Review Article

Exploring Nuances of Adolescents' Well-being: Application of PERMA and Positive Strategies

Pallavi Madan[1] and Dr. Kritika Rastogi[2]

[1]Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, JIMS, Rohini, Delhi, India.
[2]Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, CHRIST (Deemed to be University) Delhi NCR Campus, India.

Email: pallavi.madan@jimsindia.org, krtika.rastogi@christuniversity.in

ABSTRACT: *Well-being is commonly understood as the overall presence of positive affect, fulfillment, and optimal functioning health in an individual. Over the years, the landscape of well-being has expanded to include physical, mental, and social domains, ensuring a holistic and inclusive approach to the concept of health. This multidimensional conceptualization emphasizes the need to balance key areas to cultivate wellness, which is associated with numerous benefits. This paper reviews the meaning and importance of well-being for adolescents while asserting the viability and application of Seligman's PERMA model of happiness and well-being for this specific population. Living in a society where adolescents are deeply influenced by peers, media, and the internet, it becomes crucial to discern the information constantly consumed in a manner that nurtures growth and sustainable social development. The study elaborates on the factors that directly affect various areas of well-being and provides suggestions for advancing and promoting positive strategies to enhance happiness and wellness in everyday functioning.*

KEYWORDS: *Adolescence, Well-being, Happiness, Positive psychology.*

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is often characterized as the formative years of one's life. The multiple factors encapsulating an individual such as physical, social, and emotional, breed change which makes the individual susceptible to a range of adversities. It becomes highly imperative to address adolescents' mental health-related needs since it is known to extend to adulthood and affect the individual's future life. Recent surveys have also reported that half of all mental health conditions/problems start by 14 years of age, but most cases remain undetected and untreated (WHO, 2007). Furthermore, research predicts that there is a significantly positive relationship between well-being during adolescence and well-being during midlife (Richard & Huppert, 2010). Data on adolescents from national surveys stipulate that India has the largest adolescent population. Teenage years are marked by an array of experiences that shape the perception of a person.

Considering the current scenario, adolescents are exposed to a variety of stressors that are usually sidelined or underestimated by the older generations. The world has turned into a space of cut-throat competition and school years are treated as grounds of achieving academic achievements to excel in later years of life. This creates an anxiety-ridden atmosphere for students and since their experience is reduced to normal, the struggles adolescents face goes unnoticed. The focus on raising high achievers unknowingly takes the emphasis away from

raising emotionally equipped and regulated children. The source of challenges remains numerous and result in negative outcomes such as unhealthy coping mechanisms which are turned to habits including substance use, social inhibition or withdrawal, displaced aggressive tendencies, and other social problems.

Importance of Adolescents' Well-being

Living in a society where adolescents are deeply influenced by media, the internet, and peers, it becomes crucial to learn how to discern the comparisons and competition in a manner which fosters growth and learning. To ensure that they thrive and realize their full potentials and sustain healthy mindsets and lifestyles, it is indispensable to promote psychological well-being which is pivotal in maintaining positive mental health. Psychological well-being is generally understood as consisting of multiple facets underlying a state of efficiency wherein an individual realizes their capacities, resources and is motivated to achieve them in order to develop holistically.

UNDERSTANDING ADOLESCENTS' WELL-BEING

The approaches to well-being can be understood by examining the perspectives which are majorly used to get a conceptual clarity of well-being. Two widely known perspectives are explained by Waterman in 1993. He differentiated between eudaimonic and hedonic conceptions of happiness which are considered notable contributions in the context of understanding well-being. The history of the term 'eudaimonia' can be traced back to Ancient Greece when Aristotle labelled it to mean a sense of striving to achieve the best from within. This approach also supports the view that happiness is not limited to momentary satisfaction of physiological needs and it is feeling good but beyond the horizons of sensual gratification of needs or desires. Therefore, the eudaimonic perspective of well-being focuses on relating to meaning, reaching the highest potential, and being authentic in one's span of life.

This also provided grounds for the humanistic approach which put emphasis on self-actualization (Maslow, 1962), fully functioning person (Rogers, 1961), and existential approach which believed cultivating meaning to be an inseparable component of human existence (Frankl, 1958). The hedonistic approach focused on the attainment of pleasure and avoidance of pain which is often referred to as subjective well-being with a cognitive component of evaluating affective states (immediate expression of emotion) and life satisfaction. When the positive affect and life satisfaction are high, a person experiences a state of happiness (Carruthers & Hood, 2004).

