

IDENTITY STRUGGLES, EMBITTERMENT, AND LIFE SATISFACTION IN INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS OF WAZIRISTAN

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This study explores how Identity Struggles and Embitterment Influence Life Satisfaction in Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from Waziristan, Pakistan. By using cross-sectional correlation design, participants (N=250) were selected through snowball sampling method, and responded to the standardized measures of In-Group Identification Scale, Embitterment and Satisfaction with life. Correlational analysis indicated that stronger in-group identity was negatively associated with significantly lower embitterment and higher satisfaction with life. The mediation analysis completed through PROCESS macro indicated that embitterment mediated the relationship between identity struggles and life satisfaction significantly. While lower in-group identity predicted higher embitterment and consequent decline in life satisfaction. These findings suggest that having a strong sense of in-group identity can buffer displaced persons against embitterment and tend to increase their life satisfaction. The findings indicate the importance of psychosocial initiatives and interventions that increase in-group identification and address embitterment, in order to increase life satisfaction among displaced people.

Keywords: Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), In-Group Identification, Identity Struggles, Embitterment, Life Satisfaction, Waziristan, mediation analysis.

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Introduction

INTRODUCTION

According to the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (1998), Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are people who have fled or been forcibly displaced because of or in order to avoid the dangers posed by armed conflict, generalized violence or violations of human rights, natural calamities or man-made disasters but they remain within the borders of their home country.

Internal displacement has reached unprecedented levels around the world. Millions of people are forced to flee their homes due to conflicts, violence and natural disasters. According to the 2024 Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID) by Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC), approximately 75.9 million people are currently living as IDPs. Sub-Saharan Africa currently accounts for over half of all IDPs. Armed conflicts have been the primary driver of displacement: Sudan with recent hostilities, Palestine and the Democratic Republic of the Congo have forced millions more to flee their homes (IDMC, 2024).

Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), historically a semiautonomous region bordering Afghanistan, has a distinct sociopolitical and administrative framework based on tribal customs. Geographically, FATA consisted of seven agencies and six frontier regions, with harsh terrain and a porous Durand Line that facilitated cross border tribal alliances. Prior to 9/11, administration in FATA was indirect, mediated by the colonial-era Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR), which authorized Political Agents (PAs) and tribal Maliks to maintain order through collective accountability. Following 9/11, FATA became a major area of global counterterrorism activities, disrupting the delicate sociopolitical balance (Latif & Musarrat, 2012). United States' post-9/11 assault of Afghanistan, which drove Taliban and Al-Qaeda fighters into Waziristan's mountainous terrain. The region's sociopolitical isolation, inadequate government, and deep religious zeal provided ground for radicalization.

Pakistan's post-2001 military actions to evict foreign militants unintentionally encouraged local rebels, who characterized their struggle as a "defensive jihad" against state involvement and foreign influence. By 2007, the Tehreek Taliban Pakistan (TTP) was strengthened by the merger of various militant factions, escalating attacks on the Security forces

in Pakistan and targets NATO in Afghanistan. Pakistani forces have engaged in several joint and independent military operations with the United States, beginning with Operation Enduring Freedom (2001-2002) and concluding with Operation Azm-e-Istehkam (2024). All of these military operations have had a severe influence on the life of tribal people in the former FATA especially both South and North Waziristan two of the seven agencies of former FATA. The killings of civilians, particularly women and children, the destruction caused by these operations to educational facilities, and the losses caused by suicide assaults all have a substantial influence on regional security (Zeb, 2011).

Over the years, Waziristan's military interventions have caused massive internal displacement. More than five million FATA citizens (including all seven Federally Administered Tribal Areas agencies) were forced to flee their homes and places of origin in 2008, when military operations against the insurgency triggered a multi-layered crisis in Pakistan's northwest, including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the former FATA. On July 14, 2014, roughly 80,302 families and 929,859 persons were displaced in North Waziristan. These big military operations have displaced about 1,429,859 people in North and South Waziristan. Significant humanitarian effects of these displacements have included difficulty accessing basic services, disruptions in education, and loss of livelihood. Following these operations and a brief period of peace, many people returned home (FDMA, Government of Pakistan, 2016).

