

Behavioural Rigidity and Psychological Well-Being of Higher Secondary School Students: A Micro-Level Investigation in Sabarkantha District

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Abstract: Adolescence is a formative developmental psychological stage during which behavioural tendencies and psychological well-being evolve in response to academic, social, and cultural influences. In this context, behavioural rigidity may play a significant role in shaping adolescents' psychological well-being, particularly within socio-culturally distinct regions. The present study examined the relationship between behavioural rigidity and psychological well-being among higher secondary school students of Vijaynagar taluka in Sabarkantha district, a predominantly tribal region of Gujarat. The study aimed to assess the levels of behavioural rigidity and psychological well-being and to analyse the association between these two variables at a micro level. A descriptive–correlational research design was adopted, and a sample of 100 students studying in Standards XI and XII was selected using stratified random sampling. Behavioural rigidity was measured using the Acceptance and Action Questionnaire–II (AAQ-II), while psychological well-being was assessed through the WHO-5 Well-Being Index. Descriptive statistics were used to examine the distribution of students across different levels of behavioural rigidity and psychological well-being, and the hypothesis was tested using the chi-square test of association. The results indicated that a majority of students exhibited moderate levels of behavioural rigidity and psychological well-being. The chi-square analysis revealed a statistically significant association between behavioural rigidity level and psychological well-being level, suggesting that students with higher behavioural rigidity were more likely to experience lower levels of psychological well-being. The findings highlight the importance of behavioural flexibility in supporting adolescent psychological health and underscore the need for context-sensitive educational and psychological interventions in tribal school settings.

Keywords: Behavioural Rigidity, Psychological Wellbeing, Higher Secondary School, Students, Micro Level, Investigation, Sabarkantha

1) Introduction:

The stage of adolescence is marked by continuous psychological reorganisation, during which thinking patterns, emotional responses, and social orientation gradually evolve. Students studying at the higher secondary level occupy a particularly sensitive position within this developmental psychological phase, as they simultaneously negotiate academic demands, emerging self-identity, and expectations from family and society. These demands require emotional balance and behavioural adaptability, without which adjustment becomes difficult (**Erikson: 1968; Steinberg: 2014**). The manner in which adolescents manage these pressures is closely influenced by their habitual behavioural tendencies.

Among such tendencies, behavioural rigidity occupies an important place. Behavioural rigidity can be understood as a tendency through which individuals persist with fixed attitudes, established routines, or resistant responses, even in situations that demand flexibility. While determination and consistency may contribute positively to discipline and goal orientation, rigid behaviour, when excessive, may restrict adaptive thinking and emotional regulation (**Kashdan & Rottenberg: 2010**). Adolescents displaying rigid behavioural patterns often

encounter difficulty when faced with academic stress, peer conflict, or changing social expectations, which can gradually affect their psychological state.

Psychological well-being during adolescence is not limited to the absence of distress; rather, it reflects a broader condition of emotional stability, psychological comfort, and positive engagement with daily life. Research has consistently indicated that psychological well-being plays a vital role in academic participation, social functioning, and long-term psychological health (Ryff, 1989; World Health Organization:2014). Behavioural traits and coping styles, which develop during this stage, are therefore closely linked with well-being outcomes, particularly when adolescents experience rapid psychological and environmental changes (Keyes:2002).

The relationship between behavioural rigidity and psychological well-being cannot be fully understood without considering the socio-cultural environment in which adolescents grow and learn. Vijaynagar taluka of Sabarkantha district, characterised by a predominantly tribal population, presents a distinct social context shaped by traditional value systems, close community relationships, and limited socio-economic opportunities. Students from such backgrounds experience schooling within a cultural setting where continuity of tradition coexists with modern educational expectations. These conditions may influence the formation of behavioural tendencies and coping responses in ways that differ from those observed in urban or metropolitan settings (Bronfenbrenner: 1979).

Despite increasing attention to adolescent psychological health, much of the existing research has relied on large-scale or urban-based samples, often overlooking the psychological realities of tribal and rural regions. As a result, local behavioural patterns and context-specific stressors remain insufficiently documented (Patel et al.,:2018). Micro-level investigations, which focus on defined geographical and social units such as a taluka, are therefore essential for generating grounded evidence that reflects lived experiences rather than aggregated generalisations.

Against this background, the present study focuses on examining the relationship between behavioural rigidity and psychological well-being among higher secondary school students of Vijaynagar taluka in Sabarkantha district. By situating the inquiry within a tribal educational context, the study aims to explore how rigid behavioural tendencies are associated with adolescents' psychological well-being at a local level. The findings are expected to support educators, counsellors, and policy planners in designing context-sensitive strategies that promote psychological flexibility and psychological well-being among higher secondary students.

