

**PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH OF STUDENTS AND TEACHERS: A  
PERSPECTIVE**

**Dr. Pradnyashailee Sawai**

Assistant Professor

Department of English

Government Vidarbha Institute of Science and Humanities,  
Amravati (Maharashtra)

**Abstract**

Mental and physical health is fundamentally linked. There are multiple associations between mental and physical conditions that significantly impact quality life of people, demands on health care and other publicly funded services and generate consequences to society. The world health organization (WHO) defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely absence of disease”. The WHO states that “There is no health without mental health.” The social determinants of health impact both chronic physical conditions and mental health. Key aspects of prevention include increasing physical activity, access to nutritious foods, ensuring adequate income and fostering social inclusion and social support. This creates opportunities to enhance protective factors and reduce risk factors related to aspects of mental and physical health.

**Keywords :** Physical, Mental, Health, Students, Teachers

Understanding the links between mind and body is the first step in developing strategies to reduce the incidence of co-existing conditions and giving support to those already living with mental illness and chronic physical conditions. Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make contributions to society. Physical health is the general condition of a person in all aspects. It is also a level of functional and metabolic efficiency of an organism. Mental health is a term used to describe either a level of cognitive or emotional well-being or an absence of a mental disorder. Mental health is the capacity to express our emotions and adapt to a range of demands.

The relationship between physical exercise and psychological well-being is quite prominent. The students who are engaged in vigorous physical activity are having a good psychological well-being and are less likely to consult a doctor for symptoms of physical ill-health than their less active peers. Consumption of alcohol and drugs and other unhealthy habits have a bad effect on the mental and physical health of students. Some students may suffer from

depression due to various reasons. Depression is related to self-esteem and social – connectedness. Lack of social support or low socio-economic status may badly affect the mental and physical health of students. Sexual abuse, trauma experienced in childhood may give them a very weak position in the educational environment. They may lose self-confidence which can result in poor mental and physical health. Especially the female students are victims of sexual abuse as they are having regular interactions with young men in social situations in which alcohol or drugs are consumed to a certain level.

Some students may stay away from home for purpose of education. They have to relocate to a new city at some distance from home. There are challenges of having to meet a new group of peers. There is a stress of adjustment with new people, environment, timetable for courses and assignments, the requirement to work with other and the anxieties around examination which may adversely affect their mental and physical health. If English language proficiency is inadequate, this can lead to a range of problems. The most obvious of these is a detrimental effect on academic performance. Students may find it difficult to understand lectures, take notes and complete assignments. They may underperform in examinations. They can find it difficult to speak up in seminars or to ask questions. A poor grasp of English can also make it hard for students to integrate into the academic culture and to engage in social interactions. Emotional involvement with friends or teachers and improper handling of emotional issues can play a major role in adversely affecting the physical and mental health of students. Sometimes it may also lead to serious consequences such as suicidal attempts and suicides.

The students who take fresh admissions to the institutes of higher education need support and care. Induction and orientation activities should be spread throughout the first year, providing ongoing guidance and information to the students. ‘Buddy’ systems can provide mentoring and support. This sometimes take the form of schemes in which senior students act as ‘parents’ for those newly arrived. Training, guidance and health promotion events should be organized to awaken the students. Counsellors should be appointed or teachers can act as consellers for imparting counseling regarding psychological and academic difficulties. Consultation to staff concerned about students, workshops for students and staff, written materials to guide students and staff in their responses to students in distress. Online information about how to help with study and mental health difficulties.

Collaboration with others with responsibility for mental well-being is important. Contribution of teachers to institutional policy making on mental health matter and liaison with NGOs for mental and physical health awareness programmes should be done. Counseling is a systematic process which gives individuals the opportunity to explore , discover and clarify ways of living more resourcefully with a greater sense of well-being. It may be concerned with addressing and resolving specific problems, making decisions, coping with crises, working through conflict or improving relationships with others. Most counseling is of individuals, although many services offer group counseling as well. The most common issues which students may bring to counselors are depression, anxiety, problems in relationships, loss and worries about their academic progress etc. Universities should provide counseling services for staff of affiliated academic institutions. This will help them judge whether or not a referral to counseling is appropriate. Provision of support and advices by the counseling services often enable academic staff to continue helping students without overstepping the boundaries of their roles.

Many services offer students a range of workshop on, for example, procrastination, examination anxiety, transitions, stress and relationships. They can supply written and internet based information about common, emotional and learning difficulties. Services often work with student unions and other students support staff to promote mental and physical health of students. This may be termed as 'Psychoeducation'. Mental and physical health advisors should be appointed to bring a health related provision together to create health and well-being teams.

