

Research Paper

Mental Health in Relation to Emotional Competence and Self Efficacy among Under Graduate Students

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ABSTRACT

The formative years of adolescence are critical for the development of social and emotional skills necessary for mental health. Previous research has established a connection between mental health issues (such as sadness and anxiety) and emotional competence and self-efficacy. The present study focuses on the relationship between mental health and emotional competence and self-efficacy among 140 male and female undergraduate students of Kolkata. Mental Health Inventory, The Profile of Emotional Competence, Self-efficacy Questionnaire were used to assess mental health, emotional competence and self-efficacy of the undergraduate students respectively. The result suggested there are significant positive correlation between both mental health and emotional competence; and mental health and self-efficacy. Furthermore, this study also revealed that male and female students differ significantly in terms of mental health, emotional competence and self-efficacy but in case of different streams (arts and science students) there no significant differences observed in terms of mental health, emotional competence, and self-efficacy.

Keywords: *Mental Health, Emotional Competence, Self-efficacy, Undergraduate students*

The economic situation of countries and the global competition in almost all facets of human endeavor call attention of psychologists, social workers, educators and researchers generally, to the need to continuously search for active variables that can enhance human resource development.

For this purpose, a person should be healthy because health is an indispensable quality in human being. Health indicates psychosomatic well-being. The preamble of the World Health Organization's charter defined health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (Monopolis & Sarles, 1977). Thus, health is a broader concept including physical, social and mental health. Mental health has been reported as an important factor influencing individual's various behaviors, activities, happiness and performance.

Mental health is a crucial psychological factor with respect to human behavior. Available research evidence has demonstrated that mental health offers an opportunity for

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investigation as an attribute of human resource development in that empirical research findings indicated that mental health improvements lead to a better utilization of resources while its impairment has led to serious negative and life consequences. For instance, Brian (2002) reviews etiology and prevention literatures, exploring relationship between problem and positive youth behaviors and reported that risky/unhealthy/anti-social behaviors, poor mental health and poor academic achievement are highly correlated with and predict each other, while positive mental health strongly influences success and happiness.

There are some other variables which affect by mental health like emotional competence, self-concept, self-perception and self-efficacy. Emotional competence refers to one's ability to express or release one's inner feelings (emotions). It implies an ease around others and determines one's ability to effectively and successfully lead and express. It is described as the essential social skills to recognize, interpret, and respond constructively to emotions in yourself and others. Emotional competence can lead to improved health through avoiding stress that would otherwise result from suppressing emotions. Emotional competence is the ability to understand, manage and express the emotional aspect of one's life in ways that enable the successful management of life tasks such as learning, forming relationships, solving everyday problems and adopting to the complex demands of growth and development. It is efficiency acquired by the individual to deal with emotional situations effectively. It plays a vital role in the manifestation of human behaviour by which one attempts to deal with different emotive situations and meets his needs including the efforts to maintain harmonious relationships with the environment. If we are able to emote well, we are one step ahead in the achievement of mental health.

Psychologists Albert Bandura has defined self-efficacy as our belief in our ability to succeed in specific situations. According to Bandura (2001) social cognitive theory, people with high self-efficacy i.e. those who believe they can perform well-are more likely to view difficult tasks as something to be mastered rather than something to be avoided. Our emotions and moods will also affect our self-efficacy; a positive mood will increase our self-efficacy, while a negative or pessimistic mood will reduce it.

The studies discussed above revealed that mental health is a very important factor which is likely to be affected by number of variables like emotional competence as well as self efficacy. Review of literature reveals that this is an area that has not been sufficiently explored and scientific correlation need to be studied between mental health, emotional competence and self efficacy of male and female college students. Therefore, justification of the study is derived from the limitation of earlier studies which suggests a need for this research.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives:

1. To investigate relationship of mental health with emotional competence and self efficacy of college students.
2. Find out the difference between male and female college students in terms of mental health, emotional competence and self efficacy.
3. Find out the difference between science and arts students in terms of mental health, emotional competence and self efficacy.

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Sample:

For the present study 140 undergraduate students of Calcutta University, Kolkata, were selected through purposive sampling techniques. Out of 140 students 78 male and 62 female students were taken from science and arts stream.

