



Can Social Skills Predict Wellbeing? : An Exploration

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Abstract:

Well-being is a broad term capturing the importance of both psychological and physical exploration and health in one's life. The mental health and well-being of the adolescents requires proper attention. Emotionally disturbed adolescents exhibit their impairment in a variety of ways such as failing academically, having poor self-images, having poor peer relationships and additionally, they may have little respect for the law of their society and adults (Hendren et al. 1994). Academic failure and social rejection have a lasting consequence, as a failure to learn in school limits a person's chance to succeed in the future. Evidence suggests that social skills interventions can reduce many of these problems and can reduce the symptoms of depression and life-satisfaction. Social skills were also predicted to be associated with a reduction in the experience of stress and have a strong relationship with growth and development. Thus this study was designed to examine the role of social skills as a mediator between wellbeing. To test these two relationships, data were collected from 220 school going adolescents. The basic tools used for this study is Life Skills assessment tool developed by RGNIYD, which measures social skills, thinking skills and coping skills and, for measuring psychological well-being, the Ryff Scale of Psychological Well-Being (RSPWB) scale was used. Analysis of the study indicates that social skills can predict psychological wellbeing. Implication for early school intervention to promote social skills and possible direction for further researches are discussed.

Key words: Social Skills, Psychological Wellbeing, Mental Health

Introduction

The terminology well-being captures psychological and physical exploration on health in one's life. Wellbeing is widely used to understand happiness, an individual's outlook on life, and life satisfaction. The definition and description of well-being is grounded in two distinct paradigms: the first is hedonism, "the view that well-being consists of pleasure or happiness," and the second is eudemonism, grounded in the idea that "well-being consists of fulfilling or realizing one's true nature" (Ryan and Deci 2001, 143). Understanding well-being in adolescents explores more about their school/college experiences. As students move through their educational experience, understanding the factors that shape their well-being contributes to the literature regarding the multitude of ways that school impacts students. Indeed, well-being can be related to self-esteem, cognitive function, personality, and mood, including positive effects such as happiness, vigour, and morale, and negative effects such as anxiety and depression (Brown 1992).

The mental health and well-being of the adolescents require proper attention. According to the WHO papers on mental health (Hendren, Birell Weisen, and Orley 1994), "nearly one in five adolescents will have an emotional/behavioural disorder at some time during their youth regardless of where they live or how well to do they are." In addition to this, "The improvement of mental health of adolescents and prevention of adolescent's emotional problems is a very important part of any mental health programme. This can partly be done by teaching the school adolescents the essentials of mental health and giving training in life skills." (Srinivasa Murthy and Wig, 2003)

Social skills as a predictor

Social skills have a profound effect on the nature of the interactions with other people and on individuals' psychological well-being. Moreover these two phenomena are theoretically

related as the level of social interactions can affect and be affected by a person's state of mind. Lewinsohn's behavioral theory of depression states that social skill is defined as the ability to enact behaviours that are either positively or negatively reinforced and not to emit behaviours that are punished by others (Libet and Lewinsohn, 1973). Social skills can be defined as "the ability to express both positive and negative feelings in the interpersonal context without suffering loss of social reinforcement." (Hersen and Bellack 1977, 512) Researches have proved that social skills were predicted to be associated with two indicators of psychological well-being which are reduced symptoms of depression and life-satisfaction.

Social skills were also associated with a reduction in the experience of stress. Social competence and emotional well-being are considered to be the major issue for the children. Social skills always related with being liked, feeling accepted, and having self-confidence. Behavioural theories suggest that the possession and demonstration of good social skills should bring about positive social consequences, whereas a lack of social skills should be associated with negative social outcomes (Libet and Lewinsohn, 1973). These social outcomes contribute towards the association with psychological wellbeing. Lack of social skills has an implication in schizophrenia (Patterson, Moscona, and McKibbin 2001), social anxiety and phobia (Wenzel et al., 2005), depression (Segrin 2000), eating disorders (Mallinckrodt, McCreary, and Robertson, 1995), and loneliness (DiTommaso et al. 2003). It is not rational that a single mechanism of social skills should promote psychological well-being or by which social skills deficits should culminate in psychosocial problems. In this investigation, psychological well-being is assessed with a diverse set of measures that include autonomy, environmental mastery, and purpose of life, personal growth, and self-acceptance. The present investigation states to cull out the role of social skills in psychological wellbeing and this exploration begin with social skills as a single domain. At the same time, this study focuses to find out the level of significance of different social skills on domains of psychological wellbeing.

