

Mental Health of Adolescents

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Abstract: Mental health is a positive concept related to the social and emotional wellbeing of individuals and communities. The concept is culturally defined, but generally relates to the enjoyment of life, ability to cope with stresses and sadness, the fulfilment of goals and potential, and a sense of connection to others (Jenkins, 2007). Cutts and Mosaley (1978) has defined mental health as an “ability to adjust satisfactorily to the various strains of the environment; we meet in life and mental hygiene as the means we take to assure this adjustment”. Present study focuses on assessing the mental health status of adolescent girls. A sample of 30 girls doing their under graduate was drawn through randomized sampling. Standardized Mental Health Check list by Pramod (1992) was used to assess their mental health status.

Keywords: Mental Health, Well-being, Adolescents, hygiene.

I. INTRODUCTION

Mental health is a positive concept related to the social and emotional wellbeing of individuals and communities. The concept is culturally defined, but generally relates to the enjoyment of life, ability to cope with stresses and sadness, the fulfilment of goals and potential, and a sense of connection to others (Jenkins, 2007). Cutts and Mosaley (1978) has defined mental health as an “ability to adjust satisfactorily to the various strains of the environment; we meet in life and mental hygiene as the means we take to assure this adjustment”.

Mental health is an index which shows the extent to which the person has been able to meet his environmental demands - social, emotional or physical. However, when he finds himself trapped in a situation he does not have matching coping strategies to deal with it effectively, he gets himself mentally strained. This mental strain is generally reflected in symptoms like anxiety, tension, restlessness or hopelessness among others. If it is felt for too long and too extensively by the person, these symptoms may take a different form or get syndromized, representing a mental illness. Mental health, therefore, should not be confused with mental illness; it is a study of pre-illness mental condition of the person (Kime, 2000)

Health is more than just the absence of an illness, it means working toward our best possible state of emotional and physical well-being. Mental health and well-being is about thoughts, feelings and relationships. There are many related terms, such as social or emotional well-being, resilience, stress management or life skills. Mental health is a continuum, ranging from a state of optimal health, to having an illness which might affect our thoughts, feelings or behaviour. Most of us find ourselves somewhere in the middle of the continuum, just as we do for physical wellbeing, but our state of health can change over time (Commonwealth, 2004).

Mental health is defined by the (WHO) as “a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community”. In this positive sense, mental health is the foundation for individual well-being and the effective functioning of a community (WHO, 2010).

Mental health is not just the absence of mental illness. It is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community (WHO, 2007). In other words, mental health is created in our interactions with the world around us, and is determined by our sense of control in dealing with our circumstances and by the support we have to help us cope (CMHA-NL, 2001).

Mental health, given its polygenic nature and its imprecise borders, benefits from a historical perspective to be better understood. What today is broadly understood by “mental health” can have its origins tracked back to developments in public health, in clinical psychiatry and in other branches of knowledge. Although references to mental health as a state can be found in the English language well before the 20th century, technical references to mental health as a field or discipline are not found before 1946. During that year, the International Health Conference, held in New York, decided to establish the World Health Organisation (WHO) and a Mental Health Association founded in London. Before that date, found are references to the corresponding concept of “mental hygiene”, which first appeared in the English literature in 1843, in a book entitled mental hygiene or an examination of the intellect and passions designed to illustrate their influence on health and duration of life. Moreover, in 1849, “healthy mental and physical development of the citizen” had already been included as the first objective of public health in a draft law submitted to the Berlin Society of Physicians and Surgeons (Bertolote, 2008).

To help adolescence achieve their full potential both as youth and adult, it becomes essential to identify, treat and prevent mental disorders that interfere with their development. However getting rid of the disorders is not enough. It is important to instill positive values and behavior that enable them to flourish, contribute to society and be happy and healthy. While looking into the various causes influencing the mental health of adolescents, it is beyond doubt that various psycho-social factors contribute towards it. However, the psychosocial factors related to the personality of an individual become a marked potential feature, which have important role in mental health (Taylor, 2008)

Mental health and wellness is the state at which one feels, thinks, and behaves. Mental health can be viewed on a continuum, starting with an individual who is mentally well and free of any impairment in his or her daily life, while someone else might have mild concerns and distress, and another might have a severe mental illness. Mental health is just as vital as physical health. In reality, the two coexist and should not be treated separately. There are many mental health disorders that exacerbate physical concerns or disorders, and vice versa (Kristi, 2013).

