

Identification of Adjustment Issues among Adolescent Girls Studying in Pre-university

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ABSTRACT

Background: Life of adolescent girl is characterized by continual changes, both internal (e.g. physiological, anatomical, and psychological changes) and external (e.g. changes in school, peers, and parenting practices) and therefore this stage is considered to be a very critical transitional stage in a girl's life with acute crises in which her future is at stake. This study was thus conducted to identify multi-dimensional adjustment issues faced by adolescent girls. **Methodology:** Total 336 Pre-university girls between the age of 15 to 19 years were selected through purposive sampling from various Girl's colleges of Mysuru. **Results:** The results revealed that general personal problems were more apparent in adolescent girls. It was found that 40.77% adolescent girls had problems in concentration, 33% girls had problems of forgetfulness, 32.5 % of girls had problems of anxiety, tension & worries and 23% of girls had reported mood fluctuations. Problems related to academic, society, family, infrastructure and interpersonal relations were also seen, but they were not very high. Thirteen percent of girls had reported the problem of time management and 9% of girls had reported problems related to the infrastructure of the college hostel. **Conclusion:** The results thus reflect the need to cater to the needs of adolescent girls which are going through excessive biological, social and psychological issues.

Keywords: Personal issues, academic problems, adolescent girl

INTRODUCTION

The origin of the word "Adolescence" is from the Latin verb 'adolescence', which means, "to grow up." It can be defined as the transitional stage of development between childhood and adulthood, representing the period during which a person is biologically adult but emotionally not at full maturity. As "Adolescence" is a cultural and social phenomenon, its endpoints are not easily tied to physical milestones. It varies from culture to culture. In India, it is generally considered to begin around age 10, and end around 24 (10-19 years categorised as adolescents and 15-24 as a youth, together adolescent and youth are called as "Young people"). World Health

Organization ^[1] defines adolescent as the period of life between 10 and 19 years of age. In India, adolescents comprise a sizeable population; there are 236.5 million adolescents, approximately 19.6 % of the entire population.^[2] The adolescent population has increased from 85 million in 1961 to 253 million in 2011.^[2] Female adolescents comprise 47.3 % and male adolescents 52.6 % of the total adolescent population.^[2]

Adolescence is considered to be a very critical transitional stage of girl's life with acute crises in which her future is at stake. The girl child grows up till attainment of womanhood through different stages of the life cycle.

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Her development, survival and empowerment are determined by the factors affirming her rights. In all communities, the rights of the girl child are determined by rights posed by the women who were staying and enjoying the same. The adolescent girls experience emotional challenges, academic, social, personal and issues of sexuality soon after the onset of puberty. If the adolescent is attending the school during this phase, it is not only good for educational attainments but also for getting the opportunity for sharing many turbulent thoughts with their peers and sometimes with teachers also. It is frequently seen that adolescent girls are frequently dropping out their studies due to various reasons. Maithly & Saxena^[3] conducted a study on adolescent to evaluate the reasons for their dropout from schools. Total 3,980 adolescents were covered in six blocks of three districts of

Uttaranchal It was found that total 34% of adolescents were found to have dropped from school, amongst them 41% were girls and 27% were boys. The main reason for dropping out was financial difficulties for both girls and boys. Besides the financial reasons, 31% of boys and 13% girls reported that they are just not interested in further studies. A total of 28% of girls said that their family and relatives did not approve their further continuation of the studies. A total of 9% girls and 1% boys reported lack of education facility in the nearby village as the reason for dropping out.

