



Factors Affecting the Mental Health in Children and Adults

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Abstract

In the 21st century, the fast-paced lifestyle often causes people to neglect the importance of mental health. Despite people embracing the fact that mental well-being is of utmost importance, very few people are aware of factors that have an impact on the mental health. Mental health is impacted by the demographics of people, their sleep pattern, the level of exercise and even the extent to which people spend time with their families and friends. Another issue that persists in India is lack of awareness of counsellors and tendency of people to have a negative attitude towards counsellors. However, the best mechanism of getting the mental illness treated is by the help of counsellors. Nowadays, more and more people are being diagnosed by extreme anxiety and prolonged periods of depression. Since the symptoms of these diseases are not easily visible, many a times people are not able to understand the causes of these diseases. This research paper focuses on gaining an insight on the factors that has the most significant impact on the mental health of people and ways in which they can get treated. Moreover, we are trying to understand the underlying reason why people are not visiting counsellors to get treated.

Introduction

“The ability to work, love and play” is how the famous neurologist and founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud defined mental health. In today’s times, mental health is more complex with various aspects. A person is said to be mentally healthy if he/she does not have any mental disorders. Now, what are mental disorders? “A mental disorder, also called a mental illness or psychiatric disorder, is a behavioural or mental pattern that causes significant distress or impairment of personal functioning. Such features may be persistent, relapsing and remitting, or occur as a single episode.”, as defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

To maintain mental health, it is imperative for people to recognise mental disorders and seek help from mental health professionals for the same. Mental disorders differ on the basis of age, gender etc. In children, we see disorders like attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), anxiety, and behaviour disorders whereas in adults we see generalized anxiety disorder, depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and many others.

Treatments for mental disorders differ for children and adults. For children, non-verbal modalities like art therapy, play therapy, games etc. have proven to be effective. In adults, client-centered therapy, individual counselling, group therapy, holistic psychotherapy are the most common approaches. However, there is still some stigma surrounding mental disorders. Due to the stigma, many people are hesitant to openly talk about mental health and mental disorders which leads to many individuals not seeking help which may sometimes lead to extreme decisions like committing suicide.

The U.S Department of Health & Human services states that “Another way about thinking of suicide risk and depression is to examine the lives of people who have died by suicide and see what proportion of them were depressed. From that perspective, it is estimated that about 60 percent of people who commit suicide have had a mood disorder (e.g., major depression, bipolar disorder, dysthymia).

Younger persons who kill themselves often have a substance abuse disorder, in addition to being depressed.” In India, the stigma is even greater. The WHO estimates that 20% of Indians may suffer from depression in their lifetime. Due to the stigma associated with mental illness, a lack of awareness, and limited access to professional help, only 10-12% of these sufferers

will seek help. In a study conducted, it was observed that while 87% of the respondents showed some awareness of mental illness, 71% also used terms associated with stigma.

This shows that stigma and awareness are two separate issues although interlinked. To erase the stigma, it is important to increase awareness. Several measures can be adopted to make people aware like openly talking about it, encourage equality between mental health and physical health, educating yourselves and others, be honest about treatment etc. Hence, mental health is a very important aspect of a person's life and that is why we have conducted this research.

