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Importance of Mental Health and Well-Being at the Secondary School Level: With Special Reference to Assam

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***Abstract*- Mental health and psychological well-being are essential components of holistic education, particularly during adolescence, when students experience significant physical, emotional, cognitive, and social changes. Secondary school students face various challenges, including academic pressure, examination anxiety, peer relationships, family expectations, identity formation, and uncertainty regarding future careers. These challenges may influence their academic achievement, emotional stability, interpersonal relationships, and overall development. The present review research paper examines the importance of mental health and well-being at the secondary school level, with special reference to Assam. It synthesizes international, national, and regional literature to explore the concept of mental health, its significance in adolescent development, factors influencing students' psychological well-being, and the relationship between mental health and academic achievement. Special attention is given to studies conducted in Kamrup (Metro), Tezpur, and Barpeta. The paper also examines the role of teachers, families, schools, and government initiatives in promoting student well-being. The review highlights the need for a comprehensive, culturally responsive, inclusive, and preventive school mental health framework. It concludes that mental health should be regarded not merely as an individual concern but as an essential educational priority and a prerequisite for meaningful learning, holistic development, and educational equity.**

***Keywords*: Mental health, psychological well-being, secondary school students, adolescence, academic stress, school education, Assam, holistic development**.

I. Introduction

Education is a comprehensive process that aims to develop the intellectual, emotional, social, physical, and moral dimensions of human personality. Traditionally, educational institutions have placed considerable emphasis on academic achievement, examination performance, and intellectual development. However, contemporary educational perspectives increasingly recognize that meaningful learning and holistic development cannot be achieved without ensuring students' mental health and psychological well-being.

Mental health is particularly significant during adolescence, a transitional period between childhood and adulthood. Secondary school students experience substantial developmental changes alongside increasing academic expectations and social responsibilities. They begin to develop a stronger sense of identity, independence, self-esteem, interpersonal relationships, and aspirations for the future. Although these changes offer opportunities for personal growth, they may also create emotional vulnerability and psychological stress.

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2025) identifies adolescence as a formative period for developing emotional habits, coping strategies, and social skills. Globally, approximately one in seven adolescents aged 10–19 years experiences a mental health condition. Mental health difficulties may affect educational participation, social relationships, and future opportunities.

In India, students encounter challenges associated with academic competition, examinations, parental expectations, social inequalities, and limited access to psychological support. The Ministry of Education's (2022) *Mental Health and Well-being of School Students: A Survey* highlighted concerns relating to school life, personal satisfaction, academic responsibilities, peer relationships, and emotional experiences.

The importance of mental health becomes particularly relevant in Assam, where secondary school students represent diverse cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic, geographical, and educational backgrounds. Students from urban and rural areas, economically disadvantaged households, tea garden communities, tribal communities, and different school management systems may experience varying psychological challenges.

Research conducted in Assam has documented mental health concerns among school-going adolescents, emphasizing the need for context-sensitive educational and psychological interventions. Therefore, understanding mental health and well-being at the secondary school level is essential for improving educational quality, student participation, academic achievement, and overall development.

II. Objectives Of The Review

The present review research paper aims:

1. To examine the concept and importance of mental health and well-being among secondary school students.
2. To understand the psychological, social, educational, and environmental factors influencing adolescent mental health.

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3. To review the relationship between mental health, academic achievement, and educational participation.
4. To examine research findings concerning secondary school students' mental health in Assam.
5. To identify challenges faced by students, teachers, families, and educational institutions in promoting psychological well-being.
6. To discuss the role of teachers, parents, schools, and educational policies in promoting student mental health.
7. To suggest educational implications and strategies for strengthening school mental health programmes in Assam.

III. Methodology

The present paper adopts a narrative literature review approach based on secondary sources. Relevant literature was identified from scholarly journal articles, research publications, institutional reports, policy documents, and publications of national and international organizations.

The review draws upon publications available through academic databases, including PubMed and Google Scholar, as well as NCERT journals, WHO publications, Ministry of Education documents, and studies conducted in Assam.

