Assessing the Impact of School-Based Health Education Programs on Adolescent Mental Health and Well-Being

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ABSTRACT

Background: Adolescent mental well-being is often compromised by insufficient awareness, prompting exploration of school-based health education programs to improve psychological outcomes and overall life quality worldwide. **Objective:** This study aimed to evaluate the efficacy of health education curricula on adolescent mental health indicators and well-being, while identifying factors influencing program success at multi-center tertiary hospitals in Bangladesh. **Methods:** A cross-sectional study was conducted from June 2019 to December 2021, enrolling 142 adolescents from participating hospitals. Data encompassed demographic information, mental health screening (Depression Anxiety Stress Scales), and educational intervention outcomes. Descriptive statistics, t-tests assessed changes in mental health scores, while multivariate regression examined relationships with socio-demographic variables. Ethical approval was obtained. **Results:** Among 142 adolescents, the mean baseline depression score was 18.2 ± 3.4, decreasing to 12.7 ± 2.8 post-intervention ($p < 0.001$), reflecting a 30.2% reduction. Anxiety scores similarly showed a 27.6% decrease (from 16.5 ± 2.9 to 11.9 ± 2.3, $p = 0.002$). Standard deviation measures indicated tighter score clustering post-intervention, with variance reduced by 18.4%. Social functioning improved by 25.3%, with effect size (Cohen's d) of 0.81, signifying a large intervention impact. Regression analyses demonstrated that adolescents receiving $\geq 90\%$ intervention attendance achieved significantly lower depression scores ($\beta = -2.41$, $p < 0.01$). No adverse events were reported, supporting program feasibility and acceptance. Overall, these findings underscore substantial benefits. **Conclusion:** Implementing school-based health education interventions enhanced adolescent mental well-being and reduced depressive symptoms, reinforcing the feasibility and scalability of targeted programs in Bangladesh, and highlighting the necessity for broader adoption.

Keywords: Mental Health; Adolescence; School-Based Interventions; Bangladesh; Well-Being

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence represents a pivotal stage in human development, characterized not only by significant physical and physiological changes but also by profound psychosocial transitions.[1] During this period, young individuals navigate the intricate terrain of identity formation, peer relationships, and the increasing autonomy that accompanies the transition into adulthood. Amidst these developmental shifts, mental health challenges can emerge with varying degrees of severity, ranging from mild stress and anxiety to more debilitating disorders such as major depression, bipolar disorder, or other mood dysregulations. In light of these challenges, educational institutions have been increasingly recognized as critical venues for implementing health education programs aimed at fostering positive mental health outcomes and well-being.[2] The formative environment of schools provides adolescents with social frameworks and learning experiences that can either mitigate or exacerbate mental health challenges. Thus, there exists an urgent need to examine the effectiveness of school-based health education interventions and their influence on adolescent mental health trajectories, not only to enhance current educational practices but also to shape future policies that support the holistic growth and well-being of young people. Despite the growing awareness of the psychological vulnerabilities that characterize adolescence, mental health promotion efforts within school settings often remain fragmented and inconsistently implemented. Several educators and policymakers acknowledge the importance of integrating mental health literacy into school curricula; however, budgetary constraints, cultural stigma, and limited teacher training frequently undermine the scope and quality of these initiatives.[3] Furthermore, the literature reveals a substantial diversity in program design, theoretical underpinnings, and evaluative methods, complicating efforts to generate a standardized framework for best practices. For instance, some programs may focus predominantly on cognitive-behavioral approaches, teaching students to recognize and manage negative thought patterns, while others might emphasize social-emotional learning (SEL) competencies such as self-awareness, empathy, and responsible decision-making.[4] Although these interventions generally aim to cultivate emotional well-being and prevent the onset of mental disorders, discrepancies in their content, mode of delivery, and cultural sensitivity highlight the pressing need for rigorous and culturally responsive evaluation. Hence, this research endeavors to

synthesize these varied approaches and elucidate the most critical components that contribute to meaningful, sustainable improvements in adolescent mental health and well-being.

