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RESEARCH ARTICLE

An Empirical Study of Ancient Wisdom

Effect of Anasakti (Non-Attachment) and Ahamkara (Ego) on Well-Being Amongst Indians

Kriti GUPTA [1] and Jyotsna AGRAWAL [2]

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[1] O.P. Jindal Global University, Jindal School of Psychology and Counseling, Sonepat, Haryana, India
[2] National Institute of Mental Health Neurosciences, Department of Clinical Psychology, Bengaluru, India

Correspondence
Jyotsna Agrawal
National Institute of Mental Health Neurosciences, Department of Clinical Psychology
Postal Adress: Hosur Road, Near Dairy circle, Bengaluru-560029, India
Email: jyotsna.agl@gmail.com

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Introduction: According to Indian psychology, *anasakti* (non-attachment) and *ahamkara* (ego) play a significant role in determining true happiness.
Aims: To study the role of *anasakti* (non-attachment) and *ahamkara* (ego) on the level of well-being amongst Indian adults.
Methods: For the current study, 240 educated, urban Indian adults (Females = 104, Males = 136) were surveyed to investigate the relationship of *anasakti* (non-attachment) and *ahamkara* (ego) with well-being variables.
Results: Anasakti ("non-attachment") was revealed to be a significant factor in ensuring life satisfaction and experiencing positive emotions. Although ahamkara ("ego") contributed significantly toward higher cognitive well-being and affective states, it better predicted negative emotions.
Conclusions: The current study's findings may widen our understanding of "What makes people happy?" and may add to the global well-being literature.

Keywords: non-attachment, ego, well-being, yoga psychology, India

Introduction

Well-being stands among the widely researched concepts and is relevant in ensuring the quality of our existence. It is now accepted that well-being consists of a positive and holistic state, which includes physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being (Keyes, 2014; Vaillant & Vaillant, 2005), rather than just an absence of psychological problems.

Technological and economic development has offered all possible measures for maintaining an effortless and comfortable lifestyle; however, achieving sustainable happiness or well-being remains challenging (Christopher,

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2018; Dabas & Singh, 2018; Diener & Seligman, 2004; Mishra, 2010; Wadhwa & Palvia, 2018). Further, it has been suggested that the idea of happiness may vary across societies and countries since it also depends on certain cultural and economic factors (European Social Survey, 2015), and thus needs more research across cultures.

In modern psychology, the definition and description of well-being and positive mental health have been evolving over the past few decades. From describing it as a collection of hedonistic moments to viewing it in terms of achieving a fulfilling life, scholars have used a variety of lenses to define happiness (Diener et al., 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2001). Later, the PERMA model (Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishment) was used to present a more holistic picture of well-being (Seligman, 2011). However, it has also been criticized for having limited cross-cultural implications (Khaw & Kern, 2014). Further, Kjell et al. (2016) argued that although the modern operationalisation of positive mental health is wide and varied, it mainly represents sense-based happiness, which largely depends on fulfilling egotistical expectations. Since such external and predominantly materialistic ways of achieving complete well-being are liable to change with time and context, therefore it often seems challenging for people to sustain long-lasting happiness (Dabas & Singh, 2018; Diener & Seligman, 2004; Dittmar et al., 2014; Elphinstone & Whitehead, 2019; Hoffman, 2007; Mishra, 2010; Salagame, 2013; Singh et al., 2016).

In this background, exploring relevant psychological concepts from the Indian knowledge traditions seems worthwhile. This knowledge has concluded that joy is the essential nature of humans and does not depend on worldly modes (Banavathy & Choudry, 2014; Singh & Modi, 2011). Moreover, other comparable constructs that play down the role of external and/or worldly sources for achieving long-lasting happiness, and emphasize a balanced stance towards the self, are present in the literature, such as mindfulness (Pearson et al., 2015), quiet ego (Bauer & Wayment, 2008) and self-compassion (Neff, 2003). Therefore, studies to further our understanding of such concepts and their significance for positive mental health seem fruitful. Additionally, the focus on Consciousness in Indian psychology will address people's concerns about spiritual growth and optimal functioning (Dalal & Misra, 2010) while resonating with the "panpsychism" school of European philosophy (Agrawal & Cornelissen, 2021).

Correlates of Happiness in Indian Traditions: Anasakti (Non-Attachment) and Ahamkara (Ego)

Indian thinkers have proposed that embodied humans have the experience of two selves; the metaphysical/transcendental Self (denoted with capital "S") and the empirical self. The metaphysical Self, (*Atman* or *Purusha)*, embedded in the transcendental Self (*Brahman*), is the true nature of a being. It is inherently blissful; therefore, realising this Self leads to utmost happiness (Banavathy & Choudry, 2014; Chandur & Sriram, 2018; Collins & Desai, 1986; Salagame, 2014). Indian scriptures such as the *Upanishads* and *Bhagavadgita* have suggested that true happiness is attained through self-realisation (Agrawal, 1982; Banavathy & Choudry, 2014; Salagame, 2013). It involves transcending the empirical-self based identity (*ahamkara*) and merging the individual soul with the transcendental Self (*Brahman*) or pure consciousness by following the path of *anasakti* (non-attachment) and removing attachments to the materialistic world (Banth & Talwar, 2012; Bhushan & Jha, 2005; Chandur & Sriram, 2018; Pande & Naidu, 1992).

In the psychological literature, authors have noted that many psycho-spiritual concepts originating in Eastern cultures are difficult to define; for example, issues related to the definition of mindfulness have been widely discussed (Anālayo, 2019; Nilsson & Kazemi, 2016). Along similar lines, *anasakti* (non-attachment) also remains a hard-to-define concept, with scholars giving multiple and occasionally overlapping definitions (Gupta & Agrawal, 2021). Nevertheless, based on the available descriptions, *anasakti* (non-attachment) represents non-clinginess to desires and non-insistence on over-controlling life events and selfish actions. It also emphasises task excellence without self-centred concern for results (Pande & Naidu, 1992; Pande & Tewari, 2011).

It is important to note that the Indian tradition involves many schools of thought, predominantly falling under the Hindu, Buddhist & Jain categories. Every school has emphasized the idea of non-attachment; however, here, the concept of non-attachment and ego will be discussed within the context of Hinduism and Buddhism since most research works have followed these two religions for defining the concept.

