

## Well-Being of Adolescent Girls: Towards Empowering India's Demographic Dividend

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**ABSTRACT:** Wellbeing plays a significant role in enhancing the positive outlook, achievement of productivity gains and promotion of career success through better work-life balance among women. It is here that India's much acclaimed demographic dividend needs to be built upon to reap the best out of it and is surely a litmus test period for our country. This study is a step in this direction to identify the well-being quotient of our adolescent girls at a very early age and thereby explore the areas which need suitable interventions. This will then go to empower the women members of our rich demographic dividend that can be groomed and used productively. The study uses WEMWBS scale to measure wellbeing of the chosen sample incumbents and the findings demonstrated that most of the respondents were having adequate levels of "feel-good" factor. Even then, we are entailed to take action because very few respondents revealed below the standard levels of well-being and required attention. Another aspect which claims our consideration is to diminish the wide dispersion in the responses, which indicated that there is scattering of feeling from very high to medium levels. Strategizing to address the gaps will drive our nation towards efficiency.

**KEY WORD:** Wellbeing, Mental Health, Demographic dividend, Empowerment, Depression

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### I. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

For decades, the dominant powers of the world, Europe, US, China, Japan and other top economies have reaped benefits from having large working age groups in their population that has been the engine for driving economic growth. Today this has become an important topic for discussion globally as there is a sea change being experienced among these top countries with surging old age populations beginning with Japan that had a quarter of its population at age 65 years and above in 2013. This is just the beginning of the changing demographic dividend to be witnessed across the globe (The Economic Times, 2023). As this will weaken the GDP of these power economies, this is a window of opportunity for countries in South and Southeast Asia, Africa and the Middle East if we have to go by their rich demographic dividend they are going to experience. India is definitely at the top of the projected demographic dividend that will be experienced till 2055 -56 (Malin, 2023) with the highest number of working age population (WAP) to peak at 68.9% in 2030 (EY India, 2023).

As India's working age population to total population ratio is acclaimed to be the highest among any top economy of the world, our country will also be the global hub for human capital with a capacity to supply 24.3% incremental global manpower. This will be a significant contribution to the global manpower requirement problems to be faced by the current power economies and also a shift in the economic power houses of the world. This will have a multiplier effect on India's manufacturing as well as consumption base and reshape its position in the world economies. Amidst these advantages, it is also imminent to observe the steadily increasing enrolment rates of women in higher education with our country recording 49% female student's enrolment in higher education in total enrolments (EY India, 2023). However, there is a downward trend in the number of women entering employment during 1990 (27.8%) to 2020 (24%) and post-covid also this number has significantly reduced according to ILO report (Malin, 2023). So, if we are to benefit from this working age population, it is also equally very important to encourage and bring more women into the labour

participation group and also to sustain them for better individual, organizational and national productivity. Studies portray that women are also the most stressed at workplaces due to their commitment towards work and family and leads to poor retention of women employees (Chawla, 2019). Studies documented clearly show the significant role of wellbeing in enhancing the positive outlook, productivity and promoting career success through better work life balance among women (Barnard, 2018). This then identifies the need to research upon the well-being quotient of our adolescent girls at a very early age to understand their early well-being levels and explore areas that need suitable interventions. This will then go to empower the women members of our rich demographic dividend that can be groomed and used productively. Adolescence is referred to as a plastic period of life wherein multiple changes occur in them (may be physical, psychological, emotional, social and institutional) during their course of interaction with their family and community and hence plays a definite role in defining their positivity and well-being (Lerner, 2013). Literature shows a huge gap in terms of studies of well-being on adolescent girls than in the case of the adult population (Casas, 2010). Thus, the area of interest of this study is to focus on understanding the well-being of adolescent girls in order to contribute to the future social and economic wellbeing of the nation at large through suitable interventions.

## **II. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CONCERN**

### **Adolescence Census of India**

The jam-packed populace of India crossed the gigantic number 1.42 billion in the mid-2023 and we already surpassed the track record of China (State of World Population Report, 2023 – Published by United Nations Population Fund). Out of this, the number of adolescent progenies in India is 253 million. That is ‘18 percent of the Indian population are adolescents’ or we can state that ‘one out of five Indians belong to this age group’. The census survey also concluded that, in the following year (i.e. 2024), 127 million adolescent children are entering into the young adult age group.

