

## Relationship of Interpersonal Solidarity and Student Engagement with Psychological Well-being

Shahina H.<sup>1\*</sup>, Christina Mariam Chacko<sup>2</sup>, Seena M. Mathai<sup>3</sup>

### ABSTRACT

An average adolescent in Kerala is expected to concentrate on his or her academics. All other aspects like spiritual, psychological and social development are given scant attention. As the young person completes education, world demands competencies that are not taught in schools and the critical time of acquisition of these core competencies are long past. Interpersonal Solidarity is one among them. The present study intends to examine the relationship between Interpersonal Solidarity, student engagement and wellbeing among adolescents. A sample of 120 college students between the age 18 to 23 was selected from in and around Ernakulam District. Student Engagement Inventory by Christenson et al. (2006), Interpersonal Solidarity Scale by Wheelless (1978) and Scale for Psychological Wellbeing by Ryff (1995) were chosen to collect the quantitative data. The results indicate that Cognitive Engagement is found to have a significant relationship with solidarity and wellbeing, Interpersonal solidarity is found to have a significant relationship with Psychological engagement, Future Aspirations and Goals and well-being. The results imply that better interpersonal solidarity with teachers, elders, family members, peer members- through open talks, tutorials etc help the individual to gain greater openness as well as help the individual to channelize their energy in their goal direction rather than becoming confused and orienting to negative channels. This will help them to realize the value of the education they receive and also helps to be in love with it which in turn contribute to their wellbeing. Limited sample size and small geographical area of study are the major limitations of this study.

**Keywords:** *Solidarity, Student engagement, Psychological wellbeing*

Higher education is an important period in every students' life. It is during this period that an individual is supposed to work intensively towards achieving the major goals of one's life including further academics, career, family and so on. Despite all these, this period marks the beginning of a relatively independent functioning in an individual's life, for which an

<sup>1</sup> Research Scholar, U.C College, Aluva, Kerala, India

<sup>2</sup> Research Scholar, U.C College, Aluva, Kerala, India

<sup>3</sup> Asst. Professor, U.C College, Aluva, Kerala, India

\*Responding Author

Received: May 30, 2017; Revision Received: June 16, 2017; Accepted: June 30, 2017

## Relationship of Interpersonal Solidarity and Student Engagement with Psychological Well-being

individual must be sufficiently equipped with the necessary competencies like confidence, self-efficacy, tolerance, resilience; and above all 'psychological well-being'. These are even important in successfully dealing with concerns of one's academic life also. Conversely, academic excellence often boosts these competencies often boosts these competencies. So, factors like psychological well-being, resilience, tolerance etc. has a life-long value. It is in this context that investigations of factors related to the development of the aforementioned competencies become important.

Psychological Well Being includes unique dimensions like self-acceptance, personal growth, purpose in life, positive relations with others, environmental mastery and autonomy (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Keyes, Shmotkin, & Ryff, 2002). According to several researchers (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Seligman, 2002, 2011), psychological well-being encompasses the proactive and intentional components of one's life including autonomy, self-acceptance, mastery, and personality features like curiosity, integrity, spirituality and forgiveness. Psychological well-being has significant positive correlation with life satisfaction (Rathore, Kumar & Gautam, 2015). Lyubomirsky, Sheldon and Schkade (2005) identified positive cognitive, behavioral and goal-based activities as some of the major factors contributing to well-being (as cited in Padhi, Chelli & Padiri, 2015). The self-determination theory by Ryan and Deci (2000) suggests that well-being is better experienced when people are intrinsically motivated and choose to work for realistic goals.

Student engagement is a part of 'educationally purposive activities'. It is correlated to positive outcomes of student success and development like satisfaction, persistence, academic achievement and social engagement (Astin, 1984, 1993; Berger & Milem, 1999; Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Goodsell, Maher & Tinto, 1992; Kuh, 1995; Kuh *et al.*, 2005; Kuh & Vesper, 1997; Pace, 1995; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005). Coates (2007) defined student engagement as "a broad construct intended to encompass salient academic as well as certain non-academic aspects of the student experience", which includes: active and collaborative learning, participation in challenging academic activities, formative communication with academic staff, involvement in enriching educational experiences and feeling legitimated and supported by university learning communities. Student Engagement is a meta-construct that includes behavioral, emotional and cognitive engagement (Fredricks *et al.*, 2004). Behavioral Engagement draws on the idea of participation and includes involvement in academic, social or extracurricular activities and is considered crucial for achieving positive academic outcomes and preventing dropping out (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Finn, 1989). Emotional (Psychological) Engagement includes students' emotional reactions and connections to teachers, peers and the school (Fredricks *et al.*, 2004). Positive emotional engagement is presumed to create student ties to the institution and influence their willingness to do their work (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Finn, 1999). A study by Connell and Wellborn (1991) shows that positive emotional, cognitive and behavioral engagement results from students' feelings of being accepted by the teacher. Parental involvement was found to have a positive role in students' academic engagement (Mansour & Martin, 2009).