Anasakti (Non-Attachment) from the Hindu Perspective

Anasakti (non-attachment) may be considered the standard term for illustrating the notion of non-attachment in India. It seems to carry the essence of non-attachment better than the term itself (Hoffman, 2007). *Anasakti* (non-attachment) has been used in both formal psychological works, as well as folk stories and cultural phrases

(Bhushan & Jha, 2005; Banth & Talwar, 2012; Chandur & Sriram, 2018; Pande & Naidu, 1992; Singh & Raina, 2015). Hindu scriptures describe it as a mental state free from *asakti* (attachment) and the resulting emotional fluctuations. It largely contributes to establishing a state where the mind remains a keen observer of events without being affected by the same (Banth & Talwar, 2012; Chandur & Sriram, 2018). Therefore, it motivates a person to be involved in worldly affairs without selfish interests (Bhushan & Jha, 2005; Pande & Naidu, 1992). By inculcating *anasakti* (non-attachment), anyone can have a flourishing and peaceful life, even in the face of extreme difficulties. Hence, as per classical Indian philosophy, *anasakti* (non-attachment) embodies spiritualism and excellence in living (Pande & Naidu, 1992).

Non-Attachment (Anasakti) in Buddhist Teachings

As per Buddhism, non-attachment is a subjective quality involving freedom from a fixation, sensory or mental objects, or from the urge to direct life events, and openness to life without desiring specific experiences (Elphinstone et al., 2015; Sahdra et al., 2010; Sahdra & Shaver, 2013; Whitehead et al., 2020).

It may be noted that both the knowledge systems (Hindu and Buddhist) view attachment as the root cause of our endless suffering. They also agree that *anasakti* (non-attachment) requires one to transcend their egotistic tendencies and rigid beliefs regarding self, others, and life so that the individual can be free from attachments (Bhawuk, 2000, 2008; Gupta & Agrawal, 2020; Sahdra et al., 2010).

Anasakti (Non-Attachment) Versus Asakti (Attachment)

The idea of non-attachment seems universally prevalent across schools of thought and religion; however, it is especially salient and thereby widely discussed in the Hindu and Buddhist scriptures (Huxley, 1941). Within these Eastern knowledge traditions, *asakti* (attachment) is viewed as "psychic cement" (Agrawal, 1982, p. 1), a psychological phenomenon that keeps one's sense of self glued to worldly events and actions. In this manner, *asakti* (attachment) binds the self to the empirical world (*prakriti*) and holds them back from experiencing or realising the transcendental Self (Bhushan & Jha, 2005).

Ahamkara (Ego) in Hindu Thought

As per Vedanta, *ahamkara* (ego) emerges when the deeper Self identifies itself with the material aspect (*prakriti*) and with the body (*deha*) due to primary ignorance (*avidya*) while ignoring its metaphysical aspect (*Atman/Purusa*) (Salagame, 2011). Salagame et al. (2005) have proposed four aspects of *ahamkara* (ego) based on Hindu Vedantic ideas which include: (a) a sense of uniqueness in terms of having distinct characteristics (*vaishishtya*), (b) a sense of doer-ship in terms of being the agent and having control over every action and its outcomes (*kartatva*), (c) having an identification with worldly objects, in terms of me and mine (*abhimana*), and (d) having a sense of differentiation in terms of separation between I versus not-I (*dvaita bhava*) (Salagame & Raj, 1999; Salagame et al., 2005).

Self in Buddhism

Within Buddhism, belief in a static, permanent self has been considered ignorance since the self is supposed to be transient (Paranjpe, 2002). As per Buddhist psychological literature, the detriment of having a misconceived notion of a fixed self is that it leads one to avoid the reality of this world's and its objects' transitory nature. Thereby, it creates defensiveness in individuals against this reality (Brazier, 2003). Gradually, the person gets attached to the self and believes that fulfilling the desires of this self would bring happiness. Such misperception makes a person regard everything as an extension of their self, leading to the development of egoism. With egoism, the person becomes self-centred and egocentric (Dambrun & Ricard, 2011). Therefore, in Buddhism, developing the state of *no-self* or releasing the attachment to the sense of self is suggested as the path of freedom from personal sufferings (Dambrun & Ricard, 2011; Shiah, 2016).

Anasakti (Non-Attachment) and Positive Outcomes

In empirical research, it has been found that *anasakti* (non-attachment) leads one to focus on work excellence without insistence on a distinct outcome or feeling and, therefore, increases productivity and satisfaction

(Mulla & Krishnan, 2008; Pande & Naidu, 1992). It is also associated with the development of emotional equanimity towards different life circumstances and hence promises less distress and better mental health during challenging life events (Banth & Talwar, 2012; Budiarto, 2019; Pande & Tewari, 2011; Wang et al., 2016). Besides, such a non-attached approach induces unconditional care and concern for others (Singh & Raina, 2015), along with hopefulness (Shaw, 1995), and a more optimistic view of life (Agrawal & Jaiswal, 2013). *Anasakti* (non-attachment) has also been found to be associated with wisdom (Jeste & Vahia, 2008) and other indicators of an optimal psychological development, such as self-actualisation and self-transcendence (Whitehead et al., 2020).

Ahamkara (Ego) and Psychological Functioning

As discussed earlier, the ego-based identity or *ahamkara* (ego) has certain implications for one's psychological functioning. As per Salagame's model, an over or under-emphasis on any single aspect of *ahamkara* (ego) may lead to mental health problems, such as anxiety (Rekha, 1995; Salagame & Raj, 1999) and personality disorders (Salagame et al., 2005). Gaur (2011) has suggested that people with a high *ahamkara* (ego) may engage in self-adoration while neglecting others and may even put others' interests at stake for their benefit. Nevertheless, some scholars have also highlighted *ahamkara*'s (ego) utility in human life. For example, in "Integral Yoga", Sri Aurobindo argues that an individual achieves an existence out of the common mass through *ahamkara* (ego) (Aurobindo 2005; Reddy, 1990). Similarly, Raghuram (2007) suggests that *ahamkara* (ego) may help in knowing and carrying out essential life activities and social responsibilities and, therefore, recommends disciplining it instead of obliterating it.

In summary, although the terms *anasakti* (non-attachment) and *ahamkara* (ego) are rooted in the Indian tradition, these psychological concepts seem to have universal applications. They are linked to the idea of a deeper Self or Consciousness, which is the source of unconditional happiness and well-being. Even in European philosophy, the primacy of Consciousness (panpsychism) has been an essential element over the centuries (Agrawal & Cornelissen, 2021). Further, recent research with Western samples has also reported that non-attachment and going beyond egoistic concerns are associated with positive functioning (Sahdra et al., 2010; Wayment et al., 2011; Whitehead et al., 2020). Nevertheless, more research employing diverse samples, tools and methodologies is required.