### **Crucial Phase to Preserve Wellbeing**

Adolescence is a transitional phase between childhood and adulthood where they initiate to sprout the behavioural patterns related to somatic, intellectual and social lifestyles (Alsarrani et al. 2022). They undergo dozens of psycho-somatic highs and lows and this dynamic stage is the right time to instruct and implant virtuous positive habits. Fundamentally, the healthfulness of adult lives are cantered on the lifestyles which they followed during their adolescent period. Harmful habits of adolescence will be manifested as deleterious health conditions in the long run (Patton et al. 2016).

Aforesaid particulars plainly reveal that we need to look up the wellbeing of this cohort for building a blooming and resilient nation.

### **Attention from Various Authorities**

Becoming sensitive to this matter, few renowned establishments also suggested the significance of same concern:

- “Population Foundation of India” recommended that the Union Government should distribute more share from the Union Budget for upgrading the wellbeing (health, nutrition, education and skill building) of the youngsters in the adolescent age group.
- “WHO (World Health Organization)” in collaboration with “UNICEF (United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund)” framed “The Global Strategy (2016 – 2030)”. The mission is to enhance the health and safeguard the wellbeing of Women, Children and Adolescents.
- In 2015, “United Nations” summoned its member nations to actualize the listed 169 targets resolved under 17 SDG (“Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”). The three demographic clusters (Women, Children and Adolescents) are favoured to get embedded in the mainstay of “SDG”.

### **Role of Educational Institutions**

Educational institutions must integrate the lessons about ‘personal and mental wellbeing’ which is the groundwork to build our nation with a healthy forthcoming workforce. Several researchers pointed out this requisite for incorporating the personal well-being curriculum along with the systematic curriculum for cognitive development (Bonell et al. 2014; Zhang, 2016; Amaya et al. 2019; Henrico, 2022).

### III. LITERATURE REVIEW

In our review of literature, it is observed that it is very common for psychologists to conduct studies on positive psychological states of adolescents like well-being, satisfaction, achievement, confidence and other positive behaviour and then accentuate on their positive states as their strengths while reducing focus on any unfavourable traits much early in their life would prove to be productive to a nation (Kirmani, 2015) as they can be moulded and mended. Early studies (Bradburn, 1969) in psychology and sociology has found that subjective well-being is the ultimate goal of life. Hence reinforcing positive mental states among young students with the support of professional trainers can have an incremental effect on the social capital of a nation through academic achievement and emotional intelligence.

Erstwhile studies on well-being have brought out the fact that girl students more than boys showed negative well-being scores during a study conducted during the pandemic and were also lower than the expected national level scores. Studies urge healthcare suppliers, teachers and other professionals to regularly monitor the mental health and the well-being of girl students even beyond the pandemic (Halldorsdottir, 2021). There is indeed a continuous need to measure and interpret the mental health and well-being of teenage students as this can cause adverse behavioural and emotional imbalance that can result in short term ill physical health and can culminate in the long run as depression and stress. These may lead to consequences like criminal acts, rehabilitation support and also may cost the government through more social cost. It is important to note that some nations like England, Scotland and many other countries in Europe have made this their national priority (National Statistics of Scotland, 2008). No doubt, the Royal Society of UK in 2004 has defined well-being as a "positive and sustainable mental state that allows individuals, groups and nations to thrive and flourish".

As nations globally realize the significance of well-being for their socio-economic well-being, there is a need for measuring well-being using validated scales and thereby analyzing and suggesting suitable interventions. Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS), is a very popular and highly validated scale that has been used in many populations. Apart from the clarity the tool provides it is very simple to use on research conducted with adults as the target group (Tennant, 2006).

#### Research Gap

- Many studies pointed out the need for measuring the well-being of students on a constant basis. As adolescence is one of the tantalizing age group which requires persistent psychological backing to set up the right foundation for sparkling adulthood
- Lot of research papers made validity studies for the instrument used, they compared it with other related scales or they compared the pre and post test results. Solely determining the scores, will assist the institution and teachers to recognize the distressed students and deliver appropriate assistance.

### IV. METHODOLOGY

We exercised the cross-sectional inductive approach, where we examined the original data collected using a structured questionnaire and transcribed the conclusion based on the outcomes.

#### Objectives of the researchers based on the gaps recognized

The leading drives for inscribing this paper were

- To measure the wellbeing level of students using a standard questionnaire
- To highlight the importance of educating and cultivating well-being measures among girl students in adolescent age groups.
- To suggest governmental and academic measures to address this issue.

