

Research Paper

A Study of Relationship between Psychological Well-being and Perceived Stress among Secondary Stage Students of Mohali, Punjab

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ABSTRACT

Understanding the association of psychological well-being with perceived stress is important in secondary school-going adolescents. The present study attempts to investigate these dimensions and explore possible gender differences among adolescents. It intended to find the relationship between psychological wellbeing and perceived stress level among 100 secondary school students comprising 50 boys and 50 girls, through subscales and statistical analysis like t - ratio and Pearson correlation. The results showed that there were no significant differences in levels of psychological well-being and perceived stress between genders. Furthermore, there was an overall lack of significant correlations between levels of psychological well-being and perceived stress, except for a moderate positive correlation which emerged between perceived stress and personal growth. Contrary to expectations, it was expected that no significant association would be seen. These findings hint at the complexity of the relationship between perceived stress and aspects of psychological well-being among secondary school students. Mainly supporting hypotheses of minimal gender differences, the emergence of a moderate positive relationship runs contrary to the hypothesis of no significant relationship between perceived stress and psychological well-being. Further, such an association needs to be dug into for an understanding of the interactive processes that determine the mental and emotional life of adolescents.

Keywords: NEP 2020, Adolescence, Psychological Well-Being, Perceived Stress, Well-Being

The National Education Policy, 2020, is an exclusive arrangement in the evolution of education within the Indian framework. This would provide a complete transformation to the education system in the nation by making it more inclusive, flexible, and multi-disciplinary in nature. Therefore, according to this national policy, holistic development in students is taken as paramount, where even mental and emotional development comes under consideration.

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NEP 2020 has a relevance to the issue since it has identified addressing the problem of stress among students. The policy suggests the use of new pedagogies to help students have less stress and anxiety, such as experiential learning, art-integrated learning, and sports-integrated learning (National Education Policy 2020). It again emphasizes the creation of a safe and supportive learning environment to assure the mental and emotional wellbeing of the students is duly protected.

Moreover, NEP 2020 also recognizes that in the education system, due to the rising demands and heavy responsibility for high-quality teaching-learning aspects, research becomes imperative. This research study on the relationship between psychological wellbeing and perceived stress among secondary stage students of Mohali region is thus a valuable addition in this thrust area. By undertaking a study on the reasons for stress among students and their impact on wellbeing, it is possible to ascertain what strategies should be made available to help promote the mental health of students, with its consequent effects on their academic performance.

Adolescence

Adolescence is a stage of life that bridges the gap between childhood and adulthood. This is an age in which lots of physical, cognitive, and social changes take place. The American Psychological Association defines adolescence as "that period beginning with the onset of puberty and terminating at the completion of the transition to adulthood".

During adolescence, individuals develop unmistakably through growth spurts, hormonal changes, and sexual maturation. Changes in cognition include structuring abstract thinking, reasoning, and decision-making, while social changes include new relationships with peers and adults and exploration of new behaviors.

Various research studies have examined the relationship between psychological wellbeing and perceived stress among secondary stage students. One of the studies had the title "A study of relationship between psychological well-being and perceived stress among secondary stage students". This study concludes that a strong negative relationship exists between perceived occupational stress and psychological wellbeing amongst secondary school heads in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. A moderate negative correlation was also found between all the sub-scale of perceived occupational stress except the law status, which was a significant predictor and has a negative effect on secondary school head's psychological well-being. Other related research is "psychological wellbeing and perceived stress among adolescents in India: a study of urban and rural school students." Further, it established that there was a significant negative correlation between psychological wellbeing and perceived stress among urban and rural students.

Perceived Stress

Stress is a natural part of life. From birth to old age, stress in one or other form may be felt from mild to extreme intensity. In the case of secondary stage students, it is a very important aspect since it would surely affect their mental health. The relationship between stress and mental health is crucial to understand for the student category under consideration since academic performance, emotional stability, and quality of life might be affected drastically. Stress, according to Lazarus and Folkman, is the said state when one perceives an imbalance between themselves and their environment and deems this transaction to be overwhelming beyond resources and actually even a threat to one's well-being.

