

Personal Strivings as Markers of Adolescents' Quality of Life: a Gender Based Study

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ABSTRACT

Adolescence is a very complex and crucial phase of life, where teenagers are caught up in their own web of personal strivings, such as the issues of being, belonging and becoming. Such strivings play a pivotal role in determining their quality of life. Further whether these intrinsic motives (i.e. 3Bs being, belonging and becoming) are being influenced by gender stereotypes is a big issue for the psychologists to explore. Thus the current study is an attempt to explore and compare the levels of being, belonging and becoming (comprising of overall QOL) among male and female adolescents. A purposive sample of 98 adolescents aged 16-18 years, both male (n=44) and female (n=54) was drawn from the colleges of Rewari and Gurgaon districts of Haryana. For measuring personal strivings, Quality Of Life Profile for Adolescent Version Questionnaire (Raphael, Rukholm, Brown, Hill-Bailey & Donato, 1996) was used. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to assess the levels of being, belonging and becoming and overall quality of life and gender comparison was done on these variables. Results indicated adequate level of personal strivings leading to overall good quality of life among adolescents (total as well as in both male and female separately). Both males and females have similar levels of quality of life. However, females superseded males in spiritual being and community belonging.

Keywords: *Personal Strivings - Being, Belonging and Becoming and Quality of Life.*

Growth and overall development of any society is judged by the quality of life lead by its young population. The term quality of life has been defined differently by different disciplines. As sociologists defined it as an understanding of wellbeing which is further linked to need of being with other. While economists considered it as a standard of living and in medical science it is synonym of health. WHO (1947) defined QOL as a “state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity”. Thus a good life is

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assessed by both extrinsic as well as intrinsic motivations. Extrinsic motivators are materialistic assets such as economic source, family and physical environment that have strong influence on QOL (Eiser, 1997; Andrews and Withey, 1976; Campbell, Converse & Rogers, 1976; Helgeson, 2002; Lubetkin, Jia, Franks, & Gold, 2005; Sullivan, Karlsson, & Ware, 1995; Djibuti, & Shakarishvili, 2003; Helliwell, Layard, & Sachs, 2015).

On the contrary, intrinsic factors include one's mental as well as emotional state again making strong impact on QOL (Kempen, Brilman, Ranchor & Ormel, 1999; Brostrom, Stromberg, Dahlstrom & Fridlund, 2004; Dysvik, Lindstrom, Eikeland & Natvig, 2004; Demirli, Turmen & Arik, 2015). On their journey of life, adolescents struggle hard for the fulfillment of their personal strivings. They are conscious about their being (i.e. (i) physical being which includes physical health, sexuality, personal hygiene, nutrition, exercise, clothing and general appearance etc. (ii) psychological being viz psychological health, cognitions, feelings, self concept and self esteem etc. (iii) spiritual being such as focus on personal values, standards of conduct and spiritual beliefs etc.).

Adolescents think about their physical belonging in terms of home, neighborhood, school and community and have constant connection with social environment which includes family, friends, neighborhood and community. They also have a sense of community belongingness, where they have access to public resources such as adequate income, health, social services, education and recreational programs. Moreover adolescents are involved in the process of practical becoming (i.e. involvement in domestic activities at school, and volunteer activities etc.). Another important striving of their life is the process of leisure becoming, where the focus is to attain enjoyment, involve in activities which combat stress and lead to relaxation. Last critical aspect is growth becoming as they try to maintain and improve their skills and knowledge and adept themselves to change. During this stage of life they become fully functioning person, capable of realizing their full potential which leads them to a stage of self realization and self actualization.

There are so many factors which affect one's process of being, belonging and becoming. Gender appears to be one such factor which plays a primary role in determining adolescents' quality of life. We are living in a gender stereotype society where the process of socialization nurtures the feelings that males enjoying better QOL than females, because ours is a male dominating society. There are plethora of empirical evidences to support this assertion (Sanders, Michael, Tsevat, Wilmott, Mrus & Britto, 2006; Bonsaksen, 2012; Chraif & Dumitru, 2015). It may be attributed to better health facilities and job opportunities etc. provided to the males.

