



GENDER DIFFERENCES IN MENTAL HEALTH AMONG MALE AND FEMALE PROFESSIONAL AND NON PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS

Psychology

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to find out the gender difference on mental health of professional and non professional students. Psychological well being of the subjects was assessed using General well being scale by Ashok Kalia and Anita Deswal. Results revealed that there is significant difference between male and female students on their mental health. Male students studying both professional and non professional courses were obtained better mental health scores than female subjects.

KEYWORDS

Gender, Professional, Non Professional and Mental Health.

INTRODUCTION

Education is as old as the human race and it is a dynamic process. Education, in real sense, is to humanize humanity, and to make life progressive, cultured and civilized. It is very important for the progress of individual and society. Through Education man develops his creativity, intelligence, thinking and reasoning, aptitude, positive sentiments, attitudes, skills, morality, sense of justice, good values and the individual becomes a well-balanced personality, aesthetically rich, culturally sound, emotionally stable, mentally alert, morally upright, physically strong and healthy, socially efficient, spiritually enlightened, vocationally self sufficient and liberal. The entire life is education as it is continuous and dynamic process forever growing man and society. In any nation the first aim of education is to help the individual to grow mentally healthy. The child's mental health and balance are of utmost important in relation to his/her general health. Mental health is accepted as an important indicator of all round growth and development of students. The declaration of the International Conference on Primary Health Care of Alma Ata, USSR, 1979, defined 'health' as a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and 'mental health' as the capacity of an individual to form harmonious adjustments to his social and physical environment.

The word 'mental' usually implies something more than the purely cerebral functioning of a person; it also stands for his emotional affective states, the relationship he established with others and a quiet general quality that might be called equilibrium in his socio cultural context. Similarly 'health' refers to more than physical health. It connotes the individual's intra-psychic balance fit enough to be adjusting with the external environment and his social functioning. In common usage "mental health" often means both psychological wellbeing and mental illness. Mental health is a normal state of wellbeing, a positive way but a quality of life. The term "Mental Health" connotes a quality of wholeness and soundness. Mental health is not mere absence of mental illness, but it is an active quality of individual's daily living. Mental health governs what an individual feels about others and his ability to face the realities of life. The individual's condition or state of mental health continuously changes depending upon his own actions and the factors acting upon him. A mentally healthy person is expected to be a well adjusted one, living in harmony internally as well as externally. He is expected to be quite happy and at ease with everyone in all spheres of life (home, school, college, work place and society). As a master of the society, he is expected to be productive and constructive. He is expected to be happy, contented, satisfied with a sense of subjective well being, enjoying every bit of his life.

The role of mental health in human life is very important. It plays not only in the lives of individuals but also in the life of society. The term mental health does not refer to any one aspect of mental life or to any one dimension of human personality. Like physical health, mental health is also an aspect of total personality. If a person is well adjusted, he has good physical health, desirable social and moral nature and has harmonious personality. Mental health is an index which shows the extent to which the person has been able to meet his environmental

demands, i.e., social, emotional or physical and the extent to which he gets himself mentally strained. This mental strain is generally reflected in symptoms like anxiety, tension, restlessness or hopelessness among others. If it is felt too long and too extensively by the person, these symptoms may take a definite form (or get syndromized) representing a given illness. Mental health, therefore, should not be confused with mental illness; it is a study of pre-illness mental condition of the person. Mental health, as such, represents a psychic condition which is characterized by mental peace, harmony and content. It is identified by the absence of disabling and debilitating symptoms, both mental and somatic in person (Schneider, 1991).

According to Lulla (1981) Mental Health is a combined outcome of 5 types of health. (a) Physical (b) Emotional (c) Moral (d) Spiritual and (e) Social. Hales and Hales (1995) stated that mental health is the capacity to think rationally and logically and to cope with the transitions, stresses, traumas and losses that occur in all lives, in ways that allow emotional stability and growth. Fredrickson (2001) defined that mentally healthy person is always have an experience of positive emotions; prompts individuals to engage with their environments and take part of activities, many of which are evolutionary adaptive for the individual, its species or both. Satcher (2006) described mental health is a state of emotional and psychological wellbeing in which an individual is able to use his or her cognitive and emotional capabilities, function in society and meet the ordinary demands of everyday life. World Health Organization, 2013 asserted that mental health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not mere the absence of disease, promotion of wellbeing, prevention of mental disorders and the treatment and rehabilitation of people affected by mental disorders (WHO, 2013).

Thus on the basis of aforementioned definitions of mental health: it is clear that mental health means the successful performance of mental function, which results in produced activities, fulfilling relationships with other people and the capacity to adjust to changes and cope with difficulties, hardships from early childhood until late life and is influenced by multiplicity of factors like intelligence, personality, cultural level and physical health. Physical health and mental health are closely connected. Mental health plays an important role in both the ways, the way people behave and the way they feel. Mental health is considered as the spring board of thinking and communication skills, learning, emotional growth and resilience for recovering quick, self esteem and variety of changes in life, either from genetic causes, environmental stresses or physical changes that may occur during their life time.

