



Mental Health Awareness Study among Post Graduate Students of Education of Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi

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Abstract— Mental health has emerged as a global priority, profoundly influencing individuals' emotional well-being, academic performance, and overall life satisfaction. Recognizing its significance within higher education, this study explores the level of mental health awareness among postgraduate students in education at Banaras Hindu University (BHU), Varanasi. Using a descriptive survey method, data were collected from 108 students enrolled in M.Ed. and M.A. (Education) programs across the Faculty of Education at Vasanta College for Women and Mahila Maha Vidyalaya, BHU. The Mental Health Awareness Scale (MHAS), a self-developed and validated tool with a reliability coefficient of $\alpha = 0.89$ and $\omega = 0.908$, was employed to assess awareness across emotional, spiritual, and intellectual dimensions. Findings revealed that 78.70% of students demonstrated average awareness, 8.33% exhibited above-average awareness, and 12.96% showed below-average awareness, indicating a generally satisfactory level of mental health literacy among the group. Statistical analysis (t-tests) revealed no significant differences in awareness based on Gender, Locality, Educational Qualification, or Institutional Affiliation, indicating a uniform distribution of mental health awareness across these demographic variables. These results align with prior research indicating increasing normalization and destigmatization of mental health discussions among youth in academic contexts. The study concludes that postgraduate education students at BHU possess moderate to high levels of mental health awareness, reflecting growing institutional and societal sensitization toward psychological well-being. However, the presence of a small group with below-average awareness underscores the need for targeted interventions, particularly for students from rural or resource-constrained backgrounds. The study recommends integrating structured mental health education, counseling, and resilience-building modules into teacher training programs. Strengthening such initiatives will not only support students' well-being but also equip future educators to foster emotionally healthy learning environments, contributing to holistic and sustainable educational development.

Keywords— Mental Health Awareness, Higher Education, Postgraduate Students, Teacher Education, Well-Being.

1. Introduction

Mental health has increasingly become a matter of global significance, with heightened acknowledgment of its influence on an individual's emotional well-being, academic achievement, and life satisfaction. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2022), mental health encompasses more than the absence of mental illness; it refers to a state of positive well-being where individuals can fulfill their potential, manage everyday stress, engage productively in work, and contribute meaningfully to their communities. Mental health is a cornerstone of holistic education, emphasizing emotional, intellectual, and social well-being alongside academic achievement.

International studies point to a growing incidence of psychological distress among university students. Contributing factors include academic workload, economic difficulties, social detachment, peer-related competition, and uncertainty regarding career prospects—all of which are strongly associated with symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression [11,13]. Research by Hefner and Marilyn et al. indicates that insufficient social support and internalized stigma discourage students from seeking necessary mental health assistance [4,7]. These challenges highlight that, despite increased discourse around mental health, multiple barriers still inhibit effective access to support services.

The National Mental Health Survey, led by the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), found that around 10.6% of the adult population experiences mental health disorders, higher 18–29 age group with urban, female and, low-income individuals most at risk [8]. Deb et al. reported that over 60% of Indian adolescents experience significant academic stress, largely stemming from performance pressure and parental expectations [2]. Gupta et al., echoing the National Mental Health Survey, found a 10.6% prevalence of mental disorders among Indian adults, disproportionately affecting females, urban dwellers, and lower-income groups [3,8]. The authors recommended mental health education for parents and resilience training for adolescents. These studies point to the urgent need for early diagnosis, campus counseling, and stress management programs.

Nonetheless, awareness of mental health remains low—especially among education students and those enrolled in professional teaching programs [10,15]. Despite growing awareness globally, mental health issues among students remain under-addressed, particularly in Indian higher education institutions. Postgraduate students facing

intense academic and personal challenges, are vulnerable to mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, stress etc. Stigma, lack of awareness, and inadequate support systems hinder effective intervention.

Teacher education institutions are uniquely positioned to address this issue. Aspiring educators must not only develop their own psychological resilience but also acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to recognize and address mental health concerns in their future classrooms. Despite understanding its importance, many educators report inadequate training in mental health literacy [5-6]. In India, this shortfall is aggravated by persistent societal stigma, a lack of formal support systems, and the absence of structured mental health interventions [3,12]. Within academic contexts—particularly at the higher education level—concerns regarding student mental health are intensifying, prompting the need for academic and institutional intervention.

