

Research Paper :

Mental Health : A study of rural adolescents

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ABSTRACT

Present investigation is an attempt to study the mental health of rural adolescent boys and girls. The sample for study consisted of 100 rural adolescents equally distributed over both the sexes (50 boys and 50 girls). Their age range was from 18 to 20 years, belonging to middle socio-economic status families and were studying in senior secondary classes. Socio-Economic Status Scale was used to assess the socio-economic status of the respondents. Results showed a non-significant gender difference across mental health status but a significant difference was in somatic health status of adolescent boys and girls. Boys were found to be having better somatic health status as compared to girls

Key words : Mental health, Rural adolescent, Somatic health

The concept of mental health is as old as human beings. Mental health commutates those behaviours, perceptions and feelings that determine a person's overall level of personal effectiveness, success, happiness and excellence of functioning as a person. Bhatia (1982) describes it as the ability to balance desires, feelings, ambitions and ideals in one's daily living. It may also be understood as the behavioural characteristics of a person. According to Kumar (1992), mental health is an index which shows the extent to which the person has been able to meet his environmental demands – social, emotional or physical. A mentally healthy person shows homogenous organization of desirable attributes, healthy values and righteous self-concept and a scientific perception of the world as a whole. Mental health presents a humanistic approach towards self and others. It is an important factor that influences individual's various activates, behaviour, happiness and performance. However, when he finds himself trapped in a situation, he does not have matching coping strategies to deal with it effectively, he gets himself mentally strained. This mental strain is generally reflected in symptoms like anxiety, tension, restlessness or hopelessness among others. If it is felt for too long and too extensively by the person, these symptoms may take a definite form (or get 'syndromized') representing a given illness. Mental health, therefore, should not be confused with mental illness, it is a study of pre-illness mental condition of the person.

Mental health, as such, represents a psychic condition, which is characterized by mental peace, harmony and content. It is identified by the absence of disabling and

debilitating symptoms, both mental and somatic in the person (Schneiders, 1964). Age and mental health have a very close relationship. As it deals with adjustment problems at every stage of life, it helps a person to adjust his ways of thinking, feeling, behaving and attitudes in accordance with his make up, the environment and the newer developments.

Adolescence is considered as the most important transition period of life. Adolescents face an intense turmoil because of the cognitive, biological and social changes taking place in this period. Further more, adolescence is a period of heightened risk with high rates of depression, conduct disorders, suicides, drug and alcohol addiction and antisocial behaviour. Adolescent could navigate this transitional period with much success, happiness and confidence without much uncertainty and distress, but it could be possible only in one condition *i.e.* with sound mental health.

Numerous developmental studies have examined the effect of age and gender as well as their interaction on the epidemiology of mental health and have consistently revealed that problems are less common in early adolescence than in late adolescence (Fleming and Offard, 1990) and females experience higher rates of such problems than males (Sprock and Yoder, 1997). Keeping these views in mind, the present study was framed to study the mental health of rural adolescent (boys and girls).

METHODOLOGY

Sample :

The sample for the present study consisted of 100