Psychological well-being of Adolescents: A comparative study

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Abstract

This cross-sectional, non-experimental quantitative study aimed to determine gender differences in overall psychological wellbeing among adolescents. A total of 300 school students from various schools in Abha (Saudi Arabia) and Aligarh (India) participated in this study (males = 150; females =150). All students in this study were of Indian origin. The participants completed Ryff's psychological wellbeing scale. Gender differences were observed, however no differences were found on the basis of region. The purpose of this study was to access school adolescent’s psychological well-being.

Keywords: psychological well-being, adolescents, gender differences, region differences.

Introduction:

Numerous studies and researches have focused on adults and their issues around the world, comparatively very little has been done for the children and adolescents and in the area of psychological wellbeing (PWB). On the same note, just a handful studies have been conducted on comparison of PWB of adolescents coming from different backgrounds or regions. Parental education, political environment, socioeconomic status etc can have a significant effect on their overall wellbeing. If any of these factors are hostile or unfavorable it will create numerous challenges for the youth.

As per reports published by UNICEF 1.2 billion adolescents stand at the cross-road between childhood and adult world. Around 243 million of them live in India. If this opportunity is taken to nurture them in the right way, this step can transform our society in an effective manner.

A variety of components may be contributing to PWB; it’s a complex notion. The various dimensions are autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relation with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance. All these dimensions can be considered as key components that sum up PWB definition. It is therefore understood that all those individuals or adolescents who are unable to cope in these areas will be in a lower range of overall wellbeing. One of the questions that have gained interest in the study among adolescents is whether there is difference in PWB between males and females (Roothman, Kirsten & Wissing, 2003). Recent studies on gender differences in PWB have yielded contradictory findings (Ryff & Singer, 1998; Abbu-Rayya, 2005; Roothman et al., 2003) which underscores the need to study more on the impact of gender on important well-being outcomes.

Psychological well being:

The concept of PWB is viewed in different ways. One views it according to the hedonic and eudaimonic approaches of early philosophers. Subjective well being was coined by Ryan and Deci (2001) as composed of perception of pleasure, displeasure, satisfaction and happiness which runs along the hedonic approach. Another way is the eudaimonic approach or the PWB model that takes into account the healthy functioning and adjustment mechanism, it is said to be more stable than subjective well-being which could fluctuate with life experiences. It is also assumed that PWB could lead to adaptive human functioning and positive life experiences. An individual who exhibits more
positive affect and less negative ones after experiencing a certain situation is viewed as having better psychological well-being. Likewise good interpersonal relationship, optimism, self-acceptance and self-worth, general attitude toward life are considered as important variables in understanding and indicating better psychological well being. Psychological well being is a key aspect of happiness (Diener & Biswas, 2008). People who indicate high PWB report feeling happy and satisfied with life. Most widely accepted model is that of Carol Ryff (Ryff & Singer, 1998) that proposes a six-factor model of psychological well being. Ryff used the various views such as the developmental approach of Erikson, Buhler’s basic life tendencies, Neugarten’s personality changes, Maslow’s conception of self-actualization, Allport’s conception of maturity, Roger’s conceptualization of fully-functioning person and Jung’s description of individuation to come up with her integrated model of PWB. (Perez, 2012).

The aim of this research is to examine psychological wellbeing of school going students on the basis of gender (male/female) and region (Indian / Non resident Indians (NRI) in Saudi). It was hypothesized that there will be significant difference among the various groups of students.

2. Method
2.1 Sample and procedure

Subjects of this study were 300 adolescents (75 NRI males, 75 Indian males, 75 NRI female & 75 Indian females) recruited from various secondary high schools through stratified random sampling. Within the age range of 12 to 19 years. Scale was administered on the subjects with their consent. After permission had been granted, survey questionnaires were distributed to different classes identified as samples in the study. Adolescents were asked to complete measures during class time supervised by the researcher.

2.2 Measures

Psychological Well-being Scale was developed by Carol Ryff (Ryff & Singer, 1998) to measure psychological well-being of adolescents. This scale had been used in several researches on well-being and had been found to have high reliability and validity. The internal consistency of the scale ranged from .86 to .93 for the 54-item scale.

