



Psychological Well-being in Young University Students and the Perception of Affection Received from Grandparents

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Abstract: Psychological well-being is a central variable in positive psychological functioning, influencing self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, personal growth, life goals and autonomy. A positive relationship between grandparents and grandchildren can be a variable associated with the psychological well-being of both parties. The aim of this study was therefore to explore the relationship between the psychological well-being of young university students and the perception of affection received from their grandparents. 240 young university students of both genders aged between 18 and 25 took part in the study. The Scale of Affections between Grandparents and Grandchildren and the Scale for Measuring the Manifestation of Psychological Well-being were used. The results obtained show that there is a relationship between the psychological well-being of young university students and the perception of affections, particularly with regard to the “Love and Esteem” sub-scale.

Keywords: positive psychological functioning, psychological well-being, affection, grandparents, grandchildren, young university students

INTRODUCTION

Psychological Well-Being of Young University Students

Attending university is a time of significant transition, marked by changes in family presence and support, alongside the many adjustments inherent to this stage of life. This period is often seen as a time of confrontation, characterized by numerous challenges for young adults. These may include geographical distance from their closest family and social circles, while simultaneously navigating new interpersonal relationships and exploring unfamiliar organizational and social environments (Castro and Almeida, 2016; Nicholas, Soptich, Tyson, Abraham, Perry, and Gillum, 2018). Beyond the new experiences associated with entering university, students' daily lives become more structured and demanding, requiring greater autonomy in decision-making and personal responsibility—particularly regarding the existence (or lack) of healthy behaviors (Nicholas et al., 2018). As a result, the transition from adolescence to adulthood, experienced by young university students, can be a period in which mental health and psychological well-being are significantly impacted (Mansson, 2013¹)

It is important to clarify that well-being cannot be solely defined by the absence of illness. As a complex and multifaceted concept, it is challenging to define precisely, as it

encompasses both emotions and affect, as well as psychological functioning (Vaz Velho, 2017). However, there is a general consensus that the concept of well-being originates from philosophical and scientific discussions (Monteiro, Tavares, and Pereira, 2012) centered on the debate between hedonism and eudaimonia. On one hand, hedonism is based on the pursuit of happiness through the avoidance of pain (VandenBos, 2015), which forms the foundation of the Subjective Well-Being model. On the other hand, eudaimonia refers to happiness achieved through self-realization and a sense of life purpose (VandenBos, 2015), aligning with the Psychological Well-Being model (Ryff and Keyes, 1995; Ryff and Singer, 1996).

Since well-being encompasses positive psychological functioning and its components, the Psychological Well-Being model emerges as the most comprehensive and relevant framework for addressing this concept (Monteiro, Tavares, and Pereira, 2012). In this regard, psychological well-being can be identified through six key dimensions of positive psychological functioning: self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, environmental mastery, personal growth, life purpose, and autonomy (Ryff and Keyes, 1995; Ryff and Singer, 1996). Therefore, it is crucial to examine the significance of psychological well-being in the daily lives of young university students and to explore potential predictors that may influence it.

Gender is a key variable when studying psychological well-being and its relationship with attending University. Specifically, research indicates that being a female university student is a negative predictor of psychological well-being, meaning that females in University tend to report lower levels of psychological well-being compared to their male counterparts (Nogueira and Sequeira, 2020).

Additionally, social involvement and sociability emerge as important predictors of psychological well-being in young University students (Monteiro, Tavares, and Pereira, 2012; Nogueira and Sequeira, 2020). Bhagchandani (2017) found that higher levels of loneliness among university students are associated with lower psychological well-being, highlighting the significance of social engagement and interpersonal relationships. Similarly, Zwettler, Reiss, Rohrmann, Warnecke, Luka-Krausgrill and Van Dick (2018) found social identification to be a protective factor for mental health in young university students.

