

# Behavioural Problems among Adolescents

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**Abstract:** *Background of the Study:* Adolescents are highly vulnerable to behavioural problems. These problems are of significant concern to teachers and parents. These are known to have both immediate and long-term unfavourable consequences. This study aimed to assess behavioural problems among adolescents. *Methods:* A cross sectional descriptive Survey research design was adopted for the present study. 100 adolescents were recruited by non-probability purposive sampling method. Pediatric Symptom Checklist was used for assessing Behavioural problems. The study was conducted at selected PU College, Bangalore. *Results:* The result shown that 46% of adolescents are having mild to moderate impairment of psychosocial functioning. The 20% of the adolescents scored positive on the internalizing subscale, 15% scored positive on the externalizing subscale, 11% scored positive on the attention subscale and 13% of respondents of scored positive for other problems like physical symptoms, difficulty in academics and sleep disturbance. *Conclusion:* The study concludes that adolescents are risk for behavioural problems.

**Keywords:** Behavioural problems, adolescents and vulnerable group

## 1. Introduction

Adolescence is marked by immense turmoil in emotional and behavioural spheres. WHO defines adolescence as the period of life between the ages of 10 to 19 years. Rapid urbanization and modernization have exposed them to changes in society. The resultant breakdown in family structure, excessive or minimal control confuses the adolescent and makes him/her especially vulnerable to maladaptive patterns of thinking and behavior.<sup>1</sup> Adolescent behavioral problems predict numerous problematic outcomes in adulthood that involve serious challenges across many important life domains including family functioning, mental health, education, and employment.<sup>2</sup>

About 20% of adolescents, globally, suffer from impairments due to various mental disorders. The alarming rise in the number of children and adolescents in low- and middle-income countries leaves this population with inadequate attention from mental health professionals, minimal infrastructure, and limited resources for managing their mental health problems.<sup>3</sup>

The prevalence rates of behavioral problems across various studies conducted in different states in India vary, thus making it difficult to get a collective understanding of the extent of the problem. A study by Srinath et al conducted study on a community-based sample in Bengaluru, revealed the prevalence rates of behavioral problems to be around 12.5% in adolescents.<sup>4</sup> As evident from the available literature, the overall rates of psychiatric illnesses among children and adolescent population across the various states in India and other middle- and low-income countries vary between 5% and 6%. A cursory look at the Western data on the subject indicates that these figures are still on the lower side as prevalence rates of behavioral problems among children and adolescents in Canada, Germany, and the USA have been reported to be 18.1%, 20.7%, and 21%, respectively.<sup>5</sup> Lack of data on the subject precludes an assessment of the magnitude of the problem which is essential for effective health care planning. This study has

been planned to assess behavioural problems among adolescents studying in selected PU College Bangalore.

## 2. Materials and Methods

A cross sectional descriptive Survey research design was adopted for the present study. 100 adolescents were recruited by non-probability purposive sampling method at selected PU college, Bangalore and data was collected from June to August 2019. Adolescents with learning disorders and chronic illness are excluded from the study. The study protocol was approved from Institutional human ethics committee. Formal permission was obtained from Principal and informed consent was taken from adolescents and their parents.

## 3. Assessment

Adolescents who fulfilled the inclusion criteria were administered the socio-demographic proforma and Paediatric symptom checklist.

- 1) Socio-demographic proforma: It includes questions on their age, sex, religion, class, educational qualification of father, educational qualification of mother, Occupation of father, Occupation of mother and Monthly family income.
- 2) Paediatric symptom checklist: Youth Report (Y-PSC) is public domain psychosocial screen designed to facilitate the recognition of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral problems. The Y-PSC consists of 35 items that are rated as "Never," "Sometimes," or "Often" present and scored 0, 1, and 2, respectively. The total score is calculated by adding together the score for each of the 35 items. The score ranges from 0-70. The cut-off score for the Y-PSC is 30 or higher indicates impairment in psychosocial functioning. The investigator collected the data through self-report questionnaire method.

### Data Analysis

Data were analysed using Statistical package for the social Sciences software package (Version 23), and results were

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presented in table form. Descriptive statistics were computed for Paediatric symptom checklist sub-scales scores.

#### 4. Results

In the present study, Majority (65%) of the respondents were in the age of 17 years, most of them were male (75%). Majority (68%) of the respondents were Hindus and highest numbers (60%) of the respondents were studying in I PUC. Majority (47%) of the respondent's father educational qualification is No formal education and mother educational qualification is also No formal education (39%). Majority (60%) of the respondent's father occupation is Business and Mother Occupation is House maker (76%). Highest number (53%) of the respondent's family monthly income is Rs 10000-15000.

**Table 1:** Percentage of children scoring positive on the Paediatric symptom checklist: Youth reports subscales. N=100

subscales	Max score	Cut-off score	Frequency	Percentage
Internalizing problems	10	≥ 5	20	20
Externalizing problems	14	≥ 7	15	15
Attention Problems	10	≥ 7	11	11
Other problems	36	≥ 18	13	13
Total	70	≥ 30	46	46

It is observed that 20% of adolescents scored positive for internalizing subscale which indicate significant impairments with anxiety and/or depression, 15% of respondents scored positive for externalizing subscale which indicate significant problems with conduct, 11% of respondents scored positive for attention problems and 13% of respondents scored positive for other problems like physical symptoms, difficulty in academics and sleep disturbance.

It is observed that 46% of respondents scored 30 or more which indicate mild to moderate impairment in psychosocial functioning and 54% of respondents are Normal. The combined mean was  $31.92 \pm 4.15$ .

#### 5. Discussion

The study revealed that highest (20%) of respondents scored positive for internalizing behavioural problems and this supported by a prior study conducted by Pathak R et al (2011) shows that prevalence of behavioural and emotional problems in adolescents was found to be 30%, with girls exceeding boys in all age groups. Internalizing syndrome was the most common (28.6%) psychiatric problem.<sup>1</sup> Ogundele MO (2018) also found that, increased internalizing behavioural problems among adolescents.<sup>6</sup> The study conducted by Philipp J et al also found that internalizing problems were more prevalent (17.8%) than externalizing problems (7.4%).<sup>7</sup>

The study also revealed that 15% of children scored positive for externalizing subscale which indicates significant impairments with hyperactivity, conduct problems and aggressive problems and this supported by a prior study conducted by Gupta AK et al 2017 shows that higher

prevalence of externalizing symptoms among boys than girls.<sup>5</sup> The present study revealed that 46% of respondents are having mild to moderate impairment in psychosocial functioning. This is supported by Magai DNet al (2018) shows that significantly greater risk of scoring above the 95th percentile on behaviour problems, and socially deviant behaviour among adolescents.<sup>8</sup> Datta P et al (2018) also found that conduct problem was the most prevalent behavioral disorder among all the subscales with 48.70% of children, respectively. This was followed by peer problem (44.60%), emotional problem (33.70%), and hyperactivity problem (26.70%), respectively. The study conducted by Nair S et al (2017) on prevalence of mental health problems and correlates in adolescents shows that one in eight adolescents in this study was at risk of mental health problems.

Limitations: The study is limited to 100 adolescents from only Three PU College, Bangalore, did not use Randomization and small number of subjects limits generalization of the study.

#### 6. Conclusion

The study findings shown that adolescents are at risk for developing behavioural problems. There is need to raise public awareness about the prevalence of these often "hidden" behavioural and emotional problems among adolescents. Further research is needed to identify effective strategies for using primary care for recognizing, diagnosing, and treating mental health problems in children and adolescents.

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