

# Psychological Counselling Need among Nepalese Adolescents: A Cross-Cultural Study

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## Abstract

Adolescence is a time of significant change, encompassing hormonal, physical, social, and cognitive development. While most adolescents transition into healthy adulthood, this period also increases vulnerability to mental health issues. Counseling needs assessment helps counselors understand clients' issues, aiding problem-solving, intervention, evaluation, and diagnosis. Adolescents require a safe space to address developmental challenges and explore their identity.

This study aimed to understand the influence of age, ethnicity, and religion on psychological counseling needs. The study examines the relationship between age, education, ethnicity, and religion with psychological counseling needs. A survey was conducted to collect data from 344 Koshi Province and Karnali Province of Nepal students. Purposive sampling was used to collect the data. The data collection instrument employed is the Psychological Counseling Need Scale (PCNS), a self-report questionnaire comprising 25 items, with response categories including always, often, sometimes, rarely, and never.

The study sample comprised 344 students, including 187 females and 157 males. Data analysis was performed using SPSS software. Likewise, the mean and standard deviation of a few demographic details, such as age and educational level, were also calculated. The descriptive statistics were also analyzed, i.e., mean and SD of total scores. The mean age is 14.76, the level of education is 8.44, and the total score is 72.23. Here, age, education, and religion are related to psychological counseling needs. Among the 344 students, 39.2% were found to need counseling.

## INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a time of significant change, encompassing hormonal, physical, social, and cognitive development. While most adolescents transition into healthy adulthood, this period also increases vulnerability to mental health issues. Many disorders, such as depression, anxiety, eating disorders, substance use disorders, and psychosis, often manifest by the age of 14. Adolescence is one of the most crucial stages of the journey that human life takes through several stages. Adolescence is a time of substantial physical and psychological development. Adolescence is frequently linked with the teenage

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years; however, depending on how it manifests physically, psychologically, or culturally, it can begin sooner and last longer. Puberty now typically begins in preadolescence, especially in girls. Cognitive and physical development can continue until the early 20s, particularly in males. They enjoy making their own choices. They are susceptible emotionally, and as a natural result of growth, their desire for the opposite sex is growing. (Pushpalatha and Sasikala, 2015).

According to (Cash, 2003) research, depression and other mental health problems are becoming more common in young people. Urban areas reported more significant percentages of alcohol and drug misuse than more rural areas, according to the Young Life and Times (YLT) study from 2004. According to Cairns and Lloyd's data analysis of the young life and times survey conducted in Northern Ireland in 2005, schoolwork and exams were the most often mentioned sources of stress for adolescents. According to Webster-Stratton and Hammond (2010), the trend of increased competitiveness and the rapid development of technology have coincided with a decline in social bonds and the rise of individualism. Adolescents have feelings of nervousness, uncertainty, and high emotion because of negative familial ties, a sense of inadequacy, and social expectations of more adult behavior, according to Patel (2002).

According to Cameron and Karabanow (2003), adolescents face various developmental challenges at varying rates. These challenges include a growing need for independence, developing sexuality, moving through school and into the workforce, consolidating advanced cognitive abilities, navigating shifting relationships with family, peers, and broader social connections, assuming legal responsibilities, and developing personal ethics and a healthy identity. According to UNICEF's 2007 report, "Child Well-being in Rich Countries," there are serious issues with psychological maladjustment and deprivation among teenagers, and disorderly behavior has significantly increased over the past 20 years. The effects of psychological problems are wide-ranging and numerous, influencing the adolescent's development in many areas and ecosystems as well as their long-term mental health (European

Pact for Mental Health and Well-being, 2008). For some adolescents, this period is smooth as they can handle all the challenges well, but for some, it is a stage of total turmoil. Hence, such individuals face problems of adjustment, substance abuse, anger, depression, anxiety, and many other related issues. Adolescents become distant from their parents, and close relationships with friends grow. The intimacy with peer groups increases as creating new opportunities to interact with the outside world and explore it without adult surveillance/restrictions becomes essential. However, the role of the family cannot be overlooked as a family offers affection and security and operates as a role-defining agency central to promoting the adolescent's maturity and determining his future adjustment as an adult.

Family is typically a context that reinforces adult values, promotes school success, and supports emotional security (Larson & Richard, 1991). The family support system has changed over time. Recent changes in family structure brought on by globalization, liberalism, migration, etc., have increased concern for children's welfare, particularly adolescent health. A likely explanation of many of the contemporary issues plaguing adolescents, such as low educational outcomes, drug misuse, juvenile delinquency, frustration, sadness, etc., is widely identified as the decline in the prevalence of the conventional family. Additionally, today's media significantly impacts how sensitive adolescents become. It considerably alters attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs. So adolescents need a place to be listened to, and their thoughts and feelings should be regarded as necessary (Milne, 2003). So, the need for psychological counseling is felt at this hour. Boys and girls react to their development and life demands distinctively because they are psychologically and emotionally different. In Indian culture, consulting a psychologist is a form of social stigma. Often, educated masses also face the dilemma of consulting a psychologist. Counseling is an interactive process concerned with assisting an individual to achieve their goals and functions more effectively (Ivey et al., 1987). It is a one-to-one relationship involving a trained counselor who focuses on the client's development, adjustment, and decision-making (Gibson & Mitchell, 2003).

