HOLISTIC HEALTH AMONG MALE AND FEMALE TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

Holistic health is actually an approach to living, a life style transformation, change that one can make in everyday living rather than focusing on specific part of the body. The ancient approach of holistic health considers the whole body and aim to rise its functioning to the maximum level. Holistic Health Scale (HHS) developed by Husain (2009) was used in the present study to measure holistic health of male and female teachers of Aligarh Muslim University (AMU). One hundred eighty teachers (90 female, 90 male teachers) were drawn from the different faculties. Main findings of the study were as follows: Male and female teachers did not differ significantly on seven dimensions of holistic health, namely, economic, emotional, environmental, mental, physical, social, and societal and they did differ significantly on spiritual domain. Female teachers scored higher than male teachers, though not significantly, on the overall scores obtained on Holistic Health.

Key Words: Holistic Health, Gender differences and Teacher

Since the advent of 21st century, health and well-being have become the key issues of the contemporary developing society and has attracted greater amount of research (Dalal & Misra, 2006; Nadidoo & Wills, 2000). The concept of health implies both biological/physical as well as psychological factors contribution to health. The WHO defines health as ‘a state of complete physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being and not merely an absence of disease (WHO, 1980).’ The WHO definition of health is very closely related to the various treaties of Indian science. The traditional system of Indian medicine defined health as a state of delight or feeling of spiritual, physical and mental

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well-being (Raina, 1990; Rao, 1983; Sharma, 1981). Birren and Jarit (1985) and Thoresen (1984) define health as “an absence of objective signs indicating that body is not functioning properly such as indices of high blood pressure and subjective symptoms of disease or injury such as pains or nausea”. But now a days the understanding of health has widen beyond physical well-being and have also covered psychological well-being of individual because body and mind are not two entities. Very recently the well-being of soul has added to the concept of health. So, health means complete well-being of body-mind and soul. Bricher (2005) has defined health as “a dynamic state of well-being characterised by a physical and mental potential which satisfies the demands of life commensurate with age, culture and personal responsibility.” The word dynamic suggests that health is not a static state of an individual’s well-being but it may change; and physical and mental potentials are the characteristics of health and these potentials enable the person to fulfil the demands that life make with age, according to the culture and the demands of personal responsibilities.

Gender is related to how one is perceived and expected to think and act, as women and men, because of the way society is organised, and not because of their biological differences. Viewing health through a gender lens necessitates steps to improve women’s access, affordability and appropriateness to the health services. Health services for women tend to focus on their reproductive functions, neglecting the needs of women outside the reproductive ages. A lack of female medical personnel is sometimes a barrier for women to utilise healthcare services. Poor women find themselves without access to healthcare more often than men from the same social group, even in rich countries like the United States. In many developing countries, women complain about lack of privacy, confidentiality and information about options and services available. Women’s higher mental and physical morbidity have also been hypothesised as being caused by their gender sensitivity to physical cues and to the social acceptability of sick roles for women. On the other hand, emotional and cognitive capacities of females themselves may also limit their access to healthcare than do males.

Husain and Khan (2012) defined health in terms of acronym HEALTH. Their model proposes that health which is caused by multiple factors and produces multiple effects. This model maintains the health something that one achieves thought attention to physical and psychological factors. Based on the six aspects of health, they suggest the definition of health in relation to physical factors, namely, hobbies, exercise and aerobics psychological factors, namely, lifestyle, thinking and happiness. Health may be defined as endeavour to realise on individual’s physical and psychological factors that leads to managing and attaining health. Psychological health is influenced by the physical health – related factors. That is, those individual who are involved in exercise and aerobic will probably have good life style, positive, thinking and happiness in
their life (i.e. psychological health). WHO considers four dimensions of health, namely physical, mental, social and spiritual. It means that WHO has given more emphasis on the individual’s physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being. Husain (2009) considers that an individual health also depends much on his contribution to the society and environment and how much he is able to manage his emotion according to situation is also very important. Consequently, he added four more domains of health and developed a Holistic Health Scale (HHS) which measure health in a more holistic way. These four additional dimensions are societal, spiritual, emotional and economic health.

