

Cultivating Resilience: The Role of University Teachers in Student Emotional Regulation and Suicide Prevention

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ABSTRACT

In higher education, mental health is a significant concern. Students at universities are under a lot of pressure. Exams, professional uncertainties, financial difficulties, familial expectations, loneliness, and relationship issues are a few of these. Additionally, some students may suffer from sadness, anxiety, or suicidal thoughts. Counselling and other support services are offered by universities. But a lot of pupils don't get professional assistance right away. Teachers could be the first to observe changes in their kids. They might notice shifts in conduct, involvement in class, attendance, or academic achievement. Teachers now play a crucial role in providing early help. The function of university instructors in helping students acquire emotional control and resilience is covered in this article. The role of educators in preventing suicide is also covered. Resilience theory, emotional control, social learning, psychological safety, belongingness, and suicide prevention are among the concepts used in the article. It makes the case that educators shouldn't work as psychiatrists or therapists. It is their responsibility to observe, hear, assist, and, if necessary, recommend students to experts. The Faculty Emotional Leadership–Student Resilience Framework (FEL-SRF) is also presented in the essay. The framework links professional assistance, early detection, student resilience, and teacher conduct.

Keywords: Resilience, Emotional Regulation, University Teachers, Student Mental Health, Suicide Prevention, Emotional Intelligence, Higher Education, Psychological Safety

Received : 22/7/2026 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23124521> Acceptance: 15/8/2026

Introduction:

One of the most significant phases of life is university life. Pupils acquire new knowledge. They make new acquaintances. They decide what to do with their future. They also have a lot of new obligations. It may be an exciting time. It can also be challenging. Exam pressure may be experienced by students. They can be concerned about their professions and jobs. Some people can be struggling financially. Others could struggle with relationships or family. Some pupils could experience loneliness. Some people could have trouble acclimating to a new hostel or university. These problems do not affect every student in the same way. Some students manage them well. Others may find them difficult to handle.

Mental health has therefore become an important concern in higher education. Universities

have counselling centres and other support systems. However, students do not always approach these services. They may feel ashamed. They may fear judgement. They may also believe that their problem is not serious enough to seek help.

Teachers can play an important role here. Teachers meet students regularly. They see students in classrooms. They may also guide them in academic work. Because of this contact, teachers may notice important changes in students. A teacher may notice that a student has become very quiet. Another student may stop attending classes. A student may suddenly perform poorly. These changes do not prove that the student has a mental health problem. But they may be signs that the student needs attention. The teacher's

role is not to diagnose the student. The teacher's role is to notice the change, talk to the student and guide the student towards appropriate help.

Understanding Resilience

Resilience means the ability to deal with difficult situations and continue moving forward. Resilience does not mean that a person never feels sad, worried or afraid. These are normal human emotions. A resilient student can experience difficulties and still find ways to cope. The student may seek help. The student may learn from failure. The student may use family, friends, teachers or professional services for support. Resilience is therefore not about handling everything alone. This is important in universities. Students need to understand that asking for help is not a sign of weakness.

Teachers can help develop resilience through everyday teaching. For example, a student may fail an examination. A teacher may say, "You are not serious about your studies." This can make the student feel ashamed. Another teacher may say, "Let us see where you had difficulty and what you can do differently next time." The second response does not ignore the failure. It focuses on improvement. Such communication can help students develop a healthier attitude towards failure.

Emotional Regulation

Emotional regulation means managing emotions in a useful and healthy way. University students experience many emotions. They may feel happy after success. They may feel angry after criticism. They may feel anxious before examinations. They may feel disappointed after failure. The aim is not to remove these emotions. The aim is to understand them and respond in a better way. Gross's model of emotion regulation explains that people can manage emotions at different stages. They may change the situation. They may change their attention. They may change the way they understand an event. They may also control their emotional response. Teachers can help students develop these skills. Suppose a student fails an

examination. The student may think, "I am a failure." Another student may think, "My preparation was not good enough this time." These two thoughts can lead to different responses. Teachers can encourage students to see failure as information. Failure can show what needs to change. It does not have to define the student's whole identity.

