



# TO STUDY THE WELL-BEING OF SCHEDULED CASTE STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION OF HIMACHAL PRADESH

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## Abstract

The Varna system is an ancient classification framework in Indian society, categorizing people into four broad groups: Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra. In modern India, the government has reclassified citizens into four categories: General, Other Backward Classes (OBC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Scheduled Castes (SC). Despite these classifications, individuals from OBC, ST, and SC communities continue to face discrimination in various aspects of daily life, including employment, marriage, relationships, and education. This systemic discrimination often leads to adverse psychological outcomes such as guilt, shame, anxiety, worry, anger, stress, depression, and overall diminished well-being. Well-being can be defined as the state of experiencing contentment, happiness, and satisfaction with life. It encompasses a sense of achievement, belonging, and the absence of distress or dissatisfaction. Well-being includes both cognitive judgments and affective reactions, addressing constructs like happiness, satisfaction, morale, and positive emotions. Often synonymous with "wellness," well-being reflects individuals' evaluations of their lives, both cognitively and emotionally. High levels of well-being are marked by frequent positive emotions, engaging activities, and minimal distress, contributing to life satisfaction. As societies progress and fulfil basic material needs, well-being emerges as an increasingly valued goal, although it is not the sole determinant of a good life. Importantly, well-being is a continuous process shaped by individuals' active interactions with their environment. This paper examines the level of well-being among Scheduled Caste undergraduate students in higher education in Himachal Pradesh, with a specific focus on gender differences. A sample of 150 Scheduled Caste undergraduate students was selected for the study. The **Well-Being Index** developed by Dr. Vijayalaxmi Chouhan and Dr. Varsha Sharma was employed to measure well-being. The findings revealed that female Scheduled Caste students exhibited higher levels of well-being compared to their male counterparts.

**Keywords:** Well-being, Gender, Scheduled caste, Undergraduate students

## Introduction

Education is a crucial tool for introducing desirable changes in attitudes, actions, language, behavior, and personality. It equips individuals to lead socially meaningful and fulfilling lives while contributing to the overall development of a nation. Education empowers people by providing knowledge and skills, helping them achieve a better quality of life. Importantly, education should be delivered equitably, without discrimination based on caste, color, creed, religion, or other social factors. For disadvantaged groups, such as Scheduled Castes, education plays a pivotal role in fostering economic and social empowerment, breaking the cycle of marginalization across generations. The level of education often determines employment opportunities, which in turn shape economic conditions and social status, ultimately influencing an individual's position in society. Education is, therefore, indispensable for achieving economic and social well-being, especially for historically

disadvantaged communities. Well-being refers to the degree to which individuals positively evaluate the overall quality of their lives. It encompasses multiple dimensions—physical, psychological, spiritual, social, intellectual, and environmental—that collectively shape an individual's overall wellness. Achieving well-being requires a balance across these dimensions, each of which influences the others. A positive and affirming social identity, shaped significantly by education, contributes to higher well-being, better health, and greater social trust. In this way, education helps individuals frame their understanding of themselves and their relationships with others, shaping their "social identity" and contributing to overall well-being. Well-being also reflects how individuals feel and function both personally and socially, as well as how they evaluate their lives as a whole. A good life is characterized by feelings of happiness, health, social connectedness, and purpose. It also includes a sense of achievement, contentment, satisfaction, belongingness, and the absence of distress or dissatisfaction across various aspects of life. Studies by researchers such as Navdeep Kaur and S.S. Gill (2012), Kantariya (2017), Medhashree (2017), Kausar (2019), Daniel T. L. Shek and Lu-Yin Liang (2018), Mina Daraei (2013), and Singh and Udainiya (2009) have highlighted the impact of gender on well-being. These studies consistently reveal that gender significantly influences an individual's well-being, further emphasizing the importance of examining well-being through a gendered lens in different social contexts.

## OBJECTIVE

- To study the well-being of Scheduled Caste Students in Higher Education of Himachal Pradesh.
- To study the well-being of Scheduled Caste Students in relation to their gender. **DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY**
  - The study is limited to Mandi District of Himachal Pradesh.
  - The study is limited to scheduled caste undergraduate students in Govt. Degree Colleges in Mandi District of Himachal Pradesh.
  - The study is limited to Gender; Male and Female.

