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Psychological well-being of college students in The Royal University of Bhutan: a case study

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ABSTRACT: *Psychological well-being and mental health among higher education students are prevalent and increasing on university campuses. Evidence suggests that students are vulnerable to mental health problems which have generated increased public concern (Chao, 2012; Bewick et al., 2010). This study aims to explore the psychological well-being of students in one of the colleges of the Royal University of Bhutan. An explanatory two-phase mixed method design was employed. 210 students responded to the survey questionnaire and 10 students from six different programmes and four levels in the college participated in the interview. A convenient stratified and purposive sampling technique was applied. Ryff's scales of psychological well-being (Ryff & Singer, 2008) were used to measure multiple facets of psychological well-being. The findings indicated that students involved in the study possessed mixed levels of overall psychological well-being as the participants were from six courses and five levels of varied ages. The quantitative results of this study showed a positive attitude toward Ryff's six dimensions of psychological well-being across ages and programmes (M=4.70, M-4.92). However, the findings indicated that undergraduate students possessed higher levels of psychological well-being than the Master of Education students. Additionally, a strong positive correlation was observed amongst the six dimensions of psychological well-being. The qualitative findings highlighted environmental mastery and positive relations with others as critical in the promotion of the psychological well-being of the college students.*

KEYWORDS: **psychological well-being, teacher education, college students, factors, programmes, levels.**

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1. Introduction

Psychological well-being (PWB) and mental health among higher education students are of concern as their lives can frequently be chaotic and full of psychological stress when they make the transition from schools to universities. There is increasing research interest in describing the psychological well-being of students. According to Chao (2012) and Bewick et al. (2010), college students' stresses and psychological disturbances have increased tremendously over the past decade. It is, therefore, important to understand factors that impact college students' psychological well-being.

In Bhutan, as collective happiness is the goal of governance under a Gross National Happiness (GNH) society, psychological well-being is of great importance because it not only serves as an indicator of well-being for the community as a whole but also measures the success of the government in providing well-being enhancing projects and policies (Zangmo, 2008). As claimed by Seligman et al. (2009), well-being is an important concept in positive psychology and also needs to be seen as a core element of education. Several international studies observed that there is a strong positive connection between positive well-being and academic performance (Awartani et al., 2008). Student well-being has become a key agenda for education and many now consider emotional-social learning to be of equal importance to academic learning (Cohen et al., 2013; Dorji et al., 2015; Elias & Haynes, 2008). Research studies on psychological well-being in the Bhutanese context are few and far between and this study will contribute to the growing interest in mental health in the country. This research will focus on the psychological

well-being of students in one of the colleges of the Royal University of Bhutan (RUB).

The purpose of the study was to examine the psychological well-being of college students and the factors that impact it. Carol Ryff's 42-item scale to measure the psychological well-being (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Keynes, 1995) was used, since it is multidimensional and reflects a good balance engaging each of the different aspects of well-being – autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance (Ryff et al., 2007; adapted from Ryff, 1989). The 42-item scale is statistically sounder than the other models (Ryff et al., 2007) and is acknowledged as a robust tool.

A mixed-method research approach was used to understand the perceptions of psychological well-being by students in one of the colleges of RUB and the factors that may impact their psychological well-being. Ryff's 42-item questionnaire and in-depth interview to understand differences in the psychological well-being of college students were administered to collect data.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Defining psychological well-being

Psychological well-being is about lives going well. It is the combination of feeling good and functioning effectively. Despite an abundance of research, a single agreed-upon definition of well-being remains elusive (Dodge et al., 2012). The World Health Organisation (WHO) defined health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (Preamble to the Constitution of the World Health Organisation, 2018, p. 100). Well-being literature endorses this definition by focusing on both the absence of negative factors (such as illness) and the presence of positive factors (such as life satisfaction) (Henn et al., 2016).

Well-being is a multifaceted concept. It is often thought of as the experience that both guide students in the search for meaning and direction in life and help them realize their true potential. Psychological well-being is beneficial to live a healthy life, making it an important aspect of one's life (Molina-García et al., 2011). Well-being is a term widely used both in public and scientific discourse to denote a positive state, be it physical, emotional, financial, spiritual, or other (Ereaut & Whiting, 2008). Ryan and Deci (2001, p. 142) defined well-being as the 'optimal psychological functioning and experience' and is important for one to actualize his/her full potential and achieve anticipated goals. Student well-being in the study is defined as students' overall development and quality of life, as supported by Ryff's six-factor model of psychological well-being (comprising six different aspects, namely autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, purpose in life, positive relations with others and self-acceptance).

