

## Psychological Capital, Happiness and Academic Stress among College Students

Surabhi Sengar<sup>1\*</sup>

### ABSTRACT

The aim of the present study was to understand whether there are significant gender or discipline related differences with respect to levels of psychological capital, happiness and perceived stress among college students. This research was undertaken keeping in mind the increasing levels of academic stress among students and the role happiness and PsyCap play in dealing with such pressures. These academic stressors pose a great threat to psychological and physical health and qualities like hope and optimism have been found to reduce stress levels and increase overall well-being. The main objectives of the study were to (a) explore the relationship among PsyCap, happiness, and perceived stress and (b) to compare male and female students from social and natural science disciplines on the variables of interest. Sample for the present study comprised of 122 students, chosen purposively. Out of these, there were 62 females, 60 males, 61 from natural sciences and 62 from social sciences. Data was collected using Psychological Capital Questionnaire, Happiness Scale and Perceived stress scale. Obtained data was analyzed with the help of 2-way ANOVA and Pearson Product moment correlation analysis. Results of the current study revealed that there are significant differences in the levels of PsyCap, happiness and perceived stress across gender and discipline. The current study also found that PsyCap has significant and positive correlation with happiness on one hand, whereas on the other hand, it has significant and negative correlation with perceived academic stress among students.

**Keywords:** *Perceived stress, PsyCap, Happiness, Gender, Discipline*

Education plays a very important part in everyone's life. But the factors associated with it (exams, assignments, competition, etc.) place great amount of stress among students (Martin, 2007). It has been observed that the overall prevalence rates of stress have significantly increased over time (Jain & Singhai, 2018). In particular academic stress, which has become a part of students' academic life, poses a great threat to their psychological and physical well-being. According to WHO (2018), academic stress has been identified as one of the main causes of suicide among students. As there can be many causes of stress in a student's life (e.g. child abuse, peer pressure, financial problems, etc.), it is important to distinguish academic stress from other causes of stress. Also, qualities like hope and optimism need to be developed among students because these have been linked to

<sup>1</sup>Student, University of Delhi, India

\*Corresponding Author

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increased physiological and psychological well-being (Du, Bernado & Yeung, 2015). A construct that encompasses these qualities is Psychological Capital (PsyCap). Psychological capital has been defined as “an individual’s positive psychological state of development (Luthans, Youssef & Avolio, 2007) which is characterised by having high levels of HERO – Hope (redirecting paths to goals), Self-efficacy (having confidence in one’s ability to produce effective results), Resilience (capacity to bounce back from adversity and grow stronger from negative events) and Optimism (making positive attributions). It has been found that PsyCap mediates between stress and indices of psychological and physical well-being (Riulli, Savicki & Richards, 2012).

Furthermore, happiness is another essential variable in the context of academic stress as it is closely related to academic achievement. Research has found that people who have a high sense of happiness are more active in academic performance and progress of higher education (Abadi, Tabbodi & Rahgozar, 2013). Also, experimental evidences suggest that there is noticeable negative relationship between positive psychological states, such as happiness, and perceived stress (Lyubomirsky, King & Diener, 2005).

Against this backdrop, the current study aims to explore the relationship between PsyCap, happiness and academic stress among Indian college students. As noted earlier, the student population in India is at an increased risk of stress and related problems (Nagle & Sharma, 2018). Hence, this research is extremely timely and important because, to the best of our knowledge, such an investigation has not been carried out in Indian context. Moreover, since PsyCap has its origin in the organizational context, it would be interesting to see its implications in the educational domain.

### ***Discipline, gender and stress***

In recent years, there has been an alarming increase in stress levels among the college student population (Pierceall & Keim, 2007). Many researches have been conducted to examine whether gender or discipline (Natural vs. Social Sciences) affect stress levels among students. For example, Wani (2016) conducted a research to find out if gender and faculty affects stress levels among college students and found that girls are more prone to stress than boys and natural science students have higher levels of stress as compared to social science students.

