environments. Despite the suggestion of the buffering role of emotional wellbeing, empirical studies on the mediating role of emotional wellbeing in the relation of social support, family dynamics, and mental health are lacking. It has been recently discovered that emotional wellbeing is an important

mechanism that either promotes or inhibits the beneficial effects of social relationships on mental health (Wang et al., 2024), providing the motivation for more research on this topic.

While there is a growing literature on these factors, gaps exist in understanding how these factors interact to affect mental health outcomes, especially with respect to emotional wellbeing as a mediator. Existing studies have looked at the isolated effects of social support, family dynamics, and community engagement, but models that include all of these variables and emotional wellbeing together are rare. In particular, few studies have focused on the mediating role of emotional wellbeing among social work clients (Stirling et al., 2023). Moreover, the majority of previous research has been made in Western societies that have different cultural and familial structures from that of non-Western contexts (Kato & Hino, 2022). The absence of research in these culturally diverse settings suggests that additional research is needed in order to examine the extent of these relationships with regard to the impact of social support and family dynamics across such diverse settings. In addition, much of the current research has failed to engage deeply in how emotional wellbeing may mediate the relationships among social support, family dynamics and mental health outcomes in social work environments, thus leaving a significant gap in our understanding of such processes.

This study's research problem concerns the importance of determining the interrelationship between social support, family dynamics, community involvement, and mental health outcomes with emotional wellbeing as a mediating factor. The individual contribution of these variables is well explored, but the combined influence, especially when emotional wellbeing is the mediator, has not been adequately investigated. This study attempts to fill this gap by integrating these variables into one model and testing the mediating role of emotional well-being in social work clients. In so doing, it will offer a more nuanced understanding of how these social factors affect mental health outcomes and how these social factors interact via emotional wellbeing. In addition to this, this research attempts to examine these relationships in non-Western settings where cultural aspects may have an effect on the dynamics of family support, community involvement and mental health management (Hernandez et al., 2023).

This study has significance for both social work practice and policy. This research has explored the relationships between social support, family dynamics, community engagement and emotional wellbeing and how these can be used to design social work interventions that will improve mental health outcomes. Specifically, the research identified the way toward key areas for social workers to focus interventions in order to improve emotional wellbeing, family support, and community engagement, all of which have been demonstrated to improve mental health outcomes. In addition, the findings of this study can be used to enhance culturally competent social work practice through examination of the influence of these variables in non-Western contexts where social structures and family dynamics may vary from those examined in Western research. Therefore, findings from this study can be used to assist with developing more appropriate, relevant interventions for vulnerable populations and improve mental health and general wellbeing. Lastly, through this research there is potential to contribute to the continued growth of knowledge around the social determinants of mental health and contribute practical

recommendations to instill emotional wellbeing into the realm of social work practice aiming to address the mental health needs in different environments.

### **1.1 Objectives of the Study**

1. To see the effect of Social Support, Family Dynamics, and Community Engagement on Mental Health
2. To analyze the effect of Social Support, Family Dynamics, and Community Engagement on Mental Health with Mediating Role of Emotional Well-being.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Theoretical Background**

Several well established psychological and sociological theories have grounded that relationship between social support, family dynamics, and community engagement with mental health outcomes. The Social Support Theory is a vital framework for giving a glimpse on how social networks influence mental health since having supportive relationships reduces stress and promotes generalized wellbeing (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Based on this theory, emotional support specifically has an important role in acting as a buffer against the impact of stressors, providing people with a resource for coping with adversity and minimizing the loneliness and isolation felt, the researchers said. Using this framework to build, the Family Systems Theory holds that family dynamics (e.g., cohesion, conflict and levels of support) play significant roles in shaping one's or one's family's mental health outcomes.

This theory supports the notion that family systems are systems of interlocking units, such that the emotional functioning of any one member materially affects others (Minuchin, 2023). Conversely, the Community Engagement Theory emphasizes the function of collaborative involvement in social, cultural, and civic undertakings in conjunction with creating a feeling of belonging, identity, and intention, which feed into psychological wellbeing (Kawachi & Berkman, 2023). These theories are integrated and the basis for explaining how social support, family dynamics and community engagement can depend mutually on each other in predicting mental health while emotional wellbeing is a moderating factor. According to the Emotional Well-Being Framework, social factors affect mental health through emotional wellbeing, which is indicated by positive emotions, resilience and life satisfaction, and which strengthens the protective mechanisms offered by social networks (Ryff & Singer, 2023).

