

Effect of Psychological Distress on Mental Well-Being among Adolescent Students

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Cite this paper as: Sharanya. S, Dr. HemanthaKumara, V, (2025) Expression of Glucose Transporter-1 (Glut-1) in Oral Epithelial Dysplasia and Oral Squamous Cell Carcinoma. *Journal of Neonatal Surgery*, 14 (6s), 91-95.

ABSTRACT

The stage of Adolescents is considered be the most crucial and important stages of physical and emotional development among the various stages of development. Adolescents in the recent times have their struggle to manage stress and distress, there by largely affecting their mental well-being. This not affects their immediate skill set but also creates a lag in their growth towards the next stages of life. The present study focused on studying the effect of Psychological Distress on Mental Well-being among Adolescent students. A total sample of 191 students sample was obtained after using standardised screening tests by Depression Anxiety Stress scale – twenty one item (short version) and (WEBMBS) Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale, students who scored mild-moderate on psychological well-being and medium-low on mental well- being were screened. The results were analysed using the test of significance and Pearson product moment method. In this study it was hypothesized that Psychological distress will have no impact on Mental well-being. In conclusion, Psychological distress has negative impact on Mental Well-being.

Keywords: *Psychological Distress, Mental Well-being, Adolescents.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescents as the term indicates is filled with a lot of changes in an individual's life. It is also considered as the make or break moment in a person's life. In the overall development in an individual's life, we have come to understand that adolescence is the most crucial among them, in this stage a lot of feelings and emotions are involved.

In the developmental stage of adolescence is marked as the beginning of Puberty. Puberty is considered to be the most crucial stages in an individual's life. According to American Psychological Association, "Adolescent is marked as the beginning of puberty and ends with physiological and neurobiological maturity." In this phase, major changes of physical characteristics takes place and this can adversely affect body image, self-concept and self-esteem.

Psychological Distress and Adolescents

Distress generally talks about means the state of being upset of suffering from a lot of pain, Psychological distress means a state of distress that revolves around your emotions, feelings and thoughts. Psychological distress has been gaining a lot of eyes over the past decade due to the increasing mental health concerns and adolescents specifically students are more susceptible this. Psychological Distress usually refers to a mood state that has biological and psychological fluctuations in an individual for the longest period in their life. Since distress enables malfunctioning in emotional and physical system of the adolescent it in evidently lowers the self-efficacy as well as the self-worth of the person. This in turn shows up in their quality of academics and relationships. If distress is not coped well with then it paves way for serious psychological conditions such as Depression, Anxiety and chronic levels of stress.

Mental well-being among adolescents

According to Carol Ryff mental well-being consists of so many components that attributes to an individual's level of autonomy, how well they maintain positive relations with others, exploring the meaning of purpose of their life, mastery in personal and professional skills as well as personal growth. This concept is beautifully penned down in the centeredness theory that talks about inward growth which there by promotes mental well-being in today's times.

Mental well-being teaches about the goals and purposes of psychology consulting through guiding clinical research that will assist advisers in helping their advisees achieve their objectives. (Christopher, 1999). Mental well-being particularly focuses on the concept of development of self and how one can develop their sense of self. Massé et al. (1998) defines mental well-being and Psychological distress as two very distinct yet complimentary states of mental health. When distress becomes severe, it really impacts the well-being among adolescents hence it is important to work on the holistic development of the individual. Bagga et al., (2024) utilizes Self-deterministic theory and Rational Choice Theory pivotal in comprehending the multifaceted factors influencing attitudes, intrinsic motivations and decision-making processes. Both theory offering insights into the complex dynamics guiding individual preferences and behaviors

2. METHOD

Objectives:

1. To study the effect of Psychological Distress on Mental well-being among adolescents

Hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1. There will be a significant relationship between psychological distress and mental well-being.

Hypothesis 2. Males and Females differ in their levels of distress and mental well-being.

Participants

A total of 191 participants from different High schools and Pre-university colleges in Bangalore urban were chosen. The participants were administered the Depression, Anxiety, Stress- short version scale and o measure their levels of distress and well-being accordingly.

Measures

Psychological Distress Scale: The Depression, Anxiety, stress scale or DASS- 21 item short version by Lovibond S.H & Lovibond, P.F (1995). The scale came into light to measure the levels of Stress, Anxiety and Depression, this edited version of the scale has carefully divided key items into 7 items such as: hopelessness, less involvement, dysphoria , being trapped, anger and irritability. The stress subset also talks about items that depict being upset, over-reactive and not patient. The instructions are pretty simple, participants are required to read each statement and mark the responses according to their application. The scores range from zero to three , where zero elicits no applicability and three elicits most applicability. The final numbers are computed and double to get the accurate distress score.

Reliability and validity of the questionnaire stands out to be excellent with Cronbach alpha values of 0.81,0.89 and 0.78 on Depression, Stress and Anxiety. Convergent, consistent and concurrent are the validity of the scale.

The Warwick- Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale : the questionnaire was adapted by the already existing affectometer 2 which was prominent in the 80's. WEBMWS according to the experts is said to address the determinants of well-being and does not measure the well-being in itself. The highlight of the scale is that it measures the two- week window of emotions that an individual goes through, especially the quality of thoughts an individual may present with. Scale holds pride in also covering the spiritual perspective of the individual which makes it holistic. The scoring holds a standard Likert scale and the total score marks the level of mental well-being among individuals. The validity obtained is 0.87 and 0.77 while keeping the WHO five well-being index in comparison.