Measuring the Indian Concepts of Anasakti (Non-Attachment) and Ahamkara (Ego)

In psychological research, it has been noted that many psycho-spiritual concepts originating in Eastern cultures are hard to define in a precise manner. For example, the issues related to describing mindfulness have been widely discussed (Anālayo, 2019; Nilsson & Kazemi, 2016). On similar lines, *anasakti* (non-attachment) is also hard to define and scholars have given multiple and sometimes overlapping definitions (Gupta & Agrawal, 2020). In research, *anasakti* (non-attachment) is usually assessed using scales based on perspectives given in either Bhagavadgita (Pande & Naidu, 1992), Yoga (Bhushan & Jha, 2005), or Buddhism (Sahdra et al., 2010). Although all these perspectives are categorised as Eastern philosophical thought, subtle variations could be found in definitions and interpretations of the same concept within these philosophical reflections. Therefore, psychological measures rooted in specific knowledge traditions may also tap into similar yet distinct aspects of *anasakti* (non-attachment), and it was noted that such scales had shown good psychometric properties. Similar issues have been reported for the definition and measurement of *ahamkara* (ego), with few tools available (Gupta & Agrawal, 2021).

The current study has tried to overcome these issues in the best way possible. *Anasakti* (non-attachment) was operationalised as "an inner state of freedom, which lacks clinging to ideas, expectations, extrinsic motivations, materialistic desires or selfish interests, contains a complete engagement in tasks while also working for the larger good of humanity, and maintains composure in pleasant or unpleasant experiences" (Gupta & Agrawal, 2020, pp. 3). *Ahamkara* (ego) was operationalised as a self-sense, which includes a sense of separation from others, identification with worldly matters, and a belief that one possesses unique characteristics and views oneself as the agent of every action.

Three distinct standardized anasakti-scales based on different knowledge traditions were designed for the current research to gain a multi-dimensional view of *anasakti* (non-attachment). For the *ahamkara* (ego), the only available scale was utilised; details are given in the tools section and further discussed in the study's limitations.

Rationale for the Study

Self is the centre around which all experiences revolve (Mishra, 2010), and the concept of *anasakti* (non-attachment) and *ahamkara* (ego) may be directly applied to this self. Based on the description of these two indigenous concepts and their effects, it might be proposed that they are theoretically different concepts and may produce different outcomes. The theory suggests a potentially negative relationship between them, which needs to be tested empirically. Further, these two concepts can be contemplated as well-being variables, such as subjective well-being, job satisfaction (Banth & Talwar, 2012; Singh & Raina, 2015; Upadhyay & Vashishtha, 2014), social harmony (Bishoyi, 2017) and growth (Whitehead et al., 2020). Beyond that, combining measures based on Indian philosophy with mainstream psychological measures may reveal contemporary implications for these indigenous concepts based on centuries-old knowledge traditions. An empirical investigation of such associations may provide nuanced insights into how these philosophical concepts could impact one's mental health and/or adaptive functioning. Furthermore, investigating well-being variables that have not been previously studied in relation to anasakti and ahamkara would help develop interventions based on these philosophical concepts, to improve the quality of life. Additionally, the *ahamkara* (ego) model (Salagame et al., 2005) remains more or less valid, as reported in another empirical study (Gupta & Agrawal, 2021). A significant feature of the sub-components of *ahamkara* (ego) is that these might be present in different degrees among people, giving them a layered sense of identity (Gaur, 2011; Salagame et al., 2005). Every identity requires one to think, feel, and behave in a specific manner. Hence, these identities may cumulatively enhance one's sense of *ahamkara* (ego) and make it challenging to experience one's transcendental Self.

Since ours was an exploratory study, we could not formulate any specific hypothesis. However, based on psychological literature, it was broadly expected that a higher level of *anasakti*/ non-attachment would lead to higher well-being. In contrast, lower levels of *ahamkara*/ ego will be associated with better well-being.

Methods

Participants

We adhered to all ethical codes for the current study, and ethical clearance was obtained through the institute's doctoral committee (License number: IITP/1421HS01/17/31). This cross-sectional study recruited participants from the urban areas of Patna (North India) using purposive and convenience sampling techniques. We invited adults with at least twelve years of formal education and the ability to read, write, and speak Hindi/English. They were given a choice to opt for filling the questionnaire either in offline or online mode.

The final sample (N = 240) included 136 men and 104 women, their age ranging from 20–60 years (Mean age = 38.17 years, SD = 11.45 years). Table 1 suggests that a considerable proportion of the sample described themselves as Hindu, married, employed, and postgraduates, who were living with their families (More details in Gupta & Agrawal, 2021).

Measurements

The measures used in this research could be divided into three parts: measurements of *anasakti*/ non-attachment, *ahamkara*/ ego, and well-being constructs.

Scale of Anasakti (SA)

Following the philosophy of Bhagavadgita, Pande and Naidu (1992) developed the first scale of *anasakti*. It has 28 items and measures *anasakti* (non-attachment) on five dimensions: outcome vulnerability (ten items), attachment (four items), effort orientation (eight items), endurance and equipoise (three items), and physical-sensual non-identification (three items). Outcome vulnerability (OV) subscale indicates excessive concern for outcomes, and attachment (ATT) deals with one's susceptibility to others' criticism, appreciation and tendency to compare oneself with others. Effort orientation (EO) assesses one's emphasis on task excellence and duty orientation, while endurance and equipoise (EE) indicate a tolerance for psychical and emotional distress. Physical-sensual non-identification (PI) indicates the absence of desire for material objects and sensual pleasures. A few items require reverse coding and the total possible scores range from 28 to 140. Previous studies have reported this scale's adequate reliability and validity (Shaw, 1995; Pande & Tewari, 2011). In the current study, Cronbach's alpha value was .82.

Table 1. Socio-demographic details of the study participants (N=240)

Age range (years)	N	*Mean* (years)	*SD* (years)
20–60	240	38.17	11.45
Participants' Demography	Details	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	136	56.7
	Female	104	43.3
Religion	Hindu	204	85.0
	Muslim	16	6.7
	Religious affiliation not mentioned	20	8.3
Education Level	Up to 12th	14	6.0
	Graduate	53	22.0
	Post Graduate	132	55.0
	M.Phil/ PhD	41	17.0
Employment Status	Employed	106	44.0
	Unemployed	134	56.0
Marital Status	Married	127	53.0
	Unmarried	103	43.0
	Divorced/separated	8	3.3
	Widow/widower	2	0.7
Current Living Settings	With family	156	65.0
	With roommates	36	15.0
	Alone	48	20.0
Yearly Household Income	Less than 2 lakhs*	37	15.4
	2–5 lakhs	88	36.7
	5–8 lakhs	69	28.7
	8–12 lakhs	22	9.2
	More than 12 lakhs	24	10.0

Note. *1 lakh Indian rupee is approximately equivalent to 1445 USD

Nonattachment Scale (NAS)

Elphinstone et al. (2015) developed this seven-item scale, which constitutes a shorter version of the original 30-items Nonattachment Scale based on Buddhist psychology (Sahdra et al., 2010). It is a six-point Likert type scale and the scores range from 7–42. Previous studies found the scale a reliable measure (Sahdra et al., 2015; Sahdra et al., 2016; Whitehead et al., 2020), just as it proved to be in the current study (α = .81).

