



Mental Health Issues Among Adolescents And Coping Strategies During Covid-19 Pandemic: A Way To Promote Wellness In This Current New Normal Situation

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Abstract

Mental health is basically the key through which individual can enter into the chamber of happiness and wholesome adjustment. Wellness is dependent on the adequate coordination of physical and psychological health. Current new normal situation is creating a new arena in front of us and hence adjustment to such lifestyles is also a new task for everybody. Achieving proper mental health is reliant on the fulfillment and possession of some basic criteria like integration of thoughts, positive healthy feelings, development of healthy self-concept etc. Entire population is affected by this pandemic but the nature of consequence is to some extent different for the adolescent subsample. Sudden changes in daily life styles make them more prone towards internet usage, substance abuse. Grief, depression, anxiety are now companion of their journey to existence. Life is not static, so intervention strategies and probable coping up processes are also there. Psychologists and Sociologists have suggested some probable pathways for achieving the homeostasis in the frame of mental health. Problems and remedial measures are just the opposite of the same coin, name life cycle and it is our duty to help the individual who is out of such healthy track so that at the end positive fragrance of life can be achieved by them. This particular tries to throw light on several mental health issues among adolescents and coping strategies during covid-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Mental health, Adolescence, Pandemic, Coping strategies.

Introduction:

‘Mental health’ and ‘mental illness’ are two related but distinct terms. Mental health basically originates from the term mental illness in order to reduce the stigma (Rowling et al. 2002). Ryff and Singer (1998) mentioned that health is not only used to explain medical concepts rather it is an idealistic one that requires an explanation of positive life-being one where human being have a sense of the rationale, engulfed in valuable relationship with others, and bears a sense of self-respect and mastery. As defined in the Annual Report of World Federation for Mental Health ‘mental health is not simply the nonappearance of mental disorder but it is a condition in which person lives harmoniously with him and others, adapting to, and participating in, and interchanging in social setting with the sense that he or she is achieving self-realization through his or her basic needs’. Burnman pointed out that mentally healthy person one who has a wholesome balanced personality free from inconsistency, emotional and nervous tensions, disorders and conflicts.

Mental health is a necessary condition of good adjustment and vice-versa. When a person is mentally healthy, there is a little likelihood of serious maladjustment. Thus, Scott, Nunnally and Smith (1961) have said that mental health is the key to wholesome adjustment. According to Maslow, mental health means freedom from disabling and disturbing symptom that interferes with mental efficiency, emotional stability or peace of mind. The status of physical and subjective well-being always depends on smooth coordination of physical and mental health, but current scenario is totally diverse from our conventional concept of daily living. The changeability and ambiguity of pandemic situation is associated with lockdown, social and physical distancing and quarantine strategies. Many psychological problems like, stress, anxiety, trauma, depression, frustration have been emerged progressively. Universal psychological reactions related to pandemic Covid-19 may diverge from panic reactions to invasive feelings of hopelessness and helplessness. It is well known that effective and stimulating psychosocial environment is essential to create proper teaching-learning environment. Daily exposure to this pandemic particularly for those who have been either affected personally or affectively detached from the loved ones may occur in a range of consequences. Reactions can be of any type like physical, emotional, behavioural and can crash the mental and substantial lives of youth throughout the country. Educational institutions are suddenly closed and students are facing abrupt changes in their social, academic and personal lives also. Situations become so critical for which they are abound to think that they are not getting the full value of their education and their future will be occupied with uncertainty. Keeping into mind this notion, the present venture has made an attempt to highlight the affective and cognitive changes of the adolescents alongside with the coping strategies that will be beneficial for them during this pandemic situation.

Mental Health issues among adolescents during Covid-19 pandemic:

Adolescents are facing numerous challenges in the awakening of COVID-19 outbreak. The pandemic has been intimidating and swelling effect on the well being of human beings globally. Increasing deterioration in physical health also leads to gamut of psychological consequences (Liu et al., 2020), ranging from anxiety, depression to disturbances in eating and sleeping etc. During this situation most of educational institutions have decided to stop classes through offline mode, as a result students experience distress and uncertainty regarding their future. Some students for whom campus is just the second home may suffer from intense feelings of frustration, anxiety or may resist with loneliness and isolation due to detachment from friends and partners. Not only that, some students also receives counseling services from educational institution that actually control their psychological upheavals, may suffer from increased amount of adjustments problems. Absence of such protective measure may increase the rate of suicidal ideation and substance use among them.

