

Well-being and Adjustment among School Going Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

Background: Adolescence is often considered the period of both challenges and opportunities, moreover, there has been increasing reports of decreased mental health and well-being in contemporary world, and adolescent population isn't immune to this. Therefore, it is crucial to study the state of well-being among adolescent school students, and address this in improving mental health and wellness among this population. **Aim:** With the aim to explore the prevalence of decreased well-being and school adjustment among adolescents, the present study was undertaken. **Methods:** This study employed cross-sectional method with a total of 254 adolescent students aged between 14-17 years taking part in the study. The tools used were, WHO-5 Well-Being Scale and Adjustment Inventory for School Students along with socio-demographic data sheet. The analysis of data was done using descriptive statistics, frequency calculation, Chi-square and Pearson correlation. **Results and Conclusion:** Approximately 31.8% of adolescents were having poor well-being and around 18.5% were having poor overall school adjustment, for specific domains (social, educational and emotional) highest prevalence was found in the domain of social adjustment (30%), followed by educational, and emotional domain with 20.9%, and 20.1% respectively. Moreover, there is negative correlation between well-being and adjustment ($r = -.555$, $p < 0.01$). This problem needs to be addressed and moreover, there is a dire need for intervention that is suitable and tailored for this population to improve mental health and well-being.

Keywords: *Adolescents, Mental Health, Well-Being, Adjustment Problem*

There are various factors that can affect one's mental health at any stage of life. There's a need to identify and address the mental well-being status of adolescents as to ascertain the trend in the present time and context. During adolescence there's rapid growth and changes in various spheres of life, such as cognitive, physical, and socio-emotional. Adding to this is the change that's happening at societal level in context to present world. Change requires some adjustment to be made, when the adjustment is successful it is often reflected in good mental health and wellbeing and also makes transitioning to next stage in life smooth. However, that's not always the case, when there is any kind of adjustment issues, it negatively impacts one's mental health. Most often change can be stressful for an individual, and when many stressors are combined this can have

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Received: May 23, 2025; Revision Received: September 09, 2025; Accepted: September 13, 2025

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compounding effect to one's mental health, resulting in adjustment problems and other mental health problems.

As we know that when mental health issues or concerns are left unchecked it can transgress into mental health disorders, and such concerns is common across all the age group. Therefore, regular screening and assessment is necessary so to intervene for improvement of mental health. Among children and adolescents, mental health problem is often manifested as emotional and behavioural problems including adjustment issues, frequent fights, poor academic performance, difficulty managing time, isolating oneself and absenteeism. Moreover, such students are often misunderstood by others. To know what problematic behaviour that requires professional attention is, it is important to understand what is normal during that stage in life. We know that adolescence is often consider difficult time for almost all the people, especially parents (Silver, 1992). However, in healthy individual, this difficulty resolves along the natural course of life.

Mental health problem is common and prevalent everywhere. A study had found that having mental health problem is considered a new normal among adolescents (Hermann et al., 2022). A study done in Meerut, reported that 9.1% had poor mental well-being while the remaining population had good mental health and well-being (Antara, Bansal, & Gupta, 2019). In a survey report from 2016, it was found that out of 20 people 1 person in India have depression and there is a prevalence of mental disorders of 7.3% among 13 years and 17 years age group and some of the common disorders includes depression (2.6%), substance use disorder (10.40%), agoraphobia (2.3%), and phobic anxiety disorder (1.3%) (Ministry of health and welfare, 2016). Systematic review research was done by Balamurugan et al. (2024) to study wide range of mental health problems among adolescent population, in which they reviewed thirty one studies having sample size of 30,770 altogether conducted on adolescent's mental health, some mental health conditions emerged to be common among this population, such as depression came out to be the most common among others issues, and others problems include emotional and behavioural problems, stress and distress, anxiety related issue, addiction especially that of internet and technology etc. In a study by Majumder et al. (2019) to assess psychiatric morbidity adolescent patients from age 10 to 19 years that are attending psychiatric services in Manipur, they found that 41% of adolescent patients have common disorder as that of neurotic disorders including those related to stress, and psycho-somatic problems (41%), 21% from the drawn population had substance related disorders, mood related disorders were of 14.8%, the remaining consisted of schizophrenia and associated disorders (12.2%), and behavioural and emotional disorders of childhood and adolescents (9.3%) (Majumder et al., 2019). In another study it was found that the prevalence of depression and mood disorders in school-based studies is 3%–68%, and the range in studies done in clinic setting is from 1.2% to 21%; while the prevalence in community-based studies was found to be ranging from 0.1% to 6.94% (Grover et al., 2019). Despite evidence suggesting that around 10 to 20% adolescents worldwide have mental health concerns, they often do not receive treatment and needed attention (Nebhinani & Jain, 2019).