Norman Bradburn (1969) also attempted to explain the concept of well-being and happiness by distinguishing between positive affect and negative affect and concluded that it is the balance between the two. This framework emphasizes psychological well-being or happiness as the dependent variable which is impacted by an individual's position on the two independent variables namely positive affect and negative affect. It functions on the empirical evidence that the psychological well-being of a person is high in the degree to which the positive affect predominates the negative affect.

Although similar to previous models, Bradburn's theory points that the variables related to the absence or presence of positive affect had no relationship with the absence or presence of the negative affect. On the other hand, psychologists said psychological well-being results when an individual is finding meaning and purposeful direction in life, accepting oneself, seeking continued personality development, acting and thinking anonymously, and establishing potential relationships with others (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). The model propounded by Ryff and Singer included six basic dimensions which played an essential role in the positive psychological functioning of a person. These dimensions are discussed below:

- Self-Acceptance: It is related to a positive evaluation of oneself and one's past life while being aware of both, the strengths and weaknesses exhibited by a person.
- Personal Growth: This concerns itself with the continual growth of a person to achieve one's full potential.
- Purpose in Life: Actively engaging and having a reflective stance towards life helps in building a belief that one's life is purposeful and meaningful which fosters psychological well-being.
- Positive Relations with Others: there is believed to be a near-universal endorsement of the relational realm as a key feature of how to live. Thus, sustaining positive relations makes us stable and affectionate.
- Environmental Mastery: The capacity to manage significant spheres of endeavours that go beyond the self is important in achieving environmental mastery.
- Autonomy: A sense of self-determination, independence, and regulation of behaviours within the self.

Table 1: Showing a summary of theories and models of psychological well-being

Formulated by	Year	Concept of well-being	Name of Model/Theory
Norman Bradburn	1969	Well-being is maximized by a high ratio of positive to negative affect.	Structure of psychological well-being
Ed Diener	1984	The degree to which one's life is perceived to be satisfactory or close to ideal defines the level of subjective well-being.	Subjective Well-being model
Carol Ryff	1989	Six dimensions encompassing psychological well-being; self-acceptance, environmental mastery, positive relations with others, autonomy, purpose in life, and personal growth.	Psychological Well-being model
Veenhoven and Cummins	1998	Whether people are well depending on whether they have access to wellbeing pathways: skills, resources, and conditions necessary to achieve wellbeing.	Network theory
Martin Seligman	2011	Five components of well-being; positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment.	Flourish model or PERMA
Michael Bishop	2012	A person is in the state of well-being if she/he instantiates a homeostatically clustered network of feelings, emotions, attitudes, behaviors, traits, and interactions with the world that tends to have a relatively high number of states that feel good.	Hedonic balance model

FACTORS AFFECTING WELL-BEING AMONG ADOLESCENTS

Attachment with Parents

Research generally supports the view that secure attachments with parents in infancy, childhood, and adolescence are linked with positive representations of the self, including high levels of self-esteem, self-knowledge and self-efficacy. The presence of significant non-parental adults/figures appears to be associated with higher levels of youth self-esteem among diverse samples of adolescents and also with lower levels of behavioral and emotional problems once they grew up. This validates the perspective of psychological well-being having an impactful presence of childhood schemas of attachment, support, and nourishment. Flouri and Buchanan (2003) also found that parental involvement notably affected adolescents' levels of psychological well-being based on their study of 2,722 adolescents whose ages ranged from 14 to 18 years.

Relationship with Peers

Peer behaviors as well as the quality of the relationships that youth have with their peers have been shown to be important correlates of a wide range of adolescent outcomes including psychological, social, and academic functioning and well-being. This factor is a common characteristic in the models previously mentioned which emphasize the role of relationships (in PERMA) and social well-being.

Academic Outcome

In addition to the relationship to academic outcomes, peer acceptance also has been found to be significantly associated with self-reported well-being; e.g., engaging in positive relationships with peers has been linked to higher levels of emotional well-being, increased adoption of values for prosocial behaviors, and more positive beliefs about the self. (Rubin et al., 2006). The process of individuation is often related to higher well-being during adolescence (e.g., Allen et al., 1994). Academic autonomy has been found to be essential to psychological well-being (Ryan & Deci 2000) during adolescence.