Test of Asakti-Anasakti (TAA)

Bhushan and Jha (2005) developed this four-point Likert type scale having 40-items, based on *Patanjali's Yoga Sutras.* The scale measures *anasakti* (non-attachment) and *asakti* (attachment) as two extremes of the same continuum. Ten items are negatively scored, and an agreement with them reflects *anasakti* (non-attachment), whereas 30 items are positively scored, and an agreement with those is suggestive of *asakti* (attachment). Hence, possible scores range from 40 to 160, with high TAA scores suggesting *asakti* (attachment), and low scores suggesting *anasakti* (non-attachment). No reverse scoring was done in order to follow the original scoring given by the authors. This test has shown adequate psychometric properties in previous studies with the Indian sample (Banth & Talwar, 2012; Bhushan & Jha, 2005; Pandey & Singh, 2015). In the current study, Cronbach's alpha value (α = .89) was adequate.

Ahamkara Questionnaire (AQ)

In 1993, Raj developed this four-point Likert type scale (Salagame & Raj, 1999) having 18 items, following the *Vedanta* philosophy. It captures *ahamkara* (ego) inn four dimensions: identification (five items), individuality (five items), agency (four items), and separation (four items). Some of the items are reversely coded, so the total score on this instrument ranges from 18 to 72, where a higher score reflects a higher level of *ahamkara*. In previous studies, this questionnaire has demonstrated good reliability, where Cronbach's alpha value ranged from .70 to .89 (Salagame et al., 2005).

With the current sample, Cronbach's alpha value of this scale came to .55, below the popular acceptable value. We chose to proceed with the scale, however, since it was the only published and standardized scale for measuring ego as per the Indian model of self.

Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS)

Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985) developed this well-established five-item scale. It measures overall life-related cognitive judgments on a seven-point Likert-type scale. For the present study, a single item, "I am satisfied with my life," from the original scale was used to evaluate one's overall satisfaction with life. Like the full version, this single-item version of SWLS remains also a widely used measure with consistent reliability and validity (Cheung & Lucas, 2014; Pavot & Diener, 2008).

Job Satisfaction Scale (JSS)

A three-item scale, with a seven-point Likert-type response format – included in the Michigan organization assessment questionnaire (Cammann et al., 1979) – was used to assess job satisfaction. The scores range from 7–21, and before analysis, item 2 was reverse coded so that a high value indicated greater job satisfaction. A widely used scale in the research literature, it has also been found reliable in the Indian context (Aloisio et al., 2019; Bowling & Hammond, 2008; Samson & Arulraj, 2007). This served as a reliable tool with the current study sample (α = .63).

Mental Health Continuum-Short Form (MHC-SF)

This constitutes a shorter version of Keyes's (2002) 40-items Mental Health Continuum-Long Form. MHC-SF is a well-established six-point Likert-type measure of well-being used in various cultural settings. Eleven items were used from MHC-SF (Keyes, 2009) to assess psychological and social aspects of well-being, while another scale (PANAS-R; see below) captured the emotional aspect in the current study. The social well-being (SWB) subscale included five items, and the psychological well-being (PWB) subscale contained six items. Scores were summed up separately for each subscale to indicate the respective well-being. For SWB, scores range from 5 to 30; for PWB, they range from 6 to 36. MHC-SF serves as a well-established measure of well-being used in various cultural settings (Keyes, 2005, 2009; Singh et al., 2015). In the current sample, Cronbach's alpha value for SWB came to .83, and for PWB, it stood at .87.

Positive and Negative Affect Schedule, Revised (PANAS-R)

This 26-item five-point Likert type scale is the modified version of the original schedule (Barrett & Russell, 1998), further revised by Rao and Mehrotra (2006) for the Indian context. Thirteen items assess positive affect (PA), and another 13 items measure negative affect (NA). Further, PA and NA were subdivided into activated (eight items for each subscale) and deactivated (five items for each subscale) affect states. For example, statements like "feeling excited" show a positive, activated state, whereas "calm and relaxed" corresponds to a positive, deactivated state. On the other hand, "feeling angry" suggests a negative, activated state and "feeling exhausted" indicates a negative, deactivated state. Scores range from 13 to 65 for both PA and NA. This widely used and well-validated scale has shown adequate reliability within the Indian sample (Agrawal et al., 2010; Elias et al., 2016). With the current study sample, the internal consistency (Cronbach's α) was .91 for both PA and NA.

Table 2. Mean and Standard Deviation for All Measures

Measures	Total items	Possible range	Obtained range	*Mean (SD)*	Skewness	Kurtosis	Normality (Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test; *p* value)
Scale of Anasakti	28	28–140	48–134	94.85 (13.43)	.330	.556	.062
Outcome vulnerability	10	10–50	13–50	33.95 (6.68)	.068	.142	.055
Attachment	4	4–20	4–20	11.72 (3.17)	.092	–.384	.090
Effort orientation	8	8–40	13–39	27.93 (4.82)	–.121	–.136	.059
Endurance and equipoise	3	3–15	3–15	10.83 (2.38)	–.457	.147	.122
Physical-sensual non-identification	3	3–15	4–15	10.42 (2.46)	–.098	–.513	.098
Nonattachment Scale	7	7–42	7–42	31.83 (6.79)	–.720	.419	.102
Test of Asakti-Anasakti	40	40–160	44–138	85.29 (16.07)	.093	.114	.036
Ahamkara Questionnaire	18	18–72	22–61	44.80 (6.28)	–.362	.619	.057
Identification	5	5–20	5–20	12.80 (2.33)	–.123	–.579	.095
Individuality	5	5–20	5–19	12.85 (3.10)	–.292	.221	.122
Agency	4	4–16	4–16	9.81 (2.45)	.049	.069	.120
Separation	4	4–16	4–15	9.33 (2.33)	.184	–.569	.105
Positive Affect	13	13–65	18–65	43.08 (9.37)	–.234	–.070	.045
Positive Affect (activated)	8	8–40	8–40	26.27 (6.67)	–.248	–.192	.055
Positive Affect (deactivated)	5	5–25	6–25	16.82 (3.86)	–.177	–.343	.073
Negative Affect	13	13–65	13–57	25.73 (9.49)	.825	.330	.099
Negative Affect (activated)	8	7–35	8–37	15.86 (6.24)	.906	.614	.119
Negative Affect (deactivated)	5	5–25	5–22	9.87 (3.83)	.724	–.090	.137
Job Satisfaction Scale	3	3–21	3–21	16.63 (3.26)	–1.13	1.83	.149
MHC-SF Social Well-being	5	5–30	5–30	15.93 (6.91)	.06	–.99	.077
MHC-SF Psychological Well-being	6	6–36	6–36	24.50 (8.02)	–.73	–.24	.114
Satisfaction With Life Scale	1	1–7	1–7	5.37 (1.61)	1.423	1.326	.294

