

**Eleven Years of Psychological Researches in Pakistan (1995-2006): What Titles Reveal About Pakistani Research**Farhan Kamrani<sup>1</sup>, Nabila Kamrani<sup>2</sup>, Farrukh Kamrani<sup>3</sup>**Abstract**

This study analysed the themes of researches published in Pakistan. For the purpose, Pakistan Journal of Psychology (PJP) was selected as a representative of Pakistan's research in the discipline of psychology. Researches published during 1995 to 2006 were selected for this study. This study analyses the titles of the papers. Titles of 94 studies from 1995 to 2006 were analysed. Some 302 key concepts were extracted from the titles and categorized in following categories: clinical psychology/psychotherapy (25.82 %), cognitive psychology (7.61%), psychometrics (7.28%), gender studies (7.28%), experimental psychology (5.96%), personality psychology (5.96%), industrial/occupational psychology(5.62), nations/nationalities (5.29%), developmental psychology (4.30%), social psychology (3.97%), education/educational psychology (3.64%), parenting (3.64%), emotions and their expression (3.31%), physical health/illness (3.31%), marriage/family life (2.98 %) ethics/ religion (1.32 %), stress and coping (1.32 %), positive psychology (0.66%) and occult sciences (0.66%). There were no mentions of evolutionary psychology, aesthetics, forensic psychology, health psychology, neuropsychology, political psychology, media psychology, humanism and Gestalt psychology. Sex and its psychological aspects were also not present. Mentions of stress and coping, religion and ethics were negligible. The character of psychological research in the sampled researches and their implications were discussed.

**Keywords:** Pakistan, Psychological Researches, Titles

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**Introduction**

A scientific study investigation is published to communicate its finding to scientific community. Research journals are mostly accessed by researchers and students of the particular field as they contain information that are specialized and written in particular formats/styles that are objective and more

suitable for a scientific writing. For this purpose, the titles of researches are also formulated following a particular format. It is the first set of information that reaches the reader. In non-scientific writings, titles are at times vague or enigmatic to gain attention of the readers but research papers are a serious reading and their titles are clear and comprehensive and state the most important aspects of the paper. The information about the research questions, problems and variables are mentioned in it. At times, it is also indicative of the sample. A title states why a particular research was conducted and what it explores. If it is of the interest of the readers they may proceed to the abstract and the other parts of the paper. A title serves a very important purpose in a research publication.

This research is thematic analysis of a broad data set that are contained in the research titles of researches of a particular time.

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Thematic analysis is a creative technique that goes beyond numbers and statistics to find meaning for certain themes and their repetitions (Riger & Sigurvinsdottir, 2016). Thematic analysis titles of researches require an understanding of what titles are and how they are formulated. The APA 7 suggests that a research title should not be more than 12 words and should not contain any abbreviations and words that are irrelevant to the research (APA, 2019). Current APA manual does not dictate much about the content of the title rather it is more focused on the form. According to Tullu (2019), research titles are of three types i.e. descriptive, declarative, and interrogative. Examples of these types are also mentioned; a descriptive or neutral title gives important details of the theme of the research. It describes the research sample, design, treatments and outcomes. The conclusion of the research is not included in the title. A declarative title states the main findings of the research whereas an interrogative title only discusses the research question and the reader is motivated to read the abstract or the full paper to know the results.

The titles of researches conducted in Pakistan, if explored by the types mentioned above, can mostly be categorized as descriptive. This tradition of descriptive titles can be illustrated by the example of a recent research (Yamin & Muzaffar, 2021), "Academic motivation and psychological well-being of university students taking online classes amid COVID-19 pandemic".

As a descriptive title is a miniature abstract, a lot of valuable information can be extracted by just analysing the titles of the researches. A large scale analysis of research titles can reveal many aspects of the themes of the researches, the variables, the methodology and also the subfields of psychology that are mostly researched. Also, such an analysis can reveal the avoided themes and variables. Current study is an attempt to do so. For this purpose, the Pakistan Journal of

