

## **Record of Discussion of Online Session of Capacity Building Programme for Promoting Positive Mental Health, Resilience, and Wellbeing, held on 23.01.2026 at 10:00 AM**

1. An online session under the Capacity Building Programme for Promoting Positive Mental Health, Resilience and Wellbeing was conducted on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2026 as part of the Ministry of Education's sustained efforts to integrate mental health, resilience, and wellbeing into the higher education ecosystem. The session was organised for nominated members from centrally funded Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). A total of 85 participants joined the session out of which 78 were faculty members.

2. This was the 36<sup>th</sup> online session in the ongoing fortnightly series since the launch of the programme in May 2024. The initiative continues to support the development of institutional ecosystems that are sensitive to student wellbeing, aligned with objectives of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Till date, more than 2500 faculty members from more than 160 HEIs have participated in the programme.

3. In his opening remarks, Mr. D. K. Sharma, Director, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, welcomed the participants on behalf of the Department. He introduced the panel of eminent resource persons participating in the session, briefly outlined the structure of the session and invited Prof. Kumar Suresh to deliver the opening address.

4. The following resource persons were part of this session:

- ❖ Dr. Jitendra Nagpal, Senior Psychiatrist and Programme Director, Expressions India
- ❖ Ms. Geeta Mehrotra, Expressions India
- ❖ Prof. Shailender Swaminathan, Sapien Labs, KREA University

5. Prof. Kumar Suresh, NIEPA, opened the session and provided an overview of NIEPA's work in close association with the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education. He referred to the unfortunate cases of student suicides reported in Centrally Funded Institutions (CFIs), particularly in technical institutions, and underscored the urgent need for systemic and sustained interventions to safeguard student wellbeing.

6. Prof. Suresh emphasised that the initiative is firmly aligned with the objectives of the National Education Policy 2020, particularly its focus on holistic development. He referred to various guidelines issued by the University Grants Commission (UGC) on matters such as support for persons with disabilities, promotion of mental wellbeing, and inclusive practices in higher education institutions. While acknowledging these policy efforts, he stressed that the ultimate responsibility for creating a safe, inclusive, and supportive campus environment rests with individual HEIs.

7. Highlighting the pivotal role of faculty members, Prof. Suresh observed that although faculty are deeply engaged in teaching and research, their role as integral contributors to institutional life also entails responsibility for fostering a positive wellbeing atmosphere on campus. He noted that mental health is emerging as a major concern in India, and within the higher education context, it is imperative for faculty to collectively mobilise to ensure student wellbeing and to respond sensitively to signs of distress.

8. Mr. D. K. Sharma delivered a presentation on adolescent and youth mental health, emphasising that it is not a marginal or peripheral issue, but one that significantly affects learning outcomes, retention, and long-term life trajectories of students. He shared key statistics on the status of mental health in India. Mr. Sharma highlighted that growing national momentum around mental health, marked by a convergence of education policy, public health strategies, economic thinking, and judicial directives. He emphasised the need for three major shifts in addressing student mental wellbeing in HEIs: moving from crisis-oriented responses to preventive approaches; focusing on institutional-level action rather than placing the onus solely on individuals; and strengthening early intervention mechanisms through periodic wellbeing

checks, faculty and staff training, and structured support systems. He elaborated on the role of faculty as first observers of student distress, underscoring the importance of mental health literacy, clear referral protocols, boundary awareness, and attention to faculty wellbeing itself. He also stressed that students should be treated as active partners in the co-design of wellbeing initiatives rather than passive recipients of support.

9. Mr. Sharma further discussed the need to adopt a holistic understanding of wellbeing, taking into account factors such as sleep deprivation, physical health, nutrition, and digital activity. He noted that mental health is a multidimensional issue and that no single intervention can be effective for all students. In this context, he posed the need to explore how Indian cultural practices and traditional understandings can be meaningfully integrated with modern scientific approaches to mental health.

10. Dr. Jitendra Nagpal led an interactive session focussing on the role of higher education institutions and faculty in fostering a culture of mental wellbeing on campus. He emphasised that student mental health must be viewed as an integral component of holistic human development, in line with the NEP 2020, and not merely as a crisis-driven or remedial concern. Highlighting India's demographic context, he underscored the scale of responsibility borne by HEIs, given the large population of young people entering universities, and stressed that faculty members are key gatekeepers and first responders in creating supportive, empathetic, and inclusive campus environments.

11. Dr. Nagpal discussed the need for an integrated approach to wellbeing, drawing upon Indian knowledge systems alongside contemporary research, and highlighted the importance of prevention, early identification, and institutional mechanisms to reduce the burden of severe mental health concerns. He also emphasised that faculty wellbeing is equally critical and advocated for collaborative partnerships among students, faculty, counsellors, administrators, and families.

