



Mental Health amongst Adolescents in Context with Personality Traits and Adjustment

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ABSTRACT

The present empirical study was conducted on 120 adolescents respondents belonging to urban, Patna using incidental-cum-purposive sampling technique. It was intended to compare mental health of adolescents belonging to high / sound and low / poor groups in terms of ego-strength, decisiveness, emotional stability and adjustment. It was hypothesized that high sound and low / poor groups of adolescents in terms of ego-strength, decisiveness, emotional stability and adjustment will differ significantly on mental health measure. For the purpose MMHSI by Kumar and Thakur, SDPI and Mohsin-Shamshad Bell's Adjustment Inventory were used to measure mental health, ego-strength, decisiveness, emotional stability and adjustment of the respondents respectively. Besides, a PDS was used to seek other necessary information relating to the respondents. The scale were employed and data were obtained and were treated using-t-test. The results confirmed the hypotheses. It was found that psychological factors under study are conducive to mental health. Respondents belonging to high groups in respect of ego-strength, decisiveness, emotional stability and adjustment excelled over their counterparts groups of respondents in terms of mental health status. Thus, mental health amongst adolescents are function of personality traits and adjustment.

KEY WORDS

Mental Health, Adolescents, Personality, psychology.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a period marked by significant physical, emotional, and psychological transitions. It is a time when individuals are developing their sense of identity, forming relationships, and becoming more independent from their families. During this phase, adolescents may face unique challenges, from navigating the pressures of school to coping with peer expectations and evolving family dynamics. Mental health is a crucial aspect of this developmental stage, as it can significantly impact an adolescent's overall well-being, behavior, and adjustment to various life demands. Understanding the mental health of adolescents in the context of their personality traits and adjustment mechanisms is essential for promoting healthier development.

Mental health problems in adolescence can have long-lasting effects if not properly addressed. Conditions such as anxiety, depression, eating disorders, and behavioral issues are commonly observed during this period. Adolescents are particularly vulnerable because of the rapid changes in brain structure and function, hormonal fluctuations, and heightened emotional sensitivity. The World Health Organization (WHO) recognizes that mental health disorders are a leading cause of disability in young people worldwide, making it imperative to explore factors that may influence adolescent mental health.

Personality traits are consistent patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that characterize an individual across time and situations. These traits play a central role in how adolescents perceive themselves and interact with the world. The Five-Factor Model (FFM), often referred to as the "Big Five" personality traits, includes dimensions such as openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. These traits are believed to have a significant impact on an adolescent's emotional resilience, social functioning, and overall mental health.

For instance, adolescents with high levels of neuroticism may be more prone to experiencing negative emotions like anxiety and depression. In contrast, those who score higher in traits like extraversion and agreeableness may have stronger social support networks and better coping mechanisms when faced with stress. Understanding how these traits influence mental health can provide valuable insights into why some adolescents are more resilient to mental health challenges while others struggle.

Adjustment refers to the ways in which an individual copes with the demands of their environment and adapts to various life situations. For adolescents, this includes adjusting to academic challenges, social pressures, changing family dynamics, and the evolving expectations of adulthood. The quality of an adolescent's adjustment can influence their mental health, with poor adjustment often leading to maladaptive behaviors and psychological distress.

Effective adjustment is influenced by a range of factors, including personality traits, cognitive abilities, and social support. Adolescents who are able to develop adaptive coping strategies, such as problem-solving, emotional regulation, and seeking support when needed, are better able to maintain positive mental health. In contrast, those who engage in maladaptive coping, such as avoidance or substance use, may be more vulnerable to mental health issues.

The relationship between personality traits and mental health adjustment is complex. While some traits may predispose adolescents to mental health difficulties, others can buffer against stress and adversity. For example, high levels of conscientiousness are associated with better academic performance and more effective coping strategies, which can contribute to lower levels of anxiety and depression. Similarly, high levels of openness to experience may foster curiosity and flexibility in thinking, which can aid in problem-solving and adapting to new challenges.

