

Holistic Assessment of Positive Youth Development: Towards Viksit Bharat 2047

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Abstract- As India turns towards 100 years of its independence it would be contributing about 24.3% to the global workforce. Its direct impact on our economic growth and development cannot be underestimated. This much acclaimed demographic boom of young people with a median age of 28.4 years (average age of working group population) can enhance our competitive advantage locally and globally. In order to successfully exploit this advantage and to build a better morale among the next generation is essential and imminent of positive youth development. Studies conducted in this field also emphasize the need to address the problems of the growing youth population like cross-cultural challenges, gender-based violence and drug abuse that derail the productivity of the future generation. It is here that this study would be a novel attempt to focus not just on building a cognitive or skill-based talent force but a holistic youth. This calls for not only grooming skill-based talent among the youth but building holistic youth through focussing on psychological wellbeing powered by spiritual intelligence.

Psychological wellbeing can lead to positive mental states, such as happiness or satisfaction and our young people should possess them in abundance. Also, youth is the best time to develop positive emotions and training skills, because youth are seeking to find their identity and their future personality during this period. Again, this can be powered by cultivating spiritual intelligence that is associated with deep understanding of the inner self and the feeling of connectedness with a supreme self. This research paper is thus a holistic assessment of positive youth development based on the two different but related constructs of psychological and spiritual knowledge to build strong youth rather than merely looking upon it as an economic dividend. The paper also dwells on the growing need for mindfulness in steering positive youth development as India prepares for a Viksit Bharat.

Key words: positive youth development, psychological well-being, spiritual intelligence, mindfulness

INTRODUCTION

This research study focuses on the two aspects of spiritual engagement and psychological wellbeing of youth and its impact on their development. Spiritual engagement is an important dimension in youth development in India. Youth who are engaged in spirituality prevents them from socially offensive behaviour. This is because spirituality is an energy that can guide people in their challenging times and help them to rationalize behaviour. The major social issues for youth are drug usage, social media addiction, depression, alcohol usage and bullying. A systematic review of literature is undertaken to establish the relationship between spirituality and psychological wellbeing as it impacts on not only developing sound mind, healthy body but moulds our behaviour towards performing good deeds (Ryff C. D., 2021). Spiritual engagement of youth is seen to guide their positive faith in their capabilities and strongly supports their interactions with society and develops a strong person in discipline and physical wellbeing too.

On the other hand, psychological wellbeing plays an important role in youth development as it guides them in their journey of life in developing strong personal values, goals and purpose of life. It impacts not only on their mental health but also on their physical health leading to the much-required quality of life. It has the power to prevent the youth from falling a prey to social evils like committing crimes, drug abuse, alcoholism, ill health, unemployment as well as falling for anti-social events (Savage, J. A., 2011). Psychological wellbeing (PWB) which is quite similar to other terms like mental wellbeing refers to positive mental states, such as happiness or satisfaction. If I say that “I’m happy or very satisfied with my life you can be pretty sure that my psychological wellbeing is quite high”. This is a measure of one’s state of emotional

wellbeing that reflects an individual behaviour in a situation. This is dependent on the transformation of his/her adolescence through social, psychological and physical changes shaping his/her adulthood.

Time and again spiritual engagement (SE) studies show a connection to something much greater in life not only trying to analyse meaning of our life or the purpose of our existence but connecting to a higher power. It also includes attaining inner peace and harmony through connecting with all beings and the nature at large. Psychological wellbeing (PWB) is more of how to deal with emotions and regulate our behaviour while understanding the circumstances leading to a situation. PWB is positive state of wellbeing that allows us to cope with the challenges of life, build positive relationships, and achieve our goals. These concepts though are unique when taken separately are connected too like positive spiritual engagement can lead to PWB and positive PWB can help one to achieve larger purpose/ higher power. These are important dimensions that can shape youth and direct youth development.