2.2. Impact of well-being

Several studies as observed from the investigations found a strong positive link between educational standing and psychological well-being (Ryff & Singer, 2008). With the development of positive psychology in recent decades, well-being and related topics such as quality of life, happiness, and life satisfaction have gained considerable attention. Positive psychologists focus on the bright side and perceive all young people as "resources to be developed" (Lerner et al., 2003, p. 172). Universities are increasingly expected to create environments that actively promote student success and well-being (Genova & Romano, 2013). To thrive and flourish in a complex and ever-changing world, university students need to acquire both academic knowledge and life skills that promote well-being. Research shows that educational institutions that purposefully prioritize wellness also enhance student learning, engagement, satisfaction, and persistence (Awang et al., 2014; Heffner & Antaramian, 2016; Souri & Hasanirad, 2011). Well-being is one of the most important contributors to the success of individuals, communities, and societies overall (Healthy Minds/Healthy Campuses, 2021). Psychological well-being is important in the life of a college student. The link between health and well-being and positive academic performance

is well researched as studies also highlighted positive associations of life satisfaction with school performance and academic achievement (e.g., Heffner & Antaramian, 2016). Similarly, Souri and Hasanirad (2011) and Harding et al. (2019) in their studies reported that resilience, mindfulness, support from family, and support from significant others were significant predictors of psychological well-being. Moreover, studies (Khan & Husan, 2010; Awang et al., 2014) found that support from family, friends and significant others was associated with positive psychological strengths and subjective well-being among engineering students. This indicates that overall well-being enhances intrinsic motivation, decreases disciplinary problems, increases academic achievement, improves school satisfaction, and leads to the flourishing of individuals, communities, and nations (Buecker et al., 2018). Thus, educational institutions have a critical role in supporting students to develop attitudes, skills, and knowledge for living a good satisfactory life. However, some studies have reported factors that trigger students' psychological well-being. One such study is by Yusoff et al. (2010) which reports that academic-related stressors affect students the most. Similarly, studies point out that anxiety and stress affect students' psychological well-being (Lopes & Nihei, 2021; Morales-Rodríguez et al., 2020).

2.3. Bhutanese studies and findings

While reviewing the literature, it is seen that there are not many studies on psychological well-being in the Bhutanese context, especially in higher education. One of the few studies in one of the colleges of education in Bhutan found a 12.7% level of suicidal ideation and 3.7% suicide attempts by college students (Sherab et al., 2017). In another qualitative study, the study points out that classroom well-being plays a significant role in enhancing student learning and confirms that various educational elements directly exert an influence on student well-being and their learning (Seden et al., 2020). More recently in a study conducted by Schuelka et al. (2021) on Happiness, Wellbeing, and Mental Health in Bhutanese Higher Education across nine colleges of the RUB, the results showed that while many students viewed their happiness and well-being as positive overall, there was still a significant amount that experienced depression, stress, social difficulties, and other forms of distress. As higher education institutions are crucial in promoting the mental health and well-being of their students, it is timely to further explore and corroborate the psychological well-being of students in one of the colleges of the Royal University of Bhutan. This paper, therefore, aims to address the question: What is the state of psychological well-being of college students and what variables may impact it?

In order to answer this overarching question, sub-questions are developed:

1. How do students perceive their psychological well-being in the college?

2. What factors contribute to (strengthen) or impede (weaken) students' well-being in the college?

3. Methodology

The study attempted to determine the levels of psychological well-being among students in Samtse College of Education. A mixed-method research study was used as an explanatory two-phase design. The qualitative (interview) data was used to enhance and build upon the initial quantitative (survey questionnaire) data. The survey questionnaire was Ryff's 42-item PWB scale, which measures six aspects of well-being and happiness: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance (Ryff et al., 2007). The individual interviews were used to gather an in-depth understanding of students' perceptions of PWB and the factors that may impact their PWB.

3.1. Participants

The study was conducted with students at the Samtse College of Education. The college has 1132 students, however, the survey questionnaire was only distributed to 210 students across six courses and five levels in the college using a stratified sampling technique to include students across levels and courses (senior and novice)

and 210 participated (30% of the total number). A purposive sampling technique was employed to select the participants for the interview as it allows the researchers to handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgement (Cohen et al., 2007).

3.2. Instruments

The questionnaires were divided into two parts, Section 1 contained questions related to respondents' demographics and Section 2 consisted of 42 items that were adopted from Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scales (PWB). The questionnaire consisted of demographic items, and a seven-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 2=Somewhat disagree, 3=Little disagree, 4=Neutral, 5=Somewhat agree, 6=Little agree, and 7 = Strongly agree) to measure students' levels of psychological well-being across 42 items proposed by Carol Ryff (1995). The questionnaire, developed by Ryff et al. (2007), divided into six subscales, focuses on self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and a sense of personal growth. Seven items were designed to measure each subscale on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). This scale also includes both positive and negative statements to look at the consistency of students' responses for each subscale. The respondents completed the questionnaire comprising items measured on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Negative items were reverse coded into positive ones, and the respondents with high scores were deemed to possess high psychological well-being and vice versa. To ensure the reliability of the survey questionnaire, Cronbach coefficient test was carried out and the value was found to be 0.72. According to Hulin et al. (2001), the acceptable value of Cronbach alpha lies between 0.6-0.7. Therefore, the survey items were found to be reliable and valid for the Bhutanese context and participants.

