

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ANXIETY BETWEEN
UNMARRIED GIRLS AND MARRIED YOUNG WOMEN
IN THE VILLAGES OF NASHIK DISTRICT**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
SAVITRIBAI PHULE PUNE UNIVERSITY
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SUBMITTED BY

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CERTIFICATE OF THE GUIDE

I declare that the work incorporated in the thesis entitled "A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ANXIETY BETWEEN UNMARRIED GIRLS AND MARRIED YOUNG WOMEN IN THE VILLAGES OF NASHIK DISTRICT" submitted by Mr Nitin M Paranjape was carried out by the candidate under my supervision/guidance. Such material has been obtained from other sources and has been duly acknowledged in the thesis.

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DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE

I declare that the work incorporated in the thesis entitled "A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ANXIETY BETWEEN UNMARRIED GIRLS AND MARRIED YOUNG WOMEN IN THE VILLAGES OF NASHIK DISTRICT" submitted by me for the degree of Master of Arts in Psychology is the record of work carried out by me during the period from JANUARY 2021 to MARCH 2021 under the guidance of DR SWATI PAWAR and has not formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship, titles in this or any other university or other institution of higher learning. I further declare that the material obtained from other sources has been duly acknowledged in the thesis.

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OF THE CANDIDATE

SIGNATURE

Acknowledgement

The opportunity to engage in a research study as part of my MA studies was exciting and a visit back to my earlier research on contract workers of Mumbai which I had completed as part of my post graduate studies in Social Work, in early eighties. That was long time ago. Any research is always a stimulating exercise with lots of learning. The topic of this study on the mental health issues in young rural girls was always on my mind as part of my work with empowering rural communities especially young girls. The experience of working with young rural girls was insightful as it gave me an inside understanding about how stressful life was for them and the pressure to get married over any other aspiration. The experience made me determined to assess the mental health especially anxiety in young rural girls and see its relationship with married women. The research study carried during Corona times was another challenge that had to be dealt with as families in villages were concerned about their health.

Many people helped me to accomplish this research without whose help I might not have been able to complete it. I am thankful to all of them.

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ABSTRACT

The proposed study “A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ANXIETY BETWEEN UNMARRIED GIRLS AND MARRIED YOUNG WOMEN IN THE VILLAGES OF NASHIK DISTRICT” was completed in March 2020. The study was based on the researchers experience of working in the rural development for many years where the socio-economic and cultural condition of the rural communities especially the life of young girls was observed from close quarters. The extreme condition of rural poverty, the impact of patriarchy and the social norms make the life of a young girl extremely difficult. Their education, health, mobility, choices, forced labour and early marriage are some of the factors which are severely impacted. The strict regimented life creates stress and anxiety which is generally not shared with anyone. For any girl in rural context marriage is an important event and culmination of transition into another family with the hope of change for the better. The change hopefully is expected to make life satisfying and blissful for the young girl, and the assumption that the stress will be relieved. This is the scope of the study which was undertaken in the rural area of Nashik, in the Dindori and Harsul region where some of the tribal villages were located. The study hopes to find if there is relationship between the two groups in terms of their mental health conditions especially in terms of experiencing anxiety. The objective of the study was to study the mental health issues especially anxiety faced by young rural girls and compare it with young married rural women to see similarities and differences in their lives. The null hypothesis was there is no significant difference in the anxiety experienced by young unmarried girls and married young women in rural Nashik.

The two groups from rural Nashik were of young girls and the other group being studied is that of married women. The sample size is 31, 16 young girls and 15 married women who were given the Sinha's comprehensive anxiety test -SCAT ss during the month of February and March 2020.

The data was computed and mean, standard deviation and T test was calculated. According to the scores it was observed that both the young girls and married women experience extremely high level of anxiety which is not unusual given their difficult social-cultural lives. The analysis of t test also confirms that the null hypothesis formed for this study is accepted which means that the level of extreme high anxiety experienced by young unmarried girls doesn't change for the married women. In conclusion the study comparing the two groups of young girls and married women in rural Nashik states that the extremely high level of anxiety is present, and it doesn't

change after marriage. This calls for creating awareness of mental health concept in rural areas of Nashik and recommending setting up of mental health infrastructure in the local Public Health Centres and making the provision accessible to the general population and specially to young and married women. Clearly, the presence of extremely high anxiety is a matter of concern and its impact of creating poor quality of life for the married women already burdened with many responsibilities and expectation, if not treated early. It is hoped that the result of the study will throw light on the existence of high level of extreme anxiety in young girls and its presence even after marriage is something that the government need to know for them to provide mental health provisions in Gram Panchayat on urgent basis.

1.1 Title

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ANXIETY BETWEEN UNMARRIED GIRLS AND MARRIED YOUNG WOMEN IN THE VILLAGES OF NASHIK DISTRICT

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Presence of anxiety in unmarried young girls and married women in the villages of Nashik district.

1.3 Significance of the Study

Girls growing in rural India and in Maharashtra encounter many hurdles arising out of poverty, strict social-cultural norms which affect their health, educational and mobility and mental health. They are also married early owing to the prevalent patriarchal structures. The anxiety and other mental health issues that the girl experiences are not recognised nor supported. The marriage in a girl's life is a big event and it is believed that it will bring positive changes in her life. While it is a cultural belief that change will happen, the reality is something else. Does the marriage and movement to a different household change the status of women and lessen her mental issues is documented but hasn't been studied. Anxiety is an important mental health issue which is common but remains invisible, if not detected and treated can create havoc in a person's life. It is therefore critical to study the level of anxiety in a young girl's life and later also study whether it lessens in a married women's life? It is significant because a married woman is expected to play a major role with innumerable responsibilities, therefore it will enhance our knowledge to know their anxiety level and take steps to find appropriate responses.

1.4 Introduction

Over the last five decades, India has made substantial gains in terms of getting children, especially girls, between the ages of 5–14 years into schools. Female enrolment rates in elementary education have increased phenomenally, from 17.7% in 1951 to 99.6% in 2016¹. While there is a significant narrowing of the disparity between the enrolment rates of male and female children, especially at the level of elementary education, this seeming move towards equality does not remain visible as one moves up the ladder of education. The disparity between males and females gets even more pronounced for marginalised communities such as the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and particularly in the context of Maharashtra,

¹ Statistics provided by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India / National Institute of Educational Planning & Administration, New Delhi. Retrieved from https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/statistics-new/ESAG-2018.pdf

the Nomadic Tribes and Denotified Tribes, represented in the higher echelons of education. It is seen in both national and state indicators that maximum dropouts happen at the secondary level, with the rate going as high as 14.47% in Maharashtra².