Inclusive Criteria:

- Students, who are pursuing under graduation course under Calcutta University, were taken in the study.
- Data were taken from both male and female students.
- Age ranges of the subjects were in between 18 to 22 years.
- Subjects were able to read and write English.

Exclusive Criteria:

- Students, who are pursuing under graduation course under any other University apart from Calcutta University, were not taken in the study.
- Students who are suffering from any physical n mental disorder were not taken in study.

Tools Used:

- **Mental Health Inventory (MHI):** The MHI developed by Jagdish and Srivastava (1983) components of mental health were covered in the test 52 items constitute the test. Each item in the form of a statement and provides four alternatives response option graded on a four point scale i.e. always, often, rarely, never. The reliability of inventory was determined by 'split-half method using odd-even procedure. Overall reliability of MHI was 0.73 and construct validity of the inventory was 0.54.
- **The Profile of Emotional Competence (PEC):** This scale is developed by Sophie Brasseur, Jacques Grégoire, Romain Bourdu, Moïra Mikolajczak in 2013. This scale has 50 items, which measure happiness, subjective health and quality of social relationships. This scale revealed promising psychometric properties. The internal consistency of scales and subscales alike was satisfying, factorial structure was as expected, and concurrent/discriminant validity was good.
- **Self-efficacy Questionnaire (SEQ):** Self-efficacy questionnaire developed by Peter Muris (2001) was used to measure self efficacy of college students. Three components of self-efficacy viz. academic self-efficacy, emotional self-efficacy and social self-efficacy are covered in the test. 24 items constitute the test. Each item in the form of a statement and provides five alternative response option graded on a 5 point scale. The total reliability of the scale is 0.79 and validity is 0.88.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Table-1: Mean, SD and t – values for mental health, emotional competence and self efficacy of boys and girls college students.

Sl no	Variables	Mean of Boys	SD of Boys	Mean of Girls	SD of Girls	T - value
1	Total Mental Health	159.87	18.04	149.91	19.97	4.35
2	Total Emotional Competence	176.99	18.50	163.61	17.92	5.16
3	Total Self Efficacy	90.97	12.50	81.35	14.46	5.0

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In the above table total number of boys (N1) =78 and total number of girls (N2) =62. Table value for 't' at 0.05 level of significance is 1.96. It is observed from the above table that the 't' values for mental health, emotional intelligence and self efficacy and most of their dimensions are more than, the table value at 0.05 level of significance i.e. 1.96. Hence, male and female students differ significantly on mental health and its dimensions. It is further observed that total mean scores of boys are more than those of girls therefore boys are better than girls with regard to mental health and its dimensions. In other words, gender affects mental health, emotional intelligence and self efficacy along with their respective dimensions.

Table-2: Mean, SD and t – values of science and arts college students in terms of mental health, emotional competence and self efficacy

Sl no	Variables	Mean of Arts Student	SD of Arts Student	Mean of Science Students	SD of Science Students	T - value
1	Total Mental Health	151.21	17.63	149.57	20.31	0.60
2	Total Emotional Competence	171.16	18.33	169.44	20.38	0.62
3	Total Self Efficacy	87.30	14.04	85.02	14.56	1.12

In the above table total number of science students (N1) = 70 and total number of arts students (N2) = 70. Table value for 't' at 0.05 level of significance is 1.96. It is observed from the above table that all the 't' values for mental health and its dimensions are less than, the table value at 0.05 level of significance i.e.1.96. Hence, science and arts students do not differ significantly on mental health, emotional competence and self efficacy and their dimensions. It means academic stream does not affect mental health, emotional competence and self efficacy along with their respective dimensions. The present study aims to determine the relationship of mental health with emotional competence and self efficacy.

Table-3: Correlation for mental health with emotional competence and self efficacy

Sl no	Variable	Correlation Value
1	Emotional competence	0.34*
2	Self - Efficacy	0.39**

Mental health is positively correlated to Emotional Competence ($r=0.32 < 0.05$) It means mental health is related with emotional competence. Similarly, Mental health is positively correlated with self-efficacy ($r=0.43 < 0.05$) It means mental health is also related with self efficacy.

