

Gender, Number of Attempts and Social Media Usage as Correlates of Wellbeing among Civil Service Aspirants

Madiha Fatima¹, Prof. Madhurima Pradhan²

¹Senior Research Fellow, Department of Psychology, University of Lucknow

²Professor (Retd.), Department of Psychology, University of Lucknow

ABSTRACT

Approximately 06 lakh students appear for Civil Service Examination conducted by Union Public Service Commission every year in India (BYJU'S 2023). The long term preparation, lengthy syllabus, undefined pattern of the exam and cut throat competition for this exam takes a toll on student's overall wellbeing. The present study focuses on exploring the status of different dimension of wellbeing: physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual of civil service aspirants. In addition an attempt has also been made to find out the impact of gender, attempts of the exam and social media usage on wellbeing. Well-Being Scale by Singh and Gupta (2001) was used to measure wellbeing. The details of number of attempts, social media usage and gender was collected through personal data questionnaire. The sample of the study comprised of 89 participants who were preparing for civil service examination. Most of the aspirants were found to be average level in terms of overall wellbeing. There was no significant impact of gender on dimensions of wellbeing. A negative impact of social media usage on mental wellbeing of civil service aspirants was found. In addition, the social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of those respondents who had taken more than two attempts was found to be lower than those who have taken one or two attempts. Mental wellbeing was found to be positively correlated with social and emotional wellbeing which provides an evidence for studying the construct of wellbeing of civil service aspirants in holistic terms. The study has implications for the need for intervention to sustain the wellbeing of civil service aspirants and making them familiar with the techniques for digital detox.

Keywords: Wellbeing, Social Media Use, Number of Attempts, Gender

INTRODUCTION

UPSC aspirants face profound challenges and changes during their preparation, including intense pressure, fear of failure, and societal expectations. Repeated failures and a monotonous lifestyle can harm their well-being, leading to anxiety, depression, and even suicidal thoughts. While they experience personal growth, discipline, and increased responsibility, the fierce competition and limited seats in the UPSC exam create stress. Additional stressors include financial difficulties, lack of resources, insecurity, and routine-based lives, impacting social interactions. Regular communication with loved ones is recommended by mental health professionals. Recurring failures can harm self-esteem and lead to defensive behavior and frustration, often exacerbated by parental pressure.

In the light of above mentioned challenges, achieving physical, emotional, social, mental, and spiritual well-being become essential for civil service aspirants.

In our country, females are not encouraged by the society to study after they attain certain level of formal education. Those who show the courage to continue their studies have to struggle on many dimensions like unsupportive family, societal pressure on family for giving freedom to girl child and not getting her married at the right age, financial constraint etc. A female student preparing for competitive examination battles with all such factors on one hand along with her main endeavor to study and excel in exams. Such situations might demean the wellbeing of females. Therefore the present research will study the impact of gender on wellbeing of civil service aspirants.

In addition, multiple attempts and years of preparation drain the mental energy, enthusiasm and positivity of civil service aspirants which deteriorates their mental health and wellbeing. During preparation aspirants avoid many distractions like social gatherings to stay focused for their preparation. Use of social media is a double edged sword. On one hand it is beneficial for their preparation, on the other hand it may cause distraction from their preparation. Constant use of social media can have negative effects on cognitive functions and attention span which ultimately impacts the productivity of aspirants. Hence the present research will also study the impact of number of attempts and social media use on the wellbeing of civil service aspirants.

Wellbeing 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 Organization (WHO), 2005). Wellbeing encompasses health, happiness, and prosperity, and it involves experiencing good mental health, a high level of life satisfaction, a sense of purpose or meaning, and the capacity to effectively handle stress.

Physical well-being involves maintaining a high quality of life without undue fatigue or stress. It encompasses sleep, exercise, nutrition, and sexual health, emphasizing that daily choices impact overall health and well-being.

Social well-being, as per Keyes (1998), is about evaluating one's life circumstances and interactions in society. It's about fostering positive connections with others and communities, often assessed subjectively.

Mental wellbeing can be described as a combination of how we feel (our emotions and life satisfaction) and how we function (relationships with others, personal control, purpose in life and independence).

