Exploring the Effectiveness of Mental Health Support Programs for Students within Private Schools in Karachi, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Mental Health issues are rising concerns among students, specifically in urban areas like Karachi. School environments are a vital place to connect and address students' psychological, emotional, and behavioural issues with structured programs. This study delved into the effectiveness and challenges of school-based mental health programs in the private schools of Karachi at the secondary level, for the successful implementation of these programs, in the schools where these programs are not implemented. To evaluate the effectiveness of school-based mental health support programs for both administrators and teachers in private schools of Karachi, Pakistan. To identify the challenges and barriers in the implementation of effective mental health programs in schools. A qualitative research design was used, involving 20 secondary school administrators and teachers of private schools in Karachi through semi-structured interviews. This study employed Albert Bandura's Social Emotional Learning and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory as the theoretical framework. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. This study's findings reveal that school-based mental health programs positively impact students' lives by regulating emotional, self-expression, prosocial behaviours, and teacher-student interactions. An inclusive environment with trained teachers and a holistic curriculum is crucial, while barriers include limited parent involvement, cultural stigma, inadequate teacher training, and the absence of a structured curriculum. The findings underscore the importance of school-based mental health programs when implemented in a structured and supportive environment. To ensure their sustainability and impact, stronger collaboration is needed between schools, government agencies, and organizations that are engaged in running structured mental health programs for schools.

Keywords: Emotional well-being, student well-being, school counselling, mental well-being program, school counselling.

INTRODUCTION

Mental health among students is a global concern, with nearly 34% students facing challenges in Pakistan (British Asian Trust, 2024). WHO (2024) estimates 10–20% affected, with half emerging by age 14. School-based interventions improved teacher literacy and self-efficacy (Imran et al., 2022). Ali et al. (2019) explained that while health is not the main objective of education, schools play a vital role in monitoring children's health and growth. Hamoda et al. (2022) emphasized the crucial role of schools in

promoting progress and well-being, highlighting the strong link between academic success and emotional health. Students with emotional problems are at risk of drop-outs, poor performance, and future challenges like substance use, legal issues, and exploitation (Masih, Punchanathan, & Osigwe, 2024; Masih, 2022). Waqar et al. (2024) noted that mental health problems significantly affect academic achievement, with students facing such concerns showing lower performance, irregular attendance, and reduced engagement. If left unaddressed, these issues may lead to long-term complications.

Feiss et al. (2019) highlighted the advantages of school-based health programs, including reaching large groups, minimizing logistic barriers, enhancing social connections, and strengthening student-teacher-counselor relationships (Ahmad, et al., 2021; Ali, et al., 2020; Ahmad, 2018). Such programs also facilitate the identification of students requiring further support and contribute to better academic performance for those encountering challenges (Hsu et al., 2025; Huang et al., 2025; Thu et al., 2024).

In Pakistan, mental health services primarily operate through tertiary hospitals located in major cities, leading to both geographic and economic barriers (Thompson & Saleem, 2025). Due to limited integration within primary healthcare, dependence on specialists, and insufficient school mental health awareness, significant gaps remain. Waqar et al. (2024) further emphasized that poor mental health literacy and prevailing stigma among students, teachers, and parents worsen the situation, frequently discouraging help-seeking.

Study Objectives

- To evaluate the effectiveness of school-based mental health support programs for both administrators and teachers in private schools of Karachi, Pakistan.
- To identify the challenges and barriers in the implementation of effective mental health programs in schools.

Research Questions

- How effective are the school-based mental health support programs for both administrators and teachers in private schools of Karachi, Pakistan?
- What challenges and barriers do schools face in implementing mental health support initiatives?