In the last few decades, societal norms are changing at a rapid speed. Now a days, females are superseding males in many spheres of life, such as education, sports and at par in jobs etc. Their entry in corporate world has empowered them not only economically but also enhanced their

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confidence level which no doubt has resulted in their changed Quality of Life. In this way, present study focused upon the following objectives.

Objectives:

1. To highlight the level of personal strivings as well as overall quality of life of adolescents.
2. To examine the gender differences in being, belonging and becoming as markers of quality of life of adolescents.
3. To explore the gender differences in overall quality of life of adolescents.

METHODOLOGY

Sample:

A purposive sample of 98 adolescents consisting of both males (n=44) and females (n=54), was drawn from the colleges of Rewari and Gurgaon districts of Haryana. The respondents were aged between 18-20 years and belonging to both rural and urban area.

Tool:

Quality Of Life Profile Adolescent Version Questionnaire (Raphael, Rukholm, Brown, Hill-Bailey & Donato, 1996).

This scale consists of 3 major domains, i.e., Being, Belonging, and Becoming. Each domain is further divided in 3 sub domains (total 9 sub domains). Each major domain has 18 items (total 54). Each item has to be assessed in 5 point scale in terms of importance and satisfaction criteria. The average scores of all domains refer to over all QOL. Overall QOL scores range from 3.33 to -3.33. A score greater than 1.50 is considered as a “ very good “QOL, a score of 0.51 to 1.50 indicates an “ acceptable situation “and scores between -.50 and .50 indicates an “ adequate situation”. Scores from -.51 to -1.50 are seen as “problematic” with scores below -1.50 being interpreted as “very problematic” (Raphael et al. 1996). Reliability scores for 3 broad domains (Being, Belonging, and Becoming) are 0.85, 0.83, 0.87 and 0.94 respectively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The main aim of the study was to explore and compare the personal strivings and overall QOL of male-female adolescents. The descriptive statistics computed on scores obtained on personal strivings such as being, belonging, becoming and overall quality of life among overall adolescents and in males and females separately, have been depicted in Table 1.

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Table 1: Mean and SD values obtained on personal strivings (such as being, belonging and becoming) and overall QOL.

Personal Strivings	Overall Adolescents (98)		Males (44)		Females (54)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1. Being (total)	1.159	0.874	1.086	0.929	1.218	0.830
1.1 Physical Being	0.975	0.980	0.983	0.948	0.967	1.014
1.2 Psychological Being	1.177	0.986	1.183	0.995	1.172	0.988
1.3 Spiritual Being	1.325	1.033	1.092	1.136	1.514	0.906
2. Belonging (total)	1.159	0.859	1.066	0.889	1.233	0.835
2.1 Physical Belonging	1.420	1.020	1.338	1.008	1.487	1.034
2.2 Social Belonging	0.912	0.949	0.928	0.922	0.899	0.978
2.3 Community Belonging	1.144	0.957	0.934	0.981	1.314	0.910
3. Becoming (total)	1.245	0.931	1.168	0.834	1.307	1.006
3.1 Practical Becoming	1.171	1.013	0.981	0.923	1.325	1.065
3.2 Leisure Becoming	1.224	1.053	1.141	0.937	1.291	1.143
3.3 Growth Becoming	1.340	1.077	1.382	0.978	1.305	1.159
Overall quality of life	1.188	0.814	1.107	0.831	1.253	0.800

The perusal of Table 1 reveals that overall adolescents have quite good sense in becoming (mean =1.245) followed by belonging (mean= 1.159) and being (mean= 1.159). Moreover they are enjoying overall good quality if life (mean= 1.188). The present findings have highlighted the fact that contemporary adolescents have adequate sense of becoming where the highest focus is on “growth becoming” (mean = 1.340) followed by “leisure becoming” (mean = 1.224) and minimum emphasis is on “practical becoming” (mean = 1.171). These findings revealed that the adolescents of today believe in work and play principle; which of course is indicative of their rapid growth in terms of acquiring new knowledge and skills. They quickly adopt themselves to change. Further, another prominent personal striving as marker of quality of life is found to be “belonging” in which physical belonging is ahead of community and social belonging. These findings indicated that though adolescents are physically well attached to their home, school, and neighborhood etc, yet they have less fostered a sense of community and social belongingness. As it has been aptly stated by T.S. Eliot, a modern English critic that “we are lonely even in a crowd”. In other words, the physical distance among people has lessened but psychological distance has widened.

