

Research Article

ASSESSMENT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CHALLENGES IN BOARDING SCHOOL STUDENTS

Sayed Imtiaz[#]

Department of Psychiatry, Rawalpindi Medical University (RMU), Punjab, Pakistan

Abstract

Background: The Pakistani boarding school environment in general is such that students are placed under enormous psychological stress by strict discipline and long separation from family. And because mental health is considered negative in some cultures, these conditions can make for a wide variety of psychological challenges including anxiety, depression, and identity issues.

Aim: The goal of this study is to estimate the prevalence and interrelations of psychological difficulties among students of Pakistan's cadet colleges, and to address areas commonly incapacitating students of Pakistan, particularly: Separation anxiety, social isolation, behavioral problems, imposter syndrome.

Method: To investigate the role of separation anxiety in causing BPD symptoms, a self-developed questionnaire was used to conduct a cross sectional survey incorporating items from the established separation anxiety scale, beck depression inventory-II and imposter syndrome questionnaire. Convenient sampling was used and data was collected from students of 37 cadet colleges across Pakistan. Relationships among psychological variables were examined with the use of descriptive statistics and correlation analyses.

Findings and results: The major problems identified in the study were separation anxiety, stress, and behavioral issues, while isolation was strongly connected to eating disorders and substance abuse, according to the study. Cadet colleges were also a cause for a lack of emotional support and analytical correlations between identity issues and the imposter syndrome were observed. The analysis brings to the forefront a pressing need for mental health interventions.

Conclusion: What the findings verify is that Pakistani cadet colleges need to take on psychological support systems for students' mental health as practiced in West boarding schools. *ASEAN Journal of Psychiatry*, Vol. 27 (1) January, 2026; 1-9.

Keywords: Psychological Challenge; Boarding Schools; Separation Anxiety; Cadet Colleges; Social Isolation; Mental Health; Pakistan

Introduction

Boarding school means a school where students live and attend classes: It is rather specific and has a centuries-long tradition, especially in the countries which educational model has roots in the UK, the USA or Australia where such option of education is traditionally associated with prestige, strict discipline, moral values and effective learning [1]. Boarding schools in England particularly associated with the rich, who in addition to an academic preparation give students obedience and discipline [2]. These advantages are usually associated with the fact that students are separated from their families at a young age. Investigations show how psychological pressures and stress due to the boarding school provokes anxiety, depression, confusion of personal identity, and more resulting more from extended separation from their families [3].

Historical development in the subcontinent

The boarding schools in the South Asian subcontinent the more so in Pakistan have their root from the colonial period of the British [4]. During the period of British domination, launching boarding schools was meant to develop obedient, loyal and qualified inhabitants for the colonial authorities [5]. Lawrence Colleges at Ghora Gali, Aitchison College at Lahore where imitation of British schools was not only about challenging academics, but instilling character, leadership and a strong sense of responsibility [6]. This British vision of education still engraved in many of the existing cadet boarding schools and colleges of Pakistan that maintain discipline, tenacity and prime importance of academic achievements [7].

Boarding school system in modern Pakistan

Now a day in Pakistan, boarding schools particularly cadet colleges have also emerged in our society as popular and elitist institutions, to produce first rate officers at the helm of affairs of defense forces and civil administration [8]. These institutions function on military lines with regimented discipline, physical training and timetable. Although these schools are reputed for making children disciplined and responsible they exert a great psychological pressure on them. To survive in such a harsh situation and having left their families early, it is not strange to find them developing series of psychological problems [9]. This is especially notable in a cultural context where either depression or any type of psychological assistance is not sought or easily available.

Prevalence of psychological challenges among boarding school students across western-eastern countries

The statistics for psychological challenges among boarding school students in various countries on prevalence and impact of mental health among those common in educational settings with regard to those living away from home. Research into the psychological challenges that boarding school students face in Western regions, such as the UK, Norway, Iceland, Switzerland, US, Canada, Australia and NZ have consistently shown anxiety, depression and difficulties of social adjustment. In the UK it is estimated that 20 percent of students in boarding schools suffer emotional distress, with anxiety being the foremost problem mentioned. Students in these settings in Norway and Iceland generally report higher levels of stress attributed to academic pressure and homesickness and in Icelandic research show a 15% incidence of anxiety disorders. The United States observes a growing number of students who need psychological evaluation whereby thirty percent of elite boarding school students have sought counseling regarding depression and eating disorder symptoms. Through the same lens, mental health problems associated with self-harming and depression are now common place in Australian and New Zealand education campuses, a result that various studies show that about 25% of students in these countries have moderate to severe psychological distress. Furthermore, the risk of mental health issues is also high among boarding school students in Switzerland, with 18% experience anxiety and 12% having depression.