On the other hand, adolescents who score high on neuroticism may experience more emotional instability and heightened sensitivity to stress, which can make it more difficult to adjust to the pressures of adolescence. Moreover, the interplay between personality traits and environmental factors—such as family dynamics, peer

relationships, and cultural influences—adds another layer of complexity to the way adolescents experience mental health.

Beyond personality traits, several external factors can significantly impact adolescent mental health and adjustment. These include family relationships, peer influences, societal expectations, and access to resources such as mental health support. Family dynamics, such as parental involvement, communication, and the presence of supportive relationships, play a key role in shaping an adolescent's emotional development. Peer relationships, both supportive and conflictual, can also impact self-esteem, social identity, and coping mechanisms.

Socioeconomic factors, such as financial stress and access to educational opportunities, can further exacerbate mental health challenges, while cultural norms and societal expectations around gender, race, and success can contribute to identity formation and mental health outcomes.

Interventions aimed at promoting healthy adolescent development can help mitigate the effects of mental health challenges. Programs that focus on enhancing emotional regulation, improving social skills, and building resilience can be particularly effective in supporting adolescents with vulnerable personality traits or those struggling with adjustment issues. Mental health education and destigmatization efforts can also play a significant role in improving help-seeking behaviors and reducing the barriers to accessing treatment.

School-based interventions, counseling services, and community support systems are critical in providing adolescents with the tools they need to navigate this challenging developmental period. Early identification of mental health issues and targeted interventions can lead to better long-term outcomes for adolescents as they transition into adulthood.

The mental health of adolescents is a complex and multifaceted issue that is influenced by a variety of factors, including personality traits, coping mechanisms, and environmental influences. By understanding how personality traits intersect with mental health challenges and adjustment processes, researchers and practitioners can better support adolescents in navigating the challenges of this critical developmental stage. A holistic approach that includes family support, peer relationships, and professional interventions is essential in promoting positive mental health outcomes for adolescents.

Further research is needed to explore the nuanced relationships between personality, mental health, and adjustment in different cultural and social contexts, with a focus on developing more effective strategies for prevention, early intervention, and treatment.

Review of Literature

Smith & Jones⁹ (2020) examined the role of the Big Five personality traits (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) in adolescent mental health outcomes. It found that higher levels of neuroticism were consistently linked with higher levels of depression, anxiety, and stress in adolescents. Conversely, high extraversion and agreeableness were found to correlate with better social functioning and lower levels of mental health issues. The review suggests that personality traits can act as both protective and risk factors for adolescent mental health, depending on the individual's characteristic traits and coping mechanisms. Personality traits significantly influence how adolescents experience and cope with mental health challenges, with neuroticism being a strong predictor of emotional difficulties. Brown & Green² (2018) focused on the relationship between coping strategies and adolescent adjustment to stressors such as academic pressure, family dynamics, and social relationships. It emphasizes that adolescents who employ adaptive coping strategies (problem-solving, seeking support) tend to experience better mental health outcomes compared to those who rely on maladaptive coping mechanisms (avoidance, substance use). The review also highlights how personality traits shape coping preferences, with high neuroticism linked to the use of less effective coping strategies. Effective coping strategies are essential for positive mental health and successful adjustment, and personality traits play a critical role in determining which coping strategies adolescents are likely to employ. Lee & Zhang⁵

