

DEVELOPMENT OF A PROBLEM CHECKLIST FOR PAKISTANI ADOLESCENTS*

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The study aimed at developing a problem checklist (PCL) for Pakistani adolescents (college students), to explore their everyday problems. This model of PCL is conceptually based on the work of Mooney and Gordon (1950). The list has been developed in different stages and different number of participants participated in each stage. The participants have been taken from the colleges of four cities i.e., Rawalpindi, Karachi, Lahore, and Peshawar. Their age ranged 16 to 23 years. At stage I, 20 students participated in the exploration of students problems with the help of Mooney Problem Checklist (MPCL; Mooney & Gordon, 1950). In stage II, 108 students were asked to enlist all the bothersome problems faced by adolescents. In stages III and IV, the list of problems was scrutinized and selection of problems for final version of PCL was made. In stage V, test retest reliability as well as face validity of the PCL was tested. A total of 43 items were discarded, and then a study was conducted to see the most common problems faced by Pakistani adolescents. 200 students participated in this study. Test retest reliability is found to be 0.87 ($p < .001$). Face validity is found to be fairly high. Rest of the results are discussed in terms of frequency and percentage of responses of subjects to various problems of PCL.

Adolescence is defined as a period of transition characterized by accelerated process of change in cognitive, social, and psychological functioning accompanied by marked physical restructuring (Petersen & Spiga, 1982). In early theories of adolescent development, the transition to adulthood was considered as stressful in nature. This theory, first proposed by Hall (1904) and later elaborated upon by Blos (1964) and Freud (1958), claims that the biological changes occurring during the adolescent years cause severe disruption in psychological status. Empirical research, however, has not supported this view. Several studies (see for example, Andersson, 1969; Offer & Offer, 1975) have shown that not all adolescents pass through a tumultuous phase as has been frequently described in clinical

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literature. On the contrary, large scale cross-sectional, and longitudinal studies conducted during the early 1960s indicated that instead of being arrested or marked by breakdowns, development in most areas proceed rather continuously (e.g., Douvan & Adelson, 1966). The degree of stress suffered by the adolescents was found to be moderate, which did not support the assumption of a generation conflict or identity crisis (Andersson, 1969; Offer & Offer, 1975).

Adolescent research shows it is not the major crises, but rather the minor everyday conflicts between adolescents and their parents that are most significant and preoccupy the adolescents (Coleman, George, & Holt, 1977; Montemayor, 1986). A study by Seiffge-Krenke (1995), also shows a similar trend that not a major crisis, but relatively minor problems, such as, unable to deal with boredom, less pocket money, having no friend, and parents having no time to spare were named as everyday problems, that are irritating, frustrating, and distressing and the role of these everyday problems, have rarely been examined.

Problem is defined as any situation, any feeling, any cognition, any behavior of the person himself or of any other person, which is constantly bothering an individual (Webster's New world Dictionary, 1953).

Many elements encountered by adolescents in his environment may be anxiety producing and that may lead to problems of personal adjustment. For example, research indicates that extremes in physical appearance have a major influence on social relations, personality development, and adjustment (Adams, 1980). Other personality attribute like self-concept also play a considerable role in determining the extent of adjustment or maladjustment of adolescents, for example college age men with a muscular built are more confident and optimistic about interacting with others (Tucker, 1983).

The frequency of parent-child conflict also increases during early adolescence, (Steinberg, 1981). Qadri (1962) investigated students problems by means of a problem checklist and discovered that the most recurring problems related to home and family were "being treated like a child at home" and "parents expect too much".

Lent (1957) used Rotter's Incomplete Sentence Blank to survey the number, type, and distribution of problems of each age group of 425 junior and senior high school students. The problems most frequently identified were designated as personal-psychological, study, learning, social-psychological, and home/family relationships.

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eighties, however, several instruments have been developed that are suitable for younger age groups (Johnson, 1986).

