

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF LEARNERS' MENTAL HEALTH INSIDE THE SCHOOL

by:

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In the recent years most especially after the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic that affects the life of many people, schools not just in our country, but most of the part of the world have faced an alarming increase in the number of learners experiencing mental health challenges. Anxiety, depression, stress, and other mental health issues are increasingly prevalent among young people, impacting their academic performance, social relationships, physical health and overall well-being. As the mental health crisis deepens, schools, as the second home of the learners are at the lead to addressing these challenges, ensuring learners receive the support they need.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), one in seven adolescents globally experiences a mental health disorder. In the United States, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that 37% of high school students experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness in 2021, a dramatic increase from previous years. These issues are worsened by academic pressures, family problems, social media influence, peers, bullying, and, more recently, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

If not given focus and immediate solution, untreated mental health issues can lead to severe consequences including poor academic performance, absenteeism, behavioral problems, health problems and in extreme cases, self-harm or suicide. Schools, as the primary social and educational environment for children, play an important role in addressing these concerns. Teachers also are considered by learners the trusted person whom they can share and confide their thoughts and feelings to.

But despite this, many schools face lots of obstacles in providing adequate mental health support. Limited funding and a shortage of qualified school counselors and psychologists make it challenging to meet the needs of all learners. Teachers alone cannot cater their learners most especially if they do not have the knowledge needed in handling mental health cases. Additionally, the stigma surrounding this concern often discourages learners from seeking help, further complicating the issue.

In solution, these are few of the things school might consider lessening the cases caused by mental health issues.

Prioritize hiring more mental health professionals to meet learners needs.

Partnerships with community organizations and rural health services can supplement in-school resources, providing greater access to care.

Building a culture of acceptance and inclusivity.

Implementation of peer support programs, and training staff to identify and respond to mental health concerns, and create safe spaces where learners feel comfortable sharing their struggles.

Remind parents and guardians to always check on their child and support them in every way to keep their mental health in good condition.

Offer workshops and resources to educate families about recognizing signs of distress and accessing professional help.

The mental health crisis in schools requires immediate and sustained action. By addressing the unique needs of learners through comprehensive education, accessible services, and a supportive environment, schools can play a transformative role in safeguarding every learner's well-being. A collaborative effort among educators, parents,

policymakers, and mental health professionals is necessary to ensure that all learners can thrive academically and emotionally.

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