

***C*CHAPTER**



School-Based Mental Health Promotion Program–A Case Study of India

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INTRODUCTION

The youth demographic is often regarded as the most dynamic and vibrant segment of society, with India boasting the world's largest population of young people. According to the Population Projections Report by the MOHWF, individuals aged 15-29 accounted for 27.2% of the population in 2021. Mental health issues affect approximately 15% of the global population, according to estimates from the World Health Organization (WHO), with India hosting one of the largest cohorts of individuals affected by such conditions. Symptoms of mental illness vary from mild psychological disturbances to severe disorders, including long-term depression and anxiety issues. The 2019 Global Burden of Disease study highlighted the prevalence of mental health disorders in India, indicating a lifetime prevalence of 1.4% for all mental health disorders and specific prevalence rates among young people aged 10-24, such as anxiety disorders (2%) and depressive disorders (13%). While depression alone had a prevalence rate of around 2% in 2019, the substantial impact of mental health challenges on the overall well-being of Indian youth is evident from these statistics. Given the intrinsic connection between education and health, schools play a crucial role in the social development and overall wellness of individuals. With mandatory school attendance ensuring consistent presence throughout much of the day, educational institutions become convenient platforms for providing readily accessible emotional support, improving psychological well-being, and facilitating early detection, prevention, and intervention of mental health disorders [3].

In recent years, there has been a notable increase in global awareness regarding the critical necessity of addressing psychological issues among adolescents. The WHO defines

"adolescents" as individuals aged 10-19 years, "youth" as those aged 15-24 years, and "young people" encompassing the age range of 10-24 years. The adolescent stage is pivotal for laying the foundation for healthy development and positive growth. Poor mental health during this period can have long-term consequences, impacting various aspects of an individual's life well into adulthood. It is linked to societal and behavioral challenges such as school dropout rates, delinquency, substance abuse, and a higher likelihood of experiencing socioeconomic disadvantages later in life. Programs aimed at promoting positive psychological behaviors among young people play a crucial role in equipping them with the necessary skills, guidance, and resources to fulfill their potential and overcome obstacles. Given that young people are particularly susceptible to mental health issues, the learning environment, particularly schools, plays a significant role in their well-being. Schools serve as hubs for learning and growth, offering structure, support, and opportunities for intervention to foster positive mental health, prevent mental illnesses, and address students' mental health needs [1,2].

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To assess if the policies are fostering students' positive psychology, encompassing psychological well-being and school engagement, it is imperative to evaluate their breadth, substance, and associated research.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the policies and programs implemented in Indian schools to enhance mental well-being among students?

2. How successful are these efforts in fostering psychological wellness among the youth population?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted using a descriptive study design with a narrative review approach to thoroughly examine the concerns surrounding mental health policies and practices in India and their impact on the emotional well-being of adolescents. The primary objective was to identify relevant studies addressing mental health policies through an extensive online search conducted across various academic databases, including Pubmed, ResearchGate, and Google Scholar. We employed a range of search terms to identify peer-reviewed articles, books, reports, and policy documents related to mental health among adolescents, focusing on concepts such as mental illness, psychological disorders, depression, anxiety, and behavioral problems, as well as interventions and programs implemented in schools, colleges, and communities. Cross-referencing was utilized to review additional related articles, ensuring a comprehensive examination of the topic. The search criteria were refined to include only human research conducted within India, providing a focused perspective on the country's mental health landscape. Table 3.1 presents the specific terminologies used in our search for relevant articles, facilitating a systematic approach to data collection and analysis.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The narrative review highlighted the existence of 10 school-based interventions in India, with 7 being implemented by government agencies/ministries, 2 initiated by private organizations, and 1 by a non-governmental organization. These initiatives primarily aimed to enhance the mental well-being of

young individuals within school settings. The study indicated that most policies and programs focused on imparting life skills, counseling, and coping mechanisms to enhance the behavioral and social competencies of young people, enabling them to effectively navigate real-world challenges encountered in school. The study also noted that several initiatives implemented at the national level were overseen by different ministries, including the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW), the Ministry of Education (MOE), and the Ministry of Human Resources Development (MHRD). These ministries played crucial roles in formulating and executing programs at the national level aimed at promoting the psychological well-being of school-age youth. Conversely, interventions at the state level were managed by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which collaborated with local government bodies and educational institutions to implement and supervise state-specific mental health promotion initiatives.

CONCLUSION

The evaluated initiatives have provided significant advantages for young individuals, including improvements in communication skills, leadership abilities, self-confidence, and self-esteem. These programs have also addressed mental well-being concerns, leading to positive outcomes in various areas such as reducing violent behavior, promoting reproductive health, fostering healthy habits, and preventing non-communicable diseases. As a result, there has been a notable enhancement in students' overall development through effective solution-oriented approaches that focus on improving interpersonal relationships, providing self-awareness skill training, and enhancing decision-making abilities. Despite challenges such as limited resources and insufficient teacher

allocation, higher levels of awareness regarding mental wellness have led to an increased demand for support services. However, inadequate investments remain a significant obstacle that needs to be addressed to sustain or improve these programs. Implementing more comprehensive training programs and establishing growth-oriented monitoring and evaluation systems would further enhance the outcomes of these initiatives.

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