Holistic health is actually an approach to living, a life style transformation, changes that one can make in everyday living. Rather than focusing on a specific part of the body the ancient approaches of holistic health consider the whole body and aim to raise its functioning to the maximum level possible. Is there one true definition of holistic health? The term holistic health or holistic healing comes from the word whole, meaning complete. There is no one universal definition for holistic health, but there seems to be a common thread that runs through all of the definitions of holistic health that the author has researched. That is, to look at the self from a whole (holistic) perspective and to understand the different dimensions of health.

Domains of Holistic Health

Social Health: The World Health Organisation first introduced the idea of social health in 1947. WHO considers social health as an important factor in individual’s health. The concept of social health is less intuitively familiar than that of physical or mental health. Formal consideration of social health was stimulated in 1947 by its inclusion in the world health organisation’s definition of health and by the resulting emphasis on treatment of patients as social beings that live in a complex social context. Social health can refer both to a characteristic of a society, and of individuals. This definition is broad, it incorporates elements of personality and social skills reflect social norms and bear a close relationship to concepts such as “well-being” adjustment and social functioning. Social health has also become relevant with the increasing evidence that those who are well integrated into their communities level to live longer and recover faster from disease. Conversely, social isolation has been shown to be a risk factor for illness. Therefore, social health may be defined in terms of social adjustment and social support – or the ability to perform normal roles in society. Gender is related to how one is perceived and expected to think and act, as women and men, because of the way society is organised, and not because of their biological differences. Viewing health through a gender lens necessitates steps to improve women’s access, affordability and appropriateness to the health services. Health services for women tend to focus on their reproductive
functions, neglecting the needs of women outside the reproductive ages. A lack of female medical personnel is sometimes a barrier for women to utilise healthcare services. Poor women find themselves without access to healthcare more often than men from the same social group, even in rich countries like the United States. In many developing countries, women complain about lack of privacy, confidentiality and information about options and services available. Women’s higher mental and physical morbidity have also been hypothesised as being caused by their gender sensitivity to physical cues and to the social acceptability of sick roles for women. On the other hand, emotional and cognitive capacities of females themselves may also limit their access to healthcare than do males.

There are important gender differences in perceived control and in self-esteem, with women reporting lower levels of both resources than men (Mirowsky & Ross, 1989; Turner & Roszell, 1994); although women do report higher levels of social support (Umberson, Chen, Hopkins & Slaten, 1996).

Societal health refers to how much an individual contribute to the society to make it healthy and to the health of others.

Mental Health: Mental health is an important but elusive concept that still has no single definition acceptable to everyone. Psychiatrist and psychologist, have been dissatisfied with this way of looking at mental health. It is now recognised by World Health Organisation (WHO) that health is a positive term. On the basis of preliminary report is of White House Conference, The highest degree of mental health might therefore, be described as that which permits an individual to realise the greatest success which his capabilities will permit with maximum of satisfaction to herself and the social order with minimum friction and tension.WHO proposed that mental health is a “State of well-being in which individuals realises his or her own capabilities, can cope with the normal stressful life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community (WHO, 2001). This definition includes three central ideas for the enhancement of the mental health. First, mental health is an integral part of health. Second, mental health is more than mere absence of mental illness, and finally, mental health is intimately associated with physical health and behaviour.

Mental health in the positive sense is a foundation for well being and effective functioning for an individual and for community. It is more than a mere absence of mental illness. It includes emotional, psychological, social and even also spiritual well-being. The Indian concept of mental health deals with three ‘Gunas’ which determine the personality and the mental health of the individual. They are: Sattav, Rajas, Tamas. Ideal mental health means maximum possible equipoise in three gunas of psyche.

Robichaud, Dugas and Conway (2003) found that women reported more worry than men on two measures of the tendency to worry, as well as more worries about lack of confidence issues.
Physical Health: Physical health is good bodily health, and is the result of regular exercise, proper diet and nutrition, and proper rest after physical recovery. Physical health can be more readily defined and measured. Concepts such as “physical fitness” involve physical activity to achieve physical goals but may also require this to be achieved in complex and coordinated ways that inevitably involve higher mental functions. Positive physical health may encompass being better than normal i.e. above average. Physical health in childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age may very positive physical health may also encompass the capacity for resilience when the person encounters threats, including those of injury, illness, and disability, both physical and mental. The factors contributing to physical health include genetic makeup, life style and choices, socio-economic factors, and environmental factors. Like those of positive mental health, these concepts need to be better operationalised and measured so they are not just recognised by the absence of indicators of pathology.

