



Research Paper

Psychological Distress and Psychological Wellbeing Status of Adolescents of Kashmir

LOABA SHAFaq

Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh.

Abstract

This study profiled the psychological distress and psychological wellbeing of adolescents of Kashmir. Kashmir being under insurgencies for more than two and a half decade and adolescent population has never been exposed to peaceful environment within the area which takes a toll in their psychological distress. Method: A total of 400 adolescents from four districts completed the MHI 38 Scale. Results: scores of psychological distress was high among both male and female adolescents while as a low score of psychological wellbeing was found among male and female adolescents of four districts. Discussion: Adolescents being uncertain about their future and a sense of insecurity prevailing among takes a toll to their mental health. Administrations poor policy for mental health programs for adolescents needs to be checked.

Key words: Mental health, psychological distress, psychological wellbeing, adolescents

Received 28 Feb, 2022; Revised 06 Mar, 2022; Accepted 08 Mar, 2022 © The author(s) 2022.

Published with open access at www.questjournals.org

I. Introduction

Mental health is a broad term which includes a wide range of mental health states, in one end of its spectrum are mental health difficulties and mental disorders and on the other side of the spectrum is mental wellbeing. Mental health is not indicative of psychological distress only but it includes in its realm a state of wellbeing. According to WHO Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community. Mental disorders affect people of all ages in every community and country. The war and war like situation in an area influences the mental health of people living there. With the increase in the technologies man is creating deadly weapons to destroy his own mankind. The Psychological injuries of manmade destruction take a toll in the affected communities. Media everyday reports the consequences of war and how it is disturbing the mental health of population.

The unpleasant feelings or emotions that impact our level of functioning are described as psychological distress. Psychological distress interferes with our daily activities and hence a sense of discomfort takes place within an individual. This may further interfere with our perception of environment, others and self. Psychological distress happens when there are stressors that an individual is unable to cope with. These stressors may be traumatic experiences, major life events like death of a family member, health issues or everyday stressors like workplace stress, family stress. No two individuals react to stressors in same manner so Psychological distress may come out as fatigue, sadness, anxiety, avoidance of social situations, fear, anger or moodiness. Psychological distress affects physical health by releasing stress hormones into your body that causes rise in blood pressure and heart rate. It also causes inflammatory reaction in your body that can increase plaque build-up in your arteries. Psychological distress may also cause blood to be stickier which may develop blood clots inside your body.

II. Material and Methods

The study was conducted on adolescents and they were examined on following categories:

Age (early adolescence 14-15 years, late adolescence 16-17years), gender (male and female), residence (rural and urban). All the above categories were compared with Psychological distress which indicates negative states of mental health. It includes Anxiety, Depression and Loss of emotional and behavioral control. These categories were also compared with Psychological wellbeing indicating positive states of mental health i.e General Positive Affect, Emotional ties and Life satisfaction.

The data was collected from higher secondary schools of two districts of Kashmir. Permission was taken from Principals of schools. The participants were assured about the confidentiality of their personal information. Only those participants who were willing to participate in the study were taken.

Participants

The study was conducted on adolescents of four districts (Srinagar, Anantnag, kulgam and Budgam) of Kashmir valley. The number of participants of study were 400 (100 from Srinagar, 75 from Anantnag, 108 from Kulgam and 117from Budgam).

SCALES USED

Mental Health Inventory (MHI-38) (Viet & Ware, 1983): It is a 38 item inventory used for assessment of mental health of adolescents in non-clinical settings. It assesses Psychological well-being as well as Psychological distress and five factors i.e. anxiety, depression, loss of behavioral/emotional control, emotional ties, and general positive affect

□□Six subscales – Anxiety, Depression, Loss of Behavioral / Emotional Control, General Positive Affect, Emotional Ties and Life Satisfaction;

□□Two global scales - Psychological Distress and Psychological Well-being

Both global scales are scored so higher scores indicate more of the construct named by the scales label. Thus, higher scores on psychological distress indicate negative states of mental health, while higher scores on psychological wellbeing indicate positive state.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Means and standard deviation was calculated of the scores. The Statistical Package for social sciences (SPSS 20.0) was used, in which t-test was calculated by comparing all the categories i.e. age, gender, residence on the parameters of psychological distress and psychological wellbeing.

