



MENTAL WELL-BEING OF WOMEN HOSTELITES: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT:

Mental health is an important component of total positive health and is interwoven closely with the physical and physiological dynamics of the human body. Mental health is as important as physical health in an individual's life. An attempt has been made to measure women's mental health in hostels. Hostelites being non-native inhabitants, women/girls staying in hostels are at risk and are exposed to various mental health issues. The situation may be worse among female migrants in urban areas who migrate for study or work-related reasons. Hence, it is essential to give special attention to the mental well-being status of women who migrate and live in city hostels. The present paper is based on primary data collected from women staying in the hostels of Belagavi city. It aims to understand the working and living conditions and their association with the mental well-being status of the women hostelites in Belagavi. The investigation indicates that the quality of life of women hostelites significantly affects their mental health status. The factors such as age, occupation, push factors related to migration, quality of life and general health status of the migrant women can affect their mental health status. Thus, it is essential to ensure better working and living conditions and quality of life in order to improve the mental health status of women and girls staying in the hostel.

Keywords: Women/girls, migration, hostel life, mental health/ well-being.

INTRODUCTION:

A sound mental health is a prerequisite for the successful functioning of an individual. Mental health is an index that shows the extent to which a person has been able to meet their environmental demands, like social, emotional and physical (Sandhu et. al. 2015). Mental health describes either a level of cognition or emotional well-being or an absence of a mental disorder. It includes an individual's ability to enjoy and procure balances between life activities and efforts to achieve psychological residence. (Satish et al., 2013)



Migration plays a major role in developing countries like India. People migrate for education, job opportunities, to improve health and well-being and etc. Most of the health issues of women migrants are attributed to their migration to urban areas, decreased awareness about local health facilities, inability to cope with psychological stress, unhealthy sexual practices, and frequent migration (Reshmi et al., 2014). The consequences of women's migration are different at the family and community levels compared to men. Research works on women migrations to pursue higher education have made it clear that there is a special need for field research and new methods of investigation. In the current study, many women/girls in and around Belagavi city migrate to pursue higher education. When a single woman migrates to set up her academics and career, she usually stays in a hostel. The living conditions and factors related to the workplace may impact the mental health status and well-being of migrant women.

METHODOLOGY:

The paper aims to understand the mental health status of women migrant hostelites in Belagavi and the factors associated with it. The study is based on primary data collected from two girls' hostels in Belagavi city, (Karnataka State) India. The researcher selected 125 respondents who stayed in the hostel for more than one year. Although more than 162 respondents were contacted, the data was received from only 125 respondents.

The primary data was collected using a self-administered questionnaire on background nature/features, factors related to migration, living conditions, and general mental health issues.

The response rate was 77.16 per cent. The mean was calculated for continuous variables, like age. Also, the mean for mental health problems like somatic symptoms, anxiety and insomnia, somatic dysfunction and severe depression were calculated. A multiple regression analysis was carried out to understand the effect of socio-economic status, living conditions and general health problems on the mental health status of women in hostelites.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Profile of the Women Migrants (Hostelites):

Table 1 shows the distribution of women migrant hostelites according to socio-demographic characteristics. The mean age of women hostelites was 21 years. Women, after marriage, continue to stay with their husbands; interestingly, in the study, 4 per cent of the respondents were staying in the hostel to continue their education, which can be assumed that respondents have the support of their husbands and family members. The majority of the respondents were unmarried (87.2 per cent). The majority of 57.6 per cent of the respondents belonged to Hindus, 22.4 per cent were Muslims, 12 per cent were Jains, and 8 per cent belonged to Christians. More number (26.4 per cent) belonged to Lingayats, and 22.4 per cent belonged to Muslims. Furthermore, a meagre percentage belonged to Kurubas, Chalawadi, Madar, Holey, Vishwakarma, and Navi.

Education is an important factor that affects migration as well as the work status of the female. The majority of 64.8 per cent of the women has migrated from rural areas of Belagavi to pursue their higher education and are staying in hostels. In comparison, 35.2 per cent have migrated from other cities to Belagavi.