In the psychometric study of the “Scale for Measuring the Manifestation of Psychological Well-Being”, adapted for the Portuguese population (Monteiro, Tavares, and Pereira, 2012), it was observed that university students' psychological well-being can also be predicted by factors such as happiness, control, self-esteem, and balance. Regarding the role of self-esteem, Duru and Balkis (2017) demonstrated that lower self-esteem is associated with lower psychological well-being. Their study also highlighted a link between reduced psychological well-being and increased procrastination among university students. In terms of managing challenging situations, Freire et al. (2019) found that psychological well-being has a direct positive effect on coping strategies and an indirect positive effect on self-efficacy in young university students. This suggests that higher levels of psychological well-being are associated with greater use of coping strategies, such as re-evaluating situations, planning, and seeking social support.

Other variables may also influence the psychological well-being of young university students. As a primary source of support, the family functions as a dynamic system aimed at maintaining balance amid internal and external pressures for change (Alarcão, 2002).

Given the significant transitions associated with entering University, it is essential to consider the family's impact on students' psychological well-being.

Grandparents' Affections and the Psychological Well-Being of Young University Students

Research indicates that positive family interactions contribute to the psychological well-being of young university students (Yeh, 2018). Numerous studies have explored the impact of parental presence and practices on psychological well-being during higher education (e.g., García, Sánchez and Parra, 2019; Cui, Darling, Lucier-Greer, Fincham, and May, 2018; Schiffrin et al., 2014; Love and Murdock, 2004). However, as noted by Mansson (2013¹), it is essential to further investigate other family-related variables, such as affection, the presence of grandparents, and their influence on the psychological well-being of young university students.

In analyzing the role of grandparents in the lives of young university students, the emotional aspect emerged as particularly significant. Students reported that their grandparents play a meaningful role in shaping their character and providing support during challenging moments (Dias and Silva, 2003). This pattern is consistent with findings from studies by Mansson and Booth-Butterfield (2011), Mansson (2013¹) and Bernhold (2019).

According to Mansson and Booth-Butterfield (2011), affective communication from grandparents is positively associated with the social involvement of young university students, while it is negatively related to discomfort and isolation. This suggests a linear relationship between grandparents' affection and their grandchildren's social engagement—the more affection grandparents express, the more likely young university students are to be socially active, reducing their sense of isolation. Similarly, Bernhold (2019) found that affective communication between grandparents and young university students is indirectly linked to lower levels of loneliness and contributes to a sense of stability and routine, fostering healthy relationships and a sense of belonging. In line with these findings, Mansson (2013¹) identified a positive influence of the “memories and mood” and “love and esteem” facets of perceived grandparental affection on the psychological well-being of young university students. This, in turn, was associated with a reduction in depressive symptoms. Furthermore, exposure to humor - one of the four dimensions of affect - has been shown to serve as an effective coping strategy for university students facing instability. These findings align with previous research on the role of humor in psychological well-being (e.g., Miczo, 2004; Danzer, Dale, and Klions, 1990). Regarding the presence of grandparents, Durão (2017) found that young university students exhibit higher levels of psychological well-being when they maintain frequent contact with their grandparents, such as through family lunches and regular interactions. Furthermore, research suggests that both the presence of grandparents and a positive relationship with them contribute to a sense of security in navigating life circumstances, including the transition to higher education (Dias and Silva, 2003; Taylor, Robila, and Lee, 2005).

Research Question

In line with Mansson's (2013¹) findings, the literature review suggests that affection serves as a protective factor for psychological well-being. Accordingly, the present study aims to examine the relationship between the affection young university students perceive from

their grandparents and their psychological well-being. Additionally, the study explores whether perceptions of received affection vary based on sociodemographic variables such as age and gender. Furthermore, it investigates the relationship between psychological well-being and perceived affection from grandparents, as well as potential differences within this relationship.

METHODS

Participants

A total of 240 young university students, aged between 18 and 25 years ($M = 21$; $Mo = 23$), participated in this study. Of these participants, 59.6% were female and 40.4% were male. Regarding academic levels, 64.6% were enrolled in the 1st Cycle of Studies (undergraduate degree), 33.3% in the 2nd Cycle of Studies (master's degree), and 2.1% in the 3rd Cycle of Studies (doctoral program).

