
RESEARCH ARTICLE

High School Students Mental Health Support and Treatment via Mental Health Clinic

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine high school students' mental health concerns and to show what a psychologist and guidance teachers can do to help students with mental health challenges be most successful of grade 7-12 students and students' parents in the academic years of 2018-2022 at Wat Phrasimahadhat Secondary Demonstration School, Phranakhon Rajabhat University, Thailand. The instrument was the consultation record, which kept all records of the participants by the psychologist and the guidance teacher at the mental health clinic. The psychologist and guidance teacher developed the consultation records based on the functional patterns. The results were interpreted, categorized, and tabulated on computer sheets. The findings revealed that there were 82 cases from 2018-2022 in which the mental health clinic provided a range of mental health services. Most mental health concerns were low self-esteem (18 cases), depression or withdrawal (16 cases) and anxiety (10 cases), respectively. Moreover, after going to the mental health clinic, a psychologist could help students and students' parents work through such mental health problems, accounting for 62 cases out of 82. 11 cases were still to continue sessions with a psychologist. Besides, nine cases were transferred to the specialist in the hospital based on the parents' permission.

KEYWORDS

High School Students' Mental Health Problems, The Mental Health Clinic, Support and Treatment

ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Mental health awareness is an important issue for all educators, who are often the first line of defense for their students. Education professionals have recognized the impact that a student's mental health has on learning and achievement, and they realize that there's a great deal that can be done to help students with mental health issues. The National Alliance on Mental Illness estimates that one in five people live with some sort of mental disorder or disease. Even though the average age of early signs of mental illness is 14, most individuals don't seek help until adulthood. Underlining the seriousness is the fact that 60 percent of high school students with mental illness don't graduate (<https://www.wgu.edu>).

In the past 20 years, the mental health of students has attracted much attention from the society. Looking back on the relevant investigation and research on students' mental health, psychological problems have often appeared. Because of the high expectations of the family, the pressure faced by students is significantly higher than that of other groups of the same age, and suicide has become the number one killer of students. In recent years, the psychological problems of students have become more and more serious. Schools generally report that more and more students have problems such as poor adaptability, anxiety, and depression (Adlington et al., 2022).

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Mental health services are under-utilized by young people. Approximately 20% of young people experience mental disorders each year, but fewer than half receive professional treatment (Belfer, 2008). Barriers to help-seeking include stigma, mental health literacy, concerns about privacy, geographical location, financial costs, and time (Salaheddin and Mason, 2016). Youth mental health services are overburdened and fragmented, further limiting access for young people seeking treatment (McGorry et al., 2013). Improving young peoples' access to care is important in prevention and early intervention efforts and will help to minimize mental health burdens throughout the lifespan.

Looking at this issue from the perspective of schools, school administrators need to pay enough attention to mental health education, help students develop a correct world outlook, and at the same time carry out comprehensive social development. They need to understand and help students successfully complete their identity transition. The mental health education goal is to cultivate good character quality, develop intellectual potential, enhance psychological adaptability, stimulate inner motivation, maintain mental health, and develop good behavior habits, that is, fertility, enlightenment, strength, motivation, health, and guidance. In the specific teaching process, school administrators and teachers need to conduct an in-depth analysis of various problems exposed in the teaching process of positive mental health education and formulate efficient mental health education teaching strategies based on the actual situation of the school (Zhang et al., 2022).

One way to overcome barriers to help-seeking and treatment access is to provide mental healthcare in secondary schools. Secondary schools are those responsible for students in grades 7–12 (typically ages 12–17 years). Secondary schools provide ready access to large numbers of youth during the development phase when mental illness first emerges (Masia-Warner et al., 2006).

Given the impact of mental illness on learning and behavior, schools are playing an increasing role in providing care for students' social and emotional development (Weare, 2015). The traditional role of classroom teachers has expanded to include augmenting mental health care from prevention to intervention (Weston et al., 2008). Teachers are required to teach young people about mental health, identify emerging psychological difficulties, and communicate these difficulties to parents (Fazel et al., 2014). Education departments now employ trained mental health professionals, including school counselors and psychologists, to support student mental health.

To cultivate students to have a correct understanding of the society around them, maintain a harmonious and good adaptive relationship with society, make college students dare to face reality and the future, have the courage to practice, have a quick mind, constantly revise those unrealistic fantasies, improve setback tolerance, and be fully psychologically prepared and strong, they must adapt to meet the rapidly changing society. This goal is the main task of current mental health education (Brewer et al., 2019).

Mental health problems of high school students in Thailand are impacting the quality of life worldwide. The prevalence of mental illness, including mood and anxiety disorders, suicidal ideation, and psychological distress, among students is getting higher. Unfortunately, high school students in Thailand are also found to have a high rate of mental problems such as depression, stress, and suicidal ideation.

In August 2022, according to a new UNICEF-led study on adolescent mental health, Thailand must urgently increase investment in quality and timely mental health care and services for children and adolescents to prevent serious lifelong damage to their health and future. An estimated 1 in 7 adolescents aged 10-19 and 1 in 14 children aged 5-9 have mental health disorders in Thailand, according to a new study, *Strengthening Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Systems and Services for Children and Adolescents in East Asia and Pacific Region: Thailand Country Report 2022* developed by UNICEF, the Ministry of Public Health, the Institute for Population and Social Research and Burnet Institute. Suicide is currently the third leading cause of death among adolescents in the country. According to the 2021 Global School-based Student Health Survey, 17.6 per cent of adolescents aged 13–17 had recently seriously considered suicide. Millions of children and adolescents in Thailand are suffering from poor mental health, including stress, anxiety, and depression, due to many factors, such as violence, bullying, loneliness, uncertainty as well as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, they are often hidden under the surface because of stigma and lack of access to appropriate information, screening, support, and services."