Literature Review

1. **[Scott, et-al, 2017]** had presented their work on Effect of Sleep on Mental Health. It had discussed how the traditional concept of sleep being understood as a secondary repercussion of mental health problems is different from the contemporary view of sleep being very influential in creating and handling problems. Hence, the main motive had been to understand the extent to which sleep can affect to improve mental health. As per the paper, the current evidence showed that sleep and mental health had a robust link. This had been concluded through reviews on primary studies with correlational research design. Manipulations had been done in sleep to study outcomes in mental health. The limitations were that there would be diverse range of interventions and that might have a heterogenous group of studies but moderation analysis can mitigate this.
2. **[Harvey, et-al, 2015]** had discussed Evidence based Psychological treatments (EBPTs) for Mental Disorders in their work. Three problems had been presented: the high presence of mental disorder which is growing, the inability of individuals diagnosed with mental disorders to access a proper treatment and the access to the effective EBPTs is declining. A variety of barriers and their possible solutions had been discussed at 5 levels of analysis which were – patient, therapist, treatment, organization and government level. It had been suggested that there should be further innovation in treatment development.
3. **[Sankar, et-al, 2017]** has presented their work on Mental Health among Adolescents. The research carried out helped to find out the level of mental health among adolescent boys and girls who were from Tamil Nadu. According to authors, a human undergoes numerous changes in attitude and behaviour during adolescence. The researchers had chosen this issue to conduct researches on. The observers appointed by the authors had given an account of the adolescents who had symptoms of depression, loneliness and anxiety related insomnia. It also disclosed the fact that only 1 in 5 adolescents with mental health problems received proper mental health treatment. The effect of parental deprivation, friends and family in mental stability has been discussed. Survey was done on 40 adolescents in the age categories of 13-15 years and 16-19 years and gender and age were taken as independent variables while mental health was taken as dependent variable. The data was collected, arranged in tabular form and analysis was done using mean and t-test. The paper claimed that the mental health level of boys was higher than that of girls. It also claimed that there was an insignificant difference between the mental health scores of both the groups.
4. **[Sandra Mary Travasso, et-al, 2014]** have conducted a primary research to analyse factors affecting mental health of young women in Bangalore. Their main objective was to determine a correlation between factors like alcoholic and abusive husband, striking balance between raising a family and working, and the mental health of the women. Interviews with Mothers of children between the ages of 0-8 years old who were currently working (and had been working for a minimum of a year) as construction workers, domestic workers, garment factory workers, or fruit/vegetable/flower street vendors were taken to achieve the stated objective. Kessler test was conducted on the data gathered to gauge the severity of the health issue. The researcher came to the conclusion that factors that affected mental health negatively were an alcoholic spouse, intimate partner violence, poor working conditions, and barriers to caring for children.
5. **[Baingana, et-al, 2015]** have studied the research challenges and opportunities faced by the world in terms of mental health and substance-use disorder. They described the fact that substance-use disorder has primarily been driven by high health burdens and associated unmet needs in low and middle income countries. The authors described that the priority areas of research should be Epidemiology, gene-environment, health care delivery, translational research and health policies. They recommended priorities for research as well as guiding principles for context driven, intersectoral and integrative approaches that will advance knowledge and answer the most pressing local and global

mental health questions and needs. The author concluded that development and enhancement of preventive and therapeutic strategies, health system strengthening and policymaking is the way forward in order to alleviate suffering and stem the associated economic and social consequences of unmet needs.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

Research Problem

To study the cause and effect of Mental Health in children and adults

Research Questions

1. What are the most common issues affecting mental health of children and adults?
2. What are the various treatments available for people suffering from mental health problems?
3. How is mental health being looked at by the society? (Focus group)

Research Objectives

- To study and understand the most common issues affecting mental health in children and adults.
- To identify the factors affecting mental health of individuals
- To study the extent to which factors like sleep have an impact on mental health of individuals
- To gauge the role of age and gender on mental wellness of people
- To study the impact of location and city on the mental well-being of people.
- To identify the remedial measures to improve mental health in various age group
- To gain people's perception on how to best treat mental illness
- To identify why people despite of facing problems refrain from approaching counsellors.
- To understand the society's view towards mental health & mental well-being.

Hypothesis

- H1: Age of individuals has a significant impact on mental health
- H2: Gender of individuals has a significant impact on mental health
- H3: Location of living of individuals has a significant impact on mental health
- H4: Level of sleep has a significant impact on mental health
- H5: Time spent on exercise has a significant impact on mental health
- H6: Usage of OTT Channels like Netflix has a significant impact on mental health
- H7: Usage of Social Media has a significant impact on mental health

Variables under study

Independent Variables

Age	Mental Health may vary as per the age group they belong to.
Gender	Whether the gender is male or female has an impact on mental-health of the individual
Location	Location refers to whether a person stays in a metropolitan area or a non-metropolitan area
Sleep	Level of sleep a person gets comes under this category
Exercise	The extent to which a person does exercise

OTT Consumption	Channel	The hours spend watching programs on OTT Channels
Usage of social media		Hours spent on Social media platform like Facebook

Dependent Variable

Mental Health	This refers to mental well-being of an individual and could refer to the level of anxiety or feeling of anxiety
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Research Design

Through descriptive and co-relational studies, we will gain a good insight as to how mental health in adults and children getting affected because of various factors.