This research will provide important insights into the impact of mental health support programs in private schools, providing evidence-based recommendations for improving student well-being. It will help educators, policymakers, and school administrators understand the challenges and opportunities in implementing mental health interventions (Janjua, et al., 2025; Shah, et al., 2024; Naseer, et al., 2018). The findings will also promote the development of structured mental health policies, encourage teacher training in mental health support, and reduce stigma surrounding mental health issues in an academic environment. Ultimately, the research seeks to foster a more inclusive and supportive school environment for students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

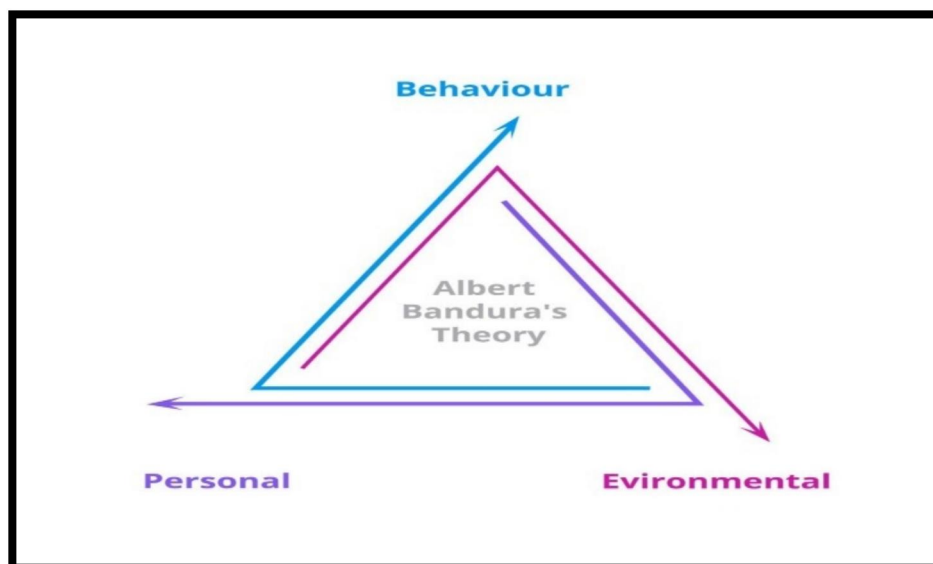*Albert Bandura – Social Learning Theory*

 Figure 1 Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory

This study is based on the Social Learning Theory presented by Albert Bandura (1977) as mentioned in Kirran et al. (2025). According to this theory, the behaviour is learned through observation. In school, students not only acquire behviours through instructions, but also how teachers interact with them. Adolescents develop positive psychological well-being when school develops a positive learning environment that fosters a healthy learning environment for the students (Yazidi & Rana, 2025; Feng, et al., 2023). The theory highlights that relationships between students, teachers, and peers play a crucial role in shaping students' mental health during their educational journey (Simply Psychology, 2025).

Khozin et al. (2024) explained further about the theory that Bandura (1976) identified four key processes involved in observational learning through modeling: retention, attention, motivation, and motor reproduction (Azhar, 2024; Azhar & Imran, 2024; Azhar, et al., 2022). The attention process refers to the need for individuals to focus and accurately perceive the critical aspects of the behaviour being modeled to learn from it. Retention involves the ability to remember the observed behaviour for future use (Danish, Akhtar & Imran, 2025; Mankash, et al., 2025; Hafeez, Yaseen & Imran, 2019). Motor reproduction focuses on the ability to physically replicate the observed actions by analyzing internal performance mechanisms. Lastly, motivation involves the evaluative responses individuals have toward their behaviour, which are influenced by the observed consequences of others' actions.

Liu et al. (2024) also mentioned in their study about social learning theory, which is developed from behavioursim and known as social psychological theory. It examines human learning from the social environment (Nisar, et al., 2025; Basharat, et al., 2023; Naz, et al., 2020). The primary focus of this theory is to understand the interaction between learning environment, cognition, and behaviour, which influences people's learning behaviour, highlights the importance of the learning environment, and one's behavioural factors. Morgan & Doku's research stressed the effectiveness of creating and managing a social learning environment for improving students' abilities in school (Morgan & Doku, 2023).

