



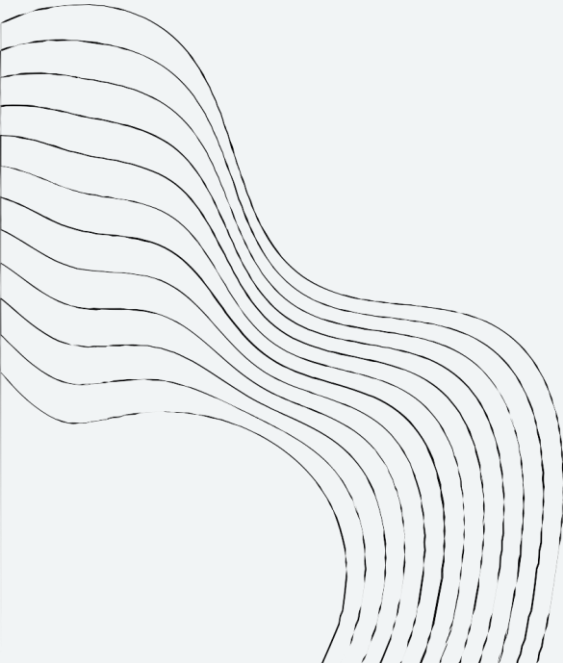
Unequal Minds: A Systematic Review of Mental Health Among Underprivileged Adolescents in India

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Introduction :

- Adolescents are young people who are typically between the ages of 10 and 19 years old. They may experience rapid physical growth, changes in their hormones, and changes in their thinking and decision-making abilities. Adolescents make up about 21 % of India's population (243 million).
- Adolescence is a critical period for mental health, significantly influencing lifelong well-being, especially in India, home to the largest adolescent population.

Introduction :

- Cultural, educational, and societal factors uniquely impact Indian adolescents' mental health, necessitating tailored interventions and comprehensive support systems.
- The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated mental health issues among youth, highlighting the need for robust public health initiatives.
- This systematic review examines the complexity of adolescent mental health in India, analyzing various interventions over the past decade.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

- BROAD RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

To review articles and ongoing projects to understand the issues faced by adolescents with respect to their mental health in India.

- SPECIFIC RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To evaluate the impact and efficacy of current mental health programs and interventions aimed at adolescents in India.
2. To analyze the various contributing factors like socio-economic factors
3. To propose strategies for increasing awareness and education about adolescent mental health among parents, teachers, and the general public.
4. To investigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on adolescent mental health and the challenges faced during this period.

KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the underlying issues associated with mental health of adolescents in India?
2. What are the various types of adolescent mental health interventions?
3. How do socio-economic factors influence the mental health of adolescents in India?

METHODOLOGY

Study Design: Systematic Review

Setting: India

Study Population: The study population for analysis would be adolescents (aged 10-19 years) in India.

Study tool : A web-based search was conducted. PubMed and Research Gate were used to identify the studies using various combinations of search terms (adolescent mental health in India).

Methodology

- Sampling techniques: The data has already been collected through various research papers available in the last 15 years.
- Data collection method: The study will make use of secondary data that is currently accessible and will take specific information that might be used to design a mental health program for adolescents. It would not involve direct data collection from Individuals.

