

# **“Out of comfort zone” as a predictor of well-being and life satisfaction in youth**

**A thesis submitted in the partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of**

**MASTER OF ARTS IN PSYCHOLOGY**

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## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled, “Out of comfort zone” as a predictor of well-being and life satisfaction in youth is being submitted in partial fulfilment of requirements for the award the of the degree of Master of Arts in Psychology, presented in the Thapar School of Liberal Arts & Sciences, Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology, Patiala is a Bonafide work carried out under the supervision of Dr.Vandana Singh Assistant Professor , Thapar School of Liberal Arts & Sciences, Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology, Patiala and that no part of this project has been submitted for the award of any other degree.

This is to certify that the above statement made by the student concerned is correct and true to the best of my knowledge.



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## CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis entitled, “Out of comfort zone” as a predictor of well-being and life satisfaction in youth submitted in partial fulfilment of requirements for the award the of the degree Master of Arts in Psychology, presented in the Thapar School of Liberal Arts & Sciences, Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology, Patiala, is an authentic record of my work carried out under the supervision and guidance of Dr.Vandana Singh Assistant Professor, Thapar School of Liberal Arts & Sciences, Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology, Patiala and refers other researchers’ work which are duly listed in the reference section.

The matter embodied in this thesis has not formed the basis for awarding any other degree at this or any other university.

Date- May 2024

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Naina Grewal', enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.

(NAINA GREWAL)

This is to certify that the above statement made by the student concerned is correct and true to the best of my knowledge.

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# Abstract

Getting out of your comfort zone is a core concept in positive psychology. This research tries to add to the literature of positive psychology, which focuses on getting out of your comfort zone, by adding a novel stretch of youth trying to get out of your comfort zone. The present study aimed at examining the impact of behavioural stretch interventions, which were performed outside of one's comfort zone, on the subjective well-being of youth. The study was divided into two phases. Participants in the study were divided into two groups and were randomly placed in either of the groups - the experimental group and the control group. In study 1, the experimental group was instructed to engage in one out-of-the-comfort-zone activity other than maintaining their routine, while the control group maintained their normal routine. They were assessed on changes in DASS-21 (Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scale), Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale (GAD-7), and the Subjective Well-Being Scale (SWB). In study 2, a similar intervention was administered, though the experimental group had to keep the resolutions out of their comfort zone for the new year. The participants were analysed on the basis of the Big Five Factor Inventory, the Procrastination Scale, and the Subjective Well-Being Scale to allow a comparison between both studies. Despite being strongly supported by theoretical evidence, both studies yielded statistically insignificant results across all standardized measures.

**Key Words:** Comfort Zone, well-being, youth, experimental study

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

In today's world, people are so busy that they don't have time to rest take a break or look after their health be it physical or mental. They are on a constant go and don't stop or don't have the time to stop for a break so that they can get things done. They are either making deadlines or chasing them. You have to be fast and efficient in order to be number one. Many students be it college going or school going or youth in general find themselves in the middle of this negative spiral, they are either battling feelings of depression and coping with anxiety and negativity around them. This all happens while juggling the pressures of college, friends, and family.

When we keep on striving for perfection we often forget to look after ourselves or our loved ones and start missing out on the small joys of our lives which are there but can't be seen because we are so busy in our own worlds. The saying "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy " is true Even the simplest activities we consider to be useless can refresh our mind and body. Considering the endless requirements for spending time at work and studying, relaxing, relaxing is almost impossible. This lack of balance in our day-to-day lives can take a toll on their (youth) overall subjective wellbeing and keeps them from reaching their full potential.

There has been a prominent uprising in positive psychology, especially from the perspective of young people, about how people feel satisfied with their lives. This appeal lies in the broader

field of positive psychology, focusing on experiences of resilience, virtue, and elevation to promote happiness. The exploration area of this area is the idea of activity regarding the expansion of actions that encourage people to go beyond their limits and immerse themselves in new and challenging experiences.

This study takes a closer look at key humanistic theories, like - Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs and the idea of self-actualization, to explore the psychological factors that connect behavioural stretch interventions with overall well-being. It aims to understand how participating in out-of-the-comfort-zone activities can boost emotional resilience, improve how people see themselves, and lead to greater life satisfaction (Bachman, 2014).

Previous research suggests that when people are faced with decisions, most of the time individuals maintain the status quo and (Matsuo,2019) refrain from choosing new courses of action (Samuelson & Zeckhauser, 1988). This may be because choosing the default requires less mental effort and psychological threat than changing (Eidelman & Crandall, 2009). Aversion to going outside one's comfort zone may also result from other processes well-known to cognitive and social psychologists, such as loss aversion and regret avoidance (Anderson, 2003; Kahneman et al., 1991).

## **1.1 Comfort zone**

To understand what it means to be out of your comfort zone, you first must understand what it means to be in your comfort zone. The comfort zone is, in layperson terms, a psychological state in which a person isn't given a mental challenge in which they have to choose between their status quo or doing something new. When you don't have to choose between alternatives

and can do what you want, you can remain in control of your surroundings. You always feel safe and secure remaining in the same environment because there is no danger if you stay in the same environment, and there is no uncertainty that something might happen that you may or may not like.

Doing different things or trying new experiences will always be a task because people don't know what might happen to them or their environment; because of this fear, some humans go through all their lives and never do anything that piques their interest.

Operating in an environment that feels safe and secure might feel adequate, but it also limits your personal growth to the point that the person will not ever want to try something new; they may wake up, read their newspaper, go to their office from 9-5 and then come back home and go to sleep they will never experience the joys of going on a vacation or reading a new genre of a fiction novel, watching different movies that might not be your style, trying a different cuisine etc. With personal growth, people might not develop resilience, confidence, adaptation to specific environments, or new people.

Furthermore, pre-existing psychological theories say that Eustress, which means intentional and positive stress, can lead to favourable results like adapting to new situations, durability, personal growth, improved emotional strength, etc. The comfort zones can be interlinked with avoidance behaviour, which is staying away from things, people, or specific environments that may cause uncertainty or discomfort. It may be seen that avoiding behaviour will protect you from the discomfort you might face, but it will stop people from adapting to new things.

## **1.2 Out of comfort zone**

As we have already seen what it means to be in your comfort zone, let us discuss what it means to stay out of your comfort zone. Being out of your comfort zone refers to engaging in activities that people aren't so familiar with, and in the first place, they can be mentally and physically challenging. A person will voluntarily have to choose a novel activity out of their comfort zone because of the fear that it may elicit them from doing something they haven't already done or may not even have heard about. These activities may cause fear or discomfort in the individual; it may even cause anxiety, panic, and nervousness, and if they can't complete it, the person might lose their confidence in themselves.

Getting out of your comfort zone may cause self-doubt because it may challenge your already-held principles because of the new information that will enter your brain. People who keep trying new activities become more emotionally and physically resilient; they develop new skills. Over time, people stop seeing novel situations as a threat or danger to themselves; instead, they see it as a challenge they must overcome. It is also important to note that getting out of your comfort zone doesn't necessarily imply that a person has to do something reckless and cause danger to them or their surroundings; the activity taken up can be calculated and intentional.

These challenges can be fruitful for young people because these activities don't have to be very expensive. They can be budget-friendly and still be out of their comfort zone; this can help with avoidance behaviour and will help them keep a positive mindset towards life.

### **1.3 Well being**

Wellbeing tends to measure both physical and psychological health; It refers to the absence of any distress or illness that may cause problems for a person. The lack of relationships can also cause an inability to find a purpose in life, not experiencing positive emotions, an inability to cope with life's challenges, etc. It is essential for healthy mental functioning in society.

Well-being is shaped by both environmental factors and the person's emotions; other than that, personal experiences, biological traits, etc, also play an important role in well-being. Well-being can help in the positive development of human beings. Adolescence is a very sensitive period; young adults form their identity, self-explore, and build most parts of their personality during this crucial period, so it is essential for young adults to maintain their well-being

### **1.4 Procrastination**

It refers to the habit of delaying or avoiding tasks or activities even after knowing that this delay might cause negative consequences. It can hinder with academic performances, work outcomes which can lead to low motivation and hinder personal growth. Procrastination is fuelled by the fear of failure and is often linked to deficits, emotional dysregulation and avoidance of coping strategies

In the second phase of this research stepping out of one's comfort zone is aimed to decrease procrastination levels. The idea behind this is that when participants will engage

in unfamiliar settings or activities they would develop tolerance and would want to indulge in such activities. These traits stop procrastination behaviour because the participants had to engage in tasks that require initiative.

Goal setting theory also suggests that when clear goals are set even if they are outside ones comfort zone it may help increase a sense of accountability in the future which in turn may reduce the procrastination levels. However personality traits may increase or decrease the level of this intervention.

## **1.5 New year's resolution**

New year is often seen as a potential to change and renew yourself. People all around the world want to change new year means new beginnings and new habits. They want to be the better version of themselves they want to change and evolve which leads to growth and people have to leave their comfort zone in order to complete their new year's resolutions in order to break their already existing habits. Th resolutions involve taking on new challenges, improving their health, going to the gym, learning new skills, etc.

Self-improvement aligns with the core belief of the study which says how engaging in out of comfort zone experiences can improve well-being and procrastination. New year gives people an excellent opportunity to reflect on what they want to be and how they want to improve. During this time people introspect make new plans and help in positive change in people's behaviour. This study aims to understand whether getting out of your comfort zone by making new years resolution will lead to an increase in well being

## 1.6. Current study

This study focuses on the theory based on Self-Perception (Bem, 1972), which gave the idea that people generally shape their self-concept by reflecting on their actions. Individuals who engage in activities that will demand them to get out of their day-to-day routine, also known as their "comfort zone," may require effort and courage from them, so with this, they start to see themselves from a positive perspective, they think they are capable and resilient, and it also boosts their self-esteem and overall wellbeing. Moreover, Steele's theory of self-awareness (Steele, 1988) states that by recognizing core values and strengths as buffers, we can act against the psychological threats we are exposed to daily. It can improve self-worth and boost growth. It encourages individuals to recognize challenges as personal developmental possibilities and promote adaptability and resilience (Dweck, 2006).

