

Teachers' Views on Functioning as Valuable Agents to Enhance Mental Health among Adolescents in Schools

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ABSTRACT

Teenagers are more prone to develop mental health problems. The existing mental health services and professionals cannot meet the evolving mental health needs of adolescents. Since teachers interact with students, they have enough opportunities to augment their mental health. The researcher used a qualitative research design to gather inputs from twenty-four teachers teaching students of the 10th, 11th, and 12th grades in private schools and pre-university colleges across Bangalore using case vignettes and interview schedules. Overall, the teachers had a moderate understanding of common mental health problems among students but had doubts about the disorders' scientific terms. Two broader global themes emerged, "Teachers' inputs on observed patterns of problems among adolescents and influential factors on adolescent mental health" and "Aspects related to teachers' part in enhancing mental health among adolescents". Though teachers have a reasonable awareness of common mental health problems, they need training on mental health problems to prevent them from labeling students and offer more efficient support. They can find issues among students by monitoring their behavioral patterns and knowing their requirements. Teachers recognized the need to build awareness of mental health concerns among adolescents using participative methods such as role-plays, movies, drama, and powerpoint presentations.

Keywords: *Adolescents, Teachers, Enhance, Mental Health*

Adolescence is a crucial developmental phase accompanied by substantial physical, emotional, behavioral, and social changes. About a fifth of the total adolescent population worldwide is from India, making it the country with many teenagers (Patel et al. 2012, as cited in Roy et al., 2019). The majority of the mental health problems emerge from the age of 14 and three-quarters by mid-20s (Kessler, Amminger, Aguilar-Gaxiola, Alonso, Lee, Ustün, et al., 2007). These mental health problems continue into adulthood, affecting the overall functioning and productivity of adolescents. An unstable mental health system, shortage of competent mental health professionals, widespread stigma, and lack of adequate resources offer additional challenges. Thus, paying sufficient attention to the mental well-being of adolescents is essential. Though long-term changes in the system and policies can help overcome these challenges, involving teachers and schools to help adolescents with mental health problems would be a more economical alternative.

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Previous research studies highlight on role of teachers in improving teenagers' mental health and endorse the interrelationship between teaching and the well-being of adolescents. However, they are reluctant to focus on teenagers' emotional well-being as they feel it might interfere with their academic responsibilities, affect their emotional well-being, and lack knowledge (Kidger, Gunnell, Biddle, Campbell, & Donovan, 2009). Contrary to the previous study, teachers and head teachers approved their role in improving students' mental health and considered it an essential duty, apart from stimulating their learning (Mælan, Tjomsland, Baklien, Samdal & Thurston, 2018).

Nevertheless, Reinke, Stormont, Herman, Puri, and Goel (2011) revealed that teachers shared that school psychologists should deliver mental health services, including conducting screening, behavioral assessments, monitoring student progress, and referring children to seek professional services. They reported that they could implement classroom-based behavioral interventions but cannot help in mental health promotion and prevention as they have insufficient skills to manage complex mental health difficulties. Reilly, Adams, Whiteman, Hughes, and Dogra (2018) suggested that teachers can support and handle adolescents' psychological well-being when provided with the resources and training to manage teenagers and ensure their mental well-being is not compromised. On similar lines in a study by Shelemy, Harvey, and Waite (2019), teachers expressed the need for training to identify students experiencing problems. Though they could recognize clear physical signs like self-harm scars, many wanted guidance and training to identify students' delicate signs. Further, training should include relevant case studies, informational materials, and approaches used within the school environment with some alterations.

METHODOLOGY

The study's purpose was to comprehend teachers' ideas on how they can assist in early detection, prevention, and awareness building on adolescents' mental health problems. For this, the researcher used a qualitative research design and a constructive paradigm to understand and make sense of realities on adolescents' mental health by interacting with teachers. The teachers' current knowledge of mental health problems among adolescents was assessed using case vignettes on ten common mental health problems. The investigator acquired the perceptions of teachers during individual interviews using a semi-structured interview schedule. A panel of experts reviewed the checklist and interview schedule. Based on experts' ratings of the case vignettes and interview schedule, the researcher made appropriate alterations in wording, clarity, and length.

Sample

A purposive sampling technique was utilized to collect data from twenty-four teachers (8 males and 16 females) imparting education to students of grades 10th, 11th, and 12th of both genders and between ages of 15-17 years in private schools and pre-university colleges across Bangalore.

Data collection and analysis

The researcher gave the teachers a clear description of the objectives and sought their informed consent before administering the checklist and audiotaping personalized semi-structured interviews. The researcher debriefed teachers about the purpose of the study after the interview session. The researcher transcribed the interview conversations, identified patterns, developed initial codes, and generated themes. The participants' views and the researchers' rational thinking were used to interpret the deeper meanings of the data.

