

Impact of Prejudice on Psychological Well-Being of Youth in Indian Scenario

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Abstract: *In order to assess the level of presence and different types of prejudice faced by the Indian youth, determine the effect of prejudice on psychological wellbeing of youth on the basis of gender, and implement the strategies and techniques to enhance the psychological well-being and to reduce prejudice among the youth of India. We have conducted a research study on a sample of 120 college students of India with the help of psychological tests regarding prejudice and psychological wellbeing. This study has been a source to measure the rate of social prejudice faced by youth and understand the factors responsible for the prejudice. It also gives a gist to recommend the techniques for managing and mitigating these irrational thoughts and judgements from occurring in future. And also suggest measures and actions to be taken at macro-level.*

Key Words: *Prejudice, Psychological well-being, gender biasness, social discrimination, gender difference.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

The term ‘youth’ depicts the young population or generation of a country. It is the time period of young adulthood that deals with a broad cluster of energetic, fresh state of mind, innovative, constructive and creative people. According to Robert Kennedy (1966), “This world demands the qualities of youth: not a time of life but a state of mind, a temper of the will, a quality of imagination, a predominance of courage over timidity, of the appetite for adventure over the life of ease.” Educational institutions are the source of learning, knowledge and character building for the students that study there. It is essential for effective learning that students – both boys and girls feel safe and welcome in a secure and healthy learning environment. The policy makers, teachers and students all have an important role to play in making sure that educational institutions are free of any sort of prejudice, stereotyping or discrimination and provide a gender-sensitive good quality education.

Psychological Well-Being

Psychological Well-Being refers to Positive Mental State like peace and satisfaction. If a person is happy and very satisfied with one’s life that means his/ her psychological well-being is quite high. Psychological well-being is concerned with two important aspects: The term hedonic well-being normally refers to the subjective feeling of happiness, and Eudemonic well-being refers to purposeful aspect of psychological well-being. Subjective Well Being involves people experiencing positive emotions and feelings of happiness with the need to experience purpose and meaning, in addition to positive emotion.

1.1. FACTORS AFFECTING PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING:

- **Psycho-Social Factors** are influences that affect a person psychologically or socially and are the blend of certain psychological and social factors. Some common psychosocial factors that affect mental health and psychological well-being are:
 - Grief and Loss of loved ones
 - Physical health problems (health issues)
 - Depression and anxiety
 - Loneliness
 - Fear of failure
 - Discordant family
 - Severe peer pressure
 - Financial crisis

- Low self-esteem
 - Disruptive self-concept
 - Uncertain trauma
 - Identity crisis.
- **Socio-Cultural Factors** involve a set of beliefs, customs, practices and behaviour that exists within a population. It is a blend of social as well as cultural factors that influence a person in one way or the other. Some of the important socio-cultural factors that have an influence on one's psychological well-being includes;
 - Gender biasness
 - Irrational behaviour of society
 - Stereotyping
 - Class discrimination
 - Intolerant attitude
 - Partial ethnicity
 - Social insecurity
 - Racism
 - Stigma
 - Casteism
 - Political values
 - Disturbing Interpersonal and intrapersonal interactions.

1.2. PREJUDICE:

The term prejudice has been derived from the Latin word 'praejudicium' which means 'judgment in advance.' (Prejudice and Discrimination: J.L. Chin-2004). Prejudice has come to have multiple connotations: i) A judgment or opinion formed beforehand without thoughtful examination of the pertinent facts, issues, or arguments; especially an unfavourable, irrational opinion. ii) The act or state of holding preconceived irrational opinions. iii) Hatred of or dislike for a particular group, race, religion, etc. Prejudice is an irrational and biased attitude (usually negative) towards a person founded solely on the individual's adherence to a social thought pool. It is concerned with some Unfavourable attributes. It deals with certain unreasonable and judgmental feelings towards a person or a group on the basis of some social stigmas. Prejudice is a resultant of a negative mindset that often leads to inferiority complex.

1.3. PRESENT SCENARIO IN INDIA:

India is a vast and varied nation with complexity and diversity in every aspect of life. Although this diversity serves as a unifying force for India, somewhere these differences lead to widespread prejudice and when people behave and act based on the prejudices they follow, it leads to discrimination various social, ethnic, cultural and religious groups.

After independence efforts have been made to eradicate casteism and prejudice at all levels, there is no denying the fact that such social differences still prevail. These differences need to be researched and addressed so that policies can be formulated to eradicate them personally from the social fabric of India.

In India, prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination are all too apparent; there are some places where prejudice and discrimination regarding gender, race, class, and community is practised at a very common rate. Despite the implementation of awareness of govt. policies and human rights acts there lays dissatisfaction as the unequal, unjust and unfair treatment is being given to the minorities which leads to retaliation. Prejudice and discrimination are the major social problems as they are being so pervasive and have a negative impact on the personality of the victims.

1.4. STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING :

1. Awareness creation
2. Brainstorming
3. Meditation
4. Counselling
5. Foster positive thinking
6. Practice acts of kindness
7. Create stress free environment

8. Try to cope with anxiety and depression

1.5. MEASURES TO BE UNDERTAKEN TO REDUCE PREJUDICE

1. Acceptance and appreciation of differences and diversity
2. Respect secularism and democracy
3. Profess and spread the idea of “Vasudev Kutumbakam”
4. Inculcate the idea and concept of healthy discussion.
5. Focus on development of society and nation instead of individual
6. Dissemination of information regarding human rights
7. Development of laws and regulation regarding discrimination and prejudice
8. Efforts to alter negative perceptions

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Charles Stangor in “The study of stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination within social psychology: A quick history of theory and research” has looked at the historical perspective of empirical research in the field of stereotypes and discrimination and their definition. The study has emphasized the importance of research in this field for policy formulation. The study has summarized various methods of measuring these aspects. The research also outlines why stereotypes and prejudice matter, their origin and reason and how they can be reduced or removed.