Psychology (PJP) published by Institute of Clinical Psychology, University of Karachi, Pakistan, is selected as it is the oldest journal of psychological research in Pakistan published biannually since 1965 (ICP, 2022). Eleven years (1995 to 2006) are selected as those were the years when the discipline of Psychology grew phenomenally in Pakistan and the number of PhDs in psychology multiplied manifold. Research culture developed in this era and due to the Higher Education Commission's (HEC) policies, research publications were made mandatory for selections and promotions on academic posts (HEC, 2019). Those criteria started a race of research publications in Pakistan and also many new research journals were established. These researches are also very important as in that era (i.e. 1995 to 2006), internet was not very widely available and even on the limited internet, there were few sources giving open access to free journals. Many researchers in Pakistan largely depended on the research journals available in their university libraries, so these researches were cited hundreds of times and served as the most readily available examples of published researches. Also, the reader has to bear in mind that most of the authors of these researches were academicians serving in public and private sector universities. Those academicians also supervise MPhil and PhD researches and most of the researches of that era were part of the MPhil or PhD theses. So, analysing these researches will give a good understanding of the trends and trend-setters of psychological research in Pakistan.

## **Method**

### **Sample**

Research publications that appeared in the Pakistan Journal of Psychology in 11 years from 1995 to 2006 are selected for this research. As the PJP is a biannual publication, there were 22 issues to analyse. In those 22 issues, a total of 94 researches were published. The titles of those 94

researches were selected as sample of researches published in the PJP.

### Procedure

For this research, an in-depth thematic analysis was conducted by analysing the repetitive themes and concepts in the titles. For this, all the 94 titles were analysed and key concepts were extracted from them. It should be noted here that at that time, key words were not written under the abstract in the PJP. Key concepts were extracted in following fashion. For example, the title “situational coping and coping dispositions of Pakistani students in a stressful transaction” (Ismail & Mehmood, 1997) has 5 key concepts i.e., 1. Situational coping, 2. Coping dispositions, 3. Pakistani, 4. Students, 5. Stressful transaction. In this example “Pakistani” and “students” both are indicative of sample but are treated as two concepts as one is a national identity and the other is occupational identity. Some key concepts were excluded from the study because they described the methodology of the research, for example, case study, correlational study and some other concepts were excluded because they were not related to psychology and used as a device to gain understanding of some psychological phenomenon. For example, from “Influence of learning trials on memory retention of Planaria: Dugesia Tigrina”. The term “Planaria: Dugesia Tigrina” is only used to know the influence of learning trials on memory retention in an experimental study.

After extraction of key concepts from the titles, the concepts were counted to know which key concepts appeared how many times in the sampled research titles. In the next step, the concepts were categorized in

accordance with the broader topic (for example, stream of psychology, social sciences or any general category of concepts) they belonged to. Some key concepts were very clearly indicative of a category but others were categorized according to their context in the title. The titles were also analysed and a qualitative analysis of abstracts was also conducted in order to better understand the key concepts and their context. For this research, descriptive statistics were calculated.

### Ethical Considerations

All the titles that were analysed in this research are available in public domain to be accessed and cited by anyone. No consent is required to read, cite or analyse any research and to pinpoint any errors or discrepancies. Also, it is stated here that selection of research topics is a choice of researchers and such topics are accepted and approved by academic bodies. Also pinpointing limitations and further avenues of research is in the best interest of science and based on the general ethical principal of beneficence (American Psychological Association, 2022).

### Competing Interest Statement and Funding Information

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

The authors also declare that they have no financial interests/personal relationships which may be considered as potential competing interests

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## Results

### Table 1

*Distribution of Key Concepts in various Categories (N=94)*

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Clinical Psychology/Psychotherapy	78	25.82
Cognitive Psychology	23	7.61
Psychometrics	22	7.28
Gender studies	22	7.28

Experimental psychology	18	5.96
Personality psychology	18	5.96
Industrial/occupational psychology	17	5.62
Nations/ nationalities	16	5.29
Developmental psychology	13	4.30
Social psychology	12	3.97
Education/educational psychology	11	3.64
Parenting	11	3.64
Emotions and their expression	10	3.31
Physical health/illness	10	3.31
Marriage/ family life	9	2.98
Ethics/ religion	4	1.32
Stress and coping	4	1.32
Positive psychology	2	0.66
Occult sciences	2	0.66

Table 1 indicates the frequencies and percentages of the broader categories, the concepts represent. The most frequent

concepts belong to clinical psychology/psychotherapy.

