

Wellbeing Among Postgraduate Female Students Using The Ryff Scale

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Abstract

Wellbeing has become a matter of concern with many experts in the field of mental health. Research has brought to light a need to understand wellbeing from multiple perspectives such as physical, spiritual, social, occupational, emotional, psychological, professional and financial as well as across age groups and gender. The present study aims at finding correlations between psychological well-being among female postgraduate students pursuing different specializations (Management, Home Science and Clinical Psychology) as well as within each group. Purposive sampling technique has been used for data collection from two universities, over a time period of 3-4 weeks, where a total sample of 90 postgraduate students were administered the Ryff scale out of which data of 74 students has been analyzed. Findings were calculated using ANOVA and TUKEY tests suggesting that age as a variable showed a negative correlation with wellbeing clearly emphasizing that female post graduate students from higher age groups had lower perception of wellbeing. Another finding on subscale indicated that Personal Growth (PG) is the only dimension for well-being that was found to have a p value less than 0.05, indicating a significant difference in personal growth among Management and Clinical psychology students but not Home science students. Wellbeing programme can help identify reasons for low perception of wellbeing and also enhance other dimensions on the scale as a support towards a positive and holistic wellbeing. Students are important contributors towards the progress of any society and change makers for the future. Conducting wellbeing programmes can help the students enhance various domains of wellbeing over a period of time, along with guidance and support from the education community.

Keywords: - wellbeing, postgraduate students, Ryff scale, female, dimensions.

Introduction

Wellbeing requires a balance of many areas of our life whether it is personal or professional. Education is also become an area of concern for wellbeing in present times. There has been a leap in the stakeholders pursuing post graduate courses among both genders in recent times due to the emergence of universities both private and government recognized. The present study aims at understanding psychological wellbeing among post graduate students from different areas of specialization. Wellbeing needs to be understood from two fronts, mainly psychological and physiological, both of which need to be balanced in our life through a skill set of resilience, social support, positive thinking and guidance. This is much needed when pursuing post graduate degrees that have their own challenges for the students to face. Stress has been associated as an important factor for wellbeing in many research studies, with the student population. A

comparative study by Ezlote.J.C, (2021) on Nigerian postgraduate students of the technology department was given a General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) and Postgraduate Stressor Questionnaire (PSQ). Results clearly indicated that 36% of students using coping mechanisms to deal with stress had better wellbeing as compared to those who did not (71%). Another study by Naomi.White, (2023) talks about the impact of psychological distress among post graduate students that was found due to poor relationship between the students and their supervisors extending the required social and psychological support required to be able to cope up with academic stress and feeling isolated. It was suggested that institutions must have mental health support programmes for postgraduate students. Well-being is more than just feeling good about oneself, it is about being able to balance various dimensions in our day to day situations that we face and what coping mechanisms we use to ensure positive wellbeing.

Literature Review

Wellbeing has become an important factor in our life and is more than just feeling or being happy and concerns all individuals across age, culture, gender or economic criteria's. Wellbeing, whether positive or negative, can impact lives and hence needs to be addressed. The present study is based on understanding wellbeing among post graduate students from different specializations. Wellbeing and its dimensions have been researched upon by many experts providing us with clarity and understanding about the role it plays in our lives and ways to enhance the different dimensions of wellbeing.

According to CSU-PUEBLO(2021), wellbeing is multifaceted and has almost 8 dimensions that include 1)emotional, 2)social,3) intellectual, 4)spiritual, 5)occupational,6) financial, 7)environmental and 8)physical. Martin Seligman (2002) a well-known psychologist talks about his theory on happiness and positive psychology stating that life should be lived considering three aspects: 1) learning to enjoy simple things in life such as friends and family, 2) acknowledge one's own unique strengths and weaknesses and 3) Find your purpose of life and use your strengths to achieve that purpose which is more than just being you. On similar grounds the theory by Barbara.L.F. (2004) on Broaden and Build emphasizes that positive emotions help broaden an individual's mindset and these in turn help build better resources that could be physical, emotional, social and intellectual for any individual leading to better wellbeing outcomes in their life. Since the focus of the present study is on understanding levels of wellbeing and post graduate students, the above theories provide us with an insight in this direction.