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Credibility and Trustworthiness

In this study, the researcher used bracketing by documenting the preconceived notions and predictable responses the teachers would give to the interview questions. As a part of the external audit process, an expert with proficiency in the qualitative research reviewed the interview schedule, transcripts, coded data, and thematic maps. Modifications were made as per the suggestions. Henceforth, the researcher established credibility and trustworthiness.

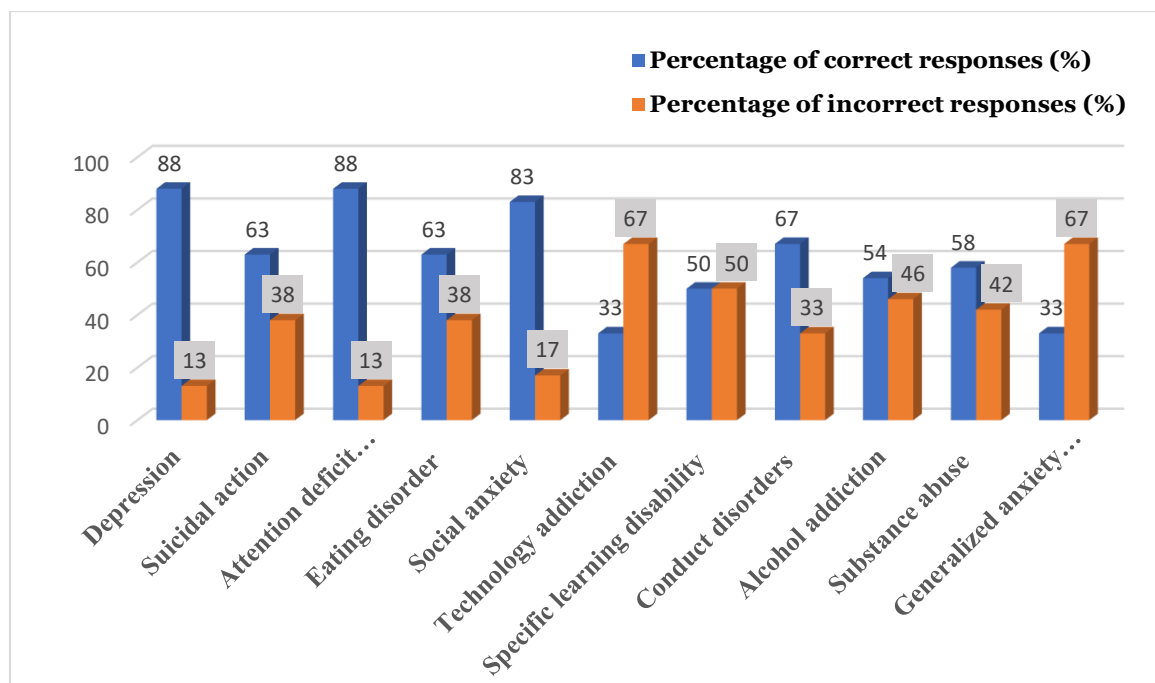
Demographic Information of the Participants

Participants included 67% of female teachers and 33% of male teachers. About 29% of the teachers were of the age range 40-45 years. An equal ratio of teachers teaching 10th grade and pre-university students.

Percentage Analysis of Responses to the Checklist

Teachers' awareness of common mental health problems was evaluated based on their responses to case vignettes. Teachers with a percentage of 90 and above had a very high level of awareness. Teachers with percentages of 70 and above, 50 and below, 25 and below, had high, moderate, and low understanding levels.

Figure 1 Percentage analysis of teachers' responses to case vignettes



Note. The bar graph depicts the percentage analysis of teachers' responses to case vignettes on common mental health problems experienced by adolescents

As depicted in figure 1, teachers had an increased awareness of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, followed by heightened awareness of depression, suicidal action, and technology addiction. They possessed moderate knowledge about increasing disability, social anxiety, conduct disorder, and substance abuse but were less knowledgeable about eating disorders, alcohol addiction, and generalized anxiety disorder. Though teachers were aware of mental health problems among students, they had doubts about technical terms. Mental health training