In the district of Nashik, the average dropout rate for females is almost twice as high as that of males. Even at the upper primary level (Class 7) it is 2.66% compared to 1.47% for males. Among the Scheduled Tribes, it is 5.03% while among the De-notified Tribes and Nomadic Tribes it is 9.75% and 12.47% respectively³. This proves that the girls who belong to the disadvantage populace drop out of school more than the boys when they are about to move into the secondary level of school education. The one of the reasons is the patriarchal structure of power that influence women and girls and therefore they are at the receiving end of injustice related to access and participation in education matters. This happens due to many socio-cultural factors around girls mobility, the general expectation of them being caregivers, poverty and limited access to resources which create hurdles in their educational aspiration and which also pushes them into domestic chores leaving no time and support pursue their education. Our educational Institutions also have constraints which result in lack in fulfilling diverse needs faced by the students and mainly by the girls who come from the marginalised communities. Lack of separate toilets for girls, hygienic conditions and long distances to school and unavailability of transport are a few issues to name that hinder girls completing their education. The ASER report (2014) also substantiates this by pointing to the same conditions prevailing in almost all the regions of India. The survey by ASER-PRATHAM clearly states that nearly 45% schools do not have girls' toilet and access to water is not available in nearly 24 % of schools. The number of schools in rural areas which provide secondary education is even less than the primary schools, which increases the chances of girls dropping out because of the issue of mobility and safety.

In matters related to safety, the anxieties around girls/women's sexuality. The belief that the women carry the name and honour of the family which needs to be protected, in case it is tainted bringing dishonour and shame to the entire family. This type of control over girls mobility and eventually over their sexuality is how patriarchy operates which basically is related to their reproductive abilities and hence needs protection. The patriarchy system keeps women bound to their duties to child rearing and domestic chores which restricts their access to education and other learning opportunities. Their secondary role thus comes from these domestic duties and care-giving which is of course unpaid and mostly invisible!

² *District Report Cards 2014-15* published by the National University of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi. Retrieved from <http://www.dise.in/drc.htm>.

³ Ibid.

The Census reports also confirms that the employment of women is mostly in agriculture and related activities which is nearly 88% of the total female work force in rural areas and 18% in urban areas (UNESCO, 1991, p. 36). From our work in rural areas we also get this view that having a girl means having an extra help at home and as well in the farm. This extra resource is taken for granted and useful source of getting additional income. Hence the view that since the girl is anyway going to go away after marriage so there is no point in strengthening her resources in education or any other skills. Anyway, the cost of education is also a constraining factor which further alienates the girl from getting higher level of education. So, an extra help comes free which eases domestic and farm-related chores. This is the reason why large number of girls remain out of school education especially higher education. An out- of- school girl is also an opportunity for the family to get her married early without any notion of consent or crossing the legal age for marriage.

While there is data available at the district level of girls' enrolment and related matter, there is no records available at the village level. Especially about nuanced information like mental health of a rural girl. The mental health has been the most neglected aspect, especially when it comes to rural areas and matters related to accessing status of anxiety and stress experienced by the girls.

A girl's life is thus riddled with many problems. Living in poverty, facing strict social norms that hinder their mobility as well as access to education and health care, and the pressure of getting them married at the earliest opportunity has meant the presence of high number of out-of-school girls in villages situated around Nashik district of Maharashtra. With innumerable pressures and expectation from family and community, the mental health of any rural girl is challenging and full of risk. In many rural cultures, being born female is a huge disadvantage and commits the girl child to the lowest structural hierarchy. This causes a great amount of physical, emotional, and intellectual damage. In fact, this impacts her growth as well as her mental health. At each stage, girls face more discrimination than boys, even violence which causes irreparable harm to their overall development. If this was not enough, girls are pulled out of school at the onset of puberty and their mobility is restricted. Out of school, she is forced into agricultural labour to support her family or married at an early age. Most of the girls are unable to share their struggle, fears, and stress with anyone as such open dialogue is not part of the cultural reality. Anyway, parents are busy in earning for the family in face of severe poverty and have less time for providing such emotional support. The girls have to fend for themselves and without any support system or awareness of mental health and its impact on their personality and growth, they suffer in silence, or without any awareness. It denies them to attain their full potential or capacity.

The girls are aware of their lower social status which they accept as they know complaint will be of no use. The socio-political structures like the Gram Panchayats have no substantive activities that would develop their abilities or create a safe environment for the girls to accomplish their goals. Against such odds, if support systems are available and the culture favourable to their aspirations then the girls' achievement in different fields of study would be remarkable than the present reality.

The life of any young girl in a rural setting is full of hard work, struggle and of adjustments. The agency of the girl is never allowed to be develop independently, to make choices as per their interest or motivation. They are regularly monitored and must function according to patriarchal norms followed in the village which unfortunately is never in favour of developing girls' potential as per their wish. The girls learn this early and spend their life according to norms and customs prevailing in the family and the community. What this constant pressure on behaviour, to be under someone's control, does to the mental health of the person and its impact on the development of the personality is a critical aspect that needs attention.

One factor which I intend to study which is an important part of personality development is how anxiety affects their mental health, and whether marriage, an important event in a girl's life, plays any role in increasing/decreasing her anxiety?

1.5 Anxiety Disorders

Anxiety disorders are a major worldwide health problem with sizeable psychological, social, and economic costs (Beddington et al., 2008). The impact of anxiety on cognitive function is a major contributing factor to these costs; anxiety disorders can promote a crippling focus upon negative life-events and make concentration difficult, which can lead to problems in both social and work environments. In such situations the state of anxiety can be seen as maladaptive. Anxiety can, however, also improve the ability to detect and avoid danger which, under the right circumstances—such as walking home alone in the dark—can be adaptive. The precise impact of anxiety on cognition is, however, unclear.

