Influence of Gender and School Climate on Psychological Hardiness among Indian Adolescents

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Abstract - **The primary aim of the present investigation was to explore the impact of gender and school climate in psychological hardiness and its dimensions among adolescents. The study is based on a sample of 1011 adolescents (male = 448 and female = 563; mean age = 17 years) using descriptive method of research. The research tools used were psychological hardiness scale and school organizational climate questionnaire. The results of analysis of variance revealed that there is a significant main effect of gender on psychological hardiness and its dimensions except for the commitment dimension. Also, a significant main effect of school climate was found on psychological hardiness and its dimensions. Further, the interaction effect of gender and school climate was found to be significant for psychological hardiness and its dimensions except for the commitment dimension. It indicates that the significant main effects of gender and school climate are dependent on each other to explain control, challenge and psychological hardiness among adolescents. Implications of the results are discussed.**

Key words: Gender, School climate, Commitment, Control, Challenge and Psychological hardiness

I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of hardiness has emerged from an existential perspective with the hardy personality indexed by control, commitment, and challenge. The literature pertaining to stress and coping provided a rationale to determine personality with a new perspective namely, hardiness to explain individual differences in stress-resiliency [1-2]. Representing a constellation of three interrelated factors -- control, commitment, and challenge – hardiness is theorized to protect against the adverse effects of stress by influencing both appraisal and coping processes. Non-significant gender differences in hardiness are reported by some researchers [3-5]. However, women are reported to be less hardy than men in an Indian sample of adults [6] and executives [7]. On the other hand, women are reported to be more hardy by another group of researchers [8-11]. In the light of complexities of finding with regard to gender differences in hardiness [5] and its relationships with other personality variables, it was thought worthwhile to study gender differences in hardiness among adolescents.

The school climate has a marked influence on the student's emotional states and, through them, on his personality. The student, as child and adolescent, spends many years in an educational environment. The wholesome school climate is often adequate to counteract any unfavorable emotional patterns of behaviors established in the home. It usually follows that an adolescent who experiences a normal and well-integrated home and school life carries over into all his other associations a similar wholesomeness of attitude and control of behavior. School climate has been defined as the "feel" of a school [12] as its "collective personality" [13]. Climate is the human environment within which the teachers of a school do their work. Like the air in a room, climate surrounds and affects everything that happens in an organization [14]. As one moves from school to school, it is possible to note that one school feels different from another. This is primarily the result of school climate. During the past three decades a substantial amount of research has been conducted on the importance of school climate. The landmark study of organizational climate yielded the organizational climate description questionnaire (OCDQ), an instrument to assess the climate of organizations. This instrument has been used extensively in hundreds of research studies to date. This instrument was adapted for use in secondary schools [15]. In the study of the organizational climate of schools, conceived of climate as being either open or closed [12]. They came up with six types of climates on a continuum: open, autonomous, controlled, familiar, paternal, and closed. These climate types were based on various degrees of four teacher-related factors: hindrance, intimacy, disengagement, and esprit; and on four principal-teacher relations factors: production emphasis, aloofness, consideration, and thrust.

On the basis of the review of related literature, it was observed that adolescent development as a function of school has remained an area of interest among researchers in education. The intellectual development, especially creativity has also gained more momentum. Above all, personality development, with special reference to psychological hardiness has too been the focus of researchers. The authors could locate only a few studies on psychological hardiness in Indian context [7, 6, 16 and 17] that too were conducted on professionals or adults. Since the dynamics of relationship of psychological hardiness vis-a-vis gender and school climate is still not clearly explained in descriptive studies, there are a number of questions that need to be addressed through research endeavors in different cultural settings. Moreover, no such coherent endeavor has been undertaken on Indian adolescents and hence the present study is a humble attempt to search an empirical database with following objectives in mind:

1. To study gender differences in psychological hardiness and its dimensions among adolescents.

2. To study the impact of school climate on psychological hardiness and its dimensions among adolescents.
3. To study the interaction of gender and school climate on psychological hardiness and its dimensions among adolescents.

