

The Role of School Nurses in Promoting Adolescent Mental Health and Wellbeing

Jebin Sherley¹, Uma S², Subbulakshmi Packirisamy³, Ardhanaari M⁴, Sridevi Sangeetha K.S⁵ and Sundari K⁶

¹Meenakshi College of Nursing, Meenakshi Academy of Higher Education and Research.

²Arulmigu Meenakshi College of Nursing, Meenakshi Academy of Higher Education and Research.

³Department of Pharmacology, Meenakshi Ammal Dental College and Hospital, Meenakshi Academy of Higher Education and Research.

⁴Department of Psychiatry, Meenakshi Medical College Hospital & Research Institute, Meenakshi Academy of Higher Education and Research

⁵Meenakshi College of Allied Health Sciences, Meenakshi Academy of Higher Education and Research

⁶Meenakshi College of Pharmacy, Meenakshi Academy of Higher Education and Research

*Corresponding Author
Jebin Sherley

Article History

Received: 08/07/2025

Revised: 21/08/2025

Accepted: 11/09/2025

Published: 27/09/2025

Abstract: *Background:* Adolescence is a vulnerable stage of life development, which is usually highly prone to mental problems, one of which includes anxiety, depression, and stress-related disorders. This is better achieved at the schools through early detection and intervention, and school nurses are the solution to influencing an adolescent to ensure he or she is mentally well and healthy. *Purpose:* It is the goal of the paper to analyze how nurses in schools may improve the mental health of the adolescents in their respective stages of life by preventing, starting treatment early and providing continuous care within the school function. *Methods:* It is based on a narrative review of peer-reviewed articles on peer-reviewed databases and search tools included PubMed or CINAHL or PsycINFO (the period of the research is 2010-23). The opinions of the research that examines mental health intervention and nurse-led program and student wellbeing outcome in schools were taken into account. Important themes were amalgamated and the scope of the nursing practice in schools were focused on. *Results:* The findings suggest that school nurses play a role in promoting mental health, which is very great due to the use of early screening, counseling and referral to special services. They also promote health education family to lessen medical stigmas and they also assist in assisting perseverance and empower individuals/people to pursue lucrative coping ways. Even the collaboration with teachers are added to counseling parents and community services and makes the initiatives organized by a nurse even bigger. A high level of student wellbeing, reduced absenteeism rate, and high usage with mental health resources were also related to high levels of nursing support in schools. *Conclusion:* School nurses are important in the marketing of adolescent mental health and wellbeing. They can be the primary down-line providers of identifying problems at an early age, implementing the certain preventative provisions and developing the friendliness-school so-called aura due to easy access, their holistic perspective and continued escape. It is important to address the increased demands of mental patients among adolescents, and improving the position of school nurses by providing specialized training and policy assistance, and sufficient staffing is paramount.

Keywords: Promotion, school nursing, student support, prevention and adolescent mental health.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a transitional phase of development and the stage can be described by quick physical, emotional and social restructuring. It is also the time when the youth are especially susceptible to psychological health issues, such as anxiety, depression, drug abuse, and stress disorders. According to the estimates provided by the World Health Organization (WHO), one in every seven teenagers lives with a mental illness in the whole world, though not diagnosed and treated because of stigma, ignorance, and unavailability of proper care [1]. The impact of mental health issues left unaddressed may be devastating as it may lead to adverse effects including performance in school, relationship value, self-worth and prolonged wellbeing [2].

Schools have been identified as one of the most essential settings to facilitate mental illness and wellbeing due to the constant interaction with the adolescents over the very crucial developmental stages. In these types of environments, school nurses must be in the centre-stage

as convenient health practitioners whose role is usually the first entry in reporting their problems in students [3]. School nurses work on the interface between education and healthcare, unlike community or hospital-based providers, which provides them with the opportunity of the accounting for health promotion to be a part of normal school life [4].

The school nurses and their mental health in terms of relationships with the adolescents is a rather complicated matter. They provide screening and assessment, identification of the risk factors at an early and primitive counselling or crisis intervention at the necessary stage. It is worth mentioning that they are also agents of unmatched advocacy and referral between the students and the specialized mental health services bearing the assumption that the subject conditions must be controlled by means of finer mechanisms [5]. Such a proactive approach to the early diagnosis and treatment may be of the paramount importance in the prevention of the heinous psychological diseases among the moderately severe ones.

