

Communication and Emotional Barriers Faced by Adolescents with ADHD

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ABSTRACT

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental condition that is not much talked about. This lack of awareness can make the life of those diagnosed with ADHD more challenging. This qualitative study was conducted to determine the effects of ADHD on the communicational and emotional development of adolescents. A total of 15 participants were part of this study. The participants included adolescents between the ages of 13 to 19 years. All of the participants resided in the Delhi National Capital Region (NCR). Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. The key findings highlighted that adolescents with ADHD find it challenging to express their emotions, and they also find it difficult to start a conversation in the first place. The adolescents take the help of simple techniques such as meditation to work on their symptoms. Most adolescents do not go for therapy or medication. They wish people were more understanding and emotionally available. There's also a need for people to bring minor changes in their ways of communication so that they would feel comfortable in their feelings as well and not feel left out. When asked about the current state the responses were neutral although the majority of adolescents expressed stress regarding school work and lack of assistance from the education system. There are many factors that are interdependent such as emotional and communicational issues. Increased support from society and the education system can decrease the stress level in adolescents. The study highlights recommendations to improve the lives of children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. The study suggests that parents and surroundings of these adolescents should be more aware of these adolescents' issues and the education system should bring provisions in all schools to help children with any mental health issues.

Keywords: *Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Adolescents, Emotions, Communication*

Activity and concentration disorders are the most common behavioral and emotional conditions affecting teenagers as well as children (Strickland & Ellen Marie, 2022). At the moment, they are thought to be the disorders that divide people the most. Since the idea of "attention" in adolescence involves a wide number of events at various levels of molarity or molecularity, adolescents may struggle in any one or more of the following categories: 1) selecting and focusing on the proper environmental stimuli when

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beginning or completing tasks; 2) maintaining focus and avoiding distraction; 3) continuously mobilizing effort in a task-oriented direction; 4) organization, forgetfulness, and recall of learned material; and 5) switching between tasks (Robin, 1998).

As children grow older and eventually mature into teenagers, when performance standards and demands also arise, these issues usually get exponentially worse. The second largest issue faced by adolescents with ADHD is academic difficulties. Contrary to popular belief, hyperactivity or oppositional conduct are not signs of ADHD.

The current study was conducted after noticing the significant growth in the literature in the West regarding the prevalence, diagnosis, and treatment of ADHD, but a very few studies conducted on this topic in India.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Around 1798, Sir Alexander Crichton gave the ailment its first written description. In spite of the fact that research on ADHD was expanding in the West at the time, a study covering cases of childhood hyperkinetic reflexes was done for the first time in India in 1972. This occurred roughly 150 years after the illness's first description (Kuppili & Patnaik, 2017).

Those who exhibit a pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that gets in the way of their day-to-day activities and/or development are diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) - a neurodevelopmental illness (APA, 2013). In 2007, it was estimated that 5.29% of the world's population has ADHD (Polanczyk et al., 2007). Recent estimates suggest an upward trend in prevalence to the tune of about 11%, emphasizing the growing burden of ADHD on healthcare systems (Visser et al., 2014).

Over the past ten years, research on ADHD in India has benefited immensely from the contributions of clinical psychologists, psychiatric professionals, and paediatricians. Due to the rise in awareness and the number of consultations for ADHD in the Indian context, it is crucial to stay up to date on study findings as these discoveries have implications for better clinical care (Kuppili & Patnaik, 2017).

ADHD in Adolescents

The majority of ADHD definitions rely heavily on presumptions. Certain symptoms can be noticed as early as age seven, and it is a condition of concentration and activity that develops. Both intellectual and social skills are impacted by ADHD, which persists throughout adulthood and frequently co-occurs with other problems. Two of these diseases, oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) and conduct disorder (CD), may exhibit similar characteristics (Sue, Sue, & Sue, 1997). About 3-5% of adolescents who are old enough to attend school have ADHD, with boys outnumbering girls four to one.

