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INTRODUCING PSYCHOLOGY AS A SCHOOL SUBJECT AND IMPROVING STUDENTS' PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

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Abstract: This article examines the importance of introducing psychology as a separate subject in schools and its role in improving students' psychological well-being. In the modern educational environment, academic achievement alone is no longer sufficient for the holistic development of learners. Students also need emotional stability, self-awareness, communication skills, stress management strategies, and the ability to cope with social and personal challenges. Psychology as a school subject can help learners better understand themselves and others, regulate their emotions, develop healthy interpersonal relationships, and build resilience in the face of everyday difficulties. The study discusses the pedagogical, psychological, and social significance of teaching psychology at school level and analyzes its potential influence on students' mental health, behavior, motivation, and academic performance. Special attention is given to the role of psychology education in preventing anxiety, aggression, low self-esteem, and social isolation among schoolchildren. The article concludes that introducing psychology into the school curriculum can serve as an effective educational and preventive measure that supports students' personal growth and contributes to the creation of a healthier school environment.

Keywords: psychology education, school curriculum, psychological well-being, mental health, emotional development, self-awareness, school students, social adaptation, stress management, educational psychology

Introduction

Education in the twenty-first century requires a broader understanding of student development. Schools are no longer viewed only as institutions for teaching reading, writing, mathematics, and science. They are also expected to support students' emotional, social, and moral development. In today's world, children and adolescents face a wide range of psychological challenges, including academic pressure, family problems, peer conflict, social anxiety, low self-confidence, digital stress, and emotional instability. These factors influence not only students' mental health but also their academic performance, classroom behavior, and social relationships.

For this reason, the question of introducing psychology as a school subject has become increasingly relevant. Psychology provides knowledge about human behavior, emotions, thinking, communication, personality development, and mental health. If students learn basic psychological concepts from an early age, they become more capable of understanding their feelings, solving interpersonal conflicts, controlling stress, and building a positive self-image. Such knowledge is especially important during school years, when children undergo rapid physical, emotional, and cognitive development.

In many educational systems, psychological support is limited to school counselors or occasional trainings. However, this approach may not be sufficient. A systematic and curriculum-based introduction of psychology can help all students, not only those already facing problems. It can become a preventive, developmental, and educational instrument that improves the general psychological climate of the school.

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This article aims to analyze the significance of adding psychology as a school subject and to show how it can contribute to improving students' psychological well-being. The article discusses the educational value of psychology, its possible content areas, and its impact on learners' personal and social development.

The Need to Introduce Psychology in Schools

School is one of the most important social environments in a child's life. It is a place where learners acquire not only academic knowledge but also communication habits, moral values, and behavioral patterns. However, many school subjects focus mainly on intellectual development and pay limited attention to emotional and psychological growth. As a result, students may perform well academically while still struggling with fear, insecurity, aggression, loneliness, or emotional confusion.

Introducing psychology as a subject can fill this gap. It gives students structured knowledge about themselves and their social world. They begin to understand why people think, feel, and behave differently. They also gain tools for self-regulation, empathy, and conflict resolution. Such a subject does not need to be overly theoretical; rather, it should be practical, age-appropriate, and closely connected with students' everyday experiences.

The need for psychology education is especially strong in adolescence, but its foundations can be introduced earlier. Younger students can learn basic ideas about emotions, friendship, respect, self-confidence, and simple problem-solving. Older students can study stress, motivation, self-esteem, communication, decision-making, and mental health. In this way, psychology becomes a developmental subject that grows together with the learner.

Another important reason for introducing psychology is the increase in emotional and behavioral difficulties among schoolchildren. Many students face bullying, exam stress, family instability, social comparison, and digital dependence. Without proper knowledge and support, these problems can become serious barriers to healthy development. Psychology classes can help students recognize such issues early and respond to them in constructive ways.

Psychology as a Means of Improving Psychological Well-Being

Psychological well-being refers to a person's emotional stability, self-acceptance, sense of purpose, positive relationships, and ability to cope with difficulties. For school students, psychological well-being is closely related to learning motivation, classroom participation, discipline, and social adaptation. A child who feels emotionally safe and psychologically supported is more likely to succeed academically and socially.

Teaching psychology can improve students' psychological well-being in several ways. First, it strengthens self-awareness. When students learn about emotions, personality, habits, and thoughts, they become more conscious of their inner world. This helps them identify their strengths and weaknesses and understand the reasons behind their behavior.

Second, psychology education improves emotional literacy. Many students experience strong feelings but do not know how to express or manage them properly. Learning about emotions such as anger, fear, sadness, joy, and anxiety helps them develop emotional control. This reduces impulsive reactions and supports balanced behavior.

Third, psychology promotes self-esteem and confidence. When students understand that making mistakes, feeling nervous, or facing difficulties are normal parts of development, they become less self-critical. They learn to accept themselves and grow through reflection rather than shame.

Fourth, psychology enhances social relationships. Students gain knowledge about empathy, active listening, respect, cooperation, and conflict resolution. This can reduce bullying, classroom tension, and social isolation while improving friendship and mutual understanding.