### ***Gender and happiness***

Results regarding whether gender differences exist with respect to happiness levels in males and females have been inconsistent. Whereas some researchers have found that females report higher happiness than males (Zweig, 2014), some have also found the opposite, i.e. males have significantly higher levels of happiness than their female counterparts (Batz & Tay, 2018). Interestingly, some researchers have also reported no significant differences in happiness levels between male and female students (Malik & Saida, 2013).

### ***Gender and PsyCap***

Research has been found that male students have higher levels of psychological capital as compared to their female counterparts (Vahabi, 2018).

### ***PsyCap and happiness***

Research conducted on PsyCap has shown that the various constituent components of PsyCap are related to well-being (Culbertson, Fullagar & Mills, 2010). Research shows that highly self-efficacious individuals are less impacted by self doubt, setbacks and criticisms

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(Bandura & Locke, 2003) and therefore, report greater happiness and greater positive functioning. Research supports a positive relationship between PsyCap and well-being (Roche, Haar & Luthans, 2014).

### *PsyCap and academic stress*

Academic stressors pose a great threat to psychological and physical well-being. According to Hirsch & Ellis (1996), students are under high pressure to earn good grades. There might be other sources of stress too such as excessive homework, assignments and uncomfortable classrooms (Kohn & Frazer, 1986).

A research conducted by Riolli, Savicki & Richards (2012) indicated that students with higher PsyCap perceive academic environment as being less distressing and more likely to see the positive elements that contribute to their overall well-being.

It has been found that high-hope individuals are motivated towards achieving success when working for future goals. Such individual experiences less of stress and negative affect (Snyder et al., 1991). A study conducted by Torres & Solberg (2001) found that stress has negative correlation with self efficacy.

### *Happiness and academic stress*

It has been observed that the overall prevalence rates of stress have significantly increased over time (Jain & Singhai, 2018). Daily stressors such as interpersonal tensions and network conflicts, have a more immediate effect on well-being by causing both psychological distress and physical symptoms of stress (Almeida, Wethington, & Kessler, 2002).

Guided by the review of literature, this research seeks to understand whether there are significant differences among levels of psychological capital, happiness and perceived stress in college students across gender and discipline.

## **MATERIALS AND METHOD**

### *Research Objectives*

- To compare males and females with respect to their psychological capital levels.
- To compare males and females with respect to their happiness levels.
- To compare males and females with respect to their perceived stress levels.
- To compare natural science students and social science students with respect to their psychological capital levels.
- To compare natural science and social science students with respect to their happiness levels.
- To compare natural science and social science students with respect to their perceived stress levels.
- To estimate the relationship among PsyCap, stress and happiness in males.
- To estimate the relationship among PsyCap, stress and happiness in females.
- To estimate the relationship among PsyCap, stress and happiness in natural science students.
- To estimate the relationship among PsyCap, stress and happiness in social science students.

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### *Hypotheses*

- H1: There would be a significant difference between males and females with respect to their psychological capital levels.
- H2: There would be a significant difference between males and females with respect to their happiness levels.
- H3: There would be significant difference between males and females with respect to their perceived stress levels.
- H4: There would be a significant difference between natural science students and social science students with respect to their psychological capital levels.
- H5: There would be a significant difference between natural science and social science students with respect to their happiness levels.
- H6: There would be a significant difference between natural science and social science students with respect to their perceived stress levels.
- H7: There would be a significant correlation among PsyCap, stress and happiness in males.
- H8: There would be a significant correlation among PsyCap, stress and happiness in females.
- H9: There would be a significant correlation among PsyCap, stress and happiness in natural science students.
- H10: There would be a significant correlation among PsyCap, stress and happiness in social science students.

### *Participants*

The participants in the present study were undergraduate students studying in Delhi/NCR. The total number of participants were 122 (N=122). There were 60 males (Natural science students=30, social science students=30) and 62 females (natural science students=31, social science students=31).

### *Criterion for inclusion*

For the present study, criterion of inclusion was specified. To control for the confounding effect of age and location, students were matched on their age and physical location. Only those students who were in the age range of 18-21 years and those who were an undergraduate student, pursuing either social science or natural science disciplines in a college in Delhi/NCR were included in the final sample. In the present study, a combination of purposive and snowball sampling have been used.

### *Variables*

Independent variables (IV) – Gender, Discipline.

