

Self-esteem and Family Communication as Predictors of Psychological Well-being in Peruvian Women

Autoestima y comunicación familiar como predictores del bienestar psicológico en mujeres peruanas

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Fecha de recepción: 12.01.2025

Fecha de aprobación: 24.02.2025

Fecha de publicación: 06.06.2025

Cómo citar: Apaza-Pari, E.; Turpo, J.; Mamani-Benito, O.; Castillo-Blanco, R.; Carranza, R. & Caycho-Rodríguez, T. (2025). Self-esteem and Family Communication as Predictors of Psychological Well-being in Peruvian Women. *Psiquemag* 14 (1), e140101. <https://doi.org/10.18050/psiquemag.v14i1.3261>

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Abstract

Objective: This study aimed to determine whether self-esteem and family communication predict psychological well-being in women living in Juliaca, Peru. **Method:** A quantitative, cross-sectional, predictive design was used. A non-probabilistic purposive sampling method was applied, with voluntary participation of 499 women aged between 18 and 56 years ($M = 35.03$, $SD = 9.13$). Three validated instruments were used: the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, the Family Communication Scale (FCS), and the Psychological Well-Being Scale for Adults (BIEPS-A). **Results:** Structural equation modeling (SEM) revealed an acceptable model fit: $\chi^2(12) = 29.5$, $p < .001$, CFI = .980, RMSEA = .053, SRMR = .030. Self-esteem significantly predicted psychological well-being ($\beta = .78$, $p < .001$), while family communication did not ($\beta = .05$, $p = .538$). The model explained 65% of the variance in psychological well-being. **Conclusion:** These findings highlight the central role of self-esteem in psychological well-being among women in Juliaca, emphasizing the need for interventions that foster self-worth and emotional resilience in this vulnerable population.

Keywords: self-esteem, family communication, psychological well-being

Resumen

Objetivo: Este estudio tuvo como objetivo determinar si la autoestima y la comunicación familiar predicen el bienestar psicológico en mujeres de la ciudad de Juliaca, Perú. **Método:** Se realizó un estudio cuantitativo, de diseño predictivo y corte transversal. Se utilizó un muestreo no probabilístico intencional, con la participación voluntaria de 499 mujeres de 18 a 56 años ($M = 35.03$, $DE = 9.13$). Se aplicaron tres instrumentos validados: la Escala de Autoestima de Rosenberg, la Escala de Comunicación Familiar (FCS) y la Escala de Bienestar Psicológico para Adultos (BIEPS-A). **Resultados:** El análisis mediante modelamiento de ecuaciones estructurales (SEM) indicó un ajuste aceptable del modelo: $\chi^2(12) = 29.5$, $p < .001$, CFI = .980, RMSEA = .053, SRMR = .030. La autoestima predijo significativamente el bienestar psicológico ($\beta = .78$, $p < .001$), mientras que la comunicación familiar no mostró una relación significativa ($\beta = .05$, $p = .538$). El modelo explicó el 65% de la varianza en el bienestar psicológico. **Conclusión:** Estos resultados subrayan el papel central de la autoestima en la promoción del bienestar psicológico en mujeres peruanas, lo que sugiere la necesidad de implementar estrategias de intervención dirigidas a fortalecer la autovaloración y la resiliencia emocional en poblaciones vulnerables.

Palabras clave: autoestima, comunicación familiar, bienestar psicológico, mujeres.

INTRODUCTION

We live in times of constant challenges to global public health. A clear example of this is the recent COVID-19 pandemic (Oh et al., 2021), which poses a real threat to the healthcare system and the well-being of the global population (Vall-Roqué et al., 2021). Within this group, women have had to face the effects of the health crisis in a differentiated manner (Chang, 2020), being seriously affected in their daily, family, and professional activities (Kamberi et al., 2020), events that have become a subject of study for researchers interested in assessing their psychological well-being (Bau et al., 2022).