Spiritual well-being is the pursuit of purpose and meaning in life, including personal morals and ethics. It can involve religious practices or personal beliefs, shaping one's views on life, death, and reality.

Emotional well-being centers on understanding and managing emotions effectively in life's events and challenges. It greatly influences day-to-day functioning and overall health, and struggles in this area can affect mental and physical health.

A review of studies on civil service aspirants reveal that these students experience various types of stress like self-inflicted stress, peer-inflicted stress, and parent-inflicted stress, non-supportive teachers etc.

Pachole et. al. (2023) found that over 50% of civil service aspirants experience depression, anxiety, and stress due to factors like non-supportive teachers, inadequate sleep, and limited study hours.

Prajapati & Singh (2017) found in sources of stressors among students preparing for various competitive exams. It was found that students face various stressors, including self-inflicted stress, peer-inflicted stress, and parent-inflicted stress.

It has also been found from review of studies that civil service aspirants experience increasing stress with successive attempts of the exam, leading to poor mental health and various negative consequences in their lives. Repeated failures may often lead to deterioration in social relationships, social isolation, and heightened anxiety among them. Multiple failure in qualifying the examination worsen their mental as well as physical well-being.

Sihag (2016) observed a moderate level of stress among individuals attempting the IAS exam for the second or third time, whereas those attempting it for the first time experienced higher levels of examination stress. The maximum stress was reported by individuals in their final attempt.

Shandilya (2023) explored that UPSC aspirants experience a significant amount of stress and anxiety during the preparation process. 53.3% of respondents rated their mental health as poor or somewhat poor. Another significant finding of the study was a correlation between the number of attempts at the UPSC exam and mental health. Those who have attempted the exam multiple times (4 or more attempts) reported poorer mental health than those who have attempted the exam fewer times or not at all. The study also found that 41.7% of UPSC aspirants have problems with their work or daily life due to emotional problems such as feeling depressed, sad or anxious. In terms of physical health, 36% of respondents rated their physical health as somewhat poor or poor.

Tiwari & Punitha (2018) found that most civil services aspirants were heavily focused on their exams, and repeated failures were affecting all aspects of their lives. While some remained hopeful about failure's meaning and consequences, many felt hopeless and were under significant mental stress. They also reported distorted relationships with loved ones and a reduced social circle due to their repeated failures. They expressed fear of negative outcomes, avoidance of feedback, and concerns about losing respect in their lives. To cope, they relied on self-motivation and engaging in hobbies.

Sharma, Singla and Sidhu (2014) reported that those students who appeared for preliminary exam of civil service exhibited higher symptoms on the anxiety subscale, interpersonal sensitivity and anger hostility. Those who have given multiple attempts had higher severity of symptoms than fresher.

Despite numerous researches that examined various aspects of civil service aspirants' experiences, there remains a notable research gap in reference to their overall wellbeing. Previous studies have predominantly focused on academic performance, stress, anxiety, depression, mental health, coping mechanisms, etc. but there is paucity of researches that explore the holistic wellbeing of aspirants.

It is not clearly evident from the existing literature that whether male and female civil service aspirants differ on different dimensions of wellbeing, hence there seems a need to study gender difference in this reference.

Moreover, the available researches have explored the social media usage among aspirants but do not study its impact on the wellbeing of the civil service aspirants.

Therefore, to fill these research gaps, the present study aims to answer following research questions:

1. What is the status of physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing of civil service aspirants?
2. Are the different dimensions of well-being correlated with each other?
3. Do male and female civil service aspirants differ on physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing?
4. Does number of attempts of civil service examination has any impact on physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing of civil service aspirants?

5. Does social media usage by civil service aspirants has any impact on their physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing?

METHOD

Objectives:

- To explore the status of physical, mental, social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of civil service aspirants and investigate their relationship with each other.
- To find out the gender difference among various dimensions of wellbeing of civil service aspirants.
- To find out the impact of number of attempts on different dimensions of wellbeing of civil service aspirants.
- To find out the impact of social media use on different dimensions of wellbeing of civil service aspirants.

