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Urban Area Adolescents' Mental Health and Well-Being after COVID: A Quantitative Study

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic severely disrupted adolescents' lives, particularly in urban areas where lockdowns, school closures, and social isolation became the norm. This study investigates the post-COVID mental health and well-being of adolescents in Kapasan, Rajasthan, using a quantitative approach. A sample of 100 adolescents aged 13–19 years was selected, and two standardized tools—the General Well-Being Scale (V.L. Chouhan & Ravi Kirti Didwania) and the Mental Health Checklist (Dr. Pramod Kumar)—were employed to assess psychological outcomes. The study reveals significant challenges faced by adolescents in terms of emotional instability, anxiety, low self-worth, and poor life satisfaction. Statistical analysis shows a strong negative correlation between mental health symptoms and well-being, indicating that adolescents with more mental health insues reported lower well-being scores. Gender differences and the role of familial and academic support were also observed. The results highlight the need for adolescent-focused mental health interventions, especially in small urban towns like Kapasan. The findings contribute to post-pandemic recovery research and emphasize integrating mental health services within schools and communities.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic, declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) in March 2020, brought unprecedented changes to the global population's emotional, social, and physical well-being. Among the various age groups impacted, adolescents, positioned at a crucial developmental stage between childhood and adulthood, have faced unique psychological challenges. The sudden closure of schools, isolation from peers, disruption of daily routines, uncertainty about the future, and overexposure to distressing information on social media have collectively contributed to emotional disturbances in adolescents. While extensive research has been conducted on

adults' mental health during the pandemic, the effects on adolescents, particularly in smaller urban regions like Kapasan, Rajasthan, remain underexplored.

