



Mental Illness And Its Impact Of Student Academic Performance

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Abstract: *Mental illness does not discriminate; it can affect anyone regardless of your age, gender, geography, income, social status, race, ethnicity, religion/spirituality, sexual orientation, background or other aspect of cultural identity. Mental illnesses are health conditions involving changes in emotion, thinking or behaviour (or a combination of these). Mental illnesses can be associated with distress and or problems functioning in social, work or family activities. Mental illnesses take many forms. Some are mild and only interfere in limited ways with daily life, such as some phobias (abnormal fears). Many people who have a mental illness do not want to talk about it. But mental illness is nothing to be ashamed of! It is a medical condition, just like heart disease or diabetes. And mental health conditions are treatable.*

* *A mental illness is a health issue. It can affect your thoughts, mood, or behaviour. It can impact the way you perceive the world around you.*

* *A mental illness can cause distress. It may affect how you cope at work, how you function in relationships and your ability to manage everyday tasks.*

Key Words: gender, geography, income, social status, race, ethnicity, religion/spirituality, sexual orientation.

Nearly 50% of adults experience a mental illness at some point in their lives. More than half of these people experience moderate to severe symptoms. In fact, 4 of the 10 leading causes of disability among people aged 5 and older are mental health disorders, with depression being the number one cause of all illnesses that cause disability. Despite this high prevalence of mental illness, only about 20% of people who have a mental illness receive professional help (Merikangas K.R. et.al. 2010)

KINDS OF MENTAL ILLNESS- There are many different types of mental illness. Some of the main groups of mental health disorders are:

- * Anxiety Disorders
- * Bipolar Disorder
- * Depression
- * Dissociative Disorders
- * Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- * Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- * Schizophrenia

- * Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- * Eating Disorders
- * Addiction & Substance Abuse

SIGN & SYMPTOMS OF MENTAL ILLNESS- Each type of mental illness has a different set of symptoms. For example, extreme dieting may be a sign that someone has an eating disorder. Hearing voices could be a sign of psychosis. An ongoing feeling of hopelessness after childbirth could be a sign of postnatal depression. People with depression can have a lasting sadness or low mood. People with anxiety often have excessive worry or fears. Sometimes feelings of anxiety happen without any apparent reason. Drastic changes in a person's thoughts, moods or behaviour can be a sign they have a mental illness. Changes can be sudden or come on gradually over a long period. These signs could indicate a mental illness. Here are some signs of mental illness to look out for:

- * Sadness or crankiness that lasts longer than usual
- * Withdrawal from friends and family

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- * Loss of interest in things you used to enjoy
- * High and low extremes of emotion
- * Big changes in sleeping or eating habits
- * Worries or fears that seem out of proportion
- * Ignoring personal grooming and hygiene
- * Disorganized or confused thoughts
- * Drug or alcohol abuse
- * Many unexplained physical illnesses
- * Ideas that don't line up with reality
- * Seeing or hearing things that others can't
- * Thinking or talking about suicide
- * Changes in how they perform at school
- * Aggression or disobedience
- * Frequent nightmares
- * Lots of temper tantrums
- * Odd or unusual behaviour

CAUSES OF MENTAL ILLNESS-

- * **Genetic factors-** Having a close family member with a mental illness can increase the chance that you might get a mental illness.
- * **Drug and alcohol abuse -** Illicit drug use can trigger a manic episode (bipolar disorder) or an episode of psychosis. Drugs such as cocaine, marijuana and amphetamines can cause paranoia.
- * **Biological factors -** Some medical conditions or hormonal changes can cause mental health problems.
- * **Early life environment -** Negative childhood experiences can increase the risk of some mental illnesses. Ex. abuse or neglect.
- * **Trauma and stress -** In adulthood, traumatic life events or ongoing stress can increase the risk of mental illness. Issues such as social isolation, domestic violence, relationship breakdown, financial or work problems can impact on mental health.
- * **Personality factors -** Some traits such as perfectionism or low self-esteem can increase the risk of depression or anxiety.
- * **Lifestyle factors -** Although lifestyle factors including work, diet, drugs and lack of sleep can all affect your mental illness.

It can also be impacted by how your brain works and the interplay with your environment. Your

social group, your culture and life experience can also play a part in the development of a mental illness. Neurological, metabolic, genetic and psychological causes are contributing factors for various types of mental illness like depression, schizophrenia, substance abuse and progression of condition (Savy and Sawyer, 2009). The exact primary causes of mental illness are complicated, however, it seems to occur in a psychologically and biologically prone individual, in the trigger of environmental and social stress (Elder, Evans and Nizette, 2009).

EFFECT OF MENTAL ILLNESS ON STUDENTS- Scientists and researchers use the term 'silent epidemic' or 'crisis' to describe the mental illness challenges faced by students in all over world. If we feel they are exaggerating, let's take you through the statistics about mental illness in students in the country. These issues have far-reaching consequences for students. Let's find out how these mental illness issues affect students and their academic performances.