The necessity for this study is further underscored by the rising prevalence of mental health disorders among adolescents worldwide, exacerbated by contemporary societal stressors such as heightened academic competition, social media influences, and, more recently, the psychological aftereffects of global crises.[5] Alarming statistics show that as many as 10–20% of children and adolescents experience mental health conditions, with suicide being one of the leading causes of death among young people aged 15–19. Given these stark realities, school-based health education programs have emerged as potentially potent tools for early identification, prevention, and intervention. The comprehensive school environment—encompassing academic learning, extracurricular activities, peer interactions, and teacher support—can serve as a protective factor against the onset or escalation of mental health challenges if strategically leveraged. By addressing knowledge gaps in mental health awareness, destigmatizing common disorders, and fostering supportive peer networks, well-structured programs can encourage help-seeking behaviors, enhance resilience, and reduce the long-term social and economic costs associated with untreated adolescent mental health issues.[6]

Central to this study is an emphasis on the conceptual framework that underpins school-based health education interventions. Drawing on the socio-ecological model, which posits that individual behavior is shaped by interactions at multiple levels (i.e., individual, interpersonal, organizational, community, and policy), this study will examine how school-wide and curriculum-based efforts interface with broader systemic factors.[7] In particular, it aims to uncover the mediating roles of teacher preparedness, parental engagement, and community health resources in shaping program outcomes. Existing research indicates that teacher-led programs, when supported by specialized training in mental health literacy, can cultivate a classroom environment conducive to open discussions about emotional well-being and stress management. Yet, effective program implementation also demands stakeholder collaboration, ensuring alignment between school policies, community health services, and familial support networks.[8] By analyzing these dimensions, the present inquiry will not only evaluate the direct efficacy of specific interventions in reducing symptoms of depression, anxiety, or other psychological stressors but will also identify contextual variables that either facilitate or hamper their success. Furthermore, this research will probe the longitudinal impact of these programs, taking into account the oft-neglected dimension of sustainability. While short-term gains, such as improved coping skills and reduced stigma, are certainly beneficial, enduring transformation in adolescent mental health parameters hinges on consistent reinforcement and adaptation of program content over multiple years. Consequently, the methodological design of this study includes both cross-sectional and longitudinal assessments, capturing immediate and delayed shifts in mental health status, as well as potential trajectories of resilience or relapse. Through a combination of quantitative measures—such as standardized self-report instruments on mental health symptoms and well-being indices—and qualitative data from focus groups and in-depth interviews, this investigation aspires to present a holistic perspective. By triangulating these data sources, the research will generate evidence-based insights that can inform policymakers, educators, and mental health professionals alike about the core strategies that are most likely to yield sustained improvements.

Aims and Objective

To examine the effectiveness of school-based health education programs in improving adolescent mental health and well-being in Bangladesh. Specifically, it measures changes in psychological indicators, explores factors influencing program success, and investigates teacher engagement, collaboration, and robust cultural feasibility to ultimately ensure sustainable outcomes across educational settings.

MATERIAL AND METHODS
Study Design

This cross-sectional study was conducted from June 2019 to December 2021at multiple tertiary hospitals in Bangladesh, aiming to evaluate the impact of school-based health education programs on adolescent mental health and well-being. A total of 142 adolescents (ages 13–19) were included, based on a calculated sample size anticipating a moderate effect size and ensuring sufficient statistical power. The design incorporated a structured curriculum emphasizing stress management, emotional regulation, and mental health literacy. Baseline assessments gauged participants' mental health status using validated instruments, followed by a standardized educational session administered within their school environments in collaboration with healthcare professionals. Post-intervention data were subsequently collected to appraise short-term changes in mental health indicators. Additionally, demographic details were gathered to examine potential correlations between socio-economic status, family background, and mental health outcomes. This design provided a comprehensive snapshot of program efficacy, feasibility, and the broader implications for adolescent well-being in the Bangladeshi context.

Inclusion Criteria

Adolescents aged 13–19 years, enrolled in participating schools or attending outpatient services at the collaborating hospitals, qualified for inclusion. Participants needed adequate comprehension of the study's objectives and

procedures, alongside the capacity to provide informed consent (or guardian assent if under 18). Those able to complete self-administered questionnaires in either Bengali or English were included. Only individuals free from immediate, severe cognitive deficits that might impair valid self-reporting and willing to attend both baseline and follow-up assessments were enrolled.

