Mental Well Being of Secondary School Students in relation to Bullying Behaviour

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Abstract

The mental well-being is an individual's overall sense of satisfaction with life, the presence of positive emotions, the ability to manage stress. Bullying could be one of those factors which can affect students' well-being. It involves repeated aggressive behavior where one individual intentionally harms another, either physically, verbally, or emotionally. The objective was, to study the level of mental well being and bullying behaviour of the students and to study the mental well being in respect to gender and school type. Other objective was to study the mental well being level in relation to bullying behaviour. A Descriptive Survey research design was used. The population of the study comprises of Government and Private School students of Ajmer city. A sample of 122 secondary school students was selected through Stratified Random Sampling Technique. A "Mental Health Scale" developed by Dr. (Smt.) Kamlesh Sharma (1969), was used to assess Mental Well-Being, while a self-constructed Checklist tool was used to determine the Bullying Behavior level. The findings of the study revealed that moderate level of mental well being and bullying behaviour are present in the students. There is no significant difference in mental well being based on gender and type of school. The study concludes that there is a negative relationship between bullying behavior and mental well-being among students, emphasizing the need for schools to implement effective anti-bullying interventions and provide mental health support to ensure a positive learning environment.

Keywords: Mental Well Being, Bullying Behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

Mental well-being is an essential part which helps in the overall development of a person. It is a state in which a person can deal with the challenges of life, maintain a positive relation, work productively and realize their full potential. A good mental well being is important for secondary level students as it supports their academic achievements, healthy social relationships and strengthens emotional resilience. Students who have a higher mental well-being have sense of contentment and the ability to effectively cope with life's challenges. It encompasses positive emotions, a sense of purpose, and the capacity to engage in fulfilling relationships and activities. Mental well being is a broad concept which include different dimensions namely social well-being, emotional well-being and psychological well-being. Various factors can influence mental well being of a student positively or negatively like biological factor which include genetics, chronic illness physical health that can affect mental stability. Psychological aspects, such as coping skills, personality traits and self-esteem. Another one is social influence-like sense of belonging, social support and relationships. Additionally, environment factors such as school stress, societal expectations, living conditions, lifestyle choices and past trauma might influence the mental well being of a student.

Bullying behaviour refers to the practice of intentionally hurting someone. It is an aggressive and repeated behaviour by an individual or group of people, which involves a perceived imbalance of power between the bully and victim. Bullying can be seen in different forms – physical, social, verbal and cyberbullying. Physical bullying involves harming someone by using physical force like pushing, kicking or hitting while social bullying involved ruining someone's reputation or embarrassing them publicly. When a student uses any harsh or mean words to make the other student feel inferior, it comes under verbal bullying. And the last, cyberbullying takes place over the digital platforms. It can include sending harmful messages, sharing private information or photos without any consent. It negatively affects student overall development. It hampers their academic performance, physical health and emotional resilience by creating a fear, anxiety and low self-esteem. Bullying behaviour can increase students' loneliness as they will not feel safe and develop trust issues in forming healthy relationship with anyone in the school.

Those students who are a victim of bullying behaviour may face a significant decline in their mental well being as it leads to chronic stress which affects psychological and emotional health of the student. The feeling of constant fear and humiliation can result in

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helplessness, poor relations, low confidence and even suicidal thoughts. Creating an anti bullying policies and maintaining a mental health support in schools is very important to stop the bullying activities and fostering an overall well - being of the students.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Nazir and Nesheen (2015) conducted a study the "Impact of school bullying on the psychological well being of adolescents". The study found that bullying has significant association with poor academics and anxiety. Students who experience bullying behaviour are at higher risk for issues like depression and loneliness. Bullying also affects the students mental well being for long term by damaging their self-esteem.

Verma. M., et. al (2021) investigated a study on "Bullying and Its Impact on School Going Adolescents". The population comprises adolescents from Government Boys Senior Secondary School. The result showed that 49.68% of adolescents were involved in bullying. Verbal bullying was more prevalent among the students. Negative correlation was found between the bullying behaviour and mental well-being.

Srivastava and Patel (2019) conducted a study titled "Association Between Bullying, Peer Victimization and Mental Health Problems in Adolescents". The results of this study, showed that 97.1% of the students has experienced bullying with them where verbal bullying with 95.5% was most used to bully. The adolescents were facing emotional and behaviour challenges because of bullying activities.

Bhygyan. K., et. al (2021) investigated a study "Experiences of Bullying in Relation to Psychological Functioning of Adolescents in Schools". It involved 311 sample of girls and boys. The findings revealed that 22.2% of the participants had been victims of bullying activities. Male experienced higher rates of bullying. At last, the chances of depression and antisocial personality issues was seen more in the individuals who were affected by the bullying activities.