Harold D. Fishbein in his book “*Peer Prejudice and Discrimination - The Origins of Prejudice*” has provided an analysis of the evolution and historical perspective of prejudice and discrimination its transformation over the years. It highlights how particular transformative mechanisms are used to both activate and stop prejudice and discrimination from taking place or to alter these behaviours once they are deep seated. The book also helps us to understand the limitations in removing prejudice and discrimination and how we can increase tolerance and acceptance of those who perceive as outsiders.

Henri Tajfel in his article on “*Experiments in Intergroup Discrimination*” has discussed about the history of discrimination and the basic reasons for its emergence. It concludes that the very segregation of people into groups is a reason enough for activating discriminatory behavior. As per the study, a feature of all modern societies, the basic form of the discriminatory behavior remains unaltered even with different groups. Social and psychological causes of discrimination as perceived by different groups have been studied and it has been concluded that these two different types of causes of discrimination converge together in the end because of the psychological effects on a person of his socio-cultural environment.

3. METHODOLOGY:

Objectives

1. To assess the level of presence of prejudice among youth of India.
2. To study the different types of prejudices faced by the youth of India.
3. To assess the impact of prejudice on psychological well-being of youth on the basis of gender.
4. To implement the strategies and techniques to enhance the psychological well-being and to reduce prejudice among the youth of India.

Hypotheses

1. There will be an effect of social prejudice on psychological well-being of youth of India.
2. There will be a significant difference between the social prejudice among girls and boys.
3. There will be diversity among youth in various social groups in context of psychological well-being.

Sampling Techniques:

A sample of 120 respondents from each type of college (Government and Private) has been taken for the study. Sample was collected randomly by stratified random sampling method as it is a convenient method

and gives accurate results which can be easily measured. The data has been collected through questionnaires which were first put on a pilot study and will later be amended and elaborated.

Tools and Techniques:

For assessing the level of social prejudice, following questionnaires have been used:

- Prejudice Scale Test- By Dr. Rajiv L Bharadwaj & Dr. Harish Sharma.

For assessing the psychological wellbeing of students, we have used:

- Psychological Wellbeing Scales – By Dr. Pooja Choudhary and Dr. Sisodia.

4. DATA ANALYSIS - STATISTICAL PROCESSING :

Statistical Processing:

Statistical processing has been done using tools like coefficient of correlation and regression to understand and establish relationship between prejudice, social discrimination and mental health. The validity has been checked with the Theoretical method found to be 0.83 and with Construct method is 0.66 and the reliability has been tested with the test-retest method is 0.69 and Split-half method is 0.94. 5-point Likert scale Scoring Pattern is applied for the manual assessment of the scales that have been used. The conduction of this study is objective by nature and individual administration is done. The significance has been calculated at 0.01 levels.

Prejudice		
N=120	Male(60)	Female(60)
Mean	172.27	189.44
SD	27.40	24.22
F-Value	12.76 p<.01	

Psychological Well-being		
N=120	Male(60)	Female(60)
Mean	170.91	188.51
SD	28.25	23.48
F-Value	13.76 p<.01	

5. RESULTS:

As the tables shows the observation and the results depict a significant difference among the concerned variables focussing on the inclusion and exclusion of the extraneous variables that could influence the responses.

6. DISCUSSION:

The study investigated the type and level of social prejudice and the psychological well-being of students from both government and private colleges. For this questionnaire survey method has been used. Respondents have been categorised into Male and Female. The research carried out for this study is of exploratory nature. The study includes exploring the types and impact of social prejudice on youth of India. The nature of data obtained for the study will be both quantitative and qualitative. Comparative study will be carried out to assess the effect of gender on the level of prejudice in youth from both government and private colleges. Based on these earlier findings as well as theoretical consideration, this research study has measured the rate of social Prejudice faced by youth. Other than the previous studies, this study also looks forward to understanding and assessing the factors responsible for the prejudice. During the research it has been noticed that the victims have faced different types of prejudice based on gender, socio-economic status and community at different levels which have adverse effects on their Psychological Well-Being and have caused stress and deteriorate their physical health as well.

7. CONCLUSION:

The results show that the objectives of the study have been accomplished, as we have conducted a research study using questionnaire survey method with the help of standardised psychological test to assess the impact of prejudice on the psychological well-being of the victims. During the research we have created awareness among the victims regarding the constitutional laws and regulations as well as their legal rights towards the discriminated behaviour of others in public places. We have also implemented the strategies and techniques to enhance the psychological well-being of the victims and made efforts to reduce prejudice in the surroundings of the victims to make a positive difference in their psychological well-being level and spread positivity in near future. These efforts of intervention actualize the difference in the Psychological well-being of the prejudiced victims. The results show that the victims have better psychological well-being after the awareness program and hence our hypotheses have been proved right as we found that there was an adverse effect of social prejudice on the psychological well-being of the victims and a positive impact was made with the help of awareness program as an intervention and we have also found that there is a significant difference the between the results of prejudice as well as psychological well-being on the basis of gender and this significant difference is a result of successful intervention program. This study has also been concentrating on recommendation of the techniques for managing and mitigating this discrimination from occurring in future. Moreover, the study is contributing to suggest measures and actions to be taken at macro-level.

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