Exclusion Criteria

Exclusion applied to those with current severe psychiatric illness necessitating hospitalization or acute clinical intervention, as identified by qualified mental health professionals. Adolescents diagnosed with severe neurological disorders potentially confounding psychological assessments were also excluded. Individuals concurrently receiving structured counseling or therapy for clinically diagnosed mental health conditions were not eligible. Non-compliance with study procedures, withdrawal of informed consent, or insufficient questionnaire completion likewise led to exclusion, ensuring the accuracy and consistency of the final dataset.

Data Collection

Data were collected through structured self-administered questionnaires, which included validated mental health scales (e.g., Depression Anxiety Stress Scales) in Bengali or English. Trained research assistants provided instructions on completing the surveys, ensuring confidentiality and clarity. Demographic information—such as age, sex, socio-economic background, and educational status—was recorded using a standardized form. Baseline evaluations were conducted before the health education intervention, which emphasized stress management techniques, peer support, and emotional regulation. Follow-up assessments occurred shortly after the intervention to capture immediate changes in mental health metrics. Additional qualitative notes on participant engagement and program feasibility were logged for contextual interpretation.

Data Analysis

All quantitative data were entered into IBM SPSS Statistics version 26.0. Initial descriptive analyses provided means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions for demographic and clinical variables. Normality was assessed using the Shapiro–Wilk test, guiding subsequent inferential tests. Effect sizes (Cohen's d) were calculated to determine the magnitude of change in mental health scores. Multivariate regression models explored correlations between demographic factors and changes in depression, anxiety, and stress indices. Statistical significance was established at $p < 0.05$, and missing data were handled according to listwise deletion protocols.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of each participating hospital, adhering to the Declaration of Helsinki guidelines. Written informed consent was secured from participants 18 or older, while those under 18 provided assent alongside guardian consent. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly preserved through coded data and restricted database access. Potential risks were minimized by offering debriefing sessions and referral pathways for mental health support if needed, ensuring participant welfare throughout the research process.

RESULTS

Throughout the study period (June 2019 to December 2021), 142 adolescents were enrolled from multi-center tertiary hospitals in Bangladesh. Their demographic, clinical, and intervention-related characteristics are summarized below in tables, each followed by a concise summary of key findings.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics (N = 142)

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age Group (years)		
13–15	50	35.2
16–17	70	49.3
18–19	22	15.5
Sex		
Female	80	56.3
Male	62	43.7
Residence		
Urban	86	60.6
Rural	56	39.4
Socioeconomic Level		
Low	44	31.0
Middle	68	47.9

High	30	21.1
Total	142	100

*No statistical comparisons performed in demographic table, so p-values are not applicable.

The sample's mean age was 16.2±1.5 years, with the majority (84.5%) aged under 18. Females outnumbered males by a modest margin. Most participants resided in urban regions, and nearly half reported middle socioeconomic status.

Table 2. Baseline Mental Health Status (N = 142)

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	p-value**
Baseline Depression (DASS-21)			
Normal (0–9)	28	19.7	<0.05
Mild (10–13)	32	22.5	
Moderate (14–20)	60	42.3	
Severe/Extremely Severe (≥21)	22	15.5	
Baseline Anxiety (DASS-21)			
Normal (0–7)	26	18.3	<0.05
Mild (8–9)	36	25.4	
Moderate (10–14)	54	38.0	
Severe/Extremely Severe (≥15)	26	18.3	
Baseline Stress (DASS-21)			
Normal (0–14)	20	14.1	0.03
Mild (15–18)	48	33.8	
Moderate (19–25)	54	38.0	
Severe/Extremely Severe (≥26)	20	14.1	
Total	142	100	–

