

## Assessment of Emotional and Behavioral Problems Among Adolescent Girls in a Government School, Delhi: Reg ID: 348

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### CITATION

Dhandapani Ghurumourthy, Gupta Anubha, YadavGeeta, Lukhmana Shveta, Santra Sahadev. Assessment of Emotional and Behavioral Problems Among Adolescent Girls in a Government School, Delhi: Reg ID: 348.

Journal of the Epidemiology Foundation of India. 2025;3(2Suppl):65.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.56450/JEFI.2025.v3i2Suppl.065>

### ARTICLE CYCLE

Received: 10/11/2025; Accepted: 20/12/2026; Published: 31/12/2025

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Adolescence is a critical developmental period characterized by significant emotional and behavioral changes. In India, adolescents constitute about one-fifth of the population, yet mental health problems in this group remain under-documented. This study aimed to assess the prevalence and pattern of emotional and behavioral problems among adolescent girls in a government senior secondary school in Delhi using a validated screening tool. **Methodology:** A cross-sectional study was conducted over four months among 433 adolescent girls from classes 9 to 12 at Government Girls Senior Secondary School No.1, Najafgarh. Participants were selected via stratified random selection based on course groups and probability proportional to size. Data were collected using a socio-demographic profile and the self-administered Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), which assesses five subscales: Emotional, Conduct, Hyperactivity, Peer, and Prosocial behavior. **Results:** The mean age of participants was  $15.5 \pm 1.24$  years. Analysis of socio-demographic data revealed that 31% of participants were from Class 12, 30% from Class 11, 20% from Class 9, and 19% from Class 10. A vast majority (93%) identified as Hindu, 68% lived in nuclear families, and 54% had two or fewer siblings. Findings indicated a substantial mental health burden, as nearly 60% of students demonstrated borderline or abnormal total SDQ scores. Specifically, abnormal behaviors were most prevalent in hyperactivity (34%) and peer difficulties (24.9%), while 16.4% showed abnormal emotional difficulties. Significant associations were found between hyperactivity and nuclear family structures ( $p=0.04$ ), while conduct problems were significantly more frequent in younger students  $\leq 15$  years ( $p=0.001$ ). Emotional difficulties were also significantly associated with the presence of siblings ( $p=0.04$ ). **Conclusion:** A significant mental health burden exists among adolescent girls, with 60% showing emotional or behavioral difficulties. Factors such as age, family type, and sibling presence significantly influence these outcomes. Strengthening school-based mental health programs through the effective implementation of "Manodarpan" is essential for early detection, counseling, and enhancing emotional resilience.

### KEYWORDS