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## **A STUDY OF TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TO PROMOTE THE MENTAL WELL-BEING OF STUDENTS**

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### ***ABSTRACT***

Mental well-being is essential for the personal growth and academic success of students. Teachers are observing students with conduct problems that have their source in emotional distress, peer pressure, school pressures, and home problems. These behavioural difficulties—aggression and withdrawal, to anxiety and defiance—tend to interfere with learning and interpersonal relationships, particularly if not dealt with. Promoting the well-being of students within the educational framework is essential for building emotionally balanced, socially compliant, and academically successful students. NEP 2020 has also emphasized the holistic development of students, including their emotional and mental health. Youth Self-Report (YSR) form, a part of the Achenbach System of Empirically Based Assessment (ASEBA) developed by Achenbach and Rescorla (2001), was used to collect data. The research examines the behavioural issues among secondary stage students in government and private schools, highlighting the psychological disparities and the implications for the educators. The study finds significant differences in behavioural problems between the two groups. The research also examines gender-based disparities in teen behaviour, whereby male students are revealed to have more behavioural issues than females. The results highlight the need



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for teacher professional development to empower educators with skills to identify and manage behavioural challenges to ensure a supportive and mentally healthy school environment.

**Keywords:** Mental well-being, Behavioural problems, Professional Development, NEP 2020

## INTRODUCTION

The rising incidence of mental health problems among students is a major area of concern for academics, school officials, and policymakers (WHO, 2021; Malhotra, Kohli, & Kapoor, 2009; Mo, 2024). Academic pressure, exposure to social media, family crisis, peer strife, and continued post-pandemic stress have been recognized as key causal factors behind the declining mental health of youths (Auerbach et al., 2018; Verywell Mind, 2023; Barreto-Rivas et al., 2023). The stressors usually take the form of classroom behavioral problems, such as defiance, withdrawal, aggression, and attention problems, which not only impact students' academic achievements but also interfere with the general classroom environment (Malhotra et al., 2009).

Teachers are the immediate interactors to students, and can easily detect early warning signs of psychological distress (Pozo-Rico et al., 2023). The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has released a number of directives highlighting the important role teachers can play in detecting and dealing with students' psychological distress. Since teachers are in contact with students on a daily basis, CBSE recognizes their special position to observe indications of mental illness early on. However, most teachers also say they feel under-supported and under-prepared in dealing with students' mental health issues (Verywell Mind, 2023; WHO, 2021). Hence, developing the capacities of teachers through ongoing professional development is necessary to promote supportive, inclusive, and psychologically safe learning environments (NEP, 2020), as highlighted by CBSE also through its emphasis on life skills and wellness programs (CBSE, 2024). Research



also lends credence to this necessity, reflecting increased teachers' self-efficacy and psychological well-being through systematic training (Barreto-Rivas et al., 2023) and the necessity of emotional intelligence and resilience in schools (Pozo-Rico et al., 2023).

NEP 2020 recognizes the overall development of students' emotional and mental health, along with cognitive skills, as essential for quality education. It considers socio-emotional learning (SEL), psychological well-being, and emotional growth as a part of the Holistic development approach. (NEP 2020, Para 4.4 & 4.25). Schools are envisioned as a secure, safe environment where emotional and psychological requirements are catered to. NEP 2020 emphasizes a health and well-being curriculum with stress management, mental health awareness, and emotional well-being. Such a curriculum should incorporate elements that enhance empathy, resilience, communication, and emotional intelligence. Co-curricular activities like yoga, meditation, and sports are to be promoted for emotional and physical well-being of students. (NEP 2020, Para 12.5).

The policy emphasizes the significance of identifying and treating behavioral problems using preventive and reactive measures, including suggestions for creating school wellness centers for managing behavioural and emotional concerns of students. It also proposes implementing customized support systems, including mentorship programs and mental health clubs. (NEP 2020, Para 4.28, Para 5.16)

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Mental well-being**

Mental health is a student's emotional, psychological, and social functioning, which is determinative of learning, decision-making, and relationship formation (WHO, 2021; Mo, 2024). Auerbach et al.



(2018) estimate that almost one-third of all adolescents worldwide have a diagnosable mental disorder, but most are not diagnosed and supported in schools. Additionally, studies from the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (2023) indicate mental and behavioral health illnesses have risen sharply among young people after COVID-19, with significant effects on academic performance and social relationships.

