Psychological Wellbeing and Academic Environment of Government and Private Secondary School Students – A Comparative Study

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Abstract*: Education is the cornerstone of human growth, shaping a child's personality and guiding their behaviour to be socially beneficial, fostering a positive outlook towards society, nation, and the world. In the words of Raymont, "Education is that process of development which consists the passage of human being from infancy to maturity the process whereby he adapts himself gradually in various ways of his physical, social and spiritual environment." Education is a lifelong process and continues from cradle to grave. In a real sense, education is to humanize humanity and make life civilized, cultured and progressive. Every day, individuals acquire new knowledge through their daily experiences, demonstrating absorption, vigour, and dedication in their learning process, however, students must develop effective strategies and styles to construct their knowledge. Depending upon the numerous styles available, students can adopt any of the styles for information processing. Learning styles are the characteristics and preferred ways in which a person gathers, identifies and processes information (Fleming, 2001). Learning styles help the students to learn the subject matter very easily and in this activity, teachers can play a very important role. Malathi & Malini (2006); and Sharma (2011) indicated that students who have higher academic scores, have better learning styles and it is easy for teachers to teach them. Students can take the help of teachers for identification of learning styles. Learning style helps the student to be autonomous in learning and gives confidence to interact with the environment. For learning, the environment plays an important role. Individual school and class environments and their preferences of branches are highly effective in learning strategies and styles. This may be due to the different educational programmes used in schools and branches (Murat & Sari, 2010). The environment should develop the physical, emotional, social, moral, spiritual and aesthetic aspects of an individual. The environment in schools should be congenial so that the individual develops to his maximum. Teachers create opportunities for students to engage in a variety of school activities (Eccles et al., 1993) and these experiences provide students with information regarding their competency to succeed their relatedness to others in that setting and their autonomy as learners'- allowing them to realize their personal and social identities (Connel & Wellborn, 1991). Conducive environment at school also helps students to be stress-free and psychologically well. The well-being of an individual is very important and the environment has a significant contribution to it. Wellbeing is the "state of successful performance throughout the life course integrating physical, cognitive and socio-emotional functions that results in productive activities deemed significant by one's culture, community, fulfilling social relationships and ability to transcend moderate psychosocial and environmental problems" (Bornstein et al., 2003).*

Keywords: Education

I. INTRODUCTION

Psychological Well-being is a way to show a positive attitude towards life and get adjusted to society. A student can face the challenges of life and have the ability to be happy. Psychological Well-being is the extent to which people feel that they have meaningful control over their lives and activities. It is considered a positive state of life and a desirable

