



A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF STUDENTS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC PERIOD

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ABSTRACT

Students during COVID-19 pandemic period faced a lot of challenges. Being a sensitive group of society, their mental health becomes the topic of concern. This upheaval has affected the psychological well-being of students. The present study aims to find out the psychological well-being of students during COVID-19 pandemic period through applying WHO (5) Well-being Index. A sample of 80 (40 girls and 40 boys) participants was selected from different CBSE board schools of Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India by purposive sampling technique. Results indicate that there is no significant difference in terms of the psychological well-being between girl and boy students. It is also found that those who fall under red flag zone, need to be further referred for proper intervention to address their poor psychological well-being. It is concluded that boy and girl students showed similar psychological well-being during COVID-19 pandemic period.

Keywords: Psychological well-being, COVID-19 pandemic.

I. INTRODUCTION

Coronavirus has adversely affected the entire world. This phenomenon has led to both short term and long-term psycho-social and mental health problems. More than two-fifths of the people are experiencing common mental disorders, due to lockdown and the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic (Grover et al., 2020). COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown as a result of that, has affected many sectors including education, economy, health, employment and day to day outdoor activities. It was observed that about 80% of the students, have been suffering from excessive stress, depression, anxiety (Dutta, A., 2020), confusion, anger, insomnia and emotional exhaustion (Rahman, 2020). This stress may lead to unfavorable effects on the learning and psychological health of students (Khetan, Moksh, S. et al., 2020), and high levels of depression were associated with difficulties in focusing on academic work (Kecojevic, A., Basch, C. H., Sullivan, M., & Davi, N. K., 2020).

Women, young people, and those with preschool aged children are experiencing the greatest increase in mental distress (Pierce, Matthias et al., 2020). Those with higher levels of perceived stress were more likely to be females and unable to focus on academic work (Kecojevic, A., Basch, C. H., Sullivan, M., & Davi, N. K., 2020).

Many countries declared nationwide lockdown due to COVID-19 pandemic. Government of India also declared complete nationwide lockdown on 25 March 2020 for an uncertain period.

As the COVID-19 pandemic spreads, there has been an increasing move in the direction of schooling online because of shutting down of schools, colleges and universities for an indefinite period (Martinez, 2020). Institutions and schools started home schooling and the far-flung use of remote teaching was introduced via online learning modules and television (Varalakshmi, R. and Arunachalam, K.,

2020; Wang, et al., 2020). There was a shift from regular class to online class. It was observed that most of the schools and colleges were totally unprepared for the complete closure and faced many challenges due to lockdown.

COVID-19 pandemic has worked as a catalyst for the educational sector to grow and opt for platforms with technologies, which have not been used before. The educational institutes created many opportunities during COVID-19 pandemic to strengthen their technological knowledge and infrastructure (Jena, P., 2020).

On 20 March 2020, The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) released list of many free digital/ e-learning platforms which is both for Secondary and Higher Education students. These platforms include e-PATHSHALA, DIKSHA, National Repository of Open Educational Resources (NROER), SWAYAM, and SWAYAM PRABHA (MHRD,2020). These initiatives are highly informative to the faculty members and the students to enhance their knowledge either in their fundamental course (or) in advanced course (or) in preparing for a competitive examination (or) in a specific field of his / her interest (Varalakshmi, R., Arunachalam, K., 2020).

Challenges

The education sector is facing unprecedented challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic period. In India, not every student is well equipped with the high-speed internet and digital gadgets, thus, they are in the line of sufferers. Government schools and colleges were at more risk because they don't have the proper facilities for conducting online classes and children studying in government schools and colleges are usually from lower economic background, so they lack Wi-Fi and internet availability. These students almost certainly do not have access to remote and digital learning facilities at home (India today, 2020). The students who aren't privileged like the others will suffer due to the present choice of digital platforms (Jena, P., 2020).