Over the past few decades there are drastic changes in cultural issues, roles and responsibilities, norms and effective communicative barriers gradually fading the gender inequality. Sinha 1978; Srivastava et al 1987; Sonnak and Towell 2001; Abootaleb et al 2004 and Mahmoud Shirazi et al 2012 concluded in their studies that there is no gender difference in mental health among students. But Magotra, 1982; Gulati and Dutta, 2004; Gupta and Kumar, 2010, Jasvir Kaur, 2013 and Juncheng Zhu et al 2016 concluded in their studies that male

students are better on their mental health. Previous studies done by Veereshwar ,1979 Kaur, 1982; Rajaswat,2002 and Bhalerao et al 2008 reported that there is no gender difference in mental health among students. Success of college education depends upon large measures on how each young man or woman feels about his/her college experiences and home experiences. It makes an immense difference whether he/she acquired attitudes and habits favorable to his/her own better intellectual, social, psychological and emotional developments as a result of college experience, or develops anti-social tendencies accompanied by bitterness and frustration. Social and emotional maturity is desirable in the development of intellectual power an end product of formal education. In his relationships with a congenial group of his own age, he/she receive practice in the art of sharing similar interests and activities. Keeping these in view, the present study is focused to examine the impact of gender on their mental health professional and non professional college students.

Objectives

To assess the gender differences in Mental Health of Professional and Non Professional students.

Hypotheses

1. There would be significant difference between male and female professional college students with regard to their mental health.
2. There would be significant difference between male and female non professional college students with regard to their mental health.
3. There would be significant difference between male and female (irrespective of nature of course) students with regard to their mental health.

Sample

The sample of the present study comprised 200 professional and non professional college students, in which 100 were male and 100 were female and their age group was 119-21 years. The colleges were randomly selected in and around Chittoor and Kadapa districts of Andhra Pradesh. Systematic random sample technique was used to collect the data.

Tool and Procedure

A bio-data sheet was prepared seeking the information about the respondents' demographic information. General Well Being Scale developed by Ashok Kalia and Anita Deswal was used in the present investigation. The scale consists of 55 items with four areas. The test is a combination of both positive and negative items. The responses of the subjects were scored with the help of prescribed key for four sub scales of general wellbeing. On the whole, higher the score indicates good mental health.

Table-I: Means, Standard Deviation and 't' values of Mental Health Scores of Male and Female Professional College Students.

Mental Health	Category	Gender	Mean	SD	t-value	Level of Significance
	Professional	Male	174.94	34.90	2.97	0.01
		Female	167.16	32.42		

Table I depicts the results of professional students on mental health in relation to their gender. The obtained 't' value of 2.97 reveals that there is significant difference between professional male and female students with regard to their mental health. Male students are better on their mental health (M=174.94) than female students (M=167.16). The present study reports that there is gender difference in the mental health of male and female professional students. Magotra, 1982, Gulati and Dutta, 2004, Gupta and Kumar, 2010 Jasvir Kaur, 2013 and Juncheng Zhu et al, 2016 supports the above findings and report that there is gender difference in mental health of subjects.

Table-II: Means, Standard Deviation and 't' values of Mental Health Scores of Male and Female Non Professional College Students.

Mental Health	Category	Gender	Mean	SD	t-value	Level of Significance
	Non Professional	Male	168.07	33.64	1.53	NS
		Female	166.81	32.16		

Insignificant 't' value of 1.53 reveals that there is no significant difference between non professional course male (M=168.07) and female students (M=166.81) on their mental health. The few previous

studies (Sinha,1978; Srivastava et al 1987; Sonnak and Towell 2001; Abootaleb et al 2004 and Mahmoud Shirazi et al 2012) also reported that there is no gender difference in mental health among students.

Table-III: Means, SDs and 't' values of Mental Health Scores of Male and Female Professional & Non Professional College Students.

Mental Health	Category	Gender	Mean	SD	t-value	Level of Significance
	Professional & Non Professional	Male	170.17	34.03	1.69	0.05
		Female	165.96	32.19		

The results in the table III shows the significant difference (t=1.69<0.05) between male and female students (irrespective of nature of course) on their mental health. It reveals that there is significant difference between male (M=170.17) and female (M=165.96) students on their mental health. Hence the framed hypothesis men and women professional and non professional college students would differ significantly on their mental health is accepted as warranted by the results. The present research finding support the research conclusion of Juncheng Zhu et al 2016, reported that there is significant influence of nature of course on mental health of the professional and non professional students.

CONCLUSIONS

Male professional students are better on their mental health than professional female students; there is no significant gender difference between male and female non professional students with regard to their mental health among students; irrespective of nature of course male students possessed better mental health than female students.

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