

Level of Mental Wellbeing Among Adolescents With Special Reference to Kess Vocational Training Institute, Thrissur District, Kerala

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Abstract

Mental health is a crucial and positive aspect of an individual's overall well-being. Adolescents represents the most crucial building block of society, embodying both immense significance and vulnerability. The significance of discussing mental health among adolescents is a crucial topic that warrants careful consideration and conversation. Globally, 13% of the burden of disease among individuals aged 10-19 is attributed to mental disorders, with one in seven within this age range experiencing such conditions (WHO, 2021). The repercussions of neglecting adolescent mental health conditions extend into adulthood, compromising both physical and mental well-being while constraining opportunities for individuals to lead fulfilling lives in their adult years. The objectives of the research were 1) To understand the sociodemographic details of the respondents. 2) To assess the level of mental wellbeing of adolescents. Descriptive research design is used for the study and simple random sampling method is used to collect data from 60 respondents, studying in KESS Vocational Training Institute, Thrissur District. The results obtained from the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale indicate a low level of mental wellbeing among the respondents. Significant differences in mental wellbeing were observed across various demographic factors like gender, educational qualification and religion.

Keywords: Adolescents, Mental health, Stress, Psychological wellbeing

Introduction

Mental health is a crucial and positive aspect of an individual's overall well-being. It encompasses various dimensions, including social, emotional, and psychological elements. When someone is in good mental health, they are functioning at a satisfactory level of emotional and behavioral adjustment. Adolescence is a dynamic and transformative stage in an individual's life, marked by profound changes and the laying of the groundwork for their personality development. It is during this crucial period that individuals begin to cultivate the root values that will shape their character and guide their life journey. In the dynamic landscape of human development, the adolescent phase stands out as a period of remarkable transformation and exploration. As individuals traverse the delicate bridge between childhood and adulthood, the multifaceted challenges and opportunities inherent in this transitional stage profoundly impact their mental wellbeing.

In recent years, there has been increasing attention on mental health disorders among children and adolescents, with a notable gap in research within India. Limited studies have focused on the mental health aspects of adolescents in the country. The literature in the similar areas show that there are not that much significant studies assessing the mental wellbeing of the children in India, particularly Kerala. In a study conducted among students, discovered that a significant portion of students, 25.5%, exhibited symptoms of depression, with 8.6% reporting feelings of loneliness and 7.8% experiencing anxiety-related insomnia (Shamika Ranasinghe, 2015). These findings emphasize the need for more comprehensive research and interventions to address the mental health challenges faced by adolescents in India.

In the study conducted about adolescent mental health for the past ten years in India, the research findings clearly showed that mental health problems like anxiety, depression as well as suicidal behaviour are on the rise in India. The reasons for these issues include parental fights, strained familial relationships, school absenteeism. The study points out that there is a high risk among the adolescent population towards mental health problems. (Shilpa Aggarwal, 2014). Gender is an important term during the developmental phase of adolescence, where children undergo physical changes and enters a maturing phase. The studies conducted shows that wellbeing of men is more than that of women. There are different reasons for this result which in turn goes to the factors like self-esteem, body image and anxiety. By moving from young age to adulthood, young girls enhance the self-esteem at the same time the young boys have more self-esteem compared to girls at the same age. The men had more scores for mental wellbeing than the women irrespective of age (Sunna, 2015). In the research paper titled “Are child and adolescent mental health problems increasing in the 21st century? A systematic review”, the findings indicate that contemporary groups of adolescent girls are facing a rise in internalizing symptoms when compared to earlier cohorts. It is imperative to delve into strategies for prevention and early intervention in response to these findings. The research also shows that continuous monitoring of mental health symptom trajectories in young people is crucial for ongoing research, enabling appropriate public health responses. Policymakers must ensure that evidence-based approaches to prevention and treatment receive sufficient resources (William Bor, 2014). Some of the studies show that there is gender difference in assessing the mental wellbeing of the adolescent population. Most of the findings shows that the girls have less scores than boys. The mental health of adolescent boys is greater than that of girls. The study results significantly show that there is a mean difference in the mental wellbeing of adolescent population in different categories of age groups (R Sankar, 2017). A study conducted among the adolescent population to measure the effectiveness of school mental health program, it shows that the program was effective in enhancing the self-esteem, coping skills through life skill education. The additional programs from the side of school and government shows that it empowers the adolescent population (Srikala, 2010)

Methods

Descriptive research design was used to conduct the study which has mainly four objectives. One was to understand the socio-demographic details of the respondents, the second one was to measure the level of mental wellbeing, the third was to identify relations between the sociodemographic data with the level of wellbeing and finally to suggest various measures to improve the wellbeing among adolescence. The study was carried out at KESS Vocational Training Institute, Mannuthy, Thrissur District, Kerala, where adolescents are given 6-months job-oriented diploma courses in Fashion Designing, Hotel Management,

Desktop Publishing, Multimedia and Computer accounting. KESS stands for Kuriakose Elias Service Society, which is a NGO working for community development, since 1974. Out of the total 80 students undergoing vocational training during the period of June 2023, 60 were selected using simple random sampling lottery method. The total 80 students in the institute comprised of 45 girls and 35 boys. The research study mainly focused on determining the mental wellbeing of the adolescents and finding any relation between the sociodemographic variables to the overall wellbeing of the adolescent population. The participants of the study were students of the institute who were residing in Thrissur districts. Official permission to conduct this study was obtained from KESS Vocational Training Institute and the ethical aspects are being ensured in each stage. Informed consent in writing was obtained from each study participants. Participants were further ensured that their participation was purely voluntary and a decision to deny participation would in no way affect the studies in the institute. Confidentiality was ensured and maintained.

