State of Psychological well-being of students during Lockdown due to Covid-19 Pandemic: view from some selected parts of India

Mustafizur Rahman[1]

Sukanya De[2]

Abstract

Well-being refers to the state of being relaxed, healthy or joyful. It is not only about physical health but also concerns a great deal with psychological and social aspects. This study attempts to find out the relation between Covid-19 and state of psychological well-being of students and whether the lockdown had a positive or negative impact on them. This study is administrated by survey method and Google Form is used for the comprehension of the impact. A total of 123 students from 22 states of India have participated in this study. The study finds that the pandemic has left the students anxious and worried about their future. The lockdown due to Covid-19 pandemic is making them apprehensive and stressed; hence, maintaining mental well-being is also a concern for them. While the entire world is under the fear of falling ill, for the students in India the worry about their jobs and career is greater than that of falling physically ill. The results also indicate that at the initial stage, the students were happy about the lockdown and enjoying their free time at homes, but eventually, they started getting frustrated. They also started spending most of their time on screens, being highly active on social media, mobile, computer, and TV screen which has some side-effects on students' psychology.

Keywords: Covid-19, India, Media, Psychology, Students, Well-being

Introduction

Well-being is an umbrella term which consists of multiple factors including positive attitudes and emotions, pleasure with life, and absence of depression. Well-being is interconnected and has diverse dimensions of physical, psychological and social well-being which cannot be understood only with the old-fashioned definition of health (Naci & Ioannidis, 2015). It includes physical strength, psychological enthusiasm, social happiness, and personal satisfaction (Kaufman, 2016). However, Diener (2009) defined well-being as overall satisfaction with life. Researchers Frey & Stutzer (2002) and Diener (2000) have examined different aspects of well-being including physical, psychological, social, economic, and emotional well-being. Psychological well-being is one of the dimensions of well-being which mainly focuses on inner-self and mental stages of a human being.

[1]Lecturer, Journalism and Mass Communication, Northern University of Business and Technology Khulna, Bangladesh

[2]Faculty, Institute of Architecture, HNGU, Patan, Gujarat, India

Psychological dysfunction is a part of human life and a person is considered psychologically well if he or she is not going through anxiety, depression, or other forms of psychological symptoms (Ryff, 1995). There are some researchers who have focused on balancing the negative and positive aspects of psychological conditions to define well-being. According to them, psychological well-being is a state of maintaining the balance between challenging and rewarding events of life (Dodge et. al., 2012). Burns (2016) has defined well-being as the inter- and intra-individual levels of positive functioning. To be more specific, Shin & Johnson (1978) has defined psychological well-being as "A global assessment of a person's quality of life according to his own chosen criteria (p. 478)". Thus, the psychological well-being consists of two major things—positivity and negativity. People feel psychological comfort when psychological well-being is more influenced by positivity and people feel psychological dysfunction when negativity affects their psychological well-being more than positivity.

The Covid-19 virus first hit the world at the end of 2019 and World Health Organization (WHO) declared it as a pandemic by the beginning of 2020. The entire world came to halt. Every sector got affected due to the pandemic and the world scenario changed drastically after the widespread of the virus. Out of all the sectors that got affected the education sector is one where the impact was visibly clear and severe. The entire education system saw a 360 degree revolution with online lectures and classes taking over the conventional classroom teaching. Teachers and students both were compelled to stay at home and deliver and attend online lectures respectively. For months students didn't move out, meet anyone in person and attended all the academic activities online. The first year graduation students never visited college or met their colleagues or faculties in person. This was way different to the normal terms in which the education system was supposed to run and unexpected for students. Since students are the future of any country, their psychological well-being is crucial for their personal as well as the growth the country. Students' academic life, personal growth, and career are interrelated and these could be largely affected by the psychological dysfunction (Turashvili & Japaridze, 2012). Even, Pakes & Winstone (2007) and McGuire (2004) have pointed out that severe psychological disorders and psychologically damaged childhood are two of the reasons to increase crime in society. The Covid-19 Pandemic caused the Indian education institutions to close down, completely cut-off physical interactions, and raised online dependences of classes. Due to the discourses like Lockdown, New normal and Social distance, Indian students might have faced or continuing to face difficulties in exploring their academic, personal, and psychological life. Thus, it is essential to examine the impact of Covid-19 Lockdown on psychological well-being.

