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A STUDY ON PREVALENCE AND IMPACT OF DEPRESSION AMONG SCHOOL GOING ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract

Adolescents with mental health conditions are particularly vulnerable to social exclusion, discrimination, stigma (affecting readiness to seek help), educational difficulties, risk-taking behaviours, physical ill-health and human rights violations. Timely intervention in form of counselling, medications, and other measures can alleviate symptoms and help children and adolescents succeed in school, develop, and maintain healthy relationships, and feel more self-confident. The present study aims at exploring the prevalence and pervasive influence of depression among school going adolescents. The study was based on quantitative and qualitative method and 50 students were selected randomly from 5 secondary and higher secondary schools consisting of private and government aided. The standard questionnaire was administered to the respondents to collect the data. The work found out that most of the school going students who are in their adolescence period suffer from depression.

Key Words: Adolescents, anxiety, depression, mental health,

Introduction

Adolescents with mental health conditions are particularly vulnerable to social exclusion, discrimination, stigma (affecting

readiness to seek help), educational difficulties, risk-taking behaviours, physical ill-health and human rights violations. Timely intervention in form of counselling, medi-

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cations, and other measures can alleviate symptoms and help children and adolescents succeed in school, develop and maintain healthy relationships, and feel more self-confident. Studies show that many cases go undetected in schools until it is too late and the problem has spiralled into great proportions. There is a knowledge gap in the area of timely identification and intervention. The purposed study aims at exploring the prevalence and pervasive influence of depression among school going adolescents.

Statement of the problem

This is a study on the Prevalence and Impact of Depression among school going adolescents.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study was to examine the impact of depression among the adolescents in school going students. The other objectives were as follows:

- i. To identify the prime causes of mental depression among school going adolescents.
- ii. To know the effects of mental depression of the students.
- iii. To study the awareness about mental depression in school going adolescents.
- iv. To study the attitude of the students towards mental depression.

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- v. To trace the role of school, family and society in enhancing mental depression in school going adolescents.
- vi. To explore the probable remedies to overcome mental depression in school going adolescents.
- vii. To investigate whether there is any gender issue associated with depression among adolescents.

Hypothesis:

The study has the following hypotheses:

H₀₁: There is no significant mean difference between the number of depressed male adolescent school going students and depressed female adolescent school going students in their awareness about depression.

H₀₂: There is no significant mean difference between the number of depressed adolescent students from rural area and depressed adolescent students from urban area in their awareness about depression.

H₀₃: There is no significant mean difference between the number of depressed adolescent students with graduate and above parents and depressed adolescent students without graduate and above parents in their awareness about depression.

H₀₄: There is no significant mean difference between the number of depressed English medium school going adolescent students and depressed vernacular medium adolescent school going students in their awareness about depression.

Significance of the study

The findings of this study will be beneficial for adolescent school going students, parents, teachers, curriculum developers, community health workers as well as psychologists and future researchers. The findings will help the teachers to understand the causes behind significant mental depression among school going adolescents. The findings will also sensitize the teachers about the severity of depression among adolescent school going students. Depending on the nature of causes the teachers will be able to modify the strategy of teaching, will be able to build structured school mental health programs for the promotion of mental health, will be able to take steps for early intervention and overall will be able to reach out to the students. The findings will be helpful for students also, as they will be able to recognise their depression and interpersonal dysfunction. These findings can also be a factor to enhance the readiness among depressed school going adolescents to open up about it and to seek help about it.

Review of related literature

Dsouza, Jayakumar, & Mahapatra (2021) in a study on “Prevalence of depression among school going adolescents in India : A Systematic review and meta-analysis of cross-sectional studies” found that the school going adolescents across India frequently experienced depressive symptoms and the levels of depression at this age group ranged from mild to severe. This calls for an urgent need to impart adequate awareness in parents, teachers, and peer

