Research Paper

Relationship of stress & resilience with general well-being & life satisfaction among post-graduate students

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ABSTRACT

Holistic living signifies the integration of every aspect of life for a positive well-being. While mentioning about positive psychology it is essential to alleviate negative factors such as stress, depression, poor mental health etc. To challenge this negativity it is important to find the compensators which would help reducing the negative components. One important aspect that needs to be addressed is stress which is inevitable. Studies indicate that stress can be managed with resilience (Southwick, Vaithilingam & Charney, 2005). By reducing stress one's well-being as well as life satisfaction is enhanced. Therefore, present study attempts to assess the relationship of stress and resilience with life satisfaction and general well-being. The sample of the study includes 50 post-graduate final year students, both male and female. The tools used were General Well Being Schedule GWB (Dupuy, 1970) to assess the level of general well-being, The Satisfaction with Life Scale SwLS (Diener et al., 1985) to assess individuals' global judgment of life satisfaction, The Brief Resilience Scale (Smith, Dalen, Wiggins, Tooley, Christopher & Bernard, 2008) and The Depression Anxiety and Stress Scale DASS (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1985) to assess the level of stress. Pearson's correlation analysis is used to find out the relationship between the factors and results show negative relation of stress with resilience, life satisfaction and general well-being. There is no difference in levels of stress and GWB related to Gender and year of study. Also, the first year post graduate students especially female were found to have severe stress and low well-being levels.

Well-being is linked to several aspects of life that includes physical, psychological, social and spiritual components. Defining well-being has been an attempt from earlier philosophical days and has evolved through medicinal approaches, sociological and psychological approaches. Medicine and psychology ultimately has pioneered an entirely different approach in measuring the subjective well-being of individuals. Well-being is not just mere absence of negatives in one's life but has been related so far with physical, psychological, emotional,

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economic, social and spiritual well-being, life satisfaction, work satisfaction and personal development. Well-being on the whole suggests the total quality of an individual's life. General well-being involves an individual's inner personal state i.e. the personal feelings of individual and his/her outlook towards every aspect of life. The terms well-being, quality of life and life satisfaction has been used interchangeably; yet each of them have unique definitions. Life satisfaction is an approach by cognitive theorists to subjective well-being based on cognitive judgments of individuals as to whether an individual's personal goals, needs and wishes have been fulfilled (Campbell, 1976). Life satisfaction is defined as "cognitive judgmental process dependent upon a comparison of one's circumstances with what is thought to be an appropriate standard (Diener.et.al, 1985). The quality of life theory (QOL) developed from Maslow's Human development perspective describes life satisfaction equated with positive and negative affect. Thus, general well-being and life satisfaction are in in parallel lanes and involves positive outlook of all the aspects of life (Scott, Shannon & Rich, 2006).

Stress is defined as any agent, circumstance, situation or variable that disturbs the normal functioning of the individual (Strokes & Kite, 2001). It can be physical as well as psychological. Stress is inevitable and individuals get to face stress in everyday life; though it cannot be prevented it can be well managed. Resilience refers to the ability of an individual, family, organization, or community to cope with adversity and adapt to challenges or change. People who are considered "resilient" tend to be very flexible, adaptable, and optimistic. Resilient or "hardy" people possess characteristics that appear to allow them more ease as they go through life. Resilience is the most important defense people have against stress. It is important to build and foster resilience to be ready for future challenges. Resilience will enable the development of a reservoir of internal resources to draw upon during stressful situations. Resilience is an ordinary inherent a well as learned capacity of an individual and is very subjective (Aguirre,2007).

It is evident from various studies stress can be managed with resilience (Southwick, Vaithilingam & Charney, 2005). By reducing stress one's well-being as well as life satisfaction is enhanced. Well-being since involves both positive and negative emotions, positive emotions predict increase in both resilience and life satisfaction, also change in resilience mediates the relation between positive emotions and increased life satisfaction, suggesting that happy people become more satisfied not simply because they feel better but because they develop resources for living well(Cohn, Fredrikson, Michaels, Brown & Conway, 2009). Also resilient mechanisms when developed facilitates an individual in managing stress (Douglas, 2003), hence stress when managed well due to resilience is expected in turn to have positive effect on the well-being of individuals on the whole.

Post graduate students face everyday hurdles along with academic complexities and these experiences often lead to stressful feeling in them. Post graduate students when in comparison to graduate students experience higher stress levels (Mazumdar, Gogoi, Buragohain & Haloi, 2012). Moreover Mallinckrodt and Leong (1992) found that women in graduate programs experienced more stressors, role strain in dealing with their family obligations, less social support and more depression than their male counterparts. Also several researchers have determined that for most female students, the effect of managing multiple roles and additional stressors was determined largely by the student's perception of the enormity of the task (Giancola, Grawitch, & Borchert, 2009; Glynn,Maclean, Forte, & Cohen, 2009), Hence a gender difference in the levels of stress among individuals can be

presumably expected. The purpose of this study is hence to study the relationship between stress, resilience with life satisfaction and general well-being among post graduate students and can support further researches with implications of resilience in managing stress and thus reflecting positively on holistic well-being of individuals.