In a statistical meta-analysis study by Robert .J.Edger,(2013) the wellbeing literature consisting of 164 studies and 560 observations done, indicated that various dimensions such as standard of living, physical health, relationships with others, sense of peace and feeling of security were significant factors contributing towards wellbeing in life. Considering the outcome of this analysis, it is easier for us to consider that the well-being of a student can be challenging when pursuing higher degrees and qualifications in a competitive world that we live in. With new standards of achievement set by the academic community and many career options to look into, students have their own challenges to face when it comes to taking decisions about their education, affordability and performance pressure. In a study by Zhang Shou et.al. (2022) conducted on 1,228 post graduate students to understand the impact of social support and psychological resilience on emotional intelligence and wellbeing, using the Emotional Intelligence scale, psychological resilience scale, social support scale and a wellbeing scale. Findings revealed the impact of emotional intelligence playing a significant role in strengthening emotional resilience which is important for wellbeing. A study similar to the previous one was conducted by S. Chaudhary (2024) on 309 management students shows the need for support in terms of family and

institution to enhance psychological well-being as well as their academic performance. M.M.Alsubaie (2019) in his study on understanding about how social support and depression impact postgraduate students quality of life conducted an online survey using tools to study depressive symptoms, quality of life and social support on 461 female students and the findings indicated that quality of life (psychological) depended on support from family and friends and quality of life (social relationships) depended on other important people and friends. Considering that research can have different focus areas on wellbeing, a study on gender differences on wellbeing with self-esteem as a mediator was conducted on 122 Indian college students (18-28 years) using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and findings indicated that self-esteem is important to maintain positive wellbeing and gender does not impact wellbeing. Another recent study was conducted by Milicev.J. et.al, (2023) to evaluate mental health and wellbeing among 479 postgraduate research students and their level of life satisfaction through an online survey. Results indicated mental health issues such as anxiety, suicidal tendency, sleep disorder that also led to low wellbeing among the students, suggesting that institutes in UK should provide with facilities to tackle the area of mental health and wellbeing to promote a balance in work-life, build resilience and foster social skills. With a similar focus on understanding coping styles in students, a comparative study of graduate and postgraduate students was conducted by Reddy.S, et.al.(2014). 120 students participated and were administered a socio-demographic interview schedule and student stress survey. Results indicated that problem focused coping style was related to academic performance whereas emotional coping style was related to behavior and emotions. It was made suggestive that institutes could have stress management programs for students. Similar studies by Kavitha,B.Y.et.al,(2020) and Jain, S. & Chaudhary, I.(2023) on coping mechanisms among university students have indicated the significance of post graduate students experiencing stress due to lack of guidance for coping mechanisms. Considering that students can gain benefit from institutional support for better learning outcomes, a correlational study on Spanish students psychological wellbeing and self-learning styles using several self-reported scales was conducted by Morales-Rodriguez (2020). The Ryff scale was used to measure the different psychological components as well as the concept of empathy and self-concept, indicating the need to have new educational policies and interventions for the students. Some research work on medical students have even highlighted different socio-demographic issues such as divorced parents, stressful environments and chronic disorders and disabilities and impact on their wellbeing status like the one conducted , by Sokratous, S.(2023) on students of Nursing college and midwife training, in Cyprus. The results were based on the t-test and regression analysis method ,which indicated a significant correlation of the above stated socio-demographic issues and psychological wellbeing and there was a suggestive need for counselling services for the student's psychological wellbeing, male students showed a higher percentage of depressive issues than female students. Research on gender and wellbeing have added another dimension that needs to be understood from a mental health perspective in context with the student population.Mitalben.M.Jadhav, (2020)conducted a study on mental health among graduate and post graduate students to find correlation in education and gender if any. The sample of 140 students from both groups of boys and girls were given a Student Problem Checklist (SPC) and the outcome revealed that boys were better on their mental health issues than girls and it was suggested there should be counselling and intervention facilities provided on campus to help students deal better with their issues. Similarly, on a cross sectional group of graduate and undergrad students from a Business school in Karachi were evaluated on their wellbeing status, on a self-made questionnaire focusing on six dimensions of wellbeing (anxiety, depression, positive well-being, vitality, self-control, and general health) by Maryam.M.Bakhsh.et.al. (2024).Findings indicated a strong