Given that the participants were young university students, it was relevant to examine aspects related to their grandparents, including: (1) whether their grandparents were alive at the time of data collection; (2) the presence of a close relationship between grandchildren and their living grandparents; (3) the age of their living grandparents; (4) frequency of contact with grandparents; (5) nature of the relationship; (6) geographical distance; (7) regularity of meetings; (8) activities shared with grandparents; and (9) perceived changes in any aspect of the relationship.

Regarding these aspects, it was observed that 93.8% of young university students had at least one living grandparent at the time of data collection. Additionally, 87.5% reported having a close relationship with a living grandparent.

To account for the diversity in the ages of participants' grandparents, they were categorized into five age groups: under 60, 60-65, 66-70, 71-80, and over 80 years old. The majority of participants had grandparents in the over-80 age group.

With respect to contact and relationships between grandchildren and grandparents, the maternal grandmother was identified as the grandparents with whom students had the most frequent contact, followed by the paternal grandmother. Grandfathers, in comparison, showed a lower percentage of contact with their grandchildren. Furthermore, when analyzing the nature of family relationships, 93.8% of participants reported experiencing a positive family environment between their parents and grandparents.

Regarding geographical distance, 55.8% of young university students reported living far from their grandparents, while 44.2% lived in close proximity. Despite this, 72.3% regularly met with their grandparents and engaged in various activities together.

The most commonly reported shared activities (63.2%) included walking or hiking, talking, sharing meals, and leisure activities. Additionally, 18.4% of participants mentioned providing assistance to their grandparents, such as helping with household chores, shopping, medical appointments, cognitive or educational support, and companionship.

Family gatherings, such as festivities or birthdays, accounted for 8.8%, while 6.7% of participants reported no shared activities with their grandparents. Finally, 2.9% mentioned periodic visits, which included visits to their grandparents' homes or care facilities.

Regarding perceived changes in the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren after entering University, 74.1% of young university students reported no noticeable change, while 25.9% observed a shift in their relationship with their grandparents. The primary change reported was a reduction in time spent with grandparents at the start of their academic journey. However, on an emotional level, improvements were noted, as students felt an increased level of attention, affection, and concern from their grandparents. Many participants also expressed feeling closer to their grandparents, with a heightened sense of care and appreciation for them.

Furthermore, entering University appeared to foster a greater sense of confidence and perceived responsibility in grandparents toward their grandchildren, strengthening the intergenerational bond.

Regarding the level of Psychological Well-Being in the present sample, the median (Med = 93) was used as the cut-off point for the Scale for Measuring the Manifestation of Psychological Well-Being (EMMBEP). The observed mean score was 91.57, indicating that the young university students in this study did not reach the expected threshold for psychological well-being.

Additionally, a t-test analysis was conducted to examine potential differences in psychological well-being based on age and gender among the participants (Table 1).

Table 1: Mean and t-Test for Equality of Means according to the Gender of Young University Students

Subscale	Female N = 143 M	Male N = 97 M	t	p
Happiness	-.105	.155	1.99	.048

The t-test for independent samples showed that male university students presented a higher level of manifestation of psychological well-being, namely in the “Happiness” subscale ($M = .155$; $p = .048 < .05$), compared to female students (Table 1). With regard to gender, no significant differences were found in terms of the manifestation of psychological well-being.

Measures

Sociodemographic Questionnaire

A sociodemographic questionnaire was developed for this study, aiming to gather key background information on participants. Specifically, it included variables such as gender, age, academic status, proximity to grandparents, their age, frequency of contact, and other relevant aspects of their relationship. Additionally, the questionnaire incorporated qualitative questions designed to capture a deeper understanding of how participants perceive the importance of their relationship with grandparents and how this connection is expressed through shared leisure activities.

Scale of Affection between Grandparents and Grandchildren (Mansson, 2013²; Arsénio, Ribeiro and Pedro, 2018).

