Adolescent Mental Health Issues

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**Introduction**

Being the most critical age, adolescence is confronted with many challenges of life. The adolescents need support from their family, friends, school, and community in this age to become capable of adjusting to society. Life is not easy for everyone, hence twenty percent of the total adolescent population in the country has been recorded to demonstrate one or more mental health issues. A prevention program for the mental health issues of adolescents has been proposed in this paper. It includes discussion of the need for a successful comprehensive prevention program. It describes the components of the prevention program, explaining its difference in comparison to those developed previously. It will also shed light on the impacts of gender and culture on the provision of services in the proposed prevention program. Certain measures, strategies, and interventions have been discussed in sufficient detail, which are believed to have a positive influence on the patients' conditions.

**Body**

**Adolescent Mental Health Issues**

Adolescence is a period in an individual’s life when one begins transitioning from childhood stage to adulthood. It is usually considered to exist between ten to nineteen years of age. An individual’s life can remain balanced only if the adolescent period passes normally, that is, the individual gets the necessary support in every aspect. Mental health issues are often neglected in an adolescent's upbringing. It has been reported that one out of every five adolescent individuals experience mental health issues every year. Death in adolescence is associated with self-harm in much available evidence. Disability is similarly associated with depression in many cases. Almost half of the mental health issues found in individuals start at the age of fourteen. In general, more than sixteen percent of the diseases acquired by the adolescent population of the world are related to mental health conditions.

The most commonly observed mental health issues in adolescence include problems related to anxiety, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), depression, and eating disorders. Anxiety is associated with feelings of fear, worry, or uneasiness excessively such that the individual’s attitude, behavior, and work performance is affected adversely. Almost thirty-two percent of the total adolescent population has been reported to acquire mental health problems. The varied forms of anxiety exhibited by adolescents includes anxiety disorder, social anxiety disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and phobia. Another significant adolescent mental health issue is depression that is characterized by mood disorder resulting in devastating feelings, thoughts, and daily activities. An individual’s routines of working, sleeping, and eating are adversely disturbed due to depression. Commonly observed forms of depression include postpartum depression, depressive disorder, and seasonal affective disorder. ADHD is much common in adolescents; causing continued inattention that affects normal functioning or development of the individual. Adolescents with eating disorders demonstrate abnormal or extreme eating behaviors. Examples of eating disorders include bulimia, anorexia nervosa, and binge eating disorder.

**Need for a New Prevention Program**

In recent times, this issue has been recognized as a major threat faced by a substantial portion of the total population. The sustainable development agenda has included this issue as a component to be addressed with appropriate measures. The sustainable development goals (SDG) have a postulate numbered 3.4 (ii) that aims at reducing premature mortality, through prevention, treatment, and promotion of personal wellbeing and mental health, from diseases that are non-communicable. The inclusion of this postulate was inevitable and it is hoped that it will help in reducing preventable deaths and disabilities among adolescents.

In spite of attaining global recognition, no considerable efforts are being made to prevent adolescent mental health issues. The main reason for the lack of progress in preventing these issues is the lack of empirical data on adolescents’ mental problems (Atkinson & Hornby, 2015). About two-thirds of the world's countries do not possess any data on mental health problems. Data on these issues is immediately required for finding workable solutions, especially in countries that are under-developed. Further, the available data in other countries is not sufficient and unsatisfactory. Most studies have been conducted with little sources available, sampling non-representative and small populations, and short-term follow-ups for the studies. Therefore, the information disclosed by these studies is not precise and comprehensive. The severity of mental health disorders in adolescents can be worse than that suggested by these studies.

It is needed by healthcare personnel as well as every community to generate data and evidence systematically to know to what extent adolescents’ mental health issues have prevailed and aggravated the situation. By gathering necessary data on the subject systematically, clinical treatments, prevention programs, and essential interventions could be developed. Sufficient resource allocation by state and federal governments could also be made possible after having an insight into these issues. Modern data collection techniques, digital technology, and assigning specialist professionals for the studies can ensure that useful results could be produced. Medical science has always been engaged in conducting studies regarding many health issues of humanity. However, the issues related to adolescent mental health have remained untouched and ignored to a considerable degree. This is the reason why clinicians find it difficult to deal with such cases and carry out prevention measures accordingly. Not addressing adolescent mental health issues timely can lead to severe consequences that appear later in the adulthood of an individual, causing impairments to both mental as well as physical health and confining the individual’s capabilities to avail better opportunities in life and contribute to the community with full potential.

