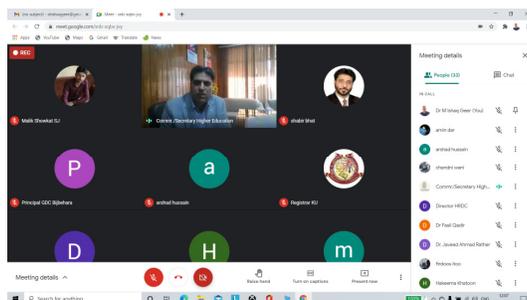


UGC-HRDC, UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR ORGANIZES WEBINAR ON “MENTAL HEALTH AND HYGIENE” IN COLLABORATION WITH GOVT. DEGREE COLLEGE, BIJBEHARA



A webinar on “Mental Health and Hygiene” was organized by the UGC-HRDC, University of Kashmir in collaboration with Psychological Counselling Cell of the Govt. Degree College, Bijbehara on December 10th, 2020. Sh. Talat Parvez Rohella, Commissioner-Secretary, Higher Education Department, Govt. of J&K was the Chief Guest at this occasion whereas Dr. Nisar Ahmad Mir, Registrar, University of Kashmir was the Guest of Honour. Prof. Shabir A. Bhat, Director, UGC-HRDC, University of Kashmir and Dr. Nighat Fatima, Principal, Govt. Degree College, Bijbehara were the Organizing Co-Chairpersons of the webinar. Dr. Arshad Hussain, Professor in the Dept. of Psychiatry, Govt. Medical College, Srinagar was the main speaker of the webinar.

Speaking at this occasion, Sh. Talat Parvez Rohella said that the Higher Education Department of the Govt. of J&K has devised a comprehensive and holistic plan for the overall development and mental well-being of the students and teachers of Jammu and Kashmir. Elaborating upon this plan he said that psychological counseling cum career planning cells have been established and activated in many degree colleges of J&K wherein career related guidance, psychological counseling and placement assistance is offered to the students besides orienting and training the teachers in extending help to the students in coping up with all kinds of stress during COVID-19 pandemic. Sh. Talat Parvez emphasized upon the need to provide ample opportunities to the students to dissipate their stress through sports, community outreach and other extra-curricular activities. He also urged upon the principals to install locked boxes within their premises wherein students could freely register their grievances, problems, issues and concerns for seeking necessary guidance and help from their teachers and administrators. He applauded UGC-HRDC, University of Kashmir for organizing a series of national and international webinars during COVID-19 pandemic and keeping the ball of academic discourse on vital issues rolling.

In his address, Guest of Honour and Registrar of the University of Kashmir, Dr. Nisar Ahmad Mir dwelled upon various types of coping strategies against stress from the social science perspective that include inculcating healthy behavioural, emotional and social skills for maintaining good mental health as well as hygiene. He stressed upon the need to undertake realistic appraisal of one’s emotions and reactions, control impulsive behaviour, foster self-esteem and harness positive mental attitude in order to overcome adversities and lead a happy

life. Dr. Mir underlined the importance of continuing education programmes like these in learning and promoting the art of strategizing one's priorities and practices in life with a view to counter day-to-day stress and dealing with hardships in a mature and sagacious manner. He pledged to offer and continue the services rendered by the Clinical Psychology laboratory of the University of Kashmir to Higher Education and Health Departments of J&K in offering counseling to the students and teachers working in different colleges.

Director HRDC, Prof. Shabir Ahmad Bhat in his address called upon the teachers and students to transcend adversity through balanced emotional responses and effective counter strategies. He underscored the need for a collaborative approach in such matters of high significance moreso in light of the fact that no university or college can thrive in isolation and only collective action and wisdom can steer us through the unprecedented times and challenges posed by COVID-19 pandemic. Prof. Shabir deeply appreciated the pro-active measures taken by the higher education department of J&K under the dynamic leadership of Mr. Talat Parvez Rohella in dealing with academic, psychological and career related needs of the students as well as teachers.

Principal, Govt. Degree College, Bijbehara in her address elaborated upon the progress made by her college in countering the challenges posed by the ongoing pandemic and added the dimension of hygiene to the mental health education while throwing light upon the importance of such webinars. "Poor hygiene is a sign of self-neglect stemming from apathy and lack of motivation and that is where psychological counseling can stand a good stead in promoting not only good mental health but good hygiene too", she said. She pledged to devise a strategic action plan for dealing with such issues and devising a roadmap on how to sensitize and equip students as well as teachers in facing such challenges.

In his lecture, Dr. Arshad Hussain, Professor in the Dept. of Psychiatry, Govt. Medical College, Srinagar discussed at length a whole lot of issues ranging from types of stress, social skills for overcoming mental stress, use of technology for socializing and raising awareness, role of artificial intelligence, spirituality and psychotherapies in dealing with mental health issues. While interacting with the participants during question-answer session, he emphasized upon the need for bringing mental health at par with physical health and dealing with problems like drug abuse and domestic violence in a collective and collaborative manner.

Dr. Showkat A. Malik, Assistant Professor at the Dept. of Education, Govt. Degree College, Bijbehara conducted the proceedings of the webinar whereas Dr. Geer M. Ishaq, Coordinator, HRDC proposed the vote of thanks. He said that it was the second lecture in the webinar series that was inaugurated by the Vice-Chancellor, University of Kashmir, Prof. Talat Ahmad on November 28th and announced that other degree colleges of the valley will also be engaged in future lectures of this webinar series with a view to reach out to all the students and teachers working in higher education sector.

- **Dr. Geer Mohammad Ishaq**
C O O R D I N A T O R