

A Comparative Study of Mental Health and Academic Achievement of Adolescent Girls

Dr. S. Mahdoom Ariffa^{1*}, Dr. Raja Mohammed T²

ABSTRACT

The mental health of students plays a pivotal role in shaping their academic performance and overall well-being. This study aims to explore the mental health status of female students in schools and nursing institutions and examine its relationship with academic achievement. A descriptive survey method was employed, involving 200 participants among them 100 higher secondary school students and 100 nursing students—from urban and rural settings. The research tool, developed by the investigators, measured mental health across ten dimensions: physical, intellectual, psychological, familial, educational, mobile phone usage, unhealthy practices, awareness, and mental health practices. Academic achievement was assessed using board examination scores. The study revealed statistically significant differences and relationships between mental health and academic achievement across various groups. The findings underscore the necessity of integrating mental health awareness into the academic curriculum to promote holistic student development. This research contributes valuable insights for educators, curriculum planners, and mental health professionals seeking to foster an environment conducive to both emotional wellness and academic excellence.

Keywords: *Mental health, Academic achievement, Adolescent, psychology*

Mental health plays a crucial role in shaping the academic performance of students, as it influences their emotional, cognitive, and social development. Recent studies have revealed a strong connection between mental health and academic achievement, highlighting how psychological well-being impacts students' ability to concentrate, manage stress, and stay motivated (Usha & Rekha, 2009; Dharanendrappa, 2012). This research explores the relationship between mental health and academic achievement, particularly focusing on school and nursing students, as well as the influence of emotional competence and academic motivation.

Our study examines various factors such as mental health, academic achievement, and their correlation among different student populations, including rural and urban adolescents, school students, and nursing students. Through a series of hypothesis-driven analyses, we explore whether there are significant differences in mental health across these groups and

¹Principal, Crescent College of Education for Women, Madurai Tamil Nadu, India.
ORCID iD - 0009-0000-6629-2788

²Assistant Professor, Crescent College of Education for Women, Madurai Tamil Nadu, India.
ORCID iD - 0000-0002-1977-1230

*Corresponding Author

Received: July 05, 2025; Revision Received: July 16, 2025; Accepted: July 21, 2025

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how it relates to their academic success. For instance, we have investigated how mental health differs between arts and science students, as well as the mental health status of rural vs. urban adolescents (Mirkamali et al., 2017; Mahdavi et al., 2023). Additionally, the study delves into the academic achievement levels of students in relation to their mental health, exploring whether better mental health correlates with improved academic performance (Ingibjorg et al., 2014; Agnafors et al., 2016).

The findings from this research contribute to the growing body of literature on student well-being, providing insights into the importance of mental health and academic success. Furthermore, it addresses the need for educational interventions aimed at promoting mental health as a means to enhance academic success. By incorporating our research findings, this study offers valuable implications for educators and policymakers, emphasizing the integration of mental health programs in educational curricula to foster overall student growth and achievement.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Usha & Rekha (2009) in their study highlighted the significant role of emotional competence and mental health in predicting academic achievement. They argue that emotional competence, which includes self-awareness, emotional regulation, and interpersonal skills, contributes positively to mental health, which in turn influences academic success. Their study emphasizes the importance of fostering emotional intelligence in students to enhance academic performance.

Dharanendrappa (2012) conducted a study to explore the relationship between mental health, emotional intelligence, and academic achievement in secondary school students. The research found a positive correlation, suggesting that students with better mental health and higher emotional intelligence tend to achieve better academically. The study emphasizes the need for mental health programs and emotional intelligence training in schools to support students' academic success.

Thorisdottir, Bjor, & Agnafors (2014) explored the relationship between mental health and educational performance. Their study indicated that students with better mental health scores (lower scores on the mental health questionnaire) exhibited better academic performance. However, this finding was not universally consistent across all studies, with some research (e.g., Asgari, 2008) showing no such correlation. They suggest that additional factors such as age, socioeconomic status, and environmental conditions may contribute to the varying results.