II. METHOD

A. Participants

The population of the study was the secondary school students studying in 1151 government secondary schools situated in 17 districts (now 20) in Punjab state of India. A sample of 30-45 participants from each of the selected school, totaling 1011 adolescents (male = 448, female = 563 and mean age = 18.35 years) was taken for assessment of psychological hardiness.

B. Materials Used

- The Psychological Hardiness Scale [18] was used for measuring psychological hardiness among adolescents. . This is a 30-item scale having 17 positively worded and 13 negatively worded statements, to be responded on 5-point rating i.e. strongly agree (1), agree (2), neither agree nor disagree (3), disagree (4), and strongly disagree (5).

- The School Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire [19] was used to classify selected senior secondary schools in terms of being: (i) open, (ii) autonomous, (iii) familiar, (iv) controlled, (v) paternal, and (vi) closed climate.

C. Procedure

All the teachers teaching secondary classes in the school concerned were administered the School Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire (SOCDQ) for the classification of schools in terms of six types of school climate, namely open, autonomous, familiar, controlled, paternal to closed. After identification of school climate, the psychological hardiness scale was administered. For studying the effect of gender and school climate in terms of being open, autonomous, familiar, controlled, paternal and closed on psychological hardiness and its dimensions among adolescents, 2 x 6 factorial design was thought worthwhile.

III. RESULTS

The use of ANOVA followed by post-hoc analysis was made to study the main and interaction effect of gender and school climate on psychological hardiness and its dimensions. The significance of mean differences across gender and six types of school climate and their interaction effect on psychological hardiness and its dimensions was tested by applying a two-way analysis of variance. The results are given in table I.

TABLE I

Summary of ANOVA (Gender x School climate): Psychological Hardiness and its Dimensions

Dimension of Psychological Hardiness	Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F
Commitment	Gender (A)	1.8	1	1.8	0.15
	School climate(B)	246.8	5	49.4	4.21**
	A x B	26.3	5	5.3	0.45
	Within	11708.4	999	11.7	
	Total	12018.2	1010		
Control	Gender (A)	205.5	1	205.5	10.94**
	School climat	351.4	5	70.3	3.74**
	A X B	259.0	5	51.8	2.76*
	Within	18764.4	999	18.8	
	Total	19737.2	1010		
Challenge	Gender (A)	114.3	1	114.3	4.66*
	School climate (B)	352.0	5	70.4	2.87*

Source	SS	df	MS	F
A X B	757.2	5	151.4	6.18**
Within	24490.2	999	24.5	
Total	25593.7	1010		
Psychological Hardiness — G ende (Gender)	562		62	7.22**
S choo (School)	2215		43	5.70**
A X B	1587		17	4.08**
Within	77705	999	8	
Total	81823	1010		

** p < .01; * p < .05

It may be observed from the table I that main effect of gender was shown to be significant for control, challenge and global hardiness (F = 10.94, 4.66, 7.22; p< .01). It indicates that male and female adolescents differ significantly on control, challenge and global hardiness. However, gender does not seem to affect the commitment dimension of psychological hardiness among adolescents. Further, it is evident from the table 1 that school climate have a significant main effect on commitment, control and challenge dimensions of psychological hardiness as well as global hardiness (F = 4.21, 3.74, 2.87, 5.70; p < .01). It indicates that adolescents within six type of school climate differ significantly on psychological hardiness and its dimensions. The perusal of table I also reveals that interaction effect of gender and school climate is significant for control (F = 2.76; p<.05), challenge and global hardiness (F = 6.18, 4.08; p<.01). It is indicative of the fact that the significant main effect of gender and school climate are dependent upon each other to explain control, challenge and global hardiness among adolescents.

To find out the significance of mean differences in psychological hardiness and its dimensions among male and female adolescents, post hoc analysis was done. The results showed that male adolescents possess significantly greater control (t= 3.31; p<.01), significantly higher challenge-accepting tendency (t= 2.16; p<.05) and are significantly more hardy (t=2.69; p<.01) than their female counterparts. Also, adolescents within autonomous (30.42), familiar (31.00) and controlled (30.66) school climate were found to be significantly more committed than their counterparts with open (29.52) and paternal school climate (29.59).

Adolescents within familiar school climate (31.00) were found to be more committed than their counterparts within closed school climate (30.15).