Dependent variables (DV) – Psychological capital, happiness and perceived stress.

### *Instruments*

***Psychological Capital Questionnaire (Luthans, Avolio, Avey & Norman, 2007).*** The Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ) is widely recognized as the standard scale measuring Psychological capital. It was developed as a compound measure consisting of (modified) items from published scales for hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy. The internal consistency ratios, calculated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, ranged between 0.72 and 0.80 for the hope scale, between 0.66 and 0.72 for the resilience scale, between 0.75 and 0.85 for the self-efficacy scale, between 0.69 and 0.79 for the optimism scale and between 0.88 and 0.89 for the total score.

**Happiness Scale (Hills & Argyle, 2002).** The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ), which is derived from the Oxford Happiness Inventory (OHI), is a 29-item scale that measures individual happiness and is applicable to both clinical and nonclinical settings. When tested against the OHI, the validity of the OHQ was satisfactory. Both the OHQ and the OHI demonstrated high scale reliabilities with alpha values of 0.91 and 0.92 respectively. The inter-item correlations for the OHI ranged from -0.03 to 0.58 and the corresponding values for the OHQ were -0.04 to 0.65.

**Perceived stress scale (Cohen, Kamarck & Mermelstein, 1983).** The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) is the most widely used instrument for measuring the perception of stress. Cronbach’s alpha is found to be 0.7 and this measure has shown consistent reliability and validity in previous evaluations.

**Data collection**

The researcher brainstormed about the topic of interest, following which the scales were finalized through review of literature. The questionnaire along with the consent form was circulated to the target population through the use of Google forms. The responses were scored using MS Excel. The responses of the individuals who did not meet the criteria of inclusion were eliminated. The rest of the responses received were coded according to their gender and discipline and later, analyzed using SPSS. Lastly, the findings and the respective interpretations were reported.

**Scoring**

The data collected was analyzed using SPSS version 20. SPSS was used to calculate the mean and standard deviation for all the measured variables in the present study. Also, Pearson correlations between each of the measured variables were calculated and presented in matrix form in order to evaluate relationships among all variables. SPSS was also used to carry out 2-way ANOVA in order to evaluate the interaction effects of discipline and gender on PsyCap, happiness and perceived stress among college students.

**RESULTS**

The results of the present study are represented in the following tables.

**Table 1 Descriptive statistics for PsyCap scores**

		N	Mean	Standard deviation
<b>Gender</b>	Males	60	54.05 (M <sub>1</sub> )	8.16
	Females	62	47.89 (M <sub>2</sub> )	9.45
<b>Discipline</b>	Natural sciences	61	47.90 (M <sub>3</sub> )	8.13
	Social sciences	61	53.93 (M <sub>4</sub> )	9.54

**Table 2 Two-way ANOVA summary table for PsyCap scores**

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p values	Effect size (partial eta <sup>2</sup> )
<b>Gender</b>	1158.12	1	1158.12	16.67	.000**	.124
<b>Discipline</b>	1118.85	1	1118.85	16.11	.000**	.120
<b>Gender*Discipline</b>	69.44	1	69.44	1	.319	.008

\*\*  $p < 0.01$  level

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Table 1 shows two-way ANOVA results for the main effects of and interaction effect between gender and discipline on psychological capital. A two-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the psychological capital levels across the two grouping variables, i.e. discipline and gender. Gender consisted of 2 levels (males and females) and discipline also consisted of 2 levels (natural sciences and social sciences). Main effects were statistically significant at 0.01 level. The obtained value of F for the main effect of gender was found to be significant, indicating a statistically significant difference between males and females. The main effect of discipline was also significant, indicating that there is significant difference between natural science and social science students. However, the interaction effect of gender and discipline was not significant. Examining the effect size, we can say that gender and discipline account for 12.4% and 12 % of the variance in PsyCap scores, respectively. Moreover, the combination of the two grouping variables accounts for only 0.8% of variance which is not surprising given the insignificance of the interaction effect.

Moreover, from comparing means of the groups in tables 1, we can say that male college students reported to have higher psychological capital than their female counterparts. Similarly, we can observe that social science students had higher mean score than natural science students on psychological capital.

