

Changing Trends among Adolescents in Schools: Lifestyle, Career and Happiness

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Abstract: *Today's world is characterized by sweeping changes such as globalization, modernization, and exposure to media and so on. Gone are the days when it would cost lot of effort and money to reach out to the world. With internet/Skype etc nowadays it is all available at a flash of a second. Open channels of communication have influenced our lives to great extent. And they have a profound effect on our young population as well. Adolescents are very particular about how they look and what others think about them. Exposure to western markets and international brands, malls etc have given rise to huge display and access to fashionable clothes, electronics, and food products- ready to eat which come handy to the working families. All of us hope to work towards a future that is stable, happy and secure. It is natural that adolescents have similar thoughts about their own lives. However the difference lies in their perspective about the future. The study aimed to carry out a comparative analysis between the private and government schools of Delhi. Basically three aspects were covered which include various subfields like their eating habits, friends, dressing style, communication with friends, choice of subjects, goals in life, what makes them happy, their stress level. It was found out that adolescents are concerned about their lifestyle as they prefer modern style of dressing; and also they want to have bright future and earn good salaries so that they can keep themselves and others happy.*

Keywords: Trends, Adolescents, Lifestyle, Happiness

1. Introduction

The term "adolescence" comes from the Latin word "adolescere", which means 'to grow' or 'to grow to maturity'. As the term "adolescence" is used today, it has a broader meaning and includes mental, emotional and social as well as physical maturity. The definition given by WHO defines adolescence both in terms of age (10-19 years) and in terms of phase of life marked by special attributes. These attributes include rapid physical, psychological, cognitive and behavioral changes and developments, including urge to experiment, attainment of sexual maturity, development of adult identity, and transition from socio-economic dependence to relative independence.

Adolescence is an extremely enthusiastic, energetic, joyous and fun loving period. The exact start and end of adolescence are arbitrary, but adolescence is the time when puberty brings about physical changes, gender role definition gets intensified and girls and boys move from childhood to adult roles as wife/husband, mother/father, worker and citizen. It is the preparation for the adulthood, it can be a critical stage in the lifespan of human development because of biological, psychological and social interaction at varied levels and adolescents face many problems varying in severity according to different levels, society, sex and other detrimental factors (Kavitha,2010).

1.1 Onset and End of Adolescence

The interplay of biological changes and social attitude will determine the psychological meaning of puberty for its members. The common themes and assumptions, which are relevant in this context, are: The onset of puberty marks the beginning of adolescence. There are individual as well as cultural differences in the length of adolescence and in the age of onset and completion. While the physical changes of pubescence signal the beginning of this phase. Sociological

criteria such as achievement of adult status and privileges, marriage, the end of education and the beginning of economic independence frequently mark the termination of adolescence. The stage of adolescence is likely to end earlier in primitive cultures and later in technological ones.

2. Problems of Adolescence

- Adolescence is a time for developing independence. Typically, adolescents exercise their independence by questioning their parents' rules, which at times leads to rule breaking.
- **Drug and Substance Abuse:** Substance use among adolescents occurs on a spectrum; from experimentation to dependence. Experimentation with alcohol and drugs during adolescence is common. Alcohol is the biggest culprit in this regard. Adolescents have access to it at parties, can obtain it from older friends who are of legal age to buy it, or may simply raid their parents' liquor cabinets.
- **Stress and Depression:** Stress is characterized by feelings of tension, frustration, worry, sadness and withdrawal that commonly last from a few hours to a few days. Depression is both more severe and longer lasting. Depression is characterized by more extreme feelings of hopelessness, sadness, isolation, worry, withdrawal and worthlessness that last for two weeks or more (Sharma, 2003).

2.1 Lifestyle

Lifestyle is a term to describe the way a person lives. A set of behaviors, and the senses of self and belonging which these behaviors represent, are collectively used to define a given lifestyle. A lifestyle is a characteristic bundle of behaviors that makes sense to both others and oneself in a given time and place, including social relations, consumption, entertainment, and dress. The behaviors and practices within lifestyles are a mixture of habits,

conventional ways of doing things, and reasoned actions. A lifestyle typically also reflects an individual's attitudes, values or worldview. Therefore, a lifestyle is a means of forging a sense of self and to create cultural symbols that resonate with personal identity.