groups, as well as to sensitize them regarding the intensity of the disease, so that early identification and treatment can be accomplished. School teachers could be the potential candidates to empower with the skills of identifying early symptoms of mental illness, that would later help to draw the attention of the health department. Chail, Dangi, Raja, & Singh (2020) in their study on “Prevalence of Childhood depression in school going adolescents in an urban Indian school” showed that school mental health is a neglected area in our country, and only a small fraction of these cases would have come to attention or received appropriate intervention under normal circumstances. The findings highlighted the need to have a structured school mental health program for the promotion of mental health and early intervention in cases with childhood depression. Ahmad, Shukla, Shukla, Shukla & Singh (2019) in a study on “Factors Associated with Depression among School-going Adolescent Girls in a District of Northern India: A Cross - section Study” revealed that depression among adolescents, especially among girls, is a rising public health problem worldwide. Praveen Daya & Karthikeyan (2018) in a study on “Depression, anxiety, stress and its correlates among urban school going adolescents in Tamilnadu, India” revealed that undetected and untreated mental disorders can impair a person’s ability to perform at school or work place, cope with daily activities of life and can lead to severe psychiatric disorders and consequences later in their life. Jayashree, Mithra, Nair, Pai, & Unnikrishnan, (2018) in a study on

“ Depression and Anxiety Disorder among Schoolgoing Adolescents in an Urban Area of South India” found out that depression and anxiety were high among the study participants. Co-existing anxiety and female gender are significantly associated with depression among them. Increasing age, socioeconomic factors, and parental education are other factors influencing depression and anxiety but were statistically not significant. Aggarwal, Jha, Kumar, Kumar, Nirala & Singh(2017) in their study on “Prevalence of Depression among School-going Adolescents in an Urban Area of Bihar, India” revealed that depression is one of the under-recognized health problems in adolescents. Emotional instability resulting from childhood to adulthood transition makes adolescents vulnerable to depression. Bakshi, Goel, Kumar, Sandal, Sharma, & Singh (2017) in their study on “Prevalence of Depression, Anxiety and Stress among school going adolescent in Chandigarh” showed that the overall prevalence of Depression, Anxiety and Stress (DAS) among school going adolescents in Chandigarh was high and was associated with increased risk of suicidal behaviour, homicidal ideation, tobacco use, and other substance use.

Research Methodology

The present study follows both qualitative and quantitative methods. Mixed method research combines the strengths of quantitative and qualitative methods to provide the most informative, complete, balanced and useful research results. The present study based on dependent and

independent variables was constituted of secondary and higher secondary students in adolescence period of Kolkata private schools, govt. aided and govt. schools. 50 students selected from 5 secondary and higher secondary schools were included in the survey by applying random sample technique. A survey questionnaire with 17 items for quantitative analysis and 5 items in the form of unstructured interview schedule for qualitative analysis based on Likert scale

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Quantitative Data Analysis:

T-test: T-test was used for pair wise comparison of the level of awareness of depression of adolescent school going students on the basis of their gender (Male and Female), on the basis of their residential type (Rural and Urban), on the basis of their parents' educational qualification (Graduate & above and not Graduate and above) and on the basis of their medium of transaction at school (English and Vernacular). Corresponding Means and Standard Deviations(S.D) were examined.

Testing of Null Hypothesis-1 (H_{01}):

H_{01} : There is no significant mean difference between the number of depressed male adolescent school going students and depressed female adolescent school going students in their awareness about depression.

The table 1: Results of T-test for awareness about depression among adolescent students with respect to their gender (Male & Female)

Sl No.	Gender	Number of Sample	Mean	S.D.	T- Value	df	Level of Significance
1.	Male	55	43.90	14.62	0.69	98	Not Significant
2.	Female	45	42	12.95			

Interpretation: With the t-statistic of 0.69 and degrees of freedom of approximately 98 (found from table), we would compare the t-value against a critical value from the t-distribution for the desired significance level (commonly $\alpha=0.05$). Since the t-value is small (0.69), it suggests that there is no significant difference between the means of the two groups. Therefore, the Null hypothesis (H_0) can be accepted. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference between male

and female adolescent students about their awareness about depression.

Testing of Null Hypothesis-2 (H_{02}):

H_{02} : There is no significant mean difference between the number of depressed adolescent school going students from rural area and depressed adolescent school going students from urban area in their awareness about depression.

