



A study on mental health problems among scheduled caste students of upper primary school

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Abstract

Mental health of students has been a topic of discussion among academicians since long but the present scenario is far from being satisfactory. Multiple mental health issues are bothering students of the present generation and the problem spreads across all students irrespective of their age, gender, caste, religion or family background. The present study takes into account the mental health problems of Scheduled Caste Upper Primary School Students residing in the urban areas of Arambag, Chunchura, Chandernagore, and Sreerampur located in the Hoogly district. The study assesses the rate of prevalence of mental health problems among the upper primary students studying in Bengali medium schools. The survey conducted on 111 students with Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire show that the boys exhibit more mental health problems than the girls. The boys also have more degree of peer problems as well as conduct problems when compared to the girls of their age.

Keywords: mental health problems, scheduled caste, conduct problems, anxiety, stress, disorder

Introduction

There are multiple physical and mental changes due to physical and mental developments in every student during their Upper Primary schooling. This dynamic phase requires coping with these changes. Lack of proper coping might lead to multiple physical and mental problems which might require immediate intervention. Proper mental health is thus a prerequisite for success at this stage of life. In many developing nations, mental health issues are not given adequate attention or consideration. Students from underprivileged families having poor economic background face more challenges in identification or acknowledgement of such issues.

It is accepted by all that good mental health is essential to undertake education, resolve daily problems and manage one's life properly. Mental health condition is also positively correlated with one's intelligence, creativity, motivation, self-realization and so on. According to Sinha (2015) ^[2], 'There is no health without mental health'. Felman (2020) ^[3] stated that "Mental Health refers to cognitive, behavioural, and emotional well-being. It is all about how people think, feel, and behave. People sometimes use the term 'Mental Health' to mean the absence of a mental disorder." The World Health Organization (WHO) in 2020 defined mental health as a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. The American Psychological Association in its dictionary of psychology defines mental health as a state of mind characterized by emotional well-being, good behaviour adjustment, relative freedom from anxiety and disabling symptoms, and a capacity to establish constructive relationships and cope with the ordinary demands and stresses of life. Modern schools have opened doors for every student and today, students from the all sections of the

society are receiving equal treatment in the educational institutions. Students from the Scheduled Caste (SC) community comprising about 17% of the Indian population (Office of the Registrar General, 2011) also form a sizable part of the school population. Being away from the light of education for generations, most students from the SC community lack proper guidance and help within the family. The problem is compounded when a first generation learner from the community is also economically underprivileged. The natural consequences are a sense of guilt, anger, frustration, anxiety and depression towards the situation in the short run leading to degradation of mental health in the long run. It can thus be accepted that mentally healthy people can tackle the problems of life better than others, can control extreme levels of emotion, have lesser chances of being depressed or frustrated, and in general lead a more joyful life as compared to ones who are not. The issue is unaddressed in most developing nations, especially among the socially and economically deprived classes.

Rationale of the study and Hypotheses

Reddy *et al.* (2016) ^[4] studied the behavioral problems among 350 preschool children aged 3 to 6 years from 6 Anganwadi schools, 6 English medium nursery schools and 5 Marathi medium nursery schools. Their results show that 24% children had behavior problems. The children belonging to class II and class III (54.7%) had higher prevalence of behavioral problems. It was also reported that prevalence of behavioral problem was higher in children belonging to a nuclear family (69.04%). Masare *et al.* (2017) ^[5] studied on the behavioral problems of secondary school children on 304 secondary school children studying in 8th and 9th standard. Their result shows that the prevalence of abnormal behavior according to self-rated SDQ

was found to be 1.6%, while prevalence of borderline abnormal behavior was 11.2% and majority 87.2% of study subjects were normal having no behavioral problem. The combined borderline and abnormal behavior problems were more prevalent in the age group of 12-13 year (64.1%) and 13-14 years (30.8%); was also more prevalent among girls (69.2%) as compared to boys (30.8%). The prevalence of behavior problem was higher among students studying in 9th in standard and studying in Hindi medium schools (61.5%).

