

# On Students' Well-being in the Indian Context

## A Review

VINEET GAIROLA\* AND PRABHAT KUMAR MISHRA\*\*

---

### Abstract

---

*The aim of this review paper is to understand and theorise different researches in the field of student well-being in the Indian context. The field of education and schooling are the doorways to realising one's potential to the fullest. However, behavioural and psychological problems in students continue to increase. Educationists, counselors, researchers, and teachers need a feasible approach to create a facilitating environment for the students engaged in teaching-learning process. This paper will focus on how mental health and students' well-being are connected. Helpful interventions related to students' well-being will be discussed. Researches on how gender, school climate, self-esteem, meaning making process, emotional intelligence, and academic achievement relate to psychological well-being will be explored.*

---

### INTRODUCTION

In this context, it comes as a necessity to explore the dimension of well-being. How people evaluate their lives is referred to as psychological well-being. There are two different types of views—hedonic and eudaimonic perspectives (Tennant et al. 2007). There are two approaches to hedonic well-being which are concerned with

the immediate states of pleasure and happiness. On the other hand, eudaimonic well-being relates to actualisation of human potentials (Ryan and Deci, 2001). Hedonic well-being in contemporary understanding is referred to as subjective well-being (SWB), which comprises life satisfaction, the presence of positive mood, and the absence of negative

---

\*Junior Project Fellow, Department of Educational Psychology and Foundations of Education, NCERT, New Delhi

\*\*Professor, Department of Educational Psychology and Foundations of Education, NCERT, New Delhi.

mood (Ryan and Deci, 2001). Similarly, eudaimonic well-being is referred to as psychological well-being (PWB). It comprises autonomy, personal growth, self-acceptance, life purpose, mastery, and positive relatedness (Ryff and Keyes, 1995).

Well-being has been defined as “fundamental to the quality of life and productivity of individuals, families, communities and nations, enabling people to experience life as meaningful and to be creative and active citizens” (World Health Organisation (WHO), 2005). What constitutes as well-being has been a part of quite a lot of debate for a long time. Different dimensions of well-being have been identified. The dimensions identified by researchers are: confidence, usefulness, interest in life, problem solving, autonomy, positive relationships, thinking clearly and creatively, energy, happiness, and optimism (Tennant et al., 2007). Twelve dimensions of psychological well-being have also been identified by Bhogale and Jai Prakash (1995). These are meaninglessness, somatic symptoms, self-esteem, positive effect, daily activities, life satisfaction, suicidal ideas, personal control, social support, tension, wellness, and general efficiency.

Psychological well-being of students is under threat in modern times due to fast pace lifestyle and societal pressure. There is a need to strengthen this crucial stage by providing quality interventions and focusing holistically, which would help in the overall development of

adolescent students. They can benefit by acquiring the knowledge, attitudes, values, and skills in a variety of ways which will improve their scholastic performance. Enhancing skills among students will enable them to make informed choices and responsible decisions related to their health and well-being. Healthy and well-adjusted students of today will become the productive citizens and empathic leaders of tomorrow.

### **DYNAMICS OF STUDENT WELL-BEING**

One of the major theorisations related to well-being was done by Bradburn (1969), who stated well-being is ‘happiness’. He referenced that whether an individual will be high or low in psychological well-being relies upon what is in abundance—positive or negative effect (Bradburn, 1969).

The six components of well-being have been recognised—self-acceptance, environmental mastery, positive relationships, autonomy, purpose in life, and personal growth (Ryff, 1989). Throughout the schooling life, be it being in primary school or secondary school, well-being plays a critical role. It serves as a key factor for emotional stability and scholastic process (Gutman and Vorhaus, 2012). Along these lines, it is not something which is out of the blue—it colours entire fabric of students’ scholastic experience. This results in schools being inclusive. There are two standpoints to look at well-being. One is “the view that wellbeing consists of pleasure or

happiness” and the other is the idea that “wellbeing consists of fulfilling or realising one’s true nature” (Ryan and Deci, 2001).

