

FLOURISHING YOUTH: EXAMINING GENDER DIFFERENCES IN PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

Dr. Aparna Satpute¹, Dr. Juhi Deshmukh², Ms. Vaishnavi Saravanaprasad³

¹ Assistant Professor, Psychology Department, School of Humanities & Social Sciences, DES Pune University, Pune. 411004.

Email: aparna.satpute@despu.edu.in

² Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Savitribai Phule Pune University, Ganeshkhind, Pune, 411007.

Email: juhi.1609@yahoo.co.in

³ Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Psychology, School of Humanities & Social Sciences, DES Pune University, Pune. 411004.

Email: 4822511003@despu.edu.in

Abstract

The present study focused on gender variations in Flourishing among post- graduate students, studying in various non- professional degree courses. Flourishing is the new upgraded level of psychological well- being in the field of positive psychology. The sample consisted of 302 post-graduate students pursuing non- professional degree courses. The data was collected by using a standardized measure namely, the PERMA Profiler (Butler & Kern, 2015). Through appropriate statistical analysis, no significant differences were observed in overall well- being and the dimensions of 'relationships' and 'meaning'. Yet, Male students scored high on dimensions of Positive emotion ($t(300) = -2.014, p < .05$) and Accomplishment ($t(300) = -2.075, p < .05$). Whereas, female students found to be high on the dimension of Engagement ($t(300) = 2.271, p < .05$). These exploratory empirical gender differences provide useful insights into gender- based need analysis and training among flourishing youth.

Keywords: Flourishing, Psychological Well- being, Males, Females.

► Corresponding Author: Dr. Aparna Satpute

Introduction

Human beings, across cultures and times, have universally aspired to pursue what is often referred to as the "good life." With advances in technology and healthcare, we have achieved considerable gains in physiological longevity. However, merely living longer does not equate to living well. Quality of life, not just quantity, is increasingly becoming a central concern in contemporary psychological inquiry. Against this backdrop, the present study aims to explore the emerging construct of psychological well- being as 'flourishing'—a key concept in positive psychology—among post- graduate students from a gender perspective.

Seligman et al. (2009) defined positive education as an approach that integrates the teaching of traditional academic skills with the cultivation of well-being and happiness. For Seligman, the intellectual trajectory of positive psychology has evolved from a focus on happiness and life satisfaction to a broader conceptualization of well-being, culminating in the notion of flourishing. According to Keyes (2002; 2005) a fully functional mental health is considered as flourishing (flourishing) while a dysfunctional mental health is addressed as languishing (languishing). The former can be elucidated as a dynamic and optimal state of psychological functioning that encompasses multiple psychosocial dimensions. Seligman (2011) conceptualized flourishing through the PERMA model, which includes five core elements of psychological well-being:

Positive Emotion (P), Engagement (E), Relationships (R), Meaning (M), and Accomplishment (A).

In the 21st century, technological advancements—especially the proliferation of smartphones and internet usage—have dramatically transformed how individuals engage with the world. These devices, due to their portability, multifunctionality, and omnipresence, have brought convenience but also raised significant psychological concerns; especially in the youth population. In this context, the construct of psychological well-being takes on new significance. It is increasingly viewed as a protective factor against a range of psychopathological conditions, including stress, depression, anxiety, impulsivity, and behavioural addictions. For youth—particularly those born in the post-1990s digital era—the psychological landscape is uniquely shaped by internet saturation, shifting value systems, rapid social change, and media overexposure. These young individuals face complex challenges that necessitate structured support and nurturing environments.

Although a significant amount of research has investigated the idea of psychological well-being as flourishing, the possible gender differences among youth have not been thoroughly examined. The biological and psychological differences contribute to the variance observed across genders. The satisfaction with life, perceived and experienced by both the genders may also vary attributing to the interaction taking place between dispositional factors and the situational factors which can lead to different outcomes (Akhter, 2015). Gender also an important social determinant of health. According to Diener, E., & Ryan, K. (2009), studies on gender differences and psychological well-being have demonstrated a few differences among the variables, although women reported having experienced positive and negative emotions with greater frequency and intensity than men. It has also been found in different cultures that women scored lower than men in self-acceptance and autonomy (Ahrens & Ryff, 2006; Karasawa et al., 2011). In the study by Karasawa et al. (2011) the differences between women and men in autonomy only appeared in the early decades of adulthood. Among the studies conducted within India on psychological well-being, Akhter (2015) reported females to be higher on psychological well-being. According to a study by Aswini, S. and Deb, A. (2017) females demonstrated higher scores than males in meaningfulness, flourishing and grit however, males obtained better results in resilience. Given the inconclusive outcomes of earlier research, it is imperative to investigate the gender differences in well-being as flourishing. Conducting such researches will enable researchers explain the diversity and offer any empirical insights discovered. It will also carve a pathway for generating probable hypothesis and research questions for future research in this domain.

From both a developmental and national perspective, fostering well-being among youth is a pressing need. The present study seeks to explore the experience of flourishing among post-graduate students, with a specific focus on gender differences in the domains of psychological well-being. In fact, this review would be considerably lengthened if the literature on gender differences in related areas like quality of life, happiness, subjective well-being etc. is included. Understanding flourishing in this context not only contributes to academic knowledge but also holds practical implications for education, mental health policy, and youth development.