As one of India's most prominent universities, Banaras Hindu University (BHU), Varanasi draws postgraduate students in education from a wide variety of social, cultural, and economic backgrounds. These students often face multifaceted pressures, including intense academic demands, teacher training responsibilities, interpersonal challenges, and ambiguity about their professional futures. BHU provides an ideal microcosm to assess awareness levels across different demographics.

Despite their role as future educators and potential mental health advocates, limited scholarly research has examined their current level of awareness or preparedness regarding mental health issues—either for self-care or to support others. Since future teachers play a vital role in shaping how mental health is perceived and addressed in schools, enhancing their capacity to promote psychological wellness is both a preventive measure and a long-term educational investment.

The rationale for the research stemmed from the growing importance of mental health in academic environments, particularly for students in higher education. While academic stress, social expectations, and life transitions significantly impact the mental well-being of students, awareness about mental health remains suboptimal. Therefore, understanding their awareness and attitudes toward mental health is not only beneficial for their well-being but also has implications for the future educational climate they will shape.

Present study focuses on exploring mental health awareness among postgraduate education students at BHU, identifying gaps, and suggesting intervention. It aims to bridge the research-to-practice gap through meaningful awareness and action.

2. Review Of Literature

The study conducted in pupil teachers of Jammu found no significant differences in mental health outcomes based on sex, locality, or qualification, suggesting that mental health awareness may be reaching more diverse groups [1]. Similar findings were reported by Rathore et.al, who observed no significant differences in mental health awareness among B.Ed. and M.Ed. students across gender and socioeconomic status, indicating widespread sensitization. They also find no significant gender or demographic differences in mental health among pupil teachers, suggesting increased mental health awareness and possibly reduced stigma in recent years [15].

Sheykhjan et al. investigated mental health and academic achievement among M.Ed. students in Kerala. The authors emphasized the correlation between academic performance and mental health, pointing out the responsibility of teacher educators and families in nurturing emotionally strong future teachers. They recommended the implementation of co-curricular and personality development programs and support systems in teacher training institutions [10].

3. Objective

Present study assesses the status of mental health awareness among post graduate students of BHU, Varanasi and, analyzes the level in terms of gender, locality, educational qualification and Teacher Education Institutions to explore further possible strategy for improvement of their mental health. The objective is to evaluate current levels of understanding, identify obstacles that hinder mental health advocacy, and recommend strategies that can strengthen mental well-being within teacher education settings.

4. Materials And Method

A descriptive survey method was used for this study. The population included all postgraduate students of education at BHU (M.Ed. and M.A. Education, session 2023-2025). The sample included 108 students across the Faculty of Education, Vasanta College for Women, and Mahila Maha Vidyalaya, BHU, Varanasi through random sampling technique (Table. 1).

TABLE I. PROFILE OF SAMPLE

Faculty/ College	N	Sex		Background Locality		Qualification	
		Male	Female	Rural	Urban	UG	PG
Faculty of Education	59	31	28	33	16	10	49
Vasanta College for Women	33	0	33	9	24	9	24
Mahila Maha Vidyalaya	16	0	16	8	8	7	9

The Mental Health Awareness Scale (MHAS) was a self-designed instrument, integrating validated constructs with original insights to ensure cultural and contextual relevance for the postgraduate student population at BHU. MHAS consist of 17 positive and 13 negative, total 30 statements covering three dimensions namely emotional, spiritual and intellectual, each dimension having 10 sets of statement. Emotional dimension has three characteristics namely half self-esteem, positive thoughts and avoid negative self-talk. Spiritual dimension has five characteristics namely easily interact people around him/her, able to love others, forgive others, joy and compassion. Intellectual dimension has four characteristics namely creativity, curiosity, openness for new ideas and passion for exploring.

The reliability coefficient was calculated by Cronbach's alpha which came out to be 0.89 alpha coefficient and by McDonald ω which came out to be 0.908. The scale had been administered on the sample (N=20). Validity was established by face and content validity. Thus, this tool was found to be reliable.

