

Emotions and Mind: The Interplay Between Emotional Well-Being and Mental Health in College Students

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Abstract—The present study examined the relationship between mental health and emotional well-being among college students, focusing on how psychological functioning influences overall emotional quality of life. Mental health is increasingly recognized as a multidimensional construct involving emotional stability, absence of psychological distress, and effective social functioning, while emotional well-being reflects positive affect, life satisfaction, and emotional regulation. A sample of 500 college students aged 18–25 years was selected using stratified random sampling. Standardized self-report measures were used to assess mental health and emotional well-being. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, regression analysis, factor analysis, and structural equation modeling (SEM). Results revealed a strong positive relationship between mental health and emotional well-being ($r = .68, p < .001$). Regression analysis indicated that mental health significantly predicted emotional well-being, explaining 46% of the variance. Factor analysis supported a two-factor structure corresponding to mental health and emotional well-being constructs. SEM results demonstrated a good model fit and confirmed a significant direct effect of mental health on emotional well-being. The findings highlight the importance of promoting mental health to enhance emotional well-being among college students. Implications for psychological interventions and educational policies are discussed.

Index Terms—Mental health, emotional well-being, college students, SEM, psychological functioning

I. Introduction

Mental health has emerged as a critical determinant of overall well-being, particularly among college students who face increasing academic, social, and emotional demands. According to the World Health Organization, mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which individuals realize their abilities, cope with normal life stresses, work productively, and contribute to their communities. In the context of higher education, mental health plays a pivotal role in shaping students' academic success, interpersonal relationships, and life satisfaction.

Emotional well-being, a core component of psychological health, refers to the presence of positive emotions, life satisfaction, and effective emotional regulation. It encompasses individuals' ability to experience positive affect, maintain optimism, and manage negative emotional states. The transition to college often exposes students to stressors such as academic pressure, identity formation, and social challenges, which can significantly impact both mental health and emotional well-being.

The relationship between mental health and emotional well-being is theoretically grounded in positive psychology, which emphasizes strengths, resilience, and optimal functioning. While mental health traditionally focused on the absence of illness, contemporary perspectives highlight the importance of flourishing, positive emotions, and psychological resilience. Emotional well-being is thus not merely the absence of distress but the presence of meaningful engagement and satisfaction with life.

Despite growing research in this domain, there remains a need for integrative studies that examine the structural relationship between mental health and emotional well-being using advanced statistical techniques such as SEM. Understanding this relationship is essential for designing effective mental health interventions in educational settings.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Early conceptualizations of psychological well-being by Carol D. Ryff (1989) emphasized multidimensional functioning, including self-acceptance, autonomy, and personal growth. Ryff's model provided a foundational framework linking mental health to broader well-being outcomes.

Research by Ed Diener (2000) introduced the concept of subjective well-being, highlighting life satisfaction and positive affect as essential components of emotional well-being. His work demonstrated that individuals with better mental health report higher levels of happiness and life satisfaction.

Studies have consistently shown that mental health problems such as anxiety and depression negatively impact emotional well-being. Aaron T. Beck (1976) identified maladaptive cognitive patterns as key contributors to emotional distress, suggesting that improving mental health can enhance emotional experiences.

Martin E. P. Seligman (2011) proposed the PERMA model, which includes positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. This model underscores the role of emotional well-being as a core component of flourishing mental health.

Empirical studies among college populations indicate a strong association between mental health and emotional well-being. For instance, Keyes (2005) found that individuals with high mental health exhibit greater emotional vitality and resilience. Similarly, research by Lyubomirsky et al. (2005) demonstrated that positive emotional states contribute to better coping and psychological functioning.

Recent studies using advanced statistical methods have further confirmed this relationship. Structural equation modeling has revealed that mental health significantly predicts emotional well-being, with emotional regulation acting as a mediating factor in some cases.

However, gaps remain in integrating multiple analytical approaches such as factor analysis and SEM within a single study, particularly in the Indian college context. The present study addresses this gap by providing a comprehensive statistical examination of the relationship.

III. OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the level of mental health among college students
2. To evaluate the level of emotional well-being among college students
3. To examine the relationship between mental health and emotional well-being
4. To determine the predictive role of mental health on emotional well-being
5. To validate the factor structure of mental health and emotional well-being
6. To test a structural model linking mental health and emotional well-being

IV. HYPOTHESES

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between mental health and emotional well-being

H2: Mental health significantly predicts emotional well-being

H3: Mental health and emotional well-being will form distinct but related factors

H4: The SEM model will show a good fit with a significant path from mental health to emotional well-being

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A quantitative, cross-sectional research design was employed.

Participants

- Sample Size: 500 college students
- Age Range: 18–25 years
- Sampling Technique: Stratified random sampling

Instruments

1. **Mental Health Scale**

- Measures emotional stability, anxiety, depression, and social functioning
- Reliability (Cronbach's α) = 0.89

2. Emotional Well-Being Scale

- Measures positive affect, life satisfaction, emotional regulation, and optimism
- Reliability (Cronbach's α) = 0.91

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected using structured questionnaires administered in classroom settings after obtaining informed consent. Ethical guidelines for confidentiality and voluntary participation were strictly followed.