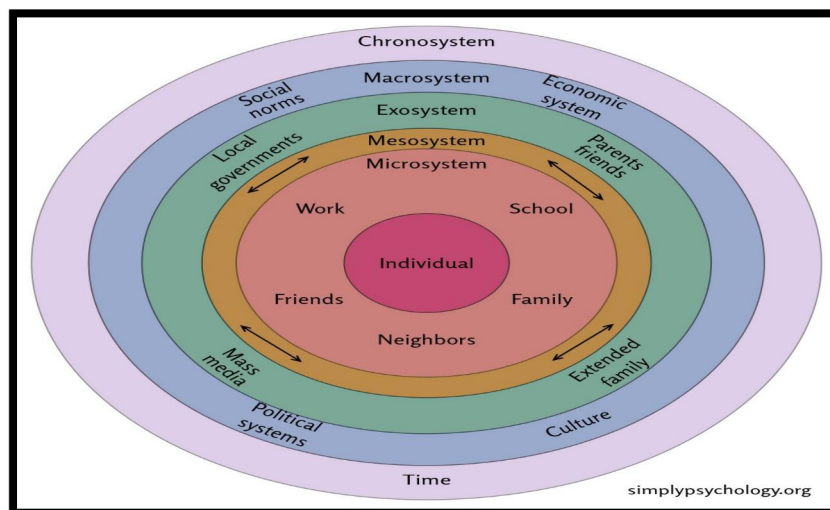**Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory**

Figure 2 Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory plays an important role in understanding how multiple environmental settings, from immediate contexts like family and school to broader societal influences, shape development (Guy-Evans, 2025). It highlights that adolescents' psychological well-being heavily depends on their school environment as a crucial microsystem. By applying this theory, experts can better grasp how changes within the school climate, teacher-student interactions, peer relationships, and connections between home and school affect adolescents' emotional and psychological growth. (Kirran et al. 2025). Bronfenbrenner's early model of human development emphasized the importance of context more heavily than the interactions between the individual and their environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979).

In his initial work, he introduced the well-known nested structure of settings, some of which directly involve the individual, while others do not (Khan & Haq, 2025; Haq & Khan, 2024). The six ecological systems outlined by Bronfenbrenner (1977) are: (1) individual who is not officially a system, personal attributes like emotional and psychological factors can impact participation (e.g., how individuals perceive and react to others' deficit views); (2) the microsystem is the environment where the individual has direct interactions (e.g., the classroom); (3) mesosystem is the connections between different microsystems (e.g., communication between a child's teacher and parent/guardian); (4) exosystem is the settings that the individual does not directly engage with but that still influence their development (e.g., state or educational policies); (5) macrosystem is the broader societal values, moral, and traditions (e.g., teachers' unconscious biases); and (6) chronosystem is the dimension of time, including historical events, transitions, and major life changes (Crawford et al., 2019).

Bronfenbrenner's latest development model, known as the bioecological system theory of human development (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000). This theory emphasizes the role of proximal processes. Proximal processes are the exchange of energy or interactions that can be unidirectional or bidirectional, or between an individual and elements of their environment (Akram, Ahmad & Sewani, 2024). The

changing relationship between individuals and the numerous environments in which they exist and develop throughout their lives becomes the basis for much of Bronfenbrenner's more recent research on human development. The effect of proximal development is greater than the impact of the environment in which these developments take place (Crawford et al., 2019).

