

# Role of School in Promoting Sustainable Mental Health of Students - A Qualitative Study

**Rajyasri Roy**

Kanyashree College, University of Calcutta, West Bengal, India

**Email address:**

royrajasri@gmail.com

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**Abstract:** Every individual aspire to live a healthy and prosperous life free of diseases and disorders. Living a healthy life implies not necessarily a physical state of well-being, but also it includes one's good mental health too. A person may be born with a predisposition to a mental health disorder or he or she may acquire disorders due to negative influences from environments during his or her lifetime. Therefore shaping someone's state of mind in a positive way, addressing mental, emotional or behavioral problems from a very early age is extremely important. Quite naturally, influence of schools in this regard is immense and a supportive, flourishing school environment act to a great extent to promote mental health of a child positively. Present study aims to understand and highlight key aspects from the responses that come up as specific measures or activities taken by school or teachers for good mental health of the children and also to find out different measures/activities taken by a school or the teachers for promotion of positive and sustainable mental health among the students. The method employed being the Interview method and the tool used being the Questionnaire designed by the researcher for interviewing teachers in a high school. Interviews of five assistant teachers of the school were conducted based on the questionnaire prepared and their responses were noted on the questionnaire. Qualitative analysis of the quantitative interpretation of the data collected were discussed to achieve in depth understanding of the role played by school in promoting sustainable mental health of a student.

**Keywords:** Mental Health Promotion, Corporal Punishment, Psychological Counseling, Sustainable Mental Health

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## 1. Introduction

The need of psychological well-being of children of all age group especially those of adolescent age for their emotional, social, cognitive development is well understood these days. Children are assets of a nation and to ensure proper moral, psychological, emotional development of them is extremely important. Effective intervention to improve a child or adolescent's resilience, promote their mental health, their mental illness or disorder can act to a great extent such that the child will grow and become a responsible, and resilient human being in future. [1] In present time, mental illness has become such a burden to healthy living globally that addressing mental health issues of younger generation is essential to provide a long standing remedy to this malady.

Good mental health is also more than just the absence of a mental disorder, such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, depression, or anxiety. According to World Health

Organization (WHO), health (and mental health) can be defined this way:

*"Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Mental health is an integral part of this definition."*

Good mental health, therefore, is the foundation for an individual's and a community's effective functioning and wellbeing. A person who is mentally healthy has a state of wellbeing in which he or she realizes his or her own abilities, is able to cope with life's normal stresses, can work regularly and productively, and is also able to make a contribution to the community. [12]

Mental Health Promotion means creating environments that promote and sustain positive mental health for everyone. Schools are an ideal platform to promote mental health for children and youth because it provides an opportunity to reach large groups of children during their formative years of

cognitive, emotional and behavioral development [2]. An effective school base mental health program can be very useful in this regard. It must be integrated into school curriculum, targeted for multiple health outcome, aimed for all students to ensure personal skill development of everyone. It must involve parents and community, and also be spread over a period of time to ensure. According to WHO one in every 5 child has a mental health issue. One-half of all lifetime diagnosable mental health conditions begin by the age of 14. If problems are identified early and intervened at the right time, it will be more cost effective, as further breakdown can be prevented and adult treatment and rehabilitation programs which are much more expensive can be avoided. It is possible to prevent the majority of behaviour disorders in preschool and school environment itself [3].

It is well known that mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and family problems often are the root causes of poor academic performance, disciplinary issues, and truancy. For adolescent age students, the first signs of mental illness or emotional distress can emerge in the school environment [13]. Hence mental health promotional activities and supportive measures followed in school environment can improve academic performance and personal relationships with family and friends, increase engagement, achievement, decrease bullying, aggression, school drop-out, distraction from class work. [5]

Such programs will ensure personal skill improvement of children. Their ability to regulate emotion, coping with problems and difficulties in life, problem solving skills will be enhanced. It will enhance empathy and generate respect for diversity in them. [6]

## 2. Aims and Objectives

1. To prepare a questionnaire for the interview and conduct interview of the teachers to get to know about the responses or opinions of them to all the questions.
2. To understand and highlight key aspects from the responses that come up as specific measures or activities taken by school or teachers for good mental health of the children.