(2019) explored the interplay between peer relationships and adolescent mental health, particularly focusing on how personality traits influence social interactions and peer support. Research indicates that extraverted adolescents tend to have larger, more supportive peer networks, which buffer against mental health difficulties. On the other hand, adolescents with high levels of introversion or neuroticism may experience social isolation, which can exacerbate feelings of anxiety and depression. The quality of peer relationships significantly impacts adolescent mental health, and personality traits like extraversion and neuroticism can influence social dynamics and adjustment. Kim & Lee⁴ (2017) reviewed investigates the effects of different parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful) on adolescent mental health and personality development. It finds that authoritative parenting, characterized by warmth, responsiveness, and firm boundaries, is associated with better mental health and positive personality traits, such as higher levels of agreeableness and conscientiousness. Adolescents from authoritarian or neglectful homes are more likely to exhibit maladaptive behaviors and higher levels of neuroticism. Parenting styles are a crucial factor in shaping adolescent personality and mental health, with authoritative parenting fostering better mental health outcomes and positive personality traits. Carter & Wilson³ (2016) explored how gender differences influence adolescent mental health in the context of personality traits. Studies suggest that adolescent girls tend to score higher in neuroticism and experience higher rates of anxiety and depression compared to boys. However, boys often display higher levels of externalizing behaviors such as aggression, which are linked to lower levels of conscientiousness and agreeableness. The review emphasizes that gendered experiences, including societal expectations and gender roles, influence the development of personality traits and mental health outcomes. Gender differences play a significant role in how personality traits manifest and affect adolescent mental health, with girls showing higher internalizing symptoms and boys exhibiting more externalizing behaviors. Adams & Brown¹ (2021) examined the concept of resilience in adolescents, focusing on how personality traits influence an adolescent's ability to cope with trauma, loss, or stressful life events. It suggests that adolescents with high levels of conscientiousness and agreeableness tend to exhibit greater resilience, showing more positive adjustment even in challenging circumstances. Conversely, adolescents high in neuroticism may struggle more with resilience, showing greater vulnerability to mental health issues. Personality traits such as conscientiousness and agreeableness foster resilience in adolescents, helping them cope with adversity and reduce the risk of mental health difficulties. Williams & Johnson¹¹ (2018) explored the relationship between academic stress, personality traits, and adolescent mental health. It highlights that academic stress is a significant predictor of mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. Personality traits like high neuroticism and low conscientiousness were found to exacerbate the effects of academic stress, leading to poorer mental health outcomes. On the other hand, high levels of conscientiousness and self-discipline tend to buffer the negative effects of academic pressure. Academic stress is a major contributor to adolescent mental health problems, and personality traits can either exacerbate or buffer these effects, depending on the individual's traits. Turner & Harris¹⁰ (2020) investigated the role of social media in adolescent mental health, focusing on how personality traits influence social media use and its psychological impact. It suggests that adolescents high in neuroticism may be more susceptible to the negative effects of social media, such as anxiety and depression, due to constant social comparison and cyberbullying. In contrast, more extroverted adolescents may use social media in ways that enhance social connection, leading to better mental health outcomes. Social media use has complex effects on adolescent mental health, with personality traits influencing how adolescents engage with these platforms and how it impacts their emotional well-being. Miller & Lee⁶ (2017) delved into the role of temperament and personality in adolescent mental health, arguing that early temperament (e.g., emotional reactivity, sociability) interacts with later-developing personality traits to shape mental health outcomes. For example, adolescents with an inhibited temperament who later develop high levels of neuroticism are more likely to experience social anxiety and depression. Conversely, those with more resilient temperaments tend to develop adaptive coping strategies and positive personality traits, leading to better adjustment. Early temperament and personality traits work together to shape how adolescents respond to stress, with inhibited or neurotic temperaments increasing

vulnerability to mental health challenges. Patel & Kumar⁷ (2019) examined how different attachment styles (secure, anxious, avoidant) impact adolescent mental health and personality development. Adolescents with secure attachment styles tend to develop better emotional regulation skills, higher levels of self-esteem, and more positive mental health outcomes. Those with anxious or avoidant attachment styles may struggle with issues like emotional dysregulation, anxiety, and depression, often exacerbated by maladaptive personality traits such as high neuroticism. Attachment styles significantly impact adolescent personality development and mental health, with secure attachment fostering healthier emotional regulation and positive outcomes. Roberts & Taylor⁸ (2021) investigated the relationship between school climate (the overall emotional and social atmosphere of a school) and adolescent mental health, considering how personality traits affect this relationship. A positive school climate, characterized by supportive teachers, peer relationships, and a sense of safety, can promote positive personality traits such as conscientiousness and agreeableness, leading to better mental health outcomes. Adolescents in negative or stressful school environments, however, may experience heightened neuroticism and other maladaptive traits, contributing to poorer mental health. A positive school climate is crucial for promoting healthy personality development and mental health in adolescents, while a negative climate can exacerbate maladaptive personality traits and mental health issues.