Singh (2017) observed that students in the high-achiever group exhibited better mental health compared to their low-achiever counterparts. This study supports the view that mental health is positively related to academic achievement, implying that students with stronger mental health are more likely to perform better academically. Singh recommends schools to incorporate mental health programs to assist students in reaching their full academic potential.

Mahdavi et al. (2023) studied the relationship between achievement motivation, mental health, and academic success in university students. Their findings showed a significant correlation between mental health and achievement motivation, suggesting that students with better mental health are more motivated to achieve academically. However, the study did not find a significant correlation between mental health and academic success itself,

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indicating that other factors such as intrinsic motivation and personal drive may also play a critical role in academic performance.

Mirkamali et al. (2017) utilized structural equation modeling to explore the roles of mental health and academic achievement motivation in academic performance. The study found that mental health had a positive effect on academic achievement motivation, which in turn positively impacted academic performance. This suggests that mental health may indirectly influence academic success through its effect on motivation, highlighting the importance of addressing mental health issues to improve students' academic outcomes.

In their longitudinal study,

Agnafors, Barmark, & Sydsjö (2017) found that higher academic performance at the baseline was associated with better mental health over time. However, they also discovered that better mental health did not necessarily predict future academic performance, which challenges the bidirectional assumption that both variables influence each other. This study suggests that academic performance could potentially be a predictor of mental health status, calling for interventions that reduce school pressure to improve both academic outcomes and mental well-being.

In a 2024 study by Patel & Sharma, it was observed that mental health significantly influences academic success in postgraduate students. Their research found that stress management and mental well-being are crucial for maintaining high academic performance in university settings. Students who were able to manage anxiety and stress effectively showed higher rates of academic achievement. The study suggests that universities should provide more support systems like counseling services and stress-relief workshops to improve academic outcomes.

Raman & Rajendran (2025) explored the role of mental health in online education and its effect on academic performance. With the rise of online education, mental health issues such as isolation, anxiety, and depression were found to significantly affect students' engagement and academic achievement. The study emphasizes that online institutions must implement mental health support systems to help students maintain their well-being and academic productivity.

Singh & Bansal (2024) conducted research focusing on the mental health of first-year university students. They found that students who experienced better mental health during their first year had higher grades and overall academic success. The study highlights the importance of early interventions in university programs to address mental health challenges, which can be pivotal in ensuring students' long-term academic achievements.

Operational Definitions:

- **Mental Health:** Mental health refers to the overall well-being of the mind, encompassing emotional, psychological, and social aspects. In this study, it pertains to the mental health of school and nursing students, examining various factors that affect their psychological and emotional states
- **Academic Achievement:** Academic achievement refers to the level of success students attain in their studies, typically measured by the marks obtained in board examinations. For this study, the academic performance of both school and nursing students is considered, with particular focus on their exam scores.

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Objectives:

1. To study the mental health of school students.
2. To determine the mental health of nursing students.
3. To examine the mental health of both nursing students and school students.
4. To analyze the difference between the academic achievement and mental health of school students.
5. To study the difference between the academic achievement and mental health of nursing students.
6. To compare the relationship between academic achievement and mental health among nursing students.
7. To study the difference in the mental health of rural and urban students in both schools and nursing institutions.
8. To compare the difference between academic achievement and mental health in school students.

Hypotheses:

1. There is no significant difference between the mental health of nursing and school students.
2. There is no significant difference in the mental health of rural and urban students in schools and nursing institutions.
3. There is no significant difference between mental health and academic achievement among adolescents girls.
4. There is no significant difference between mental health and academic achievement of Arts and Science students in schools.
5. There is no significant difference between mental health and academic achievement of school students.
6. There is no significant difference between mental health and academic achievement of nursing students.
7. There is no significant relationship between academic achievement and mental health of school students.
8. There is no significant relationship between academic achievement and mental health of nursing students.
9. There is no significant relationship between the mental health of nursing and school students.

Research Design

The present study adopts a descriptive survey research design. This design is suitable for gathering information about the mental health and academic achievement of students in natural educational settings. The purpose of the survey method is to systematically describe and analyze the current status of mental health among school and nursing students and to explore its relationship with academic achievement.