## 3. Methodology

Method/Technique: Interview method

Tool: Questionnaire

Population, Sample: Data collection was carried out on 26th August, 2019 from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Telinipara Bhadreswar High School, Bhadreswar, Hooghly by interviewing teachers in that school. Interviews of five assistant teachers of the school 6 were conducted based on the questionnaire prepared and their responses were noted on the questionnaire.

## 4. Data Analysis

Both qualitative and quantitative analysis are carried out

for the collected data by comparing and interpreting responses of five teachers in each single question. Through qualitative analysis a critical understanding of the underlying prospects of the responses of teachers against each questions will be investigated, whereas in quantitative analysis responses will be quantified to estimate their positivity.

## 5. Qualitative Analysis

### 5.1. Social and Physical Environment of the School

- a) Classroom Atmosphere: The classroom atmosphere was found suitable for the students. Most of the teachers make use of colorful pictures, chart, model etc to draw attention of the students and they can enjoy their learning practices. The teachers help the students to resolve problems and make them comfortable.
- b) Physical Comfortability: To make the classroom physically comfortable the proper initiatives were taken by the teachers by arranging sufficient benches, fans and lights. They advise their students to open the windows and doors so that classroom will be airy and they can prevent themselves from suffocation.
- c) Trust and Tolerance: The teachers make their students involve actively in every activities of the school. They believe that active participation of the students maximizes trust, tolerance, empathy and cooperation among themselves.
- d) Decision Making: The teachers grant students freedom to take decision so that they should be capable of taking decision in any situation they faced.

### 5.2. Teaching and Learning Method

- a) Socio Economic Background Of The Students: The teachers treat the students tactfully by hurting nobody and they feel they are all alike though they are coming from different socio economic background.
- b) Program: School arranged different programs and co-curricular activities like yoga, meditation, recitation, singing, drawing to make their students involved to promote their abilities and skill.
- c) Value Education: The school organizes one or two value education classes every week to infuse the students with honesty and morality.

### 5.3. Healthy School Policy

- a) Corporal Punishment: The teachers do not support corporal punishment because they think corporal punishment makes one beast rather than to be a good human being. They feel that love and sympathy are more powerful than the punishment to control a class.
- b) Students With Special Needs: As regard to the students with exceptionalities special care is taken by arranging extra classes and by involving the students in different co-curricular activities.
- c) Psychological Counsellor: School do not have any permanent or temporary counselor. But the school

authority along with the teachers does counseling when ever needed by the students.

- d) Parent Teachers Meeting: For promoting mental health of the students the school arranges guardian meeting once in a month. They think that not only the school but also the parents play important role to develop mental health of the students.
- e) Awareness against Addiction: The teachers made the students aware of inappropriate use of drugs and smoking as it is very injurious to health. They think that the students in their adolescence period don't know the bad effect of this addiction.

#### 5.4. Infrastructural Facility in School

School has adequate facilities to promote good mental health. The school has its own playground, sufficient number of classrooms etc. The school also has wheel chairs and other equipments for the physically challenged students.

### 6. Domain Wise Quantitative Analysis

Figure 1 Social and Physical Environment of the School.

Figure 2 Column chart showing the Teaching and learning method of the school.

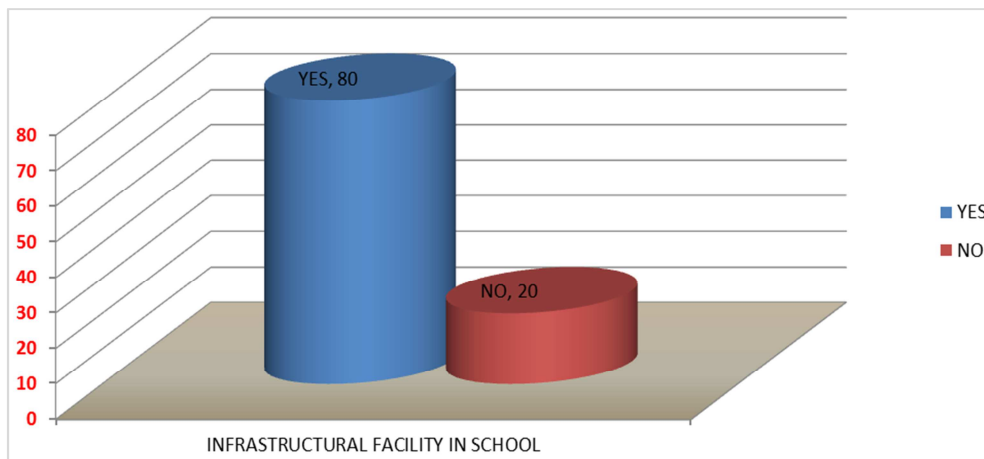


Figure 1. Column chart showing the social and physical environment of the school.