Aim of the Study

The main objective of the study is to find out the relationship between Social Skills and Psychological wellbeing. The researcher also makes an attempt to relate social skills with the six dimensions of psychological wellbeing.

Methodology

The proposed study is quantitative in nature, primarily focusing on the relationship between social skills and psychological wellbeing of the adolescents. The total sample is 220 school going adolescents. The sample is equally distributed between male and female groups. The basic tools used for this study is *Social Skills assessment tool* developed by RGNIYD, which measures 10 core life skills prescribed by WHO (Self-awareness, Empathy, Critical thinking, Creative thinking, Decision making, Problem Solving, Effective Communication, Interpersonal relationship, Coping with Stress and Coping with Emotion) and for measuring psychological wellbeing, the Ryff *Scale of Psychological Well-Being (RSPWB)* will be used. It consist of six dimensions of well-being that evaluate health and psychological happiness: positive evaluations of oneself (Self-Acceptance), sense of continued growth and development as a person (Personal Growth), belief in a purposeful and meaningful life (Purpose in Life), quality relations with others (Positive Relations with Others), capacity to effectively manage one's life and surrounding world (Environmental Mastery), and sense of self determination (Autonomy) .The study utilized SPSS software for statistical analysis.

Results and Discussions

After having obtained the data, first of all the mean and SD for all the six dimensions of psychological wellbeing and different categories of Life Skills were obtained for males and females.

Table 1
Mean scores and Standard Deviations of Males and Females on Psychological Wellbeing

Dimensions	Male		Females		MD	P
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Autonomy	37.56	6.67	37.43	6.54	1.11	>.05
Environmental Mastery	38.7	5.7	39.26	5.59	1.57	>.05
Purpose of Life	36.85	7.6	38.43	7.26	0.56	>.05
Personal growth	40.03	5.93	40.71	5.75	0.69	>.05
Self-Acceptance	39.76	4.87	38.91	6.21	0.84	>.05
Positive Relation with others	36.81	7.46	39.3	6.61	2.46	>.05

From the table it is clear that male and female subjects obtained almost similar mean score on various dimensions of psychological wellbeing. The scores demonstrate maximum difference on positive relation with others followed by environmental mastery and autonomy. However, none of these differences have emerged statistically significant.

Table 2
Mean scores and Standard Deviations of Males and Females on Life Skills

Dimensions	Male		Females		MD	P
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Social Skills	142.31	20.04	142.21	18.02	1.19	>.05

Table 2 shows that there is no gender difference in the social skills which is also highlighted by Ng Suet Fung in her doctoral research where her result highlights that there is no gender difference in cognitive, social functioning and social skills among her target population.

Table 3
Relationship between Social Skills and Psychological Wellbeing

PWBI	Autonomy	Environmental Mastery	Purpose of Life	Personal growth	Self Acceptance	Positive Relation with others
Social Skills	0.05	0.198**	0.138*	0.166*	0.241**	0.06

* Significant at 0.05 level

** Significant at 0.01 level

A close examination of Table 3 defines the nature of the relationship between Social skills and Psychological well-being. The dimensions of well-being are positive with social skills. The above mentioned table reveals that Social Skills are strongly correlated with environmental mastery, personal growth, purpose of life, personal growth and satisfaction with life.

Dominance of social skills in an individual has a strong relationship with growth and development. Hence it is clear that social skills have a positive connection with wellbeing. This is very clear from the result as all the components of wellbeing i.e. autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose of life, personal growth, self-acceptance and positive relation with others are positively correlated with social skills, which include self-awareness, interpersonal relationship, effective communication, and empathy. The study by Bijstra and Jackson, (1998) also highlights the impact of Social skills training on enhancing wellbeing. The result of this study also finds a similarity with the study conducted by Segrin et al. (2007), where their results supported the hypothesized relationship between social skills and a greater well-being.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that there is a positive relationship between Social skills and various dimensions of wellbeing. Therefore, it can be said that social skills are the best indicator of an individual's positive wellbeing. Further research should also focus on the nature of the relationship between Social skills and psychological wellbeing and also the relationship between each skill under the social skills and wellbeing need to be further analysed. However this study can be concluded with a positive note that an intervention of social skills training can be utilized for the enhancing the psychological wellbeing of adolescents.

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