

Mental Well-being of Students of Pedagogy at Ho Chi Minh City: A Cross-sectional Study

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The well-being of students refers to the psychological, cognitive, and social functioning of the life of students. The Vietnamese undergraduate students are under a great deal of burden and pressure, that makes examining their well-being more necessary than ever.

Aim: To study the mental well-being of students of Pedagogy at Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam.

Materials and Methods: This was a cross-sectional study from April 2018 to September 2018, on 476 students (128 males and 348 females) at the Ho Chi Minh City University of Education on completed paper-based questionnaires that included demographic items. The research utilised the Mental Health Continuum-Short Form (MHC-SF) in Vietnamese, which surveyed Vietnamese pedagogy undergraduates, which accesses three components of well-being: emotional, social, and psychological. The Emotional Well-being (EWB) subscale including 3 items is defined as positive effects/satisfaction with life. Social Well-being (SWB) includes social contribution, social integration, social actualisation, social acceptance, and social coherence. Finally, six items represent Psychological Well-being (PWB): self-acceptance, environmental mastery, positive relations with others, personal growth, autonomy, and purpose in life. To achieve this goal, descriptive statistics

were used for describing the sample statistics and conclusion. The SPSS version 16.0 was used for data analysis. Frequency, percentage, mean score, and standard deviation were used to analyse descriptive and inferential statistics.

Results: A convenience sample of 476 (response rate of 600 questionnaires distributed at 79.3%) Vietnamese students from the Ho Chi Minh City University of Education was studied which included 128 males (26.9%) and 348 females (73.1%). The majority of the participants (78.6%; n=374) were born in Ho Chi Minh City, and 21.4% (n=102) were born in other provinces of Vietnam. Regarding their academic year, 50.4% (n=240), 18.9% (n=90), 13.2% (n=63) and 17.5% (n=83) were freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior, respectively. The results indicated that Vietnamese Pedagogy students had a high level of psychological well-being (M=2.99, SD=1.12) and emotional well-being (M=2.96, SD=1.26), while their social well-being (M=2.40, SD=1.12) was medium.

Conclusion: Pedagogy students in Vietnam had a high level of psychological well-being, emotional well-being, and medium level of social well-being. All results obtained after this research are indispensable to understand the pedagogy undergraduates' well-being. This research was conducted with the notion that it would act as a stimulant in extending related work to improve pedagogy students' well-being.

Keywords: Emotional well-being, Mental health continuum-short form, Psychological status, Social functioning

INTRODUCTION

The theory-based formulations of well-being are not apparent [1]. Definitions of well-being have been seriously taken into consideration by researchers. Rogers discussed well-being as "the good life", which is "a process, not a state of being" and argued that each person makes a great effort to become "fully functioning person, who is open to experience, is trusting in his/her organism, and leads an increasingly existential life" [2]. Another viewpoint indicated that well-being is a see-saw that has resource-side and challenge-side [3]. Kloep M et al., explained that "each time an individual meets a challenge, the system of challenges and resources comes into a state of imbalance, as the individual is forced to adapt his or her resources to meet this particular challenge" [4].

Greek philosophies came up with two research paradigms about well-being [5]: Hedonism of which key concept is subjective well-being [6] and eudemonism whose fundamental concept is psychological well-being [7]. While the subjective well-being is defined as overall life satisfaction and happiness, the psychological well-being is about human development and existential challenges of life [8]. From the findings of Ryff C, there are six core dimensions of psychological well-being, including self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth [9].

In Vietnam, students at Ho Chi Minh City University of Education have faced an abundant of hardship related to their academic

life as well as social life [10]. Another previous study provided evidence that Vietnamese college students had the prevalence of mental problems of approximately 90% [11]. Van Petegem K et al., discovered that the teachers' well-being was one of the indispensable aspects of classroom environment [12]. Supporting this statement, Turner and Thielking conducted a study and concluded that teacher's well-being affected the teaching and studying process in many ways [13]. Based on those contribution, we posed a question of well-being state of Vietnamese pedagogy students who would soon become teachers in the future.

While there has been a wide range of studies that investigated well-being conducted on students around the world; such as in Canada [14], in Netherlands [15], in China [16], in Spain [17], in Iran [18], in America [19], in England [20]; almost all of them were surveyed on undergraduates of non-pedagogy majors: Nursing students [16], university students of all departments [18,21]. However, to the best of our knowledge, none of those studies have focused on the well-being of Pedagogy students, especially Vietnamese Pedagogy undergraduates.

