

# A Comparative Study of Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationship, Meaning, and Accomplishment Between Female Hostel Students and Female Students Residing with Family

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Student well-being plays a crucial role in personal development, academic success, and overall quality of life. However, students today face various psychological challenges, including emotional distress, stress, and anxiety, which may be influenced by their living arrangements. The present study aimed to compare the dimensions of well-being based on the PERMA model, namely Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment, between female hostel students and female students residing with their families.

**Methodology:** The study adopted a comparative research design and employed a non-probability purposive sampling method. A total of 101 undergraduate and postgraduate female students aged 18–24 years participated in the study, comprising 55 hostel students and 46 students residing with their families. Data were collected using the PERMA-Profiler and the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ). Descriptive statistics and independent samples t-tests were used to analyse the data.

**Results:** The findings revealed significant differences between the two groups across all dimensions of the PERMA model. Female students residing with their families reported significantly higher levels of Positive Emotion ( $t = -4.72, p < .001$ ), Engagement ( $t = -5.71, p < .001$ ), Relationships ( $t = -4.77, p < .001$ ), Meaning ( $t = -4.11, p < .001$ ), and Accomplishment ( $t = -6.16, p < .001$ ) compared to female hostel students.

**Conclusion:** The findings indicate that female students residing with their families report higher well-being across all PERMA dimensions than female hostel students. The results can help develop strategies to enhance the well-being of students, particularly those residing in hostels.

**Keywords:** PERMA model, female students, hostel students, well-being, positive

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## INTRODUCTION

### Introduction

Student well-being has become an increasingly important area of research due to its influence on academic performance, personal development, and overall quality of life. India has a large student population, with approximately 38.5 million students enrolled in higher education institutions [1]. While a substantial proportion of students continue to reside with their families during their education, many live in hostels away from home. These differing living arrangements may have important implications for students' psychological well-being and adjustment.

Mental health concerns among students have received significant attention in recent years. Academic competition, high expectations from parents and teachers, financial concerns, and adjustment challenges contribute to increased levels of stress, anxiety, and emotional distress among students [2]. According to the National Mental Health Survey of India, approximately 7.3% of adolescents aged 13 to 17 years' experience mental health concerns, highlighting the need to understand factors that contribute to student well-being [3]. Students residing in hostels often encounter additional challenges, including homesickness, loneliness, social

disconnection, and difficulties managing daily responsibilities independently [4]. Furthermore, inadequate access to counselling and mental health services in educational institutions may make it difficult for students to cope with these stressors [5].

Well-being is a multidimensional construct encompassing emotional, social, and psychological functioning. It extends beyond the absence of mental illness and reflects a positive state in which individuals are able to thrive and realize their potential [6]. Higher levels of well-being have been associated with improved social relationships, greater productivity, enhanced creativity, reduced stress, and increased life satisfaction [7]. Cultural factors also shape the experience of well-being. In collectivistic societies such as India, well-being is often closely linked to family relationships, social support, and community connectedness [8].

The present study is grounded in Seligman's PERMA model of well-being, which conceptualizes flourishing through five dimensions: Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment [9]. Research has demonstrated that the PERMA dimensions are positively associated with life satisfaction, psychological health, resilience, optimism, academic functioning, and overall well-being [10-12]. These associations are further supported by theoretical frameworks such as the Broaden-and-Build Theory, Self-Determination Theory, and Attachment Theory, which emphasize the roles of positive emotions, supportive relationships, and psychological needs in fostering well-being [13-15]. Additionally, PERMA-based interventions have been found to enhance psychological functioning and well-being among students [16-17]. Living arrangements may play an important role in shaping these dimensions of well-being. Family environments often provide emotional support, stability, guidance, and a sense of belonging, which may contribute positively to well-being. In contrast, hostel life may offer opportunities for independence, self-development, and social interaction, while simultaneously presenting challenges related to adjustment and separation from family. Research examining student accommodation has reported that hostel students often experience stronger peer connections but may also report greater loneliness and homesickness compared to students residing with family [18]. Similarly, hostel living has been found to influence students' social development, self-esteem, and responsibility, highlighting both the benefits and challenges associated with residential living [19].

