



STATUS OF MENTAL HEALTH OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ALIGARH: PROBLEMS AND PREVENTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The secondary school stage is the most important phase of life where students are facing physical, social, mental, family, educational, and personal problems. At this stage, mental health plays a very important role and helps to deal with these types of problems in a very effective way. The Objective of the study is to find the status of mental health of students studying in secondary schools and analyze the obstacles faced by them. The study uses an exploratory research design and purposively selected two schools from Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh district. Total samples of 50 students, out of which 25 were girl and 25 were boy students taken from selective schools. A SDQ questionnaire was formed based on the objective and was distributed among the selected students. The results revealed that more girls than boys report mental health problems. The status of mental health among students at secondary level in Aligarh is not in good condition due to various issues and challenges in terms of misconceptions about mental health, lack of awareness and resources, social, personal, financial, environment and technology-related problems. Mental health problems are common among the senior secondary students in Aligarh. Early detection and effective intervention will result in better development of the futures citizens of our country. Proper orientation and awareness about mental health issues and challenges at the secondary school level will be very helpful for students to cope up with the tense situations and also help in being well-adjusted in family and society.

KEYWORDS: *Mental health, Secondary school, Problems, Preventions*

INTRODUCTION

The goal of education is to develop a sound body and sound mind. Our research and experiences make it abundantly evident that even a highly intelligent person cannot guarantee success in life without receiving a good education. So, a minimum level of education is required for everyone. However, our educational system, particularly in higher secondary schools, places more emphasis on exam scores and book knowledge than it does on preparing students for a successful future, fostering teacher-student interaction, and helping students understand and manage their emotions in a way that is appropriate for the situation and has an impact on their mental health.

The absence of any disorders in one's mental state is referred to as mental health. It is essentially the process by which people achieve self-actualization, self-satisfaction, and fulfilled existence. It encompasses all feelings of development and progress, tranquility and adjustment, achievement and contentment, and productive participation in a community or group. It aids in determining our behavior, emotions, thoughts, and stress management. A person is considered mentally healthy if they are emotionally and socially stable.

It can be challenging for people to consistently maintain positive behavior, mental activity, feelings, emotions, and other aspects of mental health. Students in secondary school have a tendency to drift off since, at this age, stress and a whirlwind of internal and external problems can easily overwhelm their minds. In India, mental health concerns are causing a lot of problems for students. It has been an extremely difficult few years for developing nations like India. Humanity has been profoundly impacted by recent pandemics, both natural and man-made disasters, and rifts in interpersonal and professional relationships. These incidents have had a significant impact on people's feelings of melancholy, tension, anxiety, exhaustion, etc. Thus, students nowadays are dealing with a wide range of issues, such as anxiety over their declining social status, social disorders, emotional instability, suicidal thoughts, and insomnia. According to Bhatia (2020), "The proportion of mental disorders in India has almost doubled since 1990 and it leads one out of every seven Indians with a variety of mental disorders in 2017". Thus, this work is a sincere attempt to investigate the problems and obstacles related to secondary school students' mental health.



CONCEPT OF MENTAL HEALTH

The idea of mental health emerged subsequent to Clifford Beers' work. The word "mental health" is very wide and encompasses components of adjustment that are mental, emotional, physical, and social. A person with good mental health has mental resilience and is able to deal with life's challenges, no matter how difficult they may be. Five different forms of health—physical, emotional, moral, spiritual, and social—combine to form mental health. It is an important aspect of the total health of a person because, it is, both cause and the effect of the other types of health. It means three things of an individual i.e. (i) Right thoughts (ii) Right attitudes (iii) Right actions.

DEFINITION

1. According to Norma E. cuts and Nicholas Mosety, "Mental health is the various strains of the environment we meet in life as the means we take to assure the adjustment."
2. According to WHO "Mental health is more than just the absence of mental disorders or disabilities."

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as: "A state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (WHO, 2001).

