



## Mental Health Among Secondary School Students

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### Abstract

The secondary school stage is the most important period of life where students are facing physical, social, mental, family, educational, and personal problems. At this stage, mental health plays a very important role and helps to deal with these different types of problems in a very effective way. Therefore, this paper assumes significance, being a genuine effort to study the symptoms, causes, level of mental health and ways to increase the mental health among secondary school students. Prevention and cure are the essential requirements of mental health. Proper orientation and awareness about mental health symptoms and causes among the secondary school students will be very helpful for students to cope up with the tense situations and also help in being well-adjusted in family and society. Thus, the findings of the present study are very useful for teachers, parents, administrators, and guidance workers to make necessary arrangement to provide a conducive environment at school and home so that the mental health of secondary school students can be progressed.

**Keywords:** *Mental Health, Secondary School Students, Symptoms, Causes.*



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Mental health is an integral component of health and well-being that underpins our individual and collective abilities to make decisions, build relationships and shape the world we live in. It is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community. Mental health is a basic human right. And it is crucial to personal, community and socio-economic development. Mental health is more than the absence of mental

disorders. It exists on a complex continuum, which is experienced differently from one person to the next, with varying degrees of difficulty and distress and potentially very different social and clinical outcomes. Mental health conditions include mental disorders and psycho-social disabilities as well as other mental states associated with significant distress, impairment in functioning, or risk of self-harm. People with mental health conditions are more likely to experience lower levels of mental well-being, but this is not always or necessarily the case.

## 2. NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Mental health is fundamental to our overall well-being, profoundly influencing how we think, act, and interact in our daily lives. Good mental health enables us to face life's challenges with resilience, forge strong and meaningful relationships, and make decisions that shape a positive future for ourselves and our communities. Recognizing the importance of mental health is the key to fostering a healthier society, as it lays the foundation for individual resilience, effective communication, and collective well-being. Maintaining a good mental health and treating any poor mental health conditions is crucial to stabilizing constructive behaviors, emotions, and thoughts. Focusing on mental health care can increase productivity, enhance our self-image and improve relationships. Improving mental health doesn't just improve our daily functioning, but it can also help us control some of the physical health problems directly linked to mental health conditions. The study conducted by [Lee et.al. \(2023\)](#) indicated that mental health awareness was influenced by knowledge on mental health and attitude towards mental health.

Mental health is crucial for secondary school students, as it directly related to their academic performance, social interactions, and overall well-being. Addressing mental health needs in secondary schools is vital for creating a supportive environment where students can thrive both academically and personally. It's important for parents, teachers, and anyone else who works with youth to recognize the warning signs of mental health problems in students to provide early intervention and connect them to support services. The investigator, being a teacher educator is very much interested to study the symptoms, causes, level of mental health and ways to improve it among secondary school students. Hence, the need and significance of the study.

## 3. HYPOTHESIS

The level of mental health among secondary school students is moderate

## 4. OBJECTIVES

- To find out the symptoms of mental health problems in secondary school students
- To find out the causes of mental health problems in secondary school students

- To find out the level of mental health among secondary school students
- To find out the ways to increase the mental health of secondary school students

## 5. METHOD

Mixed method

## 6. TOOLS

An mental health Inventory prepared by the investigator and observation

## 7. SAMPLE

The sample of the study comprises of 60 secondary school students from Kollam district in Kerala state.

## 8. STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES USED

Mean (M), Standard Deviation (SD), Percentage analysis

Analysis and Interpretation of data

Statistics calculated	Number	Percentage
M + SD	15	25
M-SD	8	13.33
Between M + SD and M-SD	37	61.67

The study shows that 25% students have high, 8% students have low and 37% students have moderate mental health.