Hypotheses:

- The physical, mental, social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of civil service aspirants will be low.
- There will be significant gender difference on various dimensions of wellbeing of civil service aspirants.
- There will be significant impact of number of attempts on different dimensions of wellbeing of civil service aspirants.
- There will be significant impact of social media usage on different dimensions of wellbeing of civil service aspirants.

Sample:

In the present research a total of 89 respondents who were preparing for civil service examinations at least since past one year participated in the research. The age was from 21 to 33 years. Out of them 54 were male 35 were female. Convenience sampling technique was used. The data was collected through Google forms using Wellbeing Scale and personal data questionnaire. The participants provided their consent before proceeding with the questionnaire.

Measures:

Well-being scale by Singh and Gupta (2001) was used to measure wellbeing of civil service aspirants. The scale consists of 50 items represented by five subscales: physical well-being, mental well-being, social well-being, emotional well-being and spiritual well-being. Minimum score is 25 and maximum is 250. It is a five-point scale ranging from 'not so much', 'to some extent', 'average', 'rather so much', 'very much'. The collected data were analyzed by using SPSS. The scale is reliable, Test-retest reliability = (0.98) and Split half reliability = (0.96).

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

In order to find out the status of wellbeing on various dimensions, the median of all five dimension was calculated (Table no: 1). Those below the median have been categorized as low and those above the median as high on that particular dimension of wellbeing (Table no: 1).

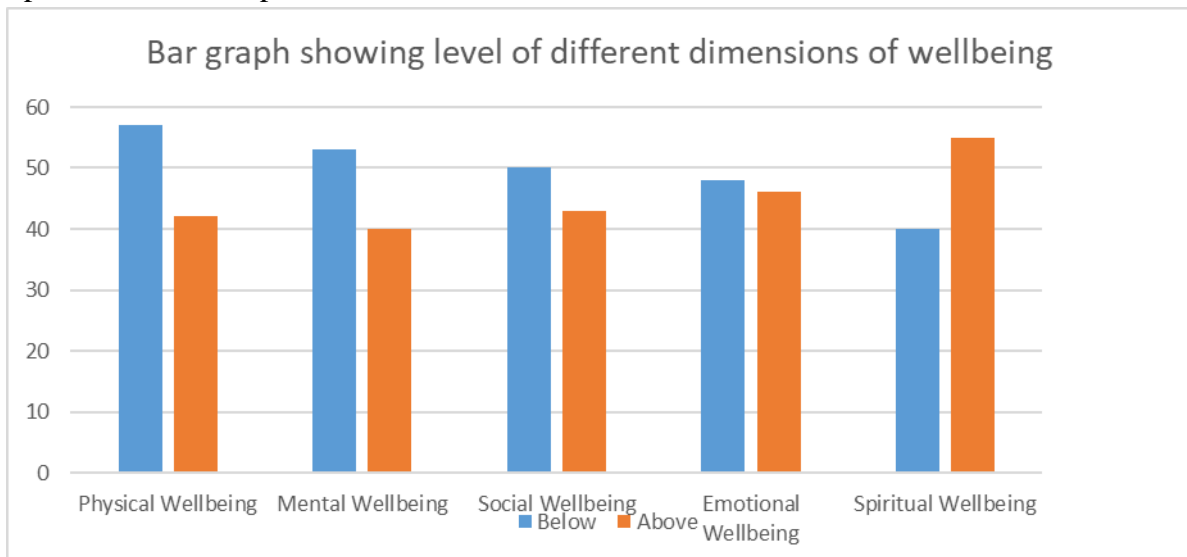
Table no.: 1: Showing participants below and above median on respective dimensions

Dimensions of Wellbeing	Median	Participants below median	%	Participants above median	%
Physical Wellbeing	26	51	57	38	42
Mental Wellbeing	32	53	59	36	40
Social Wellbeing	30	50	56	39	43
Emotional Wellbeing	30	48	53	41	46
Spiritual Wellbeing	39	40	44	49	55

