Interpersonal Communication and Mental Health: An Impact Study of Interpersonal Communication Skills on Mental Health of Youth

Unnati Shahi, Lokesh Sharma

Abstract: Effective communication is crucial for mental as well as emotional well-being, playing a key role in determining the way people express themselves, build connections and relate to others. This research focuses on understanding the impacts of interpersonal communication in life of an individual and how does it affects the mental health. Through conducting a survey of 100 individuals of age ranging between 18 to 25 years, we came to the finding that many of the participants struggle in talking or conveying their emotions, which leads to feelings of suffocation and difficulty in daily life. A substantial portion of the respondents mentioned that communication challenges often affect their relationships, while some of them told about experiencing worsened bonds due to communication difficulties. Our findings emphasize the importance of encouraging a better open communication to enhance mental well-being and improve overall quality of life.

Keywords: Effective Communication, Interpersonal Communication, Mental Health, Daily Life, Youth

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Communication: An Overview

Communication is basically an exchange of thoughts and information through a variety of mediums like speaking, writing or through signs. Interpersonal Communication has been always an inherent and inevitable part of our lives since the time when systematic use of words and languages were not even in existence. Communication influences the quality of life at a large extent. With passing time, communication has undergone significant transformations and changes due to its dynamic connection with digitalization. In the contemporary world, the experts, researchers, healthcare professionals as well as the society have shown a significant level of interest and attention directed towards the intricate interconnection shared between communication with mental health.

According to **Louis Allen**, "Communication is a bridge of meaning. It involves a systematic and continuous process of telling, listening and understanding [9]."

Ms. Unnati Shahi, Department of Journalism & Mass Communication, Banasthali Vidyapith, (Rajasthan) India. E-mail: unnatishahi6july@gmail.com; shahiunnati06@gmail.com

Dr. Lokesh Sharma*, Associate Professor, Department of Journalism & Mass Communication, Banasthali Vidyapith, Tonk (Rajasthan), India. E-mail: sharmaislokesh3@gmail.com; lokeshsharma@banasthali.in, ORCID ID: 0000-0002-0980-9207

Communication acts as a cornerstone of interactions and interpersonal communication plays a major role by allowing the individuals to share thoughts, convey feelings, express emotions, build relationships, and establish understanding between individuals. Communication encompasses both verbal as well as non-verbal forms and it is an essential aspect of human interaction which plays a pivotal role in the shaping of individual's well-being as well as their psychological resilience.

B. Mental Health: An Overview

According to **World Health Organization**, "Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community [8]." Mental Health holds the same level of importance as Physical Health does. In order to maintain an ideal lifestyle, a proper balance should be established to maintain good quality of Mental Health, Physical Health and Emotional Health. A good Mental Health isn't just about not having any of the Mental Disorders, it dives into a deeper complexity and varies from person to person. Mental Health is a complex spectrum which ranges from emotional well-being to diagnosed mental issues. It affects how individuals perceive, process, and conveys information.

C. Interpersonal Communication and Mental Health

Mental Health conditions, such as anxiety disorders, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder, can distort the patterns of communication, leading to difficulties in expressing emotions, maintenance of healthy relationships, and effectively articulating one's needs and desires. On the other side, poor quality of interpersonal communication skills disturbs the way we express ourselves which also affects us emotionally as well as mentally. So, the condition of someone's mental health leaves significant impact on their quality of communication, efficacy, as well as societal behavior and bonding. This often leads to a complex and typical interrelation between communication and mental health, the two essential aspects of human existence and survival in a society. Moreover, the misconceptions which surround mental health issues often serve as barriers to open and empathetic communication, worsening the challenges faced by individuals experiencing mental health concerns.

This research paper aims to dive deeper into the multifaceted dimensions of the interconnection between interpersonal communication and mental health.

Interpersonal Communication and Mental Health: An Impact Study of Interpersonal Communication Skills on Mental Health of Youth

It will investigate the various ways in which the quantity, quality, and effectiveness of communication impact the mental health of different individuals. The reciprocal relationship between these two emphasizes the need for a deeper exploration of the ways in which communication patterns and mental well-being affect each other. It is imperative to further understand the mechanisms that underscore this correlation, whether it is the empathetic support offered by a friend during tough times, the psychological outcomes of cyber bullying, the campaigns of mental well-being through healthy interaction or the therapeutic effects of professional counseling.

