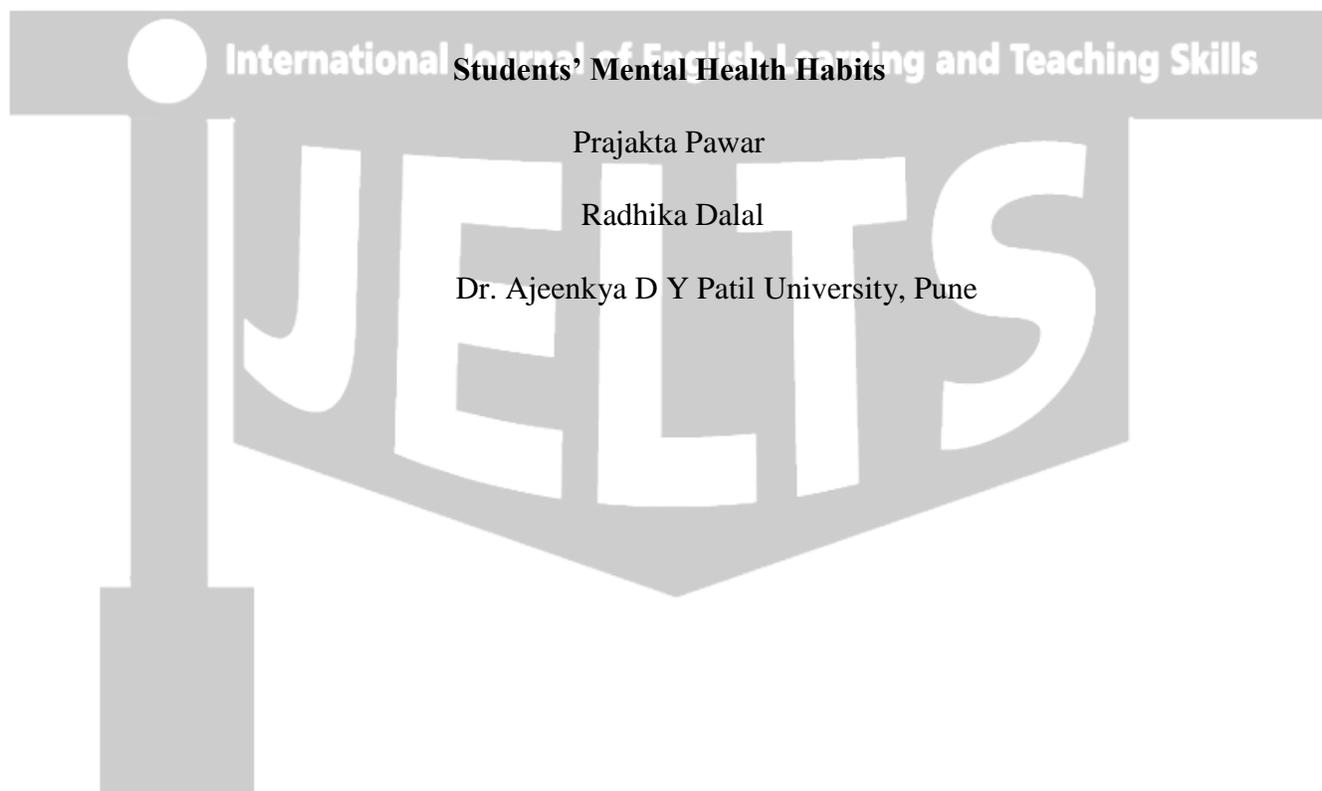


Running Head: STUDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH HABITS

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**Students' Mental Health Habits**

Prajakta Pawar

Radhika Dalal

Dr. Ajeenkya D Y Patil University, Pune

### Abstract

Students' life can be stressful and for some, it may cause mental distress. Besides being a major public health challenge, mental distress can influence academic achievements. The main objective of the current study was to examine college students for their mental health and come up with constructive solutions. Today's younger generation represents the largest group of students. The transition from adolescence into young adulthood involves major changes in several areas- social, emotional, psychological, financial, and relationships. And this transition period can cause rational challenges that some teenagers experience stressful. It has also been mentioned that the proportion of students who experience their student life mentally stressful is increasing and for some, it may be a direct cause for mental illness. The paper focuses on how mental illness can affect one's intellect and create barriers for their overall development. This paper includes a doctrinal method where we have surveyed 100 university students via a questionnaire. Depression, anxiety, and stress have been shown to be correlated to poor academic performances signifying a self-perpetuating disadvantage of students suffers from these mental health issues. We have also put light on how students can overcome these evils of recent times. Some solutions include awareness programs, healthy discussions with elders, exercising, and yoga for patience and calmness.

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### Introduction

College years are the most valuable and crucial years of one's life. It is a golden phase where one makes their career and future choices. Students start discovering their passions and strive to follow their dreams. College experiences help one build his personality, makes one responsible, independent, and mature enough to take care of themselves in all hardships. Students get out of their homes and comfort zones, build new relationships and the new friend circle is their college family with who they share their most memorable memories.