Objectives
1. To identify relationship between the four factors namely: stress, resilience, Life satisfaction and General well-Being.
2. To identify the difference between male and female students in stress levels.
3. To identify the difference between first and second years in stress levels.
4. To find the level of stress among the post-graduate students, first and second years; both male and female.
5. To find the level of General Well-being among the post-graduate students, first and second years; both male and female.

Hypotheses
1. Stress would be negatively related to resilience, life satisfaction and general wellbeing.
   - Resilience, life satisfaction and general well-being will be positively related.
2. There would be no significant difference between first year and second year students in levels of stress, resilience, life satisfaction and general well-being.
3. Female students would have higher stress levels and low resilience, life satisfaction and general well-being compared to male students.

METHODOLOGY
In the present study survey research design is used. Sample of the study involves 50 post graduate students (25 male and 25 female) and both first and second years. Their age group ranged from 20 to 26, and they belonged to different socio-economic statuses and were from different humanities field. The sample is chosen using purposive sampling method and data was collected by distributing questionnaires at random to post graduate students from four different colleges.

Tools
1. **General Well-Being Schedule (GWB)** GWB is a self-administered questionnaire developed first for the U.S health and nutrition examination survey by Dupuy, 1977. Later an 18 items tool was modified and used in the HANES study and is referred to as GWB. Among the 18 items the first fourteen questions use six-point response scales and the last four questions use 0 to 10 rating scale to represent the intensity. The items 1,3,6,7,9,11,15,16 are reverse scored while other items are directly scored. The total score ranges from 0-110, 0-60 reflect "severe distress", 61-72 "moderate distress" and 73-110 "positive well-being". It includes positive as well as negative questions. The internal consistency of GWB is very high; 0.91 for men and 0.95 for women. Other scales like Zung's self-rating depression scale and personal-feelings inventory were used on comparison to validate GWB and the average correlation of the GWB is 0.69.
2. **The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SwLS)** The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SwLS) (Diener et al., 1985) is a five item measure that assesses an individual's global judgement of life satisfaction as a whole. The SwLS measures the cognitive component of SWB, and provides an integrated judgement of how a person's life as a

whole is going. The responses are on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". The total score ranges from 5-35; 5-9 indicate that an individual is extremely dissatisfied with life, 10-14 dissatisfied with life, from 15-19 slightly dissatisfied with life, a score of 20 indicates neutral life satisfaction, 21-25 slight satisfaction with life, from 26-30 satisfaction with life, and from 31-35 extreme satisfaction with life. The test-retest reliability of SwLS is 0.82 and the internal consistency ranged from 0.57-0.75. The construct validity ranged from 0.61-0.64 (Pavot.et.al, 1991).

3. **Brief Resilience Scale (BRS)** The Brief Resilience Scale was developed by Smith, Dalen, Wiggins, Tooley, Christopher & Bernard, 2008. The BRS is a reliable means of assessing resilience as the ability to bounce back or recover from stress and may provide unique and important information about people coping with health-related stressors. It consists of 6 items and responses are on a five-point likert scale, 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree Items 1, 3 and 5 are directly scored and items 2, 4 and 6 are reverse scored. Test-restest reliability was 0.69 and internal consistency ranged from 0.81-0.91 (Smith.et.al, 2008).

4. **The Depression Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS)** DASS was developed by Lovibond & Lovibond in 1985. The DASS is a 42-item questionnaire which includes three self-report scales designed to measure the negative emotional states of depression, anxiety and stress. Each of the three scales contains 14 items. The Stress items are sensitive to levels of chronic non-specific arousal. It assesses difficulty relaxing, nervous arousal, and being easily upset/agitated, irritable/over-reactive and impatient. The responses are on a four point scale, 0=did not apply at all, 1=apply to some degree, 2=apply to considerable degree, 3=apply most of the times. The total score of stress ranges from 0-42; since the final score is interpreted after multiplying the total score by 2. 0-14 is normal, 15-18 is mild, 19-25 moderate, 26-33 severe and 34+ extremely severe. Test-retest reliability score of the scale was .48 and the total internal consistency of the stress scale was .91 (Akin, 2007).