Diving deeper to understand the interrelation between these two is vital for development of well-planned, effective and targeted interactions, interventions as well as strategies that promote healthier communication and support an improved level of mental well-being for individuals across a diverse range of demographics and contexts. By exploring the various patterns of communication among people, the impacts in terms of personal, social and cultural contexts, along with the role played by interventions, this paper aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how effective interpersonal communication strategies can be harnessed for fostering positive mental as well as emotional health outcomes.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Credibility of any research is increased through the support of other authentic works. A wide variety of reliable and related literary works together help the researcher in gathering the required information and knowledge related to the field of research.

Fini F. &Fini A. (2016) in the research paper titled, *"A Study on the Relationship between Communication Skills and Mental Health and Job Empowerment"* examines the positive correlation between communication skills and both mental health and job empowerment. It emphasizes on the role of effective communication to promote mental well-being and empower individuals in their professional environments. The results suggest a positive correlation and underscore the importance of fostering strong communication skills for overall psychological and occupational wellness [3].

Primack et al. (2017) in the study, *"Use of multiple social media platforms and symptoms of depression and anxiety: A nationally-representative study among U.S. young adults"* focused on the effects of heavy smartphone usage on the mental health of youngsters. The findings suggested a correlation between prolonged screen time and higher risk of depression and symptoms of anxiety, thus highlighting the need for a proper understanding of the psychological impact of technology-mediated communication [6].

Various studies have highlighted the influence of self-disclosure and stigma in communication on mental health. **Brown et al (2018)** in the research, *"Breaking the Silence: The Role of Communication in Challenging Mental Health Stigma"* studied the experiences of individuals navigating mental health challenges and the role of communication in shaping their societal integration and sense of self-acceptance. Their findings emphasized the importance of fostering open, supportive communication environments to combat stigma and for promoting mental health awareness [1][10].

Johnson et al (2019) in *"Communication Interventions for Managing Anxiety Disorders: A Meta-Analysis"* emphasized the therapeutic potential of an effective communication in management of anxiety disorders. Their findings demonstrated how interpersonal communication, whether through supportive friend circles, or professional counseling, can offer invaluable coping mechanisms as well as emotional support, thereby enhancing overall mental well-being and resilience. This exploration shows the significant role that communication interventions can play in promoting positive mental health outcomes [4][11].

Furthermore, investigations into the role of family communication towards mental health have resulted with some intriguing insights. **Johnson and Smith (2020)** in their study, *"Familial Communication and Adolescent Mental Health: A* Longitudinal *Study"* focused on the impact of familial communication patterns on the psychological well-being of adolescents. Their research illuminated the pivotal role of open, supportive family communication in fostering resilience and emotional stability among young individuals, emphasizing the importance of a nurturing familial environment in promoting positive mental health outcomes [5][12][13][14].

Dall M. et al (2022) in *"The link between social communication and mental health from childhood to young adulthood: A systematic review"* investigates the association between social communication (SC) skills and mental health outcomes across different age groups like children and young adults. The examined publications included population-based studies and studies investigating special populations with individuals experiencing mental health challenges or at the risk of developing them. Based on the findings, a significant correlation between social communication difficulties and mental health issues was indicated, along with a focus on early-onset and persistent problems in individuals with severe SC impairments [2].

Stieger S. et al (2023) in the article, *"Face-to-face more important than digital communication for mental health during the pandemic"* conducted a study during the pandemic emphasizing the important role of face-to-face communication in maintaining better mental health in comparison to digital communication. It suggests the far lesser relevance of digital communication than face to face communication for mental health during the lockdown. It discusses the impact of different varieties of communication modes on mental well-being, highlighting the meaningful connection between digital communication and mental health outcomes. The study emphasizes the significance of personal or face to face interaction in reducing mental health challenges during periods of isolation and uncertainty [7].

Overall, these studies collectively represent the significance of different aspects of effective communication in promoting mental well-being, emotion well-being, addressing the consequences and repercussions of communication issues on mental health, and underlining the importance of developing healthy communication practices for enhancement in the psychological resilience.

III. SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

The major significance of this study lies in its potential to represent the relative and reciprocal relationship between Communication and Mental Health. It unveils how the two key aspects of human existence are correlated and the deep impact they create over each other. The research explores the multidimensional aspects and impacts of communication patterns on mental well-being and vice versa, therefore presenting a comprehensive understanding of the complexities and challenges faced by individuals suffering with various mental health concerns. Furthermore, the study focuses on the ways in which the quality, quantity and effectiveness of communication affects the mental health of different individuals. It aims to provide useful and important insights for development of effective interpersonal communication, cultivating empathetic support systems, and promoting healthier communication practices. The ultimate purpose of this research is to contribute towards the betterment of mental health support systems, reducing stigma surrounding mental health issues, and cultivating more inclusive & understanding social environments.

IV. RATIONALE OF STUDY

This study aims to understand how the way of our communication and connection with others can affect us emotionally and mentally. The research is an observation, examination and analysis of how different kinds of interpersonal communication, like talking, writing, or even unspoken words just by being with someone, can change how we think and feel. The study explores and uncovers that how our daily activities, sleeping schedule, friendships and other relations are impacted due to the quantity and quality of our communication.

V. OBJECTIVES

1. To investigate and analyze how communication patterns (both verbal and non-verbal) affect the mental health of individuals.
2. To analyze the effects of interpersonal communication skills on daily lifestyle activities of individuals.

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research is conducted through the collection of primary data by using a questionnaire. A sample of 100 young individuals in age group of 18 to 25 year has been selected through simple random sampling technique. The use of questionnaire for the purpose of data collection intends to gather diverse responses with convenience of time, benefit of cost-effectiveness and advantages of digital advancements.

VII. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION
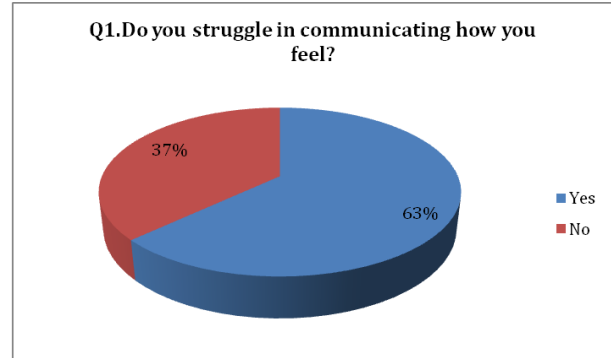
A. Difficulty in Expressing Feelings

Fig. 7.1 Difficulty in Expressing Feelings

As shown in Fig. 7.1 a notable 63% acknowledged struggling in articulating their emotions, while 37% asserted no such communication challenges in the initial inquiry regarding the respondents' ability to convey and communicate their feelings. This highlights a prevalent difficulty in expressing feelings among the surveyed individuals.
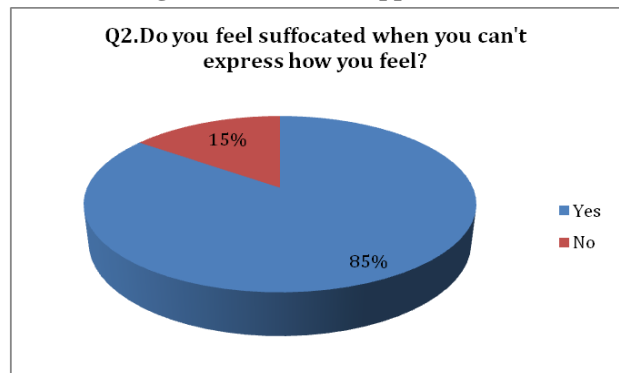
B. Feeling Suffocated or Trapped

Fig. 7.2 Feeling Suffocated or Trapped

Fig 7.2 demonstrates that a significant majority i.e. 85% of the respondents expressed feelings of suffocation or entrapment when unable to communicate their emotions. This underscores the emotional toll experienced by individuals when faced with the inability to express themselves.