## METHODOLOGY

### Tool Used

- **Well-Being Index**

Well-Being Index developed by Dr. Vijayalaxmi Chouhan & Dr. Varsha Sharma is a self-report questionnaire consisting of 50 items designed to measure an individual's mental status regarding overall feeling about life. The inventory measures six dimensions namely;

1. Emotional Well-being
2. Psychological Well-being
3. Social Well-being
4. Spiritual Well-being
5. Self-Awareness
6. Physical Well-being

### Survey Method

The analytical study regarding Well-Being of scheduled caste undergraduate students was carried out by adopting descriptive survey method of research.

### Sample

From Mandi district of Himachal Pradesh, 150 scheduled caste undergraduate students were selected for present study. The sample was selected through random sampling techniques.

## STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF DATA

To meet up the prearranged objectives of this study, the data was analyzed for Mean and Standard Deviation. Further t-test was employed to find the mean difference between groups.

### 1.1 Level of Well-Being of Scheduled Caste Undergraduate Students

Data obtained from the Scheduled Caste undergraduate students on well-being index is considered for computing different statistics and the values are presented in Table 1

**Table 1**

**Frequency Distribution and Descriptive Statistics related to Well-Being Scores of Scheduled Caste Undergraduate Students**

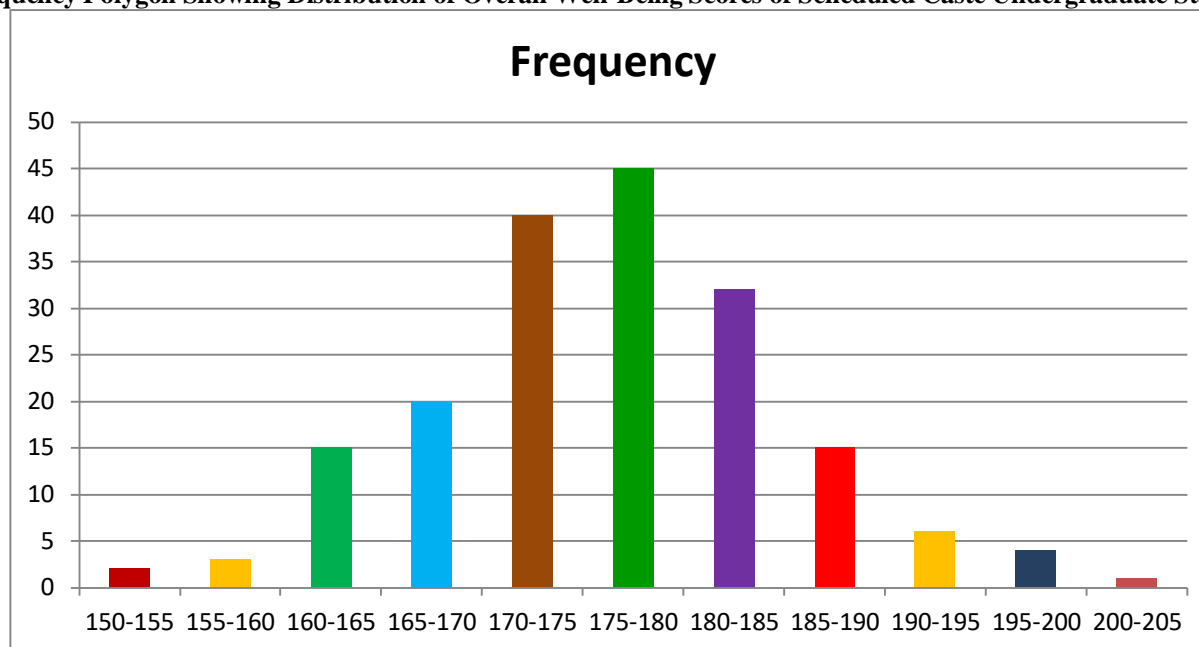
Class-interval	Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	
150-155	2	2	
155-160	3	5	
160-165	14	19	
165-170	12	31	
170-175	27	58	
175-180	39	97	
180-185	27	124	
185-190	15	139	
190-195	6	145	
195-200	4	149	
200-205	1	150	
Total	150		
Descriptive Statistics	Values	Descriptive Statistics	Values
Mean	177.37	Median	178
Mode	178	SD	9.29
Range	51		

