

NECESSITY OF MENTAL HEALTH INTERVENTION AMONG STUDENTS

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Abstract

Mental health encompasses emotional, social, and psychological well-being, influencing thoughts, actions, and interactions. Despite its importance, student mental health is often overlooked, particularly in India, where academic success is prioritized over emotional well-being. Globally, one in seven adolescents experiences a mental disorder, with anxiety, depression, and behavioral disorders being prevalent. The increasing academic pressure, societal expectations, and limited opportunities contribute to stress, anxiety, and depression among students. These challenges affect academic performance, relationships, and future prospects. Addressing student mental health is crucial to building a healthier society. This study examines common mental health issues, their impact, and strategies for fostering positive mental well-being among students.

Keywords: Mental health, disorders, depression, anxiety, positive, support, self-harm, suicide, epidemic, eating disorder, self-esteem, coping, India etc

Introduction

Mental health is crucial aspect of overall well-being and it is particularly important for students. Recently, there has been a growing concern over the rising incidence of mental health issues among students. These challenges, ranging from anxiety and depression to stress and burnout, are affecting students' well-being and academic performance worldwide. The pressure of academic life, social expectations, and the challenges of transitioning to adulthood can take a significant toll on mental health. Students who struggle with mental health issues may find it difficult to succeed academically and may struggle with relationships, making it essential to prioritise mental health in their lives. Mental health is a crucial aspect of overall well-being for students. Mental health refers to cognitive, behavioural, emotional well-being of an individual. This term is broadly used synonymously for any kind of mental disorder. Though early physical well-being was given more importance to the Mental health. Mental health can affect daily living relationships and overall life. Various socio – economic and physical factors, occupation, education, ethnicity, can affect an individual's mental health. For long psychotic care was either ignored or was a misnomer for being insane. With the ongoing Pandemic along with the other situations that surfaced the insurgency of mental health issues surfaced rampantly. The number of people seeking help for mental stress or mental ailments.

Mental Health

Mental health is a state of well-being that helps individuals cope with stress, realize their potential, work productively, and contribute to society. It is a fundamental human right and essential for personal and socio-economic development. Mental health is not just the absence of disorders but exists on a continuum, varying from person to person. Conditions include mental disorders, psychosocial disabilities, and states of distress that can impact functioning and well-being.

Mental Health and Students

Student mental health issues are on the rise, with conditions like depression, anxiety, and ADHD leading to severe consequences, including suicide if left untreated. Schools play a crucial role in early identification and intervention. Integrating mental health services in schools can support students effectively. Studies show worsening mental health among students, with over 60% of college students meeting criteria for a mental health issue in 2020–2021. In 2021, 22.8% of U.S. adults (57.8 million) experienced mental illness.

Importance of Student Mental Health

Mental health is vital for students, impacting their learning, relationships, and overall well-being. Poor mental health can lead to academic struggles, social difficulties, and long-term issues if left unaddressed.

Key Statistics:

- 1 in 4 college students experience poor mental health.
- 50% struggle with performance anxiety.
- 80% feel overwhelmed by student life.
- 40% do not seek help due to stigma or lack of awareness.

Why Mental Health Matters for Students:

- **Academic Success:** Good mental health improves focus, memory, and motivation.
- **Relationships:** Healthy mental well-being fosters positive social connections.
- **Reduced Risk of Disorders:** Early intervention helps prevent long-term issues.
- **Overall Well-Being:** Managing stress and emotions leads to a more fulfilling life.

Schools play a crucial role in supporting student mental health. Early detection of issues is key, as 50% of mental illnesses begin by age 14. Raising awareness, providing counseling, and fostering supportive environments can help students thrive. Prioritizing mental health ensures academic success, emotional resilience, and a brighter future.

BENEFITS OF GOOD MENTAL HEALTH IN STUDENTS INCLUDE:

- **Productivity**
 - Students will be more productive and motivated to pursue academic goals.
- **Coping ability**
 - Students can recognize everyday stress and handle it in healthy ways.
- **Higher self-esteem**
 - Students feel better about themselves and their abilities.
- **Positive contributions**
 - Students are engaged in learning and participate in the classroom.
- **Positive connections**
 - Students make and keep friendships; collaborate with peers; and form relationships with teachers, coaches, and administrators.
- **Improved physical health**
 - Students have healthy sleep, nutrition, exercise, and lifestyle habits.
- **Life satisfaction**
 - Students are proud of their accomplishments and motivated to pursue interests.

Causes of Worsened Mental Health in Students

1. **Academic Pressure:** High expectations, competition, and fear of failure lead to stress, anxiety, and burnout.
2. **Social media & Technology:** Excessive use fosters low self-esteem, social comparison, and sleep disruption.
3. **Financial Strain:** Tuition costs, student debt, and balancing work with studies increase stress and anxiety.
4. **Transition & Adjustment Issues:** Moving to new environments and adapting to academic and social changes can be overwhelming.
5. **Social Isolation & Loneliness:** Despite digital connectivity, many students struggle with loneliness, leading to depression and anxiety.
6. **Limited Mental Health Support:** Inadequate counseling services and long wait times prevent students from getting timely help.
7. **Family Issues:** Divorce, single-parent households, and lack of emotional support can contribute to mental distress.
8. **Unhealthy Lifestyles:** Poor diet, lack of exercise, and inadequate sleep worsen mental health.
9. **Cultural & Social Pressures:** Discrimination, stigma, and societal expectations can negatively impact students' well-being.
10. **Uncertain Future:** Career pressure and socio-economic instability create anxiety about the future.