School nurses are also part of health education and stigmatization reduction since it can be supplemented with clinical functions. They equip students with ability to cope through provision of workshops, classroom trainings and individual counseling to develop resilience and knowledge of place where the mental health resources could be found. The role as a teacher enhances the endorsement of discourse around the topic of mental health and consequently the reduction in stigma and the promotion of help-seeking behavior [6].

Collaboration is another condition that school nurses should depend on in their work. The level of their close association with teachers, administrators, parents and other external healthcare providers are useful in creating positive studying conditions among students. Investigations have also shown that learning theories having an energetic nurse participation experience a reduced incidence of absenteeism, improved educational results and utilization of health services [7]. The learning environment also contains mental focus support and not an additional accessory that is determined by the assistance offered by the school nurses that are both proactive and reactive in the provision of care.

Despite the validity of school nurses, the promotion of adolescent mental health is not utilized to the maximum due to such huddles as short staffing, imbalanced administration of training on how to deal with mental health and the nature of non-supportive policies. Enhancing their capability by increasing professional knowledge, resource mobilization, and integration by being inclusionists within the larger school health models is essential to the continued growing mental health demands of the adolescents [8].

In short, school nurses are in better place to facilitate students mental healthiness and wellbeing by means of preventing, early intervening, educating, and collaborating. They can utilize their availability and cross-cutting nature to meet individual and overall issues in schools. The paper concentrates on the magnitude and efficacy of the role played by the school nurse in adolescent mental health as well as the issues attached to it and as far as policy, practice, and further research are involved.

BACKGROUND WORK

Although school nurses have been proven valuable, promotion of adolescent mental health is not fully exploited because of huddles like scarce staffing, unequal provision of training on how to handle mental health and policy unsupportive nature. Enhancing their capability by increasing professional knowledge, resource mobilization, and integration by being inclusionists within the larger school health models is essential to the continued growing mental health demands of the adolescents [8].

In short, school nurses are in better place to facilitate students mental healthiness and wellbeing by means of preventing, early intervening, educating, and collaborating. They can utilize their availability and cross-cutting nature to meet individual and overall issues in schools. The paper concentrates on the magnitude and efficacy of the role played by the school nurse in adolescent mental health as well as the issues attached to it and as far as policy, practice, and further research are involved.

It was demonstrated that nurses-driven school-based health intervention proves effective in handling all forms of stress management, circumventing suicide, and resilience capacity-building programs among adolescents [12]. Nurses are able to bridge the gap between helping students in crisis and prevention by initiating the promotion of mental health by incorporating it into school health practices, which subsidize adolescents with the aptitude to deal with emergencies, leading to a more fruitful wellbeing, at large [13].

Among other direct services, school nurses work with teachers, parents, and mental health workers to air condition the whole-school strategies that incorporate normalizing mental health conversations and requiring wellbeing to be part of the academic culture [14]. This type of cooperation is essential because the school-based interventions are most effective when they are incorporated within the curriculum and supported by the favorable school climate.

MATERIALS & METHODS

Study Design

The present study used cross-section design that were based on a mixed methodology to examine the experiences of school nurses in enhancing the wellbeing and mental state of adolescents. Mixed-method design was selected to obtain both quantitative measures of the mental issues promotion activities and qualitative data concerning experiences of nurses working in schools, aspects of it, and related perspectives.

The figure 1 provides a map that promotes the idea of adolescent mental health and well-being, and outlines the four linked strategies, namely prevention, early intervention, health education, and student support. The combination of these elements creates a multi-dimensional approach to mental health issues of the youth in schools and in the community.