Internet Exposure

With the advancement of internet technology used abundantly in order to generate greater connectivity, there is also evidence that online self-disclosure is related to friendship formation and to the quality of existing friendships (Valkenburg & Peter 2007). Increasing amounts of choice and self-direction, both inside and outside of the school setting, are critical to adolescent psychological development. This is considered to be essential when one thinks about Ryff's dimension of autonomy of independence and self-regulation.

Spirituality

Kim and Seidlitz (2002) sought to examine the function that spirituality plays in the lives of college students. In a sample of 113 undergraduates, these researchers found that spirituality had a direct beneficial effect on negative affect and that it buffered the 22 detrimental effects of stress on negative affect and physical adjustment. Here, it's important to understand how spirituality is conceptualized. The experience of interconnectedness, compassion and self-regulation with heightened awareness is defined as the major characteristic features of being spiritual and thus, justifying its positive correlation with psychological well-being.

ATTAINMENT OF WELL-BEING THROUGH SELIGMAN'S PERMA MODEL

Martin Seligman (2011) introduced a model which concisely many of the theories and approaches under one umbrella. He talked about five core dimensions for assuring and

enhancing an individual's well-being and framed a model combining these five dimensions, called that model PERMA. This model was tried and tested under various experimental and scientific conditions and the results are generalized worldwide. Seligman's PERMA model is linked with the positive side of mental health. Though the nature of these core dimensions of the PERMA model is scientifically tested and are positively correlated with one's well-being, the domain-wise nature and intensity of these dimensions are highly subjective and unique to every individual. PERMA stands for Positive Emotions (P), Engagement (E), Relationships (R), Meaning (M), and Accomplishment (A).

1. Positive emotions (P)

Focusing on positive emotions is a way of looking at one self. One`s experience of positive emotions is determined by the perception of one`s situations and constructive perspective of one's surroundings while being hopeful, optimistic, and positive. This indeed helps in improving one's abilities to work on what needs to be fixed and at the same time practice solution-focused coping by avoiding the virtue of being oblivious. Adolescence is an age filled with stressors like pressure to conform to peers, exploring oneself, desire for independence, and other conflicting situations. It is essential to maintain a positive outlook amidst the chaos which is often dealt with cognitive fallacies like generalizability, magnification, jumping to conclusions, etc. The promotion of positive emotions could benefit in regulating adolescents' emotional responses and being in touch with the bright side of the foreseeable future. Gratitude exercises facilitated by teachers can be a helpful measure to inculcate positive emotions among adolescents. Positive emotions can be inculcated among adolescence through enhancing self-acceptance among them. Often the experience of positive emotions is also related to building future resources for the rest of the life.

2. Engagement (E)

Emotional capabilities are enhanced when a person gets engaged in an activity that provides him/her with enjoyment. Here, understanding enjoyment is a little different from understanding a pleasure. While pleasure is about feeling gratified due to the attainment of sensory simulations, enjoyment is a blissful experience of living the present as it occurs in that moment. This also marks the presence of flow or blissful immersion in what's happening which is found to have significant outcomes in the well-being of an individual. Flow is a concept of psychology correlated with a positive mental state (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). The idea of positive engagement in adolescent's life will help them in being in the present and not indulge in the mindless wandering of the mind. Learning this at an early age has its widely accepted benefits which are difficult to acquire at later stages of life. Activities in which a person feels fully engaged, flood his body with numerous positive neurotransmitters and hormones which are good for a healthy body and mind. Motivating adolescents to identify their passion like playing a musical instrument, singing, gardening, painting, helping others, playing a sport, developing a mobile application, etc. at an early stage and supporting them to pursue it, is the effective way to develop and enhance engagement among them.