The World Health Organization defines mental health as "... a state of prosperity in which the individual recognizes his or her own abilities, can cope with everyday stressors, can work profitably and productively, and can commit to his or her community" (WHO, 2001a, p.1).

The development of a prosperous state in which each person performs to the best of their psychological ability, the logically exacerbated, counteractive action of mental illness, and the release of pressure in a troubling environment. The World Federation for Mental Health has acknowledged that, given that circumstances might change, the concept of optimal psychological wellbeing refers to the most ideal state rather than a rigidly flawless one. Regarding the boundaries and social-ecological context of the individual, emotional well-being is understood as a state of the person. The word "emotional wellness" refers to a person's overall state that stems from regular associations and psychological processes. Another name for emotional well-being is the process by which people acknowledge their own conceit, efficacy, and self-awareness. In addition to other concerns, a man's overall psychological well-being is primarily affected by his overall sense of growth and progress, change and harmony, achievement and happiness, and successful involvement in a network.

The secondary school stage is the most crucial time in a student's life when they deal with issues related to their education, families, relationships, physical health, and mental health. At this point, mental health is crucial and plays a big part in how these kinds of issues are handled very successfully.

STATUS OF MENTAL HEALTH IN INDIA

Approximately 41% of people in India are under the age of 18 (Kumar, Nayar, & Bhat, 2020). Adolescents go through a phase where they are dealing with a lot of life challenges for the first time and have very little information and experience. They believe that their education and life experiences are enough to fully comprehend the world, yet they lack a basic understanding of reality and become mired in its problems when they encounter obstacles in life. With a population of about 1.236 billion, India is the second most populous country in the world (UNICEF, India, 2013). Of this total, one in three people are between the ages of 10 and 24, and one in five are considered juveniles between the ages of 10 and 19 (Census of India, 2011). With over 434 million young people, it demonstrates that India has the world's greatest youthful population (UNICEF, India, 2013). As one of the massive demographic dividends, it is predicted to increase to almost 250 million working adults by 2030 (Reuters, 2016). Contributing to the expansion and development of any nation is akin to having an asset. If the policy area prioritizes the health of children and adolescents, then all improvement is expected (Hossain & Purohit, 2019). Additionally, it has led to a rise in mental health issues. The emphasis on newborn vaccination, nutrition, and mortality in India has improved physical health overall, but school-age children's and adolescents' mental health is not given as much consideration as it should (MHFW & GOI, 2005). In India, it is estimated that around 50 million children, including schoolchildren, suffer from mental illness; if the adolescent population is taken into account as a whole, this figure will rise much higher (Shastri, 2009). The National Adolescent Health Strategy's Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram is one of the six main strategies that ranks mental health issues (MHFW & GOI, 2015). The program's target population was between the ages of 10 and 19, but the peer educators only chose participants who were between the ages of 15 and 19. It lessens the availability of counseling services for kids aged 0 to 10. The program's dual goals were to increase awareness and offer individuals in need of it therapeutic or psychological treatment. Even though the program's goal was to address issues with adolescent health in general, Hossain and Purohit (2019) found that it was unable to adequately address issues with children's and teenagers' mental health.



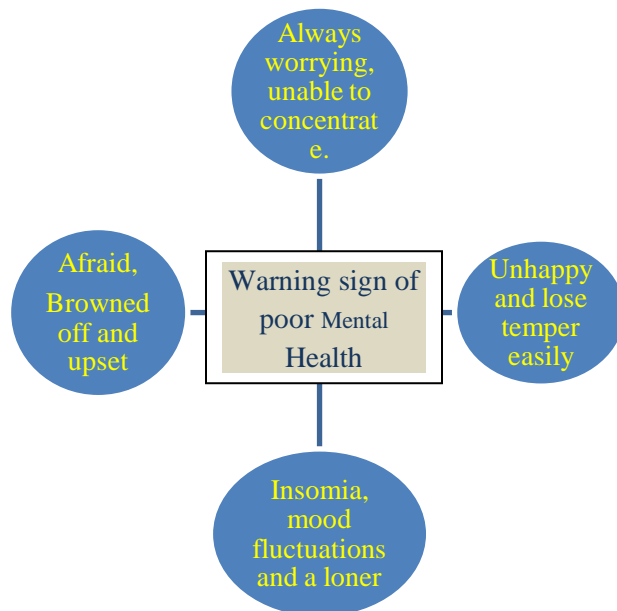
CHARACTERISTICS OF MENTALLY HEALTHY INDIVIDUAL