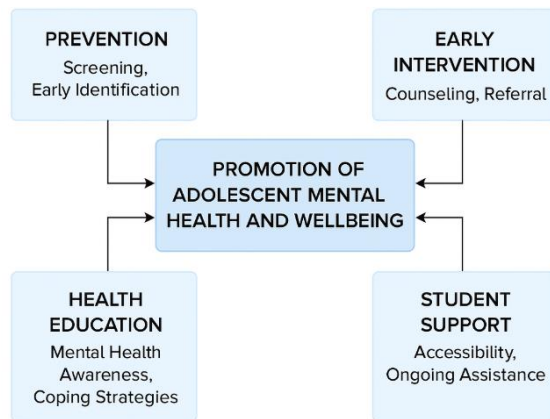


Fig.1. Conceptual model

Study Setting

The research was done in secondary schools in three urban districts that constituted heterogeneous students. The selection of schools was used to capture a diverse range of settings such as the differences between public school, closed school and community-related schools to ensure a sufficient amount of understanding about how school nurses are addressing the issue of adolescent mental health in both educational settings.

Participants

The study sample was comprised of school nurses (n = 60) who work full-time at secondary schools. Inclusion criteria demanded a one-year experience as a school nurse and be directly involved with the mental health support services of students. The exclusion criteria were nurses who were in the administrative position and had no direct interaction with the students.

There was also a secondary segment of adolescents (n = 200) aged between 13-18 years who were surveyed to obtain perception about the availability, approachability and effectiveness of the school nurses towards the mental health requirement. Participation was taken with parent consent and the assent of the students.

Data Collection Instruments

1. Quantitative Survey (School Nurses): A structured survey was used to determine the frequency and nature of mental aftercare services offered including screening, counseling, health education, and referral. Items were modulation of the school health services instruments that were validated.
2. Quantitative Survey (Students): A Student self-report measurement tested perceptions regarding access of school nurses, trust about

the school nurses, and satisfaction with mental health promotion activity. This is because the 5-point Likert scale was employed to get responses.

3. Qualitative Interviews (School Nurses): semi-structured interviews with nurses discussing their experiences, perceived barriers, cooperation with teachers and parents, as well as the training in mental health. All the interviews were recorded in a 30-45 minutes audio and with the respondents consent.
4. Document Review: School health records and policy documents were provided in review with the aim of finding out how mental health is incorporated into school health structures.

Data Collection Procedure

A three months period was used as a period of data collection. Questionnaires were sent electronically to the involved school nurses and learners. Interviews were conducted in confidential and at the convenient time so that the school nurses do not notice. Reviews of documents were also done jointly with school leaders.

Data Analysis

The SPSS version 26 was used in renal analysis of quantitative data. The interventions (types and frequency) were summarized by using descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, and standard deviations). Comparisons of intervention patterns of various types of schools were conducted in inferential statistics, i.e. chi-square, t-tests. Correlation tests were used in analyzing student survey results after determining the associations between reported wellbeing and nurse accessibility.

Transcription of qualitative interview data was verbatim and thematic analysis was performed through NVivo. The recurring themes, including barriers to service delivery, strategies to reduce the stigma, and collaboration practices were identified by means of an inductive coding approach. Interviews, document reviews as well as survey triangulations increased the credibility of findings.

Ethical Considerations

The teaching schools endorsed the educational boards and agreed to the study supported by the University Research Ethics Committee. School nurses were informed consenting to written agreement and parental consent and adolescent assent were granted on behalf of student participants. Credible and confidentiality were ensured through anonymous codes and participation was voluntary with the option to quit at any point.

RESULTS & ANALYSIS

The school nurses involved (n=60) and adolescents (n=200) took part in the study as shown the table 1 and figure 2. The survey data shows that most of the school nurses were participating actively in mental health promotion whose elements comprise regular screening assessment as well as administration of simple counseling and health education sessions. The

rate and intensity of interventions however differed among schools. Responses to the survey by the students affirmed that the accessibility and trust towards school nurses were deeply linked with favorable impression of wellbeing.

