



ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH THROUGH THE LENS OF AYURVEDA: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Mental health disorders in adolescent are significant problems some of these disorders may interfere with adolescent ability to understand and articulate their health concerns. They often have behavioural and educational problems. As adolescent are vulnerable part of the society and future of nation, proper care and attention should be need on their health concerns especially mental health. The concepts of *manasswasthya* is very broad in Ayurveda. Ayurvedic classics are one of the oldest medical classics of the world which has explored the descriptive understanding of mind in various form and various contexts. Acharya Charak elaborates many preventive measures to save from various mental disorder – *sadvritta*, *achararayan*, *dincharya*, *rutucharya*, yoga therapy, *daivvyapashraya*, *yuktivyapashrayachikitsa*. Simultaneously various *aushadhis* are also described to prevent many mental disorders without side effects and achieve complete health.

KEYWORDS : Ayurveda, manasdosha, manasvikara, mental health, adolescents, Yuktivyapashrayachikitsa.

INTRODUCTION:

"Samdosha Samagnishcha, Samadhātu Malakriyah, Prasannatmendriya Manah, Swastha Ityabhidhiyate".
(Su.Su.15/48)

In *Sushruta Samhita*, definition of 'Swasthya' (Health) described as *Vato, Pitta, Kapha, Agni* (metabolism), *Ras-raktadi* Seven *dhatus*, *vinn-mutradimala* should be in balanced state in the body. All above mentioned physiological parameters are equal in balanced with healthy mind, intellect and all senses known as *swasthya* (healthy being).¹ According to WHO definition of health states that "Health is a state of complete physical, mental, social and spiritual wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."² WHO stresses that mental health is not just the absence of mental disorder.³ A healthy mind resides in the healthy body. Mental health of the individual plays a significant role in the wellbeing of adolescents. An adolescent is a young person who is in the transitional stages of development between childhood and adulthood, typically from the ages of 9 to 19 years characterised by rapid physical, cognitive and psychosocial growth.⁴ At least one in five youth aged 9-17 years currently has a diagnosable mental health disorder that causes some degree of impairment one in ten has a disorder that causes significant impairment.⁵ According to Ayurveda the end part of *balyavastha* and the early half of *madhyamaavastha* constitute the adolescent phase. Adolescents constantly under transformation and process of development. Acharya Charak mentioned *aparipakwadhatuavastha*⁶ resembled to adolescents' period. A person with *avarasatva* (poor resilience) is more prone to develop psychological disturbances and psychiatric disorders. *Dincharya*, *Rutucharya*, *Sadvritta*, *Achar rasayan*, *Satvavjayachikitsa*, *yuktivyapashrayachikitsa*, *Daivvyapashraya Chikitsa*, yoga therapy, meditation is ayurvedic healthy practices helps in developing optimum *satvabala* (resilience).

Major factors affects mental health⁷:-

Several factors are responsible for mental health i.e. social circumstances, hereditary factors, traumatic incidents, personality of the person, biological reasons, improper diet, physical illness, overindulgence severe mental or physical stress. Unfavourable personal, familial and social environment.

1. Personal factors – lack of awareness, lack of proper education about different phases of ages. i.e., physical and psychological changes during puberty. Detained self-

acceptance, jealousy can affect mental health of adolescent.

2. Familial factors – family environment i.e., strict and toxic parenting, poverty, parental conflicts i.e., single parent, divorce, lack of family support and sibling rivalry can affect mental health of an adolescent.

3. Social factors – children and adolescents are vulnerable to sexual violence and exploitation. Suicide or other traumatic events, peer pressure, body shaming, bullying, increase use of social media, technology, force and childhood marriages, lack of quality support, services, lack of social connectedness.

*"Dharayaettusada vegan hitaishipretyacheha cha, Lobhairshyadveshamtsaryaragaadeenamjitendriya"*⁸

According to Ayurveda there is an imbalance in *tridoshas* and *trigunas* of mind has causative factor. Excess of *shoka* (sorrow), *krodha* (anger), *chinta* (unnecessary thinking), *kama* (lust), *lobha* (greed), *moha* (delusion), *irshya* (jealousy), *abhimana* (pride), *mada* (euphoria), *bhaya* (fear) are some of the negative emotions which can contribute to mental imbalance.⁹ Major factors to cause any disease are *Asatmeindriyarthasamyog*, *Pragyaparadh* and *parinam*.¹⁰ *pragyaparadha* (knowingly doing inappropriate things) is biggest cause of *mansik* disorder.¹¹ dominance of *raja* and *tamadoshas* prone to psychiatric disease.