Literature related to adolescent mental health, psychological well-being, depression, anxiety, stress, academic pressure, school environment, teacher support, and mental health promotion was examined thematically.

Studies conducted in Assam and the Northeast Indian region received particular attention to understand the local educational and sociocultural context. The paper is a narrative review and does not claim to be a systematic review or meta-analysis.

IV. Conceptual Understanding Of Mental Health And Well-Being

4.1 Meaning of Mental Health

Mental health refers to a state of psychological well-being that enables individuals to cope with everyday stresses, realize their abilities, learn effectively, maintain relationships, and participate meaningfully in society.

According to WHO (2022), mental health is an integral component of health and involves more than the absence of mental disorders. It includes emotional, psychological, and social well-being.

For secondary school students, mental health involves the ability to manage emotions, develop positive relationships, maintain self-confidence, cope with academic pressure, make appropriate decisions, participate actively in learning, and seek help when experiencing psychological difficulties.

Mental health should therefore be understood as a continuum rather than a condition characterized only by the presence or absence of illness.

4.2 Meaning of Psychological Well-being

Psychological well-being refers to positive psychological functioning, including self-acceptance, personal growth, meaningful relationships, autonomy, and a sense of purpose.

Ryff (1989) conceptualized psychological well-being through six dimensions: self-acceptance, positive relationships, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth.

In secondary education, psychological well-being involves students feeling valued, respected, emotionally secure, capable of learning, and confident about their future.

Mental health and well-being are closely related but not identical. Mental health encompasses the capacity to cope with difficulties and maintain psychological functioning, whereas well-being also emphasizes positive functioning, resilience, belongingness, and life satisfaction.

4.3 Mental Health and Holistic Education

Holistic education recognizes that students are not merely academic learners but individuals with emotional, social, physical, intellectual, and psychological needs.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes holistic, multidisciplinary, and learner-centred education. It supports the development of social-emotional skills, empathy, critical thinking, creativity, and well-rounded personality development.

Mental health promotion is therefore consistent with the broader educational objective of developing responsible, confident, emotionally balanced, and socially competent individuals.

V. Importance Of Mental Health And Well-Being At The Secondary School Level

5.1 Supporting Healthy Adolescent Development

Adolescence is characterized by hormonal changes, emotional fluctuations, cognitive development, and identity formation. Students may experience confusion, insecurity, sensitivity to criticism, and difficulties managing emotions.

Good mental health enables adolescents to develop emotional maturity, self-awareness, resilience, and healthy interpersonal relationships. It helps them understand their emotions, accept themselves, and develop constructive coping mechanisms.

5.2 Improving Academic Achievement and Learning

Mental health is closely associated with students' concentration, motivation, memory, academic engagement, and learning performance.

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Students experiencing persistent anxiety, depression, emotional distress, or excessive stress may encounter difficulties concentrating, remembering information, completing assignments, and participating in classroom activities.

Conversely, emotionally secure students are more likely to demonstrate curiosity, motivation, confidence, perseverance, and willingness to engage in challenging academic tasks.

The relationship between mental health and academic achievement is reciprocal. Academic difficulties may contribute to psychological distress, while psychological difficulties may interfere with academic performance. Therefore, academic achievement should not be considered independently of students' emotional and psychological conditions.

5.3 Developing Emotional Intelligence and Resilience

Emotional intelligence involves recognizing, understanding, and managing emotions while responding appropriately to the emotions of others.

Secondary school students require emotional competencies to manage frustration, disappointment, peer pressure, academic setbacks, and interpersonal conflicts.

Mental health education can help students develop emotional awareness, empathy, communication skills, problem-solving abilities, conflict resolution, and adaptability.

5.4 Preventing Mental Health Problems and Promoting Early Intervention

Mental health promotion provides opportunities to recognize emotional difficulties before they become severe.

WHO (2025) emphasizes that mental health conditions often emerge during adolescence and may remain unrecognized or untreated.

Schools can contribute to early identification by observing changes in attendance, classroom participation, behaviour, social interaction, emotional expression, and academic performance.