Students with low mental health are likely to experience absenteeism, poor academic achievement, and behavioural problems (Malhotra et al., 2009; Mo, 2024). They are also at greater risk of school dropout or chronic emotional disorders in the adult years (Auerbach et al., 2018). Thus, schools need to integrate mental wellness as a key component of their curriculum goals.

### **Behavioural Problems**

Behavioral issues among students—like disruptive speaking, distractibility, aggression, and social withdrawal—are usually an expression of unresolved emotional issues. Malhotra, Kohli, and Kapoor (2009) stress that such behaviors usually have their origin in undiagnosed mental illness among teenagers. Current surveys in classrooms indicate increasing teacher reporting of post-pandemic spikes in disruptive behavior (EdWeek, 2025). The World Health Organization (2021) has also noted that adolescent emotional distress tends to manifest as behavioral symptoms at school.

Research in the Indian as well as other contexts indicates that behavioral problems are more common among students attending private schools because of scholastic competitiveness and parental pressure. Malhotra et al. (2009) also observed that socio-academic pressures are responsible for behavioral disturbances, especially in high-performing scholastic environments.



Gender differences are also significant. The CBSE (2024) reports that male students tend to show externalizing behaviors like aggression or disrespect, whereas female students tend to internalize stress and present with symptoms of anxiety and depression. Mo (2024) also supports this trend, calling for gender-sensitive behavioral intervention strategies for schools.

Untreated behavioral issues can escalate into adolescent peer violence, self-esteem problems, academic deterioration, or even drug abuse during adolescence. The World Health Organization (2021) cautions that unmanaged emotional disorders in adolescents are associated with increased risks of substance misuse and long-term psychological impairment. Auerbach et al. (2018) also state that early behavioral symptoms tend to be precursors to chronic adult emotional conditions, and therefore, prompt identification and intervention by classroom teachers are essential.

## **OBJECTIVES**

- To assess the behavioural problems among Secondary school students.
- To compare the behavioural problems of secondary school students of Private and government schools.
- To compare the behavioural problems of male and female secondary school students.
- To identify the school-based mental well-being initiatives by the government to support the mental well-being of students.
- To identify the sources of Teachers' professional development for managing classroom behaviour and supporting the mental well-being of students.



## **HYPOTHESES**

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant difference in behavioural problems among male and female secondary school students.

H<sub>2</sub>: There is a significant difference in behavioural problems between secondary school students of government and private schools.

## **METHODOLOGY**

A comparative descriptive study was conducted with a sample size of 80 secondary school students, i.e., 40 students of government schools and 40 students of private schools. Adolescent students of age group 15-18 years have been taken, of whom 40 students (20 boys and 20 girls) are from Private schools and 40 students (20 boys and 20 girls) are from government schools. Data were gathered using the Youth Self-Report form (YSR), a component of the Achenbach System of Empirically Based Assessment (ASEBA) created by Achenbach and Rescorla (2001). A standardized, validated, and reliable measure, this form is utilized extensively for assessing behavioral and emotional difficulties in subjects between the ages of 11 and 18. The scale contains several subscales measuring internalizing difficulties (e.g., depression, anxiety), externalizing difficulties (e.g., rule-breaking, aggression), and general behavior functioning. Respondents are asked to rate items on a 3-point Likert scale from 0 (not true) to 2 (very true or often true).

Statistical Methods, such as Mean scores and standard deviation were used to analyse data. An independent samples t-test was utilized to ascertain statistical significance among the groups' behavioural problems

## ANALYSIS

Data were analysed to provide a meaningful picture of the raw data collected. The analysis is done considering the objectives and hypothesis.

