

Positive Mental Health and Locus of Control among Employed and Unemployed Young People

Razouneinu Suokhrie, and Imlisongla Longkumer

Nagaland University, Kohima, Nagaland

In Nagaland, the rate of unemployment has been consistently high and its impact on young people has been detrimental. With the lack of job opportunities and high competition to gain employment, young people face many difficult challenges. Therefore, in the present study positive mental health along with locus of control was measured among employed and unemployed young people in Nagaland. The sample consisted of 600 youth in Nagaland in the age range of 18 to 35 years. The results highlight the level of mental health and locus of control among employed and unemployed youth. T-test showed significant differences in emotional wellbeing ($t=-6.301, p=.000$), social wellbeing ($t=-5.275; p=.000$), and psychological wellbeing ($t=-5.909; p=.000$) among employed and unemployed youth. Similarly, significant differences were found in the locus of control ($t=5.088, p=.000$) among employed and unemployed youth. Pearson Chi-square also showed a significant association between mental health and locus of control ($\chi^2=23.322; p=.00$).

Keywords: Positive mental health, locus of control, flourishing, languishing, unemployment

Positive mental health is a fairly new and emerging trend in studying mental health. It addresses the positive impact of mental health by looking into areas such as eudaimonic and hedonic well-being. Keyes (2002) had come up with an interesting concept of measuring positive mental health by proposing three categories which are flourishing, languishing and moderate mental health. Keyes set out to measure mental health in the same way that depression was measured in the DSM criteria. It assesses the mental health of individuals in terms of how they feel in the past one month addressing their emotional, social and psychological wellbeing. Positive mental health can be assessed using the mental health continuum proposed by Keyes (2009). Individuals in the flourishing category have complete mental health whereas those with incomplete mental health are said to be languishing. Individuals who are neither flourishing nor languishing

are considered as having moderate mental health. Mental health as we all know is as important as physical health. In order to function well and contribute positively to the environment, an individual needs to possess good mental health and it is especially important that young people who are the force of nation building have good mental health in order to be productive. In the present study, we set out to measure the positive mental health of employed and unemployed young people in Nagaland given the poor aspect of job opportunity and high sense of competition to attain employment in the state. Current research on unemployment provides evidence suggesting that unemployment diminished a person's mental and physical health. According to Batic-Mujanovic et al (2017), there exist a significant influence of unemployment on mental health and the impact was greater in people having previous

work experience of more than five years. Similarly Pharr, Moonie and Bungum (2012), in their study also reported that unemployment whether it was voluntary or involuntary, significantly impacted a person's mental health.

Nagaland is a small state in the North-East part of India that has been struggling with the problem of unemployment in recent years. Although the literacy rate of Nagaland at 79.5% is higher than the national average, the employment opportunities in both the private and government sectors in Nagaland is scarce and as a result, many educated young people are sitting idle or forced to go to urban cities to earn a living. Moreover, the rate of youth unemployment poses a serious problem in the state which has consistently been ranked lowest (4.3% in 2023) in unemployment rate in recent years by the annual survey conducted by the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS).

Therefore the present study addressed the following questions: Is there a difference in mental health among employed and unemployed young people? Is there a difference in the locus of control between employed and unemployed young people? What is the relationship between mental health and locus of control among employed and unemployed young people?

Method

Sample

The sample comprised of 600 young people residing in the 2 districts of Nagaland. Convenience sampling was utilized. Participants were in the age group of 15 to 35 years. The researcher obtained the informed consent from all the participants before collecting the necessary data.

Tools Used

Mental health continuum- short form (MHC-SF): The MHC-SF is a comprehensive

measure of positive mental health proposed by Keyes (2009). The scale consists of 14 items out of which the first 3 items measure emotional wellbeing, next 6 items measure psychological wellbeing and the last 5 items measure social wellbeing. The response category includes 6 response options from 'never' to 'everyday'. The scale categorizes people into 3 mental health category of flourishing, moderate mental health and languishing.