Numerous advanced educational institutes in India are also not equipped with digital facilities right now to cope up with sudden change from traditional education set up to the online education system. India is not fully fortified to make education reach all corners of the nation via digital platforms.

Online classes are being facilitated largely for students who attend urban private schools, and already outperform government school students on most indicators of learning (Annual Status of Education Report, 2018).

COVID-19 pandemic has affected more than 91% of students worldwide, with nearly 1.6 billion children and young people who were unable to attend physical schools due to temporary closures and lockdowns (UNICEF, 2020). In India, more than 32 crores of students have been affected by the various restrictions and the countrywide lockdown for COVID-19. About 14 crores of primary and 13 crores of secondary students are affected which are two mostly affected levels in India (UNESCO, 2020). Students had pervasive negative reactions to the online condition that became necessary due to the pandemic (Besser, Avi, et al., 2020). The courses became less enjoyable, less interesting, decreased in learning value, facilitated less attention and effort, and incorporating less cultural content after transitioning online. Evaluations of courses transitioning to online were consistently predicted by online self-efficacy, emotional well-being, computer anxiety, online student engagement, and student perceptions of instructor confidence with transitioning online (Garris, Christopher, P. & Fleck, Bethany, 2020).

School students are spending 50 per cent more time online than they would have before COVID-19 hit, said a recent report by the National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM) (Das, P., 2020).

Mobile addiction is yet another major problem of online learning. Too many contacts and continuous communication via a variety of channels might cause considerable distraction preventing students from focused, concentrated learning and task solving. Inappropriately structured and delivered instruction may further lead to information and study overload (Wadhwa, N., et al., 2020).

Lockdowns, physical distancing, and shifts in learning formats, as well as other economic and contextual factors related to the pandemic, can have disproportionate effects on vulnerable groups, including children with disabilities and their families (World Health Organization and World Bank 2011; UNICEF 2020b). A study on Children with special needs showed that during the pandemic period, home isolation, lack of socialization, changes in daily routines, and lack of services negatively affected the emotional states of children with disabilities, contributing to parental overload and stress. Support teachers, assistants, therapists, activists, service providers, children with disabilities, and parents of children with disabilities in Kosovo face numerous challenges and concerns due to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, including lockdowns, physical distancing, school closures, shifts to distance learning, and a lack of support services

(Hyseni Duraku, Zamira & Nagavci, Mirjeta, 2020). There is a greater inclusion of persons with disabilities amid the COVID-19 pandemic (The Hindu, 2020).

Disadvantages of COVID-19 pandemic on students include unequal access to technology, inability to focus on screens, increased responsibility of parents to educate their wards, loss of nutrition due to school closure as there is provision of mid-day meals in many government schools in India, unprepared teachers/students for online education and payment of school fees from the students got delayed. The advantages include enhanced digital literacy, increased the use of soft copy of learning material, rise in online meetings, demand for Open and Distance Learning (ODL), improvement in collaborative work, worldwide exposure and better time management (Jena, P., 2020).

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)

COVID-19 is a disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus. 'CO' stands for corona, 'VI' for virus, and 'D' for disease. Earlier, this disease was referred to as '2019 novel coronavirus' or '2019-nCoV.' The COVID-19 virus is a new virus linked to the same family of viruses as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and some types of common cold. (UNICEF, 2020). COVID-19 pandemic has affected the entire world in some way or the other.

People infected with the COVID-19 virus experienced mild to moderate respiratory illness and they recover without requiring any special treatment. Elderly people, and those with any medical conditions like diabetes, cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer are more susceptible to develop major illness (WHO, 2020).

Psychological well-being

There is no consensus around a single definition of well-being, but there is general agreement that at minimum, well-being includes the presence of positive emotions and moods (e.g., contentment, happiness), the absence of negative emotions (e.g., depression, anger, anxiety), satisfaction with life, fulfillment and positive functioning (Frey, B.S., Stutzer, A., 2002; Andrews, F.M., Withey, S.B., 1976; Diener, E., 2000; Ryff, C.D., Keyes, C.L.M., 1995). In simple terms, well-being can be described as judging life positively and feeling good (Diener, E., Suh. E., Oishi. S., 1997; Veenhoven, R., 2008).

