



MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS AMONG ADOLESCENT SCHOOL LEARNERS - A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Adolescence is a critical developmental stage characterized by rapid physical, emotional, and social changes, making young learners particularly vulnerable to mental health problems. The present study examines the impact of mental health issues among adolescent school learners. The research focuses on mental health problems among adolescent school learners according to their age, gender, residence and types of family. For the present study, the investigator collects the relevance data through standardized tool. A descriptive survey method was adopted for the current study. The investigator found that no significant mean difference among the students' mental health problem on the basis of age, residence and types of family but significant mean difference was found on the basis of gender. The role of supportive school climate in promoting psychological well-being. The results emphasize the urgent need for school-based mental health programs, counseling services, parental awareness initiatives, and life skills education to foster resilience and emotional stability among adolescents. The study concludes that early identification and intervention are essential to ensure the holistic development and academic success of adolescent learners.

Keywords: Adolescents, Mental Health problem, , Psychological Well-being.

1. Introduction:

The actual maturity of the young individuals may not always correspond to their chronological age. Youth holds a specific or a particular outlook attitude. They are young and they have new, fresh and budding thoughts, view points, ideas and beliefs. They want everything to be easy and also want to get every wish satisfied. There is one really famous definition of Youth by world popular name- Robert Kennedy- "This world demands the qualities of youth: not a time of life but a state of mind, a temper of the will, a quality of imagination, a predominance of courage over timidity, of the appetite for adventure over the life of ease.

Mental health is crucial for maintaining physical health and social effectiveness. A healthy person meets life's demands according to their own abilities and limitations, which is connected positively to quality of life. The law of nature dictates that change occurs at all times in our lives. A person who is mentally healthy enjoys change in their life and performs well in society. The development of self-awareness and stability in adolescent children is aided by mental health. It is very important for the children of adolescence to be stable in today's fast changing time. In light of this situation, the researcher has attempted to evaluate the mental well-being of the students.

Rutter & Smith, (1995) Among young people problems such as suicide, conduct disorders, alcohol and drug abuse, depression, and attention deficit disorder, are all becoming more common, and there are increasing levels of abuse

and neglect. Zubrick et al. (1995) Children or young people with mental health problems are more likely to report feeling very stressed, have poor or fair physical health, perform below grade level at school, or use alcohol or other drugs, and think about killing themselves. Mental health helps a adolescent children become self-conscious and stable. It is very important for the children of adolescence to be stable in today's fast changing time. Taking this type of situation into consideration, the researcher has tried to check the mental health of the students (Talati & Gadhvi, 2021).

Recent pandemics, natural and unnatural disasters, and differences in personal and professional relationships have deeply affected mankind. These events have had a very profound effect like depression, stress, anxiety, fatigue, etc., among peoples. So, in the contemporary era, students are facing various problems like sleeplessness, social disorder, emotional instability, suicidal attitude, fear of deteriorating social status, etc.

2. Review of Related Literature:

Bhatin (2020) highlighted that "The proportion of the contribution of mental disorders in India has almost doubled since 1990 and it leads one out of every seven Indians in 2017 with a variety of mental disorders". Therefore, the present paper is a genuine effort to study the issues and challenges in the mental health of secondary school students. It is a review paper and based on some research studies related to mental health directly or indirectly (Kumari & Kumar, 2004).

The impact of continuous lockdown in a phased manner, to arrest the rapid spread of the pandemic, caused psychological distress for school students, such as depression and anxiety, and affected their quality of life (Duggal et al, 2016). Recent evidence highlights that women are more vulnerable to depression and anxiety during adversities (Zhou & Zhng, 2020). It has also been observed that young children, hailing from poor income families, manifest greater risks of mental health challenges (Smith & Jacob, 2020). Rural students, in developing countries like India, were the worst victims of the situation, with lack of online education, due to lack of internet facilities and/or poor internet connectivity. The Remote Learning Reachability report by indicated the widening learning gap owing to the digital divide. Poor economic conditions did not allow a majority of the rural children to buy smartphones and/or laptops, and data cards, for online education. Less than 25 percent of households were reported to be equipped with access to the internet, among which more than 80 percent of the students in government schools had no access to any educational material in Odisha, Jharkhand, Bihar, Chattisgarh, and Uttar Pradesh (Vyas, 2020)

As a result, cognitive development and nutrition (Jena, 2020) of rural school students in India was more affected, when compared to urban students. Further, social isolation and confinement at home, without much physical activity, caused mental distress for the school students. Mental health is a positive concept related to the individual's social, emotional, and psychological well being. It is a psychological state of a man who is functioning at a satisfactory level of passionate and behavioral adjustment.