The Pakistani government's insufficient support for IDPs from merged tribal areas has left the majority without adequate compensation—Rs400,000 for destroyed homes and Rs160,000 for partial damage, far less than the cost of rebuilding traditional compounds— with many still awaiting payments after the program's 2023 termination. Despite initial progress, restoration of schools, hospitals, and infrastructure stagnated in 2022 owing to financial cuts, costing an estimated Rs60 billion, while company compensation remains mostly ignored. Beyond humanitarian neglect, this institutional failure has the potential to fuel resurgent militancy, as residents disillusioned by perceived betrayal by authorities and unsolved grievances may oppose future migration efforts, allowing militants to, potentially, exploit dissatisfaction and destabilize Pakistan as a whole (Jamal, 2025).

1.1 Identity Struggles

Identity is one of the most basic and crucial elements of human and community life, and it is the subject of extensive research in a variety of academic fields, such as psychology, sociology, and anthropology, among others, each providing an alternative perspective into the nature of identity, its formation, and significance (Phinney, 2008; Javaid et al., 2024a). Identity is another dynamic and diverse thing that shapes people's ideologies about themselves and how bodies relate to the world (Gee, 2000; Ramzan et al., 2025). Essentially, identity comprises of how an individual feel about oneself and is perceived in respect to ideas, values and attributes they have that distinguish them with other people (Vignoles et al., 2011). Identity is basic to the social sciences, international relations and politics (Azmitia et al., 2008). The issue of identity has been a key aspect of human lives, whether in individual or group level (Crocetti et al., 2022).

Identity has been categorized in overlapping categories by various scholars who view identity along various axes of self-definition. Individual identity, based on personal traits, principles, and goals (Sedikides & Brewer, 2001), exists with social identities, which is created on bases of associations to groups, gender, class, or nationality (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Worldviews are influenced by cultural identification (often associated with ethnicity or migration (Phinney, 1990), which is supported by traditions and practices, so when it relates to situations of marginalization or structural inequality racial identity tend to appear strong (Helms, 1995). In the same way, national identity built on symbols, language and collective memory (Smith, 1991) can foster belonging or exclusion unlike religious identity whereby faith ideas are joined together with cultural and political affiliations (Javaid et al., 2024b ;Peek, 2005).

Identity, at the group level, can serve the purpose of social cohesion, and this is evident as groups can gather around some shared narratives or resentments (Gomez & Vazquez, 2015). Our identities are often in common and they mainly relate to political ideologies that govern the way communities react to social injustices and global challenges (Azmitia et al., 2008). Agency, in turn, is inseparable to the concept of personal identity; people create narrative purposefully to represent their ideals with the expectations to pursue society prescriptions internally (Cote, 1996).

Displacement affects the social and cultural structures that strengthen identity and belonging of IDPs. As Bisht (2024) points out, the loss of family, community, identity and

essential economic and legal anchors can have far-reaching psychological effects on the displaced populations. Theoretically IDPs retain their legal citizenship status, but poverty, poor access to documentation, justice and basic services means that this status is in practice more of a theoretical construct. The decay of the psychological aspects of citizenship - belonging and acceptance in the national community, further intensifies their alienation (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2023) and the socio-political isolation and a lack of a strong government in the region, along with its deep religious fervor, provided fertile soil for radicalization.

1.2 Embitterment

Inequality, degradation, vilification or humiliation are all facets of human experience and can lead to strong emotional consequences such as rage, hostility, shame, remorse, and, notably, embitterment (Bies & Tripp, 2002; Javaid et al., 2023). Embitterment has received increasingly scholarly attention in recent years due to its link to severe negative life events such as illness, marital conflict, bereavement, workplace adversity, and forensic challenges (Sensky, 2010; Blom et al., 2014; Michailidis & Cropley, 2016).

Linden (2003) developed the term "embitterment" to characterize the unpleasant emotions that arise when a person experiences an unjust, personally embarrassing, or cruel event, resulting in psychological anguish and a strong desire for revenge. While Linden emphasizes a single triggering episode, Sensky (2010) contends that this narrow focus makes it impossible for counselors to understand and manage the full range of personal and contextual components involved in any unpleasant experiences that people may have. The common thread running through its definitions is that perceived unfairness plays a crucial role in the development of embitterment. When persons experience events or procedures that they consider unjust, and when the negative emotion responses to such experiences fail to be adequately addressed or overcome with the passage of time, a condition of embitterment may ensue, where a change occurs in the felt emotions of anger generating to a more lasting condition of embitterment.