An interview schedule was prepared for collecting the primary data from the respondents. The interview schedule had 2 sections, where the first section had sociodemographic details and the second part was to measure wellbeing using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWS). The socio-demographic details include gender, age, educational qualification, number of family members, income source, monthly income and religion of the respondents. WEMWS is a 14-item scale to measure the mental wellbeing in the general population and it has 5 response categories, summed to provide a single score. The responses are None of the time-1, Rarely-2, Some of the time-3, Often-4 & All of the time-5

The collected data was screened for possible errors and then entered into SPSS-20 (IBM) for the analysis. Data cleaning and data transformations were conducted for scale scores and sociodemographic variables. The categorical sociodemographic variables were analyzed using frequencies and percentages, and the scale scores were analyzed with mean and standard deviation. T-test, ANOVA and correlation test were conducted using the various variables in the study.

Results

More than half (58.3%) of the respondents were girls and the remaining 41.7% were boys. The institute provides courses which are more women friendly and that is the reason why they form the majority. Since most of the respondents join vocational training after their 10th standard which is the basic eligibility to enrol the course, 61.7% of the respondents were 19 years old, 28.3% were 18 years old, 8.3% were 17 years old and the remaining 1.7% were 16 years old. Having plus 2 as a basic qualification is best to get jobs, high majority (85%) of the respondents completed plus 2 education and the remaining 15% have completed 10th standard. Majority (63.3%) of the respondents were Christians and the remaining 36.7% were Hindus. Parental jobs were the source of income for majority of the respondents (90%) and the balance 10% had guardian support as their source of income. This is quite evident as being students they have to depend on their family to meet the financial needs. More than half of the respondents (55%) have monthly income less than Rs.5000, 20% have monthly income between Rs.5000 to Rs.10000, 18.3% have monthly income between Rs.10000 to Rs.15000, 5% have monthly income more than Rs.20000 and 18.3% have monthly income between Rs.15000 to Rs.20000. Most of the respondents belong to the lower

economic strata of the society and the vocational courses under the institute are mainly focused on poor families and the findings suggests the same.

The descriptive analysis of the scale Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale shows that the respondents have low mental wellbeing (mean 34.83; SD 10.08). This is the most important finding of the study and the result call for action to deal with the situation. T-test conducted shows that there is a difference in mental wellbeing between genders (t-value= -25.512, p=.000), between educational qualifications (t-value= -25.211, p=.000) and between religions (t-value= -25.435, p=.000). ANOVA test states that there is no variance in the mental wellbeing among the respondents compared to their family income. Correlation test indicates that there is no relationship between mental wellbeing and number of family members of the respondents and also with the age of the respondents.

Discussion

The mental wellbeing of adolescents is a topic of great concern, as evidenced by the increasing prevalence of mental health problems among this age group. These problems often go unnoticed and can have long-term effects on the individual's overall wellbeing. The research findings emphasize the importance of social work intervention among adolescents. The low level of mental wellbeing in the current study is not just a matter of single institution but a general phenomenon which needs interventions in micro, meso and macro levels. The factors contributing towards the mental wellbeing is not confined to institutional and academic demands, but also those related to family and personal aspects, particularly those related to the adolescent age. The resilience among the adolescent has to be developed through proper training and inputs. The need for conducting assessments in a periodic basic, understanding the need for the awareness, extending counselling and mentoring support towards the same will make change in the standard of mental health.

Social Work Implications

Social work being a helping profession can make a lot of difference in lives of individuals. Appointment of social workers are made compulsory only in schools, which has to be widespread in all educational institutions. Provisions should be made that quality psycho-social support is available in educational institutes where adolescents are found the most. Additionally, peer support systems are to be developed in educational institutes who can serve as volunteers for psychological support. Policies are to be made in developing curriculum and providing training to teachers and faculty members who deal with adolescent. Their understanding and inclusiveness is important in the holistic care for adolescents. Social workers can also initiate family-based interventions and deal with environmental changes which foster the mental wellbeing of adolescents.

Conclusion

The study reveals a concerning trend of diminished mental wellbeing among adolescents, indicating the need for improving the same. Significantly, visible disparities in wellbeing based on gender, religion, and education underscore the importance of implementing targeted measures to enhance the mental health of adolescents. Social work and mental health interventions have a significant role in dealing with adolescent issue and their need as a professional support in educational systems and organizations is emphasized by the research. Social work and psychology professionals can paly an important role in

ensuring the mental wellbeing of adolescents in educational institutes and also in their family. They can also make an adolescent friendly environment within the educational institute, which includes training provided to teachers and other faculties who play an important role in the adolescent mental health. Individual counselling and group therapies can focus on the emotional needs of those who need focused attention based on their emotional burdens. The current study shed light on those important aspects that contribute towards mental wellbeing and highlights the importance of mental health interventions by professionals including social workers and psychologists in this area.

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