need to inculcate subjective feelings of wellbeing among students of both categories as well as the need to have more wellbeing awareness programs on campus. A systematic review on psychological wellbeing was done by Dr. Dhanabhakya (2023) to understand what the term means, its various components, including the Ryff scale to create awareness about the importance of wellbeing and promote wellbeing for all. The research gap identified is that fewer studies have been done on female post graduate students, correlation between factors affecting wellbeing and educational preferences and implementation of wellbeing programmes. The present study aims at understanding wellbeing across age and specializations using the Ryff scale as a step towards encouraging intervention programmes for wellbeing for postgraduate students on campus.

Research Methodology

The present research was conducted as a correlational study using a survey method. The survey was conducted on a sample of 90 post graduate students from three specializations (management, home science and clinical psychology). The standardized Ryff Psychological well-being scale which comprises six dimensions: autonomy (A), environmental mastery (EM), Personal Growth (PG), Positive relationship with others (PR), purpose of life (PL) and self-acceptance (SA) was administered. The scale gives an overall total wellbeing score; and scores on subscales, which help identify what our wellbeing status is and areas that need attention. A high score indicates good wellbeing and a low score suggests low wellbeing. The data was collected from 90 postgraduate students. Students were asked to fill the Ryff scale of 42 items and personal details (age, married or unmarried, working or student). Statistical analysis was done by using Descriptive analysis, Correlation, and ANOVA. Correlation between age and total wellbeing scores was computed along with the inter-correlations among the parameters of wellbeing.

Results and Discussions

The findings from Table 1 is a comparison among the groups on Autonomy, the p value among the groups is 0.832, which is greater than the 0.05, hence null hypothesis is retained. This means the mean wellbeing scores of these groups are similar.

Table1:- Comparison of Autonomy (A) parameter of wellbeing on the Ryff scale among post graduate students.

ATMNY Descriptives				ATMNY ANOVA						
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Null Hypothesis
Management	9	20.3333	5.29150	Between Groups	17.215	2	8.608	0.184	0.832	Retained
Clinical Psychology	30	21.9000	8.51915	Within Groups	3315.271	71	46.694			
Home Science	35	21.4286	5.38673	Total	3332.486	73				
Total	74	21.4865	6.75652							

Table 2:- Comparison of Environmental Mastery (EM) parameter of wellbeing on the Ryff scale among post graduate students.

EM Descriptives				EM ANOVA						
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Null Hypothesis
Management	9	20.6667	8.36660	Between Groups	212.516	2	106.258	2.204	0.118	Retained
Clinical Psychology	30	22.0333	7.88925	Within Groups	3423.538	71	48.219			
Home Science	35	18.4286	5.57983	Total	3636.054	73				
Total	74	20.1622	7.05755							

Findings from table 2 is a comparison among the groups on Environmental Mastery(EM), the p value among the groups is 0.118 ,which is greater than the 0.05,hence null hypothesis is retained. This means the mean wellbeing scores of these groups are similar.

Table 3:-Comparison of Personal Growth (PG) parameter of wellbeing on the Ryff scale among post graduate students.

PG Descriptives				PG ANOVA						
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Null Hypothesis
Management	9	24.5556	6.02310	Between Groups	300.575	2	150.287	4.962	0.010	Rejected
Clinical Psychology	30	18.1667	6.35221	Within Groups	2150.560	71	30.290			
Home Science	35	20.6286	4.50546	Total	2451.135	73				
Total	74	20.1081	5.79458							

Table 4:- Comparison of means of Personal growth parameter of wellbeing on the Ryff scale among Management, Home science and Clinical psychology post graduate students.