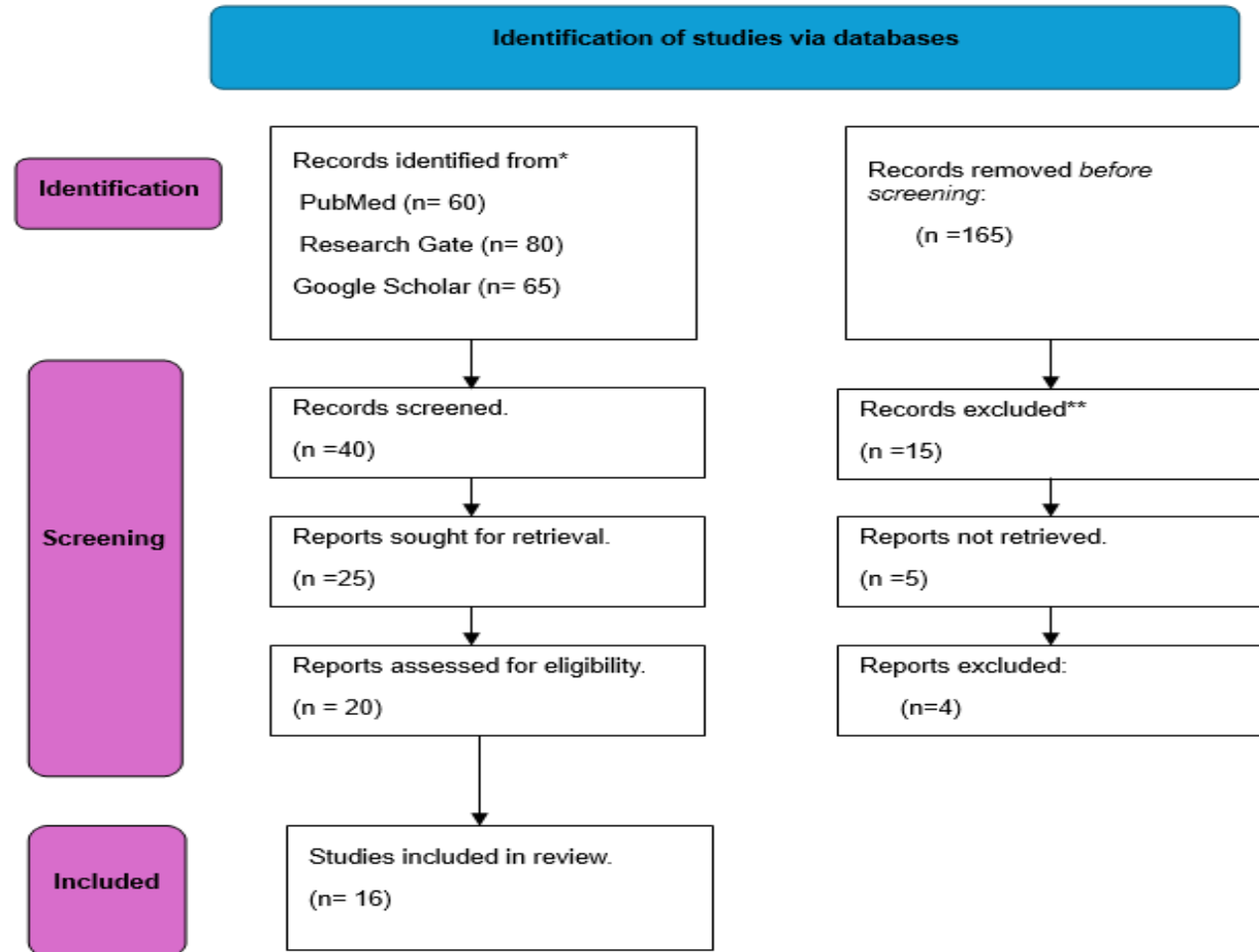
Inclusion Criteria

- Articles published in the last fifteen years that reported interventions targeting adolescent mental health were included.
- Research conducted within India.
- Studies addressing adolescent mental health in both rural and urban settings in India.
- Types of studies included: programs, interventions, commentaries, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses aimed at promoting or improving positive mental health among adolescents.
- The main outcomes of interest encompassed various aspects of mental health and well-being, including indicators of positive mental health like self-esteem and emotional wellness; negative mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and psychological distress; and overall well-being factors like social participation, empowerment, communication, and social support.
- Different existing mental health programs in India were included.

Exclusion Criteria

- Excluded were reports, conference papers, editorials, clinical studies, and studies still in the developmental phase.
- Studies not authored in English.
- Studies not involving human subjects.
- Research focusing on physical health issues without a mental health component.

PRISMA 2020 flow diagram for new systematic reviews



Results :

- The systematic review analyzed 16 research papers on adolescent mental health in India, revealing significant mental health challenges and highlighting the impact of interventions.
- The National Mental Health Survey of India 2015-2016 reported a lifetime prevalence of mental morbidity at 13.7% and current prevalence at 10.6%, with a treatment gap ranging from 70% to 92%.
- Depression affects 18.4% of adolescents, with 24.7% of senior secondary school students showing significant mental health issues, indicating severe mental health challenges among Indian youth.
- Common mental health issues include depression, anxiety, substance use disorders, and high rates of suicidal behavior, with domestic violence contributing significantly, especially among females.
- Reviewed interventions include therapy, psychoeducation, school-based programs, community interventions, and digital platforms, with a focus on early identification, awareness, and destigmatization.