Further the personal striving of “being” among overall adolescents is less emphasized in comparison to other two “ markers such as “ becoming” and “belonging”. It is surprising to note here that out of their three beings, adolescents have secured maximum mean scores in “spiritual being” (mean = 1.325) followed by psychological being (mean = 1.177) and then “physical

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being” (mean = 0.975). The current findings showed that adolescents have higher spiritual values/ beliefs and put more emphasis on personal standards of conduct. They are quite sensitized about their psychological health, having good cognitive potentials embedded with positive feelings and bothered about their self esteem etc.

However, the current data showed that adolescents are not as much bothered about their “physical being”. In other words, they are less bothered about their physical health, nutrition, exercise, clothing and general appearance etc. The low score on physical belonging (mean = 0.975) underlines the growing concerns in India on rising health problems across this age group. Degrading environment, contaminated air and water has led to more cases of endemics in recent year. Increased consumption of alcohol and drugs has also propelled health problems. (Hurt, Offord, Croghan, 1996; Harwood, 2000; Grucza, Beirut, 2007 and Pelucchi, Gallus, Garavello, 2007).

To sum up, they are enjoying overall good QOL, Figure 1 more clearly depicts the above findings.

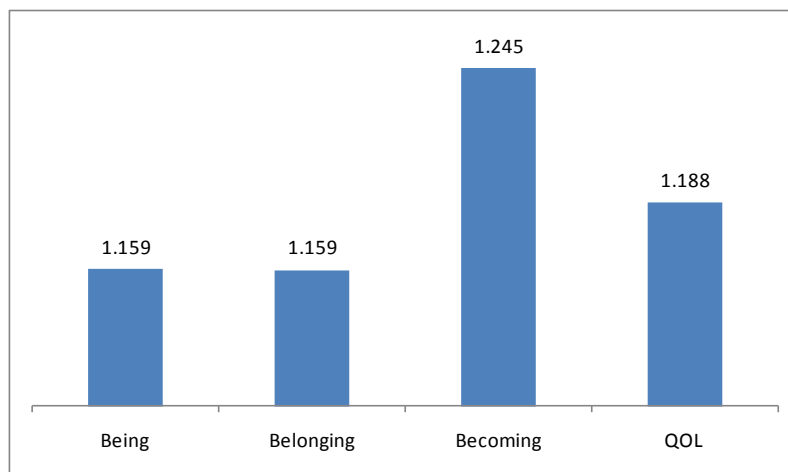


Figure 1: Mean scores on being, belonging and becoming and overall QOL among adolescents.

In order to meet the second objective of the study “To examine the gender differences in being, belonging and becoming as markers of quality of life of adolescents”, Table 1 shows that female adolescents obtained more mean scores in all the three personal strivings (i.e. being, belonging and becoming) and overall QOL than their male counterparts. This indicates that females have better sense of being, belonging and becoming and overall QOL than male adolescents. It has been more clearly visible in Figure 2.

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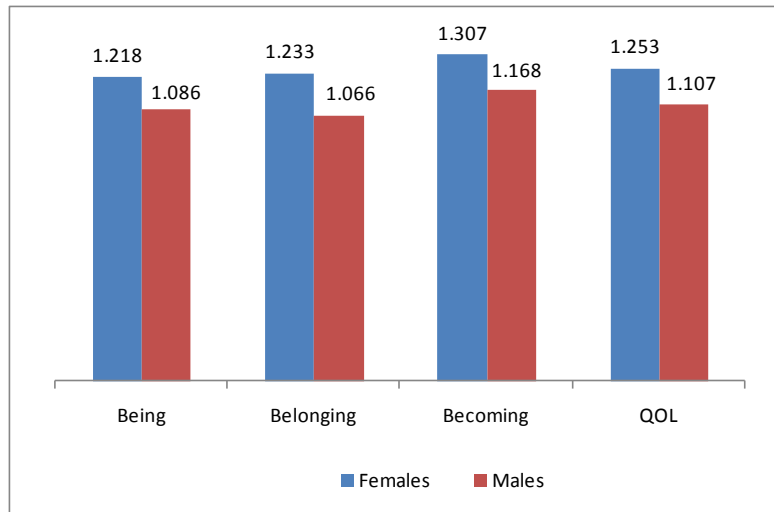


Figure 2: Mean scores on being, belonging, becoming and overall QOL among male – female adolescents.