Sample

The sample consists of 200 female students selected from various schools and nursing institutions. It includes 100 girls from nursing institutions and 100 higher secondary school students.

Instrument (Tool Description)

The tool used for the study was a **Mental Health Questionnaire** developed and validated by the **S. Mahdoom Ariffa and Raja Mohammed T (2025)**. It consists of **50 items** spread

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across **10 dimensions**: Physical health, Intellectual health, Psychological well-being, Familial environment, Educational setting, Mobile phone usage, Unhealthy practices, Social factors, Mental health awareness and Mental health practices

Each item is rated on a binary scale (Yes = 1, No = 0), with a maximum score of 50. Higher scores indicate better mental health status.

The **academic achievement** data were collected in the form of marks obtained in recent board/public examinations for both school and nursing students.

Reliability of the Tool:

The reliability analysis (construct reliability through factor analysis) supports a five-factor model, with most items showing moderate to strong and statistically significant loadings ($p < 0.05$). The highest loadings were observed in *Physical Item 5* (0.427), *Intellectual Item 5*, *Familial Item 5*, and *Social Item 4* (0.26). In contrast, the unhealthy practices factor showed weak and non-significant loadings, though *Unhealthy Practices Items 4 and 5* had relatively higher values within that group.

Factor Covariance: All covariance reported are positive and statistically significant ($P < 0.001$), indicating that the factors in the model are positively related to each other.

Scoring and Data Collection

Each participant's response was scored using the given binary scoring method. The **total mental health score** for each respondent was calculated by summing the scores across the 50 items. Academic achievement scores were documented from verified institutional records. Data were compiled in a master sheet for statistical analysis.

Statistical Techniques

The following statistical techniques were employed:

- **Descriptive statistics** (Mean, Standard Deviation) to summarize the mental health and academic achievement scores. **t-tests** to determine significant differences between groups (e.g., school vs. nursing students, rural vs. urban students). **Pearson's Product Moment Correlation** to analyze the relationship between mental health and academic achievement.

Need for the study:

The saying "A sound mind lives in a sound body" highlights the connection between mental and physical health. Good mental health helps people succeed, while poor mental health can make it hard to reach goals (Mahdavi et al., 2023).

Today, students face many challenges, such as school stress, health issues, and technology. These can cause anxiety, stress, and family or financial problems (Agnafors et al., 2016). Many students also worry about their appearance, which can hurt their self-esteem and mental health (Usha & Rekha, 2009). Digital learning can be helpful, but it also causes distractions. Phones and apps often interrupt students, affecting their focus and mental well-being (Mirkamali et al., 2017). Nursing students face extra stress from their heavy hospital work and emotional strain from patient care, leading to anxiety and burnout (Ingibjorg et al., 2014). In India, mental health issues in students are increasing. A study by NIMHANS (2024) found that 23% of schoolchildren have problems like anxiety and depression. Bullying, family issues, and social pressure are some causes. Girls also face extra challenges due to gender discrimination, which affects their mental health and studies (Agnafors et al., 2016). A healthy mind is important for both personal growth and academic success. In India,

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understanding mental health is key to helping students succeed (Dharanendrappa, 2012). This study examines how mental health affects the academic performance of adolescents school students and nursing students. It aims to show how mental health impacts learning and if support can improve students' results. This research is important to help students succeed, especially in a country where mental health is increasingly recognized as important.

