

Traversing the Mental Labyrinths of the Most at Risk

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Abstract

There is nothing more fascinating, tragic, frightening or relevant than the depth of the human mind. As the hot button issue of the era of 2020s, mental health has been seemingly name dropped in so many unknown streets of civilisation and called marbles, saneness and the likes like a celebrity. And just like a misunderstood celebrity, when asked about it, all we hear are stutters. So, as educators, it's our moral duty to mould beliefs and to make the willing mindsets challenge and relearn what has always been. Children, adolescents, the elderly, refugees, asylum seekers and the LGBTQ+ people- what's common among them? It's their vulnerability. They're all trespassers on the land of the 'more' mature, 'more' capable, 'more' belonging, and 'more' morally correct respectively. Forced to take up less space, they are in a constant mental battle with these societal evils which is always overlooked. This article entitled 'Traversing the Mental Labyrinths of the Most at Risk' hopes to bring to light the mental struggles of the misunderstood.

Keywords: Adolescents, Refugees, Fascinating, Saneness, Vulnerability

INTRODUCTION:

A wise human once said, "If you don't know history, then you don't know anything. You are a leaf that doesn't know it's part of a tree." The history of mental health has been a long one. Starting from ancient times when people often saw mental illness as something caused by spirits or gods. Over time, especially during the Enlightenment, attitudes shifted toward more compassionate care and early psychiatry. Today, the focus is on understanding mental health better, breaking the stigma, and ensuring everyone has access to the support they need. Hence, let's begin with the most fundamental question: what exactly is mental health? It is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community. But these are simply definitions for something as expansive of a concept as mental health couldn't possibly be defined in two to three lines. We say we are the modern society, the broadminded individuals accepting of all people and illnesses alike. And while most might agree- talking extensively of how much they've broadened their boundaries to become warm shoulders to the sufferers- there are some too who stay hidden in dark corners afraid to even verbalise the injustice. We're all familiar with the dining table arrangement where the powerful stay seated at the head chair, authoritative and cold. The side chairs being taken up by their followers, with unquestioning belief and respect for them. The lone chair belongs to the least respected and cared for, always sitting in last, not before serving everyone and satisfying them. Our society has always been this metaphorical household dining table. The head chair belongs to the top tier bearers- the

capable and worthy individuals, followed by the people they influence with their beliefs and lastly the ones getting a seat in the end in this metaphor are the vulnerable communities of LGBTQ+ folks, the refugees, asylum seekers, children, adolescents and the elderly.

PURPOSE OF THE NARRATIVE:

These groups face unique challenges, often battling systemic inequalities, societal biases, and a lack of representation or support. Despite their resilience and strength, they are frequently placed in positions of struggle, highlighting the stark contrasts within the social order and the pressing need for equity and compassion. Therefore, this think piece is meant to contradict the assumed and raise awareness on the dearth of mental health representation of these groups which they have been deprived of for centuries. Some of the major issues to be discussed are as follows:

- Assessing the mental health and psychological condition of people Addressing new mental health issues and determining the burden and frequency of mental illnesses
- Being aware of the effects of mental health problems:
- Knowing the effects of mental illnesses, the disability they cause, and the socioeconomic impact of mental health issues.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

A Mental Health Survey was conducted having particular questions connected to symptoms of mental illnesses, emotional stability, stress levels, coping mechanisms, and availability of mental health services. In this study, the author has targeted especially those having the age of adolescence and being the students of different types of educational institutions where most of the students are from rural background, having less financial resources and less exposure to facilities. Some of the crucial questions out of questionnaire were as follows:

- How would you rate your overall mental health?
- Have you experienced any of the mental health concerns like depression, anxiety, frustration, suicidal thoughts etc. in the past few weeks?
- Have you noticed any changes in your mood, appetite, or sleep patterns?
- What do you usually do to manage stress or difficult emotions?
- How often do you practice self-care activities (e.g., hobbies, relaxation)?
- How would you rate your academic pressure?
- Have you experienced any panic attacks or episodes of intense fear due to exams or grades?
- Do you feel pressure from parents, teachers, or yourself to achieve high grades?
- Have you experienced any traumatic events (e.g., abuse, neglect, bullying or harassment)?
- Have you ever used substances (e.g., alcohol, drugs) or unhealthy coping mechanism (e.g., self-harm) to cope with stress or emotions?

