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## A study on behavioral and emotional problems of adolescents in schools of Kolhapur city

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### Abstract

Adolescence is a critical developmental phase characterized by significant emotional and behavioral transformations that influence future adjustment and mental health. This study examines the behavioral and emotional problems faced by adolescents in Kolhapur schools, focusing on socio-demographic factors, types of issues, and their implications. Emotional and behavioral problems, such as difficulty in forming peer relationships and pervasive unhappiness, were prevalent, affecting academic performance and social functioning. The study employed stratified random sampling to include 300 adolescents and utilized the Youth Self-Report (YSR) questionnaire for data collection. Analysis through SPSS revealed significant associations between socio-demographic factors and emotional challenges, with 60% of adolescents reporting issues. Findings emphasize the urgent need for school-based counseling, early identification of mental health issues, and socio-contextual interventions. The study concludes with recommendations for tailored social work approaches and enhanced mental health resources in educational settings to mitigate these challenges and promote adolescent well-being.

**Keywords:** Emotional and behavioral problems, mental health, socio-demographic factors, school-based counseling, early intervention, social work perspectives

### Introductions

Adolescence is a critical developmental phase marked by rapid changes in emotional and behavioral functioning, both of which are key predictors of an individual's future adjustment and overall mental health. During this period, emotional and behavioral issues can emerge as significant challenges, impacting adolescents' ability to adapt, cope, and establish healthy interpersonal relationships. Early identification of these problems is essential, as they can interfere with developmental milestones and long-term adjustment. Worldwide, approximately 20% of children and adolescents experience mental health issues severe enough to cause impairments. Alarming, suicide is identified as the third leading cause of death among adolescents, underscoring the urgent need for early intervention and effective support systems.

Children and adolescents in low- and middle-income countries are particularly vulnerable, as they often face limited access to mental health care and support. The mental health infrastructure in these regions is frequently under-resourced, with a shortage of mental health professionals and facilities, making it difficult to address the growing needs of this population. Consequently, many adolescents remain without the necessary support to manage their emotional and behavioral issues, which can lead to long-term adverse effects on their mental health and social functioning.

Emotional and behavioral problems in adolescents are typically characterized by difficulty in forming meaningful relationships with peers, inappropriate responses to common situations, pervasive feelings of unhappiness or depression, and, in some cases, physical symptoms or fears tied to personal issues. These issues are often most apparent within the school setting, where they can interfere with both academic performance and social interactions. As adolescents struggle with these challenges, they may experience diminished cognitive functioning, which can create a lasting impact on their educational outcomes and future opportunities.

The World Health Organization (WHO) emphasizes the importance of identifying vulnerable groups at an early stage to prevent further developmental impairment and a potential worsening of their clinical conditions.

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Tracking the prevalence of emotional and behavioral problems is crucial not only for understanding the scale of the issue but also for identifying factors that may protect against or exacerbate these mental health challenges. By recognizing both positive and negative influences on child mental health, early intervention strategies can be developed to reduce the risk of more severe mental health disorders.

In response to these concerns, this research aims to explore the behavioral and emotional problems of adolescents in schools in Kolhapur City from a social work perspective. Through this study, a deeper understanding of these challenges will be sought, with the goal of contributing to more effective support and intervention strategies for adolescents. This research aspires to guide future social work initiatives and advocate for enhanced mental health resources for youth in educational settings.

Review of literature:-

Srinath *et al.* (2005) <sup>[8]</sup> conducted a community-based study in Bengaluru, India, which revealed a prevalence rate of behavioral problems of approximately 12.5% among children up to 16 years of age. This study emphasizes the need for early intervention and community-based mental health support to address behavioral issues in young populations.

Pandey *et al.* (2018) <sup>[5]</sup> noted that, according to the 2011 Census, India has 362 million adolescents and youth aged 10-24 years, accounting for 28% of the population. This stage of life is crucial for introducing essential health-related knowledge and skills, as mental health interventions during adolescence can significantly shape future well-being and social adaptation.