Given that mental health challenges are brought about by the problems that come with boarding school, students in eastern regions like India, North and South Korea, China, Japan, Vietnam, Singapore, Thailand, Hong Kong, Pakistan, Afghanistan, the Philippines, Indonesia, Maldives, Myanmar, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Taiwan, Cambodia, Brunei, Turkmenistan, Armenia, Bhutan, Tajikistan, Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Macau, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Russia, Laos, and Timor

experience them differently. Studies say that it is 22 percent of depression among the adolescents in such schools, especially in India where students in boarding schools experience lots of depression and anxiety mainly due to cultural pressure. South Korea and Japan have similar high academic expectations that cause a large degree of stress and burnout in the children, sometimes leading to sufferers with suicidal ideation reported in as many as 12% of students. Secondary school students in Pakistan must deal with mental health issues because research shows 27% of them suffer from anxiety primarily due to academic pressures and being separated from their family. A high-pressure education environment produces mental stressors which forces students to suffer from burnout as well as depression, especially in China and Vietnam. Furthermore, the incidence of mental health problems in the students of boarding schools in Middle East and Arabic countries specifically Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Jordan is usually not reported but the need to address this issue is said to be on the increase particularly among the children from wealthy families. For instance, Saudi Arabia has a higher number of psychological distress cases in cases of students who are moving to the higher educational institutions. The overall picture in Eastern countries has to do with socio cultural relations that give a material basis to the general shape of mental health outcomes of boarding school students. Psychological problems among boarding school students in Pakistan are of great importance and a recent study stated that prevalence of anxiety, depression and adjustment disorders in boarding school students has increased. School children in Pakistan who board at educational institutions experience social estrangement together with missing their families and heavy academic demands which intensifies their emotional suffering. The absence of complete mental health service programs throughout many boarding schools creates an escalation of existing mental health issues which results in students being without appropriate care resources. Although there is a great amount of realization of mental health problems, the need for better mental health programs and support services is needed in Pakistani boarding schools for the psychological wellbeing of students.

Pakistani socio-cultural issues in Pakistani boarding schools

In addition to the above challenges, the boarding school experience in Pakistan is also affected by socio-cultural beliefs and perceived roles of traditions. In contrast to the increasing awareness in the western countries of students requiring support in this area of psychology in school, the idea of psychological health as worthwhile in the Pakistani Boarding schools is in its infancy. Cadet college students in particular, are socially conditioned to follow specific conduct and behavior norms where there is hardly any lee way for a free out pouring of emotions or psychological counseling and comfort. This culture of compliance, drill

and accomplishment achieves the opposite of what students need – a failure to meet their emotional requirements results in problems such as separation anxiety, alienation, poor self-esteem, and identity confusion.

Comparative lessons from international boarding schools

In other countries like the United States; Europe and Australia; the boarding school concept has been expanding to embrace the total man and coming along with this package is adequate counseling. For example, many boarding schools in the US have incorporated elaborate strategies to address desperate calls due to load of academic as well as social pressures. Increased concern of adolescent mental health in Australia sees school-based programmes developed to decrease stress, anxiety and other psychological problems. However, despite these perceived improvements, the mental health effect of the boarding school system remained huge problem. Current research has pointed to more questions concerning the first-year students such as homesickness, confusion of self-identity and imposter syndrome.

Social/psychological theories as applied to boarding school issues

To gain insight into boarding schools from a psychological perspective, this work adopts Erikson's psychosocial development theory as well as Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. Unfortunately, Erikson was satisfied with defining adolescence as the time in which one of the most essential characteristics, the sense of identity, is formed. The culture though as found in boarding school system puts child under a lot of pressure and in this process isolates him or her hence contributing to confusion of one's identification and therefore low self-esteem. On the other hand, the Bronfenbrenner's model brings out the role of different microsystem, such as family, peers, educational institution in determining the psychological development. When it comes to microsystem in boarding schools, students' environment dramatically changes as they become physically and emotionally distant from their close ones, essential for child's adaptation, which causes adjustment disorders.