Although previous studies have explored the PERMA model among student populations and examined the impact of accommodation on student experiences, limited research has compared the dimensions of Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment between female hostel students and female students residing with their families, particularly within the Indian context. Understanding these differences may contribute to the development of targeted strategies and support systems aimed at enhancing the well-being of students, especially those residing in hostels.

## METHODOLOGY

### Aim

The aim of the current study is to compare the dimensions of well-being, namely Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment, between female hostel students and female students residing with their families.

### Objectives

- To compare positive emotion between female hostel students and female students residing with their families.
- To compare engagement between female hostel students and female students residing with their families.
- To compare relationships between female hostel students and female students residing with their families.
- To compare meaning between female hostel students and female students residing with their families.
- To compare accomplishment between female hostel students and female students residing with their families.

### Hypotheses

- Female students residing with their families will report higher positive emotion than female hostel students.
- Female hostel students will report higher engagement than female students residing with their families.
- Female hostel students will report stronger relationships than female students residing with their families.
- Female students residing with their families will report greater meaning than female hostel students.
- Female students residing with their families will report higher accomplishment than female hostel students.

### Operational Definitions of Variables

#### Female Hostel Students (FHS)

Female hostel students refer to those who were residing in a hostel at the time of data collection. Hostel residence served as one category of the independent variable, living arrangement.

#### Female Students Residing with Families (FSRF)

Female students residing with families refer to those who were residing with their family members and commuting to their educational institution at the time of data collection. Family residence served as the second category of the independent variable, living arrangement.

#### Positive Emotion

Positive emotion refers to the experience of pleasant emotions such as happiness, joy, and contentment. It was measured using the Positive Emotion subscale of the PERMA-Profilier.

#### Engagement

Engagement refers to the extent to which an individual is absorbed, interested, and involved in activities. It was measured using the Engagement subscale of the PERMA-Profilier.

#### Relationships

Relationships refer to the presence of supportive, positive, and meaningful interpersonal connections with others. It was measured using the Relationships subscale of the PERMA-Profilier.

#### Meaning

Meaning refers to the extent to which individuals perceive their lives as purposeful, valuable, and significant. It was measured using the Meaning subscale of the PERMA-Profilier and the Meaning in Life Questionnaire.

#### Accomplishment

Accomplishment refers to the achievement of goals, competence, and a sense of success in life. It was measured using the Accomplishment subscale of the PERMA-Profilier [9, 20].

### Participants

The study included 101 female undergraduate and postgraduate students aged 18 to 24 years ( $M = 21$  years), comprising hostel residents and students living with family. Of the total participants, 54.5% ( $n = 55$ ) were hostel residents ( $M = 21.69$ ,  $SD = 1.39$ ) and 45.5% ( $n = 46$ ) resided with their families ( $M = 21.96$ ,  $SD = 1.25$ ). Participants were distributed across the 18 – 24 years age range, with the highest proportion being 22-year-olds (42.6%) and the lowest being 19-year-olds (2%).

### Inclusion Criteria

- Female students aged 18–24 years.
- Proficient in English (minimum 10th-grade education).
- Currently enrolled in an undergraduate or postgraduate programme in Mumbai.
- Female hostel students who had been residing in a hostel for at least six months.
- Female students residing with their family members and with no prior hostel residence.

### Exclusion Criteria

- Students who had experienced significant life events or trauma during the previous six months that could affect psychological well-being.
- Students who had participated in similar research studies within the previous year.
- Hostel students residing with family members in the hostel.
- Students living independently or with friends rather than with family member.

### Research Design

The study employed a quantitative comparative between-groups research design. Female hostel students and female students residing with their families were compared on the dimensions of well-being, namely positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment.