The table 2: Results of T-test for awareness about depression among adolescent students with respect to their residential type (Rural & Urban):

Sl No.	Residential type	Number of Samples	Mean	S.D.	T- Value	df	Level of Significance
1.	Rural	35	38.40	16.75	-0.987	76	Not Significant
2.	Urban	65	42	18.50			

Interpretation: To interpret the results, we compare the t-value to a critical t-value from the t-distribution table for $df=76$ (found from the table) at a significance level (e.g., $\alpha=0.05$). If the calculated t-value is greater than the critical t-value, we re-

ject the null hypothesis. In this case, with a t-value of -0.987 , it's likely that this is less than the critical value (approximately ± 1.990 for a two-tailed test with $df=76$), meaning the result is not statistically significant. Thus, we fail to reject the null hypothesis, indicating that there is no signifi-

cant mean difference between the number of depressed rural and urban adolescent students.

Testing of Null Hypothesis-3 (H_{03}):

H_{03} : There is no significant mean difference between the number of depressed adolescent school going students with graduate and above parents and depressed adoles-

cent school going students without graduate and above parents in their awareness about depression.

The table 3: Results of T-test for awareness about depression among adolescent students with respect to their parents' educational qualification (Graduate and above & not graduate and above).

Sl No.	Parents' educational qualification	The Number of Samples	Mean	S.D.	T- Value	df	Level of Significance
1.	Graduate & above	82	42.71	20.02	0.34	98	Not Significant
2.	Not graduate and above	18	40.95	18.30			

Interpretation: For a typical significance level ($\alpha=0.05$) and 98 degrees of freedom (found from the table), the critical t-value for a two-tailed test is approximately 1.984. Since the calculated t-value (0.34) is much smaller than the critical t-value (1.984), we fail to reject the null hypothesis. This means that there is no significant difference between the mean number of depressed adolescent students with graduate and above parents and those without graduate and above parents. Thus, based on the data, it is concluded that the parental education level (graduate and above)

does not have a statistically significant impact on the depression levels of adolescent students.

Testing of Null Hypothesis- 4 (H_{04}):

H_{04} : There is no significant mean difference between the number of depressed English medium school going adolescent students and depressed vernacular medium adolescent school going students in their awareness about depression.

The table 4: Results of T-test for awareness about depression among adolescent students with respect to their medium of transaction at school (English and Vernacular).

Sl No.	Medium of transaction at school	Number of Samples	Mean	S.D.	T- Value	df	Level of Significance
1.	English	67	49	21.25	0.99	74	Not Significant
2.	Vernacular	33	45	18			

Interpretation: To determine if this t-statistic is significant, we would compare it with the critical t-value from the t-distribution table for a given significance level (e.g., $\alpha=0.05$) and the calculated degrees of freedom (74 - found from the table). For a two-tailed test at $\alpha=0.05$, the critical value for $df=74$ is approximately ± 2.00 . Since the calculated t-statistic (0.983) is less than the critical value (2.00), we fail to reject the null hypothesis. This means there is no significant difference in the mean number of depressed students between the English and vernacular medium school going adolescents.

Qualitative Analysis and Discussion of Interview Schedule

Qualitative data have been collected through one-to-one interview method of 50 adolescent school going students chosen randomly from the same schools who have spoken their hearts out. This has helped to understand deeply and clearly regarding their awareness about depression.

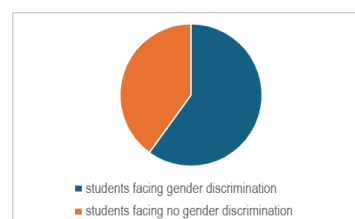
Question No. 1: How do you feel about the way people treat you based on your

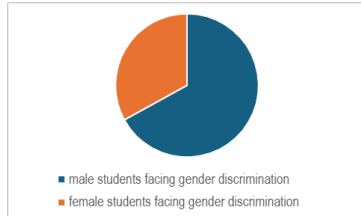
gender at school? Do you feel any gender discrimination?

60% of the respondents (67% male and 33% female) said that they face gender discrimination as certain works are done by male students and certain works are done by female students. The teachers and the staffs of the school also create gender discrimination through their behaviour.

40% of the respondents said they don't feel any kind of gender discrimination as they feel the teachers, the students and the other staffs at school, they behave well without any kind of any gender discrimination.

