

Mental Health of Adolescents: Issues, Challenges and Preventive strategies

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Abstract:

Mental health is an important part of overall well-being. Among Secondary school students, mental health plays a major role in academic performance, social relationships, emotional development, and decision making. Adolescence is a critical development period characterized by significant physical, emotional and social change. Mental health during this stage is pivotal for overall well being and future outcomes, Globally, mental health disorders are among the leading causes of mobility and mortality among adolescents, In India, with the largest adolescence population World wide, addressing mental challenges is both urgent and complex. This paper explores issues and challenges of Mental health of adolescents and Preventive strategies.

KEYWORDS:- Mental Health, Adolescence, Secondary School Students, Academic Performance, Preventive Strategies .

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a transformative stage marked by rapid physical, cognitive and social changes. It is a period where individuals begin to form their identities, explore their autonomy and navigate complex relationships and transitions. While these development shifts provide opportunities for growth, they also make adolescents particularly vulnerable to mental health challenges, Globally mental health disorders account for a

significant share of the disease burden among adolescents. According to the World Health Organization (2021) burden and increasingly self harm and substance abuse.

CONCEPT OF MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health is a state of wellbeing where an individual realizes their own abilities, can cope with life's normal stresses, can work pressure from the World Health Organization (WHO). It includes social, psychological and emotional wellbeing and effects of our thought, feeling, behavior, decision making, stress management and interpersonal relationships. The term mental health describes a state of well being in which a person is able to reach their full potential, manage daily life effectively and give back to their community.

In 2023, World Health Organization has reported one in seven adolescents globally experience a Mental Health disorder, with anxiety and depression being the most common conditions. The Organization also highlighted that adolescence is a crucial period for developing emotional and social habits that support mental well-being. There are many reasons for the mental health of adolescence such as academic stress, frustration and depression due to study pressure, age group related basic problems and other personal factors.

Gender differences also play a notable role in adolescent mental health. Research has found that mental abnormalities are more prevalent in young boys than girls, although adolescent girls tend to report more internalizing symptoms like depression and anxiety. (Suvita et al., 2024)

Knowledge and awareness about mental health plays a crucial role in shaping adolescents' attitudes and behaviours. A study conducted by Virgia et al. found that although 59.8% of adolescents had good knowledge of Mental health 42% still held a negative attitude emphasizing the gap between awareness and acceptance.

(Virgia et al. 2022)

On this aspect research has been conducted by Gupta (2015) about psychological characteristic of adolescent suicide attempts focusing on the role of Academic failure. The subject, 42 individuals aged 20 and under who had attempted suicide and were hospitalized over a one year period, were selected from two hospitals in Lucknow. The study identified poor academic performance, unhealthy personality patterns, strained family relationships and high Parental expectations as significant contributing factors to mental health management.

(Gupta, 2015)

Also examined the challenges experienced by 500 Colleges girls aged 14-18 in Lucknow. The result reported the most frequent problems by participants fell with in the social, school, and emotional domains, social problems likely encompassing difficulties with peer relationships, family dynamics, social skills, dating belonging. School,-related issues probably included academic pressure, Struggles with specific subjects, teacher relationship, test anxiety, and concern about academic performance our future education. Research he also suggests that problems in one domain, such as social relationships, can potentially exacerbate challenges in other areas like school and examination well-being highlighting the importance challenges when providing support to adolescent girls (Goswami M, 2014)

He conducted the academic performance and mental health of 100 Kashmiri secondary school students together with data from the research conducted by R.K singh and Alpna Sen Gupta Mental health battery certain statistical techniques like Percentage, S.D, Mental health battery. The result confirms that there is significant mean difference between Kashmiri students on their mental health and academic achievement. (Srivastava, 2023)

ISSUES RELATED TO MENTAL HEALTH OF ADOLESCENTS

Adolescence is a critical period of psychological and emotional development, during which individuals are particularly vulnerable to mental health. In India adolescents face a variety of stressors including academic pressure, social expectation, family conflict and Contribute to violence or abuse, all of which can contribute to mental health issues, Among the most prevalent disorders are depression and anxiety, which are often Underdiagnosed due to Stigma and Symptoms in Adolescents, may manifest differently than in adults, often showing up as irritability, with drawal, somatic complaints and Poor academic performance. (Gupta, 2022)

Researches by indicates that adolescent girls are disproportionately affected by depression with contributing factors including gender dissemination, early marriage and restricted mobility. Another widespread category includes behavioural disorders, such as Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Oppositional defiant disorder and conduct disorders. These Conditions often emerge in early adolescence and may lead to problems in school performance peer relationships and family interactions. Unfortunately ,these disorders are frequently such as anorexia nervosa, bulimia and binge eating thought historically considered more age increasingly being reported in Urban exposure to unrealistic body standards via media and social platforms plays a significant role in Shaping body image Issues among adolescents.

