

**MHAN REPORT 2019-20**

**BY DEPT. OF PSYCHOLOGY**

Mental Health and Wellbeing are by far one of the most neglected areas in our country . According to a recent National Mental Health survey, approximately 150 million people in India need care for their mental health condition. The same survey also discovered that between 70 and 92 percent of these cases failed to receive treatment. The World Health Organisation says India has the highest number of teenage suicide rates globally. In developing countries like India lack of medical facilities and skilled mental health professionals, lack of awareness of common symptoms of mental illness and when to seek help, lack of trust and faith in the treatment, compliance with the treatment, and what to do if there is a relapse in the condition are all imperative factors for us, as a society, to consider and to act upon. Educational Institutions impart knowledge to students, lay emphasis on their physical well being and prepare them for social challenges. But unfortunately there are educational institutions and teachers who are not fully aware and equipped with mental health issues of students. Psychology concerns in children are on the rise, especially behavioural issues and suicides. 12 per cent of Indian students between the age of 4 and 16 suffer from psychiatric disorders. 20 per cent show signs of mental health disorders out of which 2-5 per cent have serious concerns like autism or bi-polar disorder. Shockingly, every one hour a student commits suicide in India.

In order to break the stigma about Mental Health and to create an environment where people can discuss about their problems with someone who is not judgemental, open minded and will keep the things very confidential. One of the best feelings in the world is loosening up and taking off the burden that we are carrying for so long.

Mhan is an initiative taken by the Psychology department of Symbiosis College of Arts and Commerce to help students and provide them an environment to discuss freely, simply talk about the things they want to share

Mhan is a Marathi word which means to 'speak' or 'say'. The initiative was started to help the students of college speak their mind and to vent out to someone without the fear of being judged or criticized. The students of the psychology department had undergone a micro counselling session which taught them how a counselor is supposed to behave, or how his/her body language affects the counselee.

The sessions started with the speakers (venters as we called them) coming to the psychology lab and being assigned a listener who they have never met before and who are completely anonymous for them. The students (listeners as we called them) also didn't know the venters, which was one easy way for the venters to open up, because no one knew their name or their identity. They were given certain registration numbers, such as C-001, which was their only identity.

The students were instructed to try and avoid giving advice or guidance to the venters as they are still learning psychology and are not practicing counselors.

## Micro-Counselling Session

As mentioned above the student had a Micro-Counselling Session to prepare them and teach them some basic counselling skills. This was achieved by predefining what it means to be empathetic, which is the most important skill for counselling. Madam defined empathy as a mindset where an individual takes the perspective of the person they are listening to, not judging them, recognising their feelings and by feeling with them.

In addition to that she taught us micro-skills, like what kind of body language to use and how to speak to the venters. She discussed in what manner questions should be phrased, to make the venter feel comfortable and heard. The skill of reflection was also discussed, which basically means repeating what the client is saying, this first of all gives them the feeling that they are being heard as well as helps them put their thought in order as well as the listeners.