Literature Review

Ryff (1989), Waterman (1993), and Burns (2016) have discussed positive psychological functioning and its relation to human's mental development, while Dodge et al. (2012) have mainly focused on psychological well-being from the perspective of balancing between positive and negative events of human life. Headey (2006) has argued that positive and negative effects of psychological well-being can be perceived as separate dimensions, however, Diener (2009) has argued that psychological well-being is a multidimensional construct where positivity and negativity are just part of it. Linley & Joseph (2004) are more focused on positive functioning to describe psychological well-being.

In an early stage of research about psychological well-being, Bradburn (1969) moved away from psychiatric diagnoses and focused on the daily life of normal people and their adaptation and adjustment of daily difficulties they face. Considering these adaptation perspectives, Finsterbusch (1982) has argued psychological well-being from the perspective of Social Impact Assessment (SIA) where Stress and Life satisfaction theories are the two most relevant strands. SIA's Stress theory is a process where social environment and different events or forces related to social environment threaten an individual's well-being and it can cause physical or mental disorders if the stress remains for a long period of time. On the other hand, Life Satisfaction theory argues about dissatisfaction or unhappiness of life which can also lead to stress but their psychological impacts can produce somewhat different results. However, Ryff (1989) has criticized Bradburn (1969) for not clarifying the fundamental argument about psychological well-being from the positive and negative aspects of mental health.

Different studies have proven that mental health, both positive and negative, affects students' academic life. Turashvili & Japaridze (2012) have focused on Georgian students' perspectives while Punia & Malaviya (2015) have focused on Indian students' perspectives. Both of the studies have found that psychological well-being has a big impact on student's academic life. Nevertheless, Turashvili & Japaridze (2012) have argued that psychological dysfunction can affect the academic life and students' career, purpose of life, personal growth and financial background as well.

A student can face psychological dysfunction for social factors as well. Daraei (2013) finds no connection between psychological dysfunction and gender and religious issues, however, social factors like family relationship, family income, educational level of parents, and occupation of parents play a big role in affecting psychological well-being. Udhayakumar & Illango (2018) have focused on the

mental health and physical health of the students where they found that the students who are facing anxiety, depression and other psychological dysfunctions in their life, their physical health is also getting affected by that. Nevertheless, Khairani et al., (2019) have focused on how psychological dysfunction can be reduced and the study finds that if the students focus more on creative work, it can improve their personal growth and psychological well-being as well. Covid-19 situation has given a chance to rethink all these aspects for students' psychological well-being.

Theoretical Framework

Carol D. Ryff (1989) developed a theory called the "Six-Factor Model of Psychological Well-Being" where she not only focused on feeling happy but the core of her study was on living the life rightfully. These six factors are—self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. These factors contribute to a person's psychological well-being, positivity, mental satisfaction, and happiness. For this study, three factors that are - positive relations with others, environmental mastery and personal growth are taken into consideration. According to Ryff (1989), positive relations with others refers to a heartfelt and trusted mutual bonding where the ability to love and compassion is considered a essential element of mental health. Adapting any situation and acting accordingly is a central point of environmental mastery where an individual's capability to use any situation in favour of his or her psychological comfort zone is considered a gateway of mental well-being. Personal growth is another aspect of psychological well-being where the need to recognize oneself and apprehend one's capabilities is an important and key element to personal growth. Along with this, the Uses and Gratification Theory (Katz et al., 1973) plays a key role for this study.

Methods of the Research

A mixed-method approach has been used in this study to analyze the data. The data is collected mainly from primary sources, however, secondary source is also played an important role for this study. Primary sources include responses of students from different states in India using Google Forms and the secondary data sources include books, national and international journals, case studies and government reports. The information was collected and collated in the month of July 2020.