RESULTS
Table 1 Relationship between Stress, Resilience, Life Satisfaction & General Well-Being

Variables	Stress	Resilience	Life Satisfaction	General Well-Being
Stress	1	-.564[**]	-.581[**]	-.647[**]
Resilience	-.564[**]	1	.485[**]	.457[**]
Life Satisfaction	-.581[**]	.485[**]	1	.508[**]
General Well-Being	-.647[**]	.457[**]	.508[**]	1
N	50	50	50	50

**- Significant at 0.05 level

Results of correlation relating the four factors namely Stress, Resilience, Life satisfaction and General Well-Being are provided in table 1. Stress is found to be negatively related to resilience, life satisfaction and general well-being. Similarly resilience, general well-being and life satisfaction are positively related to one another. The correlation is also found to be significant at 0.05 level. Thus, the hypotheses 1 and 2 stating stress is negatively related to Resilience, Life satisfaction and General Well-Being and there is a positive relationship between Resilience, Life satisfaction and General Well-Being are accepted.

Table 2 Difference between first and second year students in levels of Stress, Resilience, life satisfaction and General well-being.

	Post-Graduate Year	N	Mean	Std Deviation	t
Stress	1st year	28	18.50	8.87	0.407 NS
	2nd year	22	17.64	5.44	
Resilience	1st year	28	18.89	3.52	1.263 NS
	2nd year	22	20.23	3.94	
Life Satisfaction	1st year	28	23.29	5.61	0.182 NS
	2nd year	22	23.55	4.13	
General Well-being	1st year	28	61.82	14.67	0.422 NS
	2nd year	22	63.32	8.77	

NS- Not Significant

The results of the t-test to find the difference between the first year and second year students in levels of stress, resilience, life satisfaction and general well-being are given in table 2. Results found no difference between the two groups in all the four factors. i.e. there was no difference in the levels of stress, resilience, life satisfaction and general well-being between the first year and second year students and thus the hypothesis 2 is accepted.

Table 3 Difference between male and female students in levels of Stress, Resilience, Life satisfaction and General well-being.

|	Gender	N	Mean	Std Deviation	t
Stress	Female	25	19.76	8.67	1.596 NS
	Male	25	16.48	5.49	
Resilience	Female	25	20.04	3.92	1.062 NS
	Male	25	18.92	3.52	
Life Satisfaction	Female	25	23.6	5.50	0.282 NS
	Male	25	23.2	4.48	
General Well-being	Female	25	59.56	12.05	1.707 NS
	Male	25	69.40	12.15	

NS- Not Significant

Results of the t-test to find the difference in the levels of stress, resilience, life satisfaction and general well-being between male and female students are shown in table 3. Results show no significant difference in levels of stress, resilience, life satisfaction and general well-being on gender basis. The hypothesis stating that stress levels will be high in female students than male students and also, resilience, general well-being and life satisfaction low in females compared to male students is rejected.

Graph 1
Graph 1 shows levels of stress based on gender and year of study of the post graduate students. It is found that most of the students both male and female, first and second years have normal stress levels. Only very few students have extremely severe stress levels and they are found to be female-first year post-graduate students. Few other students have mild to moderate level of stress.
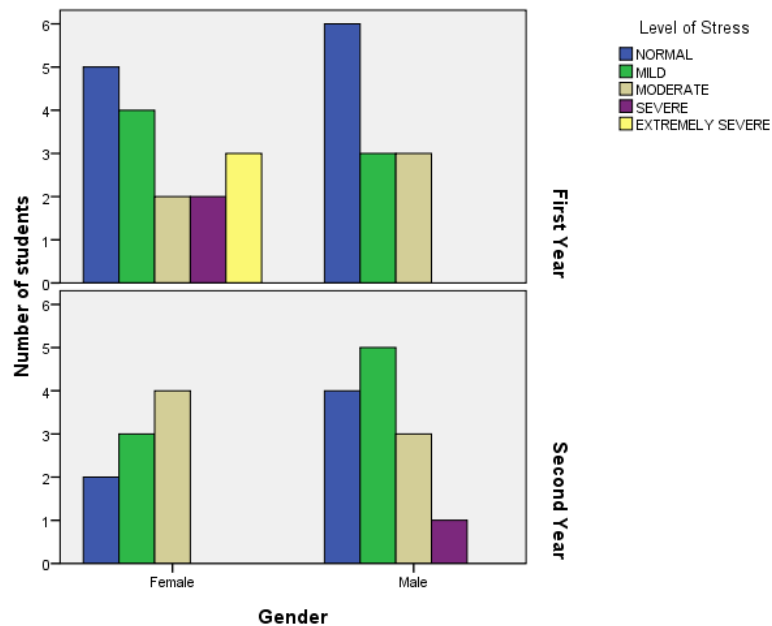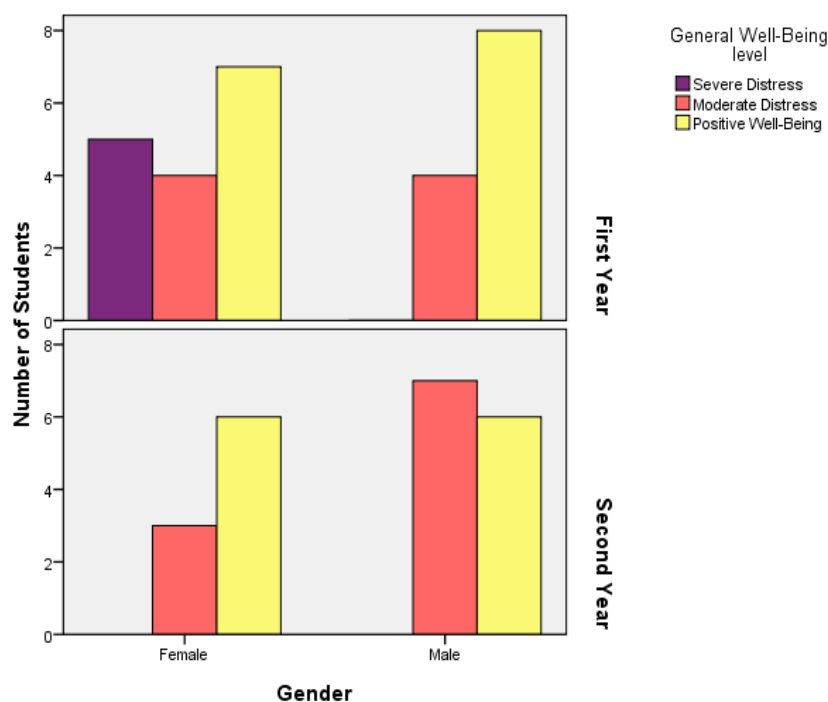
Graph 1 Stress level - Post graduate students

