

Developing an Effective Mental Health Guidance Module for Primary Schools: A Survey Study on Needs and Preferences

Noraini Zain^{1*}, Samsiah Jais², & Zarina Sana³

^{1,2} Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI), Tanjung Malim, Perak, Malaysia

³ Kolej Matrikulasi Labuan, Sabah, Malaysia

*Email: miss75norainizain@gmail.com

Published: 06 January 2025

To cite this article (APA): Zain, N., Jais, S., & Sana, Z. (2025). Developing an effective mental health guidance module for primary schools: A survey study on needs and preferences. *EDUCATUM Journal of Social Sciences*, 11(1) 11–18. <https://doi.org/10.37134/ejoss.vol11.1.2.2025>

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.37134/ejoss.vol11.1.2.2025>

ABSTRACT

There is an increasing recognition of mental health concerns in educational institutions, particularly in primary schools. The objective of this study was to obtain initial understanding of the fundamental components required for the creation of a mental health guidance module that can improve the efficacy of mental health awareness education in elementary schools. A comprehensive survey was administered to GBKSM, Senior Assistants, Education Counsellors, and Head Teachers at the State Education Department in Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, and Putrajaya to gather the required data. The survey covered participants' comprehension, proficiency, and beliefs on the management of mental health disorders and the approaches used in delivering mental health education. Significant findings indicate a necessity to prioritise emotion regulation at 90 percent, stress management at 85 percent, comprehension of mental health at 80 percent, and resilience development at 75 percent. Furthermore, social skills were identified as important at 70 percent, bullying prevention at 65 percent, and family dynamics at 60 percent. A notable 95 percent of participants favoured digital interactive tools for the dissemination of mental health education. The research underscores the necessity of creating interactive and digital resources to improve student engagement while providing ongoing professional development for educators. These findings establish a framework for developing a comprehensive mental health module that caters to the needs of students and the roles of educators in promoting a supportive environment. Future research should examine the efficacy of these modules across diverse educational contexts, assess their long-term impact on children's mental health, and ascertain whether educators need supplementary support for effective implementation.

Keywords: guidance and counselling teacher (GBKSM), mental health, module, primary school

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the prevalence and impact of mental health issues among primary school students. Studies indicate that children are increasingly experiencing mental health challenges such as anxiety (Xin et al., 2023; He & Li, 2022; Ganaprakasam & Selvaraja, 2020; Burak, 2023), depression, stress, and behavioral problems. These issues can significantly affect their academic performance, social interactions, and overall well-being. The early onset of mental health problems can also lead to more severe issues in adolescence and adulthood if not addressed promptly and effectively.

Several factors contribute to the rise in mental health concerns among primary school students, including academic pressure (Stear et al., 2023, Faucher et al., 2023, Malik, 2017) and family issues such as parental conflict, divorce, and socioeconomic challenges (Dardas et al., 2021, Roeters & van Houdt, 2019, Tardif-Williams et al., 2017). The rise of social media and technology exposes children to bullying, social comparison, and other negative influences that can affect their mental health (Girella-Serrano et al., 2022, Coyne et al., 2023). Additionally, a lack of awareness and understanding of mental

health issues among parents, teachers, and the students themselves can prevent early identification and intervention.

Given the significant amount of time children spend in school, educational institutions are in a unique position to address mental health concerns. Schools can provide a supportive environment where mental health issues are identified early, and appropriate interventions are implemented. Addressing mental health in schools can lead to the following:

a. Improved Academic Performance

There is a strong and established link between academic success and mental health (Perera & Wheeler, 2021, Rüppel et al., 2015, Sagar et al., 2020). On the contrary, students experiencing mental health challenges often face difficulties in managing academic pressures, leading to lower grades and disengagement from school activities. Mental health conditions including stress, anxiety, and depression can significantly impair a student's ability to concentrate, understand material, and participate in class activities, which might hinder their academic progress. They might exhibit increased absenteeism, incomplete assignments, and a general lack of enthusiasm towards learning. This disengagement not only affects their current academic performance but can also have long-term implications on their educational trajectory and future opportunities.