Modern factors and psychological effects on Pakistani students

In historical concern, the boarding school system in the subcontinent was established to provide education to the children of upper-class for joining the British colonial administrators and officers. But in the contemporary world these schools especially in Pakistan extending up to middle class many parents consider it just a way to get their children good jobs in future. This has posed new challenges since students who come from different

backgrounds feel uneasy in fixing to disciplined boarding school system of most of the schools which maybe in variance with their home environment. From a warmly caring home environment to inherently confining school; most students develop adjustment disorders and attachment.

In India and many other parts of subcontinent of Europe and Asia, the system of education based on British boarding schools is still in practice this is in practice but there is a trend towards the formation of more balanced system. Education institutions are gradually coming to realize that psychological functioning is a significant aspect to address and institutions have started incorporating counseling services and or mental health support structures into their institution. However, the majority of Pakistani boarding schools or cadet colleges still have not tapped into psychological and emotional component of the students. This is worrying in view of the current high incidences of stress, anxiety and depression among teenagers in these institutions.

COVID-19 recent emergencies and the call for mental health

Current changes in the social policy of Pakistan have observed some of the isolated boarding schools trying to abandon their traditional model by making provision for counseling and the psychological well-being of the students. But these services are not fully integrated, and having psychological help is still not preferred by many patients. In cadet colleges, where many learners may be preparing for leadership roles within the military or civil service, it is something that may be frowned at since everyone is expected to be strong mentally. This cultural perception may result in students failing to seek help from appropriate offices necessary for treatment of such illnesses which if not treated can follow the students to their adulthood.

Scope and aim of the current study

This present research study targets on psychological distress among students in Pakistani cadet colleges, thus, seeks to address existing literature dampened which has little or no evidence on the psychological status of students at the boarding school in South Asia specifically in the context of Pakistan. This information was gathered from many cadet colleges located in Pakistan thus given a localized data concerning psychological problems in these colleges. The occurrence and connections between common psychological problems – like separation anxiety, social isolation, behavioral problems, and identity crisis – are explored within this study to provide insight about the psychological and emotional needs of the students in Boarding schools in Pakistan and to come up with programs that may effectively address these issues.

Materials and Methods

Research design

The current study used a quantitative, cross-sectional research method aimed at evaluating psychological problems among students in cadet colleges in Pakistan. The major aims undertook were to establish the prevalence of these problems as well as the rate at which these problems co-occur among the boarding school students, such as separation anxiety, social isolation, depression, low self-esteem, identity crisis, and adjustment disorders. The research design was selected since it facilitated an understanding of the state of mental health of these subjects.

Participants

This study was carried out in different cadet colleges in Pakistan; these were selected keeping in view their prestige, ease of access, and willingness of the subjects. Principals of 57 cadet colleges (as boarding schools) across Pakistan were approached through a convenient sampling technique in order to adequately sample across grade levels and geographical regions. To increase external validity and generate a comprehensive picture of the boarding school context and challenges faced by students, principals from diverse backgrounds were invited.

- **Inclusion criteria:** Participants had to be serving as principals in cadet colleges, holding their positions for at least one year, and willing to participate.
- **Exclusion criteria:** Principals who had been in their positions for less than one year or those who declined to participate were excluded from the study.

Study instrument

The variable measure instrument was adopted in the study based on a specially developed questionnaire that has been developed for the purpose of the study by incorporating parts from standard well-known psychological scales that have been in use to measure the psychological problems confronting Principals of the Pakistani cadet colleges. To this end, this questionnaire included items adopted from the separation anxiety scale, social inclusion and loneliness scale, Beck Depression Inventory-II (BDI-II), adjustment disorders scale and the Imposter Syndrome Questionnaire (ISQ) which were revised slightly for use in the Pakistani context of boarding schools. The questionnaire was designed to measure homesickness, loneliness and depression, adjustment problems and

perceived incompetence as well as having additional questions relevant to the cadet college context. To guarantee content validity, the first version was decentralized to a panel of psychologists and educators; their suggestions were then used to enhance the inquiries. The tool was then pilot-tested on a sample of 30 Principals and modified slightly for clarity and cultural relevance, rendering a high internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha was .84. The last questionnaire consisted of several parts including traditional demographic data questions, questions from psychological tests, and free-form questions to obtain the principals' own narratives which was essential for a culturally relevant, holistic assessment of the mental health problems faced by the students of their institutions.

