# Balochistan: An Evaluation of the Level of Psychological Empowerment and Well-being among Baloch and Other Ethnic Groups

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**Abstract**

*The current study examines the impact of individual differences in group identity on psychological empowerment and well-being among members of the ethnic minority and majority. "Baloch" have been taken as an ethnic stigmatized minority while, "others" include Pakhtun and other small ethnic groups for the study purposed, living in Balochistan, Pakistan. A total of 211 students from two Universities from Quetta, that is, University of Balochistan Quetta and Balochistan University of IT Engineering and Management Sciences, Quetta, participated in the study. Among the participants, 76 (58 female, 18 male) self-identified as Bloch, while 135 (105 female, 30 male) self-identified as others. Mean age of the sample was 18.4 years. Psychological empowerment was measured with Zimmerman Psychological Empowerment Scale. Zimmerman engaged several scales, with 4 subscales, that may be ideal in gauging Psychological Empowerment. However, Well-being was assessed using Ryff Well-Being Scale with five subscales ($\alpha=.86$) were employed in the present study. Participants reported their race/ethnicity, sex, urban/rural status, and age. Descriptive analyses and multiple regression analyses were conducted for the study. The results of present study reveal that the associations between psychological empowerment, well-being and group identity were dissimilar for members of Others, as compared to a Baloch relationship group. The results demonstrate that upper level of group identity; predicted bigger psychological empowerment and a greater positive well-being among Others. In comparison, for Baloch participants, these relationships remained less and unpredictable. Furthermore, it was revealed that for Others, the relationship between well-being and group identity was arbitrated by psychological empowerment. This mediation proof suggests that group identity might have direct effects on well-being.*

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People require a hardy sense of group identification to uphold positive well-being[1]. It is opined that social identity is a fragment of one's self-concept that initiates from the evidence that one is a member of a specific social group, pooled with the value and emotional importance of that affiliation[2]. Certainly, social-psychological research demonstrates that social group identification satisfies the needs for sense and belonging and contributes towards positive well-being[3].

Furthermore, researchers[4] have discovered that group identity is predominantly advantageous for members of their groups that are undervalued in society (e.g., ethnic minorities in the U.S.). It means that advanced levels of group identification are positively associated with positive well-being among the members of some ethnic minorities (e.g., high self-evaluation, high esteem, fewer depressive symptoms, etc.). Though considerable research has studied the relationship between well-being and group identity for ethnic minority members; however, less has explored towards vital variables that may elucidate this relationship. It is proposed; therefore, that psychological empowerment is an important variable that is probable to contribute to positive well-being, particularly among ethnic minorities[5].

Basically, Psychological empowerment is a process through which individuals acquire mastery and control over their own lives[6], and also attain a critical understanding of their own environment. According to various theorists[7], there exist positive relationships among empowered people and increased personal, interpersonal, and political power - that may make better physical and psychological health[8]. In line with the idea, we hypothesize psychological empowerment as a predictor of well-being as it is probably to reduce feelings of powerlessness. Even though, theoretical viewpoints have shown a possible relationship between empowerment, group identity, and psychological well-being. Only limited empirical researches have tested their interrelationships[9]. Consequently, the main objective of the present study is to explore the role of psychological empowerment as an intermediary of the relationship between well-being and group identity, particularly among members of a stigmatized group "The Baloch"[10].

**Ethnic Minority Identity**

Globally in general and in the USA, especially, members of ethnic minority groups remain low under the ethnic majority group and usually majority group often hold low to minority. As ethnic minorities are often undervalued in the greater society, members of these groups experience discrimination and stigmatization[11]. Much social psychological research has established and has found the prevalence of discrimination and societal prejudice[12]. As an example, research has revealed that the

members of high-status groups are even biased towards their own in-group[13] and this bias even aggravates when their status is threatened[14]. Though the literature reveals that members of powerful and high-status groups show discrimination and prejudice, yet, there is scarcity of literature about the ways in which ethnic minority members cope with the stigma[15].

Since ethnic minorities are usually treated as inferior, early theorists[16], suggested that they are likely to suffer with shortages towards their well-being. However, much experimental research has opposed this idea and in its place has shown that differences in levels of self-esteem between stigmatized and non-stigmatized groups are not observed always. This conclusion may be a result of conscious or unconscious strategies that ethnic minorities use to cope with the stigma[17].