Objectives

The present study intends to compare adolescents belonging to (i) high and low ego-strength groups, (ii) high and low decisiveness groups, (iii) high and low emotional stability groups and (iv) sound and poor adjustment groups in terms of mental health measure.

Hypotheses

- H₁** High and low ego-strength groups of adolescents will differ significantly in terms of their mental health measure.
- H₂** High and low decisiveness groups of adolescents will differ significantly in terms of their mental health measure.
- H₃** High and low emotional stability groups of adolescents will differ significantly in terms of their mental health measure.
- H₄** Sound and poor adjustment groups of adolescents will differ significantly in terms of mental health measure

Method of Study

Sample Used

The sample comprised of 120 adolescents selected from among +2 high schools of urban Patna based on incidental-cum-purposeful sampling technique. They were selected in such a way that they are equally distributed (N = 60) to each high/sound and low/poor groups of independent variables (ego-strength, decisiveness, emotional stability and adjustment). Other than the conditions of research they were matched so far as practicable.

Design Used

Between group design was used

Tools Used

- (i) A Personal Data Sheet was used to get the necessary information relating to the respondents.
- (ii) Mithila Mental Health Status Inventory by Kumar & Thakur was used to measure the mental health of the respondents.
- (iii) SDPI was used to measure ego-strength, decisiveness and emotional stability of the respondents.
- (iv) Mohsin Shamshad Bell's Adjustment Inventory (Hindi Adaptation) was used to measure the adjustment of the respondents.

Procedure

The Scales along with PDS were employed on the 200 adolescents respondents and data were recorded. The median values on ego-strength scores, decisiveness scores, emotional stability and adjustment scores were obtained. The subjects were divided into high/sound and low/poor groups on the basis of their median value of the concerned score. Equal respondents were selected into each high/sound and low/poor group. The obtained data were analysed using t-test.

Results

Table 01: t-ratio showing a comparison between adolescents belonging to high and low ego-strength groups on mental health measure

Variable	Groups	N	Mean	SD	t-ratio	df	p
Ego-strength	High	60	51.58	5.13	5.17	118	<.01
	Low	60	47.13	4.96			

It is clear from the results table-01 that high ego-strength group of adolescents manifested comparatively higher mean (Mean = 51.58) than low ego-strength group of adolescents (Mean = 47.13). The t-value was found significant (t = 5.17; df = 118; p<.01). Thus, hypothesis no. (1) is retained.

Interpretation: Adolescents with high ego strength tend to manifest better mental health because they possess stronger psychological resources to cope with stress, conflict, and developmental challenges. High ego strength reflects resilience, self-control, emotional stability, and a balanced sense of identity, which enable adolescents to adapt flexibly to changing social and academic demands. Such individuals are more likely to maintain self-confidence, regulate impulses, and manage interpersonal relationships effectively, reducing vulnerability to anxiety, depression, or maladjustment. In contrast, adolescents with low ego strength often struggle with insecurity, poor coping strategies, and heightened stress reactivity, leading to weaker overall mental health.

Table 02: t-ratio showing a comparison between adolescents belonging to high and low decisiveness groups on mental health measure

Variable	Groups	N	Mean	SD	t-ratio	df	p
Decisiveness	High	60	49.36	5.47	8.19	118	<.01
	Low	60	41.33	5.26			

It is clear from the results table-02 that high decisiveness group of adolescents manifested comparatively higher mean (Mean = 49.36) than low decisiveness group of adolescents (Mean = 41.33). The t-value was found significant (t = 8.19; df = 118; p<.01). Thus, hypothesis no. (2) is retained.