The additional main aspect of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory is the Process- Person- Context- Time (PPCT) model, defined by Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998). **Process** is the first component, which refers to the ongoing interaction between the individual and their environment. **Person** is the second, which states that the individual's unique characteristics influence the proximal processes that develop with time (Rasheed, et al., 2025; Shahzadi, et al., 2025; Naz, et al., 2022). This aspect is further divided into subdivisions that are main characteristics, such as race or gender, which prompt immediate reactions, resource characteristics like abilities and experiences that create opportunities, and force characteristics, such as motivation and determination, that initiate personal change. **Context** is the third, which adds the multiple, connected environments described in Bronfenbrenner's earlier work. **Time** is the last component**,** which is divided into microtime (moments within interactions), mesotime (recurring interactions over days or weeks), and macrotime (historical events and major life transitions) (Crawford et al., 2019).
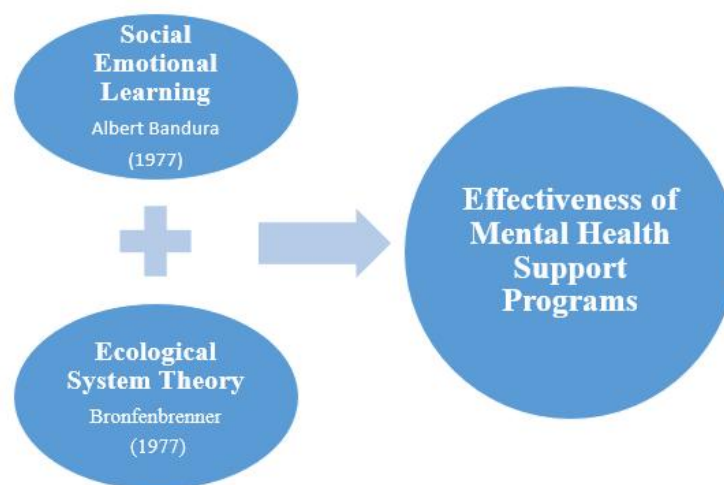

Figure 3 Theoretical Framework of the Study

Adolescents and their Mental Health Challenges

Van Loon et al. (2019) described adolescence as an important phase of quick physical and psychological development, characterized by multiple changes like puberty and the transition to high school (Janjua, et al., 2025; Faisal, Qureshi & Shah, 2025). This time of life is also seen as highly sensitive to stress, contributing to an increased helplessness to mental health issues such as burnout, depression, anxiety, and externalizing problems, which can adversely affect adolescents' well-being and developmental paths (Masih, et al., 2025s; Masih, Saher & Raju, 2022). Moreover, stress during this period can negatively impact academic performance, absenteeism, or even withdrawal from school. Subsequently, addressing psychological requirements at an early stage, mainly those related to stress and its triggers, is crucial for preventing mental health problems, academic disappointment, and social dysfunction in future life. Especially, interventions in school settings can be mainly beneficial, as mental well-being is positively connected with academic success.

School Curriculum Based on Mental Health Program

Soneson et al. (2020) identify four primary models employed by schools to detect students with mental health difficulties. Universal screening involves evaluating all students through self-, teacher-, or parent-report measures (Huang et al., 2025; Doan & Huynh, 2024; Hsu et al., 2024). Selective screening operates similarly but focuses only on students with specific, identifiable risk factors. Staff in-service training aims to enhance the school staff's understanding and capacity to identify and refer students who are at risk of or experiencing mental health difficulties**. C**urriculum-based models focus on educating students about mental health issues, supporting them to understand these issues and share their problems appropriately (Nadeem, Khan & Atta, 2024; Kahtoon, et al., 2023; Khan, Farooq & Kamal, 2023). In the UK, more than 80% of schools depend on unplanned methods to identify mental health problems (Rana, et al., 2022; Rana, et al., 2021; Rana, 2015). In contrast, structured approaches remain less dominant, with only 15% of schools accessing universal screening and about 25% implementing selective screening. Anderson et al (2018) recommend that school-based programmes play a significant role in identifying mental health issues among children and adolescents. When designing and implementing these programmes, it is important to understand not only their effectiveness but also their social validity. Social validity refers to the "social importance" or the value that society places on a programme's goals, procedures, and outcomes. (Soneson et al., 2020).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is on exploring the Effectiveness of School-Based Mental Health programs in the private schools of Karachi. It is qualitative research using a phenomenological approach to understand the administrators' and teachers' rich and lived experiences of Mental Health programs in secondary, private schools of Karachi. Mack et al. (2005) emphasized the value of qualitative methods for exploring phenomena in depth. Creswell (2013) defined *phenomenology as the study* of *lived experiences* or a phenomenon.