Note. *1 lakh Indian rupee is approximately equivalent to 1445 USD

Procedure

All measures were compiled into a questionnaire booklet. For the Hindi version of the booklet, instruments were first translated into Hindi and then back-translated into English. Subsequently, the reverse-translated version was compared with the original one to check for discrepancies or distorted meanings. The distorted meanings were corrected, and discrepancies were resolved satisfactorily through discussions. Two subject experts completed the entire process; they also had a good command of both languages. The researcher either administered these booklets to the participants in person or emailed the questionnaire (a Google-Form-based questionnaire). Their queries were resolved personally or over the phone (More details in Gupta & Agrawal, 2021).

Results

The obtained raw data were cleaned and reverse-scored wherever required before being analyzed with SPSS 20. Means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis of data were calculated and presented in Table 2. Only the scores on the Test of Asakti-Anasakti (TAA), Positive Affect (PA), and the Activated Subscale of Positive Affect were normally distributed in this sample.

Relationship between Anasakti (Non-Attachment) and Ahamkara (Ego)

The relationships among the variables were analysed using Spearman's Rank correlation coefficient and are presented in Table 3. Regarding the total scores on Ahamkara Questionnaire, the correlation value for both Scale of

Table 3. Spearman Rank Correlations Between Anasakti (non-attachment) and Ahamkara (ego)

	Scale of Anasakti	Outcome Vulnerability	Attachment	Effort Orienta-tion	Endurance & Equipoise	Physical-sensual non-identification	Non-attachment Scale	Test of Asakti-Anasakti	Ahamkara Question-naire	Identifi-cation	Indivi-duality	Agency	Separa-tion
Scale of Anasakti	--												
Outcome vulnerability	0.83**	–											
Attachment	0.72**	0.61**	–										
Effort orientation	0.58**	0.19**	0.19**	–									
Endurance and equipoise	0.49**	0.20**	0.18**	0.39**	–								
Physical-sensual non-identification	0.59**	0.45**	0.37**	0.17**	0.27**	–							
Nonattachment Scale	0.47**	0.31**	0.32**	0.41**	0.26**	0.15 (.022)*	–						
Test of Asakti-Anasakti	–0.72**	–0.64**	–0.64**	–0.31**	–0.33**	–0.44**	–0.44**	–					
Ahamkara Questionnaire	–0.27**	–0.27**	–0.27**	0.07	–0.11	–0.17**	–0.16 (.016)*	0.51**	–				
Identification	–0.33**	–0.32**	–0.38**	–0.09	–0.14 (.036)*	–0.22**	–0.24**	0.50**	0.62**	–			
Individuality	–0.17 (.010)*	–0.20**	–0.12	0.03	–0.16 (.017)*	–0.08	0.02	0.26**	0.65**	0.14 (.026)*	–		
Agency	–0.10	–0.14 (.030)*	–0.16 (.016)*	–0.05	–0.04	–0.02	–0.09	0.27**	0.65**	0.27**	0.31**	–	
Separation	–0.05	–0.02	0.00	–0.06	0.01	–0.12	–0.02	0.16 (.011)*	0.42**	–0.8	0.23**	0.05	–

Note. * (exact *p* value), ** (*p*< .001)

Anasakti (SA) ($r = -.27$, $p < .001$) and Nonattachment Scale (NAS) ($r = -.16$, $p < .016$) was a mild negative, and a moderate positive for scores on the Test of Asakti-Anasakti ($r = .53$, $p < .001$). So, a higher *ahamkara* (ego) was associated with a lower *anasakti* (non-attachment).

Relationships of Anasakti (Non-Attachment) and Ahamkara (Ego) with Positive Psychological Functioning

Anasakti (non-attachment) and higher well-being

In general, *anasakti* (non-attachment) was associated with higher well-being. In Table 4, after calculating Spearman's rank correlations, we found that Positive Affect (PA) (total, Activated and Deactivated) was positively correlated with the Scale of Anasakti (SA) ($r = .24$, $p < .001$; $r = .13$, $p < .040$; $.34$, $p < .001$, respectively) and the Nonattachment Scale (NAS) ($r = .34$, $p < .001$; $r = .26$, $p < .001$; $r = .40$, $p < .001$, respectively). Similarly, the Scale of Anasakti (SA) was modestly associated with cognitive well-being as exhibited through overall satisfaction with life (scores on Satisfaction with Life Scale; SWLS) ($r = .28$, $p < .001$) and the domain satisfaction with one's job (scores on Job Satisfaction Scale; JSS) ($r = .30$, $p < .001$). Interestingly, while the Physical-sensual Non-identification (PI) subscale within the Scale of Anasakti had a significant relationship with the Job Satisfaction Scale ($r = .18$, $p < .001$), the Attachment (ATT) subscale of this scale had a similar significant relationship with the Satisfaction with Life Scale ($r = .18$, $p < .001$). This indicates that the job satisfaction level increases when people have less desire for material objects, just as people having a lower tendency to compare themselves with other people experience an increased life satisfaction. Measures of cognitive well-being indicated a positive association with the Nonattachment Scale (NAS); however, it was stronger with the Job Satisfaction Scale ($r = .32$, $p < .001$) as compared to the Satisfaction with Life Scale ($r = .26$, $p < .001$). The psychological well-being subscale had a positive but mild correlation with Effort Orientation ($r = .16$, $p < .013$) and Endurance and Equipoise ($r = .18$, $p < .001$). With the social well-being subscale, only Effort Orientation (EO) ($r = .16$, $p < .015$) was significantly correlated. Another measure of non-attachment positively correlated with social well-being was NAS ($r = .16$, $p < .015$), although the correlation was mild.

