

# Making College Campuses More Conducive For Girls: A Study in Preventive Mental Health

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## Abstract

The present study aimed at revealing prevalence of mental health issues and interrelated variables of mental health in general population, especially in girls. The sample of the study consisted sixty under-graduate and post-graduate college going girl students, in the age range of eighteen to twenty-three years from Solapur city (Maharashtra). The participants were administered the Mental Health Battery Scale. The results of percentages showed that more than two-fifth proportion of respondents has low mental health. Chi-square values revealed that the bio-socio-demographic variables of the respondent have no significant association with total score of Mental Health Battery. However, the study has made an attempt to explore mental health education components for changing academic milieu for girls to have better mental health. It also embraced life skill education at campus.

Keywords: Girl, Academic Milieu, Mental Health Education, Preventive Mental Health

## INTRODUCTION

Education is considered a strong mean to achieve freedom from all sorts of ills' be it economical, social or psychological. Education is an indicator of human development. Education for life has been embraced by almost all thinkers and reformers. Revolutionaries from Rousseau to Rabindranath Tagore, Martin Luther King to Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Kouttilya to Amartya Sen many have had deliberately stressed on the education of vulnerable sections of the society i.e. women and specifically girls.

The scenario of girl education in India has changed its face especially after the eighth decade of twentieth century. It also considered as a 'decade of women empowerment'. But girls are susceptible to discontinue the process of their education because of variety of reasons. In the words of Sahni (2005) today, the youth in India is from one of the

most vulnerable groups, who on the one hand are expected to be the leaders to determine the destiny of India, and on the other hand, are an exploited and confused group. In such circumstances studies on academic environments and its effects on girl's mental health in cities of Indian states have significant place in academic writings and purview of education. The education system in India is likely to undergo major changes in near future in the context of *Rashtriya Ucchatar Shikshya Abhiyan* where independent colleges and universities will be given more freedom to devise their policies on par with the nation building objectives of the government (Prasad, 2014).

Youth is considered as productive section of society. It is important to every nation to see what their youths are engaged in and where they are. Many social scientists have talked about this phenomenon. Considering the incidences happened in various parts of India that youths were found involved in violence, communal violence, cyber crimes, suicides and all. What it indicates that the youth is more involved in destructive activities. Benton et al. (2003) are also found that there is a significant increase in student pathology, assaults, personality disorders and the like that asserts attention to invest in studying youth especially girls.

Youth and transition are the two sides of one coin. Youth will be always in a phase of transition, Kitzrow (2003) has opined that today's student's deal with cross cultural issues, family dysfunctions, poor frustration tolerance, and weak interpersonal relationships which incidentally cause mental health problems. Kadison & DeGeronimo (2004) suggests that in addition to normal developmental concerns experienced by the traditional college students, the current generation of students is pressurized to get good grades, hold on to jobs and become involved in college life as well.

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Preventive researches in social sciences can be instrumental to minimise the greater effects which will happen otherwise if not taken care of. In this regard, the present study is rightly emphasized on preventive aspects of mental health for girls at campus level. Mental health consist many components like impulsive thoughts, compulsive actions, fatigue, fear, anxiety, depression, sleep disturbances, irritations and maladaptive behaviours which generally found in neurosis and otherwise not needed the hospitalization per se. It has become very important for every stakeholder of society in general and university, colleges in particular to provide conducive environment at campuses. Otherwise it may cost for the other kind of exclusion which is more deliberate and intense. Most of the time girls are the victims of such exclusions.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study aims at studying the prevalence of mental health problems in perceived normal population especially in girls in the college campuses. The study also intends to describe the need to change the academic milieu for girls to have better mental health.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

While reviewing available literature and previous researches related to mental health; it is found that majority of the studies are disorder based or we can say clinical kind of studies involving diagnosed patients either by ICD-10 or DSM-IV (R). Studies found are more medical in nature and very few have the preventive approach of research; in that sense study has enough potential to explore the prevalence of mental health problem among perceived normal population i.e. girls. Developing academic environment in such a way where girls will have better mental health facilities at campus. It is also seems important in the context of Rashtriya Uchchar Shikshya Abhiyan.

## METHOD AND MATERIAL

### Sample

The sample of sixty girl students is selected on quota basis. The students studying in six colleges and from three faculties i.e. Arts, Commerce and Science are selected. They are all students of graduate degree students and first

year of post-graduate students. Participants are selected on non-probability sampling method and sample drawn by purposive sampling technique. Their age ranged from eighteen to twenty-three years.

## Tools used

1. Socio-demographic Data Sheet (self constructed) to elicit information with regard to bio-socio-demographic profile of the selected girl students.
2. The Mental Health Battery Scale (MHB) developed by Arun Kumar Singh and Alpana Sen Gupta. It included six popular indices of mental health, namely (a) *Emotional Stability*, (b) *Overall Adjustment*, (c) *Autonomy*, (d) *Security-Insecurity*, (e) *Self-concept and (f) Intelligence*. It consists 130 items indicating above said indices of mental health. Test-retest reliability correlations turned out to be significant at 0.01 level of probability. For validity, the value of correlation also turned out to be significant at 0.01 level of probability. Higher the score higher the mental health in individual and vice-versa. The MHB is well translated in local language and pre-tested in twenty students for necessary editions and making it more student-friendly.