2.3 Statistical Analysis

The data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 20 for Windows. Prior to data entry, every form was checked for completeness and consistency. Descriptive statistics (including means and standard deviations,) were calculated for all scales and subscales. Associations between well-being, gender and region were investigated with ANOVA.

3. Results

Table 3.1: Descriptive Statistics of Psychological Well-being among Different groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NRI males</td>
<td>219.88</td>
<td>19.422</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian males</td>
<td>205.49</td>
<td>18.168</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRI Females</td>
<td>212.93</td>
<td>24.461</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian females</td>
<td>226.52</td>
<td>20.932</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One way analysis of variance (Table 2) was carried out to find the significance of difference among different groups (NRI Males, NRI Females, Indian Males and Indian Female) of adolescents on psychological well-being. The results revealed significant difference among different groups of adolescents on PWB scale (df = 3,296, F = 14.070, p < .001).

Table 3 Multiple Comparison of Means for Different Groups on Psychological Well-being.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I Group</th>
<th>J Group</th>
<th>Mean Difference I-J</th>
<th>SEM</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NRI Male</td>
<td>NRI Female</td>
<td>6.947</td>
<td>3.410</td>
<td>.177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRI Male</td>
<td>Indian Male</td>
<td>14.387</td>
<td>3.410</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Male</td>
<td>Indian Female</td>
<td>21.027</td>
<td>3.410</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Female</td>
<td>NRI Female</td>
<td>13.587</td>
<td>3.410</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tukey Post hoc test (Table 3) was applied for comparing the means of different groups on the variable as significant differences among the groups were observed. A perusal of values in tables 1 and 3 indicates that Saudi male adolescents (M = 219.88) scored significantly high on PWB as compared to Indian male adolescents (M = 205.49), while NRI female adolescents (M = 212.93) reported significantly lower PWB as compared to Indian female adolescents (M = 226.52).

Indian female adolescents (M = 226.52) depicted significantly high PWB as compared to Indian male adolescents (M = 205.49).
However, NRI male adolescents and NRI female adolescents did not differ significantly on this scale.

Discussion:

The current study was conducted to provide a quantitative assessment for the PWB of adolescent on the basis of gender and region. Indian female adolescents reported significantly high psychological well-being as compared to Indian male adolescents. This finding supports the hypothesis that there is a significant difference between the various groups of students on the scale of psychological wellbeing. These results are in line with the previous study carried out by (Perez, 2012) which showed that Filipino male and female adolescents are different in a number of dimensions of psychological well-being, girl scored higher in personal growth, environmental mastery, purpose in life, positive relation and self-acceptance whereas boys achieved more in autonomy.

However there are conflicting findings from studies conducted in India the analysis along the demographic variables selected for the study reported that variables like type of school, place of residents and the individually determined variables like age and gender did not have a direct effect on the PSW or anxiety of adolescents (Rapheal, and Varghese, 2014).

Another part of the finding of present study was NRI male adolescents have better PWB than Indian male adolescents; a possible explanation for this could be that Indian adolescents (males in particular) are subjected to immense and continuous stress to excel in academics in order to secure a position in professional course in a few years time, this sort of stress is much lesser on their NRI counterparts.
because of lesser academic stress and availability of jobs.

On the other hand NRI females reported lower psychological well-being than Indian females a likely reason for this difference could be the varying level of the social interaction and job opportunities among the two groups. It should also be noted that the educational boom took place in the Saudi region more recently as compared to Indian. NRI females have lesser variety in job options (mostly medical and academic professions) and limited social interactions because of the conservative nature of the Saudi society. Almost similar findings were reported by Profanter (2014) modern higher educational institutions are surrounded by traditional Muslim society because of which there is a waste of the female potential for the societal development. Researcher also reported an unemployment rate for women of 21.7% and of men 7.6%, there is a large discrepancy in gender differentiated unemployment.

**Limitations of this study:**

The sample size was limited only to two cities (Aligarh and Abha) and restrictions of time and resources; it could not be done in other cities. Thus, the results cannot be generalized.

Though Socio-economic status is another important Demographic variable, it could not be considered for the study.

**References:**