2.2 Career Aspirations

Career aspirations refer to an individual's expressed career related goals or intentions and also include motivational components that are not present in mere interests. Career selection is one of many important choices students will make in determining future plans. This decision will impact them throughout their lives "Work is one of our greatest blessings. During adolescence, aspirations are especially important because they allow them to evaluate the degree to which various choices help or hinder their chances of attaining desired goals.

2.3 Happiness

"Happiness is the meaning and the purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence". - Aristotle

Human happiness has appeared again and again, as the most valued of all human quests. It appeared to be the central concern of almost all psychological, philosophical and theological thinking. It is the ultimate blessing of life and ultimate goal in life. Happiness is the key to mental health and subjective well-being. In this era of insatiable materialism and sophistication people yearn for happiness. Everybody in the world is after money so as to have material pleasures and thereby thinking that it might lead to happiness and tranquility (Srikala, 2010).

3. Significance of the Study

Adolescents are very particular about how they look and what others think about them. Exposure to western markets and international brands, malls etc have given rise to huge display and access to fashionable clothes, electronics, food products- ready to eat which come handy to the working families. All of us hope to work towards a future that is stable, happy and secure. It is natural that adolescents have similar thoughts about their own lives. However the difference lies in their perspective about the future.

Adolescents begin to feel the pressure of having to state what they want to be by the time they reach the end of their schooling. In fact they have to make academic decisions at school that would more or less seal their career. Choices of career available have expanded. Medicine and engineering is no longer considered as a profession for boys. In today's modern world girls also look forward to a secure career. But what's interesting to know is that. Do they still choose the typically stereotype professions? How do they make their choices? And what is the influence of parents or are they given freedom to decide themselves?

Happiness is something we all strive for. It may mean different things to different people at different stage of life. For example... during adolescence happiness would simply mean wearing fashionable clothes, eating out or independence from surrounding...where as in the adult stage

happiness means more stability and security in life, career, relationships etc. Adolescence is a stage where they become more independent and construct their self concept. Therefore, we decided to study these changing trends among adolescents such as lifestyle, career aspirations and state of happiness among urban adolescents.

The present study on "Changing trends among Adolescents in School: Lifestyles, Career and Happiness" has been carried out. It has aimed to carry out a comparative analysis between the private and government schools of Delhi. Basically three aspects were covered which include various subfields like their eating habits, friends, dressing style, communication with friends, choice of subjects, goals in life, what makes them happy, their stress level.

4. Objectives

1. To study the lifestyle of adolescents in private and government schools.
2. To find out the Career aspirations of adolescents in private and government schools.
3. To assess the extent of happiness amongst adolescents amongst adolescents in private and government schools.
4. To analyze the gender differences in lifestyle, career aspirations and happiness in private and government schools.

Locale of the Study: The locale of the study was Delhi. Two private and government schools each were selected from Delhi.

Two private co-ed schools were:

- Green Fields Public School
- Laxman Public School

Two government co-ed schools were:

- Kendriya Vidyalaya
- Rajkiya Pratibha Vikas Vidyalaya

5. Sampling

Sample selection and size: Purposive selection was done for selection of schools according to the convenience. Four schools were selected consisting of two private and government co-ed schools. From each school 100 students were asked to fill the interview schedule comprising of 50 girls and 50 boys. So the total sample of the study was 400 students.

Tools for Data Collection: Interview Schedule was taken to collect the data from the sample. Interview Schedule was prepared and was tested on the small sample say for 20- 30 adolescents.

6. Limitations of the Study

- Universe of the study was Delhi.
- Only urban adolescents were covered.
- Only 3 aspects were included.

7. Major Findings

7.1 Lifestyle of Adolescents

Adolescent's dressing sense: Majority of school children prefer stylish dressing (62.2%) as compared to other dressing styles. Next popular style appears to be western (22.2%). The current trend and awareness to shop from malls, conspicuous consumption may largely be the influence of mass media. Another reason may be peer pressure. A lesser number of students prefer the traditional style of dressing (11.2%). The trend largely reflects the mindset of adolescents. It is interesting that maximum number of children (19.5%) from government school prefer traditional style of dressing in comparison to private school (3.5%). Better exposure, liberal parents, and financial resources would attribute to this.

