

A Comparative Study of Hope and Mental Well-Being across Age, Gender, Family Type, and Residential Background

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Abstract

Mental well-being encompasses positive psychological, emotional, and social functioning, whereas hope signifies the belief in achieving goals and overcoming obstacles. It is shaped by various biological, psychological, and social factors. In the present study, the relationship between hope and mental well-being was examined across age, gender, family type, and residential background among children and adolescents. A total of 152 participants from different schools in Odisha were selected using convenience sampling method. The World Health Organization (WHO)-5 Well-Being Index and Snyder's Children's Hope Scale were administered on the study sample. A weak positive relationship was revealed through correlation analysis between hope and mental well-being ($r = 0.20$). Significant differences were shown through independent sample t-tests based on residence and gender. Higher levels of hope ($t = 5.16$) and mental wellbeing ($t = 2.56$) were reported by rural students. Higher scores in mental well-being were obtained by male students ($t = -3.01$). No significant differences were found with respect to family type and age. The results imply that contextual and demographic factors are significant in determining hope and mental health across developmental phases.

Keywords: Hope, Mental Well-Being, Positive Psychology

1 Introduction

Mental health is an important aspect of overall development, especially during childhood and adolescence. It refers to a positive state of emotional, psychological, and social functioning in which individuals are able to cope with daily challenges and function effectively. Research shows that hope is a vital first step for cultivating positive change. It is not just a positive feeling, but an active cognitive process that facilitates goal-setting, planning, and motivation to pursue those plans. Hope is recognized as a vital psychological strength that influences emotional, psychological, and social functioning, allowing individuals to effectively cope with daily challenges. It fosters goal-setting, motivation, and the pursuit of desired outcomes. Both hope and mental well-being are crucial for shaping a child's personality, enhancing academic performance, and facilitating social adjustment.

Psychological growth is shaped by various factors including gender, age, family environment, and residential background. The levels of emotional support received within different family structures can significantly impact an individual's hope and mental well-being. Recently, positive psychology has highlighted the significance of studying individual strengths. Consequently, this study aims to explore the relationship between hope and mental well-being, while also comparing these variables across various demographics such as age, gender, family type, and residential background among children and adolescents.

2 Review of Literature

Recent research in mental health has increasingly focused not only on negative psychological conditions such as depression and anxiety but also on positive psychological strengths such as hope and mental well-being.

The study by Singh et al. (2013) investigated the relationship between hope and psychological well-being among 200 students, employing measures for hope, psychological well-being, and depression. The results demonstrated a positive association between the pathway component of hope and psychological well-being, while the agency component exhibited a negative relationship with depression. Regression analysis reinforced the conclusion that hope significantly contributes to improving well-being and alleviating depressive symptoms.

Longitudinal research has also emphasized the developmental significance of hope. A six year study was conducted by Ciarrochi et al.(2015) on 975 adolescents to examine the relationship between hope and emotional well-being. It was shown in the findings that hope increases in positive affect over time and was particularly influential during transitional periods such as entry into high school. The study suggested that hope is a flexible and protective factor that contributes to positive youth development.

In a study by Kirmaini et al. (2015), the connections between hope, resilience, and subjective well-being were investigated with a sample of 98 college-going adolescent girls from a government university in Aligarh. Utilizing standardized instruments and correlational analysis, the results indicated significant positive relationships among these variables. The authors highlighted the importance of developing interventions aimed at enhancing hope and resilience to promote psychological well-being among adolescents.

The predictive role of hope and happiness in psychological well-being among adolescents was investigated by Sharma (2019) . The study examined the relationships between hope, happiness, and psychological well-being, and further assessed whether hope and happiness significantly predict well-being. Standardized tools were administered, including the Children's Hope Scale by Snyder et al., 1991, the Subjective Happiness Scale by Lyubomirsky and Lepper, 1999, and Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scales,1995. Data were collected from 81 adolescents selected through random sampling from Bhiwani, Haryana. Positive associations between hope and psychological well-being, as well as between happiness and psychological well-being was revealed by Pearson correlation analysis . However, hope and happiness were negatively correlated with each other. Both hope and happiness significantly predicted psychological well-being among adolescents

Psychological capital, which includes self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience, has also been studied as a positive psychological resource. Gender differences was investigated by Sengupta and Karmakar (2021) in hope among 60 young adults aged 18–25 years using the Psychological Capital Questionnaire. The results revealed that male participants reported higher levels of hope compared to female participants.

The study highlighted the importance of fostering hope as a motivational strength to manage stress and promote positive future outcomes.