Stipek^[4] believe that problems of personal nature such as lack of social aptitudes, romantic involvements, problems of finance, undesirable habits and lack of self-sufficiency are more prevalent in students at the school, college, and university besides their academic achievement problems. The issue of adjustment in the new environment comes not only from the inefficiency of the student for the subject matter but also due to several different factors. Gerdes & Mallinckrodt^[5] in a study found that the shift between high school and colleges can be challenging and many changes occur in emotional, social and academic adjustment. Adjustment difficulties, loneliness and depression are much more common among college students than their peers who are not in college. A study carried out by Mohsin & Hussain^[6] and Lama^[7] reported that there is a great

tendency for female students to experience adjustment problems more than males. This finding implies that male students are better in overall adjustment on the campus as compared to female students. A study conducted by Nanda^[8] and Kurvilla^[9] reported that urban adolescents were well adjusted than rural students in all areas of adjustment problems. Mc Whitner^[10] in his study of 625 college students found that female students are more likely to experience loneliness and social isolation than their male peers. This study found that female students had a more difficult time fitting into the college environment and were less likely to be involved in college activities and less likely to have leadership positions in campus organisations. Cook^[11] calculated that female students are found to demonstrate more adjustment problems such as establishing a social relationship in college compared to the male students.

This study was thus carried out to identify multi-dimensional adjustment issues of adolescent girls studying in pre-university; this study is a preliminary investigation towards test development for adolescent girls. Once the issues of adolescent girls are identified, the next step will be to develop a standard test or rating scale which will help teachers, parents and counsellor to identify various adjustment issues of adolescent girls which interfere in their academics and thus appropriate measures can be taken to rectify such issues.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Three pre-university colleges from the urban area of Mysuru (only Women's College) were approached for participation in the study and upon their permission adolescent girls between the age ranges of 15 to 19 years were selected through purposive sampling technique. Out of 650 girls 336 pre-university, (from three colleges) girls had given their responses. The main idea of the study was to identify the core issues of adolescent girls which lead to adjustment issues, therefore, girls studying in co-education were excluded from the study (identifying issues related to opposite gender etc. was not aim of the study).

Procedure: Initially permission was taken from school/college authorities and they have explained the purpose of the study. Upon permission, students were approached in their classes, and after the initial introduction, they

have explained the purpose of the study and were asked to provide their consent for the study, they were also explained the confidentiality issues. Upon receiving consent, each student was asked to write down five major problems impacting their life and leading to adjustment issues in their pre-university/college life. Their information was collected in the blank sheet without their name or identification details. Once the information was collected, students were given a lecture on stress management. After data collection, each item written by the student was analysed. Common sentences or remarks (such as “I forget what I have learned” or “I frequently forget things”) were clubbed together. Depending upon the type of the problem, it was categorised into different headings such personal, academics, social, economic etc. and then and their frequency was calculated.

RESULT

The results reveal that adolescents have many adjustment issues in personal, academic, social, economic, family and interpersonal life.

Table 1: Personal Issues

Issues/problems	<i>f</i>	%
Lack of concentration during studies	137	40.77
Poor memory (subject studied)	111	33.03
Anxiety, tension and worry over day to day issues	99	32.5
Short temper/inability to control anger/moody/ crying instincts	78	23.0
Lack of confidence	43	12.7
Sleep disturbances	31	9.22
Indecisiveness confusion (about future goals and decision making)	17	5.09
Homesickness	9	5.14
Communication problem (language English)	14	4.16
Feeling of loneliness	14	4.16
Obsessive of thoughts	13	3.86
Frequent headache	11	3.27
Frequent health problem	10	2.97
Dissatisfied by studying in women's college	07	2.08
Sensitive about small issues	09	2.67
Falling into relationship	06	1.78
Feel dependent on others	06	1.78
Acts without thinking (impulsivity)	06	1.75
Eating impulses/poor eating habits	04	1.19
Lack of assertiveness (unable to say no to friends and others)	03	0.89
Excessive preoccupation with physical appearance	03	0.89
Loss of interest	02	0.59