The concept of a mentally healthy person is ambiguous. However, a person in good mental health is able to maintain a balanced personality free from stress, anxiety, emotional strain, and conflicts of any kind. Various psychologists have identified numerous traits of a mentally well individual. A few of the crucial attributes are listed below.

1. **Accept reality:** Being able to accept reality is one of the most crucial traits of someone in good mental health. When someone can accept this, they can deal with any issue that may arise with ease.
2. **A sense of security:** A psychologically sound individual never lacks confidence in his life or future. He is self-assured in both himself and other people, believing that he can solve any situation on his own or with assistance from others.
3. **A robust physical state:** It's been suggested that mental stability depends greatly on one's physical state. A healthy body exists in a sound mind.
4. **Emotional equilibrium:** A person in good mental health is able to maintain emotional control and behave normally under pressure. Because of his emotional maturity, he is able to communicate his feelings to others.
5. **Experience is a terrific teacher** if you can learn from it. Take lessons from it. Every event gains a lesson for a mentally sound individual. Instead of constantly making the same mistakes, he builds mental toughness to meet challenges head-on.

SOME MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS/ISSUES CHILDREN FACE AT SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL

- Anxiety about school performance
- Problems dealing with parents & teachers
- Unhealthy peer pressure
- Common development , adjustment problems
- Fear about starting school
- School phobia
- Dealing with death or divorce
- Feeling depressed or overwhelmed
- Drug or Alcohol use
- Suicidal ideation
- Worrying about sexuality
- Facing tough decisions
- Considering dropping out of school





OBJECTIVES

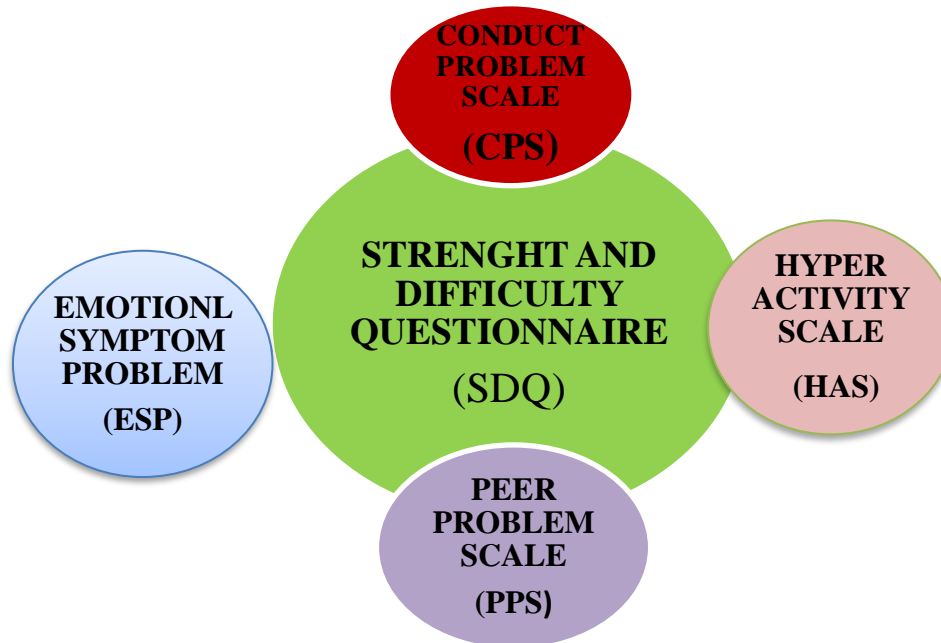
- 1) To find out the level of mental health of secondary school students.
- 2) To investigate the challenges faced due to Mental Health on secondary school students.