Pathological Anxiety

Pathological anxiety is associated with persistent and debilitating apprehension about negative future events, and it can have a wide range of effects on cognitive performance, including facilitative effects (e.g., threat detection) as well as detrimental effects (e.g., distractibility). Indeed, the DSM-IV definitions of anxiety disorders prominently feature "difficulty concentrating" as a key symptom. DSM-IV defines a number of different anxiety disorders including generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), phobias, panic disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and obsessive-compulsive disorder [OCD; although this

disorder is now thought to be more of a compulsivity disorder than an anxiety disorder (Fineberg et al., 2009)]. It should be noted that it is rare to find a patient who suffers a “pure” anxiety disorder because the rates of co-occurrence with depression are very high (Mineka et al., 1998; Kessler et al., 2012) and it is unclear how many of these symptoms can be attributed to anxiety alone.

It is my contention that anxiety plays a crucial part in our life especially those of rural girls as they are growing up in a stressful situation. However, being not aware of this mental health condition makes the girls carry on with their lives in a routine manner. Very little study is available which throws light on the impact of mental health disorders on the life of rural communities especially on those of rural girls. There is enough pressure on a girls lives – there is the tension of whether education would be continued, the unending tasks at home from kitchen, cleaning, working to earn wages to cook and look after younger siblings, the sexual harassments, the restriction on mobility on the arrival of puberty among endless other expectations.

The pressure is continuous and there is no literature that throws light on how the girls handle the pressure or what impact the pressure has on their overall development? Especially on their mental health? As specified earlier, young girls constitute a sizeable number in any village community and their well-being is of critical importance to the overall development of the community and the nation. Not only are they in sizeable number, the girls are at a critical age of growth and maturity which needs attention, care and support that would nurture their socio-psychological and mental development and enable them to attain the potential that is inherent in all of us.

This is exactly where the girls find themselves alone, with no support available in the family as well in the community. In fact, the absence makes the transition into adulthood challenging with no data available on how such hurdles are handles and crossed. Moreover, when married at a relatively early age, how does the girl make the transition to a woman-wife? What kind of adjustments does she have to undergo to assume responsibility in a new home? How does she deal with the enormous expectation that are put on her? What are some of the difficulties in her mental make-up that she is aware of? While the social-cultural factors are not favourable for a young girl's growth, she is still very active and able to perform variety of tasks asked of her. Many girls are trying to pursue their parents or their husbands to let them continue education or livelihoods, but it is a huge challenge. It would be interesting to study the mental health condition of the girls as well as the young married women especially their anxiety? Are they aware of their anxiety? How they cope with it? What strategies are employed to deal with it? What are the consequences?

1.6 Summary

This Chapter contain title, Statement of problem, significance of the study, introduction to the problem faced by the rural girls' in Nashik and importance of marriage as a social norm, and introduction to Anxiety as a mental health problem.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Review of existing literature is a critical component of any scientific study. It helps the researcher in finding out what exists in the review of literature on the same topic, what gaps are present and what needs to be done. It helps the researcher with insights, critical inputs and assists in conceptualising the research problem. Given the vast amount of literature available, it is not possible to take into account all the existing published work. However, a few relevant representative work has been reviewed.

The study is interested in studying the comparison of anxiety in young girls lives before she is married and after the marriage. For the past six years, experience of working with the young rural girls in the tribal and rural villages of Nashik district and in particularly in trying to empower them and raise their agency, one has encountered their low social status. In fact, in the overall village hierarchy the girls have the lowest status. The family believes that she is a burden and allowing her to develop her capacities would lead to several complications, one of which is loss of honour to the family in case the girl gets involved with someone else in a romantic and sexual relationship. The family is wary of such development and the overall anxiety as the girl enters puberty is high. Then puberty sets off a belief system in a Hindu family that the girl has now blossomed into a grown woman, has become mature. The girl's status changes. Now, she is viewed as someone capable of becoming a mother, of producing off-spring!

Although she is now capable of producing a child, the reality is that she has no authority or control over it. The girl is viewed as someone who is vulnerable. This change brings several social restrictions. Her mobility is controlled and so are her interactions with the males. She is now seen as a future wife and a mother. Motherhood is the biggest achievement of a woman's life. Therefore, marriage thus becomes critical and a way to become a mother. The socio-cultural prevalent in the villages favours early marriage of girls so that the opportunity and chance of the girl entering romantic alliance is minimised. The girls live a burdened and pressurised life fulfilling several expectations from following social norms to doing family chores and even helping the family by doing farm labour to support the family in economic terms. For young girls, marriage becomes significant as it is seen as important and valuable event in their life from which there is no escape. Marriage is viewed as an auspicious occasion in a girl's lives which is supposed to change the course of a girl's fortune and future. There have been several studies done on the lives of young girls especially those in the rural areas of India which reflects their status.

According to Leela Dubey (1988), girls go through a phase of their development which is hazy. It is never forgotten and said umpteen number of times that the girl's future is in another home, that forms the basis of their upbringing. There are different types of family and it is never sure which type of family she will be married into. When the girl is married into another home, it will take years for the young girl to get accustomed to the new environment and acquire some sort of power and role in decision-making. The path is full of challenges and the way the young settles down and mixes with others will not be easy path. There will be tentativeness to it. What this does is it affects the self-esteem and the accompanying confidence of the girls. Dubey (1988) gives various examples of how the girls are socialised into believing that the marriage is their only destiny.

Girls also encounter ambiguous values and expectations. It is believed that sibling relationship is supposed to be life-long. However, it is the sister who has to observe on a special day the good of their brother and their happiness. Dubey (1988) says further that the general belief is that a woman is like water, which remains shapeless of its own but assumes the shape of the vessel in which it is poured. It doesn't leave any mark of its own. Thus, woman it is believed is like that of a clay which can be shaped as per the desire of the potter. This brings also means that once a girl is married, she has to shed all the previous loyalties and allegiances and seamlessly get absorbed into the family she marries.

We can observe that girls' lives in a rural context is faced with several hardships and mental health issues, which on most occasions go unnoticed. However, a focused study on mental health issues of rural girls of Maharashtra hasn't been attempted.

Several studies on anxiety can be reviewed by sourcing scholarly platforms such as Google Scholar and Shodhganga. Some of these are reviewed below:

2.2 Review of Literature

1. MENTAL HEALTH OF ADOLESCENTS IN RELATION TO EMOTIONAL MATURITY AND FAMILY ENVIRONMENT

Researcher: Bala Chanchal, Guru Kashi University, 2016.

Researcher Bela Chanchal investigated the mental health of adolescents, their emotional maturity and family environment to find out the mental health in relation to gender and location. She used the Family Environment scale to study the mental health aspect in adolescent. She found that there is no significant difference in male and female adolescent in relation to their mental health, emotional maturity and family environment. Even in location she found no significant difference in rural and urban adolescents.