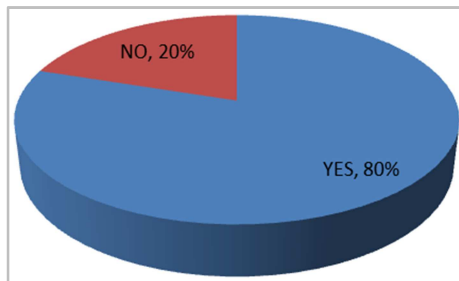


Figure 2. Pie chart showing the social and physical environment of the school.

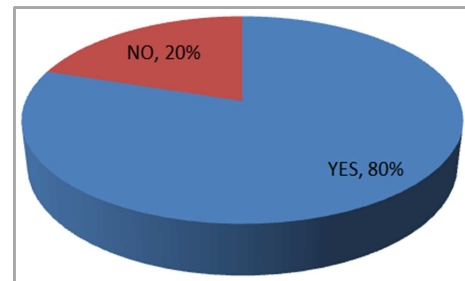


Figure 3. Pie chart showing the Teaching and learning method of the school.

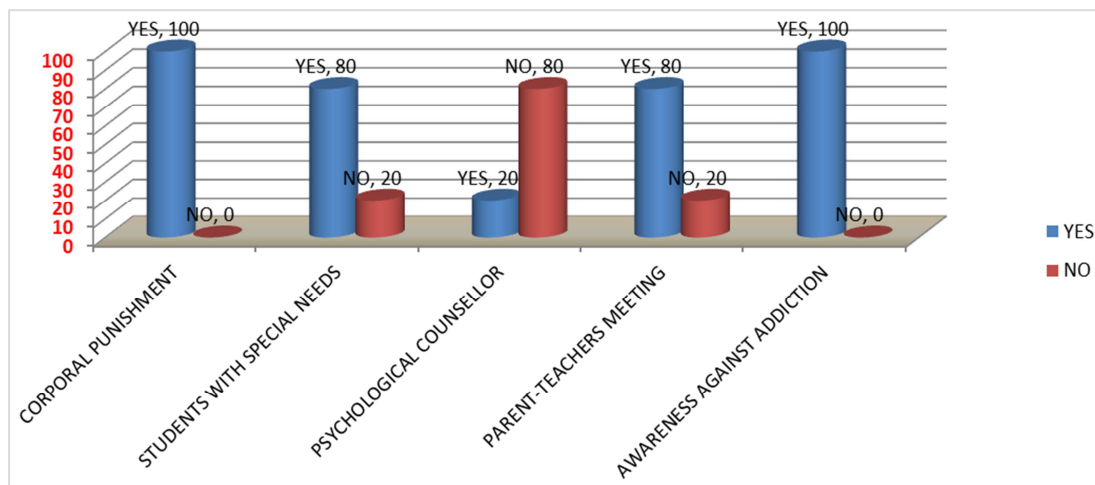


Figure 4. Column chart showing the Healthy school policy.

Table 1. Teaching and Learning Method.

Domains	Teacher1		Teacher2		Teacher3		Teacher4		Teacher5		Total		Total	Yes%	No%
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	NO	Yes	No			
<b>SOCIO ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>		<b>100</b>	<b>0</b>
PROGRAMMES	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	3	2		60	40
VALUE EDUCATION	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	4	0		80	20
														80%	20%

1=POSITIVE  
0=NEGATIVE

Table 2. Healthy School Policy.