condition of society and not incapacity, discomfort or absence of pain. It helps people to live a quality life with proper growth and development. An individual is said to be psychologically well when his needs are met, have a sense of purpose, feel able to achieve important personal goals and participate in society. It is enhanced by strong personal relationships, good health, personal security and a healthy and attractive environment. People who score high on the psychological well-being scale earn high incomes and perform better at work than people who score low in well-being (Diener, 1997). Psychological Well-being is thus, an important component of the health of groups and individuals and is comprised of an individual's overall appraisal of life. Carol Ryff highlights that psychological well-being in developmental psychology is considered as a continued growth across the life cycle (as seen from Erik Erikson's psychosocial stages, Charlotte Buhler's basic life tendencies, Bernice Neugarten's personality changes). Clinical psychologists describe psychological well-being through Gordon Allport's formulation of maturity, Abraham Maslow's conception of self-actualization, Carl Jung's account of individuation and Carl Roger's depiction of the fully functioning person (Horbal, 2012). Wellbeing is a multifaceted concept encompassing various aspects of an individual's life, such as social, physical, mental, emotional, career, and spiritual well-being (Akhter, 2015). Psychological Well-being has its basis in the concepts given by Aristotle but as a part of psychology, it has been a matter of interest for five decades. Psychological Well-being is associated and derived from satisfying various social, psychological and existential needs. It is implicated in personal growth and is independent of (though often correlated with) subjective assessments of wellbeing. People make overall evaluation about the quality of their inner experience related to basic life aspects and positive mental health. As per World Health Organization (1997) quality of life is "An individual's perception of their position in life in the context of culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns. It is a broad-ranging concept affected in a complex way by the person's physical health, psychological state, personal beliefs, social relationships and their relationships to salient features of their environment." The assessments are either in the form of cognition or affect. The cognitive aspect pertains to the assessment of one's overall life satisfaction based on knowledge, while the affective aspect involves the hedonic evaluation influenced by emotions and feelings. The primary assumption responsible for this is that most people assess their life internally as either good or bad enabling them to communicate their evaluations. Moreover, there is a tremendous effect of moods and emotions experienced by people on the quality of experience. People who are in a positive emotional state tend to assess themselves and others more positively, attribute things more leniently, and exhibit confident, optimistic, and generous behavior in interpersonal interactions (Forgas, 2002; 2006; Sedikides, 1995). Creating a classroom environment that values diversity and recognizes individual differences is crucial for student resilience and success, as emphasized by Watkins (2005). To meet the demands of life, it is the learning environment that determines how a student behaves and interacts. The environment plays an important role in the overall development of students. It has a major impact on physical, emotional, social, ethical and spiritual development. According to the Dictionary of Psychology, "an academic environment is an atmosphere in which learning is attempted that can help or hinder or diminish learning." The modern education system must provide opportunities through the environment that promote the development of psychomotor skills, self-concept and harmonious personality traits. In a healthy school environment, students are happy, feel part of the school, believe that teachers treat them fairly and feel safe. School environment measures the psychosocial climate of the school that students experience. It is the cognitive, emotional and social support provided during the school life of students in teacher-student interactions (Misra, 2012). School is a strong institution in the development of a child's behavior. It is a miniature society where children live, interact and do activities under the supervision of their eachers. The school as a social institution differs from the family in many ways; it is impersonal; the adult-child relationship is short-lived; adults present viewpoints that differ from those of parents, and performance evaluation is comparative public and repetitive. The school society as an environment for child development is influenced by various factors such as type of school, size, population, age, infrastructure and its social culture. Taniugari (1967) described the school environment as a "persistent aspect of an institution's interior environment, including its facilities, that impact the behavior and academic performance of its members. This can be understood by referring to the institution's values or specific traits."

According to Bandura (1997), a quality education promotes psychological development that enhances life quality outside of the workplace. Extending his viewpoint, he declared that the purpose of formal education ought to be to provide students with the knowledge, skills, values, and innate curiosity to educate themselves in a range of endeavors

over the course of their lives. Numerous studies have demonstrated the significant impact that the school environment has on both teachers and students. One of the most crucial elements of any school setting is the comfort of the teachers and students. Teaching and learning are considerably easier when students are at ease. Pupils possess a range of skills and abilities that can be applied in a variety of contexts in the classroom, and teachers are responsible for teaching social skills in addition to academic content. Students want choice in education, and part of this is based on their belief that their teachers give them the ability to participate in class discussions and make decisions about academic assignments and school administration. These perceived characteristics predict greater behavioural engagement with school tasks and higher identification (Katz & Assor, 2006; Reeve, Bolt & Cai, 1999). According to Esscles et al. (1993), a lack of decision-making opportunities for students contributes to the explanation of decreases in students' interest in and value of education as they move into middle school. Giving students the option to make decisions, control their behavior, and feel a sense of personal fulfillment and accountability as they have an impact on their learning environment can all help to increase school engagement (Assor et al., 2002). Students' needs are met by identifying issues and offering corrective action, which reduces frustration and maladjustment. Psychological techniques for academic and interpersonal guidance, counseling, and motivation assist the child in the right adaptability to different fields. Activities offered by educational institutions alleviate the stress of pupils, enabling them to become self-reliant and disciplined individuals. Schools are unique settings that are in place with the intention of improving student performance. They are delicately constructed to house a very specific group within society. It is a location that preserves and upholds traditions while determining their applicability to the utility in the now and the future (Rasool, 2008). The school environment offers new opportunities for socialization and cognitive development, and by offering these opportunities in varying degrees, different schools have a direct impact on students' affective and cognitive behaviors.

II. METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE

The data for the present study was collected through personal visits by the investigator to government and private schools of district Srinagar. The list of all the secondary schools was obtained from the website of the Directorate of School Education. Prior permission from the Principals of respective schools was taken for data collection. The subjects of the 9th and 10th classes were included in the sample.