The sample size was 123. Due to the constraint of time and cost, the random purposive sampling method has been incorporated to do the sampling. But to signify the data in a representative manner, the responses have been taken from 22 states

of India. The data was collected through the Survey method using Google Form and structured questionnaire. The form was kept open and it accepted responses for 15 days in the first half of July 2020. Field based face-to-face interviews are desirable for social science research, however, it couldn't be possible due to the strict lockdown situation and Covid-19 cautions in India during the period of data collection.

Demographic profile and Geographic distribution of the respondents

Table-1: Demographic profile of the respondents

Demographic Characteristics	N	%
Gender		
Male	56	45.5
Female	67	54.5
Total	**123**	**100**
Age		
15-20	20	16.3
21-25	89	72.3
26-30	13	10.6
31-35	1	0.8
Total	**123**	**100**
Education		
School level (12th or less)	9	7.3
Graduation level	64	52.1
Post-graduation level	47	38.2
Doctorate/Post doc or higher	3	2.4
Total	**123**	**100**

Table-2: Geographic distribution of the respondents

State/Union Territory	Number of Students
Maharashtra	23
Kerala	13
West Bengal	13
Himachal Pradesh	9
Karnataka	9
Odisha	9
Uttar Pradesh	9
Bihar	5
Gujarat	5
Tamil Nadu	4
Telangana	4
Andhra Pradesh	3
Assam	3
Delhi	3
Punjab	3
Goa	2
Chhattisgarh	1
Jammu and Kashmir	1
Jharkhand	1
Manipur	1
Nagaland	1
Rajasthan	1
Total	123