Common Mental Health disorders in adolescents :

Attention- Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder: adolescents with ADHD tends to be easily distracted, inattentive and emotionally immature. They often have behavioural and educational problems and lack of focus.¹²

Anxiety Disorders: Anxiety disorders are the most common mental health disorder in adolescents. It includes generalized anxiety disorder, social anxiety disorder and panic disorder. Anxiety disorders are clinically significant when they interfere with important areas of functioning such as school, work or relationships with family and peers.¹³

Mood disorders and Depression – Mood disorder include adjustment disorder with depressed mood, major depressive disorder, bipolar disorder and premenstrual dysphoric disorder. Depression is more common in female adolescents than in male adolescents. Depression adversely affects school, work or interpersonal relationships.¹⁴

Disruptive Behaviour Disorder – It includes oppositional defiant disorder and conduct disorder. Females with conduct disorder often run away from home and are at increased risk

of sexual exploitation or trafficking as well as engaging in high-risk sexual behaviour. Adolescents with disruptive behaviour disorders may be argumentative and resistant to advise from any adults including health care professionals.¹⁵

Borderline Personality Disorder – It affects 1-3% of adolescents and young adults mostly females.¹⁶ Borderline personality disorder is characterized by frequent bouts of anger, depression and anxiety lasting only hours often alternating. Adolescents with borderline personality disorder are highly sensitive to rejection and fear abandonment, which cause them to demand frequent attention.

Suicidal thoughts – Suicide is the second leading cause of death in young people aged 15-24 years with a rate of 13.9 death by suicide in this population per day. The rate of suicide attempts is 100-200 times higher than that of completions.¹⁷

Psychiatric conditions in Ayurveda

1. *Unmada*¹⁸ (psychosis)
2. *Apasmara*¹⁹ (convulsive disorders)
3. *Bhrama*²⁰ (illusion)
4. *Atarvabhinisham*²¹ (Obsessive Disorders)
5. *Prajnaparadha*²² (lack of coordination between *dhidhruti* and *smruti*)
6. *Tandra*²³ (drowsiness)
7. *Klama*²⁴ (neurasthenia)
8. *Mada*²⁵ (loss of perception)
9. *Apatantrakam*²⁶ (hysteria)
10. *Avasada*²⁷ (Depression)
11. *CittoUdvega*- (Anxiety neurosis)
12. *ManasaMandata* (Mental Retardation)
13. *Madatyaya*²⁸ (Intoxication etc)

Concept Of Mana

The term *Manas* has its genesis *Satva* (*mana*), *atma* (soul) and *sharir* (body) are labelled as main pillar of life (*tridanda*). They combine to form *Purusha* (living being)²⁹ Ayurvedic management is aimed at treating this *Purusha*. The *mana* controls all the senses and keeps eye on itself.³⁰ Healthy mind is responsible for analytic, logical, thinking and its improper functioning invites illogical thoughts, decrease analytical power and is very harmful for body. *Chintya* (thinking), *uhy* (judgement), *Vicharya* (logical analysis / interpretation), goal and aims resolution, etc are the subject of *mana*.³¹

In *CharakSharirSthanaAcharyaCharak* defined *chintyam*, *Vicharyam*, *uhyam*, *dhyeyam*, *sankalpan* are called as *arth*. This concept resembles to concept of Emotional Intelligence (EI) where author *Daniel Goleman* described component of EI³² i.e self-awareness, internal motivation, self-regulation, empathy, social skills. *Ayurveda* explains 3 *manasikagunas*³³ *Satva*, *Raja*, *Tama* from which *raja* and *tama* are *mansikadoshas* responsible for causing disease. *Satvaguna* is related to *kalyan* or welfare.

Preventive measures for Mental illness

In *Ayurveda*, mental health is closely linked to the balance of the three *doshas* (*Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*) and the harmony of the mind, body, and soul. Preventive measures for mental health problems aim to maintain this balance and strengthen mental resilience. Here are some key preventive measures:

NidanaParivarjanam: It is a cornerstone of Ayurvedic preventive and curative medicine. It aligns with the holistic approach of *Ayurveda*, emphasizing the removal of the root cause of disease rather than just treating its symptoms. *NidanaParivarjanam* is a fundamental principle in *Ayurveda* that focuses on the avoidance or elimination of the causative factors (*nidana*) responsible for a disease. It is considered one of the primary approaches to disease prevention and management. This concept is rooted in the idea that addressing the root cause of a disorder prevents its

progression and recurrence.³⁴

Dinacharya (Daily Routine): wake up early (*brahmamuhurta*), *abhyanga* (oil massage), practice mindfulness and breathing exercises like *nadishodhana*, consume *sattvic* diet, avoid *tamasic* (heavy, processed) and *rajasic* (spicy, overly stimulating) foods, avoid excessive multitasking and stressful environments, maintain a consistent sleep schedule, *vihara* (lifestyle practices) i.e. avoid overstimulation through excessive exposure to technology. include leisure and recreational activities that align with individual *dosha* types. By integrating these measures into daily life, *Ayurveda* promotes a balanced and resilient mind, helping to prevent the onset of mental health issues.³⁵

Rutucharya in *Ayurveda* refers to the seasonal regimen that outlines specific lifestyle and dietary practices to maintain health and prevent diseases during seasonal changes. The term is derived from "*Ritu*" (season) and "*Charya*" (regimen), emphasizing the importance of adapting one's routine to align with seasonal variations to balance the *doshas* (*Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*). *Ayurveda* recognizes six seasons (*Ritus*) in a year, each having unique climatic conditions that influence the *doshas*. *Rutucharya* helps to maintain harmony between the individual and their environment, promoting physical, mental, and spiritual health.³⁶