Early support may prevent further deterioration and help students access appropriate professional assistance.

5.5 Promoting Positive Teacher–Student Relationships

Teachers are among the most influential adults in students' school lives. Their attitudes, communication patterns, expectations, and teaching practices can significantly affect students' emotional experiences.

A supportive teacher provides encouragement, respect, fairness, emotional understanding, and constructive feedback.

Positive teacher–student relationships help students develop trust, belongingness, and confidence. Students are more likely to communicate their difficulties when teachers are approachable and non-judgmental.

Teachers should avoid humiliating students, comparing their performance publicly, or using punishment that damages self-esteem.

5.6 Creating a Safe and Inclusive School Environment

A positive school environment is characterized by emotional safety, respect, inclusiveness, fairness, cooperation, and freedom from discrimination.

Students' mental health may be adversely affected by bullying, harassment, exclusion, discrimination, corporal punishment, or fear of failure.

Schools should promote respect for individual differences, gender sensitivity, prevention of bullying, inclusion of students with disabilities, and supportive disciplinary practices.

WHO (2021) recognizes safe and supportive school environments as important contributors to health and educational outcomes.

5.7 Encouraging Social Relationships and a Sense of Belonging

Peer relationships become increasingly significant during adolescence. Supportive friendships provide emotional security, companionship, acceptance, and opportunities for social learning.

However, negative peer relationships, bullying, exclusion, and pressure to conform may contribute to emotional distress.

Schools should encourage collaborative learning, peer mentoring, group activities, sports, cultural programmes, and student clubs to strengthen positive relationships.

5.8 Reducing Dropout and Improving Educational Participation

Students experiencing persistent mental health difficulties may demonstrate absenteeism, disengagement, reduced participation, or declining academic performance.

Psychological distress may contribute to school avoidance, social withdrawal, and difficulties maintaining educational motivation.

Mental health promotion can help improve attendance, classroom engagement, student retention, and participation in educational activities.

VI. Factors Influencing Mental Health And Well-Being

6.1 Academic Pressure and Examination Anxiety

Academic pressure is one of the prominent concerns among secondary school students. Examinations, competitive academic environments, homework, parental expectations, and uncertainty about future careers may contribute to stress.

Excessive pressure may lead to fear of failure, sleep disturbances, irritability, reduced motivation, and emotional exhaustion.

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The transition from secondary to higher secondary education may further increase concerns about subject selection and career opportunities.

6.2 Family Environment and Parental Expectations

Family relationships significantly influence students' emotional development.

Supportive parenting, open communication, emotional warmth, and reasonable expectations strengthen psychological resilience.

Conversely, excessive parental pressure, family conflict, neglect, financial hardship, and lack of emotional support may contribute to psychological difficulties.

Parents should understand that academic achievement is only one dimension of their children's development.

6.3 Socioeconomic Conditions

Socioeconomic inequalities may influence students' access to educational resources, nutrition, technology, healthcare, and psychological support.

Students from economically disadvantaged households may experience financial insecurity, domestic responsibilities, inadequate study facilities, or difficulties accessing educational opportunities.

Mental health promotion should therefore be linked with educational equity and social support.

6.4 Peer Pressure and Social Relationships

Peer acceptance becomes highly important during adolescence. Students may experience pressure regarding appearance, social status, academic performance, relationships, and online behaviour.

Fear of rejection, bullying, and social exclusion may negatively influence self-esteem and psychological well-being.

6.5 Digital Media and Technology

Digital technology provides opportunities for learning, communication, creativity, and social interaction. However, excessive or inappropriate digital engagement may contribute to sleep disturbances, distraction, cyberbullying, social comparison, and emotional distress.

The relationship between technology and mental health depends on the nature, duration, and context of its use.

Schools and families should promote responsible digital citizenship, online safety, balanced screen use, and awareness of cyberbullying.

6.6 Gender, Language, and Cultural Factors

Gender-related expectations and inequalities may influence mental health.

Girls may experience concerns associated with safety, discrimination, body image, and social expectations. Boys may experience pressure to suppress emotional expression.

