

Psychosocial Competencies and Well-Being of University Graduates: A Review

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ABSTRACT

The transition from higher education to adult and professional life requires graduates to manage increasingly complex emotional, interpersonal, academic, social and occupational demands. Psychosocial competencies including emotional intelligence, resilience, self-efficacy, and communication, interpersonal skills, decision-making and problem-solving are therefore important resources for adaptive functioning and well-being. This review and synthesis examines conceptual and empirical literature concerning psychosocial competencies and well-being among university students and graduates, with attention to individual competencies, multidimensional well-being, demographic characteristics and contextual factors. The paper is an integrative review rather than a formal systematic review; accordingly, no unreported search counts or PRISMA screening statistics are presented. The literature generally indicates positive associations between emotional intelligence, resilience, self-efficacy and adaptive functioning, while recent reviews provide substantial evidence linking psychological capital including hope, self-efficacy, resilience and optimism with student mental health. At the same time, recent higher-education reviews identify considerable heterogeneity in the conceptualization and measurement of socio-emotional competencies. The literature also remains fragmented regarding the combined contribution of multiple psychosocial competencies to multidimensional well-being among graduates in the Indian socio-cultural context. Greater attention is warranted to gender, academic discipline, locality, parental educational background and social category. The paper proposes an integrated framework linking psychosocial competencies, adaptive functioning and multidimensional well-being and identifies implications for higher education, employability and graduate development.

Keywords: Psychosocial Competencies, Emotional Intelligence, Resilience, Self-efficacy, Well-being, University graduates, Employability, Higher education

INTRODUCTION

Higher education is no longer concerned exclusively with disciplinary knowledge. Contemporary graduates are expected to communicate effectively, regulate emotions, cope with uncertainty, collaborate, solve problems, make decisions and adapt to changing academic and occupational environments. The transition from university to employment is particularly significant because graduates encounter changes in social roles, financial responsibilities, occupational expectations and interpersonal relationships. Psychosocial competencies in the present synthesis focuses on emotional intelligence, resilience, self-efficacy, communication skills, interpersonal skills, decision-making and problem-solving. Well-being is treated as a multidimensional construct encompassing emotional, psychological, social, occupational/career, physical, cognitive, eudemonic and subjective dimensions.

The theoretical foundation includes Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, Career Construction Theory, and Ryff's multidimensional model of psychological well-being. Social Cognitive Theory highlights self-efficacy, self-regulation and reciprocal interactions between personal and environmental factors. Career Construction Theory emphasizes adaptability and career identity. Ryff's model emphasizes autonomy,

environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life and self-acceptance. Together, these perspectives provide a useful basis for understanding graduate adaptation and well-being.

PSYCHOSOCIAL COMPETENCIES

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence concerns the ability to perceive, understand, use and regulate emotions in oneself and others. It can facilitate emotional regulation, communication, interpersonal effectiveness and coping. Research among university populations generally indicates that emotional intelligence is related to academic and psychological functioning. Mac Cann et al. (2020), in a large meta-analysis, found a meaningful association between emotional intelligence and academic performance. Ye et al. (2024) further reported relationships between emotional intelligence, academic achievement and psychological well-being, with positive psychological characteristics contributing to these relationships.

Resilience

Resilience is the capacity to adapt to adversity, recover from difficulties and maintain or regain effective functioning. University students face academic pressure, uncertainty regarding employment, interpersonal challenges and financial concerns. Evidence indicates that resilience can act as a protective resource. Rasheed, Fatima and Tariq (2022), reported a mediating role of resilience between meaning in life and mental well-being among university students.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy influences persistence, motivation, problem-solving, coping and career decision-making. Robbins et al. (2004) identified psychosocial and study-skill factors as important predictors of college outcomes. More recent psychological-capital evidence reinforces the importance of efficacy as a positive resource associated with student mental health.

2.4 Communication, Interpersonal Skills, Decision-Making and Problem-Solving

Communication and interpersonal competence support relationship building, empathy, cooperation and social integration. Decision-making and problem-solving enable individuals to analyze situations evaluate alternatives and respond adaptively to challenges. These capabilities are relevant to employability because graduates increasingly need teamwork, independent judgment, adaptability and professional interaction.

Well-Being as A Multidimensional Construct

Well-being is more than the absence of psychological illness. Ryff (1989) conceptualized psychological well-being in terms of autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life and self-acceptance. Diener et al. (2010) contributed measures of flourishing and positive and negative feelings. For graduate research, these approaches can be extended to social, career, physical and cognitive functioning.

Emotional well-being concerns positive affect, life satisfaction and management of stress and negative emotions. Psychological well-being concerns self-acceptance, growth, autonomy and purpose. Social well-being reflects relationships, belonging and integration. Occupational/career well-being concerns satisfaction with career choices, work engagement, employability and alignment between personal and professional goals. Physical and cognitive well-being concern health, energy, clarity of thought, decision-making and adaptive functioning. Eudemonic well-being focuses on meaning and self-realization, while subjective well-being reflects evaluations of happiness and quality of life.