India today is being looked upon as a nation with the largest demographic dividend (working age population having a median age of 29 years) and this benefit will be an advantage until 2055-56 with a peak around 2040-41. If we are to reap the benefit of this dividend then moulding our youth to make them strong enough for the challenges in life and guide them in their life's journey rests not only with the skill knowledge providers(educators) but should make them strong holistically. Youth are pillars of future and surely their inclination to spiritual faith and God centred environment will help to control their social emotions and help in building a healthy future for any country. Hence, it is indispensable to understand their levels of spiritual and psychological quotient that will enhance their development. It is common in India and around the world that most of people are praying or engaging in activities of various faith and activities. They are having varied spiritual ideas and are following different ways to reach their personal satisfaction. In this regard, studies are needed to gain deeper insight on the role of PWB and SE in shaping the youth of tomorrow.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This section presents a brief idea of the major dimensions that form the background of the study and would be helpful in identifying the gaps from the past studies while directing the researcher to frame relevant objectives and the hypothesis that need to be tested.

SPRITUALITY

Religion and spirituality provide (Zohar & Marshall, 2000) possibilities to reflect on the values and meanings of life that could provide purpose for gifted students in their studies and for their future lives. Spiritual intelligence has been suggested as a new intelligence type that includes skills to reflect on the meaning in life and create values in new circumstances.

Spirituality (Koenig, 2012) is a complex construct and usually defined as a combination of the quest for self or soul-searching, connecting with a higher power or transcendence and meaningful connectedness with significant others or relational consciousness. The term "searching for meaning" has become a familiar topic in the study of spirituality (Medlock, 2015). Some previous studies suggested that continuously engaging in religious practice is a certain way to form a meaning of life, while the others believe that religious practice is not the only indication of meaning fulfilment. Spirituality (Li and Chow, 2015) has also been used to predict ones' positive behaviour. Studies trace spiritual development stages as intuitive-projective (0 to 7 years old), the second step, human spiritual stage remaining stable in stage of mythical-lateral belief (8 to 11 years), they then reach Syntactic-conventional (12 to 20 years), the spiritual development is consistent in the stage of individual-reflective (21 to 40 years old) and spiritual development is more likely to be a conjunctive stage in the age of 41 to 60 years old. At the last stage, human spiritual seems to be universal after the age of 60 (Hasan 2006). As spirituality defines the meaning of life and helps human being to comprehend the importance of life existence based on his/her own perspective, it is good if the spiritual inclination can be measured to study the impact on positive development of youth and this can guide in cultivating this discipline among youth. Studies have measured spirituality through various scales, each designed to

capture different aspects of spiritual beliefs, experiences, and practices. Some commonly used scales to measure spirituality include:

Exhaustive literature review has shown many scales like the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale (DSES) that assesses the frequency of spiritual experiences in daily life, such as feeling God's presence, finding strength and comfort in religion, and experiencing inner peace. The Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS) measures two dimensions of spiritual well-being: religious well-being (connectedness to a higher power or God) and existential well-being (sense of purpose and meaning in life). The Brief Multidimensional Measure of Religiousness/Spirituality (BMMRS) scale assesses multiple dimensions of religiousness and spirituality, including religious coping, forgiveness, religious support, and religious attendance. The Spirituality Assessment Scale (SAS) evaluates spirituality across four domains: belief in a higher power, connection to others, the meaning and purpose of life, and the practice of one's spiritual beliefs. The Spiritual Transcendence Scale (STS) measures spiritual transcendence, which includes aspects such as feeling connected to something larger than oneself, experiencing unity with all life, and finding meaning in suffering. The Intrinsic Spirituality Scale (ISS) assesses the degree to which spirituality is an intrinsic part of an individual's identity and worldview. The Quest Scale for Religious and Spiritual Experiences (QUEST): This scale measures the quest for religious and spiritual meaning, including the desire for ultimate truth, openness to new experiences, and the search for personal transformation. Hodge, D. R., Cardenas, P., & Montoya, H. (2001). Substance use: Spirituality and religious participation as protective factors among rural youths. *Social Work Research*, 25(3), 153–161. In another study Makkar, Shikha & Singh, Ajay. (2020) have used five factors viz. Transcendence, Self-Engagement, Service towards others, Self-efficacy, and Self Awareness and also the scale validity was confirmed through CFA method.

PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING (PWD)

Psychological well-being is a broad construct that can be divided into two large domains as objective well-being and subjective well-being (SWB). SWB is also known as hedonic well-being and is described as the feelings related to positive emotional experiences in

life (Diener 1984). (Ryan and Deci, 2000) expressed psychological well-being as having two facets: eudaimonic well-being and hedonic well-being.

