Psychological Well-Being of First Year Male Students of Science and Commerce Faculty

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the difference of psychological wellbeing (PWB) among the first year male college students of science and commerce faculty. This study comprised of 102 first year male students of a private university in Jaipur, Rajasthan between the age group of (18-20) mean age (18.26), studying in the streams of science (48%) and commerce (52%). Ryff’s PWB Scale (1989) was used to collect data and socio-demographic details were obtained through questionnaire. In present study the type of faculty was considered as independent variable and Psychological Well-being as dependent variable. Accordingly t-test was carried out to find the difference of psychological well-being between science and commerce male students. Results revealed that male students of science faculty were significantly higher on four factors of PWB namely environmental mastery, positive relations with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance than the commerce students. There was no significant difference found on other two factors of PWB.

Key words – Psychological well-being, science, faculty, commerce, male students

Introduction

After a secured environment in the schools as adolescents enter the vast world of college or university, they feel directionless. Late adolescence is the transitional period in a person’s life between childhood and adulthood when they are getting ready to take the responsibilities of an adult. The first year of college is trying for many students; new responsibilities and expectations can be overwhelming. In today’s challenging world, these young students of university and college are facing numerous stressors that can affect their well-being (Gall, Evans, & Bellerose, 2000; Wintre & Yaffe, 2000). The first year in college poses many new challenging and potentially threatening situational demands for these young male students, requiring major adjustments. These male students studying in colleges do not make efforts only to obtain and maintain good grades at the university, but also to live a good life. It is important to know that university students are constantly facing the risk of poor academic achievement and impaired social functioning, in the context of their developmental, broader social changes, financial and also due to the specific demands of the academia (Misra & McKean, 2000; Ross, Cleland, MacLeod, 2006; Verger, et al. 2009). This is the phase where these young people require the strong mental health to tackle the life in effective way. Well-being includes not only subjective, social and psychological aspects but health-related behaviors also. Well-being has been divided in two categories namely subjective well-being or hedonic approach and psychological well-being or eudemonic approach. Many studies on subjective well-being (Diener et al., 1985) have been carried out. In eudemonic approach the human potential is depicted through many studies (Diener, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2001).

The term psychological well-being is used nowadays in the literature to refer to a wide range of issues including mental, emotional, social, physical, economic, cultural, and spiritual health and consequently, it has been defined in various ways. It is agreed that a model of psychological well-
being should include and reflect the interconnectedness of the various aspects of overall well-being (Linley et al., 2009). Majority of studies have not focused on impact of gender on PWB separately. The findings in many studies have not demonstrated significant gender difference on aspects of psychological well-being. So, present study is a humble attempt to find out if any significant difference exists in PWB in male students of first year science and commerce faculties.

**Psychological well-being** – Psychological well-being theory had emerged from many earlier models like Maslow’s self-actualization ((1968), Erikson’s psychosocial model (1959), Roger’s model of fully functioning person and Jung’s formulation of individuation (1933). Ryff (1989) developed the psychological well-being model by incorporating these theories and the term used for mental health which incorporated the world of wisdom, happiness, psychological, physical and social well-being. Many researchers like Ryff and Singer (1998) used the term “human flourishing” and according to Felce and Perry (1995) psychological well-being comprises of physical, material, social and emotional well-being. Ryan and Deci (2000, 2001) described it as human’s three basic psychological needs like competence, autonomy, and relatedness.

Psychological well-being is one of the most frequently studied areas in psychology literature (Schmutte & Ryff, 1997). Psychological well-being has been defined by Ryff (1989a, 1989b) as a multidimensional construct that comprises various social, psychological and physiological aspects, which may be interconnected and may influence each other. These six dimensions of PWB are autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, purpose in life, self-acceptance and personal relations. Variations in different dimensions of well-being of different age groups are explored via studies of enduring human experiences (Martin & Silvia, 1999), (Rathi & Rastogi, 2007), (Steven, 2000).

‘Personal Growth’ relates to being open to new experiences as well as having the continued ability to develop and grow as a person. Personal growth includes activities that improve awareness and individuality. It develops abilities, builds human capital and expedites employability, improve quality of life and contribute to the realization of dreams and aspirations. The individual is constantly working to develop as an efficient person. For a fully functioning person, the internal locus of control is very important. The people who are well aware about personal growth have a feeling of continued development; see themselves as growing and getting higher in life. They welcome new experiences and generally have a sense of realizing their potential.

‘Autonomy’ refers to individual’s sense of self-determination, independence and freedom from norms. One needs to take decisions and responsibility on his own. It is the regulation from within to do whatever one feels is appropriate. In other words an individual is self-governed and independent. Autonomy is often used as the basis for determining moral responsibility and accountability for one’s actions.