Most measures of life stress in adolescents have been designed to resemble those applied to adults. More recently, several instruments have been developed that are suitable for younger age groups (see, for example, Johnson, 1986). Compas, (1987) has developed a scale which was based on minor and major events generated by adolescents. Open-ended list of daily and major life events were obtained from a sample of more than 600 adolescents aged between 12 and 20 years. There were 213 non-redundant life events and daily stressors generated, which could be organized into three slightly different sets of items representing events of early, middle and late adolescence.

In studies employed other instruments it was established that the types of events generated were strongly dependent on the ages of individuals, Coddington (1972), for example, analyzed life events as a function of age and found an increased number of life stressors between the ages of 12 and 18 years, which consequently led to the construction of age-specific life events lists. The instrument developed by Compas (1987) is, however, the only one that allows a combined assessment of minor and major stressors.

Another most widely used instrument for gathering problems of adolescents is Mooney Problem Checklist (MPCL), developed by Mooney and Gordon (1950). The items making up the checklist for high school students are classified into 10 areas and that of college students has following 11 areas: Health and physical development, finances, living condition, and employment, social and recreational activities, social psychological relations; courtship, sex and marriage, morals and religion, home and family, adjustment to college work, the future, vocational and educational, and curriculum and teaching procedures.

As problems may vary, depending on context and culture, this study aimed to develop an indigenous problem checklist for Pakistani adolescents which explain the nature of everyday problems of our adolescents. The rationale of developing this checklist is to focus on the problems of our youth in general, and students in specific terms, because the college students report a constellation of problems which educational institutes must understand.

There were two main purposes of this study. Firstly, to develop a problem checklist for Pakistani adolescents. Due to the non-availability of an indigenous problem checklist for Pakistani adolescents, there was an ample need to develop one of its own. Secondly, to explore the major problems and concerns of our

adolescents by applying this problem checklist to a sample of Pakistani adolescents.

METHOD

Problem Checklist (PCL) for Pakistani adolescents has gone through different phases in the course of its development. Each phase involved different systematic steps which were related to the procedure and method involved in the development of a checklist.

Phase I, involved the investigation of problems of Pakistani adolescents with the help of Mooney Problem Checklist (MPCL; Mooney & Gordon, 1950). At phase II, problems were generated from the adolescents themselves on self-report basis. Phases III and IV, involved in reduction and selection of items for final checklist and at Phase V, psychometrics were find out and a small study was carried out to know the most frequently bothering problems of the adolescents.

Sample

A total of 351 College students participated in this study at different phases. Their ages ranged 16 – 21 years ($M = 18$ years) and they were students of intermediate or bachelor level. Students were randomly selected from different colleges of Rawalpindi, Karachi, Peshawar, and Lahore. Different cities were taken just to have a broader view of our students' problems.

Phase I

Sample

20 college students (10 boys and 10 girls) were randomly selected from different colleges of Rawalpindi, Peshawar, and Lahore. Their age ranged 16 to 21 years and they were students of intermediate or bachelor level.

Procedure and Results

Participants were given MPCL with the intention to explore problems of Pakistani adolescents. MPCL covered many diverse problem areas like 'health and physical development', 'personal psychological problems', 'moral and religious problems' etc., which were assumed to be of concern for our adolescents, but there were some other problem areas like, 'courtship, sex, and marriage', or 'finances, living conditions and employment', which were assumed to be culture-fare problems. The rationale of giving MPCL to our

adolescents was to see the relevance of different problem areas, and also to generate some indigenous problems with its help.

88 problems were endorsed by more than 50% of the sample and they were extracted from the list, for further check. These items were translated into Urdu with the help of 2 bilingual judges.

Phase II

Sample

108 college students (52 boys, 56 girls) were randomly selected from different colleges of Rawalpindi, Peshawar, and Lahore. Their age ranged 16 to 21 years and they were students of intermediate or bachelor level.

Procedure and Results

108 students participated in this phase. An item pool was generated from the adolescents themselves by giving them an open-ended questionnaire, with 13 headings. These headings were basically those which belong to MPCL, and had been translated in Urdu.