*Figure 1: Mental health*

Students get a lot of opportunities to grow mentally and accept the toughest challenges to prove their worth but on this scary journey, they are often prey to stress, anxiety, mental trauma, and depression. Many succeed to cope up with these whereas those who are not able to get through this phase are either led astray and adopt fatal addictions or see suicide as their only way out. Statistics by the World Health Organization state that the suicide rate of students over the globe in the year 2019 was 7.4% (i.e. 1/100,000). Lancet Global Health Study Report states that in India suicide is the second leading cost of death among the youth and a survey points that 4 out of 10 students experience depression. According to the National Crime Records Bureau, 8934 students (6.7% of all suicides) are committing suicide ever in India alone. This means that one student gives up on his life every hour in our nation.

The above-stated facts prove that huge and top leading Indian institutes are incapable to counsel their students and to deal with their mental health issues. Youth is the future of every country and effective measures to protect their mental health must be taken immediately.

Good mental health is critical for one's success in life. A student spends 6-10 hours of his day in college hence it must be made sure that he is in a healthy environment. With the rise in the rate of students suffering from depression and getting involved in self-injurious acts, it has become necessary for every college to have a team of health experts, counselors, and psychologists in their campus conducting health sessions and surveys regularly and encourage the students to adopt healthy and useful mental habits to achieve their goals and fulfill their ambitions to make everyone proud.

#### **Literature Review**

Students' mental health has become a great concern around the globe. Hence, the authors of this paper have recognized the urgent need to design and develop a Mental Health Management System for University students using NET, Web, and SQL technology. This system can manage and analyse students' mental health by taking the required inputs and give valid solutions to make an improvement in their health.

The basic concept of this project is to collect data from students, process and analyse it, observe the complex things and develop new products, store all this data, and also to transmit it when needed and this is known as database management. A database is a collection of data that is stored for a long time and can be shared. SQL Server is the data management and analysis platform used in this project. It provides high security, reliability, and efficiency of data management. ASP.net technology is also used to generate powerful web applications [1][9].

The system offers permission control to differentiate between student, teacher, and health experts. A student is first asked to log in with his correct credentials and he is then asked several questions as a part of the Mental Health Test which is analysed and studied by the system to find out the issue and suggest solutions. This data is also transferred to the university health expert for further consultations [1][9].

The virtual teaching laboratory faculty of psychology collaborated with the Virtual Reality Visualization Observatory of the National Autonomous University of Mexico to work on a project to evaluate educational sessions for the mental health of university students in order to teach patient's symptoms, use of VR technologies for agoraphobia exposure treatment and the advantages and disadvantages of this innovative therapeutic modality.

This paper is an example of how VR is useful for educational purposes. Nineteen students were invited to the survey where they were exposed to VR environments. The students were given two questionnaires after and before being exposed to VR. The results showed an increase from 3.0 to 4.21 which suggested that using VR technology to treat agoraphobia would be a success [2].

This paper emphasizes on the importance of physical education in school to obtain complete health concepts and establish healthy behaviour. This paper summarizes all aspects of the teaching content, teaching methods, implementation strategies, teacher training, quality control, education, and evaluation for implementing mental health in physical education and constructs the development of a physical education model integrated knowledge, belief, and practice. The target of this paper is to promote the development of physical and mental harmony, health, overall development [3].

The paper elaborates the structure of the education system and the importance to give priority to physical education in schools and universities to improve the mental health of the students to achieve their

goals, improve concentration, build an optimistic personality, control emotions, have strong will power, become independent and strengthen their self-esteem [3].

The author of this paper carried out a survey of the mental health problems of university students in 1850 participants in the age range of 19-26. They designed a 45 item rating scale that relates to four dimensions of mental health problems as reported by university students, such as Sense of Being Dysfunctional, Loss of Confidence, Lack of self-regulation, and Anxiety Proneness.

The university life is a transitory phase where the students experience many pressures and challenges and, as a result; they may experience mental health problems. Being cognizant of the changing demands and pressures, it is unjust to diagnose them as suffering from mental disorders. Moreover, the prevalence rate is very varied mainly because of different assessment tools to determine the severity and different operational definition of mental health problems. Despite all these methodological issues, fact remains that a significant proportion of university students suffer from serious mental health problems that may affect their normal functioning.

The main objective of this paper was to determine the prevalence rate of mental health problems among university students in Pakistan and to determine the relationship between mental health problems with key demographic variables. Data were collected from 4 universities of Lahore and then a demographic form, student problem checklist, and its properties, and test results were jotted down. Based on the means and standard deviations computed for the four factors and the total score on SPCL, the three categories were made namely "Moderate" (mean score), "Severe" (1SD above moderate), and "Very Severe" (2SD). The scores were calculated by adding all the responses to each factor, where higher the score means higher mental health problems [4].