C. Impact on Daily Life

Figure 7.3 Impact on Daily Life

Interpersonal Communication and Mental Health: An Impact Study of Interpersonal Communication Skills on Mental Health of Youth

Fig 7.3 shows that 35% of respondents reported that difficulties in communication significantly affect their daily lives. While 57 % of respondents also admitted getting affected in their daily lives sometimes. A minority of participants (8%) did not perceive any noticeable impact on their daily lives despite facing communication challenges.
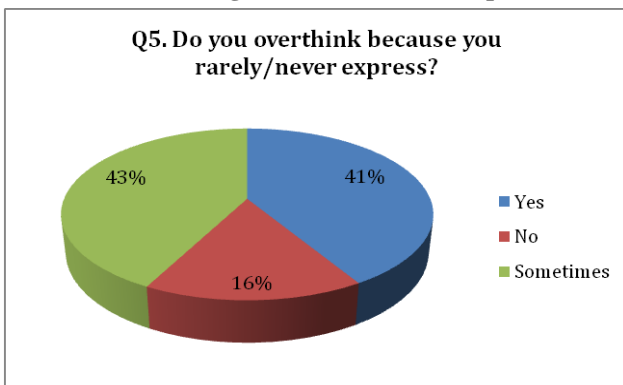
D.   **Saying Yes Unwillingly**
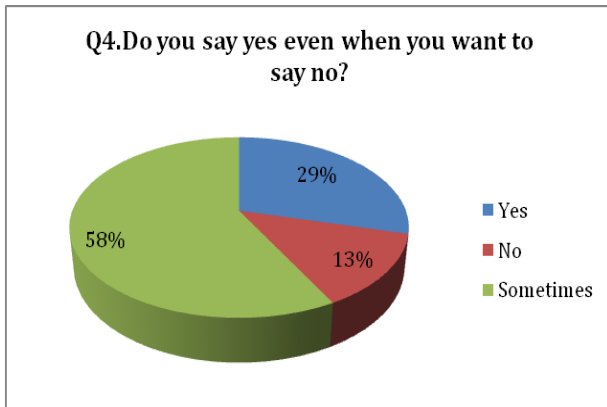
Fig. 7.4 Saying yes Unwillingly

As fig 7.4 shows, a considerable 58% of participants admitted to hesitating to say no, with 29% habitually saying yes unwillingly. This trend suggests a prevalence of people-pleasing behavior among the respondents.

E.   **Overthinking Because of Under Expression**

Fig. 7.5 Overthinking because of Under Expression

Over thinking appears to be a common consequence of struggling to express oneself, as reported by a majority of respondents in fig 7.5. Specifically, 41% admitted to over thinking due to under-expression, and 43% acknowledged experiencing this phenomenon occasionally.

F.   **Effect on Mental Peace**
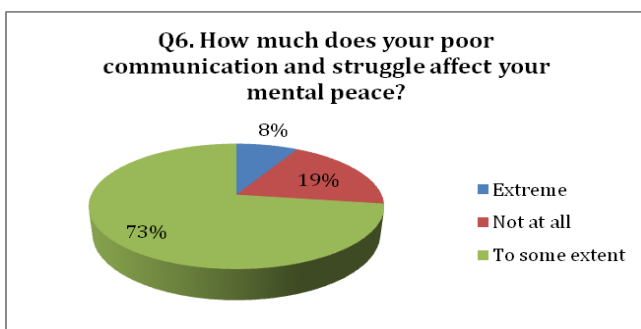
Fig. 7.6 Effect on Mental Peace

Fig 7.6 shows that, 73 % of respondent's poor communication often affects their mental piece to an extent while, 8% of respondents admitted getting their mental peace affected at an extreme level. This indicates a significant portion of the participants facing consequences and effects in their mental health due to communication challenges.

G.   **Effect on Sleep Quality**
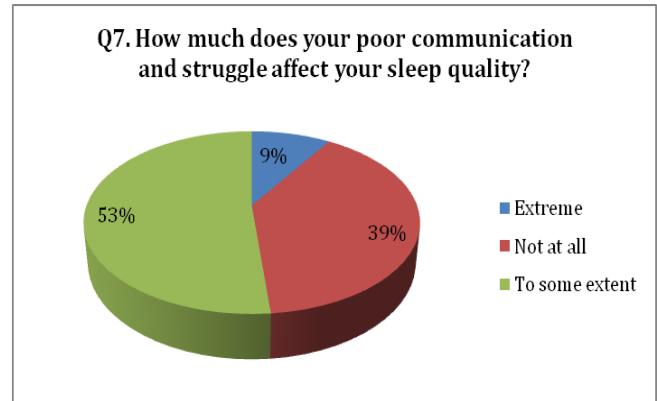
Fig. 7.7 Effect on Sleep Quality

Sleep quality is also influenced by communication struggles, as reported by a majority of participants. Fig 7.7 shows 52% of them shared having sleep disturbances to some extent due to struggling or being unable to communicate. While, 9% of them also admitted experiencing an extreme impact on their sleep quality.

