

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF ADOLESCENTS IN THE 21ST CENTURY - AN INTROSPECTION

Dr. Mani Joshi

Assistant Professor (Selection Grade)

Shri J.N.M. P.G. College, Lucknow

Email: manijoshi9@yahoo.in

Abstract

Adolescence, a period of storm and stress along with full of contradictions, mood swings and emotions, is a turbulent time charged with conflicts in their lives. The will to win, the desire to succeed, and the urge to reach their full potential are the keys that will unlock the door to personal excellence in them. In India adolescents of different castes, creeds, colors and gender have to face different problems as they have to be prepared for the 21st century. For this education should help them to fulfill their different needs because need fulfillment or need gratification is a better way than need deprivation. Adolescents of today are responsible adults of tomorrow. So they should be trained in selecting the right vocation, feeling of patriotism, brotherhood, nationalism, faith and tolerance and how to lead a perfect and balanced life through stress management for their physical and mental well-being to cop up with challenges and problems of day-to-day life.

Keywords

Adolescents, Issues, Peer Pressure, Conflict Management, Stress Management, Depression, Bullying, Anger Management, Delinquency, Challenges, Self-Esteem, Self-Actualization.

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

Received: 19.11.2022

Approved: 25.12.2022

Dr. Mani Joshi,

*ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF
ADOLESCENTS IN THE 21ST
CENTURY - AN INTROSPECTION*

*RJPSSs 2022, Vol. XLVIII,
No. 2, pp.143-154
Article No.18*

Similarity Check: 11%

Online available at:

*[https://anubooks.com/journal-
volume/rjpss-vol-xlvihi-no2](https://anubooks.com/journal-volume/rjpss-vol-xlvihi-no2)*

DOI: *[https://doi.org/10.31995/
rjpss.2022v48i02.18](https://doi.org/10.31995/rjpss.2022v48i02.18)*

Introduction

Adolescence is the onset of puberty and ends in the mid-20s. It is a critical period of development during which key areas of the brain mature and develop. These variations in the structure, functioning and connectivity of the brain make adolescence a phase of opportunities to touch new heights in achievements and to strengthen positive relationships with parents and friends and to realize one's developing identity. It is also a phase of flexibility that can modify the setbacks of the childhood and set a launch pad for a bright future.

Social issues are an integral part of any society that affects individuals, groups and society as a whole. Adolescents face social problems just like any other adult does. Adolescents are more susceptible to these challenges as their brains are still in the developing stage and they are experiencing continuous biological changes in their bodies. Social issues which we might think of as "adolescence problems" can affect both the physical as well as emotional health of the adolescents.

Today's adolescents are facing new and different social issues due to technology and scientific advancement. Social and electronic media and digital communication have modified or accelerated the pace of some of the adolescent problems as it has changed the way of adolescents interact with their peers, for example. Adolescents lack essential interpersonal communication skills like knowing how to pick up on social cues as virtual socializing and learning were essential during the COVID-19 pandemic. Adolescents' social media and texting habits are changing the way they communicate, learn, sleep, and exercise, and thus is changing their lifestyle. On an average adolescent spends more than eight hours each day using electronic devices. Although not all social issues and problems are an outcome of technology but for most of the social problems technology and media, use is responsible.

Characteristics

Adolescence is the most important period of human life. Poets have described it as the "spring of life of human beings". This period runs between childhood and adulthood and is also known as teenage period. According to some psychologists, it is the period when an individual is capable of begetting offspring. It is the period of "storm and stress, period of transition, period of difficult adjustment, period of new birth and period of recapitulation and change". According to Indian psychologists, adolescence ranges from 12 to 18 years.

In India, children achieve puberty earlier because of favorable climate and cultural factors. The puberty stage for boys ranges from 13 to 18 years and for girls it ranges from 12 to 16 years. The range of adolescence not only differs from country to country but also varies from community to community and from individual to individual.

Adolescence can be characterized on the basis of physiological, psychological, behavioural and sociological changes as a result of physical, mental or intellectual, emotional, social, sexual and moral development. Change in physical appearance occurs due to the secretion of different hormones in the body. It is the period of attraction, affection, aspiration, anxiety, depression, curiosity, fear & frustration, gender consciousness, and day-dreaming which leads to several behavioural changes like due importance to recognition, feeling of acceptance at home, school and society, feeling of belongingness, importance to self-respect, regard and fame, realization of their potential to become successful in life, aggression, violence, impulsive and radical mood swings, social-phobias and distraction, egocentric complex and conflicts due to unfulfilled needs and desires, feeling of being unwanted and uncared in the peer group poses threat to their status.

