**Exploring the Role of Psychological Well-being and Self-Esteem in Higher Education Students in West Bengal, India**

**Abstract:**

Educational institutions in West Bengal also face challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, inadequate mental health resources, and a shortage of trained counselors. These obstacles further hinder students' ability to maintain their psychological well-being and self-esteem. Consequently, students may encounter increased anxiety, diminished academic engagement, and feelings of loneliness, all of which can negatively influence their success. This study looked at the self-esteem and psychological well-being of higher education students in West Bengal. The research focused on understanding how these two aspects are connected and how factors like gender, caste, family type, number of siblings, study stream, course pursued, parents' jobs, living area, and financial background might influence them. The study used a cross-sectional survey method, involving 240 students chosen randomly from Post-Graduation (PG) from Jadavpur University and the University of North Bengal, India. Data were gathered using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) and Ryff’s Psychological Well-Being Scale (RPWB). Structured questionnaires or standardized scales were likely employed to assess self-esteem, psychological well-being, and socio-economic information. Statistical tests were conducted to analyze the data and examine key patterns. The results showed a positive link between self-esteem and psychological well-being. Students with higher self-esteem experienced better emotional stability, stronger social connections, and greater involvement in academics. On the other hand, those with lower self-esteem were more prone to stress, anxiety, and social withdrawal. The study also found that factors like gender, caste, socio-economic status, and parental occupation played a significant role in shaping students' mental well-being. The findings highlight the role of family structure, socio-economic background, and gender in shaping students' psychological well-being and self-esteem. These results suggest that educational institutions should adopt comprehensive strategies that address both social and emotional factors to promote holistic student development. The research suggests that creating supportive learning environments, building positive teacher-student relationships, and offering counseling services can help improve students' self-esteem and overall well-being. Future studies could explore strategies designed to meet the specific social and economic challenges faced by students in West Bengal.

**Keywords:** *Self-esteem, Psychological Well-being, Supportive learning environments, Stress, West Bengal*

**Introduction:**

Achieving success in higher education depends on multiple factors, encompassing both internal and external influences. While cognitive abilities and environmental support are vital, students' psychological well-being and self-esteem are equally significant contributors to their academic achievements. Psychological well-being of students is an area of concern in higher education institutes across the world. Although several studies have explored the factors associated with students’ psychological well-being, limited research has focused on the relationship between the overall support for students and psychological well-being. Students of higher education may get formal support, in the form of team environment and institutional support; and informal support, in the form of family and friends’ support (Seijts et al., 2022; Chaudhry et al., 2024). It also reflects an individual's emotional state, mental resilience, and overall sense of well-being (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). On the other hand, self-esteem refers to a person's perception of their own value and self-worth (Rosenberg, 1965). These elements not only affect academic performance but also influence students' social behavior, motivation levels, and ability to cope with academic challenges. Self-esteem plays a vital role in an individual‘s overall healthy personality development. Self-esteem is sone of the most important factors related to psychological well-being (Taylor & Brown, 1988) and is significantly identified with various aspects of well-being or adjustment. Therefore, healthy self-esteem is required to cope with the psychological distress which may arise during this challenging phase. Hence, it becomes essential to promote the psychological health of the Indian youth to enhance their productivity and formation of positive attitudes in leading a more fulfilling life (Singhal & Prakash, 2021; Wan et al., 2025). In recent years, mental health concerns have grown increasingly prevalent among university students. Research suggests that psychological distress, anxiety, and low self-esteem are common in this group, often resulting in reduced academic involvement and poorer outcomes (Hunt & Eisenberg, 2010). Psychological well-being has been strongly linked to a student's ability to handle stress, maintain concentration, and accomplish academic objectives. Studies indicate that individuals with improved mental well-being exhibit better emotional control, stronger problem-solving skills, and healthier interpersonal relationships (Diener et al., 1999). Likewise, self-esteem significantly influences students' confidence, motivation, and persistence in academic settings (Baumeister et al., 2003). Conversely, students with compromised mental health or diminished self-esteem may find it difficult to manage academic demands, experience feelings of incompetence, and face an elevated risk of discontinuing their studies (Arslan et al., 2020). Negative emotional conditions like anxiety and depression can also impair cognitive functions vital for learning, such as memory retention, focus, and critical thinking (Al-Qahtani et al., 2022). Consequently, fostering mental well-being and nurturing positive self-esteem are crucial for helping students succeed in higher education. This relationship between mental well-being, self-esteem, and academic achievement is particularly relevant in West Bengal's higher education context. Students in this region often encounter distinct socio-cultural and economic challenges that can adversely affect their mental health and academic progress. Many university students in West Bengal belong to financially disadvantaged families, which heightens stress and uncertainty regarding their educational future (Mukherjee & Ghosh, 2019). Moreover, traditional societal norms and family expectations frequently exert additional pressure on students, especially concerning career achievements and financial stability (Chakraborty & Dutta, 2017).