‘Environmental Mastery’ means a person’s ability to manage life and his or her surroundings. It refers to the capability of an individual to change or mould the environment by using his physical and mental strength. Environmental mastery is the sense that we are able to have an influence on the events in our lives and are capable of acting on our own behalf.

‘Self-Acceptance’ is defined as a positive attitude towards self and our past life experiences. It refers to the individual who is happy and satisfied with himself and aware of own weaknesses and strengths. This is a good factor for mental health. An individual’s capability to handle situations with true self combines this dimension. It allows you to feel good about yourself, even with the flaws, mistakes and failures that we all have. And so, self-acceptance is essential to feeling good about just being one. Self-acceptance does not rely on achievements and accolades to build us up. A positive outlook on who a person really is inside is essential to feeling good about himself, no matter what is going on outside.

‘Purpose in Life’ relates to a person’s life goals and the belief that his life is meaningful. On having purpose to grow in life, an individual uses the opportunities and chances. This factor decides a person’s growth in positive manner. It is the capability of one trying and utilising his potential to attain his goals or purpose. The people with purpose in life have clear goals and a
sense of directedness. They have a sense of significance to present and past life. High on this scale holds beliefs that give life a purpose, aims and objectives for living.

‘Positive Relations with Others’ refers to satisfying, cordial relationships with others. The individual capability to have cordial ties with others will have satisfying relationships which in turn will help him to survive and grow in the society. The ability to love is viewed as the central component of mental health. Self- actualizes are described as having strong feelings of empathy and affection for all human beings and as being capable of giving love, deeper friendship, and positive identification with others.

All psychological well-being domains reflect a great degree of access to coping resources, such as self-acceptance and supportive personal relations, which are important in coping with psychological stress. Life span theories emphasize acceptance of self and one’s past life, and holding positive attitude towards oneself as a central characteristic of positive psychological functioning. They suggest that optimal psychological functioning require the achievement of these characteristics and continuous development of one’s potential to grow as a person.

**Review of Literature**

The research on psychological well-being among adolescents in relation to different aspects has gained momentum in last two decades. Earlier, majority studies of psychological well-being have focused on adults and examined social and health factors that correlate with PWB. The adjustment of college students in first year has been the focus of research in last few years (Walker, 2009). According to these researches the level of PWB has profound effect on the adjustment in the challenging life of the first year students.

Bewick and colleagues (2010) demonstrated that, the amount of psychological stress, as an indicator of the level of psychological well-being amongst students, is more at the beginning of the college year. As they have measured and monitored the PWB level during the first year of college students. Results have shown that heightened anxiety causes greater strain on psychological well-being among the students than particularly depressive time. Research in associating psychological well-being of college students with many variables has gained momentum recently.

Limited studies have examined psychological well-being among college students in India. A few studies on indicators of psychological well-being demonstrated greater anxiety (Dhillon & Jasra, 1992) and depression (Baum & Boxley, 1983; Mathur & Sen, 1989; Venkoba Rao, 1989), lower life satisfaction (Bhardwaj, Sen & Mathur, 1991; Chadha, 1991) and more adjustment problems among the male and female college students both. (Chandrika & Ananthraman, 1982; Singh, Singh & Dawra, 1983).

A very few studies concentrated upon the PWB level among students of different faculties of study, for instance Walker (2009) showed that education science students had gained higher scores of psychological well-being than the students of Journalism. But the relationship of psychological well-being of the first year students with their choice of study course has hardly got much attention for research. In some other studies it has been pointed out that psychological well-being tend to change over the life span. Autonomy and environmental mastery tend to increase with older age, whereas purpose in life and personal growth tend to be lower among older adults (Ryff, 1989, 1991; Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Ryff & Singer, 1998). Jeannie (2012) reported the gender difference in psychological well-being among college students in terms of daily spiritual experience, father relationship, peer relationship, autonomy, positive relations with others, and purpose in life. Some recent studies have yielded contradictory findings on gender difference. Males scored higher on some aspects of PWB than females (Ryff & Singer, 1998; Roothman et al., 2003).

A few studies also explored the impact of social factors on psychological well-being mainly, gender, educational level of parents, family income, occupation of parents, and family relationships (FaribaTabeBordbar et al., 2011; Mina Daraei, 2013).
There is a considerable emphasis in the literature associating psychological well-being with qualities like self-determination, independence, and internal locus of control or regulation of behavior from within. These concepts have been used extensively in understanding psychological well-being (Fava & Ruini, 2003; Ryff & Singer, 1996) of the adolescents. Different studies have used Ryff’s model of psychological well-being to observe its relationship with various other variables (Bardi & Oliver, 2001; Diener, Oishi & Lucas, 2003; Joseph & Paula, 2002).