Psychological well-being is defined as a state of balance between a person's mental and physiological aspects, allowing them to function positively and achieve a sense of fulfillment in life (Sezer et al., 2022). In this regard, Ryff's theoretical model (1995) represents a state of positive functioning characterized by self-satisfaction in domains such as autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, and positive relationships. This means that, in women, high self-acceptance is related to greater self-confidence, positive relationships with others tend to be more meaningful, greater autonomy may enable them to make more independent decisions, high environmental mastery suggests they can effectively manage their circumstances to achieve their goals, having a clear purpose is related to personal or professional goals, and finally, personal growth allows them to develop new skills and face challenges effectively (Matud et al., 2019; Arcos-Romero & Calvillo, 2023; Fergus et al., 2024).

Although in practice one might assume that certain crises affect the entire population equally or to the same extent, scientific literature reveals that women are more prone to developing emotional disorders and anxiety compared to men (Thibaut, 2017). During the COVID-19 pandemic, financial challenges (Barrafrem et al., 2021) and frustrated positive expectations regarding the economic impact (O'Donnell et al., 2021) were among the many factors that caused dissatisfaction in their perceived quality of life (Blanco Vega et al., 2022), greater vulnerability to mental health issues (Martínez Pajuelo et al., 2022), and a negative evaluation of their psychological well-being (Kuhn et al., 2021).

Faced with this reality, researchers have been conducting various studies to analyze the predictors of psychological well-being (Dionigi et al., 2021). Although few studies focus exclusively on women, research involving both sexes are yielding interesting results.

Predictors of Psychological Well-Being

In this study, the authors found it relevant to analyze the role of two specific variables: self-esteem and family communication. Based on existing evidence and the theoretical background supporting them, these variables have ideal characteristics to explain the development of psychological well-being in women.

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is defined as the perception and evaluation a person has of themselves, based on their self-concept and personal acceptance. It involves how they see, feel, and assess themselves in relation to their experiences, abilities, and interpersonal relationships (Rosenberg, 1965). Previous studies provide empirical evidence suggesting that self-esteem influences the development of psychological well-being. For example, research conducted on orphaned women aged 22 to 55 in the United States found that low self-esteem scores correlated with lower psychological well-being (Frazier & Cowan, 2020). Similarly, a study on adolescents in Nepal concluded that self-esteem plays a moderating role in the relationship between perceived social support and psychological well-being (Poudel et al., 2020). Additionally, research on young adult women in the United States found that self-esteem dependent on social media feedback is associated with a higher risk of poorer psychological well-being (Sabik et al., 2020).

Theoretically, self-esteem is significantly related to several dimensions of psychological well-being, such as self-acceptance, environmental mastery, and purpose in life (Archana & Thomas, 2021; Akram, 2017). For instance, women with healthy self-esteem tend to be more resilient and capable of facing challenges with an optimistic attitude (Izydorczyk et al., 2018). This helps them manage stress and negative emotions more effectively, contributing to better psychological well-being (Klainin-Yobas et al., 2021). Moreover, self-esteem influences how women establish and maintain interpersonal relationships, so positive

self-esteem can enhance the quality of these relationships, which is essential for psychological well-being (Ruvalcaba-Romero et al., 2017).

Family Communication

Family communication is defined as the process of exchanging information, opinions, and feelings among family members, which can be verbal or non-verbal (Verleye et al., 2024). This process is essential for establishing and maintaining healthy relationships within the household, fostering an environment of unity, affection, and mutual respect (Huang et al., 2023). Various studies emphasize the importance of the quality of relationships with family members in individuals' psychological well-being (Gilligan et al., 2017). For example, a study conducted on adults in China during the COVID-19 pandemic confirmed that perceptions of family well-being were associated with the quality of family communication (Wong et al., 2022). Additionally, research on overweight adolescents in Iran found that both communication and family functioning directly affected adolescents' psychological well-being (Kaveh Farsani et al., 2020). Similarly, a study on women in Turkey observed that family communication directly influenced psychological distress (Geçer & Yıldırım, 2023).