Wellbeing	Low	%	Average	%	High	%
Overall	4	4.49	75	84.26	10	11.23

The table no. 1 depicts that most of the respondents were found to be below median on physical wellbeing (57%) mental wellbeing (59%) and emotional wellbeing (53%). The similar results have been reported by Gull et. al., 2023 who found that students preparing for competitive exams are under a lot of stress due to which their mental and physical health is deteriorated. Moreover 56% of participants were found to be below median on social wellbeing. It seems that due to long hours (14-16 hours) of preparation for study, students find less time for recreation, amusement and socialization (Gull et. al., 2023). More than 50% participants were found to be high on spiritual wellbeing. This finding gets support from the study by Ola, 2016 who reported that spirituality helps in dealing with exam anxiety. Students might find solace in spirituality in their tough times. Overall 84.26% participants fall into average on overall wellbeing.

The graph for the same is presented below:



In terms of above mentioned findings the first hypothesis stating that “physical, mental, social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of civil service aspirants will be low” is partially accepted since spiritual wellbeing was found to be high.

Table no.: 2- Correlation among dimensions of wellbeing

		Physical Wellbeing	Mental Wellbeing	Social Wellbeing	Emotional Wellbeing	Spiritual Wellbeing
Physical Wellbeing	Pearson Correlation	1	.201	.112	.164	.027
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.059	.296	.126	.803
	N	89	89	89	89	89
Mental Wellbeing	Pearson Correlation	.201	1	.217*	.236*	.097
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.059		.041	.026	.365
	N	89	89	89	89	89
Social Wellbeing	Pearson Correlation	.112	.217*	1	-.034	.019
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.296	.041		.749	.861
	N	89	89	89	89	89
Emotional Wellbeing	Pearson Correlation	.164	.236*	-.034	1	-.002
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.126	.026	.749		.986
	N	89	89	89	89	89
Spiritual Wellbeing	Pearson Correlation	.027	.097	.019	-.002	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.803	.365	.861	.986	
	N	89	89	89	89	89

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 shows the correlation among different dimensions of wellbeing. Social wellbeing and emotional wellbeing have been found to be positively correlated with mental wellbeing which illustrates that those high on social wellbeing are also high on mental wellbeing, similarly those high on emotional wellbeing are also high on mental wellbeing. Since wellbeing is a holistic concept therefore its dimensions are interdependent on each other and anything that affects one aspect also affect the other aspects (Sintley, 2021). The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 also focuses on the holistic development of students. It aims to develop students' social, physical, intellectual, emotional, and moral capacities to foster overall wellbeing of students by enhancing skills like self-confidence, self-awareness, responsibility, critical thinking, problem-solving skills etc.

Table no.: 3- showing the gender difference on wellbeing

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Statistical Inference
Physical Wellbeing	male	54	25.88	5.89	t= .445 df=87 P>0.05 Not Significant
	female	35	25.37	4.40	

Mental Wellbeing	male	54	31.03	4.94	t= .577 df=87 P>0.05 Not Significant
	female	35	30.40	5.29	
Social Wellbeing	male	54	29.81	4.82	t= -0.12 df=87 P>0.05 Not Significant
	female	35	29.82	5.64	
Emotional Wellbeing	male	54	27.96	7.38	t= -2.05 df=87 P>0.05 Not Significant
	female	35	31.28	7.56	
Spiritual Wellbeing	male	54	36.11	9.28	t= -1.98 df=87 P>0.05 Not Significant
	female	35	39.85	7.67	

To find out the gender difference on different dimensions of wellbeing t test was calculated. The table no 3 reveals that there is no significant gender difference on any of the dimension of wellbeing. But at the mean level females are better on emotional and spiritual wellbeing. Through previous spirituality assessment studies it was found that female students scored higher than males in spiritual well-being (Hammermeister et al., 2005; Bryant, 2007; Jafari et al., 2010). Females tend to score higher than males on emotional self-awareness, interpersonal relationship, self-regard, and empathy. (Meshkat, 2017)

The second hypothesis that “there will be a significant gender difference on various dimensions of wellbeing” is rejected.

