

PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN RELATION TO PROGRAM COMMITMENT

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ABSTRACT

Psychological well-being is an important goal for our physical and mental health together with effectual living. However, it is arduous to maintain this sense of well-being at all stages of life, especially as student and that too of higher education. In the present study, psychological well-being among university students was examined in relation to program commitment. Results indicated the significant relationship of psychological well-being and program commitment among university students. Also, it was found that program commitment contribute significantly to the prediction of psychological well-being of university students. No significant gender difference among psychological well-being and program commitment was found.

Keywords: *Psychological well-being, Program Commitment, Higher Education, University Students.*

Introduction

Well-being is one of the most important goals which individuals strive for. Sense of well-being is a logical consequence of both good physical and mental health. It affects our perceptions of the external world such that we are able to view them with greater positivity and deal with day to day problems effectively.

Psychological wellbeing thus is an important goal for our mental and physical health together with effectual living. However, it is arduous to maintain this sense of well-being at all stages of life, especially as student and that too of higher education.

The growth in the Higher Education sector is led by Universities, which are at the top position of learning and university students represent the future of families, communities and countries. Passing through a stage of developmental transition which involves cognitive, attitudinal, social as well as psychological changes and these changes cause conflict on one hand and positive personality development on the other. In search for a unique social identity for themselves, students got 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.

In recent years, behavioural scientists have focused on positive aspects of people rather than their problem in recent years. One of the conceptualizations in this approach which is called positive psychology is psychological well-being (Seligman, 2002; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

According to Ryff (1989) "Psychological well-being is active engagement in a number of existential challenges." Psychological wellbeing is a multidimensional construct composed of six areas of positive functioning listed below. To flourish in life depends on the extent to which one sees himself or herself actively functioning in these areas. Ryff (1989) defined these six constructs of positive functioning are *Autonomy, Purpose in Life, Positive Relations with Others, Personal Growth, Environmental Mastery, and Self-Acceptance.*

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Ryff's conception of psychological wellbeing represents a convergence and integration of prior theories of life course development, positive functioning and mental health conceptions. These theories are culminated in a multidimensional view of psychological well-being.

Hence, psychological well-being may be defined as a state of mind characterized by a sense of independence, competence to adjust and adapt according to one's environmental conditions, self-determination, positive attitude towards one's life, positive relations with others, having realistic goals and goal directed behaviour measured by Psychological Well-Being scales, Ryff (1995).

The word commitment elicit a sense of intention, focus and resilience and is accompanied by a plan of action. Affective commitment satisfies the basic psychological needs of employees and provides positive emotions, which, in turn, help restore limited regulatory resources (Rivkin et al., 2015). The correct handling of reputation can also be crucial to ensure the sustenance and success of organizations. Organisations like institutes of higher education have realized the importance of managing intangible assets such as reputation to improve the relationship with their stakeholders and to distinguish themselves over their competitors.

But research into student commitment in the university context is less common and only few studies explore the different components and foci of commitment. The involvement of the students in their respective university programs determines their study effectiveness, which has influence on the quality of higher education in university in turn. Therefore, it's necessary to explore the antecedents from the student perspective. Prior research indicates that major commitment influences study engagement significantly.

The university classroom presents various challenges that can negatively impact students' psychological and physical well-being. During the first year in particular, students are faced with numerous educational and personal stressors that can negatively impact upon their health and well-being (Hudd et.al, 2000; Lumley & Provenzano, 2003; Perry, 1991, 2003). The process of adjusting to a new and often complex academic setting, including increased pressure to succeed at unfamiliar tasks, academic competition, more frequent experiences of failure, and important career decisions can be exceedingly difficult (Perry, 1991, 2003). The transitional change from school to higher education is also followed by various personal stressful challenges, such as changes in social relationships, arrangements for residence, and finances, all of which may predispose students to health difficulties (Lumley & Provenzano, 2003; Perry et al., 2001). All these factors add to their existing stress to thrive in academics.

As students face a variety of complex choices throughout their university experience that may affect their psychological well-being, the most salient of these tasks involves choosing an appropriate program of study, committing to it, and carrying out the necessary steps to follow it through to completion. Components of student's level of university program/course commitment includes interest (Holland, 1996), prestige (Tracey & Rounds, 1996), success expectancy (viz., motivation; Vroom, 1964), program involvement (Locke, Latham, & Erez, 1988), program satisfaction (Shim & Morgan, 1990), quality of alternatives (Rusbult, 1998), attitude towards program or chosen course. Hence, program commitment may be defined as students' dedication or persistence to complete their chosen program of study successfully.

