

Psychosocial well-being of Adolescents from Disadvantaged Families

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Abstract

In the present decade, the psychological well-being of the individuals specifically, adolescents is one of the crucial concerns for society. The psychological well-being of the youth or teenagers can be understood with the relationship with the social, economical and psychological conditions. The current study aimed at assessing the well-being, social competence and self-esteem of the adolescents who belong to the disadvantaged families. The study with the help of existing literature found that those students who got support, love and care from their families had happiness and positive impact in their lives. On the contrary, students who belong to disadvantaged families, or who did not get love and care from their family due to numerous circumstances did not have a positive impact on their well-being and were seen indulging in violence and bad actions in their life. The present study with the help of existing literature finds the factors responsible for the psychological well-being of individuals from different disadvantaged backgrounds. The study found that for life satisfaction and happiness, there is a need for good and positive socioeconomic status. The current study also infers that optimism and self-efficiency plays a significant role in improving the self-esteem of adolescents.

Keywords: *self-esteem, family, income, disadvantaged, adolescents*

Introduction

The locus of social activities is mostly the family of an individual. It is a social institution and unit created by adoption, marriage, blood and can be segregated as nuclear that consists of children and their parents or extended that encompasses grandparents, uncles and aunts (Nam, 2004). The family is the fundamental social unit in culture. It serves as a foundational unit that creates future generations and provides children with affection and love thus, stimulating the cycle of socialization. Children's well-being is the prime responsibility of the family (Pannilage, 2017).

The family of an individual plays a major role in providing support economically and socially. It is through the family that the children and the adolescents learn the social values and the behavioural activities to be followed in the society. This process continues for long from their childhood until the time they are grownups and become adults. Even a baby is fed and taken care of by the family. It is the family that imparts social values in their children. In order to understand the term well-being, it is imperative to understand both the aspects associated with it. As per the clinical perspective, it is defined as the negation of the negative conditions in an individual, whereas the psychological well-being defines it as the presence of positive aspects in an individual (Pannilage, 2017).

The six general features of the psychological well-being of an individual include a balance of attributes, life satisfaction, the active pursuit of well-being, multiple dimensions, prosocial behaviour, and personal optimisation. Angner (2008) also defines well-being in simple words as life going well

which comprises welfare, quality of life, benefit, person's good, advantage, prudential value, interest, happiness, eudemonia, flourishing, utility and thriving.

Gough and McGregor (2007) gave a definition of well-being as 'What people are notionally able to do and to be, and what they have actually been able to do and to be (6). According to Camfield, Streuli, and Woodhead (2010) states that well-being can be measured at the level of society or individual and can be considered as the element of life satisfaction which cannot be defined easily and that cannot be examined and is not influenced by the economic growth (Camfield, Streuli, & Woodhead, 2010). Deiner (2009) defines well-being as the estimation of the quality of life. The three components of this concept are enduring positive levels of pleasant emotions, a cognitive estimation that the life of an individual is good, and also involves an experience of low levels of negativity (Deiner, 2009). Prior researchers also revealed that there is a close link between children well-being and family structure (Björklund et al. 2007; Breivik and Olweus 2006; Steele et al. 2009). Children who live with a single parent had fewer material sources and had poor health in comparison to those who did with their mother and father (Laftman, 2010).

It has been found that the employment of the parents, life experiences and relationship especially with family plays a major role in the life satisfaction of the adolescents (Valois, Zullig, Huebner, & Drane, 2009; Levin & Currie, 2010; Edwards & Lopez, 2006; Chang, McBride-Chang, Stewart, & Au, 2003). Apart from family, peers also are correlated to the well being of the adolescents (Nickerson & Nagle, 2004; Ma & Huebner, 2008).