Pupils who maintain mental health at its best are often more likely to perform well in school and participate fully in class activities. They are better able to focus, take in information, and engage in critical thinking—all skills that are essential for succeeding academically (Duncan et al., 2021, Nayanika Singh & K. C. Barmola, 2015, Chávez-Castillo et al., 2023). Additionally, they are more likely to be resilient and motivated, which helps them take on difficult assignments and persevere in the face of setbacks. They frequently demonstrate improved time management, organisational abilities, and the capacity to set and meet academic goals. In addition, kids in good health are more likely to take part in extracurricular activities, group projects, and classroom debates, all of which can improve their academic performance and learning environment.

The success in school of students depends on our ability to help them improve their mental health. Students who are emotionally and psychologically well are more likely to give their all in class, stay motivated, and achieve their goals. A more conducive learning environment should be created by integrating mental health education and support services into school curricula. By taking a proactive approach to mental health in schools, provide a balanced and effective learning environment and resources can help students acquire the emotional and psychological skills necessary for academic success, managing stress, building resilience, and encouraging emotional regulation. Therefore, students' mental health, academic performance, and future success are all positively impacted by schools that provide resources for mental health education and assistance.

b. Enhanced Social Skills

By focussing on students' mental health, many believe that schools may help improve students' overall well-being and the quality of their relationships with one another. One of the most important aspects of social skills is the ability to communicate effectively, which is enhanced by having a healthy mental state (Beyari, 2023) (Rimehaug & Kårstad, 2022). Students are better equipped to create strong, meaningful connections with their classmates if they are able to articulate their views and feelings in a clear and concise manner and listen attentively to what others have to say. These communication skills are frequently practiced through activities that are incorporated into mental health education programs. Some examples of these activities include role-playing situations, group discussions, and peer mentorship. Not only can these activities develop students' individual communication skills, but they also help to cultivate a supportive classroom climate in which kids feel understood and valued when they participate.

Education of mental health might potentially improve social skills in a number of important areas, including conflict resolution. It is less likely that students would resort to aggressive behaviour or retreat from the classroom if they are taught how to handle disagreements and conflicts in a manner that is calm and constructive. In its place, they acquire the ability to look for solutions that are advantageous to both parties and to keep strong relationships even when confronted with difficulties.

The capacity to effectively resolve disagreements adds to a school climate that is more harmonious and inclusive, encouraging kids to feel safe and valued in their learning environment. Moreover, mental health education promotes empathy and compassion, which are essential for forming healthy peer relationships (Chen & Xu, 2021)(Rodríguez et al., 2022). When students are encouraged to consider and understand the perspectives of others, they become more empathetic and supportive friends. This empathy reduces instances of bullying and social exclusion, as students are more likely to stand up for their peers and include them in group activities. The development of empathy also strengthens the sense of community within the classroom, fostering a sense of belonging and connectedness among students.

In conclusion, addressing mental health in schools plays a vital role in enhancing social skills among students. By teaching emotional regulation, effective communication, and conflict resolution, mental health education helps students build healthier, more positive relationships with their peers. This not only benefits individual students but also contributes to a more supportive and cohesive school environment, ultimately promoting both social and academic success.

c. Overall Well-being

Mental health education must be prioritized in schools to improve student well-being and resilience. The intended well-being includes the emotional, psychological and social well-being of students. Through the education of stress management skills, emotional control and building confidence will help children deal with challenges in the future. These skills are important to apply to improve academic performance, good growth development and mental well-being. Resilient students can adapt, recover quickly and remain positive when faced with obstacles. When they use this approach, they learn to adapt, face challenges, and treat mistakes as learning opportunities. Resilient students can handle life's uncertainties, whether in school or in relationships, with grace (PeConga et al., 2020).

Mental health education also encourages students to recognize and address their needs. Students learn the importance of balancing studies and free time, enjoying free time activities, and asking for help when needed. This proactive self-care reduces fatigue and mental health anxiety and increases power and strength. Apart from that, Mental health education also prioritizes the cultivation of strong relationships and social support networks. Through mental health guidance, students facilitate the development of healthy relationships and provide support among students, instructors and family members through effective communication, empathy and good conflict resolution. Students who have a good understanding of mental health are more likely to identify indicators of mental health problems in themselves and others, actively seek appropriate help, and provide support to their peers. This awareness reduces social disapproval and promotes a more empathetic and knowledgeable community, both inside and outside the educational environment.

Ultimately, advocating for mental health in educational environments is crucial for cultivating holistic well-being and fortitude among students. Mental health education empowers students with the tools to efficiently navigate future obstacles by teaching them stress management, resilience building, self-care practices, and the formation of healthy relationships. This holistic approach to well-being not only improves the current quality of life for students but also lays the foundation for long-term mental health and achievement.