Emotional Intelligence of Teachers

Teachers also need emotional awareness. A teacher may become angry when a student repeatedly misses classes. The teacher may immediately think that the student is careless or irresponsible. But there may be another reason. The student may have family problems. The student may be unwell. The student may be facing financial difficulties. The teacher may not know the full situation. Therefore, teachers should pause before making a judgement. The faculty reflection material developed for emotional intelligence training also stresses this idea. Teachers are encouraged to examine their own emotions, listen without becoming defensive and consider whether there may be reasons behind a student's behaviour that are not immediately visible. This does not mean that teachers should accept every form of poor behaviour. Academic discipline is important. But discipline can be maintained without humiliation.

From Emotional Intelligence to Emotional Leadership

Emotional intelligence is about understanding and managing emotions. Emotional leadership goes one step further. It means using this ability to create a healthy environment for students. An emotionally mature teacher can give critical feedback without insulting the student. The teacher can disagree with a student without disrespecting the student. The teacher can maintain discipline without public humiliation. The faculty self-reflection material also includes respectful disagreement, constructive feedback and accepting one's own mistakes as important aspects of emotional leadership. These behaviours may appear simple. But they are important. Students observe their teachers. They learn from the behaviour of teachers. A teacher who remains calm during difficult situations can become a positive model for students.

Psychological Safety

Students learn better when they feel safe. Psychological safety means that students feel able to ask questions and express concerns without unnecessary fear of humiliation. A student should be able to say, “I do not understand this topic.” A student should be able to ask a question. A student should be able to make a mistake. This does not mean that academic standards should be reduced. Teachers can maintain high standards while treating students with respect. A psychologically safe classroom may also make it easier for students to discuss personal difficulties. A student who expects judgement may remain silent. A student who expects respect may be more willing to seek help.

Importance of Belonging

Students also need a sense of belonging. A student who feels connected to classmates and teachers may find it easier to deal with difficulties. Teachers can support belonging in simple ways. They can learn students’ names. They can encourage participation. They can promote respectful discussion. They can avoid unnecessary public comparison. These actions cannot solve every mental health problem. But they can help create a more supportive environment. Research on student mental health has also highlighted the importance of belonging and social connection. Feelings of isolation and being a burden may be associated with suicidal thoughts. Therefore, universities should not focus only on academic performance. They should also create opportunities for healthy social relationships.

Teachers and Suicide Prevention

Suicide prevention requires professional knowledge and institutional support. Teachers cannot be expected to prevent every suicide. They cannot diagnose suicidal behaviour. However, they can contribute to early recognition. A teacher may notice a major change in a student’s behaviour. The teacher can approach the student and ask whether everything is okay. The teacher should listen carefully. The teacher should not immediately give advice. If the

student needs professional help, the teacher should use the university’s referral system. This can be described in six simple steps:

Role of Gatekeeper Training

Teachers can acquire these abilities with the aid of gatekeeper training. According to recent studies, gatekeeper training can increase awareness and self-assurance when handling children who are in danger. But knowledge is insufficient on its own. Clear processes are also necessary for teachers. They ought to be aware of who to call. They ought to be able to refer others. In an emergency, they ought to know what to do. They ought to be aware of professional limits and confidentiality. Thus, training ought to be linked to the university’s real support network.

Teachers Are Not Counsellors

This is a crucial point. It is unrealistic to expect teachers to become counsellors. A teacher is able to hear what a pupil has to say. The instructor may express worry. The instructor can motivate the pupil to ask for assistance. However, only qualified professionals should do the diagnostic and therapy. Teachers should assist students in accessing the proper services if they require psychological or psychiatric care. The instructor shouldn’t attempt to address every personal issue. Both the teacher and the learner are protected by well-defined boundaries.