Psychological counseling needs in the Indian context emerge against tremendous change (Arulmani, 2007). Cruz *et al.* (2007) examined the needs young people expressed. A more significant percentage of females asked to talk about sexuality and family problems, while more males than females asked about reproductive health and mental health.

Thagunna and Dhungel (2019) investigated learning disabilities in 200 early adolescents from government and private schools in Kathmandu. Government schools exhibited higher rates of severe dyslexia (30%), dysgraphia (20%), and dyscalculia (30%) compared to private schools (4, 6, and 10%, respectively). The study highlighted the need for targeted interventions, particularly in government schools. Janetis (2012) examined the significant concerns and challenges faced by college students needing counseling. Adolescents struggle with transitioning to adulthood, coping with persistent childhood illnesses, mental health issues, risky behaviors, and facing serious health threats, including accidents, violence, and suicide. Albert, Tirkey, and Kerketta (2021) examined psychological counseling needs among +2 students in the West Garo Hills District of Meghalaya and gender differences in psychological counseling needs there. According to the research, the West Garo Hills District of Meghalaya has a high need for psychological counseling services for all +2 students, and female students were shown to have more significant requirements than male students.

Sati and Vig (2016), in their research on the need for psychological counseling among adolescents, found that 44% felt a high need, 43% felt a low need, and only 13% felt the average need. The results also showed that girls had a higher need for psychological counseling (58%) than boys (30%). According to Thagunna, Bista, and Dangi (2023), The role of the school psychologist in an inclusive environment is crucial. Inclusive education has been practiced for many years, and the involvement of school psychologists has played a significant role in improving the integration and inclusion of all students.

Dhami and Sharma (2020) studied the assessment and comparison of psychological counseling needs of rural and urban adolescents. The study showed that of the 200 respondents, high-level psy-

chological counseling needs were 47.50%, followed by the average psychological counseling needs at 29% and low-level psychological counseling needs at 23.50%. In the rural sample, 66% of females and 50% of males were found to have a high level of psychological counseling needs. In contrast, in an urban locale, 48% of males had a high level of psychological counseling needs, which was more than females (26%).

Bhat *et al.* (2020) studied the need for counseling among 120 university students from Anand, Gujarat, using the PCNS. Analysis with t-test, ANOVA, correlation, and regression revealed a random counseling need across student streams. Sivagurunathan *et al.* (2015), in their review article on Adolescent Health: Present Status and Its Related Programs in India, intend to create awareness among stakeholders about the importance of strengthening adolescent health services to meet their needs. The article stated that access to and availability of health care services are severely limited. Cruz *et al.* (2007) examined the needs young people expressed. A more significant percentage of females asked to talk about sexuality and family problems, while more males than females asked about reproductive health and mental health. Janetis (2012), in his study, focused on the significant concerns and constraints of college students who need counseling assistance and developed a comprehensive counseling program in the Indian higher education scenario.

Dangi *et al.* (2022) conducted a study on suicidal ideation among adolescents, involving 325 school students aged 13 to 17 years, from grades nine to eleven, in Bhaktapur City. The study found that 64.3% of the respondents exhibited average levels of suicidal ideation. Chouhan and Josh (2014) used the PCNS to explore adolescents' counseling needs with 120 participants. The Results showed no significant gender differences. Khayamali *et al.* (2022) studied internet addiction among 136 participants (71 male, 65 female). Results indicated that 15 (11%) had no or normal addiction, 92 (67.6%) had mild addiction, and 29 (21.3%) had moderate addiction. Bista *et al.* (2016) found that one-fifth (17.03%) of adolescent students suffered from psychosocial dysfunction. Male students (9.50%) were more affected than female students (7.80%). The proportion of psycho-

social dysfunction rose with the rise in age group and grade. The frequency of family disputes was significantly associated with psychosocial dysfunction.