**Table 3 Descriptive statistics for happiness scores among males and females**

		N	Mean	Standard deviation
<b>Gender</b>	Males	60	32.85 (M <sub>1</sub> )	7.14
	Females	62	30.74 (M <sub>2</sub> )	7.54
<b>Discipline</b>	Natural sciences	61	28.96 (M <sub>3</sub> )	6.83
	Social sciences	61	34.90 (M <sub>4</sub> )	6.61

**Table 4 Two-way ANOVA summary table for Happiness scores**

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p values	Effect size (partial eta <sup>2</sup> )
<b>Gender</b>	135.50	1	135.50	3.08	.082	.025
<b>Discipline</b>	1200.94	1	1200.94	27.31	.000**	.188
<b>Gender*Discipline</b>	101.46	1	101.46	2.30	.131	.019

\*\*  $p < 0.01$

A two-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the happiness levels across 2 grouping variables (gender and discipline), results of which are depicted in table 2. The obtained value of F for the main effect of gender was found to be insignificant, indicating that there is no statistically significant difference between males and females with respect to their happiness levels. However, the main effect of discipline was significant, indicating that there is significant difference between natural science and social science students. The interaction effect of gender and discipline, on the other hand, was not significant. Examining the effect size, we can say that gender and discipline accounted for 2.5% and 18.8% of the variance in happiness scores, respectively. Moreover, the combination of the two grouping variables accounts for only 1.9% of variance which is not surprising given the insignificance of the interaction effect.

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Moreover, from comparing the means of groups in tables 3, it can be observed that males reported to be slightly higher on happiness than females. Similarly, social science students were found to be higher on happiness than natural science students.

**Table 5 Descriptive statistics for perceived stress scores among males and females**

		N	Mean	Standard deviation
<b>Gender</b>	Males	60	19.12 (M <sub>1</sub> )	11.14
	Females	62	24.32 (M <sub>2</sub> )	7.88
<b>Discipline</b>	Natural sciences	61	27.31 (M <sub>3</sub> )	7.04
	Social sciences	61	16.21 (M <sub>4</sub> )	9.32

**Table 6 Two-way ANOVA summary table for perceived stress scores**

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig value	Effect size (partial eta <sup>2</sup> )
<b>Gender</b>	826.37	1	826.37	15.06	.000**	.113
<b>Discipline</b>	3815.71	1	3815.71	69.56	.000**	.371
<b>Gender*Discipline</b>	882.60	1	882.60	16.09	.000**	.120

\*\* p<0.01 level

A two-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the levels of perceived stress across the two grouping variables (gender and discipline), results of which are depicted in table 3. All effects were statistically significant at 0.01 level. The main effect of gender was found to be significant, indicating a statistically significant difference between males and females. The main effect of discipline was also significant, indicating that there is significant difference between natural science and social science students with respect to perceived stress. Furthermore, the interaction effect of gender and discipline was also significant. Examining the effect size, we can infer that 11.3% of the variance in perceived stress is accounted for by gender, 37.1% by discipline and 12% by the interaction of gender and discipline.

Group mean comparisons in tables 5 indicated that female college students scored higher than male college students on the measure of perceived stress. Also, natural science students appear to be more stressed than their social science counterparts.

**Table 7 Correlational Matrix among variables**

	Mean	SD	N	Psychological capital scores	Happiness scores	Perceived stress scores
<b>Psychological capital scores</b>	50.92	9.32	122	1		
<b>Happiness scores</b>	31.78	7.39	122	.653**	1	
<b>Perceived stress scores</b>	21.76	9.93	122	-.555**	-.714**	1

\*\* p< 0.01 level

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Table 7 presents the correlational matrix among the variables. Psychological capital is positively and significantly correlated to happiness scores and negatively and significantly correlated to perceived stress scores. On the other hand, happiness scores are negatively and significantly correlated to perceived stress scores.

