



PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS DURING COVID-19

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Abstract

Psychological well-being is usually conceptualized as some combination of positive affective states such as happiness and functioning with optimal effectiveness in individual and social life. Psychological well-being during COVID-19 refers to an individual's overall mental and emotional state during the COVID-19 pandemic. It encompasses various factors such as autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance. To study the psychological well-being of university students, an online survey was conducted with 174 students of Himachal Pradesh University, who were pursuing online education during COVID-19. Here Ryff and Keyes's (1995) scale was designed in the Google form and sent via social media like WhatsApp, email, and Facebook for data collection. t-test was used to analyze the data. The psychological well-being of male and female university students differed significantly on the 'Purpose of Life', whereas university students belonging to the social science stream were higher on the 'Autonomy' dimension of the psychological well-being as compared to university students belonging to the science stream during covid-19.

Keywords: Psychological well-being; COVID-19; University Students



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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has an impact on the psychological aspect so that it affects the psychology of students, due to changes in the learning system from offline to online system. This self-unpreparedness forces students to inevitably follow it. This causes students to adapt to new habits that can cause stress. In addition, online learning has constraints on the internet/slow network, requires costs to buy an internet package, looks for references in doing assignments, is not time bound so it must always be on standby, and is inefficient in terms of manpower, time and costs.(Meo, Abukhalaf, Alomar, Sattar& Klonoff , 2020). It's important to remember that psychological well-being can vary from person to person, and everyone copes with the challenges of the pandemic differently. If feelings of distress persist or significantly impact daily functioning, it is advisable to seek professional help from a mental health provider. Well-being has become a core concept in the study of psychology (Diener et al., 1999; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Psychological well-being is simultaneously the absence of the crippling elements of the human experience – depression, anxiety, anger, fear – and the presence of enabling ones – positive emotions, meaning, healthy relationships, environmental mastery, engagement, and self-actualization. Psychological well-being is above and beyond the absence of psychological ill-being and it considers a broader spectrum of constructs than what is traditionally conceived of as happiness (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Seligman, 2011). Psychological well-being includes the absence of disorders, such as major depression or schizophrenia. An individual suffering from mental disorders can hardly experience psychological well-being. However, the absence of those disorders does not guarantee psychological flourishing. Since society traditionally supports mental illness within its healthcare system, it belongs in the health domain and it will not be a focus of this chapter. Only some of the interventions described below can both alleviate mental illness and improve positive psychological functioning. Most of the recommendations in this chapter are aimed at amplifying psychological health assets. The psychological and physical well-being of university students is greatly disturbed. Low levels of mental well-being can reduce motivation, focus, and prevent learning and are also a major cause of self-harm and suicide. While there is strong reason to suspect the impact of this invention during the Covid-19 era.

A large number of studies support that coronavirus (COVID-19) has a profound effect on mental health and behavior. Studies show that because of the coronavirus, people become

poorer economically, physically, and mentally. Other medical reports have seen an increase in suicides. While the effects are felt by everyone, especially college, and university students. Even before the epidemic, students around the world faced growing levels of anxiety, feelings of depression, insecurity, etc. of online courses, distance from home, isolation, declining family income, and future employment. There is a mental health-related model provided by Professor Carol Ryff. Novo, Gancedo, Vázquez, Marcos, and Farina (2020) studied the relationship between classroom participation and well-being for university students and found a positive correlation between phase involvement and psychological well-being; students who were tested during COVID-19 had less work well-being. Satpathy and Ali (2020) conducted a study on the psychological well-being of final-year management students during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown in India and found that common reasons for worries among students were job opportunities, delays in joining companies, coronavirus, and delay in the start of a career. Further, Dodd, Dadaczynski, Okan, McCaffery, and Pickles (2021) studied the Psychological well-being and Academic Experience of University Students in Australia during COVID-19 and reported that 34.7% of students had a sufficient level of well-being, while 33.8% had low wellbeing and remaining 31.5% had very low well-being. Further, well-being was highest in postgraduate students and lowest in undergraduate students.

NEED & SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The pandemic has introduced unique stressors and challenges for university students. They had to adapt to online learning, deal with social isolation, and face uncertainties regarding their academic progress, career prospects, and personal lives. Studying their psychological well-being helps identify the specific issues they are facing and develop targeted interventions to support their mental health. Psychological well-being can significantly impact academic performance. Understanding the psychological challenges students are experiencing during COVID-19 can help institutions develop strategies to mitigate the negative effects on learning outcomes. This knowledge can inform the design of support services, academic accommodations, and resources to promote student success. The effects of the pandemic on students' mental health may extend beyond their university years. By studying their psychological well-being during this time, researchers can gain insights into the potential long-term consequences on their mental health, career trajectories, and overall

well-being. This knowledge can guide future policies and interventions to address any lingering effects and support their transition into post-university life.