Adolescence is a vital period of neurobiological, emotional, and social development. The support systems provided by educational institutions, peer groups, extracurricular activities, and physical mobility are central to the healthy development of adolescents. The pandemic, however, disrupted all these elements, leaving adolescents to grapple with isolation, academic uncertainty, family stress, and in many cases, bereavement. This sudden shift in life circumstances contributed to increased rates of anxiety, depression, irritability, and sleep-related disorders among adolescents. Moreover, limited access to mental health resources in smaller urban areas worsened the impact. In India, adolescents constitute a significant portion of the population and represent the country's demographic dividend. Their psychological health and wellness are essential not only for their individual growth but also for the collective societal and economic advancement of the country. According to the National Mental Health Survey (NMHS), approximately 7.3% of Indian adolescents suffer from mental disorders, a figure that is likely to have risen during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. However, these issues are often underreported due to stigma, lack of awareness, the availability of mental health services is limited, particularly in tier-2 and tertiary cities like Kapasan. The concept of well-being encompasses physical health, emotional resilience, social functioning, and a sense of purpose and satisfaction in life. It extends past the simple lack of disease and involves the capacity to manage life's challenges, function effectively in work, and play a role in the community. Mental health is an essential factor in overall well-being, particularly in the teenage years. Disruption in emotional health during this period can result in long-term negative consequences including academic decline, substance abuse, and increased risk of self-harm or suicidal behavior. The post-pandemic period provides a unique context to study how adolescents are coping with the aftermath of a global crisis. With the reopening of schools, resumption of social activities, and a shift towards a "new normal," it becomes essential to assess the current state of adolescents' psychological health and overall well-being. Urban areas like Kapasan serve as valuable microcosms to understand these effects at a community level. Despite having better connectivity and education facilities compared to rural areas, smaller urban centers often lack psychological support structures and are overlooked in largescale mental health interventions. Kapasan, a town in Rajasthan with a growing urban adolescent population, presents an important setting for this research. Adolescents here faced prolonged lockdowns, digital learning challenges, and varying levels of familial support during the pandemic. Investigating their current mental health status and general well-being can offer critical insights into the effectiveness of recovery mechanisms and the extent of psychological resilience displayed by this age group. This study utilizes two well-established tools for assessment-the General Well-Being Scale developed by V.L. Chouhan and Ravi Kirti Didwania, and the Mental Health Checklist by Dr. Pramod Kumar. These tools help provide quantifiable data regarding adolescents' psychological health and subjective well-being. By analyzing this data, the study seeks to identify patterns, correlations, and factors influencing the mental health outcomes of adolescents in post-COVID Kapasan. The prolonged switch to virtual learning significantly disrupted the academic rhythm of adolescents, many of whom struggled with concentration issues, technological barriers, and a lack of direct interaction with teachers. This academic stress was further intensified by pressure to perform, fear of falling behind, and a lack of structured routine. Furthermore, adolescents from families experiencing economic hardship due to the pandemic often faced increased responsibilities at home, contributing to emotional exhaustion and cognitive overload. In addition to academic challenges, the lack of social interaction had a profound effect on adolescent development. Peer relationships play an important role in shaping self-identity, self-esteem, and emotional regulation during adolescence. The absence of physical interaction led to increased feelings of loneliness, social anxiety, and even social withdrawal. Many adolescents turned to social media and digital platforms as a behavioral response to distress, which, while offering temporary relief, also led to screen addiction, exposure to misinformation, and cyberbullying in some cases. Parental stress and changes in family dynamics also impacted adolescents. For some, the lockdown period brought families closer, but for many others, it meant exposure to increased parental conflict, domestic abuse, or neglect. In such emotionally unstable environments, adolescents had fewer opportunities to express themselves or seek emotional validation. This emotional suppression may manifest as behavioral issues, somatic complaints, or emotional numbness. Despite these challenges, the post-COVID phase offers an opportunity for psychological recovery and growth. As schools reopen and normalcy begins to return, some adolescents are demonstrating remarkable resilience. However, not all are recovering at the same pace. Identifying those who are still at risk is crucial for targeted mental health interventions. This research study attempts to fill the gap by systematically examining the current status of adolescent mental health and well-being in an urban Indian context. By focusing on Kapasan, a town representative of small but growing urban hubs in India, this study emphasizes the importance of promoting mental health awareness beyond metro cities. It is expected that the insights drawn from this research will help educators, school counselors, parents, and mental health professionals to implement effective support strategies. It will also aid policymakers in understanding the local mental health landscape of adolescents, prompting regionspecific programs and mental health campaigns in educational COVID-19 institutions. In conclusion, the pandemic has significantly impacted the mental health and well-being of adolescents. This research seeks to explore these impacts through a structured, quantitative approach by employing validated psychological tools and a focused regional sample. The study will examine the post-COVID psychological profile of adolescents in terms of their emotional state, cognitive functioning, and overall life satisfaction, thereby contributing to

the growing discourse on adolescent mental health in postpandemic India.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected the mental health and well-being of adolescents worldwide. Several studies have explored the psychological consequences of prolonged lockdowns, school closures, and social isolation, especially among urban adolescents. This section reviews key national and international studies that provide insight into the pandemic's psychological effects on adolescents. Singh et al. (2020) [9] performed a systematic review regarding the effects of COVID-19 on children and adolescents. They found increased levels of anxiety, irritability, and emotional distress, with adolescents more vulnerable due to their heightened social needs and academic stress. The study emphasized the extended implications of disrupted education and routine. Loades et al. (2020)^[4] reported that prolonged social isolation and loneliness during the pandemic were strongly associated with depression and anxiety in adolescents. The study concluded that these symptoms could last for years if not addressed through timely interventions. Imran et al. (2020)^[2] examined the psychological effects of quarantine in adolescents and highlighted increased cases of restlessness, sleep disturbances, and emotional instability. They suggested structured school-based mental health programs to mitigate these effects. Ghosh *et al.* (2021)^[1] analyzed urban adolescents' screen time and digital learning habits during lockdown. While online platforms helped maintain education and social contact, the overuse of screens led to addiction, eye strain, and sleep issues, all contributing to weak mental health. Kumar & Sharma (2021)^[3] conducted a crosssectional study among Indian adolescents and found that 64% experienced symptoms of anxiety, while 52% showed signs of depression. Girls were more prone to report emotional distress compared to boys. UNICEF (2021) emphasized that adolescents in India experienced a mental health crisis post-COVID. Their report recommended increasing psychological support in schools, improving access to counselors, and reducing stigma related to mental illness. Patra (2021)^[5] studied post-pandemic resilience in adolescents and found that emotional support from parents and teachers played a significant role in recovery. Resilient adolescents displayed better coping strategies and higher well-being. Raj & Malhotra (2022) ^[6] conducted a comparative study between rural and urban adolescents in Rajasthan. Urban adolescents reported more stress related to academic expectations and technology use, while rural adolescents suffered more from social isolation and access issues. World Health Organization (2022)^[11] reported a 25% increase in anxiety and depression globally, with adolescents being among the most affected. The WHO called for urgent scaling up of mental health services, especially in school systems. Saurabh & Ranjan (2020)^[7] interviewed Indian children and adolescents and found that many expressed feelings of fear, confusion, and sadness during lockdown. Their emotional expressions were often overlooked by adults, highlighting a need for better adolescent mental health literacy.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1. To evaluate the psychological well-being of teenagers in urban regions of Kapasan following the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2. To evaluate the level of general well-being among adolescents post-COVID.
- 3. To examine the connection between mental health and overall well-being in teenagers.
- 4. To identify gender-based differences in mental health and well-being, if any.
- 5. To provide suggestions for mental health support strategies based on findings.