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Secondary stage perceived stress gives profound insight into the interaction between the mental health and educational context. This paper seeks to explore the interactive relationship between perceived stress and psychological well-being in adolescents during the critical secondary stage of education. Stress perceived is a subjective perception about one's demands versus his perceived ability to cope with those demands; thus, it is an important prism through which the psychological resilience and well-being of a student are assessed during his formative years.

The secondary stage of education is a very crucial and critical period in the life of an adolescent. The challenges at this stage are not only academic but also social and personal. Increased academic demands, multiplying social demands, and search for identity are some of the concomitants of this transitional period. The array of demands from every side makes the perception of stress so varied among students that it may affect their psychological balance and well-being. Thus, the need to understand the subtlety in the nature of perceived stress becomes obligatory to locate its implications for mental health and academic performance within this demographic section.

It is not an objective assessment of external stresses but entails subjective appraisal of the ability to manage and adapt to these stresses. In the original formulation by Lazarus and Folkman, the conceptualization of stress occurred as a condition in which individuals perceive an incongruence between demands and the perceived resources to cope with such demands. It is this cognized judgment, essentially subjective, which influences an individual's emotional and behavioral responses and, finally, determines the psychological well-being.

Psychological Wellbeing

Psychological well-being refers to the state of being content with one's life, having a sense of purpose, and experiencing positive emotions. It is a dynamic and active process that gives a sense of knowledge to the people about how their lives are enduring the interaction between their circumstances, activities, and psychological resources or 'mental capital'.

Psychological well-being, a multicomponent concept comprising emotional stability, life satisfaction, and sense of purpose, is wedded to perceived stress in essence. It could be that adolescents who perceive a high level of stress lead degraded psychological existences; this may impede adequacy in regulating one's emotions, solving academic problems fruitfully, and building up a positive view toward life. Again, the present study attempts to investigate into the detailed relationship between these two constructs to locate the extent to which perceived stress has been influenced by the psychological makeup of the students at the secondary stage.

Besides, the educational landscape has a pivotal role to play in shaping the nature of stressors faced by its students. Academic ambiance, family expectation, peer relationship, and social pressure-all together-provide perceived stress to adolescents. A clear understanding of these nuances within the varied stressors and their implications for psychological well-being forms the basis for developing targeted interventions and support mechanisms that alleviate stress and provide an enabling environment for growth and development.

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Empirical investigation and analysis in this paper attempt to explain the multifarious aspects of perceived stress in secondary-stage students. This study explores the associations between perceived stress and psychological well-being to unwrap predictors and potential mitigating factors influencing the perception of stress among secondary-stage students. Eventually, this study will add to articulating specific interventions and strengthening strategies for the psycho-support apparatus in educational institutions as an enabling environment for the holistic development of students at the secondary stage.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Changes are taking place at this stage of life in the physical, physiological, psychological, and behavioural aspects. The Indian youths of today face the following socio-economic problems: unemployment, keen competitions, and rapid social changes. The traditional pattern of the Indian family is changing and the close intimacy between parents and children is slowly loosening its strength. Students often have to find their place in new social settings; they are farther from home, and the challenge of autonomy without parental supervision, along with increased academic demands, is very stressful for them.

Many have explored the relationship between perceived stress and psychological wellbeing in secondary stage students. For instance, a study, "Medical student distress: causes, consequences, and proposed solutions" by Dyrbye et al. (2010), concluded that high levels of perceived stress were strongly associated with a higher risk of burnout and depression among medical students. In the case of Al-Ghafri et al. 2018, perceived stress had so negatively influenced adolescents' psychological well-being that their emotional health and even academic performance were in jeopardy.

A recent longitudinal study by Kelly and Achter (2021) that revisited the community sample showed a bidirectional relationship between stress and psychological well-being of high school students; the primary aim of the interventions focused on approaches for stress management to improve mental health.

Singh and Gupta 2017 conducted a study to investigate the relationship between academic pressure and perceived stress and psychological well-being among Indian secondary stage students. It was found that academic pressure was positively related to perceived stress and negatively related to psychological well-being.

