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# Psychological Well-being among University Students in relation to Social Competence and Program Commitment

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**Abstract**

Psychological well-being is a vital aim for our physical, mental, and effective functioning. It can be challenging to maintain this sense of well-being as a student, especially one pursuing higher education. It is critical to investigate the determinants of psychological well-being from the perspective of university students. The current study investigated the relationship between university students' psychological well-being, program commitment, and social competence. The findings revealed a statistically significant relationship between university students' psychological well-being, program commitment, and social competence. Furthermore, it was observed that program commitment and social competence have an important role in predicting the psychological well-being of university students. In terms of program commitment, social competence, and psychological well-being, there was no apparent gender difference were found.

**Keywords:** Psychological Well-being, Program Commitment, Social Competence, Higher Education, University Students

## Introduction

The quantum growth in the Higher Education sector is spear-headed by Universities, which are the highest seats of learning and university students represent the future of families, communities and countries. They are passing through a transitional stage of development which involves cognitive, attitudinal social as well as psychological changes. These changes can be a cause of conflict on the one hand and positive personality development on the other. In search for a unique social identity for themselves, students are confused about different programs of study to choose, major course choices, different areas in a particular field and many such choices related to their studies and career. Most of the times they choose their study programs under the influence of family and societal pressures. Their personal choices, interests and capabilities are ignored. As a result, the students are being torn apart between course studies, competitions and multifaceted approach of the entire teaching learning process.

Throughout their university experience, students are faced with a variety of complex choices that may influence their psychological well-being (Bragg, 1994). The most salient of these tasks involves

choosing an appropriate program of study, committing to it, carrying out the necessary steps to follow it through to completion and maintain and thrive in social relationships and tasks.

Sustainable well-being does not require individuals to feel happy all the time; the experience of stressful emotions (e.g. hopelessness, distress) is a regular part of life, and being able to manage these negative emotions is essential for long-term well-being. Psychological well-being is, however, compromised when negative emotions are extreme or very long lasting and interfere with a person's ability to function in his or her daily life.

Social competence in educational settings is influenced by the learning environment where highlights the ability to communicate and cooperate with each other (Gedvilienė, 2012). Successful communication and cooperation situations include a wide range of skills and behaviours as: teamwork, problem solving, decision making, facing challenges, establishing and maintaining relationships, self-control, assertiveness, responsibility, respect, creativity, or critical thinking, among others. The development of social competence from school to university years has an outstanding importance for allowing personal growth, self-esteem, and the respect for the socially established human rights. An individual with a poorly developed social competence may find difficulties to successfully interact with the events of his/her life, demonstrate positive feelings, set goals, or devise strategies, especially in adverse situations (Del Prette et al., 1999).

Education must not only prepare pupils for a future profession, but also for participation in the community (citizenship) and must contribute to personal development (Rychen & Salganik, 2003). Social competence in this sense is an educational goal for *all* pupils, regardless of the type of education and socio-cultural background. Every activity, either in or outside the school/university, can, in principle, teach young people both cognitive and social competences. The university authorities should pay more explicit attention to enhance social competence among students as it is an important factor which directly or indirectly influences individual's psychological well-being.

Social competence refers to display socially appropriate behaviours in different circumstances and according to the social expectations of the environment (Gresham, 1995). A socially competent person is able to optimize their social behaviour depending on the available social information (Taborsky & Oliveira, 2012). This ability improves his/her interaction, social relationships (Savickas, 2005) and behavioural flexibility (positive relations with others).

Demirci (2020) examined the association between school engagement, well-being, hope, and social competence among secondary school students in Turkey [172 females (53.4%) and 150 males (46.6%)]. The structural equation modelling indicated that hope and social competence fully mediate the association between school engagement and well-being. The results of the bootstrapping analysis confirmed the significance of indirect effects. The result of the study has provided an understanding of the psychosocial factors that may contribute to school engagement and well-being.

More specifically, it is argued from a socio-cultural perspective that social competence is inherently linked to pupils' learning and development processes.