The descriptive statistics of the well-being scores of Scheduled Caste undergraduate students reveal a variation in scores ranging from 152 to 203, resulting in a range of 51. The mean well-being score is 177.37, indicating that the overall well-being of Scheduled Caste undergraduate students is at a relatively high level. The median score is 178, suggesting that half of the students have well-being scores above this value, while the other half fall below it. The mode of 178 implies that this score is the most frequently occurring value in the dataset.

The standard deviation (SD) of 9.29 reflects a moderate level of variability in well-being scores among the students. The data distribution appears to be symmetric, as the mean, median, and mode are closely aligned. This further supports the conclusion that most Scheduled Caste undergraduate students in the sample possess a high level of well-being.

Figure 1

Frequency Polygon Showing Distribution of Overall Well-Being Scores of Scheduled Caste Undergraduate Students



The distribution of overall well-being scores of scheduled caste undergraduate students is shown in figure -1 which appears nearly normal in shape.

### 1.2 Well-Being of scheduled caste undergraduate students in relation to Gender

To study the well-being of scheduled caste undergraduate students in relation to their gender t-test was employed. The values are shown in table 2.

Table-2

‘t’ Value Showing Significance of Difference in Mean Scores of Well-Being of Scheduled Caste Undergraduate Students in relation to Gender

Variable	Male (N=75)		Female (N=75)		t-value
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
Gender	174.40	10.28	180.34	7.08	4.12**

\*\* Significant at 0.01

Table 2 clearly indicates that the calculated **t-value** for the difference between the mean scores of Scheduled Caste male and female undergraduate students on well-being is **4.12**. This value is greater than the critical table value of **2.61** at the **0.01 level of significance**, confirming that the difference is statistically significant.

The mean well-being score of female Scheduled Caste undergraduate students is **180.34**, which is higher than the mean score of **174.40** for their male counterparts. This indicates that female Scheduled Caste undergraduate students possess a significantly higher level of well-being compared to male Scheduled Caste undergraduate students.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study indicate that the overall level of well-being among Scheduled Caste undergraduate students is high. This suggests that these students exhibit good physical, psychological, spiritual, social, intellectual, and environmental well-being. Furthermore, the results reveal a significant correlation between well-being and gender among Scheduled Caste undergraduate students. Specifically, female Scheduled Caste undergraduate students were found to have a significantly higher level of well-being compared to their male counterparts.

One possible explanation for this finding is that female Scheduled Caste undergraduate students may achieve emotional and social maturity at earlier stages of their lives. Additionally, they may possess more positive choices, values, motivations, and a greater sense of positive self-understanding. These factors could contribute to their better overall adjustment to various life situations, thereby enhancing their well-being.

### Suggestions to Achieve Well-Being

Based on the findings, the following suggestions can be made for educational and societal implications to enhance well-being:

1. Foster and maintain healthy relationships with family and friends.
2. Consume a balanced diet with nutritious and healthy food.
3. Actively engage in meaningful work or educational activities.
4. Incorporate regular physical exercise to enhance overall health and slow age-related cognitive decline.
5. Set realistic and attainable goals in life and work consistently toward achieving them.
6. Cultivate a positive outlook on life and focus on optimism.
7. Organize awareness campaigns to promote the benefits of well-being and a healthy lifestyle.
8. Provide counselling sessions for stress management to mitigate its negative effects on well-being.
9. Initiate community counselling programs to promote well-being at a societal level.
10. Encourage heightened self-awareness to enable individuals to make positive choices aligned with their values and motivations.
11. Participate actively in social and community life to foster a sense of belonging.
12. Engage in acts of kindness and help others to increase personal happiness and societal harmony.
13. Practice small acts of kindness, such as committing to at least one act of kindness per week over a six-week period, to foster a sense of fulfilment and well-being.

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