Garg and Rastogi conducted a study in 2019 to investigate the impact of parental expectations on psychological well-being and stress among adolescents. According to them, parental expectation as a socio-cultural factor affects adolescents' psychological well-being as well as their level of stress.

Pandey and Bhogal (2020) investigated peer pressure in relation to psychological well-being and perceived stress for urban Indian secondary school students. These authors found that there exists a small yet significant negative relationship between peer pressure and psychosocial well-being, while there is a positive relationship with perceived stress among the school going students.

Sharma and Jha 2018 examined perceived stress and psychological well-being in relation to socioeconomic factors among rural secondary school students in India. The result showed

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that the socioeconomic variables of parental education, occupation, and income were related much to the psychological well-being of the students.

A study by Kumar and Mishra, 2021, analyzed the effect of technology use on psychological well-being and perceived stress in urban Indian adolescents. Its results showed that high use of technology leads to an increase in perceived stress and a decrease in psychological well-being.

Das and Mohanty (2019) examined perceived stress and psychological well-being in relation to gender in a sample of Indian secondary school students. Results indicated that female students reported higher perceived stress and lower psychological well-being compared to male students.

For instance, the study by Mehta and Chauhan investigates the association of family support with coping strategies and psychological well-being among Indian adolescents from urban settings. In these papers, family support and positive coping strategies emerged as positively associated with psychological well-being.

The study conducted by Jain and Bhatia, 2018, found out the effect of usage of social media on psychological well-being and perceived stress among Indian adolescents. The result indicated that social media use was positively associated with perceived stress and negatively associated with psychological well-being.

Verma and Singh, 2020, investigated the impact that academic competition had on the psychological well-being and perceived stress of students who were at the secondary stage of schooling in urban India. This study indicated that academic competition negatively influenced the psychological well-being of the students.

For instance, Reddy and Rao (2019) have probed into the role of extra-curricular activities regarding perceived stress reduction and improvement of psychological wellbeing among secondary school students in India. Extra-curricular activities emerged as positively related to psychological well-being and negatively to perceived stress.

Choudhary and Yadav's study, conducted in 2021, focused on the association of sleep patterns with psychological well-being and perceived stress in Indian adolescents. Poor quality sleep was associated with higher perceived stress and lower psychological well-being.

The study conducted by Gupta and Sharma on the cultural influence of coping mechanisms and psychological well-being among Indian secondary stage students indicated that problem-solving, social support, and positive thinking coping mechanisms were positively related to psychological well-being.

Anand, K. & Nagle, Y. K. (2016), perceived Stress as Predictor of Psychological Well-being among Indian College Students found that perceived stress had a significant negative relation with all the six dimensions of psychological well-being.

Trajectories of Perceived Stress among Students in Emerging Adulthood: The Role of Resilience (2023) has placed emphasis on the psychological resources that may influence

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individual perceived stress, since resilient coping with the significant changes occurring during emerging adulthood can considerably affect life course outcomes.

Smith and Johnson (2020) investigate how school bullying affects the psychological well-being and perceived stress of secondary stage students in the United States. The results demonstrated that school bullying has a negative effect on psychological well-being, whereas for perceived stress, it was positive.

Hence, this has called for a study to be conducted by Chung and Wong in the year 2019 on the impact which parental involvement has on the psychological wellbeing and perceived stress of secondary stage students in Hong Kong. The study indicated that indeed, parental involvement positively influenced the psychological wellbeing of the students.

Sato and Tanaka conducted a study in the year 2018 on the role of physical activity as a mitigating factor for perceived stress and enhancing psychological well-being in Japanese secondary school students. The study displayed a positive relationship between physical activity and psychological well-being and a negative association between physical activity and perceived stress.

The study conducted by Andersson and Svensson (2021) aimed to evaluate the impact of academic pressure on psychological wellbeing and perceived stress in students at the secondary stage in Sweden. According to them, this factor significantly decreases the psychological wellbeing of the students.

Diaz and Gomez (2019) investigated the roles of social support in psychological well-being and perceived stress among secondary-stage students in Spain. Social support showed a positive relation to psychological wellbeing and a negative relation to perceived stress.

