



WELLBEING AND THE GENDER DIFFERENCES AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

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ABSTRACT

Background: Well-being embraces the existence of positive emotions and moods (e.g., contentment, happiness), the absence of negative emotions (e.g., depression, anxiety), satisfaction with life, fulfilment and positive functioning. "Hedonic wellbeing" is the term used to refer to the subjective feelings of happiness and this equates wellbeing with happiness and pleasure (Ryan and Deci, 2001). The stage of young adulthood is characterized by cognitive and emotional changes and so an understanding of their levels of well-being can provide an outline for designing more effective interventions to cushion the components of wellness. **Objective:** The main objective of this study is to know the levels of wellbeing among young adults aged 18 to 24 and also to find the gender differences in wellbeing. **Methodology:** A total of 401 young adults were selected from different colleges of Visakhapatnam city of Andhra Pradesh through random sampling and were administered the test of WHO- 5 wellbeing scale to know their wellbeing levels. **Results:** Results show that 48.4 percent of the college students reflected poor levels of wellbeing and 51.6% of students reflected good levels of wellbeing and there was a significant difference in the wellbeing scores for male ($M=15.04$, $SD=5.374$) and female ($M=12.11$, $SD=5.667$) groups; $t(399) = 5.304$, $p<0.01$. **Conclusion:** Considerable proportion of young adults are having poor levels of wellbeing and females have scored significantly less in wellbeing scores in comparison to males. This is definitely a matter of concern and this stresses the need for effective interventions to be designed and implemented to improve the wellbeing of young adults alongside professional help.

Keywords: Wellbeing, Gender, Young adults.

INTRODUCTION

Well-being is a multifaceted construct that concerns optimal experience and functioning (Ryan and Deci, 2001). Well-being embraces the existence of positive emotions and moods (e.g., contentment, happiness), the absence of negative emotions (e.g., depression, anxiety), satisfaction with life, fulfilment and positive functioning. In other words, well-being can be defined as judging life positively and feeling good. Well-being is relatively similar to other terms that refer to positive mental states, such as happiness or satisfaction. The contemporary research on well-being is based on the two viewpoints. "Hedonic wellbeing" which used to refer to the subjective feelings of happiness and this equates wellbeing with happiness and pleasure (Ryan and Deci, 2001). "Eudemonic wellbeing" that equates wellbeing with finding meaning and purpose of life and self-realization and describes wellbeing as the degree to which an individual is optimally functioning and is used to refer to the purposeful aspect of psychological well-being. It is assumed that an individual experiences happiness when positive affect and satisfaction with life are both high (Carruthers & Hood, 2004). Hedonic is a term often synonymous with instant gratification rather than satisfaction in the long run. The hedonic approach focuses on subjectively-determined positive mental states (Kagan 1992). Subjective wellbeing basically refers to happiness, relief, and relatively lack of problems. In the current study we are measuring Subjective well-being, the term that basically associates with hedonic well-being. Subjective well-being is concerned with satisfaction with life and presence of positive affect and absence of negative affect.

Young adulthood spanning approximately from ages 18 to 26 is a period of critical development with lifelong implications for a person's overall health and well-being. The United States department of health and human services defines young adult period as the time between ages 18 and 24. The years from 18 to 25 constitute a unique stage of emerging adulthood (Arnett J J, 2015). Although this age range varies from theories like Erik Eriksons' stages of development which describes

young adulthood as ranging from 20 to 45, most of the research frameworks and theories developed till date reflects a shift in the sequence of developmental stages and defines young adulthood as generally ranging from 18 to 25. A review survey by U.S department of health and human service on Drug Use and Health from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) reflects that young adults aged 18 to 25 have heightened psychological vulnerability than adults aged 26 to 34 years. The present study aims to find wellbeing among young adults aged 18 to 24.

OBJECTIVES

To find the levels of wellbeing among young adults aged 18 to 24 and the gender differences in wellbeing.

Hypothesis:

H1 – There will be a significant gender difference in the levels of wellbeing among young adults.

METHODOLOGY

Sample:

The sample consists of total 401 young adults with age ranging from 18 to 24 selected from different places in Visakhapatnam city through random sampling.

