



A STUDY ON DEPRESSION AMONG ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN RELATION TO THEIR EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND PERSONALITY VARIABLES – (OPTIMISM, RESILIENCE AND SELF ESTEEM)

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1. ABSTRACT

The impact of depression on adolescent girls is becoming increasingly concerning as a public health issue in India, especially in a socio-cultural context like Kerala where the educational system places a lot of emphasis on high academic standards, social competition, and emotional obligations. In this study, we will explore how the relationship between these variables can be further explained by the influence of emotional intelligence. We used a cross-sectional research design to sample 300 adolescent girls aged 13-18 from Kerala who were selected through stratified random sampling procedures across higher secondary schools throughout the state. We measured each variable (i.e., depression, resilience, optimism, and emotional intelligence) using well-validated, standardized assessment instruments. Statistically significant negative correlations were found between depression and resilience ($r = -.52, p < .01$), as well as depression and optimism ($r = -.48, p < .01$). Emotional intelligence was found to be a partial mediator of the relationships between resilience, optimism, and depression. According to the study, there are protective psychological mechanisms that help adolescent females reduce susceptibility to depressive symptoms. Implications for emotional competency education programs in schools are explored further.



KEYWORDS: Depression, Adolescent Girls, Resilience, Optimism, Emotional Intelligence, Kerala.

2. BACKGROUND

Adolescent females go through rapid changes in biological, cognitive, and psychosocial development during adolescence, but they also experience socio-cultural pressures because most adolescent females in Kerala have many socio-cultural pressures that influence their behaviour: academics, body image, socialisation with peers via social media, and gender role expectations.

Emotional intelligence (EI) serves as a vital psychological element which establishes its importance for emotional well-being. People with emotional intelligence capacity to understand and control both their personal emotions and the emotions of others. Adolescents who possess higher emotional intelligence skills demonstrate superior abilities to handle stress while they control negative emotions and develop healthy social connections.

Researchers have started to investigate how emotional intelligence functions as a mediation element which affects the connection between personality characteristics and mental health results.

Emotional intelligence enhances control over emotions which results in better problem-solving skills and increased resilience and optimism.

The rising rates of depression among Indian adolescents particularly affect girls so it becomes necessary to identify which psychological elements impact their emotional well-being. The study investigates how adolescent girls in Kerala connect their resilience and optimism with their emotional intelligence and depression levels.

Based on the findings from the 2022 NIMHANS National Mental Health Survey, depressive symptomatology among Indian adolescents is increasing. The evidence indicates that girls are more likely than boys to exhibit internalising problems such as depression (twice as likely) Optimism and resilience are both thought of as protective personality traits that can help an individual buffer an individual from emotional distress. The development of Emotional Intelligence (EI) facilitates the ability to manage stress and regulate emotions, both as a result of coping with adverse situations constructively To date, there has been limited empirical research specifically looking at these variables among Kerala adolescent females. The present study will attempt to address this gap.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW (2020-2025)

Recent literature has shown that resilience and optimism are protective factors in adolescent mental health

Singh and Mishra (2021) found resilience to be a significant negative predictor of depression amongst Indian adolescents.

- George and Joseph (2022) found that emotional intelligence significantly alleviated academic stress for students attending higher secondary schools in Kerala.
- Gupta and Kumar (2022) conducted research on Indian adolescents which showed that emotional intelligence had a strong negative relationship with depression. Adolescents with higher emotional intelligence demonstrated better emotional control and interpersonal skills.
- -Sharma et al. (2023) found that optimism has been linked with lower levels of depression in adolescent girls. WHO (2023) identified emotional regulation skills as one of the most important protective factors against developing depression during adolescence.
- The study conducted by Varghese and Mathew(2023) in South India found that emotional intelligence acted as a mediating factor which connected personality traits with psychological well-being in adolescents.
- The recent study conducted by Thomas and George (2023) found that emotional intelligence helped Kerala adolescents improve their coping skills while decreasing their emotional distress.
- Nair & Thomas (2024) concluded that EI buffered the relationship between stress and depression for South Indian adolescents.
- Rani and Mishra (2024) discovered that resilience together with optimism and emotional intelligence these three factors combined to create substantial psychological benefits which helped adolescent girls decrease their depressive symptoms

Thus, these studies further indicate that there needs to be a consideration of personality traits, in particular EI, in understanding the development of depression.

4. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Adolescents' depression has become a global mental health issue that affects people from various countries. Studies in India show that most Indian adolescents experience depression symptoms which arise from academic pressure and social expectations and family conflicts and emotional problems. Adolescent girls face a higher risk of depression because of their biological makeup and

psychological characteristics and cultural environment. The development of depression depends on multiple factors yet the personality traits of resilience and optimism function as protective elements which decrease psychological distress.

Emotional intelligence serves as a critical capacity that enables people to manage their emotions while they handle pressure situations.

