

## INFLUENCE OF GENDER AND LOCALITY ON MENTAL HEALTH OF HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS OF VARANASI

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### Abstract

The objectives of the present study were to examine the main and interaction effects of gender and locality on the mental health of higher secondary school students. The sample for the study consisted of 208 students, selected through simple random sampling from five higher secondary schools in Varanasi. To assess the mental health of the participants, the Mansik Swasthya Mapani developed and standardized by Rai (1994) was administered. For data analysis, a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was employed to determine the effects of gender and locality, as well as their interaction, on students' mental health. The findings revealed a significant difference between boys and girls in their mental health, with girls exhibiting better mental health than boys. However, no significant difference was found between rural and urban students in terms of mental health. Additionally, the study indicated that there was no significant interaction effect between gender and locality on the mental health of higher secondary school students.

**Key Words:** *Mental Health, Gender and Locality, Higher Secondary Schools*

Good health is a vital aspect of human life, encompassing physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being. Among these dimensions, mental health holds a central position, as it profoundly influences all other aspects of health and overall quality of life. It is essential for leading a happy, fulfilling, and productive life. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health is defined as "a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community." Mental health shapes our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, enabling individuals to manage stress effectively and maintain psychological, emotional, and social balance. It enhances our ability to make sound decisions, form positive relationships, adapt to changing

environments, and function efficiently in daily life. As a combination of cognitive, behavioral, and emotional well-being, mental health influences everything we think, feel, say, and do. Importantly, mental health plays a crucial role throughout all stages of life—from childhood and adolescence to adulthood and old age. Its significance extends beyond the individual, contributing to social harmony and national progress. Therefore, fostering and maintaining positive mental health is fundamental not only for personal happiness and resilience but also for the social, cultural, and economic development of a nation. Therefore, the study of factors affecting mental health, positively or negatively, and provide suggestions for treatment, is an essential task of researchers. There are several factors associated with

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mental health in which some are beneficial and some are harming. Exercise, meditation and yoga are potential ways that affect mental health positively, while loneliness, trauma, abuse, neglect, discrimination, social isolation, unemployment, poverty, disturbed family life and breakup or divorce are factors that affect mental health adversely. Good social, economic, geopolitical and environmental aspects can enhance mental health conditions of an individual. Out of these factors, gender and locality are also associated with mental health. Particularly at adolescent stage, students' cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains develop very fast and it depends on locality also. But the research related to gender and locality are showing contradictory results. Therefore, the investigators decided to study mental health in relation to sex and habitation.

A considerable number of studies have explored the mental health of adolescents across variables such as gender, locality, and school type. Early research by Sharma (1979) on 1,060 students from grades X to XII revealed that boys had better mental health than girls. However, subsequent studies presented mixed findings. Anand (1989) reported significantly better mental health among girls than boys, while Nanda (1999); Rai and Yadav (1993) also found girls to be superior in mental health when socio-economic status was controlled. Similarly, Manjuvani (1995) and Nanda (2001) observed better mental health among girls than boys and noted rural girls' superior mental health compared to urban girls.

Research conducted by Gupta (2002) and Srividhya (2007) also supported the trend of better mental health among female adolescents. Contrarily, Perumal (2008) found

no significant gender difference in mental health. Later, Bandhana and Sharma (2012) reported significant gender differences in favour of females, while Chawla (2012) found boys superior in mental health. Kumari (2012) observed no significant gender difference. Babu (2013) found girls to have better mental health than boys and noted urban students outperforming rural students.

Other studies such as Choudhary (2013), Dheventhiran and Babu (2013), and Kumar (2013) showed mixed results—while Choudhary found girls superior, Dheventhiran and Babu found no difference. Kumar's findings revealed that male students were mentally healthier overall, though female students scored higher on self-actualization. Studies examining locality differences also revealed inconsistent outcomes. Bartwal (2014) found no significant rural-urban difference, while Thilagavathy (2014) and Joseph (2015) observed that rural students had better mental health. Naik, Bhattacharjee, and Sutradhar (2015) also reported superior mental health among rural adolescents, especially rural boys and girls compared to their urban counterparts. In contrast, Viswanath and Reddy (2016) found urban students and boys to possess better mental health.

Recent studies continue to show variability. Patel (2018) found male students to have higher mental health, Ali and Equbal (2020) reported no significant difference between rural and urban students. However, Tripathy and Sahu (2021) found urban students, particularly urban girls, to be mentally healthier.

D'Souza and Tripathi (2022) similarly reported significant differences favouring urban girls over rural girls.

Overall, research on adolescent mental health demonstrates inconsistent patterns across gender and locality. While several studies show girls to possess better mental health, others find boys superior or no significant difference at all. Likewise, locality-based comparisons yield mixed outcomes—some favouring rural students, others urban, suggesting that contextual, cultural, and methodological factors influence these variations.

### Objectives

Following objectives were framed for the present study:

1. To find out influence of gender on mental health of higher secondary school students of Varanasi.
2. To find out influence of locality on mental health of secondary school students of Varanasi.
3. To find out interaction effect between gender and locality of higher secondary school students on mental health.

### Hypotheses

Objective wise null hypotheses were framed in following way:

1. There is no significant influence of gender on mental health of higher secondary school students of Varanasi.
2. There is no significant influence of locality on mental health of secondary school students of Varanasi.
3. There is no significant interaction effect between gender and locality of higher secondary school students on mental health.