Adults' tolerance of hyperactive boys being more common than hyperactive girls may be the cause of this huge gender gap (Barlow & Durand, 1999). Additionally, it's critical to keep in mind that British physicians are less likely than American physicians to diagnose ADHD in teenagers (Berger & Thompson, 1995) (Gill and Hosker, 2021).

Teenagers with ADHD frequently have trouble in school (and it's not for lack of intelligence!). ADHD makes it challenging for them to concentrate on tests and organize homework, particularly as their classes become more difficult. Adolescents with ADHD

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might experience a more difficult time controlling their feelings or settling down when angry (Rooney, 2022).

Every day, we connect and communicate with those around us by using our social skills. We accomplish this by using both verbal and nonverbal cues, such as body language, eye contact, and facial emotions (volume, speed, tone of voice). Understanding and using these social skills might be challenging for adolescents with ADHD. The executive functioning impairment in their brains may make it difficult for them to develop and maintain acquaintances. A person's ability to wait for one's time, minimize downtime, organize one's day, regulate one's emotions, and recall information in one's memory function are all under the supervision of executive control in the brain. ADHD adolescents' executive abilities may lag behind typically developing adolescents by as much as 30 per cent (Gill and Hosker, 2021).

Effects of ADHD on Adolescents' Development

Adolescents with ADHD may come off as indifferent and rude to their classmates when they become preoccupied or take over social conversations. Peers will most likely avoid these individuals. Missed opportunities to practice social skills and diminished self-assurance are the results of this (Strickland and Ellen Marie, 2022).

Teenagers who are capable of retaining control over their bodies, thoughts, and emotions as well as their comprehension of social cues are present and ready to learn all day long. Due to their impetuous, hyperactive, and/or inattentive tendencies, this could be difficult for children with ADHD to complete. As a result, these people could struggle to grasp social cues and alter their conduct in a classroom setting (Gill and Hosker, 2021).

Teachers and parents of these adolescents with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) worry most about the disorder's impact on their child's ability to interact socially. The ability to interact with others, both verbally and non-verbally, is crucial to our success in virtually every aspect of human life. It is apparent how vital efficient communication is in a classroom. Effective communication between students and teachers is essential. We can maintain healthy peer relationships and establish our social intelligence and desirability by being aware of and competent to implement society's core social standards (Strickland and Ellen Marie, 2022).

Inattention and disorganization happen when people don't stay on task at levels that don't best fit their age or stage of development, don't seem to be listening, or use up all their resources. Overactivity, restlessness, an inability to remain still, interfering with other people's activities, and an inability to wait are all indicators of hyperactivity/impulsivity. These behaviors are excessive for the person's age or stage of development. A large number of youngsters with ADHD have trouble executing tasks that are appropriate for their age and are often distracted. Another prevalent trait is impulsivity or a lack of inhibitory control (Loe, 2007).

Due to the fact that school is where most children and adolescents meet, engage with, and experience bullying from their peers, peer interactions among ADHD-affected adolescents may have an impact on how they feel about school (Pepler & Craig, 1995). Children and teenagers with ADHD usually struggle in their relationships with their peers (Becker, Luebbe, & Langberg, 2012). Although they claim to have the same number of friends as others, their connections are less enduring and much less likely to be recognized or verified

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by parents or teachers than those of others (Blachman & Hinshaw, 2002; Cardoos & Hinshaw, 2011; Heiman, 2005; Marton, Wiener, Rogers, & Moore, in press). They invest less time with their friends outside of school in person or on the phone and are less satisfied with their friendships than adolescents without ADHD, which lowers the strength of their connections (Marton et al., in press) (Normand et al., 2011).

Additionally, adolescents with ADHD are more prone than adolescents without ADHD to both engage in and be the targets of bullying (Wiener & Mak, 2009). According to a parent report, but not self-report, adolescents with ADHD are more likely to be excluded by classmates and have fewer friends than adolescents without ADHD (Bagwell, Molina, Pelham, & Hoza, 2001).