Embitterment can combine despair with a desire for vengeance, and in its most severe forms, it constitutes a pathological condition known as Posttraumatic Embitterment Disorder.

Despite its serious psychopathological features, psychiatry and clinical psychology have largely ignored it. Individuals display social disengagement, rejection of trauma-related cues, decreased motivation, violence or revenge fantasies, reluctance to accept aid, querulant behavior (e.g., protracted legal battles), and neglect of personal and professional duties. These interrelated expressions demonstrate embitterment's extensive impact, which causes anguish and impairs daily functioning (Linden, 2003; Linden & Maercker, 2011; Znoj et al., 2016; Michailidis, 2023).

1.3 Life Satisfaction

Research on 'Positive Psychology' (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) has emerged as an important new field in psychology. In stark contrast to psychology's traditional emphasis on negative emotions like melancholy and anxiety, an increasing number of academics are focusing their attention on the positive end of the emotional spectrum (Myers, 1992). Recently, the expanding discipline of positive psychology has highlighted the importance of psychology in addressing issues related to optimal functioning and happiness.

Nair and Gaither (1999) stated that life satisfaction is closely tied up with marital status, social support and chances of socializing with the environment. Moreover, the health, leisure, family, work, financial situation, social relationships, and self-worth are also suggested as the indicators of life satisfaction on a more often-used social scholar scale (Milovanska-Farrington & Farrington, 2021). Na-Nan and Wongwiwatthanakit (2020) presented a list of many measures of life satisfaction that other social scholars very seldom explore. So according to the people one needs at least five crucial indicators of satisfaction with life: (1) being eager to engage in something and being attentive to your living conditions; (2) being persistent and powerful as a sign of accepting life values; (3) having aims which coincide with your desires to achieve; this is a sign of success in life; (4) a good self-concept, being cheerful with the health and making a significant contribution to somebody or society; (5) a possibility to manage the mood, knowing how to become happy, to have a good attitude and positive feelings concerning other people. A number of life satisfaction indicators are suggested.

Internally displaced people (IDPs) are the most vulnerable people in the world. The epidemiological indication that cost of the mental health is greater in areas of the world that are in conflict and the post-conflict crises than the cost of countries that are not engaged in conflict

is convincing. This involves areas which have experienced ethnic wars of targeted violence due to political and civil upheavals. Forced displacement negatively affects mental health and well-being of people (Getanda et al.,2015).

1.4 Theoretical Underpinning

According to Social Identity Theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), membership in social groups, such as ethnicity, nationality, or region, plays a significant role in shaping one's self-concept. This group-based identity can boost self-esteem and a sense of belonging, particularly when there are clear in-group/out-group distinctions. SIT relies on social comparison, which can lead to identity confusion, low self-worth, and emotional suffering. Forced displacement can lead to a loss of place-based identities and limited opportunities for positive comparison with other nationalities, resulting in a weaker identification with the national in-group. Such fragmentation of national belonging can lead to emotions of exclusion and resentment, driving displaced people to seek alternative affiliations—such as regional or ethnic subgroups—that restore their dignity and psychological safety.

Baumeister and Leary's (1995) theory is that humans have a basic psychological need to establish and maintain significant one-to-one and group relationships. Belonging is not merely a social preference; it's a crucial element for psychological stability, self-esteem, and overall well-being.