Interpretation: Adolescents with high decisiveness tend to manifest better mental health because decisiveness reduces uncertainty, confusion, and prolonged stress in daily life. Clear and timely decision-making enhances a sense of control, self-confidence, and problem-solving ability, which are vital protective factors against anxiety and depression. High decisiveness also supports goal-directed behavior, effective time management, and adaptive coping strategies, leading to greater emotional stability and resilience. In contrast, low decisiveness often results in hesitation, self-doubt, and rumination, which can heighten psychological distress and impair adjustment. Thus, decisiveness acts as a psychological resource that promotes sound mental health in adolescence.

Table 03: t-ratio showing a comparison between adolescents belonging to high and low emotional stability groups on mental health measure

Variable	Groups	N	Mean	SD	t-ratio	df	p
Emotional Stability	High	60	58.20	5.03	4.06	118	<.01
	Low	60	54.42	5.18			

It is clear from the results table-03 that high emotional stability group of adolescents manifested comparatively higher mean (Mean = 58.20) than low emotional stability group of adolescents (Mean = 54.42). The t-value was found significant ($t = 4.06$; $df = 118$; $p < .01$). Thus, hypothesis no. (3) is retained.

Interpretation: Adolescents with high emotional stability manifest comparatively sound mental health because they are better able to regulate emotions, cope with stress, and maintain psychological balance in challenging situations. High emotional stability reduces vulnerability to anxiety, depression, and mood swings, fostering resilience and optimism. Such adolescents typically display greater self-control, problem-solving ability, and positive social interactions, which protect against mental health difficulties. In contrast, those with low emotional stability are more prone to emotional reactivity, stress sensitivity, and negative thinking patterns, increasing the risk of psychological distress. Thus, emotional stability acts as a protective factor for adolescent mental health.

Table 04: t-ratio showing a comparison between adolescents belonging to high and low adjustment groups on mental health measure

Variable	Groups	N	Mean	SD	t-ratio	df	p
Adjustment	Sound	60	60.30	5.37	7.05	118	<.01
	Poor	60	66.86	5.22			

It is clear from the results table-04 that high adjustment group of adolescents manifested comparatively higher mean (Mean = 60.30) than low adjustment group of adolescents (Mean = 66.86). The t-value was found significant ($t = 7.05$; $df = 118$; $p < .01$). Thus, hypothesis no. (4) is retained.

Interpretation: Adolescents with high adjustment manifest comparatively sound mental health because adjustment reflects their ability to cope effectively with environmental demands, interpersonal relationships, and internal conflicts. High adjustment equips them with better emotional regulation, problem-solving skills, and resilience, enabling them to manage stress, academic pressure, and social expectations constructively. These adolescents are more likely to experience stable relationships, positive self-concept, and a sense of control over life events, all of which foster psychological well-being. In contrast, low-adjustment adolescents often struggle with frustration, conflict, and poor coping mechanisms, which can increase vulnerability to anxiety, depression, and other mental health problems.

CONCLUSIONS

- (i) High ego-strength is conducive to sound mental health behavior. Adolescents possessing stronger ego-manifest comparatively sound mental health behavior as compare to adolescents possessing poor ego-strength.
- (ii) Decisiveness is conducive to mental health behavior. Adolescents possessing higher degree of decisiveness manifest sound mental health behavior as compare to the adolescent possessing poor decisiveness as personality trait.
- (iii) Emotional stability is conducive to mental health behavior. Adolescent group possessing higher emotional stability manifest comparatively sound mental health bahviour as compare to adolescents of poor emotional stability group.

- (iv) Sound adjustment is conducive to sound mental health behavior. Adolescents with sound adjustment manifest sound mental health behavior and vice-versa.

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