Lower levels of parental and peer social support were seen in adolescents with ADHD who were victims compared to non-victims (Wiener, 2011). In households with an ADHD teenager, the father, mother, and self-report all show a significant increase in parent-adolescent conflict (Edwards, Barkley, Laneri, Fletcher, & Metevia, 2001; Markel & Wiener, 2014). Teenagers with ADHD report having more arguments with their parents about allowance and curfews than do teenagers who are usually developing. Parents have also indicated that getting up in the morning and getting to school on time, issues in the classroom, lying to them, and talking back to them are all causes of conflict (Markel & Wiener, 2014).

Objectives of the Study

1. To understand the experience of adolescents with ADHD.
2. To learn about the issues faced by adolescents with ADHD when it comes to communication with peers and family.
3. To explore and analyze the emotional barriers faced by an adolescent with ADHD and how they deal with these issues.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was undertaken to understand and explore the communicational and emotional barriers faced by adolescents with ADHD. It explores and understands the barriers faced by adolescents with ADHD when communicating with friends or family.

Participants

The participants of the study are male and female adolescents. All the participants came from different backgrounds. The study was conducted with 15 adolescents (boys and girls) diagnosed with ADHD in the age group of 13- 19 years. For the selection of the sample, the snowball technique was used. The subjects were located through classmates and common contacts. The data was collected from Delhi NCR.

Instruments

The data collected was qualitative in nature in order to get more open and authentic responses. To collect data for the present study, a semi-structured interview schedule was prepared in order to understand the emotional effects of ADHD on an adolescent's social life.

Procedure

The interviews were conducted according to the convenience of the participants. Participants were ensured that their names or any other personal information will not be mentioned

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anywhere in the study. It was also told that they can say no to move along with the interview if they were to feel uncomfortable due to any reason. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and lasted 30- 40 minutes approximately.

Analysis of data

The interviews were conducted, transcribed, and themes were culled out. The interview content was subjected to qualitative analysis in order to pinpoint the underlying issues and ascertain their prevalence among the interviews. The major themes that permeated every interview were then collected to provide a coherent picture of the objectives. The primary themes that emerged from all of the interviews were then grouped.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study was conducted with the aim to understand the communicational and emotional challenges faced by adolescents with ADHD. After transcription, the data were qualitatively analyzed and major themes were picked out. The findings of the study were then structured around the following themes:

Experience of Adolescents with ADHD

It was found in the present research that adolescents with ADHD experience substantial social, emotional and communicational effects in their family, school, and social lives. Affected people frequently believe that they have less self-control, and are less competent in executing tasks and interacting with others than their peers. When the teenager feels excluded or wrongfully blamed, the challenges can cause misunderstandings.

A wide range of responses was recorded from the fifteen participants (both male and female), adolescents who either were in school or had cleared school. Along with the experience of adolescents with ADHD, communicational issues faced by adolescents with ADHD when it comes to peers and family and emotional barriers faced by adolescents with ADHD, and how they dealt with these issues were also inspected.

Diagnosis of ADHD

The first dimension that was explored with the adolescents was the age when the participants were diagnosed. Varied responses from all the participants were received; some participants were diagnosed at an early age whereas some were diagnosed later during their teenage years. One of the participants was diagnosed at an early age of 8 years and another participant was 17 years old when they were diagnosed.

An article by Chawla et al. (2022) shows that the ubiquity of the disorder was higher in the age group of 8, 9 and 10 years, in the Indian context. In the interview conducted, although there were adolescents who were diagnosed during that age, there were other participants as well those were diagnosed much later than the common age group. Most participants' ages of diagnosis ranged between 7 to 15 years. The years between 7- 15 were the ones where the majority of the participants were diagnosed with ADHD.