Well-being can be defined as a state of happiness and contentment, with low levels of distress, overall good physical and mental health and outlook, or good quality of life (American Psychological Association, 2019).

Psychological well-being (PWB) refers to inter- and intra-individual levels of positive functioning that can include one's relatedness with others and self-referent attitudes that include one's sense of mastery and personal growth (Burns R., 2016). It also refers to how people evaluate their lives. According to Diener (1997), these evaluations may be in the form of cognitions or in the form of affect (Centre for Bhutan & GNH Studies).

Psychological well-being is usually conceptualized as some combination of positive affective states such as happiness (the hedonic perspective) and functioning with optimal effectiveness in individual and social life (the eudaimonic perspective) (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Objectives

The present research attempted to study the psychological well-being of students during COVID-19 pandemic. It also aimed at studying the need for psychological intervention for well-being of girl and boy students.

Hypothesis

The researcher hypothesized that (i) there will be a significant difference between the psychological well-being of girl and boy students during COVID-19 pandemic period, and (ii) there will be a need to address poor psychological well-being in students.

Sample

The sample consisted of 80 subjects (40 girls and 40 boys) from different CBSE board schools of Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India studying in 8-10 standard. The age range of these subjects was 13-15 years.

Sampling technique

The technique used in the selection of the sample was purposive sampling technique.

Variables

Independent Variable - COVID-19 Pandemic period.

Demographic- Gender of students (girls and boys)

Dependent Variable- Psychological well-being of students.

Tools

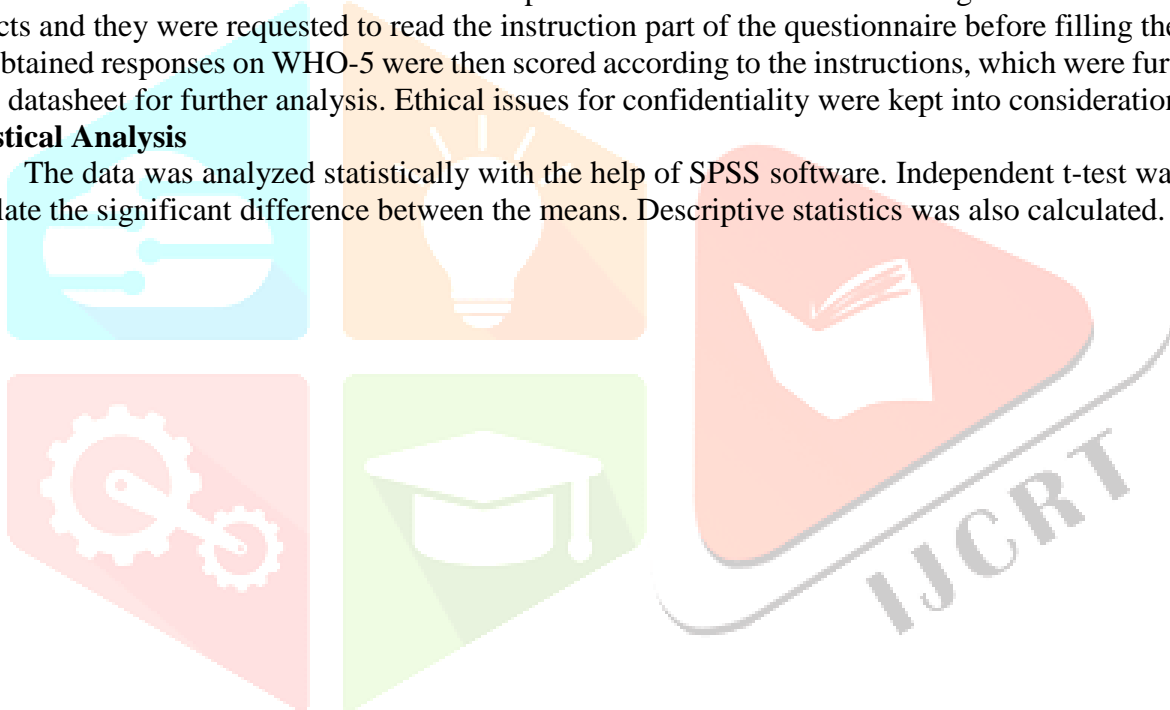
The tool used for this research was World Health Organization- Five Well Being Index (1998 version). The WHO-5 is a short self-reported measure of current mental well-being. The measure was first introduced in 1998 by WHO Regional Office in Europe as part of the DEPCARE project on well-being measures in primary health care. It is for children aged above 9 and has been translated in 30 languages.