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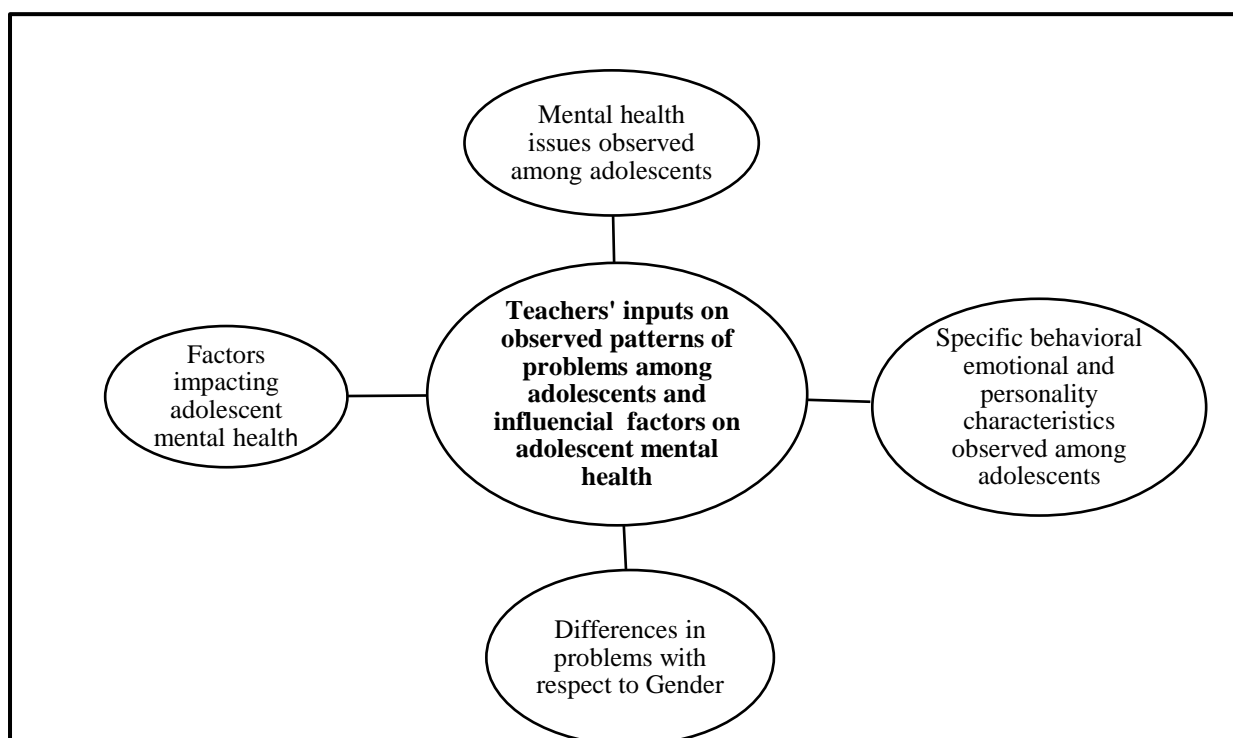
was essential to improve teachers' knowledge of the severity of the conditions and the overlapping nature of symptoms. Better understanding among them can prevent them from labeling students as psychologically ill and ignoring the severity of students' problems. Besides, they can make precise decisions on psychological support required for students and make referrals.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 2 Thematic Network for Global Theme 1

Note. The figure shows thematic network for global theme on Teachers' inputs on patterns of issues observed and influences on adolescent mental health based on Attride-Sterling (2001) structure of thematic network

As clearly indicated in figure 2 the global theme 1 teachers' inputs on observed patterns of problems among adolescents and influential factors on adolescent mental health has four sub-themes which have been discussed in this section.



Mental health issues found among adolescents. Teachers shared that they detect potential problems like depression, anxiety, attention-seeking behaviors, addiction to drugs, alcohol, and cigarettes among adolescents. They also noted other issues like learning disability, obsessive-compulsive disorder, addiction to the internet, gadgets (phone), social media, psychological problems, stress, and peer pressure among teenagers. Teenagers showed specific behavioral, attitudinal changes and express fear of approaching anything. Youngsters get attracted to the opposite sex, talk a lot, and become restless. Further, they experienced difficulties in concentration and had a shorter attention span.

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Concerning the usage of social media and gadgets, teachers shared that “*I have observed, they feel in the group nobody cares about their appearance ... social media, facebook and instagram..... virtual feeling. They download snap chat, try to put all the filters, post them in social media, and try to find friends...*” (H.B.M., personal communication, 22nd March 2019). Several teachers observed attention-seeking patterns among students and considered it unhealthy as it might influence their overall well-being. Teachers articulated that seeking attention was not wrong. Students’ propensity to behave weirdly and use unsafe methods to capture others’ attention was considered unusual.

Students intended to seek recognition of others through social media. As a result, they lessen personal interactions and fail to develop a social circle to share their problems. Excessive social media usage, addiction to games, and limited social interactions make students aggressive. Teachers experience difficulties controlling social media usage among teenagers, as some parents approve of these patterns in their children.

The adolescents also developed unhealthy eating patterns. Teachers found “*unhealthy eating habits... eating a lot of food ...they become...obese, they think...to be like the film actresses or actors without considering their age or hormonal change growth chart...they are just going for the diet.... for unhealthy gym practices or ahh exercise*” (A.S.J., personal communication, 10th May, 2019). Furthermore, their excessive preoccupation with physical appearance and unhealthy eating patterns can be detrimental to their well-being.

Besides, educational institutions, parents, and teachers pressurize students. Depression and the inability to cope with failure among teenagers can be due to parents’ carelessness and failure to build a pleasant classroom atmosphere. Thus, teachers suggested helping students to deal with their issues.

