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A Study on Factors Affecting Mental Health Among Upper Primary Students

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Abstract:
Mental health is an essential component of the overall development of children, particularly during the upper primary stage of education. The present study examines the major factors affecting mental health among upper primary students studying in Classes VI to VIII. During this developmental period, students experience significant physical, emotional, psychological, and social changes. Family environment, academic pressure, school climate, peer relationships, socioeconomic conditions, and digital media usage are important factors influencing their mental health. The study adopts a descriptive and analytical review method based on available literature and relevant reports. It focuses on understanding the influence of these factors on students' emotional stability, self-confidence, social adjustment, and academic performance. The paper also highlights the importance of parental support, teacher guidance, school counselling, and a positive learning environment in promoting psychological well-being. The study suggests that mental health awareness and emotional support should be integrated into school education to ensure the holistic development of children.

Keywords: Mental Health, Upper Primary Students, Academic Stress, Family Environment, Peer Relationships, Psychological Well-being.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education plays an important role in the physical, intellectual, emotional, and social development of children. Mental health is one of the essential dimensions of holistic education, as it influences students' thinking, learning, behaviour, relationships, and overall personality development. The upper primary stage, generally covering Classes VI to VIII, is a crucial period in which children experience several developmental changes associated with the transition from childhood to adolescence.

During this stage, students may experience emotional fluctuations, academic pressure, peer competition, family expectations, and difficulties in social adjustment. These factors may influence their confidence, concentration, behaviour, and academic performance. According to the World Health Organization, approximately one in seven adolescents experiences a mental health condition, highlighting the importance of early mental health promotion.

Family environment, parental support, school atmosphere, teacher behaviour, friendship, bullying, and digital technology are among the important factors affecting children's mental health. A supportive family and school environment can develop emotional security and confidence, whereas excessive academic pressure, family conflicts, and social rejection may create psychological difficulties.

In the present educational context, academic achievement often receives greater attention than students' emotional well-being. Therefore, understanding the factors affecting mental health among upper primary students is essential for parents, teachers, and educational administrators. The present study attempts to examine these factors and suggest suitable measures for promoting positive mental health among school children.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

1. Bronfenbrenner (1979), through his ecological systems theory, explained that children's development is influenced by family, school, peer groups, community, and broader social environments. This theory highlights the importance of environmental factors in shaping children's psychological development.
2. Erikson (1968) emphasized the importance of psychosocial development during childhood and adolescence. According to his theory, encouragement, recognition, and positive social experiences contribute to confidence and personality development, whereas repeated criticism and failure may create feelings of inferiority.
3. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) explained the relationship between stress and coping mechanisms. Their theory is relevant to understanding academic stress, examination anxiety, and the importance of emotional support in helping children manage challenging situations.
4. Balamurugan et al. (2024), in their systematic review of mental health issues among school children and adolescents in India, identified various concerns relating to depression, anxiety, stress, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and internet-related problems. The study emphasized the need for early identification and appropriate mental health support.
5. The World Health Organization (2025) highlighted the importance of supportive family relationships, positive school environments, healthy peer interactions, and early interventions in promoting adolescent mental health.

The reviewed literature indicates that mental health among upper primary students is influenced by multiple interconnected factors. However, greater attention is required to promote awareness, emotional support, and preventive measures at the school level.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study was undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To examine the importance of mental health among upper primary students.
2. To identify the major family-related factors affecting mental health among upper primary students.
3. To study the influence of academic pressure and school environment on students' psychological well-being.
4. To examine the impact of peer relationships, friendship, and bullying on students' mental health.
5. To analyse the influence of digital media and mobile phone usage on students' emotional development.
6. To suggest suitable measures for promoting positive mental health among upper primary students.

4. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

The following broad propositions guide the present review:

1. Family environment and parental support are important factors influencing mental health among upper primary students.
2. Academic pressure and school climate are associated with students' psychological well-being.
3. Positive peer relationships contribute to better emotional and social adjustment.
4. Excessive and inappropriate digital media usage may negatively influence students' mental health.

5. METHODOLOGY

5.1 Research Design

The present study adopted a descriptive and analytical review method to examine the factors affecting mental health among upper primary students.

5.2 Major Factors Considered

The study examined the following dimensions:

1. Family environment and parental support.
2. Academic pressure and examination stress.
3. School climate and teacher-student relationships.
4. Peer relationships and bullying.
5. Digital media and mobile phone usage.
6. Socioeconomic background and physical well-being.

