



## THE MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS IN SCHOOLS: ADDRESSING THE INCREASING STRESS, ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION AMONG STUDENTS

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### ABSTRACT

*The level of anxiety, stress, and depression is increasing in the students in the present day scenario. There are several reasons for this, which cause disturbance in the mental health of the students. Mental Health of the students depends upon the atmosphere of schools, the pressure of work, academic performance, learning disorders, etc. The number of students suffering from mental health nowadays is more than the number of students in the past so, certain measures help to combat the problems and give some relief from stress, anxiety, and depression. This article explains the core issues that cause mental health crisis, what are the measures to be taken to combat this problem and what are the strategies to be included in the curriculum of the school. The crucial aspect is the behavior of the parents towards their children for example how they react to their children's academic performance and how they are dealing with the children's mental health etc. The pivotal role of balancing the children's health depends on the parents and the schools. Hence this article aims at prioritizing mental health as a primary aspect of education and empowering the students to grow without any mental health problems and enjoy their childhood with peace.*

**Keywords:** Mental Health Crisis, Stress, Anxiety, Depression, Education.

### INTRODUCTION

"Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community"<sup>1</sup>. The mental health of students has become a very critical issue in schools in India and even worldwide as there is an increase in stress, anxiety, and depression due to several reasons. The

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<sup>1</sup> WHO <<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response#:~:text=Mental%20health%20is%20a%20state, and%20contribute%20to%20their%20community>>.

present education system in schools mainly focuses on students' grades rather than their mental health and well-being. The competition among the schools is one of the main reasons why the schools are forcing the students only to get good grades but they are not focusing on whether the students are understanding the concept or not. The attitude of the parents towards their children about their academic performance also plays a crucial role in determining the mental health of the students. Due to this pressure from schools and parents, the students suffer from stress, and in some cases, the students are committing suicide. If proper care is not taken on this issue then students cannot focus on their studies. And if this problem continues then it leads to long-term consequences such as less life satisfaction and limited career opportunities. There is a high risk of chronic mental health conditions. Hence there is a need for legislation where it provides strict guidelines for schools on how to prepare a curriculum that focuses on both the studies and the well-being of the students including various co-curricular activities.

Thus this paper includes the reasons for the mental health of the students and the measures to be taken to control this problem. Addressing this crisis is not just a moral aspect it is essential for nurturing a generation of resilient, capable, and fulfilled individuals who can contribute positively to society.

### **CAUSES OF MENTAL HEALTH**

1. **Academic Pressure:** Due to Academic Pressure many students feel mental illness. Pressure to get more marks than their classmates and ensure a bright future puts significant pressure on students. This pressure causes stress, anxiety, and depression which keep them under heavy pressure.
2. **Impact of Technology and Social Media:** Excessive use of social media where students focus on changes from studies to social media and feel stressed about covering the total syllabus during exam times. Technology can lead to cyberbullying, unhealthy comparisons, and reduced self-esteem.
3. **Overcoming mental Stigma:** Fear of judgment and lack of communication skills discourage students from seeking help from others so they cannot take help from their friends if they have any doubts regarding their academics which finally leads to academic pressure and causes stress, anxiety and depression.

4. Substance Abuse: Taking drugs or alcohol, sometimes influenced by peer pressure or as a coping mechanism, can worsen mental health issues. This is one of the dangerous habits that not only leads to stress, anxiety, and depression but also causes many health hazards.

5. Insufficient Access to Mental Health Support: Lack of access to counseling services, mental health education, or support networks within schools exacerbates issues.

6. Traumatic experiences: Some students may experience traumatic situations in their lifetime, which always disturb their mental stability.

7. Cultural and Societal Pressures: Expectations around success, identity, or cultural norms can heighten stress for some students.

8. Family issues: Domestic issues such as conflicts between, financial instability, and lack of emotional support from parents contribute to mental health struggles.

The above-mentioned are some of the important causes that lead to mental health instability among students.

Some methods help students to cope the mental health instability.

### **METHODS TO COPE WITH MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS IN STUDENTS**

1. Talking with close people: When students are feeling stress, anxiety, and depression then they can talk with their close people like family members and friends. When they speak with close people then they can share their feelings with them so that they can feel relief from that mental pressure.

2. Support from the Parents: Parents should support their children when they score lower marks rather than forcing them to study hard. They should create a peaceful atmosphere in a home where the children can share everything with their parents.

3. Practicing Yoga: Yoga reduces stress by calming the nervous system, promoting mindfulness, improving sleep, releasing tension, and enhancing emotional resilience through gentle poses, controlled breathing, and relaxation techniques like meditation.

4. The attitude of teachers towards children: Teachers should motivate students when they score low marks and help them work on their weaknesses. They should not pressure the students to get more work to their advantage.

5. Counseling and Mentoring: Providing counseling to students who are suffering from anxiety and depression and taking measures to get through it.

6. Co-Curricular Activities: Participating in Co-curricular activities reduces stress and they can deviate their mind from this mental pressure.

These are some of the methods to cope with Stress, Anxiety, and depression. These methods help the students to combat the causes of mental health so that they can lead a happy life.

## CASE STUDIES

### ❖ Finland Holistic Approach

“The Finnish education system's success in supporting students' mental health is indeed commendable. Finland's approach to education prioritizes well-being alongside academic achievement, and this holistic approach has yielded positive results. By fostering a balanced environment that takes into account the mental and emotional needs of students, Finland has set an example for other nations to follow. Creating a supportive school environment is crucial, as it allows students to feel safe, valued, and empowered to seek help when needed. Moreover, offering access to necessary support services ensures that students receive the assistance they require to maintain good mental health. Finland's model can serve as a valuable lesson for other countries, emphasizing the importance of placing the well-being of students at the forefront of their education systems. After all, a healthy mind is the cornerstone of a successful future”<sup>2</sup>.

