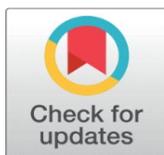


MENTAL HEALTH LITERACY AMONG PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS: AWARENESS, ATTITUDES AND PREPAREDNESS IN TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Mental health concerns among students have increased significantly in recent years, making teachers key agents in identifying, supporting, and referring students facing psychological challenges. In this context, mental health literacy (MHL) among pre-service teachers has emerged as a critical component of effective teacher preparation. The present study aims to assess the level of mental health literacy, attitudes, and preparedness among pre-service teachers enrolled in teacher education institutions. A descriptive survey method was employed for the study. The sample comprised 200 pre-service teachers selected through stratified random sampling from B.Ed. colleges. Data were collected using a standardized Mental Health Literacy Scale along with a self-developed preparedness questionnaire. Statistical techniques such as mean, standard deviation, percentage analysis, t-test, and ANOVA were used for data analysis. The findings revealed that the majority of pre-service teachers possessed a moderate level of mental health literacy, with no significant gender differences. However, the study identified a noticeable gap between theoretical awareness and practical preparedness in handling student mental health issues in classroom settings. The results highlight the urgent need to integrate structured mental health education, counselling skills training, and experiential learning modules into teacher education programs. The study concludes that strengthening mental health literacy among pre-service teachers is essential for creating emotionally supportive classrooms and promoting holistic student development.

Keywords: Mental Health Literacy, Pre-Service Teachers, Teacher Education, Awareness, Preparedness, Well-Being

1. INTRODUCTION

Education today extends beyond academic achievement to include emotional and psychological well-being. With rising cases of anxiety, depression, behavioural concerns, cyber-bullying, and academic stress among students, teachers often become the first observers of mental distress. However, without sufficient knowledge and skills, teachers may misinterpret emotional problems as discipline issues.

Mental Health Literacy (MHL) refers to knowledge and beliefs about mental disorders that assist in recognition, management, and prevention. Pre-service

teachers, being future educators, must develop competencies that help them create empathetic, inclusive, and psychologically safe classrooms. Therefore, evaluating their mental health literacy is both timely and necessary.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

- [Jorm \(2000\)](#) introduced the concept of mental health literacy and emphasized early identification.
- [Wei et al. \(2015\)](#) highlighted the positive impact of school mental health programs.
- [Kutcher et al. \(2016\)](#) found structured teacher training significantly improved awareness and attitudes.
- [Reavley and Jorm \(2012\)](#) reported increasing awareness but limited formal training globally.
- Indian research indicates moderate awareness but inadequate counselling preparedness among teacher trainees.

The literature reveals a gap between theoretical understanding and applied readiness in teacher education contexts.

3. NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

- Increasing student mental health concerns.
- Teachers' role as first responders.
- Lack of compulsory mental health modules in B.Ed. curriculum.
- Alignment with holistic and inclusive education goals.
- Policy emphasis on student well-being and life skills.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1) To assess the level of mental health literacy among pre-service teachers.
- 2) To examine gender differences in mental health literacy.
- 3) To study the relationship between academic stream and mental health awareness.
- 4) To evaluate preparedness of pre-service teachers in handling student mental health issues.

5. HYPOTHESES

H01: There is no significant difference in mental health literacy between male and female pre-service teachers.

H02: There is no significant relationship between academic stream and mental health literacy.

H03: There is no significant difference in preparedness levels among pre-service teachers.

6. OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

- **Mental Health Literacy:** Knowledge, awareness, and beliefs aiding recognition and management of mental health issues.

- **Pre-Service Teachers:** Students enrolled in teacher education (B.Ed./D.El.Ed.) programs.
- **Preparedness:** Practical readiness to identify, guide, and refer students with psychological concerns.

7. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Descriptive Survey Method

Population

All pre-service teachers enrolled in teacher education institutions.

Sample

- **Size:** 200
- **Sampling Technique:** Stratified Random Sampling
- **Locale:** Urban and Semi-Urban Colleges

Tools Used

- 1) Mental Health Literacy Scale (MHLS – Standardized)
- 2) Self-Developed Preparedness Questionnaire
- 3) Demographic Information Sheet

Procedure

Institutional permission was obtained. Participants were informed about confidentiality and voluntary participation. Data were collected through both online and offline modes.

Statistical Techniques

Mean, Standard Deviation, Percentage Analysis, t-Test, ANOVA.

8. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1

Table 1 Level of Mental Health Literacy		
Level	Frequency	Percentage
High	48	24%
Moderate	102	51%
Low	50	25%

Interpretation: Majority fall in the moderate category.

Table 2

Table 2 Gender Difference in MHL (t-Test)				
Gender	Mean	SD	t-Value	Result
Male	62.4	8.2	1.21	Not Significant
Female	64.1	7.9		

Interpretation: No significant gender difference. H01 accepted.

Table 3

Table 3 Preparedness Scores	
Area	Mean Score (5-Point)
Identifying Anxiety	3.8
Handling Depression	2.9
Referral Awareness	2.5
Classroom Intervention	2.7

Interpretation: Awareness higher than practical preparedness.

9. MAJOR FINDINGS

- Overall MHL is moderate.
- Gender differences are insignificant.
- Practical counselling and referral skills are comparatively low.
- Exposure to seminars/workshops improves literacy.
- Lack of structured curriculum support observed.

10. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- Mandatory Mental Health Education Module in B.Ed.
- Regular role-plays, case studies, and simulations.
- Collaboration with psychologists and counsellors.
- Internship tasks on student well-being observation.
- Establishment of Campus Counselling Cells.

11. LIMITATIONS

- Restricted geographical area.
- Limited sample size.

12. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

- Longitudinal and intervention-based studies.
- Comparative rural-urban studies.
- Research on in-service teachers.
- Cross-cultural investigations.

13. CONCLUSION

The study reveals that pre-service teachers possess foundational awareness regarding mental health but lack adequate practical preparedness and counselling competence. In modern education systems, teachers must be emotionally intelligent facilitators in addition to academic instructors. Integrating structured mental health literacy training within teacher education will foster inclusive classrooms, reduce stigma, and promote holistic student development. Strengthening mental health literacy is therefore a critical requirement for sustainable educational progress.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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