Adolescent preference for shopping: A large percentage of young adolescent prefer to shop from the malls whether they belong to private schools or government schools, be it girls or boys. Reasons could be that youth get fascinated by the mall culture which gives them ample choices, greater access to brands; it is considered fashionable and probably adds to the prestige. Next popular choice are company outlets (23.2%) which probably get them stylish dresses and brand products at reasonable price. Third preference was given to departmental stores (9%). Interestingly more boys and girls from govt. schools prefer to shop from local market which may be attributed to constraint of resources – financial and mobility.

Adolescent's preference for shopping if, given choice: Interestingly, it was found that even on given choice, maximum adolescents gave preference to company showrooms followed by malls for shopping. Few adolescents from private schools especially females gave their preference for international market and designer stores too.

Frequency of eating out: The question was asked to know the eating preference of adolescent. We all know that in this stage adolescents become very choosy. The question was asked to know the expenditure pattern of adolescent. Eating out once in a week was most popular amongst adolescent of all categories. The students have given second preference for eating out occasionally. More number of girls from govt. school reported eating out occasionally in comparison to eating out once a week. It appears that like stylish and western dresses, eating out is also in vogue... a reflection of change in our consumption pattern.

Adolescent VS exercise regime: The maximum number of adolescent from private schools exercise few times a week. A distinct gender difference was also observed, more number of boys than girls reported doing exercise few times a week. However, more girls from private schools reported doing exercise in comparison to girls from government schools. It appears that boys from the private schools are more health conscious as 34% of them exercise daily and 34% do it few times a week. Only 13% of them do not exercise at all. But on the other hand maximum number of boys (40%) and girls (48%) from the govt. school did not prefer to exercise at all. It may be because they probably did not get time due to

involvement in household work or may simply be lack of awareness.

Hobbies and leisure time interest: It was observed that maximum number of adolescents (25-43%) have music as hobby followed by sports and then dance. Least preference is given to art or creative field. However boys from both private and government schools (40% and 43% respectively) prefer sports over dance, music and arts. Again very few boys from the private school choose dance as a hobby (3%). But on the other hand 13% boys of govt. school chose dance as a leisure pursuit.

Professional training other than school: 21% boys in private school as well as 17% in govt. school reported taking training in sports like cricket, basketball, football, etc. While girls from both govt. and private school reported taking training in areas like dance, music, beauty culture and yoga out of which yoga was more prominent amongst private school adolescent girls. The concerns about health appearance and aesthetics seem prominently rooted in girls.

Role models of adolescents: It appears that the adolescents at this age look towards parents and teachers for major decisions in their lives and are dependent on them. Both parents and teachers are accorded the position of authority. Film stars as role models represent their identification with them – a reflection of their concern with body image, fashion and glamour. On the contrary, low preferences were given to social activists and politicians. Probably, they are at the crossroads of development of full autonomy and identity and society concerns. The other infrequent responses were politicians, teachers, parents, social activists.

Close friend's gender: It is observed that boys from private schools have four to six close friends while boys from government schools have only one to two close friends. Only 28% of government schools boys have larger peer circle. 49% girls in government schools have very small and close friend circle and only 23% of them have a bigger friend circle. Similarly, less number of girls from private schools (26%) prefers to have larger friend circle of four to six close friends which makes one believe that having more close and intimate relationships probably is a characteristic of the second sex.

Average money spent in a month: The data clearly shows that the monthly expenditure of a majority of adolescents is between Rs.100-200 (35%) and also Rs.500 and above. A lot of variation is seen between the amount of expenditure in government and private school. While maximum adolescents (61%) in government schools spend between 100 -200 rupees about (59%) in private school spend more than 500 rupees. This can be attributed to the difference in the financial status of the families to which they belong. The ratio of expenditure between boys and girls also shows a marked difference. Only few girls (8%) in government schools who spend more than Rs.500 whereas the percentage is much more in private school (67%).

Things on which money is spent by adolescents: The adolescents did maximum on eating out (41.5%) followed by

purchase of clothes (36.25%) one of the reasons for this could be peer pressure or influence. The data also depicts that a large number of adolescents spent money on mobile phones and movies as well. Also the adolescents in private schools spent more on eating out and clothes in comparison government school adolescents spend more on clothes and gifts. Though not much difference was seen between the boys and girls of private school in their spending preferences, the girls of government schools (50%) had a major focus on spending on clothes --- a clear indication of concern with appearance. Unfortunately books find a scant attention in the expenditure pattern of adolescents.