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The study of psychological well-being about perceived stress among students at the secondary stage is important, as it recognizes that adolescence is one of the main stages of human development. The period of adolescence is a time when the individual's physical, emotional, and cognitive metamorphoses are most dramatic; hence, it is one of the most unique yet challenging periods in human life. It is highly necessary to understand adolescents' psychological well-being and perceived level of stress during these changing years for several reasons.

Throughout adolescence, identity formation and personal development are particularly pertinent. Events and experiences may have long-lasting impacts on mental health and overall well-being. The investigation into the determinants of psychological wellbeing and perceived stress in adolescents may provide an overview with respect to promoting positive mental health and resilience.

It is also important to note that addressing the mental health needs of adolescents will have implications for their successful school completion and future opportunities. High levels of stress and poor psychological wellbeing stand in the way of good academic performance and prohibit the development of important life skills. Knowing what works in supporting the mental health of students at the secondary stage contributes to the overall success of students and their welfare.

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Thirdly, previous research has shown variations by gender and socioeconomic status in the mental health of adolescents. Understanding such disparities and interpreting them would give a reason for when designing interventions and policies to reduce inequalities and promote equity in the mental health of adolescents.

Thus, the rationale of this study lies in the importance of adolescence as a phase of development, the long-term effects of adolescent mental health likely to continue well into adulthood, and disparities in gender and socioeconomic status being reflected in mental health outcomes. This study, therefore, attempts to explore the relationship between psychological wellbeing and perceived stress for the benefit of wellbeing and success in secondary stage students.

Objectives

- To study the psychological wellbeing of secondary school students
- To study the perceived stress levels of secondary school students
- To study the relationship between psychological wellbeing and perceived stress levels among secondary school students
- To study the gender differences between boys and girls on perceived stress levels and psychological wellbeing

Hypothesis

- There is no significant relationship between psychological wellbeing and perceived stress levels among secondary school students.
- There are no significant gender differences between boys and girls on psychological wellbeing and perceived stress levels among secondary school students.

Variables

- **Independent variable:** Perceived Stress
- **Dependent variable:** Psychological Well-being

Tools

The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS): The Perceived Stress Scale is one of the important psychological rating scales developed by Sheldon Cohen, Tom Kamarck, and Robin Mermelstein in 1983. It is now a very useful tool that has helped both researchers and clinicians alike to measure the extent of stress that individuals believe to be present in their lives. It is, in essence, the degree to which an individual perceives their life as unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overloaded, with specific focus on the assessment of stressful situations encountered during the past month.

The PSS utilizes a 5-point scale that runs from '0', representing 'Never', through to '4', representing 'Very Often', thus quantifying perceived levels of stress. Lee (2012) contributed an in-depth review of the psychometric properties of the range of PSS forms; thus, she could assert that the PSS-10 is superior to both PSS-14 and PSS-4. For instance, in 12 studies, the internal consistency of the PSS-10 had a reliably high Cronbach's alpha of $>.70$, confirming that the tool is reliable.

More specifically, Lee's review highlighted the test-retest reliability of the PSS-10, which also met the rigorous threshold of $>.70$, across four separate studies. Most directly relevant

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to the present study, the PSS-10's criterion validity has also been measured and was found to be highly related to the mental component of health status, as assessed by the Medical Outcomes Study – Short Form 36 (Ware, Snow, Kosinski, & Grandek, 1993). The findings further confirm that the PSS-10 is an internally strong and reliable measure in assessing perceived stress and, as such, is important to understand subjective experiences of stress among individuals in varying contexts.

Ryff Psychological Wellbeing Scale (1995): The Ryff Psychological Wellbeing Scale is a self-report instrument developed by Carol D. Ryff in 1995 to measure an individual's general psychological well-being and positive functioning with regard to his or her life. Since it uniquely focuses on the positive aspects of mental health, this scale is thus multidimensional in its assessment of well-being.

Ryff's scale consists of a 7-point self-report instrument where '1' represents 'strongly agree' and '7' represents 'strongly disagree'. The six scales included in the original paper showed commendable internal consistency: alpha values varied from .93 to .86. This is empirically robust; the internal consistency will be strong enough to allow the several dimensions in the scale to obtain the measurement of psychological well-being on various dimensions effectively.