Adjustment covers various aspects of life which includes emotional, behavioural and social domains, it is considered as an ability of an individual to adapt to any situation adequately (De la Barrera et al., 2019;). Well-adjusted children possess various positive characteristics that may help in improvement of cognitive, emotionally they are well regulated and will have good relationship with others, moreover these positive assets are further carried to adult life (Martin et al., 2020). Therefore, students that have issue with adjustment may have

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problems in those areas mentioned above. Along with the risk of having problems which are linked with poor adjustment, decreased in subjective well-being has been seen during adolescence (González-Carrasco et al., 2017). Good adjustment goes hand in hand with one's well-being and mental health. Mental health is not same as absence of any kind of illness; however, various factors can deteriorate well-being and have negative impact on one's mental health. A study conducted in Mangalore found that majority of the adolescent which is around 73% reported to have good mental well-being, while approximately 24% had average mental well-being, and 2% had poor mental well-being respectively (Rodrigues et al., 2024). Therefore, for overall health and wellness, it is necessary to assess and explore problems in adjustment and decline in well-being among adolescent students. In India, efforts have been made by various stakeholders including the government both central and state, and school authorities, towards improving mental health and well-being of all the students (Ministry of Education, 2022).

School being one of the major parts of adolescent's life, more often any problem that happens to an adolescent student is reflect or seen in their performance in school, which includes, academic, co-curricular, and interaction with teachers and classmates. Moreover, many skills and values, apart from academic are learnt at schools, be it, team spirit, respect and acceptance of people from various communities, leadership, public speaking etc. So, school become an important institution to study the state of mental health among this population and also to introduce various intervention that aims to improve their life. Therefore, the present study was undertaken to examine the well-being and school adjustment among adolescents that are school going which is to be addressed in an intervention. The objectives of the present study include examining Well-being and Adjustment among adolescent students, and to assess their relationship. Moreover, the relationship between gender and the study variables, i.e. Well-being, and School Adjustment will also be examined.

METHOD AND MATERIAL

Method

Cross-sectional design was employed for the present study.

Participants

The sample consisted of 254 school going adolescent students, with age ranging from 14 to 17 years which were drawn from class 8 to class 12 using simple random sampling technique from schools in Ranchi. Approximately 34.3% of the students (n=87) were of 14 years, 27.2% (n=69) students were of 15 years, 22.4% (n=57) students were of 16, and 16.1% (n=41) students were of 17 years. Male student consisted of 51.2% (n=130) and 48.8% (n=124) of the participants were female. Students having severe psychiatric and physical illness were excluded from the study.

Tools

Along with the Socio-demographic data sheet, which was used to collect the required and relevant information of the participants, which includes name, age, gender, and class etc, the following study tools were used:

1.) WHO-5 Well-Being Scale: this scale was used to assess the well-being and it consist of 5 items that have to be rated on 6-point scale from 0 being "at no time" to 5 being "all the time". The raw score ranges from 0 to 25, when converted into percentage by multiplying by 4, it ranges from 0 to 100. In the present study cut-off of 50 was use to indicate poor well-being (Quansah et al., 2022, De Wit et al., 2007), and

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2.) Adjustment Inventory for School Students: The Adjustment Inventory for School Students was developed by A.K.P. Sinha and R.P. Sinha (2013). This inventory has total of 60 items for assessing overall school adjustment as well as adjustment in three specific areas – Emotional, Social and Educational.

Procedure

Various schools in Ranchi were approached, and after obtaining permission from few schools; assent and informed consent was obtained from the participants' parents and the participants themselves, taking the inclusion and exclusion criteria into consideration. Then the study tools i.) WHO-5 Well-being Scale, and ii.) Adjustment Inventory for School Students were administered.

Statistical analysis

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (version 26) software was used to analysed the data. To check the normal distribution, Kolmogorov-Smirnov was used. Both the psychological variables in study, Well-being and Adjustment, were found to be normally distributed. Frequency and percentage were calculated for various socio-demographics, prevalence of poor well-being and poor adjustment. Moreover, Pearson correlation was calculated to examine the relationship between Well-being and School Adjustment, and Chi-square and Fisher test was calculated to compare Well-being, and School Adjustment with gender respectively.

RESULTS

The results from the analysis are as follows:

Figure 1 shows that 31.8% of adolescents have the score below 50 in WHO-5 Well-Being Scale indicating poor well-being while 68.2% have score above 50.