The results reflexed that 34.4% of university students showed mental health problems and that mental health problems among university students are increasing in number as well as in severity.

In India, mental stress and psychological problems have started growing at a tremendous rate and are getting bigger day by day. And by an epidemiological study of child and adolescent psychiatric disorders in urban and rural areas, we have come to know that the people who are suffering from such problems are mostly the youth of India.

So to overcome the problems related to mental health we can imply and practice (SMH) programs for our brighter future. School mental health (SMH) programs have proven efficacy in enhancing the psychological well-being of school-going children. In fact, the CBSE has started the inclusion of life-skills training in the curriculum as it helps the learner to face life with a sense of confidence and conviction [5].

The bigger obstacles in effective SMH implementation in India are the lack of a trained workforce and financial constraint. In the workforce, it becomes very difficult with such limited training avenues, resource limitation, migration of trained professionals, and acute shortage of mental health professionals. In India, SMH is limited to some short-and long-term efforts by a few individuals and centres. The programs are usually conducted in the form of interactive sessions and workshops by mental health professionals. However, these programs focus mostly on teachers and lack in-depth coverage of topics because of the short duration of the programs (usually of 1–2 days) [5]. India is facing such a huge crisis related to mental health. SMH should be implemented; however, far less has been done toward its actual implementation. And now we should practice steps to initiate large-scale SMH activities.

At present time mental health and behavioural problems are very common among university students. Most of us know how exhausting and stressful university life is, especially during the course of study, while some people develop disorders for the first time.

Through a study, the researchers came to know that most of the people suffering from mental health problems got affected between the duration of 18 to 25 years. For many young adults, this may coincide with their time at university. For some students who are already suffering from such mental health problems sometimes feels aggravated during this transition. And these problems may get worse during their course of study and can have an impact on their academic performance. There is another study that states nearly 1/4th of the 1st year students had clinical levels of psychological distress. Additional studies bear witness to the fact that females have significantly higher rates of mental health problems. Students who struggle financially have higher rates of mental health problems as compared to those who don't have such problems [6].

Stigma, particularly surrounding mental disorders and suicide, means many people thinking of taking their own life or who have attempted suicide are not seeking help leading to suicide being the third leading cause of death in 15-19-year-olds. Besides, students who had lifetime suicide plans and attempts when entering university obtained significantly lower grades, as did those who engaged in non-suicidal self-injury. Issues with attention and concentration can also impact on grades in addition to mental distress.

This modern and increasingly competitive world of higher education made mental health problems worse among university students. Students who are suffering financially may be forced to compete for a limited number of scholarships or have to work at part-time jobs which increases their anxiety, stress, or depression. Due to these stressful tasks students lose their sleep or get poor sleep quality-symptoms leading to mental weaknesses. It is conspicuous in multiple countries that stress, anxiety, and depression have

progressively worsened in university students. These are correlated to poor academic performances. However, self-esteem can be the liberator from stress, anxiety, and depression, the self-esteem has been used as a cushion for these mental health problems and has shown a positive relationship with student's academic performances. And the increasing pliability and the skills to tame stress can-counter act the negative perceptions that increase the risk of suicidal tendencies amongst at-risk university students [7].

Due to the increasing frequency and extremity of mental health issues among university students globally, administrators and faculty have growing opportunities to reduce mental health problems and improve well-being for students on their campuses. It is very important to implement programs for all the salient students of the university, which have the potential to become the future leaders of their cities, the nation, and global societies.

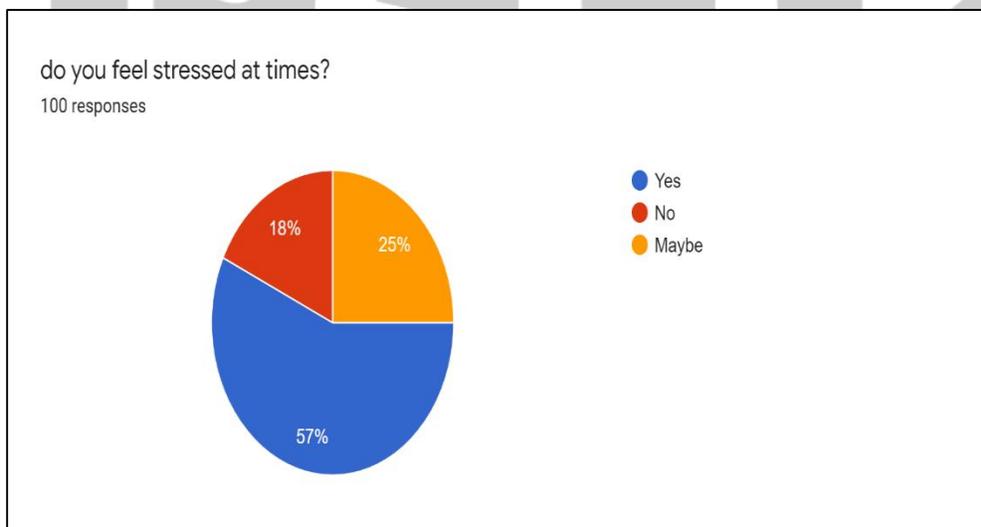
In college, the life of students becomes so hectic and stressful and for some students, it may cause mental distress. Due to mental illness, student academic performance gets affected. The main objective of this study is to examine associations of mental distress with academic self-efficacy and study progress. Logistic regression analyses were carried out to evaluate the relationship between academic self-efficacy, academic performance and mental distress. The study showed that there was a strong association between symptoms of mental distress, academic self-efficacy, and study progress [8].