As per the studies based on the Family stress model, financial hardships and unemployment of the parents have a severe impact on the adolescents due to increase in the psychological agony and distress of the parents, decrease in the support of the parents and affecting the parent-child relationship (Dong & Zhang, 2015; Piko, Luszczynska, & Fitzpatrick, 2013; Mistry, Lowe, Benner, & Chien, 2008; Frasilho et al., 2015). It has also been found that a high family satisfaction acts as a protective factor in the adolescent life satisfaction in relation to parental unemployment (Frasquilho, Matos, Neville, & Caldas-de-Almeida, 2016). It has however been unclear what impact does friends and family have when living with employed or unemployed parents. The unemployment in case of parents results in economic hardships and lower financial resources mainly in the case of economic recession (2014).

Moreover, it has been advised (Ladd, 1999) that in order to strengthen the social competence of an individual during childhood or adolescence, frequent opportunities are required for psychological well-being for a long term and for cognitive and academic development. It has also been found that those students who are not able to build a close relationship with others are more vulnerable to mental health problems, low academic achievement, dropping out of schools or colleges and a poor history of employment (Mazza, Fleming, Abbot, Haggerty, & Catalano, 2010; Lane & Carter, 2006; Segrin et al., 2007).

There have been a lot of youth in various countries who are suffering from various kinds of childhood conditions (Children's Defense Fund, 2014) and there are many adolescents who face multiple kinds of risks in their lives. It is a well-known fact that those adolescents who are brought up in under-resourced areas are vulnerable due to residing in such an area and due to victimization by their friends. It has also been seen that those children who grow up in such areas and are poor are at risk of mental, behavioural and emotional problems (Samaan, 2000). A direct, as well as a mediating impact, is seen due to poverty on children that include family situations, limited access to healthcare, poor-quality schools, and unsafe neighbourhoods (Yoshikawa, Aber, & Beardslee, 2012).

It has also been seen that children who are brought up in societies where violence is common menace are at risk of negative effects. Exposure to community violence has an increase in aggressive behaviour, risk of trauma-related disorders, aggressive behaviour in addition to internalizing difficulties (Fowler et al., 2009). The family process and relationship with others and peers play an imperative role in the well-being of both parents and children. It is the family which is the guiding stone and one of the important factors in predicting the well being of the children and adolescents (Rees, Bradshaw, Goswami, & Keung, 2010).

Family communication is crucial in the well-being of the entire family, even though it has a limited income. In addition to this, family decision making, stress, and conflict hinder the well-being of the family and it is only better communication that leads to better well-being (Galvin, Bylund, & Brommel, 2012).

There have been various studies that focuses on the subjective social indicators and child and adolescent well-being (Casa, 2019), the influence of “family structure vs. family climate on adolescent well-being” (Philips, 2012), “ self-efficacy and well-being in adolescents with high vs. low scholastic self-efficacy” (Caroli and Sagone, 2014), adolescent life satisfaction (Watson, 2019), parent-child relationship (Neill, 2014), adolescents social connections (Evarist, 2018), parent social connection and adolescents well being (Zhang, Huang & Wang, 2019) and many more studies that focuses on the well being of the individuals or especially the adolescents’ well-being on a particular factor. This study tries to assimilate the psychological well-being of adolescents who belong to disadvantaged families. Although there have been studies done in the past that focus on the impact of family income on children, there is hardly any study that studies and assesses the psychological well-being of adolescents who belong to disadvantaged families, broken families, single parents and examines their social competence and self-esteem.

Literature Review

Identification of domains and components of wellbeing

A connection with parents or family means that you have been cared for, loved and valued by your family. As per the research done by Farrell et al. (2010), adolescents who are closely connected to their parents are less involved in the violence and brutal fights. Day and Walker (2009), in their study found that those adolescents who are closely connected to their parents are less vulnerable to internalizing disorders and do not attempt suicide.

It has been found that school connectedness with peers and classmates, genuinely motivated the youth and they feel associated with their school and community. Peers and schoolmates genuinely care for each other in the well-being of individuals and learners (CDC, 2009). It has also been found that school connectedness has provided in improving the academic outcomes as well and improving the youth behaviour (Booker, 2006).