There are gender differences in exposure to various lifestyle behaviours, with men more likely than women to smoke, consume alcohol, have an unbalanced diet and to be overweight, while women are more likely than men to be physically inactive (Denton & Walters, 1999; Ross & Bird, 1994).

Spiritual Health: A healthy spirit means so many different things to different people. Spirituality is unique to each individual. Spirituality is an integration of all aspect of health a way of knowing the self, a feeling of wholeness and a sense of something which provide strength and hope. Spiritual health is a component of an individual’s well-being. In one words of Husain (2008), “Spiritual health characterises the growth of a believer in the fruit of the spirit which is love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, righteousness and truth.” Spiritual health includes all the efforts spent in achieving optimal physical health. Spiritual health is achieved when a person finds a balance between life values, goals, belief systems, and their relationship within themselves and with others' ability to core meaning fully for others and self. Spiritual health as a dimension of holistic health has not been adequately defined, researched grounded in theory, or integrated into the health education curriculum (Hawks, 1994). Mental health research and practitioners have neglected spirituality, preferring to look at the effect of organised religion (Longo & Peterson, 2002). Kolander and Chondler (1990) state that spiritual health is “…the source of an all overarching umbrella covering all of the other aspects of health, representing the essence of who and what the individual is (Quoted in Hawks 1994).

Peterson, Hertting, Hagberg and Theorell (2005) have defined spiritual well-being as a science of relatedness or connectedness to others a provision for meaning and purpose in life, the fostering of well-being, and having a belief in the relationship with a power higher than the self. Spiritual health has been defined variously because the researchers have suggested different parameters and measurable factors.
Cloniger, Pryzbeck, Svrakic, Dragan, and Wetzel (1994) evaluated transcendence and personality traits in 1,388 individuals and reported that women had 18% higher self-transcendence scores as compared to men. With regards to the growing literature on health and religion/spirituality, research has suggested there may be gender-based differences.

**Emotional Health:** People who are emotionally healthy are in control of their emotions and their behaviour. They are able to handle life’s inevitable challenges, building strong relationship and lead productive fulfilling live. When bad things happen, they are able to bounce back and move on. Unfortunately, too many people take their mental and emotional health for granted focusing on it only when they develop problems. But just as it requires efforts to build or maintain physical health, so, it is with mental and emotional health.

It has been hypothesised that men tend to experience types of strain that are likely to lead them to feel other-directed emotions (*e.g.*, anger) in response to strain, which in turn, cause them to engage in other-directed forms of deviant acts (*e.g.*, interpersonal aggression). On the other hand, women’s strains are likely to generate self-directed emotions (*e.g.*, depression and anxiety) that tend to lead to self-directed deviant (*e.g.*, drug use) or no deviant, legitimate coping behaviours (*e.g.*, ignoring the problem or religious coping). Also, women are less likely to respond to strain and emotional distress with deviant coping than men because of gender differences in conditioning factors, such as self-esteem and self-efficacy.

**Environmental Health:** Environmental health is the branch of public health that is concerned with all aspects of the natural and built environment that may affect human health. Other terms that concern or refer to the discipline of environmental health include environmental public health and environment health and protection. WHO defines environment health as: “those aspects of the human health and disease that are determined by factors in the environment. It also refers to the theory and practice of assessing and controlling factors in the environment that can potentially affect health.” Environment health is a very large and growing concern for those living a holistic lifestyle and more so every day as the state of the environment continues to decline rapidly. The concern is justified by the fact that not only do toxins in the environment threaten nature and our planet itself, but they also have a profound impact on mental, physical and spiritual health. Many of the chronic mental and physical health are the result of the toxins in the environment. Cancer, respiratory disease, asthma, depression, arthritis, anxiety, hyper activity, cardiovascular disease, hormonal problems, nervous system disorders, kidney disease etc. all are directly linked to environmental toxins.

