

GOOD MENTAL HEALTH IN SCHOOL STUDENTS: A KEY TO SOUND SUCCESSFUL ADJUSTMENT

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Received: December 05, 2018

Accepted: January 15, 2019

ABSTRACT: *The 21st century is marked as the peak of invention and scientific development for mankind and their well being. But the million dollar question is, how much are we well with this arena of development? In search of more happiness people of this world has actually moved away from real happiness, i.e. towards the materialistic perspective, even at the cost of their mental health. With this backdrop, the school students are also not an exception to this sorrowful situation. School life is the period of joy and happiness. However, the actual scenario is quite different because school student hood is under crisis due to unhealthy competition and commercialization of attitude. The ultimate aim of education has become not just to be a good human being but to be a good earner. In such a situation, human value is measured commercially rather than ethically and morally. Commercial attitude towards life is gaining momentum which is resulting in various undesirable and shocking incidents of committing crimes by the school going students. Frequent incidents such as murders, kidnapping, robbery, addicted to substance use, etc., have been surfaced. Studies of such dreadful incidents reveal that the students associated with such crimes are mentally unstable and unhealthy. The main reason of their unstable mind is excessive pressure on them of various kinds especially to adjust with the transitional phase of the society and to be successful in their life. The Indian Philosophy of Education suggests us that without value, ethics and morality in life, mental peace and happiness is hard to achieve. In the light of this circumstance, the school students' mental health is an important issue of concern. This discourse is a little attempt to discuss about mental health of school going students and suggest various measures to be a mentally healthy person of the society even in their newly confronted hardships.*

Key Words: *Mental Health, School Students, Adjustment.*

INTRODUCTION:

Rishi Aurobindo viewed that *"When mind is still, then truth gets her chance to be heard in the purity of the silence".*

It is a proven fact that a person can perform better if he has healthy body and mind. There should be proper synthesis between physical and mental health. So, the prime aim of education is the all-round development of the learner such as physical, mental and emotional, moral and social aspects. Along with the all-round development, it is necessary to equip the learner with knowledge and understanding to adjust with the new situation to overcome the hardships and difficulties of life. In this context, the term 'Mental Health' and 'Adjustment' both are of special concern not just in the contemporary time but it has been even from the time of the existence of human beings on this earth. Reference could be found in the ancient Indian scriptures like in the Atharva Veda. Though in the West, the concepts are of recent origin with biologist like Darwin and others. A number of researches have been made in this direction with regard to the crucial role played by mental health in the development of personality. Both the terms are interrelated, if one is the cause the other is the effect.

Not only in the Western countries, even in India the mental health of school going children is the matter of serious concern of parents, teachers as well as of the educational policy makers. Because series of incidents are evident of various unexpected behaviour such as conspiracy against parents, teachers and classmates to grab their attention towards themselves and unexpected incidents such as black mailing to fulfil their illogical demands, addiction to adult films, addiction to substances use, more addiction to social medias, involvement in criminal and anti-social activities, disrespect to the elders, ignoring advice of their parents, teachers and elders. So, proper tune of physique and mind of school goer is very much essential to reduce as well as to uproot the above discussed problems in future.

Therefore, along with the academic activities, variety of other activities should be introduced to nurture the mental health of the school children. In this discourse, the present scenario of the mental health at school level, the concept of adjustment and the various causes of maladjustment and probable recommendation for keeping healthy mind of the school going children will be discussed.

FOCUS OF THE DISCOURSE:

The present study considers the following objectives:

- To highlight the present scenario of mental health of schools' students.
- To understand the concept of adjustment and to find out the different defence/adjustment mechanisms that helps in the adjustment of a person.
- To identify a mentally healthy person by his exhibited characteristics.
- To look into the factors that helps in the promotion of mental health of the school going students.

METHODOLOGY:

The present academic discourse is descriptive in nature, where the information are primarily sourced from various websites, reference books and articles published in the academic journals in India as well as abroad.