This is the “period of simple recapitulation of infancy when they behave like infants”. This is a period of great stress and storm because a few new instincts and emotions emerge and disturb the personality of the adolescents. In this stage, scientific, philosophical, and humanistic interests begin to take shape. Poetry, science and critical thoughts monopolize the adolescent mind and there are vague doubts and questions in their minds about the constitution of the universe and society.

There is a crystalization of special mental abilities during adolescence. Higher mental abilities like decision-making, generalization, memory, language development, creativity, and emotional expressions are developed during this stage. They give importance to idealism, hero-worship and reality and they want to change the society. They give importance to social relations and social values and group psychology dominates. An attitude of dependence is seen in them specially on their friends, development of delinquency, feeling of freedom and revolt and political parties influence them most. Feel of self-respect, construct of their own philosophy and their own perspectives of life.

Issues

Adolescents face several problems and have issues on a daily basis as this is the most awkward growth stage of their lives. During this time, adolescents are exposed to some overwhelming external and internal struggles. They have to cope with hormonal changes, social and parental forces, work and school pressures etc. Many of them feel misunderstood. Physical and physiological changes i.e. adjustment to physical appearance, emotional changes – mood swings and complexes, behavioural changes – impulsive and radical, substance use and abuse, cyber addiction, coping with stress, social and academic issues, peer pressure, cyberbullying, harassment, frightening and threatening, aggression and violence, tension and distraction, gender consciousness and self-esteem are the various issues and problems affecting adolescence life.

- ✓ **Peer Pressure** issue is one of the most important factors affecting adolescents. Friends become extremely important to them and can have a great influence on their choices. As adolescents focus more on their peers, that inevitably means they withdraw from their parents/family. There may be a sudden behavioral change resulting in a refusal to comply with reasonable rules and boundaries or avoiding the consequences of bad behavior by lying. Adolescents may be seen spending too much time alone.
- ✓ **Conflict Management** is another very important aspect while dealing with adolescents. As they begin seeking independence, they frequently argue. Constant escalation of arguments, violent atmosphere at home, skipping school, getting in fights and run-ins with the law are all negative behaviors that go beyond the norm of adolescent rebellion. Every view of the parent is misinterpreted by the adolescents which is a part of the growing stage. No two individuals have the same thoughts in the same manner and differences of opinion are always there, the cause for concern is that a basic conflict should not turn into an aggressive debate or fight. Trust is the foundation of any relationship. Spying, cross-questioning/ checking with friends or doubting hamper their bond, leading to defiant behaviors. It is important to accept adolescents as they are and to build trust in them. This will help them develop self-respect, trust and a feeling of acceptance of themselves as well as of others in their circle of friends and relatives. Most of the adolescents are not able to develop positive

self-esteem because of tense family environments and frequent criticism by parents. Parents should try to develop respect for mutual virtue as it will lead to the development of a stronger bond between them and adolescents. Adolescents should be treated as an individual first and as a offspring later.

- ✓ **Stress Management** is also of utmost Importance. Stress with respect to adolescents stays unnoticed, but adolescents often undergo stressful events just as adults do. Some major factors causing stress include continuous failure in academics, unbalanced parenting styles and also financial crisis in most cases. Many of the adolescents burden themselves with stress, when it does take place, inadequately managed stress can lead to anxiety issues, aggressive conduct, usage of obscene language and also physical illness. Being unable to cope up with the hectic regime of the school is one of the major causes of stress in the adolescence period. Authoritarian parents, which enforce rigid obedience at the cost of the personal preference of the adolescent weaken their mindset which can lead to the feeling of self-doubt among them.
- ✓ **Lack of Confidence** : Adolescents encounter an array of difficulties in their period of adolescence and tackling them can often challenge their own self-confidence. Factors affecting the self-confidence of adolescents may vary from their own biological changes & developments to getting less attention from their peer group. This is the time when even a single drop of negativity around them makes them hurtful, making them to expose their vulnerable side to the family and society. In severe cases, there are multiple mental breakdowns faced by the adolescents at this age.
- ✓ **Poor Motivation** cause a lack of self-confidence which leads to self-loathing, eventually surfacing as social withdrawal, inactivity, inability to comply and in most of the cases underperformance in academics which is a worrying factor for most of the parents. Laziness is basically avoidant behaviour, a response where the adolescent feels fatigued after failing repeatedly despite trying with their best efforts. Gradually this grasped helplessness being called as “lethargic” is an easier and more comfortable label to bear than those of “incapable”, “mindless” or “dense”.
- ✓ **Depression** : According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), an estimated 4.1 million adolescents in the United States had at least one

