


Original Article

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN MENTAL HEALTH AMONG HIGHER SECONDARY STUDENTS IN IMPHAL WEST DISTRICT, MANIPUR

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the differences in mental health between male and female higher secondary students and to compare the differences in mental health based on school, home, and peer dimensions. Hypotheses of the study include that there will be no difference in mental health between males and females based on school, home, and peer dimensions. The descriptive survey method is employed. The random sampling technique is used to collect data. 243 higher secondary students (124 males and 119 females) aged 15-19 years from four (4) higher secondary schools in Imphal West District, Manipur were selected for the study. A standardized scale, the "Mental Health Scale," developed by Dr. Sushma Talesaro and Dr. Akhtar Bano (2017), was administered to the respondents. To analyse the data, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and an independent samples t-test were used. No significant difference between males and females was found in overall mental health, and in the school, home, and peers domains.

Keywords: Mental Health, Adolescents, Higher Secondary Students, School, Home, Peers

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a critical developmental stage marked by rapid physical, physiological, psychological, and behavioural changes that occur during the transition from childhood to adulthood. This period plays a vital role in shaping an individual's present and future health, as experiences and health conditions during adolescence often influence well-being in adulthood. Because of these significant changes, adolescence is considered a foundational phase for establishing lifelong physical and mental health [World Health Organization. \(2014\)](#). According to the World Health Organization, adolescents are individuals aged between 10 and 19 years, and they constitute an important and dynamic segment of the population. Health-related challenges that emerge during this stage can significantly affect adolescents' physical, social, and psychological development as they grow [World Health Organization. \(2014\)](#).

Health is not merely the absence of disease but a state of complete physical and mental well-being. Mental health, in particular, is an essential component of overall health. The World Health Organization defines mental health as a state of well-being in which individuals recognize their abilities, can cope with normal life stresses, work productively, and contribute meaningfully to their community [World Health Organization. \(2001\)](#). In simple terms, mental health reflects how individuals think, feel, and behave, as well as how they manage emotions, maintain relationships, and handle challenges in daily life.

Historically, mental health was viewed primarily as the absence of mental illness or disorder. However, contemporary perspectives emphasize that mental health goes beyond this limited definition and includes positive psychological functioning and

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emotional well-being. In recent decades, mental health has gained recognition as being equally important as physical health and is now regarded as a crucial factor in promoting overall quality of life and well-being. Addressing mental health concerns during adolescence is therefore essential for better individual development and a healthier adult life.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Adolescence is a crucial developmental stage during which mental health strongly influences present well-being and future adult outcomes. However, adolescent mental health remains inadequately addressed despite contributing nearly 10–20% of the overall disease burden in this age group (WHO, 2020). Recent evidence suggests a rising prevalence of mental health problems among adolescents, underscoring the need for focused research.

In India, regional and sociocultural factors further complicate adolescent mental health concerns. The National Mental Health Survey reported a prevalence rate of 14.1% for mental health disorders, with Manipur among the states showing higher rates [Murthy \(2017\)](#), [National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences. \(2016\)](#). Despite adolescents being a vulnerable population, empirical studies from the North Eastern region remain limited. The present study addresses this gap by examining the mental health status of higher secondary school students in Imphal West District, Manipur, contributing context-specific evidence to support early identification and intervention efforts.

OBJECTIVES

- 1) To compare the difference in mental health between male and female of higher secondary students in Imphal West District, Manipur.
- 2) To compare the difference in mental health between male and female of higher secondary students in Imphal West District, Manipur, based on the dimensions: School, Home, and Peers.

HYPOTHESES

- 1) There exists no significant difference in mental health between male and female of higher secondary students in Imphal West District, Manipur.
- 2) There exists no significant difference in mental health between male and female of higher secondary students in Imphal West District, Manipur, based on the dimensions: School, Home, and Peers.

RESEARCH METHOD

Descriptive research method is used in the present study.

SAMPLE AND SAMPLING

The present study employed a random sample of 243 higher secondary students (124 males and 119 females) aged 15-19 years from four (4) higher secondary schools in Imphal West District, Manipur.

TOOL USED

To measure mental health of the respondents, a standardized scale Mental Health Scale (MHS) developed by Dr. Sushma Talesara and Dr. Akhtar Bano was used.

STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES USED

Percentage, Mean, Standard Deviation and Independent samples t-test were used.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1

Table 1 Difference in the Mean Scores of Mental Health Between Male and Female of Higher Secondary Students in Imphal West District, Manipur

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t value	Result
Male	124	138.02	23.364	241	-0.848	
Female	119	140.61	24.23			Not significant

The above table revealed the difference between mean scores of male and female higher secondary students in Imphal West District, Manipur. The t value found is not significant at any level of confidence.