## **WELL-BEING OF INDIAN STUDENTS**

### **Stress, anxiety, well-being and mental health**

What is the most prominent factor in determining stress experienced by students in the academic settings? Saha and Mishra (2016) investigated the impact of stress on the students of Kendriya Vidyalaya, Bareilly. A sample of 200 students studying in 10th-12th was taken. It was uncovered that 81 per cent of the students found expectations from significant others and parents to be stressful. It was seen as the most perceptible factor of stress and worry in students.

Mental health and educational adjustment of school students were investigated by Malathi and Rajeshwar (2018). Findings showed that school adjustment of students depended upon their gender, class in which they were studying, parental occupation, and school management. Academic adjustment was observed to be better in schools founded by government. However, emotional adjustment was found higher in students from English and privately managed schools (Malathi and Rajeshwar, 2018).

A longitudinal study for three years with children and adolescents aged 4–11 years was carried out

by Malhotra, Kohli, Kapoor, and Pradhan (2009). It showed incidence of child and adolescent psychiatric disorder to be eighteen thousand per year. Pattanayak and Mehta (2012) in their investigation identified how the prevalence rate of depression, which in childhood was found to be around 1–2 per cent increases dramatically to 10–20 per cent by late adolescence. Sharma, Vijay, and Chaturvedi (2008) noted how suicidal ideation and attempts can be seen more in females as compared to male adolescents. It was seen that 4–16 per cent adolescents have suicidal ideation and suicide attempt have been made by 0.4–5 per cent.

These statistics indicate that there is a growing need for critical research along with palpable and substantial interventions which would benefit student well-being.

Anxiety and academic achievements are closely entwined to one another. Akhtar (1978) elucidated how there is a negative correlation between anxiety and academic achievements. What is fascinating is that adolescents who are academically sound use problem focused coping strategy and on the other hand, adolescents who are relatively less competent are inclined towards the use of emotion focused coping strategies (Rath and Nanda, 2011). This tells us that thought processes and actions are closely related to each other.

Stressful life events are associated with low psychological well-being

(Bhatti and Channabasavanna, 1985). Psychological well-being is influenced by academic stress. Urban adolescents are high in scholarly tension as compared to rural adolescents (Kohli and Malik, 2013). The underlying root cause in experience of high stress levels in Indian students is precisely because of examination system, the way exams are carried out. Stress faced during exam time can prompt anxiety and depression for which they are taken to counselors and even psychiatric assistance (Garg, 2004).

Higher numbers of stressful events are experienced by psychologically distraught boys and girls as compared to boys and girls with balanced orientation (Patel, Shah, Patel, Tilwani, and Vankar, 1998). Events which are experienced as stressful and unpleasant increase the ideation towards being depressed (Mohanraj, Subbhiah and Watson, 2010).

One of the core mental health dimensions is adjustment and good adjustment is straight forwardly related to improved academic achievement (Mohan and Gulati, 1986). Similar findings were indicated by Devi (1982). This demonstrates that well-being of students is legitimately interwoven with their academic outcomes and adjustment.

The above-mentioned researches indicate that expectations from parents and significant others are the prominent factors which causes stress among students. School adjustment of students depended

upon their gender, class in which they were studying, parental occupation, and school management. Focusing on the students and improving their holistic well-being would be productive not just at the individual level—the overall productivity of the schooling institutions would improve as well.

The above-mentioned findings will help in developing a better understanding about the impact of mental health factors like stress and anxiety among adolescent students.

Based on the findings of the above mentioned studies, an intervention plan can be developed to reduce academic stress which would further improve academic performance. Moreover, researches on the impact of yoga and stress would channelise new theorisations to understand the dimension of well-being. Adaptation problems experienced by school-going adolescents need to be carefully examined further to ease the students from various stressors thus, fostering a facilitating environment.

### **HELPFUL INTERVENTIONS RELATED TO STUDENT WELL-BEING**

The life skill approach model developed by Bharat and Kumar (2010) demonstrated that psychosocial aptitudes can be improved by participatory methods and experiential learning systems. 55,000 secondary school adolescents from Karnataka benefitted through improved self-esteem, coping, and school adjustment. A mindfulness

program was led by Anand and Sharma (2014) with school adolescents and the findings revealed that students showed reduction in stress— be it academic in nature, peer related or in relation to general well-being.