5.3 Method of Analysis

The available literature was analysed descriptively to identify the major factors influencing students' mental health. The findings of earlier studies and theoretical perspectives were used to develop educational implications and recommendations. No primary survey or statistical analysis was undertaken.

6. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The review of literature indicates that mental health among upper primary students is influenced by several family, educational, social, and environmental factors.

Family Environment: A supportive family environment plays an important role in developing emotional security and confidence among children. Parental affection, understanding, and encouragement contribute positively to psychological well-being. Conversely, family conflicts, neglect, harsh parenting, and excessive parental expectations may create emotional stress.

Academic Pressure: Examination stress, excessive homework, competition, and fear of failure may affect students' mental health. Children may experience anxiety, lack of concentration, and reduced interest in learning. A supportive teaching approach and continuous encouragement can help reduce academic pressure.

School Environment: A positive school climate promotes confidence, discipline, cooperation, and emotional security. Friendly teacher-student relationships and inclusive classroom practices contribute to students' psychological well-being. Discrimination, punishment, and an unsafe school atmosphere may negatively affect mental health.

Peer Relationships: Friendship and peer acceptance are important during the upper primary stage. Positive relationships promote cooperation, communication, and social adjustment. However, bullying, rejection, peer pressure, and social exclusion may result in fear, loneliness, and reduced self-esteem.

Digital Media Usage: Mobile phones, online games, and social media provide educational and communication opportunities. However, excessive screen time, cyberbullying, inappropriate online content, and disturbed sleep may negatively influence students' emotional well-being. Parental supervision and digital awareness are therefore essential.

Socioeconomic Conditions: Family income, parental education, living conditions, and access to educational and healthcare facilities may influence children's psychological well-being. Students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds may experience additional challenges. Equal educational opportunities and appropriate institutional support are necessary.

Overall, the review suggests that mental health is influenced by the interaction of family, school, peer, and environmental factors. A coordinated approach is essential for promoting positive psychological development.

7. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The present study highlights the importance of integrating mental health awareness into school education. The following educational implications are suggested:

1. Schools should organize regular mental health awareness programmes for students.
2. Teachers should receive training in child psychology and emotional well-being.
3. Parents should provide emotional support and maintain friendly relationships with their children.
4. Schools should establish counselling and referral facilities for students experiencing psychological difficulties.
5. Academic activities should be planned to avoid unnecessary stress and examination pressure.
6. Bullying, discrimination, and physical punishment should be prevented through appropriate school policies.
7. Sports, yoga, cultural activities, and recreational programmes should be encouraged.
8. Students should be educated about responsible mobile phone usage and digital safety.

Educational institutions should give equal importance to academic achievement and psychological well-being to ensure the holistic development of children.

8. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study has certain limitations which should be considered while interpreting its findings.

a. The study is based on secondary data and a review of available literature; no primary data were collected directly from upper primary students.
b. The study is limited to the factors affecting mental health among upper primary students studying in Classes VI to VIII.
c. The study does not include direct responses from students, parents, teachers, or school administrators.
d. The study does not examine mental health differences based on gender, rural and urban backgrounds, or government and private school settings through statistical analysis.
e. The findings are based on previously published research studies, reports, and theoretical perspectives, and may vary according to regional, cultural, and socioeconomic conditions.

f. The study does not establish cause-and-effect relationships between family environment, academic pressure, peer relationships, digital media usage, and students' mental health.
g. The availability of relevant research specifically focusing on upper primary students may be limited compared with studies covering broader adolescent age groups.

9. CONCLUSION

Mental health is an important aspect of the holistic development of upper primary students. The present study highlights that family environment, academic pressure, school climate, peer relationships, digital media, and socioeconomic conditions are major factors influencing students' psychological well-being. A supportive family, positive school environment, healthy friendships, and appropriate teacher guidance contribute to emotional stability and confidence among children.

The study emphasizes that mental health promotion should become an integral part of school education. Parents and teachers should identify children's emotional needs and provide appropriate guidance and encouragement. Schools should strengthen counselling facilities, promote mental health awareness, and create safe and inclusive learning environments.

In conclusion, promoting mental health among upper primary students requires the collective efforts of parents, teachers, educational institutions, and society. Giving importance to children's psychological well-being will contribute to their academic success, personality development, and the creation of a healthy and responsible future generation.

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