To fill in the gap, the present study was conducted among Vietnamese Pedagogy students to examine the well-being of Pedagogy undergraduates at the Ho Chi Minh City University of Education and lay the groundwork for future studies that will delve deeper and come up with strategies to boost their well-being.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This was a cross-sectional study conducted from April 2018 to September 2018 at Ho Chi Minh city of Vietnam, University of Education. The students completed paper-based, cross-sectional questionnaires that included demographic items. The survey instrument Vietnamese version of (Mental Health Continuum-Short Form (MHC-SF) scale, which was designed by Keyes was distributed to 476 pedagogy students [22].

This study was undertaken with the approval of the Ho Chi Minh City University of Education, Vietnam. In ethical issues, the aim of the study was described, and written consent was obtained from the participants before the enrollment of them in the study.

Sample size calculation: The convenience sampling method was used to recruit students who volunteered to help with the study and administer the survey. The studied population was 600 randomly selected students. The sample size was calculated using Epi-Info statistical package version 7. The sample size was estimated for the population survey with the following parameters: Expected frequency 50%; an acceptable margin of error of 5; confidence level of 95%; and design effect 1.5. The researcher used design effect 1.5 to increase the precision of having a representative sample of the studied population. It was used to compensate for applying a multistage sampling technique instead of a simple random sample. The minimum required estimated sample size was 560 subjects, which was raised to 600 subjects to avoid drop-out and non-respondents.

Inclusion criteria: Those Students of the university who showed interest in participating in this study after describing the aims, methods, benefits and potential hazards of the study and also returned the completed survey form back were included in the survey.

Exclusion criteria: Those students who were not interested to participate in the survey and those who did not returned the completed form of survey were excluded from the study. To enhance confidentiality, all questionnaires were completed anonymously, and only required information was collected. Also, it was mentioned that all participants can leave the survey at any time during the study.

Keyes CL developed the MHC-SF with 14 items [22], and its Cronbach's Alpha was 0.74 ($\alpha=0.74$) [23]. The scale was developed with an aim of creating a brief self-rating assessment tool which assesses three components of well-being: EWB, SWB and PWB. The EWB subscale including 3 items is defined as positive effects/satisfaction with life. The SWB is assessed with five items that represent each aspect of the model described by [24]: social contribution, social integration, social actualisation, social acceptance, and social coherence. Finally, six items represent each of the dimensions of PWB, as described in Ryff CD's model [25]: Self-acceptance, environmental mastery, positive relations with others, personal growth, autonomy, and purpose in life. Participants were required to respond to all items in a six-point Likert-type scale based on the experiences they had over the last month (never, once or twice a month, about once a week, 2 or 3 times a week, almost every day, or every day). This response option was selected to provide a clear standard of mental health assessment and a categorisation similar to the method used by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) to assess a Major Depressive Episode [26]. Vietnamese version of this questionnaire or the adapted questionnaire was reviewed by psychology researchers and experts in 2018 [27]. In that study, the McDonald's (ω) coefficient of the Vietnamese version of the MHC-SF score was reported as 0.73 [27]. The coding procedure was performed as follows: 0=Never, 1=Once or twice a month, 2=Once a week, 3=Twice or three times a week, 4=Nearly every day, 5=Every day. Higher scores indicated higher levels of mental health/well-being. For the purpose of transforming the discrete values into ranks, distance value was calculated as (Maximum-Minimum)/ $n=(6-1)/6=0.83$ [28]. Therefore, the meanings

of the rankings were judged as very low (0.00-0.83), quite low (0.84-1.67), medium (1.68-2.51), high (2.52-3.35), quite high (3.36-4.19), and very high (4.20-5.00).

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 16 was used for data analysis. Frequency, percentage, mean score, and standard deviation were used to analyse descriptive and inferential statistics.

RESULTS

The survey instrument was distributed to 600 pedagogy students of Ho Chi Minh City University of Education, Vietnam, of which 476 completed surveys were submitted, with a 79.3% response rate. There were 128 males (26.9%) and 348 females (73.1%). An overview of the 476 survey participants is provided in [Table/Fig-1].

Variables		n	%
Gender	Male	128	26.9
	Female	348	73.1
Academic year	Freshman	240	50.4
	Sophomore	90	18.9
	Junior	63	13.2
	Senior	83	17.5
Region	Ho Chi Minh City	374	21.4
	Other provinces	102	78.6

[Table/Fig-1]: An overview of the survey participants.
n: Number of participants; %: Percentage

The results of this study based on the MHC-SF scale, which was designed by Keyes [Table/Fig-2] also shows values for students' well-being [8].

Assessments and scoring	n	Mean	SD
Emotional well-being	476	2.96	1.26
Social well-being	476	2.40	1.12
Psychological well-being	476	2.99	1.12

[Table/Fig-2]: Mental health continuum-short form mean scores.
N: Number of participants; M: Mean; SD: Standard deviation

Respondents rated the frequency of every feeling in the past month on a six-point Likert scale. Means of most items which represented each component of psychological well-being, had mean value around 2.99 (SD=1.12), which indicated that during the past one month (the study duration), students had only felt psychological well-being twice or three times a week.

