



Synopsis for Dissertation

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

Submitted by

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Background:

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. Adolescence is a crucial period of physical, emotional, and social development.^[1] Underprivileged adolescents refer to young people (between the ages of 10 and 19) who come from marginalized or disadvantaged communities and lack access to basic resources, education, and opportunities.

According to UNICEF, India has the largest adolescent population in the world, with approximately 253 million adolescents. According to the 2011 census, adolescents make up around 20% of India's total population. This group faces a lot of challenges such as peer pressure, identity formation, academic stress, and family conflict.^[2]

Adolescents represent the future of the country. India stands to benefit socially, politically, and economically if this large number of adolescents are safe, healthy, educated and equipped with information and life skills to support the country's continued development^[3]. Hence, they represent a critical demographic group with unique health, education, and economic needs. Investing in their development is essential for the long-term development of the country.

There is a significant burden of mental health problems among adolescents, including depression, anxiety, and substance use disorders which can have significant long-lasting effects on an individual's well-being, education attainment, and future employment prospects. However, many young people do not receive adequate care and support for their mental health needs. One of the major issues that also needs to be addressed is the need to address the stigma associated with mental illness in India, as many young people may not seek help due to fear of discrimination and social exclusion.

COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of addressing the mental health needs of adolescents in India. The nationwide closures of schools and colleges have negatively impacted over 91% of the world's student population. The home confinement of children and adolescents is associated with uncertainty, fear, and anxiety. The underprivileged children faced acute deprivation of nutrition, overall protection, and separation from parents. This prolonged period of stress could have a long-term negative impact on their development during the period of lockdown.^[4]

There is also a need to address mental health issues among adolescents as a part of India's efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).^[5] The third SDG focuses on “good health and

well-being” and aims to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. This goal has thirteen targets, and Target 3.4 aims specifically to reduce mortality from non-communicable diseases and promote mental health. The National Mental Health Policy in India also aims to promote mental health, prevent mental illness, provide access to affordable and quality mental health care services, and protect the rights of people with mental illness.

In terms of implications for adolescent mental health programs in India, there is a need to focus on early intervention and prevention, as well as ensuring that mental health services are accessible and affordable for young people.^[6] Community-based interventions, including school-based programs, can play an important role in promoting mental health and preventing mental health problems among adolescents. A study of determinants can help to identify key factors that need to be considered when developing and implementing adolescent mental health programs for target groups. These programs must be embodying the National Educational Policy 2020 of India which aims to provide quality education for all.

Research question:

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?

Research objectives:

- **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 study mental health issues specific to vulnerable groups, including adolescents from marginalized communities, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and those with traumatic experiences.

3. To analyze the various contributing factors like socio-economic, cultural, and environmental factors effecting mental health issues among Indian adolescents.
4. To propose strategies for increasing awareness and education about adolescent mental health among parents, teachers, and the general public.
5. To investigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on adolescent mental health and the challenges faced during this period.

Material and Methods:

- Study Design: Systematic Review
- Setting: India
- Study Population: The study population for analysis would be underprivileged adolescents aged 10-19 years in India.
- 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.
- Duration of study: 2.5 months
 - Sampling techniques: The data has already been collected through various research papers available in the last 10 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.
 - Study Tool: A web-based search was conducted through PubMed, ResearchGate and Google Scholar and were used to identify the studies using various combinations of search terms (underprivileged adolescent mental health).

Operational Definition:

The process of designing, developing, and implementing mental health programs specifically aimed at promoting mental health, preventing mental illness, and providing treatment and support for underprivileged adolescents in India.

Data Analysis:

- Data extraction from multiple sources.
- Quality assessment to determine the risk of bias and the strength of evidence.
- Data synthesis to identify problems, similarities, and differences in the papers.
- Reporting the findings of the review in a clear, concise, and transparent manner.

Ethical considerations:

The study involves the analysis of publicly available secondary data from the research papers.

The study does not involve direct participation from the participants and therefore does not pose ethical risk to study population.

However, the study considers the ethical issues associated confidentiality and privacy. The so available data is used only for research purposes and will not involve sharing it with third parties. I acknowledge that original data source and authors are given due credits to avoid plagiarism.

Implication of the research:

- The study aims to provide a systematic analysis and identify the challenges and underlying issues of adolescent mental health and the factors associated with it in India.
- This study aims to provide a working model for school health and wellness program for multiple schools across India.
- Adolescent mental health programs can help to identify and treat mental health issues early on, leading to improved outcomes for young people.

References:

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