FOCUS AREA I**PRESENT SCENARIO OF MENTAL HEALTH OF SCHOOLS' STUDENTS:**

Twenty first century is considered as the era of the revolution of science, information and communication technology. This revolution has great influence on the social, economic, emotional as well as mental health of the individuals mostly the youth. Youngsters today are more driven by perfectionism than previous generations, and this may be taking a toll on their mental health, a study suggests. This study has been conducted by researcher Thomas Curran of the UK's University of Bath, reveals that the rise in perfectionism among millennials is driven by a number of factors, according to Curran. For example, raw data suggests that social media create indirect pressure on young adults to perfect themselves in comparison to others, which makes them dissatisfied with their bodies, among other things, and increases social isolation, pressure to get good education and setting lofty career goals and other areas in which today's young people exhibit perfectionism. The increase in perfectionism may in part be affecting the psychological health of students, said Andrew Hill of York St John University, UK, citing the higher levels of depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts reported now than a decade ago¹.

It has been observed that within a year the suicide cases among the school children have more or less doubled the data recorded earlier. Most of the causes of suicide as revealed that the students were often pressurised and rebuked to study beyond their capacity by their parents, that led them to mental distress and ultimately they committed suicide. Besides these, the rat race for doing best in studies is the most important cause of such incidents. Recently Kolkata and various areas of West Bengal has become the place of youth suicide zone according to the report of Home Ministry of India. As stated below –

State	2014	2015	2016
Maharasta	1191	1230	1350
West Bengal	709	676	1147
Tamilnadu	853	955	981
Madhya Pradesh	645	625	838
Chattisgarh	416	730	633

Source: ²

According to Prasanta Roy, a Sociologist of Kolkata, the mental distress due to failures and high expectation of family for more success in studies is a very reasonable cause for the increase rate of committing suicide.

Another most pathetic side effect of mental disorders is disability in young people according to the report of World Health Organization. In recent years, there have been several population studies giving fairly reasonable estimates on the prevalence of child and adolescent mental disorders (CAMD) in low and middle income countries. Reported rates are 17.7% in 1-15 yrs old in Ethiopia; 15% among 5-10 yrs olds of Bangladesh; 12.7% in 7-14 yrs olds urban Brazilian school sample and 7% in 7-14 yrs rural Brazilian school and 6.9% in 4-17 yrs. Puerto Rican community based sample. Studies from India have revealed the prevalence rates to be 12.5% in 0-16 yrs community based sample from Bangalore; 9.4% in 8-12 yrs olds from a community sample in Kerala and 6.3% in 4-11 yrs old school children in Chandigarh. Overall rates of CAMD in India and other middle and low income countries range between 6%-15% which are on the lower side as compared to reported rates from certain western countries such as Canada 18.1%, Germany 20.7%,

¹ Times of India, Dated – 06/01/2018

² Home Ministry of India, 2017

Switzerland 22.5%, and USA 21%. It is also known that many more children have problems that can be considered “sub threshold” since these may not meet the diagnostic criteria.³

From the above picture, the severity of the problem is quite clear. It should be the major concern for all, if left untreated, mental disorders can hinder all aspect of health, including emotional well-being and social development, leaving young people feeling socially isolated, stigmatized, and unable to optimize their social, vocational and interpersonal contributions to society. Early addressing of mental health hazards may lead to decrease the problems of emotional misbalanced, adjustment problems, problems in learning as well as academic performance.

FOCUS AREA II

UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF ADJUSTMENT:

Human life is full of hardships and struggles; an individual always fights for his her existence. Life is thus a struggle for survival. Each one of us is always busy in the satisfying our needs. While struggling to achieve something if one finds that the result is not satisfactory, one either changes one’s goal or the procedure. For example, if one aspires to join medical course but does not get chance due to low percentage, one may perhaps opt for dentist. By adopting such means, one protects one’s ego, failure or frustration. It is a sort of shifting to a more defensive position in order to face the challenges of circumstances after failing in earlier attempts. This special feature of the linking beings is termed as adjustment.

Life is a continuous process of adjustment. Each day countless adjustments are carried out more or less automatically, with no particular thought even without awareness. Quickly opening the umbrella on sudden rain may be the example of this situation. A person may be well adjusted or poorly adjusted in his life.

However, according to the Wikipedia adjustment can be defined in psychology as “The behavioural process of balancing conflicting needs, or needs against obstacles in the environment”.

According to **Warren (1934)**, “Adjustment refers to any operational where an organism or organ becomes more favourably related to the environment or to the entire situation, environmental and internal.