In order to analyze the level of affection between grandparents and grandchildren, the Affection Scale between Grandparents and Grandchildren (Arsénio et al., 2018) was applied, more specifically the Portuguese version of The Grandchildren's Received Affection Scale was used (Mansson, 2013²). This scale, composed of 17 items evaluated on a Likert scale (1 - strongly disagree to 7 - strongly agree), aims to measure how grandchildren perceive affection from their grandparents across four key dimensions: Love and Esteem - e.g., "My grandfather/grandmother tells me that he/she loves me."; Affection - e.g., "My grandfather/grandmother listens to what I have to say."; Memories and Humor - e.g., "My grandfather/grandmother tells me stories about his/her life."; Celebratory - e.g., "My grandfather/grandmother sends me postcards for my birthday and special holidays.". Regarding the internal consistency and reliability, Mansson (2013²) reported Cronbach's alpha values between .73 and .91 for the four subscales. In the Portuguese adaptation by Arsénio and colleagues, 2018, the reliability of the subscales was assessed: the alpha for the affection subscale was .92 (compared to .90 in the original scale); .94 in the love and esteem subscale (compared to .89 in the original scale); .90 in the memories and humor subscale (compared to .89 in the original scale) and, finally, of .58 in the celebratory subscale (compared to .75 in the original scale). The results indicate strong reliability for the first three subscales but weak reliability (.58) for the Celebratory subscale, suggesting limitations in its ability to consistently measure celebratory interactions between grandparents and grandchildren.

Manifestation of Psychological Well-Being Measurement Scale (EMMBEP) (Massé, Poulin, Dassa, Lambert, Bélair and Battaglini, 1998; Monteiro, Tavares and Pereira, 2012).

The scale aims to assess global psychological well-being through six subscales: self-esteem (four items), balance (four items), social involvement (four items), sociability (four items), control of self and events (four items) and happiness (five items) - accounting for a total of 25 items assessed on a five-point Likert scale (e.g. 1 - never, 5 - almost always). The total score on the scale is obtained by summing the item scores, meaning that higher total scores indicate a greater manifestation of psychological well-being. Regarding the psychometric adequacy, Massé et al. (1998) found Cronbach's alpha values between .71 and .85, deeming the scale psychometrically adequate. In the Portuguese adaptation by Monteiro et al. (2012), the following Cronbach's alpha values were reported: Happiness: .89 (adequate); Self-esteem: .83 (higher than .75 in the original scale); Control of Self and Events: .85 (same as the original scale); Sociability: .83 (higher than .75 in the original scale); Social Involvement: .67 (weaker than the original .75); Balance: .69 (weaker than the original .71). The results suggest strong reliability for most subscales but indicate a weaker level of reliability in the "Social Involvement" and "Balance" subscales (Monteiro et al., 2012).

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection for this study was conducted using Google Forms, chosen for its efficiency and accessibility in reaching participants. The platform ensured a rigorous and

ethical completion process, offering features similar to traditional data collection methods - especially in the possibility of presenting and clarifying the Informed Consent, ensuring the confidentiality and ethical standards necessary for carrying out a study. The use of Google Forms provides the option of requiring responses to all items posted, ensuring not only rigorous responses but also the absence of blank responses. Finally, it is worth highlighting that, in case of doubts or questions when filling out the instruments, the institutional email of the author of the study was provided so that they could be clarified.

Analysis

All quantitative analysis procedures were performed using the SPSS Packages software. To characterize the sample, descriptive and frequency analysis was carried out in relation to demographic variables (regarding the mean and percentages) and, qualitatively, content analysis was carried out in relation to the open-ended questions belonging to the sociodemographic questionnaire applied. The independent samples t-test was used to determine whether there were differences in the perception of affection received from grandparents and also to verify whether there were differences in the overall manifestation of psychological well-being of young university students according to the age and gender of university students under the criterion of homogeneity of variances (Field, 2009).

A bivariate correlation analysis was conducted using Spearman's correlation coefficient. This method was chosen due to the violation of the normality assumption, making it more appropriate than a parametric test, as suggested by Field (2009). The primary objective of this analysis was to examine the relationship between psychological well-being and the perception of affection received from grandparents. To further investigate the effect of perceived affection on psychological well-being, a multiple linear regression analysis was performed. This analysis aimed to provide a deeper understanding of the impact of affection perception on psychological well-being. Several statistical considerations were taken into account, including the Durbin-Watson value to assess the independence of residuals, interpretation of the regression curve, verification of outliers, and the homoscedasticity assumption (Field, 2009).