Table no.: 4- Number of Attempts of UPSC CSE Examination

Number of attempts	N	%
0	15	16.9%
1	29	32.6%
2	24	27.0%
3	9	10.1%
4	6	6.7%
5	3	3.4%
6	1	1.1%
7	1	1.1%
8	1	1.1%

The data of number of attempts of UPSC CSE exam are presented above in the table 4. Out of 89 participants 32.6% participants have given one attempt of UPSC CSE. 16.9% haven't given any attempt

.Table no.: 5- t test between dimensions of wellbeing and number of attempts

Dimensions	No. of attempts	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Statistical Inference
Physical Wellbeing	0-2	68	25.48	4.86	t= -.634 df=87 P>0.05 Not Significant
	3-8	21	26.33	6.75	
Mental Wellbeing	0-2	68	30.98	4.85	t= .664 df=87 P>0.05 Not Significant
	3-8	21	30.14	5.79	
Social Wellbeing	0-2	68	30.04	5.24	t= .738 df=87 P>0.05 Not Significant
	3-8	21	29.09	4.81	
Emotional Wellbeing	0-2	68	30.00	7.58	t= 1.649 df=87 P>0.05 Not Significant
	3-8	21	26.90	7.28	
Spiritual Wellbeing	0-2	68	38.02	8.36	t= .854 df=87 P>0.05 Not Significant
	3-8	21	36.14	10.2	

To find out the impact of number of attempts on wellbeing t test was calculated. Two groups were formed on the basis of number of attempts: group one composed of those participants who had taken 0 to 2 attempts and group two composed of those participants who had taken 3 to 8 attempts (Table no.: 5). The table above reveals that there is no significant difference between the two groups. But at the mean level social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of those whose number of attempts were more than two were found to be lower than those who made one or two attempts. As the number of attempts increases the level of stress also increases. In existing researches it has been found that academic stress negatively impact mental health of students (Li and Lin, 2003; Eisenberg et al., 2009; Green et al., 2021) The third hypothesis that “there will be a significant impact of number of attempts on different dimensions of wellbeing” is rejected.

Table 6: Showing impact of social media usage and dimensions of wellbeing

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Physical Wellbeing	Between Groups	59.17	4	14.79	.507	.73
	Within Groups	2450.01	84	29.16		
	Total	2509.19	88			
Mental Wellbeing	Between Groups	313.60	4	78.40	3.38	.01
	Within Groups	1945.34	84	23.15		
	Total	2258.94	88			

Social Wellbeing	Between Groups	11.21	4	2.80	.10	.98
	Within Groups	2307.90	84	27.47		
	Total	2319.12	88			
Emotional Wellbeing	Between Groups	45.61	4	11.40	.19	.94
	Within Groups	5023.90	84	59.80		
	Total	5069.52	88			
Spiritual Wellbeing	Between Groups	316.74	4	79.18	1.01	.40
	Within Groups	6552.87	84	78.01		
	Total	6869.61	88			

Table 6 shows impact of social media use and dimensions of wellbeing. There is significant impact of social media use and mental wellbeing. The post hoc Tukey test shows that there is significant difference between those who use social media for 1-2 hours and those who use for more than 6 hours. The mental wellbeing of those who use social media for more than 6 hours was highly impacted. According to a UNICEF survey (2021), one out of every seven youngsters in India suffers from a mental health disorder like anxiety or depression due to the influence of social media on students.

The fourth hypothesis that “there will be a significant impact of social media use on different dimensions of wellbeing” has been partially accepted since the significant impact of social media use has been found only on one dimension of wellbeing.

DISCUSSION

The present research explores the wellbeing of civil service aspirants and various factors such as gender, social media usage, and number of exam attempts, affecting different dimensions of wellbeing. In line with the hypothesis, civil service aspirants were found to be low in physical, mental, social, and emotional wellbeing, but contrary to the hypothesis, they were found to be high in spiritual wellbeing.

The obtained finding of below the median level of physical, emotional, mental, and social wellbeing of respondents is supported by previous studies. Aspirants experience various types of stress during their preparation, such as self-inflicted stress (i.e. not giving best efforts, worrying about failure, and feeling compelled to fulfill parental expectations); parental inflicted stress: parental pressure, high expectations, lack of family support, and inquiries about academic performance; and peer inflicted stress: unfavorable comparisons with peers, leading to doubts about their abilities and negative beliefs about test performance. (Prajapati and Singh, 2017). These sources of stress may be responsible for the poor wellbeing of civil service aspirants.

