



Original Article

The Impact of NEP 2020 on Student Mental Health: A Psychological Perspective

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Abstract

The state of a person's "mental health," which includes their emotional, psychological, and social well-being, is just as important as their physical health. Nowadays, mental health care and its administration are more important than ever. It is crucial that individuals with mental health disorders receive the support they require to manage, as the number of people suffering from these issues is on the rise. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a dramatic shift in India's educational landscape by emphasizing a holistic approach that integrates emotional, social, and cognitive development. This policy emphasizes the need of students' academic achievement while simultaneously highlighting the need of students' emotional and mental well-being in the classroom. In line with the goals of NEP 2020, this research looks at ways to improve students' health and happiness in the classroom by examining things like positive teacher-student connections, a welcoming environment, creative and physical education, and new approaches to instruction.

Keywords: New Education Policy, Social, Well-being, Mental health, Counselling.

Introduction

A person's health is paramount and essential to their existence. Various viewpoints and academic fields have shown a great deal of interest in this area of research throughout the years. A new subfield of psychology called "Health Psychology" has emerged as a result of numerous psychologists around the world focusing on health-related issues. More and more, people are seeing health as encompassing not only a person's physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being, but also their overall physical condition and the efficiency with which their bodies perform. In the Dictionary of Education (1959, p. 263), Carter V. Good defines mental health as "the wholesomeness of the mind." This refers to the state of one's mental faculties. A person can adapt to their changing environment with the help of education, which promotes balanced development in all areas of their personality. Having a positive school climate helps students adapt to their new surroundings. One of the most important aspects of education is the school climate, which has a direct impact on students' emotional and psychological well-being as well as their ability to learn. All students should be able to access high-quality physical facilities and relevant learning resources in an inclusive and supportive school climate where they are encouraged to explore their interests and develop their skills. Every school should strive to instill these values in its students. A positive school climate, good mental health, and quality education all go hand in hand. Creating a supportive school climate is crucial for students' mental health and academic success.

There was a sea change in India's educational system when the National Education Policy 2020 was implemented. Its stated goal was to make education more accessible and modern for students in the twenty-first century. Digital learning, interdisciplinary studies, and competency-based education are the pillars upon which NEP 2020 rests. It supports vocational training beginning in Grade 6 and continues through Grade 4, uses mother language as the medium of instruction in the early years, and substitutes the traditional 10+2 structure with a 5+3+3+4 curricular framework (Ministry of Education, 2020). Students' mental health has suffered as a result of the policy's hasty implementation and the digital transition, particularly in the aftermath of COVID-19.

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Students' mental health is under assault from a variety of sources, including mounting academic pressure, screen addiction, anxiety about failing to meet expectations, and a lack of clarity surrounding the many interdisciplinary course options available to them. The effects of these systemic changes on students' mental health are discussed in this study, along with adaptation techniques and the responsibilities played by institutions in fostering psychological resilience.

Concept of Mental Health

Whenever physical health is being discussed in relation to psychological wellness, the phrase "mental health" is utilized. A state of full physical, mental and social well-being and not just the absence of disease or disability is what the World Health Organization (WHO) calls mental health (2001). Because it is common knowledge that a healthy mind allows a well-functioning body to do its job, maintaining good mental and physical health is of paramount importance. A person with this condition can adapt to stressful situations in a healthy way and remain resilient in the face of adversity. He benefits both himself and his neighborhood as a result of this. To sum up, mental health can be defined as the degree to which an individual is emotionally and psychologically stable, able to make appropriate use of their cognitive and emotional capacities, participate meaningfully in society, and cope with the day-to-day challenges they face. Figure 1 depicts the trans-domain model of health, which offers a holistic view of health based on the three domains of health described by WHO (2015) and Huber et al. (2011). According to this definition, there are three forms of health: physical, mental, and social. Each form of health is defined by a basic level of adaption and functioning. Dynamic integration or synergy across the domains occurs in four areas (Patil, 2022).