The eudaimonic well-being (Johnson et al., 2018) refers to the purposeful aspect of psychological well-being and Ryff developed six dimensions of eudaimonic well-being that is widely used until recently. The hedonic well-being refers to the subjective feelings of happiness, subjective well-being and positive emotions. It comprises of two components, an affective component (high positive affect and low negative affect) and a cognitive component (satisfaction with life). It is proposed that an individual experiences happiness when positive affect and satisfaction with life are both high. The less well-known term, “Eudaimonic” wellbeing is used to refer to the purposeful aspect of PWB. The psychologist Carol Ryff has developed a very clear model that breaks down Eudaimonic wellbeing into six key types of psychological wellbeing.

Eudaimonic Wellbeing terms	Hedonic Wellbeing terms
✓ Self –acceptance	✓ Happiness
✓ Environmental mastery	✓ Subjective wellbeing
✓ Positive relationship	✓ Positive emotions
✓ Personal growth	
✓ Purpose in life	
✓ Autonomy	

According to (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007) the job demands-resources (JD-R model), an increase in positive personal resources and job resources or a decrease in negative job demands enhance both organizational outcomes and individual job performance. And psychological well-being predicts job performance. Psychological well-being happens mostly during adolescence and does not change substantially throughout life (Rathi and Rastogi, 2007). The scale used for PWB was version produced by Ryff. Some of the items used to measure psychological wellbeing are; “I like most parts of my personality.”, “When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out so far.”, “Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them.”, “The demands of everyday life often get me

down.”, “In many ways I feel disappointed about my achievements in life.”. These scales were evaluated using six-degree spectrum (ranging from fully disagreed to fully agree). Each scale consists of 14 articles where psychological well-being of Ryff's model includes data such as self-acceptance, Environmental mastery, positive relationship with others, and purpose in life, personal growth and autonomy

POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT (POYD)

Positive youth development (POYD) refers to youth development in a broad and holistic perspective with a special focus on assets and strengths (Catalano, Hawkins, Berglund, Pollard, & Arthur, 2002). One of the most prominent conceptualizations of such POYD approach is developed by Richard Lerner and his colleagues' (2005) five Cs model. The five Cs represent Competence, Confidence, Character, Connection and caring respectively. Positive Youth Development (POYD) emerged from the need for youth development practitioners to use strengths-based prevention approaches in addressing youth issues (Catalano et al., 2002).

Positive youth development (POYD) is a strength-based approach that focuses on human potential, individual capability, and plasticity (Lerner, 2018; Shek et al., 2019). One prominent conceptualization (Baltes & Baltes, 1990; Freund & Baltes, 2002) of an individual's intentional self-regulation ISR is the Selection, Optimization, and Compensation (SOC model). The scale used for measuring POYD was a version produced by Arnold et al. (2012) and follows the five-Cs model of youth development, by measuring the constructs of confidence, competence, character, caring, and connection. This version also includes the measurement of a sixth C, contribution. The POYD expands from a 4-point scale: 1 (*strongly disagree*), 2 (*disagree*), 3 (*agree*), and 4 (*strongly agree*) to a 5-point scale including a *neutral/unsure* score in their study. The Positive Youth Development “Five Cs” measure for grade 8–12 (Lerner et al., 2005; Phelps et al., 2009; Bowers et al., 2010) was used to assess PYD. This self-report measure consisted of a total of 15 subscales which serve as indicators of each of the Five Cs.

SEM analysis examining how five Cs relate with well-being, which indicates positive outlook on life and

capacities, have shown that all five Cs are positive predictors of well-being. Confidence is again the strongest predictor in this model, followed by connection and competence. Interestingly, character is positively related with well-being while caring emerged as rather poor predictor of mental well-being. Novak, M., Šutić, L., Gačal, H., Roviš, D., Mihić, J., & Maglica, T. (2023). Structural model of 5Cs of positive youth development in Croatia: relations with mental distress and mental well-being. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 28(1).

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPIRITUAL ENGAGEMENT AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

The relationship between spiritual engagement and psychological well-being is a subject of considerable interest in both psychology and spirituality. While the exact nature of this relationship can vary depending on cultural, individual, and religious factors, several general patterns have been observed:

Sense of Meaning and Purpose: Spiritual engagement often provides individuals with a sense of meaning and purpose in life. This can contribute to psychological well-being by providing a framework for understanding life events and fostering resilience in the face of adversity.