Asakti (attachment) and lower well-being

Asakti (attachment) scores; reflected by higher scores on the Test of Asakti-Anasakti, were positively and moderately associated with Negative Affect (total, Activated, and Deactivated) ($r = .50$, $p < .001$; $r = .48$, $p < .001$; $r = .45$, $p < .001$, respectively). Further, Positive Affect (Deactivated) ($r = -.21$, $p < .001$) and cognitive well-being (assessed by measures of life satisfaction and job satisfaction) ($r = -.27$, $p < .001$; $r = -.29$, $p < .001$, respectively) demonstrated a negative correlation with the Test of Asakti-Anasakti (TAA). Along similar lines, the Negative Affect (NA) total, Activated and Deactivated all three showed negative correlations with the total score on the Nonattachment Scale (NAS) ($r = -.28$, $p < .001$; $r = -.23$, $p < .001$; $r = -.24$, $p < .001$, respectively) and the Scale of Anasakti (SA) ($r = -.47$, $p < .001$; $r = -.43$, $p < .001$; $r = -.47$, $p < .001$, respectively). Although Negative Affect (NA) demonstrated a negative association with all subscales of the Scale of Anasakti, it was more robust for Outcome Vulnerability (OV) ($r = -.43$; $r = -.39$; $r = -.42$, $p < .001$, respectively) and Attachment (ATT) ($r = -.40$; $r = -.39$; $r = -.34$, $p < .001$, respectively).

Ahamkara (ego) and higher well-being

Interestingly, *ahamkara* had a mixed relationship with well-being, at mild to modest strength, as presented in Table 4. Total scores on Ahamkara Questionnaire (AQ) indicated mild to modest positive correlations with Positive Affect (total and activated) ($r = .23$, $p < .001$; $r = .31$, $p < .001$, respectively) and the Psychological Well-being subscale ($r = .17$, $p < .001$). The total Positive Affect was associated with the Individuality ($r = .16$, $p < .014$) and Agency ($r = .17$, $p < .001$) subscales, while Positive Affect (activated) was positively associated with all four subscales of *ahamkara* (ego). The psychological ($r = .15$, $p < .018$) and social well-being ($r = .14$, $p < .030$) subscales were also associated with the Individuality subscale.

Table 4. Spearman Rank Correlations Between Anasakti, Ahamkara, and Measures Relevant to Well-Being Constructs

	Emotional Well-being						Cognitive Well-being		Psycho-logical Well-being	Social Well-being
	Positive Affect (Total)	Positive Affect (Activated)	Positive Affect (Deactivated)	Negative Affect (Total)	Negative Affect (Activated)	Negative Affect (Deactivated)	Satisfaction with Life Scale	Job Satisfaction Scale		
Scale of Anasakti	0.24**	0.13 (.040)*	0.34**	–0.47**	–0.43**	–0.47**	0.28**	0.30**	0.06	0.06
Outcome vulnerability	0.12	0.05	0.22**	–0.43**	–0.39**	–0.42**	0.17**	0.21**	0.02	–0.03
Attachment	0.07	–0.02	0.19**	–0.40**	–0.39**	–0.34**	0.18**	0.12	–0.07	0.02
Effort orientation	0.27**	0.20**	0.30**	–0.19**	–0.17 (.010)*	–0.21**	0.25**	0.27**	0.16 (.013)*	0.16 (.015)*
Endurance and equipoise	0.23**	0.13 (.040)*	0.32**	–0.24**	–0.21**	–0.24**	0.32**	0.26**	0.18**	0.11
Physical-sensual non-identification	0.05	–0.02	0.14 (.030)*	–0.22**	–0.19**	–0.24**	0.06	0.18**	–0.03	–0.05
Nonattachment Scale	0.34**	0.26**	0.40**	–0.28**	–0.23**	–0.24**	0.26**	0.32**	0.10	0.16 (.015)*
Test of Asakti-Anasakti	–0.03	0.06	–0.21**	0.50**	0.48**	0.45**	–0.27**	–0.29**	0.02	–0.03
Ahamkara Questionnaire	0.23**	0.31**	0.01	0.29**	0.29**	0.24**	–0.09	–0.08	0.17**	0.08
Identification	0.12	0.18**	–0.02	0.20**	0.19**	0.11	–0.02	0.04	0.10	–0.03
Individuality	0.16 (.014)*	0.26**	–0.04	0.30**	0.27**	0.27**	–0.06	–0.06	0.15 (.018)*	0.14 (.030)*
Agency	0.17**	0.20**	0.03	0.02	-0.00	0.04	0.01	0.10	0.05	0.02
Separation	0.11	0.14 (.025)*	0.06	0.25**	0.27**	0.20**	–0.22**	–0.22**	0.08	0.07

Note. * (exact p value), ** ($p < .001$)

Table 5. Stepwise Multiple Linear Regression Analyses on Well-Being Variables

Dependent variable	Significant predictors	Beta (β)	*t* value	Significance	R2 change	*F*
Positive Affect	Nonattachment Scale	.328	4.78	.000	.241	6.791**
	Ahamkara Questionnaire (Identification)	.182	2.61	.010		
	Scale of Anasakti (Outcome Vulnerability)	.192	2.25	.026		
	Scale of Anasakti (Endurance & Equipoise)	.178	2.61	.010		
Negative Affect	Test of Asakti-Anasakti	.265	2.76	.006	.266	9.131**
	Ahamkara Questionnaire (Separation)	.120	2.16	.032		
	Ahamkara Questionnaire (Agency)	–.188	–3.32	.001		
	Scale of Anasakti (Outcome Vulnerability)	–.241	–3.12	.002		
Satisfaction with Life Scale	Nonattachment Scale	.202	2.89	.004		
	Ahamkara Questionnaire (Identification)	.169	0.23	.018	.224	6.478**
	Ahamkara Questionnaire (Separation)	–.154	–2.46	.015		
	Scale of Anasakti (Endurance & Equipoise)	.244	3.52	.001		
Job Satisfaction Scale	Nonattachment Scale	.216	3.13	.002		
	Ahamkara Questionnaire (Separation)	–.178	–2.89	.004	.232	5.647**
	Ahamkara Questionnaire (Agency)	.155	2.47	.014		
	Scale of Anasakti (Endurance & Equipoise)	.170	2.48	.014		

Note. *1 lakh Indian rupee is approximately equivalent to 1445 USD

Ahamkara (ego) and lower well-being

Total *ahamkara* (ego) showed mild to modest positive correlations with Negative Affect (total and activated) (r = .29, p < .01; r = .29, r = .29, p < .001, respectively), along with Deactivated Negative Affect (r = .24, r = .29, p < .001). Similarly, Negative Affect (total and Activated) was associated with the Individuality (r = .30, p < .001; r = .27, p < .001, respectively), Separation (r = .25, p < .001; r = .27, p < 0.001, respectively) and Identification (r = .20, p < .001; r = .20, p < .001, respectively) subscales. Deactivated Negative Affect demonstrated a correlation with Individuality (r = .27, p < 0.001) and Separation (r = .20, p < .001). Separation negatively associated with both the Life Satisfaction Scale (SWLS) (r = –.22, p < .001) and the Job Satisfaction Scale (JSS) (r = –.22, p < .001).