At present time the younger generation represents the largest group of students in history. While growing up children agonize over the problems related to financial, housing, social, and emotional. Depressive disorders result in constant low mood, diminished cognitive function, lack of grasping sense, and interest in other activities, as well as lack of enthusiasm and energy. Also, depression and anxiety often

affect memory and concentration, which makes it more difficult to acquire new knowledge and cope with examination situations.

### Survey and Research Approach

The aim of this observation through a set of questionnaires was to calculate the % of college students suffering from depression or stress, and they are not aware of it. We deduced that only about 20% of students are sleeping on time and 58.7% of students are not able to sleep due to anxiety and stress. At this stage of life where the rate of suffering from serious illness is very low, the main cause of stress (suicide rate is increasing every year) could be time management (53.1% of students agree), financial problem, study pressure, relationship, surroundings (family problem), etc. which triggers mental health issues.



*Figure 2: Survey question 1*

To overcome those problems or to ignore their current situation for a certain time students spend their time on social media (63.3% of students spend 2-3 hrs.) besides the negative comments (58.2% of students

got affected) therefore their minds become unstable hence affecting their sleeping schedule. These small things grow bigger slowly and increase the pressure on the students unknowingly leading them into depression.

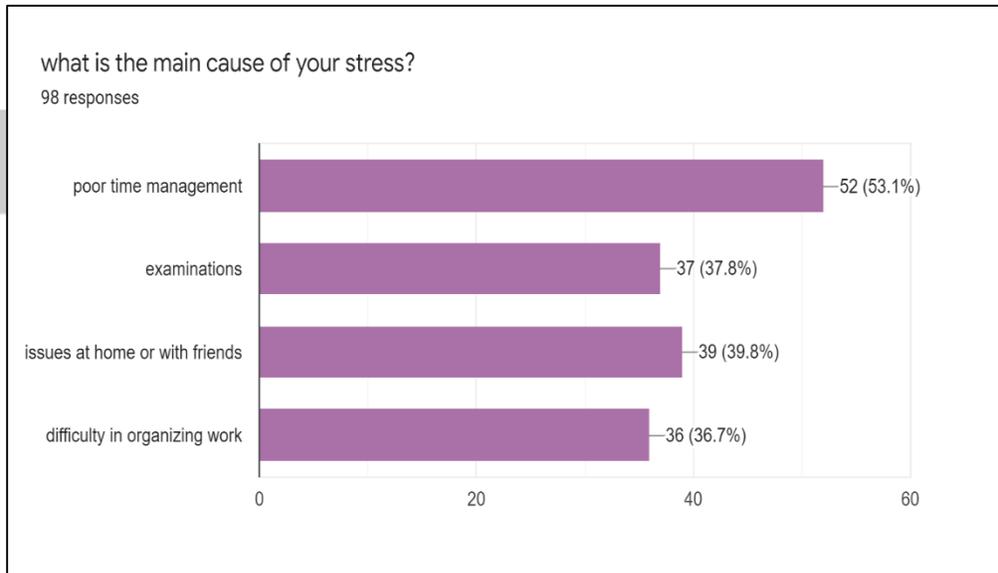


Figure 3: Survey question 2

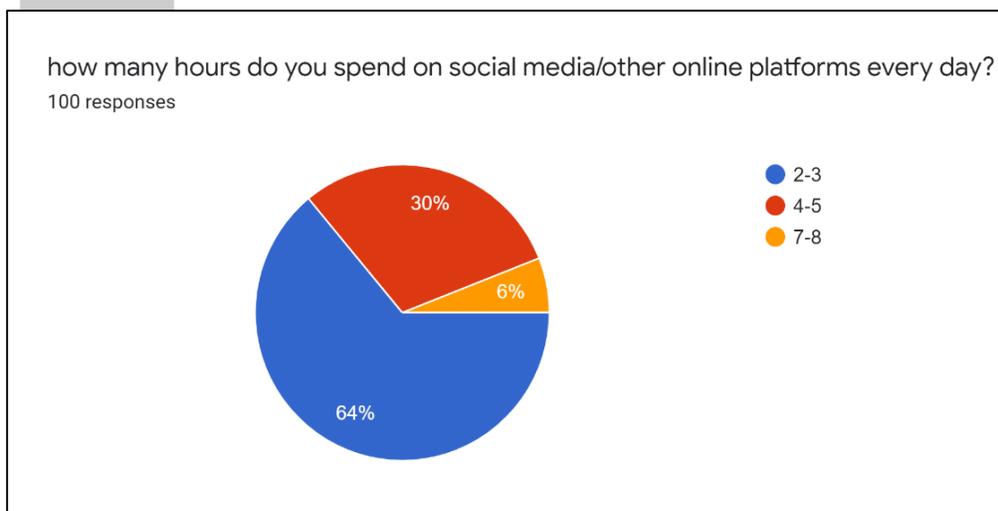
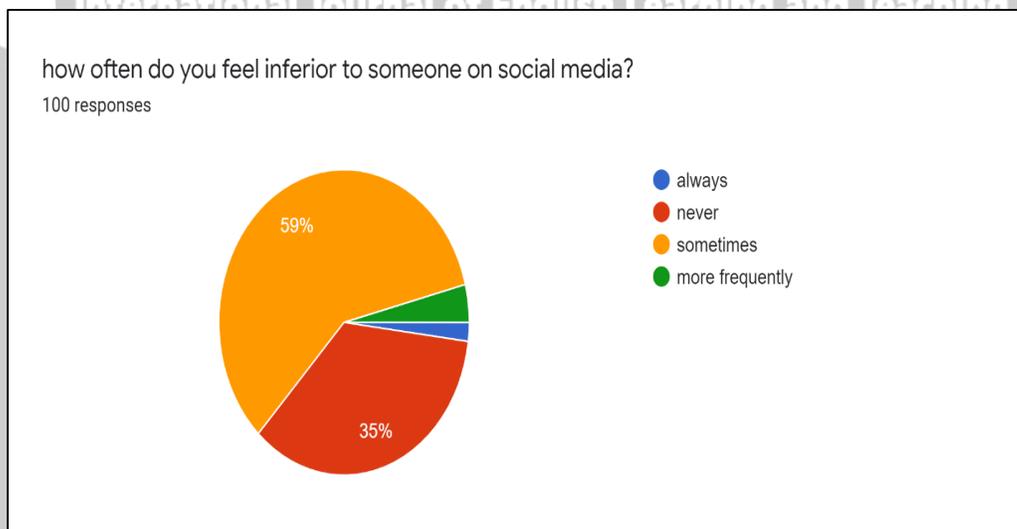


Figure 4: Survey question 3

72% of students spend time on Netflix and social media instead of sleeping. They end up sleeping for only 3-4 hrs. Many suffer from anxiety just because of the high standards that social media sets for them making them feel inferior to the other.

Figure 5: Survey question 4



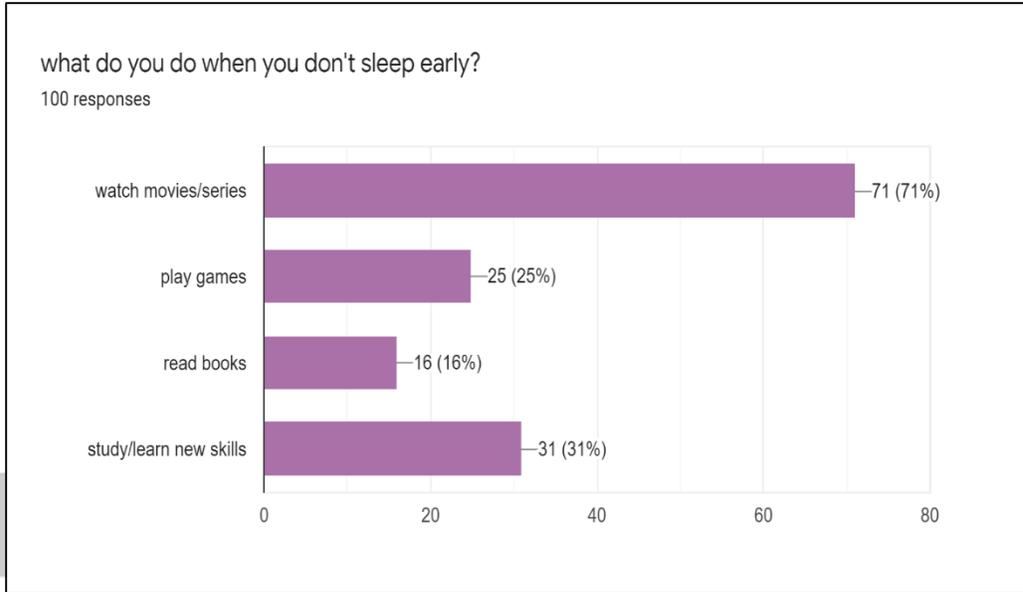


Figure 6: Survey question 5

In this digital and fast world, people have stopped taking their health seriously and fail to take out even 30 minutes from their busy day to step out and exercise. It is very essential for the students to come out of their devices and play a sport for real. Our survey shows that only 45% of students do some exercise daily which is not a good sign.