Table 1: Demographic difference of adolescents of four districts of Kashmir on study variables

Demographic variables	Mean	SD	SEM	t	p
Age	17.30	.793	.058	2.66**	.008
District	2.60	1.19	.088	-.115	.909
Academic Course	1.71	.898	.066	2.25*	.025
Income	2.26	1.33	.098	1.85*	.019

Note. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Table 1 shows the demographic details of adolescents of four districts of Kashmir. Significant difference was found for Age (M= 17.30 , t= -2.66, p<.01),Academic course (M= 1.71, t= -.025, p<.01) and income (M= 2.26 , t= 1.85, p<.01).

Hypothesis I stated that there will be no significant difference in any of the demographic variables on study variables. Therefore, the first hypothesis is partially accepted as age, academic qualification and income did differ on study variables. While as there was no significant difference found for districts on study variables.

Table 2: Difference among male and female adolescents of four districts of Kashmir on psychological wellbeing and psychological distress.

Districts	Psychological Distress		Psychological Well being	
	Mean(SD)	Mean(SD)	Mean(SD)	Mean(SD)
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Srinagar	101.27(10.02)	84.83(19.26)	50.06(10.44)	45.13(11.41)
Anantnag	77.19 (15.25)	77.97 (18.50)	49.50 (12.15)	50.52 (9.59)
Kulgam	85.64 (13.47)	79.25 (15.61)	50.03 (8.58)	50.29 (12.11)
Budgam	81.44 (12.32)	84.18 (13.65)	47.29 (8.90)	49.47 (8.21)

Table 2 shows the mean difference for psychological distress and psychological wellbeing among male and female adolescents of four districts of Kashmir. Significant differences was found between male and female adolescents on psychological distress in Srinagar district (M= 101.27 and 84.83 respectively). Also significant difference was found between male and female adolescents on psychological wellbeing in srinagar district(M= 50.06.27 and 45.13 respectively). However no significant difference was found between male and female adolescents of anantnag district on psychological distress. While as significant difference was found between male and female adolescents of anantnag district on psychological wellbeing(M= 49.50 and 50.52 respectively).

The above table also indicates that there was a significant difference found between male and female adolescents on psychological distress in Kulgam district (M= 85.64 and 79.25 respectively). However no significant difference was found between male and female adolescents on psychological wellbeing in district Kulgam. In district Budgam there was a significant difference found between male and female adolescents on both study variables i.e psychological distress and psychological wellbeing (M= 81.44 and 84.18 and M= 47.29 and 49.47 respectively).

Hypothesis II stated that there will be no significant difference between male and female adolescents on study variables among four districts. Therefore, the second hypothesis is partially accepted as male and female adolescents did differ on psychological distress and psychological wellbeing in four different districts of Kashmir.

III. Discussion

Psychological distress is a collective symptom of many major psychological problems including anxiety, depression and mal adjustment, confused emotions, hallucination, rage etc. It is a major issue in the mental health of an individual. Psychological distress is a plague that affects a person's well-being either physical or mental. On the collected data the analysis revealed that there is difference among male and female adolescents on psychological distress in the four districts of Kashmir i.e. Srinagar, Budgam, Kulgam and Anantnag. In a similar study (Amin & Khan, 2009) the researchers found differences among male and female when they measured depression. The difference in the prevalence of depression among males and females was significant. Depression among females was higher (93.10 %) as compared to males (6.8%) in the population. Their study provides a support to the result of the current study where there is significance difference between male in female when the researcher measure psychological distress.

Psychological distress is subjective to the type of individual and the situation and environment. Coping mechanism and adjustment differs between male and female. While male adolescents are more prone to physical aggressiveness due to the distress female adolescents tends to bottle up more. Kashmir being a very politically sensitive zone and the war like situation in it is an established cause of many psychological problems resulting in much mental distress to both male and female adolescents. The Psychological distress is increasing day by day with the civilians caught between the military and the militancy problems. Adolescents are the most affected and the difference among male and female can be physically seen from the way they react to these distresses. Rioting, protest, stone pelting, civil disobedience and resorting to militancy and anti-government activities has become very common among male adolescents in the region. While female adolescents are more confined to their homes and rarely indulge in such activities in would be inaccurate to say that the females are less psychologically distressed. They seem to be better in coping with the psychological problems and seek psychological support from family and friends. Also the culture of Kashmir where female adolescents are discouraged from involving in such activities also serves as restrictive a measure in their reaction. But male adolescents with no such restriction resort to more risky behaviours to cope with their distress. Therefore, the difference in male and female adolescents in psychological distress is justified. While male adolescents become victims of physical and psychological trauma of an on-going civil war and lives with constant fear of death and torture female adolescents suffer constant psychological distress because of the fear of losing their father or brother or being raped and desecrated.