Time spent on social networking sites by adolescents: A perusal of the data indicates that more number of adolescent boys in comparison to girls from both private and government school spent time on social networking sites. The number of adolescent girls and boys who use social networking sites from private schools is higher in comparison to government school. A considerable number of adolescents from all categories however used it occasionally. It is feared that such involvement may restrict their participation in outdoor activities.

7.2 Career Aspirations

Preferred choices of subjects among adolescents: This question was asked to know career preference of adolescents. On analyzing the responses it is inferred that both male and female adolescents of government and private school give more preferences to commerce subject in comparison to PCB, PCM, humanities and other. C.A as profession is very popular amongst adolescents and every third person wants to become a chartered accountant. It is also seen that the second preferences is given to PCB by both male and female of government and private school over the PCM and humanities. Humanities is the next preferred category. Adolescents of private school have given more preference to PCM and commerce over the PCB and humanities because majority of them want to become C.A or engineers which is one of them more popular career option.

Dream career of adolescents: It is interesting to observe that majority of the adolescents look towards government service as their first option. In fact more adolescents from government schools chose this as their dream career. Their second preference was equally divided among being MNC executive and self-employed. Self-employment on the other hand provides unlimited scope for progress and gives full autonomy to individuals. The risk taking behavior of adolescents and the urge to become more independent probably find reflection in this choice. More girls from government schools reported opening up a beauty parlour or a daily care center as their popular choice of a dream career. The other less frequent options were going abroad, politics, etc.

Reasons for choosing a job: The data revealed that the main factor while choosing a job was salary (26.25% approx). The salary is important not only to meet basic needs but also seems to carry prestige. The next major criterion was job security (31%) that is important for emotional stability. Data further revealed that more boys in comparison to girls

considered package or salary whereas the girls gave more preference to job security. Salary and job security combined; company profile and job title were other important factors, though less frequently reported for selecting a job.

Factors influencing selection of a career: The maximum i.e. 60% of adolescents from private schools cited personal preference as the most important criteria for selecting their career. While 20% of adolescents gave second choice to parents pressure and convenience (10% each), followed by socio cultural factors. Difference in the selection criteria amongst boys and girls was almost negligible and likewise amongst government and private schools. This shows the typical trait of adolescence that they do whatever they want to do, what they like, etc.

Parent's choice matching with their children: A majority of the adolescent boys and girls (70%-94%) from both private and government schools affirmed that their career aspirations matched with their parents. The preferred options reported were being engineers and doctors. For others, whose aspirations did not match with their parents, were found clueless about the preferred career in future.

Future aspirations of adolescents: When asked where they could see themselves five years from now, higher studies were quoted by a large majority of adolescents from both government and private school. The number/percentage is comparatively higher for adolescent girls from government schools. It seems, given the opportunity to study they are more eager and keen to unfold their wings. The job and independent business was seen as the next possible position. Interestingly more adolescent boys and girls from private schools saw themselves being successful persons in future; though approximately 25% students were not sure of their future to know where they would be.

Life goals of adolescents: Maximum number of from both private and government schools were very clear about how they wanted their future to be and what profession they wanted to opt for. They construed it in terms of career like being a doctor, engineer, lawyer, etc. However, both boys and girls of private adolescents had a more altruistic inclination while choosing their life goals and a large majority of it constituted private school adolescents. For instance, the reported making others happy or making their family proud as their life goals. Majority of government school adolescent boys reported that they were not clear about their life goals.

8. Happiness level in Adolescents

Happiness level of adolescents: It is found that more number of adolescents from both private and government schools reported being very happy. Very few reported of being unhappy, while a considerable number admitted being neither unhappy nor happy. Being adventurous, experimenters, and explorers are characteristics of adolescents. In our sample population probably is an epitome of this, where they find joy in the things they do. The non-committed were probably more cautious and the ones who were unhappy voiced uncertainty of future as their major concern.

Things which make adolescents happy: From the data it is observed that it is the company of friends that makes most of the adolescent boys and girls of private and government schools happy as they seem to be one source with whom they feel free and can share all their problems. Though a large number of adolescent boys from private schools consider friends as an important aspect of happiness, money is also valued by them more in comparison to girls. Parents occupy the next prominent place as contributors to adolescent happiness. Such a trend is a clear evidence of a strong emotional bonding between parents and children. Other things which were considered important for happiness were recreation, parents and friends together, parents, friends, money together.