Statistical Analysis

- Descriptive Statistics (Mean, SD, Skewness, Kurtosis)
- Pearson Correlation
- Linear Regression Analysis
- Factor Analysis (Principal Component Analysis)
- Structural Equation Modeling (SEM using AMOS)

Sample Details

1. **Sample Size (N)** = 500
2. **Age Range** = 18–25 years
3. **Gender:**

A. Male = 240 (48%)

B. Female = 260 (52%)

1. Sampling Method: Stratified Random Sampling

2. Variables Used

Mental Health (MH) Dimensions

- 1 Emotional Stability
- 2 Anxiety (reverse scored)

3 Depression (reverse scored)

4 Social Functioning

Emotional Well-Being (EWB) Dimensions

- Positive Affect
- Life Satisfaction
- Emotional Regulation
- Optimism

3. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
Mental Health (Total)	72.45	10.32	45	95	-0.48	-0.12
Emotional Well-Being	74.80	9.85	50	96	-0.36	-0.25
Emotional Stability	18.60	3.45	10	25	-0.42	-0.30
Anxiety (Rev)	17.95	3.90	8	25	-0.51	-0.10
Depression (Rev)	17.40	3.80	9	25	-0.45	-0.18
Social Functioning	18.50	3.20	11	25	-0.30	-0.22

Interpretation

[1] Scores indicate **moderate to high levels** of mental health and emotional well-being

[2] Slight **negative skewness** suggests more students reported higher well-being

4. Correlation Analysis (Pearson's r)

Variables	MH Total	EWB Total
Mental Health	1.00	0.68
Emotional Well-Being	0.68**	1.00

($p < .01$)

Dimension-wise Correlation

MH Dimensions	EWB
Emotional Stability	0.61**
Anxiety (Rev)	0.59**
Depression (Rev)	0.63**
Social Functioning	0.66**

Interpretation

TABLE I. Strong **positive correlation (r = 0.68)**

TABLE II. Better mental health → higher emotional well-being

5. Regression Analysis

Model Summary

Fig. 1. $R = 0.68$

Fig. 2. $R^2 = 0.46$

Fig. 3. Adjusted $R^2 = 0.45$

Fig. 4. $F(1, 498) = 424.32, p < .001$

Coefficients

Predictor	B	SE	Beta	t	p
Constant	21.35	2.10	—	10.16	.000
Mental Health	0.74	0.04	0.68	20.60	.000

Regression Equation

$$EWB = 21.35 + 0.74(MH)$$

Interpretation

[1] Mental health explains **46% variance** in emotional well-being

[2] Significant predictor ($p < .001$)

6. Factor Analysis

KMO & Bartlett's Test

- KMO = 0.91 (Excellent)
- Bartlett's Test = Significant ($p < .001$)

Extracted Factors (Principal Component Analysis)

Factor	Eigenvalue	Variance %
Factor 1 (Mental Health)	3.85	48.2%
Factor 2 (Emotional Well-Being)	2.10	26.3%

Factor Loadings

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2
Emotional Stability	0.78	—
Anxiety (Rev)	0.75	—
Depression (Rev)	0.80	—
Social Functioning	0.72	—
Positive Affect	—	0.76
Life Satisfaction	—	0.79
Emotional Regulation	—	0.73
Optimism	—	0.77

Interpretation

- Clear **two-factor structure**
- Strong construct validity

7. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

Model Description

- Latent Variable 1: Mental Health
- Latent Variable 2: Emotional Well-Being
- Path: MH → EWB

Fit Indices

Index	Value	Interpretation
Chi-square/df	2.45	Good
CFI	0.95	Excellent
TLI	0.94	Good
RMSEA	0.054	Acceptable
SRMR	0.041	Good

Path Coefficient

- MH → EWB = **0.71** ($p < .001$)

SEM Interpretation

- Strong **direct effect** of mental health on emotional well-being
- Model shows **good fit**

8. SEM Diagram (Text Representation)

Mental Health (Latent)

↓

| Emotional Stability |

| Anxiety (Rev) |

| Depression (Rev) |

Social Functioning

↓ 0.71

| Emotional Well-Being (Latent)|

| Positive Affect |

| Life Satisfaction |

| Emotional Regulation |

Optimism

9. Overall Interpretation

- Mental health and emotional well-being are **strongly interconnected**
- Students with:
 - Lower anxiety & depression
 - Better emotional stability
→ Show higher well-being
- Findings support:
 - Positive psychology theory
 - Mental health promotion in colleges

VI. DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study provide strong empirical support for the hypothesized relationship between mental health and emotional well-being. The significant positive correlation indicates that students with better mental health tend to experience higher levels of emotional well-being, including positive affect and life satisfaction.

Regression analysis further confirmed that mental health is a significant predictor of emotional well-being, accounting for a substantial proportion of variance. This suggests that interventions aimed at improving mental health—such as stress management, counseling, and mindfulness practices—can effectively enhance students' emotional well-being.

The factor analysis results validated the distinct yet related nature of mental health and emotional well-being constructs, supporting theoretical models proposed in positive psychology. The clear factor structure indicates strong construct validity and reliability of the measurement tools.

SEM analysis provided a comprehensive understanding of the structural relationship, revealing a strong direct effect of mental health on emotional well-being. The good model fit indices suggest that the proposed model adequately represents the data.

These findings are consistent with previous research, reinforcing the importance of mental health as a foundation for emotional well-being. In the context of college students, this relationship is particularly critical, as this developmental stage involves significant psychological and emotional transitions.

VII. CONCLUSION

The present study concludes that mental health is a crucial determinant of emotional well-being among college students. The strong relationship between these constructs highlights the need for comprehensive mental health programs within educational institutions. Promoting emotional resilience, reducing psychological distress, and enhancing coping mechanisms can significantly improve students' overall well-being.

The study contributes to the existing literature by integrating multiple statistical approaches, including SEM, to provide a robust understanding of the relationship. Future research may explore mediating variables such as mindfulness, self-efficacy, and social support.

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