Furthermore, about 15% of Thai high school students are at risk of suicide, according to findings from the Bureau of Mental Health Service Administration in November 2022. The department has recently completed an assessment of the mental health of more than 130,000 students aged under 18. The findings show that 56.31% are "normal", 9.18% are listed as vulnerable to depression, and 15.86% are prone to harming themselves or committing suicide. The main cause of the students' mental health problems is that they worry about their studies and cannot adapt to studying at home during the COVID-19 pandemic, in addition to known problems such as bullying by classmates and conflicts with the elders in their families. Family members can help by monitoring

students for signs of abnormalities, such as depression, stress, frustration, not wanting to go to school, or not doing things that they used to do regularly. Moreover, parents should look after their children and give them the resources to cope with depression and mental health problems.

Wat Phrasimhadhat Secondary Demonstration School, Phranakhon Rajabhat University, Bangkok, Thailand, which is an autonomous institution directly under the central administration of Phranakhon Rajabhat University, was founded in 1953 with the primary goal of being a laboratory for student teachers and providing the educational scheme for high school levels. The school offers an educational program that promotes a high standard of learning achievement from grades 7-12. The junior high school (grades 7-9) offers an intensive English program. There are four majors for senior high school students (grade 10-12), which are 1) Mathematics-Science, 2) Mathematics-English, 3) English-Japanese and 4) English-Chinese.

The life of students at school can be stressful due to many factors, such as homework, social life, perceived parental pressure, university applications, and never-ending workloads, which all generate stress. Although a moderate amount of stress can be beneficial and act as a motivator for students to do well, too much stress can impact their overall well-being. So, depression and anxiety are a major problem in the school community, which can also lead to poor academic achievement, increase the likelihood of dropping out of school, and diminish motivation. Therefore, both students and educators need to recognize what the triggers are and what they can do to better manage everyday school stress. As a result, Wat Phrasimhadhat Secondary Demonstration School, Phranakhon Rajabhat University, set up a mental health clinic sponsored by the Parents Teacher Association. A psychologist who works in schools can have different titles, including an educational psychologist, school psychologist, guidance officer or school counselor.

In conclusion, the last few years have brought increased awareness of the importance of mental health and behavior in schools, showing how children's mental health significantly affects their academic performance and, later, career success.

A huge part of mental health support in schools starts with awareness. Students need to be educated about mental health to be aware of the signs so that they can know where to go for help and may also be able to help others. This, in turn, would greatly benefit the lives of students experiencing problems and potentially even reduce their symptoms.

2. The Objectives of the Study

1. To determine high school students' mental health concerns from the academic year 2018 to 2022.
2. To show what a psychologist and guidance teachers can do to help students with mental health challenges be most successful.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Mental Health during the Coronavirus Pandemic

Mental health disorders are on the rise in Western countries (Ohrnberger et al., 2017). The Coronavirus Outbreak 2019 has changed all activities, not only social, educational, and cultural, but also individual lives. This has been the biggest shock to health in so many years lately (Aucejo et al., 2020). Similarly, students have also been the most affected segment of the population due to the shifts in educational paradigms. School routines have been found to be very important for coping with students' mental stress. The students had been facing fears of losing their academic years, becoming seriously sick, or lacking resources to complete their studies. Furthermore, the transition from classroom learning to online learning and then to onsite learning in schools has immensely affected educational plans, academic performance, the labor market, and expectations for future employment opportunities (Aucejo et al., 2020).

Students have been under the shock of a pandemic related to its outcomes, such as anxiety, loneliness, social distancing, and physical health. The mental health of individuals is adversely affected by any negative or unexpected events. However, how this mental health can affect the education and environment of the school is still unknown but is predicted to be substantial (Gallego et al., 2020; Odriozola-González et al., 2020). Emotional disorders are mostly seen in high students, and the presence of such disorders at this time is supposed to produce adverse effects on the minds of the students (Saha et al., 2021). The pandemic has not only affected health, but it has developed the concerns of people regarding their education, mental health, stress level, anxiety, relationships with others, and overall wellbeing of their families. Students living in combined family systems tend to have more social support and are found to have more stable mental health than those who are left alone in nuclear families (Noor et al., 2014). Therefore, social support and peer collaboration have been found to be strongly associated with the mental health of students. Similarly, mentally stable individuals tend to deal with their life matters more intelligently and emotionally than those who are unstable in these respects.