In Assam, students come from Assamese-speaking, Bengali-speaking, Bodo-speaking, tea garden, tribal-language, and other linguistic communities.

Language barriers can affect classroom participation, academic confidence, communication, and access to psychological support.

Mental health programmes should therefore be gender-sensitive, culturally responsive, and linguistically accessible.

6.7 School Climate and Teacher Behaviour

School climate includes relationships among students, teachers, administrators, and families.

An overly competitive, punitive, or examination-oriented environment may increase psychological stress.

A positive school climate characterized by cooperation, respect, encouragement, and emotional safety can promote mental health and educational engagement.

Teachers' classroom management practices, assessment methods, feedback, and interpersonal behaviour are therefore important considerations.

VII. Review Of Literature With Special Reference To Assam

Assam provides a significant regional context for understanding secondary school students' mental health because of its geographical diversity, cultural plurality, socioeconomic inequalities, and differences in educational opportunities.

7.1 Mental Health Status of Adolescents in Kamrup (Metro)

Devi, Barthakur, and Das (2021) conducted a study titled *Mental Health Status of Adolescent Students of Government Schools of Kamrup (Metro), Assam: Evidence for Action Plan*.

The researchers examined 1,839 students from 101 government schools using the General Health Questionnaire-28 (GHQ-28). The findings indicated considerable psychological distress among adolescents, with a greater proportion of girls experiencing mental health difficulties than boys.

More than 80% of participants reported somatic symptoms, while approximately 66% experienced anxiety and insomnia. Mental health problems were associated with academic proficiency and paternal occupation.

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The study highlighted the need for systematic mental health promotion and preventive interventions in government secondary schools in Kamrup (Metro).

7.2 Depression, Anxiety, and Stress among Adolescents in Kamrup (Metro)

Saikia, Das, and Rajendran (2023) conducted a school-based study titled *Mental Health Morbidities and Their Correlates among the Adolescents in Kamrup (Metro), Assam*.

The study included adolescents aged 14–17 years studying in Classes VIII–X in ten high schools. Using the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale-21 (DASS-21), the researchers reported the following prevalence estimates:

TABLE-1

Mental health concern	Reported prevalence
Depression	22.2%
Anxiety	24.4%
Stress	6.9%

The findings suggest that depression, anxiety, and stress represent important psychological concerns among school-going adolescents in Kamrup (Metro).

The study also identified associations between depression and certain family-related, behavioural, and academic factors. It emphasized the need for comprehensive investigations and early recognition of psychological difficulties.

7.3 Mental Health of School-going Adolescents in Tezpur

Harikrishnan, Arif, and Sobhana (2017) examined mental health among school-going adolescents in Tezpur, Assam.

The study included 1,403 adolescents from ten schools and employed the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ).

The researchers identified gender, educational factors, family type, academic performance, and socioeconomic status as relevant predictors of mental health difficulties.

The study emphasized periodic assessment and appropriate school-level procedures for identifying students requiring psychological support.

7.4 Psychological Well-being among Secondary School Students in Barpeta

Lahkar and Saikia (2020) investigated psychological well-being among students of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya in Barpeta district, Assam.

Their descriptive survey found that most participants demonstrated moderate psychological well-being, while comparatively few students belonged to the high well-being category.

The researchers highlighted the importance of counselling and guidance programmes for students and teachers, particularly in educational settings serving disadvantaged students.

The study contributes to understanding psychological well-being in residential educational institutions and emphasizes the need for supportive interventions.

7.5 Overall Interpretation of Assam-based Research

The reviewed studies indicate that mental health and psychological well-being are important educational concerns in Assam.

The literature suggests that:

1. Psychological distress among adolescents deserves systematic attention.
2. Anxiety, depression, stress, and somatic complaints are reported in school-based research.
3. Mental health concerns may vary according to gender, family circumstances, socioeconomic conditions, and academic experiences.
4. Schools provide an important platform for mental health awareness and early support.
5. Research remains geographically and methodologically uneven across Assam.