Finally, a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was performed to determine if there are differences in the relationship between psychological well-being and the perception of affection received based on the age and gender of the young university students. The analysis adhered to the assumptions of multivariate normality, which was tested through an examination of univariate normality. Additionally, the assumption of equal variances-covariances was verified using the Box M Test, as recommended by Field (2009).

RESULTS

The results obtained through the statistical procedures previously described are presented below. To explore potential differences in the perception of affection received based on gender and age among young university students, the mean, t-values, and p-values were analyzed. Specifically, a t-test was conducted to determine whether differences in perceived affection existed between genders. Although differences were observed across

various subscales, the Levene Test confirmed the assumption of equal variances, and the t-test results indicated that these differences were not statistically significant.

Similarly, to examine whether age influenced the perception of affection received, a t-test analysis was performed to compare means (Table 2), ensuring compliance with the assumption of equality of variances.

Table 2: Mean and t-Test for Equality of Means as a Function of the Age of Young University Students

Subscale	18-21 years	22-25 years	t	p
	N = 131 Mean	N = 109 Mean		
Love and esteem	.062	-.076	1.06	.286
Affection	.060	-.072	1.02	.307
Memories and humor	.125	-.149	2.09	.037
Commemorative	.095	-.114	1.61	.107

The t-test analysis revealed significant differences in the perception of affection received based on age, particularly in the "Memories and Humor" subscale. Specifically, young university students aged 18 to 21 reported perceiving higher levels of affection in this category compared to those aged 22 to 25 (Table 2).

To address the main objective of the study, examining the relationship between psychological well-being and the perception of affection received from grandparents, a bivariate correlation analysis was conducted, comparing the subscales of the two assessment instruments used. Following a normality test using the Shapiro-Wilk test, it was determined that the Spearman correlation coefficient would be used for data interpretation (Table 4).

The results indicate that the "Love and Esteem" subscale correlated significantly, albeit weakly, with all subscales measuring the manifestation of psychological well-being, particularly "Happiness," "Self-Esteem," and "Control." However, no significant correlation was found with the "Balance" subscale. Similarly, the "Affection" subscale showed a significant but weak positive correlation with all psychological well-being subscales, including "Sociability" and "Self-Esteem". Notably, unlike the "Love and Esteem" subscale, the "Affection" subscale correlated with all dimensions of psychological well-being, including "Balance." Regarding the "Memories and Mood" subscale, results indicate a significant positive correlation with all EMMBEP subscales, particularly "Sociability," "Self-Esteem," "Happiness," "Control," and "Involvement." Finally, the "Commemorative" subscale did not show a significant positive correlation with any of the psychological well-being subscale.

To corroborate the correlation results, a Multiple Linear Regression analysis was conducted to determine whether, beyond a simple relationship, the GRAS subscales have an effect on the EMMBEP subscales. After verifying the assumptions required for Multiple Linear Regression, results indicated that 6.4% of the overall variance in the manifestation of psychological well-being can be explained by the type of affection perceived by young university students ($R^2 = 0.064$). Through ANOVA, it was confirmed that the model fit differs

when the predictor is included, meaning that incorporating the GRAS subscales leads to a higher overall score in the manifestation of psychological well-being ($p = 0.04 < 0.05$). However, further analysis revealed that among the GRAS subscales, only the "Love and Esteem" subscale had a significant effect on the overall score of psychological well-being in young university students (Table 3).