Figure 1: Prevalence of poor well-being

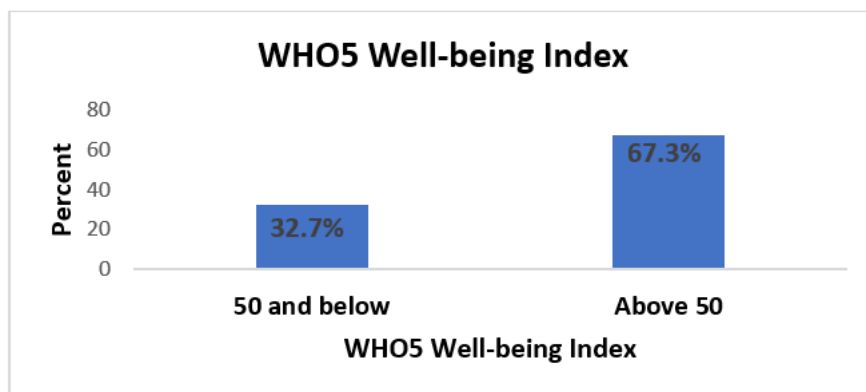


Table 1 shows that about 18% of adolescent have overall poor school adjustment, out of which 17.2% have “Below average” adjustment while 0.8% have “Unsatisfactory” adjustment. When it comes to poor adjustment in specific domains, highest prevalence was found in the domain of social adjustment (30%), followed by Educational and Emotional domain with 20.9% and 20.1% respectively.

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Table 1: Prevalence of School Adjustment Problem among Adolescent Students

		Adjustment Inventory for School Students (AISS)						
Adjustment		Extremely High	High	Above Average	Average/Moderate	Below Average	Unsatisfactory	Extremely Unsatisfactory
Overall	Frequency	-	10	76	121	45	2	-
	Percentage	-	3.9%	29.9%	47.6%	17.7%	0.8%	-
Emotional	Frequency	6	51	69	77	34	15	2
	Percentage	2.4%	20.1%	27.2%	30.3%	13.4%	5.9%	0.8%
Social	Frequency	1	16	57	104	55	20	1
	Percentage	0.4%	6.3%	22.4%	40.9%	21.7%	7.9%	0.4%
Educational	Frequency	0	12	78	111	48	4	1
	Percentage	-	4.7%	30.7%	43.7%	18.9%	1.6%	0.4%

Table 2 shows that there is strong negative correlation between WHO-5 well-being score and School adjustment score, including overall adjustment ($r=-.555$) and all three domains, social ($r=-.411$), educational ($r=-.463$) and emotional ($r=-.448$), at 0.01 significant level. This indicates negative association between increased well-being and poor adjustment.

Table 2 Correlation between Well-being and Adjustment problem

	School Adjustment			
	Overall	Social	Educational	Emotional
Well-being	-.555**	-.411**	-.463**	-.448**

Significant level ** $p < 0.01$

Table 3 shows that there is significant relationship between gender and well-being ($\chi^2 = 17.64$, $p=.004$), where poor well-being is more prevalent among female.

Table 3 Relationship between Well-being and Gender

Gender	Well-being (WHO-5 Well-being)				χ^2	P
	Below 50		Above 50			
	N	%	N	%		
Male	34	26.2%	96	73.8%	5.151	0.023*
Female	49	39.5%	75	60.5%		

Significant level * $p < 0.05$

Table 4 shows the relationship between gender and school adjustment, here, gender has significant relationship with domain of emotional adjustment only (Fisher=17.62, $p=.004$) and female participants have more poor emotional adjustment as compared to male participants. While there is no significant relationship between gender and domain of educational adjustment, and social adjustment.

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Table 4 Relationship between School Adjustment and Gender

School Adjustment		Gender				Fisher's exact test	P
		Male		Female			
		N	%	N	%		
Overall Adjustment	Extremely High	0	0%	0	0%	5.71	.192
	High	4	3.8%	5	4%		
	Above Average	44	33.8%	32	25.8%		
	Average	62	47.7%	60	48.4%		
	Below Average	17	13.1%	27	21.8%		
	Unsatisfactory	2	1.5%	0	0%		
	Extremely Unsatisfactory	0	0%	0	0%		
School Adjustment: Emotional	Extremely High	3	2.3%	3	2.4%	17.62	.004**
	High Adjustment	31	23.8%	20	16.1%		
	Above Average	31	23.8%	38	30.6%		
	Average	48	36.9%	29	23.4%		
	Below Average	12	9.2%	22	17.7%		
	Unsatisfactory	3	2.3%	12	9.7%		
	Extremely Unsatisfactory	2	1.5%	0	0%		
School Adjustment: Social	Extremely High	1	0.8%	0	0%	7.259	.250
	High Adjustment	10	7.7%	6	4.8%		
	Above Average	34	26.2%	23	18.5%		
	Average	53	40.8%	52	41.1%		
	Below Average	22	16.9%	33	26.6%		
	Unsatisfactory	9	6.9%	11	8.9%		
	Extremely Unsatisfactory	1	0.8%	0	0%		
School Adjustment: Educational	Extremely High	0	0%	0	0%	7.551	.149
	High Adjustment	5	3.8%	7	5.6%		
	Above Average	44	33.8%	34	27.4%		
	Average	50	38.5%	61	49.2%		
	Below Average	23	20%	22	17.7%		
	Unsatisfactory	4	3.1%	0	0%		
	Extremely Unsatisfactory	1	0.8%	0	0%		

