

**A STUDY TO FIND OUT THE EFFECTIVENESS OF
RESOURCEFUL ADOLESCENT PROGRAM (RAP) IN
PROMOTING MENTAL HEALTH OF STUDENTS AT
SECONDARY LEVEL IN WEST BENGAL**

Nandita Deb*

ABSTRACT:

Mental health is the full and harmonious functioning of the whole personality. Every person has certain needs. An individual tries to establish a balance between his needs and his capacity of realizing these needs. This a continuous struggle between the needs of the individual and his social environment is going on. An individual becomes joyful when his needs are satisfied and dejected when his needs remain unfulfilled. The problem of mental disorder have been increasing tremendously for the last two decades. The major factors, responsible for this are rapid growth of population, conflict of values, social alienation, industrialization, competition, unemployment communal disharmony and the materialistic attitude of the people. The Resourceful Adolescent Program (RAP) was developed to build resilience and promote positive mental health in teenagers. The program specifically aims to prevent teenage depression and related difficulties. The aim of the study is to reduce the prevalence of mental health problems (such as anxiety and depression) in students of Secondary levels at Howrah District of West Bengal with the help of Resourceful Adolescent Program (RAP). This paper attempt to highlight how RAP facilitate teachers by providing knowledge about body clues, negative and positive self talk, problem solving models, and support networks, which further help in promoting mental health of students at secondary level.

Keywords: Mental health, Resourceful Adolescent Program (RAP), resilience, teenage depression.

* Research Scholar, Dept. of Education, Rabindra Bharati University, West Bengal

INTRODUCTION :

The problem of mental disorder have been increasing tremendously for the last two decades. The major factors, responsible for this are rapid growth of population, conflict of values, social alienation, industrialization, competition, unemployment communal disharmony and the materialistic attitude of the people. Mental disorders have been referred to in our ancient scriptures since the drawn of civilization. School health programs are said to be one of the most efficient strategies that a nation might use to prevent major mental health and social problems. Next to the family, schools are the major institution for providing the instruction and experiences that prepare young people for their roles as healthy, productive adults. Schools can—and invariably do—play a powerful role in influencing students' mental health-related behaviors. Appropriate school interventions can foster effective education, prevent destructive behavior, and promote enduring health practices. For many young people in their formative years, school may, in fact, be the only nurturing and supportive place where they learn mental health information and have positive behavior consistently reinforced.

The Resourceful Adolescent Program (RAP) was developed to build resilience and promote positive mental health in teenagers. The program specifically aims to prevent teenage depression and related difficulties. Approximately one in five teenagers will develop depression during the course of their teenage years which could severely hamper their development and future prospects. RAP aims to increase the psychological resilience or resourcefulness of young people and draws on research of successful treatments for adolescent depression and the known psychosocial risk and protective factors at the individual, family and school level.

The Resourceful Adolescent Program consists of three components that promote the individual, family and school protective factors respectively:

1. **RAP-A** for adolescents : school-based program for 12 to 15 year olds that aims to improve the coping skills of teenagers
2. **RAP-P** for parents : targets family protective factors such as increasing harmony and preventing conflict
3. **RAP-T** for teachers : aims at assisting teachers to promote school connectedness, a protective factor that has recently been shown to be very important in teenage mental health

The three components of the Resourceful Adolescent Programs are primarily run as universal prevention programs. They are designed to be useful to all teenagers, and not only those

specifically at risk for depression. The programs aim to prevent the development of future problems by promoting a range of protective factors. The three components of the program can be run independently or together.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY :

The RAP programs are based at the School of Psychology and Counseling at Queensland University of Technology, Australia. The RAP programs have been shown to be effective in building resilience to prevent depression. Beginning with a pilot program in 1996, RAP has been the subject of systematic evaluation for over 10 years and is now endorsed as an evidence based program by the Commonwealth Government. Grants from the Queensland Health Promotion Council, the Commonwealth Department of Health and Human Services, have enabled on-going development and evaluation of the program. Results of published randomised controlled trials have indicated that the RAP program prevents future depressive symptoms in adolescents and is significantly better than a placebo control.