It has been proposed that group identification is a coping strategy that effectively shields the negative effects associated with being a group member of an ethnic minority (i.e., target of discrimination)[18]. Their study suggested that African American participants' of their study group identity safeguards the negative relationship between perceiving Psychological well-being and oneself as a target of discrimination. These findings remained consistent with the previous that African Americans' higher levels of group identity is greatly associated with more positive well-being (e.g., lower levels of hopelessness, life satisfaction). The result of the study conducted reveals that these relationships remained unreliable for White participants. Even the similar conclusions have been presented already[19]. Therefore, there exists empirical sustenance in favor of the notion that especially among members of ethnic minority groups; the group identity is associated with well-being. Significantly, research focusing upon group identity as a coping strategy has overlooked the role that psychological empowerment may have in the well-being of an ethnic minorities.

## Psychological Empowerment

Psychological empowerment is the "process of increasing personal, interpersonal, or political power, which allows people to take action to improve their life situations". It was postulated that psychological empowerment may be activated by bearing in mind an amalgamation of 1) mastery, 2) control, and 3) efficacy (i.e., individual empowerment). *Feelings of control* are defined as the perceptions that salient or valued aspects of one's life are manageable, while *Mastery* is defined as perceptions of competence. *Desire for control* is defined as aspirations to such aspects. *Efficacy* is defined as beliefs about one's capability to exercise influence over one's performance in relation to events that affect one's life[20].

Empowerment, as a process, has the ability to amend the problems of devalued and powerless people (e.g., depression, negative affect, restricted access to resources. Likewise, empowerment may have a distinct relevance to members of ethnic minority groups. It means that individual empowerment is a process that (a) may be conceptualized as a means for managing powerlessness and stigma; (b) may subsidize to a greater positive well-being. However there are only two studies that have provided evidence that psychological empowerment impacts well-being positively[21].

The low-income families who were provided empowering health information did report higher scores on the indexes of well-being. Using a clinical sample, an additional study showed that acquisition a sense of empowerment was positively related with reduction in psychological distress and discovered that, highly empowered Black women had better coping skills as compared to other Black women[22]. Lastly, a study of African American fathers involved in an empowerment-based intercession discovered a positive association between self-esteem and psychological empowerment. Reported researches provide an initial indication that psychological empowerment predicts well-being; nevertheless, hardly a couple of studies have focused on members of an ethnic minority group, and even measured the supplementary role of ethnic group identity[23].

Composing both theory and research on group identity, well-being and empowerment, it is suggested that group identification is expected to predict psychological empowerment among the members of ethnic minority groups. Researchers have contended that when one becomes conscious of the stigma associated with an adopted identity, one is likely to become involved in the process of identity development. Explicitly, theory has recognized three means by which members of stigmatized groups manage their low social status: (a) to identifying with a dissimilar social group; (b) evolving group pride; and (c) concentrating on the uniqueness of one's group membership. Greatest pertinent to the present studies, the latter two strategies are indicative of group identity, associated with positive well-being among ethnic minorities[24].

Various scholars[25] have proposed that empowerment is predicated on the advancement of positive ethnic identity**.** For example, described that African American woman in White-majority settings interchange toward empowerment when they affect a positive sense of their own racial identity. That is considered a consequence of empowerment. Research has also revealed that highly identified African American students report willingness to engage in events to ease social change[26]. Likewise, it was exhibited that when African American mothers stressed upon the importance of racial identity in their parenting,

their daughters showed higher levels of self-efficacy among themselves[27]. It is established, therefore, on this preliminary evidence, and it is proposed that, for ethnic minorities, there exists a positive relationship between group identity and psychological empowerment and that psychological empowerment mediates the relationship between group identity and well-being[28].

## Balochistan

Balochistan is the poorest and the least developed province of the federation of Pakistan, with the lowest literacy rate (29.81), fewest educational institutions, lowest Gender Parity Index (GPI), deplorable health care facilities with unfavorable indicators in contrast to all the provinces of Pakistan[29].

Balochistan encompasses 43 percent of Pakistan's land spread over 347,190 kilometers; however, possesses only five percent of country's population.  In east, it has provinces of Sindh and Punjab with a part of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa. It comprises of 760 kilometers of coastline of the Arabian Sea. Balochistan lies at the cross-roads of South Asia, Central Asia and Middle East, culturally and geographically. It has fascinating geo-strategic and military importance where it is quite safe to build military installations[30].

Nevertheless, in spite of its vast area, abundant natural resources, unique geographical significance, cumulate both openings and challenges. Balochistan is rich in mineral resources, the Baloch hardly get any advantage from these resources rather they say "Province's resources are exploited". There exists a strong sense of political deprivation among Baloch people due to their under representation and under employment at federal level. The incompetent political and administrative institutions, a weaker writ of the government and absence of rule of law cumulates to significant governance issues[31].