major depressive episode in 2020. That means 17% of American adolescents may experience depression before reaching adulthood. Data from NIMH also shows that depression is much more prevalent in female adolescents (25.2%) than male adolescents (9.2%). Spending a major chunk of their precious time on digital platforms leads to the prevention of adolescents from in-person activities with their peers as well as outdoor activities such as sports and games which are essential for warding off depression. They also experience new conditions like “fear of missing out” or FOMO, which further leads to feelings of loneliness and isolation. Disorders caused due to depression can be treated with taking help of mental health professionals.

- ✓ **Bullying** : Different Researches have inferred that social media and digital platforms have made bullying much more exposed and more elaborate for the public. Cyberbullying or cyber-harassment is a form of bullying using electronic means. This type of bullying has become increasingly common, especially among adolescents, as the digital sphere has expanded and technology has advanced.
- ✓ **Drug & Alcohol Use** : There are many factors such as bad parenting, peer pressure, depression, influence of culture and society, desire to be themselves, family environment, curiosity, experimentation etc which leads to drug & alcohol addiction in adolescents. No doubt, easy access to illegal drugs is the main reason why young people are able to try them.
- ✓ **Communication Gap** : Adolescents often hesitate in pouring their hearts and there is a communication gap between the parents and the young ones which have to be bridged. It is important for the parents to understand that the thoughts of the adolescent should not be suppressed and their ideologies must be accepted by the parents with due respect. Adolescence is the tender stage that it is, conversations that are touchy or might lead to heated conflicts must be prevented and also divergent opinions must be accepted.. Enforcing attentive listening at this stage does wonders and also makes them feel free to project emotions without being objected to. When the adolescents feel accepted by their parents without the fear of rejection, ears outside the house would not be required for them to open their hearts.

- ✓ **Anger Management** : Having a control over their impulses is something that is found to be difficult by the adolescents, due to the puberty changes that they undergo, thus hostile emotions are generally executed by them very frequently . Turning out to be very hysterical in their behaviour, rebellious conduct when feeling rejected, sudden changes in the mood, sense of disobedience towards elders are common conducts of the adolescents. In certain cases, the feeling of being misunderstood would even worsen the scenario. Empathy and understanding are the two main tools to mellow down the aggressive behaviour of the adolescents. It is also important for the parents to accept the fact that such a behaviour is temporary and being overreactive to the situation would simply heat the situation more. Exposure to a positive and progressive environment would help the adolescents to behave more positively. Forgiveness functions as a major role during the development of the adolescents. Parents must make sure that for the certain irrational behaviour of their young ones they should forgive them at the time of their misconduct and also make sure that the behaviour is not to be repeated in the future.

Challenges

Needs exert tremendous influence on adolescents behavior which results in unrest and stress and develops low self-esteem in them. Need fulfillment and need gratification lead to motivation and value development while need deprivation results in conflicts, depression, frustration, abnormal behaviors, crime, delinquency and anti-social behaviours.

Physiological Needs like need for food, water, clothes and shelter are basic needs of every adolescent. If their basic needs are deprived, it results in the abnormal behaviour of adolescents at home. In the classroom, if the teacher tries to create a congenial and healthy environment to satisfy their study needs, they show a willingness to learn and are ready to respond through study preparedness.

Safety & Security Needs :To fulfill the safety & security needs of adolescents, teachers should create a positive, healthy & democratic environment free from physical threats and psychological harms so that they may feel comfortable, secure and confident.

Social Needs : For social need gratification, teachers should take care to motivate students to develop social values like belongingness, love, care and affection and cooperate with them through active participation in the classroom.