Kafle *et al.* (2010) ^[6] studied the common behavior problems amongst 454 primary school children in age group of 6-10 years of Kathmandu Valley to find out morbidity in habit disorders. It has been found that from the perspective of gender wise habit disorders there was no statistical difference.

In India most of the scheduled caste students enroll for upper primary education. The students of this age face many types of mental health problems but there are limited studies that have been conducted on mental health problems of Scheduled Caste Student's of Hooghly District in West Bengal. On the basis of this research problem the following research question has been arise in researcher's mind

1. What is the prevalence rate of Mental Health Problems among Scheduled Caste Upper Primary Bengali Medium School Students who are the resident of urban area in Hooghly District?
2. What is the prevalence rate of mental health problem among Scheduled Caste Upper Primary School Bengali Medium Student who are the resident of urban area in Hooghly District with respect their Gender?

To find out the answers to the above identified research question the present study undertaken with the following hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between scheduled caste upper primary boys and girls in the rate of prevalence of Mental Health Problems or Total Difficulty.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between scheduled caste upper primary boys and girls in the rate of prevalence of Emotional Problems.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference between scheduled caste upper primary boys and girls in the rate of prevalence of Conduct Problems.

H₀₄: There is no significant difference between scheduled caste upper primary boys and girls in the rate of prevalence of Hyperactivity Problems.

H₀₅: There is no significant difference between scheduled caste upper primary boys and girls in the rate of prevalence of Peer Problems.

H₀₆: There is no significant difference between scheduled caste upper primary boys and girls in the rate of prevalence of Pro-Social Problems.

Data and Methodology

The present study employs a cross-sectional survey research framework. For the purpose of study, a total number of 111 students (54 male and 57 female) studying at upper primary level in class V to VIII were selected who belonged in the age group of 11 to 15 years. The Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) of Goodman (1997) ^[8] was used as research tool to collect the data. The survey was conducted in 11 schools from four different sub-divisional areas (Arambag, Chunchura, Chandernagore, and Sreerampur) of Hooghly District. After obtaining necessary permission from the heads of respective schools the questionnaire was administered and the data was collected. The data thus collected were individually plotted, analyzed through SPSS and necessary inferences were drawn.

Results and Discussion

The data are tabulated and thoroughly discussed in this section:

Table 1: Gender wise distribution of the sample

Gender	Total no of Student
Male	54
Female	57
Total	111

Table 2: Class wise distribution of the sample

Class	Total No. of Sample
V	30
VI	31
VII	25
VIII	25
Total	111

Table 3: Independent Sample Test of H₀₁ (Gender wise result of Mental Health Problems or Total Difficulty)

Variable	Independent categorized variable	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Df	p-value	Remarks
Mental Health Problems among the Students	Boys	54	15.37	5.468	2.228	109	0.028	S* P<0.05
	Girls	57	13.05	5.488				

On the basis of this table, it can be said that the null hypothesis H₀₁ is rejected and it is accepted that there is a significant difference in mean score of Mental Health Problems among the

Urban Area's Scheduled Caste Upper Primary boys and girls of Hooghly District. It is seen that the boys exhibit a more unfavorable score as compared to the girls of their age.

Table 4: Independent Sample Test of H₀₂ (Gender wise result of Emotional Problems)

Variable	Independent categorized variable	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Df	p-value	Remarks
Emotional Problems among the Students	Boys	54	3.67	2.074	0.852	109	0.396	NS* P<0.05
	Girls	57	3.33	2.074				

The above table shows the Emotional Problems score of boys and girls of Urban Area's Scheduled Caste Upper Primary school students in Hooghly District. Both the groups face similar type of Emotional Problems (the average score of Emotional Problems is

Male = 3.67 and Female = 3.33). On the basis of this table it can be said that the researchers failed to reject null hypothesis H_{02} . So, there is no significant difference in the rate of prevalence of Emotional Problems among boys and girls.