### **Student well-being in relation to gender**

Vataliya (2014) researched psychological well-being of adolescent boys and girls.

A sample of 30 adolescent boys and 30 adolescent girls from 11th class were randomly selected from Bhavnagar city of Gujarat. Psychological well-being was estimated by Psychological Well-being Questionnaire developed by Sudha. A significant difference was noted between boys and girls on psychological well-being.

On the other hand, Kulkarni and Patki (2016) explored emotional intelligence, experienced bullying and the difference between male and female secondary school students on psychological well-being. A random sample of 87 students from 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th class was taken. To gauge psychological well-being, Psychological General Wellbeing Index formulated by Harold Dupuy was utilised. Results demonstrated that there was an insignificant difference among male and female students on psychological well-being.

Dadhania (2015) explored mental health and psychological well-being in adolescent boys and girls. Sudha's Psychological Well-being

Scale was utilised for the same. A sample of 40 adolescent boys and 40 adolescent girls from 10th class was taken from the Junagadh city of Gujarat. Results indicated critical contrasts among boys and girls with regards to psychological well-being and boys were found to have higher psychological well-being than girls.

### **School climate and well-being**

Emotional needs of students in Navodaya Vidyalaya were explored by Rao (2001). A training program was developed for teachers to meet the students' emotional needs. A purposive sample of the principal, 20 Navodaya Vidyalaya teachers, and 10 students from each class was taken. It was revealed that controlling and suppressive environment will not help in meeting emotional needs of students. Rather, supportive teachers, gentleness along with self-discipline will help the students. Behavior of teachers changed significantly with students in the intervention via training program. Knowledge and skills provided in the training program were utilised and it brought desirable changes in the attitude of students and teachers.

### **Self-esteem and psychological well-being**

The relationship between peer victimisation, self-esteem, and psychosocial well-being among adolescents were examined by Bhau and Tung (2019). A sample of 96 adolescents (52 females and 44

males), of age extending between 12 to 16 years was taken. It was noted that peer victimisation, self-esteem, and psychosocial well-being are negatively correlated.

Similarly, research conducted by Singh and Singh (2013) which concentrated on the role of depression and self-esteem in psychological well-being of students found out that psychological well-being of students is adversely affected by depression and low self-esteem.

Bhupinder and Rakhi (2009) studied self-efficacy and well-being of adolescents with respect to the type of family and gender. 50 adolescent boys and 50 adolescent girls were taken from joint and nuclear families to gauge self-efficacy and well-being. Results showed a huge impact of gender and type of family on self-efficacy. Be that as it may, no noteworthy effect was found in the measure of well-being.

### **Meaning in life and psychological well-being**

Students' subjective experience related to belief in a just world and its relation to their subjective well-being were examined by Kamble and Dalbert (2012). A sample of 278 Indian students from two private English-medium schools was taken. It was noted that students' personal belief in just world was identified to their experience of justice and well-being. The more the students believe in a just world, the more they thought that they are being treated

in a reasonable manner by their parents and teachers, which in turn diminished their distress. Teacher justice explained distress at school.

Rathi and Rastogi (2007) investigated meaning in life and psychological well-being in pre-adolescents and adolescents. A sample of 104 students (34 boys and 20 girls were from the adolescence period in 12th class; 31 boys and 19 girls were from pre-adolescence in 9th class) was taken. Meaning in life and psychological well-being was measured by Personal Meaning Profile Scale by Paul Wong and Well-Being Manifestation Measure Scale by Masse was utilised. Results pointed out that psychological well-being and meaning in life have a strong positive correlation. Thus, students who perceived their life to be having a meaning had higher levels of psychological well-being. Pre-adolescents had elevated levels of psychological well-being and personal meaning as compared to adolescents. Girls were significantly higher in the dimension of personal meaning as compared to boys.