Poonam Thapliyal (2023) assessed on the "Psychological Well-Being of Private and Government Secondary School Students". The study used a descriptive survey design and consists sample from 10 secondary schools. The findings revealed a significant difference in psychological well being between private and government school students, as well as between female and male students.

Chenting Li (2023) studied on "The Relationship Between School Bullying and Mental Well Health among Adolescents". The findings revealed that adolescents who were involved in bullying were more likely to develop mental health problems and showed lower cognitive, social and emotional functioning compared to those who were not involved.

Rationale of the study

Secondary school students are at a critical developmental stage, exposure to bullying can lead to negative effect on their mental well being. A few studies have addressed this issue, but there is still a gap in understanding how bullying behaviour affects students mental well-being. The findings on gender differences and school type are also unclear. Therefore, these gaps motivated the researcher to conduct research addressing the mental well being in relation to students' bullying behaviour.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Question

What is the relation between mental well-being and bullying behaviour of secondary level school students?

Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study are as follows:

To study the mental well being of secondary level school students.

1. To study the mental well being of secondary level school students in relation to their gender and school type.
2. To study the bullying behaviour of secondary level school students.
3. To study the mental well-being of secondary level school students in relation to bullying behaviour.

Research design

In this study ,a Descriptive Survey method was used to meet the objectives.

Population and the Sample of the study

Secondary Level School Students of Ajmer city comprises the population of the study. The sample was selected by Stratified Random Sampling Technique. Sample of the study consists 122 secondary level school students.

Tool of the Study

In the present study, a standardized tool "Mental Health Scale" by Dr. (Smt.) Kamlesh Sharma (1996) for mental well-being was used. For this tool, the Test- retest (interval of 2 months) and Split - Half reliability coefficient was found .86 and .88 respectively.

Additionally, the validity coefficient was calculated by comparing the scale with Mental Health Check List of Pramod Kumar and was found .79.

To assess the bullying behaviour, self-constructed checklist was developed by the researcher under the supervision of Dr. Amrita Katyayni in 2024. In the checklist, a total of 12 questions were included from 4 dimensions of bullying behaviour i.e. physical, verbal, social and cyber bullying. The students have to read the question and mark (✓) either in the "Yes" or "No" column according to their experiences.

After preparing the tool, the face validity was established by taking the feedback by experts. Three items were modified as per the advice and one item was removed to ensure the validity.

The reliability of the tool was ensured by determining the internal consistency using the split half method. The correlation coefficient obtained was 0.76 and thus the tool was a reliable one.

 Data Collection

The researcher distributed the tools to each student in the class of randomly selected schools and data was collected. After administering the tools, scoring was done as per the scoring procedure mentioned in the manual.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Objective 1: To study the mental well being of secondary level school students.

To study the nature of distribution of Mental Well Being scores of total samples, relevant statistical measures were calculated. Following is the basic statistic for Mental Well Being scores represented in table 1.

Table 1: Basic Statistic for Mental Well Being Scores (N=122)

Basic Statistic	Value
N	122
Mean	61.86065574
Median	62
Mode	62
S.D.	10.40765419
Kurtosis	-0.700310476
Skewness	-0.053465785
Range	46
Minimum	40
Maximum	86

The basic statistic shows that mental well being is moderately present in the sample with the mean of 61.86 and standard deviation 10.407, The minimum score is 40 and maximum score is 86, with the range of 46. The distribution has skewness of -0.534 and kurtosis of -0.700. The value of skewness is moderate, indicating the distribution is symmetric and kurtosis value suggests that data has flatter tails and is less peaked, with fewer extreme values.

To check the normality of data Q-Q Plot has been used.

Figure 1: Q-Q Plot of Mental Well Being Score
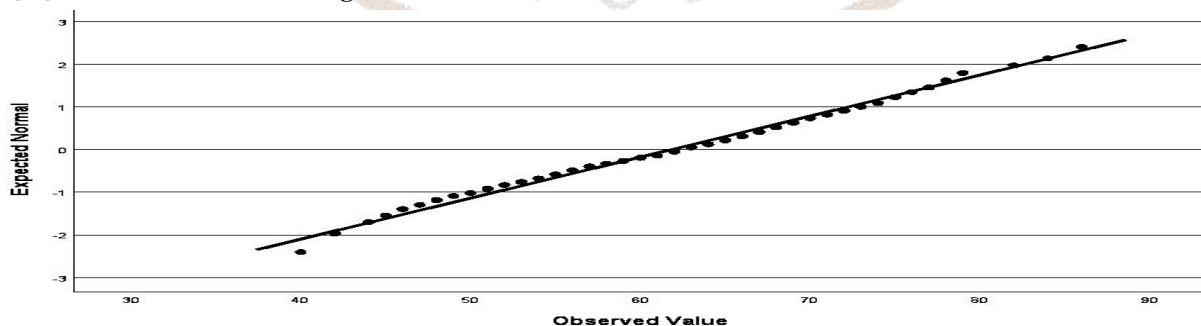
In the above Q Q Plot, the points follow the diagonal line closely, indicating that the distribution of mental well-being scores is approximately normal. There are minor deviations at the lower and upper ends of the plot, where the points stray slightly from the line, but these deviations are small and suggest that the distribution does not have significant skewness or kurtosis. Overall, the data appears to be normally distributed based on this plot.