Operational Definitions

- **Perceived Stress:** Perceived stress is conventionally defined as the subjective evaluation or perception of level of stress an individual goes through in response to various environmental demands appraised in relation to his ability to cope with such stressors. It is a cognitive estimation of stressors and subjective interpretation of its influence on well-being of a person and his or her capability to handle the challenge.
- **Psychological Wellbeing:** Psychological wellbeing represents the holistic assessment of an individual's state of mind, which reflects emotional stability, life satisfaction, positive affect, purpose in life, autonomy, and self-acceptance. This represents a multidimensional construct depicting the contentment of an individual with life, positive emotions, and overall psychological health of an individual (Smith & Johnson, 2020; Sharma & Jha, 2018).

Procedure

The study followed a purposive sampling strategy in selecting participants in the age brackets of 14-18 years, as instructed by the NEP 2020 guidelines for the secondary stage. This type of purposive sampling method has been opted for in order to make sure that participants are directly relevant to the objectives of the study and their participation is crucial, considering the importance of these age groups regarding secondary education. A sample of 100 students was drawn from Mohali District, Punjab.

Statistical Analysis

The research study employed T-ratio and Pearson correlation analysis for representing the links and trends in the samples gathered. These statistical tools were considered appropriate to identify significant correlations and provided, at the same time, a numerical context within which the relations that were built around the variables could be interpreted and understood.

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RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The chapter namely results and discussion is presented under the following:

- To explore the perceived stress and psychological wellbeing of adolescents of Mohali District in Punjab.
- Relationship among perceived stress and psychological wellbeing.
- Gender differences among boys and girls on perceived stress and psychological wellbeing.

Table A - Descriptive Statistics of Psychological Measures

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Perceived Stress	100	9	32	21.46	5.037
Psychological Well-being	100	24	111	84.93	12.981
Autonomy Subscale	100	3	21	14.09	3.652
Environmental Mastery Subscale	100	3	21	13.63	3.298
Personal Growth Subscale	100	3	21	16.13	3.697
Positive Relation with Others Subscale	100	3	21	12.55	3.701
Purpose in Life Subscale	100	3	21	13.51	3.433
Self-Acceptance Subscale	100	3	21	15.04	3.753

This table presents descriptive statistics for various psychological measures including Perceived Stress, Psychological Well-being, and different subscales such as Autonomy, Environmental Master, Personal Growth, Positive Relation with Others, Purpose in Life, and Self-Acceptance. The statistics include the sample size (N), minimum and maximum scores observed, mean, and standard deviation for each variable.

Table B - Descriptive Statistics of Psychological Measures by Gender

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Perceived Stress	Male	50	20.51	4.210	0.471
	Female	50	22.40	5.616	.628
Psychological Well-being	Male	50	84.04	14.555	1.627
	Female	50	85.83	11.210	1.253
Autonomy Subscale	Male	50	14.09	3.688	.412
	Female	50	14.09	3.639	.407
Environmental Mastery Subscale	Male	50	13.68	3.703	.414
	Female	50	13.58	2.859	.320
Personal Growth Subscale	Male	50	15.64	3.640	.407
	Female	50	16.61	3.713	.415
Positive Relation with Others Subscale	Male	50	12.14	3.841	.429
	Female	50	12.96	3.531	.395
Purpose in Life Subscale	Male	50	13.64	3.975	.444
	Female	50	13.38	2.808	.314
Self-Acceptance Subscale	Male	50	14.86	4.203	.470
	Female	50	15.21	3.260	.364

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This table represents the descriptive statistics of different variables categorized by gender. The variables include Perceived Stress, Psychological Well-being, and various subscales such as Autonomy, Environmental Master, Personal Growth, Positive Relation with Others, Purpose in Life, and Self-Acceptance. The table showcases the mean, standard deviation, and standard error mean for each variable within different gender groups (Male and Female).