2. Family Environment and Mental Health of Adolescent Girls

Researchers: 1. B.Sathyabama & 2. J.O.Jeryda Gnanajane Eljo

The researchers studied the relationship between family environment and its influence on mental health of adolescent girls. The study found that more than half of the respondents had low scores in various dimensions (eg. leadership, role, communication, etc) of family interactions and mental health aspects of adolescent girls. The study also found that there is a significant relationship between family interactions and the mental health of adolescent girls.

3. Thesis: A study of academic stress anxiety and health profile among the adolescent other backward classes OBC girls of Sagar district Madhya Pradesh

Researcher: Raikwar, Rajul

The objective of the study was to study health profile of the students and to find the level of academic anxiety and stress. The study found presence of stress anxiety in adolescent girls belonging to backward communities in Sagar district of Madhya Pradesh.

4. Perceived Stress and Coping among Rural Adolescent Girls in India

Published in the International Journal of Indian Psychology 2(3):170-3, June 2015

The study was conducted among 120 adolescent girls from rural areas of Calicut, Kerala to find levels of stress and coping mechanism adopted by the girls. The finding showed lesser level of stress but adopted maladaptive coping strategies. This was because the majority did not report stress due to their low socio-economic status.

5. Gender Socialization: Differences between Male and Female Youth in India and Associations with Mental Health

Research article by Usha Ram, Lisa Stroschein, and Kirti Gaur, published 2014

The research paper throws light on the gender socialisation among youth in India and tries to show its linkage to their mental health. Result shows substantial socialisation difference among how boys and girls are brought up. The female youth reported more restrictions to their independence. It was also found that female youth experienced more mental health problems when their families discriminated males over females. Largely, the findings of this major substantial survey across the youth in India suggested that gender inequality was present in majority of the families in India as well as its linkage with mental health problems.

6. Test anxiety of higher secondary students in relation to their emotional maturity and locus of control

Researcher – Roy Piyali, Guhati University

The study was to find the relationship of test anxiety among higher secondary students with their emotional maturity and locus of control. The study found that most of the students did possess test anxiety and that there is a significant difference in test anxiety among higher secondary students on the basis of gender (male/female). The study also found that the majority of the students fall under emotional immaturity category.

The academic studies focus was on academic stress on the students or study between girls and boys or between urban and rural adolescent youth as the studies done in Punjab, Kerala or M.P where the only significant conclusion in the M.P study was the presence of anxiety in students and it was more related to other socio-economic factors like caste, economics, violence and due to grades and expectations.

The study of literature shows that young girls in rural India face enormous amount of pressures as compared to boys although there is no significant study present which highlights relationship between stress and young girls especially rural girls. Also, there is absence of any study done which shows Anxiety Test being applied to rural girls in Maharashtra to see its effect. Also, as we have seen in the socio-cultural conditions that affect girls' life related to their marriage and the assumptions that it will bring happiness and change for the better conditions in a young girl's life. However, this huge assumption has never been studied especially its relation to young married girls and its impact on their mental health.

2.3 Summary

In this chapter the researcher has attempted to explain the review of literature on young girls and presence of anxiety in their mental health profile.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The researcher has attempted to find solution to the study in question through applying different scientific techniques. In psychological studies, it is necessary to base the study on scientific methodology like defining the problem, identifying the variables and collecting data, applying statistical test for its analysis.

3.2 Problem Statement

India, situated in south central Asia of the Indian subcontinent, is the 2nd most populous country in the world having the population of more than 1.30 billion people. A country with 62.5% of population in the age group of 15-59 years and which is ever increasing makes it the largest beneficiary of this demographic dividend. But despite having the youngest workforce in the world, India is facing an unprecedented employment crisis making the young job seeking population anxious about their future. The National Sample Survey Office's (NSSO) job survey for year 2017-18 had revealed India's story of employment and shown a spike in the unemployment rate to over 6 per cent, which is the highest in past 45 years. The unemployment rate for females, rural and urban, stood at 5.7 percent and for males, rural and urban, the unemployment rate stood at 6.2 percent. While employment is certainly a cause of worry for millions of young people, it is definitely not the only issue that needs to be addressed in the country. Increased cost of education with minimum guarantee of returns, extreme poverty is still ailing the nation thus limiting the opportunities of sizable amount of young population. Add the mental health issue which is silently suffered and affects the functioning of the people especially the most vulnerable group – that of young girls.

UNESCO's report on education published in 2016 clearly stated that India will be half a century late in achieving its universal education goals. This means the country will achieve universal primary education by 2050, universal lower secondary education in 2060 and universal upper secondary education in 2085 only. Lakhs of students have been staying out of the school, a recent report by National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, shows 39.4% girls aged between 15-18 years and 35% boys have dropped out of school and colleges due to poverty. Of the girls who drop out, 64.8% do so not because they have to start working to earn, but because they are forced to take on household chores which highlights how poverty coupled with other oppressive structures increase the existing inequalities.

Findings from a participatory research carried out by Abhivyakti in tribal areas of Nashik District has revealed that 43 % girls dropped out of the school. In India's patriarchal society, girls are expected to 'fulfil' their household responsibilities and do household chores from a very young age and prioritise them before their studies. They are expected to support families through physical labour, which is more visible in rural parts of the country, the drop out numbers obtained through the action research by Abhivyakti underline these issues.

Gender based discrimination has been a matter of concern for government as well as civil society organizations. Even though participation of girls in education has improved in recent years, girls are not on the same page as boys are as far as the educational priorities are concerned. In the context of rural marginalized girls, pursuing formal education is often considered as a way to avoid marriages against their own will. Issue of early marriages still persists, haunting dreams of young adolescent girls as 27% of girls are married before their 18th birthday.

The data from the research indicates that girls do not have the agency to make important decisions for themselves. For example, approximately 70% girls from the survey Abhivyakti carried out in the last couple of years cannot choose their life partners. Falling labour force participation of women in India is again a matter of concern. Female labour force participation rates have declined from 42.7 percent in 2004–05 to 20.8 in 2018–19⁴. This trend has been puzzling given the increased enrolment ratio of girls in the ambit of formal education sector.

