

Addressing the Challenges Facing Students: A Holistic Approach to Mental Health

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 The challenges students face is well-documented, with the most tragic outcome being the issue of student suicide. This unfortunate reality is often the culmination of multiple stressors, including academic pressure, social anxiety, financial burden, and personal struggles. Moreover, the inability to assess, identify, seek help, or cope with these stressors can lead to severe outcomes. As educators, psychologists, and mental health professionals, we must not only focus on preventing mental disorders but also address the broader spectrum of challenges that students face.

 Stress is a common precursor to almost all mental disorders, and it is often the first sign of deeper psychological issues. When stress is not addressed, it can escalate into more severe conditions, leading to detrimental effects on students' mental health and academic performance.

 One of the key insights we've gained from our work is that stigma and unawareness play significant roles in the mental health challenges students face. Stigma creates a barrier that prevents students from seeking help, while unawareness leads to a lack of understanding about available resources and support systems. If stigma is not addressed, even the most comprehensive resource development efforts are unlikely to change the situation.

 To tackle these challenges, we formed a small working group and began hosting monthly webinars, meetings, and workshops. By visiting universities and institutions, we engaged with teachers and professors to understand their concerns and gather insights. We learned that many educators are unsure about how to create awareness, identify mental health issues, and provide support to students.

 A significant challenge is the lack of success stories in mental health treatment due to the stigma surrounding these discussions. This creates a vicious cycle of impossibility, where students and educators believe that seeking help is futile. To break this cycle, we needed a fresh approach that focused on empowering students to take control of their own mental health.

 Our approach involves providing students with knowledge, information, and tools to identify their own problems. The goal is to enable students to make informed decisions about their mental health, rather than relying solely on external sources for validation.

 To achieve this, we developed a series of psychometric tools designed to help students assess their mental health. These tools are structured sets of questions that are scientifically designed and rigorously tested for reliability and validity. While they do not provide a formal diagnosis, they significantly aid in screening and identifying potential issues.

In addition to psychometric tools, we developed digital technology to disseminate information and empower students. This includes a mobile app and a website that offer self-assessment tests. These resources are available to students for free, with the aim of increasing accessibility and encouraging engagement with mental health resources.

 To provide a structured approach, we developed operational criteria to define:

* The type and severity of the problem.
* Appropriate interventions based on the results of the psychometric tools.

Depending on the outcome, students might need different types of support:

* Self-development through mental health education and life skills training.
* Counselling with a mentor, teacher, or counselor.
* Psychological evaluation to assess more complex issues.
* Psychiatric consults for severe conditions.
* Immediate attention in cases of suicidal tendencies.

 To offer effective interventions, we cannot work alone. We developed policies that integrate with existing mental health resources in both the government and private sectors. Networking with people and organizations in the field allows us to broaden our reach and provide comprehensive support to students.

 Our journey to address the mental health challenges facing students has only just begun. The tools and approaches we have developed are a first step toward creating a safer, more supportive environment for students. By breaking down stigma, empowering students with knowledge, and providing access to reliable resources, we can help students navigate their challenges and lead healthier, more fulfilling lives.

 Today, we are opening our self-assessment app to the public. It is free for government institutions, and we encourage the first 100 users to provide feedback. The app will offer insights into:

* The level of stress.
* The presence of psychiatric symptoms.
* The level of functioning and positivity.

Based on these results, users will receive guidance on the appropriate next steps, whether it's mental health education, self-development, or professional counseling.

We invite everyone to join us in this journey. Together, we can make a difference and create a supportive environment where students feel empowered to face their challenges with confidence.