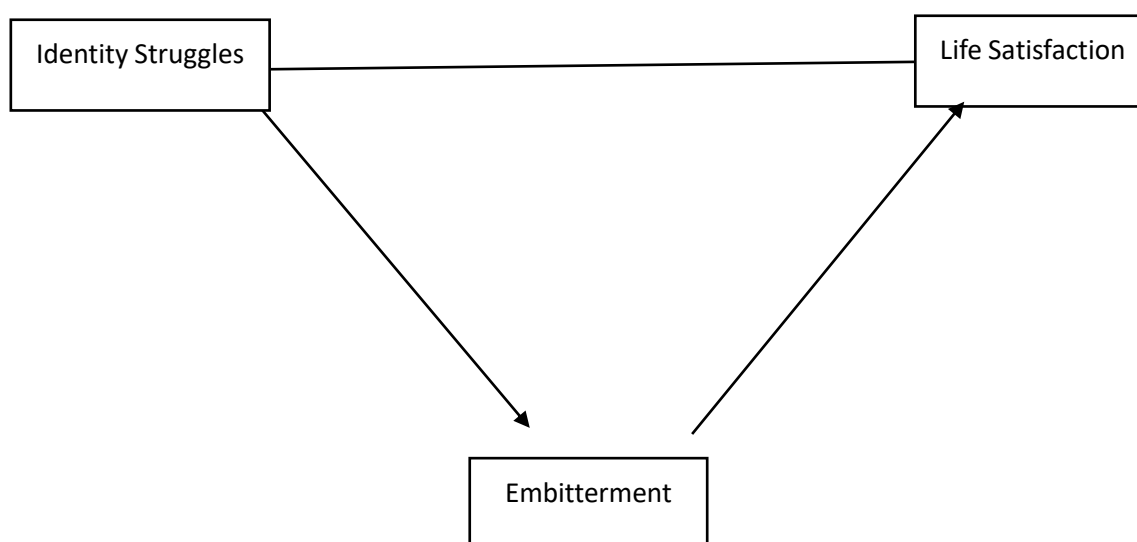
1.5 Rationale for the Study

The primary goal of the current study was to outline the key concerns related to the psychosocial effects of internal displacement. Previous research in Pakistan focused on the psychological, physical, and financial challenges that internally displaced individuals (IDPs) faced (Saqib & Nareen, 2015). This study investigated into how identity issues caused by displacement influenced life satisfaction among IDPs in Waziristan. It explored the role of Embitterment as a mediator, emphasizing how negative emotions could lower life satisfaction. These concepts had not previously been investigated jointly in the background of Pakistani IDPs or within an identity-based displacement context.

1.6 Objectives

1. To investigate the relationship between Identity Struggles, Embitterment and Life satisfaction.
2. To determine whether feelings of embitterment mediate the relationship between Identity struggles and Life Satisfaction.

1.7 Conceptual Framework



LITERATURE REVIEW

Displacement caused by conflict disturbs not only people's physical life, but also the psychological underpinnings that support identity, stability, and health. Steel et al. (2009) performed one of the most extensive and generally recognized meta-analyses on the psychological effects of mass violence, displacement, and trauma, particularly among refugees and internally displaced individuals (IDPs). Importantly, the study found that forced displacement was a powerful and persistent predictor of psychological illnesses. A recent Systematic Review by Bedaso and Duko (2022) and meta-analysis indicated that three in five IDPs having depression. Different empirical studies in Pakistan have examined the psychological effect of displacement among the internally displaced population (IDPs), particularly the conflict vulnerable regions such as KP and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Mujeeb (2015)

undertook a groundbreaking study on the psychological anguish experienced by internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in Pakistan's Jalojai camp, which housed a large number of civilians evacuated as a result of military operations in Swat. The findings revealed dangerously high rates of psychological distress among participants, particularly those who had lost family members or were directly exposed to violence and damage. Saqib and Nareen (2015) explored the psychological impact of internal displacement on people affected by military operations in North Waziristan, with a particular emphasis on IDPs living in Bannu. The findings demonstrated that displacement had not only disturbed the affected population's socioeconomic and physical security, but also had a significant negative impact on their psychological health.

Internally displaced people exist in a liminal position as "displaced citizens," stuck between formal legal membership in the nation-state and practical exclusion from its social, economic, and political responsibilities. According to Brun (2003), designating people as "internally displaced" creates a long-term social category that both marks and marginalizes them. This "abject citizenship" emerges because IDPs are perceived to "belong elsewhere," weakening their claims to full participation and establishing a perpetual temporariness in their lives. Brun goes on to suggest that this categorical discomfort splits IDPs' identities: they are ostensibly citizens, but are treated as outsiders, denied access to the same resources and protections as regular inhabitants. The humanitarian designation, which is intended to signify need, mistakenly stigmatizes and excludes, resulting in contradictions between citizenship standards and lived experience of exile (Brun, 2003).

Kiang et al. (2006) did a meta-analysis and discovered that ethnic identification correlates significantly with well-being across many cultural contexts, implying that a secure sense of ethnic belonging promotes beneficial psychological consequences. The study stressed that people with a strong ethnic identity are more resilient, which improves life satisfaction. According to Phinney (2008), a strong ethnic or cultural identity acts as a psychological buffer against external demands, and bicultural individuals—those who maintain connections to both heritage and host cultures—frequently experience improved well-being. She emphasizes that people who study and successfully commit to their cultural identity have better adjustment, more self-esteem, and more life pleasure.