Sample Selection

We have a stratified sampling technique by dividing the population in different stratum on the basis of age, location (Metropolitan and Non-Metropolitan) and gender. Further, we have used disproportionate stratified sampling.

Data Collection

An online questionnaire was used to gain a detailed understanding of the opinions of individuals regarding the importance of counsellors. The questionnaire played an integral role in gathering data from consumers regarding their demographics and daily life-style.

Personal Interviews with psychologists and Delphi-Technique was used to gain a holistic picture of pertinent factors affecting the mental well-being of individuals.

Data Analysis

Throughout this research, our primary objective was to identify the factors affecting mental health of individuals in 21st century dynamic and fast-paced environment. Based on our research, aforementioned is the analysis of the research conducted.

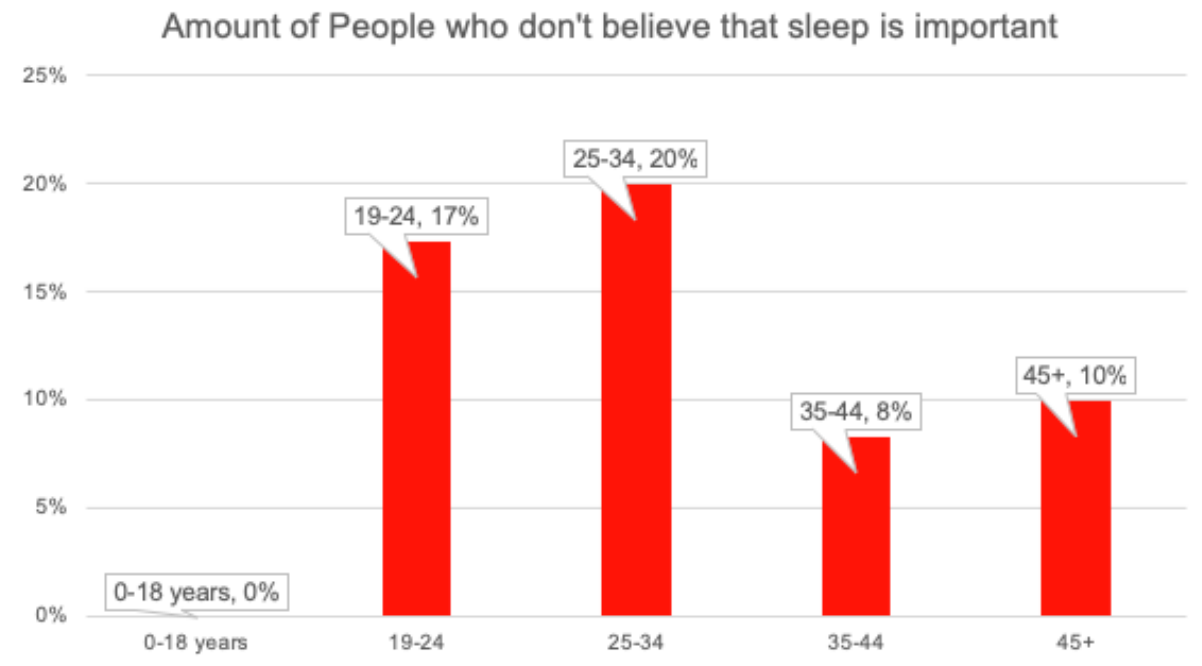
Quantitative Analysis

Table: Age wise poll on whether sleep is an important factor for mental well-being

Particulars	Frequency
0-18 years	4
Yes	4
19-24	75
No	13
Yes	62
25-34	15
No	3
Yes	12
35-44	12
No	1
Yes	11
45+	10
No	1
Yes	9
Grand Total	116

In the following table, we have calculated age wise the number of people who believe that sleep is an important factor when it comes to the well-being of mental health. Overall 85% of the people think that yes, proper sleep is the most important factor when it comes to mental well-being of an individual. But 15% people believe that no, sleep is not an important factor.