Training programs in terms of enhancing the school climate are effective in improving overall well-being of students. As the researchers suggest—gentleness, supportive teachers, and self-discipline are important constituents of bringing about a practical change in student-teacher interaction. The impact of inclusive practices will open new

doors to understanding the elements well-being. The researchers have indicated a significant positive relationship between meaning in life and psychological well-being. There is a need to explore the field of Vipassana, Dhyana etcetera (renamed and propagated as mindfulness by the West without acknowledging its roots) in relation to school adolescents. In that manner, students would practically understand the elements of Bharat's rich heritage. The time has come to create a much-awaited correspondence between technologies of the ancient seers and applying them to the present contexts specifically in the domain of education, psychology of education, and its practice.

### **Emotional intelligence, academic achievement, and psychological well-being**

Shaheen and Shaheen (2016) studied emotional intelligence in relation to psychological well-being of students. A sample of 50 boys and 50 girls (100 students) were randomly selected from the secondary schools of Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh. The outcomes showed that emotional intelligence and psychological well-being are positively correlated. There was no significant difference found between psychological well-being of boys and girls. However, scores of girls on emotional intelligence were essentially higher than that of boys.

The relation between emotional intelligence and academic achievement of students were

deciphered by Bhadouria (2013). The results exhibited that without emotional intelligence, academic achievement of students didn't guarantee future success and lack of emotional intelligence also indicated frail personality and relation building in schools, which is an important facet of quality education. A significant positive relation was noted between motivation towards academic achievement and emotional intelligence (Roy, Sinha, and Suman, 2013). High, average, and low achievers varied fundamentally in their degree of emotional intelligence (Roy, Sinha, and Suman, 2013).

Social skills play a very critical role in determining the general well-being of students.

A huge contrast remains in the general well-being of social skill deficient and non-deficient school students. Students who are deficient in social skills are lower in general well-being as compared to non-deficient school students. Social skills have a significant impact on the scholastic accomplishment of school students and play a major role in determining the emotional intelligence of school students (Devi, 2015). Patel (2015) studied emotional intelligence and psychological well-being of adolescents. A sample of 160 students (40 boys and 40 girls from urban; 40 boys and 40 girls from rural) from urban and rural areas was randomly selected. Psychological well-being was measured through Psychological Well-being Scale

developed by Sisodia and Choudhary. Discoveries brought up higher psychological well-being of students in urban area as compared to rural area. Psychological well-being of males was found to be higher than females.

The researches have shown that emotional intelligence is positively correlated with psychological well-being. A significant positive relationship was also noted between motivation towards academic achievement and emotional intelligence. Keeping in mind the zeitgeist of present time, emotional intelligence and listening, communicating, and relating with oneself and others is something that can be explored through intervention programs in schools of both rural and urban areas. Intervention programs in schools of both rural and urban areas will help us better understand the thread between geographical and the psychological.

### **Implications of Research for Creating a Facilitating Environment**

Behavioural and psychological problems in students are on the rise. Hence, it is of utmost necessity to explore and elucidate the dimension of student well-being. Promotion of mental health and well-being of adolescents can be done through improving

psychosocial skills, resilience, using teachers as facilitators, and having a comprehensive participatory experiential approach towards well-being (Vranda, 2015). Doors are open to devise new creative ways to facilitate well-being of students because even after decades of research, this area remains a dire concern. The amalgamation of various researches will lead us towards various patterns and gaps which can further facilitate the process of researching the vicissitude of student well-being. This would further aid particularly in social policy and planning. Nation can flourish only when children are educated and are physically and emotionally well.

### **CONCLUSION**

Consequently, detailed comprehension for improving student well-being comes as a fundamental advance to improve the frontiers of education in the Indian context. A growing need to concentrate on student well-being has been noted by educationists, counselors, researchers, teachers, and students themselves. Many thinkers have devoted their lives in attempts to bring changes in the education system to facilitate students' well-being. These steps should be encouraged, facilitated, and acted upon. As we know, well done is better than well said.