Subjects were administered to the scale via Google Form, response was collected as mean data derived from the five-point scale pattern of Likert summated scoring procedure. Awareness was divided into three groups namely 'average', 'below average' and 'above average' based on the mean score achieved across variables such as gender, background locality, educational institutions and educational background. Mean score of 'average' level of awareness is from 87.8 to 123.7 score, 'below average' below 87.8 and 'above average' above 123.7 [16].

Descriptive statistics like mean, median, mode & Inferential Statistics like mean & S.D. as well as T-test were used as per need.

5. Results

1. **Level of mental health awareness:** Analysis of level of mental health awareness amongst post graduate students is presented in Table 2. It reveals Out of 108 respondents, 14 (12.96%) possess 'below average' awareness, 85 (78.70%) have 'average' awareness whereas 9 (8.33%) respondents were found to have 'above average' awareness towards mental health. The mean of total score was found to 105.75 with standard deviation of 17.95, indicating moderate dispersion around the mean. The distribution suggests that mental health awareness among postgraduate student at BHU is generally 'average' with some 'below average' students needing focused intervention. The distribution of scores did not display significant skewness or kurtosis, indicating that the data lies under the normal probability curve (NPC).

TABLE 2: LEVEL OF MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

Level of awareness	Score range	Frequency	Percentage
Above average	Above 123.7	9	8.33
Average	87.8-123.7	85	78.7
Below average	Below 87.8	14	12.96

2. **Level of mental health awareness of students with respect to their gender:** Analysis of level of mental health awareness of students with respect to their gender is presented in Table 3. The mean mental health awareness score for male and female is 108.93 and 104.46 respectively. Calculated value of 't' between male and female is 1.33 which is less than the table value 1.99 that is not significant at 0.05 level with degree of freedom 75. So there is no significant difference between the levels of mental health awareness of male and female post graduate students.

TABLE 3: LEVEL OF MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WITH RESPECT TO GENDER

Gender	Number	Mean	SD	Degree of freedom	t-value
Male	31	108.93	14.11	75	1.33
Female	77	104.46	19.22		

* Not significant at 0.05 level

3. **Level of mental health awareness of students with respect to their background locality:** Analysis of level of mental health awareness of students with respect to their background locality is presented in Table 4. The mean mental health awareness score of students of rural and urban locality is 103.88 and 107.36 respectively. Calculated value of 't' between rural and urban is -0.97 which is less than the table value 1.99 that is not significant at 0.05 level with degree of freedom 83. So there is no significant difference between the levels of mental health awareness of rural and urban background students.

TABLE 4: LEVEL OF MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WITH RESPECT TO BACKGROUND LOCALITY

Locality	Number	Mean	SD	Degree of freedom	t-value
Rural	50	103.88	21.47	83	-0.97
Urban	58	107.36	14.33		

* Not significant at 0.05 level

4. **Level of mental health awareness of students with respect to their educational qualification:** Analysis of level of mental health awareness of students with respect to their educational qualification is presented in Table 5. The mean mental health awareness score of students having UG and PG qualification is 110.07 and 104.37 respectively. Calculated value of 't' between UG and PG is 1.39 which is less than the table value 1.99 that is not significant at 0.05 level with degree of freedom 41. So there is no significant difference between the levels of mental health awareness of students having UG and PG qualification.

TABLE 5: LEVEL OF MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WITH RESPECT TO QUALIFICATION

Educational qualification	Number	Mean	SD	Degree of freedom	t-value
UG	26	110.07	18.2	41	1.39
PG	82	104.37	17.76		

* Not significant at 0.05 level

5. **Level of mental health awareness of students with respect to Teacher Education Institution:** Analysis of level of mental health awareness of students with respect to their Teacher Education Institution in term of Faculty of Education of BHU and affiliated colleges of BHU is presented in Table 6. The mean mental health awareness score of students of Faculty of Education of BHU and affiliated colleges of BHU is 105.42 and 106.14 respectively. Calculated value of 't' between Faculty of Education of BHU and affiliated colleges is -0.21 which is far below than the table value 1.99 that is not significant at 0.05 level with degree of freedom 106. So there is no significant difference between the levels of mental health awareness of students being trained in Faculty of Education of BHU and affiliated colleges of BHU, Varanasi.