The growing anxieties and uncertainties, exclusionary policies, have brought India's youth on streets. We have witnessed massive strikes over a past few years, certain communities have been demanding reservations in government jobs and education. These communities have traditionally been in agriculture related activities. Shrinking sizes of land, increased cost of agricultural inputs, and low rate of returns are some of the key reasons which have made young people look for alternative livelihood opportunities rather than indulging into traditional ones. The struggle for the young women with their own aspirations is even more. The COVID-19 pandemic has added layers of stress on the already burdened mind.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been rampant worldwide. Some of the world's most powerful nations also have been weakened by the pandemic. The growing spread of this epidemic has underlined the fact that survival is the priority for people around the world. Maharashtra tops the list of states for having maximum number of the COVID-19 patients. Though the lockdown is everywhere and affected many, rural and tribal areas have been affected adversely. Due to loss of employment for many workers, closure of markets and transportation, life in these

⁴ According to the ILO's estimates. Data retrieved from the World Bank <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS?locations=IN>

areas came to a standstill. This has impacted the lives of the rural populace including women and young girls the most. Especially their physical and mental health has been severely affected. As schools are closed during the lockdown the girls are mostly home. Given that everyone in the family too is at home, the burden of household chores has increased for women and for girls even more. Girls had to walk long distances for fetching water in summer and the commencement of farming due to arrival of monsoons meant increased responsibility in the fields too.

With these responsibilities, girls have been spending a lot of time and energy in physical labour. 70% of girls from the short survey which Abhivyakti conducted in a few villages surrounding Nashik like Kochargoan and villages in Harsul, said they have to do both farm and household chores. Girls stated that prolonged physical labour affects their physical health to a great extent. 20% of girls say that they feel tired due to increased work-load during this period. 10% of the girls said that this work hurts their limbs a lot. 55% of the girls said they didn't mind the work and their health is fine. At first glance, this may seem like a positive answer, but it is not. The girls avoided expressing their discomfort here, as they are conditioned to believe that they are supposed to endure the physical pain and not talk to anyone about it, and that a girl's health is not an important issue. Their response shows how natural it is for them to accept this suffering and it is unavoidable.

Apathy about mental health was the reason for the girls to keep quiet over this matter, but when asked in more depth, 75% of the girls said that they were stressed. 20% of the girls said that they are stressed due to studies at present. Staying engaged in the household chores leaves them with very little time or no time for studying at home and thus they are neglecting studies. 25% girls are afraid that they might have to drop out of school. Questions like when the school will begin and even if it does, whether they will be able to continue going to school are on their minds.

25% girls have fears that their families might get them married during this lockdown period. These fears are increasing their stress levels and affecting their mental health. 15% of the girls reported that they feel irritated by the increased workload at home, the compulsion to stay at home full time, the lack of any means of entertainment and the fear created in their minds due to the above reasons. Vidya from Hirdi village says, "I have to get up in the morning and go to work in the field. As soon as I return from the field, the water tanker arrives. Then I fill water and start doing the evening household chores. Since all the people are at home, I didn't get much time and it increases my irritation."

If the recruitment does not start during this period, many will lose an opportunity to work. 15% of girls expressed the fear that without an opportunity to work they would have no choice but

to get married. They shared that they had negotiated with their family and got limited time to try to find an employment, or continue studying for exams but now the competitive exams have been postponed indefinitely, there will be no recruitment and so we are afraid of being pressurised to get married during this time.

From the above observations, it is not difficult to state that girls' mental health and life in general is filled with stress which is neither expressed nor any support in any form of counselling or medical aid is received. It is therefore necessary to understand the stress levels of the girls especially anxiety and compare it with those who are married and see if there is any departure for the girl after marriage. The study hopes to find answers to this growing problem faced by innumerable young people, especially young girls.

3.3 Research Objectives

1. To study the mental health issues especially anxiety faced by young rural girls and compare it with young married rural women to see similarities and differences in their lives.

3.4 Hypothesis

The life of rural young girl is stressful due to various pressures put on her as well as on the family. It is believed that marriage of the young girl will alleviate the stress as she becomes independent and mature. However, our experiences of working with the young rural girls in the vicinity of Nashik district tells another story. Marriage or rather early marriage of girls leads to more stress in their lives. This is what needs to be tested through application of psychometric test. In this case Comprehensive Anxiety Test. Hence the hypothesis is as follows –

There is a significant difference in the anxiety experienced by young unmarried girls and married young women in rural Nashik.

3.5 Methods (participants, tools, design and procedure)

The research design is a plan of action, a strategy to find answers to the research question. It gives the details necessary for obtaining the information needed to get answers to the research problem.

According to Kerlinger (1966), research design is the plan, structure and strategy of investigation conceived so as to obtain answers to research questions and to control variance.

According to Green and Tull (1970), a research is the specification of methods and procedures for acquiring the information needed. It is the overall operational pattern or framework of the project that stipulates what information is to be collected from which sources by what procedures.

The research in question is about finding the mental health conditions especially anxiety levels in young rural girls and married women. Here, the research is limited to villages situated in Nashik district. These are tribal villages based in Dindori and Harsul regions of Nashik. The research question is to find whether anxiety is present in young rural girls and whether it is present or not after marriage. It is generally believed in India culture that marriage is an important event in a young girl's life and that it will enable the young girls to live experience transformation and better living conditions. This study also explores the state of mental health and especially the state of anxiety in a married woman in the rural context. Therefore, this study is a comparative study which studies the level of anxiety in the lives of young girls and its status after marriage. The dependent variable here is anxiety and the independent variable is marriage. A null hypothesis was created to test if there exists a difference in anxiety in the two groups being compared.

3.6. Selection of Sample

The participants on whom the research study is based are two groups of participants. One is the group of young girls who are not yet married, who are either staying at home, studying or working in the farm as farm workers. They are in the age bracket of 14 to 25 with the majority being in the age group of 20-22. The girls stay in the tribal villages based in Nashik district. Most of the girls are from Kochargoan village situated in Dindori taluka. Most of the girls are either studying in schools and colleges or helping their families in supporting and strengthening their financial situation.

The second group is of married young women who are mostly home-makers but also supplement their family income by working as agricultural labourer during the monsoon season. They are in the age group of twenty to thirty-five. A few are very young, new married while rest are married for a longer duration. The married women also belong to the same region and are mostly from Kochargoan village, while some are from villages situated near Harsul. The sample size was 30 in total, 16 young girls and 15 married women who agreed to take the test.