**Table 1**

*Sample for study*

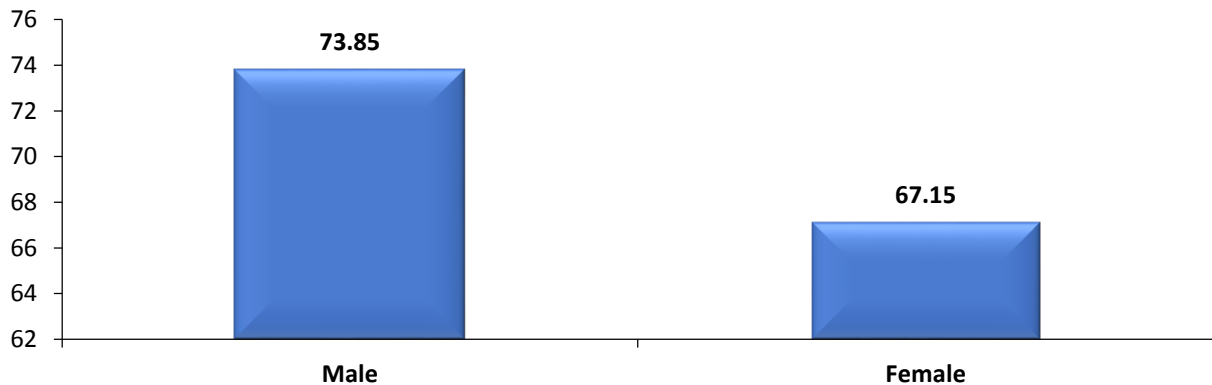
Gender	Adolescent students (15-18 years)		Total (Adolescent students)
	(Government school)	(Private school)	
Male	20	20	40
Female	20	20	40
Total	40	40	80

**Table 2**

*Comparison of Behavioural Problems among Male and Female Adolescents*

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-stat
Male	40	73.85	6.179	4.401**
Female	40	67.15	7.381	

\*\* Significant at both 0.01 and 0.05 level of confidence



**Figure1** *Showing means of behavioural problems among male and female adolescents*

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare behavioural problem scores between male and female adolescents. Results shown in table 1 indicated that male students (M = 73.85, SD = 6.18) reported significantly higher behavioural problem scores than female students (M = 67.15, SD = 7.38),  $t(78) = 4.40, p < .01$ . This difference was statistically significant at both the 0.01 and

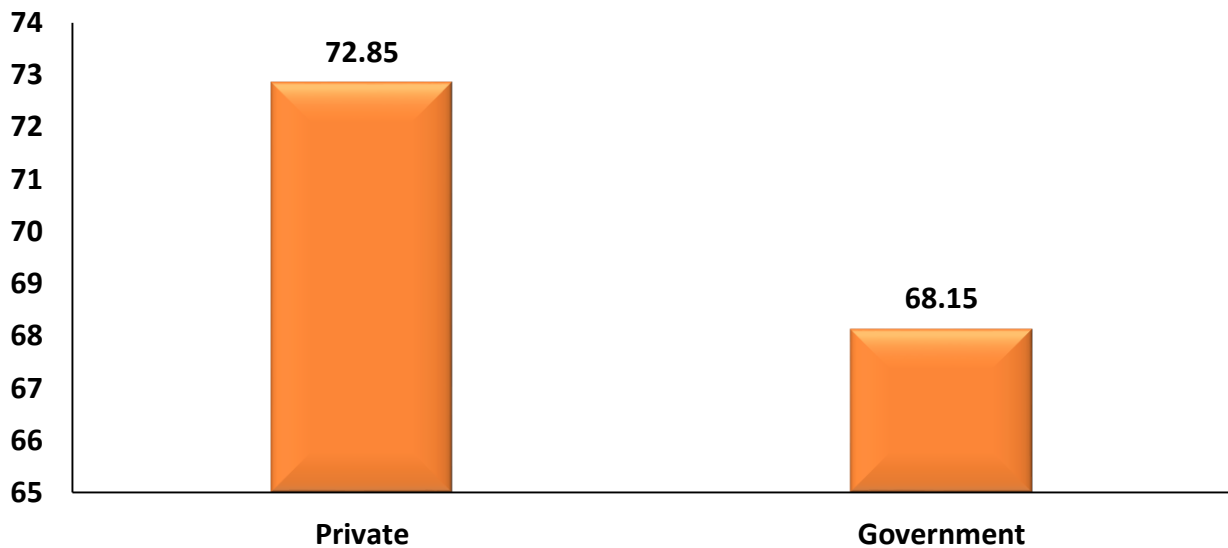
0.05 levels of confidence. Thus, the Hypothesis (H1), which states that “There is a significant difference in behavioural problems among male and female secondary school students” is accepted.