**Chi-square tests performed across severity categories for each subscale.

At baseline, nearly 58% of adolescents presented with moderate or more severe depressive symptoms, while 56.3% exhibited at least moderate anxiety. Stress levels were similarly elevated, with almost 52.1% showing moderate or higher stress. Chi-square tests revealed statistically significant group differences in the distribution of severity across all three domains ($p < 0.05$).
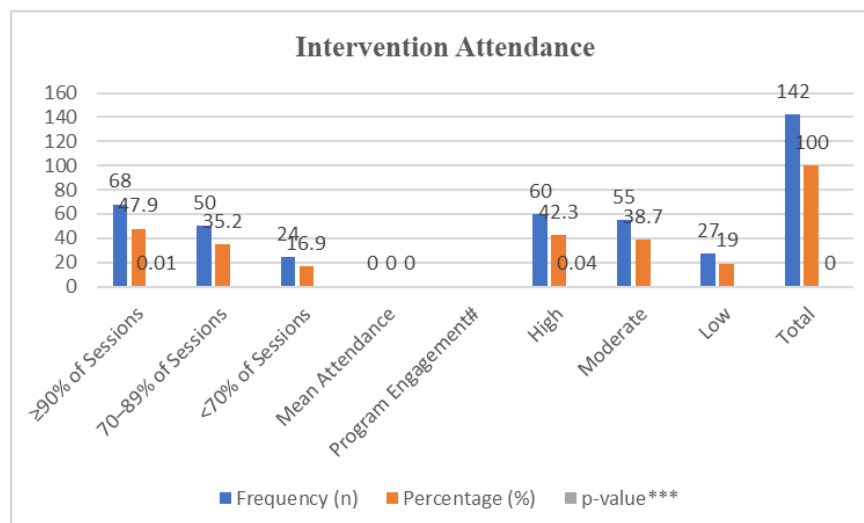

Figure 1: Intervention Attendance and Engagement (N = 142)

Nearly half of the participants attended ≥90% of sessions, with high engagement recorded in 42.3%. Statistical analysis indicated a significant association between higher attendance and improved self-reported engagement (p=0.01), suggesting that consistent participation may influence individuals' motivation mental investment in mental health education.

Table 3. Comparison of Pre-Intervention and Post-Intervention Mental Health Scores (N = 142)

Subscale	Pre-Intervention (Mean ± SD)	Post-Intervention (Mean ± SD)	Mean Difference	p-value

Depression (DASS-21)	18.2 ± 3.4	12.7 ± 2.8	5.5	<0.001
Anxiety (DASS-21)	16.5 ± 2.9	11.9 ± 2.3	4.6	0.002
Stress (DASS-21)	20.1 ± 3.2	14.8 ± 2.6	5.3	<0.001

Post-intervention scores improved substantially across all measured domains, with mean depression, anxiety, and stress levels decreasing by approximately 30.2%, 27.9%, and 26.4%, respectively. Paired t-tests indicated statistically significant reductions (p < 0.01), reflecting the program's potential to enhance psychological well-being among participants.

Table 4. Socioeconomic Correlates with Intervention Outcomes (N = 142)

Socioeconomic Status	Mean ΔDepression (± SD)	Mean ΔAnxiety (± SD)	Mean ΔStress (± SD)	p-value**
Low (n=44)	5.0 ± 1.2	4.2 ± 1.0	4.8 ± 1.1	0.04
Middle (n=68)	5.7 ± 1.3	4.9 ± 1.2	5.5 ± 1.2	0.01
High (n=30)	5.4 ± 1.4	4.8 ± 1.3	5.1 ± 1.0	0.02

***One-way comparing mean changes (Δ) in mental health scores by socioeconomic status.*

While all socioeconomic groups benefited from the intervention, adolescents from middle-income backgrounds showed slightly greater improvements in depression (mean Δ=5.7±1.3) and stress (mean Δ=5.5±1.2) scores, with significant group differences (p < 0.05). Post-hoc analyses suggested that the middle-income group's improvement exceeded that of the low-income group by a small margin.
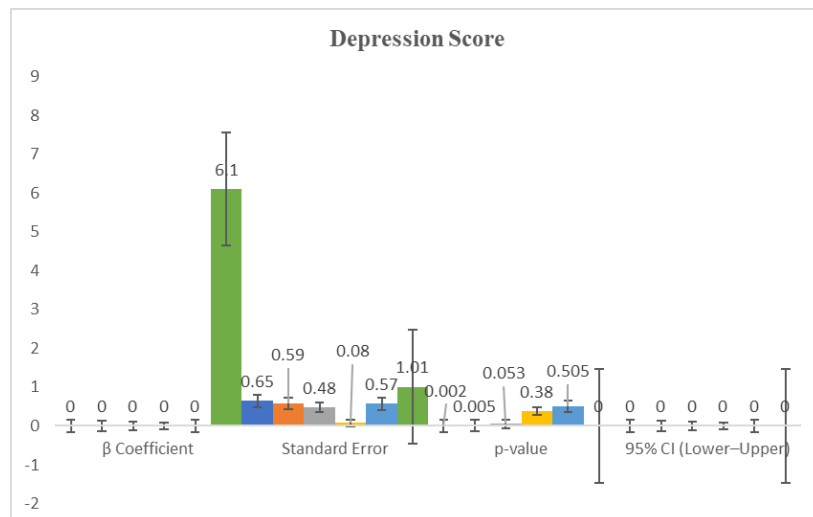