Figure 1- Trans-domain Model of Health

When an individual is mentally healthy, they are able to "realize his or her own abilities, cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and fruitfully, and make a contribution to his or her community," as stated by the World Health Organization. Resilience and self-control are hallmarks of a mentally healthy person (Huber, et-al, 2011). Maintaining good mental health is just as important as maintaining good physical health in today's fast-paced, high-stress world if we want to make it through each day unscathed.

Highlights of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020

Several policies are being crafted to meet the specific needs of different student populations across all levels of education, from elementary school to college, in accordance with NEP 2020. In order to improve educational standards, NEP 2020 proposes a variety of systemic adjustments. The first step is to increase the Gross Enrollment Ratio by 50% by 2035, which would be achieved by adding 3.5 crore more seats to the current capacity. As a second objective, it aspires to provide an undergraduate program that is diverse in its subject matter and emphasis. A three- or four-year undergraduate curriculum with many exits is also recommended. Finally, the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) would have control over all Indian universities, with the exception of those that offer degrees in medicine or law. Public and private universities alike will be subject to the watchful eye of the Higher Education Coordinating Institute (HECI), which will also investigate the effectiveness and consistency of these processes. Fourthly, it hopes to improve schools by giving students access to sufficient materials and qualified teachers. Independent colleges, together with those that prioritize research and teaching, will be bolstered in the long run. The report finishes with five suggestions, including as an open hiring procedure, measures to improve teacher performance, and the creation of courses through interdependence. Finally, the National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE 2021) is to be developed in conjunction with NCERT. Using this model, we can determine what teachers need in terms of minimal credential status. On a national level, it also intends to set up a mentorship mission with seasoned educators.

Scholarships for students from ST, SC, OBC, and SEDG categories will be administered through a National Scholarship Portal, which aims to accomplish the aforementioned goals. It also includes improving virtual learning, expanding access to high-

quality open and distance learning courses, bolstering local Indian languages, assisting adult education, and using new technologies in educational institutions. Individuals cultivate attributes including self-awareness, emotional intelligence, social competence, and physical health through a process known as "social and emotional learning," or SEL. In a modern workplace that increasingly values empathy, flexibility, and teamwork, these talents are more important than ever. An important principle of India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is the promotion of students' emotional and psychological well-being. It is recognized that a nurturing school atmosphere is crucial for enhancing students' mental health. Research has demonstrated that a more supportive school environment can have a significant impact on students' mental health, namely their capacity to manage stress and anxiety.

NEP 2020's Provisions for Mental Health

A lot of people are talking about how crucial it is to make sure that school policies are for kids' overall health and happiness since the NEP 2020 guidelines on mental health started it all. The rules are a crucial step toward creating a school climate that promotes children's emotional resiliency and mental wellness. By NEP 2020, counselling programs that help students cope with stress and adjust emotionally will have met the mental health needs of students (Patil, 2022). In the policy, it is explicitly stated that "professional academic and career counselling available to all students" and that "counsellors to ensure physical, psychological and emotional well-being (Ministry of Education, 2020)." Academic and career counselling are just two of the many support services that will be available to all enrolled students. Furthermore, there will be an adequate number of counsellors assigned to guarantee that students' psychological, emotional, and physiological well-being are attended to. It is very clear what this project is trying to accomplish: creating a safe space where students at HEIs may go to get support for things like mental health, academic stress, and personal problems. The rule also accounts for the fact that getting a degree may be a very stressful ordeal for many students. A more flexible and interdisciplinary curriculum is being advocated for by the policy for this same reason. One way the technique aims to assist students cope with worry and stress is by reducing the emphasis on memorization and high-stakes testing. With this change, students will have greater leeway to investigate their own academic passions and excel in more areas. A strong campus community is emphasized once again in the policy as a way to improve academic performance. Here, students can choose from a wide variety of extracurriculars, including as sports, environmental clubs, cultural events, and community service. By providing students with opportunity to unwind, interact with others, and grow as individuals, these diverse pursuits aim to improve their mental health. In conclusion, having a thriving campus life is good for your mental health and can help you achieve your academic goals. Important for kids' development as whole people, these programs offer chances for socialization, skill development, and community building outside of the typical classroom context. A number of vulnerable demographics have their specific needs addressed by the policy, including students from low-income backgrounds or those with exceptional needs. Individualized support systems are in high demand as a means to assist students in thriving emotionally and cognitively. Additionally, the strategy suggests that "the nutrition and health (including mental health) of children will be addressed, through healthy meals and the introduction of well-trained social workers, counsellors, and community involvement into the schooling system" (NEP-2020). Counsellors and psychologists should be readily available in schools, and those who work in the field should receive adequate training to help kids in need. It is the responsibility of schools to create and execute programs that promote mental health. These programs should include initiatives to raise awareness and educate parents, teachers, and students about mental health. For mental health issues to be effectively addressed, the policy stresses even more that schools and other stakeholders, such as parents, community groups, and healthcare providers, must work together. The NEP 2020 includes several important provisions concerning mental health, including:

- Awareness and sensitization: Raising understanding of mental health issues among school personnel, parents, and children is a priority for the policy. In order to combat the prejudice and stigma that surround mental health issues, it urges the implementation of awareness campaigns. "Mandatory life skills" (such as knowing one's way around a computer, budgeting, communicating effectively, taking care of one's health, being an informed consumer, supporting one's family, and being able to plan for one's future). the year 2020
- Counselling services: To help students cope with emotional challenges and find direction in life, the policy suggests that all schools implement counselling services. "Counselling systems for handling stress and emotional adjustments shall be in every education institution." the year 2020
- Mental health curriculum: The policy's stated goal is to increase students' mental health literacy by having classes on mental health included in standard school curricula. The Anganwadi system's health examinations and growth tracking services should be extended to elementary school and Anganwadi Preparatory Class pupils as well. "Health cards will be issued to monitor the same, and all school children shall undergo regular health check-ups," the statement read. "They shall immunize themselves to the tune of one hundred percent in school." the year 2020
- Support for special needs students: Adequate support and accommodations are required to address the unique mental health needs of children with exceptional needs, as acknowledged in the policy.
- Capacity building: Teachers and other school staff must be better equipped to deal with children's mental health concerns, according to the policy. Scientific explanations of the detrimental and damaging effects of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs will also be included in the curriculum, along with basic health training in areas such as mental health, disaster response, personal and public hygiene, good nutrition, and basic first aid. the year 2020

Recognizing the crucial role of mental health in the education system, the National Education Policy 2020 emphasizes the need for a comprehensive approach to encouraging excellent mental health practices and addressing the needs and challenges of all students.

Conclusion

The significant issue of students' mental health may not be adequately addressed by the NEP 2020, despite its best efforts. Despite their importance, the suggestions made in NEP 2020 will not be enough to tackle the complex issues related to mental health that have been made worse by the rise of online learning. Therefore, the measures under NEP 2020 may not completely contain the complex challenges influencing mental health in digital education, notwithstanding their desirable nature. To tackle the countless issues that technology's ubiquitous presence is ever-presenting, a more nuanced and realistic approach is needed. It is critical that lawmakers, educators, and society at large collaborate to resolve the increasing number of problems associated with technology. These include decreased privacy and security, shorter attention spans, and an increase in inaccurate information and misleading suggestions. In spite of the fact that minority populations often face unique challenges that can contribute to higher rates of mental health issues, the policy continues to disregard this reality, highlighting the need for a more targeted approach to meet the specific needs of these populations. This emphasizes the paramount importance of finding more practical ways to ensure that people from all walks of life, regardless of their race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, caste, or financial situation, have equitable access to mental health services. Finally, NEP 2020 should be commended for the significant progress it has achieved in recognizing the significance of mental health. We desperately need a more comprehensive and flexible approach to properly protect students' mental health in the fast-changing world of digital education. The unending jubilation should serve as a constant reminder that we must continually assess, modify, and create in order to tackle the myriad difficulties posed by the digital era. We must also make sure that Indian educational systems prioritize the emotional and personal growth of our students while they adapt to new technologies. The only way to guarantee a better and more equitable future for students is with such steadfast devotion and commitment.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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