Anasakti (Non-Attachment) and Ahamkara (Ego) as Predictors of Positive Mental Health

After determining the correlations, the variables having significant correlations were used for a stepwise multiple linear regression analysis to determine whether *anasakti* (non-attachment) and *ahamkara* (ego) can predict various mental health outcomes. For this, the effects of age and gender were controlled, and stepwise multiple linear regression analyses were performed with variables that had a significant correlation with *anasakti* (non-attachment) and *ahamkara* (ego). Since Positive affect (PA), Negative affect (NA), Satisfaction with Life and Job satisfaction had stronger relationships with the measures of *anasakti* (non-attachment) and *ahamkara* (ego) than with the psychological and social well-being scale, they were used as dependent variables. Table 4 presents the findings of the multiple regression analysis for Positive Affect (PA), Negative Affect (NA), the level of life satisfaction (SWLS), and job satisfaction (JSS) as the outcome variables. For their predictions, age and gender were controlled before scores of the Ahamkara Questionnaire and its subscales, Scale of Anasakti and its subscales, Nonattachment Scale (NAS) and the Test of

Asakti-Anasakti (TAA) were entered. Results revealed that the final regression model, which explained a 24% variance in Positive Affect (PA), included the Nonattachment Scale, Ahamkara questionnaire's Identification subscale, Scale of Ansakti's Outcome vulnerability, and the Endurance and Equipoise subscales. For Negative affect (NA), the Test of asakti-anasakti, the Ahamkara Questionnaire's Separation, the Agency subscale, and the Scale of Anasakti's (SA) Outcome Vulnerability subscale emerged as significant predictors for explaining a 27% variance in the Negative Affect (NA). The best predictors, which explained a 22% variance in the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), included the Nonattachment Scale, the Ahamkara Questionnaire's Identification and Separation subscale, and the Scale of Anasakti's Endurance and Equipoise subscale. The best-fitting regression model for the Job Satisfaction Scale (JSS) included the Nonattachment Scale, the Ahamkara Questionnaire's Separation and Agency subscales, and the Scale of Anasakti's Endurance and Equipoise subscale as it explained a 23% variance in the level of job satisfaction (JSS).

Discussion

The current study empirically explored possible associations between the psycho-philosophical concepts of *anasakti* (non-attachment) and *ahamkara* (ego), and measures of well-being, in a sample of urban, educated Indian adults. The results supported that *anasakti* (non-attachment) and *ahamkara* (ego) relate to well-being differently. They were assessed through frequent experiences of positive affect, presence of life and job satisfaction, and infrequent experiences of negative affect, along with some indications of psychological and social well-being.

Anasakti (non-attachment) was associated with a higher frequency of positive affect, especially the low energy type, such as feeling calm and relaxed. Previous research found similar results where *anasakti* (non-attachment) has been associated with better well-being (Elphinstone & Whitehead, 2019). Having a lower fixation on one's expectations from life and actions (Pande & Naidu, 1992; Whitehead et al., 2020), having equanimity and the ability to tolerate unpleasant situations (Banth & Talwar, 2012; Bhushan & Jha, 2005), as well as focusing less on outcomes and being process-oriented (Pande & Naidu, 1992) are all associated with well-being. People having a higher *anasakti* (non-attachment) understand that, unlike personal identity, surrounded by self-relevant feelings, beliefs, and mental images, their self remains genuinely more inclusive and spiritual (Collins & Desai, 1986; Mills, 2011). Thus, anasakti (non-attachment) provides the optimal conditions for expanding one's Consciousness, which goes beyond the body, material possessions, and the sense of ownership. Further, while working, people with *anasakti* (non-attachment) may maintain their calmness throughout the task due to their lack of anxiety about outcomes. Moreover, they view work as one's contribution to the betterment of the world; therefore, it brings a sense of fulfilment and contentment to them regardless of the work's results (Caza & Wrzesniewski, 2013; Pande & Naidu, 1992; Shaw, 1995; Upadhyay & Vashishtha, 2014). Further, those having greater *asakti* (attachment) also reported experiencing a higher frequency of negative or unpleasant emotions. People with higher *asakti* (attachment) may tend to be more fixated on their expectations and be more pleasure- or result-oriented. Many studies suggest that *asakti* (attachment) becomes manifested in the form of memories or concerns and expectations for future outcomes (Banth & Talwar, 2012; Bhushan & Jha, 2005). So, when a conflict between current happenings and an individual's expectations emerges, the individual may experience intense negative emotions (Whitehead et al., 2021).

Another interesting finding was that, unlike in previous studies (Banth & Talwar, 2012), in our sample, psychological and social well-being indicated a relation only with certain features of *anasakti* (non-attachment) rather than with an overall non-attached attitude towards life. Probably, this resulted when people could maintain a stance of equanimity and focus on effort rather than the outcomes of their actions. They were also more likely to experience a fulfilling and meaningful life and interpersonal relationships. Interestingly, the sense of *ahamkara* (ego) emerged as a unique predictor of cognitive and affective well-being, along with *anasakti* (non-attachment). Although results for *anasakti* (non-attachment) stood similar to that found in the literature, results were more nuanced for *ahamkara* (ego). Unlike in previous studies, our findings revealed that people with *ahamkara* (ego) might experience various positive and negative emotions. They may experience positive emotions like excitement, enthusiasm, or pride more frequently; however, they are less likely to experience pervasive life- and work-related satisfaction and often may experience negative emotions, ranging from anger to sadness. Identification predicted a positive affect and life satisfaction; agency predicted job satisfaction and a lowered negative affect. The separation component of *ahamkara* (ego) predicted a higher negative affect, and a lower sense of separation predicted cognitive well-being. When we take these findings together, one could say that *ahamkara* (ego) constitutes an important factor in determining a happy and fulfilling life, but only if balanced with a sense of interconnection and non-attachment. These findings added to the literature on the human capacity to integrate opposite poles of living (Carreno et al., 2021).

