
MENTAL HEALTH AS PREDICTOR OF OPTIMISM AMONG PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS

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Abstract

The present investigation was primarily conducted to find the correlation between mental health and optimism among prospective teachers and to find contribution of mental health in predicting optimism of prospective teachers. A sample of 100 prospective teachers from Government College of Education, Sector 20-D, Chandigarh was selected by using random sampling. The Mental Health Checklist constructed by Kumar (1992) and Optimistic-Pessimistic Attitude Scale by Pareskar (1998) was used to measure mental health and optimism of prospective teachers respectively. The analysis and interpretation of the data was done by calculating Pearson's coefficient of correlation and simple linear regression. The findings of the study revealed that there was negative and significant correlation between the mental health and optimism among prospective teachers. Also mental health significantly predicted optimism among prospective teachers. 6.6 % of the variance in optimism scores of prospective teachers was significantly contributed by mental health.

KEY WORDS: Mental health, Optimism and Prospective teachers

INTRODUCTION

Prospective teacher is referred to a student who is admitted in an institution of education (college of education or department of education in universities) to receive pre service training in order to become a competent teacher. Curriculum in such colleges of education emphasise on learning how to teach. Prospective teachers require building positive attitude towards challenges of the course to cope with the phase of transition from student to teacher. The concept of optimism and pessimism is about how an individual generalizes positive and negative experiences to predict future outcomes (Peterson & Seligman, 1984). According to Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), Optimism is referred to the generalized outcome expectancies that good things rather than bad things will happen and there is a tendency to expect positive outcome in the future. Expectation of positive results (optimism) and expectation of negative results (pessimism) are quite crucial to an individual's psychological and physical well-being (Eshun, 1999) and effect mental health of the individual. Mental health is an index which shows the extent to which the person has been able to meet his environmental demands- social, emotional or physical (Kumar,1992). According to Schneiders (1962), mental health represents a psychic condition which is characterized by mental peace, harmony and content. It is identified by the absence of disabling and debilitating symptoms, both mental and somatic in the person. National Mental Health Association, 1997 has given 10 characteristics of mentally healthy persons which include feeling good among themselves, not becoming overwhelmed by emotions, having lasting and satisfying personal relationships, feeling comfortable with other people, laughing with themselves and with others, having respect for

themselves and for others, accepting life's disappointments, handling problems, making one's own decisions and adjusting to the environment (Biswas, 2012).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Chandra and Reddy (2014) conducted a study on 600 prospective teachers to find out the effect of mental health on study habits, teaching attitude and academic stress among prospective teachers. Results revealed that there was significant impact of mental health on study habits, teaching attitude and academic stress of prospective teachers.

Renuka and Sapna (2010) explored the differences between Optimist and Pessimist adolescents on depression among 144 (86 optimists and 58 pessimist) adolescents. The result showed that Optimists were found to possess a tendency of using Playful Problem Solving and Positive Reappraisal more as compared to Pessimists when in a stressful situation.

Lehtinen (2008) reported that positive mental health includes resilience, positive sense of well-being, high self-esteem, high optimism and low pessimism, a sense of mastery and coherence; ability to initiate, develop and sustain mutually satisfying personal relationships; and ability to cope with adversities positive mental health.

Creed, et al (2002) concluded that worried, pessimistic people have negative feelings and less positive as compared to the less worried, optimistic people. Also pessimism is correlated to hesitation, wonder in life and low self-esteem.

Maruta,et al (2000) found an inverse relationship between optimism and mental and psychical disorders. In other words, optimism leads person to a better life and a desired interpretation of its events and turns away the behaviours that caused disorders.

Harju and Bolen (1998) studied the effects of optimism on quality of life of college students. The results showed that the high optimists have the highest quality of life and more effective coping skills.

Mcsteen (1997) concluded that the mental rigidity or toughness was a good predictor on the variance of the optimistic disposition. The study indicated that the contribution of mental rigidity, control direction and family awareness accounted for 53% of the total variance of the optimistic disposition.

NEED OF THE STUDY

Curriculum for teacher education needs to be reformed to include mental health education to sensitize trainee teachers about the possible negative effects of poor mental health to themselves and the students they will teach (Mundia, 2010c). Experiences and feelings associated with unemployment, getting married, finding job and continuing their studies can lower optimism level of prospective teachers. Investigator took this study to see if the mental health of prospective teachers predict optimism or not and to see relationship between mental health problems and positive outlook towards life situations.