3.7 Method of Data Collection

The data collection was carried in the month of February and March by visiting the villages and meeting the young girls and married women and getting their consent. They were

informed about the nature of the test and that it consisted several situations which they had to answer as per their views and experiences. One limitation was in the language of the tool which was administered which being in Hindi made it difficult to administer it independently and required clarifying a few items in the questionnaire. There was no time limit and the participants took their time to answer the questions by answering either Yes or No to the items.

3.8 Tool

The tool used to determine the anxiety was the Sinha's Comprehensive Anxiety Test – SCAT-ss which was developed by AKP Sinha and LNK Sinha (2005). The authors found that psychometric test on Anxiety that existed beforehand lacked a few facets of Anxiety which were not covered, both in India and foreign locations. Also, several confusion and disagreement existed regarding the concept of anxiety. Several aspects of anxiety were not considered. These led to the development of the comprehensive test of anxiety which incorporated a variety of indices related to anxiety which were suggested by different experts keeping in view the conditions that were present in the country.

3.9 Psychometric Properties of the Test

The items of the Test were based on the symptoms of anxiety experienced by people. The items were also tested by five judges who were engaged in counselling and psychological testing. Their expertise was taken as also the Test was tried on small samples who had complained of anxiety. Based on rigorous item analysis, the final version consisting of 90 items were finalised.

The co-efficient of reliability was determined by the Test-retest method on a sample of 100, and the correlation score was 0.85. The Test was also tested for internal consistency reliability. The reliability coefficient was found to be 0.92. Both the values suggest a high reliability of the test. Its validity was also determined to be 0.62 which is significant beyond .001 level of confidence.

The scoring of the test was by counting the yes answers which got the score of one while no answers got zero score. The sum of the Yes answers would be the total anxiety score of the individual.

The individual is classified into five categories based on their scores obtained on the test. A table of the classification has been developed by creating the percentile norms. The classification ranges from Extremely High Anxiety, High Anxiety, Normal Levels, Low Anxiety, And Extremely Low Anxiety.

The table below gives the percentile equivalent for the Test scores of the Girls.

Percentile	Scores	Interpretation
P 99	71	Extremely High Anxiety
P 95	41	
P 90	36	
P 80	29	
P 75	28	High Anxiety
P 70	27	
P 60	25	Normal Anxiety
P 50	23	
P 40	20	
P 30	16	Low Anxiety
P 25	15	
P 20	13	Extreme Low Anxiety
P 10	09	
P 05	04	

The analysis of the Test scores was done by applying statistical methods. The mean scores of both the groups – young girls and married women were calculated as well as their standard deviations. Then the hypothesis was tested using the T test. The analysis of the data is given below in the tables and graphs.

The design of the research is a comparative study between two groups. The study compares the anxiety level in two rural groups – one being the young girls and the other is of married women. The study will use statistical methods to compare the two groups who were given the same psychometric test of comprehensive anxiety test. The comparison will use the t test to test the hypothesis formed for this study.

3.10 Summary

In this chapter the researcher has attempted to explain the research methodology used in performing this research. The start to end process as of how the study was conducted in details is present in this section of the report.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

4.1 Introduction

Then purpose of the study was to find level of anxiety in young rural girls and compare it with married women in Nashik district. The researcher applied statistical methods to find out the level of anxiety and to examine significance relation in the two groups.

4.2 Statistical Interpretation

There is significant difference in relation to anxiety levels in young unmarried girls and married women in rural Nashik.

Hypothesis -

There is a significant difference in the anxiety of unmarried girls and married women.

The scores of the young unmarried girls are given below in the table no-1.

Table 1: Anxiety Scores of Unmarried Girls

Unmarried Girls Score				
Scores	Mean	Deviation	SD	Normal Dist
31	49.375	-18.375	337.640625	0.012
31	49.375	-18.375	337.640625	0.012
31	49.375	-18.375	337.640625	0.012
39	49.375	-10.375	107.640625	0.022
39	49.375	-10.375	107.640625	0.022
41	49.375	-8.375	70.140625	0.024
43	49.375	-6.375	40.640625	0.026
48	49.375	-1.375	1.890625	0.029
50	49.375	0.625	0.390625	0.030
51	49.375	1.625	2.640625	0.029
56	49.375	6.625	43.890625	0.026
61	49.375	11.625	135.140625	0.020
63	49.375	13.625	185.640625	0.018
64	49.375	14.625	213.890625	0.016

66	49.375	16.625	276.390625	0.014
76	49.375	26.625	708.890625	0.004
790			2907.75	
49.375		SD	13.48088925	

*SD means standard deviation

From the above table -1, we can state that the mean score of unmarried girls' is 49.37. The scores of all the young girls are in the extremely high anxiety range. The mean score of the young unmarried girl is 49.37 which again is in the highest range of extreme anxiety. Of the sixteen girls who gave the test, only three which is nearly 19% who are at the lower range of the extreme high anxiety, rest of the majority have a higher value which only proves the point that girls lead a stressful life and are not considered an asset to be invested into. Girls know their fate and face many challenges from ending their education to working as labourers in the field, along with carrying out many household chores. That the girls might not be aware of their mental health condition and the extent to which it affects their functioning.

The standard deviation score is 13.48 which indicates that the data is dispersed from the mean score. It means that though all the young unmarried girls had an extremely high anxiety score, their scores are dispersed at different levels of extreme high anxiety.