## **Relationship of Interpersonal Solidarity and Student Engagement with Psychological Well-being**

Several studies show that positive student outcomes are related to interpersonal solidarity (Andersen, 1979; Stewart & Wheelless, 1987). Interpersonal solidarity is a feeling of closeness between people that develops as a result of shared sentiments, similarities, and intimate behaviors (Wheelless, 1976). Conceptually, people with strong solidarity feelings should also trust, like, and self-disclose to one another. Wheelless (1976) also identified five types of relations that contribute to solidarity: “relations involving similarities in personal characteristics such as age, attitudes, and occupation; relations involving closeness in physical space and social space (status); relations involving pleasant sentiments such as liking, loving, attraction, sympathy, and trust; relations involving behaviors such as cooperation, frequent interaction, confiding in one another, and beneficent actions; and relations involving symbolic expressions of similarity, proximity, or intimacy” (as cited in Kay, 1995). Student’s perception of care from teachers account for learning more (Teven & McCroskey, 1997). Kontos & Wilcox- Herzog (1997) found that adaptive relationship with teachers are linked to better social, cognitive and language development in young children. Several studies show that adolescents having positive interactions with peers have better motivation (Furrer & Skinner, 2003), and also show greater engagement and better academic performance (Liem & Martin, 2011). So, as far as a student’s life is concerned positive interpersonal relationships with parents teachers and peers are crucial in facilitating adaptive social, emotional and intellectual functioning and also in nurturing self-esteem and self-worth (Martin & Dowson, 2009). All these findings impart the basis for the hypothesis that interpersonal solidarity, student engagement and psychological well-being are meaningfully related.

### ***Need and Significance***

An average adolescent in Kerala is expected to concentrate on his or her academics. All other aspects like spiritual, psychological and social development are given scant attention. For a better career, improved social status, marital prospects and for future happiness; it is necessary to enhance one’s psychological wellbeing which cannot be merely attained through academic excellence although it plays a role in it. There are many mediating factors which contribute to psychological wellbeing where interpersonal solidarity and student engagement are the two major factors. However, interpersonal solidarity is an integral part in enhancing wellbeing which thereby presumably brings satisfaction and excellence in all aspects of life.

### ***Aim***

- To study the relationship, if any, between interpersonal solidarity, student engagement and psychological wellbeing.

## **METHOD**

The sample consisted of 120 college students between the ages 18 to 23 from in and around Ernakulam District. Student Engagement Inventory (SEI) (Appleton, Christenson, Kim, & Reschly, 2006). Good Internal consistency reliability of 0.72-0.92, test-retest and inter-rater reliability of 0.60-0.62. Test also has good construct validity. Interpersonal Solidarity Scale (ISS) (Wheelless, 1978). Split-half reliabilities of .96 and .94. There is sufficient concurrent

## Relationship of Interpersonal Solidarity and Student Engagement with Psychological Well-being

and criterion-related validity. Scale for Psychological Wellbeing (SPWB) (Ryff, 1995). Test-retest reliability of 0.81-0.88. Internal consistency reliability of 0.86-0.93. Analysis was done using SPSS version 16. The tests used for analysis were 't-test' and 'correlation'.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Through the present study investigators have attempted to study the relationship of Interpersonal Solidarity and Student Engagement with Psychological Wellbeing. The obtained data was analyzed using t-test' and 'correlation'. The obtained results were discussed below.

**Table 1: Mean scores, standard deviations and 't' values for interpersonal solidarity, cognitive engagement and psychological engagement among males and females.**

Variables	Groups		t value
	Males(N=23) Mean ± SD	Females(N=97) Mean ± SD	
Interpersonal Solidarity	107.30 ± 14.537	115.84 ± 11.855	2.96**
Cognitive Engagement	6.33 ± 0.87	6.70 ± 0.66	2.31*
Psychological Engagement	9.34 ± 1.15	9.87 ± 0.74	2.75**

\* Significance at 5% level \*\* significance at 1% level

Based on the results in Table 1, Interpersonal solidarity, Psychological engagement and Cognitive engagement were found to be greater among females were the former 2 variables are significant at 1% level and the latter one significant at 5% level. This is consistent with the findings (Reeve & Jang, 2006; Iudtke et.al,2009; Mainhard, Brekelmans, DenBroke & Wubbels, 2011) indicating that perceived high quality student –teacher relationship are effective as they are characterized by high in attunement and supportiveness and thereby contributing to autonomous motivation and self-regulation efforts of students. Social interactions teach students about themselves and about what is needed to fit in with a particular group. Culturally, in Indian context as female students are more pressured to focus on their academics, they do so and thereby receives greater acceptance from teachers which is linked to emotional, behavioral and cognitive engagement (Connell & Wellborn, 1991).