METHODOLOGY

The Nature of the study is purely exploratory. Quantitative and qualitative approaches were employed to fulfill the purpose of this preliminary study. For quantitative part, the mental health difficulties test namely Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) was used to identify the mental health difficulties of secondary school children. The SDQ is a broad behavioral screening profile of children's emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity inattention, peer problems, and pro social behavior. In this study, to measure the mental health difficulties for children, only the four domains (emotional symptoms, hyperactivity/inattention, conduct problems, and peer problems) were used. The data collected from SDQ were analyzed by using "(SPSS)" and were summarized using appropriate statistics based on the objectives of this study. The present study has been conducted based on the primary data with the help of a Strength and Difficulty questionnaire. Total samples of 50 students, out of which 25 were girl and 25 were boy students taken purposively from 2 selective schools of Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh. i.e.

- AMU ABK HIGH SCHOOL(BOYS)
- AMU ABK SCHOOL(GIRLS)

A questionnaire was formed based on the objective and was distributed among the selected students. For conducting the study the investigator applied random sampling technique. Collected data were analyzed with the help of graphical representation and percentage analysis. The age of the adolescents approximately ranged from 13 to 15 years. The semi structured interview was conducted to have in depth information of pertinent issues that arose from the quantitative results. This enabled the researcher to understand more for children's mental health status.



FINDING & DISCUSSIONS

Different mental health conditions among secondary school students based on their sexual orientation



(Table 1)

Variables		Normal		Borderline		Abnormal	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Internalizing problem							
ESS	Male	12	48%	5	20%	8	32%
	Female	8	32%	7	28%	10	40%
	TOTAL	20	40%	12	24%	20	36%
PPS	Male	10	40%	8	32%	7	28%
	Female	12	48%	3	12%	10	40%
	TOTAL	20	44%	11	22%	17	34%
Externalizing Problems							
CPS	Male	13	52%	4	16%	8	32%
	Female	15	60%	5	20%	5	20%
	TOTAL	28	82%	9	18%	13	26%
HAS	Male	18	72%	2	8%	5	20%
	Female	12	48%	4	16%	9	36%
	TOTAL	30	60%	6	12%	14	28%

(Fieldwork data)

Table 1 showed that different mental health condition of secondary school student with their sex wise.

The study shows that there were around 35% children in the abnormal band for internalizing problems, while nearly 27% of children were suspected to have high risk for externalizing problems.

1. EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS

- According to the study, out of 50 respondents, 32% of boys and 40% of girls had abnormal levels of emotional symptom problems. Twenty percent of responders were boys and twenty eight percent were girls at the borderline level, While 32% of girls and 48% of boys did not experience any emotional symptom problems.
- These children were unable to learn because they could not pay attention, remember information on purpose, or act properly in a school environment.
- These pupils are challenging to control in the classroom. These children are impetuous, incompatible with one another, and unable to follow instructions. They show hostility and aggression in the school or the playground.
- Eight boys were at the borderline level out of fifty students. In comparison to students at an abnormal level, he experienced fewer issues. However, there were no appreciable variations between the emotional symptom scores of boys and girls.

2. PEER PROBLEM

- In the peer problem, it was discovered that, out of 50 respondents, 28% were boys, 40% were girls at an abnormal level, 32% were males, and 12% were girls at the borderline. Peer problems were nonexistent for respondents, with 48% of girls and 40% of boys reporting no issues.
- Table 1 showed that, out of 50 pupils, 10 girls had abnormally high peer difficulties.
- They might experience excruciating emotions of loneliness. She can find school to be an unpleasant place. In the end, she might start skipping class or stop entirely. Additionally, that child can be more susceptible to peer pressure from delinquent or drug-abusing peers.



- In the borderline level, there are more boys than girls. However, there were no appreciable variations in the Peer Problem score between boys and girls.