This study was conducted in two phases. A quantitative approach was applied to evaluate the impact of getting out of the comfort zone on a two-week intervention in an experimental group. The main aim of the research was to investigate the impact of leaving one's comfort zone in the first phase and then encouraging them to complete their New Year's resolution by sending them emails every week and its effect on the subjective well-being of young people.

# Chapter - 2

## Review of literature

The focus of this review will be on studies examining the effect of getting out of your comfort zone on well-being. In each of the sections current studies will be reviewed and highlight how it contributes to the present study.

### 2.1 Discomfort and Behavioural Stretching as Predictors of Well-Being

As a discipline, psychology is now pondering whether comfort, previously viewed as safety and satisfaction, may be inhibiting personal growth and well-being. Moreover, evidence indicates that when individuals consciously and physically push their limits, emotionally or behaviorally, this aids in psychological development and enhances overall life satisfaction.. Literature supports these claims and says that discomfort as a concept should not be considered something that needs to be avoided. Still, it should be seen as something that can help in the productive transformation of individuals.

A significant study that contributes to this is Kashdan et al. (2021), which presents a behavioural stretch intervention to promote well-being amongst adults engaging in discomfort. Participants were randomly assigned to the condition and instructed to pursue their daily activities. Additionally, they were told to pursue activities that placed them out of their comfort

zone, like, for example, breaking personal routines, being a part of conversations they wouldn't usually have, etc. The well-being was recorded over one week, and those who participated in out of the comfort zone activities showed a higher level of well-being than those in the control group. The benefits that were seen were higher for those who showed lower baseline happiness, suggesting that people experiencing dissatisfaction can improve.

This model aligns with the theories of post-traumatic growth (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004), which say that growth occurs when individuals confront and work through adversity. Even when no trauma is inflicted, individuals can still simulate growth conditions in minor psychological discomfort by dismembering behaviour patterns and forcing individuals to adapt to novel situations.

It can also be seen through self-determination theory (SDT), which says that when people experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness, their well-being is enhanced by the behaviour stretch that was introduced, which helped in this because it provided relatedness by engaging in meaningful interactions, autonomy by choosing challenging activities, and competence by navigating interactions. This allows us to explain why choosing difficult voluntary experiences will help produce positive emotions.

A concept known as optimal anxiety by Yerkes and Dodson (1908) also helps us understand this phenomenon. The idea suggests that performance is maximized at moderate levels of arousal; too much stimulation will lead to anxiety, while too little will lead to boredom. Stretching boundaries in a controlled manner will help maintain this balance between stress and maximizing performance.

If all of these are examined together, they support the well-being research by recognizing that discomfort helps in psychological resilience. So, rather than trying to feel good all the time, it's better to experience a bit of discomfort to experience personal growth and well-being.

## **2.2 Emotional Differentiation and Behavioural Stretching: Mechanisms of Well-Being**

Regulating well-being and Emotional self-awareness has been brought to the lime light in recent researches. One of such topics is emotional granularity which basically means to differentiate and label ones emotions precisely. It plays a major role in managing stress and in functioning adaptively in the environment. Those people who have high level of emotional granularity acclimatize to their experiences in a better way which in turn enables them to regulate their emotions and respond to them in an effective way.

One approach to encourage people to get out of their comfort zone is to engage in novel activities that the people haven't already indulged in. These in turn increase emotional awareness of an individual by exposing them to unfamiliar situations which in term fosters emotional differentiation in the real world. When people engage in such situations they challenge their existing routines due to which they will feel increased personal growth and higher life satisfaction.

The idea of this is supported by behavioural research as well which suggests that these interventions are made to promote well-being which can be done by completing novel experiences. Moreover integrating emotional and behavioural approaches underlines the importance of holistic view in psychological interventions. So thus by combining cognitive

and emotional processes of granularity outside the comfort zone the literature points towards a dynamic model.

### **2.3 Comfort Zone Orientation and Psychological Resilience**

Comfort zone orientation (CZO) was introduced by Kiknadze (2018) it examines individual differences in the willingness to engage in discomfort and challenges. CZO refers to the tendency to seek the activities that lie outside of peoples comfort zone rather than avoiding them. It is not behavioural in nature but rather focuses on taking an emotional risk with the help of uncertainty and novelty.

A series of three studies were conducted by Kiknadze which helped in demonstrating that people have greater confidence in unpredictable situations and they possess psychological traits such as emotional stability, openness to experience, perseverance, etc. These traits are associated with psychological resilience which suggests that individuals who are willing and dispositioned to accept psychological challenges or novel activities that they may not have performed earlier are more adaptable to situations that may have adverse effects and can cause stress, they can handle stress in a better way that other people.

This study is relevant because it explains how important it is for emerging adults who are in the process of forming their identity and are trying to become autonomous individuals indulge in developmental tasks (Arnett, 2000; Erikson, 1968). Adolescents are usually confused about whether they should or should not leave their comfort zone or should they just keep being a part of familiar situations that they are comfortable with. The findings of this study by

Kiknadze tell us that those who have a high level of Comfort Zone Orientation are usually more likely to choose and get through this dilemma of either choosing their comfort zone or a novel activity.

These findings align with self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) which says that individuals do well once their need for competence, autonomy and relatedness are met these are the needs that are often met when individual are put into situations that are different and they have to use their skills to navigate through them.

This study also provides support for the fact that stepping out of one's comfort zone will be a predictive factor for well-being and life satisfaction. People who keep on challenging themselves and take interest in new activities have shown greater resilience which is linked to better or we can say healthy coping mechanisms and an optimistic outlook on their life. These traits help individuals attain better well-being with which they can navigate through setbacks in a better and controlled manner in comparison to those individuals who avoid novel activities due to which they may not be able to grow because they will remain bound to their rigid patterns.

Another approach by Kashdan et al. (2021), who worked on intentional behavioural discomfort and how it can work as a well-being intervention through a short-term stretch. Kiknadze said that comfort zone orientation is a dispositional state, but Kashdan said it is a manipulable state that can be activated through targeted behavioural interventions. In this study, the participants were told to engage in activities that placed them outside their comfort zones for one week. The activities included socially challenging tasks or anything else. The results showed us that the participants in the intervention experienced greater improvements in subjective well-being,

particularly those with lower baseline happiness. This suggests that engaging with discomfort, even for a short time, even without a pre-existing high CZO, could yield positive psychological outcomes.

If the studies are examined together, the findings give a comprehensive view of the role discomfort plays in psychological development. Kiknadze emphasizes stable individual differences in comfort zone, and Kashdan et al., on the other hand, provide experimental evidence that behavioural stretch intervention can serve as an effective, low-cost intervention.

#### **2.4. Risk-Taking and Life Satisfaction in Young Adults**

Risk taking and well-being in the context of youth is an important topic. Youth as it is known is an important part of people's identity it is characterised by identity exploration, autonomy-seeking, and a developmental openness to novel experiences (Arnett, 2000). The study the study "We Are Young, We Run Free" (2022) gives us important information about how different forms of risk-taking impact life satisfaction in young backpackers. Majority of this population is defined as risk takers they voluntarily engage in travel and culture immersion and often engage in challenges gives us insight into how young people navigate life outside the boundaries of their routine comfort zones.

The findings of the study help us find out that that moderate and intentional risk-taking was positively associated with increased life satisfaction and personal growth. Individuals taking part in novel activities like travelling through unfamiliar terrain, talking to strangers, facing unexpected weather which led them to reporting a heightened sense of confidence, autonomy, and purpose. These findings aligned with self-expansion theory (Aron & Aron, 1997)

which tries to explain that when people engage in challenging experiences it helps contributing in personal development by expanding one's self-concept.

The study however also explains how it is necessary to be cautious against unregulated or excessive risk-taking. This was found to be correlate with lower levels of well-being and life satisfaction. As it is said that an excess of anything can be dangerous or harmful. Impulsive decisions that are taken without thinking about them can be harmful distinction should be made in harmful, impulsive behaviour and behaviour that promotes personal growth.

This study also focuses on the fact that support plays an important part in shaping the outcomes of risk taking behaviour. Backpackers who had a strong social support from their family, friends and peers showed greater life satisfaction which suggests that social support is essential in producing positive outcomes. Another model that supported this conclusion was relational model of well-being which explains that meaningful social interactions and shared experiences amplify the benefits of personal challenges.

This study gives evidence that stepping outside one's comfort zone through moderate and socially supported risk-taking can contribute positively to life satisfaction and well-being in youth. It also explains that discomfort is not the only factor that needs to be looked at the intervention should be framed in such a way that it supports growth oriented mindset.

## **2.5. Shyness, Self-Efficacy, and Life Satisfaction in Adolescents**

Transitioning from adolescence to early adulthood is a hard task. Many changes take place during that period. Individual differences develop during this period that can impact the well

being of individuals. A study that was posted in the Turkish Journal of Psychiatry (2017) explored how shyness, self-efficacy affect life satisfaction among adolescents it offered valuable insights about understanding how internal dispositions relate to developmental outcomes.

The findings showed that there was a negative correlation between shyness and life satisfaction and a positive correlation between self-efficacy and life satisfaction. Participants who had greater self-efficacy showed greater life satisfaction but those who showed higher level of shyness they exhibited low levels of life satisfaction.

The results help us explain the current study on comfort zone behaviours as it encourages the participants to face and eventually overcome social and emotional challenges. Shyness refers to avoiding talking to people, withdrawing from gathering, fear of being judged due to which people won't engage in developmental activities. Activities such as debating, public speaking, initiating contact with new people, or participating in group projects help in increasing life satisfaction because they help in personal growth.

