DEPRESSION AND WELL-BEING: EXPERIENCES FROM KUMAON HILLS IN UTTARANCHAL

Aradhana Shukla*

ABSTRACT

This study was aimed at studying the pattern of well-being and depression as affected by sub cultural variation and gender difference. It was hypothesized that there would be significant effect of culture on depression and well-being. It was expected that the two tribal graphs would differ in the expression of depression and well-being. Ninety adults in the age of 25-40 years participated in this study following a 3×2 factorial design with 3 sub cultural variations (Bhotia, Raji and General Kumauni) and 2 levels of gender (Male and Female) there were 15 participants in each cell of the design. Finding, in sum, are as follows:

1. Impact of cross cultural variation was significant.
2. Gender influence was also significant.
3. All areas of well-being were closed to each other.
4. Adverse relationship between depression and well-being was noted.

Key Words: Depression, Well-being, Culture and Gender

Culture is an emergent property of individuals interacting with their natural and human environment. It is defined as a rubric of patterned variables and also as a super ordinate construct that provides meaning, direction and coherence to it’s members, such as satisfying subsistence and psychological needs. This is the process of culture through which the behaviour of the persons living in particular segment is influenced and the pattern of culture makes them different with others living in other cultural segments.

In this way it is apparent that culture imposes significant impact on people. It can be seen as embedded in individuals’ behaviour in particular and various

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personality differentials appear in them. In addition, since, cultural variations provide difference in human behaviour hence, it is reflected in many aspects of personality. Moreover, psychological process block the ideas of a person towards personal well-being. In this study an attempt was made to correlate depression and well-being in Kumauni tribals namely, Bhotia, Raji and general Kumaunies of Kumaun hills. The description of tribals is as follows:

The Bhotia

The Bhotias, is a community Mongoloid of origin, inhabit the high altitude regions of Uttaranchal at Indo Tibetan and Indo Nepal borders, a zone of ethnic intermixing and cultural assimilation. They tend to show close racial and culture affinity to the Tibetans and probably for this similarity the Bhotia region is called as Bod or Bhot which is synonym for Tibet (Kapoor and Vaid, 1981). Though, the cultural traits of Bhotias reflect close links with the Tibetans acquired through generations of association through trade, they stand distinct from Tibetans with regards to their character and mode of economy. The culture reveals much closer socio-economic ties with the population inhabiting the middle and lesser Himalayan region of Kumaon and Garhwal.

Families of Bhotian are of both joint and nuclear types and both the males and females have equal right in the affairs and decision making system of the family (Tiwari, 1954)

Traditionally, the Bhotias are traders and their trade with Tibet has been the mainstream of their economy. However, the economic system of Bhotias is developed and shaped greatly by various forces of which ecology of their land or habitat is perhaps the most crucial one. The main pursuits traditionally followed by Bhotias are trade, pastoralism and agriculture. The impact of physical and geographical environment and trade with Tibet had been so great on the Bhotia’s socio-cultural life that they had to take resort to seasonal nomadism, which forced them to build a distinct socio-economic structure (Kapoor and Vaid 1981). At present the economic organization of Bhotias is an agglomeration of trade and business, terraced cultivation, pastoralism, woolen’s industry and service (Samal, Fernando and Rawat, 1999).

The Raji

The Rajis, socially and economically, are constitute the most under-developed tribal community of Central Himalayan region of India. They are also described as Van Rawats (king of forest), Van Raji (royal people of forest) or Van Manush (wild man or man of forest) who claim themselves to be Rajputs and original inhibiter of Central Himalaya.

The Rajis are multilingual and speak languages, belonging to the Himalayan group of the Tibeto-Burman family of languages. However, they communicate
with other neighboring communities with Indo-Arayna language, Kumaoni and Hindi. They use Devangari script.

Rajis are believed to be the descendants of Kirata who ruled over this area in prehistoric period. According to Trail (1823) Rajis represent themselves as descendants of one of the aboriginal prince of Kumaon. It is worth mentioning here that a large population of this tribe resides in Nepal and there is also strong social and affiliial relations between Rajis of India and Rajis of Nepal.

**General Kumaunies**

The belt of Kumaun is the lower part of Himalaya and the basic residents of Kumaon are considered as general Kumauni. Generally the people who are living in Kumaun from their part three generations are move were considered as general Kumauni in their today.