## 9. FINDINGS OF THE PRESENT STUDY

### 9.1. Symptoms

The following symptoms are observed

- **Anxiety** (Tension, persistent worrying, change in sleep/appetite, irritability or aggression, increased heart rate, stomach problems, avoiding going to school, frequent trips to the nurse, panic attacks )
- **Depression** (Sadness or hopelessness, isolation and social withdrawal from peers change in sleep/appetite, headaches or stomach problems, decline in grades, truancy)
- **Sleep Disorders** (Falling asleep in class, decline in grades, trouble focusing, irritability or aggression)
- **ADHD** (Constant fidgeting, trouble focusing, excessive talking, problems sitting still, interrupting conversations)

## 9.2. Causes

It's important to understand the causes of mental health problems in students to create effective strategies for harm prevention. Mental health is deeply personal for teens, and each student may have different stressors that affect them differently.

### Common Causes of Mental Health Problems in Students

- Individual psychological and biological factors such as emotional skills, substance use and genetics can make people more vulnerable to mental health problems.
- Exposure to unfavourable social, economic, geopolitical and environmental circumstances – including poverty, violence, inequality and environmental deprivation – also increases
- Academic pressure: This can be due to pressure from parents, teachers, or even themselves to succeed. Achieving high test scores, good grades, and preparing for college can all cause teens extra stress when thinking about their future.
- Peer Conflict: Adolescence is a time when teens are exploring their identities and finding their place in social circles. It's normal for teens to want to “fit in” and feel accepted by their peers. Research shows that students who are victims of bullying, discrimination, or harassment are more likely to struggle with mental health challenges and are at an increased risk of suicide. Although parents may think of physical violence when they hear the word bullying, there are several ways teens can feel victimized by their peers that impact their mental health. Bullying can appear as Rude gestures, Name-calling, Exclusion, Spreading rumors and gossip, Constant negative teasing and Cyber bullying
- Isolation: Positive social interactions among teens lead to healthier development and lower the risk of developing mental health problems such as depression. The COVID-19 pandemic played a significant role in the rise of student mental health problems by isolating teens during remote learning from their peers and communities. Encourage your teen to join extracurricular activities such as sports, art classes, music programs, or a school club to foster

connection with peers and decrease feelings of loneliness or isolation.

- Social Media: Over 50% of teens today spend at least 4 hours scrolling on their phones and social media. Although social media allows teens to connect with their peers, get creative, and learn new skills, it can also wreak havoc on their mental health. Teens who spend more time on social media may struggle with face-to-face interactions, have lower self-esteem, and set unrealistic expectations for themselves based on what they see on their feeds. Remind your teen that many things they see on social media may not accurately reflect reality and encourage them to connect with peers in person, not just through online interactions. If you believe your teen is struggling with social media addiction, consider setting limits or having “tech-free” time in the home as a family.
- Home Environment: Students who come from high-risk homes with poverty, violence, or a history of substance abuse or mental illness may be at an increased risk of developing a mental health disorder. Schools play a prominent role in helping these teens with their mental health and should provide them with the tools to succeed.

## 10. WAYS TO INCREASE THE MENTAL HEALTH OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

The study also found that there is a moderate mental health among secondary school students. So we can increase the mental health of secondary school students in the following ways.

- Increase the access to mental health services
- Ensure guidance counselors are in every school
- Build an open communication with parents
- Provide individual learning support if necessary, such as an IEP
- Train teachers and staff to recognize the warning signs of mental health problems
- Provide training to staff on what to do or who to call during a mental health crisis

## 11. CONCLUSION

Children spend more time in school than in any other formal institutional structure. As such,

schools play a key part in children's development, from peer relationships and social interactions to academic attainment and cognitive progress, emotional control and behavioral expectations, and physical and moral development. All these areas are reciprocally affected by mental health. Adolescence is a transitional phase between childhood and adulthood, characterized by a number of cognitive, emotional, physical, intellectual, and attitudinal changes as well as by changes in social roles, relationships, and expectations. While it is a phase of tremendous growth in preparation of adults' roles and skills to sustain pressures and challenges, it is also a transition phase that can increase risk of various, psychological disorders, adjustment problems, and suicidal tendencies. Providing students with mental health education and training enabled students to learn and understand issues with mental illness. There is a critical need for sufficient mental health education among secondary school students. This study suggests that schools must address the benefits of mental health education and campaign to support students' mental health.

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