A total of 210 (30%) students between 18 and 32 years responded to the survey. With regard to gender, 45.2% (n=95) were women; 54.3% (n= 119) men with .5% (n=1) in the other category. Of the total sample, 27.1% (n=57) were enrolled in the Postgraduate Diploma in Education course; 9.5% (n=20) in the Postgraduate Diploma in Counselling and Contemplative Practices; 45.2% (n=95) in the Bachelor of Secondary Education; 8.1% (n=17) in the Bachelor of Primary Education; 4.8% (n= 10) in the Master's in education and 5.2% (n= 11) in the Bachelor in Social Work course in the college providing a good coverage across the courses. Regarding the levels, 22.4 % were in the final year of their study, while 19% were in their third year, and 12.4% and 46.2% were in their second and first year of their study, respectively.

Further, to better understand psychological well-being and elicit thick, rich descriptions, semi-structured in-depth interviews were carried out with 10 students (f-5; m-5) from six different courses. There were 14 questions focusing on the six broad areas associated with optimal psychological functioning (Ryff, 2007) and included obstacles/barriers that may be faced during the study in college. An opportunity was provided for additional points to be made that were not covered in the questions. The interviews were conducted in English and lasted between 30-40 minutes.

3.3. Procedure

To carry out the study, approval was sought from the Office of Dean Research and Industrial Linkages, Samtse College of Education and the participants. Participation in the study was voluntary, and students were assured that all of their responses would remain confidential and used for research purposes only. The survey was administered and interviews were conducted during the free hours. Further, participants' privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity were assured through the use of pseudonyms throughout the research.

3.4. Analysis

The first step of the analysis for this study was to examine the Likert scale results. Descriptive statistics were calculated and examined using SPSS version 22. The psychological well-being

of the students was analyzed and interpreted using Ryff's Six-factor Model of Psychological Well-being to understand students' views regarding well-being, contentment, and happiness. The descriptive analysis of the 7 points Likert scale of the six themes shows a slightly higher side of the mean (4.9) with the standard deviation (0.82) (Table 7). After this, the interviews were transcribed and then closely examined to make sense of the raw data (Clarke & Braun, 2018). However, they were analyzed and interpreted following Ryff's six dimensions of psychological well-being.

4. Findings and discussion

The findings of the survey and the interviews are analyzed and discussed for the six dimensions of psychological well-being and are informed by literature. As shown in Table 1, descriptive analysis was used to determine the level and pattern of students' psychological well-being on six of its dimensions (Autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance). The findings indicated high scores on the dimensions of Autonomy (M = 4.99, SD = 0.82) and Personal Growth (M = 4.99, SD = 0.72), followed by Environmental Mastery (M = 4.96, SD = 0.86), Purpose of Life (M = 4.92, SD = 0.64), Self-acceptance (M = 4.92, SD = 0.89), and Positive Relations with others (M = 4.89, SD = 0.93). As shown in Table 1, the average mean for the 6 predetermined themes was (M=4.95, SD-0.81) which is near to the 'Little Agree' category.

4.1. Autonomy

As indicated in Table 4, the analysis of the five items showed not much variation in the way students perceived their autonomy as the overall mean value for the theme was (4.99) with the

Table 1. Overall level of students' psychological well-being by subscale

Themes	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Autonomy	210	4.99	.83
Environmental_Mastery	210	4.97	.87
Personal_Growth	210	4.99	.73
Positive_Relations	210	4.89	.94
Purpose_in_life	210	4.93	.65
Self_acceptance	210	4.93	.89
Overall of Psychological Well-being	210	4.96	0.81

Table 2. Levels of psychological wellbeing across age groups

Age		Autonomy	Environmental Mastery	Personal Growth	Positive Relations	Purpose in life	Self-acceptance
Less than 18 years	Mean	5.92	5.59	5.73	4.90	4.78	5.70
	Std. Deviation	.12	.118	1.03	.71	.71	.423
19-22 years	Mean	4.95	5.09	5.00	4.85	4.91	5.04
	Std. Deviation	.84	.89	.67	.92	.643	.99
23-26 years	Mean	4.99	4.87	4.95	4.95	4.92	4.87
	Std. Deviation	.79	.85	.729	.929	.62	.748
27-30 years	Mean	5.35	5.19	5.51	5.23	5.36	4.99
	Std. Deviation	1.05	.99	.88	1.27	.977	1.29
31 years and above	Mean	4.78	4.65	4.62	4.25	4.87	4.48
	Std. Deviation	.591	.66	.615	.56	.474	1.03

Table 3. Differences in students' psychological well-being levels across fields of study