3. HYPERACTIVITY

- 20% of boys and 36% of girls who answered the hyperactive problem were determined to be at an abnormal level; however, 8% of boys and 16% of girls were at a borderline, and resting 48% of females and 72% of boys reported no issues with this hyperactivity disorder.
- These pupils can't focus or maintain attention on any task for too long since they are impulsive. They may occasionally exhibit a particular learning difficulty.
- They are thought to be less hazardous than an aberrant amount. There are more boys than girls in each group. However, there were minor but noteworthy differences in the hyperactivity problem score between boys and girls.

4. CONDUCT PROBLEM

- 32% of boys and 20% of girls had abnormal problems in the conduct problem, while 16% of boys and 20% of girls had borderline problems. The remaining 52% of boys and 60% of girls had no problems.
- They consistently display disrespect for social norms and regulations. They may exhibit violent or socially unacceptable behavior at times.
- Over a six-month period, they may also exhibit at least three of the following six behaviors: stealing, lying all the time, purposefully starting fires, skipping class, breaking into homes or offices, physically abusing animals or people, pressuring people to have sex, starting fights frequently, and using weapons in fights.

REMEDIAL MEASURES TO IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Keeping in view, the issues and challenges of mental health, the following remedial measures are suggested by the researchers for further improvement of mental health of secondary school students:

(i) **Proper Diagnosis of Issues Related to Mental Health:** Prioritizing corrective action requires first and foremost an understanding of the issue at both the surface and the underlying levels. For a better understanding of the issue, an efficient diagnostic approach should be developed. Making diagnoses in the following areas is recommended:

- **Physical Diagnosis:** Prioritizing the identification of youngsters in good physical condition and free from any physical problems that could compromise their mental development is crucial. Rather than sending them to a psychiatrist, you should refer them to a physician or other qualified specialist if they have any general physical issues. Common physical issues that persist over time might impact mental health.
- **Psychological diagnosis:** Children who exhibit typical behavior yet are physically normal may be suffering from a mental health issue. Furthermore, it is untrue that children who behave or react appropriately are psychologically well. It is imperative to consistently keep a tight eye on children's and adolescents' behavior, physical activity, and thought processes. It is important to watch out that the child is unaware of this and does not become upset while doing so. It is important to watch this with caution so that the kids don't realize someone is watching them and don't get upset.
- **Genetics diagnosis:** Examining the children's family's medical and other histories is also crucial. Children's negative emotional and physical behavior can occasionally be attributed to their family and parents. Prior to starting treatment, the parents or other family members may be the cause of the child's poor performance in the classroom, even after repeated reminders.
- **Environmental diagnosis:** It is also crucial to examine the child's surroundings. The study of child development demonstrates that a child's environment has a significant impact on their brain. If the youngster does poorly in such a scenario, stakeholders should work to enhance his surroundings rather than offering mental treatment.

(ii) **Proper Orientation and Awareness about Mental Health:** Good health is accurately represented by a healthy body and mind, which can influence health either directly or indirectly. The ability of the body and mind to function effectively and in harmony is known as health. Mental health is one of the primary components that supports both social effectiveness and physical health. Children who are well-adjusted and exhibit moral values and good physical health were viewed as having sound mental health. A mentally well individual was content, robust, and full of hope (Sharma, 2017). One must always adapt, sometimes adapting to oneself, other times to society, the environment, or other factors. They must acquire the ability to adapt. By adjusting to others and their surroundings, children are not bothering anybody else. They need to be concerned about how to establish peaceful relationships with other people, the environment, and oneself. It is for this reason that October 10th is recognized globally as Mental Health Day each year. Therefore, it is crucial that all parties involved receive the right orientation in order for them to be able to give children a supportive environment both inside and outside of their homes and institutions.



(iii) **Guidance for Maintaining Mental Hygiene:** A method or approach to achieving and maintaining mental health is called mental hygiene. "The study of ways and means to keep the mind healthy and developing" is what Klien defined as mental hygiene. Therefore, it's important to understand the causes of mental disease, how to avoid them, and how much of an impact either the internal or external environment has on a person's mental health (Sharma, 2017). According to Parkar, Dawani, and Apte (2001), the Indian Council for Mental Hygiene and the first child guidance clinics were founded in the 1940s and 1937, respectively, and are regarded as the pioneering efforts to address adolescent mental health issues in India.