One of the current study's significant findings was the empirical establishment of the theoretical relationship between *anasakti* (non-attachment) and *ahamkara* (ego). Although many scholars explored the concepts of *anasakti* (non-attachment) and *ahamkara* (ego) separately, they have hinted at a negative association between them. Many of them pointed out that for developing *anasakti* (non-attachment), the removal of *ahamkara* (ego) is essential (Banth & Talwar, 2012; Bhushan & Jha, 2005; Elphinstone & Whitehead, 2019; Whitehead et al., 2018; Whitehead et al., 2021). Our study confirmed that people higher in *anasakti* (non-attachment) might be less egoistic. They may be less involved in personalizing every experience and, to define themselves, they do not depend on phenomenal experiences or objects. Additionally, when people are not involved in their egoistic selves, they may be willing to engage in tasks that do not promise any reward or may not even be pleasurable but are still worth doing. They may be able to resist temptations and are less susceptible to social comparisons.

Overall, the current study's findings supported the Hindu and Buddhist philosophy that *anasakti* (non-attachment) aligns with mental health by indicating an empirical link with the modern Western indicators of positive psychological functioning.

Strengths and Limitations

One of the notable strengths of this study is that it has empirically tested and proved the inverse relationship between *anasakti* (non-attachment) and *ahamkara* (ego). Based on the theoretical understanding of *anasakti* (non-attachment) and *ahamkara* (ego) as given in classical texts, both seem different and lead to different outcomes. To our knowledge, however, none of the studies has examined this relationship to date. The current research has filled this gap in the psychological literature.

Further, we have employed three measures to assess the independent variable *anasakti* (non-attachment), which allowed a multi-dimensional representation of *anasakti* (non-attachment) and further provided evidence that findings are independent from the types of measures.

Despite having theoretical and empirical relevance, the study does suffer from some limitations. A cross-sectional survey approach restrains determining the causal relationship between *anasakti* (non-attachment), *ahamkara* (ego), and mental health variables. Furthermore, the cross-sectional research methodology has been criticized for not providing any information on over-time changes in the measured variable compared to other methodologies (e.g., longitudinal). Nevertheless, cross-sectional studies seem to be a convenient alternative for preliminary evaluations of less explored variables. The male-dominated sample, confined to an urban community of a particular geographical region (North India), limited the results' generalisability to other samples belonging to different sections of the society or various socio-cultural backgrounds and clinical populations. The lack of data on the sample's meditative practices could have a confounding effect on increasing *anasakti* (non-attachment), lowering *ahamkara* (ego), or improving well-being. Self-reported measures might have compromised objectivity and truthfulness (Goodwin & Leech, 2006). Another limitation relates to the Ahamkara Questionnaire. Since this was the only available published measure of *ahamkara* (ego), the researchers decided to proceed with this tool. However, its low reliability necessitates a cautious interpretation of quantitative results obtained through the Ahamkara Questionnaire. Similarly, the Job Satisfaction Scale and a few subscales of anasakti indicated a lower internal consistency. It could be due to the shortness of these measures and the multidimensionality of the measured concept, which seems true in the case of the Job Satisfaction Scale and a few subscales of the Scale of Anasakti, respectively. Lastly, the heterogeneity of the sample could also lead to a low reliability of the measure.

Conclusion, Implications and Future Directions

In this cross-sectional study, 240 urban educated adults were surveyed using standard scales of *anasakti* (non-attachment), *ahamkara* (ego), and positive psychological functioning. Results fully supported previous studies that established the role of *anasakti* (non-attachment) in overall emotional well-being as well as life and job satisfaction but mildly supported the idea that greater *anasakti* (non-attachment) would result in better psychological or social well-being. Interestingly, our findings have provided a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between *ahamkara* (ego) and well-being, with both positive and negative associations based on the sub-components and contexts. It also highlighted that occasionally *ahamkara* (ego) might also render some unique benefits to an individual's psychological well-being, and to desirable affective states such as enthusiasm or inspiration.

The current study's results dealt with indigenous concepts of *anasakti* (non-attachment) and *ahamkara* (ego), which are rooted in classical Indian thoughts. These results may be utilized for developing an intervention to improve the overall well-being and spiritual growth of Indian people based on the Yoga-Vedantic psychological perspective. It may be especially useful for them since among Indians, many people find it easy to accept Yoga-Vedantic explanations regarding human life due to the belief systems transmitted from generation to generation (Gautam & Jain, 2010). Apart from spiritual transformation, concepts of *anasakti* (non-attachment) and *ahamkara* (ego) have shown their role in emotional experiences. While *ahamkara* (ego) remained mostly related to negative emotions, *anasakti* (non-attachment) stood mainly correlated with positive emotions. Developing *anasakti*-based interventions, therefore, could be useful for people dealing with life challenges, for example terminal illness and bereavement.

Future studies investigating the effect of *anasakti* (non-attachment) and *ahamkara* (ego) on psychological functioning, using research design beyond cross-sectional surveys such as experimental or longitudinal studies, are required to establish a causal relationship, if it exists. Furthermore, replicating the present finding with more diversified samples would add to the study's implications. Additionally, these concepts may be studied further across cultures and cross-culturally concerning positive mental health. Although empirical literature on well-being has been accumulating globally, certain contributing variables still remain hidden. Globally, it has been suggested that the idea of complete mental health involves both the functioning and spiritual aspect of living (Dittmar et al., 2014; Koltko-Rivera, 2006; Martins et al., 2021). By correlating Western indicators of positive mental health with the indigenous concepts of *anasakti* (non-attachment) and *ahamkara* (ego), the present study has provided empirical evidence for the model of complete well-being, which Indian psychology also proposes. If, in future works, similar results are found across cultures, interventions from the Indian psychological perspective could be planned, and insights from this study might come in handy. Europe has had a rich philosophical tradition with ideas complementary to Indian psychology, and in modern times the continent has also become geographically, culturally, and religiously diverse. Thus, an Indian-psychology-based mental health model, which involves traveling beyond *ahamkara* (ego) and developing *anasakti* (non-attachment) to achieve serenity and interconnectedness, could have vast implications for mental health services which strive to provide holistic well-being to European citizens.

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Author contributions
Kriti GUPTA: conceptualization, design, methodology, funding acquisition, investigation, data management, formal analysis, interpretation, writing original draft, writing review and editing.
Jyotsna AGRAWAL: conceptualization, design, methodology, project administration, data management, formal analysis, interpretation, supervision, writing original draft, writing review and editing.
All authors gave their final approval of the version to be published and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

Declaration of interest statement
The authors have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

Ethical statement
This manuscript is the authors' original work.
The study was reviewed and approved by the institute's doctoral committee, license number: IITP/1421HS01/17/31.
All participants engaged in the research voluntarily and anonymously, providing their written informed consent to participate in this study.
Data are stored in coded materials and databases without personal data, and the authors have policies in place to manage and keep data secure.

ORCID
Kriti GUPTA https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3547-8437
Jyotsna AGRAWAL https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2852-7336

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