Program	Statistics	Autonomy	Environmental Mastery	Personal Growth	Positive Relations	Purpose in life	Self-acceptance
PgDn	Mean	5.05	4.89	4.99	4.94	5.02	4.93
	Std. Deviation	.77	.77	.76	.939	.64	.77
PgDCCP	Mean	4.89	4.87	4.82	4.99	4.75	4.93
	Std. Deviation	.99	.99	.67	.99	.87	.99
B.Ed Secondary	Mean	4.96	5.06	5.02	4.81	4.85	4.95
	Std. Deviation	.93	.91	.79	.91	.59	.92
B.Ed Primary	Mean	5.33	5.08	5.37	5.55	5.23	5.29
	Std. Deviation	.74	.87	.81	.79	.65	.86
M.Ed	Mean	4.65	4.62	4.69	4.28	4.83	4.08
	Std. Deviation	.65	.49	.57	.67	.66	.81
B.A in Social work	Mean	5.17	5.02	4.92	4.84	5.13	4.97
	Std. Deviation	.75	1.07	.77	1.01	.62	.53

standard deviation of (1.811) which falls toward the 'Little Agree' category. This indicates that students somewhat agree concerning managing their autonomy. However, the average mean rating for item 03, My attitude about myself is probably not as positive as most people feel about themselves, and item 5, I have the sense that I have developed a lot as a person over time falls in the neutral and somewhat agree category. This indicates that students neither agree nor disagree about their attitude while they are somewhat certain that they have developed as a person.

Likewise, the analysis of autonomy across age and programmes showed an average mean rating of (M=5.19, M=5.00) which falls towards the little agree category indicating that students across ages and programmes have similar concerns about handling their autonomy. However, surprisingly the participants in the younger age range below 18 years showed a higher mean value (5.91) which is closer to the somewhat agree category, showing that they can make decisions, manage freedom, have a better internal locus of control, individualization and self-regulation of behaviour as compared to other age groups (see Table 2 and 3). This is inconsistent with the results of other studies (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Keynes, 1995; Ryff & Singer, 2008), who report that autonomy tends to rise with older age. Typically, it is expected that the older groups of students would exercise greater autonomy as they are mature and experienced. However, one possible reason for this incongruence could be because the senior students are overwhelmed by the workload of their courses and are in-service teachers who come from a structured system wherein everything is planned and set up for them. The findings from the survey across fields of study (Table 3) as well demonstrate that the undergraduate students show higher levels of autonomy than the M.Ed students which are inconsistent with the findings of Rosian et al. (2017) that pointed out that the Master of Education students possessed a slightly high level of psychological well-being.

Additionally, triangulating the results from the quantitative data, and the findings from the interviews, all students (100%) reported that lecturers gave assignments, group work, and presentations of their choice and organized group discussions in the Virtual Learning Environment providing a range of learning opportunities and also allowing them to be actively engaged in their learning as observed from the student interview. For instance, a student shared that *"the fact that the courses have discussion groups in Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) related to studies. I think this is inclusive because as a shy person, I face difficulty in asking questions in the class (S3)"*. This finding aligns with the

Table 4. Students' level of autonomy

Autonomy	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I am not afraid to voice my opinions	210	5.20	1.92
My decisions are not usually influenced by what everyone else is doing	210	5.06	1.88
My attitude about myself is probably not as positive as most people feel about themselves	210	4.00	2.04
I tend to be influenced by People with strong opinions	210	4.90	1.83
When I compare myself to friends and acquaintances, it makes me feel good about who I am	210	4.93	1.89
I have the sense that I have developed a lot as a person over time	210	5.90	1.29
Average		4.99	1.81

study by Awang et al. (2014) which informs that challenging academic environments are of great importance to students' academic adjustment.

Universities are increasingly expected to create environments that actively promote student success and well-being (Genova & Romano, 2013). The qualitative data reports that the college organizes varied activities including cultural, sports and games, and literary activities, to meet learning diversity and also to promote students' success and well-being. Students shared that *"I do participate in cultural items and sports. The college is inclusive and provides equal opportunities (S7)"*, and *"... in this college, people tend to care for each other whenever you face some problems, or you are ill. Even if there is no special care, there is at least equality, everybody is treated equally. Few tutors are very strict, but it is their way for showing concern and care (S10)"*. The students stated that such activities promoted independent learning, autonomy, inclusivity, equality, and shared responsibility and this finding aligned with Ryff (1989) who considers autonomy as equal to making one's own decisions, freedom, internal locus of control, individualization, and self-regulation of behaviour.

4.2. Environmental mastery

As depicted in Table 5, the analysis of the five items of Environmental Mastery revealed a mean value of (4.96) with a standard deviation of (1.68) which is closer to the little agree category, indicating that the reaction to the environment indicates that the respondents are able to manipulate and respond to the environment as a key part of positive psychological functioning and make effective use of opportunities or have a sense of mastery in managing environmental factors and activities (Ryff, 1989) in the college campus. An interesting point to note is the mean for item 3, I do not fit very well with people and the community around me has a higher standard deviation (2.17), indicating that the responses varied on this item. The findings from the survey across fields of study (Table 3) also demonstrate that the students enrolled in the undergraduate courses show higher levels of Environmental Mastery than the M.Ed students. A possible reason for this could be that undergraduate students by virtue of being younger are more explorative and innovative in adjusting their learning environment in a way that enhances their personal and professional growth, while M.Ed students are struggling to adjust to the learning environment as they are studying after prolonged years in the service.