**Components of the Prevention Program**

Adolescence is attributed as a period that is critical for acquiring essential capabilities to fit into society and community. These varied capabilities prove to be the foundation for health and overall wellbeing in later life. Supportive entities to the adolescents’ health and wellbeing include family, caregivers, school, and community. If an individual fails to receive x zc environmental support during adolescence, he or she can become vulnerable to mental health problems. The existing research indicates the risk factors for adolescent mental health problems, which include poverty, chronic illness, substance use, violence, harsh parenting, forced migration, early pregnancy, bullying, early marriages, discriminated group status, sexual violence, etc.

Based on the data collected on adolescent mental health issues, prevention programs need to be developed to save the young generation from adverse consequences. To collect this data at a certain population level, specialized tools are required. Qualitative, as well as quantitative approaches of study, would be involved in validating and adapting to the data collection tools. It will also include validation of anxiety, depression, and suicidality. As a result of these efforts, researchers will find a tool that can be used in a survey for assessing the spread of adolescent mental health conditions. Two samples shall be considered with age ranges of ten to fourteen and fifteen to nineteen. Selected participants will have diverse backgrounds concerning demographic characteristics, socioeconomic traits, and subnational geographic areas. This approach will help to capture equity patterns. In short, these studies will facilitate the researchers to find a solid ground for developing an effective prevention program.

The proposed prevention program will be targeted at the entire adolescent population of the country i.e. the entire USA. It may result in severe consequences if any kind of ignorance is tolerated with the issue any more. The data about adolescent mental health patients is not available to a satisfactory extent. Clinicians lack a thorough understanding of these health problems. Therefore, the proposed prevention program will address the needs of all adolescent population of the country. Based on this program, an extensive, inclusive, and comprehensive research will be conducted to collect sufficient data for further analysis. The research will establish the findings on the issue and guide the clinicians in identifying and treating such patients.

The prevention program for adolescent mental health issues will aim at enhancing an individual's capacity to gain better control in regulating emotions. Adolescents can be able to find alternatives frequently to their risk-taking behaviors. The prevention program will inflict resilience in the individual against difficulties and adversities. Prevention programs will be designed in a way that will remove misconceptions from people’s minds and promote the social environments and social networks that are supportive of the affected youngsters. These programs will promote and protect adolescents’ mental health by reducing exposure to the risk factors involved. The action program for adolescent mental health will provide evidence-based guidelines to assess and manage abuse conditions. Special considerations for the program include all issues related to adolescents’ mental health such as self-harm, suicide, behavioral disorders, mental issues, etc.

The proposed prevention program will provide interventions to promote and protect the mental health of adolescents. Evidence-based recommendations will be included in the prevention program for implementing these interventions. The suggested interventions are supposed to be delivered in health care, social care, community, schools, or digital media. Interventions may be of different kinds. For instance, psychosocial interventions will help improve the psychosocial well-being of the subjects and reduce the risks for impaired mental health outcomes (Das, Salam, Lassi, Khan, Mahmood, Patel, & Bhutta, 2016). These interventions will target the adolescents, in groups or individually. These interventions might also be targeted to the families or caregivers of the adolescent mental health patients.

The prevention program will impart certain skills in affected individuals to cope with distress and disorders. Non-specialist facilitators will train and supervise the adolescents to this end. At first, the skills will be developed as part of an experimental stage of their treatment. Later, it will bring valuable results when the participants will be successful in acquiring these skills. Another significant attempt that this prevention program would propose will be the development of a psychological intervention delivered digitally. The design of this intervention will be human-centered, which will propose the technology to be used in the delivery of the intervention and determine the type of content that will be used. This would be a mental health intervention supported by technology for adolescents. It will not be a copyrighted product. Instead, it will be a public good, powered by evidence, and designed to be used easily and universally.

The difficulty in providing preventive care and related treatment to adolescents suffering from mental health problems is that they take the issue as a stigma and are found to be reluctant in discussing their problems with anyone (Ogden & Hagen, 2018). In this regard, caregivers and families can play an important role. They can report immediately to the respective authorities. The proposed program will commence by having received all necessary psychosocial assessments regarding the adolescent people. Specialized services will be dedicated to solving adolescents' problems. The services provided through the program will minimize the disruptive behaviors and symptoms of anxiety, depression, etc., and enhance social skills and personal wellbeing.