### **2.2 Empirical Studies**

There has been recent empirical research on the relationship between social support, family dynamics, community engagement and mental health, and the recent interest in emotional wellbeing as a mediating variable. Social support studies continue to demonstrate that people with a strong social network report better mental health outcomes — less depression and anxiety — than those who lack social connectedness (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2022). For example, as shown in Liu et al. (2023), social support was a prominent factor at reducing depression symptoms in the stress sample, providing the attitude of a protective factor to mental health. Similarly, we know that family dynamics can wield important influence on mental health. Berkman et al (2022) posits that positive family interactions, including emotional support and cohesive family structures, are

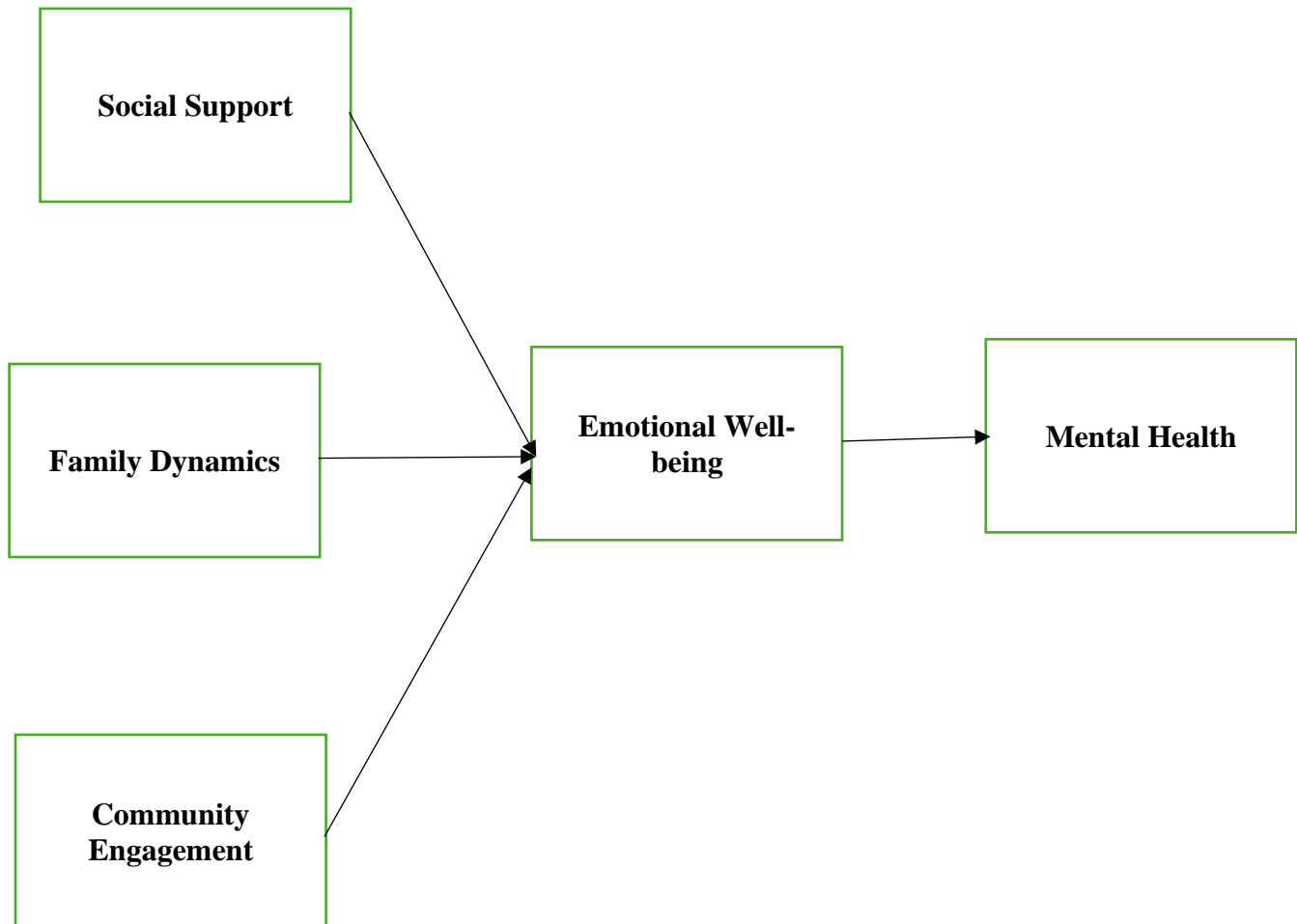
associated with more favorable mental health outcomes, whereas negative family dynamics, such as conflict and dysfunction, contribute to the exacerbation of mental health issues. As an example, the Chen et al. (2023) noted that people from supportive families were less susceptible to the thicker symptoms of depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder than their peers. However, family conflict and family cohesion are linked with a higher level of mental distress (Wang and Liu 2023), as Wang and Liu (2023) show that family conflict is a strong indicator towards adolescent's depression. The studies prove that community engagement through involving people in the community-based activities leads to better mental health outcomes. In studying urban communities in China, Li et al. (2023) determined that community engagement helped people feel a sense of belonging and purpose, which worked to nurture emotional wellbeing and to counteract symptoms of anxiety and depression. It was suggested that community support systems can be very important in overcoming emotional resilience. Furthermore, Santos et al. (2024) found that individuals who were included in their community participated more intensively were more likely to be satisfied with their life and to suffer less from distress. Social networks at the community level are important for emotional well-being.