**Table 8 Correlation matrix of variables among males**

	Mean	SD	N	PsyCap	Happiness	Perceived stress
<b>PsyCap</b>	54.05	8.16	60	1		
<b>Happiness</b>	32.85	7.14	60	.628**	1	
<b>Perceived Stress</b>	19.12	11.14	60	-.457**	-.739**	1

\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Table 8 represents the correlation matrix of variables among males. As it can be seen from the table, there is a significant, strong and positive correlation between psychological capital and happiness among males. On the other hand, psychological capital and perceived stress scores are negatively and significantly correlated. Similarly, happiness and perceived stress scores are found to be strongly negatively and significantly correlated.

**Table 9 Correlation matrix of variable among females**

	Mean	SD	N	PsyCap	Happiness	Perceived stress
<b>PsyCap</b>	47.89	9.44	62	1		
<b>Happiness</b>	30.70	7.54	62	.667**	1	
<b>Perceived Stress</b>	24.32	7.88	62	-.614**	-.699**	1

\*\*  $p < 0.01$  level

From table 9, we can observe the correlation among variables in females. It can be seen that there is a significant positive correlation between psychological capital and happiness. It can also be seen that perceived stress correlates negatively and significantly with both psychological capital and happiness.

**Table 10 Correlation matrix of variables among natural science students**

	Mean	SD	N	PsyCap	Happiness	Perceived stress
<b>PsyCap</b>	47.90	8.12	61	1		
<b>Happiness</b>	28.66	6.83	61	.678**	1	
<b>Perceived Stress</b>	27.31	7.03	61	-.479**	-.618**	1

\*\*  $p < 0.01$  level

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Table 10 shows correlation among variables in natural science students. It can be observed that there exists a significant correlation between psychological capital and happiness. Though, there is a significant negative correlation between psychological capital and perceived stress, it is rather a weak one. Happiness also correlates significantly and negatively with perceived stress.

**Table 11 Correlation matrix of variables among social science students**

	Mean	SD	N	PsyCap	Happiness	Perceived stress
<b>PsyCap</b>	53.93	9.53	61	1		
<b>Happiness</b>	34.90	6.61	61	.540**	1	
<b>Perceived Stress</b>	16.21	9.31	61	-.475**	-.661**	1

\*\*  $p < 0.01$  level

Table 11 presents correlation matrix among variables in natural science students. There is a significant positive correlation between psychological capital and happiness. Also, psychological capital correlates significantly and negatively with perceived stress. There is a significant negative correlation between happiness and perceived stress.

## DISCUSSION

The aim of the present study was to understand whether there are significant gender or discipline related differences with respect to levels of psychological capital, happiness and perceived stress among college students. Several hypotheses were developed to examine these differences, which are discussed below.

***H1: There would be a significant difference between males and females with respect to their psychological capital levels.***

Results indicate that the difference in the levels of psychological capital between males and females is significant and by observing the means, it can be concluded that males are significantly higher than females with respect to their PsyCap levels. Similar findings have been reflected in the existing literature. For instance, it has been found that male students have higher levels of psychological capital as compared to their female counterparts (Vahabi, 2018).

Research has also pointed out to the potential role of each of the four dimensions of PsyCap (hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism) to help a female employee overcome the challenges at work and in managing stress. For instance, Mainiero & Sullivan (2005) found that women with higher hope can expect to succeed given the constant redirection of career paths that takes place in a woman's professional life. Self-efficacy is pivotal for women to feel confident about the skills, abilities, and knowledge that they bring to the workplace, considering the societal skepticism about their efforts and abilities to perform (Newman et al, 2014).

***H2: There would be a significant difference between males and females with respect to their happiness levels.***

Results further indicated that males and females did not differ significantly with respect to their levels of happiness. The observation that males and females do not differ significantly with respect to their happiness levels, finds support in previous research evidence (Malik & Saida, 2013). A probable reason for the absence of gender differences on happiness is that men and women may have different sources of SWB and self-concept. As SWB is considered synonymous to happiness (Peterson, 2000), it has been found that women's identities may tend to be more strongly tied to social network events, whereas men's identities may be more strongly tied to their careers (Golombok & Fivush 1994). Stevenson & Wolfers (2008) have also suggested that the social changes that have occurred over the past decades have increased opportunities for women and a standard economic framework would suggest that these expanded opportunities for women would have increased their welfare.