PG Multiple Comparisons (Tukey HSD)				
Dependent Variable		Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
MBA	Clinical Psychology	6.38889*	2.09169	0.009
	Home Science	3.92698	2.05692	0.144
The difference between the Mean Wellbeing scores of Management and Clinical Research students is significant at 0.05 level. The Mgmt students have significantly higher Mean(24.556) than that of the CP (18.167) students.				

However in Table 3 the p value in the ANOVA table is 0.01 which is less than 0.05, hence the null hypothesis is rejected, which means there is significant difference in Personal Growth (PG) dimension of well-being among the 3 groups. Table 4 shows comparative results among the 3 groups. When further analyzed using the TUKEY test it was observed that the difference between the clinical psychology and

management students is significant at 0.05 level. The Management students have significant higher mean (24.556) than that of the clinical psychology students (18.167). A similar study was conducted by Fatime.Ziberi (2023) on the well-being of university students and possibilities for improvements in their wellbeing by using a survey method with 106 students. Six dimensions of wellbeing were being looked at and the results indicated a high score on Personal Growth (PG) dimension and lowest score on Personal Relationships (PR), which indicated a need to provide counselling, recreational activities and interventions to the university students to help them improve their wellbeing.

Table 5:- Comparison of Positive Relationship with others (PR) parameter of wellbeing on the Ryff scale among post graduate students.

PR Descriptives				PR ANOVA						
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Null Hypothesis
Management	9	22.6667	6.26498	Between Groups	30.247	2	15.123	0.312	0.733	Retained
Clinical Psychology	30	21.8333	8.42854	Within Groups	3437.767	71	48.419			
Home Science	35	23.2000	5.59306	Total	3468.014	73				
Total	74	22.5811	6.89253							

Findings from table 5 is a comparison among the groups on PR, the p value among the groups is 0.733, which is greater than 0.05, hence null hypothesis is retained. This means the mean wellbeing scores of these groups are similar. Similarly the findings from Table 6 is a comparison on PL, the p value among the groups is 0.825, which is greater than 0.05, hence null hypothesis is retained.

Table 6:- Comparison of Purpose of Life (PL) parameter of wellbeing on the Ryff scale among post graduate students.

PL Descriptives				PL ANOVA						
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Null Hypothesis
Management	9	18.6667	5.22015	Between Groups	13.634	2	6.817	0.193	0.825	Retained
Clinical Psychology	30	19.5333	7.26699	Within Groups	2507.352	71	35.315			
Home Science	35	18.6571	4.72131	Total	2520.986	73				
Total	74	19.0135	5.87657							

Table 7:- Comparison of Self-Acceptance (SA) parameter of wellbeing on the Ryff scale among post graduate students.

SA Descriptives				SA ANOVA						
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Null Hypothesis
Management	9	26.3333	8.15475	Between Groups	144.509	2	72.254	1.760	0.179	Retained
Clinical Psychology	30	24.1000	7.29360	Within Groups	2914.586	71	41.051			
Home Science	35	27.0571	4.97016	Total	3059.095	73				
Total	74	25.7703	6.47344							

Findings from table 7 is a comparison among the groups on SA, the p value among the groups is 0.179, which is greater than 0.05, hence null hypothesis is retained. This means the mean wellbeing scores of these groups are similar.

Table 8:-Comparison of total scores of wellbeing on the Ryff scale among students of all 3 specializations

Total Score Descriptives				Total Score ANOVA						
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Null Hypothesis
Management	9	132.7778	34.55350	Between Groups	169.900	2	84.950	0.111	0.895	Retained
Clinical Psychology	30	127.9333	33.99182	Within Groups	54294.965	71	764.718			
Home Science	35	129.6857	18.17848	Total	54464.865	73				
Total	74	129.3514	27.31472							

Findings from Table 8 indicate comparison of total wellbeing scores among all the 3 groups with a significance of 0.895, which is more than 0.05, hence null hypothesis is retained, indicating that the different areas of specializations have not impacted the wellbeing of the students. Wellbeing scores are the same. A dissimilar comparative study was done by Dr. Zulfiqar.U.Siddique (2006), to examine psychological wellbeing among students taking up non-professional and professional courses in the field of science. The tool used was a PGI General Well-being scale on 100 students and the results indicated a higher wellbeing level among students pursuing professional courses than those pursuing non-professional courses. As well as the mean scores indicated male professional students having a higher well-being than female professional students. Similar studies by Kavitha,B.Y.,(2020) and Jain, S. & Chaudhary, I. (2023) have indicated the significance of post graduate students experiencing stress due to lack of guidance for coping mechanisms.