Not all students experience the same levels of psychological distress during the pandemic. Studying their well-being can help identify specific groups that are more vulnerable, such as those from marginalized backgrounds, international students, or those with pre-existing mental health conditions. This understanding allows for targeted support and interventions to address the unique needs of these groups. Research on the psychological well-being of university students during COVID-19 can inform the development of evidence-based interventions and support services. By understanding the factors that contribute to poor mental health and identifying effective strategies for promoting well-being, institutions can implement proactive measures to mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic and provide the necessary support for students. The findings from studying students' psychological well-being can inform policy decisions and resource allocation at the institutional and governmental levels. This knowledge can help direct funding and support towards mental health services, counseling programs, and other resources needed to address the specific challenges faced by university students during the pandemic. Overall, studying the psychological well-being of university students during COVID-19 is crucial for understanding their unique experiences, identifying areas of support, and developing targeted interventions to promote their mental health and academic success.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the significant difference in the psychological well-being of male and female university students during covid -19 in terms of the six dimensions of psychological well-being i.e. autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance.
2. To study the significant difference in the psychological well-being of social science and science stream of university students during covid-19 in terms of the six dimensions of psychological well-being i.e. autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants and Procedure:

The present study had been conducted on 174 students of Himachal Pradesh University, who are pursuing online education during COVID-19. The main focus of the study is to see the

psychological well-being of university students during covid-19 as related to certain demographic variables. Data was gathered from 103 social science and 71 science students of Himachal Pradesh University. There were 113 female and 61 male students.

Measures:

To study the psychological well-being and academic experiences of Himachal Pradesh University students an Online Survey method was used. Here Ryff and Keyes's (1995) scale is designed in Google form and sent via social media like WhatsApp, email, and Facebook. 18-Items Psychological Wellbeing (PWB) Scale measures six aspects of well-being and happiness: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relation with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance (Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Curhan et al., 2014) was used in the study. The Autonomy subscale items are Q15, Q17, and Q18. The Environmental Mastery subscale items are Q4, Q8, and Q9. The Personal Growth subscale items are Q11, Q12, and Q14. The Positive Relations with Others subscale items are Q6, Q13, and Q16. The Purpose in Life subscale items is Q3, Q7, and Q10. The Self-Acceptance subscale items are Q1, Q2, and Q5. Responses were on Likert Scale with 1 for disagree, 2 for neither agree nor disagree and 3 for agree. The survey method is used because it suits best the nature of the present study.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

In the present study, 't-test' was used to analyze the data. The level of significance of t-values was checked at 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance. To achieve the objectives of the present study, the obtained data from university students were organized in a form suited to testing the hypotheses. The description of calculations and results obtained have been systematically presented as:

Psychological Well-Being of University Students during Covid-19 as Related to Gender:

To compare the significant difference between mean scores of psychological well-being of Male and Female university students, their means, standard deviations, and 't'-value were calculated. The means, standard deviations, and 't'-value are given in Table 1.

Table 1 Gender Difference in Psychological Wellbeing of University Students

Sr. No.	Dimension of Psychological Well-Being	Gender	N	M	SD	t-test
1.	Autonomy	Male	61	4.66	1.182	0.56 NS
		Female	113	4.80	1.079	
2.	Environmental Mastery	Male	61	4.72	1.318	0.32 NS
		Female	113	4.82	1.453	
3.	Personal Growth	Male	61	4.28	1.127	0.19 NS
		Female	113	4.23	1.232	
4.	Positive Relations with Others	Male	61	5.82	1.668	1.02 NS
		Female	113	5.44	1.658	
5.	Purposes in Life	Male	61	5.38	1.38	2*
		Female	113	4.80	1.226	
6.	Self-Acceptance	Male	61	4.97	1.095	0.42 NS
		female	113	4.86	1.302	

* -Significant at 0.05 level of Significance

NS – Not significant at 0.05 level of significance

It is evident from Table 1 that the calculated value of 't' for comparing the significance of the difference in mean scores of male and female university students on the autonomy, personal growth, positive relations with others and self-acceptance dimensions of psychological well-being during covid -19 was found to be 0.56,0.32,0.19,1.02 and 0.42 respectively, which are less than the table value (1.97) at 0.05 level of significance for two-tailed test for the degree of freedom, df=172, so not significant at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, it may be interpreted that there is no significant difference in mean scores of male and female university students on the autonomy, personal growth, positive relations with others and self-acceptance dimensions of psychological well-being during covid-19. That is, male and female university students were almost similar in autonomy, personal growth, positive relations with others and self-acceptance dimensions the psychological well-being during COVID-19.