Gul (2023) studied the life satisfaction of Afghan refugees living in Eastern Turkey, highlighting the importance of migration factors in determining post-migration wellbeing. The study discovered that migrants who emigrated for forced reasons—such as war, political persecution, or violence—had much lower life satisfaction than those who relocated for economic or family reasons.

A recent clinical study demonstrates how pain and injustice generate embitterment among displaced people. Spaaij et al. (2021) looked at 71 refugees and asylum seekers getting psychiatric care and discovered that 68% had clinically significant embitterment symptoms. The perception of wrongdoing and the loss of agency is the main cause of anger that continuously contributes to the depressive dimensions and a lack of life satisfaction. Ongoing injustice and perceived unfairness in areas affected by conflicts hinders survival's ability to process negative feelings and embitterment, negatively affecting individuals, families and communities (Kizilhan & Neumann's 2020). Emmelkamp (2023) explored the multifaceted nature of refugee's mental health and drawn attention to the trauma, displacement, and systematic injustice and how these are affecting the psychological wellbeing of the displaced ones, setting the basic ground for understanding embitterment. In Pakistan's Context, Javaid and Mahmood (2023), through a qualitative study on Pakistani university students, found that perceived unfair treatment and humiliation often manifest as embitterment, indicating how contextual injustices contribute to bitterness in local populations.

Kühn et al. (2018) investigated the psychological effects of embitterment and its link to well-being indices. Their findings demonstrated a strong negative relationship between embitterment and life satisfaction, implying that those who experience chronic embitterment—characterized by emotions of injustice, powerlessness, and constant anger—have much worse subjective well-being. The study stressed that embittered people frequently focus on perceived wrongs and unchangeable occurrences, stifling emotional rehabilitation and leading to psychological stagnation. These emotional states not only suppress good emotions but also reduce an individual's overall life satisfaction.

H1: There is significant relationship between Identity Struggles, Embitterment and Life Satisfaction

H2: Embitterment will mediate the relationship between identity struggles and Life Satisfaction

METHOD

3.1 Research Design

To explore the interrelationships between identity struggles, life satisfactions and the role played by embitterment, a cross-sectional correlational design is used.

3.2 Sampling and Data Collection

A purposive and snowball sampling approach was applied in recruiting people who are internally displaced (IDPs) in North and South Waziristan. The sample size was estimated using G*Power (3.1.9.4) which was 250.

3.3 Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

- Participants should be from south or north Waziristan
- Should be displaced because of violence or the ongoing conflicts in those areas
- Should be able to give informed consent
- Should be adult (Older than 18 years)

While those were **excluded**...

- Who cannot give informed consent
- Younger than 18 years
- Not Originally from South or North Waziristan
- Not displaced because of the ongoing conflicts or violence

3.4 Instruments

3.4.1 In-Group Identification Scale

The In-Group Identification Scale, which was originally established by Leach et al. (2008), is a standardized measure which is used to gauge the level of the psychological relationship and the sense of identification to a specific social group. It models group identification as a hierarchical structure entailing five first-order dimensions Solidarity, Satisfaction, Centrality, In-Group Self-Stereotyping (ISS), and In-Group Homogeneity (IGH) that are congruent with two higher-order dimensions Self-Investment and Self-definition. In the current research, the scale was translated into the Urdu language by the researcher (2025) with Alpha Cronbach 0.84, following a standard

forward-backward translation methodology to reflect linguistic and cultural equivalence of the Waziristan IDP population.

3.4.2 Embitterment Scale

The Embitterment Scale (Javaid, 2025) was used as a measure of the embitterment level of the participants, as it is aimed to evaluate negative emotional processes that occur after the perceived severe injustice or humiliation. The scale measures 20 items with five subscales as Reaction to Injustice (6 items), Revengeful Emotions (4 items), Decrease in Trust (3 items), Past Bitter Experiences (3 items) and Impact on Self-Confidence (4 items). Responses are measured on a 5-point Likert scale (Cronbach .75).

