

Report on the 2nd National Conference on Contemporary School Mental Health Initiatives

Bridging the Gap with Innovative Best Practices

Introduction

The **2nd National Conference on Contemporary School Mental Health Initiatives**, themed “*Bridging the Gap with Innovative Best Practices*,” was successfully conducted on **26th and 27th February 2026** at the **Moolchand Medcity Auditorium, New Delhi**. The conference was organized as a **two-day academic event conducted in hybrid mode**, bringing together educators, mental health professionals, school counselors, researchers, and mental health advocates to deliberate on emerging concerns related to school mental health and wellbeing.



The conference witnessed enthusiastic participation from both online and offline delegates representing diverse professional backgrounds including school counseling, psychology, education, and allied mental health fields. A major highlight of the conference was the presentation of **more than 120 scholarly papers** contributed by researchers, school counselors, mental health practitioners, and educators. The second day of the conference included virtual participation, enabling wider academic engagement and participation from across different regions.

Inaugural Session

The conference commenced with a formal inaugural ceremony held at the **Moolchand Medcity Auditorium**. The inaugural session was graced by distinguished dignitaries including **Shri Devendra Kumar Sharma**, Director, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education; **Dr. H. K. Chopra**, Chairman, CME Series, Moolchand Medcity; **Dr. Sunil M. Raheja**, Senior Cardiologist, Moolchand Medcity; and



Dr. Shashi Bala. The conference was conducted under the guidance of Dr. Nagpal, who served as the Organizing Chairman and played a pivotal role in conceptualizing and organizing the event.

The session began with a formal welcome address extended to the esteemed guests, speakers, and participants. In their inaugural remarks, the dignitaries emphasized the growing importance of mental health within educational ecosystems and highlighted the need for collaborative engagement between educational institutions, healthcare professionals, and policymakers to address the psychological wellbeing of children and adolescents.

The keynote reflections underscored the interrelationship between mental health and overall healthcare practices, emphasizing that emotional and psychological wellbeing significantly influences academic engagement, social development, and long-term life outcomes. The speakers also stressed the importance of creating supportive and inclusive school environments, along with the need for structured mental health initiatives and early intervention strategies within educational institutions.

Panel Discussion

Following the inaugural ceremony and a brief tea break, the conference proceeded with a panel discussion featuring eminent academicians and professionals, who shared their perspectives on the evolving landscape of school mental health.

Day 1 Panelists

- **Prof. Vimala Veeraraghavan** – Emeritus Professor of Psychology & Education and Dean (Academics), Apeejay Stya University
- **Ms. Tania Joshi** – Principal, The Indian School, Josip Broz Tito Marg, New Delhi
- **Shri Devendra Kumar Sharma** – Director, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Shastri Bhavan, New Delhi
- **Mr. Gaurav Bedi** – Principal, Gurukul The School, Ghaziabad
- **Ms. Sangeeta Chakroborty** – Principal, Delhi Public School, Sector 19, Faridabad
- **Dr. Raj Kumar Sahu** – Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry, ESIC Medical College and Hospital, Basaidarapur, New Delhi

The panelists discussed a range of contemporary issues including **increasing psychological distress among adolescents, the impact of digital media on mental health, suicide risk behaviors, and the importance of early identification and school-based mental health interventions.**



At the conclusion of the first day's proceedings, the session was formally addressed by **Shri Vineet Joshi**, Secretary, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Government of India. In his remarks, he emphasized the importance of strengthening collaborative engagement between educational institutions and mental health professionals to enhance student wellbeing initiatives across the country.

Day 2: Hybrid Academic Sessions

The second day of the conference included hybrid participation, with the first half featuring virtual paper presentations and the latter half continuing with offline presentations at the venue. More than 25 research papers were presented online, enabling wider academic engagement from different regions.

In the second half of the day, the conference continued with offline paper presentations at the venue, allowing in-person presenters to share their research findings and practical experiences related to school mental health initiatives.