Table 3: Trajectory between Predictors and Criteria (Regression Equation)

Model	Non-Standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	EP				Tolerance	VIF
Love and esteem	3.28	1.48	.188	2.21	.028	.551	1.81
Affection	1.03	1.70	.059	.609	.543	.420	2.38
Memories and humor	.985	1.68	.056	.587	.558	.430	2.32
Commemorative	-.626	1.37	-.036	-.457	.648	.648	1.54

Table 4: Bivariate Spearman Correlation between GRAS and EMMBEP Subscales

Variables	Happiness	Sociability	Control	Involvement	Self-esteem	Balance
Love and Esteem	.245**	.195**	.208**	.161*	.235**	.077
p	<.000	.002	.001	.012	.000	.233
Affection	.250**	.291**	.253**	.204**	.255**	.215**
p	.000	.000	.000	.001	.000	.001
Memories and Humot	.203**	.270**	.227**	.212**	.236**	.146*
p	.002	.000	.000	.001	.000	.024
Commemorative	.123	.089	.099	.112	.080	.122
p	.056	.169	.126	.083	.215	.058

To examine whether there are differences in the relationship between psychological well-being and the perception of affection received, depending on the age and gender of young university students, a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was conducted. This analysis included the GRAS subscales, the overall score for the manifestation of psychological well-being, and the age of the participants. Although the results indicated differences in the overall score when associated with the "Affection" subscale ($p = 0.03 < 0.05$), an in-depth analysis of the relationship did not reveal statistically significant differences. Consequently, it was concluded that age does not influence the relationship between psychological well-being and the perception of affection received.

Similarly, a MANOVA was performed to assess whether gender differences influence this relationship. The analysis demonstrated that significant differences exist in the relationship between psychological well-being and the overall score of manifestation of psychological well-being, particularly in the "Affection" subscale [Pillai's Trace = 1.089; $F = 1.449$; $p = 0.002 < 0.05$], as shown in Table 5 and Table 6.

Table 5: MANOVA between GRAS Subscales and Overall Score of Manifestation of Psychological Well-Being according to the Gender of Young University Students

Effect		Value	F	p
Love and esteem	Pillai's Trace	1.45	1.14	.171
Affection	Pillai's Trace	1.09	1.45	.002
Memories and humor	Pillai's Trace	.914	1.15	.140
Commemorative	Pillai's Trace	.709	1.05	.349

Table 6: Effect Tests between the Variables under Analysis

Origen	Dependent variable	gl	F	p
Affection	Global Note	108	1.47	.018
	Gender	108	1.37	.043

In this sense, discriminant analysis was carried out. Although Wilks' Lambda did not significantly discriminate between the two groups, the Discriminant Function Coefficients were also analyzed in response to the significant values of MANOVA (Table 6).

Table 7: Discriminate Function Coefficients

	Function
	1
Global Note	.979
GRAS Affection	-.480

The fact that the variables exhibit opposite values (i.e., one positive and the other negative) suggests that the differences between the groups are driven by the differences between the variables, with both contributing to the linear combination—that is, both variables are significant as their values approach the range of 1 and -1 (Field, 2009).

Thus, the findings indicate that gender influences the relationship between psychological well-being and the perception of affection received among young university students. Consequently, it is necessary to determine which gender exhibits a stronger association in this relationship (Table 8).

Table 8: Differences of Discriminant Function

	Function
Gender	1
Male	.141
Female	-.095

The positive and negative connotations of the functions indicate that the two groups exhibit different behaviors when analyzing the relationship. Specifically, the positive

connotation observed in the male gender ($f = .141$) compared to the negative connotation in the female gender ($f = -.095$) suggests a notable distinction. Thus, it can be concluded that male university students tend to demonstrate a higher overall score in the manifestation of psychological well-being when associated with the “Affection” subscale.

DISCUSSION

At the beginning of the data analysis, it was important to determine the level at which young university students perceived the affection received from their grandparents. Upon analyzing the “Love and Esteem” subscale, which includes explicit expressions of love, praise, and the significance of the grandparent-grandchild relationship, it was concluded that there is an overall positive perception. This finding aligns with participants' descriptions of changes in their relationship with their grandparents after entering University, where they reported experiencing greater attention and affection from their grandparents, leading to increased closeness. In this regard, the results also resonate with the qualitative analysis conducted by Sciplino and Kinshott (2019), who identified key themes in young adults' perceptions of their relationships with their grandparents. These themes included contact and mutual appreciation, both of which contribute to a deeper sense of understanding and respect toward grandparents. This suggests that the bond between grandparents and grandchildren remains significant even as young adults transition into higher education, reinforcing the emotional support and connection that grandparents provide during this stage of life. The same pattern can be observed in the “Affection” and “Memories and Humor” subscales, which relate to grandparents' concern for their grandchildren's lives and the sharing of personal stories. The young university students in this study also reported experiencing these forms of affection from their grandparents. This suggests that all four subscales reflect the presence of a positive and affectionate relationship between young university students and their grandparents. According to Mansson (2013²), these subscales indicate that grandparent's express sincerity and attentiveness toward their grandchildren, fostering an environment of warmth and consideration. This aligns with the findings of the present study, where young university students acknowledged their grandparents' genuine interest in their well-being and their role in offering both emotional support and meaningful interactions.

