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Research Paper

An Assessment of Positive Mental Health Among Male and Female B.A.M.S. Students

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ABSTRACT

Positive mental health is a vital component of overall well-being and academic success, particularly among students pursuing professional healthcare education. Bachelor of Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery (BAMS) students are exposed to unique academic, clinical and psychosocial demands that may influence their mental health status. The present study aims to assess the positive mental health among male and female BAMS students. The study sample comprised 164 BAMS students, 58 of male and 106 of females selected through purposive sampling. The Positive mental health inventory (PMHI) developed by Dr. C.D. Agashe and Dr. R.D. Helode consisting of three Components self-acceptance, ego-strength and philosophies of life was used for the study. The tool consists of 36 items. The mean score of male students on positive mental health is 18.52 with a standard deviation of 4.126, whereas the female students obtained a mean score of 17.19 with a standard deviation of 4.036. The results indicate that male students scored slightly higher on positive mental health compared to female students. The results highlight the importance of fostering positive mental health through supportive academic environments, stress management strategies and mental health promotion programs within Ayurvedic educational institutions.

Keywords: *Positive mental health, BAMS students, well-being, Ayurvedic education, Positive Mental Health Scale, gender*

In contemporary society, individuals face increasing psychological, social, and economic challenges that significantly affect overall well-being. Traditionally, mental health has been understood primarily in terms of the presence or absence of mental illness. However, this illness-centered perspective has been increasingly challenged by scholars who argue that mental health also involves positive psychological functioning and well-being. As a result, the concept of Positive Mental Health has gained prominence in psychological research and mental health practice.

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Positive mental health refers to a state in which individuals are able to realize their abilities, cope effectively with the normal stresses of life, work productively, and contribute meaningfully to their communities (World Health Organization [WHO], 2004). This perspective emphasizes a holistic understanding of mental health that extends beyond the reduction of symptoms to include optimal functioning and quality of life.

According to Keyes (2002), positive mental health consists of three core components: emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Emotional well-being involves positive emotions and life satisfaction; psychological well-being includes autonomy, personal growth, and a sense of purpose; and social well-being reflects effective social functioning and a sense of belonging within society. Individuals who exhibit high levels of positive mental health are more likely to demonstrate resilience, effective coping strategies, and sustained life satisfaction, even in the presence of adversity.

The development of the Positive Psychology movement has played a crucial role in advancing the study of positive mental health by shifting attention toward human strengths, virtues, and factors that enable individuals and communities to thrive (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Empirical evidence suggests that positive mental health is associated with improved physical health, enhanced academic and occupational performance, and a reduced risk of developing mental disorders (Keyes, 2005).

Given these findings, the promotion of positive mental health has become a central focus of mental health interventions, prevention strategies, and public health initiatives. By adopting a well-being-oriented approach rather than an exclusively pathology-based model, mental health professionals and policymakers can design more effective strategies to enhance overall quality of life. Therefore, the present study aims to examine the concept of positive mental health, its importance for individual and societal well-being.

Bachelor of Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery (BAMS) students form a unique academic group undergoing rigorous training in both classical Ayurvedic sciences and modern medical subjects. The curriculum demands mastery over ancient Sanskrit texts, theoretical concepts, clinical skills, and contemporary biomedical knowledge. This dual-system education makes BAMS academically intensive and intellectually demanding.

Academic and Clinical Stressors

BAMS students experience significant academic stress due to a vast syllabus, frequent examinations, and the need to memorize complex Ayurvedic terminologies along with modern medical concepts. Subjects such as Padartha Vigyan, Samhita, Sharir Rachana, Dravyaguna, and Roga Nidana require deep conceptual understanding, often leading to mental fatigue. Additionally, clinical postings and internships expose students to patient care responsibilities at an early stage, increasing performance pressure and emotional stress.

Objectives of the Study:

To evaluate the gender differences in Positive mental health of BAMS students.

Hypotheses:

There will be significant gender differences in Positive Mental Health among BAMS students.