This study also explains how discomfort is not necessarily harmful. If it is taken in a supportive environment it usually becomes as a necessary condition to help in self-discovery and development. So interventions that encourage taking a part in out of the comfort zone activities like performing in front of a group, asking for help, etc it can allow in strengthening self-efficacy.

If it is looked at from a theoretical perspective it matches with Bandura's findings from his social cognitive theory (1997) which explains how mastering of experiences is the most

effective means of increasing self-efficacy. When participants engage in tasks that they may think they might not be able to complete or is difficult for them and. They slowly overcome and complete it, it boosts their self-esteem which eventually leads to positive outlook on life. Making sure that the discomfort that is experienced can be managed and contributes to accomplishing something like for example acting in front of a bunch of people when you are an introvert will help in boosting confidence.

This is what out-of-comfort-zone interventions aim at doing, making discomfort look as a growth promoting experience. This study provides us with empirical evidence that promoting self-efficacy through out-of-comfort-zone experiences can serve as an opportunity to enhance self-efficacy and life satisfaction in adolescents.

## **2.6 Discomfort as a Catalyst for Motivation and Growth**

Discomfort is often related to negative affect or avoidance behaviour but recent research has been challenging these assumptions. A growing body of evidence suggests that discomfort when experienced by individuals own will and when it is goal driven in nature can have a powerful impact on people. It can motivate and develop resilience.

Woolley and Fishbach (2022) conducted a series of research studies which aimed at exploring how individuals would interpret and respond to voluntary discomfort when they are in pursuit of fulfilling their personal goals. The results showed that those who undertook difficult emotional and physical tasks like public speaking or confronting people about their unpopular opinions reported heightened levels of self-motivation and personal growth. In this case, the

idea of discomfort was not viewed as something negative or a hindrance, but rather an indicator that progress was happening.

The redefining discomfort can be lined up with a model given by (Aron & Aron, 1997) which says engaging in novel experiences helps an individual with expanding their idea of self-concept, it also helps in increasing knowledge about one self. Discomfort can help in pushing boundaries which will further help in expanding horizons.

Another theory given by Dweck, 2006 which is the growth mindset theory states that viewing difficulty as a natural part of the learning process helps in persistence and resilience. On the other hand the findings by Woolley and Fishbach explain that discomfort is a form of intrinsic feedback which help in validating the notion that the individual is pursuing something that is of importance. This is relevant for both adults and adolescents who are trying to find their identity, still building their morals and beliefs about everything. Discomfort doesn't necessarily mean failure it can also be seen as a symbol of growth like as it is said after the rain comes sunshine.

This research helps in providing support for interventions that support that interventions encourage young people to step outside their comfort zone rather than just shielding and protecting them from what lies out there. When young people understand that discomfort helps in learning and helps in giving new opportunities they start exploring more and start taking challenges frequently. So the work of Woolley and Fishbach helps us in explaining how discomfort plays an important role in life satisfaction, improvement, growth and well-being.

# Chapter – 3

## Method

This chapter focuses on the methods that were used in the study, the participants and the procedure. A quantitative approach was applied in the study. The aim was to identify if getting out of comfort zone will affect the well-being of young adults. Previous researches that have been conducted focused if getting out of the comfort zone will affect the well-being of adults this research focuses on if getting out of the comfort zone will affect the well-being of youth.

### 3.1 Research paradigm

Three basic research paradigms can be used in a research study, namely positivist, which is quantitative research, constructivist, which is qualitative research, and last but not least, pragmatist, which is a mixed method approach, i.e., both quantitative and qualitative.

The primary focus of the quantitative research paradigm is the empirical measurement of data. It aims to test data statistically and aims for a cause-and-effect relationship. It helps researchers discover truths about their research through controlled and rigorous studies and focuses on scientific methods, which means the analysis is based on hypothesis testing and statistical analysis (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Its basis is ingrained in positivism. Positivism is based on the fact that reality can be measured by observing and quantifiable data.

The current study applies positivism as its research paradigm to test whether getting out of your comfort zone by engaging in activities helps increase well-being in youth by focusing on variables such as subjective well-being, anxiety, perceived stress, etc. As the study involves

experimental and control groups and focuses on statistical analysis of the results (Creswell, 2009), a positive paradigm is appropriate for this research..

### **3.2 Research design**

Research design helps outline how a study will be conducted in a structured way, including data collection, analysis, research questions, etc. It is the overall strategy that a researcher uses to get answers to their research question. It has been established that a quantitative approach was used to help examine the impact of getting out of your comfort zone on well-being and life satisfaction in youth, Other than that a between group experimental design was used which consisted of two groups experimental group (they were pushed out of their comfort zone) and control group (they had to continue with their routine and dint have to engage in the intervention). Both groups were administered with standardized scales both before and after the intervention. The scales measured variables like subjective well-being, perceived stress, and anxiety. The research aligns with the positive paradigm; all data analysis was done statistically.

## **Study 1**

### **3.3 Sample**

The research sample consisted 74 individuals who were enrolled at Thapar School of Liberal Arts and Sciences a branch of Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology's. The final sample used for the quantitative analysis was 42, both male and female included; depending on the specific outcome and time point, as many participants were recruited, given the resources. A broad diversity of participants from undergraduate and graduate programs was used, inviting people to participate in a study to explore human experiences over two weeks.

The sample was diverse in age and ethnicity, allowing the study to extend beyond previous reliance on only undergraduate samples, which often have limited age and education ranges. Randomization was employed by dividing them into subgroups based on their age and then randomly assigned to each subset. Each of the participants had an equal chance of being assigned the experimental or to the control group.

### **3.4 Sample characteristics**

The sample consisted of male and female participants in Thapar University. The age of students ranged between 17-25 years. The first sample for this study consisted of undergraduate students, with a mean age of 21.5 years. The majority of female participants (62.16% female) was more than the male participants.

### **3.5 Procedure**

A questionnaire was given to the people who were willingly participating in the study. The observation period was two weeks. All the questions and instructions were administered in English. Participants filled out a pretest questionnaire at the start of the first week which evaluated their baseline subjective wellbeing, depression, perceived stress, and anxiety. At this point, each person was randomly assigned to an experimental condition. Then, they were given the experimental instructions. The participants who were in the control group were told to -

*During this week, choose one day and keep track of your daily activity related to what you usually do in your everyday life that day. Just write down the factual information about what you did. Do not alter your routine; keep track of what you do. (Netzer & Cohen, 2022)*

The experimental group was told to do something different. The instructions were as follows –

*During this week, choose any one day to do something that will be different from what your normal routine is. It can be something out of the ordinary (for example choosing a different cuisine to eat that day like Chinese) that does not fit in your daily routine. It can be anything ranging from - Something small or big, something you haven't had the chance to try out but you've wanted to, it can be done with someone or all by yourself (Netzer & Cohen, 2022).*

The instruction for both groups was used from previous studies' control tasks (e.g., Kruse et al., 2014; Layous et al., 2013). Participants were told to document their experience for two weeks for both groups. After the participants had been exposed to the intervention for two weeks, a post-intervention wellbeing assessment was done online. They filled out the same questionnaire they filled out in the pre-intervention. After completing the pretest In the questionnaires, 32 participants out of the 74 dropped out, which caused attrition. Ten participants dropped out of the experimental group and 22 out of the control group. Sixteen participants were left in the experimental group and 26 in the control group.

### **3.6 Measures**

The measures that were used were as follows –

#### **3.6.1 Perceived stress scale,**( Sheldon Cohen, Tom Kamarck, and Robin Mermelstein, 1983).

The Perceived Stress Scale also known as PSS has been used to determine individual stress levels. It is an instrument used to assess stress. It was developed in 1983 and it helps us understand how being in different situations might affect our perceived stress level and our

feelings. The questions mainly ask about how you feel regarding a situation in the last month or so and also indicate how you felt or how many times you felt a certain feeling.

### **3.6.2. Depression, anxiety and stress scale 21, (Peter F. Lovibond and Susan H. Lovibond, 1983)**

The DASS - 21 also known as Depression, anxiety and stress scale – 21 is a set of three self-report scales questionnaire which intends to measure depression, anxiety and stress of an individual. It contains seven item per subscale. The depression scale assesses dysphoria, hopelessness, anhedonia etc. , The stress subscale measures difficulty relaxing nervous arousal, being upset rather easily, the anxiety sub scale measures situational anxiety, subjective experience of anxious effect etc. It is also important to note that the DASS -21 is not designed to diagnose mental health disorders according to the ICD or DSM it in fact measures symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress on a continuum that means on the basis of levels of severity not by distinct categories. The essence of this is that if you score high on this scale it doesn't mean that you have been clinically diagnosed instead it means that the level of your emotional distress is high.

### **3.6.3. Subjective wellbeing scale (Ellison, 1983)**

It measures how people evaluate their lives specific domains and activities occurring in their lives and how they encompass positive and negative emotional experiences in their evaluation of satisfaction with their lives. The SWB measures the wellbeing of individuals on a 6-point Likert scale with reverse-coded questions as well (1 = strongly agree, 7 = strongly disagree). Participants chose the extent they agreed or disagreed with twenty items.

### **3.6.4. Generalized anxiety scale (Spitzer,2006).**

It is a self-report questionnaire which measures the defining symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder. It is a seven item scale which was designed by Spitzer and his colleagues. At first it was created to increase the recognition of generalized anxiety disorder. It has good reliability and validity. It is designed to measure the severity of generalized anxiety disorder symptoms.

## **Study 2**

### **3.7 Sample**

The research sample consisted 35 individuals who were enrolled at Thapar School of Liberal Arts and Sciences a branch of Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology's. The final sample used for the quantitative analysis was 35, both male and female included. A broad diversity of participants from undergraduate and graduate programs was used, inviting people to participate in a study to explore human experiences over several weeks. The sample was diverse in age and ethnicity, allowing the study to extend beyond previous reliance on only undergraduate samples, which often have limited age and education ranges. Randomization was employed by dividing them into subgroups based on their age and then randomly assigned to each subset. Each of the participants had an equal chance of being assigned the experimental or to the control group.