Nonetheless, the interview data indicate that students found the atmosphere at the college conducive, comfortable, welcoming, caring and accommodating, resonating with Seligman et al.'s. (2009) claim that well-being is the core element of education, as indicated in the excerpt: *"The university supports and cares for its pupils. Academic rigour is encouraged for the kids. The campus is large, making it a pleasant location to learn. Other than the assignments, I like my college (S4)"* and *"Additionally, the qualitative*

Table 5. Students' overall level of environmental mastery

Environmental Mastery	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
In general, I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live	210	5.96	1.42
In many ways, I feel disappointed about my achievements in life	210	4.14	1.98
I do not fit very well with the people and community around me	210	3.70	2.17
I am good at managing the many responsibilities of my daily life	210	5.69	1.29
I often feel overwhelmed by my responsibilities	210	5.30	1.52
Average		4.96	1.68

findings reveal that the college has a supportive academic atmosphere headed by far-sighted, passionate, compassionate and selfless hard-working leaders and highly intellectual lecturers (S4)."

In addition, the academic requirements were stimulating and challenging, demanding them to analyze and think critically; for instance, the English lecturer gave assignments where they had to look at two different writings by students and critically analyze their writings (the strengths and weaknesses), the possible causes and what could we do as a teacher. Another assignment that made them think critically was analyzing the curriculum for their subject.

Similarly, students reported that the college has a good number of experienced faculty with expertise in the research field as well as those mastered in content knowledge of specific disciplines which shapes their growth as pointed out in the excerpt: *"Along with expanding my subject knowledge and instructional skills, I wish to sharpen my competence, especially in the field of research. As a teacher, I have identified a number of academic problems that contribute to pupils' poor performance, which calls for interventions and improvement. I am sure that attending this college is the best choice for me to gain in-depth knowledge of the study topic (S2)".*

In contrast to the above examples, some respondents stated that a few lecturers showed unacceptable behaviour and were not cooperatively creating negative impressions amongst the students, as corroborated by the following comment in the interview: *"there exist few lecturers who do not even seem like lecturers. The way they react and respect students' views and feelings when we are blamed without having good judgement and understanding of the situation, it brings a lot of negative impact to our vulnerable minds (S5)".*

4.3. Personal growth

Ryff (1989) defined personal development as the ability of the individual to develop his/her available potential to develop and grow. The analysis of the five items under the dimension of personal growth indicated that there were not many differences in the way students perceived their personal growth, with a mean of (4.99) with a standard deviation of (1.75) (Table 6). The data, as depicted in Tables 2 and 3, the average mean rating for self-acceptance across ages and programmes was (5.15 & 4.96) which falls in the little agree on category, indicating that students have somewhat little potential to develop their personal growth. However, for the age range below 18 years, the mean value was (5.72,) and the Standard Deviation was higher (1.02), revealing that there is variation in the way the students of this age group manage their personal growth (Table 2). The findings from the survey across fields of study (Table 3) also demonstrate that the students enrolled in the undergraduate courses show higher levels of Personal Growth than those in the other courses. This could be attributed to personal traits such as resilience, optimism, and forthcoming. The results are consistent with the results of Carver et al. (2010) and Souri and Hasanirad (2011).

Consistent with the survey findings, the interview data revealed that courses offered for Masters in Education are comprehensive and conducive. The lecturers' sound academic

Table 6.Students' level of personal growth

Personal Growth	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
For me, life has been a continuous process of learning changing, and growth	210	6.46	1.17
I live one day at a time and don't really think about the future	210	3.64	2.08
The demands of everyday life often get me down	210	4.49	1.83
I gave up making big improvements or changes in my life a long time ago	210	3.40	2.15
I judge myself by what I think is important, not by the values of what others think is important	210	5.70	1.64
Generally, I feel confident and positive about myself	210	5.92	1.33
I do not enjoy being in new situations that require me to change my old familiar ways of doing things	210	4.51	1.99
I know that I can trust my friends, and they know they can trust me	210	4.90	1.87
I enjoy personal and mutual conversation with family members and friends	210	5.95	1.72
Average		4.99	1.75

background and expertise greatly enhanced their learning experiences helping them to grow personally and professionally. Such attributes of lecturers are prerequisites for enhancing students' overall well-being. These findings are consistent with Buecker et al. (2018), who state that promoting overall well-being enhances intrinsic motivation, decreases disciplinary problems, increases academic achievement, improves school satisfaction and leads to the flourishing of individuals, communities, and nations. A comment in the interview validates the findings: *"… As a master student, I get to enhance myself both academically (content) and professionally (pedagogy). I am able to understand research in-depth and could carry out one as a requirement of the course. I could see myself growing as compared to a year back as a teacher in the field. The college has a good number of qualified and experienced faculties in all the fields like research, content, and pedagogy. We can easily meet tutors for any help unlike in universities abroad (S2)".* Students shared that the lecturer provides presentations and assignments that promote their personal growth, enhancing their critical thinking and academic writing skills as well.

