

# Mental Health Literacy among Middle School Students in Private and Community Schools, Kathmandu, Nepal

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## Abstract

Mental health literacy (MHL) among adolescents is crucial for early recognition and intervention of mental health issues, yet research on MHL among Nepalese adolescents remains limited. This study aimed to assess mental health literacy and its relationship with demographic variables among school-going adolescents in Nepal. Methods: A cross-sectional survey using the Mental Health Literacy Questionnaire (MHLQ) was conducted among 454 students (56.82% male, 43.18% female) aged 12 – 16-year from seven schools in Kathmandu and Lalitpur districts, selected through purposive sampling. Data normality was assessed with the Shapiro-Wilk test. Descriptive and inferential statistics were applied, with effect sizes calculated using Hedges'  $g$ , partial eta squared and Cohen's  $d$ . Reliability was measured with McDonald's  $\omega$  and Guttman's  $\lambda_6$ . Spearman's  $\rho$  ( $\rho$ ) was used for correlation analysis. Results: The study revealed significantly higher levels of global mental health literacy and knowledge about mental health problems among females compared to males. Parental education significantly influenced MHL, with students whose parents held bachelor's or master's degrees demonstrating better literacy compared to those with primary-level educated parents. Females with higher parental education had greater mental health literacy, while among males, only those with bachelor's-educated parents showed higher literacy. While participants showed high awareness of common mental health conditions like depression (84.36%) and anxiety (52.86%), recognition of less common conditions was notably low. No significant differences were observed across ethnicity, permanent residence, or grade levels. Conclusion: The findings underscore the need

for targeted interventions to enhance mental health literacy, particularly among male students and those from families with lower educational backgrounds, while emphasizing comprehensive mental health education covering both common and less common mental health conditions.

### Keywords

Adolescents, Gender Differences, Mental Health Literacy, Nepal, Parental Education, School Type

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## 1. Introduction

Mental Health Literacy (MHL) refers to the knowledge and beliefs about mental health disorders that facilitate their recognition, management, and prevention (Jorm et al., 1997). Since its introduction, MHL has evolved into a multidimensional construct encompassing several essential components: the ability to recognize specific disorders, understanding the risk factors and causes, knowledge of self-treatment options, awareness of professional help available, and attitudes that encourage appropriate help-seeking (Jorm, 2000; O'Connor & Casey, 2015).

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