The uneven development and modernization of the economic system in Pakistan, in specific and in Balochistan, in general, is extensively believed to be based upon inherent discriminations. Resultantly growing economic adequacies, rising economic pressures and sense of deprivation and disempowerment has triggered conflict at the political and socio-economic levels in the least developed region of Balochistan[32].

Social and political analysts perceive processes of social change at work in Baloch society. It is believed, even, that tribal system is no longer the core issue but economic, socio-economic development and exposure of the Baloch social structure to the outside world is playing a significant role in the change. In Balochistan, recently, the middle class Baloch are increasingly getting empowered by education and trade[33].

There is a transitional change accompanied by a class conflict in the province due to, elites try to maintain tribal status quo at one hand; while emerging middle class, persistently pushing for positive change, on the other hand[34]. Balochistan is a multicultural province dominated by Baloch, Brahvi, Pakhtun and small clusters of other ethnic groups classified on the basis of regions possessed by them. Consequently, ethno-cultural conflict revolves around language, ethnicity and culture[35].

History has depicted some problematic groups in Balochistan on the basis of ethnicity and language. These include Baloch-Brahvi and Pakhtun-Baloch having multifold reasons and issues[36]. Referring various estimates, the Baloch make up between 40-60 percent of Balochistan population. Whereas Pakhtun, the second biggest ethnic group, are believed to make up between 28~50 percent as native inhabitants. Whatever are the actual figures, there is a considerable and increasing tolerance among the Baloch regarding the presence and ever increasing presence of Pakhtun refugees from Afghanistan. With an estimate of 80,000 – 1.4 million, the provincial capital Quetta is believed to have Pakhtun majority. Presently, Baloch have one third majority in the electoral constituencies of Balochistan[37].

Therefore on the facts and figures, it is argued that Baloch may be taken as an ethnic stigmatized minority in this study. While, "others" include Pakhtun and other small ethnic groups for the study purposed, living in Balochistan.

## Method

*Participants*
211 students from two Universities from Balochistan, (University of Balochistan Quetta and Balochistan University of IT Engineering and Management Sciences, Quetta), participated in the study. Among the participants, 76 (58 female, 18 male) self-identified as Bloch, while 135 (105 female, 30 male) self-identified as others. Mean age of the sample was 18.4 years.

*Procedure*
Participants were given a random code number instead of names to maintain confidentiality. Participants were given measures of psychological empowerment, group identification, and well-being arranged in random order, and they were given demographic information at the end.

*Measures*
Psychological    empowerment    was    measured    with    Zimmerman

Psychological Empowerment Scale[38]. Zimmerman engaged several scales that may be ideal in gauging psychological empowerment. However, in the present study, measures of control ideology, desire for control, self-efficacy, and mastery were used to assess a composite psychological empowerment variable as used and adopted by Zimmerman.

Well-being was assessed using Ryff Well-Being Scale[39]. Five subscales, including self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, purpose in life, and personal growth ($\alpha$.=.86) were employed in the present study. Participants reported their race/ethnicity, sex, urban/rural status, and age.

## Results and Discussion

*Preliminary Analyses*
Descriptive analyses and multiple regression analyses were conducted for the study. For the regressions, Baloch were coded as –1 and Others were coded as 1. One-tailed tests $(p<.05)$ for all analyses were adopted. Others and Baloch participants did not differ in their mean levels of either psychological empowerment or wellbeing. However, Others ($M$=3.27) reported higher levels of group identity than did Baloch ($M$=2.70), $t$(207)=8.74, p<.001. There were no associations between the primary variables and participant sex, area, or age. These variables were not included in subsequent analyses.

As shown in the first column of Table 1, the results reveal a marginal main effect of ethnicity, such that Others reported lower levels of psychological empowerment than did Baloch, $t$(207)=1.35, p<.10. In addition, there was a relationship between group identity and psychological empowerment, such that higher levels of group identity were associated with higher levels of psychological empowerment, $t$(207)=3.73, $p<.001$. As predicted, these associations were qualified by a significant interaction between ethnicity and group identity indicating that the

Table. 1:Multiple Regressions for Psychological Empowerment and Well-being with Group Identity and Ethnicity as Predictors

| Variable Predictor | Psychological empowerment | Well-being |
|---|---|---|
| Ethnicity | -.10† | -.07 |
| Group identity | .31*** | .36*** |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Ethnicity Group Identity | .14* | .12* |
| Overall $R^2$ | .07 | .11 |
| $F(3, 210)$ | 5.56*** | 8.73*** |

*Note.  Standardized betas are reported.*
†p<.10. *p<.05. ***p<.001.