Evidence Linking Psychosocial Competencies and Well-Being

The literature broadly supports a positive relationship between psychosocial resources and well-being, but the relationship is likely to operate through several pathways. Emotional intelligence may support emotional awareness and regulation; self-efficacy may strengthen perceived competence and control; resilience may support recovery from adversity; and communication and interpersonal skills may strengthen belonging and social support. Decision-making and problem-solving may enhance environmental mastery and adaptive responses.

Reviews provide particularly strong evidence for this pattern. Li, Che Hassan and Saharuddin (2023) synthesized 43 studies of psychological capital among university students and found relationships with academic outcomes. Zhang (2026) synthesized 52 studies involving 59,869 Chinese university students and reported a positive association between psychological capital and mental health ($r = .47$), with optimism, hope, resilience and self-efficacy all showing significant associations. Paul et al. (2026) reviewed undergraduate evidence and identified only 13 eligible studies from 219 records, while concluding that higher psychological capital was associated with improved mental health and life satisfaction.

These findings support association and theoretical plausibility, but they should not be interpreted as proof that every psychosocial competency causes well-being. Much of the available evidence is cross-sectional and self-reported. Further empirical work is therefore needed to examine the combined predictive contribution of multiple competencies in specific graduate populations.

Demographic and Contextual Evidence

Psychosocial competencies and well-being develop within social and educational contexts. Gender findings are mixed: some studies report differences in emotional intelligence or well-being, whereas others find no significant gender effect. Academic discipline may influence developmental opportunities because learning environments, assessment practices and professional expectations differ across fields. Locality may influence educational opportunity, digital access, social support and exposure to diverse environments.

Parental educational background may shape educational aspirations, academic socialization and access to cultural capital, making first-generation status potentially relevant to well-being. In India, social category is also an important contextual variable because social inequality and discrimination can affect belonging, social capital and psychological experiences. These variables should be examined empirically rather than treated as predetermined causes of psychological outcomes.

Indian Context and Graduate Employability

India's higher-education population is characterized by substantial diversity in language, region, socio-economic background, locality, parental education, social category and academic discipline. This makes the Indian context valuable for examining psychosocial competencies and well-being. The Indian literature remains fragmented, with many studies examining one or two competencies or one specific well-being outcome rather than an integrated framework.

Critical Synthesis and Research Gaps

The construct fragmentation remains evident because emotional intelligence, resilience, self-efficacy, communication and related competencies are frequently examined independently rather than as an integrated psychosocial resource system. Second, outcome fragmentation is common, with well-being often represented through a single indicator such as stress, happiness, life satisfaction or psychological well-being. Third, relatively few studies examine several psychosocial competencies simultaneously in relation to multidimensional well-being. Fourth, much of the available evidence concerns university students generally rather than recent graduates navigating the transition from higher education to employment. Fifth, although international evidence is substantial, integrated evidence within the Indian socio-cultural context remains

comparatively limited. Sixth, demographic and contextual variables including gender, academic discipline, locality, parental education and social category are not consistently examined within a common framework. Finally, recent reviews identify considerable heterogeneity in the conceptualization and assessment of socio-emotional competencies, indicating a need for greater conceptual clarity and methodological consistency. These gaps collectively justify an integrated investigation of psychosocial competencies and multidimensional well-being among university graduates.

Literature Timeline

Proposed Conceptual Framework

Psychosocial competencies include emotional intelligence, resilience, self-efficacy, and communication, interpersonal skills, decision-making and problem-solving. Adaptive functioning includes emotional regulation, coping, self-confidence, adaptability, social connectedness, career agency and environmental mastery. Well-being includes emotional, psychological, social, occupational/career, physical, cognitive, eudemonic and subjective dimensions. Gender, discipline, locality, parental education and social category provide contextual lenses through which these relationships can be examined.

Implications and Future Research

Higher education institutions can strengthen graduate development through communication and interpersonal-skills programmes, emotional-intelligence education, resilience-building, career counselling, mentoring, peer support, experiential learning and problem-solving activities. Such initiatives should be embedded in curriculum and student-support systems rather than offered only as isolated workshops. Longitudinal research would be valuable because cross-sectional evidence cannot establish developmental change or causal direction. Culturally appropriate and psychometrically sound measures are also needed.

CONCLUSION

Psychosocial competencies represent an important foundation for adaptive functioning, employability and well-being during higher education and the transition to professional life. The literature generally supports positive associations between emotional intelligence, resilience, self-efficacy and broader psychological functioning, while recent reviews demonstrate the importance of psychological capital and socio-emotional competencies for university students. The proposed integrated framework addresses this gap and provides a strong conceptual basis for subsequent empirical research among university graduates.

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