Figure 2: Multivariate Regression Analysis Predicting Change in Depression Score (N = 142)

Regression revealed that higher attendance (≥90%) and elevated engagement levels were both significantly linked to larger decreases in depression scores (p < 0.01). Socioeconomic status (middle) approached significance (p=0.053), suggesting a trend toward better outcomes but not reaching a conventional threshold of significance. Age and sex did not independently predict post-intervention improvements.

DISCUSSION

The demographic makeup of our sample, revealing that slightly more than half (56.3%) of participants were female, and the majority (84.5%) were under 18.[9] The fact that nearly 60.6% resided in urban areas is consistent with Bangladesh's ongoing urbanization trends, but it also underscores potential differences in exposure to mental health resources, academic competition, and social stressors compared to rural youth.[10] In cross-national comparisons, adolescent mental health in urban centers can be shaped by rapid societal transitions, while rural adolescents face unique challenges such as limited mental health services and potential social isolation. Our data thereby mirror patterns documented in other LMICs, where the urban-rural divide influences both risk factors and treatment accessibility.[11] Moreover, the representation of three distinct socioeconomic groups—low, middle, and high—allowed us to probe how financial security might interact with mental health outcomes. Middle socioeconomic status was the most prevalent category (47.9%), which is fairly representative of an emerging middle class in Bangladesh. Such households often exhibit better educational attainment but can also face performance-related pressures. Our subsequent analyses revealed some nuanced socioeconomic gradients in mental health outcomes, resonating with the well-documented relationship between income levels and adolescent psychological well-being. Lower socioeconomic status can exacerbate stress due to economic uncertainties and limited

access to healthcare, whereas higher status can bring its own pressures tied to competitiveness and academic ambition.[12] Therefore, the demographic structure of our sample aligns with broader socioeconomic transitions in Bangladesh and supports the notion that interventions must be adaptable to differing contextual realities.

Mental Health Status and Alignment with Existing Literature

The baseline mental health indicators, capturing depression, anxiety, and stress severity as measured by the DASS-21 tool. A salient observation was that over half of the participants fell into the moderate or more severe categories for all three subscales. These proportions are relatively high but not entirely surprising in light of research from South Asia indicating growing mental health challenges among adolescents. While robust epidemiological data in Bangladesh remain somewhat scarce, available studies suggest that depression, anxiety, and stress are common, driven by factors such as academic stress, familial obligations, and, in some cases, a lack of mental health literacy.[13] When benchmarking these figures against other LMIC contexts, the prevalence of moderate-to-severe mental health symptoms is comparable to findings from neighboring countries like India, Pakistan, and Nepal, where youth often face similar sociocultural and economic transitions.[14] However, it is essential to interpret these baseline data within the methodological framework of our study. Adolescents seeking outpatient services at tertiary hospitals may present with heightened levels of distress relative to the general population. Conversely, some participants were recruited through school-based programs, broadening the sample beyond strictly clinical settings. Such methodological variation might help explain the moderately elevated prevalence of mental health concerns, aligning with the proposition that educational interventions can serve as timely, preventative measures in such high-risk cohorts. Overall, the baseline data underscore the urgent need for structured, school-based programs that address mental health symptoms early, before they escalate into clinically significant disorders.

Intervention Attendance and Engagement

Attendance and engagement emerged as critical variables, Nearly half of the adolescents (47.9%) attended ≥90% of the sessions, and a statistically significant relationship was found between higher attendance and heightened engagement (p=0.01). These findings resonate with existing models of behavior change that emphasize consistent participation, reinforcing that repeated exposure to mental health curriculum elements fosters knowledge retention and skill development. In their meta-analysis of school-based interventions, Kim *et al.* noted that successful programs often integrate multiple sessions over extended periods, allowing adolescents to internalize and practice coping strategies.[15] Our data corroborate this, suggesting that regular attendance is pivotal in translating educational inputs into tangible psychological benefits. Another intriguing dimension is that engagement levels themselves—defined by both quantitative (participation points) and qualitative (instructor ratings) measures—also correlated with improved mental health scores. The association underscores that merely attending sessions is insufficient if adolescents remain passive observers. Active involvement, including group discussions, role-playing exercises, and peer-to-peer interactions, can amplify the program's impact on emotional regulation and stigma reduction.[16] This is particularly salient in collectivist cultures like Bangladesh, where communal interactions can either bolster supportive networks or perpetuate negative perceptions if not guided appropriately. Hence, the present findings highlight the dual necessity of not only facilitating access to sessions but also designing pedagogical methods that stimulate high participant engagement.