An area of MPCL, 'courtship, sex and marriage' was divided into two areas viz., 'friendship with opposite sex problems' and 'marriage related problems'. The rationale of splitting this area was not to confound courtship problems with marriage related problems of our adolescents, and also because the word 'courtship is not in vogue in our culture in the same manner as in western societies. One more area 'any other problem' was also added in order to generate any culture specific problem.

The participants listed a total of 753 problems, boys stated 331 problems, and girls 422. The list of 753, was reduced to 340 items, on the basis of redundancy, overlapping, more of global or societal nature of problems stated than personal. Two judges were involved in this process of scrutinization. 340 items were then added into 88 items previously drawn from MPCL making a total of 428 items.

Phase III & IV

Sample

23 college students (10 boys, 13 girls) were randomly selected from different colleges of Rawalpindi, Peshawar, and Lahore. Their age ranged 16 to 21 years and they were students of intermediate or bachelor level.

Procedure and Results

This list of 428 items was then given to a sample of 23 college students and asked them to endorse those items of the list which they think are the common problems of college students. Those items which were endorsed by 50% of the sample were retained. That resulted into 325 items on the list.

4 psychologists teaching at university level (as judges) were given the task to check the face validity of each statement, personal relevance was set as a criteria. With 100% agreement on each statement, many items dropped, because of the generality of the statements. That resulted in a list of 186 problem statements under 10 problem areas. Already existed 13 problem areas were shortened into 10 areas, as it was felt during items generation that problem area 'finances, living standard and employment' does not apply with our adolescents, so we exclude that area from the final list. Another area of 'social psychological problems' was merged into 'social and recreational activities'. . Two areas 'friendship with opposite sex problems' and 'marriage related problems', were merged into one and named as 'friendship with opposite sex and marriage related problems'.

Phase V

Objectives

Three objectives were focused upon at this stage:

- 1) To determine the reliability and validity of the checklist.
- 2) To find out the most common problems of the students by conducting a small study.
- 3) To refine the list if deemed necessary (those items excluded if endorsed by less than 25%).

Sample

200 students (100 boys, 100 girls) participated in this phase. They were randomly selected from different colleges of Rawalpindi, Lahore, Karachi, and Peshawar. 50 students from each city were taken, with an equal representation of boys and girls. Their mean age was 18 years.

Procedure

The checklist containing 186 statements with categorical format of 'YES' and 'NO', having 10 problem areas or domains with an

uneven number of statements, was given to the participants. While giving the PCL to participants for the small study, problem statements were randomized to break down area-wise categorization in order to minimize the effect of biasness.

Table 1

Ten problem areas with their respective number of problems

Problem Areas		Items
1	Health Related Problems (HP)	13
2	Recreational Social Psychological Problems (RSP)	21
3	Personal Psychological Problems (PPP)	20
4	Friendship With Opposite Sex And Marriage Related Problems (FOM)	11
5	Familial Problems (FP)	06
6	Moral and Religious Problems (MRP)	13
7	Adjustment to College Work (ACW)	25
8	Future: Educational and Vocational Problems (FEV)	08
9	Curriculum and Teaching Procedures (CTP)	21
10	Others (OT)	04
Total Items		143

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Reliability and Validity Test

40 participants were drawn randomly from the larger sample, and retested after an interval of 4 days. Test retest coefficient was 0.87 ($p < .001$). 43 items were endorsed by less than 25% (which was set as a criteria), of the sample, so those items were excluded from the final list.

The validity of a checklist depends upon the assumption on which it is built. When this checklist was developed, it was assumed that it would cover a reasonable range of personal problems faced by adolescents. To check this assumption, two questions were asked from the subjects at the end of the checklist.

1. 81% participants responded 'Yes' to this question: 'Do you feel that all the statements given above, which you have marked 'Yes' properly represent your problems?' (Y/N).

2. 'Do you face any other problem, other than these problem statements?'

58% participants responded 'No' to his question.

