

PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AND GENDER: A COMPARATIVE STUDY AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN KASHMIR

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Abstract: Present research is focusing on highlighting the differences between genders concerning well-being status on university students of Kashmir. Participants are students ages between 21 and 28 (M=24). A sample of 100 university students (male=50 & female=50) were selected from three universities of Kashmir using stratified random sampling procedures. The instrument used was: Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWB) (1989) with 42 items. For achieving the desired objectives, the collected data was analysed by using Mean, SD, and Independent Samples t-test. The results showed that there is no significant gender difference on psychological well-being.

Keywords: Gender, Positive Relations, Psychological Well-Being, & Self-Acceptance.

Introduction: Psychological Well-being is a concept that encompasses a well-rounded, balanced, and comprehensive experience of life. It includes health in social, physical, mental, emotional, career, and spiritual domains. Psychological well-being has been defined as "engagement with existential challenges of life (Keyes, Shmotkin, & Ryff 2002, p. 1007) and in this vein is arguably best represented by Ryff's (1989) conception of the six factors of PWB. To clarify psychological well-being and its measurement, Ryff (1989) developed a theoretically derived multidimensional scale, which intergraded a number of different perspectives within one measurement model. The Ryff's measure taps 6 core dimension of psychological well-being that is common to the mental-health, clinical, and life-course developmental theories of positive psychological functioning. These 6 dimensions are: self-acceptance, or positive attitudes toward oneself; positive relation with others, including the ability to achieve close union with others; autonomy, including qualities of self-determination, independence, and the regulation of behavior from within; environmental mastery, with is the individual's ability to engage in, and manage, activities in one's surrounding world; purpose in life, including the beliefs that give one the feeling that there is purpose in and meaning of life; and personal growth, which represents one's continual development and striving to realize one's potential to grow and expand as a person. Having a positive psychological well-being (PWB) is crucial for successfully navigating a new environment, engaging in meaningful relationships, and realizing one's fullest potential throughout one's lifespan (Allport, 1961; Erickson, 1959; Maslow, 1968; 5 Rogers, 1961; Ryff, 1989). Ryff's (1989) multidimensional psychological wellbeing model examines six constructs identified and defined as follows: *Self-acceptance* reflects a positive evaluation of self and past life experiences (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). *Positive relations* with others emphasize the importance of trusting, satisfying interpersonal relationships with others (Rogers, 1961). *Autonomy* refers to an individual having an internal locus of evaluation and not looking to others for approval, but using personal standards for evaluating self (Rogers, 1961). *Environmental mastery* is the capacity to choose and manage effectively environments suitable to their strengths (Ryff, 1989). *Purpose in life* is predicated on the belief that life has meaning and purpose. *Personal growth* is having continued development, as characterized by self-actualization (Maslow, 1968; Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

Gender Differences: Gender differences in Psychological well-being are important because of the many efforts being made in contemporary society to empower all individuals to achieve self-actualization and utilize their full potential. In a post-feminist context this incorporates the idea of an "equal opportunities" society; yet social stereotypes still remain (Connors, 1990; Eagly, 1987; Turner & Sterk, 1994). All people are equal but not identical, and the possible differences between people need to be considered in order to empower all

individuals to achieve self-actualization and to fulfill their potential (thereby promoting optimal psychological well-being), whilst being offered equal opportunities.

Objectives: 1) To study psychological well-being among university students studying in Kashmir, and 2) To study the significance of gender difference on psychological well-being among university students studying in Kashmir.

Hypothesis: There is a significant difference in psychological well-being between male and female university students.

Design: This cross-sectional research consists of a sample of 100 university students (50=males and 50=females) studying in Kashmir (J&K), India, selected by stratified random sampling method. A standard questionnaire was distributed to the sample. The sample was compared with reference to their gender. The data collected from the sample was analysed by various statistical techniques such as Mean, SD, and Independent sample t-test with the help of SPSS. The present study is a comparative study. Only the data collected from the university students studying in Kashmir were included in the current study.

Inclusive Criteria: The university students studying in the universities of Kashmir and belonging to Jammu and Kashmir.

Exclusive Criteria: They students of Jammu and Kashmir studying outside of the State.

Statistical Techniques: For achieving the desired objectives, the collected data was analysed by using Mean, SD, and Independent Samples t-test.

Tool Description: The *Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scales (PWB)* is a tool for assessing well-being. The tool was constructed and standardized by Ryff 's scales of psychological well-being scale developed by Carol Ryff (1989). The PWB consists of 42 questions assessing the six areas of psychological well-being: self-acceptance, positive relation with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth. Respondents rate statement on a scale of 1 to 6, with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 6 indicating strong agreement. The internal consistency coefficients of the scale are between 0.86 and 0.93.

Results:

Table below Showing Means Difference of Psychological Well-Being between Male and Female Students

Gender	N	Mean	SD	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Well-being Male	50	149.58	26.876	.336	98	.737 ^{NS}
Female	50	147.76	27.260			

^{NS}. No Significant Difference

The results presented in the above table reveal the t-value of the mean scores of psychological well-being with reference to gender. An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean scores of well-being between male and female subjects. The results showed that the mean scores of psychological well-being do not differ significantly between male and female subjects. Males have significantly same levels of well-being (N=50, M=149.58, SD=26.876) with that of females (N=50, M=147.76, SD=27.260); $t=.336$, $df = 98$. Hence, the hypothesis, "there is a significant difference in psychological well-being between male and female university students" is rejected.

Discussion: Current studies on the existence of gender differences, including those related to psychological well-being reflect contradictory result and a distinct lack of consensus (Ryff & Singer, 1998, Strumpfer, 1995, as cited in Akhter 2015). Past literature supports the gender differences on well-being. The reason may be that in past male and female populations were treated differently by every society throughout the world. Crose et al (1992) believe that gender differences do exist in almost every aspect of health and health care (as cited in Akhter 2015). In a Taiwanese study, Lu (2000) discovered gender differences while examining conjugal congruence on role experiences and subjective well-being (as cited in Akhter 2015). Inglehart (2002) finds that in almost every society, men have higher incomes, more prestigious jobs and more authority than women--all

links with relatively high levels of subjective well-being. So women show low level of happiness than men (as cited in Akhter 2015).

Now the trend has changed in many societies especially in Kashmir. Men and women are being treated equally. Woman has been empowered to some extent in some societies. The myth is at its extinction that woman is the weak side of human life. Now the woman is going parallel to man in every domain of life. Therefore, now-a-days, the results may be different on researches related to well-being on gender difference. As the results of the current study show that there is no significant gender difference on well-being. Hence, the hypothesis that, "there is a significant difference in psychological well-being between male and female university students" is rejected. It can be concluded that men and women at university level have similar levels of psychological well-being. Because the reason may be that in Kashmir the female child is treated equally now as the male child. The female child's education and health are given the same importance as that of male child.

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