Table 1 Mental Health of School and Nursing Students

Dimensions	School students MH (in percentage)	Nursing students MH (in percentage)
<i>Physical health</i>	74.4	74.8
<i>Intellectual</i>	85.8	84.8.
<i>Psychological</i>	70.6	71.2
<i>Familial</i>	71.0	73.4
<i>Social</i>	75.8	82.6
<i>Educational</i>	69.4	66.0
<i>Mobile phone usage</i>	60.2	57.6
<i>Unhealthy practices</i>	90.6	93.2
<i>Awareness</i>	60.4	61.8
<i>Mental health practices</i>	63.0	74.0
	72.12	73.94

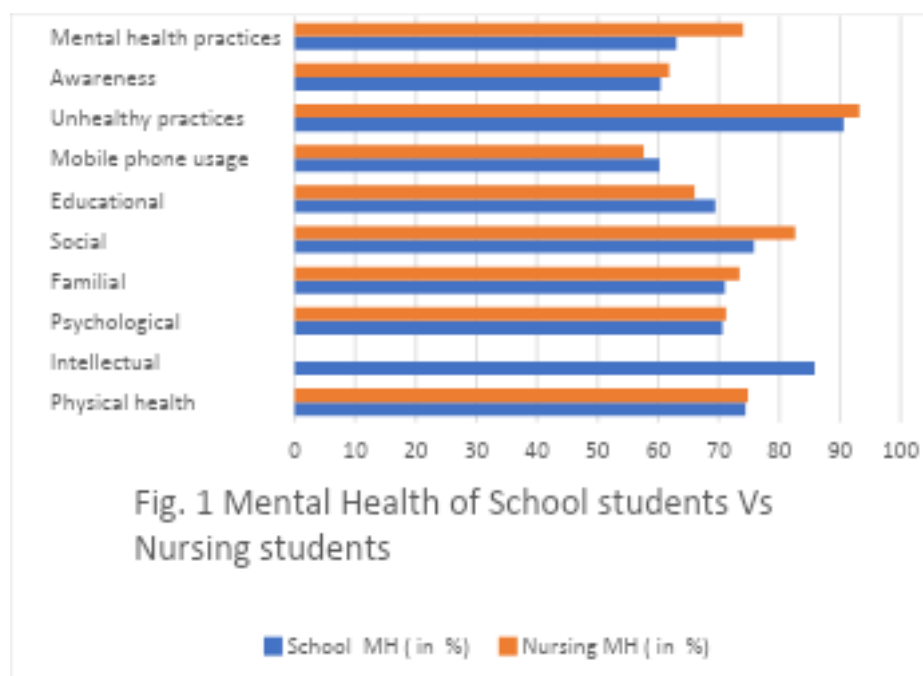


Table 1 presents a comparative analysis of the mental health status of school and nursing students across ten dimensions. In the dimension of physical health, school students scored 74.4% and nursing students 74.8%, indicating that both groups maintain good physical well-being with a positive body image, sufficient energy, and minimal health issues. The intellectual scores were high for both groups—85.8% for school students and 84.8% for nursing students—demonstrating strong cognitive abilities such as problem-solving, creativity, and conceptual understanding. Psychological well-being was moderate, with school students scoring 70.6% and nursing students slightly higher at 71.2%, suggesting good emotional regulation and mental stamina in both groups.

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Familial support was also evident, with scores of 71% for school students and 73.4% for nursing students, reflecting a supportive and respectful family environment. Social interaction showed a significant difference, as nursing students scored 82.6% compared to 75.8% for school students. This could be due to the nature of nursing education, which encourages communication and community engagement. In terms of educational aspects, school students scored 69.4% and nursing students 66.0%, indicating a moderate level of academic satisfaction and confidence in learning.

Mobile phone usage received lower scores—60.2% for school students and 57.6% for nursing students—highlighting its dual role as both a learning aid and a potential distraction. Interestingly, the dimension of unhealthy practices showed the highest scores (90.6% for school students and 93.2% for nursing students), indicating that both groups generally avoid harmful behaviors and maintain healthy habits. Awareness of mental health issues was moderate, with school students scoring 60.4% and nursing students 61.8%, suggesting the need for improved mental health education. Finally, mental health practices were more prevalent among nursing students (74%) compared to school students (63%), likely due to their exposure to health-related content in their curriculum.

Overall, the average mental health score was 72.12% for school students and 73.94% for nursing students. These findings reveal that while both groups demonstrate good mental health, nursing students slightly outperform school students in most dimensions, possibly due to differences in age, maturity, and academic exposure to health and wellness topics.