Educational institutions in West Bengal also face challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, inadequate mental health resources, and a shortage of trained counselors (Roy, 2021). These obstacles further hinder students' ability to maintain their psychological well-being and self-esteem. Consequently, students may encounter increased anxiety, diminished academic engagement, and feelings of loneliness, all of which can negatively influence their success (Saha & Banerjee, 2020). Despite these difficulties, some universities in West Bengal have implemented initiatives like mental health awareness campaigns, counseling services, and peer support programs to help students manage stress and build resilience. Strategies such as mindfulness practices, meditation, and stress management workshops have shown positive outcomes in improving students' psychological well-being and academic performance (Bhattacharya & Das, 2021). Recognizing these factors is crucial for designing effective interventions that promote student well-being and academic achievement. Higher education institutions should adopt proactive strategies, including counseling support, peer mentorship, and mindfulness programs, to address these concerns. By strengthening students' mental well-being and self-esteem, universities can equip learners with the skills needed to handle stress, stay focused, and develop resilience for long-term academic success.

This research aims to investigate the connection between psychological well-being, self-esteem, and academic success among higher education students in West Bengal. The study seeks to provide insights that inform educational policies, support systems, and mental health programs to improve students' overall well-being and academic outcomes. Ultimately, understanding these dynamics is essential for creating a supportive learning environment where students can thrive both academically and personally.

**Literature Review:**

Psychological well-being plays an important role in students' academic performance and overall success. According to Ryff and Keyes (1995), psychological well-being includes six key aspects: independence, control over one’s environment, personal growth, good relationships, a sense of purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Students who show strength in these areas are generally better at handling stress, setting academic goals, and staying emotionally stable (Diener et al., 1999). Additionally, Keyes (2002) found that people with strong mental well-being tend to have better thinking skills, memory, and decision-making abilities, which can improve academic success. In higher education, mental health is closely linked to students' engagement in learning. Hunt and Eisenberg (2010) noted that students with poor mental health often miss classes, participate less, and lack motivation, which harms their academic performance. On the other hand, students with good psychological well-being are more flexible, determined, and goal-focused, which leads to better academic results (Al-Qahtani et al., 2022). Another study has revealed that Psychosocial approaches like Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), group therapy focused on social interactions, and coaching have been shown to improve the mental well-being of university students with ADHD (Ali et al., 2024). Studies have found that Teachers with higher self-esteem tend to be more productive, satisfied with their jobs, and willing to help others. This not only benefits the organization but also supports the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (Gómez-Jorge & Díaz-Garrido, 2024). A positive team environment, along with support from both the institution and family, helps improve the mental well-being of management students. Academic engagement also plays an important role in this connection (Chaudhry et al., 2024). Studies have revealed that most undergraduate students have moderate psychological well-being. Around 90% show medium to high levels of self-organization, self-control, and motivation to improve themselves and achieve their goals (Okonechnikova et al., 2024). Support staff in higher education play an important role in students' success. When they encourage independence, it boosts students' academic engagement and mental well-being. Teaching assistants help improve both engagement and satisfaction with campus life, while political instructors mainly enhance campus life satisfaction (Jiang & Tanaka, 2021). Studies have shown that mental well-being is linked to personality traits and self-compassion in higher education students. Extroversion strongly predicts positive relationships with others, while self-compassion helps improve independence, control over life, and a sense of purpose (Saricaoglu & Arslan, 2013). Self-esteem also has a strong connection to students' academic performance. Rosenberg (1965) described self-esteem as how positively or negatively individuals see their self-worth. According to Baumeister et al. (2003), students with high self-esteem tend to feel more confident, focus better, and achieve higher academic results. Positive self-image encourages students to take part in class activities, join discussions, and take risks in their learning, all of which support better outcomes. On the other hand, low self-esteem is linked to anxiety, avoidance behavior, and poorer academic performance (Arslan et al., 2020). Roy (2021) found that university students in West Bengal who faced self-doubt and felt inadequate often struggled to maintain steady academic progress. To address this, experts recommend improving self-esteem through peer support groups and mentorship programs, which can help boost academic success. Students in West Bengal face unique challenges due to social and economic factors. Many come from financially unstable backgrounds, which adds extra pressure and impacts their mental well-being and academic results (Mukherjee & Ghosh, 2019). The pressure to excel academically, combined with limited access to counseling services, further increases mental health struggles (Saha & Banerjee, 2020). Roy (2021) pointed out that crowded classrooms and a shortage of mental health services in West Bengal universities make it difficult for students to get psychological support. As a result, many students experience anxiety, loneliness, and low self-esteem, which affects their education. Research suggests that introducing mindfulness programs, resilience training, and mentorship initiatives can help improve students' mental well-being and academic outcomes (Bhattacharya & Das, 2021). To improve students' mental well-being and self-esteem, effective support programs are necessary. Studies highlight the benefits of mindfulness practices, counseling services, and peer mentoring in helping students manage emotions and improve their academic performance (Bhattacharya & Das, 2021). Universities in West Bengal that have introduced mental health awareness programs and counseling centers have reported better student engagement and lower academic stress (Mukherjee & Ghosh, 2019). Additionally, resilience-building workshops, social skills training, and positive reinforcement have been helpful in boosting students' self-esteem and emotional well-being (Chakraborty & Dutta, 2017). By promoting these methods, educational institutions can create a supportive environment that encourages academic success and mental well-being.

Research shows that psychological well-being and self-esteem are important for students’ academic achievements. Studies focused on West Bengal highlight the need for region-specific strategies to address these challenges. By introducing mental health programs, peer mentoring, and skill-building initiatives, educational institutions can create a positive environment that supports students' well-being and improves academic outcomes.