Specific behavioral, emotional, and personality characteristics are observed among adolescents. Teachers noticed some distinctive changes in the behaviors, temperament, and personalities of adolescents. They were familiar with adolescents’ desire to develop a unique identity and express a need for privacy because of the changes during this phase. Teachers acknowledged the students’ need for freedom and provided them their private space. However, they need to intervene to solve the problems of students. It is challenging for teachers to maintain a delicate balance between the level of freedom and interference they provide to students.

Students also display disobedience towards elders. Teenagers experience difficulty accepting their parents’ and teachers’ opinions because they are convinced about their reasoning. Thus, if parents and teachers do not comply with their wishes or place restrictions on their activities, they consider them their rivals.

Adolescents had an increased desire for things. Students from lower and middle social strata get influenced by the lifestyle of their peers. As a result, they indulge in immoral acts like stealing, borrowing money, and threatening parents to comply with their demands. Thus, it is indispensable to educate students on the value of money and morals in life.

Teachers were aware of heightened emotional activity and hormonal changes during adolescence. They expressed that students show both positive and negative emotions. However, students who use their intelligence along with feelings manage situations better.

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Some students misconstrue teachers' efforts to monitor their behavior without realizing that they are interested in their well-being. Lastly, students have a diverse attitude towards situations, while some laugh over it, and some take things seriously. Students' general approach towards conditions also influenced their vulnerability to develop mental health problems and their ability to cope with difficulties.

Differences in problems observed among adolescents concerning gender. Teachers voiced that they observe some gender differences in the mental health of teenagers. Attention-seeking behaviors were observed among both genders. There were apparent differences in their attention-seeking patterns. Boys attract others' attention by displaying their superiority while girls seek others' attention to deal with their insecurity. Girls open up more on their problems, but boys hesitate and take time to open up on their issues. The upbringing and societal expectations from boys not to cry or express emotions prevent them from opening up on issues.

Societal pressure leads to mental health disorders like anger, depression, tension, nervousness, and health issues among students of both genders. But depression is more common among girls compared to boys. The underlying cause and intensity of the problems might be different between genders. Physical abuse is more predominant among girls compared to boys, and they observe hyperactivity more among boys. Overall, boys are not very sensitive, whereas girls are susceptible. Boys also are more satisfied with their performance in academics.

Concerns with body image were evident in either gender. Girls were preoccupied with their bodies and considered being slim as a standard to attract boys. Boys felt that having a six-pack body would help them attract girls. Girls have a desire to look superior to other girls when compared to boys. Slight differences are apparent in girls at the time of menstruation, wherein they are susceptible and experience discomfort sitting in the classroom. In contrast, boys are more conscious about specific physical changes such as mustache and change in voice.

Different factors act as triggers for teenagers to express anger. Girls get angry due to the hormonal changes and lack of approval, while boys get angry when being bullied or receive negative remarks in front of others as it hurts their ego.

Teachers indicated that drug addiction and indulgence in criminal activity is prevalent more among boys. But, of late, the frequency of addiction behaviors has increased among girls due to negative influence and to prove they are on par with boys. Teenagers tend to be hostile, but girls have an adequate level of tolerance compared to boys. Boys often fail to make efforts to improve their endurance to resist temptations of anger. Girls take more effort to overcome their difficulties, regardless of whether they thrive in their efforts. Still, boys are unwilling to take the initiative to resolve their problems as they focus more on the results. Besides, girls are more compliant, energetic, and pay attention to the teachers compared to boys.

Teachers observed some apparent differences in the personality and temperament of boys and girls. Girls were robust enough to cope with problems compared to boys. Unlike girls, boys want to have a powerful desire to be superior to others but do not compare themselves with others. Girls take the criticism offered by teachers and try rectifying their mistakes.

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Teachers also stated, “*ahh ...I have seen that boys boss over on girls, girls acting as if they are submissive and the girls go to the extent of writing the notes to boys and assisting.... I don't know what sort of behavior it is*” (A.K., personal communication, 23rd March 2019). This tendency among boys and girls left teachers with an element of surprise. They were unaware of girls' reasons to adhere to act submissively even to the extent of writing the assignment and offering assistance to them.

Boys are more likely to get affected by the luxurious lifestyle of their classmates. Girls show more maturity in understanding their family circumstances and avoid getting influenced by other students' lavish lifestyles. Overall, teenage boys are more immature and cannot control their temptations. The needs and preferences of each student are unique. Thus, teachers must understand the needs and expectations of students to offer guidance.

Factors impacting adolescent mental health. Many factors influence adolescent mental health. While some elements have a negative influence, many other factors positively impact adolescents' well-being. Alicea, Pardo, Conover, Gopalan, and McKay (2012) emphasized that youngsters exposed to stressors may experience diminished decision-making and problem-solving skills, unhealthy interpersonal affiliations, insecure sexual behavior, and drug use. On similar lines, teachers expressed that greater exposure to stressful factors makes adolescents more susceptible to develop mental health problems.