Procedure

The procedure involved an online survey, taken with the help of google forms. The google form was created of WHO-5 Well Being Index and a survey link was circulated using WhatsApp. Each subject was requested to fill the questionnaire. They were requested to be open and honest in answering the questions and was informed that their answers would be kept confidential. The instructions given were same for all the subjects and they were requested to read the instruction part of the questionnaire before filling the form. The obtained responses on WHO-5 were then scored according to the instructions, which were further entered in the datasheet for further analysis. Ethical issues for confidentiality were kept into consideration.

Statistical Analysis

The data was analyzed statistically with the help of SPSS software. Independent t-test was applied to calculate the significant difference between the means. Descriptive statistics was also calculated.



III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Comparison between boys and girls in terms of their psychological well-being.

	Boys (n=40)		Girls (n=40)		t-score
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Psychological well-being	16.03	5.22	16.98	4.69	0.86

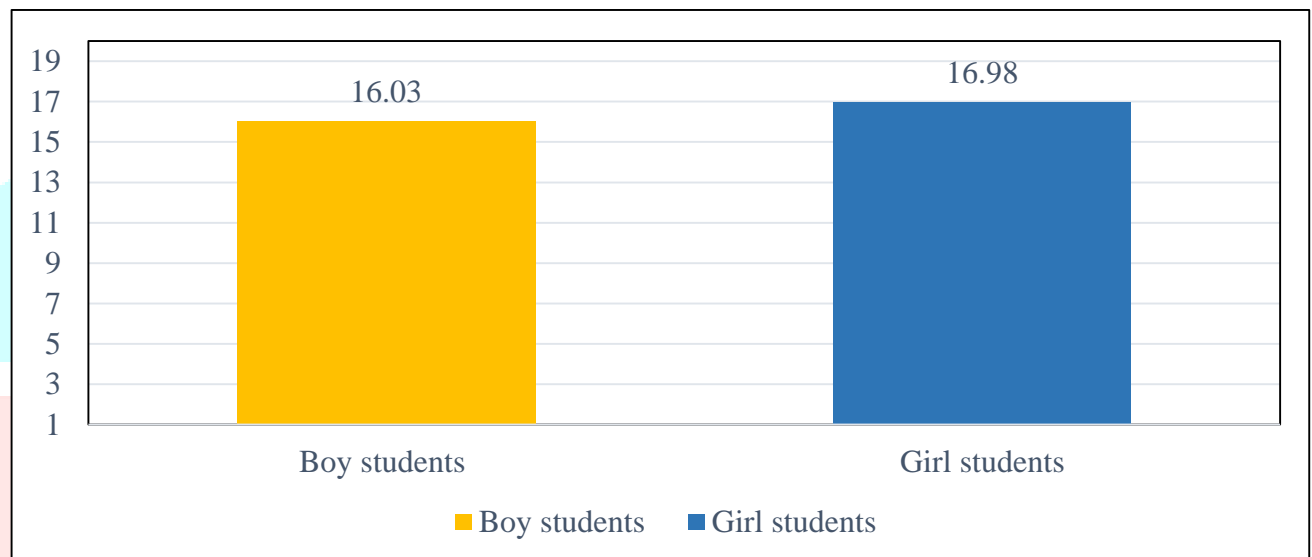


Figure 1: Mean scores of Psychological well-being of boys and girls.