Theoretically, positive family communication promotes healthy self-esteem and self-acceptance, which are essential for psychological well-being (Torres-Soto et al., 2022). It also facilitates the development of positive interpersonal relationships both within and outside the home (Tabrizi et al., 2024). Therefore, open and respectful family communication can help women set goals and face challenges effectively, contributing to greater environmental mastery and a sense of purpose in life (Ji, 2023). This is crucial for psychological well-being, as it enables women to feel more confident and motivated in their personal and professional projects. Similarly, positive family communication fosters personal growth by allowing women to explore their interests and develop new skills, helping them better manage stress and adversity (Gecer & Yilidirim, 2023). In summary, healthy communication can act as a protective factor, reducing the risk of psychological distress and promoting more stable emotional well-being (Grevenstein et al., 2019).

Although previous research has documented independent associations between self-esteem, family communication, and psychological well-being, little is known about how these factors interact within a predictive model. Specifically, it remains unclear whether family communication has a direct effect on psychological well-being when self-esteem is taken into account. Addressing this gap in knowledge, this study aims to analyze the combined predictive capacity of self-esteem and family communication in explaining psychological well-being among women in southern Peru.

In previous studies, for example, González et al. (2008) developed a structural predictive model of mental and physical health that highlighted the influence of social support and self-esteem in reducing stress and improving the mental health of women in Mexico. Similarly, García et al. (2013) developed a predictive model of life meaning and psychological well-being, emphasizing that a sense of purpose significantly predicts overall psychological well-being, particularly in dimensions such as self-acceptance, life purpose, and environmental mastery. Both models were crucial for addressing women's mental health, as they identified key factors that could be targeted for interventions to improve psychological well-being. Understanding and addressing these predictors can help develop more effective strategies to promote mental health in this population group.

Thus, this study seeks to fill this knowledge gap to aid in designing personalized intervention programs that address the specific needs of this group, where it is essential to prevent issues such as depression and anxiety, which are common among women (Thibaut, 2017).

Objective and hypothesis

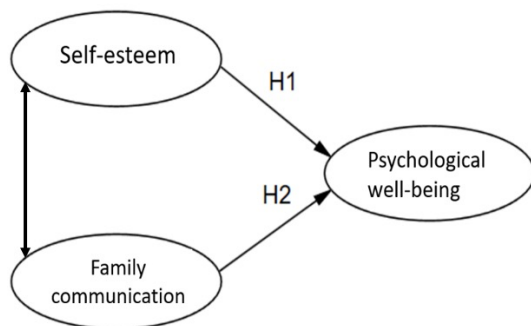
Based on existing literature, this study aims to examine whether self-esteem and family communication jointly predict psychological well-being among Peruvian women. Specifically, the following hypotheses are proposed:

(H1) Self-esteem significantly predicts psychological well-being.

(H2) Family communication significantly predicts psychological well-being.

These hypotheses derive from theoretical frameworks emphasizing the role of individual self-perception and social interactions in shaping mental well-being (Ryff, 1995; Deci & Ryan, 2008). The following research hypotheses were proposed (Figure 1):

Figure 1
Theoretical model.



METHODS

Study design

This study employed a cross-sectional predictive design, as it aimed to analyze the relationship between the study variables to predict their behavior at a single point in time (Ato et al., 2013).

Study participants

A total of 499 women residing in the city of Juliaca participated in the study. The following inclusion criteria were: 1) being women, 2) Peruvian, and 3) over 18 years of age. The exclusion criteria did not include the participation of minors, foreigners, or women who had not given their consent. The ages of the participants ranged from 18 to 56 years ($M = 35.0$ and $SD = 9.1$). Of the participants, 34.5% reported cohabiting, 32.9% married, 29.7% single, 1.8% divorced, and 1.2% widowed; currently residing in Juliaca, and fluent in Spanish. A non-probabilistic purposive sampling method was used.