Another possible explanation for poor wellbeing could be repeated failures faced by the aspirants due to the highly competitive nature of the examination. In the present study, 27%–32% of the participants faced either one or two failures in the examination. The present study revealed that the level of social, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing decreases as the number of attempts increases. After many years of preparation with no success in examination, the aspirants find themselves stuck in a situation without any progress in their lives, which lowers their self-esteem, fighting spirit, optimism, and increases self-doubt, hopelessness, and dilemmas regarding the future. Tiwari and Punitha (2018) found that repeated failures influenced each aspect of civil service aspirants’ lives. Most of them were hopeless and experienced tremendous mental pressure. Their responses also indicated that they had alienated feelings and distorted relationship with their closed ones. Most of the respondents reported shrinkage in the

friend circle after facing many failures. They demonstrated fear of negative results, feedback avoidance, and loss of respect in their lives after facing continuous failures.

Another explanation can be extended in terms of the cognitive appraisal and personality of the respondents, although these variables were not studied in the present research but might have played an important role in determining the wellbeing of civil service aspirants. The wellbeing of civil service aspirants can be affected by their cognitive appraisal of a situation. Aspirants who believe that they have the resources to cope effectively with their failure might have better wellbeing than those who have insufficient resources to cope. Students with a strong financial background, support system, and a backup option for their career might not be overwhelmed by their failure as compared to those who lack such efficient resources to cope. Aspirants with weak primary appraisal (initial evaluation of a situation) as well as secondary appraisal (evaluation of how to cope with a stressor) of situations might be devastated by their failures, resulting in poor mental health and wellbeing. This finding gets the support of Lazarus (1984) Model of Stress and Coping, which states that the way we interpret or react to an event has a more powerful impact on our stress level than the event itself.

Personality is another factor that could affect wellbeing. Research has demonstrated that certain personality traits, including agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience, are positively correlated with wellbeing (Osamika et al., 2018). Those who possess lower levels of these traits may struggle to cope with stressors that adversely affect their wellbeing. Similarly, individuals with hardy personalities are better equipped to manage stressors, as their personality traits act as a buffer against the negative psychological and physical consequences of stress.

The present study found a high level of spiritual wellbeing among civil service aspirants. A possible reason could be that aspirants move towards spirituality to find solace, as it might help them cope with challenging times during their preparation by providing them with a sense of purpose, hope, and meaning in what they are doing. (Murphy 2023).

The present finding that gender had no significant impact on wellbeing aligns with the findings of Matud et. al. (2019) who also found no difference between males and females on wellbeing. A possible explanation for this finding could be that in contemporary times, women have achieved remarkable success in various fields. According to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, the female labor force participation rate in India reached 37% in 2023, promoting career advancement opportunities. Women are also gaining greater access to education, which enables them to assume leadership roles in society. Over the past few decades, societal attitudes towards women's education and empowerment have undergone significant changes, suggesting potential reasons for gender having no bearing on wellbeing (Kantariya, 2017).

Another major finding of this study is that high use of social media deteriorates the mental wellbeing of aspirants. This is in line with existing research (Zubair et al., 2023), which has linked excessive social media use to increased stress, anxiety, and decreased physical activity. In this digital era, social media might be a boon for civil service aspirants, as it provides a platform such as YouTube, where there is ample knowledge that is easily accessible and every aspirant can benefit from it without any discrimination, but if not used wisely, it may become a bane. Hence, it is necessary to use social media platforms judiciously. Previous studies have also indicated that individuals who spend more time on social media have lower self-esteem and higher levels of anxiety and depression. (Huang 2010; Vannucci 2017).

One of the interesting findings of the research regarding social media usage was that those aspirants who used social media for 4 to 6 hours a day had high level of social & spiritual wellbeing, extremely low physical & emotional wellbeing and moderate level of mental wellbeing. Although it was not specifically asked from the participants, the probable reason for their high spiritual wellbeing could be the content they consume on social media. The content they consume may be related to stress management or relaxation techniques that could lead to a high level of spiritual wellbeing. Similarly, they might be connected with the community on social media, which acts as a support system for them. It was also found in the present study that those who used social media for 1 to 2 hours a day had better mental wellbeing than those who used social media for less than 1 hour a day and more than 2 hours a day. This finding sheds light on the balanced use of social media. It can act as a stress buster and work as a refreshing break during long study hours.