Data collection procedure

The data collection process spanned three months, from August to October 2024. The researchers procured formal clearances from the administrations of the cadet colleges under study. The questionnaires were sent to the principals of these institutions, and participation was voluntary. Those principals who were willing to participate completed and returned the questionnaires. As no data was directly collected from students, and no formal assent was sought from them or their guardians.

Ethical considerations

The study followed the ethical consideration of anonymity, confidentiality and voluntary participation. No participant's individual details could be depicted, and participants understood that they can opt-out at any time without explanation.

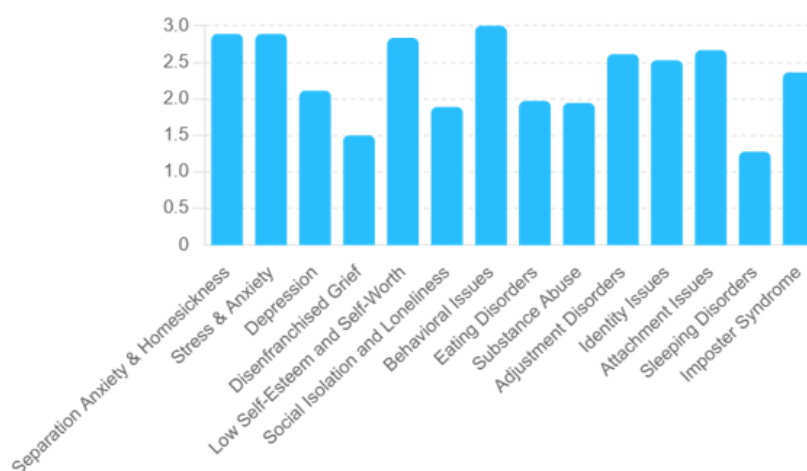
Results

Total 57 forms were distributed among principals of 57 cadet colleges. While in response to this, it was collected from 37 cadet colleges across the country. This showed that almost every region and provincial presentation was found in the collected data. Whereas this was firsthand information which was received.

Table 1 and Figure 1 is revealing that, separation anxiety and homesickness and stress and anxiety are among the most frequently observed issues, with means close to 3, indicating these challenges are commonly experienced by students. disenfranchised grief and sleeping disorders have the lowest means, suggesting they are less commonly observed. The variability, as indicated by the standard deviations, shows that some issues like low self-esteem and self-worth have more variability in responses, indicating differences in how frequently they are observed among students.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics (N=37).

Psychological challenge	Mean	Standard deviation
Separation anxiety and homesickness	3	0.61
Stress and anxiety	2.94	0.8
Depression	2.15	0.63
Disenfranchised grief	1.59	0.66
Low self-esteem and self-worth	2.71	0.94
Social isolation and loneliness	2.09	0.78
Behavioral issues	2.91	0.8
Eating disorders	1.88	0.66
Substance abuse	2.18	0.67
Adjustment disorders	2.56	0.91
Identity issues	2.53	0.9
Attachment issues	2.47	0.82
Sleeping disorders	1.68	0.53
Imposter syndrome	2.26	0.9


Figure 1. Mean Scores of Study participants across all domains.

Interactions between high number of psychological challenges that students in boarding schools face are

determined in order to establish how these challenges coordinate (Table 2).

Table 2. Correlation among study variables.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Separation anxiety and home sickness	-	0.164	-0.014	0.06	-0.102	-.421**	-.502**	-0.258	-.489**	-.422**	-.438**	-.470**	-.380*	-.496**
Stress and anxiety			0.045	0.072	-0.22	-0.134	-0.087	-0.227	-0.038	-0.148	-0.169	-0.17	-0.149	-0.198
Depression				0.204	0.274	.394*	0.181	0.248	0.248	.358*	0.187	0.279	0.245	0.219
Disenfranchised grief					0.164	.441**	0.128	.468**	.513**	0.311	0.243	0.321	.610**	0.286
Low self-esteem and self-worth						0.101	0.251	.380*	.382*	.484**	.489**	.441**	0.32	0.248
Social isolation and loneliness							.610**	.615**	.547**	.552**	.469**	.549**	.652**	.620**
Behavioral issues								.670**	.654**	.661**	.628**	.731**	.622**	.770**
Eating disorders									.716**	.789**	.747**	.850**	.812**	.789**