THE MOST VULNERABLE MINDS:

(a) CHILDREN: THE ENDANGERED ORCHIDS

Childhood; the phase of life when we view everything in technicolour and when little to no heed is paid to our cries and whining. What's the concept of stress to us anyways? Studies show that children are prone to developing anxiety disorders, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), depression and other mood disorders, eating disorders, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These, if ignored, can disrupt the whole life of the child. So, it is important to notice behavioural differences and take action accordingly.

(b) ADOLESCENCE: THE SILENT BATTLE OF THE RACOUS

Every second of everyday, children believe what their parents say. And suddenly, one day they come to know that their mind is really their own; that they don't have to eat all the veggies; that they don't know if hell and heaven exists. That day, their parents are their gods no more and feel surprised that they feel good about it. Some parents take to this realisation well but many don't. Clashes, both mental and physical become a common occurrence. Being called conscious and conflicted the very next is what being an adolescent is. While we're busy misunderstanding their actions, they're busy pushing all their mental health under the rug. According to the WHO 2024 reports, Globally, one in seven 10-19-year-olds experiences a mental disorder, accounting for 15% of the global burden of disease in this age group. Depression, anxiety and behavioural disorders are among the leading causes of illness and disability among adolescents. Suicide is the third leading cause of death among those aged 15–29 years old. We fail to realise that these mood swings and behavioural changes are due to hormonal changes taking place in their changing bodies. Hence, there is a need to make them feel welcomed and understood but also forgiven for all their wrongdoings.

(c) ELDERLY EMOTIONS: THE UNSEEN STRUGGLES:

As you enter the later stages of life, the mental landscape gets distorted and changes shape and altogether. While being rich with wisdom, the elderly are prone to silent battles of loneliness, depression, and cognitive decline. All of these issues can take a turn for the worst if left unattended. Today, the world has become so developed compared to what it was like even 10 years ago. And while we might be advancing forward, it seems like we are digressing when it comes to upholding our family values. Children abandoning their elderly parents have become increasingly frequent. Exacerbated with the loss of family and friends are bound to grapple with feelings of isolation. Therefore, it is important that we inculcate values like respect and care for every member of the family and make sure that we keep a frequent check on their emotional state.

(d) REFUGEES:

Refugees often grapple with profound mental health challenges stemming from their displacement and traumatic experiences. Forced to flee their homes due to war, persecution, or natural disasters, many endure the psychological scars of violence, loss, and separation from loved ones. They often go through cultural alienation, financial instability, and the burden of rebuilding their lives from scratch. The stigma surrounding mental health in certain communities prevents many refugees from seeking help, leaving them isolated and vulnerable. Addressing these issues requires holistic interventions that combine

psychological support, community integration, and empowerment to help refugees regain a sense of stability and hope.