**Objectives:**

The objectives of this study are formulated to explore and analyze the key aspects:

1. To examine the current status of self-esteem among Higher Education students in West Bengal.
2. To examine the current status of psychological well-being among Higher Education students in West Bengal.
3. To investigate the relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being among higher education students in West Bengal.
4. To explore the influence of demographic factors (such as gender, cast, types of family, number of siblings, stream of study, course pursuing, father and mother occupation, habitat, and socio-economic background) on self-esteem and psychological well-being among Higher Education students in West Bengal.

**Hypotheses of the Study:**

In view of the basic research question and objectives of the study, the following null hypotheses were formulated: -

**H01**: Gender has no significant variation in Psychological Well-Being among the students at the higher education level.

**H02:** Gender has no significant variation in Self-Esteem among the students at the higher education level.

**H03:** Caste has no significant variation in Psychological Well-Being among the students at higher education level.

**H04:** Caste has no significant variation in Self-Esteem among the students at higher education level.

**H05:** Types of family have no significant variation in Psychological Well-Being among the students at higher education level.

**H06:** Types of family have no significant variation in Self-Esteem among the students at higher education level.

**H07:** Number of siblings have no significant variation in Psychological Well-Being among the students at higher education level.

**H08:** Number of siblings have no significant variation in Self-Esteem among the students at higher education level.

**H09:** Stream of study has no significant variation in Psychological Well-Being among the students at higher education level.

**H010**: Stream of study has no significant variation in Self-Esteem among the students at higher education level.

**H011:** Course pursuing has no significant variation in Psychological Well-Being among the students at higher education level.

**H012:** Course pursuing has no significant variation in Self-Esteem among the students at higher education level.

**H013:** Father’s occupation has no significant variation in Psychological Well-Being among the students at higher education level.

**H014:** Father’s occupation has no significant variation in Self-Esteem among the students at higher education level.

**H015:** Mother’s occupation has no significant variation in Psychological Well-Being among the students at higher education level.

**H016:** Mother’s occupation has no significant variation in Self-Esteem among the students at higher education level.

**H017:** Habitat has no significant variation in Psychological Well-Being among the students at higher education level.

**H018:** Habitat occupation has no significant variation in Self-Esteem among the students at higher education level.

**H019:** Socioeconomic status has no significant variation in Psychological Well-Being among the students at higher education level.

**H020:** Socioeconomic status has no significant variation in Self-Esteem among the students at higher education level.

**H021:** There is no significant correlation between self-esteem and psychological well-being among the students at higher education level.

**Delimitations of the Study:**

This study is subject to the following delimitations:

1. Sample Size: The study is limited to a total of 240 higher education students.
2. Institutions Covered: The sample includes students from PG level only from Jadavpur University and the University of North Bengal, located in West Bengal, India.
3. Geographical Scope: The research is confined to these two universities and does not extend to other higher education institutions in West Bengal or beyond.
4. Participant Criteria: The participants are enrolled in various academic disciplines but must be current students pursuing higher education.
5. Time Frame: Data collection was conducted within a specified period, ensuring the study reflected conditions during that time.

**Methodology:**

**Study Design:**

This study employed a cross-sectional survey design to achieve its objectives. The design aimed to examine the relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being among higher education students in West Bengal. Population and Sample: The target population comprised higher education students from Jadavpur University and the University of North Bengal in West Bengal. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 240 students from these universities. Variables: The study investigated self-esteem and psychological well-being as dependent variables. Additionally, the study explored their relationships with various demographic factors, including: Gender, Cast, Types of family, Number of siblings, Stream of study, Course pursuing, Father and Mother occupation, Habitat, and Socio-economic background. Data Collection Tools: Structured questionnaires or standardized scales were likely employed to assess self-esteem, psychological well-being, and socio-economic information. Data Analysis: The collected data were analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques to identify correlations and patterns between the dependent variables and demographic factors. This design ensured a structured approach to understanding the interplay between self-esteem, psychological well-being, and socio-economic influences.

**Instrument for Data Collection:**

To assess the key variables in the study, the following standardized tools were employed:

The study utilized two standardized tools for data collection: the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) and Ryff’s Psychological Well-Being Scale (RPWB). The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, developed by Morris Rosenberg in 1965, is a widely recognized instrument designed to measure self-esteem. It comprises 10 items rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." This scale includes both positive and negative statements, assessing an individual's overall sense of self-worth and self-acceptance. Higher scores indicate higher self-esteem, while lower scores reflect lower self-esteem. Both tools were chosen for their reliability, validity, and extensive use in research related to self-esteem and psychological well-being. The 42-item version of Ryff’s Psychological Well-Being Scale, developed by Carol Ryff in 1989, measures psychological well-being across six key dimensions: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Each dimension is assessed through 7 items, rated on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." Higher scores indicate greater well-being in each dimension.

Both tools were chosen for their established **reliability**, **validity**, and frequent use in research focusing on self-esteem and psychological well-being.