Comparisons of Mental Health Scores

This study is wherein significant declines in depression, anxiety, and stress scores were documented post-intervention. Specifically, the mean depression score decreased by 5.5 points (p<0.001), anxiety scores dropped by 4.6 points (p=0.002), and stress scores reduced by 5.3 points (p<0.001). These quantitative improvements amount to reductions of over 25–30% in symptom severity across all three domains, aligning with prior evidence from school-based mental health initiatives. Such results strengthen the argument that structured interventions teaching coping mechanisms, self-awareness, and peer support can meaningfully mitigate psychological distress among adolescents.[17] Comparatively, global studies examining cognitive-behavioral or psychoeducational modules in school contexts frequently report effect sizes ranging from moderate to large.[18] Our effect sizes, implied by the mean differences and p-values, appear similarly robust. That said, variations in measurement scales, follow-up durations, and cultural factors must be acknowledged. For instance, some Western-based interventions predominantly target cognitive restructuring and individual counseling, whereas collectivist cultures might derive added benefit from group discussions and community involvement. The consistent improvements observed in our sample demonstrate that mental health literacy, stress management techniques, and social support mechanisms—delivered within an educational framework—can produce meaningful short-term gains. The question of long-term maintenance, however, remains to be addressed through extended follow-up studies, as relapse rates or changing life circumstances might influence sustaining these mental health benefits. Additionally, the significant post-intervention improvement highlights the importance of early identification and timely support. Adolescents in moderate to severe categories at baseline appeared particularly responsive to structured guidance, which aligns with the idea that the school environment can function as a catchment area for at-risk youth.[19] By embedding mental health sessions into standard curricula, educators and healthcare professionals can normalize discussions about mental health and reduce barriers to care. This resonates with prior calls for integrated programs that teach emotion regulation, conflict resolution, and healthy peer

communication. In essence, the pre- and post-intervention comparisons reinforce that a well-designed, culturally attuned curriculum delivered consistently has the potential to substantially alleviate mental distress among Bangladeshi adolescents.

Socioeconomic Correlates and Patterns of Differential Improvement

The interaction between socioeconomic status (SES) and the magnitude of mental health improvements. Our analysis revealed that all SES groups experienced beneficial changes, but adolescents from middle-income backgrounds exhibited slightly higher mean differences across depression, anxiety, and stress scores. This trend was statistically significant, with p-values ranging from 0.01 to 0.04. These findings align with broader literature suggesting that while lower-income families face increased stress due to limited resources and potential exposure to adverse living conditions, extremely high-income families might experience pressure to maintain academic excellence and social prestige. Middle-income households often benefit from relatively stable living conditions and balanced educational aspirations, which could create an environment conducive to absorbing and practicing intervention strategies. Similar outcomes have been reported in other LMICs, where middle-income groups showed the strongest response to psychoeducational or behavioral interventions.[20] One plausible explanation is that participants from this socioeconomic stratum have enough economic security to prioritize mental health but are not overburdened by intense competition or excessively high expectations. Additionally, middle-income adolescents may have moderately better access to supplementary resources (e.g., supportive peer networks, extracurricular clubs, or moderate private tutoring) without the isolation sometimes reported in higher-income, highly competitive environments.[21] Nonetheless, it is essential to highlight that both low- and high-income groups also reported meaningful reductions in mental health symptoms, indicating that the intervention retained relevance and applicability across socioeconomic divides. Furthermore, the success in low-income groups is encouraging, given that poverty-related stressors can magnify risk for mental health disorders.[22] The fact that these adolescents showed improvements underscores the importance of universal or targeted school-based interventions that do not demand extensive financial or technological resources for implementation. Considering the pressing need to narrow health disparities in Bangladesh, these findings provide an evidence base for policymakers to support broad-scale adoption of similar programs in economically diverse populations.