### Sampling Method

A non-probability purposive sampling method was used, wherein participants were selected based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria.

### Tools Used

#### The PERMA-Profiler

The PERMA-Profiler is a multidimensional measure of well-being based on Seligman's PERMA model of flourishing. The scale consists of 23 items assessing five dimensions of well-being: Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment. Responses are recorded on an 11-point scale ranging from 0 to 10. The PERMA-Profiler has demonstrated good reliability and validity, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from .70 to .90 across domains [20].

#### Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ)

The Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ) assesses two dimensions of meaning in life: Presence of Meaning and Search for Meaning. The scale consists of 10 items, with five items measuring each dimension. Responses are recorded on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Absolutely Untrue) to 7 (Absolutely True). The MLQ has demonstrated good psychometric properties, with internal consistency coefficients ranging from .81 to .92 and satisfactory validity and test-retest reliability [21].

### Procedure

A total of 101 participants, comprising 55 female hostel students and 46 female students residing with their families, were recruited using purposive sampling. Data were collected through an online questionnaire. Participants were provided with information regarding the purpose of the study, and informed consent was obtained prior to participation. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage. Participants then completed a demographic information form followed by the PERMA-Profiler and the MLQ. Upon completion of the questionnaires, participants were provided with a debriefing statement and an acknowledgement of their participation.

### Statistical Analysis

Data were analysed using Microsoft Excel and JASP (Version 0.19.3). Descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, minimum, maximum, and variance, were computed for positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment across both groups. Inferential analysis was conducted using independent samples *t*-tests to examine differences between female hostel students and female students residing with their families on the five dimensions of well-being.

## RESULTS

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment among female hostel students (FHS) and female students residing with their families (FSRF). Across all five dimensions, FSRF demonstrated higher mean scores than FHS. For positive emotion, the mean score was 6.67 (SD = 1.32) for FSRF and 5.35 (SD = 1.51) for FHS. Similarly, higher

mean scores were observed among FSRF for engagement (M = 7.00, SD = 1.33) compared to FHS (M = 5.30, SD = 1.67), relationships (M = 7.15, SD = 1.73) compared to FHS (M = 5.58, SD = 1.55), meaning (M = 49.89, SD = 8.72) compared to FHS (M = 43.62, SD = 6.08), and accomplishment (M = 6.92, SD = 1.10) compared to FHS (M = 5.09, SD = 1.85). Variance, minimum, and maximum values for each variable are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Descriptive statistics of Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationship, Meaning, and Accomplishment Among Female Hostel Students and Female Students Residing with Family.**

Statistics	Variables									
	Positive emotion		Engagement		Relationship		Meaning (MIL)		Accomplishment	
	FHS	FSRF	FHS	FSRF	FHS	FSRF	FHS	FSRF	FHS	FSRF
Variance	2.29	1.73	2.77	1.77	2.41	3	37.02	76.01	3.41	1.2
Mean	5.35	6.67	5.3	7	5.58	7.15	43.62	49.89	5.09	6.92
Std. Deviation	1.51	1.32	1.67	1.33	1.55	1.73	6.08	8.72	1.85	1.1
Minimum	2.33	4	2.33	3.33	2.67	3.33	31	33	2.33	5.33
Maximum	8	9.67	9	9	8.67	10	55	68	9.67	9.67

Note: FHS= Female Hostel Student and FSRF= Female Student Residing with Family.