Graph 1: Amount of people who don't believe that sleep is an important factor for mental well-being age wise

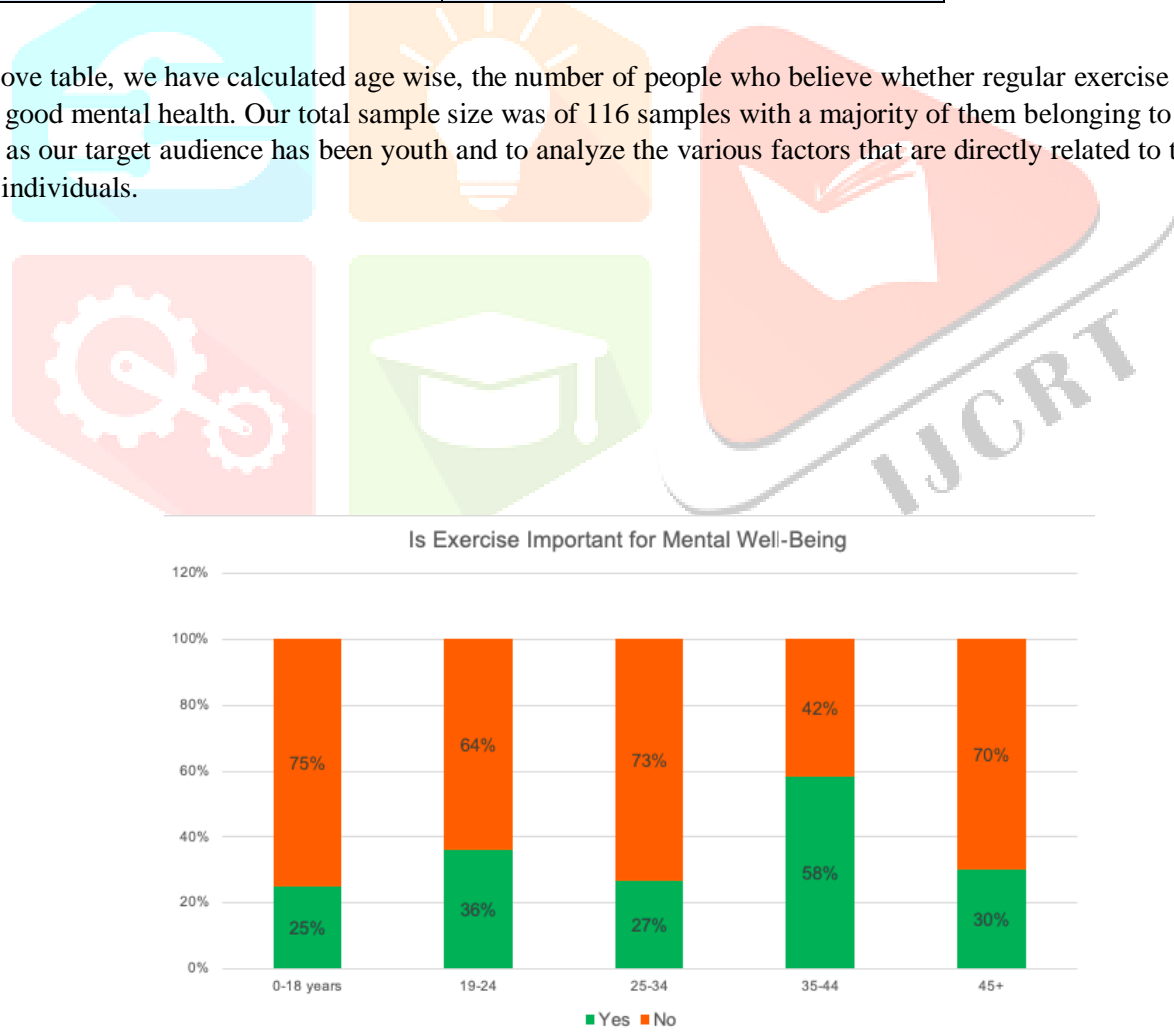


In the graph, we can see age wise, the percent of people who believe that proper sleep is not important for the mental well-being of an individual. In the 0 to 18 years age category, no one believes that proper sleep is not important. But in the 19-24 and 25-34 age categories, 17% and 20% people respectively believe that sleep is not the most important factor and that there are other factors much more important than proper sleep. This can be because this is the age group that has either just started working or individuals in it have been working and are mid-level managers. For majority of the people in these age groups, career is the most important aspect of their lives as they need to grow in their corporations and they are mostly unmarried people. Therefore, these people believe that stress, workload, and good work life balance are more important factors than sleep when it comes to mental well-being. The last two age groups that are 35-44 and 45+, only 9% of them believe that sleep is not important. The rest of them are married, settled people who have achieved success in their corporate jobs or in their respective fields. Also, these people have gone through the previous age groups and have experienced the high stress and workload of climbing their way in the corporate ladder and therefore by experience they can say that sleep is indeed the most important factor when it comes to mental well-being of an individual.

Table: Age wise poll on whether frequency of exercise is an important factor for mental well-being

Particulars	Frequency
0-18 years	4
No	3
Yes	1
19-24	75
No	48
Yes	27
25-34	15
No	11
Yes	4
35-44	12
No	5
Yes	7
45+	10
No	7
Yes	3
Grand Total	116