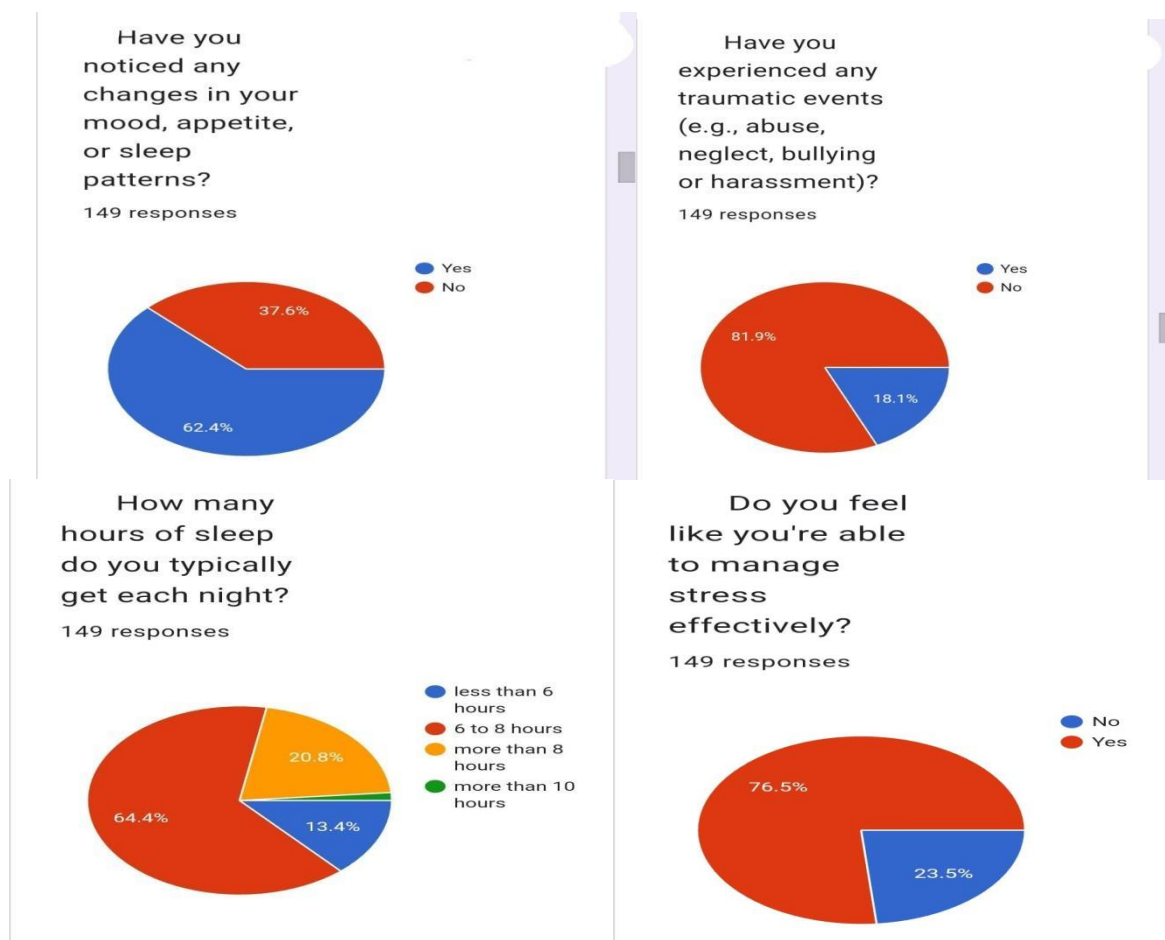
(e) UNMASKING MENTAL HEALTH IN LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY:

Despite the ever increasing openness for the LGBTQ+ community, there are still so many people from the community who are treated as inferior, some having been treated like animals. The constant battle with societal rejection, discrimination, and stigmatization takes a heavy toll, creating an environment of isolation and self-doubt. Many face an internal struggle to reconcile their true selves with societal expectations, leading to higher rates of anxiety, depression, and even suicidal thoughts. The journey of self-acceptance can feel like an uphill battle, where the lack of understanding and support only deepens the emotional scars.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

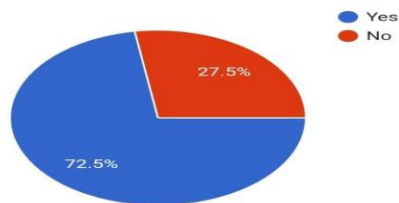
This article has covered only one part of the society and put focus on children/Students only.

Through a Mental Health Survey, some very important results came out.