The sample size was determined based on minimum recommendations for structural equation modeling (SEM), which suggest that a sample size greater than 250 increases the likelihood of model validation (Schumacker y

Lomax, 2016). Given the complexity of our model, a sample size of $n = 499$ was deemed appropriate.

Instruments

1. Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale: This scale was validated in the Peruvian context by Ventura-León et al. (2018). It contains ten statements with four Likert-type response options, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. The scale demonstrated evidence of construct validity ($CFI = .997$, $RMSEA = .020$) and reliability with omega coefficients greater than .80. In the study sample, internal alpha coefficients of .81 and .72 were obtained for positive and negative self-esteem, respectively.

2. Family Communication Scale (FCS; Olson et al., 2006): Validated in the Peruvian context by Copez-Lonzoy et al. (2016), the FCS consists of 10 items, with Likert-type response options ranging from 1 (extremely dissatisfied) to 5 (extremely satisfied). The scale demonstrated evidence of construct validity ($CFI = .995$, $AGFI = .992$, $RMSEA = .000$) and reliability ($\alpha = .88$). In the study sample, $\alpha = .85$ was obtained.

3. Psychological Well-Being Scale for Adults (BIEPS-A; Casullo, 2022). Domínguez-Lara (2014) validated the BIEPS-A in the Peruvian context. It contains 13 items, in a structure of four correlated dimensions (Acceptance/control of situations, Autonomy, Social Bonds, Projects), with Likert-type response options ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The scale demonstrated evidence of construct validity ($CFI = 1$, $GFI = .97$, $RMSEA = .078$) and reliability ($\alpha = .81$). In the data of the present study, alpha coefficients between .71 and .78 were obtained for the dimensions of the scale (view Table 1).

Procedimiento

This study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Graduate School at Universidad Peruana Unión (Reference: 2022-CE EPG-0000142). Data collection was conducted online via a virtual questionnaire designed in Google Forms, which was distributed through social media platforms (Facebook and Instagram), WhatsApp, and email. The first part of the questionnaire included the study instructions and objectives. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, emphasizing that participation was voluntary and anonymous.

Statistical analysis

The study model was evaluated using structural equation modeling (SEM) with the MLR estimator, which is robust to deviations from normality in inferential statistics and suitable for numerical variables (Muthen & Muthen, 2017). To analyze collinearity, separated models were specified, where each predictor was regressed on the remaining predictors. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) was calculated based on the R-squared value. A VIF value of 2.3 was obtained, indicating no problematic collinearity (Hair et al., 2022). Model fit was assessed using the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). Model fit was evaluated using CFI > .90 (Bentler, 1990), RMSEA < .080, and SRMR < .080 (Browne & Cudeck, 1992), indicating an acceptable model fit. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha (α). Data analysis and

calculations were performed using "R" software version 4.2.1, and the "lavaan" package version 0.6-12 (Rosseel, 2012) was used for the analyses.

RESULTS

To examine the predictive relationships between self-esteem, family communication, and psychological well-being, we conducted a structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis. The scores for the study variables were scaled between 0 and 30 to facilitate visualization, ensuring that this procedure did not affect the correlation values between the variables. In Table 1, descriptive results such as skewness (g1) and correlation results are between -.44 and .70 in absolute value for the study variables. The table also shows the internal consistency coefficients (Cronbach's alpha), which ranged from .61 to .85.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics, internal consistency (α), and correlations among Self-Esteem, Family communication, and psychological well-being