Findings
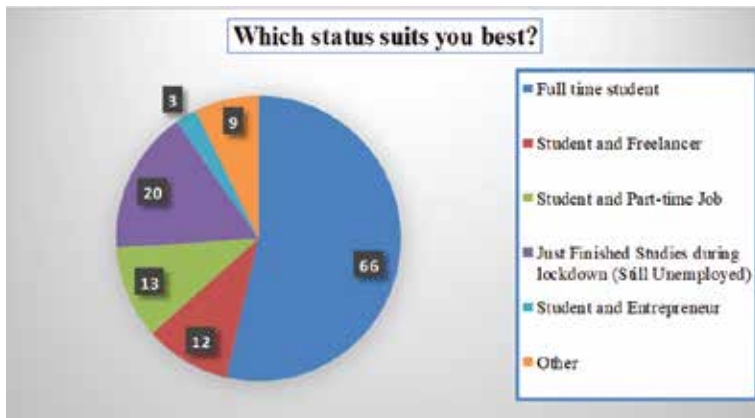
Figure-1: Students' status

Students Are More Concerned about Their Career than Getting Sick

The Covid-19 pandemic created a worldwide health concern, everyone was worried about catching the virus, falling ill and even about their life. However, Indian students were found to be more anxious about their education, job, and career rather than getting sick or infected by Covid-19. As Figure-1 suggests, most of the students who participated in the survey were not occupied or involved in any job or business and their core focus was studies. When we asked these 123 students what were the things they were most anxious about during Covid-19 lockdown, every student gave multiple answers. A total of 87 students (70.7%) replied that they were anxious about their job and career, 55 students (44.7%) were anxious about not getting any chance to travel, 53 students (43.1%) were concerned about their education, 51 students (41.5%) were worried about economic crisis and how to manage their finances, 45 students (36.6%) were concerned about not being able to meet their near and dear one while only 45 students (36.6%) mentioned their concern about falling ill. The data proves that getting infected with Covid-19 and falling ill was not a major concern since they felt they are young and healthy to get adversely affected by the disease. They were more concerned about their education, job, career, travel, economic crisis and meeting near and dear one. The reason behind this could be the unforeseen scenario where everyone was witnessing shutting down of business, laying off of employees, salary cuts, no hiring. Due to these issues, the personal growth of the students and their positive relation with others was at stake. Few other factors which seemed to create anxiety among the students were running out of food supply (9.8%), health issue of family and friends (1.6%), chances of getting depressed (1.6%), and their fellowship program (0.8%). The data shows that along with the physical and psychological health the lockdown had a direct impact on their academic plans, career plans, and future plans.
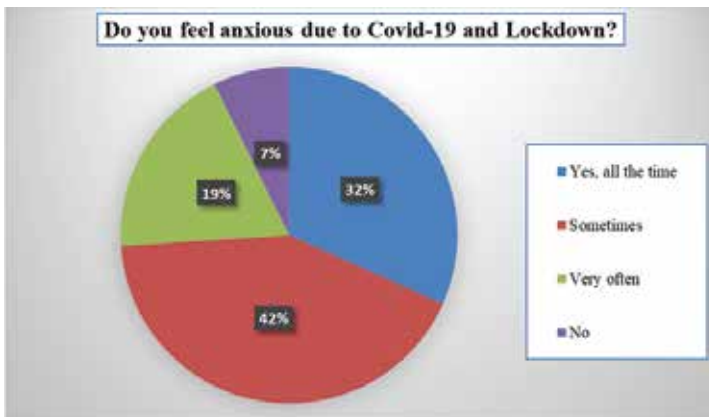

Figure-2: Students' anxiety about Covid-19 lockdown

Covid-19 lockdown Are Taking Psychological Test for Students

Students did not only feel anxious but also felt aimless, however, they are somehow trying to cope up with the situation. When we asked them whether they were feeling anxious about the current situation, (Figure-2), 52 students (42.3%) replied that they sometimes felt anxious about the current situation, 39 students (31.7%) answered that they felt anxious all the time, and 23 students (18.7%) felt anxious very often. However, only 9 students (7.3%) never felt anxious about the current situation. Thus, we tried finding out what caused the anxiety. Answering that (Figure-3), 35 students (28.5%) replied that they are felt aimless because of the situation, 22 students (17.9%) felt that the socio-economic situation are getting them down, and 21 students (17.1%) were concerned about their future and they got some time during this period to think about that. However, there were some positive notes as well. 35 students (28.5%) agreed that life is a continuous process of learning, changing and growth and they are trying to make the most of the situation that life had presented while 10 students (8.1%) didn't think about anything at all and they believed in living in the present and without getting worried about their future.
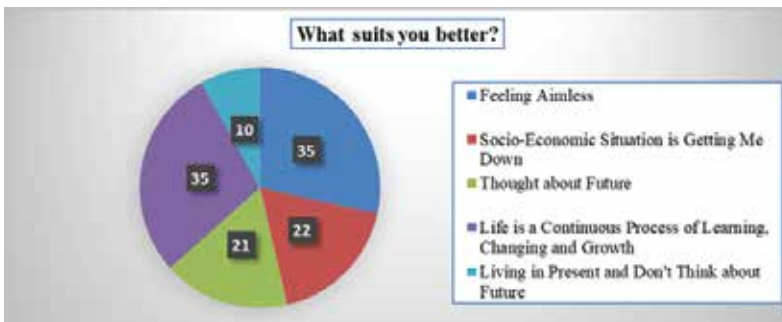

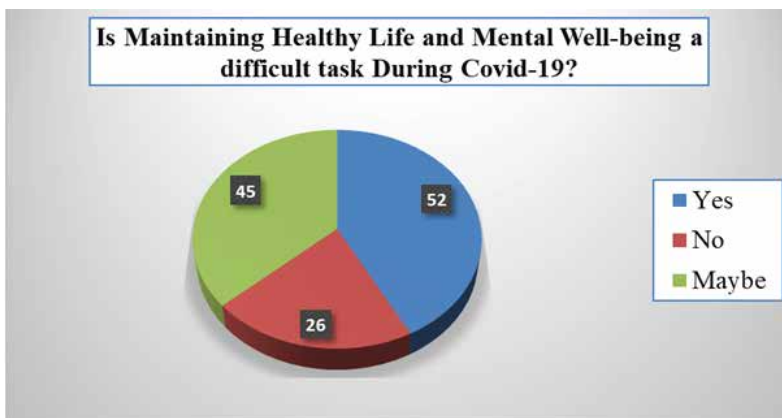Figure-3: Covid-19 lockdown is a psychological test for students

