

Demographic Correlates of Psychological Well-being Among Adolescents of Kerala

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Abstract

Study was intended to explore distribution of psychological well-being among adolescents of Kerala, across their demographic variables mainly, age, gender, place of residence, type of school, religion and subject of study. 228 adolescents were selected from various schools of Thrissur district of Kerala state by convenient sampling. Participants belonged to 13-18 years age range. T-test and One way ANOVA was carried out using SPSS version 20. Results revealed that age, type of school, subject of study had significant influence on the psychological well-being of adolescents with ($P < .0001$). Study finds the observed results very much significant as it highlights the need for in-depth investigations to understand the distribution of psychological well-being of adolescents across Kerala state which has not occurred so far.

Key words:

Psychological well-being; Adolescents; Kerala; School; Education

Introduction

Psychological well-being is conceptualized as a combination of positive affective states such as happiness, satisfaction, optimism, etc. It includes functioning with optimal effectiveness in

individual and social life (Deci & Ryan 2008). Carol Ryff who defined well-being as development of a person's real potential (Ryff, 1989, 1995) argued that happiness or psychological well-being is not the main motivation of a person but the result of a well-lived life (Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Ryff & Singer, 1998). A multidimensional model of well-being offered by Ryff (1989) comprised self acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth as its dimensions. This model measures well-being from an objective platform, all the while extracting the amount of positive affect sustained by the individuals in various facets of life.

Past decade has witnessed a shift towards viewing adolescents as a resource to be developed rather than problems to be managed (Kurtines, Ferrer-Wreder, Berman, Lorente, Silverman, & Montgomery 2008). This might have given impetus to the fact finding endeavors in the field of adolescent psychological well-being. Jessica Savage (2011) consider psychological wellbeing of adolescents as being satisfied with life and experiencing a plentitude of positive

emotions, when coupled with the absence of psychopathology, is associated with maximum academic function, social competency and support and physical health. Also, a positive standard of psychological well-being in adolescence include both the development of an independent sense of identity and maintenance of close relationship with parents (Bulanda & Majumdar 2008)

Widespread and conclusive evidences highlighting the strong link between well-being and academic success (El Ansari & Stock, 2010; Gilman & Huebner, 2006; Verkuyten & Thijs, 2002) gave a venue for the application of positive psychology principles and approaches in educational settings – at individual, group and school levels (Gilman, Huebner, & Furlong, 2009). There is concrete evidence that high levels of well-being can boost resilience in students and helps to maximize study experiences (Jackson & Bartlett, 2011). Extensive research, both experimental and observational, on goal pursuit showed that enhanced subjective wellbeing is associated with: goals being intrinsic, i.e. self-generated (e.g. Kasser & Ryan, 1996). The reason for this is, people high in subjective well-being tend to have attributional styles that are more self-enhancing and more enabling (Ryan & Deci, 2001) thus well-being appear to have a stronger effect on performance than environmental conditions of schooling (Daniels & Harris, 2000; Wright & Staw, 1999)

Despite these observed truths about the far reaching consequences of positive mental health in the lives of inmates of a citizen, there haven't yet occurred any comprehensive analysis into the psychological well-being of adolescents in the state of Kerala. And the present study is a humble initiative in that line.

Methodology

228 students from five schools of Thrissur district were selected by convenient sampling. Mean age of participants was 15.6 years. Psychological Well-Being Scale prepared by Devendra Sing Sisodia was distributed among participants after getting informed consent from the parents and school authorities. Students were given adequate instructions and doubts were clarified during answering. Gathered data after coding was analyzed using SPSS version 20. One way ANOVA and t-tests were the main statistical tests used to get the results.

Instruments

Psychological Well-Being Scale prepared by Devendra Sing Sisodia was used to estimate Psychological well-being of students. It is a 5 point Likert scale which estimates psychological well-being along five dimensions namely, Satisfaction, Efficiency, Sociability, Mental Health and Interpersonal relationship. Its test-retest reliability is .87 and internal consistency is .90. Besides face validity scale claims high content validity. Validity coefficient against external criteria is .94.

Results

Table:1 T-test results for gender difference in Psychological Well-Being (PSW)

Gender	N	Mean PSW	SD	tvalue	P-value
Male	123	187.64	18.36	1.724	.086
Female	105	183.16	20.87		

Table:2 One way- ANOVA for influence of place of residence on Psychological well-being(PSW)

Place Of residence	N	Mean PSW	SD	Df	F	P-value
Rural	115	187.52	18.95	2,225	1.503	.225
Urban	106	183.20	20.44			
Semi	7	189.71	16.29			

Table: 3 One way ANOVA for influence of Type Of School On Psychological Well-being(PSW)

School	N	Mean PSW	SD	Df	F-value	P-value
Govt	93	181.19	18.54	2,225	7.627	.001
Aided	79	184.95	20.45			
Private	56	193.75	17.97			