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Fifth, psychology helps learners cope with stress. School life often includes tests, deadlines, competition, and expectations from adults. Psychology classes can teach relaxation techniques, healthy habits, time management, and positive coping strategies that protect students from chronic stress.

Educational and Social Benefits of Psychology as a Subject

The inclusion of psychology in the curriculum would bring both educational and social benefits. From an educational perspective, students with stronger psychological well-being usually show higher concentration, better memory, improved classroom behavior, and stronger motivation to learn. Emotional stability creates favorable conditions for intellectual activity.

Psychology also contributes to the development of soft skills that are increasingly necessary in modern society. These include communication, cooperation, emotional intelligence, adaptability, critical thinking, and self-management. Such skills are important not only for school success but also for future professional and personal life.

From a social perspective, psychology education can improve the general atmosphere of the school. When students understand the value of empathy, tolerance, and mutual respect, the school environment becomes safer and more inclusive. Conflicts can be reduced, peer relationships can improve, and students may become more open to asking for help when needed.

Moreover, psychology as a subject can support inclusive education. In diverse classrooms, students have different needs, personalities, backgrounds, and learning styles. Psychological knowledge helps learners respect individual differences and behave more supportively toward classmates who may be shy, anxious, or socially vulnerable.

Psychology education may also strengthen collaboration between school, family, and community. When students bring psychological knowledge home, they may communicate more openly with parents, better understand family relationships, and develop healthier habits. In the long term, this can contribute to a more psychologically aware society.

Possible Content of School Psychology Lessons

If psychology is introduced as a school subject, its content should be carefully adapted to students' age and developmental stage. The goal is not to turn students into professional psychologists, but to provide useful life knowledge and practical skills.

For younger schoolchildren, lessons may include:

- understanding emotions;
- friendship and respect;
- rules of communication;
- self-confidence;
- behavior and habits;
- simple stress relief activities.

For middle and upper grades, topics may include:

- personality and individual differences;
- self-esteem and identity;
- communication and conflict resolution;
- motivation and goal-setting;
- stress, anxiety, and coping strategies;
- decision-making and responsibility;
- digital behavior and emotional safety;
- bullying prevention;
- mental health awareness.

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Methods of teaching psychology should be interactive and student-centered. Role plays, discussions, case studies, reflection diaries, storytelling, games, and group tasks can make the lessons more meaningful. The subject should encourage openness and trust rather than fear or formal memorization.

The Teacher's Role in Teaching Psychology

The teacher plays a central role in the successful implementation of psychology as a school subject. This teacher should not only know theoretical psychology but also understand pedagogy, child development, and communication ethics. Since psychological topics may touch students' personal experiences, the teacher must create a safe, respectful, and confidential classroom environment.

A psychology teacher should guide students carefully, avoid stigmatizing language, and encourage balanced discussion. They must also recognize the limits of classroom teaching. If a student shows signs of serious emotional difficulty, the teacher should cooperate with school psychologists, counselors, or parents rather than attempt clinical intervention alone.

In addition, all teachers can benefit from basic psychological knowledge. Even if psychology becomes a separate subject, its principles should support the broader educational process. Teachers of all subjects need to understand student motivation, emotional states, and interpersonal dynamics. Therefore, the introduction of psychology can positively influence the entire teaching culture of the school.

Challenges in Introducing Psychology as a School Subject

Although the benefits are significant, some challenges should be considered. One challenge is curriculum overload. Schools already teach many subjects, and adding a new one requires careful planning. However, psychology can be integrated gradually or introduced through flexible modules, elective courses, or interdisciplinary programs.

Another challenge is the shortage of qualified teachers. Effective psychology education requires specialists who understand both theory and school practice. This means that teacher training institutions may need to prepare educators specifically for this purpose.

There may also be misunderstandings about the role of psychology in school. Some people may think it is only for students with behavioral problems or emotional disorders. In reality, psychology education is beneficial for all learners because it focuses on development, prevention, and life skills.

A further challenge is ensuring that lessons remain practical and age-appropriate. If the content becomes too abstract or academic, students may lose interest. Therefore, curriculum designers must focus on real-life relevance, interactive methods, and developmental suitability.

Conclusion

Introducing psychology as a school subject is an important step toward creating a more humane, balanced, and student-centered educational system. In modern schools, academic instruction must be combined with emotional and psychological support if educators want to raise healthy, confident, and socially responsible individuals.

Psychology education helps students understand themselves, regulate their emotions, manage stress, communicate effectively, and build positive relationships. It strengthens psychological well-being and creates better conditions for learning, cooperation, and personal growth. It also serves a preventive role by addressing emotional difficulties before they become serious problems.

The inclusion of psychology in the school curriculum should therefore be viewed not as an additional burden, but as an investment in the child's full development. When students are psychologically strong, they are better prepared not only for academic success but also for life

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itself. For this reason, teaching psychology in schools can become one of the most effective ways to improve students' psychological condition and to promote a healthy educational environment.

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