DOMAINS	Teacher 1		Teacher 2		Teacher 3		Teacher4		Teacher 5		Total		Total	Yes%	No%
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No			
CORPORAL PUNISHMENT	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	5	0		100	0
STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	4	1		80	20
PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELLOR	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	4		20	80
PARENT-TEACHERS MEETING	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	4	1		80	20
AWARENESS AGAINST ADDICTION	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	5	0		100	20
														76%	24%

1=POSITIVE  
0=NEGATIVE

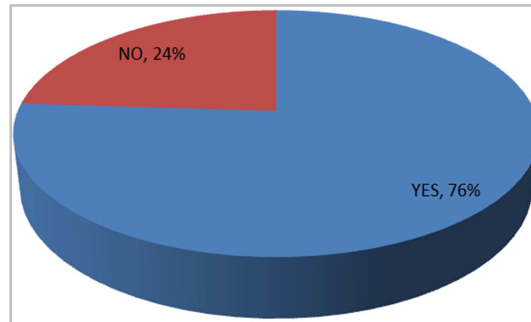


Figure 5. Pie chart showing the Healthy school policy.

Quote on mental health: "Sanity remains defined simply by the ability to cope with insane conditions".

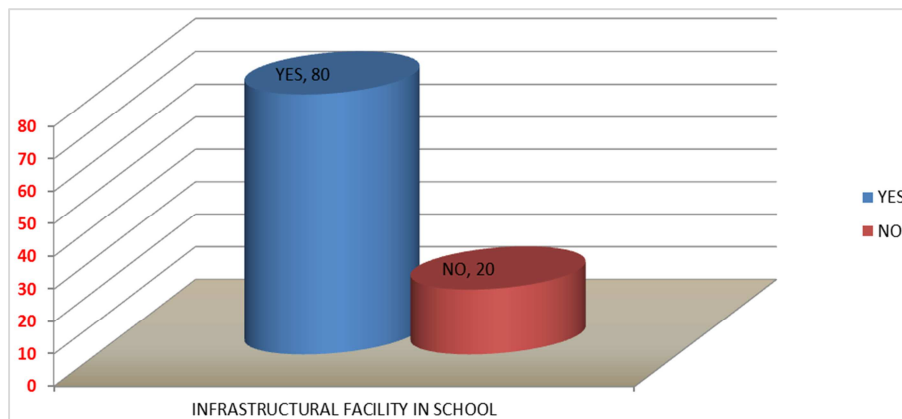


Figure 6. Column chart showing the Infrastructural facility in school.

Table 3. Infrastructural Facility in School.

DOMAINS	P. K.patra		H.zamader		G.paul		S.mukherjee		B.golui		Total Yes	Total No	Yes%	No%
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No				
INFRASTRUCTURAL FACILITY IN SCHOOL	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	4	2	80	20
													80%	20%

1=POSITIVE  
0=NEGATIVE

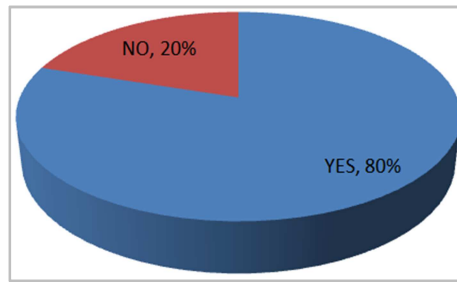


Figure 7. Pie chart showing the Infrastructural facility in school.