□ *Effects of Lockdown*

Quarantine has pessimistic and potentially extended effects on the psychological well-being of individuals, including symptoms of post-traumatic stress, perplexity, and antagonism (Brooks et al., 2020). Daily lives without school or college are associated with lessened physical activity, inappropriate patterns of sleep and diet, more screen time (Wang et al., 2020). The reciprocal interaction between brain maturation and social environment becomes in trouble which have a negative influence by inviting preliminary symptoms of psychiatric disorder during adolescence (Lamblin et al., 2017). Sudden separation from friends, excessive apprehension about relatives and their own health brings a kind of insecurity within them. Experience of lockdown becomes intolerable for them. They have to withdraw themselves socially and stay at home, where as in normal times this behavior was considered as pathological one (Tajan 2015; Lamblin et al., 2017).

□ *Suicidality*

Traumatic events like current situation unquestionably affect most of the demographics of adolescents. Communication through online mode creates a special kind of alertness regarding behavioral fluctuation among the students population and that is no doubt challenging for them. At this crucial moment parents have to play the supplementary role of teacher or counselor, predominantly for those who have suffered from gloominess and insecurities. In reality, it is very difficult for the parents to bear such role without knowing the adequate strategies for coping with such unusual situation and hence it results in frequent mental instabilities among adolescents, as well as higher risk for suicidality (Erbacher, 2020). Literature survey also suggests that stressful life events are another risk factor for adolescent suicidality (Brent 1995).

□ *Addictions*

The incidence of increased addictive disorders among adolescents has also been raised (Reijneveld et al., 2005) during this time. In order to cope with the traumatic events adolescents are expected to take on risk-behaviors, such as alcohol or any kind of substance abuse and sexual relationships (Hagan, 2005). Primarily adolescents involve in substance abuse due to coping reasons (Gerrard, Gibbons, Houlihan, 2008; Thombs and Beck, 1994). Basically, they experience 'negative emotionality' a propensity towards affective disorders like depression, anxiety, lower adjustment to stress, which ultimately leads to solitary substance abuse within them (Creswell, Chung, Wright, 2015).

□ *Grief*

COVID-19 brings the first experience of deaths for some adolescents. This experience is shocking and associated with longer grief (Nader and Salloum, 2011). Abrupt and unforeseen parental loss may be an etiological aspect for depressive disorder for some adolescents (Gray et al., 2011). Literature also suggests that poorer economic status may be negatively associated with adolescent's intrafamilial grief (Stikkelbroek et al., 2016).

□ *Family and Intrafamily Violence*

Pandemic situation elicits a lot of new experiences in the lives of human beings, among which family detention is a significant one. Literature review suggests that due to such drastic transformation women and girls are supposedly more exposed to gender-based violence, particularly sexual violence (UNFPA, 2020). During this time, adolescent break out the watchfulness of adults and parents which actually mark their agony in customary societal surroundings.

□ *Internet, Social Media and their Accessibility*

COVID-19 has created a new world of technology in front of us. Social media becomes the key catalyst within this era. It could be a constructive one in order to maintain social interaction during this time but it is also associated with harmful outcomes too. According to current survey, excessive use of internet may invite depression, anxiety, psychological distress and sleep problems (Keles et al., 2020; Barry et al., 2017). Internet addiction is characterized by too much or feebly controlled preoccupations, urges, or behaviors concerning computer use and internet admittance that guide to destruction or suffering (Shaw and Black, 2008). The information they receives through social media are much undeviating less contextual than conventional one. In order to deal with social media adolescents are utilizing several sources and different kinds of news, but for understanding such information their maturation levels are not up to the mark and they news proper guidance for monitoring such avenues, hence results in behavioural and emotional tribulations (Murty et al., 2016).

□ *Adolescents with Psychiatric Disorders facing the COVID-19 Eruption*

Insensitive effect of lockdown, terror of infection creates the situation miserable for adolescents with psychiatric disorders. Due to their poor impulse control, they are unable to tolerate the effect of lockdown (Chevance et al., 2020). Adolescents with Attention-Deficit-Hyperactive-Disorder (ADHD) might face some difficulty in dealing with lockdown. Daily routine, habit pattern are totally disrupted which ultimately leads to inflexible behaviour pattern, particularly for those who are suffering from pervasive developmental or spectrum disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

□ *Economic Crisis*

The COVID-19 pandemic is also ensuing in an economic disaster (Fernandes, 2020). Periods of economic crisis are linked with raise in suicides, depression, anxiety, and addiction disorders (Gili et al., 2013; Marazziti et al., 2020; Uutela, 2010; Silva et al., 2020). Parental emotional support and time spent with parents may conserve adolescents from potential depressing effects of an economic crisis (Gudmundsdóttir et al., 2016).