Description of tools:

The World Health Organizations **WHO-5 Well-Being Index** is a scale that evaluates subjective well-being of an individual. The scale has adequate validity and has been successfully applied as generic scale for evaluating well-being across a wide range of study fields. WHO-5 is a short questionnaire with 5 simple non-invasive questions with positively phrased items like “I have felt cheerful and in good spirits”.

Statistical analysis: The data is analysed using Statistical package for social sciences (SPSS v-26) and Descriptive statistics and independent samples t- test are the statistical techniques used. The statistical significance value was set at $p < 0.01$.

RESULTS

Table 1 showing frequency distribution of levels of wellbeing

	Frequency (N=401)	Percent (100%)
Poor levels of wellbeing	194	48.4%
Good levels of wellbeing	207	51.6%

Figure 1

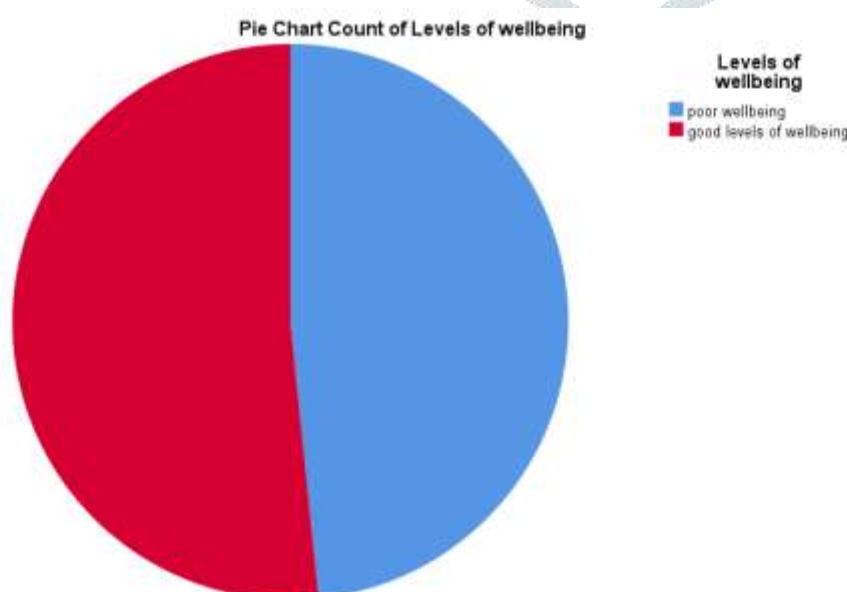


Table 1 shows the levels of wellbeing among young adults and figure 1 represents the same with 48.4% of sample showing poor levels of wellbeing and 51.6% showing good levels of wellbeing.

Table 2 showing results of an independent samples t test for gender differences in wellbeing

Wellbeing	Gender	N = 401	Mean	SD	t- value
	Male	200	15.04	5.37	5.30*
	Female	201	12.11	5.66	

An independent samples t-test was performed to know the gender differences in wellbeing and the results in Table 2 shows that there was a significant difference in the wellbeing scores for male ($M=15.04$, $SD=5.374$) and female ($M=12.11$, $SD=5.667$) groups; $t(399) = 5.304$, $p < 0.01$. These results suggest that gender has a significant effect on well-being with females showing lower well-being scores than males. In the light of empirical evidence shown in table 2, above mentioned hypothesis H1 was accepted.

DISCUSSION

Results show that 51.6 percent of young adults are having good levels of wellbeing and 48.5 percent are having poor levels of wellbeing which is a considerable proportion. The stage of young adulthood is characterized by cognitive and emotional changes and so an understanding of their levels of well-being can provide an outline for designing more effective interventions to cushion the components of wellness. Also, the results reveal a significant gender difference in wellbeing with males showing more levels than females possibly due to differences in socio-cultural expectations and biological differences and other factors. The results are consistent with previous findings that says there is significant gender difference in psychological wellbeing of male and female students (S Akhter, 2015). Female reported lower levels of psychological wellbeing compared to male (Gomez Baya, 2018).

CONCLUSION

The levels of wellbeing are poor for considerably large proportion of young adults. Also, females are more in this proportion. This is definitely a matter of concern and interventions are required to deal with this. Professional help should be considered along with other strategies like lifestyle changes and support from families and authorities to improve the levels of wellbeing among young adults who contribute to majority of nations population.

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