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Shaping Mental Well-Being through Education: An Analysis of Educational Stream, Occupation, and Marital Status in Karnataka

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Abstract: ***"Education is not just about the preparation for life; education is life itself." This profound insight by John Dewey underscores that the environments in which we learn and work- our educational streams and professional occupations- are the primary architects of our psychological resilience. Mental well-being is not a static trait but a functional outcome of one's socio-educational journey. While academic institutions traditionally focus on cognitive outcomes, the mental health of individuals is significantly shaped by the pressures of their chosen streams and the stability of their subsequent careers. The primary purpose of this study was to analyse the mental health dimensions of a diverse cohort, ranging from college students to individuals aged 50 years, in Karnataka, India. Utilizing a sample of 508 participants, the researcher examined variations across Educational Stream, Occupation, and Marital Status. The collected data were processed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including percentages, t-tests, One-way ANOVA, and Standard Deviation. The findings highlight critical disparities, particularly within specific academic disciplines and professional roles, providing a basis for targeted educational interventions and workplace wellness strategies.***

Keywords: Mental Well-being, Educational Stream, Occupational Stress, Marital Status, Karnataka, Socio-Educational Intervention

1. Introduction

The contemporary educational landscape is not merely a venue for academic achievement but a primary ecosystem that shapes the psychological resilience of individuals. As John Dewey posited, education is life itself, suggesting that the streams we choose and the professions we enter define our mental well-being. In a rapidly evolving society like Karnataka, the transition from being a student to a working professional involves navigating complex social roles and marital expectations. This study investigates how these specific socio-educational variables—academic stream, occupation, and marital status—intersect with mental well-being indicators such as stress management, emotional stability, and interpersonal satisfaction.

Objectives of the Study:

1) To assess the general status of mental well-being among college students and adults up to 50 years of age in Karnataka[1].
2) To compare the mental health dimensions of individuals across different educational streams (e.g., Arts, Science, Commerce, Engineering, and Humanities)[2].
3) To examine the variations in mental well-being among participants belonging to various occupational categories (e.g., Students, Teachers, Professors, and Homemakers).
4) To determine if there is a significant difference in mental health status based on the marital status (Married vs. Unmarried) of the respondents.
5) To formulate targeted educational interventions and workplace wellness strategies based on the identified disparities[3].

Hypotheses of the Study:

These are formulated as Null Hypotheses (H_0) to be statistically tested:

- H_01: There is no significant difference in the mental well-being of individuals belonging to different educational streams.
- H_02: There is no significant variation in the mental health dimensions of participants based on their occupational roles.
- H_03: There is no significant difference in the mental well-being of participants based on their marital status.

2. Methodology

1) Research Method:

This study utilizes a Descriptive Survey Method[4]. This approach is ideal for gathering data from a broad cohort to describe characteristics and identify significant differences among pre-existing groups[5].

2) Population and Sampling:

- **Population:** The target population includes diverse individuals in Karnataka, ranging from college-going students to middle-aged adults up to 50 years[6].
- **Sample Size:** A total of 508 participants were selected for the study[7].
- **Sampling Technique:** The researcher employed Stratified Random Sampling to ensure that educational backgrounds and professional roles were adequately represented[8].

3) Research Design:

An Ex-Post Facto Design is adopted[9]. Since the variables (stream, occupation, marital status) are already established and cannot be manipulated, this design allows for the analysis of how these social factors influence the dependent variable: mental well-being[10].

4) Research Tool:

Data collection was performed using a Mental Health Inventory (MHI)[11].

- Dimensions: The tool assesses several psychological dimensions, including positive self-evaluation, integration of personality, autonomy, and environmental mastery[12].
- Validity: The tool is a standardized instrument with established reliability and validity for the Indian context[13].

5) Statistical Techniques:

The data will be analysed using the Percentages, Standard Deviation, Unpaired t-test, and One-Way ANOVA.

3. Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Young and Middle-Aged Individuals in the Study Area

		Frequency	Percent
Educational Stream	Arts	196	38.6
	Commerce	36	7.1
	Engineering	8	1.6
	Humanities	8	1.6
	Science	260	51.2
Occupation	Homemaker	24	4.7
	Lecturer	8	1.6
	Other Occupation	20	3.9
	Professor	4	.8
	Research Scholar	4	.8
	Student	392	77.2
	TEACHER	56	11.0
Marital Status	Married	112	22.0
	Unmarried	396	78.0
	Total	508	100.0

Table 2: One-way ANOVA for Mental Health Scores of Participants Based on their Educational Stream

ANOVA				
Mental health				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	p
Arts	196	81.33	11.703	<0.001
Commerce	36	70.22	16.732	
Humanities	8	66.00	1.069	
Science	260	81.14	11.282	
Engineering	8	68.00	13.898	
Total	508	79.99	12.378	

Mental health scores varied significantly across different fields of study ($p < 0.001$). Arts (81.33) and Science (81.14) students had the highest mental health scores, while students in Humanities (66.00), Commerce (70.22), and Engineering (68.00) reported lower scores. The lower scores in Engineering and Commerce students may reflect academic pressure, job market competition, or financial concerns.