Objective 2: To study the mental well-being of secondary level school students in relation to their gender and school type.

H$_O$: There is no significant difference in the mental well-being of secondary level school students in relation to the gender.

To achieve this objective null hypothesis was formulated and tested with the help of t – test. The result is summarized in table 2.

Table 2: t-value for difference in Mental Well Being of Male and Female students.

Gender	N	Mean	S.D.	t – value	P	Remarks
Female	49	61.06	9.527	-.694	0.489	Not Significant
Male	73	62.40	10.991	(df 120)		

The above table presents, the mean score for females is 61.06 with the standard deviation of 9.527, while the mean score for males is 62.40 with a standard deviation of 10.991. The t-value is -0.694, with a p-value of 0.489. Since the p-value is greater than the significance level 0.05, there is no significance difference between the groups. Also, the t-value was calculated as -.694 which is less than the table t – value of 1.98 at df 120. **Therefore, null hypothesis is accepted and there is no significant difference in the Mental Well-Being of secondary level school students in relation to gender.**

H$_O$: There is no significant difference in the mental well-being of secondary level school students in relation to the school type.

This null hypothesis was tested with the help of t – test. The results are summarized in table 3.

Table 3: t-value for difference in Mental Well Being of Government and Private students.

School	N	Mean	S.D.	t – value	P	Remarks
Government	55	63.27	10.792	1.363	0.176	Not Significant
Private	67	60.70	10.014	(df 120)		

In the table 3, the government school group consists of 55 students, with a mean score of 63.27 and a standard deviation of 10.792. The private school group has 67 students, with a mean score of 60.70 and standard deviation of 10.014. The t-value is 1.363, and the p-value is 0.176. Since the p-value is greater than the significance level of 0.05, the difference between the mean scores of governments and private school students is not statistically significant. Also, the t-value was calculated as 1.363 which is less than the table t – value of 1.98 at df 120. **Therefore, null hypothesis is accepted and there is no significant difference in the mental well being of secondary level school students in relation to school type.**

Objective 3: To study the bullying behaviour of secondary level school students.

To fulfill this objective relevant statistical measure were calculated. Following is the basic statistic for bullying behaviour scores as presented in table 4.

Table 4: Basic Statistic for Bullying Behaviour Scores (N=122)

Basic Statistic	Value
N	122
Mean	6.32
Median	6.00
Mode	6
S.D.	3.097
Skewness	.048
Kurtosis	-.957
Range	11
Minimum	1
Maximum	12

The basic statistic shows that bullying behaviour is moderately present in the sample with the mean of 6.32 and standard deviation 3.097, The minimum score is 1 and maximum score is 12, with the range of 11. The distribution has skewness of .048 and kurtosis of 0.84. The value of skewness is approximately symmetrical and kurtosis value has fewer extreme values.

To study the distribution of bullying behaviour score of total samples, the scores were divided into three levels of Bullying Behaviour and frequencies in each level were determined. The class interval and frequency distribution of Bullying Behaviour Level is given in the table 5.

Table 5: Distribution of Bullying Behaviour Level of Total Sample

Levels of Bullying Behaviour	Class Interval	Frequency	Percentage Frequency
Low Bullying Behaviour	1 – 4	38	31%
Average Bullying Behaviour	5 – 8	51	42%
High Bullying Behaviour	9 – 12	33	27%

The table shows that 31% of students have low level of bullying, 42% have average levels, and 27% have high levels. This distribution indicating average bullying behavior among the secondary level school students.