The program includes certain activities for the adolescent mental health patients to carry out. It provides guidelines for developing activities for school students. These activities will be aimed at providing increased knowledge of preventing suicide. This will help reduce self-harm attempts in adolescents (Bains & Diallo, 2016). Community-based activities will also be suggested in the prevention program. These activities will have positive effects on self-esteem, self-confidence, behavioral changes, level of knowledge, and physical activity. Internet-based prevention is another suggestion in the prevention program suggested. Adolescents get inspired by many platforms on the Internet. These platforms can be used to provide essential information on the issues related to them. Individual-based interventions will provide the guidelines for developing productive and optimistic personal habits such as those related to eating, exercise, etc. Exercise will have a positive effect on the individual’s self-esteem. Families can support their adolescent members to be a normal community member. They can identify symptoms of possible mental health problems and contact the healthcare service providers timely (Ford, Cheek, Culhane, Fishman, Mathew, Salek, & Jaccard, 2016).

The staff selected to run the proposed prevention program would comprise public health researchers, healthcare professionals, psychologists, psychiatrists, nurses, counselors, communicators, and many others. The researchers will be the backbone of this program. They will provide the information needed for implementing the program. They will search for technology and tools to implement the prevention program with its full capacity. Medical advancements regarding the neglected issue of adolescent mental health issues can only happen if these professionals are provided with adequate resources. Psychologists and psychiatrists are needed to provide their respective services for handling clinical situations. Healthcare professionals and nurses will deal with complexities and injuries caused by self-harm or similar attempts. The role of counselors is very important in making the proposed prevention program successful. It has been found in research that counseling and advice are also important in treating mental health issues, especially those related to adolescence. The cause or root of mental health problems can be rectified through proper and consistent counseling. Communicators will take the role of conveying messages to large masses. They will increase awareness in adolescents of the country to know the facts and depths of their situation. Anxiety, depression, and other mental disorders in adolescence can be eradicated if identified timely and got treated by regular visits to the experts. The public health message related to adolescent mental health problems will increase awareness in the target audience about the abovementioned diseases and help them understand its symptoms, risk factors, and prevention measures.

The duration of treatment will vary as per every case’s history and requirements. Adolescents vary in their backgrounds as well as their demographic dimensions. On the whole, the prevention program will continue its work for the betterment of the country's children and youth. However, the expected results will be achieved in one year for the short-term goals and 5 years for the long-term goals.

**Difference between Proposed and previous prevention Programs**

The previous prevention programs were based on the research conducted at that time on the issue. As indicated above, previous researches did not have enough data to reflect the burden of adolescent mental health issues. No sufficient data collecting tools were available that could retrieve the desired results. Only a limited number of researches were being made on the subject. The current proposed plan is comprehensive and supportive. It emphasizes the use of technology and tactics to find out the precise situation of the patients and their sufferings. This prevention program targets the entire adolescent population by making it the most reachable program in the country in this regard. It proposes strategies and interventions that prove successful in getting the desired results achieved. The current prevention program addresses the mental health issues of adolescents and proposes real-time solutions services with increased effectiveness.

**Impact of Gender and Culture on Provision of Services**

The effects of gender and culture on the prevention program services can be explained regarding adolescence. The stigma associated with mental health problems in early youth or adolescence is more strongly found in girls. They are more conscious of their social image and persona. Therefore, the influence of these problems varies in male and female patients. The male adolescents are more likely to develop anxiety disorders, whereas female adolescents are more prone to acquire depression problems. The effects of culture in the provision of services is also evident by comparing the cultures of different countries. Identification, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of adolescent mental health issues differ in different countries. In the US, there are slight differences in culture. In conservative families, individuals might think that getting their adolescent children diagnosed with mental health issues might impair their name and have negative effects on their future social interactions.

**Conclusion**

There exists an intense need for developing prevention programs for reducing adolescent health issues in communities. The age of adolescence is the most crucial period in a person's life. The absence of necessary support to maintain a good balance in life can cause certain mental health issues. Prevention programs implemented previously lack the necessary information on patients' history/profile, lack of data collection tools, and selection of almost non-representative samples for study. The current prevention program has the purpose of targeting the needs of adolescents having mental health problems living anywhere in the country. The team appointed for the task will manage all operations provided that they get sufficient funds. It provides strategies and interventions that would prove helpful in reducing mental health issues in adolescents and increasing youth's contributions to the community.

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