

A School-Based Approach to Explore Dimensions of Psychological Issues and Challenges faced by Adolescents Studying in a Selected School of New Delhi

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Abstract: *Adolescence is a critical transition period in which several biological, cognitive, and psychosocial changes take place. The worldwide data shows an increase in the prevalence of mental health issues in childhood and adolescence and the percentage of those afflicted. The present study was undertaken with the objectives to i) Identify the current mental health issues among adolescent students ii) Assess the contributing factors for mental health issues iii) Identify the perceived solutions for dealing with mental health issues. A cross-sectional descriptive research design with survey approach was used among 183 adolescents studying in IX -X Std at a selected school of New Delhi. Warwick Edinburg Mental Well-being Scale was used as the primary tool for data collection. Non probability purposive sampling technique was used for data collection. Frequency, Percentage and Standard Deviation were used for Descriptive analysis and Chi square for Inferential analysis. Results revealed that more than 36% of students scored less than 40 in WEMES which is suggestive of clinical depression. Financial, relationship and discrimination issues were pointed as the major contributing factors for this by participants. Many students expressed their concern related to fights in the family, feeling of suffocation and pressure from the family as well as less support. There was no significant statistical association of their demographic variables with their mental wellbeing score. Alarming factor is that only 22% have some strategies to cope with their stressful situations. Study concluded that it is important to help adolescents to develop good mental health because many health behaviour and habits that are established in the adolescent years will be carried over into adult years. Building strong bonds and connecting to youth can protect their mental health. The study emphasizes the role of schools and parents in supporting them by fostering strong relationships and protective factors which will help them to grow.*

Keywords: Dimensions of psychological issues and challenges, Adolescent school children, Contributing factors for mental health, perceived solutions.

1. Introduction

Early adolescence is a time of rapid learning and brain development which includes increase in sensation seeking, motivation for social relations and sensitivity to social evaluation. Adolescence, is a period of opportunity and vulnerability during which social and emotional habits important for mental well-being are developed.¹ Adolescent mental health conditions might extend to adulthood, impairing both physical and mental health of them. According to CDC (2021) more than 4 in 10 students experienced poor mental health. Globally one out of seven 10-19 yr old, experiences a mental disorder, accounting for 15% of the global disease burden in this age group.² The research evidences on this pertaining issue reveals alarming figures of overall 12.5% prevalence of child and adolescent mental disorders among few major Indian cities. Depression, anxiety and behavioural disorders are a leading cause of illness and disability among adolescents. A large chunk of the general mental distress remains unrecognized as subclinical issues.

The more risk factors adolescents are exposed to, the greater the potential impact on their mental health. The increasing burden of mental health problems among this population is a growing concern globally.³ Multiple factors are associated with poor mental health among adolescents, including domestic violence, child abuse, bullying, peer pressure, substance abuse, teenage pregnancy and many more. Some adolescents are at greater risk of mental health conditions due to their living conditions, stigma, discrimination or exclusion, or lack of access to quality support and services. Transition through stressful and unhealthy adolescence with a high burden of mental disorders can impact their health and well-being later in life.

Factors that can contribute to stress during adolescence include exposure to adversity, pressure to conform with peers and exploration of identity. Media influence and gender norms can exacerbate the disparity between an adolescent's lived reality and their perceptions or aspirations for the future. Other important determinants include the quality of their home life and relationships with peers. Violence (especially sexual violence and bullying), harsh parenting and severe and socioeconomic problems are

recognized risks to mental health.⁵ It is crucial to address the needs of adolescents with mental health conditions. The major challenges faced are early identification of mental health problems, treatment gap, lack of professionals, and interventions that address the same. For this reason it is crucial to identify the current mental health issues and the contributing factors among adolescent students.

2. Objectives of the Study

- Identify the current mental health issues among adolescent students.
- Assess the contributing factors for mental health issues among adolescent students.
- Identify the perceived solutions for dealing with mental health issues among adolescent students.
- Associate selected mental health issues with selected demographic variables.

3. Review of Literature

More than 40 research articles were reviewed which focused on current mental health issues among the adolescents, reasons of mental health issues among adolescents and solutions to improve their mental health.