### ❖ Canada's School-Based Mental Health Programs

Canada has many school based mental health programs some of them are:

#### 1. *Mental Health in Schools (MHIS) Strategy*

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<sup>2</sup> Finland education hub.com (8 September 2023) <<https://finlandeducationhub.com/supporting-students-mental-health-in-finnish-schools/>>

A strategy from the Ministry of Education in British Columbia that focuses on compassionate leadership, capacity building, and mental health in the classroom.

*2. School-Based Mental Health and Substance Abuse (SBMHSA) Consortium*

A consortium of researchers, practitioners, and mobilizes who work on school mental health in Canada

*3. School-Based Mental Health Programs at the Roberts Smart Centre*

A program in Ottawa that provides in-school mental health services for high school students with emotional and behavioral difficulties

*4. Mental Health in Schools Pilot in Alberta*

A pilot program that provides support and services like counseling, social and emotional learning, and family- and parent-oriented supports

*5. School Mental Health ASSIST (SMH ASSIST)*

A program in Ontario that provides school mental health leadership, resources, and coaching support

*6. AstraZeneca Young Health Program (YHP)*

A program that works with Canadian charitable organizations to improve the mental and emotional well-being of youth ages 10-19

School-based mental health programs can help students build the skills they need to succeed at school and feel supported. They can also help create a safe and welcoming learning environment.

**❖ New Zealand's Wellbeing Curriculum**

"This Strategy identifies six high-level and interconnected outcomes: children and young people are loved, safe, and nurtured; children and young people have what they need; children and young people are happy and healthy; children and young people are learning and developing; children and young people are accepted, respected and connected; children and young people are involved and empowered. The government is required by law to set out

measures for these outcomes. A linked monitoring system of 36 indicators, the Child and Youth Wellbeing Indicators, was subsequently developed. These indicators are featured in the annual progress report for the integrated plan.

The government is also required to report annually to the parliament on its progress in achieving the Strategy's outcomes. It is also required to review the Strategy every three years. Any change to the Strategy is examined by national law, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

Finally, New Zealand's well-being budgeting efforts have included a child well-being priority area linked to the Strategy. To date, New Zealand has found that including a child well-being priority area in the budget process makes it easier for officials to consider the integrated plan for child well-being in policy development. Assessing budget bids against this child's well-being priority has evidenced that government policy and investment decisions are primarily 'aligned' with the integrated plans, and thus the government's priority goals for child well-being"<sup>3</sup>.

## SUGGESTIONS

Addressing the mental health disaster among students calls for a complete method that involves faculties, parents, and communities. Schools ought to weave mental health education into the curriculum, teaching students how to manage their emotions and increase coping talents. They need to additionally establish on-web page counseling offerings and peer assist packages to provide instantaneous assistance. Incorporating mindfulness practices like yoga and meditation can assist in alleviating stress and tension, even as enforcing strict anti-bullying rules fosters secure and inclusive surroundings. Educators have an important position to play and must learn to become aware of early signs of mental fitness troubles, use de-escalation strategies, and encourage superb reinforcement to construct student self-belief and resilience. Parental involvement is similarly crucial; workshops can assist dad and mom learn how to assist their kid's mental fitness, preserve lines of communication open, and version powerful stress-management techniques. On a policy stage, colleges ought to put money into complete intellectual fitness applications, collaborate with local health organizations, and adopt bendy curricula to ease educational pressure. Additionally, imparting entry to crisis hotlines and

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<sup>3</sup> OECD (20 November 2023) <[https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/well-being-knowledge-exchange-platform-kep\\_93d45d63-en/new-zealand-s-child-and-youth-wellbeing-strategy\\_536ab28d-en.html](https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/well-being-knowledge-exchange-platform-kep_93d45d63-en/new-zealand-s-child-and-youth-wellbeing-strategy_536ab28d-en.html)>

virtual counseling ensures well-timed aid. Community engagement via recognition campaigns, partnerships with health facilities, and after-college leisure applications can further assist lessen stigma and sell emotional well-being. These mixed efforts can create nurturing surroundings where students can thrive emotionally and academically.

## **CONCLUSION**

The mental health crisis in schools is an urgent problem that demands on-the-spot and sustained attention. The growing costs of strain, tension, and despair among students are not simply challenges for individuals but broader societal challenges. Schools, as foundational spaces for growth and development, need to take proactive steps to deal with those demanding situations by fostering an environment that prioritizes emotional well-being alongside educational achievement. This includes integrating mental fitness training, ensuring entry to expert aid, and building a lifestyle of openness and resilience. Collaboration among educators, policymakers, and communities is essential to create a strong support system that empowers students to navigate their challenges efficaciously. By reducing stigma, selling recognition, and enforcing comprehensive mental fitness programs, we can help college students expand their abilities to thrive. Addressing this disaster is not simply funding within the destiny of education but in the well-being of a generation. With collective effort and a commitment to change, colleges can turn out to be now not most effective centers of getting to know but additionally sanctuaries of emotional fitness and growth, ensuring each student can reach their complete capability.

Finally, Students are not tools or machines to be forced or burdened with more work than they can handle. They deserve to live happily and enjoy their childhood in peace.