Table 1 reveals that the personal problems reported by adolescents', leading to adjustment issues in pre-university life. It was found that adolescent's girls had a number of personal problems in comparison to other issues. Type of personal problems varied to a large extent. Table 1 shows that 40.77 girls have difficulty in concentration while studying, 33.03% of girls have issues of forgetfulness with respect to study material. 32.5% girls have reported that they worry over trivial issues of everyday life and feel tense about it. Further 23% of girls have reported difficulty in controlling their anger; have frequent mood fluctuations and crying spells. They also reported to be unsure about their future and their inability to make decisions (5.09%) in addition to their low confidence (12.7%). They also reported having frequent somatic complaints such as sleep disturbance (9.22%), headache (3.27%) and other health issues (2.97%) and they often feel homesick (5.14%). Adolescents' girls have reported a number of other issues but in smaller percentage such as communication problem (4.16%), feeling of loneliness (4.16%), obsession of thoughts (3.86%), falling in relationship (1.78%), lack of assertiveness (0.89%) or concern over physical appearances (0.89%).

Table 2: Academic Issues

Types of Problem	<i>f</i>	%
Time management	44	13.09
Management skill (making goals for studies)	32	9.52
Academic skill (for the subjects taught)	23	6.84
Feeling difficulty in subjects and concepts	17	5.05
Not interested in studies	10	2.97
Lack of motivation to studies	09	2.67

Table 2 reveals that the academic issues reported by adolescent's girls. It was found that around 13.09% of adolescent girls have difficulty in time management and around 9.52% have difficulty in prioritising their study goals. They are also not sure about the subjects they have chosen for their study and feel they lack academic skills for the subject chosen (6.84%). Some students are unable to understand the concepts (5.05%), and some feel that there is no motivating factor (2.67%) to study and therefore lack interest in studies (2.97%).

Table 3: Socio-economic Issues

Types of Problem	Frequency	Percentage
Financial problem	09	2.67
Social barriers by society to study	06	1.78

Table 3 reveals that the issues related to family and society, it reveals that adolescent girls have not many issues related to their family or society except few who have reported having financial issues (2.67%) and others to have pressure from society to discontinue their study (1.78%).

Table 4: Infrastructure/Transportation Issues

Types of Problem	f	%
College/hostel problem (old hostel building, unavailability of Wi-Fi facilities, drinking water, hot water, less number of bathrooms and sub-average quality of food)	31	9.22
Transportation problem	03	0.89

Table 4 highlighted that the issues related to infrastructure & transportation. The results reveal that some students have issues related to the infrastructure of college & hostel (9.22%) which is interfering in their studies which include poor facilities - add hostel, lack of washrooms, the absence of Wi-Fi facility etc. Very few adolescents have also reported issues related to their transportation (0.89%).

Table 5: Interpersonal Issues

Types of Problem	f	%
Interpersonal issues with friends & teachers	47	13.98
Selfishness/opportunistic the behaviour of other peers	09	2.67
Rumour and gossips	02	0.59

Table 5 highlights that adolescent's girls have a strained relationship with friends and teachers (13.98%). Few students have reported issues related to rumours and gossips (0.59%), and few have reported opportunistic behaviours of other peers (2.67%).

Table 6: Family issues of adolescents girls

Types of Problem	Frequency	Percentage
Disputes in family	18	5.35
Excessive restriction by family members	05	1.48

Table 6 highlight family issues of adolescent's girls. Results reveal that few adolescent girls have family issues (5.34%) such as disputes,

separation or divorce affecting their study and few students have an excessive restriction in the family affecting their study (1.48%).

DISCUSSION

It is seen in the result section that large numbers of adolescent girls have reported problems such as lack of concentration, forgetfulness, anxiety, tension and worries. Some girls have also reported issues such as a lack of confidence, loss of interest, feeling of loneliness, inability to control emotions (mood fluctuations), frequent headache and other somatic problems (sleep and eating disturbances) etc. Many of these symptoms are similar to the features of depression but based upon the results obtained it is difficult to categorically diagnose and generalise that all the adolescent's girls are suffering from depression. However, it is indicating the need to systematically identify and screen out anxiety and depression in pre-university adolescent girls.