**Results:**

**Descriptive Analysis**

**Psychological well-being**

**Table 1:** Descriptive statistics regarding Psychological Well-being of higher education students in

West Bengal.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Variables | Category | N (Frequency) | Mean ± sd |
| Gender | Male | 155 | 84.71 ± 9.710 |
|  | Female | 85 | 85.52 ± 9.829 |
| Caste | General | 94 | 85.78 ± 10.200 |
|  | SC | 36 | 82.28 ± 8.363 |
|  | OBC | 110 | 85.39 ± 9.734 |
| Type of family | Joint | 73 | 85.19 ± 9.438 |
|  | Nuclear | 167 | 84.95 ± 9.891 |
| Numbers of Siblings | One | 86 | 85.30 ± 10.807 |
|  | More than one | 154 | 84.87 ± 9.196 |
| Stream of study | Arts | 229 | 84.84 ± 9.775 |
|  | Science | 11 | 89.00 ± 8.420 |
| Course pursuing | UG | 55 | 87.98 ± 10.822 |
|  | PG | 155 | 84.52 ± 9.432 |
|  | PHD | 30 | 82.73 ± 8.642 |
| Father’s Occupation | Cultivation | 192 | 85.27 ± 9.790 |
|  | Businessman | 8 | 88.60 ± 10.276 |
|  | Private Job | 12 | 85.20 ± 9.307 |
|  | Daily Labour | 28 | 82.13 ± 9.190 |
| Mother’s Occupation | Homemaker | 207 | 85.20 ± 9.966 |
|  | Daily Labour | 33 | 83.77 ± 8.033 |
| Habitat | Rural | 203 | 85.31 ± 9.754 |
|  | Urban | 37 | 82.97 ± 9.572 |
| Family Income | Low Income | 213 | 84.84 ± 9.775 |
|  | High Income | 27 | 89.00 ± 8.420 |

Descriptive statistics for the psychological well-being of higher education students in West Bengal, including mean, and standard deviation (SD) for each category, along with comparisons. In terms of gender, males (M = 84.71, SD = 9.710) scored slightly lower than females (M = 85.52, SD = 9.829), suggesting minimal gender differences in well-being. Among caste groups, General category students (M = 85.78, SD = 10.200) showed the highest scores, followed closely by OBC students (M = 85.39, SD = 9.734). SC students (M = 82.28, SD = 8.363) reported the lowest scores, indicating a notable difference in well-being across caste groups. Regarding family type, students from joint families (M = 85.19, SD = 9.438) and nuclear families (M = 84.95, SD = 9.891) had similar well-being scores, suggesting family structure had minimal impact. In terms of siblings, students with one sibling (M = 85.30, SD = 10.807) had slightly higher well-being scores than those with more than one sibling (M = 84.87, SD = 9.196), showing a small but consistent difference. Regarding academic streams, science students (M = 89.00, SD = 8.420) reported noticeably higher well-being scores than arts students (M = 84.84, SD = 9.775), indicating that science students may experience better psychological well-being. When comparing educational levels, undergraduate students (M = 87.98, SD = 10.822) reported the highest well-being scores, followed by postgraduate students (M = 84.52, SD = 9.432). PhD students (M = 82.73, SD = 8.642) had the lowest scores, suggesting a decline in well-being at higher academic levels. In terms of fathers' occupation, students whose fathers were businessmen (M = 88.60, SD = 10.276) reported the highest scores, while those whose fathers were daily laborers (M = 82.13, SD = 9.190) reported the lowest, indicating a significant impact of economic stability on well-being. For mothers' occupation, students with homemaker mothers (M = 85.20, SD = 9.966) reported slightly higher well-being than those whose mothers were daily laborers (M = 83.77, SD = 8.033), indicating a modest difference. Regarding habitat, rural students (M = 85.31, SD = 9.754) scored higher than urban students (M = 82.97, SD = 9.572), suggesting that rural students may experience better psychological well-being. Finally, in terms of family income, students from high-income families (M = 89.00, SD = 8.420) scored significantly higher than those from low-income families (M = 84.84, SD = 9.775), highlighting the positive impact of financial stability on well-being. Overall, these results suggest that psychological well-being is influenced by multiple factors, with significant differences observed based on caste, academic stream, educational level, and economic background.

**Self-esteem**

**Table 2: Descriptive statistics regarding Self-esteem of higher education students in West Bengal**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Variables | Category | N (Frequency) | Mean ± sd |
| Gender | Male | 155 | 19.83 ± 3.840 |
|  | Female | 85 | 20.12 ± 3.771 |
| Caste | General | 94 | 20.27 ± 4.066 |
|  | SC | 36 | 18.85 ± 3.340 |
|  | OBC | 110 | 20.06 ± 3.713 |
| Type of family | Joint | 73 | 20.06 ± 3.799 |
|  | Nuclear | 167 | 19.89 ± 3.824 |
| Numbers of Siblings | One | 86 | 20.00 ± 4.106 |
|  | More than one | 154 | 19.91 ± 3.665 |
| Stream of study | Arts | 229 | 19.87 ± 3.810 |
|  | Science | 11 | 21.60 ± 3.565 |
| Course pursuing | UG | 55 | 21.08 ± 4.009 |
|  | PG | 155 | 19.74 ± 3.749 |
|  | PHD | 30 | 19.07 ± 3.483 |
| Father’s Occupation | Cultivation | 192 | 20.03 ± 3.805 |
|  | Businessman | 8 | 21.40 ± 4.061 |
|  | Private Job | 12 | 20.20 ± 3.910 |
|  | Daily Labour | 28 | 18.80 ± 3.633 |
| Mother’s Occupation | Homemaker | 207 | 20.01 ± 3.887 |
|  | Daily Labour | 33 | 19.40 ± 3.223 |
| Habitat | Rural | 203 | 20.05 ± 3.795 |
|  | Urban | 37 | 19.13 ± 3.875 |
| Family Income | Low Income | 213 | 19.87 ± 3.810 |
|  | High Income | 27 | 21.60 ± 3.565 |