***H3: There would be significant difference between males and females with respect to their perceived stress levels.***

The difference between male and female students with respect to their perceived stress levels was found to be significant and males reported to have lower level of perceived stress than females.

Growing evidence also suggests that women and men are stressed by different types of situations. For instance, according to Anbumalr, Dorathy, Jaswanti, Dhandapani & Reni (2017), men were more likely to list finances and work-related events as sources of their stress (stressors), whereas women were more likely to list family and health-related events. It has also been found that women face a number of burdens in everyday life as a result of social status and roles relative to men and these strains contribute to higher stress (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1990). Moreover, it has been found that the transition of students from high school to university or college is a major experience and is also a source of stress in their lives (Anbumalr et al, 2017). Although both the genders have to experience such academic transitions and the consequent stress, women are affected more because of the compound effect of numerous other stressors that only affect them (e.g., Everyday harassment, eve teasing, house hold responsibilities etc.).

Numerous studies have shown that women find themselves in stressful circumstances more often than men (Almeida & Kessler, 1998) and that they are exposed to more daily stress associated with their routine functioning (Kessler & McLeod, 1984).

***H4: There would be a significant difference between natural science students and social science students with respect to their psychological capital levels.***

The difference between psychological capital levels in natural science and social science students denoted a significant difference between natural science and social science students. It was found that natural science students reported to have significantly lower psychological capital levels than those of their social science counterparts.

As stated earlier, students face many pressures during academic years. It is, therefore, essential that they have the ability and skill to cope with such pressures. Vahabi (2018) found that despite charging more fee, natural science disciplines are not any better when it comes to employment prospects which could be the reason for high levels hopelessness and pessimism in this cohort. This ultimately leads to lowered PsyCap levels among natural science students. Unemployment after graduation can make different reactions in students wherein students with high psychological capital experience low stress in academic setting.

They may see positive factors, which empower them and help them resist against high stress (Vahabi, 2018).

***H5: There would be a significant difference between natural science and social science students with respect to their happiness levels.***

The difference between natural science and social science students indicated that there is significant difference between natural science and social science students with respect to their happiness levels. When we compare the means of the two groups, it was found that natural science reported to be significantly lower on happiness than social science students.

There is a paucity of research in this area, i.e., regarding the relationship between the disciplines (natural and social sciences) and happiness levels among college students. But, tentatively it can be explained by the fact that a lot of students in India are pushed into taking natural science disciplines in higher education by their parents. As students do not enjoy these subjects, this results in their lowered levels of happiness. For example, a study by Tangade, Mathur, Gupta, & Chaudhary (2011) found that dental students who joined dentistry (natural science discipline) due to parental pressure and 'following in the footsteps of a parent' reported greater stress than those who joined of their own accord.

***H6: There would be a significant difference between natural science and social science students with respect to their perceived stress levels.***

The difference in perceived stress levels of natural science and social science students is found to be significant, indicating that there is significant difference between natural science and social science students with respect to their perceived stress levels. By observing the means of the two groups, it can be concluded that natural science students have more amount of perceived stress than their social science counterparts.

The findings of the present study are consistent with the existing literature. For instance, a study by Wani et al (2016) found that natural science students have higher levels of stress as compared to social science students. These findings are similar to studies conducted by Kumar & Bhukar (2013) who also found that engineering students had more pressure due to their academics and large amount of syllabus content to be covered in a small amount of time.

***H7: There would be a significant correlation among PsyCap, stress and happiness in males.***

As can be seen from table 5, all the obtained Pearson correlation coefficient values among PsyCap, stress and happiness in males are found to be significant at 0.01 level. For the relationship between PsyCap and happiness, the Pearson correlation coefficient indicated a significant, positive and moderately strong relationship between the two variables. Also, it was found that perceived stress correlates negatively with both PsyCap and happiness, with the correlation being strong for the latter. The inverse relationship between the variables suggests that as perceived stress levels among students increase, the levels of PsyCap and happiness decrease.