Variables	M	DE	g1	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Positive self-esteem	23.0	4.8	-0.3	.81	-						
2. Negative self-esteem	10.4	5.5	0.0	.72	-.44	-					
3. Family communication	21.0	4.3	-0.8	.85	.40	-.35	-				
4. Acceptance/control of situations	16.6	3.1	0.2	.69	.47	-.39	.42	-			
5. Autonomy	15.8	3.2	-0.5	.61	.42	-.34	.36	.59	-		
6. Links	16.1	3.2	0.1	.69	.43	-.34	.45	.53	.45	-	
7. Projects	17.0	3.2	0.2	.78	.52	-.40	.36	.70	.66	.61	-

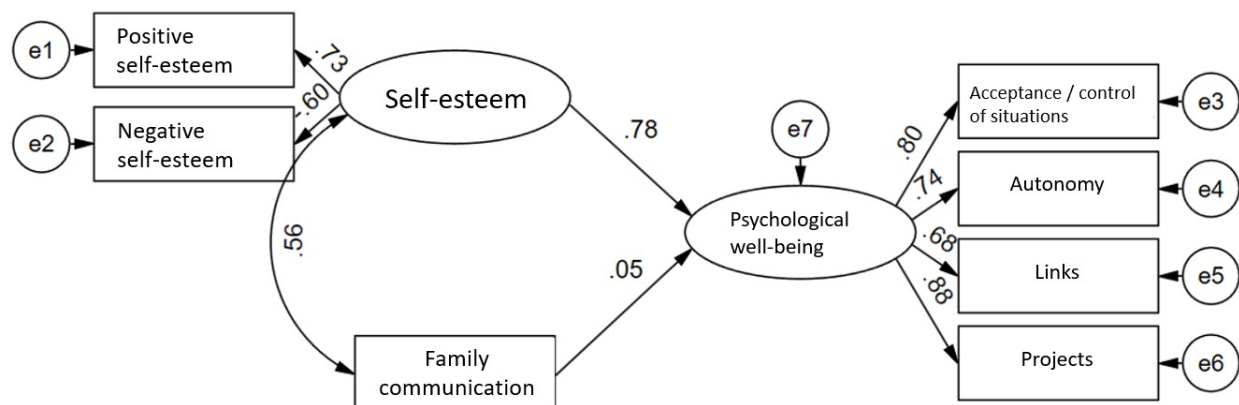
Note. g1: skewness, α alpha coefficient

Adequate fit was obtained in the analysis of the proposed model: $\chi^2(12) = 29.5$, $p < .001$, CFI = .980 ($> .90$), RMSEA = .053 ($< .080$), and SRMR = .030 ($< .080$). These values indicate a good fit to the data (Bentler, 1990; Browne & Cudeck, 1992), supporting the adequacy of the explanatory model. Hypothesis 1 (H1) about the effect of self-esteem on psychological well-being was confirmed in the model, $\beta = .78$, 95% CI [.40, .70],

$p < .001$, accounting for a large proportion of variance. However, Hypothesis (H2), regarding the effect of family communication, was not confirmed, $\beta = .05$, 95% CI [-.06, .12], $p = .538$, suggesting that, in this sample, the role of family communication may be minimal. Additionally, 65% of the variance in psychological well-being was explained by this model. The results are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Results of the structural explanatory model of psychological well-being. Standardized parameter estimates are shown.



DISCUSSION

The World Health Organization (WHO) (2022) posits that good mental health is rooted in adequate psychological well-being. However, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, various measures disrupt people's daily lives, causing stress, anxiety, depression, distress, insomnia, and generalized fear (D'Addario et al., 2021), particularly affecting women (Iglesias et al., 2022; Tekkas et al., 2022). In this context, the objective of this study was to determine whether self-esteem and family communication predict psychological well-being in women from the city of Juliaca.