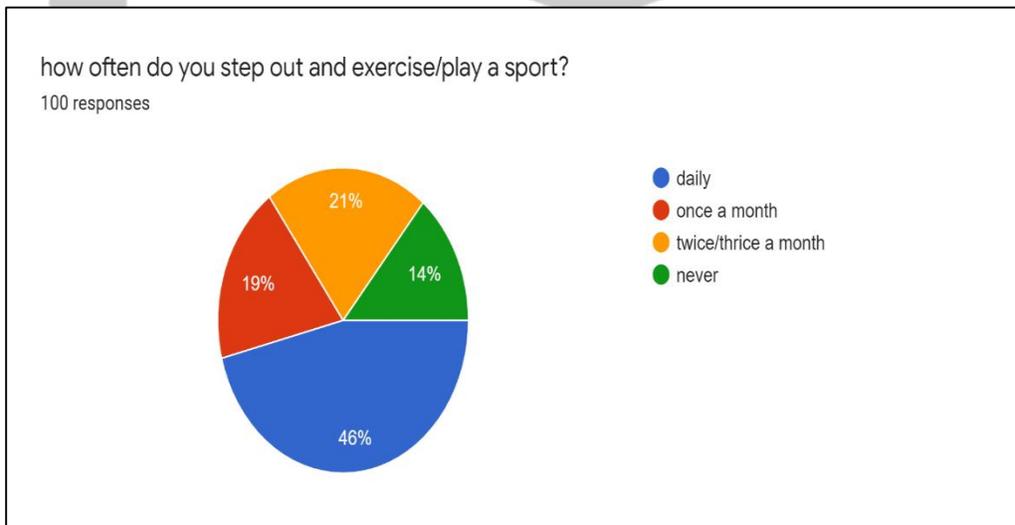
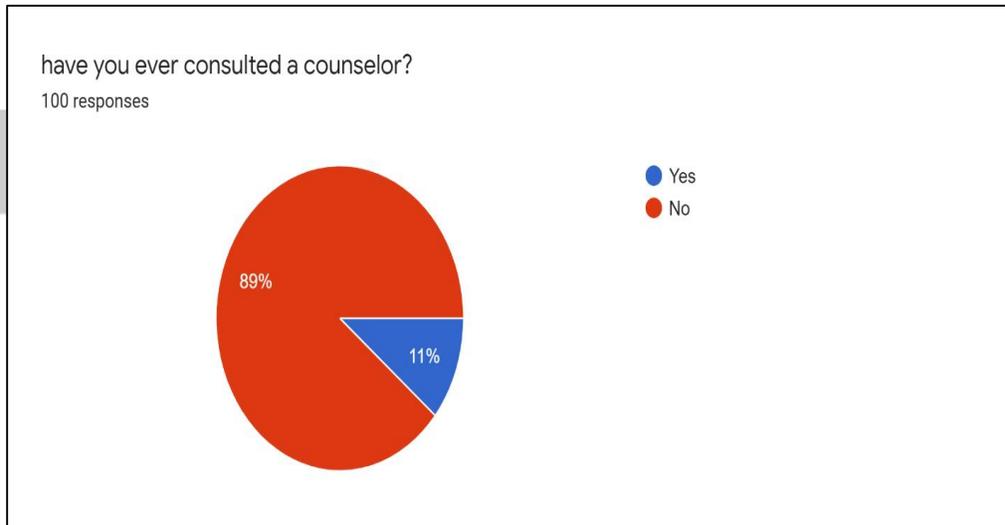


Figure 7: Survey question 6

Students are suffering from stress and depression but are not approaching any doctors or counselors. They must be encouraged to reach out for help and be told that there's no shame in doing so. According to the survey conducted 90% of students suffer from stress but hesitate to go visit a doctor or a counselor.



*Figure 8: Survey question 7*

### **Recognizing Anxiety and Depression in students:**

#### 1. Behavioural signs:

Research shows that people suffering from depression have different psychological behaviors from a mentally healthy individual. A person's hands and leg movements, eye movements, facial expressions, and social behaviours speak volumes about his mental health. An individual's online behaviours can be used to study his mental status. A depressed person tends to like negative posts and comments on social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc. Analysing this data can help in classifying the level of depression and strategizing on suppressing the same.

## 2. Physiological signal:

Depression prone persons show different varying physiological behaviours than normal people. The EEG signals, MRI signals, serotonin content, brain wave signals, and other medical imaging and test results are different between the two. Technological and medical advancements have made it very easy to rely on its efficiency and to use the data along with machine learning to come up with algorithms to identify and classify the level of depression or anxiety and to take appropriate measures for them.