Table 5: Independent Sample Test of H_{03} (Gender wise result of Conduct Problems)

Variable	Independent categorized variable	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Df	p-value	Remarks
Conduct Problems among the Students	Boys	54	3.67	2.146	2.108	109	0.037	S* P<0.05
	Girls	57	2.81	2.150				

The above table describes the Conduct Problems score of Urban Area's Scheduled Caste Upper Primary boys and girls. Both the group face Conduct Problems (the average score of Conduct Problems is Male = 3.67 and Female = 2.81). On the basis of this

table, it can be concluded that the null hypothesis H_{03} is rejected and it is accepted that there is a significant difference in mean score of Conduct Problems of boys and girls.

Table 6: Independent Sample Test of H_{04} (Gender wise result of Hyperactivity Problems)

Variable	Independent categorized variable	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Df	p-value	Remarks
Hyperactivity Problems among the Students	Boys	54	3.78	2.661	0.254	109	0.800	NS* P<0.05
	Girls	57	3.65	2.683				

Table 6 describes the Hyperactivity Problems score of Urban Area's Scheduled Caste Upper Primary boys and girls of Hooghly District. Both the group face similar Hyperactivity Problems (the average score of Hyperactivity Problems is Male = 3.78 and Female = 3.65). On the basis of this table it can be

concluded that the researchers failed to reject null hypothesis H_{04} . So, there is no significant difference between boys and girls in the rate of prevalence of Hyperactivity Problems among boys and girls.

Table 7: Independent Sample Test of H_{05} (Gender wise result of Peer Problems)

Variable	Independent categorized Variable	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Df	p-value	Remarks
Peer Problems among the Students	Boys	54	4.26	2.504	2.451	109	0.016	S* P<0.05
	Girls	57	3.26	1.727				

Table 7 describes the Peer Problems score of Urban Area's Scheduled Caste Upper Primary school boys and girls. Both the groups face Peer Problems (the average score of Peer Problems is Male = 4.26 and Female = 3.26). On the basis of this table, it

can be concluded that the null hypothesis H_{05} is rejected and it is accepted that there is a significant difference in mean score of Peer Problems among the boys and girls.

Table 8: Independent Sample Test of H_{06} (Gender wise result of Pro-social Problems)

Variable	Independent categorized Variable	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Df	p-value	Remarks
Pro-social Problems among the Students	Boys	54	6.06	2.851	0.702	109	0.484	NS* P>0.05
	Girls	57	6.42	2.632				

Table 8 describes the Pro-social Problems score of Urban Area's Scheduled Caste Upper Primary school boys and girls. Both the group face very similar Pro-social Problems (the average score of Pro-social Problems is Male = 6.06 and Female = 6.42). On the basis of this table it can be concluded that the researchers failed to reject null hypothesis H_{06} . So, there is no significant difference among boys and girls in the rate of prevalence of Pro-social Problems of Scheduled caste students.

Conclusion

On the basis of analysis and interpretations of collected data, the major findings of the study are:

- The male students face Mental Health Problems greater than Female students: and the difference was found statistically significant ($p<0.05$).

- Both boys and girls face similar Emotional Problems; and the difference was found statistically not significant ($p>0.05$).
- The male students face more Conduct Problems than Female students: and the difference was found statistically significant ($p<0.05$).
- Both boys and girls face similar Hyperactivity Problems; and the difference was found statistically not significant ($p>0.05$).
- The male students face more Peer Problems than female students: and the difference was found statistically significant ($p<0.05$).
- Both boys and girls face similar Hyperactivity Problems; and the difference was found statistically not significant ($p>0.05$).

In conclusion, it can be said that the boys face more mental health problems than the girls. The boys also face more conduct problems and peer related issues as compared to the girls of their age. The discussions revealed that the girls share their emotion not only with their peer group but also with their family and relatives, and they also control these emotions in a more socially acceptable manner. The girls are more regular in social and cultural programs which also results in lower mental health problems. It was also revealed that the upper primary students face many challenges in his/her physical and mental growth and sometimes they feel guilty for their circumstances. They lack proper vision and guidance to address their issues and the educational institution, teachers and the society in general must take note of their circumstances to take adequate positive actions.

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