Chart no. - 1

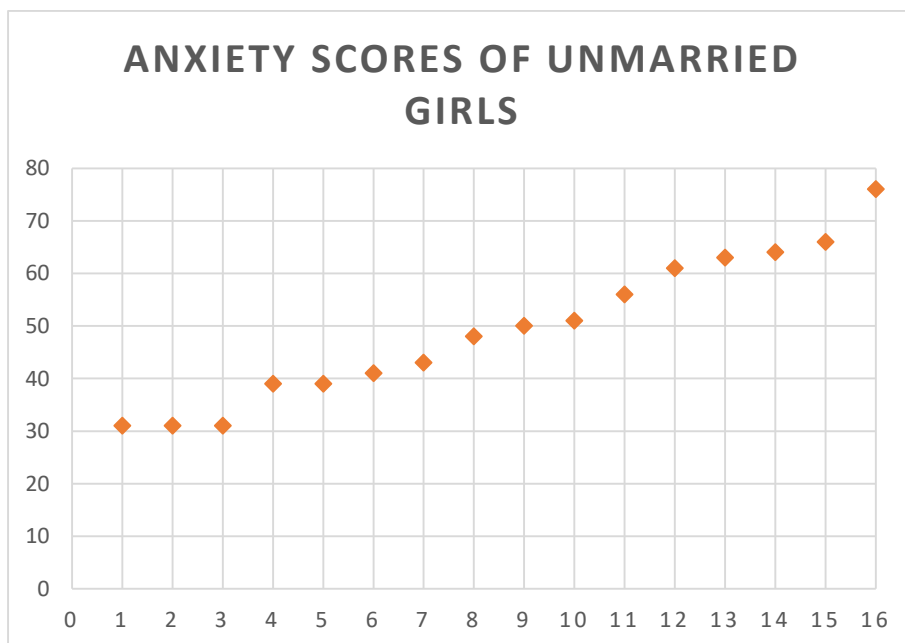
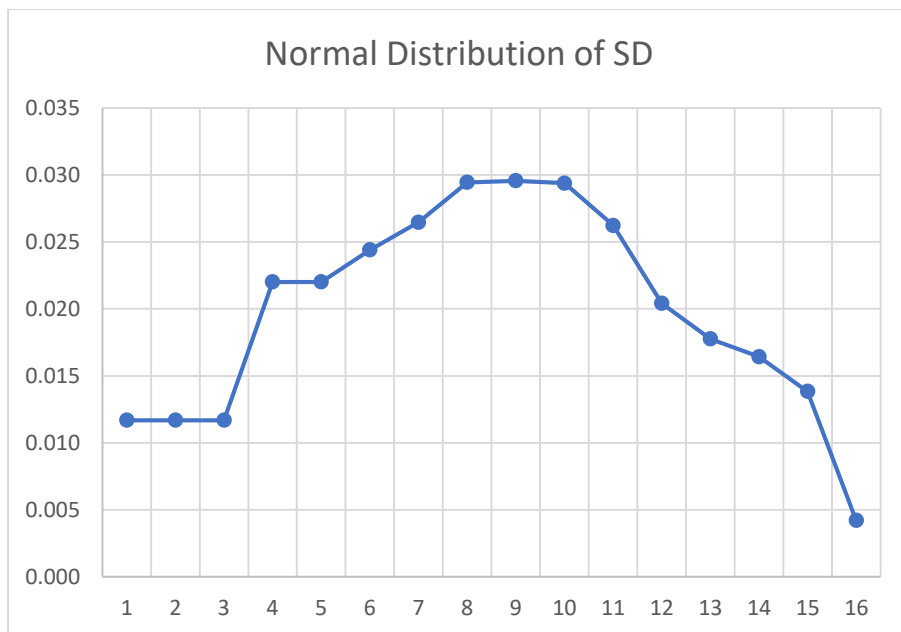


Chart no. 2



The above graphs depicted I chart no 1 and 2 also show that nearly 31 percent of the girls are in the higher bracket of the extremely high anxiety. While from this data it cannot be noted about their coping mechanism and how they deal with the high level of anxiety, there is also the prevalent condition of cultural silence that is common in most of the villages where one especially girls learn that it is best to remain silent. Lack of mental health services from which such anxiety could be detected and treated is also another aspect of a girl’s life as she prepares for her future. The normal distribution curve also confirms that the data is skewed towards extremely higher level of anxiety.

Table 2: Anxiety Scores of Married Women

Anxiety Score of Married women				
Scores	Mean	Deviation	SD	Normal Dist
31	54.57	-23.57	555.54	0.00448
36	54.57	-18.57	344.84	0.00967
45	54.57	-9.57	91.58	0.02440
48	54.57	-6.57	43.16	0.02913
49	54.57	-5.57	31.02	0.03045
55	54.57	0.43	0.18	0.03408
56	54.57	1.43	2.04	0.03385
57	54.57	2.43	5.90	0.03338

58	54.57	3.43	11.76	0.03267
59	54.57	4.43	19.62	0.03175
62	54.57	7.43	55.20	0.02788
63	54.57	8.43	71.06	0.02631
68	54.57	13.43	180.36	0.01765
77	54.57	22.43	503.10	0.00543
764			1915.43	
54.57		S D	11.70	

The Table 2 of married women is no different. The mean score of married women is 54.67, which indicate that the average married woman is experiencing extremely high anxiety. All the married women are in the highest bracket, which is extreme high anxiety. Only two married women, ie. 14% fall at the lower end of the extreme high anxiety. The standard deviation score of the married women is 11.31. The standard deviation of married women also points towards the dispersed scores from the mean.

Chart no. - 3

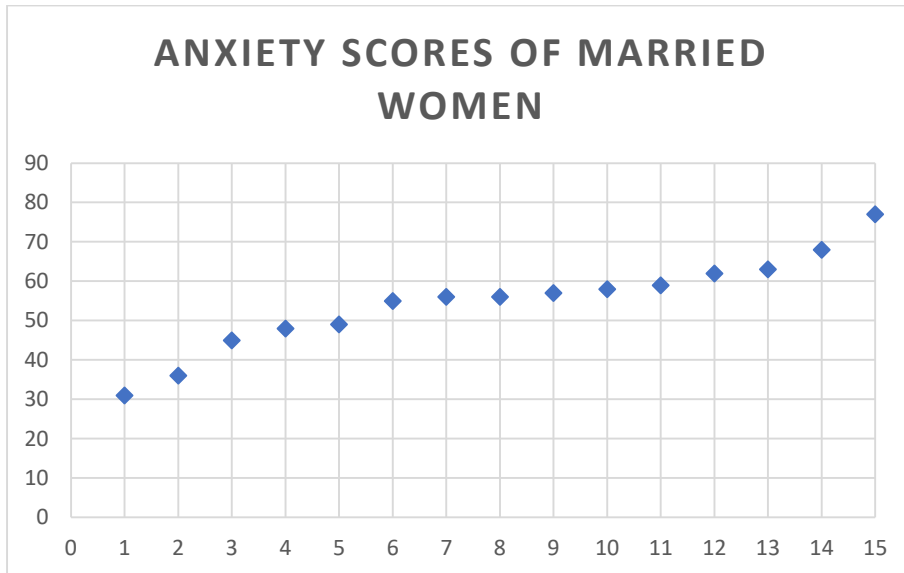
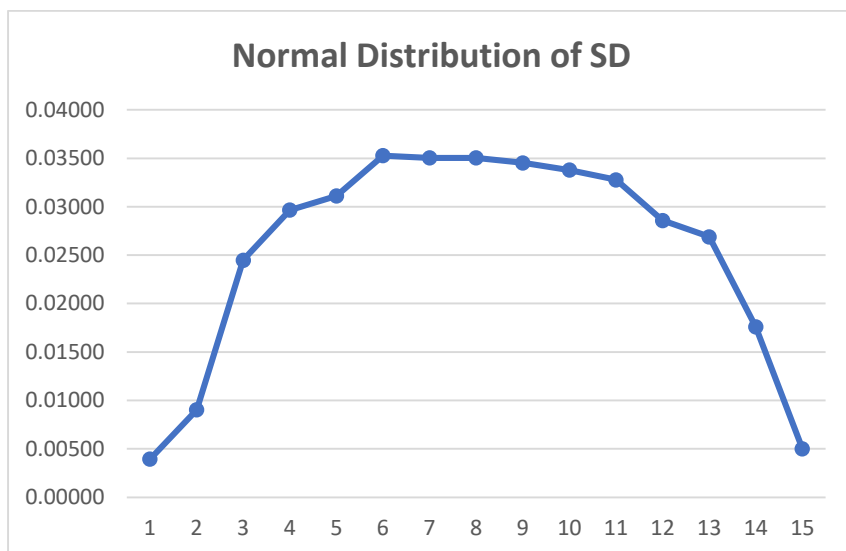