12. The session included an active interaction with faculty participants from various institutions, who shared good practices such as mentor–mentee programmes, wellness committees at departmental and institutional levels, student representation in wellness initiatives, faculty training in collaboration with campus counsellors, and activity-based wellbeing programmes for students. Participants highlighted the value of early engagement with students, particularly during transition phases, and the role of empathetic faculty interactions in addressing academic stress, career anxiety, and personal challenges. Dr. Nagpal encouraged institutions to document and share such practices with the Ministry to enable collective learning and strengthen a sustainable wellbeing ecosystem across HEIs.

13. Ms. Geeta Mehrotra, Expressions India, facilitated an experiential and interactive session focusing on building emotional awareness, empathy, and connection as foundational elements of student wellbeing. She emphasised that before expecting students to be emotionally healthy and happy, faculty members must reflect on their own emotional states and capacities. Through guided reflection and simple breathing exercises, she encouraged participants to pause, reconnect with positive memories from their own adolescence, and recognise the role of joy, belonging, and supportive relationships in personal development.

14. Through a series of participatory activities, such as recalling formative school experiences, identifying emotions through single-word reflections, observation-based exercises, and collaborative storytelling, Ms. Mehrotra demonstrated how low-cost, time-efficient classroom practices can foster communication, creativity, mindfulness, and trust between faculty and students. She highlighted that such activities help break hierarchical barriers, promote inclusion and equality, and enable faculty to become more observant and responsive to subtle changes in student behaviour, which may indicate emotional distress.

15. Ms. Mehrotra underscored that wellbeing is closely linked to life skills such as adaptability, communication, empathy, positive behaviour, and the ability to deal constructively with everyday challenges. She stressed that these skills are not innate but are developed through experience, observation, and supportive environments. Emphasising the importance of maintaining appropriate professional boundaries, she advocated for flexibility, informal engagement, and shared experiences as tools for building meaningful faculty–student connections.

16. Prof. Shailender Swaminathan, Sapien Labs, KREA University, presented findings from large-scale quantitative research on youth mental health, drawing on data from the world’s largest ongoing mental wellbeing and brain biomonitoring programme, covering nearly two million individuals globally, including over two lakh respondents from India. He highlighted that evidence from this dataset points to a global mental health crisis, with young people emerging as the most affected group across countries, including India.

17. Prof. Swaminathan explained that Sapien Labs adopts a trans-disciplinary and trans-diagnostic approach to measuring mental wellbeing, moving beyond a disorder-centric framework. The mental wellbeing measure developed through this approach captures multiple psychological, social, and functional dimensions and enables identification of underlying drivers affecting mental health. He noted that mental wellbeing has a strong and direct relationship with educational engagement, productivity, and long-term workforce outcomes, underscoring the economic and developmental implications of declining youth mental health in a country with a large young population like India.

18. Presenting age-wise trends, he highlighted a significant shift over time: while earlier cohorts showed a U-shaped pattern where mental wellbeing was relatively high in youth and declined during working age, recent data shows the lowest levels of mental wellbeing among adolescents and young adults, with gradual improvement only later in life. He pointed out that nearly half of young people today report struggling with mental health, and a substantial proportion report suicidal thoughts, indicating a marked deterioration in youth wellbeing compared to earlier generations.

19. Prof. Swaminathan discussed key factors associated with poor mental wellbeing among young people, including early and prolonged exposure to smartphones and social media, reduced physical activity, increased consumption of ultra-processed foods, weakening social and family connections, and environmental exposures such as pollutants and chemicals. He emphasised that these factors operate cumulatively and interactively, and no single variable alone explains the observed decline in mental wellbeing.

20. He further highlighted the critical role of social connectedness and family relationships, noting that youth from economically weaker backgrounds but with strong family bonds often report better mental wellbeing than those from higher-income backgrounds with weaker social ties. Language and cultural connectedness were also identified as important protective factors influencing family closeness and emotional wellbeing among youth.

21. Focusing on implications for higher education institutions, Prof. Swaminathan demonstrated that for any given level of mental wellbeing at entry, students who engage in regular physical activity report fewer missed academic days and better functional outcomes. He also highlighted gender-related differences in the relationship between academic performance and mental wellbeing, cautioning against academic pressures that may come at the cost of students’ psychological health.

22. Concluding his presentation, Prof. Swaminathan emphasised that the widespread prevalence of poor mental wellbeing among youth across all states of India presents both a serious concern and a significant opportunity for intervention. He underscored the need for evidence-informed, preventive, and institution-

level strategies within higher education to translate research insights into practical actions that support student wellbeing, resilience, and long-term societal outcomes.

