SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND MENTAL HEALTH OF SCHOOL CHILDREN

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Abstract

Background: Adolescence is the period of transitions and challenges. Apart from the adjustment to major physical and psychological changes the adolescents have excessive burden from their family members and school to excel in academics and which leads to affect their mental health. There are many factors which influence the mental health of school children. Families' socio-economic status is one of them. Low socio-economic status of families restricts children to access resources to meet the challenges in their life which may influence their mental health.

Aim: The present study aims to understand the relationship between socio-economic status and the mental health of school children.

Method: The study was conducted among 180 randomly selected secondary school children (standard 9th and 10th) in Kolhapur city in Maharashtra. Socio-economic status and mental health were assessed by socio-economic status scale developed by Prof. R.P. Verma, Prof. P.C. Saxena and Dr. (Smt) Usha Mishra and mental health battery developed by Prof. A.K. Singh and Dr. Aplana Sen Gupta respectively. The mental health battery has six components i.e. emotional stability, overall adjustment, autonomy, security-insecurity and intelligence.

Results: In this research study the one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed that there is no significant difference among children of different socio-economic status with regard to their mental health. The correlation test disclosed that there is a significant correlation between socio-economic status of respondents and their and mental health. A positive relationship was observed between socio-economic status and emotional stability, overall adjustment, intelligence and overall mental health where a negative relationship between socio-economic status and autonomy and security-insecurity was seen. Stepwise multiple regression analysis revealed income of family and family status factors emerged as significant predictors of mental health.
Conclusion: Socio-economic status is one of the important elements of mental health but it is

not the only factor in determining mental health of school children. Improvement in socio-economic status of families can help to promote mental health of school children.

KEY WORDS: Socio-Economic Status, Mental Health and Secondary School Children.

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INTRODUCTION:

Mental health is one of the crucial components of an individual's personality. A mentally healthy individual can live happily and work productively. A good mental health is more than just the absence of mental illness (Helen Herrman et. al. 2005). World Health Organization (2014) defines mental health as "a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community." According to Bhatia (1982) mental health is the ability to balance feelings, desires, ambitions and ideals in one's daily living. There are different theories and models to explain the criteria of mental health. Johoda (1958) in her book 'Current Concepts of Positive Mental Health' has given such six criteria i.e. attitude towards the self, degree of self-actualization, integration, autonomy, perception of reality and environmental mastery.

Adolescence is one of the most critical periods in a person's life. It is a period of 'Storm and Stress' (Erikson, 1968). In one hand an adolescent has to adjust with major physical and psychological transitions during this stage and on the other hand he/she is expected to perform well in school. This burden leads to affect his/her mental health. Poor mental health is associated with low educational performance and good mental health helps students to perform better in schools (Keong and Lee 2015). Mental health of school children is a product of many factors (like family environment, parental involvement, school environment, teachers-pupil relations, social relations with peer groups and various social skills). There is a strong influence of family, peer and school on children's development (Ines Blaze Vic, 2016). Socio-economic status of the families is one of them (Goodman & Huang, 2001). Socioeconomic status is considered as one of the most prominent environmental risk factors of mental health (Markus and Liisa, 2011).

Adolescents having good socio-economic status can have access to various resources so that they can cope up with these stressors more easily than the adolescents from low socio-economic status families. Due to such different challenges in this period, adolescence is very critical time from mental health perspective.

What is Socio-economic Status?

There is no universal agreed definition of socio-economic status. Socio-economic status is a construct that has different components. According to Guru Raj (2015) socioeconomic status is a person's position within a hierarchical social structure. Socioeconomic status consists of various components. As per Kuppuswamy socioeconomic scale, there are three components of socio-economic status (occupation of head, education of head and total monthly income of the family of socioeconomic status) (Sheikh, 2018). A sound socio-economic status can contribute for healthy individual development.

Socio-Economic Status and Mental Health: Is there any relationship between these two?

According to World Health Organization (2014) good quality socio-economic status helps to achieve positive mental health and social inequalities increase the risk of developing mental health issues. Some studies also disclose deprived environment can lead individuals to more uncertainty, conflicts, and threats due to which they do not have resources to meet their needs (Adler & Rehkopf, 2008). Some studies also reveal that chronic life stress, associated with environmental or psychosocial, contributes to poor mental health (Beckie, 2012)

Every society is unique in its own way. Every aspect of human life is deeply connected with society and its different components. Social elements like family, religion, school, peer groups and occupation have positive or negative influence on human beings. Historically, Indian society is divided into various stratifications or categories such as Varna and Jatis (Caste). Occupation of a person is based on the hierarchy from which he belongs to. This classification in the society determines the pattern of social interaction in the society. In the caste system intimate contact with those who are not members of your caste are avoided and sexual relations or

marriage with members of other social groups is forbidden (Mary Larkin, 2011). This system ascertain the socio-economic status of the people in India.