Coping Mechanisms: Many people turn to spirituality and religion during times of stress or difficulty as a way of coping with challenging emotions and situations. Practices such as prayer, meditation, and community support can provide comfort and emotional stability, which in turn can improve psychological well-being.

Social Support: Religious and spiritual communities often provide a strong social support network, which can be beneficial for psychological well-being. Belonging to a community of like-minded individuals can reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness, and provide opportunities for social connection and belonging.

Values and Ethics: Spiritual and religious beliefs often promote values such as compassion, forgiveness, and gratitude, which are associated with positive

psychological outcomes. Living in accordance with one's spiritual or religious values can foster a sense of integrity and authenticity, leading to greater psychological well-being.

Mindfulness and Presence: Many spiritual practices emphasize mindfulness, presence, and awareness of the present moment, which can have positive effects on psychological well-being. Mindfulness practices have been associated with reduced stress, anxiety, and depression, and increased feelings of happiness and contentment. Hope and

Optimism: Spiritual beliefs often provide individuals with a sense of hope and optimism about the future, which can be beneficial for psychological well-being, particularly during difficult times. Belief in a higher power or divine plan can help individuals maintain perspective and resilience in the face of adversity.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

The relationship between youth development and psychological well-being is intricate and multi-dimensional. Here are several key aspects of this relationship:

Identity Formation: Youth development involves the exploration and establishment of identity, including aspects such as values, beliefs, and self-concept. A positive sense of identity is closely linked to psychological well-being, as it provides a stable foundation for navigating life's challenges and transitions.

Social Relationships: Healthy social relationships are crucial for both youth development and psychological well-being. Positive interactions with peers, family members, mentors, and other significant individuals contribute to a sense of belonging, social support, and emotional well-being.

Autonomy and Competence: Youth development aims to foster autonomy and competence in various domains, such as academics, extracurricular activities, and personal decision-making. Developing a sense of

mastery and independence promotes feelings of self-efficacy and psychological well-being.

Resilience: Youth development programs often focus on building resilience, which is the ability to adapt and bounce back from adversity. Resilient youth are better equipped to cope with stress, overcome obstacles, and maintain psychological well-being even in challenging circumstances.

Positive Youth Development Framework: The Positive Youth Development (POYD) framework emphasizes fostering assets and strengths in young people rather than simply addressing risks and deficits. POYD programs promote competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring, which are all associated with positive psychological outcomes.

Mental Health Promotion: Youth development efforts play a crucial role in promoting mental health and preventing psychological problems such as depression, anxiety, and substance abuse. By providing supportive environments, teaching coping skills, and promoting healthy behaviours, youth development programs contribute to overall psychological well-being.

Educational Attainment: Educational experiences are a significant aspect of youth development and are closely linked to psychological well-being. Access to quality education, opportunities for learning and growth, and support from teachers and mentors contribute to positive developmental outcomes and psychological well-being.

Cultural and Contextual Factors: The relationship between youth development and psychological well-being is influenced by cultural norms, socio-economic status, family dynamics, and other contextual factors. Effective youth development interventions take these factors into account to ensure that programs are culturally sensitive and responsive to the needs of diverse youth populations.

The review of literature helped to obtain a good idea of the methodologies used in studies to measure youth development on the basis of psychological wellbeing and spiritual engagement under various contexts.

MINDFULNESS IMPACT ON WELLBEING

Mindfulness related theories pose that with focused meditation comes mindfulness and calmness. Through proper practice the self can minimize negative emotions, actions and thoughts. Mindfulness practice is predicted to be successful in the at-risk youth population to foster wholesome thoughts, compassionate behaviours toward others and self along with joy and loving-kindness (Lau N, Hue M.) Preliminary outcomes of a mindfulness-based programme for Hong Kong adolescents in schools: well-being, stress and depressive symptoms Child Spiritual 2011; 16:315–30.) Mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) are programmatically developed interventions focused on internal experiences, such as thoughts, feelings, or sensations, and the Way an individual responds to them (i.e., acceptance vs. change). At the core of these Interventions is mindfulness practice, which can be defined as an awareness of present Experience with acceptance. (Germer, C. What is mindfulness. Insight J. 2004). The Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) was used to measure mindfulness. It places a focus on present time attention and awareness, leaving out dimensions of mindfulness, such as non-judgmental accepting. Statements characterize ideas or actions that are not congruent with mindfulness such as being on automatic pilot, preoccupation and being distracted. Brown, K. W., & Ryan, R. M. (2003). The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84(4), 822-848.