Pie charts on gender discrimination -

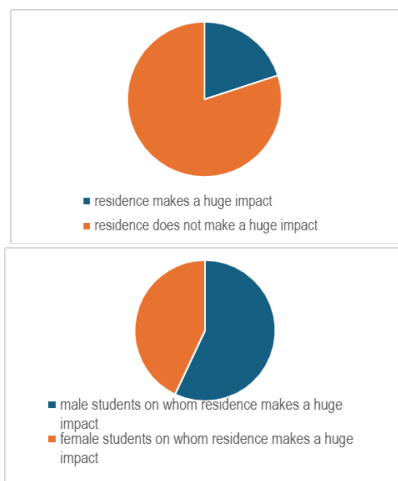




Question No. 2: Can you describe the environment where you live (rural or urban area)? How does this impact your mood or mental wellbeing?

20% of the respondents (57% male and 43% female) said that the area of their residence makes a huge impact on their mental health as they spend the major time at their homes. 80% of the respondents said that the area of their residence makes no impact on their mental health.

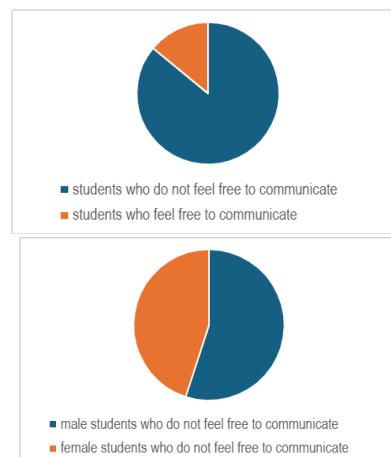
Pie charts on the impact of residence on students' mental health –



Question No. 3: How involved do you feel your parents are in your awareness towards depression and personal life? Do you find it easy to communicate with them about your feelings or challenges?

86% of the respondents (55% male & 45% female) said that they do not feel free to communicate with their parents regarding their mental health and personal life as they feel their parents never understand their point of view. 14% of the respondents said that they do communicate with their parents regarding their mental health and personal life as their parents have created a safe space for them where they can talk about anything and everything without being judged.

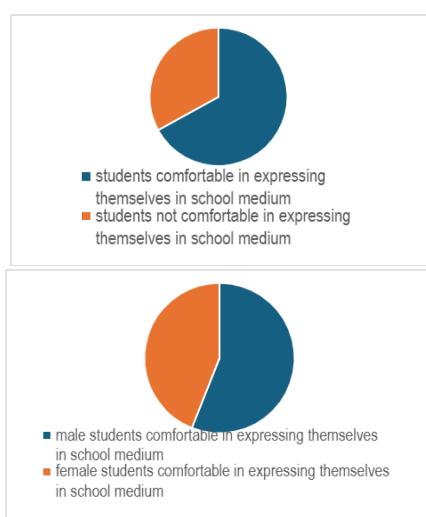
Pie charts on students and their communication with their parents -



Question No. 4: Do you feel comfortable to express yourself in the language – that the school has as the medium of transaction?

67% of the respondents said that they are comfortable in expressing themselves with the language that the school has as the medium of transaction as they have become habituated in expressing themselves with that language of transaction. 33% of the respondents said that they are not comfortable in expressing themselves with the language that the school has as medium of transaction as they feel some kind of hindrance while expressing.

Pie charts on students and their comfortable language to express themselves -

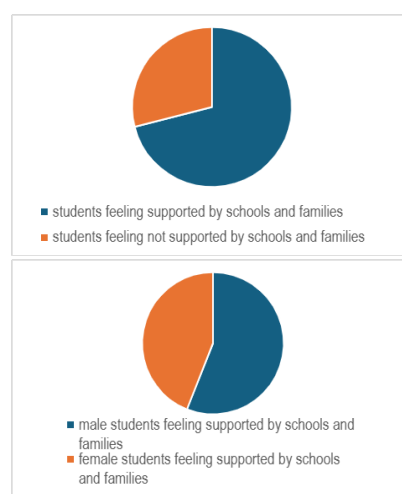


Question No. 5: How do you feel when thinking about your future goals or dreams? Do you feel supported by your family and school in achieving them?