(iv) **Effective implementation of the Policy:** There was a lack of appropriate administration and comprehensive policies for children and adolescents connected to mental health for the population of more than 435 million kids and teens, despite the severity and scope of teen mental health issues (Malhotra & Patra, 2014). From 1991 to 1995, national medical science authorities created their psychiatric fellowships and actively contributed to the advancement of children's and adolescents' mental health in the academic sector (Malhotra, 2004). Nevertheless, several gaps were discovered. The National Policy on Children (1974) and Education (1986), the Act for Mental Health (1987), the National Nutrition Policy (1993), the National Trust for Welfare of Persons with Cerebral Palsy, Autism, Multiple Disabilities, and Mental Retardation Act (1999), the 2004 Charter for Children, and the 2005 National Plan of Action for Children are just a few of the numerous national policies that India has adopted in various areas related to the development of children. However, none of these policies took the mental health of children and adolescents seriously. The National Health Policy (MHFW, & GOI, 2014; Hossain, & Purohit, 2019) and the National Mental Health Policy (2014) showed minimal interest in the mental health of the youth between 2002 and 2016. While the District Mental Health Program and the National Mental Health Program help those in need of basic or primary psychiatric care, they do not specifically address the mental health of children and adolescents (Murthy, 2007). Policies to reduce anxiety, stress, and prevent mental illness. To protect the mental health of teenagers in India, policies that determine how and to what degree children are at fault for deteriorating their mental health should be put in place for the usage of gadgets like mobile phones (Anboucarassy & Begum, 2014).

Good mental health policies for children and adolescents in India should incorporate a number of WHO guidelines, including the following: (a) creating facilities specifically for mental health care; (b) integrating mental health into basic healthcare; (c) guaranteeing the availability, accessibility, and equitable distribution of facilities and essential resources in both rural and urban areas; (d) creating an environment at home and at school that promotes optimal development; and (e) involving children and adolescents in taking on responsibilities and making decisions regarding the planning of mental health programs (WHO, 2005). Using a proactive strategy, the complete method, integration, and multi-sectored approach, well-drawn obstacles and limits can be minimized (Hossain, & Purohit, 2019).

(v) **Meditation and Yoga Programmes:** From the Vedic to the modern eras, stress-reduction techniques like yoga and meditation have long been popular. Educational institutions should actively participate, run recurring training sessions for kids, and educate parents on effective coping mechanisms for academic stress. To help kids feel less stressed, teachers might employ a variety of techniques and interventions. Teachers should divide difficult and time-consuming assignments into manageable, stress-free chunks. The two main methods for calming the mind and promoting health that makes people feel good and invigorates their life are yoga and meditation (Sharma, 2012).

CONCLUSIONS

Mental health problems are common among the senior secondary students in Aligarh. The results revealed that more girls than boys report mental health problems. The status of mental health among students at secondary level in Aligarh is not in good condition due to various issues and challenges in terms of misconceptions about mental health, lack of awareness and resources, social, personal, financial, environment and technology-related problems.

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that secondary school students face a variety of mental health-related issues and challenges that interfere with their academic, social, and personal lives. These issues and challenges include lack of awareness, resources, facilities, and services; social dilemmas; financial difficulties; personal & mental conflicts; environmental & technological complications. Thus, the current study recommended certain corrective actions for future advancement, such as accurate mental health problem diagnosis, appropriate mental health issue orientation and awareness, sufficient mental hygiene guidance services, appropriate policies & implementation, meditation and yoga programs. In order to promote the mental health of secondary school children, the present paper has educational implications for policymakers, school administrators and staff, teachers, parents, and agencies involved in secondary education. These stakeholders should create a supportive atmosphere both at home and at school.



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