Figure-4: Maintaining healthy lifestyle and psychological well-being was difficult

Maintaining healthy lifestyle and psychological well-being is at stake

Lockdown changed the routine for everyone, since people were not supposed to step-out, the need to do the daily activities on time or to even follow a clock became less essential than ever. We asked the students whether they too were having a tough time maintaining healthy lifestyle and psychological well-being during Covid-19 lockdown. (Figure-4), a total of 52 students (42.3%) agreed that yes it was a concern for them while 26 students (21.1%) thought that maintaining a healthy lifestyle and psychological well-being is not an issue for them, however, 45 students (36.6%) neither agreed nor denied with us while they answered "maybe" it is a difficult task. So, how were the students spending their time during the lockdown? When asked (Figure-5), 48 students (39%) replied that they were trying to do some productive works to keep themselves busy, 19 students (15.4%) were disappointed and regretting that they could have used this period in a better way, and 23 students (18.3%) were totally upset thinking that 2020 is a year wasted from their life. However, 33 students (26.8%) replied in a positive manner that they were being productive and they were working on things they didn't get any chance to do before.
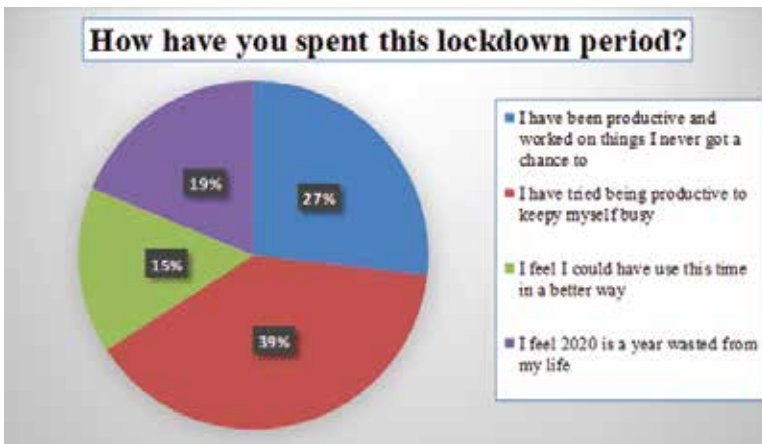

Figure-5: How the students spent their lockdown period.

Living with Family: A Bittersweet Experience

Looking at Figure-6, we can say that most of the students who were living with roommates or friends shifted and moved in with their families during Covid. A total of 15 students were living alone and 1 student was living with a partner before lockdown and continued doing so during the lockdown. However, 52 students lived with roommates or friends before the lockdown while it reduced to just 9 after lockdown was imposed. 55 students lived with their families before the lockdown which almost doubled to 98 students during lockdown. However, we asked these students if they are happy to live in their current place, 44 students

(35.8%) replied that they were happy initially, but they want to get back into their usual life while 41 students (33.3%) students were happy to stay in the current place. Apart from that, 19 students (15.4%) were glad that they shifted on time, 13 students (10.6%) replied that they had a problem adjusting at the beginning but they are comfortable now, 4 students (3.3%) replied with sorrow that they wish they had got any chance to shift with family, and 2 students (1.6%) replied that they wish they hadn't shifted at all.
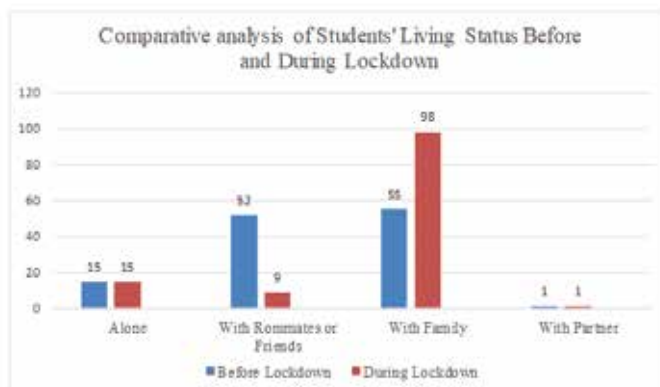