The students mentioned that a conducive learning environment, lecturers' supportive, positive attitude, and professionalism, have contributed to their personal and professional growth as S6 stated, *"being a student of the counselling department, I derived a lot of knowledge that helped me in my personal growth."* Moreover, respondents reported that college created an inclusive environment: *"Yes, I feel included in the class and college as a whole. For any meetings conducted by the college, the student's concerns are asked through the class representatives. The class representatives heed every individual's opinion. This shows that the college cares for the students (S4)".*

On the other hand, a few respondents were critical of the basic facilities provided by the college such as – insufficient tables and chairs in the hostel rooms, lack of sufficient reagents and equipment in the science laboratories; inadequate and unavailability of relevant books in the library and unreliable internet facilities. These shortcomings, they said, adversely impacted quality learning and hindered their progress. What is more, some of the respondents stated that a few lecturers' practices of assessment inhibit their personal growth. For instance, some lecturers do not pay heed to language while assessing assignments. They tend to focus more on the content or subject matter and do not check students' in-text citations or references. Such findings confirm that the college needs to ensure that students receive the support necessary throughout their studies to enable them to fulfil their intended goals.

Chao (2012) reports that college students' stresses have increased tremendously over the past decade. The majority of the student participants (65%) in this study report experiencing stress related to exams, and academic work, especially assignments and presentations that demand a lot of independent reading, learning, and input. S1 said, "*majority of assignments and presentations seem to be very stressful when we are not equipped with enough resources.*" Similarly, S2 stated, "*most stressful thing about being an M.Ed student is my competency to carry out the research work. The research work demands lots of reading, writing, and referencing, which I am not so comfortable with."* These findings corroborate with the study done by Yusoff et al. (2010) of medical students in the School of Medical Sciences (SMS), Malaysia, and other studies (Lopes & Nihei, 2021; Morales-Rodríguez et al., 2020). Few of the students also articulated stress from the lecturer's scolding, minimal input, and low treatment, especially when they failed to do their work on time. Such results suggest that lecturers might need courses that may help in improving students' well-being. Similarly, students may also benefit from the Happiness and Wellbeing Center of the college.

4.4. Positive relations

Good positive relations are characterized by an ability to maintain good relationships with others (Ryff, 1989). As shown in Table 7, the analysis of the five items exhibited the overall mean value of (4.69) with a standard deviation of (1.79) which is closer to the little agree category. This indicates that student participants have somewhat little ability to maintain good relationships with others.

The average mean rating for self-acceptance across ages and programmes was (4.82 &4.89) which falls in the little agree category (Table 2 and 3). However, for B.Ed Social Work students, the standard deviation was higher (1.00), indicating variation in how they maintain their relationships (Table 3).

However, the quantitative analysis of item 5, When I think about it, I have not really improved much as a person over the years, falls towards the neutral category (M=4.07), indicating that students have not improved as a person or perhaps the time has been short for them to improve or show improvement as maintaining good relationships take time to nurture. The interview findings revealed otherwise that the college promotes positive relations with the students by involving all of them in the college functions and activities. Additionally, the faculties, as well as non-academic staff of the college, are found to be very caring, supportive, and friendly. For instance, S2 expressed, "*I appreciate more when few lecturers befriend us. This circle of friends enhanced more social inclusion, relationships, and networks*". Such findings posit that forming close and positive relationships leads to greater psychological well-being. Other well-being practices such as welfare support indicate that college goes out of their way to promote positive relations, as observed by a respondent: *"Students' welfare support services like 'semso' in times of*

Table 7. Students' level of positive relations

Positive Relations	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
People will describe me as a giving person, willing to share my time with others	210	5.64	1.27
Most people see me as loving and affectionate	210	5.56	1.31
I tend to worry about what other people think of me	210	4.61	1.98
I have not experienced many warm and trusting relationships with others	210	3.89	2.01
When I think about it, I have not really improved much as a person over the years	210	4.07	2.08
I often feel lonely because I have few close friends with whom to share my concerns	210	4.32	2.16
Average		4.69	1.79

need, free counselling services, extra care for sick students, and other timely and selfless support for the well-being of trainee students shower us with parental love and affection. Those services, thus, make me feel cared for in this college (S2)".

Amidst practices to improve students' overall personal and professional growth, item 4, I have not experienced many warm and trusting relationships with others (M=3.9) has inclined towards the neutral category. This is because 70% of students were frustrated with some lecturers' unwillingness to render support and academic help. As observed by Chao (2012) and Awartani et al. (2008), a strong positive connection between well-being and academic performance is essential for creating positive well-being; in which students stated that *"although it is the responsibility of the lecturers to assist students, I was declined help by few lecturers in the name of their tight schedule, at times, made me feel uncared by the college (S1)"*. This concludes that experiencing such difficulties can have significant consequences on the psychological well-being of students.