In general, research on the well-being of diverse college students has focused largely on adjustment processes that are specific to the college environment, such as social adjustment to college (Bowman, & Oseguera, 2008; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Locks, Hurtado; Mendoza-Denton, Downey, Purdie, Davis, & Pietrzak, 2002; Mounts, 2004). Although these forms of well-being are associated with dropout rates (Hausmann, Schofield & Woods, 2007; Tinto, 1993), they are primarily related to the college field. In contrast, PWB is relevant to life transitions in a variety of contexts. Adjusting to the college environment presents a host of new challenges for students from a variety of backgrounds. Many students are living away from home for the first time, so they manage academics, social life and other aspects of their lives themselves. Although college transitions can be difficult for all students (Upcraft et al., 2004), students of color and students with lower socioeconomic backgrounds often have greater difficulty adjusting to college than majority students (Terenzini et al., 1994; Zwerling & London, 1992).

It is a well-known fact that healthy mind is necessary for successful growth of an individual in the life. Education plays an important role in a person’s overall wellness for healthy adjustment in various life situations of the present and future. Therefore, it is imperative for educators and researchers to understand the factors contributing to the good mental health of the college students. Therefore, the aim of present study is to have better understanding of the difference in first year male students’ psychological well-being studying in the faculties of science and commerce.

**Method**

**Sample**

This study sample comprised of 102 first year male students of a private university in Jaipur, Rajasthan between the age group of (18-20) mean age (18.26), studying in the streams of science (48%) and commerce (52%). Socio-demographic details of the respondents are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1  Socio Demographic details of the respondents N=102**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eldest</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youngest</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domicile</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Father’s Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Secondary</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Graduate</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mother’s Education**
Illiterate 11% 11
Primary 14% 14
Secondary 25% 26
Higher Secondary 24% 25
Graduate 18% 18
Post Graduate 8% 8
**Family Type**
Joint 53% 54
Nuclear 47% 48
**Family Income**
<10000 4% 4
10000 - 20000 17% 17
20000 - 30000 27% 27
30000 - 40000 24% 26
40000 - 50000 28% 28

**Tool**

**The Ryff's Scales of Psychological Well-being Scale (Ryff, 1989):** Three versions of PWB scale were constructed by Carol Ryff(1989), the longest version consists of 84 items (14 items for each factor). The mid-length version was used for the present study which consists of 54 items, 9 items each on six dimensions of psychological well-being namely environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, self-acceptance and autonomy. The scale used in the present study demonstrate high internal consistency reliability (alpha range = .70 to .84) and temporal reliability (test-retest coefficients range from 0.81 to 0.88). The shortest version, developed for national telephone surveys, consists of 18 items (3 per scale).

**Procedure**

The aim of the study was to find the difference between the PWB of first year male students of science and commerce faculty. Total 102 respondents were administered the Ryff’s scale (1989) in their respective classrooms of science and commerce faculty. Demographic information was collected through questionnaire. Instructions were given to the respondents before the administration of the scale. For data analysis SPSS 16 for windows was used, for descriptive analysis (mean, standard deviation and range) of the data. Independent sample t-test was run to calculate the difference in psychological well-being.

**Results**

Table 2 clearly indicates that on the six variables of psychological well-being, significant differences were found on four variables namely environmental mastery, positive relations with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance. On the variable of environmental mastery, there is a significant difference between the commerce and science students with ‘t’ value being 2.31 (p < 0.05). The science students have a higher mean on environmental mastery indicating that they are better on this factor of PWB than commerce students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Commerce</th>
<th>Science</th>
<th>‘t’ value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MeanSD</td>
<td>MeanSD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>31.96</td>
<td>5.366</td>
<td>33.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Mastery</td>
<td>33.48</td>
<td>6.252</td>
<td>36.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Growth</td>
<td>33.13</td>
<td>5.536</td>
<td>34.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Relations</td>
<td>33.13</td>
<td>5.587</td>
<td>36.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With ‘t’ value of 2.371 (p < 0.05) and higher mean on positive relations with others suggests better PWB of science students than commerce students. For the variable purpose in life ‘t’ value being 2.630 (p < 0.05) and higher mean on purpose in life demonstrating better PWB among science students than their commerce counterparts. As regards self-acceptance ‘t’ value 2.241 (p < 0.05) and higher mean score of science students indicates greater PWB than commerce students. The mean scores on other two variables namely autonomy and personal growth indicate better PWB than commerce students although the difference was statistically insignificant.