Timilsina *et al.* (2018) findings of this study show that 12.9% of adolescents had psychosocial problems. While categorizing psychosocial problems, the adolescents had internalizing problems (44.6%), attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD) (25.8%), and externalizing problems (4.2%). There is an association of age group and parent's marital status with psychosocial problems. Adolescence is a time of transition when many changes occur on all levels: physically, emotionally, socially, intellectually, sexually, and in various other ways. Khayamali *et al.* (2022) examined mental health literacy among 200 Ayurveda students in Nepal using the MAKs questionnaire. The findings revealed overall high literacy (mean score 76.32), with first- and second-year students showing medium literacy (74.22–74.67) and third-year students and interns scoring higher (79.59–81.29).

Teenagers are struggling to make this transition, and on top of that, they deal with a host of other problems like peer pressure, communication issues, rivalry, eating and sleeping disorders, substance abuse, sexual problems, socialization issues, relationship issues, and family issues, all of which are contributing to behavior issues, stress, anxiety, and depression. As a result, it is vital to determine the issues adolescents are having and the requirements for counseling among those age groups.

### Objectives

- To assess psychological counseling needs among adolescents.
- To study the socio-demographic details of the respondents.
- To study gender differences in psychological counseling needs among adolescents.
- To study the cultural variation of psychological counseling needs among adolescents.

## METHOD

### Participants

The study used a descriptive survey method conducted in different schools in Morang, Koshi

Province, and Surkhet Karnali Province of Nepal. Purposive sampling was used. The study sample comprised 344 adolescents, 187 girls and 157 boys, in the 13-18 age range.

### Measures

The Psychological Counseling Need Scale (PCNS), constructed by Dr. Vijaya Laxmi Chouhan and Mrs. Gunjan Ganotra Arora, was used to collect data. The PCNS is a self-report questionnaire comprising 25 items, with response categories including always, often, sometimes, rarely, and never. It consists of 25 statements on a five-point Likert scale, with 21 positive and four negative statements. For positive statements, scoring is 5 for "Always," 4 for "Often," 3 for "Sometimes," 2 for "Rarely," and 1 for "Never," and for negative statements, it is reverse scoring. The minimum score of PCNS is 25, and 125 is the maximum score. The split-half reliability of the test is .90, and the validity is .82. The need for psychological counseling was assessed using the subject's raw scores. The scores were categorized as follows: 25–71 ("very low"), 72–75 ("low"), 76–79 ("average"), 80–83 ("high"), and above 83 ("very high").

### Procedure

Prior to data collection, written consent was obtained from all participants. They were provided with detailed information about the research verbally and in writing. Data processing commenced only after their consent to participate was secured. A rapport was established with participants before administering the tests. Scoring was conducted according to the specific procedures outlined for each scale. Participants were instructed to respond honestly to each question without consulting one another.

### Statistics Analysis

The collected data was coded and entered into the Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 24.0) for analysis. The coded scores were analyzed using mean and standard deviation (SD) to derive the results, with data presented as frequencies and percentages. The mean and standard deviation of a few demographic details, such as age and educational level, were also calculated. The

descriptive statistics were also analyzed, i.e., mean and SD of total scores. The mean age is 14.76, the level of education is 8.44, and the total score is 72.23.

## RESULTS

The results indicate that more than half (54.4%) of respondents are female. The largest group of adolescents (27.9%) is in the 15-year-old age bracket. Additionally, 39.8% of adolescents are in the 10th grade. Most respondents (66.6%) are from Koshi Province, with a significant majority (70.3%) identifying as Hindus. Moreover, 51.2% belong to tribal groups, while the remaining respondents belong to non-tribal groups.

Table 1 shows that the majority of students (62.5%) report low or very low psychological counseling needs, while 39.2% express a need for psychological counseling. Among those with a counseling need, 13.1% have very high needs, 11.3% have high needs, and 14.8% have average counseling needs. The data analysis reveals that 39.5% of male respondents had a low need for psychological counseling, while 41.8% of female respondents exhibited a very low need. The need for psychological counseling was higher among girls, with 9.0% indicating a very high need, compared to 13.8% of boys. Furthermore, 13.1% of boys and 16.4% of girls reported an average level of psychological counseling need. Among the male students, 21% had low needs, 12.6% had high needs, whereas 22.6% of females had low needs, and 10.2% had high needs. These findings suggest that the majority of both male and female respondents showed a very low level of psychological counseling need.

The mean age of the respondents was 14.8 years ( $SD = 1.42$ ), with an average educational level of 8.44 years ( $SD = 1.21$ ). The mean score for the total psychological counseling needs was 72.2 ( $SD = 10.3$ ).

Table 2 shows that more than half (54.4%) of the respondents are female. The highest number of adolescents (27.9%) belong to the 15-year-old age group. Similarly, 39.8% of adolescents study in the 10th grade. Most respondents (66.6%) hail from Koshi Province, and most (70.3%) are Hindus. Likewise, 51.2% belong to tribal groups, while the rest belong to non-tribal ones.