Graph 2

Graph 2 shows the level of general well-being based on gender and year of study of the post graduate students. It is found that majority of the post graduate students have a positive well-being level; some of them have moderate distress and few of them have severe distress. Also, the first year post graduate female students are found to have severe distress levels. More number of first year students are found to have positive well-being.

Graph 2: General Well-Being Level - Post-Graduate Students

DISCUSSION

The present study proposes relationship between stress, resilience, life satisfaction and general well-being among post-graduate students based on previous relevant researches. Results from table 1 have shown that stress is negatively related to the three factors namely resilience, life satisfaction and general well-being; and also the three factors are positively related to one another confirming the hypothesis 1. An individual with high stress levels often feels stressed with everyday activities and inability to manage it well could be possibly due to low resilience of the individual. Resilience may also go down due to continuous experiencing of stressful events. Experiences of negative emotions or incidences affect's the individual's resilience and inability to recover immediately from stress (Anthony, Bergerman, Tony & Kimberly, 2006). However individuals in the study were not found to have extremely severe levels of stress; most of them in fact had normal levels of stress. Moreover only few first year female students were found to have extremely severe stress and severe distress in general well-being levels (Graph 1 & 2). It could be due to the multiple roles they have and getting to manage higher studies (Mallinckrodt & Leong, 1992).

However there is no significant difference between male and female students as well as the first and second years in levels of stress resilience, life satisfaction and general well-being. Though, there was expected to be higher stress levels in female students compared to their male counterparts, the sample of this data found to have no such differences. This could be due to effect of culture where women may not be expected to play variety of roles, age can also be a reason since the female students are freshly graduated and are continuing their education without any break and thus it would not have been much difficult for them to cope up. Nevertheless individuals in this study do have severe stress and moderate distress well-being as in every other population but a prominent difference is not seen. The mean stress level of female students (M=19.76) are slightly more than the male (M=1.48) students (Table 3). Similarly the mean score of general well-being levels of male (M=69.4) is greater than the mean score of female students (M=59.56).

Stress is a persisting feeling throughout the life span; especially in students it emphasizes more on achievements, relationships and social life. Post graduate level is the final level of formal education most people receive and stress if high due to complexities of education at this level and also due to various other factors. The ability to bounce back helps in overcoming not just stress, also other incidences in life. The emerging studies in Positive psychology can further study the experience of positive emotions in building resilience and thus increasing the life satisfaction (Michael, Barbara, Brown, Joseph, & Conway, 2009). Since Life satisfaction and General well-being are well related; focusing on improving related aspects would improve both significantly (Scott, Shannon & Rich, 2006).

CONCLUSION

Positive well-being is essential to have fruitful life experiences and increases the positive thinking as well as positive affect of individuals. Effective managing of stress would contribute more to positive well-being. The present study has identified a negative relationship between stress with resilience, life satisfaction and general well-being and hence importance of stress management with resilience or hardiness could be emphasized for facilitating a holistic living and future researches can identify effect of stress and stress management on well-being and inter-relationship among the factors.

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