### **3.8 Sample characteristics**

The sample consisted of male and female participants in Thapar University. The age of students ranged between 17-25 years. The first sample for this study consisted of undergraduate students, with a mean age of 21.5 years. The majority of female participants (65.71%female) was more than the male participants.

### **3.9 Procedure**

A questionnaire was distributed among the participants willing to participate in the study. The observation period was after every week. All the questions and instructions were administered in English. A pretest questionnaire was circulated at the start of the first week, which evaluated their baseline subjective wellbeing, procrastination level, and personality. Following this, each person was randomly assigned to the experimental or control conditions. The participants were asked to share their New Year's resolution. The experimental group received weekly motivational emails to fulfil their New Year's resolution. On the other hand, no such emails were forwarded to the control group. After every week, the same questionnaire was circulated online again to assess whether there were any changes in their well-being. They filled out the same questionnaire they filled out in the pre-intervention.

To guide the experimental group through the intervention period two emails that were carefully constructed were sent. The purpose of these emails was to serve as motivation and reminders for the participants so that they would remember to complete their new year resolutions and feel motivated to do so. The first email was sent after one week of filling the pre intervention form. Listed below is the first email –

*Do you remember when you learned how to set goals?*

*If you have trouble answering that question, you're not alone! Most of us don't spend much time thinking about how we set goals.*

*In fact, many of us don't even think of goal setting as a skill; rather, it's just something we do without reflecting on it much.*

*However, goal setting is a practice that operates on a set of specific skills—and luckily, these skills are relatively easy to teach.*

## ***A Look at Goal Setting***

*Setting goals is a vital practice that can benefit anyone with a dream or a vision for their future. Young people who are just starting out on the grand journey of life are at a particularly opportune time to start building their goal setting skills—not only will these skills serve them throughout their lives, but building them now will help them mold their future into one that they desire.*

*Further, research backs up the effectiveness of goal setting, both for the students themselves and for schools and systems overall (O’Neill, 2000). When teachers practice good goal setting, the benefits for their students are two-fold:*

- 1. The students see effective goal setting modelled, and*
- 2. The school itself is likely to become more effective at facilitating learning.*

## ***How Do Students Benefit from Goal Setting?***

***goal setting benefits children and students in many ways, including:***

- 1. Improving self-image*
- 2. Increasing awareness of one’s strengths*
- 3. Increasing awareness of one’s weaknesses*
- 4. Providing an experience of success*
- 5. Facilitating effective visualization*
- 6. Clarifying the path ahead*
- 7. Encouraging prioritization*
- 8. Defining reality and separating it from wishful thinking*

9. *Building responsibility for one's self*

10. *Improving decision making (Goucher College Office of Student Engagement, n.d.)*

***Other benefits include :***

11. *Provides direction, which most youths are either seeking or trying to nail down.*

12. *Helps children clarify what is important to them and focus on it.*

13. *Facilitates more effective decision making through better self-knowledge, direction, and focus.*

14. *Allows children to take a more active role in building their own future.*

15. *Acts as a powerful motivator by giving children something to hope for and aspire towards.*

16. *Gives children a positive experience of achievement and personal satisfaction when they reach a goal.*

17. *Assists children in finding a sense of purpose in their lives (The Peak Performance Centre, n.d.).*

This email was carefully curated by Dr. Vandana Singh, which helped emphasize how goal setting is essential for youth and its benefits. It also showed how it contributes to self-awareness and an explicit self-concept, gives you purpose, etc. It helped participants get a clearer understanding of the intervention. The second email that was sent the week after the mid test form was completed was as follows –

*The Process and Steps of Setting Life Goals*

*The following framework is taken from the well-known psychological capital intervention (PCI), and it uses three steps: goal design, pathway generation, and overcoming obstacles (Luthans et al., 2006).*

### *1. Goal Design*

*The first step is to design our goals. When crafting goals, we need to remember the key premise of goal-setting theory—that they are intentions which guide our behaviour. They are “targets for mental action sequences” (Synder, 2002: 250).*

*Ideally, by design:*

*Goals should be concrete endpoints. That is, we should be able to measure our success because they are clear and detailed;*

*They should be approach-based. This means we should easily be able to focus on moving positively towards their accomplishment, rather than on away from negative outcomes.*

*(“Working toward” rather than “avoiding” something) (Coats et al., 1996); and*

*We should be able to break them down into sub-goals if necessary so that we can celebrate little successes along the way (Snyder et al., 1991).*

### *2. Pathway Generation*

*We now have personally meaningful life goals designed and we can start thinking about different potential pathways for achieving them. Luthans and colleagues’ PsyCap Intervention invited participants to brainstorm multiple pathways without worrying at first about their*

*feasibility. 'As many possibilities as they could think of', essentially, and not unlike 'there are no bad ideas in brainstorming'.*

*Participants then invited others to weigh in and add to their potential pathways. In the same way, you might ask friends, family, or someone in a mentor-like position to help you come up with ideas on how to pursue your goals. What possible pathways might Jamie take to become a certified K1 teacher for asylum seekers in Svenborgia, for example?*

*The last part of pathway generation considers inventory pathways: what resources will you need to pursue pathway A, B, or C? Essentially, we refine our potential pathways—we think carefully about what we can realistically expect, and this leaves us with fewer, more viable options (Luthans et al., 2006).*

### *3. Overcoming Obstacles*

*We have inherent beliefs about our ability to use pathways for goal success—our agency—and these are accordingly termed 'agency thought' (Snyder, 2002). This kind of thinking plays a particularly important role when we come up against obstacles, especially unexpected ones, as they can determine whether we pick ourselves up or just disengage.*

*When setting life goals, therefore, it helps to consider the possible barriers that might arise. Independently, we can self-reflect, thinking about our potential pathways as well as our strategies we might use to deal with them (Luthans et al., 2006). We might do this alone or with others, like in the pathway generation stage, and our focus here is to ready ourselves for contingencies.*

*Put differently, “What might prevent me from achieving my goal?” and “How could I work through or around this?”*

### *Healthy Goal Setting Objectives and Guidelines*

*No matter what you’ve set as your life goals, adopt some best practice guidelines to make the whole journey a positive experience. Based on what we have looked at so far, we can draw a few objectives to keep in mind.*

*Be realistic. Try to keep things in perspective both when designing your goals and as you work toward them. Research indicates that the best goals are challenging, yet achievable (Locke & Latham, 2002).*

*A healthy goal is a positive ‘approach’ goal. Rather than setting negative, avoidance goals that have us working away from certain harmful, aversive, or unpleasant outcomes, set yourself positive targets. Depending on whether they are intrinsic or extrinsic, therefore, they might be desirable, enjoyable, or ‘good’ in a deeper sense (Coats et al., 1996).*

*Be ready to fail along the way...but don’t let it stop you. Resilience is the capacity to persevere in spite of setbacks, and obstacles are inevitable in some form or another. So as well as accepting this inevitability first up, resilience is a useful skill to develop throughout your journey. How do you plan to overcome obstacles? Can you brainstorm some alternative pathways?*

*Involve others. As we’ve discussed earlier, family and friends can be invaluable. Not only do they help us generate ideas, but they are social resources that we can reach out to for support along the way.*

*Break them down where possible. Celebrating our wins along the way is the same as celebrating our progress towards a larger life goal. Whether that celebration takes place on a monthly, weekly, or even daily basis will depend on your unique aims and the pathway you choose to follow. Nonetheless, research shows that they are critical for momentum and motivation (Amabile & Kramer, 2011).*

The second email was aimed at providing a deeper perspective on goal setting. It outlined a three-step approach which included - Goal Design, Pathway Generation, and Overcoming Obstacles. Each of the steps was supported by research-based evidence, which showed the importance of goal setting and also how to prepare for setbacks. It also focused on how to build resilience for their long-term growth.

### **3.10 Measures**

The measures used in this study were different than the previous study except for the well-being scale which remained the same. The first measure that was used was –

#### **3.10.1 Subjective wellbeing scale (Ellison, 1983)**

It measures how people evaluate their lives specific domains and activities occurring in their lives and how they encompass positive and negative emotional experiences in their evaluation of satisfaction with their lives. The SWB measures the wellbeing of individuals on a 6-point Likert scale with reverse-coded questions as well (1 = strongly agree, 7 = strongly disagree). Participants chose the extent they agreed or disagreed with twenty items.

#### **3.10.2 Big five inventory (Adapted from Rammstedt, B. & John, O. P. (2007)).**

The BFI – 10 scale measures the big 5 traits which are Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, openness and emotional stability. The scale was adapted from the 44 item big 5 inventory and designed for individual who have limited time.

### **3.10.3 Procrastination scale**

This scale contains a 9-item questionnaire to assess one's level of procrastination. Individuals rate how well each statement describes them on a 5-point scale. Higher total scores indicate greater tendencies to procrastinate. It focuses on irrational delays that a person voluntarily delays tasks despite experiencing negative outcomes. It is a self-reporting scale , participants have to rate how often the statements about their procrastination behaviour are true or not.

### **3.10.4 Google form**

It is a web based application which comes under google workspace that allows individual to create online surveys, forms, etc. It can be used to collaborate with other users and can be entered into a spread sheet automatically.

# Chapter 4

## Results

The primary aim of this research was to investigate if engaging in out of the comfort zone activities had an impact on the well-being and life satisfaction of youth. The study was conducted in two phases to help address this objective. Conducting the study in two distinct phases also helped in a thorough examination of psychological changes over time.

In the first phase group themes are discussed followed by the statistical analysis. Then the statistical analysis of the second phase is discussed. Each phase is discussed separately for a better understanding of the material.