Psychological Well-being and Program Commitment: A Research Review

From the suggested links between commitment and autonomous regulation it is implied that commitment mindsets are distinctively related to the satisfaction of the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Greguras and Diefendorff (2009) studied employees from different institutions found that affective commitment was positively related with the satisfaction of all three needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In a sample of health care employees, Meyer, Parfyonova and Stanley (2010) found that both affective commitment and normative commitment are related with the satisfaction of the three needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness). Meyer and Maltin (2010) proposed that satisfaction of needs is an important indicator for the motivation and commitment levels of employees. They also explained how different forms of commitment relate to the wellbeing.

Maltin and Meyer (2011) aimed to provide a clear picture of what we know about the relatedness between commitment and well-being, and provide important information about their relation while defining the multidimensional nature of these variables. The study explored both hedonic well-being and eudaimonic well-being of teachers. The results indicated that the higher levels of wellbeing was reported by the employees who had a strong affective commitment.

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. The undergraduates' major commitment means the attitude of the undergraduates to pay attention to learning because of the professional cognition about the major. Study engagement refers to a positive mental state of the individual during the study process (Xu, He & Zhao, 2012).

Hagenauer, Gläser-Zikuda and Moschner (2015) found out in their study that perceived relevance of the material related to their studies which is a factor related to the need for autonomy was the strongest determinant of positive and negative emotions of students. Moreover, warming relation with peers proved to be significant for emotions and life satisfaction of students which further predicted their study commitment, with a strong association between positive emotions and study commitment. It was suggested that to improve study commitment and maintain emotional wellbeing of students, it is necessary to support the conditions of study that promote the fulfilment of basic psychological needs of students..

Commitment directly related to psychological well-being (Meyer & Maltin, 2010) and indirectly through satisfaction (Human-Vogel & Rabe, 2015). Human-Vogel and Rabe (2015) used a sample of 259 university students to examine the relationship between commitment and three indicators of wellbeing (satisfaction, quality of alternatives and investment size). Satisfaction came out to be a significant predictor of academic commitment.

Asikainen, Kaipainen, and Katajaviuri (2019) examined experiences of students of a small acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) based intervention. It was found that students' well-being of students and their time and effort management increased during the intervention. The results indicated that with the acceptance and commitment therapy intervention course, wellbeing of students can be enhanced.

Dar and Iqbal (2019) used a sample of 92 college students to study the indirect effect of religious commitment on wellbeing. The conceptualization of meaning of life as a potential mechanism between religious commitment and well-being was examined. Results suggested that religious commitment influences a sense of meaning in a person's life which affects one's wellbeing.

In a study involving 269 Italian university students, Capone, Marino and Park (2021) investigated the relation between organizational commitment, mental wellbeing, career planning and other related variables. The results demonstrated the positive correlation among mental wellbeing and organisation commitment.

Katajaviuri, Vehkalahti and Asikainen (2021) explored the experiences of students of an acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) course on wellbeing and studying of university students. It was analysed that time management skills and studying of students improved. Also they learned to cope with their negative thoughts and learnt stress management skills. Hence, in terms of studying and wellbeing, the ACT therapy benefited students in many ways.

These studies demonstrates that the relationship between commitment and personal well-being is linear. Personal commitment to a central domain of life (e.g., career) contributes to personal well-being. Our study focused on the relationship between psychological well-being and program commitment of undergraduate university students and to examine the effect of program commitment on psychological well-being. Another objective was to study the gender differences, if any, among psychological well-being and program commitment in undergraduate university students. This was hypothesized as follows

- H₁:** There will be a significant relationship among the psychological well-being and program commitment of undergraduate university students.
- H₂:** Program commitment will contribute significantly to the prediction of psychological well-being of undergraduate university students.
- H₃:** There will be no significant gender difference with respect to psychological well-being and program commitment of undergraduate university students.

Methodology

The present study was conducted using descriptive survey method. In this study, two variables were taken, psychological well-being as dependent variable and program commitment as independent variable.

- **Sample**

The sample consisted of 261 undergraduate students (182 female and 79 male students) from departments of science faculty of Panjab University, Chandigarh.

- **Procedure**

Data were collected from students who volunteered for the study. In each case, permission to collect data was obtained from head of departments before students were approached. Data were collected anonymously and students received no benefit or incentives for participating in the study.