3.2 Effects of Mental Health on Student Learning

Mental health has become increasingly acceptable to discuss in recent years .A growing body of research about high school students' mental health concerns underlines the need for educators to consider how mental health might affect students and what courses of action are available .This is imperative, given how mental illness may hinder student success)Thompson, Connely, Thomas-Jones, and Eggert, 2013 .(

Over the past twenty years, mental health difficulties among students have been on the increase worldwide, becoming a leading cause of disability .The incidence of diagnosable mental, emotional, or behavioral disorders is now estimated at between 10 %and 20 %among school children)Erskine et al., 2015 .(Mental health difficulties can manifest as either externalizing or internalizing problems) Stone et al., 2015 .(The most common externalizing problems include disruptive behavior issues, attention deficit hyperactivity disorders) ADHD(, oppositional defiant disorders, and conduct disorders) Tremblay et al., 2004 .(The predominant internalizing disorders include depression, anxiety, panic disorder, mood disorders, social phobia, specific phobias, and obsessive-compulsive disorder) Ogundele, 2018 .(Data collected over the last decade indicate that self-harm, suicidal attempts, eating disorders, depression, and addictive disorders are growing problems among young people) Twenge, 2020). Depression is the third leading cause of death among adolescents in the USA and Europe.

Mental health difficulties have a significant adverse impact on different aspects of children's and young people's development, contributing to poor school adjustment, reduced concentration, and problems in achievement and social relationships) Thorlacius and Gudmundsson, 2019 .(Mental health issues are also associated with poor school attendance, suspension, and early school dropout) DeSocio and Hootman, 2004.(

3.3 Mental Health Services in Schools

Dunn)2016 (asserts that schools play an important role in determining the mental health of students because they serve more than 95 %of the nation's young people for nearly 6 hours per day .Atkins)2010 (states that children's social and emotional growth has been an ongoing concern for both mental health professionals and schools as they realize the impact the school setting has on children's social and cognitive development.

Multiple studies show strong associations between school achievement and markers of mental health throughout the adult years . Teachers work to increase student proficiency and are the first responders for their students .When students have mental health issues, the teachers are usually the ones who refer them to counselors or administrators for help) Galanti, 2016 .(Ball) 2016 (found mental health concerns can cause a student to have difficulty in school with poor academic performance, even chronic absenteeism, and disciplinary concerns .Weist)2005 (notes that in the prior two decades," school mental health programs have increased due to the recognition of the crisis in children's mental health ."

In a later study, Weist)2012 (asserted that schools offer the best access to youth for influencing their educational, behavioral, emotional, and developmental needs .In addition to administrators and teachers, most high schools have high school counselors . However, mental health services for students continue to be marginalized because schools are asked to improve student academic outcomes with fewer resources provided, especially in the context of complicated issues such as family concerns, poverty, and substance abuse, that affect the social context of education)Weist, 2012 .(

Some schools employ school social workers who focus primarily on support of mental health issues .Many schools partner with community organizations to provide a range of mental health services, but this is inadequate .Weist)2012 (suggests that mental health services in schools should be an integrated enterprise where schools, families, and community systems work together to create a climate of success for youth .This would include promoting mental health with prevention, early intervention, and any needed treatment .

4. Methodology

4.1 The Participants

This study aimed to explain factors in the school or home setting that affect students' mental health, to determine the effects of mental health on students in relation to their academic and social success, and to show what a school psychologist and a guidance teacher can do to help students with mental health challenges be most successful at Wat Phrasimahadhat Secondary Demonstration School, Phranakhon Rajabhat University, Thailand. Focusing on the consulting clinic project to support mental health and wellbeing, the study was carried out to gather information related to how to increase awareness of the importance of mental health and behavior in school. The participants were students, parents and school staff who had consulted with the psychologist or guidance teacher from the academic year 2018 to 2023.

4.2 Method of Data Collection

To collect the data for the study, the psychologist and guidance teacher introduced the consulting clinic project to the school board. Once the project was approved, the psychologist and the guidance teacher promoted the project to students, parents, and school staff via the school multimedia channels such as Website, Facebook, Instagram, Line group, Student Care Messenger application, poster, etc. The consulting clinic offered the service 3 hours a week. The participants who desired to consult a psychologist or a guidance teacher were required to make an appointment beforehand. When the date came, all participants could consult the psychologist individually in a consulting clinic. Confidentiality in mental health is of vital importance as sensitive information. The psychologist was ethically bound to protect all participants' privacy regardless of what information the participants chose to share with others.

4.3 Instruments of Data Collection

The consultation record was applied to keep all the participants' records. The psychologist and guidance teacher developed the consultation records based on the functional patterns. The record consisted of various information as follows:

1. Consulting date
2. Name (Pseudonym was acceptable.)
3. Consulting time
4. Mental health problems
5. Consulting results/suggestions