Results :

- Government initiatives such as the National Mental Health Program (NMHP) and the Mental Healthcare Act of 2017 are crucial but face challenges like limited funding, insufficient trained professionals, and stigma.
- Stigma and lack of awareness hinder diagnosis and treatment-seeking behavior, leading to untreated mental health disorders and long-term consequences such as impaired educational and career outcomes, chronic mental health issues, and increased risky behaviors.
- Socio-economic disparities significantly impact adolescent mental health, with lower socio-economic status linked to higher prevalence of disorders, limited access to services, and weaker support systems.
- The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated mental health issues among adolescents, increasing risks of school dropouts, isolation, and anxiety, with government strategies like peer education and mental health clinics proposed to address these challenges.

Key Research Findings : Socio-Economic disparities in mental health.

CHARACTERISTICS	LOW SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS	HIGH SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS
Prevalence: Mental Health Disorders	Higher prevalence due to stress and limited access to healthcare	Lower prevalence due to better access to resources and care
Access to Mental Health Services	Limited access, often due to cost and availability issues	Greater access to a variety of mental health services
Education and Awareness	Lower levels of mental health literacy and stigma reduction	Higher levels of awareness and acceptance of mental health issues
Support Systems	Weaker social support systems, including family and community support	Stronger support systems, including family, friends, and professional networks
Nutrition and Health	Poorer nutrition and overall health, which can exacerbate mental health issues	Better nutrition and overall health, contributing to better mental health
Exposure to Stressors	Higher exposure to stressors such as financial instability, violence, and unsafe living conditions	Lower exposure to such stressors, leading to reduced mental health issues
Educational Opportunities	Fewer educational opportunities and higher dropout rates	More educational opportunities and higher school completion rates
Employment Prospects	Limited employment prospects, leading to higher stress and mental health issues	Better employment prospects, reducing financial stress and related mental health issues
Family Dynamics	More likely to experience family instability and conflict	More likely to have stable family environments
Community Resources	Fewer community resources such as parks, recreational facilities, and support groups	More community resources and recreational facilities

Recommendations : Current Mental Health Initiatives in India and Recommendations

CURRENT MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVES IN INDIA	DESCRIPTION	RECOMMENDATION
Government Programs and Policies	National Mental Health Program (NMHP) aims to improve mental healthcare services, promote community participation, and integrate mental health into primary healthcare systems.	Increase funding for NMHP. Expand training programs for primary healthcare workers. Ensure consistent monitoring and evaluation.
Mental Healthcare Act of 2017	Prioritizes the rights and dignity of individuals with mental illness, decriminalizes suicide, and promotes community-based care.	Strengthen enforcement mechanisms. Increase public awareness about the rights under this act. Provide additional resources for community-based care.
Community-Based Mental Health Services	Focus on decentralized care, essential medications, referral systems, and community-based rehabilitation services to bridge the treatment gap and improve access to mental healthcare.	Enhance the training of community health workers. Increase the availability of essential medications. Strengthen referral and support systems.
Awareness Campaigns and Advocacy Efforts	NGOs, mental health professionals, and community groups engage in advocacy, education, and destigmatization initiatives to challenge stereotypes and promote positive attitudes toward mental health.	Increase collaboration between government and NGOs. Expand education programs in schools and workplaces. Utilize media to reach a wider audience.

Recommendations :

- Develop interventions that reflect the unique socio-economic and cultural realities of Indian adolescents, such as peer education, vocational training, and school-based mental health programs.
- Enhance community-based mental health services and foster partnerships between the government, NGOs, and mental health professionals to ensure comprehensive support for adolescents.
- Implement awareness campaigns to reduce stigma surrounding mental health and involve multiple stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and community leaders, in promoting mental well-being.
- Address socioeconomic disparities by ensuring equitable access to quality education and healthcare for adolescents, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Involve adolescents directly in the design and implementation of mental health programs to ensure they are effective and relevant to their needs.

Conclusion :

- Addressing adolescent mental health in India is crucial for socio-economic development.
- Adolescents face mental health challenges due to academic stress, urbanization, changing family structures, gender inequality, and cultural norms.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these issues, revealing gaps in current interventions.
- Socioeconomic disparities complicate access to mental health care, especially for marginalized and rural communities.

Conclusion :

- One common factor that was found in these papers was the stigma around mental health in the community. Stigma affects many adolescents and their willingness to seek help. Many people, including adolescents themselves, may not recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health problems or may attribute them to personal weakness or character flaws. This may also be due to cultural and social norms, fear of discrimination and judgement.
- Psychoeducation aims to reduce stigma, increase awareness, and promote early intervention.

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Thank you !