Along with the age of participants, the reasons behind getting the diagnosis in the first place were also recorded. All participants shared the age at which they were diagnosed along with the reasons which led the family to consult an expert. One of the participants said *“I was experiencing issues with my studies, despite the help of private tuition I was unable to cope and it was stressing me and my parents. That is when my school counsellor talked to my parents and advised them to get me tested.”* the other participants responded *“I was*

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inattentive in my classes. And I have mood swings frequently and I don't eat properly. That's when my parents decided to take me to a therapist.” Another participant said *“I have always been a hyperactive child and it started to interfere with my studies. My uncle, who is a paediatrician himself, convinced my parents to take me to a therapist.”*

Almost all participants stated that lacking behind in school was the main reason that made the parents consult an expert. As we can see above, more than one response talks about the difficulty of coping with studies from an early age.

In the research conducted by Mayo Clinic (2019) it was stated that poor performance in school is one of the many prominent struggles faced by children with ADHD. Although one of the participants also said *“I was unable to adjust to the class atmosphere so my teacher suggested that my parents get me evaluated or tested.”* this response brings light to another significant issue which is troubled relationships, and inability to perform in different atmospheres.

Symptoms of ADHD

The responses also reflected upon the reasons that led to the diagnosis and according to the majority of participants, problems at school were the significant reasons behind the diagnosis.

After the age and reason for diagnosis, the interview moved on to cover the different symptoms faced by adolescents with ADHD. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder comes with numerous symptoms such as anger, difficulty focusing, forgetfulness, problem paying attention, fidgeting and short attention span along with many other symptoms. The responses recorded by the participants fall under a similar category of symptoms. One participant stated, *“My main symptoms were aggressive behavior and lack of concentration. I try to calm myself down when I get angry. It works sometimes and sometimes it doesn't. Still working on my concentration issues.”* Another participant said, *“I have difficulty focusing on tasks that I don't find interesting, and I leave those tasks in the middle and leave them hanging. That makes me restless in the long term but I don't do much about it. My symptoms have not improved yet.”*

According to the various responses received in the current study, the symptoms range from aggressive behavior, and lack of concentration to hyperactivity and procrastination. Some participants also mentioned that their symptoms have improved over time. In accordance with a study conducted by the National Institute of Mental Health (2021), people who have ADHD frequently exhibit the following kinds of symptoms:

- Inattention is the inability to pay attention.
- Hyperactivity is the excess of energy or overactive speech and
- Impulsivity is the inability to exercise a sense of control.

Some members named a combination of these symptoms whereas others had very specific symptoms. Therefore, people can have both combinations of these symptoms as well as certain specific symptoms.

Treatment of ADHD

Treatment plays an important role for an adolescent diagnosed with ADHD. When asked about the treatment taken up by the participants, the responses were *“I have been to therapy,*

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but my experience was not very positive. As in, I didn't see any change within myself. I never took medications though." and *"I did not take any medication or therapy"*. Participants either did not go for medication or therapy in the first place and those who did, did not stick to the procedure for a long time. One participant said, *"My therapist helped me a lot in recovering and managing my symptoms."* It was observed that whether or not an adolescent gets treatment depends on two main criteria, awareness and socio-economic status.

A number of participants had never heard of the term Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder before their diagnosis and even after being diagnosed with ADHD, many participants didn't find it necessary to get any type of treatment. ADHD is presently found in 7.1% of adolescents and children in India. Even with a number that big, the awareness regarding any mental health issue including ADHD is extremely low, which in turn leads to late diagnosis and in many cases little or no treatment.