The social hierarchy based on caste determines the family occupation which also distinct its income. Children of lower caste are observed with very low self-concept, low self-esteem, and lower need to achieve (Jiloha, 2007).

Theories such as social causation theory (Dohrenwend & Dohrenwend, 1969) assumes that mental health problems are the outcome of socioeconomic deprivation. According to social selection theory (Eaton, 1980) mental health issues abates person's socioeconomic position because of his psychopathology and inability to perform expected role efficiently.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Economic, political and social circumstances in which people live ascertain their health and mental health. According to World Health Organization (2014) social determinants play very crucial role to promote positive mental health among the children. Socioeconomic factors affect individuals' vulnerability to mental illness and mental health problems (U.S. Public Health Service Report, 1999). A healthy socio-economic status can develop conducive home environment which can help the children to have good mental health. Recent studies have revealed that mental health has strong association with material deprivation.

Several research studies reveal the relation between socioeconomic status of the families and mental health of children. In some studies socio-economic status has emerged as one of the correlates to mental health of children (Bradley & Corwyn 2002). Researches have also proved that negative impacts associated with low socio-economic status may lead to affect the psychological functioning of individuals and will increase the chances to develop etiology of mental disorders (Turner, Wheaton, and Lloyd 1995; Link, Lennon, and Dohrenwend 1993; Kohn 1981; Wheaton 1978). Low socioeconomic status such as poverty limits access to resources to deal with environmental stressors has implication on mental health (Murali and Oyebede, 2004).

METHOD AND DATA COLLECTION

The students of 9th and 10th standard in Kolhapur city of Maharashtra was the universe of current study. As per records at the time of study there were 89 schools in the city. Initially 10% i.e. 9 schools were selected randomly (with lottery method) from the list of schools and 20 students from 9th to 10th standards from each school were chosen. Hence the sample size constituted to 180 respondents. Socio-economic status was assessed by socio-economic status scale developed by Prof. R.P. Verma, Prof. P.C. Saxena and Dr. (Smt) Usha Mishra whereas mental health was examined with the help of mental health battery developed by Prof. A.K. Singh and Dr. Aplana Sen Gupta.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS:

| One Way ANOVA					
Total Mental Health					
Between Groups	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	341.836	4	85.459		
Within Groups	6996.964	175	39.983	2.137	.078
Total	7338.800	179			

One way ANOVA was performed to understand the association between socioeconomic status and mental health of school children. Above table reveals that there is no association between SES and mental health of respondents. Present finding supports finding of some previous studies. The sample size taken from the universe is not stratified so that respondents were not randomly assigned hence the number of respondents from each socioeconomic status group is not equal and do not represent.

Table No. 1 Correlation Matrixes of Socio-Economic Status and Mental Health

Category	General	Family	Education	Occupation	Income	Other	Total SES	Emotional Stability	Over all Adjustment	Autonomy	Security-Insecurity	Self-Concept	Intelligence	Total Mental Health
General	1													
Family	.091	1												
Education	.169*	.190*	1											
Occupation	.129	.074	.316**	1										
Income	.270**	.265**	.531**	.499**	1									
Other	.229**	.195**	.384**	.446**	.577**	1								
Total SES	.368**	.375**	.639**	.668**	.921**	.749**	1							
Emotional Stability	.072	.021	.051	.017	.091	.142	.103	1						
Over all Adjustment	.052	-.228**	.118	.087	.138	.044	.096	.277**	1					
Autonomy	-.042	-.128	-.083	-.007	-.048	-.042	-.071	.132	.190*	1				
Security-Insecurity	-.021	.197**	-.083	.055	-.107	-.084	-.052	-.006	.030	.105	1			
Self-Concept	-.004	-.006	-.123	-.177*	-.234**	-.171*	-.224**	-.105	.043	.011	.196**	1		
Intelligence	.165*	-.075	.251**	.352**	.420**	.229**	.401**	.001	.165*	-.030	-.096	-.191*	1	
Total Mental Health	.123	-.113	.138	.208**	.222**	.110	.209**	.424**	.712**	.339**	.329**	.223**	.550**	1