**Table 2: Independent Sample T-Test for Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationship, Meaning, And Accomplishment Between Female Hostel Students and Female Students Residing With Family.**

	t	df	p
Positive emotions	-4.72	98.84	< .001
Engagement	-5.71	98.81	< .001
Relationship	-4.77	91.44	< .001
Meaning (MIL)	-4.11	78.3	< .001
Accomplishment	-6.16	89.93	< .001

Note. Welch's t-test

Table 2 presents the results of the independent samples *t*-tests comparing female hostel students and female students residing with their families on the five dimensions of well-being. Significant group differences were observed across all dimensions. Female students residing with their families reported significantly higher levels of positive emotion,  $t(98.84) = -4.72, p < .001$ , engagement,  $t(98.81) = -5.71, p < .001$ , relationships,  $t(91.44) = -4.77, p < .001$ , meaning,  $t(78.30) = -4.11, p < .001$ , and accomplishment,  $t(89.93) = -6.16, p < .001$ , compared to female hostel students. These findings indicate that female students residing with their families demonstrated higher levels of well-being across all five PERMA dimensions.

**Ancillary Analysis**

The Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ) also provided scores for the Presence of Meaning and Search for Meaning dimensions. Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics for these variables among female hostel students (FHS) and female students residing with their families (FSRF). For Presence of Meaning, the mean score was 25.46 (SD = 5.88) for FSRF and 21.27 (SD = 3.90) for FHS. For Search for Meaning, the mean score was 24.43 (SD = 6.43) for FSRF and 22.38 (SD = 3.56) for FHS. Variance, minimum, and maximum values for both variables are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Presence and Search of Meaning in Female Hostel Students and Female Students Residing With Family.**

	Presence of meaning		Search for meaning	
	FHS	FSRF	FHS	FSRF
Mean	21.27	25.46	22.38	24.43
Std. Deviation	3.9	5.88	3.56	6.43
Variance	15.24	34.61	12.68	41.41
Minimum	13	11	15	8
Maximum	29	35	30	33

Note: FHS= Female Hostel Student and FSRF= Female Student Residing with Family.

**Table 4: Independent sample t-test for Presence and Search of Meaning**

	t	df	p
Presence of meaning	-4.12	75.69	< .001
Search for meaning	-1.93	67.33	0.06

Note. Welch's t-test

Table 4 presents the results of the independent samples *t*-tests for Presence of Meaning and Search for Meaning. A significant difference was observed for Presence of Meaning,  $t(75.69) = -4.12, p < .001$ , with female students residing with their families reporting higher levels of meaning presence than female hostel students. However, no significant difference was observed for Search for Meaning,  $t(67.33) = -1.93, p = .06$ .

## DISCUSSION

The present study examined differences in well-being between female hostel students and female students residing with their families using Seligman's PERMA model. The findings revealed that female students residing with their families reported significantly higher levels of positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment compared to female hostel students. These findings suggest that living arrangements may play an important role in shaping student well-being, with family environments potentially providing emotional, social, and practical resources that support flourishing across multiple domains of life.

The first hypothesis, which proposed that female students residing with their families would report higher positive emotions than female hostel students, was supported. This finding is consistent with previous research highlighting the protective role of family support in promoting psychological well-being and reducing emotional distress [19]. Family environments often provide emotional support, stability, and a sense of belonging, all of which contribute to positive emotional experiences. Attachment Theory suggests that individuals develop strong emotional bonds with caregivers and close family members, and these secure attachments provide emotional security during stressful situations [22-23]. Students residing with their families continue to have access to these support systems, which may facilitate the experience of positive emotions. Similarly, researchers have reported that secure attachment is associated with greater positive affect and more adaptive coping strategies [24]. In contrast, hostel students may experience homesickness, loneliness, and separation from attachment figures, which can negatively affect emotional well-being.

The second hypothesis predicted that female hostel students would demonstrate higher engagement than female students residing with their families; however, this hypothesis was not supported. Instead, students

residing with their families reported significantly higher engagement. Although hostel life is often associated with independence and exposure to new experiences, these advantages may not necessarily translate into greater engagement. The transition to hostel life frequently involves adjustment challenges, including adapting to unfamiliar environments, managing responsibilities independently, and coping with emotional distress. Self-Determination Theory proposes that the fulfilment of psychological needs such as relatedness, competence, and autonomy promotes motivation and engagement [25]. Family environments may facilitate the fulfilment of these needs by providing encouragement, emotional reassurance, and a stable support system. Previous research has similarly suggested that students who perceive higher levels of emotional support are more likely to remain engaged in academic and personal activities [26].