**Table 2:** Distribution of respondents based on psychological counselling need scale

Level of Need	Number	Percentage
Very Low	140	40.7
Low	75	21.8
Average	51	14.8
High	39	11.3
Very High	45	13.1

**Table 1:** Socio-demographic detail of the students

Socio-demographic data	Number	Percentage
<b>Sex</b>		
Boys	157	45.6
Girls	187	54.4
<b>Age</b>		
13–14	136	39.5
15–16	180	52.3
17–18	28	8.2
<b>Education Level</b>		
Grade-8	31	9.0
Grade-9	30	8.7
Grade-10	137	39.8
Grade-11	57	16.6
Grade-12	89	25.9
<b>Geographical Location</b>		
Koshi Province	229	66.6
Karnali Province	115	33.4
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Tribal	176	51.2
Non-Tribal	168	48.8
<b>Religion</b>		
Hindu	242	70.3
Buddhist	16	4.7
Christian	16	4.7
Muslim	2	0.6
Kirat	65	18.9
Others	3	0.9

Table 1 shows that most students (62.5%) have no psychological counseling needs low or very low psychological counseling needs. In comparison, 39.2% need psychological counseling, 13.1% have very high needs, 11.3% of respondents show a High need, and 14.8% have an average need for Psychological counseling needs.

**Table 3:** Gender differences in psychological counseling needs of students

Category	Sex Boys N (%)	Girls N (%)
Very low	66 (39.5)	74 (41.8)
Low	35 (21.0)	40 (22.6)
Average	22 (13.1)	29 (16.4)
High	21 (12.6)	18 (10.2)
Very high	23 (13.8)	16 (9.0)

**Table 4:** Demonstrates the mean and SD of age, educational level, and total scores

	Mean	Standard deviation
Age	14.8	1.42
Educational level	8.44	1.21
Total scores	72.2	10.3

It is inferred from Table 3 that among boys, 39.5% of the selected sample had a low need for psychological counseling. In comparison, 41.8% of the girls showed a low need for psychological counseling. The very high psychological counseling need was found to be among girls, i.e., 9.0%, as compared to boys, i.e., 13.8%. Over 13.1% of boys were found to have an average level of psychological counseling need, while 16.4% of the girls showed an average level of psychological counseling need. Similarly, 21% and 12.6% of the male students, respectively, have low and high levels of psychological counseling needs. Moreover, 22.6 and 10.2% of the female respondents, respectively, have low and high levels of psychological counseling needs. Therefore, the table indicates that the majority of both the girls and boys showed a very low level of need for psychological counseling.

The mean age is 14.8, with a standard deviation of 1.42. Similarly, the average educational level is 8.44, with a standard deviation of 1.21. The mean value of the total scores is 72.2, and its standard deviation is 10.3 (Table 4).

## DISCUSSION

Adolescence is a crucial time for an individual. It is a time of preparation for life and includes various developmental stages, including physical, social, and economic. This period is also called the identity development stage, as adolescents try to develop an identity for themselves. Along with growth and

development, teenagers also experience numerous problems. Moreover, they might need help dealing with the problems. Although the findings of this paper show that the majority of the students have a very low psychological counseling need, comparisons between the two genders reveal that girls have higher psychological counseling needs than boys. Female students are more significant than male students, which is similar to the findings of Malik (2017), who carried out a study on Psychological counseling needs among Kashmiri adolescents where the findings of the study indicated that adolescents are in high need of psychological counseling and that the girls are in higher need of psychological counseling as compared to boys.

Similarly, Sati and Vig (2016) conducted a study on the need for Psychological Counseling among adolescents. Their study also revealed that the majority of adolescent girls had a higher need for counseling than boys of their age. Parents have a more considerable duty to guide their kids, but because of cultural differences, they often skip talking to them about physical and physiological changes. It can be concluded that in this stage of life, it is important to understand and acknowledge the needs of adolescents.

Proper guidance and care are needed the most, so the parents or any other guardians can do this by forming a quality relationship with them. Parents and guardians can be made aware of their issues and the help that can be provided. To assist adolescents in learning life skills, molding their personalities, and improving their capacity to select the ideal vocation based on their interests and aptitudes through a planned program of guidance and counseling, counseling and guidance services should be made accessible (Pushpalatha & Sasikala, 2015).

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study highlights the significant role of age, education, and religion in shaping the psychological counseling needs of adolescents in Nepal. The results show that adolescents face various developmental challenges, making counseling essential for their well-being. The survey, which included 344 students, revealed that both male and female students, regardless of educational



background or religious beliefs, expressed a need for psychological support. With 14.8% of females and 15.8% of males requiring counseling, it is clear that providing a safe space for listening and support is crucial for the mental health and development of youths. The study calls for government policies and initiatives to improve access to mental health support and Mental wellness in classrooms for Adolescents.

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