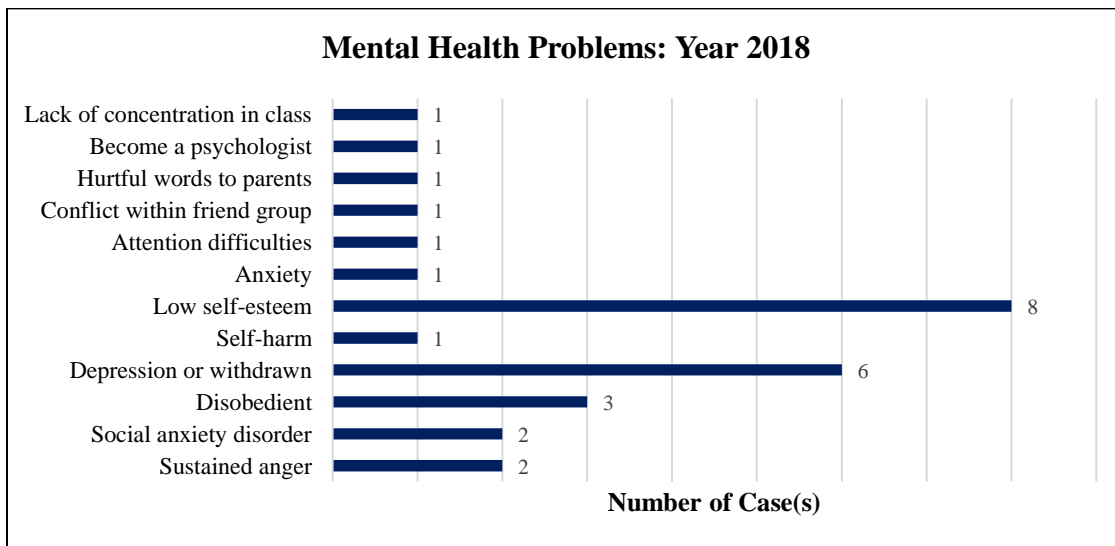
4.4 Method of Data Analysis

The results and findings were presented in tables and figures together with full explanations. The results of the consultation record were interpreted, categorized, and tabulated on computer sheets and were calculated into the statistical values. The data concerning the factors that affected students' mental health, the effects of mental health on students in relation to their academic and social success, and consulting results/suggestions were presented in Mean Range and Standard Deviation.

5. Findings

This section presents the data collected from a psychologist and guidance teacher working at the mental health clinic. The results were based on the data obtained by using the consultation records. The results from the consultation records presented the mental health problems and mental health treatments from the academic year 2018-2022.

Figure 1 Mental Health Problems: Year 2018



As shown in Figure 1, there were 28 cases in 2018 in which the mental health clinic provided a range of mental health services. Most mental health concerns are low self-esteem (8 cases), depression or withdrawal (6 cases) and disobedience (3 cases), respectively.

Figure 2 Mental Health Treatments: Year 2018

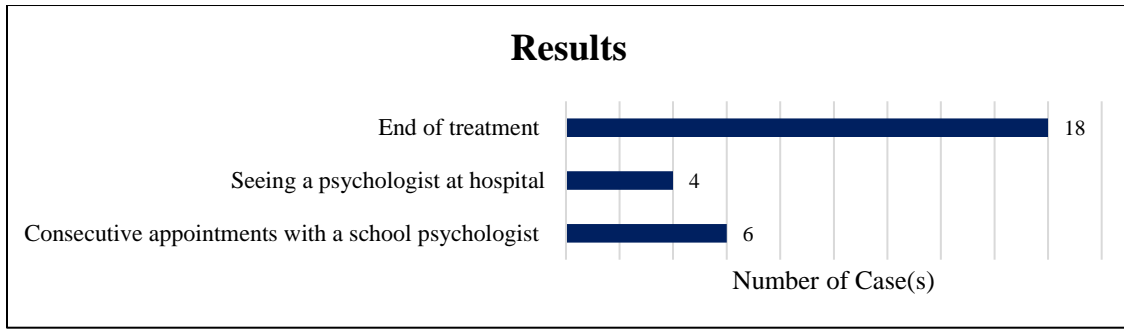


Figure 2 shows that after going to the mental health clinic, a psychologist can help students and students’ parents work through such mental health problems, accounting for 18 cases out of 28. Six cases still need continued sessions with a psychologist. Moreover, four cases are transferred to the hospital specialist based on the parents’ permission.

Figure 3 Mental Health Problems: Year 2019

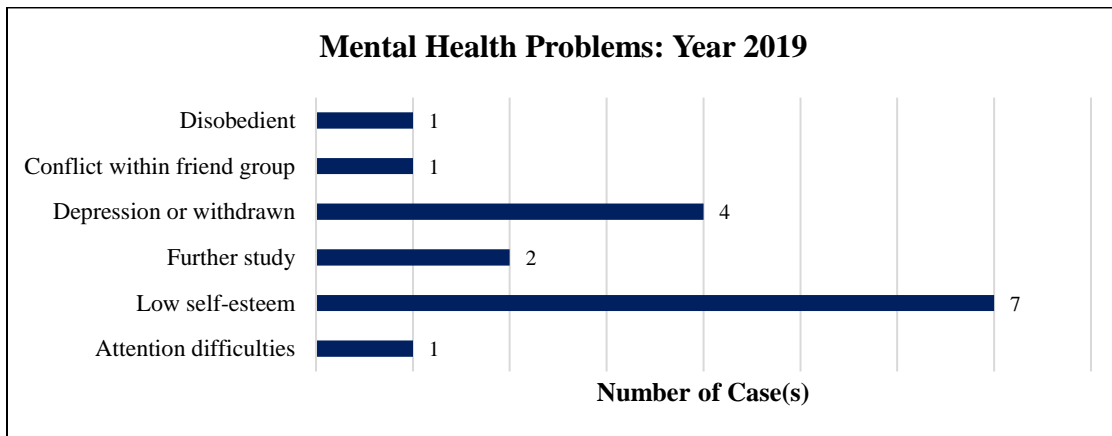
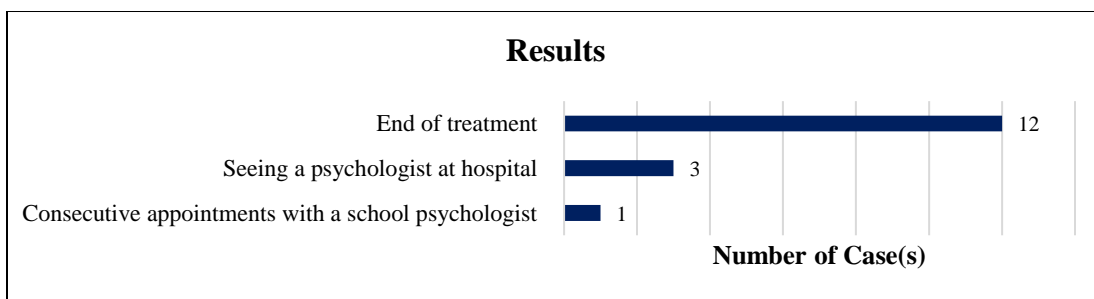