23. The session concluded with a summarisation and vote of thanks by Dr. Dharma Rakshit Gautam from NIEPA.

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**List of Attendees  
Faculty Members**

<b>S. No</b>	<b>Name of Institution</b>	<b>Faculty Nominated</b>	<b>Attendees</b>	<b>Absentees</b>
1	Central University of Haryana	1. Anju 2. Ashwani Kumar 3. Bijender Singh 4. Devendra Rajput 5. Kalpana Chauhan 6. Maruthi Mulaka 7. Mona Sharma 8. Nand Kishor 9. Neeraj Karan Singh 10. Neeraj Kumar 11. Parmod Kumar 12. Payal Kanwar Chandel 13. Pradeep Kumar 14. Rakesh Meena 15. Ravi Pratap Pandey 16. Ravinder Pal Ahlawat 17. Renu 18. Samiksha Godara 19. Saurabh Chandra Saxena 20. Vishnu Narayan Kucheria 21. Vishwa Chaudhary	1. Ashwani Kumar 2. Devendra Rajput 3. Kalpana Chauhan 4. Maruthi Mulaka 5. Mona Sharma 6. Nand Kishor 7. Parmod Kumar 8. Payal Kanwar Chandel 9. Pradeep Kumar 10. Ravi Pratap Pandey 11. Vishnu Narayan Kucheria 12. Vishwa Chaudhary	1. Anju 2. Bijender Singh 3. Neeraj Karan Singh 4. Neeraj Kumar 5. Rakesh Meena 6. Ravinder Pal Ahlawat 7. Renu 8. Samiksha Godara 9. Saurabh Chandra Saxena
2	Central University of Jammu	1. Ritu Bakshi 2. Shweta Yadav	1. Ritu Bakshi 2. Shweta Yadav	
3	IIIT Sri City	1. Amrita 2. Bulla Rajesh 3. Kamalakantha Sethi 4. Lokendra 5. Paul B 6. Piyush Joshi 7. Priyambada 8. Santhosh 9. Selvi 10. Tulsidas	1. Amrita	1. Bulla Rajesh 2. Kamalakantha Sethi 3. Lokendra 4. Paul B 5. Piyush Joshi 6. Priyambada 7. Santhosh 8. Selvi 9. Tulsidas
4	IIIT Una, Himachal Pradesh	1. Ankur Thakur 2. Ashwini Kumar	1. Ankur Thakur 2. Ashwini Kumar	-

		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Ina Thakur</li> <li>4. Jaspreet Kaur</li> <li>5. Laxmanika Garg</li> <li>6. Madan Lal Verma</li> <li>7. Nisha Gautam</li> <li>8. Parmeet Kaur Chahal</li> <li>9. Prince Sharma</li> <li>10. Rishabh Deo Pandey</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Ina Thakur</li> <li>4. Jaspreet Kaur</li> <li>5. Laxmanika Garg</li> <li>6. Madan Lal Verma</li> <li>7. Nisha Gautam</li> <li>8. Parmeet Kaur Chahal</li> <li>9. Prince Sharma</li> <li>10. Rishabh Deo Pandey</li> </ol>	
5	Motilal Nehru National Institute of Technology, Allahabad	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Abhishek Kundu</li> <li>2. Asheesh Kumar Singh</li> <li>3. Ashish N. Sawarkar</li> <li>4. Dinesh Singh</li> <li>5. Divya Kumar</li> <li>6. Dogga Raveendhra</li> <li>7. Kanika Saxena</li> <li>8. Prashant Kumar Tiwari</li> <li>9. Rajitha B</li> <li>10. Sahadeo Padhye</li> <li>11. Shweta Tripathi</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Abhishek Kundu</li> <li>2. Asheesh Kumar Singh</li> <li>3. Ashish N. Sawarkar</li> <li>4. Dinesh Singh</li> <li>5. Divya Kumar</li> <li>6. Dogga Raveendhra</li> <li>7. Kanika Saxena</li> <li>8. Prashant Kumar Tiwari</li> <li>9. Rajitha B</li> <li>10. Sahadeo Padhye</li> <li>11. Shweta Tripathi</li> </ol>	-
6	National Institute of Technology, Patna	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Amit Kumar</li> <li>2. Lini Dev K</li> <li>3. Manpuran Mahto</li> <li>4. Mukesh Kumar</li> <li>5. Om Ji Shukla</li> <li>6. Prabhat Kumar</li> <li>7. Prakash Chandra</li> <li>8. Sangeeta Singh</li> <li>9. Shailendra Kumar Mandal</li> <li>10. Subodh Srivastava</li> <li>11. Bineeta Mukhopadhyay</li> <li>12. Sanchari Basu</li> <li>13. Seemanti Saha</li> <li>14. Bharat Gupta</li> <li>15. Neelesh</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Manpuran Mahto</li> <li>2. Mukesh Kumar</li> <li>3. Sangeeta Singh</li> <li>4. Shailendra Kumar Mandal</li> <li>5. Subodh Srivastava</li> <li>6. Bineeta Mukhopadhyay</li> <li>7. Sanchari Basu</li> <li>8. Seemanti Saha</li> <li>9. Bharat Gupta</li> <li>10. Neelesh</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Amit Kumar</li> <li>2. Lini Dev K</li> <li>3. Om Ji Shukla</li> <li>4. Prabhat Kumar</li> <li>5. Prakash Chandra</li> </ol>
7	National Institute of Technology, Delhi	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. V S Pandey</li> <li>2. Sandeep Kumar</li> <li>3. Anidev Singh</li> <li>4. Karan Malhotra</li> <li>5. Rahul Pandey</li> <li>6. Gunjan</li> <li>7. Vipin Pal</li> <li>8. Ankur</li> <li>9. Preeti Verma</li> <li>10. Anuj Sharma</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Preeti Verma</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. V S Pandey</li> <li>2. Sandeep Kumar</li> <li>3. Anidev Singh</li> <li>4. Karan Malhotra</li> <li>5. Rahul Pandey</li> <li>6. Gunjan</li> <li>7. Vipin Pal</li> <li>8. Ankur</li> </ol>