## 3. Voice signals:

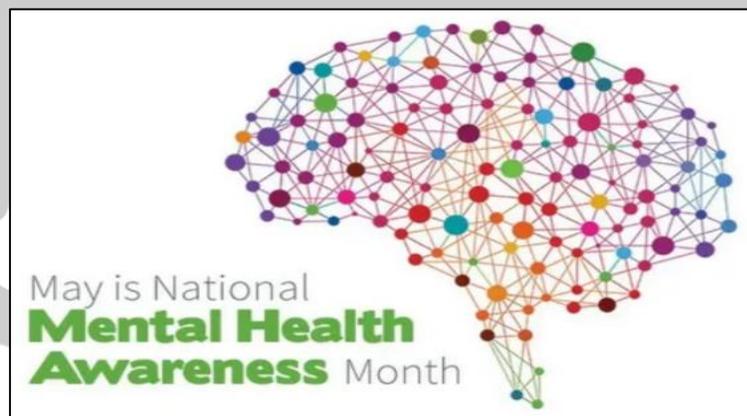
Intensive research has proved voice signals to be the best factor to recognize mental distress. 10 to 20 seconds of speech fragments can provide emotion recognition. Other recognition signals include a distinctive reduction of memory capabilities, slower responses, and reflexes, inability to solve difficult problems, making poor judgments and decisions, lack of interest in studying, working, or enjoying their hobbies, being pessimistic about almost everything, etc. All of these can have a huge negative impact on a student's career and future life and one must take all the possible measures to have a healthy mind.

### **Constructive Solutions**

As mentioned earlier in the paper, according to the statistics of WHO, 7.45% of students committed suicide in 2019, 8934 in India alone, and 4/10 suffered from depression. The youth is our future and no student one should face any hurdles in achieving his goals due to lack of availability of professional help to guide them on the right path and conquer their desires. And to make this possible the authors have proposed the following:

1) Initiatives to be taken to avoid mental illness:

- a) Giving mental health the priority above all is the primary step our government needs to take. Every college needs to have funds kept aside for the sole purpose of spreading mental health awareness. Colleges need to have separate committees where students can volunteer for the cause and brainstorm new approaches to reach out to maximum people. Making posters and preparing street plays and using social media to reach a larger audience is just another effective example.



*Figure 9: Mental health poster*

-Next, it should be made mandatory to have a group of professional mental health counsellors in every college and school. Students should feel welcomed to come and share their stories and ask for help and to achieve this, regular seminars need to be conducted explaining the need for a healthy mind, symptoms of anxiety and depression, and more importantly that it is perfectly alright if one feels mental distress. Everyone should be encouraged to look out for their friends and extend help if they detect the slightest symptoms. At the commencement of every semester a basic acute test should be taken consisting of questions pertaining to students' mental health and based on the results the college can strategize their program.



The application should have a very strong and capable algorithm to fetch data and analyse it. For example, if a student is liking a lot of negative images, comments and using negative language, the algorithm should be able to assess it and have a virtual assistant who would try to make start a conversation making him feel heard and wanted and then convince him to take a simple test which would narrow down to what he might be suffering and its severity. Further, the bot could share the importance to get treated and find a psychologist near him or in his college. The application should also have an option to help those who already know what they suffer from and have reminders and notification of articles/videos useful to him. For example, if a student shares with the app that he has low self-confidence and is demotivated then the app could run the web and gather short daily motivational, articles, inspirational short stories, and images and have timely pop-ups telling him he can do it and various and related quotes. It can also have a to-do list and the app can keep inspiring the student to finish what they have planned for the day.

- d) Another beneficial feature it could have is a zen mode which on activating students won't be able to use their device for the selected time and could focus on themselves and their thoughts or give their valuable time to their priorities and strengthening their skills. Students can also register themselves as volunteers after passing a test that declares they have good mental health to organize events and the app would notify them if they could help anyone around them by doing the least like hearing them out. Certified volunteers would receive a letter of recommendation after strict checking and count as social service hours devoted to their CVs. This would encourage more people to come forward and help their mates. This application can be an all in one helping hand to the students on a national base.



*Figure 11: Software Applications*

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### 2) Initiatives to be taken by the counsellors after detecting unhealthy symptoms:

- a) If a student shows any physiological, behavioural, voice, or other symptoms, he/she should be advised to take interviews, Baker Depression Scale, and Hamilton Depression Scale tests by the counsellor to identify the type and level of severity of the illness and the causes that instigated the same. Further medical tests can be done based on the previous results to make conclusions and prescribe medicines by the doctor. The college counsellor should make sure that the student does not feel intimidated by any of this and attends regular therapy. Interventions can be done if the individual seems to be inclining towards harmful addictions which might give him temporary relief.