#### Selection of Instrument for quantifying the element 'Wellbeing'

Considering that the theme being is subjective in nature, self-reporting scales were explored to measure the wellbeing levels in numerical terms. The following scales were reviewed:

SL NO	INSTRUMENT	REFERENCE & YEAR	NO. OF ITEMS
1.	<b>General Well-being Schedule</b>	Dupuy (1977)	18 items
2.	<b>SUBI</b> (Subjective Well-being Inventory)	Sell (1994)	40 items
3.	<b>WHO – 5</b> (World Health Organization Well-Being Index)	Staeher (1998)	5 items
4.	<b>WEMWBS</b> (Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale)	Tennant et al. (2007)	14 items version 7 items version
5.	<b>PWB</b> (Psychological Well-being Scale)	Ryff (2008)	8 items
6.	<b>The Flourishing Scale</b>	Diener et al. (2010)	8 items

**VALID ARGUMENTS TO CHERRY-PICK “WEMWBS (14 Item Version) SCALE”**

Studies point to the popularity and efficacy in measuring well-being using the WEMWBS scale, this study uses this scale for measurement. “Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale ” has two versions of self-reporting survey forms (14 items version and 7 items version). The scales estimate the mental well-being & existing emotional status of an individual in a 5-point Likert scale (1 – None of the time; 2 – Rarely; 3 – Some of the time; 4 – Often; 5 – All of the time). The minimum score a respondent can get is 14 and maximum it can go up to 70.

We preferred to pick this powerful psychometric instrument for the reason that it minimizes the ceiling effect in answers. There were no artificial limits in choices of answers and the responses are guarded from clustering of scores near high points for any grounds like social acceptability or so (Tennant et al. 2006).

Another advantage of using this instrument is that all the items are positively stated.

- Conventionally, it was suggested to blend the positive and negative statements in any survey questionnaires to keep the attention of the respondents and to reduce the agreement bias (Qasem & Gul, 2014). But a lot of recent studies found that this solution was generating more glitches in the validity and reliability/internal consistency of the instrument. The reason might be the reversed negative phrased items will not accurately gauge the actual positive counterparts (Cantillo & Roman, 2023; Chyung et al. 2018; Salazar, 2015).
- A fascinating study analysed the eye-tracking of the people who were responding to the survey questionnaires and found that negative terms necessitated more processing time to answer than the positive terms (Kamoen et al. 2017).

The ‘WEMWBS’ scale was utilized for our data collection because of its efficacy, practicality and less processing time to answer.

**Reliability of the Instrument**

Internal consistency of the adopted scale for the particular sample in this study was measured using Cronbach’s Alpha method. The reliability value of this well-being survey with 14 items collected from 61 under-graduate students was

$$\alpha = 0.769 \text{ (14 item instrument)}$$

**V. DISCUSSION**

**SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS**

Our sample consisted of 61 fresh undergraduate students of a Government Institution. We would like to describe our sample using few demographic details. 82% of the respondents are residing with their parents and the remaining 18% stay with their guardians or at a hostel. Most of the respondents live in a family which comprises 4 to 6 family members. Only 57.4% of the student’s fathers have full-time jobs and 13 respondents out of 61 had only single parent.72.1% of the respondent’s monthly family income is less than ₹ 15000.

**TABLE 1 – SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS**

Place of stay		Number of members in your family			
With Parents	50	82	Less than 4 members	22	36.1
With Guardian	6	9.8	4 to 6 members	37	60.7
Hostel	5	8.2	More than 6 members	2	3.3
Father’s Occupation			Mother’s Occupation		
Full time job	35	57.4	Full time job	13	21.3
Part time job	14	23	Part time job	7	11.5
Not employed	3	4.9	House wife	37	6.7
Not applicable	9	14.8	Not applicable	4	6.6
Monthly Income of the family (In Rupees)					
Less than 15000	44	72.1			
15000 to 25000	15	24.6			
More than 50000	2	3.3			

**DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS**

- Highest mean value (4.46) for the first item in the scale represents that most of the respondents agree that they are feeling positive about their future.
- Lowest mean value (3.08) for the ninth item in the scale represents that most of the respondents feel little disagreement with their level of closeness to others.

- Range of individual items is 3 or 4 which indicates high levels of dispersion among the responses which is again reiterated in the pictographic image of overall score (lot of dips in the ring indicate there is more dispersion).