II. METHODOLOGY

The sample consisted of under graduate teens that were pursuing their graduation. For the conduct of the study Coimbatore was selected for the present study, A sample of 30 students was selected through random sampling. The samples ranged in age between 19 - 24 years. Mental Health Check list developed by Pramod Kumar in 1992 was used with the objective of analyzing the mental health status of the selected sample. This checklist consists of 11 items- six mental and five somatic signs, presented in a four point rating format. A numerical value of 1, 2, 3 and 4 is assigned to the four response categories. The total score varies from 11 to 44. For Mental Health A (i.e.) mental signs, the score range between 6-24 and for Mental Health B (i.e.) somatic signs the score range between 5-20 showing the highest to the lowest mental health status of the person. The adopted scoring pattern for both A and B separately is as follows:

- ❖ A score of less than or equal to 10 indicates good mental health.
- ❖ A score of ranging from 11-13 indicates moderate mental health.
- ❖ A score more than 14 poor indicates poor mental health.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Mental health habits including coping, resilience and good judgement help adolescents to achieve overall well-being and set the stage for positive mental health in adulthood. Enhancing social skills, problem-solving skills and self confidence can help prevent mental health problems such as conduct disorders, anxiety, depression and eating disorders as well as other risk behaviours including those that relate to sexual behaviour, substance abuse, and violent behaviour (Werner, 1995).

TABLE – I MENTAL HEALTH STATUS OF THE SELECTED SAMPLE

Signs	Category	Score	N(30)	%
Mental signs	Healthy	< 10	8	27
	Moderately healthy	11-13	8	27
	Ill	>14	14	46
Somatic signs	Healthy	<10	16	54
	Moderately healthy	11-13	7	23
	Ill	>14	7	23
Total	Healthy	<20	9	30
	Moderately	20-28	12	40
	Ill	>28	9	30

CATEGORIZING THE SELECTED SAMPLE BASED ON THE MENTAL HEALTH SCORE

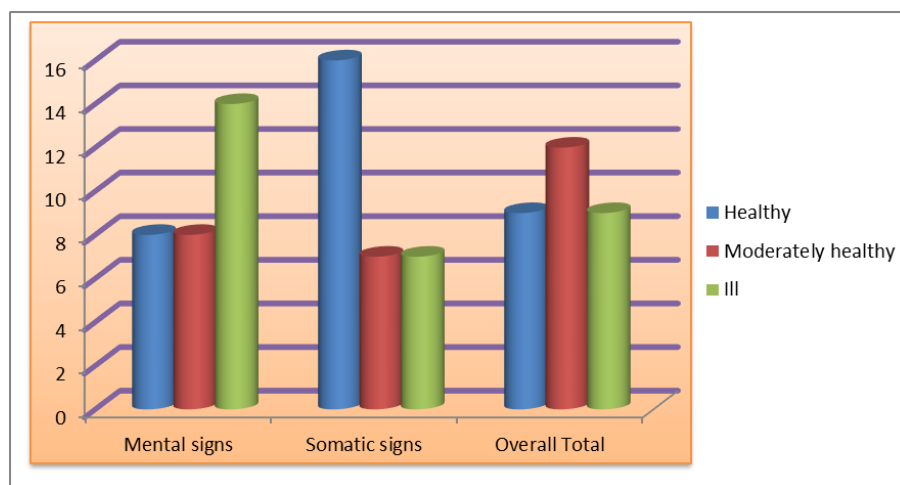


Fig. 1.

Table I and Fig. 1. indicates the manifestation of mental health signs nearly half of the respondents (46%) reported their health status as ill. Whereas an equal percentage of them (i.e.) 27 per cent were found to be healthy and moderately healthy.

With regards to the manifestation of somatic signs more than half of the respondents (54%) reported their health status as healthy. Whereas an equal percentage of them 23 per cent were found to be moderately healthy and ill.

Interpreting the data of mental signs and somatic signs separately, it is well realised that the mental signs sets before somatic signs in any individual and moreover the manifestation of mental signs makes the adolescent feel ill.

Glancing at the mental health overall status 30 percent of the adolescent girls, were observed to be mentally ill. The fact raises an alarm to the psychologists, researchers and the academicians to look into the issue and help the adolescent to lead their life successfully. However an equal percentage of them is found to be healthy by scoring more than 20. The remaining lot were observed to be moderately healthy.

IV. CONCLUSION

A commonly used definition of mental health is “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community”. Mental health or psychological well-being makes up and integral part of an individual’s capacity to lead a fulfilling life, including the ability to form and maintain relationships, to study, work or pursue leisure interests, and to make day-to-day decisions about educational, employment, housing or other choices.

Many mental health problems emerge in late childhood and early adolescence. Recent studies have identified mental health problems - in particular depression, as the largest cause of the burden of disease among young people. Poor mental

health can have important effect on the wider health and development of adolescents and is found to be associated with several health and social outcomes such as alcohol, tobacco and illicit substances use and abuse, adolescent pregnancy, school dropout and delinquent behaviours. There is growing consensus that healthy development during childhood and adolescence contributes to good mental health and can prevent mental health problems (WHO, 2014).

Poor mental health can have import effect on the wider health and development of adolescents and is association with several health and social outcomes such as higher alcohol, tobacco and illicit substances use, adolescent pregnancy, school dropout and delinquent behaviours. The role of personality factors is important in determining the mental health. Studies have adopted different methods to understand the effects of personality factors in the progress of mental health and well-being of adolescence. So the current study aimed to understand adolescent's state of mental health, and realize how the personality factors namely ambitious and optimistic nature influence their mental health.

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