3. Relationships (R)

Connectedness is a characteristic of utmost importance in the current scenario surrounding human relationships. Humans are always actively involved in socializing and maintaining interpersonal interactions as a basic innate tendency. Sustaining healthy relationships is linked with optimal functioning of body and mind. Flourishing and authentic relationships also act as protective factors and make a person more resilient at times of adversities. Loneliness is a determinant of psychological distress amongst the young population which is commonly faced by individuals devoid of a social system. Building interpersonal relationships with peers,

facilitators, educators, and friends can ensure emotional stability with higher levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy. Educating adolescents to identify the difference between authentic and flourishing relationships and 'just' relationships is a stepping stone for them to lead an emotionally healthy life. Educators and parents should also make adolescents aware of the importance of authentic and healthy relationships to lead a positive life.

4. Meaning (M)

Humans thrive for fulfillment and purpose in life. The search for meaning is ingrained in us and is believed to be the gateway to happiness and well-being. Theorists believe that once a sense of meaning is achieved in life, one flourishes in a way like never before. Living with a purpose can make one feel intrinsically motivated to perform everyday tasks and be future-oriented. This can also be of great help in the process of identity formation and individuation. Developing a habit among adolescents to respect small day-to-day related tasks and loving the activities they are involved in, will help them to lead a meaningful day, meaningful week, meaningful year, and meaningful life ahead. Ask them questions like 'why you are doing what you are doing?', 'what you want to achieve in life?' and 'what is the purpose of your life?' will make them mindful and more involved in their behavior. People find meaning through various things and activities but self-awareness is the first step to finding the true meaning of one's life.

5. Accomplishment (A)

A feeling of satisfaction is experienced when one is able to achieve one's goals and ambitions. An individual experiences pride in oneself and it enhances self-esteem which is essential to keep the motivation high while living an enriching life and developing in a holistic manner. To experience this feeling in life adolescents should have clear goals and achievable aspirations. Parents and educators can assist adolescents with their goal setting, which is indeed a very important milestone of one's life and also help them in achieving these goals to inculcate a sense of accomplishment in them. Celebrating their small and big achievements in school years by parents and teachers can act as rewarding experiences guiding adolescents toward progress and feelings of accomplishment which are predictors of successful lives.

POSITIVE STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE HAPPINESS AND WELLNESS

Reflecting on effective responses and behavioral management to enhance the positive outcomes of our daily functioning, we can corroborate the below-mentioned strategies using the multiple models discusses in this paper and the broader domain of Positive Education which is defined as the education for both traditional skills and happiness (Seligman et al., 2009) or applied positive psychology in education (Green et al., 2011). The foremost strategy is to make use of the character strengths an individual possesses. These are found to be helpful in improving one's emotional well-being and addressing the challenges of daily life in a sustainable manner (Peterson & Seligman, 2005). The Strath Haven Positive Psychology Curriculum has used signature strengths of students to empirically prove the increased efficiency in their engagement with learning, enjoyment at school, achievement, and an overall improvement in the social skills of adolescents. The next strategy is centered around cultivating gratitude in adolescents and using the psychological benefits associated with it to foster everyday wellbeing.

Gratitude includes components such as appreciation and thankfulness that are associated with perceived good fortune and goodness in others. These have been found to be related to efficacious outcomes such as pro-social behavior, subjective well-being, and heightened optimism (Froh et al., 2010). It has also been linked to an increase in the positive affect of students which validates the potency of this strategy. Lastly, goal-setting strategies are found

to enable adolescents to work towards the identified opportunities and overcome obstacles along the way. Personal and academic goal setting and goal striving methodologies are associated with optimal functioning, achievement, and wellbeing (Green et al., 2012). Clearly defined goals direct behavior and allow the individual to take ownership of the defined goals and the learning or the achievement process becomes more personalized. Furthermore, there are various research-backed positive strategies that are proven to increase happiness and wellness among adolescents and can be used in the mainstream education framework.

CONCLUSION

Many profound psychologists proposed various ways and approached to decipher well-being and apprehend its essence and importance. Their theories and concepts are based on a series of researches and scientific studies which provide a direction to the masses to attain well-being but none of these theories can assure one's wellbeing. It takes conscious and continuous efforts to decode one's very own and unique meaning of happiness and well-being, which is the first step towards achieving it. Theories and models of well-being merely give a wide spectrum to individuals to make the process easy and fulfilling. Parents and teachers also play a major role in making the adolescents aware of their well-being through giving importance to these concepts in their own life as well as in the life of their children and students during their adolescent years.

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