Variables

- Independent variable – Positive Mental Health
- Dependent variable – BAMS students
- Demographic variable – Gender

Tools:

- **Demographic Data Collection Tool**: Demographic data consisting primary information of BAMS Students (Name, age, class, Gender)
- **Positive Mental health inventory**: The Positive mental health inventory (PMHI) developed by Dr.C.D. Agashe and Dr.R.D. Helode. This scale consists of 36 items with three components self-acceptance, ego strength and philosophies of life. It has reliability of 0.723 and the established validity is -0.427.

Sample:

The study sample comprised 164 BAMS students, 58 of male and 106 of females selected through purposive sampling from Muniyal institute of Ayurveda Medical Sciences, Manipal.

Inclusion Criteria

- BAMS students aged between 18 to 25 years.
- Individuals proficient in reading and comprehending English.
- Willing participants who provide informed consent.

Data Collection Procedure

Participants were provided with a briefing regarding the study's objectives, followed by the acquisition of informed consent. The Positive mental health inventory (PMHI) developed by Dr. C.D. Agashe and Dr. R.D. Helode was administered according to the instructions specified in the manual. Completed questionnaires underwent verification for scoring readiness. Raw scores were computed in accordance with the prescribed scoring methodology. Scores were subsequently interpreted using the z-score norms delineated in the manual.

Research Design

A descriptive survey research design was adopted to investigate Positive mental health.

Statistical Analysis

The Independent Sample t-test was employed to compare the mean scores of positive mental health between the selected groups. It involves the application of descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequencies) as well as inferential statistics (t-test).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table: 1 Gender Difference in Positive Mental Health among BAMS Students

	Group	***A total Scores on* Positive Mental Health**				
		N	*Mean*	SD	t	p
***A total Scores on* Positive Mental Health**	Male Students	58	18.52	4.126	2.00	.04
	Female Students	106	17.19	4.036		
	Total	164				

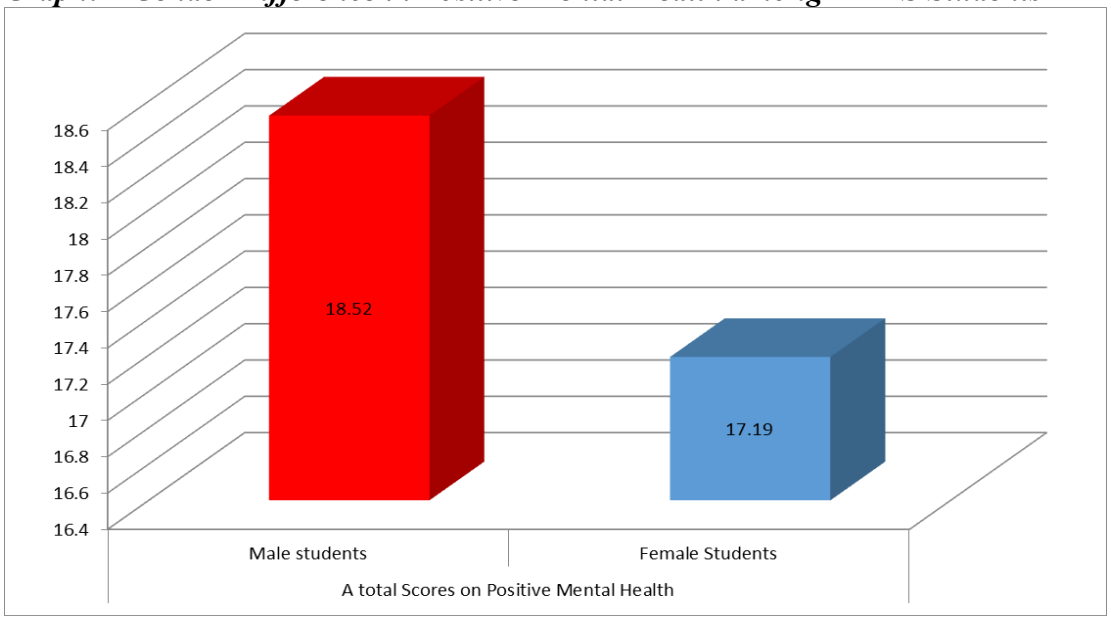
Table shows the results of the Independent Sample *t*-test conducted to examine the gender difference in Positive Mental Health among BAMS students of Muniyal Institute of Ayurveda Medical Sciences, Manipal. The comparison was made between male students (N = 58) and female students (N = 106) based on their total scores on positive mental health.