**TABLE 2 – DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS**

SL NO	ITEMS	RANGE	MEAN	S.D
1.	I have been feeling optimistic about the future	3	<b>4.46</b>	0.905
2.	I have been feeling useful	4	4.02	1.204
3.	I have been feeling relaxed	3	3.48	1.134
4.	I have been feeling interested in other people	4	3.30	1.418
5.	I have had energy to spare	4	3.64	1.184
6.	I have been dealing with problems well	4	3.80	1.195
7.	I have been thinking clearly	3	4.13	1.040
8.	I have been feeling good about myself	4	4.51	0.960
9.	I have been feeling close to other people	4	<b>3.08</b>	1.295
10.	I have been feeling confident	3	4.33	0.961
11.	I have been able to make up my own mind about things	4	3.82	1.310
12.	I have been feeling loved	4	3.80	1.412
13.	I have been interested in new things	4	4.08	1.242
14.	I have been feeling cheerful	3	4.20	1.030

**FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION**

From the table we were able to understand, most of the respondents answered in agreement to the positive statements of the instruments. We can also see that a considerable percentage of responses are at mid-level of positive well-being by responding that they have positive feelings only some of the time.

It is also good news that none of the respondents disagreed with the positive statements which means they are feeling very low about their well-being. They have little dips which is common in our day-to-day life but it also seeks attention probably from teachers who can handle the issue well.

**TABLE 3 – FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONSES**

SL NO	ITEMS	None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	Most of the time
1.	I have been feeling optimistic about the future	0 0%	2 3.3%	11 18%	5 8.2%	<b>43</b> <b>70.5%</b>
2.	I have been feeling useful	2 3.3%	4 6.6%	<b>19</b> <b>31.1%</b>	2 3.3%	<b>34</b> <b>55.7%</b>
3.	I have been feeling relaxed	0 0%	12 19.7%	<b>27</b> <b>44.3%</b>	3 4.9%	19 31.1%
4.	I have been feeling interested in other people	7 11.5%	12 19.7%	<b>19</b> <b>31.1%</b>	2 3.3%	<b>21</b> <b>34.4%</b>
5.	I have had energy to spare	1 1.6%	9 14.8%	<b>24</b> <b>39.3%</b>	4 6.6%	<b>23</b> <b>37.7%</b>
6.	I have been dealing with problems well	3 4.9%	3 4.9%	<b>23</b> <b>37.7%</b>	6 9.8%	<b>26</b> <b>42.6%</b>
7.	I have been thinking clearly	0 0%	3 4.9%	<b>20</b> <b>32.8%</b>	4 6.6%	<b>34</b> <b>55.7%</b>
8.	I have been feeling good about myself	1 1.6%	3 4.9%	5 8.2%	7 11.5%	<b>45</b> <b>73.8%</b>
9.	I have been feeling close to other people	7 11.5%	13 21.3%	<b>23</b> <b>37.7%</b>	4 6.6%	14 23%
10.	I have been feeling confident	0 0%	2 3.3%	15 24.6%	5 8.2%	<b>39</b> <b>63.9%</b>
11.	I have been able to make up my own mind about things	4 6.6%	6 9.8%	<b>16</b> <b>26.2%</b>	6 9.8%	<b>29</b> <b>47.5%</b>
12.	I have been feeling loved	6 9.8%	5 8.2%	16 26.2%	2 3.3%	<b>32</b> <b>52.5%</b>

13.	I have been interested in new things	1 1.6%	8 13.1%	14 23%	0 0%	<b>38</b> <b>62.3%</b>
14.	I have been feeling cheerful	0 0%	5 8.2%	12 19.7%	10 16.4%	<b>34</b> <b>55.5%</b>

**UNDERSTANDING “SUM TOTAL OF SCORES” OF 14 ITEMS**

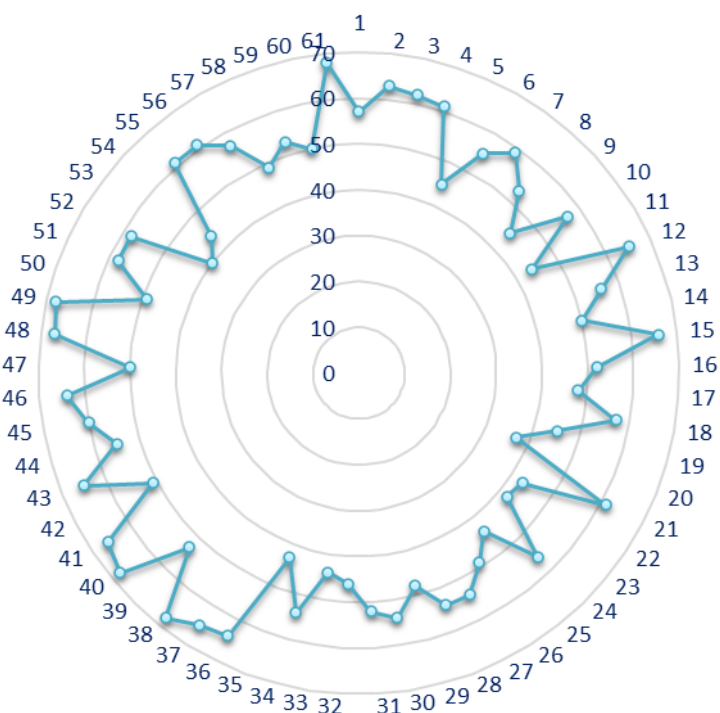
User manual for WEMWBS scale was used to calculate, interpret and present the results pictorially. 14 item scale with each item carrying 5 points maximum (5 point Likert scale), we are supposed to compute the totals by adding the individual scores of all 14 items. In general, the guide book instructs us to infer that any score above 45 is sensible and satisfactory.

