

Psychosocial Health and Well-Being of Children

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The Ministry of Education with the help of National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) had conducted the Mental Health Survey keeping in view of the perspectives of National Education Policy, 2020 which emphasizes students' mental health and well-being in order to provide holistic development. The survey was undertaken to explore the perception of students with regard to their mental health. The items of the survey gave an opportunity to the students to reflect and introspect their feelings and emotions on aspects that positively or negatively influence their perceptions of well-being. A total of 3,79,842 students of classes 6 to 12 from different schools across the country participated in the survey. The Survey Report was released by the Ministry of Education on 06th September, 2022. The overall findings of the survey indicate that: majority of students expressed feeling responsible for doing well in their life, are satisfied with school life, are trustworthy, do not hesitate in seeking social support. However a decline is observed in student's responses about their physical appearance, satisfaction with personal and school life, and availability of people to share their feelings and experience of happiness, as they move from middle to secondary stage.

Happiness was the most common emotion/feeling reported by both boys and girls. Students also reported frequent mood swings, feeling anxious about studies, examinations, and results which increased from middle to secondary stage and were reported more by girls in comparison to boys. Coping strategies adopted by students reveal their preference for yoga and meditation, changing the way they think, writing journals, and self-reflection.

The Ministry of Education has undertaken an initiative, named, 'Manodarpan', covering a wide range of activities to provide psychosocial support to students, teachers and families for Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing during the COVID outbreak and beyond. A Working Group, having experts from the fields of education, mental health and psychosocial issues as its members, has been set up to monitor and promote the mental health issues and concerns of students and to facilitate providing of support to address the mental health and psychosocial aspects during and after COVID-19 lockdown, through counselling services, online resources and helpline. Under the Manodarpan initiative a Web page (URL: <http://manodarpan.education.gov.in>) has been created on the Ministry of Education website carrying advisory guidelines, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), Practical tips, posters, videos, do's and don'ts for students, teachers/faculty and families for psychosocial support have been uploaded on the Web-page. A National Toll-free Helpline (**8448440632**) for a country-wide outreach to students from schools, colleges and universities to provide them tele-counselling to address their mental health and psychosocial issues during and after the COVID-19 situation has been set up, which has been functional since 21st July, 2020. All the State and Union Territory Governments were advised to give wide publicity to the Manodarpan initiative of this Ministry so that the interested students/teachers/parent could make full use of these services.

NCERT has been engaged in strengthening the capacity of teachers and counsellors to extend the support to the students for their emotional and mental well-being, help to deal with fear and find ways of dealing with these. NCERT offers the Diploma Course in Guidance and Counselling (DCGC) with teacher counsellor model so that such teacher apart from teaching can also extend help to students in dealing with academic, personal and career-related issues.

Modular Handbook on Early Identification and Intervention for Mental Health Problems in School Going Children has been developed in collaboration with Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI) which contains guidelines for early identification, detection and intervention of mental health problems (stress/illness) in school- going children, for hands-on training of teachers, counsellors and other stakeholders. The Handbook was launched by Ministry of Education on 06th September, 2022.

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) provides pre and post examination tele-counselling

facilities through centralized toll-free helpline. Due to the corona pandemic, CBSE started an additional Toll-Free Tele Helpline on CORONA VIRUS safeguards for students. The Board has published material on how to be stress free. Audio-visual presentations on issues affecting mental health during this crisis were made available on official YouTube and Facebook handles of CBSE. CBSE has also brought out a manual on mental health and psychosocial wellbeing during Covid. CBSE has launched mental well-being app 'Dost for Life', to provide free counselling sessions by principals and counselors.

The information was given by the Minister of State for Education, Smt. Annpurna Devi in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha today.

MJPS/AK

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