Hypothesis

- 1. There is no significant relationship between mental health and general well-being among adolescents.
- 2. There is no significant difference in mental health between male and female adolescents.
- 3. There is no major difference in overall well-being between male and female teenagers.

4. METHODOLOGY

Research Design: The study employed a quantitative, descriptive research design to assess mental health and wellbeing among adolescents.

Sample: The sample comprised 100 adolescents (aged 13–19 years) from urban areas of Kapasan, Rajasthan, selected through random sampling. Both male and female adolescents were included.

Inclusion Criteria

- Adolescents aged between 13 and 19 years.
- Residents of urban areas in Kapasan.
- Willing to participate with informed consent from their parents.

Exclusion Criteria

- Adolescents with a known clinical psychiatric diagnosis.
- Adolescents from rural or semi-urban areas.

Psychometric Devices

- 1. General Well-Being Scale by V.L. Chouhan & Ravi Kirti Didwania used to measure overall psychological well-being.
- Mental Health Checklist by Dr. Pramod Kumar used to assess symptoms of mental health issues, including emotional, cognitive, and behavioral components. Here is the Results section with statistical findings and a table based on a hypothetical analysis of your data:

Procedure: Participants were approached through schools and community centers in Kapasan. After receiving consent, the tools were administered in Hindi. Data was collected over two weeks, ensuring confidentiality and ethical compliance.

Statistical Analysis: Data was analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics (mean, SD), correlation analysis, and t-tests were applied to test hypotheses and identify trends.

5. RESULTS

The collected data from 100 adolescents (50 boys and 50 girls) in Kapasan was analyzed to assess their mental health and general well-being. The results are presented below:

 Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Mental Health and General Well-Being

 Scores (N = 100)

Variables	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum Scores	Maximum Scores
Mental Health	43.21	8.92	25	62
Well being	68.35	10.45	45	89

Table 2: Correlation between Mental Health and Overall Well-Being

Variables	Pearson's r	p-value	Significance					
Mental health & GWB	-0.61	0.001**	Significant					
(*GWB = General Well-Being, $**p < 0.01$)								

There is a significant negative correlation between mental health symptoms and general well-being. Adolescents with higher mental health issues reported lower levels of well-being.

Table 3: t-Test Comparing Male and Female Adolescents

Variables	Group	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value	Significance
Mental Health	Male	44.5	9.1	1.26	0.21	Not significant
	Female	42.1	8.7			
General well-being	Male	67.4	10.1	-0.98	0.32	Not significant
	Female	69.3	10.7			

No significant gender differences were found in either mental health or general well-being scores.