RESEARCH GAP IDENTIFIED

The understanding and measurement of psychological wellbeing and spiritual engagement can contribute towards a pro social behaviour like engaging in voluntary activities. It is considered as a desirable social and political objective that is needed to build in youth a strong personality and direct their energy to focus on a meaningful goal for personal success and better career achievement (Savage, J. A., 2011). Studies in this direction call for research to be conducted in diverse cultural settings and in various geographical locations so that one can iterate the results/ affirm the findings. This can also help to identify other missing factors or different

interventions (Sieng, M. 2018) to address the risky behaviour of the youth. If possible, the effects of the relationship need to be studied over a longer time period. There is need to review the literature in depth to identify necessary scales/instruments to measure psychological wellbeing, spiritual engagement and youth development as concurrent validity of the scales are less researched upon (Makkar, S., & Singh, A. K., 2019). Addressing these gaps can help to develop meaningful pathways for the youth quite early in their life's journey and this can benefit them in the long period to live a sustainable life with peace, purpose.

SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

- Through this study the researcher aims to analyse the life of youth engaged in spirituality through the use of validated instruments for measuring psychological wellbeing, spiritual wellbeing and youth development scales.
- To identify the motivational factors to participate in spirituality and to measure the psychological wellbeing of the youth in this context.
- This research study focuses on the benefits of spirituality in the psychological growth of youth.
- To understand the connection between spirituality, psychological wellbeing and mindfulness leading to positive youth development.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the study will be to explore the connectedness of spiritual engagement to youth development, psychological wellbeing to youth development and to then understand the how spiritual engagement through psychological wellness contribute to a more sustainable youth development.

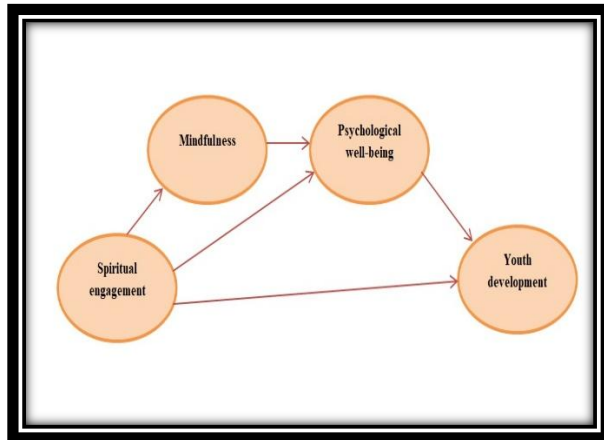
Based on the scales identified the role of the drivers in shaping the constructs of spiritual engagement, psychological wellbeing and youth development (strong personality reinforced by positive emotions, satisfaction, happiness and career achievement) will be explored and how these can be enhanced will be studied.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Based on the above cited theory and research, the initial study is an exploratory and descriptive research design. This will be used to develop a conceptual model. Relevant hypotheses will be developed based on the conceptual model identified. This study will be furthered in the future to validate the conceptual design and then measure positive youth development based on the major constructs of the study.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF THE STUDY

As discussed in the review of literature this study would try to understand the relationship among the four variables and will study strength of the cause effect relationship.



EXPECTED IMPLICATIONS / OUTCOME OF THE STUDY

This study would make contributions to the social sector, educational sector and workplaces apart from contribution to the theoretical studies. It would enable to understand the spiritual engagement of the youth and how it shapes their purpose towards life and ultimately contributing to psychological wellbeing and youth development in general. The study aims to identify what enhances and inhibits youth development with reference to the major constructs of spiritual engagement and psychological wellbeing and in the presence of mindfulness. This would enable to focus the energy of the youth in more constructive ways.

CONCLUSION

Thus, this study would explore the spiritual engagement of youth in various activities and also measure the respondent's psychological wellbeing and explain their effect on positive development of youth. This would guide moulding youth through a more holistic process.

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