IMPLICATIONS

To improve wellbeing, individuals may benefit from setting limits on social media usage and finding more offline and face-to-face social interactions.

While the previous researches consider social media as a whole, in future studies it should be studied as multifaceted construct. The focus should not only on the number of hours of social media usage but also how the content of it is being consumed should also be studied.

In addition, stakeholders such as the government, coaching institutes, and families should play a role in the journey of aspirants to become civil servants. In line with online counseling websites such as Monochikitsa, the government should establish 24/7 counseling centers, especially to cater to students' needs. Not only establishment of such centers will suffice but also the awareness of such facilities should be created to the last mile.

Coaching institutes must also have some arrangements for dealing with the mental health issues of aspirants and should promote strategies for social connectedness and personal wellness. In addition, every college and university should take the initiative to create a civil service aspirant community or hub within their campus to provide resources and support to civil service aspirants.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

In the present research, only few factors which affects the wellbeing of civil service aspirants have been studied, but there could be many other factors too which could influence their wellbeing such as financial status, social support, educational background, and access to resources that influence the wellbeing of aspirants. Future research should also study the impact of other factors to determine their impact on aspirants and what measures they take to cope with such challenges. The present study failed to capture the sample characteristics that might have influenced the results such as age, educational background, geographical location, socioeconomic status, whether they are enrolled in coaching institutes, self-preparation, or online courses, reasons for pursuing civil services, study habits, attitude towards examination, access to resources, work experience, marital status, etc.

Personality factors could have played the role of confounding variables, which might have affected the results. Further research is needed to study the influence of personality on civil service aspirants' coping skills and well-being.

The data were collected online through Google Forms with no personal interaction; hence, future studies should focus on collecting data offline and also collect qualitative data to substantiate the quantitative study.

The government should also act upon recommendations given in May 2023 by a parliamentary committee to reduce the duration of the civil service examination selection cycle, which is currently one year, citing the toll it takes on candidates' physical and mental health, and the waste of their prime years. Such suggestions have also been given by many other stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

Since the population of those giving civil service examination conducted by UPSC is huge, there is high need that we as a society should support them in their journey of becoming the future bureaucrats of our country. During their long journey of preparation aspirants face lots of hardships of all sorts making their preparation more difficult. Stakeholders like parents, friends, teachers and coaching institute should take this responsibility of making their journey smooth through helping them with study resources, mental health resources, social and emotional support. The findings of this study provide important insights regarding wellbeing of UPSC aspirants and highlight the need for greater awareness and support during exam preparation. By addressing these issues, we can help to ensure that UPSC aspirants are better equipped to manage all the challenges of exam preparation and achieve success in their pursuits.

REFERENCES

1. App, S. (2023, December 20). What is holistic well-being? Sintelly. <https://sintelly.com/articles/what-is-holistic-wellbeing/>
2. BYJUS. (2023). How many apply vs. how many clear. UPSC exam statistics. BYJUS. <https://byjus.com/free-ias-prep/upsc-exam-how-many-apply-vs-how-many-clear/>
3. Davis, T. (2019, January 1). What is well-being? Definition, types, and well-being skills. Psychology Today. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/click-here-happiness/201901/what-is-well-being-definition-types-and-well-being-skills>
4. Garg, M. K. (2023, July 1). India's UPSC exam has 1 million candidates, just 1,000 seats. What happens to those who don't make it? WION. <https://www.wionews.com/india-news/indias-upsc-exam-has-1mn-candidates-and-1000-seats-what-happens-to-those-who-dont-make-it-610862>
5. Giovenco, D., Shook-Sa, B., Hutson, B., Buchanan, L., Fisher, E. B., & Pettifor, A. (2022). Social isolation and psychological distress among southern U.S. college students in the era of COVID-19. PLOS ONE, 17(12), e0279485. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0279485>
6. Growing concern for well-being of children and young people amid soaring screen time – UNICEF. (2021). UNICEF. <https://www.unicef.org/rosa/press-releases/growing-concern-well-being-children-and-young-people-amid-soaring-screen-time-unicef>
7. India Today. (2023, March 26). UPSC asked to reduce recruitment process timeline to protect candidates' mental, physical health. India Today. <https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/news/story/upsc-asked-to-reduce-recruitment-process-timeline-to-protect-candidates-mental-physical-health-2351781-2023-03-26>
8. Kantariya, A. S. (2017). Impact of gender on psychological well-being among post-graduate students. Psychology and Behavioral Science International Journal, 2(1), 555578. <https://doi.org/10.19080/PBSIJ.2016.02.555578>