### 4.1 Study - 1

#### 4.1.1 Open measure responses

##### Group themes

As mentioned earlier there are two groups in the study they represent contrasting approaches to well-being. Group one which is the control group was not supposed to do anything except record their daily routine they prioritize discipline, structure and in productivity. Some of them believed that getting things done and staying organized is essential for maintaining balance in their life while others preferred relaxing and spontaneity. When they set goals and stick to routines they create and feel more stable which helps them in feeling accomplished and helps them in taking charge of their future. It was seen that they value maintaining their physical and

mental health. In addition to that they also focus on personal growth by actively seeking new challenges or by keeping their minds engaged. They were not supposed to step out of their comfort zone they documented their normal life. We can take group 1 as a reference point for understanding how subjective well-being is affected when individual don't step out of their comfort zone.

Group 1's behaviour also shows that they were more keen on relying on internal structure as a coping mechanism (internal structure here refers to an individual's personal routines and habits that they have developed to create a routine in their life. In this study it means that a person relies on their previously created routines.) Even though this group did not engage in any intervention just the act of documenting their day might have encouraged in reflecting upon themselves. Moreover the emphasis on maintaining physical health explains that comfort can also mean self-care but in safe and familiar boundaries.

If we contrast group 1 with group 2 which was the experimental group that was tasked to do something out of their comfort zone we see that they engage in activities that are more socially driven and laid back. Their activities were more centred on the fact that they are fun or around connecting with people, they wanted to catch up reconnect socially. They went with the flow instead of challenging themselves in traditionally uncomfortable ways. They wanted to try out new activities but in a fun way by either going to the gym, spending time with friends or by prioritizing enjoyment in their lives.

Group 2's responses reveal that out of comfort zone's meaning is varied between participants but it commonly revolves around the notion of expanding social network or something that doesn't take up a lot of mental capacity rather than choosing something that is stressful and

difficult in nature. Going out of your comfort zone doesn't mean doing something distressing it can simply mean doing something that you are unfamiliar with but still positive.

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**Group 1**

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**Staying organized** – focusing on routines, planning the day and managing time effectively.

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**Getting things done** – Concentrating on work, school tasks, or learning something new.

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**Taking care of health** – Prioritizing exercising, eating healthy, and making sure to get enough sleep.

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**Challenging yourself**– Setting goals, trying new skills, or aiming for self improvement.

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**Keeping your mind active** – Reading books, studying, or solving puzzles to stay mentally sharp

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**Group 2**

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**Hanging out** – Spending time with friends, chatting online, or relaxing with loved ones.

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**Enjoying life** – Taking break, going to the gym, scrolling through social media or watching shows.

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**Going with the flow** – Adjusting plans easily and embracing a laid-back attitude.

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**Feeling good** – Doing things just for fun, like taking selfies or reactivating social media apps.

## 4.2 Quantitative analysis

The aim of the study was to examine the impact of stepping out of one's comfort zone on youth's well-being. The measures used were as follows subjective well-being, perceived stress scale (PSS), depression, anxiety, and stress using the depression anxiety stress scales (DASS-21), and generalized anxiety disorder symptoms were measured by GAD-7. These scales were used to get a better understanding of the research.

The Perceived stress scale helps in understanding how exposing an individual to a new situation affects their stress appraisal. The depression, anxiety and stress scale helps understand how getting out of your comfort zone will affect symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress. Subjective well-being measures a person's overall life satisfaction so it helps measure that and last but not the least generalized anxiety disorder GAD-7 allows to understand anxiety symptoms of an individual like tension and chronic worry which can increase when an individual is experiencing a new situation.

The purpose of using these scales was to understand whether new experiences result in same patterns or do they produce change. When comparing the intervention group and the control group it can be seen whether stepping out had an impact on the well-being of individuals, had no effect at all or whether it had negative effects on their well-being.

#### **4.2.1 Analysis of perceived stress**

A repeated measures analysis was done to evaluate the effect of getting out of comfort zone on perceived stress using the perceived stress scale as the outcome variable. Stress levels were measured both pre and post the intervention for both the control group (who didn't have to engage in out of the comfort zone activities) and the experimental group (the one who had to engage in out of the comfort zone activities).

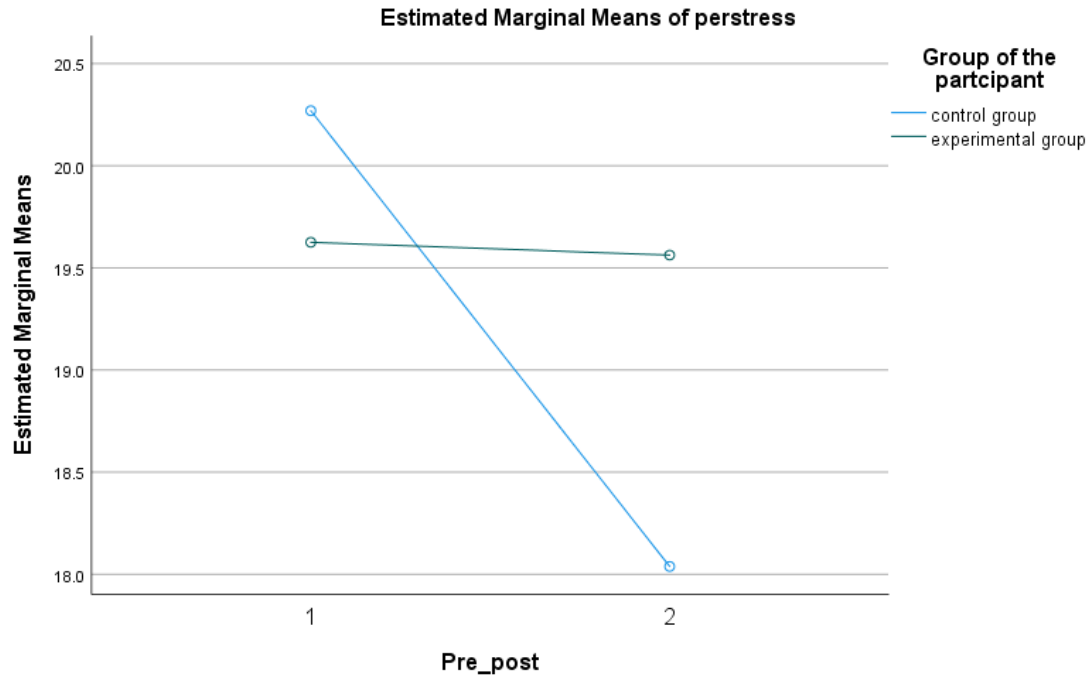
The between subject analysis did not show any statistically significant main effect on the group on perceived stress  $F(1,40)=0.054$ ,  $p = 0.817$ . This shows us that there wasn't any meaningful difference between the control group and the experimental group across time. The estimated marginal means plot suggests that the control group experienced a notable reduction from pre to post test the experimental groups stress levels remained unchanged during that time.

This pattern shows that the intervention that was to push participants out of the comfort zone didn't contribute to a decrease in perceived stress compared to maintaining your routine. Despite having the intention of fostering positive emotions through new experiences the experimental group didn't witness any decrease in perceived stress. But the control group experienced a routine related decline in it even though it wasn't statistically significant. The data suggests that for some people stepping out of the comfort zone doesn't mean decreased stress.

<b>Source</b>	<b>SS</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>MS</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>p</b>
Intercept	29,741.55	1	29,741.55	420.67	.000
Group	3.83	1	3.83	0.05	.817
Error	2,827.99	40	70.70		

### **Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

Measure: perstress



#### 4.2.2 Analysis of DASS depression

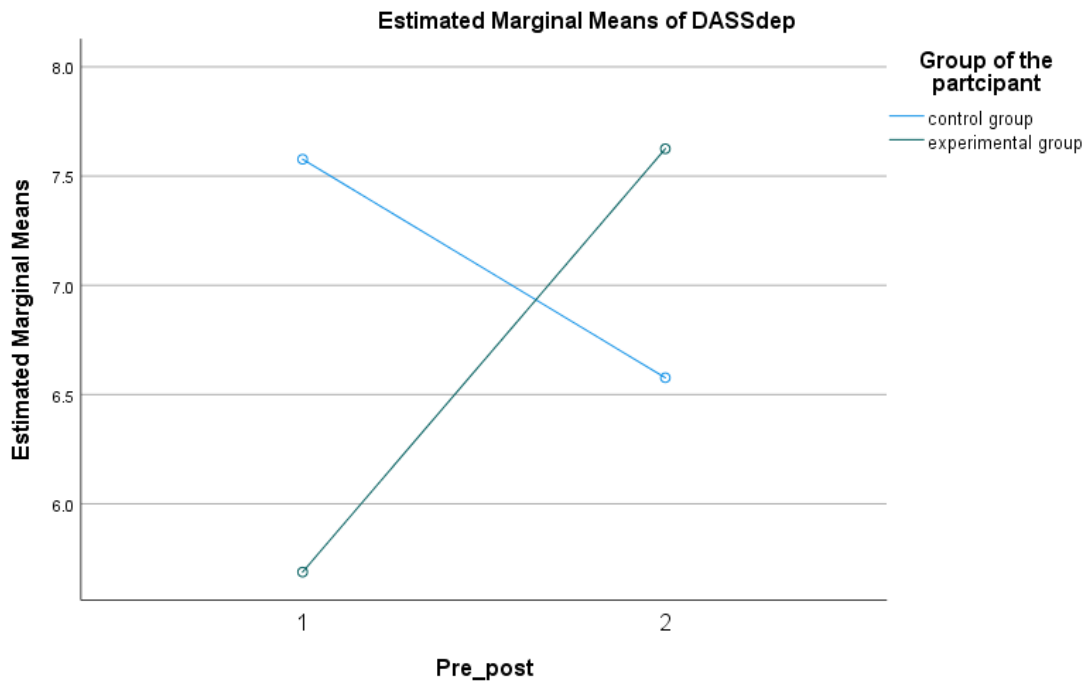
This measure, measures affective symptoms of depression for example low mood, hopelessness, loss of pleasure, etc.,. The aim of this measure was to find out if getting out of the comfort zone will affect depression symptoms. A between subject analysis was conducted comparing both the groups. The group variable showed a type 3 sum of squares of 3.506 with 1 degree of freedom an F-value of 0.080, and a p-value of 0.778 the p value which is higher than the conventional value of 0.05 shows that the data was not statistically significant.