CHALLENGES TO BE FACED BY ADOLESCENTS

Adolescence is a time in a young person's life where they move from dependency on their parents to independence, autonomy and maturity

BIOLOGICAL CHALLENGES :- Adolescence begins with the first well-defined maturation event called puberty. Included in the biological challenges are the changes that occur due to the release of the sexual hormones that affect emotions. Mood changes can increase, which can impact on relationships both at home parents and siblings and socially and socially or at school.

COGNITIVE CHALLENGES :- Piaget ,In his theory of social development believed that adolescence is the time when young people develop cognitive skills from “Concrete operation” to “formal operations” so they are able to deal with ideas, concepts and abstract theories. It takes time for confidence to build with using their newly acquired skills and they may make mistakes in judgement, learning through success and failure is part of the challenges of the learning process.

PSYCHOLOGICAL CHALLENGES :- The Psychological challenges that the adolescent must cope with are moving from childhood to adulthood. A new emerging ,where rules will be placed on him/her so that a certain standard of behaviour is becoming an expectation from both a parent and legal concept as Adolescents continue their journey of self -discovery ,they continually have to adjust to new experience as well as the other changes happening to them biologically and socially.

PREVENTIVE STRATEGIES

Preventive efforts aim to improve mental health by addressing individual, social and structural determinants of mental health. Interventions can be designed for individuals, specific groups or the whole population because many determinants lie outside the health sector, effective prevention programmes require cross- sector collaboration. Education, labour, justice, transport, environment, housing and the welfare sector all have vital roles. The health sector can contribute by embedding prevention into its services and by leading or supporting multi sectoral coordination.

Suicide Prevention is a global priority and part of sustainable development goals. Key strategies include limiting access to means, Promoting responsible media reporting, supporting social and emotional learning for adolescents, and ensuring early intervention.

Banning highly hazardous pesticides is a particularly inexpensive banning highly hazardous pesticides is a particularly inexpensive and cost - effective interventions for reducing suicide rates. Promoting child and adolescent mental health is another priority. Effective approaches include policies and laws that protect mental health, support for caregivers, school based programmes and improvements to community and online environments. Among these ,school based social and emotional learning programmes are especially effective across all income levels.

Mental health at work is a growing area of interest and can be supported through legislation and regulation ,workplace policies, manager training and targeted interventions for workers.

ROLE OF PARENTS TEACHERS

By providing opportunities for intervention, schools and Colleges may have a big impact on teenage development. Teenagers from as all socio economic back grounds in India are still greatly influenced by their family .Research shows that excellent parenting and Parental support can improve Children's mental health outcomes and reduce treatment barriers. Early identification of teenage mental health problems can be facilitated by educating and training educators and Counselors. Regular drug awareness programmes in schools and Universities should include the opportunity to evaluate high risk individuals. The ability to say “no” to drugs and the development of social skills to handle peer pressure should be given more attention. Encourage and support kids who struggle academically or have learning impairment.

Resilience-focused intervention, like coping skills and capacity building, can improve mental health. Adolescent females are now more aware thanks to intervention like sex education, pubertal changes, and “health education” for

adolescent health. Model based health care initiatives, including yoga's promotion of mental health and Secondary School Students of life skills, have shown great success and can be built upon.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Mental health issues and challenges (secondary level) is an essential problem formed in students today. Thus it is important for teachers to understand frustration and students and treat children with proper care, providing them proper guidance in accordance to the physical and mental challenges observed from time to time in a student.

Parents are the first teachers of their children who play a significant role in the development of a child's personality. Their friendly and supportive behavior help children to transform in a more mature person so Parents should not be and negative to their children instead encourage and motivate them. Children and rural areas have different of bringing as that of Urban children so, they need more attention and concern according to their needs Parents Should we aware of such things and communicate effectively with them.

CONCLUSION

Mental Health is a major concern among Secondary school students because adolescence is a sensitive stage of development. Academic stress, bullying, Social health challenges theoretical perspective Erik Erikson's psychological theory helps explain the emotional struggles experienced during Adolescents. Addressing these issues requires cooperation among Schools, Parents, Health care professionals and society. Promoting awareness counseling services and supporting environments can improve students mental well-being and academic success.

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