3.4.3 Satisfaction with Life

The overall satisfaction with life is measured using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985) to internally displaced persons (IDPs). The scale has a five item construct where each item is rated using a 7-point Likert-scale (Cronbach alpha of 0.80).

3.5 Procedure

The present study used cross-sectional quantitative research design to investigate the role of identity struggles in determining the life satisfaction among the internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Waziristan with embitterment as mediator. The sampling techniques involved purposive and snowball sampling. Informed consent was taken beforehand. The data were collected with the use of scales having standard psychometric properties.

3.6 Statistical Analysis

The statistical analysis was carried out in IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 22.0). Mean, standard deviation, frequencies and measures of normality were calculated to summarize demography and study variables. Cronbach was used to carry out a reliability analysis to determine internal consistency of the scales. Pearson correlation analysis would be utilized to check out the relationships between the variables. A mediation analysis was conducted using PROCESS macro v4.2 (Hayes, 2022; Model 4) with 5,000 bootstrap samples and 95% confidence intervals to test whether embitterment mediates the relationship between identity struggles and life satisfaction.



3.7 Ethical Standards

The research was conducted in strict observance of ethical research standards where protection of the rights, dignity and welfare of the participants have been taken care of. Each participant was informed and had given their consent having been given clear and culturally sensitive explanations about the purpose, the procedures and potential risk and the expected benefits of the study. Participation was a fully voluntary activity with withdrawal rights at any point.

RESULTS

This chapter provides results on the data analyses done in this research. Statistical analyses were conducted with the IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 22.0), and where appropriate the PROCESS macro (Version 4.2; Hayes, 2022) was applied to mediation analysis. The findings are presented in logical order where the descriptive statistics and reliability analyses come first, followed by correlational analyses and then proceed to hypothesis testing of moderated mediation and group tests.

Table 4.1

Demographic Characteristics of the Participants (N=250)

Variable	Category	n	%
Age	20–30	108	43.2%
	31–40	102	40.8%
	41–60	40	16.0%
Education	None	52	20.8%
	Primary	30	12.0%
	Middle	23	9.2%



	Matric	51	20.4%
	Intermediate	69	27.6%
	Bachelor	25	10.0%
Gender	Male	142	56.8%
	Female	108	43.2%
Duration of Displacement	1-4 years	6	2.4%
	5-8 years	48	19.2%
	9-13 years	135	54.0%
	14+ years	61	24.4%
Marital Status	Unmarried	97	38.8%
	Married	141	56.4%
	Divorced/Widow	12	4.8%
Family System	Nuclear	61	24.4%
	Joint	189	75.6%



Pre-Displacement Residence	South Waziristan	150	60.0%
	North Waziristan	100	40.0%

The participants (N = 250) comprised mainly of people in their young to middle adulthood life, with 43.2 percent of the respondents aged between 20 and 30 years and 40.8 percent aged between 31-40 years. They were mostly male (56.8%) with 27.6 percent and 20.4 percent having intermediate and matric education respectively. Over half (54.0) had a long duration of displacement of 9-13 years and most of them resided in a joint family system (75.6).

Table 4.2

Descriptive Statistics and Normality Indicators for Study Variables (N = 250)

Variable	Min	Max	M	SD	Skewness	SE	Kurtosis	SE
IDS	33.00	80.00	56.88	11.11	0.31	0.15	-0.85	0.31
EMB	44.00	83.00	63.01	8.96	-0.31	0.15	-0.85	0.31
LS	10.00	28.00	18.75	3.81	0.27	0.15	-0.54	0.31

Note. LS = Life Satisfaction, IDS = In-Group Identification Scale, EMB = Embitterment, M = mean; SD = standard deviation; SE = standard error.

The results indicate that the data were able to fit the assumptions used in conducting parametric tests in the following sections.

Reliability Estimates (Cronbach's Alpha) for Study Scales

All study scales had good internal consistency exhibiting Cronbach alpha values, with In-Group Identification Scale (.84), Embitterment Scale (.819) and Life Satisfaction Scale (.79), way above the generally accepted value of .70 (George & Mallery, 2010).

Table 4.3

Pearson product Moment Correlation among study variables (N=250).

Variable	1	2	3
IDS	—	-.71**	.65**
EMB	-.71**	—	-.64**
LS	.65**	-.64**	—

Note. The asterisks (**) point statistically significant correlations ($p < 0.1$). IDS= In-Group Identification Scale, EMB=Embitterment, LS=Life Satisfaction.