AcharRasayana in *Ayurveda* refers to the code of ideal conduct or behavioural therapy, which is considered an essential part of *Rasayana* (rejuvenation) therapy. While *Rasayana* primarily focuses on herbs, dietary guidelines, and rejuvenation therapies to promote health and longevity, *AcharRasayana* serves as a guide for leading an ethical and disciplined life, thereby creating a foundation for holistic health and well-being.³⁷

Sadvritta in *Ayurveda* refers to the code of ethical conduct or moral discipline that ensures physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. It is a set of guidelines for leading a righteous and healthy life by maintaining harmony with oneself, society, and nature.³⁸

Management:

Major treatment modalities explained for different disease in *Ayurveda* are *DaivavyapashrayaChikitsa*, *YuktivyapashrayaChikitsa* (rational therapy), *SattvavajayaChikitsa* (psychotherapy).³⁹

DaivavyapashrayaChikitsa:

DaivavyapashrayaChikitsa is one of the three primary approaches to treatment described in *Ayurveda*. The term "*Daivavyapashraya*" refers to divine or spiritually-oriented therapy, which is used to counteract diseases caused by *adrishta* (unseen factors), such as karma, cosmic influences, and unseen forces beyond human control. *DaivavyapashrayaChikitsa* serves as a reminder of the holistic nature of *Ayurveda*, which integrates physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions of health. The treatment recognizes the role of karmic influences and unseen causes (like planetary imbalances, evil spirits, or curses) in the manifestation of diseases. It is based on the belief that certain conditions cannot be addressed solely by logical or physical interventions but require divine intervention.

YuktivyapashrayaChikitsa in Mental Health

YuktivyapashrayaChikitsa refers to the rational treatment approach in *Ayurveda*, utilizing medicines, diet, and lifestyle modifications to address physical and mental health issues. In paediatric mental health, it focuses on managing conditions such as anxiety, ADHD, behavioural disorders, and psychosomatic ailments through herbal formulations, dietary regulation, and therapeutic practices.

SattvavajayaChikitsa: *SattvavajayaChikitsa*, or psychotherapeutic treatment in *Ayurveda*, focuses on strengthening the mind (*Sattva*) to overcome mental disturbances caused by *Rajas* (hyperactivity, restlessness) and *Tamas* (inertia, depression). In paediatric care, it emphasizes managing mental health issues like anxiety, behavioural problems, hyperactivity, and psychosomatic disorders through counselling, behavioural modification, and mindfulness techniques.

Panchakarma for Adolescent Mental Health

Panchakarma is a set of five therapeutic treatments in *Ayurveda* that aim to cleanse the body of toxins (*ama*) and restore balance to the *doshas* (*Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*). For adolescents, particularly in dealing with mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, stress, behavioural disturbances, and psychosomatic conditions, Panchakarma can play a vital role in restoring mental clarity, emotional balance, and overall well-being. Adolescence is a crucial phase of development, where physical, emotional, and psychological changes occur. Therefore, Panchakarma can help support mental health by addressing both the root causes of mental imbalance and symptoms like irritability, mood swings, emotional disturbances, and stress.

Yoga Therapy for Adolescent Mental Health

Adolescence is a period of significant change, both physically and emotionally. Yoga therapy helps adolescents navigate these changes, providing tools to manage stress, reduce anxiety, improve focus, and regulate emotions. Yoga therapy is a holistic approach that integrates physical postures (*asanas*), breathing techniques (*pranayama*), and meditation to promote mental, emotional, and physical health. For adolescents, yoga therapy can play a key role in addressing the unique challenges they face, including stress, anxiety, mood swings, attention difficulties, and emotional regulation issues. Yoga not only improves physical strength and flexibility but also helps in cultivating emotional stability, enhancing self-awareness, and promoting mental clarity.

CONCLUSION:

Mental health in adolescents, from an *Ayurvedic* perspective, is a multifaceted concept that encompasses not just the mind but the balance of the body's *doshas* (*Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*), the quality of digestive fire (*Agni*), and the state of the body's tissues (*Dhatus*). *Ayurveda* offers a holistic approach to mental well-being, emphasizing the need for balanced physical, emotional, and spiritual health. The key *Ayurvedic* treatments—such as *DaivavyapashrayaChikitsa*, *YuktivyapashrayaChikitsa* (rational therapy), *SattvavajayaChikitsa* (psychotherapy), and Panchakarma—focus on enhancing mental clarity, emotional stability, and reducing stressors that affect adolescent mental health. Furthermore, the integration of yoga, pranayama, and mindfulness practices offers adolescents effective tools to manage their emotional and mental states. By understanding the unique biological and psychological changes in adolescents, *Ayurveda* provides a comprehensive framework that can complement modern psychiatric care. *Ayurveda's* emphasis on prevention, lifestyle modifications, balanced nutrition, and natural therapies offers an effective, individualized treatment approach that can promote long-term mental health and well-being in adolescents. As the mental health challenges facing adolescents continue to rise, integrating *Ayurvedic* principles into treatment plans presents a promising path toward achieving holistic mental health.

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