There is a wealth of literature that demonstrates the potential benefits of employee commitment. In the context of university students, we differentiate different foci and components of commitment similar to the organizational context. This differentiation may allow universities to make more selective use of strategies to encourage and maintain higher levels of student commitment. Commitment to the university, also called institutional commitment (Tinto, 1987), reflects attachment to the institution as a whole. Although most students are likely to leave the university after graduation, we argue that students can develop commitment toward their university similar to employees. University alumni initiatives work because they build on this type of commitment of graduates toward their alma mater. Several factors can contribute to students' commitment to their university, such as, a positive image of the institution, well-known academic staff, scientific reputation, or peer mentoring (Sanchez et al., 2006). Also, Commitment appears to be an important predictor of performance outcomes (Lee et al., 2000; Meyer et al., 2002).

The selection of a university program is generally considered to represent an active form of commitment to one's future vocation (Holland, 1985). As such, it seems reasonable that it would play an important role in university students' psychological wellbeing.

Wiener and his colleagues (1987) used a sample of young adult music store managers (N = 257; mean age = 25 years) to test the hypothesis that those who were more committed to their work would also experience greater personal well-being. The researchers defined well-being as "the extent of satisfaction and happiness with the overall quality of life experienced by an individual" (Wiener, Muczyk, & Gable, 1987). The results confirmed that as individuals' commitment to their work increased, so did their feelings of personal well-being.

Meyer and Maltin (2010) proposed that need satisfaction serves as the basis for employees' motivation and commitment mindsets, and helps to explain why some forms of commitment are positively associated with well-being and buffer the negative effects of stressors, whereas other forms of commitment are negatively related to well-being and exacerbate the effects of stressors on strain.

Xu, He and Zhao (2012) found that affective commitment, one component of major commitment, facilitates the undergraduates' study engagement significantly, including vigour, dedication and absorption.

Factors ranged from age and personality types, to the level of education and socio-economic status are supposed to influence psychological well-being. There are several factors which are supposed to be influencing psychological well-being directly or indirectly including self-esteem, self-efficacy, family and work or school environment, personality factors, social competence, social support, life satisfaction, work or study commitment, career decision making attitudes, age, socio-economic status etc. influence psychological well-being. In the present study, we focus on the role of social competence and program commitment in predicting psychological well-being among university students. One objective of this study was to examine the relationship of social competence and program commitment with psychological well-being, with a view to test hypothesis that social competence and program

commitment would predict psychological well-being. Gender differences among social competence, program commitment and psychological well-being was also examined.

**Methodology**

The present study was conducted using descriptive survey method. In the present study, three variables were taken, psychological well-being as dependent variable, social competence and program commitment as independent variables. The population of the study was university students and participants were 261 undergraduate students (182 female, and 79 male students) from departments of science faculty of Panjab University, Chandigarh.

**Statistical Analysis**

Person product moment coefficient of correlation was used to find out whether relationship between independent and dependent variable exist. Regression analyses were conducted to examine the contribution of independent variables to the prediction of dependent variable. To study the gender differences among psychological well-being, social competence and program commitment, t-test was used.

**Instruments**

Participants completed a questionnaire consisting of demographic information, Psychological Well-being scales by Ryff (1995), Social competence in Higher Education Questionnaire by Legnes-Lavall and Perez-Aldegeur (2016) and Program commitment scale (PCS) developed by the researcher. Items of psychological well-being were rated on a 6-point Likert-type scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Slightly Disagree, 4 = Slightly Agree, 5 = Agree, 6 = Strongly Agree), Social competence scale items were rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale with descriptors provided (1 = Totally Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree), and items of PCS were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale with descriptions (1 = Strongly Disagree (SDA), 2 = Disagree (DA), 3 = Neutral (N), 4 = Agree (A), 5 = Strongly Agree (SA)).

**Procedure**

Participants were sampled from first and third year undergraduate students of the departments of science faculty of Panjab University. Data were collected from students who volunteered for the study. In each case, permission to collect data was obtained from the Dean of the Faculty, as well as the Head of Departments before students were approached. Data were collected anonymously and students received no benefit or incentives for participating in the study.