STUDY ISSUES

Numerous educational institutions face difficulties in successfully incorporating comprehensive mental health counselling into their curricula, despite the fact that there is a growing awareness of the necessity of mental health education in elementary schools. The deficiency can be attributed to a number of different factors, including a lack of resources, inadequate training for educators, and an inadequate understanding of the most effective methods and components for mental health education. The consequence of this is that a sizeable proportion of elementary school students do not receive the necessary aid to grow essential mental health talents. This, in turn, has a detrimental impact on the students' emotional condition, their ability to interact with others, and their achievements in school.

METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted in a systematic manner to gather comprehensive data from education professionals on the most effective methods for delivering mental health education, the pressing mental health issues faced by primary school students, and the preferences for a mental health guidance module.

The following steps outline the survey methodology:

1. Participant Selection

Participants for the survey were selected from among Guidance and Counseling Teachers (GBKSM), Senior Assistants Teacher (PK), Education Counsellors, and Head Masters (GB) within the Central Zone of Malaysia, specifically from the states of Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, and Putrajaya. The selection aimed to ensure a diverse and representative sample of education professionals who are directly involved in the mental health and well-being of primary school students.

2. Survey Design

The survey was meticulously designed to capture relevant data and insights from the participants. It included a mix of multiple-choice questions, Likert scale questions, and open-ended questions. The questions were structured to cover several key areas: the current practices in mental health education, the effectiveness of various teaching methods, the specific mental health issues that need to be addressed, and the preferred formats and components for the mental health guidance module.

3. Data Collection

Data collection was carried out using an online survey platform, which facilitated easy access and convenience for the participants. Invitations to participate in the survey were sent via email, along with detailed instructions on how to complete the survey. The online platform ensured that the responses were collected efficiently and securely.

4. Ensuring Confidentiality

Participants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses. Measures were taken to anonymize the data, ensuring that individual responses could not be traced back to specific participants. This helped to encourage honest and candid feedback from the participants.

5. Data Analysis

Once the survey responses were collected, the data was cleaned and organized for analysis. Quantitative data from multiple-choice and Likert scale questions were analyzed using statistical methods to identify trends, preferences, and significant findings. Qualitative data from open-ended questions were analyzed using thematic analysis to extract key themes and insights related to mental health issues and the components of the guidance module.

6. Validation and Reliability

To ensure the validity and reliability of the survey results, the survey instrument was pre-tested with a small group of educators who were not part of the main study. Their feedback was used to refine the survey questions and format, ensuring clarity and relevance. Additionally, reliability tests were conducted on the Likert scale questions to confirm the consistency of the responses.

7. Reporting Findings

The findings from the survey were compiled into a comprehensive report that highlighted the most effective methods for delivering mental health education, the pressing mental health issues to be addressed, and the preferred formats and components for the guidance module. This report served as the foundation for the development of the mental health guidance module, ensuring that it was grounded in the practical insights and preferences of the education professionals who participated in the survey.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The survey results unveiled some crucial observations about the creation of a proficient mental health advice module for primary schools. The majority of respondents expressed a strong preference for interactive learning materials, with a notable proportion favouring digital resources. This underscores the increasing acceptance and efficacy of technology-based solutions in effectively engaging students.

The importance of emotion regulation and stress mitigation was highlighted, emphasising the necessity for practical techniques to assist students in managing their emotions and dealing with stress. Recognising the significance of mental health, respondents stressed the need for a solid understanding and awareness to cultivate a supportive atmosphere. In addition, there was a strong emphasis on fostering resilience, through various activities aimed at cultivating Students' capacity to recover quickly from difficulties.

The module recognised social skills and peer connections, bullying prevention, and family ties as urgent matters that require attention. These topics reflect the intricate social dynamics that influence the mental well-being of Students. Moreover, the poll underscored the necessity of thorough instruction and assistance for teachers, with a particular emphasis on continuous professional growth and availability of mental health services. These findings offer a comprehensive plan for developing a strong and adaptable mental health guidance module that is specifically designed for the requirements of primary school students and the skills of educators.

The following Table 1 provides a concise overview of the main elements proposed by participants for the mental health module, along with the corresponding percentage of participants who suggested each element.