Source: Primary Data

Graph No. 1 Showing Relationships between Socio-Economic Status and Mental Health
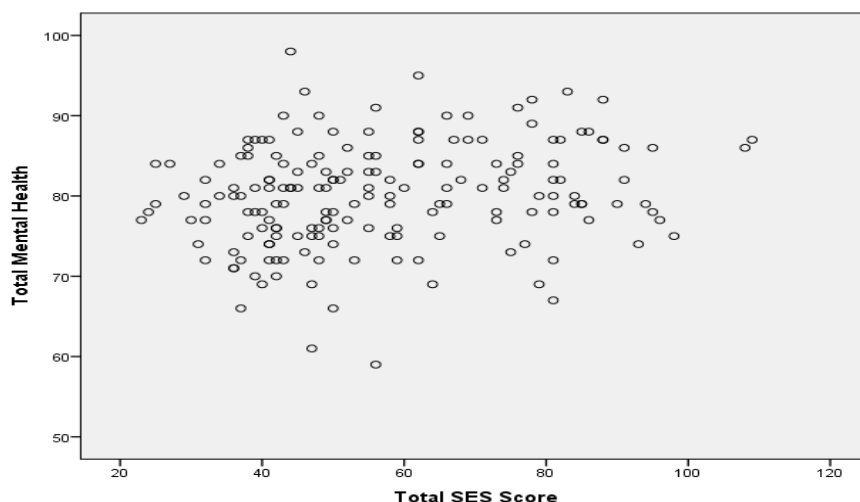
The above table and graph indicate correlation of coefficient of socio-economic status with six components of mental health and total mental health are .103, .096, -.071, -.052, -.224, .401and .209 respectively. All these r values are highly significant on 0.01 level of significance and clearly indicate positive relationship between socio-economic status and the six elements of mental health i.e. emotional stability, overall adjustment, intelligence and total mental health where there is negative relationship between socio-economic status and autonomy and security-insecurity. This is also evident that there is a weak positive correlation between respondents' SES and mental health.

Table No. 2 Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis for Mental Health Status

Sr. No.	Predictors	Adjusted R Square	DF	F	Standardized Coefficients Beta	Sig.
1	Income	.044	1, 178	9.18	.22	.000
2	Family	.070	1, 177	7.78	.27	.014

To identify the predictors of mental health of the school children, stepwise multiple regression analysis was performed in which socio-economic status and its components were

predictors and mental health was criterion variable. As observed from the above table that income and family status factors emerged as significant predictors of mental health. However, family's remaining factors/components such as general, educational, occupational, other and overall SES do not contribute to the mental health status of secondary school students. When income as a first variable was entered into the model the obtained adjusted R^2 = .044, and when 'family was entered the adjusted R^2 = .070 found. It means that this model accounts for 04%, and 07 % variance respectively in mental health status among respondents. Furthermore it is also seen from above table that standardized coefficient Beta for income is .22 and for family is .27 therefore it is articulated that these predictors have strong impact on the criterion variable i.e. mental health.

DISCUSSION:

The result of one way ANOVA discloses that there is no association between socioeconomic status of school children and their mental health. In the present study the respondents were not distributed randomly into various categories of socioeconomic status. The mental health is a product of many factors. Socioeconomic status is not the only component which affects mental health of school children.

Whereas the result of correlation shows that there is weak positive relationship between socioeconomic status of families of school children and their overall mental health. Mental health is an outcome of various factors such as hereditary characteristics, family and school environment, occupation, peer groups and culture. Family is the first institution of socialization and plays very vital role in shaping personality of an individual. Family has also very crucial role to play in the career planning and development of school children. The socio-economic status of family affects significantly to the overall development of children. In the country like India where the society is divided into various strata such as religion, caste and class children get different kinds of family environment. Socio-economic status of families of children generally consists of religion, caste, class and parental education-occupation-income. Research studies show that socioeconomic status of the family affects not only the mental health but also the overall personality of the school children.

In the present study it is also found that some of the factors of socioeconomic status of the families' have close relationship with the mental health of respondents. For the present study Socio-Economic Status Scale was used to assess respondents' socioeconomic status. In this scale there are six components of socioeconomic status i.e. General (Social factors), Family, Education, Occupation, Income, Other (and Total Socio-economic Status). Mental health battery was used to assess children's mental health status. In this study it is observed that socioeconomic status of the families' has close relationship with mental health of school children.

CONCLUSION:

Adolescence is the period of transition. Adolescent is neither a child nor an adult. At one hand he has to adjust to major physical and psychological transitions and at the same time he/she is expected to show his/her excellence in schools. This excessive burden leads to affect the mental health of school children. Mental health status depends on various factors and families' socioeconomic status is one of them. Healthy socioeconomic status of families of children provides access to resources to cope with psychosocial stressors in life. Good socioeconomic status of the family contributes to promote mental health of school children. But socioeconomic status is not the only component to contribute to mental health. Mental health is a result of many other factors.

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