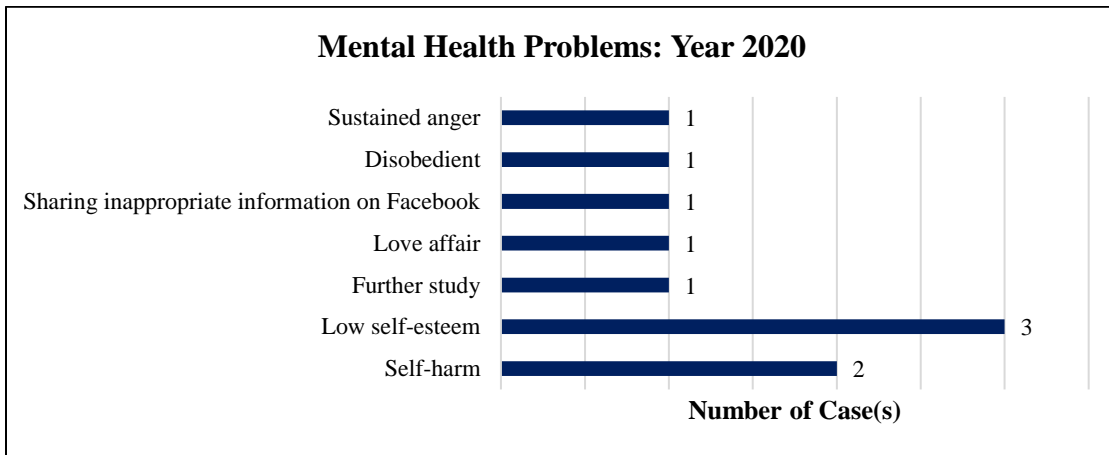
Figure 3 shows that there were 16 cases in 2019 in which the mental health clinic provided a range of mental health services. Most mental health concerns are low self-esteem (7 cases), depression or withdrawal (4 cases) and further study (2 cases) respectively.

Figure 4 Mental Health Treatments: Year 2019



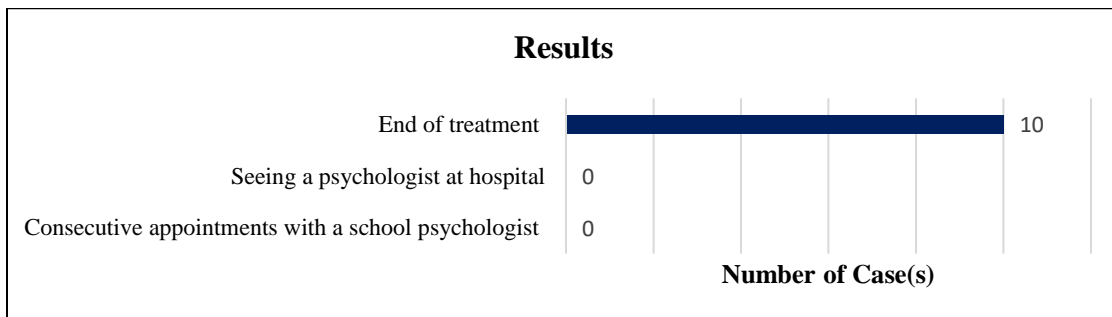
In Figure 4, after going to the mental health clinic, a psychologist can help students and students’ parents work through such mental health problems, accounting for 12 cases out of 16. One case is still to continue sessions with a psychologist. Furthermore, three cases are transferred to the *hospital* specialist based on the parents’ permission.

Figure 5 Mental Health Problems: Year 2020



According to Figure 5, the results based on the data showed that there were 10 cases in 2020 in which the mental health clinic provided a range of mental health services. Most mental health concerns are low self-esteem (3 cases) and self-harm (2 cases), respectively.

Figure 6 Mental Health Treatments: Year 2020



Based on the data, figure 6 shows that after going to the mental health clinic, a psychologist can help students and students' parents work through such mental health problems, accounting for 10 cases out of 10. There aren't any cases where they continue sessions with a psychologist, and they are transferred to the specialist in the hospital based on the parents' permission.