In the above table, we have calculated age wise, the number of people who believe whether regular exercise is necessary for having a good mental health. Our total sample size was of 116 samples with a majority of them belonging to the 19-24 years category as our target audience has been youth and to analyze the various factors that are directly related to the mental well-being of individuals.



Graph 2: Is exercise an important factor for mental well-being (age wise)

In the above chart, we have analyzed categorically, the percentage of people who believe that exercise is or is not the most important factor for mental well-being of individuals. In the 0-18 years category, only 25% people believe that exercise is an important factor whereas 75% believe that exercise is not an important factor. This can be possibly because people of this age

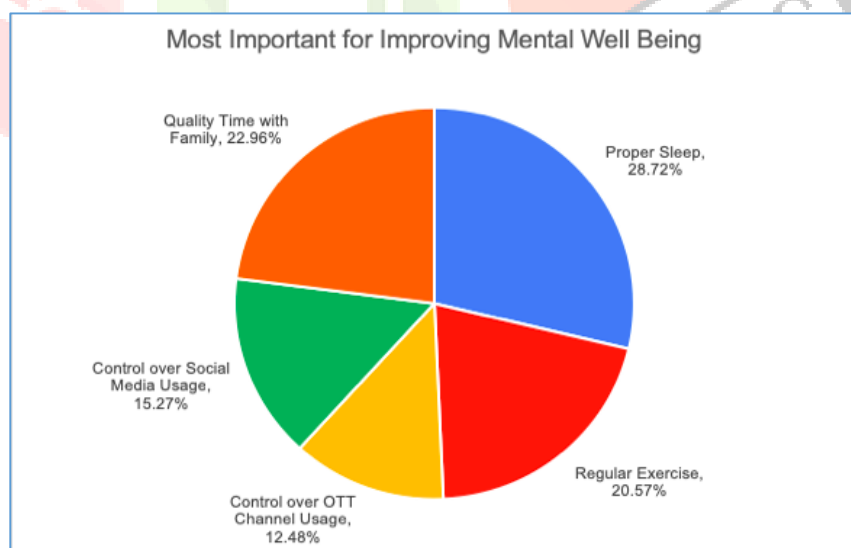
group if they have any mental illness it is mainly due to factors like academic pressures or adolescent changes or maybe demographic changes in the person's life. These are very volatile years wherein the person goes through several changes in their life, therefore they think that exercise is not an important factor. In the 19-24 age group, most of the people are in the college and graduation phase of their lives. The main factor that exerts pressure on their mental well-being at this stage is the academic pressure, the pressure to get a good job, the pressure of performing in their new jobs/institutes. This age group though has a regard for exercise but for majority of it exercise is not the most important factor. For the 25-34 age group, performing at work and climbing through the ranks of the organization is considered to be the greatest factor for the mental well-being of the people and not exercise. For the 35-44 age group, the pressure of working at the organization is not so great as for the previous age group, as these people have already climbed through the ranks and hence they know how to manage their work life balance, therefore these people give more time and energy towards exercising and keeping themselves fit. Hence, they believe that exercise is important for the mental well-being of an individual.