The result indicates that the difference of means between the two groups of students (girls and boys) in terms of their PWB during the period of COVID-19 pandemic is found to be not significant as the difference in PWB between both the groups is very less (0.95).

According to Kantariya Ashok S. (2017), gender has no effect on psychological well-being and that girls and boys are raised and treated equally without any gender bias while their family accept them wholeheartedly. Over the past few decades, the views of society towards women education and empowerment have changed markedly which indicates that gender has no effect on PWB. The present study confirms the findings of the previous studies carried out by Salleh, N., & Mustafa, C.S. (2016); Hassan, A., & Khairiah, K., (2014) and Saranya, R., & Velayudihan (2008). They found that there are no significant differences in the mental health among boys and girls. Casey and Rebecca (2011) have also found that there are no differences according to gender on the level of wellbeing, anxiety, and depression.

The finding of the present study also indicates that there is a little hike, though negligible, in PWB of girls than boys, which means, the PWB of girls is better than boys during the COVID-19 pandemic period. A study by Waghmare, R. D., (2017) explained that female students have high psychological well-being, efficiency, mental health and interpersonal relations as compared to male students. If viewed in terms of their academic performances Gürel, N. A., (2009); Cirhinlioğlu, (2006) and Cenkseven (2004) have found that females are more successful than males in academic context and reported higher psychological well-being than males.

Boys procrastinate more than girls in the morning, that becomes difficult for them to attend online class and they also show lack of interest. This observation is supported by a study by David S. Bennett et al. (2005) who found that the boys who are depressed have higher clinician ratings of anhedonia, depressed

morning mood, and morning fatigue. The finding of the present study agrees with the study of David (2005); however, it contradicts with the findings of a study by Gray et al. (2020), who explained that there are gender differences and indicate greater levels of mental health problems due to COVID-19 in women.