Before administering tools, the investigator told the purpose of the tools to the students. They were requested to give their true and free responses. It was also made clear to them that strict confidentiality should be maintained regarding the responses provided to them. Full assurance was given that the information collected from students would be used for research purposes only. After establishing rapport with students, the questionnaires of Psychological Wellbeing, Learning Style and School Environment were distributed and asked them to write personal information on the title page and then instructions were given to them as given in the manual of the test. The students were asked to respond as quickly as possible and after completion of the questionnaires, the booklets were taken back. The academic achievement of the previous two years i.e. 8th and 9th standard of the sample subjects was collected from the official records of the secondary schools.

III. FINDINGS

A brief report of the results is summarized as under.

- Mean scores reveal that govt. school students have higher psychological well-being than private school students. However, govt. and private school students do not differ significantly in all dimensions of psychological well-being.
- Govt. and private secondary school students have a higher preference for Enactive Constructive, Figural Reproducing (sig. at 0.01) and Enactive (ER+EC) Learning Style (sig. at 0.05) than private school students. Meanwhile, results reveal that govt. and private school students have equal preference for Enactive Reproducing, Figural Constructive, Verbal Reproducing and Verbal Constructive Learning Styles. The results reveal that the students in govt. schools are involved in such learning activities which involve motor skills and physical activities i.e., learning by doing. It is also seen that govt. school students are more dependent on reproducing learning styles stressing imitation and practice.

- Govt. and private secondary school students do not differ significantly in school environment. However, the acceptance dimension of the school environment is higher among private school students than govt. school students indicating that private school students perceive a higher acceptance level from their teachers than govt. school students.
- A positive and significant relationship was found between Psychological well-being and the Learning Style of secondary school students.
- A positive and significant relationship was found between Psychological well-being and School Environment of secondary school students.
- A positive and significant relationship was found between Learning Style and the School Environment of secondary-school students.
- No significant relationship was found between Psychological well-being and Academic Achievement of secondary-school students.
- No significant relationship was found between School Environment and Academic Achievement of secondary-school students.

IV. CONCLUSION

Findings emanated from descriptive analysis are reported as

1. 80.4% of students from both govt. and private secondary schools have a moderate level of psychological wellbeing.
2. 66.2% of students from both govt. and private secondary schools perceive their academic environment as average.
3. 25.4% of students from govt. and private secondary schools has achieved A2 grades.
4. 22.5% of govt. school students have a higher level of psychological well-being than private school students which includes only 14.2%.
5. 52.5% of govt. school students have above average level of study involvement as compared to private school students (50.8%).
6. 27.5% of private school students have a high-level perception about their academic environment as compared to govt. school students that have only a 22.5% level of perception. Private secondary school students perceive their academic environment as congenial for the learning process.
7. Composite mean score of psychological well-being shows that govt. school students have higher psychological well-being than private school students. However, govt. and private secondary school students were found to have insignificant difference in all dimensions of psychological well-being.
8. Private school students were found to perceive a higher acceptance level from their teachers than govt. school students. On composite mean score, private school students were found to perceive their school environment as moderately congenial as compared to govt. school students. Meanwhile, on other dimensions both the groups were found to have insignificant differences.
9. Academic performance of private school students is found higher than govt. school students
10. Psychological well-being and school environment have been found positively and significantly related to each other.
11. A positive and significant relationship is found between study involvement and school environment.
12. No significant difference has been found between psychological well-being, study involvement and school environment with academic achievement.

Suggestions for Further Research

1. The present study was confined to district Srinagar only and may be conducted in other districts also.
2. The present study should be replicated on a larger sample.
3. The present study includes secondary school students and may be conducted on senior secondary, college and university students.

4. The sample for the present study was taken from govt. and private secondary schools. It should be taken from urban and rural secondary

schools also.

5. The present study may be conducted on professional and non-professional undergraduate students.

6. New variables may be included in the present study like Emotional Intelligence, Scientific Temper and Creativity.

7. This study may be conducted on a large scale considering three regions of the state i.e., Kashmir, Jammu and Ladakh.

8. A comparative study may be conducted among schools following the CBSE and NCERT pattern.

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