Table: Rank of the most important factors for improving mental health

Which of the following, according to you, plays the most significant role in improving mental-well being of an individual?					
Ranking Table					
	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5
Proper Sleep	70	29	8	4	6
Regular Exercise	8	35	46	15	13
Control over OTT Channel Usage	1	8	20	34	54
Control over Social Media Usage	8	9	19	54	27
Quality Time with Family	30	36	24	10	17

The above table contains all the factors that play a significant role in improving mental well-being of an individual along with the ranks given to each factor. Rank 1 being the most important factor and Rank 5 being the least important factor. We assigned weights to each of the ranks for calculating the weighted average of the importance of all factors. Rank 1 signifying the most important factor was assigned the highest weight that is 5 whereas Rank 5 being the least important factor was given the lowest weight of 1.

Graph 3: Weighted distribution of the most important factors for improving mental health



After all the calculations, we came to the result shown in the chart above. At an average of 29% people consider sleep is the most important factor for improving mental health followed by spending quality with family with 23% people believing that. We can conclude that 50% of the people believe that mental health can be improved without actually having any changes in the individual's lifestyle, he/she does not have to allocate more time to an extra activity in order to improve their mental health. It can improve simply by proper sleeping and spending some quality time with their family and friends. 30% of the

people believe that mental health can improve by a control on the internet usage of the individuals, that is a control on social media and on the usage of the OTT channels such as Netflix, Hotstar etc. Only 20% people believe that regular exercise can help improve the mental health of an individual.

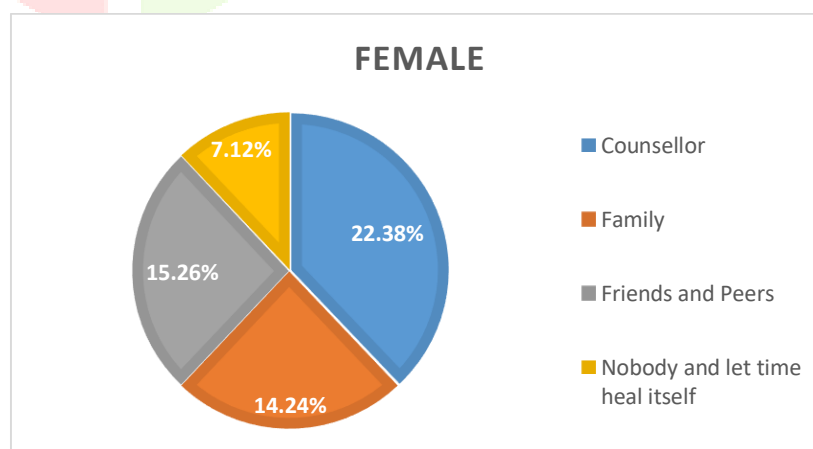
Which of the following, according to you, plays the most significant role in improving mental well-being of an individual?					
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Regular Exercise	8	35	46	15	13
Control over OTT Channel Usage	1	8	20	34	54
Control over Social Media Usage	8	9	19	54	27
Quality Time with Family	30	36	24	10	17

Based on the above tabulation, it was revealed that people consider sleeping to be the most important determinant of a good mental health. Our initial hypothesis was that prevalence of OTT Channels also has a huge impact on their mental health. This research helped showed that OTT channels do have an impact but not of a significant level. This research also helped us understand that Regular exercise and quality time with family is a medicine for poor mental health.