Substance abuse										.737**	.731**	.770**	.853**	.738**
Adjustment disorders											.747**	.856**	.754**	.737**
Identity issues												.809**	.747**	.780**
Attachment issues													.812**	.817**
Sleeping disorders														.832**
Imposter syndrome														-

Separation anxiety and homesickness, as the name suggests is inversion to other related psychological complications. However, the present study revealed a significant inverse relationship between separation anxiety and social isolation and loneliness, $r=-.421$, $p<.01$. This might mean that persons with friends even though homesick are less likely to feel lonely in their new environment as the students indicated. Likewise, there was a significant negative correlation with the Behavioral Issues ($r=-.502^{**}$) indicating that the less homesick the students would be the less they would have behaviors that are problematic in school might because their adjustment is good to the new environment.

Stress and anxiety does not display line relationships with most of the other variables and hence stress and anxiety are found to be quite rampant but they are not proportional to other psychological adversities in a way that is consistent with all the students.

Self-esteem is significantly negatively related to behavioral issues ($r=-.355$, $p<.05$), while depression is positively related to behavioral issues ($r=.394$, $p<.05$), meaning that, the more the students are depressed the more likely they will display negative behavior. This could be attributed to negative emotions that were internalized that might actually present as external assertive behaviors.

Disenfranchised grief appears to have a .441 significant positive linear relationship ($p<.01$) with social isolation and loneliness where students who have feelings of disenfranchised grief, are likely to express feelings of isolation and loneliness. This emphasizes the need to explicate loss in learners, particularly in instances when this is not obvious, as this was found to have a strong influence on learners' inclusiveness and relatedness with others. Furthermore, disenfranchised grief also has a significant positive relationship with the students' adjustment disorders ($r=.513$, $p<.01$) suggesting that these students have difficulties to cope with the requirements of the boarding school.

It proves that social isolation and loneliness has considerable to very high degree of association and relationship with Behavioral Issues ($r=.610$, $p<.01$) and eating disorders ($r=.615$, $p<.01$). This implies that students who perceive their isolation shows the signs of developing behavioral disorders and food disorders because of

loneliness. These correlations signify the necessity of creating the favorable climate to prevent these risks.

Behavioral issues suggest significant positive relationships with substance abuse (Pearson correlation coefficient= 0.670 , $p<0.01$) and eating disorders on similar coefficient (Pearson correlation coefficient= 0.654 , $p<0.01$) This direction suggested that students who develop behavioral problems also develop substance abuse and eating disorders at higher rates. These findings point to the fact that the behavioral problems could be anyhow clustered, therefore intervention measure may not be too effective if it involves addressing a single problem without addressing the others.

Last, eating disorders are strongly positively related with substance abuse, their correlation coefficient is .789 ($p<.01$), and with attachment issues, the correlation coefficient is .812 ($p<.01$), in other words, this means that students who are in conflict with eating disorders might also have problems with substances usage and attachment. These interrelationships mean that learners with eating disorders may need complex support that focuses on the eating patterns as well as attachment struggles.

It can be stated that the correlation analysis shows a multiplied network of interconnections between multiple psychological issues of students of boarding schools. Undoubtedly, the obtained significant correlations show that it is crucial to pay attention to not only such vices but their interaction at the same time. It should be understood that interventions should address several areas because disturbances like social isolation, behavioral disorders, and attachment problems may intersect and can be addressed effectively only by complex solutions.

Discussion

The descriptive statistics and the correlation analysis suggests that the psychological challenges for boarding school students are multi-faceted and inter related. This report delves into the prevalence, variability, and interrelationships among 14 psychological issues: Stress (Anxiety), depression, disenfranchised grief, low self-esteem and self-worth, social isolation and loneliness, behavioral issues, eating disorders, substance abuse, adjustment disorders, identity issues, attachment issues, sleeping disorders, being an imposter, and more. The data

provides a full picture of these challenges; and these provide critical insights into the mental health landscape within that population.