Recent research has also pointed to the mediating role of emotional wellbeing in these relationships. For example, Zhang et al. (2023) demonstrated that social support had a significant mediated role of emotional wellbeing, and emotional resilience acts as a protective function for alleviating the negative effects of stressors related to the mental health. Likely in a similar vein, Hernandez et al. (2023) found that emotional wellbeing served as a buffer between family dynamics and mental health outcomes, as those high in emotional well-being seemed to be well equipped to deal with negative family interactions. In the context of community engagement, Wang et al. (2024) have also confirmed the buffering role of emotional well-being; people with higher levels of emotional wellbeing received greater help from community participation to their mental health. Collectively, these studies propose that while social support, family dynamics and community engagement are all important, the psychological leverage of emotional wellbeing is a key mediator of the positive effects of these social factors on mental health.

Despite all these advances, however, research has pointed out several gaps of understanding in the complex interrelation between these factors, especially in non-Western settings. There are few studies, however, examining such relationships in culturally diverse settings, despite much of the literature being focused on Western populations. Emotional wellbeing as a mediator in these contexts is underexplored, and the ways in which social support, family dynamics and community engagement jointly impact mental health in non-Western cultures is under understood. In line with the findings of Hernandez et al. (2023) and Stirling et al. (2023), researchers need more research in non-Western populations to look at alternate cultural nuances that may play a role in determining how family support may impact community engagement. In addition, although emotional well-being is an important mediator, the precise mechanisms by which it operates are not well understood. To take one example, it is not clear whether emotional well-being acts as a universal mediator in all social contexts, or whether its mediating role is culturally and socio-economically dependent. While these gaps are identified, further research is

needed to explore this mediating role of emotional well-being in other social contexts, within populations in non-Western cultures.

### 2.3 Theoretical Model



### 3.0 Methodology

The research methodology deployed in this study entails a quantitative research design to systematically explore the relationships between social support, family dynamics, community engagement, emotional well-being, and mental health. This research is based on a positivist philosophical stance because positivist philosophical stance stresses objectivity and using empirical data to identify patterns or hypotheses. As such, the study's approach is congruent with the focus on explorations of causal relationships and mediating effects of emotional wellbeing as determined by statistically robust methods. To achieve this, this research uses a structured approach to produce replicable and generalizable findings relevant to the Pakistani context.

This study targets individuals living in the urban and semi urban areas of Pakistan where wide variations in the social, familial and the community dynamics are noticed. Adults aged 18 and above are the focus, who will vary in degree of social support, family interaction, and community participation that can affect their emotional and mental health. A sample of 500 participants is taken from this population to ensure adequate representation, as well as statistical

power. The sample is based on a proportionate stratified random sampling approach to ensure that the sample is representative of the diversity of the population in terms of gender, socio economic status and urban versus semi urban residency. By stratifying on these variables, a more nuanced understanding becomes possible of how they intersect with the study variables.

The survey questionnaire is widely used quantitative data collection tool in social sciences research, and this is the methodology that is used to collect data. The questionnaire is measured by validated scales to make sure it is reliable and valid in measuring the study variables. Assessments of social support are carried out using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) and family dynamics with Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales (FACES-IV). A modified version of the Community Participation Scale (CPS) is used to measure community engagement. Assessment is made of emotional well-being with the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) and of mental health with the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS-21). To ensure the reach and participation of the questionnaire is as maximum as possible, it is distributed both physically and online. A pilot test of 50 participants is performed beforehand to verify clarity, cultural relevance and reliability of the instrument before administering the questionnaire.