TABLE 6: LEVEL OF MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS AND TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

Teacher Education Institution	Number	Mean	SD	Degree of freedom	t-value
Faculty of Education of BHU	59	105.42	19.69	106	-0.21
Affiliated colleges of BHU	49	106.14	15.8		

* Not significant at 0.05 level

6. Discussion

1. **Level of mental health awareness:** From the statistical analysis, it was observed that the mean awareness score was 105.75, with a standard deviation of 17.95. A negatively skewed distribution (skewness = -1.10) implies that the bulk of students scored above the mean, indicating a higher level of mental health awareness. Furthermore, based on categorized interpretation scores, 8.33% of the students demonstrated above average awareness, 78.70% displayed average awareness, and only 12.96% exhibited below average awareness. The results align with earlier studies that found no significant demographic variation in mental health awareness among education students, reinforcing the trend of growing mental health literacy among youth in academia [15]. The results of this study align with previous research conducted in the domain of mental health awareness among youth, especially within educational institutions. The dominance of average awareness among students suggests the growing consciousness of mental health as an essential component of overall well-being. The academic setting of BHU, with its exposure to interdisciplinary knowledge, peer interaction, and resource availability, contributes to this heightened awareness. The above average awareness levels can be reflective of the university's educational

emphasis on holistic development, access to counselling services, workshops, and increased online campaigns on mental health.

Moreover, it is worth noting that while traditional Indian society has historically held stigmatized views about mental health, the younger generation, especially in urban and semi-urban educational settings, is becoming more open, inquisitive, and accepting of mental health issues and support mechanisms. This generational shift, fueled by both educational exposure and digital literacy, is evident in the responses captured in the data.

The small percentage of students showing below average awareness, though not alarming, is critical. This cohort might include students from rural, conservative, or resource-deprived backgrounds. Such insights reaffirm the importance of targeted, equity-driven interventions.

2. Level of mental health awareness of students with respect to their gender, background locality, educational qualification and Teacher Education Institution: The variances between groups compared (e.g., gender, locality, educational qualification, and teacher education institutions) were reasonably homogeneous, meeting the homogeneity of variance assumption. These conditions justified the use of the t-test for inferential analysis, thereby ensuring the statistical validity of the results. The absence of significant differences across gender, locality, prior qualification, and institutional affiliation suggests a uniform level of awareness, possibly due to shared curricula, access to digital resources, and increasing societal conversations around mental health. These findings are in consonance with Bajaj et al who reported no significant differences in mental health outcomes based on sex, locality, or qualification, suggesting that mental health awareness may be reaching more diverse groups. Similar findings were reported by Rathore et al, who also observed no significant differences across gender and socioeconomic status, indicating widespread sensitization, increased mental health awareness and possibly reduced stigma in recent years [15].

7. Conclusion

The majority of postgraduate students of education at BHU, Varanasi possess an average level of mental health awareness. Very few students demonstrate above average awareness, highlighting effective mental health sensitization. Irrespective of the personal variables such as gender, locality, educational qualifications and teacher education institutions, the post graduate students have similar awareness towards mental health. These results lead to the conclusion that postgraduate students at BHU are largely informed and aware of mental health issues. This trend may be attributed to several factors such as increasing societal conversations around mental well-being, inclusion of mental health in academic discourse, institutional sensitization efforts, and exposure to digital platforms discussing mental health. This is a positive indicator for the future of education, as these students-many of whom will become educators -are likely to carry forward a basic understanding of mental health issues.

The presence of a small segment (12.96%) of students showing below average awareness points to the necessity of inclusive and targeted awareness programs. These should be designed specifically for students who may lack access to mental health education or those who belong to marginalized or disadvantaged backgrounds. Therefore, the study concludes that while the overall mental health awareness level among the target group is commendable, there remains a need for ongoing, inclusive, and multilayered efforts to ensure no student is left uninformed or unsupported. Mental health education should be normalized across all programs and departments and must go beyond basic awareness to include preventive strategies, coping mechanisms, and information about available support systems. It emphasizes the urgent need for integrating mental health education into teacher training programs to promote better emotional resilience and social well-being among future educators. The study highlights the need for enhanced mental health education and supportive interventions within academic institutions to foster holistic student development.

Lastly, this study also opens avenues for further exploration such as longitudinal studies to observe changes in awareness levels over time, qualitative inquiries into students' perceptions and experiences with mental health, and comparisons across institutions, disciplines, or geographic locations.

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