It is also important to highlight the low levels recorded in the “Commemorative” subscale, which refers to grandparents' recognition of special occasions in their grandchildren's lives. This lower value may be attributed to the incomplete cultural adaptation of the questionnaire, as the specific item – “My grandfather/grandmother sends me postcards on birthdays and holidays” – reflects an action that does not necessarily involve direct communication (Mansson, Floyd, and Soliz, 2017). In Portuguese culture and tradition, the presence of grandparents at birthdays and festive gatherings is significantly more common compared to the country of origin of the scale (United States). In Portugal, such occasions tend to involve direct interaction and physical presence rather than distant gestures like sending postcards. This cultural difference may have influenced the lower scores in the “Commemorative” subscale, as the expression of affection in Portugal is often demonstrated through active participation rather than written messages. Mansson, Floyd, and Soliz (2017) also found that this subscale tends to be the least representative when assessing the affection young adults receive from their grandparents, reinforcing the idea

that commemorative gestures may not be the primary way in which grandparents express their love and care.

Regarding the analysis of differences in the perception of affection received based on age and gender, the findings indicate no significant differences concerning gender. This result aligns with Mansson's and Booth-Butterfield (2011) study, which found that the gender of young university students does not influence the emotional relationship between them and their grandparents. However, when considering age, the results demonstrate that university students aged between 18 and 21 tend to perceive higher levels of affection in the "Memories and Humor" subscale compared to those aged between 22 and 25. This finding may be explained by the fact that younger university students are at the beginning of their academic journey, a period often marked by heightened stress levels (Bewick, Koutsopoulou, Miles, Slaa and Barkham, 2010; Rendón, Villalobos, Rovira and Gracia-Leiva, 2020).

The expression of affection captured in the "Memories and Humor" subscale—such as storytelling and humor from grandparents—acts as a protective factor for students' well-being. According to Mansson (2013¹) these interactions are associated with lower levels of depressive symptoms. Therefore, the present study suggests that young university students aged between 18 and 21 perceive greater affection in this domain, potentially contributing to their psychological well-being by offering emotional support during a crucial transitional phase in their lives.

The correlation analysis conducted to examine the relationship between psychological well-being and the perception of affection received from grandparents revealed a significant positive relationship across the various subscales, except for the "Commemorative" subscale. Although the correlations were weak, they were statistically significant, indicating a low probability (5% to 1%) of error in stating the existence of a relationship. These findings align with those of Mansson, Floyd, and Soliz (2017), who found that affectionate communication from grandparents—particularly in the dimensions of "Love and Esteem," "Affection," and "Memories and Humor"—is associated with psychological well-being, providing young university students with essential emotional resources for maintaining their mental health (Mansson, 2014). Moreover, similar to the present study, the authors also concluded that the "Commemorative" subscale does not influence young adults' psychological well-being, further supporting the lack of correlation in this dimension (Mansson, Floyd and Soliz, 2017). Interestingly, while Mansson (2013¹) did not initially find a significant relationship between the "Affection" subscale and psychological well-being, the present study suggests otherwise. The findings indicate that affection from grandparents plays a role in reducing depressive symptoms in young adults (Moorman and Stokes, 2016). Furthermore, the greater the perceived affection from grandparents, the higher the likelihood that grandchildren will experience greater psychological well-being (Mansson and Booth-Butterfield 2011).