**Economic Health:** It refers to how much an individual is financially healthy, accordingly he/she will avail health policy, health services and quality of medical care.

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Research Objectives

The main objective of the present study was to examine gender differences in the various dimensions of holistic health as well as the composite score on the holistic health scale.

METHOD

Sample

The sample consisted of 180 teachers working in the different faculties of Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh. Of these, there were 90 female and 90 male teachers.

Tool

Holistic Health Scale (HHS) developed by Husain (2009) was used to measure the health of participants. The HHS comprised 80 items with a five point Likert scale. This scale measures eight dimensions of health, namely, mental, physical, spiritual, emotional, social, societal, environmental and economic health. Cronbach coefficient Alpha of HHS was found to be 0.946. Cronbach coefficients Alpha for the male and female participants were found to be 0.938 and 0.9 respectively. Cronbach coefficients Alpha for the economic health domain 0.61, emotional health domain 0.61, environmental health domain 0.65, mental health domain 0.74, physical health domain 0.78, social health domain 0.59, societal health domain 0.84 and spiritual health domain 0.75 were found to be highly reliable.

Procedure

The data was collected individually from male and female teachers of AMU, Aligarh. Before handing over the HHS, assurance was given to them that information collected from them will be used only for research purpose and will be kept confidential. Scoring of each questionnaire was done manually.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The mean and standard deviations of the male and female respondents on the various dimensions of holistic health and the composite health scores were computed. The significance of difference between the means of the male and female groups were analyses by applying t-test.

From Table 1, it can be seen that significant differences were not found between the mean scores of male and female teachers on economic, emotional, environmental, mental, physical, social, and societal domains of holistic health. It can be seen that significant difference was not found between the mean scores of male and female teachers on composite scores of all eight domains of holistic health.
Table 1: Significance of difference between the mean scores of male (n=90) and female (n=90) teachers on various domain of holistic health

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t value</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>37.75</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>&gt;.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>37.26</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>36.20</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>&gt;.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>35.24</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Environmental</td>
<td>39.43</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>.4353</td>
<td>&gt;.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>39.16</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Mental</td>
<td>37.55</td>
<td>5.95</td>
<td>.842</td>
<td>&gt;.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>36.88</td>
<td>4.77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>34.84</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>1.795</td>
<td>&gt;.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>36.01</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>37.58</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>1.110</td>
<td>&gt;.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>36.90</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>39.64</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>-.182</td>
<td>&gt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>39.75</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>39.76</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>2.428</td>
<td>&lt;.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>38.25</td>
<td>4.59</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Composite</td>
<td>302.94</td>
<td>24.58</td>
<td>1.017</td>
<td>&gt;.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Score</td>
<td>299.48</td>
<td>20.87</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It may be concluded from the above results that there are no significant differences between the male and female teachers with respect to seven dimension of holistic health. This may be attributed to the fact that the sample was drawn from Aligarh Muslim University. So far as the University culture is concerned equal treatment is given to both male and female teachers in the workplace. Unlike other places of the work where sometimes female folks are subjected to exploitation and harassment, Aligarh Muslim University has work atmosphere which is conducive to women. All kinds of cooperation and healthy atmosphere are provided to them so that they do not face any stressful situation at the workplace. Consequently, they are free of stress and tensions and lead a hassle free life.

The results showed that significance difference did not exist between the mean scores of male and female teachers on mental health domain of holistic health. Teachers who are mentally healthy have a sense of commitment and ability to deal with stress, a sense of meaning and purpose in mental activities and their relationship. Male as well as female teachers have flexibility to learn new things and adopt the change, maintain balance between work and play, rest and activity etc. and the ability to build and maintain the fulfilling relationships.

However, Table 1 indicated significant differences between the mean score of male and female teachers on spiritual domain of holistic health, where the mean score of female teachers is higher than males. This indicates that female
teachers hold spiritual beliefs more firmly than males and use that to understand life phenomenon. Also they are more likely to engage in spiritual practices than do male therefore scoring more on spiritual health.

Thus, the present investigation reveals that there are no significant gender differences in holistic health, except in the domain of Spiritual health where females had better health than males.

REFERENCES