Figure 7 Mental Health Problems: Year 2021

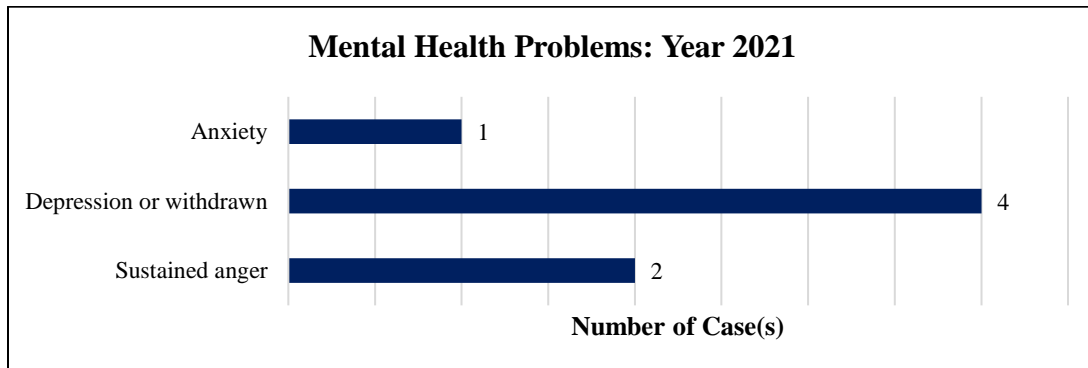
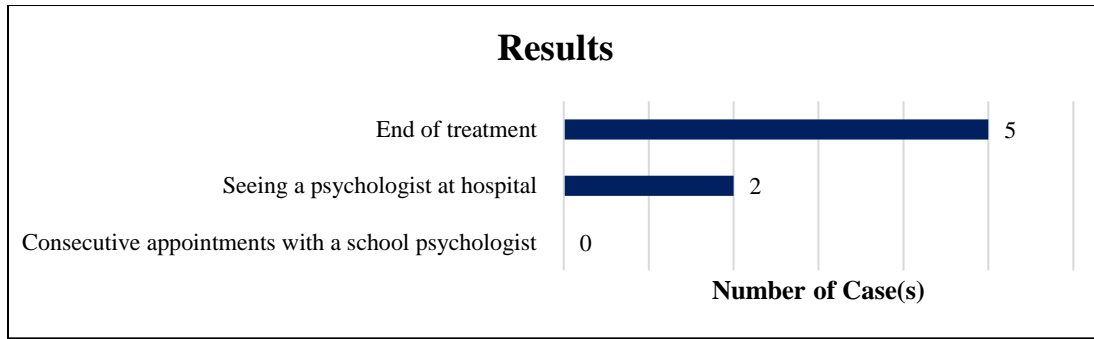


Figure 7 shows that there were seven cases in 2018 in which the mental health clinic provided a range of mental health services. Most mental health concerns are depression or withdrawal (4 cases), sustained anger (2 cases) and anxiety (1 case) respectively.

Figure 8 Mental Health Treatments: Year 2021



From Figure 8, after going to the mental health clinic, a psychologist can help students and students’ parents work through such mental health problems, accounting for five cases out of seven. There are no cases where we need to continue sessions with a psychologist. Additionally, two cases are transferred to the hospital specialist based on the parents’ permission.

Figure 9 Mental Health Problems: Year 2022

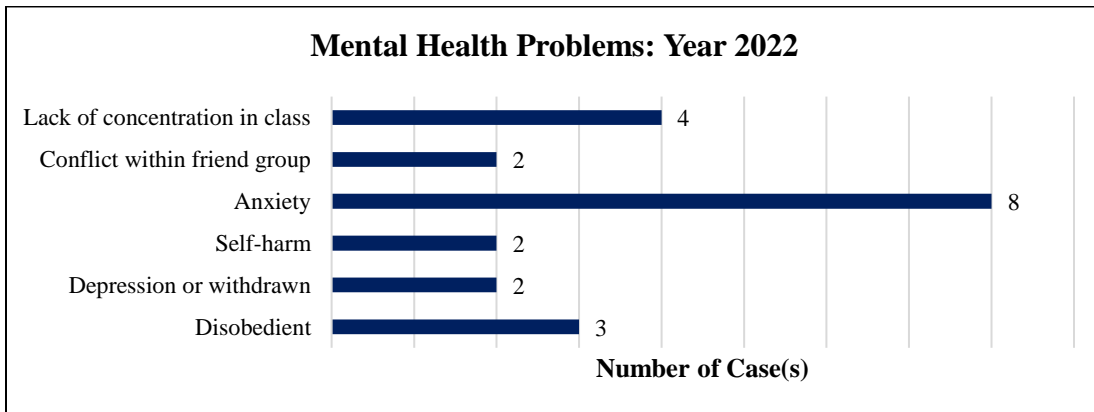


Figure 9 shows that there were 21 cases in 2018 in which the mental health clinic provided a range of mental health services. Most mental health concerns are anxiety (8 cases), lack of concentration in class (4 cases) and disobedience (3 cases) respectively.

Figure 10 Mental Health Treatments: Year 2022

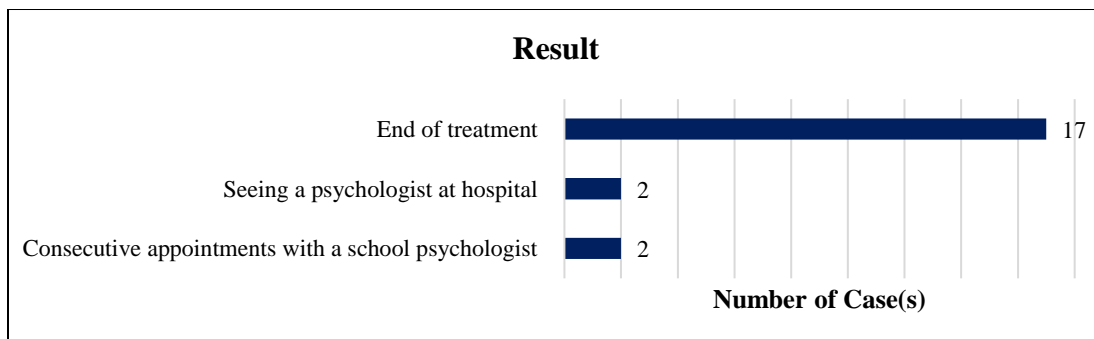


Figure 10 shows that after going to the mental health clinic, a psychologist can help students and students’ parents work through such mental health problems, accounting for 17 cases out of 21. Two cases still need continued sessions with a psychologist. Besides, two cases are transferred to the hospital specialist based on the parents’ permission.