### Method and Material

The present study employed the analytical survey method to investigate the mental health of higher secondary school students. A

sample of 208 students was selected using the simple random sampling technique from five secondary schools located in Varanasi city. To assess the mental health of the participants, the Mansik Swasthya Mapani (Mental Health Scale) developed and standardized by Rai (1994) was utilized. The scale comprises 78 items, distributed across ten factors: physical condition, self-concept, and self-confidence, self-concept about life, attitude towards others, and attitude of others towards self, achievement satisfaction, adjustment, mental ability, and emotional ability. The reliability coefficient of the scale was reported to be 0.91, indicating a high degree of internal consistency. The scale has been standardized and employed in several research studies and is considered appropriate for assessing the mental health of students at the high school, higher secondary, and graduate levels. For statistical analysis, the data were subjected to a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to examine the effects of independent variables and their interaction on the mental health of students.

### Results and Interpretation

To find out main and interaction effects of gender and locality, descriptive statistics and two-way analysis of variance were used. Results of descriptive analysis and two-way analysis of variance are presented in Table-1 and Table-2 respectively.

**Table-1-Results of descriptive statistics for gender (male and female) and locality (rural and urban) secondary school students on their mental health**

	N	Sum	SS	Mean	S.D.
Rural-Boys	75	19944	5477652	265.920	48.511
Rural-Girls	75	21219	6111009	282.920	38.155
Urban-Boys	75	19641	5200983	261.880	27.850
Urban-Girls	75	20445	5644575	272.600	31.034

### Influence of Gender on Mental Health

Table-2 shows that the F value for the main effect of gender on mental health of higher secondary school students is 10.388 and probability of this F ratio is 0.001 which is much less than 0.01. This means that significant differences exist between boys and girls on their mental health. It is clear from Table-1 that the mean of girl students is higher than boy students on mental health. It means girls' students' mental health is better than that of boy students. Thus, the null hypothesis that "There is no significant influence of gender on mental health of higher secondary school students of Varanasi", is rejected.

**Table-2- Results of two-way analysis of variance for main and interaction effects of gender and locality on mental health of higher secondary school students**

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Probability
Main Effects	18273.900	2	9136.950	6.588	.002
Gender	14407.470	1	14407.470	10.388	.001
Locality	3866.430	1	3866.430	2.788	.096
2-Way Interactions	739.470	1	739.470	.533	.466
Gender X Locality	739.470	1	739.470	.533	.466
Explained	19013.370	3	6337.790	4.570	.004
Residual	410538.960	296	1386.956		
Total	429552.330	299	1436.630		

### Influence of Locality on Mental Health

It is depicted in Table-2 that F value for influence of locality on mental health of higher secondary school students is 2.788 and probability of this value is 0.096 which is greater than 0.05 this means that significant difference does not exist between rural and urban higher secondary school students on their mental health. Thus, the null hypothesis that "There is no significant influence of locality on mental health of secondary school students of Varanasi", is accepted.

### Interaction between Gender Locality on Mental Health

Table-2 also shows that F value for interaction between gender and locality on mental health of higher secondary school students is 0.533 and probability of this value is 0.4666 which is much greater than 0.05. This means that interaction between gender and locality on mental health of higher secondary school students is not significant. This result also indicates that main effects of gender and locality are not affected by their interaction effect. Therefore, the null hypothesis that "There is no significant interaction effect between gender and locality of higher secondary school students on mental health", is accepted.

### Discussion on Results

In the present study significant difference was found between mental health of boys and girl students on their mental health. Mental health of rural and urban girl students was found to be better than that of boy students. Most of the studies related to gender are in line with the findings of the present study. In the studies conducted by Anand (1989), Nanda (1999), Rai and Yadav (1993), Manjuvani (1995), Nanda (2001), Srividhya (2007), Bandhana and Sharma (2012), Babu (2013), Choudhary (2013), Thilagavathy (2014), Joseph (2015), found that females' mental health is better than males. But some previous studies' findings are deviated from the findings of the present study. Studies by Sharma (1979), Kumar (2013), Viswanath and Reddy (2016) and Patel (2018), found that mental health of boys is better than girls. While some studies by Perumal (2008), Chawla (2012), Kumari (2012), Dheventhiran and Babu (2013), Kumar and Grewal (2014) and Senad (2018) indicates that there was no

significant difference between boys and girls on their mental health.

The present study also indicates that significant differences do not exist between rural and urban students on their mental health. Some previous studies findings are in line with the findings of the present study. Rai and Yadav (1993), Bartwal (2014), Kumar and Grewal (2014), Thilagavathy (2014) and Ali and Equbal (2020) it was found that significant differences did not exist between rural and urban students on their mental health. But studies conducted by Babu (2013), Viswanath and Reddy (2016) and Tripathy and Sahu (2021) indicate that mental health of urban students was better than rural students. While studies by Joseph (2015) and Naik, Bhattacharjee and Sutradhar (2015) indicate that mental health of rural students was found to be better than urban students. These studies are not supporting findings of the present study.

### **Educational Implications**

The present study finding indicates that girl students were found to have better mental health than male students. Therefore, to overcome this gender gap, school teachers and principals should regularly measure the mental health of boys and girls and use meditation, exercise and yoga to improve their mental health. Some mental health related programmes should be organized by the principal in school.

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