According to **L.S. Shaffer (1961)**, “Adjustment is the process by which living organism maintains a balance between its need and the circumstances that influence the satisfaction of these needs”

Adjustment cannot be gained just by fulfilling one’s own needs and by ignoring norms, ethics, and tradition of one’s society. Adjustment depends upon mental health of a person; many times direct adjustment may not take place. It means, we cannot achieve all our aspirations, ambitions and desires in our life. All the needs of a person cannot be met because needs are not constant, resulting frustrations. These emotional problems are managed with some adjustment mechanism. Therefore, when a person is not successful in achieving any direct adjustment with the situation, remedy is gained by defensive or escape actions that certainly do satisfy the drive or motive. These mental constructions are called adjustment/ mental / defence mechanisms.

DIFFERENT DEFENCE/ADJUSTMENT MECHANISMS THAT HELPS IN THE ADJUSTMENT OF A PERSON:

Defence mechanism may be defined as “The unconscious strategy adopted by an individual to protect from ego, to minimize conflict, and to maintain repression.”

Davison and Neale, (1990) define it as --- “In psychoanalytic theory, a reality-distorting strategy unconsciously adopted to protect the ego from anxiety”.

Morgan et al (2005): “Unconscious strategies used to avoid anxiety, resolve conflict, and enhance self esteem.”

Some Basic Defence Mechanisms:

Defence mechanisms help in the adjustment process. Following are some of the important defence mechanisms.

Simple Denial:

The easiest way to maintain the balance of personality is to deny the fact which could create conflict in the mind.

Aggression:

Aggression is used as an attempt to hurt or destroy the source of frustration. It may be classified into two broad categories

³ Malhotra,S. and Patra,B.N.(2014). *Prevalence of child and adolescent psychiatric disorders in India: a systematic review and meta-analysis*. *Child Adolesc Psychiatry Ment Health*; 8: 22. Jul 21. doi: 10.1186/1753-2000-8-22 PMID: PMC4113132

- (i) **Extra-punitive:** In such case he may attack the person physically or verbally.
- (ii) **Intro-punitive:** The person feels that he himself is the source of frustration and criticizes himself.

Compensation:

An individual tries to balance or cover up his deficiencies in one activity by exhibiting his strength in another activity or area.

Sublimation:

It helps in the repressed and undesirable wishes, input, drives, emotions, or actions in some socially acceptable form and thus saving the individual from the mental agony and other troublesome consequences. It is supposed to be the best defence mechanism. It plays major role in moulding personality and in the development of specific character traits.

Rationalization:

In this a person tries to justify his act by giving socially acceptable reasons for it and thus attempts to deceive others and himself by giving good reasons to justify his conduct. For example, a student scoring low marks blames teachers or school.

Fantasy:

It is a kind of withdrawal of one's self in a private and satisfying world of imagination.

Selective Forgetting:

To escape from difficulties or painful situation, a person tends to forget such situations. Suppression and repression are two attributes of selective forgetting.

- (i) **Suppression:** A person consciously decides and derives out the painful experiences from his memory.
- (ii) **Repression:** In repression, painful experiences, distressing events, conflicts unfulfilled desires are pushed from the conscious mind to the unconscious mind.

FOCUS AREA III**IDENTIFICATION OF A MENTALLY HEALTHY PERSON BY HIS EXHIBITED CHARACTERISTICS:**

A mentally healthy person professionally healthy too is responsible, dependable, and self-reliant and has a true sense of individuality. He or she has a realistic life goal as well as philosophy of life and values. He or she can differentiate the right and wrong. Such person possesses usually a good physical health and has insight into his /her actions.

According to Professor **P.B. Lewkan**, "Mentally healthy person is one who is happy, lives peacefully with her/his neighbours, makes his children healthy citizens and after fulfilling such basic responsibilities is still empowered with sufficient strength to save the cause of society in any way"

A mentally healthy person can be easily distinguished from others by his mode of living, behaviour and personality

The following are some of the recommendations advocated by various educationists:

1. The individual is adaptable to the changing conditions of his environment has the ability to adjustment by changing what can be changed and accepting what cannot be changed. In this purview the cognitive psychologist **Jean Piaget** (1952) viewed intellectual growth as a process of adaptation (adjustment) through equilibrium, assimilation and accommodation.
2. He knows himself well and is in a position to evaluate his strength and weakness. Therefore, chooses tasks of intermediate difficulty. In this aspect, **Swami Vivekananda** viewed that "Never say no, never say, I cannot, for you are infinite. All power is within you. You can do anything".
3. He is emotionally mature and stable as he is able to express his emotions in a desirable way and exercise proper control over them. **Daniel Goleman** expressed the importance of emotional intelligence through his competence model is a key factors to be a successful leader in the field of business and others field.
4. His intellectual powers are adequately developed. He is able to think independently and take proper decision at proper time.
5. He always lives in the world of reality rather than that of imagination and fantasy.
6. He does not indulge in antisocial activities. His goal of life is in accordance with social norms. He fulfils his objectives in harmony with other people of the society.
7. He possesses enough courage and power of tolerance for facing failures in his life. He never repents and worries over his failures and mistakes.

8. He is free from undesirable mental disturbances, disorders, conflicts, anxieties, frustrations, ailments and diseases.
9. He has enthusiasm in life. He works with curiosity and is devoted to his profession. He is reasonable in his action. He accepts criticism of others.
10. He has insight into his own conduct. He self-evaluates his behaviour then he improves upon his behaviour on the basis of his self examination.

FOCUS AREA IV

FACTORS THAT HELPS IN THE PROMOTION OF MENTAL HEALTH OF THE SCHOOL GOING STUDENTS:

Development of good mental health is to be cared for from the early childhood like the development of physical health. If this foundation remains weak, then one has to pay a heavy price at the later stage.

- 1) A sound body is said to possess a sound mind. The school students should be helped in maintaining good health. In this aspect, **Lord Buddha says**, *"To keep the body in good health is a duty ... Otherwise we shall not be able to keep our mind strong and clear"*.
- 2) They should learn to exercise control over their emotions and to express them in a socially desirable way. In recent times Emotional Intelligence has become the major concern of academicians and in the others field for its importance as a psychological attribute in the field of academic excellence and performance efficiency. The term was jointly coined by **Salovey and Mayer in 1990** followed by the works of **Wechsler's non-cognitive aspect of intelligence and intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence** by **Howard Gardner**.
- 3) In a planned way the teacher may introduce various defence mechanisms to their students to overcome the academic hardship in the classroom situation such mechanisms will also help them later in their later life to be more adjustable with others.
- 4) The attitude and behaviour of the teacher, parents and others should be gentle and sympathetic rather than harsh and more careers oriented.
- 5) The school building and learning environment should be favourable for the learner.
- 6) Students should be helped to set a proper level of aspiration and they should be helped to set realistic goals in life.
- 7) In the cases of failure, teachers will tell the stories of the famous persons those who got the success after repeated failure like **Abraham Lincoln, Helen Keller**, and King **Robert Brown** etc. to increase the tolerance levels of the unsuccessful students.
- 8) Unduly emphasis on complete perfection should be avoided.
- 9) The counselling programme should be organized by the expert counsellor along with the academic activities for helping children in their personal, social, emotional, intellectual, moral and academic adjustment.
- 10) Students should be engaged with various social welfare and community development programme which will help them to understand their contribution for their own community rather than mentally unhealthy and non-cooperative member of a society.

SUMMARY:

Sociologist Emile Durkheim opined that human aspiration level is unlimited. However, to fulfil this aspiration human being has degenerated as well as destroyed the natural way of life. Even a child cannot think about fulfilling his own dreams due to the high aspiration of their parents. When, it is observed, the incidents of the Ryan International and the incidents of Brightland school Lucknow; class I boy is stabbed by senior student in his school toilet to get the school closed a little early⁴, all these incidents question us about the mental stability of the children. The well-known philosopher Rousseau believed that "Everything is good as it comes from the hands of the author of nature, but everything degenerates in the hands of man". In this context he is very much relevant because to some extent the modern education system is ineffective to make a man all-round developed, desirable and competent to the society with stable mind. Children are in more pressure to fulfil their parental dream which leads their mental health under crisis. The present children's dreams are at stake. Therefore, they are always in some sort of rat race and it makes them machines and mentally unhealthy person too. Teacher, parents and others stakeholders should be thoughtful about this critical situation and take necessary initiatives as recommended in the earlier section of the discourse for the betterment of their children so that they can lead their life with healthy body and mind to the fullest.

⁴ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com>

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