9. Jianping, G., Zhihui, Z., Roslan, S., Zaremohzzabieh, Z., Burhanuddin, N. A. N., & Geok, S. K. (2023). Improving hardiness among university students: A meta-analysis of intervention studies. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 994453. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.994453>
10. Manochikitsa Online Counseling & Therapy. (2023, February 25). About. <https://manochikitsa.com/about/>
11. Meshkat, M., & Nejati, R. (2017). Does emotional intelligence depend on gender? A study on undergraduate English majors of three Iranian universities. *SAGE Open*, 7(3), 2158244017725796. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244017725796>
12. Murphy, C. (2023, March 13). Faith and mental health: How spirituality can benefit mental wellness. LinkedIn. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/faith-mental-health-how-spirituality-can-benefit-murphy-cprs>
13. Nazari, A., Hosseinnia, M., Torkian, S., & Garmaroudi, G. (2023). Social media and mental health in students: A cross-sectional study during the Covid-19 pandemic. *BMC Psychiatry*, 23(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-023-04859-w>
14. Nortje, A. (2023). What is mental wellbeing? A psychologist explains. PositivePsychology.com. <https://positivepsychology.com/what-is-mental-wellbeing/#:~:text=In%20the%20context%20of%20mental,any%20activities%20that%20cause%20happiness>
15. Osamika, B. E., Lawal, T., Osamika, A. E., Hounhanou, A. J. V., & Laleye, M. (2021). Personality characteristics, psychological wellbeing and academic success among university students. *International Journal of Research in Education and Science (IJRES)*, 7(3), 805-821. <https://doi.org/10.46328/ijres.1898>
16. Ritesh. (2022, July 1). Online counselling for UPSC aspirants in India. Manochikitsa Online Counseling & Therapy. <https://manochikitsa.com/online-counselling-for-upsc-aspirants/>
17. Shandilya, G. K. (2023). Mental health status of UPSC CSE aspirants: A survey-based study. *International Journal for Research in Applied Science and Engineering Technology*, 11(5), 4454–4458. <https://doi.org/10.22214/ijraset.2023.52603>
18. Sharma, A., Singla, M., & Sidhu, B. S. (2015). To study psychiatric morbidity in students preparing for civil services examination. *Journal of Psychiatry*, 18, 207. <https://doi.org/10.4172/2378-5756.1000207>
19. Sihag, A. (2016). Aspirants to civil servants: Case studies. *Indian Journal of Health and Wellbeing*, 7(7), 763-764. <https://www.i-scholar.in/index.php/ijhw/article/view/120184>
20. Stride Mental Health Charity. (2022, March 17). Spiritual wellness: What is spiritual wellbeing? Stride. <https://stride.com.au/dimensions-of-wellness/spiritual-wellness/>
21. Tiwari, V. K., & Punetha, D. (2018). Impact of repeated failure: An exploratory study from the perspective of civil services aspirants. *Indian Journal of Health and Wellbeing*, 9, 555-561.
22. Vosloo, C., Wissing, M. P., & Temane, Q. M. (2009). Gender, spirituality and psychological well-being. ResearchGate. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234833496>
23. Zubair, U., Khan, M. K., & Albashari, M. (2023). Link between excessive social media use and psychiatric disorders. *Annals of Medicine and Surgery* (2012), 85(4), 875–878. <https://doi.org/10.1097/MS9.000000000000112>