



Article

# Mental Health Among Adolescents in Salah-Aldeen Governorate/ Aldulouyia District 2023

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**Abstract:** Flourishing of youth is a concept rooted in the ability of to live healthy, purposefully and meaningfully. Tribalism is one of the political divisions of Iraq in addition to region, ethnicity and region. In the last decades more power and autonomy were delegated to tribes, which in turn lead to rapid social changes that affect flourishing of youth. Ghis study was done to assess flourishing in tribal area. A total of 190 students was included in this study. They were recruited from secondary schools in Salah-Aldeen governorate, Aldulouyia district (2 schools for boys and 2 schools for girls). The variables of interest were psychological, social and emotional wellbeing. Conduct problems were of interest too (persistent display of antisocial and aggressive behavior). Flourishing was noticed in 12 (6.3%) students. Flourishing among students aged < 20 was significantly higher than those aged ≥ 20 years (7, 11.9% and 5, 3.8%, respectively (p=0.03). Eight (6%) of male students and 4 (7%) of female students were flourished. No significant impact for sex on flourishing (p=0.7). of those in secondary level and those < secondary level, 7 (6.4%) and 5 (6.2%), respectively. Education level was not significantly affecting flourishing (p=0.9). Smokers, occasional smokers and nonsmokers showed flourishing in 3 (3.8%), 4 (5%) and 5 (12.5%), respectively. No significant differences in flourishing due to smoking status (p=0.19). Students with and without conduct problems showed flourishing in 4 (5%) and 8 (7.3%), respectively. Conduct problem was not significantly impact flourishing (p=0.07). Low rate of flourishing was noticed in the tribal city.

**Keywords:** Flourishing, Tribalism, Youths, Conduct Problems.

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## 1. Introduction

Seventy-five percent of the total Iraqi population are members of a tribes or have kinship to one.1 Scholars believe that, despite the country's many political divides, including religion, ethnicity, and region, one of the least understood is the country's tribalism.1. In the 1990s, more power and autonomy were delegated to tribes. After 2003, a wakening councils shared fighting Al-Qaeda and ISIS together with troop surge i.e., more power and autonomy.2

A tribal city is a settlement or urban area that is predominantly inhabited by members of a particular tribe or tribal community. In a tribal city, the social, political, and cultural life of the residents is often deeply rooted in tribal traditions, customs, and values. Flourishing of youth is a concept rooted in the ability of youth to live healthy, purposeful, and meaningful live. Flourishing among youth refers to the positive development and

growth of young individuals in various aspects of their lives, such as physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being. It involves thriving, achieving their full potential, and experiencing overall happiness and fulfillment.<sup>3,4</sup> The impact of rapid social changes alters youth's lifestyles, beliefs, and community living. The strain of acculturation on moving to urban spaces and use of alcohol and other substances predisposes to several mental health issues. The impact of changing youth subcultures on behavior and priorities can also make it difficult to define mental health and estimate mental health problems in adolescents. Publishing on flourishing in Iraq is scarce<sup>3</sup>, which was the impetus for carrying out this research to report on flourishing of adolescents in tribal city.

## 2. Materials and Methods

A total of 190 students was included in the study. They were recruited from 4 secondary schools from Salah-Aldeen Governorate/ Aldulouyia District (2 schools for males and 2 schools for females). Their mean age was  $20.4 \pm 2.3$  years with a male to female ratio of 2.3:1.

The variables of interest were emotional well-being, psychological well-being, and social well-being. Demographic variables were of interest. Scales of emotional well-being, psychological well-being, and social well-being were for mental health. Emotional well-being (ability to recognize, understand, and manage emotions) measured by feeling happy, interested in life, or satisfied.

Psychological well-being (self-acceptance, purpose in life, autonomy, meaning connection with others, feeling opportunity to manage one's environment, engaging in learning, new experience and challenges that lead to growth). Social well-being (sharing, developing and sustaining of meaning relationship with others, sense of belonging, meaning connection, being seen and value). Flourishing was diagnosed when adolescents got 1 item positive of three items of emotional well-being and 5 items of 9 items of psychological and social well-being.<sup>2</sup>

Conduct problems (mental health conditions that affect children and teens e.g., persistently display antisocial and aggressive behavior (bully others, abusive to small animals, lie, steal, drink alcohol, skip school ...etc.) were measured with single item based on self-reports. Adolescents reported either the number of times or whether they had ever skipped school, been arrested, smoked cigarettes, drank alcohol or used inhalants to get high.

Chi-square test was applied to examine the impact of the studied variables i.e. age, sex, educational level, smoking and conduct problems (independent variables) between the states of mental health (dependent variable) on flourishing (dependent variable).  $P$  value  $< 0.05$  was considered statistically significant.

## 3. Results

Flourishing was noticed in 12 (6.3%) students. Out of those  $< 20$  and  $\geq 20$  years, 7 (11.9%) and 5 (3.8%), respectively. A significant difference in flourishing between those age  $< 20$  and those  $\geq 20$  years ( $\chi^2 = 4.4$ , d.f.=1,  $p = 0.03$ ).