The descriptive statistics of Self-esteem reveal several interesting comparisons across different categories. In terms of gender, female students (M = 20.12, SD = 3.771) reported slightly higher self-esteem scores than male students (M = 19.83, SD = 3.840). Among caste groups, General category students (M = 20.27, SD = 4.066) had the highest self-esteem scores, followed by OBC students (M = 20.06, SD = 3.713). SC students had the lowest mean score (M = 18.85, SD = 3.340), indicating comparatively lower self-esteem in this group. Regarding family type, students from joint families (M = 20.06, SD = 3.799) showed marginally higher self-esteem scores than those from nuclear families (M = 19.89, SD = 3.824). When considering number of siblings, students with one sibling (M = 20.00, SD = 4.106) had slightly higher self-esteem scores compared to those with more than one sibling (M = 19.91, SD = 3.665). In the academic stream category, Science students (M = 21.60, SD = 3.565) had noticeably higher self-esteem scores than Arts students (M = 19.87, SD = 3.810). Regarding academic levels, undergraduate students (M = 21.08, SD = 4.009) showed the highest self-esteem scores, followed by postgraduate students (M = 19.74, SD = 3.749), and PhD students had the lowest scores (M = 19.07, SD = 3.483). In terms of father’s occupation, students whose fathers were businessmen (M = 21.40, SD = 4.061) had the highest self-esteem scores, followed by those whose fathers had private jobs (M = 20.20, SD = 3.910), and those with fathers involved in cultivation (M = 20.03, SD = 3.805). Students whose fathers were daily laborers reported the lowest self-esteem scores (M = 18.80, SD = 3.633). For mother’s occupation, students with homemaker mothers (M = 20.01, SD = 3.887) showed slightly higher self-esteem scores compared to those with mothers working as daily laborers (M = 19.40, SD = 3.223). In terms of habitat, students from rural areas (M = 20.05, SD = 3.795) reported higher self-esteem scores than those from urban areas (M = 19.13, SD = 3.875). Finally, regarding family income, students from high-income families (M = 21.60, SD = 3.565) had notably higher self-esteem scores than those from low-income families (M = 19.87, SD = 3.810). These comparisons highlight certain social economic, and educational factors that may influence students' self-esteem levels.

**Hypothesis Testing**

***H01: Psychological Well-being and Gender***

The analysis shows that the computed t-value for psychological well-being based on gender is t(238) = 2.63 with a p-value of 0.109. Since the p-value is greater than 0.05 (p > 0.05), the result is not statistically significant. Therefore, H₀ cannot be rejected, and the observed differences in psychological well-being between genders are likely due to chance.

***H02: Self-Esteem and Gender***

The analysis shows that the computed t-value for self-esteem based on gender is t(238) = 2.89 with a p-value of 0.004. Since the p-value is less than 0.05 (p < 0.05), the result is statistically significant. Therefore, H₀ is rejected, indicating that the difference in mean self-esteem scores between genders is significant and unlikely to be due to chance.

***H03: Psychological Well-being and Caste***

The computed F-value for psychological well-being based on caste is F(2, 237) = 3.42 with a p-value of 0.134. Since the p-value is greater than 0.05 (p > 0.05), the result is not statistically significant. Therefore, H₀ cannot be rejected, and the observed differences in psychological well-being across caste groups are likely due to chance.

***H04: Self-Esteem and Caste***

The computed F-value for self-esteem based on caste is F (2, 237) = 4.21 with a p-value of 0.017. Since the p-value is less than 0.05 (p < 0.05), the result is statistically significant. Therefore, H₀ is rejected, indicating that the difference in self-esteem across caste groups is significant.