The administrative staff and teachers were informed about the consent, and signed by the participants. Also, participants were informed about the anonymity of the data and the interviewer. The face-to-face interviews were conducted within the premises of the schools to ensure individual privacy and maintain confidentiality. The participants were asked semi-structured questions, and the responses were recorded.

The data collected from interviews was analyzed using a thematic analysis approach mention by Braun and Clarke (2006). They have mentioned six steps which are served as the foundation for thematic analysis. First, the researcher has to familiarize themselves with the data by reading to it multiple times to understand its depth. Second, the research systematically identifies and label interesting features either driven by the data or from pre-existing theories. Third, in this step the researcher organizes the codes into broader themes by grouping similar patterns and identifying relationships between them. In the fourth step Braun and Clarke suggested to review and refine the themes by ensuring they fit the data and often using a thematic map. fifth step is to clearly defining the themes with its scope, by assigning concise and descriptive names. Lastly, in the sixth and final stage the researcher is writing up the analysis with vivid examples for each theme, by linking it to the research question and literature and coherently presenting the narratives.

Demographic Information of the participants

There were 20 participants in this study who were from the schools of Karachi at the secondary level. The selection of the schools was based on their smooth running of the school-based mental health programs (Zhang, et al., 2023). The participants were selected with at least one year and above experience

in the same school, with experience in school-based mental health programs and counselling sessions with the students at the secondary level.

Findings of the study

The mental health program plays a crucial role in the holistic development of the students. Early interventions can help students and teachers to help the students modify certain behaviour to avoid future repercussions (Ahmad, Noorani & Sewani, 2025). The data was collected through semi-structured interviews with the school administrators and the teachers. The data collected from participants in this study highlight key themes that capture the effectiveness and challenges, and the potential strategies to improve mental health programs in schools.

The thematic analysis is structured in three broad themes and sub-themes.
Theme 1 Students' Well-being and Support System

Participants of the study consistently recognized the positive impact of mental health interventions on students' mental well-being (Khoso, et al., 2024; Sultana & Imran, 2024; Ahmad, Bibi & Imran, 2023). Teachers observed obvious changes and improvement in students' behaviour and emotional well-being.

Anxiety Reduction and Emotional Regulation

A crucial benefit was the improvement and reduction in anxiety, and emotional regulation was found in the students' behaviour. Several activities helped improve such behaviours, like *"journaling, deep breathing, grounding techniques, gratitude jar, mood tracker"* helped students to monitor their behaviour and were found effective. Approaches like *"memory tree"* and emotional expression through colour codes like *"purple/blue coding"* helped students to express and articulate their feelings and emotions. As one respondent stated, "When they feel safe… they come up with their problems… they need a ear," Such practices help students to understand, regulate, and develop Emotional Quotient and manage their stress well. A teacher shared, *"they are taught mediation…. Mindfulness sessions…. These relaxation techniques reduce stress and anxiety."* Another teacher shared an important insight from the students' emotional transformation, *"By the end of the year… she thrived because she knew it's ok, not everything is in control…. My anxiety is in control."*

Improved Self-Expression and Openness

Teachers stated with emphasis that mental health support programs encourage students to share and be confident emotionally and socially. The safe place in the schools helps students to share their feelings and approach teachers without any fear of judgment. One of the teachers quoted, *"students are more expressive…. Started building relationships with others and are more open."* Another teacher shared on the importance of trust, *"when they feel safe in the environment…. they come up with their problems …. they need a listening ear."*