Particularly, among 476 students who participated in the study, 1.05% of the total never fulfilled their PWB, 9.24% felt PWB once or twice a month, 19.13% only felt PWB about once a week, 30.88% felt PWB twice, or three times per week, 30.67% felt PWB nearly every day and only 8.82% had every day full of PWB during the past month.

The mean score of items from the emotional well-being subscale was 2.96 (SD=1.26). Specifically, 3.57% of all participants reported they never felt their emotional well-being, 11.76% fulfilled their EWB once or twice a month, 18.70% only felt EWB once a week, 25.42% felt EWB twice, or three times per week, 30.88% felt EWB nearly every day and 9.66% of them enjoyed themselves every day with their EWB during the study duration.

Students' social well-being had the mean score at around 2.40 (SD=1.12), which showed that students' feeling of SWB varied from twice to three times a week during the past one month (the study duration). Mainly, out of 476 students taken part in the study, only 1.89% of them never fulfilled their SWB, 22.69% felt SWB once or twice a month, 28.78% had the feeling of SWB about once a week, 26.47% felt SWB twice, or three times per week, 17.65% felt PWB

nearly every day and the rest of them, which only made up 2.52%, had every day full of SWB during the study duration.

DISCUSSION

This study mainly focused on measuring Vietnamese Pedagogy undergraduate students' well-being including psychological well-being, emotional well-being, and social well-being. From the records of this study, Pedagogy students had a high level of PWB and EWB. Their SWB was at a medium level ($M=2.40$, $SD=1.12$). The remarkable feature was that the participants whose PWB and EWB were reported everyday accounted for 8.24% and 9.66% of the total sample respectively, while their highest frequency of social well-being recorded was reported by 2.52% of the participants. Using the MHC-SF questionnaire, the present research showed that the mean scores for PWB, EWB and SWB was 2.99, 2.96 and 2.40 respectively; while Kelders S et al., reported mean scores of 3.06, 3.21 and 2.57 for the sub-scales; and in another study [15], which was conducted on 10.3% Asian, 6.1% African American, 6.3% Hispanic, 66.7% Caucasian (non-Hispanic), 4.7% multiple race/ethnicities and 5.9% other races by random sampling, the mean scores for PWB, EWB and SWB were respectively 3.69, 3.78, 2.80 [29].

Besides, Quynh AT et al., stated in their study that most of the Vietnamese medical undergraduates experienced a good quality of life based on the World Health Organisation (WHO) WHO-5 Well-being index scale [30]. According to Smith GD and Yang F, the total mean score for Chinese nursing students' well-being was 3.23 ($SD=2.54$), at the medium level [16]. When comparing the present study results to those of previous studies, it must be pointed out that Vietnamese undergraduates of Pedagogy had a lower level of well-being than students of different majors all around the world [15-18].

To the undergraduates, well-being can bring about certain benefits which could be listed: (i) plays a vital role in going through university's hardship [17]; (ii) mediates the relationship between competence skills and substance use [31]; (iii) has a positive relationship with adaptive coping strategies [32,33]. Based on those advantages, for decades, researches in PWB were conducted on university students [18,21]. According to Michaeli MF, males had a lower level of psychological well-being than females [18]. The result of Cooke R et al., study supported this statement and emphasised the change in PWB from pre-university to university [34]. Another study showed that PWB was impaired in Chinese undergraduate nursing students [16]. Chow HP argued that participants with higher family income, better physical health, a higher degree of satisfaction with their relationships, a more positive self-image, and less stress from schooling were found to "exhibit a significantly higher level of PWB" [14]. To the best of the authors' knowledge, this is the very first research to report the Vietnamese Pedagogy students' well-being.

Limitation(s)

Firstly, the participants of this study were not uniformly distributed, the proportion of females was nearly three times than males, and the proportion of freshmen was greater in comparison with the others. Secondly, as the data collection happened only once, while well-being, according to Rogers C, is a process which takes time to be explored [2]. Thirdly, this study did not include information about the participants' psychiatric history as well as their medical history, which would have an effect on their well-being; hence, the study might lead to unaccurate results of their well-being. Fourthly, positive and negative control groups were not utilised in this research. It is also a question of future research to look for the etiology of the differences between Vietnamese students whose majors are Pedagogy and students from other majors and other countries.

CONCLUSION(S)

Vietnamese Pedagogy students experienced a high level of PWB and EWB while their SWB was at medium level; Vietnamese Pedagogy undergraduates showed a lower level of well-being than worldwide students from different departments. All results obtained after this research are indispensable to understand the Pedagogy undergraduate students' well-being. This research was conducted with the notion that it would act as a stimulant in extending related work to improve the well-being of Pedagogy students.

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