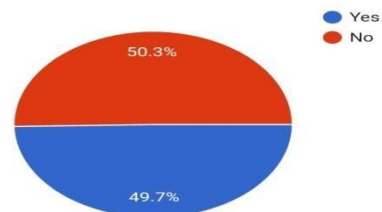
Do you feel like you can be honest with your friends about your struggles with mental health?

149 responses



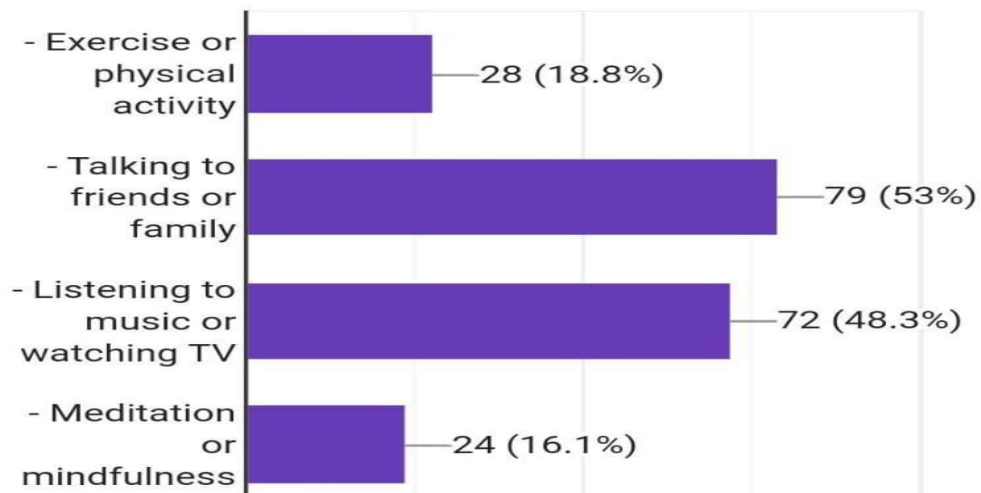
Do you engage in any physical activities like sports or exercise?

149 responses



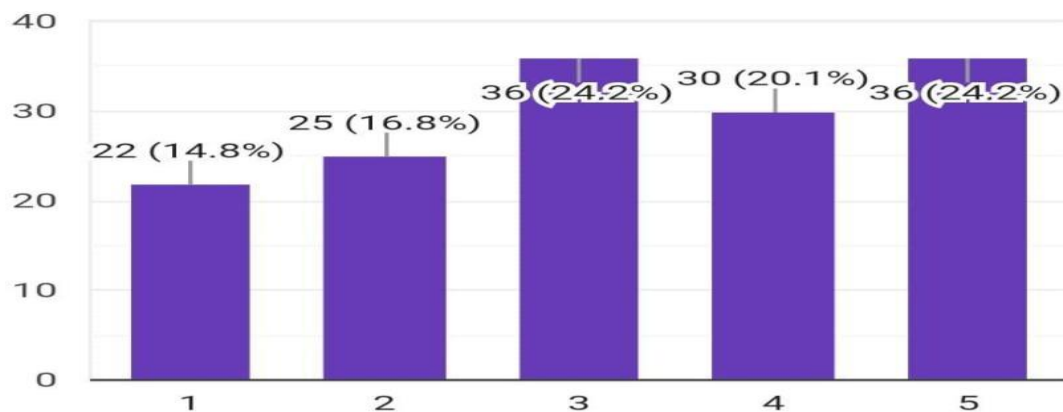
What do you usually do to manage stress or difficult emotions?
(Select all that apply)