The available studies do not establish a single prevalence estimate for all secondary school students in Assam. Differences in sampling methods, instruments, age groups, school types, and periods of data collection limit direct comparisons.

Further representative research is necessary to understand mental health patterns across the state's diverse educational settings.

VIII. Mental Health Challenges Among Secondary School Students In Assam

The educational and sociocultural context of Assam presents several important considerations for mental health promotion.

8.1 Rural–Urban Differences

Students in urban areas may experience academic competition, digital pressures, and high expectations, whereas students in rural areas may encounter limited educational resources, transportation difficulties, economic constraints, and reduced access to specialized psychological services.

However, rural and urban students may experience different types of stressors, and reliable comparative research is required before drawing conclusions about differences in mental health.

8.2 Socioeconomic Disparities

Assam includes students from economically diverse backgrounds. Poverty, inadequate learning facilities, financial insecurity, and family responsibilities may affect educational participation and psychological well-being.

Students from disadvantaged communities may require additional academic support, counselling, nutritional assistance, and opportunities for social inclusion.

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8.3 Linguistic and Cultural Diversity

Assam's linguistic and cultural diversity requires mental health programmes to be culturally sensitive and accessible.

Psychological support should be available in languages students understand and should respect local traditions, family structures, cultural values, and community practices.

8.4 Educational Competition and Examination Stress

Secondary school examinations are important for educational progression and future career opportunities.

Students may experience pressure from parents, teachers, peers, and themselves to achieve high marks. Fear of examination failure and uncertainty regarding career choices may contribute to psychological distress.

Schools should promote healthy study habits, realistic expectations, and balanced assessment practices.

8.5 Limited Access to Specialized Support

The availability of trained school counsellors, clinical psychologists, and child and adolescent mental health professionals may vary across districts and educational institutions.

Students in remote or disadvantaged areas may encounter difficulties accessing specialized services.

A coordinated referral system involving schools, district health services, counselling professionals, and community organizations is therefore necessary.

IX. Government Initiatives And Policy Framework

9.1 National Education Policy 2020

The National Education Policy 2020 emphasizes holistic development, learner-centred education, social-emotional learning, and life skills.

Its vision supports educational environments that promote emotional development, empathy, resilience, and overall personality development.

Mental health promotion is consistent with the policy's commitment to reducing educational stress and improving the quality of school education.

9.2 Manodarpan Initiative

The Ministry of Education introduced Manodarpan as part of its efforts to provide psychosocial support and promote mental health among students, teachers, and families.

The initiative provides awareness materials and counselling support related to psychological well-being, emotional support, and stress management.

It is particularly relevant for secondary school students experiencing examination stress, academic uncertainty, and emotional difficulties.

9.3 School Health and Wellness Programme

The School Health and Wellness Programme under Ayushman Bharat promotes health education and well-being among school students.

It provides opportunities to address mental health, emotional well-being, interpersonal relationships, nutrition, and healthy lifestyles through school-based activities.

The programme supports the integration of health education into school learning and encourages collaboration among teachers, students, and health professionals.

9.4 Initiatives of Samagra Shiksha Assam

Samagra Shiksha Assam's Annual Report 2024–25 describes initiatives aimed at promoting child mental health and protection in schools.

Reported activities include:

- Distribution of mental well-being activity books and teacher handbooks.
- Establishment of Happiness Zones and Wellness Corners.
- Awareness of Tele-MANAS and Manodarpan counselling services.
- World Mental Health Day activities involving storytelling, yoga, art, and peer-led programmes.
- Training of 13,288 nodal teachers across the state.

The report also records mental health awareness and life-skills education for students in Classes VI–XII.

These activities represent important steps toward strengthening school mental health awareness and creating supportive educational environments in Assam.

9.5 Tele-MANAS and Manodarpan Helplines

Tele-MANAS provides mental health support through the national helpline.

Schools should ensure that students and families are aware of these services and understand how to access support when necessary.

X. Role Of Teachers And Parents In Promoting Mental Health

10.1 Role of Teachers

Teachers play a significant role in creating emotionally supportive learning environments.