Table: 2 Mental health of school Vs Nursing

Hypothesis 1. There is no significant difference between the mental health of the nursing and school students.

Particulars	mean	S.D.	T -value	df	p-value	Significant
School (100)	73.52	8.14				
Nursing (100)	73.94	6.62	0.4003	198	0.689	<i>Not significant</i>

Table 2 shows the comparison between the mental health of school students and nursing students. The average (mean) mental health score of school students is 73.52, and for nursing students, it is 73.94. The standard deviation (S.D) is 8.14 for school students and 6.62 for nursing students. The t-value is 0.4003, with 198 degrees of freedom, and the p-value is 0.689.

Since the p-value is more than 0.05, the difference is not significant. This means there is no significant difference between the mental health of school students and nursing students. So, the hypothesis is accepted — both groups have almost the same level of mental health.

Mental health of Rural Vs Urban (Students of School Vs Nursing)

Hypothesis 2. There is no significant difference between the mental health of the rural and urban students of school and nursing Institution.

Particulars	mean	S.D.	t-value	p-value	Significant
Rural (128)	74.36	6.388.	1.59	0.1131	
Urban (72)	72.61	8.99			<i>Not significant</i>

The above table reveals that the average (mean) mental health score of rural students is 74.36, with a standard deviation (S.D.) of 6.38. For urban students, the mean score is 72.61, and the standard deviation is 8.99. The calculated t-value is 1.59, and the p-value is 0.1131.

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Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, the result is not statistically significant. This means that there is no significant difference in the mental health between rural and urban students. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted, and we can say that the living area (rural or urban) does not significantly affect the mental health of the students in this sample.

Mental health Vs Academic Achievement of Adolescents girls

Hypothesis:3

There is no significant difference between the Mental health and academic Achievement of Adolescents.

Particulars	mean	S.D	t -value	df	p-value	Significant
<i>Mental Health</i>	73.73	7.45	10.69	198	< 0.0001	<i>significant</i>
<i>Academic Achievement</i>	62.74	12.17			0.30	

The average (mean) score for mental health is 73.73, with a standard deviation (S.D) of 7.45. The mean score for academic achievement is 62.74, with a standard deviation of 12.17. The calculated t-value is 10.69, with 198 degrees of freedom, and the p-value is less than 0.0001. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the result is statistically significant. This means there is a significant difference between mental health and academic achievement among adolescent students. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and we conclude that mental health and academic performance are not the same and are significantly different in this group.

Mental health and Academic Achievement of Arts and science school students:

Hypothesis:4.

There is no significant difference between the Mental health and academic Achievement of Arts and science school students.

Particulars	Mean	S.D	t-value	Df	p-value	Significant
Arts(51)	36.62	4.30	1.03	98	< 0.0001	NS
Science(49)	37.17	3.92			0.30	

The table shows that the mean mental health score of Arts students is 36.62 with a standard deviation of 4.30, while Science students have a mean of 37.17 with a standard deviation of 3.92. The calculated t-value is 1.03 with 98 degrees of freedom, and the p-value is 0.30.

Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, the result is not significant. This means there is no significant difference in mental health between Arts and Science school students. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted.

Mental health and academic achievement of school students:

Hypothesis: 5

There is no significant difference between the Mental health and academic Achievement of school students.

Particulars	Mean	S.D	t-value	df	p-value	Significant
<i>Mental health</i>	73.52	8.23				
<i>Academic Achievement</i>	65.34	14.76	4.84	98	< 0.0001	Sig.

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The mean score for mental health is 73.52 (S.D = 8.23), and for academic achievement, it is 65.34 (S.D = 14.76). The t-value is 4.84, with 98 degrees of freedom, and the p-value is less than 0.0001.

Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the result is significant. This indicates a significant difference between mental health and academic achievement of school students. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Mental Health vs academic achievement of Nursing Students

Hypothesis:6

There is no significant difference between the Mental health and academic Achievement of nursing students.