Figure 11 Mental Health Problems: Year 2018-2022

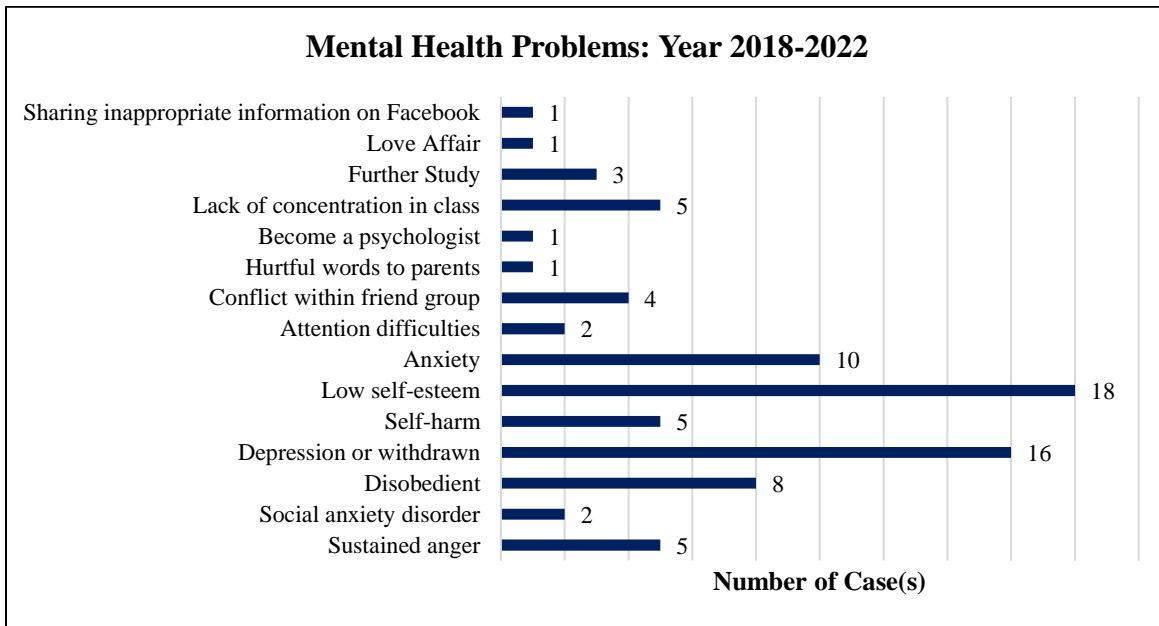


Figure 11 shows that there are 82 cases from 2018-2022 in which the mental health clinic provides a range of mental health services. Most mental health concerns are low self-esteem (18 cases), depression or withdrawn (16 cases) and anxiety (10 cases), respectively.

Figure 12 Mental Health Treatments: Year 2018-2022

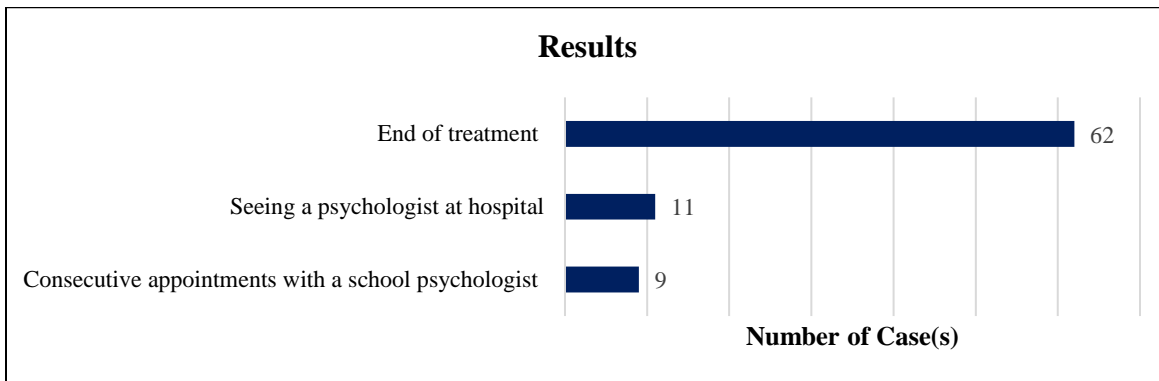


Figure 12 indicates that after going to the mental health clinic, a psychologist can help students and students' parents work through such mental health problems, accounting for 62 cases out of 82. 11 cases are still to continue sessions with a psychologist. Besides, nine cases are transferred to the specialist in the hospital based on the parents' permission.

6. Discussion

This section presents the major discussion based on the objectives of the study.