Difficulties faced in daily life

The results show that adolescents with ADHD face many difficulties in daily life. This part of the interview helped understand all the hurdles adolescents face in daily life due to their symptoms. Some participants responded by saying *"It has affected my grades throughout my life. I can only bring myself to move when the deadline is close. Always late to classes. Avoid calls that give me anxiety. A small task like replying to text messages seems like a drag. Friends feel ignored. Friendship takes a hit. I have a huge clutter of junk in my almirah drawers. If something is out of my sight, I'll forget about it. I forget stuff... I forget to bring the groceries sometimes. If I bring the groceries, I'll forget the change. Leave the house with the door unlocked. Paid the examination fees but forgot to fill out the exam form so couldn't sit for the exam. I pick up hobbies but can't seem to complete them. I lose interest very fast."*, and other participants said, *"I feel ADHD does affect my daily life, my school performance and the way people see me because of it."* With the help of a combination of these responses, it was easily observed that ADHD not only affects their psychological health, but their physical well-being as well. One participant also complained that because of her symptoms, she often gets into arguments with her family and is unable to control her emotions at the moment; which in turn causes a lot of communication issues between her and her family members. As per a research study (Harpin, 2005), the teenage period may result in a decrease in the excessive activity that is sometimes so obvious in young children, but attention deficit disorder, impulsivity, and internal irritability continue to be serious issues.

Adolescents with ADHD have described how their perception of self is altered and how their regular self-development is disrupted. Additionally, the emergence of highly hostile and disruptive behaviors might result in new issues. When parents of ADHD-affected teens conducted the rating exercise, there additionally was an observed spike in parent-teen conflict. Adolescents diagnosed with ADHD face difficulties in different areas, they not only struggle with imbalanced emotions but also with how those emotions impact their day-to-day activities.

Issues faced by adolescents with ADHD when it comes to communication with peers and family.

When we talk about ADHD, one of the first symptoms that come to mind is communication issues. The interview, with the help of multiple questions, sheds light upon communicational issues faced by adolescents with ADHD. According to the research conducted by (Bertin, 2014), in large gatherings or in busy environments, paying close attention to the topic of

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discussion might become even more difficult for a youngster with ADHD. It can be difficult to switch between speakers while maintaining attention on one speaker. This has social repercussions because some ADHD children find it simpler to get along with people individually than in a group setting. Multiple activities occurring at once in a distracting classroom may make it extremely challenging for a youngster with ADHD to focus. Adolescents with ADHD not only have problems sticking to one conversation but often face issues being understood. Many participants named their symptoms as aggressive behavior which can cause a lot of problems when communicating along with being unable to hold a conversation for a long time.

Interaction on a daily basis

During the interview, the participants were asked to name the people they interact with the most on a daily basis, some participants responded “*My parents, siblings and my close friends*” and another responded “*My mother*”. Most responses revolved around daily interaction with parents, siblings and friends. Daily interactions play an important role in development for anybody and everybody, positive regular interaction is something a person with ADHD can benefit from. It not only enhances skills but also helps them gain confidence.

When asked the reason why they preferred to interact with this small group of people more often than others, the participants said, “*My sister because I think she is the one who can understand what I'm thinking and doing*”, “*I like interacting with my friends, as they have known me for a long time and understand me.*” and “*My friend Yogesh. He's accommodating and puts up with some small issues that may be caused due to my condition.*”

After reviewing all the responses, it was noticed that participants prefer spending time with a small group of people and sometimes with a single person. Spending much time with known people gives them a feeling of comfort in an otherwise chaotic routine. With whom the adolescent decides to interact often depends upon the comfort level provided by that person. The chances of interaction are much higher if the person in question is accommodating, aware, understanding and provides the adolescent with a judgment-free atmosphere.

The reason behind the hesitation when interacting with a new person is anxiety and fear of being misunderstood or judged, hence sticking to people they commonly interact with feels like a safe choice.

Being Misunderstood by Friends or Family

Moving forward, the participants were asked who, according to them, understands them better- friends or family? A vast number of participants responded that their family understands them better than their peers. Although a few participants also said that since their friend circle is small and they have known them for a long time, they feel supported by both friends and family. One participant responded “*I think that it's my father that understands me the best so yea family.*” Another participant was recorded saying “*My family and friends are good but they don't always understand me that well.*” Yet again, understanding depends on the type of environment provided by peers or family.

