



AN INVESTIGATION OF YOUTH PROBLEMS AMONG MALE AND FEMALE ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract

The present study was conducted to examine gender differences in youth problems among adolescents in Parbhani, Maharashtra. A total of 200 adolescents were selected through random sampling from the population of Parbhani, Maharashtra. The sample consisted of 100 male adolescents and 100 female adolescents. Efforts were made to obtain a representative sample with respect to area of residence and educational background, while participants were selected from a broadly similar socioeconomic background. Youth problems were assessed using the Youth Problem Inventory developed by Dr. (Mrs.) M. Verma. The mean score obtained by male adolescents was 67.56 with a standard deviation of 8.72, whereas female adolescents obtained a mean score of 58.29 with a standard deviation of 7.63. An independent-samples *t* test was used to examine the difference between the two groups. The obtained *t* value was 8.00 with 198 degrees of freedom, which was statistically significant at the .001 level. The findings indicate that male adolescents reported significantly higher levels of youth problems than female adolescents. The findings are consistent with previous Indian research reporting significant gender differences in adolescent problems and emphasizing the importance of gender-sensitive approaches to understanding and addressing youth concerns. The study highlights the need for systematic identification, counselling, and preventive interventions for adolescents experiencing family, educational, social, and personal difficulties.

Keywords: Youth Problems, Adolescents, Gender Differences.

Introduction

Adolescence is an important developmental period characterized by substantial physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and interpersonal changes. During this period, young people gradually develop greater independence and begin to make important decisions concerning education, relationships, identity, future occupation, and social roles. Although adolescence provides opportunities for growth and development, it may also be accompanied by a variety of personal, family, educational, social, and emotional difficulties.

The problems experienced during adolescence cannot be understood solely in terms of individual characteristics. Family relationships, educational expectations, peer relationships, socioeconomic circumstances, social norms, and perceptions of the future may influence the nature and intensity of adolescent problems. Consequently, systematic assessment of youth problems is important for identifying adolescents who may benefit from counselling and other forms of psychological support.

The Youth Problem Inventory (YPI), developed by Dr. (Mrs.) M. Verma, is designed to identify problems experienced by young people. Available descriptions of the inventory indicate that it assesses problems across major domains including family problems, school/college problems, social problems, and personal problems and oversensitivity. The inventory is intended to help identify problem areas and support counselling and psychological assistance.

Gender is an important variable when examining adolescent problems. Male and female adolescents may experience similar developmental challenges, but the expression, perception, and reporting of problems can differ. Social expectations and gender-role norms may influence the types of difficulties experienced by adolescents and the ways in which they respond to them.

Review of Previous Research

Pandit, Raina, and Abhyankar (2013) examined gender and emotional intelligence as predictors of adolescent problems among male and female adolescents. Their study considered problems in areas such as home, school, social relationships, and the self. The findings indicated that female students experienced fewer adolescent problems than male students and that gender was a significant predictor of adolescent problems. The authors also reported a negative relationship between emotional intelligence and adolescent problems. These findings are directly relevant to the present investigation because they suggest that gender may be associated with the level of problems reported by adolescents.

Punia and Chaudhary examined stress and youth problems among adolescents using the Youth Problem Inventory developed by Dr. M. Verma. Their study included 120 adolescents and examined relationships among parenting, stress, and different dimensions of youth problems. Family, social, personal, and oversensitivity problems showed positive relationships with stress, while school/college problems also demonstrated a positive relationship, although smaller in magnitude. The study demonstrates the usefulness of the Youth Problem Inventory for investigating the multidimensional problems experienced by adolescents.

A cross-sectional study of 600 school-going adolescents in Kollam district, India, investigated emotional and behavioral problems across gender and location. The study found that emotional and behavioral difficulties were present among a meaningful proportion of adolescents and emphasized the importance of early detection and intervention through schools and mental-health professionals.

Similarly, a study of 1,087 pre-university students in Bangalore examined emotional and behavioral difficulties among young people. The findings identified difficulties involving emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention, and peer problems, with some gender differences in the pattern of difficulties. The researchers emphasized the importance of gender-informed approaches in college mental-health programmes.

Research conducted in Kerala on adolescent problems perceived by school counsellors also reported differences in the types of problems encountered by boys and girls. Educational and family problems were reported for both groups, while some problem areas showed gender-specific patterns. Such findings indicate that adolescent problems should be examined from a multidimensional and gender-sensitive perspective.

Taken together, previous research suggests that adolescents experience problems across several domains and that gender may contribute to differences in the level or pattern of these problems. However, contextual differences in population, educational setting, socioeconomic background, and geographical region make it important to examine youth problems in specific local populations. Therefore, the present study was undertaken to investigate gender differences in youth problems among adolescents from Parbhani, Maharashtra.

Method

Statement of the Problem

“A Study of Gender Differences in Youth Problems among Adolescents.”