Wat Phrasimahadhat Secondary Demonstration School, Phranakhon Rajabhat University, Bangkok, Thailand, set up the mental health clinic sponsored by the Parents Teacher Association because, in recent years, the psychological problems of students have become more and more serious. Schools generally report that more and more students have problems such as poor adaptability, anxiety, and depression (Adlington et al., 2022). According to a new UNICEF-led study in August 2022 on adolescent mental health, Thailand must urgently increase investment in quality and timely mental health care and services for children and adolescents to prevent serious lifelong damage to their health and future. A psychologist who works in schools provides mental health advice once a week, not only for grade 7-12 students but students' parents as well.

According to the objective of the study No.1, To determine high school students' mental health concerns from the academic year 2018 to 2022, the results showed that:

1) From the consultation records presented on mental health problems from the academic year 2018-2022, there are 82 cases from 2018 to 2022 in which the mental health clinic provided a range of mental health services. Most mental health concerns are low self-esteem (18 cases), depression or withdrawn (16 cases) and anxiety (10 cases), respectively. Similar to a new study, Strengthening Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Systems and Services for Children and Adolescents in East Asia and Pacific Region: Thailand Country Report 2022, developed by UNICEF, the Ministry of Public Health, the Institute for Population and Social Research and Burnet Institute, it found that an estimated one in seven adolescents aged 10-19 have mental health disorders in Thailand.

2) Based on the data from the consultation records, "Low self-esteem" and "Depression or withdrawn" are the leading causes of mental health problems among students. Similarly, the 2021 Global School-based Student Health Survey stated that millions of children and adolescents in Thailand are suffering from poor mental health, including stress, anxiety, and depression due to many factors such as violence, bullying, loneliness, uncertainty as well as the impact of COVID-19 pandemic.

3) In the academic year 2020-2021, schools faced multiple challenges at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. In March 2020, the coronavirus pandemic forced schools to close their doors and move classes online; essentially, all students were forced to become online learners. The way of providing mental health care is highly disrupted because of the available time. However, the mental health clinic still provides the services because mental health difficulties have a significant adverse impact on different aspects of students' development, contributing to poor school adjustment, reduced concentration, and problems in achievement and social relationships (Thorlaciuss and Gudmundsson, 2019).

According to the objective of study No.2, "To show what a psychologist and teachers can do to help students with mental health challenges be most successful." the results from the consultation records presented the mental health treatments from the academic year 2018-2022.

1) Dunn (2016) asserts that schools play an important role in determining the mental health of students because they serve more than 95% of the nation's young people for nearly 6 hours per day. All teachers work to increase student proficiency and are the first responders for their students. When students have a mental health issue, the teachers are usually the ones who refer them to the mental health clinic for help (Galanti, 2016). After going to the mental health clinic, a psychologist can help students and students' parents work through such mental health problems, accounting for 62 cases out of 82. 11 cases are still to continue sessions with a psychologist. Besides, nine cases are transferred to the specialist in the hospital based on the parents' permission.

2) In the academic year 2020-2021, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted education in school, and students missed out on learning at school but turned to the online system. The number of mental health cases dropped sharply because they studied at their places.

7. Limitations of the Study

However, there are certain limitations associated with the study as well. Future attempts can be made to measure these variables by taking time-series data checking the post-pandemic and pandemic mental health of students. The current study has taken grade 7-12 students and some parents who desired to consult with a psychologist as the sample. In future studies, these relationships can be checked in higher education as well. Moreover, the limitations of the findings are that the data was collected in one high school using maximum variation and snowball sampling methods. Given these sampling methods and the small sample size, the data is not representative of the general population and cannot be generalized to other locations. More robust data would be obtained if the study was undertaken at multiple high schools in various parts of the country. Future research should look at adolescents in other locations, such as those who reside in urban and rural school districts. The short timeline for this study and the lack of access to other high schools prohibited a more extended study. Future research is needed with a larger sample size to allow for the generalization of findings.

8. Recommendations for Research

The current study will help educational institutions and schools plan to set up mental health clinics or improve the clinics to maintain good mental health for every individual. Educational institutes and schools should make policies regarding students' mental health problems that support students to avoid the factor of mental health. This would help the educational institutes and schools in coping with any such disaster or emergency circumstances of the students. Furthermore, the materials and equipment necessary for the mental health clinic should be made an effort to provide services available to all those who need help. Therefore, further studies may explore students' mental health problems by using other data gathering techniques such as focus groups, observation, and surveys, which help to gain more accurate and detailed information about the problems concerned.

9. Conclusion

Mental health awareness is an important issue for all educators, who are often the first line of defence for their students. Education professionals have recognized the impact that a student's mental health has on learning and achievement, and they realize that there's a great deal that can be done to help students with mental health issues.

Stronger mental health for students means they can learn better and be more likely to realize the full potential of their abilities. Students' mental health in school is a crucial part of the education system. Ultimately, students with positive mental health can build relationships more effectively, make decisions, and work together. These positive effects support the individual student and their larger community as they enter adulthood.

Student mental health is high on the educational agenda for many countries, including Thailand. Supporting the mental health of secondary school students requires cooperation between school personnel, families, and young people. Psychologists, teachers, and counselors are a core part of this system and, in this study, self-identified as important contributors to youth mental health. A clear understanding of responsibilities within schools is imperative for psychologists, teachers, and counselors to be part of an effective support system for young people when their mental health deteriorates.

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