Overall, previous studies indicate that hope is strongly linked with psychological well-being and emotional adjustment. However, limited research has examined these variables across demographic factors such as age, gender, family type, and residential background among children and adolescents. Therefore, the present study attempts to address this gap.

3 Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate the pattern of interrelationship between hope and mental well-being in children and adolescents.
2. To examine the age differences in hope and mental well-being.
3. To examine the gender differences in hope and mental well-being.
4. To study the differences based on family type (nuclear and joint family) in hope and mental well-being.
5. To study the differences based of residential background (urban and rural) on hope and mental well-being.

4 Hypotheses

1. There is a significant positive relationship between hope and mental well-being among children and adolescents.
2. There is a significant age difference in hope and mental well-being.
3. There is a significant gender difference in hope and mental well-being.
4. There is a significant difference in hope and mental well-being between students from nuclear and joint families.
5. There is a significant difference in hope and mental well-being between urban and rural students.

5. Research Methodology

Sample

The study included a total of 152 students, comprising 65 males and 87 females. Among them, 77 were children aged 9–10 years and 75 were adolescents aged 14–15 years. In terms of residence, 81 participants were from rural areas and 71 from urban areas. Additionally, 73 students belonged to joint families, while 79 were from nuclear families. The sample was selected from different schools in Odisha using the convenience sampling method.

Table 1 Sample Distribution

Variables	Distribution of Sample	
Age	Children 77	Adolescents 75
Gender	Male 65	Female 87
Family type	Joint 73	Nuclear 79
Residential Background	Rural 81	Urban 71

Tools Used

Mental well-being was assessed using the World Health organisation (WHO) -5 Well-Being Index, which evaluates positive psychological and emotional functioning. Hope was measured using Snyder’s Children’s Hope Scale, which assesses goal-directed thinking through its agency and pathway components.

Statistical Analysis

A Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between hope and mental well-being. Differences in hope and mental health by age group, gender, family type, and residential background were examined using independent sample t-tests.

6. Results

The data collected from 152 participants were analysed using correlation analysis and independent sample t-tests to examine the relationship between hope and mental well-being and to identify differences across different demographic variables like age, gender, family type and residential background.

Table 2 Intercorrelation between Hope and Mental Well-Being

Variable	Mental Well-Being
Hope	0.20

Note- $p < 0.05$

Table 3 Independent sample t- test for Hope and Mental Well-Being among male and female

Variable		Mean	t value	P value
Hope	male	25.10	1.63	>0.05
	female	26.26		
Mental Well-Being	male	17.78	-3.01	< 0.05
	female	15.97		

Table 4 Independent sample t- test for Hope and Mental Well-Being among children and adolescents

Variable		Mean	t value	P value
Hope	Children	25.90	-0.40	>0.05
	Adolescents	25.62		
Mental Well-Being	Children	17.10	-1.17	>0.05
	Adolescents	16.38		

Table 5 Independent sample t-test for Hope and Mental Well-Being among rural and urban residential background

Variable		Mean	t value	P value
Hope	Rural	27.37	5.16	< 0.05
	Urban	24.10		
Mental Well-Being	Rural	17.45	2.56	< 0.05
	Urban	15.87		

Table 6 Independent sample t-test for Hope and Mental Well-Being among Nuclear family and Joint family

Variable		Mean	t value	P value
Hope	Joint family	25.82	0.14	>0.05
	Nuclear family	25.72		
Mental Well-Being	Joint family	16.68	-0.20	>0.05
	Nuclear family	16.81		

Graphical representation of results

Figure 1 showing the mean differences in Hope and Mental Well-Being among male and female

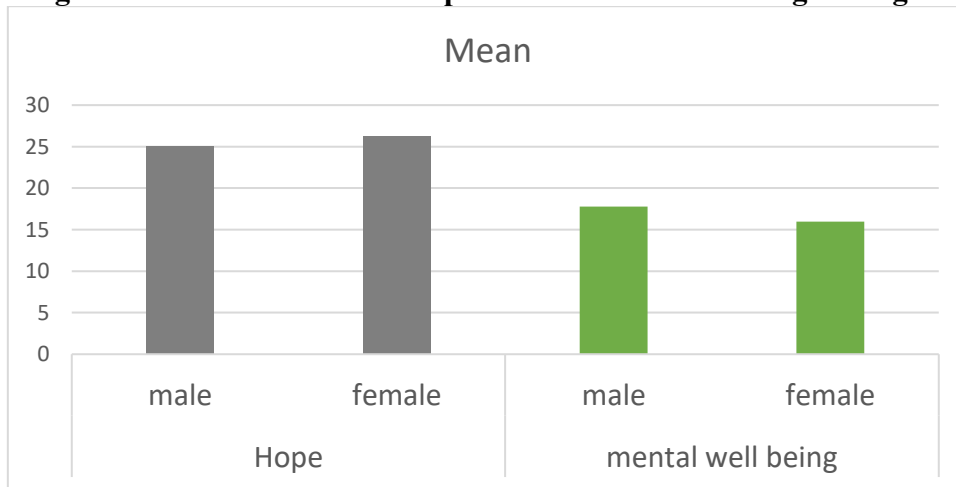


Figure 2 showing the mean differences in Hope and Mental Well-Being among Children and Adolescents