**Table 2**

*Affiliations of Contributing Authors (N=94)*

<b>University/Institution/Organization</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Institute of Clinical Psychology, University of Karachi	45
Department of Psychology, University of Karachi	16
Department of Applied Psychology, University of Punjab, Lahore	11
Institute of Business Administration Karachi	7
Department of Psychology, University of Peshawar	4
Institute of Professional Psychology, Bahria University, Karachi	3
Wilbur Wright College	3
Department of Educational Psychology, University of Alberta, Canada	2
University of Illinois	2
Department of Psychology, Federal Urdu University, Karachi	2
Department of Psychology, University of Sindh	2
Liaquat National Hospital, Karachi	2
Centre of Clinical Psychology, University of Punjab	2
Federal Public Services Commission, Islamabad	1
University of Chicago	1
Department of Psychology, Lahore College for Women	1
Department of Psychology, Okara Degree College for Women	1
Department of Education, University of Karachi	1
Department of Psychology, Government College Lahore	1
Faculty of Law, Dada Bhoj University	1
Mohammad Ali Jinnah University Karachi	1
Punjab Institute of Mental Health	1
Mashad University of Medical Sciences	1
Isra University, Hyderabad	1
St. Joseph College for women	1
Department of Psychology, Frontier Women University	1
Department of Human Development Studies	1

Jinnah College for Women, University of Peshawar	1
Department of Psychology, Sindh University Jamshoro	1

Table 2 indicates the institutions where the researches were conducted. Most of the researches were conducted at the Institute of Clinical Psychology, University of Karachi.

## Discussion

This research was an attempt to gain an understanding of the key concepts that contributed to the development of the research culture of psychology in Pakistan. Certain statistical/numerical aspects of the findings of this research are discussed and after that, the deeper meanings of the findings are analysed.

Titles of 94 studies were analysed for this research. Only 6 (6.38%) out of 94 studies were qualitative while the rest of the studies were quantitative. These 6 percent were case studies of people suffering from psychological disorders and their treatments. No other qualitative research methodology was applied in research. The majority of the research (93.62%) was quantitative. Most of these research studies were questionnaire based correlational studies.

Out of 117 authors of the sampled studies, only 1 (0.008%) was not affiliated with a university. It makes all the authors academics or researchers doing their MPhil or PhD level studies. Only 8 authors (0.07%) were affiliated with universities outside Pakistan. The above mentioned statistics are reflective of the fact that the sampled researches are representative of the type of research that Pakistani researchers (that were almost all academics) were doing. These researchers are from all over Pakistan except the province of Baluchistan. So, this can be said with confidence that the trends reflected in these research titles represent most of the Pakistani research.

The concepts that appeared the most in the research titles belonged to the category of clinical psychology and psychotherapy (25.82%). Depression and some anxiety disorders are the most frequently occurring psychopathologies.

Concepts related to cognitive psychology were 2<sup>nd</sup> most frequently occurring concepts (7.61%). Self-esteem, and self-acceptance are abundant in the titles and are very often seen in relation to concepts of clinical psychology.

Both psychometrics and gender studies came 3<sup>rd</sup> with 7.28% each. Psychological scales are translated or adapted for suitability of the Pakistani population and also some scales were developed interestingly in the English language. Gender difference and other gender specific concepts were explored in relation to concepts of clinical or cognitive psychology.

Concepts related to experimental psychology and personality psychology both occurred at the rate of 5.96%. Concepts related to industrial and occupational psychology took even lesser space (5.62%). Nations, nationalities were mentioned in 5.29% titles. These mentions are at times in order to specify the sample or to compare one nation with another nation.

Concepts related to developmental psychology only occurred in 4.3% while concepts of social psychology appeared in 3.97% of the sample. Concepts related to the realm of education and educational psychology were only mentioned in 3.64% of the sample. Similar was the mention of concepts related to parenting (3.64%). Concepts related to emotions and their expression were only mentioned in 3.31% of the sample. Concepts of physical health and illness were also mentioned in only 3.31% of the sample. Concepts related to marriage were mentioned in the sample even lesser (2.98%). Ethics and religion were mentioned only in 1.32% of the sample. Concept of stress and coping in 1.32% while both positive psychology and

occult sciences were mentioned in 0.66% of the sample.