Particulars	mean	S.D	t value	df	p-value	Significant
<i>Mental Health</i>	73.94	6.62	13.12	98	< 0.0001	Sig.
<i>Academic Achievement</i>	60.14	8.17				

The mean score of mental health among nursing students is 73.94 (S.D = 6.62), while their academic achievement mean is 60.14 (S.D = 8.17). The t-value is 13.12, with 98 degrees of freedom, and the p-value is less than 0.0001.

As the p-value is very small, the result is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and it is concluded that there is a significant difference between the mental health and academic achievement of nursing student.

Correlation Between Mental Health and Academic Achievement of School Students

Hypothesis: 7

	MH percentage	AA
MH percentage	—	0.375
df	—	101
p-value	—	<.001

Note. H_a is positive correlation

The Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) between mental health and academic achievement of school students is 0.375, with 101 degrees of freedom and a p-value < 0.001.

Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the correlation is statistically significant. The positive r-value (0.375) indicates a low positive relationship between mental health and academic achievement among school students. This means that as mental health increases, academic achievement also tends to increase, though the relationship is not very strong

Correlation Between Mental Health and Academic Achievement of Nursing Students.

Hypothesis: 8

	MH percentage	AA
MH percentage	—	0.429
df	—	99
p-value	—	<.001

The Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) between mental health and academic achievement of nursing students is 0.429, with 99 degrees of freedom and a p-value < 0.001.

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This result is also statistically significant. The r -value (0.429) shows a moderate positive relationship, suggesting that mental health is substantially related to academic achievement in nursing students. Better mental health tends to be associated with higher academic performance.

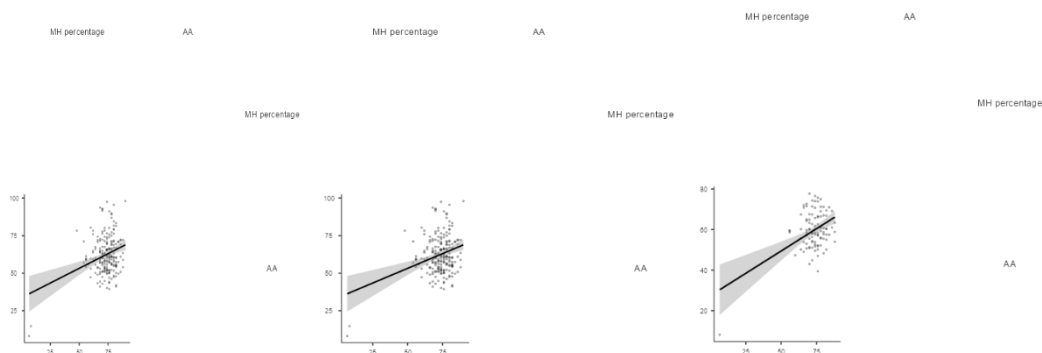
Correlation Between Mental Health and Academic Achievement of Total Sample (School + Nursing Students)

Hypothesis: 9

	MH percentage	AA
MH percentage	—	0.295
df	—	201
p-value	—	<.001

The Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) for the total sample (school and nursing students combined) is 0.295, with 201 degrees of freedom and a p -value < 0.001.

This is a statistically significant correlation. The r -value (0.295) indicates a low positive relationship between mental health and academic achievement among all students. Although the relationship exists, it is weaker when school and nursing students are combined.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The study results reveal some significant findings regarding the mental health and academic achievement of students. Firstly, no significant difference in mental health was observed between school and nursing students, indicating that both groups have similar mental health statuses despite their different educational demands. Similarly, when comparing rural and urban students, the data showed no significant difference in overall mental health, suggesting that geographical location does not significantly impact students' mental well-being in this context. However, a more noticeable pattern emerged when examining the relationship between mental health and academic achievement. Contrary to the null hypothesis (H_{03}), the findings demonstrated a positive and statistically significant correlation, particularly among nursing students. This implies that students who possess better mental health inherently perform better in academics. These results are supported by previous research, such as Mahdavi et al. (2023) and Mirkamali et al. (2017), which highlight how mental well-being positively influences academic motivation and performance.