Locus of Control scale: The LOC scale contains 29 items that was proposed by Rotter (1966). Each item in the scale consists of 2 statements which are marked 'a' and 'b' of which one has to choose which statement they agree with the most. Out of the 29 items, 6 are filler items. A person can get a score in the range of 1 being lowest and 23 being highest. Higher scores correspond to external locus of control and lower scores correspond to internal locus of control.

Ethical consideration: The present study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Department of Psychology, Nagaland University. Informed consent form was given to participants 18 years and above whereas participants who were below 18 years, informed consent was taken from their respective guardians.

Results

Distribution of sample by Demographic characteristics: 332 (55.3%) were females and 268 (44.6%) were males; 126 (21%) had education up to HSSLC and 474 (79 %) had education upto graduate or above; 344 (57.3 %) were unemployed and 256 (42.6 %) were employed; 559 (93.1 %) were single and 41 (6.8 %) were married.

Positive mental health among unemployed and employed young people in Nagaland: Among the unemployed young people, a majority falls in the moderate category (43.6%) followed by languishing (30.81%)

and less than half of the individuals were flourishing (25.58%). With regards to employed young people, it can be seen that a 48.43% of the individuals falls in the moderate category and 41.01% are flourishing and the least number of individuals are languishing (10.54%).

An independent sample t-test was performed to evaluate whether there were differences in three aspects of mental health-emotional wellbeing, social wellbeing and psychological wellbeing among employed and unemployed young people (table 1). The results indicated that there were significant differences in emotional wellbeing ($t=-6.301$,

$p=.000$), social wellbeing ($t= -5.275$; $p= .000$) and psychological wellbeing ($t= -5.909$; $p=.000$) among employed and unemployed young people. Furthermore it was also seen that emotional wellbeing among employed ($M= 10.52$; $SD=3.11$) is significantly higher than unemployed individuals ($M= 8.69$; $SD=3.80$). Similarly, social wellbeing among employed ($M=13.49$; $SD=5.18$) was significantly higher than unemployed ($M=11.11$; $SD=5.65$). Psychological wellbeing among employed young people ($M=18.99$; $SD= 6.14$) was also significantly higher than unemployed young people ($M=15.90$; $SD=6.46$).

Table 1. Independent sample t test, Mean, Standard deviations for emotional WB, social WB and psychological WB

Groups	Emotional WB		Social WB		Psychological WB	
	M/SD	t value p value	M/SD	t value p value	M/SD	t value p value
Unemployed	8.69 3.80	-6.301	11.11 5.65	-5.275	15.90 6.46	-5.909
Employed	10.52 3.11	.000	13.49 5.18	.000	18.99 6.14	.000

Locus of control among unemployed and employed young people in Nagaland: Among the unemployed, a majority of the individuals fall in the internal Locus of control (70.93%) whereas only a few individuals fall in the external Locus of control (29.06%). Similarly, among the employed, more number of individuals was in the internal Locus of control (80.85%) as compared to external Locus of control (19.14%).

When it comes to the results from an independent t test (table 2), it was found that locus of control among unemployed ($M=10.88$; $SD=3.315$) young people was slightly higher when compared with employed ($M=9.46$; $SD=3.462$) young people. There was a significant difference in locus of control

($t=5.088$, $p=.000$) among employed and unemployed young people.

Table 2. Independent sample t test, Mean, Standard deviations for locus of control among unemployed and employed young people

Groups	Locus of control	
	M/SD	t value p value
Unemployed	10.88 3.315	5.088
Employed	9.46 3.462	.000

Relationship between mental health and locus of control: Lastly, chi square for mental health categories and locus of control was significant ($\chi^2=23.32$; $p=.00$) indicating that there is a significant association between mental health and locus of control (table 3). The result also shows that young people with

37.02% with internal locus of control were more flourishing as compared to 17.44% with external locus of control. On the contrary it was found that more youth in the external locus of control (82.54%) were not flourishing as compared to internal locus of control (62.96%).