The findings reveal strong correlations between the significant variables of the study. The in-group identification yielded a negative correlation with embitterment ($r = -.71$, $p < .001$). Conversely, In-Group Identification was positively correlated with Life Satisfaction ($.65$, $p < .001$). While Embitterment was negatively correlated with the Life Satisfaction ($-.64$, $p < .001$).

Table 4.4

Mediation analysis of Identity Struggles on Life Satisfaction Via Embitterment (Mediator)

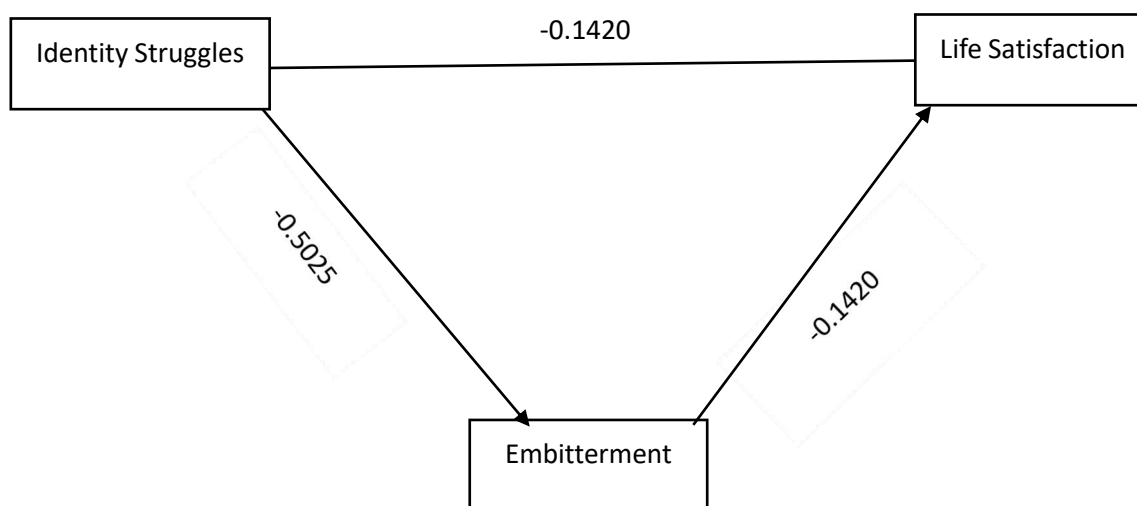
Effect	B	SE	T	p	95% IC	
					LL	UL
IDS → EMB	-0.5025	0.0313	-16.06	<.001	-0.5638	0.4412
EMB → LS	-0.1420	0.0257	-5.53	<.001	-0.1924	0.0916
Direct Effect (IDS → LS)	0.1074	0.0181	5.95	<.001	0.0717	0.1431
Indirect Effect (IDS → EMB → LS)	0.0713	0.0142	—	—	0.0435	0.0998
Total Effect (IDS → LS)	0.1787	0.0230	7.77	<.001	0.1336	0.2238

Note. IDS=In-Group Identification Scale, EMB=Embitterment, LS=Life Satisfaction

Table 4.4 shows simple mediation analysis whether Embitterment mediates the relationship between the Identity struggles and Life Satisfaction. Identity struggles significantly predicted Embitterment ($b = -0.50$, $p < .001$) indicating that person with fewer Identity Struggles (High IDS score) experienced lower embitterment. And Embitterment negatively predicted life satisfaction ($B = -0.14$, $P < .001$). The direct effect of IDS on LS remained significant ($B = 0.11$, $p < .001$). and so

the indirect effect through embitterment ($B=0.07$, 95% CI [0.0435, 0.0998]) was also significant which is suggesting partial mediation. Therefore, the person with lower identity struggles reported higher life satisfaction, in both direct and via embitterment.

4.1 Tested Model



DISCUSSION

This study explored the relationship between Identity Struggles, Embitterment and Life Satisfaction among internally displaced persons from Waziristan. Especially, how the embitterment mediates the relationship between Identity Struggles and Life Satisfaction. Standardized Scales were used to measure these constructs. Data was normally distributed as explained by descriptive analyses.