4.5. Purpose in life

Analysis of the five items presented not much deviation in the way students perceived their purpose in life. The mean value of (4.93) with the standard deviation of (1.73) signifies that students tend to slightly agree (Little Agree) along with the same items under the purpose in life (Table 8). According to Ryff (1989), the purpose in life involves the feeling of direction and purposefulness in life and intentionality, and the ability to work towards goals that allow for more productivity, creativity, and emotional integration. The mean value (4.93) shows that student participants have little feeling of direction, purposefulness, and ability to work towards goals that allow for more productivity, creativity, and emotional integration.

However, item 1 had a mean of (3.72) and a higher standard deviation of (2.23), indicating that the responses are varied on this item. While items 3 and 4 had higher mean values of (6.25; 6.02) and a lower standard deviation of (1.19; 1.49), exhibiting that students agree on these items (Table 10). This indicates that the learning experiences in the college are challenging, stimulating, and help students achieve their purpose in life. The average mean rating for self-acceptance across ages and programmes was (5.00 &4.85) which falls in the little agree category (Table 2 and 3). Findings from the survey across fields of study (Table 3) also demonstrate that

Table 8. Students' level of purpose in life

Purpose in Life	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I am not interested in activities that expands my horizons	210	3.72	2.26
When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out	210	5.28	1.75
I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how you think about yourself and the world	210	6.25	1.19
I have sense of direction and purpose in life	210	6.02	1.49
I have been able to build a living environment and lifestyle for myself that is much to my liking	210	5.65	1.47
Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them	210	5.03	1.88
I don't have a good sense of what it is I am trying to accomplish in life	210	3.80	1.88
I sometimes feel as if I have done all there is to do in life	210	3.77	1.96
I feel like many of the people I know have gotten more out of life than I have	210	4.70	1.59
I have confidence in my opinions, even if they are contrary to the general consensus	210	5.31	1.49
It is difficult for me to voice my opinion on controversial matters	210	4.68	2.03
Average		4.93	1.73

the students enrolled in the B.Ed Primary course show a higher level of Purpose in life followed by students in the BA in Social Work than the respondents from the other courses.

Similarly, the interview data indicated that the lecturers are competent; come prepared; provide answers to their queries; provide resources where possible, and work hard to guide the students. Such traits of lecturers are perceived to be helpful for them. Support from friends and lecturers pushes them to attend to their personal and professional goals. Previous studies revealed similar findings (Awang et al., 2014; Khan & Husan, 2010). In addition, the students were able to pursue their studies without many problems due to the comfortable and accessible infrastructure, including accommodation, classrooms, and library. The strict rules and regulations and the system of presenting awards to students irrespective of their roles and responsibilities are some of the enabling conditions that push them towards achieving their purposes. As students in the interview said, *"most of the module tutors who taught me appreciated me and that encouraged me to learn more. They believed in my ability and I feel competent. They actually have changed my attitude towards my profession (S2)"* and *"In contrast to other colleges, this one rewards students for their skill, effort, and achievement, thus students here actually want to contribute to the institution. Therefore, I consider it an excellent way to motivate everyone to succeed (S6)"*.

Few students attributed various factors to their lower sense of purpose in life. For example, S1 shared, "*minimal input from the lecturers and the display of partiality, scolding, and criticizing in the crowds inhibited them from achieving their purposes or intended learning goals".* In summary, the results suggest that having an enabling environment contributes positively to achieving their purpose in life.

4.6. Self-acceptance

Ryff (1989) defines self-acceptance, a significant property of positive psychological functionality, as having a positive attitude towards oneself. As indicated in Table 9, the analysis of the five items showed a mean value of (4.93) and a standard deviation of (1.96), which is geared towards the little agree with category, indicating that student participants have a little positive attitude towards themselves. However, item 1 had a mean of (6.06) which implies that the students somewhat agreed on the same item. In contrast, item 4 had a higher standard deviation (2.08), indicating that while the students enjoy making plans for the future and working to make them a reality (item1), they are not confident with daily activities, as shown by the deviation of item 4. This could be partly attributed to the workload and other activities which keeps the students rather busy.

Tables 2 and 3 show that although the average mean rating for self-acceptance across ages and programmes falls in the little agreed category (5.00 & 4.85 respectively), the mean for M.Ed programme students (4.08) is in the neutral category, indicating that they are unsure about their attitude towards life (Table 5). This could be that the M.Ed students being in-service teachers find it challenging to adjust to the vigour of the M.Ed course and, therefore not very confident at this stage. This contradicts the results of Ryff and

Table 9. Students' level of self-acceptance

Self-Acceptance	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I enjoy making plans for the future and working to make them a reality	210	6.06	1.19
I have difficulty in arranging my life in a way that is satisfying to me	210	5.04	2.62
Maintaining close relationships has been difficult and frustrating for me	210	4.18	2.14
My daily activities often seem trivial and unimportant to me	210	3.98	2.08
I like most parts of my personality	210	5.38	1.75
Average		4.93	1.96

Keyes (1995), which found no difference in self-acceptance across age groups.

