

EXPLORING THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN ADOLESCENT HOBBY ENGAGEMENT AND WELL-BEING

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Abstract

Adolescence is widely acknowledged a developmental stage marked by rapid changes in social, emotional, and psychological aspects of life. In recent years, the concerns about adolescents mental health has grown dramatically, especially in situations where options for leisure activity and self-expression are restricted by lifestyle choices and academic pressure. The current study looked at the relationship between teenagers psychological wellbeing and their involvement in hobbies in the Punjab region.

A total of 138 adolescents aged between 13 and 19 years participated in the study. Standardized tools including the Mental Health Continuum–Short Form (MHC-SF) and the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales–Youth Version (DASS-Y) were used for data collection. The study followed a correlational, cross-sectional design, and the data were analysed using descriptive statistics and correlation methods.

The study's findings indicated a 'significant positive relationship between hobby engagement and psychological well-being.' However, **hobby engagement was not found to be significantly** related to stress, anxiety, or depression, although the direction of association was negative. Additionally, psychological well-being showed strong negative correlations with emotional distress variables. After summing up, these findings suggested that hobby engagement acts more as a promotive factor that enhances positive mental health rather than directly reducing emotional distress.

Index Terms

Adolescence, Hobby Engagement, Psychological Well-being, Emotional Distress, Mental Health

I. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is still seen as a crucial developmental period marked by changes in identity, emotional regulation, and social functioning. At this stage, adolescents begin to develop a more solid sense of self as they negotiate through peer relationships, scholastic demands, and cultural expectations. Even though adolescence offers opportunities for growth and self-discovery, it is also associated with a greater risk of psychological distress (Steinberg, 2014).

In India, adolescent psychological wellbeing has become a major concern in recent years. Academic pressure and performance expectations are high which can lead to anxiety, stress, and emotional disturbances. In addition, Mental health outcomes have also been impacted by changes in lifestyle, such as increased screen time and decreased engagement in meaningful activities.

Modern perspectives state that mental health includes both the absence of illness and well-functioning (Keyes, 2002). This includes mental, emotional, and social well-being. Emotional well-being is viewed under positive affect, life satisfaction under psychological well-being which is exemplified by personal growth & purpose, and social well-being by meaningful relationships & social interaction. There are also negative emotional states which includes despair, anxiety, and stress are seen as an indicator of psychological distress (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995).

“Hobbies may enhance wellness by providing opportunities for emotional regulation, skill development, and self-expression.” In Support there are previous research which has demonstrated a connection between improved wellbeing and leisure activities. For instance, Holder et al. (2009) highlighted the importance of leisure activities in promoting happiness, while Badura et al. (2021) found that teens who participated in organized activities reported higher levels of life satisfaction. Similarly, O'Donnell et al. (2024) discovered that participation in extracurricular activities enhanced adolescents sense of belonging and psychological adjustment.

However, findings related to negative emotional states have shown to be less trustworthy. Hobbies may help individuals feel less anxious and sad, according to some study (Ma et al., 2020), while other studies (Bhad, P. et al. 2019) suggest that the relationship may depend on contextual factors including social environment and academic pressure. In Indian culture, where academic commitments can take dominance over leisure pursuits, the necessity of having a hobby becomes more crucial. Nevertheless, our study has looked at the relationship between hobbies under both positive and negative aspects of Indian youth's mental health.

NEED OF THE STUDY

In India, increasing academic pressure, reduced leisure time, and rapidly changing lifestyles have made adolescent mental health an important area of concern. Reports such as the UNESCO GEM Report (2021) highlighted that the exam-oriented system in Indian schools often prioritised rote learning over creativity, which may limit opportunities for self-expression and engagement in hobbies. Similarly, the PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan (2024) indicated that less than half of schools in India provided skill-based or hobby-related learning opportunities at higher grades.

The emergence of the idea for the present study was influenced by prior documentary work which was conducted on the drug addiction problem in the Punjab region. The findings of that study indicated that one of the major reasons behind substance use was the dysfunctional family relationships, academic expectations and the lack of opportunities for an engagement in extracurricular activities. There were limited or no spaces at all where young individuals could channel their energy, relax, or spend meaningful leisure time away from daily stress.

These observations highlighted the importance of providing adolescents with healthy outlets such as hobbies and supportive environments that encourages the positive development. This formed an important basis for exploring the role of hobby engagement in adolescent well-being in the present study.

II. OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

The study's goal was aimed to give a better knowledge of the connection between hobby participation and various aspects of wellbeing.

Objectives:

- To examine the association between hobby engagement and psychological well-being.

- To examine the association between hobby engagement and emotional distress (stress, anxiety, and depression).

Hypotheses:

- H1: There is a significant association between hobby engagement and psychological well-being.
- H2: There is a significant association between hobby engagement and emotional distress.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study followed a correlational and cross-sectional research design to understand the relationship between hobby engagement and well-being at a single point in time.

3.2 Population and Sample

The study included 138 adolescents aged between 13 and 19 years. Among them, 78 were male and 60 were female. Most participants belonged to the 13–15 age group.

Participants were categorized based on hobby engagement, where 90 participants reported being engaged in hobbies and 48 reported no regular engagement.

3.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Participants were included if they were adolescents aged 13–19 years, residents of Punjab, and willing to participate. Those with severe cognitive or psychiatric conditions or incomplete responses were excluded.