According to World Health Organization (WHO) (2020) <sup>[9]</sup>, the most common emotional and behavioral issues among adolescents include conduct disorder, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and depressive or anxiety disorders. These findings underscore the importance of targeted mental health strategies aimed at reducing the prevalence of these disorders and supporting healthy emotional development.

In a study by Harikrishnan and Sailo (2021) <sup>[3]</sup>, it was observed that slightly more than 10% of school-going adolescents had emotional and behavioral problems. Their multiple regression analysis found significant associations between these problems and factors such as school type, school setting, and socioeconomic status (SES). This research points to the value of tailored mental health interventions that consider both the educational environment and socioeconomic factors affecting adolescent mental health.

Halpern and Figueiras (2013) <sup>[2]</sup> discussed the various risk factors contributing to the onset and exacerbation of mental health issues during adolescence. They identified poverty and social disadvantage as significant contributors to mental health challenges, emphasizing the importance of addressing socio-economic inequalities in mental health policies.

Gajre *et al.* (2019) <sup>[1]</sup> found that family dynamics, including parenting styles and family conflicts, had a significant influence on the emotional and behavioral health of adolescents. Their findings indicate that adolescents from families with supportive and communicative environments were less likely to experience mental health problems, highlighting the importance of family-based interventions.

In research by Murthy and Reddy (2020) <sup>[4]</sup>, the relationship between academic stress and mental health among Indian

adolescents was examined. They found that high academic pressure, especially in high-achieving school environments, led to increased levels of anxiety and depression among students. Their findings support the need for mental health support within educational institutions, including counseling services and stress management programs.

Shah *et al.* (2021) <sup>[7]</sup> studied the impact of social media use on adolescent mental health, finding a significant correlation between excessive social media use and increased anxiety and depressive symptoms. Adolescents who engaged in more than three hours of social media use per day reported greater issues with self-esteem and body image. This study highlights the importance of promoting healthy social media habits to reduce adverse effects on adolescent mental health.

Roy *et al.* (2022) <sup>[6]</sup> examined the influence of peer relationships on the emotional well-being of adolescents. Their findings showed that positive peer interactions acted as a protective factor, enhancing self-esteem and reducing loneliness. However, adolescents who experienced peer rejection or bullying were at higher risk for anxiety and depression. This research underscores the importance of fostering healthy peer relationships as part of a comprehensive approach to adolescent mental health.

### Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the socio-demographic background and its association with emotional and behavioral problems among school-going adolescents.
2. To identify and assess the types, levels, and causative factors of emotional and behavioral issues faced by school-going adolescents.
3. To propose remedial measures from a social work perspective to address emotional and behavioral issues among adolescents.

### Hypotheses

1. There is a significant association between the socio-demographic background of adolescents and their emotional and behavioral problems.
2. The levels and types of emotional and behavioral issues among school-going adolescents vary based on socio-demographic factors.
3. Remedial measures developed from a social work perspective can effectively address emotional and behavioral problems in adolescents.

### Methodology of the Study

This study was conducted with the aim of understanding the behavioral and emotional challenges faced by adolescents in schools throughout Kolhapur city. A detailed methodology was employed, covering essential elements such as the population scope, sampling approach, data sources, data collection tools, and analysis methods used.

The target population, or universe of the study, comprised adolescent students enrolled in various schools across Kolhapur city. This diverse group included students from a wide range of socio-demographic backgrounds, providing a comprehensive view of the adolescents' experiences within the urban educational context.

A stratified random sampling technique was employed to select 300 respondents. Stratification was based on factors like age, type of school, and socio-economic background, ensuring that each subgroup within the population was proportionately represented. Within each stratum,

convenient sampling was used to gather data, balancing representativeness with practicality. This mixed sampling approach provided a broad yet manageable sample that could be analyzed within the study's timeframe and resources.