An article by Raising Children Network (2022) claims that children with ADHD may require some assistance when it comes to certain areas in friendship such as focusing on what the person is saying, letting others finish speaking first and observing other people's

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body language. With the help of these very simple techniques, children with ADHD can find it easier to communicate and make new friends in the classroom and outside the classroom. Family and friends should make an effort to learn about ADHD and how they can make communication easier and more efficient.

Changes required

When asked what they would like to change in the way people communicate with them, some participants responded by saying, *“Yes, I want people to be more aware of ADHD and be more supportive.”* and *“I just wish people would be more patient with me, like when I am angry they can be a bit more calm and understanding.”* and some said, *“Not really, people around me are very kind and polite”*. All these changes might not sound very complex but they can certainly bring a very significant positive change in the lives of people, especially children diagnosed with ADHD.

In all of these responses, the common words used were ‘understanding’, ‘kind’, ‘polite’ and ‘patient’. All these qualities can be easily bought into the habit when talking to an adolescent with ADHD.

Some of the other responses recorded were, *“I sometimes wish people would relax a little and understand that I am just overwhelmed and just need some time to calm down. People sometimes get hyper which can make the situation worse.”* and, *“I hope people would be more patient, instead of assuming that I am acting differently or doing things on purpose.”* Almost all participants responded with one change or the other that they expect from the people who communicate with them. Participants also complained that many times, they have heard people say they are being “lazy” or doing this on purpose to cause trouble. These comments reflect upon the level of unawareness that still prevails in our society regarding mental health issues.

Emotional issues faced by adolescents with ADHD and how they deal with these issues

According to the research conducted by The American College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologist (2020), adolescents with ADHD often exhibit distractibility, a lack of focus and immaturity on an emotional level. They frequently struggle in both their behavior and schoolwork. Risk-taking behavior, particularly risky sexual behavior, is more likely to occur in adolescents with ADHD.

The results of the study by Stern et al. (2020) indicate relationships between emotional issues and both dimensions of pediatric ADHD symptoms. It was identified that specific correlations between childhood hyperactivity-impulsivity and symptoms of depression in adolescents suggest that these relationships become more pronounced as people enter early adulthood. One theory is that hyperactive-impulsive childhood behaviors might have negative functional effects and contribute to depression in adolescence.

Various studies have been conducted that explain the extreme emotional imbalance that people with ADHD go through and what can be done to assist them. Unfortunately, the majority of these researchers were done in other countries. There is a lack of data when it comes to Indian adolescents with ADHD.

Emotional Difficulties and Barriers

The participants were asked to describe the emotional difficulties they face often and a variety of responses was recorded. A single participant said that she is often overwhelmed

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by her feelings. *“I feel too much, I am easily persuaded, I also face some anger issues.”* and *“I wish to feel as emotionally normal as I can, I feel as if I am always anxious about something or the other”*. One thing common among these responses is the feeling of anxiousness faced by most participants. Participants also stated, *“I find myself getting hyper very easily. I have been quite short tempered but on the other hand, I also get really vulnerable at times when I struggle with some tasks or multitasking and with controlling emotions.”* *“I feel that when I am agitated or angry, instead of talking about those feelings I just start yelling and burst out.”*

One of the participants also expressed that they feel overwhelmed by their feelings yet they find it difficult to express their feelings in front of anyone. Responses like *“I find it hard to talk about what is bothering me”*. With the help of these responses, it was observed that adolescents with ADHD not only face problems with processing emotions, but also with expressing them. The reason for the hesitation in expressing themselves was anxiety and not feeling emotionally safe enough to express those feelings. The participants also said that they feel uncomfortable when they try to express themselves. One of the participants mentioned, *“I am not using any techniques currently.”* Sharing feelings and expressing emotions are often associated with embarrassment and being vulnerable. Hence, people often avoid talking about their feelings, which in turn leads to frustration and risk-taking behavior. Adolescents with ADHD are more prone to overthinking and behavior such as self-harm, suicidal thoughts and early signs of sexual behavior.