### 3) Initiatives to be taken by individuals:

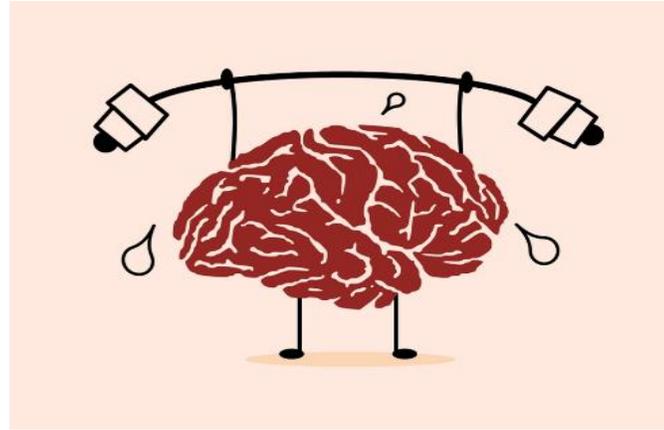
- a) Keeping your mind healthy should be every individual's priority. And to achieve that the brain needs the right food so one should make sure he is following a correct diet which includes all the necessary nutrients. Our bodies need fruits, vegetables, and foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids to boost mental health. Daily consumption of nuts and seeds has proven to be a very efficient brain-food as these are enriched with antioxidants and omega 3 fatty acids which can protect the brain from oxidative stress.

Another very important ingredient is cocoa. Cocoa contains flavonoids which encourage neuron and blood vessel growth in parts of the brain responsible for memory and learning.



*Figure 12: Healthy Diet and Nutrition*

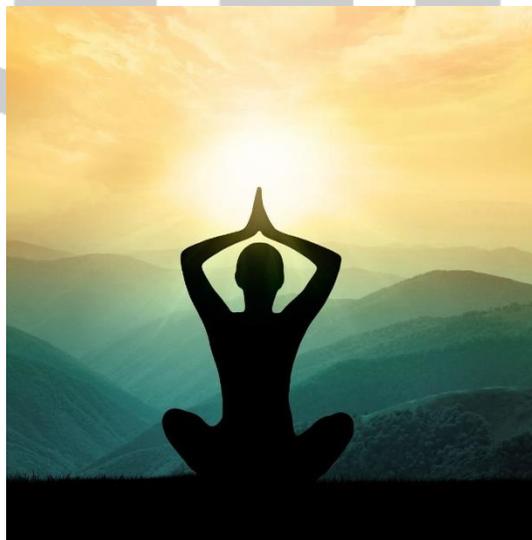
- b) Daily exercise for the brain is as important as for our bodies. Reading books is the best exercise for your brain. Staying away from electronic devices and devote an hour to reading will improve our knowledge and give our brains its needed exercise. Solving puzzles and different quizzes also give our brains a good exercise and increase their efficiency.



*Figure 13: Mental Exercises*

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- c) Yoga and meditation work in harmony with exercise for improving our mental health. Starting our day with ten minutes of meditation can also do wonders. Meditation can connect you to your emotions. It helps in reducing stress and addictions, gives us the strength to handle chronic pains, boosts self-esteem and self-confidence, and improves focus, concentration, tolerance, and patience.



*Figure 14: Physical Exercises*

### Conclusion

The growing prominence of gadgets and the visual world is something every teenager admires in today's era, but every coin has two sides. Is it not that the world started as a dream and is ending towards a nightmare. Students' mental state greatly reflects in their intellect and academia. The researchers conclude that students' mental health is in a very fragile state and needs attention. No doubt technology is the backbone of this generation but this so-called digital age demands a united step towards a healthy mental state.

Crafting proper protection in the electronic realm has always been a complex endeavor. It requires a keen awareness of not only the visual world but also changes in how youngsters use technology and how these changes are pushing them to the edges of the current situation that is nothing but deteriorating their state of mind.

The increased use of social media is a major factor resulting in the growing percentage of students suffering from anxiety, aggression, stress, suicidal thoughts, brain dysfunctionality, loss of confidence, lack of self-regulation, and harmful addictions like smoking and intake of drugs, weakening their mental health all over the world.

The environment of universities and institutes also plays a very important role in making sure that their students have good and positive mental health. Family problems, peer pressure, one's friend circle, comparing oneself to others, and college curriculum pressure and assignments are also reasons that contribute to the deteriorating health of today's youth.

According to the many types of research done and surveys conducted by various health experts, students and professionals, we have come to the conclusion that all students should be warned of the pros and cons of this virtual and digital world from the very beginning in schools via awareness programs and

regular counseling sessions by experts and by parents to encourage them to have optimal mental health. The colleges need to make sure that students don't feel pressured under any circumstances and have counselors to guide them and be available for them throughout the semesters. It is very important to inculcate healthy habits like exercising every day, doing yoga, meditating, and reading more books in students from childhood to establish good mental health which will prepare them for every challenge that life throws at them.



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