Procedure:

A sum of 191 participants were selected for the study from high schools and pre-university colleges of Karnataka. (N= 191, Females= 98 and Males= 93) who were administered DASS 21 and WEMWS respectively . The objective of the research was communicated clearly to participants and consent was taken for their participation. While administering the questionnaire, doubts were clarified and scoring was done using the norms of the manual of the said questionnaires. Comparisons of the variables was done to find out the relationship and gender differences PD and MWB.

Analysis of Results:

Mean and SD was computed using the standard Descriptive Statistics for the data obtained, the statistical analysis was done using Pearson Product moment to find out the significance between PD and MWB.

Correlation between the variables

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
STR	23.1632	12.99571	190
ANX	19.0737	8.11197	190
DEP	23.9158	10.84637	190
MWB	27.7316	14.64705	190

Table 1: Shows the Mean, Standard Deviation of all the participants

Descriptive Statistics

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 1 shows the participants have scored 23.16 as the mean and 12.99 SD in Psychological distress of stress and 19.07 as mean and 8.11 as SD in Anxiety, they have also scored 23.91 as mean and 10.84 as the SD in Depression. The group on the whole have scored 27.73 as mean and 14.64 as SD in Mental well-being, this shows that the variables have a significant effect over one another.

Table 2: shows the Correlation between the variables of Psychological distress and mental well-being

Variables

Psychological Distress	Mental well-being	
Stress	r = -0.55	p=0.01*
Anxiety	r = 0.61	p= 0.01*
Depression	r=0.00	p=0.01*

**significant @ 0.01level

As shown in table 2, mental well-being has a significant Negative correlation with mental well-being($r = -0.55, p = 0.001 < 0.01$) with Psychological distress of Depression ($r = 0.00, p = 0.001 < 0.01$) Anxiety ($r = 0.61, p = 0.001 < 0.01$) and stress ($r = 0.60, p = 0.001 < 0.01$).

Table 3 : Shows the Mean, SD of males and female participants respectively.

Variables	Groups					
	Males (N=92)		Females (N=98)		t value	p value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Mental well-being	38.11	14.32	17.97	5.19	-13.03	.001**
Psychological Distress						

Stress	13.31	8.96	32.40	9.04	14.91	.001**
Anxiety	14.56	8.15	23.30	5.15	8.79	.001**
Depression	17.65	11.79	17.97	5.19	9.29	.001**

As shown in table 3, the mean and SD of male participants in their MWB are 38.11 and 14.32, and for female participants

are 17.97 and 5.19 respectively. The test of significance ($t = -13.03$, $p = 0.001 < 0.01$) shows that male and female participants are differ in their level of Mental well-being.

The mean and SD of male participants in their psychological distress of stress are 13.31 and 8.96, whereas for female participants in their psychological distress of stress 32.40 and 9.40 respectively. The significance of test ($t = 14.91$, $p = .001$) shows that male and female differ in their way of perceiving stress and accepting stress. Similarly, the mean and SD of male participants in Anxiety is 14.56 and 8.15, whereas for female participants in their anxiety is 23.30 and 5.15 respectively. The test of significance ($t = 8.79$, $p = .001$) shows that male and female differ in their way of dealing with anxiety. The mean and SD of male participants in Depression are 17.65 and 11.79, whereas for female participants are 17.97 and 5.19 respectively. The test of significance ($t = 9.29$, $p = .001$) shows that male and female participants differ in perceiving and adapting to depression.

3. DISCUSSION

The results indicate that the relationship is significant between Psychological Distress and Mental well-being. The Mean and SD of all participants indicated a strong significant effect of Psychological distress on mental well-being, Stress and Anxiety are positively correlated among one another, This shows that when there is stress present, there is a strong indication of anxiety being present as well. Anxiety and Depression are positively correlated at 95% significance level, this may be due to the clinical byproduct of anxiety being present along with depression and vice versa. Psychological Distress has a negative correlation with mental well-being Stress, Anxiety and Depression is said to have negative correlation with mental well- being.

Among the subsets of Psychological Distress, Depression was said to have the most significance with mental well-being. This may be due to influence of environmental factors as well as mental mindset of participants. There were gender differences among the variables of Psychological distress and Emotional Well-being which indicates that Girls have more Psychological Distress of stress and anxiety when compared to Boys .However, both boys and girls tend to be almost similar in their levels of depression, this can occur due to lack of awareness and untimely diagnosis of the disorder. The effects of pandemic may also be prevalent for the same.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings of the study hold concrete evidence on lack of mental health education among adolescents and other subsets of the population. We can understand the importance of Variables of psychological distress and mental well-being in today's context. The findings clearly state a strong relationship between Stress, Anxiety and Depression among the adolescents which indicates higher levels of distress, however, the same influences the lack of well-being mentally. Studies clearly indicate how female participants tend to be more anxious, stressed, depressed in comparison with their male counter, this may be stem due to the stereotypical conditioning of gender and the environmental influences they witness on a daily basis. The study gives a great pathway for institutions to set up timely interventions in reducing the levels of Psychological Distress and promoting good mental well-being.

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