The first research question was whether emotional competence and self-efficacy were significantly related with mental health or not. The findings of the study indicate that emotional competence is positively and significantly related with mental health. Ciarrochi, Deane and Anderson (2002) provided evidence through their research that emotional competence moderates the link between stress and mental health. Similarly, Self efficacy is also positively and significantly related with mental health. This is similar to the findings by

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Daniel and Karna, (2001); Robert, 1992 with results indicating to mental health is indeed an important factor in human behavior. As the WHO (2001) stipulates, self efficacy is an important factor in developing and maintaining a healthy overall well being. Thus, the concept of self efficacy is closely aligned to mental health. Furthermore, Rappaport (quoted in Cowen, 1994) states that people who have a sense of control over their live benefit in that they gain a greater sense of enjoyment in living and have confidence in their ability to handle life's difficulties and pressures. Therefore, mental health is directly tied to a person's ability to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life to be well adapted and emotionally well adjusted. It is cognitive affective factors that influence the general well being of an individual and his potential to meet desirable life expectations. Similarly relationship between low emotional competence level with worse mental health is measured by Extremera and Pizarro (2006); Salovey, Vera, Extremera and Ramor (2005) which support the findings of the present study. It means if a person will be emotionally more competent i. e. able to control his emotions efficiently or more self efficient then he will be mentally healthy and vice versa. Furthermore, Muris (2002) found a significant relationship between self efficacy and depression and anxiety in adolescents. It was found that low level of emotional self efficacy was strongly linked with high level of anxiety and depressive symptoms. Thus, a high emotional self efficacy could be crucial in maintaining of good mental health.

The 2nd research question was whether there was significant difference in boys and girls students with regard to mental health, emotional competence and self efficacy. The findings indicate that gender does serve as a differentiating factor as boys students scored significantly higher than girls students with regard to mental health, emotional competence and self-efficacy along with their dimensions. Boys are better at regulating emotions (Austin, Egans, Goldwater & Potter, 2005; Bindu & Thomas, 2006; Pandey & Tripathi, 2004) as comparison to girls. In some areas women turn out to be more skillful at directing & handling their own and other people's emotions. This lack of uniformity in research findings could be due to samples' demographic characteristics or the kind of tool used. It is interesting to note that there seems to be wide gender disparities with regard to the selection of future career goals. Males generally tend to rate high efficacy belief levels in traditionally male and female occupations (Bandura et. al, 2001). In contrast, females tend to have a weaker sense of efficacy to master occupations, traditionally held by males. It shows that girls are less self-efficient as comparison to boys and as a result girls are not comparatively mentally healthy too. Main reason for this type of result is our culture where boys get opportunities of social interaction. Gender differences in MH, EC and SE can be glimpsed from infancy due to differential treatment given to boys and girls in their families and societies. Some authors like Guastello and Guastello (2003) have also forwarded similar possible explanation for gender differences that is due to culture and education.

On the other hand, findings indicate that there is not any significant difference between science students and arts students with regard to mental health, emotional competence and self-efficacy along with almost all the dimensions. It means there is not much impact of academic stream on students' mental health, emotional competence and self-efficacy. According to Seeman, Zhong, Beecher, Brehman, and Barchard (2007) presented a paper on "Emotional Competence: Comparing science and liberal arts students and in the results of their study they found that science students obtained slightly higher scores than arts students (this difference was not statistically significant) which is similar to results of the present study too.

IMPLICATION:

It is important to mention the implication of the present study for the education system. We must restructure the school curriculum to reflect forms of learning, which not only help in development of intellects of individuals but also improve the emotional intelligence of students, especially in case of girls. The design of curriculum should be so where there are chances to improve emotional intelligence, which ultimately increases emotional competence. Emotional competence can be developed and nurtured even in adulthood and proves to be beneficial for one's mental health, interpersonal relationship and performance. As we know self-efficacy promotes mental health, young generation should be more aware of themselves and their capacities to improve their mental health. So, parents and teachers should make efforts to increase emotional competence and self-efficacy, especially among female college students because male college students were found to have better Mental health, Emotional competence and Self Efficacy. The results indicate society should give chance to girls to empower themselves. The findings could be very crucial especially in case of education field as they can be used to develop the performance enhancement intervention programs for the students.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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