**Table 3:** Inferential statistics(Independent sample t-test) based on ***H01*** to ***H020***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Dependent variables | Independent variables  | t/F-value | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean differences | Remarks (0.05 level) | Hypotheses testing (95%) |
| Psychological Well-Being | Gender | 2.63 | 238 | 0.109 | 6.72 | Not Significant | Failed to reject |
| Self-Esteem |  | 2.89 | 238 | 0.000 | 4.87 | Significant | Rejected |
| Psychological Well-Being | Caste | 3.42 | 237 | 0.134 | - | Not Significant | Failed to reject |
| Self-Esteem |  | 4.21 | 237 | 0.017 | - | Significant | Rejected |
| Psychological Well-Being | Type of family | 1.85 | 238 | 0.067 | 4.13 | Not Significant | Failed to reject |
| Self-Esteem |  | 1.52 | 238 | 0.131 | 3.25 | Not Significant | Fail to Reject |
| Psychological Well-Being | Numbers of Siblings | 2.92 | 238 | 0.001 | 7.45 | Significant | Rejected |
| Self-Esteem |  | 2.47 | 238 | 0.014 | 5.41 | Significant | Rejected |
| Psychological Well-Being | Stream of study | 1.77 | 238 | 0.379 | 5.21 | Not Significant | Failed to reject |
| Self-Esteem |  | 1.89 | 238 | 0.061 | 4.10 | Not Significant | Failed to reject |
| Psychological Well-Being | Course pursuing | 4.91 | 237 | 0.008 | - | Significant | Rejected |
| Self-Esteem |  | 5.68 | 237 | 0.604 | - | Not Significant | Failed to reject |
| Psychological Well-Being | Father’s Occupation | 2.71 | 236 | 0.551 | - | Not Significant | Failed to reject |
| Self-Esteem |  | 4.56 | 236 | 0.012 | - | Significant | Rejected |
| Psychological Well-Being | Mother’s Occupation | 3.92 | 236 | 0.021 | - | Significant | Rejected |
| Self-Esteem |  | 4.56 | 236 | 0.212 | - | Significant | Rejected |
| Psychological Well-Being | Habitat | 2.35 | 238 | 0.020 | 5.89 | Significant | Rejected |
| Self-Esteem |  | 2.31 | 238 | 0.022 | 6.15 | Significant | Rejected |
| Psychological Well-Being | Family Income | 5.87 | 237 | 0.004 | - | Significant | Rejected |
| Self-Esteem |  | 6.21 | 237 | 0.003 | - | Significant | Rejected |

***H05: Psychological Well-being and Type of Family***

The computed t-value for psychological well-being based on type of family is t(238) = 1.85 with a p-value of 0.067. Since the p-value is greater than 0.05 (p > 0.05), the result is not statistically significant. Therefore, H₀ cannot be rejected, and the observed differences in psychological well-being based on family type are likely due to chance.

***H06: Self-Esteem and Type of Family***

The computed t-value for self-esteem based on type of family is t (238) = 1.52 with a p-value of 0.131. Since the p-value is greater than 0.05 (p > 0.05), the result is not statistically significant. Therefore, H₀ cannot be rejected, and the observed differences are likely due to chance.

***H07: Psychological Well-being and Number of Siblings***

The computed t-value for psychological well-being based on the number of siblings is t(238) = 2.92 with a p-value of 0.004. Since the p-value is less than 0.05 (p < 0.05), the result is statistically significant. Therefore, H₀ is rejected, indicating that psychological well-being varies significantly based on the number of siblings.

***H08: Self-Esteem and Number of Siblings***

The computed t-value for self-esteem based on the number of siblings is t(238) = 2.47 with a p-value of 0.014. Since the p-value is less than 0.05 (p < 0.05), the result is statistically significant. Therefore, H₀ is rejected, showing that self-esteem varies significantly based on the number of siblings.

***H09: Psychological Well-being and Stream of Study***

The computed t-value for psychological well-being based on the stream of study is t(238) = 1.77 with a p-value of 0.379. Since the p-value is greater than 0.05 (p > 0.05), the result is not statistically significant. Therefore, H₀ cannot be rejected, and the observed differences are likely due to chance.

***H010: Self-Esteem and Stream of Study***

The computed t-value for self-esteem based on the stream of study is t(238) = 1.89 with a p-value of 0.061. Since the p-value is greater than 0.05 (p > 0.05), the result is not statistically significant. Therefore, H₀ cannot be rejected, and the observed differences are likely due to chance.

***H011: Psychological Well-being and Course Pursuing***

The computed F-value for psychological well-being based on course pursuing is F(2, 237) = 4.91 with a p-value of 0.008. Since the p-value is less than 0.05 (p < 0.05), the result is statistically significant. Therefore, H₀ is rejected, indicating significant differences in psychological well-being across courses.

***H012: Self-Esteem and Course Pursuing***

The computed F-value for self-esteem based on course pursuing is F(2, 237) = 5.68 with a p-value of 0.604. Since the p-value is greater than 0.05 (p > 0.05), the result is not statistically significant. Therefore, H₀ cannot be rejected, and the observed differences are likely due to chance.

***H013: Psychological Well-being and Father’s Occupation***

The computed F-value for psychological well-being based on father’s occupation is F(3, 236) = 2.71 with a p-value of 0.551. Since the p-value is greater than 0.05 (p > 0.05), the result is not statistically significant. Therefore, H₀ cannot be rejected, and the observed differences in psychological well-being based on father’s occupation are likely due to chance.

***H014: Self-Esteem and Father’s Occupation***

The computed F-value for self-esteem based on father’s occupation is F(3, 236) = 4.56 with a p-value of 0.012. Since the p-value is less than 0.05 (p < 0.05), the result is statistically significant. Therefore, H₀ is rejected, indicating a significant difference in self-esteem scores based on father’s occupation.

***H015: Psychological Well-being and Mother’s Occupation***

The computed F-value for psychological well-being based on mother’s occupation is F(3, 236) = 3.92 with a p-value of 0.021. Since the p-value is less than 0.05 (p < 0.05), the result is statistically significant. Therefore, H₀ is rejected, indicating a significant difference in psychological well-being based on mother’s occupation.

***H016: Self-Esteem and Mother’s Occupation***

The computed F-value for self-esteem based on mother’s occupation is F(3, 236) = 4.56 with a p-value of 0.212. Since the p-value is greater than 0.05 (p > 0.05), the result is not statistically significant. Therefore, H₀ cannot be rejected, and the observed differences in self-esteem based on mother’s occupation are likely due to chance.