The impact of the family environment and their parents was a chief factor. Students with a pleasant family atmosphere perform better in studies compared to students from an unhealthy family background. The family structure (nuclear/joint) also impacts adolescent mental health. In recent times with a decline in tradition of joint families, students do not receive social support from extended family members, including grandparents and other elders. Since joint families offer students opportunities to express their emotions more, teachers recommend educational institutions to provide family counseling services. Further, organizing close-knit social gatherings at home can initiate adolescents' opportunities to develop bonding with family members and improve their well-being.

The affiliation between adolescents and their parents also had a substantial influence on adolescent mental health. Further, students express to teachers about conflicts between their parents, which impacts their overall concentration level.

Parents cannot spend time with students and monitor their children's activities due to their work engagements. As a result, students are more likely to indulge in high-risk activities and explore things due to peer pressure. Parents also overlook the child's discipline and negative traits to overcome their guilt of not spending time with them. Teachers articulated that students living with single parents experience many problems and are reluctant to share their concerns with teachers. Thus, they should be responsive to students' needs with single parents to ensure their mental health does not deteriorate further.

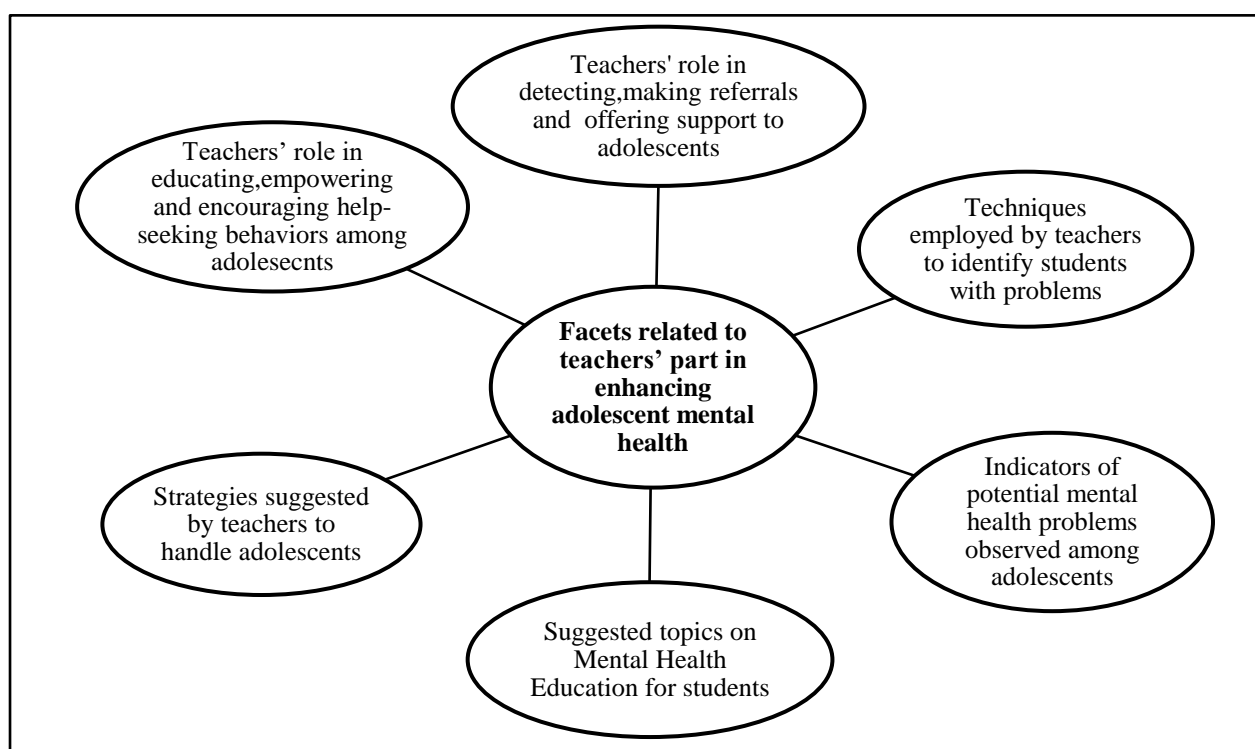
Unrealistic societal expectations, high academic requirements, and limited opportunity for adolescents to pursue their passion generate stress among students. Students feel pressured to survive in this competitive world and act against everyone who do not comply with their requests, including their parents and teachers. The school atmosphere offers limited scope for students to indulge in high-risk activities due to better parental supervision. However, students get influenced by peers once they enter pre-university colleges. To be accepted by peers, they

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indulge in high-risk activities like alcohol, drugs as the college atmosphere provides more opportunities for students to explore.

Parents emphasize on meeting expectations of the society. Comparing the academic performance of students with their peers or siblings influences students. They try to embarrass the child for low academic achievement and expect them to reciprocate the materialistic things received from them by excelling in academics. They refuse to accept the strengths and weaknesses of the child. Mothers are protective of their children while fathers have over expectations about their performance. Students get confused, and there is a lack of clarity among them regarding meeting parents' expectations.