From the initial analysis mentioned above, it can be seen that the focus was on concepts related to clinical psychology. But it is interesting that none of the 94 studies reported or discovered any new psychopathology. No culture specific variations in psychopathologies were mentioned. When the reader goes from title to abstract section, the reader finds that the sample of almost all of these studies were university students.

There are no mentions of concepts related to evolutionary psychology in any research. No mention of any concept even remotely related to forensic psychology. It is a very interesting finding because the crime rate in Pakistan was 6.23% in 2006 (MacroTrends, 2022). Health psychology is to be found nowhere in these researches. Neuropsychology is completely absent. Media psychology is absent. Even when psychotherapies are mentioned, the concepts related to behaviorism or even psychoanalysis find very little or no place and humanism and Gestalt psychology are completely absent. Sex and its psychological or social aspects are also completely absent in these researches. Even marriage or divorce are discussed without any mention of the sex and its role in the success or failure of marriages.

Art, literature and poetry are human aesthetic creations and give valuable insight about the human mind. Freud and Jung (Ewen, 2010) utilized this knowledge to gain understanding of human mind and behavior. But there is not even one mention of these concepts in the key concepts of sampled titles.

In 1999, a serial killer Javed Iqbal shocked the nation by confessing to a newspaper about killing 100 children (BBC, 2000). But interestingly, this case or antisocial personality disorder did not find any space in the 94 researches sampled for this study.

It is relevant to note here that the years 1995 to 2006 were times of social and political

upheaval and transitions. It was a time when Pakistan became an atomic power. Two political governments ended abruptly. A military dictatorship was established. Allied forces attacked Afghanistan and Pakistan also became a battlefield. Political violence was at its peak (Snellinger, 2021). Even student politics became very violent and the University of Karachi (from where PJP is published) became very much affected. But interestingly, all these happenings and their psychological implications found no place in these researches. Political psychology is to be found nowhere in the topics. In a time of political and social unrest and transition, the mere mention of emotions is only in 3.31% of the sample. In times of wars based on religious identity, the mere mention of religion and ethics is in 1.32% of the research. The mention of stress and coping is negligible.

During 2001 to 2006, internet penetration rate increased from 1.3% to 6.5% (APP, 2021). Pakistan was a country with fastest internet growth rate but in the sampled researches, there is not a single title that explored internet usage and its psychological/social implications. Social media and changing social dynamics were not explored even in a single research. There was not a single mention of pornography in any research in any context although it was considered a social ill and the government of Pakistan was taking measures to curb it in as early as year 2003 (AFP, 2003).

### **Conclusion**

From the above analysis a distinct character of psychological research in Pakistan can be outlined. Pakistani researcher is fixated on clinical psychology but knows only cognitive approach towards it. Pakistani psychological research is apolitical, it is areligious, and it is socially aloof. Pakistani psychological research does not know crime and does not even know aesthetics. It does not know much about the psychology of religious behaviour and is also unwilling to look at evolution. It is obsessed with the

statistical analyses of human behaviour, specifically comparison and correlation. It is asexual and unwilling to see emotions. Brain and neurology do not exist for Pakistan's psychological research.

This very "blind" character of Pakistan's psychological research reveals a lot about the motivations of the researchers. Fear of unknown, unwillingness for innovation and functional fixedness are prime causes of the limited topics and repeated methodology to arrive at the already known conclusions. It appears as if some topics are considered psychological and others are considered out of bounds for psychological research. This taboo-like avoidance of certain topics is strange as these 94 researches were contributed by some 202 authors.

The reader may argue that this character, even if it represents its time (i.e. 1995 to 2006) is not representative of today's psychological research in Pakistan. This argument might have been valid if there were any revolution in academia but nothing of the sort has happened. It is relevant to note here that the authors of under discussion research are mostly teaching and supervising research in Pakistani academia so this tradition is guarded by those who initiated it or went through it.

It can be concluded that Pakistan's psychological research is limited in its scope because it is unwilling to accept the realities of society and human nature. It does not wish to answer all the prevailing questions about human nature but is only willing to answer some that are more suited to its own academic traditions.

#### Contribution of Authors

Farhan Kamrani: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – Review & Editing  
 Nabila Kamrani: Formal Analysis, Writing – Original Draft  
 Farrukh Kamrani: Investigation, Data Curation, Writing – Original Draft

#### Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest declared by authors.

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