Table 2: Levels of Psychological well-being of boy students and girl students

PWB/Gender	High	Low
Boys	23	03
Girls	23	06

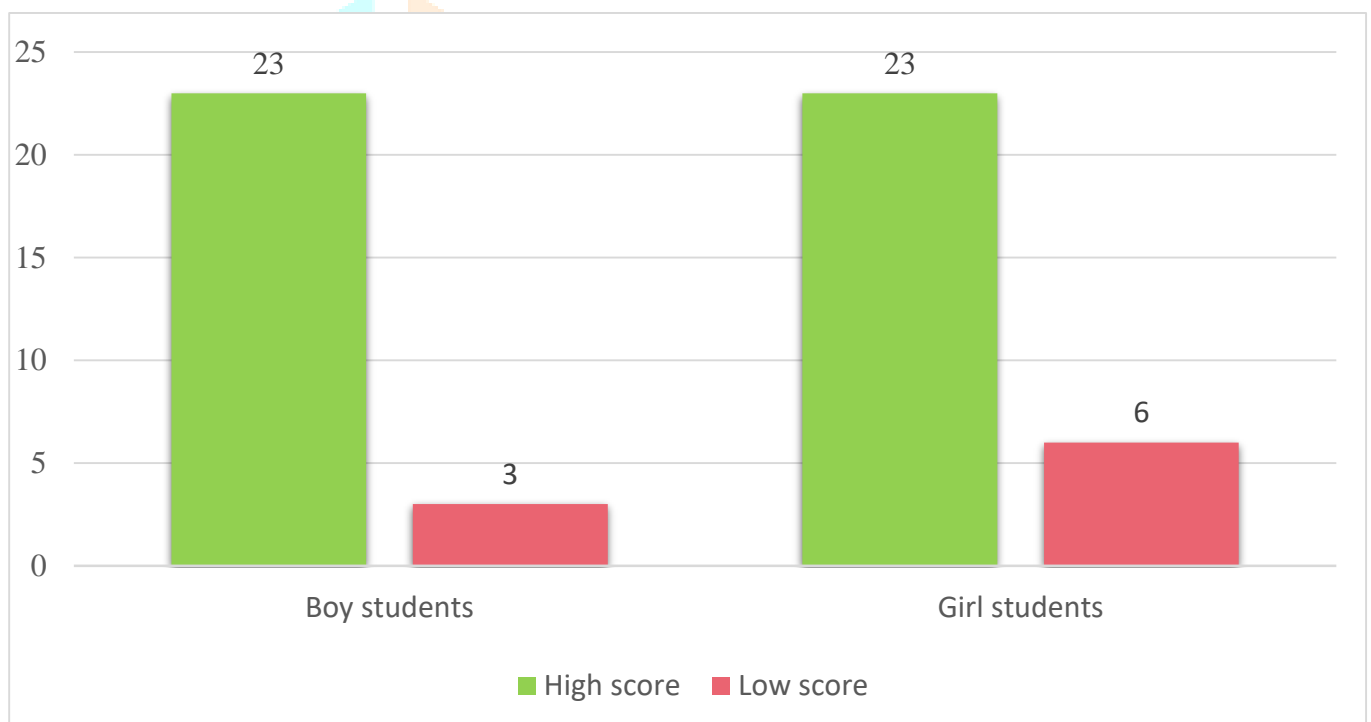


Figure 2: Psychological well-being of boy students and girl students

As indicated in the table 2, the girls' group obtained 23 as the highest score, which means their psychological well-being is good. Good psychological well-being is about feeling happy and doing well. People with high psychological well-being report feeling capable, happy, well-supported, and satisfied with life (Morin, A. 2020). The minimum score obtained by the girl students is 06, which signals extremely poor PWB, which is a worrying situation. Similarly, the highest score obtained by boys is 23 and the lowest is 03. A score as low as 03 is again a red flag in terms of their PWB.

There is a total of 15 students who scored below 13 and according to the tool used in the present study (WHO [Five] Well-Being Index) any score below 13 is an indicator of poor wellbeing. Those who scored below 13 are suffering from poor PWB and may show the symptoms like depressed mood, loss of interest and enjoyment, and reduced energy leading to increased fatigability and diminished activity, as per the criteria given in ICD-10.

This directs for a need of immediate intervention for the improvement of the well-being of all these 15 students. Thus, it is an indication for testing for depression as per the criteria mentioned under ICD-10. Further intervention may be provided accordingly under professional supervision.

IV. CONCLUSION

The study revealed that the students scored almost equal on the WHO (Five) Well-Being Index and there is no significant difference in the levels of PWB between girl and boy students during COVID-19 pandemic period. It concludes that boys and girls faced similar levels of PWB during COVID-19 pandemic period, which affected them in similar ways. Furthermore, those who were found in the risk zone of poor well-being as per the criteria of ICD-10, needs to be assessed further and referred for proper intervention. Moreover, further research is needed for the study of PWB of students during COVID-19 pandemic period.

V. LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTION

It would have been more representative if the data would have been collected face to face. This study was conducted on a small group of students in a defined area. More representative results can be procured considering various areas and then a comparative study can be conducted. Large scale study can also be conducted to explore Psychological well-being in students with greater depth. Students from CBSE board schools were selected in the present study, hence, it is suggested that students from other schools under different boards can be included in future studies for broader outcomes.

Follow-up is required for the students who scored below 13 as they are considered to be at risk of poor well-being according to WHO (Five) Well-Being Index.

There is also a need to carry out more research to analyze the psychological well-being of male and female persons in general and students in particular.

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