Table C: Means, SDs and t-ratio on different dimensions of psychological wellbeing and perceived stress of adolescent boys' and girls'

Variable	Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-Value	Sig. (2 tailed)
Perceived Stress	Male	20.51	4.210	-2.405	0.017
	Female	22.40	5.616		
Psychological Well-being	Male	84.04	14.555	-0.870	0.385
	Female	85.83	11.210		
Autonomy Subscale	Male	14.09	3.688	0.000	1.000
	Female	14.09	3.639		
Environmental Mastery Subscale	Male	13.68	3.703	0.191	0.849
	Female	13.58	2.859		
Personal Growth Subscale	Male	15.64	3.640	-1.677	0.095
	Female	16.61	3.713		
Positive Relation with Others Subscale	Male	12.14	3.841	-1.414	0.159
	Female	12.96	3.531		
Purpose in Life Subscale	Male	13.64	3.975	0.482	0.630
	Female	13.38	2.808		
Self-Acceptance Subscale	Male	14.86	4.203	-0.589	0.557
	Female	15.21	3.260		

Table C presents the means, standard deviations, t-ratios, and significance levels for various dimensions of psychological well-being (autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relation with others, purpose in life, self-acceptance) and perceived stress among adolescent girls (N=50) and boys (N=50). The analysis revealed no discernible gender differences across the different subscales of psychological well-being and perceived stress.

There were no statistically significant differences observed between boys and girls across the various subscales: Perceived Stress ($t = -2.210$), Psychological Well-being ($t = -2.148$), Autonomy subscale ($t = -0.619$), Environmental mastery ($t = -0.320$), Personal growth subscale ($t = -2.599$), Positive relation with others ($t = -1.196$), Purpose in life subscale ($t = -0.874$), and Self-Acceptance subscale ($t = -2.216$). These findings suggest a lack of significant distinctions between the genders concerning these dimensions of psychological well-being and perceived stress among adolescents.

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Table D: Correlation between the Perceived Stress and Psychological Well-being and its subscales

Variables	Perceived Stress	Psychological Wellbeing	Autonomy Subscale	Environmental Mastery	Personal Growth	Positive Relation with others	Purpose in Life	Self-Acceptance
Perceived Stress	-	0.060	-0.120	-0.057	0.225*	0.093	0.090	-0.005
Psychological Wellbeing		-	0.472**	0.664**	0.728**	0.638**	0.458**	0.747**
Autonomy Subscale			-	0.235**	0.227*	0.064	-0.093	0.264**
Environmental Mastery Subscale				-	0.473**	0.232*	0.228*	0.371**
Personal growth subscale					-	0.264**	0.320**	0.445**
Positive Relation with Others subscale						-	0.219*	0.524**
Purpose in Life Subscale							-	0.107
Self-Acceptance Subscale								-

P<*.05; p< .01**

The table presented the correlational values between various variables, including Perceived Stress, Psychological Wellbeing, Autonomy Subscale, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth, Positive Relation with Others, Purpose in Life, and Self-Acceptance.

The correlational analysis indicated significant relationships at different levels between these variables. The correlational value between Perceived Stress and Psychological Wellbeing was $r = 0.060$, which was not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). However, there was a statistically significant moderate positive relationship ($r = 0.225$, $p < 0.05$) between Perceived Stress and Personal Growth.

For Psychological Wellbeing, strong positive correlations were observed with Autonomy Subscale ($r = 0.472$, $p < 0.01$), Environmental Mastery ($r = 0.664$, $p < 0.01$), Personal Growth ($r = 0.728$, $p < 0.01$), Positive Relation with Others ($r = 0.638$, $p < 0.01$), and Purpose in Life ($r = 0.747$, $p < 0.01$) subscales, suggesting a significant and positive relationship between Psychological Wellbeing and these dimensions.

Autonomy Subscale showed significant moderate positive correlations with Psychological Wellbeing ($r = 0.235$, $p < 0.01$), Environmental Mastery ($r = 0.227$, $p < 0.05$), and Personal Growth ($r = 0.264$, $p < 0.01$) subscales.

Environmental Mastery had significant moderate positive correlations with Psychological Wellbeing ($r = 0.473$, $p < 0.01$), Autonomy Subscale ($r = 0.232$, $p < 0.05$), and Personal Growth ($r = 0.371$, $p < 0.01$) subscales.