Spearman correlation coefficient was used to find the correlation of interpersonal solidarity with cognitive engagement, future aspirations and goals, psychological engagement and total psychological wellbeing.

**Table 2: Correlation of interpersonal solidarity with cognitive engagement, future aspirations and goals, psychological engagement and total psychological wellbeing.**

	Cognitive Engagement	Future Aspirations and Goals	Psychological Engagement	Total Psychological Wellbeing
Interpersonal Solidarity	0.350**	0.316**	0.229*	0.181*

\* significance at 5% level \*\* significance at 1% level

## Relationship of Interpersonal Solidarity and Student Engagement with Psychological Well-being

The results given in table indicate that there is significant positive correlation between Interpersonal Solidarity and other 4 variables. But the values are considerably low. Positive interpersonal relationships act as a buffer against stress, helps the individual to boost their self-worth and self-esteem and contributes greatly to emotional and social development. This positively impact students' motivation, engagement and achievement by way of its positive influences on other self- processes relevant to academic outcomes (Connell & Wellborn, 1991;; Argyle, 1999; De Leon,2000; Martin & Dowson, 2009; Martin,2013).

**Table 3: Correlation of cognitive engagement with future aspirations and goals, psychological engagement and total psychological wellbeing.**

	<b>Future Aspirations and Goals</b>	<b>Psychological Engagement</b>	<b>Total Psychological Wellbeing</b>
Cognitive Engagement	0.807 **	0.575 **	0.245**

\*\* Significance at 1% level

Table 3 signifies that cognitive engagement has a positive correlation with future aspirations and goals, psychological engagement and total psychological well-being. This result is consistent with the findings of Greene & Miller, 1996; Greene, Miller, Crowson, Duke & Akey, 2004; Pokay & Bluemenfeld, 1990 indicating that there is a robust relationship between cognitive engagement and personal goal orientation and investment in learning which in turn has been associated with academic achievement. Similarly, psychological engagement has been associated with adaptive school behaviors, including task persistence, participation and attendance (Goodenow, 1993a, cited in Appleton, 2006). Cognitive and psychological engagement includes less observable, more internal indicators, such as self-regulation, relevance of class works to future endeavors, value of learning and personal goals and autonomy (for cognitive engagement) and feelings of identification or belonging and relationships with teachers and peers (for psychological engagement) (Appleton, 2006). Better interpersonal relationship and mentoring aid in Psychological wellbeing.

**Table 4 :Correlation of future aspirations and goals with psychological engagement and total psychological wellbeing.**

	<b>Psychological Engagement</b>	<b>Total Psychological Wellbeing</b>
Future Aspirations and Goals	0.425**	0.227 *

\*Denotes significance at 5% level

\*\*Denotes significance at 1% level

Based on the results in Table 4, Future aspiration and goals have positive correlation with Psychological engagement (significant at 1% level) and Total Psychological Wellbeing (significant at 5% level). Result indicates that vision about future and proper goal setting enables the individual to work with commitment and perseverance and helps them to learn from mistakes instead of giving up and energize them to design and make better strategies. This in turn contributes to their self-esteem, feeling of mastery and subjective wellbeing (Myers, 1992, Kesebir and Diener, 2008).

## CONCLUSIONS

Through the present study investigators have attempted to study the relationship of Interpersonal Solidarity and Student Engagement with Psychological Wellbeing. The obtained data was analyzed using t-test' and 'correlation. The results indicate that Cognitive Engagement is found to have a significant relationship with solidarity and wellbeing, interpersonal solidarity is found to have a significant relationship with Psychological Engagement. Inter-personal solidarity is found to have a significant relationship with Future Aspirations and Goals and well-being. The results imply that better interpersonal solidarity lead to cognitive and psychological engagement with academic activities. Better interpersonal solidarity lead to better Future aspirations, goals and well-being. Hence efforts must be made at a very early age to enhance interpersonal skills for better well-being and academic engagement.

### *Implications*

Better interpersonal solidarity lead to cognitive and psychological engagement with academic activities and better Future aspirations, goals and well-being. Hence efforts must be made at a very early age to enhance interpersonal skills for better well-being and academic engagement.

### *Limitations*

The study was conducted only in a limited sample size and it was confined to Ernakulam district in kerala alone.

### *Acknowledgments*

The author appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

*Conflict of Interests:* The author declared no conflict of interests.