Self-Esteem : In a classroom teachers should give due importance to the ideas, thoughts and views of adolescents to develop confidence, competence, self-respect, superior thinking and self-control to enable them in the direction of self-actualization to fulfill their self-esteem needs.

Self-Actualization i.e. Self-fulfilment or being what one can be – what one is potentially good at to become successful. For this teachers should provide a platform where their potential or talent may be exposed to attain perfection resulting in self-actualization.

Thus motivation is not a single magic formula for motivating all students and for every teaching-learning situation. What is true for one adolescent may not suit the other in the same or different learning situations. Motivation can bring desired behavioural changes to develop higher-order traits and values in them for their character and mental development.

Suggestions

For Parents

- ✓ Follow positive parenting techniques
- ✓ Provide unconditional love
- ✓ Be role models for adolescents
- ✓ Spend quality time with them
- ✓ Respect their self-esteem
- ✓ Develop friendly communication with them
- ✓ Know about their peer group
- ✓ Teach them the realities and hardships of life
- ✓ Develop life skills in them
- ✓ Give them chance to express their feelings, beliefs and ideas to reduce conflicts
- ✓ Give positive reinforcement to adolescents
- ✓ Make them aware of their duties and responsibilities by inculcating etiquette and moral values
- ✓ Teach them positive coping skills
- ✓ Should explain family rules to them

For Teachers

- Should apply emotional intelligence skills and knowledge of adolescent psychology to manage individual differences in classroom situation

- Should improve confidence level by bringing desired positive personal change in the adolescents
- Should positively manage the anxiety and fear of the adolescents to improve their performance
- Should make them good decision-makers so that they may plan, formulate and implement problem-solving practices in stressful situations
- Should develop ability to manage their time positively to achieve set goals in life
- Should do a “SWOT” analysis of the adolescents to identify their weaknesses & Strengths
- Should understand their feelings and make them aware of their positive and negative emotions
- Should use the positive emotions of adolescents to increase their creativity and adjustment to their well-being
- Should develop their interpersonal, social, and emotional skills and competencies
- Should use various diagnostic and Action Research techniques to solve their emotional and behavioral problems
- Should create a congenial environment in the class to realize the potential of adolescents
- Should teach them stress management skills
- Make their health-conscious by allowing them to participate in various physical activities
- Make them spiritual beings by allowing them to participate in Yoga and meditation camps to relieve stress

Thus an emotionally competent teacher is the heart and soul of any educational program.

According to Carl Rogers, “ Only those teachers are able to modify the behavior of their adolescent students who have qualities like Genuineness, Empathy and Acceptance with Learners”.

Research Findings

Do children in India grow well into adolescents?

- Research on adolescents has revealed that fifty percent of mental disorders

in adults begin at the age of fourteen i.e. anxiety, social phobia, mood swings and depressive disorders.

- In India, a key contextual determinant of adolescent mental health is the nature of schooling.
- Mental health literacy among Indian adolescents, parents and teachers has been reported as low.
- 21st-century adolescents spend more time with friends and less time with parents.
- Research has revealed that relatively high level of Testosterone hormone and relatively low levels of Cortisol hormone secretion is responsible for delinquent behavior in adolescent boys.
- Research has revealed that the Anterior Temporal Lobe of the brain is implicated in processing social emotions like guilt and embarrassment.
- Researches reveal that Oxytocin and Vasopressin hormones cause neuro-behavioral changes at puberty.

Conclusion

India is a young country with a maximum population of younger generation. It is a challenge for our nation to channel and utilize the energy of adolescents positively for the growth and development of the country. How to make the adolescents be vocationally oriented and health conscious? How to make them earn and spend money logically so that they can think logically and act globally for their better physical, mental and spiritual well-being? In this era of digitalization and cybercrime, parents and teachers should join hands to raise and rejuvenate the lives of adolescents so that they can cope up with and sustain themselves in this 21st century. Parents and teachers should also inculcate in adolescents higher-order values of patriotism, nationalism and global thinking so as to attain global peace and inner happiness for their better future tomorrow as Generation Alfa is waiting for its turn.