Table 2

Mean and Standard Deviation of the total number of problems of the Problem Checklist (N=200)

VARIABLES	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
186	75.51	24.84

The problem checklist was developed after passing through different levels of scrutinization and refinement. This instrument was developed to assess everyday problems in 10 salient areas, (these areas are described above). Table 2 shows the results obtained from the sample of 200 adolescents. It shows that the mean score of problems as indicated by sample is 75.51 ($SD = 24.84$).

There were 43 items which were endorsed by 25 per cent of the sample or less. Those items were dropped off from the final list. The rationale of using this criteria of 25 per cent for selecting outstanding problems of adolescents was, that these figures are only approximation of frequencies, and are included because they provide a rough estimate of how common a difficulty is among adolescents. An average student in high school or college has at least a dozen of such problems, many have still more, of which, however, only two or three are basics, the rest being pyramided on top of the fundamental ones.

Table 3

Mean Scores in Different Problem on the basis of Gender, Grades and Socioeconomic Class

Problem Area	Boys (<i>n</i> = 100)	Girls (<i>n</i> = 100)	Inter. (<i>n</i> = 117)	Bach. (<i>n</i> = 83)	Lower (<i>n</i> = 48)	Middle (<i>n</i> = 79)	Upper (<i>n</i> = 46)
HP	4.69	5.44	4.99	5.17	5.54	5.13	4.85
RSP	10.14	10.2	10.42	9.82	11.21	10.33	9.85
PP	9.49	9.82	9.81	9.43	10.21	10	10
FOM	4.88	4.88	4.91	9.48	5.83	4.97	4.87
FP	2.81	2.26	2.69	2.31	3.21	2.39	2.39
MR	6.73	7.26	7.09	6.86	6.83	7.09	7.48

Continued ...

Problem Area	Boys (n = 100)	Girls (n = 100)	Inter. (n = 117)	Bach. (n = 83)	Lower (n = 48)	Middle (n = 79)	Upper (n = 46)
ACW	12.38	12.79	12.69	12.43	13.35	12.97	12.39
FEV	3.79	3.4	3.73	3.41	4.31	3.51	3.52
CTP	10.66	10.88	10.82	10.7	12.06	10.84	18.67
OT	2.35	1.57	2.25	1.55	2.44	1.99	1.8

Note. HP=health related problems; RSP=recreation and social psychological; PP=personal psychological; FOM=friendship with opposite sex and marriage related problems; FP=family problems; MR=moral and religious; ACW=adjustment to college work; FEV=future: vocation and education; CTP=curriculum and teaching problems; OT=others.

In the present sample, problems related to college (work or curricula) and social psychological were named most frequently, which confirmed the results of other studies (Daniels & Moos, 1990; Siddique & D'Arcy, 1984; Stern & Zevon, 1990).

Another finding was that, family related problems were only rarely reported, the low incidence of conflicts indicates that the orientation towards parents remain positive. This is very much in line with the research on parent-adolescent relationships showing that family are generally described as good and free from major conflicts (Douvan & Adelson, 1966; Hill & Holmbeck, 1986; Montemayor, 1983; Seiffge-Krenke, 1995).

Problem related strains were perceived by both genders. In contrast to the results of Petersen, Sarigiani, & Kennedy (1991), it is not confirmed that girls perceive higher stress in all domains. It is demonstrated in the present study that, there is a tendency for girls, to report a higher frequency of 'health related problems' and 'moral & religious problems', only, and this can be attributed to their more concern with outer appearance related to health factors, as well as they feel more obligated to do well religiously.

Not much difference in the mean problems is seen in the results of intermediate or bachelor level students. On the other hand adolescents from different socio-economic status (SES) groups reveal that in the area of 'Curriculum and Teaching Procedures', adolescents who belong to upper class, and middle class expressed almost similar number of problems, ($M=10.67$, and 10.84) respectively. Whereas lower class adolescents indicate mean value of 12.06 . This may be due to the fact that lower class is the non-privileged strata of society and lack of resources, and illiteracy of the parents results in many

difficulties for their youth. On the other hand results indicated that in the area of 'Personal Psychological Problems' all three SES groups responded with a uniformity.