H.   **Effect on Relationship**
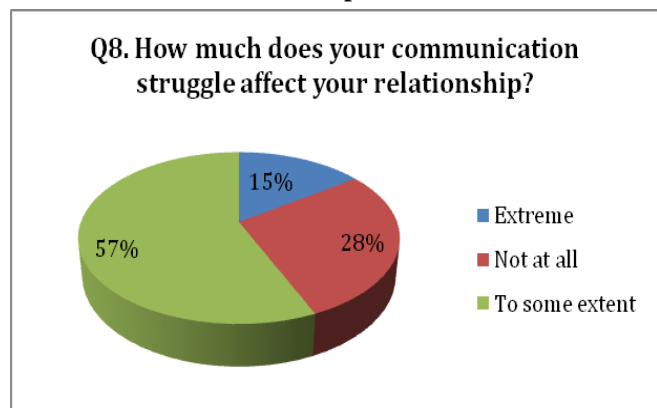
Figure 7.8 Effect on Relationship

As demonstrated in fig 7.8 more than half of the participants (57%) reporting that their difficulties in expressing themselves sometimes affect their relationships, while, 15% expressed an extreme impact, and, 28% of participants asserted that, despite struggling with communication, their relationships remained unaffected, suggesting resilience or adaptability in some interpersonal connections.

I.   Breaking Friendships
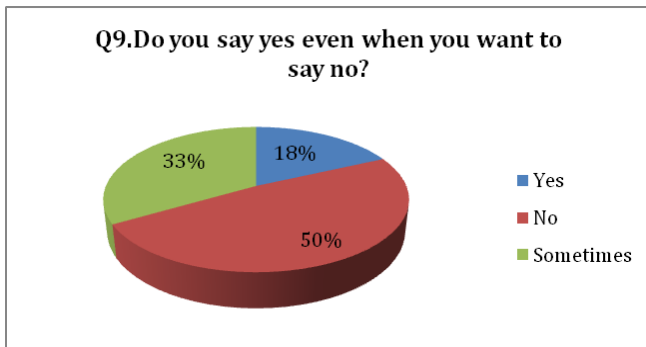
Figure 7.9 Breaking Friendships

Half of the participants also disclosed that their difficulties in expressing themselves sometimes also results with breaking friendships where, 18% of them shared the experience of friendship dissolution due to being unable to communicate properly, and an additional 33% experiencing such outcomes sometimes as shown in fig 7.10.

J.   Suffering with Anxiety or Depression
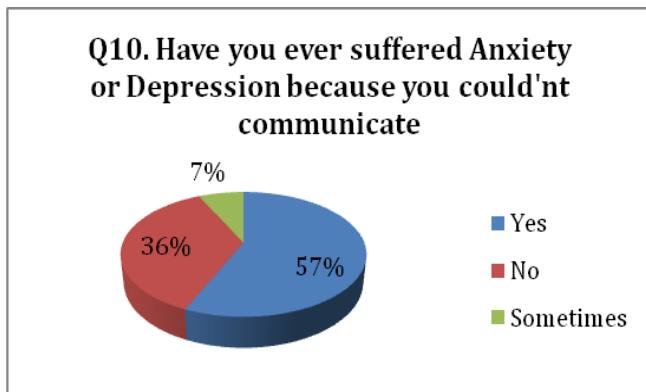
Fig. 7.10 Suffering with Anxiety or Depression

Fig 7.10 demonstrates that a significant 57% of respondents shared that they suffered from anxiety or depression when unable to communicate while feeling low, while an additional 7% admitted to experiencing anxiety on occasion. These findings highlight the profound emotional and mental challenges associated with difficulties in communication, including misunderstandings, emotional barriers, overthinking, and anxiety, as well as depression in certain conditions.

VIII.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Interpersonal communication is a complex, dynamic and inevitable part of our lives that leaves significant influences over the mental well-being of youth, as revealed by our study. The data collected in this research indicates towards a prevailing struggle among the respondents in effective expression of their emotions, where 62.6% admit struggling and facing challenges in sharing their feelings. This emphasizes a widespread issue in the youth demographic, which reflects that the articulation of thoughts and emotions is not as seamless as it seems to be.