Youth who are socially connected do not exhibit violence, alcohol use or abuse (Brookmeyer, Fanti, & Henrich, 2006). A similar term is peer connectedness. It is the connectedness with peers, genuine caring, trust and support in one’s peer group (Bernat & Resnick, 2009). It has also been examined by previous research that the behaviour of an individual is influenced by the peer group. Youth who are negligent and irresponsible and tend to stay with such people end up engaging themselves with such behaviour (Pardini et al., 2012). On the other hand, those adolescents who have a positive vibe and have a positive attitude towards others are less likely to engage in physical abuses and violence (Pardini et al., 2012). The peer relationship also has a significant impact on the health and well-being of the youth and results in depression and anxiety (Prinstein et al.2000). On the contrary, community connectedness is defined as the perception of the adolescents being cared for by the adults in their community and to be dependent on them for their assistance and support (Bernat & Resnick, 2009). Youngblade et al. (2007) in their study found that community connectedness promotes health behaviour and social competence and a similar survey was conducted by the National Survey of Children’s Health. Converging data from longitudinal studies shows that teenagers ' views of parents, supportive friends, colleges, and the environment may reduce the likelihood of maladaptive behaviours and enhance beneficial behaviours in youth. There is no question that psychological well-being and associated principles such as optimistic feelings are connected to improved self-reported wellbeing, less distress, lower morbidity and longevity (Diener & Chan 2011; Veenhoven 2008; Chida & Steptoe 2008, Howell et al., 2007; Pressman & Cohen 2005; Lyubomirsky et al. 2005). Study through 142 nations showed that positive emotions indicate improved self-rated wellbeing across the globe, with positive emotions overriding food, housing, and protection in predictive value (Pressman et al., 2013). The premature inference is that by moving the masses to a greater degree of fulfilment, health and welfare would increase. Diener & Chan (2011) indicates that there is strong proof that "subjective well-being has a direct impact on wellbeing and survival" (p. 21), but this problem is based on empirical-based evidence and that has not yet been answered.

Improving the Adolescent's health and wellbeing

One of the most significant roles is played by the familial income of the people on their well-being. A direct impact of poverty is seen on the mediating impact on the adolescents and children which includes factor such as poor quality schools, family distress, unsafe neighbourhood and limited access to health care (Yoshikawa, Aber, & Beardslee, 2012). Furthermore, the poor and the underprivileged people commonly face discrimination on a daily basis. Those adolescents who are brought up in communities where there are high levels of violence are also exposed to the danger of negative outcomes. Fowler et al. (2009) in his study on the basis of meta-analysis, suggests that community violence has an impact on the youth. There can be seen an increase in the amount of the risk of disorder related to trauma, behaviour difficulties aggressive as well as internalizing problems can also be seen. It has also been found that social conditions like destitution or impoverishment are notably difficult to modify which altogether makes the recognition of the modifiable factors that can safeguard the adolescents raised in the areas that lack resources, making it a high priority. Bullying is also another social challenge that has an effect on the self-esteem of adolescents and is defined as “any unwanted aggressive behaviour by another youth or group of youths who are not siblings or current dating partners, that involves an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated. Bullying may inflict harm or distress on the targeted youth including physical, psychological, social, or educational harm” (Gladden, Kantor, Hamburger, & Lumpkin, 2014). Bullying, a major factor was also reported by a survey conducted and found that 20.8% of students who were studying in classes 6th to 12th and had experienced it during the year 2015 (School Crime Survey, National Center for Education Statistics and Department of Justice Statistics, 2015). The study done by Mc Loyd et al. (2009) found that in comparison to children, adolescents are conscious about the wide gap between the rich and the poor. This is seen because of the self-consciousness and social consciousness being aroused in adolescents because of growth and development. Further, the influence of low socioeconomic status on self-esteem has also been assessed and found on adolescents in comparison to children (McLoyd et al., 2009).