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Furthermore, when comparing arts and science students, no significant difference in their mental health levels was found, supporting the null hypothesis (H_{04}). This suggests that the academic discipline does not inherently influence students' mental health, and the type of subject pursued does not significantly affect emotional well-being.

Lastly, when evaluating the impact of mental health on students' academic performance, significant differences were observed in both school and nursing students, where better mental health was consistently linked to improved academic achievement. These findings highlight the critical role that mental health plays in academic success, underscoring its importance in shaping students' educational experiences and overall development.

Suggestions

Based on the findings of the study, several actionable suggestions are proposed to enhance both mental health and academic achievement among students. Firstly, it is recommended that mental health education be integrated into the regular curriculum at both school and college levels. This will help students develop coping strategies, manage academic stress, and build emotional resilience. Institutions should also ensure that students have access to counseling services and regular mental well-being workshops, which can play a crucial role in addressing psychological challenges that may hinder academic progress.

Moreover, regular assessment of students' mental health and academic performance should be implemented. Such monitoring systems will allow educators to identify students who may require timely interventions and create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. Educational institutions are also encouraged to develop and enforce policies that prioritize mental health by introducing structured programs such as stress management training, mindfulness sessions, and better access to trained mental health professionals.

In addition, promoting physical health and general well-being is essential, particularly in rural areas where the study indicated noticeable disparities. Community-based physical activity programs and awareness initiatives can help improve students' overall health, contributing positively to their academic performance. Finally, engaging parents and caregivers in mental health initiatives can strengthen the support system surrounding students. Their active involvement in promoting mental wellness can help bridge the gap between home and school environments, fostering a more holistic approach to student development.

Educational Implications

- The findings highlight the critical importance of fostering positive mental health in both school and college (especially nursing) settings.
- Teacher educators and administrators should be encouraged to introduce structured interventions, such as mindfulness practices, emotional intelligence training, and stress reduction workshops, to support students' mental well-being.
- These insights can be used to revise existing curricula, embedding mental health education within academic frameworks to raise awareness and reduce stigma among students.
- Parents, teachers, and academic counselors can utilize the findings to adopt a more proactive role in supporting the psychological well-being of students, which is closely linked to academic performance and overall development.

CONCLUSION

This study clearly establishes that mental health plays a significant and direct role in academic achievement. The evidence shows that across different student groups—whether school students, nursing students, or those pursuing arts or science—better mental health is strongly associated with enhanced academic outcomes.

Although mental health and academic performance are inherently distinct domains, this research illustrates their strong interconnection. Students with a higher level of mental well-being consistently demonstrate better academic performance.

The findings emphasize the need to address mental health as an integral component of the educational experience. By implementing structured mental health programs, conducting regular assessments, and creating a supportive academic environment, educational institutions can play a vital role in helping students reach their full academic and personal potential.

A holistic approach—encompassing physical, psychological, and emotional well-being—is essential to nurture well-rounded, resilient, and high-achieving learners. Consequently, mental health should be considered a top priority by educators, policymakers, and the broader community to ensure the academic success and overall well-being of future generations.

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Acknowledgment

The authors sincerely thank the school and nursing college students who participated in this study. We also thank the teachers and principals for their support during data collection. Special thanks to Crescent College of Education for Women, Madurai, for providing guidance and encouragement to complete this research.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest to this work.

Funding Support

This research received no specific grant or financial support from any funding agency, public or private organization.

Ethical Statement

The study was conducted in accordance with ethical standards. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Privacy and confidentiality were maintained throughout the research process.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

A Comparative Study of Mental Health and Academic Achievement of Adolescent Girls

Author Contribution Statement

All authors contributed equally to the conception, design, data collection, analysis, and writing of the manuscript. All authors have read and approved the final version of the paper.

How to cite this article: Ariffa, S.M. & Raja, M.T. (2025). A Comparative Study of Mental Health and Academic Achievement of Adolescent Girls. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 13(3), 594-607. DIP:18.01.053.20251303, DOI:10.25215/1303.053