

Empirical Analysis of 3D-WS in Indian Context

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Abstract

This study has been designed to explore the potential relationship of wisdom with demographic factors like age, gender, length of experience, number of organisations worked for, and the position held by the person in the organisation. Scope of the study is limited to teaching fraternity working in professional educational institutions in the national capital region of India. Ardel's (2003) three-dimensional wisdom scale (3D-WS) was used for measuring individual wisdom. Study results indicate that age and gender have no significant relationship with wisdom. However, strong relationship was observed between wisdom and length of experience; number of organisations worked for; and the position held by the person in the organisation, indicating that wisdom is the outcome of duration, variety of professional exposure; and the role and position related responsibilities carried out by the person.

Keywords: Affective, Cognitive, Reflective, Wisdom, 3D-WS

1. Introduction

Wisdom is an ancient philosophical concept, and yet, until recently it has escaped the attention of psychologists of the modern era. Wisdom is a subject that has puzzled philosophers, intellectuals, and mystics throughout the ages. The definition of wisdom remains elusive and debatable. Even though wisdom has been used in a variety of contexts in the English language, its meaning often varies due to the context of its use. Thus, it is not surprising that psychologists have been slow to study this multifaceted concept. In the domains of educational and counselling psychology, wisdom had been historically ignored as a research topic. Educational psychology mostly focused upon topics such as childhood learning, psychometric or intelligence testing issues, learning of remedial skills in adult education, etc. In counselling psychology, early efforts focused upon treating psychopathology and on personality development. As psychologists were forging a new science at the turn of the 20th century,

they distanced themselves from humanistic fields in order to establish psychology as a scientific discipline. Thus, early psychologists avoided philosophical concepts such as wisdom that did not build psychology into an empirical science. Wisdom remained unexplored in a scientific context until the 1980's²⁴. Even at the close of the 20th century, the word 'wisdom' does not appear in a glossary of psychological terms³⁸. Thus, for a long time, wisdom was considered outside the scope of psychological investigations.

2. Literature Review

Modern management does not refer to Wisdom Management as a separate topic; it is linked to Knowledge Management as a use. During the last twenty years, people who work to find information in behavioural science have shown renewed interest in the ancient concept of wisdom^{25-27,48}, which has been in the past believed as the peak of human development¹⁴. Wisdom coordinates knowledge and judgments about the

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‘fundamental practical’s of life’ around such properties as: 1. Success plans and goals involving the conduct and meaning of life; 2. Limits of knowledge and uncertainties of the world; 3. Excellence of judgment and opinions about what could or should be done about a situation; 4. Knowledge with very unusual scope, depth, and balance; 5. Search for a perfect synergy of mind and character; and 6. Balancing the good or well-being of oneself and that of others¹⁴.

Wisdom has long been conceived as a virtue by philosophers and by admired leaders of diverse religions with divergent and overlapping ideas about virtues and values associated with wisdom³. Historically, issues of virtues and values have been avoided by psychologists, in part because the ideal aspirations of psychological science, articulated by broad consensus, direct psychologists to work towards understanding, describing, or predicting human behaviour and experience, reduction of human suffering, and promotion of the well-being of persons, while avoiding the prescription or promotion of any specific ideology or any set of values¹¹. Psychologists have been wary of the concept of wisdom for decades and remain wary about attempting to measure individual differences in the levels of wisdom as an attribute of persons^{13,21}. However, in a fast changing and uncertain world where rapid scientific and technological strides are accompanied by equally strong waves of intolerance, breakdown of family and societal systems, and an increasing sense of frustration and inability to resolve inner conflicts, there is a need for a serious study and scientific exploration of the topic of wisdom. The psychological study of wisdom and its meas-

urement is infamously difficult^{42,46}, but not so much that the efforts to study or measure wisdom should be abandoned.

Achenbaum and Orwoll¹ define wisdom as intrapersonal, between people and transpersonal experiences in the dimensions of cognitive (thought), affect (feeling), and conation (behaviour). The cognitive dimension contains self-knowledge, understanding, and the recognition of the limits of knowledge and understanding. The affective dimension consists of self-development, deeply caring; understanding feelings and self-excellence, and the conative represents integrity, honesty, good human quality, maturity in relationships, and philosophical/spiritual promises. Based on this definition, males might have an advantage in the intrapersonal sphere and cognitive wisdom dimension, whereas females might excel in the interpersonal and affective aspects of wisdom³⁵. Boys are often talked with people to explore the world and to become independent and able to depend on you²⁰. Because of this, ‘masculine’ thinking could be described as self-contained desires to do things for you and not be like others that are seen as separation, lack of interest, mastery, and actions of accomplishing or completing something challenging³⁹. On the other hand, Girls are encouraged to develop ability to get along well with others such as deeply caring, understanding feelings and the ability to care for others⁴⁹. Therefore, men might find it easier than women to perceive reality in a goal, clear and sensible, and detached way, whereas women might be more very kind and understanding, caring, and mature in relationships than men.