OBJECTIVES

- 1) To study the correlation between mental health and optimism among prospective teachers.
- 2) To study the contribution of mental health in predicting optimism among prospective teachers.

HYPOTHESIS

- 1) There is no significant correlation between mental health and optimism among prospective teachers.
- 2) There is no significant contribution of mental health in predicting optimism among prospective teachers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey method was used for the present study and the variables included were Mental Health and Optimism. The data was collected on these variables from 100 prospective teachers of Government College of Education, Sector 20-D, Chandigarh using standardised tests. Random sampling method was used to select the sample. Data was collected from prospective teachers using The Mental Health Checklist by Kumar (1992) and Optimistic-Pessimistic Attitude Scale by Pareskar (1998). The data collected was analyzed by employing inferential statistics. Pearson's coefficient of Correlation between mental health and optimism was calculated to determine the relationship between them. Further, simple linear regression analysis was done to find the contribution of mental health in predicting optimism among prospective teachers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table-1: Correlation between the Mental Health and Optimism among Prospective Teachers

Variable	N	df	R	P
Mental health	100	98	-0.257	.010
Optimism	100	98		

Table- 1 reveals that the calculated Pearson's coefficient of correlation between Mental Health and optimism among prospective teachers was -0.257. Thus there is low negative correlation between Mental Health of prospective teachers and their optimism. Also this correlation is significant at 0.01 level of significance ($p=.01$). Hence the null hypothesis "There is no significant correlation between mental health and optimism among prospective teachers" is rejected.

Table-2: Simple Linear Regression equation showing Mental Health as predictor of Optimism among prospective teachers

Model	Variable / predictor (X ₁)	Df	R ²	F	P	Regression equation (Y= optimism) (X ₁ = Mental Health)

I	Mental Health	98	.066	6.917	.010	$Y = 32.959 - 0.175 X_1$
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Model I of table 2 reveals that for Prospective Teachers, Value of index of Discrimination (R^2) was .066, indicating that 6.6% of variance in optimism among prospective teachers was predicted by their mental health. Also the variance in optimism among prospective teachers was explained significantly by mental health (as $F = 6.917$, $p = .01$). Hence the null hypothesis “There is no significant contribution of mental health in predicting optimism among prospective teachers” is rejected.

FINDINGS

1. There was significant negative correlation between mental health and optimism among prospective teachers.
2. Mental health significant predictor of mental health of prospective teachers.
3. 6.6 % of variance in optimism of prospective teachers was predicted by their mental health.

SUGGESTIONS

This study emphasise that prospective teachers should learn to be more optimistic by practicing cognitive skills to build their strengths. When they are taught to hold positive views, they are less likely to have mental health problems. Also for good mental health of prospective teachers, proper curriculum transaction strategies should be adopted with fewer loads of assignments. In the colleges, there should be appointment of trained counsellors for treating mental health problems. Prospective teachers must be taught to think and act positively towards the classroom problems. This will help them to lead more productive and happier lives.

CONCLUSIONS

There is negative and significant correlation between optimism and mental health of prospective teachers. This means that if optimism scores increase, mental health scores (which are indicators of mental health disorders such as headache, anxiety, nervousness, hopelessness etc) of prospective teachers will decrease. More negative outlook to life experiences of an individual will lead to poor mental health. These results are in accordance to the results of Maruta, et al (2000) who found an inverse relationship between optimism and both mental and physical disorders. Homaei, Bozorgi, Ghahfarokhi and Hosseinpour (2016) held that an increase in optimism will lead to a decrease in mental and emotional problems resulting in an increase in life satisfaction. Also mental health is significant predictor of variances in optimism among prospective teachers. Mcsteen (1997) concluded that the mental rigidity or toughness was a good predictor on the variance of the optimistic disposition. Hence there is an urgent need to aware the prospective teachers about good mental health so that they can develop positive outlook towards life situations and develop these skills in students also.

SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

A series of research projects can be carried out with bigger sample. Also school students can be taken as sample. In the present study prospective teachers from Chandigarh were taken. For further

research sample from other states and professions can be taken. Also prediction of optimism based on other variables such as self efficacy, socioeconomic status, home environment, study habits, well being, life satisfaction, personality etc. can be found out. Multiple regression analysis, quadratic regression analysis and other inferential statistical techniques can be applied on data collected. Mixed method approach can also be used.

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