Figure 3 Thematic Network for Global Theme 2



Note. The figure shows thematic network for global theme based on Facets related to teachers' part in enhancing adolescent mental health Attride-Sterling (2001) structure of thematic network

Mental health is a valuable part of students' well-being. Theorists and specialists acknowledge the teacher's therapeutic role in helping students with difficulties (Elliot & Place, 2012; Kourkatas, 2012). Though teachers do not receive training specialists in psychological problems and interventions, they interact with students personally and professionally. They spend a considerable amount of time with students and can offer vital information regarding their behavior and functioning to help professionals design appropriate interventions (Kauffman & Landrum, 2013). The study's primary aim was to explore teachers' role in identifying, preventing, and creating awareness of mental health problems among adolescents.

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As shown in figure 3 the global theme 2 facets related to teachers' part in enhancing adolescent mental health has six sub-themes which have been discussed in this section.

Teachers' role in detecting, making referrals, and offering support to adolescents. Teachers showed that they could detect problems among students and prevent them from becoming severe. They approved that they must play a dynamic role in recognizing students' issues and ensure they do not adhere to peer pressure and perform poorly in studies.

Teachers can identify mental health problems among students as opposed to general health concerns. Teachers shared that “... *seriously concerned about the student...teachers can notice a lot....and the way probably a mother can know more.... the child similarly, can notice a lot among students...have a personal connection with students*” (S.U., personal communication, 23rd March, 2019). Overall, teachers have better prospects to interact with students and understand their attitudes and behaviors. They get involved in students' well-being as they considered it a vital part of teaching and would go to any extremes to help them regardless of whether they would receive support from the management or parents.

To identify students with problems, teachers must speak to students, ask about their problems, and offer students psychological support during their free time. They must try to know the student, including their personal life, family background, academic performance, and challenges they might be experiencing. To encourage students to open up on their problems, teachers should improve their skillsets and develop personality characteristics. They must have patience, acceptance, a friendly attitude, active listening skills, and let go of their set preferences and inhibitions.

Teachers should communicate to the students that everyone experiences problems, so instead of concentrating on the issues, they should focus on their efforts. They must educate students on developing an outlet to express their issues to someone they feel comfortable. They should avoid labeling a student as “learning disabled” without comprehensive knowledge and understanding of their problems. When teachers maintain confidentiality on students' issues, they will open up on their problems without hesitancy. Based on their observations, they can gather more information from students or parents to redirect them to counselors or mental health professionals.

Teachers believed that they play a unique role in helping them find suitable solutions to their issues. They clarified that they could notice problems on a superficial level but not on an in-depth basis, as they lack comprehensive information on the child's background. Most of the time, teachers can recognize broader issues among students like concentration difficulties or stress-related matters based on their behavior but cannot pinpoint the exact problem. Further, they also explained that they could only recognize the problem but cannot provide psychological support to them as they are not qualified like counselors.

Teachers voiced that students spend about five to six hours in schools or colleges and the remaining time at home. Even during this time, they spend about six to seven hours sleeping and attending tuitions. Parents are unaware of students' activities, which prevents them from providing support and guidance to adolescents. In line with this opinion expressed by participants in the current study, Yates (2017) emphasized how teachers can help in the timely recognition and referral of students to seek help as children spend about 32 hours of their time in a week during an academic year in schools. In schools, teachers can act as principal sources

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of referrals for students' mental health services based on their mental health needs' sensitivities and observations.

Teachers thought themselves to be better therapists than anyone else as they are always in touch with their life events. Lack of awareness among teachers on exact words or psychological words does not matter as students consider teachers their role models and listen to them. They suggested the need to build confidence among students through positive affirmations like “you can”, “stay cool and sit down”, instead of negative affirmations like “no” this is not possible. They also expressed that teaching moral values to students is essential.

Though teachers are compassionate to help students in detecting problems, they experience some challenges and limitations. Challenges like high-class strength, academic deadlines prevent them from concentrating on the personal lives of students. However, there are high levels of expectations placed on teachers to help students with mental health issues. Still, in reality, the training provided to them is inadequate for them to carry out these responsibilities (Graham, Phelps, Maddison, and Fitzgerald, 2011).

Several problems can be prevented by communicating with parents on the mental status and thinking patterns of students. Teachers must educate students on difficulties during this phase, techniques to handle such challenges, and the impact it can have on them. Parents and teachers can work together to help students seek professional advice to prevent the issues from continuing into adulthood instead of stigmatizing them. Additional support from management, authorities, and the principal can also help teachers identify students' problems more.

