



Psychosocial problems among adolescents: A critical review

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Abstract

The term adolescence has been derived from the word “Adolescere” which means to grow up. Adolescence is the transitional stage of development representing the period of time during which a person experience a variety of biological and emotional changes. Adolescence is linked to teenage years. Adolescence can be understood with the help of stages that is early adolescence and late adolescence. Psychosocial is the state of emotional and behaviour disorder with internalizing and externalizing conditions. Most common disorders include depression, anxiety, suicide, tendency and trauma. Since psychosocial problems are not easy to be detected by parents and teachers, and they are easily neglected. The main cause of anxiety among school children and adolescents are parent’s high educational expectations and pressure for academic achievement. Depression will not go on its own. Left untreated, depression can be damaging and can result in suicidal ideation. If an adolescent is depressed, it’s important to open up a dialogue in an honest and non-judgmental way. Some major causes of depression include psychosocial stress, serious or prolonged illness, major life style changes, experience of a traumatic event, academic struggle, conflict with family and peer relation and most important are the hormonal changes.

Keywords: psychological problems, adolescents, depression

Introduction

The term adolescence has been derived from the word “Adolescere” which means to grow up. Adolescence is the transitional stage of development representing the period of time during which a person experience a variety of biological and emotional changes. Adolescence is linked to teenage years. Adolescence can be understood with the help of stages that is early adolescence and late adolescence.

Early adolescence (10-14) years - It is at this stage the physical changes generally commence, usually beginning with growth spurt and soon followed by the development of sex organs and secondary sexual characteristics. These external changes are often very obvious and can be a source of anxiety as well as excitement or pride for the individual whose body is undergoing the transformation.

Psychosocial and social problems, particularly involving behaviour and school issues, are more common during adolescents. Adolescents are much more independent and mobile and are often out of direct control of adults. when mis behaviour becomes severe and frequent, adolescents should be evaluated for a psychosocial disorder by a depression, anxiety or mood disorder may have physical symptoms such as fatigue or chronic fatigue, headache and chest pain.

- **Depression:** is associated with high levels of stress, anxiety, and in the worst possible scenarios, suicide. It can also effect a teen’s personal life, school life, work life, social life, and family life. This can lead to social isolation and other problems. Depression isn’t a condition people can “snap out of it “, or simply “cheer up” from. It is a real medical condition that can effect a person’s life in every manner if it’s not treated properly. Estimates from a study published in American family physician state that up to 15% of children and adolescents have some symptoms of depression. The symptoms of depression can often be difficult for parents to spot sometimes depression is confused with the

typical feeling of puberty and teenage adjustment. Suicide is the second leading cause of death following motor vehicle accidents among teenagers and young adults. On average, adolescents aged 15 to 19 years have an annual suicide rate of about 1 in 10,000 people. Among youth 12 to 16 years of age, up to 10% of boys and 20% of girls have considered suicide. The teen years are an anxious and unsettling period as boys and girls face the difficulties of transition into adulthood. It is the period in life, that is often confusing, leaving teens feeling isolated from family or peers unfortunately, some may at one point or another perceive suicide as permanent answer to problems that are more often than not just temporary. The self-doubts, confusion, and pressure to succeed or conform can come at a high price for troubles than boys, but boys are about 4 time more likely to die from suicide attempt. This is because the methods hat boys choose often using firearms or hanging are more lethal than those chosen by girls namely drug overdose or cutting themselves. Anxiety disorder is one of the most common type of mental health concerns experienced by all ages, are mental health disorder that include extreme amount of unremitting fear, nervousness dread or worry. The most common form of adolescents anxiety disorder include generalised anxiety disorder (GAD) is characterized by extreme worry about a variety of events, including past, present and future event. Children and teens with GAD worry about a lot of issues including past conversation, behaviour, health competencies in academics or sports. Many teens with GAD find that they have difficulty controlling their extreme amount of worry and that anxiety interferes with their daily life.

- **Separation anxiety:** can be caused by willingness to separate from major attachments figures or from home. Threat of having to separate from caregivers leads to anxiety.

- **Thought disorder:** are psychiatric illness that involves serious problems with thinking, feeling and behaviour. Thought disorder are very rare in late childhood or early adolescent. The symptoms of thought disorder can include false belief about self or others, paranoia, hearing or seeing things that others don't see, extremely disconnected speech or thinking
- **Eating disorder:** especially in girls, are common and can be life threatening, some adolescents go to extraordinary length to hide symptoms of an eating disorder, which may include substantial reduction in food intake, purging after eating, use of laxatives and vigorous exercise.
- **Phobia:** A phobia is an identifiable and persistent fear that is excessive or unreasonable and is triggered by the presence or anticipation of a specific object or situation. Children and adolescents with one or more phobias consistently experience anxiety when exposed to a specific object or situation. Common phobias include fear of animals, insects, blood, heights, closed spaces, or flying.

Review of Literature

Connolly and Bernstein (2007) ^[7] found that anxiety was related to a lack of social skills, learning and attention problems as these skills vary with age, and the level of fear may vary with age in these age groups.