This explains that the effect of out of comfort zone on depression didn't alter the depression levels as compared to following the usual routine. The plot shows that there was a decrease in the control group symptoms while there was an increase in depression symptoms in the experimental group.

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Intercept	3,736.08	1	3,736.08	85.67	.000
Group	3.51	1	3.51	0.08	.778
Error	1,744.41	40	43.61		

### Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Measure: DASSdep



### 4.2.3 Analysis of DASS stress

Evaluating the impact of stepping outside one's comfort zone on stress levels. The participants completed the Stress subscale of the depression anxiety stress scales (DASS-21) both pre and post the intervention. This subscale measures nervousness, non-specific arousal, irritability,

etc. The study compared scores between the experimental and the control group. A between subjects ANOVA was conducted to analyse the differences between pre and post subject scores. No significant main effect of group was seen  $F(1, 40) = 0.033$ ,  $p = .856$ , which indicates that there was no statistically significant in stress level when compared to the control group. The large p value suggests that the difference that is there is due to chance factors and not the intervention.

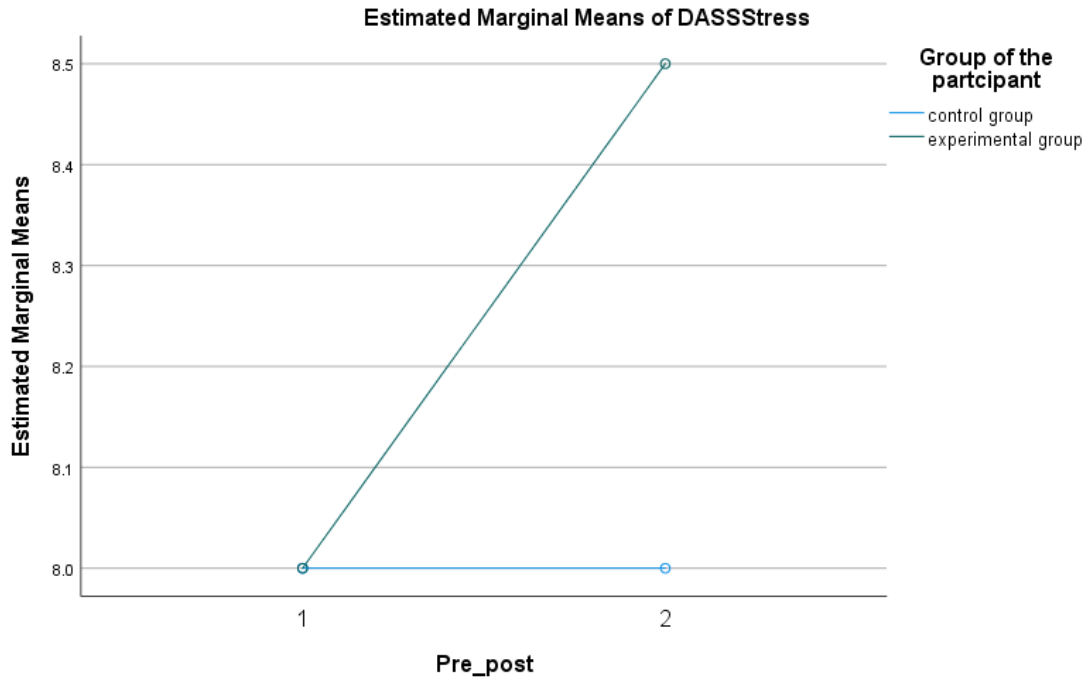
The plot on the other hand suggests that the control group exhibited an increase in stress levels from pre- to post-intervention while on the other hand the experimental group maintained stable stress levels over the same time period. So the control group might show natural fluctuations in the stress level due to day to day pressures while the experimental group might have experienced increased emotional resilience due to the intervention.

These findings suggest that even if the intervention didn't decrease stress it can help stabilise it in the control group.

<b>Source</b>	<b>SS</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>MS</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>p</b>
Intercept	5,230.95	1	5,230.95	141.19	.000
Group	1.24	1	1.24	0.03	.856
Error	1,482.00	40	37.05		

### **Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

Measure: DASSStress



#### 4.2.4 Analysis of DASS anxiety

DASS anxiety's result indicated that there wasn't a statistically significant effect of going out of your comfort zone on anxiety levels between the control and the experimental group following the intervention. The group variable yielded an F-value of 0.001 with a p-value of 0.973 which indicates that the result was significant between both the groups. This also shows us that any difference between the groups might be because of chance and not because of the intervention.

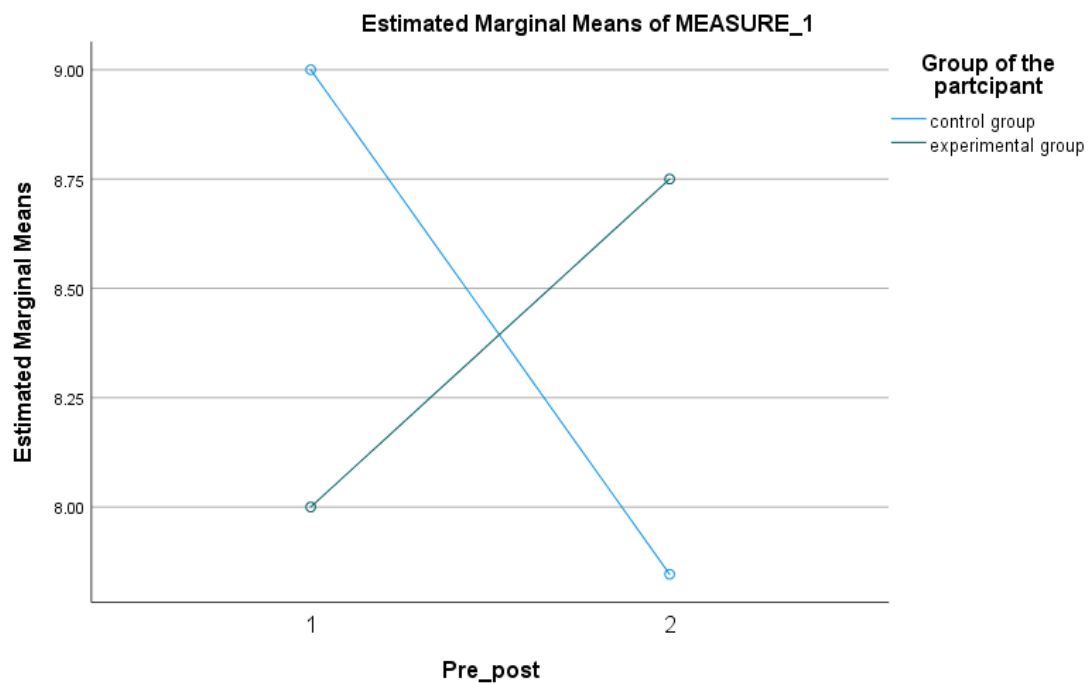
The estimated marginal means graph shows us that there is a slight decrease in anxiety scores for the control group but the anxiety scores of the experimental group increased, but these changes in the scores were less so they didn't reach statistical significance. This explains that the intervention of engaging in out of comfort zone activities did not have an effect on the anxiety scale of DASS. It is possible that for some individuals who aren't habitual of

unpredictable situations stepping out of their comfort zone is actually increasing their anxiety instead of decreasing it.

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Intercept	5,589.76	1	5,589.76	145.45	.000
Group	0.05	1	0.05	0.00	.973
Error	1,537.19	40	38.43		

### Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Measure: MEASURE\_1



### 4.2.5 Analysis of Subjective well-being scale

Subjective Well-Being (SWB) was analysed using a between-subjects design. The intervention did not have a statistical impact on the subjective well-being scores. The F-value was 1.819 with a p-value of .185, which is above the conventional threshold of .05 of statistical significance. This shows that there was no significant difference between the experimental and control group.

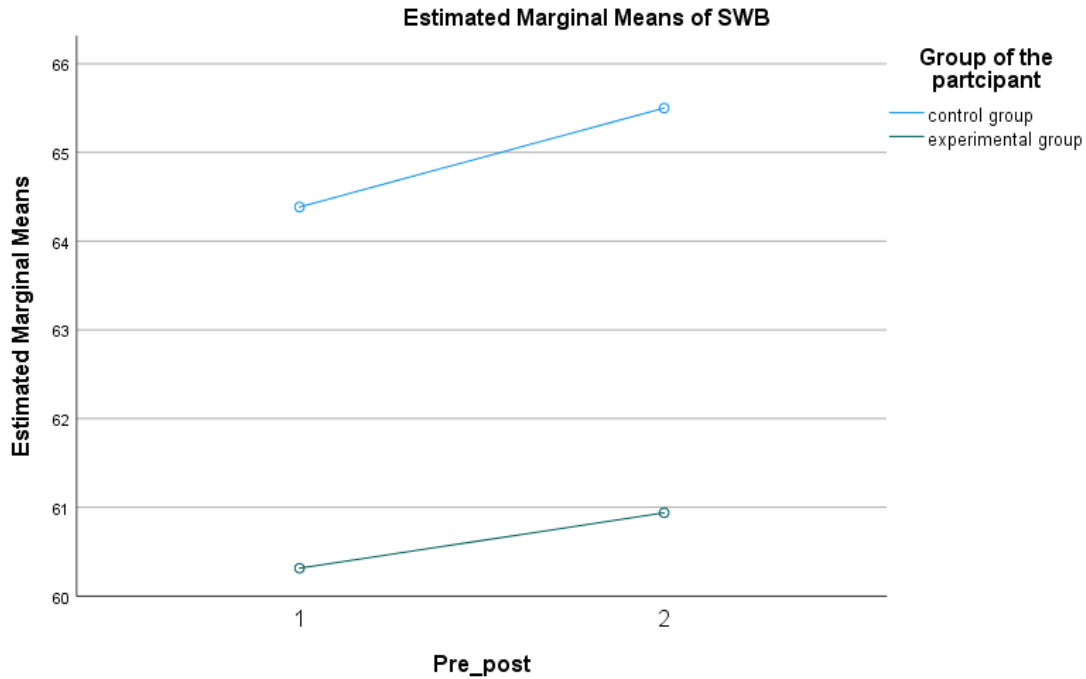
The marginal means plot shows us that both the experimental and the control group showed an upward incline from the pre-test to the post test. The experimental group had a slightly steeper increase than the control group but because there was no statistical significance it cannot make a difference.