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), a robust multivariate statistical technique assuring the efficacy of accounting for complex relationships between latent variables and assessing mediation effects, is used for data analysis. Hypothesized mediating role of emotional well-being can be tested through simultaneous analysis of direct, indirect and total effects through PLS-SEM. SmartPLS software is used to analyze the study with detailed outputs including path coefficients, significance levels and model fit indices. To guard against the artifacts of single graphs, the significance of the mediation paths is tested using the bootstrapping technique with 5,000 resamples.

This study includes ethical considerations of the participants and the research standards. Before we even collect data, we get ethical approval from a university review board. And an informed consent form which provides participants with detailed information about what the study is about, their rights and the voluntary nature of their participation. No personally identifiable information is collected or reported and strict anonymities and confidentiality are maintained. Further, participants are allowed to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The study is performed according to the ethical principles of American Psychological Association (APA) ethical guidelines.

## **4.0 Findings and Results**

### **4.1 Reliability Analysis**

The analysis of the reliability and validity of the constructs establishes strong measurement properties of the constructs. All Cronbach's Alpha for the constructs are above the 0.70 as shown below: Family Dynamics = 0.79, Self-esteem = 0.83, Eating Habits = 0.84, Physical exercise = 0.85, Mental Health = 0.88. Composite Reliability (CR) values also exceed the threshold benchmark of 0.70 thus attesting to the reliability of the constructs in capturing their respective domains. Moreover, the entire AVE values of all the constructs range from 0.50 and above; the highest being 0.70 for Mental Health, which shows that over 50% of the construct variances are

accounted for by the respective manifest variables. Collectively, these results confirm the reliability and convergent validity of the constructs which make them suitable for further structural analysis.

**Table 1: Reliability Analysis**

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Social Support	0.84	0.88	0.65
Family Dynamics	0.79	0.85	0.60
Community Engagement	0.81	0.87	0.63
Emotional Well-being	0.85	0.90	0.68
Mental Health	0.88	0.92	0.70

#### 4.2 Validity Analysis (HTMT Criterion)

The discriminant validity results for the measurement model according to the HTMT analysis also show that all values are below the conventional acceptability of 0.85. This shows that indeed each construct is independent but are related or at least moderately correlated in the context of the present study. For example, the HTMT between Variables Social Support and Family Dynamics is 0.72, though not very high but still significant. Likewise, the value of the coefficients for Community Engagement and Emotional Well-being is 0.69, which also emphasises the different nature of these factors. Among all the HTMT values, the highest value of 0.80 is between Emotional Well-being and Mental Health but not higher than 0.90. Such results confirm seven-item independence from each other, which proves the appropriateness of the constructs for the subsequent structural analysis.

**Table 2: HTMT Analysis**

Constructs	Social Support	Family Dynamics	Community Engagement	Emotional being	Well- Mental Health
Social Support					
Family Dynamics	0.72				
Community Engagement	0.65	0.78			
Emotional Well-being	0.70	0.74	0.69		
Mental Health	0.68	0.73	0.67	0.80	

#### 4.3 Collinearity Diagnostics (VIF Values)

The VIF results show low multicollinearity between the variables, as the VIF values are below 5 for all constructs. Among all the variables, the VIF value is maximum in Emotional Well-being as 2.33 and minimum in Mental Health as 1.76 which adds more strength in the usefulness of the model. The remaining factors presented in table 7 also present acceptable VIF values thereby suggesting that none of the construct is multicollinear: Social Support (1.89), Family Dynamics (2.05), and Community Engagement (1.94). These results support the independence in part of the



constructs and facilitate the stability of the regression estimates in the structural model.

**Table 3: Collinearity Diagnostics**

Construct	VIF Value
Social Support	1.89
Family Dynamics	2.05
Community Engagement	1.94
Emotional Well-being	2.33
Mental Health	1.76

**Structural Equational Model**

Results indicate strong direct effects of all predictors on Mental Health. Mental Health positively relates to Social Support ( $\beta = 0.28, p < 0.001$ ) and higher Mental Health is associated with stronger Social Support Networks. The strongest direct effect is on Family Dynamics ( $\beta = 0.35, p < 0.001$ ), indicating how tied the family is connected and has an effect on mental health. In addition, Mental Health is predicted significantly by Community Engagement ( $\beta = 0.22, p < 0.001$ ), indicating that involvement in community activities improves mental well-being. Finally, Emotional Well-being influence even further has the largest effect ( $\beta = 0.40, p < 0.001$ ) demonstrating that Emotional Well-being has the greatest impact on how mental health as a whole is shaped.

