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## “A Study of Gender differences of Mental Health and Social Values among Adolescents”

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### Introduction

Mental health is as important as our physical health. A holistic definition from WHO which describes “mental health as a state of well being in which every individual realizes his/her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.”

Mental health problem in adolescents results from the complex and dynamic interplay between individual's attributes and behavior (example, genetic factors), emotional and social intelligence, social and economic circumstances (e.g.- experienced social support, poverty, educational opportunities) and wider social cultural environment factors ( e.g. social and economic policies at national and discrimination). These aspects interact with each other in a dynamic way that can either protect or pose a risk to mental health.

Adolescents or teenage (13 years to 19 years) is an important period in one's life. During this period, an innocent child blossoms into an adult. There is physical growth with secondary sexual features appearing, converting a boy into a man, a girl into a woman. There is mental growth but it is not fast as physical growth. Thinking, controlled expression of emotions, proper understanding of the environment through five senses, decision making, intelligence, ability to satisfy the needs within the limitations of various social and moral norms, varying mental functions get definite shape. Interest in the opposite sex, sexual desires and expression try to find suitable place in one's life. The individual has to face important examinations in the field of education, get better marks competing with others, selecting a course, a vocation which determines one's future. One has to find one's way to understand the reality and clarify one's goals. Adolescents get entangled in these issues and struggle to succeed. They have to sort out their identity

crisis. They have to cope with their elders and their traditional (some meaningful and some absurd) values, beliefs and practices. Thus, some say that adolescent is a period of turmoil, confusion and uncertainties. Because of these biological, psychological and social changes, adolescents are more prone to develop mental health problems. The common ones are:

**Anxiety neurosis:** Apprehension, vague fears, uneasiness, poor concentration and memory, indecisiveness, doubts and conflicts, boredom, irritability, initial insomnia, poor appetite, sexual inadequacies. Most of them believe that they have physical weakness or illness and medicines like tonics, vitamins and injections would help them they get investigated unnecessarily and consume. Factors which are responsible for anxiety neuroses are:

- **Identity crises** – the adolescent being not clear about his role and status in the family or in the society, suffers from insecurity, inferiority and helplessness which lead to severe anxiety when he has to face problems or new situations.
- **Emotional disorders** – unexpected change in mood, emotional outbursts are very common in adolescent stage and children need attention and sense of security to deal with such changes that are taking place.
- **Performance anxiety** – parents expect their children should get first rank, should succeed in the competition and thus put enormous pressure on them. They give big incentives for success and threaten punishment for failure. This leads to performance anxiety in the adolescents. They start worrying excessively about the result and their performance suffers.
- **Realities of life and fantasies** – the big gap between realities and fantasies of life can induce lot of anxiety in the adolescents.
- **Eating disorders** – anorexia (they have very low body weight and are heightened to weight gain) and bulimia nervosa include preoccupation with food, body shape or weight, and behavior such as excessive exercise, vomiting to compensate to the calories intake. Media plays very vital role in developing an image of the celebrities and model fitness and race to copy celebrities starts resulting in eating disorders.
- **Suicide and Para-suicides**- India has world's largest youth population 36crores. Higher suicidal deaths are being reported from several Indian studies. National crime report bureau (NCRB) says 34.4% of all suicides during 2014 were between 15 to 29 years. Suicide of students has risen from 5.5% of all suicides in 2010 to 6.2% in 2014. Wrist slashing, consuming some available tablets, cleaning agents are some of the threatening methods adopted by the children to fulfill their meaningless demands.
- **Lack of sexual education** – there is no formal sex education is given in our society; sex has become an attractive secret or a taboo. Asking question about sex is prohibited. They have misconceptions leading into unhealthy attitudes and unwanted fears.

- **Social disorganizations and evils** – severe, unhealthy and unethical competition, uncertain future, lack of faith and mutual distrust, bleak future with unemployment, unequal distribution of wealth and facilities add to the anxiety of the individual.
- **Depression** – feelings of sadness, weeping spells, lack of interest in all activities, hopelessness, helplessness, worthlessness, self blaming, guilt, poor appetite and sleep, decreased sexual drive, headaches, body ache, numbness in the limbs, death wish, suicidal wish, suicidal ideas and even attempts are the common features of depression.

The theory of basic human values was developed by Shalom H Schwartz, this is a theory of field of intercultural research. Schwartz considered it as an essential extension of previous approaches to comparative intercultural research theories. Schwartz's theory identifies ten such motivationally distinct values and further describes the dynamic relations amongst them. Social scientists also agree that values are important and serve as guiding principal in people's lives. Values are significant for understanding various social-psychological phenomena (Schwartz and Bardi, 2001). There is a clear link between values and behavior and Sinha (1990) observes that operative values are close to social norms and that the desirable ideal and important values one perhaps the cherished values and many have universal structure. They defined human values as guiding force in people's lives. For instance, giving importance to power values implies striving for power at work, home and with friends and so forth. Schwartz (1992) interprets five found features of values – as beliefs concept, pertaining to desirable and states of behavior, guided selection or evaluation of behavior and events and is ordered by relative importance.

Values are embodied in social activities and relationships, and institution. However the later as subject to change and adjustment while values have a relative permanence and universality. Values play a vital role in determining human behavior and social relationship as well as maintaining and regulating social structure and interactions on one hand and giving them cohesion and stability on the other hand (Verma,2004). Values are relatively stable motivational characteristics of person that change little during adulthood (Feather, 1971; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1997).