Thus, the Hypothesis 1: There exists no significant difference in mental health between male and female of higher secondary students in Imphal West District, Manipur is accepted.

Table 2

Table 2 Difference in the Mean Scores of Mental Health Between Male and Female of Higher Secondary Students in Imphal West District, Manipur Based on the Dimension - School						
Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t value	Result
Male	124	44.31	9.15	241	1.958	Not significant
Female	119	41.98	9.414			

The above table revealed the difference between mean scores of male and female higher secondary students in Imphal West District, Manipur based on the dimension - School. The t value found is not significant at any level of confidence.

Table 3

Table 3 Difference in the Mean Scores of Mental Health Between Male and Female of Higher Secondary Students in Imphal West District, Manipur Based on the Dimension - Home						
Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t value	Result
Male	124	57.88	57.88	241	-1.911	Not significant
Female	119	60.55	60.55			

The above table revealed the difference between mean scores of male and female higher secondary students in Imphal West District, Manipur based on the dimension - Home. The t value found is not significant at any level of confidence.

Table 4

Table 4 Difference in the Mean Scores of Mental Health Between Male and Female of Higher Secondary Students in Imphal West District, Manipur Based on the Dimension - Peers						
Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t value	Result
Male	124	35.91	7.676	241	-2.211	Not significant
Female	119	38.08	7.64			

The above table revealed the difference between mean scores of male and female higher secondary students in Imphal West District, Manipur based on the dimension - Peers. The t value found is not significant at any level of confidence.

Thus, Hypothesis 2: There exists no significant difference in mental health between male and female students in higher secondary schools in Imphal West District, Manipur, based on the dimensions: School, Home, and Peers is accepted.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study indicated that no significant differences between male and female higher secondary students in Imphal West District, Manipur in overall mental health and across the domains of school, home and peers. It can be interpreted as there is no role for gender to play in determining the mental health among adolescents. A possible result may be an equal exposure of both male and female adolescents to comparable academic demands, family expectations, and peer interactions. Changing social norms and increased educational opportunities may have reduced traditional gender differences in mental health experiences. Previous research has also reported similar findings, emphasizing that environmental and psychosocial factors often have a greater influence on adolescent mental health than gender alone [Patel et al. \(2007\)](#), [Rutter \(2002\)](#). A systematic review of adolescent mental health studies in India reported that gender differences were minimal for overall mental health outcomes, with both boys and girls showing similar levels of psychological well-being [Malhotra and Patra \(2021\)](#). Likewise, a study on adolescent mental health found no significant gender variation in general mental health scores, suggesting that shared environmental and social factors may play a stronger role than gender in influencing adolescent mental health [Singh et al. \(2020\)](#). These findings indicate that adolescents of both genders may be similarly affected by common experiences related to academics, family environment, and peer relationships [World Health Organization. \(2020\)](#).

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Addressing mental health concerns during adolescence is essential, as this developmental stage plays a critical role in shaping future well-being. Promoting supportive school and family environments may help enhance mental health outcomes for adolescents irrespective of gender. The findings of the study suggest that mental health concerns among adolescents are not significantly influenced by gender, indicating that boys and girls experience similar challenges within school, home, and peer contexts. Therefore, schools should adopt inclusive mental health programmes that address common stressors such as academic pressure, peer relationships, and family-related concerns. Life skills education, stress-management activities, and counselling services can be implemented for all students rather than focusing on gender-specific approaches. Parents, teachers and school administrators should be sensitized to recognize early signs of mental health difficulties and provide a supportive and non-discriminatory school and home environment that promotes overall psychological well-being among adolescents.

Therefore, it is very crucial to check mental health of the adolescent students to avoid as well as minimize the negative outcomes one gets from having poor mental health. It is the need of the hour for the policymakers, educational administrators, mental health professionals, psychologists, social workers, school authorities, teachers and parents to collaborate and act accordingly to prevent development of mental health problems as well as to improve the mental health state of the future pillars. Interventions should be made at all levels to create awareness of importance of mental health, life skills, coping up strategies, proper guidance and counselling, social interaction programmes, personality and other skills development programmes, extra-curricular activities, etc. Both the parents and teachers have major responsibilities in maintaining and understanding the mental health of the students. A proper care, early detection, appropriate treatment and timely interventions could keep an individual's mind fruitful and healthy.

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