3.4 Data and Source

The present study was based on **primary data** collected from adolescents in the Punjab region. The data was gathered directly from participants using standardized psychological scales, namely the Mental Health Continuum–Short Form (MHC-SF) and the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales–Youth Version (DASS-Y).

The participants were approached in schools and coaching centres. The questionnaires were administered offline, and responses were collected in a structured manner. Before data collection, participants were informed about the purpose of the study and were assured of confidentiality.

3.5 Statistical Analysis

The data were analysed using descriptive statistics and correlation methods. Point-biserial correlation was used for hobby engagement, and Pearson correlation was used for continuous variables.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sociodemographic Characteristics

Table 4.1: *Socio-demographic characteristics of the participants (N = 138)*

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	78	56.5
	Female	60	43.5
Age Group	13–15 years	104	75.4
	16–18 years	34	24.6
Hobby Engagement	Hobby-Engaged	90	65.2
	Non-Hobby	48	34.8
Gender × Hobby	Males – Hobby	51	36.9
	Males – Non-Hobby	27	19.6
	Females – Hobby	39	28.3
	Females – Non-Hobby	21	15.2

The sample comprised 138 teenagers, as indicated in Table 4.1, with a somewhat greater percentage of boys (56.5%) than females (43.5%) out of which 75.4% of participants were between the ages of 13 and 15. In terms of hobby participation, 34.8% of teenagers said they did not regularly engage in hobbies, compared to 65.2% who said they did. An appropriate foundation for analysing group differences was supplied by this distribution.

Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Table 4.2: *Psychological well-being and emotional discomfort descriptive statistics (N = 138)*

Variable	N	Min	Max	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Psychological Well-being (MHC)	138	10	66	41.44	12.68	−0.31	−0.28
Depression (DASS-Y)	138	0	21	6.59	5.22	0.81	−0.01
Anxiety (DASS-Y)	138	0	20	6.64	5.05	0.78	−0.19
Stress (DASS-Y)	138	1	21	10.77	5.00	−0.03	−0.90
DASS-Y Total	138	1	58	24.00	13.05	0.56	−0.40

The descriptive statistics for the primary study variables are shown in Table 4.2. With a mean score of 41.44 for psychological well-being, individual levels of well-being were moderate.

The mean scores for the emotional distress factors were 10.77 for stress, 6.59 for depression, and 6.64 for anxiety. These results indicated that the sample's emotional suffering varied. All variables skewness and kurtosis values were within permissible bounds, suggesting that the data were roughly regularly distributed and appropriate for additional statistical examination.

Association Between Hobby Engagement and Study Variables

Table 4.3: Point-biserial correlations between hobby engagement and study variables (N = 138)

Outcome Variable	r_{pb}	p	r^2	Result
Psychological Well-being (MHC)	.328**	<.001	.108	Significant
Depression (DASS-Y)	-.128	.134	.016	Not Significant
Anxiety (DASS-Y)	-.079	.359	.006	Not Significant
Stress (DASS-Y)	-.046	.590	.002	Not Significant
DASS-Y Total	-.099	.246	.010	Not Significant

Table 4.3 demonstrates that hobby participation was strongly correlated with psychological well-being ($r = .328, p < .001$). Teenagers who had interests, reported feeling better psychologically than those who didn't. Engaging in hobbies, however, was not substantially linked to stress, anxiety, or sadness. The correlations were not statistically significant, despite the fact that they were negative, indicating a potential trend linking hobby participation to less emotional discomfort.

Relationship Between Psychological Well-Being and Emotional Distress

Table 4.4: Pearson correlations between psychological well-being and emotional distress variables (N = 138)

DASS-Y Dimension	r	p	r^2	Interpretation
Depression	-.615**	<.001	.378	Strong negative
Anxiety	-.396**	<.001	.157	Moderate negative
Stress	-.424**	<.001	.180	Moderate negative
DASS-Y Total	-.562**	<.001	.315	Strong negative

Psychological well-being and emotional distress factors are related, as Table 4.4 illustrates. Psychological well-being and depression were shown to be strongly correlated but negatively ($r = -.615$, $p < .001$), meaning that better well-being was linked to lower levels of depression. Similarly, there were moderately negative associations between psychological well-being and stress ($r = -.424$, $p < .001$) and anxiety ($r = -.396$, $p < .001$). These results suggested that emotional discomfort was lower in teenagers with greater psychological well-being.

The significant portion of these findings were supported by earlier studies, showing that hobbies enhance good functioning and offer chances for self-expression, accomplishment, and skill development which are critical for psychological well-being. Holder et al. (2009) Their studies showed that ‘vigorous leisure activities improve happiness’, and Badura et al. (2021) discovered that ‘teenagers who engaged in structured leisure activities expressed greater levels of general well-being and life satisfaction’.

However, the lack of a strong correlation between hobby participation and emotional discomfort raises the possibility that hobbies are insufficient to deal with more serious psychological issues, as elements such as social surroundings, family expectations, relationship with peers and academic pressure might impact emotional challenges. This finding is in line with Keyes (2002), who proposed that well-being and mental illness are related but distinct dimensions, and Caldwell and Smith (2006), who proposed that although recreational activities might enhance wellbeing, their impact on lowering stress and negative emotions may vary depending on personal and environmental circumstances.

V. CONCLUSION

Conclusion:

After thoroughly viewing the study, a significant correlation between adolescents psychological well-being and their involvement in hobbies was found. However, there was no meaningful correlation between hobby engagement and reduction emotional distress. These results underline the value of healthy development during adolescence and the role that hobbies play in fostering a good mental health.

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