71% of the respondents (56% male and 44% female) said that they do feel supported by their families and schools in achieving their future goals and dreams as they experience encouragement from both the places. 29% of the respondents

said that they do not feel supported by their families and schools in achieving their future goals and dreams as they experience discouragement or disinterest from both the places.

Pie charts on students and their family support -



Final Interpretation Based on the Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis

Null hypothesis 1 is supported by both the quantitative data analysis and the qualitative data analysis. By the interpretation of T-test it is proved that there is no significant mean difference between the number of depressed male adolescent school going students and depressed female adolescent school going students in their awareness about depression. And in the qualitative analysis, by analysing interview question number 1, it is supported that there is no significant mean difference between the number of depressed male adolescent school going students and depressed fe-

male adolescent school going students in their awareness about depression. Null hypothesis 2 is supported by both the quantitative data analysis and the qualitative data analysis. By the interpretation of T-test it is proved that there is no significant mean difference between the number of depressed adolescent school going students from rural area and depressed adolescent school going students from urban area is their awareness about depression. And in the qualitative analysis, by analysing interview question number 2, it is supported that there is no significant mean difference between the number of depressed adolescent school going students from rural area and depressed adolescent school going students from urban area is their awareness about depression. Null hypothesis 3 is supported by both the quantitative data analysis and the qualitative data analysis. By the interpretation of T-test it is proved that there is no significant mean difference between the number of depressed adolescent school going students with graduate and above parents and depressed adolescent school going students without graduate and above parents in their awareness about depression. And in the qualitative analysis, by analysing interview question number 3 and question number 5, it is supported that there is no significant mean difference between the number of depressed adolescent school going students without graduate and above parents in their awareness about depression. Null hypothesis 4 is supported by both the quantitative data analysis and the qualitative data analysis. By the interpretation of T-test it is proved

that there is no significant mean difference between the number of depressed English medium school going adolescent students and depressed vernacular medium adolescent school going students in their awareness about depression. And in the qualitative analysis, by analysing interview question number 4, it is supported that there is no significant mean difference between the number of depressed English medium school going adolescent students and depressed vernacular medium adolescent school going students in their awareness about depression.

Discussion and Findings

Discussions about the whole study i.e Summary and the Findings of the study is done and future directions are provided on the basis of the findings of the study.

Limitations:

- i. Due to sensitisation of the selected topic, the adolescent school going students were hesitant to give answers.
- ii. The awareness towards depression among adolescent school going students of two different private schools is not enough to show the overall awareness towards depression among adolescent school going students of West Bengal.
- iii. As the data was collected on the basis of a five point likert type scale, the adolescent school going students may not have given their proper opinion about depression.

- There is a big possibility of biasness.
- iv. The area of the study was limited only among adolescent school going students.

Recommendations and Suggestions

On the basis of finding the recommendation and suggestions has been made and given below.

- i. The adolescent school going students with low level of awareness towards depression should be more aware and should gather more knowledge about depression because they will be the future citizens of the country.
- ii. The school should arrange several awareness programmes regarding identifying depression to improve the awareness towards depression among adolescent school going students.

Scope for Future Research

There is a fair scope of carrying out a good number of research works in this field. Some areas that may be explored further include-

Knowledge and attitude of adolescent school going students towards depression.

- i. A comparative study about the attitude of adolescent school going students and adult students towards depression.
- ii. A comparative study about the awareness of higher secondary grade students and undergraduate students towards depression.

- iii. A comparative study on awareness towards depression among adolescent private school going students and adolescent government aided school going students.

- iv. **Conclusion** It was revealed that most of the school going students who are in their adolescence period suffer from depression. In fact, a significant part of them is suffering from severe depression. Female school going adolescents are more depressed than male school going adolescents. Gender issues, religion, family, guilty feelings - these are the prime causes of depression. This depression is resulting in interpersonal dysfunction among the adolescent school going students. Stigma created by society and lack of awareness in society regarding depression are making it more difficult for adolescent school going students to open about it. Overall depression is affecting the mental, physical, emotional, and social well-being of school going adolescent students.

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