A study conducted by **Christine Schieiner et al (2022)** to analyse the prevalence of Mental disorders at the beginning of adolescence among 877 adolescents of seven German High Schools using series of questionnaire assessing their mental health revealed that 12.5% of the samples had mental health problems.⁴ Nebhinani et al(2019) emphasises that adolescence is a transition phase that can increase risk of various psychological disorders, adjustment problems and suicide.⁵

A systematic review by **G Balamurugan et al (2023)** using 31 studies with sample size of 30,970 reported that a significant proportion of school aged children were depressed which highlighted the need for reinforced and strengthened school based mental health screening programmes and collaboration with parents or care takers, teachers and mental health professionals to deal with problems more effectively.⁶

4. Materials and Methods

A cross sectional descriptive research design with survey approach was adopted for the study. The sample size was calculated and included 183 adolescent children studying in IX -X Std at a selected school of New Delhi. As per the inclusion criteria the subjects were included in the study using non probability purposive sampling. Subjects who were unwilling to participate and unwell during the time of data collection were excluded from the study. Institutional ethical approval and written informed consent were accorded prior to the study. Pilot study was also conducted among 10 students prior to the present study. Research variables under study were Mental health issues among adolescent students, contributing factors for mental health issues and Perceived solutions for dealing with mental health issues. Data collection was done by survey method. Structured questionnaire Warwick Edinburg Mental Well-

being Scale was used as the primary tool for data collection. Also, a semi-structured questionnaire was used for the collection of demographic data and Open ended response sheet for assessing contributing factors and perceived solutions. The validity and reliability of the tool was established prior to data collection. Frequency, Percentage and Standard Deviation were used for Descriptive analysis and Chi square for Inferential analysis.

5. Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Distribution of samples according to Socio demographic data, n=183

S No	Parameters	Freq	%	
1	Age	13 yrs	21	11
		14 yrs	60	33
		15 yrs	90	49
		16 yrs	12	7
2	Gender	Male	108	59
		Female	75	41
3	Std of study	X	126	69
		IX	57	31
4	No of siblings	None	7	4
		One	162	89
		Two	14	7
5	Order of birth	First	102	56
		Second	78	43
		Third	3	1
6	Academic performance	Satisfied	36	20
		Not satisfied	147	80

Table 1 shows that Out of 183 students the majority (90) were from the age group of 15 yrs and also majority were males. 126 students of 10th standard and 57 students of 9th standard have participated in the study. 162 students had single siblings and 102 students were the eldest among the siblings. 147 students have expressed that they were not satisfied with their performances in the academics.

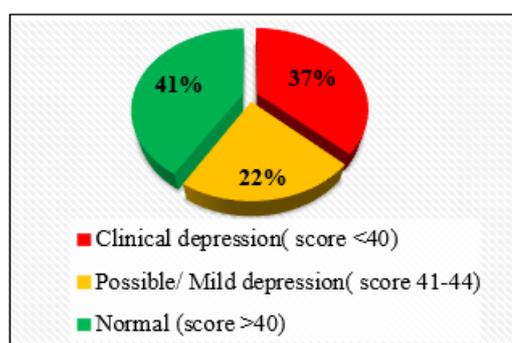


Figure 1: Distribution of samples as per the scores obtained in Warwick Edinburg mental well- being scale, n=183

Figure 1 depicts that students who scored less than 40 were 66 in number which is suggestive of clinical depression. 39 students scored between 41-44 which shows the possibilities of mild/ possible depression and 74 students scored more than 45 falling in normal range.

Table 1: Distribution of samples according to contributing factors, n=183

S No	Contributing factors	Freq	%
1	Accommodation	34	18.5
2	Finance	11	6.1
3	Physical health	33	18.0
4	Family	46	25.1
5	Friends	40	21.8
6	Close relationship	19	10.3
7	Discrimination	25	13.6
8	Social life	41	22.4
9	Academic pressure	110	60.1
10	Emotional well being	85	46.4

Table 2 depicts that 60% of students had issues with academic pressure followed by another 46% having issues with their emotional well-being. 25 % of samples consider issues with their family as a contributing factor and 22% with their social life.