- **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 variable to the prediction of dependent variable. To study the gender differences among psychological well-being and program commitment, t-test was used.

- **Instruments**

Participants completed a questionnaire consisting of demographic information, Psychological Well-Being scales by Ryff (1995) and Program commitmentscale (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) 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)).

Results and Findings of the Study

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize variables collected in the questionnaire and the main characteristics of the study population. IBM SPSS Statistics 25.0 was used to perform the data analysis. We used composite scores for calculating Pearson correlations for Psychological Well-being (TotalWELL) and Program Commitment (TotalPC) scales.

Table 1: Coefficient of correlation for Psychological Well-Being and Program Commitment of University Students

TotalWELL	Pearson Correlation	Total PC
		.445**
	N	261

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (.148)

Table 1 shows the value of coefficient of correlation between psychological well-being and program commitment was positive ($r = 0.445$) in nature and significant at both 0.01 and 0.05 levels of significance, showing significant relationship between psychological well-being and program commitment of university students. The finding is supported by studies conducted by Meyer, Parfyonova and Stanley (2010), Maltin and Meyer (2011), Hagenauer, Gläser-Zikuda & Moschner(2015), and Capone, Marino and Park (2021). In table 2, program commitment was introduced as an independent variable. The value of R was found to be 0.445. The value of R square and adjusted R square were found to be .198 and .194 respectively. The value of adjusted R indicates 19.4% variance in the psychological well-being was explained by program commitment.

The F-value found to be 63.779 which were significant at 0.01 level as per the F-table value.

Table 2: Regression Analysis of Psychological Well-Being and Program Commitment of University Students

Group Statistics					
	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t - value
TotalWELL	Fem	182	221.4560	22.48525	.807
	Mal	78	224.2436	31.53649	
TotalPC	Fem	182	165.0275	18.93444	.113\
	Mal	78	165.3590	26.89951	

Hence, program commitment contributes significantly to the prediction of psychological well-being of undergraduate university students. The results were supported by studies conducted by Xu, He and Zhao (2012), Hagenauer, Gläser-Zikuda and Moschner (2015), Dar and Iqbal (2019) and Katajavuori, Vehkalahti and Asikainen (2021) as it was reported that commitment facilitates different components of well-being among students.

Table 3: Significance of difference in means of Psychological Well-Being and Program Commitment with respect to gender

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.445 ^a	.198	.194	22.88884	.198	63.779	1	259	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), TotalPC (Program Commitment)

The first row in table III shows the t – value .807, which is not significant at 0.01 (1.96) and 0.05 (2.59) levels, demonstrating insignificant gender differences in psychological well-being among undergraduate university students.

In the second row, the t -value .113 was found to be insignificant at 0.01 and 0.05 level of significance, showing there is no significant gender differences in program commitment among undergraduate university students.

Discussion

First objective of our study was to determine whether relationship exists among psychological well-being and program commitment among university students. Our results suggest that there were significant relationship among psychological well-being and program commitment of undergraduate university students. Based on the second objective of our study, the results demonstrated that program commitment contributes significantly to the prediction of psychological well-being among university students. Our findings corroborate with the earlier studies which have also found similar results related to psychological well-being and commitment (organisational, academic etc.).

Another objective of this study was to study the gender differences in psychological well-being and program commitment among undergraduate university students. Present study demonstrates that when overall comparison between males and females was done for psychological well-being and program commitment, no significant gender differences in psychological well-being and program commitment was found. In context of University students, those who were more committed to their program were likely to have more favourable course perceptions and career potential as well as a greater degree of self-influence in their selection of a major. From our results it can be suggested that males and female students of university exhibit similar levels of psychological well-being and commitment to their courses. These findings suggest that students would attribute significant psychological importance to committing and following through to completion a chosen program of study. Accordingly, it is reasonable to expect that students who are more committed to their program will also experience greater psychological well-being.

Conclusion

With many university students not completing their university studies and most of them feel distressed during their university years, the present study contributes to the literature by demonstrating the importance of helping students to develop meaningful, identity-level commitments. Our results also suggest that it is important for students to be satisfied with their studies and to feel content by their study choices and how commitment to their program of study facilitates their well-being. At university level, this may be accomplished by the way in which educators and university administrators facilitate the development of a clear and stable sense of self. Interventions focused on different components and levels of commitment can be introduced to improve students' commitment to their courses and counselling services can provided by each department to foster students' needs related to their career and other issues related to academics. With the development of meaningful commitment to their chosen course of studies, students can be assisted to improve their overall well-being.

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