3) Objectives of the Study:

- To assess the level of behavioural rigidity and psychological well-being among higher secondary school students of Vijaynagar taluka in Sabarkantha district.
- To examine the relationship between behavioural rigidity and psychological well-being among higher secondary school students in the selected tribal taluka of Sabarkantha district.

4) Hypothesis:

H₀ (Null Hypothesis):

There is no significant relationship between behavioural rigidity and psychological well-being among higher secondary school students of Vijaynagar taluka in Sabarkantha district.

H₁ (Research Hypothesis):

Behavioural rigidity is significantly related to psychological well-being among higher secondary school students of Vijaynagar taluka in Sabarkantha district.

5) Research Methodology:

5.1 Research Design:

The present research study adopted a descriptive–correlational research design, which was considered appropriate for examining the relationship between behavioural rigidity and psychological well-being among higher secondary school students. This design enabled the researcher to study naturally occurring behavioural tendencies and psychological conditions without manipulating any variables, while allowing for statistical examination of their association.

5.2 Area of the Study:

The present research study was conducted in Vijaynagar taluka of Sabarkantha district, Gujarat, a region characterised by a predominantly tribal population. The study duration of data collection in October 2024 to December 2024.. The taluka was selected purposively, as it represents a socio-cultural and educational context that is often underrepresented in psychological research. The selection allowed for a micro-level understanding of adolescent behaviour and psychological well-being within a tribal educational setting.

5.3 Population and Sample:

The population of the study comprised higher secondary school students studying in Standards XI and XII in government and grant-in-aid schools of Vijaynagar taluka. From this population, a sample of 100 students was selected. A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure proportional representation of students across gender and academic standard. Such stratification helped reduce sampling bias and ensured that variations related to grade level and gender were adequately reflected.

5.3 Population and Sample:

- ✓ **Independent Variable: Behavioural Rigidity**
- ✓ **Dependent Variable: Psychological Well-Being**

Behavioural rigidity referred to students' tendency to maintain fixed behavioural responses and resistance to change, whereas psychological well-being referred to their emotional stability, psychological comfort, and positive functioning in daily life.

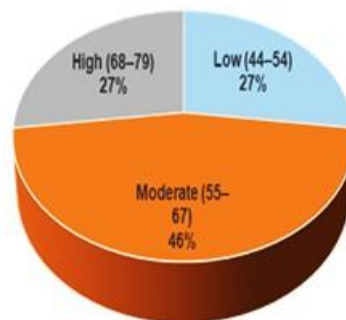
To examine the stated hypothesis regarding the relationship between behavioural rigidity and psychological well-being, the two variables were defined and measured using standardised and empirically validated psychometric instruments. Behavioural rigidity, understood as psychological inflexibility and resistance to adaptive change, was assessed through the Acceptance and Action Questionnaire–II (AAQ-II), a widely applied measure of rigid behavioural and cognitive response tendencies among adolescent and student populations (Bond et al., 2011). Psychological well-being, encompassing emotional balance, positive functioning, and psychological comfort, was measured using the WHO-5 Well-Being Index developed by the World Health Organization as a concise and culturally adaptable indicator of psychological well-being (World Health Organization, 1998). The composite scores obtained from these instruments were used for hypothesis testing, and their association was analysed using correlational techniques. The application of internationally recognised instruments supported conceptual clarity, measurement reliability, and methodological rigour in examining the proposed relationship among higher secondary school students of Vijaynagar taluka in Sabarkantha district.

Behavioural Rigidity Tool (AAQ-II)

Bond, F. W., Hayes, S. C., Baer, R. A., Carpenter, K. M., Guenole, N., Orcutt, H. K., Waltz, T., & Zettle, R. D. (2011). Preliminary psychometric properties of the Acceptance and Action Questionnaire-II. *Behavior Therapy*, 42(4), 676–688. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.beth.2011.03.007>.

Psychological Well-Being Tool (WHO-5)

Figure:1 Aggregate Distribution of the Psychological Well-Being Level



World Health Organization. (1998). *Wellbeing measures in primary health care: The DepCare Project*. WHO Regional Office for Europe.

6 Result & Discussion:

The distribution of students across different levels of behavioural rigidity and psychological well-being provides a clear descriptive picture of the psychological profile of the sample shown in to **Table:1**. Out of the total 100 students, 41 students (41%) fall within the moderate behavioural rigidity category, which represents the largest group. In absolute terms, this indicates that nearly two-fifths of the students exhibit a balanced behavioural pattern characterised by partial flexibility along with some degree of firmness. Relatively, this proportion is higher than both the low rigidity group comprising 29 students (29%) and the high rigidity group consisting of 30 students (30%), suggesting that extreme behavioural patterns are less common than moderate ones.