Table 1. Definitions of wisdom

References	Definitions
Webster ⁵²	Faculty of making the best use of knowledge, experience, and understanding by exercising good judgement.
Clayton and Birren ²⁶	An integration of cognitive, reflective, and affective dimensions.
McIntyre ³²	Related to options and how to judge what we should do.
Ackoff ²	Process that makes use of knowledge in order to answer difficult questions while considering human factors like moral or ethical codes.
Staudinger and Baltes ⁴¹	An expert knowledge to handle difficult questions in life.
Beck ¹⁶	Partly acquired by means of everyday trial and error
Aubrey and Cohen ¹²	More than being cultured and well educated; it implies an ethical obligation to improve society and an attitude of caring
Baltes and Staudinger ¹⁴	A multifaceted and multidimensional concept and that the multiple facets and dimensions reinforce each other

Brown and Starkey ¹⁴	The key to obtaining competitive advantage from organizational learning and knowledge, wisdom is a key strategic resource, but one that is missing as a construct in the knowledge-based theory of the firm.
Bierly et. al. ¹⁷	The ability to best use knowledge for establishing and achieving desired goals and learning about wisdom as the process of discerning judgments and action based on knowledge.
Webster 2007 ⁵²	A complex phenomenon of multiple constructs working together in a synergistic way.
Nonaka and Kyoko ³⁴	Making (human) sense of Data, Information, and Knowledge; composed of Values and Vision
Nonaka and Kyoto ³⁴	More important than Technology

3. Factors Affecting Wisdom

Wisdom involves a maturity of character with important salience to sound reasoning and judgment, and that wisdom would be most likely to emerge in adulthood¹⁸. The high level of integration across emotional and cognitive processes is a core characteristic of developmental maturity in adulthood^{5,31,36,37}, and essential for excellence in mature and effective 'use of knowledge in problem solving'¹⁸. Ardel's theory^{5,10}, and the studies of some other authors on the psychology of wisdom⁴³⁻⁴⁵ suggest that here are variations in the level of wisdom expressed by individuals depending on the interaction of their personal characteristics and the contextual features of the situations calling for wisdom.

Individuals who have reached the level of maturity are characterized as 'wise; broadly empathic; with a full sense of identity; able to reconcile inner conflicts and integrate paradoxes'³³, and humble^{28,30,40}. Wisdom-related maturity is assumed to have 'practical and transcendent' aspects or functions⁵⁴; therefore, the qualities of wisdom enable wise persons to navigate life's common challenges with exceptional skill and to flourish even in the face of serious hardships^{5-10,53,54}.

4. Three-Dimensional Wisdom Theory: An Overview

The theoretical foundation for this study is a psychological view of wisdom, in which wisdom is defined as a high level of integration across certain affective,

cognitive, and reflective dimensions of personality maturity^{5,26}. Monika Ardel⁵ is one of the most recent scholars to make a substantial contribution to knowledge about the nature of wisdom and measurement of wisdom in individuals^{15,23,46}. Ardel emphasizes that the emergence of wisdom requires the integration of three distinct but inseparable domains i.e., cognitive, reflective and affective. The cognitive dimension of wisdom refers to a person's ability to understand life, that is, to understand the importance and deeper meaning of important pattern of things and events, especially relating to intrapersonal and interpersonal matters^{4,19,24,29,47}. The reflective dimension is a requirement for the development of the cognitive dimension of wisdom. A deeper understanding of life is only possible if one can perceive reality as it is without any major distortions. The affective dimension refers to the presence of positive feelings of love, hate, fear etc and behaviour toward other beings, such as feelings and acts of sympathy and kindness, and the absence of indifferent or negative emotions and behaviour toward others. The three dimensions are not independent of each other, but they are not conceptually identical either⁵.

Ardel's model⁵ treats wisdom as a latent variable with cognitive, reflective, and affective as the effect indicators. Ardel developed and tested the Three-Dimensional Wisdom Scale (3D-WS, 2003), a self-administered rating scale that assesses individual's levels of wisdom. In a population drawn from middle-aged and older members of the general population, Ardel⁵ found this instrument to show reliability and validity as a measure of wisdom.

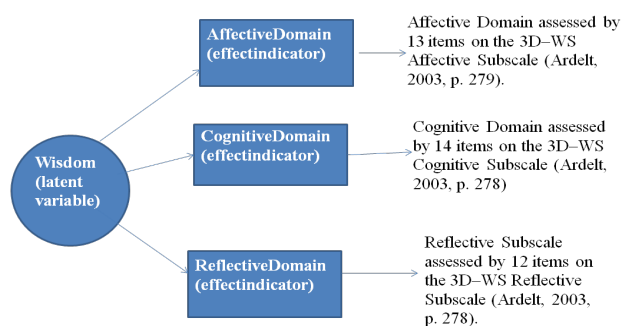


Figure 1. Representation of Ardel’s three-dimensional model of wisdom⁵.