Further, the adolescents within paternal (35.43) and familiar climate (34.40) differed significantly on control dimension of psychological hardiness. Adolescents within autonomous (34.91), familiar (34.40), controlled (34.89), paternal (35.43) and closed climate (34.87) possess significantly greater control upon themselves than their counterparts in open climate (33.56). Also, adolescents with paternal climate (35.43) are significantly more internally controlled than their counterparts with familiar climate (34.40). Also, adolescents within familiar (31.86), controlled (31.39) and paternal type of school climate (31.91) show significantly higher challenge-accepting tendencies than their counterparts within open (30.25) and autonomous climate (30.22).Furthermore, adolescents within familiar (98.10), controlled (96.93) and paternal climate (96.93) are significantly more hardy than their counterparts with open (93.33) and autonomous climate(94.69). Adolescents with closed school climate (96.18) are significantly more hardy than their counterparts with open school climate (93.33). However, adolescents within closed climate (96.18) are less hardy than their counterparts with familiar school climate (98.10).

IV. DISCUSSION

These results may be seen in the light of some related research evidence. The results of the present study revealed significant gender differences in psychological hardiness and its dimensions except for commitment dimension. Male adolescents in the sample possess significantly greater control upon them, higher challenge-accepting tendency and are more hardy than their female counterparts. This may be attributed to the differential treatment which is given to the boys and girls in Indian society. There is a preference of male children in Indian context. Hence, the preferential treatment and the exposure given to the male children as compared to the female counterparts may be responsible for these results. Male children receive more independence and encouragement than females because of cultural roles assigned to both the sexes in adult life [20]. The implications are both for biological and social development of adolescents. It was concluded that sex discrimination still prevails almost in all cultural zones of Punjab in areas of social activities, feeding pattern, recreational activities, upbringing practices and education etc. Therefore, gender is the crucial determinant of the course of life of individual [21].

The results of the present study commensurate with the findings of few studies conducted in India where women are reported to be less hardy than men in an Indian sample of adults [6] and executives [7]. On the other hand, women are reported to be more hardy by another group of researchers [8-10]. Female students are also reported a significantly higher mean score on hardiness *commitment* compared to male students [11]. Non-significant gender differences in hardiness are reported by some researchers [3-5] and its relationship with psychological distress [22] and illness [5].

Also, a significant impact of school climate was found on psychological hardiness and its dimensions. In a recent study on a large sample of undergraduates and found that hardiness was associated with positive attitudes toward school, instructors, and one's own capabilities and standards as well as expressed satisfaction with life [23]. Hence, the results of the present study are supported by previous researches. Students' perceptions or feelings of school 'connectedness' have been shown to account for 13-18% of the variation in adolescent emotional distress [24] and affect students' sense of their school as a community leading to lower involvement in 'problem behaviors' such as drug use and delinquent behaviour. Such studies have concluded that where schools are experienced as communities enhance students' psychological resiliency [25]. Since schools are expected to be accountable and need improvement, especially in educating students from disadvantaged backgrounds. School improvement should be seen as a major focus for all schools. Widening educational opportunities and equity and improving students' attainment levels and social and effective outcomes is essential to promoting active citizens' who are capable and motivated to participate in a democratic society. The present research suggests that psychological hardiness is determined by gender and school climate which might be of paramount significance for researchers and socio-cultural agencies so that the contingencies and emphasis could be stressed upon.

Like any other research endeavor, the present investigation also, has few limitations like the study in hand was undertaken on adolescent students of the same grade and approximately of the same age. The study may be expanded to cover various age and grade levels in order to make age-wise and grade-wise comparison. More socio-psychological variables can be incorporated in the research design to determine their possible influence on psychological hardiness. Further, socially disadvantaged group of students may be the focus of some researches to determine socio-psychological correlates of hardiness. Although the contribution of various psychological factors in hardiness is well recognized, less attention has been devoted to social and personal factors, despite their potential as a valuable resource among adolescents. Thus, the purpose of the present study was to gain insight about gender and various type of school climate as determinants of psychological hardiness among adolescents. Despite these limitations, the present study contributes to the existing knowledge on gender and school climate as important factor determining psychological hardiness among Indian adolescents.

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