Significant level ** $p < 0.01$

DISCUSSION

Not being sick is not only the sign of good mental health, there are various factors to take into account that is indicative of mental health. Well-being is another sign of good mental health, sometimes used synonymously. The present study revealed that 31.8% of adolescents have poor well-being. A study done in Meerut, Uttar Pradesh to assess psychological well-being among adolescents (1185) aged between 12-19 years using GHQ-12, it was found that larger part of the population had good mental health and well-being while 19.1% had poor mental well-being (Antara, Bansal, & Gupta, 2019). A study conducted in Mangalore found that 73.61% of the adolescents had high mental well-being, while 24.30% and 2.08% had moderate mental well-being and low mental well-being respectively (Rodrigues et al., 2024). Poor well-being often leads to under performance and it also have possibility of

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turning into severe problems, therefore timely intervention is required with the aim to alleviate such issues and also improve in overall functioning and well-being.

The result from the present study showed that around 18% of the adolescent students have poor adjustment. When it comes to poor adjustment in specific domains, highest prevalence was found in the domain of social adjustment (30%), followed by Educational and Emotional domain with 20.9% and 20.1% respectively. The period of adolescence is often considered a time of change and development in various areas such neurocognitive, affective, social, and academic (Sawyer et al., 2012). These changes may have impact on adolescents in adjusting and coping with these novel challenges. Difficulty in adjusting can have negative impact on mental state or vice versa and may add on to the risk of developing into various mental disorders. Lack or inadequate skills to handle a situation be it emotional, academic or interpersonal often leads to experience of difficulty in adjustment, therefore, intervention targeting such skill acquisition training can be beneficial for adolescents facing adjustment issues at school. In a study conducted in Trichy to assess the adjustment among adolescents belonging to class 9 to 12. It was found that majority of the participants (53%) have overall poor social adjustments, 55% have poor adjustment in social aspect and 54% in emotional aspect of social adjustment (Rajeswari & Eljo, 2023). Shekhar et al. (2021) conducted a study to find out the adjustment problems among 200 adolescents, the study identified feeling of insecurity, sleep disturbance, negligence by parents, unfulfilled unrealistic demands feeling loneliness and use of mobile phones, were the areas the participants have adjustment problems in.

Further, the study also found that poor well-being is more prevalent among female as compared to male adolescents. Similarly, poor emotional adjustment was more prevalent among female. Thanikaivel and Priya (2016) also conducted a study on around 200 adolescent pupils of age ranging between 16 years and 19 years (100 male and 100 female), to examine the level of adjustment in these students. Male students were shown to have better overall adjustment compared to female students. Social adjustment was average in both groups. The findings also suggested that female adolescent students had inadequate adjustment in several areas of study.

Mental health and well-being are associated with good adjustment in various areas of life. For adolescents, school is one among other important areas, therefore it is necessary to examine their functioning at school which is a part of their overall well-being. The study showed that there is strong correlation between well-being and overall school adjustment and also school adjustment in all the three domains (Emotional, Social and Educational). This finding indicates that poor well-being is associated with poor adjustment in school. Therefore, in order to examine the mental health and also their well-being of an children and adolescents, it is important to consider their functioning and performance at school as well. This also points towards the need to address their behaviour and performance at school and also to include various mental health programs and interventions in school setting. A study has also shown a similar finding where poor mental health was found to have correlation with poor school adjustment (Rajkumar, Saravanan, & Anbarasi, 2016).

CONCLUSION

The present study suggest that poor well-being and poor school adjustment is prevalent among school going adolescents. And poor well-being is associated with poor adjustment. When mental health concerns are left unchecked, it has possibility of transgressing into serious condition. Therefore, this problem needs to be addressed, so that early identification

and screening is important, further an early intervention that is suitable and tailored for this population is crucial to improve and promote mental health and well-being.

The present study was a preliminary study conducted only in Ranchi, therefore, studies on larger population size will help in generalizing the finding.

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Acknowledgment

The present research is a part of Ph. D. research (Title: Development of intervention module for adolescents' mental health) funded by The University Grants Commission (UGC) through UGC, NET-JRF.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

How to cite this article: Devi, B.D. & Masroor Jahan, M. (2025). Well-being and Adjustment among School Going Adolescents. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 13(3), 3440-3448. DIP:18.01.313.20251303, DOI:10.25215/1303.313