Teachers' role in educating, empowering, and encouraging students to seek help. Teachers articulated that they create awareness among students on mental health concerns. To help students open up on sensitive information like the experience of abuse from parents, elders, or any other person, they must gain confidence. They must provide awareness of abuse and education on assertiveness. Teachers suggested that they should have personal talks with students “... we can talk to the children talk freely.... when somebody touches you, you're not comfortable say " no " speak out very loudly ...” (S.M., personal communication, 5th August 2019). Such training on assertiveness will help students become aware if they are being abused and handle such situations. Further, students must be encouraged to overcome their fear and disclose abuse incidents instead of thinking about how their parents would react.

Teachers should improve their knowledge of sensitive topics like relationship (boy-girl issue) before discussing these topics with students to ensure they receive this information with more maturity. Emphasis must be given to teachers' expectations, ideas, opinions, and state of mind concerning students' mental well-being as it can enhance teachers' self-confidence and skills to handle students. They must build awareness among students on desirable behavior in society and the hazardous effects of getting addicted to gadgets and not paying attention to studies. An effective way to educate students on dangerous behaviors would be to give them a clear picture of the advantages and disadvantages of getting addicted or not studying instead of just forcing their view on them.

Teachers must build awareness in the classroom by using an integrated approach and place more importance on moral values. Teachers can use audio-visual aids, rallies, seminars, workshops, and activities to educate students on kinds of disorders, emotional well-being,

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dealing with addictions, etiquette in the classroom, and forms of abuse. In this way, the overall awareness among students on these issues will improve, and they can face these issues with more confidence.

Another critical problem observed among students is their addiction to gadgets. Teachers must educate students on mental fatigue that occurs because of utilizing devices for a longer time. Further, they must encourage students to resist their temptation to use gadgets until they complete their exams and minimize their time on devices. Thus, teachers must instruct students on how patterns of addiction develop.

Addressing students as a group on topics pertinent to mental health will be more operative as students dislike being advised during this age group. Teachers must encourage students to have a positive mind-set. They must reassure efforts made by the students and encourage them to make efforts instead of focusing on positive consequences. There is a realization among teachers on building awareness among students on morals and health issues. However, they felt institutions did not provide enough importance to these facets and should concentrate on awareness building activities and academics.

Strategies suggested by teachers to handle adolescents. Based on their experience of dealing with adolescents and their observations, teachers provided some valuable methods to manage students better. Teachers suggested evading scolding students as it makes them violent and brings an adverse transformation in their behavioral pattern due to shame and humiliation. Some students also build resentment towards the teacher who scolds them in front of their peers. Teachers must also restrain from employing physical punishment to discipline the child and instead use more responsive ways.

Several researchers specified that teachers' constructive affiliation might reduce children's behavioral and psychosocial issues and enhance school change among students (Sutherland, Lewis-Palmer, Stichter & Morgan, 2008; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Teachers' caring attitude helps build trust among students, enables students to comply with their advice, and increases parents' confidence in teachers. Also, they avoid giving stress and compelling students to do things they are not comfortable doing.

Teachers can provide revision classes to students who show disinterest in studies and rebuild their motivation to perform well in their final exams. Teachers recommended, "*Students should be encouraged to have some pastime apart from academics, especially for students who tend to be aggressive.... they should be with this percussion instrument.... wherein they throw away all their emotions ... help them in a positive way*" (S, personal communication, 19th March, 2019). They endorsed that having a pastime keeps students engaged and help them cope with problems.

Informing parents about students' problematic behaviors without expressing it to the child and encouraging them to change their behavior/attitude towards the child can help students. Teachers insisted assigning some responsibilities to the college students to keep track of their activities and ensure no student goes unnoticed. By identifying students who smoke in class and having a personal talk with them, teachers can reduce smoking behaviors.

Teachers need to have personalized communications with students to understand their thinking patterns, attitudes, and the nature of problems experienced. They should avoid

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expecting immediate results and positive outcomes in students' behavior. They suggested encouraging students to reflect on society and offer help through simple acts like assisting aged people in crossing the road.

Teachers should be skilled in noticing improvement in students' behaviors with age. Some students become more responsible and capable of assuming leadership positions after a while. They must help students comprehend that having a positive approach will increase their possibilities to solve most of the problems. Students are uncomfortable opening up on their classroom issues, even in a confidential environment with teachers or parents. Thus, providing them an opportunity to write their problems without revealing their identity can help them overcome their reluctance to share their issues.

Indicators of mental health problems among students. To identify students with potential mental health problems, teachers must examine students' behavioral patterns and attitudes. The chief among them was to observe the students' performance in class for at least two to three months. If a student's performance declines in most subjects and the collective opinion from teachers suggests the same, they might experience some problems. In a study conducted by McLeod (2017), a decline in academic performance and stigma were the primary identifying signs observed by teachers among students.

Teachers notice some minor changes in the students' behavior like being aloof, forgetting to complete work, absence from classes for an extended period, and sudden decline in academic performance in a student who was excellent in studies. Students sometimes would state health issues to skip classes and be hesitant to show their talent despite having exceptional abilities.