Today the RAP Programs continue to be researched to assess their effectiveness, as well as to explore alternative delivery formats and settings, and the optimal age to implement prevention programs for depression. Since its development in 1996, RAP has become widely used throughout Australia with approximately 6,000 people representing over 3000 schools and health and community organisations trained to facilitate the program. RAP-A has been successfully introduced in several other countries of the world also.

AIM OF THE STUDY :

The overall aim of the Promoting Resilience in Schools programme is to reduce the prevalence of mental health problems (such as anxiety and depression) in students of Secondary levels at Howrah District of West Bengal.

The following sub goals will work towards achieving the overall aim.

- Collaborate with multidisciplinary agencies and coordinate the planning, implementation, evaluation and sustainability of mental health promotion and prevention programmes (Resourceful Adolescents Programme) in schools of Howrah, West Bengal.
- Collaborate with multidisciplinary agencies and coordinate the planning, implementation, evaluation and sustainability of mental health promotion and prevention programmes for parents of students at Secondary Level in schools of Howrah, West Bengal.

- Provide early detection and support for students at risk of or showing symptoms of mental health problems.

METHOD AND DESIGN :

Resourceful Adolescents Programme (RAP) was piloted in 2011 with ten high schools in Howrah District of West Bengal. A Project Coordinator was employed for each school, reporting to the interagency committee. Training was provided for teachers and support staff in Term 1 of each school year. Pre- and post-activity tests were administered to participating children using anxiety and depression scales. Evaluations were also conducted with students, parents and teachers. Teacher manuals and student workbooks have been designed for RAP. The Resourceful Adolescents Programme (RAP) is approximately 10 weeks long, with one hour-long session each week. There are also have optional parent sessions. Teachers facilitate sessions providing knowledge about body clues, negative and positive self talk, problem solving models, and support networks. Skills taught in the classroom are reinforced by the provision of mental health promotion programmes for parents held at the school or at a local community centre.

RESULTS :

After completing the RAP programme, students reported significant improvements in their perceptions of peer relationships and perceptions of physical appearance and general self. The programme was effective in reducing the incidence of depressive symptoms and feelings of hopelessness. The initial six pilot schools (1000 children) had expanded to 15 by 2012 (approximately 1500 children). The majority of teachers surveyed felt that the programme was effective in enhancing the coping skills and self-esteem of their students. More than half the parents surveyed had noticed an increase their child's coping skills and self-esteem since participation in the programme. The majority of students in both pilots showed reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression when comparing pre- and post-activity tests.

DISCUSSION :

Mental Health Promotion in Schools Committees have now been formally established in some schools of the Howrah district. The Departments of Health, Education and Community Development have successfully collaborated to achieve their aim of improving the mental health

and well-being of students of Secondary Level in the Howrah District of West Bengal. The support offered during their implementation has provided teachers with skills in promoting student health and well-being through the learning-teaching process. In addition, as a result of these programmes school psychologists have reported that teachers are much better able to identify students at risk of emotional problems. This has been attributed to the training received prior to the programme's delivery and supervision provided during the programme. Interventions for those students identified as requiring further support are more effective because students are already familiar with the basic concepts presented during RAP. Teachers are more able and willing to continue support across curriculum areas.

FUTURE PLANS :

Strategies of Resourceful Adolescents Programme (RAP) for sustaining the programmes include:

- maintaining the commitment of support from the Mental Health Promotion Coordinator, school psychologists and other key agencies represented on the Mental Health Promotion in Schools Committees;
- annual teacher training;
- media promotion.

The success of future promotion of resilience in schools depends heavily on interagency collaboration and the development and sustainability of effective partnerships with key stakeholders in the region of Howrah District of West Bengal.

CONCLUSION:

Because the mental health of students is inextricably linked to educational achievement, it is critical that schools promote mental health. Schools can provide the nurture and support needed to facilitate the adoption of health-enhancing behaviors. A comprehensive, well-coordinated school health program can promote the optimal physical, emotional, social, and educational development of students. In this context it can be concluded that the Resourceful Adolescent Program (RAP) play an effective role in building resilience and promote positive mental health in teenagers. Thus, the program specifically aims to prevent teenage depression and related difficulties.

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