Figure 2 clearly shows that the personal striving for becoming is followed by belonging and being in both sexes and overall QOL is quite good in both groups. However females are exceeding in all in comparison to males. In order to find out the statistical significant gender difference in three personal strivings and overall QOL, t- tests were computed and have been shown in Table 2.

Table 2: t-test to compare mean scores of males and females across various personal strivings and QOL

Personal Strivings	Males (44)		Females (54)		df	t-value
	Mean	Std. Error	Mean	Std. Error		
1. Being (total)	1.086	0.140	1.218	0.112	96	-0.739 ^{NS}
1.1 Physical Being	0.983	0.143	0.967	0.138	96	0.082 ^{NS}
1.2 Psychological Being	1.183	0.150	1.172	0.135	96	0.057 ^{NS}
1.3 Spiritual Being	1.092	0.171	1.514	0.123	96	0.955*
2. Belonging (total)	1.066	0.134	1.233	0.114	96	-0.955 ^{NS}
2.1 Physical Belonging	1.338	0.152	1.487	0.141	96	-0.716 ^{NS}
2.2 Social Belonging	0.928	0.139	0.899	0.133	96	0.149 ^{NS}
2.3 Community Belonging	0.934	0.148	1.314	0.124	96	-1.986*
3. Becoming (total)	1.168	0.126	1.307	0.137	96	-0.732 ^{NS}
3.1 Practical Becoming	0.981	0.139	1.325	0.145	96	-1.686 ^{NS}
3.2 Leisure Becoming	1.141	0.141	1.291	0.156	96	-0.696 ^{NS}
3.3 Growth Becoming	1.382	0.148	1.305	0.158	96	0.350 ^{NS}
Overall quality of life	1.107	0.125	1.253	0.109	96	-0.880 ^{NS}

*p < 0.05, NS: Not significant

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From Table 2, it is clearly evinced from insignificant values of t in all the three major strivings and overall QOL that both male and female adolescents have similar level of personal strivings and overall QOL. The current findings have clearly shown that no gender discrimination exists as far as being, belonging, becoming and overall QOL of adolescents concerned. In other words both sexes are enjoying equal level of QOL. Rather it is interesting to note here that females have better QOL as far as their “spiritual being” and “community belonging” are concerned as compared to male adolescents, as is revealed by significant values of t (0.955 and 1.986 respectively). In other words, female adolescents have more clear cut and more stringent spiritual values/ beliefs, more concerned about their conduct and stronger personal values than their male counterparts. Females have more developed sense of community than males. All these are the indicative of positive societal change where gender discrimination appears to be disappearing. The present findings are in line with those of Hammermeister, Flint, El-Alayli, Ridnour & Peterson (2005); Bryant (2007); Akhouri, Kehksha, Azmi (2016) who also found that women have higher inclination towards spiritual beliefs. This can be explained by higher inclination of females to follow footsteps of their mother and follow religious activities followed by previous generations in the family. Females have greater involvement in worships, fasting and generally have holistic approach.

To conclude it may be stated that contemporary adolescents irrespective of gender are having adequate sense of personal strivings for becoming, belonging, being and enjoying overall good QOL, which appears to be quite contrary to the prevailing common myth which focuses upon the poor QOL of adolescents. Gender did not play any significant role in determining overall QOL of adolescents. However in two domains i.e. spirituality and community females superseded males.

The current findings endorse some suggestions that there is a need to give interventions to the adolescents at schools and colleges level to boost their striving for “being” particularly with reference to their physical being. In other words their true being which actually refers to their changeless, perfect and eternal being, is based on their experience of the real world, which needs to be aware about that existence. Further there is a need to enhance spiritual being and community belongingness among male adolescents. Public health department and NGO's should be actively involved in enhancing these two strengths.

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