

Thinking Competition

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Large-scale workshops on Building Self-awareness and Mental Resilience.

Bad mental health not only leads to financial crises, relationship problems, physical pains, and overall low life satisfaction, but also is a major reason for criminal behavior. On an average 32000 cases of rape or rape and murder were “reported²” only in India in 2023. Imagine the numbers for the whole world in the last 5 years. Given the rising crime rate in contemporary society, especially among young people, addressing such psychological issues becomes very important.

Approaches: .

1. Providing mental health support like group workshops and personal counseling sessions to women in care homes who had been abused in the past.
2. Providing mental health support like group workshops and personal counseling sessions to men in rehab centers.
3. Community leaders can be used as an effective resource for facilitating service delivery to the unreached rural population.¹
4. Providing indirect mental health support like group workshops and awareness sessions to children in orphanages and suburban areas’ school students, through training NGO volunteers or student volunteers.
5. Providing mental health support like group workshops and counseling sessions to college students in small town colleges, which generally don’t have enough funds to provide counseling services to their students.

#Approach 4 is selected among all other approaches due to the following reasons:

- Direct approaches like counseling in rehabs or women care homes need a lot more professional training, time, funds, and human-power.
- Community leaders might not be very receptive due to stigma and biasedness in rural areas.
- Online counseling has various drawbacks⁴, like internet or device access, video counseling may not provide proper expressions of the patient to the professional, etc.
- “Social learning theory suggests that people who are traumatized in childhood or grow up in violent environments are more likely to mimic and internalize these behaviors and subsequently exhibit violent behavior themselves.³” Given the rising crime rate in contemporary society, addressing such psychological issues from a very young age becomes very important.

1) https://journals.lww.com/ijsp/fulltext/2024/40010/rural_urban_divide_in_mental_health_care_in_india_3.aspx

2) Most cases aren’t even reported

3) https://www.researchgate.net/publication/376972246_The_Relationship_Between_Childhood_Trauma_and_Crime_and_its_Mechanism

4) Interview with Social impact AI Lab founder by Besa Bauta: <https://publichealth.nyu.edu/podcast/iamgph/ep97-mental-health-and-artificial-intelligence-besa-bauta>

Part 2: Defining the Scope

- Direct interventions by professional psychologists can be difficult, instead training the volunteers through offline series of workshops.
- Reaching out to bodies like NSS in India

Narrow Scope: Implement workshops by training **National Service Scheme India student volunteers** to deliver self-awareness and mental resilience programs in orphanages and **government schools** starting with a single NSS unit like NSS IIT Delhi.

Process of Arriving at the Scope:

1. Training peers, like student volunteers, enhances relatability and effectiveness in mental health programs.
2. Targeting orphanages and government schools, often overlooked and in need of mental health resources, to maximize social impact.
3. Utilizing Existing Structures: NSS integration ensures minimal disruption and logistical simplicity while providing a robust support system for consistent delivery.
4. **Trade-offs:** While more intensive professional counseling could provide deeper engagement, the student volunteer model is more sustainable and scalable.

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Part 3:

Organization process: Reaching out to NGOs and NSS to collaborate to train volunteers to conduct mental health workshops.

Reaching out to NSS:

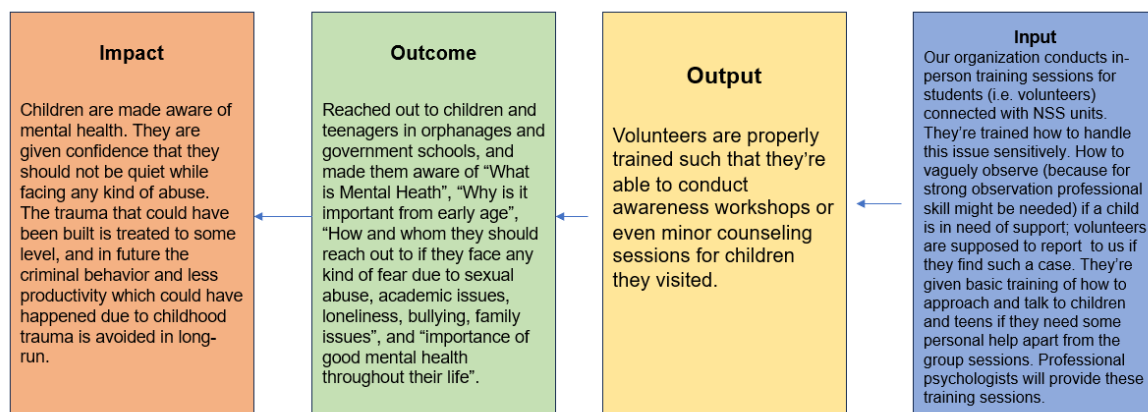
NSS India has ~ 40 lakh volunteers across the country. Even if 5% of them are receptive and serious, ~ 2 lakh volunteers can be trained and they in turn can train:

- (5 volunteers per school/NGO/orphanage) 40k schools/NGOs ~ 4 lakh children reached (10 children reached in each setting)
- 40k schools ~ 2 lakh teachers ~ 10k teachers will be receptive ~ 1 lakh children reached

Individually reaching the schools, the teachers, the children, the orphanages will be a tough task. Instead utilizing the existing structure of NSS can be beneficial.

I had been a NSS Volunteer, as well as NSS IIT Delhi Executive in the past. Hence understanding the structure and working of the body revealed me that reaching through NSS volunteers for Mental health workshops and Social Emotional Training for children is implementable.

Theory of Change Map



Key Assumptions and Uncertainties:

Volunteers will be able to properly convey mental health discussion.

Children are not triggered or overwhelmed in the process.

Q. How to solve the uncertainties? :

Possible solution through Experts' advice:

1. Anjali Mahalke is a *Counseling Psychologist*. Before focusing on therapy, they had been a **Child Rights Advocate** and worked with the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights where they:

- Investigated child sexual abuse cases across India.
- Participated in special investigations.

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- Contributed to projects like the SAHARA Helpline and SAMVEDNA.
- Helped enforce the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act in Rajasthan.
- Suggested updates to the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Rules, 2020.

They provided insights of how we need to do the groundwork and understand the state of women and children who were abused. This will provide us with proper training strategies of how to provide mental health support to children who may or may not be abused.

2. Sachin Chaudhari is the Director of International Youth Conference who is working in the areas of Education and development interlinkages for marginalized communities in India and worldwide with special focus on - equity, access, human rights, and development initiatives.

He suggested to understand the work by other NGOs who are directly working in the field of women's safety and child-abuse prevention.

Further possible developments in future:

- Reaching out in the schools and teachers in the rural areas through the volunteers who have gained good experience and training.
- With professional supervision, providing internship opportunities to psychotherapy/psychiatry students in women care centres.

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References:

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- 6) <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6020905/>
- 7) <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1883139>
- 8) <https://nss.gov.in/nss-volunteer>
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