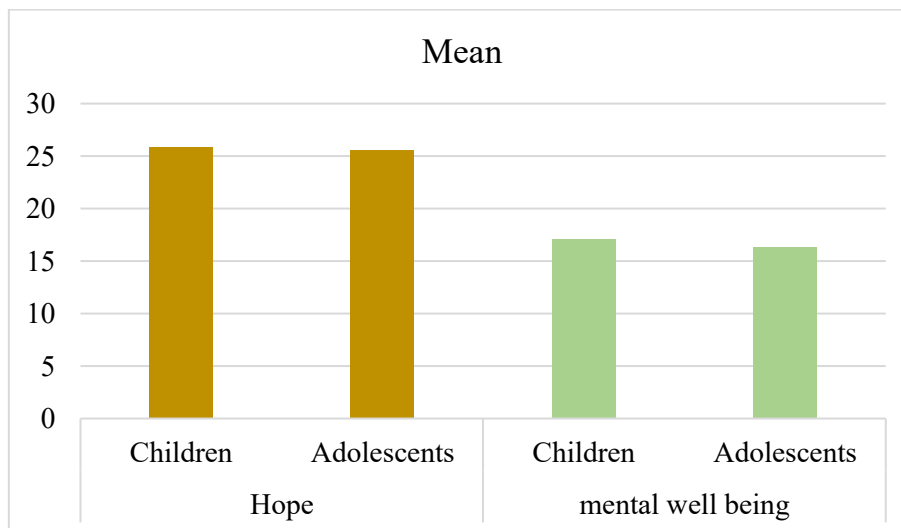


Figure 3 showing the mean differences in Hope and Mental Well-Being among Residential background (rural and urban)

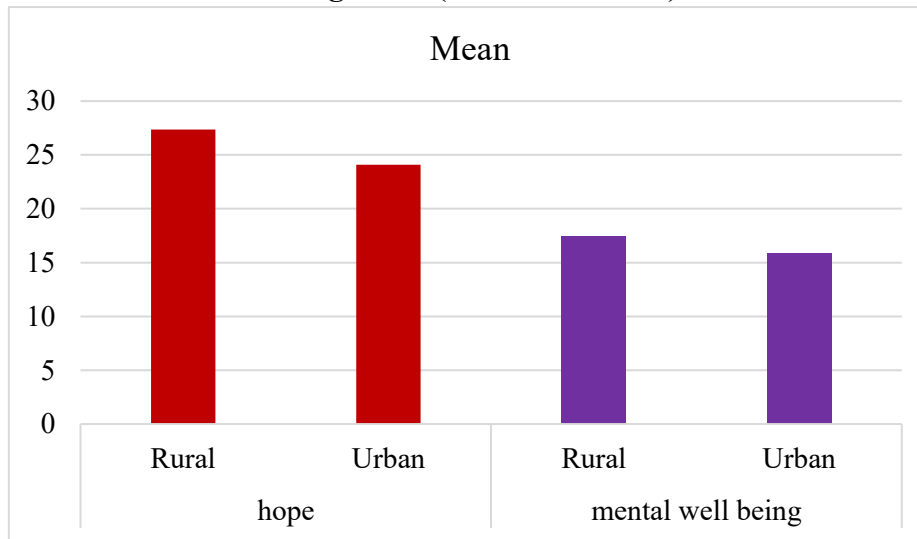
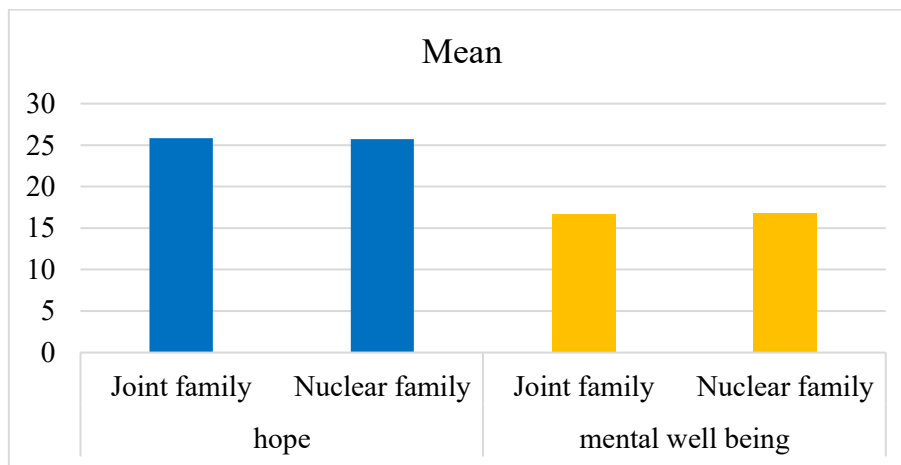