Developed Prosocial Behaviour and Empathy

The mental health programs successfully nurtured skills like empathy, compassion, and social responsibility. Initiatives like "compassion classes" and "buddy systems" helped students learned to understand and make sense of others' perspectives and build connections more effectively (Shah, et al., 2025; Haq, et al., 2024; Noor, et al., 2024). This also improved their interpersonal skills, especially for those students it helpful and did not mingle. One teacher reflected, *"Aggression has been lowered… more expressive… started building relationships with others."* Such interventions help cultivate empathy and

kindness, as reported through students' activities in the "mental health club" and trainings on *"sensitivity, family systems awareness."* This response aligns with Bandura's theory, which emphasizes learning through observation, modeling, and interacting with the surroundings. One more teacher added, *"they develop empathy… conflict resolution… cooperation…self-awareness."* Another educator added, *"compassion classes… emotional regulation, setting healthy boundaries… buddy programs promote pro-social behavior."* Such practices not only regulate individual growth but also help in contributing to a more inclusivity and empathetic school climate.

Impact on Teacher-Student Interaction

Teachers also shared the observation that these mental health programs help elevate and enhance the quality of student-teacher and teacher-student relationships, which positively contribute to enhanced learning outcomes. One participant shared, *"Students improve their relatioships with peers and teachers after attending these programmes."* One more participant asserted that these interactions work as a therapeutic alliance for students. *"A stronger relationship between student and teacher can be measured."* The interactions between teachers and students are vital in building trust and emotional security.

Theme 2 School Environment as a Holistic Development Place

These mental health program in school settings helps regulate holistic development for the students, that is, it is not for academic purposes only but also for the mental health and well-being of students, so they develop a psychologically dynamic personality.

Safe and Non-Judgmental Place

As one respondent of the study noted, *"It is quite helpful… as they (students) know that we have a place to go,"* which brings to attention that having mental health services in place in school creates a sense of emotional security for the students. One more respondent added, *"they are very much effective when done consistently…. their emotional distress lowers down, and it improves their behaviour,"* confirming that consistent and organized implementation can bring meaningful psychological outcomes. Furthermore, such programs also help teachers understand students' psychological issues, *"It helps actually the teacher to understand what the child is going through and it will ultimately affect his or her studies."* Moreover, a hurdle of trust and openness from students remains an issue, as one of the participants pointed out, *"there is a trust issue as well."* Another participant contributed that, *"When the children know they will not be judged, of course they will have a better understanding."*

Emotional Regulation Curriculum

Many teachers discussed that due to the program's structural nature, with social emotional learning content, it is helpful to regulate them through proper lesson plans. The structured curriculum supports regulating and promoting emotional intelligence, social skills, and empathy with emphasis on psychological well-being. One of the teachers shared, *"we have structured lesson plans around compassion…. Objectives and student feedback are also included."* One more participant explained, *"social emotional lessons help improve empathy, emotional intelligence, and effective communication."*

Teachers' Emotional Well-being and Training

Participants also highlighted the importance of teacher training and their own well-being in the classroom for the students, and the successful implementation of such programs. They explained that those teachers who have received this program training felt much equipped to understand and recognize the early issues in students and simultaneously proved to be helpful, and in introducing appropriate interventions. One participant shared, *"Teacher training is very crucial… helps identify problem areas early… improves student outcomes."* Perhaps, emotional support or teacher well-being for them is seen as necessary, as one of the participants asserted, *"Activities planned for teachers… emotionally regulated teacher is essential."* However, one of the participants shared that this area of teacher improvement is *"neglected."* And shared, *"Teacher is the role center… observes… mental state of students… vital."*

Theme 3 Systemic and Cultural Barriers

The barriers are the hindrances that hinder the overall implementation of the program. The hindrance can be organizational as well as cultural. In implementing mental health programs at schools, the teachers had to suffer a lot of challenges and barriers from the culture and also from the system in which they are striving for the implementation and sustainability of these programs.

Cultural Stigma

Participants also shared their grievances that societal and cultural norms often acted as a barrier and discouraged open dialogues about mental health. Furthermore, gender stereotypes often affected the engagement of students in this program. *"parents feel discussing mental health is unnecessary… there's still a lot of stigma."* One of the teachers further shared on gender differences, *"girls are more expressive… boys internalize stress and avoid asking for help, on the other and create trouble to capture attention, when they are disturbed.".* These gender dynamics further complicate the premises of these programs in the school, another teacher observed and shared the same observation about gender-based acceptability of mental health program in school, *"girls are more open to talk… boys are reluctant due to societal stigma,"* and in co-ed environments, *"girls fear being judged."* Cultural taboos and societal norms are seen as important barriers. One educator ponders that *"religious influences, parental resistance,"* and *"fear of being exposed"* are the key obstacles to these programs.