Table 9:- Correlation among all the six dimensions on the Ryff scale for Wellbeing.

Correlations							
		ATMNY	EM	PG	PR	PL	SA
ATMNY	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	1					
EM	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.536**	0.001				
PG	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.353**	.277*				
PR	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.418**	.393**	.310**			
PL	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.318**	.250*	.473**	.504**		
SA	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.468**	.378**	.423**	.462**	.399**	
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).							
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).							

Table 9 is a correlation among the six dimensions of wellbeing, indicating that from all the dimensions analyzed in the above table, only PG-Personal Growth has shown a significant correlation at 0.002(2 - Tailed test) among the three student groups.

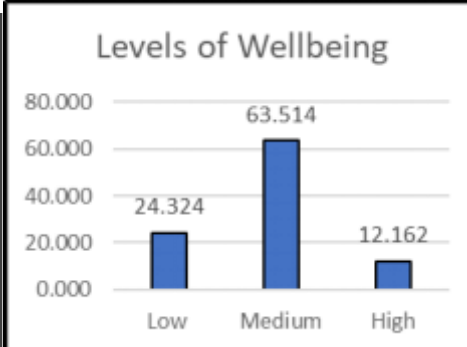
Table 10:- Correlation between the age and total score on Ryff well-being scale.

TOTAL SCORE	Age
Pearson Correlation	-.358**
Sig (2-tailed)	0.002
N	74
Null Hypothesis	Rejected

Findings from Table 10 indicate a significant correlation between age and wellbeing with a significance score of 0.002 (2-Tailed) analysis. Roslan (2017) conducted a study on 192 postgraduate students using a psychological wellbeing questionnaire and the results indicate that women above the age of 41, have shown higher psychological wellbeing as compared to those women in the younger age groups. However this study is indicating a different light on age and its correlation with personal growth as compared to the present study in question.

Table 11:- Comparison of levels of wellbeing of post graduate students.

Levels of Wellbeing	Frequency	Percentage
Low	18	24.324
Medium	47	63.514
High	9	12.162
Total	74	100



Overall findings on the six dimensions on the Ryff scale for psychological well-being indicate inter correlation of all the six parameters of well-being that are positive and significantly correlated with each other. So any change in the values on any of the parameters can affect the remaining parameters and also their overall wellbeing scores. The findings also suggest that the dimension of Personal Growth (PG) can be considered as a starting point to provide support needed for the students leading to a better wellbeing as students on personal and professional front, which is required in today's times considering how female students are coming to urban cities from different parts of the country to gain knowledge and education in such diverse fields of study. Social support can act as a mediator in promoting wellbeing among post graduate students indicated by a study done on 335 students from 13 Malaysian universities by Ooi, H. X., (2023). Findings indicated that self-esteem and social support are important to maintain positive wellbeing. Hence universities should be encouraged to facilitate the students by providing intervention programmes on wellbeing on campus, conduct regular assessments to gauge wellbeing and encourage a positive student engagement in wellbeing activities, that will help create progressive societies.

Conclusions

The present study has brought to light findings that share concern on identifying and enhancing wellbeing among post graduate students. The findings indicate that age as a variable showed a negative correlation with wellbeing clearly emphasizing that higher the age groups, lower is the perception of wellbeing. However a significant correlation on personal growth dimension of wellbeing between management and clinical psychology students, emphasizes how other dimensions of wellbeing can be enhanced too. There is interdependency of the dimensions on the Ryff scale and incentives to improve one dimension will have a positive impact on the dimensions too which is a domino effect that can help us empower students and create a positive wellbeing society.

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