It has been found that adolescents who are victimised due to bullying have been found to be depressed, anxious, somatic complaints, school problems and suicidal ideation (Arseneault, Bowes, & Shakoor, 2010). Apart from this, the behavioural problem such as substance use, sexual behaviour at an early age and delinquency have also been found (DeCamp & Newby, 2015). The data collected from the National Survey in the year 2007 on Children's Health revealed that there is a 3- fold increased risk of anxiety, depression and ADHD in the case of children who bully (Benedict, Vivier, & Gjelsvik, 2015). Youth who are the perpetrators and victims of getting bullied by others are at a higher risk of negative results. A study done by Borowsky et al. (2013) on the students studying in class 6th, 9th, and 12th class found that about 1.2% of the adolescents made a suicide attempt without any bullying involvement in contrast to 6.5 of victims, 5% of bullies, and 11% of bully-victims. A study done by Popp and Peguro (2012) stated that bullying adolescents or victimization and perpetration might have a significant impact on the connections of the youth, their social bonds, their friendship with peers and create an additional risk of adding negative outcomes.

It has been found that one of the main factors that emerged in relation to high life satisfaction of adolescents is family satisfaction and it does not involve the employment status of their parents. Prior researches done on the life satisfaction and well-being of the adolescents revealed that family warmth plays a major role during the adolescent years (Schwarz et al., 2012), and it was also observed that a beneficial influence of good familial relations is on the adolescents irrespective of their socio-economic status (Olsson, 2009). Furthermore, results of various researchers in the past revealed that showed, in line with previous research, that positive family relationships act as a barrier in the negative impact of the unemployment of the parents in the life satisfaction of the adolescents (Bacikova-Sleskova et al., 2011; Frasquilho et al., 2015; Frasquilho et al., 2017). Another noteworthy role in adolescent life satisfaction is played by friend satisfaction. Those adolescents who have high family satisfaction also tend to have high friend satisfaction. According to Sánchez-Queija and Oliva (2003) as per the attachment theory, those children who have bonding with their family have cordial relations with their friends which is based on intimacy and higher support. However, research by Moreno et al. (2009) has

shown that a higher level of life satisfaction is seen in those adolescents who have a satisfactory and a positive relationship with either their family or friends.

Childhood poverty and adolescent psychological well-being

There are highly specific approaches to the relationship between subjective youth well-being, moral or social maturity and the context of school. For example, Guerra and Bradshaw (2008) indicated that healthy teenage adaptation is linked to five main personal competencies: a strong sense of self, decision-making abilities, self-control, a dogmatic religion system, and pro-social connectivity.

Furthermore, they also emphasise that their assistance “provides a connection between positive youth development and risk prevention programming” (p. 1). Across the same context, prior research in the context of adolescence personal development or in the examination of their strengths (Scales et al., 2016) aim to recognize external and internal variables called strengths or advantages that play a defensive function by promoting the idea of achieving stable adolescence trajectories (Curran & Wexler, 2017). Internal constraints include potential aspirations, decision-making and self-regulation (Curran & Wexler, 2017), positive values, professional maturity, moral beliefs, self-regulation and self-esteem (Calmeiro et al., 2018). The association between well-being and empathy has been illustrated in adolescents (Shanafelt et al., 2005) and teenage research. Valois et al. (2009) suggested in their study on properties and subjective quality of life that youth with lower rates of empathy had lower levels of satisfaction with life. Recently, Taylor et al. (2017) grouped such competencies more thoroughly into self-awareness (such as identification of feelings and beliefs), self-management (such as emotional regulation). Such skills tend to be related to the performance of both education and life. Some of these dimensions have also come to light in studies on research, identifying conditions that may promote teenage adaptation after having encountered significant risk circumstances, such as violence and brutality (Hinduja & Patchin, 2017).