The uncertainty and hesitancy in talking about and expressing feelings can cause lasting emotional problems which can affect the adolescent's overall social development and adjustment. Due to the inability to express emotions, people also eventually find themselves feeling distant from those around them and also find it difficult to show empathy when required. Although this does not apply to everyone, as one of the participants expressed that they are well adjusted when it comes to certain emotional issues. It was also stated, *“I don't feel any trouble expressing myself, I say whatever comes to my mind.”*

According to a recent research conducted by Mayo Clinic (2019), adolescents with ADHD who have severe daily swings in their emotions are less likely to be accepted by their peers, have more internalizing symptoms like anxiety and despair, and have more externalizing symptoms like ADHD, opposition, disobedience, and behavior issues. In general, ineffective emotion regulation may be a factor in many of the bad consequences they encounter, including involvement in dangerous behaviors like the consumption of drugs, verbal and physical aggressiveness, peer rejection, relationship issues, and family strife.

Balancing difficult emotions

After conducting the interview, it was found that adolescents often take the help of simple techniques to balance their emotions, due to the unavailability of resources.

According to many responses, yoga and meditation are famously used to balance emotions. Participants said they use breathing techniques to calm themselves down. One participant said *“Not really, but I have started to do meditation as I read on the Internet, and also heard through a lot of people that it helps a person to stay calm.”* It seems like the adolescents are using meditation as a calming technique.

People use unconventional techniques as well, as one participant said, *“I try reading, it helps me a lot. I think it is a good way to express my emotions.”* A participant also stated that they have tried meditating over time but due to constant shifting focus they are unable to stick to

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the same techniques for a long time *“I sometimes do meditation and yoga to stabilize my emotions. It mostly works but I don't do it regularly.”* There are certain new techniques as well that have proved to be very helpful when it comes to calming down or expressing your emotions. *“I have developed a habit of journaling and it has helped me quite a bit.”* These techniques can be learned professionally as well. In an otherwise chaotic routine, learning and investing in effective methods to balance overwhelming emotions is important.

Along with the techniques stated above, many participants also mentioned that they often find peace in pursuing activities of their liking. A participant said, *“I often listen to music and go for a walk, it makes me feel calm”*. Hobbies can play a big role in upliftment from daily stressors, participants interested in art explained how they learned and then started making art that helped them relax. As mentioned by one of the participants *“I started making mandala art in the lockdown which really helped me stay calm and kind of helped me to practice focusing on one thing, and I also love and enjoy making it.”*

With the help of these responses, it was observed that adolescents like taking the help of techniques and hobbies to help them with anxiety and stress. It was detected that these techniques and activities helped the participants immensely. They referred to it as an “escape” from the worrisome lifestyle. Some people prefer indoor activities whereas others prefer outdoor activities. Whatever the choice may be, having a hobby or executing, both of these were observed to have a positive effect on the participants’ overall experience and mental health.

Recent emotional state of participants

The last part of the interview included the current emotional state of adolescents with ADHD. One participant said that they have school-related stress and stated, *“I feel buried under all the assignments, feels like a never-ending work which is sometimes tiresome”*. Another participant gave a neutral response by mentioning, *“It really keeps on changing, I may be all good and happy one day but might feel anxious and frustrated and burdened the next day. But, yes, the past few weeks have been quite good.”*

Ever since the pandemic happened, more and more teenagers have been spending time on screens, and social media has taken a huge amount of every adolescent’s time. Increased time on the internet can be harmful to both emotional and physical health. It can especially be harmful for adolescents with ADHD, who already have issues such as lack of concentration, impulsivity and anxiety. Hence it is important for adolescents with ADHD to have hobbies that keep them away from screens for as long as possible and enhance their performance.