## Mood-Boards

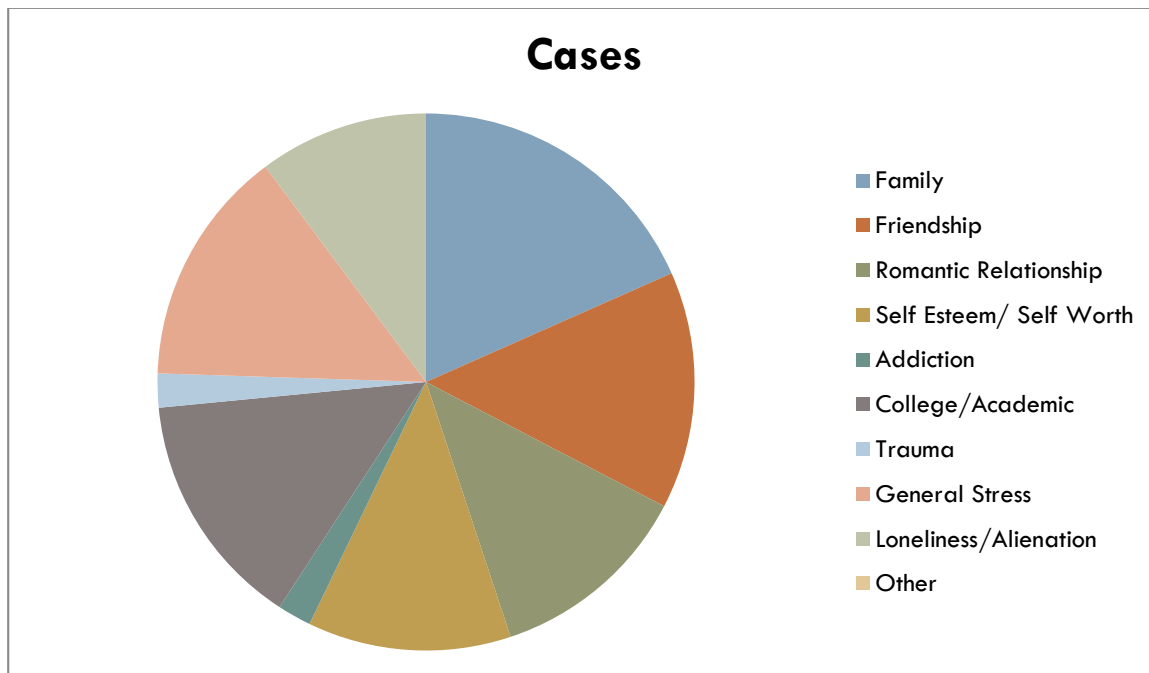
The students came up with ideas to help the venters communicate better or to vent more easily. There were small sheets of colourful papers which could be used by the venter to write (vent) or doodle on. The students put up a unique idea called 'Mood Board'. It was a chart paper with 9 sheets stuck on it, each sheet of a different colour. The motive behind putting up Mood Boards was so that the venters could select a colour that they felt like and could talk about why they felt like that colour, or why they chose that colour.





## Cases

After marketing for the event on campus and taking registrations for two days we ended up having 105 registration on paper and more than 50 students did actually came for the sessions, enabling us each to have at least one session where we were listening to a venter.



In total we had:

- Family with 18%
- Friendship with 14%
- Romantic Relationship with 12%
- Self Esteem/ Self Worth with 12%
- Addiction with 2%
- College/Academics with 14%
- Trauma with 2%
- General Stress with 14%
- Loneliness/ Alienation with 10%
- Other with 2%

The venters were given a feedback form to assess the quality of the sessions as well as to give the listeners a learning opportunity. Many of the venters wrote in their feedback that the experience helped them to see the issues from another perspective. By talking about they felt like a burden had been lifted from their shoulders, some even describing it as “feeling lighter”. The session took their fears of opening up and made them feel as if their problems and issues were valid and heard. Some felt inspired to seek out further help trough professional or friendship means.

The venters in general did not felt judged, they felt comfortable, had more clarity and felt listened to.

## **Conclusion**

Throughout the initiative we have learned a lot. It was a great opportunity to further our counselling skills as well as listening skills. It helped us to gain a newer and better perspective of our psychology course.

There were instances that we struggled with, for example listening to severe cases being discussed by the venters as well as having no opportunity to debrief ourselves after the sessions were done. Thankfully we have in cooperated methods to fix these issues. For the new round of Mhan, happening in March, we are going to have a reference list for the venters to seek out professional help afterwards, including the details of the college counsellors of SCAC. The second issue will be dealt with trough having a peer debriefing session held by Dr. Girija the Psychiatrist of SIU.

Overall this initiative really helped the students on campus as well as the psychology students and we would like to thank every teacher and employee of SCAC for supporting us, with an honourable mention of Dr. Alpana Vaidya Madam.

Respectfully,

The MHAN Team

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