**Table2**

***Comparison of Behavioural Problems among Adolescents from Private and Government Schools***

School Type	N	Mean	SD	t-stat
Private	40	72.85	5.942	2.909**
Government	40	68.15	8.309	

**\*\* Significant at both 0.10 and 0.05 levels of confidence**



**Figure2 Showing means of behavioural problems among adolescents from government and private schools**

An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine differences in behavioural problems between private and government school students. Results showed that students from private schools (M = 72.85, SD = 5.94) had significantly higher behavioural problem scores than students from government schools (M = 68.15, SD = 8.31),  $t(78) = 2.91, p < .01$ . This difference was statistically significant at both the 0.01 and 0.05 levels of confidence. The t-stat value is 2.909 which is significant at both 0.01 and 0.05 levels of confidence. Thus, the Hypothesis (H<sub>2</sub>) which states that



“There is a significant difference in behavioural problems between secondary school students of government and private schools.” is accepted.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The Youth Self-Report™ (YSR) (2001) questionnaire was used to identify the nature and extent of behavioural issues in government and private school adolescents. Gender-wise comparison has also been made.

### **Gender-wise Comparison of Behavioural Problems among Students (Table2)**

The mean score for behavioural problems for male adolescents (N=40), was 73.85 and that for female adolescents (N=40) was 67.15. t-statistic value was 4.401, which is significant at both the 0.01 and 0.05 levels of confidence. This indicates that Male adolescent students exhibit more behavioural problems as compared to Female adolescent students. This includes more external behaviours like aggression, rule-breaking, and conduct problems.

### **School-based Comparison of Behavioural Problems among Students**

The private school adolescents (N=40) had a mean score of 72.85, whereas the government school adolescents (N=40) had a mean score of 68.15. The value of the t-statistic was 2.909, which is significant at 0.01 and 0.05 levels. The results indicate that the Teenagers in private schools have more behaviour problems compared to government school students. This could be due to increased academic pressure, parental pressures, or social comparison that is prevalent in private school settings.

These outcomes align with findings of previous research by Malhotra, Kohli, and Kapoor (2009), which indicated that male students reflect more externalizing behaviours such as aggression, rule-



breaking, and defiance. Research by Mo (2024) and a document by CBSE(2024) confirm the observation that behavioural problems among boys tend to be more overt, whereas girls tend to internalize emotional distress, presenting symptoms of anxiety, withdrawal, or depression. Such evidence highlights the necessity for developing gender-sensitive behavioural interventions to use in schools, keeping in mind the various expressions of emotions and behaviour in boys and girls. The results also suggest that the private school students exhibit more behavioural problems than government school students. This is consistent with research by Auerbach et al. (2018), which found that academic pressure, parental pressure, and social comparison were contributing factors to increased stress and mental health problems in students. The competitive and performance-oriented environment of the private schools leads to emotional imbalances and results in behavioural problems.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 highlights student well-being, socio-emotional learning, and teacher training as important aspects. A comprehensive model of education, incorporating emotional well-being and ongoing teacher professional training. (Para 4.25 & 5.15, NEP 2020). CBSE also underscores the need to focus on life skills development and mental wellness, with an incentive for schools to incorporate wellness education and counseling services.(CBSE Circular No. Acad-24/2024)

### **Teachers' Professional Development**

As mental health challenges affect adolescents with high impact, there is a need for responsive and empathetic school systems (WHO, 2021; Auerbach et al., 2018). Behavioral problems are not discipline issues but symptoms of underlying psychological needs, frequently overlooked through



the lack of appropriate training provisions for teachers (Malhotra, Kohli, & Kapoor, 2009; Mo, 2024). Teachers are best suited to identify and support students, provided they are properly trained and emotionally ready (Pozo-Rico et al., 2023; Barreto-Rivas et al., 2023). Systematic professional development programs—via NEP-compliant platforms such as DIKSHA and SWAYAM, or projects funded by CBSE—can make teachers wellness ambassadors capable of promoting safe and inclusive classrooms (NEP, 2020; CBSE, 2024). Only through these systemic, policy-enabled interventions, the schools foster resilient, emotionally sound learners (NCTE, 2021; CBSE, 2024). Teachers require regular and structured training to recognize the mental health concerns of students at an early stage and to provide them with the required support. The teachers who receive training in the areas associated with mental health, emotional stability, and resilience show improvements in emotional competence, classroom management, and can develop empathetic communication strategies to build strong connections with their students. (Pozo-Rico et al.,2023) Improvements and enhancements in Teachers' psychological well-being and their professional self-efficacy enable them to manage behavioural problems more effectively. (Barreto-Rivas et al.,2023)

NEP 2020 recommends a minimum of 50 hours of annual CPD (Continuous Professional Development) for all teachers including the areas of child psychology, health and wellness education and inclusive education practices. Schools need to initiate life skills and wellness programs to address the rising concern of behavioural issues among students.(CBSE, Circular No. Acad-24/2024)

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has released several guidelines highlighting the important role of teachers in recognizing and dealing with students' psychological distress. With an



understanding that teachers work with students daily, CBSE stresses their special position to notice early warning signs of mental distress.