Table: Gender wise distribution for mode of treatment of a mental illness

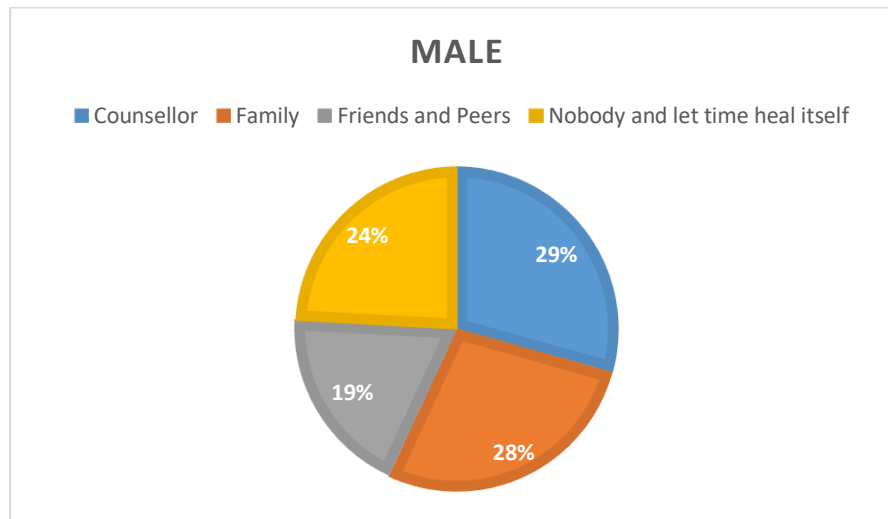
Count of Treatment for Mental Health	Female	Male	Grand Total
Counsellor	22	17	39
Family	14	16	30
Friends and Peers	15	11	26
Nobody and let time heal itself	7	14	21
Grand Total	58	58	116

Graph 4: Modes of treatment sought by females



Amongst the Female respondents, around 22% had the feeling that a counsellor can help them resolve the issue. They felt that friends and families are equally important for the treatment of the disease.

Graph 5: Modes of treatment sought by males



On the flip side, males believed that apart from the counsellors, even time is a healer. According to them, mental illness is just a temporary feeling and would eventually be cured over time and no human intervention is needed.

Table: Likert Scale to analyse why don't people approach counsellors

Why people don't approach counsellors?	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Lack of Awareness about Counsellors	22	62	27	6
Social Stigma	34	47	27	9
Counsellors might be In-Effective	7	37	50	23
They consider the issue incurable	6	35	51	25

In order to analyze why individuals are not visiting counsellors to cure their illness, we used LIKERT Scale to give us a holistic picture. With this, it is clear that two main drivers of refraining from visiting counsellors are lack of awareness and social stigma associated with this.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that, people also agree that counsellors are effective and could be the one to approach to find a permanent fix to their problem.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The results of interviews done with the psychologists is presented below in the Q&A format.

Q1. What changes have happened in last 10 years that people have started to report greater problems of Mental Well-Being?

Primarily, the biggest change has been due to the advent of technology and mobile phones becoming more accessible to people. Since every person has a mobile phone in their hand, everything can happen at a click of button and people don't have to search. But this mobile phone is also the source of a lot of mental problems that people have started to face. For instance, people have started to prefer communicating with people using mobile phones instead of physically meeting people. Undoubtedly, use of social media has been the driver of emotional problems people face.

Q2. Which age category are most prone to mental problems?

Everyone is equally likely to become a victim of this issue. Usually, teens have lower self-control over their mobile phone usage and subject to peer-pressure so this makes them vulnerable to illness.

Q3. What are the main causes of mental ill-being and instability?