Chart no. – 4



The chart no. 3 & 4 as graphic representation also confirms the data is dispersed and there is a clear picture emerging of married women facing lot of anxiety which is of extreme high levels.

The comparative score of both the groups, of unmarried girls and married women from rural Maharashtra point towards the extreme high level of anxiety experienced by both the groups. Yet, to confirm this data statistically to see if there is any significant relationship between the two groups. To test this, it was decided to apply the T test. T test is an inferential statistic used to find if there is any significance difference between the means of the two groups under the scope of this study. T test will also test the hypothesis of the study.

Table 3: Applying T test

Applying T test		
Particulars	Group 1 Unmarried Girls	Group 2 Married Women
Mean	49.37	54.67
S.D	13.48	11.31
Variance	181.7104	127.69
Total	16	15
DF	29	

SED	4.53	
Difference in Mean	-5.3	
T Value	-1.17	

Here, S.D means Standard Deviation, Variance is the standard deviation of the both the groups squared, SED is standard error of difference, and DF is the degrees of freedom.

Table 3 of the T test gives us the standard error of difference which is 4.6 and the value of t calculated is -1.17.

In the present comparison, the computed value of t is -1.17 is lower than 1.96 and 2.58, so the value is not significant at both 0.05 and 0.01 levels. Hence the Hypothesis is rejected as there is no significant difference in the anxiety experienced by young girls and married women..

4.3 Discussion

The research was undertaken to study the anxiety faced by young girls and married women in rural context of Nashik district and whether there is any relation between them. The sample consisted of 16 young unmarried girls and 15 married women. In the study it was found that both the groups, the young unmarried girls and married women when tested for anxiety had extremely high level of anxiety. The t test applied to see the relation among them also confirmed that the marriage doesn't alter the anxiety experienced by the young girls. In fact, the test result showed that the married women had more severe anxiety.

4.4 Summary

This chapter enlighten the main working principle and results of the present study.

CHAPTER 5

EPILOGUE

5.1 Introduction

The research was undertaken to study the anxiety faced by young girls and married women in rural context of Nashik district and to examine whether there is any relation between them.

5.2 Summary

The aim of the study was to find the level of anxiety in young girls and married women in rural Nashik and to examine if there is any significant difference between them. The problem of rural girls and women are plenty owing to the traditional social norms and influence of patriarchal structures which affect their mental health. Literature review was different study was also done. The random sample of young girls and married women were selected from the rural areas of Nashik District. Research design is a comparative study. The Sinha's comprehensive anxiety test SCAT – ss was used for collection of data. Statistical techniques of Mean, Standard Deviation and t test was used to analyse the data. The data was analysed to find if there existed any significant difference in the two groups.

5.3 Conclusion

The t test applied to see the relation among them also confirmed that the marriage doesn't alter the anxiety of the young girls. In fact, the test result showed that the married women had more severe anxiety. Thus, the hypothesis is rejected. There is no significant difference in the anxiety experienced by young unmarried girls and married young women in rural Nashik.

5.4 Limitations

The study also had a few limitations. They are as follows -

1. The research study was for a selected sample from rural Nashik.
2. The sample size was small.
3. The age of married women was restricted to below 35.
4. Due to small sample size the results cannot be generalised.
5. Due to Pandemic data collection was affected.

5.5 Suggestions

The study confirms our experience of working with the young rural girls about experiencing anxiety as they go about their lives. The study confirms that that all the girls faced extremely high levels of anxiety. Most of the time this feeling goes without any sharing nor receiving any support. Similarly, married women also display extremely high anxiety. This clearly indicates that marriage in a girl's life which is socio-culturally celebrated and thought to be the pinnacle of happiness in a girls' life proves otherwise with all the married women displaying extremely high anxiety. The statistical calculation through the application of t test also confirms that the hypothesis is rejected.

What this means is that marriage as an important socio-cultural factor in a girl's life doesn't make any difference in the mental health status of the married women. In fact, her anxiety scores are extremely high and so we see there is no difference in her experience of anxiety. The anxiety doesn't lessen when a girl is married, which is not surprising. The married women in a different household of the husband experiences many responsibilities and expectations to fulfil with hardly any support system available, neither provided through the local governance structure nor through any informal networks. In such a context, how the young married women cope with mental health issues such as stress and anxiety and stabilise her life needs another inquiry and research study. We can recommend that the focus of providing mental health services through the local health services cannot be over emphasised. The family entrenched in the patriarchal system need to understand the impact of anxiety and other mental health problems faced by the young girls and married women on the overall well-being of the individual and of family and take efforts to providing support. This calls for creating awareness of mental health concept in rural areas of Nashik and recommending setting up of mental health infrastructure in the local Public Health Centres and making the provision accessible to the general population and specially to young and married women. Clearly, the presence of extremely high anxiety is a matter of concern and its impact of creating poor quality of life for the married women already burdened with many responsibilities and expectation, if not treated early. It is hoped that the result of the study will throw light on the existence of high level of extreme anxiety in young girls and its presence even after marriage is something that the government need to know for them to provide mental health provisions in Gram Panchayat on urgent basis.

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APPENDIX

1. Questionnaire Tool on Anxiety