**Discussion**

The main objective of this study was to explore if any significant differences existed in psychological well-being of the first year university male students studying in science and commerce faculties. Ryff’s PWB scale comprising of six dimensions namely autonomy, personal growth, positive relations with others, self-acceptance and environmental mastery was used to measure the psychological well-being of the student sample. In case of relating PWB with respect to first year science and commerce male students, it was observed that statistically significant differences existed between the PWB of science and commerce students on environmental mastery, positive relations with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance. This demonstrates that science students have better psychological well-being than commerce students. Similar findings have been reported by Bordbar et al. (2011) while comparing psychological well-being amongst the students of different majors. Their findings showed significant differences on the factors of self-esteem, environmental mastery, positive relations with others and self-acceptance. Another recent study by Kotar, (2013) also reported that science students were significantly higher on PWB scale than arts students.

With respect to environmental mastery, this study shows that the students of science faculty were better in psychological well-being than the commerce students. It can be argued that science students were capable of managing their surrounding pragmatically. This further suggests that it is not important to actually be in control but necessary to have the sense of being capable of acting on their own behalf. Since science subjects are more challenging, need consistent involvement and logical understanding than commerce, science students have better control on their environments to act independently, in a focused and persistent manner than their commerce counterparts.

With respect to purpose in life, results in table 2 indicate that, science students were more goal-oriented in comparison to the commerce students. This illustrates that science students are more self-reliant, realistic, responsible and mentally tough to take actions to reach the goal. On the other hand commerce students of this sample are found to be comparatively unclear about their goals because of many other options and avenues in their subjects. Nevertheless it can be further reasoned that exceptions can be there about the students from elite institutions of commerce.

According to Bowman (2010), the students who attended research universities experienced greater gains as regards to positive relations with others than the students who attended liberal arts colleges. Present study also denotes the significant mean difference in positive relations with others with respect to science and commerce first year male students. Science students tend to keep the team operating on a practical and realistic manner as compared to the commerce students. It may be explained that science students are socially more aware, controlled, self-disciplined and perfectionists as compared to the commerce background students. Moreover, the curriculum for science courses is more technical and requires regular interaction with others to work in teams to have the better understanding of the subjects. This helps them in building good relations with their peers and others.

It was evident from the study that self-acceptance level of science stream students is significantly greater than commerce students. In this context, it may be argued that science stream is

| Purpose in Life | 33.06 | 6.344 | 36.79 | 7.981 | 2.630* |
| Self-Acceptance | 33.35 | 5.614 | 36.06 | 6.602 | 2.241* |

*Note* p < 0.05
seen as prestigious faculty of learning (in Indian scenario) in comparison to commerce stream, hence there remains a general feel good factor among the science students in first year. Further, it was observed that in Indian context, the students who perform better in academics in previous class opt for science stream in college which is another feel good factor. Though the science subjects are comparatively tougher and demand more focused effort, however, since it was well thought of choice by the students, they work harder to grasp the subject. Even, if they are not able to do very well in the initial stages in certain cases, they do analyse where the fault lies and work towards overcoming such obstacles and generally have better control over the situation. Hence, they have better self-acceptance level vis-à-vis commerce students.

It is observed from the results that science students scored higher mean on autonomy as compared to commerce students. However, it is also noted that statistically there is no significant difference between the autonomy levels of both the categories. The reason for insignificant difference may be attributed to the fact that students of both streams are almost in the same age group and have just come out from the school level where they undergo same kind of education, monitored continuously; hence their autonomy level is likely to be at the same level.

It is further revealed from the results that mean score on factor of personal growth of the commerce students, is lower than those of science students (Table 2). Though, difference between both the groups is statistically insignificant. It can be further argued that personal growth level index for all type of students under study is almost comparable since the students have still not been subjected to considerably different learning environments and exposure has also been almost limited for the students of both streams. In addition, it can also be viewed that students at this level have also not undergone meaningfully different activities which would lead to their exceptionally higher personal growth in comparison to their peer in commerce group.

Conclusion

On the basis of the results of this study it can be concluded that there is a statistically significant difference in the psychological well-being of science and commerce under graduate male students. Students in both the groups go through the same type of situations at this time of their lives after passing out from schools, however science students are found to be having better psychological well-being suggesting thereby that there may certain differences in their curricula. Thus it may be suggested that commerce group students can be given more application oriented environment and tasks to enhance their PWB levels at this point to bring them almost at par with the science group. Eventually it is the training of mind that leads to good mental health. The activities which involve more team work, individual tasks and goal oriented accomplishments can be introduced to boost the psychological well-being level of the said group. Educators and researchers can make policies on these lines to enhance the PWB level of this group.

References