It was primarily identified that the students in Pakistani cadet colleges went through a complex web of the interrelated mental health issues. Each of the 14 domains identified in this study is critically discussed and compared with existing literature from the UK, USA, Europe and Australia. This comparative analysis attempts to sort out some deeper understanding of universal pattern of some with unique cultural factors involved in Pakistani boarding schools.

Homesick and separation anxiety

Some of the most common issues featured seemed to be homesickness and separation anxiety. This ties in with other studies in the United Kingdom that find students often feel discomfort owing to being away from their families at a young age. Çitil Akyol and Kutlu also did a similar study in the USA, where they also found that the first year boarding school students experience homesickness (it is associated with the issues of adaptation of new environment). In Pakistan cadet colleges are more about discipline than emotional support, and it leads to add to homesickness feelings. Because of this, counseling services are not so widely available for students as they are in Australian schools, in order to adjust, or carefully planned psychological support is still lacking in Pakistani institutions.

Stress and anxiety

The study shows that cadet college students are subjected to very demanding academic and physical expectations that leads to high stress and anxiety levels. Anxiety disorders are also a research topic in Europe where it has proven that stress under high pressure environments (at the boarding schools) contributes to arising anxiety disorders. In contrast, as Lacomba-Trejo et al. report, US boarding schools put mindfulness and stress management programs in place to reduce student anxiety. Chronic stress in the Pakistani cadet colleges, previously underpinned by culture of discipline, is not managed because of the stigma surrounding mental health.

Depression

The study found that depression was related to behavioral issues in a positive manner ($r=0.39$), which suggests that students who express these feelings internally may act them out in outward behavioral problems. Studying showed in the UK that boarding school environment can cause depressive symptoms due to isolation and academic pressure. While this was similar to the findings in the USA where depression in boarding school students is connected to the absence of familial support, a causal relationship

cannot be proven, so we argue these are merely associative results. Not only does cultural stigma and lack of mental health resources hamper Pakistani students, especially in cadet colleges, from accessing any of the above, but it intensifies depressive symptoms.

Disenfranchised grief

For the most part, disenfranchised grief was less prevalent, yet correlated significantly with social isolation ($r=0.44$) and adjustment disorders ($r=0.51$). A finding in Australia is also echoed in this statement that students who suffer from unacknowledged grief are more likely to feel isolated. To manage this grief, the cadet colleges structure in the Pakistani context is so rigid that the students are forced to bottle everything up. In contrast, such hidden emotional needs are slowly being addressed by grief counseling through European schools.

Low self-esteem and self-worth

Another common issue affects Pakistani students – they have low self-esteem. This concurs with data from the UK that suggests that efforts to hold tight with high expectations and strict discipline can corrode students' feelings of self-worth. Studies have shown programs in the USA focused on increasing self-esteem through extra curricula activity has helped tackle these issues. Comparatively, Pakistani cadet colleges have little in the way of support systems for students, which makes the continuation of low self-esteem in students inevitable, as they are held to be accountable to purely academic and disciplinary performance.

Social isolation and loneliness

There was a strong correlation between behavioral issues ($r=0.61$) and eating disorders ($r=0.62$) and social isolation and loneliness. That is in line with European studies that show students who feel isolated are more likely to develop unhealthy coping mechanisms. Boarding schools in Australia have also been using peer support program to combat feelings of loneliness. Pakistani cadet colleges, by contrast, emphasize competition and discipline over the kind of social connections that make meaningful experiences possible.

Behavioral issues

Substance abuse ($r=0.67$) and eating disorders ($r=0.65$) were connected to behavioral problems. The USA also has observed similar patterns, where students with unsettled emotional issues tend to also be troubled by bad behavior. Studies in the UK have shown that strict disciplinary measures can actually make behavioral problems worse by suppressing otherwise emotional expression. Something the Pakistani boarding school system tends to focus on, obedience may come at a price with these problems, since

the students do not have any safe outlet for their emotions.

Eating disorders

There was a very strong correlation ($r=0.79$) between eating disorders and substance abuse and ($r=0.81$) with attachment issues. Disordered eating among boarding school students has been associated with emotional neglect and high performance pressure in Europe. The findings from Pakistani cadet colleges indicate that the highly demanding environment may be at least a part of a mechanism of coping by unhealthy dietary behaviors. Instead, schools in Australia have incorporated nutritional counseling to attack these challenges.