**Inclusion Criteria**

- Students from B.Sc. I and III pursuing courses in departments of Physics, Chemistry, Botany, Zoology, Anthropology, Biophysics, Biotechnology, Biochemistry, Mathematics, Pharmacy, Microbiology and Geology .
- Only those students who volunteered for data collection and also completed all the tests.

**Results**

Table 1 shows the coefficient of correlation value (r = 0.162) between psychological well-being and independent variables of social competence. The value came out to be positive and significant at 0.01 and 0.05 level of significance, showing significant statistical relationship between psychological well-being and social competence.

Findings show that students who could express and control their emotions, were aware of others' feelings, communicated and interacted with others, and had effective thought processes were able to improve their learning and development process. As a result, social skills support a number of aspects of well-being. It also indicates that the students who were a part of a group with strong bonds among its members, unity, feelings of attraction among its members, and a sense of belonging to their own group, are able to work with others by establishing successful communication and constructive behaviour, giving students the opportunity to participate in different environments of social and professional life in an effective and constructive way, have a positive outlook on life, and have a sense of successfully adjusting in their surroundings.

Table 2 shows the value of coefficient of correlation between psychological well-being and program commitment (r = 0.445), and the value was positive and significant at both levels 0.01 and 0.05 levels of significance, showing significant relationship between psychological well-being and program commitment of university students.

According to the findings, students who have a positive attitude toward their educational institutions and courses have a more positive outlook on life in general. Students who are happy with their academic program experience less despair and more joy in their daily responsibilities. Also, students who are satisfied with their selected courses and who did not find the other possibilities more alluring tend to have less anxiety and perplexity about their chosen disciplines and find their lives secure and fulfilling.

Table 1: Coefficient of Correlation for Psychological Well-being and Social Competence of University Students

| | | **TotalWELL** | **TotalSC** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **TotalWELL** | **Pearson Correlation** | 1 | .162** |
| | **Sig. (2-tailed)** | | .009 |
| | **N** | 261 | 261 |
| **TotalSC** | **Pearson Correlation** | .162** | 1 |
| | **Sig. (2-tailed)** | .009 | |
| | **N** | 261 | 261 |

** Correlation is Significant at the 0.01 Level (2-tailed)

Table 2: Coefficient of Correlation for Psychological Well-being and Program Commitment of University Students

| | | TotalWELL | TotalPC |
|---|---|---|---|
| **TotalWELL** | **Pearson Correlation** | 1 | .445** |
| | **Sig. (2-tailed)** | | .000 |
| | **N** | 261 | 261 |
| **TotalPC** | **Pearson Correlation** | .445** | 1 |
| | **Sig. (2-tailed)** | .000 | |
| | **N** | 261 | 261 |

** Correlation is Significant at the 0.01 Level (2-tailed)

Hence, the null hypothesis, there is no significant relationship among the psychological well-being social competence and program commitment of undergraduate university students, was rejected, signifies that there were statistically significant relationship among psychological well-being, social competence and program commitment of undergraduate university students.

The results are supported by the findings of Yalçın et al. (2021) as they found a statistically significant relationship among the psychological well-being and emotional and normative commitment of academicians. Similar results were found by Chambel and Carvalho (2022) in case of contact centre employees.

In case of social competence, Sergin et al. (2007) confirmed the similar results as the significant association between social skills, well-being, and lower levels of perceived stress was supported. Nair et al. (2013) in their study on school going adolescents indicated that social skills can predict psychological well-being.

Table 3: Regression Analysis of Psychological Well-being, Social Competence and Program Commitment of University Students

| Model Summary | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **R** | **R Square** | **Adjusted R Square** | **Std. Error of the Estimate** | **Change Statistics** | | | | |
| | | | | **R Square Change** | **F Change** | **df1** | **df2** | **Sig. F Change** |
| .162[a] | .026 | .022 | 25.21474 | .026 | 6.977 | 1 | 259 | .009 |
| .445[b] | .198 | .192 | 22.92310 | .198 | 31.908 | 2 | 258 | .000 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), TotalSC
b. Predictors: (Constant), TotalPC, TotalSC

In the first row of table 3, Social competence was introduced as an independent variable in the first step. The value of R was found to be 0.162. The value of R square and adjusted R square were found to

be .026 and .022 respectively. The adjusted R square is found .022 which indicates 2.2% variance in the dependent variable psychological well-being by social competence.