Table: Suggested Components for Mental Health Module

Component	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Emotion Regulation	90
Stress Mitigation	85
Understanding Mental Health	80
Resilience Building	75
Social Skills and Peer Relationships	70
Bullying Prevention	65
Family Relationships	60

The poll revealed several vital components that participants deemed essential for inclusion in a mental health module. Furthermore, 95 percent of participants reported that the resources were predominantly digital tools, which were not only effective but also participatory, fascinating, and enjoyable activities. Ninety percent of respondents emphasized the importance of Modul Bimbingan Kesehatan Mental (MBKM's) emotional management components for assisting students in comprehending and effectively handling their emotions. Similarly, the topic of stress management. 85 percent of responders' advocate including this component in MBKM. This underscores the crucial

significance of equipping children with effective strategies for managing stress and anxiety in their everyday existence.

In addition to understanding mental health, which is deemed crucial by 80 percent of respondents, building resilience is also regarded as an essential component that should be incorporated into the curriculum of this module. This ensures that students not only possess a fundamental awareness of mental health concerns but also know how to seek assistance. Conclusive evidence shows that a significant majority of 75 percent of respondents' support initiatives aimed at equipping students with the skills to face challenges. Most responders, 70 percent to be exact, highlighted the importance of peer connections and social abilities. It can be incorporated into module content to foster positive peer interactions and augment social skills. Based on the content, 65 percent of the participants believed that putting an end to bullying will help create a safe learning environment and promote the success of students.

Given the substantial impact of family dynamics on students' mental well-being, 60 percent of participants suggested that the MBKM curriculum should include a focus on the significance of family relationships. The objective is to aid students in effectively navigating and handling their family connections by addressing any difficulties within the family. These findings provide crucial insights into the prioritization of items when developing a comprehensive mental health counselling program tailored to the needs of elementary school pupils.

SUMMARY

Developing an effective mental health module for elementary schools is the focus of this research, which aims to address the rising prevalence of mental health problems among students. The most effective methods of teaching mental health education, the most pressing mental health issues faced by elementary school students, and the features sought after in a mental health guidance module were the subjects of a comprehensive survey administered to education professionals in Malaysia's Central Zone, which includes Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, and Putrajaya. Several important components that ought to be included in the mental health guidance module were highlighted by the survey's main results. To ensure that instructors have the knowledge and skills to successfully implement the mental health advice module, the study stressed the importance of comprehensive training and support, with an emphasis on ongoing professional development.

A number of suggestions for improving the mental health advising module were born out of these results. Curriculum priorities should center on engaging and interactive content, comprehensive instruction in emotional regulation, stress reduction, and basic mental health facts, and an emphasis on building resilience, enhancing social skills, and decreasing bullying. Additionally, it needs to provide practical strategies for handling challenges related to family issues with an emphasis on family dynamics. It is also necessary to engage in teacher assistance and professional development to guarantee the module is implemented correctly. By implementing these discoveries and suggestions, the mental health advice module has the potential to greatly improve the mental well-being of primary school kids. Consequently, this will establish a conducive and efficient learning atmosphere, facilitating pupils' academic and personal growth.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to convey our profound appreciation to all individuals who have provided support and made valuable contributions to the successful culmination of this project. We extend our sincere gratitude to the Guidance and Counselling Teachers (GBKSM), Senior Assistants (PK), Headmasters (GB), and Education Counsellors of the State Education Department in Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, and Putrajaya for their essential contributions and valuable perspectives. Your eagerness to impart your expertise and experiences has played a crucial role in creating our research.