**Depression**

Depression is a psychobiological process (Kulhara and Prasad 1986). It refers to such aspect of personality, which is revealed in the tendency to achieve and experience moods or mood changes in characteristic ways. The outstanding quality of depression is that, it tends to be persistent and much closed with emotions which play a dominant role in person’s life. Thus, the persistence of depression predicts how a person will react to a given situation with a fair degree of accuracy? In addition, increase in the level of depression blocks the ideas of a person towards personal well-being and social welfare.

In these days trend towards materialism and rapid growth of urban civilization is disintegrating. This has changed the reality of life. The responses to the change are different and based on cultural background. Since culture shapes the “self” of a person hence it may argued that it will affect the well-being of a person. Culture also affects the personality, stress and well-being. It is proved by the western world (Cohen & Williamson, 1991) and in Indian as well (Gautam & Kamal, 1990; Shukla, 2001, 2003).

Thus, It can be said that variations in culture organize the structure of well being and method of healing. Keeping these in view the present study was planned. It aimed at studying the pattern of well being and depression as affected by sub cultural variation and gender difference. It was hypothesized that:

- there would be a significant impact of culture on depression and well-being.
- there would be a significant impact of sex on depression and well-being.
- there would be a close relationship among the areas of well-being; and
- there would be adverse relationship between depression and well-being.
METHOD

Sample

Ninety adults in the age of 25-40 years participated in this study following a 3x2 factorial design with 3 sub cultural variations (Bhotia, Raji and General Kumauni) and 2 levels of sex (male and female). There were 15 participants in each cell of the design.

Tools

PGI General Well being Scale: This measure was constructed by Verma (1978). It is a 20 item scale in yes-No Form. It consists of four qualities of life, which are the indicators of positive well-being. These four are happiness; control over mind and body; belongingness and peacefulness and no distress

Depression Scale

It was constructed by (1998) and comprised of 96 five point items. Score ranges between 96-480. Low score indicates low depression and high score vice versa,

Procedure

Data collection was made after a good rapport with particifpants. It was done individually or in small group. Best attempts were made to avoid external distractions. In addition, correlation analysis was made to find out the dimensional profile of well-being and relationship between depression and well-being.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Obtained findings were analyzed by 2-way analysis of variance and interpreted in term of depression and well-being as affected by cross-cultural variation and gender. Findings are presented in two sections below:

1. Impact of cross-cultural variation and sex on depression : Obtained findings related to the impact of cross-cultural, variation and sex on depression are given in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of variation</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>18.78</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.39</td>
<td>7.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>8.27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.27</td>
<td>7.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>14.90</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.45</td>
<td>8.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error (Between)</td>
<td>71.86</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Table 1. shows the main effect of depression was significant. It showed that variation in depression did vary across sub cultural groups. The Rajis scored lowest (M=47.63) followed by Bhotia (M=81.87), and general Kumauni (M=84.06). Thus, it was found that Rajis had low degree of depression than Bhotia and general Kumauni groups. The main effect of sex was also significant. It was noticed that males were less depressed (M=51.81) than females (M=86.88).

The two way interaction of culture x sex was also significant. It reveals that Rajis were in less depression than Buxas and general Kumaunies and this trend was similarly followed by males and females. However, gender difference was more pronounced in the general Kumauni group followed by Bhotia and Raji tribals, respectively.

2. Impact of cross-cultural variation and sex on well-being: Similar to the previous analysis data of well-being also subjected through 2-way ANOVA and findings are given in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of variation</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>f</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>22.48</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.24</td>
<td>6.61 (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>11.20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.20</td>
<td>6.59 (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>22.82</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.41</td>
<td>6.71 (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>49.41</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. indicates significantly greater well-being among Rajis (M=25.59) as compared to Bhotias (27.24) and general Kumauni sample (M=34.09), respectively. The main effect of sex was also significant. It was found that males reported higher level of well being (M=28.65) than females (M=32.76).

The culture X sex interaction was significant which reveals that gender difference as compared to Rajis difference was highest in general Kumauni group and Bhotia.

3. Area-wise analysis of well-being: In this section an attempt was made to find out the relationship among areas of well-being in participants of each area were pooled and they were subjective to correlational analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Name of areas</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Happiness</td>
<td></td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Control over mind and body</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Belongingness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Peacefulness and no distress</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Relationship between depression and well-being: Last but not least was the endeavour where relationship between depression and well-being was made. Data reveal moderate but negative relationship between them. It appears that increase in depression generate a sense of loss in the magnitude of well being.

