

Best Practice 1

Title: Catering to Mental Health of College Community

Objectives:

- Catering to the Mental Health needs of various stakeholders in the College Community (students, teaching staff, ancillary staff, alumni and parents) is an objective of activities conducted by the Department of Psychology.
- Awareness-building, reducing stigma, consciousness raising about the importance of Mental Health steers various activities.
- Armed with the knowledge and expertise with regard to Mental Health, another aim is to reach out to the larger social community, identify needs and help address their concerns and participate in information dissemination.
- This practice follows the guiding principles laid down by the World Health Organization of prevention, promotion and treatment in the area of mental health.

The Context:

A study conducted to measure mental health literacy in the Indian context found mental health literacy among adolescents to be very low, i.e. depression was identified by 29.04% and schizophrenia/psychosis was recognized only by 1.31%. Stigma was noted to be present in help-seeking[1]. The suicide rate in India in 2015 at 15.7/100,000 is higher than the regional average of 12.9 and the global average of 10.6[2].

These findings reinforce the need to increase attention given to mental health and especially in the context of adolescents and young adults who are the major stakeholders in Higher Education Institutions.

Most chronic and debilitating mental illnesses have their onset before 24 years of age when most are a part of the educational system. From including mental health narratives in curricula toward, de-stigmatization, removing discrimination and early detection, to empowering stakeholders for early detection and simple interventions; the educational system yields many opportunities for enhancing mental health awareness[3].

WHO Preventing Suicides: Global Imperatives Report, 2014 had predicted India as the hotbed of suicides with adolescents and young adults being the most vulnerable. Considering the diversity of students: urban poor, middle class, students from North East and international students, catering to their mental health in a creative, inclusive, bottom-up manner is a challenge[4].

With this context in place various activities under Mental Health Practices are planned and executed.

The Practice:

All the activities under the banner of Mental Health fall into one or the other bucket of the directives of WHO which are Prevention, Promotion and Treatment of Mental Health and catering to the UN SDGs of mental health, inclusion and gender issues.

With a view of Prevention, World Suicide Prevention Day is commemorated every year on 10th September by a **Suicide Prevention Campaign**. Students prepare handmade/digital Posters portraying the message creatively that Suicide is Preventable. Details of the Counselling Cell in college and Suicide Prevention Helplines are mentioned in the Posters. Students take these posters and visit classrooms and spaces around the campus and speak to students about Prevention of Suicide.

In an initiative to move beyond the campus, the activity was extended to the neighbouring Modern College High School, Modern Law College and Modern NCL, Junior College as well. The students with their posters and messages visited these three campuses to raise awareness.

On **World Mental Health Day**, students are encouraged to speak on themes like mental health, disability, stigma, myths, ask questions and express their concerns.

For Promotion of Mental Health, following activities are undertaken...

- Disha- Peer-Support Group
- Kaleidoscope- Psychology Magazine
- MindScape- Psychology Research Compendium
- Koshish- Community based Internship
- Ummeed- College Community Mental Health.

From a Treatment perspective the functional and active Counselling Cell has been helping individuals cope and recover from various mental health issues. During reporting period 232 beneficiaries availed the services in person and online as well since the last two years of the pandemic.

Counselling cell organizes life-skill workshops, empowering the participants with tools like stress-management, confidence-building, goal-setting etc. Such life-skills and self-care workshops are conducted for ancillary staff under UMMEED and annual workshops for teaching staff on life skills, work-life balance, parenting and conflict resolution.

Head of Psychology Department participated in framing of 'WHO Mental Health Quality of Rights' which was launched in 2021.

Staff Academy organised a workshop on Mind Matters: where health meets happiness for women teachers in international women's day.

A session on 'Power of Positivity' was conducted for science students (136 beneficiaries).

A state level workshop on 'How to initiate and strengthen Counselling Cells in Colleges' was organized to guide other HEIs and NGOs.

In Psychology Fair, Psy-world, students are trained in project-based learning. It takes the message of psychological practice and mental health to larger society.

The entire practice respects vulnerabilities and helps to give voice to unsupported and the activities feed into each other as an organic whole.