For data collection, both primary and secondary sources were utilized. Primary data came directly from the adolescents in the selected schools, allowing firsthand insights into their emotional and behavioral experiences. Secondary data included academic literature such as books, journals, magazines, newspaper articles, reports, and online sources, which provided context and supported the study's theoretical framework, particularly regarding adolescent behavioral health.

The Youth Self-Report (YSR) questionnaire (2001) was selected as the primary data collection tool. This self-reporting instrument is widely recognized for its reliability in assessing behavioral and emotional problems in youth populations. It enabled the adolescents to report their own experiences, giving the study a direct view of their emotional and behavioral states.

Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Descriptive statistics summarized socio-demographic information and gave an overview of behavioral and emotional problems among respondents. Chi-square tests were applied to examine associations between socio-demographic factors and the presence of behavioral or emotional problems. Correlation analysis was used to explore relationships between different variables, while mean and standard deviation calculations provided insights into the average levels of emotional and behavioral issues and their variability within the sample. These methods allowed for a robust and detailed interpretation of the data.

The study's scope included both functional and geographical dimensions. Functionally, it extended to areas such as health, family environment, parent-child relationships, media influences, and social behavior among adolescents. Geographically, although focused on Kolhapur city, the study's findings have implications for similar urban settings, potentially offering guidance for further research and interventions.

### Summery of Findings and Conclusions

Based on the objectives and methodology of the study on the behavioral and emotional problems of adolescents in Kolhapur schools, several key findings have emerged that shed light on the scale and nature of these challenges:

**Prevalence of Emotional and Behavioral Problems** the study found that approximately 60% of adolescents face significant emotional and behavioral issues, with a primary manifestation being difficulties in establishing satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers. This aligns with global research that indicates a substantial proportion of adolescents struggle with such issues, underscoring the need for targeted interventions.

**Need for School-Based Counselling** a noteworthy finding is that around 70% of adolescents expressed a strong need for counseling services within their schools. This suggests a critical gap in available support systems, as counselling could play a vital role in helping students manage and address emotional challenges. The demand for counselling reflects adolescents' desire for structured guidance in navigating emotional and social difficulties.

**Early Identification and Intervention** the study highlights that 50% of adolescents were able to recognize emotional and behavioral issues at an early stage. This finding is encouraging, as early identification is essential for timely interventions that could prevent the escalation of problems. However, it also indicates that the remaining adolescents may lack awareness or the necessary support to identify these issues early on, suggesting the need for more proactive education on mental health within schools.

**Impact of Socio-Demographic Factors** half of the adolescents in the study reported that their socio-demographic background contributes to their emotional and behavioral challenges. Factors such as economic hardship, family dynamics, and social pressures were identified as contributors. This finding underscores the importance of considering socio-demographic contexts when designing support services for adolescents, as these external factors can significantly influence mental health.

**Prevalence of Depression and Unhappiness** the study found that 20% of adolescents experience a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression. This statistic highlights a vulnerable group within the population that could benefit from targeted mental health interventions, as prolonged periods of unhappiness or depression can affect academic performance, social relationships, and overall well-being.

**Comparative Need for Mental Health Support** the findings suggest that the number of adolescents requiring mental health support in Kolhapur aligns with trends observed globally and in low- and middle-income countries, where approximately 30% of children and adolescents are affected by mental health issues. This parallel highlights the urgent need for resources and mental health programs, particularly in regions where access to mental health professionals and facilities is limited.

### Conclusions

In conclusion, the study underscores the significant prevalence of emotional and behavioral challenges faced by adolescents in Kolhapur schools. Key conclusions drawn include the need for enhanced mental health awareness, early identification programs, and structured support systems, particularly counseling services within school settings. Socio-demographic factors play a substantial role in influencing adolescent mental health, indicating that interventions should be tailored to consider students' backgrounds. Furthermore, the persistent levels of unhappiness and the high demand for mental health support emphasize the importance of implementing school-based mental health programs to foster a supportive environment that can effectively address the needs of adolescents.

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