Figure-6: Comparative analysis of students' living status before and during Lockdown

Students Are Eager to Get Back into Normal Life

When we asked the students about the current situation and normal life, most of the students replied that they are frustrated with the current situation. A total of 72 students (58.5%) students replied that they were tired of the current situation and they wanted everything to get back to normal, while 22 students (17.9%) thought that this was the perfect time to relax and prepare for the future. Apart from that, 21 students (17.1%) were worried about their future, 4 students (3.3%) were enjoying the current situation and life, 1 student (0.8%) was hoping that everything will be fine very soon, 1 student (0.8%) just want to make sure her parents are okay, 1 student (0.8%) is into an overthinking phase, and 1 student (0.8%) doesn't know what she wants.

Movies and Social Media are the Best Ways to Escape from Anxiety

To maintain our psychological well-being, it is necessary to be happy or to get involved in activities that make us happy. Thus, we asked the students what they were doing to keep themselves happy during the Pandemic. A total of 122 out of 123 students replied to this question while all of the students gave multiple answers. 84 (68.9%) students replied that they watched movies or series to keep them happy while 72 students (59%) spent time on Social Media to be happy. Apart

from that, 71 (58%) students spent time in cooking, 61 students (50%) spent time (online/offline) with their family and friends, 57 students (46.7%) spent their time reading, 47 students (38.5%) spent time exercising, 33 students (27%) involved themselves into painting and crafting, 32 students (26.2%) spent time playing online games, 28 students (23%) did mediation, 4 students (3.3%) listened to music, 2 students (1.6%) spent time in the online courses and learning, and 1 student (0.8%) spent time in writing to keep them happy during Covid-19 lockdown.

Discussion and Conclusion

If we consider Ryff (1989) and her theory of "Six Factors Model of Psychological Well-being", we can easily understand that the positive relations with others were getting affected due to Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown. 45 students out of 123 students mentioned that they were happy initially to move in, however, now they are frustrated. It gives an idea that due to overstaying at home, positive relations with family members, roommates and partners are getting affected. Talking about Environmental Mastery (Ryff, 1989), students are desperately wanting to get back into normal life. Their psychological well-being is getting affected as most of them (72 students out of 123) faced difficulty in coping up with the new environment and they are tired of the Covid-19 lockdown. While some of them tried to do something productive others also felt that 2020 was a year wasted from their life. Due to these issues, environmental mastery was a difficult customer for them to deal with.

Personal growth (Ryff, 1989) is another aspect to discuss. Students faced difficulties in growing in their personal lives as well. This study finds that only 7% of students were not anxious about the Covid-19 situation. According to Ryff (1989), when anxiety is there, personal growth will be at stake. As most of the students were anxious about the situation (93%), their psychological well-being could be affected negatively. Only 21% of students think that maintaining a healthy lifestyle and psychological well-being was not a difficult task for them during Covid-19 while 79% of students think it is a difficult task. Along with this, students were more concerned about their job, career, and education than getting sick from Covid-19 which is also a concern area for personal growth. Stress and anxiety increased drastically among the students due to their academic and career dissatisfaction. As Finsterbusch (1982) has rightly mentioned in Social Impact Assessment (SIA), dissatisfaction could lead to stress and stress can cause physical or mental disorders for the students.