Rahmawati et al. (2017) investigated research on "Relation of Emotional Intelligence, Self-Esteem, Self-Efficacy and Psychological Well-Being Students of State Senior High School" in Malang City that focused on the link of public senior secondary high school. The findings of this study revealed a strong association between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being, the association of psychological well-being with self-esteem, the association between psychological well-being with self-efficacy. The results of the study further revealed that the link of self-esteem, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy has a linear relation with psychological well-being. It was found that 50.7% was due to the impact of the three independent variables whereas the remaining was affected by the rest of the variables. Moreover, the study deduced that towards the psychological well-being, self-esteem was found to be the most impactful variable, next was the emotional intelligence and at the end was its association with self-efficacy.

Udhayakumar and Illango (2018) undertook research on the "Psychological well-being among college students" and observed that psychological well-being is a function of the balance of positive affective states such as pleasure and mirth. It is a reality that psychological well-being issues are well established among college students, particularly undergraduate students. This is because they are young people who are horizontal to psychological problems. The study was conducted in Thiruvaram district, Tamil Nadu. The sample size of the study was 100 university students of the college. As a result, it is assumed that the degree of college students was very strong in anxiety and depressive mood. Self-control was also one of the students' issues. Both of which would also have a negative impact on the overall growth and well-being of the students. Students require special treatment to cope with depression and anxiety. It was inferred that stress reduction sessions should be organised in the classes for the adolescents.

Ersoz (2017) in the research studied “The role of university students in general self-efficacy, depression and psychological well-being in predicting their exercise behaviour.” A sample size of 522 students was obtained for the research. The techniques used for the research were “Beck Stress Database”, “Psychological Well-Being Measure”, “Physical Activity Stages of Change Questionnaire”, and “General Self-Efficacy Score”. The results of the inferred that “the participant’s general self-efficacy and psychological well-being levels were high and the depression levels were low when on advanced levels of exercise”. Furthermore, the study deduced that psychological effects such as depression were decreased and a positive impact was due to psychological well-being and self-efficacy.

Self-esteem of adolescents from disadvantaged family

In order to improve the well-being and health of adolescents, it is imperative that the youth of the country should have a positive personality and optimism. The adolescents should have a positive attitude towards their expectations, future challenges and should be confident enough to cope with their challenges (Friedman & Kern, 2014). Research done in the past found that a crucial role is played by optimism in the psychological adaptation of people and their well-being (Krok, 2015; Alarcon, Bowling, & Khazon, 2013). Contrary to this notion, a lot of research found optimism as playing a mediating role in the well-being of the individuals (Ho, Cheung & Cheung, 2010), or as an antecedent factor (Wong & Lim, 2009) or less known as a moderator due to known by less number of people (Lai, 2009). It has also been found that individuals who are socioeconomically disadvantaged and are optimistic have a tendency to think of their future prospects in a positive manner and are of the view that they are going to have a favourable life (Chen & Miller, 2013). As per the study done by Chen (2012), that applied the shift and persist model, concluded that the individuals who belong to low-income families should develop an approach of accepting their life for what it is and adapting to their surroundings and change it through an amalgamation with persistence and by enduring to life challenges with an optimistic approach. Optimism has also been found as one of the protective factors of well-being, and an important tool for persisting low socioeconomic status adolescents. Furthermore, optimism is based on the approach to sustain effort and adherence to the goal pursuit in comparison to the pessimistic peers (Monzani et al., 2015).

Heizomi et al. (2018) undertook research to assess the function of life satisfaction, happiness, hopefulness, and self-efficiency, perceived pressure, and psychological wellbeing in the community. The sample of this study was 289 adolescents females. This was a cross-sectional study. With the help of qualified workers, a self-administered validated questionnaire was filled by the participants. The results of the study revealed that 74.3% of the participants reported high-stress levels, whereas, it was revealed that 64.7% of the participants had mental health problems. The study also concluded that there was a positive correlation with happiness, life satisfaction, self-efficiency, hopefulness, happiness and was associated negatively with self-perceived stress. There was a higher level of self-efficacy and happiness with lower stress levels. Following these strategies might improve the conditions of the people who are optimists and belong to low socioeconomic status against the negative outcomes. Thus, it can be concluded that optimism can be considered as a protective factor for reducing the potential risks of low socioeconomic status that has a significant impact on the life satisfaction and self-esteem of the youth who are socioeconomically disadvantaged.