Table-1
Socio Demographic Characteristics

Background Characteristics	Number	%
Age Group		
18-20	65	52.0
21-23	55	44.0
24 and above	05	04.0
Marital Status		
Unmarried	109	87.2
Married	16	12.8
Religion		
Hindu	72	57.6
Muslim	28	22.4
Christian	10	08.0
Jain	15	12.0
Caste		
Lingayat	33	26.4
Kuruba	09	07.2
Chalawadi	10	08.0
Madar	06	04.8
Holeya	05	04.0
Vishwakarma	07	05.6
Navi	02	01.6
Muslim	28	22.4
Jain	15	12.0
Christian	10	08.0
Migrant from-		
Rural	81	64.8
Urban	44	35.2
Total	125	100.00
Mean Age of the Respondents = 21 Years		

Table 2 reveals the educational qualifications of the women hostelites. Majority of 58 per cent of the respondents had Kannada as a medium of instruction in primary and secondary schools. In the present study, 44 per cent of the respondents are pursuing post graduation, and a majority of 56 per cent of the respondents are studying in graduation. More number (28.8 per cent) of respondents are pursuing a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.), 24 per cent of respondents are studying Master of Arts (M.A.), and 20 per cent are pursuing a Master of Commerce (M.Com.). 12 per cent of the respondents are pursuing Bachelor in Education (B.Ed.), Bachelor of Commerce (8.8 per cent) and Bachelor of Science (6.4 per cent). Majority of the respondents have completed courses such as typing and basic computer, and 48 per cent do not have any other course certificate. The study finds



that most of the respondents have a strong urge to pursue their higher education and focus on a successful career.

Table-2
Educational Status

Options	Number	%
Education		
Graduate	70	56.0
Post-Graduate	55	44.0
Medium of Instruction		
Kannada	72	57.6
English	53	42.4
Degree		
B.A.	36	28.8
B.Sc.	08	06.4
B.Com.	11	08.8
B.Ed.	15	12.0
M.A.	30	24.0
M.Com.	25	20.0
Course		
Typing	20	16.0
Basic Computer	45	36.0
None	60	48.0
Total	125	100.0

Regarding social disorder, questions were related to whether respondents can keep themselves busy and occupied. Are they playing a vital role in day-to-day chores? Do they have the calibre to make decisions on their own, etc.? The mean score was found to be 3.78. However, the mean score was more than five for 21 per cent of the women hostelites. The questions under severe depression were related to feeling worthless and suicidal tendencies, and the mean score value for this was found to be 1.98. Overall, the mean score value for mental health problems was 12.42. The mental health score shows that more than 15 per cent of the respondents come under poor mental health conditions, 26 per cent are under average, and more than half of the respondents come under good mental health conditions.



ANALYSIS:

The place hostel plays an important role in a woman's life, for which she leaves behind her home to study and bear the bland food and atmosphere of a hostel. The study reveals that the respondents are young, unmarried and pursuing higher education. Some respondents revealed they experienced poor quality of life as the living conditions at the hostel were average/poor and not well maintained. Some respondents expressed that they suffer from poor mental health status. The study examined the connection between hostelites' living conditions on mental health status. Significant variations were found in their mental health status based on their academics and living conditions. The study indicates that the respondents' age, occupation, push factors, and quality of life can affect their mental health status.

Living conditions have a significant relationship with the mental health status of hostelites. The factors influencing anxiety among the respondents found that the duration of stay and the problems related to different areas of hostel life correlate with the respondents' mental health.

The study further points towards a need for a more systematic study into hostelites' health problems concerning their academics and work. The respondents have ill health symptoms such as sleep disturbances, headaches, depression, menstrual disorder, anxiety, backache and anaemia.

CONCLUSION

Migration and psychological health have a significant connection. The study revealed that the background characteristics, academic and living conditions have significantly associated with the mental health status and well-being of the women hostelites. Consequently, exceptional importance should be given to improving the living conditions, which will have a greater impact on the mental health status of the women hostelites. According to UNFPA (2011), lack of familiarity with new locations, less access to traditional support systems, exposure to different lifestyles and influences, and vulnerability to exploitation and abuse are some factors that impact the health and well-being of women hostelites.



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