Other than the reason discussed above, overwhelming school work can also be a cause of stress for adolescents. *“I have been pretty good the past few weeks, a bit stressed about school work.”* Another participant said, *“I actually had a small issue with my friend so that has kept me preoccupied”*. There are various reasons such as family, friends or school that have been stated as being responsible for everyday stress. None of the participants complained about the staggering amount of stress. More importantly, they conveyed what they expect from people when it comes to communication. One of the participants said, *“Yes, I want people to be more aware of ADHD and be more supportive.”* Another participant stated, *“I think people should focus more on my capabilities and things I can do instead of pointing out what I can't do.”* Yet another mentioned, *“Yes, I sometimes wish people would stop acting like I won't understand.”* All of these responses were a real eye-

opener when it comes to getting an insight into the communicational problems of Indian adolescents with ADHD.

CONCLUSION

Individuals with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) have a hard time communicating and expressing their emotions, more so when it comes to adolescents who are already dealing with so many hormonal changes in the first place. This study was conducted to get an insight into the daily lives of adolescents diagnosed with ADHD and the emotional as well as communication issues faced by them.

Along with balancing all the stressors associated with adolescence, many adolescents also have to face added issues that come with being diagnosed with ADHD. At the beginning of the research, it was identified that most individuals get diagnosed in their late teenage years. Due to delayed diagnosis, they miss out on opportunities to work on themselves. It was also observed that due to financial reasons and lack of awareness, the majority of participants reportedly do not use medication or therapy and out of the few who did, stopped using it after a short period of time. Some said ADHD affected their overall academics, whereas others said that it makes them feel as if they are different from everyone else. Participants stated that they have not talked about their diagnosis with their friends as they were afraid of being judged.

The participants also shared the emotional difficulties faced by them on a daily basis. Some said they have an issue of controlling their anger and some have difficulty expressing their emotions to the fullest. When asked the reason, the common answer was a feeling of discomfort when they made an effort to express themselves. When family and peers fail to provide a safe and supportive environment, adolescents tend to become more and more secluded. This is a topic of concern as teenagers with ADHD have rapid mood swings and are more likely to get into issues like self-harm and drug abuse.

On the same line of thought, the participants also shared how people often mistake ADHD with other mental illnesses more or less severe, often use words like “lazy” and “unmotivated” when referring to someone with ADHD, think that they (adolescents with ADHD) are undisciplined and always erratic. People often make harsh comments without thinking twice and without realizing how these words can affect a person’s emotional state. Participants also shared the different activities that they perform on a daily basis, which help them stay calm and regulate their emotions. These include simple techniques such as meditation, painting, sports etc. Adolescents with ADHD should be taught how to take control of their emotions little by little with the help of these numerous techniques. Small habits can bring big significant changes in their lifestyle.

The most important finding of the present study was participants wishing people were more aware, were more patient, helpful and considerate. This emotional exclusion can push them towards serious conditions such as constant anxiety and depression. The lack of support from family and friends and the lack of support from the education system can lead these teenagers into a tricky situation. The responses have surely helped me understand that this study was a step in the right direction, dealing with the confusion that comes with ADHD and then dealing with people who do not take it seriously can be exhausting for adolescents. Many participants complained that their schools do not provide any kind of assistance to students with ADHD and many other mental conditions as well. This needs to be dealt with collectively. It is important that schools come up with ways to educate students as well as

parents about mental health conditions and bring changes in the system that help these students learn with ease and excel in their preferred fields. This will not only help the individual immensely but also set an example for others struggling with similar as well as diverse conditions. Parents also need to step in at an early age and try to give their sons and daughters an early diagnosis and help them learn skills and also need to show complete social and emotional support to build their self-confidence and teach them independence. After providing all of these facilities, we are ensuring a safe and bright future for every adolescent.

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Conflict of Interest

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