Adolescence which is the transitional period from childhood to adulthood is a stage of emotional instability making them vulnerable. The state of emotional instability results from difficulties in establishing self-identity and self-esteem leading to conflicts within (the) family and peer groups.^[12] It is often seen that parents and teachers are unable to tackle issues of adolescents, and often adolescents struggle to discuss their issues with others and others neglect their problems. During this stage, there is also excessive pressure to attain educational achievement and parents concerns are revolving around educational success, but they are unable to identify and manage personal issues of adolescent's girls. A trained student counsellor at school and college level can help adolescents by identifying and managing their symptomatic personal issues and help them to develop their self-identity and self-esteem.

The results of the study also revealed that adolescent girls have difficulty in academics. It is seen that girls have difficulty in managing their time. Difficulty in time management could be the cause or effect of their above mentioned personal issues. It is well known that a number of factors contribute in the selection of subject by students after 10th standard such as employment prospects, income, the reputation of course in society, availability of study option etc.^[13] For girls the

list of factors is even longer which include availability of college (girl's college), distance of college from home, subjects considered to be fit for girls such as home science etc. Most of the times the subject chosen by students are not based on their aptitude and interest but upon convenience and parent's approval.^[14] In such a situation adolescent girls have difficulty in comprehending the subject matter and therefore they lack interest in studies. Due to this, they lack academic skills and thus have difficulty in managing goals. Also, many pre-universities and college still use traditional methods of teaching (lecture mode) and are less acquainted with "state of the art" technology; these factors further contribute in the poor academic performance of students. In the current study also (table 4) adolescents' girls have reported issues related to infrastructure which interferes with their studies.

The results of the study further revealed that few adolescent girls had reported social and economic issues affecting their studies. The current study shows that very few students have financial problems impacting their study. However, if we study the entire student population, we find that illiteracy is closely linked to poverty.^[15] Further, few students have indicated societal pressure restricting their studies.

Adolescent girls have also reported barriers related to infrastructures which hinder their academic performance. Students have reported some issues such as poor condition of hostel & college building, unavailability of Wi-Fi facilities, drinking water, hot water, less number of bathrooms and sub-average quality of food. Studies ^[15, 16] indicate lack of infrastructure at the primary and secondary school level. However, there are no studies indicating the availability of infrastructure at pre-university level. But the current studies indicate that adolescent girls face some issues related to lack of infrastructure at pre-university level.

As adolescence is the period of expanding social relations; heightened emotionality which is largely the result of social factors is seen. Excessive preoccupation with a peer group is also the characteristics of this stage and therefore disturbances in an interpersonal relationship affect adolescent girls to a large

extent. This is the reason that in the present study adolescent girls have reported a number of interpersonal issues which hinder their studies such as the strained relationship with peers and teachers.

Lastly, it is seen that few adolescent girls have family issues which affect their academics. Also, few girls have reported having restrictions at home which affect their academics. Such type of restrictions is seen more among girls than boys. Although in the current study the adolescent girls have not reported issues related to gender discrimination or crime against them but it is known that adolescent girls often struggle with certain specific challenges not experienced beforehand. Issues such as gender discrimination, eve teasing, alcoholism, drug abuse, trafficking, early marriage, adolescent pregnancy, rape and cybercrimes are quite rampant today and even in the past.^[17] Due to these reasons, Indian parents exercise excessive restrictions on adolescent girls which in turn interfere in their academics.

CONCLUSION

It can thus be concluded that adolescent girls have reported a number of adjustment issues during their pre-university years. Among all the areas, it was found that adolescent girls have a high number of personal issues such as the inability to concentrate, tension worry etc. This was followed by issues related to academics such as time management, management of goals for study, comprehending the subject matter etc. Problems related to society, family, infrastructure and interpersonal relations were also seen but they were not very high. The results thus reflect the need to cater to the needs of adolescent girls who are going through excessive biological, social and psychological issues. This study has given an initial understanding of various issues of adolescents' girls.

The study, however, has few limitations such as adolescent girls in studying in co-education institutions were not targeted and colleges in a rural area could not be approached.

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