1. Engagement- Institutes worldwide often point toward lower engagement with studies from students suffering from mental illness issues. Universities now increasingly track engagement levels to identify students who might need support. Students having mental illness issues might:

- * become uninterested in studies,
- * lack of active participation in discussions, and
- * have declining attendance in class.

Students facing mental illness issues like anxiety or depression might lack the will to attend lectures or have discussions.

2. Concentration And Progress- Students facing mental illness issues might struggle with concentration during the lectures. This may mean that the student might:

- * take longer to understand concepts,
 - * be unable to participate in sessions in the usual way, or
 - * not be able to focus on the given tasks, etc.
- Mental illness issues are linked to higher



dropout and lower student retention rates.

3. Social Presence And Relationships-

Students facing mental illness issues are more likely to become less friendly. They seem less interested in making friends or building any relationships. They lack the enthusiasm to participate in social activities.

PROMOTING MENTAL WELL-BEING AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE- To promote mental well-being and academic success, schools need to provide support services for students. This can include counselling services, support groups, and mental health education programs. These services can help students learn how to manage their mental illness and provide them with the tools they need to succeed academically.

In addition, parents and guardians can play an essential role in promoting their child's mental well-being and academic success. They can do so by providing a supportive home environment, setting realistic expectations, and helping their child set goals. They can also help their child build a strong support system by connecting them with friends, family, and mental health professionals. Mental illness plays a crucial role in determining an individual's academic success. Poor mental health can manifest in various ways, including anxiety, depression, stress, and other mental disorders, which can negatively impact a student's ability to learn, retain information, and perform well on exams. To promote mental well-being and academic success, schools need to provide support services for students and for parents and guardians to provide a supportive home environment, set realistic expectations, and help their children set goals. Society needs to take mental well-being seriously and provide necessary support in academic institutes to ensure that students are able to reach their full potential.

Symptoms Should I Look As A Teacher-

- * A sudden or drastic change in the quality of assignments
- * A sudden or drastic decline in grades
- * Test and performance anxiety

- * Withdrawal from interests or from peer
 - * Concentration problems
 - * Increased irritability
 - * Low frustration tolerance
- Symptoms Should I Look As A Parent?-**
- * Trouble sleeping
 - * Trouble eating or change in eating behaviours/appetite
 - * Irritability
 - * Concentration problems
 - * Ruminating about future events
 - * Test and performance anxiety
 - * Loss of interest in hobbies and other activities
 - * Having low energy
 - * Statements of self-doubt or low self-esteem (e.g., "I'm so dumb")
 - * Withdrawal
 - * Crying a lot

APPROACHES TO SUPPORT MENTAL WELL-BEING DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS-

The approaches to support mental well-being development are as follows:

A stigma-free environment: First, it is essential that schools create an environment free of stigma and supports discussions concerning mental well-being development. Such environments can be created by fostering open conversations about mental health supports and their impact on future functioning. Schools can continue to develop stigma-free environments by incorporating lessons that help students develop and strengthen coping and relaxation skills, such as muscle relaxation techniques, problem-solving strategies, or mindfulness-based techniques.

School-Based Counselling Services: Students can work with their school counsellors on developing social skills, building coping strategies, and incorporating relaxation techniques as needed. Supports can be provided individually or through group-based supports.

Accommodations: Schools are also able to provide accommodations (e.g., through a 504



accommodation plan or Groves Educational Plan (GEP)) to support their students' needs, including extended time on testing or testing in smaller environments that may minimize feelings of anxiety that may be related to testing (2006-2017 University of Washington).

Wrap-Around Services: Lastly, schools may coordinate wraparound services in cases where referrals for community-based supports are needed to provide the most appropriate mental health supports to students.

Mental well-being development continues beyond the school walls. Students can continue to support their mental health skills at home with their families' support.e.g.:

* **Exercise:** Research demonstrates that regular exercise routines have many benefits, including decreasing the risk for depressive symptoms.

* **Well-Rounded Diet:** A well-rounded diet, especially low in processed foods and sugars, has been proven to support mental well-being.

* **Mindfulness:** Regular mindfulness activities are also a great way to develop adaptive coping strategies throughout the day.

* **Quality Sleep:** Ensuring good sleeping habits, including decreasing technology use before going to sleep, can also support mental health functioning.

* **Therapeutic Services:** Lastly, it is important to seek therapeutic support as needed to help address mental health concerns and incorporate adaptive strategies to support students' needs. Psychology Today and Good Therapy allow you to find therapists in your geographic area based on filter options of medical insurance, gender of therapist, type of therapy (e.g., cognitive behaviour therapy), etc (Gerhard Andersson 2009).

Finally, it is important to remember that mental illnesses are often treatable. There are a number of effective treatments available, and with the right support, many people can recover from mental illness and go on to lead happy and fulfilling

lives. The first step is recognizing the signs and symptoms of poor mental well-being and addressing them with compassion and care before it gets too bad.

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