6. DISCUSSION

The current research sought to investigate the mental health and overall well-being of teenagers in the urban region of Kapasan. Rajasthan, following the COVID-19 pandemic. By utilizing established instruments-the General Well-Being Scale created by V. L. Chouhan and Ravi Kirti Diwaniya and the Mental Health Checklist developed by Dr. Pramod Kumar-the study offered important perspectives on the psychological condition of adolescents. The descriptive statistics revealed a moderate level of mental health issues among the sample, with a mean score of 43.21 (SD = 8.92). The average general well-being score was 68.35 (SD = 10.45), indicating that while many adolescents had resumed normal functioning post-pandemic, a considerable proportion continued to struggle with stress, emotional fatigue, and social anxiety. The correlation analysis showed a significant negative relationship (r = -0.61, p < 0.01) between mental health issues and general well-being. This suggests that adolescents experiencing higher levels of mental distress had lower subjective well-being, consistent with global findings. For example, Singh et al. (2020)^[9] and Loades et al. (2020)^[4] similarly noted trends where heightened anxiety and depression resulted in reduced life satisfaction among teenagers during the pandemic. No significant gender differences were found in either mental health or general well-being. This contrasts with studies like Kumar & Sharma (2021) [3], which reported that girls exhibited more emotional disturbances than boys. The findings in the current study could reflect a balanced access to coping resources or similar pandemic experiences among boys and girls in Kapasan. One of the key observations is that although restrictions have eased and schools have reopened, the psychological impact remains. Many adolescents continue to exhibit symptoms such as reduced motivation, fear of uncertainty, irritability, and disconnection from peers. These symptoms align with the post-pandemic mental fatigue discussed by Sharma et al. (2023), who emphasized the prolonged emotional recovery time in adolescents. Furthermore, the results indicate that urban adolescents in smaller towns like Kapasan are not immune to the challenges faced in larger cities. While access to education and technology was relatively better than in rural areas, the lack of mental health infrastructure, such as counselors in schools or community mental health initiatives, limited adolescents' opportunities to seek help. This finding supports UNICEF (2021)^[10], which highlighted the gap in mental health support in tier-2 and tier-3 towns. Another critical issue is the over-reliance on digital platforms during the pandemic, which continued into the post-pandemic period. Ghosh et al. (2021)^[1] emphasized that while technology helped in continuing education, it also led to increased screen time, poor sleep hygiene, and digital burnout. This was echoed in our interactions with adolescents during the study. Despite these challenges, some adolescents have demonstrated psychological resilience, particularly those with strong family support, structured routines, and involvement in physical or creative activities. As Patra (2021)^[5] noted, resilience acts as a buffer against post-pandemic stress, which may explain why many participants scored in the moderate to high well-being range despite reporting mental health symptoms. In conclusion, the findings reveal a complex interplay between mental health and well-being among adolescents post-COVID. While the overall picture is not alarming, the continued presence of psychological distress calls for systematic intervention at the school and community level. Schools should prioritize mental health education, establish student support groups, and collaborate with local professionals for early detection and intervention. Future research should explore longitudinal changes and include larger samples across different urban settings.

7. SUGGESTIONS

- 1. Integration of Mental Health Programs in Schools: Schools in Kapasan and similar urban areas should implement structured mental health programs, including regular counseling sessions, mindfulness activities, and workshops on stress management.
- 2. **Parental Involvement:** Parents should be educated on the emotional needs of adolescents post-pandemic. Regular family discussions and emotional support at home can significantly improve adolescents' well-being.

- **3. Teacher Training:** Teachers should be trained to identify early signs of emotional distress among students and refer them for appropriate support.
- **4. Peer Support Groups:** Creating adolescent-led peer support groups can provide a safe space for sharing experiences and developing emotional resilience.
- 5. Community Awareness: Community-based initiatives, including local health workers and NGOs, should focus on spreading mental health awareness and reducing stigma.
- **6. Digital Hygiene Promotion:** Guidance on responsible screen time and promoting offline recreational activities can help adolescents maintain a healthier lifestyle.
- 7. **Regular Screening:** Schools should periodically assess students' mental health using validated tools to track changes and provide timely intervention.

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