Statement of the Problem

Are there significant gender differences in psychological well-being as flourishing among post-graduate students?

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the psychological well- being as flourishing among post- graduate students.
2. To explore the gender differences in psychological well- being as flourishing among post-graduate students.

Hypotheses

1. There will be no significant difference on the dimension of Positive Emotions of psychological well- being as flourishing between female and male students.
2. There will be no significant difference on the dimension of Engagement of psychological well- being as flourishing between female and male students.
3. There will be no significant difference on the dimension of Relationships of psychological well- being as flourishing between female and male students.
4. There will be no significant difference on the dimension of Meaning of psychological well- being as flourishing between female and male students.
5. There will be no significant difference on the dimension of Accomplishment of psychological well- being as flourishing between female and male students.
6. There will be no significant difference on the overall well- being as flourishing between female and male students.

Method

Research Design

Experimental Between- Groups Research Design.

Participants

The sample was purposive. Students from first and second year of post- graduation; doing traditional non- professional courses were selected for the present study. The sample was composed of 302 students; having 206 female students and 96 male students.

Psychometric Tool

➤ The PERMA Profiler by Butler, J. & Kern, M.L. (2015).

The measure consists of 23 items. Questions are on an 11- point scale ranging from 0 to 10. There are 15 PERMA items (3 per PERMA domain). These domains comprise of Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment. Health, negative emotion, loneliness, and overall happiness questions act as filler questions and provide more information.

A series of eight additional studies (N= 31,966) were conducted to test the psychometric properties of the measure. The PERMA Profiler demonstrates acceptable model fit, internal and cross- time consistency, and evidence for content, convergent, and divergent validity. Scores are reported visually as a profiler across domains, reflecting the multidimensional nature of flourishing. It has added to the tool box of wellbeing measures, allowing individuals to monitor their wellbeing across multiple psychosocial domains.

Procedure

Sample was identified from the educational institutions, offering traditional non- professional courses. After establishing the rapport, first brief personal data- sheet was asked to fill. Then, the PERMA- Profiler scale was administered among respondents. Ethical considerations were duly followed.

Results

Table 1: Showing the gender differences in psychological well- being as flourishing.

Psychological Well- being as Flourishing	Female Students		Male Students		t (300)	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Positive Emotion (P)	20.90	4.39	22.01	4.63	-2.014	.022
Engagement (E)	21.78	4.11	20.56	4.76	2.271	.024
Relationships (R)	22.53	4.94	22.02	5.23	.825	.205
Meaning (M)	21.94	4.32	22.91	4.60	-1.770	.078
Accomplishment (A)	21.25	4.35	22.39	4.56	-2.075	.019
Overall Well- being	115.62	18.25	117.21	18.29	-.703	.483

Discussion

The data was collected from 302 post- graduate students- including 206 female students and 96 male students, pursuing non- professional degree courses; by using a standardized measure namely, the PERMA Profiler (Butler & Kern, 2015). After conducting an appropriate statistical analysis, it was observed that the third, fourth and sixth hypotheses were accepted. Therein, no significant differences were observed in overall well- being and the dimensions of ‘relationships’ and ‘meaning’ among female and male post- graduate students. Psychological well-being as a variable has been researched and studied expansively across disciplines. However, the construct holding relevance as flourishing and its association with gender differences are underexplored or have yielded inconclusive results as found in a study conducted by Shafiq et al. (2015) which concluded that there no significant gender differences in assertiveness and psychological well-being amongst the University students of Pakistan. This primarily motivates the idea to understand the role of PWB and differences that can be observed across genders such as found in a research study conducted by Rathi et al. (2007) where in females scored significantly higher than males on Personal Meaning Profile (PMP) subscales related to relationship, self-acceptance, intimacy, and fair treatment and on Well-being Manifestation Measure Scale (WBMMS), females scored higher than males in self-esteem and mental balance, but no significant differences were found on other subscales. Flourishing, when explored via research has also shown inconclusive results as found in Kumari, J. et al. (2024) research study which yielded statistically insignificant differences in grit and flourishing levels between males and females.

While some studies emphasize emotional intensity differences between genders, others focus on functional aspects like autonomy and self-acceptance, illustrating multidimensionality in well-being such findings were reported in a study by Sharma et al. (2021) where in across every dimension of psychological well-being, female students scored significantly higher. In the present study, the first, second and fifth null hypotheses have been significantly rejected. Male students scored significantly high on dimensions of Positive emotion ($t(300) = -2.014$, $p < .05$) and Accomplishment ($t(300) = -2.075$, $p < .05$). Whereas, female students found to be high on the dimension of Engagement ($t(300) = 2.271$, $p < .05$).

Given the mixed findings, further research is advised to identify the role of gender specific contribution in perceiving psychological well-being as flourishing. Thus, for the nurturance of upcoming young generation for better future, their Flourishing seems to be a vital area to focus upon. Positive education strategies can be helped with the findings of present study.

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