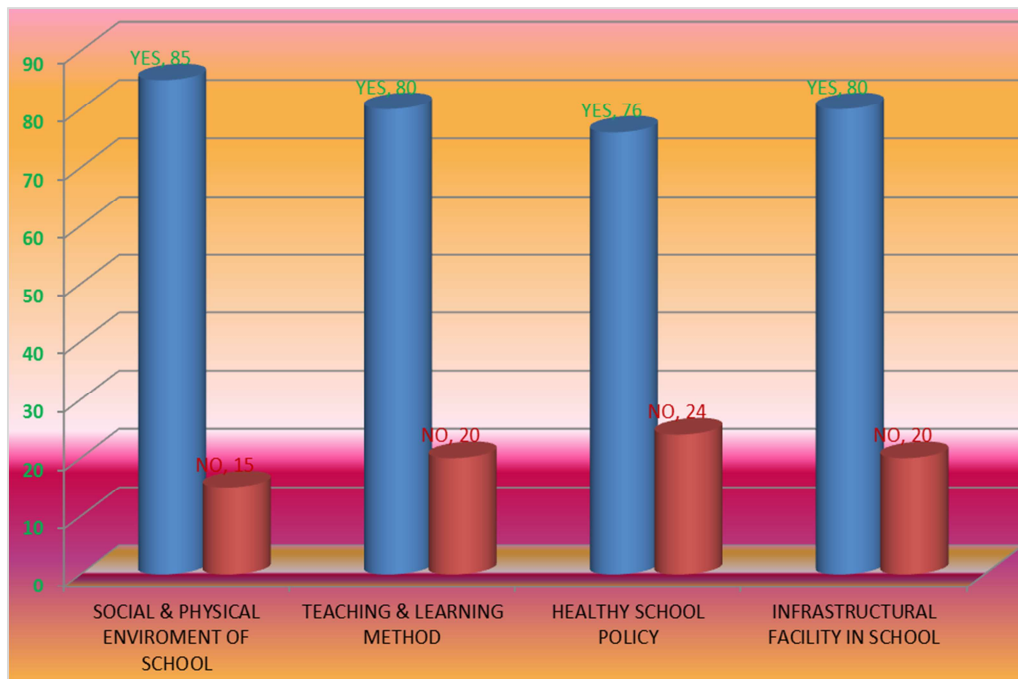


Figure 8. Quantitative analysis presented through column chart.

Table 4. Overall Quantitative Analysis.

DOMAINS	YES%	NO%
SOCIAL & PHYSICAL ENVIROMENT OF SCHOOL	85	15
TEACHING & LEARNING METHOD	80	20
HEALTHY SCHOOL POLICY	76	24
INFRASTRUCTURAL FACILITY IN SCHOOL	80	20
	80.25	19.75

From the qualitative analysis some key initiatives taken up by the teacher that can promote mental health of students can be identified

1. Students should be engaged into group based activities, cultural programs, and co-curricular activity, yoga classes.
2. Students should be alerted with examples so that they don't get addicted to bad habits.
3. Value education can be imparted to students by means of stories, biography of eminent personality, real life examples etc.[14]
4. Instead of corporal punishment, or harsh scolding, students should be made aware what is right or wrong in a good manner. Teacher should always remain alert such that bullying, mutual hatred between students do

not exist inside school environment.

5. A more student-centred learning method need to be followed to encourage students' participation. [7]
6. Students should be assigned duties, responsibilities like ensuring cleanliness of the classroom, by engaging them in various school activities.
7. Parents should also be participating in this mental health promotion process so that outside the school also the child gets a friendly, congenial environment. Parents should stay alert about the mental health of their child and guide them properly. [9]
8. Teachers need to maintain a friendly relationship with the students. This way students will feel free to communicate with their teachers. This will help in teaching learning process and also any mental, intellectual, emotional, problems or shortcomings faced by any students can be minimized effectively. [15] This way a teacher can become a true 'friend, philosopher, and guide' to the students.

## 7. Recommendations

1. Appointing part-time or full time counselor should be

considered with utmost importance since help of an experienced or qualified personnel to address various issues like troublesome or offensive behaviour of a child can be extremely useful and fruitful. [10]

2. Separate value education classes must be arranged. Life-style education classes suitable for appropriate age group can be arranged especially for students belonging to adolescent age. [11]
3. Full time or at least part time 'Special educator' or qualified personnel must be employed for 'special' children.
4. Infrastructure of the school must be improved so that students feel comfortable inside class room.
5. Part-time teachers can be employed to maintain a good student-teacher ratio till Government employs permanent teachers in vacant posts.

## 8. Limitations of the Study

1. Due to the constraint of available time, interviews were conducted in only one school. Therefore, few questions of the questionnaire have provided similar responses due to identical scenario observed by all the teachers within the context of the school. Conducting interviews in multiple schools would have yielded a much better quantitative as well as qualitative analysis of the collected data.
2. Many responses does not quite clearly relate to what was intended to ask. Those become bad data and they are duly excluded from qualitative analysis and treated accordingly in quantitative analysis.

## 9. Conclusion

Role of a school in nourishing mental health of a child is well understood these days and providing a favourable environment is considered immensely important in this regard. [8] Quite naturally, the teachers play the biggest role in this matter apart from school authority or parents of child. With the execution of this fieldwork, various activities or measures adopted by the teachers of a school to promote good mental health of the students of the school have been found. Some other aspects which are needed to take care of can also be realized. Overall, a comprehensive idea to promote positive mental health among the students is gained from this fieldwork.

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