Social Media usage and level of sleep are the most important factors.

Q4. How important is it for a person to be mentally and emotionally stable?

I would say that being mentally stable is the most important thing in life. Even more important than money. The ultimate objective of every individual is to stay happy in their life and this would only happen if they are emotionally stable. Good relationships with friends and family also plays a crucial role to ensure mental stability and peace of mind.

Q5. Do you think these people were hesitant to express themselves?

I don't think people should be hesitant to express themselves and visit a counsellor if they feel that they are suffering from mental issues. Counsellors are the best people to approach to come out of this problem and by not visiting, they are doing themselves more harm than good

Q6. Any suggestions for students like us to stay safe from the mental issues like depression?

It is always advisable to talk to your parents and friends if you face any mental issues since they are the ones who play a critical role in supporting a person to visit a counsellor to cure the disease. Moreover, the best solution is to have a proper sleep cycle along with control over usage of gadgets.

Reasons people don't visit counsellors:

People avoid counselling for multiple reasons. In fact, one is worsening their own condition by putting off these sessions. Many think about how it will affect their image or is it financially worth it. Here are some reasons why people might avoid counselling.

First aspect that comes to one's mind is the financial aspect of these counselling sessions. Coming to counselling will be costly but it is like an investment in your own self. It is worth for long run and to get back on track.

As we know people talk. Someone might have a bad experience with a counselor but that doesn't mean everybody would. Therapies are different for every individual. Similarly, one might have a bad experience with one counselor but every counselor has different methods. People talk and share their experiences but that shouldn't stop anybody from getting themselves treated.

People often say that counselling is only for "crazy" people. But this is untrue. This helps in addressing many issues and moving forward from them. It is a safe place to talk. Privacy is maintained. One might be intimidated to open up but everything is confidential and with time it becomes comfortable.

Visiting counsellors is often looked down upon, people care about what others will think. They get anxious and think will get judged in a negative way. People even think that asking for help would hurt their pride and sharing too much can make them vulnerable. But in reality, it makes you even stronger and better your self-esteem. It helps to tackle whatever life throws at you ahead.

Challenges faced by people having mental health issues:

People facing these issues are very reserved and get anxious about how others might react to their interaction. They are feared and think they have to act or react in a way which is socially acceptable. Meeting new people is a challenge for them.

Knowing the symptoms of the issues and working hard at managing them so that more people don't get to know becomes a task. Reaching out for help always makes them feel exposed and they hold back themselves then.

The biggest challenge is not knowing about how they feel regarding their illness and the constant mood change. Identifying moods and feelings is very essential but tedious.

As we know exercise helps in the betterment of mental health. But maintaining routines is difficult. They are stressed about how their mood will be when they wake up or when some hurdle arrives. Maintaining positive habits is a tough task for them for plenty reasons and there a million reasons to avoid these routines, even for normal people.

They have to work really hard on how they portray themselves and make attempts at social life. They always worry whether their illness will return. People should be more accepting and rather than judging them, they should make them feel comfortable and belonging.

Conclusion

After the analysis of the data collected through the online questionnaire and Personal interview, we would like to present the final conclusion and learnings from this research.

There are various determinants of mental well-being of an individual. To be mentally stable and fit is imperative but it requires constant effort and conscious devotion to ensure that the lifestyle is such that it leads to overall mental well-being of an individual.

Based on our research, sleep is the most important factor affecting the mental stability of an individual and proper sleep cycle is the key to good mental health.

Other factors like exercise, usage of OTT Channels and social media also has a significant impact.

According to different age groups, the importance of each factor varies and while taking action to improve mental health factors like age, gender and locality should be kept in mind.

Technology has led to a dramatic shift in lifestyle of individuals and mindful use of technology is quintessential for mental well-being.

Still in the 21st century, individuals are hesitant to visit a counsellor to address their issues. They are afraid of taboos and also consider visiting counsellors a social stigma. But visiting a counsellor is the way forward to get treated.

Quality time with friends and families also plays a huge role in impacting the mental health of individuals.

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