They agreed that close observation of students' body language could provide valuable inputs regarding a child's mental health status "*I have seen a lot...the way they answer in class... sit in class... gestures in class have an eye-to-eye contact with the teacher or they see somewhere else and speak.... And their attitude also when you ask them a few questions in person*" (S, personal communication, 19th March, 2019). Teachers must also look out for characteristic changes in students' behavior. For instance, a student who was silent earlier would suddenly become hyperactive.

Addictions to gadgets can affect their concentration and academic performance. Teachers can locate the fundamental cause of the change in their behavior by monitoring the activities of students. One teacher reported identifying a student who developed an excessive addiction to gadgets during the study holidays as a distractor. When the teacher interacted with the students' parents, they reported that the student becomes aggressive if the device is withdrawn. In such cases, teachers, along with parents, can intervene to educate students on the harmful effects of addiction and help them overcome the problems precipitated by their addictions. Teachers' proactive involvement in identifying signs of mental health problems among students can help detect addiction at the initial stages and help them recover from these unhealthy patterns.

Techniques and measures to identify students with problems. Teachers use some explicit methods to identify issues among teenagers. Teachers observe the students' behavior, in class settings, and with peers to recognize behaviors across settings. By utilizing case studies, diagnostic tests, interviews, counseling activities, and a combined assessment of students' academic performance and co-curricular activity, they can decide on students' behavior

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changes. Still, teachers must have initial one-on-one interactions with students with a non-judgemental attitude. They need to comprehend the rapport between the student and their parents through regular discussions with parents. Thus, gathering information from the students, parents, and peers was essential.

Teachers used novel techniques to manage students based on their personal experiences with them. Going around the classrooms to observe students' behaviors can help detect addictions behaviors among students. Students mark the letters of person whom they are fond of, or highlight the brand names of alcohol in the book from time to time. Apart from that, teachers suggested that they monitor students' behaviors on social media with help of their friends. The image students project on social media can reveal their mental health status. Teachers must have more personal interactions with students at least once a week and observe whether they maintain eye contact while speaking to recognize whether they are fabricating information or telling the truth.

Suggested topics on mental health education for students. Teachers proposed a few crucial aspects to conduct awareness among students. They suggested educating students on sexual harassment, good touch, and bad touch, and sexuality. Students must be encouraged to talk about reproduction or internal body parts without discomfort.

Further, teachers also suggested the need to educate adolescents on sexually-transmitted diseases like AIDS. Awareness of sexuality was considered vital for adolescents besides mental health problems. They suggested topics like building self-confidence, techniques to handle sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and bullying. Eve-teasing, helping adolescents with pubertal issues, and managing the boy-girl relationship were the other topics recommended. Teachers had a conscious awareness of topics that can improve knowledge among adolescents. HIV/AIDS and sexuality, building values, life skills, and gender-related issues were components of the mental health model developed for adolescents (Vranda, 2015).

Teachers also proposed that students be given general awareness on health, hygiene, environment, and neighbors' influence. Teachers must teach students to respect each gender. and avoid using obscene language and jokes with double connotations. They must encourage them to restrain from using websites with inappropriate content.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Teachers can play a dynamic role in refining the general well-being of teenagers. The current study explored teachers' perspectives on identifying, preventing, and creating awareness of mental health problems among adolescents. The researcher used a qualitative research design and conducted individual interviews with 24 teachers teaching the 10th, 11th, and 12th grades in private schools and pre-university colleges across Bangalore. All the teachers had a B.Ed. qualification and minimum work experience of at least one year or higher in handling teenagers. Most of the teachers were females. A percentage analysis of teachers' responses to case vignettes on adolescents' problems showed that overall, the teachers had a fair understanding of students' observed behaviors and symptoms. Nevertheless, they lacked clarity on precise information on disorders and their overlapping nature of symptoms. Additional training can improve teachers' skill sets to detect adolescents' problems and prevent them from labeling students.

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Teachers can make a dynamic contribution in detecting potential signs of mental health problems among students by carefully noticing changes in their behaviors and attitudes. Optimistically majority of them endorsed the necessity to provide awareness of mental health concerns among adolescents and preferred talking about mental health during classroom discussions of other subjects. They chose more experiential and interactive approaches like role-plays, movies, drama, and power point presentations to involve teenagers and expand their retention rate on mental health and related concerns.

LIMITATIONS

The study could not capture teachers' opinions in rural areas due to practical considerations and time constraints. The researcher could not acquire a more wide-ranging depiction of the mental health needs of adolescents. Further, the study did not adopt a mixed method using qualitative and quantitative methods, which would have increased the findings' credibility.

Implications

During the study, teachers' suggestions and inputs can be a baseline for other researchers and mental health professionals to design mental health awareness programs for adolescents. It can provide valuable insights to teachers, parents, mental health professionals, and educational experts on specific mental health concerns observed among adolescents in this grade range. The study can also help focus on viable strategies that can be applied to offer support to them.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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