REFERENCES

- Beyari, H. (2023). The Relationship between Social Media and the Increase in Mental Health Problems. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20032383>
- Burak, D. (2023). The Effect of Risk and Protective Factors on Primary School Students' COVID-19 Anxiety: Back to School After the Pandemic. *Child Indicators Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-022-09971-z>
- Chávez-Castillo, Y., Zapata-Lamana, R., Diaz-Vargas, C., Antileo-Miño, L., Castro-Durán, L., Vásquez-Gómez, J., Parra-Rizo, M. A., & Cigarroa, I. (2023). Mental Health, Subjective Well-Being, and Academic Performance in Chilean Schoolchildren Who Are Part and Are Not Part of the School Inclusion Program. *Education Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13101065>
- Chen, Y., & Xu, Y. (2021). Exploring the effect of social support and empathy on user engagement in online mental health communities. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18136855>
- Coyne, S. M., Weinstein, E., Sheppard, J. A., James, S., Gale, M., Van Alfen, M., Ririe, N., Monson, C., Ashby, S., Weston, A., & Banks, K. (2023). Analysis of Social Media Use, Mental Health, and Gender Identity Among US Youths. *JAMA Network Open*. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.24389>
- Dardas, L. A., Price, M. M., Arscoot, J., Shahrour, G., & Convoy, S. (2021). Voicing Jordanian Adolescents' Suicide. *Nursing Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1097/NNR.0000000000000476>
- Duncan, M. J., Patte, K. A., & Leatherdale, S. T. (2021). Mental Health Associations with Academic Performance and Education Behaviors in Canadian Secondary School Students. *Canadian Journal of School Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0829573521997311>
- Faucher, J., Khanafer, N., Chauliac, N., Essadek, A., Galia, P., Mamimoue, E., Leroux, M. L., Pollet, M. P., Immler-Weber, F., Gillet, Y., Fournier, P., & Espi, P. (2023). Factors Associated with Increased or Decreased Stress Level in French Children during the First COVID-19 Lockdown. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20054667>
- Ganaprakasam, C., & Selvaraja, T. (2020). Cognitive Behavioural Group Therapy on Test Anxiety Among Primary School Students. *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (MJSSH)*. <https://doi.org/10.47405/mjssh.v5i6.427>
- Girela-Serrano, B. M., Spiers, A. D. V., Ruotong, L., Gangadia, S., Toledano, M. B., & Di Simplicio, M. (2022). Impact of mobile phones and wireless devices use on children and adolescents' mental health: a systematic review. In *European Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00787-022-02012-8>
- He, Y., & Li, Y. (2022). An investigation of anxiety and depression among Chinese primary school students after the resumption of school post-COVID-19. *Vulnerable Children and Youth Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17450128.2021.1985198>
- Malik, R. (2017). A study of academic stress among adolescent children of working and Non-Working Mothers. *International Journal of Advanced Research in ...*
- Nayanika Singh, & K. C. Barmola. (2015). Internet Addiction, Mental Health and Academic Performance of School Students/Adolescents. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.25215/0203.053>
- PeConga, E. K., Gauthier, G. M., Holloway, A., Walker, R. S. W., Rosencrans, P. L., Zoellner, L. A., & Bedard-Gilligan, M. (2020). Resilience is spreading: Mental health within the COVID-19 pandemic. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0000874>
- Perera, D. M., & Wheeler, M. (2021). Mental Health Informed Educators: Facilitating Student Academic Success. *New Educator*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1547688X.2021.1903637>
- Rimehaug, T., & Kårstad, S. B. (2022). Communication and Emotional Vocabulary; Relevance for Mental Health Among School-Age Youths. *Frontiers in Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.847412>
- Rodríguez, D. A. L., Herrera, M. P. T., de Castro, M. O. H. F., & Mejía, O. M. A. (2022). Empathy, Social Media and Mental Health Indicators in Colombian' Social Crises. *Universitas Psychologica*. <https://doi.org/10.11144/Javeriana.upsy21.ersi>
- Roeters, A., & van Houdt, K. (2019). Parent–Child Activities, Paid Work Interference, and Child Mental Health. *Family Relations*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12355>
- Rüppel, F., Liersch, S., & Walter, U. (2015). The influence of psychological well-being on academic success. *Journal of Public Health (Germany)*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10389-015-0654-y>
- Sagar, R., Chatterjee, B., Goyal, N., & Sahu, A. (2020). Mental health promotion and prevention in school setting: Are we prepared for tomorrow. *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*.

- Steare, T., Gutiérrez Muñoz, C., Sullivan, A., & Lewis, G. (2023). The association between academic pressure and adolescent mental health problems: A systematic review. In *Journal of Affective Disorders*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2023.07.028>
- Tardif-Williams, C. Y., Tanaka, M., Boyle, M. H., & MacMillan, H. L. (2017). The Impact of Childhood Abuse and Current Mental Health on Young Adult Intimate Relationship Functioning. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260515599655>
- Xin, S., Sheng, L., Zhang, A. Y., Su, Q., Peng, H., Chen, Y., Geng, X., & Liu, H. (2023). Birth cohort changes in anxiety levels among primary school students in China during 1995–2019: A cross-temporal meta-analysis. In *Acta Psychologica*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2023.103996>