They should possess basic mental health literacy and understand common signs of emotional distress among adolescents.

Teacher training programmes should include adolescent psychological development, emotional and behavioural difficulties, examination anxiety, bullying, communication skills, and referral procedures.

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Teachers should establish classrooms characterized by respect, encouragement, fairness, and emotional safety. Students should feel comfortable asking questions, expressing opinions, making mistakes, and seeking assistance.

Teachers can incorporate social-emotional learning through storytelling, role-play, group discussions, collaborative activities, empathy-building exercises, and classroom reflection.

Teachers are not expected to diagnose mental health conditions. However, they can identify concerning changes in student behaviour and facilitate appropriate support.

Potential warning signs include persistent sadness, withdrawal, significant changes in attendance, sudden deterioration in academic performance, repeated physical complaints, frequent emotional outbursts, and loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities.

Such signs require sensitive observation and appropriate communication with parents, counsellors, and qualified professionals.

10.2 Role of Parents and Families

Parents are important contributors to students' mental health and educational development.

Family-based mental health promotion should emphasize:

1. Open and supportive communication.
2. Reasonable academic expectations.
3. Emotional acceptance and encouragement.
4. Recognition of individual differences.
5. Healthy sleep and daily routines.
6. Balanced use of digital devices.
7. Participation in school activities.
8. Awareness of psychological difficulties.
9. Cooperation with teachers and counsellors.
10. Seeking professional assistance when necessary.

Parents should avoid comparing children with siblings, classmates, or relatives.

Students require reassurance that their worth and identity are not determined exclusively by examination results.

XI. Educational Implications

The review has several important implications for secondary education, particularly in Assam.

11.1 Mental Health as an Educational Priority

Mental health should be integrated into educational planning rather than treated as an additional or optional activity.

Educational institutions should recognize psychological well-being as an essential condition for effective learning and holistic development.

11.2 Integration of Mental Health Education into the Curriculum

Mental health education should be incorporated into school activities, life-skills education, health education, and appropriate curricular components.

Students should learn about emotional regulation, resilience, stress management, healthy relationships, self-esteem, and help-seeking behaviour.

The content should be age-appropriate, culturally sensitive, and accessible in relevant languages.

11.3 Strengthening Teacher Education

Teacher education institutions should include mental health awareness and psychosocial support in pre-service and in-service training.

Teachers require practical knowledge of adolescent development, emotional difficulties, classroom stress, and referral procedures.

11.4 Establishing School Counselling Services

Secondary schools should establish accessible counselling facilities wherever possible.

Schools with limited resources may develop shared counselling arrangements through district-level resource centres, trained counsellors, and partnerships with local health institutions.

Counselling should be confidential, supportive, and free from stigma.

11.5 Developing School Mental Health Policies

Every secondary school should develop a clear mental health and well-being policy covering awareness activities, bullying prevention, student protection, confidentiality, identification of support needs, referral procedures, and crisis response.

11.6 Reducing Examination-related Stress

Educational institutions should reconsider excessively competitive and pressure-oriented academic practices.

Schools should provide examination preparation guidance, time-management support, stress-management activities, and realistic academic counselling.

Assessment should emphasize learning, improvement, and understanding rather than only marks and rankings.

11.7 Promoting Inclusive Education

Mental health promotion should address students from marginalized and disadvantaged backgrounds.

Special attention should be given to students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, rural learners, linguistic minorities, and students experiencing social exclusion.

11.8 Strengthening School–Family Partnerships

Schools should organize regular meetings and awareness programmes for parents.

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Teachers and parents should cooperate in identifying students' emotional and educational needs.

A coordinated school–family partnership can provide consistent support across home and school environments.