Adolescent's worries: When asked about the worries, getting good marks surfaced as the prominent reason as there is a lot of academic pressure on children these days which may be a reflection of the parents expectations. In congruence the second preference was given to success. To achieve success in life seems to be the motto of present generation. Both marks and future success were given preference by both male and female of government and private schools as they want good marks in studies to achieve better career which ultimately leads to success. Next preference was given to what people thought about them as we know that during stage adolescents become very self-conscious and they always want to portray good image of them in front of others. Likewise, how they look was also considered important by private school boys. Many of them have also given preference to all the above factors as they want all these characteristics in them. Some of them also have given preference to jobs in view of financial security.

Most important thing in life: Interestingly, for 51% of adolescents from the total population, "to make others happy" is the most important thing in life, while another 32% want, "to be happy". While making others happy was voiced more by adolescent girls and boys of government school, "to be happy" was of more concern to adolescents from private school.

Comparison among private and govt. school adolescents: About 46% of the adolescents of the sample population considered themselves under stress. The number is higher for adolescents from government schools in comparison from private schools. The reason could be as said earlier, reaching up to the expectations of others or lack of resources available to government school children. On asking the reasons, 53% of the population responded that they have stress of exams and of getting good marks. While rest attributed to their concern for future, parental pressure and issues related to family and friends. But no gender differences were observed amongst stress levels of boys and girls. Though the government has given a choice for opting Xth board exams, still children are having stress regarding their exams and future.

Causes of stress: When asked specifically, how worried they are about future, 49% that is almost half of the total adolescents were found much worried about their future. While 36% are worried somewhat, 15% of adolescents were not worried at all. In fact though not stressed, majority of the adolescents expressed concern about the future.

Horoscope reading by adolescents: It was found that only 8% of adolescents read horoscope daily while 47% read some times and about 45% did not read it at all. The question was included with a view to know, how much do they believe in such forecasts as their involvement with future.

Belief in God: After analyzing the data, it is interpreted that though the adolescents did not believe in horoscope and future predictions, their belief in existence of god was almost complete. Majority of both adolescent girls and boys from the two categories of schools (94) believed in god. It seems religion as practiced in our home and societies has tremendous influence on the youngsters. Those who did not believe in god were not probed further to give reasons for the same. It may simply be an imposition of their parents' views.

9. Conclusion

Adolescents like to wear stylish clothes which they shop from malls followed by company outlets except government school adolescents who prefer shopping from departmental store and local market. Adolescents from private schools are conscious about their health and they do exercise at least few times a week, followed by adolescents who exercise daily. It has also been seen that govt. school adolescent girls are less conscious as compared to private school adolescent girls while no such difference was found amongst government.

The popular role models are parents, teachers and film stars. On the contrary, least preference is given to social activist and politicians. Private School children admire their parents more as their role models while adolescents from govt. schools prefer teachers more. Adolescent boy's peer group is more extended (4-5) as compared to adolescent girls (1-2). Maximum numbers of adolescent boys both from private and government school have male friends followed by both male and female friends, similar trend is visible for adolescent girls as well.

As would be expected maximum number of adolescents from govt. school usually spend around Rs. 100-200/- while adolescents from private school spend Rs.500 or more as their pocket allowance. Maximum expenditure is done on 'eating out' by adolescents from both private and government schools though private school adolescents spend relatively more in eating out as compared to adolescents from government school. Maximum number of adolescent boys opted for commerce as a subject while the girls opted for PCM and PCB as well. The adolescents from government schools are more interested in govt. job while, adolescents from private school wants to go for other careers like engineer, cricketer, I.A.S, Doctor., etc.

Parent's choices were matching with their children and maximum number of adolescents was very clear about their future, their life goals, and what they want to do in future. Adolescents reported being very happy followed by neither happy nor unhappy. The things which make them happy include friends followed by parents; contrary to the popular belief money is the aspect which provides them least happiness. Also, more adolescent boys than girls consider it important. Adolescents reported having no stress but they

also said that they are worried about their future a lot and for achieving good marks and success.

10. Suggestions

- Sample population to include from other age groups of adolescents.
- Inclusion of rural adolescents.
- Incorporation of parents and teachers viewpoints.
- Conducting focus group discussions to get in-depth information.

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Author Profile



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