## REFERENCES

- Appleton, J. J., Christenson, S. L., Kim, D., & Reschly , A. L. (2006). Measuring cognitive and psychological engagement : Validation of the Student Engagement Instrument. *Journal of School Psychology*, Vol. 44, pp 427-445.
- Connell, J. P., & Wellborn, J. G. (1991). Competence, Autonomy and Relatedness: A Motivational Analysis of Self-system Processes. In M. R. Gunnar & L. A. Sroufe (Eds.), *Self processes in Development :Minnesota Symposium on Child Psychology .* Vol.29. Pp 244-254. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc.
- Furrer, C., & Skinner, E. (2003).Sense of Relatedness as a factor in Children's Academic Engagement and Performance. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, Vol.95, Iss.1, Pp.148-162.  
<https://www2.le.ac.uk/...and.../Sense%20of%20Belonging%20Lit%20Review.docx>
- Kesebir, P. & Diener, E. (2008). "In pursuit of happiness: Empirical answers to philosophical questions", *Perspectives on Psychological Science*. Vol. 3, Pp.117-125.
- Kontos, S., & Wilcox-Herzog, A. (1997). Teachers' Interactions with Children: Why are they so important? Research in Review. *Young Children*, Vol.52, Iss.2, Pp.4-12. From

## Relationship of Interpersonal Solidarity and Student Engagement with Psychological Well-being

- [https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/.../king\\_and\\_marietta\\_interpersonal\\_relationships.pdf](https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/.../king_and_marietta_interpersonal_relationships.pdf) (Dec.10, 2016.)
- Liem, G. A., & Martin, A. J. (2011). Peer relationships and Adolescents' Academic and Non-academic Outcomes: Same sex and opposite sex peer effects and the mediating role of school engagement. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 81(2), 183-206. from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21542814>. ( Dec.10, 2016.)
- Mansour, M., & Martin, A. J. (2009). Home, Parents and Achievement Motivation: A study of key home and parental factors that predict student motivation and engagement. *Australian Educational and Developmental Psychologist*, 26(2), 111-126. From <https://www.researchgate.net/...Martin35/...home.../587e9d9e08ae9a860ff53f46.pdf?>. (Oct. 23, 2016)
- Martin, A. J., & Dowson, M. (2009). Interpersonal Relationships, Motivation, Engagement and Achievement: Yields for Theory, Current Issues and Practice. *Review of Educational Research*, 79(1), 327-365. From <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.3102/0034654308325583>. (Oct. 23, 2016)
- Martin, A. (2014). Interpersonal relationships and Students' Academic and Non-academic Development: What Outcomes Peers, Parents and Teachers Do and Do Not Impact. In D. Zandvliet et al (Eds.), *Interpersonal relationships in Education: From Theory to Practice* (pp 9-21). Netherlands: Sense publishers.
- Padhy, M., Chelli, K., & Padiri, R. A. (2015). Optimism and Psychological Well-Being of Police Officers with different work experiences. *Sage Open*, <https://www.journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/2158244015580852> (Oct. 23, 2016)
- Rathore, S., Kumar, A., & Gautam, A. (2015). Life Satisfaction and Life Orientation as predictors of Psychological Well Being. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, Vol.3, Iss.1, DIP: C03112V3I12015, Pp.20-27.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination Theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development and well-being. *American Psychologist*, Vol.55, Iss.1, Pp. 68-78. From [https://selfdeterminationtheory.org/SDT/documents/2000\\_RyanDeci\\_SDT.pdf](https://selfdeterminationtheory.org/SDT/documents/2000_RyanDeci_SDT.pdf). (Oct. 23, 2016)
- Teven, J. J., & Mc Croskey, J. C. (1997). The Relationship of Perceived Teacher Caring with Student Learning and Teacher Evaluation. *Communication Education*, Vol.46, Iss.1. From [www.jamesmccroskey.com/publications/167.pdf](http://www.jamesmccroskey.com/publications/167.pdf). (Oct. 23, 2016)
- Trowler, V. (2010). Student Engagement Literature Review. Heslington: The Higher Education Academy. From [https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/studentengagementliteraturereview\\_1.pdf](https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/studentengagementliteraturereview_1.pdf) (Oct. 23, 2016).
- Zandvliet, D., Brok, P. D., Mainhard, T., & Tartwijk, J. V. (Eds.). (2014). *Interpersonal Relationships in Education: From Theory to Practice*. Boston: Sense Publishers, pp 231–259. From <https://www.sensepublishers.com/.../1995-interpersonal-relationships-in-education-5.p...> (Oct. 23, 2016)

**How to cite this article:** Shajina H, Chacko C M, Mathai S M (2017), Relationship of Interpersonal Solidarity and Student Engagement with Psychological Well-being, *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, Volume 4, (3), DIP:18.01.135/20170403, DOI:10.25215/0403.135