Higher education can offer enormous potential to positively influence the health and well being of students, staff and the wider community through education, research, knowledge exchange and institutional practice. Investment for health within educational sector also contribute to core agendas such as staff and student recruitment and retention and hence enhance the institutional and societal productivity. Students spend maximum time of their life in the academic institutions. Therefore they should have the teachers who have the ability to teach, love and build moral qualities. And for being these kind of able teachers one must be healthy, mentally and physically. There have been many studies conducted on mental and physical health of teachers in relation to various variables. According to these studies, almost all the teachers concerned with higher education are healthy, physically and mentally. The state of working bears no relation to mental health while social values are positively related to mental and physical health of teachers.

“A teacher with bad mental and physical health not only tends to incapacitate himself for the performance of his multifarious duties but also creates difficulties and problems for his or her students.” Most of the female teachers concerned with higher education are in a dilemma of how to perform and harmonize the social and family responsibilities well, which has been a heavy burden on them and has a bad effect on their health. They are burdened by occupational stress, coping resource of academics and their relationships. They are stressed due to role overload and responsibilities. All the teachers should use recreational activities such as T.V, Music, social support from friends to get relief from mental tensions. Studies indicate that correlation between occupational stress and mental health is negative. Correlation between mental health and coping resources is positive and significant.

Individual factors of teachers not only influence their work, but also bring deep and everlasting impact on the development of the students. The sentiment state of a teacher not only influences the cognition, motive and behavior system of the teacher, but also brings direct and indirect influences on the students. The significant positive correlations between measures of adjustment i.e home, health, emotional and occupational responsibilities and that of organizational commitments have depicted rightly that the teachers have proper adjustment in the areas of home, health and occupation. Besides the guidance of experienced persons, the individuals also have to learn from his or her own experiences and thereby he or she shapes, develops and modifies the personality.

Stress plays a major role in everyone's health. It can be defined as the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them. Excessive performance is costly to employees and can make them ill. Most teachers experience pressure on a daily basis. Some pressure can be good, even enjoyable. Some people may derive satisfaction from trying to overcome mental or physical challenges. Pressure can motivate people to perform better. However the pressure must be proportionate to the needs of the situation, the time limits and the individual's capacity to cope and control. This capacity varies according to the

individual. Long term pressure can lead to stress, which can be the cause of mental and physical illness. Possible symptoms of stress include exhaustion, exhaustion, headache, increased pulse rate, sweating and pain in the back, shoulders or neck. It can bring about illnesses such as heart diseases or stroke, high blood pressure, digestive disorder, skin problems, infections, asthma and even cancer. Teachers suffering from stress may also be more susceptible to infections such as cold and flu. Stress may lead to behavioral changes such as anxiety, panic attacks, fatigue, sleeplessness, becoming withdrawn, depression, mood swings, irritability, neglect of personal appearance, frequent absences, aggression, unwillingness to accept advice or co-operate with others, increased use of cigarettes, coffee, alcohol and other drugs, overworking and difficulty in maintaining concentration and above all personal relationships can also suffer.

Teachers can maintain a good physical and mental health by following these simple measures;

- There should be work and life balance.
- Feelings and experiences should be shared with colleagues.
- Routine administrative and clerical tasks add to the workload but do not require the professional skills, expertise and professional judgement of a qualified teacher.
- A lack of perceived job control is significantly associated with high blood pressure and heart rate. There should be freedom to the innovative and make full use of one's skills and competencies.
- An appropriate work plan should be chalked and followed properly. Unreasonable deadlines should not be entertained.
- Identify the classroom support and curriculum resources you need to deliver and be well prepared for giving best results.
- Co-operate the colleagues and seek their co-operation in academic activities.

It is generally accepted that group cohesion and co-operation is conducive to a healthy working environment and may help protect teachers against stress and burnout. Where this sense of togetherness is absent, poor peer relationships manifest themselves in low solidarity, lack of co-operation and interpersonal conflict. If you think you are being bullied, harassed or subjected to other forms of unacceptable behavior by colleagues, it is important to keep a record of what has happened and to seek an early remedy. Don't keep the problem to yourself. Find out whether colleagues also face the same problem and find out the solution collectively.

The behavior of the students impact significantly on a teacher's sense of well-being. Disruptive behavior can range from low level disruption, which frustrates the delivery of lessons to incidents of verbal and physical assault that seem to intimidate staff and often result in short or long term breakdown in physical or mental health. The teachers should speak to supportive colleagues about successful strategies to manage difficult students. The incidents of verbal and physical abuse should always be reported to the authorities. Role related factors most usually contribute to the stress of the teachers when there is a clash of two or more expectations, duties or responsibilities and fulfilling one makes accomplishment of another more difficult.

Therefore it is important to manage the roles and responsibilities in a proper manner. Teachers struggling with well-being or mental health issues are often reluctant to disclose the fact because of the fear that it will affect the way they are treated within the workplace. Specifically, they feel it will reduce their career opportunities within the college/University or

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their chances of moving to another. It is clear that attitudes to mental health and well-being must change significantly. A culture should be created in which there is a comfortable recognition that stress may be useful and natural part of living. A high quality support and training should be provided which should include emotional support of colleagues.

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