This pattern of the plot explains that there may be some positive changes in the subjective well-being of the participants but the effect is too small to make a statistical difference in the analysis.

<b>Source</b>	<b>SS</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>MS</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>p</b>
Intercept	312,339.71	1	312,339.71	1,538.65	.000
Group	369.23	1	369.23	1.82	.185
Error	8,119.83	40	202.99		

### **Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

Measure: SWB



#### 4.2.5 Analysis of GAD - 7

The analysis of GAD – 7 score explains how getting out of the comfort zone effects generalized anxiety disorder across both the experimental group and the control group. The results of the between subject test effects did not yield a statistically significant test result. The group effect yielded an F-value of 0.094 with a p-value of .761, indicating that the observed differences are likely due to chance rather than a real effect of the intervention.

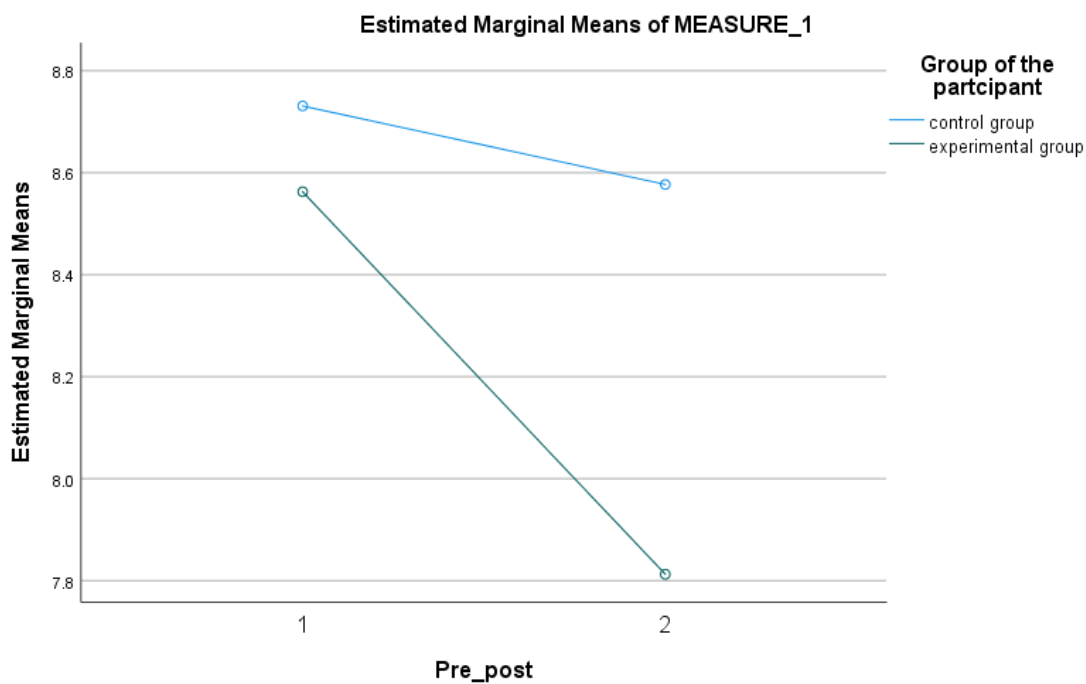
The marginal means graph shows that both the intervention and the control group show a slight decrease in anxiety. The control group showed a slightly higher increase than the experimental group which engaged in out of the comfort zone activities. The experimental group already had a lower score of GAD – 7 and also experienced a decline even though the score was not

statistically significant. This suggests that the intervention did not have a significant impact on the GAD measure at least within the time of the study.

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Intercept	5,618.59	1	5,618.59	122.57	.000
Group	4.31	1	4.31	0.09	.761
Error	1,833.64	40	45.84		

### Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Measure: MEASURE\_1



The study's aim was to find the impact of engaging in out of the comfort zone activities on variables (perceived stress, DASS subscales (depression, anxiety, and stress), subjective well-being (SWB), and generalized anxiety disorder (GAD)). The analysis showed no statistical significance in between group differences after the intervention. The descriptive patterns in the

estimated marginal means showed that some changes like reduction in depression and anxiety scores of the experimental group and very minute changes in subjective well-being even though they weren't significant.

The DASS measure results of depression, stress and anxiety showed no improvement at all for the experimental group in comparison to the control group. The GAD and PSS scales also showed little improvements but not significant at all. SWB increased for both the groups slightly more for the control group but had no significance. Moreover the intervention didn't yield any benefits over the control conditions measured. This suggests that the activities may hold motivational value but their psychological impact is very little without support and guidance

### **4.3 Study – 2**

The first study was designed to measure the effect of behavioural interventions on well-being and psychological functioning among young adults. This study is further designed to interconnect with a survey that differs from the previous research, yet is similar. Study 1 measures how getting out of a comfort zone will affect psychological well-being. On the other hand, Study 2 examines the impact of structured goal-setting on procrastination, personality dimensions, and subjective well-being.

Study 1 divided participants into two groups: the experimental group (who were told to engage in out-of-the-comfort-zone activities) and the control group (who had to follow their daily routine) over a timeline. Activities that were out of my comfort zone included initiating contact with other people, altering their routine, trying different cuisines or genres of novels or movies,

etc. Stress, anxiety, depression, and subjective well-being measures were collected both before and after the intervention to measure the changes. The intervention explored whether doing something out of your comfort zone would impact participants' well-being. The hypothesis was whether exposing people to discomfort would enhance their well-being and help in personal growth.

Study 2 was an extension of study 1 it focused on how consistent goal setting will help in psychological well-being. In this study the participants were again divided into two groups the experimental group (Group 1) was asked to write their new year's resolutions and received weekly follow up emails throughout the intervention period to help in reinforcing them to their commitment to their resolutions. These reminders served as reminders to reinforcing commitment and helping them by providing motivation to the participants. On the other hand, group 2, the control group, did not receive any follow-up emails and were not motivated to follow up with their New Year's resolution. Both groups completed pre- and post-questionnaires; they were supposed to fill out the questionnaire after a gap of one week till the intervention period was over. The measures included in the questionnaire were the Procrastination Scale, the Big Five Factor Inventory (BFI), and the Subjective Well-Being Scale.

A key component of this study was the subjective well-being scale used in both study 1 and study 2, which helped in a comparative analysis of how a behavioural approach, which was study 1, and a goal-oriented study (study 2) created a difference in well-being of individuals.

With this, the study aimed to find whether behavioural changes increase psychological well-being and how goal setting increases or decreases well-being. The results of the second study focused on procrastination. Personality factors and subjective well-being are as follows -

### **4.3.1 Analyses of Procrastination scale**

A repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to assess the impact of time over procrastination scores and the intervention on both the experimental and the control group on the participants. The within subject factor which represents three measuring points namely pre, mid and post test revealed a statistically significant main effect of time,  $F(2, 28) = 8.38, p = .001$ . Which indicated that the participants level of procrastination changed over time regardless of the intervention. However the interaction effect between time and group was not statistically significant,  $F(2, 28) = 0.79, p = .466$  which means that the pattern of change in procrastination across time was similar for both the experimental group which was sent motivational emails and the control group which was not sent any emails. So even though procrastination scores changed over time the intervention didn't lead to any difference in the groups.

The between-subjects main effect of group was also not significant,  $F(1, 14) = 1.84, p = .197$  which indicates no overall difference in procrastination levels in both the groups over time. This means participants did experience changes in the study period but they weren't attributable to the intervention.

#### **Within Subjects Effects**

<b>Source</b>	<b>SS</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>MS</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>p</b>
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<b>RM Factor 1</b>	<b>1392.96</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>696.48</b>	<b>8.38</b>	<b>.001</b>
<b>Residual (within)</b>	<b>2327.38</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>83.12</b>		
<b>RM Factor 1 × Group</b>	<b>128.16</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>64.08</b>	<b>0.79</b>	<b>.466</b>
<b>Residual (interaction)</b>	<b>2283.51</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>81.55</b>		

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#### **Between Subjects Effects**

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<b>Group (between)</b>	<b>157.34</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>157.34</b>	<b>1.84</b>	<b>.197</b>
<b>Residual (between)</b>	<b>1198.49</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>85.61</b>		

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#### **4.3.2 Analysis of BF-5 inventory**

A repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to examine changes in Big Five personality trait scores over time and between groups. As seen in the tables below the within-subjects effect of time was statistically significant,  $F(2, 28) = 8.84$ ,  $p = .001$  which indicates that personality trait scores measured by the BF-5 inventory significantly changed across the three time points, which means that participants' self-reported personality traits did not remain stable throughout the research time period.

The between-subjects effect of group was approaching significance,  $F(1, 14) = 4.34$ ,  $p = .056$  which indicates that there may be some overall differences between the experimental and control groups in terms of their Big Five scores but it didn't reach the statistically significant levels (i.e.,  $p < .05$ ). The interaction effect between time and the group was also not statistically

significant,  $F(2, 28) = 0.28$ ,  $p = .761$  which in turn means that while scores have changed over time but the way they changed did not differ significantly between the two groups. This means that the intervention didn't lead to any personality changes.