Table 3: Distribution of samples according to perceived solutions for dealing with mental health issues, n=183

S No	Perceived Solutions	Yes (%)	No (%)
1	Support from family	39	61
2	Support from friends	27	73
3	Support from teachers	37	63
4	Medical advice	13	87
5	Specialist support	19	81
6	Advice & information on managing studies	48	52
7	Advice & information on time management	81	19

Table 3 explain that 39% of the samples expressed the need of more support from their families, especially parents and the key points identified are support in the form of love, approachable attitude, understanding nature and flexibility in thoughts. 27% felt that they need more support from friends specially during the time when they feel left out and lonely in the classroom. 37% of the children verbalised the need of extra support from the school in academics in terms of fair behaviour and non-discrimination between different social status as perceived by them. 13% of the students wanted to seek medical advice in one way or the other while 19% felt that they need specialist support to handle their current issues

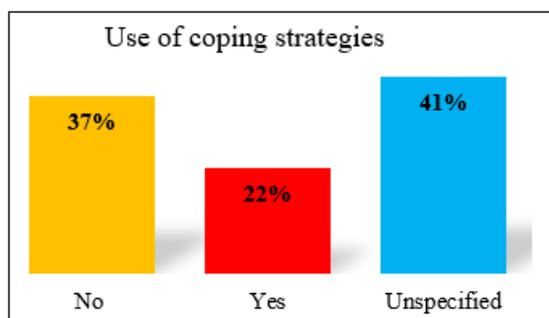


Figure 2: Distribution of samples as per the strategies used to cope with stressful situations, n=183

As depicted in figure 2, only 22% use some strategies to cope with their stressful situations. Most of the students stated that they use time management skills to cope with their stress, followed by self-belief and confidence. 39% children had an idea that how they will seek solutions to the

problems they will face while 38% had no clue about the remedial measures.

The Pearson Chi-Square test was used to analyse the association between selected mental health issues with selected demographic variables which revealed that the calculated Chi-Square value is 0.798 which is less than table value with p value 0.671 and it is evident that there is no statistically significant association.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

Present study revealed that 37% of the samples who scored less than 40 which is suggestive of clinical depression and 22% scored between 41-44 which shows the possibilities of mild/ possible depression. According to WHO one out of every seven (1:7) adolescent experiences a mental disorder. Depression, anxiety and behavioural disorders are among the leading causes of illness and disability among the adolescents. The result of the present study is in consistent with **G Balamurugan et al study (2023)** which highlighted the high prevalence of depression, behavioural and emotional problems, psychological distress and other mental health issues among adolescence. Also, **Christin Scheiner et al (2022)** revealed that 12.5% of the adolescent samples in their study reported mental health problems. 60% of students had issues with academic pressure followed by another 46% having issues with their emotional well-being.

The present study also depicted that 60% of students had issues with academic pressure followed by another 46% having issues with their emotional well-being. The findings are consistent with **Mao min Jiang et al (2022)** study which revealed significant influence of academic pressure on adolescent's problem behaviour ($p < 0.001$). It also emphasized on significant negative effect on subjective well being and parent child conflict.

Poor mental health in adolescent impact many areas of a teen's life. Adolescents with mental health conditions are vulnerable to social exclusion, discrimination, stigma, educational difficulties, risk taking behaviours, physical ill health and human right violations. It is important to help adolescents develop good mental health because many health behaviours and habits that are established in the adolescent years will be carried over into adult years. The psychological issues of the adolescents should be given continuous attention. It is necessary to involve strategies to combine individual, family, external environment and internal performance to strengthen the psychological characteristics of adolescents and manage their issues.

7. Recommendations

- Regular screening and early identification of the troubled teens is significant in preventing the adoption of risk taking behavior among the adolescent students.
- Parents should be made aware about healthy and positive parenting habits.
- Organize workshops and awareness programs at regular intervals in the school setting in which adolescents are intimated about the various helplines available for their welfare.

- d) An appointed school psychologist should be available and regular counselling sessions to be done to know the general and specific problems of the students. Parents and family members should be regularly counselled about the possible issues faced by the adolescents
- e) Positive parenting practices should be encouraged to promote better communication between parents and children which are honest and open in nature.
- f) The study can be conducted as a multicentric study involving more no of samples.

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