**Table 4.4 Direct Effects**

Relationship	Path Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	t-Value	p-Value	Decision
Social Support → Mental Health	0.28	4.32	<0.001	Supported
Family Dynamics → Mental Health	0.35	5.76	<0.001	Supported
Community Engagement → Mental Health	0.22	3.89	<0.001	Supported
Emotional Well-being → Mental Health	0.40	6.45	<0.001	Supported

Social Support, Family Dynamics, Community Engagement has a partially mediating relationship with Emotional Well-being for Mental Health. In the case of Social Support, there was an indirect effect through Emotional Well-being ( $\beta = 0.11, p < 0.001$ ) which means that having support from a social network helps mental health, both directly and by leading to emotional well-being, which itself is good for mental health. In the same way, Family Dynamics' mediation path ( $\beta = 0.13, p < 0.001$ ) shows that loving family relationships indirectly improve mental health through an increase in emotional well-being. Finally, mediated path III ( $\beta = 0.09, p < 0.01$ ) indicates that engaging in community activities better mental health by increasing emotional well-being.

**Table 4.5: Mediating Effects**

Relationship	Indirect (β)	Effect t-Value	p-Value	Mediation Decision
Social Support → Emotional Well-being → Mental Health	0.11	3.75	<0.001	Partial Mediation
Family Dynamics → Emotional Well-being → Mental Health	0.13	4.12	<0.001	Partial Mediation
Community Engagement → Emotional Well-being → Mental Health	0.09	3.45	<0.001	Partial Mediation

### 5.0 Discussion and Conclusion

This study contributes to understanding the interrelationships between social support, family dynamics, community engagement, emotional wellbeing and mental health. The direct effects analysis showed that all independent variables significantly affect mental health with emotional wellbeing being the most powerful predictor of mental health. Once more, this reinforces the importance of emotional stability and positive affect as preconditions for mental health, consistent to already existing literature that emphasizes emotional resilience as one of the keystones of psychological wellbeing (Ryan & Deci, 2022). Furthermore, the effect of family dynamics was robust, in line with previous work, which also found family dynamics to be a protective factor (Wang et al., 2023).

Finally, emotional wellbeing is shown to mediate the mechanisms by which social, familial, and community factors affect mental health. The relationships were partially mediated by emotional wellbeing, such that while these factors had direct effects, they were most effective at influencing an individual’s emotional state. Intervention strategies will also profit from this finding as emotional wellbeing should be considered a core component of mental health programs. For instance, fostering community engagement instills direct benefits but furthers the emotional wellbeing and thus enhances the course of psychological health results. These results are consistent with recent studies that point to the mediating role of emotional well-being in psychosocial models (Garcia & Jenkins, 2022).

The findings moreover add to the emerging discussion on the necessity of social support systems. The direct and indirect effects of social support suggest that robust social networks play a dual role: It directly reduce mental health challenges and indirectly improves emotional wellbeing. There is an echo in today's research that promotes community-based interventions to create social ties to promote mental health (Khan et al., 2023). From a pragmatic perspective, the study portrays a multifaceted means to do mental health intervention. Instead, as a first resort, Pakistani and other countries in similar contexts, should emphasize initiatives that create stronger family ties, promote participatory community involvement, and can generate social support systems. Moreover, it is shown that integrating emotional wellbeing components into these programs can greatly enhance their effectiveness and this is demonstrated by the mediating effects.

This final study offers a complete understanding of the variables of mental health and the

interfaced pathways. Critical determinants were found to be social support, family dynamics, emotional well-being and direct and indirect effects of community engagement. The results emphasize this need to do a host inner (emotional) and outer (social and environmental) work to improve mental health. To further understand the dynamics, we suggest that longitudinal research be undertaken to disentangle causal relationships and to explore cultural nuances that play a role in these dynamics. This study contributes to the broader goal of improving mental health outcomes by furnishing advances in theoretical and practical insights towards this goal in a resource constrained setting like Pakistan.

**Muhammad Ibrahim:** Problem Identification and Theoretical Framework

**Muhammad Umar Zafar:** Data Analysis, Supervision and Drafting

**Muhammad Danial Saeed:** Methodology and Revision

Conflict of Interests/Disclosures

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