Figure:1 Distribution of psychological well-being among the students different type of schools and different courses of study

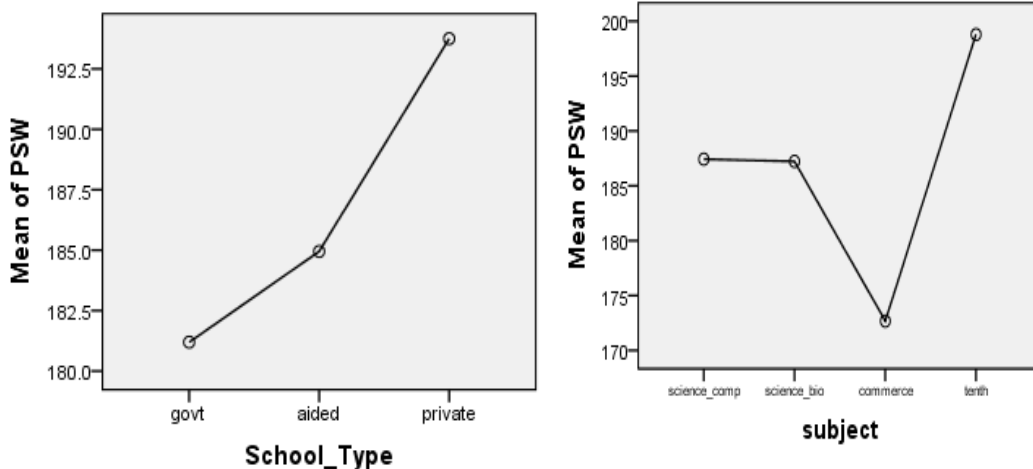


Table:4 One way ANOVA for influence of Subject Of Study On Psychological Well-being(PSW)

Class	N	Mean PSW	SD	Df	F-value	P-value
Computer Sc	33	187.42	15.94	3,224	39.501	.000
Biology	18	187.22	16.97			
Commerce	93	172.68	15.51			
10 th standard	84	198.99	16.32			

Table:5 One way ANOVA for influence of religion on Psychological Well-being(PSW)

Religion	N	Mean PSW	SD	Df	F-value	P-value
Christian	74	183.42	19.84	2,225	3.138	.045
Hindu	123	184.87	19.08			
Muslim	31	193.55	20.04			

Table:6 T-test for influence of age on adolescent psychological well-being(PSW)

Age	N	Mean PSW	SD	t-value	P-value
13-15	101	192.70	18.97	5.152	.000
16-19	127	179.91	18.34		

Discussion

From the above results, one can observe that gender, and place of residence haven't any significant role in the psychological well-being of adolescents (Table1 & Table:2). But, age of student was a reason for fluctuation in adolescent Psychological Well-being (Table:6). Two age groups differed significantly with high school students exhibiting high levels of well-being compared to their counterparts in the higher secondary levels ($t=5.152$, $P=.000$). This seems to be contradicting another Indian study by Neerpal & Renu (2007) in which no age related change was observed among the adolescents in their well-being. School variables like type of school and subject of study were most prominent among the variables that exhibited significant role in the adolescent

the psychological well-being. Of these, private school students scored high in psychological well-being compared to aided and government schools (Table:3) and the difference among the student well-being of three types of schools was very much significant ($F(2,225)=7.627$, $P=.001$). Though, most private schools of Kerala is notorious for high academic pressure they incur on students for grades, they ensure quality in teaching and infrastructure. A study comprising a large sample may reveal the reason behind increased level of well-being in these schools. Similarly difference in the psychological well-being of groups categorized along their course subject (Table:4) too were highly significant ($F(3,224)=39.501$, $P=.000$). Difference in basic cognitive and intellectual orientation or disposition of students opting for different subjects may be the reason behind such

highly significant difference in their psychological well-being. At the same time, it is to be noted that 10th standard students scored maximum in their psychological well-being, though post-hoc tests indicated significant mean differences for computer science and biology students as well as for computer science and commerce group. Finally, influence of religion was significant ($F(2,225)= 3.183, P=.045$) but not so strong as observed in the school variables. Muslim students scored high in their psychological well-being (Table:6). Verily, the meaning one attributes to one's life as a whole is very much affected by one's religion. And purpose and meaning in life is one of the many indicators of psychological well-being measurement.

Conclusion

The six dimensions of exploration of this study comprised two personal variables (age and sex), two school variables (Type of school, Subject of study) and one community variable (Religion) and one geographical variable (Rural/Urban). Of these school seemed to exhibit high influence in the psychological well-being. Any large scale investigations intended to probe into the correlates of psychological well-being of adolescents should give prominence to the factors in the school environment of adolescents. Significance of the role played by educational institutions in the positive mental health of adolescents of Kerala is an area that has not given adequate coverage in research and practice. The results of study may invite the attention of

educationists and policymakers into the matter.

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