5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the level of depression among adolescent girls in Kerala?
2. Is there a significant relationship between resilience and depression among adolescent girls?
3. Is there a significant relationship between optimism and depression among adolescent girls?
4. Is emotional intelligence related to depression among adolescent girls?
5. Does emotional intelligence mediate the relationship between resilience, optimism, and depression?

6. OBJECTIVES

1. To assess levels of resilience, optimism, emotional intelligence, and depression among adolescent girls in Kerala.
2. To examine the relationship between resilience and depression.
3. To examine the relationship between optimism and depression.
4. To study the mediating role of emotional intelligence.

7. HYPOTHESES

- H1: Resilience is negatively correlated with depression.
H2: Optimism is negatively correlated with depression.
H3: Emotional intelligence mediates the relationship between resilience and depression.
H4: Emotional intelligence mediates the relationship between optimism and depression.

8. METHODOLOGY

8.1 Research Design

A descriptive cross-sectional correlational design was employed.

8.2 Participants

- N = 300 adolescent girls
- Age: 13–18 years
- Selected from government and private higher secondary schools in Kerala
- Sampling: Stratified random sampling

8.3 Inclusion Criteria

- Currently enrolled in school
- Consent from parents and school authorities.

8.4 Tools Used

1. Beck Depression Inventory-II (BDI-II)
2. Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC)
3. Life Orientation Test-Revised (LOT-R)
4. Emotional Intelligence Scale (Schutte et al.)

8.5 Procedure

Permission obtained from school authorities. Participants completed questionnaires in classroom settings under supervision.

8.6 Statistical Analysis

- Descriptive statistics (Mean, SD)
- Pearson Correlation
- Mediation Analysis (Baron & Kenny method / PROCESS macro)
- SPSS Version 26.

9. RESULTS

9.1 .Descriptive statistics

The table presents descriptive statistics for four variables:

Variable	Mean	SD
Depression	21.45	8.32
Resilience	67.12	10.45
Optimism	18.34	4.21
Emotional intelligence	124.56	15.78

9.2. Correlation table

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Depression	1			
2. Resilience	-.52**	1		
3. Optimism	-.48**	.41**	1	
4. emotional intelligence	-.56*	.49**	.46**	1

9.3 Mediation analysis

Predictor	Direct Effect	Indirect effect via EI
Resilience	-.38**	-.14**
Optimism	-.31**	-.11**

Model $R^2 = .42$ $F(3,296) = 71.84, p < .001$

10. DISCUSSIONS

The results of this study support previous research that resiliency and optimism can greatly decrease the occurrence of depression in young girls in the State of Kerala. Emotional Intelligence was identified as a significant mediator in the relationship between resiliency and optimism and depression.

The girls who exhibited resiliency also used adaptive coping strategies to manage their stressors, while the optimistic girls were able to view their stressors positively by reinterpreting them. Emotional Intelligence served to enhance the protective factors of resiliency and optimism through emotional regulation.

In the State of Kerala, where academic competition is fierce and parents tend to have unrealistic expectations of their children, the need for training in emotional skills is particularly important. According to literature intersection, the results conform to three referenced studies:

1. Singh and Mishra (2021) who demonstrated that resilience and optimistic dispositional attributes led to less depressive symptoms; while emotional intelligence was variable between resilience and optimism; and emotional intelligence was likely mediating adolescent mental health - this finding replicates results of the Kerala study.
2. Sharma and colleagues (2023) provide evidence for emotional intelligence to positively impact coping ability and emotional self-regulation among adolescents who experience academic pressures and stress due to schoolwork.
3. Nair and Thomas (2024) recommend enhanced provision of emotional-skill training in high-expectation situations, such as those found in the education system of Kerala, may reduce incidences of depression.

11. IMPLICATIONS

Educational:

- Include Emotional Intelligence (EI) training in the school curriculum.
- Counsellors in schools should provide ways to help adolescents build their resilience. Clinical:
- Screening for low EI and optimism should take place early on.
- Programs for mental health prevention for adolescent females should be implemented. Policy:
- The Kerala education department can adopt life skills modules into the curriculum.
- Provide programs of awareness concerning adolescent mental health.

12. CONCLUSION

The study shows that resilience and optimism significantly predict a reduction in depressive symptoms in girls in Kerala, and that emotional intelligence acts as a mediator and psychological buffer in this relationship. Developing emotional intelligence could potentially be an effective preventative measure to reduce adolescent depression.

13. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Longitudinal Research: Implement longitudinal research to explore the influence of emotional intelligence on resilience optimism, and depression causation relationships.
- Intervention Program Research: Identify and evaluate emotional intelligence intervention programs that promote resilience and optimism in adolescent females.
- Compare and Contrast Among Regions/Cultures: Examine and compare levels of emotional intelligence, resilience, and optimism in adolescent females by regions/cultures.

- Mixed-Methods Research: Conduct mixed-methods research to further research on the causal factors of depression in adolescent females.

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