The above table is graphically represented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Distribution of Bullying Behaviour Level of Total Sample
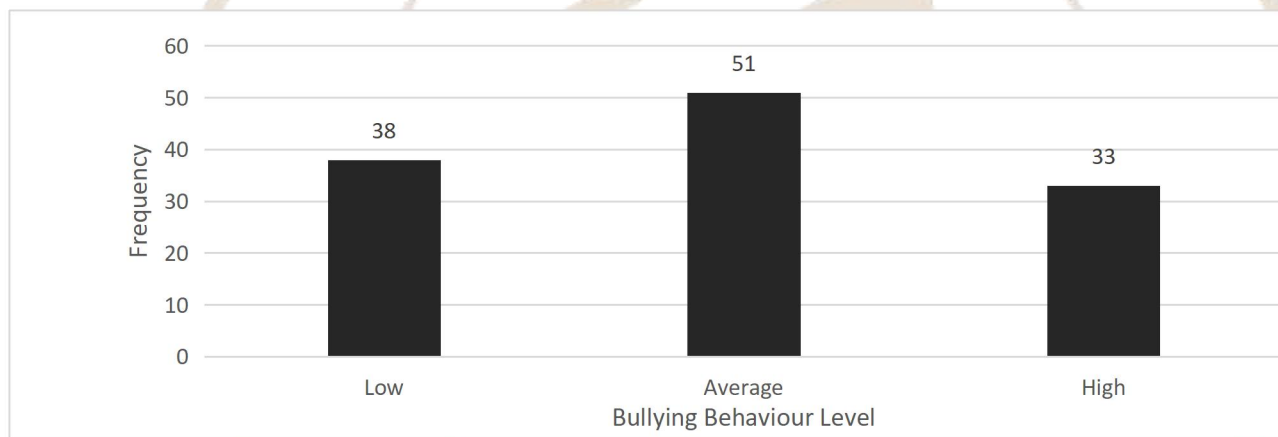
Objective 4: To study the mental well being of secondary level school students in relation to bullying behaviour.

H$_O$: There is no significant difference in mental well-being of secondary level school students in relation to bullying behaviour.

To achieve this objective null hypothesis was formulated and tested with the help of ANOVA test. The result is presented in table 7.

Table 7: ANOVA test of Mental Well Being scores on the basis of Bullying Behaviour Level

Between Groups	8456.709	2	4228.354	108.211	<.001	P <.05
Within Groups	4649.922	119	39.075			
Total	13106.631	121				Significant

The sum of squares between groups is 8456.709, with 2 degrees of freedom (df), resulting in a mean square of 4228.354. The sum of squares within groups is 4649.922 with 119 degrees of freedom, yielding a mean square of 39.075. The total sum of squares is 13106.631. The F value is 108.211, with a p-value 0.001.

Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the result is statistically significant, meaning that there is a significant difference between the groups being compared. This leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis. **Thus, there is significant difference in mental well being of secondary level school students in relation to Bullying Behaviour**

Discussion on the Results

The mean values suggest a moderate level of mental well-being among secondary school students. These are may be the contributing factors such as pressure of academic, peer relationships, and personal growth. Also, the level of support systems of the students from their family, school, and the community, could affect students' mental health.

No significant difference was found in the mental well-being of female and male students. This could be possible because both the groups face similar peer interactions, academic pressure and social stressors in school, which act on their mental health in similar ways. The findings are supported by Chaudhary (2024).

Similarly, there was no significant difference in the mental well-being of students from government and private schools. This may be due to similar kind of academic challenges, peer dynamics, and mental health support in both type of schools. However, the finding is in contradiction with the result obtained by Thapiyal (2023), who found a difference in mental well-being scores between government and private school students.

In terms of bullying behaviour, the mean score shows an average level of bullying among secondary school students. This could be due to reasons such as peer dynamics, school environment, cultural influences, and psychosocial stress from academics as well as personal issues. These factors may explain the average level of bullying in schools.

A significant difference was found among the group of secondary schools students, divided on the basis of bullying behaviour. Higher bullying behavior linked to lower mental well-being, and lower bullying behaviour linked to better mental well-being. This implies bullying behaviour increases stress, anxiety, and emotional distress, which ultimately harm their mental health. These findings are supported by Suresh and Tipandjan (2012), Maji et al. (2016), and Patel et al. (2017), who also found a connection between bullying and students' mental well-being.

Conclusion

The study found that secondary school students exhibited moderate levels of both mental well-being and bullying behavior. No significant differences were observed in mental well-being based on gender or school type, indicating that these factors do not strongly influence mental well being. However, a significant negative relationship was found between bullying behavior and mental well-being, where students with higher level of bullying behavior had lower mental well-being scores, while those with lower level of bullying behavior had higher mental well-being scores.

Overall, mental well-being acts as a protective factor, helping adolescents manage stress, build resilience, and adapt to changing circumstances, but bullying behaviour can be one of the causes which can negatively affect students' mental well-being. Hence, this study emphasizes the importance for policymakers to develop comprehensive anti-bullying and mental health support systems in schools. Additionally, the school authority should provide guidance and counselling services and train teachers to manage bullying behaviour and mental health issues. An equitable intervention for all students is necessary to create safer and more supportive educational environment.

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