Evidence of Success:

Some tangible outputs during the reporting period are:

- 232 Students benefited from one on one counselling.
- 250 Students have benefited from attending various workshops like Life Skills, Study Skills, Stress Management and Confidence-Building.
- 14 issues of the Psychological Thematic Magazine Kaleidoscope.
- Mental Health Awareness Booklet made by students interning at Eklavya
- 60 Students visited various organizations for Structured Internships Koshish
- 78 Support Staff received training in self-care through the medium of Ummeed-College Community Mental Health
- Five volumes of Mind Scape research compendium.
- 45 students have presented papers in National and International Conferences.
- Validating feedback from beneficiaries of the counselling sessions
- Invitation to be Member of State Mental Health Core Committee by Disability Commissioner, Government of Maharashtra and Participation in State Level Workshop on Mental Health organized by Commissionerate by Head, Department of Psychology as Resource Person, faculty members and students representing Disha Speak out and Peer Support Group.
- 120 people received guidance and information dissemination through a one day workshop - 'How to Establish and Strengthen Counselling Cells in College Campuses.
- 1700 visitors attended the Psychology Fest 'Psy-World'
- Amelia Ubesie, PhD student from Pennsylvania, USA studied these practices under one-month mentoring collaborative program, where she was mentored by the Head, department of Psychology.
- Three Publications of students, one of staff members and eight publications of Head, Department of Psychology based on some of the practices have helped in creating a snowball effect about mental health awareness

Problems Encountered and Resources Required:

Since mental health is a gray area and a complex field, we in India, are stuck between stigma and awareness and hence we have to be very careful about our messaging in all our activities in terms of knowledge, facts, cultural appropriateness and addressing a diverse audience.

We need more material and human resources to take this work further.

Notes:

References:

- [1] Ogorchukwu JM, Sekaran VC, Nair S, Ashok L. Mental health literacy among late adolescents in South India: What they know and what attitudes drive them. *Indian J Psychol Med.* 2016;38:234–41.
- [2] World Health Organization. World Health Statistics 2016. Geneva 27, Switzerland: World Health Organization; 2016.
- [3] Kalpana Srivastava, Kaushik Chatterjee, Pookala Shivaram Bhat, Mental health awareness: The Indian scenario, *Ind Psychiatry J.* 2016 Jul-Dec; 25(2): 131–134.
- [4] Natu, S College Mental health : The Disha Experience , MFC Bulletin, MFC, Pune

Best Practice 2

Title: Future Bankers' Forum – A Step towards Professional Banking

Objectives:

The vision of the Future Banker's Forum (FBF) is to create a centre of excellence in banking and financial sector. The Forum aims at...

- Making the students aware about the challenges and opportunities in banking sector.
- Imparting various skills and values to develop professionalism
- Making the students market-ready
- Ensuring financial literacy among students of schools/colleges, farmers, villagers and Self-Help Groups

Key principles guiding objectives

- Tailor-made approach
- Learning while doing
- Collaborate for capacity-building
- Enrich and empower with the knowledge
- Make yourself and other financially literate

The Context

Various initiatives of government of India and Reserve Bank of India helped us to reach to the 85% of financial inclusion. Financial literacy along with financial inclusion is important for making the students financially independent. For healthy and trustworthy relationship between banks and public it is essential to understand the rights and duties related to financial activity. Indian banking and financial sector is facing some challenges like.

- Right, safe and secure use of various digital payment platforms and incentivising the same[1].
- Educating and empowering the urban and rural community and socio-economically disadvantaged groups of the society
- Lack of investment awareness and literacy
- Management of assets

There are some challenges in educational industry too. As per the Human Resource Development Report 2020 out of 5 only one employed person is skilled in India. In supply of skilled workforce India is 129 amongst 162 countries. Research and innovation, Practical exposure and training etc. has got an importance very recently in higher education institutes.

The practice

In order to overcome various challenges of Indian Banking Industry our college started Banking Club in 2011 and further restructured as Future Bankers' Forum (FBF) in 2018. The main motive of the club was to inculcate values, ethics and disciplined behaviour amongst the students.

- **Management and Governance**
- **Advisory committee:** is the think tank of FBF. It consist of Principal, Vice Principal, Industry expert, alumni bankers, ex-bankers, parent bankers, staff and student representatives. Advisory committee designs student-centric programs.
- **Team of Forum:** Consisting of students working as Liaison officers, looking after correspondence and responsibility of coordinating the event.

Forum collaborates with Modernites® Alumni Association, for Street Play on demonetization, connecting to Indian Postal Banking Services, career counselling during *Vividha* exhibition.