XII. Recommendations

Based on the reviewed literature, the following recommendations are proposed for promoting mental health and well-being in secondary schools of Assam:

1. *Establish comprehensive school mental health programmes:* Every secondary school should develop structured activities involving mental health awareness, emotional development, stress management, and student support.
2. *Strengthen counselling and referral facilities:* Schools should ensure access to trained counsellors and qualified mental health professionals through school-based or district-level arrangements.
3. *Train teachers in mental health literacy*: Teachers should receive regular training in emotional support, early identification, adolescent development, and referral procedures.
4. *Conduct regular awareness programmes*: Schools should organize seminars, workshops, classroom discussions, poster activities, and student-led programmes to reduce stigma.
5. *Promote stress management and emotional regulation*: Students should be encouraged to practise healthy coping strategies, including physical activity, relaxation, time management, and creative activities.
6. *Create Happiness Zones and Wellness Corners*: Schools may establish safe and welcoming spaces where students can reflect, communicate concerns, and access information about psychological support.
7. *Strengthen parent and community participation*: Parents, teachers, community members, and local health professionals should collaborate in mental health awareness and support programmes.
8. *Promote anti-bullying and child protection measures*: Schools should establish clear procedures for preventing and responding to bullying, harassment, discrimination, and violence.
9. *Ensure culturally and linguistically appropriate support*: Mental health materials should be available in Assamese and other relevant regional languages and should respect the cultural diversity of Assam.
10. *Strengthen collaboration with health services*: Schools should establish connections with district mental health programmes, healthcare institutions, counsellors, and relevant community organizations.
11. *Monitor student well-being ethically*: Schools should periodically review student well-being through appropriate and confidential assessments. The purpose should be to identify support needs rather than label students.
12. *Promote balanced academic expectations*: Teachers and parents should encourage academic excellence without creating excessive pressure and should recognize students' individual strengths and interests.

XIII. Conclusion

Mental health and psychological well-being are indispensable components of secondary education and holistic adolescent development. The secondary school stage represents a critical period during which students experience substantial physical, emotional, cognitive, and social changes. Their psychological experiences during this period can influence academic achievement, motivation, self-confidence, interpersonal relationships, and future educational opportunities.

The present review demonstrates that mental health should not be understood merely as the absence of psychological disorders. It also encompasses emotional stability, resilience, positive relationships, self-esteem, social adjustment, and the ability to cope with everyday challenges.

The reviewed literature indicates that academic pressure, examination anxiety, family expectations, socioeconomic circumstances, peer relationships, digital engagement, and school climate are important factors influencing students' mental health. These factors operate within a complex relationship between individual, family, school, and community environments.

The studies conducted in Assam are particularly significant. Research from Kamrup (Metro) has documented psychological distress among school-going adolescents, including anxiety, depression, stress, and somatic complaints. Studies from Tezpur and Barpeta further demonstrate the importance of investigating mental health across diverse educational contexts.

However, the available evidence is not sufficiently comprehensive to establish the mental health status of all secondary school students in Assam. Differences in research instruments, sampling procedures, geographical coverage, and study populations indicate the need for more representative and longitudinal research.

The initiatives undertaken by the Ministry of Education and Samagra Shiksha Assam, including Manodarpan, mental health awareness programmes, Happiness Zones, Wellness Corners, and teacher training, represent meaningful steps toward promoting psychological well-being in schools.

Nevertheless, their effectiveness depends on sustained implementation, adequate resources, trained personnel, institutional commitment, and cooperation among teachers, parents, students, and health professionals.

The review emphasizes that schools should move beyond an exclusively examination-oriented approach toward a learner-centred, inclusive, emotionally supportive, and holistic educational environment. Mental health awareness, counselling, social-emotional learning, stress management, positive teacher–student relationships, and early support should become integral components of secondary education.

In the context of Assam, mental health promotion requires particular attention to rural–urban differences, linguistic diversity, socioeconomic inequalities, cultural sensitivity, and the educational needs of marginalized communities.

Ultimately, **the promotion of mental health and well-being is not merely a supportive educational activity; it is a fundamental responsibility of the education system.** A mentally healthy student is better positioned to learn, develop meaningful relationships, overcome challenges, and contribute positively to society.

Therefore, strengthening mental health and well-being at the secondary school level should be regarded as an essential educational priority for Assam, contributing to holistic development, educational equity, and the creation of a healthier, more compassionate, and resilient generation.

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