The mean score of male students on positive mental health is 18.52 with a standard deviation of 4.126, whereas the female students obtained a mean score of 17.19 with a standard deviation of 4.036. The results indicate that male students scored slightly higher on positive mental health compared to female students.

The obtained *t* value is 2.00, and the corresponding *p* value is 0.04, which is significant at the 0.05 level of significance. This finding suggests that there is a statistically significant difference in positive mental health between male and female BAMS students.

The significant difference may be attributed to various psychosocial and academic factors. Male students may perceive academic stress differently or may exhibit greater emotional resilience, coping strategies, or social support in the given educational environment. On the other hand, female students may experience higher academic pressure, emotional sensitivity, or role-related stress, which could influence their level of positive mental health.

Graph: 1 Gender Difference in Positive Mental Health among BAMS Students



Graph depicting the gender difference in positive mental health among BAMS students, visually supports the statistical findings presented in Table. The graph clearly shows higher mean scores for male students compared to female students, thereby reinforcing the presence of a significant gender difference.

In conclusion, the results of Table and Graph indicate that gender plays a significant role in determining positive mental health among BAMS students, with male students demonstrating relatively higher levels of positive mental health than female students. This finding highlights the importance of developing gender-sensitive mental health interventions and support systems within medical institutions to enhance the psychological well-being of all students.

Gender Differences:

The Independent Sample *t*-test (Table 2) showed a significant gender difference in positive mental health ($t = 2.00$, $p = 0.04$). Male students (Mean = 18.52) scored higher than female students (Mean = 17.19). This suggests that male students tend to have relatively better positive mental health compared to female students, highlighting the importance of gender-sensitive mental health support programs.

Table shows a significant difference between male and female students ($t = 2.00$, $p = 0.04$). Male students scored higher on positive mental health than female students. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not supported.

The significant gender difference observed in the present study is supported by earlier research. Studies by Nolen-Hoeksema (2001) and Barker et al. (2016) reported that female students often experience higher emotional distress, anxiety, and stress, which negatively affects positive mental health. Indian studies Kumar & Bhukar (2013) also found lower psychological well-being among female medical students compared to males.

The findings may be explained by factors such as:

- Higher emotional sensitivity and self-critical tendencies among female student
- Greater academic and social role expectations
- Gender-specific stressors and coping styles

However, contradictory evidence exists. Studies by Ryff and Singer (2008) and Jose & Brown (2008) reported higher psychological well-being among females due to stronger interpersonal relationships and emotional expressiveness. The difference between such findings and the present study could be due to cultural context, professional stress, and academic demands specific to medical education.

These results align with a substantial body of research emphasizing the vulnerability of medical students to psychological distress and reduced well-being. The study underscores the urgent need for systematic mental health promotion, counselling services, and stress-management interventions within Ayurvedic medical institutions.

CONCLUSIONS

The present study was undertaken to assess the gender difference of Positive Mental Health among BAMS students. the following conclusions have been drawn:

- A significant gender difference was observed in positive mental health among BAMS students. Male students reported higher positive mental health compared to female students. This suggests that gender-related psychosocial factors and coping patterns may influence mental health outcomes in professional courses.
- The overall findings suggest that positive mental health among BAMS students are influenced by both personal and academic variables, emphasizing the need for targeted psychological interventions. The study underscores the importance of implementing mental health promotion programs, counseling services, stress management training, and wellness initiatives within Ayurvedic medical institutions to enhance students' psychological well-being and academic effectiveness.
- In conclusion, the present investigation highlights the urgent need to prioritize positive mental health as an integral component of medical education, ensuring the holistic development of future Ayurvedic healthcare professionals.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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