Substance abuse

Correlation scores with adjustment disorders ($r=0.74$) and identity issues ($r=0.73$) were strong for substance abuse. In the USA it has been found that substance use among boarding school students is often a coping strategy to academic stress and social isolation. In Pakistan, the culture surrounding the use of substances is taboo with discussion often being hidden away and this prevents us from being able to intervene early on.

Adjustment disorders

Identity problems ($r=0.75$) and attachment problems ($r=0.74$) were tied to adjustment problems. This finding is consistent with UK research which has linked students becoming uneasily adjusted to life in boarding school. In Pakistani cadet colleges, adjustment disorder can be aggravated for those students from vastly different backgrounds who then have difficulty adapting to a highly disciplined environment.

Identity issues

Imposter syndrome ($r=0.39$) also correlated with identity issues suggesting that students with difficulty with an identity may also be struggling with imposter syndrome. This is consistent with Erikson's theory; if adolescence is when identity is formed. Schools in the USA have begun tackling this issue through counseling, yet little back up is available in Pakistan.

Attachment issues

One thing was significantly correlated with eating disorder (1.00) and sleeping disorder (1.00). Results have proven in European studies that attachment problems can cause problems to do with forming good relationships, in turn which may lead to eating disorders. Attachment problems may be to blame of Pakistani lack of parental presence in cadet colleges which are not addressed on account of culture.

Sleeping disorders

While less common, significantly correlated with attachment issues ($r=0.83$) were sleeping disorders. Research has also been conducted in Australia that finds that there is often a link between stress and anxiety and sleep problems among boarding school students. The sleep disturbances are exacerbated in Pakistan due to sleep disturbance due to the demanding schedules with minimum to no emotional support.

Imposter syndrome

Behavioral issues and identity issues were strongly correlated with imposter syndrome ($r=0.57$; $r=0.39$ respectively). Studies in USA have shown students among competitive boarding schools are more susceptible to feelings of inadequacy. In Pakistani cadet colleges, imposter syndrome becomes more likely when supportive counseling is less available and high expectations are more likely to be pressured.

Limitations of the Study

While this study provides, indeed, a unique understanding of how Pakistani cadet college students navigate psychological challenges, it nevertheless, needs to be considered that there are some limitations which need to be incorporated with. The research used a cross-sectional design therefore differential causal inferences are not possible. Furthermore, the study exploited newly available, though imperfect, self-reported questionnaires, which may be prone to response biases such as social desirability. All the samples were drawn from cadet colleges and may not have adequately represented the experiences of students of other types of boarding schools in Pakistan. Longitudinal studies alongside more diverse boarding school contexts may be useful for future research to achieve a more complete picture of these issues.

Implications of the Study

Implications for educational policy and mental health interventions in boarding schools in general, and in Pakistan in particular are of the order of inference that can be derived from the findings of this study. The results point out the urgency of having comprehensive psychological support systems, including counseling services and peer support services targeting psychological challenges confronted by these students to new extents. Cadet Colleges especially and other educational institutions should take into account mental education educating the students on mental health and... As boarding schools in Pakistan can learn by adopting strategies from successful interventions in UK, USA, Australia, the overall wellbeing of children in these schools can be improved and this would benefit their academic performance and social adjustment.

Recommendations

Establishing mental health services like on site counselors and peer support systems should be prioritized by cadet colleges because they are the one that students need the most psychologically. Adolescent mental health can be fostered with regular training of staff on adolescent mental health. Moreover, adopting social emotional learning and mindfulness programs inside the curriculum might alleviated stress, anxiety and other psychology issues in students.

Conclusion

This study has revealed that students Pakistan cadet colleges face great psychological challenges like anxiety, social isolation and behavioral problems. Where Western institutions have been far better supported in their mental health, theirs have shone less brightly. Counseling and stress management programs can help alleviate these gaps and therefore improve student wellbeing. The changes enabled can instigate such a better, more supportive environment.

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Corresponding author: Sayed Imtiaz, Department of Psychiatry, Rawalpindi Medical University (RMU), Punjab, Pakistan

E-mail: syed.shahbal@numl.edu.pk

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