Hence the present investigator formulated present research title as "*Mental Health Problems among Adolescent School Learners - A Critical Analysis*".

3. Objectives:

Main purpose of the present study are-

- To know the mental health problems among adolescent students on the basis of their age
- To study the mental health problems among adolescent students on the basis of their gender.
- To justify the mental health problems among adolescent students on the basis of their habitation.
- To know the mental health problems among adolescent students on the basis of their types of family.

4. Hypotheses:

H₀1: There is no significant difference between the mean score of mental health problems among adolescent students on the basis of age.

H₀2: There is no significant difference between the mean score of mental health problems among adolescent students on the basis of gender.

H₀3: There is no significant difference between the mean score of mental health problems among adolescent students on the basis of habitation.

H₀4: There is no significant difference between the mean score of mental health problems among adolescent students on the basis of their types of family.

5. Research Method:

In the present study, the investigator adopted a descriptive survey method.

5.1. Population and Sample:

Students studying in class VIII - X in English and Bengali medium schools of the age group of 12-16 years of the state of West Bengal were considered as population of the study. Since a good number of samples representing the population is required to collect information from the target group, schools were chosen randomly from Shyamnagar and its sub-urban areas to represent the target group. The study was conducted on a total participants of 200 students studying in class VIII, IX and X attending Bengali medium schools affiliated to West Bengal Board of Secondary Education (WBBSE).

5.2. Tool of Data Collection:

It is important for a study to gather data to test the hypotheses or answer the research questions. Tools are distinctively used to collect information and data to describe and quantify the data according to the study design. In the present study the self report version of the 'Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire' (SDQ) was used to collect data it is considered to be simple and user-friendly questionnaire. A formal permission was obtained via mail for use the questionnaire for this study.

5.3. Data Collection procedure:

Data for the present research study were collected to study the Mental Health problems of the adolescent school going children. The relevant data collected by the researcher from Bengali medium Schools of West Bengal. The researcher personally contacted the head of the schools and explained the purpose of the study and sought permission to conduct the study, finally agreed to participate in the study. With the consent of the school authority a schedule was prepared for data collection.

6. Statistical analysis and Interpretation of data:

In this section, several statistical approaches are employed to analyse data. The investigator cleaned and quantified each data sheet after collecting it, then tabulated it on an excel sheet as systematically as possible. The data was examined using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) tool. The investigator utilized Mean, S.D, t-test for statistical measures based on the study's aims and hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: "There is no significant mean difference in the mental health problems among adolescent school learners on the basis of their age".

Table showing t-test for mental health of adolescent students on the basis of age

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	df	t-valu	Sig./p(2tailed) value	Remark (0.05 level)
Age	14-15	157	25.06	5.20	198	1.31	0.19	Not Significant
	16-17	43	23.88	5.34				

Interpretation: As indicated in the table above an independent t-test was utilized to assess the mean mental health score of age group 14-15- and 16-17-year adolescent school students. 16 - 17-year-old students have better mental health than 14 - 15-year-old students, but the mean difference is statistically not significant. Hence the null hypothesis "There is no significant mean difference in the level of mental health problems among adolescent school learners on the basis of their age" is accepted.

Hypothesis 2: "There is no significant mean difference in the mental health problems among adolescent school learners on the basis of their gender".

Table showing t-test for mental health problems of adolescent students on the basis of gender

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	Sig./p(2tailed) value	Remark (0.05 level)
Gender	Male	98	24.10	5.11	198	1.98	0.050	Significant
	Female	102	25.49	5.28				

Interpretation: As indicated in the table above, an independent t-test was utilized to assess the mean mental health score of boys and girls adolescent school students. Male students have better mental health than female students, at the 0.05 level of significance; the mean difference is statistically significant. Hence the null hypothesis “*There is no significant mean difference in the mental health problems among adolescent school learners on the basis of their gender*” is rejected.

Hypothesis 3: “*There is no significant mean difference in the mental health problems among adolescent school learners on the basis of their habitation*”.