Lack of Parental Involvement and Hindrances

Teachers also reflected on the parental resistance or their lack of involvement in such programs, identified as a crucial barrier to the smooth running of the programs for the students' improvement. The educators also shared their observation that many parents show a lack of interest and their attendance is low in workshops and which hinders the interventions at the school level. Participants shared, *"parents do not cooperate…if held after school, attendance is low."* Another teacher observed and shared, *"if the parents are more engaged, there are better outcomes."* Another thought by the teacher on parental involvement, *"when parents are positive, there's a clear difference."* The teacher shared concern for students that, *"parents don't participate in workshops… if not involved, kids feel less confident and low."*

Inadequate Staff Training and Absence of Structural Policy

Participants shared that due to the lack of formal training for the teachers, the implementation of the program became a disaster for the teachers. Also, there should be a proper policy and structured program to be regulated in the school. Usually, one counsellor is appointed in schools to monitor the whole system, *"only one counselor in most schools… lack of resources and staff training,"* shared by one of the

participants. Another participant shared, *"no proper policy or curriculum in many schools…programmes are often neglected."*

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study explored the various aspects of school-based mental health programs, highlighting the vital role in nurturing students' development and well-being. This qualitative research analysis highlighted the interconnections and interplay among student experiences, institutional policies, and implementation challenges, which highlighted the overall perspective on the effectiveness and areas of improvement of the school-based mental health program. Van et al. (2019) highlighted that many studies support the implementation of school-based mental health interventions that contribute positively to student development, particularly in schools at middle and secondary levels where emotional and behavioural issues become more prominent.

The findings of the first objective, which was the effectiveness of the school-based mental health programs in the school, the two themes were identified from the first objective that is Theme 1- Students' well-being and support system, and Theme 2 – School Environment as a Holistic Place. The sub-themes from the first theme are anxiety reduction and emotional regulation. According to this sub-theme, the findings of one of the studies highlighted the influence of mental programs on students' emotional and social skills. Grant et al. (2018) mentioned the significance of the curricula, which help foster the understanding of mind, thought, and consciousness to understand resilience and emotional regulation among young people. Furthermore, Cappella et al. (2019) also stated that during the transition to middle school emotional support system is vital for students' well-being due to increased academic and social stressors.

Additionally, strategies like mindfulness training, meditation, and stress-reduction techniques have shown great improvement in students' abilities to manage stress and anxiety and improve focus. Van Loon et al. (2019) also explored in their study that following mindfulness and social-emotional learning programs, students have learned to improve emotional regulation, and the anxiety symptoms have improved in students. This study reflected the second sub-theme of theme 1, which is the emotional regulation and openness.

Moreover, according to theme 1, the third sub-theme was developed on prosocial behaviour and empathy. According to this sub-theme, the development of self-expression and openness in students is vital. When the students were provided with a safe psychological school environment, they were able to express their thoughts, emotions, fears, and personal challenges. Carroll et al. (2020) supported this idea in their study by stating that the role of social and emotional learning helps students deal with complex relationships and improve interactions. Safe environments with friends and adult support serve as enablers for emotional weaknesses and openness, which are the requirements of socio-emotional development in adolescents. Also, to strengthen students' well-being, school-based mental health programs provide a platform for the development of empathy, cooperation, and prosocial behaviour. The regulation of social-emotional learning curricula that foster compassion, conflict resolution, and self-awareness directly impacts students' interpersonal skills.