Communication barriers lead to highly evident emotional tolls, where 84.8% of respondents experience a disturbing sense of suffocation or entrapment when they cannot communicate their emotions. This emotional turbulence highlights the importance of effective self-expression for mental well-being, pointing towards an essential need for interventions which address these challenges.

Moreover, beyond the emotional impacts and influences, our study also explores the tangible consequences of communication difficulties in daily life. According to the 35.4% of participants these challenges significantly affect their daily lives, while 56.6% of them find impacts in their daily lives on an occasional basis. In addition, 8.1% of participants did not experience any noticeable impact on their daily routines which suggests a nuanced relationship between communication struggles and tangible consequences.

The study further analyses the habit of saying 'yes' unwillingly. As per the collected data, 86.9% of participants admitted to this behavior. This inclination towards the behavior of people-pleasing highlights a potential reluctance among respondents to assert themselves, which is possibly driven by the fear and hesitation of saying 'no.' this aspect of communication related challenges remarkably affect personal autonomy as well as decision-making.

Moving ahead, the study further explores the delicacy of balance between communication challenges and mental health. The survey data shows, 72.7% of respondents admitted that poor communication often affects their mental peace, while, 8.1% of them experienced an extreme impact. This connection between difficulties in communication and mental peace grabs attention towards the alarming relationship between effective self-expression and mental well-being.

The study further found a prevalent issue of overthinking, a common consequence of struggling to communicate. A substantial 41.4% of participants admitted that they overthink due to under expression, while 42.4% of them suffer occasional overthinking due to failure in expressing themselves. This shows a cyclical pattern of rumination, further suggesting that communication challenges can often contribute to an elevated level of mental stress and anxiety.

The quality of sleep is a vital indicator of overall well-being. The study found remarkable effects on sleep quality by communication challenges. Over half of the participants i.e. 51.5% of them reported a moderate impact on their sleep due to the struggles in expressing themselves, however, 9.1% of them experienced an extreme impact. This highlights the encompassing impact of communication challenges on various facets of well-being.

Exploring the impact on interpersonal relationships, more than half of the participants (56.6%) reported that difficulties in expressing themselves sometimes affected their relationships, with 15% indicating an extreme impact. However, 28.3% asserted that their relationships remained unaffected despite communication challenges, suggesting a certain level of adaptability in certain connections.

Communication difficulties were identified as a potential factor in the breakdown of friendships. Half of the participants disclosed that their struggles sometimes resulted in broken friendships, with 18.2% experiencing this outcome directly.

This highlights the profound impact that communication challenges can have on the fabric of social connections.

A significant revelation of our study was the psychological impact of communication difficulties. A substantial 56% of respondents shared that they suffered from anxiety or depression when unable to communicate while feeling low, with an additional 7.1% admitting occasional anxiety. This sheds light on the emotional and mental challenges individuals face when confronted with communication barriers, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to address these issues.

This study provides a comprehensive insight into the intricate relationship between interpersonal communication skills and the mental health of youth. The findings highlight the prevalence and multifaceted consequences of communication challenges, underscoring the need for tailored interventions to promote mental health and foster resilient interpersonal connections among the youth.

IX. CONCLUSION

To sum up, this research is focused on finding the reciprocal connection between communication and mental health of an individual. The study highlights the significant impact of communication problems on people's well-being and their relationships. The observation is done by connecting communication with individual's daily activities and establishing a further connection with mental and emotional patterns followed by a systematic comparison and analysis. The study shows that many individuals find it tough to talk about their feelings, which can make them feel trapped or suffocated. This, in turn, affects their daily activities and sometimes puts a strain on their relationships. The findings stress the importance of finding better ways to help people express themselves more easily. By improving how we communicate, we can make our daily lives smoother and prevent misunderstandings that can harm our relationships. It is essential to focus on creating practical strategies and support systems that can help individuals communicate more effectively, leading to better mental well-being and healthier connections with others. Further research should concentrate on developing specific methods to overcome these communication challenges and promote emotional well-being.

DECLARATION STATEMENT

Funding	No, we did not receive.
Conflicts of Interest	No conflicts of interest to the best of our knowledge.
Ethical Approval and Consent to Participate	No, the article does not require ethical approval and consent to participate with evidence.
Availability of Data and Material	Not relevant.
Authors Contributions	All authors having equal contribution for this article.