Murray *et al.*, (2007) ^[20] investigated whether psychological resources influenced the association between parent education, a maker of socioeconomic status and perceived stress. A cross-sectional analysis was conducted in a sample of 1167 non-Hispanic black and white junior and senior high school students, middle western public school district in 2002-2003 results revealed that adolescents from families with lower parent education are less optimistic than teens from more educated families.

Kende (2007) ^[16] suggests many teenagers are seriously affected by the experience of stress and depression. They may rely on their negative or positive behavior while dealing with their problems. Stress features a feeling of anxiety, frustration, worry and withdrawal and a typical session of anxiety may last for few hours to few days.

Torres *et al.* (2007) studied suicide attempts among depressed primary care adolescent patients. Youth classified as suicide attempters showed an elevated level of psychopathology, specifically depressive symptoms, externalizing behavioral disorder, anxiety substance use, mania, and PTSD symptoms.

Kantronits and wingert (2008) ^[15] noted that while today's teens are richer, more educated and healthier than ever before their seems to be an overwhelming rise of serious emotional problems in this population. Kids who are bullied or harassed at school and taunted or teased by others may create an environment that creates sadness and helplessness. Modern technology that offers pornography, cyber bullying and inappropriately used social networks that spread rumors and lies may further contribute to the overwhelming sadness of young adults today. The immense pressure and responsibility brought on by juggling work, extracurricular activities, and a demanding social life may further complicate the life of teenagers.

Parker *et al.*(2008) ^[23] examined the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and several addiction-related behaviors like gambling, internet use and video games

playing in two community-based sample of adolescents 13-15 years N (209) and 16-18 years old (N=458) both were measured using respective scales. Emotional intelligence was found to be moderate to strong predictor of addiction-related behavior in both the groups.

Sepulveda & Car Robles *et al.* (2008) ^[26] carried a study on teenager students, girls show health-threatening behavior, such as dieting, use of laxatives, vomit induction. 6% of such girls have BMI (Body Mass Index) of 17.5 or lower, while 2.5 of them show amenorrhea in the past 3 months. As for the boys they have an increased risk of compulsive eating.

Chaplin & Gilliam (2009) conducted a study on total anxiety and worry and oversensitivity symptoms were found to predict later depressive symptoms more strongly for girls than for boys. Physiological anxiety predicts later depressive symptoms for both boys and girls. These findings which are consonant with the result of the current study, highlight the importance of anxiety for the development of depression in adolescence, particularly worry and oversensitivity among girls.

Mahfouz *et al.* (2009) ^[21] vital study have been conducted on S P in children and young people, although less is known about the prevalence of S P in these population. Phobia anxiety is the most frequent mental health related problem among Saudi adolescents, with a rate of around 17.3%.

Nemeth *et al.*, (2009) ^[22] conducted a study to examine relationship among self-esteem, stress, social support, coping and to test a model of their effects on eating behavior and depressive mood in a sample of 102 high school students results indicate that stress and low self-esteem were to avoidant coping were related to unhealthy, eating behavior. Results also suggest that teaching adolescents skills to reduce stress, build self-esteem and use more positive approach of coping may prevent unhealthy eating and subsequent obesity and lower risk of depressive symptoms.

Suldo & Shannon *et al.* (2009) ^[25] conducted a study on 162 students participating in the 1B program and a comparison sample of 157 sample of 157 students in general education the study investigated the environmental3 stressors, and psychological adjustment. Factor analysis revealed that primary sources of stress experienced by 18 students was related to academic requirement. In contrast, students the general education program indicated a high level of stress associated with parent-child relation, academic struggle, conflict with the family and peer relation, as well as role transition and societal problems.

Katrina (2009) ^[14] suggests, people believed the anxiety experienced by upper secondary school girls relates only to school. However, the picture is far broader. Girls feel responsible for various types of relationship such as with friends and siblings, or have taken upon their leisure time commitments in various associations and organizations.

Ackard *et al.*(2011) ^[1] showed that among teenagers which have not been diagnosed with eating disorder in clinical context, but who show symptoms of an eating disorder, the following may be observed in comparison with the asymptomatic teenagers, lower self-esteem, more frequently substance abuse, depression, suicidal thought and even more frequent suicide attempts.

Anita *et al.* (2012) ^[2] unipolar depressive disorder in adolescence is common worldwide but often unrecognized. The incidence notably in girls, raises sharply after puberty

and, by the end of adolescence, the 1 year prevalence rate exceeds 4%. The burden is highest in low income and middle income countries. Depression is associated with substantial present and future morbidity, and heightens suicide risk. The strongest risk factor for depression in adolescents are a family history of depression and exposure to psychosocial stress. Inherited risks, developmental factors, sex hormones and psychosocial adversity interact to increase risk through hormonal factors and associated perturbed neural pathways. Although many similarities between depression in adolescents and depression in adulthood exist, in adolescents the use of antidepressants' is of concern and opinions about clinical management are divided. Effective treatments are available, but choices are dependent on depression severity and available resources. Maugham & Collis *et al.* (2013) ^[19] examined that anxiety and depression are strongly correlated, but it cannot be ascertained which of these appears first. Hence it seems that the period since childhood and until early adolescence anxiety precedes depression. While starting with late adolescence both variants are possible, meaning it is possible that anxiety precedes depression or that depression precedes anxiety.