Psychological well-being is a conglomerate of multiple entities which defines the positivity in emotion, behaviour and adjustment in an individual as a whole. Although both male and female score very low in psychological well-being indicating the negative nature of the status of psychological well-being among these adolescent. Khan and Jahan (2015) found similar result in their study too where no significant difference was found between male and female Kashmiri adolescents in terms of psychological well-being. Rehman, Shafi and Rizvi (2016) also found similar result wherein they reported no significant difference in terms of psychological well-being between male and female adolescents of Kashmir.

Kashmir has been facing its fair share of violence, political turmoil and years of insurgency. It has taken a toll on the mental health of every Kashmiri civilian. It will be hard to find anyone with a positive psychological well-being status in the Kashmir valley. Although the deaths and torture are more male targeted the female adolescents goes through the same anxiety, fear and insecurity. These psychological distresses serve as the reason for their low well-being score yet no significant differences among male and female. The treat to life and property and chances of becoming victim to the current civil war is very real to both male and female. Although the reaction due to the psychological distress is very different among male and female, psychological well-being takes a toll on both gender. Therefore, the insignificant difference among them in terms of psychological well-being is expected.

IV. Conclusion

Humans are social animals, fighting back when they are attacked or threatened is in their nature. With the current scenario in Kashmir it is not surprising that the current study revealed such results. The difference in Psychological distress yet similarity in psychological well-being and loss of behaviour and no significant difference in anxiety, depression, life satisfaction etc. in the whole of Kashmir is a sign that the whole of Kashmir requires immediate attention with regards to Mental Health in every corner. This study is a proof that no districts among all the four that is included in the study is having better condition than the other for adolescents to grow up.

The government needs to take more precaution and should start implementing mental health bill more strictly and properly. State government should ensure security of adolescents and counselors must be appointed in every school private and public. Security forces should build a better repo with the civilians especially with adolescents. Their contribution can help a lot of adolescents from turning to wrong paths and ensure a better future for them.

References

- [1]. Amin, S., & Khan, A. W. (2009). Life in conflict: Characteristics of Depression in Kashmir. *International journal of health sciences*, 3(2), 213.
- [2]. Barenbaum, J., Ruchkin, V., & Schwab-Stone, M. (2004). The psychosocial aspects of children exposed to war: practice and policy initiatives. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 45(1), 41-62.
- [3]. Hassan, A. (2011). The cost of conflict. *Greater Kashmir*. E-paper, dated 27 July 2011
- [4]. Housen, T., Lenglet, A., Ariti, C., Shah, S., Shah, H., Ara, S., ...& Pintaldi, G. (2017). Prevalence of anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder in the Kashmir Valley. *BMJ global health*, 2(4), e000419.
- [5]. India, R. (2008). India Revises Kashmir Death Toll to 47,000. *Thomson Reuters Corporate*, 6. from the original on 8 May 2017. Retrieved 20 May 2017.
- [6]. Jan, M., & Masood, T. (2008). An assessment of life satisfaction among women. *Studies on Home and Community Science*, 2(1), 33-42.
- [7]. Khan, T. F., & Jahan, M. (2015). Psychological Well-being and Achievement Motivation among Orphan and Non-orphan Adolescents of Kashmir. *Research gate*.
- [8]. Macksoud, M. S., & Aber, J. L. (1996). The war experiences and psychosocial development of children in Lebanon. *Child development*, 67(1), 70-88.
- [9]. Madhosh, A. G. (1996). The present turmoil and plight of children in Kashmir. *A project report. Ministry of health/Kalyan Mantralaya Govt of India West Block*, 8.
- [10]. Majied, N., & Khan, M. S. Stress, Somatic Complaints and Anxiety: A Comparative Study of The Adolescents of Jammu and Kashmir Regions. *IJPS IJPS*, 61.
- [11]. Manzoor, S. (2018). Problems faced by adolescent due to armed conflict in Kashmir. *Research Review International Journal of Multidisciplinary*, 3(9), 875-879.