REFERENCES

1. Brown, L., Davis, M., & Wilson, S. (2018). Breaking the Silence: The Role of Communication in Challenging Mental Health Stigma. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyt.2022.944815
2. Dall, M., Fellinger, J., &Holzinger, D. (2022). The link between social communication and mental health from childhood to young adulthood: A systematic review.*Journal of Frontiers in Psychiatry*.
3. Fini, F., &Fini, A. (2016). A Study on the Relationship between Communication Skills and Mental Health and Job Empowerment.*Journal of Exploratory Studies in Law and Management.*
4. Johnson, C., Brown, D., & White, E. (2019). Communication Interventions for Managing Anxiety Disorders: A Meta-Analysis.*Journal of Counseling Psychology*.
5. Johnson, K., & Smith, T. (2020). Familial Communication and Adolescent Mental Health: A Longitudinal Study.*Journal of Family Psychology*.
6. Primack, B., Shensa, A., &Sidani, J. (2017). Smartphone Use and Symptoms of Depressive and Anxiety Disorders Among College Students.*Journal of Adolescent Health*.
7. Stieger, S., et al. (2023). Face-to-face more important than digital communication for mental health during the pandemic.*Scientific Reports*. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-023-34957-4
8. https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response/?gclid=CjwKCAiA-bmsBhAGEiwAoaQNmlVb0eNO3mJJGoIpW-yBeInEMqBrs4wWs2GvKkjbuZ20dNyU3ibzYxoC8ZUQAvD_BwE
9. https://www.jaypeedigital.com/eReader/chapter/9789354654534/ch1
10. Srivastava, A., & Saxena, Dr. U. K. (2023). Digital Media and Media literacy. An Analysis of the Contribution and Effect of social media in Media Literacy. In Indian Journal of Mass Communication and Journalism (Vol. 3, Issue 1, pp. 17–22). https://doi.org/10.54105/ijmcj.a1051.093123
11. Gupta, S., & Rai, Dr. K. (2019). Effect of SFBT on Anxious Youth. In International Journal of Engineering and Advanced Technology (Vol. 8, Issue 5c, pp. 1302–1305). https://doi.org/10.35940/ijeat.e1185.0585c19
12. Predictive Research for Mental Health Disease. (2019). In International Journal of Innovative Technology and Exploring Engineering (Vol. 8, Issue 9S2, pp. 196–199). https://doi.org/10.35940/ijitee.i1038.0789s219
13. Indhumathi, P., & Rajeswari, Dr. K. (2019). Moderate Step Over Sensitive Move Towards Mental Stress. In International Journal of Soft Computing and Engineering (Vol. 9, Issue 4, pp. 6–10). https://doi.org/10.35940/ijsce.c3307.109119
14. S, A. K., Wadhwa, A., & Gramle, Dr. A. (2021). Health Care Professionals in the Digital Landscape in India. In International Journal of Management and Humanities (Vol. 5, Issue 7, pp. 30–36). https://doi.org/10.35940/ijmh.g1258.035721

AUTHORS PROFILE

Unnati Shahi, currently pursuing BA in Journalism and Mass Communication from Banasthali Vidyapith University, is an accomplished writer and editor. She has authored several notable books including "Indriyanubhav," "Fiction through Reality," "Love and Fall," and "The Profound Lessons From Bhagavad Gita." As the editor of Literafest, she has showcased her editorial skills and literary acumen. Unnati has been recognized for her contributions to literature, receiving prestigious awards such as the Rabindranath Tagore Literature Award, Naari Pratibha Samman, and Bhartiya Pratistha Purashkar. With a diverse background in content creation, blogging, and anchoring, she aspires to excel as a Content Specialist.

Dr. Lokesh Sharma is an associate professor of Journalism and mass communication with 14 years of experience in Academics (teaching, research & administration) and more than 20 years of experience in Media Industry (Radio & TV). Currently he is serving Banasthali Vidyapith (A++ Graded University) as associate professor and head of the department of Journalism and Mass Communication. Community Journalism, Broadcast Journalism and development communication are the major areas of his research interest.

He has authored and co-authored research papers which have also been published in SCOPUS and reputed peer review journals. He has also authored a book on community radio. He has also participated and presented in more than 60+ international and national conferences on journalism and mass communication. Dr. Sharma has also worked closely with CEMCA, UNICEF, DST and BBC Media as a research project coordinator. He is passionate about building foundations for next generation of academics and workforce pioneers.