Gender	Behavioural Rigidity Level			Psychological Well-Being Level		
	Low (23–28)	Moderate (29–36)	High (37–45)	Low (44–54)	Moderate (55–67)	High (68–79)
Male	12	23	15	16	20	14
Female	17	18	15	11	26	13
Aggregate	29	41	30	27	46	27

Source: Author Primary Data

The presence of 30% of students in the high behavioural rigidity category is analytically important, as it reflects that almost one-third of the students demonstrate comparatively inflexible behavioural tendencies. Although this group is smaller than the moderate category, its size is substantial enough to warrant attention, particularly in an educational context where adaptability and emotional regulation are essential. Conversely, the low rigidity group (29%) represents students who are relatively more flexible and open to change, indicating variability in behavioural responses within the student population.

A similar but not identical pattern is observed in the distribution of psychological well-being levels. The largest proportion of students, 46 students (46%), falls within the moderate psychological well-being category, indicating that nearly half of the sample experiences an average level of psychological comfort and emotional balance. In relative terms, this category clearly dominates the distribution when compared to both the low well-being group and the high well-being group, each comprising 27 students (27%). The equal proportions at the low and high ends suggest a psychological polarity within the sample, where a similar number of students experience psychological strain as those who demonstrate strong well-being.

When behavioural rigidity and psychological well-being distributions are examined together, a meaningful descriptive pattern emerges. While 41% of students show moderate rigidity, a slightly higher proportion, 46%, demonstrate moderate psychological well-being. This difference suggests that although behavioural rigidity is relatively balanced for many students, psychological well-being does not increase proportionately for all of them. Furthermore, the presence of 30% high rigidity alongside 27% low psychological well-being points to a potentially overlapping segment of students who may experience difficulty in adapting behaviourally and psychologically.

Table:2 Chi-square Test for Association Between BRL & PWL

Test Statistic	Chi-square (χ^2)	Degrees of Freedom	Level of Significance (α)	Table Value ($\chi^2_{0.05,4}$)	p-value	Decision
Value	9.21	4	0.05	9.49	< 0.05 (Approx.)	Null hypothesis rejected

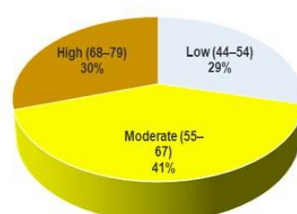
Source: Author Primary Data

**BRL= Behavioural Rigidity Level*

**PWL= Psychological Well-being Level*

The chi-square analysis indicates a statistically meaningful association between behavioural rigidity levels and psychological well-being levels among higher secondary school students. Students with moderate behavioural rigidity were more frequently represented in the moderate psychological well-being category, whereas those with high behavioural rigidity showed a comparatively higher presence in the low psychological well-being group. Conversely, students with low behavioural rigidity were more evenly distributed across psychological well-being levels, suggesting greater psychological adaptability.

Figure:2 Aggregate Distribution of the Behavioural Rigidity Level



These patterns imply that behavioural rigidity is not independent of psychological well-being and that rigid behavioural tendencies may be linked with less favourable psychological outcomes during adolescence. The findings provide empirical support for the study hypothesis and justify further inferential analysis using continuous scores.

7. Conclusion:

The present research study concludes that behavioural rigidity and psychological well-being are significantly associated among higher secondary school students of Vijaynagar taluka in Sabarkantha district. The descriptive analysis revealed that most students exhibit moderate levels of behavioural rigidity and psychological well-being, indicating partial adaptability alongside ongoing psychological adjustment. However, the presence of a substantial proportion of students with high behavioural rigidity and low psychological well-being highlights underlying psychological challenges within the adolescent population.

The inferential findings confirmed that behavioural rigidity is not independent of psychological well-being. Students who demonstrated higher levels of rigidity were more likely to experience reduced psychological well-being, whereas those with moderate behavioural flexibility tended to report more balanced psychological functioning. These results emphasise the role of behavioural adaptability in supporting adolescent psychological health, particularly during the higher secondary stage where academic and social pressures are pronounced.

In conclusion, the study contributes empirical evidence on the interplay between behavioural rigidity and psychological well-being within a localised tribal context. Highlighting the psychological patterns of higher secondary students, this study offers practical insights for educational planning and promoting adolescent psychological health. Future research may extend this work by incorporating longitudinal designs, qualitative perspectives, or intervention-based approaches to explore further how behavioural flexibility can be strengthened to enhance psychological well-being among adolescents.

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