Faculty Emotional Leadership–Student Resilience Framework

The Faculty Emotional Leadership–Student Resilience Framework (FEL-SRF) can be used to integrate the concepts covered in this article. There are six primary components to the framework. The first is the emotional leadership of faculty members. Self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, communication, and role modelling are all part of it. Resilience-oriented teaching is the second. It encompasses appropriate reactions to failure, psychological safety, and constructive criticism. Student protective procedures make up the third. Emotional control, self-assurance, belonging, hope,

and asking for assistance are a few of these. The fourth is early recognition. Instructors and other staff members see notable shifts in their pupils. The fifth is expert assistance. Students are connected to counsellors, psychologists, psychiatrists, and other pertinent services. The sixth is institutional continuity. The university keeps helping the student as needed. It is a framework for concepts. To confirm the proposed links, more research is needed.

Relevance to Indian Universities

The Indian higher education system is very diverse. Students come from different states, languages, cultures and economic backgrounds. Many universities also have large student populations. Mental-health professionals may not always be available in sufficient numbers. In such situations, teachers can become an important link between students and professional services. This is especially important when students are reluctant to approach a mental-health professional directly. However, teachers should not replace professional services. Universities need clear referral systems. Teachers should know whom to contact when they are concerned about a student.

A Bihar Perspective

Universities in Bihar are also affected by the problem. In Bihar, a large number of students come from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and rural areas. There are pupils who are first-generation learners. Some relocate to pursue higher education. They may have rather distinct experiences. Therefore, creating a system with varying degrees of support is a useful strategy. Basic emotional assistance can be given by teachers. Professional psychological services can be provided by psychologists and counsellors. When necessary, psychiatrists and other medical specialists can offer expert care. These services can be coordinated by university authorities. The instructor should serve as a liaison between the student and the system of assistance. This strategy can be guided by a straightforward principle: Teachers ought to identify, react, and make recommendations. They ought not to diagnose and treat.

Faculty Well-Being

Teacher well-being and student mental health are inextricably linked. Stress affects teachers as well. They are responsible for teaching. They have administrative tasks to complete. They do tests. Students are under their supervision. Along with other duties, they oversee research. It can be challenging for a teacher who is emotionally spent to react to students in a patient manner. Universities should therefore promote the wellbeing of their professors. Self-awareness is the first step toward emotional leadership. “What am I feeling?” is a question an instructor could pose. “Why am I reacting this way?” “Am I making a quick judgement?” Professional responses can be enhanced by asking questions like “Could there be another explanation for the student’s behaviour?”

Suggestions for Universities

Universities can take a number of useful actions. First, they can train instructors on fundamental mental health awareness. They can also offer training for gatekeepers. Thirdly, they can establish unambiguous channels for referrals. Fourth, they can facilitate access to counselling services. Fifth, they are able to create peer support networks. Sixth, they can provide teachers with psychological safety and polite communication training. Seventh, they can provide support for faculty members. Most importantly, these measures should be part of a regular university system. They should not begin only after a crisis.

Future Research

More research is needed in Indian universities. Future studies can examine whether teacher emotional intelligence is related to student well-being. Researchers can also study whether psychological safety improves student help-seeking. Another important area is gatekeeper training. Research should examine not only whether teachers learn about suicide prevention but also whether they use the knowledge in real situations. Long-term studies are also needed. Qualitative studies can be useful. Interviews with students and teachers can help researchers understand

their experiences in greater depth. Research should also consider differences between rural and urban institutions, residential and non-residential students, and different socioeconomic groups.

Conclusion:

An essential component of higher education is student mental health. Professional mental health treatments are necessary for universities. However, these services cannot function independently. The support system also includes teachers. When a student's life changes, a teacher might be the first to notice it. The instructor can react thoughtfully. The instructor is able to listen. The instructor can refrain from making snap decisions. The student's dignity can be upheld by the instructor. The instructor might direct the pupil toward expert assistance. The teacher does not become a therapist as a result. The instructor becomes a responsible teacher as a result. This position can be easily understood using the Faculty Emotional Leadership–Student Resilience Framework. It links student resilience, emotional control, belonging, early identification, and professional assistance to teacher emotional leadership. Making children strong enough to handle any challenge on their own is not the main objective. The intention is to assist pupils in creating appropriate coping mechanisms. Additionally, it aims to foster an atmosphere at universities where seeking assistance is encouraged. Not every issue can be resolved by a kind instructor. A teacher is able to pay attention. A teacher is able to provide guidance.

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