The F-value found to be 31.907 which were significant at 0.05 level as per the F-table value.

The independent variable program commitment was found in the second step, where R value was found to be .445. The value of R square was found to be .198 and adjusted R square was .192. This value indicated that 19.2% variance was explained by the social competence and program commitment conjointly. Thus, program commitment brought .17 units of increment in the value of adjusted R square. This indicated that an additional 17% of the total variance in the dependent variable was caused by the addition of program commitment. The F-value was found to be 31.908 which were significant at 0.01 and 0.05 levels as per the F-table.

With the psychological well-being as criterion variable, the significant predictors which contributed to the psychological well-being were social competence and program commitment.

Thus, Students who are able to work effectively in a social setting and as a team, are affectionate toward the members of their group, and are confident about the successful completion of their chosen courses have a more stable and satisfied life, are able to set goals for their growth, have positive relationships with others, and are competent to adapt according to the demands of the professional world have a more stable and satisfied life.

Hence, the null hypothesis, social competence and program commitment do not contribute significantly to the prediction of psychological well-being of undergraduate university students was rejected.

Table 4: Significance of Difference in Means of Psychological Well-being, Social Competence and Program Commitment with Respect to Gender

| Group Statistics | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Gender** | **N** | **Mean** | **Std. Deviation** | **t-value** |
| **TotalWELL** | **Female** | 182 | 221.4560 | 22.48525 | .807 |
| | **Male** | 78 | 224.2436 | 31.53649 | |
| **TotalSC** | **Female** | 182 | 135.6758 | 16.60624 | 1.556 |
| | **Male** | 78 | 132.2051 | 16.17466 | |
| **TotalPC** | **Female** | 182 | 165.0275 | 18.93444 | .113 |
| | **Male** | 78 | 165.3590 | 26.89951 | |

The first row in Table 4 shows the t-value .807 which is more than table value, hence significant at 0.01 and 0.05 levels, showing significant gender differences in psychological well-being. In the second row, the t-value 1.556 was found to be significant at 0.01 and 0.05 level of significance, showing significant gender difference in social competence.

In the third row the t-value .113 was found to be significant at 0.01 and 0.05 level of significance, showing significant gender difference in program commitment.

In the present study, significant difference was observed between males and females in the variables of psychological well-being, social competence and program commitment indicating that males were more able to regulate their behaviour, have a sense of directedness, competence to manage their surroundings, and a sense of fulfilment as compared to female students. Contrasting results were reported by Garcia-Castilla et al. (2020) in their study on gender and psychological well-being of young adults as females scored high on the scales of personal growth and positive relations with others than males. Matud, Lopez-Curbelo and Fortes (2019) in their study found that the women participants reported more affectionate and positive relations with others and a higher sense of personal growth than their male counterparts.

Similarly, in case of program commitment, Dodd-McCue and Wright (1996) discovered that female participants in their study had lower levels of attitudinal commitment.

In contrast, Jahangir and Priscilla (2020) discovered that female employees have higher degrees of affective, continuation, and normative commitment, as well as overall commitment.

Hence, for the present investigation, the null hypothesis, there is no significant gender difference with respect to psychological well-being, social competence and program commitment stands rejected.

**Conclusions**

Promoting students' psychological well-being necessitates a thorough awareness of the distinctive, crucial, and central developmental goals connected with university life. The current study clarifies, unifies, and extends earlier bivariate research related to the variables of psychological well-being, social competence and program commitment. According to the current findings social competence and program commitment, are positively related to psychological well-being in university students.

The analysis revealed that the variables of social competence and programme commitment, made the significant contributions to the prediction of psychological well-being. Gender differences in psychological well-being, program commitment and social competence have also been discovered.

Hence, administrators at universities should put more effort into creating and implementing initiatives that help students grow professionally and become more committed to their studies. It may be more successful to establish programmes that increase students' social competency while also delivering career-related knowledge (which may lead to greater programme commitment). Attrition-prone students with low levels of university program commitment and psychological well-being may benefit from this method as well.

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