**REFERENCES**

- AKHTAR, S. 1978. A Study of Anxiety in relation to Academic Achievement. (Unpublished M.Ed. dissertation). Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh.
- ANAND, U. AND M.P. SHARMA. 2014. Effectiveness of a Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction Program on Stress and Well-being in Adolescents in a School Setting. *Indian Journal of Positive Psychology*. Vol. 5, No. 1. pp. 17–22.
- BHADOURIA, P. 2013. Role of emotional intelligence for academic achievement for student. *Research Journal of Educational Sciences*. Vol. 1, No. 2. pp. 8–12.
- BHARAT, S. AND K.V.K. KUMAR. 2010. Empowering adolescents with life skills education in school mental health program: Does it work? *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*. Vol. 52, No. 4. pp. 344–349.
- BHATTI, R.S. AND S.M. CHANNABASAVANNA. 1985. Study of Neuroses: Life Events and Personality Dimensions. *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*. Vol. 27, No. 2. pp. 127–137.
- BHAU, S. AND S. TUNG. 2019. Relationship of Peer Victimization with Self-esteem and Psychological Well-being among Adolescents. *Indian Journal of Psychology and Education*. Vol. 9, No. 1. pp. 76–81.
- BHOGALE, S. AND I.J. PRAKASH. 1995. Development of Psychological Well-being (PWB) Questionnaire. *Journal of Personality and Clinical Studies*. Vol. 11, No. 2. pp. 5–9.
- BHUPINDER, S. AND U. RAKHI. 2009. Self-efficacy and Well-being of Adolescents. *Journal of the Indian Academy of Applied Psychology*. Vol. 35, No. 2. pp. 227–232.
- BRADBURN, N. 1969. *The Structure of Psychological Well-Being*. Chicago: Aldine Pub. Co.
- DADHANIA, D. A. 2015. Mental Health and Psychological Well-being in Adolescent Boys and Girls. *International Journal of Public Mental Health and Neurosciences*. Vol. 2, No. 3.
- DEVI, B. 1982. Certain Psychological Factors of Adjustment Influencing Achievement among School Children. *Indian Journal of Psychology*. Vol. 57. pp. 143–153.
- DEVI, M. 2015. Study of Emotional Intelligence General Well-being and Academic Achievement among Social Skills Deficient and Non deficient School Students. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Maharshi Dayanand University, Haryana. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/208373>.
- GARG, R. 2004. Clinical Study of Psychological Factors and Comorbidity in Major Depressive Disorder in Adolescents. (Unpublished M.D. thesis). All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi.
- GUTMAN, L.M. AND J. VORHAUS. 2012. *The Impact of Pupil Behaviour and Well-being on Educational Outcomes*. London: Childhood Wellbeing Research Centre.
- KAMBLE, S.V. AND C. DALBERT. 2012. Belief in a Just World and Well-being in Indian Schools. *International Journal of Psychology*. Vol. 47, No. 4. pp. 269–278. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00207594.2011.626047>.
- KOHLI, S. AND A. MALIK. 2013. Anxiety and Well-being amongst Rural and Urban Adolescents. *Indian Journal of Positive Psychology*. Vol. 4, No. 2. pp. 148–152.
- KULKARNI, N. AND S. PATKI. 2016. A Study of Emotional Intelligence, Experienced Bullying and Psychological Well-being among Secondary School Students from Boarding Schools. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*. Vol. 3, No. 4. p. 68.