The fourth sub-theme of theme 1 is improved teacher-student interaction Van loon et al. (2019) asserted that the participation of students in such interventions brought an immense measurable impact on their prosocial behaviour and showed improved relationships. Such social outcomes are vital for the school's harmonious environment and the youth's positive development.

The theme 2 is the school environment as a holistic development place. The first sub-theme from this main theme is a safe and non-judgmental place. It is very important for the role of teachers and the school environment for the successful execution of mental health programs without any judgment. A school environment that allows a non-judgmental and inclusive atmosphere for students encourages students to meet their mental health needs. As mentioned by Swick and Powers (2018), the school settings should be intentionally developed to decrease stigma, introduce help-seeking behaviour, and improve the trust relationship between students and teachers. This study reflects the second sub-theme of theme 2, which mentions the emotional regulation curriculum.

One of the significant findings from the research, which makes the third sub-theme of the theme, is the teacher's emotional well-being and training. Teachers who are trained and knowledgeable about mental health and know how to regulate their own emotions are in ideal conditions for identifying the early signs of students' distress and can help them to provide timely interventional strategies (Ahmed, Batool & Haq, 2025; Shah, et al., 2025). According to Hughes and Mazzotta (2021) that schools that provide mental health programs for students must play an active role in training their staff, for early recognition and responding to mental health concerns, and explaining the importance of therapeutic aspects.

Nonetheless, this research also identified the challenges, which make theme 3 systemic and cultural barriers, stating the resistance from the teachers, which can be one of the hindrances to the successful implementation of the program. Swick and Powers (2018) also acknowledge such hindrance in their study, that misconception among school staff requires continuous professional development and organizational support.

Despite, various potential of school-based mental health programs, there are several structural and systemic issues. One of those is that the cultural stigma serves as a major barrier, particularly in a community-oriented culture like Karachi, discussing such aspects is seen as taboo. Cultural stigma is the sub-theme of theme 3. Gronholm et al. (2018) mentioned in their study that stigma is the most regularly mentioned reason, which makes students hesitant to receive school-based mental health services. Their findings also recommend that students seem to be less stigmatized by the school-based mental interventions than that they receive from outside.

Lack of parental involvement and hindrance is the second sub-theme of theme 3. Many parents who are not aware of mental health programs are usually in the denial phase of the mental health concerns and do not participate in any workshop or counselling sessions. The last theme of theme 3 is Inadequate Staff training and absence of structural policy. Swick and Powers (2018) recommended professional development and organizational support to sort these issues.

Summary of the study

This research study, "Exploring the Effectiveness of Mental Health Support Programs for Students within Private Schools in Karachi, Pakistan," is qualitative research conducted in the schools of Karachi at the Secondary level. The objectives were to explore the effectiveness, barriers and challenges of the school-based mental health program. The data were collected from 20 participants, including administrators and teachers, through semi-structured interviews. The findings show countless effectiveness, positive outcomes in the students' behaviour, but unavoidable challenges due to the demanding requirements of mental health programs in the schools.

CONCLUSION

This research study explored the effectiveness of school-based mental health programs in private schools of Karachi through administrators' and teachers' perceptions and identified the barriers and challenges to their implementation. The findings and results of the study underscore the importance of the mental health program, which positively impacts students' self-control and emotional regulation, anxiety reduction, social interaction, and overall psychological behaviour. The program's effectiveness improves This program also impacts the students' academic achievement when regulated in a structured and supportive environment.

Additionally, the success of this program is highly connected to a safe school environment, a focused curriculum on well-being and compassion, and the emotional resilience of both students and teachers, as well as their training. Though challenges like cultural stigma, parental resistance, time constraints, limited resources, and a shortage of trained professionals may create significant hindrances.

Direction of the future study

The recommendations for the direction of future research are:
- Comparative studies should be initiated to understand the context-specific challenges and best practices in both public and private schools.
- Parents' and students' perspectives should be deeply explored to gain further insights into the holistic development and effectiveness of the program.
- Focusing on the benefits of sustainability and evidence-based policy development should be conducted through a longitudinal or mixed-methods approach.

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