So, what are the things students are doing to cope up with the situation? Here comes the Uses and Gratification (Katz, et. al., 1973) concept, especially the

"Escape Function". To get rid of the anxiety and to be happy, 69% of students watch movies and series, 59% of students use social media, 47% of students spend time in reading, 26% of students play online games, and 3% of students listen to music to satisfy their tension-free needs. During this difficult time of Covid-19, at least, the media is helping them to escape from their anxiety. Though this is not enough, however, something is better than nothing.

References

Bradburn, N. (1969). *The Structure of Psychological Well-Being*. Chicago: Aldine.

Burns, R. (2016). Psychosocial Well-Being. *Encyclopedia of Geropsychology*, 1-8.

Daraei, M. (2013). Social Correlates of Psychological Well-Being Among Undergraduate Students in Mysore City. *Social Indicators Research*, 114 (2), 567-590.

Diener, E. (2000). Subjective Well Being: The Science of Happiness and a Proposal for a National Index. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 34-43.

Diener, E. (2009). Subjective Well-Being. In E. Diener (Ed.), *The Science of Well-Being* (pp. 11-58). Dordrecht: Springer.

Dodge, R., Daly, A., Huyton, J., & Sanders, L. (2012). The Challenge of Defining Wellbeing. *International Journal of Wellbeing,* 2(3), 222-235.

Finsterbusch, K. (1982). Psychological Impact Theory and Social Impacts. *Impact Assessment*, 1(4), 71-89.

Frey, B., & Stutzer, A. (2002). *Happiness and Economics*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Headey, B. (2006). *Happiness: Revising Set Point Theory and Dynamic Equilibrium Theory to Account for Long Term Change*. Berlin: DIW German Institute for Economic Research.

Katz, E., Blumler, J. G., & Gurevitch, M. (1973). Uses and Gratification Research. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 37(4), 509-523.

Kaufman, S. B. (2016, January 30). The Differences between Happiness and Meaning in Life. Retrieved July 28, 2020, from Scientific American: https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/beautiful-minds/the-differences-between-happiness-and-meaning-in-life

Khairani, A. Z., Idris, I., & Shamsuddin, H. (2019). Improving Psychological Well-being Among Undergraduates: How Creativity Can Contribute? *International Journal of Innovative Technology and Exploring Engineering*, 8(7), 48-52.

Linley, P. A., & Joseph, S. (2004). Applied Positive Psychology: A New Perspective for Professional Practice. *Positive Psychology in Practice*, 3-12.

McGuire, J. (2004). *Understanding Psychology and Crime: Perspectives on Theory and Action*. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).

Naci, H., & Ioannidis, J. P. (2015). Evaluation of Wellness Determinants and Interventions by Citizen Scientists. *JAMA,* 314(2), 121–122.

Pakes, F., & Winstone, J. (2007). *Psychology and Crime: Understanding and Tackling Offending Behaviour*. Devon: Willan Publishing.

Punia, N., & Malaviya, R. (2015). Psychological Well-Being of First Year College Students. *Indian Journal of Educational Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 2(1), 60-68.

Ryff, C. D. (1989). Happiness is Everything, or is it? Explorations on the Meaning of Psychological Well-Being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57(6), 1069-1081.

Ryff, C. D. (1995). Psychological Well-Being in Adult Life. *Current directions in psychological science*, 4(4), 99-104.

Shin, D. C., & Johnson, D. M. (1978). Avowed Happiness as an Overall Assessment of the Quality of Life. *Social Indicators Research*, 5(1), 475-492.

Turashvili, T., & Japaridze, M. (2012). Psychological Well-Being and its Relation to Academic Performance of Students in Georgian Context. *Problems of Education in the 21st Century*, 49, 73-80.

Udhayakumar, P., & Illango, P. (2018). Psychological Wellbeing Among College Students. *Journal of Social Work Education and Practice*, 3(2), 79-89.

Waterman, A. S. (1993). Two Conceptions of Happiness: Contrasts of Personal Expressiveness (eudaimonia) and Hedonic Enjoyment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 64(4), 678-691.