#### Within-Subjects Effects

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
RM Factor 1	2886.07	2	1443.03	8.84	.001
Residual (within)	4569.60	28	163.20		
RM Factor 1 × Group	73.89	2	36.94	0.28	.761
Residual (interaction)	3743.78	28	133.71		

#### Between-Subjects Effects

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Group (between)	908.84	1	908.84	4.34	.056
Residual (between)	2933.49	14	209.54		

### 4.3.3 Analysis of subjective well-being scale

Again a repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to help examine the effect the intervention on the well-being scores as seen in the tables given below. The results that were obtained help in understanding the effects better. A significant main effect was seen

of time, the F value was  $F(2, 28) = 10.08$  and the p value was  $p < .001$  which indicates the fact that well-being scores have changed significantly across the three time points but the main effect of group that was seen was not significant in the results the F value was  $F(1, 14) = 2.58$ , the p value was  $p = .130$  which suggests that the overall levels of well-being did not differ significantly between both the experimental and the control groups. Moreover the results of the interaction between time and group didn't come out to be significant, the F value was  $F(2, 28) = 0.21$  and the p value was  $p = .810$  which essentially means that the change that occurred over time in the groups was not different.

In layman's terms this means that the participants well-being changed over time it didn't matter whether they were in the experimental or the control group, but the experimental group did not show a significantly different level of change compared to the control group which essentially means that the interaction didn't have any effect on the well-being of the participants.

### **Within-Subjects Effects**

<b>Source</b>	<b>SS</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>MS</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>p</b>
<b>RM Factor 1</b>	<b>7874.60</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3937.30</b>	<b>10.08</b>	<b>&lt; .001</b>
<b>Residual (within)</b>	<b>10942.07</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>390.79</b>		
<b>RM Factor 1 × Group</b>	<b>182.02</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>91.01</b>	<b>0.21</b>	<b>.810</b>
<b>Residual (interaction)</b>	<b>11989.98</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>428.21</b>		

### **Between-Subjects Effects**

<b>Source</b>	<b>SS</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>MS</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>p</b>
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<b>Group (between)</b>	<b>2025.88</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2025.88</b>	<b>2.58</b>	<b>.130</b>
<b>Residual (between)</b>	<b>10980.62</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>784.33</b>		

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The results for both the studies give have shown that nagging in out of the comfort zone activities have not produced any statistically significant results when compared to the control condition. The effects varied across all the measures that were used in study 1 no significant results were found from between group effects for the measures that were used which were perceived stress, DASS subscales (depression, anxiety, stress), subjective well-being (SWB), or generalized anxiety (GAD-7). Descriptive plots showed slight changes in the scores for the control group and the experimental group but they were not statistically significant. In some cases the control group showed a better increase in the scores of the measures that were used despite not being part of the intervention.

The results of study 2 showed us that there was a statistically significant time effect of procrastination scale and the well-being scale after a repeated measures analysis of variance was done which showed that there were changes across the sample of participants but there was no significant time and group interaction which means that the changes that occurred were not due to the experimental condition. There were no significant effects across the big 5 factor measure as well. So the results suggest that there might have been psychological improvements but they were not due to the intervention.

# Chapter - 5

## Discussion

The basis of the research was to explore the impact of engaging in out-of-your comfort zone activities on the well-being and life satisfaction of youth. The two studies with experimental and control groups examined whether engaging in psychologically safe out-of-the-comfort-zone activities could serve as a positive psychological intervention designed to improve psychological well-being.

Participants who were in the control group were told to follow their routine. Conversely, experimental group members were intentionally instructed to attempt activities beyond their comfort level. The experimental group did not show statistically significant changes in well-being, stress, and anxiety measures compared to the control group. Some changes in a positive direction may have occurred in the experimental group, although they remained statistically insignificant. The control group on the other hand which did not participate in new interventions they just had to follow their daily routines showed minimal changes on the well-being scale which essentially suggests that activities that are out of the comfort zone may have potential but the intensity of the activities may not have been sufficient to produce a statistically significant result.

In the second study, which was an extension of this study, participants were told to write a set of their New Year's resolutions to push them out of their comfort zone by weekly reminders and motivational emails. The control group didn't receive any emails at all. Their pre-, mid-, and post-test scores were recorded. The experimental group showed improvements on the

measures, such as a reduction in procrastination scale, but the changes were not statistically significant, which suggests that the intervention's benefits may not generalize across all domains.

The findings align with prior research which indicates that novel activities can help increase positive changes (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006) but the lack of significant changes in the study might be attributed to many issues such as the short time frame, external influences like exams, tests, sessions and efforts. New year's resolutions, however reasonable, have always had a low follow-up rate.

Study 2, in general, has observed positive trends regarding procrastination reduction, even if the results were insignificant, in terms of subjective significance for the participants who went through with the intervention seriously. Similarly, in study 1, participants who showed an increase in well-being may benefit, which we can see in the study findings by Russo-Netzer and Cohen (2023).

Some participants reported heightened stress or anxiety in anticipation of their chosen activities, which was seen as eustress or positive stress, a stress that helps in increasing motivation and performance (Selye, 1974). These responses can also be seen in cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), in which individuals are intentionally made to face negative or fear-provoking situations, which in turn helps in building resilience and tolerance for certain situations. Desensitisation involves gradually exposing people to situations they either fear or are uncomfortable with, but in a controlled manner, then reducing the fear related to the situation by gradually increasing exposure. Similarly, this study aimed at inducing tasks that were uncomfortable before, but then slowly realizing that it helps in personal growth and well-

being once the task is done. The participants in study 2 who were supposed to keep up and follow through with their New Year's resolutions may have been affected by this, even though the results didn't show anything significant

Even though study 2 has shown a lack of statistical significance, which challenges the hypothesis, the Big 5 factor inventory helps us understand that different traits also play a role in the response to the intervention. Participants who were high on extraversion might have been more responsive to the intervention, whereas those who were high on neuroticism might need a little more push to reach that level.

Discomfort or being out of one's comfort zone is subjective; this, in turn, may have influenced the outcomes. The intervention aimed at encouraging people to step out of their comfort zone, but the definition of what may be considered out of their comfort zone may differ for different people. An action out of one person's comfort zone might not be out of another person's comfort zone, for example, attending a social event might be ordinary for some people but difficult for others. Since the intervention was supposed to be self-chosen, there was no standardized threshold for discomfort; this may have altered how impactful the intervention was.

This can be seen in study 2, where individuals were supposed to choose resolutions. The fact that the results were not significant may align with this conclusion. Some participants may have chosen resolutions aligning with their pre-existing goals, which may not have resulted in discomfort. In contrast, other people may have chosen goals that do not align with their pre-existing goals, which might have caused discomfort.

This research highlights the effects of engaging in out of the comfort zone activities the intervention did show some trends but it is also important to acknowledge that the results didn't show statistically significant results. Across both the studies the outcomes didn't produce significant changes in the measures. Future research should focus on more specific interventions and longer follow up period.

## Chapter – 6

### Limitations

There are several limitations associated with both studies. First, the duration of the study and the intervention was relatively short, two weeks for the first study and three weeks for the second phase of the study, which limits the study from getting appropriate results from the long-term impact of the intervention. Changes in procrastination, well-being, personality factors, anxiety levels, etc, may take some time and follow-up questioning to measure correctly.

Next, the studies relied on self-report measures, which are prone to biases like mood at the time of self-report, desirability bias, inaccurate description of their experience, etc. These biases may affect how reliable the well-being results, procrastination, etc, were. Future research can include observation as a predictor of the intervention's effect.

In study 2, participants were asked to set a New Year's resolution outside of their comfort zone. This, in turn, introduced variability because participants differed in what they felt was, which could have changed the overall effect of the intervention.

Last, the intervention focuses on personal preferences as to what individuals think is out of their comfort zone because they were not instructed to have a pre-fixed level of out-of-comfort-zone activities. Future research should ensure that each participant engages in a task that induces growth.

## Chapter - 7

### Conclusion

The research aimed at exploring how getting out of the comfort zone will affect the well-being and life satisfaction among youth. With the help of two studies each of which was designed to assess different aspects of the intervention it was aimed to determine whether engaging in unfamiliar and challenging activities could help serve in boosting well-being.

Study 1 had an experimental versus control group in which the experimental group was instructed to complete one activity that they could choose by themselves and which was also supposed to be out of their comfort zone, the control group, on the other hand, had to carry on with their routine for the day. Participants who were in the experimental group engaged in activities like interacting with other people, going to the gym, etc. They were assessed on their anxiety, depression, stress, and well-being measures.

Study 2 on the other hand also had two groups one experimental and one control group the experimental group and the control group were asked what their new year's resolution were (out of their comfort zone) the difference was that the experimental group was sent motivational emails to help them complete their new year's resolution this group was assessed based on the level of their procrastination, the big 5 factor personality scale and their well-being to tie this study with the 1st study and observe how if the well-being scores differed or not. The results indicated that the intervention failed to produce statistically significant results.

Even though previous research studies have been conducted on adults that stepped out of their comfort zone and did different activities which have shown positive outcomes in terms of well-

being (e.g., Russo-Netzer & Cohen, 2023), the findings of the current study suggest that the same intervention may have different reasons not to have been significant. Adults usually have stable careers and identities, can make better decisions, and are likelier to experience better results from these interventions. However, the young population is still exploring their identities, their personality, their subjects, the career path they want to choose in the future, their relationships with themselves and other people, and exams, which may increase the difficulty that they may face with the increased burden of the intervention. They may fear being judged, which could have altered the results.

Additionally young people are in the stage of development which can cause their behaviour or their emotions can change rapidly than that of adults. So a brief intervention might not be able to create a noticeable difference more repetition may be required for the study to show measurable effects.

Moreover younger population may need more reinforcement and guidance to help them benefit from the behavioural intervention. The intervention may look theoretically promising but its application on the youth may require a little adaptation and changes to help get statistically significant results.

## Chapter - 8

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