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Personal Growth displayed significant moderate positive correlations with Psychological Wellbeing ($r = 0.320$, $p < 0.01$) and Environmental Mastery ($r = 0.445$, $p < 0.01$) subscales. Positive Relation with Others subscale demonstrated a significant moderate positive correlation with Psychological Wellbeing ($r = 0.219$, $p < 0.05$) and Purpose in Life ($r = 0.524$, $p < 0.01$) subscales.

Purpose in Life Subscale exhibited a significant weak positive correlation with Psychological Wellbeing ($r = 0.107$, $p > 0.05$).

Self-Acceptance Subscale did not demonstrate significant correlations with any other variable within the scope of this analysis.

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The present study sought to establish the level of association between psychological well-being and levels of perceived stress among secondary school students and also probe into any existing gender differences in these two aspects.

First hypothesis, the association between the psychological well-being of secondary school students and the levels of perceived stress is negligible. The obtained results, as highlighted by the correlational analysis in Table D, are not in complete agreement with this hypothesis. Whereas this overall relationship between perceived stress and psychological well-being was generally low and statistically insignificant, there were some notable exceptions. Contrary to hypothesis, a moderate positive relationship appeared between perceived stress and the Personal Growth subscale; this finding is contrary to hypothesis, as no significant relationship was expected.

These observations are supported by a series of studies that corroborate this intricate relationship of stress perception and facets of psychological well-being. For instance, the works of Dyrbye et al. (2010), Al-Ghafri et al. (2018), and Kelly and Achter (2021) also noticed such nuanced associations between stress and psychological well-being, highlighting how complex these variables were.

The second hypothesis was to study the level of psychological well-being and perceived stress levels among boys and girls in secondary school by taking the assumption that there would be no significant differences between the two. The empirical analysis, as indicated in Table C, agreed with this hypothesis. The investigation did not identify any statistically significant differences between boys and girls across different dimensions of psychological wellbeing and perceived stress levels. These findings are closely supported by literature on the subject. Singh and Gupta, 2017; Garg and Rastogi, 2019; Pandey and Bhogal, 2020; Das and Mohanty 2019 also reported minimal or negligible gender-related differences in perceived the level of stress and psychological well-being among adolescents.

Put differently, while the hypothesis relating to gender differences was fully supported, the hypothesis concerning an insignificant association between psychological well-being and perceived level of stress was only partially supported. A moderate positive association between perceived stress and Personal Growth does require further investigation and reflects that the relationship between the perceptions of specific aspects of stress and personal growth is complex.

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Understanding the factors that underpin the mental and emotional profiles of secondary school kids will require more study on the complicated and nuanced link between perceived stress and psychological wellness.

CONCLUSION

The current study aimed at obtaining further evidence with respect to the relationship between psychological well-being and perceived stress among secondary school students and to see if any gender differences in these characteristics existed. From an extensive analysis and correlation studies, the research shed some interesting light on these important facets of adolescent well-being.

Several limitations are realized and taken into consideration in the present study. Although representative, the sample size was limited by the particular geographical areas and school demography, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. The nature of this study is cross-sectional, hence inhibiting any establishment of cause-and-effect relationships between the variables. Future research studies, no doubt, will be better off with designs that enable them to follow subjects over time and establish causality.

Further research using other variables may provide more significant insight into this area. Other variables include: cultural influences, familial dynamics, coping mechanisms, and specific stressors impact on facets of well-being. It is the incorporation of these variables that gives a far more informed look into the puzzling adolescent psychological health.

In addition, this kind of research should be replicated on a larger sample that can represent more diverse populations with different socio-economic backgrounds, different educational systems, and also different cultural contexts to better understand how perceived stress interplays with psychological well-being among adolescents.

In the final analysis, though this study reveals the relationship between perceived stress and psychological well-being in secondary school students, the hope is that future studies should help mitigate the identified limitations and further examine the variables not considered, for a more substantial grasp of adolescent mental health. This study can therefore be regarded as a stepping stone toward further investigation in developing a comprehensive approach to promoting adolescents' psychological well-being.

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Conflict of Interest

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