		11. Kapil Kumar		9. Anuj Sharma 10. Kapil Kumar
8	IIT Delhi	1. Anupam Dewan 2. Jatin Panwar 3. Kaushik Mukherjee 4. Maya Ramanath 5. Minati De 6. Pramit Kumar Chowdhury 7. Ravi Shankar 8. Subir Dey 9. Tanusree Chakraborty 10. Vikram Singh 11. Nilakshi Yein	1. Anupam Dewan 2. Pramit Kumar Chowdhury 3. Subir Dey 4. Nilakshi Yein	1. Jatin Panwar 2. Kaushik Mukherjee 3. Maya Ramanath 4. Minati De 5. Ravi Shankar 6. Tanusree Chakraborty 7. Vikram Singh
9	Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad	No faculty nominated		
10	Indian Institute of Management, Indore	1. Abhishek Koshti 2. Deeksha Dutta 3. Gururaj Gopinath Pamidi 4. Hridaya Vyas 5. Manas Parihar 6. Nisha Rathod 7. Pankaj Chouhan 8. Premgi Kumar 9. Shivani Sharma 10. Uveshmohammed Chobdar	1. Abhishek Koshti 2. Deeksha Dutta 3. Gururaj Gopinath Pamidi 4. Manas Parihar 5. Nisha Rathod 6. Pankaj Chouhan 7. Premgi Kumar 8. Shivani Sharma 9. Uveshmohammed Chobdar	1. Hridaya Vyas
11	IISER Thiruvananthapuram	1. Ashuthosh Pandey 2. Dhanyamol Antony 3. Jerry Alfred Fereiro 4. Manish Kumar 5. Mathew Arun Thomas 6. Nishana Mayilaadumveettil 7. Pramitha M 8. Sandhya Ganesan 9. Shabnam Iyyani 10. Suresh Chavan 11. Tanumoy Mandal	1. Ashuthosh Pandey 2. Dhanyamol Antony 3. Manish Kumar 4. Mathew Arun Thomas 5. Nishana Mayilaadumveettil 6. Sandhya Ganesan 7. Shabnam Iyyani 8. Suresh Chavan 9. Tanumoy Mandal	1. Jerry Alfred Fereiro 2. Pramitha M
12	NITTR Kolkata	1. Deepak Mehra 2. Habiba Hussain 3. Jagadeesh MS 4. Kaki Venkata Rao 5. Kunwar Raghvendra Singh	1. Deepak Mehra 2. Habiba Hussain 3. Jagadeesh MS 4. Mithu Dey 5. Naveen B.P. 6. Papia Roy	1. Kaki Venkata Rao 2. Kunwar Raghvendra Singh

		6. Mithu Dey 7. Naveen B.P. 8. Papia Roy 9. Sagarika Pal 10. Saurabh Kumar Yadav 11. Soumitra Kumar Mandal	7. Sagarika Pal 8. Soumitra Kumar Mandal	3. Saurabh Kumar Yadav
13	Unidentified Affiliation		1. Roshni	

Affiliation Details	Name of the Attendees
Ministry Officials, Resource Persons, Officials from NIEPA	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mr. D. K. Sharma, Director, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education</li> <li>2. Dr. Jitendra Nagpal, Senior Psychiatrist &amp; Program Director, Expressions India</li> <li>3. Ms Geeta Mehrotra, Faculty, University and School Life Skills, Mental Health and Wellbeing, Expressions India</li> <li>4. Prof. Shailender Swaminathan, Sapien Labs, KREA University</li> <li>5. Prof. Kumar Suresh, NIEPA</li> <li>6. Prof. Dharma Rakshit Gautam, NIEPA</li> <li>7. Ms. Richa Shrivastava, Consultant, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education</li> </ol>