- MALATHI, P. AND G. RAJESHWAR. 2018. Study of Mental Health and Educational Adjustment of School Students. *International Journal of Academic Research*. Vol. 5, No. 5. pp. 93–100.
- MALHOTRA, S., A. KOHLI., M. KAPOOR AND B. PRADHAN. 2009. Incidence of Childhood Psychiatric Disorders in India. *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*. Vol. 51. pp. 101–107.
- MOHANRAJ, R., K. SUBBHIAH AND B. WATSON. 2010. Risk and Protective Factors to Depressive Symptoms in School-going Adolescents. *Journal of Indian Association of Child and Adolescent Mental Health*. Vol. 6. pp. 101–119.
- MOHAN, J. AND A. GULATI. 1986. Academic Achievement: A Review of Determinants. *Indian Psychological Review*. Vol. 30, No. 4.
- PATEL, H.A. 2015. Emotional Intelligence and Psychological Well-being of Adolescents. *International Journal for Technological Research in Engineering*. Vol. 2, No. 10.
- PATEL, S., R. SHAH., H. PATEL., M. TILWANI AND G. K. VANKAR. 1998. Depressive Symptomatology among Adolescent School Girls. *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*. Vol. 40, No. 35.
- PATTANAYAK, R.D. AND M. MEHTA. 2012. Childhood and Adolescent Depression. In U. Nayar (Ed.), *International handbook on mental health of children and adolescents: Culture, policy and practices* (pp. 21–38). Sage Publications. New Delhi.
- RAO, R.B.S. 2001. Development of an In-service Training Programme for Navodaya Vidyalaya Teachers in Meeting Students' Emotional Needs. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara.
- RATH, S. AND S. NANDA. 2011. Adolescent's Coping: Understanding the Role of Gender and Academic Competence. *Indian Journal of Positive Psychology*. Vol. 2, No. 2. pp. 136–139.
- RATHI, N. AND R. RASTOGI. 2007. Meaning in Life and Psychological Well-being in Pre-adolescents and Adolescents. *Journal of the Indian Academy of Applied Psychology*. Vol. 33, No. 1. pp. 31–38.
- ROY, B., R. SINHA AND S. SUMAN. 2013. Emotional Intelligence and Academic Achievement Motivation among Adolescents: A Relationship Study. *International Refereed Research Journal*. Vol. 4, No. 2. pp. 126–130.
- RYAN, R. AND E. DECI. 2001. Happiness and Human Potentials: A Review of Research on Hedonic and Eudaimonic Well-being. *Annual Review of Psychology*. Vol. 52. pp. 141–166.
- RYFF, C.D. 1989. Happiness is Everything, or is it? Explorations on the Meaning of Psychological Well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. Vol. 57, No. 6. pp. 1069–1081.
- RYFF, C.D. AND C.L. KEYES. 1995. The Structure of Psychological Well-being Revisited. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. Vol. 69. pp. 719–727.
- SAHA, S. AND S. MISHRA. 2016. An Exploration of Academic Stressors and Stress Intervention Designs among Students of Kendriya Vidyalaya (NER, Bareilly). *Indian Journal of Psychology and Education*. Vol. 6, No. 1. pp. 42–49.
- SHAHEEN, S. AND H. SHAHEEN. 2016. Emotional Intelligence in Relation to Psychological Well-being among Students. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*. Vol. 3, No. 4. pp. 206–213. DIP: 18.01.115/20160304.
- SHARMA, R., L. VIJAY AND S. CHATURVEDI. 2008. Suicidal Behavior amongst Adolescent Students in South Delhi. *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*. Vol. 50, pp. 30–33.

- SINGH, A.K. AND S. SINGH. 2013. Psychological Well-being of Students: Role of Depression and Self Esteem. *Indian Journal of Psychology and Education*. Vol. 3, No. 1. pp. 59–66.
- TENNANT, R., L. HILLER., R. FISHWICK., S. PLATT., S. JOSEPH., S. WEICH., J. PARKINSON., J. SECKER AND S. STEWART-BROWN. 2007. The Warkwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS): Development and UK validation. *Health and Quality of Life Outcomes*. Vol. 5, No. 63.
- VATALIYA, A.P. 2014. Psychological Well-being in Adolescence of Gender Difference. *Global Journal of Research Analysis*. Vol. 3, No. 3.
- VRANDA, M.N. 2015. Promotion of Mental Health and Well-being of Adolescents in Schools- A NIMHANS Model. *Journal of Psychiatry*. Vol. 18, No. 5. DOI: 10.4172/2378-5756.1000303.
- WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION. 2005. Mental Health Declaration for Europe. Helsinki, Finland.

© NCERT  
not to be republished