## Association of Mental Health and Values.

Values have a significant influence on attitude towards emotional expression and that understanding these attitudes can also mean effectively predicting one's mental health. There are many ways our community, culture, traditions impact mental health:

**Support:** Cultural factors also decide how much support someone gets from their family and community when it comes to mental health. A lot of stigma is attached to mental health and that creates difficulty

**Cultural stigma:** Different cultures have different attitude of looking at mental health. For many, there is growing stigma around mental health, and mental health is considered as weakness and something to hide. This can make it very difficult for those who are looking for help and seeking guidance.

**Understanding symptoms and causes:** Culture can influence how people describe and feel about their symptoms. It can affect whether someone chooses to recognize and talk about only physical symptoms, only emotional symptoms or both.

**Resources \ Guidance :** when looking for mental health guidance and treatment, you want to talk to someone who understands your specific experiences and concern. It can be difficult and time consuming to find for resources and treatment options.

### Measures

#### ➤ Mental health inventory

Mental health inventory is designed by Dr. Jagdish and Dr. A.K.Srivastav to measure mental health (positive) of normal individuals. This inventory includes 6 dimensions of mental health, it is as follows: 1.Positive self evaluation, 2.Perception of reality, 3.Integration of Personality, 4.Autonomy, 5. Group Oriented Attitudes, 6.Environmental Mastery. It consists of total 56 items including 32 false keyed and 24 true keyed. 4 alternative responses were given to each statement i.e., always, often, rarely and never. 1,2,3,4 scores are assigned to negative and 4,3,2,1 scores to positive items.

#### ➤ Social values scale

Social value scale designed by Shalom H. Schwartz (1990) to measure social values. There are 10 motivationally distinct values that are theoretically derived from human life, namely, Power, Self- direction, Achievement, Hedonism, Security, Stimulation, Conformity, Universalism, Tradition, and Benevolence. The scale has 16 items with four responses for each items i.e., 1.strongly agree, 2. Partial agree, 3. Agree and 4. Strongly Agree.

## Results

The data obtained in the research were analyzed by using appropriate statistical techniques in SPSS. The analysis was made by Mean, Standard Deviation, t-value. The significant coefficient was taken as  $p < 0.5$  and .01 level. There were 200 participants in the study.

Table1. Showing Mean, Standard Deviation and t- value of Male and Female Adolescents on Mental Health.

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	S.D	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)
Mental health	Male	100	45.85	3.066	1.151	198	.251
	Female	100	46.33	2.825			

Table2. Showing Mean, Standard Deviation and t- value of Male and Female Adolescents on Social Values.

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	S.D	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)
Social value	Male	100	17.77	2.487	-.269	198	.788
	Female	100	17.65	3.6950			

The comparison of score on the pilot study of male adolescents and female adolescents on mental health is shown in table1. That shows that there is no significant difference between male and female adolescents mental health. table2. Represents the score of male and female adolescents on social value, which indicates that there is non significant difference between male and female social values. Therefore, null hypothesis which states that's there is no significant difference in Mental Health and Social Values among male and female adolescents. However, mean values of female adolescent's Mental Health are higher than male adolescents. Whereas, in terms social values the male adolescent's mean is higher than that of female adolescents. Results show that female adolescents have higher overall Mental Health than male adolescents and male adolescents have higher Social Values.

Further, there is a positive correlation between the two measures that are mental health and social values. The correlation is  $r = .266$  (\*\* $p < .01$ ) for mental health and social values. Therefore, null hypothesis that there will be no significant correlation between mental health and social values is rejected. The result indicates

that there is a positive correlation between mental health and social values. This signifies that with increase in mental health there will be an increment in social values as well and vice a versa.

## Discussion

The study was conducted to investigate the gender difference between mental health and social values among adolescents. The null hypothesis proposed was that there will be no significant difference between the degree of mental health and social values and the findings favor the hypothesis. Both male and female adolescents did not find significant difference on the variable of mental health and social values. In this modern era of fast forward technologies both male and female adolescents try to create balance between their mental health (perception of reality, positive self evaluation and so on) and social values (power, achievement, security, hedonism and so on). Adolescents stage is a turmoil stage where both male and female undergo a lot of changes and responsibilities of both the self and the family. Values help us to strive towards our goal and future and mental health guides us to evaluate ourselves, our personality and our attitude. Adolescent stage is a raw stage and thus the experiences and conditioning at this stage moulds the personality, choices, values and also impacts the mental health, emotional health and the physical health of the individual. Proper guidance and motivation from parents, family, friends and society help's in shaping a better individual and also provides with clear vision of future and achievement.

The findings reject that the second hypothesis "there is no correlation between mental health and social values of male and female adolescents", and there is a positive correlation between mental health and social values. According to the result, if mental health increases then social values also increment both in male and female adolescents. Because adolescents is a dynamic stage of life where attitude, beliefs, behavior and cultural norms clashes with expectations, reality and the hard hitting truth of life.

## Conclusion

Thus it can be concluded that there is no significant difference with male and female adolescent's mental health and social values. Although, mental health of female adolescents were found to be more as compared to male adolescents. But in aspect of social value male adolescent's scored more. That is male adolescents are aware of their goals and limitations. While analyzing relationship between both the variables positive relationship with mental health and social values among male and female adolescents was discovered.

This may be the result of the exposure, guidance, support system, and indulgence in extracurricular and cultural activities that individuals take part in school. Also importance of mental health is the new age topic

which was until now covered with physical health wrap. Needless to say that both mental health and physical health and growth is important.

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