Further, the calculated value of 't' for comparing the significance of the difference in mean scores of male and female university students on the Purposes in Life dimension of psychological wellbeing during COVID-19 was found to be 2, which is greater than the table value (1.97) at 0.05 level of significance for two-tailed test for the degree of freedom,df=172, which is significant at a 0.05 level of significance. Hence, male university students were higher on the Purpose in Life dimension of the psychological well-being as compared to female university students during covid-19.

Psychological Well-Being of University Students during Covid-19 as Related to Stream:

To compare the significant difference between mean scores of psychological well-being of Social Science and Science university students, their means, standard deviations, and 't' - value was calculated. The means, standard deviations, and 't'-value are given in Table 2.

Table 2 Stream wise Difference in Psychological Wellbeing of University Students

Sr. No.	Dimension of Psychological Well-Being	Gender	N	M	SD	t-test
1.	Autonomy	Social science	103	4.78	1.102	3.07*
		Science	71	4.70	1.139	
2.	Environmental Mastery	Social science	103	4.67	1.324	.94NS
		Science	71	4.96	1.507	
3.	Personal Growth	Social science	103	4.34	1.201	.89NS
		Science	71	4.11	1.178	
4.	Positive Relations with Others	Social science	103	5.71	1.637	.91NS
		Science	71	5.38	1.702	
5.	Purposes in Life	Social science	103	5.16	1.349	1.40NS
		Science	71	4.77	1.221	
6.	Self-Acceptance	Social science	103	4.90	1.217	.04NS
		Science	71	4.89	1.260	

NS – Not significant at 0.05 level of significance ; *- Significant at 0.05 level of significance

It is evident from Table 2 that the calculated value of 't' for comparing the significance of the difference in mean scores of university students belonging to social science and science stream on environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose of life and self-acceptance dimensions of psychological wellbeing during covid -19 was found to be 0.94,0.89,0.91,1.40 and 0.04 respectively, which are less than the table value (1.97) at

0.05 level of significance for two-tailed test for the degree of freedom, $df=172$, so not significant at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, it may be interpreted that there is no significant difference in mean scores of university students belonging to social science and science stream on the environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose of life and self-acceptance dimensions of psychological well-being during Covid -19. That is, university students belonging to the social science and science stream were almost similar to environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose of life and self-acceptance dimensions of psychological well-being during COVID-19.

Further, the calculated value of 't' for comparing the significance of the difference in mean scores of university students belonging to social science and science stream on the Autonomy dimension of psychological well-being during COVID-19 was found to be 3.07, which is greater than the table value (1.97) at 0.05 level of significance for two-tailed test for the degree of freedom, $df=172$, which is significant at a 0.05 level of significance. Hence, university students belonging to the social science stream were higher on the Autonomy dimension of psychological well-being as compared to university students belonging to the science stream during covid-19.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Based on the findings, the following educational implications can be drawn: -

- From the results, it was clear that the psychological well-being of male and female university differed significantly on the 'Purpose of Life' dimension of Psychological well-being, so, to promote the psychological well-being of female students on Purpose in Life such action should be taken which may help them in developing goals in life and a sense of directedness, holding beliefs that life has a purpose, has aims and objectives for living. Such activities should be organized so that they develop a positive attitude toward the self, know about their good and bad qualities and accept the self so that purpose in life can be achieved in female students. Government, educational institutes, and policymakers should make curriculum and educational policies that can help students in knowing their purpose in life.
- Further, the psychological well-being of science and social science university students differed significantly on the 'Autonomy' dimension, So, to promote the psychological well-being of science students such action should be taken which may help in the development of their potentialities rather than depend upon others. They should be able to

resist social pressures to think and act in a certain way, especially during pandemic time. Such programs should be organized accordingly which may contribute to making effective use of their teaching-learning process so they get new experiences in life, get more connections with themselves, and know about their potential.

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