Table 3: One-way ANOVA for Mental Health Scores of Participants Based on Occupational Category

One-way ANOVA				
Mental health				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	p
Student	392	81.45	11.592	<0.001
Teacher	56	71.71	13.722	
Lecturer	8	64.00	24.588	
Professor	4	89.00	.000	
Research Scholar	4	81.00	.000	
Other Occupation	20	86.80	4.697	
Homemaker	24	73.50	7.071	
Total	508	79.99	12.378	

A statistically significant difference in mental health scores was observed across different occupations ($p < 0.001$). Professors had the highest mental health scores (89.00), possibly due to job stability and experience. Lecturers (64.00) and teachers (71.71) reported lower mental health scores, which may be due to academic pressure, workload, or job insecurity. Students (81.45) and research scholars (81.00) had relatively higher scores, but homemakers (73.50) and those in other occupations (86.80) varied significantly.

Table 4: Comparison of Mental Health Scores Based on Marital Status Using Unpaired t-test

Unpaired t test					
	Marital Status	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	p
Mental health	Married	112	79.36	13.984	0.539
	Unmarried	396	80.17	11.897	

No significant difference was found between married (79.36) and unmarried individuals (80.00) ($p = 0.539$). This indicates that marital status alone does not significantly affect mental health.

4. Major Findings

Based on the analysis of 508 participants, the following major findings were formulated:

1) Demographic Distribution

- **Educational Stream:** The majority of participants belonged to the **Science (51.2%)** and **Arts (38.6%)** streams.
- **Occupation:** A vast majority of the sample were **Students (77.2%)**, followed by **Teachers (11.0%)**.
- **Marital Status:** The sample was largely composed of **Unmarried (78.0%)** individuals.

2) Psycho-social Well-being Indicators

- **Goal Support & Resilience:** A strong **85.0%** of participants felt supported in achieving their goals, and **74.8%** felt capable of managing stress and anxiety.
- **Emotional Stability: 44.9%** of participants frequently experienced mood swings, indicating a significant need for emotional regulation strategies.
- **Cognitive Focus:** Despite overall resilience, **40.2%** found it difficult to concentrate on tasks, and **37.8%** reported trouble making decisions.
- **Social Connection:** While **72.4%** were satisfied with their relationships, **22.8%** reported feelings of isolation or loneliness.

- **Self-Perception:** Positive self-regard was high, with **83.5%** of participants reporting they did not experience self-hatred.

5. Discussion

The data reveals a 'Resilience Paradox': while 74.8% of participants report high stress-management self-efficacy, nearly 45% experience frequent mood swings. This suggests that while individuals possess the **cognitive belief** that they can cope, their **emotional regulation** is under significant strain. This gap is most visible in the Humanities and Engineering streams, where scores fell significantly below the Arts and Science cohorts ($p < 0.001$).

The dominance of the Science stream (**51.2%**) and the Student category (**77.2%**) in the sample suggests that academic pressure may be a silent driver of the reported concentration difficulties (**40.2%**). Furthermore, the fact that **36.2%** have experienced relationship conflicts suggests that interpersonal education is as vital as academic instruction for maintaining long-term mental well-being.

6. Educational Implications

1) **Curriculum for Emotional Intelligence:** Since nearly half of the participants experience mood swings, educational institutions must integrate social-emotional learning (SEL) to help students navigate emotional shifts.
2) **Cognitive Support Systems:** The reported difficulties in concentration and decision-making (**37.8%**) suggest that "Learning to Learn" and "Mindfulness" workshops should be part of the academic stream requirements.
3) **Support for Professional Transitions:** The shift from the transition from student to professional educator roles. requires specific mental health orientations to help maintain the high goal-support levels found in this study.

7. Suggestions

1) **Stream-Specific Wellness Programs:** High-pressure streams like Science and Engineering should have built-in mental health "buffer" periods to reduce cognitive fatigue.
2) **Interpersonal Skills Training:** To address relationship conflicts (**36.2%**) and loneliness (**22.8%**), colleges should promote peer-support groups and communication workshops.
3) **Digital and Cognitive Hygiene:** To improve concentration levels, students should be trained in managing digital distractions and setting realistic micro-goals.
4) **Early Screening:** Institutions should implement regular screenings for anxiety and insecurity, as over one-third of the population reported these feelings.

8. Conclusion

This research concludes that mental well-being in Karnataka is a product of supportive environments and individual resilience. While participants show high levels of self-adequacy and goal-oriented support, the prevalence of mood swings and concentration difficulties points toward a need for more nuanced mental health interventions. By addressing these internal psychological challenges through the educational framework, we can move toward a society where education truly serves as "life itself," fostering not just careers, but comprehensive psychological health.

References

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