Objectives

1. To assess the level of youth problems among male adolescents.
2. To assess the level of youth problems among female adolescents.
3. To compare male and female adolescents with respect to youth problem scores.
4. To determine whether there is a significant gender difference in youth problems among adolescents.

Hypotheses

Male adolescents will have significantly higher youth problem scores than female adolescents.

Sample and Sampling

The sample consisted of 200 adolescents selected from the population of Parbhani, Maharashtra, through random sampling. The sample was divided equally according to gender in which Male adolescents were 100 and Female adolescents were 100. Efforts were made to make the sample reasonably representative in terms of area of residence and educational background. Participants were selected from a broadly similar socioeconomic background to reduce the influence of socioeconomic differences on the findings.

Research Design

The present investigation employed a quantitative, cross-sectional, comparative research design. The study compared youth problem scores between two independent groups—male adolescents and female adolescents. An independent-samples *t* test was used to determine whether the difference between the two groups was statistically significant.

Variables

Independent Variable

- Gender
 - Male adolescents
 - Female adolescents

Dependent Variable

- Youth problem score

Tool

Youth Problem Inventory: The Youth Problem Inventory developed by Dr. (Mrs.) M. Verma was used to assess youth problems. The inventory is designed for adolescents/youth and is intended to identify problems that young people may experience. Available descriptions of the instrument indicate that it covers major domains including family problems, school/college problems, social problems, and personal problems and oversensitivity. The instrument can therefore provide a broader assessment of problems rather than focusing on only one psychological or behavioural domain.

Operational Definitions

1. **Youth Problems:** In the present study, youth problems refer to the problems experienced by adolescents as measured by their scores on the Youth Problem Inventory developed by Dr. (Mrs.) M. Verma. A higher score represents a greater level of problems as measured by the inventory.
2. **Male Adolescents:** Male participants included in the study who belonged to the adolescent age group defined for the study.
3. **Female Adolescents:** Female participants included in the study who belonged to the adolescent age group defined for the study.

Procedure

After selecting the participants, the purpose of the study was explained to them. The Youth Problem Inventory was administered individually or in appropriate small groups under standardized conditions. Participants were instructed to respond honestly to the items and were assured that their responses would be used for research purposes. The completed inventories were scored according to the prescribed scoring procedure. The scores obtained by male and female adolescents were then subjected to statistical analysis.

Results and Discussion

Results

The obtained descriptive statistics are presented below.

Group	N	Mean	SD	't' value	Level of significance
Male adolescents	100	67.56	8.72	8.00	0.01
Female adolescents	100	58.29	7.63		

The mean youth problem score of male adolescents was 67.56, whereas the mean score of female adolescents was 58.29. Thus, male adolescents obtained a higher mean youth problem score than female adolescents, with a mean difference of 9.27 points. To determine whether this observed difference was statistically significant, an independent-samples *t* test was conducted.

The pooled estimate of variance was used because the two groups were independent and of equal size. The obtained *t* value was $t(198) = 8.00$. The obtained value is significant at the **0.001 level** ($p < .001$). Therefore, The research hypothesis is supported.

Discussion

The present study examined gender differences in youth problems among 200 adolescents from Parbhani, Maharashtra. The results demonstrated a statistically significant difference between male and female adolescents. Male adolescents obtained a higher mean score on the Youth Problem Inventory than female adolescents. The obtained *t* value of 8.00 was statistically significant at the .001 level.

The findings suggest that, within the present sample, male adolescents reported or exhibited a greater level of problems as assessed by the Youth Problem Inventory. This result is consistent with the findings of Pandit et al. (2013), who specifically investigated gender and adolescent problems and reported that female students experienced fewer problems than male students. Their study also identified gender as an important predictor of adolescent problems.

The findings can also be interpreted in the context of the multidimensional nature of adolescent problems. The Youth Problem Inventory assesses several areas, including family, educational, social, and personal problems. Therefore, a higher overall score may reflect difficulties across multiple areas rather than a single psychological problem.

The result is also broadly consistent with Indian research showing that adolescent difficulties vary according to gender and context. Studies of Indian adolescents have reported gender-related differences in emotional, behavioural, peer, and other problem areas.

One possible explanation for the higher scores among male adolescents may relate to differences in social expectations, family roles, peer relationships, behavioural expression, educational pressures, and opportunities to communicate emotional difficulties. However, the present study did not directly investigate the causes of the gender difference. Therefore, such explanations should be regarded as possibilities rather than conclusions established by the present data.

The findings have implications for educational institutions and counselling services. Since adolescent problems may involve several domains, schools and colleges can benefit from systematic screening and counselling programmes. Gender-sensitive counselling may be particularly useful because male and female adolescents may differ in the ways they experience and communicate their difficulties. Previous research has similarly emphasized early identification and school-based mental-health interventions for adolescents.

Conclusions

Male adolescents obtained a higher mean score on the Youth Problem Inventory than female adolescents.

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