5. Conceptual Framework of the Study

This study incorporates the use of “Three Dimensional-Wisdom Scale”⁵ to measure wisdom as a latent variable. This instrument has three subscales; thus, there were four dependent variables: (a) score on the 3D-WS Affective Subscale (i.e., the mean of 13 items); (b) score on the 3D-WS Cognitive Subscale (i.e., the mean of 14 items); (c) score on the 3D-WS Reflective Subscale (i.e., the mean of 12 items); and (d) 3D-WS Combined Scale score (i.e., the mean of the three subscale scores). Ardel’s scoring instructions⁵ was used to calculate participants’ scores on this instrument.

The conceptual framework establishes a linkage between demographics and wisdom of the selected sample population. Ardel⁵ had developed the three dimensional wisdom scale using qualitative and quantitative interviews with a sample of 180 old persons (age 52-plus). However, this study tested different age groups ranging between 25 and 55 years. The following hypotheses have been formulated:

H1:

There is the null hypothesis is converted into alternate hypothesis significant relationship between wisdom and people of different age groups.

H2:

There is the null hypothesis is converted into alternate hypothesis significant relationship between wisdom and gender.

H3:

There is the null hypothesis is converted into alternate hypothesis significant relationship between wisdom and length of experience.

H4:

There is the null hypothesis is converted into alternate hypothesis significant relationship between wisdom and number of organisations the person worked for.

H5:

There is the null hypothesis is converted into alternate hypothesis significant relationship between wisdom and the position held by a person in an organisation.

The study covers teaching fraternity working in professional educational institutions in Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR) of India. Judgmental sampling has been used for the purpose of data collection. In total 500 questionnaires were distributed. 433 completed questionnaires were used and the remaining questionnaires were discarded on account of missing data. IBM SPSS 20 was deployed for data analysis. Single tail ANOVA/T-test was used to study the relationships between independent and dependent variables.

6. Analysis and Results

Results of the study are presented in the following table:

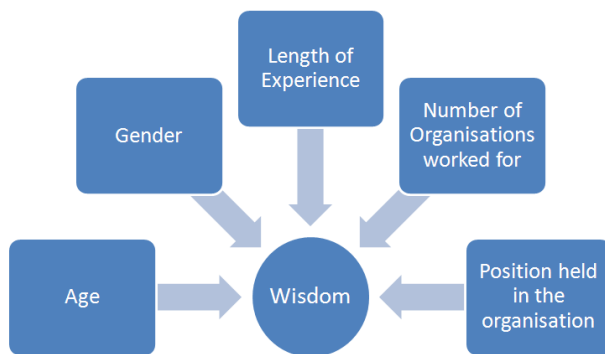


Figure 2. Conceptual model of wisdom.

Table 2. Study findings and results

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Hypothesis	Significance Level	Acceptance/ Rejection
Age	Wisdom	H1: There is a significant relationship between wisdom and people of different age groups.	.117	Rejected
Gender		H2: There is a significant relationship between wisdom and gender.	.507	Rejected
Length of Experience		H3: There is significant relationship between wisdom and length of experience.	.005	Accepted
Number of Organisations Worked for		H4: There is significant relationship between wisdom and number of organisations people worked for.	.009	Accepted
Position held by the person in an Organisation		H5: There is significant relationship between wisdom and position held by the person in an organisation.	.047	Accepted

7. Conclusion

The study results show some interesting findings. In the first place, the study conducted in the Indian context with Ardel's 3D-WS scale demonstrates that Ardel's theory of wisdom⁵, can be used as a meaningful framework for embarking on cross cultural studies of wisdom and its measurement.

The study focused on homogenous occupational groups from educational sector who have the potential to make an impact and contribution to theory development, which may ultimately lead to meaningful, practical, and rewarding studies of wisdom at the level of the general population.

This study challenges a popular belief that 'wisdom comes with winters'. The results refute the assumption of strong association between older age and higher wisdom.

Even younger persons are capable of resolving conflicts. The findings match Ardel's view that wisdom and age are not directly related. Wisdom should therefore be studied in terms of maturity likely to be found amongst middle-aged and older adults.

Gender wise variation in wisdom is not supported by the study results. This indicates that men and women are equally capable to discover deeper truths of life. They are equally competent to handle complicated and sensitive issues of life, despite being different at emotional level.

Study results also indicate that length of experience and number of institutions worked for, i.e., duration and variety of professional exposure; have a positive impact on wisdom. Hence, at the organisation level, it may be possible to design interventions for employees in terms of job rotation and variety for their growth in terms of wisdom.

8. Scope for Future Research

Present study has limitations in terms of the scope, sample size and geographical coverage. Future studies can focus on larger population samples constituting domains other than education. Studies may also be carried out to identify interventions that help in grooming individuals towards higher levels of wisdom; or think tanks that nurture organizational wisdom.

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