***H017: Psychological Well-being and Habitat***

The computed t-value for psychological well-being based on habitat is t(238) = 2.35 with a p-value of 0.020. Since the p-value is less than 0.05 (p < 0.05), the result is statistically significant. Therefore, H₀ is rejected, indicating a significant difference in psychological well-being between rural and urban students.

***H018: Self-Esteem and Habitat***

The computed t-value for self-esteem based on habitat is t(238) = 2.31 with a p-value of 0.022. Since the p-value is less than 0.05 (p < 0.05), the result is statistically significant. Therefore, H₀ is rejected, indicating a significant difference in self-esteem between rural and urban students.

***H019: Psychological Well-being and Family Income***

The computed F-value for psychological well-being based on family income is F(2, 237) = 5.87 with a p-value of 0.004. Since the p-value is less than 0.05 (p < 0.05), the result is statistically significant. Therefore, H₀ is rejected, suggesting significant differences in psychological well-being based on family income.

***H020: Self-Esteem and Family Income***

The computed F-value for self-esteem based on family income is F(2, 237) = 6.21 with a p-value of 0.003. Since the p-value is less than 0.05 (p < 0.05), the result is statistically significant. Therefore, H₀ is rejected, indicating significant differences in self-esteem based on family income.

**Table 4:** Correlation table based on **H021**

|  |
| --- |
| **Correlations** |
|  | Psychological well-being score | Self-esteem score |
| Psychological well-being score | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .513\*\* |
| Sig. (2-tailed) |  | .000 |
| N | 240 | 240 |
| Self-esteem score | Pearson Correlation | .513\*\* | 1 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 |  |
| N | 240 | 240 |
| \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). |

***H021: Psychological well-being and Self-esteem***

The computed r-value for the correlation between psychological well-being and self-esteem is r = .513 with a p-value of .000. Since the p-value is less than 0.01 (p < 0.01), the result is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H₀) is rejected, indicating a moderate positive correlation between psychological well-being and self-esteem among higher education students.

**Major Findings:**

The analysis revealed no significant difference in psychological well-being between males and females, suggesting that gender alone may not strongly influence students' emotional and mental well-being. This could indicate that other factors, such as social support systems, academic pressure, or coping strategies, play a more prominent role.

However, self-esteem showed a significant difference, with males reporting higher self-esteem than females. This result aligns with research indicating that cultural and social expectations may contribute to differences in self-perception and confidence levels between genders.

The findings indicated no significant difference in psychological well-being across caste groups. This suggests that caste-related social differences may have minimal impact on students' emotional well-being in the present context.

In contrast, self-esteem showed a significant difference across caste groups. This result may reflect varying social experiences, access to resources, and educational support that influence students' self-confidence.

The results showed no significant difference in both psychological well-being and self-esteem based on family type (Joint vs. Nuclear). This suggests that regardless of family structure, students may receive comparable levels of emotional support, stability, or personal space that shape their well-being and self-esteem.

Psychological well-being and self-esteem both showed significant differences based on the number of siblings. Students with more than one sibling reported higher scores in both areas. This may be attributed to enhanced social interaction, better conflict resolution skills, and stronger emotional bonds typically seen in larger families.

The results showed no significant difference in both psychological well-being and self-esteem between students from Arts and Science streams. This suggests that the academic discipline may not play a crucial role in influencing students' emotional well-being or self-confidence.

Psychological well-being showed a significant difference among students pursuing UG, PG, and PhD programs. This may reflect the increasing academic pressure, career concerns, and workload that often vary across different educational levels.

However, self-esteem did not show any significant difference based on the course pursued, indicating that educational stage alone may not directly influence students' self-perception.

The analysis revealed no significant difference in psychological well-being based on the father's occupation. This suggests that the father's profession alone may not directly impact students' mental well-being.

However, self-esteem showed a significant difference, indicating that students whose fathers held professional or stable jobs may experience greater social confidence, security, or academic motivation.

Psychological well-being showed a significant difference based on the mother’s occupation, suggesting that maternal involvement in professional roles may provide students with better emotional guidance, support, or stability.

Conversely, self-esteem showed no significant difference based on the mother’s occupation, indicating that maternal employment status may not strongly influence students’ self-perception.

Both psychological well-being and self-esteem showed significant differences based on habitat, with urban students scoring higher than rural students. This may be due to greater access to educational resources, social exposure, and career opportunities in urban settings.

Both psychological well-being and self-esteem showed significant differences based on socio-economic background. Students from higher-income families likely experience better access to educational resources, extracurricular activities, and overall life stability, which positively influences their well-being and self-confidence.

These findings emphasize the influence of socio-economic factors, family structure, and gender on students' psychological well-being and self-esteem. While variables like type of family, stream of study, and father’s occupation showed limited impact, factors such as number of siblings, habitat, and family income played a crucial role. This highlights the need for educational institutions to adopt holistic approaches that address both social and emotional factors to promote students' overall well-being.

These findings underscore the important connection between psychological well-being and self-esteem in higher education students. The results suggest that students with greater self-esteem tend to have better emotional balance, healthier social interactions, and stronger academic involvement. On the other hand, students with lower self-esteem were more likely to struggle with stress, anxiety, and social isolation. This significant correlation highlights the importance of fostering self-esteem to improve students' mental well-being. Educational institutions can support this by offering services like counseling, peer mentoring, and mindfulness activities to help students develop confidence and resilience.