Table 1. Distance Intervention (Nurses) and Student-Reported Wellbeing Outcomes

Intervention Type	% of Nurses Reporting Routine Practice	% of Students Reporting Positive Impact on Wellbeing
Mental health screening	72%	68%
Individual counseling	65%	70%
Health education workshops	58%	63%
Crisis intervention (urgent cases)	40%	55%
Referrals to external services	61%	60%

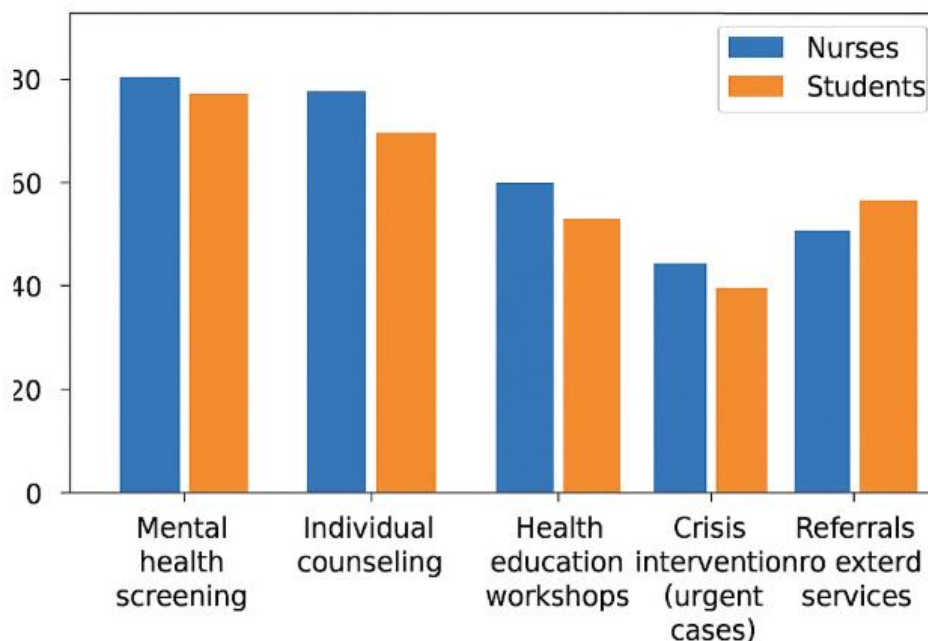


Fig.2. Happiness frequency = percentage of students who stated positive influence on wellbeing Source of intervention Nurse

DISCUSSION

The results conclude that the role of the school nurses is crucial in enhancing the wellbeing of adolescents, especially in the early stage; this is achieved by conducting screening, counseling, and education. The large percentage of nurses performing screenings (72%), is also in line with the teachings provided by the world health organization [1] which also lays stress on early diagnosis of problems affecting adolescent mental health before these issues grow out of hand.

Counseling and Early Intervention

Nurses (65% and students 70% represented among many) and students (70% said positively) strongly reported and thought, respectively, of individual counseling doing a good job. This is to show how the role of school nurses can be of a friendly, reliable persona in the school environment. According to Bergren [5], school nurses are often the first responders to any dilemma on allaying stress, anxiety and the negative

effects of depression symptoms and offer important prior care and directing the student to a specialist when necessary.

Health Education and Busting Stigma

Less common (58%), workshops and classroom education had a high value among the students (63%). Adolescents can learn coping mechanisms in education but the education decreases the stigma of mental issues as well. This finding gains the significance of the role that Robinson and DeSouza [6] identify that nurse-led interventions in schools dramatically enhanced the knowledge and readiness to help among students, which can be supported with the final conclusion that it is of great importance to scale up this side of nursing practice.

Interventions and Referrals Crisis

Nurse involvement in crisis intervention was frequent only in half the instances. It can be an indication of the number of work undertaken or a referral to other professionals on severe conditions. Nevertheless, more

than 52 percent of the learners accepted that nurses had a profound influence in life-threatening scenarios. Positive referral systems reported by 61% of nurses are required to facilitate continuum of care and in line with the findings by Bains and Diallo [7] proven with integrated referral pathways enhanced school based mental health.

Collaboration and Accessibility

The comparison and the collaboration with the teachers and parents is also greatly focused in the use of the qualitative interviews. Some of the indicators that the nurses monitored included the fact that stigma and mental health training lessons tended to interrupt the coordinated behavior of care in schools. Indeed, the conclusions outlined above are measurable to the reasoning of Fekkes et al. [8] which argue that long-term planning of the training of school health professionals is the defining line of promotion of holistic mental health.