Consequences of Poor Mental Health in Students

1. **Academic Decline:** Reduced concentration, energy, and motivation lead to lower grades and school dropouts.
2. **Impaired Relationships:** Struggles with social interactions affect friendships, family ties, and peer support.
3. **Substance Abuse & Risky Behavior:** Increased likelihood of drug use, unsafe sex, and reckless actions.
4. **Physical Health Issues:** Poor mental health can contribute to sleep disorders, eating disorders, and chronic illnesses.
5. **Self-Harm & Suicide:** Severe cases may lead to self-injury or suicidal thoughts.
6. **Career & Financial Impact:** Difficulty securing jobs and maintaining stability in adulthood.
7. **Community & Social Effects:** Mental health struggles impact family, faculty, and peers, creating a wider emotional burden.

Mental Health Disorders in Students

A mental health disorder is a diagnosable condition affecting a person's thoughts, emotions, and behavior, often leading to distress and disruption in life. If untreated, it can result in self-harm, substance abuse, and suicide. Schools play a crucial role in early detection, support, and education to ensure students' well-being.

Mental health is influenced by biology (genes, brain chemistry), environment (trauma, abuse), and lifestyle (nutrition, sleep, substance use). Common mental health disorders among

students include ADHD, anxiety, behavior problems, and depression. Warning signs include mood swings, inattention, impulsivity, social withdrawal, sleep and appetite changes, and physical symptoms like headaches and nausea.

Neglected Mental Health Issues in Indian Students

According to UNICEF, 1 in 7 students (18-24 years) in India face mental health issues, yet there is a severe shortage of mental health professionals. The academic pressure, societal expectations, bullying, parental stress, competition, substance abuse, and social isolation significantly impact students' mental health. Stigma and lack of awareness further prevent them from seeking help, worsening the crisis.

The National Mental Health Survey (2015-16) revealed that 7.3% of adolescents (13-17 years) suffer from mental disorders. Factors like early marriage, sexual abuse, digital challenges, and academic stress contribute to the issue. Untreated mental health problems affect students' academic performance, relationships, career prospects, and may lead to self-harm or substance abuse.

COVID-19's Impact on Student Mental Health

The pandemic disrupted education, increased digital dependence, and caused fear, isolation, and anxiety. Many students lacked access to online learning tools, while others struggled with household stress, economic uncertainty, and loss of social interactions. A 2022 study found 67% of students experienced loneliness, bullying, and behavioral issues, while 43% feared stigma if they spoke about mental health.

The Way Forward

India must prioritize mental health education, increase accessibility to professional support, and create stigma-free spaces for open conversations. Schools should integrate long-term mental health programs rather than short-lived initiatives. Addressing students' emotional well-being is crucial for their academic success and overall quality of life.

How to Overcome Mental Health Challenges as a Student **Prioritizing Mental Health**

Students can maintain good mental health by taking breaks, getting enough sleep, exercising regularly, practicing self-care, seeking help when needed, building connections, and managing stress. This improves academic performance, relationships, and overall well-being.

Role of Schools & Teachers

- Incorporate mental health education into the curriculum.
- Foster supportive environments where students feel safe to express themselves.
- Encourage communication and provide access to counselors.
- Promote class discussions on important issues like peer pressure and stress.

Role of Parents

- Observe signs of distress and encourage open conversations.
- Avoid excessive academic pressure and provide emotional support.
- Seek professional help if needed and create a positive home environment.

Solutions to Mental Health Issues

- Maintain a balanced lifestyle with proper nutrition, sleep, and exercise.
- Build strong social connections to prevent isolation.
- Learn stress management techniques like mindfulness and time management.
- Ensure access to mental health resources like counseling and support groups.

Role of Social Workers

Social workers assist students with mental health issues through counseling, intervention, and advocacy. They help address challenges like substance abuse, trauma, and behavioral disorders by providing necessary resources and emotional support.

Suggestions

- Mental health of students should be prioritized.
- Teachers, parents, and peers should provide support.
- Social workers should offer professional guidance.
- Erase the stigma surrounding mental health issues.
- Raise awareness about mental health.
- Avoid blaming individuals for their struggles.
- Mental health conditions are treatable.
- It's okay to not be okay—you are not alone.

Conclusion

Student mental health is crucial for personal and academic success. Rising concerns like stress, anxiety, and depression demand urgent attention. A supportive environment, reduced academic pressure, and mental health awareness can foster resilience and well-being. Everyone—parents, teachers, and society—must play a role in ensuring students receive the care they need. Let's create a future where students can thrive without fear.

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