To further explore the relationship between affection received from grandparents and psychological well-being, a Multiple Linear Regression analysis was conducted. Although only 6.4% of the overall psychological well-being score was explained by the type of affection perceived by young university students, it was found that only the "Love and Esteem" subscale had an effect on their overall psychological well-being. This finding contradicts the existing literature on the subject, as variables typically associated with psychological distress—such as stress, loneliness, or depressive symptoms—were not

significantly linked to the “Affection” and “Love and Esteem” subscales (Mansson, 2013¹). Instead, prior studies have identified the “Memories and Humor” subscale as the sole predictor of psychological well-being among young university students (Mansson, 2013¹).

Although there is a relationship between psychological well-being and perception of affection received, no significant differences were found in the age variable. Thus, although there are significant differences in psychological well-being depending on age, it can be concluded that there is no specific age at which perceived affects have an influence on the psychological well-being of young university students.

However, when the variable “gender” was analyzed in the relationship between psychological well-being and perceived affects, significant differences were found. Although no significant differences were found in relation to gender in association with perceived affects (Mansson, 2011) in the previous objectives, this variable is demonstrated here as a predictor of the influence of effects on psychological well-being - notably when it comes to the male gender. In fact, this is the gender that presents the highest levels of psychological well-being (as already verified in the present study and by Nogueira and Sequeira, 2020). Given the above, it can be seen that the male gender tends to present a higher overall score of manifestation of psychological well-being when associated with the “Affection” subscale - one of the scales associated with the protection of psychological well-being in young university students (Mansson, 2014; Mansson, Floyd and Soliz, 2017).

CONCLUSION

The positive results obtained in the present study emphasize the significant role that grandparents play in the lives of their young university grandchildren. Given the data collected, it can be stated that grandparents contribute positively to the well-being of these young adults, a finding that could have implications for psychological interventions targeting this population. The relationship between grandparents and grandchildren is reciprocal—both benefit from the bond (Souza, 2014). On one hand, grandparents have the potential to enhance the lives of their young adult grandchildren (Huo et al., 2017). On the other hand, grandchildren provide grandparents with motivation to lead more active and creative lives, adding a unique and meaningful dimension to this final stage of life (Lisboa et al., 2018).

However, the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren remains significantly less studied compared to other family relationships, such as the parent-child dynamic (Mansson, Floyd, and Soliz, 2017). This gap in the literature posed a limitation in conducting a more in-depth analysis, restricting the ability to expand knowledge and compare findings across studies.

Given this, it is essential to emphasize the need for further psychometric evaluations of the “Scale of Affection between Grandparents and Grandchildren” (Mansson, 2013²) to ensure its proper adaptation and validation within the Portuguese cultural context. This is particularly relevant for the “Commemorative” subscale, which may not fully align with Portuguese traditions and values. Expanding research in this area, especially among young university students, could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the significance of grandparents-grandchild relationships.

As this is a limitation of the study, future research should incorporate a qualitative analysis of the existing relationship to provide a deeper understanding. This should consider

not only the perspective of the grandchildren but also that of the grandparents. Additionally, future studies could explore variables such as “grandparents’ lineage,” which would help determine how the generational background of grandparents influences the affection perceived by young university students and its impact on their psychological well-being.

“Demographic distance” is another important variable that should be taken into account in future studies. Since many young university students live away from their area of residence, this distance could affect the emotional relationship between grandparents and grandchildren. Previous studies have found that grandparents who are more emotionally involved with their grandchildren tend to live closer geographically than those who are less involved (Bates, Taylor and Stanfield, 2018). However, it is essential to note that living in close proximity is not a sole determinant in fostering positive relationships. In today’s world, modern communication technologies help bridge geographical gaps, offering opportunities for more frequent and meaningful connections between family members who are physically distant (MaloneBeach et al., 2018).

In conclusion, despite the limitations, the results of the present study offer valuable contributions to the field of psychology. The findings suggest practical applications and directions for future research, particularly regarding the role of grandparents in supporting the psychological well-being of young university students. Thus, the study serves as a solid foundation for further exploration into family dynamics and their influence on mental health.

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