The third hypothesis, which proposed that female hostel students would report stronger relationships than students residing with their families, was also not supported. Female students residing with their families reported significantly stronger relationships. While the hostel environments provide opportunities for social interaction and peer bonding, relationship formation may be hindered by adjustment difficulties, interpersonal conflicts, and feelings of isolation. Research has shown that hostel students commonly experience homesickness and emotional distress during the adjustment process [19]. The campus ecological framework further highlights how physical and social environments influence students' interpersonal experiences [27]. Factors such as overcrowding, limited privacy, institutional regulations, and restricted personal space may make it difficult to establish meaningful relationships. Additionally, research documenting the prevalence of bullying in Indian hostels suggests that experiences of verbal, physical, and social bullying may undermine trust and social connectedness [28]. In contrast, students residing with their families benefit from long-standing, stable relationships that may strengthen perceptions of social support and connectedness.

The fourth hypothesis, which proposed that female students residing with their families would report a stronger sense of meaning in life, was supported. Family environments may foster meaning by providing emotional security, guidance, and opportunities to engage in cultural and familial traditions. According to research, supportive social environments facilitate identity development and purpose formation [29]. Cultural values emphasizing family connectedness may further contribute to a stronger sense of meaning and belonging [30]. The ancillary analysis provided additional support for this finding, as students residing with their families reported significantly higher levels of Presence of Meaning than hostel students. This finding aligns with Logotherapy, which proposes that meaning is often derived from relationships, responsibilities, and personal values [31-32]. Although students residing with their families also reported slightly higher Search for Meaning scores, the difference was not statistically significant, suggesting that both groups may be similarly engaged in exploring purpose and direction in their lives.

The fifth hypothesis, which stated that female students residing with their families would report higher levels of accomplishment than female hostel students, was also supported. Family support may contribute to accomplishment by reducing stress and providing encouragement during academic and personal challenges. The Buffering Hypothesis of Social Support suggests that supportive relationships protect individuals from the negative effects of stress and enhance coping abilities [33]. Students residing with their families may benefit from emotional encouragement, academic guidance, and access to resources that facilitate goal attainment. In contrast, hostel students often face additional responsibilities, financial concerns, and adjustment-related challenges that may compete with their academic and personal goals.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the emotional, social, and practical resources available within family environments may contribute to multiple dimensions of well-being simultaneously. Family support appears to function not only as a source of emotional comfort but also as a protective factor that enhances engagement, strengthens relationships, promotes meaning, and facilitates accomplishment.

### Implications

The findings highlight the importance of providing adequate support systems for students residing in hostels. Educational institutions may consider implementing counselling services, peer-support programmes, mentorship initiatives, and activities that promote social connectedness and emotional well-being. Such interventions may help hostel students cope with adjustment-related challenges and enhance their overall well-being across the dimensions of the PERMA model.

### Limitations

The study has certain limitations. The sample was restricted to female undergraduate and postgraduate students from educational institutions in Mumbai, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the use of a cross-sectional research design prevents causal conclusions from being drawn. Future research may include larger and more diverse samples and employ longitudinal designs to better understand the relationship between living arrangements and well-being over time.

### CONCLUSION

The present study examined differences in well-being between female hostel students and female students residing with their families using the PERMA model of well-being. The findings revealed that female students residing with their families reported significantly higher levels of positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment compared to female hostel students. Additionally, the ancillary analysis indicated higher levels of Presence of Meaning among students residing with their families, while no significant difference was observed in Search for Meaning. These findings highlight the influence of living arrangements on student well-being and highlight the importance of emotional and social support in nurturing flourishing. The study contributes to the growing literature on student well-being and emphasizes the need for targeted interventions to support female students residing in hostels.

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