References

1. Ahuja, S., Kumari, S. (2008). Impact of Extended Video Viewing on Emotional Stability Among Preadolescents. *Psychological Studies*. 53(3&4). **Pg. 294-297.**
2. Archana, P.V. (2004). A study of health-related behaviors among adolescents. Unpublished M.Sc. project. University of Madras: Chennai.

3. Bailly-Lambin, I., Querleu, D., Beuscart, R., Collinet, C. (2004). Sleep in adolescents and its disorders: A survey in schools. *Encephale*. 30(4). **Pg. 3529–3532.**
4. Call, K.T., Reidel, A.A., Hein, K.L., Vonnie, P A., Kipke, M. (2002). Adolescent health and well-being in the twenty-first century: A global perspective. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*. 12(1). **Pg. 69–98.**
5. Hans, G. (1994). Lifestyle education for student youth: Need and strategy. *The Indian Journal of Social Work*. LV (1). **Pg. 25–39.**
6. Jessor, R. (1992). Risk behaviors in adolescents: A psychosocial framework for understanding and action. In D.E. Rogers, & E. Ginzberg. (Eds). *Adolescents at risk: Medical and social perspectives*. Westview Press: Boulder. **Pg. 24.**
7. Kapur, M. (1992). School mental health in India. In S. Malhotra, A. Malhotra, & V.K. Sharma (Eds). *Child mental health in India*. **Pg. 179–188.** Macmillan: Delhi.
8. Khanna, N., Singh. (2000). A study of leisure time utilization by students in Delhi. *Journal of Educational Research and Extension*. 37(1). **Pg. 1–11.**
9. Larson, R.W., Wilson, S., Brown, B.B., Furstenberg, F.F., Jr., Verma, S. (2002). Changes in adolescent interpersonal experiences: Are they being prepared for adult relationships in the twenty-first century?. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*. 12. **Pg. 31–68.**
10. Malhotra, S., Patra, B. (2014). Prevalence of child and adolescent psychiatric disorders in India: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Child and adolescent psychiatry and mental health*. 8(1). **Pg. 22.**
11. Mohan, V., Kataria, A. (1998). A study of delinquency proneness in adolescents in relation to adjustment and Trigun personality. *Personality Study and Group Behavior*. 18. **Pg. 9–25.**
12. Pillai, A., Andrews, T., Patel, V. (2009). Violence, psychological distress and the risk of suicidal behavior in young people in India. *Int J Epidemiol*. 38(2). **Pg. 459–69.**
13. Rani, M., Karunanidhi, S. (2010). Prevalence of depressive symptoms among urban adolescents in South India. *J Indian Assoc Child Adolesc Ment Health*. (2). **Pg. 33–43.**
14. Sharma, R., Grover, V., Chaturvedi, S. (2007). Health-risk behaviors related to road safety among adolescent students. *Indian J Med Sci*. 61(12). **Pg. 656–62.**

15. Sen, S. (1993). Juvenile delinquency. *Indian Journal of Criminology*. 21(2). **Pg. 82–89.**
16. Sharma, D. (2004). Cultural pathways through the information age. Pearson: New New Delhi.
17. Singh, A.K., Maheswari, A., Sharma, N., Anand, K. (2006). The lifestyle associated risk factors in adolescents. *Indian Journal of Pediatrics*. 73. **Pg. 55–60.**
18. Singh, R.A., Singh, B.K. (1989). Delinquency in secondary schools: A psychosocial approach. *Indian Journal of Psychology*. 64(1–4). **Pg. 41–45.**
19. Tikoo, V., Dhawan, A., Pattanayak, R., Chopra, A. (2013). Assessment of Pattern and Profile of Substance Use among Children in India [Internet]. [cited 2014 September 8]. Available from: http://www.ncpcr.gov.in/view_file.php?fid=17.
20. Tripathi, B.M., Lal, R.C. (1999). Substance abuse in children and adolescents. *Indian Journal of Pediatrics*. 66(4). **Pg. 569–575.**
21. Verma, S., Singh, M.B. (1998). Perceived causes of behavior problems among Indian adolescents. *Psycho-lingua*. 28(2). **Pg. 151–158.**
22. Verma, S., Saraswathi, T.S. (2002). Adolescence in India: Annotated bibliography. Rawat Publications: New Delhi.
23. World Health Organization. (2004). World health report. Retrieved from <HTTP://www.who.org> (accessed on 13 July 2004).