Relationship between group identity and psychological empowerment was different for Others than for Baloch, $t(207)=2.08$, p<.05. The patterns of findings reveal that although Baloch had significantly higher levels of well-being than did Others.
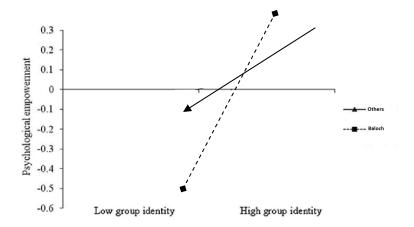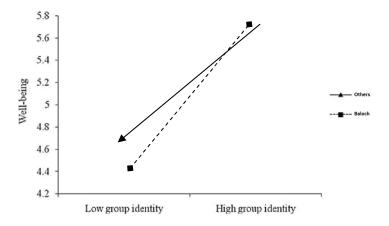


Figure. 1: Relationship between ethnicity (plotted at 1 SD above and 1 SD below the mean) and ethnic identity on psychological empowerment.

Figure. 2: Relationship between ethnicity (plotted at 1 SD above and 1 SD below the mean) and ethnic identity on well-being.

In summary, the results of this study suggest that the influence of group identity on well-being may be, at least in part, a result of psychological empowerment.

Simultaneous regression analysis was conducted to test whether the association between group identity and well-being was reduced when psychological empowerment was entered into the model for Baloch[40]. The overall simultaneous regression was significant ($R^2$=.40), $F(2, 73)$=43.91, $p<.001$. Similar to the findings for Others, group identity was positively associated with well-being ($\beta$.21), $t(133)$=2.45, $p<.01$. However, consistent with the zero-order correlations, the relationship between group identity and psychological empowerment was not significant among Baloch participants. As such, psychological empowerment did not mediate the relationship between group identity and psychological empowerment among Baloch.

**General Discussion**
The results of present study disclose that the associations between psychological empowerment, well-being and group identity were dissimilar for members of Others, as compared to a Baloch relationship group. The results demonstrate that upper level of group identity; predicted bigger psychological empowerment and a greater positive well-being among Others. In comparison, for Baloch participants, these relationships remained less and unpredictable. Furthermore, it was revealed that for Others, the relationship between well-being and group identity was arbitrated by psychological empowerment. This mediation proof suggests that group identity might have direct effects on well-being.

The results of the current study demonstrate that the relationships among well-being and psychological empowerment are dissimilar for Others, in comparison to Baloch. Pattern of these results may be a consequence of variety in the life experiences of Others and Baloch. Since the racial identity of Baloch in Balochistan is less likely to be a basis of stigma, it is unlikely that a coping strategy such as a discriminating sense of group identity is essential for positive well-being.

The literature on psychological empowerment suggests a relationship between psychological empowerment and group identity. Additionally, whilst people perceive identity relevant social injustices, their racial identity may trigger the process of psychological empowerment[41]. As regards those who were strongly identified with their ethnic groups, these experiences might have directed to psychological

empowerment. Present research is among the first to highlight that higher levels of group identity are positively associated with higher levels of psychological empowerment among Others. Theory has postulated an association between well-being and psychological empowerment, but a very small number of studies have supported this theory[42].

The results revealed provide additional evidence of the link between positive well-being and psychological empowerment among both Baloch and Others. Present study is the first study to propose that Others with higher levels of group identity might experience added positive well-being as they feel greater psychological empowerment. Even though, these findings prop up theories of empowerment. Present study has a variety of limitations. First, the sample of students is relatively small. To verify the pattern of relationships revealed in analyses, prospective research should aim to collect data from a larger number of members from relevant ethnic minority groups[43].

Secondly, the results of this study were derivative of a convenience sample of University students; though Zimmerman[44] indicated that college aged participants show varying levels of psychological empowerment, college aged samples may not believe that they are targets of stigma in relation to their race, therefore, other members away from Universities and colleges may be approached for the study.

The goal of the present work was to investigate the relationship between well-being and psychological empowerment among varied ethnic groups. The results of this research imply that psychological empowerment is good for the well-being of both, Others and Baloch.  It's assumed that psychological empowerment might serve as a positive coping method merely for the members of devalued social groups.

Developing a more and a complete understanding of the usefulness of psychological empowerment for the well-being of members of ethnic minority groups is one mean to alleviate this inequality.[45]

## Notes & References

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