**The results of our study in represented in single pictographic image**

If the blue line is a smooth ring running over the outermost circumference of the circle, all the respondents have a maximum level of well-being which is practically not possible. The dips in the blue circle indicated the low feeling of the respondents. We are interpreting the outcomes by comparing it with a lower acceptable range. Any score above this acceptable levels were considered as positive levels of well-being.

WEMWBS user guidebook states that the respondents with score 45 and above are considered to have acceptable well-being levels, 41 to 44 is having trifling levels of depression and whoever is having the score less than 40 is diagnosed to have clinical depression which requires medical attention.

**FIGURE 1: Overall Score of Wellbeing**



**Specific points to consider in our findings**

- Totally 61 students participated in the study and 52 students got the score of 45 and above which indicates that they were having satisfactory levels of well-being
  - (22 students) – 45 – 54 – Moderate level of wellbeing
  - (30 students) – 55 – 70 – High level of wellbeing
- 9 students got a score of 44 and below which indicated that
  - One of the respondent’s score out of these 9 was 37 (> 40), who need medical attention.
  - Remaining 8 students fall under the category of having mild depression ‘41 to 44 score’. They have low levels of well-being and they need attention to address the issue.

**COEFFICIENT OF RANGE OF WELL-BEING SCORE**

- Range tells the absolute dispersion and Coefficient of range tells the relative dispersion levels. Highest Score was 68/70 and Lowest score was 37/70
- **Range = Largest value – Smallest Value = 68 – 37 = 31**

- Formula for *Coefficient of Range* =  $\left[\frac{L-S}{L+S}\right]$
- *Coefficient of Range* =  $\left[\frac{68-37}{68+37}\right] = 0.295$  or 30%

The coefficient of range is around 30%. This further iterates that the overall mental well-being of the students considered in this sample is moderate to good with a dispersion (range of 3 to 4) in opinion ranging up to 30% that needs to be addressed with suitable interventions from time to time.

## **FINAL THOUGHTS**

### **Concluding clarifications for issue addressed in our introduction**

- The duty of educational institutions is not only to impart intellectual knowledge, but also to take care of the all-inclusive and wide-ranging growth and well-being of students.
- Our study highlighted the need for ongoing assessment of adolescent well-being and initiating mandatory mentorship programs and counselling services to students.

### **Restate the significance of this topic in real world**

- The signs of depression are mostly silent, where we might miss someone if timely appropriate action is not taken.
- Adolescence phase is very delicate phase, where they need external support till they get adequate maturity to handle it all by themselves

### **Summary of the main points of the findings**

- Our findings demonstrated that most of the respondents were having adequate levels of “feel-good” factor.
- Still action should be taken to minimize the wide dispersion in the responses, which indicated that there is scattering of feeling from very high to medium levels.

### **Significance of our research findings**

- Steps need to be taken for the students who fall under the category less than 44 score
- It may range from simple counselling service at the institution to seeking the medical attention

## **VI. IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE**

### **Governmental Implications**

- Periodical camps and awareness programs to uphold the mental wellbeing
- Training programs to front line teachers who is having regular interaction with the students
- Mental Wellness app using AI powered tools can be launched and made mandatory in the line of success of Arogya Sethu and Cowin App
- Industries to forge tie-ups with schools and colleges to assess mental wellness

### **Operational Implications**

- Ensure to have counselling services at all educational institutions
- Institutions to brainstorm on Mental Wellness topics and customize them
- Maintenance of recommended mentor-mentee ratio to monitor and upgrade the students overall well-being levels

### **Future Research Implications**

- We call for action from future researchers to further explore and develop this kind of study longitudinally and keep tracking of well-being scores.
- It is substantially sensible to find the pathway connecting well-being levels and its related factors
  - Economic and environmental background
  - Life experience and existence of any grievances
  - Physical illness related to melancholy and so on.

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