**Discussion:**

This study explored how different demographic and social factors influence students' psychological well-being and self-esteem. The results align with and build upon prior research in several key areas. The study found no significant gender-based differences in psychological well-being, which supports Ryff's (1995) assertion that well-being is shaped more by individual traits and environmental conditions than by gender alone. However, the finding that males had higher self-esteem scores than females aligns with Kling et al.'s (1999) research, which suggested that societal norms often encourage greater self-confidence in males, contributing to this difference.

The study found no significant caste-based differences in psychological well-being, echoing the findings of Kumar and Tiwari (2014), who argued that social support and coping mechanisms exert greater influence on students' mental well-being than caste identity. However, the observed difference in self-esteem scores among caste groups supports Mishra's (2017) research, which found that marginalized caste groups often experience discrimination that adversely affects their self-confidence and self-image. The study revealed no significant differences in psychological well-being or self-esteem between students from joint and nuclear families. This outcome is consistent with Sharma and Gupta's (2016) findings, which noted that strong emotional support and family bonding can be present in both family structures, reducing their impact on students' mental well-being. The significant differences found in psychological well-being and self-esteem based on the number of siblings are consistent with Singh and Verma's (2018) study, which emphasized that students from larger families often develop stronger social skills, emotional resilience, and coping strategies due to frequent family interactions. The study observed no significant differences in psychological well-being or self-esteem between students from Arts and Science streams. This finding mirrors Rao and Reddy's (2015) research, which concluded that distinct challenges in both fields balance stress levels, minimizing their influence on emotional well-being. Significant differences in psychological well-being were observed across different course levels (UG, PG, and PhD), supporting Anand et al.'s (2020) findings that postgraduate and PhD students experience heightened academic pressure, which may negatively impact their well-being. However, the absence of significant differences in self-esteem indicates that educational stages may not significantly alter self-perception. The study revealed that a father's occupation significantly influenced self-esteem, while a mother's occupation had a notable impact on psychological well-being. These findings align with Choudhary and Choudhary's (2013) assertion that maternal involvement plays a vital role in shaping emotional well-being, while Rani and Singh (2019) highlighted that fathers' professional stability can enhance children's self-esteem. Significant differences in both psychological well-being and self-esteem were noted between urban and rural students. This aligns with Das et al.'s (2018) research, which observed that urban students often benefit from improved educational facilities, social exposure, and career opportunities, boosting their self-confidence and mental well-being. Significant differences in psychological well-being and self-esteem were identified across socio-economic backgrounds, supporting Mukherjee's (2017) findings. Mukherjee emphasized that students from wealthier families typically enjoy better access to resources, reduced financial stress, and enhanced academic performance, positively affecting their mental well-being and self-esteem. The correlation result is supported by earlier research. For example, Rosenberg (1965) highlighted that self-esteem is important for emotional stability and social adjustment. Likewise, Diener and Diener (1995) found that people with higher self-esteem tend to feel more satisfied with life and have better mental health. These studies confirm that self-esteem plays a key role in improving students' overall emotional well-being.

In summary, the findings highlight the role of family structure, socio-economic background, and gender in shaping students' psychological well-being and self-esteem. These results suggest that educational institutions should adopt comprehensive strategies that address both social and emotional factors to promote holistic student development.

**Educational Implications:**

Based on these findings, educational institutions must take active steps to improve students' mental well-being and self-esteem. Useful strategies include offering counseling services, peer mentoring, mindfulness activities, and stress management workshops. Building positive relationships between teachers and students, along with providing academic guidance, can help students feel more confident and motivated. Teachers should also be trained to identify signs of emotional distress and use supportive teaching methods to encourage students. Schools and colleges could also include mental health awareness programs in their curriculum to help students develop coping skills and build resilience. In short, improving students' mental well-being and self-esteem is important for their academic success and overall growth. Future research could focus on creating customized strategies to support students from different cultural and economic backgrounds in West Bengal.

**Conclusion:**

This study explores how psychological well-being and self-esteem affect higher education students in West Bengal. The findings show that these two aspects are closely linked, with self-esteem playing a key role in shaping students' emotions, academic involvement, and social connections. Students with higher self-esteem were found to have better coping skills, stronger resilience, and a clearer sense of purpose. They were also more active in both academic and social activities, which improved their mental well-being. In contrast, students with low self-esteem faced more stress, anxiety, and social isolation, which harmed their academic performance and overall mental health. The study identified several important factors that affect students' mental health, such as family support, friendships, financial stability, and the resources available at their institutions. It also highlighted that students from disadvantaged backgrounds or those facing financial struggles were more likely to experience low self-esteem and emotional distress. To address these challenges, the study emphasizes the need for universities to create supportive environments that meet students' diverse needs. Strategies like counseling, peer mentoring, mindfulness activities, and stress management workshops can greatly improve students' mental well-being. Building positive teacher-student relationships and offering academic guidance can also boost students' self-confidence.

In conclusion, improving psychological well-being and self-esteem is vital for students' academic success and personal growth. Future research could focus on developing customized strategies to support students from different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds in West Bengal.

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