Obtained findings were analyzed by 2-way ANOVA and interpreted in terms of cross-cultural variation and gender on (i) depression and (ii) well-being. It was hypothesized and cultural variation and gender both would play significant role in deciding the pattern of depression and well-being. It was found that both variable played significant role and findings have been discussed accordingly.

1. Impact of culture on depression and well-being: The first hypothesis was related with the pattern of depression and well-being as affected by culture. It was found that both variables were influenced by cultural variation and revealed the significance of culture in human life.

From the perspective of an observer looking in culture is seen as the way people think, feel and behave but from the view of incidental perspective, culture is basic, innate and natural surrounding where children are born. Although, children they the potential to learn any where they get first sensory experience from their linguist and cultural setup. To most adults, the particular culture where, yet they usually grow in is natural and basic and other cultures are viewed as foreign and alien. Without culture, one is just only the owner of basic animal instincts and can not think, feel and behave the way one does.

Culture has been employed as an explanatory variables in cross cultural investigations. Mishra (2001) has stated that culture is related to symbols associated to a particular group. Misra (2004) has also stated that culture is not given but it is created daily through interaction between individual and society. It allows to define who we are, to decide what is meaningful, to communicate with other and to manage one’s social environment. It is through culture that one think, feel and behave (Snyder & Ford, 1987). It is true that Ss, although, were selected from remote areas, had made a good contact with modern societies and it may have generated depression in them (because of the lack of modernization in them). In addition, it can also be contended that the magnitude of depression in Rajis was found lesser as compared to Bhotia and general Kumauni may be because Rajis have been found as relatively less active than the others therefore, they can not utilize their talents. Some of them have got jobs on the Governments reservation policy but mostly third or forth grade jobs have been occupied by them. On the basis of this discussion author can say that differentials in depression and well-being are caused by cultural variation.

2. Impact of sex on depression and well-being: Earlier in this study it was assumed that difference in sex would cause difference in depression and well-being. Fortunately, the hypothesis was confirmed and it was noted that males were superior in positive well being and they manifested less magnitude of
Depression than females. It is a common fact that men go out, form the homes to solve the problem of bread and butter. Since they do either service or business so they have to maintain, their balance in temperament and control themselves otherwise they cannot survive. Perhaps, this notion has affected present findings. On the other hand, a notable number of women in India live in home and perform households. They feel secure at home so they cannot imagine about the consequence of their behaviour. They used the weapons of “so called depression” some times to fulfill their demands. They exhibit dejected mood, loss of desire to change and to do thing and general tiredness and in ability to concentrate. They, during the state of depression, imagine that nothing can be done to change the undesirable life conditions (as they). Dalal (1999) has suggested that the emotional reaction of depression is beneficial in the sense that its prophecy to the late adjustment that must be made as a complainer of illness. However, acute or prolonged depression is the sign of pathological illness. In addition, women face many other complains like depression, high level of CMD, somatoform to form and dissociation. Although, national mental health Programme (NMH) was started in 1982 but it was unable to uplift relatively low woman status in India. The finding are in close consonance with Panda (2004), and Swain (2004) where gender issued is discussed.

In India women have been in great stress in intra-familial settings reflecting the predominance of their household role (Singh, Kaur and Kaur, 1984). There is hardly any support system available in Indian family for women. Most women whether they belong to rural/urban segment do not have freedom to socialize independently and built their own social network. Now slowly and slowly urban women have started search of self fulfillment not through self effacement but outside home and heath. In addition, rapid social change and industrialization, economic development and over crowding are having profound effect on the psychological well being. Perhaps, this notion has caused present findings. On the lines of present findings it can be said that sex of participants has deeper social roots than the cast and ethnicities both at the level of individual and the group.

The present scenario of society which elicits that ample attempt are being made to increase the health status of persons. Thus, it is apparent that well-being has now a primary concern of all people as it result from the degree of satisfaction, individuals deriving in fulfilling the multifarious demands of life such as work place or social setting. Unfortunately, there is dearth of researchers in this area so it is essential to build-up psychological knowledge base in this regard.

REFERENCES