The results of the study are in line with the hypotheses, showed that individual with stronger In-Group Identification (i.e. fewer Identity Struggles) experienced low embitterment and notably higher Life Satisfaction. Also, Embitterment was strongly linked with reduced Life Satisfaction, hence, playing a significant role as mediator. The results, overall, suggest that a stable sense of Identity and belonging to one's group (in this case, country) can buffer against the negative consequences of displacement, especially the emotional catastrophes. While, Embitterment undermine the overall Life Satisfaction of those displaced persons.

The first important finding is the strong positive relationship between In-Group Identification and Life Satisfaction. Individuals who retained a clear sense of identity, of who

they are and where they belong, or they are sharing the same national identity reported greater satisfaction with life. This is consistent with social identity theory which says that affiliating with social group increases self-esteem, purpose and overall psychological wellbeing including life satisfaction. In other words, group identification provides a sense of belonging and meaning that increase self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This result is also in accords with the recent research by Zapata (2022), they found positive group attitudes (disability group identity, in their case) significantly predicted higher satisfaction with life. In Waziristan IDPs Context, strong relations to national identity may have served as a source against embitterment and increased level of life satisfaction. Those who felt alienated from the mainstream citizenship or considered themselves as second class citizens their life satisfaction tend to decline.

Another finding was that identify struggles were highly associated with embitterment. Such as individuals with weaker In-group identification experienced stronger feelings of injustice and embitterment. This finding can also be linked to previous researches such as that by spaiij et al. (2021). A strong sense of identity and social support network may help people process negative effects of displacement such as loss and trauma, whereas its deprivation leaves persons feeling wronged and isolated. In displaced environment, most of the time, people perceive unjust treatment such as neglect and discrimination. And without a supportive group or having sense of belonging these perceptions can be strengthening. This is what research on refugees has shown that moral injuries and perceived injustice fuel embitterment (spaiij et al., 2021). In this study the strong negative correlation between in group identification and embitterment shows that those who are no longer associated themselves to a larger group (i.e. their country) anchors more embitterment. More vastly, displaced people often lives as outsiders considering themselves second class citizens. According to one study IDPs are considered as they belong to “somewhere else” which can also intensify the feelings of exclusion (Brun, 2003).

The third finding of the study showed that embitterment, itself, inversely correlated with life satisfaction. In this study higher embitterment was linked to lower life satisfaction. This is in line with prior studies indicating that embitterment is detrimental to overall life satisfaction (Kühn et al., 2018). They found that embitterment is negatively correlated with self-reported satisfaction with life overall wellbeing. Embittered persons remain focused on perceive injustice and feel helpless to alter their fate which suppresses which suppresses overall quality of life.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides strong insights that identity and embitterment jointly play their significant role in shaping life satisfaction in displaced persons from Waziristan. These results deepen our comprehension of how displacement due to conflict or violence can fracture identity and can lead to lower satisfaction with life. Embitterment played its role as mediator significantly between identity struggles and life satisfaction.

Limitations and recommendations

1. With the cross-sectional design, such vast and multifaceted subject cannot be grasp fully, required comprehensive qualitative design based studies.
2. The sample consisted of IDPs in Waziristan, and the inability of the study to examine other displaced populations in any part of the world or Pakistan limits generalizability of the results.
3. Critical contextual parameters like gender roles, tribal affiliation, political orientations were not examined in detail although they could be contributing to identity and life satisfaction.
4. Application of longitudinal methods should also be used to monitor the changes in identity struggle, embitterment, and flourishing, as time passes, as IDPs are resettled or as they go home.
- 5.

Implications

1. The important implications of the study involve that the psychosocial challenges of displacement are not just materialistic ones but also deeply tied with the identity and emotions.
2. In case of Waziristan, the violence, conflict and terrorism vs counter terrorism disrupted not only the daily life but also the IDPs belongingness and association with their country.
3. There is dire need of bringing displaced people, who are facing such harsh conditions and brutality, into the mainstream.

4. Policy must be established in order to “heal” their broken image of identity by considering their will and condition in the ongoing counter terrorism activities and operations in the farmer FATA and other parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, before it’s too late.
5. If they feel betrayed and ignored because of inadequate assistance or unfulfilled promises their embitterment may grow and prevent recovery.
6. These are the issues to be addressed and may be require more than just rebuilding the houses and markets. Acknowledgement of injustices is where the state can start the process of recovery.

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