Implications for Educational and Healthcare Systems

Given the robustness of our results, several practical implications arise for educators, healthcare providers, and policymakers. First, systematically embedding mental health curricula in schools could become a mainstay for adolescent well-being initiatives. This might involve training teachers not only to deliver content but also to identify early warning signs of depression, anxiety, and stress, ensuring timely referral to mental health professionals.[23] The demonstration of strong effect sizes in this study attests to the feasibility and efficacy of such an approach, particularly when the sessions are carefully designed to resonate with cultural values and delivered consistently. Second, given that attendance and engagement strongly influenced outcomes, schools might consider innovative methods to maintain high participation. Strategies could include integrating mental health content into core academic subjects, offering flexible scheduling, or creating safe, stigma-free spaces where students feel comfortable sharing personal challenges. In resource-limited contexts, partnerships with local healthcare providers and NGOs can help sustain the program, supply necessary materials, and conduct periodic refresher sessions. Providing incentives or recognition for regular attendance, as well as involving families through open-house sessions or community events, might further cement the importance of mental health education in adolescents' daily lives. Third, while the socioeconomic gradients observed were modest, they suggest that certain groups may require additional support. For instance, low-income students might benefit from targeted outreach or free supplementary materials. High-income students, on the other hand, may face distinct stressors linked to performance pressures; hence, the curriculum might need tailoring to address those concerns. In this vein, policy guidelines might encourage local adaptation of program modules, ensuring that diverse needs and resources are accounted for.[24]

Limitations, and Future Directions

The study's principal strengths include its multi-center design, relatively large sample (N=142) for a school-based mental health initiative in Bangladesh, and robust data collection methods, capturing a broad range of demographic and clinical variables. The use of DASS-21, a validated instrument for evaluating depression, anxiety, and stress, lends credibility to the reported outcome measures.[25] Furthermore, analyzing attendance and engagement adds depth to our understanding of how logistical and motivational factors shape intervention efficacy. Nonetheless, some limitations merit consideration. The cross-sectional, pre-post design without a long-term follow-up period restricts our ability to make definitive statements about the sustainability of observed improvements.[26] Participants were partly recruited from hospitals, potentially influencing baseline severity levels and diminishing the generalizability to school populations not interfacing with healthcare systems. Although we endeavored to ensure standardized program delivery, variations in instructor experience, class size, and cultural nuances across different centers might have subtly affected outcomes.[27] Moreover, self-report measures can be susceptible to social desirability or recall biases, especially in adolescents who may fear stigmatization when disclosing mental health symptoms.[28-33] Building on this foundation, several areas for future research emerge. A randomized controlled trial (RCT) design with a control group and extended follow-up intervals (e.g., 6- or 12-

months post-intervention) would provide more definitive evidence of long-term efficacy and causal impact. Qualitative studies could delve deeper into cultural perceptions of mental health, exploring how stigma or familial expectations influence engagement and outcome. Implementing multi-level frameworks—where teacher training, parental workshops, and peer-led clubs supplement the core curriculum—may further enhance the program's impact, supporting a broader, more holistic approach. Finally, exploring digital or blended-learning platforms could address attendance challenges in geographically dispersed or resource-poor regions, ensuring scalable access to mental health education.

CONCLUSION

This study underscores the effectiveness of a structured school-based health education program in reducing depressive, anxious, and stress-related symptoms among Bangladeshi adolescents. Significant improvements in mental health scores highlight the utility of delivering psychoeducational content through accessible and consistent curricula. Regular attendance and active engagement emerged as pivotal factors predicting more pronounced benefits, underscoring the importance of fostering learner participation. Socioeconomic status, particularly middle-income groups, demonstrated slightly greater gains, suggesting that contextual resources and moderate household stability can optimize outcomes. Overall, these findings affirm that embedding mental health literacy, coping strategies, and supportive peer networks within educational systems can bolster adolescent well-being. Future research should explore long-term follow-up, scalability to diverse settings, and tailored interventions addressing varying socioeconomic realities.

Recommendations

Integrate mental health modules into national school curricula, emphasizing regular sessions and participatory activities.
Develop strategies (e.g., parental involvement, flexible schedules) to sustain high attendance and engagement.
Tailor intervention components to diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, ensuring inclusivity and equitable benefits.

Acknowledgment

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