## Procedure

The participants selected for the study are administered in group as well as in individual basis. After explaining the purpose of the study they are requested to read the instructions carefully and also requested to provide personal data about themselves. Each student has given enough time to fill the questionnaire because it is quiet lengthy. The data is analysed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (16.0 version).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study are reported and discussed here;

**Table 1: Level of Mental Health in Girl's**

Level of Mental Health	Frequency	Percentage
Low Mental Health	25	41.7
Average Mental Health	34	56.7
High Mental Health	01	01.7
Total	60	100.0

Table 1 show that the categorization of mental health level i.e. low, average and high based on the quartile values of the score for mental health battery. It may be seen from the table that the majority proportion, more than two-fourth (56.7%) of the respondents have average mental health. A very small proportion, less than one-tenth (1.7%) of the respondents have high mental health. However, it shows that the significant proportion, more than two-fifth (41.7%) of the respondents have low mental health.

It can be concluded that majority of girl students have average mental health and only one girl could found with high mental health level on the battery. But, here, we have 41.7% potential participants who are in need of some or other kind of psychological intervention at the campus level. The present study supports the findings of study made by Benton et al (2003) that too talks about student pathology and asserts attention to invest in studying youth.

**Table 2. Chi-Square Test Values of Bio-Socio-Demographic Variables with Mental Health**

Sr.	Variables	X <sup>2</sup> value	df	Level of sig.
1	Age	9.946	4	0.072
2	College	3.180	8	0.923
4	Class	10.659	4	0.031*
5	Religion	1.582	4	0.812
7	Father's education	11.634	10	0.310
8	Mother's education	5.960	10	0.819
11	Mother tongue	1.594	4	0.810
16	Region	2.285	4	0.684
17	Family type	3.885	4	0.422
18	Family Monthly income	8.178	4	0.085
20	Family size	2.239	2	0.326

\*Significance at 0.05 levels.

Table 2 reveal that the association between the bio-socio-demographic variables and mental health of the girl respondents. Study had a hypothesis that the bio-socio-demographic variables have nothing to do with the possible score of mental health battery. The above table explains the associational significance between different variables and mental health battery score.

It reveals that the variables age, college, religion, father-mother education, region, family type, family monthly income and family size of the respondents have nothing to do with the scores of mental health battery acquired

by the respondents. There is no significant association been found in these variables therefore we have to accept the null hypotheses that bio-socio-demographic variables have nothing to do with mental health of the students. The only variable class of the students (graduate and postgraduate) have found associated with mental health score at significant level less than 0.05.

This discourse counters the popular literature base about the reasons for psychological disturbances which leads to mental health problems. These results invite deeper investigation to go beyond these variables and to find the causes of mental ill health. It may be said that college students have multiple educational responsibilities and liabilities along with family pressures especially for girl students. The similar study done by Kitzrow (2003) has opined that students deal with cross cultural issues, family dysfunctions, poor frustration tolerance and weak interpersonal relationships which incidentally cause mental health problems. This also indicates the immense need of mental health intervention at college level to change the present scenarios of academic milieu.

## PREVENTIVE MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION

Mental health is a varied concept in every culture. Mental health is complex term. Many scholars treat it as a construct. Preventive mental health education at campus for girls is a need of an hour. Bhatia (1982) considers mental health as the ability to balance feelings, desires, ambitions and ideals in one's daily living which entails the ability to face and accept the realities of life. Whereas, Symonds (1961) suggests mental health is a psychodynamic unity, a personality integrating in an individual in relation to his or her environment.

Preventive mental health is nothing but applying knowledge; facts come out of various researches in field of mental health. Developing various psychological tools which can assess actual or at par symptoms of mental illness in general population for early diagnosis and treatment; which is rightly part of preventive mental health. Educating individuals, study groups or people on particular mental health concern will be treated as a work of preventive mental health. Preventive mental health believes on the training which will make people realize their strengths, weaknesses, vulnerabilities, susceptibilities, and teach them to handle their emotions,

feelings, reactions; in-total behaviour which may otherwise take them in risk of becoming mentally ill (Jagdale, 2011).

What colleges/academic institutions can change is that making different college structures conducive for girls. The whole administration of college can be sensitized through different orientation programs related to girl's mental health. Colleges can have Youth Centres, Women's Study Centres, Feeling boxes along with sexual harassment committees which can engage themselves in a continuous/periodical small research studies like present one and make the use of it while training and sensitizing the stakeholders of the educational institute. It will be instrumental in deciding organizational policies more de-gendered and girl's sensitive. Through this it may possible to change the cognitive understandings of girls about their concerns related to their safety, freedom, and participation and experiencing higher education.

## CONCLUSION

The present study has come up with a conclusion that the bio-socio-demographic variables of the girl's have found nothing to do with their mental health. It is very important in the area of education in general and higher education in particular where government is introducing a *Rashtriya Uchchar Shikshya Abhiyan* in which individual colleges will be given more freedom to devise their policies and modes of operation. It is emphasized that every college or university must have some mechanisms to find and resolve mental health concerns of girl students. It will be very fruitful if such mechanisms adopt the life skills

educational approach devised by world health organization in consultation with National Mental Health Institutes.

Disclaimer: The views expressed in the article are solely personal and should not be considered as views of the organization where author is affiliated to.

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