In Circular No. CBSE/M&PR/Counseling/Mapping/2024 dated 26.06.2024, CBSE mandates that each secondary and senior secondary school make an appointment of a full-time Counselor & Wellness Teacher. This professional needs to be trained in psychology, child development, or have a diploma in career guidance and counseling. The intention is to see that schools are endowed with dedicated staff members who can cater to the mental and emotional needs of students.

Moreover, CBSE's Circular No. CBSE/M&PR/Counseling/Conclave-2 of 30.09.2024 declares a virtual Conclave dedicated to strengthening mental health care in schools. The activity stresses the integration of teachers, counselors, and families to make students emotionally resilient. It also underscores the school principals' leadership in developing caring environments.

CBSE conducted a series of Capacity Building Programs in several cities to update the capability of school counselors and wellness teachers. These programs are aligned with National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, focusing on psychosocial and career aspirations of students. All these efforts of CBSE towards streamlining mental health care in the educational process, viewing teachers as central to facilitating students' mental well-being.

### **Government Initiatives**

Government and National Education Organisations prepared technology platforms for the professional development of teachers that offer courses and training programs for improving teachers' ability to promote student mental health. These platforms include:



- DIKSHA(Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing) is a digital platform launched by the Ministry of Education, Government of India. It offers various courses, e-content, and Teaching-Learning material for teachers, students, and administrators. "Social Media Safety and Well-being" course is also available on DIKSHA with a focus on digital well-being and mental health consciousness.
- SWAYAM(Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds) is a Technology platform by the Ministry of Education, Government of India. It offers free Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) for teachers, students, and professionals. For promoting mental well-being, it provides courses such as "Mental Health & Adjustment," aimed at building knowledge and skills in the area of mental hygiene and psychological well-being.
- CBSE Training portal, managed by CBSE Centre of Excellence (CoE), conducts face-to-face and online training for principals and teachers in various domains. To equip teachers with counselling and management skills, it organizes frequent workshops and counselling sessions, e.g., the National Adolescent Summit 2024, on life skills, mental health, safety, and well-being.
- PRASHAST App is launched by the Ministry of Education and NCERT under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan to promote inclusive education. This App can help teachers identify behavioural and emotional challenges faced by the students. This App can support teachers in planning interventions in collaboration with special educators and counsellors.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- To integrate mental health education with the regular school curriculum, including sessions on life skills, mindfulness, and stress management.



- Establishing dedicated wellness centres or counselling units to provide emotional and psychological support to students as recommended in NEP 2020.
- Creating a safe and inclusive environment through peer mentoring and support programmes.
- To ensure the implementation of structured plans for students' mental well-being and behavioural support.
- Teachers' training on early screening tools like PRASHAST App for identification of students with emotional and behavioural concerns.
- Establishment of professional learning communities (PLCs) for teachers to share their experiences, case studies, and best practices.
- Promoting Action- Research on behavioural trends and students' mental health challenges.

## CONCLUSION

The mental well-being of students is an integral part of their academic achievement and overall growth. Behavioral problems as a result of mental illness can greatly impact the learning environment. For this reason, it is necessary to invest in teacher professional development to allow educators to be wellness ambassadors in their respective schools. Through capacity-building programs and linkage with national education policies, schools can foster an environment that focuses on the mental well-being of the students to develop a culture of empathy, understanding, and holistic development. The research emphasizes the urgent need for school systems, especially private ones, to incorporate prevention mental health approaches, to focus on teacher education, and wellness-based practices. It also reflects the need for differentiated behavioral support measures in male and female students. Empowering educators to become wellness ambassadors, as proposed in NEP 2020 and CBSE directives, is not merely a policy initiative but an operational imperative to enhance behavioural outcomes and facilitate emotional resilience among teenagers. Strengthening school wellness programmes, expansion of opportunities for professional development of teachers



with NEP aligned mental health strategies are necessary initiatives to ensure that schools are not only places of learning but also hubs of comprehensive student well-being.

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