Except for 'moral and religious' domain of the checklist, adolescents belonging to lower class, relatively, show more problems. Reasons might be, lack of resources, and opportunities this segment of society avails.

Table 4

Most Frequently Endorsed Items from Each Area with their Respective Means

Problem Areas	Items
Health Related Problems (HP)	
Item no. 119	56%
Item no. 25	49%
Item no. 37	46.5%
Recreational Social Psychological Problems (RSP)	
Item no. 25	79%
Item no. 118	70.5%
Item no. 80	67%
Personal Psychological Problems (PPP)	
Item no. 36	78.5%
Item no. 133	76%
Item no. 135	66%
Friendship With Opposite Sex And Marriage Related Problems (FOM)	
Item no. 28	71%
Item no. 73	65.5%
Item no. 156	55.5%
Home and Family Problems (HFP)	
Item no. 124	75%
Item no. 147	54%
Item no. 110	46.5%

Continued...

Problem Areas	Items
Moral and Religious (MR)	
Item no. 42	90%
Item no. 154	75%
Item no. 85	72%
Adjustment to College Work (ACW)	
Item no. 27	84.5%
Item no. 116	72.5%
Item no. 99	69.5%
Future: Vocation and Educational (FVE)	
Item no. 96	74.5%
Item no. 3	63%
Item no. 84	63%
Curriculum and Teaching Procedures (CTP)	
Item no. 75	83%
Item no. 112	76.5%
Item no. 70	68%
Others (OT)	
Item no. 143	47.5%
Item no. 60	46%
Item no. 58	43.5%

Above results reveal that there are many problems which are really bothersome for our adolescents, for example item no.42 on MR, 90% adolescents regret their discourteous behavior. It is very optimistic that adolescents are conscientious about their bad behavior. This is very painful that they learn this from their adults, they are living in the environment which is full of contradictions. They are taught religious values in home and educational institutes but they do not see these values being practiced in the society. This conflicting situation develop in them a guilty feeling, as can be seen from items no. 154 (75%) and 85 (72%) of the same MR area.

In the area of ACW adolescents show many concern. It is the most problems indicating area. There are some 25 problems falling in this category. Adolescents feel really troubled regarding unfair means employed during examination (item no. 27, 84.50%).

Adolescents also face difficulty in understanding lectures in class (item no. 116, 72.5%) and studying methods they should apply for

better results (item no. 99, 69%). Luella and Irma (1969), Seiffeg-Krenke, (1995) reported somewhat similar results, which indicate that students with any cultural background exhibit same problems in relation to studies and education.

Adolescents also face many problems in the area of Curriculum and Teaching, also. This area of the checklist contains 21 problems. 83% adolescents share this feeling that examination system is not properly measuring their abilities, (item no. 75). They also complain that teachers do not take pains to update their notes and impart latest information to the students.

In this indigenously developed checklist another important area which also contains 20 problems is area of Personal Psychological Problems. Adolescents show emotional reactions like depression, sensitiveness to some unpleasant event, thinking without any reason (items no. 36, 78.5%; 133, 76%; and 135, 66% respectively).

In our culture emotional ties with parents, siblings, and peers are so strong that any rift in such relations may cause psychological disturbances and thus result in depression, unpleasantness or anxiety.

CONCLUSION

The process of development of PCL and findings of the small study conducted on its base, indicate that we really, do need, such indigenous work, that will not only help adolescents to know more about themselves, but also provide teachers and councilors a safe, reliable, and quick method to screen their students or clients having some difficulties. This PCL is a tool to enhance and accelerate the procedure of analysis. PCL is not a test in a real sense, as it does not measure the scope or intensity of a student's problems in such a way as to yield a test score.

In future researches, however, these statements of PCL can be used in a scale format to measure the intensity of adolescents' problems. If parallel forms for school and university level students (rural and urban) would also be prepared and a nation-wide large sample is implied, we can develop norms of our students' problems. This normative study will provide a focus for psycho-educationists to target the problematic domains that need to be improved, and hence they can come up with some stress-management programs for adolescents.

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