Baxter *et al.* (2014) ^[5] study has shown that anxiety disorders with the highest burden are found in both male and females, adolescents and young adults. Moreover, the most frequent anxiety disorders during adolescence are social phobia and generalized anxiety disorder, as compared to adulthood where the most common clinical disorder concern specific phobia.

Findings of the Study

- The finding revealed that youth classified as suicide attempter's showed an elevated level of psychopathy, specifically depressive symptoms, anxiety substance use and PTSD symptoms. (Torres *et al.* 2007)
- It was found that anxiety was related to a lack of social skills, learning and attention problem. (Connolly and Bernstein 2007) ^[7]
- The results revealed that stress brings out, feeling of anxiety, frustrations, worry and withdrawal and a typical session of anxiety may last for few hours to few days (Kende 2007) ^[16]
- The findings revealed that the emotional intelligence was found to be moderate to strong predictor of addiction related behavior in both the groups. (Parker 2008) ^[23]
- It was revealed that the immense pressure, brought by juggling work, extracurricular activities and a demanding social life of may complicate the life of teenagers. (Kantronits and wingert 2008) ^[15]
- The results revealed that teenage girls show health threatening behavior such as dieting, vomit induction.6% of such girls have BMI of 17.5 or lower. (Sepulveda and car robes 2008) ^[26]
- It was found that the oversensitivity symptoms were found to predict, latter depressive symptoms were strongly for girls than for boys. (Chaplin and Gilliam 2009)
- The findings revealed that adolescents cope with stress in two ways –problem solving –wielding of thoughts and feelings caused by problem. (Jigisha and Chaudhary 2009) ^[13]
- The results revealed that girls feel responsible for

various types of relationship such as those with friends and siblings, or have taken up their leisure time commitments in various associations and organizations. (Katrina 2009) ^[14]

- The results revealed that phobia and anxiety are the most frequent mental health related problems among Saudi adolescents with a rate of 17.3 (Mahfouz 2009) ^[21]
- The findings revealed that teaching adolescents skills to reduce stress, build self-esteem may prevent unhealthy eating and subsequent obesity and lower risk of depressive symptoms(Nemeth *et al.*2009) ^[22]
- The results revealed that primary source of stress experience by 18 students was related to academic requirement (Suldo and Shannon 2009) ^[25]
- The findings revealed that the strongest risk factor for depression in adolescents are a family history of depression and exposure to psychosocial stress (Anita *et al.* 2012) ^[2]
- The findings revealed that the most frequently anxiety disorder during adolescents are social phobia and generalized anxiety disorder (Baxter 2014) ^[5]

Conclusion

It can be concluded that, adolescents experience various life stressors ranging from catastrophic or traumatic life events. A stressor is, any change that upsets the balance in our lives. The more stressors a person experiences in a given period of time, the greater the risk for illness. Stressors can also trigger depression and suicidal behaviours in adolescents. Adolescents experience various psychosocial problems including depression, stress, and anxiety, thought disorder, eating disorder, and phobia. Some major causes of depression include psychosocial stress, serious or prolonged illness, major life style change or experience of a traumatic event, academic struggle, conflict with family and peer relation and most important hormonal changes. Teen hormones affects teenager's moods, emotions, and impulses as well as their body. The mood swings that teen experience are caused by fluctuation in estrogen, progesterone and testosterone- the sex hormones. The immense pressure and responsibilities brought on by juggling work, extra-curricular activities, and a demanding life may further complicate the life of teenagers. The most frequent anxiety disorders during adolescence are social phobia and generalized anxiety disorder. It can be inferred that school is the main source of stress for adolescents, and stress is one of the important factor causing depression to an individual, depending on the strength and persistence of the stress, the individual personality, cognitive appraised of the stress and social support.

Recommendations

- Good parenting protects against psychosocial problems in adolescence. Good parenting helps children adjust to change and establishes healthy pattern of physical, cognitive, emotional functioning.
- Allow adolescents talk openly without hearing advice or a dismissal of their thoughts and feelings.
- Good friendship and supportive family environment may help protect adolescents from depression.
- When disciplining adolescents, replace shame and punishment with positive reinforcement for good behaviour.
- Pay attention to warning signals.

- If a young person's anxieties are becoming so unreal or so strong that they are interfering with their daily life, then talk with a counsellor.
- Nutritional counselling should be provided to the teen suffering from eating disorder.
- Teen depression isn't a weakness or something that can be overcome with willpower. It can have serious consequences and requires long-term treatment.
- Depression will not go away on its own. Left untreated, depression can be damaging and can result in suicidal ideation.
- Involve teen in discussions about treatment options, and meet a few professionals before making any decisions.
- Adolescents should be encouraged to discover their own unique qualities and have the confidence to face challenges and take risk.
- Trust in others and feelings of being safe and cared for are key components to recover from abuse.

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