The qualitative data states that mindfulness practices incorporated in the assembly helped students to stay calm, thus being useful in achieving a positive attitude. Similar to our findings, a study in the Philippines revealed that mindfulness was a significant predictor of positive PWB and negative PWB among university students (Klainin-Yobas et al., 2015). Additionally, few of the students (n-4) expressed their disapproval over certain activities that the college organizes for the students, as indicated in the following excerpt: *"I felt an overwhelming sense of disapproval when the college used "attendance" as a threat. The college forces us to attend all these programmes, and in a way, I feel that the programme has no value or means nothing to most students. As someone who loves learning, being forced to attend something kind of feels invasive and makes me feel disinterested in most college activities (S3)"*.

Such practices, according to these students, affected their PWB. Nonetheless, students (45%) also suggested that taking attendance for all college activities is also done for their benefit

Table 10. Pearson correlations test on the six variables as group

Correlations							
		Autonomy	Environmental Mastery	Personal Growth	Positive Relations	Purpose in life	Self-acceptance
Autonomy	Pearson Correlation	1	.178**	.429**	.188**	.428**	.244**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.010	.000	.006	.000	.000
	N	210	210	210	210	210	210
Environmental Mastery	Pearson Correlation	.178**	1	.316**	.331**	.237**	.653**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.010		.000	.000	.001	.000
	N	210	210	210	210	210	210
Personal Growth	Pearson Correlation	.429**	.316**	1	.147*	.356**	.278**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.034	.000	.000
	N	210	210	210	210	210	210
Positive Relations	Pearson Correlation	.188**	.331**	.147*	1	.294**	.387**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	.000	.034		.000	.000
	N	210	210	210	210	210	210
Purpose in life	Pearson Correlation	.428**	.237**	.356**	.294**	1	.255**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.000	.000		.000
	N	210	210	210	210	210	210
Self-acceptance	Pearson Correlation	.244**	.653**	.278**	.387**	.255**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	210	210	210	210	210	210
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).							
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).							

and as their presence is needed in these activities. For example, S9 stated, "*Equal opportunities for all and taking attendance in all the college programmes. Because taking attendance means our presence is required, and we have to be part of the programme."* The presence of such practices tends to affect our self-acceptance which contradicts Awang et al.'s (2014) finding which claimed that when students receive higher levels of support from a peer, senior, school and family were more likely to report greater autonomy and self-acceptance.

Pearson correlation test was performed to detect the prevalence of correlations among six dimensions of psychological well-being. Data shows that a strong positive correlation exists amongst the six dimensions with the p-values <.01. This implies that facets such as positive relationships with others, environmental mastery, autonomy, a feeling of purpose and meaning in life, self-acceptance and personal growth and development are significant predictors of psychological well-being which is consistent to findings of Ryff and Singer (2008) that found strong positive link between educational standing and psychological well-being.

5. Conclusions, limitations and recommendations

Psychological well-being and mental health among higher education students are of concern. Various studies have reported that college students' stress has increased tremendously over the past decade. Thus, supporting the psychological well-being of all college students should be of the highest priority. This study reports findings from an explanatory two-phase mixed-method design. The descriptive analyses indicated that students involved in the study possess a combination of levels of overall psychological well-being across six courses and five levels of varied ages. Based on the seven-point Likert scale, the quantitative results of this study showed a positive attitude toward Ryff's six dimensions of psychological well-being across ages and programmes (M=4.70, M-4.92). The results also indicated that undergraduate students possessed a higher level of psychological well-being than the M.Ed in-service students. This could be because M.Ed students are more familiar with structured ways of learning and the sudden transition to more unstructured ways of learning (independent learning) must have contributed to their lower levels of psychological well-being. Additionally, a strong positive correlation was observed amongst the six dimensions of psychological well-being with the p-values <.01. The qualitative findings highlighted environmental mastery and positive relations with others as critical in the promotion of the psychological well-being of the college students. A possible reason could be that a supportive environment and positive relationship with tutors and friends lead to better learning as they receive guidance and support as this form the prerequisite for personal and professional growth. Thus, the study reinforces college to pay attention to activities organized by the Happiness and Well-being centers, such as Mindfulness-based programs and Buddhist teaching - well-designed programmes of instructions and empowerment in the tradition of Mahayana Buddhism. These are important for trainee teachers. Regular discourses and activities by Buddhist experts in the country, such as Jong-wa (Inner Science yoga), asides regular counselling support services, mental health awareness talks, and stress and anxiety management programs should be promoted to strengthen the overall well-being of students.

For the quantitative data, the study conducted only descriptive and Pearson correlation tests. Future research could conduct independent t-test to investigate the levels of psychological well-being across programmes, gender, and age to furnish a complete understanding of how psychological well-being changes across these variables. Results from such analysis would also aid in developing effective interventions that can assist students as they transition from their first to 2nd year. Additionally, the study is conducted only at Samtse College of Education; thus, the findings may not be generalized to other RUB colleges. A further investigation of precision of measurement across the other colleges (continuum) could be required.

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