Table showing t-test for mental health of adolescent students on the basis of habitat

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	df	t-valu	Sig./p(2tailed) value	Remark (0.05 level)
<i>Habitation</i>	Rural	157	25.03	5.39	198	1.146	0.25	Not Significant
	Urban	43	24.00	4.57				

Interpretation: As indicated in the table above, an independent t-test was utilized to assess the mean mental health score of rural and urban adolescent school students. Urban have better mental health than rural adolescent learners, at the 0.05 level, the mean difference is statistically not significant. Hence the null hypothesis “*There is no significant mean difference in the level of mental health among adolescent school learners on the basis of their habitation*” is accepted.

Hypothesis 4: “*There is no significant mean difference in the mental health problems among adolescent school learners on the basis of their types of family*”.

Table showing t-test for mental health of adolescent students on the basis of family type

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	Sig. value	Remark (0.05)
<i>Types of Family</i>	Nuclear	119	25.45	5.07	198	2.09	0.37	Not Significant
	Joint	81	23.88	5.37				

Interpretation: An independent t-test was performed to compare the mean mental health score of learners on the basis of their types of family. The test is statistically not significant. The findings implied that the average score of two groups was not significantly different on the basis of family types. Hence the null hypothesis “*There is no significant mean difference in the mental health problems among adolescent school learners on the basis of their family type*” is accepted. While comparing the mean score among two groups of adolescent students, the joint family’s adolescent learners are more favourable than nuclear family’s adolescent pupils.

7. Findings and Discussion:

The investigator after collects the data and analysis of data, the researcher found that-

7.1. On the basis of age: According to the analysis of data and graphical representation of data, the researcher found that, 16 - 17-year-old students have better mental health than 14 - 15-year-old students, but the mean difference is statistically not significant. In terms of social adjustment, Girls are more capable of adjusting to social situations than boys. This study supported by Sankar et al (2017), 15/16 years old adolescents have more mental health problems than junior adolescent students. Zubrick et. al. (2000) Children or young people with mental health problems are more likely. Rutter & Smith (1995) found same result, young people mental health problems more common than senior adolescent students.

7.2. According to gender: A significant mean difference exists among the learners in the respect of gender. Male students have better than female students among their mental health problems. The result found that (Talati, 2021) Gender discrimination dose not effect on mental health of secondary school students.

7.3. On the basis of habitation:

Urban students have less mental health problems than rural adolescent learners, at the 0.05 level of significance, the mean difference is statistically not significant. Present result of the study also supported by some other researchers' findings like Sharma (2014), Kumar and Grewal (2014), Bartwal (2014), Singh (2018), Arulkumar and William (2017), Parmar (2019), Ahmad et. al. (2007), Srinath et. al. (2005), Sarda et. al. (2013) and Kaur et.al. (2015). The present researcher also noticed that rural adolescent learners possess better mental health than urban adolescent learners. This finding supported by the study of Sharma (2014). He observed that children in urban schools had greater mental health issues than students in rural schools.

7.4. In the respect of types of family:

The findings implied that the average score of two groups was not significantly different on the basis of family types, in mental health; the joint family's adolescent learners are more favourable than nuclear family's adolescent pupils. Anita et. al. (2003) noted that children from nuclear families possess more mental health problems than the children from joint families. Malliga and Jayachandran (2018) also found same result. They noted that higher secondary students from nuclear families have greater levels of stress and anxiety than students from joint families. Kaur et.al. (2015) found a statistically significant difference in the mental health among adolescents from different family structures. In contrast, as per the results found by Nandi (2016), between students from nuclear and combined households, there was no statistically significant difference in the prevalence of mental health problems.

8. Educational implications of the study:

The school authority should aware about mental health problems of these learners as well as how to support them for social and familial adjustment. Family only can support a learner for development of his or her self - concept and self -respect. Without the parental support a child's social development will be hampered. The teachers should be aware about these issues as well as their importance for development of learners' academic excellence skill.

Conclusion:

The study has significant implications for parents, teachers, students, experts, educational planners, educational policymakers, counselors, psychologists, religious bodies, and incoming researchers. First and foremost, it should be recognized that the adolescent era of human development is a challenging and critical period for students. The school authority should aware about mental health problems of these learners as well as how to support them for social and familial adjustment. The school authority should sensitize the parents as well as the common people regarding these issues. The teachers should be refreshed in in-service training about these issues. The teachers should be aware that their function is not just to teach a child but to support him/ her for their all-round development. In the modern changing society teachers' role now increased day by day from classroom to the society in large.

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