Day 2 Panelists

- **Prof. Namita Ranganathan** – Professor, Department of Education, University of Delhi, New Delhi
- **Dr. Sudha Acharya** – ITL Public School, Dwarka
- **Dr. Akshita** – Assistant Professor, School of Behavioral Sciences, Department of Psychology, SGT University, Gurugram
- **Dr. Monika Srivastava** – Professor and Dean, School of Behavioral Sciences, Department of Psychology, SGT University, Gurugram

The discussions on the second day focused on strengthening mental health initiatives within educational institutions, promoting inclusive education, and sharing innovative models of

school-based mental health interventions. The hybrid format ensured broader accessibility while maintaining academic rigor and interactive engagement among presenters and participants.

Academic Sessions and Paper Presentations

The conference progressed with a series of thematic academic sessions. Each session was moderated by experienced academicians, school principals, senior researchers, and university professors, who provided contextual insights related to the respective themes before the commencement of paper presentations.

The paper presentations were delivered by a diverse group of contributors including school counselors, mental health practitioners, psychologists, educators, and researchers. The sessions facilitated the sharing of empirical research findings, case studies, and models of best practices implemented within schools and educational institutions.

The conference themes covered a broad spectrum of contemporary issues including:

- evolving roles and responsibilities of **school and university counselors**
- **digital wellness** and management of social media addiction
- **early childhood mental health**
- **inclusive psychosocial interventions** for children with special needs
- **life skills education** for adolescent resilience
- **mental health promotion** within school ecosystems

Several presenters shared innovative strategies and intervention models implemented in schools to support students' emotional wellbeing. These presentations demonstrated how teachers, school counselors, and administrators are integrating mental health practices into everyday educational settings to foster supportive and inclusive learning environments.

Key Discussions and Emerging Concerns

Throughout the conference sessions, several pressing issues affecting children and adolescents were highlighted.

One of the major areas of focus was the increasing concern regarding suicidal ideation and self-harm behaviors among young individuals. Presenters and panelists emphasized the importance of early identification, crisis intervention strategies, and strengthening school-based mental health support systems.



Another important topic addressed during the discussions was sleep deprivation among adolescents and its association with emotional regulation, cognitive functioning, and overall psychological wellbeing. Participants also examined the role of digital technology and social media in shaping the mental health experiences of young people, acknowledging both its benefits and potential risks.

The conference further emphasized the significance of inclusive education and psychosocial support mechanisms for children with special needs. Participants highlighted the crucial role of educators, counselors, and families in creating environments that promote acceptance, accessibility, and psychological safety. Several best practices undertaken by school counselors and educators that have demonstrated remarkable outcomes within educational settings, shared through the examples of structured, as well as innovative approaches to inclusive learning designed to build conceptual understanding among children with special needs. These practices reflected the growing commitment of schools to adopt holistic and student-centered approaches that address diverse learning and developmental needs while strengthening the overall mental wellbeing of students.

Road Map Ahead & Learning Outcomes

The conference concluded on a forward-looking note with the announcement of the upcoming event, **Mind Smart**, which will serve as the next significant milestone in this ongoing initiative.

This event has marked an important landmark the launch of the pioneering and immensely innovative programme titled ‘Young Wellbeing Scientists of India’. The initiative aims to nurture a new generation of student leaders who will actively contribute to building a culture of positive mental health and wellbeing within school ecosystems.

These young ambassadors will play a vital role in promoting awareness, empathy, and wellbeing practices among their peers, thereby strengthening the emotional and mental health framework within their institutions. Their efforts will be guided and inspired by the collective support of school Principals, School Counsellors, Wellbeing Teachers, and encouraging Parents, whose leadership and commitment are instrumental in fostering nurturing educational environments.

The launch of this initiative represents a significant step towards empowering students as champions of wellbeing and cultivating healthier, more compassionate school communities across the country.