149 responses



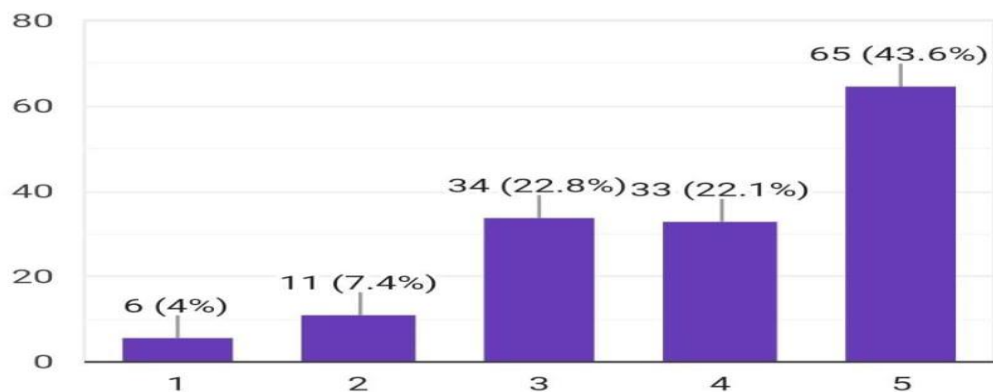
**How often
do you practice
self-care
activities (e.g.,
hobbies,
relaxation)?**

149 responses



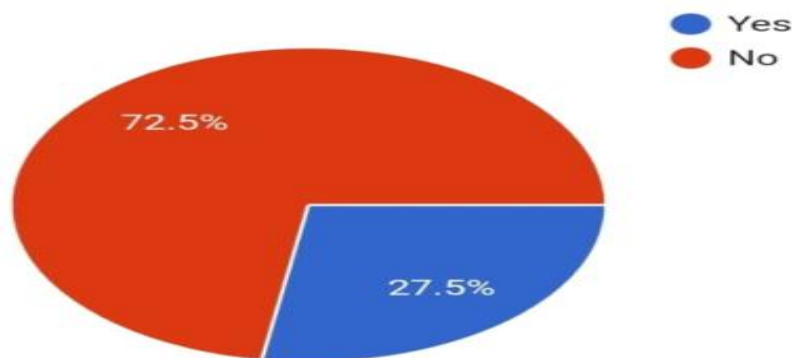
**How
satisfied are you
with the support
you receive from
friends and
family?**

149 responses



22. Would you like to talk to a counselor or mental health professional about your concerns?

149 responses



SUGGESTIONS:

Some of the suggestions if followed with an honest approach may be fruitful. However the output can be at a slow pace as it is very difficult to mold someone's mind instantly.

***CHILDREN-** Addressing children's mental health requires creating a safe, open environment for them to express their emotions, while providing access to therapy and support. Early intervention and strong familial and social support systems are essential in fostering emotional well-being.

***ADOLESCENTS should get** encouragement for open communication and active listening should also be there to help them express emotions. Strengthening the support systems through family involvement, peer groups, and school mental health programs can also be helpful.

***ELDERLY should be** encouraged social interaction through community engagement, technology, and volunteering to reduce isolation. We must ensure them access to mental health services like therapy and routine screenings for timely support

***REFUGEES** .must be provided accessible mental health services, psychosocial support, and trauma-informed care while addressing basic needs and reducing stigma. Foster community building, advocate for long-term solutions, and collaborate with governments and NGOs for sustainable impact is a must.

***LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY** must get access to affirmative therapy, inclusive spaces, and social support networks is crucial. Reducing stigma, promoting education, and providing gender-affirming care can further enhance well-being and resilience.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, all the groups discussed above are vulnerable in their own ways because of the hands they are dealt with. It is vital that we work towards improving the quality of life because at the end of the day, all of these groups are an integral part of our society. Mental health challenges affect diverse groups, including children, adolescents, the elderly, the LGBTQ+ community, and refugees, each facing unique struggles. It is crucial to recognize the specific needs of these populations and ensure access to appropriate support systems, compassionate care, and inclusive environments. By fostering awareness, empathy, and effective interventions, we can help mitigate the mental health disparities and empower individuals to live fulfilling lives.

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