Unique activities

- **Bank Connect:** Activity to connect school children, villagers, farmers to banks. We use a **Banking Kit** comprising forms, slips, financial literacy material and videos.
- **Campus Bank Connect:** FBF students jointly with banks/ Post Office organise camp for PAN card application. College house-keeping staff is guided to use banking services. First year students are required to open bank account and use of payment gateways.
- **Hands-on training:** Final year students work with banks since 2008 for getting practical experience of banking operations.
- **Banking Day:** In the memory of late C.D. Deshmukh (first Indian RBI Governor) every year 11th August is celebrated as the Banking Day. FBF volunteers take self-designed Pledge to make Indian banking system strong.
- **FBF Pride award** in the memory of late C.D. Deshmukh is presented to a student showing outstanding performance.
- **Celebration of New Year with senior citizens:** On every 30th December New Year eve is celebrated at old age homes. FBF displays poster on door-step banking announced by RBI in 2017. It creates a sense of social responsibility among students.
- **Mock Parliament:** Forum conducts Mock Parliament to make the students aware about the ordinance, passage of bill and legislation related to banks through role plays.
- **Bank Mitra:** A social platform is initiated to undertake surveys, street-plays, distribution of financial literacy material at schools, villages to support the national policy of financial inclusion and literacy.
- **Blog Writing:** A Blog developed in house to nurture writing, analytical and research skills of advanced learners.
- **Skill development course in operational banking:** Since 2019-20 FBF is implementing a skill-development course designed by alumni bankers to make the students aware about changing business profile of banks.
- **Celebration of My Nation My Pride:** 14th February is celebrated as My Nation My Pride to inculcate patriotism and nurturing the qualities of worrier citizen.
- **Investment awareness workshops:** orientation sessions are organized annually jointly with Knowledge Wealth Pvt Ltd to encourage students for investment in stock markets and mutual funds.

Evidence of success

- 172 students were linked to banks under Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) by 26 FBF volunteers. Before the concept of Business Facilitator (Business Correspondent) became popular, FBF volunteers played this role in national campaign

of financial inclusion. Forum had organized Kisan Parents and Students Meet to make them aware about various schemes and discuss challenges in agro-finance.

- Our students are securing good positions in banks, insurance and stock market.
- Forum has tried to achieve the targeted benchmarks in the areas of...
 - **Teaching:** Curriculum development through skill development course, internship in bank, use innovative teaching pedagogies, participative learning and problem solving.
 - **Research:** conduct surveys, motivate to write research papers, articles on self-developed blog.
 - **Extensioin:** Through Bank Mitra, Bank Connect, Celebration of New Year with grandparents cultivated a sense of social responsibility.
- Apart from these outcomes we could achieve...
 - Linkages with Banks like Vidya, Cosmos, Janata Cooperative, Bank of India and Indian Post Office for Internships/training with 659 beneficiaries. Association with Kabira Institute, Les' Beauty Centre for training, Abhinav Farmers Club for Agro to Campus, College of Agricultural Banking RBI for Bank Mitra Social Platform.
 - Interdisciplinary approach with Departments of Computer Science (Blog), Political Science (Mock Parliament), Sociology (My Nation My Pride) and Mathematics (test your quantitative aptitude).
 - Financial inclusion and Literacy: Through Bank Connect 1200 students have opened an account and connected to payment gateways.
 - Bank Mitra Campaign for financial literacy at Modern High School, Pune and at villages viz. Jambhe, Lawarde, Garadee, Khamgaon Chhatra
 - Distinct features –Pledge (Code of conduct), Banking Kit (compilation of forms), Logo and Caption.
 - Skill enhancement –event management, leadership, technical, behavioural and managerial.

Problems Encountered

- Being an affiliated college it is difficult to fit additional activities in a well-defined structure.
- Students opting professional examinations (CA-CPT/ICWA/MPSC/UPSC) find it difficult to join such activities after college hours.
- Absence of funding agency covering financial inclusion and literacy.

Notes (Optional)

Energetic youth of HEI and banking sector together can play a remarkable role in nation-building. Students can play an important role as Business Facilitator for the financial institutions to bring a sea change in the economic empowerment of every citizen. This will reduce the pressure of bankers to reach out to stakeholders. Thus it can be a win-win situation to both, banking sector and HEIs.

Suggestions: HEIs can tap their alumni in the field of banking, finance and insurance to involve them in planning, designing and implementation of academic/co-curricular activities.

Reference:

- [1] Malik Sarath, 2019-20, Review of Banking Sector in India.