Figure 4 showing the mean differences in Hope and Mental Well-Being among family types (Joint family and Nuclear family)



7. Interpretation

Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between hope and mental well-being. A weak positive correlation between hope and mental well-being ($r = 0.20$) was indicated by the results. It is suggested that as hope increases, mental well-being tends to increase slightly among children and adolescents.

Independent sample t-test analysis revealed significant differences in hope based on residential background. A significant difference was found between rural and urban students in hope scores ($t = 5.16$, $p < 0.05$). Higher scores were obtained by rural students ($M = 27.37$) than urban students ($M = 24.10$). Similarly, a significant difference in mental well-being was observed between rural and urban students ($t = 2.56$, $p < 0.05$). It was observed that rural students ($M = 17.45$) reported higher mental well-being compared to urban students ($M = 15.87$).

Gender differences in mental well-being were also found to be significant ($t = -3.01, p < 0.05$). Higher mental wellbeing were obtained by male students ($M = 17.78$) than female students ($M = 15.97$). Independent sample t-tests indicated no significant differences in hope and mental well-being based on age group and family type ($p > 0.05$).

8. Discussion

The present study examined the relationship between hope and mental well-being among children and adolescents, as well as differences across residential background, gender, age, and family type.

The findings revealed a weak positive correlation between hope and mental well-being ($r = 0.20$). This indicates that although hope contributes to mental well-being, it explains only a small portion of the variation in mental well-being among children and adolescents. Mental well-being during developmental stages is likely influenced by multiple psychological, social, and environmental factors such as family support, peer relationships, academic stress, and socio-economic conditions. Therefore, hope may function as one contributing factor rather than the sole determinant of mental well-being.

Significant differences were observed between rural and urban students in both hope and mental well-being. Rural students reported higher levels of hope and better mental well-being compared to their urban counterparts. This finding may reflect the influence of supportive social environments, stronger community bonds, and closer interpersonal relationships often present in rural settings. Community connectedness and collective social structures may provide emotional security and resilience, thereby promoting positive psychological outcomes.

Gender differences were also found in mental well-being, with male students reporting higher mental well-being scores than female students. These differences may be understood in light of socialization patterns and coping styles. During childhood and adolescence, societal expectations and gender norms may influence emotional expression, stress management, and perceived mental well-being. Females may experience greater emotional sensitivity or social pressures during developmental transitions, which could impact their mental well-being levels.

No significant differences were found based on age group and family type, suggesting that these factors may not independently influence hope and mental well-being within the present sample. Further research may explore these variables using larger and more diverse samples.

Overall, the importance of contextual and demographic factors in understanding mental well-being among children and adolescents is emphasized in the findings. Interventions aimed at enhancing mental well-being should consider environmental influences, social support systems, and gender-sensitive approaches alongside fostering hope.

9. Implications of the Study

- The findings highlight the need for school-based interventions that promote hope, goal-setting skills, and mental well-being, particularly among urban students.
- Educational institutions should design structured programs that strengthen resilience, problem-solving abilities, and positive future orientation among children and adolescents.
- Mental health programs should adopt a gender-sensitive approach, addressing the distinct emotional experiences and coping patterns of both boys and girls.
- Schools should provide supportive environments that encourage healthy emotional expression and adaptive coping strategies.

- Strengthening community connectedness and supportive social relationships at school and family levels can enhance positive psychological development.
- Policymakers and educators should integrate individual, school, and community-level mental health strategies to promote overall well-being among young populations.

10. Conclusion

The present research investigated the association between hope and mental well-being in children and adolescents, considering variations based on factors such as residential background, gender, age, and family structure. The findings revealed a weak but positive correlation between hope and mental well-being, indicating that while hope contributes to the enhancement of mental well-being, it is not the sole factor involved. Notable differences were found in relation to residential setting and gender, with students from rural areas and male students reporting higher levels of mental well-being. These findings indicate that psychological development during childhood and adolescence is significantly affected by contextual and demographic factors. The study underscores the necessity of designing targeted interventions to foster positive mental health among young individuals.

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