Several coping strategies for adolescents during Covid-19 pandemic:

- *Identification and labeling of feeling:* It is important to be acquainted with the feelings and emotions that are most significant at the time of emergency. Without accepting or identifying the thoughts it will be difficult for anybody to cope with the crisis.
- *Effective Communication:* Self-talk is one of the major aspects that most of the individuals follow in his or her daily living. Sincere efforts are necessary to keep oneself aloof from the negative affects otherwise coping will be so far from human population.
- *Impact of Family on Adolescent's coping:* Analysis of literature reveals the fact that family has a potential positive and negative impact on adolescent's rearing up process during the time of pandemic. Neglecting family environment, erroneous parental practices may influence adolescent's post catastrophic well-being (Cobham et al., 2016). Beside negative outcomes, some adolescents are mature enough to take responsibilities, engage in prosocial behavior and develop capacities of resilience and revival (Nuttman-Shwartz, 2019). In order to promote the well-being and sense of security within them parents have to play an important role. As parents are the main pillars of dependence of their lives so it is their duty to enhance their ward's well-being by providing adequate knowledge regarding safety and stress reducing actions for them (Wang et al., 2020).
- *Balanced Diet and Nutritious Food:* Physical well-being is always depends on maintenance of proper body homeostasis. As adolescents are growing population so their body balance is totally depends on proper dietary habit. Insufficiency in balanced diet may invite sleep and frequent changes of mood also.
- *Preparation of Everyday Me-time:* Work on strength-based skills for a livelihood. Keep an eye on the areas of improvement but do not let them supersede on one.
- *Avoidance of Excessive Media Exposure:* Increased screen time activity may hinder the impulse control of adolescents. Not only have that media sometimes provided misleading information. So cross-checking of every bit of knowledge and lesser internet usage may be another way for adaptive coping during pandemic.
- *Positive Strength Recognition:* It is important for students to reappraise their past success. The way they fought with that situation helps them to build up their strength and reminds the lessons that they have learnt from their unique strengths.
- *Support Group Creation:* Adolescents can bond any available peer sustaining programmes to support and highlight with other friends who are going through strain or obscurity in coping due to this pandemic.
- *Psychosocial Intervention:* Psychosocial interventions can aid adolescents after shocking events. Cognitive-behavioral therapy, Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), Narrative exposure therapy can be equally recommended for adolescents after disasters (Brown et al., 2017).
- *Cognitive-behavior therapy:* This therapy is considered to be one of the most effective therapeutic techniques for improving one's mental health. It is the way through which one can handle his or her problems by managing the thoughts responsible for inappropriate behavior. This technique helps the clients to think more realistically, behave better functionally and feel healthier emotionally.
- *Eye-movement-desensitization and reprocessing:* This is typically useful for the adolescents who are suffering from phobias, depression and obsessive compulsive disorder during this time. In this session an individual is asked to think about unpleasant image, memory or any traumatic event. In continuation with these thoughts the individual is also asked to move his eyes from side-to-side for several seconds. After a while the client has to explain what was brought up during the course of exercise. This cycle continues until the pain of the person becomes reduced.

- *Narrative exposure therapy*: The next useful technique that the therapists follow to deal with adolescent's multiple traumas is Narrative exposure therapy. The therapist asks the client to explain his or her emotions, judgment, sensory information and physiological manifestations in detail. The client is asked to narrate the shocking knowledge and revive the emotions practiced without trailing association to the present. Staying present is achieved by utilizing enduring reminders that the emotions and physical responses that occur in response to recollections are related to broken up facts but are then reprocessed and incorporated with meaning. At the end of treatment, a predictable autobiography that has been shaped by the therapist is offered to the client.

Conclusion:

During COVID-19 Pandemic many psychological problems like, stress, anxiety, trauma, depression, frustration have been emerged progressively. Universal psychological reactions related to pandemic Covid-19 may diverge from panic reactions to invasive feelings of hopelessness and helplessness. It is well known that effective and stimulating psychosocial environment is essential to create proper teaching-learning environment. Daily exposure to this pandemic particularly for those who have been either affected personally or affectively detached from the loved ones may occur in a range of consequences. Ignoring the instantaneous and long-term psychosomatic effects of COVID-19 Pandemic would be terrible, chiefly for adolescents. Interventions need to spotlight on cultivation of resilience in adolescents by enhanced message to address their doubts and concerns, enriching routines and physical activities, and taking dealings to alleviate loneliness. Parents needs to be concerned about their own mental health, coping strategies, and follow a replica of constructive psychological approach in order to prop up adolescents to get through this hard time.

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