Of those flourished students, 8 (6%) and 4 (7%) were males and females respectively. No significant association of flourishing with sex ( $\chi^2 = 0.06$ , d.f.=1,  $p = 0.7$ ).

Among those below secondary level, 7 (6.4%) and of those in secondary level 5 (6.2%) flourished. No significant differences in flourishing between student before and during secondary level ( $\chi^2 = 0.001$ , d.f.=1,  $p = 0.09$ ).

Smokers, occasional smokers and non-smokers show 3 (3.8%), 4 (5.7%) and 5 (12.5%), respectively, flourishing. No significant differences in flourishing between smokers, occasional smokers and non-smokers ( $\chi^2 = 3.2$ , d.f.=1,  $p = 0.19$ ).

Students with conduct disorder show flourishing in 4 (5%) and those without conduct disorders shows 8 (7.3%). No significant association between conduct disorders and flourishing ( $\chi^2 = 3.2$ , d.f.=1,  $p = 0.07$ ).

These findings are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of flourishing in tribal city

Variable	Dichotomous variables	Total	Flourishing	
			No.	%
Age	< 20	59	7	11.9
	$\geq 20$	131	5	3.8
		$\chi^2 = 4.4$ , d.f.=1, $p = 0.03$		
Sex	Male	133	8	6
	Female	57	4	7
		$\chi^2 = 0.06$ , d.f.=1, $p = 0.7$		
Education	< secondary	110	7	6.4
	secondary	80	5	6.2
		$\chi^2 = 0.001$ , d.f.=1, $p = 0.09$		
Smoking	Smokers	79	3	3.8
	Occasionally smokers	70	4	5.7
	Never smoke	41	5	12.5
		$\chi^2 = 3.2$ , d.f.=1, $p = 0.02$		
Conduct disorders	Yes	80	4	5.0
	No	110	8	7.3
		$\chi^2 = 3.2$ , d.f.=1, $p = 0.07$		

#### 4. Discussion

The school health in general is the cornerstone of community health as it deals with younger children and affecting their future health. The mental health problems of Iraqi students are unfortunately invisible.<sup>5</sup> The flourishing for adolescents is essential in building optimum social-emotional relationships and prevention of mental diseases in their later life.<sup>6</sup>

The present study found that prevalence of flourishing among students was (6.3%). This rate is similar to that reported previously in Iraqi (5.6%).<sup>3</sup> The observed figure (6.3%) is much lower than that reported on US (65.8%).<sup>7</sup> This difference might be attributed to exposure of Iraqi adolescents to violence (wars and internal conflicts). Access to education and healthcare, social support, economic stability, positive relationship, personal growth and sense of purpose are affecting flourishing among adolescent which in turn available

in developed countries. The observed rate (6.3%) is much lower than that reported recently among protestors (21.3%).<sup>4</sup> The difference might be attributed to development of goal among protestors (activists).

Flourishing was significantly higher among adolescents age < 20 years than that among older (p = 0.03). It is in agreement with that reported previously in Iraq.<sup>3</sup> It might be explained by repeated occurrence of trauma stress that affect negatively mental health. No significant difference in flourishing between the two sexes (p = 0.7). It consistent with that previously reported.<sup>3</sup>

In contrast with that in literature,<sup>8</sup> flourishing was affected by education level (p = 0.09). The difference might be attributed to many factors e.g., weakness of social support which depends on strong social network, access to healthcare and economic instability. The finding of rate of flourishing associated with smoking (p = 0.02) is in the line of that reported in literature.<sup>3,8</sup>

Flourishing did not affect positively conduct problems (p = 0.07). It is inconsistent with that in literature.<sup>3,8</sup> The difference might be attributed to the fact that exposure to wars and conflicts lead to high rate of alcohol and drug abuse in early age onset (conduct problems).<sup>9</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

This study evaluated the level of "flourishing" or overall well-being among adolescents in the Aldulouyia district, Salah-Aldeen Governorate, Iraq. "Flourishing" is defined as positive development in physical, mental, emotional, and social aspects. The study involved 190 students from four secondary schools (two schools for boys and two schools for girls). The results showed a very low level of "flourishing," only 6.3%. Adolescents under the age of 20 showed a higher level of "flourishing" (11.9%) compared to those aged 20 and above (3.8%). There was no significant difference in the level of "flourishing" between males (6%) and females (7%). Additionally, education level, smoking status, and conduct problems did not show significant impacts on "flourishing."

In conclusion, the low level of "flourishing" in this tribal area may be attributed to exposure to violence, lack of access to education and healthcare, and minimal social support. Adolescents under the age of 20 are more likely to experience "flourishing" compared to older adolescents, while education level, smoking status, and conduct problems do not significantly affect the level of "flourishing." This article highlights the importance of focusing on adolescent mental health in areas experiencing rapid social change and exposure to conflict.

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