***H8: There would be a significant correlation among PsyCap, stress and happiness in females.***

As can be seen from table 6, all the obtained Pearson correlation coefficient values among PsyCap, stress and happiness in females are found to be significant at 0.01 level. For the relationship between PsyCap and happiness, the Pearson correlation coefficient indicated a significant and positive correlation between the two variables. Also, it was found that

perceived stress correlates negatively with both PsyCap and happiness, both being significant at 0.01 level.

***H9: There would be a significant correlation among PsyCap, stress and happiness in natural science students.***

As can be seen from table 7, all the obtained Pearson correlation coefficient values among PsyCap, stress and happiness in natural science students are found to be significant at 0.01 level. For the relationship between PsyCap and happiness, the Pearson correlation coefficient indicated a positive relationship between the two variables. Also, it was found that perceived stress correlates negatively with both PsyCap and happiness, both being significant at 0.01 level.

***H10: There would be a significant correlation among PsyCap, stress and happiness in social science students.***

As can be seen from table 8, all the obtained Pearson correlation coefficient values among PsyCap, stress and happiness in social science students are found to be significant at 0.01 level. For the relationship between PsyCap and happiness, the Pearson correlation coefficient was found to indicate a significant, positive and moderately strong relationship between the two variables. Also, it was found that perceived stress correlates negatively with both PsyCap and happiness, both being significant at 0.01 level.

These findings are consistent with the existing literature which states that there exists a positive relationship between psychological capital and happiness (Avey, Luthans & Youssef, 2010). Also, research conducted by Riolli, Savicki & Richards (2012) indicated that students with higher PsyCap perceive academic environment as being less distressing and more likely to see the positive elements that contribute to their overall well-being. Similarly, researchers also support our findings of the existing negative correlation between happiness and academic stress. Research has found that daily stressors such as interpersonal tensions and network conflicts, have a more immediate effect on well-being by causing both psychological distress and physical symptoms of stress (Almeida, Wethington, & Kessler, 2002).

## **CONCLUSION**

The present aimed at understanding whether there are significant gender or discipline related differences with respect to levels of psychological capital, happiness and perceived stress among college students. This research was undertaken keeping in mind the increasing levels of academic stress among students and the role happiness and PsyCap play in dealing with such pressures.

The current study revealed that there are significant differences among levels of psychological capital, happiness and perceived stress in college students across gender and discipline. The current study also found that PsyCap has significant correlations with both happiness and perceived academic stress among students. Keeping in mind the significant role of the increasing academic stress in students, parents and teachers should give attention to develop PsyCap in students because several researches support a positive relationship between PsyCap and well-being (Avey, Reichard, Luthans & Mhatre 2011; Roche, Haar & Luthans, 2014).

## LIMITATIONS OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The limitations of the present study should be noted. First, the study is based on a small sample which may affect the ability to generalize the results on a wider population. Moreover, since random samples are difficult to obtain due to time and resource restrictions, the current sample employed purposive sampling, which too may limit the generalizability of these findings. In the present study, the sample was limited to college students of Delhi/NCR, and hence findings may not be applicable onto other age groups and geographical areas. Thirdly, students studying either natural sciences or social sciences disciplines were considered and therefore, the results may or may not be applicable to students pursuing other courses like fashion designing, hotel management etc.

### *Implications of the present study*

The present research has both practical and theoretical implications. Practical implication of the study is that keeping in mind the significant role of the increasing academic stress in students, parents and teachers should also give attention to develop PsyCap in students. Moreover, disciplines where students have lowered levels of happiness and high degrees of stress can frame teaching modules that involve activities and trainings targeted at enhancing students' PsyCap. Theoretically, the study will extend contribution and enrich the literature of positive psychology in general and psychological capital in particular from the perspective of educational context.

### *Future directions*

The results of this study suggest that the concept of psychological capital has significant relationship with happiness and perceived academic stress among college students. This study is therefore a pioneering attempt to study the implications of psychological capital in the educational context. The generalizability of the findings of the present study could be enhanced further by taking a larger sample size. Although, the aim of the present research was to examine the relationship between PsyCap, happiness and perceived stress among college students, there can be other variables that might also contribute to happiness or stress in students that might be examined in future researches. Finally, future researchers can include other disciplines to draw better juxtapositions.

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