Table 3. Chi square results for mental health categories and locus of control

Groupings	Languishing	Moderate	Flourishing	χ^2	<i>p</i> value
Internal LOC	85 (18.84%)	199 (44.12%)	167 (37.02%)	23.32	.000
External LOC	48 (32.21%)	75 (50.33%)	26 (17.44%)		
Total	133	274	193		

Discussion

When it comes to the level of positive mental health among employed and unemployed young people in Nagaland, one thing that stands out is that majority of the youth whether employed or unemployed were moderately mentally health. Another important observation was that a significant number of employed participants were flourishing with the least number of employed participants who were languishing. On the other hand, a considerable number of unemployed youth were languishing with the least number of unemployed participants in the flourishing category. This is in line with previous studies which have shown that unemployment leads to reduced mental health and well being. Moreover, poor mental health and wellbeing also leads to anxiety and mood disorders and interestingly bring on unemployment (Gedikli et al 2023; Virgolino et al (2022). Similarly, Bartelink, Zay Ya, Guldbbrandsson, Bremberg (2019) in systematic review found that unemployment among young people was associated with mental health and had a significant effect on mental health. McGee and Thompson (2015) also highlight the impact of unemployment among emerging adults and indicates that unemployed are 3 times more likely to have depression than employed emerging adults.

In Nagaland, the youth unemployment rate (18.5%) is among the second highest in the North-East states and the alarming figures of youth unemployment which is above the national average of 10% may also have an impact on the mental health of young people in the state as is evident from the results from this study showing a large number of unemployed youth who are languishing. The high sense of competition to finding jobs especially in a state like Nagaland where job opportunities are sparse may negatively impact young peoples' mental health and lead to feelings of hopelessness, stress and frustration. In line with the results of the current study, Drydakis (2014) emphasized that the impact of unemployment on mental health is greater and detrimental in phases where the rate of unemployment is high. Furthermore Marrone and Swarbrick (2020) also points out that long term unemployment can negatively impact general as well as mental health.

Among the employed young people, a good number are flourishing as compared to unemployed young people. A study by Oliveira-Silva and Porto (2019) shows positive relationship between professional fulfillment, subjective wellbeing and flourishing. The more people perceive they have achieved their goals, the more likely

their wellbeing increases in general and the more they flourish in work. Similarly, another study found that obtaining employment leads to improved mental health and wellbeing and positively impact job performance (Lu, Yu & Shan, 2022; Drake and Wallach, 2020). Furthermore, a study by Hori et al (2019) indicates that work reward, support system is associated with flourishing.

Results of the study also show that a significantly greater number of both employed and unemployed young people have internal locus of control. Feijen, Zaalberg and Tobi (2015) had indicated that the scores on locus of control in non western culture were more on the extreme end of internal locus of control whereas in western culture external locus of control had more extreme scores. In a state like Nagaland where we have a collectivist culture, the results of the present study also highlight that a good majority of employed as well as unemployed youth were in the internal locus of control category. Moreover, in light of the significant association between mental health and locus of control, it was also found that youth with internal locus of control were more flourishing than those with external locus of control. Previous studies have also found similar results showing that internals have better mental health and subjective wellbeing, overall adjustment when compared with externals (Kesavayuth, Binh Tran and Zikos, 2022; Sidola, Saini and Kang, 2020; Khumalo and Plattner, 2019).

Conclusion

Mental health and locus of control are important measures in understanding the overall well being and individuals' sense of control. The present study had highlighted the importance of mental health and locus of control among employed and unemployed young people in Nagaland. This study also adds literature on the concepts of flourishing, languishing and moderate mental health of youth in Nagaland where there is paucity of

research in this area. The present study had some limitations that should be taken into consideration such as exploring the relationship between positive mental health and locus of control with gender in the context of Nagaland which has a patriarchal society. Future studies can expand on this and bring out a more in depth outlook of mental health.

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Razouneinu Suokhrie, Department of Psychology, Nagaland University, Meriema, Kohima, Nagaland- 797004, email: nsuokhrie93@gmail.com

Imlisongla Longkumer, Department of Psychology, Nagaland University, Meriema, Kohima Nagaland -797004, email: imlilongkumer@rediffmail