Finding and Discussion

In order to understand the well-being of the children, it is imperative to examine the social, political and economical background and the surroundings in which the adolescents live. Adolescents' well being can only be understood in relation to the various factors that have an impact on adolescents. The youth of our nation is the future of our nation and thus it is our duty to take adequate measures to raise concern for their health and well-being. Good orientation from the family and peers and their competence can have a positive impact on the competence of adolescents. Furthermore, it has also be estimated that the school plays a major role in the adolescent's well being. It is not only the family which plays a significant role in the adolescents' well-being but school mates as well. A sense of belongingness to the school and society is felt when young people have a positive school environment and friends. On the other hand, it is observed that a negative impact is seen due to the bad company or peers in the school who indulge in violence and bad behaviour. A positive attitude and optimism is necessary for the well-being of adolescents who belong to disadvantaged families. Positive perseverance should be there in the case of adolescents towards their goals and aspirations. Although it is difficult for adolescents who have a single parent or broken families to live a happy and a life full of hopes yet they should be confident enough to cope with their challenges. The study with the help of the existing literature also inferred that optimism is the key to move forward in life, whatever may be the

circumstances. Furthermore, the study also found that adolescents is the age when the psychological issues related to the differences, and gaps between the rich and the poor are maximum. A parent-child relationship is crucial for the well-being of adolescents.

The current study tried to assess the psychosocial well-being of adolescents from disadvantaged families. Although various studies have been done in the past that focuses on the parent-child relationship, self-efficacy, the impact of family on the adolescents' well-being, social connection and the impact on children well-being. Although there have been studies done in the past that focus on the impact of family income on children, there is hardly any study that studies and assesses the psychological well-being of the adolescents who belong to disadvantaged families, broken families, single parent and examines their social competence and self-esteem.

Conclusion

The psychosocial well-being of an individual, especially an adult, is deemed as the maintenance of positive relationships with friends, family and people surrounding oneself with the aid of mental, spiritual and emotional strengths. Among numerous factors that contribute to the well-being of an individual, an optimistic behaviour, stabilized self-esteem, and reappraisal are the primary elements which monitor the well-being of an individual. Although the support of families is considered genuinely crucial for well-being, it has been noted that an individual's relationship and positive association with their peers promotes the process of well-being and it has helped create a sense of positiveness in the environment. Social connectedness among individuals has also been considered as an important factor in the promotion of a healthy behaviour and enhanced social competence in the society. The economic income of a family directly affects the level of well-being of an individual, that is to say, if the income of a family is high then the rate of well-being will be high, whereas, if the family has a low income or is a victim of poverty then there is an increased possibility of not receiving the tools to maintain a modest level of well-being, both mentally as well as physically.

Poverty or low income makes individuals vulnerable and exposes them to social and economic discrimination and bullying. It is, thus, observed that, irrespective of the income of a family, if the elements of discrimination and bullying are eradicated from the life of an individual, it might improve the chances of his/her well-being. Bullying leads to depression, anxiety, substance abuse and early sexual behaviours which affects the well-being of an individual and, thus, it is often noted that the behavior of peers worsens the health of an individual more than their economic status. It is also found that the Social Economic Status (SES) of an individual can have a deep impact on the mental well-being; also, SES and the level of satisfaction possessed by an individual has an impact on their self-esteem, however, it can be mitigated with the aid of optimism. It is thus concluded that a lower level of SES decreases the well-being of people due to lower levels of optimism, while, higher level of SES increases the well-being of people due to higher levels of optimism. Thus, it can be asserted that optimism has a direct effect on the well-being of an individual.

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