The present study demonstrates that self-esteem is the strongest predictor of psychological well-being in women from Juliaca, explaining a large proportion of the variance. This means that women with higher self-esteem maintain higher levels of psychological well-being. This effect size is consistent with previous research (Yan et al., 2020) and reinforces the central role of self-perception in mental health. Psychological well-being is an important measure of quality

of life (McGregor & Little, 1998), and depends on emotional experiences and a healthy sense of self-esteem (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Therefore, women who desire better psychological well-being should aim to maintain adequate self-esteem. Improving self-esteem plays a buffering role against anxiety and promotes mental and physical health (Pepping et al., 2013). Consistent with previous findings (Rehman et al., 2021; Yan et al., 2020), the present study confirms that self-esteem is a strong predictor of psychological well-being. These results align with the theory of self-determination de Deci y Ryan (2000), which postulates that individuals with high self-esteem experience greater psychological well-being due to their ability to satisfy intrinsic psychological needs. Conversely, a lack of self-esteem leads to uncertainty and bad moods (Lau, 2019). However, unlike prior studies that highlight the positive role of family communication (KavehFarsani et al., 2020; Wong et al., 2022), our findings suggest that family communication does not significantly contribute to psychological well-being in this sample of Peruvian women. This discrepancy may be explained by the high prevalence of dysfunctional households in Juliaca (Inquilla Mamani et al., 2020; Reyes & Oyola, 2022).

Dysfunctional families lack a healthy family unity, which causes each family member to feel less close, valued, and understood by the others. This tends to generate unfavorable communication patterns and low levels of family satisfaction (Shon & Lee, 2024). It appears that communication within the home does not always translate into greater well-being. Future studies should explore possible moderating effects, such as the perceived quality of family communication or household structure.

The results of this study have several important implications. Theoretically, these findings align with Deci and Ryan's social self-determination theory (1985, 2000), in which psychological well-being is explained by self-esteem. Thus, when the psychological need for self-esteem is satisfied, it promotes better psychological well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Practically, the results contribute to the literature on subjective well-being, as they inform strategies to help women, especially those in Juliaca, improve their well-being, particularly in the context of many social and economic challenges (Pari, 2019; Vargas & Callata, 2021). Additionally, the instruments used in this study can serve as similar research to explore the role of self-esteem, family communication, and psychological well-being. Intervention programs should focus on enhancing self-esteem to improve the psychological well-being of women.

Despite its valuable contributions, this study presents several limitations that must be considered. First, its cross-sectional design prevents the establishment of causal relationships, limiting the ability to determine the long-term impact of self-esteem and family communication on psychological well-being. Second, the use of self-report measures may have introduced social desirability bias, as participants might have provided inflated scores on self-esteem and well-being. Third, the study focused exclusively on women from Juliaca, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other Peruvian or Latin American populations. Future research should consider employing longitudinal designs to examine whether the relationship between self-esteem and well-being remains stable over time. Additionally, given the unexpected lack of association between family communication and well-being, future studies should explore possible moderating factors (e.g., perceived quality of family interactions, household dynamics). It would also be valuable

to incorporate qualitative methodologies to gain a deeper understanding of how Peruvian women perceive and experience these variables.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study highlights the crucial role of self-esteem in promoting psychological well-being among Peruvian women. While family communication did not emerge as a significant predictor, this finding underscores the complexity of family dynamics and the need for further research on cultural and contextual moderators. These results have important implications for mental health professionals and policymakers, emphasizing the need to develop self-esteem enhancement programs tailored to vulnerable populations. By fostering self-worth and resilience, such interventions can contribute to the psychosocial well-being of women in contexts of adversity.

Declaration of competing interest:

The authors have no Competing or conflicting interests.

Fuentes de financiamiento / Funding:

No funding was received to support the writing of this research paper.

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was provided by all participants.

Data Availability Statement

The data used in the present study can be requested from the corresponding author.

Additional information

No additional information is available for this paper.

Acknowledgements

None.

Permission of the original creators of the instrument

No, permission was not necessary

Ethics approval

This study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Graduate School at Universidad Peruana Unión (Reference: 2022-CE EPG-0000142).

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