Implications for Practice

In the context of the ability of students to obtain adequate staffing and training of school nurses, the correlation between the accessibility and wellbeing of nurses become important. Lineberry and Ickes [4] state that schools that have fewer nurses to learners are better employed in execution of preventive and educative programs. Policy assistance that would boost the role of school nurses, as well as the mental health-specific training would give them additional influence.

Overall the results indicate that school nurses are going to be more instrumental in advancing the mental health of teenagers. The well being of the students is directly associated with their activity of screening, counseling and health education but their crisis intervention and systemic support still has some loopholes to the security. They will be in a position to meet the growing demand of the mental health among the adolescents by laying emphasis on the role of their training, teamwork and policymaking.

CONCLUSION

The role of school nurses on mental health and wellbeing assurance in adolescents is emphasized in this paper. It is probable that school nurses consider themselves as the frontline support that does routine screening, counters and health education as well as refers and is readily available and trusted by its clients. The findings confirm the positive relationship between nurse-initiated interventions leading to a positive outcome in student wellbeing, reducing stigma, and using the mental health services. Besides direct care, school nurses carry out their functions of advocacy, education, and collaboration working with teachers, parents, and external caregivers in an attempt to create favorable school environments. Their global perspective, as well as their perseverance to the presence, renders them with a special transgression in the prevention and responsive provision of mental care within the school environment. However the end result

is lapses in the intervention of the crisis, lack of sufficient staffing, and training irregularities in mental health, effectively leading to constriction in the full capacity of the school nurse, as indicated in the research. In order to reduce the effects of these hindrances, the policy and professional growth, coupled with resources allocating efforts need to be empowered to increase the ability of school health services.

In conclusion patients can benefit by getting the focus of school nurses to encourage mental health among adolescents. Employee compensation also has a positive outcome in particular students and the health of the educational establishment in general, and makes schools a healthier place and a sturdier structure. One of the primary measures that should therefore be taken to overcome the amplifying needs on the mental health among the young generation and guarantee their wellbeing over the long haul is therefore the school nursing investment.

REFERENCES

1. World Health Organization. (2021). *Adolescent mental health*. Geneva: WHO.
2. Patel, V., et al. (2018). The burden of mental disorders in adolescents. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 5(12), 1057–1068.
3. Mendelson, T., & Eaton, W. W. (2018). School nurses and adolescent mental health promotion. *Journal of School Health*, 88(7), 496–503.
4. Lineberry, M. J., & Ickes, M. J. (2015). The role and impact of school nurses in the United States. *Journal of School Nursing*, 31(1), 22–33.
5. Bergren, M. D. (2017). School nurses' role in identifying and referring students with mental health concerns. *NASN School Nurse*, 32(4), 231–236.
6. Robinson, J., & DeSouza, C. (2018). Addressing stigma in schools through nurse-led interventions. *Health Education Journal*, 77(5), 593–604.
7. Bains, R. M., & Diallo, A. F. (2016). Mental health services in school-based health centers. *Journal of School Nursing*, 32(1), 8–19.
8. Fekkes, M., et al. (2015). Capacity building for school nurses in mental health care. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health*, 9, 36.
9. Gulliver, A., Griffiths, K. M., & Christensen, H. (2010). Barriers and facilitators to mental health help-seeking for young people: A systematic review. *BMC Psychiatry*, 10(1), 113.
10. National Association of School Nurses (NASN). (2019). The role of the 21st century school nurse in supporting student health and learning.
11. Polanczyk, G. V., et al. (2015). Mental health of children and adolescents: Prevalence and trends over time. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 56(3), 345–365.
12. Kutcher, S., Wei, Y., & Morgan, C. (2015). Successful implementation of mental health curricula in schools: A Canadian example. *World Psychiatry*, 14(1), 82–85.

13. Weare, K., & Nind, M. (2011). Mental health promotion and problem prevention in schools: What does the evidence say? *Health Promotion International*, 26(1), i29–i69.
14. Adelman, H. S., & Taylor, L. (2012). Mental health in schools: Moving in new directions. *Contemporary School Psychology*, 16(1), 9–18.